

The Canticle

MARCH 2001

O F S T . G E R T R U D E ' S

Taking God to Work

by Sr. Chanelle Schuler, OSB



The Transforming Power of Work

The next four issues of *The Canticle* will look at ways to welcome God's transforming power in our lives. This issue focuses on the transformation of ourselves and our world through our Work.

In *Wisdom Distilled From the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*, Joan Chittister, OSB, describes the spirituality of Benedictine work and reminds us that humans have been working and laboring since the creation of the Garden of Eden. *Then God took Adam and put him in the garden to cultivate and to care for it.* (Gen. 2:15) Seven key elements of work are:

1. Work is our gift to the world. It is social fruitfulness and creates in us a likeness to God.
2. Work saves us from total self absorption and provides a reason for existence larger than ourselves.
3. Work is a form of redemption and salvation. We participate in creation by working, co-creating.
4. Work creates community. We give ourselves to others when we work. Work is not for ourselves alone.
5. Work uses our gifts and calls forth new ones from us. It challenges our personal and spiritual growth as we discover new dimensions of ourselves.
6. Work, quite simply, must be accepted. God is due our work.
7. Work's purpose is to cultivate and care for others in this Garden we inhabit.

I began my life as a Benedictine sister working as an obstetrics nurse. The first years of my career were more of a job than a ministry because I would get so bogged down with the work, believing that everything depended upon me.

In those days I found it difficult to combine spirituality with my physical work. However, as I grew in experience and wisdom, I learned to let the Spirit work through me. Coming full circle from those early years in the maternity ward, I now find myself assisting people with the dying process.

I absolutely believe that patients heal more quickly, or accept death more readily, when their spiritual needs are recognized and met. Without a doubt, the spiritual dimension has a direct effect on the body.

Much of my work is compassionate listening to patient and family stories.



Sr. Chanelle Schuler

After 30 years as a hospital RN, I changed gears. For 12 years I have served as a chaplain at Sacred Heart Regional Medical Center, Spokane, WA. My primary ministry is serving patients and staff in the Dialysis Unit at the hospital and outlying units throughout the region. My trips to Coeur d'Alene, ID, and Moses Lake, WA, allow me time to reflect upon the tremendous work dying patients must go through.

Renal Care Group, a for-profit dialysis company, recently merged with Sacred Heart. This group recognized the importance of people dying with dignity, with a sense of peace and closure. They have continued Sacred Heart's commitment to chaplaincy and our patients' spiritual needs.

I help them discover meaning in their life experiences, especially in the pain and suffering they are currently experiencing. I often sing and share music with patients. They find the music calming, and it helps them in reaching a peace and tranquility in the midst of their trauma.

Dying well requires patients to resolve unsettled issues in their lives. One woman was able to let go only after she found a way to forgive her grandson for the death of her daughter. She had held this pain in her soul for a long time, and once she relinquished it, she was free to die.

Our Benedictine mission statement calls us to be eager to welcome God's transformation in ourselves and our world through healing hospitality. This is manifest daily in my ministry as I remind myself and others that we choose how to color our days – black and white, with shades of gray, or multi-colored!



Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

One of our biggest challenges is adapting to change. In our modern world, technology changes so rapidly we can't seem to control it or to keep up with it. Yet, change is a law of nature which applies to our personal and spiritual lives as well. Change is neither good nor bad; it just is! It's how we respond to it that determines whether it brings life or destruction.

In St. Benedict's world of the 6th century, things were changing fast, too. Not liking what he saw, Benedict went into the desert to pray and fast and discern what God wanted him to do. As he listened God called him to a new way of living – a "monastic way" that called for a dynamic balance between change (or *conversatio*, conversion) and stability (or *ora et labora*, a way to choose life and build healthy relationships through prayer and work). He believed that prayer and work would not only transform his monks, it would transform the world as well.

The Church, too, calls us to this work of transformation. It gives us liturgical sea-

sons such as Advent and Lent to guide us. During the season of Lent we are asked to pray, fast, and give alms to the poor. Through prayer, we work to renew and deepen our relationship to God. In fasting we work to restore a right-ordered relationship with ourselves. In alms-giving we seek to be in right relationship with others. This is the work of transformation to which God calls each of us, not only during Lent, but throughout our lives.

