



# HORIZONS

Vol. 53 No. 3

SAINT SCHOLASTICA MONASTERY, Fort Smith, AR

November 2024

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# Message from the Prioress



*Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Prioress*

*We must shine with hope. Stained glass windows that shape light into icons glow like lanterns borne before a procession. Who can bear hope back into the world but us?*

*--Marge Piercy*

How is it that the older one becomes, the faster time ticks by? I remember as a girl, I could not have been older than five or six, asking my mother if I could do something that needed her attention and hopefully a quick answer, and I received the famous response from her: "Okay, honey, in a minute." From here, I learned there is a huge difference between what sixty seconds meant to a child and what it meant to an adult. I can remember thinking, this is going to take forever. And for me, that kind of waiting seemed an eternity and seriously less for my mom, who was always in demand in her own right.

As a child, I did not understand the depth of Advent. Commercialism declared the importance of hurrying up and rushing so that Christmas could be more special than the year before. I did not grasp the gift of the liturgical season that was then and continues to be now. Advent was about the special calendar with perforated window-like doors that held an advent message and chocolate for the one who was privileged to open it for the day. We would open the calendar at night before bed, hoping we would be the ones to do the honors.

We even thought about asking if we could open some of the calendar days early because we did not want to wait in hope.

The season of hope is upon us, but if we think about it, hope is not a season that ever leaves us even though we may on occasion leave it.

How is our hope a stained-glass window of light and lantern-lit for the world today?

We are given one brief span of time, an opportunity to help the world be better than when we first encountered it. As Benedictines, our lanterns are lit with the promises we make as we seek God together; we carry the lantern of Obedience, the lantern of Stability, and the lantern of Fidelity to the Monastic Way of Life. Other expressions of these lanterns may include simplicity, sacred solitude or silence, stewardship, humility, community, hospitality, care for the elderly and the young, or living lanterns lit by our prayer and lectio divina. Lanterns need to be ablaze with the grace of the Gospel that brings greater light to all that is dim in us, keeping awake to all unkind distraction, and division that the world tends. How might our own lanterns need attending to so that we are not dim in the blindness of inattentiveness to the world around us?

In the time we have, are we willing to ignite our lantern to meet the needs of another? As we look to the waiting time that Advent calls us to, are we willing to learn from the minutes we miss so that we become the light of hope in the stained-glass windows of a world that needs it?

Take time to embrace the minutes of your life and manage them well. Be the lantern needed to light the stained-glass window of another today, remembering that time does fly by and will take us to the forever we are meant to know.

*--Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska, OSB*  
Prioress

# Message from the Office of Mission Advancement

I once read an anecdote (true or not, I don't know) about a volunteer greeter at a Walmart store. The volunteer was a wonderful worker but was often late for his shift. His supervisor said to him, "I know you were in the military for many years. What did people say to you when you were late?" The volunteer answered, "They usually just said, 'Good morning, General. Can I get you a cup of coffee?'" The story reminds me of how often we learn things we never knew when we read an obituary or hear people share their memories of someone who has died. After reading the obituary of one of our Oblates, we learned that he had been a conscientious objector and lived under an alias for several years. Another of our Oblates was one of the first two women pharmacists in Arkansas. One of our Sisters recently commented after reading her brother-in-law's obituary, "I never knew he did all that." We never know what is hidden beneath what we see on the surface. When visiting our elders, it is always interesting to discover their unique life accomplishments.



*Sister Elise Forst*

Not knowing what is hidden from our senses is added reason to show honor and respect to each person we encounter. We never know what has gone into forming the person who is before us.

As I record and acknowledge gifts to the monastery, I'm often aware that the depth of my feeling of gratitude for each gift does not depend on the size of the gift. Sometimes I know enough about the donor to realize the gift is given out of meager resources. But most of the time I do not know how much sacrifice has gone into the gift.

We, as a community, are grateful to each of you for any help you give us, whether it's giving of your precious time or of your hard-earned resources. We honor and respect each of you for all we know about you and for all that is unknown to us.

