

SEPTEMBER 2001

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

# The Canticle

## Serving Up Leadership

by Sr. Bernadette Stang, OSB



### Governance

This issue of *The Canticle* takes a look at governance, defined as influence over others, a topic very *apropos* in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks on our nation.

The overwhelming decisions facing our national leaders right now boggle the imagination. Our history as a human family indicates our response to violence is generally counter-violence, and we find our nation calculating how best to orchestrate that.

But dare we hope for something different? Might this atrocity against humanity and our nation become the moment at which the imagination of world leaders is able to envision and implement an effective nonviolent way of responding to the massive, insidious violence perpetrated on our nation and our planet?

How can the human family bring those who desecrate life to justice *and* break the pattern of retaliation? When we look at issues of governance we need to ask: What influences our decision-making? How do we influence the decisions of others? Which styles of governance have influenced us? energized us? oppressed us? How is governance an image of our image of God?

For Benedict, governance, defined as the mature exercise of authority and obedience, is the supporting structure that gives life to our values of hospitality, creative peacemaking, listening, simplicity and community. Authority and obedience provide an interdependent tension necessary for personal growth. Difficult **and** essential.

Jesus set the standard of true governance when he said, "The Son of Man has come to serve, not to be served!" (*Mark 10:34*) and again, "The greatest among you will be the one who serves the rest," (*Matthew 23:11*).

Governance is leadership, and true leadership is transforming. Governments and ethnic groups, organizations and individuals spend energy struggling for power instead of leadership. Countries struggle for economic or military power; ethnic groups struggle for power to control their heritage; businesses struggle for an "edge" over their competitors; and individuals struggle for better jobs and relationships at home and elsewhere.

I work mainly with the migrant and alien population in southern Idaho. I live with many examples of governance, or leadership, good and bad. For example:

Lionila, an alien, had her workday interrupted by INS workers, who handcuffed her to a co-worker and deported her. Rosa cleans at the Nampa State School. When she passed her citizenship test, she received a congratulations card from her employers along with a note saying she had received a raise. Which example of leadership was transformational? Which type

meets the standard set by Jesus of "to serve, not be served?"



Sr. Bernadette Stang

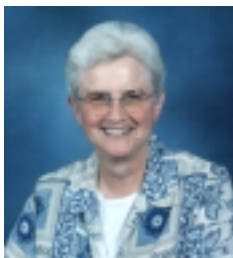
Tanya, thinking of her migrant students in Kimberly, ID, writes "A good leader focuses on what is really important – the people." She feels leadership means caring for "her kids" by working for their best interest. When the paperwork of her job takes her attention away from the students, she

wonders if she is still being a transformational leader.

Some in our society don't even struggle for power because they lack the power to do so. Jeff, in State College, PA, states that the powerless are people who have nothing – the unborn, young, aged and homeless. They depend on good governance and leadership to empower them. Jeff feels that when he votes he needs to vote for the good of the community, especially the powerless.

Warren is retired and to him leadership means obeying God with a happy heart, exuberant love and kindness, regardless of where he serves.

Following Jesus' example of leadership "to serve and not to be served" leads down a potentially frightening road. But it is the road to personal and societal transformation.



# Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

Greetings to all of you in this time of national grief. I, for one, have a hard time wrapping my mind around such senseless acts of destruction born of hatred. As a nation, we know life will never again be the same. We will recover, but our nation will not seem as safe a haven as it has in the past. We now know what many other peoples of the world face every day of their lives.

Terrorism presents our national and international leaders with great challenges. They need our prayers and the wisdom of God as they determine how to respond to acts that are so destructive of human life, of world economies, and of the earth's resources.

President Bush especially needs our prayers as he and his advisors determine what means to use to seek out those who are responsible for these acts. May it be done not for vengeance and retaliation, but for justice and compassion.

I know President Bush is seeking the collaboration of leaders of other nations who want to eradicate worldwide terrorism. I

would hope that, at the same time, they would begin to address the root causes of such violent and destructive acts.

