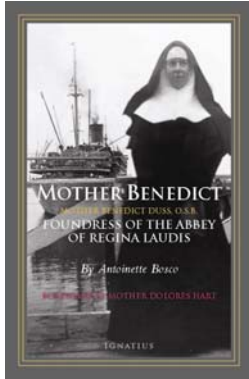


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Foundress of famous American Benedictine monastery for nuns reveals her epic story

SAN FRANCISCO, May 23, 2007 – The dramatic story of how the first American monastery for Benedictine contemplative nuns was established is fascinating to any audience. The 1950s movie, *Come To The Stable* (starring Loretta Young – as “Mother Benedict”) was based on it. But the award-winning author who presents the amazing life story of the physician-turned-nun who founded the monastery had another impetus – at least initially – for her interest in it.

Author Antoinette Bosco had learned through a newspaper story that a famous actress had left her promising film career to become one of the contemplative nuns at a Connecticut monastery called Regina Laudis Abbey. And it was too much to ignore. As a well-known, lifelong Catholic writer always looking for a good story, she was intrigued by this place, and the people whom she’d heard were going there – both as visitors and permanent residents.

Bosco’s new 423-page hardcover book, *Mother Benedict: Foundress of the Abbey of Regina Laudis* (Ignatius), is a captivating look at the nun who founded the Abbey, armed with insurmountable faith and determination despite the threatening chaos of world wars and spiritual wars during the last century. Yet with the help of future popes, politicians, famous writers and others, she steadfastly embraced her call. And it was Mother Benedict herself who asked Bosco to listen to her story, then put it in writing so it could be remembered.

“I had read ... about a young actress, Dolores Hart ... who had been in movies with actors like Elvis Presley and George Hamilton, and had been on Broadway,” says Bosco, describing her early curiosity about Regina Laudis Abbey beginning in the 1960s. “Then the newspaper article described how Hart, a convert to Catholicism, was taking on a new role – that of a nun. I was glued to the story, astonished that someone could leave such a promising career, and impending marriage, to enter a monastery. Yet I was full of admiration for a woman who would leave fame and fortune to follow her soul.”

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Today, Mother Dolores is the Prioress of the Abbey and the only Catholic nun who is a voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Initially, Bosco wanted to do a story on the monastery for the Connecticut newspaper for which she was editor, the *Litchfield County Times*. She'd heard that the nuns had animals and did farming, and envisioned a feature story on how these cloistered nuns live and work. In fact, after befriending several of the nuns there and learning how their community functioned, she did many stories on various facets of their life – on the Abbey's well-known guests, its annual monastic fair, and the unique work of individual nuns.

When on one of her fact-finding visits to the Abbey but with the worry about her son, Peter's, illness plaguing her, Bosco met Mother Dolores Hart and was transformed by the nun's genuine affection for her and willingness to counsel her.

"She looked as youthful and beautiful as she had years earlier on the screen," recalls Bosco about Mother Dolores. "She put her hands out to hold mine, and when I looked into her eyes, I felt she had somehow known I needed a human touch that day. We spoke a bit, but I didn't need words to tell me why God chooses very special people for His temples."

Most special of all would be the Abbess who answered the call first -- in the late 1940s to start this monastery. Mother Benedict Duss left a flourishing career as a doctor to become a Benedictine contemplative, even against her parents' wishes. Though she was an American, her early years as a nun were spent in France. Following the Gestapo occupation of Paris during which she had to go into hiding, Mother Benedict felt forever grateful for the American generals and soldiers who liberated France, and longed to give a "gift" back to her country. She later found out that it was General George Patton, Jr., who liberated Jouarre, and credits him with figuring directly into her founding of The Abbey of Regina Laudis in the United States.

Today, incredibly, General Patton's granddaughter, Mother Margaret Georgina, is a nun at the Abbey.

