



# Monastery *Minute.* *Expanded.*



THE BENEDICTINE SISTERS

ST. JOSEPH MONASTERY | TULSA, OK



# A LETTER FROM OUR prioress



Easter greetings ~ Alleluia!

The monastery courtyard is bursting with vibrant blossoms and new growth. It has recently become a favorite place where I sit and enjoy the beauty of nature. There is often a gentle breeze inviting me to be still and listen, to reflect and pray. Taking time each day to be still and listen is an essential practice of our monastic life so we can attune ourselves to the voice of God. This is the stance for discernment, and it trains our hearts and minds to receive and respond to God's grace. It matters who and what we listen to! We listen especially to Scripture and to the prioress, and we listen to one another. Most especially, when the community is gathered to discuss some important business, we take the stance of being still and listening, reflecting and praying as we meet together. We use our minds to take in the information and our hearts to consider what God is asking of us. All are asked to contribute; all are asked to be present and respond.

As we shared with you in our recent announcement, we have been in a diligent process of discernment for over a year, listening for what God is asking of our community now and into the future. But this was not a one-time process. Rather, it comes from being formed in discernment as a way of life in the monastery. At the beginning of each gathering, we began with the prayer from the recent Synod *"Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus"*. One line in the prayer carries special meaning for us, *"Teach us the way we must go, and how we are to pursue it."* Truly, there is no discernment without the Holy Spirit. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we have been strengthened in unity, enabling us to make important decisions for our future.

This is my final letter to you, as I end my term as prioress on July 1. I am deeply grateful for your support and prayers for me and for our Sisters over the past six years. I have been touched by your generosity, care and friendship. I will continue to keep all of you in prayer and ask that you continue to pray for all our Sisters as we move forward into the future, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Peace and joy in the Risen Lord,

*Sr Marie Therese Long*

## BENEDICTINE SISTERS ANNOUNCE TRANSITION OF MONTE CASSINO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

APRIL 2, 2025

After more than a century of unwavering dedication and leadership, the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Joseph Monastery are embarking on an exciting new chapter. The Sisters have announced that they will be transitioning the governance of Monte Cassino Catholic School to its Board of Directors—a decision made after thoughtful prayer, discernment, and consultation with the Monastic Council, Bishop David Konderla, and Monte Cassino leadership.

Founded with a deep commitment to faith, education, and service, Monte Cassino Catholic School has flourished under the Benedictine Sisters' stewardship, instilling values of prayer, work, and hospitality in generations of students. With the school thriving and well-positioned for the future, the Sisters are confident that the time is right to entrust its continued success to the Board of Directors.

*continue reading on following page*



***" We believe that mission has been fulfilled, and now, with great confidence, we pass the torch to the school's leadership, allowing us to focus more fully on our core monastic mission—prayer, work, and hospitality. "***

"Our calling has always been to nurture Monte Cassino, ensuring that Benedictine values are woven into the fabric of every student's experience," said Sister Marie Therese, Prioress of Saint Joseph Monastery. "We believe that mission has been fulfilled, and now, with great confidence, we pass the torch to the school's leadership, allowing us to focus more fully on our core monastic mission—prayer, work, and hospitality."

Monte Cassino will remain an independent Catholic institution firmly rooted in its Benedictine foundation. School administrators and the Sisters are working in close collaboration to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

"The Benedictine Sisters have provided strong, faithful leadership that has positioned Monte Cassino for another century of excellence," said Chris Burke, Head of School for Monte Cassino. "We are honored by the trust they have placed in us to carry their legacy forward. Our commitment remains steadfast—to uphold the traditions, values, and academic excellence that define a Benedictine Catholic education. Future generations of Saints will continue to benefit from this rich heritage."

Echoing this sentiment, Larry Rooney, chairman of the Monte Cassino Board of Directors, emphasized the school's bright future. "The Benedictine legacy will endure, and we are deeply grateful for the Sisters' lasting impact on our school and the broader community. Their influence will forever be at the heart of Monte Cassino."

In addition to this transition, the Benedictine Sisters will be relocating from their current monastery to a new site in the Tulsa area. While the exact location is still being finalized, the move will enable the Sisters to continue their monastic way of life in an environment that supports their mission of prayer and service. Updates on the relocation will be shared as plans progress.

