



Summer 2005

St. Gertrude's Canticle

A Journal of Our Life

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Stay in Touch!

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Spirituality & Retreat Ministry Reaching Out, Sharing Our Lives

by Sr. Teresa Jackson, Outreach Retreats
Coordinator

"Blessings of the Spirit" took on many layers of meaning as our community gathered on Aug. 1st to bless our new Spirit Center.

With the notes of "Bless This Place" ringing through the halls, the beauty of the earth-tone rooms shone as sisters walked with holy water and branch in hand to bless each room. No one could doubt we have been blessed by the Spirit.

But the blessings don't end there. We are profoundly grateful for the blessings of you, our supporters. Your continued commitment and generosity allow us to share our monastic way of life with those who come seeking God's peace and grace. A primary way of doing this is through retreats and outreach ministry.

Monastic spirituality is a call to live a simple, ordinary life focused on God. When most people think of monasteries, they think of silent, cloistered places where people seek to flee the world. The reality, however, is that men and women who live the monastic tradition have always reached out to share their spirituality.

In the 6th century St. Benedict, who taught the importance of hospitality, said a monastery will never be without guests. His observation continues to be true today. Here at the monastery, we welcome a steady flow of nearly 1,200 guests each year coming to share our way of life and spirituality.



A visitor enjoys easy access to Spirit Center's front entrance. This view looks south from the monastery.

*"All guests who present themselves
are to be welcomed as Christ, who said:
'I was a stranger and you
welcomed me.'"*

—Rule of Benedict

With the addition of Spirit Center, we can now reach out and share in more expansive ways. The new building features 22 bedrooms and three conference rooms, as well as some hand-made furnishings, stunning prairie views and a solar energy system.

The new space allows us to welcome more guests and host more than one group at a time. It also allows us to offer retreats targeted for special groups, as well as our popular annual retreats, such as "Come to the Quiet" and "Centering Prayer".

This fall we are offering retreats for church secretaries and women in pastoral leadership, gathering women in similar ministries to share across denominational lines. This winter we will offer our first "fiber-craft" retreat, aimed at knitters and crocheters wishing to integrate their spirituality and love of craft.

See "Outreach" on page 7



Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends,

This *Canticle's* theme is "Outreach"—a call that is deeply rooted in our Judaeo-Christian heritage and in our Benedictine legacy as well.

Many Old Testament stories give inspiring examples of those who reached out to others in spite of their own needs. I am sure you all remember Abraham and his extravagant hospitality to strangers.

Ruth has always been one of my favorite examples of loving outreach. Accompanying her mother-in-law Naomi back to her homeland after both of her sons had died always impressed me as an act of generous outreach, certainly more than what was required of her.

In Jesus we see someone whose entire life was spent reaching out to others. Through his ministry he empowered many to move beyond their fears and limited vision. His invitation to be people for others who engage in causes greater than themselves has echoed through the centuries and continues to inspire others to make a similar commitment.

Nor does St. Benedict overlook the call to be people for others. I love how he puts it in Chapter 72 of his rule: "They [monastics] should each try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience one another's

weaknesses of body or behavior. ... No monastics are to pursue what they judge better for themselves, but instead, what they judge better for someone else."

So, how do we as a community commit ourselves to the happiness and well being of the human family today? How do we determine the direction our outreach will take?

*In Jesus we see someone
whose entire life was spent
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We spent a week last November setting our direction statements for the next six years. We decided as a community to focus our communal and individual energies around four goals:

- 1) Grounded in our contemplative call, we will grow in our global awareness and will actively engage in peace-making and works of justice;
- 2) Seeking God together in community, we will consciously choose a healthy relational style of life that will sustain us;
- 3) Eager to journey with the Gospel as our guide, we will develop and provide structures which will shape, strengthen and exercise the leadership gifts of each member for the good of the community; and
- 4) trusting and embracing God's promise for the future, we will seek creative fi-

nancial options in order to carry out our mission to the world. Exciting and worthwhile challenges, indeed!

As we meet over these next months, we will strategize on how to deepen and strengthen our own inner life, so as to place the fruits of our ongoing transformation in service of the world.

Another dimension of our outreach is each sister's individual ministry. On August 4 we gathered in chapel to ritualize our continued commitment to service. As Prioress, I was deeply touched as each sister came forward to be missioned for service. Each held a deep desire to serve, whether by praying for the needs of the world, domestic service in the community or a ministry reaching out to the needs of the wider community.

Each sister was given a container of soil and some seeds as a reminder to plant the seeds of healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking generously and joyfully.

