



Spring 2005

# St. Gertrude's Canticle

A Journal of Our Life

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## Discerning Prioress

"I am stunned and overwhelmed," said Sr. Clarissa Goeckner when asked how it felt to be chosen the 13th prioress of St. Gertrude's. "I also feel challenged and empowered, loved and supported by each member of this community."

Sr. Clarissa is a "local girl", born and raised in Keuterville, ID. She attended St. Gertrude's Academy and entered the monastery in 1957. She made final profession in 1961.

Passionate about education, she earned masters degrees in School Administration, Religious Education and Life Transitions Counseling, and she spent 30 years in the classroom as teacher and principal. While teaching high school in San Francisco, CA, she also served as Associate Director of Campus Ministry.

In 1989 she was appointed sub-prioress at the monastery, but couldn't stay out of the classroom; she taught outreach classes and served as adjunct faculty member for Lewis Clark State College in Lewiston. In 1993 she became the Coordinator of Children's and Family Catechesis for the Diocese of Boise. She held that position until 2004 when she was appointed by Bishop Michael Driscoll to serve as the Director of the office of Catholic Education Ministries for the Diocese.



Sr. Clarissa Goeckner was elected the 13th prioress of the monastery on April 6, 2005.

"Being prioress will be a great challenge. The community has asked me to help them implement our vision which will enhance and strengthen our mission and ministries in the Catholic church and the world," stated Sr. Clarissa.

All of the 60 sisters of St. Gertrude met April 3-6, 2005, for the prayerful discernment process by which Sr. Clarissa was elected.

The main components of the discernment process include reviewing directions the sisters set for themselves in November 2004, identifying what style and qualities of

leadership would be needed to implement them, naming members who had such qualities for leadership, and coming to consensus on who seemed best suited to be prioress. Consensus was reached by prayer, discussion and voting.

Outgoing prioress Sr. Jean Lalande said, "being prioress has been a sacred privilege. I've gotten to know the sisters on a new level which has enlivened me. It has been inspiring to see our community grow in prayerfulness and faith, and to deepen our commitment to our mission.

"A special delight of my six years has been welcoming eight women into our formation program. This is concrete evidence of faith at work in our lives today."



# Greetings from the Prioress

Dear Friends,

Greetings of Easter peace and joy to each of you!

As all of you know the community gathered in April to discern our next Prioress. As always the discernment process called us to listen to the Holy Spirit's direction in our lives. On our final day of discernment we knew the Spirit was in charge as Sr. Clarissa Goeckner's name kept coming before us. The community was filled with joy as we solemnized this choice in our canonical election in the Chapel. I congratulate Sr. Clarissa as she prepares to become our 13<sup>th</sup> Prioress. I will joyfully turn the office of Prioress over to her on June 11, the day of her installation.

Looking back over the last six years, I am grateful to the community, our family and

friends, for their support and love. The community asked me to set up a more collaborative approach to leadership during my tenure, which I did. Sr. Meg Sass, Assistant Prioress and Sr. Emagene Warren, Procurator, have been vital to making the new system work and prove effective to move the community into the new millennium.

One of the "big things" to happen during my tenure was the construction of Spirit Center, a 21,800 square foot spirituality and conference center. After looking long and hard at space needs in three areas: our growing membership, sisters retiring to the monastery, and our corporate ministries, we realized that we needed to create new space and renovate the monastery building. We

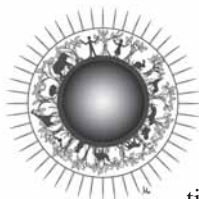
made the historic decision to launch our first ever Capital Campaign – *Growing a Future Rooted in Hope*. Thanks to our Development Office staff for stepping up to the plate, and to each one of you who has, or who will, contribute to the project.

Another sacred blessing during this administration is our increase in new members. We are excited to have two canonical novices, two second year novices and two sisters in temporary profession, plus two postulants! God is so very good to us.

I wish each of you God's richest blessings. It has been an honor to share our lives with you these last six years.

*Sister Jean*

## Eco-Sabbatical Program Offered In Fall



Our first offering in Spirit Center will be Inn-Terra, a three-month sabbatical program that offers participants a time with God, themselves and the earth, surrounded and supported by the monastic community.

