



# *Sisters of Benedict*

## NEWSLETTER

Winter 1997, Vol. 8: Issue 3

All-inclusive God, the Christmas mystery  
Reveals your fondness for the world:  
Precious, precarious, common, unique.  
The farthest galaxies expand by your enfleshment.  
Restore our awe for oceans, earth and life.  
Bend our eyes to celebrate the small.  
Help us embrace our creaturehood with you  
Before we stretch too soon for the divine.

Gentle God, the Christmas mystery  
Delights the restless spirits:  
Pilgrim couple, shepherd seekers, wandering wise—  
Hosts and guests of a homeless God.  
Relieve the drifters of our dismembered world:  
Evicted children of our violence and war,  
Gaunt prophets for a world of refugees.  
Help us surrender what you give in trust.

Persistent God, the Christmas mystery  
Disturbs complacent smugness, righteous power,  
Pretentious virtue and sterile expertise.  
You risk transcendence to reclaim a world.  
Affirming weakness as a mode of strength,  
Choosing service to commune with need,  
Translating GODness into lower case.  
Open our hearts to welcome all you bring.

*Christmas Greetings*  
**SISTERS OF BENEDICT**  
**Red Plains Monastery**

Jim Dinn  
PAX CHRISTI USA  
532 West Eighth Street, Erie, PA 16502  
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## COMMUNITY BIDS FINAL FAREWELL TO DEAREST GRACE



*Grace Gavin*

Grace Gavin, beloved and esteemed friend and co-member of the Sisters of Benedict, died November 21 in the home of her long-time friend and caregiver, Marilynn Burget. Her wake service was held in the Oratory at Red Plains Monastery, and was attended by dozens of Oklahoma friends, co-workers and the Sisters of the Monastery. Her funeral was held at Our Lady's Cathedral, Oklahoma City.

Warm tributes and specific remembrances were shared by those in attendance at the wake. Friends recalled that Grace was "treasured," "dear," "resolute," and "always kept us on track." Former co-worker Pearl Fidel of Veterans Hospital in Oklahoma City where Grace worked for 15 years, observed that Grace and Marilynn were "role models for friendship" and that her own years spent working with Grace were ever joyful and fruitful, and noted that many of Grace's ideas were innovative, ultimately becoming models for service to the patients at the VA. Many of the programs she instituted are incorporated there today.

Sister Jan Futrell shared an extraordinary account of personal

situations she encountered attempting a rapid trip home from Chicago for Grace's wake and funeral during the pre-Thanksgiving travel rush. Ultimately, Jan was astonished that the captain of her flight's aircraft, Stephen Grace, dubbed "Amazing Grace" by his co-workers, was introduced to the passengers with the very epithet fondly used by persons describing Grace throughout her life.

Marilynn's 25 year friendship with Grace is replete with captivating "Grace-Tales." What made Grace so loving to all persons she encountered? Without hesitation, Marilynn noted, "She was just born that way," I believe, "but being hospitalized three years of her childhood in her home state of New York may've contributed and influenced the rest of her life." Apparently Grace was known then by the Sisters within the hospital as "Happy," instructing other ailing children from her hospital bed. Smiling, Marilynn recalled how Grace forever entangled her in major and worthwhile projects--seemingly small at the outset, but always terrifically involved as they progressed!

Grace was described with a gracious tribute in the homily delivered at her Funeral Mass by Father Thomas Boyer, rector of the Cathedral. Father Boyer characterized Grace as a woman who lived "in covenant--a covenant of holiness within the church, as a member of the Body of Christ. All of us are more holy for having shared a bit of this life with a martyr, an ascetic, a contemplative, a servant, and a sister. She treated us all like brothers and sisters, and now we may be confident that she has heard the words: 'Come, you have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.' "

As a young woman Grace served for many years as the Executive Secretary of the Catholic Union of the Sick in America, New York City. In that capacity she was responsible for the overall operation of a national organization of physically handicapped, a position which included publication of a house organ as well as general development and expansion activities. Upon relocation to the Midwest, Grace attended the University of Oklahoma where she earned a BA and MSW, Phi Beta Kappa.

She became a loyal and trusted friend of the Sisters of Benedict and initiated "development," the process of fundraising, as requisite parcel of the Community's life. As she spearheaded many projects, her alliance with the Sisters enabled the establishment of Benedictine Spirituality Center and the purchase of Monastery homes and property. Likewise, she instituted this newsletter and was a stalwart friend and volunteer of the Sisters through much of our 28 year history as a foundation of St. Joseph's Convent, Tulsa.

