



The Canticle

J U N E 2 0 0 1

O F S T . G E R T R U D E ' S

Hearing Aids For My Heart

by Sr. Barbara Ann Bielenberg



The Transforming Power of Technology

Technology resides with us. In fact, we are so steeped in technology that we have to *choose* simplicity. Have you tried to buy a TV recently, without a remote control? Or how about a record player, remember those?

Technology is a wonderful tool. Through its use we transform ourselves into healthier, safer, quicker, more informed and efficient people.

Technology works on us as well. We live longer, we create different kinds of waste products and we communicate globally in an instant. These changes arrive in our lives with a new set of challenges.

The Rule of Benedict, Chapter 32, discusses the proper use of the tools of the monastery. Benedict says,

The tools of the monastery should be entrusted to capable members ... Whoever fails to keep the things belonging to the monastery clean or treats them carelessly should be reproved.

Using technology to transform ourselves and our world comes with the responsibility to use this powerful tool wisely and care for it appropriately. As we create and use technology we must remain aware of its eventual impact on our lives, our health and our world, not only in our generation, but on the ones to follow.

I have been a nurse for 31 years. Has technology changed my career? You bet! I remember what autoclave means, and I remember “doing” it.

Not too long ago, IVs were hung in glass bottles. We calculated by hand the number of drops per minute that an IV should run. Now a machine has simplified and automated that task.

We also used glass syringes and reused needles that required sterilizing (or autoclaving). Now most things we use are disposable.

I also have experience using technology on a more personal level – I am hearing impaired and use hearing aids in both ears.

I remember my first set of hearing aids. They were big and awkward. Even worse, they amplified all the frequencies. Because my hearing loss is severe in the high frequency sounds, but I hear very well in the lower tones, those early hearing aids weren't very helpful.

Over the years hearing aid technology has improved to the point that only the frequencies that I need help hearing are amplified. The new instruments are very tiny and automatically adjust the loudness or softness depending upon the environment I'm in.

I have experienced technology making my life and the lives of those around me more convenient. It is wonderful to see how humans have used their God-given intelligence to



Sr. Barbara Ann Bielenberg is charge nurse and shift supervisor at St. Joseph Care Center, Spokane, WA.

develop ways to help us lead more productive, more helpful lives.

On the other hand, we have become so used to disposing of things that we have often ignored what this is doing to the beautiful earth God gave us. It is also an on-going struggle, especially as a nurse,

not to lose sight of the person in all the technology and paperwork.

My monastic life has made me more conscious of simple things – like turning lights off when not in use. At home as well as at work, I try to be aware of ways in which I save energy, reuse items and share with others those things that I can no longer use.

As for losing the person in the paperwork, I take St. Benedict as my example: He never lost sight of the individual. He treated everyone and everything as if they were vessels of the altar.

Technology is good, but like all things, it must be kept in balance.



Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Families and Friends,

Here we are in the season of Pentecost; I greet you in the love of the Holy Spirit. May you be filled with that same love and fiery energy that sent the first disciples out to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel.

This issue of *The Canticle* focuses on technology. As I consider Pentecost and spreading the Gospel, I marvel at the almost miraculous way technology allows us to share the monastery's good news with others.

Through the use of email, we are able to keep in closer touch with friends and families. Almost every day email messages are posted on the prayer board from people all across the world requesting prayer for themselves or others. I often wonder how they got our address, but really, I know.

We have a presence on the internet with our own web page (www.StGertrudes.org). This is an excellent tool for spreading our good news.

Through the website we attract people to our Retreat Ministry and other special

events. Many vocation prospects have contacted us through the internet and so have people who are interested in our volunteer program.

Instantaneous global communication focuses our prayer ministry through email updates, television and radio reports. We know the very day or hour when disasters occur, or when violence erupts between nations.

The technology of the internet has made it possible for one of our sisters to take online college courses. This increase in knowledge, this sharing of the gospel, is beneficial to our society.

