



# Community Retreat

June 9-14, 2024



**Sister Cecilia Dwyer, O.S.B.**, the director for our retreat this summer, is a sister of Saint Benedict Monastery, Bristow, Virginia. Sister Cecilia has been liturgy director and accompanist for the community since 1973. Sister Cecilia currently serves on the monastic council and as Formation Director and the Director of Mission Integration for the monastic community.



Seeking God (not self) is at the heart of Benedictine spirituality. We need to “Listen with the ear of the heart.” The Retreat focused on values in the Rule and encouraged us to go deeper.

So what are some Benedictine values? Community – building relationships in stability – presence - where we share self not just space with others. Peace – we’re different persons with different gifts and interests; all of us are on the Way – we need to accept differences (they don’t divide, judging does). Silence is a needed value so we can listen to God in the Scriptures, in self and the other. Humility keeps us learning. Hospitality welcomes God in others.

These values enrich the lives of Oblates and lay folks who recognize the wisdom they hold. The values overlap the quotes from the Rule and enrich all who practice them. Thank you, Sr. Cecilia, for refreshing and strengthening us as we continue our journey to God!

**Sister Mary David Hydro**



## *A Single Ray of Light:*

### *The Dimensions of an Extravagant Heart*

The Benedictine Sisters of Florida Annual Retreat took place June 9-14, 2024. Sister Cecilia Dwyer, O.S.B., from St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, Virginia, gave the retreat. The title of the retreat was “A Single Ray of Light: The Dimensions of an Extravagant Heart”. The central story and inspiration for the retreat was taken from the Second Book of the Dialogues of St. Gregory, Chapter Thirty-five: “How [Saint Benedict] saw the whole world represented before his eyes: and also the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua, ascending to heaven”. This passage describes Benedict’s vision of the world appearing as in a single ray of light. The retreat closed with a talk entitled “Good Zeal: A Feminine Perspective”. The term “Good Zeal” is taken from Chapter 72 of the Rule of Benedict.

Sr. Cecilia wove many quotes from the Rule of Benedict, modern spiritual writers and accounts of personal experiences together in her presentations. The six days of Retreat were each a balance of input from S. Cecilia and our individual pondering and praying.

## Diversity Trivia

Here are some diversity trivia you may find interesting.

In Canada and England, the first prize ribbon is red, not blue.

Traditional houses in Norway are built with a raised doorsill to keep the trolls out (trolls can only shuffle their feet).

In Japan, the birth of a baby is announced with the flying of a banner (actually a windsock) with the design of a fish. A red fish is for a boy baby and a blue fish is for a girl.

Germans are expected to host their own birthday party.

In France, a sneeze is responded to with the words "To your wishes!"



Diversity manifests itself not only culturally but also in our physical selves. When is the last time that someone's behavior at Mass puzzled you? Perhaps the woman who insists on sitting on the end of the pew must be able to get to the restroom on very short notice. The person in the pew who cannot sit still may have back problems. A whistling sound may be a hearing aid that is not working properly. A person sitting in the back may be claustrophobic and need to exit the building occasionally to catch his breath. The person who does not wish to speak may be a non-English speaker and afraid of making a mistake when she talks. As Christians, we are called to accept the differences in others without judging them. What better time to practice nonjudgmental thoughts than when sitting at Mass before the Blessed Sacrament?

Sister Eileen Dunbar

## Giving Tuesday

December 3, 2024

Giving Tuesday happens December 3rd 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

Please help make this a reality with a donation. Go to: [www.benedictinesistersoffl.org](http://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 Cheryl at (813) 838-7452.

**Checks postmarked by December 3, 2024** 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!*

# Divine Diversity

“What’s a nun or sister?” you ask. “What do they do?” you ask.

Ready for a diversity of answers? Without question, each sister here at the monastery (and around the world) is similar to you and yet different. Each of their days is like yours and yet different.

## Let’s Walk



Here for some, it’s “Let’s walk.” Before each sunrise, Sister Mary Romana prays the rosary prayer path before entering the chapel for

Eucharist. Our “evening walkers” are Sisters Roberta, Elizabeth, Mary David and Kathleen. Indoor “floor walkers” are Sisters Eileen, Margaret Mary, Jean and Mary Clare. Our shiny floors are kept by Terrie and Debbie, our faithful housekeepers. Each sister’s focus is oh, so diverse, yet with a universal goal. The path is a lovely place to phone family and friends, get exercise, burn off calories, ponder life’s complexities, or to speed up slow circulation. Our guest retreatants also enjoy leisurely strolls and seem to be in communion with our Creator.

