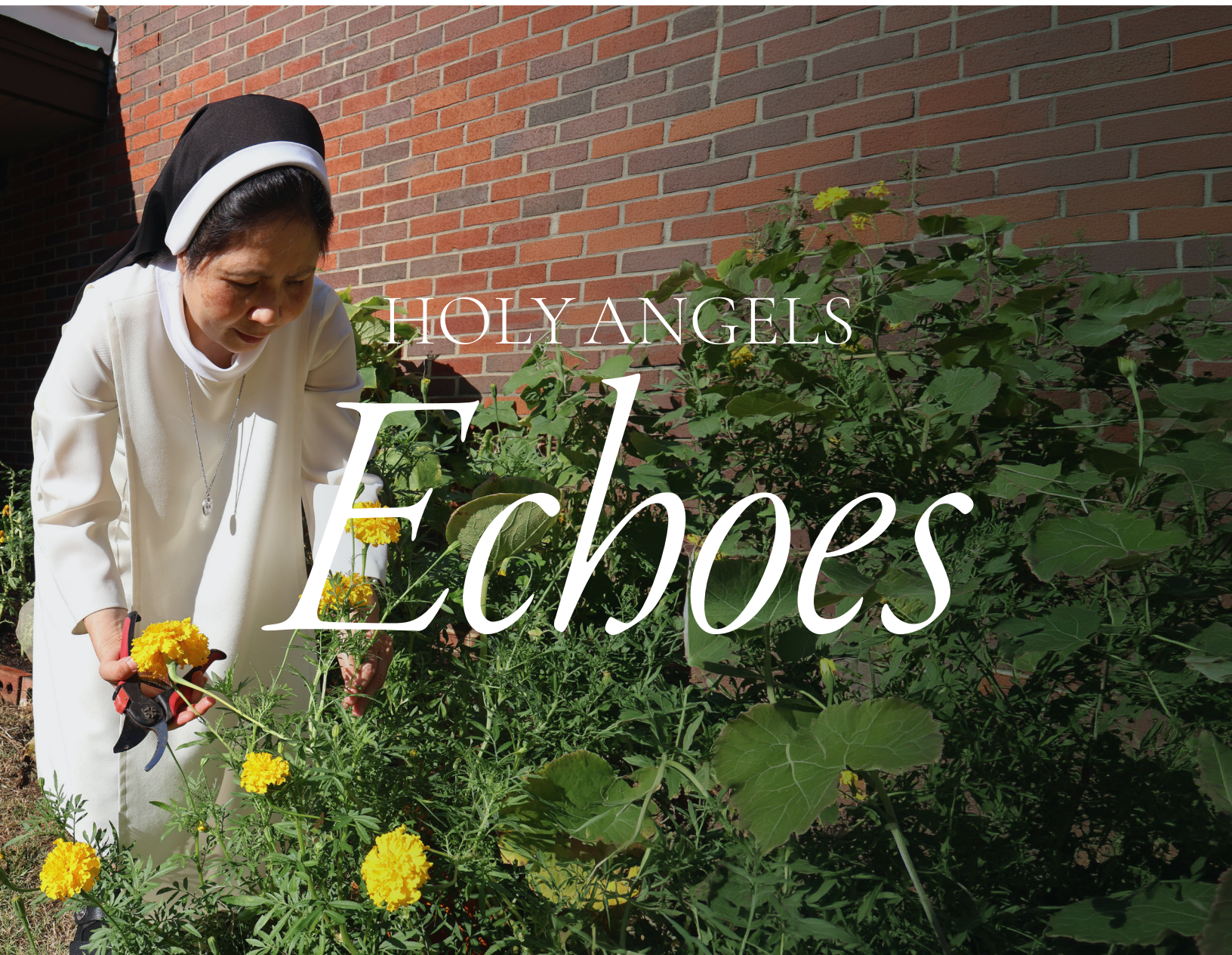




OLIVETAN —
BENEDICTINE SISTERS

Jonesboro, Arkansas

FALL 2026

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

It is with great joy that I invite you to explore the pages of our newly updated and expanded convent newsletter, *Holy Angels Echoes*. If you have been a reader of the Echoes for a while, you will remember different iterations of the newsletter over the years. When I was a Junior Sister in the early 2010s, the late Sr. Henrietta Hockle, who was our editor at the time, took me on as her apprentice, so that, as she used to say, “Someone else will carry this on when I get to go to heaven!”

