



WINTER 2002

ST. GERTRUDE'S **Canticle** A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

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Stay in Touch!

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Chaos + Hope = A Gift From God

by *Sr. Angela Uhlorn*

God's power of hope has been expressed in my life in many ways. At times I have experienced it as a push and pull in the midst of discerning a direction. At other times I have experienced it as a call and invitation to embrace the future when all seemed dark around me.

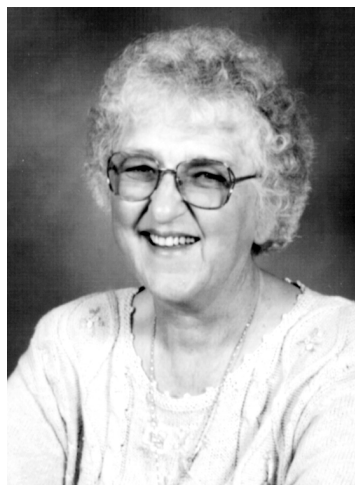
There have been times, too, when I have been in the midst of chaos (a recurring theme in my life!) and God helped me believe in His power of hope. Again and again I have been able to say "Yes" to the unknown, not weighted down by my fear or inexperience, but given grace for learning new skills, and gaining experience when called for during such challenging times.

There have been less chaotic times as well when hope has been a steady call to trust and risk letting go to try new things.

As one of 12 children in a family where God's presence was almost tangible, I learned that God created me to know, to love and to serve Him. I felt deeply called to share my life in a loving and healing way with everyone.

"The Call" to join the Benedictine Sisters revealed itself to me as an image of the monastery's two towers, and it came at the most unusual times – while dancing, at parties, when praying and over and over as I was in the midst of the inconsequential chores of daily living. The "call" was persistent and inviting. I was compelled to say "Yes" in

hope and faith and answered the call to join this community. Through my hope and faith, God has seen fit to bear fruit in my life and my ministry.



Sr. Angela Uhlorn

While I was working in Bogota, Colombia, I had a terrible accident riding a wild horse. My elbow was crushed when the saddle cinch broke as I was galloping. After some futile surgeries in Colombia, I had to return to the States for more medical care. I was devastated when I found I could not return to Bogota.

Despite the chaos in my heart, spirit and body during that time I was moved to say "Yes" to a new and untested work for

my Benedictine community. The Bishop asked me to begin working as a pastoral associate with the Hispanic people in southern Idaho. I loved parish ministry and found strength and skills I never knew I had. Chaos + Hope = A Gift.

Recently I had the privilege of sitting at the bedside of our dying Sr. Philomena (see her obit on page 3). As she neared death this 101 year old woman, who came to America from Switzerland, kept crying out "Take me home, Mama, Mama, Mama. Let me go home!" In my comforting and encouraging her to let go and trust the unknown beyond life's door, I suddenly realized that she really didn't need my help. Her life had been filled with courage and hope.

See "Hope" on page 3



Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As we move from the Season of Advent into the time of Christmas and its Star of hope, I am reflecting on our community's latest decisions and experiences of hope which you'll be reading about in this issue of *The Canticle*.

"Hope is the evidence of things not yet seen." (cf Hebrews 11:1) In that spirit of hope and trust the Monastic Chapter voted on November 9, 2002, to begin to implement the Master Site Plan approved in August.

Plans are to set up a team of contractors and architects to accomplish two tasks: draw up plans for a new spirituality center and design a plan for renovations on the current monastery building.

The new space will include meeting and conference rooms, office space, and sev-

eral bedrooms for guests, oblates and retreatants. The new structure will also include storage space for the archives and the Historical Museum.

Renovations on the existing building will provide a visible and accessible entrance; increase energy efficiency (new windows, insulation and possible heating system); relocate offices for more effective and efficient work; and make the building more handicapped accessible (larger elevator).

Far-reaching renovation and building plans such as these require people, money and courage to implement, not to mention a long time.

Our expectation is that this is the beginning of a complex process that will help us OPEN THE DOOR to Benedictine Spirituality in the 21st century here in North Central Idaho.

You will be hearing more about this project as the months and years unfold. We would greatly appreciate your prayers as the seeds of this new venture (**Advent-ure?**) grow in the darkness.

As always, we pray for you and your loved ones with gratitude during Christmas Midnight Mass and the entire Christmas Season. Each of you is a ray of God's love for us. We ask the Christ Child to bring you the gifts you most desire. May the Star of Hope shine in your heart throughout the coming year.

