

Coming to Compassion

As she conducted our community's annual retreat in June, author Megan McKenna's powerful presentations on compassion in the context of prayer and justice helped us further explore our vision statement, **"Prayer awakens. Justice impels. Compassion acts. Thy Kingdom Come."** She said she hopes prayer will stretch our idea of who God is – the God of the expanding universe, the God of all the nearly one trillion people who are living now, those who lived before and those who will live in the future! Contemplative prayer, she added, is a "long, loving look at reality – especially the hard stuff!"

When we gaze upon the God who cares about all the children of the world, we notice their suffering, hardships and pain, and prayer becomes a driving force for justice acted out with compassion!

Sometimes we practice a disengaged compassion. As Bill Moyers observes: "Faith-based charity provides crumbs from the table; faith-based justice offers a place at the table." Our vision statement requires our compassion to act on behalf of a transforming justice. We can learn such compassion by reading and praying the Word, speaking and acting with compassion, and receiving and extending forgiveness.



Megan McKenna addressing community

In light of how Jesus modeled compassion verbally and in his interactions by healing, restoring and comforting those on the margins, Megan challenged us who are from the dominant culture in the world to learn more about the needs of the rest of the world. She urged us to remember that 85 percent of the world's people go to bed hungry every night. In America less than four percent of the population uses 85 percent of the world's resources. Where to start? Megan recommended that we pray for the poor, and stand in solidarity and communion with the needs of all God's people. She challenged us from this grounding place to act on behalf of the poor.

Catherine Whitmire challenges us similarly in *Practicing Peace*: "It is our turn now to stand and watch through the night. If we listen carefully we may hear God entreating us to come up – prepared or not – to stand in the gaps, holding our children, singing our songs, calling for justice and offering beams of hope by letting our lives reflect what the power of love/compassion can do....Our efforts may feel unimportant but nothing is too small to make a difference. We may be led to write a peace poem...raise children, drive hot meals to the elderly, save turtles in a wetland, teach refugees to read..."

The poor are looking for good news. When they see us coming, do they say, **"Here is the good news!"**? ✱

Sister Clarissa Goeckner



Sister Clarissa Goeckner
Prioress

New Directions: 1960-2009

The election of Pope John XXIII in October, 1958 began changes in the Church that few people anticipated. At St. Gertrude's Convent, Mother Augustine Uhlenkott was elected for a second term as Prioress in 1961 and the community opened St. Benedict's nursing home in Jerome, Idaho. Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. Soon after this, all religious communities were given the mandate to send 10% of their members to South America to accommodate the needs of that church. The member communities of the Federation of St. Gertrude worked together and in 1964 sent 13 Sisters to Colombia to establish communities and staff schools. Two Sisters from St. Gertrude's went to Bogota to teach in the Colegio San Carlos. That same year, two Sisters from St. Gertrude's were assigned to teach at the new diocesan Kelly High School in Boise.

During the 1960s the number of Sisters in St. Gertrude's community peaked at 180. In 1967-68 the Federation of St. Gertrude called for revision of the Constitutions to reclaim the monastic way of life, which would lead to changes in liturgy, lifestyle, dress and ministries. The late 60s and early 70s found the parishes on the Camas Prairie feeling the financial stresses of subsidizing their schools. They decided to close their schools and St. Gertrude's closed their Academy after 43 years. The Academy buildings were sold to the Public School District.

St. Gertrude's Community renewed their interest in Retreat ministry in 1972. After remodeling and renovation, the 5th floor of the monastery was dedicated to this effort.

In 1980, the Benedictine Order celebrated the 1500th Anniversary of the births of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica. That year, St. Gertrude's dedicated their new Historical Museum building. Two years later, they celebrated the 100 year anniversary of the arrival of their three Swiss foundresses in the United States and



Mother Augustine Uhlenkott
Prioress 1955-1967

Sr. Lucille Nachtsheim started writing the early history of the community, *On The Way*.

From 1986-98, the community developed and staffed Innspire, a three month sabbatical program in spirituality which attracted participants from many parts of the world. They began the Oblate program in 1990 to provide a way for lay people to commit themselves to Benedictine spirituality in their lives outside of the

monastery. In the early 1990s, the community built a guest house and completed renovations of the chapel, infirmary and kitchen. By 2002 the sponsorship of St. Mary's Hospital and St. Benedict's Hospital had been transferred to St. Benedict's Health System.

Due to the phenomenal growth of Retreat Ministry, in 2004 the Sisters built a conference and retreat center, which opened in 2005 as Spirit Center. The original monastery building was renovated and updated to make it more conducive to 21st century work and ministry by installing new windows and an ADA compliant elevator.