I, personally, do not believe such acts are a result of "religion." I think it has more to do with poverty and the lack of basic necessities required to sustain human life. Again, let us pray for insight and courage for leaders of nations that there will be cooperation and good will among them as they seek out the real truth behind these acts of terror.

All of this brings me to the theme of this issue of *The Canticle*, GOVERNANCE, or influencing others for change. Terrorist activity is an extreme example of what happens when leaders no longer value the dignity of the human person and rule by oppression, might and greed, which in turn breeds discontent and chaos.

St. Benedict lived in very violent times, too. After living through the chaos of his time he wrote a Gospel-centered Rule to govern his monasteries. Because his vision of governance and leadership was centered in Christ, it was much different than that of the rulers of his time. Rulers were often chosen by competitions to see who was the strongest. Society was structured into classes, with the rich nobility at the top and poor peasants at the bottom.

Benedict dispensed with class distinctions and competitions. Monastery leaders were chosen for their goodness of life and wisdom in teaching. Rank was determined by date of entrance into the monastery, not by circumstances of birth.

Benedict desired that his monks live simply, have their needs met by the community, and be satisfied with that. He believed

in common ownership, allowing monks to possess only what they were given, thus preventing the hoarding of goods.

Benedict called his monks to obedience to the monastic leader and to one another. This demanded a listening heart, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the leader and within the community, as well as in the events of their lives. When faced with decisions, Benedict knew the wisdom of consulting the community and sharing his leadership with the elder and the younger monks.

In the chaos created by wandering monks and clerics at the time, Benedict understood that belonging to a stable community was crucial to the spiritual and personal growth of the monk. Thus the monk, or monastic, promised stability in a particular monastery until death.

Like those of the past, today's Benedictine communities place authority in the hands of the Prioress or Abbot. She or he understands the purpose of authority, meaning "to author life," and provides a structure and environment needed to do just that. Through a healthy rhythm of prayer, work, study and leisure, monastics become a presence that welcomes God's transforming power into the world to bring about positive change.

Your gifts to us, your presence with us and your prayers for us transform us, as well. Thank you for all the ways you help us. May our gracious and loving God bless you for your generosity and give you peace.



**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.

**Sr. Mary Kay Henry, OSB**  
Director of Development

**Darla Anglen-Whitley**  
Editor

TEL: (208) 962-3224 • FAX: (208) 962-7213

EMAIL: [develop@camasnet.com](mailto:develop@camasnet.com)  
[www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)

# Who's In Charge Here?

## Governance at the Monastery

by Sr. Meg Sass, OSB

The governance of our Benedictine community lies somewhere between a primary group, such as a family, and a formal organization, such as a business.

Like a family we are bound by ties for life, we reverence and love one another, we care for our members' needs. Like an organization we have budgets and audits, direction statements and goals and policies. These organizational tools are meant to help us enmesh our mission statement:

*Eager to embrace the transforming power of God we ... seek God through monastic profession and respond in healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking.*

Our goal, however, is not to make a profit but to help one another seek God and to be God's presence in our world.

Practically speaking, the community needs an organizational structure insuring participatory governance. Therefore the community has a Prioress, who is elected by the Chapter, and a Council, composed of some community members appointed by the Prioress and some elected by the Chapter.

Our current Prioress, Sr. Jean Lalande, is expected to "hold the place of Christ" as the spiritual leader of the monastery and the chief steward of its temporal goods. She guides the formation of the sisters and directs the works of the monastery.

Chosen by her community of sisters, she is the sign of their unity in Christ. To help her with this arduous task, Sr. Jean has chosen two sisters to be part of her Administrative Team. I was selected to serve as Assistant Prioress and have primary responsibility for long-range planning and mission develop-

ment, while Sr. Emagene Warren, Procurator, has primary responsibility for the running of the monastery and its grounds.



**Talking and listening to one another while participating in the community's decision-making process.**

The Chapter is composed of all the sisters who have made perpetual monastic profession. They assist the Prioress in making decisions. Generally the Chapter meets three to four times a year – we call these gatherings our Community Meetings.

