



WINTER 2004

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

## Look Inside

In Loving Memory ..... 3

Who's In Charge? ..... 4

Hear God Calling? ..... 6

Thanks, Turkeys! ..... 7

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## Profession: Twice As Nice

*By Darla Anglen-Whitley*

In front of nearly 100 witnesses Jean Ihli and Michele Bateman, deliberately, carefully and sometimes tearfully, promised their lives to the monastic community at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in the Rite of Temporary Profession on Thursday, November 16, 2004.

"I promise fidelity, stability and obedience," both women vowed, "and to seek God in the Monastery of St. Gertrude until death."

When Prioress Jean Lalande asked the gathered sisters if they would receive Ihli and Bateman as members of St. Gertrude, the community responded "Yes, with joy we accept and will support them!"

Then Ihli and Bateman knelt at the altar and sang "Receive me, O Lord, as you have promised, that I may live, and disappoint me not in my hope."

Sr. Janet Barnard, Vocation Director, said "There are many Benedictine monasteries in the United States that haven't had a profession for several decades. We have six women in initial formation, or one-tenth of our population: two novices and two postulants moving into the novitiate, plus several women in the beginning stages of looking at life with us here at St. Gertrude's."

Sr. Jean Ihli, 65, is from Boise. "I have always been involved in the church," Ihli said. "After I retired, it seemed God was suggesting that I ask the sisters in Cottonwood if I could join them."



**Sr. Jean Ihli, left, and Sr. Michele Bateman, are the two newest women to make profession at the Monastery of St. Gertrude.**

Much to her delight, the sisters were willing to consider her application. She sold her house and moved into the monastery four years ago. Ihli had been involved in the monastery's

Oblate program before entering and knew many of the sisters.

"Moving into the monastery wasn't too difficult because I had established relationships with the sisters already," Ihli recalls.

Sr. Michele Bateman, 51, is also from Boise and took a different path to the monastery.

"I thought I couldn't become a sister because I wasn't a raised Catholic, and I had been married," she said. She was delighted to discover she could pursue her calling to enter religious life.

"My daughter and grandchildren weren't surprised at my decision to enter community," Bateman continues. "I am excited that they were able to be here for my profession."



# Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends,

Advent greetings! As you read this we are well into this liturgical season. Advent is a time of anticipation, a time for looking forward to the coming of Jesus into our lives in new ways. John the Baptist reminds us to "prepare the way of the Lord."

In anticipation, we look within ourselves and reflect upon our lives and the changes that will prepare us for the return of Jesus. Change is a fact of life, a call and a challenge to grow. Somewhere I read: "To live is to change and to grow is to change much."

As Benedictines we are called to be a people of change, a people dedicated to growth. Living the monastic life is not about living behind walls, separated from the world. The threefold promise we make at our Monastic Profession includes fidelity to the monastic way; stability in this community; obedience to God, to the prioress, to each other; and, ongoing dialogue with the needs of our world. This promise demands change and growth, a process known as *conversatio* or conversion.

Conversion is vital to us as a community. We choose to meet as a total community at least four times a year to plan for our future needs, to assess our life and our ministries, and to discern new directions and new leadership.

In November we met to begin our process of discernment for our next prioress. With facilitated leadership we began the first step in the process: Direction setting. By the end of our time together we had set directions for the next six years. The directions statements we set for ourselves spring from our mission statement and encompass peace and justice making, healthy and healing living practices, developing leadership gifts and skills in our community members and financial stability as we fulfill our mission.

Using our direction statements we will meet again April 3 - 8, 2005, to discern three things: 1) what leadership qualities would be needed to help us move in these directions? 2) who among us possesses these qualities? and 3) who is the one person that God is calling to be prioress for the next term? I ask for your prayers for us during this very important time of discernment.

This issue of *The Canticle* is full of the good news about our two newly professed, Sister Jean Ihli and Sister Michele Bateman. We are so happy that God has blessed us with these two beautiful, committed women who have joined us on our monastic journey.

