



# BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



Spring 2020

Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • 1001 Harvey Avenue • Greensburg, PA 15601

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The woman said, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything."

Then Jesus declared,  
"I, the one speaking to you – I am he."

– John 4:25-26

# Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



**You**, there! “Inspire envy! Push on! Keep your chin up! Get through it! Seize the day! Improve yourself today! Be unstoppable! Power through! Impress yourself today!”

The above messages come my way via a cough drop that I take in the morning to smooth my intonation of the opening verse of Vigils: “O Lord, open my lips that my mouth may proclaim **your** praise.” These two different life paths vie for my heart **by 5:15 am!** Me, myself and I equal the false Trinity with its focus on what I want, what I need, what satisfies me. The other way focuses on the true Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—becoming Other-centered and other-centered.

Each Lent calls us to reflect upon where our daily choices have brought us. Jesus directs us to turn away from sin and back to Him. When we miss the “mark,” we call it sin. This usually concerns some expression of selfishness and a lack of love for others—and for Jesus Christ. During the grace season we call Lent, Jesus urges us to clean our spiritual glasses, to examine our hardness of heart, and to make a U-turn that Jesus calls *metanoia*.

Growing up a long time ago, we “gave” up things during Lent – not necessarily a bad idea to forego snacks or TV but I knew that on Easter Sunday we got them back. Some years ago, one of our chaplains suggested during a Lenten homily that we do something during Lent that will change us for the rest of our lives! To work on an attitude, read more Scripture, attend Mass more often, add prayer, volunteer to help others: how God could change us through these resolutions—and not just for 40 days.

Even though I claim that that challenge has inspired me immensely so why we need yet another Lent? In the Rule of St. Benedict, Benedict nails the reasons in his 49<sup>th</sup> Chapter on *The Observance of Lent* vs 1-4.

*The life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent. Since few, however, have the strength for this, we urge the entire community during these days of Lent to keep its manner of life most pure and to wash away in this holy season the negligences of other times. This we can do in a fitting manner by refusing to indulge evil habits and by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial.*

“During these days of Lent”. Benedict calls us to make a concerted effort during these 40 days. Why? Because only a few monks, a few human beings have the strength to do it every day. We humans know all too well that we get tired of making constant effort, we find it difficult to keep our heart fixed on Jesus, our wills weaken. We set time frames when we will do better: when Lent comes, when we are not so stressed, or after our next retreat. We have endless excuses about how “external” conditions limit MY better reactions or choices.

“Negligences of other times”: what an apt description of



being tired of “keeping on keeping on”, of throwing internal pity-parties about “poor me” and how I am always doing or giving. How to celebrate Lent in a fitting manner according to Benedict? “Refuse to indulge our evil habits”: to **indulge** our evil habits, what a great phrase! We want to reward ourselves by taking the path of less resistance, to play the card that times have changed, everyone does it, and I will do better tomorrow.

Benedict continues that we should devote ourselves to prayer with tears and reading. Minimally our hearts should match our words and we should engage the Lord in prayer with our whole being not just with our lips. We moderns have so many choices or manners of reading: books, digital talks, parish lectures, access speakers from around the world on the computer. “Reading” can open our minds, inflame our hearts, move our wills to God and the things of God. Devote ourselves to compunction of heart: to truly be sorry for missing the mark, sinning, and choosing our ways over God’s ways.

Self-denial. I stand in amazement at how people deny themselves for a goal: practice of time and energy for a sports team, to get into a smaller dress or another category in a sport, to win a prize. In many corners, though, fasting and self-denial seems old fashioned like when we were growing up. But self-denial from what? Too much time on a computer? Too much time with friends and sports and not enough with spouse and family? Self-denial from comfort zones and buying the “right things” or belonging to the right places or wearing the proper logos on one’s shirts or shoes?

I cannot find Scripture quotes where Jesus encourages us “to inspire envy, to be unstoppable, to impress yourself today, and to power through; those tend to be our low default settings. Jesus came to save us from that mode of operation.

