

Canticle

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OF ST. GERTRUDE - A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



WINTER 2006

Faithful Servant, Faithful Friend

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

When a life makes a “full circle” it resembles that of Fr. Meinrad Schallberger, OSB, chaplain for the Monastery of St. Gertrude and St. Mary’s Hospital in Cottonwood, ID.

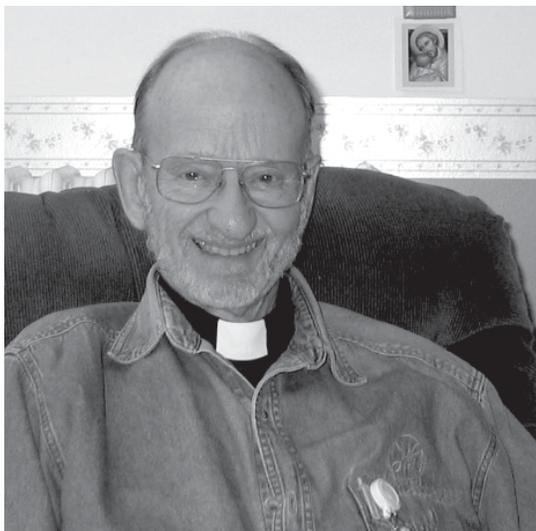
“My dad and his brother came to America from Switzerland directly to St. Gertrude’s. My grandmother knew Mother Hildegard Vogler, so she sent the boys to Cottonwood when they immigrated. Some of my relatives are buried in the Sisters’ cemetery.”

Johann “John” Schallberger was a shoemaker by trade. He heard that cobblers were needed at the monastery in Mt. Angel, Oregon, so he left his brother behind in Cottonwood. Upon his arrival in Oregon, he discovered that the monks only needed a shoe repairman. So instead of shoemaking, John secured work at the Benedictine Press.

Growing up in Mt. Angel with his father an employee of the monastery, Meinrad spent his early years surrounded by monastics and being taught by them. When he decided to enter the monastery in 1957, he was torn between becoming a brother or a priest.

“I’m an introvert and I wasn’t excited about the idea of standing up in front of a parish and giving homilies,” Fr. Meinrad remembers. “But I became a priest because that was what God wanted for me.”

His first parish ministry was in Portland, Oregon. “This was one of the greatest experiences of my life,” Meinrad said. “I learned



Fr. Meinrad Schallberger relaxes in his apartment at the Monastery of St. Gertrude. He appreciates the welcoming hospitality of the people on the Camas Prairie and the Sisters’ feminine spirituality.

there what the experiences and struggles of everyday life are like for people who don’t live in a monastery. I’ll never forget that.”

In 1969 Fr. Meinrad was called back to Mt. Angel Abbey to manage the Benedictine Press print shop. Those were busy years for Fr. Meinrad. He ran the shop 60-hours per week and then travelled to parishes around the state on the weekends to preside at Masses.

“After about a dozen years of this insane schedule, I finally had to ask the Abbot for a weekend off each month, which he gave me.”

The monks had established a priory in Idaho in 1965, now known as the Monastery of the Ascension in Jerome. In 1982 Abbot Bonaventure asked Meinrad if he wanted to move to Idaho. “Which of course, was less a question than a direction,” Fr. Meinrad quipped.

At Ascension Fr. Meinrad continued his weekend parish work, divorce ministry, and experienced “every position in the monastery, including Prior!” In 1999 when Sr. Jean Lalande asked the monks at Ascension to send someone to St. Gertrude’s to be Chaplain, Meinrad threw his hat into the ring.

“Coming full circle, back to the place my father started, is remarkable. I feel at ease here, working as Chaplain for the sisters as well as for the hospital.

“My appointment is made annually, so each September I wonder if it will be time to move on. So far, I’ve been blessed to stay here.”



Greetings From the Prioress

While working for the Diocese, I always made sure I was in Boise for the pre-Christmas performance of Handel's *Messiah*. I waited all year to hear "The Trumpet Shall Sound," which, for me, was the highlight of the evening.

Brad Peters, Principal Trumpet, never disappointed the audience and he made it seem so effortless. But, was it really that easy?

