

## From Sister Anita

Dear Oblates,

The season of Advent is upon us. This season provides a good opportunity for us to consider the Wisdom of God for which we long. The first O antiphon, sung at Evening Prayer on December 17, states this as we sing: “O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!”



We all long for wisdom in life. We seek to speak and act wisely, to know the best ways to respond to various situations in life. We long to gain knowledge, especially knowledge of God. Who is this God who calls us, who has come to dwell among us, and who calls us to become more and more God-like as we progress in our lives?

I love the images provided in the Book of Wisdom describing the nature of wisdom. In Chapter 7 of that book we read: “There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolled, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.” That long sentence of descriptive words is a good sentence to use for lectio and continued reflection.

God, in Wisdom, calls us to pay attention, to listen! St. Benedict echoes this theme in his rule. As we enter these busy weeks of the year, preparing for the holiday season of Christmas and the New Year, let us strive to follow St. Benedict’s call to listen closely with the ear of our heart so that we may learn and discover the Wisdom of God propelling us forward in our spiritual lives. May we each — gradually — obtain more of those qualities listed above.

Have a blessed and fruitful Advent season!

*A Anita Louise Lowe, OSB*

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB, Prioress

## Upcoming Monthly Oblate Meetings

All meetings begin at 12:30 p.m. with Zoom sign-on starting at 12:15 p.m. For a Zoom link, please email [oblates@thedome.org](mailto:oblates@thedome.org) at least three (3) days in advance. All times are **12:30 – 3:30 p.m. EST** in St. Gertrude Hall, with the exception of Advent and Lenten Studies.

Monthly Rosary is held every second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. EST (6:30 p.m. CST).

**January 18, 2026**

**February 22, 2026**

**March 16, 2026**

**April 19, 2026**

**May 17, 2026**

**June 5-7, 2026:** Retreat in New Harmony, Indiana

**August 9, 2026**

**September 13, 2026**

**October 11, 2026**

**January 17, 2027:** Installation of New Leadership Team

*Any date changes will be conveyed via Oblate Updates, on the website and on our Facebook page.*

*All presentations, meeting dates and articles are posted at [thedome.org/oblates](http://thedome.org/oblates).*



# Words of Wisdom: Living the Way of St. Benedict

Sister Becky Mathauer, Oblate-Sister Liaison

After almost twenty-five years of vowed life, I find that The Rule of St. Benedict continues to surprise me. What once felt like a structure of obedience has become a rhythm of freedom — a way of living that makes space for God in all things. The vows I professed years ago — stability, conversion of life, and obedience — have not confined me; they have rooted, stretched, and shaped me.

**Stability** has taught me to stay — not only in place, but in relationships. Staying when community life is hard, when prayer feels dry, or when dreams shift — this is where grace matures. Stability calls me to keep showing up, trusting that God is present in the ordinary, even the uncomfortable.

**Fidelity to this Monastery/  
Conversion of Life** reminds me that monastic living is never finished. Each day is an invitation to begin again, to grow more compassionate, to be more awake to the needs around me. Conversion is not about perfection; it's about openness. It's learning to let go of what no longer gives life and to make room for the Spirit's quiet renewal.

**Obedience** has evolved from mere compliance to deep listening — listening to God, to my prioress, my sisters, to my own heart, and to the cry of the world. True obedience is not blind; it is rooted in love and mutual trust. It is the humility to say, "Teach me, Lord, your way."

Living the Benedictine way means learning to see the sacred in the simple — in the morning psalms, in shared meals, in laughter and tears, in the rhythm of work and prayer. It means believing that community, with all its challenges and beauty, is the place where God's grace takes flesh.

After almost twenty-five years, I know this: the Benedictine life is less about achievement and more about becoming — becoming attentive, peaceful, generous, and rooted in Christ. It is the long, patient work of love. It is about living life as it unfolds and watching what was once a dream become a beautiful, yet humble reality.

