

# SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

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802 E 10th St., Ferdinand, IN 47532-9239



In Chapter 4 of *The Rule of St. Benedict*, the author provides a number of tools for good works. Benedict advises us not to be proud, not to speak ill of others, to devote ourselves to prayer and much more.

Near the end of the chapter, in verse 74, he offers this: "And finally, never lose hope in God's mercy."

During trials, we become more aware of God's mercy. And while 2020 presented so many trials, from a pandemic to racial injustice to economic upheaval, it was a year overflowing with God's mercy.

It has been more gratifying than I can convey to see our sisters rise to the challenges of this year with patience, persistence and even good humor. We continued to look for new ways to help others, and to pray for you and for all those within and outside of our community.

And it has been more humbling than I can tell you to see the outpouring of support and generosity from so many of you. You made it possible for us to continue our work, both close to home and in the mission field. Our impact on this world is magnified by you.

In 2021, join us in praying for an end to the pandemic, for less division and greater unity among all people, for a season of recovery and stability...and for a greater awareness of God's infinite mercy every day.

*Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB*

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB  
Prioress



# What's Open?

While the monastery isn't open for tours just yet, there are still good reasons to visit. Light a candle in the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. Walk the Stations of the Cross. Take a lakeside stroll. Make a Rosary Walk uphill toward Our Lady of Fatima. Reflect on Our Lady of Guadalupe. And support the work of the Sisters with a visit to the Gift Shop or St. Benedict's Brew Works.





A portrait of Sister Rose Mary Rexing, an elderly woman with short, wavy white hair and glasses. She is smiling and wearing a grey blazer over a red turtleneck sweater. A gold chain with a circular pendant hangs around her neck. On her left lapel, there is a white circular pin and a blue and white identification badge that reads "Mission" and "Care Means We're In This Together". The background is a blurred indoor setting.

# Caring through COVID

“It happened so quickly. We had to rethink everything almost daily. There were a lot of God moments.”

SR. ROSE MARY REXING

THIS PAGE:  
Sister Rose Mary Rexing,  
Executive Director of  
Mission Integration at  
Memorial Hospital in  
Jasper

OPPOSITE:  
Sister Rose Mary  
blessing the COVID-19  
vaccine in December,  
2020

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, life changed virtually overnight for Sister Rose Mary Rexing, who serves as Executive Director of Mission Integration at Memorial Hospital in Jasper.

“On March 11,” she recalled, “we canceled all volunteers and elective procedures. On December 17, the vaccine arrived. It was nine months of labor and expectation and then — a beautiful delivery.”

Those nine months brought new challenges every day — with daily morning and afternoon calls to figure out what that day would look like.

### **The Power of Prayer**

“I could find myself feeling afraid,” Sister Rose Mary said, “but we never stopped praying. We started every meeting with prayer. We had a prayer for each time we put a mask on.” Faith Community Nurses, with more than 80 nurses across 8 counties, organized parishes to pray for nurses and departments over the 12 days of Christmas. A poster went out listing the parishes and departments being prayed for. “When I opened that, I just cried,” she recalled.



### **A Strong Community**

In spite of it all, she never felt alone in the journey. “We have a strong community in the hospital,” she noted, “and the larger community donated masks, money, food...there was truly a sense that we were all in this together.”

### **Supporting the Staff**

Sister Rose Mary oversees the pastoral care and social services staff, and reminded them to be attentive to their own trauma even as they cared for others.

She created a process to administer an employee emergency fund to help those whose hours had been cut. “One woman, the wage earner in her family who was expecting her fourth child, found herself with fewer hours and unexpected bills. But she was too humble to ask for help. When we were able to assist her, we both cried on the phone together.”

The hospital has a “Code Lavender” for those times when staff needed a moment just to talk to someone. It was in heavy use throughout the pandemic and remains so even now.

### **Patients, Families, Sisters**

Because patients were isolated, the staff set up tablets so they could talk to their families. Sister Rose Mary would set up sacraments, often while the chaplain prayed with the family in the parking lot.

