



The Benedictine Tide

# Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

Spring 2018

## Happy Feast Day!

No, we're not talking about a banquet. This is a feast of a different sort. This is your saint's Name Day! In the not too distant past, children were often baptized in the name of the saint whose feast was being celebrated on the child's birthday. For instance, Teresa was born on the feast of St. Teresa of Avila or Therese of Lisieux or John on the feast of John the Baptist.

In our Benedictine community each Sister celebrates both her birthday and her feast day. [Aren't we lucky!] In this issue of the Tide you will see a few stories from Sisters about their particular patronal feast day

In addition to our personal feast days, there is a calendar of saints we commemorate at Mass and at Liturgy of the Hours (communal prayer). Some are Benedictine saints like St. Benedict, Scholastica, Maurus, Placid, Gertrude and Hildegard. Most days there is more than one saint on the calendar. There are books galore on saints in book stores or daily saint stories on the Internet at [www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org).

Easter is the central religious feast in the Christian liturgical year. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from death. He sacrificed his own life for us in order to bring us to God. It is humbling to consider Jesus' great gift of love.

(Left: stain glass window of St. Benedict in our monastery reception area.)



*This Easter and throughout the year,  
May you and your loved ones  
Know peace and live it ~  
Understand love and give it ~  
Have happiness and share it ~*



## Feast Days - Patron Saints

As a teen I read Lives of the Saints. It was inspirational to learn of their bravery, persistence, what they knew, did and where they traveled. Many of them sounded like scripts for a movie. Only later did I realize these heroic folks were simply like me...it wasn't about words, doctrine, asceticism, rites or racking up points with God. Their lives were reflections of Christ's life. They related to and followed Jesus. They lived and spoke the truth, fed "hungers" for food, education, spirituality and belonging. They didn't quit, give up, drift or just focus on self—they lived the Christ life.



**Benedict** is my patron now—a hero who left us values to steward and share—values much needed today. Community, peace, balanced life of prayer and work are just a few. He knew that to live the Christian life is to be counter-cultural. We can't do it alone. That is why he called people together in community. I'm so grateful for my Benedictine vocation and this Community for the way God is with us and how we continue to

grow in grace as persons of faith and ministry. I wanted my life to make a difference. I continue learning that I can make a difference because I live differently!

We Benedictine Sisters of Florida share in the charism of Benedict—we pray, work, live community with our Oblates, offer retreats, Days of Recollection, and nurture vocations in women who might want to join us as Sisters. We also act for peace and justice, steward and care for the earth through our gardens and aquaponics program.

The Sisters celebrate our patron's feast day by living the Benedictine values! On St. Benedict's Feast Day we have special prayer and liturgy and we feast on good food. (Some call it a "balanced life" - pray and eat!)

Though we live in challenging times, we are all called to live, pray, work and study together to give witness of God's power and to be a sign of the possibility and desirability of living Gospel values. In these times, our choices can make a difference.

Sister Mary David Hydro

My patron Saint is **Saint Elizabeth** who is the cousin of the **Blessed Virgin Mary**.

When I received my Baptism my parents gave me the name Elizabeth which is my maternal grandmother's name. When I became a Religious I was able to keep my baptismal name. Vocation was intimately linked to our baptismal call. The feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is May 31st. I chose this feast day because of the significance of the Visitation.



Just after the Annunciation, Mary went in haste to the house of **Zachary** and her cousin, **Elizabeth**. Mary greets them and something wonderful happens...Elizabeth's infant who would become **John the Baptist** leaps in Elizabeth's womb with joy (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth too is filled with joy and cries out in words that would become part of the chief Marian prayer, the *Hail Mary*: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Elizabeth then acknowledges Mary as "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:42-43). Mary responds with the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), a canticle that is an essential part of the Church's evening prayer.

The feast of the Visitation reminds me of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that I should be in haste to bring **Christ** into the lives of other people and like Saint Elizabeth, I should be eager to recognize Christ in others.

