



The Benedictine Tide

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

Winter Tide 2021

We are all connected

in fragile

and mysterious

ways ...



03/25/2020

Photo and phrase by
Sister Miriam Cosgrove

Connection

When the call for articles for this issue of the TIDE was first sounded by our Advancement Office staff, and I saw the theme was CONNECTIONS, my feeling was: Good glory! What can one write about “connections” in these days when so much feels “dis-connected”? Yes, there is ZOOM; there’s Instagram and Facetime. Virtual hugs are nice but we miss human touch: a handshake and hug. Someone remarked recently, “Your tombstone is going to read - one day she ZOOM-ed away.” We’re slowly opening our doors now, but for 20 months we missed welcoming in-house guests. Just as I was getting carried away by all the “disconnectedness,” I got a preview peek of **Sister Miriam’s** Tide cover photo of a spider web sparkling in the sunlight.

Spiders are not confined or defined by any sort of ZOOM. The strength of spider web material is remarkable. Spiders teach us lessons in persistence. Did you know many spiders actually rebuild their entire web every single day, bigger and more decorative. And, spiders aren’t choosy about where they spin their webs. They can rig one just about anywhere. Have you ever been greeted on a dewy, scarcely lit morning with spider webs clinging to your car? They stretch from the side-view mirror to the back door handle and down to the tires. And, they just seem to multiply as you try to wipe them off with the single tissue you had in your pocket. Or (horrors!) they cling to your fingers and won’t shake off.

In these long months of pandemic “stay safe” practices, we’ve learned what a cloistered life might be like. Most of us are super glad we’re not “enclosed” monastics. Yearning for connection to “real” people, I’ve caught myself having a conversation with a character in a novel or e-book. I’ve grown accustomed to expecting or making phone calls to relatives at certain preordained times. We worry when we do not hear from each other at the appointed hour.

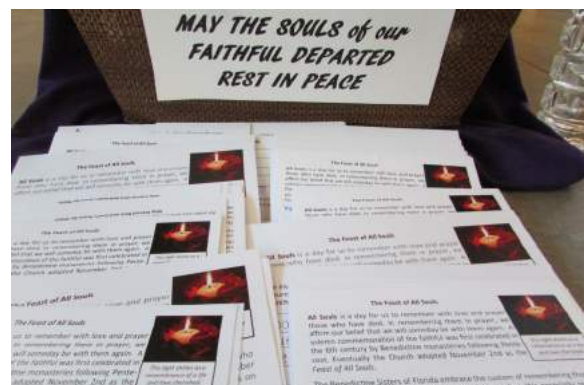
Our community has been blessed with loyal, caring staff members who offer us outlets for sharing sto-



ries and hearing about their families’ blessings and woes. The Mission Advancement staff have worked remotely keeping our public aware of our mission “to respond to the hungers of God’s people.”

They’ve used newly emerging avenues of social media to provide postings, e-blasts and snail mail. In the Community Room, there’s a running list of well-wishers who have touched base with individual Sisters. Window sills are lined with greeting cards reminding us of friends’ emotional and prayerful support. Prayer requests come to us via the phone, emails and our website. On quick trips to town, persons who recognize a Sister’s eyes above her facial mask approach to ask a remembrance of family and friends who are suffering from COVID and other health concerns. The ALL SOULS cards in the basket at the foot of our altar is heaped this year. Throughout November we pray:

MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE.



(Con’t Page 4)

Thoughts on Connection

1

Surely Covid has encouraged connections to continue, if done in a different way. I make use of snail-mail, email, and phone with friends, Oblates, and spiritual directees. ZOOM meetings with our Oblates have been extremely effective in our "connectedness." We get to share and see one another! I'm sure they nonetheless miss Mass and dinner with the Sisters. BTW Iris Salcedo wins the prize for connecting from farthest away — she is in WA state. *Mysterious* how this can happen...

2

Gratitude is a connection--brings us closer. Focus on the good.



3

Earth Connections

Cultivate and nurture the earth--it gives us food, shelter, beauty--yet today there is drought, fires, flooding, pollution... The earth is home to many peoples/nations. We need to share and protect our earth connections. Nature also connects us to God.

Take a walk or look out the window--what "love notes" from God do you see?

The tiny flower, puffy cloud, sunrise or sunset are connections.