As I sign off on this letter, I am filled with gratitude for each member of this community, our employees, our oblates, our volunteers, our donors and our friends. I am knowing more each day what a blessing you are. Your outreach is generous, unselfish and never-failing.

Sr. Clarissa

Got Free Time? Give It to a Good Cause

The sisters of St. Gertrude often wear many hats. While their vocation is serving God, their *vacation* often is too. From piano lessons to crocheting to Scottish dance, there's no shortage of talents to share with those in need.

□

"My real job," said **Sr. Placida Wemhoff** with a smile, "is director of maintenance. ... Sewing is a hobby."

When she's not mowing lawns, monitoring operations or tinkering with the boiler, Sr. Placida can often be found in the sewing room, fashioning fabric donated to the monastery into clothes for the poor.

"When some white cloth in various shades, linens, satin and lace came in, I decided to make some baptismal and First Communion gowns," said Sr.

Placida, who has been sewing for families in need for the past 15 or 20 years.

□

Sr. Aelred Oakley's recreation often proves priceless for others, too. Skilled in Scottish dance, Sr. Aelred regularly entertains patients at a Grangeville nursing home with jaunty dance numbers.

"Their faces light up when Sr. Aelred takes the stage and the music starts," Postulant Donna Palm said of the nursing home residents. "It's smiles all around."

□

Novice Mary Mendez has used her gift for knitting for the greater good. Earlier this year, she created a collection of infant wear for premature babies to give to the poor. She also knits baby booties that look like miniature tennis shoes to sell in the monastery gift shop.



Sr. Placida Wemhoff enjoys using her talent for sewing to give joy to those in need.

□

Sr. Jean Ihli devotes her free time to taking the Eucharist to those in our local community who aren't as mobile as they used to be.

In Loving Memory: Sr. Mildred Lustig

Sr. Mildred Lustig, 91, died at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, ID, on May 30, 2005 after a brief illness.

Born Esther Elizabeth Henrietta to Victor George and Mary Elizabeth Jansen Lustig in 1913, Sr. Mildred grew up the fourth of 11 children on a farm near Greencreek, ID.

Her religious devotion began at an early age, when she and her siblings would recite 4,000 Hail Marys on the way to school during Advent. Encouraged by her mother, Esther joined the monastery's formation group in 1931, making profession as Sr. Mildred in 1933.

"My mind was made up so definitely," she once recalled. "I was assured in my soul this was the right decision."

After serving 20 years as a schoolteacher, Sr. Mildred was diagnosed with cancer in 1952. Following treatment and recovery,



Sr. Mildred Lustig

she made a career move into the medical records field, acting as Medical Records Administrator for St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, ID.

"Medical records are vital to the recovery and safety of the patients," said Sr. Mildred, who helped to found and orga-

"We must attempt to bring ourselves into God's presence through prayer, remembrance and spiritual sayings. God's presence is a mighty place to be."

nize the Idaho Medical Record Association (now the Idaho Health Information Management Association). She served terms as vice president, director, and journal editor before her retirement in 1979.

During the next two decades, Sr. Mildred ministered as cook, nurse and companion for several Idaho families.

Always active in her retirement, Sr. Mildred especially enjoyed the monastery's balance of work, relaxation and daily prayer. Above all she wished to live a full life that would benefit the greater good every single day.

Farmway Honors Sr. Bernadette's Service

Mayor and Migrant Village Dedicate Community Center to Beloved Teacher

Farmway Village residents in Caldwell, ID, joined city and county officials June 24 to celebrate the migrant village's 66th anniversary and to surprise beloved teacher Sr. Bernadette Stang with the dedication of a community center named in her honor.

"I am just overwhelmed because I didn't do anything ... honestly," said Sr. Bernadette, upon learning of The Bernadette Stang Community Center. "I don't deserve what you're giving me. It's been everybody's wonderful work."

During the past decade, Sr. Bernadette has coordinated the migrant village's after-school tutoring program for the Caldwell School District, helping countless students graduate high school and go on to college.

In addition to tutoring, Sr. Bernadette also trained volunteers to assist with a variety of community service programs, including English as a Second Language, literacy and GED classes, citizenship, computer and catechism classes, even transporting parents to school conferences.



Seeing students and parents succeed is the highlight of Sr. Bernadette Stang's ministry.

"The program would not have taken off without someone like her," said Warren Taylor, former assistant superintendent of Caldwell Schools. "It needed someone who was dedicated 190 percent and she was. She loves being of service."

Taylor and Stang began working together at Farmway ten years ago, when they recognized a need for a specialized program.

"We found out we had the same sort of dream," said Taylor of Sr. Bernadette's determination to develop the nationally recognized public school program.