Reflecting on the broader significance of this transition, Bishop David Konderla of the Diocese of Tulsa expressed his appreciation for the Sisters' enduring contributions. "St. Benedict is often called the Father of Western Monasticism, and the movement he inspired has profoundly shaped our culture, faith, and learning. The Catholic and Benedictine heritage is deeply embedded in Monte Cassino and will continue to bear fruit for generations to come. I am proud of all the Sisters have accomplished, both at the school and within our diocese, and I look forward to supporting them as they embark on this new chapter."

As Monte Cassino Catholic School moves forward, it does so with a strong foundation, a dedicated leadership team, and a vibrant community of students, families, and alumni. The Benedictine Sisters extend their heartfelt gratitude for the continued support and prayers of all those who have been part of this remarkable journey.





# Listening Together: The Power of Communal Discernment

Discernment, for the Benedictine Sisters of St. Joseph Monastery, is not a moment—it is a way of life. It is the daily, deliberate act of listening for the voice of God through prayer, silence, scripture, community, and the stirrings of one's own heart. In times of great decision, this rhythm of discernment became even more essential.

For over a year, the Sisters asked, "What is God calling us to do now, and how are we to respond?" In both individual reflection and communal gatherings, they practiced the Benedictine art of stillness, honoring emotions, and welcoming divine guidance.

This was not a decision made in haste or isolation. It was shaped by scripture, nurtured by trust, and confirmed through inner peace, unity, and spiritual affirmation. The Sisters took great care to ensure that every voice was heard and that every step forward was grounded in faith, mutual respect, and hope for the future.

In the reflections that follow, you'll hear from each Sister as she shares what discernment means to her and how she personally walked through this transformative moment. Their words offer a beautiful testimony to the courage, wisdom, and grace that arise when a community seeks God's will—together.



**Sister Mary Grace Sieben**

"I understand discernment as keenness in perceiving and understanding good judgment. I personally, over a long period of time, studied various psalms to learn the qualities that Monte Cassino's Board of Directors should possess. In recent years they have shown themselves competent in guiding the school. We feel that they can successfully assume the governance of Monte Cassino."



**Sister Mary Clare Buthod**



"Discernment means leaning upon the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as I seek to follow God's holy will. As a community, each evening we prayed in silence, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as we pursued His holy will. During this time of prayer, I remembered the delight of being a part of the glory of Monte Cassino. How I enjoyed the privilege of serving our teachers, parents and dear children. I sorted my thoughts and asked God for a confirming sign. My heart filled with the realization that Jesus was walking with us every step of the way as we agreed to transfer governance to a thriving Monte Cassino which would continue to be a Catholic, Benedictine independent school. I feel affirmed in my decision and in our decision as a Benedictine Community."



**Sister Barbara Austin**

"In silent prayer, discernment is opening my mind and heart to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a decision, it is sorting my thoughts and seeking the truth – God's will – the next right action. For me, listening to the members of the community as we considered all the aspects of the decision-making and sorting out was key. I prayed specifically for those involved, sorted my thoughts about the decision and took my thoughts to prayer; whatever arose in my heart and mind became the prayer. And then, we met together and listened to what arose in one another's heart and mind, and I took that to my prayer."



## Sister Julia Marie Roy

“Discernment is the intentional and ongoing listening in daily life for the next right thing God is asking me/us to do; a continual openness to that call.

It was about listening together and individually to God’s call and guidance. Each sister brought a part of the wisdom. Together with time and prayer it became clear what the call was about.

Then together we watched for the confirming signs from God that validated the decision. For instance, the quality of function and decision-making of the School’s Board of Directors was a confirming sign regarding the governance of the school.”



## Sister Christine Ereiser



“Discernment is the process of listening to God and to others, noticing what thoughts rise in my mind, sifting those (which are of God, of others, of myself) and coming to a decision. After I have a decision in mind, I ‘try it on’ or live into it virtually and watch for a confirming sign of the choice I made.

We spent significant time individually and communally in silence to allow ourselves the space to hear God’s voice.”



## Sister Catherine Martinez



“In Spanish, one of the possible translations for ‘discernment’ is “discerner.” This is the same as the root for ‘sifting’ (Cerner).

For me, that “sifting” of thoughts, emotions, images in union with the Holy Spirit is what discernment is about. In “sifting” through all that I am experiencing in my life, in prayer, I’m trying to hear where God is calling us next. This is a process, not a one-time event. It has become the rhythm of my life.

