



# Sisters of Benedict

## NEWSLETTER

Summer 1997, Vol. 8: Issue 2

### *-Benedictine Hospitality-*

Chapter 53 of the **Rule** of St. Benedict sets forth a mandate of hospitality. In the "The Reception of Guests" we find Benedict's exhortation:

*Let all guests be received as Christ Himself, for He will say, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matt.25-35)*

Hospitality has three main attributes: it is a welcoming heart; it is a form of worship that recognizes the mystery of God in others; and it is a monastic virtue prescribed by Benedict in his **Rule**.

Benedict's daughters at Red Plains Monastery receive each guest who comes to its doors and strive to extend the inclusive hospitality the Lord once showed. In our guest rooms at Lucy's

Guest House we welcome those seeking a place of rest and wanting to get time away from the stresses of a fast-paced world. Guests may join the Sisters in the chapel for Community prayer if they desire, and for main meals in our dining room.

If time for private prayer, walks, reflection, or reading is desired, there is opportunity on our grounds and within our spaces.

Hospitality to guests is the hallmark of Western monasticism. And though we never know who may appear at our

doors, we welcome them and receive them as Christ received. We are thankful for their presence.

Red Plains Monastery invites YOU to come, rest awhile and be refreshed in this quiet place.



*Splendid sunrise is a hospitable welcome to the day, as seen from Lucy's Guest House.*

### MELISSA LETTS, JUDITH MARTIN TO MAKE VOWS JULY 11

In a ceremony celebrated on the summer feast of St. Benedict, July 11, Sister Melissa Letts will make temporary vows and Sister Judith Martin will make recommitment vows to the Community at Red Plains Monastery. These vows are vows of stability, conversion and obedience.



*Newest members of the community, Melissa Letts and Judy Martin consider necessary details of their upcoming commitment ceremony.*

Melissa has been in formation to the community for the past year. As a candidate for membership, Melissa has studied the Rule of Benedict under the careful guidance of Sister Eunice Ballmann, novice director. Her permanent vows to the Community can be made after a three year scholastic period.

Recently Melissa and Eunice attended a two week Institute at Beech Grove Monastery, Indianapolis, Indiana, expressly for those Benedictine women in formation across the United States.

## Welcome Home, Sister Marie Mundell



**SISTER MARIE MUNDELL**

There's a happy new resident these days at Red Plains Monastery. Sister Marie Mundell moved home to her community at Piedmont during May. Retired in 1990 from 64 years in the teaching profession, Sister Marie has a life-time of working experiences in Colorado, Louisiana, Oklahoma, California, Indiana, in addition to a one year

stint in Mexico City. Besides her ability as teacher in many of these places, her assignments included principalships and administration of numerous schools. She allows, however that administration held not the "soul" that she enjoyed as a teacher of Latin or English.

Sister Marie's tales of her own education often bring chuckles to the listener. As a ninth grader, she often cut classes at Holy Family School in Tulsa to attend movies. "My dear mother couldn't figure out truancy reports about me from the school, because she was sending me off to class each morning. One morning I boarded the street car and noticed Mama getting on at the other end. I was a little suspicious, but then I decided she was just going shopping. I got off the street car, and walked about 10 blocks to school. When I arrived there, to my surprise, I again spotted

Mama. I made certain she saw me go in the front door, but I headed right back out the back door and went to a movie. Mama was satisfied that I had gone to school however, and reported to the nuns 'My Mary came to school this morning.'"

Sister Marie is fond of cats. Her most recent kitty, a calico named Butterfly, so named because of his particular markings, was left with a friend in Louisiana. She enjoys the dogs, cats, birds and other gifts of God's creation so much a part of Red Plains Monastery. But she especially appreciates just being back home again among her Sisters. "You really live Eucharist," she says, "being so joyful and generous.

With warmth, join in welcoming this spirited and spunky sister, Marie Mundell, home to life on Oklahoma's red plains!



*Time for ice cream now that work is done!  
Blake Chamberlain and Tom Temple find a  
shady spot during Picnic/Swim.*



*Mary Ann Tomlinson, former student of Sister Marie Ballmann,  
center, tours grounds with Kathy Payne.*

# VISITORS PLENTIFUL

In keeping with Benedictine hospitality, the Community of Red Plains has welcomed many visitors to a series of events recently.

