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Watching Papa's Plan Unfold!

On January 26, 2023, we gathered with Prayer Partners, members of The Sister Dulce Foundation, Inc., benefactors, and friends of the Community to celebrate Mass with the Most Reverend Michael G. Duca, Bishop of Baton Rouge, and watch as he blessed the grounds for our new Novitiate House.

It was a powerful moment as stories were recounted of how God's plan for this House of Formation, for young women discerning Religious Life within our Institute, has taken a decade to unfold and has overcome many obstacles.

"It's all about Papa's timing and not ours," said Kim Johnson, Executive Director of Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center, "and He knows just when the right time truly came; and this is the right time."

"I have come to set the world on fire."

Luke 12:49

Kim Johnson, who has been part of the whole journey, explained how Sister Dulce Maria Flores, HMSS arrived in Baton Rouge, in April 2001, to continue a prayer and healing ministry for the sick and dying. As Papa (Sister's name for God) began healing through her hands, and as she promoted deep devotional prayer, and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, Sister Dulce began outgrowing various spaces. Soon her ministry to hundreds of people became ministry to thousands of people and more.

In 2006, Papa instructed Sister Dulce to look for fifty-one acres in the heart of Baton Rouge, which Johnson says is, "a whole story in itself!" Forty-eight acres were purchased in 2007 with the remaining three in 2008. The building of the Ministry Center was completed in 2009, the Convent in 2010, and the Chapel of Divine Providence in 2011. All of this happened with the guidance of Papa, the prayers of our Sisters, and the help of generous donors.

Papa's vision was not yet completed. In 2012, the vision for the Novitiate House was shared by Sister Dulce to the Foundation Board Members Chef John Folse, Eddie Rispone, Paul Burns, Andre Bourgeois, Renee Giffin Kim Johnson, and Scott Deumite. In 2014, Phase One of the Meditation Trails were constructed.

"Anyone want to count how many Mercedarian Novices and Postulants were around at this time?" said Johnson. The answer was none. But Papa was putting all the puzzle pieces together because in Cleveland, Mother Rosario and Mother Jeanette were told that they would no longer be receiving vocations from Mexico.

They began translating all the Community's prayers into English, increasing their time spent in daily Adoration, and praying and fasting intentionally for vocations.

The first vocations began entering in 2014, which, looking at records, was the same year the Novitiate House received its first grant. Currently, our Sisters in Formation outnumber the number of Perpetually Professed Sisters we have in this Region.

"We needed you all to grow before we could talk totally about the Novitiate house," said Johnson, "so things are happening in different areas, and then all of a sudden this puzzle piece comes, because now you all have come, and this now makes the Novitiate House possible."

Now, with Bishop Michael G. Duca's blessing of our Institute to continue growing in Baton Rouge, Papa's plan has triumphed through patient trust in His Providence.

"The power of the groundbreaking to me," remarks Johnson, "just simply said from my perspective: 'I am God and you are man, and as man, you will not destroy what I have developed for the benefit of thousands of souls that will come on this blessed property.'"

Papa still has more of a plan for the complete development of the Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center campus and we pray you will continue to support us as we slowly unfold it with His guidance.





"It was quite a surreal experience to stand on the cleared land of our future Novitiate House for the Groundbreaking Ceremony - all I could think was, "wow, this is really happening!" As we outgrow the space in our convent here in Cleveland, there is much excitement among our Sisters that we'll soon have a place dedicated to Formation and big enough to welcome new women into our Community. I continue to be amazed by God's Providence as this project comes to fruition and am immensely grateful for the generosity and prayers of all our benefactors, family, and friends who are helping to make this a reality."

-Sr. Audra Hoffmeister,
First-Year Novice

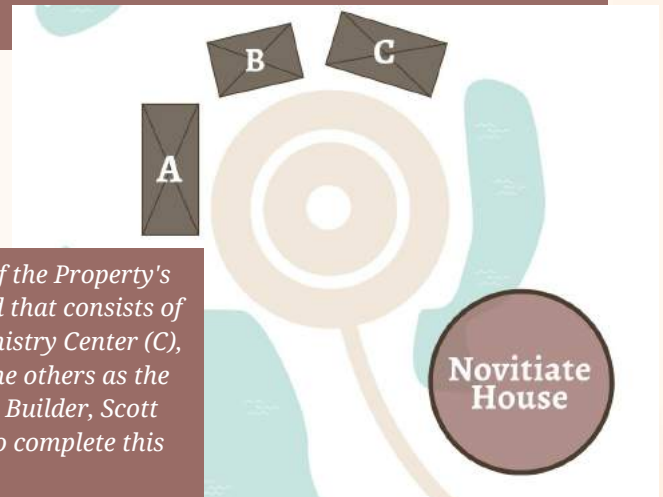
BUILDING PROGRESS & OVERVIEW



Novitiate House at
Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center
The Sister Dulce Foundation, Inc.

