

The Santa Rita Newsletter

Newsletter of the Trappist Cistercian Nuns of Sonoita, Arizona

Vol. XXII, No. 1

December 2016

Dear Friends,

Another year has gone by, and the winter Holy Days are upon us. Your Sisters at Our Lady of the Santa Rita Mountains are thinking of you with gratitude and asking God's gentle blessings for you and all your loved ones. In a world so full of violence, both far away and all too close to home, it is more important than ever that people of faith live the mercy, lovingkindness and peace of God right here and right now. By the graces of this Advent, Christmas, and Hanukkah Season, may the Lord bless all people and empower us all to do just that! Here at the monastery, we have much to be grateful for as we look back over the year 2016. Let this be a thank you letter to God and to you, our friends, who support our contemplative monastic life in so many ways.

Chaplains: We thank God for the many priests who celebrated the Eucharist with us at various times throughout the year. Fr. Casimir Bernas and Fr. Francis Michael Stiteler (from our monasteries in Utah and Georgia respectively) each spent several weeks as our chaplain; Abbot Joseph Boyle, our Father Immediate from Colorado, came for our Visitation in May; and Fr. John Denburger from New York gave us our annual community retreat in October. We say a warm-hearted thank you to these good monks and to their generous



Our community photo taken in May this year: (Standing, left to right) Srs. Pam, Esther, Rita, Kate, Mother Vicki, Sr. Nettie; (Seated) Srs. Margarita, Cathy, Clare, Jacqui, and Miriam.

communities who shared them with us. Fr. Casimir will be here again as our chaplain from Thanksgiving Day, 2016 to January 9, 2017. From our own Diocese of Tucson we were blessed to celebrate the Feast of the Visitation of Mary at the end of May with our Bishop Gerald Kicanas. Msgr. Tom Cahalane and Fr. Miguel Mariano also said Mass in our church whenever they were able to make the hour's journey from their busy Tucson parishes. Happily we also benefit from the occasional priest on retreat; they generously offer Mass at our altar, too.



Sr. Pam, Anna, Sr. Rita, and Janie at the September Monastic Experience Weekend. Janie was also one of our volunteers.

Vocations: We had three vocational events here this year. In March Fr. Robert Rodriguez, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Safford, AZ, brought four young women interested in religious life for a one-day visit. We held two Monastic Experience Weekends, one in June, the other in September, to give women between the ages of 18 to 40 who are discerning a call to the religious life a chance to learn about monastic life up close. Janell and Lisa attended the first weekend, and Anna and Janie came for the second. Our Sisters Rita and Pam enjoyed giving them a taste of our Cistercian life over the course of the weekend. Two more weekends are being planned for 2017, the dates yet to be announced.

Volunteer Helpers: Another new venture undertaken this year is our Volunteer Helpers Program. Women up to the age of 55 have the opportunity for an extended stay in our retreat house, sharing in the prayer life of the monastery, and assisting the Sisters wherever needed. We had our first three volunteers this summer—Sonia, Donna, and Janie. Each one found her time here a benefit to her life of faith and prayer, and they were a great help to us. Thank you, each of you!

We are also grateful for our local friends who offered their help during the year. Last winter Jon & Jen Rinaldi crafted a beautiful new sign for our front gate (see the photo on the next page). In May Clay and Marcia Landwehr brought us the new custom-designed sorting tables for our altar bread bakery which they had made for us. In July Dennis Cozzetti and his helper patched and re-coated one of our roofs. Kelly Gaylor has helped out in the sorting department at altar breads throughout the year. And last but not least we offer our thanks to the innumerable friends who gave food or money or other gifts to us during the year. God bless you all, each and every one!



Above: Volunteer Janie and Sister Kate inspect freshly cut altar breads on the new sorting tables made by the Landwehrs. Janie and our other volunteer helpers also assisted with cleaning the retreat house and the monastery, cooking for the Sisters, and

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Jubilee Joy

We had the joy of celebrating the Jubilees of our Sisters Margarita and Pamela on April 23—fifty years in religious vows for Sr. Margarita, and twenty-five years for Sr. Pam. Sr. Margarita was a Daughter of Charity for thirty years before the Lord called her to the monastic life here at Santa Rita, and Sr. Pam entered our monastery a year after graduating from college. Two of our priest friends, Msgr. Tom Cahalane and Fr. Gregory Adolf, concelebrated the Jubilee Mass. Sr. Jeanne Bartholomeaux, Vicar for Religious for our diocese, also joined in the festivities. Sr. Margarita's sister, Kathy Hennahane, traveled from Buffalo, NY, and Sr. Pam's parents, Don & Sue Fletcher, and her sister, Diana, drove down from northern Arizona. It was a joyful occasion for all!



***Our beaming Jubilarians with their families.** Above: Sr. Margarita and her sister Kathy. Below: Sr. Pamela with her parents and sister, Sue, Don and Diana.*



Our web presence: Our website, www.santaritaabbey.org, is an ongoing creation. This summer the team at Anchor Wave, our webmaster, reformatted it to make it easier for people to view on a smart phone. We've added some new pages to our website this year: pages for the vocational weekends

and the volunteer helper program mentioned above, and a Reflections on the Gospel page in the Journal section which has a selection of Mother Victoria's Gospel reflections and chapter talks. We've also improved and added to our Cistercian Altar Bread pages—take a look at <http://www.santaritaabbey.org/cistercian-altar-breads-baked-nuns-santa-rita-abbey/>. In May we launched our official Santa Rita Abbey page on Facebook. Find us at www.facebook.com/santaritaabbeynuns/. We post a weekly "Wednesday's Wisdom" quote from a variety of monastic literature sources, photos of our life and environs, dates when we have Mass, and short news items. Do you know any young women of faith who may be discerning a call to the religious life? Please direct them to our website and our Facebook page. We'd love to share our life with them.

**May the year 2017 be full of blessings
for everyone all over the globe.**

"God bless us, every one!"



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