

Canticle



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OF ST. GERTRUDE - A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

SUMMER 2007

Vows to Last a Lifetime

“Come my daughter, draw near to me ... and your being will always be at peace,” sang the community of sisters as Novices Cynthia Schultz and Kim Marie Jordan made their final trip to the altar as Novices.

With more than 200 witnesses gathered in the chapel, Schultz and Jordan publicly accepted the monastic promises of fidelity, stability and obedience and “to seek God in the Monastery of St. Gertrude.” Turning to the audience as Sr. Cynthia and Sr. Kim Marie, the monastic community promised in return their support and acceptance.

Sister Cynthia, 47, is a Cottonwood native and grew up surrounded by the sisters. “The Benedictines were present at my birth, the sisters taught me in school, and my first job was at the hospital which the sisters ran,” Schultz recalled. “The way I was initially trained to ‘care for the sick’ by the sisters at the hospital has significantly influenced me in the way I care for people today.”

Schultz, a registered nurse, worked at St. Mary’s Hospital, Tri-State Hospital in Clarkston, WA, and Syringa General in Grangeville. She also volunteered as an EMT for 18 years. During all those years serving the health care needs of her patients, “God worked on my heart.”

As a young adult she heard one of the sisters speak about the Benedictine core values of prayer, community and service. “Those values moved me deeply,” said Schultz. “Those initial stirrings



Novices Cynthia Schultz, left, and Kim Marie Jordan are led through the gathered friends, family and sisters to the altar by Sr. Agnes Reichlin, Formation Director, on their way to becoming Benedictine Sisters in the Rite of Temporary Profession.

led me to where I am now, but it has been a long discernment of prayer and reflection.”

Several years before she entered the monastery, Schultz began joining the sisters for prayer and Mass. When she volunteered to clean the headstones at the sisters’ cemetery, however, she experienced a connection to St. Gertrude’s.

“I asked for information about each sister in the cemetery, and I read their stories as I cleaned the headstones. We got to know each other as I removed the old paint, and I decided to seriously discern entering the monastery.”

Not surprised by her decision, Schultz says the last three years in formation “have been very enriching! It wasn’t always easy; at times I questioned myself, asking again and again, ‘Are you sure?’ But these years have confirmed my desire to seek God and to live the monastic life as a Benedictine.”

Sister Kim Marie, 53, is a divorced mother of two from Houston, TX. She found out about St. Gertrude’s in Idaho via an internet search in 1997 for a Benedictine monastery.

“I was educated by the Benedictines in Atchison, KS, as a little girl, and had become familiar with the idea of monastic life by

see **Profession** on page 3



Greetings From the Prioress

What does grateful have to do with simplicity?

When we chose simplicity as part of our Mission Statement, the slogan “Live simply so others may simply live,” informed and inspired my “yes” to this idea. It is a challenge to voluntarily live with less. As Americans, most of us experience great abundance while others – two-thirds of the world – live in poverty, hunger, scarcity and deprivation. St. Benedict noticed the imbalances that could occur within the monastery and urged those who need less – less food, less things, less rest – to be grateful and those who need more to be humble. Extending this insight down through the ages, we are challenged to be concerned and “painfully disturbed” by the tremendous inequities which surround us today.

The Benedictine spirit, as Joan Chittister comments, should not rest until this imbalance is righted. Living simply was one way for us to address this situation. Thus the value of simplicity became part of our Mission Statement.

What meaning does “grateful” add to the value of simplicity? How does “gratitude” connect us more deeply to the needs of our times?

The journey to gratitude takes some effort. Recall how, in the gospel story, only one of the lepers who was cured came back to thank Jesus. I remember, as a young girl, I had to be coached at every turn to say thank you. The repeated prompts from my parents taught me how to be grateful. Each thank you opened my eyes to the goodness of so many givers; it forged a bond that did not exist before; and it prepared the way to see the great Giver.

Building upon this foundation, Fr. Anthony DeMello, a Jesuit priest from India, took me another step along my journey to gratitude during a retreat in 1985. He said: “Be grateful to your toothbrush, toothpaste, clothes, and the water you use when you get up in the morning. Be grateful also for any depression, joy or loneliness you might feel upon rising.

This came as a surprise! Why be grateful for something so mundane as a toothbrush? Didn’t I buy it? Wasn’t it mine? And why be grateful for depression and loneliness? Joy would be reason for gratitude, but depression and loneliness?

