

Benedictine Sisters Install New Prioress

On June 5, Sister Elisabeth Meadows, O.S.B., was installed as the 11th Prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman. Her term of office succeeds that of former Prioress Sister Tonette Sperando whose term came to an end on June 5. Sister Elisabeth will serve for a total of six years.

A native of Georgia, Sister Elisabeth entered the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman in 2005, leaving a successful career as a nurse in both clinical and academic research settings to follow her desire to seek God through the monastic way of life. Following her first two years of Initial Formation, Sister Elisabeth was assigned in 2007 to serve as Associate Director of the Benedictine Sisters Retreat Center. She made her Perpetual Monastic Profession in 2012. In 2014, Sister was appointed Director of the Retreat Center and has served in that capacity since that time. In her Retreat Center roles, Sister Elisabeth has worked with individuals and groups from across the diocese. She has also welcomed guests of numerous different denominations to the Retreat Center, sharing the Benedictine gift of hospitality with a multitude of retreatants and monastery guests over the years.

Within the monastic community, Sister Elisabeth has served as website administrator, newsletter coordinator, Vocations Team member, musician, and Sacristan. Her committee work within the monastery has included the Communications, Liturgy, and Finance committees along with service on the Monastic Council. She has also served as a Chapter Delegate representing the community at the Federation of St. Scholastica's General Chapter.

Sister Elisabeth entered the community having already obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees in Nursing from Emory University in Atlanta. Since entering the monastery, she has completed two additional degrees – a Master of Theological Studies from Spring Hill College and a Master of Arts in Theology from St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. She has utilized her theological education through offering retreat programs in the Retreat Center, giving presentations to church groups, and teaching in the monastery's Initial Formation program. Sister Elisabeth has also served on three planning committees within the Federation of St. Scholastica, the Federation of Benedictine women's communities to which the Sacred Heart community belongs.

The election of a new leader is a significant event in the life of every monastic community. It is not merely a matter of selecting a leader who can guide well the temporal affairs of the community. Rather, St. Benedict's vision of the monastic leader incorporates a strong element of Christ-like servant leadership and spiritual stewardship of the community. Thus, the discernment process takes on a deeply spiritual hue as the community seeks to recognize who God is calling to fill this important role at this particular time in the life of the community.

Presiding over the April 18 election was Sister Kimberly Porter, O.S.B., Councilor of the Federation of St. Scholastica. The election discernment process was facilitated by Sister Aileen Bankemper, O.S.B., Prioress of St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, KY.

The Installation Mass was held in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel with Abbot Marcus Voss, O.S.B., presiding over the Eucharistic Celebration and Msgr. Michael Sexton concelebrating. Sister Tonette Sperando, O.S.B., outgoing Prioress, led the Rite of Installation. Attendance was limited due to COVID-19, but Sister Elisabeth's family was in attendance, along with monks of St. Bernard Abbey, Oblates of Sacred Heart Monastery, and friends from around the diocese. A joyous reception followed the Installation Mass.