In our decision about governance of Monte Cassino and the relocation of the monastery, my basic question throughout the process was ‘God, let me remain open to all options,’ which later shifted to ‘God, show me our next right step and help me to trust you.’”

“Discernment is listening for the voice of God calling us. When we hear it, we are at peace.

The transfer of governance to the school has been an ongoing process. In the final piece of the process, each of us prayed that things would work out and the school would remain an independent Benedictine School that would keep its Catholic identity.

Since we would no longer be in the school, it made sense to find a new location for the monastery.”

## Sister Marilyn Norwood



## Sister Marie Therese Long



“Discernment means to sort out, in the light of the whole, that which is of God. This is done with prayer to the Holy Spirit, who is my guide. Discernment is a daily practice that involves noticing my thoughts, reading and listening to Scripture, and listening to the prioress and my sisters in community.

I used the discernment steps throughout the day and especially after Vespers when all the sisters sat together in silence. I kept the question before me during prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help me. Once I received a confirming sign, I chose my answer to the question, then shared it in our community meetings.”



## Sister Lucy Marie Fitzmorris

“Discernment is a fundamental stance one takes in life. It is a listening for God’s will and call at a given moment and a readiness to act on what is heard. We practice this as Benedictines every day in our ordinary life. Then when big decision moments come, we are well trained and ready to listen, decide, and act trusting that God’s love will lead us to the next right thing.

I was in a unique place when the decisions were made. I was able to attend the chapter meetings as a temporarily professed sister, but did not yet have voting rights.

I am still so thankful I got to witness the process. I listened to and learned from the community’s experience and emotions and watched the community come to a place of deep trust and unity in the final decision. You couldn’t help but feel and see the Holy Spirit at work. The whole process only affirmed my own decision to make perpetual profession to this monastic community.”



# A NEW CHAPTER OF LEADERSHIP: SISTER JULIA MARIE ROY'S VISION AS prioress

*Jessica Lowe-Betts, Contributing Writer*

*Senior Vice President, Schnake Turnbo Frank*



*Sister Julia praying Vespers.*

When Sr. Julia Marie Roy was called to serve as the next Prioress of St. Joseph Monastery, it wasn't the result of a traditional vote tally or announcement. It was the outcome of a deep, communal discernment process—one filled with prayer, reflection, and trust.

"We didn't just arrive at a decision," she shared. "There were months of prayer and conversation. In February, I sensed it was a possibility. By March, we had entered a two-day period of communal dialogue and spiritual reflection. The focus was less about technical qualifications and more about spiritual leadership—what the community needs at this moment in our journey."

Sr. Julia Marie's journey in religious life spans more than four decades. Since entering the community at the age of 19, she has served as an educator at Monte Cassino and St Gregory's University, sub-prioress under three different prioresses, and a teacher of Benedictine theology to lay Oblates. "Now at nearly 65, I have had years to live with these teachings and further understand them in my lived experience. There is always room for growth."

As she prepares to lead the community through a period of significant change—including the relocation of the Monastery and the transfer of governance of Monte Cassino Catholic School—Sr. Julia Marie's focus remains steadfast: "We are being called to deepen our monastic life and live it even more intentionally. Moving to a new space isn't just about packing boxes—it's a spiritual move, an interior move, as much as a physical one. We have never lived as a community without being directly involved in a school. This is a new chapter. And our task now is to reimagine how we live Benedictine life well in a new place."

When asked about her vision for the Monastery, Sr. Julia Marie reflects humbly: "I wouldn't say I have a vision apart from what we feel God is calling us to. My job is to be open to the next right thing God is asking of us—and to help the community do the same."

She is also deeply aware of the role the Monastery plays in the broader Tulsa community and beyond. "People often think of us as the Sisters from Monte Cassino, but our ministry has reached far—McAlester, Muskogee, Guthrie, Okeene. We've taught and ministered in many places. We also remain connected through retreats, spiritual direction, partnerships with organizations like Catholic Charities, and our ongoing presence in the lives of those who come seeking prayer and community."

