



harmony

though many we are one

Peace on earth

Sand Springs monastery provides haven for many

Joe Farney isn't Catholic, but that doesn't matter.

At Forest of Peace Osage+Monastery, home to the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Sand Springs, Okla., his heart found a home in a place open to all faiths.

He was only 40 years old when the doctors told him he had prostate cancer, and the devastating news stopped him dead in his tracks.

"It was a reality check," he said. "Before my diagnosis, I was at a point where work was consuming and extreme stress was a daily experience. I could see nothing but the same for the future."

He and his wife, Kathy, a Catholic, had visited Forest of Peace several times in the previous decade. They found a solace from busy schedules, crazy careers and doctors, seeking

shelter among the trees. There they found kindred spirits in women who have devoted their lives to God.

"When people come here it's like the world is a crazy ride and they just want to stop and get off," founder Sister Pascaline Coff, OSB said. "Here, we are the body, the soul and the spirit. So it's important that the body and the psyche come to some kind of rest in order to enter into the stillness within."

And it is that stillness that so many seek at Forest of Peace. While the sisters host one or two group retreats each year, most of their visitors are individuals from all walks of life and religious backgrounds.

The monastery, located on 40 acres of forested property just west of Tulsa, was founded as a place to honor many of the world's faiths. It even pays tribute to the area's Native American cul-



Forty acres of trees provide a canopy of peace over the Sand Springs monastery, also known as Osage+Monastery.

ture with the placement of a Eucharistic Sundance Circle in the main chapel.

A quick glance at the books filling the library's shelves point to the monastery's mission of embracing all faiths. Topics include Hinduism, Zen, Christianity, Judaism, Orthodox Greek, Taoism, Western classics and mystics. Stacked on the coffee table in the living room are copies of the *Tibetan Review*, the Rule of St. Benedict and the local diocesan newspaper.

"It is a place where many people, local and from afar, come for prayer, retreat and restful refreshment," Sister Pascaline said.

Reverend Matt Cobb, a hospital chaplain from Manhattan, Kan., was one such person. An Episcopalian, he and his wife have pledged to follow a simple life. To stay grounded, he takes retreats to places like Forest of Peace to meditate and evaluate how best to keep his vow.

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The sisters of Osage+Monastery include (seated, left to right) Sister Priscilla Trost, Temporary Member Sister Kathy Smith, Sister Pascaline Coff, (standing, left to right) Sister Sarah Schwartzberg, Superior Sister Benita Luetkemeyer and Sister Kathleen Gorman.





Upcoming Monastic Celebrations

Final Profession

Sister Sophia Becker, July 21

Postulancy Entrance

Clarisa Cutaia, August 3

Novitiate Entrance

Nancy Gucwa, August 3

First Profession

Novice Sarah Miller, August 4

Silver Jubilee

Sister Sean Douglas, July 29

60th Jubilee

Sister Kathleen Gorman, October 5

Golden Jubilee

Sister Monica Sanders, October 5
Sister Joesetta Grant, October 6

Novice Sarah Miller (right) will make her First Monastic Profession during a ceremony on Aug. 4 in the Adoration Chapel in Clyde, Mo.



Novice Sarah Miller



Postulant Nancy Gucwa

◆ — ◆

Postulant Nancy Gucwa will enter into the novitiate during a ceremony on Aug. 3 in Clyde. Also on that date, Clarisa Cutaia, from New Orleans, will become a postulant.

Peace on earth

Continued from page 1

“The silence here is tremendous,” he said. “It’s easier to look within when silence surrounds you.”

Sister Gertrude Nagel, OSB, a member of the Red Plains Monastery in Piedmont, Okla., has taken retreats at Forest of Peace for more than 10 years. The former teacher spends three weeks each year and enjoys the privacy offered by the individual cabins and the spiritual direction provided by Sister Pascaline.

“I feel a freedom here unlike anywhere else,” Sister Gertrude said. “These Benedictines are an amazing group of women.”

And it is a group that is aging. The youngest of the five sisters is 59. The rest range from 78 to 90, making it more and more difficult for them to maintain a property that includes miles of walking trails, several cabins, a spiritual center and a main building that houses a kitchen, common living areas and the chapel.

So that’s where people like Joe and Kathy Farney come in. Wanting to return the warmth, love and spiritual assistance they have received from the sisters over the years, they helped found Friends of the Forest, a group of dedicated volunteers devoted to helping out wherever they can.

