



Winter 2005

St. Gertrude's Canticle

A Journal of Our Life

Look Inside

God's Greatest Gift 3

Living Monument 4

Recipe for Life 5

Developments 6

Grateful for Good Food, Friends

by Sr. Michele Bateman,
Kitchen Manager

Of the four seasons, fall seems to be the season of abundance from our friends and the Earth. From the colorful half-gallons of fruit and vegetables richly lining pantry shelves to boxes of walnuts or occasional gifts of steak or salmon, our gardens and our friends have been so generous to us.

All creation is the abundant table of God to be shared. In the words of John Dominic Crossan, "It is in our food and drink offered equally to everyone that the presence of God and Jesus is found ... a sacred rite and liturgical worship."

We are grateful to so many people who help us set an abundant table for all who gather at the monastery. From generous friends and family who share their harvest with us to the faithful service of our local suppliers, such as Gary and Joe Riener from Riener's Grocery, Sonnen Meats, and Dean Leachman from Lewiston Seafood.

We are also extremely thankful to the Knights of Columbus and other groups and individuals who often bless us with their generosity. When we have the opportunity, we share these gifts with our guests, employees and volunteers.

We work hard to be good stewards of these gifts as well as the abundance from our gardens and fields. Each year we select fruits and vegetables from our gardens to enter in the Idaho County Fair.



A donation of fresh pears prompts a canning party at the monastery.

The money we receive from the winning ribbons is used to purchase seeds for next year's planting.

The care and commitment of so many goes into the harvesting, processing and cooking of the season's yields. During the summer and early fall, employees Sandy Enneking and C.J. and Taylor Rieman joined the women of our Formation team and other volunteers to bring in the harvest.

Sr. Wilma Schlangen oversees the processing and canning in the monastery's Old Kitchen while the cooks prepare and serve delicious meals each day. I extend many thanks and compliments from sisters and guests to our monastery cooks – Jeannette Nuxoll, Dolores Enneking and Bonnie Gehring, who are so loyal in their service and

See "Good Food" on page 5

Stay in Touch!

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Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends,

Autumn leaves are piled up everywhere and snowflakes are coming down in limitless number! A very good setting in which to reflect upon abundance.

To find abundance we need only look up, around, about and within us! “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them,” said the Lord to Abram in a vision. [Genesis 15:5]

Closer to earth, we have just experienced another harvest – a multitude of flowers to delight us, and fruit, vegetables and grain to sustain us. It was no stingy hand that provided seed, soil and sunshine to produce these harvests!

Looking within, we hold the potential to develop and live from generous hearts. Our lives give us the opportunity to produce inner abundance.

I love the Gospel story of the widow who gave her last coin. She was praised for giving out of her need. The poet Kahlil Gibran describes such giving thusly: “Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.”

Two years ago at the Thanksgiving Ecumenical Prayer Service at St. John’s Cathedral in Boise, Bishop Mike Driscoll shared with us a reflection entitled, “Perspective Adjustment,” which is reprinted in the box at right.

This is another way to think about the abundance that so many of us enjoy. From freedom to food, we are very blessed, and I know that I tend to take this all for granted.

The holiday seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas call for reflection. What are the gifts that we have received? What is the abundance that we have inherited? What do we take for granted?

Let us take time to ponder where our abundance might be connected with the scarcity others experience. Let us stand in that intersection with our prayer, our charity and our action to do what we can to change structures that keep scarcity the common experience of two-thirds of the world.

St. Benedict reminds us in “The Tools of Good Works” [RB 4] that we are to “...relieve the lot of the poor.” Sister Joan Chittister’s commentary on this chapter exhorts: “The monastic heart ... is to be engaged in the great Christian enterprise of acting for others in the place of God.”

What better time than the holidays to look outward, see the needs, let our generosity be stirred and our abundance shared? Not just for a season but as a way of life.

No matter the season, you, our friends, donors, oblates, volunteers and families, are truly our abundance.

Clarissa Goekse

Perspective Adjustment

It is the season for giving thanks ... this is a nice reminder.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death, you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75 percent of this world.

If you have money in the bank, cash in your wallet and spare change in a dish, you are among the top 8 percent of the world’s wealthy.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than the 2 billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

As you count your blessings, think of how you can use your good fortune to bless someone else in need.

