



AUTUMN 2003

ST. GERTRUDE'S Canticle

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

Look Inside

Attending to God 3

Prayer Adventures 4

Vocation News 5

Developments 6

Reflections On 50 7

Stay in Touch!

PHONE:
Monastery
(208) 962-3224

Museum
(208) 962-7123

EMAIL:
monastery@connectwireless.us
vocation@stgertrudes.org
retreat@stgertrudes.org
outreachretreats@hotmail.com
develop@connectwireless.us
museum@velocitus.net

WEBSITE:
www.StGertrudes.org

Wanted: A Relationship

by Sr. Sue Ellen Drexler

Prayer actually led me to become a Benedictine Sister.

Before I entered the monastery, I taught kindergarten and found out it was very difficult to teach if I didn't pray first. I literally couldn't teach without praying. When I prayed before teaching, the words to say and the actions of teaching, helping, and caring were "Grace of God" gifts.



Sr. Sue Ellen Drexler

Now I teach Release Time (religion classes) at Prairie Elementary School and minister as an Administrative Clerk for the monastery.

And I can't do either job without prayer!

In *The Rule of Benedict* we are told to pray constantly. Prayer is what gives me the spirit (juice) to do my jobs, not just to get them done, but to do them with a sense of stewardship.

Prayer helps me do my work well. It turns doing laundry and mopping dusty floors into care for the gifts that God has given us – towels, a home and furniture. Prayer reminds me that all we have is a gift from God.

When I work with correspondence, I think about each one who receives my letter or card in the name of the monastery. I thank God for the person and say a special prayer for whatever that person may need.

My experiences have shown me that prayer bonds, gives hope, and helps resolve conflict. I am changed when I pray with parents of my students, peers, friends, and so are they.

When concerned about relationships with others, prayer is essential. Praying about the situation, whatever the challenge has been, leads to resolution before the conflict becomes worse.

I like to use many styles of prayer. I listen to my inner self and hear what tools I need to use just then. Sometimes I use scripture, journaling, taking walks outside and meditation (if I don't fall asleep!). Every night I just talk to God about the day and my concerns. I lay prayers for our world and our universe at God's feet before I sleep.

One goal I have is to pray without ceasing. When I actually accomplish it, I find myself energized. When I don't pray without ceasing, I tire out quickly.

See **In Touch** on page 4



Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends,

Greetings to all of you in this early Fall season. Like many of you we have been enjoying the fruits and vegetables of our garden. Already, and for a while longer, we'll be busy canning and preserving the harvest for the upcoming winter.

We are still waiting for the first frost and the ensuing change of colors for the leaves.

That's the part of Autumn that I love the most – the changing colors in the leaves.

The part I like less is the falling of the leaves. And not just because I have to rake the leaves off the grass!

The falling leaves reminds me that life always involves letting go. Even though we know there are specific times for letting go and that the process is natural, it is still a very hard thing to do.

Many of our sisters, families and friends have recently experienced losses of one kind or another. We ask for your prayerful support.

The theme for this issue of *The Canticle* is **prayer**. As you'll read, prayer is central to Benedictine life. In fact, our monastic life revolves around two major poles – prayer and work – or, if you like Latin, *ora et labora*.

In the daily monastic rhythm our prayer flows out into our work and ministries. Through mindfulness, our work becomes prayer. Our work is a result of our prayer, of listening to God to hear what work or ministry needs to be attended to.

Throughout the day we alternate periods of prayer and work. Many of us rise early for personal contemplative prayer. Three times each day we gather for communal prayer known as Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office. Dispersed between these times of prayer are times for work and ministry.

Prayer, regardless of its type or schedule, is always an expression of our relationship with our God.

Our relationship with God is so vital. It centers us in God, in truth and in love. In this relationship we come to know ourselves better and, as we open ourselves to the transforming power of the Spirit, we become signs of Christ's healing presence in our world today.

For me, this is the call of all Christians in today's world.

Let us continue to pray for one another in these challenging times. Our world needs the healing nonviolent presence of Christ in so many ways. Can we be that presence? That is my prayer for all of us.