So what will Jesus suggest that I do this Lent? A question that by its very nature differs from “what am I going to do or give up this Lent?” The focus changes from me to Jesus.

“O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me” is a good place to begin Lent.

*Continued on page 7*

The ***Benedictine Touchstone*** is published by the Sisters of St. Benedict of Westmoreland County for our friends and benefactors:

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

## Join Us to Learn Palm Weaving!

Always wanted to learn palm weaving?  
Sr. Maria Johanna OSB and Sr. Margoretta OSB  
will teach you beautiful ways of weaving palms that  
will enhance your pictures or become a religious  
focal point for the coming year.

**When?** March 28, Saturday

**Time?** 9:30 – 2:30

**Where?** St. Emma Monastery

**Fee?** \$10 (covers light lunch and materials)

**For?** Anyone interested

**RSVP?** [benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org)  
or call 724-834-3060



*“They should value nothing whatever above Christ himself,  
and may he bring us all together to eternal life.”*

*(Rule of St. Benedict, chapter 72, fin)*



Find out more about  
the Benedictine-  
Nuns at St. Emma’s  
Monastery with a  
visit. Pray with the  
community during  
*Liturgy of the Hours*,  
follow the daily  
rhythm of the mon-  
astery, experience a  
meal with the nuns  
in the refectory (din-  
ing room), interact  
with the nuns, and  
listen to God.

Suggested weekends include: Palm Sunday week-  
end, April 3-5, 2020; Holy Week, April 5-12, 2020;  
Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25, 2020. You are  
also welcome to visit anytime that is good for you.

Sr. Maria Johanna, Vocation Director, may be  
reached at 724-610-7595.

Are you viewing Postulant Audrey on YouTube?  
Just search YouTube for “Audrey” and “St. Emma  
Monastery.” Check our Facebook page too!

## *Triduum - Easter Schedule*

**We invite you to join us Benedictine Nuns  
for the most sacred days of the year**

### **Holy Thursday**

5:45 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)  
9:00 a.m. Terce  
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)  
7:00 p.m. **Mass of the Lord’s Supper**  
**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**  
(until 10:00 p.m.)

### **Good Friday**

5:45 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)  
9:00 a.m. Terce  
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)  
3:00 p.m. **Celebration of the Lord’s Passion**  
7:00 p.m. Compline

### **Holy Saturday**

5:45 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)  
8:30 a.m. Terce  
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)  
9:00 p.m. **Easter Vigil**

### **Easter Sunday**

6:25 a.m. Lauds  
7:45 a.m. Terce  
8:00 a.m. **Mass**  
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)  
5:00 p.m. Vespers  
7:00 p.m. Compline



*Please join us for Mass and the Dedication  
of our new shrine in honor of the Year of Mercy:*

*The Woman at the Well*

*On Divine Mercy Sunday*

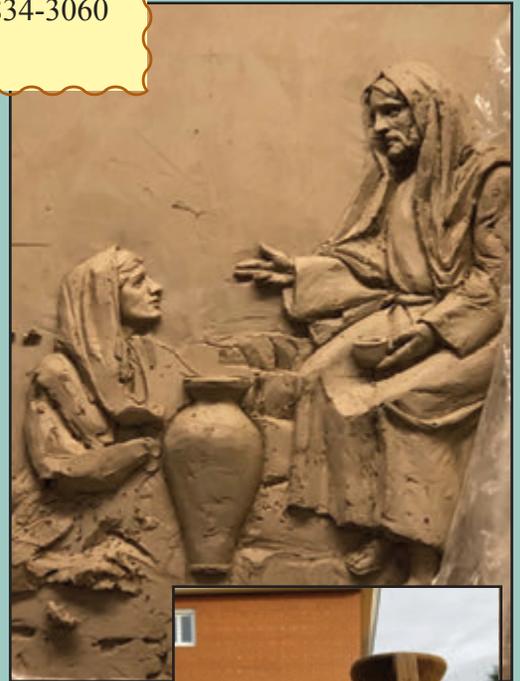
*April 19, 2020*

*10 am Mass Cor Jesu Chapel  
Most Rev. Edward J. Malesic*

*Blessing follows*

*Reception • RSVP appreciated*

[benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org) or 724-834-3060



Creating "The Woman at the Well"  
Sculptor Cliff Dupill, Athena Gardens  
Latrobe, PA

