



FROM THE CENTER

A Newsletter for Friends and Benefactors of Saint Benedict Center Across the Country

Raising the Standard

When the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace on the border of Canada and New Hampshire closed, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate offered us their outdoor Stations of the Cross. The Brothers caravanned equipment the 4-hour ride to the site and spent several days carefully dismantling these beautiful art pieces. They brought the set of fourteen marble carvings and the crucifixion scene, featuring a 14-ft, 1500-lb Carrara marble crucifix and statues of Our Lady, Saint John, and Saint Mary Magdalen, to the monastery.



After a few years in storage, this impressive scene is finally being reassembled. The Brothers raised the Crucifix to its new location on November 30, 2024, with the help of long-time friend Mark Fisher, who helped with the reconstruction. It was providential that the event occurred on the feast of Saint Andrew, who eagerly saluted his cross of martyrdom with these words: “O most beautiful Cross that was glorified by carrying the Body of Christ! Glorious Cross, sweetly desired, ardently loved, always sought, and finally prepared for my heart that has so long awaited you. Take me, O Cross! Embrace me. Release me from my life among men. Bring me quickly and diligently to the Master. Through you, He will receive me, He, Who through you has saved me.”



This magnificent marble Crucifix now welcomes visitors to the monastery upon entering the chapel driveway. Eventually, seven steps, engraved with the Seven Last Words, will lead up to the summit where Our Lady, Saint John, and Saint Mary Magdalen figures will also stand.

Set against the stunning backdrop of the valley, especially at sunset, the Crucifix is a breathtaking reminder that we should always live with the Standard of the Cross before us!

Expansion Update

It has been five years since we broke ground for the IHM School addition! Our greatest hope was to have the building up within a year—then COVID hit. Well, we all know how that went. About two years later, when normalcy began again, progress resumed on the project.

A magnificent building, tiered landscape, and rerouted driveways now stand where pine trees once stood. The Brothers' dedicated and quality workmanship shows in every corner. But while details are worked out and permits and codes are acquired or covered, we anxiously await the day we can officially move in.



Above: Brother Gerard and Brother Anthony Marie install a new chalkboard in what will be the new 5th grade classroom.

The checklist has definitely lessened. The new walk-in fridge and freezer are up and running, the last walls are being painted, and the woodwork is polyurethaned. The elevator is almost finished, but the most significant obstacles yet to hurdle are final inspections from engineers and town and state inspectors.

With your help, we can move past the final steps of this project and move everyone into the new building soon! Contribute to help on the school site ImmaculateHeartSchool.org.



Above left: The IHM School Woodworking Class delivers the cabinets they made to the Brothers' new dining room.

Above: Brother Gerard gets ready to install a window frame.

Left: School children leave the school building through the new entryway on their way to recess.





Above left: Sister Marie-Bernard stands in the new kitchen and (above right) Sister Christopher Margaret, Sister Maria Faustina and Sister Katherine Maria show the wooden cross that was refinished for the new building in the future refectories.

Right: Sister Mary Ann and Sister Gabriel Marie help out with some painting in the new entryway.



Far right: Sister Christopher Margaret and Sister Maria Faustina check out the new walk-in freezer that will be adjacent to the kitchen.



Pro-Life in a Big Way

IHM School's Saint John the Baptist Pro-Life League is excited to announce the launch of our new billboard, unveiled on December 31. This bold initiative marks a strong start to the Jubilee Year of 2025! The full-sized 15'x49' billboard (seen below) is prominently located at the busy intersection of Route 290 and Route 190 in Worcester, MA, where over 2 million viewers will see it in the next four weeks. We are particularly grateful to a generous supporter, who, impressed by the creativity and initiative behind our student-designed and funded billboard,

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has committed to extending its display for an extra month! This billboard is particularly special as it is the tenth to be sponsored by our student organization since 2017.



Gate of Heaven at Christmas

Christmas is particularly special here at Saint Benedict Center. While many visitors come to admire the life-size Nativity Scene on the front lawn of IHM Chapel or to visit the beautifully adorned inside, the gem of the Sisters' private Gate of Heaven Chapel is rarely seen.

