



The Benedictine Tide

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives Through Prayer and Service

Summer 2025

Transformation



Change
Improve
PROCESS
ADVANCEMENT
Growth
MODIFY
Evolve
CREATIVITY
Development
IDEAS
Innovation
TRANSFORMATION
CHANGE
REBUILDING
Strategies
Reorganization
ALTERATION
IMPROVE
BUILD
ADAPTING
RESULTS
SCENARIOS
PROGRESS
REFLECTING
METAMORPHOSIS
REORGANIZATION
REBUILDING
REBUILDING

Community Retreat

June 29-July 4, 2025



Sister Dawn Annette Mills, O.S.B., the director for our retreat this summer, is a sister of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde, Missouri. Sister Dawn Annette is the major superior of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. As part of a contemplative monastic community Sr. Dawn Annette has specialized in the study and practice of prayer and spiritual disciplines.

housewife in God's house" and expected to spend her life living in the same place. But instead, she found herself travelling extensively as a Benedictine. This led to her insight that the Benedictine vow of stability is stability in God, not a physical place.

The talks were rich with such insights and flavored with a wonderful sense of humor. We came away from them refreshed and ready to move forward with our own personal struggles.

Sister Eileen Dunbar

Transformation

The annual retreat for the Benedictine Sisters of Florida took place June 29-July 4, 2025. Sr. Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri, was the Retreat Director.

Sister Dawn Annette is a native of Hobart, Indiana, and entered the Benedictine Sisters in 1975. She completed a master's program at the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, California, and has also taken courses at St. Louis University and at the University of Notre Dame.

Sister Dawn gave daily talks to the sisters on the topic of transformation. She began with a description of the development of the human fetus into an infant and that of a caterpillar to a butterfly. From there, she spoke about important stories in Scripture (both Old and New Testament) and offered her own insights in how these stories relate to our call being transformed ("divinized") as Benedictines. From the creation story in Genesis, Sister voices the question that many of us have asked ourselves. "OK, God made me. But does He like me?" Sister Dawn directed us to Psalm 139 to find the answer ("For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, your works are wonderful"). The answer, said Sr. Dawn, is in this psalm. Here God tells us "I have chosen to love you forever".

As a young woman, Sr. Dawn recognized her call to the Benedictine life in Psalm 105 ("The Lord remembers his covenant forever"). She herself desired to become "a

HAIKU

I love words and the Word, Jesus Christ. My daily prayer includes reading the daily Scriptures, reflecting on how they connect to my life today. Listening is important, so quiet time to just Be WIT * Christ is part of my personal daily prayer. * **With, In, working Through Christ**

A number of years ago I heard of Haiku (3 lines: 5,7,5 syllables) and I became aware of Haiku in Scriptures. Sometimes all the words are in Scripture and at times I add my own—so it has become lectio for me and they get noted in my journal—at times a reflection or prayer is added.

Since I've been doing this for 2 or more years, I have the makings of a book. I share with friends and they get my Haiku (and Tanka, too—5 lines: 5,7,5,7,7 syllables)

Kathleen Daye who spent time with us as a volunteer, sent a response for getting my "poems" She wrote: "I write them down, memorize them and use them for Lectio Divina. They encourage me to spend time in prayer which is so important and I'm really grateful."

I'll include a few of my "poems" here and you can pray or ponder them, May God Be WIT You! May Christ work through you so others come to know Him in your words or actions. Amen.

Sister Mary David Hydro

TRANSFORMATION

As I reflect on the theme of transformation, it reminds me of the dramatic change that took place in St. Paul's life. His conversion exemplifies how an encounter with Christ can transform our lives in doing Something Beautiful for God.

The story of Saint Paul's conversion in *Acts 22:3-16* is one of the most powerful testimonies of God's grace and transformation. Paul, formerly known as Saul, was a man driven by zeal, believing he was serving God by persecuting the followers of Jesus. When he was on the road to Damascus, in zealous pursuit of the Christians, he had a profound experience. A brilliant light from heaven surrounded him, and he heard the voice of Jesus asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

This personal experience of Jesus Christ affected his conversion. In that moment he believed, and he went from persecutor of Christians to disciple of Jesus Christ. It says that after this experience he immediately started preaching Christ. There was no wavering, no human reasoning, wondering if what he was doing was right. He had experienced Christ and had a completely new focus in life. His mission now was to bear Jesus' name to the Gentiles, as well as before kings and the children of Israel. (*Acts 9*)

St. Paul states in his letter to the Philippians 3:5- 8 "I was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Christians; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. In all of these accomplishments I took credit. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ."