"The challenge is to continue to animate, to encourage, to build confidence in the children, to help them see the value in education."

—Sr. Bernadette Stang

"If you are not into divine intervention, then you probably shouldn't hang around Sr. Bernadette," Taylor said.

But the celebration was bittersweet for many of Sr. Bernadette's former students. "We're not happy she's retiring because we really love her and we really need her," said resident Yliana Yado Gonzalez.

Though Sr. Bernadette is retiring, she's not going far. She plans to help other children in the same way by tutoring those in need. Seeing students and parents succeed is the highlight for Sr. Bernadette. Students who go on to college and professional careers, parents who return to say "thank you", and students who come back to volunteer—these are her rewards.

Irish President Tours Seattle Homeless Center

While touring Seattle in May, Irish President Mary McAleese met with some of the most influential leaders in Washington: speaking at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, meeting the mayor of Seattle and addressing the University of Washington president.

Fortunately, she also took time out to learn about Seattle's good works by touring the Matt Talbot Center, where she talked with program residents, volunteers and Sr. Bernie Ternes. During her years of outreach to Seattle's poor, Sr. Bernie helped establish the Matt Talbot Center, a recovery program and treatment center that has ministered to those in need through drug and alcohol treatment services, housing and employment assistance, counseling and literacy training since 1985.

The Matt Talbot Center is named in honor of a Dublin dock worker who was considered a hopeless alcoholic by age 13. He lived in



Sr. Bernie Ternes, right, with Irish President Mary McAleese in May.

poverty, partly because he was so generous to people in need. At 28 Matt Talbot experienced a profound conversion and made a pledge of sobriety to God that lasted until his death 41 years later. Often in church, he preferred to work behind the scenes, wishing to remain quiet and constant before God.

In the same way Matt Talbot's humble service was a role model for others, Sr. Bernie has often been a quiet encourager to those in need through her constant service with organizations, such as Matt Talbot Center, First Service Center, Operation Nightwatch and St. Martin de Porres Shelter.

But don't put Sr. Bernie on a pedestal. For her, service and community outreach are all in a day's work. "My work is not about meeting the president of Ireland," said Sr. Bernie. "It's about serving the poor." No doubt, Matt Talbot would have agreed.

Life's Lesson: One Day at a Time

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

"I was called 'Luella' at home since there were so many 'Catherines' in the family," said Sr. Catherine Manderfeld with a giggle.

Catherine Luella Manderfeld was born October 28, 1917, in Genesee, ID, to Henry Anton and Anna Marie Kambitsch Manderfeld. The eldest of six, Catherine learned responsibility early in life.

"One day when I was in second grade, my mother sent me to town to sell the cream." She was instructed by her mother to endorse the check and buy a spelling book required for school. "So I did," Sr. Catherine remembered matter-of-factly.

Educated by the Benedictine sisters at St. Joseph's school in Genesee, Catherine's transition to St. Gertrude's Academy and into the postulancy was nearly seamless. Life at St. Gertrude's was similar to home – lots of gardening, chores and responsibility.

Tone deaf, Catherine found learning Gregorian chant nearly impossible. "I was something of a cross for Sr. Eugenia, my novice mistress, to bear," Catherine smiled.

Catherine became Sr. Catherine in 1934. At the grand old age of 16, she took her first teaching position in Nez Perce. The priest wanted "someone with a veil. It apparently didn't matter if they had any experience," quipped Sr. Catherine. She taught elementary grades for the next 12 years.

After studying to become a medical lab technician, Sr. Catherine was selected as the physics and higher math teacher at St. Gertrude's Academy. So back to school she went to earn her teaching certificate. Sr. Catherine earned a B.S. in Physics and an M.S. in Secondary Education, with minors in Math and Philosophy.



"I wouldn't have made it without my religious life and community," says Sr. Catherine Manderfeld, looking back on her life at St. Gertrude's.

"I liked biology and the natural sciences best," Sr. Catherine explained. "However, learning physics and math helped me be a better teacher. I had to 'learn' the subjects, just like my students, so I understood what would help them succeed."

In 1977 Sr. Catherine was ready for a break from her 27 years of teaching high school. She became Sr. Alfreda Elsensohn's full-time assistant at the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. With the help of many sisters, Sr. Catherine began making sense of the voluminous data, notes and artifacts, focusing the collection on North Central Idaho. She learned how to display artifacts using "common sense. I am an amateur, no doubt," she admitted.

In 1999 Sr. Catherine and the sisters of St. Gertrude were awarded Idaho's first ever *Esto Perpetua* award for outstanding accomplishments in preserving Idaho's heritage. Not bad for an amateur.