Giving Thanks for God's Greatest Gift

by Sr. Claudia Rae Braun

At this time of year, it is a natural to think of God's abundance and gratitude. All around us, we see abundance in our lives and we are grateful.

All that we receive is gift – the support of friends and benefactors, a comfortable home, gifts of food and clothing, good health and health care, opportunities for education and ministry, a growing formation group, enthusiastic volunteers and dedicated employees.

Gratitude is the appropriate response for abundance in my book. It is not what is given to us but what we do with these gifts that really matters. Scripture challenges all of us to use our abundance (earthly treasures) to build up the kingdom of God and to spread His love to all in need.

The question we have to ask ourselves is how best to do this. With all of the recent disasters in the world there have been many opportunities to share with those in need.



Sr. Claudia Rae Braun coordinates pastoral services at St. Benedict's Family Medical Center in Jerome, ID.

How can we live simple lives, be responsible with our finances, and give to the poor as the Lord leads us?

A simple, yet powerful way to share our abundance with others is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we can give is our attention. A loving silence is more powerful for healing than the most well-intentioned words. This is the gift of presence, of being present to others. With

gratitude we accept presence, and from our abundance we offer presence. Healing presence can make an encounter sacred.

One of God's many blessings to us – part of our abundance – is the Incarnation, Emmanuel, God with us. Each year we prepare for this great event for humankind during the Advent Season.

Christmas celebrates the ultimate gift – God's priceless gift of His only Son to the whole world. Out of God's abundance humankind received its greatest Gift.

In gratitude we accept this Gift. Our faith, our hope and our love are the responses that we give as we show our gratitude. We develop our own abundance as we model our lives on the life of Jesus. ALL we receive is GIFT!

If we live in such a way that ALL we receive is GIFT, we are living a life of abundance with gratitude.

Sr. Mary Forman Celebrates Book Release

Sr. Mary Forman, Ph.D., celebrated the publication of her new book *Praying with the Desert Mothers* with a book signing at the monastery, her home community in Cottonwood on November 12.

An assistant professor of monastic studies in Collegeville, MN, Sr. Mary delves into the wisdom of the fourth- and fifth-century desert mothers in the Mediterranean region, known as *ammas* (spiritual mothers), who were founders of early Christian communities.

Praying with the Desert Mothers introduces the lives, sayings, and stories of these remarkable spiritual elders. For each topic a true story is drawn from a modern person's experience of seeking God. Sr. Mary incorporates her own experience of living in community at St. Gertrude's in her storytelling.



Sr. Mary Forman signs copies of her new book *Praying with the Desert Mothers* at the monastery in November.

This tapestry of stories of the desert *ammas* is woven together with theological insights, discussion of genres of literature, historical views on women, and reflective approaches to the wisdom tradition. *Praying with the Desert Mothers* combines scholarship and reflection for praying, meditating, and living the wisdom of spiritual practices today.

"I would be grateful for this book if it simply provided insight into the neglected world of the desert mothers," says author Kathleen

Norris. "But in this appealing blend of scholarship and personal narrative, Mary Forman has done much more. ... She has brought these ancient monastic women to life, and allowed the reader to see how their profound spiritual wisdom might apply to life today."

Gifts Take Root in Forest's Living Monument

by Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, Forest Manager

"Shout for joy, mountains, and every tree of the forest! Our God is great indeed!"

Isaiah 44:23

The abundant gifts of God are all around us. We have only to open our eyes to see and our hearts to praise. My personal preference is a simple walk through the woods.

There I see the love of God expressed in so many ways – trees and flowers, animals and birds, color and sound. Truly God has made us part of a creation overflowing with variety and beauty.

Through the years our monastery has acquired a substantial acreage of land, which we see as both a blessing and a responsibility. We believe it is the part of this planet that God is asking us to love and steward.

The largest piece is the 880 acres of forest land on Cottonwood Butte. This land was purchased from the monks of St. Michael's Monastery when they left this area in the 1920s. At that time the sisters were interested primarily in the water from the springs on the land – the only source of water for the monastery and the high school until the mid-1980s.