Whether it's through radical changes or subtle shifts in our hearts, God works in us to shift our perspectives and priorities. We need to let go of things which stand as a barrier in fully experiencing Jesus Christ. Embracing this transformation is a journey we all embark upon, learning to leave behind what no longer serves us and moving toward a fuller life in Jesus Christ.

In an instant, St. Paul's life's mission was redirected from persecutor of Jesus Christ to proclaimer of the Good News. Christ had become everything for him, His powerful testimony was: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." *Philippians 1:21*

St. Paul's conversion illustrates the beauty of new beginnings. It's a reminder for us that every day presents a chance to start over, to embrace God's grace, and to pursue the plans He has for us. Just like St. Paul left his past behind, we too can let go of all things that no longer serve our purpose. Embracing this transformation is a journey we all embark upon, learning to leave behind what no longer serves us and moving toward a fuller life in Jesus Christ.

Through Paul's conversion and his powerful transformation, we are reminded of the limitless grace and mercy of God. His journey illustrates that anyone can be transformed and used for great purposes, no matter their background.

St. Paul often wrote about experiencing strength in his weaknesses. His story shows us that even in our imperfections, we can find purpose and strength through Christ. We are encouraged to embrace our struggles and use them for growth. He wrote that God's grace is sufficient for us in our most challenging and difficult moments of life. God provides the strength we need. It reminds us that our weaknesses can be transformed into opportunities to glorify God through our lives. He reminds us that a vibrant faith is active and involves taking steps to foster our relationship with God. As we follow His teachings and walk in faith, we should always look for ways to bear witness our love for God and others. Living out our faith becomes a natural overflow of our transformed hearts, inspiring those around us and bringing glory to God.

Sister Elizabeth Mathai

TRANSFORMATION

A frequent question guests to the monastery ask the sisters, "How long have you been here?" Some reactions are startled faces, admiration, then a compliment. God chose us, we listened and so we came.

Saint Peter asked Jesus, "I've given up everything to follow You, so what do I get in return?" And the Lord's reply? **A hundredfold!** Did Peter keep count as he followed Jesus over the years?

In a recent read of her family letters from 60 years ago, Sister Miriam was moved to tears recalling the past and realizing all the family concerns of anguish, poverty, joblessness, illness and confusion. During World War II, nations and families suddenly changed and life was hard. Yet during it all, our family core remained faithful to God, to Church, one another and to prayer. A devotion to

(Con't from page 3)

the Blessed Mother united us as we got to our knees and prayed the rosary each evening for guidance, peace and unity. It truly strengthened our souls, my calling and purpose for living.

In one of my father's letters, he wrote words that motivated me for 43 years educating youth in Christian values and providing nourishment for their future.



In my 65 years here at Holy Name there have been transformations without number. Long ago, our Benedictine chaplain Father Damian Duquesne often said that we change imperceptibly,

find our true freedom is in Christ.

Today it seems that many lack direction, seek instant security in material goals, absolute certainty in decisions, perfect relationships or Instant success without effort--all which have dissatisfying ends and lead to frustration. Without anyone being centered in the Divine, life will be a continual struggle with unrest and discontent with oneself. The Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding tell us that living is an endless process of change, bearing with hardships and transformations. Our eternal soul must follow on the journey from incarnation to divinization. In every age and time, the Spirit prompts us to listen to the Word of God.

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

The real transformation (conversion) is spiritual

Sr. Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, shared the fruit of her own lectio divina quite generously in her presentations to us, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, during our retreat. During her reflection on Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Isaac, she pointed out the fact that we, the readers, are not told how old Isaac was at the time of the sacrifice. If he was an older child, an adolescent, Isaac would have had to co-operate. The thought brought me back to my decision at the age of 44 to enter the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. It amused me to imagine my middle-aged self, trudging behind a mysterious figure,

carrying firewood on my back without a clear idea of what I was getting myself into.

So, I follow my Father to an altar in the middle of nowhere to surrender myself to His will. I am to follow Him in the Benedictine life, and I know that I am surrendering myself in ways that I do not yet understand. The words "obedience", "stability", and "conversion" are only labels that as of that moment are not connected to life experience.

