

What Impels Us Now?

As the community was shaping our vision statement – **“Prayer awakens. Justice impels. Compassion acts. Thy Kingdom Come.”** – in January 2008, we agreed that prayer awakens the inner eye of our hearts, the eye of deep wisdom, the eye of love and the eye of compassion. Then we grappled with: From the rootedness of our prayer, what moves us forward and outward and urges us to action? Which of the many needs that exist today call for our response? Through discussion and in prayer and silence, we allowed Scripture, the call of our Benedictine legacy and the needs of our times to have a conversation within us.

A mosaic of messages came to me in that silence. The Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels sensitize us to the importance of justice – to be advocate for and stand in solidarity with the poor, the widow, the exploited and the abused. Jesus calls us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit prisoners.

The Rule of Benedict invites us to a life of justice in community “loving God, loving one another and doing no harm to anyone.” It urges us to relieve the lot of the poor, help the troubled and console the sorrowing. Joan Chittister’s commentary on The Rule of Benedict reminds us: “Benedictine monasticism is a life lived with an eye on those for whom life is a terrible burden.”

A glance into community history shows our foremothers providing shelter for orphans and at-risk adults, giving healthcare and education to those who could not afford to pay for them and seeking just solutions when problems arose.

Today there is an increasing focus on justice in our lives. According to Jim Wallis, author of *The Great Awakening*, the two greatest hungers in the world today are for spirituality and justice! We are educating ourselves and taking action on local and national justice issues such as hunger, human trafficking and poverty. We make consistent efforts to do what we can to transform injustice with the help of our Social Justice Committee and in collaboration with our Oblates and other groups.

In preparation for the 2005 discernment of prioress, we took a strong step forward as we set this goal: Grounded in our Contemplative call, we will grow in our global awareness and will actively engage in peace-making and works of justice.

We are still unpacking the communal meaning of justice and will make further discoveries during a June retreat led by Megan McKenna, through community discussions this summer and the Canonical Visitation in fall. These conversations will be challenging as they deepen our communal understanding of justice and strengthen our commitment to action. Inspired by our foremothers, who recognized and addressed the needs around them, we strive to promote justice in the world today. ✕



Sister Clarissa Goeckner
Prioress

Sister Clarissa Goeckner

Years of Expansion: 1935-1960

When St. Scholastica's Academy in Colton closed in 1931, the attention and energy of the Sisters gradually focused on life at St. Gertrude's in Cottonwood, Idaho. The next few years brought growth and expansion and, by 1935, the community numbered 120 Sisters.

On June 10, 1938, Sister Dominica Sweeney was elected prioress – the first who was not of Swiss or German descent. Within the year, she and the community faced the challenge of their future as an autonomous house. At first, Bishop Kelly opposed the idea of a Congregation of several Benedictine communities but later changed his mind. On June 1, 1939, St. Gertrude's community voted unanimously to join the Congregation of St. Gertrude the Great. This was a major change in organization as St. Gertrude's became a papal community, no longer under the immediate jurisdiction of the Bishop of Boise, except in matters of diocesan interest.

The Sisters made a concerted effort to honor the requests for expanding ministries. In 1939, they contracted with Mr. Frank LaRock to build a 20-bed edition to St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood. That same year, they opened St. Paul's School in Nampa, their first school in southern Idaho. Within the next few years, they opened four additional schools – St. Mary's and Sacred Heart in Boise, St. Anthony in Pocatello and St. Nicholas in Rupert.

In July of 1942, Bishop Kelly asked the Sisters to host a catechetical institute for the teaching Sisters in the diocese. Classes were taught by Fathers Urban Schmidt, Victor Lustig, Raymond Peplinski and Nicholas E. Walsh. Besides the Benedictine Sisters, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Ursuline Sisters and the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart attended. This institute gradually evolved into the present-day Fall Conference in Boise.

