



The Benedictine Tide

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives Through Prayer and Service

Winter Tide 2025

Home Land



HOME LAND



As I write this article on the theme of “Home Land”, I do so from a unique perspective. While serving as the Canonical Administrator for the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, I am a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, Alabama. In fact, my monastery is the joint daughter house of Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, Florida and St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, Kentucky. Benedictine women from those two monasteries joined together in 1902 to found Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Alabama.

Throughout my initial formation years, I was introduced to various traditions and rituals of daily life in the monastery. I often wondered where those rituals originated. Frequently, I pondered on the rich heritage passed to the members of my monastery from both of those motherhouses. Over the years, I have come to deeply admire the numerous Benedictine women who have gone before me, paving the way for new expressions of the same Benedictine heritage that began in North America in 1852 from Eichstätt, Bavaria.

St. Walburg Abbey in Eichstätt, Bavaria, holds a special place in the story of the Benedictine Sisters of North America. In 1852, Mother Benedicta Riepp and two other sisters arrived in St. Marys, Pennsylvania, to support the German Catholic immigrants. There, they began a school for girls and gradually, expanded the Benedictine charism by founding other monasteries throughout the country. Ultimately, the Benedictine charism found its way to San Antonio, Florida where Holy Name Academy, now called Holy Name Monastery, was established.

Eichstätt, Bavaria is more than a geographic origin—it is a spiritual homeland, a place where the seeds of Benedictine life were nurtured before branching across continents. From this Bavarian soil, monasteries grew and spread, carrying with them the Benedictine charism of prayer, hospitality, and service. The homeland of Eichstätt is a shared heritage that binds independent monasteries together. It reminds us that while our expressions of Benedictine life may vary, we are all connected by the same spiritual lineage.

In the end, “Home Land” is not only about the soil of Eichstätt or the foundations of our motherhouses—it is about the living bond that unites us across time and place. Whether in Florida, Kentucky, Alabama, or countless other states, we carry within us the same Benedictine heritage that first blossomed in Bavaria. This homeland continues to steady our steps, shape our traditions, and draw us into deeper unity. It is both gift and responsibility: a memory that honors those who came before us, and a mission that calls us to embody the Benedictine charism anew wherever God plants us.



Sister Tonette Sperando

A Poem by Father John McEvoy

I sit in the amphitheater,
With souls who have changed.
All trying to find a way to follow Him more faithfully.
Their roads challenging, rocky, desolate full of self-suffering
Now trying together to change.
The amphitheater gives a glimpse of heaven
Despite all the sinfulness, all have chosen to follow Him.
His way is not easy,
Full of grief, isolation, and misunderstanding.
All coming and traveling together
Experience what heaven will be
From their different ways of life
Loneliness, isolation, failure, suffering.
Now with mercy, and forgiveness from Him
Each helping each to receive a new peace of mind,
Together they share with one another their unique journeys,
From shame, misunderstanding, isolation,
Together they changed,
To friendship,
A companion to listen,
Fellowship to share
Isolation no more.
A glimpse of the way to heaven.



In Memorium:



Marilyn Kiefer ('51) Hines - August 9, 2025

Marjorie Karan - August 14, 2025

Sister Jerome Leavy - September 2, 2025

Barbara Songy



Where is my Homeland?

Where is my Homeland? A number of answers came to mind. I'm Florida born and raised so Florida is a Homeland.

I'm a Catholic Church member since birth, Catholic educated child to adult, so the Church is a Homeland.

I'm a Benedictine. Member of Florida Benedictines for over 60 years; so the Monastery is a Homeland

Homeland is where we live and grow. Yet Homeland is more than where the body is. Homeland = where the spirit lives and grows.

These days I'd say also that Nature = my Homeland. I feel in Nature God's love and presence.

A walk in nature = a prayerful time and I'm aware of God's Presence in and around me.

I'm aware of God's "love notes" in nature: sunshine, blue sky, green grass and trees, wild flowers... My Homeland is truly in nature.

My Homelands now are prompt and prep for the Homeland where we'll all be WIT* God forever -- Heaven! Amen.

- With God, In God, working Through God

Sister Mary David Hydro

Homeland is where we belong

Homeland is where we belong. Homeland is not complete without us. And we are not complete without Homeland.



The restoration of the American Bison to the Great Plains has taught us this. When the buffalo return, what was once degraded landscape turns green.

The bison roam continually, grazing in some areas and leaving others behind untouched to provide an environment for other creatures. Their hooves break up the soil, allowing the

rain to penetrate and seed to germinate. The buffalo roll around on the ground to remove parasites and cover themselves with dust to ward off insects. But the indentation in the earth they leave behind fills with water when it rains, providing habitat for birds and insects. The wool of the buffalo provides materials to build nests. The buffalo need the plains. And the plains need the buffalo.