Typical decisions made by Chapter include electing Council members, approving yearly budgets, making major financial choices, admitting new members and determining how best to live our Benedictine life today. Sometimes civil or canon law requires an official vote; the Chapter offers the Prioress advice that she is free to accept or reject.

It is difficult for the whole community to gather often. Therefore the Council, a group of six, meets regularly with the Prioress to give advice and/or consent on a variety of issues not requiring Chapter input. Council members have limited terms, often being asked to serve when they have particular knowledge or skills needed at a specific time. They also bring concerns and issues to the Prioress' attention.

Perhaps the most counter-cultural aspect of monastic governance is that even when church or civil law requires an official vote, in practice, we talk together and discern together until a common vision emerges.

Talking together, clearly and respectfully, making sure all are heard, is a more demanding discipline than hair shirts or fasting! Each sister listens attentively to the matter presented, to her own thoughts and feelings and to those of others. Her intent is to obediently listen and hear "with the ear of her heart" God's call to the community in whatever decision is being made.

Each sister strives to let Gospel principles, Benedictine values, community tradition and the good of all speak more loudly and clearly than her own personal desires, cultural expectations or the approval of others.

Once each community member's wisdom has been spoken and heard, each sister is called to "let go" and let the Prioress mold and fashion a decision. This decision is to be accepted without murmuring. Sometimes the whole process takes a long time, even years. It is certainly far easier to give up desserts or movies!

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This form of governance is possible only when the entire community, having chosen to seek God together in this monastery until death, is transformed through prayer and by the Gospel, and when each sister is loved and revered into life.

# Jubilarian Inspired by Monastic Studies

Sr. Mary Forman celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of monastic profession at the Monastery of St. Gertrude on Saturday, August 11, 2001. Sr. Mary is the daughter of the late M. Neal Forman and Eugenia T. Mis Forman currently of Boise, ID.

Sr. Mary grew up in Boise, ID, where she was employed as a pharmacist after graduating from Idaho State University in 1970. Before entering the Monastery in 1973, and afterward, she continued her work as a pharmacist. She also taught released time classes and served in various parishes as a youth minister, pastoral associate, DRE and as retreat minister at the monastery.

Her interest in monastic studies has guided much of her work, beginning with teaching Latin at the Center for Medi-

eval Studies at the University of Toronto. She is a Councilor for the Federation of St. Gertrude and the past President and Board member of the American Benedictine Academy. Currently she is an Assistant Professor in Monastic Studies at the School of Theology, Saint John's University in Collegeville, MN.



Sr. Mary Forman celebrates her Silver Jubilee in style.

Her research has revealed that many forms of monastic life have been lived through the centuries, each responding to the events of the culture and society. "A truly inspiring surprise has been to discover that the earliest monasteries were frequently established by Christian women, following

the example of Christ by establishing house churches and later household communities near major Christian centers in the Mediterranean region."

Without a doubt, Sr. Mary believes being a sister at St. Gertrude's is the best place for her. "The first time I drove up to the Monastery in 1972," she said, "I knew that I had come 'home'. It was a graced moment of deep inner knowing God's love for me, which has been true ever since."

She would advise anyone seeking a closer relationship with God to "follow the deepest, discerned promptings of your heart and you will foster joy in this life, even in the midst of suffering, doubt and hardship.

"The sisters at St. Gertrude have a legacy of contemplative awareness, pioneering tenacity and monastic rootedness where, together, we make a difference in the world."

## Good Leaders, Good Followers

*Sr. Bernadette Stang polled friends and family for their input on issues surrounding governance and influence as she prepared her lead article for the newsletter. Here are some responses she received.*

"Remember how it felt to be picked last in kick-ball? Remember when you were not included at all? Interestingly enough, if there was a strong leader at that time who supported you with the group of other kids, it brought out the best in you! Also, I bet you still remember that person who supported you!

"I think as we grow we tend to be less willing to let an outsider in. But this is where mediocrity and excellence in leadership

clearly separate. A leader that is sensitive to his or her environment will be able to pick out the best in people and support them by making sure their voice gets heard. You can gain strength as a leader just by respecting others.