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,  
since as one body you were called to peace.  
And be thankful.  
(Colossians 3:15)*

*—Sister Elise Forst, OSB*

# In Loving Memory

## Sister Marcella Schmalz, OSB

July 5, 1920 - July 29, 2024

Sister Marcella Schmalz, age 104, a member of St. Scholastica Monastery, died July 29, 2024, at Chapel Ridge Health & Rehab in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Sister Marcella was born July 5, 1920, in Carbon City, Arkansas, to Ed and Helen Agnes Blunk Schmalz. She was named Marcella Carolina. During her teen years, she moved to California where two of her sisters lived and worked. While there, she became a beautician, but the call to religious life she had felt since she was eight years old never left. Sister Marcella heeded the call and entered St. Scholastica as a candidate on August 11, 1943. She was given the name Mary Benoit and made her first profession June 24, 1946. She made her final profession on June 24, 1949. During her years of mission work, her work centered mostly around cooking.

She lived out her calling as a Benedictine in different areas of Arkansas and Missouri, including Lake Village, Atkins, St. Joseph's Orphanage, the Bishop's residence in Little Rock, the hospital in Van Buren in Arkansas and St. Joseph's Hospital in Boonville, Missouri. In 1971, she moved to Canyon, Texas, where she became a founding member of St. Scholastica's daughter house, St. Benedict's Monastery. Sister Marcella contributed forty-six years to the work of the Benedictines in Texas. In Canyon, she served as vocation and oblate director, subprioress, cook-dietician, organist, and gardener. At St. Anthony's Hospital in Amarillo, she served in pastoral care. After the closure of St. Benedict's Monastery in 2017, Sister Marcella returned to St. Scholastica.

Sister Marcella's deep monastic spirituality, hospitable spirit, and peaceful presence endeared her to her community members and the people of Canyon. She was a wonderful cook and bread maker and hardworking gardener. A fall in the garden caused serious damage to her right wrist and hand. Despite surgeries and much therapy, she was never able to regain use of her right hand. She worked hard to learn to use her left hand and continued her usual duties. The only change was that she needed more help.



*Sister Marcella Schmalz, OSB*

Her 100th birthday was in the Covid year of 2020, so her party was a private community event. On July 5 of this year, for her 104th birthday, 23 days before her death, the community and staff at Chapel Ridge had a big party with the Sisters, friends, and residents at Chapel Ridge. She greatly enjoyed celebrating with everyone.

She was preceded in death by her parents and siblings: Alice Schrivner and husband, Dave; Hilda Nehus and husband, Gary; Irene Upchurch and husband, Carl; Roy Schmalz and wife, Mary; Estella Etkorn and husband, Albert. She is survived by her beloved nieces and nephews, her many friends in Canyon and Amarillo, Texas, and the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica.

A Vesper Service was held at 7:30 p.m. on September 19 and a Funeral Mass at 10:30 a.m. on September 20 with Father Jerome Kodell, OSB, presiding. All services took place at St. Scholastica Monastery. Interment of her remains in St. Scholastica's new columbarium will be at a later date. Memorials may be made to St. Scholastica Monastery's Continuing Care Fund.



## Sister Adrian Wewers

November 25, 1928 - August 16, 2024

Sister Adrian Wewers, age 95, a member of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas, died August 16, 2024, at Ashton Place Manor in Barling, Arkansas. Sister Adrian was born November 25, 1928, in Morrison Bluff, Arkansas, and named Hedwig Ann. She entered the monastery in 1945, joining her aunt, Sister Benita Wewers. She became a novice on June 24, 1946, when she was given the name Sister Adrian. She made temporary profession in 1948 and final profession in 1952.

Sister Adrian's first desire was to be a nurse but was told there was a greater need for teachers. She received her degree in elementary education from St. Mary College in Leavenworth, Kansas. Sister Adrian taught primary grades in Dardanelle, Barling, Russellville, Paris, and St. Joseph's Home in North Little Rock in Arkansas, in Pilot Grove, Missouri, and in Nazareth, Texas for 36 years. She taught in Nazareth for 21 years. Sister Adrian said the most challenging and joyful part of teaching was preparing her students for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. Wherever she taught, she loved her students, and her students loved her.