Reading the bios in the brochure which introduced Brad Peters and other Philharmonic artists, I found that no matter which instruments the musicians played, all held one thing in common: faithfulness to hours of practice. Stellar performances did not just happen; these were the result of faithfulness in love to consistent, focused effort.

For some reason, these performances always led me to reflect on my promise of Fidelity to the Monastic Way of Life. I would find myself thinking that if I would work with even half the focus, half the commitment, half the dedication to practice, half the intensity of these musicians, my life would become more effective.

St. Benedict invites us to a similar approach to our journey of life long conversion. Through all the practices that make up our life style – silence, reading, obedience, stability, prayer – there is only one end in mind: to "change the corners of our hearts," eliminating the off notes, so to speak, in order to live lives more in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

Through faithfulness to conversion, faithfulness to emptying our hearts of grudges, pettiness, hatreds, prejudices and smallness of vision, we create room for larger things to happen in and through the symphony of our lives.

Does this promise of faithfulness to the monastic way of life have anything to contribute to our world in 2006?

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of 100 people, there would be:

60 Asians, 12 Europeans, 15 from the Western Hemisphere (9 Latin Americans, 5 North Americans, 1 Oceanian), and 13 Africans.

50 females, 50 males; 80 would be non-white (South American, Asian and Africans), 23 white (North American, European and Oceanian); 67 would be non-Christian, 33 Christian.

20 would earn 89% of the world's wealth.

25 would live in substandard housing; 17 would be unable to read; 13 would suffer from malnutrition; 2 would have a college education; only 4 would own a computer.

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

Stats from 2001 as reported by www.sistergoldenhair.com/actualstats.html

I think so.

Recently a friend gave me the information printed in the side bar. This lists just a few of the present day needs that require focus and commitment.

While these needs are "soul sized," requiring the commitment of many people, the starting point is always individuals taking some small steps towards solutions.

As we formulate pre-Christmas lists of things to do, let us make sure our list includes a way to address one of these issues. Then having found that one issue, let us pursue it with the hard work, focus, intensity and faithfulness of a musician.

Throughout the coming Christmas Season and the upcoming year, may we hold the hopes and hungers, dreams and needs of the entire human family close to our hearts. May we determine in some way, large or small, how to make a much wider circle of abundance and create a world of peace.

Thus we will counterpoint the darkness of hunger, homelessness and inhospitality with a note of hope ringing out beyond the Christmas Season and into the future.

We are deeply grateful for your spiritual, financial and moral support. Our prayers always surround you, dear family and friends, but especially at this beautiful time of year. Even as we pray for you we ask your prayers for us, especially for Sr.

Mary Geis who is undergoing chemotherapy and radiation for uterine cancer and Sr. Mary Kay Henry who is having chemotherapy for fallopian cancer.

May your Christmas Season be happy and blessed in every way!

Clarissa Goeckner

Welcome Novice Katie Cooper

Katie Cooper, mother of two and grandmother of four, stood outside the chapel on the cold evening of the Feast of St. Gertrude and persistently knocked on the door.

Opening the door and letting Katie enter, Prioress Clarissa Goeckner asked her, "What do you want?"

And using the words of the centuries-old formula for becoming a novice, Katie replied, "The mercy of God and admission to the novitiate."

Novice Katie is a retired school teacher, most recently from Coeur d'Alene, ID. Raised in the northeast in the Methodist church, she was always involved in her youth group. The first time she entered a Catholic church, however, she knew she would convert.

"I realize now that when I was a child I had a Benedictine heart. I could sit for hours watching the river and praying.

"Here at the monastery there is a deep sense of community. We are all women who desire to seek God. That is a powerful way of life."



"New members are a sign of hope and life here at St. Gertrude's," says Sr. Clarissa Goeckner, pictured at left. With her, from left to right, are Sr. Agnes Reichlin, Formation Director; Postulant Wendy Olin, Novice Katie Cooper and Postulant Cindy Harris.

Novice Katie joins Novices Kim Marie Jordan and Cindy Schultz in the novitiate. She will spend the next couple of years familiarizing herself with the Benedictine life of prayer, study, reflection, solitude and work.

Postulants Join the Formation Group

Along with the three women in the Novitiate, the monastery is delighted with two new postulants in the formation program.

