



Sisters of Benedict

NEWSLETTER

Spring 1998, Vol. 9: Issue 1

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN BENEFITS OUR MONASTERY

The recent Capital Campaign benefitted our monastery in significant ways. Following are descriptions of the changes and modifications made to our monastic home because of the Campaign.

Our monastery is comprised of three homes located adjacent to one another on 21.5 acres of property near Piedmont, Okla, which is west of Oklahoma City "about 15 minutes." It is the residence for twelve of the fifteen members of our community; it is where we care for our monastic family. Our family life is similar to that of any other family--with daily activities of cooking, shopping, housecleaning, gardening, and, of course, enjoying the company of each other and especially our guests.

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Sister Eunice Celebrates Golden Jubilee

Sister Eunice Ballmann celebrated her 50th year as a Sister of Benedict in early January with parishioners of St. John the Baptist, Edmond, Okla. She was honored at a Mass attended by many parish friends as well as her Benedictine sisters. The Mass was followed by a reception which featured her

favorite
G l e n n
M i l l e r
tunes!

As religious education director of the parish, Eunice bespeaks humility about her work, but

the parishioners and staff are ever enthusiastic about her many contributions. Their appreciation gift given to her at the celebration was a trip to the Holy Land and Rome in May.

"We're going to all the important places," Eunice was eager to say. "Our tour guide will be Father Kevin Ratterman. The other Sister Ballmann, my own sister, Marie, will be my companion. We'll visit Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee, Cana-- even Mt. Carmel." Following time in these sacred places, the tour will travel to Rome where they will have an audience with Pope John Paul VI, tour St. Peter's Square, the Sistine Chapel, and other points of interest in Vatican City.

In preparation for the trip, Eunice is avidly reading a book of historical and geographical information to bone up on "even the terrain" of many holy places they'll visit.

Reflecting on her life as member of the Benedictine community, Eunice has found satisfaction being a teacher of young children. As a child herself, learning to read was very difficult. "My mother was diligent in helping me learn," she said, "patient in the repetition necessary for me to learn. Later in my life, I discovered that during times of change in my community, I tried to remain 'constant' throughout the change, and have



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ADDRESSING THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

By Sister Jan Futrell, O.S.B.

A fundamental ministry of our community is *Retreat in Daily Life*. Sisters Marie Luecke and Benedicta Boland pose these questions to our readers:



*Sister Marie Luecke
has a grin for everyone.*

- 1. Are you taking time to grow spiritually?**
- 2. Do you find it difficult to take time away for a retreat--especially one of some duration?**
- 3. Do you want to experience God as a more integral part of your on-going life experience?**

Retreat in Daily Life is a way for busy people to grow more deeply in their relationship with and commitment to Jesus Christ. It is based on the seven-month experience of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. This form of retreat involves giving personal time each day to prayer, committing to the method of the *Exercises* and its entry into the Gospel.

“It will again be offered October 1998 to May 1999 under the guidance of Sister Benedicta, myself, and a number of other trained prayer guides,” according to Sister Marie. “Some retreatants meet at the monastery near Piedmont, Okla, while other groups meet in various areas of Oklahoma City, and also at Enid, Guthrie and Moore. Groups of eight to ten persons will be led through 30 weekly group sessions. Each person will have a personal spiritual guide who leads them through 15 one-to-one individual meetings every other week,” she continued.

A \$60 monthly fee is suggested as compensation for participation in all group meetings and individual sessions. Since the Benedictine tradition has always been hospitality to all, no one is turned away for lack of funds. Scholarships are available. Sister Marie noted “St. Benedict’s *Rule* is very clear: ‘Those who have been blessed with more may wish to contribute more, and those who have less, give less, so that all may at peace in the house of God.’ ”

In the past 15 years, over 450 persons of varying denominations have benefitted from this enriching prayer experience. Registration occurs in the summer months, with a period of personal preparation for a few weeks before the actual beginning in early October. Other kinds of retreats are also available at the Piedmont retreat house.

Tools For Vocation Discernment

by Sister Joanne Yankauskis, O.S.B.



The Way of Benedict: Journey of Faith, Path of Love is a newly released video depicting Benedictine life in twelve monasteries located in the “heartland” of the U.S. The video is available through the respective vocations director of each community for individuals or groups seeking information about monastic life.