"After creating a level playing field, it becomes very apparent that talent comes from all different areas and no one person can bring it all to the table."

*I feel everyone has power to lead and influence.*

"Over the last five years in business, things have moved towards team work. Since not everyone can be a strong leader, why not

strive for being a strong follower? Within the team, everyone has influence over not only their peers but also their leader. The leader ends up 'serving the team versus being served'!"

*What governs decisions? Unfortunately some people are easily swayed by media. The best way would be to find somebody that sets a good example and learn from him or her. Keeping an open mind and thinking things through before jumping in. Know your consequences.*

"I think leadership can be abused at all levels. The worst abuse happens in the family unit, for example, spousal and/or child abuse."



# Allurements of the Heart

Autumn is steadily marching our way and with it the reminder that winter is just around the corner!

Vocation work here at the monastery has been steadily building. Sitting down to write this update I wondered how to fill the pages. Once I began to look over the past three months, I was astonished at the number and variety of ways I've been about the vocation work entrusted to me.

We currently have four affiliates with two more women looking at becoming affiliates soon. Affiliates are women who have expressed an interest in discerning more seriously their call to the monastic life. This stage on the road to becoming a sister can last from six months to three years. Pray with these women in this time of discernment.

I attended several youth camps during the summer as Camp Nurse, continuing a tradition started last year. I spent several weeks at the Diocese of Boise Discipleship Camp with high school students, as well as the Junior High Camp.

My decision to attend these camps was reaffirmed when a young adult leader expressed her excitement to know that it was possible to choose religious life and still be able to work with young people in a youth summer camp environment. She didn't know that would still be possible as a sister.

In late July I took a "California Road Trip" through southern Washington, the Oregon coast and northern California with Sr. Teresa Jackson and Kathy McFaul. We made stops at local churches along the way leaving vocation materials behind.

We enjoyed the company of five women for our annual Monastic Living Experience

in July. They spent the 12 days praying, working and playing with us. One of the participants plans to become an affiliate and she is seriously discerning religious life here with us. Keep her in your prayers.

This autumn I'll be on the road visiting university career fairs. I'm scheduled for Big Sky in Missoula, MT, WSU in Pullman, WA, and Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA. Both Emmett and Boise, ID, are sponsoring Vocation Awareness events that I will be attending. The Benedictine Vocation Directors will also be meeting together this fall.

This is a wonderful opportunity to interact with other Benedictines, sharing tips, tricks and insights.

Another experience from the past few months helped me realize the importance of being able to be out

among young people. One young woman stated "how can we think about religious life as a choice if we have no personal experience with anyone living that life?" She was glad to meet me and see how my choice to live in community enabled me to be present to her and her peers.

So much of what I am able to do for vocations for St. Gertrude's and the church is a direct result of your support through your prayers, your presence and your donations. Thank you.



Our career fair display draws an interested visitor.



Teresa and Kathy visiting a "site" in Washington.



## Come and See Weekends

*Reflection and discernment weekends for single women. Pray with the Sisters and other women exploring religious life.*

**October 19 - 21, 2001**  
**December 14 - 16, 2001**  
**February 8 - 10, 2002**  
**April 12 - 14, 2002**

## Triduum at the Monastery

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

**March 28 - 31, 2002**

## Monastic Living Experience

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

**July 1 - 12, 2002**



Visit our Vocations pages at  
[www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)  
[vocation@camasnet.com](mailto:vocation@camasnet.com)



# DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

This time of harvest is a time to notice how God has blessed us and to bow in gratitude. One such blessing is that our four Affiliates, Michele Bateman, Katherine Beckley, Jean Ihli and Susan Stanton, are discerning their possible calls to our community. Michele and Jean have lived-in with us as volunteers for the summer and hope to join us this fall. We bow in gratitude.

Sending us new members seems to be a way God is asking us to look to the future and bring our resources to the service of many. We bow in gratitude and will launch an extensive Vocations Awareness Campaign with the goal that every single Catholic woman in the Northwest and beyond who is making a vocation choice will be aware that religious life remains a fulfilling option worthy of consideration.