## Aspects of Our Monastic Life: Horarium - Our Daily Schedule



In each issue of this *Benedictine Touchstone*, we print our daily prayer schedule. In this issue I would like to lead you deeper into it. St. Benedict never states that “Ora

et Labora,” Prayer and Work, is the motto of Benedictines, but many people have looked at this Rule and summed it up in this manner. The horarium, our daily schedule, puts this reality into practice.

The word *horarium*, derives from the Latin word, *hora*, that means hour; *horarium* refers to The Hours, The Hours of the Liturgy that set the framework for our day. This schedule is the backbone of our day. Like our backbone, a schedule can be too rigid; without a schedule, we tend to achieve little. If we suffer from stenosis or arthritis, movement becomes painful and difficult. If we make the schedule too rigid, it can become burdensome instead of freeing. Without a backbone, we are like an oversized amoeba, an undifferentiated blob. The horarium guarantees that we do the important things each day and allows for a harmonious interplay of all the aspects of our daily lives focused on loving God and others.

Let me share our schedule and what it incorporates:

With the prayer, “O Lord, open my lips that my mouth shall proclaim your praise,” we begin Vigils at 5:15 am. Sometimes Vigils is called Matins and now it is also known as the Office of Readings. Vigils has one or more sections of Psalms called nocturns (depending on whether or not it is a solemnity) and two long readings: one from Scripture and the other a commentary usually from the early Church fathers. Originally, this was prayed in the middle of the night. Currently we eat breakfast in silence following Matins.

Lauds or Morning Prayer follows at 6:25 with Mass at 7 am. After Mass we have time for *Lectio Divina*. Benedict placed shorter times of prayer that he called “The little Hours”. Originally these had the same three psalms Tuesday through Saturday so they were very easy to memorize. Benedict said if the monks worked a distance from the church, they could pray them wherever they worked. Terce we pray at 8:40; we combine Sext and None at 11:45. These Latin words meant the “third, sixth and ninth” hours or at 9 am, noon, and at 3 pm.

After Terce, we as a community preview the day, noting the arrival of guests, special prayer requests, and the things that

need to be done that day. We also count the number of volunteers who will be here for lunch! After that we disperse to our various tasks that await us each day—and tasks that have a great chance of changing before noon!

After Sext/None at 11:45, we have lunch during which we read the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the Saint of the Day, a meditation on the Scriptures at Mass for the next day, and prayer requests. These requests from all over the United States keep us informed about the current sufferings of Christ. Sometimes we read news articles or articles from religious publications. Personal time follows dishes. Work begins again until Vespers at 5 pm. On Sundays and for Solemnities (the highest rank the church gives to a feast), Vespers includes antiphons and psalms from the following day.

Supper follows with some reading and recreation, which involves not only talking with one another but currently we enjoy playing cards.

At 7 pm Compline “completes” our day. In winter we use the soft lights on the side of the chapel that transition us from the full daylight to the lengthening shadows of the evening. Afterwards we process to the beautiful, hand-carved statue of our Lady holding the Infant and sing one of the four Marian Antiphons to her. This tradition of greeting Mary before we retire for the day dates to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Although we often refer to her as “Queen of heaven and earth,” royalty and royal titles are not indigenous to the American culture. We think about Gold Medals won in Olympic competition. Indeed, Our Lady would be the only gold medalist in the human race for she said, “I am the handmaid of the Lord—be it done to me according to Thy Word.” She did not declare her independence or claim to be in charge of her life. She acknowledged that God is God and that she was not! Mary was the first disciple of our Lord. Therefore, we give her our love and admiration.

After Compline, the time of Sacred Silence envelopes us and our monastery until after Mass the next morning. We have the extra time for more reading, prayer, and time for ourselves. We handle the Night Silence with great care and speak only what is necessary. One senses this embrace by God for the night. Thus ends the horarium of the day and prepares us for the next day to love and serve God and His people.