"We offered a successful sabbatical program called Inn-Spire for 15 years," said Sister Teresa Jackson, coordinator of Inn-

Terra. "Building on that success, we are initiating Inn-Terra, a sabbatical program unique to St. Gertrude's. It flows from who we are as a monastic community of women who have chosen stewardship of the land as one of our corporate ministries."

The presentations, prayer experiences and reflections will focus on the belief that God is present in all creation and has commissioned us to live in harmony with creation and to use natural resources wisely.

Several internationally acclaimed speakers will make presentations: Paula Gonzales, SC; Jane Comerford, CSJ; and, Dairmuid O'Murchu, MSC.

Designed with the modern life-style in mind, participants can come for the first month only, or all three months. Other options include attending any one of several weekend and/or week-long retreats offered. See the Retreat Schedule for details, or contact Sr. Teresa Jackson. She can be reached at [outreachretreats@hotmail.com](mailto:outreachretreats@hotmail.com).

# In Loving Memory

Sr. Barbara May (Mary Teresita) Gonzales, 66, died of a heart attack, Tuesday, January 18, 2005. She had been with her family after the death of her own sister, Toni Pierce, in Gooding, ID, when she was life-flighted to Boise. She died en route.



Sr. Barbara was born May 1, 1938, to Jose and Duby Velasquez Gonzales in Burly, ID. She entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude in 1955 and made her temporary vows as Sr. Mary Teresita in 1957. She taught school at St. Joseph's in Cottonwood; St. Anthony's in

Pocatello; St. Mary's in Boise and Sts. Peter and Paul in Grangeville.

In 1961 when it was time for her to make final vows, Sr. Barbara felt led to leave community. During her years away she volunteered with St. Gertrude's sisters in Bogota, Colombia, taught in parochial schools and Head Start, and worked as a legal secretary in Gooding, ID.

In 1983, Sr. Barbara re-entered the monastery and made final vows in 1983. Her love and calling was to Hispanic Ministry: at Boise State University; for Idaho Migrant

Council in Gooding; as English As Second Language (ESL) teacher at Gooding Junior and Senior High Schools; in the parishes in Gooding, Caldwell and Meridian, ID; and at Idaho Legal Aid Services in Twin Falls, where she was employed at the time of her death.

Sr. Barbara was preceded in death by her sister, Toni Pierce. She is survived by her monastic community and her sisters, Stella and Jim Murray of Gooding, Fran Hernandez of Twin Falls, Georgia and Eldon Wright and Rita and Fred Boger of Boise, and Josie Roberts of Hood River, OR; her brothers, Joe Gonzales, Jr. and Lou and Loral Gonzales of Gooding, ID, and many nieces and nephews.

# New at Spirit Center

As Spirit Center enters into the final two months of construction, the finishing details begin to appear. Nine shades of paint ranging between green and blue bring the outdoors inside.

The furniture order for rocker gliders, wing chairs, swivel chairs and sofas comes with upholstery names such as basil, greenleaf, heather and hemlock. Leaf and moss are the drapery colors, complemented by flax-hued mini blinds.

The grey stone lobby flooring is on site, along with the cork flooring for the multi purpose room; rolls of dark forest green carpet have yet to appear, however.

Solar energy cells and panels are working as planned and we are sending approxi-



**Spirit Center from the Hospitality House looking north as of March 30, 2005. The monastery's towers are just visible behind the residential wing. Notice the solar panels on roof of the glass-walled lobby.**

mately 10KW of electricity back into the grid each day. Door keys have been ordered, as well as a copier, industrial coffee maker and an ice and water machine.

The Landscape Committee has chosen Carlton Landscapes of Lewiston, ID, to establish a natural, low maintenance landscape that frames God's creation of mountains, trees and sky. Included in the design is a water interest meditation area.

The grey hardiplank seen in the photo is weathering the snow, rain and sun of spring in Idaho. Eventually it will be painted a brick brown shade to blend in with the museum and monastery annex.

The award for the first over-nighter goes to Mama Cat who thought insulation made a wonderful home for her new kittens. Mama Cat and kittens were gently but firmly evacuated from the premises.

# Two Times Fifty = 100 Years of Profession

"I can't believe how fast the time has gone," exclaimed Sr. Angela, when reminiscing about her 50 years as a sister at St. Gertrude's. "When the aches and pains of my tired body hit me, I can believe it, but on another level I feel like the song, *We've Only Just Begun!*"

Sr. Angela Uhlorn and Sr. Mary Marge Goeckner made profession on June 13, 1955. They will celebrate their Golden Jubilee on June 18, 2005, at the monastery with a multitude of friends and family.

