

# Christmas Greetings



ISSUE NO. XXVIII • CHRISTMAS • 2023



April 22, 2023, Celebration of our 50th Anniversary of Foundation. Seated left to right: our Sr. Margarita, Sr. Gilchrist of Tautra MariaKloster, our Srs. Miriam, Clare, Mother Vicki, and Jacqui, with Sr. Nettie of Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey. Second row, standing: Fr. Charlie of St. Benedict's Monastery, M. Kathy of Our Lady of the Angels, our Srs. Esther & Rita, M. Rebecca of Mississippi Abbey, our Sr. Sharon, M. Sofia & Sr. Robbie of Mt. St. Mary's Abbey. Back row: M. Kathy of Redwoods Monastery, Fr. Elias of Gethsemani Abbey, our Srs. Hildegard & Pam, and Fr. Joseph of Holy Cross Abbey.

## From the Prioress

*Dear Friends,*

Blessings and peace of this holy season of Christmas to each and all of you! As another year draws to a close, we extend our warmest prayers and wishes that this coming year will bring you every good gift from the heart of God!

Thank you for your love and support and know that we hold each of you in prayer with warmest gratitude. Please enjoy our newsletter with its chronicle of our 50th anniversary of foundation here in the high desert of southern Arizona. It is sent with our deepest thanks and heartfelt prayer for all you mean to us. Blessed Christmas!

Mother Victoria and all your Santa Rita Sisters

## Meet Our New Father Immediate

Each monastery of our Order has a Father Immediate, another monastery with which it shares a special bond. At the 2022 General Chapter we were given a new father immediate, the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux in California. In the photo, their abbot, Dom Paul Mark Schwan, is with our Mother Victoria, having just presented her with our 50th anniversary gift, an exquisite glass vase.







On February 6, 1972, Rev. M. Angela Norton, abbess of Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, Wrentham, MA, brought six nuns to Arizona to found a new Trappist Cistercian monastery: Our Lady of the Santa Rita Mountains.

## Photos from our Early Years



Our foundresses in 1972: Sr. Beverly, Mother Cecile, Srs. Celestine, novice Vicki, Srs. Clare and Anita; behind them, chaplain Fr. Romain.



The monastery after chapel and dormitory wings were added in 1973.



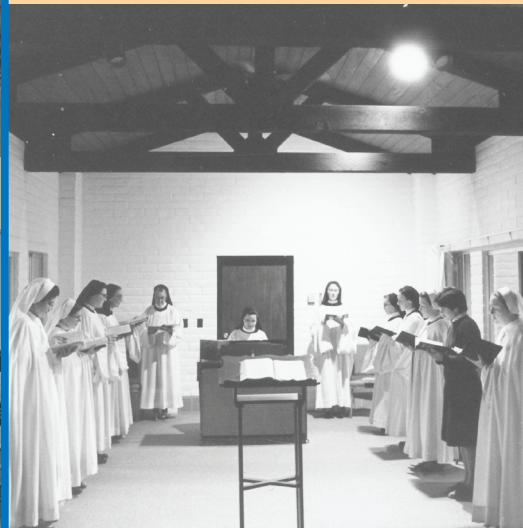
To earn their living, our foundresses tried craftwork. Sr. Clare in the stained-glass studio.



Sr. Beverly crafting ceramics.



By 1980 they had switched to the baking of altar breads. Sr. Vicki in the shipping department.



Young women joined the new monastery, filling up the 1973 chapel.



In 1983 a larger church was constructed, and in 1988 the dormitory was enlarged.

## Our Four Prioresses



Mother Cecile, 1972-1990, led our community through its beginnings with courage and good humor.



Mother Beverly, 1990-2000, ardent lover of both solitude and community, built our retreat house in 1995.



Mother Miriam, 2000-2012, elected from our motherhouse, guided us with gentle wisdom.



Mother Victoria, 2012 to the present, leads us with joy and tender kindness.

## September 14, 1978



On this date the foundation of Our Lady of the Santa Rita Mountains became an autonomous priory. In this photo, courtesy of the Diocese of Tucson archives, our six foundresses are gathered at the altar to change their vow of stability from the motherhouse to Santa Rita. On this same day they elected Mother Cecile, whom Mother Angela had appointed as superior in 1972, to be their first prioress.

## 50th Anniversary Celebration



On April 22 this year, we joyfully celebrated the 50th anniversary of the foundation of our monastery with our Bishop Edward Weisenburger, visiting members of our Order, and about 175 other friends and supporters. A jubilee Mass was celebrated in our chapel, followed by a light lunch. Thank you to all who contributed to the joy of this special occasion!

We look back on our fifty years with gratitude to God for his tender care and abundant blessings, of which you form a part. We look forward with faith and joy to the blessings to come!



# Retreat House Reopening Soon!



After seemingly endless delays, we are happy to announce that our retreat house will reopen in January 2024!

We first opened our retreat house in 1995, nearly thirty years ago, and the beautiful building is showing its age. In 2019 and early 2020 the exterior stucco was repaired and repainted. Then the pandemic hit ...

We expected to reopen in the fall of 2022, but the summer rains caused the roof to leak. A new roof was needed. Our email fundraising campaign was a great success. This enabled us to install two new HVAC units in late 2022, and the new roof this past spring. Thank you, again, to all who contributed!

As of this writing, mid-November 2023, interior repairs are in process. When all the patching and painting is complete, we will begin taking reservations for 2024! If you sign up for our email newsletter (see the link on the bottom of every page on our website), you'll be among the first to know when this happens.

## Vocation News

### Toni's Observership

Last fall Toni attended our 2022 Monastic Experience Weekend. This past winter, she spent six weeks living in the enclosure with us for the observership stage of her discernment process. She is pictured here in choir, standing between Srs. Hildegard and Sharon, praying at the Office of Lauds (morning prayer).



## Monastic Experience Weekend



This October Adrienne, Anna, and Cristina attended our 2023 Monastic Experience Weekend. These weekends give young women thinking about becoming nuns an opportunity to learn about our contemplative monastic way of life.

This year's group participated in our prayer

(all seven hours of the Divine Office, including 4:15 a.m. Vigils!), listened to conferences on monastic history and spirituality, asked questions, worked in the iris garden, toured our altar bread bakery, heard our sisters' vocation stories, and enjoyed free time for personal prayer and reflection. Please pray for Toni, Adrienne, Anna, and Cristina as they continue to open their hearts to God and to seek his will for their lives. Are you (or is someone you know) a single Catholic woman between the ages of 21 and 40 who is thinking about becoming a nun? Start a conversation with our vocation director, Sr. Pam, at [santaritavocations@gmail.com](mailto:santaritavocations@gmail.com).