



The Benedictine Tide

# Benedictine Sisters of Florida

*Touching Lives Through Prayer and Service*

Spring 2023

## Emmaus Moments



“That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus’ disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus. They were conversing about all the things that had occurred.” (Luke 24:13) Where were you when your “Emmaus Moment” occurred? Who were you conversing with? Did you recognize the significance at the time? Or was it like it was for the disciples? Did it have to “percolate” a while before “your mind was opened to understand” this was an “Aha Moment”?

I think of my “Emmaus Moment” as an image reversed. At the time **I did** recognize Jesus and I could identify all who were in the reflection scenario with my friend Jesus, save one. That one remained a mystery for a long time. I mean like years!

The day of my Emmaus Moment began quietly. I was catching a quick nap on the couch in the living room. Ah, blissful quiet! In my dream-like state, I recall walking beside a “barrier” of some sort, maybe a stone wall. Here and there I could see over the wall. A group was seated in a circle that kept moving forward at the same pace I was walking on my side of the wall. At one point, I stepped over the wall and proceeded into the circle. As I said earlier, I recognized Jesus and thought at first that the group gathered with Him was maybe His first disciples. But, no, these were people I knew. Some predeceased; others were my living companions. I knew them all; all but one! I could not figure out who she was. Had I ever met her before? The scene faded away and I jolted out of my reflective state, rarely to recall it again. That is, until many years later.

What a startling moment when I was introduced to a Benedictine Sister at a national conference. It was she! There stood the unknown woman from that long ago circle. Over time, she became a confidant, a treasured friend. Now she is numbered among the Elect.

I would venture to guess you, too, can recall every detail of your Emmaus Moment. We believe God is everywhere, all around us. But do we really believe the Jesus will drop into our company and chat with us? Do we believe that every person manifests a virtue of Jesus that I need in my life? Look around. Where do you see Jesus looking back at you? How interesting that we all see the faces but each one sees the very virtue she needs to make her life whole.

When or where will you meet the Risen Christ today? What we do know is that He will show up! Like Piglet told Pooh, “I say, I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen to me today?”

Sister Roberta Bailey

## An Angel There Then Gone Again

Sister Mary David and I were on our way to the condo on Anna Maria Island. It had been raining.

After we got off the expressway, I ran over a newspaper that was straddling the two-lane highway, but I didn't know it. When I got to the light, I could not stop. I pressed the brake pedal, but the brake was dead and so I hydroplaned into the back of a white car. It kind of shook me up! I didn't know what to do, but I got out of the car. The driver of the white car was a young lady. She was very upset, so she wouldn't talk.

A nice lady driving a truck saw the whole thing. She stopped and got out of her truck and talked to us. We told her where we were going.

We moved the car to the Walmart parking lot. She put all our belongings in her truck and she drove us the rest of the way to Anna Maria Island.

On the way, we stopped at the Publix where we normally shop. She waited while we did our grocery shopping.



She took us down to the condo and helped us unpack.

This young lady was in her early forties and she owned a roofing company in Sarasota, Florida. She said that she had been up here and done some work, so she was a little familiar with our area.

We invited her to come up here sometime if she was in the area, and have lunch with us, but we never heard from her again. We did get her name, but I don't have a clue after all these years. She did give us her card, but we never used the card.

She never contacted us again, but I would say that God sent this angel to help us and it was really great. The next day John brought us a different car.

She was an angel that was there and gone again.

Sister Donna DeWitt

## HOW CHRIST HAD MERCY

It was a couple of days after the flood had poured through the first floor of my home. I was still in shock, not knowing where to begin, not wanting to do it at all, but there was no way out. I would have to manage the "restoration" myself.

No electricity, heat or hot water. Filthy mud everywhere. The specter of mold growing unseen in hidden spaces. In the basement, the heating oil tank had ruptured. The fuel oil mixed with the floodwater and permeated everything. The odor filled the air and I did not know if it would ever go away.

The furnace was ruined and the ductwork was full of mud. It was September and I had no way to heat my house for the upcoming winter. I was determined not to put in another oil burner. I blamed the flood on climate change due to the burning of fossil fuel.

What else was there? Electric heat is not adequate for the Vermont winter. It would have to be wood, I decided. Luckily, I had a fireplace, and so I already had a chimney.