After retiring from teaching, Sister Adrian lived at the monastery where she drove Sisters to their appointments and helped wherever needed. Sister Adrian was an avid fan of the Dallas Cowboys and Arkansas Razorbacks and enjoyed watching movies with the community. She faithfully kept in contact with her family and friends and loved spending time with her family. In her later years, she spent much time praying and reading the Bible, developing a close personal relationship with Jesus.

Sister Adrian was preceded in death by her parents, Willie and Stephanie Seiter Wewers; her birth mother, Anna Lensing Wewers, who died a few days after her birth; her sisters, Benita Siebenmorgen and husband, Tony; and Sister Mary Ruth Wewers; her brothers, Joe Wewers and Harold Wewers; and her brothers-in-law, Herbert Stengel, Bill Edelhuber, Ray Ahlert, and Pat Bentley. She is survived by her sisters, Mary Edelhuber, Wilma Ahlert, Sarah Wewers, Patricia Reid and husband John, and Debbie Bentley; her beloved nieces and nephews; her Benedictine Sisters; and many former students.



*Sister Adrian Wewers, OSB*

A Vesper Service was held on August 30, 2024, and a Funeral Mass at was held on August 31, 2024, with Father Joseph Chan as presider. She was buried in St. Scholastica Monastery Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to St. Scholastica Monastery's Continuing Care Fund, 1315 S. Albert Pike Ave., Fort Smith, AR 72903-2411.



**Oblate Katherine Josephine Applegate**  
**January 27, 1956 - November 25, 2023**

Katherine Applegate, 67, passed away November 25, 2023. She was born to Henry and Pauline Schmuck Applegate on January 27, 1956, in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

She attended Christ the King School and Southside High School, and graduated from Westark Community College as a registered nurse. She also attended Texas Women's College, and graduated with a degree in Medical Records. She worked at Waldron Hospital, Mercy Fort Smith, and Baptist Fort Smith.

Katherine made her oblation as a Benedictine Oblate on October 18, 1992 at the monastery in Fort Smith. She was a Master Gardener and a member of Belle Point Quilters Guild. She also enjoyed attending Star Trek Conventions. She was an animal lover and cherished her pets, especially her black Labradors.

She was preceded in death by her parents who were also Oblates. She is survived by many cousins and friends.

A graveside service was held on December 7, 2023, at Oak Cemetery in Fort Smith.





# Around the Monastery

## St. Leo's Parish Tour

Twelve members of St. Leo's Parish in Hartford, Arkansas came to visit and tour St. Scholastica Monastery the evening of September 24, 2024. Tours of the monastery are open to the public and can be scheduled by calling or emailing.



## Annual Alumnae Reunion

September 21-22, 2024, the St. Scholastica Academy Alumnae Association held its annual reunion in Fort Smith. Alumnae and Sisters met and had lunch at Immaculate Conception Saturday morning and dined together at Taliano's on Saturday evening. A celebratory Mass took place at the monastery the following day with Father Jerome Kodell, OSB, presiding. The Mass concluded with the singing of the St. Scholastica Academy anthem, followed by a brunch. The Sisters and the alumnae enjoyed visiting and reminiscing.



*Father Jerome Kodell, OSB, presided at the Alumnae Mass.*



*Alumnae Mary Kennedy Burns '64 and Emily Geels Soller '64 participated as gift bearers in the Alumnae Mass.*



*Edna Dean Howard '65 visiting with Sister Rosalie Ruesewald at the brunch.*

## St. Scholastica Monastery Columbarium

During the summer, work was begun on preparing a site at the cemetery for the installation of the new columbarium. The two sections of the St. Scholastica Columbarium were set on their foundations on October 8, 2024. After some landscaping of the area is done, the columbarium will be blessed and the cremains of Sisters who have been cremated since 2000 will be interred. One section of the columbarium is for the Sisters and one is for the public.