The list of blessings created by technology goes on and on. But like most good things, there is a dark side to technology as well. It can be frustrating, expensive, time-consuming and sometimes addictive. Its use creates newer, bigger, different sets of problems than the one it was created to overcome. Each time we choose to implement a new technology, we must evaluate it for its effect on people's lives and relationships and its effect on the earth.

I am reminded of a verse from Deuteronomy 30:19b:

I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life then, that you and your descendents may live...

You, our families and friends, are gifts of life to us. Know that you are continually in our prayers. God bless you for your generosity in the many ways you support us.

Sr. Jean Lalande
Sr. Jean Lalande, OSB, Prioress

In Loving Memory

Sr. Helen Brebner

Sister Helen Marie Brebner, 71, died at the Monastery on March 12, 2001, of heart failure. She was born in St. Maries, ID, on April 26, 1930, to James and Flora Ann McMillan Brebner.



Sr. Helen was known for her gentle and quiet spirit, but is remembered by her family and community as playful, mischievous, and caring. She delighted in discovering the healing qualities of essential oils. Her gracious listening led people to open their hearts to receive her challenges and wisdom. Many guests of the monastery experienced her warm hospitality.

Sr. Helen made her monastic profession in 1948, then ministered primarily as a first grade teacher in Rupert, Lewiston, Greencreek, Nampa, and Cottonwood, ID.

Sr. Gonzaga Letter



Sr. Gonzaga Letter, 99, died at the Monastery on April 23, 2001. She was born in 1902, in Oberageri, Switzerland, to Bonaventure and Marie Anna Besmer Letter.

At the age of 19 she set sail for America and made her profession in 1923. Sr. Gonzaga ministered as an educator, first in grade schools, then at the high school in Greencreek and at St. Gertrude's Academy.

Sr. Gonzaga left behind many beautiful works of art that used dried flowers and calligraphy. Her prayer life was deep and passionate, and she is greatly missed.



The Canticle
OF ST. GERTRUDE'S

The *Canticle of St. Gertrude's* is published quarterly by the Development Office at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, and is distributed to our friends, families and donors.

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Technology Has Them Floored

Housekeeping is not generally considered a “technical” field. But once Donna Ross and Peggy Matson, both housekeeping employees at St. Gertrude’s, start talking about floor care at the monastery, the techno-talk flows.

Words like “atmospheric influence on wax adherence” proved that keeping floors clean has come of age.

“It’s such a mix of old and new,” said Peggy, Director of Housekeeping, and a 13-year employee at the monastery. “We still sweep and mop, but we do it smarter, quicker and with better results.”

Take the improvements in waxing equipment. When Sr. Alexia Kaschmitter was in charge of shining the floors, the sisters strapped soft cloths on their feet and

“skated” around the halls, dragging their feet and shining the floors at the same time.

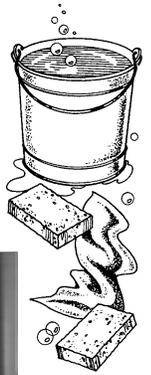
“The high speed burnisher we use now allows us to clean the floors in a fraction of the time,” says Donna. “Plus, we buy different types of waxes for the different types of flooring and traffic areas. This helps us keep the floors extra-shiny.”

And well-protected, too. Many of the floors in the historic stone monastery are still covered with the original “battleship” lineoleum.

“It’s good lineolum,” said Peggy, “and it looks as good today than the day it was put down.”

Peggy and Donna attend workshops to keep informed of new technology and

techniques that help keep the monastery shining and spotless. Yet, with all the “new” there are some “old” ways that still work.



The miles and miles of woodwork and handrails are preserved the old way, with a mixture the sisters whip up that includes turpentine and oils.

“And,” says Donna, “hands and knees and elbow grease still come in handy.”