Sr. Jean

Our Hopes For You

We invited the community to write a line or two about their experiences with HOPE. We've sprinkled their personal messages throughout this newsletter, little love letters to each one of you from us.



"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without words and never stops – at all."
Emily Dickenson



HOPE stands for Hospitality, Options, Perseverance, and Encounter. Where we show hospitality there is hope, where we see options there is hope, where we persevere there is hope and in who and what we encounter there is a possibility for hope.
Sr. Sue Ellen Drexler



Hope believes that Christ was born into the world over two thousand years ago as PRINCE OF PEACE. He continues to be born into our lives and into our world daily as we strive for PEACE and JUSTICE.
Sr. Barbara Gonzales



Hope is being able to live in the vision of Jesus, trusting that God will bring forth fruit from my prayer, ministry, gifts, failures and struggles. I live in the assurance of Paul's words in Romans 5:5: "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us." [NAB]
Sr. Mary Forman

In Loving Memory

Sister Philomena (Margarita) Vogler, 101, was born June 28, 1901, in Lungern, Switzerland, to Konrad and Agnes Schallberger Vogler. She died November 25, 2002, at the monastery in Cottonwood.

She came to the United States in 1921 and made her final profession as a Benedictine Sister at St. Gertrude's in 1923.

Her work in the book bindery at St. Gertrude's included binding magazines and documents for St. Gertrude's Academy and College, the public high school and other organizations in the area. She also ministered as a domestic and in kitchen work at St. Martin's College in Lacey, WA; St. Valentine's Hospital in Wendell, ID; Keuterville School in Keuterville, ID; Our Lady of Consolation Hospital in Cottonwood; and at St. Gertrude's.

Sr. Philomena loved to care for the plants at the monastery grotto, cultivate flower gardens, and collect and prepare herbs for medicinal use. Her personal file in the



archive contains a 1939 copy of *The Herbalist Almanac*.

From reading the magazines and documents that passed through the bindery, Sr. Philomena amassed knowledge on a variety of subjects and gained an exceptionally broad world view. Until the last few years of her

life she was keenly interested in and aware of world events.

She kept in touch with many family members and friends in Switzerland and the US. Two trips to her homeland to visit family remained highlights of her life, as did the visits of her Swiss relatives to Cottonwood.

Feisty, mischievous, profoundly prayerful, strong-willed, full of zest for life, Sr. Philomena cared deeply for the community, worked hard and exhorted others to do likewise.

Formation News

"We are delighted," smiles Sr. Agnes Reichlin, Formation Director, when asked how it feels to have two novices at the monastery. "They are signs of hope that God is opening the door to a vital future for us."

Jean Ihli and Michele Bateman became Novices in a quiet ceremony in the monastery's chapel on December 8. Jean and Michele reverently placed their checkbooks and car keys on the Bible, in front of the gathered community. This gesture symbolizes that they willingly relinquish independent life for one of inter-dependence, within the monastic community of St. Gertrude.

In return the community pledged themselves to the Novices by giving them the *Rule of Benedict*, the monastery's governing documents, and a Benedictine medal as an outward sign of their commitment.

The novitiate is a time for deepening relationships with the monastic community and becoming more familiar with Benedictine monasticism. Jean and Michele will spend their time as Novices at the monastery in prayer, study, reflection, solitude and work.

"We are excited that they have made this commitment. It is wonderful to have new companions on our journey," said Sr. Agnes.

"Even as Jean and Michele move into the novitiate, Postulants Mary Mendez and Carla Fontes continue their journey of discernment into life here.

"We are blessed with women interested in monastic life. How could we not have hope for our future?" smiles Sr. Agnes.

"Please join us in prayer that other women will respond to God's call to spend their lives with us."

Hope, from page 1

Hope has walked with me throughout my life journey. I am very grateful to live in this hope-filled community. I have the support and encouragement to reach beyond myself to the dreams of Kingdom building. My Benedictine sisters are good at moving from the safe, tried and true, in order to embrace the transformation that hope requires.

God has put me here to live my life with enthusiasm, and so I am. My prayer is that I remain rooted in God and faithful to His call to "remember the hope to which you have been called," as stated in our Easter liturgy.