To you, our beloved Oblates, I offer this encouragement:

*Stay faithful to the daily rhythm.  
Be gentle with yourself and others.  
Listen deeply.  
And trust that the God who called you to this way of life will continue to guide your steps — one psalm, one task, one act of love at a time.*



**“...the Benedictine life is less about achievement and more about becoming — becoming attentive, peaceful, generous, and rooted in Christ.”**

# Wisdom the Benedictine Way

Stephanie Smith, Oblate Director

As usual, I am the last one to submit her thoughts and I'm finishing this the day it is due to Lynn for the newsletter. I tell you this because I think it is going to be important to what follows. Maybe not. Before I began writing, I read the beautifully profound writings of Lynn and Shirley and purposely, did not read Sr. Becky's. Something told me to wait before reading it, so I am going to read it just before I finish writing and let you know if my theory holds.

My theory is that God is going to provide once again, just as He always does. My favorite part of The Rule is the Prologue. The word "listen" reverberates through my mind many times a day. Sometimes I have to prompt myself and sometimes it prompts me. Before my introduction to the Benedictine way, I was always very hard on myself and did my best to present a strong and tough persona to the world. My brother once commented to me, "I know you have a good heart" and I remember wondering where he was coming from because I thought I had done my best to hide any softness — except around dogs and small children.

Everything changed for me in 2012, when I decided to go back into therapy which was practically an occupational requirement. Unbeknownst to me, my new therapist was a Benedictine woman who had been in the community of St. Scholastica in Chicago for 32 years. Even though she had left monastic life, she still lived The Rule. She gently guided me through a crisis. I won't call it a crisis of faith, necessarily, as it wasn't faith in God or even in the Catholic Church. It was a crisis born from a disagreement with the hierarchy of the Church — its teaching about the role of women and the sex abuse scandal involving children.

Introducing me to the writings of Sr. Joan Chittister opened my eyes to the presence of strong people (women, especially) in the Church who would speak out loudly about what was wrong but never point fingers at God or accuse Him of being responsible or indifferent to suffering. And that led me to the word "listen" and to listen with ear of the heart.



Early in this journey, I shared with another Benedictine sister that I just couldn't continue to swallow some of what I was hearing and had heard all my life from Church doctrinal teaching. She calmly (or "Benedictinely") told me to "Spit it out." I had never had anyone, let alone a vowed religious person, tell me such a thing about the Church. And I think this is when I first realized how much wisdom is found in The Rule. All these Benedictines seemed to be saying that it was okay to think for oneself and to disagree. The key word there is to think.

My counselor, Dee, pulled me up short one day. I was bemoaning the stress and frustration I lived with daily. I was establishing a training center for law enforcement teams to investigate child abuse and knew in my heart; I would never see the end of such abuse in my lifetime. Dee questioned why I continued to do this work which was so draining. I told her it was because I knew I was good at it and that many who could be as good or better wouldn't take it on because of the stress. Essentially, someone had to do it. In her very calm voice, she asked, "So, what I hear is that you think God wants you to do something that is not life-giving for you because you have that ability?" Yes, put that way it was incredibly self-centered and foolish. I was substituting what I believed (or wanted to believe) about what God wanted for actually listening to what God wanted. Following where God would lead has been far better for me and everyone around me.

These women led me to the Monastery Immaculate Conception, and life has never been the same — nor has it ever been better. While I'm still working on it, I have become much better at listening — whether in silence, in meetings, or during gatherings with friends. In trying to hear what is actually being said and to try to empathize with the feelings those words are conveying, especially when I disagree with what I'm hearing.

This is a time of great division and dissatisfaction in our beautiful, amazing country. The Rule tells us to listen because wisdom is found in understanding others.

It's tough sometimes when we profoundly disagree or dislike someone to remember God loves us both equally — and we should as well. The Rule doesn't tell us to be perfect but to be our best, to do our best, and to keep trying through our listening ears and our hearts. That is wisdom and that is why I love this way of living.