The two sisters were happy to share some of their memories of the last five decades.

"When we were postulants, the professed sisters were not allowed to talk to new members," remembers Sr. Mary Marge. "This was very difficult, especially for Sr. Angela's outgoing personality. She would be in trouble one day and would pack her bags to leave. I would talk her out of it, and then, the next day, I would have my bags packed ready to leave. She would listen to my tears and talk me out of leaving.

"Thank God for the gift of music! Sr. Angela and I were able to sing and that saved us more than once. While we didn't yet know Latin, we were able to sing the chant and mumble the words. This got us back into the sisters' good graces."

For each of these women, finding their way to St. Gertrude's was the result of observing sisters first hand in the classrooms and experiencing their gift of joy and service to others.

"I remember feeling like I wanted to embrace the whole world," recalled Sr. Angela, "and somehow I sensed that monas-



Sr. Angela Uhlorn (L) and Sr. Mary Marge Goeckner on their profession day, June 13, 1955.

tic life would give focus and direction to this expansive yearning. It seemed to me that the Sisters influenced many people in positive ways through healing and teaching, and I wanted to participate in that."

Sr. Mary Marge entered St. Gertrude's "because the sisters were always there ... friendly, good teachers, ready to answer my questions, and even in hard times, they were happy people."

It is one thing to enter monastic life when you are 18 and idealistic. It is quite another thing to stay on in that vocation for 50 years.

"Having grown up in a large, close-knit family it was difficult at first to limit myself to the small world of the Formation group, cutting off social contacts to the wider world. It was hard to miss the weddings, reunions and celebrations of my immediate and extended family," said Sr. Angela.

She continued, "Facing the reality that I could not be a wife or mother was the hardest thing for me to do. I, of course, knew that before I entered, but I struggled at times with the call to celibacy.

"Our formation director was a wise woman who helped me understand the monastic call and the singleness of heart it requires. As I matured I began to see how celibacy is necessary to make community life fruitful and possible. Learning to make choices that are best for the group, and not just best for me, helped contribute to my happiness and stability at St. Gertrude's."

Sr. Mary Marge recalled three specific times when she felt her

vocation was tested.

While watching the children on the playground one day, a second grader was hit in the chest by a baseball. The child died in Sr. Mary Marge's arms. It was a devastating and faith-shaking experience.

"I grew up that day," she said.

In 1964 Sr. Mary Marge was sent to Minot, ND, to teach sixth grade. "Mother Augustine forgot to tell me that I was not going to go back to St. Mary's in Boise to teach. She only remembered once I was packed and heading out the door. We were both in shock and I learned quite a lesson in monastic obedience!"

One of the hardest times in Sr. Mary Marge's life was when she was asked to develop and implement the Released Time Program for the public school system after the closing of St. Gertrude's Academy.

"One day an 8th grade student, fed up with me and school and life in general, came up to my desk and spat in my face and shouted, 'I don't have to do anything you say be-



cause my parents said this Released Time Program is a bunch of garbage.'

"With tears and spit running down my face, I wondered if our community and the town of Cottonwood could make it through this change. I sat at my desk and vowed to find a way to reach the children. I let the kids express to me their anger, pain and fear around the changes in the church and in their town."

There have been many blessings along the way for both sisters, too. For Sr. Angela, the best part of the last 50 years has been the relationships she has made with the people she has worked with, both within community, and in her varied ministries.

"I cannot clearly express the gift of grace that my inner life is to me," said Sr. Angela. "Sharing my life with others, and sharing the lives of those of others seeking the Kingdom, is humbling."

"To know that the power of the Holy Spirit comes through my hands and my love in my various ministries to others is a special Grace. The song *How Can I Keep From Singing* has taken on new meaning as I look back at this sharing of Grace with others!"



Sr. Angela Uhlorn

"I have had many opportunities for study that I might not have had coming from a small town," said Sr. Mary Marge. "More importantly, however, I have grown in my spiritual life, not just through studies, but through trials of life."

"I survived cancer and a horrific car wreck that killed Sr. Annunciata; I have no fear

of death! These experiences helped me in my ministry of Pastoral Care to those dying and those who survive."

While it is fun to look back over a lifetime and laugh at the antics and tactics used to survive monastic life, would these seasoned nuns recommend religious life to inquiring women today?