The convent's private chapel is lovingly decorated with evergreen garlands, poinsettias, and Christmas trees. The Infant Jesus rests in a hand-carved manger, prominently displayed at the altar rail and surrounded by flowers.

With Immaculate Heart of Mary School closed for two weeks, the Sisters enjoy "a week of Sundays." This celebration also includes a visit and lunch with Bishop McManus, a tradition they have maintained for several years. Everyone enjoys the delightful atmosphere filled with laughter, storytelling, and blessings. After the visit this year, the Sisters gathered for a photo in the Gate of Heaven Chapel with Bishop McManus. We are truly grateful to God for our prayerful bishop.



Light in the Darkness

The two 6:00 AM Masses on December 7th and 14th at Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel were filled with the faithful who came to attend the Rorate Masses. With two priests at the monastery, each was able to celebrate this tradition a week apart, so it was a blessing to have the opportunity no one could miss!

The stillness of the morning hours seemed to mirror the silent expectation of the Virgin Mary, and the darkness of the chapel was broken only by the candlelight illuminating the altar—a beautiful anticipation of the Light that was soon to come into the world.

The Rorate Masses were an inspiring mid-Advent way to prepare for the coming feast of Christmas.

Advent Highlights



The weeks leading up to Christmas are a time of excitement and joy!

On December 6th, we have the wonderful tradition of welcoming the cheerful Saint Nicholas to our IHM School. We're so grateful that he carves out time from his busy schedule to spread holiday cheer—as he is the official Santa of Boston, even flying into the North End of Boston by helicopter the next day!

This year's Christmas Fair on December 7th was an incredible event! The Fair has grown in popularity in five short years to rival our 40-year-old Fall Bazaar! MacIsaac Hall is a kaleidoscope of sparkling lights, a museum of Nativity Scenes, delightful crafts, delicious food, lively music, and an infectious festive spirit.

On December 12th, we also celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a touching occasion marked by the lovely

tradition of Guadalupe Roses. After Mass, Father blesses the roses that embank Our Lady's statue and distributes them to students and Mass attendees—a sweet gift from our Mother!

We wrap up the school year with festive class parties, dress rehearsals, and the grand finale of the IHM School Christmas Program! This event is always a remarkable showcase of faith, talent, and holiday spirit. We invite you to relive the joy by catching the performance on the IHM School site at www.ImmaculateHeartSchool.org



Sister Maria Francesca, Novice

After completing her months as a postulant, the initial step in religious life, Madeleine Robbins took the habit and veil of a novice on September 8, 2024. She is now known as Sister Maria Francesca, named after the intrepid Mother Cabrini, her namesake and patroness. Please pray for Sister Maria Francesca as she embarks on her two-year novitiate program, which includes study and training in preparation for her First Vows. May our sweet Blessed Mother and the zealous Mother Cabrini be her inspiration and guides. Perseverance, Sister!



Shipping Room Records



Dan and Marian Kelly spearhead our True Devotionals shipping room in such a professional and efficient manner!

products from True Devotionals in hopes of finding and purchasing the right gifts. In December alone, over 1,000 orders were placed and shipped out, reaching not just the neighboring states but 47 states in total! December 16th saw a record-breaking day with 79 orders filled and shipped in one morning!

While the shop offers a wide variety of items, the products that remain the top sellers have been designed here at the Monastery: in particular, our exclusive sterling silver True Devotion Rings and Bracelets. A big thank you to Dan and Marian for their valuable help and to all our devoted customers who continue to support us through the True Devotionals Shop!

Our online store, True Devotionals, has been reaching souls across the country on a daily basis.

Early each morning, a couple of the Sisters review the online shop's orders and gather items in a pick list to send to the shipping room. From there, Dan and Marian Kelly, long-time members of the "Third Order" community, collate orders and carefully package each item to ship. They volunteer daily for hours behind the scenes to help ensure that customers get their products promptly. Most orders are shipped the next day, and a handwritten message thoughtfully included shows appreciation for supporting the Monastery.

The Christmas season is always an exciting time at the shipping room as Catholics across the country peruse

Displaying Mercy



Recently, Tim Kilcoyne donated an 8x4 two-sided weatherproof plaque of Divine Mercy in honor of his parents, John and Mary Hastings Kilcoyne. It is displayed on the south side of the new playing field behind the elementary school.