You will also meet Dave English, Construction Supervisor for Bouten Construction, Co. It is Dave's job to make our dream of building Spirit Center come true. Every wall he puts up brings us closer to fulfilling this hope God has given us of providing a place of spirituality and peace to our retreatants and guests.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year. Know that you are remembered in our prayers and in the celebrations of the liturgies of this season.

May our gracious God who wants to share life and love with us, bless you and draw you ever closer to the Incarnate Word, Jesus our Saviour.

Sr. Jean Lalande, OSB

# In Loving Memory

Sr. Marcella (Clementine Elizabeth) Riener, 95, died January 28, 2004, at the monastery. She was born October 11, 1908, to John and Mary Hutfles Riener, in Greencreek, ID.



She joined the Monastery of St.

Gertrude in 1927 where she made her Monastic Profession two years later.

She was a much-loved teacher in Chewelah and Colton, WA and in Ferdinand, Genesee, St. Maries, Keuterville, Cottonwood, Greencreek, Grangeville, Nampa, Pocatello, and Rupert, ID. In her retirement she visited patients in the hospital and sewed clothes for the poor and for the pregnancy counseling center in Lewiston. The Pregnancy Center presented her a plaque of appreciation during her 90th birthday party.

Strong and gentle, prayerful and industrious, gracious and humorous, smiling and open-minded are words frequently used to describe Sr. Marcella. She loved being a Benedictine Sister and was featured in the community's vocation appeal because she had told Prioress Jean Lalande that "the only thing I want for my future and our future is that new women will answer God's call to come to the monastery and learn to love our way of life." She also loved her family heritage and liked to share that she was born in a homestead house on the Nez Perce Reservation near Greencreek.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her siblings Clem, Joe, Carl, George, Elizabeth Wessels, Mary Baerlocher, Teresa Schmidt, Anastasia Schmidt, and Magdalene (Sr. Celestine). She is survived by her monastic community and numerous nieces and nephews with whom she remained very close.

Sr. Stephanie Marie (Joan) Wardle, 61, died January 31, 2004, at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood. She was born April 18, 1942, to Bud Jennings and Cecilia Marie Thinnies Wardle in Ogden, UT.



Following her graduation from Utah's Weber State, Ms. Wardle taught school until she joined the Monastery in 1966. There she made her Profession as Sr. Stephanie Marie in 1968.

Sr. Stephanie served in a broad array of ministries which included teaching in Catholic schools in Cottonwood and Lewiston, directing youth ministry in Boise and Religious Education Programs in Rupert, and serving as Pastoral Associate in Lava Hot Springs and Soda Springs, ID.

She served for 19 years as counselor and director at drug and alcohol recovery centers in Boise, Nampa and Caldwell, ID. She also established and managed a soup kitchen at the Community Christian Center in Garden City, ID. Her last seven years she worked in Mission Services at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, and Clearwater Valley Hospital in Orofino, ID.

*The Idaho Statesman* featured Sr. Stephanie in "Portrait of a Distinguished Citizen" in 1983 and in 1990 the Idaho Board of Alcohol and Drugs selected her "Counselor of the Year."

Sr. Stephanie was creative, persevering, courageous, intelligent and committed to acting on behalf of the poor.

She was preceded in death by her mother, and is survived her monastic community, her father, and brothers Robert and Tim, both of Ogden, UT, and their families.

Surrounded by her monastic community, Sr. M. Aquinas (Irene Margaret) Schaecher, 91, died November 25, 2004. She was born in Cottonwood on June 25, 1913, to Theodore and Catherine Beller Schaecher. Her



family moved to Alberta, Canada, in 1920, and she returned to the states in 1930 to join her sisters, Sr. Rose and Sr. Assumpta, at St. Gertrude's. She made her monastic profession on August 27, 1931.