We have shared with you throughout the past two years how our community is discerning ways to respond to change, especially those changes that affect us as a monastic community. In response, we have spent a considerable amount of time in prayer and discernment in order to make decisions that bring renewed life to our community. We have rearticulated our Mission Statement for this new time in our history, and we are embarking on a journey of revisioning, discerning, and dialoguing about possible new directions.

This is an extremely important time for us and we ask for your prayers. We want to respond to this invitation to grow and deepen our Benedictine way of life and to serve God's people by sharing the gifts we have been given. We are "eager to welcome God's transforming power in ourselves and our world."

Thank you for your prayers and the many ways that you support us. May God bless you with abundant grace to know God's abiding love and care for you and those you love.

Sincerely in Christ,

Sr. Jean Lalande, Prioress

In Loving Memory

Sister Angela Mis, OCD, 84, died of causes related to age at the Monastery on January 2, 2001. She was born in Fall River, MA, to Josef and Elizabeth Wewiorski Mis.

She made profession as a Carmelite Sister at the Monastery of Mary Mother of Grace, Lafayette, LA, in 1952. In 1975 when she felt God's call to move out of the Carmelite monas-



Sr. Angela Mis, OCD

tery, but to continue to live as a Carmelite nun, she came to St. Gertrude's at the invitation of her niece Sr. Mary Forman and of then Prioress Regina O'Connell.

Sr. Angela ministered as receptionist and domestic worker at St. Gertrude's. She joined the Benedictines in their prayers, and continued the Carmelite way of penance, silence and solitude in her personal spirituality. She had a profound devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux and strove to imitate her simplicity and unflinching commitment to being what God willed her to be.

Sr. Angela will long be remembered by many as gentle, encouraging, faithful and grateful. Memorials may be made to the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

Congratulations, Sisters!


on being named the

Idaho Tree Farm of the Year

by the

Idaho Tree Farm System

Look for more exciting information about our reforestation efforts in upcoming mailings.



The Canticle
OF ST. GERTRUDE'S

The Canticle of St. Gertrude's is published quarterly by the Development Office at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, and is distributed to our friends, families and donors.

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Timecards, Lunchboxes and God ...

I work in Twin Falls at one of seven Idaho offices of Idaho Legal Aid Services. The mission of Idaho Legal Aid is to provide free, quality legal services to low-income people. To qualify for our services, families and individuals must meet the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Our clients are people who would otherwise have no access to the justice system.

As the Outreach Worker/Legal Assistant and part-time secretary, I have come to understand the word discrimination in a new way. I confront it daily through our clients – the homeless, the physically and emotionally abused women and children, the elderly living on fixed incomes staring financial ruin in the face with the loss of Social Security or Medicare.

Often our clients, young and old, are physically or mentally challenged. They come to us when they are in danger of losing their homes, having their utilities turned off, facing racial and cultural discrimination in their jobs ... any time circumstances are beyond their control, they come to us for help.

And help we do. Our goal at Idaho Legal Aid is to provide people with the professional legal help needed to resolve or remedy such daily problems.

This job is extremely challenging for me. Faced with inadequate funding for the

overwhelming needs, we attempt to take cases which will effect systemic changes in the Justice System. The snail's pace of the legal system, encumbered by well-intentioned laws and regulations, seems to mock the **immediate** needs of our clients.

I am blessed in this work, despite its challenges, by knowing that this work is much bigger than myself. It is comforting to know that I am not alone in what I do and that God walks to work with me each day.

My colleagues at the office, my Benedictine sisters and our benefactors make this a transforming ministry. I am grateful to be an agent of change.



Sr. Barbara Gonzales

... the Work of Transformation

“Eager to welcome God’s transforming power in ourselves and our world.” What a powerful introductory sentence from our mission statement! Reflecting on this challenge brings the reality of the role work plays in my life.

While serving as Sub-Prioress of our community, I felt a need to provide quality ongoing education to the sisters living at the monastery. I took a workshop called “Twelve Keys of Spirituality”, and it changed my life.