Blessings and peace!

Sr. Jean Lalande
Prioress

Turning Our Attention to God

by Sr. Mary Frances Kluss with Darla Anglen-Whitley

Sr. Mary Frances Kluss is a licensed practical nurse. She ministers in a nursing home setting for sick and elderly religious sisters in Spokane and has worked there for 11 years.

I had an opportunity to ask Sr. Mary Frances about her personal experience with prayer and how it shapes her life. Here's what she had to say.

Is prayer important for you? for the monastic community?

I believe that prayer is vital. Without prayer we wouldn't be a monastic community. Prayer is part of the essence of our call by God. It is part and parcel of the fabric of our lives. We wouldn't be a Benedictine community if we didn't pray together.

Prayer is vital for me in my work as well. Prayer gives me a sense of peace and joy, compassion, and a focus that allows me to be present to the person I'm caring for. Through prayer the healing presence of God can be experienced as each person has need.

Have your prayers made a difference in the lives of those you minister to?

Oh, yes! Recently a convalescing woman told me that she had a deep, comforting sense of our prayers and concern for her. Her first biopsy had shown melanoma. After a subsequent surgery, no other cancer cells were found.

I never know how many people may be praying for the same person. I am often told, in one way or another, that my prayers are appreciated; that a sense of healing and peace has happened in connection with my presence and prayers. I feel very humble then, knowing that it is because of God that anything good can happen through me.

Besides praying individually, we sometimes pray as a group at work. Not only does prayer help in physical, spiritual, and emotional healing, it also helps us to connect in deeper, more peaceful and fulfilling relationships.

How do you pray?

I like to offer up my whole day to God. If I know of someone in special need, I may offer up my day especially for her or him. Prayer for me includes Divine Office, said with other Sisters or by myself, and centering prayer.

I also like to memorize scripture, hymns, and prayers that have special meaning for me. I pray spontaneously by myself and with others, including patients and staff. Daily Eucharist is very important to me, and simply praying "Jesus" at any time is a wonderful prayer and help.

Prayer helps me to experience God's presence during the day. Simply turning my attention to God has great effect.

How can our readers better incorporate prayer into their lives?

First of all, bring your awareness of our loving, true, faithful, merciful and powerful God to your mind and heart. Often a scripture passage or written prayer may be especially helpful.

Find a word, such as "Jesus," "Spirit," or "Love," that is meaningful and assists you to quickly tune into God. The word can be



Sr. Mary Frances Kluss

good for any time of the day and can help you to be a prayerful presence.

Eucharist and other types of communal prayer are not always possible, but they are a great help. Praying at different times of the day as it fits into your own schedule is also a wonderful way to meet with God.

God is available at any time. God loves us and is happy to help us in

any way that is valuable to us – through books, a priest, minister or a spiritual director.

How has prayer, especially with the monastic community, changed you?

Community prayer helps me, profoundly, to be about more than just me. It creates a much more meaningful and enriching life for me.

Prayer assists me in making good choices, such as how to use my talents, resources and gifts so that I can be more in tune with God and of better service.

Prayer has changed me, slowly over time, to be more aware of God, of others, of my own person and my call from God. It makes me aware of creation and the deeper connections among all of us in the universe.

Adventures in Prayer

by Sr. Maria Elena Schaefers

For most of us “cradle Catholics” prayer has always been present in our lives. Growing up we said prayers before meals and at night before going to bed. At certain times of the year, or for special needs, we prayed the Rosary together as a family.

In school my friends and I frequently stopped by the parish church after classes for a visit and began going to daily Mass. These activities helped me to include God into my daily life with short prayers of thanksgiving, petition, and forgiveness.

During my formation at St. Gertrude’s, I was introduced to the Divine Office, which is the official prayer of the Catholic church. We learned *lectio* – Bible readings and reflection – as an important part of our day.

I spent many years in San Juan Bautista Parish in Cali, Colombia, working with the Idaho priests who ministered there. We were



Sr. Maria Elena Schaefers

located in one of the very poorest areas of Cali. The people there faced lives of hunger, sickness and many serious needs. Again and again we heard testimonies of God’s providence – how God had stretched the rice in the pot to feed the family, or how God had helped a father find work that didn’t pay much but fed the family each day.