A passionate lifelong learner, Sr. Aquinas relished teaching and was a favorite of her many students. She taught at Guardian Angel School in Colton, WA; St. Gertrude's Academy and St. Joseph's School in Cottonwood, ID; St. Maries Academy in St. Maries, ID; St. Paul's School in Nampa, ID; St. Anthony's School in Nezperce, ID; the Keuterville and Greencreek schools, and St. Mary's School in Boise.

In 1968, she headed for Bogota, Colombia, to teach at Colegio San Carlos. While there, Sr. Aquinas received word that she had been elected Prioress by a Benedictine community in Covington, LA, a surprise and new leadership responsibility. She served in that capacity for two years.

She shared her compassion and love with underserved groups throughout Idaho and Washington. She served as Director of Novices and Sisters in Temporary Profession and as Director of Maintenance at the monastery.

Sr. Aquinas was preceded in death by her parents, and siblings: Lawrence, Ray, Gertrude Albers, Sr. M. Rose and Sr. M. Assumpta. She is survived by her monastic community and her nieces and nephews.



# Making the Sisters' Dream Come True

by Darla Anglen-Whitley

Exactly who is in charge of making things happen at a construction site? Who makes sure things are ordered and delivered on time? Who does the hiring and firing? Dave English, Construction Superintendent for Bouten Construction, Co., in Spokane, WA, is the man "in charge."

When I asked Dave if I could interview him about the project, he had one condition: "Don't make me look like a dork," he said.

Well ... ahem.

Dave is no stranger to St. Gertrude's. He was here 11 years ago when the sisters remodeled the kitchen. Back then he made several good friends in the area. He also trained for a marathon in the long evenings while away from his wife, Dana, and their five children.

He has renewed his acquaintances since returning to Cottonwood in September. He is also back to running marathons.

"I have lots of time in the evening to train. In fact, the last marathon I ran was when I was working here before," Dave told me.

I asked him about Spirit Center and if he found this project different from others he has worked on. I wondered if building a structure for a group of sisters was, well ... different.

Dave was quick to point out the obvious uniqueness of Spirit Center: commercial building sites are typically located in busy, commercial areas of cities with lots of noise and activity.

"This is completely opposite of a typical building site," Dave said. "It is so quiet and

Hospital in less than an hour," Dave said. "The guy is back on the job."



**Dave English, Construction Superintendent, on the job at Spirit Center, our 21,800 square foot conference and retreat center. Dave expects the project to be completed on time, even though the snow is beginning to fall. "The fall and early winter has been mild and we made a lot of headway. I'm sure the sisters' prayers had something to do with that."**

peaceful here ... and the cows on the other side of the fence ... what could beat that?"

Of course, the rural location offers some challenges as well.

"We plan very carefully when we purchase our supplies. If we run out of or forget something, we can't just run down to the mega supply store and get it.

"The guys at the building supply in Cottonwood – Gem Builders – are great to work with. If they don't have it, they can get it within a short period of time."

The small town atmosphere is refreshing as well. The morning of our interview, one of the carpenters accidentally injured his hand. "An emergency room visit in a city takes at least six hours just to get seen by a doctor. We were in and out at St. Mary's

Another unique aspect of Spirit Center is its wooden construction. Today, most commercial projects aren't wood-framed.

"The carpenters are loving this project because it is a wooden structure and it is this big. It is designed with unique angles to take in the views. These are challenging and interesting to the crew."

I asked if it seemed he had 60 sister "overseers" looking over his shoulder, peering out the windows, and visiting the site each day.

"It's just great. The sisters are very interested in what's happening here.

That makes the project fun.

"When things don't go exactly as planned, the sisters understand that. They say, 'Oh. I see.' They trust us to get it done right and sometimes that takes more time. They are very willing to work with us."

Many, if not all, commercial buildings and additions are constructed with an eye to improving the company's bottom line. Dave understands that Spirit Center is being built in order to do God's work and fulfill the sisters' mission.

"This place is about helping out humanity, not some company's pocketbook. I feel very fortunate for this opportunity to work here," he said.

And if that makes him sound like a dork ... then that's just the way it is.