On day four, I went up to the morning meeting in the parking lot behind the school. I went over to an acquaintance and began talking about my "heating plan." A stranger was there with him. He said he had come up from Boston to help us. He was the owner of "Boston's Best Chimneys."

He came to my house, inspected the chimney and measured the fireplace. Then he took me to the stove store, where he helped me choose a new stove, which I bought. The next weekend he returned, with his truck and equipment, and did the installation, including an expensive stainless steel chimney liner, at no charge.

The stove worked perfectly and gave off plenty of heat. It was an island of comfort in a dark time.

Kathleen Daye (Postulant)

## On the Road with Jesus

Many years ago I joined my best friend and her family for a short trip within our New England state in the springtime of the year.

I don't recall where we were coming home from, but I do remember the torrential rain on the interstate as we made our way south, toward home, in the late afternoon. It was not yet time for the sun to set, but the day had been dark and gloomy for hours. Traffic was heavy but moving quickly. Probably no one wanted to stay out in this weather any longer than necessary.

My friend, who was 8-1/2 months pregnant with her third child, was driving the big station wagon. Her husband was in the passenger's front seat. He suffered from partial paralysis on one side of his body from an accident a few years prior. I sat in the



back seat and tried to keep their 2-yr old and 3-yr old from doing anything dangerous.

Suddenly we heard a muffled bang and the car started to pull to one side. Dee was an accomplished driver and got us safely to the far right of the roadway. The stretch we were on was a "limited access" section with no exits or safe pullout spots in case of emergency. Because the blowout was on the driver's side, anyone who ventured to do something about it would be seriously vulnerable to the speeding traffic in the still-pouring rain. The only people who wanted to get out were, of course, the little children, who wanted to get out so they could play in the puddles.

We all saw the flashing lights and heard the siren behind us. A young state trooper appeared at the driver's side window and took a quiet visual inventory of the passengers. By now the children were making spitballs from the roadmap. At least it was keeping them quiet for the moment. The trooper blocked one of the highway's lanes with his

vehicle, set out flares and a couple of cones, and proceeded to change the tire.

"You know," he told us, "we're not allowed to change flats for motorists. So if anyone asks, I'm removing debris from the roadway." We pledged our silence, accepting our characterization as "debris". In almost no time, the change was made and the trooper was leaving, advising us to proceed with caution, since we no longer had a spare tire. He, of course, was unaware that in ordinary circumstances our vehicle would have been without one from the beginning.

The children felt a bond with the "helper man" who smiled in the rain, and they cried a while when he left. They were getting hungry and wanted to go home. Apparently, there is little nutrition in road maps.

I always felt that there was something extra special about our trooper-mechanic. He performed his mission with a smile and with water pouring off his hat onto everything he touched. I don't know if it was Jesus himself or one of his messengers. I do know, that no situation is too messy or uncomfortable for Jesus to wade in through the speeding cars and trucks to keep his people safe, even when it's against the rules. Clearly not his rules, anyway.

Sister Jean Abbott

## JESUS THE RISEN LORD WALKS WITH US – LIKE ON THE EMMAUS ROAD

In the beginning of last August, I travelled from Switzerland to France with my brother and his family and my brother's friend to visit the Shrine of our Lady of Lourdes. We were hoping that when we reached Lourdes, we would be able find a tour guide who could speak English or German. But we did not find anyone who could understand English or German and no one in our group could understand French. There was much to see there and we didn't want to miss anything. We were at a loss and disappointed.

While we were walking towards the Grotto of Our



Lady of Lourdes a religious sister approached us and told us that she heard us speaking in her native tongue, the language of Kerala, India, which was both her and our birthplace. She belonged to a French religious community. Her name was also Sr. Elizabeth. Her community was one of the forty religious communities that have various kinds of ministries at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. Sr. Elizabeth's ministry was to take care of the Adoration Chapel. Other members of her community took care and gave tours of St. Bernadette's family home. She served as our tour guide and even recommended an Indian restaurant which was not far from the Shrine.

This holy pilgrimage was very peaceful, joyful, prayerful, and spiritually renewing. This experience brought to mind the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus the Risen Lord is ever present in our midst. He walks with us in our journey, and He guides us, opens our eyes, and gives us the grace to experience the gift of His peace, love, and joy on our journey of life.