The dedication of the Chapel took place on March 21. Benefactors were present for blessing and Eucharist followed by a dinner in the Monastery dining room. Archbishop Eusebius Beltran celebrated the dedication Mass with liturgical music provided by contractor Tom Temple and carpenter Bob Powers.

Volunteers were honored at an Open House on April 20, and two public Open Houses were held in mid May. Dozens of loyal friends attended.

The Sisters recognized the labors of those involved in construction by hosting a Picnic/Swim in early June. The workers and their families enjoyed an outdoor cook-out around the swimming pool.

And, on the 4th of July, the Sisters will honor Merle and Joyce Arens and their family at a cook-out, in thanksgiving for their labors to the Community.



*Sister Eunice Ballmann, left, and guests Jan Clark and Angela Meier re-acquaint at May Open House.*



*Justin Powers, son of carpenter Bob Powers, savors a brownie at the Picnic/Swim held for the artisans and craftsmen who built our chapel and other Monastery additions.*



*Traveling the farthest distance to an Open House were Chicagoans Joanne and Jim Futrell, left. It was occasion for happy reunion with Jim's sister, Sister Jan Futrell, right.*

## ***FAX FACTS***

*Our facsimile number is (405) 373-3392. If your FAX machine has a handset, please transmit to us by choosing the GREEN/START key, rather than by using the handset option.*

# The Inviting Grounds of Our Monastery

One of our neighbors once commented that we had transformed our property into a park. While we didn't set about with that as a primary goal, it is true that the 21.5 acres surrounding our home are beautiful and park-like, adding a proper atmosphere to our place of hospitality. Even the white rail fence which bisects rolling hills between our groomed lawn and a field of sunflowers adds to the pastoral feeling of our grounds.

Many varieties of trees seem to flourish everywhere—our lake is virtually surrounded by trees—oak, sycamore, willow, cottonwood. The spacious frontage of the yard at Lucy's Guest House is replete with dozens of pines, sycamores, maples. Several apple and pear trees provide abundant fruit for the Community in summer and fall.

With trees come birds! A favorite pastime of the Sisters and guests is bird-watching. We have nesting birds in the trees and in birdhouses and around feeders that are posted around our grounds. While no one has taken official count of the variety of birds sighted here, we regularly see bluebirds (yes, the real ones with bright blue feathers and orange breasts), cardinals, finches, owls, larks, dove. Blue herons, white her-

ons and red-winged blackbirds are but three water birds which thrive around the lake.

Our flowers are both cultivated and "wild" varieties, perennials and annuals. Sunflowers are but one of the assortment of the untended which abound. A new spot aimed

of Sister Gertrude Nagel and Sister Marie Luecke. "Volunteer" bulbs delight us in the spring, day lilies remain faithful in the summer, chrysanthemums brighten autumn days, while a host of jaunty blossoms are tenderly cared for throughout the growing season.



*A late spring freeze spared our dogwood.*

at providing year 'round color has been opened and carefully tilled by our friend, Stephanie Emrick. Near our dining room and chapel are a rock garden and several framed beds, homes to petunias, roses, marigolds, clematis, hostas and begonias which bloom under the "tutelage"

At Lucy's Guest House, Sister Benedicta Boland is proud of long stalked holly-hock, while Sister Roberta Schachle tends to alyssum, geranium, and pots of summer bloomers. At our third and newest house this spring, we enjoyed long-established lilacs and "surprising discoveries" which were welcomed and nurtured as they emerged, having been planted by previous homeowners. Sister Miriam Schnoebelen is certain, however, of her grown-from-seed zinnias and cosmos as well as herbs such as lavender, cilantro and basil.

The grounds surrounding our three homes and the additional acreage are regularly maintained by our friends, the Merle

Arens family. They are faithful mowers and trimmers and snippers and groomers of the acreage, and they keep it in fine shape year-round, though we ourselves are apt to climb upon a riding mower to lend the Arens a hand!

During April we opened an enlarged garden plot. In its first season, it is located right upon the scene of an old pony barn. There rhubarb, squash, beans and other marvelous things to eat will be flourishing by mid-summer. Perhaps there will be juicy melons and succulent tomatoes by the time you arrive!

