Sisters of
Benet Hill
Monastery

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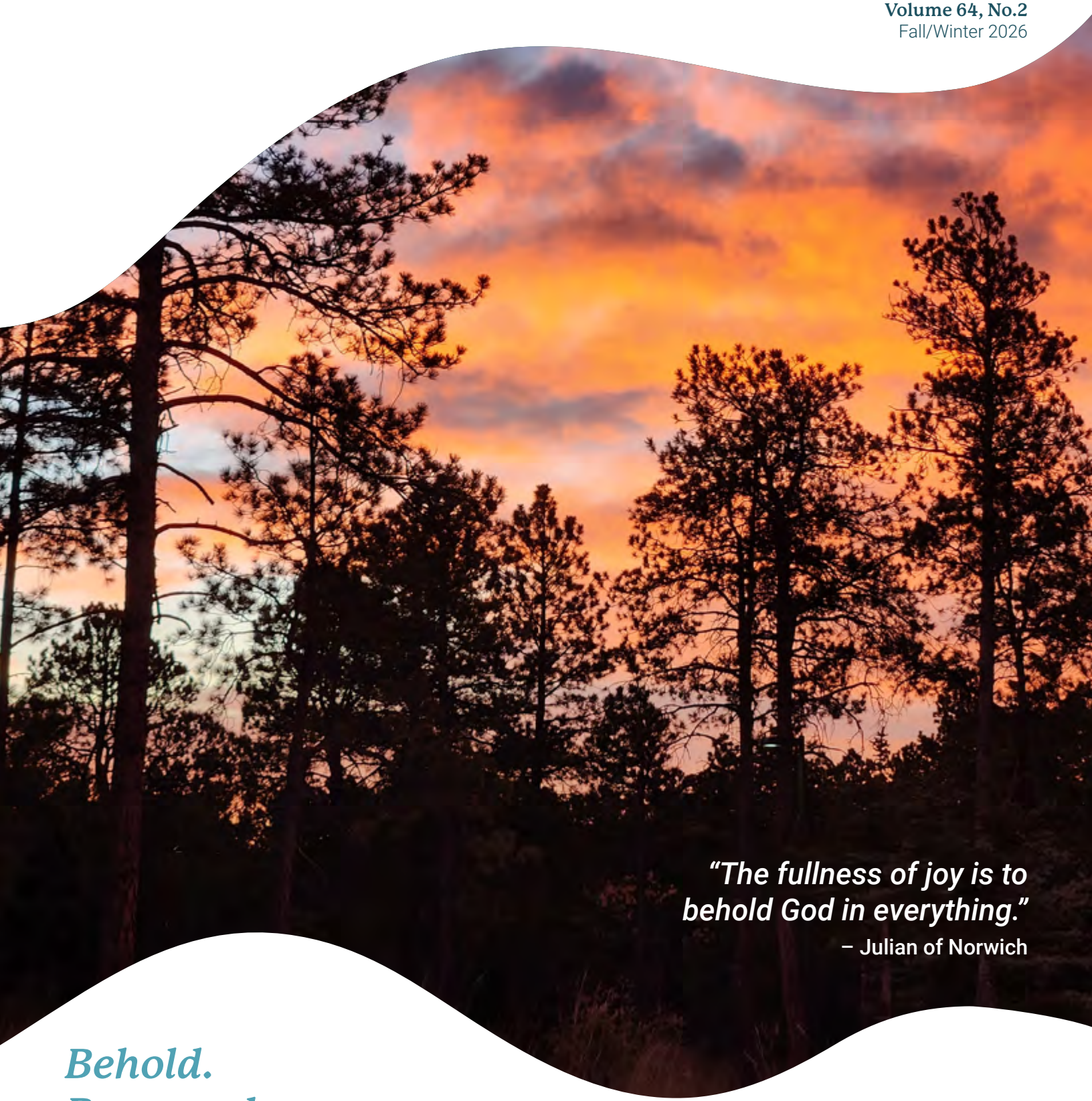


"The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything."
– Julian of Norwich

Behold.
Be moved.

Letter
from the prioress

Dear Friends,

I open this letter with the words from a song I listen to in the early morning hours to start my day:

> *Awaken us to your presence here and now.*
>
> *Come stir in us your grace at work in each of our hearts.*
>
> *Come Spirit with your wisdom.*
>
> *Guide and lead us now.*

Our theme during the 2025-26 liturgical year has been **Awaken Joy**, anchored in the text "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith," (Romans 15:13) and visually in the image *Women Singing Earth* by Mary Southard, CSJ. Throughout the year, we worshiped, prayed, sang, and showed up together, grounded in our faith that God is good and ever present, and that our joy serves as resistance. That state of joy has now provided our theme for the 2026-27 liturgical year **Behold. Be moved**. Awakened, we seek to move to the fullest meanings of the concept **To Behold.**

From my own study, I have learned that the divinely inspired writers of scripture used the word behold quite often – 1,297 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and 149 times in the New Testament. I have studied the etymology, the Mirriam-Webster dictionary, the biblical sense, and the spiritual meaning, and now realize that when we behold:

- we see, perceive, gaze, observe, and so much more.
- our attention captures more of the essence of the individual.
- our attention elevates our vision as we listen to our core.
- our attention deepens our understanding of the giftedness found in all creation.
- we are invited to pause, reflect, and consider.
- we are invited into a posture of reverence, humility and awe.
- we allow truth to fill and transform our initial perceptions and observations.