How Mother Benedict built the Abbey of Regina Laudis as a place where women could come to live a life of faith, in relationship with God, and from all walks of life – and continue on in their chosen fields – is the incredible story which the book reveals. The Order encompasses actresses, scientists, lawyers, doctors, musicians, teachers and artists. The nuns wear full, traditional habits, pray at regular intervals throughout the day and night, worship at a Latin Mass, and sing Gregorian Chant. Their Gregorian Chant music has been made into recordings, which are now best-selling CDs across the country.

But are these women somehow living in a time-warped modality?

"These women are not lost in a pattern of religious life," says Bosco, "but are avant-garde in their understanding of it." Following the Rule of St. Benedict, a sixth-century monk, they recognize the need to be in step with the times, while holding to the stability of eternal values. "They are professional women who each stay in touch with their field – for the purpose of being better able to serve others, both inside and outside the Community. "They find no contradiction between higher learning and deeper living." Interestingly, Regina Laudis is one of few religious communities for women in the U.S. which is thriving.

Bosco spent hundreds of hours with Mother Benedict before the nun's death in 2005, learning infinite aspects of her life and of the Community, and assembling the biography. And it was only at the insistence of Mother Benedict's bishop that the book on her life and works was done at all.

The book is lavishly illustrated with 32 pages of photos.

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Media interested in scheduling an interview with author Antoinette Bosco, Mother Abbess David Serna, O.S.B., or Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B. should contact Christine V. Owsik (215-230-8095, valencom@aol.com).

San Francisco-based Ignatius Press, founded in 1978, is one of the largest Catholic publishers in the world. Ignatius Press is the primary English-language publisher of Pope Benedict XVI. Dedicated to publishing and distributing information on the Catholic faith, Ignatius Press publishes over 40 books each year (with over 1,800 titles in print). Its author-roster includes some of the foremost names in the Catholic Church. Ignatius Press is also the publisher of *Catholic World Report* and *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* magazines. www.ignatius.com

What Others Are Saying About

Mother Benedict: Foundress of the Abbey of Regina Laudis

Antoinette Bosco has done it again! In this book she uses her outstanding talents to tell the remarkable story of Mother Benedict, Sorbonne educated medical doctor who founded the Abbey Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, CT. However, this isn't just "another autobiography", it is a terrific reporter's look at a special community of nuns who are contemporary but true to the centuries old Rule of St. Benedict in their vocation. And we find some great vocation stories along the way - the once Hollywood star turned coffin maker or the former state legislator. *Mother Benedict* is filled with faith, hope and love!

—**Dennis W. Heaney**, President *The Christophers*

If you are looking for a good read, a spiritual banquet of delight, look no further. Antoinette Bosco, using her magical writing skills, has served up a series of stories about women who have interacted with God in mysterious ways. Following in the footsteps of their foundress, who was played by Loretta Young in the movie, *Come To the Stable*, these exquisite women reveal the true meaning of holiness in today's world. A must read for anyone trying to understand how God calls us to loving service, without taking our freedom away.

—**Father John Catoir**

In *Mother Benedict*, Antoinette Bosco gives the reader a powerful profile of a pioneering Benedictine nun whose devotion to God and to her vocation is evident on every page. The chapters on her escape from the Nazis and her encounters with the men who would become Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI provide fascinating glimpses into her strength of character and her single-minded dedication to serve God at every turn. *Mother Benedict* spans the arc of the Church's life from the early 20th century, through World War II, and into the post-Vatican II years to today.

—**Tim S.Hickey**, Editor-*Columbia Magazine*/Knights of Columbus

How we wish all nuns after Vatican II would have traditional virtues and perennial Catholic wisdom but also be wise, creative, and free spirited. If you are such a reader you will want to read *Mother Benedict: Foundress of Regina Laudis* to see how these virtues grew amidst the struggles of World War II and how they followed her into the difficult vocation of founding a contemplative Benedictine monastery for women. Antoinette Bosco's account is fast-moving and inspiring.

—**Ronda Chervin, Ph.D.** professor of philosophy, Catholic writer and speaker.

