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## Our New Regional & General Council!

“We live in synodality towards a liberating renewal.”

For the next six years, our Sisters around the world will be uniting under this new theme. It is a fruit of the prayer of our Sisters who participated in our XVIII General Chapter this past July at our La Nueva Esperanza Retreat House in Puebla, Mexico. There, they evaluated and discerned how the Holy Spirit is leading our Institute to revalue our charism and continue building the Eucharistic Kingdom.

During the meetings, our new General Superior, Mother María de la Luz del Sagrado Corazón Acosta Bustos (Mother Lucero), HMSS, and her Council were also elected. Mother Lucero previously served as our Mother General from 2000-2012.

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

*Luke 12:49*



*General Chapter Sisters*



*XI Regional Chapter Sisters*



*General Council*



*Regional Council with Mother General*

We look forward with great hope to how the Lord will continue directing our hearts, and our Institute, in spreading the fire of Eucharistic love under the maternal protection of Our Lady of Ransom and spiritual patrimony of our Mother Foundress, Venerable Maria del Refugio.

Another sign of great hope was our XI Regional Chapter for our U.S. Immaculate Conception Region held on November 24-28, 2024 at our Regional House at Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Our new Mother General attended, along with two members of the General Council, and Sisters from our San Antonio, Gainesville, Maumee, Cleveland and Baton Rouge communities. The bilingual Chapter included newly Perpetually Professed Sisters and it was a great learning experience for them. It was a time for our entire Region, Sisters of all generations, to draw strength by sharing experiences, fellowship, and prayer.

The Chapter Sisters also elected our new Regional Council that will serve from 2024-2027 (pictured above):

Mother Maria Isabel Rodriguez, HMSS, Regional Superior (middle right); Mother Maria del Rosario Vega, HMSS, Vicar Regional, Economer, and Formator of Juniors (second from the left); Mother Jeanette Marie Estrada, HMSS, Mistress of Novices and Vocational Ministry Advisor (furthest left); Mother Rita Pinedo, HMSS, Apostolate Coordinator (second from the right); and Mother Maria Guadalupe Mier y Terán, HMSS, Coordinator of Permanent Formation (furthest right).

Throughout the week of Thanksgiving, we were also able to give thanks for the gift of our lives, vocations, and simply being together. We celebrated the anniversaries of all our Sisters who have more than 50 years of Religious Life, shared an incredible Thanksgiving meal provided by Chef John Folse, had s'mores, and even a praise and worship night where we prayed for each one of our communities around the world and our Mother General, Secretary General, and Regional Superior.

We are so grateful for all the blessings our Eucharistic Lord has given us and ask for your continued prayers for our Region!







# A New Foundation:

## *St. Joseph Convent*

In August, Mother Rosario Vega, HMSS, met with Bishop Daniel E. Thomas, of the Diocese of Toledo, and Fr. Eric Schild, Pastor of St. Joseph Parish, to officially open a new Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament convent at St. Joseph Parish in Maumee, Ohio.



Sr. Katherine Marie Chiara McCloskey, HMSS; Sr. Grace of Mary Kupiszewski, HMSS; and Sr. Chelsea of the Heart of Mary Parza, HMSS are the first Sisters at this new foundation. They currently serve at both the parish and school and throughout the Diocese.



***Sr. Katherine Marie Chiara McCloskey, HMSS, the community's superior, reflects:***

On August 10th, which is the feast of St. Lawrence, our new convent and majestic chapel (which used to be a garage!) was blessed by Bishop Daniel Thomas.

During his homily, he exhorted the Sisters to remember that *our main reason for being here in this new place is to be set on fire with Eucharistic love, so that we may share this with all those we come into contact with.*

He pointed out that the metal decorative piece on the door to the chapel looked like the grill that St. Lawrence died on! My heart was burning during his homily and I was pretty wrecked, in a good way, by the end of the Mass.