4

Ideas and words connect us so we can be one in thought and action



5

Music connects us
a smile, a prayer can connect us to others, too.

6

OSB Connections

I'm ever grateful for my vocation and my monastic Community that connects me to the Sisters God has given me here in Saint Leo, Florida. That includes the larger Benedictine Family in which I have Sisters

across the country. Our Benedictine values connect us also to many Oblates. Together we:

- "seek God" and strive to build community
- live a balanced life of prayer/work
- "listen with the ear of the heart"
- welcome others in hospitality
- be connections to God who seeks to be One with us all.

Sister Mary David

How I Survived the Pandemic



During the months of our strict isolation at the beginning of the pandemic, there were a number of people, too many to name, who came to the monastery to help us. They went out and shopped for our food and personal needs. They even bought us food and delivered it! Astounding how giving people are.

It was very hard at first for me to stay put. Doing is how I best function. Going to the post office and back was it! Employees could not be in the monastery either and some worked from home. Cooking and cleaning again became the responsibility of the Sisters.

When we were finally able to get out again, the plan was to just shop at one store per trip. Upon returning home, it was take a shower and change clothes. Then, sometime in August 2020, our employees came back to work. I now had less cooking to do, so thoughts became focused on how best to make my time useful. Initially I started to do more walking and working on eating better. The loss of about 36 pounds, give or take a few, has been good.

Then a door was opened to volunteer in the food pantry at Day Star Hope which is run by **Sister Jean**. Working there has been very rewarding and made me realize how blessed the Sisters are to have what we have. Also, I now go to the Day Care and answer the phone a few hours twice a week. Seeing the teachers, parents and children has been joyful.

Recently, I took on helping **Sister Mary Romana** in the flower garden. And, with the help of one of our wonderful volunteers, **Linda Gant**, we are do-

more reading and for fun, still doing puzzles. Those activities along with daily prayers for family, friends and the world make me feel connected.

To close – **Sister Roberta** gave all the Sisters a copy of this quote and picture at the beginning of the pandemic. I for one tried my best - I believe - to live by these words.



Jesus embraces a Corona victim

*“Go home, my people, and
lock your doors!
Hide yourselves
for a little while
until this trial has passed.”*
(Adapted from Isaiah 26:20)

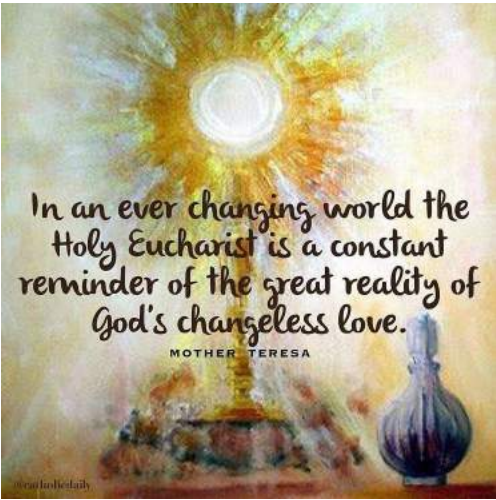
*“Go into your room,
close the door and pray.”*
(Matthew 6:5)

Sister Donna DeWitt

Bound Together

For me one of the wonderful things about being Roman Catholic is the doctrine of the communion of saints. We are all part of a “mystical body” with Christ as our leader. Spiritual union is ours as people of faith on earth with the blessed living in heaven who bring us closer to Christ.

This is especially true in our monastery. When one of the Sisters dies, there is a very strong feeling within me that all that she has done is just moved on. Thinking of them continues to be in the present. There is no sense that the person they were in life is lost or extinguished, even temporarily.



Our shared life in the monastery binds us to one another. We are going to God together. And we know we will see each other again. Alleluia!

Sister Eileen Dunbar

(Con’t from Page 2)

This prolonged pandemic has heightened our sense of connectedness to God and neighbor; to relatives; estranged family members; and efforts to re-connect with “old” friends. A special bond has been built with volunteers who “sit at the reception desk” and others who do yard work. On Tuesdays, we watch for the university dining staff who have weekly helped keep the pantry shelves stocked. I’ve no doubt, God has been extraordinarily good to us! No virus has ventured to seep through our walls or face masks. We’ve been fortunate to have daily Mass and never needed to wear masks at meals or in the chapel. We’ve made one change I’ve sincerely appreciated and not solely for “holy” reasons. Our weekday Mass and Morning Praise is an hour later in the morning! It seems to be my natural rising hour. As a bonus I get to watch the ending of the 9 p.m. movie.