Maintaining Common Sense & Techno-Sense

“We’ve got the technology” is a common quip of the our maintenance crew John Remacle and Sandy Enneking. They work the garden and grounds, keep the monastery and houses in good repair, do the fencing, fix the cars, change lightbulbs, and much more.



When they say “we’ve got the technology,” it doesn’t mean that they are plugged into the internet and carrying around pagers. What they really mean is that they have the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and inventiveness to make it, fix it,

or adapt it. When it comes to this kind of “technology”, John and Sandy are our greatest assets.

We do, however, use technology with a capital-T, in a variety of ways in the maintenance department.

The first way that comes to mind is the many woodworking tools we use in our shop. There are saws that cut boards and saws that make beautiful edges and saws that do corners. Then there are drills and sanders and screw guns to help put the pieces together.

We also have machines to help with the mowing, snow removal, tilling and more. Without these time-saving, technology-driven devices it would be impossible to keep up our expansive grounds.

The advances in groundskeeping machines are exciting. This fall we plan to get a

mulching lawnmower that will spread the grass clippings back over the lawn as we mow, fertilizing the grass.

These days technology is usually associated with computers. We use one to keep track of our cars. It crunches the numbers, and in minutes reports miles per gallon and cost per mile for each car. It keeps track of each car’s total miles and cost per year. These types of statistics would take me forever to do, even with a calculator.

Maintenance is not the most technologically advanced department in the monastery. We blend the “old” technology of common sense with the “new” technology of machines and systems in beneficial ways.

Learning and practicing this balance helps us remain true to our monastic mission of living simply, doing more with less and creating a smaller footprint on the earth.

by Sr. Placida Wemhoff

Allurements of the Heart



Benedictine Experience Weekend

A reflection and discernment weekend for single women. Pray with the Sisters and other women exploring religious life.

Scheduled as needed; please call.

Monastic Living Experience

A two-week opportunity for single women to share our monastic life, prayer and work.

July 1-12, 2001

We celebrate the

Solemnity of St. Benedict

on July 11, 2001

In Chapter 58 of The Rule of Benedict, Benedict lists four standards for determining whether an inquirer should become a monastic member:

Do you truly seek God?

Are you eager for community prayer?

Are you eager for mature obedience?

Are you eager to bear one another's burdens?

Vocation work at the monastery has been on the forefront of our move into the technology age. In 1996, Sr. Corinne saw the need for an internet connection to keep her in touch with inquiring women. The monastery's first modem was donated and installed in the Vocation office.

The first computers "entered" the monastery between 1983 and 1987, and were used mostly in the Business Office for accounting and word processing. Many of the computers found in other offices during that time were donated, "old" computers.

In fact, many of our computers in the monastery today, by industry's standards, are outdated. Donated for our use because they weren't fast enough or big enough, we use them until it just isn't possible to connect them to anything else.

Vocation work is about communicating who we are, where we are, and what we are about. Technology enhances the chances of doing that well in today's culture.

The internet is a vital tool for being in contact with women interested in monastic life. For many inquiring women, it is the first place they turn to as they begin their search.

The internet is a powerful tool in this search. It provides inquirers some anonymity as they "browse" around to find out what monastic life might be about. They can email questions and receive almost immediate responses, still without making a commitment of even their name.

In some cases, inquiring women can go to "chat rooms" and discuss with others their search-in-progress, sharing the struggles and victories with like-minded people throughout the states, and even the world.

I believe we are communicating our mission effectively throughout the Northwest. We now have four affiliates, two of whom are living here at the monastery this summer as volunteers. We have monthly affiliate weekends planned when all four can meet together for prayer, study, work and play. Please pray for these women as they walk through this discernment process.

Personal contact is still the most effective "tool" in good communication. Some of our Oblates helped me meet many people in Moscow and Lewiston recently as I spent three weeks in each place for intensive vocations awareness contacts. In addition to presenting information about the monastery, I encouraged people to think about all the vocation choices available in the church.