We have all benefited from the abundant natural resources found on this land. In the



Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth surveys a growing seedling. The monastery has planted more than 89,000 seedlings as part of its forest management plan.

late 1950s income from logging helped the community build the high school gymnasium and St. Mary's Hospital.

In the past 15 years we have become more aware of the impact our activities have on the health and vitality of these woods. We hired a forest management company to help us write a long-term plan. Our ultimate goal is a sustainable forest that will continue to provide us with a source of income, as well as preserve the wildlife habitat and protect the water quality.

Our major concern was the heavy growth of grand fir, which had become stagnant

and diseased. We have learned that this is not the best species for the area, especially in years of limited rainfall. So we have worked at clearing out the sections of dying grand fir.

Our next step was to plant in ponderosa pine, western white pine and western larch, species better suited to this climate. To date, we have planted 89,000 seedlings with 20,000 more planned for next spring and 15,000 on order for the spring of 2007.

To help cover the cost of these plantings, we established a fund and asked if people would be willing to help us with this project.

Speaking of abundance! Your response was overwhelming. More than 1,300 people have donated to this fund, many asking us to plant the trees in memory or in honor of a loved one. With awe we realize that our newly growing forest is a living monument to 964 individuals who have been important in your lives.

It is exciting for me as I walk through these newly planted areas to see the trees taking root and reaching for the sunshine, thanks to your generosity. From the bottom of my heart and in the name of community, I thank you for your gifts of abundance.

Sr. Jean Lalande On Road to Recovery After Accident

Sr. Jean Lalande, former prioress of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, expresses her gratitude for continued prayer as she recovers from a recent car accident.

"Thanks for the prayers, love, flowers, notes and thoughts," says Sr. Jean.

"Through all these days I keep turning to you! Thanks for your unfailing support."

Returning to Cottonwood after a visit to Bismarck, ND, Sr. Jean was involved in a collision on November 2. She suffered broken ribs and bruising, and was treated

at a Spokane hospital before being transferred to a rehab facility. She returned to the monastery in late November.

While the recovery process is slow and painful, Sr. Jean is making progress and happy to be with her home community.

Recipe for Life: Work Hard, Pray Hard

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

Sr. Wilma was the fourth of 13 children born to Jacob and Catherine Bragelmann Schlangen, in Richmond, MN. Named Hildegard, she spoke German until she entered first grade in the public school near home.

Born to a farming family, she and her siblings had cows to milk and chickens and pigs to feed before and after school, plus inside housework and cooking. These are the years Sr. Wilma learned how to seed and plant and preserve the fruits of the garden – her ministry at the monastery for most of her years.

Deeply attracted to three of her aunts who were Benedictine sisters at St. Benedict's in Duluth, MN, Sr. Wilma applied for entrance into the convent. Turned down because of a birth defect, she applied to several other communities over the next four years. The results were the same at each convent.

"I shed many tears," she recalled. "It was hard on my parents, too, to see me rejected over and over for something I couldn't help."

When she was 21, she met two sisters from St. Gertrude's who were visiting relatives nearby. "They encouraged me to apply to St. Gertrude's," Wilma remembered. "I applied and, even after seeing my photo, Mother Scholastica accepted me."

Hildegard Schlangen became Sr. Wilhelmina on March 21, 1939. Later, "I took the HEL out of my name" and became Wilma, she quipped.

Her blood sister, Eleanor (Sr. Florentine) transferred her membership from the Duluth convent and entered St. Gertrude's with Sr. Wilma. Their younger sister Frances (Sr. Cyrilla) entered five years later saying, "As long as St. Benedict's wouldn't accept you, I won't go there either, but will follow you." Lucky us!

Sr. Wilma believes God was testing her vocation during those long years of being told "no". She has never regretted her decision to come to St. Gertrude's.



Sr. Wilma Schlangen coordinates the canning of fruits and vegetables for the monastery and makes wonderful jams and preserves.

"The balance of working hard and praying hard appealed to me then, and still appeals to me," Sr. Wilma said with conviction.

During her years at the monastery, Sr. Wilma has primarily worked in the gardens and kitchens. From 1951 to 1959 she ministered at St. Martin's in Lacey, WA, as kitchen director for more than 500 students and 80 priests, plus brothers.