Sound inviting? Our guests are free to meander around our spaces just about anywhere they like to go. We have benches and gliders offering respite for persons desiring solitude, or with a friend, conversation. Fishing is an activity that many enjoy in our lake while others spread a blanket near the water's edge and relax with a good book. In summer, some chose recreation in or near our captivating swimming pool. Several members of the Community enjoy a dip from time to time and our guests find the water soothing, refreshing...and wonderfully invigorating!

Always nearby is our beautiful chapel, accessible from the out of doors. Our guests may simply ring our doorbell and enter the chapel. The chapel's circular design is contemporary in feeling, a style unifying it to the beauty of nature which surrounds its circumference. Through its large windows, one has a commanding view of the lake, the trees, the flora and fauna. The

chapel is fundamental to the peace found here, and our grounds ever lend harmony to its essence. Indeed, there is hospitality at Red Plains with our grounds being a significant portion of the welcome shown here to you, our guests.



*Nature's gifts are bounteous. The corner at Lucy's Guest House teems with such bounty.*

## ANNUAL GARAGE SALE SET FOR SEPTEMBER 27

As you clear out, clean out and simplify your life, please remember the Sisters' annual garage sale.

We collect every usable item except clothing. For pick-up, storage information, and additional details, please contact us 373-4565.

## RETREATS—A PRIMARY MINISTRY

### *What is a retreat?*

A retreat is an opportunity for a person to pay more attention to another, with an intention of deepening a mutual relationship. Spouses need retreat times alone or with each other, friends seek ways and means for such communication. And God invites persons to go within self to find God there, present and loving.

Knowing this hunger to be alive within human hearts, the Sisters of Benedict offer various kinds of retreats. We offer a quiet, simple and beautiful space where women and men can meet and speak to God, can let self be found and touched by God.

### *What is a directed retreat?*

A time with God in prayer and reflection combines with opportunity for individual daily dialogue with a director. Stepping aside from a busy schedule, one can search into life to discover a deeper level of relationship with God. For this to happen the practice of silence is an important basis for the solitude need for deep encounter with God.

A daily meeting with a director for 45 to 60 minutes helps one discover the movements of the Spirit in oneself. Overall, this quiet time increases awareness of God's presence in all aspects of life and draws one to respond even more generously. Experiencing Jesus's words, "the kingdom of God is within you," the retreatant can more readily fulfill God's daily desire and directive for us to "go forth to proclaim the Good News."

#### Schedule:

Two to ten day retreats upon request, scheduled as needed and available.

#### Directors:

Several are available.

#### Cost:

\$50 per day. Non-refundable deposit of \$5 per day.

### *What is a private retreat?*

A person can enter into a quiet time,

enjoying the monastery space as a way to relax and to meet God. Conferences are not scheduled.

#### Schedule:

Two to ten day retreats upon request, scheduled as needed and available.

#### Cost:

\$25 per day. Non-refundable deposit of \$5 per day.

### *What is a day of solitude?*

By stepping aside for a few hours from life's busy activities into the wonders of God's love, one is refreshed and better able to center relationships and work in God.

Supplying one's own food, a person can choose to have a conference or not.

#### Schedule:

As needed and available.

#### Cost:

\$10 per day, \$40 with conference. Non-refundable deposit of \$5 per day.



*None there is like the white rose.*

### *What is "Retreat in Daily Life?"*

From October through April, this "at home" experience of the retreat involves giving daily time to prayer, a weekly prayer group meeting and twice monthly individual sessions with a spiritual guide.

#### Schedule:

Apply in summer.

#### Cost:

\$60 per month.

### *What else do I need to know?*

#### Suggested Donations

Since the Benedictine tradition has always been hospitality to all, we do not want anyone turned away for lack of funds. Those who have been blessed with more may wish to contribute more, and those who have less may give less "so that all may be at peace in the house of God." (Rule of Benedict)

#### Arrival and Departure Time

Please plan to arrive between 7 and 8 p.m. on the retreat's first day, and plan a departure time by 4 p.m. on the closing day.

#### Prayer and Mass

The community of Sisters invites anyone wishing to do so to join in the monastic hours of prayer each day. On Monday through Friday we gather at 7:30 a.m. and again at 5:15 p.m. If you desire to do so, on Wednesdays we attend 7:30 a.m. Mass at the nearby Carmelite chapel, departing at 7 a.m.