Hope is what keeps my friend Jean accepting the invasive chemotherapy and radiation as she suffers from brain cancer. Hope is the smile on Claudia's face as she touches the baby in her womb. Hope is the peace that Sister Augustine manifested as she breathed her last. Hope is what kept Wayne from depression as he defined himself at the 12 step meeting, "I am an alcoholic!" Hope is "breathing under water!" Hope is standing beneath the Cross of the Redeemer and knowing his life has made a difference.
Sr. Bernadette Stang

The Blessings of Hope

by Andrea Partenheimer

One quality I love about hope is that its arrival always surprises me. It taps me on the shoulder at unexpected times, unexpected places, and points to an opening window that I hadn't noticed before. This window lets in new life, joy, color and possibility. And it brings God right here, right now, which changes everything.

Hope (the life-breath of God) often graces me through daily human encounters. For the last four months, I have had the great honor of working as a music-thanatologist. I bring live, individualized voice and harp music to the bedsides of those nearing the end of life. It is a wonderful paradox that the dying and their loved ones are often bearers of hope. In the face of tremendous change and loss, they are my greatest teachers in becoming more alive, more loving, and more human.

I have been asked whether this ministry has tested my faith in God. It is just the opposite. I have never been so convinced of the presence of God. When the windows of God-light open for the dying, this light spills out onto the rest of us who are present. We are all anointed in the holy substance that surely contains hope, mixed in with God's loving tears.

Just prior to beginning this incredible ministry with the dying, I had another truly life-changing experience that in so many ways enriches my current life and work.



Andrea "volunteering" to serve up some refreshments at the monastery.

For nine months in 2001 and 2002, I lived, worked, prayed and celebrated with the Sisters of St. Gertrude as a live-in volunteer. These women, both through their monastic lifestyle and through their individual hospitality and friendship, rekindled the flame of hope for me.

My first interaction with the sisters came through attending the Monastic Living Experience in July of 2001. At the time, I was thoroughly exhausted inside and out. Throughout the two week experience I experienced myself slowly "coming home": into relationship with the earth, into my soul within a needed space of inner quiet, into the larger human community, and into God. The desert began to bloom again!

I asked the community if I could return as a live-in volunteer, and thankfully they said yes. Words cannot describe the joy and blessing that infused my body and heart during the next few months. Hope accom-

panied me daily: in the joy of celebrating special days and moments, in the unique and wonderful variations of "monastic humor," in witnessing all visitors being warmly welcomed to the table, in the careful tending of earth and each other, and particularly in the indescribable depth, meaning and beauty of shared prayer. I remain deeply grateful.

I remember and honor these and all hope-bearers in my life. I thank the dying and their families I am so privileged to serve in Olympia, WA. And I thank the sisters for sharing their lives with me and with the wider community. Their presence, prayer, retreat and volunteer ministries truly form a wellspring of hope in a thirsty world.

May God continue to shower us all with blessing, and fill the wellspring abundantly!



Holding Our Possibilities Expectantly

God is lavish in caring for us. All we need do is wait and hold open our hands: God will place in them all that we need.

Sr. Judith Brower



Hope for me means that we share a vision of Just Peace - the health and education of the whole human family, each of us loved unconditionally by the same Creator who made us all - and that we celebrate and make alive that vision together.

Sr. Benita Hassler



Hope is knowing that all I need do is trust with great abundance and BELIEVE that every need is cared for in this present moment.

Sr. Stephanie Wardle

While We Wait In Joyful Hope?

by Sr. Clarissa Goeckner

Should I ever forget it, news reports remind me daily that we live in perplexing, challenging times. Terrorism, war, corporate greed, crippling poverty, starvation, a troubled economy and pollution that is putting our planet at risk are but a few of the facts of life today.

In addition to all that, I cringe at the crisis shaking our church. Sexual abuse and lack of integrity on the part of some church leaders have produced a cloud of disillusionment and hopelessness where integrity and hope should flourish.

Though optimistic by nature, I ask myself, is it possible to have hope? **Where** is hope today?

Looking to the past I am reminded that our times have no monopoly on difficulties. The people of Israel, the Advent readings tell us, felt the heavy burden of oppression, injustice and war. They ached for liberation, light in their darkness, hope.

Jesus was born into troubled times: an occupied homeland (oppression), disease (leprosy), injustice, prejudice (think of the Samaritans), unemployment (the beggars), greed (remember the tax collectors?), blindness and deafness of all kinds. He, too, had to deal with the hypocrisy of religious leaders.

During his lifetime Jesus brought hope to many individuals and situations. Although he did not eliminate or seem to impact the major ills of his time, he did leave a compelling vision and a tremendous legacy of hope by accomplishing the work of our salvation. Had he given us pointers on how to bring hope in hopeless times, I think he might have suggested the following:

1. Begin your own conversion. Become aware of your own inner hostility, prejudice, blindness, deafness and lack of integrity.