As a Community, the Sisters celebrate the feast of the Visitation with appropriate readings, psalms, hymns and prayers in our Liturgical services and offer special prayers for me. After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I receive during breakfast a flower bouquet and greeting card. Then the community members and friends sing, "Happy Feast Day." I celebrate my feast day with great joy, praise, gratitude and I sing with the Blessed Mary - "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

- Sister Elizabeth Mathai



It was May 1964 when requested to submit five names for consideration as the name I would have hence forth. Imagine for yourself making such a decision after being known your entire life with your given name at birth.

Much thought and prayer went into the names I submitted. But when the day came and ceremony took place, none of the five names submitted was chosen. Instead, I was told that I would be known as **Sister Mary Paschal**.

After the ceremony and Mass, the Superior informed me she had planned to give me the name of **Saint Angela**. But that very morning when told it was the Feast of **Saint Paschal Baylon**, the Superior decided that should be my name. Saint Paschal was born in Spain on Pentecost Sunday which they call *Pasc of the Holy Spirit*. Thereafter, people thought the name was associated with the Easter season which caused confusion.

The name was not to be mine for very long. In later years, we were permitted to use our given name and being called **Donna** just felt right for me. However, my mother named me Donna not after a saint, but after Donna Reed of the television show! So I needed a feast day.

It seemed logical that the date of my baptism would give me my feast day. I searched for the record and found it was August 29th—the feast of the beheading of **Saint John the Baptist**.



Many people ask me to this day why I chose that date as my feast day. As it turns out, Saint John and I have something in common...our big mouths! He lost his head over it and I often get into trouble because of it.

**Sister Donna DeWitt**

### *- Our Doors are Always Open -*

Benedictines have lived lives of prayer and service for over 1,500 years. We, the community of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, have lived this legacy of continual prayer, service and community life for 129 years.

We stand on the shoulders of creative, courageous, and committed women. We look to the future in living Benedictine values in a world hungry for meaning and peace.

Come for a visit to Holy Name Monastery and find that meaning and peace that God wants for you.

### **Disclaimer**

I am no saint  
I cannot lie  
My pies are not up in the sky.  
I live on earth  
That's where I'm put  
The saints I know  
All live in books.

But once they lived  
On earth like me  
Breathed the air  
Awoke from sleep  
They lived and loved  
And now they're done  
And now they bask  
In God the Son.



- **Sister Eileen Dunbar**

My patron saint is **Clare of Assisi**. Some people wonder why I chose a Franciscan Saint to be my patron. That story has two parts. Years ago all novices were given new names to signify the new life they chose. Shortly before I became a Novice, I was asked to submit three names from which our Superior might choose one. I don't actually remember the other two names, but I included Clare. My Aunt Clara was my mother's youngest sister and one of my two favorite aunts. Given the name Sister Mary Clare made me very happy.

I did some research about the life of Saint Clare. One episode from her life intrigued and impressed me. When Assisi was under attack by the troops of **Frederick II**,



Saint Clare took the host from the tabernacle and raised it up in front of a window. This caused the invading troops to fall back, thus saving Assisi. I admire Clare's cour-

age, her determination, and her great faith in the power of the Eucharist.

- **Sister Mary Clare**

# Bless You for Giving to the Annual Appeal 2017

Each of the following donors made a difference in our ability “to make ends meet,” reach out in service to others, feed the hungers of those in need, volunteer for other charities doing good works, and

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(Con't Page 8)

## Oblate Program

Our Oblates choose a Benedictine patron saint when they make oblation. It's no surprise that many decide on Saint Benedict as the model from whom they want to learn. Saint Benedict speaks of conversion—the promise to change and grow. We can see growth in our Oblates in their personal and spiritual lives as well as in their dedication. Our November meeting is usually a smaller group after the holiday, but we had 25 attend and five new women! Sharing of *homework* even from those out of state enriched us all.