Our “garden walkers” and workers are Sisters Donna, Miriam and Mary Romana. The sisters’ diverse days involve numerous tasks, many that take us out and about with all the building and road construction at our doorstep, Wichers Road is a detour. Our new maintenance man Brad keeps the cars in good condition just in case the town’s roundabout detour gets longer.

## Let Diversity Grow

People grow at all levels when we are involved. By opening doors of possibility, by inviting more live-in volunteers, by creating new friendships, by seeking if others are called to live with us, if we understand others’ burdens, then we grow. When we embrace the hungry poor as in our Daystar pantry, we grow. (and the list goes on...) When we instruct eager students in aquaculture and respectful farming, we give hope for the climate benefit future. Since the planet’s natural resources are daily threatened, we must be sustainable and steward the fragile environment responsibly. Pope Francis has said

the world needs a “revolution of tenderness.” To break the spiral of violence, evil, injustice, hate, and sadness in our world is our constant prayer, just like yours.

Growing begins in one’s own back yard. Our summer produce from the aquaponics system has grown many banana bunches and pounds of juicy figs. Tender okra is prepared with care by Angie our creative chef. Growing is endless when we live by the light of faith, with trust in Jesus’ eternal promises and truly love. How do you grow?

## We Pray For You

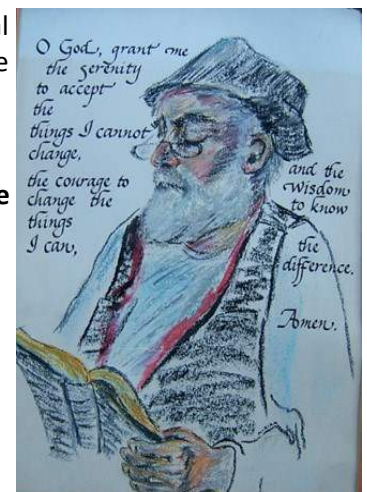
The famous contemplative author Thomas Merton wrote, “All creation teaches us some way of prayer.” All those heartfelt prayer intentions you send through our website are inscribed in the chapel book and directly addressed by our community as we place them in the hands of the Lord.



## Let’s Build

For us as sisters and similarly for many of you as people of faith, we must build lasting peaceful relationships. “Let’s connect,” “Let’s listen,” “Let’s love.” What is love? What makes a lasting relationship? If your Creator God is the central focus in your life, you know. All persons are more alike than different. We choose to grow knowing the personal intimate connection of the Divine everywhere.

## Sister Miriam Cosgrove



# The Pause that Renews

## Are you looking for:

- A retreat opportunity?
- A location for your sabbatical?
- A relaxing vacation from the hectic world in which we live?
- A place to just be?

## 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.

## You are Welcome Here!



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

Tucked away from the rest of the world, you'll find your own comfortable place to recharge...a sanctuary from the bustle of everyday life.

You will be refreshed by hospitality in true Benedictine style. Time is yours to structure! Your stay includes a variety of amenities and opportunities:

- Guest rooms each with private bath
- Stroll/exercise along our prayer path
- Relax, reflect and enjoy nature's beauty
- Daily monastic prayer and Eucharist
- Explore the neighboring Grotto of St. Leo Abbey
- Close proximity to cultural and artistic attractions

## RESERVE YOUR STAY TODAY!

12138 Wichers Rd, PO Box 2450  
St. Leo, FL 33574-2450  
Phone: (352) 588-8320  
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Email: maryclareneu@gmail.com



*Benedictine Sisters of Florida*  
Touching Lives through Prayer and Service



## The St. Scholastica Circle

**Saint Scholastica**, twin sister to **Saint Benedict**, is the patron saint of Benedictine Sisters. Together with her brother, she is our co-founder. Saint Scholastica's passion for God led her to offer a sanctuary for women seeking a closer relationship with Him (like St. Benedict did for men). We, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, share their teachings from the **Rule**. A guide written in the 6th Century, the **Rule** illustrates how we can all live a better life and it continues to be profoundly relevant to this day.

Love of God, care for others, leadership and listening, the gentler iterations of the Benedictine way, are thought to have been St. Scholastica's influence in the writing of the **Rule**. In that regard, we have established **The St. Scholastica Circle**.

Our purpose is to broaden our reach. Those who come for retreat to Holy Name come for a variety of reasons: meaning, clarity and purpose in their lives. There is universality in their overwhelming need for peace, especially in the stressful world in which we live.

Would you like to be a part of helping others overcome the feeling of emptiness and distance from the Light of our Lord? Would you help us build our capacity to improve the quality of life for both women and men in need of our retreat hospitality, but can't afford what really is a necessity? Holy Name Monastery is a place for people to just be, to be transformed, and to know they are not alone no matter how devastating their circumstances.

