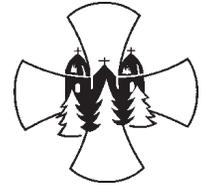


Canticle



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OF ST. GERTRUDE - A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

SUMMER 2006

Obedience In the 2nd Millennium

by Emagene Warren, OSB

When I made my first Profession in 1988, I committed to the monastic promise of obedience. I did not commit to this lightly. As a divorced mother, grandmother, real estate broker and appraiser, I was not interested in being told what and when to do something.

The word "obedience" conjured up images of subjugation and a hierarchical power system: parent to child, boss to employee, president or king to citizens.

I discovered, however, that obedience as described in the *Rule of Benedict* means something completely different. St. Benedict's definition of obedience deals more with listening well and attentively to what is being asked and then discerning, with prayer, the appropriate action.

In fact, St. Benedict begins the Rule with the admonition to listen and obey:

Listen carefully, my child, to my instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from one who loves you; welcome it and faithfully put it into practice. The labor of obedience will bring you back to God from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience. (RB Prologue 1-2)

This illustrates a more meaningful definition of obedience: Listen, discern then act. The word "listen" is repeated again and again in the *Rule*, stressing the importance of being awake and aware in order to hear what is being said, and what is not said.



We all know that listening can be selective.

As a child, when my mother called me to come in from playtime with friends, I often ignored her; I preferred not to listen. Not surprisingly, my own daughter used the same tactic when I asked her to do something she did not relish.

However, listening can be intense as well. When my daughter was allowed to watch a favorite television program such as "The Wizard of Oz," her eyes and ears were glued to the emerging plot. She sang along with Dorothy and cringed in her chair when the wicked witch appeared. She listened intently, with her entire being.

After delving into monastic life I understood that the Prioress and all the sisters would listen and discern with me. Because of the Benedictine interpretation of this promise, I was eager to make the commitment to this community.

We do not promise Obedience alone. We also profess a commitment to Stability and Fidelity to the Monastic way of life. All of these promises lead us to love, to seek God, to love one another and to love our world.

When this love is present, obedience is a way to live with a life directed toward wholeness and joy.

Sr. Emagene ministers as the Volunteer Coordinator and Treasurer at the monastery. She currently (and proudly) boasts three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Greetings From the Prioress

Before I entered the community, my mother told me that the sisters were sometimes required to “plant cabbage plants upside down” to test their obedience. She had great fears for my monastic future, since, in her opinion, I did so poorly obeying her reasonable requests. How would I ever handle unreasonable ones?

There are many accounts of desert ascetics who tested the obedience of newcomers in various ways. It is said that one senior member ordered his disciples to persevere in watering a dead stick!

More tragically, many of us remember the obedience that cult leader Jim Jones exacted of his followers which resulted in the Jonestown tragedy. More than 900 people died because of his command to drink the fruit punch laced with cyanide.

These examples trivialize, distort and misunderstand obedience. They make it seem that obedience is only for the immature, submissive, weak and dependent types. Obedience is seen as an instrument to keep people powerless, oppressed, and submissive to a dominant authority, much to their detriment.

Nothing could be farther from Benedict’s idea of obedience!

In the first place, the *authority* described in the Rule of Benedict is not about power over others. It is a sacred trust to be used for empowering the call, gifts and talents of each other. *Authority* is about “authoring life.” Ideally leadership is supportive, challenging, and open to new possibilities as St. Benedict expresses so beautifully that the weak not be crushed and that the strong be challenged.

The obedience side of authority is a very positive value as well. Diarmuid O’Murchu writes that a life of obedience “is a life lived with alertness to the Spirit and attentiveness to things that really matter. It is about respectful and attentive listening to God, to others, to life’s circumstances ...” Monastic obedience is not about mindlessness and subservience, rather, it is about mindfulness and service.

Having just celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Sisters Chanelle and Jean, I was amazed how obedience challenged them to growth

and fullness of life and how they responded in a variety of services. Sr. Jean was an elementary and high school science teacher, director of formation, retreat director, parish minister, massage therapist and our prioress for six years. Sr. Chanelle served as a nurse in the hospital setting. She was director of surgery, emergency room and obstetrics. She later served as a hospital chaplain for 19 years. Their gifts were constantly called forth for the good of the human family!

The whole community is called to listen together to God’s call as well. Its communal obedience must also seek to find the needs of our times and respond in service.