## Autumn Oblate Retreat

Twelve Oblates of St. Scholastica enjoyed a retreat at the monastery October 25-27, 2024. The retreat began with evening prayer and dinner on Friday evening. Saturday, retreatants walked the grounds, enjoying the peace of the monastery and the weather -- listening for the voice of God. Sister Laura Cathcart, Oblate Director, said, "The Oblates participated in the liturgical prayers with the Sisters and held lively reflective conversations with the Sisters after table reading in the refectory at the Saturday evening meal. The Oblates took advantage of all opportunities for private quiet reflection throughout the weekend through prayer in chapel before the Blessed Sacrament, praying the labyrinth, and walking the grounds or sitting in the gazebos, swings, or picnic tables as the weather was perfect for meditating out doors." The retreatants joined the Sisters for Sunday Mass. Sister Laura said, "The Oblates expressed gratitude for having special time with the Sisters at meals and prayers. And how wonderful it was to get to know each other better. They look forward to doing it again."



*Oblates Katie Shields (left) and Sandra McKee (right) bring the gifts to Father Joseph during Mass.*

To find out more about the St. Scholastica Oblates, visit our website at [www.stscho.org](http://www.stscho.org), or email [oblates@stscho.org](mailto:oblates@stscho.org).



*The Oblates and the Sisters during the Autumn Oblate Retreat Weekend.*



## Vocation Corner

By Sr. Siena Fisk, OSB

September 22-25, 2024, Jaqueline Perez of Fort Smith came for a discernment visit. While with us, she participated in our monastery activities including having brunch with the St. Scholastica Alumnae during their annual reunion weekend this year.

Please remember Jaqueline as well as our other vocation discerners in your prayers.



*Jaqueline Perez outside the chapel  
after the Alumnae Mass.*

Don't miss the annual Saint Scholastica Bake Sale!



Saturday, December 14, 2024  
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Our baking Benedictines will have breads, jams, jellies, cookies, pies, cakes, and other items!



## Oblate Conference

By Katie Shields

This summer I had the privilege of joining Sister Laura Cathcart at the North American Association of Benedictine Oblates (NAABOD) conference in Schuyler, Nebraska. The theme was “Carrying Wisdom Across the Threshold”. Three amazing speakers covered a wide array of topics such as nurturing and growing our Oblate programs, the invaluable resource of our wisdom figures, and even how to write your own lament psalm.

It was an insightful and energizing experience to connect with Oblates from across the U.S. and Canada, especially others in our region from Oklahoma and Texas. Clearly present throughout the conference was the traditional Benedictine hospitality. It was comforting to experience the familiar generosity and kindness of our St. Scholastica Oblate community while so far from home.

I am genuinely grateful for this opportunity and encourage Oblates to consider attending the next biennial conference in 2026.



*Katie Shields made her oblation in 2023.*

## Fiesta of Solidarity 2024

The annual fundraiser for the Girls' Education Matters (G.E.M.) scholarship program was held at Christ the King on September 21, 2024. Sister Rosalie Ruesewald opened the evening with a few remarks before Father Brian prayed over the food and the evening's festivities. The Fiesta of Solidarity was packed with volunteers, guests, and entertainers for a fun-filled evening. Guests perused the silent auction items, enjoyed a delicious meal, watched ethnic dancers perform, and listened to the Subiaco Jazz Band. Special thanks to: Christ the King, La Huerta, Las Americas, Subiaco Jazz Band, Ana Minden and Cecilia Parga, the Tello family, and to countless others who contributed so generously.





## Q & A with Oblate Candy Foster

*Are you native to Fort Smith?*

I am not a native to Fort Smith, but have lived here for over 50 years. I grew up on a farm near Glenwood, Iowa. While in college at the University of Missouri, I met someone from Fort Smith; we married and moved to Fort Smith. It's definitely home.

*What is your background?*

As I mentioned, I grew up on a farm in Iowa. My grandfather immigrated to the U.S. from Germany. At that time, farm land was being offered to new settlers. I think there's nothing better than growing up on the farm. We were surrounded by relatives, had lots of freedom to roam, and had fresh produce and lots of pets.