Sr. Julia Marie sees both challenges and opportunities ahead for monastic life. "People sometimes think we're spiritual athletes, that we're somehow higher up on the ladder. But we're ordinary women, called by God like everyone else. Benedictine spirituality is not remote—it offers something countercultural but deeply needed: community, prayer, presence, and discernment. That's what draws people in."

As she begins her six-year term, her prayer is simple and powerful: "*Your ways, O Lord, make known to me. Teach me your paths.*" (Psalm 25). "If I'm not being led by God," she says, "then I don't have a chance. That's what I'm relying on—God's mercy and the prayers of the Sisters."

Her steady presence and lifelong commitment to Benedictine life reflect the strength of tradition and the courage to embrace change. With Sr. Julia Marie Roy at the helm, St. Joseph Monastery begins this new chapter anchored in prayer, guided by wisdom, and ready to listen for what God is calling forth next.



# SERVING AT THE MARGINS: MISSION AT THE MEXICAN BORDER

*Jessica Lowe-Betts, Contributing Writer*  
*Senior Vice President, Schnake Turnbo Frank*

In May, Sister Lucy Marie Fitzmorris will dedicate her time to serving at the Mexican border, embodying the Benedictine call to hospitality and compassion. This section highlights her preparation, the people she will encounter, and how the monastery's values continue to inspire action beyond its walls.



*Sister Lucy Marie preparing to accompany the sisters' singing in the oratory.*



## Interview with Sister Lucy Marie Fitzmorris

**When do you leave and how long will you be gone?**

*"I leave on May 19th and will return on May 30th."*

**Who will join you on the mission?**

*"There are eight sisters from different Benedictine communities across the United States who will be going on the mission trip."*

**What inspired you to serve at the Mexican border, and how did this opportunity come about?**

*"Every other year or so, all the Benedictine sisters in the US and Mexico who are 55 years old or younger come together in person for a long weekend of fellowship, prayer, and formation. The gathering is called 55&Under. At one of our last gatherings, the Presidents of our Monastic Congregations tasked us with presenting projects to them that we would be interested in working on together to foster support and fellowship between our monasteries and congregations. One of the projects that came out of that brainstorming was this service trip."*

*"Our community chose immigration as our study topic a few years ago for our monthly recollection weekends. It was very fruitful for us, but since then I have really wanted to be able to meet and learn from the experience of people who have had to immigrate. I have pretty much lived in the same 100-mile radius for most of my life, so the experience of needing to immigrate to a whole new country is hard for me to grasp. This seemed like the perfect opportunity for me to learn. Some of the sisters I will be working alongside are immigrants themselves so I can be learning from them also."*

**How are you preparing—spiritually, emotionally, and practically—for this journey?**

*"I can get pretty nervous about walking into new experiences or situations, and there will be a lot of "new" in this trip. I think I have been really focusing on making sure I take an open heart and an open mind with me when I go. I really want to be present to the people and situations I encounter."*



## **What do you anticipate your daily work will look like while serving at the border?**

*“Sr. Ursula from St. Scholastica Monastery in Boerne, TX operates a mission house in Eagle Pass, Texas, called Caridad de Corazón. We will stay at the mission house. Sr. Ursula says she is planning on sending us out in pairs to serve at her different ministries. Some days we may find ourselves sorting donations, others working in her soup kitchen, and some (if allowed) will cross the border into Mexico to serve and play with children at an orphanage that Sr. Ursula helps support.”*

## **What kinds of people do you expect to encounter, and what do you hope to offer them?**

*“We know we will be serving recent immigrants to the United States. With some of the uncertainty around our Southern Border we do not know exactly what that might look like, but Sr. Ursula assures us that no matter what, there will be a need we can help fill. Other than that, I am trying to keep an open mind.”*

## **How does this mission reflect the values of the Benedictine community? Have any particular scriptures or prayers been guiding you as you prepare for this work?**

*“In the Rule of Benedict in the chapter on guests, the monks are told that ‘All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.”’*

*I want to help provide a warm welcome to all those I meet. One of my co-workers at Catholic Charities spent a weekend living on the streets of Tulsa to have a better understanding of what it feels like to be homeless. One of his takeaways that he shared with all of us was, “I never realized how many different ways there are to say, “You are not welcome here.” I think we may meet people who have been told they are no longer welcome where they live because of violence, poverty, or persecution - and now they have traveled to a new place with the hope of starting a new life where they can belong and flourish with their families. They will be strangers in a country that I call home, so it seems my obligation as a Benedictine is to offer them hospitality and a warm welcome. I also think the Rule helps remind us that Christ is on both sides of these encounters. I both imitate Christ through my service, and at the same time, I seek and recognize Christ in the other.”*