In June, I gathered for a week with Benedictine women from our Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica and in August, I attended the assembly of the Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR). From the speakers and my experiences at these gatherings, I have come to an even deeper understanding of what it means to truly behold.

The meeting theme of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica was *Courage to See* and *Freedom to Risk*. Prioress General Rosann Ocken, OSB was one of our presenters. She said of Benedictine religious women communities, "We are at a 'Abraham-Sarah Moment.' Many of us are old, yet we are called to leave the securities of the past for new frontiers though the destination is unclear. We are in the midst of mystery. 'Go to the land I will show you.' (Genesis 12:1); (however), there are no step-by-step Google directions telling us exactly where the turns will be, and when we will arrive." She continued, "We feel vulnerable. We cannot depend on our own faculties and calculations. We throw ourselves on the providence of our loving God. Like Abram and Sarai, we set out on the journey with faith and trust in the God who is calling us forward. Like Joshua, who had to take the reins after Moses died, we hear the voice of God, 'I command you, be firm and steadfast! Do not fear or be dismayed for your God, is with you wherever you go.' (Joshua 1:9)."

She offered that "Living at this moment needs to be with attention and intention," and quoted Otto Scharmer, a senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Scharmer focuses on awareness-based action research that anchors leaders of organizations in the concept of presencing, a method of learning from the emerging future. Scharmer says that the mistake he most often sees leaders and organizations making today is that they fail to listen. He says, "Energy follows attention. The quality of how I pay attention, makes the pathway." Through the process of presencing, we allow the inner message to emerge. We come to this presence through our listening and seeing with fresh eyes. In other words, we behold.

Scharmer explains the transformative process of presencing in this way:

- When I open my mind, I suspend judgment and move from ignorance to listening.
- When I open my heart, I am ready to redirect and move from greed to love.
- When I open my will, I move from fear to courage; however
- Judgment shuts down the power of the open mind.
- Cynicism (distrust) shuts down the power of the open heart.
- Fear shuts down the power of the open will.

This theme of presencing was reinforced at the 70th Anniversary of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) where I gathered with 1,300 other religious to celebrate and discern our future purpose. Sister Vicky Larson, PBVM addressed the assembly as President and spoke of presencing as a harmony of intention. She said, "Have you ever heard an orchestra or band warming up before a concert? Each instrument plays random notes to warm up and tune. The sound is chaotic, noisy, and disorganized. Then, the conductor steps onto the stage, raises the baton, and suddenly the chaos becomes music. The musicians align themselves with a common tempo, a shared rhythm, and a unified purpose. This is how the Holy Spirit draws us together—into a common symphony of life. Religious life is not a solo performance. We honor our different instruments as we join in a shared purpose with each other and with people around the world." This message of harmony of purpose beautifully merges with our intention to behold.

The Benet Hill community is diverse, comprised of sisters, staff, oblates, Sunday worshipers, retreatants, Benedictine spiritual directors, ministry program attendees, Benet Hill Academy alumnae, friends, and family. As our shared leadership teams of sisters, staff and oblates open our minds, hearts and wills, we are listening to and adapting to the signs of the times as Benedictines have done for 1,500 years. We are walking into the future, imagining God's creative plan. We know that we do not redefine our community - God does. We are wrapped in mystery, in a process of being recreated.

In the following pages, you will find examples of how our vision to be a contemporary Benedictine monastic presence for the world is unfolding. Three sisters share about their years in religious life and their Jubilees in August. An oblate novice reflects on her journey to be formed by *The Rule of Benedict*. Sister Mary Colleen and the graduates of the Global Online Benedictine Spiritual Direction program describe the Benedictine values that transformed their lives. Seasonal pilgrims share from their experiences of being in nature, guided by Sister Jan, and Benet Hill Academy alumnae gather once again with the sisters who guided their high school years.

I invite you to join us as we behold this moment with intentionality as we continue to move into the emerging future. Let us pray, together with all humankind, for courage to see and freedom to risk as we move forward. With the grace at work in each of our hearts, may we be open to the wisdom of God to guide and lead us now in this moment at Benet Hill and in our world.

Blessings in abundance to each of you,

S. Marie Therese Summers OSB

Sister Marie Therese "MT" Summers, OSB
Prioress

Jubilee Reflections

"My celebration of 70 years as a monastic has caused me to remember people who have been part of these years. Besides my family and the Sisters of the Visitation, I remember the friends and families who helped when the Whitewater Community began on Kannah Creek near Grand Junction. I remember my initial formation in the Visitation Monastery in St. Paul, Minnesota. My teachers are all deceased, but the motto of the Visitation is still a part of me: "May our whole life and all our actions unite us with God and God's Holy Church, especially through gentleness and kindness." Those ideas stayed in my heart when I moved to Colorado in 1971 and lived a quiet, less structured life in the Whitewater Community. We welcomed many retreatants to Whitewater and lots of friends who came to visit and to help. The Benedictine value of hospitality became a way of life before I joined the Benedictine Order in 2008. Since moving to Benet Hill in 2019, I no longer have to care for a house and 100 acres, so I have more time to read and reflect and be grateful for these many years of love and friendship. I look forward to whatever comes next!"