Tender Mercy by the hand of Sr. Carolyn Miguel





Sr. Sue Ellen Drepler

Connie Sonnen, OSB

Sr. Bernice Messels, OSB

Sr. Betty Schumacher

Sr. Carolyn Miquet

Alfred Oakley, OSB

Mary Forman, OSB

Sr. M. Esther Velasquez

Bernie Ternes, OSB

S. Petronella Lieser

Sr. Joan Smith

Sr. Maria Elena Schaefer, OSB

Sr. Mary Bernard Lieser

S. Catherine Mansfield

Sister Jean Jhl<sup>9</sup>

Sr. Meg Sass

Sr. Mercedes Martzen

S. Bernadette Stang

Sr. Winifred Lorentz

Sister Lucy Keaney

Sr. Wilma Schlangen

Sr. Margie Schmidt

Sr. (Connie) Forman


S. Teresa Jackson

Sr. Ida Mae Fuchs, OSB

Sr. Rose Marie Nutsch

Sr. Jessica Bremer

Elisa Martenz, OSB



May God's tender mercy  
shine on you  
to guide your feet  
into the path of peace.

*Adapted from Luke 1: 78-79*

~ Benedictine Sisters at St. Gertrude ~



Sister Jean Lalande, OSB

Sr. Louise Alburding

Sr. Theresa Mary Stoeing

Sr. Valine Kachelmier, OSB

Sr. Mary Geis

Postulant Cindy Schultz

Sr. Carm Turner

Sr. Claudia Rae Braun, OSB

Sr. Evangelina Bossert

Novice Carla Fontes

Sr. Barbara Gonzales

Sr. Lillian Englert

Sr. Jerry Moise

Sr. Sylvia Heiland

Sr. Cecile Marie Whlson

Norica Mary Mendes

Sister Mary Marge Hoeckner

Chanelle Schuler OLB

Sr. Lucille Nachtsheim

Sr. Clarissa C. Doeckner

Sr. Janet McBurnard

Sr. Mary Frances Kless

S. Barbara J. Miodowski

Mary Kay Henry, OLB

Sr. Emogene Wosson

Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

Sister Scholastica  
Uhlenkott

Sister Angela Uhlen

Postulant Kim Jordan

Sr. Josephine Vincke, O.S.B.

Sr. Barbara A. Bielenberg

Sister Mildred Lustig

Sister Benita Hassler

Sr. Agnes Reichlin, OLB

Sr. Placida Wemhoff

Sr. Michèle Bateman

Sr. Theresa Dvorak



**Monastery of St. Gertrude**

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# DEVELOPMENTS

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my work as Director of Development is the personal contact I have with so many of you. It is a privilege to invite you closer to the inner being and workings of who we are and to be continually inspired by your faith and generosity.

You have brought so much life to our community both inwardly and in our outreach by sharing your own stories with us, asking why we do what we do and how we see that serving the needs of the church and the world today, and helping us see new possibilities for deepening our own spiritual lives and assisting others to do so.

2005 will mark 100 years since the first small group of our sisters from Colton, WA responded to an invitation from John and Gertrude Uhlenkott to begin teaching in Cottonwood. We rejoice that God continues to sustain us here on the prairie through communal prayer, community life and many forms of outreach.

I hope our lives also help sustain you on your spiritual journey and I hope each of you will have an opportunity to come and visit us at St. Gertrude's this year. May 2005 be a year of blessings for you.



Have you thought about making a "planned gift" to the monastery? Here are several ways:

**Plan a Gift in Your Estate.** Your bequest helps ensure that we continue our ministries into the future without affecting your assets during your lifetime. You can turn surplus life insurance coverage into a charitable gift, or purchase a new policy naming us the beneficiary.

**Partner With Us in Your Giving.** You can receive stable lifetime payments that are taxed attractively when you create a *charitable gift annuity*. You can receive income to help you meet many family obligations from a *charitable remainder trust*. Increase your estate for your children while delivering years of income to the Benedictine Sisters with a *charitable lead trust*.