While every loss felt personal, some were closer to home. “I was with Sister Marge Sasse when she was dying in the hospital in August,” she remembers. And Sister Cathy Ann Robinson, who passed away in September, “was still ministering to a CNA as she was dying.”

### **A Time to Reflect**

With all of the long hours and challenges, Sister Rose Mary has still found this a good time to reflect. “I wanted to find meaning. I wanted my life to be worthwhile. And I’ve had a wonderful life. I’ve loved everything I’ve ever done. I don’t have anything I wish I’d done.”

*Your donations to the Sisters of St. Benedict have helped support our community and the work we do throughout the pandemic.*



## **Sister Lisa’s Perspective**

Sister Lisa Marie Schutz has also been on the front lines during the pandemic as a clinical assistant at Jasper Primary Care Physicians.

Like everyone else, she looks forward to putting COVID-19 behind us. “Some of my favorite patients have died,” she said. “And some are still dealing with the lingering effects of the virus.”

Often during the pandemic, patients have turned to her as they make decisions. “Sometimes they just need someone they can talk to, especially older patients. They see me as a safe person to talk to. It feels good to be able to pray for them and support them.”



# The way of the Cross



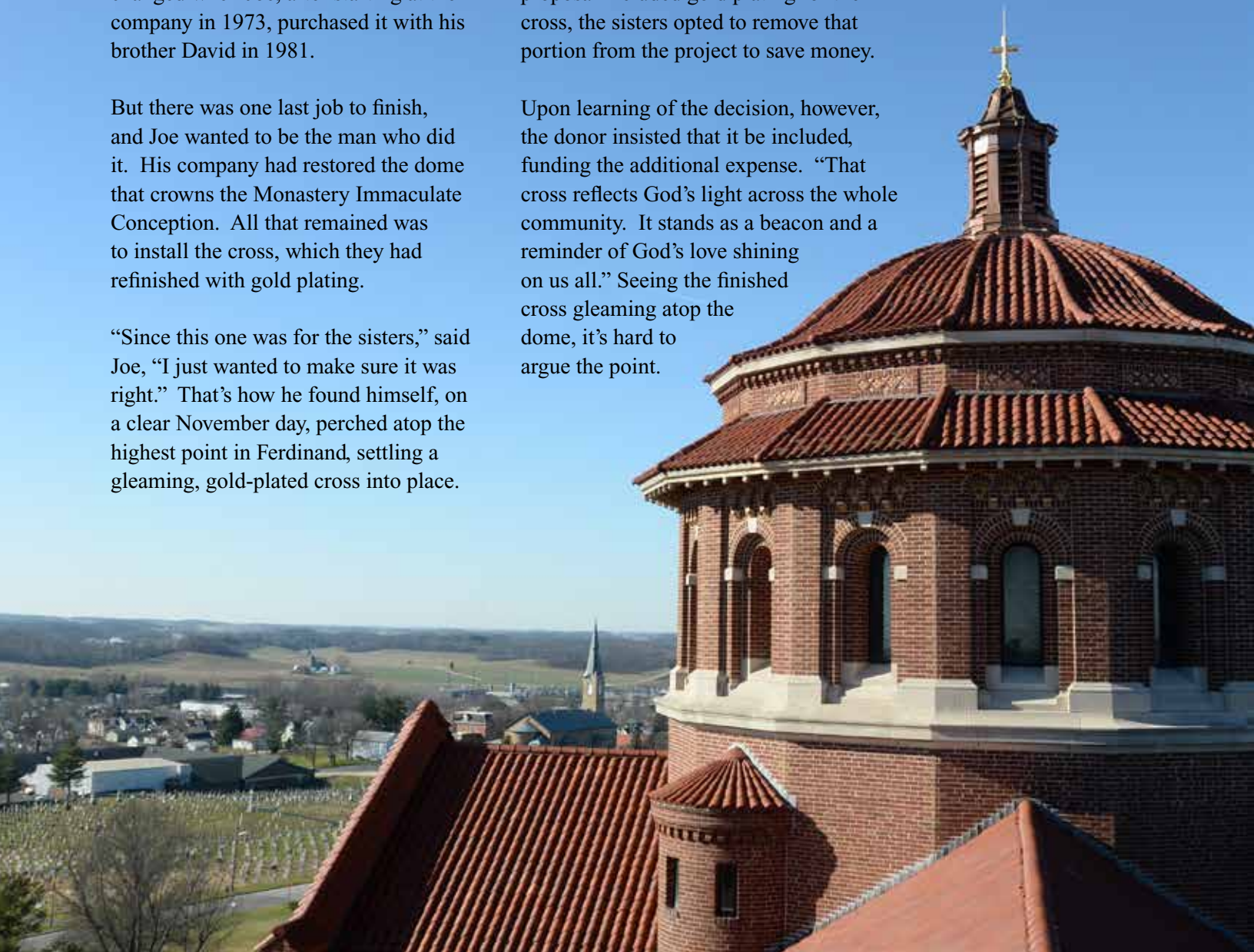
After 47 years, it was Joe Helming's last project. He was about to retire from Helming Brothers in Jasper. Founded as Stiegel Contracting in 1936, the name changed when Joe, after starting at the company in 1973, purchased it with his brother David in 1981.