On June 16, 1943, the Sisters assembled to elect Sister M. Eugenia Schallberger as the sixth prioress of the community. Mother Eugenia evaluated every department in the monastery. She appointed a full-time Director of Novices, provided modern equipment where needed and installed an elevator in the stone building. In 1948, she initiated construction of a five-story annex which would be added to the south face of the stone building. Upon completion of the annex, the Sisters, along with the Jerome Hospital Association, began building St. Benedict's Hospital.

In 1953, the cornerstone was laid for a modern and spacious St. Gertrude's Academy to replace the old convent building which had served as a high school since 1927. The new St. Gertrude's Academy opened in March of 1954, and provided accommodations for 200 students. When Sister Augustine

Uhlenkott was elected prioress in June, 1955, she completed the Academy project with a new gymnasium with a large stage and drama facilities. The construction began in 1957 and the formal opening was January 26, 1958.

The community made its first venture into on-campus retreats in 1957, hosting a five-day retreat for the priests of the diocese. Many of the Sisters stayed in mission houses in order to free the annex bedrooms for the retreatants. The community also hosted a three-day retreat for seventy-five women from eastern Washington and north-central Idaho. The Sisters continued to facilitate private retreats on a small scale until the 1970s when they began to develop Retreat Ministry as a community ministry. ✱



Mother Dominica Sweeney
Prioress 1938-1943

Service ~ Healing Ministry

As Coordinator of Mission/Pastoral Services at St. Benedicts Family Medical Center and St. Benedicts Long Term Care Unit in Jerome, Idaho, Sister Claudia Rae Braun's ministry involves fulfilling the mission of the facility "to improve the health of our community, to take care of the sick and needy, especially the disenfranchised, for in them Christ is served."



Sister Claudia Rae Braun at St. Benedicts Family Medical Center.

Guided in her work by six core values (quality, hospitality, respect, stewardship, justice and teamwork), Sr. Claudia Rae is in her 12th year of service at St Benedicts and has served in Jerome for a total of 29 years. "If we are mindful of the core values, we will be doing the right thing for the right reason," she notes.

As the chaplain of St. Benedicts, Sr. Claudia Rae's goals for patients, residents, families and employees include: strive for outcomes that benefit all; comfort anxious and frightened people; be caring and tender in all that is done; honor every person with dignity and respect; heal all physically, emotionally and/or spiritually; listen and give hope to all; and speak in a comforting and reassuring way. "As I tell the new employees at our monthly orientation day, we cannot always cure but we can always care." says Sr.

Claudia Rae. "At the end of each day, if I can say that I made a difference in one person's life that day, it has been a successful day." ✽

"Working with people each day as they face life's challenges gives my ministry purpose and many blessings." Sister Claudia Rae Braun



Years of Expansion Photos, clockwise

Sisters at work in the St. Benedicts Hospital nursery in Jerome, 1950s; Dedication Day at St. Gertrude's Academy, March 1954; Diocesan Priests' Retreat, 1960s.



Planting for the Future

Land Stewardship Update by Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, Forestry Manager

As we celebrate 100 years in Idaho, we reflect with awe and gratitude on what our pioneer Sisters accomplished. An important factor in this history was their determination to build a future based firmly on a solid land base. Today the monastery owns, or as we prefer to say, is responsible for, approximately 1,400 acres of land. Most of the land is forested but also includes farm and grazing land, gardens and orchards. This land provides us with fresh fruits, herbs and vegetables, which we share with our guests. It also provides contemplative space for ourselves and our retreatants.

Our forest land is managed under the guidance of a professional Forest Management Plan. An exciting part of this plan is the reforestation work done in the past ten years. We are methodically replacing the dying fir trees with pine and larch trees, which are hardier species more adapted to our habitat. A professional forest consultant helps us determine how many seedlings a given area will sustain. The seedlings are

ordered from the nursery two years in advance and planted in the spring after the snow has melted but while the ground is still moist. Experienced crew members each plant 1,000 seedlings per day. Since implementation of this program, we have planted 250,000 seedlings. Observing their growth is fulfilling and heart warming.

