



Sisters of Benedict

NEWSLETTER

Summer 1999, Vol. 10: Issue 1



Cathy Keating, Oklahoma's first lady, and luncheon hostess, provided humor during her remarks.

ment director, Barbara Nichols, Mrs. Van Horn co-ordinated details and arrangements with Ralph Knighton, administrator of the Governor's Mansion and the Phillips Pavilion.

The Benedictine cookbook, a traditional luncheon souvenir for each guest, featured "Mansion Favorites" and "Monastery Favorites." Allisha's Catering provided three delicious salads, a luscious chocolate dessert, raspberry tea and lovely service. Many of our former and faithful luncheon volunteers were present, and commented on the relaxed atmosphere, "What? No brownies to bake, no lemon squares to cut....?"

Thirty-four individuals contributed as sponsors, or underwriters, of the luncheon. We are grateful to Sherry Beasley, Terri Bernauer, David and Jane Best, Carleen Burger, Harry and Mary Jane Calvey, Elnora Cullinan, Susan and Robert Dolan, Mary Ann Edwards, Betty Erbrick, Jane Edmonds, Sandy and Tom Goldsworthy, Darcie Harris, Jeanette King, Judy Love, Margaret V. Love, Mary Martinovich, Libby Medina, Elizabeth Z. Milam, Tom Moran, Barbara Nichols, Vestina Ruffin, Sylvia Slater, Kathy Steffen, Marjean and Charles Towe, Nancy and George Wallace and an anonymous donor all of metropolitan Oklahoma City; Frances Doak of Chickasha and Mary E. Nichols of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.



Andy Rheinberger, standing, welcomes Kay Sexton, Sue Reno and Peg Conner.

9th ANNUAL LUNCHEON HOSTED BY FIRST LADY OF OKLAHOMA

Despite thunderstorms, the ninth annual Spring Luncheon at the Phillips Pavilion on the grounds of Oklahoma Governor's Mansion was lots of fun! Mrs. Cathy Keating was our hostess and luncheon speaker. Gracious and lighthearted, Mrs. Keating shared anecdotal stories of her experiences as first lady of the state. She opened the Mansion, which she dubbed "your home," to 185 guests following the luncheon.

A luncheon chairwoman in 1997, Jeanne Anne Van Horn repeated service by chairing this year's luncheon. Together with her daughter, Mallory, and our develop-



Luncheon guests, from left, include Billie Milligan, Nancy Wallace, Irene Alsobrook and Ellen Knebel.



Luncheon chairwoman, Jeanne Anne Van Horn.

ONE HAPPY WOMAN!

A parallel activity to our luncheon is our annual drawing. Typically a hand-made quilt is one of the gifts. This year's winner, Deborah Morrow Houlette, of Wanette, Oklahoma, could not be present at the luncheon, but her enthusiasm is worth sharing:

"What a wonderful surprise I had when I found the package at my backdoor. It seemed like Christmas in April! One of the most beautiful items I have ever personally received awaited me....the quilt is gorgeous....I love pink and the colors/pattern combination is superb. It is happy and spring-like! The cross-stitched panels of violets and the starburst center pattern are absolutely splendid.....Please share my sentiments of appreciation with any or all who had anything to do with this quilt....I consider the quilt both as functional artwork, and a blessing....."

We are tickled the quilt was lovingly received. The cross-stitch was completed by Sisters Eunice and Marie Ballmann, and their own sister Margaret Lageman..... It was quilted by our community friend, Mary Louise Chapman.

Sister Eunice Celebrates Golden Jubilee



Sister Eunice

Sister Eunice Ballmann celebrated her Golden Jubilee of Monastic Profession on Saturday, June 5. Recently retired from teaching activities, Eunice serves the community as Formation Director. A native of Elsberry, Missouri, she made first profession of vows on January 3, 1949, at St. Joseph's Convent, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Eunice's jubilee celebration took place at first vespers of Corpus Christi. At the ceremony Eunice was surrounded by her community and some thirty guests, including her five brothers and sisters. Along with Sister Marie Ballmann of Red Plains Monastery were Margaret Lagemann of Elsberry, Missouri; Jerome and Emily Ballmann of O'Fallon, Missouri; Anthony Ballmann of Davis, California; and Patricia Ryland of Houston, Texas.