An abiding gift, however, was Grace's keen spirituality, nurtured in its direction by the Sisters themselves. She became a co-member of the Community in 1988 and lived her daily life in close alliance with the Rule of St. Benedict. As a spiritual director trained by the Sisters with several others, she served a number of persons in that capacity.

Grace's family members include her two nieces and two nephews, Kevin, Rad, and Maureen Daily of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Deidre Moldrick of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

*Requiem in pacem, Grace. We love you!*

## FROM ROME.....TO RED PLAINS OF OKLAHOMA....

Abbot Marcel Rooney, Abbot Primate of the world-wide Benedictine Order, visited in Oklahoma from Rome this fall and joined the Sisters of Benedict at Red Plains Monastery for mid-day prayer and lunch on October 1.

He told of some of his experiences during his first year as Abbot Primate and shared with the Sisters some of the activities taking place within the Benedictine Order. The community enjoyed his good humor along with his evident caring spirit. "We felt honored by his presence," said Sister Benedicta. Many of the Sisters have known and appreciated Abbot Marcel's sister, Sister Kevin Rooney, A.S.C., of Wichita, Kansas, who spent several years in Oklahoma City in spiritual life work.

The Abbot Primate is the titular head of the Benedictine Order and the symbol of unity and cooperation among the various abbeys of the Order. There have been only seven previous Abbots Primate since the office was established in 1893. Abbot Marcel is the third American to hold this office. He carries out his responsibilities from the headquarters of the Benedictine Order at the Abbey of Sant' Anselmo in Rome, where he serves as head of the Benedictine University. Until his election as Abbot Primate one year ago, Abbot Marcel was the Abbot of Conception Abbey, Conception, Missouri. Previously, he was a professor of liturgy in the

Pontifical Liturgical Institute and Prior of the Benedictine community at Sant' Anselmo. He has lectured throughout the United States, England, and other European countries, and has also published works in various scholarly journals.

The first American Abbot Primate, Father Rembert Weakland, O.S.B., now archbishop of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, also visited and befriended the Sisters of Benedict in the earliest years of their becoming a new foundation, especially during 1969-1972.



*Sisters Gertrude, Benedicta, Roberta, Jan, Melissa, Marie Ballmann and Marie Mundell, left to right, in company with Abbot Marcel Rooney during his October trip.*

## ANNUAL APPEAL NOW IN PROGRESS

Once a year, we ask for your support of our ministries through gifts that can benefit the charitable works of the Benedictine Sisters. Last month we mailed our Annual Appeal letter to you. We thank you for your many gifts already received in our office. If you have yet to mail a donation, please consider us as you contemplate making charitable year-end gifts.

Giving gifts of appreciated securities, of cash, of real estate, in Charitable Remainder Trusts or other tangible personal property can benefit you and your tax-plan. For further information, please contact our Development Office at (405) 373-3392.

May God bless you for the joy you extend to others. May God's love move each of us to love and care for one another.

## *Sister, Sister, how does your garden grow?*

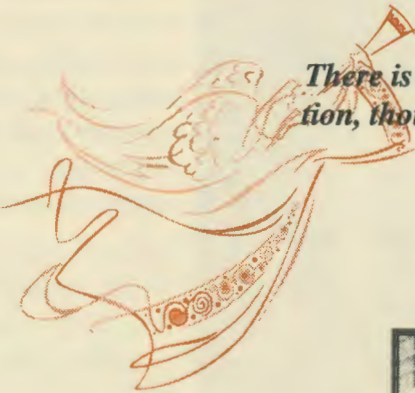
Growing vines of gourds was one of Sister Melissa Letts gardening projects this past summer. Melissa planted many seeds along the fence south of the Monastery and dutifully watched, watered, and weeded the gourd plants from March until November. She harvested a small crop, and subsequently built a drying rack for the gourds in the Sisters' Art-Barn, where she expects them to dry for several more months. At that time, Melissa will carve dippers from them for use in Indian purification rituals within a

"sweat lodge." Melissa is 1/8th Creek Indian and is a periodic participant in such rites.