He continued: “Only take from nature that which you need for the moment. Ask permission and then take it with respect.” And he pressed on. “How immature the person who has never experienced depression, loneliness, ambition and jealousy. If we fight these, we fight ourselves – we must learn to accept them because they are our teachers.”

Retreat ended but the invitation to awareness and gratitude did not. I began seeing gifts where I hadn’t seen them before – everywhere.

The opening song for another workshop some years later went like this: “Thank you, God, for waking me up this morning; for putting shoes on my feet, clothes on my back and food on my table. Thank you, God for health and strength and the activities of my limbs. Thank you that I awoke in my right mind.” The presenter asked us to think back on these morning activities and conditions with awareness and gratitude. Then she invited us to focus on the day, freed from the bondage of yesterday and fear of tomorrow. This required being in the present moment. How can we be grateful if we are not present to what surrounds us right now? Gratitude requires coming home to our ourselves – living from a contemplative stance, seeing and attending to what is there – not easy to do.

Living with attention, noticing, acknowledging and appreciating the gifts that we receive each day, brings gratitude and joy. It breaks through the boundaries of what is mine and what is yours, and a spirit of independence gives way to interdependence. A worldwide neighborhood of heart is created where we celebrate the bond that binds us all together as a human family.

Graced with gratitude, our simplicity will be shot through with a sense of connectedness that celebrates the gifts that the Creator wishes for all of us, not just some of us. Gratitude positions us to respond with love to live simply.

As we approach the season of autumn, we hold all the activities of the past months in gratitude, many of which you will read about in this *Canticle*. We hold all of you, our beloved family, friends, oblates, donors and volunteers in prayer and gratitude as well.

Sister Clarissa Goeckner

In Loving Memory: Sr. Scholastica

Sister Scholastica Uhlenkott, 87, died peacefully at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID, on August 7, 2007.

Born Mary Susanne to Gerhard and Elizabeth (Hoene) Uhlenkott on December 15, 1919, in Keuterville, ID, she entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood on January 10, 1940. She was professed as a Benedictine Sister in 1941, and celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 1991.

Sister Scholastica was the first sister from St. Gertrude's to receive her Doctorate, earning a Ph.D. in education from The Catholic University of America. She taught in the public and parochial schools in Idaho, including six years as principal of St. Gertrude's Academy. In 1968, she was appointed by the State Board of Education to the Idaho State Advisory Council on elementary and secondary education, serving until 1979.

In recognition of her lifelong work in education, Sister Scholastica received the 1999 Fall Conference Diocesan Ministry Award, which honored "her 56 years of gracious, generous and joyful service in education throughout the Diocese of Boise. She taught every grade level from first grade to college. She has been a high school and elementary school principal, a director of religious education, a remedial reading teacher, a counselor, a college reg-



istrar, a member of a government-funded reading program, and a member of a parish pastoral council."

Sister Scholastica will be remembered as a woman of deep faith and prayer. Her devotion to teaching and quality education will live on in the minds and hearts of her students.

She cared deeply for others and always wore a smile and had kind words for everyone in spite of her own hardships. Her spirit of joy, sense of humor and gentle nature will be missed by her sisters in community, her family, caregivers and many friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents, brothers Eberhard, Norbert and Larry and sister Regina (Raymond) Seubert. She is survived by her monastic community, her sisters Celeste (Irvin) Sullivan and Rosemary (Charles) Rodgers and numerous nieces and nephews and their families.

The Mass of Christian Burial was on August 13. Her nephew, Rev. Gary Uhlenkott, S.J., was presider and homilist. Memorials may be made to the Monastery of St. Gertrude or online at www.networkforgood.org.

Profession *from page 1*

visiting a men's monastery in New Mexico," Jordan remembers. "When I found St. Gertrude's on the internet, I was curious and came for a 12-day Monastic Living Experience."

After her second day at the monastery, Jordan knew St. Gertrude's was to be her home. She stayed in contact with the sisters for the next six years as she tried to talk herself out of the move.

"Deciding to come to the monastery was like climbing a mountain," Jordan says. "The trip to the top was a struggle. It was hard to leave my friends, my job, my house and car. But once I reached the top and the decision to come here was made, everything became easy."



Sisters Kim Marie Jordan and Cynthia Schultz, front, are surrounded by Sr. Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress; Sr. Mary Geis, Procurator; and Sr. Mary Marge Goeckner, Asst. Prioress.

Once she arrived in Idaho after selling her house and car, quitting her job of 14 years in the publishing business, saying her farewells to friends and family, she sat on her bed in her tiny room and exclaimed, "Oh, Kim, what have you done?!"

