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## Our Formation House Moves South

How many vans does it take to move a Formation House one thousand and ninety-nine miles south?

*Three vans, plus a U-Haul!*

When it comes to how many hands, the answer is a lot more than three! Our Formation House, consisting of Postulants, Novices, and Formators, is now living at our convent in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Soon, the Formation Sisters will move into their new home, set apart for those in Initial Formation — the eagerly awaited Novitiate House also located at the Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center (see more on page 3).

What did it take to make this initial move down south?

This is the story.

“I have come to set the world on fire.”

*Luke 12:49*



### *Preparing the Way*

Unlike John the Baptist, no locusts, honey, or camel hair were involved before Mother Jeanette Marie,

HMSS, our Formator, and eight novices made the move from Cleveland, Ohio to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but a U-Haul was sent ahead thanks to the generosity of the family of Sr. Joseph Marie, HMSS! After a couple weeks of packing, the U-Haul was loaded up with the help of two seminarians from the Diocese of Cleveland, Nathan Frankart and Cameron Ferrell. Then, Sr. Joseph Marie and her family hit the road. What went with them? What you typically find in a convent: habits, veils, art supplies, board games, a whole library, an exercise bike, and more!

### *First Arrivals*

Our Sisters already in Baton Rouge and the local community did much to prepare for the arrival of our Sisters in Formation.

As the U-Haul arrived, students from St. Michael the Archangel High School were ready to help with the unloading of the boxes. This first arrival, while necessary, pales in comparison with the second: the arrival of Elizabeth, Olivia, and Kristin, who entered our community as Postulants on September 23rd (see more on page 6). As the first young women to enter Postulancy in Baton Rouge, this marks an important moment in our Region's history!



### *The Caravan*

They came not by plane, boat, camel, or train... in early October, our eight novices and Mother Jeanette Marie, accompanied by the seven Professed Sisters in our Cleveland community, took on a two-day caravan by minivan. It takes a lot of prayer, laughter, and snacks to make a thousand mile journey, especially after the beautiful and thoughtful send-offs from our friends in Cleveland. Early in the night, on October 11th, the caravan reached the convent located on the grounds of the Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center property in East Baton Rouge.

### *A New Era*

We have the great blessing of not only building a Novitiate House, but seeing the progress with our own eyes, and hope to make one last move into the new Novitiate House in early Spring 2024.

What is this new era like so far? It is one of new experiences and exploration. The beautiful people of Baton Rouge have certainly brought it to a great start with their generosity and hospitality. For many of our Sisters in Initial Formation, there have been many firsts: first jambalayas and gumbos, first experiences of the South, first "warm" winter. The natural surroundings are hard to beat; with scenic trails, ponds, and wildlife, the environment itself lends well to prayer. The Chapel of Divine Providence is a beautiful place of worship and provides ample room for our Sisters. Best of all, in this home, there is space to grow, to invite others to come and encounter the Lord, and to invite young women to follow Him in building the Eucharistic Kingdom!



~ Sr. Beatriz Galindo, First-Year Novice

# BUILDING PROGRESS & OVERVIEW



Since our Spring 2023 Newsletter, there has been major progress on our new Novitiate House! We are excited to share with you these updates and we ask for your continued spiritual & financial support!



## Summer

Foundation was laid and the first walls went up on July 31!



## August

In one month, all the exterior walls went up!



## September

Bishop Duca blessed the Novitiate House during the Eucharistic Procession on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Ransom. Roof installation began.



## October

The Sisters in Formation moved to Baton Rouge. Paving, rough carpentry, and roofing were completed.



## November

HVAC, electrical, and plumbing rough-ins near completion, 50% of exterior brick completed, doors and windows installed, and much more!



## December

Exterior brick and stucco almost completed.



Thanks to your financial support, especially from our mailout this Fall, we are so close to reaching our Novitiate House Building Fund goal!

The \$5.2 Million budget covers the cost of construction and we have raised \$3.7 Million, leaving \$1.5 Million to meet our goal.