Whether it’s spending a day raking leaves and clearing trails or building a new Web site for the monastery, their motivation is simple – to give back and say thank you.

“Each day holds in it a gift from God to serve others,” Joe said. “The sisters provided strength to me during the most challenging times, and I will never be able to completely express my sincere gratitude to them for their prayers and encouragement.”

For more information on Forest of Peace or to learn how you can help, log onto our Web site at www.BenedictineSisters.org.†



Friends of the Forest, including people like Helen Pratt (top photo), Kathy Farney Conry and her niece, Danie (middle photo) and Joe Farney (bottom photo) are dedicated volunteers who often help out with projects around the Osage+Monastery grounds. Pictures courtesy of Joe Farney.

Spring ushers in 60th jubilees

Sr. Mary Grace Cunniff

“Sisters don’t come ready made.”

That thought occurred to Sister Mary Grace Cunniff, OSB when she was a young girl, struggling to decide if God was calling her to religious life.

“I knew that it took a lot of work. I asked my blood sister (Sister Mary Stella Cunniff, OSB) if it was a sin to be a sister if you didn’t want to be one,” Sister Mary Grace said. “She laughed and quickly answered, ‘No.’”

Sister Mary Grace attended Catholic schools in her hometown of Nashville, Tenn., but never received a life-changing lightening bolt from God calling her to become a monk.

“A high school friend asked me to attend an investiture ceremony with her, and I didn’t really want to go,” she said. “However, I knew she’d be disappointed, so I went. After I got home I thought maybe religious life wasn’t so bad, but I still had my doubts.”

After graduation, she spent a year working in the private sector and writing letters to Sister Mary Stella who had joined the Benedictine Sisters three years earlier.

Sister Mary Grace told her sister she was still trying to decide if religious life was her calling. Until finally one day she had to answer the question, “Well, are you or aren’t you?”



Sister Mary Grace Cunniff

She decided she was. In April, Sister Mary Grace celebrated the 60th jubilee of her first monastic profession with the Benedictine Sisters.

“I didn’t want to teach or nurse,” she said. “I loved the idea of leading a contemplative life, so this was the right fit for me.”

One of her fondest memories is also a bittersweet one.

“I helped open our Kansas City monastery and absolutely fell in love with the place,” she said. “But I was also at the other end of the line when it closed. It was a joyous time but also sad.”

Her monastic life has spanned across a period of great transformation within the Church, including changes that occurred after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Many of these changes lessened some of the rigidity associated with religious life, which she doesn’t mind.

“You are a product of your time,” she said. “The Church changes, and we change along with it.” †

Sr. Mary Dorothy Kordick

When Sister Mary Dorothy Kordick, OSB visited her aunt in tiny Clyde, Mo., she would look up hill at the Benedictine monastery, hear the bells ringing and wonder what the Sisters were doing at that very moment.

Her curiosity was rewarded in a most satisfactory way.

In April, Sister Mary Dorothy celebrated the 60th jubilee of her first monastic profession as a Benedictine Sister of Perpetual Adoration.

“I’ve known since I was 12 years old that I was called to religious life,” the Iowa native said. “The visits to Clyde made me realize this is where God wants me, and that conviction is still strong today.”



Sister Mary Dorothy Kordick

During her years as a Benedictine Sister, she served as the oblate director at the Tucson (Ariz.) monastery for almost three decades and recalls the oblates with great fondness.

“They were a real inspiration, so zealous in seeking God and desiring to share in our Benedictine way of life,”

she said. “They challenged my own spiritual growth.”

She now spends her time working in Clyde’s correspondence department, answering letters and prayer requests from people around the world. Some have written for more than 50 years, sharing their lives, their faith, their experiences and their problems.

“We’ve experienced so many technological changes, from simple typewriters to computers, e-mail and all other new advances,” she said.

But some things never change, such as what is in the hearts of those who write to the Sisters.

“People look to us for help

and guidance, and we receive so much more from them,” she said.

It is a calling which she has no regrets answering. Celebrating the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration and prayer and the various types of work provide a well-balanced life as St. Benedict prescribed in his Rule.

“The adoration of Christ in the Eucharist brought me here so long ago, and it keeps me going,” she said.

