



## News Release

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### Sister Mary Grace Cunniff celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Jubilee as Benedictine

**CLYDE, Mo.** - "Sisters don't come ready made."

That thought occurred to Benedictine Sister of Perpetual Adoration 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 (Benedictine 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 that life-changing lightning bolt from God calling her to follow the life of 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?"

She decided she was. In April, Sister Mary Grace celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> 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 as a Benedictine Sister 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 time in 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, Sister Mary Grace said.

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

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