But there was one last job to finish, and Joe wanted to be the man who did it. His company had restored the dome that crowns the Monastery Immaculate Conception. All that remained was to install the cross, which they had refinished with gold plating.

"Since this one was for the sisters," said Joe, "I just wanted to make sure it was right." That's how he found himself, on a clear November day, perched atop the highest point in Ferdinand, settling a gleaming, gold-plated cross into place.

The restoration of the dome was funded by a single anonymous donor. Stewardship is always first and foremost in the sisters' minds. So when the initial proposal included gold plating for the cross, the sisters opted to remove that portion from the project to save money.

Upon learning of the decision, however, the donor insisted that it be included, funding the additional expense. "That cross reflects God's light across the whole community. It stands as a beacon and a reminder of God's love shining on us all." Seeing the finished cross gleaming atop the dome, it's hard to argue the point.







Above, detail of the south bell. Below, the pulleys and ropes that make it all work

# And next...the bells

Three bells reside in the tower above the monastery, all cast by Stuckstede Bell Foundry in St. Louis, MO - one in 1891 and the other two in 1907.

A recent campaign raised the funds necessary to update the bells, which are still rung by hand using the original hardware.

Upon completion, the bells will be furnished with new steel stands, yokes, strikers, wheels and clappers.

Best of all, a new digital controller will allow the bells to be programmed to ring at the appropriate times. A remote control will allow the bells to be rung for special occasions.



A full-page background image showing a diver in blue water, looking up towards a large, dark rock formation. Sunlight filters through the water from the top left, creating a bright, ethereal glow. The diver is positioned in the lower left, looking towards the upper right where the rock formation is. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# A deeper dive

Have you wanted to deepen your spiritual life...but weren't sure where to start? Spiritual Direction from the Sisters of St. Benedict might be the perfect place to begin.

Spiritual direction simply means accompanying someone in her or his spiritual life. A Spiritual Director listens to your story, and together you listen for God's call and presence in the ordinary events of your life.

Through monthly conversations, our goal is to deepen your relationship with God by helping you learn to recognize divine grace in all aspects of your life.

Think of it as the art of listening for the movement of the Divine, but in the context of a trusting relationship.

## **How It Works**

You meet with one of our certified Spiritual Directors to explore your spiritual life. The goal, over time, is that you awaken to the mystery of God in all of your life, and respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.

Your director follows the "Guidelines for Ethical Conduct" established by Spiritual Directors International, which are available upon request.