## Levels of Giving

Up to \$100,000 and above  
Most Blessed Sacrament Supporter

Up to \$50,000  
Our Lady of Mercy Supporter

Up to \$10,000  
St. Joseph Supporter

Up to \$5,000  
St. Michael the Archangel Supporter

Up to \$1,000  
Mother Foundress,  
Ven. Maria del Refugio Supporter

Up to \$500  
St. Peter Nolasco Supporter

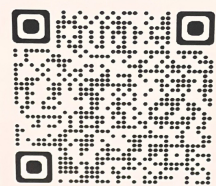
Up to \$100  
Pope St. Pius X Supporter

**Building Cost:** \$5,200,000  
**Amount Raised:** \$3,700,000

**Still Need:** \$1,500,000

## Donations:

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





 **Mercedarian Sisters *of the* Blessed Sacrament**

# Come & See

For young adult women 18-35 years old  
**November 10-12, 2023**  
**March 22-24, 2024**

Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center  
 17560 George O'Neal Road  
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Contact Sr. Chiara, HMSS  
[sisterchiara@mercedariansisters.org](mailto:sisterchiara@mercedariansisters.org)

  [www.MercedarianSisters.org](http://www.MercedarianSisters.org)  

~To Evangelize with Mary in the Light of the Eucharist~



Thirteen women attended our Come and See Retreat back in November. It was a weekend filled with prayer, talks, and fellowship. We were blessed by the presence of these young women and their witness of faith. Please keep them in your prayers as they continue growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ, so that they may respond accordingly and boldly to His love!

If you are a single, young adult woman interested in learning more about Religious Life or simply desire to grow deeper in your relationship with God, see the surrounding fliers for different discernment opportunities with our Institute in Spring 2024.

# DISCERNMENT DAY RETREAT

@ St. Patrick's



 **Mercedarian Sisters *of the* Blessed Sacrament**

**FOR COLLEGE AGE MEN AND WOMEN**

**MAIN SPEAKERS**  
 Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

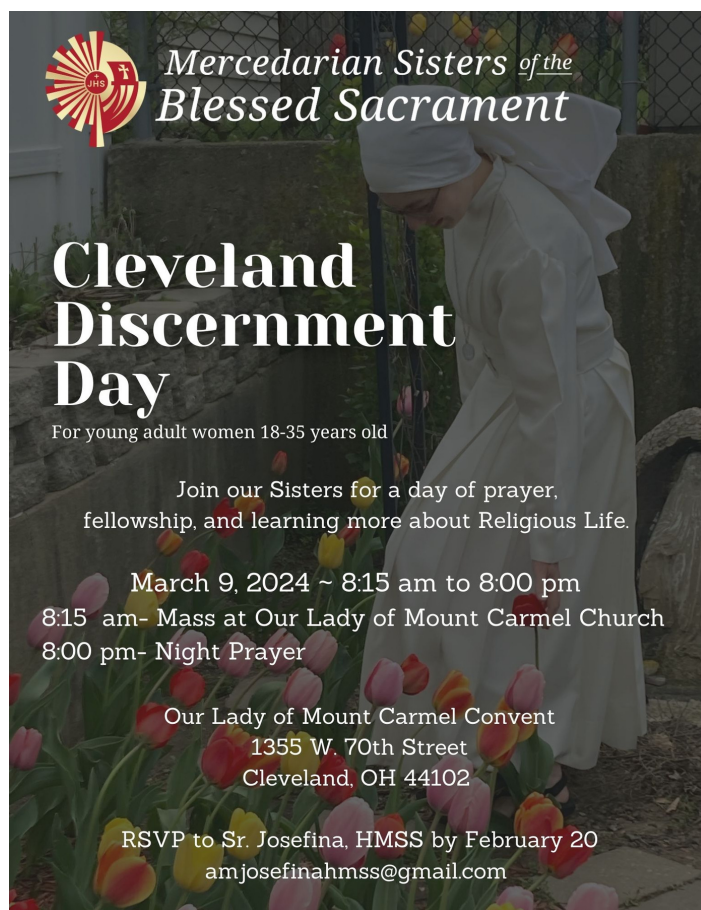
**BREAK OUT SESSIONS**  
 Drew and Ashley Hemingway  
 Gwen Evans  
 Fr. Joseph Hill, SJ  
 Fr. Augustine, SMMM


**MARCH | 2<sup>nd</sup> | 2024**

**8:00AM - 4:30PM**

Contact Sr. Yve Marie, HMSS  
[sryvemarie@catholicgotors.org](mailto:sryvemarie@catholicgotors.org)

Like the Dewfall | 4



 **Mercedarian Sisters *of the* Blessed Sacrament**

# Cleveland Discernment Day

For young adult women 18-35 years old

Join our Sisters for a day of prayer, fellowship, and learning more about Religious Life.

