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Film

Franklin documentary invites you to come alive

Aretha Franklin documentary "Amazing Grace" offers an authentic and joyous worship experience, if you allow it to take you there.



Project

A church rises — out of 500,000 Legos

At the Washington National Cathedral, the Lego fundraising project will support work to repair damage from the 2011 earthquake.



Television

Figuring out life as a Muslim millennial

Comedian Ramy Youssef is still figuring out life as a Muslim millennial. So he made a show about it.

## Silent Sanctuary

### The Passionist Nuns Retreat House offers a quiet place to commune with God, nature

BY RENEE BEASLEY JONES  
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

In this hustle-bustle world, it's easy to forget the power of silence.

Imagine a place where no car engines roar. No phones ping or ring. No TVs or radios play.

Instead, the only sounds are natural — geese honking, wrens trilling and leaves rustling.

On the outskirts of Whitesville, Crisp Road leads to a sanctuary of silence.

The Saint Joseph Monastery is perhaps Daviess County's best-kept secret, said Mother John Mary Read, the monastery's superior.

The monastery — home to 14 Passionist Nuns — sits deep inside a 170-acre wooded retreat. A mile-long road winds up, down and around hills. Occasionally, one of the monastery's many paths cuts across the woods and meets the road.

At a clearing, guests get their first glimpse of a manicured meadow, picturesque lake and sprawling red brick monastery.

The Passionist Nuns moved from Owensboro to this secluded spot in 1995. They are cloistered and dedicated to prayer and a contemplative lifestyle. As Owensboro grew, it encroached on their former monastery, which is now the Boulware Mission.

The nuns do not take a vow of silence, but they spend most of their day in silence — except when they are chanting in the chapel, conducting Mass and during brief break times after meals. Up to four times a month, the nuns have afternoons when they are free to talk and enjoy each other's company.

"Keeping an atmosphere of silence is very important," Mother John Mary said.

The Whitesville nuns are the only Passionist Nuns in western Kentucky. They live in one of only five Passionist Nuns monasteries in the United States.

Seven times a day they gather in the monastery's chapel for prayer. They wake at 4:30 a.m. — long before most regional residents leave their beds. They begin the day's cycle of worship and prayer with the Liturgy of the Hours at 4:45 a.m. Their final or night prayer begins at 8 p.m.



Photos by Alan Warren, Messenger-Inquirer | [awarren@messenger-inquirer.com](mailto:awarren@messenger-inquirer.com)  
Mother John Mary Read stands inside the library in the Retreat House on Wednesday at the Saint Joseph Monastery.

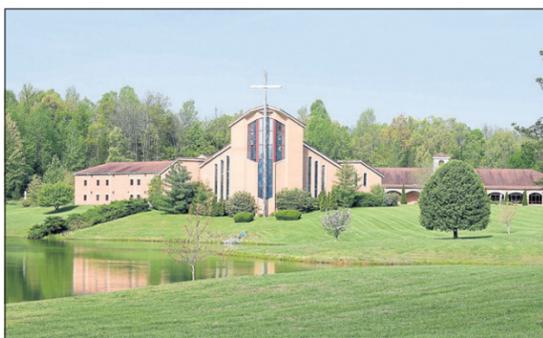


### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Passionist Nuns of Whitesville spend hours each day in prayer. They welcome prayer requests on their website at [www.passionistnuns.org](http://www.passionistnuns.org).

Also, they operate the Passionate Nuns Retreat House at Saint Joseph Monastery. Reservations can be made on the website.

Left: Christie Swanson, left, and Mother John Mary Read look over items in the Passionist Inspiration Shop at the Retreat House on Wednesday at the Saint Joseph Monastery.



Above left: The Saint Joseph Monastery, which houses the Passionist Nuns Retreat House, sits on 170 acres in the woodlands outside Whitesville. Above right: A Retreat House guest room at the Saint Joseph Monastery in Whitesville is shown.



Whether they are in the chapel or during their own private prayer time, they spend hours daily lifting up the world in prayer and praising God.

"If there is talking all the time, it dissipates prayerfulness and

attentiveness," Mother John Mary said. "Silence is so conducive to meditating."

Anyone can experience the monastery's healing power of prayer, peace and quiet. The nuns operate the Passionist

Nuns Retreat House, which is connected to the monastery. In the retreat house, one word is posted in various places: silence.

Retreatants, or those on

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## Let's celebrate National Day of Prayer together

It's springtime!

There are so many spiritual "power" moments in this season: Ridvan (Baha'i), Buddha Day (some Buddhists), Easter (Christians), Ramayana and Rama Navami (some Hindus), Mahavir Jayanti (Jains), Passover (Jews), Ostara (Pagans), and Vaisakhi (Sikhs). As it happens, our Muslim neighbors join us this year by preparing for Ramadan.

Each in our own way, as people of faith, are paying attention to the rhythms of our Tradition as well as big themes like life and death; struggle, enlightenment and liberation; fasting and feasting; the cost of truth and service. Each Tradition has deep stories to study, all of us have soul work to do. I'm always heartened when these powerhouse times coincide because I know we're all being stretched and enriched.

Even with this lush spiritual environment, the world didn't stop turning! Another week

passed with disaster and disorder: the loss of life and community in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Central and South America; the memories of Columbine 20 years later on the day of Sri Lanka's tragedy; Notre Dame burning in Paris.

In juxtaposition to these, there's also been moxy and visionary investment: Refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons keeping up their struggle and

reminding us of the need for more justice; the bees (!) of Notre Dame — colonies started to improve the environment of France — surviving the fire; the Turpin children stepping out with fresh dreams even as their parents were sentenced to life in prison. Here at home, Impact 100 and Next Gen announced they'll nurture our community far beyond their previous grant amounts.

Just as we all pursue holiness



THE REV. CLAUDIA RAMISCH  
ON FAITH

## We are the stories we tell ourselves

There was a time when our ancestors had set up camp where the wild things were.

The threat of predators was ever-present, and they lived in constant fear of annihilation.

As a result, humans had to band together to thwart the threats.

Survival meant we needed to be included in the group, or else we were vulnerable to extinction.

Groups — and group-think! — kept us protected, sheltered, and fed.

But we don't live in a jungle anymore.

Whereas we once gathered in groups to protect and to feel protected, now we are forced to fear the one, true predator who threatens to undo us every day. Us.

We are afraid of each other. We worry, we look over our shoulder, we change our plans and our opinions — all because

of what we fear the most: not being accepted, approved, included, liked, loved.

One of the most enduring problems of our species is the anxiety we carry about what others think of us.

More than anything, it is what controls how we think about ourselves.

If I had a nickel for every time I've heard a client fret about disappointing someone, letting someone down, hurting someone's

feelings, or failing to gain the acceptance of someone because of a decision or a choice that was made ...

In the early 500s BCE, half a millennium before Jesus, Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, said, "Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner."

Of course, it is inherent to us



DR. JONATHAN ERIC CARROLL  
RECLAIMING THE PUBLIC SQUARE

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