



The Benedictine Tide
Benedictine Sisters of Florida
Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

Summer 2020

Noah built



*Ordinary people
who did extraordinary things
did not realize what a role
they played in the
"Greatest Story Ever Told"*

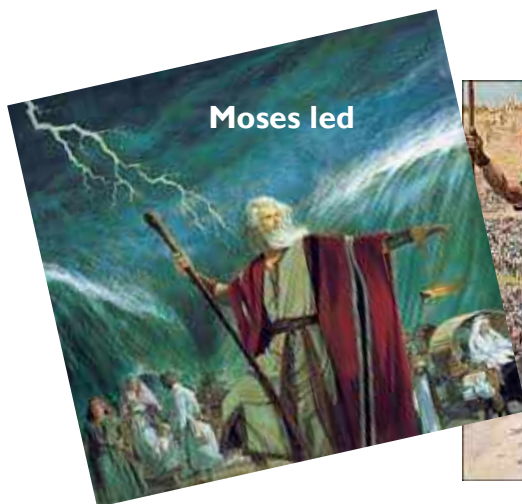
*When we serve
the least among us,
we serve Jesus himself.*



Jeremiah preached



Mary said, "Yes"



Moses led



David conquered



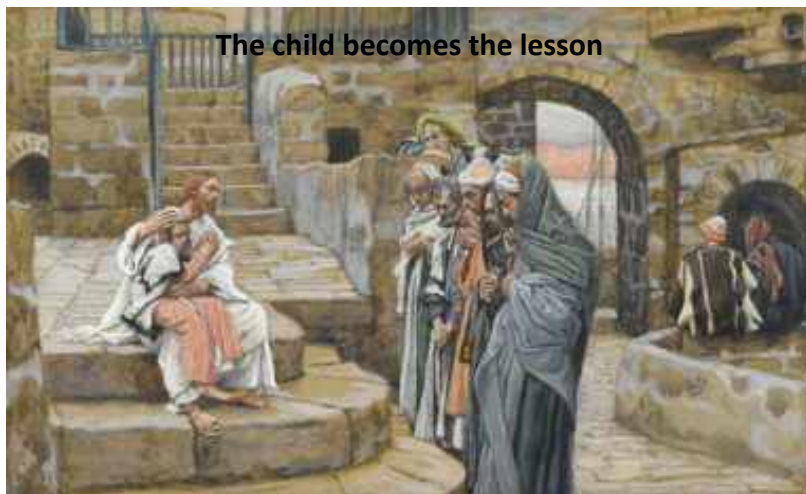
Joseph accepted



Ruth stayed



Apostles
went



The child becomes the lesson



the early church persevered

It's What We're Supposed to Do

Jesus' teaching to His disciples emphasized that the greatest are those who serve all. In one story, the disciples are uncharacteristically silent, afraid and ashamed, seemingly unaware that Jesus had overheard their arguing. A small child, like an eager puppy, has managed to



squirm his way through the crowd and is waiting for Jesus to notice him. Jesus lifts him up and the child settles comfortably onto his lap. The child unknowingly becomes the lesson.

Now, don't fail to understand the significance of this action. You see, in first-century Palestine, children were without status or power, possessing no legal rights whatsoever. They were totally subject to the authority of others. Most often, when children are mentioned in the Scripture, they're lumped together with the others considered lowest on the food chain: women, cattle and foreigners.

Using the child as an example, Jesus is teaching us that when we serve the least ones among us, we serve Jesus himself. Who are the people today without power or status in our society that Jesus is calling us to serve? Do we do so willingly? Does our hospitality extend to the people Jesus would choose? This is the criteria upon which we will be judged.

Jesus says: "See, the greatest people in the kingdom of God are not the rich and powerful." They are the weak and powerless; not the ones with the most servants, but the ones who serve others the most. The "greatest" are the servants of others ... wash the dishes, do the laundry, sweep the floor, pull the weeds, visit the sick, sign up to read, take non-drivers shopping - you know the list ... it goes on and on filled with everyday tasks that help make community life run smoothly.

