

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching lives through Prayer and Service

Winter 2019

Anniversary Ode in Our New Monastery—5th Year

Every window offers beauty
Every silence echoes peace
In the hallowed space of newness
Laced with familiarity long-known.



Every sunrise; each
glowing sunset
Shouts promises
renewed
From the God who's
always with us
Ever old; yet ever
new.

Slamming doors
and thru-the-night lit hallways
Continue an adventure of surprise.
No call bells; in-room TVs and phones,
Private baths and gracious closets
Remind us daily of others' gifts
Surrounding us with love and boon.



Ago one hundred thirty years
From Germany to P.A.
Through the wilderness to Florida
Came five stalwart O.S.B.s
Settled in the hills of Pasco
In the heart of central state
To teach the children
Both boarders and day hops.

High school, grade school
Girls' academy and boys' prep
Kept the Sisters on their toes
Night and day betwixt



Came the college and new degrees
Social work and CCD
Retreats large and singles
Reaching out and drawing in
From our neighborhood
And far-flung places;
Both religious and lay folk
Seeking safe, secure, serene
Bed, repast and walking path.

Dining scrumptious meals
And chosen chapel time
Both private and in groups.

Angelus bells and gongs for
Sunday liturgy
Thru the neighborhood ring true,
calling
"Sisters praying for you" –
bow your head
And, call to mind your needs
right now.

Communal Eucharist and
Prayer Times alone or
Orchestrated to a rhythm
Paced for chant, rest and psalm.

'Tis the life of Florida Benedictines
Nestled where orange groves once thrived
Now aquaponics, roses and jacaranda sing
Join the hymn of Sisters' voices in
Joyful praise to the God who assures us:
ALL THINGS work together unto GOOD!

(S. Roberta Bailey 10/2014, updated 8/2019)



Ode in our New Monastery—5th Year

Thankful and Grateful

“Sing a new song to the Lord! Sing to the Lord, all the world! Sing to the Lord and praise him.” - Psalm 96



Music is one of the great gifts with which God has blessed us and one of the great vehicles through which we express our thanks and praise to God. St. Augustin said that singing is like twice praying.

Music is an integral part of our Liturgical service. And we are blessed with beautiful musical concerts each month in our monastic chapel. The acoustic panels help to increase the clarity and quality of the sound of the music. The musicians of the various church choirs love performing here because the acoustics are so good. Having children's choirs, hand bell choirs, patriotic choral music—it is all wonderfully inspiring.

The variety of music is captivating for us and listeners far beyond our monastery surroundings. The music fills us all with an experience of serenity and peace. Your heart is lifted out of ordinary concerns into giving praise to God.

Throughout Scripture, there is spiritual power unleashed when the faithful sing—power to remember and be comforted, power to be integrated in heart and mind, and power to lift our hearts to God and praise Him. We are thankful and grateful for this monastery that is our home here on Wichers Road.

~ Sister Elizabeth



Five years in our “new” monastery ... can it be? One of my favorite areas is the Art Room. I have been given the opportunity to study icon painting—a beautiful, ancient religious art form handed down through hundreds of years.

In the old building, I painted in the dark and dank

basement which was not ideal for the creative process. Now I paint in an art room that faces the east with God's light that pours in through wonderful windows. Perfect!

Our monastery here on a hill is becoming a holy place. And when painting, I think often of what one of my teachers once told the class ... that for each stroke you put on the board, a prayer should be said. I try to do that even though at times it is difficult not to get caught up in the technique of painting. But the Art Room is where I offer prayers and in so doing, the Art Room also becomes a very holy place to me.

~ Sister Dianne

I love my home. It's sooo nice. But, I'm STILL wondering what the “landlords” think.

The construction crews working on the new building were the first ones to really notice them. They were there every day, watching every move that the workers made. They chattered and laughed among themselves, calling out rudely, never leaving the crew alone for very



long. These were not human landlords, mind you. These overlords were a group of noisy crows.

I suspect that the crows had been living there long before we thought about building a house on their turf. From what I know about them, they are social, intelligent and curious. So I can't find fault with their interest in exactly what was going on below them.

