

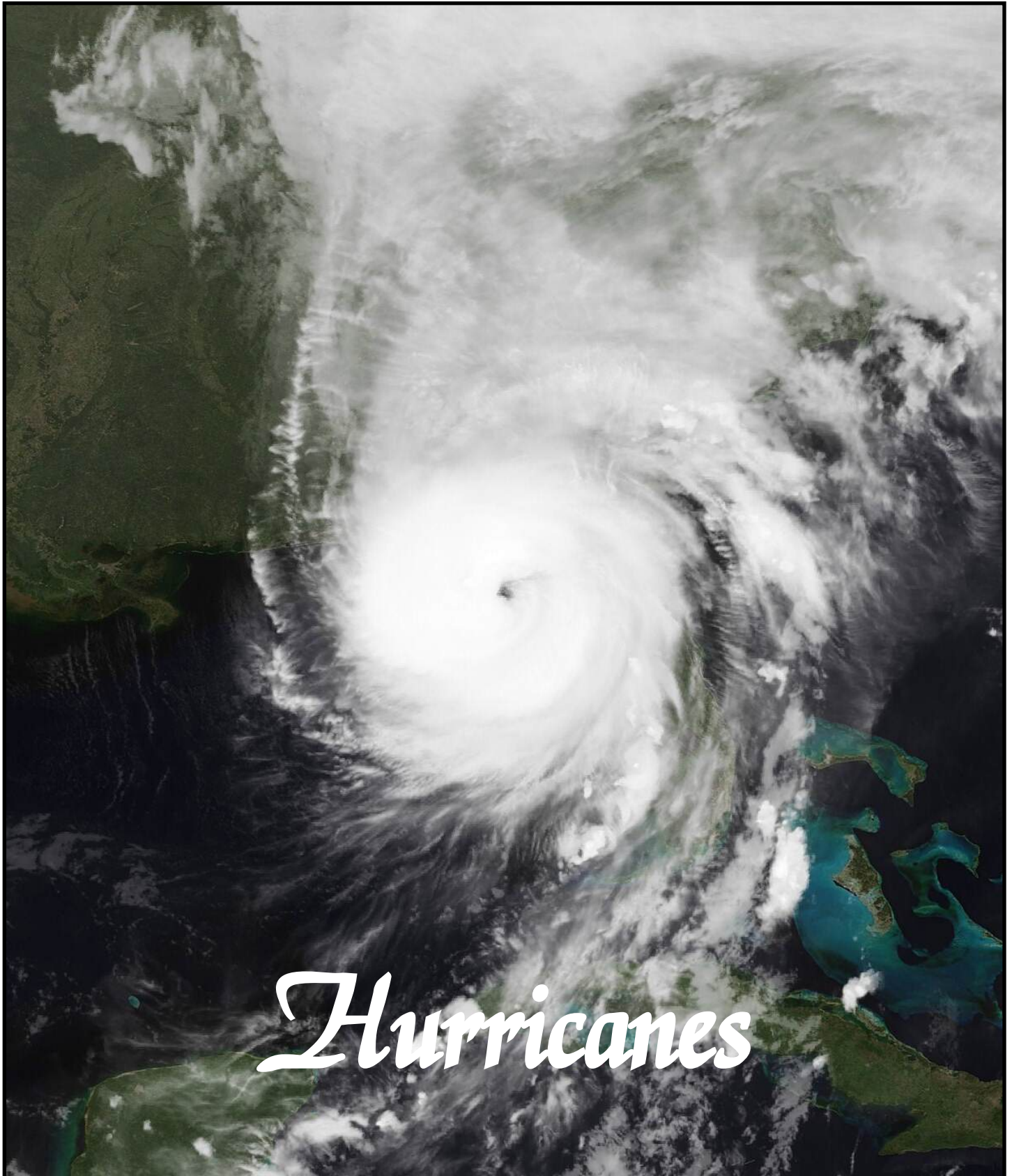


The Benedictine Tide

# *Benedictine Sisters of Florida*

*Touching Lives Through Prayer and Service*

Winter Tide 2024



# *Hurricanes*

# And Our Crows Came Back (or was it a raven?)

## Sign of God's Continuing Care



“Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 4:6-7]

