

**The  
STARR COUNTY**

July 2006-December 2006

# **Benedictines**

*Journal of the Benedictine Monastery of the Good Shepherd*  
Rio Grande City, TX 78582



*Welcome Him with joy, with wonder, with praise.  
Merry Christmas!*



## Dear Friends,

We rejoice that our God comes to be with us! Our Emmanuel is a constant source of hope when all seems so hopeless: a family member who no longer wants to be one with the family; when suffering never seems to end; enduring a loss that just won't heal; seeing a future that seems to hold just more of the same pain; a world where division, violence, abortion, godlessness and poverty just seems to advance its reign.

Our Emmanuel, Jesus, the Son of God, comes to us offering us **Himself** as the source of all unity, healing, comfort, peace and the future full of hope that is meant to be ours. Pope Benedict says about the season of Advent, "Advent is par excellence the time of hope, in which believers in Christ are invited to remain in vigilant and active expectation, nourished by prayer and by a concrete commitment to love".

We are to enter the cave of our hearts as He wants to be born anew in our lives. Let us seek Him in the quiet of our hearts. When we see obstacles of Jesus' birth in our lives repentance will remove that blockage to new life. As with Mary we are to accept His knock at the door of our life and welcome Him with faith, love and abandonment to the great plans in store for us.

We give thanks for Emmanuel working in our life here at the monastery. We see Him giving us continued enthusiasm to get up day after day to pray, to work and to welcome the plan of serving Him in our guests as they come to retreat, to pray, to work and to be another face of Jesus to us.

May we be ready with open hearts to welcome His coming at Christmas. May our gifts to Him be that of transformed lives- less and less of ourselves and more and more of His peace, self-donation and lavish love for the poor and for all those in any kind of need.

With love, gratitude and our prayer we will remember you in a Novena of Masses following Christmas Day, thanks to our dear Chaplain Father Jerry Felion. Sister Fran, Sister Luella and I pray that your Advent/Christmas season and the New Year be filled with abundant blessings!

In Jesus, the Prince of Peace,  
Sister Nancy

## Fountain of Life Chapel Opens on All Saints Day

Indeed, God-is-with-us, all the time in the Eucharist! We are seeing the belief in Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist through the choice that many people in this area are making. At 6 a.m. on November 1st, two worshippers from Rio Grande City who had committed themselves to do so, drove eight miles to our adoration chapel to be with Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. From that day on, friends of Jesus seek Him and spend time with Him here in our chapel. Some come several hours a day. Others come one hour a week. In God's word we find great hope to comfort us: *"...if my people...humble themselves and pray and seek my presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and heal their land."*

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

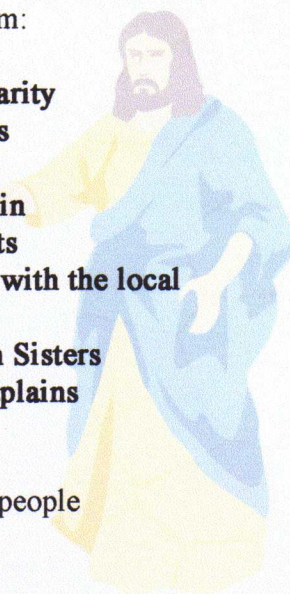
God has made His promise, but will we do our part to bring it to completion? **Are you interested in being with Jesus in our chapel? Call: 956.486.2680**

## GUESTS AND RETREATANTS

We were happy to welcome many to the monastery for days of prayer and reflection. More and more persons in the consecrated life are coming for peace and quiet. Among those who were a blessing to us by their presence, were guests from:

**The Daughters of Charity**  
**Christian Brothers**  
**Mercy Sisters**  
**Poor Clare Capuchin**  
**ACTS mini-retreats**  
**An Ecumenical prayer service with the local**  
**Baptist pastor**  
**The ICM and Dominican Sisters**  
**Diocesan Catholic Chaplains**

It has been a real joy to welcome people from all walks of life.







## OBLATES

Our Benedictine Oblates, lay associates, continue to hold an important place in our lives. In addition to meeting once a month to delve deeper into Benedictine spirituality, they assist us in so many other ways. Blessed Marmion Deanery helped plan and organize our annual retreat this year. The retreat well attended. The retreat speaker was Elda Maria Estrada from San Antonio, TX. The topic was Building A Hermitage Within.