Once at a weekly prayer meeting we all asked God to make “everything come out all right” for a man who faced delicate surgery to remove nodules on his vocal chords. The next week he was back to tell us of his miracle. Just as the surgeon began to make the first incision, the nodules loosened and exited by themselves. We had prayed that everything would “come out all right” but we hadn’t meant it that way!

The years in Cali taught me about God’s power for and interest in my daily life. Experience confirms that the Lord wants a relationship with us, and helps us have an ever deeper relationship with God.

Working here in the parish in Rupert I visit the sick, the dying, the grieving, the shut-ins, and families. We pray together for their needs. We thank the Lord for favors received. This is a practical way to include the Lord in daily life, to learn to have a “real life” relationship with the Lord. This is also the most important thing I teach in the religion classes with the high school groups.

Prayer of any kind makes our lives a real adventure with the Lord. It stretches our lives in ways that we could never have imagined.

I have been so enriched praying with my family, my monastic community, the people I have lived and worked with. I shall always be grateful to the Lord for having taken me on this adventure.

In Touch, from page 1

As a Benedictine sister I pray formally with my community three times each day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening. When we pray the prayer of the church, we pray for all people on earth and all of creation. When we chant the psalms, we lift up the whole of humanity to God.

Formal prayer is powerful and healing. I have personally experienced inner healing during communal prayer. At those times, I have felt the love and support of the whole group chanting, which is an awesome experience.

Prayer is what we are all about as monastic women. What would the community look like if it didn’t pray together? I think we would fall apart. It is like the saying goes that “the family that prays together stays together.”

I know that God wants each one of us to be in relationship with our great awesome creator. Prayer is simply *talking* and *listening* to God. We must remember that God loves us very much. Regardless of what we have or have not done, God *wants* to keep in touch with us.

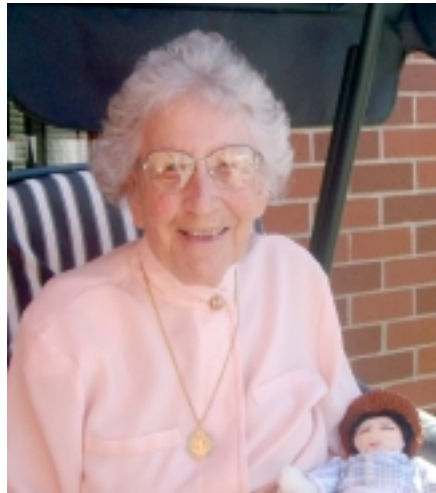
It can be difficult to begin a systematic prayer life, but I would start by talking to God each night about the day. To keep it meaningful, try a variety of prayer forms such as using a scripture passage, music, or journaling.

Pray often. Remember that a big part of prayer is listening. Sit in the quiet presence of God and “listen with the ear of your heart.” (*Rule of Benedict*, Prologue)

We are all called by God to love and serve one another. You don’t have to be a member of a religious order to pray. God wants to hear from each one of us!

Always Moving Closer to God

Clara Martzen was born in 1911 to one of the few Catholic families in her town. Her parents had immigrated from Luxemborg in 1908 and Clara's father found work as a blacksmith in tiny Winona, ID. Living far from a church, the family rarely attended services. Clara's mother always prayed that the family could move closer to a church.



Sr. Mercedes Martzen and a Polly Bemis doll that she still makes for the museum.

In the 1920's when the family did move closer to town and acquired a car, participating in church activities became easier. Eventually Clara went to St. Gertrude's for religion lessons. While there she began to "get an inkling that religious life was appealing" to her.

Clara's parents were very devout, but when she expressed her interest in becoming a nun, both her parents vehemently disallowed it.

Thinking that was that, Clara entered happily back into her life of work, good times and dancing. Once in a while, however, "when I was plowing in the field, I'd say 'I've got to DO something with my life.'"