I smiled when I saw them that first weekend in November. Remember, that was the weekend we “fell back” with the time change. The onset of early darkness had prompted me to move up the timing of my backyard exercise stroll. What a pleasant surprise when in the distance I saw them; heard them, too. “Caw! Caw! the pair echoed each other. OUR crows had returned to stake their claim on our monastery.

Seeing them reminded me of the Old Testament story of Noah and the Great Flood. Noah had been living in his Ark with his family and his collection of animals. (Imagine that scene!) According to the Bible, Noah waited 40 days before he sent out first a raven, then a dove to scout for dry land. When the dove returned with an olive leaf in its beak, Noah knew the flood was subsiding and land was reappearing. Like our days following Hurricane Helene and Milton, patches of dry land signified a new beginning and hope for life after the devastation.

Let me explain the connection. Back in 2013-14, and again in 2016 when our current monastery and guest wing were being constructed, crows (or maybe they were grackles or even ravens?) stood tall, every evening, on the highest peaks of the fresh shingles. I likened their presence to St. Benedict’s raven. The “savior” dive-bombed the raised vessel of wine before Benedict could swallow the poisoned potion.

Our black-winged visitors seemed to be reclaiming the space of the former orange grove where they had had free range among the fungus-infected trees. The “foreman” crow would boisterously issue orders to the work crew daring them to shoo these black-robed visitors away. Flitting from one bedroom wall to the next, they would loudly demand ownership of our new structure. In the late afternoon they’d disappear for parts unknown. But not until we’d see them pause momentarily to “reign” from the highest peak of the chapel. With a flap of a wing, we’d hear a parting “caw” wishing us well: “See yah tomorrow.”

Barely 24 hours after 2 hurricanes and several tornadoes worked havoc, our crows came again! They didn’t stay long. Just long enough to take a “Google Earth” image of the collapsed greenhouse, the dangling gutter at the rear of the house and the huge tree that plunged to earth far distant from the house.

Today’s visit was different, more subdued. Only one pair of “visitors” cruised low, close to the ground. It appeared that they were examining the new patches of colorful wildflowers. Then, with a sniff here, a wing-tap there and a call of approval the pair paused momentarily atop the roof of the garden pavilion. They perched there just long enough to remind us: “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God alone suffices.” [Teresa of Avila]

**Sister Roberta Bailey**

Here we are one month away from celebrating the birth of Jesus and I wonder how uniquely each one of us got to this point. In light of experiencing two major hurricanes in 11 days just less than a month ago, I dare say some of us are already making the usual preparations of our family traditions. Others will continue throughout the season of Advent, and beyond, picking up the pieces of what once was their lives and wonder how they will celebrate Christmas. That is the physical reality, but Advent is a faith journey, a spiritual journey, a journey filled with preparation and anticipation that rises above what we see with our eyes.



The Mass readings will remind us that Advent is a faith journey, a spiritual journey, a journey that rises above what we see with our eyes. Luke's gospel introduces us to the power of a name. The angel Gabriel had appeared to the priest Zechariah and told him that his elderly, barren wife Elizabeth would give birth to a son and his name would be John; not Zechariah as was custom, but John. In his physical reality, Zechariah doubted what he heard, and he was struck dumb. When their son was born, Zechariah and Elizabeth fulfilled their faith journey and named him John, and Zechariah's ability to speak returned to him, and he gave blessing to God. The name John means "God is gracious". Was that the power of the name; was the act of faith in giving of the name the power; or both?