**March 9, 2024 ~ 8:15 am to 8:00 pm**  
 8:15 am- Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church  
 8:00 pm- Night Prayer

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Convent  
 1355 W. 70th Street  
 Cleveland, OH 44102

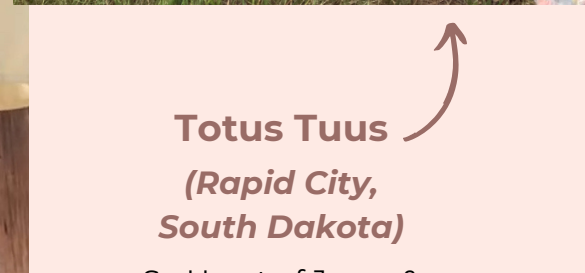
RSVP to Sr. Josefina, HMSS by February 20  
[amjosefinahmss@gmail.com](mailto:amjosefinahmss@gmail.com)

# SUMMER CAMPS

Each summer, our Sisters attend Catholic camps around the country in order to witness to Religious Life, spread awareness of vocations, and simply evangelize! Summer 2023 was the first summer we attended so many camps at once, and we are so thankful for all the invitations and opportunities we had for encounter! We pray these photos fill you with the same joy and hope we had at the camps!

## Catholic Youth Summer Camp (Centerburg, Ohio)

Sr. Josefina  
(pictured), Sr. Chiara,  
Sr. Mercedes,  
Megan & Katie

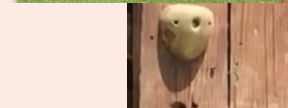


## Totus Tuus (Rapid City, South Dakota)

Sr. Heart of Jesus &  
Sr. Marie Refugio (pictured)

## Life Teen Camp Covecrest (Tiger, Georgia)

Sr. Chelsea, Sr. Katherine, Alaina,  
Beatriz, & Amanda



## Inspire (Copperhill, Tennessee)

Sr. Raquel of the Holy Spirit  
(pictured) & Sr. Grace



## Camp DeSales (Brooklyn, Michigan)

Sr. Eucharist,  
Sr. Trinity, &  
Sr. Yvelyne Marie



# Entrance to Postulancy



On September 23, 2023, during the First Vespers of the Solemnity of Our Lady of Ransom, our Institute admitted Kristin Foresman, Elizabeth Jasek, and Olivia Staverman into Postulancy. This marked the first time young women entered with us in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at our Chapel of Divine Providence. ***"Postulancy...aims at deepening the individual's human and Christian experience in order that she achieve greater maturity in her vocational choice for the Institute" (Constitutions #106).***

In the ceremony, our Regional Superior, Mother Mary Rosario Vega-R., HMSS, on behalf of the Community, received Kristin, Elizabeth, and Olivia and invited them to share in the life of the Institute so that they may better know the spirituality, charism, lifestyle, and apostolate of the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Bishop Michael G. Duca of Baton Rouge presided over the ceremony and was joined by Fr. Joshua Johnson, Vocations Director for the Diocese and pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. Within the ceremony, Bishop Duca presented to each Postulant a medal containing images of the Eucharist in a monstrance and Our Lady of Mercy, the scapular of Our Lady of Mercy, a rosary, and a chapel veil. The Sisters, fellow LEM members, and those present received the Postulants with great joy in a reception following the ceremony. Please pray for Kristin, Elizabeth, and Olivia, as they continue their journey and discernment of Religious Life in our Institute.