I frequently return to Bishop's words (especially when I see the "grill" on the door), and since seeing him several times after, he has constantly checked in to *make sure our prayer life is protected.* We are honored to be a part of a beautiful, big, active parish and school, but *our main reason for being here is to spread the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament...and this can only happen if we allow Him to love and transform our hearts first.*

***Please keep us in your prayers as we continue on this new adventure!***







# Summer Highlights

Our sisters were very busy this summer! We had many opportunities to spread awareness of vocations, bring others deeper into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, and to evangelize with the help of Our Lady! Not only did many of our sisters attend summer camps across the United States, but they were also able to attend the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. In September, on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mercy, we were able to share our love for the Eucharist by hosting a Eucharistic Procession on our property in Baton Rouge.

## Camp Hidden Lake



## Camp Chatawa



## Camp Covecrest



## The Franciscan Experience



## National Eucharistic Congress



"The Eucharistic Congress was an experience I will never forget! What a joy it was to adore the Lord with thousands of other people. It was evident that the Lord wanted to transform, heal, and inspire the hearts of all who were present. I pray that the Lord may continue to instill an ever-deepening love for His Eucharistic presence in our nation and in our world." -Sr. Olivia

## Solemnity of Our Lady of Mercy





# Novitiate House Update!

On June 10, 2024, we started moving boxes and furniture into the house.



On June 17, 2024, our Formation Sisters spent their first night in the new house.

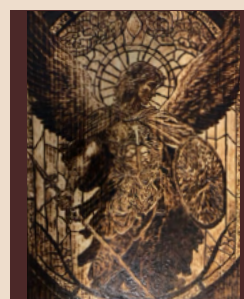


On June 23, 2024, Fr. Josh Johnson brought Jesus to our Chapel!



On August 4, 2024, we welcomed five new Postulants and nearly every room in the House became occupied!

On September 29, 2024, St. Michael the Archangel was declared the namesake and protector of the Formation House!



**We are so grateful for our benefactors who have given so much to our community. Your generosity has helped to provide a beautiful space for our Sisters to receive formation. Through Papa's guiding hand, we find our community growing and are excited to learn what He still has in store for us!**

**Donate to the remaining \$1.2 Million of our Novitiate House Building Fund:**



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



# Entrance to Postulancy

On Wednesday, August 7, 2024, during Vespers, we welcomed five new Postulants into our Institute! With our Sisters surrounding them, our Regional Superior, Mother Mary Rosario Vega-R., HMSS receiving them, and Bishop Duca of the Diocese of Baton Rouge presiding, these five young women were invited to enter into deeper discernment of the Lord's call for their lives and to share in the life of our Institute. The year of Postulancy aims at deepening each one's human and Christian experience in order that she achieve greater maturity in her vocational choice for the Institute, the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Please pray for Charlotte, Anna, Ana, Elizabeth, and Carly as they continue their discernment.

*We've conducted a Q&A with our new Postulants to see how their first year of formation has been so far!*

## **What is a highlight from your Entrance day?**

*Anna:* The formula we recited during the ceremony corresponded so deeply to the movements of my own heart. The new Postulants ask to live the life and vows of a Mercedarian Sister. The Superior replies to our zealous desire with an invitation to know what we ask for more deeply by sharing in their life. We respond by asking for the Sisters' prayers and good examples. I have daily experienced the prayers and good examples of my new community!

## **What was the biggest change for you upon entering Postulancy?**

*Carly:* One of the biggest changes for me was our clothing. I now wear a beautiful, white jumper everyday. The time that I would have spent debating what to wear, I now use for prayer every morning to thank God for the new day He has given me. I can now express myself through creating art, laughing with my Sisters, and learning every day how to love more deeply.

## **What has surprised you the most about Religious Life?**

*Ana O:* The mercy of our dear Jesus has been made manifest in so many ways. We all take care of each other and truly share in each other's joy. Even our family and friends become our Sisters' family and friends because we speak so lovingly about each other. Also, the things that I had previously thought would disqualify a girl from entering religious life (e.g. having been engaged) actually greatly increased this desire as I kept discerning by getting to know Mama Mary as she taught me how to best love her Son.

## **What is your favorite thing you've learned so far this year?**

*Charlotte:* Our most recent Postulant formation class has been about the Divine Office. I found it so beautiful how priests and religious have a special role to pray on behalf of the whole world, especially for those who do not pray or are in spiritual danger.