## “Be” - “attitudes”

By Barbara Mayer, Development Director



Recently I became a Godmother and with that title comes responsibility to help the parents raise up a Catholic Christian child. The baptizing church required me to take a Baptismal class which I did, but honestly I didn't think I needed it, just another going through the motions to satisfy a rule. You can probably guess where this story is headed: self-righteousness is not a very attractive characteristic but that didn't stop me from believing I already knew everything I needed to about Baptism. Not only are my four children Baptized but I taught a Baptism class many years ago. I already knew all the traditions and symbols, the rite and prayers, what more did I have to learn.

So of course the class did not go as I expected. Surprisingly most of the class required the parents and Godparents to share their feelings and thoughts about various topics: being a new parent and being a Godparent; the meaning of Baptism in your life; how will you cultivate the gift of faith in your own life and the child's. We spent only a few minutes on the traditions and symbols of Catholic Baptism. As the class progressed and I was pushed to think about how to answer these questions about my faith and how I would share it, I really felt my answers were weak and not descriptive of where I wanted them to be. Yet another great opportunity for me to be humbled by the Holy

Spirit: didn't know as much about myself and my own spirituality as I thought I did.

But wait! The Spirit is upon me! How blessed am I for I am not abandoned as the Lord promises. In my arrogance I believe I have all the answers, in His mercy I am shown a new path. The final exercise of the class was about The Beatitudes, one of the greatest teaching moments of the Bible. These eight very different tenets are core to how we should live our lives, yet they are often difficult to understand and act upon. The teacher presented the chart below to us as a tool for helping us to raise a child. This simple chart, meant to help children understand the Beatitudes, spoke to me and opened my heart to see how much work I need to do to be like Christ.

Certainly poor in spirit is a good place to start! I finally understood that to be poor in spirit means to acknowledge our deepest human need for God and to grow in that longing and that dependence every day. Blessed am I that God has opened my eyes, revealing how badly I need Him and that I am nothing without Him. His love and mercy have given to me the chance to become worthy of His Kingdom in heaven.

Each new day gives us the chance to change who we are, to frame ourselves in the likeness of Christ, to “Be-attitude” like Christ. The challenge is to accept this chance and let God take it from there.

### How Would Jesus Raise a Child? The Beatitudes:

Matthew 5:1-11

**The characteristics that Jesus said God would bless in us**

**Jesus' Approach**

Poor in Spirit	Be humble and grateful; ask God for what you need and pray for the needs of others
Meek	Be gentle, not harsh with others. In some cases give up your power and privilege, do not lord over others
Mourning	Mourn for your own and others' suffering; be sympathetic and caring
Hungering/Thirsting for Righteousness	Seek to grow in righteousness; seek to become aligned with God
Merciful	Have mercy on others; be forgiving; include others – especially the outcasts
Pure in Heart	Focus on God and what is good. Don't dwell on evil or allow evil thoughts
Peacemaking	Strive to bring peace to all situations and do not enjoy or encourage discord or gossip
Persecuted for seeking moral rightness or holiness or justice in the world	Stay true to your quest, despite persecution, ridicule, or other obstacles

### St. Emma Planned Gifts

*Within the last year St. Emma has been suggested as a memorial in obituaries as well as remembered in several different wills and bequests. These gifts are an amazing financial blessing to the Nuns.*

#### Remember the Nuns in Your Will

Wills and Bequests are among the simplest and most popular planned gift methods for supporting the Benedictine Nuns. The Will simply lists the **Nuns as a beneficiary of the assets**. You retain maximum flexibility and use of your assets during your lifetime. Bequests are generally deductible for estate and gift tax purposes.

#### Charitable Gift Annuities

An Annuity is a contract that **pays the donor a constant rate of return**. A portion of the interest income may be tax-free and a portion of the principle gift can be deducted the year of establishing the annuity.

Please call (919) 410-3525 to speak to Barbara Mayer, Development Director about a planned gift.