"I would happily recommend monastic life to a young person today," beamed Sr. Angela. "I would look for evidence of a true

calling to this life, plus the ability to make such a life choice and to live away from family support.

"If people are 'seeking God' today and want to grow in their spiritual life, I recommend finding someone to walk with them as a spiritual companion. I would suggest certain books and ask them to make a Retreat. This will help them know who

God is in their life and who God can become for them."

"I have no trouble recommending monastic life to any women who is truly seeking the Holy One," said Sr. Mary Marge.

"Benedict calls us to be Wisdom Women and keep truth before our eyes. Inquiring



Sr. Mary Marge Goeckner

women need to have life experiences such as college, working and dating. I also believe they have to be seeking spiritual direction, asking questions of the Church and be in dialogue with the theological questions of today.

"Women have so many choices today, and those who have tried to 'do it all' find out there is still more to discover seeking God. If they can join us in that search I will welcome them!"

Both Sr. Angela and Sr. Mary Marge used the phrase "We've just begun" when asked how they feel about their last 50 years of life.

"There is so much more I want to experience in the spiritual realm," said Sr. Angela. "The call to realize the kingdom is still before me, asking me to help make this a reality for others. I am also very, very thankful for the gifts of relationships that I have been given and for the depths of love that have touched my heart from Community, family, and friends. I am most aware of how The Spirit of God has entered into my life and has fanned into flame the gifts of God!"

Sr. M. Marge concurred, "I have only just begun to love and to receive love with the passionate desiring that St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, St. Gertrude and the community call me to live out.

"I understand the *Rule of Benedict* better now and continue to 'listen with the ear of my heart.'" As the Rule says, 'Are you hastening toward your heavenly home? Then with Christ's help keep this little rule that we have written for beginners.' *Rule of Benedict, Chapter 73.*"



# DEVELOPMENTS

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

“Behold, I am doing something new!” (Book of Rev 21:5) This is Pentecost Time in the church and the world. What are the bridges that need built? What Good News waits to be proclaimed? How is God’s presence being revealed in this Moment?

Pope John Paul II’s passage into new life and the cardinals’ choice of Pope Benedict XVI as the next Supreme Pontiff (Great Bridge) poises the Church to discover what the “Something New” is for which God is pouring out grace at this Pentecost moment.

Rooted in the stability of 1,500 years of Benedictine Tradition *and* stretched by the rapid pace and complexities of the twenty-first century, we seek to be good news as God bridges the divisions among the peoples.

Some simple and profound ways we have experienced God’s transforming or bridging presence recently include:

Hearing your stories of the excitement and struggles in your lives;

Discerning Sr. Clarissa Goeckner as our next prioress;

Welcoming two eager postulants with rich life experiences;

Seeing the construction of Spirit Center moving toward completion as a place of learning and renewal for a great diversity of seekers;

Receiving your generous gifts to sustain our members and our ministries, including gifts to our capital campaign to build Spirit Center, renovate the monastery and establish endowments for the retreat ministry and museum.

We rely on your gifts of cash or stock, bequests, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and transfer of property. Thanking you for sharing in our mission and ministries is a profound way of celebrating God’s presence among us.

We thank you especially for your prayer and financial support for our vocations promotion. You play such a significant part in the vitality which new members bring to the community and the service they will be doing in the church and world.

If a 30-or 40-year old family member or friend told you she is considering a call to St. Gertrude’s, what would you tell her? what would you ask her?

This is Pentecost Time. Strengthened by our bond with you we invite the Holy Spirit to form us into vital bridges over which God’s transforming power passes to bring hope and healing to our beautiful and broken world.



## Museum Notes

*by Lyle Wirtanen, Director  
Historical Museum at St. Gertrude*

During the winter months, we installed nine new exhibit cases in the museum. The new cases contain lighting and are designed to display artifacts. The cases replace several old, out-of-date store display cabinets that were considered artifacts themselves.



Several “themed” collections have been transferred to the new cases including the Nez Perce collection, music and entertainment, Chinese mining in North Idaho, a lantern and light exhibit, transportation, cameras, and early woodworking.

All of the cases were made possible through grants from Foundation Northwest, Spokane, WA, \$9,750; and the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Museums Initiative, \$15,500.

Funds received through the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Museums Initiative administered through the Governor’s Committee and are intended to assist museums in preparing for the bicentennial commemoration.