We have a number of predominantly Spanish speakers and some of our Oblates are leading the formation classes in Spanish for those who wish to become oblates. In August the Spanish-speaking group came for their session on stability. They are a wonderful Spirit-filled group.

Our youth oblates had their annual retreat with stories of St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, prayer times and activities. Father Greg Labus, newly ordained and assistant at the San Juan Basilica, wishes to become one of our oblates and we are indeed very honored to welcome him along with the other ten oblate candidates into our monastic family.

## VOCATIONS

We sponsored a vocation conference at the San Juan Basilica. The priests at the Basilica, Fathers Eduardo Ortega and Greg Labus, were very welcoming of us. At the conference, we gave a history of our beginnings and recounted our personal vocation stories.

With our long-awaited website now up, we hope this will help us move forward with women who are meant to join us in being a community of prayer as we continue spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Benedictine Sisters. So many friends, in the past, have said that a website could help us.

We continue to have our Benedictine Life Weekends. Women from the area come and spend time here, sharing our life. Prayer and work are paramount in our daily life. Time is provided for being outside together, playing games or just being together.

We also attended a Young Adult conference sponsored by the Diocese of Brownsville. We set up a display for our monastery and we were available to meet with any participant interested in the consecrated life.



## WEBSITE

In June we began preparations for our website. Thanks to Kevin Banet from the Religious Life Institute, we were able to create a website, and it was launched on November 1st, the special day of All Saints .

The world is small, since even a volunteer from South Africa whom Kevin knows, helped design the website. We are grateful for their patience and expertise as we waded through the many possibilities. So many people have asked for the background story of this monastery. In summary fashion, we tried to give the highlights on our site.

Our website address tells where we are located and who we are. [www.starrcountybenedictines.org](http://www.starrcountybenedictines.org)  
We ask for your prayers that the website may bear much fruit for the glory of God. You are welcomed to pass it on to your friends.

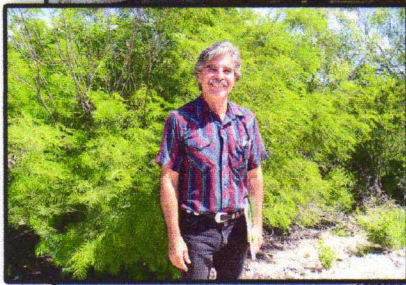
## DEVELOPMENTS



- Work continues on our latest building project, the **Monte Cassino** Conference and Renewal Center. Our construction engineer, Jaime Benavidez, is working diligently to bring this effort to completion.



- Landscaping on Maria's Courtyard continues. We thought it most fitting to call it Maria's Courtyard, since we have a marble statue of our Blessed Mother there and had chosen the name of Maria for the prayer bell in the courtyard. **Rene** and Melba **Reynolds** hired a landscaper and he has done a superb "work of art" with rock sidewalks and patio around the mesquite tree. With the underground sprinkler, the grass is green and the flowers and vegetation are in full beauty. The visiting butterflies are an added delight. Indeed the courtyard is something on which to feast our eyes.



- Friends, **Benito Trevino**, botanist, and Luis Figueroa, architect and project manager, spent several hours studying the property to see where the planting of native vegetation would enhance the 115 acres of Promised Land. Benito is drawing up a master plan for us.



- Our Winter-Texan volunteers, Dorothy and **Bud Curwick** are back and are working full force already: Dorothy, with the sewing of quilts for the poor and crafting table-runners to sell at our monastery gift shop, and Bud with the laying of sidewalks for the Fountain of Life Adoration Chapel and for the parking area. Bud has also erected a spotlight to shine on our ten foot high white cross, which can be seen from a mile away at night. Recent visitors had tears well up in their eyes upon seeing the cross.

A surprise volunteer has come to our monastery from Rio Grande City. She works her way spending time with Jesus in the adoration chapel and carries out her prayer by doing good deeds.





• We give thanks to *Leonor Garza* and *Nelda Garcia* for their one year of volunteering about four hours each week in the cleaning of the chaplain's house, the adoration chapel and parts of the monastic residence.