JAIRO LEON ARCHITECT

With the capacity to house 34 young women on the path to becoming a Mercedarian Sister, this two-story, 14,574 square-foot building will be financially sustained by God's Divine Providence, the salaries received from the ministries of our Professed Sisters and through grants and benefactors.



The Novitiate House will be located to the right of the Property's entrance, completing the 8 acres of developed land that consists of the Convent (A), Divine Providence Chapel (B), Ministry Center (C), and Meditation Trails. The Building will match the others as the original Designer and Architect, Jairo Leon, and Builder, Scott Deumite, Deumite Construction, have returned to complete this Novitiate House.



January

Bishop Michael G. Duca blesses the Novitiate House Grounds at the Groundbreaking Ceremony.



February

Mother Rosario met with the Interior Designer to make selections for appliances, flooring, and exterior bricks.



March

Exterior drainage lines were re-routed, pipes were installed, and dirt hauling began.



April

Dirt hauling finished along with the layout for the building pad.



May

Steel for 62 concrete drill shafts was delivered, prepared, and completed.



Summer

Foundation will be laid and erection of the building will begin!

Building Cost: \$5,200,000
Amount Raised: \$2,762,097

Still Need: \$2,237,903



Donations:

- 17560 George O'Neal Rd
Baton Rouge, LA 70817
- (225) 752-8480
- mercedariansisters.org/novitiate-house-building-fund/

Marching in a Post-Roe America



Four of our Temporary Professed Sisters joined six buses of High School students, from the Diocese of Baton Rouge, for their Annual March For Life Pilgrimage. This Year's Theme, 'Child of Mercy,' brought the students to profound encounters with God's mercy through the Sacraments, Eucharistic Adoration, fellowship, marching in D.C., and more! Below is a reflection on the pilgrimage by Sr. Ashley Marie Refugio Santora, HMSS.

My grandmother is the reason my heart goes out so strongly to this movement. Every Saturday, she has been going to the abortion clinic to pray, no matter if it is raining, snowing, or sunny outside. She has always been in her chair, with her rosary, since I can remember, and I am now 27.

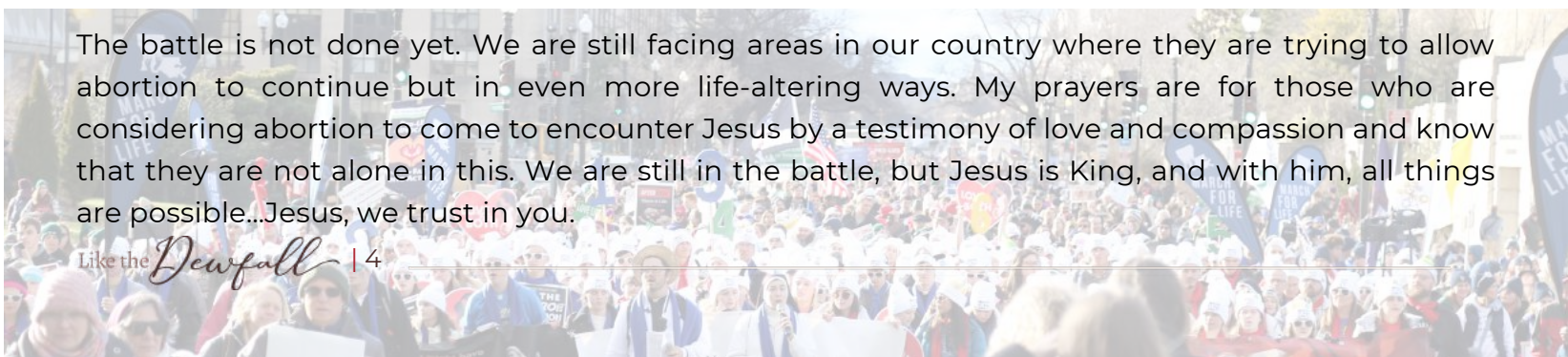
Once, I remember getting out of my grandma's car and seeing these signs with pro-life messages with Jesus and Mary. I then asked if I could go with her on a Saturday. I really didn't know what she did, or what my role there was, but I knew I wanted to be with her, and be like her, and this was another way I wanted to learn from her.

I would see my grandma cry everytime a car pulled in and just tremble and ask Jesus to come and help them. There was no anger, just love, compassion, and sorrow, all in that moment. It hurt my heart to see her weep and I wanted to be there with her and support her in this battle.

Being part of the Baton Rouge March for Life Trip was such a gift. Being able to see many youth, adults, religious and priests all coming together in prayer and fellowship to march for life was truly a beautiful spiritual experience. Keeping in mind that we were not tourists but pilgrims also really shifted the atmosphere. We were, and are, sent like the disciples to bring Jesus to those who may not know who He is or the message He desires for them: that they are loved from the moment they are conceived.