*Please use the enclosed envelope to send us your prayer requests.*

## Prioress' Reflection *Continued from page 2*

### The Woman at the Well

The opening sentence of the Pope Francis' *Letter Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) announced the Year of Divine Mercy from December 2015 to November 2016 and proclaimed that "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy." In John's gospel we read the touching story of Jesus and the woman at the well who receives God's mercy. Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well during the heat of the day. She is ashamed of herself and hides from the judging eyes of the other women when she is able. Meeting Jesus at the well is unexpected and surprising. Samaritan women were regarded by Jews as ritually impure, and therefore Jews were forbidden to drink from any vessel they had handled.

Jesus forgives all her sins, for he knows them and reveals them to her, and still offers her everlasting life: "but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:14. The woman is amazed by His words and runs to tell her neighbors, the very people she was afraid to see.

This parable grips and mystifies each of us as we enter into it. With whom do we identify? Do we approach the well at the heat of the day, another day, another chore—rejected by others and by our self-hatred? How often do we approach Jesus as a problem-solver rather than entering more deeply into a relationship with Jesus that will change us?

Or are we the disciples "amazed that he was talking with a woman," still unbelieving in Jesus' saving words, his merciful actions? Do we believe that not only can Jesus quench our thirst but He can also make his presence a spring of water welling up into eternal life? How many of us still tend to doubt that offer?

The woman at the well saw the face of the Father's mercy in Jesus. She experienced the redeeming love of God, his mercy, his compassion. No sin is greater than the merciful love of God; no sinner can ever forfeit his inheritance beyond the pale of the mercy of God expressed in Jesus Christ who died for us when we were yet sinners.

Where do these reflections lead us this Lent? What are we thirsting for? Where do we seek the living water and from whom? Are we ready to meet the Father's mercy through Christ his Son?

### *Thank You, Volunteers!*

Thank you for The Christmas Shoppe to all the volunteers who sorted, cleaned, beautifully displayed and worked throughout the event. Each time we have such an event, first time guests express awe and wonder at the quantity, the quality, the display and the friendliness, the organization. Repeat guests often bring others with them because they say they can never describe it. The event grossed \$19,000.

On January 5, nearly 70 volunteers and spouses joined us for Mass and a meal afterwards. God has truly blessed us to have such dedicated people in our lives.

CORPUS CHRISTI  
JUNE 14, 2020

MASS AT 2 PM  
FOLLOWED BY  
PROCESSION AND  
LIGHT SNACKS

ALL ARE WELCOME

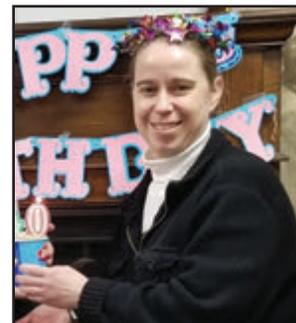


## Nativity Sets/Bethlehem Express Train Bring Visitors to Celebrate Season



The Bethlehem Express Train brought many adults who love trains; other train displayers, remembering their childhood and/or wanting children to see it. Many thanks to our chief engineer, Bill McLay, who literally engineers the layout and provides the trains and all the houses etc. His helpers included Bob Johnson and Jerry Martz. Nativities from around the world flanked the walls of the train display as well as the Retreat Dining Room and the original house. The displays of over 300 Nativity sets throughout all of St. Emma's took many hands and generous hearts – both to display, dismantle and store them. God bless one and all!

Thanks to Brady Train Outlet, Greensburg, PA for providing again this year a Thomas Kincaid train as a raffle prize. Children under 15 present for the display received a free ticket to enter the raffle. Brynn McChesney of South Dakota was the lucky winner.



*Celebrations of birthdays!  
Nuns only get younger!  
Sister Mary Therese OSB  
Postulant Audrey*

## Flea Market Set for June 18, 19, 20

### Attention Spring Cleaners!

Wondering what to do with those items you no longer need or use? Drop them off ASAP for our Annual Giant Indoor/Outdoor Flea Market! We have volunteers ready (and waiting) to pre-sort the treasures you bring.