The number of seekers coming to our spirituality center for retreats, workshops, and times of quiet are overflowing the space we have and some have to wait for a later date. We bow in gratitude as we look at concrete options for expanding this ministry.

For 120 years, rooted in tradition and flexible in approaches, our community has risked letting go of some works and taking on others according to the needs of the time and the talents of the sisters.

The “governor” of such decisions has always been eagerness to welcome the transforming power of God in ourselves and our world. That is what fires us up to remain standing in the fountain of contemplation which overflows in myriad streams of compassion.

Humble streams? Mostly. Yet streams that bring hope and services to women; youth and families at risk; parishioners; patients, families and staffs in hospitals and nursing homes; elderly; teachers and catechists; retreatants; individuals and groups in discernment; students; our families, friends, and benefactors. Streams that go far because they are joined to the compassion and self-giving of many people such as yourselves.

We invite you to remain in the fountain and stream with us as volunteers, oblates, and supporting friends. We hope that some of *your dreams* for making a difference in the world can be realized by participating in and supporting our way of life and the ministries that flow from it. The enclosed Stewardship Report seems to say that this is true, for which we humbly bow in gratitude.



## Holding You In Prayer

November is traditionally the month to remember our beloved deceased ones. This November we will hold up all those whose lives were extinguished so senselessly on September 11, 2001, in the terrorist attacks on this nation. We ask you to do the same.

We also invite you to share with us the names of people and/or situations that we can lift up in prayer for you. Email your intentions to [develop@camasnet.com](mailto:develop@camasnet.com), or call (208) 962-3224 x35.

Between All Saints Day on November 1, and the Feast of St. Gertrude on November 16, your petitions, intentions and loved ones will be presented daily in our community prayers.

## SISTERS IN MOTION



Sometimes **Sr. Placida Wemhoff**, left, at left, has time to spare from working on the maintenance of the monastery. When she does, she spends it sewing children's clothes for the poor and homeless. Here she is shown with Grace Velasquez, packing a suitcase for Grace to take to Mexico to distribute to children in need. Sr. Placida sews the clothing from a variety of material and yard goods donated to the monastery.

**Sr. Philomena Vogler**, right, arrived in American in 1921, from Switzerland, the year the cornerstone was set in place in the historic stone building. On June 28, joined by relatives from her native country, she celebrated her 100th birthday. Asked what is best about being a century old, Sr. Philomena replied, “I would say every day.” And asked if it was a blessing to be 100, she retorted, “Oh, by golly, ja!”



No, this isn't a new member! He's **Dennis Desmarais** of Coeur d'Alene, ID, a mechanic by trade. Dennis donated a week of his vacation time to check and repair all the motorized equipment at the monastery. This freed up more time for Sr. Placida's sewing projects ... Thanks, Dennis!



# Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

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

by Lyle Wirtanen, Museum Director

## Holiday Gifts from the Museum

Are you searching for a unique holiday gift for that special someone? The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude has several gift-giving ideas.

For the holidays we are offering Sr. Alfreda Elsensohn's ***Pioneer Days in Idaho County, Vol. 2*** for \$35. Regular price \$45. Discount good until December 25, 2001.

Other books from Sr. Alfreda include: *Idaho Chinese Lore*, \$6; and *Idaho County's Most Romantic Character: Polly Bemis*, \$4.

The gift shop has an excellent selection of history books pertaining to the Northwest, including: *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* by Alvin Josephy; *Last of the Mountain Men* by Harold Peterson; *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915* by Glenda Riley; *Hear Me, My Chiefs! Nez Perce Legend and History* by L. V. McWhorter; and *River of No Return* by Johnny Carrey and Cort Conley.

For those interested in Idaho history, a membership to the Museum is a thoughtful gift. We have several membership levels available for individuals and families ranging from \$15 to \$75. Why not delight someone with a donation to the Museum in honor or memory of your own family's founding members.

