

Joy in Living the Gospel

Women Religious in the Diocese of Covington

Winter 2026

from Sister Marla Monahan, SND, Vicar for Religious

United in Prayer This prayer for peace, sponsored by our women religious vocation directors, occurs every other month at 6:00 pm in Covington's Main Strasse at the Bell Tower. The next date is Tuesday, January 20, 2026. Future dates: March 24, May 5. All are welcome. The prayer is also live streamed.

2026 World Day for Consecrated Life Mass will be celebrated on Saturday, February 7, at 10:00 am at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption with Bishop John Iffert presiding. A brunch reception will follow in Bishop Howard Memorial Hall. All are welcome.

Save the Date The Picnic for Women Religious hosted by the Diocese of Covington and the Serra Club of Northern Kentucky is scheduled for Friday, June 19 at Summit Hills Country Club.

Blessed and Happy Advent and Christmas and New Year!

OSB

We mourn the passing of Sister Deborah Harmeling, OSB (1946-2025) a beloved member of St. Walburg Monastery. Sister Deborah entered the Benedictine community in 1964



and devoted her life to prayer, teaching, and service. She shared her gifts as a librarian, writer, and archivist, always reflecting a deep love of learning and faith.

Known for her sharp intellect, gentle spirit, and playful fondness for cats and dragons, Sister Deborah brought warmth and wisdom to all who knew her. She is survived by her brother George, dear friends, and her Benedictine sisters, who give thanks for her faithful life and joyful presence among them.



*"LOOK TO THE PAST WITH GRATITUDE... LIVE THE PRESENT WITH PASSION...
EMBRACE THE FUTURE WITH HOPE..."*

~POPE FRANCIS

St. Walburg Monastery holds 166 years of history within its archives—stories of 329 Benedictine Sisters who lived, prayed, and served in schools, parishes, and ministries across generations.

We are now preparing a portion of our archives to be housed at the Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) Heritage Center in Cleveland, where they will be preserved and shared as part of a national collection celebrating the legacy of women religious.



Sr. Cathy Bauer led the **S.E.E.K. Confirmation Preparation Program** for 8th graders at **Saint Agnes School**. As part of the program, students walked from **Be Concerned** to the **Emergency Shelter of NKY** and on to **Welcome House, Inc.**, learning firsthand about homelessness, food insecurity, and the challenges faced by those in need.

Srs. Cathy and Dorothy spent two powerful days in **Selma and Montgomery**, visiting historic sites of the 1965 Voting Rights March, the **Edmundite Missions**, and the **Equal Justice Initiative's** Legacy Museum and Memorials. We ended with prayer, reflecting on all we've seen and experienced. Thank you for praying with us!



The sisters are **once again** holding their **Pies for a Purpose** sale for Thanksgiving. We will be offering pumpkin, pecan, and apple pies. Guided by the **Benedictine** value of service, all proceeds will benefit **Hispanic immigrants**.

SJW

Each year St. Joseph Academy holds a breakfast with Santa for all the school children. The children come to see Santa, decorate cookies, do crafts and hear Mrs. Claus read Christmas Stories. Mrs. Claus is our Kindergarten teacher.



Lent seems far away but it will be here before we know it. That means we will be having our annual Fish Fry. It is one of the biggest fundraisers for St Joseph Academy. We serve over 1000 dinners each Friday during Lent. We couldn't do it without our many volunteers. Sister Philomena will be busy making bourbon balls to sell at the Fish Fry. She loves to bake and cook. And the sisters all love to eat what she makes, so everyone is happy.

The sisters are preparing to go to the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) conference. This conference has gotten so big, it will be held in three different locations. We will send two sisters to Columbus, Ohio and two sisters to Denver, Colorado. Being such a small community, there just aren't enough of us to attend the third location which is being held in Dallas, Texas. We always have wonderful conversations with the college students about religious life as well as their own spiritual life.



Sr. Patricia Jean with a young woman

SND

October 1: Foundation Day and 175th Anniversary of Founding.



October 1 marked our founding 175 years ago in Coesfeld, Germany. One of our celebrations was in Rome. An international group of SND's gathered at the Vatican during the Jubilee of Consecrated Life and presented Pope Leo with a Coesfeld Cross, our legacy from our first two sisters, Hilligonde Wolbring (foundress) and Elisabeth Kuhling.



In Covington, we celebrated with Notre Dame Academy both the 175th anniversary of the Congregation and the 120th anniversary since NDA opened its doors. Ms. Lauren Hilton was also installed as the fourth president of NDA at the conclusion of the liturgy.

FOUNDATION DAY
Honoring the Sisters of Notre Dame



October 4: Virtual Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation The SND JPIC committee gave a virtual pilgrimage for our sisters and associates on “Praise, Creation and Hope” to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Laudato Si. Sister Maria Francine Stacy, Sister Rita Geoppinger, and Associate Connie Ehrnschwender presented the program on Saturday, October 4th. The “pilgrimage” was presented in five sections: 1) Wonder of creation, 2) Devastation of the earth, 3) the Cry of the poor, 4) Our personal response, 5) Hope!