At the start, I said that I would read Sr. Becky's reflection before concluding. Please excuse me for a minute while I do so...well, my theory holds. The theory is that God gives us the words and fits all the puzzle pieces together. If you recall our April meeting, Father's homily included a last-minute addition that came to him the night before. It dovetailed beautifully with the discussion I was planning for our meeting. That has happened to me many times in the past and here it was again. Some call it serendipity, but I call it The Spirit. Sr. Becky, beautifully and succinctly, said what I just spent a lot of digital ink saying as well. So, if you read her thoughts first, sorry, because you're likely thinking this was a waste of time. And if you read this first, sorry, you could have saved a lot of time reading hers! I love each of you and this oblate community and serving as Oblate Director has been the best time ever. You have made it so.

Continue to read and follow The Rule. Hear others but most of all, hear God.

## Finding Wisdom

Shirley France, Formation Coordinator

Wisdom. Where does it come from? How do we know it when we see, hear, or experience it? What do we do with it once we have found it? These are the questions I pondered when Lynn asked me to write this article.

When our son Stephan was about four years old, he did something that we had asked him not to do. I don't even remember what he did, but I remember this day over forty years later. Stephan was never one to lie about what he had done so when I sat him down to talk to him about it, he admitted it right away. I asked him to go to his room and think about what he had done and to ask God to forgive him. He promptly went to his bedroom and closed the door. I was surprised that this small ball of energy stayed quietly in that room for so long, so I knocked and opened the door to check on him. I asked him if he thought about what he had done.

He said that he had. Then I inquired whether he asked God to forgive him. Stephan said that he had, and God said something back to him. I'm thinking this will really be interesting. Stephan said God spoke to him, saying, "I forgive you. Stephan, you will do more bad things, and I will forgive you then, too." When I thought about where wisdom came from, this day came to my mind first.

My mentor, Sr. Kathy Huber, told me once that wisdom can come from anywhere, from anyone and at any time. I gave more thought to who are the "wisdom figures" God has put in my path over the years. There have been so many. Here are a few of them.

On our wedding day in 1970, when I was nineteen years old and afraid, my mother gave me some advice right before I walked into the church.

"Timing is everything. You don't need to tell everything you know." This seemed odd at the time, but I realized after decades into my own marriage what wisdom my mother had from her six decades of marriage. She was wise alright!

My brother John, a calculus and math analysis teacher for over forty years, told me when I became a corporate trainer that people will never remember everything I say but they will always remember how I made them feel. Great wisdom that has served me well.

In high school, our government and political analysis teacher told us on the first day of class, "When you are quiet, people will assume you are smart and reflective about what you heard. Once you open your mouth to speak, people will know whether you





are smart or not. Think about what you are going to say before you say it.” This wisdom was seared into my brain. Obviously, I didn’t talk much in that class.

When our thirteen year old daughter, Trista, knew she was not going to live, in an effort to avoid promoting further anxiety, I did my crying in the shower where she couldn’t hear me. She was blind by this time, and she couldn’t see my swollen face or red eyes. One day she said to me, “Mom, do you ever cry? If you do, could we please cry together from now on?” Trista opened the door for us to share our grief. What wisdom.

My dad had a corporate job with Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. He wore a suit, tie and wingtip shoes to work every day. He arrived home each day promptly at 5:30 p.m. in time for dinner. As soon as he got out of the car, he took off his socks and shoes to walk around in the grass before going through the front door. I watched him do this over and over so one day I asked him why. Dad said, “My work is not who I am. It’s my work that provides for our family. When I walk around bare footed in the grass, it brings me back to what is real, what is important, before I go into the house with all of you.” Wisdom.

Planning for our move to Boise to live near our son has created a little anxiety about what house will we buy once out there.