The primary focus of the video is to give insight into Benedictine life as lived today. Comments from members of the various communities describe different aspects of Benedictine life. Alternating with their comments, the video features descriptive scenes at the various monasteries, explanations of portions of St. Benedict’s *Rule*, and audio recordings of Benedictines at worship.

Sister Benedicta Boland is one of the featured spokeswomen for Red Plains Monastery on the video. Her commentary concerns the prevalent element of hospitality mandated by the *Rule* for all Benedictine communities. There are, in addition, several “still” photographs of life at Red Plains Monastery.

If you would like to view the video or obtain a list of the participating monasteries, please contact Red Plains Monastery’s Vocation Director Sister Joanne Yankauskis at (405) 373-4565, or osbokc@ionet.net or 728 Richland Road SW, Piedmont, OK 73078.



Red Plains Monastery also is featured with other Benedictine communities in a double-paged advertisement in the 1998 edition of the Religious Vocation Discernment Handbook, *VISION*, published annually by the national Religious Vocation Conference, Chicago, Illinois.

P O N D E R T - H - E P O S S I B I L I T I E S

Have you considered a vocation to religious life? If you are a single woman, Catholic, and twenty years of age or older, we invite you to consider life as a Sister of Benedict. You may choose to “COME AND SEE” at our Monastery for a day, a weekend, or even longer.

“BETHANY NIGHT” is for women interested in knowing more about monastic life. It is held monthly on the third Wednesday evening from 5:00 to 8:15 p.m. Vespers is celebrated at 5:15 p.m., followed by supper and conversation. The evening concludes with night prayer beginning at 8:00 p.m. Please call (405) 373-4565 if you would like to participate in either activity.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN B E N E F I T S

OUR MONASTERY *continued*

We gather for common prayer four times daily in our newly completed chapel, or *oratory*, its name in the Benedictine tradition. Classic in its simplicity, it was designed and crafted by long-time friend of the community, Tom Temple. We can easily contemplate the glory of God as we behold Nature's grandeur through the spacious windows of the chapel. The chapel has an eastern exposure overlooking our lake and is attached to the southernmost wing of the main monastery house. The names of our benefactors were sealed inside the vertical support beam of the central cross, and the name of each member of our community is etched into the cement footing of the chapel's perimeter. Visitors are always wel-

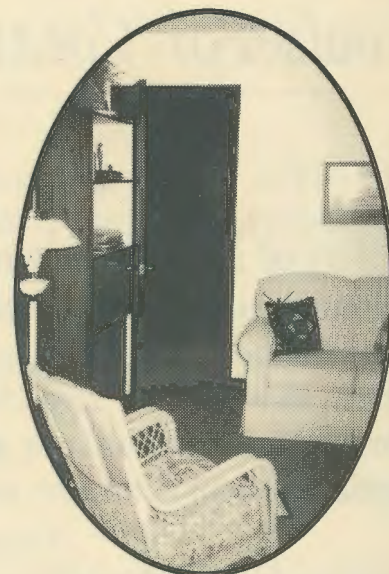
come to join us in community prayer.

We recreate and relax in the main house. Five sisters live there, and it is in our large community room where the entire community comes together to read, assemble jigsaw puzzles, work on crafts projects, enjoy television or movies. We share meals, celebrate birthdays, and host receptions in our lovely new dining room which has been enlarged to accommodate 18 persons. Our expanded kitchen has many amenities: two dishwashers, two double sinks, the ever-popular microwave, a double oven and a large pantry equipped with "lazy susans."

The original cramped kitchen has now become a most pleasing room to prepare food for ourselves and our guests.

Lucy's Guest House is the second home in our monastery complex. Frequently through the year it serves as temporary "home" to the dozens of retreatants who seek quiet respite in their daily lives.