In her TED talk, **Es Devlin**, a poetic designer, says these words: “I once read that a poem learnt by heart is what you have left, what can't be lost, even if your house burns down and you've lost all your possessions.” She adds words I’d like you to remember: “Only connect! Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Only connect! And live in fragments no longer.”

Please, heed the lesson from the spiders. Let’s weave our fragments of connectivity into strong, beautiful web-like designs linking us together in prayer and affection. God bless! Stay safe – be healthy – know peace!

Sister Roberta Bailey

Calendar of Upcoming Events

November 30th	First Sunday of Advent
December 8th	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December 25th	Christmas
December 26th	Feast of the Holy Family
December 31st	Day of Prayer
January 1st	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
January 2nd	Solemnity of the Epiphany
January 9th	Feast of the Baptism of our Lord
March 2nd	ASH Wednesday-beginning of Lent

Giving Tuesday November 30, 2021 \$30,000 Match!

Giving Tuesday happens November 30th and we need your help! The day is a **24-hour day of giving** that follows Christmas shopping on Black Friday and cyber Monday.



#GIVING
TUESDAY

YOUR GIFT WILL BE MATCHED!

Your donation will be matched dollar for dollar!

Our dear friend, **John Picciano**, has pledged to match every dollar raised for the Sisters on Giving Tuesday up to \$30,000.

Please help make this a reality with a donation. Go to: **www.benedictinesistersoffl.org**. Click on the Donate Now button at the top of the page. It's easy!

Ask your **friends and family** to join you in this effort. Even \$5.00 or \$10.00 gifts make a difference.

For questions or assistance, call Faith (941) 586-3112 or Cheryl at (813) 838-7452.

Checks postmarked by November 30, 2021 and made payable to the Benedictine Sisters of Florida can be sent to: PO Box 2450, St. Leo, FL 33574-2450.

*With your help,
we can do this!*

Afghans by Sister Jerome

Crafted
with



Love and
Prayers

Sister Jerome Leavy was introduced to the Florida Benedictines while attending Holy Family School in North Miami, Florida. She entered our community in 1958. She was awarded a Master's Degree from Notre Dame University and a PhD in education from the University of South Florida. Sister taught in schools staffed by our Sisters in Jacksonville Beach, Sarasota, North Miami and was principal of Saint Anthony School in San Antonio, Florida.

Several years ago **Sister Jerome** suffered a stroke that left her partially paralyzed on the right side and language impaired. Her hard fought battle to regain some control over her life has been valiant.

Sister resides at Concordia Village Assisted Living in Tampa and is proud to contribute her artistry for our mission work.

One of Sister Jerome's loves is crocheting and her ability to again create items is a blessing. Her lovely afghans (approx. 36" X 36") are available at the monastery and offered at a minimum donation of \$20 to the Benedictine Sisters of Florida.

**May God bless us
With listening hearts that we may
Hear the Spirit's voice.**

Haiku by Sister Mary David

Our First Retreat Group Since March 2020!



On September 17th through the 19th, 2021, Holy Name Monastery hosted its first retreat group since the Covid pandemic shutdowns started in March 2020. The retreat title was *Practicing God's Presence: A Contemplative Retreat*. The desire to seek and practice God's presence together drew ten folks from across west central Florida hungry to be with others longing to "Be Still and Know that [God is] God."

The retreat featured contemplative prayer periods as a group, individual silent time, contemplative teaching, and rich spiritual fellowship. It was led by Dr. Rickey Cotton, a spiritual director and presenter for Centering Prayer through Contemplative Outreach, and his wife Anna, an experienced soulfriend and published poet. Richness was added when the retreatants joined the Sisters for meals, daily prayer periods and Eucharist.

The Benedictine Sisters' practical example and warm hospitality provided yet again a place and a spirit to respond to God's words, "Be still and know that I am God."



FINDING IT

With so much disheartening evidence about our planet in peril, we must search for ways to lift up our soul, be it ever so small or seemingly insignificant. In July after the long lockdown our first retreat visitors were welcomed and the community's smiles lit up as did both women who came. And what were the chances that both were named **Sandra** and while here each found the peaceful quiet they were looking for.

