BENEDICTINE SISTERS SACRED HEART MONASTERY in CULLMAN, ALABAMA

916 Convent Road NE, Cullman, AL 35055 ~ *www.shmon.org* ~ (256)734-4622

November 22, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE_____

CULLMAN—Sister Priscilla Cohen, O.S.B., a Benedictine Sister of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, AL, passed into the arms of God on November 20, 2023. She was 75 years of age.

Reception of the body with Vespers will be held Sunday, November 26, at 4:45 PM in Sacred Heart Monastery Chapel in Cullman. Visitation will follow until 7:30 PM. The Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Monday, November 27, at 3:00 PM. Interment in the monastery cemetery will follow.

Sister Priscilla was born at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida to Walter and Eugenia Cohen, the oldest of nine children. She was baptized Priscilla Maria in the base chapel at Eglin. Her father's military career led the close-knit family to destinations across the country. After the family settled permanently in Pensacola, Florida, Sister attended Pensacola Catholic High School. Here, she was taught by Benedictine Sisters and began to feel an attraction to religious life.

After completing high school, Sister Priscilla entered Sacred Heart Monastery as a postulant and moved through the stages of monastic formation with a steady focus on her desire to serve God. During these years of formation, Sister Priscilla earned an A.A. Degree from Sacred Heart College and began the ministry of education.

Prior to making Perpetual Profession, Sister Priscilla discerned that she was not ready to make a life-long commitment to monastic life. She went on to earn a degree from St. Vincent School of Nursing and embarked on a career as a registered nurse, serving at St. Vincent Hospital in Birmingham, the University of Alabama in Birmingham, and Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, where she served as head nurse in the critical care unit.

Sister Priscilla continued to feel drawn toward religious life even as she was professionally fulfilled in her nursing role. After much discernment, she re-entered the monastic community at Sacred Heart in 1987 and made her perpetual profession in 1993. While studying in the monastic formation program required for re-entry, Sister Priscilla ministered as a nurse in the Department of Public Health in Cullman. She furthered her education during this period by earning a BA in Health Arts from the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL.

Alongside her formal ministry and the prayer and work of the community, Sister Priscilla nurtured her spiritual life through silent prayer, mentorship in the art of spiritual direction, and experiencing the

expression of God's beauty in nature. Poetry was a particular way in which she drew close to God. Not only did Sister Priscilla find spiritual sustenance through reading and pondering poetry, she enjoyed writing personal poems, particularly in the haiku form. This balance of ministry and prayer was once expressed by her as being the "freedom to encounter the mystery of God and availability to share this encounter with others through love and service."

In addition to nursing, a key way in which Sister Priscilla ministered was service and leadership within the monastic community. At various times, she served as subprioress, infirmarian, monastic coordinator, community secretary, Communications Committee member, and oblate director. She also led retreats, composed creative prayer services and reflections, regularly contributed to the community's social media and blog, and worked with the Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment.

A role much-loved by Sister Priscilla was that of Oblate Director. First appointed to this position in 2001, she coordinated the monastery's oblate program for over twenty years. As director, Sister Priscilla helped guide lay men and women who desired to incorporate Benedictine values and practices into their lives and associate themselves with Sacred Heart Monastery as Benedictine Oblates. She was currently serving her second term as President of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors.

A poetic perspective, a contemplative spirit, and a love of nature's beauty characterized Sister Priscilla. Her quiet ways of taking care of many things well also typified her life in monastic community. She exemplified the words she once wrote - "freedom to encounter the mystery of God and availability to share this encounter with others through love and service."

Sister Priscilla was preceded in death by her parents and by two brothers, David Cohen and Kenneth Cohen. Survivors include the Benedictine community; four sisters, Frances (Vincent) Noa, Cynthia (Reggie) Jernigan, Lynn (Terry) Reed, and Debbie (Steve) Hendricks; two brothers, Wayne Cohen and Steve Cohen; aunt and godmother, Virginia Maher Cafaro; and many beloved nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, grand-nephews, and other extended family.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, AL, 916 Convent Rd., NE, Cullman, AL, 35055, or shmon.org/support-us. Sister Priscilla was preceded in death by her parents and by two brothers, David Cohen and Kenneth Cohen. Survivors include the Benedictine community; four sisters, Frances (Vincent) Noa, Cynthia (Reggie) Jernigan, Lynn (Terry) Reed, and Debbie (Steve) Hendricks; two brothers, Wayne Cohen and Steve Cohen; aunt and godmother, Virginia Maher Cafaro; and many beloved nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, grand-nephews, and other extended family.