Beginning in 2007, the Sisters have worked on a Strategic Planning process to focus on plans for the future. They recently completed a year of special events commemorating their Centennial, "Celebrating 100 Years 'at Home' in Idaho." ✕



Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude

A Lifetime of Devotion

Vocation Story of Sr. Mary Bernard Lieser

As young girls, Marie Catherine Lieser and her friend, Anna Mae, vowed they were going to be Sisters when they grew up. When Marie Catherine was in her teens, however, she told her friend, Anna Mae, “I went to a dance and it was so much fun! You can go ahead and be a Sister. I’m not.”

Anna Mae went on to marry and have nine children, while Marie Catherine entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude, where she has spent more than 60 years living her faith in community as Sister Mary Bernard.

Sr. Mary Bernard was part of a devout Catholic family in Lake Henry, Minn. Her grandmother had a profound love for God that carried over to her family. In fact, 16 members of Sr. Mary Bernard’s family have taken vows as priests or Sisters, including two of her older siblings, Sr. Petronilla and the late Sr. Josephine, who joined the community of Benedictine Sisters at the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

When Sisters Petronilla and Josephine came to Minnesota for a home visit, their young sister traveled back with them to Cottonwood, Idaho, to enter St. Gertrude’s, as well.

“That’s the last time I stood on Minnesota soil before I took my vows,” she said, pointing to a photograph taken of her as a young girl flanked by her two sisters in Benedictine habits.

Sr. Mary Bernard’s lifelong ministry in the medical field began when the head nurse at Our Lady of Consolation Hospital in Cottonwood asked Sr. Eugenia Schallberger, prioress, for Sr. Mary Bernard’s help at the hospital. She took a short LPN course and was scheduled for the night shift at the hospital after only two weeks of instruction.



Sister Mary Bernard

She earned her degree as a registered nurse from St. Benedict’s, Ogden, Utah, in 1965 and worked in anesthesia for many years at Leila Post Hospital in Michigan and Gritman Memorial Hospital in Moscow. In 1983, she left Gritman and worked at St. Luke’s Memorial Hospital in Spokane. She retired in 2004 from St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, where she was a night nurse.

A soft smile lights her face when asked the best thing about her life as a Benedictine Sister at St. Gertrude’s. “Attending Mass was considered such a privilege when I was growing up;” she said, “so, being able to go to Mass every day is very special.”

“I also love chanting the Divine Office and the singing,” she sighed. “Oh, our music is wonderful!”

Calling upon a lifetime of devotion to God, Sr. Mary Bernard finds inspiration in everything around her. She advises, “See God in everyone else. When you are kind to your neighbor, you bring such joy and allow them to see God.” ✠



Nursing at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center

“When you are kind to your neighbor, you bring such joy and allow them to see God.” *Sister Mary Bernard*

Initial Formation

Sisters Miriam Mendez and Carlotta Maria Fontes made their perpetual monastic profession on September 19 in the chapel at the Monastery of St. Gertrude. The ceremony emphasized their life-long commitment to the promises of stability, obedience and fidelity to the monastic life, marking the final stage of their initial formation journey.

For Sister Carlotta Maria, the journey began when she experienced a strong calling to the religious life while traveling in Europe in 2000. She was praying in a chapel in Medjugorje, when a group of nuns entered the sanctuary. “I watched them pray and felt an overwhelming sense of wanting to belong to something like that,” she said.

Sister Miriam felt her calling while volunteering at Sacred Heart Monastery in Richardton, N.D. At a crossroads in her life and searching for new meaning, she embraced the daily balance of prayer, work, study and leisure she found at the monastery. “I discovered I had a Benedictine heart and soul,” she said.

Both women spent time in personal reflection, talked with friends and family and made several visits to the Monastery of St. Gertrude while they discerned their calling.

According to Sr. Miriam, “I wasn’t here 12 hours before I knew I was supposed to explore this community and find out what it meant for me.” She made her first monastic profession with Sr. Carlotta Maria on March 21, 2006.

The mother of three grown children, Sr. Miriam was a hospice nurse when she entered the community. After dialoguing, Prioress Clarissa Goeckner appointed her to manage the monastery’s Book & Gift Shop and expand its services. Sr. Miriam is also studying to become a certified spiritual director.

Sr. Carlotta Maria discovered her love of herbs after entering the community and earned a certification as a master herbalist from the University of California,



Sisters Carlotta Maria Fontes (left) and Miriam Mendez
in the Monastery of St. Gertrude chapel

Santa Cruz in 2007. She has developed an herbal lip balm, soaps and a salve, which are sold in the monastery’s Book & Gift Shop, as well as in local stores and at the Grangeville Farmers’ Market. Sr. Carlotta Maria teaches classes on making natural products as well as classes on holistic living.

