



The Benedictine Sisters of Erie met with Pennsylvania Secretary of State Al Schmidt who visited their monastery Aug. 3, 2026 to congratulate them for an award they received for their civic engagement. (Courtesy of State of Pennsylvania)



Rhina Guidos

[View Author Profile](#)



Kamran Chaudhry

[View Author Profile](#)

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The Benedictine Sisters of Erie, who fought against lies against their monastery by a Republican operative in the 2024 presidential election, received a visit from Pennsylvania's Secretary of State Aug. 3, who nominated them for an award for their commitment to civic engagement and election integrity.

A month before the 2024 presidential election, operative Cliff Maloney alleged voter fraud stemming from the 170-year-old convent, saying more than 50 people there were registered to vote "and no one lives there."

"We want to call Cliff Maloney to account for his blatantly false post that accuses our sisters of fraud," the sisters said in a statement about the allegation. "We do live at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery and a simple web search would alert him to our active presence in a number of ministries in Erie."

The National Association of Secretaries of State [honored the sisters last fall](#), but Al Schmidt, Pennsylvania's highest ranking elections authority, who nominated them, couldn't attend the ceremony. He instead paid a personal visit.

"The honor highlights the group's work in promoting factual election information after a social media post regarding their voter registrations went viral," the Pennsylvania Department of State said in a press release.

Some sisters at the convent also received personal awards: two for voting in elections for more than 50 years consecutively, and one was recognized for her service as a poll worker.

Dominican nuns recount a week of fear and flooding in Pakistan

A heavy monsoon in late July left four Dominican sisters trapped inside their Gujrat, Pakistan convent for a week, damaging their nearby church, school and residences,

destroying furniture and a chapel altar.

The sisters were trapped along with church workers by knee-high floodwaters. Nationally, the floods resulted in 136 dead and 418 injured, the country's National Disaster Management Authority reported.

For Sr. Celine Qasim, the sister in charge of Holy Rosary Convent, July 25 remains a painful reminder of the panic and helplessness that followed nearly 10 hours of relentless rain.

"The muddy water was above our knees. There was no way out," she told Global Sisters Report. "We joined the workers in shifting whatever items we could carry upstairs, but the wooden furniture, two cupboards and the wooden altar of the chapel have been completely ruined."

Masses and pastoral activities at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Gujrat were suspended for a week. Church workers used pumps to drain the water. Mud and standing water continued to cover parts of the church lawn and school playground.

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Flooding in 2025 also left the church compound under water for nearly three months, destroying orange and guava trees. Qasim said the recurring floods have become increasingly severe.

"The flood intensity has been increasing for the past five years in Pakistan, which remains consistently ranked among the countries most vulnerable to climate change," she said.

Folksy shoemaker Birkenstock scores a hit with animated nun in ad

Shoemaker Birkenstock has featured in a summertime [ad](#) on Instagram of an animated nun in a black habit playing hopscotch and donning the footwear popular among consecrated men and women in the U.S.

"From hippies and punks to nuns and monks — some wear a habit, others make it one," says the July 11 ad on the social media app. The company also showed an ad

from the 1980s of six habit-wearing nuns with the words "Get into the habit" above them, the inspiration behind the newer ad.

Viewers quickly replied to the @birkenstock handle about their experiences with women religious, as well as brothers and priests wearing their "birks." Some sisters also replied to the ad.

"Actual nun here...any discount for nuns?" @rfsndr asked on Instagram.

"We cannot offer a coupon or discount code, but feel free to check Birkenstock.com to see if there are any sales or promos going on in your region," the company replied on Instagram.

Environmentally friendly fund backed by sisters says it has helped more than a million in Africa

Religious congregations from the U.S. and Ireland, along with Catholic investors, say its climate investment fund, in its first 30 months, has helped transform the lives of more than 1 million across East Africa, while creating jobs and protecting the environment.

The Vita Green Impact Fund invests in fuel-efficient cooking stoves, forestry programs and clean water.

Religious congregations and organizations, including U.S.-based Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Mercy Investment Services, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace as well as Irish congregations St. Patrick's Missionary Society and the Mercy Sisters Western Province participate in the fund.

The organization's most recent report says along with creating 300 jobs for women, it has saved a total of 114.5 million hours of labor, advancing gender justice and community empowerment. It says it's an example of following Pope Francis' call in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.