It was surreal to march in a Post-Roe March, and I am still unpacking all the graces from that time. It was only my second March and the environment was so different. There was peace from both those marching and those opposed. It felt like the 'Calming of the Storm' we hear in Scripture, which was quite an experience too. I have dreamed of the day seeing Roe v. Wade overturned, ever since the first time I went with my grandma to pray outside the abortion clinic. It was a whirlwind of emotions to say the least, and to be able to hug my grandma and say we made it was a memory I'll hold forever.

The battle is not done yet. We are still facing areas in our country where they are trying to allow abortion to continue but in even more life-altering ways. My prayers are for those who are considering abortion to come to encounter Jesus by a testimony of love and compassion and know that they are not alone in this. We are still in the battle, but Jesus is King, and with him, all things are possible...Jesus, we trust in you.





*Sr. Mary of the Angels
Correa Reyes, HMSS*
October 2, 1940 - December 21, 2022

*Pope Emeritus
Benedict XVI*
April 16, 1927 - December 31, 2022

Revival's in the Air!

by Sr. April Marie Josefina, HMSS



Photo taken from
Catholic Diocese of Cleveland Social Media

The chorus of a song by Bethel Music that I like proclaims, "Revival's in the air / Catch it if you can / He's moving on the wind / The dawn is breaking / Lift your eyes to see / He's better than you dreamed / Everything you lost / Love's returning"

I think this sums up the aim of the National Eucharistic Revival that is spreading through the Catholic Church in the United States and our religious family of the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament... may we all lift up our eyes to see our God is better than we dreamed and gives us all we are seeking through His Eucharistic Body!

Beginning in June 2022, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops called for dioceses, parishes and the faithful to partake in a movement to revitalize belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This "Eucharistic Revival" will culminate in July 2024 in a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. As an Institute dedicated to spreading the love of the Blessed Sacrament, we were very excited to hear about this Revival and wanted to be at the forefront.

Moving from the Year of Diocesan Revival into the Year of Parish Revival, most of our involvement in the Revival, so far, seems to be a natural living out of our charism. We feel that we are truly made

"for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14) as God is taking a spotlight to our spirituality and we are able to share it with others on an even grander scale!



In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mercy in September, our Sisters partook in a Eucharistic Procession on the Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center Property. The Sisters serving at St. Michael the Archangel Diocesan High School have been hosting 'Worship Wednesday' every week for the students and faculty during their lunch hours, which

consists of Eucharistic Adoration, praise and worship, and opportunity to receive prayer. Every Thursday, the Sisters serving at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School have been

teaching the young children about prayer and taking the different grade levels to Adoration. The Sisters also helped host a monthly event called 'Friday Night Lights,' (pictured to the right)

where young people and their families are invited on a Friday night to spend an hour in Eucharistic Adoration, with praise and worship and an opportunity for prayer with our Sisters. Our Sisters have witnessed young people driving over an hour to encounter our Eucharistic Lord, spending a shorter amount of time with Him than they did driving, and wanting even more opportunities to do so!

In Gainesville, Florida, our Sisters organized a Lenten Parish Mission that included a Eucharistic Cenacle (i.e., Adoration, Confession, reflections, and praise and worship led by the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary) and a 40 Hours Devotion for St. Augustine Catholic Church and Student Center. They also regularly participate in 'Nightfever,' an event in which the church doors are opened at night and passersby are welcomed in to light a candle before Jesus in the Eucharist and spend time in prayer.

The Sisters also help with a Eucharistic-centered college retreat called "FIRE", Faith in Receiving the Eucharist, (pictured below) and two Sisters are a part of the Parish Worship Committee, which is promoting Eucharistic Miracles by using a display based off Blessed Carlo Acutis' research.



Similarly, in Cleveland, several Sisters led a Parish Mission focusing on the Eucharist. They have participated in several retreats and youth conferences, in and out of state, that



involved Eucharistic Adoration, praise and worship, confession, and prayer for healing. They also host an event like 'Nightfever' called 'Emmaus' when the weather allows. With the school children at Our Lady of Mount

Carmel, the Sisters have weekly Mass and our Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM), which is a talk and praise-and-worship-based gathering before the Blessed Sacrament.

Looking ahead, we have more hopes for our involvement in the Revival. All the aforementioned communities plan to attend the Eucharistic Congress in 2024. Personally, I have been very moved by hearing Sisters share their desire to increase their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and to ask even greater miracles of God through His Eucharistic Presence. I have already witnessed a greater willingness in our Sisters to vulnerably share words they've received from the Lord for each other from their daily hours of Eucharistic Adoration. It is so beautiful! Praise the Lord for the fire that is spreading through His Bride, the Church, and through His little brides who love His Eucharistic Heart!