For example, it was once the work of one sister to keep abreast of social justice issues. In 2005 we decided that the work of peace-making and justice were so crucial that we **MUST** put our communal energies towards these efforts. We stated it this way: “Grounded in our contemplative call, we will grow in our global awareness and will actively engage in peace-making and works of justice. This justice process will involve education, prayer and discerning a response.”

A woman who is here attending a retreat, and who is preparing for monastic profession with her own community writes that

In professing our obedience, we commit to listening and responding to the will of God. We discern the will of God by attention to our monastic prayer practices, the voices of our sisters and prioress, and the cry of the oppressed in our world. Our obedience is lived out through our service to the church and the needs of the world. We strive to continually deepen our ability to listen to that deep interior voice of the Spirit revealing God’s will in the present moment.

This vision of obedience is truly a gift and will open us to the needs of the world.

Clarissa Goeckner

Growing More Vocations

by Sr. Janet Marie Barnard

We remain blessed with women inquiring about monastic life at St. Gertrude's. Two affiliates, one from Emmett, ID, and one from the Boston area, hope to move into the postulancy this fall. Wendy is here as a volunteer for the summer, and Cindy hopes to move to Cottonwood in September. Please pray for these women as they continue to discern their calling to monastic life.



I continue to work with women around the northwest. In mid-August I will attend Camp Perkins as the camp nurse. This is a great way to interact with junior-high age kids in the diocese, plus give kids real-life exposure to religious life.

Thanks to each of you who sent in donations for our vocations appeal. When I read the list of all that your past support has done for our vocations program I am humbled and excited. Five new sisters and more on the way.

- Sr. Teresa Jackson made perpetual profession
- Srs. Jean Ihli, Michele Bateman, Miriam Mendez and Carlotta Maria Fontes made temporary profession
- Postulants Katie Cooper and Donna Palm continue on their formation path, hoping to enter the novitiate this fall
- Novices Cindy Schultz and Kim Marie Jordan expect to make profession in 2007
- Two affiliates are planning to move into the monastery this fall to begin their postulancy.

If you or someone you know might like to explore religious life, write or call and I'll set up a date with you. You are welcome to come alone, or with a friend or two! My phone 208-962-5024; email: vocation@stgertrudes.org; mailing address 465 Keuterville Road, Cottonwood, ID 83522.

Sisters on the Move



Sr. Meg Sass, former subprioress at the monastery, will begin her new ministry as Coordinator for the Parish Life and Faith Formation Office - North & North Central Deaneries, in August. Not only is her title many words, the position itself has a lot of facets.

"The position requires developing adult education and ministry programming for the area parishes, setting up networks and groups within the deaneries to share what's happening around the diocese, and basically bring the diocese to the rural and remote parishes in the region. I hope to be a spokesperson for the two deaneries at the Diocesan office." Two other coordinators cover the remaining deaneries.

Sr. Bernadette Stang is retiring in August and returning home to begin working at Spirit Center. For more than a decade she worked to establish an after-school program at Farmway Village in Caldwell, ID, tutoring children of mostly migrant workers. Her outstanding work was recognized in 2005 by the civic and religious communities who placed her name on the newly built community center.



Once again the monastery sponsored a team in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, held in Grangeville, ID. The **HOLY MAMAS** took to the track on July 21 at 7:00 pm and walked through the night, finally collapsing into a collective heap at 11:30 am on the following day. Sr. Carlotta Maria Fontes received recognition for walking the most laps – 150 for a total of 37.5 miles. Sr. Mary Kay Henry raised the most money for an individual – \$2,675 and still counting. With over 30 teams involved this year the entire event is estimated to have raised more than \$70,000 for cancer research. Not bad for a little town! Go, girls!

see "MOVE" on page 6

Jubilee Is Twice As Nice:

Sr. Jean (Patricia Anne) Lalande and Sr. Chanelle (Margaret Claire) Schuler celebrated their 50th Jubilee together on July 8, 2006, at the Monastery. Professed as Benedictine sisters on June 14, 1956, the two women started out at St. Paul's School in Nampa, ID, with Benedictine sisters as their teachers.

"The sisters fostered my vocation over the years. They were a kind and gentle presence in my life. It wasn't surprising to anyone that I had a vocation," Sr. Jean remembers.

Sr. Jean was an only child of divorced parents, and she was raised by her father and grandmother. She loved and admired her teachers and wanted to become a sister by the end of the 8th grade.