## **What message do you hope to bring back to the monastery and broader community after your time at the border?**

*“The universal Catholic church just finished the 3-year Synod on Synodality. Through it, we really are being called to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Synodal church. A large part of synodality, I believe, is learning to listen to one another and each other's experiences of life, of faith, and of God. My hope would be that in meeting and journeying with others who have very different life experiences than me, I can come to a bigger understanding of what it means to be Church, what it means to be a human person, and what it means to hope and trust in times of adversity. Then I can add my own new experience to the larger dialogue and pass it along to my community and those around us.”*

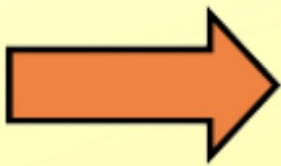
## **How can others support or participate in this mission, whether near or far?**

*“I enclosed a flier that our group made up to help ask for donations for the trip. In it we ask for donations of food and clothing along with financial donations to Caridad de Corazón.”*

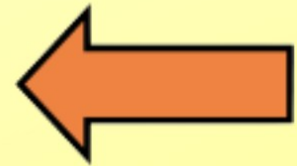
**If you are interested in assisting the mission of Caridad de Corazón at Eagle Pass, Texas, please see information on the following page. Please keep this essential ministry in your prayer.**



Join Sister Lucy Marie and her companions in supporting the work of Sr. Ursula, OSB, at her mission house in Eagle Pass, TX, where she lives Benedictine hospitality by welcoming all who present themselves as Christ.



Items needed  
Clothing      Food  
Personal Hygiene Products



Donations can be shipped directly to Sr Ursula at:  
1080 Vista Hermosa • Eagle Pass, TX 78852

OR

Monetary donations can be made here:  
[boernebenedictines.org/caridad-de-corazon/](http://boernebenedictines.org/caridad-de-corazon/)

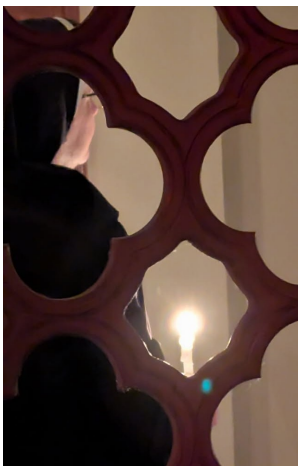


Look for the Donate button

We ask you to join us in praying for all those serving at Caridad de Corazón and for those who are being served.



*Sister Ursula with children at the orphanage supported by Caridad de Corazón*



## The Easter Vigil



**Sr. Marilyn lighting  
the Easter Candle**



**Sr. Lucy Marie & Sr.  
Catherine preparing for  
our Emmaus Journey  
Easter Monday**

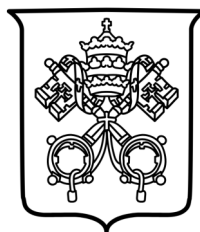


**Our Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes**

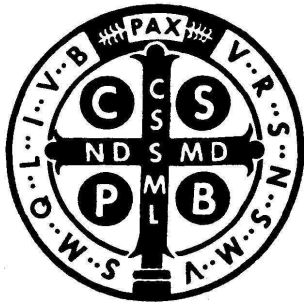


**Please pray with us for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis:**

**Loving Father, have mercy on our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and in your love, welcome him to the fullness of your kingdom. We thank you for the good things you have done in your Church through his humble leadership and examples of mercy and compassion. May he now live with you in joy. Give us the grace to continue to follow Jesus with love. We place our trust in you and praise you, our God. Amen.**







## St. Joseph Monastery

2200 South Lewis Avenue

Tulsa, OK 74114-3117

(918) 742-4989

[www.stjosephmonastery.org](http://www.stjosephmonastery.org)

St. Joseph Monastery is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax deductible. Please consider a gift to us in your estate planning. Contact Sister Christine at 918-746-4203 or [srchristine@stjosephmonastery.org](mailto:srchristine@stjosephmonastery.org).

## SYMBOLS OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH



EASTER HOLY WATER

