



Becoming Benedictine

Sister Briana Elisabeth Craddock

Date of Entrance:

August 20, 1995

What are your interests?

I enjoy doing most kinds of art, including drawing, painting, pottery, and paper crafts. I also enjoy sewing, gardening, and walking. I like to read in the evenings.

What is your ministry?

I work in our Communications office as the Communications Specialist.

How did you know you wanted to be a sister?

Believe it or not, I had a dream in which I was hanging out on the beach with a group of sisters in habits, like the sisters who taught me in grade school. I eventually realized that I wasn't just *with* the sisters, but that I *was* a sister. It was at that point that I knew that the idea of being a sister was floating around in my mind.

What attracted you to this community?

When I was discerning religious life, I saw an ad from our community that said, "Molds are for cookies, not nuns." The ad led me to believe that I could be myself here. When I first visited, I felt at home, even though I had never met any of these women before.

How do you know that you fit into this community?

When I am away, I miss the community and the community misses me. I know that I need the rhythm of work and prayer that we have if I am going to live my life to the potential God has in mind for me.

How did your family react?

My mother was very upset about my decision to enter the community. My dad was supportive.

How do you pray? What is your favorite prayer form?

I like to meditate on the Scriptures using artwork. I have kind of developed a form of lectio for myself that involves making art, mostly because I am not good at just sitting in one place and staying focused.

Hey, Sister T!

Hey, Sister T: You said something in the last God's Time about living "happily ever after." What do you mean?



Hey, My Friend,

Let me tell you a story.

Like all good stories, this one starts with, "Once upon a time..." And like all the fairy tales, this one starts with, "There was a poor little girl, who seemed to always be in trouble." I grew up the sixth of eight children to my momma and daddy, Bobbie and George Gunter, in West Memphis, Arkansas. They did an amazing job with all of us. If they could afford it, we went to Catholic school; if not, we went to the public one. St. Michael's was a great school. I learned all my prayers, made great friends, and learned that there were "sisters" who lived together in the house next to the school. But, in the 7th grade, my parents thought that I should go to the public schools. It wasn't as bad as I dreaded. I learned to get to my classes, be on time, and smile in the hallway. If I wanted to play ball, I had to practice harder. If I wanted to be accepted, I had to accept all people. In this case, it made me one of the few white girls on the team. My mom, who was at all the games, knew every one of my teammates and afterwards, they would come speak to her. She sometimes was the only parent in the stands.

I really did have it all; I just didn't realize it at the time. We did everything that we were supposed to do: we went to church, youth group, girl scouts, sororities, etc. - and it was good - most of the time. My dad was sick when I was growing up. He suffered several heart attacks, followed by a stroke. I think my first memory is sister and me teaching my dad to walk again. We were barely big enough to see over the walker. It was during the time of desegregation and my daddy taught at a Vocational-Technical school where mostly blacks would come and learn trades. My mom said that it was stressful at that time. There were riots every weekend and my dad had to settle down his class during the week, only to start over on Monday. My dad taught printing and he was color blind. We didn't know that there was something called racism. When we would go to the free clinic to get our shots for school, my mom took us in the back and told us to go sit next to that person. It wasn't until years later, that I realized we were in back of the clinic and not the front where the whites were sitting.

Being a little tomboyish, I just went with the flow. I played ball with the neighborhood boys, raced go-karts down the street, jumped ramps on my bike like Evel Knievel, and learned to hit hard and run fast. And yes, I

was always in trouble. More than once a day, my mom would tell me to "sit on my hands." (That was the worst punishment ever, especially when you had hardwood floors and your knuckles were down.) What a great time to be young. We played all day and just had to go inside when it got dark.

My older siblings were getting married, but I kept thinking about those sisters that lived next to the church. How they would come to Mass, sit together, and always look happy. There was this one sister, Sister Mariam, who would come to the youth group and play basketball with us. I started seeing religious life as attractive, that maybe I didn't have to get married. I went off to college to play volleyball and to get a degree. I played a lot of sports in college, and yes, got in trouble a few times. Yet, I kept going to Mass every weekend, and even made my friends go with me. There wasn't a Catholic group for college students, so I started one. Even there, God kept putting religious sisters in my path and I once again realized that God was moving me in a different direction.

My first job was teaching in a self-contained classroom in Ozark, Arkansas. It was there that I met a guy whose family was so much like mine, that being married and having 10 kids could be an option. We could travel and do mission trips, teach our children to love God and be happy. It could be perfect. Yet, in the back of my mind, being a nun, a religious, a sister was speaking so softly, that it was bothering me every day.

Then, I met some amazing women, "sisters" who lived in Memphis and ran a school for handicapped children. They invited me to visit Indiana. I thought that I would go, get being a nun out of my system, go back to Arkansas and get married. Twenty-five years later, I'm still trying to get being a nun out of my system, but now it's embedded.

I can't begin to tell you how God has blessed my life. I've lived a life that is hundredfold. Everything I wanted in a marriage, I've received as a religious. I have shared my most intimate thoughts with my sisters. I've done mission trips around the United States. I've raised hundreds of children to love God. I've taken what my family instilled and remained color blind, learned to play as long and as hard as I could, had youth "sit on their hands" and tell them that it's sometimes ok to go against the grain. And God has given me a life to live...Happily Ever After. And isn't that what God wants for all of us? For you? To follow him and live a life that He has in store for you. So that at the end of your life you can say, "I lived happily ever after."

Peace out,

Sister T

Upcoming Service Opportunity

January 3-6, 2018

Service Retreat at Monastery Immaculate
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Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are monastic women seeking God through the Benedictine tradition of community life, prayer, hospitality, and service to others. By our life and work, we commit ourselves to be a presence of peace as we join our sisters and brothers in the common search for God.

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