When we moved in on August 2014, the landlords were still there. They had something new to watch, what with the moving company dodging periodic cloudbursts to get the bulk of our belongings under our new roof. They were also there as the St. Mark Columbiettes and their families helped each Sister move her personal effects into her room.

They did stick around for a while after that. I remember that their cawing was so loud one evening that a dinner guest commented on it. But the real show, the construction and moving in, was done.

(Con't Page 6)

Sister Roberta Bailey, OSB, Prioress

Sister Roberta Bailey was one of twelve jubilarians honored by the Diocese of St. Petersburg on October 13th. Sister celebrated her 60th Jubilee. Mass celebrant was **Bishop Gregory Parkes** and attending in her honor were Holy Name Monastery Sisters, volunteers and friends, **Lourdes Malin** and **Beth Kinsella**.

Sister Roberta made her final vows of monastic profession March 23, 1962. Throughout her life, Sister has always been passionate about educating through leadership. Born in Wilmington, Delaware and raised in New London, Connecticut and DeLand, Florida, Sister graduated from Holy Name Academy, the residential school formerly operated by the Benedictine Sisters of Florida in St. Leo. She received a BS degree in Elementary Education and Library Science from Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky and earned a Montessori Preprimary Certificate from the Montessori Institute in Chicago. She completed her MA degree with a specialization in early childhood education at the University of South Florida.

Respected throughout the state of Florida for her educational excellence, Sister has served on many boards including the board of the Florida Association for the Education of Young Children and represented the association on the Southern Early Childhood Association. She was appointed by the governor to serve on Florida's first Universal Pre-Kindergarten Advisory Committee. She has taught infants through college age students throughout the state of Florida.



S. Roberta and Bishop Gregory Parkes

Sister opened the first certified Montessori school in the state and currently serves on numerous boards in the area including Saint Leo University, the Greater Dade City Chamber of Commerce, Sunrise Domestic Violence Center, and on the board of Premier Community HealthCare.

Sister Roberta's accomplishments and appointments in her field fill two pages so we'll share just a few. She served on the Advisory Council for Office of Catholic Schools and Centers, was voted Pasco County's "Teacher of the Year," founded Priory Montessori School (then Florida's only nationally accredited Montessori program). Bellarmine University, Sister's alma mater, honored her in 2010 as "Alumna of the Year," and she was named "Member of the Year" by the Greater Dade City Chamber of

Volunteer Marlaney, Srs. Elizabeth & Roberta, Marrietta, S. Mary Romana

Commerce in 2019.

It was long hours of prayerful reflection in taking the helm as Prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. As principal for fifteen years at Saint Anthony Catholic School in San Antonio, the parting would not be easy. The staff, teachers, parents, and students did not take the news well, but understood her need to serve the call of her religious community.



That was 2010, but her educating days would not end. Sister's many years of leadership experience and her wealth of wisdom serve her avowed Sisters well. The ministry of prioress is many-faceted and Sister Roberta imparts expectations in a nurturing, faith-centered framework.

Saint Leo University also honored Sister on August 13th at their annual Community Day. **Dr. Jeffrey Senese**, the university's president (pictured center), presented Sister with flowers, a gift and a cake.

Lots to Celebrate!





A Match for Your Donation on *Giving Tuesday* December 3, 2019

If we raise \$25,000 on Giving Tuesday, our very kind and generous donor, **John Picciano** will match dollar for dollar. That means that your donation will double for the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. So \$25 becomes \$50, \$50 becomes \$100 and \$100 becomes \$200, and so forth.

Please go online to:

www.benedictinesistersoffl.org

during the 24-hour giving challenge and make a donation of whatever is meaningful for you. Every gift makes a difference!

Annual Giving Update as of November 15, 2019

The Sisters' most impactful ministry is prayer. Each day is begun and ended with prayer for loved ones, requests, our oblates, each other and for the world. If not them, then who? Their example reminds us all that to be grateful in prayer is what gets us through challenging times and the best of times.

Helping others to secure a balance, a direction, a way forward, and to experience the impact of prayer in one's life, are the keys to contentment and peace. We are grateful to our supporters who give so that our prayer ministry flourishes.