When Clara's mother became ill, she spent some time at Our Lady of Consolation Hospital (now St. Mary's) in Cottonwood. During her stay she became acquainted with the sisters and told Clara that it would be fine for Clara to join the monastery.

So Clara did. She became Sr. Mercedes in 1933. It took her father nearly two years to "come around" to the idea, but by then Clara was already a novice.

Sr. Mercedes credits her mother's faith and prayer for her vocation and has never regretted the decision to become a nun.

She admits she had quite a few years to consider her vocation before her mother gave her blessing. Always, throughout her late teens, there were "taps on my shoulder, reminding me of God's call."

Immediately after taking final vows Sr. Mercedes was trained as a nurse.

In the early years she cleaned a lot of bedpans, but eventually she became a labor and delivery nurse. Between 1957 and 1971 Sr. Mercedes helped with 258 deliveries at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood.

"There were lots of babies born after the war," she recalled with a smile.

Sr. Mercedes loved nursing. "You feel so good when you do something good for someone. One gentleman came in for care and I asked him, 'Why not join the church?' He said, 'I can't live up to it.'"

"But when he was dying, he returned to the hospital and received baptism and the sacraments before he died."

Believing that her relationship with God is the best thing about being a monastic, Sr. Mercedes is quick to encourage today's women to look at community life.

"Living in community helps create this deep relationship with God. My consolation now is my life with Jesus in prayer.

"If you are getting tapped on the shoulder like I did, get input from your family and friends. If you are older or have been married, it might be harder, but it works. Just come!"

Vocation News

by Sr. Janet Marie Barnard

God is good to us! We have two women coming as Postulants this month. They will join the other four women in formation – Novices Jean Ihli and Michele Bateman and Postulants Mary Mendez and Carla Fontes.

Cindy Schultz is from Cottonwood, ID, has known the sisters all her life. She comes to us as an RN with training in Therapeutic Touch and Reiki.

Kim Jordan is from Houston, TX. She became acquainted with the community by participating in a Monastic Living Experience five years ago and has continued to visit annually. She has been working for a publishing company.

Please pray for all these women as they move into this new life with us!



Come and See Vocation Events

Reflection and discernment weekends for single women. Pray with the Monastic community and other women exploring religious life.

November 21 - 23, 2003

January 23 - 25, 2003

March 5 - 7, 2004

May 14 - 16, 2004



DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

How many of you got to play in real rivers and lakes and streams during this hot summer? Can anything be more life giving?

Memories of such streams flow into an image of prayer. Prayer stirs up in the human heart a yearning to stand in the main stream of Life, to be washed and refreshed there until one becomes a stream of Life to all around.

We overflow with gratitude that you are such a stream to us!

First, we credit your prayers, encouraging words and financial support for strengthening the stream of new membership in the monastery. From prior issues of *The Canticle* you have already met Novices Jean Ihli and Michele Bateman, and Postulants Mary Mendez and Carla Fontes. We are excited that in October two more women are joining us as postulants as you have already read in Vocation News.

Second, your generous prayers and financial gifts rushed us past our development office goal of \$450,000 for fiscal year 2002. Thank you for this increase in a year when the economy continued to struggle. See the enclosed Stewardship Report for details.

In December we will complete a Readiness Assessment (Feasibility Study) in preparation for a capital campaign to build a conference and spirituality center and renovate the monastery significantly. We continue to count on your prayer and support as we step out in faith to provide space for renewed monastic life, and to create spaces that empower retreatants and guests to stand profoundly awakened to their own Life's call.

You can count on our prayer support. Feel free to request prayer for your intentions via email, phone, or note.

Direct Donations

We recently implemented a program called "Direct Donations" which is an electronic transfer of your donation from your checking or savings account into ours. This program is similar to automatic bill payment and direct debit programs. Instead of paying a bill, however, you will send your gift to the Monastery.

National research indicates that a Direct Donation program reduces the cost to process checks by as much as 11.5 cents per check. Enrollment in this program will stretch your gift even more as we fulfill our mission to the church and world.

Direct Donations are convenient, secure and cost-effective. Call or email today and we will give you all the details.