Postulant Donna Palm was joined by Wendy Olin and Cindy Harris (pictured above) as Postulants this autumn.

Wendy, 54, is originally from Nevada. After joining the Catholic church while in college in the 1970s, she began to explore religious life. She met a sister from St. Gertrude's in the mid 80's and visited the monastery.

In an effort to convince God that she was the wrong girl for the job, Wendy pursued careers in teaching, nursing, long-haul trucking and running to Alaska to work construction.

Finally, with the help of her parish family in Emmett, ID, she decided to quit arguing with and running away from God. She applied to the monastery for admission to the formation program.

Cindy, 53, was born and raised in New Hampshire. A nurse by avocation and training, she spent some time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, South America. As the only RN for 9,000 people, she felt she really made a difference during her time there.

After returning to the states, Cindy continued her nursing career in Massachusetts. She began thinking about religious life in 1994 and began praying that God would make it possible.

In 2002, Cindy noticed an ad in the *National Catholic Reporter* for Sr. Judith Brower's retreat "Discovering the Monk Within." She loved the monastery's quiet and the continual focus on God.

Cindy's circumstances changed and it became possible for her to seriously discern her vocation to religious life. She moved to Cottonwood in August, 2006.

Getting Together: Boarder Reunion

by Angela Uhlorn, OSB

Every year individual classes from St. Gertrude's Academy celebrate with reunions. This past August we hosted our first-ever Boarder Student Reunion, and what an event it was!

We made a diligent search to contact everyone who boarded at the monastery or with local residents from 1960 until the Academy closed in the early 1970s.

Registration applications were sent out and by the first weekend in August over 43 boarders plus spouses and former teachers had registered. Spirit Center was filled to capacity; some guests stayed with family or at local motels in the area.

The students were given a very special welcome by Prioress Clarissa Goeckner; Srs. Carm Ternes and Angela Uhlorn, both of whom had been prefects of the group, also welcomed the participants. Sr. Mary Kay Henry gave a short presentation on what had happened with the sisters in the intervening years.

The rest of the time was spent reconnecting with one another. There were tours of the former St. Gertrude's Academy (now Prai-

rie High School), Spirit Center, Historical Museum at St. Gertrude and the Monastery. Group photos were taken, and a peek at some of the former dorm rooms was arranged.



Former St. Gertrude Academy Boarder Students from the 1960s and 70s gathered in August for a reunion at the monastery.

The Reunion ended Sunday morning with a shared Mass in the monastery's chapel. Once all the good-byes were said and addresses were exchanged, the Monastery Campus returned to its usual pace of quiet contemplation, but with the sisters' hearts filled with gratitude and joy at seeing how God continues to act in the lives of our former students.

Renovations Update

by Mary Geis, OSB



The refectory, covered in plastic, awaiting a new coat of paint.



Two offices undergoing a transformation into a sewing room.

The renovations that began in the monastery in April are nearly complete!

So much has been accomplished, including moving a library and repainting the dining room. But the hallways are still full of furniture looking for homes!

Where did it all come from? Where will it all go?

Nearly 300 windows have been replaced, several walls removed and rebuilt, carpeting laid, a new freezer and cooler installed, gallons of paint applied and a new elevator christened.

When will it all be finished? Soon.

But then again, this is a renovation and around every corner is a surprise ... now where *DID* that sofa go?

Fidelity From On High

by Margie Schmidt, OSB

Back when I was young and had no idea what my life would be like, I made a promise of *Fidelity to the Monastic Way*. That was 41 years ago.

I knew what fidelity was because it was an often practiced, never talked about reality of my life. From faithfulness within families to faithfulness to the Church to faithfulness in helping neighbors who were in need, fidelity colored my upbringing.

When I became a member of the Community of St. Gertrude's, fidelity to the sisters and to the monastic way of life was always important. Throughout the years there have been many challenges and struggles. The experience of fidelity from my early years at home and at the Monastery helped me realize God's faithfulness to me in my own journey.

Fidelity to the monastic way of life is simply fidelity to the Gospel way of life: faithfulness to the Church, to the local Community, to the poor and to the environment. Christ was faithful to his way of life; he accepted the truth about himself and in the end this led to his death. He lived a life of absolute fidelity to his Father, accepting all and in return giving all.