Sister Elizabeth Mathai

## From the Oblate Office

In Chapter 49 of the Rule of **St. Benedict** we're told, "We urge that during Lent we conduct our lives with the greatest possible purity." Our longing for a deeper life with Christ is real. We ask Christ to correct us when we

### Are you looking for a Family?

#### Are you discerning a vocational call to religious life?

Would you like to receive invitations to our "Seekers" events and retreats? Would you like to arrange a visit with the Sisters at Holy Name?

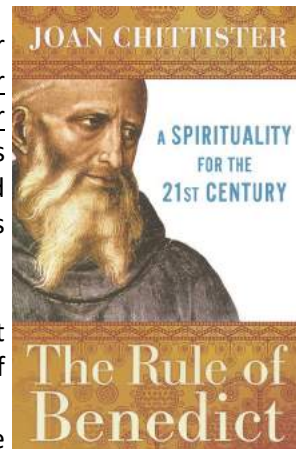
At this time, for the safety of the Sister and all our guests, we are receiving visitors who have been fully vaccinated.

- **To arrange a day-visit**, please contact S. Eileen Dunbar, at: [dunbareileen9@gmail.com](mailto:dunbareileen9@gmail.com) or (352) 588-8320.
- **To schedule an overnight visit**, contact S. Mary Clare Neuhofer at: [maryclareneu@gmail.com](mailto:maryclareneu@gmail.com) or (352) 588-7188

**God's blessings be with you.**

go astray and bring us back to Him. As we commit ourselves to a life of purity, Jesus gives us strength and power to maintain it always. Our Oblates, knowing support from the Benedictine Sisters of Florida and fellow Oblates, experience this. When we put faith and trust in Jesus, we are transformed by the renewing of mind and body.

The Oblates continue to use for a second year "Spirituality for the 21st Century" (Insights for the Ages) by **Joan Chittister** as our text. The book is text and commentary on all 73 chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict.



It is amazing to remember that folks have been using the Rule of Benedict for 1500 years! Benedict was so wise; the values he prescribes help us all to grow into the best person we can be. Values so needed in our world today -Community, Peace, Stewardship, Balance of prayer and work, Respect, Humility...to name a few.

That is what the Oblates are learning and putting into practice—they are a vital part of our Community. We are as proud of them as they are of us.

We have continued with Zoom meetings due to Covid. We have also had a few in-person meetings with a limited number of people at a time. The good thing about Zoom is that we do get to see each other. Oblates at a distance can join us, such as Iris who lives in WA. It does save Oblates travel time and money but they miss Mass with the Sisters and sharing in or at Sunday dinner.

**Let Jesus lead you to a life of purity!**

**Following are the dates of rest of this year's meetings:**

**March 26**

**May 21**

**Sept 24**

**November 26**

**Join Us!**

**Contact S. Mary David Hydro at [mary.david.hydro@saintleo.edu](mailto:mary.david.hydro@saintleo.edu)**

## Jesus Is Always Glad to See Us

When I told my colleagues that I was planning on spending my fall break sightseeing in East Germany, they looked at me as if I had lost my mind. It was after all 1985. The Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain were still intact. I had read stories in German classes about people who were detained there for weeks or even months on trumped up charges. But I was curious to see the country for myself. And even then I had a feeling that the German Democratic Republic would not last forever.

It took three months for the travel agency to get my visa. I had to submit my itinerary with the visa application. When the approval came, I saw that I was expected to keep to my itinerary. I was only permitted to travel to those places and nowhere else.

The experience was as other-worldly as you might imagine. I took a sleeper train on October 27th from Hamburg to Dresden. The attendant spoke a dialect that I had never heard before. At the border, my passport was taken off the train by an official for examination and returned about 15 minutes later. Dogs were used to examine the undercarriage. The officials went through every item in my luggage. When I asked the other passengers in my sleeper compartment (all German citizens visiting family in the east) what they were looking for, the answer was "bibles". I was relieved when the train began to move again.

Everything went according to schedule until I got on the wrong train. It was an express train going north to the Baltic Sea. The next stop was outside of the area where I was permitted to travel. I was terrified. Seeing no other alternative, I got off the train there.