– Sister Anne Madeleine Brost, OSB

"I am grateful for my vocation to the Benedictine monastic life and for my family who laid a strong foundation of faith, a positive work ethic and a sense of community life. Over these 50 years, I have been blessed to serve in many ministries. I taught primary grades for twelve years and delighted in seeing children grow in self-confidence and faith as well as academically. Later, I earned a degree in Physical Therapy and was Director of PT for the Alamosa Hospital, serving the eight counties in the San Luis Valley. As Retreat Director, I journeyed with diverse seekers. I created meditation paths and prayer sites so that seekers of all faiths could experience and deepen their relationship with themselves and their God. Most recently, I have served in various roles internally that have humbled and stretched me. I continue to deal with our challenging medical system and the various government agencies to ensure that all our sisters have medical insurance. I hope my legacy will be a healthy forest. I have spent three decades caring for it with the help of volunteers and the local fire department. I am filled with gratitude and humility for all the blessings I have received and the wonderful people who have been part of my journey."

– Sister Jan Ginzkey, OSB

"When Sister Deb asked what 50 years of monastic life meant to me, I told her that it went by so fast. There were years of grace and years when I faced my own failures. Years of working with fun, curious teenagers. They taught me to be open to ideas and their amazing depth of spirit, and to listen to their struggles to manage their friendships and relationship to their God. I so loved them and their faithful families who blessed me with their trust when faced with tough decisions. My twenty-five years as a therapist have been a blessing as I've journeyed with those who have trusted me with their brokenness, opened their hearts, and risked speaking their truth with integrity. Lastly, the years I served as the Prioress were years of great challenge, love and beauty. Though the sisters bestowed their confidence on me, I felt so inadequate at times when I failed to listen and love them as they deserved. Those were years when God was faithful through the support he gave me through my sisters, other professionals, oblates and our Sunday community. I have been lifted and carried by the grace of the Trinity: Our God Creator, Jesus my lover and the Spirit of wisdom. These have been years well spent and hopefully, I have another 50 years."

– Sister Clare Carr, OSB

(Left to right) *Sister MT Summers, Sister Anne Madeleine Brost, Sister Clare Carr, and Sister Jan Ginzkey*

Oblate Novices of Benet Hill Monastery

Jennifer Geraci

In many ways, receiving the Medal of St. Benedict during the Oblate Novice ceremony July 12, 2026, was a moment that I had long wanted to work toward. After reading Kathleen Norris' book *A Cloister Walk* in the early 1990s, I became intrigued with Benedictine spirituality and monasticism; however, I could not bring myself to enter the doors of a monastery – until I discovered Benet Hill.

The past several months as an Oblate Candidate have been rich and rewarding. Working through the Rule and learning about how to understand and put Benedictine spirituality into daily practice has not only changed the rhythm of my days, but also my general outlook and relationship with my colleagues. Learning to listen to the deep stirrings of my own soul, which often went ignored in the past, and learning to respond to those stirrings with discernment and scriptural wisdom has been affirming and restorative.

Back when I first read *A Cloister Walk*, I thought I could pursue Benedictine spirituality on my own. I bought a copy of the Rule and a couple of books about the Rule, but it was difficult for me to really get a foothold on its practice. I've found that my Oblate cohort, my mentor, and the period of formation have been necessary for a full and ongoing engagement with the Rule and its many layers of meaningful guidance.

But perhaps the most important and cherished part of my experience has been developing relationships with the Benet Hill sisters. Being able to spend time with them talking and listening, observing them and praying with them in the Oratory has given me great appreciation for their humility, their resilience and resourcefulness, and their sense of fun and independence. I take great inspiration from their lived commitment to seeking the divine each day, providing comforting and steadying hospitality, finding and sharing their awe for the natural world, and their continued dedication to living as examples of God's love and compassion. Great lives well-lived, indeed.

Entering the Oblate Novitiate and receiving the St. Benedict medal in July not only marked the moment of a long-held desire coming to fruition, but the beginning of a commitment to continue to walk and live following the wisdom and examples of the Benet Hill Sisters. It is my extreme privilege to be able to do so.

The next cohort of Oblate Candidates will begin January 2028. The Oblate Leadership Team will conduct interviews of those expressing interest in the 2028-2029 cohort beginning in the fourth quarter 2027. Please contact Sister Clare Carr for more information at sclare@benethillmonastery.org.