One of the new retreatants rooms



in Lucy's Guest House

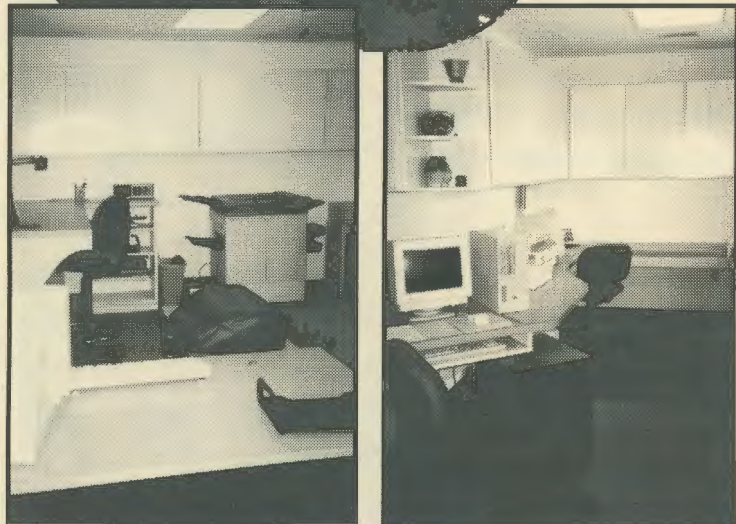
During one phase of renovation we were able to convert its garage into two small bedrooms and an adjoining bathroom. Lucy's is the setting for spiritual direction for persons who come to us seeking our guidance and counsel, and is available for small groups to use for workshops or retreats. Two sisters utilize Lucy's as their personal living space.

Our other home, known as "The Third Place," has likewise been renovated. We converted a playroom into two bedrooms, added a handicapped accessible bath, and enlarged the library by creating shelf and storage space. Five community members live at the Third Place. The Art Barn is located nearby and houses a potter's wheel and two kilns. The Art Barn has also received some TLC-- it has been heated, air-conditioned, and re-roofed.

Because the splendid response to the Campaign, we were also able to convert two thirds of our garage at the main house into the community business/development office. The office is outfitted with standard business equipment and furnishings, and we are delighted to find e-mail



Old office



Two views of new business/development office

from our friends across the nation from time to time as we utilize yet another aspect of our computer system! Many of the storage spaces in the office and in the adjacent pantry facility were created by using recycled cabinet doors and materials salvaged from renovated portions of each of our three monastic homes.

Since we began these projects, our household has increased by three persons. Two new members, Sisters Melissa Letts and Judith Martin, have become a part of our Benedictine journey. Sister Marie Mundell returned home from New Orleans last year, bringing the number of Sisters at the monastery to twelve.

We are grateful indeed to our God for providing us with our monastic home and for seeing us through the Capital Campaign which resulted in so very many improvements, changes and construction at Red Plains Monastery.



New kitchen spaces to replace the old

The accompanying photographs illustrate many, but not all, of the improvements which were made to our monastery as a result of the Capital Campaign. Any reader of these pages is welcome to visit our monastery by simply calling and arranging a mutually convenient time. Our telephone number is 405 373-4565.

Sister Eunice Celebrates Golden Jubilee continued from page 1

taken pains to remember the needs of the children I taught. I tried to remain patient in their attempts to learn to read, remembering my own youthful struggle."

Her long years of ministry were spent as a primary teacher in Tulsa schools and parishes--Church of Madalene, St. Catherine's, St. Francis, and Monte Cassino. She also spent 6 years at St. John's in McAlester, and her longest stint was 18 years at John Carroll School in Oklahoma City.

To persons considering religious life today, Eunice suggests a mindfulness in helping others. "In religious life, one can find support, encouragement and help that is needed. Living within a group, one will find that the community is interested in seeing that one's gifts are used."

"Community life for me is very important. Learning to live with strangers of various ages helps you learn who you are. It is growth in Benedictine spirituality, for you never come to a stopping place. There is always more to learn about your relationship with God and others. Community life provides many opportunities for this growth," Eunice continued. "We learn through the give and take of the common life to grow into the person God wants us to be. We recognize and call forth the variety of gifts each one has and are asked to share with one another and others. This gives the strength, support and interdependence needed or required for shared activities in meals, work, ministry and especially in common prayer, liturgies and celebrations."

Eunice has served her community as formation director for many years. "At my age, my good health has served me well. I have tried to be flexible, though sometimes I have not been as spontaneous as some, but I have grown, seeking new horizons, learning more about prayer and contemplation, and seeking the will of God in my life." She added wistfully, "there is always something new to embrace."

- SISTERS ON THE MOVE -

Sister Marie Ballmann, prioress of Red Plains Monastery, was among 55 Benedictine leaders of the *Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses* recently convened by President Judith Ann Heble at Monastery of the Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana.

The workshop, which drew Benedictines from the U.S., Canada, Bahamas and Australia, took the theme "Sacramental Life of Monastic Communities and the Liturgical Roles of the Prioress."