October 5: Public Jubilee Celebration On October 5, Sister Marge Mouch (Diamond Jubilee) and Sister Pamela Mae Geiger (Golden Jubilee) celebrated

publicly at St. Pius X Church. Sr. Marge has served in education and pastoral ministry in the Appalachian region and presently lives and ministers in Morehead, KY. Sr. Pam has ministered in education and at the Diocesan Catholic Children's Home for over 30 years. She currently lives and ministers in Northern Kentucky.



October 17 and 26: Fall Parties – October Fest at Lourdes Hall and Halloween Party at Lookout Ct. Of course,



we could not let the fall season come and go without an October fest and a Halloween party. Sisters gathered at Lourdes Hall on October 17 to celebrate Oktoberfest with German foods and songs. On October 26 we celebrated Halloween.

October 25: Grief Session About 25 sisters gathered for a presentation with Donna McCartney, LISW, a bereavement counselor and community outreach coordinator at the Goldstien Family Grief Center of Hospice of Cincinnati. This workshop was designed to provide us with the knowledge, tools, and support needed to navigate the grieving process—both for us and for those we care about. Donna explored with us the emotional, physical, and psychological effects of grief. The program also offered insight into how to support others who are grieving, fostering empathy and connection in times of loss.

Commemoration of the Faithful Departed On the Feast of All Soul's Day, the family members of our deceased sisters were invited to celebrate their loved ones during a 2:00 p.m. Mass at St. Agnes. A token of remembrance was given to family members in the Service of Remembrance/Litany of Names at the conclusion of the Mass. A reception followed in the undercroft. Everyone appreciates coming together once more as a Notre Dame family.

Online introduction to the Discernment Process –November 8 To prepare for the selection of our next provincial leader, the province initiated a discernment process on November 8. During the one-hour Zoom presentation, the following issues were shared:

- Dispositions to cultivate during collective discernment
- The synodal methodology we will be using
- Timeline for national/regional discussions
- Sr. Margaret Gorman, the current provincial, provided a summary of the “state of the province” and further considerations.

We invite all to join in praying with us on this journey of discernment that will culminate sometime in March with installation of the new provincial leadership team scheduled for July 5, 2026.

CDP

The Sisters of Divine Providence have found a challenge, a call, and a gift in advocating for immigrants and refugees. Early in October, we hosted a Honk and Wave in which, positioning ourselves at a busy intersection, Sisters, Associates, and neighbors rallied in support of immigrants, refugees, and allies. We had a wonderfully positive response. Also, to commemorate the Feast of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, we had two opportunities for prayer and protest. Several Sisters and Associates participated in an event at the St. Mary's Garden at the Cathedral sponsored by the Intercommunity Sisters Peace & Justice Committee. Two other sisters joined several religious communities and a group of



Xavier University students to pray the rosary outside the ICE Facility in Blue Ash, Ohio. Our Providence spirituality calls us to demonstrate God's tender care, particularly to vulnerable people, and we are grateful to be able to advocate for immigrants in these and other ways.

Another meaningful gathering was our annual All Souls Day remembrance of our deceased Sisters and Associates. We prayed and sang, told stories, and remembered them with love and gratitude.

We've also had some fun this fall, and Sisters and staff and Holy Family marked this spooky holiday with a festive Halloween party.





Lastly, we are so grateful for the volunteers who serve alongside us, and we've had some wonderful groups come to Holy

Family lately. In October, we partnered with Thomas More University for Saints Serve, a campus-wide volunteer day for students, faculty, and staff. They made our garden so beautiful! Two of the students who came also regularly visit and play cards with sisters. We also had a group of young women lead us in pumpkin decorating, which was fun. We are so grateful for their service and presence with us!



To commemorate the Jubilee of Consecrated Life, a group of Sisters from three of our Northern Kentucky congregations journeyed together to Alabama for a “local pilgrimage.” The pilgrims who participated were Sisters Dorothy Schuette, OSB, Cathy Bauer, OSB, Ruth Lubbers, SND, Jean Menke, CDP, Judith Riese, CDP, and Leslie Keener, CDP. An essential part of our journey was the beautiful hospitality offered to us by CDP Sisters Mary Cashman and Ginny Patrick in Selma.

As pilgrims on this journey of hope, we joined in the spirit of those who marched from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 for rights, peace, and freedom. As we visited the historic sites and reflected on the impact of the Civil Rights Movement, we also prayed for all those who experience oppression, violence, and bigotry in our day. In addition, we had a chance to visit the Edmundite Missions to see the amazing and important work they do — education, social services, nutrition, medical services, clothing, and more. We also took time to pray and reflect together along the way, noticing the ways that God is speaking to each one of us through this experience. What a meaningful time of community, solidarity, prayer, and hope!



CP

Our Passionist Sisters continue to remember our world, Church, and us in their prayer.



MONASTERY
OF THE
SACRED PASSION
ERLANGER, KY



Thank you to our Newsletter contributors: Sister Shauna Bankemper, SND, Sister Leslie Keener, CDP, Becky Motley for OSB, Mother Mary Christina Murray, SJW.