Although it is appropriate at times to discuss psychological and relational difficulties in the context of spiritual direction, a Spiritual Director is not a psychotherapist and does not provide such services.

Your Director will hold your spiritual direction conversations in strict confidence. Your time together is sacred.

The Director will not reveal the content of your conversations unless you give signed consent (or where it is legally and/or ethically required, as in cases of actual or suspected abuse, or risk of injury to self, to a minor, or to any third party.)

Occasionally, the Director may need to use material from the sessions for supervision purposes, but your name will not be revealed.

The standard fee for spiritual direction, which is available virtually, in person at the monastery, or at other locations, is usually \$45 – \$60 per session, negotiable according to need and arranged with the Director. No one will be deprived of spiritual direction for financial reasons.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 812-367-1411 or contact one of our Spiritual Directors.

"Think of it as the art of listening for the movement of the Divine."



# Meet your Spiritual Directors



## **Sister Betty Drewes**

Sister Betty has degrees in education, counseling, and spiritual direction. In addition to serving as a spiritual director, she enjoys leading days of reflection, retreat presentations, and various personal growth programs with creative prayer experiences. She sees directees in southern Indiana and western Kentucky.



## **Sister Kathryn Huber**

Sister Kathryn Huber studied Spiritual Direction in the Institute of Spiritual Leadership at Loyola University of Chicago and earned her master's degree in Spirituality from Loyola. She also leads retreats and workshops, and is involved in ecumenical and interfaith activities and prison ministry. She sees women and men for direction at the monastery in Ferdinand, Indiana.



## **Sister Karen Joseph**

Sister Karen's education focused on monastic studies and theology. She spent 23 years in leadership in monastic community and is now involved in giving retreats and seeing people for spiritual direction. She sees directees in Ferdinand, Indiana.



## **Sister Joella Kidwell**

Sister Joella has a master's degree in biological sciences. In addition, she has a diploma in theological studies from Regis College, Toronto, which included training in spiritual direction. She also had continuing theological training in Rome, Italy. She has served as prioress of the Sisters of St. Benedict, president of the Benedictine Federation of St. Gertrude, and director of spirituality ministry for the community. She sees directees in the Southern Indiana region.



## **Sister Patricia Ann McGuire**

Sister Patricia Ann has a bachelor's degree in education, a master's degree in Christian spirituality, and certification in spiritual direction. She is a Pastoral Associate at St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville, Indiana, and Director of Temporary Professed Sisters for the Sisters of St. Benedict. She sees directees in Ferdinand and Evansville, Indiana.



## **Sister Rose Wildeman**

Sister Rose has a bachelor's degree in music education from Oakland City College and a master's degree in music from Ball State University. She worked as a music teacher and parish liturgist in the Diocese of Evansville for 34 years. She completed the spiritual direction internship in 2007. Currently serving as Subprioress, she sees directees in Ferdinand, Indiana.



## **Sister Jane Will**

Sister Jane currently serves on the Spirituality Ministry team as program director and spiritual director. She has master's degrees in education and Christian spirituality with an emphasis on spiritual direction, and a doctorate in psychology. Sister Jane has been a teacher and has served in community leadership. She sees directees in Ferdinand and Evansville, Indiana.



## **Sister Susan Mary Hooks**

Sister Susan Mary has a bachelor's degree in business administration. She completed the spiritual direction program in 2016. She has served as a business manager for St. Helen Parish in Louisville, Kentucky, as comptroller/assistant to vice-rector for administration for the Pontifical North American College in Rome and as the Administrator/Parish Life Coordinator for St. Agnes Parish in Nashville, Indiana. She currently is caring for a family member on the family farm in Arkansas.



# A deeper dive, too: the Oblate option

Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian men and women from all walks of life who associate themselves with a specific Benedictine monastery to enrich their way of life.

Oblates don't take on new religious practices. Rather, you promise to deepen your faith and lead an enriched Christian life according to the Rule of St. Benedict.