When a name is preceded by the word Hurricane, it conjures up the need to prepare for the severe weather that the forecast messenger tells us is to come. On our spiritual journey of Advent, we prepare for and anticipate the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ as foretold by the messenger John the Baptist. There is great power in the name of Jesus, the name above all names. At the mention of the name every knee shall bow, every tongue confess JESUS IS LORD. He told us himself: "In My Name, they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." This Advent let your journey lift your head to see who is coming and say His Name.

**Father John McEvoy**, Chaplain at Holy Name Monastery, home of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. In cooperation with his Ghost Writer, Patty Marzilli. Patty lives in Apollo Beach with her husband, Joe, and served as Administrative Assistant to Fr. John McEvoy 2009-2019 at St. Anne, Ruskin.



# Hospitality Connections



Hospitality, prayer, work and service in our Benedictine community.

During H el ene and Milton and the concomitant tragedies and losses of property, power and potable water, the monastery provided shelter for sixteen visitors as well as our Sisters and volunteers.

Personally, I had planned to stay with family in Dade City but when they decided to evacuate, I came to Holy Name Monastery. The last room available was in the retreat wing, a place that was familiar to me. This familiarity enabled me to guide and welcome our guests. We never lost power or water, and the generators worked as expected.

Our guests came from Largo and Seminole, and included two Catholic Sisters from Ireland for whom a hurricane was a novel experience. Neighbors from Zephyrhills and Land O' Lakes included a family of five: mother, father, three young children ages seven, five, and four who enjoyed the adventure.

As a fifth generation Floridian, I am able to remain calm when a hurricane approaches. But even a native Floridian could not have been fully prepared for the impact H el ene and Milton would have on our area. We rose to the occasion however, worshipping, eating, entertaining and offering comfort. Solace is no small part of hospitality as is prayer and work, ora et labora, the Benedictine values.

**Janet Rodriguez Collura**

## Weather Events

I am an armchair archaeologist, and have learned what I know about the subject from YouTube and PBS. I know that stone with a right angle has been shaped by humans. Nature shapes in curves. I also know that the famous philosopher/scientist Teilhard de Chardin wrote that God is present in the universe as energy. Put curves together with energy and hurricanes come to mind, at least for me.

Unlike our distant ancestors, we know now that what we do and how we do it shapes our weather. I believe science, and science has been predicting climate change for decades. One of the predictions has been that weather events would become more extreme. We are taking God's gift of energy (His presence) and are manipulating it so that weather events such as hurricanes (nature's natural curves) become more powerful and more dangerous. Energy and natural design have not conspired to harm us. It is our actions and our choices that made it so.

In addition to nature's design and plentiful (God) energy, God has also given us an intellect and a free will. Let us use both. How do we contribute to the problem of climate change in our daily lives? How can we co-operate with nature's design so as to make better use of the abundance of energy that God has made available to us in creation?

**Sister Eileen Dunbar**



### Calendar of Upcoming Events

<b>December 1</b>	First Sunday of Advent
<b>December 9</b>	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
<b>December 25</b>	Christmas
<b>December 29</b>	Feast of the Holy Family
<b>December 30</b>	Day of Prayer
<b>January 1</b>	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
<b>January 6</b>	Solemnity of the Epiphany
<b>January 12</b>	Feast of the Baptism of our Lord
<b>February 10</b>	St. Scholastica Day
<b>March 5</b>	Ash Wednesday-beginning of Lent
<b>March 21</b>	Solemnity of Saint Benedict
<b>April 20</b>	Easter

## Giving Tuesday

### What a Success!

Giving Tuesday happened December 3rd and was a success because of you!

Thanks to our generous friends, donors and change-makers for helping us create hope. Your generous action on Giving Tuesday raised **\$50,213!** You made our goal happen plus we met our match!



# GIVING TUESDAY

Many thanks to our dear friend, **John Picciano**, who pledged to match every dollar raised for the Sisters on Giving Tuesday up to \$40,000.