"Dad said I should finish high school first, and was that ever good advice," she recalls. "I loved high school. I was competitive and athletic and played intermural sports as well as joined the tennis team. It was a blast."

Sr. Chanelle's vocation did not surprise anyone either.

"As one of 10 girls in our family (and two boys), my dad always thought one of us would become a nun. It turned out to be me!

"I knew I wanted to be a nurse my whole life," Sr. Chanelle said. "I believe my mother's intercession influenced my decision to become a nun. She died when I was 16 and it was only after her death that I began to think about religious life. And I knew it would be at St. Gertrude's."

Before entering community, Sr. Chanelle took a Marian Year Pilgrimage to Europe, the highlight of which was the canonization of St. Peter Chanel, her religious namesake.

When she returned to Nampa she stayed with one of her sisters to help with a newborn. By early November, Sr. Lucile, the formation director at the monastery, sent her a letter which said, in part, "Cinderella! The clock is striking midnight. You must come now or you will have to wait until next year to join!"

She arrived at the monastery door a few days later in a bright red jumper, high heeled shoes and an orange blazer. Her first week in formation was a colorful one.



Sr. Jean Lalande, former Sr. Marylene Kernan and Sr. Chanelle Schuler stand together for a photo on their profession day in 1956.

As a postulant, Sr. Chanelle was sent to substitute teach for a week. After that experience "I told the formation director that if I had to teach, I was leaving," Sr. Chanelle reminisced. "It was just awful! I knew right then that I had no skill for dealing with children in a classroom, and if that was what the sisters wanted me to do, I could not stay."

"Actually, she was subbing for me," Sr. Jean admitted with a laugh. "I always wanted to be a teacher, to be like the sisters who taught me. I guess it just wasn't in the stars for Sr. Chanelle."

Fortunately, the community had need for both nurses and teachers and both women entered ministries which they loved.

As a PE and science teacher Sr. Jean did not find wearing a habit a hindrance. "I hiked up my skirts, tucked them into my belt, tossed my veil back over my shoulders, and took off running." She received her Bachelor's degree in 1965 and taught at St. Gertrude's Academy and Bishop Kelly High School in Boise until 1977.

While Sr. Jean was getting her toes wet teaching 5th and 6th graders, Sr. Chanelle was off to nursing school in Utah and began a profession that spanned 22 years, mostly on the night shift.

"In those days we – meaning nuns – were only as good as the amount of work we could do ... and I wanted to be a great nun," Sr. Chanelle said with wry shake of her head. "I couldn't say no to any request. Not surprisingly, by 1981 I was completely burned out."

After a much needed break, Sr. Chanelle entered the Credo program at Gonzaga University which focused on spiritual renewal for sisters. For the first time since making profession she had time to immerse herself in theology, which resulted in deep spiritual renewal and growth.

"I was born to please and I learned how to be a servant from my mother's example," Sr. Chanelle said. "Mother was always there for everyone, helping whomever needed it, wherever she was needed."

Good Friends Celebrate 50 Years

“The time spent in renewal helped me understand this about myself. It allowed me time to consider what gifts I have to offer and the best way to use them.”

Sr. Jean faced a transformational time in 1977 when she was asked to give up her teaching to return home and minister as formation director.

The next decade found Sr. Jean not only ministering as formation director at the monastery, but also receiving her Masters degree in Spirituality, working in parish ministry and becoming certified to practice massage therapy.

In 1989 Sr. Jean and her good friend, Carolyn Johnson, started the Body Therapy Clinic, a massage therapy business in Lewiston. “I loved running my own business. My science and physical education background, plus my own contemplative and monastic nature, provided a perfect fit for the business of healing with touch and massage. Massage is a very spiritual occupation; I did not find the transition difficult at all.”

Sr. Jean was elected Prioress in 1999. During her six year term she led the community through visioning meetings that required really listening to one another. These exercises set the stage for choosing life and making the big decision for the future: To build Spirit Center, a 21,800 square foot retreat and conference center.

“During my years as prioress I was grateful to have played a part in developing a team approach to leadership. The job of prioress is too immense for one person.”

And speaking of changes, Sr. Chanelle gave up her nursing career and became a hospital chaplain first at St. Benedicts Medical Center in Jerome, ID, and then at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane, WA. She worked there for over 14 years, finding the ministry rewarding and fulfilling.

“It was a privilege to share times of need, pain and sorrow with patients and their families,” says Sr. Chanelle. “To ease patients’ fears by singing and praying with them, or to accompany them in their final moments of life, these were sacraments, sacred times. These were moments when God was made present to others through me.”