The spirituality of St. Benedict is so flexible that it can be adapted to the life of anyone seriously seeking God and desiring to live the Gospel message.

Through the Sisters of St. Benedict, you receive guidance and support in living the Christian life with regular Oblate meetings, the quarterly Oblate newsletter, and other enrichment opportunities offered by the sisters. As an Oblate, you:

**UNITE** daily prayer to the prayer of the sisters

**JOIN** in the community's celebration of the Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours

**DEVELOP** a relationship with the sisters

**SUPPORT** the ministry of the sisters as ability or time allows

**ENCOURAGE** and support vocations to the Benedictine way of life

**ATTEND** days of prayer and other spiritual enrichment offerings

**PARTICIPATE** in works of charity and justice in the local area

**MANIFEST** the Spirit of St. Benedict in all places and all times

**MEET** monthly, virtually or in person, for prayer, presentations, and social time

## Interested?

St. Benedict first had disciples some 1,500 years ago. Since then, Christians have been included in the prayer and work of Benedictine communities without leaving their homes, families, or occupations.

To learn more about becoming an Oblate, contact the Oblate Leadership Team at [oblates@thedome.org](mailto:oblates@thedome.org) or by calling us at 812.367.1411 ext. 2827.

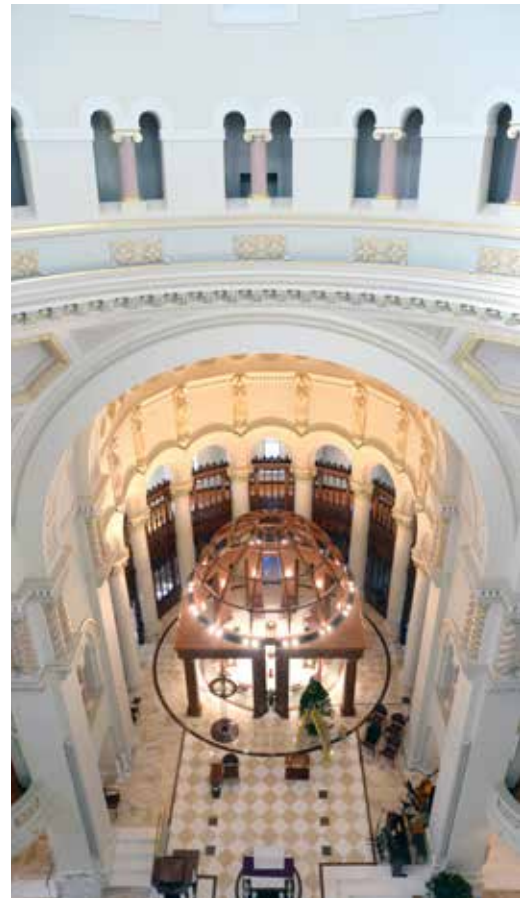
We'd love to talk!





# The hidden monastery

There are so many parts of the monastery that most people never see. Clockwise from upper left: the interstitial space between the church and the crypt; the view from the walkway around the dome of the church; the crypt below the church, which was the previous church; some of the inner workings of the organ; two views of the attic; and the cellar steps.



# How to spot a sister

Since the boom of the mid-1960s, the number of women choosing religious life has dropped off dramatically. But that doesn't mean women aren't being called.

In fact, we're seeing more millennials and younger women investigating life as a Sister. But how can you encourage a woman who might find this calling?

You might not think about it, but it's a wonderful way to support the Sisters: to watch for young women you know who might be suited for this life and feeling God tugging on their hearts.

Start by looking for small signs that might suggest potential for a call by God to religious life. Watch for these:

- She feels close to God or Jesus.
- She attends spiritual retreats or workshops.
- She thinks about God daily.
- She likes to pray.
- She reads Scripture on her own.
- She wants to follow Jesus.
- She's active in a parish or youth group.
- She likes to serve others.
- She enjoys spiritual conversations.