I know what it means to surrender material possessions. The surrender of possessions of the mind and the heart is something I do not yet understand. In order to trust, I must give up my fears. In order to love, I must assume that strangers can have good intentions. I must learn to forgive, but in order to do so I must also live with the reality that I too need forgiveness. And there are many virtues that I have not yet learned to value: patience, acceptance, humility. Finally, I must learn to accept that there are difficulties that will always be part of the monastic life, either because of who I am or because of the character of the life itself. The real transformation (conversion) is spiritual, and it is this transformation that requires years, even a lifetime, of work. I must persist in my efforts at transformation, knowing that I will never be perfect.

I remain convinced that I made the right decision. I am grateful to God for the gift of courage that made that surrender (and the transformational work that has followed) possible.

Sister Eileen Dunbar

Upcoming Events Calendar

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|--------------------|---|
| November 1 | All Saints Day |
| November 2 | All Souls Day |
| November 10 | Feast of St. Leo |
| November 11 | Veterans Day |
| November 27 | Thanksgiving Day |
| December 2 | Giving Tuesday |
| December 8 | Feast of the Immaculate Conception |

In Memorium:



Ronald Ellis - April 6, 2025
Otto Weitzenkorn - May 3, 2025
Frances E. Martin '60 - May 31, 2025
Warren Broz - August 16, 2025

If tonight God comes in your dream and invites you to ask for one thing, and one thing only, what would you ask for?

Each year on February 28th we, the Benedictine Sisters of Holy Name Monastery, mark one more year celebrating the **transition** of our founding Sisters' from Pittsburgh, PA to the "Mission Land" of Florida in 1889. This year marks the accumulation of 136 years that the Benedictine Sisters of Florida have lived together the words of Saint Paul to the Colossians (Chapter 3). "As God's chosen ones, clothe yourselves with compassion and kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another, let peace rule your hearts, live in harmony, teach and admonish one another in wisdom, and never forget to be thankful for what God has done for you." That's what I call a **GRAND TRANSITION**!

We **are grateful** for all that God has done for us throughout these 136 years since our Founding Sisters ventured forth from Pittsburgh, Pa. to Pasco County, Florida. That's a long time. Are you ready for a long ride? I ponder changes that have drifted "under the bridges" in those years. Some came quickly to mind: opening and withdrawing from schools – all still a credit to our **transition** skills as they continue in some form of serve the founding purpose. Some changes were welcome and settled in easily; some rested uneasily on the Sisters shoulders as they, responded to "the call of our times". Changes in attire, changes from Latin to English, all the changes after Vatican II, the cycle of the rise and fall of hemlines.

Now I am really curious! So, I call on Google and type in "year in review" from the 1889. My list represents giant steps through the 20th and 21st centuries in clusters of approximately ten years.



In the first decade after our Sisters got "Florida sand in their shoes" (folklore = you're here to stay) on the job in Florida (1889) the U.S. Congress designated Yosemite a National Park; Grover Cleveland won the U.S. presidential election, becoming the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms; Thomas A. Edison finished building his first motion picture studio; a decline in the New York stock market triggered the Panic of 1893 and first Monday of September was designated a legal holiday; and Klondike Gold Rush began in Alaska.

1900 – 1920s our Sisters **transitioned** to honor the call of an Alabama bishop to join Sisters from Covington, KY in to establish what is our shared foundation in Cullman, AL. On a lighter note, the Oreo cookie was first introduced, SOS was accepted as the universal distress signal, and World War I began, the first crossword puzzle was published, traffic lights were introduced; Prohibition and World War I began. Praise God, the Sisters' necrology lists no deaths in the influenza epidemic of 1918.

Women were granted the right to vote; the lie detector was invented, *Reader's Digest* was published, and Talking Movies were invented. The first Olympic Winter Games were held; flapper dresses came into style; bubble gum hit the market; penicillin was discovered, and the car radio was invented.

In the 1930s the empire state building was completed; the US officially got a National Anthem; air-conditioning was invented, the Loch Ness monster was first spotted; the golden gate bridge opened; the helicopter was invented; the first commercial flight flew over the Atlantic and World War II began.

In the 40s when our Sisters were busy handing over the administration of parish schools in New Orleans, LA, Olfen, TX and Slidell, LA. This freed them to open new parish schools in Florida and to continue staffing summer catechetical programs in parishes where there were no Catholic schools. In their spare time the Sisters continued attending night and summer degree courses. They may not have noticed that nylon stockings hit the market, the jeep was invented, T-shirts, ballpoint pens, computers, Polaroid cameras, the microwave oven, the bikini was introduced.

(Con't on page 10)

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!