Won't you join the 55 current members of this circle of care, built to ensure the Benedictine Sisters can sustain their ministry of light? Recurring donations made monthly or quarterly help us plan and grow our Retreat Hospitality Program. Part of your donations will provide partial scholarships for retreatants who qualify. The remainder of the **The St. Scholastica Circle** donations help to fund the program, especially directed retreats, leader, curriculum, staff and housekeeping. See box below to easily set-up your account.



*“Everything was an important part of the whole, and seeing the balanced lifestyle in action was powerful.”*

*“Being cared for and cared about by the Sisters, prayer time to be introspective, walks in the gardens, and talking to God have brought me back to what is important.”*

*“Truly blessed having the opportunity to spend this time and reflect.”*

### Give monthly or quarterly now to support the Sisters' giving of the Light!

- Go to our website to set-up account at: **[www.benedictinesistersoffl.org](http://www.benedictinesistersoffl.org)**
- Click on DONATE NOW at the top of page
- Answer 4 questions just one time—then it is automatic
- Choose a recurring amount for your budget: \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 or Other
- Cancel or change the amount whenever you need to
- Questions? Email: **[cheryl.chadick@saintleo.edu](mailto:cheryl.chadick@saintleo.edu)** or call: **(352) 588-8320**

**Together we are a conduit to the Light of God who changes lives.**

## Sister Mary Romana turns 90!



There are few opportunities in one's life (other than marriage) where one becomes an instant family member. Both my cousin Pereta Rodriguez and I had such an opportunity when we celebrated Sister Mary Romana's 90th birthday with her. The celebration began on Saturday, April 13, 2024 at Holy Name Monastery with the offering of a delicious catered Italian lunch, courtesy of Theresa Hernandez. A wonderful time was had by all the sisters and the many guests including Sr. Mary Romana's relatives from Houston who brought tamales and her Belizean friends.

The following Tuesday the party continued on a flight to Cancun, Mexico. Upon learning that Sr. Mary Romana was on her way to Mexico to celebrate her 90th birthday, Southwest Airline passengers serenaded her with a rousing "Happy Birthday to You". Sr. Mary Romana's friend Grecia and her friends met us at the airport and we drove five hours to Chetumal, Quintana Roo, a small town on the Belizean border. We arrived at midnight where we were greeted with a re-

ception to welcome us. There are no words (in English or Spanish) to describe how much she is loved and cherished by her family.

The day after our arrival, a Mass was said at Our Lady of Guadalupe Cathedral in Sr. Mary Romana's honor. There was also a surprise party attended by 200 family and friends who had come to honor her. A beautiful cake, live music provided by a mariachi band, food, both spicy and flavorful lovingly made in the Mayan tradition, and much singing made for an unforgettable celebration.

From Cancun we also took a ferry boat to the Isla Mujeres for a day's outing. There was much laughter, most of it coming from Sr. Mary Romana herself.

Sr. Mary Romana's joie de vivre and her profound faith are rooted in her origins. She hails from a remarkable, faithful, generous, and loving family. They are an extraordinary witness to the power of love, family and friendship.

**Janet Collura**

## Diversity of Friends

Always one who loves **variety**, Sister Miriam, a Guidance Counselor for 22 years at Pasco Elementary School (now retired), was honored at the dedication of the **monarch butterfly garden** which she and *students* once tended.

DONNA COLLEGE, Principal, initiated the garden **renewal** as an **Eagle Scout** project completed by **Jackson Stout**.



The Principal's plan was her friendly way to bring diverse people together. The joyous gathering included a phone call from abroad by a former student Cooper Long now in the army in Korea. Yet another surprise was a hug from student Lyric Martin who **became a teacher** at her school.

Many staff members are still there from Sister's retirement year 2010, who added to the party vibes. In the beginning, prior to a "go" sign, our Creator **God** surprised us with *extravagant entertainment* in a sudden heavy downpour and thunderstorm just as friends arrived for the **outdoor event**. (Yes, God loves diversity and humor!)

Nothing dampened everyone's energy and the skies later cleared enough for viewing the garden area. It is now equipped with a sitting bench if any butterflies or dedicated teachers need a rest. With gratitude for one more day of diversity, I am.



Sister Miriam Cosgrove

### John Barthle (May 6, 1961 - May 25, 2024)



John Bernard Barthle, 63, of Dade City, FL passed away May 25, 2024, in his home, surrounded by family. John was born May 6th, 1961, in Dade City to Alfred and Mary Barthle, and grew up in the small town of Saint Joseph. John was a lifelong area resident and a longtime member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. He loved horticulture, played clarinet in his high school band, and loved baseball. Most important to us is that he was employed as our monastery maintenance supervisor for almost 50 years. He followed in the steps of his father, Fritz Barthle, who also worked for the sisters. John started to work with his dad at the monastery in his teens. He also worked with Mr. Richard Havens who taught him the skills John would need when he took over as maintenance supervisor upon Mr. Haven's retirement.