In 2004 Sr. Chanelle officially retired from Sacred Heart and returned home to St. Gertrude’s to oversee the Infirmery and general health care for the sisters.

She enjoys being home and especially loves the communal prayer and daily Eucharist. “As a community we are united in our effort to seek God. Each of us receives the grace that is always there. We are poverty-stricken people without it.

“These 50 years have been a blessing. God was able to touch so many lives through me, and for that I am deeply grateful.

“I can’t imagine myself anywhere else. There is nothing out there that could draw me away from this life.”

Sr. Jean was almost drawn away from this life – literally – in 2005 when she was involved in a serious auto accident. After several weeks in intensive care and time at a rehabilitation facility, she returned home to the monastery to continue her healing.

“I am learning to take it day by day. I find that each and every minute is a sacramental moment. Choosing with each breath to live for God, the earth and others takes courage and faith. Each day I start over, choosing life.

“At this time I am in a waiting mode, waiting for God to make it clear what will be my next challenge in life.”



Sr. Jean Lalande, left, and Sr. Chanelle Schuler after 50 years. Still looking good as ever, and celebrating the blessing of 50 years as Benedictine sisters!

Jubilarians Experience Obedience

Sr. Maria Elena Schaefers and Sr. Valine Kachelmier have been professed sisters at St. Gertrude's for 60 years. Sr. Maria Elena currently ministers at St. John's parish in Boise, and Sr. Valine ministers at the monastery. They were both eager to share their thoughts on monastic obedience and what it has meant to them over their many years as Benedictine women.

Sr. Maria Elena ~

Obedience seems easier now that I have been “doing” this religious life for 60 years. While I find it relatively easy to obey the *Rule of Benedict*, the prior-ess and community, it is always a challenge to really *listen* – to *discern* the will of God for my life.

As a Novice I was assigned to cook breakfast for community. This may not seem like much, but I was not very handy in the kitchen, so for me it was torture! Who knows how many pans of lumpy cereal and burned toast the community had to endure during my Novitiate.

I was gratefully looking forward to giving the job to the next group of Novices after I made profession. But it was not to be. Once I became a sister I was assigned the task again! I couldn't believe it! I think I even cried.

As I look to the future and the next decade of my life, I hope to give God thanks daily for my good health and energy. I expect to continue my ministries for as long as I am able.

I will eventually return to St. Gertrude's in retirement. I expect to take on a more contemplative mode of life and to help with the work around the monastery. Maybe I'll even be asked to cook breakfast every once in a while ...



Sr. Maria Elena Schaefers, left, and Sr. Valine Kachelmier, right, celebrated their 60th anniversaries as monastic women. Prioress Clarissa Goeckner, center, is inspired by their lives of obedience.

Sr. Valine ~

After 60 years as a monastic, I continue to discover the inexpressible delight of love as I progress on the path of God's commandments (*Rule of Benedict*).

Obedience has not always been easy. St. Benedict suggests that we not become fearful as the road of obedience is narrow. He

continues that if we find obedience unfavorable, we should accept it and endure it without weakening or seeking escape.

I discovered the wisdom of this during the four years I taught high school English and Biblical History at St. Gertrude's Academy. Trained to teach elementary grades, I felt like a fish out of water teaching teenagers!

God be praised, however, because prayer and the grace of God came to my assistance largely due to my obedience. And God cannot be outdone in generosity!

Now in retirement, I am enjoying the golden years of good health. I desire to live in greater simplicity, and I want to accept my limitations with graciousness and grow in my prayer life. I want to deepen my appreciation for this community, to cherish my family and friends and to take time for them. And I suppose I will continue to practice the art of obedience to the end, when I reach our everlasting home which will never end.

MOVE from page 3

Srs. Petronilla (pictured on the left) and **Mary Bernard Lieser** were thrilled to visit Minnesota in July on the occasion of the Lieser family officially recognizing its family homestead with a granite monument and commemorative plaque. Their grandparents began the homestead in 1867 in Jacobs Prairie, and it has remained in the family under the Lieser name for 140 years.





DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

On August 6 we Christians celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, that sacred moment when he gifted Peter, James and John with a sustained glimpse of the infinite dazzling light within him – the very light of the Godhead.

On that same day we stand as a human family in silence with the inhabitants of Hiroshima who glimpsed the seemingly infinite dazzling light from within the atomic bombs which blackened their city.