Bequests and Planned Gifts

Planned gifts are made now to benefit you, the donor, today, and the Monastery at a future, or deferred date. Immediate benefits of a deferred gift may include lifetime, tax-free income; conversion to higher yield investments in your portfolio without the increased tax liability; charitable deduction on income taxes; reduction of probate taxes on your estate; increased retirement savings through tax-exempt trusts; and protection of assets from the costs of a catastrophic accident or illness, or long-term care.

Examples of planned gifts include **charitable gift annuities** which exchange cash, securities, real estate or other assets from the donor to the Monastery in return for a contractual obligation to pay a lifetime income to the donor or the donor's designee; **life insurance policies** naming the Sisters as beneficiaries; and **gifts of appreciated assets**.

Talk to your lawyer or planned giving advisor before making any decisions.



Museum Notes

by Lyle Wirtanen, Director

Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

The museum is looking forward to its annual Fall Lecture Series. The lectures are held in the dining room of the Monastery on Thursday evenings from 7:00 - 8:30 pm. Donations for speaker stipends are gladly accepted.

Oct. 16 History of the Camas Prairie Railroad – with Fred Jabbora. Mr. Jabbora worked for the Camas Prairie Railroad for 45 years. He was a telegraph operator and station agent at every town along the route, except Lapwai. He will discuss the history of the railroad and be available to answer questions.

Oct. 23 The History of Ferry Boats On the Salmon River – with Carolyn Isenhardt. Enjoy a fascinating expedition along the Salmon River that investigates the many ferry boats that operated in several locations.

Oct. 30 Common Courage: Bill Wassmuth, Human Rights and Small-Town Activism – with Andrea Vogt. Ms. Vogt is the author of a new book about speaking out on behalf of human rights. The book grew out of the last public interviews with Northwest human rights activist and former Catholic priest, Bill Wassmuth. A native of Greencreek, ID, Wassmuth died of Lou Gehrig's disease in 2002. Vogt is a north Idaho native and a freelance writer whose work has appeared in various publications including the *National Geographic Traveler*, the Associated Press, and *Der Spiegel*.

Nov. 6 The Ordway Party Crosses the Camas Prairie – with Steve Evans and Allen Pinkham. Mr. Evans and Mr. Pinkham have done extensive research pertaining to the Ordway crossing of the Camas Prairie in 1806. This presentation will add new information on the crossing, as well as on the route followed.

Reflections on 50 Years of Benedictine Life

by Sr. Agnes Reichlin

The best thing about being a Benedictine sister at St. Gertrude's is being one of and with this group of women dedicated to prayer, work, living together and honoring all people and the Earth.

In this relationship I have grown. I have shared in and contributed to the resources of the community. I have done things and gone places I would never dreamed would be possible. The community has challenged, encouraged and supported me.

I believe it was really God who decided that I would join the community. I had contact with the sisters from early childhood and attended high school at St. Gertrude's Academy. One day the P.E. teacher and I were walking and talking when, suddenly, out of my mouth came the words "I am going to enter St. Gertrude's when I finish high school." The words surprised me as much as they did her!

I had always wondered if I had a vocation, and I tried all kinds of ways to ignore the idea. I wanted to be sure that the idea was crazy, a big mistake, and that God really didn't want me to do this with my life. In order to convince God that I didn't want to be a nun, I visited the Sisters of Providence to show the Creator what a bad fit religious life was for me. At the time I thought the most honorable thing I could do was be a mother. And I wanted to be a nurse.

During the year I was a novice at St. Gertrude's I was plagued with the thought that I had made a big mistake. I felt I should be at home helping my mother with my younger brothers and sisters.

I often talked to the chaplain, Father Dominic, about my concerns and he repeatedly assured me that my family was getting along very well without me. While I really didn't want to believe him, I finally gave up asking.



Sr. Agnes Reichlin on her 50th Jubilee in August 2003.

Still assailed by doubts I began to tell myself that the sisters would not accept me. The community would certainly see that I didn't fit in. Amidst this turmoil, however, there were things about community life that I appreciated. I found peace at community prayer. I appreciated the classes. I loved being outside in the woods, the cemetery, the garden and the park. I enjoyed recreation and play time with the group.