One visitor toured the aquaponics and fruit tree area. A year ago **Sister Miriam** was thrilled to see countless avocado blossoms covering a 5-year-old tree and that now had borne fruit. While showing the first successful fruits, the visitor exclaimed, "Look, there's a bird nest in the tree!" And it had eggs for an added surprise. Sweet! Next on the tour was the butterfly garden at the north end of the monastery where tall avocado trees planted 7 years ago seemed to be "fruitless." And yes, that observant newcomer found several ripe avocados which the gardener herself never knew were there.

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

In Memorium:

Antoinette C. ('47) Midilli - October 7, 2021

Faye Burnside ('55) Martin – September 9, 2021

Eleanor Katherine Grudzinski – August 14, 2021

Estella Storch ('50) Barthle - August 8, 2021

Patricia Nancy Powers ('53) - February 13, 2021

Not making a decision is a decision.

In my 25 years of raising funds for non-profit organizations doing great work in their communities, I've known many very kind and generous people. It is always a surprise to learn that while they believe strongly in giving back, plans haven't been made for what should happen to their assets upon their passing from this world.

Without a will, decisions will be made by the government and may not be what you want. Take care of yourself, your family and if it is what you want, a charity or charities you love by planning.

Make the decision today!

Contact me, **Faith Pridmore, CFRE** and I would be happy to assist with your financial advisor or attorney to put together your plan. Email or call:

hnmdevelopment@saintleo.edu
(352) 588-8320 or (941) 586-3112

The Benedictine Sisters are humbled and grateful to friend, **Eleanor Katherine Grudzinski** for her kind remembrance of our mission in her will. Eleanor passed away August 14, 2021. A graduate of Saint Leo University, she worked there with **Sister**



Mary Clare when Sister was Dean of Women.

Beyond her career as a Special Education Teacher, Eleanor was an active volunteer with the Women's Auxiliary of the Knights of Columbus Council 10671, HPH Hospice and for several ministries at her parish, St. Joseph Catholic Church.

We look forward to honoring Ellie at our next *Angels in the Wings Luncheon*. Because of the ongoing Covid variants, we will not be able to have a luncheon as usual in early November. Hopefully, we can do so this coming Spring. The opportunity to publicly thank our "Angels" with their family present is a privilege.

Need to Unplug?

The Retreat Center at Holy Name Monastery is a lovely, peaceful place for a time away from the our fast-paced world!

Rushing is at the center of life. Anxiety, stress, and strained relationships overwhelms us. The Sisters warmly welcome all who seek time to be still, to reflect, to just be. Come and find yourself renewed, find a renewed perspective, find a renewal of your values and priorities.

Whether you are looking for a Directed Retreat or just want to be on your own, we are here to accommodate with traditional Benedictine Hospitality.

To schedule your individual or group retreat, contact **Sister Mary Clare** at (352) 588-8320 or email at: maryclareneu@gmail.com

Retreat Scholarships Available—If you are in need, but do not have the resources to retreat, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida may be able to help. (See contact information for Sister Mary Clare above.)

Dade City Monarch Festival

Now that was my kind of place, Hibiscus Park in Dade City among the earthy gardeners at the October 2021 Monarch Festival and their vendor table displays of home-grown nectar plants and host plants for butterflies. The event showed the need



to protect the monarch butterfly, one of countless endangered species whose disappearance is drastic decline has reached a dangerous extinction level.

One happy highlight of the day was Rebecca, the lovely 7-foot monarch (on stilts) fluttering her graceful wings as she smiled broadly for onlookers who took their photo with her.

It was my honor and privilege to give the invocation with a theme of hope, joy, and doing good. and then

mingled in the crowd to give away pots of milkweed which is the host plant for monarchs. One exhibit had multiple chrysalis suspended from a net showing the metamorphosis stage from caterpillar to butterfly.

Would that more people understood the importance of their role in preserving even the fleeting beauties of the natural world.

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

Connected to a Really Fishy Family of Friends

How did one commitment in 2014 create so many connections? The answer is just natural. The network of fishy friends who frequent the monastery was generated by the love of God and Creation as God intended the Kingdom on earth. Aquaponics has thrived for 7 fortunate years here in large part due to the skills of **Phil Reasons** shown in his favorite pose with a tilapia. Phil harvests all our fish with expert ease. He brings so many friends and students to this peaceful place.