Always seek professional advice when considering any of these possibilities. Your tax or financial advisor knows your situation the best and can offer the most advantageous options for you, plus provide income for the sisters of St. Gertrude.



Roof trusses for the conference center arrived in October.



Dan McGill took this photo of Sr. Lillian Englert from Hospitality House.



Foggy days in November didn't stop the roofers.



Some roofing is complete and window installation is beginning.

# Slow Down To Listen

by Sr. Janet Marie Barnard

Wouldn't it be nice if God called you on your cell phone and told you what to do? Or one day, while opening your mail, your life's road map fell out?

Unfortunately, this isn't how God usually works in our lives.

God usually looks for us until we respond. And our response is a journey – our life's journey.

As Vocation Director, women often ask me "How do I know if I am called to religious life?" They aren't hearing voices and haven't received emails with specific directions, but they have persistent, insistent, "intrusive" thoughts that religious life might be for them.

Some women see these thoughts as the "call" to get involved in their parish, because, surely, they aren't being "called" to religious life! They busy themselves in good work by volunteering at the soup kitchen, visiting the shut-ins, serving as Eucharistic ministers. Soon their lives are full, yet they still experience a sense of unrest. Some use the words, "This isn't enough. There must be something more."

My recommendation for women in this situation is find a spiritual advisor and talk to them about what you are experiencing and feeling. This could be a trusted prayer companion, a sister who serves in your parish, an impartial friend, a priest or mentor.

Listen to what they say; hear what others say about you. God often uses others to guide us.

personal maturity to live successfully in community.

Our modern lives are full of activities and we often don't have time to hear God calling us. We are busy about finding personal satisfaction by doing God's work, getting more toys, more money, more prestige at work.

Slow down and listen once in a while! Out of the frenzy we might find God's clear voice, calling us to something more, a new way to contentment and satisfaction.



"Come my daughter, draw near to me ... and your being will always be at peace" the sisters sang as Novices Michele Bateman, left, and Jean Ihli, right, were accompanied down the center aisle of chapel by Sr. Agens Reichlin, Formation Director, on their way to becoming professed sisters at St. Gertrude.

I also suggest exploring a variety of religious communities. Women and men religious are listed in the diocesan directories. Call them up and talk; plan a visit to their community. This is the time to begin finding out the truth about religious life and how it is lived today. You will interact with the vocation director and other community members. Visit several religious communities and discover the group that you feel comfortable with, whose life and ministries "fit" you.

Discerning which religious community is right for you is a two-way street. You will listen for God's direction, and so will the community. They will ask God if you are right for them, if you can fit into their future directions, if you have the spiritual and



There are some great books and guidelines available for anyone considering religious life. I suggest *Vocations Anonymous: A handbook for adults discerning priesthood and religious life*, by Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC. It is available through the National Coalition for Church Vocations at 1-800-671-6228. Also see *Vision, The Annual Vocation Discernment Guide* or visit their website at [www.VisionGuide.org](http://www.VisionGuide.org). Most religious communities have websites and these are great places to go to get a feel for the community, to learn about their mission and meet some of their members. Our website is a wonderful place to "meet" us: [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org).



## Vocation Events

### Come and See Weekends

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

**January 28 - 30, 2005**

**April 8 - 10, 2005**

**May 27 - 29, 2005**

### Triduum At the Monastery

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

**March 27 - 24, 2005**

### Monastic Living Experience

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

**July 1 - 12, 2005**



Visit us at  
**[www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)**  
**[vocation@stgertrudes.org](mailto:vocation@stgertrudes.org)**

# A Gift to Us: Thanks, Turkey!

*by Darla Anglen-Whitley*

Sr. Theresa Mary (formerly Sr. Leona) nearly didn't become a sister because of a flock of turkeys.

Turkeys!?

Theresa Katherine Stroeing was born in West Union, MN, October 5, 1915. Her parents, John and Katherine Mayers Stroeing, were the caretakers of a sheep farm owned by the Benedictine brothers at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN.