The call to share this wonderful wisdom with others was powerful, and a new ministry was born. *Transforming Experiences*, is a ministry that brings workshops, seminars and retreats to people at their locations.

Medical science has added years to our lives, but learning how to develop a sense of awareness, forgiveness and deep spiri-

tuality is the work of studying transforming experiences. I try to help people learn how to live, and labor, with God as the center of their lives.

In one workshop called *Retirement As a Spiritual Journey*, participants are encouraged to reflect on how to gracefully become an elder versus becoming “older.” One question that requires an honest answer is “if you are what you do, when you retire who are you?”

Through the Spirit’s transforming power, participants learn how to transform from acting as human “do-ings” to becoming human “be-ings.” Once we learn the difference, our work is elevated with God in the center.

Parish staffs benefit from a workshop called *Maturity 101*. This workshop helps parishes

develop programs for meeting the spiritual needs of people over the age of fifty. The U.S. Catholic Bishops in *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* called for parishes to begin developing such programs.

It is said that “you can take the teacher out of the classroom but not out of education.” In my life this is true!

Another aspect of my ministry is to teach teachers. All of Idaho’s teachers are required to take a three-credit class in reading before they renew their certificate. I’ve taught four of these classes since January 2000. Principals tell me that the classes have changed how teachers interact with the children. Transformation *at work*, through my work!

While it is true that most of us must work for a living, the process of looking at our work as a ministry transforms us. Outwardly, and inwardly, we share a journey that will lead to an experience of God.



Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski

Creating A Vision That Works

In April 1999, Jean Lalande was elected Prioress. Conscious of her vision for new relationships between laypersons and the community, she invited Kathy McFaul to pray, live and work as a Partner in Ministry with the Benedictines at the Monastery of St. Gertrudes.

Kathy has been a volunteer at the monastery several times. Her background includes practicing poverty

law, working in parish social justice ministry, developing prayer and ritual gatherings and facilitating faith-sharing groups, especially among women. She began her time as a Partner in Ministry in September, 1999.

We interviewed Kathy and Sr. Jean about this emerging partnership and here are some excerpts from the interview.

Kathy: My volunteer times at the monastery led me to a deep appreciation for the community and a realization that consistent tending to spirituality is essential in my life.

I also realized that I was interested in being here long-term myself. I had already spoken with the community about my experience as a volunteer, how it felt and whether it “worked.”

I perceived that some of the sisters had questions about long-term arrangements. Because of the ambiguity of some of the community, I decided to pursue options other than a long-term commitment here.

You can imagine my surprise, Jean, when you invited me to spend a year at the monastery living the rhythm of life here and working with the retreat team.

Sr. Jean: I had a sense that your involvement in the community’s future could be mutually beneficial. It seemed like God was working through you to open us to new possibilities.

It’s one thing to have a vision
... it’s quite another to live it.

Kathy: After some open, direct communications, I accepted your invitation as affirmation of a call for me to be here. “Partners in Ministry” emerged as a name for the new relationship which we have been living into for the last year and a half.

Working as a “Partner in Ministry” has involved trailblazing new ways of being. The path is not always smooth. Like so many worthy endeavors, it’s one thing to have the vision ... it’s quite another to live into it.

Sr. Jean: This new partnership has stretched our community, too. I want to affirm, though, what a grace you are within the community, Kathy. You have helped us experience what cooperation can look like, although I regret that sometimes we took you for granted and didn’t make room for your creativity.

Kathy: I did miss the creative side of retreat work – preparing and facilitating retreats, companioning with individuals – in my first year here. I realized, however, that what was a disappointment turned out to be a profound grace.

The first year allowed me a great deal of solitude and personal prayer time as well as an opportunity to experience a kind of incorporation within the community.

It is great to now be involved in retreat work in a broader way. I’m glad we sorted out how I fit in here as a non-member. There were times that weren’t easy for either of us, but I feel like our honesty and faith in this partnership has born fruit.

Jean: I agree. Thanks for your perseverance, and I appreciate our recent conversations about continuing our partnering.