Study this year continues to be on **Joan Chittister's** book, Radical Spirit, which focuses on humility. JOIN US! March 25th and May 27th are our upcoming meeting dates. All are welcome. Please RSVP the Wednesday before each meeting by calling **Sister Mary David** at (352) 588-8320 or email at [vocation@saintleo.edu](mailto:vocation@saintleo.edu).

## From the Vocations Office

We held a "Time for Seekers" from December 26th to January 1st with four women in attendance. Prayer and meals with the Sisters was obviously joyful as were their visits with **Sisters Helen** and **Mildred** at Heritage Park Rehab. They even gave Christmas greetings to other residents there.

The Seekers had several sessions on *lectio divina* and had the opportunity of a private conference with our vocation director, **Sister Mary David**. Directions were given for reflection, thanks to God for blessings and listing of hopes for 2018.

## Upcoming Events

- March 3**—A Day of Reflection on Thomas Merton
- March 5**—Lenten Soup Supper (Donate canned goods or packaged foods for those in desperate need.)
- March 10**—*Dancing With Our Stars* Event
- March 13**—Penance Service
- March 25**—Palm Sunday
- March 29**—Holy Thursday
- March 30**—Good Friday
- April 1**—Easter Sunday
- April 16 to 20**—Aquaponics Training
- May 6**—Employee Appreciation Day
- May 13**—Sisters serve "Love One Another Luncheon" for the homeless on Mother's Day

## Thanksgiving Dinner 2017 22nd Year!

**How do you measure a day in someone's life that most of us take so freely for granted?**

The Thanksgiving Dinner in partnership with Saint Anthony Parish brings us together in prayer and fellowship with attendees we might not ever meet otherwise. It takes place each year on Thanksgiving Day. Guests rave about how lovely it is to have dinner with such a welcoming and friendly group of people. One woman in particular who lives alone said she had Thanksgiving the prior year at her residence and no one spoke.



We are always overwhelmed by the volunteers who step up! They tell us their Thanksgiving Day is so blessed because of what they do as part of this event. You should know that many of them participate every year and never want to miss. They are partners in our Corporate Commitment to "feed the hungers of the people of God."

We prepared home-cooked traditional meals for 325—108 delivered to the local abuse shelter as well as those who are homebound. The other 217 enjoyed dining and fellowship with us at Saint Anthony Parish Hall. Volunteers who helped the Sisters included: Ellen Mijias and Family, decorations from students at St. Anthony School, desserts by St. Anthony Women's Club, and many volunteers who greeted guests, delivered meals, served at the parish, and/or cleaned-up!

Delicious rolls and butter were donated by Golden Corral in Zephyrhills. A very generous financial donation was given by a donor who wished to remain anonymous. Other donations were made by: **Kenny Ayler, Elizabeth Bogdan, Margaret Cantu, Stephen Church, Donna Floberg, Friedman and Groomes, D.D.S., William and Anne Lennox, R.A. Milliman, Lissette Pedrayes-Valdes, Patrick and Jeanette Reilly, Rotary club of San Antonio, Anne Louise Smith, Social Work Club of Saint Leo University.**

**Bless You ALL!**





## Angels in the Wings Honoree

**Dominick - "Dom" - "DJ" Passalacqua** was honored at our *Angels in the Wings* luncheon on November 10, 2017. Both **Sisters Eileen** and **Roberta** spoke fondly of Dom and his parents, **Dr. Dominick, Sr.** and **Bernadette**.



Sister Roberta said that Dominick was termed an "influential student" by his elementary school teachers - always an excellent student leader. He followed his parents' lead who were very active leaders in serving others at their parish and its school.