As I stood alone on the platform, I saw a small wooden shed at the end with a door. Gathering up all my courage, I walked down the platform and saw that there was someone inside, probably an employee of the train system. I knocked timidly and an elderly gentleman appeared. I took a deep breath and in my best, most polite German I apologized and explained I had taken the wrong train. Could he please help me? He was very courteous and gave me the direc-

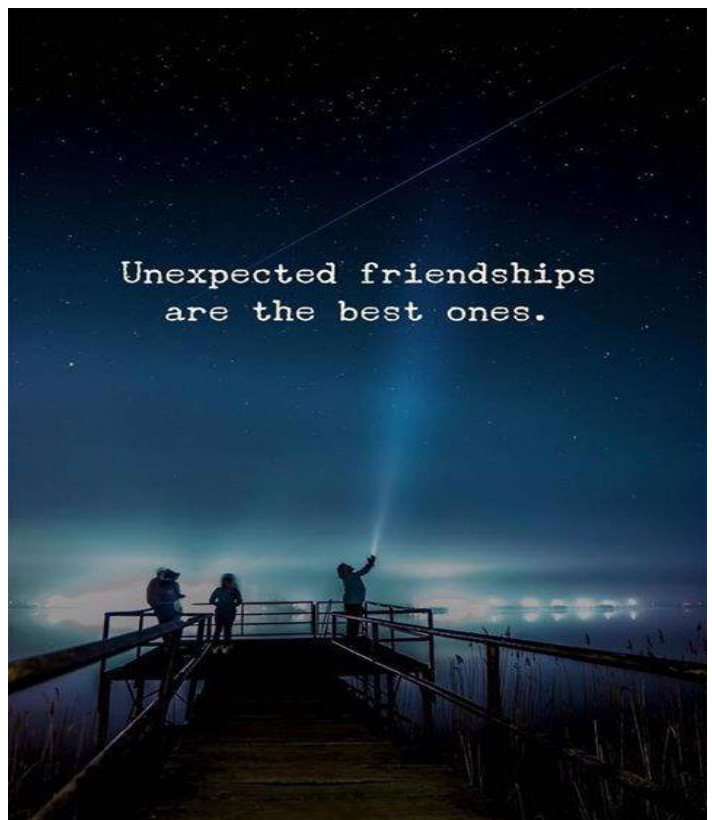
tions I needed. I thanked him. Then, he looked at me directly and said, if I may I ask, where are you from? My heart sank. I was sure I was in trouble. Again, seeing no way out of the situation, I told him I was a US citizen.

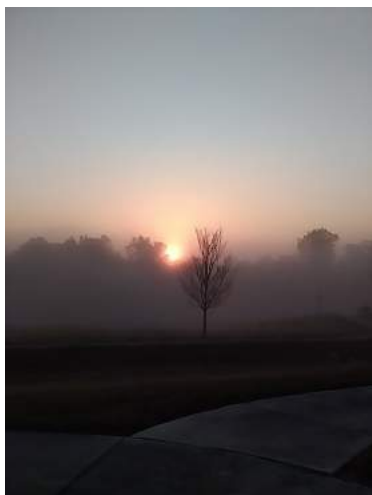
His face lit up and he broke into a huge smile. He pointed to himself, exclaiming "Ich, ich, Kriegsgefangener! Alabama and Tennessee!" He had been a German prisoner of war during World War II and had spent his time as a POW in the US. From the look on his face, he had a good experience there and was thrilled to meet an American in his home country. I don't remember much about what was said after that. I was too busy experiencing my relief over having found a friend in such an unexpected place.

After boarding the train he pointed out to me, I sat next to a window and shed tears as I watched the countryside go by. I was so ashamed of how afraid I had been of him.

I saw many beautiful places on that trip. The highlight however will always be my encounter with the gentleman on that train platform. Jesus is always glad to see us.

**Sister Eileen Dunbar**





The day was **Friday**. That meant the walk—a goal long-awaited.

Slowly, easy does it, one step at a time (sweet Jesus), assisted by self-determination, a walker for support. She paced the path around to the south, toward the east, then eager for a rest, paused for a breath at the stone bench in the flower garden.

Noticing the effort, a companion joined her with a word of assurance and encouragement. Both looked east at the December tree line, taking in its bleak beauty, commenting on what lay beyond—vision blocked from our view. Pleasant exchange, uplifting words, and with her trek over, her last walk, she returned to home base—her bedroom.

The day was **Saturday**, noon mealtime---vivid recall of the event. ....“I need to go to my room.”