(Seated, left to right) *Kay Talley-Foos, Sarah Groh, Joan Silverstein, Ellen Depatie, Mona Wirth, Brendan Wirth.*

(Standing, left to right) *Enid Carlson, Mike DeBettencourt, Deli DeBettencourt, Jennifer Geraci, Laurette Stang, Sister Clare Carr, OSB.*

Global Online Spiritual Direction Graduates

Sister Mary Colleen Schwarz, OSB

"Divine Love is so immensely great! Great is its overflowing, for Divine Love is never still. Always ceaselessly and tirelessly it pours itself out so that the small vessel which is ourself might be filled to the brim and might also overflow."

— Mechtild of Magdeburg, 13th Century German Mystic

Mechthild viewed the relationship between God and the human soul as an intense, intimate love affair rather than a rigid legalistic or distant judicial dynamic. This perfectly describes the soul care that is the focus of a spiritual director. Through the Benedictine value of reverence, the graduates of the Global Online Spiritual Direction program integrated this Divine love within their own hearts. This outpouring then filtered into the spiritual lives of those to whom they provided spiritual direction this year.

Spiritual integration is about living the discoveries and gifts that you have attained, not just thinking about them. It is easy to be philosophical and think deep thoughts, but to embody what you have realized is a whole different matter! In essence, spiritual integration is a movement from head to heart and from conceptual to practical. It is self-actualization.

Reverent behavior is the overflow of a heart that lives in the presence of God. Spiritual direction students learn to "behold all things," implying a gaze of reverent attentiveness. A central transformation movement happens when the students develop the capacity to "see beyond." By developing this compassionate attentive listening skill, spiritual direction students learn to hold those whom they spiritually guide in Divine love and grace.

These students know that Benedictine values change lives, hearts, and how we live the Gospel. Benedict knew that the secret of the holy life was not so much a holy reputation as it was a holy attitude: reverence for God, reverence for the body, reverence for the other who is younger and unimportant, reverence for the elder who feels useless or is oppositional. Benedict had a deep belief and respect for everyone as sons and daughters made in the image of God. It is up to each of us to take due and proper responsibility for the handling of this amazing gift of our sonship and daughterhood. Monastic spirituality says that we are to honor one another. We are to listen to one another. We are to reach across boundaries and differences in this fragmented world to see in those differences distinctions of great merit that can mend a competitive, uncaring, and troubled world. After God, it is human beings who deserve our honor. Benedict provided for these students an example of "beholding" through reverence.

Reverence happens when we are humbly in touch with created reality, that is, when we see past the illusion of separation and independence from each other, creation, and the divine life. As humility grows, egocentricity fades. With fading egocentricity comes the embrace of our conditional and vulnerable created life, as well as our mutuality with and in God. The experience of this conditionality, vulnerability, and divine mutuality fills us with awe and wonder, amazement, and respect. Reverence is a ripening of these traits; it is the fruit of a oneing with God expressed wonderfully in the nature of things.

Respect for people isn't a mere duty; it's a source of peace, harmony, and profound blessing. Benedictine respect reflects spiritual maturity and deep wisdom. As we practice it, we receive grace, not only for ourselves, but for every life we touch. As their attitudes of reverence ripened, the students created a generous space in their lives that carried over in their spiritual direction sessions. Students communicated Spirit and Divine love through their heart wisdom and grace, illuminating hope and healing for those they directed. Doing their own interior spiritual work, students learned the way to truth is to live into life and to experience all of life. They then could see the revealed truth and Divine love present in their own lives and in others.

Reverence is the way of radical respect. It recognizes and honors the presence of the sacred in everything — our bodies, other people, animals, plants, rocks, the earth, and the waters. It is even an appropriate attitude to bring to our things, since they are the co-creations of humans and the Creator. There is one unmistakable message in the spiritual practice of reverence: because everything is touched by the sacred, everything has worth. This practice, then, lends itself to responding in the world instead of reacting by recognizing that we stand on Holy ground that connects all of us as one in our hearts.

In the program, we guide students in the process of self-discovery and holistic healing to uncover their spiritual story and to listen to their inner voice of wisdom. When the students begin sharing their stories, they begin to connect on a deeper level with themselves, their spirituality, loved ones and community. Sharing our stories is a reverent action that becomes a spiritual practice. This cultivation of reverence is an essential ingredient for, and inevitable result of, transformation.

It is with great appreciation and confidence that I present to you the 2026 graduates of the Global Online Spiritual Direction Program. They exhibit the deep humility, spiritual heart wisdom, and grace that equips them with the skills to be exceptional spiritual directors! Their essence of Divine love is so immensely great!

The poem Guest House by Rumi, a 13th century poet, captures the essence of reverent attentiveness to see beyond to the vision of Divine love and hope.