My dear sister in Christ, Maggie, said there is no reason to worry about that. Your house is already determined, and your house will pick you. Relief and wisdom.

I read an article not long ago about a young black woman who interviewed her elderly great-great grandmother asking if she had any words of wisdom. She was about to turn 100

years old and was a descendant of slaves. Still totally lucid, she laughed and said there are two things that kept her happy all these years. “Don’t put labels on circumstances or people, not good or bad. We just don’t know. And do not put limits

on yourself, others or God.” Such wisdom!

I think about the sisters who have shared wisdom with me over the years. A few days before Sr. Maria Tasto died, she invited me to her room. Sr. Maria had been my mentor to teach contemplative prayer and Lectio Divina. We used to talk on the phone as I shared the lessons I had prepared for a 12-week class at our church then at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. As she got comfortable in her chair with a purple hand-made cover over her lap, she took off her oxygen and told me to ask her anything. I asked for words of wisdom. “Say yes as much as you can. Pray about it. Don’t let not knowing how to do it ever deter you from your ‘yes.’ If God has called you to do something, He will send the resources you need to learn and do it.” Wisdom.

**“The wisdom  
of The Rule  
teaches us  
to listen, pay  
attention, and  
to hear  
God’s word.”**

Sr. Sylvia taught me the acronym F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely on God). She even sent me cards of encouragement with frog stickers on them. Such wisdom!

I once asked Sr. Kathy Huber to pray for me to have wisdom when I was about to have a difficult conversation with a woman who had repeatedly been unkind to me and others when we volunteered together. Sr. Kathy told me I already had wisdom and to remember that there will be three persons at that conversation, me, the woman and God. Such wisdom I never forgot.

As Sr. Kathy said, I also believe wisdom can come from anyone, anywhere and at any time. We each have been given the gift of discernment to recognize it. It rings true in our souls. We know it because God gives us grace to identify it. It’s all grace!

The Prologue in The Rule clearly gives us the roadmap to find wisdom, why we seek it and what to do with it. The wisdom of The Rule teaches us to listen, pay attention, and to hear God’s word. St. Benedict instructs us to renounce our own will and take up obedience. We are to seek humility and love to heal ourselves and others. The Rule is a “school for the Lord’s service,” a spiritual training for growth. When we lack wisdom, we are called to begin again in God’s grace, even when it gets difficult.

Wisdom for over 1500 years! We are so blessed! Thank you, St. Benedict. Pray for us!

# The Meaning & Practice of Wisdom the Benedictine Way

Lynn Belli, Oblate  
Communication  
Coordinator



## Defining Wisdom

Wisdom, as described by the online Cambridge dictionary, “is the ability to make good judgments based on what you have learned from your experiences.” This definition leads me to reflect on how I personally developed the capacity to make sound decisions. The foundation of my wisdom came from my parents and the many individuals whom God has placed in my life. Among them, my father stands out as the greatest source of wisdom. He taught me the importance of paying it forward, not only through physical acts but also through simple gestures like saying a prayer for someone in need. Through his example, I learned to reach out to others, even when it was difficult. Despite the challenges, he always found joy in these acts, and it

was clear that those on the receiving end felt joy as well. Over the years, I have continued to learn from others about the value of sharing, caring, and giving.

## Wisdom in Personal Decision-Making

Wisdom also encompasses knowing how to make decisions for myself and recognizing the importance of self-care and care for others. For instance, this past July, I traveled with friends to the Canadian Rockies, where we had planned a guided hike to a glacier. As we ascended, it became evident that our guide would recommend we turn back. Determined to fulfill my dream of reaching the glacier, I initially resisted the suggestion. However, upon realizing that the rest of the main group of people were way ahead of us and we were falling behind, it was clear we would not reach our destination. The guide spoke with us and strongly encouraged us to turn around. Although we were disappointed, we ultimately agreed — for our safety, it was necessary. This experience emphasized the vital role of caring for ourselves and one another, especially when faced with difficult decisions that sometimes lead to disappointment. Though such moments can be challenging, the knowledge that we tried and did our best brings a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. By supporting each other and trying, even when the outcome is uncertain, we nurture our community and personal growth.