Kathy: My sense is that our partnership is not over, although the form of it is not yet clear. I feel very rooted here through individual relationships, communal and personal prayer, the earth itself, and the insights I glean from the women here.

Jean: I am delighted that you will remain here with us. I trust that the work the community is doing in our strategic planning will be a holy door into a future graced with qualities of feminine spirituality such as inclusiveness, imagination, and steadfastness.

Kathy: I, too, feel intrigued by the possibilities of fresh new things happening in retreat ministry. I believe that, together, as we risk thinking outside the box, we will discover our way.

I believe this community will continue to be very viable as it offers its unique gifts and qualities to those who come here. Spirituality is the overarching focus and I feel like I might have a role to play in that.



Kathy McFaul

Allurements of the Heart

Winter for me is usually a time of hibernation, slowing down, settling in for the long winter's night. This winter has been a little different.

With the launch of our appeal for Vocations Promotion, I traveled to McCall, Cascade and Pocatello. I met and talked with many people and was gratified by the excitement and support people voiced for our Vocation efforts.

In January I participated in a Vocation Awareness Day in Pocatello. Men and women from other religious communities and the Diocesan Priesthood, Priests and Deacons attended. The young people we talked with had lots of questions for us and seemed open to looking at Priesthood and Religious Life as they begin to discern their Vocations.

We also hosted a Benedictine Experience Weekend in January. Five women from around the Northwest came to experience life at the Monastery. They

brought a new energy to the house, and I hope to get to know each one of them better as they continue to explore their call.

February saw me in the Nampa/Boise area where I directed a Busy Person Retreat at Boise State University, St. Paul's Student

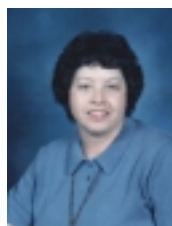
Center. Twelve busy people participated. This experience touched me deeply; I am humbled by the depth of peoples' longing to be closer to God.

Sr. Scholastica joined me at the Vocation Awareness Day at St. Paul's in Nampa. The grade school students had a poster contest as part of the day-long event. My favorite poster said "Do you want priests and sisters to become an endangered species? If not join them."

As Spring approaches I will be in the Moscow/Pullman area for some intensive and focused vocation work.

Thanks to your support for our appeal for Vocations Promotion, I am able to plan more trips to visit with potential candidates. Your generosity has already provided several young women an opportunity to

visit the monastery, increased advertising and assisting in an upgrade of our website. And most amazing of all, for the first time in the history of this community, the Vocation Director is earning a salary! Thank you very much for your help.



Sr. Janet Barnard



Participants at the January Benedictine Experience Weekend enjoying a lighter moment.



Benedictine Experience Weekend

A reflection and discernment weekend for single women. Pray with the Sisters and other women exploring religious life.

Scheduled as needed; please call.

The Triduum at the Monastery

Experience the three days prior to Easter at the Monastery. Participate in Liturgy and Lectio with the Sisters

April 12 - 15, 2001

Monastic Living Experience

A two-week opportunity for single women to share our monastic life, prayer and work.

July 1-12, 2001



Visit our Vocations pages at www.StGertrudes.org
vocation@camasnet.com

Our Lenten Gift to You

Since our arrival in Cottonwood in 1906, we have prayed the Divine Office each and every day. Even during the flu epidemic when only a handful of sisters were well enough to pray, pray they did. As a gift to you this Lenten season, we offer to you our gift of prayer. Let us know your special intention through the mail, email (develop@camasnet.com) or telephone (208) 962-3224.

Please include these intentions in your Lenten Prayers: _____

Name Address

City, ST, ZIP Email

Celebrating 3 Centuries of Profession

With a combined 320 years experience, five sisters celebrated their Jubilees on February 10. The five celebrants were: Sr. Augustine Uhlenkott, 80 years; Sr. Aquinas Schaecher, 70 years; Sr. Sylveria Weiand, 60 years; Sr. Scholastica Uhlenkott, 60 years; and Sr. Lucy Keaney, 50 years.