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Benedictine Sisters of Florida
Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

New Governance Structure for the Benedictine Sisters of Florida at Holy Name Monastery, St. Leo FL

The Benedictine Sisters of Florida at Holy Name Monastery have been in the diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida since their founding over 135 years ago, and have served well and faithfully in a number of capacities and locations in the diocese and others throughout Florida and prior to 1949 in Texas and Louisiana. Recently the decision was made that a sister administrator from outside the community needed to be appointed to serve them as their religious superior in the coming years, as they step into the future.

On August 10, at a beautiful ritual of installation, Sister Tonette Sperando, OSB of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Alabama was installed as the administrator of Holy Name Monastery. An especially meaningful aspect of this appointment is that Sister Tonette's monastery was founded by the Benedictines of Holy Name almost 125 years ago, which was only 10 years into their own monastery history. Quite remarkable. The two communities have always enjoyed a good relationship as sisters, so this seems to be a natural evolution of the history of these two communities.

As administrator Sister Tonette will be both a pastoral presence to the sisters and a decision maker, taking care of practical matters for the monastery. She will be the public face of the monastery and also be the legal representative.

Sister Roberta Bailey, who has served as prioress for the last fifteen years has now stepped aside and Sister Tonette will have the responsibilities of the prioress. The community owes Sister Roberta a debt of gratitude for her long and capable leadership. She will continue to serve as an adviser to Sister Tonette, alongside Sister Mary Clare Neuhofer, another former prioress at Holy Name Monastery.

The Benedictine Sisters of Holy Name Monastery now move forward into the future with hope, continuing their life of prayer and service in the St. Leo area.

Sister Lynn McKenzie

Sister Tonette Sperando, OSB

Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, Alabama

Sister Tonette Sperando was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama and is a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, Alabama. She was taught by the Benedictine Sisters at St. Paul Cathedral School and John Carroll Catholic High School, both located in Birmingham. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, AL. She entered the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman shortly after graduating from college in 1990. She later received her Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Dayton in Ohio.

Sr. Tonette served as teacher, principal and president of various Catholic elementary and high schools located primarily in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama. Recently, she served at Prince of Peace Catholic Church as the Director of Mission Initiative. Sr. Tonette also served as her religious community's Treasurer, Development Director and Prioress. She continues to serve on several committees within her religious community.

Currently she lives in Birmingham with two Benedictine Sisters from her Cullman community and has recently been appointed by the President of the Congregation of Saint Scholastica to serve as the canonical administrator for the Benedictine Sisters of Florida at Holy Name Monastery located in St. Leo, Florida.

"I am honored to serve with such a courageous group of religious women who are boldly embracing their reality with great trust in God's unfolding plan for them." Sister Tonette Sperando



Testimonial from Ellis Munoz



Ellis Muñoz, S. Roberta and Ellis' mother Milagros Estévez

Dear Sisters,

Couple of months ago I read a book titled : "Finding happiness where you least expect it". And that was just what God had planned for me. I came on February with so much pain in my heart, so many questions unanswered, and most of all knowing that even though I had a visible illness (cancer) my greatest sickness was feeling God had abandoned me. And that made me feel so vulnerable, sad, lost and hopeless.

Thank you Sister Mary Claire, for answering my email and opening this beautiful and sacred place for me to stay (a lady from Dominican Republic you did not know anything of), thank you !!

Thank you all for receiving me, my sister and my mother with so much love, kindness, peace, acceptance and joy!

Sister Roberta, I cherish your words of wisdom, sensibility and love for all. You are a true inspiration!!! I told my mom that knowing you gives me an idea of how saints live.

Sister Miriam, my guardian angel, I see life in such a simple and kind way after learning that "God creator of all things " always works for our best, even if, like the seeds we planted, we do not get to see what he is doing. I will miss so much being outside with you!

Sister Elizabeth, I remember one morning trying to wake up for mass and feeling the effects of my treatment almost couldn't be standing and you said to me: "Stay in bed, you don't have to go, God knows". Thank you ! Your words gave me the certainty I needed that God sees my heart and that is what matters.

Sister Mary Romana, your sensitivity and simplicity are really admirable. You bring joy everywhere you go.

Father John, thank you for your prayers and for your words of love and wisdom. And for always asking me how I felt.

Sister Donna, thank you for your help always, for sharing with us your fruit cake and for your love and friendship.

I would like to mention every one of you in a special way but This is getting to long and I need to go. I can only say: THANK YOU GOD FOR THIS WONDERFUL NEW BEGINNING IN MY LIFE! Thank you ST. Benedict !!! I didn't ever think you would do so much for me in a way I never expected.

