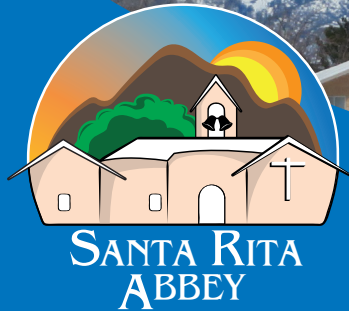


# Christmas Greetings



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## From the Prioress

*Dear Friends,*

With warmest thoughts, prayers, and gratitude, we wish you a very blessed and joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with the enfolding love of God through every day of 2023! As we look back over this past year, our gratitude knows no limits for your generous response to our need for a new roof at the retreat house and all the many other ways you support us by your prayers, love, kindness, and generosity. You remain in our daily prayer and close in our hearts. May the Christ Child bless you abundantly! We hope you will enjoy this year's Christmas Newsletter, sent with our love.

Mother Victoria and all your Santa Rita Sisters

## An Exciting Year for Vocations

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, we had a quiet double celebration of our Sr. Clare Renquin's platinum (70 years) and M. Victoria Murray's golden (50 years) anniversaries of monastic vows.

Sr. Clare and M. Vicki were in the group of six sisters who arrived here in 1972. We thank God for our two beloved foundresses and for the witness of their lives given to God in love, joy, and great trust!



M. Vicki and Sr. Clare continued on page 2





*Sr. Pam and Toni*

## Monastic Experience Week

Toni spent a week with us in October in order to learn about our Order and to get a taste of our way of life. She thoroughly enjoyed her time here, attending the Divine Office, talking with our vocation team members, lending a hand in the altar bread bakery and elsewhere, along with ample time for quiet prayer, reading and reflection. Please keep Toni in your prayers as she continues to discern God's will for her life.

## Taking Christmas Orders Now for New and Existing Customers

To order altar breads for your parish, contact Sr. Rita at [cistercianab@gmail.com](mailto:cistercianab@gmail.com) or place an online order on our website at <https://www.santaritaabbey.org/altar-breads/>

## Vocations Cont.

### Sr. Sharon's First Profession

Our Sr. Sharon Bezner made her first profession of monastic vows on the feast of the Annunciation this past spring. She began her postulancy on March 25, 2019, receiving the novice's habit one year later. After three years in the novitiate, she deepened her "Yes" to God by taking this next step in her vocation journey.



*Sr. Sharon and Sr. Hildegard*

### Sr. Hildegard's Change of Stability

Sr. Hildegard Wanjiku Mberere, already a solemnly professed member of our Order since 2010, changed her stability to our community on June 29, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and thus became a permanent member of our community. Mother Bénédicte, abbess of Sr. Hildegard's former community in France, came for the occasion, adding to our joy. In the photo above Sr. Sharon is on the left and Sr. Hildegard on the right.

# 1972-2022

## OUR GOLDEN JUBILEE OF FOUNDATION

It was on Sunday, February 6, 1972, that Rev. Mother Angela Norton, the abbess of our motherhouse, Mt. St. Mary's Abbey in Wrentham, MA, led our six founding sisters (Mother Cecile, Sisters Clare, Anita, Beverly, Celestine, and Victoria) to a small ranch house on a hilltop in Sonoita, Arizona. What an adventure of faith the next five decades proved to be!

Please join us in giving thanks to God for our fifty (soon to be fifty-one) years of contemplative monastic life in the Diocese of Tucson, a life of prayer and love in the heart of the Church. Stay tuned for a special jubilee newsletter this coming spring.

## 2022

### The Year of Two General Chapters

This year our Order, the Cistercians of the Strict Observance (a.k.a. the Trappists), held its overdue General Chapter in Assisi, Italy, in two parts. The first of these, held February 7 – 17, was for the election of our new abbot general: Dom Bernardus Peeters. (That's Dom Bernardus with us in our community photo on page 1!)

The second part was held September 2-23 to attend to other business of the Order. A highlight of this second meeting was the General Chapter's private audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican on September 16. Our Mother Vicki was thrilled to be able to greet the Holy Father in person, and we are thrilled to have such a wonderful photo of their brief encounter.



*The founding group on Feb 6, 1972*



*M. Vicki and Pope Francis*



# The Retreat House



## No Date Yet for Reopening

Hospitality is such an important part of our Benedictine-Cistercian charism. After being closed for nearly three years, we are eager to share our contemplative environment once again with those seeking a time apart for prayer and reflection. We had hoped to reopen our retreat house this past fall; however, we've been on rollercoaster ride the last few months, first with much-needed interior painting, then the roof leaked like a sieve, and then multiple heating/air conditioning units failed.

The projected cost for a new roof is \$18,990.00, and the projected cost for the new HVAC equipment is \$13,505.00, for a total of \$32,495.00.

Thanks to the generous response to our email fundraising campaign, we are close to our goal! We hope to have the new roof installed early in 2023, followed by the installation of the new HVAC units and then the necessary drywall repairs and painting. As of this writing, we do not have an opening date. If you sign up for our email newsletter, you'll be among the first to know when at last we re-open. Visit our website and click on the sign-up link on the bottom of any page. [www.santaritaabbey.org](http://www.santaritaabbey.org)

## Volunteers



*Jennifer and Suzanne*

In spite of the leaky roof at the retreat house, we re-opened our volunteer helper program this fall. Two wonderful women signed up. Jennifer and Suzanne lived at the retreat house, joined us at the liturgy, and helped us with our work for about five hours each day. Our volunteer program is closed for the winter but will open again in April 2023. Interested? Check out the web page at: <https://santaritaabbey.org/volunteer-helpers/>

We have several long-time friends and volunteers. For many years Clay and Marcia have devoted part of their summer to various helpful projects here. This year they were the valiant painting team down at the retreat house.

Colleen and Dennis live nearby and lend us a hand a few times a week. Colleen helps wherever needed around the monastery, the retreat house, and in the altar bread bakery. Dennis does various handyman jobs for us and has spent many hours on our tractor mowing our lower fields.

It is Anna who takes the text and photos we supply and turns them into the email newsletter and social media posts which many of you have enjoyed this past year. If you aren't on the email newsletter list yet, go to our website and click on the sign-up button.