Fidelity is the acceptance of the truth about ourselves, honestly loving who we are. Scripture is very clear that we are to love ourselves because God's love is within us. Who we are is a gift from God because God has made a home within each one of us. How can we not love the God who lives within us?



Sr. Margie Schmidt

Fidelity to the truth about ourselves gives us great peace and freedom to be and do our best, knowing our Gracious God makes up for what we lack. God takes our inadequacies and makes them adequate.

I have been privileged to be a part of many parish communities throughout the Diocese of Boise. At present I am the Director of Pastoral Care at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Lewiston. Along with the other employees I am part of a community that is dedicated to the care and well-being of the sick in the area.

Fidelity to and love of each patient is demonstrated many times each day. There are times when we celebrate the Resurrection, and life is full of joy. There are times when we celebrate the Passion of Christ, and life is dark and painful. In both cases we are challenged to fidelity.

God who is faithful to us initially, enables us in turn to maintain fidelity, because God's irrevocable love is with us in good times and in dark times.

God's concern is not that we do great things, but that we do everything with great love. It's called being faithful to the moment. Whatever we are doing in any given moment, if we do it out of love, we are fulfilling our call to be people of faith.

Fidelity is in its essence a relationship of love. And the love given by God is irrevocable: "*Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.*" (Is. 49:15)

A Christmas Thought

by Petronilla Lieser, OSB

Since my retirement to St. Gertrude's I visit at the North Idaho Correctional Center in Cottonwood each week. I am faithful to this ministry because I see it as one way to make the face of Christ real to men or women who are searching for meaning and a chance to begin a new life. I believe that is the heart of what Christmas means.

The fullness of Christmas reminds them and me that we are not inmates but individuals interested in happiness, singing and looking forward to freedom.

Christmas is a time to release those whom we keep "imprisoned" by our negative thoughts, speech or actions toward them. It is a time to bring the joy of Jesus through positive thoughts and words and actions toward our family, our friends and all the people in our lives.

Thank you, Jesus, for the mutual joy that comes from being friends with those in prison.

For Ever and For What Ever

A vocation story

Ever since she was a small child, Sr. Sylveria Weiand wanted to be a nun.

“Of course, when I got interested in boys, my interest dimmed somewhat,” she stated matter-of-factly.

Sr. Sylveria was born Mary Alice in 1924 in Blue Grass, ND, to Frances Skalsky and Mike Weiand. At age 14, an apprehensive Alice Mary boarded a train and headed for Cottonwood. She planned to join her brother Bill, who worked as a farm hand at St. Gertrude’s.

“It was scary,” she remembers. Traveling alone and away from her family for the first time in her life, Sr. Sylveria felt some trepidation.

Upon her arrival she was placed in classes with the candidates for admission into the convent. It wasn’t until Christmas of 1938, however, that she decided to actually join the monastery.

“It was a Christmas surprise to all my classmates,” Sylveria remembered, flashing her cherubic smile.

Young Alice made profession as Sr. Sylveria in 1941. Until 1956 she worked in a variety of ministries at St. Gertrude’s and Our Lady of Consolation Hospital, focusing especially on dietary and kitchen management.



Sr. Sylveria Weiand

In 1956, she began her ministry in education, teaching primary school for 17 years in Nampa, Pocatello, Rupert, Nezperce and Grangeville. She eventually earned her BA in Elementary Education in 1967.

When she retired from teaching in 1972 she took the position of Resident Manager for Hays House, a place for “status offense” teenage girls. That position lasted until 1976.

Returning home in 1976 Sr. Sylveria has worked in a variety of jobs and positions for the last 30 years, “Wherever they needed help,” she recalled.

At the bottom of an internal interview in 1992, the interviewer commented that “It seems to me Sylveria has listed only half her jobs ... You can ask her for anything, at any time. It is good to have her here at home with us.”

“I love this community. It is strong and brings me strength. I recommend this life to anyone who wants to do something that will last,” Sr. Sylveria said.

Always self-deprecating and a little bit humble, Sr. Sylveria makes light of her years of service, dedicated to God. “After I said ‘Yes’ in 1938, it was forever, and for what ever.”