## Living Wisdom Daily: Inspired by St. Benedict

For me, living wisdom — embracing the daily way of St. Benedict — now involves much more than striving to pray three times a day, along with

regular meditation and prayer. It means embodying the hands, heart, and love that God has bestowed upon me. This is reflected in small acts of kindness, such as holding the door for someone, picking up an item someone has dropped, and practicing the principles taught to me by my parents and other role models. Wisdom guides me to make prudent decisions, like choosing to turn around when a challenge becomes too great. It also calls me to welcome everyone into my home and heart as if they are Christ.

## The Importance of Reflection

One of my wisdom figures, Sr. Dolores Folz, once shared, “an unreflected life is not worth living.” This statement had a profound impact on me. While I do not reflect often enough, when I do I feel immense gratitude for my parents, those who came before me, and those who are still present in my life. I am deeply thankful for the wisdom they have shared and for their example of Christ-like living.

## Serving the Community Through Wisdom

As I continue to strive to become the person God calls me to be, I bring all that I have learned to our Oblate leadership team and our community. I am humbled to serve as your communications coordinator, the individual entrusted with sharing our news and fostering connection among us.

## A Call to Reflection

I invite each of you to take some time to reflect on your own wisdom figures and the lessons you have learned from them. May the spirits of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica continue to inspire us to be the heart, hands, and feet that Christ calls us to be.

# Sanctified In The Storm

Erin Giddens, Guest writer



The battle of prayer is inseparable from progress in the spiritual life. Catechism of the Catholic Church 2725

The Church recognizes the battle we face in the world — across centuries — and confirms the battle is not separate from our spirituality, rather, it is necessary to our conversion in faith. So, if there is no battle, no reconciling with a commitment, your spirituality will suffer.

As an Oblate candidate, I am learning to navigate daily prayer and accepting what the battle is for me. What holds me back, what is separating me from daily prayer life and moving forward in my spiritual life?

For the past several years, I have found my speaking voice growing intensely quieter, turning instead toward reflection in my heart before saying anything out loud. Perhaps it's unique challenging circumstances bringing me to a halt, but, as I begin this journey, I now believe it was The Rule prepping me, in a sense, to the word we are all familiar with, the instruction listed first to us, from St. Benedict: listen.

One of my battles of prayer has always been distasteful, or nonsensical, noise — and to that note, I imagine hell for me would be similar to having a mildly annoying headache and being trapped in a large venue with thousands of people

talking to each other, very loudly, aggressively trying to be heard among the other conversations

— the white noise of gossip and prideful talk, and you can't escape even by going to the bathroom!

Part of becoming an Oblate is discerning our individual and unique battles and listening for ways to intercept and impede our distractions. Since I know that considerable, unnecessary noise is a battle to my prayer life, I offer morning and evening prayer in the quietude of my home. Over the next several months, I will work on quieting the noise of my mind, so as to become an even more obedient listener.

## 2026 Benedictine Oblate Retreat

June 5-7, 2026 in New Harmony, IN

Cost is \$350 per person

Oblates of Monastery Immaculate Conception are invited to attend a three-day retreat to explore what it means to live our Benedictine charism in today's world.

Step-away to deepen your connection to your oblate community. Some highlights of what you will experience:

- Prayer and worship together in the Roofless Church and in Holy Angels Church
- A tram tour to discover the historical spirituality in New Harmony, Indiana
- Lessons from four guest speakers
- Walking the meditative Cathedral Labyrinth

### TO REGISTER:

Complete the form on the next page and submit it to Sr. Becky Mathauer along with your \$150 deposit by April 1, 2026.