Thinking of anyone yet? Here are a few other signs that your "candidate" is already considering religious life:

- She has religious mentors or people she looks up to.
- She likes to work beside or just visit with religious.
- Her family or friends notice how much she enjoys religious company.
- She Googles about religious orders and seems intrigued by their lifestyle.

- She's been on a retreat or had a live-in experience with a community.
- She's made a discernment retreat
- She imagines religious life as an option.
- She's asked God if this is a call.

Is the young woman you're thinking of still in the running so far? Let's go to the next level. Here are serious indicators that a loving, persistent God may be calling her to religious life:

The idea doesn't go away. If she ignores it and looks at other, non-religious paths, this one keeps coming back.

She digs deep into all the reasons why religious life wouldn't be good for her. But even as her head builds a case, her heart is still stirred by that persistent pull.

The biggest of questions — "How can I know for sure?" — isn't enough to dissuade her.

She "tries on" other options, but they leave her heart empty, and she feels unsatisfied, disappointed, or restless. In discernment, we call this "desolation," a lack of peace or joy.

If a woman you know fits this description, the best thing you can do is to encourage her to investigate the full measure of religious life without pressuring her or implying any expectation on her part.

God wants her to be happy and so do you. So guiding her gently toward people and resources who can help her discern whether she is truly being called is an act of love and kindness.





# 6 steps to a successful sister

## A Call Initiated By God

The right motivation is so crucial. A genuine religious vocation springs up within your heart. It doesn't come from outside pressure or circumstance.

Even if some external event puts you on the path to discernment, your call comes directly from your Creator, who knows you best. If you're truly being called, that outside event just confirms the desire that was already stirring in your own heart.

## A Personal Relationship With God

The call to religious life builds on a relationship that already exists. A true religious vocation is marked by a longing for greater intimacy with the Lord — the sense of a deeper, richer life waiting.

How can you foster friendship with the Divine? Regular Mass. Frequent Confession. Personal prayer time with Scripture.

## Free Response To The Call

Are you considering religious life freely, out of your own desire? Or does the idea of a religious vocation weigh you down? You may not be able to answer this question right away. Some fear or apprehension is absolutely normal.

But if you're truly being called and responding freely, then somewhere along your path of prayer and discernment, your vocation will be your heart's desire, a source of great joy and peace.

## Good Health

Life in a religious community is intense and rigorous. You need physical, psychological, and emotional health to live cheerfully and generously in the community you enter, accepting their schedule, diet, work, and penitential practices graciously.

## Sufficient Maturity

Maturity can't be measured by age alone. We continue to mature our whole lives. But a certain level of maturity is needed for life in a religious community.

Community life takes personal responsibility. The ability to give and receive forgiveness. A focus on others above self. You have to be in it for the duration; to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus every day.

## Desire And Capacity For Living The Vows

If God is truly calling you to religious life, He'll give you an appreciation for the beauty of this call and the capacity to live it. The vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience are both sacrifice and gift.

You're offering God your natural capacity and desire for marriage and family, your right to own possessions, and your right to govern yourself according to your own will.

Fear not! Your Creator will lead you to safe harbor if you ride on the gentle wind of the Holy Spirit.



The book, *Discerning Religious Life* by Sr. Clare Matthiass, CFR, is a valuable resource for any young woman on a journey of discernment!

# In the bakery







Our bakery is always  
abuzz with activity.  
Left: self-proclaimed  
"Master Zester" Sister  
Rachel whipping  
up Simply Lemon  
Cookies. This page,  
clockwise from upper  
left: packing Spicy  
Pretzels; preparing  
Apple Streudel;  
packaging Shortbread  
Cookies; whipping  
up Hildegard Crunch  
Mix; loading lemony  
goodness into  
the oven: adding  
chocolate to our  
delicious Buttermint  
Cookies. The  
generosity of our  
Women of the Rule,  
keeps us equipped  
to bake all year long.  
Stop by the Gift Shop  
or order online to  
support the sisters and  
indulge your sweet  
tooth.