> *This being human is a guest house.*
> *Every morning a new arrival.*
> *A joy, a depression, a meanness,*
> *some momentary awareness comes*
> *as an unexpected visitor.*
> *Welcome and entertain them all*
> *Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,*
> *who violently sweep your house*
> *empty of its furniture,*
> *still, treat each guest honorably.*
> *He may be clearing you out*
> *for some new delight.*
> *The dark thought, the shame, the malice,*
> *meet them at the door laughing,*
> *and invite them in.*
> *Be grateful for whoever comes,*
> *because each has been sent*
> *as a guide from beyond.*

Global Online Benedictine Spiritual Direction Graduates

Linda M. Abel-Thomas (Minnesota)

The greatest gift of these past two years has not been what I have learned, but who I have become. Spiritual direction formation invited me to do the sacred and often difficult inner work of allowing God to reveal the places in my heart that still needed healing, freedom, and surrender. As I became more aware of my wounds, attachments, fears, and ego, I also became more aware of God's unfailing love and His desire to restore every part of me. Rather than striving to be the one with the answers, I have learned to rest more deeply in God's presence, trusting that He is the true Director of every soul. This journey has transformed my prayer from doing more to simply being with Him. It has taught me to listen with greater compassion, embrace silence without needing to fill it, and recognize the gentle movements of the Holy Spirit in both my own life and the lives of others. I have become more humble, more attentive, and more willing to surrender control, trusting that God's grace is sufficient even in my weakness. This formation has not simply prepared me to accompany others; it has first allowed Christ to accompany, heal, and transform me. I leave this program with a deeper sense of freedom, a greater capacity to love, and a profound confidence that the work God has begun in me will continue as I faithfully say "yes" to His invitation each day.

Ileana Amparan (Texas)

When I started this program, I thought I was doing it to help others find God. What I didn't expect was that it was the other way around. This program changed me from my core, helped me find my true self, and slowly recovered it. These two years have expanded my heart in a way I never thought possible. I see the world with the eyes of love, a language that is universal and encompasses all creation. I don't think there are words to describe how God worked in me. My life changed completely. I can walk with others with compassion and understanding of their own journey and see the hand of the divine in my life and others.

Chris Bickel (New Jersey)

The Benet Hill Spiritual Direction program has been such a blessing to me. As a career educational administrator and a life coach, being with individuals always meant identifying problems and finding solutions. This program, however, has taught me how to be with others through deep listening, still presence, and love. In this space, I have been taught to hear the wind, touch the waves, smell the hydrangea, taste the salt and see the gentle current of the divine reflect in the sun sparkles of conversation. I have learned to live in the liminal space where ocean meets land and where the divine is everywhere and in everything. This is the gift I was given from the Benet Hill program. This has been a beautiful blessing.

Sarah Boatright (Colorado)

Liz Cooke (California)

This program met my spiritual needs and profoundly transformed me. I learned and experienced meaningful spiritual truths that provided incredible grounding for me as I seek to embark into this new ministry. I discovered the space of heart connection, deep listening, and the stance of love; not techniques and the need for perfection. I feel ready to serve in this ministry as I submit to God's leading of love for his children and witness the miracle of spiritual companionship. I have learned that God is more creative than I can ever imagine. He has a relationship with each child that is unique, tailored to individual needs, and I will only be a witness to His boundless expansive artistry. I want to see Him in action and companion Him! This program prepared me to walk into this great reality and I am forever grateful.

Rev. Deacon Danilo Cortez (Australia)

Completing the Spiritual Direction course at Benet Hill has been a profound blessing in my life. I initially enrolled thinking mainly of the personal benefits it would bring me as a Catholic, a married deacon, a senior hospital chaplain in Central Australia, a husband, and a father. However, throughout the course I experienced the gentle unfolding of the Holy Spirit in ways I had not expected. The online format was a perfect fit for my circumstances, allowing me to participate fully while balancing my ministry and family commitments. The facilitators were truly gifted—deeply spiritual, authentically human, and wonderfully encouraging. Their wisdom and guidance helped me grow in listening to God and to others with greater attentiveness. By the end of the course, I had gained not only a deeper understanding of spiritual direction but also a much clearer sense of where God is leading me in the next stage of my spiritual journey and ministry.

Deanna McMillin Denham (New Mexico)

Melanie Foreman (Louisana)

Ben Freville (Illinois)

The program provided a wonderful balance between inward and outward formation. It invited me to journey inward—to know myself more deeply, to grow in self-awareness, and to become more attentive and receptive to the movement of the Spirit in my own life. At the same time, it prepared me to accompany others on their spiritual journeys through the support, encouragement, and wisdom of a community that was engaged in the same journey. Along with teaching me the practice of spiritual direction, it helped me become more contemplative, moving from doing for God to simply being with God. As a result, I have developed a deeper trust in the Spirit's presence and work, both in my own life and in the lives of those I accompany.

Rev. Lara E. Gilbert (Wyoming)

Diane Sakal Gutierrez (Utah)

Fr. Richard M. Healey (Australia)

Anthony (Tony) Hoban (Australia)

My journey started with self-discovery and assistance to realize how deeply graced I am by God's love - not at a head level, but at a heart level. Later, I learned how to help others to discover more about themselves and God's deep love for them through spiritual direction. I remember hearing Fr James Martin SJ speak about spiritual direction and say the No.1 Rule in choosing a director was to ensure they have been trained. After completing this training program, I agree with him 100%. If I attempted spiritual direction without the benefit of the insights, support and skills development offered by

Continued on next page...

Graduates, *continued*

this program, I think I could have easily done more harm than good to directees in their quest to deepen their relationship with God and discern God's will for their lives.