What is the one human quality that was underlying the

argument among the disciples? The quality that drives us to success while causing all sorts of problems at the same time? Ambition. Ambition is one of the driving forces in our lives. It propels us to excel in our jobs. It pushes us to reach our goals. It can give us a reason for living. Ambition is one of the tools that the world uses to measure success. But, it is only one tool.

If we measure success the way the world does, we will overlook some ordinary people who did extraordinary things. They probably did not realize what a role they played in the "Greatest Story Ever Told" until perhaps they looked back on history from God's heavenly perspective.

Just to name a few, let's look at some of the Scriptural figures we know – what do we remember them for? **Noah** built; **Abraham** moved; **Moses** led; **Josiah** restored; **David** conquered; **Nehemiah** repaired; **Ruth** stayed; **Jeremiah** preached; **Mary** said "yes"; **Joseph** accepted; the poor widow gave; the Apostles went; the early church persevered.

An everyday example presented itself recently in a backpage news story about a couple of school children. One had gotten into some minor trouble and was going to have to walk a few laps instead of playing at recess. She wasn't taking the news very well. Another student, a bystander who wasn't even a close friend stepped up quietly to offer encouragement. She whispered to her peer that she wouldn't have to walk alone; she'd walk with her to cheer her on. When the teacher remarked what a wonderful thing she had done, the student shrugged and replied, "It's no big deal. It's what we're supposed to do."

Can you imagine our world if everyone had the same attitude? It's those kinds of thinkers who are changing the world. Those who forgive, love, go the extra mile, and live righteously, not out of a sense of obligation, not to be seen and applauded by others, but simply because "that's what we're supposed to do."

Sister Roberta Bailey, Prioress

A True Story -

The young woman I first met briefly was the picture of grace, polite, and well-spoken in the English language. She was elegant in appearance with long black hair piled up in the proper fashion for a married Sikh woman from

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New Delhi. Now her world was falling apart. When she returned from India after a visit, her husband wouldn't let her into their apartment. He had filed for divorce. That night she had taken refuge with the only other Indian family in Waterbury, VT— **Aero, Antony** and their two boys.

They lived in a small apartment and Antony sometimes worked from home. It was not long before Antony said that **Taran** could not stay with them any longer. Taran didn't know anyone else to ask. The couple of years she'd lived with her husband in Waterbury, she'd spent mostly at home while he worked.



During that time immigration rules changed for wives of "HB1" visa holders. Aero had eagerly gone out and resumed her career, but Taran's husband had not helped her to get her work permit and to begin the career for which she had been studying before their marriage.

Aero came to me, accompanied by my best friend **Jan**, and they asked if Taran could stay with me for two weeks until a court hearing when the judge could order her husband to move out and allow Taran to have the apartment. I knew that scenario was unlikely and I understood that Taran could be living with me for a long time if I took her in.



Reluctant, and thinking it was not at all my affair, like Simon of Cyrene, I agreed to help Taran carry her cross. I told Aero and Jan that my guest room was all ready and that they could bring Taran right over.

Dr. Kathleen Daye, HNM Resident

Even though doors are closed to friends and even family, our minds are delving continuously into the search for meaning and truth and have discovered many sad realities. Do we walk in empathy with all people—our brothers and sisters? Do we give support to courageous protesters who act out their beliefs? Do we unite in



deep prayer with all peoples? Do we grieve at violence in our cities? Do we have higher standards than those who profess power, law and order as their ideal? Or do we embrace human dignity as the higher order? As a person of white privilege, am I doing what I'm "supposed" to do?

As I watch inequality demonstrations, I see around the globe a huge range of emotions of suffering, anger, courage, and empathy. As people age and mature over the years, their gifts and ambitions grow due to countless life changing experiences. In today's upheaval everywhere people are asking—what are we to do? Learn. Demonstrate. Bleed. Pray. Be engaged. Educate ourselves. Sacrifice. Study history. Share. Abandon greed and power. Resist. How intense my prayer has become for everyone experiencing today's anguish.

One thing we all must learn is to get beyond ourselves to allow our soul to feel another's pain, to get inside their humanity. My life has taught me that amid trials I must search for the meaning of it. Sometimes, very small glimpses and fleeting joys occur in my ministry, so I cling to those events for without such moments despair sets in.