Sr. Janet Barnard

I also made a swing through Montana ... quite a large swing, I might add. I stopped in Missoula, Great Falls and Helena, attending career fairs, meeting friends and making contacts.

Upcoming at the monastery is our annual Monastic Living Experience, a two-week long opportunity for women to work and pray with us.

Much of what I am able to do in our Vocation work is a direct result of your support. Since November 2000, you have contributed over \$43,000 to our vocation promotion appeal. Pray that our efforts are successful, that we steward your donations well and wisely, and that the church will ultimately be strengthened and grow through our efforts. Thank you, and may God strengthen you in your own vocation choice of marriage, single life or priesthood.



Visit our Vocations pages at
www.StGertrudes.org
vocation@camasnet.com

Tree Farm of the Year Award

The Idaho Tree Farm System recently named the monastery "Idaho Tree Farm of the Year" for its efforts in managing its forestland for sustainable productivity while protecting water quality and wild-life habitat.

"Managing the forest for a balance of aesthetic and economic benefits is our goal," said Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, community forester. "I firmly believe that is an essential part of the Benedictine tradition. We care for what we have. Our concept of stewardship means finding a way to maintain a balance between productivity for income and healthy bio-diversity."



Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, back row and left, receives a donation from the fourth grade class at St. Stanislaus, Lewiston, for the Grow a Forest Campaign.

We are accustomed to praying intesively the nine days before the Feast of St. Benedict (July 11) and three days before the anniversary of our foundress, Johanna Zumstein (July 31). We invite you to share your special intentions with us so that we can pray for you during these special days in July.

Call in your intentions to the Development Office at (208) 962-3224, write to us using the enclosed envelope, or email us at develop@camasnet.com

Benedictine Jubilarians Proclaim Religious Life Full of Opportunity

Sr. Bernice Wessels and Sr. Benita Hassler will be celebrating their Golden Jubilees on the Feast of St. Benedict, July 11, 2001.

Sr. Bernice believes that after 50 years, the best thing about being a Benedictine Sister at St. Gertrude's is the time for prayer and lectio.

"Prayer and the support from the sisters has made me who I am today," she claims.



Sr. Bernice Wessels

Contrary to popular thinking that monastic life is all about giving up opportunities, Sr. Bernice credits life in a monastic community as having broadened her horizons.

"The educational and other opportunities given me by the Community have been tremendous," she said. "I have come to a trust that it is truly God who is leading me and I need not worry."

Sr. Bernice entered St. Gertrude's in 1951. "Having been educated by the Benedictines all my life I never thought of joining any place else."

Did she ever question her decision to make vows? "Yes, there were times I was asked to do things that I believed I couldn't do. However, through the support of the community and my family and friends, I somehow always found a way to 'make' it."

Sr. Bernice believes that God is still calling women to religious life. Those feeling the "call" need to bring it to prayer and find someone who can be their spiritual guide.

Her advice to those striving to live a deeply spiritual life: "Take it one day at a time. Believe that God is real and loves you more than can be imagined. God will never ask more of you than you can take."

Sr. Benita believes that the potential for an enormous amount of personal growth, spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, is the gift that being a Benedictine Sister has given her.

"The balance of community and personal prayer with meaningful, making-a-difference opportunities to work with others has made my Benedictine lifestyle very healthy and energizing for me."

After resisting "the call" during her high school years, the prayers of her mother, her three Sister-aunts and her Benedictine uncle, "finally brought me to St. Gertrude's, a 'good and holy place,'" smiles Sr. Benita.



Sr. Benita Hassler

Sr. Benita wanted to be a nurse and live at the monastery. However, her Prioress wanted her to study music and to teach. This ministry included time in Bogota, Colombia, teaching English.

With her 50-year perspective, Sr. Benita "sees that following St. Benedict's emphasis on obedience has given a fruitful direction to my life."