The light of life; the light of death. How do we know which light is urging our choices? I believe that depends on the grace of obedience which means to act out of having listened. Today obedience as “deep listening” is often done through the art of discernment which is a process of praying for the light of clear vision, clarifying what values underlie the issue we are considering, gathering the information needed to look at the issue from many perspectives, letting go of personal agendas and seeking what is best for the common good, and making the decision and living with it to see what kind of fruit it bears.

The *Rule of Benedict* calls the community to this process for all major decisions. As many of you have experienced, this process can increase vitality and long-term effectiveness within families, workplaces, and service organizations as well as here at the monastery.

As Director of Development I see many of you using some form of discernment in choosing where to spend your discretionary dollars. You talk about what values drive your favorite charities, whose lives are bettered by those charities, how you realize your own dreams for a better world by participating in the work of such charities.

As we conclude fiscal year 2006 I am profoundly grateful to you for discerning St. Gertrude’s as a worthy place to invest your gifts, whether of time, talent or treasure. Your generosity empowers us to let the light of life shine through us more brightly. I hope that you experience sharing with us as a joyful way to let your own light shine!

I look forward to visiting with many of you this year to hear what’s happening in your lives, share what’s happening here. I also hope to extend to you an invitation to participate in our capital campaign for Spirit Center, renovations of the monastery, and endowments for retreat ministry and the Historical Museum.

The monastery renovations are underway. Arnzen Building Construction of Cottonwood is installing a larger elevator which will grant access to all the floors in the monastery. They are renovating some of the living and work spaces and replacing the single pane windows with double pane energy-efficient ones. The project is scheduled to be finished by the end of November.



Museum Notes

What is Idaho County’s leading food export? Who counted camas root as a major food item? How do you churn butter? And where does sauerkraut come from?

Learn the answers to these questions and more when *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, a traveling exhibit of the Smithsonian Institution, opens Oct. 21 at the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude.

Key Ingredients examines the evolution of the American kitchen and how our recipes, menus and ceremonies have been directly shaped by our country’s rich immigrant experience.

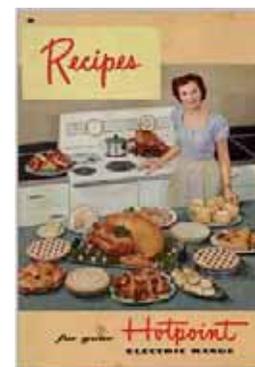
Exploring the connections between Americans and the foods they produce, prepare, preserve, and present at the table – *Key Ingredients* offers a provocative and thoughtful look at the historical,

regional, and social traditions that merge in everyday meals and celebrations.

Key Ingredients will be on exhibit in Spirit Center at the monastery from Oct. 21 through Dec. 2. It will offer creative ways for the Museum to link the local food traditions and specialties of North Central Idaho to the panoramic story told in the exhibit.

Key Ingredients is part of the Museum on Main Street program, a partnership of the Smithsonian Institution and State Humanities Councils. For more information, contact the museum at museum@connectwireless.us or 208-962-2050.

by Carla Robinson



Come Away to a Retreat

Earth Is a Mystic, Full of God

Sept. 1 - 6, 2006 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Wed. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Marya Grathwohl, OSF

Explore ways to live reverently, consciously and compassionately as members of the Earth community. Draw inspiration from the Northern Cheyenne and Crow traditions with whom Grathwohl ministers.

Contemplative Prayer Retreat

Sept. 29 - Oct. 1, 2006 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenters: Evangela Bossert, OSB and Kathy McFaul

An opportunity to learn an approach to contemplative prayer, including guided practice and individual spiritual direction.

God's Passionate Love:

The Story of Creation in Art & Poetry

Oct. 13 - 15, 2006 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenters: Teresa Jackson, OSB and Melanie Weidner

The cosmos was created out of God's passionate love. Do we treat the gift of earth with equally passionate love? Explore this question through art, poetry, science and theology.

Living in the Presence of God

Oct. 20 - 22, 2006 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Abbot Peter Eberle, OSB

Do you desire to deepen your prayer life? Abbot Peter will address praying the psalms, living in the presence of God, going to God as a community and forgiveness.

Come to the Quiet

Jan. 19 - 26, 2007 • June 15 - 22, 2007

Directors: Lillian Englert, OSB and Kathy McFaul

A silent individually directed retreat. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community of women. Weekend-only option available.



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