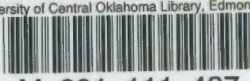
#### Location and Facilities

Our facilities are located northwest of Oklahoma City, an approximate 30 minute drive. One turns right (north) off the Northwest Expressway (St. Hwy 3) onto Richland Road and takes "the first turn on the right" to enter a long driveway to our 21 acres.

Facilities include a chapel, meeting space, a handcrafted gift shop, an outdoor pool and private bedrooms.

Guests are welcome to share the day's main meal with the Sisters, while breakfast and lunch items are kept in Lucy's Guest House kitchen. Please make known any special dietary restrictions.

**For reservations:  
PLEASE CALL  
(405) 373-4565**



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## ***“DECLARATION OF LIFE” ACCEPTED***

*The Benedictine charism of Peace challenges us to witness to the Gospel values. Recognizing this call to be peacemakers, Benedictines for Peace gives common voice to a vision of peace as we confront the violence of our day with the love of Christ that it might be transformed by our prayers and action.* **Benedictines for Peace Mission Statement**

Early this year, the National Office of Benedictines for Peace asked that we address capital punishment. We were offered, as one of our actions on this issue, a document titled “Declaration of Life.” This document is a statement of moral conviction. The one who signs it declares opposition to the death penalty and requests that, in the event the signatory party dies as a result of a violent crime, the person(s) found guilty of this homicide not be subject to the death penalty under any circumstances.

We took this Declaration of Life to personal prayer and discernment with the promise that we would provide a ritual within a prayer service for those who were ready to sign during our June meeting.

All members of the Community signed the Declaration of Life. It just happened to have been scheduled on the very day the jury was convened for the sentencing phase of the McVeigh trial. We experienced some meaningful reflections because of this timing and because our monastery is in the locale of the bombing incident.

## ***Federation Dialogue***

Benedictine women who are members of the Federation of Saint Scholastica have begun deliberations on the subject of the celebration of the eucharist in women’s monastic communities. Sisters Marie Ballmann, Benedicta Boland and Miriam Schnoebelen represented Red Plains Monastery in these proceedings in Canyon City, Colorado, June 19-26.

## ***Kathleen Norris: An Author’s View of Benedictine Hospitality***

**K**athleen Norris, a Presbyterian woman, became fascinated with Benedictine spirituality and wrote her initial impressions of it in **Dakota: A Spiritual Geography**. Seeking an immersion experience in Benedictine ways, she entered a Benedictine monastery in Minnesota for one year as an oblate. Her book, **Cloister Walk**, is a record of that time and in it she gives the reader an understanding of monastic values:

*For a long time I had no idea why I was so attracted to the Benedictines, why I keep returning to their choirs. Now I believe it’s because of the hospitality so vast that it invites all present into communal lectio, a hospitality so vast that it invites all present into communion with the text being read. I encounter there not a God who rejects me because I can’t pass some dogmatic litmus test, but one who invites me to become part of a process, the continuing revelation of holy word. (p. 217)*

Norris’ readers are given a tangible understanding of Benedictine spirituality in her books. Her writing is crisp and honest, with significant regard for detail.

**Dakota** is published by Houghton-Mifflin; **Cloister Walk** is published by Putnam.

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## *A Friend Writes:*

*"The faith, hope, love and hospitality of the Benedictine Community is a wonderful gift to Oklahoma and our world."*

"I have been truly blessed and enriched in my spiritual life through the Sisters of Benedict being faithful to their response to the Lord.

My response to God's calling to me is returning to the home and beauty of the country of Red Plains Monastery close to Piedmont where I had some very deep and life changing experiences. I encountered this through my commitment to the Retreat in Daily Life and my spiritual direction visits with Sister Benedicta and with my association with all of the Sisters there.

Having a place of retreat to get a conscious connection with my faithful and eternal God, loving and caring Jesus and trusted Holy Spirit is peace of mind, joy and happiness for me in my busy and at times, overwhelming, world.

Today, I know who and where to come to for what I need and have learned and believe God desires for me in my life to know Him better, love Him more deeply and serve Him faithfully—for a balance in my life and in my relationship with others.

The faith, hope, love and hospitality of the Benedictine Community is a wonderful gift to Oklahoma and our world."

*In peace and love, and Jesus' name,  
Sandy Twark*

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## *Sisters of Benedict*

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