

Sr. Thecla Goertz, OSB  
November 23, 1925 - December 23, 2011

## Eulogy

Prepared and Presented by  
Sr. Bernadine Reyes, OSB  
Tuesday, December 27, 2011

Sr. Thecla Goertz was born on November 23, 1925 to Pius and Rosalia Goertz in Red Rock, Texas. In 1926 the Benedictine Sisters began teaching at Sacred Heart School in Rockne, Texas, a small community adjacent to Red Rock. Sister's early education was with the Benedictine Sisters. She was encouraged to go to public high school before she considered going to the convent. She graduated from Bastrop High School in June of 1943. Sister Thecla still waited a while and on February 10, 1945, the Feast of St. Scholastica, she entered the Benedictine Sisters Community in San Antonio, Texas. She made her first vows on August of 1947, just in time to begin her teaching career in September of 1947 at Sacred Heart School in San Antonio, TX. She was twenty-one years of age.

Sr. Thecla, like so many sisters at that time, began teaching long before she had her degree in Education. The classrooms in those days often had no less than fifty students. Sr. Antoinette Van Galen, OSB related to me that in 1952, she and Sr. Thecla would go every other night to St. Benedict's Hospital to attend to the patients and in the morning returned to school to teach. Our records show that Sr. Thecla received her Bachelor's degree in Education a year later in 1953. When did she study, when did she prepare lesson plans...when did she sleep?

Those early days must have taught her a great deal about perseverance, self-knowledge, and commitment. She must have gained a lot of confidence that she could "do it", she could get the job done. Sister must have thought, "If I can 'do it', if I can come through in my assignments, so can others."

I say this because:

During last night's Rosary, I heard over and over from our Sisters how she mentored them to become teachers. She not only called them forth, but she also walked along side them until they gained their own confidence. Joan Chittister, OSB says in her book, *The Rule of Benedict, Insights for the Ages*, "We sometimes do not know what we can achieve until someone cares enough to call us forth, beyond what we think we are capable of doing." Sr. Thecla did this for our young Sisters at that time and I'm sure she did the same for the lay staff in her faculty. One former student related that he could not read; she told him he would read and he did!

I have been astounded at what her former students have said about her. They remember she was their first grade teacher. First Grade! I don't remember my 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, but I do remember my 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher and a few others besides. I remember them because they took an interest in me personally and nudged me forward. She took an interest in her students and she had high expectations from them. Sr. Thecla stayed around at Sacred Heart long enough for the students to say she was their teacher in first, fourth and eighth grades. Not only that, but she stayed in contact with some of her students to the day she died. Juan Hidalgo called from California to offer his condolences and he said he received her Christmas card shortly before he heard the news of her death. Isn't that amazing?

The children under Sr. Thecla's care were safe, they were welcomed; Sister showed them hospitality and she called forth whatever their potential was. She saw Christ in them. That is why even this year at our gatherings she was often surrounded by former students.

Sister gave her all at each school where she taught as long as she could: Sacred Heart, St. Benedict's, Holy Spirit, St. Albert's and St. John's. She did the same regarding her involvement within the Benedictine Sisters Community. She held responsible positions as council member, trustee, and community secretary as well as serving on numerous committees through the years.

The spirit was willing but the body began to slow down. There were surgeries, and arthritis, difficulty in mobility and finally a failing heart. Through it all she had an alert mind and a desire to stay involved as best she could. She attended 99.9 % of our Community meetings and she participated in them. She probably did as much as she did because of her faithful friend and buddy, Sr. Michael Brandt, OSB.

I think the readings that were selected for today said it well. "If God is for us, who can be against?" "What can separate us from God? .. anguish or distress or peril or present things or future things or any other creature? Nothing can separate us from God." Sister Thecla loved to pray with the Community and had a lovely singing voice. The Word of God penetrated her soul after sixty-six years of praying the scriptures and psalms. She was rooted in faith and trusted in the One who said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you." "I am the way and the truth and the life."

During the last few months, Sister's health began to show signs that all was not well and the last two weeks uncovered a very damaged heart. Sister Thecla enjoyed a long life and she lived it well by loving unconditionally and serving faithfully. She dedicated herself to God's work, her Benedictine Community, family, friends, and past pupils. Her celebrated life is an example for generations to follow.

Today, we see her at peace and resting and we are comforted by the words, "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them." "They are at peace." "As gold in the furnace, God proved them, and as sacrificial offerings, God took them." "Grace and mercy are with these holy ones, and God's care is with these elect."

In the name of Benedictine Sisters, in the name of your family that you loved so much and in the name of all those you touched with your life, we are grateful to you and we thank you for sharing yourself with us all these years. Now, Sister Thecla, your work is not done because you have to pray for us.

*The Vigil and Rosary for Sr. Thecla was held at 6:00 pm at the Monastery Chapel on Monday, December 26, 2011. The Mass of the Resurrection was held at 10:00 am at the Monastery Chapel on Tuesday, December 27, 2011. Interment was at Holy Angels Cemetery on the Monastery grounds. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the Benedictine Sisters.*

To view full obituary or to leave a memorial message please visit:  
<http://www.vaughanfuneralhome.com>