A retired teacher, principal, superintendent, and superior, this tiny Sister was a giant to me in terms of her experience, strength, and dedication to our community. She loved publishing the *Echoes*, and wrote most of the articles herself. One thing I admired about her, was that in her elder years, she was still young at heart and open to new ideas. She would ask my opinion, in spite of my lack of experience, and would often take it, quoting St. Benedict’s rule, which says, “the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger.” (RB 3:3) Her humility and openness to growth and change made a deep impression on me. So it is with that openness to growth and change that I approached the idea of updating the *Echoes* once again.

In preparing for this update, I conducted a survey among the other Sisters, asking them for new ideas, and thoughts about what to keep and what to change. We decided to keep the original name, “Holy Angels Echoes,” for continuity. But perhaps you are wondering where that name comes from, or what its significance is for us today?

As part of their ministry, our Sisters ran an all-girls Catholic high school from 1930-1963. At the time, the high school newspaper was called “Holy Angels Echoes,” and after the school closed, the Sisters adopted the title for their quarterly newsletter. I’ve not been able to track down a written reason about the meaning behind the title, but a simple explanation occurs to me, based on Psalm 66:8.

*O peoples, bless our God;
let the voice of his praise resound.*

An echo is a repeated or resonant sound, continuing on after the word has been spoken. We think of the grand canyon, or the acoustics in our basement or garage, how the sound goes on. In our newsletter, we strive to share news with you about our monastic life, and the great things God has done and is doing for us. We pray that our voice, through these pages, will let his praise echo and resound in your life as it does in ours.

That in all things, God may be glorified.
(*The Rule of St. Benedict* 57:9)

Sr. Glorea Knaggs, OSB
Editor, Holy Angels Echoes

*Sr. Glorea Knaggs, OSB,
and Sr. Henrietta Hockle, OSB,
in 2013.*



OLIVETAN BENEDICTINE SISTERS

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FR. QUINN'S BLESSING

Our Sisters and Novices received the symbolic first blessing from Fr. Quinn Thomas after his Ordination.

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*Know someone who would
like to receive Echoes?*

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Mother Mary Clare with Bishop Anthony Taylor.

Prioress Reelected

On Monday, June 22, the Sisters reelected Mother Mary Clare Bezner as prioress of the community. Mother Mary Clare has held this position since January 2022. During her time as superior, she has prioritized building on the community's foundations—spiritually and materially.

"I felt from the beginning of my time as superior," Mother Mary Clare said, "that our community has given me so much, I had the strong desire to serve them in whatever ways God was asking me to." Mother has focused on strengthening the community's monastic identity through monthly ongoing formation opportunities and by meeting with all the Sisters individually throughout the year to foster communication. "While the spiritual work is

being done," she said, "God is also inviting us to address the material work that needs to be accomplished." In the years prior to her election, the community had been discussing the growing need for a renovation or new monastery. A large part of Mother Mary Clare's time in office has been spent researching and working with committees and her council to determine the most viable options for the 50+ years old Convent - a project that is still in motion. When asked what made her role as superior the most rewarding, she said, "Encouraging my Sisters to keep seeking union with God, and seeing His work in our lives. I have so much to be grateful for."

Please join us in praying for Mother Mary Clare as she continues to serve our community as prioress.

Holy Angels Highlights



HOLY WEEK RETREAT

Young women from the diocese joined us for a Holy Week Retreat. It was a great blessing to have them with us for the days of prayer, silence, and drawing closer to the Lord during the Sacred Triduum.



CORPUS CHRISTI

The summer heat prevents our elder Sisters from an outdoor procession on Corpus Christi, but our tradition of processing inside of the house, stopping at our decorated altars for song and adoration, is one that we always look forward to.



NICU REUNION

In March, St. Bernards held their annual NICU Reunion - celebrating the children and families who spent time in the neonatal intensive care unit.



NEW ARRIVALS

During the Easter season, our Sisters enjoyed welcoming some new friends - 40 baby chicks! The chicks were a little nervous at first, but after spending lots of time cuddling with their new owners, they began to feel right at home. Our good maintenance men worked with Mother Mary Clare to convert one of our old sheds into a hen house, and built a flexible run for them as well. We find them to be delightful to watch, and hope they provide us with an abundance of eggs once they have fully matured.