When I was 9 years old, I became ill. I ran a fever and was very lethargic. I remember not having the energy to ride my bike. At first, I was diagnosed with Rheumatic Fever. I later went to Mayo Clinic and was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. By the time I was 10 years old, I was confined to a wheelchair. For many years, I was in and out of hospitals and would spend winters at Levi Hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas. They specialized in treating patients with arthritis and had several children from all over the U. S. In 1964, I attended high school in Glenwood. It was a two story, old building. Luckily, the athletic boys didn't mind getting out of class early to lift me up and down the steps. Upon graduating, I attended the University of Missouri. It was one of the few accessible colleges at that time. After college, we returned to my husband's hometown of Fort Smith.

*How did you become an Oblate of St. Scholastica?*

God does work in mysterious ways! I met Kathy Jarvis while we were getting our vehicles serviced at the Honda dealership. Thanks to Kathy, I began to participate in activities at the monastery and the Oblate program. I would volunteer to visit the Sisters in the infirmary. It was such a wonderful experience getting to know them and to listen to their stories of family and their vocation. I was so grateful for those relationships.

*How does your life as an Oblate differ from before you made the commitment?*

Being an Oblate has enhanced my life in so many ways. I was raised in the Methodist Church, but I've always been drawn to the Catholic faith. My neighbor and friend had been a Benedictine nun. When she found out I was interested in becoming Catholic, she immediately arranged for me to attend RCIA classes. As an Oblate, I have gained so much knowledge about the faith and know now what a blessing it is to be a Catholic. It has enhanced the strength of my faith and how it affects my daily life. It has offered opportunities to meet people and be with the Sisters.

*Do you have anything you'd like to add?*

I don't think I would have survived the many obstacles in my life had it not been for my relationship with God. As I've gotten older and have had the chance to participate in Oblate meetings, my faith has become more important than ever to make it through this tough world. I am honestly thankful for each day and am comforted knowing God is by my side.



Oblate Candy Foster (left) works with volunteers to prepare for the Fiesta of Solidarity, an annual fundraiser for the Girls' Education Matters program.

## Special Task Force Moves Forward

Sisters, staff, and members of the local Catholic community began meeting this year to discuss the future of the open area where the former monastery stood. The Sisters expressed their desire for a “green footprint”, and members of the committee are brainstorming ideas that would extend the green space of the monastery,



honor the history and legacy of the Sisters in Arkansas, and create a sacred space.

The grottoes will be connected to this new space, and the Sisters have submitted suggestions for the types of trees they would like to see planted on the grounds. New landscaping will take place to add to the beauty and peace of the area, and the bells

that were once part of the tower of the old building will be incorporated as well. Ideas and research continue to be developed as the group works together to find a solution that furthers the mission of the Sisters.



*Our mission: Seeking God in our life together and enlivened by daily prayer, we, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas, respond to the needs of the people of God in a spirit of hospitality, simplicity, and reverence for one another and all creation.*

*Charism Statement (excerpt): We, the Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, have responded to a call to seek God by a total gift of self in a religious community of celibate women, who make profession to live the Gospel according to the Rule of Benedict, the norms of the Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude, and the norms of the Monastery. By professing stability and fidelity to the monastic way of life, we promise to be faithful to our Benedictine tradition of prayer, work, and leisure, and to be a Christian community where persons are revered in their uniqueness and diversity.*



# Hesychia House of Prayer Embraces the Message of Winter

Words and photos by Sister Lisa Atkins, RSM, Director



*Hesychia cow at night.*

in winter attire, sipping on hot coffee, wide awake in AWE, gazing at the stars and comets racing across the night sky. In the stillness, darkness, solitude, and emptiness of the night they meet our Christ-Wonder and are filled with the presence of The Presence.