I thank God for each one of you ! in each one of you I have seen his endless and free love.

You will be forever part of my heart! Thanks for making your home also my home.

Please keep praying for us especially for my daughter Maria Camelia.

Thank you! Hugs and kisses to all of you! We will stay in touch, your community is also part of our family.

Love,

Ellis Muñoz

Accomplishment Achieved



Some experiences have a beginning and an end. The Milton natural disaster, at least for the monastery greenhouse, can now be a thing of the past. After waiting since October 2024 for the rebuild, the greenhouse has been wonderfully transformed into an “oh, wow!” structure as several visitors have said.

Thanks be to God, all benefactors, and continual prayer, an amazing accomplishment has happened at Holy Name Monastery because our aquaponic-hydroponic system is completely rebuilt.

The strenuous challenge was the labor of Aquasol International Dade City employees with President Phil



Reasons and took ten days. These men are electricians, mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, metal workers, and all-around good-natured family members—cousins, brothers and friends. Starting in May, a whole day was needed to dismantle the damaged structure of poles and pipes and haul debris to a county recycle center. Being in alignment with each other, the men were multitasking, drilling and gluing, measuring and leveling every item with precision, connecting power lines in conduits, and power washing fish tanks. The skilled project manager, Joo, kept the energy flowing by his alert attention to detail and the team. Even with hydrating, all were drenched with summer sweat.

And what a glorious sight it is! The exterior is an 80-foot silver aluminet covering on top of two layers of film aptly named Sun Master to allow sufficient light for plant growth while regulating temperatures.

The newest addition is the evaporative cooling panels to chill the air as the summer heat swells outdoors. Two big exhaust fans circulate the air. It is such a blessing to look ahead to seeding and harvesting vegetables and lettuce again in comfortable conditions. As you know, the tilapia are tropical fish that tolerate warm climates and so will again always be happy.



Phil Reasons with Hans

Living in extreme times as everyone is, we are fully aware that other hurricane survivors have not yet recovered their lives and homes affected by storms. If you think about it, every day we go through times of wholeness and brokenness over and over. We break, weaken,

someone comes along, we mend, we heal and start over. Often, Christ is manifested in disguise. In the past seven months, the community kept hope alive until this special celebration and now can remove all the emotional band-aids. We pray that our Creator God will prosper the work of our hands. (Psalm 90:17) Thank you Phil, Hans, Joo, Junior, Eli, Ish, Van, Julian, and Estevan for this great transformation—job well done!

We are again accepting volunteers to experience the joy and satisfaction of growing organic food and want to share that achievement with many future fish farmers to come.



Joo repairing air pump

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

(Con't from Page 5)

In the 1950s the first credit card was introduced, the Korean War began, color TV and car seat belts were introduced, polio vaccine was created. The first McDonald's opened, Velcro and TV remote controls were introduced. Hula hoops and Lego toys were introduced and *The Sound of Music* opened on Broadway.

In the 1960s, our community numbered around 65 and we transitioned to union with the Federation of St. Scholastica. The Peace Corps was founded, we had the Cuban Missile Crisis, the first Catholic president was elected and subsequently, assassinated, the Beatles became popular, the *Star Trek* TV series aired, the first heart transplant was performed, and Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. In the 1970s, computer floppy disks, pocket calculators and VCRs were introduced.

Moving quickly through the 80s and 90s, the Rubik's cube became popular, the first woman was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, personal computers were introduced, the first American woman rode a space shuttle and we witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall.

From 1929 - 1959 the sisters operated St. Benedict's Prep school for boys. Holy Name Academy provided day and boarding programs for girls from the first days in 1889 until 1964. Shifting gears, we *transitioned* to build two new dormitories and a cafeteria to provide services to Saint Leo College students. In 2014 we made the courageous decision to "begin again" the great adventure of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida.

These are only a few of the highlights that I picked out... there were many, many more historic events. When we get our "seasoned" members talking about memories of the "good ole days" they may tell us about learning to drive on a tractor, how much cars have changed ... and don't forget to ask them why Mother Rose Marie bought PJs, rather than nightgowns, for all the sisters after experiencing a hotel evacuation order one night in New Orleans. What a sight they must have been to the on-lookers below: 5 women scantily clad in white nightgowns scampering down the fire escape. The next morning Mother Rose Marie bought every Sister a pair of PJs for when they traveled. Does that remind you of Benedict's admonition to supply each member going on a journey to be given clean underwear! (Which, by the way, they were to return clean and good repair at their journey's end.