For information on how the Museum can help you with your holiday gift-giving, contact Mary Cay Henry, Curator, or Lyle Wirtanen, Director, at (208) 962-7123 or via email: [museum@micron.net](mailto:museum@micron.net).

## 2001 Fall Lecture Series

The Historical Museum's annual fall lecture series is set to get underway. These two-hour lecture and discussion sessions start at 7:00 p.m. and are held in the Monastery's dining room. Refreshments will be served. If you have any questions, please contact the museum.

### September 27 **Standing Up to the Rock**

**Louise Freeman-Toole**

A soon-to-be-published book that has been described as a beautifully written memoir about the land, its history, and its people on a cattle ranch in Hells Canyon of Idaho. The author is from Pullman, Washington.

### October 4

#### **History of the Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude Sr. Mary Kay Henry and Sr. M. Evangela Bossert**

Come hear this incredible story of the perseverance, faith and hospitality of these pioneering Benedictine women in the northwest.



### October 11

#### **A River Went Out of Eden: Additional Perspectives on Sylvan Hart, His Work and His Times**

**Dr. Rodney T. Cox**

Dr. Cox is the nephew of Sylvan "Buckskin Bill" Hart and will discuss Hart's life and legacy. Dr. Cox is from Portland, OR.

### October 18

#### **The Battle of White Bird, June 1877**

**Ace Barton**

Ace Barton is a local historian from Riggins, ID, and will off a slide presentation and narration on the first battle of the Nez Perce War of 1877. Mr. Barton is co-author of *Snake River of Hells Canyon*, a history of the canyon.

### October 25

#### **Witness to a Century: The Life and Times of Alvin Josephy Dr. Patricia Keith, Lewis Clark State College**

This film and lecture is part of a yet-to-be-produced documentary on the life of Josephy, a nationally recognized historian and writer. Amongst other things, Josephy interviewed Trotsky in Mexico in the 1920's, worked with Navajo code-talkers during World War II, and became a dedicated chronicler of the Nez Perce history and life-style.

### November 1

#### **Historic Files of North Central Idaho**

**Omer Drury**

Mr. Drury's films have been featured on the Idaho Public Television program *Outdoor Idaho*. He will present and discuss films pertaining to Fog Mountain by Selway Falls, the Salmon River, and the Snake River. These are one-of-a-kind historic films. Mr. Drury is from Troy, ID.

# Upcoming Retreats at the Monastery

## Trinity, Community & Contemplation

October 12 - 14, 2001

Dr. Michael Downey

This retreat will explore the practical implications of the Trinitarian mystery for every dimension of the spiritual life.

## It's Certainly Not the Money:

### Spirituality in the Helping Professions

November 2 - 4, 2001

Sr. Teresa Jackson & Kathy McFaul

Spirituality may have drawn you into the helping profession and sustains you there. This retreat helps you integrate your work life and spiritual journey.

## The Gifts of Advent

November 30 - December 2, 2001

Sr. Agnes Reichlin

Come away and reflect on the gift of this season. Prepare for Christ's coming as a Child.

## Letting the Lord Build the House

February 15 - 17, 2002

Chotard Doll & Bernard Fenik

Break down the gender specific roles we easily assume by encountering Jesus in Scripture, early Church teaching and prayer and discussion.

## Finding God in Simple Ways

February 22 - 24, 2002

Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

Begin Lent by exploring the why's and how's of a simpler lifestyle.



## Special Advent Mini-Retreats!

Select one of seven possible topics for a two-hour mini-retreat at your site, at the time of your choosing:

- *Where Is God Being Born in Your Life?*
- *Waiting With the Earth - Advent Symbols from Nature*
  - *Boldly Whining, Humbly Dining*
- *The Advent Giving Tree: Roots, Shoots and Fruits*
- *Preparing the Way*
  - *What's To Be A-Bornin'?*
  - *Of Presents and Presence*

For information, contact the Spirituality Outreach Ministry at (208) 962-3224 Email: outreachretreats@hotmail.com



Visit us on the web: [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)  
Email: [retreats@camasnet.com](mailto:retreats@camasnet.com)



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