"I used to think I chose to come here, to St. Gertrude's. Now I know that God chose this place for me. How else in this wide world would I have ended up here?"

Both women will live at the monastery. Schultz is discerning her work and feels certain her health care experience will be involved. Jordan will work in the Development Office.

50 Amazing Years at St. Gertrude's

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

"It's unbelievable," exclaimed Sr. Corinne Forsman, "I can hardly believe I've been a nun for 50 years!"

Sr. Corinne celebrated her 50th Jubilee on June 23. Born Mary Kay Forsman in 1938 to Frank and Gertrude Sprute Forsman, Sr. Corinne entered the monastery in 1955. She made her first profession in 1957.

What inspired her vocation? A movie about missionary work in China.

"In the 6th grade I had a heroic vision of myself saving the world after seeing that movie," Sr. Corinne recalls with a smile. "I thought I could write a movie that would convert the whole world."

She confided in her sister Jeanne that she was interested in being a nun, and Jeanne spilled the beans to their parents.

"They thought I was too young, but they didn't interfere," Sr. Corinne said. Before she entered the monastery, she and her siblings planned a 20th anniversary celebration for their parents.

"We all knew that once I entered the monastery I wouldn't be able to come home for their Golden Anniversary."

After graduation from St. Gertrude's Academy, Sr. Corinne began a 12 year teaching career. "I was so young then," she recalled with amazement. "I was just 19!"

The early years in the monastery were very strict and Sr. Corinne remembers being fearful of "so many things, especially of breaking the rules. In a way, this fear drew me closer to Christ."

The 1970s were tumultuous times in the Church and the sisters at St. Gertrude found themselves facing challenges raised by the decisions of the Vatican II Council. One particular aspect of Vatican II called religious orders to "revive their ancient traditions of service and so adapt them to the needs of today."

"Before Vatican II there was an emphasis on denial of the self, especially our emotional self," Sr. Corinne explained. "After Vatican II we realized we needed to be whole, healthy women,



Sr. Corinne today and as she looked on her profession day in 1957. She is surrounded by her parents, Gertrude and Frank Forsman.



individually responsible for our spiritual growth if we wanted to be effective in our ministries."

During those turbulent years, Sr. Corinne experienced many of her close friends leaving religious life for a multitude of reasons. She worked hard at allowing herself the freedom to leave if need be and in so doing, found "the freedom to stay, the desire to re-choose this monastic life at every chance."

"It also helped that I was working at the Catholic Education Office in Boise during that time," she explained. She came in con-

tact with many people throughout the state, all struggling to understand the changes in the church. It was especially rewarding for her to share in the spiritual growth of both young and old.

In the years that followed, Sr. Corinne served as Sub-Prioress at the monastery, worked in parish ministry and was called to the position of Vocation Director for the community. Most recently she ministered at Holy Family Parish in Clarkston, WA, and is currently Mission Director at St. Mary's and Clearwater Valley hospitals in Cottonwood and Orofino, ID.

"Monastic life is a real life. Living with other people is very real. It is challenging, but rewarding.

"I love my monastic community and am very proud of it. We are a stable group with a rich and valuable tradition and history. Because of that strong foundation we are also a community that is moving forward, building our future."

And what is in Sr. Corinne's future? She does not know what her work will be but one thing is certain: "I want to keep working at knowing that God loves me."

The Inevitable Vocation

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

It was almost inevitable that Sr. Benita Hassler became a sister: Four aunts and one uncle were members of religious orders and her own mother eventually became Sr. Veronica at St. Gertrude's.

Surrounded by such company who often "called" her to religious life, Sr. Benita resisted at first, and enjoyed typical high school activities such as dancing and dating. Still restless for something more, she wondered if her family's encouragement was a call from God. She asked her uncle for advice, and his Abbot (formerly from Nez Perce, ID) suggested St. Gertrude's as a "good and holy place."

Sr. Benita headed for Cottonwood in 1949, intent on entering the monastery. "My best friend tried to discourage me from entering and my dad, before we had even arrived, urged me to come back home to Montana with the family because the monastery was too far away and the road too difficult," Sr. Benita remembers.

"I stayed, though, and was soon living the rather austere novitiate life. I enthusiastically joined the community in chanting the Divine Office seven times a day, celebrating Holy Mass together, was given time for private prayer, *lectio* and study, and for the practice of 'Good Works', with lots of hoeing in the gardens and scrubbing of convent floors."