Many thanks for your consideration.

Air conditioned; items displayed beautifully; delicious food, Benedictine hospitality, furniture, & much more!

**June 18: Thursday 2:00 – 6:00 pm Early bird: \$5 Admission**

**June 19: Friday 10 am – 4 pm**

**June 20: Saturday 10 am – 1 pm (50% off most items)  
1-3 pm Bag sale on most items**

**Homemade food and take-out available!**

**Volunteers welcomed BEFORE, DURING and AFTER**

## Rest in Peace

May they these souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

+ Dr. Harry Gillespie, Irwin, PA, died Dec. 9, 2019. He made retreats here for many years and left us a remembrance in his will.

+ Dorothy Meyer, St. Mary's, PA, died January 2, 2020. She had asked that in her obituary that memorial contributions be directed to St. Emma's.

+ Long-time volunteer Verne Holden, Greensburg, PA went to her heavenly Father on January 15, 2020, at the tender age of 94! We are grateful to her and her family for mentioning St. Emma Retreat House in her obituary notice.

We offer our prayers and sympathy to the families.

## Volunteers

**We celebrate you!** Please join us for Vespers (4 pm) and covered dish supper on **April 14.**

Respond [benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org)

## Save the Date!

### 10th Annual Tee Time for a Nun

**Monday, August 31, 2020**

**Hannastown Golf Club • 9:30 Registration, 10:30 tee-off**

Fee: \$100 per player which includes: Cart • Greens Fee

Coffee & Donuts • Lunch • Team photo

**Steak Dinner at St. Emma Monastery**

[www.stemma.org/events/golf](http://www.stemma.org/events/golf)



## Calendar of Retreats • 2020

**Feb. 28-March 1 SILENT** Women/men, waiting list  
Rev. Tom Acklin OSB, \$180

**March 6-8** Men/women Msgr. Roger Statnick, \$180

**Choose your retreat preference**

- Regular weekend retreat with talking at meals OR
- **SILENT weekend retreat**

**March 13-15 SILENT Lenten** Women/men, waiting list  
Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB, \$180

**April 24-26** Lay Carmelites, contact Stephanie Malley for details and fees, 412-373-1915

**July 18-24 SILENT** women/men \$400 Part-time also welcomed  
Saturday to Monday \$180  
Saturday to Tuesday \$255

**July 17-24 Encounter with Silence Retreat, limited to 15**  
Rev. John Mary Tompkins, OSB  
Monastic Guest House \$525, Retreat House \$450



## Day of Recollection and Preparation for Holy Week

Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB

April 4, 8:30-2:30, \$30

Reservation required: 724-834-3060

## Women's Emmaus Retreat

May 15-17, 2020, arrive 6:00 pm

Spend time with Our Lord exploring your relationship with Him. Learn to recognize Jesus in your everyday lives. Hear talks by other women concerning their walk with God. There will be time for reflecting, praying and participating in activities.

Cost \$160 for the weekend. Questions contact Pat Fitzpatrick at 412.915.0177 or [patf.emmaeast@gmail.com](mailto:patf.emmaeast@gmail.com).



## BENEDICTINE SISTERS

1001 HARVEY AVE.,  
GREENSBURG, PA 15601

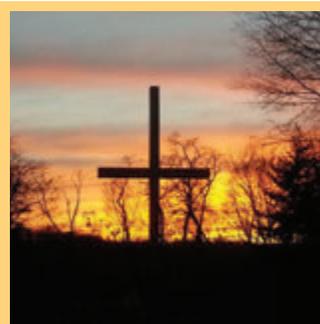
724-834-3060

**Gift Shop and Book Store**

**Monday - Saturday**

**10 am – 4 pm**

Wide choice of first Communion items, Catholic gifts and merchandise for all occasions: Rosaries, medals, crucifixes, statues, jewelry, pictures, Bibles, books



Please remember us when revising or making your will.

Our legal name is:  
The Sisters of Saint Benedict  
of Westmoreland County

Our Federal ID # is 25-1017575