Make checks payable to Sisters of St. Benedict. Balance due by May 1, 2026.

Cancellation for full refund must be made by May 7, 2026.

# Reflection Questions About Wisdom

St. Benedict teaches us in The Rule that we can find wisdom by living our daily lives in moderation, diligently working and by attentively listening. He teaches us the importance of listening with the “ear of our hearts” which involves listening to scripture, the ‘Master’s Instruction’. He also teaches us that through prayer and the guidance of the community, wisdom may be found.

**Who are the “wisdom figures” God has placed in your life?  
What have they taught you?**

**What specific scripture passage speaks wisdom to you?  
Memorize it or journal about it.**

**How have our Sisters of St. Benedict Community guided you to seek wisdom in your daily life as an oblate? If a particular sister stands out to you, let that sister know.**



## BENEDICTINE OBLATE RETREAT REGISTRATION

Submit deposit of \$150 to Sr. Becky by April 1st, 2026.

Make checks payable to Sisters of St. Benedict, 802 E. 10th St, Ferdinand, Indiana

**I plan to attend the Oblate Retreat scheduled for June 5-7, 2026.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I request:**     ☐ A single room     ☐ A double room (room for two)

*Please note: it is the same price to attend this retreat whether you prefer a single or shared room.*

If you would like to be considered for a full or partial scholarship based on need, you may confidentially contact Sr. Becky at [beckym@thedome.org](mailto:beckym@thedome.org) by March 6, 2026.



"Life has taught me that every day is lived in the 'school of the Lord's service' as St. Benedict says in the Prologue. I just need to be aware of all the information I encounter in my daily journey and pray for the wisdom to let the Spirit guide me to 'new life' with God."

**Sr. Mary Agnes Sermersheim**



"The Benedictine value of hospitality has taught me that people are not interruptions. Even if all your work doesn't get finished, it's essential to put greeting a guest or helping someone in need before your plan for the day."

**Sr. Katie Noelle Cummings**



## Words of Wisdom from the Sisters



"I have found in my 60 plus years in this Benedictine community that two of my greatest supports are living community life with women who hold many of the same Christian values that I do and following a horarium that calls for regular times for prayer."

**Sr. Dolores Folz**



"Living the Benedictine way of life has taught me to find God in the ordinary and every day."

**Sr. Rose Mary Rexing**



"Keep death daily before your eyes."

**Sr. Charlene Ann  
Wheelless**

# 2025 A Year in Review

## JANUARY

Brother John Mark from St. Meinrad Archabbey gave a presentation to the Oblates on January 19, about the role and purpose of oblates in a community.

## FEBRUARY

At the February 16 Oblate meeting, Sr. Kathy Huber, gave a presentation on Desert Abbas & Desert Ammas explaining who they were, what they did, and what we can learn from them.

## MARCH

Our Oblate community, along with the sisters, were treated to a special presentation at our meeting on March 23. Maggie Beightler, now retired, was the warden at the Marion Correctional Institution for men in Marion Ohio. She was then Deputy Warden at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Maggie introduced to us a heartfelt introduction of two women who spent time in the Ohio Reformatory for Women. We invite you to sit back and take in the story of these two women, Chrystal Pfeifer and Margie Gonzales, as they shared their journey with us.

## APRIL

On April 23, Oblate Shirley France led our oblates with prayer and with discussion using the book, *Stations of the Resurrection*, compiled by Sr. Catherine Duenne with reflections written by some of our Benedictine sisters and oblates.

## JUNE

Our special guest speaker, Sr. Anita Louise Lowe, shared with oblates and guests her wisdom and knowledge titled: *Liturgy of the Hours, the People's Prayers*. We learned of the history of the Liturgy of the Hours, "with a concentration on the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Work of God," in the Rule of St. Benedict. Afterwards, we considered the call to daily prayer for all Christians, but especially those who follow the Rule of St. Benedict and consider how we can all be faithful to marking "all time as holy."