As of November 15, 2019, we are at 59 percent of our \$300,000 goal. We are excited that Giving Tuesday is an opportunity to raise \$50,000! By the time you receive this Tide, there will be one month left in calendar year

2019 for us to reach that goal. If you haven't made a donation, we hope you will consider making a difference with a gift by December 31st. Your kindness provides the resources to more effectively achieve our goals in helping others whose names, as a donor, you may never know. But God bless you for being such a person.



Oblates

We had 15 Oblates for our Oblate Summer Day on July 31st. It was good to see **Gloria Yates** who was able to attend along with **Sister Tracey**, and a new volunteer, **Marleney**.

Our September 22nd gathering was a big group with 37 in attendance. I was happy that **Luella Wilson** became an Oblate candidate and **Liz Hauer** made her oblation.

Sister Roberta shared her reflection on **Sister Mildred** which she had prepared for the Vigil. Sister even had us laughing at some of the things Sister Mildred had said or done over the years. RIP

Both days were blessed times of sharing and building community with the Benedictine Sisters – feeding hungers of body and soul.

From **Oblate Mary Maher** ~

*God has given **Sister Mary David** the gift of spiritual leadership for our Oblate family. We come hungering for more each meeting, and we go away nourished and fully satisfied. We anticipate with enthusiasm our next meeting where we will again be blessed, nourished, and fed from Eucharist, Sister Donna's feasts, spiritual teaching guided by Sister Mary David – a woman of the gospel and imbued with the richness of St. Benedict's spirit and wisdom.*

The more I learn about Benedictinism, the more I treasure being an Oblate. Today was a day of remembrance in prayerful recollection of what it means to belong to centuries of Benedictine spirituality permeating all the saints who have and are still today living the life of a Benedictine follower of Jesus Christ.

The St. Benedict Video was beautifully done. Sister Roberta did a splendid narration. The entire presentation made me proud to be a tiny part of such a tradition.

(To view the St. Benedict Video go to Youtube, type-in Benedictine Sisters of Florida, and look for the one we produced about St. Benedict with Sister Roberta's narration.)

*The purpose of life is to hear the Word
And respond to it.*

Sister Mary David

Angels in the Wings Legacy Society

The annual luncheon of the **Angels in the Wings Legacy Society** members was Friday, November 1st. We hold the luncheon to honor those who have remembered the Benedictine Sisters of Florida in their will or estate planning.



Jamie E. Tomlin, CFP

We also provide a service to our friends who appreciate the information presented by an expert in financial planning. Thinking about how you ensure that your family is taken care of and assets are distributed as you decide is a gift for your loved ones. Strategies appropriate for your financial goals and how you might leave a gift to your favorite charities are also part of the presentation.

This year the honors were for **Janet Rodriguez Collura**. A 4th generation Floridian, Janet was brought-up in Tampa with her brothers Jeff, Bryan and Wayne. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work from Florida State University and worked in New York as a hospital administrator in community and government relations.

She returned to Florida in 1990 to care for her ailing mother and also opened a catering business. She met and married FJ Collura and together they volunteered for 4-H, the Fair Association, the Rattlesnake Festival and supported the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. Their life together, Janet will tell you, was bliss and cut much too short by FJ's illness.



S. Mary Clare, Janet and Monsignor Mouch-

Janet adopted the Sisters as her second family. She does so much for us, it is difficult to know where to begin.

Beyond her financial generosity, —whatever needs appear on the horizon at the monastery, she steps right up to help. Janet drives to/from the airport, picks-up prescriptions, decorates for holidays, treats for special outings, has chaired our annual gala and works on the gala committee every year.

The culinary talents Janet has developed in her catering business are shared on the weekends. It is always a surprise—Italian, Greek, Spanish, Mexican—you name it and she makes it! Always fresh, always delicious.

Janet gives of her time, talents and resources lovingly and joyfully. She often asks, “Are you okay, do you need anything?”

In accepting our humble gift blessed by Monsignor Frank Mouch, Janet commented, “It seemed so natural that I would make this my second family.”