EASTER VIGIL

The April sunset was exquisite the evening we celebrated the Easter Vigil. Each year, we begin with the Easter fire in our courtyard, and all of creation seems to join in our deep joy.



COMMUNITY RETREAT

In June, our community was blessed to have Abbot Gregory Polan, OSB, of Conception Abbey as our retreat Master. After serving as Abbot for 20 years as abbot of Conception Abbey, Abbot Gregory served an 8-year term as Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation, a term that concluded in 2024. The theme of the retreat was "Living the Paschal Mystery in the Monastic Life." It was also a joy to have the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of Peace Monastery of Rutherfordton, North Carolina join us for our retreat.



(L-R) Sr. Cecilia, newly ordained Fr. Christopher Elser, Sr. Mickey Espinoza, MCP, Mother Mary Clare, Novice Maria José, and Isabelle Wittke.

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

On May 30, 2026, Bishop Anthony Taylor ordained 5 new priests for the Diocese of Little Rock. A group of Sisters and Novices attended to extend our community's joy and support. The community was blessed to be able to attend the first Mass of Fr. Quinn Thomas, a son of our local parish, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church.



THANK YOU, FR. BENI!

At the end of June, our Sisters bid farewell to our chaplain, Fr. Beni Wego, SVD, who has served our community and St. Bernards since August 2020. We are so grateful to Fr. Beni for faithfully providing us with daily Mass and the sacraments, and pray for God's blessings upon him as he continues to serve in his religious congregation, the Divine Word Missionaries.

CMSWR WORKSHOP

In April, Sr. Cecilia and Sr. Maria Christi attended the CMSWR workshop for Vocation Directors and Formators. This workshop facilitates sharing resources with other communities and our Sisters always return from it grateful and compelled! This year's topics included the document "Essential Elements of Religious Life," and deepening the identity of a woman religious as daughter, sister, mother, and bride.



Above: The Novices take classes on the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, the Vows, monastic practices, and community history. Here they are pictured in a class on the Catechism with Fr. Cody Eveld.

Right: Novices Emmanuel Marie Nick, OSB, and María José Nuñez, OSB, with Sr. Gloreia Knaggs, OSB.



From the Formation Hall

SR. GLOREA KNAGGS, OSB

As the Formation Director for our community for the last four and a half years, I have fielded many questions about the process of entering religious life, particularly, “What is a day like for a Sister in formation?” The period of formation is meant to introduce an individual to religious life and to aid in discernment. How long that takes and exactly what that looks like is different in each religious community. I can offer you a glimpse into formation here at Holy Angels Convent by answering some of the most frequently asked questions.

WHAT IS THE FORMATION PROCESS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

In our community, the whole period of formation lasts 7-9 years. After a woman's application has been accepted, she would enter and spend a little time with us before becoming a postulant. A postulant spends their first year with us, asking, as the name suggests, "Is God calling me?" They take classes to learn about religious life and enter into prayer, work and recreation with the community. They occasionally participate in events outside of the monastery with the other Sisters, such as volunteering for the parish and hospital, ordinations and other diocesan gatherings, and visit their families for two weeks at the end of the year.

During the Novitiate, novices take two years to look more seriously and intently, with God, at the question: Am I being called to religious life here? Novices begin this period by taking on a new religious name and the habit of the community. In some ways it looks like postulancy - classes and work - but less time is spent going out of the community for events, so that more time is devoted to prayer, particularly in the first year. In the second year of the novitiate, classes and discernment continue, with the addition of a part-time apostolate - that is, the work of the community, either at St. Bernards, the parish, or school.

After completion of the Novitiate, the novices make first vows. They put on the black veil and promise to God to live our five vows: poverty, chastity, obedience, stability in the community, and conversion of life according to monastic principles. They begin full-time work in the apostolate, and renew these vows annually for 4-6 years before making a lifetime commitment through perpetual vows.

After perpetual vows, the formal period of initial formation concludes, but all religious Sisters engage in ongoing formation for the rest of their religious lives. In our community, this can take shape through formal education, but is also carried out through monthly weekends of recollection, occasional workshops, and monthly meetings/talks that support the Sisters in living out their vocation.

WHAT IS A DAY LIKE FOR A SISTER IN FORMATION?