We opened the 2025 oblate year with a pitch-in picnic. Good food and fun times were had by all!



## SEPTEMBER

We took a trip to Belcourt to visit our oblate brothers and sisters there. Read Sr. Becky Mathauer's reflection on the next page.

On September 21, we welcomed Ryan Ecken, Erica Ecken, Erin Giddens and Stan Kaszynski as Candidates. The program was a Monastic Fair with a Sister representing many of the Sisters' ministries. We had time to visit with each Sister and learn about that ministry and its needs to find a good fit for our volunteerism at the Monastery.

## OCTOBER

On October 18, we welcomed three new oblates: Sue Yochum, Lissa Kaszynski and Rebecca Byrd before we all renewed our own oblation promises. The program was presented by Dr. Richard Jeric who explained the underpinnings of the spiritual music he presented the previous evening as part of the St. Mechtilde Concert Series.





## Belcourt Reflection Sister Becky Mathauer

My time with the Benedictine Oblates in Belcourt, North Dakota, was a sacred pause — a chance to slow down, listen, and be renewed in the spirit of St. Benedict. From the moment I arrived, I felt surrounded by genuine warmth and hospitality. The Oblates there live the Benedictine charism so naturally; it is woven into the fabric of their daily lives and ours.

As we prayed the abbreviated Liturgy of the Hours together, I was struck by the quiet beauty of our shared rhythm — voices rising and falling in prayer, grounded in centuries of monastic tradition yet very much alive in this present moment. In those simple, prayerful gatherings, I felt a deep sense of belonging and peace.

The prairie landscape itself seemed to speak of God — wide skies, open fields, and a wind that never really stops moving. There's something profoundly Benedictine about that

steady, gentle persistence of nature. The International Peace Garden and its grace and beauty were a joy and so refreshing to experience together. It reminded me that God's presence is constant, even when unseen and in times of great uncertainty all around us, and that stability is often more about the heart than the place.

Throughout my visit, I was moved by the faith, generosity, and dedication of our Belcourt Oblates. Their commitment to prayer and service shines through their care for one another and for their wider community. They reminded me that the Benedictine way is not limited to monastery walls but can flourish anywhere people seek God together with humble hearts. They are a thriving community with so many gifts to share throughout their area and across miles in and beyond the national and global Benedictine world.

As I left Belcourt, I carried with me renewed gratitude for our Benedictine family — for the ways it gathers and sustains us across distances, and for how it continually calls us back to balance, peace, and presence. My time there deepened my own desire to live with greater simplicity and attentiveness, to find God in all things, and to let my own life be a quiet reflection of the love and stability I witnessed among the Oblates in Belcourt. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to spend time with these beautiful women and men and to have experienced the true meaning of Benedictine Hospitality in their simple yet thriving humility and continued growth. I look forward with joy to the next time we can be together to experience the true Benedictine joy our Belcourt sisters and brothers exude from their very beings.





## Prepare the Way: Advent Retreat

Join the Sisters of St. Benedict for this retreat during Advent.

Reflect on ways to grow in faith, hope, love and peace while waiting for the coming of Christ this Advent. Step away from the rush and demands of holiday preparation to experience more deeply the true meaning of Christmas.

**December 8, 7:00 p.m. EST – December 12, 10:00 a.m. EST**

**Benedictine Hospitality Center**

**Cost: \$400 includes meals and overnight**

**Capacity: 7**

Register online at [www.thedome.org/advent-retreat-2025](http://www.thedome.org/advent-retreat-2025) or contact Sr. Rose Mary Rexing at 812-367-1411, Ext. 2842.

Thank you to the oblates and sisters who contributed to this year's newsletter: Stephanie Smith, Shirley France, Lynn Belli, Erin Giddens, Sr. Anita Louise Lowe, and Sr. Becky Mathauer. A special thanks to our marketing department, who did an incredible job with our newsletter.