Mark Lee Hock Seng (Malaysia)

The Benedictine Spirituality program has been a deeply enriching and transformative experience for me. It has enabled me to reflect more profoundly on my own experiential journey, helping me to grow from within through lived experience and deeper self-awareness. The program has broadened my understanding of the rich landscape of Benedictine spirituality and equipped me with valuable insights to accompany others more meaningfully in their spiritual journey. I am truly grateful for all that I have gained, and I look forward to continuing my own inner growth while sharing these blessings through spiritual direction and accompaniment.

Jennifer Holst (Africa)

Jim Huntley (Colorado)

Monique Julewynn (Washington)

Darryl Will Kozak (California)

When I began the program, I hoped to learn how to become a spiritual director. The program has certainly equipped me to accompany others, but it has also formed and transformed me.

As a pastor, coach, and leader in the church, I am accustomed to helping people find answers and determine their next steps. Benet Hill has reminded me that not every experience needs to be explained or solved. Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is remain present, listen deeply, and trust the slow work of God.

I learned how to listen not only to another person's words, but also to the pauses, emotions, images, and questions surrounding them. I've become more comfortable allowing silence to have its place and saying, "I don't know." Rather than feeling responsible for producing an insight, I've learned to trust that the Spirit is already at work.

I've deepened my self-awareness and my Benedictine spirituality. Benedictine spirituality had already taught me to listen with the ear of the heart. This program in spiritual direction taught me to trust what emerges when that listening is given time.

As I completed the program, I recognized that I was leaving with far more than a certification. I experienced a deeper trust in God, a more spacious way of listening, and a renewed understanding of ministry as accompaniment. I began hoping to learn how to offer spiritual direction. Along the way, I discovered that I was also being directed and formed.

Karen Lubertazzo (New Mexico)

Clark Christopher Maxon (Colorado)

This program has been a transformative catalyst to a closer, more authentic relationship with God. It helped me to discern and prepare for my calling to the ministry of spiritual direction within a loving and supportive community, where we experienced God's Presence through a wide range of beautiful spiritual practices. Through this program, I am learning to see and experience the Love of Christ in all and through all.

Roslyn McGuire (Malaysia)

With a grateful heart, I have learned to be receptive of God's unconditional love and expansiveness of His heart poured out freely for me and others. I am His beloved.

In the solitude of my heart, I have become attentive to the presence of God. I have learned to deeply listen with the ear of my heart and see with the eyes of my heart. I practice WAIT (W-wisdom helps to love well and fully, A-attentive to how God shows up, I-integrate body, mind, spirit and heart to become more whole, T-transformation and take my narrative into staying in truth and light). I have learned to stop and trust the process and myself even though I do not understand as His instrument. The Holy Spirit is the True Director. I have learned to slow down, pause in silence, and listen deeply during spiritual sessions to experience the slow work of God and the "Ah ha" moment. I have learned to recognize the voice of the Spirit through the stirring in my heart. Through the Ten Steps of St Hildegard of Bingen, I have learned to awaken my inner insightful and powerful mystic not only in Spiritual Direction but in my life and relationships.

Ng Shiek Nee (Malaysia)

I never imagined, when I first registered for this program, what God had in store for my spiritual growth. I stepped into the unknown, and I emerged spiritually stronger than I had ever been.

This program has taught me so much. I have learned to listen more deeply to another person—not only with my ears, but with my whole being: body, mind, and soul. I have learned the importance of being fully present, because God is found in the present moment, not in the past or the future where our minds so often wander.

I have also become more aware of who I truly am: a person lovingly created by God, yet one who had gradually learned to wear many masks after years of life's hardships and disappointments. Through this journey, I have learned to trust God more deeply by surrendering, letting go of my own desires and ego, and allowing Him to lead.

I have grown in compassion, both towards myself and towards others. I have come to see that each of us is a beloved child of God, and that every person carries a unique story that God is patiently unfolding and healing in His own time. I have also learned to accept people where they are, rather than expecting them to be where I think they should be.

Most importantly, I have learned to listen to God through the wisdom of my heart, allowing Him to guide not only my own life but also the lives of those I accompany during listening sessions. It is a humbling privilege to witness God at work in another person's journey.

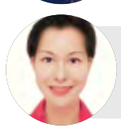
There are countless tangible and intangible blessings that I have received through this program—far more than words can express.

Today, my heart simply prays:

> *"God, I know You love me deeply. I know You called me to this program for a purpose. I know You are preparing me to serve in Your Kingdom, and I willingly offer myself for You to use in whatever way You desire. May I always remain faithful to Your call."*

I am truly blessed, deeply loved by God, and forever grateful for this journey.

Erica Palmer (California)



Dr. Christine Qing He (China)

Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas (Canada)

I first trained as a Spiritual Director in 2000-2001, but I felt in need of a refresher course. When I learned about the two-year Benet Hill course based on Benedictine spirituality, I thought this would be the perfect one for

Continued on next page...