During Holy Week, the grief of Jesus’ agony lingers in our souls even as we believe the miracle that lies ahead. We ponder in our “inner room” and delve into the Mystery of death and life. Remembering Jesus’ final days walking this earth, we also ponder Sister Dianne’s journey with us and her passing. Proverbs 3 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, in all your ways be mindful of him and he will make straight your paths.” Sister Dianne’s path in life was full of obstacles galore and yet, she journeyed on until the finish knowing she was asked to carry that cross. We saw her pain and with it---a certain beauty--we recognized Jesus.

In Luke 6 Jesus told his followers on the road to Emmaus, “Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into his glory?” Then they experienced him again in a new kind of presence—unlimited, active, alive, cosmic. It was a deep spiritual joy of Love. Now they knew. As e.e.cummings said, “I who have died am alive again today and...”

Our loved ones gone from here are hidden with Christ in God. Richard Rohr says—“To live there is finally to be at home.” If we can see rightly, heaven is within us and beyond us; our Emmaus walk at Easter is homeward, heavenward bound—joined with Jesus. (...Just a closer walk with Thee...)

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

### *Upcoming Events Calendar*

<b>April 2</b>	Palm Sunday
<b>April 6</b>	Holy Thursday
<b>April 7</b>	Good Friday
<b>April 8</b>	Holy Saturday
<b>April 9</b>	Easter Sunday
<b>May 21</b>	Oblate Sunday
<b>May 25-31</b>	Sisters’ Annual Retreat
<b>July 11</b>	Summer Feast of St. Benedict

### *In Memoriam*

**Sister Dianne Wansley, OSB—**  
December 30, 2022  
**Donald Roy, Oblate—**January 27, 2023





# *The Pause that Renews*

In the beautiful rolling hills of Pasco County, FL, step into the quiet calm of our sunlit home -  
**Holy Name Monastery.**

You will be refreshed by hospitality in true Benedictine style. Your stay includes a variety of amenities and opportunities:

- Guest rooms each with private bath
- Stroll/exercise along our prayer path
- Daily monastic prayer and Eucharist



## **Fill Your Spirit!**

Give yourself the gift of time away in quiet reflection; time away to concentrate on what you know is important; time to connect with your deeper self; time to just enjoy yourself!

New experiences, surroundings and people often inspire us in unexpected ways. The Benedictine Sisters of Florida strive to create an inviting space for all our guests.

## **RESERVE YOUR STAY TODAY!**

**For retreat scheduling,  
 contact Sister Mary Clare:**

(352) 588-7188 or email: [Maryclareneu@gmail.com](mailto:Maryclareneu@gmail.com)

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### *Ukraine Gifts*

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 Jack and Jeanie Vogel

*Thanks You*

### *Advent Outreach Gifts*

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 Donald† and Beverly Roy  
 Cynthia Selph  
 John Parrell and Dr. Carol Stanton '63

### *In-Kind Gifts*

In-kind gifts are also vital to non-profit organizations as services, equipment, etc. can be very costly. Your generosity in giving or providing items and/or services helps to keep us "in the black."

Peter and Linda Biscardi  
 Janet Rodriguez Collura  
 Columbiettes of St. Mark  
 William Hauser  
 Peter Kinzie  
 Knights of Columbus-St. Mark  
 Msgr. Frank Mouch  
 John Picciano



# *Heartfelt Thanks to our Donors for Your Support to our Annual Appeal 2022*

Each of the following friends and supporters made a difference in our ability to “make ends meet”, reach out to others, and pray for you, your loved ones, the community and the world.

**You Continue to Bless Us and Those We Serve!**

## **Reflection Circle - 50,000+**

Sr. Mildred Gelis†  
John Picciano

## **Community Circle - \$10,000 thru \$49,999**

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Bernd, Holly and Sophia Sokolowski

## **Stewardship Circle - \$5,000 thru \$9,999**

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## **Commitment Circle - \$2,500 thru \$4,999**

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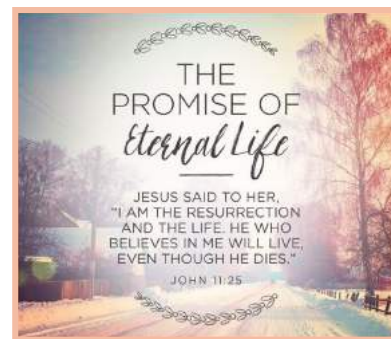
*Thank You For The Lives You Touch!  
 We Appreciate You So Much!*

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*May Jesus bring you  
lots of love and joy  
into your life, wishing  
you happy Easter to  
you and your family.*