When it was time to make profession I was still unsure whether I belonged. When I asked to make profession Mother Eugenia responded by looking deeply through my eyes into my soul and asked, "Is this really what you want?"

And as before, when I told the P.E. teacher I would enter the monastery, a Presence deep inside me spoke to my heart. I knew in *that instant* that this was what God wanted me to do. I answered, "Yes," with the conviction that could only come from God living in me. Since that moment I have had no regrets or doubts about my call to this life.

There have been times that were not easy. I know that these times are God's special invitations to grow, to move from the comfortable and familiar to the new and stretching horizon. Frank Anderson's "Galilee Song" puts it this way:

*Deep within my heart I feel
Voices whispering to me
Words that I can't understand!
Meanings I must clearly hear!
Calling me to follow close
Lest I leave myself behind!
Calling me to walk into
Evening shadows one more time!
So I leave my boats behind!
Leave them on familiar shores!
Set my heart upon the deep!
Follow you again, my Lord!*

I have left a number of boats behind. Always God has given the call and then has been there to support and strengthen me in the journey.

I would encourage any inquiring woman to look gently into her heart, to sit quietly with the stirrings within and to listen peacefully to the God whispering to her. When God's call is sensed by any person, she/he should honor and reverence what is going on, listen and pray to know the truth of it all.

For me, life as a Benedictine of St. Gertrude's has been 50 years of positive, rich and growing LIFE into the FULLNESS OF CHRIST. This growing will continue until I take my last breath and begin to live and dance forever in the presence, light, life and love of God.

Editor's Note: Sr. Agnes is now the Director of Formation. Currently she has six women in formation, four postulants and two novices. Sr. Agnes walks through the years of training and classwork with women, teaching them about monastic life and the Rule of Benedict.

Come Away to a Retreat

A Circle of Women

September 19 - 21, 2003 (Friday, 7:30 PM to Sunday, 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Kathy McFaul

Scripture is rich with stories of women of faith who laughed, cried and prayed with each other. While exploring their stories, we will reflect on the circle of faith-filled women in our own lives. A weekend of prayer, story, sharing and ritual. Bring your sister, mother or friend!

Praying With Women and Men of the Bible

October 17 - 19, 2003 (Friday, 7:30 PM to Sunday, 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Sr. Ruth Fox, OSB

As we ponder the stories of women and men of the Bible, we discover how, when, and why they prayed. We will reflect on the experiences and prayers of biblical people, and find in them models and encouragement for our own prayer.

Sister Ruth Fox is a member of Sacred Heart Monastery, Richardton, ND. She is the director of the Benedictine Spirituality Center at Richardton and writes and speaks on topics related to scripture and spirituality.

Come to the Quiet

January 16 - 23, 2004 (Tuesday, 7:30 PM to Tuesday 1:30 PM)

Directors: Sr. Lillian Englert & Kathy McFaul

A silent individually directed retreat. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community. There will be opportunity for optional faith sharing, creative expression through music, art, body prayer and ritual.

Get Off the Freeway

February 27 - 29, 2004 (Fri. 7:30 PM to Sun. 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Sr. Meg Sass

Change at an ever-faster pace is a constant in our lives. It takes a toll from our personal and shared reservoirs of physical, emotional and spiritual energies. Spend a quiet weekend on the back roads, exploring the spirituality of change, how to limit its demands and how to replenish our energy supplies.



Visit us on the web: www.StGertrudes.org
Email: retreat@stgertrudes.org
outreachretreats@hotmail.com



IDAHO CORP. OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS

Monastery of St. Gertrude

HC 3 Box 121, Cottonwood, ID 83522-9408

Look Inside ...

God Wants YOU!

Always Moving Closer to God:
Sr. Mercedes' Vocation Story

Sr. Agnes Reichlin:
Reflections on 50 Years of
Benedictine Life



Befriend the Earth!

This document is printed on recycled
paper using soy-based inks.

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Permit No. 10
Cottonwood, ID

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