Our next planting is scheduled for the spring of 2010, when we will plant 19,800 seedlings over 66 acres. Our gratitude goes out to the benefactors who have contributed to our planting projects as a living memorial or honor for a loved one. For a \$75 donation, we will plant 150 trees. Donations of all amounts to the tree planting fund are appreciated. Planting trees is a statement of belief in our future as a monastery, as well as a positive way to care for our earth. For more information, please contact Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth, 208-962-5032, or by e-mail st_gertrude_justice@hotmail.com. ✽



Wildflowers, birds and wildlife abound on the monastery's trail system.

Celebrating the Campaign

Capital Campaign Update by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development



“Companioned by our faith-filled foremothers who took many risks, we continue on the monastic journey. We choose to risk another venture: to build Spirit Center, a facility for retreats and conferences; to make renovations to the monastery; and to establish ministry endowments. We see this comprehensive project as the truest way for us to Grow a Future Rooted in Hope; to leave a legacy of prayer and community life that overflows in ministries for the 21st century.”

Capital Campaign Case Statement

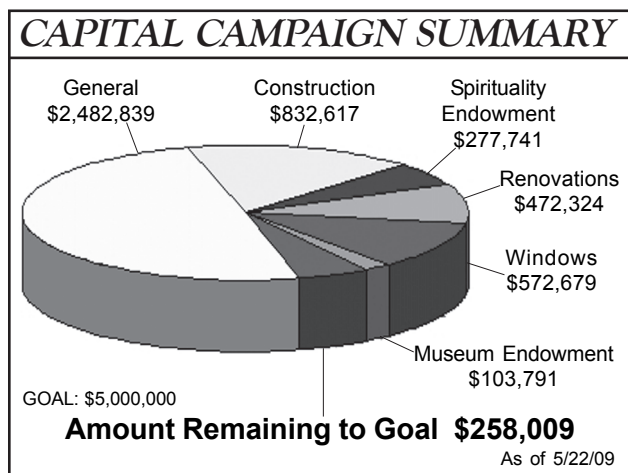
Five years ago, our community was called to launch a capital campaign. Careful planning and generous gifts have helped us achieve the goals we envisioned and have placed us firmly on the road toward a vital future.

Today, Spirit Center is thriving with more than 1,800 participants annually. The staff is creating new programs and implementing a marketing plan so that this multi-use facility can serve additional spiritual retreatants as well as businesses and social service agencies. New energy efficient windows keep the monastery cool in summer and warm in winter. Our elders remain independent longer since the new ADA-compliant elevator provides access to all floors in the monastery. Guests and retreatants can visit the chapel and library easily. Endowments for the Historical Museum and Spirit Center sustain these ministries into the future by expanding programming and covering operations and maintenance costs.

The capital campaign has deepened our friendships with many of you, sparked new friendships with some of you and shared values with all of you who acted on your own visions for making a better world by contributing over \$4,740,000 to our venture.



Spirit Center Guests Mother-Adult Daughter Retreat, 2008.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Please consider expressing your own hopes for the future with a first or an additional gift for Spirit Center, monastery renovations or endowments. The conclusion of the capital campaign is August 16. You may designate your gift to the \$109,000 still needed for the monastery elevator, the \$100,000 for the Spirit Center elevator or the \$33,000 for windows. Other gifting opportunities include \$25,000 to sponsor a guest room at Spirit Center or \$25,000 to establish a named endowment. Gifts of all amounts are greatly appreciated. Please use the enclosed remittance envelope or make your gift online at www.StGertrudes.org – just click on the Make a Donation button. Contact us at 208-962-5062 or develop@stgertrudes.org for more information. ✱