“People diet and exercise, working on the outside of their bodies, but they neglect their inner selves,” she said, “It is vital to heal and care for our entire person, inside and out.”

Sr. Miriam sees life as a Benedictine as being a witness to the world. “These are hard times and the future is challenging for the Church and for the world,” she said. “There is a rhythm to daily life at the monastery and to living The Rule of Benedict. People sense the peace and the love of this community and are drawn to the balanced life.”

For Sr. Carlotta Maria, quietly promoting a holistic life-style and demonstrating the Benedictine principles of simplicity and connection to the earth comprise her witness. She actively lives these values by assisting with maintenance and helping manage the monastery’s extensive gardens.

The perpetual monastic profession of Sisters Miriam and Carlotta Maria was attended by about 200 friends, family and community members. Father Meinrad Schallberger was celebrant for the Mass and the music was provided by the monastery’s schola, accompanied by organist Sr. Cecile Marie Uhlorn. A reception was held afterward. ✕

Developments

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We say **thank you five million times** to the more than 925 of you individuals, foundations and corporations who have helped us reach the \$5,000,000 goal of our ***Growing a Future Rooted in Hope* Capital Campaign!** Your amazing generosity to this challenging and satisfying endeavour positions us to begin our second century in Idaho with renewed vitality!



Three long-lasting signs of your generosity include: 2,500 people each year enriching their lives and work through programs at our beautiful and vital Spirit Center; an updated monastery conducive to 21st century lives of prayer and ministry and to welcoming new members; and the initial endowments established for our Spirituality Ministry and the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude.

Best of all, we begin our new century with so many friends who say they feel enlivened by their association with St. Gertrude's, and in turn encourage and challenge us to persevere in our Benedictine vocation to prayer that moves us to active ministry. **Thank you for being at the heart of "*Growing a Future Rooted in Hope*".**

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Is there life after a capital campaign? YES! And it's exciting to begin a five-year plan to sustain that life. Our plan is rooted in the hope that you will continue to feel supported in your own values by participating in our mission and ministries through prayer, programs, volunteering and financial support of our community.

CONTACT US

Contact our Development Office at 208-962-5062 or develop@stgertrudes.org for more information.

"Best of all, we begin our new century with so many friends who say they feel enlivened by their association with St. Gertrude's, and in turn encourage and challenge us to persevere..."

Sister Mary Kay Henry



Capital Campaign Donor Appreciation Event, June 5-7, 2009
Top: Irma and Don Tacke with Sr. Jean Lalande (right).
Bottom: Dr. John Pennings and Dr. Terese Fandel, Capital Campaign Chairpersons.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Recently, a scan showed that there are still metastasized cancer sites in my lungs. There is a good chance that the new chemo I began mid-August will be successful. I was so looking forward to visiting many of you in person; however, this chemotherapy series will keep me close to home through January 2010. I will stay in touch other ways, keep you in my prayers, and continue to rely on your prayers and love. ✕

Mary Kay Henry, ois

Highlights from Spirit Center

by Mary Schmidt, Spirit Center Administrator

A NEW LOOK FOR SPIRIT CENTER

In order to present a professional look for its marketing materials, Spirit Center brochures, packets and mailings feature a unified logo and letterhead. The design reflects the colors of Spirit Center itself, featuring red, the building's exterior, and sage green, the interior group spaces and rural setting of the facility. These materials use recycled paper stocks and soy inks, supporting the monastery's Stewardship of the Land ministry, which is also reflected in the "green" construction of the building.

ART & SPIRITUALITY OF THE ICON

The "Art & Spirituality of the Icon" workshop, led by Father Brendan McAnerney, of Sacramento, California, drew 14 participants. In addition to the workshop, Fr. Brendan presented a series of evening lectures attended by more than 40 people. Those interested in attending future icon or art programs are invited to contact Mary Schmidt, 208-962-2001 or mschmidt@stgertrudes.org.



Art & Spirituality of the Icon Workshop Top: Debi Jordan paints an icon. Bottom: workshop participants with Fr. Brendan.

LOSSES OF OUR LIVES, November 13-15

How can small, everyday losses help prepare our hearts to cope with more significant losses, such as death, divorce or serious illness? In "Losses of Our Lives," a retreat offered at Spirit Center November 13-15, presenter Nancy Copeland-Payton will ask participants to consider the ways in which we grow each time we suffer a loss. Copeland-Payton teaches that our everyday losses help us learn about larger losses. When we intentionally enter into our small, daily losses, the terrain of major loss is not totally unknown and terrifying, for we have walked some of this way before with our lesser losses. **To register: 208-962-2000 or retreat@stgertrudes.org.**