Graduates, *continued*

me. It was! We received a module online each month of the program with a wealth of material, including video clips, reading material on a particular theme ranging from prayer, contemplation, self-awareness to the essentials of Spiritual Direction, plus 5 - 7 articles pertinent to the theme of the month. We also had reading assignments from an assigned list of books, written reflections on the theme of the month, and two classes each month. The classes were used to reflect more deeply on what we'd been learning through the month. Each of us had a mentor, someone who was familiar with the program, to whom we sent our reflections and from whom we received helpful feedback. I found the second year of the program even more helpful than the first because each student had one or two directees with whom we practiced spiritual direction. This meant three classes a month in the second year. The extra class gave us the opportunity to share part of a session with a directee and receive feedback from the other students and from Sister Mary Colleen and Dana Cossey. This feedback was tremendously helpful and always positive. I feel that I have learned such a lot which has enriched my spiritual direction. This may sound like a lot of work but it is worth it.

Rev. Angela Lynn Shannon (Indiana)

Michelle Shonbeck (Texas)

The Benet Hill spiritual director program has been a wonderful, two-year journey, and I have enjoyed it immensely. Prior to enrolling in the program, I had been the beneficiary of 25 years of spiritual direction as a directee. I knew firsthand how powerful spiritual direction can be in an individual's life, so this was one of the reasons I enrolled in the program: to become a director so others could also benefit from the power and depth of spiritual direction.

The program is well-organized and gives students many tools to deepen their spirituality. Each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made" – we are each unique children of God – so our brains and learning styles all vary. All of this is taken into consideration in the program.

I also found this program helpful professionally. I'm the CEO of a Christian nonprofit organization in Houston that serves the poor. Our organization encompasses 42 churches, so it's a big, diverse community. As the leader, it's vital that I be both centered in my faith and the organization's mission, while also being attentive and respectful of all the various viewpoints our stakeholders have. I feel the Benet Hill program strengthened my leadership, especially my listening skills.

Dede Smith (Colorado)

Li-Cheng Tan (Singapore)

The Benet Hill Spiritual Direction Programme came at a liminal time in my life and felt like a door that God had opened for me. Looking back, I can only describe it as a grace-filled experience. I greatly appreciated the breadth of the programme which balanced rich learning with a deep emphasis on personal formation. The practicum was also invaluable. Through the wisdom and encouragement of our supervisors and mentors, I discovered my own way of being a spiritual companion and grew in confidence as I learned to trust the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I leave deeply grateful, feeling truly blessed and trusting God to continue leading me as I accompany others.

Rev. Melinda J. Townsend (Florida)

For more than ten years, I had looked at Benet Hill Monastery's Spiritual Direction Program and thought, "Someday," but the timing never seemed right.

After retiring and relocating, I found myself at an unexpected spiritual crossroads. The ministries and activities that had given shape to my life were absent, and I felt spiritually stalled. I was led back to Benet Hill, applied, and discovered a program that met and exceeded my expectations.

What I valued most was that Benet Hill first formed us spiritually and personally before asking us to accompany others. Through readings, reflection, cohort conversations, companionship, and later our work with directees and peer supervision, I grew both personally and as a spiritual director and as a human being.

The program became a spiritual lifeline for me. It rooted me again in Benedictine spirituality and deepened my ability to listen—to my directees, to myself, and to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Benet Hill gave me not only the skills to become a spiritual director, but a renewed spirituality and a new way to live out my ministry. I will be forever grateful to the Sisters of Benet Hill who sponsor this ministry, most especially Sr. Mary Colleen.

Sr. Kathryn Tulip SSJD (Canada)

Jennifer Waroway (Canada)

Seasonal Pilgrimages

Sister Jan Ginzkey, OSB

This past June - October, more than seventy pilgrims intentionally slowed down the pace of their daily lives to come into the quiet at Benet Hill Monastery through Guided Walks and retreats. Some came to experience the blessings of the labyrinth more deeply through greater depth of faith and knowledge about this ancient meditative practice. Others learned to recognize the Culturally Modified Trees, gently shaped long ago by the ancestors of the Ute Nation. A few hardy souls journeyed on both paths: Labyrinth and Culturally Modified Trees. All pilgrims awakened a greater awareness and appreciation of creation on their seasonal pilgrimage.

> *It is very grounding to walk through God's creation, His trees, and hear the hushed voices and footfalls of all the generations that have walked here before me.*
>
> — Manette

The Labyrinth walks and talks have truly helped us to be so much more aware of God in Creation. The quiet contemplative Labyrinth is a wonderful gift to experience as a family.

— Jim

> *If you missed this year's seasonal pilgrimage opportunity, you're in luck: there will be a 2027 Seasonal Pilgrimage opportunity. Watch for news in May, 2027.*

> *The CMT walks have changed the way I look at (and experience) the trees around me. I have always loved the woods and felt that trees have a sacred energy, but now I also see cultural and historical landmarks. I find myself looking for the five signs of culturally modified trees whenever I am out on a hike, and imagining what Colorado must have looked like when the Ute were a free people.*
>
> — Kate

I left Sister Jan's class on culturally modified trees with a feeling of wonder and great mystery. When I arrived home, I discovered a Prayer Tree just feet away from my home, possibly a burial tree. This beautiful, living artifact has always been right outside my door (literally!), and I am just discovering it! Since this discovery, I have walked through the world with much more reverence, gratitude, and awe. I have an eagerness to learn as much as I can about the Ute people who lived here, and to walk on these lands with great love in my heart.