What to do? My full-time ministry. With 2020 food distribution a reality, and as the food famine looms wider we must be proactive. Do you know how many fish Jesus had with the two bread loaves to feed the hungry crowd? And did you know that Jesus' bread and fish were safe to eat? God provided then and still has given the earth's soil everything it needs to feed us. I continue to fill each day with fish and plant concerns—200 tilapia at present, tend the compost soil, and grow safe food.

Everything about the monastery aquaponics farming and soil is safe because our garden food has never absorbed dangerous glysohates. We certainly loved all 61 pounds



of eggplant grown this year, all 46 pounds of bok choy—and how we loved 27 pounds of blueberries! Aquaponics farming treats all creation especially the soil as sacred and our crops are not changed in unnatural ways before coming to

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the kitchen, only exposed to sunlight, clean water, unpolluted air and constant loving care. Sometimes, moments



of joy very small and fleeting happen in my ministry so I can grasp a happy memory and ward off despair.

May God and all in heaven give us strength to heal our national bigotry, engage in uncomfortable conversations of white privilege and blackness, examine our own hidden bias, work to undo the harmful attitudes we have and live the way we're supposed to. I welcome this opportunity to speak through our newsletter and unite in conscience with like-minded persons who read our Tide.

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

*The book of nature
Is always there—helping me
Ever praise the Lord
No pages to turn...just turn
Your gaze and see God's goodness*

Sister Mary Dave Hydro

Think back to Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel... and so on and on. Then Jesus comes. And what is His message?

Love one another.

If only we could do that 24/7.

But we are human beings— and we need to give it at least our very best effort. Everyday when we awaken, we need to say to ourselves:

*"Oh God, I pray—let me be the best I can be today.
Help me do what I am supposed to do."*

Sister Donna DeWitt



Experience shows the potential of the human spirit.

Committing to what is right, what is just and what is good brings fulfillment.

Coretta Scott King

As I write this we are in the midst of what looks to be a long period of physical isolation from the rest of the world. We're in an excellent position to obey the social distancing guidelines brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are supposed to stay six feet apart (a family member describes this an *adult-alligator-length* apart) from others. Not easy in family or communal living situations but we are very conscious of these limits in the house. We do have lovely grounds and porches right out-



side our doors. Fresh air is available in any quantity you want. The birds are visiting regularly as usual. We have some bluebirds this year as a welcome addition to the roster. The cranes are always with us.

Since we began staying home we have been receiving donations of food and related items, brought to our door by friends whom we would love to be able to hug, but cannot yet do so. Loads of good stuff have been appearing at our kitchen door. We are getting so spoiled! People who have stayed with us know the kinds of snacks we like, too, and we have plenty of those as well as the abundant fresh produce.

I think everyone in the house has been taking this opportunity to reopen conversations via phone, email or text with many old friends and distant family members. It's heart-warming to feel the love passing both ways as we collect information on our loved ones and pass the news around to the rest of the community. We are so blessed!

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Easter was a very different celebration this year, as was Palm Sunday, but we continue to reach out to our dear friends and families and pray for an end to this dangerous visitor to our world. We pray each day for those in fear and in pain and for the selfless medical workers who are defying the odds and helping so many to survive.

We have closed the house to guests, and have furloughed our employees until further notice. Staying away from our ministries is the hardest part, but it is what we are supposed to do for now. For some just knowing that we can't go out to shop when we need something, or to go out to meet with friends and coworkers, constitutes a real hardship. For others, not having to go out is a pleasant vacation experience. Same situation, different outlook.

One thing I learned many years ago when I was an impatient child looking forward to something special, is to find something meaningful to do in the meantime. There's always something to learn or read or discover or invent or make. Now is a good time to put this into practice, isn't it?

We are definitely in a "meantime" period when we can make our meantime meaningful. For instance, what are we learning about ourselves, about each other, about life itself during these weeks? What changes do we need to consider that will help us all live together more harmoniously in the future? How can we help others to reach the other end of this period safely and sanely? We are, to be sure, all in this together with the rest of the world. That, in itself, is pretty amazing.

Sister Jean Abbott



Two-Way Connections

We have dearly missed our friends and visitors to Holy Name during these past months of Covid-19. Hearing from so many of you by email makes our day. Please keep us in your loop going forward. It means a lot to us.