Though hoping to be a nurse, Sr. Benita became a teacher in order to use her art and music talents. So in 1951, she began a teaching ministry that took her to St. Gertrude's Academy; Colegio San Carlos, in Bogotá, Colombia; Bishop Kelly High School in Boise; Minico High School in Rupert; and, the Caldwell and Wilder School Districts. She also taught basic computer skills to the Wilder school children's parents, and was instrumental in getting computers into homes there.

"I was happy living my monastic life and I loved teaching, but I was becoming more and more aware of the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities in the world. I struggled with the desire for us to do more to help eliminate the greedy causes and terrible effects of poverty on the lives of so many," Sr. Benita reflected.

"I've learned a bit more humble trust in God as I've gotten older; teaching has offered me many chances to work with our sisters and many others for a better world, and for me to work more directly with the poor."



Sr. Benita Hassler, left, enjoys helping Sr. Mercedes Martzen view a photo of her family sent via email.

Most recently Sr. Benita did volunteer work in the Caldwell-Nampa area, mostly teaching homebound women and families at Farmway Village computer and GED skills and English.

From 1999 to 2005, Sr. Benita, with the help of John Irwin (SGA '57), now deceased, and Kermit Cudd of Caldwell, placed 160 used computers into the homes of low-income families. She helped many earn their GED and started more than 200 people on the long road to learning English.

Retired now to the monastery, Sr. Benita is fully immersed in her life-long joy of visiting the sick.

"My mission is to connect the sisters living on the Sun Porch Wing (the Infirmary) to community, family and friends by helping them with e-mails and other correspondence," she shares. "In my early morning hours, before and after my sunrise walk, I catch up on creative works in art, poetry and music."

One special work of love she is doing is writing "Gratitude Tributes to the Monastic Mentor/Friends I have visited in the infirmary over the years and who are now living and loving in Eternity. Many of my greatest blessings come from our mutual sharing. I thank God that Love never dies."

Sr. Benita celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2001 and encourages inquiring women to "Come and See! Don't be afraid. Listen to God's voice around you and in you."



DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

When I began jotting down some ideas on “grateful” such profound gratitude welled up within me that I had to stop and just think about all of you. I extended my hands over a picture of the world to receive the blessing you are to us and to extend the blessing of our prayer and concern to you.

The importance of the articles I had read and the thesaurus entries on gratefulness paled. **You** are the book from which we learn the story of generosity, of creating opportunities for others to broaden their horizons, of the kinds of co-laboring that supports people in their physical, mental and spiritual needs.

Thank you for who you are and the ways you participate in our mission and ministries through prayer, volunteering and financial support. Along with the gifts noted in the enclosed Stewardship Report we are also grateful for the relationships and kindnesses that do not show up in printed columns.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote: “*Humanity will not perish from lack of information but from lack of appreciation ... It is gratefulness which makes the soul great.*”

“Making our soul great” is an apt image of the purpose for the Future Planning process we embarked upon as a community in July. This year-long process is designed to help us walk through the next five years with a well-grounded plan for promoting membership, using and sustaining our facilities, celebrating and developing our ministries, and strengthening the financial base needed for living our mission and being faithful to our ministries of prayer and outreach. An essential and exciting part will be engaging many of you in helping to shape our future.

We thank our God whenever we think of you, and when we pray for you we pray with joy, remembering how you have helped spread the Good News. (See Phil 1:3-5)

Come and See



Vocation Events

Come & See Weekends

A planned weekend retreat opportunity for women considering religious life.

September 7 - 9, 2007 • October 26 - 28, 2007
November 9 - 11, 2007 • December 14 - 16, 2007

You are welcome to visit us at anytime.

If you wish to come and see at another time, let us know, and we will set up a date that works for you. You are welcome to come alone, or with a friend or two!

You can make it happen.



Visit us at www.StGertrudes.org
vocation@stgertrudes.org

Update Your Records

We changed internet service providers several months ago and many of the email addresses changed. Here is a list of some of the most used addresses and telephone numbers:

General Monastery Info: monastery@stgertrudes.org
208-962-3224 FX: 962-5031

Book & Gift Store: turnstile465@yahoo.com
208-962-5022

Conferences/Spirit Center: spiritcenter@stgertrudes.org
208-962-2000 FX: 208-962-2003

Development Office: develop@stgertrudes.org
208-962-5061

Healing Yoga School: yogaschool77@yahoo.com
208-962-5013

Historical Museum: museum@stgertrudes.org
208-962-2050

Spirituality/Retreat Ministry: retreat@stgertrudes.org
208-962-3224 FX: 208-962-2003

Vocations: vocation@stgertrudes.org
208-962-5024 or 208-962-2072

Volunteer Program: volunteer@stgertrudes.org
208-962-5003



Museum Notes

by Lyle Wirtanen, Director

The museum sponsored its 15th Annual Raspberry Festival on August 5. This was the most successful festival to date with over 2,000 people in attendance and net proceeds breaking \$22,000. Some 70 volunteers plus sisters and museum staff helped to make this day a success. All of your hard work on behalf of the museum is appreciated. I wish to thank you all for your continuing support for this major fundraiser that benefits the museum.