Antoinette Bosco has told me many times of her visits to Regina Laudis -- of the friendships and inspiring atmosphere she found there. This book surely was a labor of love! She writes, 'At Regina Laudis I have experienced a joy not often found in this world.' This biography of the abbey's foundress naturally becomes a history of the abbey itself. Of course, key issues in contemporary religious life are not avoided. Readers particularly will enjoy the compelling story of Mother Duss' life as a young nun in occupied France and of the major figures of modern church history she encountered as the road to America unfolded for her.

—**David Gibson**, editor of *Origins*, CNS Documentary Service

If you read only one book this year, make it *Mother Benedict*. More than a biography, Antoinette Bosco has written an inspirational epic—a fascinating look at a true Catholic heroine—Mother Benedict Duss. In this sweeping saga of faith, hardship, and courage, Bosco not only gives readers a portrait of an extraordinary woman and her struggles to found a contemplative order—the first in America—but she also captures the essence of the Abbey of Regina Laudis itself, and the captivating stories of the people, both celebrity and common man, who have passed through its gates.

—**Allia Zobel Nolan**, author of *The Worrywart's Prayer Book*, Senior Editor Religious Book, Reader's Digest.

Vatican II had a message for religious: Return to the spirit of your founders and foundresses. Certainly Lady Abbess Benedict Duss, O.S.B. did that. As was true for St. Benedict, troubles beset her from within and without. Through suffering, and though take back responses, challenges, and what would appear as unreasonable demands, she never wavered from the vision that became clear to her and was symbolized by the star on the jeeps of General Patton's army and later built into the floor of the chapter room at Regina Laudis.

Always pointing to Christ she said of Him and of those called to be His spouses, that this way of life is to embrace the cross, that this way of life is a contradiction to the world.

From my experience with Lady Abbess and the Nuns who have been drawn to the Abbey she founded in the United States of America, I can enthusiastically endorse this gripping account as related by Antoinette Bosco.

—**Rev. Douglas Mosey**, President-Rector, Holy Apostles College and Seminary.



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Antoinette Bosco



An award-winning journalist and writer for newspapers and magazines for over 25 years, including *Women's Day*, *Parade*, *Guideposts*, *Reader's Digest* and *Ladies Home Journal*, Bosco has also appeared on over 20 television shows and is author of 16 books.

The most recent of her books is *Mother Benedict, Foundress of Regina Laudis Abbey* (Ignatius Press, May 2007). Her other titles include *Growing in Faith When a Catholic Marriage Fails: For Separated and Divorced Catholics and Those Who Minister With Them*; *Lent, An Uncommon Love Story*; *One Day He Beckoned, One Woman's Story of the difference Jesus Made* (which received First Place in the 2005 Catholic Press Association competition); *The Jesus Garden, An Easter Legend* (winner of an Angel Award); *America at War, World War I; Choosing Mercy, a Mother of Murder Victims Pleads to End the Death Penalty* (received a 2001 Christopher Award, and the 2002 Pax Christi Award); and *The Pummeled Heart, Finding Peace Through Pain*; *Coincidence, Touched by a Miracle, Shaken Faith, Hanging in There When God Seems Far Away*; and *Miracles Abound, When We Open Our Hearts to God*.

Ms. Bosco is also a syndicated columnist for Catholic News Service in Washington, D.C. She was formerly a journalist with *The Long Island Catholic* from 1962 to 1972; the associate news director at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, also holding a faculty appointment there, for ten years; and the executive editor of *The Litchfield County Times* in Connecticut from 1982 to 1995. She also served as a Human Rights Commissioner for several years on Long Island, working actively for justice, particularly in interracial affairs, mental health and medical issues, and criminal justice reform.

A prolific magazine writer, with hundreds of her features appearing in magazines, she has also authored many opinion pieces for respected newspapers. Her journalism awards have been many, among them a Front Page Award, several first prizes by The Society of Professional Journalists and a Mental Health Media Award from the Connecticut Department of Mental Health. She has appeared on over 20 television shows, including "Unsolved Mysteries," "The Christophers," "Among Friends," "Telicare," "The Leeza Show," "The History Channel," and "Point of View."