• The Development Council and the Oblates are also working to organize a Paisano (Roadrunner) Festival, set for April 21, 2007. There is much interest and enthusiasm among our Oblates and other benefactors in taking on more responsibility to do fundraising for the needs of the monastery. Know that you are all most welcome to join us on that day. The Lord is the ultimate provider and for Him we give thanks!



## ON-GOING FORMATION

Sister Nancy participated in a two-week session at the Vita Consecrata Institute in Front Royal, Virginia. Among the instructors were Father Benedict Groeschel, Father Thomas Dubay and Fr. Thomas Nelson. The instructors were a source of much inspiration and motivation to live a life of holiness and be who we are meant to be. Sr. Nancy's words to describe the two weeks were, "It was a time to become more grounded in my vocation. I was encouraged to see a new generation of men and women rising to this wonderful way of life as consecrated persons."

## AWARD PRESENTED

Sisters Luella and Fran attended the Parks and Wildlife Conservancy Banquet in the Starr County Branch of South Texas College. A video presentation of rare species was shown. We were the recipients of a beautifully mounted certificate for the rare species that were found in our property: St. Joseph's Staff and the Dumpling Cactus.





## PTC BANQUET

We are friends of Janie Rivera, the director of the Rio Grande Valley Pregnancy Testing Centers and were invited to their PTC Gala. The Gala was entitled "Created in HIS Image". It was an inspiring evening as we heard the reports of the work done to help many women in crisis pregnancies and the stories of children who could have been put to death through abortion. Special speakers were Jonathan and Deborah Flora. He is a producer for Disney's Buena Vista Home Entertainment and writer for "*A Distant Thunder*". Deborah is an actress, former Miss Colorado and 2nd runner-up Miss America. They shared their testimony of God's intervention in their lives.

## PRAY ALWAYS

***"Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God"***  
**Rule of Benedict, chapter 43**



Upon looking at our life and considering that we are basically to be a community of prayer, on November 1st, we began using the book, Benedictine Daily Prayer, for our Liturgy of the Hours. It is compiled and published by Liturgical Press in Collegeville, MN.

The difference is that we now pray seven prayer "hours", a gathering in prayer seven times throughout the day. The Liturgy of the Hours consists of hymns, psalms, readings and intercessions.

Our monastic work these past years has basically been here at the monastery and so we are able to build work times around these periods of prayer together.

We have especially benefited from the variety of readings from the writings of our Church heroes included in the new Liturgy of the Hours book.

Know that as we praise our most wonderful God, you and your needs are also being presented to our God of mercy and compassion.

## NEW GATE

**"Enter, rejoice and come in"**

Besides the floodlight that Bud installed to shine on the cross, we also have the new gate that is activated. Luis Figueroa designed it to include our logo, the shepherd's staff and the Benedictine cross.



It is an electric gate with a code that allows people to come in for their night vigil with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at our Fountain of Life Adoration Chapel. The Roma and Rio Grande City Catholic Daughters of America Courts provided the finances for the gate. They hosted a donation luncheon in October of 2004 and invited their sister courts throughout the diocese. We thank them for helping us have a more secure place in which to live, and a beautiful entrance with which to welcome our guests.





**Retreat volunteers**



**Lotus and Chuck Scheving donors of the bell**



**Family at prayer in adoration chapel**



**Wonderful volunteers**



**Reinforcement of foundation**



**Happy and hard workers**





**Benedictine Sisters  
of the Good Shepherd  
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## Emmanuel, God-with-us!

I understand that each time we contemplate with desire and devotion the Host in which is hidden Christ's Eucharistic Body, we increase our merits in heaven and secure special joys to be ours later in the beatific vision of God. (St. Gertrude, a great Benedictine)

"One cannot help but be warmed as one sits by the fire." (In reference to being in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus)

(From some people who come to be with Jesus in our Fountain of Life Adoration Chapel) As I sat there one night I thought how blessed we truly are to be here with Jesus allowing Him to bless and love us as only He can. One feels a peace beyond description.

Time goes by so quickly. When I'm there it seems like a different time dimension, not like the time I know daily.

I feel changed!

I feel Jesus all around, enveloping me!

Without Him I'm like in a black hole. But here He is - my Light!