## **What is your favorite thing about life as a Mercedarian Postulant?**

*Elizabeth:* This year of Postulancy is about discovering who we really are in Christ so that we can become that fully. In growing together with the Postulants, there is always laughter. The joy and fun keeps us striving forward and binds us together, no matter where we are at or where we are coming from. Each Postulant brings uniquely beautiful qualities and gifts to the body of Christ, and in learning and growing here at the convent, these are brought out more fully and illuminated by love. What joy, true and full, is behind these gates.





# Entrance to Novitiate

On Thursday, August 22, 2024, during Vespers in our Chapel of Divine Providence, our three Postulants, who had entered Postulancy in September 2023, entered into the Novitiate and officially became “Sisters”! How exciting! During this private ceremony, our Novices-to-be were lovingly surrounded by our Sisters, their families, and some beloved priests. Mother Mary Rosario Vega-R., HMSS, our Regional Superior, and Mother Jeanette Marie Estrada, HMSS, our Novice Mistress, along with Bishop Michael G. Duca of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, received them into the Novitiate, and thus, into a deeper stage of discernment with Jesus and our Mercedarian family.

## What does it mean to enter into Novitiate?

Novitiate is a time in which these young Sisters will continue to enter more deeply into relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a time of being betrothed to Jesus (kind of like an engagement)! It is a two-year long betrothal before they will, God-willing, meet Jesus at the altar to make First Vows (wedding day)! As Novices, the Sisters take Novice classes with Mother Jeanette Marie, HMSS to learn more about the Mercedarian family, what it means to live our religious life well, and what it means to profess the vows.

## What does the Entrance Ceremony entail?

During the Novitiate Ceremony, our Novices-to-be stand in front of our Regional Superior, Mother Rosario, HMSS, and ask to enter into Novitiate. They also ask to be tested or tried by God in the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in order to see whether they are being given the grace to live this life before making a lifelong commitment. They receive the Novice habit and veil, with a nice haircut to go along with it, symbolizing their consecration and giving even their beauty to God! After this short, private ceremony, they are officially called “Sisters” and are betrothed to Jesus!

## What does your schedule/day look like as a First-Year Novice?

The first year of Novitiate is considered the “cloister” or “canonical” year, which means that the Sisters in this stage of formation do not enter into apostolic work or ministry. Rather than going out on mission like St. Peter and St. Paul, they spend their days in the school/home of Nazareth, spending more time in prayer and loving and serving their Sisters in community. They also take fewer classes than the other Sisters in Formation so that they have more time for rest, prayer, and discernment with Jesus in this new stage of life. It is a special time of communion with the Lord and with our Institute!

Please pray for Sister Kristin, Sister Olivia, and Sister Elizabeth (pictured left to right) as they continue their discernment toward First Vows (i.e., marrying Jesus)!





“This is who I am,  
the Bride of Christ...”



You're the Lover  
of my soul.”

Lyrics from “Bride of Christ” by WorshipMob



# *First Profession of Vows*

## **2024**

In the evening of August 15, 2024,  
during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the  
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
three of our Sisters made their First Profession of Vows!

Donning the official habit of our Institute,  
each Sister exchanged her white novice veil for the black veil of a Professed Sister,  
and her initial formation medal for the medal bearing the Mercedarian shield  
and the images of the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Mercy.

Each Sister also received a copy of our Constitutions,  
a crucifix to wear over her heart, and her new religious name!

**Sr. Sara Cecilia Ferreira, HMSS**

**Sr. Audra Magdalene Marie Hoffmeister, HMSS**

**Sr. Ashin Anastasia Roby Kalladanthylil, HMSS**

For the first time in our Region's history,  
the profession was celebrated in Baton Rouge at our Chapel of Divine Providence,  
with Bishop Michael G. Duca as presider.

Please keep our new Temporary Professed Sisters in your prayers  
as they live out their total consecration to Jesus their Bridegroom!

*Visit our YouTube Channel to watch the livestream of the Profession Mass and  
see more photos of the beautiful celebration on our Facebook page!*







Thank you to everyone who helped us at our first Fall Work Day in Baton Rouge!