Art & Spirituality of the Icon

August 7 - 13, 2009

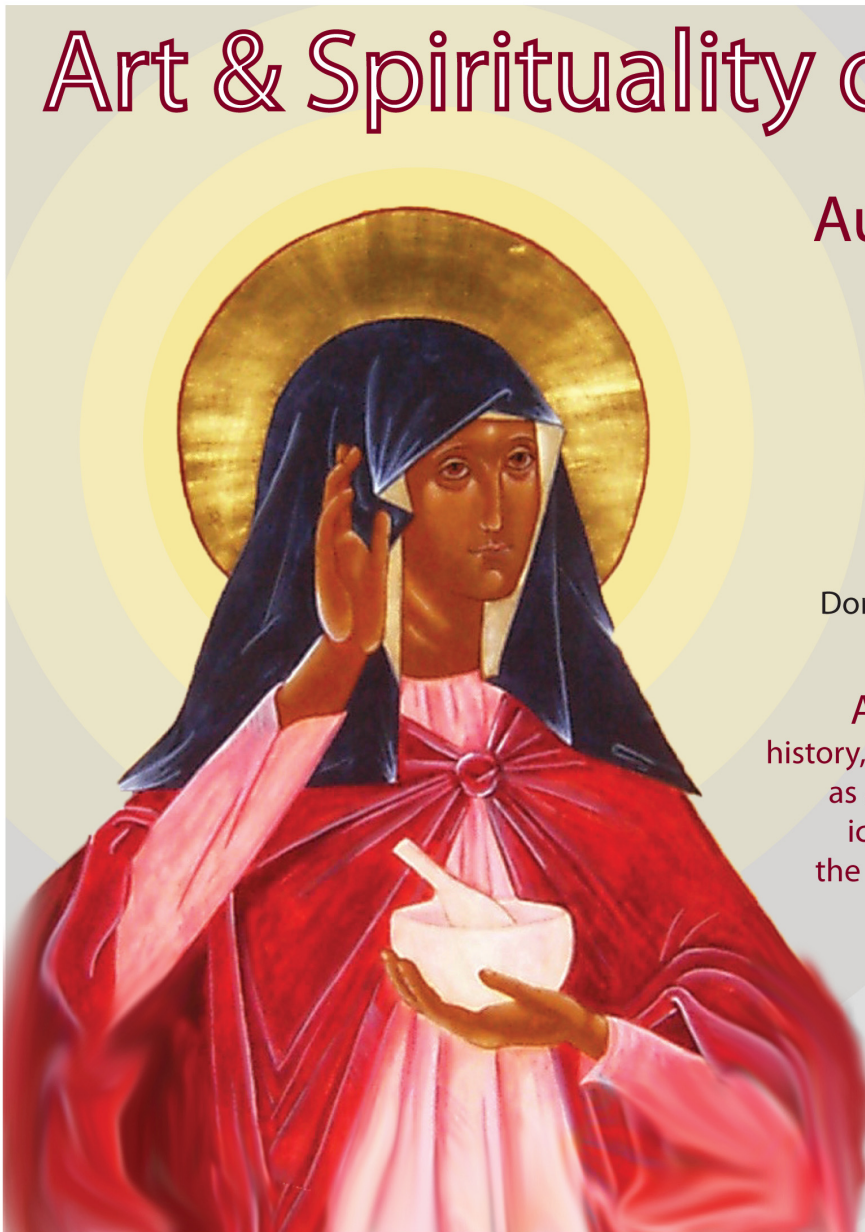
Friday 7:30 pm to
Thursday 1:30 pm

Presenter:

Fr. Brendan McAnerney,
DominICON Ministry, Sacramento CA
www.dominICON.com

A rare opportunity! Explore the history, tradition and spirituality of the icon as a sacred image through creating an icon and lectures at *Spirit Center* at the beautiful Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho.

No previous artistic experience is necessary, only a desire to create with the sacred, ancient craft of iconography. **Maximum 15 students.** (Sign up early!)



Suggested Donation: \$595
Includes lodging, meals
and all materials
*Please inquire about our special
\$450 commuter rate

For more information:
Spirit Center
208-962-2000

spirit-center@stgertrudes.org
www.Spirit-Center.org

SpiritCenter

"A tradition of welcoming people of ALL beliefs."