Fear has changed lives. Even so, the many true revealers of courage and commitment we hear of and see on television are inspirational and give us all strength.



The Sisters continue to uphold these brave healthcare workers and you in our daily prayers. It has been good for us to hear from you regarding the email blasts of Sister Roberta's Sunday Reflections. Online connection has been a blessing for all of us. The following are just some of the comments we've received—pray, pray:

- ♦ *I can't tell you how much peace I get from knowing you and the Sisters are praying for me and all those affected by this terrible virus. It is the prayers of you who are the most faithful, the most studied and disciplined, that will help us. As a former respiratory therapist, I have so much pain and suffering thinking of the thousands of people dying alone.* **Beth Kinsella**
- ♦ *This is such a beautiful reflection from your devoted, surrendered and committed life to our Lord God Almighty. Thank you.* **Mary Trumm**
- ♦ *You and the Sisters never cease to amaze me with your selflessness and kindness to others. I miss seeing you and joining in your programs...hunkered down with my husband and teaching online.* **Lynn Tepper**

**Read Sister Roberta's Reflections at:
www.benedictinesistersoffl.org**

In Memorium

Lisa Herring, former employee, April 7, 2020

Barbara Lou Adams Munger, HNA '48 – April 19, 2020

Mary Elizabeth Plazewski, HNA '50—April 24, 2020

From the Advancement Office
Giving Tuesday—December 1, 2020



Giving Tuesday is the beginning of December. Small non-profits such as the Benedictine Sisters of Florida have been struggling financially during the pandemic, but we are deeply grateful for those who have given what they can. We pray for all those doing without and looking to charitable causes endeavoring to help.

Everyone can be a part of ensuring that charitable organizations emerge positively from the Covid-19 pandemic. **Giving Tuesday takes place the first Tuesday after Black Friday and Cyber Monday.** When founded in 2012, the idea was to inspire people and companies to take action just like retailers do in selling merchandise for the holidays.

You don't have to be rich to participate in Giving Tuesday—every small act counts. Even \$1.00 to a cause has an impact. Participation has grown nationally each year to a record \$400 million raised for charitable causes in 2018 with many foundations and individuals matching dollars.

Whether we admit it or not, the holiday season can get the best of us. Splurging on gifts for family member(s) can be stressful. Giving back to charity for those in need takes some of that stress and guilt away.

Those who have greater resources might consider giving more during this crisis when it is especially needed. There are those with **Donor Advised Funds**, for example, all across the country held in accounts at Brokerage companies and Community Foundations. These funds, once placed there by donors, can not be taken back. Their joy is distributing annually to charities of the donor's choosing ... a true blessing. The value sitting in these institutions is in the billions. **Now** is the time to look at giving away more of those funds to ensure the charitable work by struggling non-profits continues to be done.

Programs and Events

These past months have been like no other and while none of us knows what fall will bring, it is our hope and prayer that our programs to help feed the spirit of others will be back in full swing.



Our cancelled March 28, 2020 Annual Gala is now planned for March 20, 2021 and will feature the much anticipated murder mystery performance -

***My Big Fat
Italian Funeral***

Mark your calendars for:
March 20, 2021

A very special thank you to those who made a donation of their purchased tickets to the cancelled 2020 gala. Your thoughtfulness helped cover event expenses incurred before this virus forced all of us to become insular.

As for other events, we are holding off with plans until we have a better idea of what early fall brings. Please check our website for updates on what is happening:

benedictinesistersoffl.org

Meet One of Our Live-in Volunteers

"Lost and Now Found"



I had been raised a Catholic by my father, who used to take me to Mass every Sunday when I was a child. My mother said she was a Protestant and that's why she didn't come to church with us. Then my father's business began to prosper and he began to go to the Country Club on Sunday mornings instead. For a while I was just dropped off and attended Mass by myself. I would go to the High Mass with the incense and the beautiful singing, all still in Latin, but at some point, after Confirmation, it all just ended for me.