Postulants, Novices, and Junior Sisters all participate in the full monastic horarium, or schedule of the community - Mass, communal prayer, meals, and recreation. In addition to that, they spend time during the day on personal prayer, rest, exercise and studies. Throughout the week, they follow a separate schedule that includes occasional meetings, classes, and common work.



Head Sacristan Sr. Maria Rose (left) recently trained the Novices on Sacristy duties, including preparing for Mass and the daily Eucharistic Adoration.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FORMATION?

The period of initial formation is meant to introduce a candidate to religious life, how it is lived specifically in this particular place, and to help her discern her vocation. It is also preparation for life in community with other religious, and helps those being formed to practice monastic principles, such as silence, prayer, and work in everyday life, in a way that is healthy and fruitful.



Get to Know

Sister Maria Christi Cavanaugh, OSB

Year I entered religious life: 2006

Birthday: 07/15/1962

Hometown: Hamler, Ohio

Feastday: Corpus Christi Sunday

Current Assignment: Pastoral Care at St. Bernards, Council Member

Treat I like for my feast day: Dark Chocolate Brownies with Walnuts

Favorite flower: Lilac

Favorite book: Bible

Last book read: *A Mary's Heart in a Martha's World*

Favorite movie: Jesus of Nazareth

A precious memory: As a little girl, my Dad holding my hand as we walked

Favorite Bible verse: "Behold I am the handmaiden of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word." *Luke 1:38*

Hobbies or interests: Making rosaries

A color that makes me happy: Lavender

Favorite activity at evening recreation: Jigsaw Puzzles

Dream pilgrimage: Holy Land, Fatima and Lourdes

Favorite way to pray: Silent meditation with God

Hidden talent: Flower arranging and making bread

Best season of the year: Spring and Fall

Favorite artist: Michelangelo

Favorite pope: Pope Benedict XVI

Favorite title of Our Lady: "Our Lady of All My Needs"

Special animal: Dog

Favorite church: Church of St. John the Baptist in Jerusalem, Israel

A team I cheer for: Boston Celtics

Favorite thing about Holy Angels: The surrounding 160 acres of woods, silence and peace of the monastery.



St. Bernards Neurointerventional Care Suite Opens

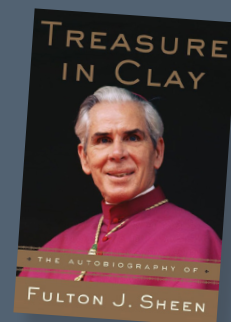
In February, St. Bernards held a ribbon cutting for the new Neurointerventional Care Suite - the first of its kind in Northeast Arkansas. The celebration honored Dr. Nicholas Khattar who was responsible for leading this endeavor, which will provide the most effective treatment available for stroke patients in the region.

Picture (L-R) at the ribbon cutting with Dr. Khattar's parents are Sr. Deborah, Sr. Maria Christi, Sr. Thérèse, Sr. Mary Beth, and Sr. Ann Marie.

Recommended Reading

One of our customs as Benedictines is the practice of Table Reading. At supper, a Sister reads from a book to the community for a short period, each day, except for Sundays and special feastdays. We read from a variety of books and documents, and thought you might enjoy recommendations from what our Sisters have enjoyed.

In honor of his recent beatification, we recommend reading *Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen*. Archbishop Sheen's charming storytelling, gentle humor and testimony to God's work in his life, was touching to the older Sisters who remembered him, and inspiring to the younger ones who were born after his time.



Thank You to Our Benefactors

The Olivetan Benedictine Sisters wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all our benefactors who made contributions in 2025. Whenever attempting to create such a list as this, we run the risk of accidentally omitting a name. If we have done so, please accept our apologies and know that we are very grateful!

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Novice *Reflections*



The Creative Hour

NOVICE EMMANUEL MARIE NICK, OSB

*“So God created mankind
in his own image.”*

Genesis 1:27

I was recently talking with a priest who seemed to have vast knowledge of painting. I asked him, “Father, are you a painter?” He responded, “I painted a lot in high school and college, but I have not had time to paint since then.” I could relate to him in not having time – or making time – for creative hobbies.