"Dom was a graduate assistant in my office," recalled Sister Eileen. He was taking an accelerated six-month honors MBA course awaiting the start of medical school at the University of Florida, working and a student first-responder on the UF campus. Dom was usually first on the scene of problems because he used his bicycle which was quicker than by car. Though only at Saint Leo for a short time, Sister found Dominick happy to help in any way that was needed. "Measured and reflective throughout the illness that would eventually take him, Dom was clearly accepting of whatever the future held. Shortly before he died, I got an email from him with the subject line - 'I'm still here.' I kept the email on my computer for several years as it always comforted me. He was a young man of tremendous faith and it was my privilege to know him. I'm looking forward to meeting up with Dom in heaven!"

Dr. and Mrs. Passalacqua told us that while working on his masters degree at UF, D.J. was doing research in genetic cellular factors and his work was published in one of the medical journals. They remember that "there was much accomplished in their son's short life, but understand that God had bigger plans for him."

"D.J. loved going to the monastery and being with the Sisters," shares Mrs. Passalacqua. "Upon entering, he would encompass the angelic composure of the Sisters and that everything seemed to flow in such a poetic elegance amongst them. He felt that the monastery evoked a special aura that filled him with such peace and tranquility. A feeling he could carry away with him. I too felt that way as well on visits there."

The Passalacqua's felt during D.J.'s formative years that he might have a calling for the Religious life, but his calling by God came early. "He lived and conducted his life beautifully and we were so thankful that God and the Blessed Mother gave us the opportunity to nurture D.J. and live life - with him - in him - and through him."

While experiencing some illness now, Dr. and Mrs. Passalacqua are not able to visit as in the past. But we are grateful that they keep in touch with us. We pray that they know their exceptionally kind support through the years from the Dominick J. Passalacqua, Jr. Endowment makes an impactful difference to the Sisters' lives and those we serve.

The Angels in the Wings Legacy Society members have left their mark on the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. They have made an investment in our mission and impact. We honor these dear friends each year.

The luncheon also features an expert speaker who provides estate and gift planning education. We believe this is an invaluable service to our donors. It helps them understand how to provide for their families and also support their communities and causes they love.

## Feeding Children

Saint Leo University signed up to help the community on January 12th with *Feeding Children Everywhere*. The organization's purpose is to gather large groups of people to package meals. "It was impressive to see so many students there," said

**Sister Mary David.**

She along with **Faith Pridmore** put in

some volunteer time and were both delighted to see that the packages were

for Jambalaya and very healthy: lentils, vegetables, brown rice, and even a pinch of Himalayan pink salt which contains all the minerals the body needs!



*Feeding Children Everywhere* is located in 42 states and 52 countries. 600 projects have been completed in just the past year and each project—like the one at St. Leo—packages 70,000 meals. The packaging was well organized and fun for everyone involved. If you get the opportunity to volunteer in your area for this project, don't hesitate. It was awesome and we got cute hats to wear!

## *Annual Appeal 2017 Donors (Con't.)*

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*Saints walked before us  
Also now beside us. Let  
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*"Anyone with any interest in aquaponics should be studying with Aquasol."*

- Jen Wride, Haiti

*"I want to do aquaponics because I'd like to teach people how to grow their own food."*

-SamDiTrollo



## Listening Heart Circle Luncheon

January 25, 2018 marked our very first luncheon for a special group of individuals who are members of the **Listening Heart Circle**. The Sisters are fortunate to have friends who have continued over the years to support us with recurring gifts—monthly or quarterly. Thanking them personally is the purpose of this annual luncheon. Most donations to charities are made at specific times of the year such as Christmas, the end of a tax year, and Easter. We are deeply grateful for all gifts made to be sure. But understanding that like yourself, the Sisters have to budget. Donations made throughout the course of a year make a significant difference in their ability to plan.

Putting food on the table, maintaining our home, paying utilities, providing retreats and educating newer Sisters are critical to the sustainability of the Sisters' lives of community, prayer and ministry.

The circle was formed two years ago and has made a considerable impact on planning...planning which helps to move us forward confidently.