She also worked in the kitchen at St. Benedict's Hospital in Jerome, ID, and in the laundry at St. Valentine's in Wendell, ID.

She became responsible for the monastery gardens in 1987 and has been learning how to retire since 2002.

"I am blessed to be able to work in the great outdoors where Creation comes alive."

"As I get older, I am falling in love with Jesus, who is my All," says Sr. Wilma. "I am learning how to sit still, pray and just 'be' with God, even in the prime time of the day. I have had very few dull moments in my life because God seems very close to me."

"Good Food" continued

accomplish so much in moments that can be very taxing.

"In the sharing of food we come closer to God," observes Diarmuid O'Murchu in his book *Reclaiming Spirituality*. When we eat mindfully, we are aware that a sacrifice has

been made of a living presence in order for us to live. In the literal sense of the word, "sacrifice" means "to make something sacred". This is evident not only when we celebrate our Eucharist, but when we share meals with one another and our guests at our Earth's "table of plenty".



Monastery gardens yielded fresh produce for the county fair.



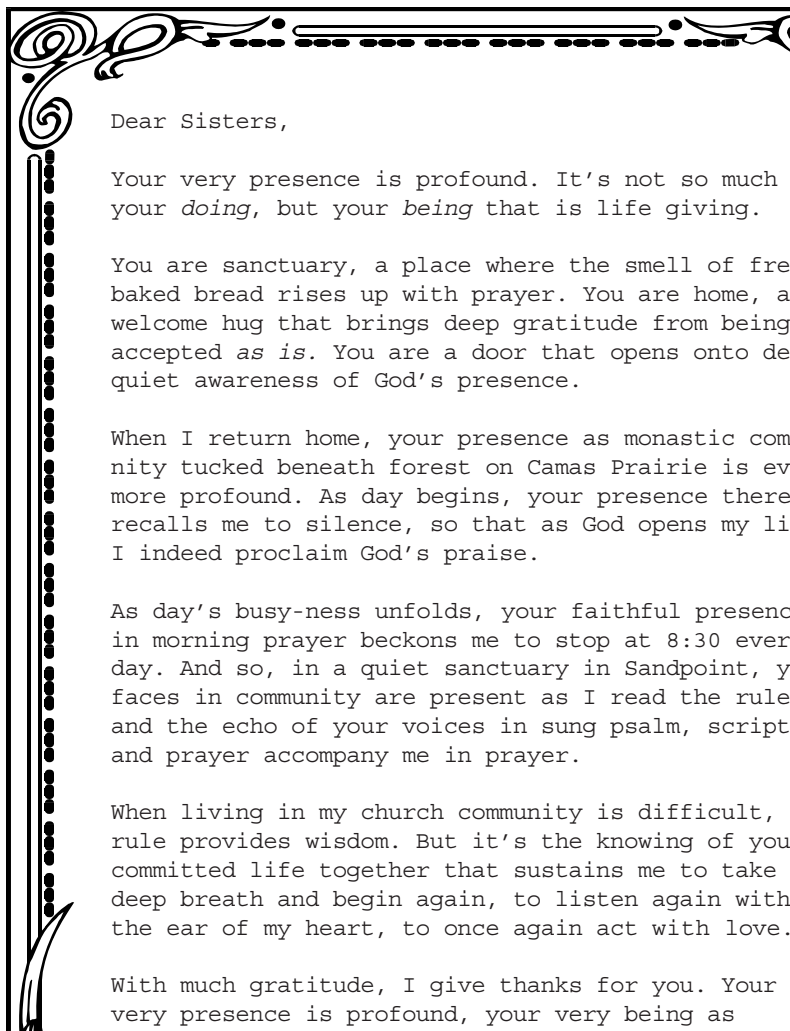
DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

I join in the chorus of this *Canticle*: Thank you for your abundant goodness! The enclosed Stewardship Report thanks you for your generosity through June, 2005. Total gifts to the \$5 million capital campaign are past \$2.9 million as of today.

In the last issue I invited readers to share their connections with St. Gertrude's. The

responses are all about relationships. Marsha Cox Graham, an artist and attorney whom I taught in 7th grade, said simply: "Why do I keep connected with St. Gertrude's? That is easy – you. All those years ago, you reached out and touched the heart of a girl and she still remembers." Below is another response, and more will follow in coming issues.