When I was in middle school, my life was immersed in creative hobbies. I had ample time to sew, cross-stitch, crochet, bake, sing, and more. But over the years, engaging in creative hobbies slowly became less of a priority for me. This realization came to a head when, as a part of my religious formation, I was asked to spend time each week in a “Creative Hour.” The Creative Hour is just what it sounds like – setting aside an hour each week to be creative. At first, it was difficult for me to find something

creative to do. The hour felt more like something I had to do instead of something that re-created me. But through this practice, I have come to discover that God, our Creator, who created us in His image and likeness, wants us to participate in His creativity – to be co-creators with Him. When we invite God to create with and through us, anything is possible.

Recently, a sister was talking about how one of our sisters used to make a plastic-canvas ornament featuring a sister on it. She mentioned it would be nice to have an ornament like that again. I thought to myself, “I bet I could crochet a sister ornament!” Little did I know, I could not find a pattern to make a sister ornament. I felt pretty confident that this ornament would not be possible without a pattern of some sort, but I decided to spend one Creative Hour trying. That hour turned into many hours of crocheting and pulling out what I crocheted. After much perseverance and with the help of God, His angels, and saints, I created my first sister ornament! I am still surprised at what I was able to create, but in a way, it is not surprising, as Scripture tells us, “with my God I can scale any wall” (Psalm 18:29).

Though a weekly required Creative Hour may not always easily fit into my schedule, I hope to continue the practice regularly for the rest of my days so I can continually give God a channel to create with and through me.



What They Didn't Tell Me

NOVICE MARÍA JOSÉ NUÑEZ, OSB

*"... whoever loses his life for
My sake will find it."*

Matthew 16:25

Everyone, including myself, was shocked when I finally entered Holy Angels Convent in August of 2024. Every year, for about 5 years, I would tell others, "Please pray for me. I am entering the convent this August." Those Augusts came and went, but I held off joining. It was no wonder that people didn't believe I was going to the convent when the time came. I was even told, "I'll believe it when I see it." But at some point, I realized I no longer wanted to live with the question: "What would have happened if I just entered?"

So, I took a leap of faith and left everything behind with the help of the Lord. But why had it taken me so long to finally make up my mind?

I pondered on this question during my first few months in religious life. I realized that as I searched for the courage to enter a religious community, I struggled with handing things over to Jesus: my family, friends, dreams, comforts, and even my phone. The list felt endless. Then, to complicate things, when I began to talk about my desires to enter religious life, I was disheartened by the responses of many. Instead of finding open hearts and encouragement, I was questioned. They asked, "Why are you throwing your life away?" "Don't you want to have a happy life with a family of your own?" This caused me confusion and doubt. I was repeatedly being reminded of all I was going to lose.

But what I didn't yet see, and what those who spoke this way failed to see, was all that I would gain if I offered my life to God with an undivided heart.

Now, I have come to understand more clearly St. Paul's words about how he counted everything as a loss in comparison to gaining Christ (Phil. 3:8). During my first two years in the convent, I have tasted and seen God's divine love through the gift of this monastic community. I have been called to surrender to the Lord in ways I would have never expected, and I have learned how to shift from struggling to freedom. All this has been given to me by the Lord through silence and prayer. I have not thrown away my life – I have gained it.

Mark your calendars and
keep an eye out for more information
about these upcoming events.

Save the *Date*

Saturday with the Sisters

Saturday, November 7, 2026

For single, Catholic women ages 16-30. Come and get a glimpse of religious life. Spend a day with us in prayer and fellowship. For more information or to register, contact our Vocation Director, Sr. Cecilia Nguyen, at Vocations@olivben.org or our Formation Director, Sr. Glorea, at Formation@olivben.org.

Come & See Retreat

Saturday, October 17 - Sunday, October 18, 2026

For single, Catholic women ages 19-30 who are interested in learning more about religious life, or are considering a religious vocation. Come for a weekend of prayer, talks pertaining to discernment, and information about the meaning of a vocation. For more information or to register, contact our Formation Director, Sr. Glorea, at Formation@olivben.org.

Oblate Come & See Retreat

Saturday, September 26, 2026

Come and pray with the Sisters, listen to talks on the spiritual life, and enjoy fellowship with others who strive to live Benedictine Spirituality in the world. You do not need to be an oblate to attend. For more information or to register, contact our Oblate Directress: Sr. Mary John Seyler, OSB, at srmaryjohns@gmail.com or 870-243-2440.

Christmas Open House

Sunday, December 27, 2026 | 2-4PM

Come and visit Holy Angels Convent in all its Christmas splendor. Join us for tours, Christmas treats, and fellowship.



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