Nathan Mitchell of the University of Notre Dame spoke to the prioresses on the Rule of St. Benedict as it relates to the Benedictine tradition of ritual and the prioress' role in the monastic rites of her community.

Sister Joanne Yankauskis attended the regional meeting of the *National Religious Vocation Conference* at Lake Dallas on February 9-12. The theme of the conference was "Engaging Young Adults."

On March 3-5, Sister Joanne was present for the *Heartland Monastic Vocation Directors Conference* at Assumption Monastery in Ava, Missouri. Women and men monastics present at the session supported one another as they discussed current activities and challenges of vocation ministry.

The Prioress's Message by Sister Marie Ballmann, O.S.B.

Gratitude is the predominant feeling in our hearts as we Sisters of Benedict, Red Plains Monastery, near completion of a \$530,000 Capital Campaign. You, our cherished friends, have been part of a thirty-year journey in Western Oklahoma, and we are grateful for our past history with you, for our present time with you, and for our future with its special promise of God's grace and goodness to us through you.

We began this Campaign two and one half years ago. To date, we have received gifts, pledges and grants totaling \$506,900. Of that amount \$239,064 was in 1328 gifts and pledges, and \$78,000 was received in two grants. Our community itself contributed another \$189,836 from sale of our urban property, individual salaries, and personal gifts.

The largest pledge in the Campaign was \$60,000, generously donated by Sister Adorers of the Blood of Christ, of Wichita, Kansas. We have enjoyed their friendships and support and have worked side by side with their members in ministry in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. \$40,000 of their three year pledge has already been received. There are only five other individual pledges representing \$3,100 outstanding.

We are establishing an endowment fund to provide for future maintenance needs on our properties, with an initial contribution from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City forming the basis of that fund. Though we deeply appreciate the services that many volunteer friends render, we are realistic about the expenses related to maintenance, ever mindful of a tenet of St.

Benedict that we remain faithful stewards of the gifts that we have been given.

We are so very near our goal because of your help, and also the assistance from many other sources, as well as the competent and creative labors of Barbara Nichols, who began working as our part-time Development Director in 1995. Because of incredible generosity, we were able to complete each and every project during five phases of construction/renovation. (Please see related article on page 1 for details of the projects.)

We are appreciative of the dedicated hard work of our Sisters and are especially grateful for our friends, family members, volunteers, co-members and donors who enabled all of this to be possible. We are thankful, we are thankful!



PRAYER OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE

Edward Hayes

BLESSED ARE YOU, LORD OUR GOD,
WHO DAILY GIFTS US WITH TIME.

You who are Lord and Creator of Space and Time
yet who lives beyond them,
we praise You and honor You
for the gift of minutes, hours, days and years.

Each second of life that You give
is precious and profound.

We pause now so as not to take these gifts for granted,
so that we may remember in a holy way
that all time is holy,
a gift which calls forth
songs of gratitude from our hearts.

We pause to gratefully remember
those holy persons of ages past
who call us to measure time in a godly way.

We call to mind:
Noah, counting forty days and nights
Job, waiting with longing in prayerful patience,
and Mary of Nazareth, numbering her nine months.

For those persons today who call us
to take time for work and play,
to make time for love and praise,
to create time for rest
and the leisure necessary for creation,
we lift up our hearts in thanks.

We who live in the present
recall the past
so that by our remembrance
we might more fittingly prepare
for the future time.

We stand in the middle of a trinity of time,
past, present and future,
and do bless You, Source and Sustainer of All Seasons.

Blessed are You, Lord our God,
who daily gifts us with time.

Amen +

Sisters of Benedict

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You are cordially invited....

SPRING TASTING LUNCHEON *and STYLE SHOW by Tres Chic*

Benefitting the Sisters of Benedict

Wednesday, April 29, 11:30 a.m.

in the home of

Governor and Mrs. David Walters, 6219 Riviera Drive, Oklahoma City*

Reservations by Friday, April 24 ~ Patty Baker (405) 755-2180

\$15.00 Luncheon

Silent Auction

* Riviera Drive is 1 block south of N.W. 63rd Street, and runs east from Villa.

Complimentary Shuttle Service will be provided from All Souls Episcopal Church both to, and from, the Walters' home. All Souls is located at N.W. 63rd Street and North Pennsylvania.

Please use the east parking lot of the church.

The shuttle will run continuously from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m.

