

“ I liked the Benedictine concept of family . . . and the importance of Scripture and liturgy.”

God called Sister Rose Maria Birkenfeld through the interests and skills that He placed in her. Hospitality is a part of Benedictine life that she especially values – from cooking a meal for guests to folksy conversation with her parishioners.

I grew up in Amarillo, Texas. Hospitality was important to my family. Having a “Mom and Pop” grocery store, we were trained to wait on customers ~ to treat the customers as special. When I entered the Benedictines, I saw this concept of hospitality carried over into community life.

My fondness of Scripture started with my Presbyterian grandmother who treated the Bible with such respect. Then when I was a junior in high school and had my first Scripture course, my love grew stronger.

When I was in the 7th grade, Sr. Ambrosia was talking about religious life, and I said, “I’d like to do that.” My parents didn’t think too much of it at the time.

The desire for religious life continued through high school where I was educated by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. I owe a lot to the Incarnate Word

Sisters ~ they educated me and taught me a love of liturgy. Religion was always my favorite subject in school. Even though it was the days of the question and answer catechism, the CCVI sisters made religion class come alive.

My high school teachers planted the seed, but as I was making my decision I read up on things and investigated, and chose to become Benedictine. I liked the Benedictine concept of family, the concept of individual monasteries as being independent, and the importance of Scripture and liturgy. Fort Smith was the only Benedictine place that I knew anything about – I had a cousin in that community. So I graduated from high school in May, 1949 and entered at Fort Smith on June 6, 1949, traveling 500 miles from Amarillo to Fort Smith.

God fits us for the vocation to which He calls us. God planted seeds of an appreciation for hospitality, liturgy, and Scripture in Sister Rose Maria, and they have bloomed in the garden of Benedictine monastic life.



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