Also in this selfless network is dear friend **Richard Bon** who since the very beginning of our fish farming has used his expert talent to prepare our tilapia for the Sisters' meals by filleting out every bone and placing his finished product at our chapel door. In return for his generosity, Sister Miriam fortifies Richard with whatever produce she is growing at that season. With a barter system like this, Richard uses his talents to help others who in turn use their skill and gift him with their product. As Richard says, "The world would be a better place if we used the barter system."

Other *connectors* who enable our success are **Hans Geissler, Joo Ho Lee, Dan Blanton, Bradley Taylor, Flo Watson, Ron, Clay, John and Karen Roth, Becky Wilson, Janet Collura, Ben Pumo, Lizzy Reasons, Mazuli Sassaman, Don Lutrell** and son **Jade, St. Mark's Knights of Columbus** and **Columbiettes**, and many other kind donors. All these are real friends who bring joy to Sister Miriam's community ministry and enable her to enjoy a "long, loving look at the real," as writer **Walter Burghardt** described the signs of God's kingdom all around us.

Saint Leo University Tennis Team In our “Court”



Coach Chad Barryhill brought the awesome athletes of the Men and Women’s Tennis Teams to work in the Aquaponics garden. After much work and sweat, Sister Miriam was impressed with the transformation they accomplished. There were 13 countries plus the U.S. represented in the group—England, Spain, Italy, Germany, Bolivia, Ukraine, Bolivia, Chile, France, Poland, Argentina, Netherlands, Venezuela and Morocco.

Of course a crash course by **Sister Miriam** about Aquaponics’ best practices was part of the students’ day. She finished with a blessing and *“gratitude for such gracious service.”*

SAVE the DATE!

MARCH 28th— APRIL 1, 2022

SPRING AQUA/HYDROPONICS WORKSHOP

For more information contact Phil Reasons at:

Reasons@aquasol.com



Luminaries of Love

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Invite you
to honor your loved one(s) with our

Luminaries of Love.

Give a gift of gratitude ...

Give a gift of remembrance ...

Give a gift just because ...

Give a gift to your family ...

The Sisters will place the individual, couple or family's name on a lit Luminary and display them on the circular drive at Holy Name Monastery on:

Christmas Eve

***It is our prayer that this will be a connection of the heart for you.
Funds raised will help us respond to needs at this time of Covid.***

To order your Luminary or Luminaries:

Mail your donation to PO Box address below or

Order Online at:

www.benedictinesistersoffl.org

Click on the **Donate Now** button.

Please designate **Luminaries** as the purpose for your donation.

Put names to be placed on Luminaries in "**Dedicated To**" box.

Questions? Contact

Faith Pridmore (941) 586-3112 or Cheryl Chadick (813) 838-7452

\$5.00 minimum donation per Luminary

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

PO Box 2450 * 12138 Wichers Rd, St. Leo, FL 33574-2450

Please feel free to take your Luminary home Christmas Day.

100th Anniversary of the Federation of Saint Scholastica 2022

*The same call and gift of the Spirit that came to **Benedict of Nursia** and his sister **Scholastica** early in the 6th century came to the women who formed the Federation of Saint Scholastica early in the 20th century. This same call and gift of the Spirit comes to us today, inspiring and animating us to respond to the gospel with their good zeal, with listening hearts, with clarity of spiritual vision, and with hearts impelled by love. And so we pray:*

Loving God, we give you thanks
for our Benedictine heritage,
and for the expression of this call and gift in the
communities of the Federation of St. Scholastica.

May our celebration
of the Federation's first 100 years
strengthen us in our spiritual tradition,
deepen our capacity to listen,
widen our hearts with your love,
and sharpen our spiritual vision
that seeks to see Christ in the heart of all Creation
and at the center of our common life.

One in Christ,
may the communities of the Federation,
oblates, benefactors, and friends,
share the peace of Christ, show the love of Christ,
and make Christ known in our world.





Holy Name Monastery

PO Box 2450

St. Leo, FL 33574-2450

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 and emotional hungers of the People of God.

Editorial Team

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Jesus Christ

Sent by God for Love, for Hope, for Enlightenment ... for our Salvation