Dear Sisters,

Your very presence is profound. It's not so much your *doing*, but your *being* that is life giving.

You are sanctuary, a place where the smell of fresh baked bread rises up with prayer. You are home, a welcome hug that brings deep gratitude from being accepted *as is*. You are a door that opens onto deep, quiet awareness of God's presence.

When I return home, your presence as monastic community tucked beneath forest on Camas Prairie is even more profound. As day begins, your presence there recalls me to silence, so that as God opens my lips, I indeed proclaim God's praise.

As day's busy-ness unfolds, your faithful presence in morning prayer beckons me to stop at 8:30 every day. And so, in a quiet sanctuary in Sandpoint, your faces in community are present as I read the rule and the echo of your voices in sung psalm, scripture and prayer accompany me in prayer.

When living in my church community is difficult, the rule provides wisdom. But it's the knowing of your committed life together that sustains me to take a deep breath and begin again, to listen again with the ear of my heart, to once again act with love.

With much gratitude, I give thanks for you. Your very presence is profound, your very being as community is life giving.

In gratitude,
Nancy Copeland-Payton

Making News

Bishop Michael Driscoll and the Catholic Education Ministries staff presented a special ministry award to **Sr. Clarissa Goeckner** on Sept. 25 at this year's Diocesan Fall Conference in Boise, ID.

Sr. Clarissa Goeckner, who was recently elected prioress of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, served 13 years in the Catholic Education Ministries Office as coordinator of children's and family catechesis. The last year she was Catholic Education Ministries director.

In presenting the special award, **Sr. Betty Schumacher** said, Sr. Clarissa "is known by her gracious and warm smile and welcoming presence. She is known by her deep sense of compassion and care for each of us individually and as a parish community. ... She has a deep commitment to the church and the people of Idaho."

Sr. Corrine Forsman recently joined the staff of St. Mary's Hospital and Clearwater Valley Hospital and Clinics as their Mission Integration Director. She replaces **Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski**, who is serving as Director of Spirit Center at St. Gertrude's Monastery, Cottonwood.

The Monastery of St. Gertrude and its new **Spirit Center** were featured in the November/December issue of AARP magazine as part of a feature on retreat destinations. "It's just such a nourishing atmosphere," says **Nancy Copeland-Payton**, a Presbyterian pastor from Sandpoint, ID, who makes retreats at the monastery five or six times a year.

Oblate Jane Frith represented the Monastery of St. Gertrude as a delegate to the first World Congress for Benedictine Oblates in Rome, Italy, in September. Frith, who has been an oblate since the program began in 1988, was one of 60 delegates from 150 monasteries in the United States.

'Tis the Season for Volunteering

What has four heads, eight legs and is coming out of the wood-work? What can rake horse chestnuts, preserve peaches, sweep floors, wash pots, answer phones and help retreat guests all at the same time?

Volunteers! The monastery has a very active volunteer program, and this fall it's overflowing with abundance.

Four women of varied ages and backgrounds from different parts of the country share something in common – they live on the monastery's top floor and work each day to help the monastery run smoothly.

"I enjoy being of service, and life with the sisters is so peaceful," says Marie Vergata, a retiree from Tucson, AZ, who volunteers throughout the year with organizations such as the National Parks service and wildlife refuges.

Volunteers may come for a weekend, a month or even a year, depending on the need. Kim Sohrakoff of Slate Creek, ID, has been indispensable during her six-week stay by pitching in with the Housekeeping Department.