For those discerning a religious life, Sister Mary Dorothy’s words of advice are simple, “If God is calling, don’t keep him waiting. He is more than enough to fulfill all one could desire.” †

Getting 'zonked' by the Lord

Upon celebrating her Golden Jubilee of professed vows in April, Sister Jacqueline Marie Steinbrenner, OSB recalls that she knew from an early age that the Church would play a pivotal role in her life.

"My parents set a marvelous example by their involvement in our parish," the St. Louis native said. "They had a sense of pride and obligation to be involved and to support it with time, energy and hard work. It was done with joy and unassumingly."

And it was during those younger years in St. Anthony's parish that she developed a love for religious life. It was a desire that



Sister Jacqueline Marie Steinbrenner

lurked in the back of her mind as she dove into teenage years full of dances and dating and sports and clubs. "I remember enjoying myself at those activities and then coming home and feeling very empty," Sister Jacqueline Marie said. "Something was missing. I wanted to give myself to God, and that's all that seemed important to me."

Drawn to the Apostolic works of the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, she asked permission to enter before she even graduated high school. She studied education and taught in classrooms throughout the country.

She enjoyed her years in the classroom

and the interaction with students but sensed, again, that something was missing.

"I felt my religious life was lacking the depth that I desired," she said. "The need for more quiet, deeper prayer and community living was growing by leaps and bounds until I finally decided to do something."

She made a private retreat during the summer of 1971, which took her back home to the Benedictine Sisters' then-monastery in St. Louis. However, she had no thoughts of transferring at the time.

"I just needed to discern what was making my heart so restless," she said. But while there, after experiencing the Liturgy of the Hours and the community, she "was literally zonked by the Lord."

So in 1974, exactly 20 years after making her entrance with the Franciscans, she transferred to the Benedictine Sisters.

"I'm so very happy that I held onto the Franciscan tradition while moving into Benedictine life," Sister Jacqueline said. "I have experienced the best of two spiritualities, and I'm overjoyed to celebrate 50 years of God's fidelity. Not mine but God's." †

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Monastery Scents offers new guest soaps

Our Benedictine tradition places a high value on hospitality. These elegantly packaged soaps offer you the opportunity to show your guests the same gentle and gracious care.

Each bar of soap is carefully blended, individually cut and wrapped and the set is sealed with our monastery's wax logo. The package of six costs \$12.

An attached card, featuring the unique art of one of our sisters, gives an explanation of the soap and the prayer that goes into it. These lovely guest soap sets make an ideal gift or a wonderful addition to your own home.

Soaps are individually wrapped and packaged in sets of six, containing three each of our two most popular fragrances - Mayan Gold and Swiss Lavender.

Mayan Gold is a rich and exotic fragrance that is a favorite of many. Swiss Lavender is a soothing, calming fragrance made with lavender blossoms from our Swiss Sisters and also grown at our monastery in Clyde, Mo.

Fragrance and essential oils, shea & cocoa butters, olive, coconut, palm, palm kernel, almond & castor oils are the natural ingredients that make our soaps environment-friendly and great for your skin. In addition, each batch contains a few drops of holy water and a prayer for those who will use our soap. †



National Public Radio highlights altar breads

Benedictine Sister Lynn D'Souza appeared on the Easter weekend edition of "Good Food," a program produced by National Public Radio's KCRW in Santa Monica, Calif.

The station serves more than half a million listeners in the areas of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Sr. Lynn chatted with program host Evan Kleiman about the Benedictine Sisters' discovery of a low-gluten altar wafer, which allows people suffering from a wheat allergy to be able to share in their church's Eucharist ceremony. The show can be heard via podcast at www.kcrw.com/podcasts.

Celiac disease is a digestive disorder triggered by gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and other grains. After a

decade of trial and error, the sisters eventually produced an altar bread that is safe for consumption by sufferers of Celiac disease yet is also in compliance with the strict guidelines of Canon Law.

As the only producers of the low-gluten altar bread in the United States, the sisters' customers include churches from many denominations around the world. Sales of low-gluten breads began in 2004 and have jumped from 260 parishes and individuals to more than 2,000 satisfied customers today.

The Benedictine Sisters, the largest religious producers of communion wafers in the nation, have produced altar breads for almost a century. It serves as their main source of income and allows them to lead a monastic life devoted to prayer and celebration of the Eucharist. †

Computer professional joins Benedictine staff

It began as a journey to discover more about Benedictine life and to develop a deeper relationship with God. It ended up being something even more.