Museum Notes

by Lyle Wirtanen, Director

It has only been a year but it is time, once again, to begin to replicate clothes from the 40’s and 50’s. It’s Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and Artie Shaw time. It’s time to do the jitterbug, the swing, and the lindy hop. It’s time to relive the music of the big band era at the second annual “Moonlight Serenade”.

On Saturday, April 21, the museum will sponsor this Big Band Dinner Dance at the Greencreek Community Hall. A no-host bar at 6 p.m. with a buffet dinner at 6:30 p.m. will precede music by

the Hog Heaven Big Band from Moscow, ID. As last year, swing-era fashions and shameless showboating on the dance floor are encouraged.

This is a benefit for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$45 per couple. The event is limited to 300 people with tickets available by early February. For more information contact the museum at (208) 962-2050 or by email at museum@connectwireless.us.



DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

From Hi-Fi for sound to Wi-Fi for networking, we human beings are always seeking ways to express “the ideal” with ever greater fidelity. Philanthropically we support organizations that we perceive to have high fidelity to our own top priorities.

We at St. Gertrude’s are both grateful and humbled that so many of you share how our renewed commitment to fidelity to the monastic way of life has become a kind of leaven for you in your own commitment to deep spirituality, compassionate and faithful relationships, and service to others from the powers of healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking.

We experience your support of these mutual values through your prayer, participation in our ministries and financial gifts. Thank you!

An example of this support is our friend and donor, Doug Black of Lewiston, ID. He became a friend of the monastery years ago when Sr. Carm Ternes was a pastoral minister at St. Joseph’s Hospital. At the time his wife was dying and Sr. Carm brought prayer and support to Doug during those difficult days.

From that initial experience of healing hospitality, he and his present wife Mary Ellen have continued to learn about and participate in the mission and ministries of the monastery.

Doug is active in his support of the monastery. He serves on our development advisory council and our capital campaign committee, plus brings his friends and relatives to visit St. Gertrude’s whenever he can. From his experience as volunteer, donor and friend of the sisters, he wrote the following:

“Each year in December we plan our charitable gifting for the coming year. Because I am 70½ years old (or older!), we must make an annual mandatory withdrawal from our IRA.

“This year Congress passed a rule under the Pension Protection Act that we can make a direct payment to a charity of our choice directly from our IRA – up to \$100,000.



Mary Ellen and Doug Black, thriving in their retirement, have learned to enjoy practicing philanthropy tempered with good stewardship.

“After talking with our tax advisor we decided to make use of this rule for making a year-end gift to St. Gertrude’s. Anyone who qualifies should talk to their tax advisor for specifics. In our case, making a financial gift from our IRA to St. Gertrude’s is a win-win situation for us and the sisters.

“If you qualify for this option I encourage you to consider it and also let other family members or friends know about the opportunity.”

Consider Doug and Mary Ellen’s witness to superior stewardship in their support of the monastery.

May Jesus surprise you with many special blessings during the Christmas Season!

Come Away to a Retreat

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.**

Back to Basics: Praying the Good News

February 2 - 4, 2007 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Carol Ann Wassmuth, OSB

The Gospel of Jesus proclaims to us the everlasting love and faithfulness of God. Explore a variety of ways that we experience and pray that Good News as a fundamental reality in our lives.

Journey to Wholeness: Psychological Insights into the Gospels

February 23 - 25, 2007 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Teresa Jackson, O.S.B.

Both Jungian psychology and Jesus' teachings call us to confront our darkness in order to enter the light of deeper wholeness and relationship with God.

How Does Your Faith-ing Grow?

March 9 - 11, 2007 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Meg Sass, O.S.B.

Our faith in God is meant to grow, deepen and expand, like all life-giving relationships. We will explore how our faith unfolds and our spirituality deepens over the years, with times for self-reflection and prayer.

The Whole You: Living Lenten Values

March 23 - 25, 2007 • Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Barbara Jean Glodowski, O.S.B.

Take time away this Lent to more fully integrate the qualities which the season and our faith lives ask us to develop. Topics will include living in the now, forgiveness, awareness, honoring self and more.



Visit us at www.StGertrudes.org

Email: retreat@stgertrudes.org

outreachretreats@hotmail.com



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