I was highly concerned about the suffering and injustice in the world. My father said that the poor themselves are to blame for their poverty. I argued that they didn't have equal opportunity. My mother just couldn't understand why I was so "serious." She wanted me to "go out and have fun." She also secretly urged me to pursue a career, "because you'll never be happy if you're just a housewife like me, dependent on a husband."

At age 17, still very much a child, I went off to college, to Long Island University in Brooklyn, NY. There, despite my shy nature, I was swept along into the 60's counter-culture, and, amazingly, found myself strongly united with lots of like-minded peers. Together we were going to build a better world.

First step was to flee the city and establish ourselves in the countryside, where we would live peacefully and simply. This became "the dream of Vermont." To contribute to this new society, I would first attend Penn State to become a doctor.

Fast forward to 2020: I am 72 years old now. I have been retired from my work as a physician at the Vermont State Hospital for years. My kids have gone off to live their own lives. Their dad and I had never said one word to them about God. The idea of baptism never once crossed my mind while they were young.

It's been about 18 years since my yearning for some meaning in my life finally led me back to St. Andrew Church. The first year I was back, I cried through every Mass in my relief to find that the church was still there

and to know I was no longer alone in that cold, materialistic world. Yes, "Lord, long have I known that thy will is established forever," but in my isolation, with everyone around me telling me something else, all these years, I've been trying to go along with them as best I could, and totally lost my way.

I did have a conversation with my father shortly before he died after a long slow decline due to Parkinsons. He started by saying, "Life is hard, Kathleen," and I answered, "Yes, it is, Dad, and that's why I've gone back to the church." He astonished me when he replied, "I've been thinking about it for years." Suddenly, my anger toward him was replaced with tremendous gratitude for the gift of faith he did pass on to me, before the enticements of the world drew him away.

My mother was in a nursing home at the end. All my life, I had never heard her sing or say a prayer. One day I went there and the minister was playing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" on the piano and my mother was singing along. She still knew all the words! My envy at her "perfect life" dissolved in compassion, when I finally saw the extent of the sacrifices she had made for the sake of a peaceful home for me and my brother.

So, my gratitude is beyond bounds, for this opportunity to live with the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, in order to make up for lost time, learn and better understand the truths of life, before it's too late. To be surrounded by believers, rather than scorers, to have the daily Mass, the Eucharist, to blend my voice with theirs in prayer, to feel the love of God. It's all so wonderful. I'd be happy to stay "for the duration."

Dr. Kathleen Daye

Email and Phone Numbers

A couple times each year the Sisters like to make phone calls to our supporters to give a more personal "thank you" for your kindness. The calls are also an opportunity to get to know you. It is a special connection for us and we pray that is for you as well.

We also like to email words of inspiration and "thank yous." If we don't have your phone number, email address or both, please email us or snail mail as soon as you finish reading this. Peace!



Affiliate Moira Melvin

On January 26, 2020, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida formally welcomed **Moira Melvin** as an Affiliate of their community. As an Affiliate, the initial stage of religious formation, it is a period during which she will spend time with the Sisters to discern and explore the Benedictine way of life. Discernment is a process and occurs over time.

Moira grew up in a devout Roman Catholic family, the second youngest of five girls. Her early years were spent in Laytonsville, Maryland before her parents traveled overseas for various teaching assignments in Belgium and Germany. During her last two years of high school she had the opportunity to attend an all-girls boarding school in Ireland. After returning to the U.S. and living in California and Maryland, she settled in the Tampa area in 2002. With a 32+ year career in the legal field, Moira is a “late bloomer” in joining the monastic community. Although she had previously considered joining a religious order in November 1996, her spiritual growth began in earnest in January 2014 when she took a 12-week course on the Bible at a local non-denominational church. It was then that she began to really embrace the Bible and believe it is God’s Word.