Steve McClain, who is currently an oblate candidate at the Tucson monastery, has joined the Benedictine Sisters' staff as an information technology specialist and will assist with many projects related to computing and networking projects for the entire congregation.

His relationship with the Benedictine Sisters began in the summer of 2006 when his "personal spiritual development began to suddenly grow by leaps and bounds," he said.

Steve attended Mass, inquired about the oblate program and took part in spiritual and contemplative reading sessions. Shortly afterward, word spread around the monastery that he "knew computing" and volunteered to train the Sisters in their computer needs.

"The opportunity to bring others to the congregation via Web site design, so that they may experience the same peace that I have found through the Sisters and the Rule as well as the goal of bringing rapidly changing technology to the Sisters in order to lessen their growing burden, all serve to emphasize my personal praise to God," Steve said. "My relationship with the congregation is truly a grace from heaven."

Steve has already designed new Web sites for the Tucson community and *Spirit&Life* magazine. His attention to detail and appreciation of Benedictine life will help the Sisters expand their Web presence.

"Our Internet activities have helped us make our life efforts of seeking God known worldwide," Prioress General Sister Ramona Varela, OSB said. "With so many good projects, it became obvious we needed a fulltime expert to help us continue our mission on the Web." †

Summer Monastic Experience



July 21 - July 27, 2007

Registration Deadline - July 14

For more information, contact
vocation@benedictinesisters.org

Tucson monastery receives donation

The Tucson monastery has received a M.I. Hummel figurine collection valued at \$10,000 to sell in their gift shop.

The line of beautifully handcrafted figurines was first introduced in 1935 after the Goebel Company approached Sister Maria Innocentia Hummel for permission to create 3-dimensional figurines based on her drawings. Sister Maria Innocentia was a member of the Convent of Siessen in Bavaria.

The Tucson collection, donated by the M.N. Justice estate, includes 46 figures, and all proceeds will benefit the monastery. For more information, e-mail osbtucson@benedictinesisters.org. †



Sister Maria Innocentia's drawings (like the one pictured above left) inspired hundreds of beautiful figurines such as *The Photographer* shown on the right. Pictures courtesy of the Goebel Company ®.

Conferences and Workshops

Prayer Workshop

Novice Sarah Miller, Postulant Nancy Gucwa and Clarisa Cutaia, who will enter the BSPA this summer, attended a workshop sponsored by the Institute of Religious Life at the Franciscan Center in March in Independence, Mo.

Christian Zen Sesshin

Almost 30 people participated in the annual retreat led by Ruben Habito at Osage+Monastery in April.

Treasurers' meeting

Sr. Valerie Stark and Sr. Wilmarie Ehrhardt attended a meeting of the Conference of Religious Treasurers held at the Ursuline Convent in Paola, Kan.

Handcrafted Soap Makers Guild

Sr. Cathleen Marie Timberlake was a featured speaker at the 2007 Handcrafted Soap Makers Guild conference in May in St. Louis. HSMG is a non-profit professional trade association that works to promote the handcrafted soap industry.

Wyoming Come & See Conference

Sr. Joretta Grant and Sr. Hope Rodenborn attended the Diocese of Cheyenne's conference in May in Casper, Wyo. Topics included organizing community efforts, social justice issues, parenting for peace and crisis intervention.†

Celebrating Bede Griffiths

Sand Springs and the Osage+Monastery hosted the Mahasamadhi Celebration for Father Bede Griffiths in May. Father Bruno Barnhart, OSB Cam., of New Camaldolese Hermitage in Big Sur, Calif., was the featured speaker. His topics included "Bede Griffiths and the Four Gospels" and "Bede Griffiths and Teilhard de Chardin."

During the weekend, oblates and Friends of the Forest visited the Hindu Temple of Greater Tulsa with Swami Venugopal Gaptu and Rajagopal Raghavan serving as hosts. †

Happy Birthday!

Sister Irmina Blatt celebrated her 100th birthday in May while surrounded by many friends and family at her monastery in Clyde, Mo.

Drawn to a contemplative life, Sister entered the Benedictine Sisters in March 1927, which means she recently celebrated her 80th anniversary of entering monastic life.

She joins Sister Juliana Bresson (pictured with Sister Irmina below), 102, as the congregation's two centenarians.



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