In reviewing her 70 years as a sister, the teacher admitted she learned a lesson: "Life is lived one day at a time; we do what we need to do," said Sr. Catherine. "I am grateful for the way God was able to touch lives through me."

Holy Mamas Hoof It in Relay for Life

Aching feet and a lack of sleep didn't dampen team spirit as the monastery's Holy Mamas (and Son) team took to the track with more than 20 other teams for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life in Grangeville, ID, on July 22.

The team of 15—including sisters, novices, postulants, monastery employees, volunteers, friends and family—raised money, decorated luminaries and took turns trekking around the race track for an 18-hour marathon to honor those who have battled cancer. Survivors kicked off the relay with a celebratory lap around the track.

With a goal of \$15,000, the two-day event, raised more than \$45,000 for cancer research. Sr. Mary Kay Henry received top honors, earning the "Most Money Raised" award for her contribution of \$2,040.

The Holy Mamas also received the team award for "Most Money Raised" for its grand total of more than \$3,640.

Die-hard competitors Novice Carla Fontes and Volunteer Pollyanna Candalot took home a special award (and assorted aches and pains) for walking 16 hours and countless miles during the 18-hour marathon.



The Holy Mamas team included sisters, novices, postulants, monastery employees and volunteers, friends and family—and one employee's son.



DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

More than 8,800 of us will receive this *Canticle*. What if each of us experienced the synergy of the Holy Spirit, urging all of us to think, pray and act on behalf of “life to the full” for all people—and our other brothers and sisters?

As we welcome our new leadership team and open the new Spirit Center, it seems like a good time to renew with you what moves us into the future with vitality.

Our Mission Statement reminds us that “eager to welcome God’s transforming power in ourselves and our world, we seek God together through monastic profession and respond in healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking.”

We in the development office have the privilege of promoting the mission, membership and ministries of the monastery and raising funds to support these core aspects of our life together. That means we get to: tell the story of the monastery; invite others, such as yourselves, to partner with, participate in the activities of and donate to the monastery in order to fulfill our corporate mission; thank you as partners, participants and donors; and keep you informed of the use of your gifts.

I delight in the image one friend presented. “I think the monastery is so important today because you are a box of sanity in an over-busy, crazy and stressful world.”

Here are some ways we invite you to join us in moving toward hospitality, simplicity and peacemaking:

- Participate in our life and ministries by volunteering,
- Revisit the vocations letter we sent you in June and make a gift

to support new members to carry on Benedictine values,

- Support one of our ministries with a gift in honor or memory of a loved one you admire for their generous outreach,
- Sustain our mission and ministries into the future by including us in your will,
- Express your hope for a better world by making us the beneficiary of a life insurance policy,
- Choose another way.

Celebrate with us that we have crossed the \$2 million mark in our capital campaign for Spirit Center, endowments for the Spirituality Ministry and the Historical Museum, and renovations of the monastery. We are still in the initial/quiet phase of the campaign for \$5 million for this three-part project. We count on your prayers and support that God will surprise us with an abundance of major gifts throughout this year.

A Somalian greeting is “God is so good!” The response is “All the time.” YOU are such a witness to that! Thank you! May God bless you in all the ways you reach out to make a better world.

Let’s have some fun! I’d love to have lots of you be storytellers in this column’s next issue. Take a minute to let me know what you would say if a friend asked you, “*Why do you keep connected with St. Gertrude’s? What happens when you go there? Why do you seem so energized when you come back?*”

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Museum Notes

by Lyle Wirtanen, Director
Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

Music lovers will once again have the opportunity to enjoy exclusive performances by world-class guitarist Alfredo Muro.



Last fall the renowned musician delighted audiences with a sold-out performance in the chapel of the Monastery of St. Gertrude as a fund-raiser for the museum.

The public’s response to that cultural event was so gratifying Muro has agreed to return for an encore performance in the chapel, as well as a limited-seating dinner concert in the monastery’s new Spirit Center.

The evening dinner concert is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 30, in the monastery’s new retreat center, next to the museum. Seating for this exclusive event is limited to 80 and will include a gourmet dinner, a debut CD of last year’s performance and a concert by the artist. Reservations are required; tickets are \$50 per person.

Music lovers can enjoy Muro’s chapel performance on Saturday evening, Oct. 1. Seating is limited to 300 with tickets ranging from \$15 to \$25 per person.

For more information on concert tickets, contact the museum at (208) 962-7123.

Take Action: Make a Difference

by Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, Social Justice Coordinator

Prayer is dangerous. Anyone who prays with a sincere and open heart is led in unplanned and uncomfortable ways. Those of you who've spent time with us at the monastery have quickly discovered that our daily schedule is woven around the three times we gather in chapel for communal prayer.