The Renewal of Monastic Profession took place during the ceremony. Eunice stood before the community and publically renewed the threefold monastic profession of stability, conversion through the monastic way of life, and obedience, which she had proclaimed fifty

years ago. With upraised arms, she thrice intoned the *Suscipe*, a traditional supplication first sung at the time of her final profession. The community repeated the intonation in response. The intonation is a monastic custom which dates back to the time of St. Benedict and expresses trust in God's faithfulness.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Eunice was honored with dinner at the monastery. Heartiest congratulations, Sister Eunice!

BENEDICT RETURNS TO GREET OUR GUESTS



Mosaic of St. Benedict

For many years, a handsome mosaic of St. Benedict had an honored place at our front door. A gift of artist Ann Stuever in 1968, the mosaic gradually deteriorated from the weather and some of its tiles began to fall from place. Sister Roberta collected the loose tiles and repaired "St. Benedict" with painstaking care.

We tried to find *the right place*, a new home for the mosaic. We tried the monastery hallway. We tried a second place in the monastery hallway. We tried other seemingly fit locations, but we were never fully satisfied. At long last, someone spoke our collective desire and said, "I really liked it best outside the front door to greet our guests."

We then embarked on suitable protection from the elements. A redwood frame and backing were fashioned, and Roberta will continue to apply a protective silicon sealer to shield the surface.

When you visit the monastery, Benedict is back "home" to greet you at the front door.

Fourth Home Ready for Guests



Tom, working high in the ceiling joists.....

It is complete! We have moved in! And, on the Feast of St. Benedict, we blessed the newest addition to our monastery--our handsome new guest home on the 5 acres next to our main building. Several women who are considering monastic life joined us at the March 21 blessing, which followed the Sunday's Eucharistic celebration offered by Fr. Lawrence Stasyszen of St. Gregory's Abbey, Shawnee.



Four of the five bedrooms in the home have windows overlooking the lake. Spacious in design, the home includes a library, rooms for new members and guests, fully equipped kitchen, and a basement storm shelter area. Sister Judith Martin and Sister Eunice Ballmann are the community members who live in the new home.



Our new home will accommodate its first guests during our Benedictine Life Experience in mid-July. (See box on page 8)



Special drainage was a requirement.

We acknowledge our benefactors whose gifts made possible the home's construction, and respectfully ask our friends and readers to join in the following prayer for vocations to our community:



We credit Tom Temple and Bob Powers, our contractor and our chief carpenter, with craftsmanship of our new home.

A PRAYER OF ST. BENEDICT

O Gracious, All-Holy God,
give us
Wisdom to perceive you,
Diligence to seek you,
Patience to wait for you,
Eyes to behold you,

A heart to meditate upon you,
And a life to proclaim you;
through
the power of the Spirit
of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Please pray for vocations to the Sisters of Benedict

MESSAGE FROM THE
PRIORRESS,
SISTER MARIE
BALLMANN, OSB

Dear Friends,

Here on the rolling hills and plains of Oklahoma, it is harvest time. As I look out the front door of the monastery, I see our neighbor's yellow wheat field. In the middle of that field is a piece of twisted metal roofing or siding, left there by the recent tornado. We have much to be thankful for, especially that everyone and everything here at the

monastery is safe and sound. Events such as this storm help us to put in proper perspective the ultimate value of the lives of our loved ones in relation to the relative value of material possessions. This sentiment was voiced over and over again by the storm's survivors.

At the monastery we are celebrating the completion of our latest structure, a fourth home on our 21 acres. To signal that completion, we have connected all four living spaces by sidewalks, 525 feet to be exact. This will provide for an easier 'commute' between buildings and fewer grass cuttings tracked into the houses. The contractor is the last stages of removing the large shed that was in front of the new house and rebuilding it on his own property. When that is complete, and we reshape that spot, we'll have a real front yard.