Nancy Copeland-Payton is a Presbyterian pastor and former hospital chaplain. She also practiced medicine as a physician for 20 years, working in inner cities of the United States and abroad. Today she is a spiritual director, retreat leader, speaker and writer. Her book, "The Losses of Our Lives: The Sacred Gifts of Renewal in Everyday Loss," will be released in fall, 2009, from Skylight Paths Publishing. ✱



Upcoming Retreats

AT THE MONASTERY OF ST. GERTRUDE

**Centering Prayer
Intensive**
October 23 - 30, 2009

Losses of Our Lives
November 13 - 15, 2009

"No Room in the Inn!"
December 4 - 6, 2009

Come to the Quiet
January 22 - 29, 2010

"To Have and To Hold"
February 5 - 7, 2010

**Creative Expression
in Prayer**
February 19 - 21, 2010

Complete retreat schedule on the web!

Visit us at www.Spirit-Center.org

"A tradition of welcoming people of ALL beliefs."

208-962-2000 retreat@stgertrudes.org

Oblate News

from Jeannette Kelley Obl.S.B.

At a retreat at the monastery in June, the oblates focused on the meaning and impact of the monastery's vision statement: **Prayer awakens. Justice impels. Compassion acts. Thy Kingdom Come.** They reflected with Sisters and in small groups on each part of the statement. Sister Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress, gave closing reflections.

On Sunday, June 28, the oblates were joined by sisters, oblate novices, former oblates, friends and family members for a reunion. The program included welcoming remarks by Sr. Clarissa and Oblate Jeannette Kelley, a Litany of Oblates, and a pictorial history of the past 21 years of their history. Also in June, Oblates Alyse Cadez and Regina Sullivan attended the North American Association of Oblate Directors biannual meeting in LaTrobe, Pennsylvania.

For Oblate Program information contact Jeannette Kelley: 208-962-3224 or oblates@stgertrudes.org. ✱



Oblates Nancy Gillard (left) and Laura Oleaga help prepare the *Canticle* for mailing.

UPCOMING OBLATE EVENTS

October 2-10

Jeannette Kelley and Nancy Gillard will attend the World Conference of Benedictine Oblates, Rome

October 9-11

Annual Monastery of St. Gertrude Oblate Retreat

Our Volunteers

by Sr. Teresa Jackson, Volunteer Coordinator

This summer, it became very clear that the monastery can't do without the dedicated service of many volunteers. From June to August we have been blessed with 14 live-in volunteers who have stayed from two days to several months, offering their time, talent and service to St. Gertrude's. Volunteers picked raspberries, weeded the gardens, answered phones, washed dishes and helped at countless events such as Raspberry Festival, Jubilee and the Centennial Grand Finale. The volunteer program is a rewarding and enriching way for people to experience the "ora et labora" (work and prayer) of Benedictine life. For the sisters, these generous people provide greatly needed help with all the tasks of daily monastic life.



Summer 2009 volunteers.

VOLUNTEER AT ST. GERTRUDE'S

Learn more about volunteering at St. Gertrude's, contact Sr. Teresa Jackson: 208-962-3224 or volunteer@stgertrudes.org. ✱

On the Move

Sr. Kim Marie Jordan attended the Benedictine Spirituality Workshop & Retreat at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, South Dakota, June 8-July 1. **Sr. Carlotta Maria Fontes** attended The Monastic Institute at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., June 28-July 2. Full stories at www.StGertrudes.org. ✱

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paper with soy ink.

Sarnen Visitors

"You have been in our hearts and in our prayers and now you are here with us."

Prioress Clarissa Goeckner



Abbess Pia Habermacher (right) and **Sister Rut Maria Buschor** (center) of the Sankt Andreas Kloster in Sarnen, Switzerland, were welcomed to the Monastery of St. Gertrude with a red carpet and the joyous ringing of the chapel bells on August 5. Prioress Clarissa Goeckner presented them with the keys to the monastery. Sisters Wilma Schlangen and Mary Bernard Lieser presented roses to the visitors. In 1882, three sisters from

Sarnen came to the Pacific Northwest to establish a new community in the United States. One hundred years ago, in 1909, the Sisters arrived in the Cottonwood area from Colton, Washington. In 1920, they built the motherhouse that is now St. Gertrude's. The present-day arrival of Abbess Pia and Sr. Rut Maria coincided with the finale of St. Gertrude's year-long centennial, "**Celebrating 100 Years 'at Home' in Idaho.**" ✕

Beginning a New Century



Over 300 people filled the chapel at the Monastery of St. Gertrude on August 16, 2009 for the Grand Finale of the Benedictine Sisters' Centennial Year "Celebrating 100 Years 'at Home' in Idaho." The theme for the finale was "Turning the Page: Beginning a New Century." ✕

Find the full story and photos on the web at www.StGertrudes.org.
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