In 2014 we made the courageous decision to "begin again" the great adventure of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida – build a new house across the highway. That *transition* began many years prior when our predecessors recognized a treasure across the street. We owned 39 acres offering stunning views and a perpetual breeze; awesome sunrises and sunsets. They buried it with a citrus grove and went out with joy to serve the people of God in many places. And, when the time was right. our time, we sold what we had and rejoiced to reclaim our treasured "pearl."

Jesus often ends His parables with the question: Do you understand all these things?" Like His disciples, without hesitation we answer, "Yes." But do we really? Maybe our voices quivered and there was a question mark in our expression. But, praise God, there is conviction in our hearts. Conviction that, with God's help, we will extend God's kingdom wherever we live, whatever the restrictions we struggle with, whatever the types of resources we have, or don't have.

In our 136 years in Florida our community members have lived with 13 religious superiors. Now, that alone is endurance! And, they have had multiple careers. To name a few: classroom teachers, principal, mission superiors, CCD teacher and coordinator, teacher and "mom" at Good Counsel Camp; procurator, worker in various aspects of our guest ministries, archivist and keeper of artifacts and the chronologies. They've been Hospice volunteers, provided service in health care, laundry and kitchen staff, seamstresses and coif makers; choir director and sacristan; artists, calligraphers, musicians, and champion crafters. For any I've overlooked, rest assured that God's got it in the Good Book.

Many years of vowed commitment sit right here in this chapel. In the midst of an ever-changing church and world, we offer an example of flexibility, perseverance and stability. Faithfulness to lectio and community exercises, shows us that they know where their life in God is sustained. Their interest in everyday happenings shows their love of learning. Their many friends within and outside the community, clearly pays tribute to our Sisters' sense of Benedictine hospitality.

The Kingdom of God was always clear to Jesus but to us, what does He say to us? He repeats the question He had for his worried parents when, after three days of searching for him, they finally found their lost child in the temple. "Did you not know this is where you could find me? Jesus vision becomes ever clearer to us. Little did we foresee when we designed this building with 20 living spaces that within 10 years our community members would occupy half that number of bedrooms. Gratefully we sing "May the mind of Christ my Savior live in me from day to day; may His word dwell richly and Jesus' love fill me that I may be calm and strong and brave." (Hymn: "Mind of Christ" by Katie Wilkinson).

In everyday terms, tomorrow, next week, our mission, our vision will not change. The words of a Quaker hymn come to mind: "We bend and we bow and shan't be ashamed". Our mission remains the same. It just *transitions* to take on a new shape. Why did our Sisters come from Pennsylvania to settle in this area? "Was it not to feed the local children's hunger for learning? Long before we wrote formalized philosophy statements and directional goals, our Sisters "fed hungers" in a variety of roles at all levels in the education field. They worked in internal ministries and as nurses and home-care takers, seamstresses, coif makers, packing house workers, gardeners, ... you name it, as long as it was legal and moral, someone probably tried it.

Our aim is, and has always been, to foster life in community. We strive to BE community for each other: to pray and work; to interact with the care and respect St. Benedict describes in his Rule, particularly in RB chapter 72. "be the first to show respect to the other". Or in our own words: to be the first "to respond with the compassion of Christ to the hungers of others."

In a world that seems to have gone insane: refusing to recognize the signs of spread of disease, climate change, and global hunger - sane things seem to be unreal. Jesus presents to us a variety of examples to help us conceptualize His Kingdom: a hidden treasure, a box filled with golden coins buried somewhere in a field; the Kingdom as a precious pearl, a jewel found by a businessman who astutely sold everything he owned in order to buy it; a fishing net filled with fish both good and bad, wheat and chaff growing together. The illustrations abound: leaven in dough, light, salt, a seed, a ripe harvest, a pearl (was it still hidden deep in the oyster's grasp?) a royal feast and a wedding banquet. These parables all have to do with a person finding something of such tremendous value that they are willing to give up everything they have in order to possess it. God leads the way – sets the path before us ... God is the merchant who gives up all in order to possess a treasure – He gave His only Son, and in doing so, He has identified US as His pearl of great price.



If tonight God comes in your dream and invites you to ask for one thing, and one thing only, what would you ask for?

Sister Roberta, Bailey



Holy Name Monastery

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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 hungry of the People of God.

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