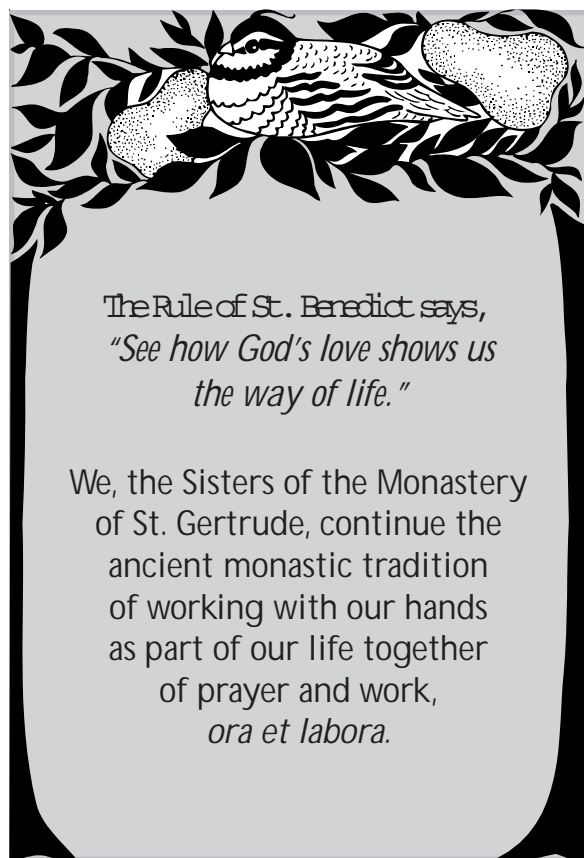
Edrea Eisenhauer of Boise, ID, is another familiar face. A former sister at St. Gertrude's, Edrea is devoting a month this fall to volunteer in Spirit Center during the busy retreat season.



Volunteers Carla Robinson, left, and Kim Sohrakoff help dry pots and pans alongside the sisters after the mid-day meal at the monastery.

Carla Robinson of Austin, TX, enjoyed volunteering in August 2004 so much that she returned for a longer stay to help out in the Development Department.

"We are fortunate to have many enthusiastic volunteers," says Sr. Mary Geis, House Coordinator. "It's wonderful that they enjoy sharing their talents with us."



The Rule of St. Benedict says,
*"See how God's love shows us
the way of life."*

We, the Sisters of the Monastery
of St. Gertrude, continue the
ancient monastic tradition
of working with our hands
as part of our life together
of prayer and work,
ora et labora.

Monastery Gifts

Here at the monastery we have several artisans practicing a variety of "crafts" that may tempt your Christmas-shopping self! Consider some of our online gifts – they're sure to brighten, lighten or enlighten the recipient's spirit!

Log on to www.StGertrudes.org and click the **Book and Gift Shop** link.

✦ Select **Handcrafted Items** for



- Icons, "Saint" Rocks and Stained Glass
- Hand-made Candles by Sr. Valine
- Crafted Soaps, Lip Balm, Healing Salve
- "Monastery Lights" Custom Candles

✦ Select **"From the Monastery Well"** for Gospel reflections

✦ Select **Bookbinding** to repair treasured books

✦ Select **Souvenir Items** for St. Gertrude's T-shirts or coffee mugs

Come Away to a Retreat

Come to the Quiet

Jan. 20 - 27, 2006 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Fri. 1:30 p.m.)

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

A silent, individually directed retreat. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community. The retreat differs in content each time but includes optional faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual.

Praying With Disciples: Tools for Disciples

Feb. 10 - 12, 2006 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Sun. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Meg Sass, OSB

Jesus gave his 12 Apostles a number of ways to pray and "tools" to use to follow Him. We, too, are called to follow; these tools help us as well. (Also Saturday only option)

Finding God in Simple Ways

Feb. 24 - 26, 2006 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Sun. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Carol Ann Wassmuth, O.S.B.

Begin Lent by exploring the how's and why's of a simpler lifestyle. In light of global poverty and planet degradation, how does one live the gospel message of trust and caring?

Praying With Prophets: Urged By Truth

March 17 - 19, 2006 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Sun. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Mary Kay Henry, OSB

Prophets are men and women who experience God's Spirit pushing them to proclaim God's word to the people. What constitutes a prophet? Are you one? (Also Saturday only option)

A Gift of Forgiveness - A Gift to Yourself

March 31 - April 2, 2006 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Sun. 1:30 p.m.)

Presenter: Barbara Jean Glodowski, OSB

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a choice. This retreat will explore the need to forgive others in order to free ourselves. We will celebrate the pearls that result from forgiveness.



Visit us on the web:
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IDAHO CORP. OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS

Monastery of St. Gertrude

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Look Inside ...

Giving Thanks for God's
Greatest Gift

Recipe for Life:
Work Hard, Play Hard

'Tis the Season
for Volunteering



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