When asked to share their thoughts on their years as Benedictines at St. Gertrude's, every one said the *very best thing* about this community is the devotion to prayer, especially the Divine Office.

Both Sr. Sylveria and Sr. Lucy decided to join St. Gertrude's because of the obvious love and devotion of the community to prayer, and to one another.

Sr. Scholastica, after visiting other religious communities, was drawn to St. Gertrude's by the exemplary dedication of the sisters to God. She believes that "the fidelity and devotion to Mass and the Divine Office is the greatest asset of St. Gertrude's."



Jubilarians pictured above are (L-R), seated, Sr. Augustine Uhlenkott, Sr. Aquinas Schaecher. Standing, Sr. Scholastica Uhlenkott; Sr. Jean Lalonde, Prioress; Sr. Sylveria Weiand; Fr. Meinrad Schallberger; Sr. Lucy Keaney; Sr. Emagene Warren, Procurator; and, Sr. Meg Sass, Assistant Prioress.

Sr. Augustine said that her vocation was tested in the early years. "Good spiritual direction and deep prayer helped me prioritize my call from God." Once she put her religious vocation first, she "felt the affirmation of my call in my heart each time I prayed."

The Jubilarians resoundingly said that becoming a sister today is a desirable choice, as long as a woman is "called to a life con-

secrated to God." Sr. Sylveria believes that without that single-hearted call from God, "dwelling on the things of God" might be overwhelming.

Advice from these wise elders on a personal relationship with God or the church was varied:

Augustine: The journey is hard without personal prayer. Learn to know and trust Jesus through your prayer.

Sylveria: Don't lose hope, and always trust that God is present and eager to help in any situation.

Scholastica: Your personal relationship with God and the Church is vital. Whether this relationship is fostered best in religious life, or not, depends upon your vocation.

Lucy: Get a good spiritual advisor who will help you grow in personal relationships.

Sr. Aquinas was unable to comment due to the effect of Alzheimer's.



DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

Choosing A Future could be our Development Office banner! **A banner** of thanks for your prayers, warm greetings, and generous support!

A banner of hope for the strategic planning sessions in which the community is engaged in order to discern what God is calling us to and what steps to take to get there. Please pray with us as we all assemble June 6 - 9, 2001, to pull together the work we are doing in smaller groups throughout the month of March.

A banner of broadened vision as we initiate our Development Council on March

21, 2001. This is an advisory group to help the Development Office in its two-fold function of promoting the mission, membership and ministries of the monastery, and to raise monies necessary for such promotion.

A banner of success in our appeal for Vocations Promotion. Obviously, recruiting and incorporating new members is a central piece of our choosing a strong future.

The Vocation page of this issue paints the details of what the \$40,000 raised so far is making possible. We hope that those of you who placed the appeal on your "to do" list will join others committed to vocations in

the church and this community by sending in your contribution soon. We want to reach our goal of \$74,000. If you want to see a copy of the appeal letter, go to our website at www.StGertrudes.org and choose the Vocations link.

A banner of long-term possibilities from the Idaho Corporation of Benedictine Sisters Endowment. Our founding gift of \$1,000 in 1998 has grown to just over \$39,000. A gift to the Endowment helps create a "forever" future. What a rewarding way to honor or memorialize your living or deceased loved ones through a bequest, annuity or other major gift!



Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

HC 3 Box 121 • Cottonwood, ID 83522-9408 • (208) 962-7123 • museum@micron.net • www.webpak.net/~museum

by Lyle Wirtanen, Museum Director

A Victorian Tea Party!

The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude requests the pleasure of your company for afternoon tea.

*Saturday, May 12, 2001
1:30 ~ 3:30 p.m.*

*in the refectory of the
Monastery of St. Gertrude*

Admission \$15

All proceeds benefit the Museum

Make plans now to attend the 4th Annual Victorian Tea. Scheduled for Mother's Day weekend, it's a delightful way to treat that super special person in your life.

Enjoy an afternoon in a recreated Victorian drawing room with the costumes, food and music of the Victorian era. Sample scones, Devonshire cream, shortbread, finger sandwiches and pots of piping hot tea, coffee and punch.