We are grateful to everyone who made a gift on Giving Tuesday. With your thoughtfulness and sharing, you have not only made the match possible, but also gifted us with your respect and appreciation for the many years of prayer and service the Benedictine Sisters of Florida have given to countless others over the years.

The funds will provide financial resources to address the needs of those seeking peace, spiritual guidance, and a model framework for living as those we serve face their own challenges. In addition, your donations help us with care for our elder Sisters and the needs of the monastery. We look hopefully with you to the future when we can continue programs and the work we began 135 years ago.

**Thank you for your alliance with our mission this Giving Tuesday!**

## 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 overwhelm 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) 588-7188 or email at: [maryclareneu@gmail.com](mailto:maryclareneu@gmail.com)



# Aquaponics Rebuild



Before Hurricane Milton



After Hurricane Milton

After significant tornado damage from Hurricane Milton to the greenhouse aquaculture system at Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, Florida, a decision was reached by the Benedictine Sisters and Phil Reasons of Aquasol International to dismantle the ruined structure and rebuild anew. Damage includes broken pipes, twisted metal beams, splintered wooden sideboards, and shredded plastic coverings. The 60+ large tilapia suffered trauma, would not eat and so had to be harvested and shared with various organizations.

The plan to rebuild took considerable assessment of many factors and we believe this is God's work that needs to continue. We will eliminate the aquaponic component which is the tilapia rearing tanks and focus on hydroponically grown plants in the new greenhouse. The outside portions of the farm and fruit tree section are intact so will continue to produce as before the storm.



After Hurricane Milton

Months before the hurricanes, the second-hand golf cart which was used to carry supplies around the area gave up the ghost. In addition to the greenhouse construction, a golf cart would be a substantial contribution (approx. \$3000) to the monastery and greatly appreciated.

To all who have supported us during these past 10 years, we gratefully accept any contributions you are able to make to this rebuild so we can sustain ourselves and customers with nutritious vegetables.

Below is the breakdown of materials, labor, total by Aquasol International.

Dismantle existing greenhouse	\$2,500
Install new greenhouse bows and purlins	\$20,000
Remove aquaculture system	\$1,000
Repair damaged equipment	\$1,500
Golf Cart needed	<u>\$3,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>

Please make checks payable to: Benedictine Sisters of Florida for greenhouse rebuild



# Listening Heart Circle

Become a Member  
Benefit Yourself and Our Cause

## What is the Listening Heart Circle?

This special group of people is dedicated to an ongoing role in our mission. They spread their donations throughout the year providing **twofold benefits**:

1. **Helps you** as a donor keep your budget in line. For as little as \$5.00 or \$10.00 a month, you can make a real difference!  
Example: You would like to give \$100 but that isn't in the monthly budget. Perhaps \$8.34/month is doable.
2. **Helps the Sisters** because by spreading your donations over the year, you provide predictable income for the mission and the ability to plan efficiently for expected/unexpected needs.

Your membership in this circle, inspired by St. Benedict's words in the Rule, "*Listen carefully to the instructions of the Lord and attend to them with the ear of your heart,*" includes an annual lovely luncheon honoring you and your monthly commitment.

## How do I Join?

- **You can** support the Sisters' "Greatest Needs," or a program such as Outreach, Hospitality, Aquaponics, Vocations, Health-care, or Retirement.
- **You can** choose a specific amount (\$5, \$10, \$25, etc.)
- **You can** cancel, pause, or change the amount any time
- **It's Easy:**
  - Go to our website at: [www.benedictinesistersoffl.org](http://www.benedictinesistersoffl.org)
  - Click on the "DONATE NOW" button at top of page
  - Fill-out the form
  - Your gift is sent automatically monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually hassle free



*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**

Editors: Sister Roberta Bailey, *Prioress*  
S. Eileen Dunbar and Development Staff  
Writers: Benedictine Sisters  
Web Master: Cheryl Chadick

*Praise His name for  
He is a living God,  
He was born to save us all.*

*Merry Christmas and a blessed  
Happy New Year!*