2. Accept people in their situations; help them take the next step.

3. Move beyond fear and discouragement.

4. Hold onto a hopeful vision.

5. Work for small gains; change comes slowly.

6. Engage in creative, courageous and committed action.

7. Plant many small seeds of hope each day.

8. Know that grace comes out of chaos, and life out of death.

But **where is** hope today?

I continue to be inspired by the real life story of Tony and Evelyn Messuri of Caldwell, Idaho. This couple's daughter, Mary Elizabeth, was born a healthy and happy baby. Six months into her life she developed seizures and high fevers that left her brain damaged.

Moving beyond the feelings of anger the torments of "Why us, God? Why Mary?," Tony and Evelyn decided they would do their very best for her. They learned everything they could about her disability, opened a school for special needs children and worked to have the children admitted to the public schools.

On their 50th wedding anniversary in 2000, their parish honored them for raising 10 children (two adopted) and foster parenting 390 others, most with special needs.

This is where hope lives today. It happens every time ordinary people like the Messuris, like you and like me, make



Sr. Clarissa Goeckner

choices for hope and give extraordinary amounts of effort and love to those choices.

The following quote from St. Augustine helps me see current problems in a new light: "The times are not bad; we **are** the times." We could also say, "The church is not bad; we are the church."

When each of us can claim that we are the times and we are the church, then we accept responsibility for the past and move into the future with power both as individuals and as community, to bring solutions, to bring hope.

Is hope possible today?

There has never been a time when hope is more necessary. It is the only effective tool we have to pierce the hopelessness and darkness of our times.



Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

Prov. 13:12

Novice Michele Bateman



Hope is a dream stretching toward reality and action.

Sr. Lucille Nachtsheim



Hope is the gift of God's grace by which we trust in what is unseen and unknown to be for the ultimate good of all. Hope is the strength that keeps me walking in the darkness of mind, the weakness of body, the despair of spirit towards what I believe is fuller life for everyone.

Sr. Meg Sass



Hope, in our finiteness, lets us place our trust in God who is all love. Sr. Mercedes Martzen



Hope is waiting with open hearts & hands in this sacred place & time, trusting in God's presence. Sr. Betty Schumacher

Dear Sisters:

I hope you will spare me a few minutes of your time for I have a story to tell in connection with the enclosed donation.

I am a 1950 graduate of St. Teresa's Academy in Boise, ID, predecessor of the present-day Bishop Kelly High School. Although few in number (class of 24 graduates), my surviving classmates remain quite a close-knit group, even after 52 years.

One of our classmates, however, never replied to invitations to reunions, etc. Try as we might, efforts to reach her were unsuccessful – until recently.

I'll spare the details, but it seems that our elusive classmate, Elaine Neal, recently passed away after living for many years as a "bag lady" in California. The authorities in California informed us that she was known as "Downtown Mary" and spent her days performing acts of kindness for those in need.

A grateful recipient of Downtown Mary's acts of kindness provided her with a funeral, complete with flowers. Police and firemen acted as pallbearers.

Of course we were stunned to find this out, and we regret not learning of her situation until after her death, too late to offer friendship. Since we had had no word of her in such a long time, we take this recent news as a message: We are to do something for Elaine.

I told my friends of your reforestation efforts and we all agree that Elaine should be remembered in this way. Please accept the enclosed donation in memory of Elaine.

I realize I have rambled on at length but I feel her story and the reason for this contribution might interest you. Would Elaine be pleased having trees growing in Idaho in her memory? We hope so.

Sincerely,

St. Teresa's Academy Class of 1950

This letter came in the mail one day, unannounced and totally unexpected. You can imagine the silence that fell upon our office (a rare thing!) when we read the letter.

After wiping away the tears, we called the donor and asked her permission to share this note with you.

It's a powerful expression of how hope can be lived under the most difficult situations.

Enjoy.





DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

War, rumors of war, war as game. Cutbacks for education, healthcare and welfare. Political, economic, religious scandals. Dark times that cry for a savior, for hope.

How does a monastery hear that cry? By renewed fidelity to seeking the God who takes flesh in the *now*. Evidenced by prayer on behalf of and in the name of the church and world; by offering spiritual seekers time and space for silence, learning and retreat; by inviting visitors to muse on stories and artifacts from the past to acquire wisdom for creating the future; by stew-

arding land with a view toward the next seven generations and beyond; by reaching out from the motherhouse in service to youth and families at risk, parishioners, patients and their families, students, lay ministers, and others.