Theresa knew she would be a sister by the time she entered third grade. She had two aunts, a great-aunt, a great-great aunt, and several cousins who were in religious life. All her grammar and high school years she was taught by Benedictines, so it was a given that she would enter St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, MN.

And she would have, except for the turkeys.

It just so happened that Candidate Theresa was assigned the care of the sisters' turkeys. She soon found out that turkeys make her sick with a painful rash on her face and arms. She quit the monastery twice, returning after her skin healed. Each time she was placed on turkey duty and each time she had to leave once more.

One day, after Theresa left for the last time, Sr. Margaretta wrote and asked Theresa to visit St. Benedict's again. While there, Theresa met Sr. Johanna Uhlenkott from a convent in Cottonwood, ID. "I fell in love with her," Sr. Theresa Mary remembers.

By the time the visit ended, arrangements had already been made for Theresa's move to Idaho.

The next month, Theresa Katherine was on a train bound for Idaho to enter St. Gertrude's. She made profession as Sr. Leona in 1938 and began a long career as a cook. Sr. Theresa Mary is one of three sur-



viving sisters who cooked for the monks at St. Martin's Abbey in Lacey, WA.

Sr. Theresa Mary also taught grade school in Cottonwood, St. Maries, Grangeville, Rupert, Nampa, Lewiston, and Boise. She also did home care with the elderly and parish work at St. John's in Boise. She retired and moved back to St. Gertrude's in 2000.

Despite the turkeys, Sr. Theresa Mary never doubted that God wanted her in religious life.

"I sometimes wondered why I moved all the way to Idaho, especially those times when my mother needed help," she recalls. "But she managed. We buried her on her 92nd birthday."

Sr. Theresa Mary fairly sparkles when speaking of the love, acceptance and kindness of her monastic community. "It's the best thing about St. Gertrude's," she said. "There is so much concern in community for one another."

With a resounding "Yes!" she believes women discerning religious life should consider the monastery. "There is no place like it on earth. It is a beautiful, prayerful place."



# Come Away to a Retreat

## Come to the Quiet

January 21 - 28, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 p.m. - Fri. 1:30 p.m.)

*Directors: Lillian Englert, O.S.B., Kathy McFaul & others*

A silent individually directed retreat. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community. The retreat differs in content each time but includes optional faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual. Weekend-only retreat is an option.

## All Creation Praise! An Introduction to Ecological Spirituality and Theology

March 4 - 6, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm)

*Presenter: Teresa Jackson, O.S.B.*

Christians of varying backgrounds are exploring the connections between their faith and how they can see the earth as an expression of God's care for all creation. This retreat will be an introduction to the work of prominent theologians and writers on the connections between ecology, spirituality and theology. There will be a special emphasis on women's issues.

## Air, Water, Earth and ... Our Faith

April 15 - 17, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm)

*Presenter: Carol Ann Wassmuth, O.S.B.*

Can we be people of faith without caring for our planet? Come prepared to be challenged. Explore links between our faith and our actions. Prayerfully reflect upon and discuss our scriptures and contemporary teachings on the call to be good stewards.

## Mother and Adult Daughter Retreat: Once Upon a Time ... Resurrection Stories in My Life

April 29 - May 1, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm)

*Presenter: Judith Brower, O.S.B.*

Each day Jesus calls us to new life in many and varied ways. This weekend will offer time for input and reflection on how the story of each of our lives is given meaning by the Resurrection of Jesus. This is no fairy tale!



**Visit us on the web:**  
**[www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)**  
**Email: [retreat@stgertrudes.org](mailto:retreat@stgertrudes.org)**  
**[outreachretreats@hotmail.com](mailto:outreachretreats@hotmail.com)**



IDAHO CORP. OF BENEDICTINE SISTERS

**Monastery of St. Gertrude**

HC 3 Box 121, Cottonwood, ID 83522-9408

## Look Inside ...

How Turkeys Almost  
Stopped Her Vocation

Slow Down and Listen:  
Is God Calling You?

Twice as Nice:  
Two Women Make Profession



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