Moira first encountered the Benedictine Sisters in November 2014, during a self-imposed retreat following the death of her mother. She was touched by the Sisters holiness and hospitality, especially Sister Miriam who was particularly sensitive to her grief. In December 2018 she became re-acquainted with the Sisters during an Advent retreat the monastery offered and shortly thereafter began thoughtful consideration to monastic life. There had been a subtle desire for something more and she realized she was longing to know God more deeply, to live a life centered on faith, and to be part of a community of fellow seekers who exhibit a balanced life of prayer and work. What she did not expect was to find herself so naturally “at home” in the monastery environs. “I have not had to wrestle as much as I would have thought in the discernment process,” she said. “When you desire to have a deeper intimacy with our Lord and Savior and you really want to grow spiritually, then the desire to become involved with things that do not reflect God’s nature will fade over time.” Holy Name Monastery has been a sanctuary of welcome for Moira and with the prayerful support of the Sisters is thriving in her new role. “God knows my story...all of it. Despite my imperfections, He loves me, and I believe wants me to be part of His family through the monastic community of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida.”

Moira continues to work full-time as a paralegal at a downtown Tampa law firm, while exploring the Benedictine way of life and to allow a smooth transition from the lifestyle of a lay woman to the lifestyle of a Benedictine community member. Before the pandemic struck and COVID restrictions were established, Moira enjoyed the life and rhythm of the community as frequently as possible, interacting with the Sisters through Sunday Mass and participating in the monastery’s activities such the monthly Music at the Monastery, attending the quarterly Oblate meetings conducted by **Sister Mary David Hydro**, and going to the Grotto with **Sister Elizabeth Mathai** to say the Rosary. Now, Moira remains connected to the Sisters by way of a weekly milk delivery and provisions until the monastery can re-open for guests and visitors.

*Consider what God
Has done for you, and give thanks
Bless His holy name.
God is ceaselessly
Faithful to us despite our
Infidelities.
Covenant shapes His fidelity
May He help us mirror His love.*

Enjoy, stay well and know of my prayerful love...Sister Mary David

Donor Profile—Jody Bollinger

When my mom, in a semi-comatose state, was lying in bed in Hospice, she pointed upward. I asked her if she was going up there to Heaven. She answered, “No, further up.” If there is a “further up,” I am sure that is where she is.

My mom loved to read, to learn, to play Scrabble, to listen to Pavarotti. (His rendition of *Nessun Dorma* brings tears to my eyes.) My sisters and I nicknamed her the “human dictionary.” She took up painting in her 60’s, and she also created beautiful bureau scarves by doing intricate stitching. She was strong in her faith and strong-willed in her comportsment. She once told me that her mom never complained; my mom was the same way. My mom passed on her love of learning, words, and music to me and my sisters. Whenever we visit, we always play a variety of word games and I keep a notebook of words learned from doing crossword puzzles. This love of learning was why I became an educator for 30 years in Florida schools. Now I volunteer in the media center at my great nephew’s school.



A few years ago, my two sisters and I asked each other, “Who was Dad’s favorite?” I thought I was his favorite, but my sisters thought the same thing! Each of us felt we were special to him. How wonderful is that!

I grew up loving to play baseball, kickball, and basketball. Dad was happy to have a daughter who loved sports. One of my favorite memories is going to Baltimore to see the Orioles play. My dad worked at a shoe factory, and the men in his department chartered a bus to go to a game. All of the men took their sons...my dad took me. I remember playing baseball in the neighborhood with the boys. They all got to play Little League, but I had to be the batgirl!

Dad was always there to support me when I played college basketball, entered triathlons, and played softball on his company’s team. I still exercise regularly and love to watch Gator football, basketball and softball.

My life growing up was filled with love and support. We visited aunts, uncles, cousins, and my grandma and went on picnics and vacations with them. Our vacation spot was a cottage which was owned by my dad’s employer. We spent hours swimming in the muddy creek, playing croquet, swinging, rowing the creaky rowboat. My childhood is one long, happy memory. The good Lord surely blessed me when I was chosen to be the daughter of **Fremont and Evelyn Bollinger**.

When I was in my 30’s, I felt a calling to religious life. I spent many weekends at Holy Name Monastery. What a blessing to have spent time with such a welcoming, faith-filled, loving community. (That was over 30 years ago.) The Benedictine Sisters will always hold a special place in my heart. They are a bright light for the world to behold.

Holy Name Monastery

PO Box 2450

St. Leo, FL 33574-2450

Editorial Team

Editors: Sister Roberta Bailey, *Prioress*
Faith Pridmore, CFRE,
Dir. of Mission Advancement

Writers: Benedictine Sisters

Web-Master: Cheryl Chadick

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.