Do these attempts to be a leaven of hope in our culture resonate with your dreams of a hospitable, equitable, and peaceful world? If so, please participate in our mission and ministries by praying for us, telling others about us, and by making a contribution to our vocations promotions program, our Grow a Forest Campaign, our museum ap-

peal, or our greatest need. Learn more about these at www.StGertrudes.org.

Have you considered including the Monastery in your will or other planned giving instrument such as a life insurance policy? A lasting legacy for lasting values.

Thank you for continuing to support us in these economically difficult times. In turn we hope that you feel our support for you through our prayer and other ministries.

All together may we experience God who comes as Hope, and then reflect that Hope to others.



The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

The Benedictine Sisters launched their first official fundraising campaign for The Historical Museum in November. We hope each of you has received your copy and will consider a generous response.

“Aside from special events we have not done fundraising for the museum since the building was constructed in 1980,” said Sr. Mary Kay Henry.

“We consider the museum a primary way to continue our education ministry. We also see it as a means to support the local economy by the increased number of visitors, especially during the upcoming Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration.”

With over 7,000 annual visitors, plus guests for the Victorian Tea and Raspberry Festival, the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude is an important tourist, cultural and research center for the Northwest. The museum’s

collection consists of over 70,000 artifacts with about 11,000 on display.

Lyle Wirtanen, Museum Director encourages everyone to visit the museum. “Stop by during the holidays with your family or friends and treat yourself to a few hours of exploration. I guarantee you’ll discover something new.”

The museum is installing some new exhibit display cases. The cabinets that had been in use were actually artifacts and were quite fragile.

“The new cabinets are built to house specific artifacts,” said Wirtanen. “They are taller, making the artifacts closer to eye-level. They also have lights in them and the glass isn’t breakable. They will significantly improve the affected exhibits.”

As one of the nine Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Trail Museums, the museum re-

ceived funds for the display cases through the Lewis and Clark Trail Museum Initiative, a grant program administered by the State of Idaho. The purpose of the program is to assist museums along the Lewis and Clark Trail to upgrade exhibits and facilities in order to deal effectively with the increase in tourists during the trail commemoration years.

“This has been a helpful program for us. We changed our front entrance last year and upgraded the security system. The new cases are safer for the public and will also help secure the collection. Some artifacts that are now displayed within reach of visitors will be enclosed; this protects the artifacts and the visitors alike.”

Learn more about the museum online at www.HistoricalMuseumAtStGertrude.com

Come Away to a Retreat

Return to Me With All Your Heart

Feb. 28 - Mar. 2, 2003 (Fri. 7:30 PM to Sun. 1:30 PM)

Presenters: Sr. Teresa Jackson and Kathy McFaul

Prepare for Lent by exploring the many ways we can deepen our relationship to God through prayer. Prayer forms will include centering prayer, lectio divina, body prayer, and prayer with scripture. Grounded in prayer, we will be ready to welcome the Risen Lord with all our hearts.

Well, Wise and Whole

March 7 - 9, 2003 (Fri. 7:30 PM to Sun. 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski

Enhance "total health" by learning strategies that address matters of wellness, self-knowledge and relationships as well as personal wholeness. *One month advance notice required with additional registration procedures and fees. Request brochure for information.*



Visit us on the web: www.StGertrudes.org
Email: retreat@camasnet.com
outreachretreats@hotmail.com

Voices from the Margins:

Listening to the Hidden Women of the Gospels

April 4 - 6, 2003 (Friday, 7:30 PM to Sunday, 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Sr. Teresa Jackson

When we read the Gospel stories, we often forget that women were among the first and strongest disciples of Jesus. Through their discipleship they proclaimed the Good News of the Reign of God and challenged the accepted role of women in their culture. Look again at the stories of these women and how they are role models of faith and discipleship in difficult times.

Mother & Adult Daughter Retreat:

"Where do you live?"... "Come & See"

April 25 - 27, 2003 (Fri. 7:30 PM to Sun. 1:30 PM)

Presenter: Sr. Judith Brower

John's disciples wondered about Jesus and heard Him invite them to come and visit. This Octave of Easter weekend you're invited to do the same. Perhaps you'll also hear Jesus say to you, "Where do YOU live?" This may be a good time to whisper back, "Come and see."



IDAHO CORP. OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS

Monastery of St. Gertrude

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Look Inside ...

Chaos & Hope:
Partners in Time?

Advent-ures
at the Monastery

Welcome Our
Two Novices!



Befriend the Earth!

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