Was her vocation ever tested? "Yes, sometimes, when I ask 'Could I do more for the poor elsewhere?'" Sr. Benita remains committed to her current ministry in Caldwell, ID, of teaching people who fall between the cracks of the social services system. She teaches English and computer basics and helps people earn their GEDs.

"I say to anyone inquiring about the Benedictine Way of Life that it continues to lead me closer to what Amado Nervo, the Mexican mystical poet, proclaims:

*I love, I was loved,
the sun caressed my face.
Life, you owe me nothing.
Life, we are at peace."*

Sisters Appreciated North and South

Two St. Mary's – one in Boise and one in St. Maries, ID – celebrated the presence and ministry of the sisters in their parishes this spring.

St. Mary's in Boise, ID, commemorated 51 years of service by the Benedictine sisters, either teaching, administering in the school or ministering as a pastoral associate. To show their appreciation, the parish hosted a Benedictine Appreciation Day in April.

"We wanted to show our love and appreciation to the Sisters who have profoundly affected the faith development of so many parishioners," said Darlyne Pape, event organizer.

Over 400 people attended the mass and celebration. At the reception former students and teachers chatted about old times and reacquainted themselves.



Sr. Theresa Mary Stroeing and a friend in Boise.



Sr. Scholastica Uhlenkott with one of the Mexican dance performers.

While the celebration in Boise was being organized, another plan was

hatching eight hours north, in St. Maries.

Some months earlier, the statue of Mary in the grotto in front of St. Mary's Church had been vandalized. The parishioners decided to have it restored and the grotto refurbished. To mark its completion, the parish planned a blessing and rededication ceremony, and invited former teachers and administrators at St. Mary's Academy. Six Benedictine sisters from St. Gertrude's attended the festivities.

During the homily, Fr. Bill Taylor invited St. Mary's parishioners to share some of their memories of the Benedictines at the academy. Without exception, those who spoke expressed deep gratitude for the sisters' 46 years of ministry, presence and gift of education.



D E V E L O P M E N T S

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

For John who has lung cancer surgery tomorrow ... For successful brain surgery for Susan Good on June 3 ... For reconciliation of my daughter and her husband who are having marriage problems ... In gratitude for the safe delivery of my sister's twin babies yesterday ...

Most days the list of intentions recommended to our prayers here at the monastery is long and varied. We pray for these concerns individually and at our communal prayer times. How does such a prayer network compare with a cyber-network?

Technology can be defined as the way humans extend their capacity for being in relationship with others in life-enhancing ways. An ancient and powerful, yet ultra-modern technology might be called "cyber-mysticism." This is the technology, of lifting people and situations up to God with the desire that the grace of God's presence will bless and transform the situation.

Every human is called to be a cyber-mystic. St. Benedict learned that cyber-mysticism required lots of practice. Sometimes it is best achieved in a communal setting with all its members committed to being the Mystical Body of Christ, the Communion of Saints, the People of God. Benedictine monasteries use this type of technology daily.

Along with the intentions posted on our prayer board, know that YOU, our friends and donors, are certainly among those we hold before God in love and gratitude.

Thanks to your generosity in prayer and financial support, signs of hope and future bloom among us: women planning to join us, volunteers participating in our life and works, an 11-member advisory Development Council committed to assisting us in achieving our mission, resources for intensive vocations awareness promotion, and reforestation on Cottonwood Butte.

As of this writing the Vocations Promotion Appeal has raised \$43,000 of our \$74,000 goal. Our Grow a Forest Campaign is at \$15,000 of its \$30,000 goal. I still dream of a major boost for each of these efforts.

Within our community, time and energy continue to be committed to strategic planning for the future. The focus of our planning is how to make our mission of "welcoming God's transforming power in ourselves and our world" have meaning in the future, especially in our ministries and membership.