400th Anniversary of First African Slaves to U.S.

At the suggestion of Pax Christi, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida tolled their bell at 3 pm Sunday, August 25th in



remembrance of the 400th anniversary of the first African slaves brought to the U.S. in 1619.

We prayed for healing and an end to racism in our country. It is our hope that our action helped others to remember and pray with us. A special intention was part of prayers at Eucharist as well.

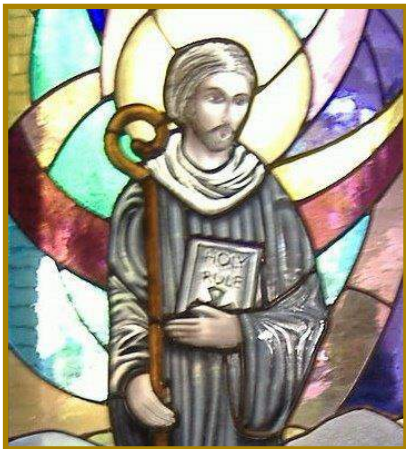
These actions may not seem significant, but like a pebble dropped in the water, may Peace ripple out to all.
Sister Mary David

What a Team!



Twenty members of the Saint Leo University Men's and Women's Tennis Teams and their coaches, **Nathan Huggett** and **Head Coach Chad Berryhill**, volunteered to clean-up our Butterfly Garden. It was September 7th and it was hot, but they were awesome! Sister Miriam, on the far left standing said the group made it so much fun. Some of the countries from where they come are Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, France, Morocco and Canada. Both coaches are from Michigan.

This is the second year that these bright, young people have given of their time and *physical strength* to our gardens at Holy Name Monastery. Thank you gals and guys!



Thankful and Grateful (from Page 2)

Gradually the landlords lost interest. They moved on to settle in somewhere else.

The crows do still stop by occasionally to have a look around the monastery though. Lately I've been wondering if they aren't guardian angels in an unexpected form. It's nice to think that they were sent to watch over us. Crows are, after all, closely related to ravens, and it was a raven that carried a poisoned loaf of bread away into the desert at the request of St. Benedict, thus foiling the monks' plot to murder him.

And so I pray, St. Benedict, please continue to pray for us. And feel free to send your emissaries around to visit any time!

~ Sister Eileen

St. Paul's Catholic School Jacksonville Beach, Florida



As founders of St. Paul's Catholic School in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida take great delight in hearing from past and current students and staff. Of course, we love hearing from those we've taught no matter what school. But there is definitely something about founding a school that evokes feelings deep within.

Such was the case for us when the principal, **Krissy Thompson**, and staff contacted us in September. They are celebrating the school's history with a monthly Tag Day fundraiser. Each month students dress in different decades (40's, 50's, etc.) and pay \$1.00 to dress down.

The chair of the Spirituality Committee, **Margarita Sastre**, informed us that the funds raised each month will be donated to the Sisters' retirement fund. We were "wowed" to receive \$157.00 raised by the students in September.



The ongoing faith-based education at St. Paul's makes us proud for the Benedictine calling we embrace and strive to impart to this day. God blesses us in so many ways, but most importantly in the thoughtfulness of His people of every age.

A Special Invitation ~ Seekers Week

Are you discerning a vocational call to religious life? Are you a single Catholic woman who is curious about the Benedictine way of seeking God? If the answer is yes, we invite you to come spend time with the Sisters to learn about our life together.

Seekers Week at Holy Name Monastery is December 26, 2019 to January 1, 2020. This is an opportunity to listen to God in the richness of prayer, liturgy, silence and Community in a monastic setting. Sharing with others and a vocation director is also part of this special program. If this sounds like something that could be the answer to your prayer, register with **Sister Mary Clare** at (352) 588-7188 or maryclareneu@gmail.com.

Blazing Saddles Ranch

The Sisters were invited by the Fitzpatricks for supper and tour of their Blazing Saddles Ranch on October 27th. **Heather and James Fitzpatrick's** ranch is next to the Sisters' farm property in Dade City. They board and train horses, but had no equestrians among the Sisters!