We, the sisters, could be demanding, impatient, and just plain annoying, John remained ever gentle, kind and patient with us, never judgmental, always ready to help. He is survived here at the monastery by his wife Cindy Ellis who serves as the community beautician, brother James Barthle who cuts our grass between summer downpours, and stepson Brad Ellis, who has succeeded his stepfather in the job as maintenance supervisor at Holy Name Monastery.

## DIVERSITY IN LITURGICAL TRADITIONS AND IN SPIRITUALITY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

There are 23 different liturgical traditions in the Catholic Church. Among them is the Syro-Malabar Catholic church which is an Eastern Catholic Church based in Kerala, India. It is an autonomous particular church that is in full communion with the Holy See and the worldwide Catholic Church. This means it maintains its own liturgical traditions and governance while being part of the larger Catholic Church. There are currently 4 million members in it. They regard themselves as the descendants of the high caste Nambudiri Brahman converts of Saint Thomas. My entire family belongs to the Syro-Malabar Church where my Catholic faith was nurtured, grew, and deepened and fostered my religious vocation.

Syro-Malabar Catholics trace their origin to St. Thomas the Apostle, who is said to have come to India in 52 AD and was later martyred near Chennai. Seven churches in Kerala were founded by St. Thomas the Apostle, and a new Christian tradition grew there, linked to the East Syrian Church, which was a primary source for Syro-Malabar Christians' liturgy, spirituality, governance and practices.

The Syro-Malabar Church is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church having a Major Archbishop as its father and head. The Syro-Malabar Church, with its deep-rooted spirituality and high rate of vocations to priesthood and religious life, can be considered as the most vibrant Catholic community in the world.

The Holy Mass is called "Holy Qurbana" in East Syriac Aramaic and means "Eucharist". It is celebrated in its solemn form on Sundays and special occasions. During the celebration of the Holy Qurbana, priests and deacons put on elaborate vestments which are unique to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. The most solemn form of Holy Qurbana is Rāsa, which literally means "Mystery."

The Syro-Malabar Qurbana is celebrated in seven parts, which include the Introductory Rite, Ministry of the Word of God, Rite of Preparation, Anaphora, Rite of Reconciliation, Rite of Communion, and Rite of Conclusion. The celebration of the Qurbana is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Syro-Malabar Church, reflecting its ancient heritage and cultural identity.

At Syro-Malabar liturgies, men and women generally separate into different sides of the church. Shoes are left outside of church, and prayer rugs cover the floor. The altar is veiled behind a large red drape that opens after the beginning of the liturgy to reveal the sanctuary, and closes at the end of the liturgy.

Spirituality is enshrined in the devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary and saints. Devotion to Mary has always been very strong among the Thomas Christians. Most of the churches of the Thomas Christians are dedicated to Mary. All the Marian feasts are celebrated with great solemnity. Eight days of fasting and prayer are observed before the feast of Nativity (September 8th), the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th) and fifteen days of fasting before the Feast of Assumption (August 15th). Feasts of saints especially of the patron saint of the parish are celebrated with great enthusiasm. Long prayers and colorful processions carrying the relic of the saint accompanied by the playing of musical instruments are practiced. Worshipers in Syro-Malabar churches face east when worshipping.

**Sister Elizabeth Mathai**



# Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

## Commemorative Bricks An Enduring Reflection of Love

You can now honor a loved one, celebrate a special day, remember your departed loved one(s) or simply inscribe a message on a brick at Holy Name Monastery. The bricks will lead to and surround the statue of the Blessed Mother at the front of the property. Your gifts will help toward the maintenance and beauty of the monastery grounds and gardens which provide quiet contemplation for all our visitors.

Space is limited, so **reserve** your brick(s) today in honor, remembrance or celebration of those you love in this place of peace. Each brick is 8" X 4" with up to 3 lines of text; maximum of 13 characters per line.

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\_\_\_\_\_ Online via PayPal or credit card at our web-site: [www.benedictinesistersoffl.org](http://www.benedictinesistersoffl.org)

\_\_\_\_\_ We accept Visa or MasterCard – To order by credit card, call us at (352) 588-8443

**Fit your message for an engraved brick in the spaces below – maximum 3 lines, 13 characters on each line (including each letter, space and punctuation):**

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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.

### **Editorial Team**

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