Again and again we hear the clarion call of the scriptures to look beyond ourselves and to heed the agonies and needs of our world. Anyone who is daily immersed in the Word of God cannot help but be an activist.

One of the ways that we live out that challenge is through our Social Justice Office. For the past 15 years, I have been privileged to be the coordinator of that office. Leadership is provided by a Social Justice Committee, consisting of members from both our monastic and oblate communities. Our mission is to lead us all to a deeper awareness of the needs of our world and find ways that we can reach out and respond.

How can we bring about a peace that is based on justice for all? Obviously the first step is knowledge. We cannot act if we are ignorant of circumstances. We employ a variety of methods to educate ourselves on important issues: reading, videos, speakers, networking and the internet. Then flowing from this information, we seek out appropriate ways to respond.

One of the ways we take action is through writing letters and making phone calls to legislators and other officials. A good example of this is our annual Lenten practice of joining with Bread for the World by writing letters to our senators and representative, urging them to support hunger-relief legislation. On Holy Thursday these letters are offered as part of our evening service, blessed and then mailed.

"Outreach" continued from page 1

Another important part of our outreach continues to be taking our retreats on the road, especially during Advent and Lent. During that time of collective reflection, we offer popular two-hour "mini-retreats"

for church groups and service organizations in Idaho, Washington and Montana.

We are planning to add some longer "adult spirituality workshops" that bring a more in-depth look at topics pertaining to growing in our faith.



Social Justice Committee members: (front L-R) Sr. Elisa Martinez, Sr. Bernadette Stang, Oblate Jane Frith; (back L-R) Oblate Alyse Cadez, Sr. Corinne Forsman, Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, Sr. Betty Schumacher.

*"Grounded in our contemplative call,
we will grow in our global awareness
and will actively engage in peace-
making and works of justice."*

—St. Gertrude's Direction Statements

Networking with other organizations that share common values is also an important element of our social justice work. We financially support worthy organizations and participate in their activities whenever possible.

We all recognize there are many areas of injustice, oppression and violence in our world; no one can attend to them all. Consequently, as a community we have felt we could have greater impact by focusing on a particular issue, such as the growing problem of human trafficking or violence against women and children. Committed to education and action, we have joined with other religious communities, as well as the Diocese of Boise, to learn how to raise awareness and help victims. We hope you'll take time to look at the worthy organizations in the Peace and Justice section on our website. Follow the links and find new areas of challenge. We also invite you to join us for prayer vigils in times of special world needs.

Will we make a difference? That's not really the important question. Have we taken action? That's the question God will ask us.

We plan to continue our popular spiritual direction program as we grow in our outreach efforts. We currently have spiritual directors from the monastery visiting Lewiston, Moscow and Coeur d'Alene, ID, on a regular basis, and we hope to expand to other cities.

Come Away to a Retreat

Inn-Terra Eco-Spirituality Sabbatical & Retreats

Aug. 13 - Sept. 13 OR Aug. 13 - Nov. 13, 2005

A time of reflection with Earth's story and our story. Opportunity for one- or three-month sabbatical, or a variety of weekend retreat options. Call (208) 962-3224 for information.

Be Still and Know ...

Sept. 4 - 11, 2005 (Sun. 4 p.m. - Sun. 1:30 p.m.)

Directors: Lillian Englert, O.S.B., Kathy McFaul and others

This silent, directed retreat will explore ways to come into contemplative awareness by drawing on classical traditions, as well as more contemporary, earth-centered consciousness.

The Universe is Dancing: Where Are My Shoes?

Sept. 30 - Oct. 6, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Thurs. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Mary Kay Henry, O.S.B.

Explore how we human beings can move in harmony with ourselves, other humans, nature and God. Based on the video series *The Earth's Imagination* by Dr. Brian Swimme.

Playing & Praying With the New Story of the Universe

Oct. 14-18, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Tues. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Jane Comerford, CSJ

New understandings of science and religion are revolutionizing traditional faith. New images of God and ourselves are emerging. This interactive retreat combines aspects of the *New Story of the Universe* taught by Fr. Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme.

Christian Faith & the New Cosmology

Oct. 21 - 27, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Thurs. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Diarmuid O'Murchu, M.S.C.

As our consciousness expands through our new understanding of creation, the journey of our Christian faith moves to new levels of understanding and engagement.



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www.StGertrudes.org
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Holy Mamas Hoof It
in Relay for Life

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to a Good Cause

Life's Lesson: One Day
at a Time



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