We hope to see you on April 12, 2025 for our Spring Work Day! Let us know if you're coming by emailing [rsvp@mercedariansisters.org](mailto:rsvp@mercedariansisters.org)



# Coming Fall 2025: Encounter School of Ministry Baton Rouge Campus

We are excited to announce that the Encounter School of Ministry Baton Rouge Satellite Campus will be starting at our Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in September 2025.

Encounter School of Ministry teaches, equips, and activates disciples to demonstrate the love of God in their spheres of influence. Our Sisters have been so blessed by the School of Ministry and we have seen the Lord bear abundant fruit in our lives and those in which we minister to because of it!

We will have events beginning in the new year, including a Summer Intensive, in order to share more about what the School is and how you can attend! If you would like more information, please contact: Mother Rosario Vega, HMSS, Satellite Director [sisterrosario@mercedariansisters.org](mailto:sisterrosario@mercedariansisters.org)





# Discernment Retreats

**“Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.” (Luke 10:39)**

This October, we welcomed four young women to our Cypress Springs Mercedarian Prayer Center property in Baton Rouge to experience our life and community for a weekend and to have the space to be free to sit before the Lord’s feet and listen to Him!

Our Sisters shared their vocation stories and gave reflections to the retreatants. We joined together for different activities, meals, and prayer!



Hear from one of our retreatants...

“My weekend in Louisiana was amazing! All of the Sisters were so welcoming, I felt at home right away. Their love for Jesus and for me was evident in everything we did throughout the weekend. One night we had Adoration along with Praise & Worship and Reconciliation. It was exactly what I needed, and I felt the Lord’s presence so strongly. Altogether, it was a beautiful weekend that I’ll always cherish!”

-Alana

Are you looking for a place to hear the Lord’s voice more clearly? Join our Sisters to encounter Christ’s love in an intentional time of prayer and discernment.

## Discernment Opportunities Spring 2025:

Baton Rouge, LA Discernment Retreat  
March 21-23, 2025 (see flyer) >>>

Cleveland, OH Discernment Day  
February 1, 2025

Gainesville, FL Discernment Day  
March 1, 2025

Find more information on our website under ‘Upcoming Events’!

**Discernment Retreats**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**  
*For young adult women 18-35 years old*

October 25-27, 2024  
March 21-23, 2025

Cypress Springs  
Mercedarian Prayer Center,  
17560 George O'Neal Road  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817

Please contact Sr. Heart of Jesus, HMSS at  
sisterheartofjesus@mercedariansisters.org  
before making plans to attend.





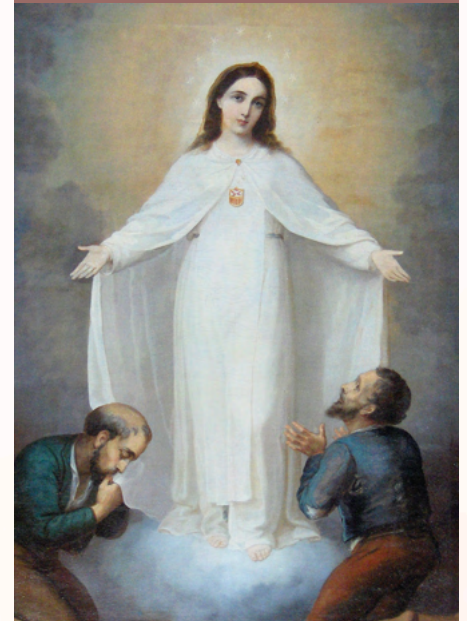
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*Vocational Inquiries*

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



*Our Lady of Mercy,  
pray for us!*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### January

- 1-5 SEEK25 in Salt Lake City, Utah
- 16 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)
- 17 *Fearless* Documentary Showing (Baton Rouge)
- 24 March For Life

### February

- 1 Discernment Day (Cleveland)
- 7-9 High School Retreat (Baton Rouge)
- 20 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)
- 21-22 Encounter Ministries School of Identity (Baton Rouge)

### March

- 1 Discernment Day (Gainesville)
- 20 Night of Adoration (Baton Rouge)
- 21-23 Discernment Retreat (Baton Rouge)

### April

- 12 Spring Work Day (Baton Rouge)