We are once again looking forward to our 8th Annual Fall Lecture Series that begins on Thursday, Sept. 27 and continues for the following four Thursdays. All lectures are held in the Johanna

Room of Spirit Center. On Sept. 27, Terry Holubetz, a retired fisheries biologist, will make a presentation on *The Survival of Idaho's Salmon & Steelhead*. On Oct. 4, Sister Michele Bateman will speak on *The Commonalities of Belief* and her recent trip to India. On Oct. 18, Gary Eller will perform and share *Historical Songs of the Snake and Salmon River Regions*.

As of the end of July, the museum visitorship was slightly higher than last year by about 200 visitors. August is usually our heaviest month for visitors with big help from Raspberry Festival – 308 people came on that one day.

Sisters on the Move

The Oblates of St. Gertrude gathered for their annual discernment weekend last spring. While here, we managed to get them all together in one spot for a photo (below). Oblates are men and women, married or single, of any Christian faith, who determine that their lives are best lived according to Benedictine spirituality. For information, please contact the monastery.



The sisters' **Relay for Life** team (right) – *Spirit Walkers* – raised over \$6,300 for the American Cancer Society. Sr. Mary Kay Henry once again received the award for Most Money Raised by an Individual: \$4,600.



Sr. Teresa Jackson is cleaning out her Spirit Center office for a nine-month sabbatical. She will spend her time immersed in Monastic Studies at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. While there she will share housing with another sister from St. Gertrude's: **Sr. Mary Forman**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Monastic Studies at the university.

Sr. Miriam Mendez is delighted with the new **Book & Gift Shop**. If you have not stopped by since the move, you need to make time to come in and browse. With more than twice the

space and a larger variety of items to choose from – books, gifts, hand-

made crafts, Fair Trade items, soap and more – the Book & Gift Shop is a great place to shop for any occasion. Open most



days from 1:00 - 2:00 pm or by appointment. You can view many of the gift items online at www.StGertrudes.org. All proceeds benefit the monastery and its ministries.

Sr. Michele Bateman traveled to the Omega Institute in New York, in August as the yoga instructor in a retreat with Fr. Cyprian Consiglio. The retreat, *The Universal Call to Contemplation*, will be presented at the monastery October 12 - 16. Sr. Michele is trained to teach Hatha yoga by the Himalyan Instititue.

Come Away to a Retreat

Spirit, Soul and Body: The Universal Call to Contemplation

Oct. 12 - 16, 2007 Fri. 7:30 pm - Tues. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Fr. Cyprian Consiglio

The call to contemplation and mystical depth is found in every spiritual tradition and is meant for every person. Fr. Cyprian integrates techniques from the East with the wisdom of Eastern and Western Christianity for an experience aimed at the whole person. The days will include yoga, meditation, chanting, sacred reading, teaching, prayer, discussion and a concert.

Suggested Donation: \$310, Concert included

Developing Our Friendship With God

Oct. 19 - 21, 2007 Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Fr. Sean Caulfield, JCL

Jesus said: "I call you friends, not servants anymore..." A friend is a person who knows all about you, the good and the bad, and loves you all the same. God's friendship is personal and unique to you. Develop it.

Suggested donation: \$150 single/ \$200 shared

Introduction to Centering Prayer

Oct. 26 - 28, 2007 Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm

Presenter: Darlyne Pape

This workshop includes the historical background and method of the prayer style as both relationship to God and as a discipline. *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating (required) will be available for purchase, or bring your own copy.

Suggested donation: \$150 single/ \$200 shared

Being Catholic, Then and Now

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

Presenter: Bernadette Stang, OSB

Listen to the faith experiences of some of the sisters and reflect on your own faith. Explore how our Church has both changed and remained the same since Vatican II.

Suggested donation: \$150 single/ \$200 shared



Visit us at www.StGertrudes.org

Email: retreat@stgertrudes.org

outreachretreats@hotmail.com



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