Our Homeland is heaven. We are made for God and for heaven because God has created us for Himself. We are not complete until we are home with God in heaven. We cannot understand how it is that heaven completes us until we experience it, but our faith tells us this is so. And we are also surrounded by witnesses. Many have experienced NDEs (near death experiences) and returned with stories of how human consciousness continues after physical death, how they find themselves immersed in the unconditional love of God, and how reluctant they are to return to their physical bodies.

St. Augustine of Hippo said it best "You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

Sister Eileen Dunbar



Calendar of Upcoming Events

December 8	Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December 25	Christmas
December 28	Feast of the Holy Family
January 1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
January 6	Solemnity of the Epiphany
January 11	Feast of the Baptism of our Lord
February 10	St. Scholastica Day
February 18	Ash Wednesday-beginning of Lent
March 21	Solemnity of Saint Benedict
April 5	Easter

Giving Tuesday What a Success!

Giving Tuesday happened December 2nd 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 **\$45,662!** 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 \$45,000.

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 136 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 the **Monastery** at (352) 588-8320 or email at:
holognameretreatflorida@gmail.com



INDIA MY HOME LAND

My home land is India, state of Kerala which is situated in the southwest corner of India which is called 'God's own Land'. It has an estimated population of 36 million. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. Kerala is known as "God's own Country". Kerala's enchanting beauty, its lush green paddy fields, spice gardens, black waters, meandering waterways, thick forests, rich cultural heritage, and spiritual significance all contribute to its reputation as "God's Own Country". Kerala with a literacy rate of 91.5% stands first among the Indian states. The official language of Kerala state is Malayalam and our official language of India is Hindi. But mostly everyone can speak English. Kerala has 14 districts with Trivandrum as the capital city. It has the reputation for being a major pool of educated manpower, temporal as well as spiritual. People of Kerala are called Malayalees. Malayalee priests and nuns abound in church-run educational institutions and hospitals across India. It is estimated that there are about 40,000 Catholic priests and 25,000 nuns across India, and most of them are from Kerala.

Religion in Kerala is a mixture of different faiths; Hinduism, Islam and Christianity being the most significant among them. The population of Christians in Kerala is large compared to other Indian states – almost 20%. 60% of these are Catholics. Secondly, Christianity is historically deep-rooted in Kerala, having been introduced by St. Thomas in AD 52. Catholics are a major force in Kerala's educational sector, running more than 30,000 schools (36% of the total) and institutions of higher learning. Kerala is home to several saints and blessed individuals who have made significant contributions to the Christian community. At present about 21 Keralites are in the process of being Canonized.

Kerala state is home to numerous temples, churches, and mosques that reflect its religious diversity. The tranquil environment and sacred sites provide a perfect backdrop for spiritual seekers, reinforcing the idea of Kerala as a place blessed by the divine.

Kerala is a tropical land with pleasant climate. The three major seasons in Kerala are Summer (February - May), Monsoon (June - August and October - November) and Winter (December - January) with an interval of mild weather between August and October.

Rice and Tapioca are the important food crops in Kerala. Kerala is a major producer of coconut, rubber, pepper, cardamom, cashew, coffee, tea, ginger and cocoa. Tree spices like cinnamon and cloves are also cultivated here. Every year thousands of tourists are coming to see the serene beauty of this small peaceful land.

Kerala boasts a rich cultural heritage that is evident in its art, dance, music, and festivals. The annual festivals, marked by colorful celebrations and rituals, reflect the deep-rooted traditions and communal harmony of Kerala's diverse population. This cultural richness enhances the state's divine charm and connection to the divine.

Kerala has lots of renowned festivals. Be it the state festival Onam or the temple festival Pooram, or Christian festivals such as Christmas or Easter the people in God's own country celebrate all the festivals with great passion and spirit.

Kerala is also famous for its Ayurvedic practices and wellness tourism. The ancient science of Ayurveda, which emphasizes holistic healing and well-being, attracts visitors seeking rejuvenation and relaxation. Many resorts and wellness centers in Kerala offer authentic Ayurvedic treatments set against the backdrop of serene landscapes. This focus on health and wellness adds to the notion of Kerala as a sanctuary, befitting its title as God's Own Country.

Sister Elizabeth Mathai





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 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, includes a 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, Healthcare, 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**
 - Click on the "DONATE NOW" button at top of page
 - Fill-out the form
 - Your gift is sent monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually and hassle free



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 physical, spiritual and emotional hungers of the People of God.

Editorial Team

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