The Development Office staff are rejoicing because this fiscal year, which ends June 30, we will surpass our in-office bottom-line goal for the first time in three years! And it's all your doing!! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

HC 3 Box 121 • Cottonwood, ID 83522-9408 • (208) 962-7123 • museum@micron.net • www.webpak.net/~museum

by Lyle Wirtanen, Museum Director



FESTIVAL

Sunday, August 5, 2001 • 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Prairie High School Gym • 3 miles west of town on Keuterville Road

The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude is preparing for the Raspberry Festival on August 5, 2001, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Join us for this day when “old time” and “new time” technologies partner in creating a fun-filled day for families and friends.

This annual museum fundraiser features products made from the raspberries harvested from the sisters’ extensive raspberry patch. Participants will be able to purchase raspberry jam, vinegar, honey, and mustard. Raspberry shortcake will again be the irresistible dessert, along with barbecued beef sandwiches, chips and drinks. Other products, such as books and handiwork, will also be available for purchase throughout the day.



Cultural demonstrations including weaving, spinning and Native American bead work, plus live music featuring local talent, will keep attendees well entertained.

Another attraction is the Quilt Show presenting quilts



made by local and regional artists. The show will be displayed in the gym’s balcony (not handicapped accessible).

The annual Show and Shine of classic cars from the 1920’s to the 1970’s takes place on the monastery grounds. The variety of trophies awarded includes the popular “Nun’s Choice Trophy” given to the car owner selected by the vote of the sisters.

This year we have three outstanding prizes for the raffle: a 48” JVC TV valued at \$1,500 (the winner must pay shipping to its new home, or accept \$500 cash instead); a hand-embroidered



French linen and lace tablecloth with six napkins done by Sr. Mercedes Martzen; a handmade redwork alphabet quilt. Raffle tickets are only \$1.00 each and are available at the museum, the monastery and the day of the Raspberry Festival. Need not

be present to win, so the more tickets you buy, the better your chances!

For more information contact the museum at museum@micron.net or (208) 962-7123. We hope to see you there!

RASPBERRY

Retreat Opportunities at the Monastery

Seeking Wholeness: A Cancer Retreat

JULY 15 - 20, 2001 OR SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 5, 2001

Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

This retreat is designed especially for anyone whose life has been affected by cancer and focuses on healing. Enjoy one-on-one and group sharing, spiritual direction, massage, nature walks, private reflection time, prayer with the community and artistic expression. Spouses and primary care-givers are welcome. Limited to eight participants.

Discovering the Monk Within

AUGUST 26 - 31, 2001 ~ SUN, 10:00 AM - FRI, 1:30 PM

Coordinator: Sr. Judith Brower

An "immersion experience" into everyday living in a monastery. Enter the rhythm of prayer, work, leisure and study within both the monastic community and the small group of like-minded people gathered for this experience.

Suggested Donation: \$250 single/\$400 couple

Resting In God: How Did the Mystics Do It?

SEPT 14 - 16, 2001 ~ FRI, 7:30 PM - SUN, 1:30 PM

Presenters: Sr. Lillian Englert & Kathy McFaul

Let the lives and words of mystics lead us deeper into the mystery of radical faith and trust. Explore those places where our own stories intersect with those of the mystics.

Suggested Donation: \$100 single/\$150 couple

Body-Mind-Spirit: Discover Your Gifts

SEPTEMBER 21 - 23, 2001 ~ SAT, 9:00 AM - SUN, 1:30 PM

Presenter: Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski

Understand the vital connections between your body, mind and spirit. You will identify your strongest gifts and learn practical ways to formulate a basic plan for developing them.

NOTE: 5 weeks advance registration required!

Suggested Donation: \$100 single/\$150 couple

Add'l fees apply; request brochure for registration.



Visit us on the web: www.StGertrudes.org

Email: retreats@camasnet.com

Let Our Retreats Come to You!

Ask about our Outreach Retreat Ministry!

Email: outreachretreats@hotmail.com



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