We invite you to visit the museum to see the improvements and enhancements that have come about as a result of receiving these funds.

# More Novices! and Postulants! Oh, My!

In a centuries old ceremony at evening prayer on the feast of St. Scholastica, February 10, Postulants Cindy Schultz and Kim Marie Jordan were received into the community as Novices. They join two other novices already in formation: Nov. Mary Mendez and Nov. Carla Fontes.

Following the guide for admitting Novices into the monastery as outlined in the *Rule of Benedict*, the two women stood outside the chapel in the cool of the evening and knocked persistently on the door for entrance.

Sr. Jean Lalande, Prioress, opened the door and asked the two women "What do you want?"

They responded "The mercy of God and admission to the novitiate." Then Sr. Jean welcomed the two women into the chapel and invited them to pray with community.

As a sign of their willingness to embrace monastic life and to depend upon the community to meet all their needs, they placed their checkbooks, charge cards and car keys on a Bible.

**T**wo other signs of vitality in the formation program are Donna Palm and Katie Cooper, affiliates who became postulants in a simple ceremony on April 15, 2005.

Donna, 61, is from San Diego, CA. An American Express Financial Advisor she is considering religious life with St. Gertrude's because the sisters exhibit "pure

joy of existence. At St. Gertrude's I am helped by companions along my serious spiritual path."

"I am drawn to this community of women because they truly live and cherish the Benedictine rhythm that resonates with my own yearning to seek God," said N. Cindy.

Katie, 59, is from Coeur d'Alene, ID. She is a recently retired elementary school teacher, mother and grandmother. "The seeds were planted years ago through contact with Sr. Judith Brower who taught at North Idaho College," recalls Katie. "I kept

Novices Cindy and Kim Marie will spend the next two years familiarizing themselves with the Benedictine life of prayer, study, reflection, solitude and work. They will take classes on the Rule of Benedict, monastic profession and the Scriptures. They will also learn to lead community prayer.

telling God 'No.' But when I first visited the monastery I felt I had found a God-filled home, full of love and inspiration."

Please pray for these women as they continue to discern their call to religious life and to life at St. Gertrude's.

A registered nurse specializing in emergency nursing, Cindy was born in Cottonwood and grew up on the Prairie. "I have known this community my whole life. Their wholesome way of living and Benedictine charism have significantly influenced me."

N. Kim Marie, a divorced mother of two, is from Houston, TX. She worked in the publishing field for 14 years before making the move to St. Gertrude's to "seek God. I believe that God has called me to be part of this group of prayerful women.

"I cannot imagine being any place else."



Sr. Jean Lalande (left) welcomed Postulants Kim Marie Jordan (center) and Cindy Schultz (right) into the chapel and asked them "What do you want?"



# Come Away to a Retreat

## Evangelization: Waiting, Weaving, Working

May 13 - 15, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm)

*Presenter: Mary Kay Henry, O.S.B.*

A gathering of men and women to reflect on and deepen their wholehearted response to Jesus' mandate to proclaim the Good News to all the world. Waiting: praying to hear God's word; Weaving: seeing the connections of that word with current events; Working: living out the word by example and story. The week-end will include input, prayer and sharing. Bring a Bible.

## Centering Prayer

May 20 - 22, 2005 (Fri. 7:30 pm - Sun. 1:30 pm)

*Presenter: Therese O'Grady, O.S.B.*

This retreat is designed for those who hunger for a stronger contemplative dimension in their lives. Presentations on the method and periods of practice characterize the retreat. Sr. Therese O'Grady, OSB, is from Benet Hill Monastery in Colorado Springs, CO. She coordinates the local Contemplative Outreach Program and works as a certified Spiritual Director and Retreat Director.

## Come to the Quiet

June 15 - 22, 2005 (Wed. 7:30 pm - Wed. 1:30 pm)

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

A silent, individually directed retreat. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community. Includes optional faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual.

## Inn-Terra Eco-Spirituality Sabbatical & Retreats

August 13 - September 13 OR August 13 - November 13, 2005

A time of reflection with Earth's story and our story. Opportunity for one- or three-month sabbatical, or a variety of weekend options. Call for information.



Visit us on the web:  
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**Monastery of St. Gertrude**

HC 3 Box 121, Cottonwood, ID 83522-9408

## Look Inside ...

Meet the New Prioress

2 x 50 =  
100 Years to Celebrate!

New Novices, New Postulants!  
Oh, My!



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