At Hesychia the Sisters and the retreatants look forward to many God-moments during Advent with daylight growing shorter, and darkness lingering longer, and warm weather turning colder. In the changing of the seasons, perhaps God is inviting us to claim a greater Christ-balance in our lives as we encounter the light, chaos, darkness, joy and coldness of life within and around us. It is precisely during this holy time of Advent that you may find retreatants in the early hours of the morning, sitting on their hermitage decks, bundled up



*Retreatant on the Sacro Speco Hermitage porch.*



*Retreatant on St. Mark's Hermitage porch*

As the seasons come and go, we invite you to Hesychia to experience the silence, beauty, and blessings of God. To learn more about us and to schedule a retreat, please visit our Hesychia website at [www.seektheholly.org](http://www.seektheholly.org).

Even on a cold winter day it is not uncommon to find our retreatants experiencing the Spirit of God as they sit on their hermitage porches soaking in the warm rays of the bright winter sun. In the silence and solitude God awakens them to a deeper listening to God's own Spirit through the cows mooing and the calves sucking, and the birds singing. Each encounter with Christ changes us forever.



*St. Hildegard's Hermitage*

Hesychia House of Prayer  
New Blaine, AR 72851  
@Hesychiahouseofprayer









# *The Grounds of St. Scholastica*

No matter the season, the beauty of the grounds of St. Scholastica connect the Creator to the creation: the iris in spring; the lilies in summer; the leaves in fall; the quiet of winter. In this way, the grounds are an extension of the mission of the Benedictine Sisters who reside in the monastery. The property that is now St. Scholastica was once farmland – the “old Barnes place”. Since the purchase of the land in the early 1920s and the Sisters’ relocation to Fort Smith, cows have grazed the land, baseball games have been played in the grass, vegetable gardens have been grown, and flower gardens have been nurtured.

The grottoes, a place that is special to the hearts of many, have been the sites of prayer and contemplation, outdoor Masses, and rosaries as well as backdrops for little girls in white dresses as they posed for First Communion photos and other special occasions.

The gazebo, the “Come Apart and Rest a While”, was and is a place to pray, write, sip a drink, or have a much-needed chat with friend or family. And the labyrinth, just down the slope from the gazebo, encourages those who enter to draw closer to God as they circle ever closer to the center of the path.

One might see birds, squirrels, rabbits, the monastery cats (or, possibly, a fox!). Most likely, one would see a goose or two (or twenty) on a quiet walk. The birdhouses on the trees might offer the sounds of new life, depending on the season.

These acres of land sit atop one of the highest points in the Fort Smith area. They have been a part of the prayers, toils, and joys of the Sisters as they went about their daily lives in the service of God. The special Task Force of Sisters and others connected to the monastery look to add more beauty and peace to the grounds as they discuss opportunities to grow more trees and add more areas of contemplation where the former monastery stood. New life will flourish and new prayers will be offered. The Sisters and those who visit will continue to walk the grounds in the coming years, its beauty an inhale and their peace the exhale.



*Last February, fog enveloped the grounds. It brought a stillness and an atmosphere of thought-provoking etherealness to the Lenten season.*



*Spring is heralded by daffodils on the grounds, but as the season progresses, the delicate forms of many colors of iris grace the landscape.*

# News Briefs

August 11-17, 2024: Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska attended the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Assembly in Orlando, Florida.

August 22-27, 2024: Sisters Cecelia Brickell and Regina Schroeder virtually participated in the Benedictine Subprioresses and House Coordinators' conference in Norfolk, Nebraska.

September 29-October 5, 2024: Sister Kimberly Rose Prohaska and Ravi Thiagaragan attended the Resource Center for Religious Institutes conference in Orlando, Florida.

October 20-23, 2024: Sister Kimberly attended the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Region 13 Meeting in Leavenworth, Kansas.

October 30-November 5, 2024: Sister Siena attended the National Religious Vocation Conference Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



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Vol. 53 No. 3

Horizons

November 2024

Horizons is published three times a year by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery, 1315 S. Albert Pike, Fort Smith, AR 72903-2411  
Phone: 479-783-4147. E-mail: Monastery@stscho.org Website: www.stscho.org FAX: 479-782-4352.

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Photography credits: Carly Flanagan, Sister Kimberly Prohaska, Karen Schwartz, Sister Lisa Atkins, RSM, and St. Scholastica Archives