— Anna

> *The Labyrinth walks feed my body, mind and spirit. Each session offers an opportunity to not only learn something new about the spiritual practice, but also to experience something new in the Benet Hill Labyrinth.*
>
> — Kate

Benet Hill Academy Reunion

Diana (Doran) Szcsech's daughter created these adorable cookies!

Class of 1976

Front row, left to right – *Julie (Witzig) Cozad, Annie (Morphis) Roorback, Suzzanne (Jackson) Jones, Diana (Doran) Szczech, Linda (Gasteiger) Gavin.*
Back row, left to right – *Pat (Collins) Brown, Pam (MacLean-Kennedy) Johnson, Kate Shea, Suzy Mallory, Terry (Meehan) Spitler, Mary Muehlbauer, Bonny (Reese) Crews, Ginnette (Goodsell) Ritz*

Classes of 1966-67

Left to right – *Bonnie (Browne) Collazo, Ellen Depatie, Alice (Kuhn) Busby, Kathy (McLaughlin) Sharkey, Katie Vidmar*

Class of 1969

Left to right – *Kattie (Faricy) Eide, Sandra Damron, Karen Zecha, Deirdre (Sullivan) Koehler, Deborah Spitzer*

Class of 1973

Front row, left to right – *Mary Beth (Lahey) Netherton, Helena (Suchecky) Jones-Siddle, Cynthia (Ladig) Parsons*

Back row, left to right – *Kim McCready, Letha Robison*

Classes of 1972-75

Left to right – *Tricia (Langley) Boatner, Gail (Withey) Miskho, Claudia Klein, Sugar (Throckmorton) Terbush, Kippi (Throckmorton) Hart*

Sisters,

Thank you SO much for hosting our reunion last weekend! It was fantastic from start to finish! So glad Bishop Hanifen could say our Mass just as he did at our graduation. How special was that? But seeing both of you and the other Sisters was even more special. You will never know the extent of the profound impact you had on all of us! It'll continue as long as the good Lord allows us to be here. Thank you again for all the years of support, example, and love!

– Pat Brown, Class of '76

> *Alumnae – hold the date for next year's picnic and mass at Benet Hill Monastery! July 24 – 25, 2027. More details to follow.*

Community Stories

Our community life at the monastery is enriched by so many people and celebrations. Our Sunday worshiping community said a fond good-by to Father Joe one Sunday, raised awareness about gun violence by wearing orange on another, and donated crayons for back to school. We celebrated our 61st Founding Day in June, many birthdays and outings, and stayed connected with our three sisters residing at Dooley Center in Atchison, KS.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones

Compiled by Sister Lucile Hartmann, OSB

Sister Evangeline Salazar and the Gordon Family

Grand-nephew, Logan Gordon

"Logan was always a happy child and a creative teenager. Because Logan lived in Nebraska, we didn't get to see him very often but we certainly enjoyed the time we spent together. He loved Jesus."

Sister Mary Jane Vigil and the Vigil Family

Brother, John Vigil

"John was 1 1/2 years older than me. He was the 4th child, and I was the 5th child of fourteen. Because we were close in age, we got in trouble together quite a bit. He loved playing the guitar from an early age, and was self-taught. Our family loved to sing along with his guitar."

Sister Elizabeth Cogan and the Cogan Family

Sister-in-law, Arlene Cogan

"After fishing in the morning, I would join Arlene in front of the TV. We would laugh together and do our knitting and crocheting. Arlene and my brother Joe always welcomed sisters from Benet Hill who were driving to or from Colorado Springs and needed a break. They kept soda cans in the refrigerator just for traveling sisters."

Sister Naomi Rosenberger

Cousin, Kay Poore

"We were born during the Shirley Temple decade. Our beautiful shoulder-length curls enabled us to respond to a photo shoot for Faultless Laundry. We grew up as sisters and Faultless Twins with Kay the big sister by one day. The love we shared was limitless; it remains in life and in death forever."

Mary Ellen Burton, Benet Hill Academy '74

Mother, Ellen Burton

Debbie (Johnson) Gausman, Benet Hill Academy '69

Father, Daniel Johnson

"*Daniel died at the age of 102. He served as the electrical contractor on the new Academy building project.***"**

Mary Beth (Lahey) Netherton, Benet Hill Academy '73

Mother and Father, Catherine and Thomas (Jim) Lahey

Friends and family of Kathleen (Schaefer) Meisinger, Benet Hill Academy '80

Friends and family of Carolena Steen, Benet Hill Academy '79

Sister Elizabeth Steen was a Benet Hill Academy Student 1976-78

Marie (Nuvolini) Wolff, Benet Hill Academy '82

Father, Joe Nuvolini

Explore memorial service and columbarium options at Benet Hill Monastery.

Sisters of
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Sisters of
Benet Hill
Monastery

The Review

For there is still a vision
for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end,
and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry,
wait for it;
It will surely come,
it will not delay.

Habakkuk 2:3