She holds an undergraduate degree in Science from The College of St. Rose in Albany, a masters degree in the Humanities from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from The College of St. Rose in Albany, N.Y. in 1996.

Her many awards include the 2005 Elizabeth Ann Seton Award at the Vincentian Convocation from St. John's University; the 2005 Distinguished Service Award given every two years by the National Council of Catholic Women; the 2005 Wisdom Award given annually by Wisdom House in Litchfield, Ct.; the 2006 Esse Non Videri Award (Non-Violence Award) from St. Joseph College in Long Island, N.Y.; and the Walt Everett Humanitarian Award (Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, June 2006).

A mother of seven (three deceased), and grandmother of 15, she pursues a personal ministry of helping people hurting from painful loss of a loved one, and also is active in prison ministry work. She is a member of Amnesty International; Murder Victims Families for Human Rights, an organization of murder victims' survivors who oppose and seek the abolition of the death penalty in the United States; and is an active worker for the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty.

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Mother Benedict: Foundress of the Abbey of Regina Laudis

Product Fact Sheet

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Written like a novel – though a fast-moving and thoroughly true story – this is the inspiring account of Mother Benedict Duss and the famous Benedictine monastery – Regina Laudis Abbey, a large flourishing community of contemplative Benedictine nuns – which she founded in Bethlehem, Connecticut some 70 years ago.

Home to many accomplished and professional women from all walks of life, the Abbey is also the longtime home to former Hollywood film star, Dolores Hart, who shocked the film world when she left a successful movie career in the early 1960s at age 25 to become a contemplative Benedictine nun. Today she is Prioress at the Abbey.

Foundress Mother Benedict Duss was no less successful in her former life, as an American medical doctor working in Paris. She nevertheless chose to become a nun, and through the liberating efforts of General Patton’s army of German-occupied France in 1944, she was inspired to make a “gift” to her native country by establishing the first contemplative community of Benedictine nuns in America. At just age 32, she received the help of Popes, politicians, famous writers and so many others in her quest. And despite certain overwhelming odds and difficulties, she persevered – always in obedience – and has launched a Catholic legacy both in her community and in her person.

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Broadcast Interview Questions

For

Antoinette Bosco

Mother Benedict: Foundress of the Abbey of Regina Laudis

1. How did you come to write the memoir of Mother Benedict, foundress of Regina Laudis Abbey in Bethlehem, CT?
2. Can you talk a bit about how Mother Benedict came to start this community back in the 1940s – the first community of contemplative Benedictine nuns in America – and why? Also talk a bit about what some of the early difficulties may have been?
3. A movie was actually made in the 1950s about Mother Benedict and the founding of her monastery. Tell us about that, and how it might have drawn international attention to the monastery.
4. Famous Hollywood actress Dolores Hart is among the contemplative Benedictine nuns at the Abbey. In fact, she is now the Prioress there. What can you tell us about her decision to abandon her acting career and become a nun when she was just 25? And what is she like today?
5. It is said the Regina Laudis is home to many accomplished and professional women from all walks of life. Can you talk a bit about them?
6. Since Regina Laudis is actually one of the most thriving monasteries in America, tell us what attracts women to come there. What has Mother Benedict instilled there that is unique, and almost “eternal” in its attractiveness?
7. What should people know about contemplative life at this monastery, and why is a place of spiritual pilgrimage for many well-known American celebrities?
8. How has coming to know the nuns and spiritual respite at Regina Laudis affected you personally?



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Sampling of Authors:

Pope Benedict XVI	Hans Urs von Balthasar
Pope John Paul II	Thomas à Kempis
St. Therese of Lisieux	Frank Sheed
Mother Angelica	Josef Pieper
Blessed Mother Teresa	Mark Twain
Cardinal Christoph Schönborn	Ronald Knox
Cardinal George Pell	Stephen K. Ray
Cardinal Frances Arinze	Roy Schoeman
Cardinal Avery Dulles	Louis Bouyer
Fr. Benedict Groeschel	Thomas Howard
Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen	Dale Ahlquist
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