Another gardening venture for Melissa, who professed temporary vows to the community in July, was the establishment of sage and camomile plants in an herb garden. As summer came to a close, she dried leaves of the camomile, and produced tea which "I am pleased," she reports, "tastes just like it is supposed to!" The sage may be used in the Indian rites, and some

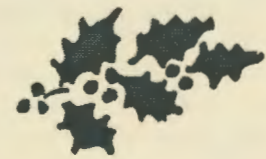
may find its way into Community stew-pots as well.

Melissa hopes to expand the herb garden next growing season. It is an historic Benedictine tradition to grow and use herbs from the Community herb garden. Medieval monasteries were the source of herbs used as pharmaceutical necessities before the advent of modern medicine. Today herbs are utilized primarily, of course, in cooking and as medicinal remedies for many human ailments.



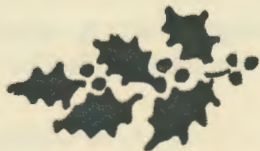
*There is not only the contemplation of His love in the work of redemption, though that is wonderful, but the end for which we are redeemed: a communion with Him.*

*-Julian of Norwich-*



*Through the unspeakable grace and help of God I have become myself.*

*-Soren Kiekegaard-*



*Two members and two co-members of the Community recently received Certificates of Spiritual Direction in a ceremony at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center. Sister Marie Ballmann, OSB, Sister Judith Martin, OSB, Joyce Arens, and Nadine Siler were among eleven recipients who completed the five year training program.*

*Pictured standing left to right are Sister Jan Futrell, OSB, Director, Caroline Hopper, Joyce Arens, Carolyn Lyon, Betty Cizek, Mary Recla, Sister Joanne Yankauskis, OSB, Archdiocesan Office of Spiritual Life, Nadine Siler, Sister Judith Martin, OSB, Sister Mary Maloney, SP, and Archbishop Eusebius Beltran.*

*Seated, from left are Sister Marie Ballmann, OSB, Charlotte Descher and Rita Galier.*



*Sister Joanne Yankauskis has warm greetings for two friends who participated at the "Come and See" Day for women considering religious life. Periodically, the Community hosts Monastic live-in experiences for such individuals. The next weekend is scheduled for March 20-22, 1998. For more information, please contact Sister Joanne at (405) 373-4565.*



*Red Plains welcomes guests from all corners of the world. Recently, Father Rudy, a Jesuit priest, traveled from Indonesia to inquire about spiritual direction as presented by the Sisters of Benedict. He is pictured here with Sister Jan Futrell, one of the Sisters' spiritual directors.*

## ... COMMUNICATION ...

There are several ways of reaching the Sisters of Benedict at Red Plains Monastery.

- \* We now have an e-mail address: **osbokc@ionet.net**  
*Please be sure to include the name of the individual sister to whom you are writing.*
- \* A new web-page on the Internet, designed by Sister Joanne Yankauskis, O.S.B., director of vocations, and Sister Diana Seago, O.S.B., will be on-line as this publication reaches you. Information about monastery activities is available, and there is a guest book page as well.

The site is **<http://www.geocities.com/wellesley/6285>**

- \* Our FAX number: **(405) 373-3392**
- \* Of course there's always the telephone: **(405) 373-4565**
- \* And the U.S. Postal Service! **Sisters of Benedict  
Red Plains Monastery  
728 Richland Road S.W.  
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We are ever anxious to hear from you.

*Contemplative prayer is not a conversation in words, but an exchange of heart.*

*-Thomas Keating-*

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*We are grateful to all our donors listed below. We also give special thanks to our very many faithful friends in 1997, who donated money and time during our projects this past year. Our donors listed below include those who have contributed from November 1, 1996, to November 1, 1997.*

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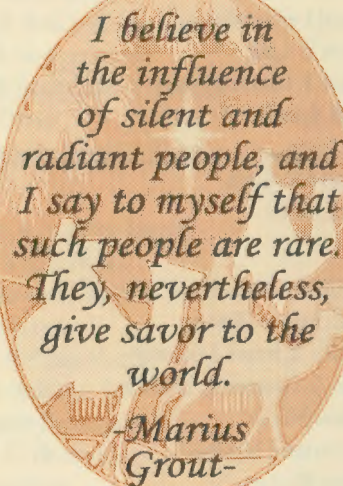
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*I believe in  
the influence  
of silent and  
radiant people, and  
I say to myself that  
such people are rare.  
They, nevertheless,  
give savor to the  
world.*  
Marius  
Grout-

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