Forever Brides of Christ!

On April 12, 2023, Sisters Yvelyne Marie Bernard, April Marie Josefina Candelaria, and Lourdes of the Holy Eucharist Rebecca Furnells, HHMMSS professed their Perpetual Vows as Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Gainesville, FL. Bishop Erik T. Pohlmeier, of the Diocese of St. Augustine, was joined by priests from all over the country to celebrate our Sisters laying down their lives to be conformed *forever* with Christ the Redeemer in His Eucharistic Mystery.

The livestream of the Perpetual Profession continues to be visible on our YouTube Channel. As our Sisters are only beginning to dwell on the graces they have just received, we pray you enjoy some of the graces from the Profession that are already being revealed!



Sr. Yvelyne Marie Bernard, HMSS

The day before Profession, Sr. Eucharist and I were at Our Lady of La Leche Shrine in St. Augustine. I was sitting on a bench overlooking the water as the sun began to come up on the horizon. All of a sudden, I was wearing a wedding dress. It was wild! The vision/experience lasted the entire rest of the day and the grace I was receiving through it was "as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your Builder marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you" (Isaiah 62:5). During the profession, as Bishop Erik placed the ring on my finger I thought, "your word has been fulfilled" (Luke 2:28).



Sr. April Marie Josefina Candelaria, HMSS

What comes to mind now of the graces of my Profession is that I *have* been waiting for this moment. Intellectually and on a deep, spiritual level, I knew that my spousal union with Jesus had been a free gift given to me at baptism. Religious life has been for me a consent to a call to live out of that truth. However, when I was professing my vows aloud, I thought of the fact that I was not only consenting to live this way for the rest of my earthly life but to see its perfection on the other side of this life, and that in that moment, Holy Mother Church, with the entirety of my Religious Institute, was consenting to this with me. The power of this revelation was and is indescribable.



Sr. Lourdes of the Holy Eucharist Rebecca Furnells, HMSS

The day before professing perpetual vows I fell and sprained my ankle. Refusing to let the fall disturb what I knew was one of the most important days of my life, I leaned into Jesus and entrusted my steps to Him. The blessing being, knowing that He would carry me, as He always has, for the rest of my life. I am His and despite my frailty He has called me to be His bride, and is this not the beauty of how our consecration reveals the reality of the whole Church.



Like the Dewfall 19



Veni Creator Spiritus!

Come, Creator Spirit!

As our Temporary Professed Sisters prepare for Final Vows, they are mentored by a fully Professed Sister.

In gratitude for their love and support, Sr. Yvelyne Marie, HMSS gifted each Madre with a unique image that she painted!





Mercedarian Laity of the Blessed Sacrament

Entrance to Postulancy!

On December 10, 2022, we welcomed the first members into Postulancy with our Lay Association in the United States!

Laicados Eucarísticos Mercedarios (LEM), translated as Mercedarian Laity of the Blessed Sacrament, is an ecclesial movement based on our Mercedarian-Eucharistic Charism that welcomes lay people, single or married, to participate in our spiritual experience in communion with the Church.

It brings us great joy to begin this extension of our family here in the United States. We invite you to consider if God is calling you to live our charism more deeply as a Lay Member of our Institute!

Email lem@mercedariansisters.org to learn more about Formation this Fall!



"Even during our time with Catholic Gators, Catherine and I could already see the seeds of a Eucharistic spirituality through our daily practice of going to Mass and being rooted in liturgical prayer. Through LEM, what we are experiencing as a family is a living out of the Mercedarian spirituality, of "becoming Eucharist" in the way in which we unite ourselves to Christ out of love for Him and allow ourselves to be poured out first to each other as husband and wife, and then to our children. It is in this way, we evangelize with Mary in light of the Eucharist, striving to be "light and leaven" to the world in need of the Gospel. To experience support from our Mercedarian family has been a great joy and blessing to us as we continue to strive for holiness!"

-Matthew & Catherine Kuizon, LEM Postulants



UPCOMING EVENTS

Summer

June 4-12 - Superiors pilgrimage to Medjugorje

Sisters will be attending Summer Camps in the following places throughout June, July, and early August:

Catholic Youth Summer Camp (Centerburg, Ohio)

Life Teen Camp Covecrest (Tiger, Georgia)

Fidelis Inspire Camp (Old Fort, Tennessee)

Totus Tuus (Rapid City, South Dakota)

St. Francis De Sales (Brooklyn, Michigan)

August

13 - First Profession

September

1 - Formation House moves to Baton Rouge

Connect With Us!

MercedarianSisters.org



Vocational Inquiries

MercedarianSisters.org/inquiry-form/



*Our Lady of Mercy,
pray for us!*