## Postulant Q & A

~Sr. Kathyryne of the Holy Trinity, HMSS

### **Q: What is one highlight from your Entrance day?**

The exterior signs particularly had an impression on me. I found myself putting on the postulant jumper, all clean and white and tailored specifically for me, the medal, and the white scapular of Our Lady of Mercy, when I had earned none of it. It was all a symbol gratuitous of the gift from the Mercedarian Community of allowing me to live their life and charism, so that hopefully by the Lord's grace, the exterior change in attire could become a sign of my interior conversion throughout the year of Postulancy. ~ Elizabeth Jasek

### **Q: What are you most looking forward to about living in community?**

I'm most looking forward to family life! I'm excited to take part in the traditions of the Community, especially with celebrations of Christmas and Easter! I'm also looking forward to the ordinary everyday moments to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, in myself, and in others more deeply every day. ~ Kristin Foresman

### **Q: What has surprised you most about living in community?**

In my few short months of living in community, I would say that the most surprising (and beautiful) thing has been seeing how each Sister shares her gifts and talents. Each one of us brings something different to the Community, and I have loved seeing how the Lord calls us to use these gifts. ~ Olivia Staverman



# Entrance to Novitiate: Into the Home at Nazareth

*And from that hour he took her into his home.  
~cf. John 19:27*



In the morning of August 22, 2023, *The Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Cleveland, Ohio, our Postulant Class of 2022 entered Novitiate. The Entrance Ceremony took place during Lauds (Morning Prayer) with Fr. Kevin Fox as the presider. From there, we began a two-year journey of prayer, study, and further discernment of our vocation within the Mercedarian religious family. The first of the two years of Novitiate is the canonical year, “which, in order to be valid, must last twelve months passed in the novitiate community” (Constitutions #112). This means we do not participate in works or events related to the Community's apostolate, nor do we visit our families during the summer as is typical each year.

In this “cloistered” year, we enter into an experience of the hidden life of the Holy Family in the home at Nazareth – the silent time during which the Child Jesus grew up, prayed, and worked with Mary and Joseph, learned from them, “and was obedient to them” (Lk 2:51b), until the beginning of His public life and ministry. Remaining in Community with our Sisters for this year, in this home and this holy family into which God has brought us, we seek even greater union with Him in prayer, in our studies, and in loving and serving Him in our Sisters. We seek to grow ever more conformed to Him, and ever more in love with Christ as our Bridegroom.



Every morning now, when we put on our veils - the veils that signify our consecration to Him and the hidden life that we live with Him, in Him, and for Him - we pray, “Sweet Jesus, by this veil I am consecrated to You. May it conceal me from creatures, and that I may always be for you a pure, holy, and immaculate tabernacle.”

Please pray for Sisters Beatriz Galindo, Amanda Hartwell, Megan Henle, Katie Krantz, and myself as we begin this journey of Novitiate in our Institute, that as Jesus has taken us into His home, we ourselves may become more and more a holy and loving home for Him.

*~ Sr. Alaina Furman, First-Year Novice*



*Connect With Us!*

[MercedarianSisters.org](http://MercedarianSisters.org)



*Vocational Inquiries*

[MercedarianSisters.org/  
inquiry-form/](http://MercedarianSisters.org/inquiry-form/)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January

- 2-5 SEEK24
- 6 CLE 21:6 Diocesan Youth Conference
- 19 National March For Life (Washington D.C.)
- 25 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)

### February

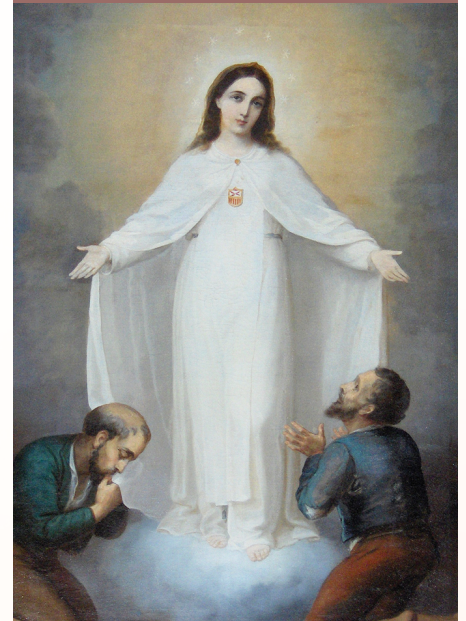
- 22 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)

### March

- 2 Discernment Day Retreat (Gainesville)
- 9 Discernment Day (Cleveland)
- 22-24 Come and See Retreat (Baton Rouge)

### April

- 3 Perpetual Vows
- 25 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)



*Our Lady of Mercy,  
pray for us!*