We now have 37 members of the **Listening Heart Circle**! It was wonderful to have some of them able to come for lunch and receive a personal thank you: **Janet Collura, Irene and John Doscher, Barbara Molloy, Pereta Rodriguez, Jeanie Vogel and staff members, Cheryl Chadick and Faith Pridmore.**

The following are also **Listening Heart Circle** members who could not be at the luncheon. We gratefully thank all of them for providing the peace of mind that comes with reliable revenue that allows for sound planning and sustains us through lean times of the year:

**Patricia Becker, Matthew Clarke, Bruce Day, Richard and Jean Flury, Joseph and Donna Giarrantana, Virginia Gordon, William Gregg, John and Patricia Grubbs, Jack and Stephanie Hipple, Karen Humphreys, Michael and Rosemary Hutchinson, Marie Irving, Dr. Rochelle Knowles, Jane Martinson, Lourdes Milan, R.A. Milliman, Mary Moreau, Christopher and Gina Neuhofer, Allan and Lynn Powers, Deborah Richardson, Sandra Sachs, John and Barbara Sinnott, Margaret Sullivan, Jack and Jeanie Vogel, Joseph Vogel, and Otto Weitzenkorn.**



GiveDay  
TampaBay

May 1, 2018

*"Silence is Golden"*

## *From Anna Cotton—one of our retreatants*

I'm an extrovert by nature, yet my spirit, mind and body desire silence. My husband is an introvert, so he too values silence, especially on retreats. We both make room for daily quiet time in our lives, but we chose to make a retreat at Holy Name Monastery because we felt these committed Benedictine Sisters would understand and honor our need for intentional silence and prayer in their sacred space. When **Sister Mary Clare** accepted my phone call and readily agreed to our request for rooms, she also said we would be welcome at meals and prayers with the community. It was that easy!

We also chose HNM because we know some of their history ("*Women on the Move*" was a compelling play about these Sisters that was written and produced at Saint Leo University.). We were particularly touched and moved by the story of **John Picciano's** huge donation for the new ten-room retreat wing where we stayed. It seems a small stretch to say God must be pleased with John's gift which makes Benedictine hospitality possible in such a significant way.

Speaking of hospitality, that is exactly what stood out to both of us during our retreat. We felt warmly welcomed by everyone. We kept silence during the day, but talked at meals so we could get to know the sisters and volunteers. I'd like to add that **Barbara Molloy's** story of coming to the monastery to lend a hand and staying is as remarkable as the kindness she showed in checking on us regularly. Now that we are home from our retreat a FAQ is *How is the food?* Delicious! I loved the homemade potato soup. My husband enjoyed the super tender prime rib, which was special for Mary's feast day. Seriously, we were fed in body, mind and spirit and believe others will be too when they take up the offer expressed by Jesus through the Sisters at Holy Name, "Come and See."

**Anna Cotton, Silent Retreat 8-2017**

## *- 2017 Gifts in Honor Of -*

### ***Sister Roberta Bailey, OSB***

John and Amy Cordray  
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### ***Benedictine Sisters of Florida***

Janet Rodriguez Collura

### ***Sister Miriam Cosgrove, OSB***

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Johanna Maytin  
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Rev. James F. Fetscher

### ***Margaret Randall***

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August and Karen Malfregeot

### ***Faith Pridmore, CFRE***

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### ***Trudy Rodriguez***

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### ***Sister Dianne Wansley, OSB***

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*Holy Name Monastery*  
PO Box 2450  
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### **CORPORATE COMMITMENT**

In an effort to address contemporary local needs, we, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, commit ourselves and our resources to respond with the compassion of Christ to the physical, spiritual, social and emotional hungers of the People of God.

### **Editorial Team**

Editors: Sister Roberta Bailey, *Prioress*  
Faith Pridmore, CFRE,  
*Director of Mission Advancement*  
Writers: Benedictine Sisters  
Design and Layout: Faith Pridmore



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**5:30 pm**

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All proceeds benefit the Benedictine Sisters of Florida and their work.