AT THE MONASTERY OF ST. GERTRUDE

MORE UPCOMING RETREATS

Holistic Living
July 17-19, 2009

Saving the Planet
Sept. 11-13, 2009

Centering Prayer Intensive
October 23-30, 2009

For info contact Spirit Center at 208-962-2000 * retreat@stgertrudes.org * www.Spirit-Center.org

In Memoria

Sr. Constance (Betty Jane) Sonnen, OSB, died peacefully on February 12, 2009. Born in Greencreek, Idaho on May 17, 1929, Sr. Connie entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude on August 28, 1946. She was professed there on March 19, 1948, and celebrated her Golden Jubilee on July 11, 1998. Sr. Connie graduated from St. Gertrude's Academy in 1947. She attended Mt. Angel Women's College and the College of St. Gertrude and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from St. Martin's College, Lacey, Wash., in 1963. She taught in parochial schools in Idaho for 35 years, including 18 years at Bishop Kelly High School, Boise. In 1985, she returned to the monastery to serve as Procurator and Kitchen Manager. She then taught ten years at Prairie Middle School until her next role as Monastery Archivist. A many-talented woman, Sr. Connie enjoyed life as she generously shared her gifts with people of all ages. She is fondly remembered by a multitude of students. She loved teaching and made learning fun for everyone, herself included. Good humor sprinkled the content of her lessons and her life. A vigil service was held in the monastery chapel on February 15. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated there on February 16. A memorial Mass was held for Sr. Connie at St. Mary's Parish, Boise, on February 17. Memorials may be made to Monastery of St. Gertrude, 465 Keuterville Road, Cottonwood, ID 83522. ✽

In Memoria
**Sr. Constance
Sonnen**
1929 - 2009

For more about Sr. Connie,
go to www.StGertrudes.com
and click on In Memoria.



In the News

FUN RUN / WALK: AUGUST 2, 8:00 AM

The 10K Raspberry Run and 5K Shortcake Walk will kick off a day of family fun at the 17th Annual Raspberry Festival at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood on August 2.



Beginning at 8 a.m. in front of the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, the course follows an out-and-back route on a quiet, paved country road. The stretch offers views of the Seven Devils mountains, Salmon River breaks, Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area and the Camas Prairie, making the Raspberry Run one of the most scenic running/walking events in Idaho.

Water and refreshments will be provided and showers are available at the nearby Prairie High School gym.

Entry fees are \$15 if submitted by July 31 and \$18 afterwards, including the day of the race. Registered runners and walkers will receive a commemorative t-shirt.

For more information and registration, contact Lyle Wirtanen by phone at 208-962-2051 or e-mail director1@StGertrudes.org. ✽

Register online at www.signmeup.com/65381



Come Celebrate With Us...

YOU are invited to these three Centennial Events!

For more info call 208-962-3224
or visit www.StGertrudes.org

July 11, 2009, 1:30 pm: 50th Jubilee of Monastic Profession of Sisters Mary Kay Henry, Mary Geis and Cecile Marie Uhlorn in the monastery chapel. Celebration of the Eucharist will be followed by a reception.

August 2, 2009, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm: 17th Annual Raspberry Festival. This family-oriented event is a yearly fund-raiser for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude and includes a fun run/walk, arts and crafts fair, quilt show, car and motorcycle show, kids carnival, chapel tours, live entertainment, cultural demonstrations, lunch, famous raspberry shortcake and more.

August 16, 2009, 1:30 pm: Grand Finale of "Celebrating 100 Years 'at Home' in Idaho" marking St. Gertrude's becoming the motherhouse in Cottonwood. Bishop Michael Driscoll will preside at a Mass of Thanksgiving on the front lawn. During the reception after Mass there will be musical performances, tours of Spirit Center and the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, and shopping at the Monastery Book & Gift Shop.



DON'T MISS THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CELEBRATION!



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Cover Photo
The Monastery of St. Gertrude on
Dedication Day, July 27, 1924.

www.StGertrudes.org