A very special feature of the afternoon is the Victorian fashion show featuring live models in vintage attire. We encourage you to wear your finest waistcoats and hats, too, to relive a unique time in history.

Monastery Chapel tours are scheduled for the afternoon. The Book & Gift Shop will be open and you will have an opportunity to purchase fresh bread baked in the Monastery bakery, raspberry jam and vinegar.

Museum Volunteer Program

On January 22, 16 people met with museum staff and "signed on the dotted line."

With their signatures, we have officially initiated our volunteer program. Not only will our volunteers assist us in planning and implementing the Victorian Tea and the Raspberry Festival, they will also help in the museum itself. Document preservation, the gift shop, tours, data entry, hands-on education programs, and collections enhancement will all receive their special input. For more information on this exciting endeavor, please call the museum at (208) 962-7123.

Lewis & Clark Trail Museum

The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude is one of nine non-federal museums recognized by the Idaho Governor's Lewis & Clark Trail Committee as a "trail museum". This designation makes us eligible to receive appropriated funds to enhance our museum in preparation for the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial.

According to a Governor's Committee spokesperson, the Governor is aware of the impact of the Lewis & Clark bicentennial on our area museums. They also feel that we have the opportunity to educate visitors to Idaho travelling along the trail during the bicentennial. The Governor's Committee will assist the "trail museums" in preparing for the commemoration.



Our museum is exploring options to prepare for the potential influx of tourists commemorating the amazing work of the Corps of Discovery.

Our connection with the Lewis & Clark Expedition is relatively unknown. On May 27, 1806, Sgt. John Ordway and Pvts. Peter Weiser and Robert Frazer were dispatched from Camp Chopunnish (Kamiah) to Lewis' River (now the Snake River) in order to obtain salmon. Guided by three young Nez Perce men, the party crossed the Camas Prairie. The Nez Perce trail they used is thought to be the one that passed between Mason Butte and Cottonwood Butte near the present community of Cottonwood.

On May 29 at a Salmon River village, Pvt. Frazer traded an "old Razer" to an Indian woman for two Spanish Milled Dollars. Our museum has two replicas of those Milled Dollars, which are the forerunners of our own silver dollar. On May 31, 1806, Sgt. Ordway led his party back to Camp Chopunnish from Lewis' River with salmon.

We're On the Web at: www.webpak.net/~museum

We have developed and implemented a new website! Find out all the pertinent information about the museum, research opportunities and links to other historical sites. Check it out and email us your thoughts, comments and historical notes.

Retreats at the Monastery

Death & Resurrection

SATURDAY, APRIL 7 ~ 9:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

Input, reflection and prayer on the Paschal Mystery celebrated in the Sacraments of Initiation. For catechumens, profession of faith candidates, sponsors, spouses and RCIA team members.

Mother & Adult Daughter Weekend

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, APRIL 20 - 22 ~ 7:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Sr. Judith Brower & Mom/Daughter Friends

God works marvels in our lives — over the years and each new day. Experience anew the mystery of your relationship with God and each other.

The Universe is Dancing! Where Are My Shoes?

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, MAY 18 - 20 ~ 7:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Sr. Mary Kay Henry

A women's retreat! Explore your sacred connections with the divine. Based on "The Earth's Imagination" by Dr. Brian Swimme. Input, discussion, quiet, prayer. Bring casual clothes.

Seeking Wholeness: A Cancer Retreat

JULY 15 - 20, 2001

Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

This retreat is designed especially for anyone whose life has been affected by cancer and focuses on healing. Healing is defined as the inner process of becoming whole emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The experience of cancer can be a powerful opportunity to ask important questions about the purpose, meaning and value of life. During the five days enjoy one-on-one and group sharing, spiritual direction, massage, nature walks, private reflection time, prayer with the community and artistic expression. Spouses and primary care-givers are welcome. Limited to eight participants.

Let Our Retreats Come to You!

Ask about our new Outreach Retreat Ministry!

Email: outreachretreats@hotmail.com



Visit us on the web: www.StGertrudes.org

Email: retreats@camasnet.com



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Monastery of St. Gertrude

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Transforming the World!

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