The tree outside my office window is heavily laden with apples and promises of an abundant harvest this fall. Our lake, brimming with water, is entirely replenished following last summer's drought. God's blessings are so plentiful. We raise our hymn of praise each time we gather as a community to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in our beautiful chapel. We thank you, our benefactors, for the many ways you have shared yourselves and your blessings with us.



*Our lake, brimming full.
Do you recall the drought photo of our last newsletter?*

YES, WE ARE ALL RIGHT!

Our community thanks the many, many friends who called to check on our well-being following the May 3 tornadoes in Oklahoma. Thankfully, we sustained no physical injuries or damage of any kind to our property. However, in the surrounding areas of Piedmont, many homes, barns, and outbuildings were damaged or destroyed by tornadoes, torrential winds and hail.

Several community friends lost their homes in the ravaged areas of Midwest City and Moore. Our prayers are constantly with them as they rebuild fragmented lives. We are concerned, too, by many problems that the citizens of Mulhall, Oklahoma, are facing. Mulhall is a small town which was virtually destroyed by the twisters. It is located several miles north of our monastic community. Some of our sisters taught children who were bused from Mulhall to St. Mary's School in Guthrie.

EAGLE SCOUTS TRANSFORM OUR LAKE ENVIRONMENT



One of the wooden benches the scouts built blends nicely into the natural environment of the lake.

We have reason to consider naming our monastery's lake "Eagle Lake."

Four Eagle scout candidates and many helpers from Troop 120 of Christ the King parish in Oklahoma City contributed several wood-working projects around our lake during the past

several months. Each scout selected a specific improvement, and spent dozens of hours laboring to complete his respective project.

Sean Corbett, Houston Eagleston, Conor Osborne, and Jason Thompson participated in the projects which were accomplished during weekend hours.

The scouts installed three meditation benches, a trellised canopy, a footbridge and wood chip pathways. Waterside areas for the benches were cleared, trimmed and mulched; in some areas poison ivy was removed. New spaces were established for birdwatching and meditation. In addition, the scouts contributed small cedar trees set amid the benches, creating a "cared-for" look along our prayer/reflection footpath. The community, our guests, and retreatants will long appreciate the scouts for their contributions and improvements to our little lake.



From left, Scouts Chris Osborne, Conor Osborne, Matt Beadles, and Sister Melissa Letts join Scout leader Bob Osborne for a strategy session.

The distinctive Eagle rank was awarded to the scouts at a May 15 Court of Honor at Christ the King parish. Sister Marie Ballmann and Sister Joanne Yankauskis, representing Red Plains Monastery, were recognized at the ceremony.

John Paul II Speaks to Benedictine Women

John Paul II addressed the Third International Symposium of Benedictine Women in Sant'Anselmo, Rome last fall. Following are excerpts from his letter:

*"The Rule which Benedict wrote is unforgettable not only for its burning passion for God and its wise concern for the discipline without which there is no discipleship, but also for its radiant **humanitas**. The Rule breathes a spirit of hospitality grounded upon the belief that the other is no enemy but is Christ himself who comes as guest; and this is a spirit given only to those who have known the magnanimity of God. In the Rule of Benedict, we find an order which is strict but never stern, a light which is clear but never cold, and a fullness which is absolute but never overwhelming. In a word, the Rule is radical but always hospitable—which is why when other monastic Rules disappeared, the Rule of Benedict triumphed and continues to work its power even today in the lives of your communities.*

*"Dear Sisters, our society too knows much darkness at the end of this century and on the threshold of the new millennium. In such a time, the luminous figure of Benedict stands in our midst, pointing as always to Christ. You have been called in a special way into that mystery of light—which is why the Church continues to look to you and your communities so expectantly. We look to you because you are those who are not afraid to enter the cave which is dark and empty; those who listen in a truly contemplative silence; those who hear the word of God and *become* that*

continued on page 7



Rev. Price Grimes

Old friends are special friends. Father Price Grimes, who initially met three of our Sisters as a seminarian, is an old friend who has become a special friend to the community. Ordained now for eleven years, Father Grimes is a periodic Eucharistic celebrant for the community.