A fun outing, especially feeding the mini donkeys and horses. They even have a "talking" horse that had a lot to say to Sister Eileen!



An Invaluable Service

Since 2014 the Sisters have welcomed five Canine Companions for Independence assistance dogs at Holy Name Monastery. The Sisters have played a pivotal role in the development of these puppies by helping socialize them at Mass, Sunday afternoon concerts, and more casual visits to the Monastery. After the last Mass the puppy attends at Holy Name and before entering professional training, the Sisters offer a special prayer sending the

puppy forth with God's blessings.

Recently, **Zeego**, puppy number four, was placed with **Matt Lafleur** from Opelousas, Louisiana after they completed team training as Canine Companions for Independence graduate team. Matt has Friedreich's ataxia (FA), a rare genetic disorder. FA challenges virtually every aspect of daily life im-

pairing the ability to coordinate voluntary movements. Matt has shared that since receiving Zeego, all areas of his life have improved. At Matt's direction, Zeego now assists Matt by opening doors for him, turning lights on and off, opening the refrigerator, retrieving and delivering items, and much more. Theirs is the ideal match as they complement each other perfectly with their laid-back personalities, strong work ethic, fearlessness, and positive attitudes.



Jeanie at Mass with a trainee.

Jeanie Vogel takes very little credit for grooming the pups in their early upbringing. She takes on the responsibility of ensuring the early puppy training readies them with the essential behaviors needed for advanced training.

During the first year, Jeannie takes the puppy everywhere she goes so that it is exposed to all kinds of stimuli and environments. Giving them these experiences ensures the dogs are well-adjusted. It is a gift that truly keeps on giving to the individual whose life is profoundly changed because of a trained service dog.

Aquaponics Training Another Huge Success!

An aquaponics training event unlike any other happened here in October to transform the heart, mind, and soul of seventeen persons who not only learned, but engaged with rapt attention as **Phil Reasons**, lead instructor of Aquasol International explored the science and sustainable values of fish farming.



Lively presentations flavored with humor reflected Phil's intense love for earth, care for the needs of the global family, and for humanity's future of healthy food production. Our food is sacred. Yet, many are oblivious of the destruction of the dead zones of our oceans, water being a major source of our food supply. It is urgent that we "do something." Does what we're doing give God glory?

Participants relied on a 123-page Aqua-Grow manual, made notes when in outdoor events taught by 3 other



Getting all the notes down!

instructors to include a diverse array of topics—proper water chemistry for tilapia and plants, safe use of power tools, construction of a small aquaponics system, greenhouse construction, balance of composting soil, and even pest monitoring.

Aquaponics (Con't) ~

The alumni session presented by five seasoned aqua-culture farmers was an unforgettable highlight! In a word—the best!

Now the training is over, an atmosphere of hope and possibilities was created, and has become a beautiful memory. Or has the good it generated begun again as others are energized by God's creative goodness in every living being?

Sister Miriam is certain that an enlightened group of 17 will consciously move forward to do something to improve current conditions of the earth. May God continue to use us all as loving instruments in a sacred work. And we are in great hopes of an intern to assist in our food ministry.

Class members' comments:

"This was such a peaceful and beautiful week. Just being in the presence of the Sisters was very warming and spiritual. They showed love to us and treated us like family. And it was so nice to be around like minded people who want to make a change in the world by helping others have healthy food to eat. We are blessed to know you all!"

- Julie Linnerman

"I had an absolutely amazing time at Holy Name Monastery with the entire Aquasol crew! It is such a peaceful and beautiful place. We thank you so much for everything you have done for us this past week! We will be taking everything you have taught us and put together our own aquaponics system at Fat Beet Farm.

Peace, and love the power of fish poop."

—Josie Curci, MS, RD

"The class has given me the confidence I lacked to get started and the lessons learned undoubtedly will save me time and money along the way. Highly recommend it."

- Tim Hudak



The next training class will be held in the Spring of 2020. Information can be found in March at our website:

benetinesistesoffl.org

or

call Sister Miriam at:

352-588-8320



Not your typical graduation class photo!

Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM)

Sister Mary David attended the annual board meeting of the AIM USA conference October 9th. Held at Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, the AIM organization supports monastics in third-world countries. Their



Current Board left to right front row: Sister Mary David, Abbot Stanislaus Gumula, Equador, Sister Ann Hoffman, Sister Therese Glass

Back Row: Father Joe Macul, Abbot Neal Roth, Brother Paul Richards, Sister Anne Wamback, Sister Michael Marie Rottinghaus, Sister Chris Kosin, Sister Ann Shepard, and Sister Nancy Miller

needs vary so AIM responds based on their need—spiritual and financial. Aid is provided especially in education and the formation of their members. Grants are sent to Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Sister has served on the board for five years. They meet for just one day, but a long day it is, from 9 am to 9 pm. It is a great group that works well together as a team. (See the link on the Benedictine Sisters website for AIM.)

This year for the very first time, distance was bridged. One of the members from Ecuador was not able to attend the meeting, so through Zoom technology (see the computer screen on the table), he was there! Unfortunately, he did not get to join us for dinner at the end of the day so he missed the good food, comradery and laughter!

“Simply,” says Sister Mary David, “being Benedictine equals one BIG Family world wide! I got interested in AIM when we had student sisters from Tanzania and Kenya living with us. We provided housing and com-

munity and Saint Leo University provided scholarships. Donated books also linked us to nuns in Paramiho, Tanzania. The world is small and it is great to be Benedictine!”

Supper with Friends

Dade City **Chief of Police James Walters’** family attended prayers and supper with the Sisters on October 22nd. **Mrs. Beatrice Walters** is Chief Walters’ mom and has been a dear friend of the Sisters for many, many years. At 96 years young, she is moving to Virginia soon so a farewell party at the monastery was hosted by the Sisters for her.

Bea’s family members who were with us included Chief Walters’ wife, **Deborah Walters**, **Phil** and **Karen Walters**, and Bea’s granddaughter, **Olivia Walters**.

Safe travels and God’s blessings Bea!



Sister Mary Romana, Bea and Olivia

Saint Leo University Community Day

November 11, 2019

Every year, twice a year, Saint Leo University has a Community Day. The students and staff volunteer in the community for non-profit organizations. The Benedictine Sisters of Florida are always on the list of organizations that could use extra help. We've had volunteers wash the Sisters' cars, garden, spring clean the kitchen—you name it, they will do it! It is all part of the university's endeavors as a Catholic institution to promote Benedictine values.



This fall Community Day brought (left to right) **Doris Van Kampen-Breit, Michelle Joy, Renee Gould and Marissa Smith** to help in the library. Cleaning the books is not an easy task, but these gals stayed at it all day!



We had another hard working group outside. These volunteers are part of the Social Work Club which is Professor Vok's passion. Their job of pulling weeds (not fun) was tough, but it got accomplished.

Students from Saint Leo understand the notion of ministry and giving. We hope they know how much they are appreciated.

Upcoming Events Calendar

December 3rd—Giving Tuesday

December 8th—Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Concert by Piney Grove Baptist

December 12th—Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe

December 22nd—House Decorating Party

December 25th—Christmas

December 26-January 1st—Week for Seekers

December 31st—Day of Quiet and Prayer

January 1st—New Year's Day

January 5th—Epiphany Sunday

January 12th—Concert by St. Anthony Children's Choir

February 9th—Concert by Dade City Methodist Choir

February 26th—Ash Wednesday

March 28th—Annual Gala

Panera Bread on Giving Tuesday

December 3, 2019

Join our Party ~ 4:00 to 8:00 pm

Get dinner at Panera and 20% of your bill will be donated to the Sisters by Panera!

Panera flyer MUST accompany your food order.

Flyer is on our website:

Benedictinesistersoffl.org

In Memorium

John Luke Schrader, September 1, 2019, Grandson of Mary Beaumont ('49) Schrader

Please pray for John and the Schrader Family



Holy Name Monastery

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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 hungers of the People of God.

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Rejoice

*As we anticipate the day of Jesus'
glorious birth*

may His spirit

*always live within you, and may you
always*

know the gift of Love,

the blessing of Hope,

and the promise of Peace.