He first became acquainted with our community through Sister Marie Mundell, his English teacher at St. Gregory's College in Shawnee. He later knew our late sisters Mary Alice Lawhead and Regina Balster at St. Meinrad's Seminary, and was reacquainted with Sister Marie, who was religious education director at a parish near St. Meinrad's.

Father Grimes is on medical retirement at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, a place he describes as one of "prayer and reflection." Ever generous with his time to our community, he celebrates Sunday Mass with us. Prior assignments have been as associate pastor at St. John's parish in Edmond, and St. Thomas More in Norman.

SELF-PORTRAIT

Date and place of birth:	February 8, 1959; Shawnee, Oklahoma
Date of ordination:	June 4, 1988
Last book I read:	<i>Wine and Bread</i> by Photina Rech, OSB
My best asset:	Storytelling
My worst habit:	I quit smoking!
If I had a different job, I'd be:	A doctor
Behind my back, people....:	Make fun of my Okie accent
Favorite city:	London
The thing I have been blessed with is:	Gift of music, performance and listening
If I could change one thing about myself:	I wish I had hair on top of my head
The best advice I could give:	Appreciate and love each day as a gift from God



Confirmation preparations for four Calumet students were completed in late April. From left to right are retreatants Erin Pena, Facilitator Joyce Arens, Scott Murphy, Christina Schiffman, and Jessica Bailey.



Sister Joanne Yankauskis, Vocation Director for the community, periodically visits college campuses with vocation materials. Here, she attends a youth conference at St. Gregory's University in Shawnee.



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Rest in Peace, Sister Mattie

Sister Mary Frances (Mattie) Swanda died February 22, 1999, following complications of multiple sclerosis. Mattie's sister, brother, nieces, nephews, and numerous friends joined our community in a joyous funeral liturgy on February 26 at the chapel of St. Ann's Home, Mattie's residence the past several years.



Legions of Oklahoma students remember Mattie, the Math Teacher. She was recognized as Outstanding Educator of the Catholic Archdiocese in 1982, recommended by her principal as "extremely competent and wise, with an impact on both students and faculty." Mattie, known by some as Sister Mathias, was witty and ever ready with humorous observations! Throughout her affliction, she grinned often, complained infrequently. When the disease affected her ability to traverse the long hallways of Oklahoma City's Bishop McGuinness High School, she was aided by her "Amigo," a small motorized vehicle. Her teaching assignments were at McGuinness; Monte Cassino, Tulsa; and McAlester Public High School.

She earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the University of Oklahoma and Master of Arts in Mathematics from the University of Notre Dame.

Mattie was an avid sports fan and a determined gardener. She was born February 24, 1932, and entered religious life June 13, 1957.

Rest in peace, dear Sister.



John Paul II Speaks to Benedictine Women, cont. from page 5

word; those who help shape a truly civilized world where anxiety and despair lose their power, and the peace of Easter is experienced in the *tranquillitas ordinis*.

"The Church looks to you with special eagerness as we undertake the new evangelization to which the Holy Spirit is now summoning us at the dawn of the new millennium. There will be no evangelization without the contemplation which is the heart of Benedictine life. The whole Church must learn more of the meaning of "*Ora et labora*", and who will teach us that, if not the sons and daughters of Saint Benedict? The world is longing for the truth which Benedict knew and taught so well; and now, no less than in the past, people are looking to the witness of prayer and work which your communities so joyfully offer....."

"May Benedict, Scholastica, and the great host of Benedictine saints be your inspiration and your strength....."

From the Vatican: 11 September, 1998.

(S) Joannes Paulus II

**Sisters of Benedict
Red Plains Monastery
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Are you a single, Catholic woman, 20 and older?*

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COME JOIN US!

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7:00 p.m. Wednesday to 3:00 p.m. Monday

Contact: Sister Joanne Yankauskis, OSB
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