



## Monastic Economy

Its Purpose,  
Practicality and Poetry

### *Reflections from Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner*

**According to *Of All Good Gifts*\***, in our technological society a “good” job is often considered one with excellent pay, short hours, social status and power. Certain kinds of work, usually those that involve manual labor, are considered less significant and prestigious than others. Work is regarded as a burden and assumes that the less time spent doing work the better. The purpose of work is profit.

The Benedictine ideal is that work be about sharing in the creative activity of God. One monastic “job” is not better than another; one ministry is not considered more prestigious than another. All work is about the opportunity to put our personal stamp on creation and hold ourselves accountable for it.

Our community is tasked with making a contribution to its moment in history. Our Strategic Plan 2008-2020 helped us realize how important it is for us to find new sources of income so that our communal and individual ministries may continue into the future. Some of the measures we have taken to do this:

With your generous help, we built Spirit Center primarily to provide a beautiful, prayerful environment within which people could renew, refresh and re-imagine their lives. We opened the Inn at St. Gertrude as a new way to extend Benedictine hospitality to modern-day seekers. The Healing Center aims to help

those in pain find relief through Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy. Through a stronger financial base, we hope to strengthen our individual ministries which continue to bring education, healing and support to those we serve.



“May you see in what you do  
the beauty of your soul.

May the sacredness of your  
work bring light and renewal  
to those who work with you  
and to those who see and  
receive your work.”

*from “For Work,” by John O’Donohue*

Collaborating with us in our ministries are twenty-three excellent lay employees. They play a vital role in welcoming and offering hospitality to the many guests who visit us each year—2,500 to Spirit Center, 200 to the Inn at St. Gertrude since its public opening on June 13th, 6,500 to the Historical Museum and 300 to the Healing Center. Also onsite are

20 infirmiry caregivers who are vital in ministering to our elderly.

We hope our ministries support the local economy as well. Many of our 9,520 annual guests stop down town for gas, or a bite to eat or to buy something at the local stores. (They tell me that there isn’t anything that can’t be found at Arnzen Drug!)

The poet Kahlil Gibran writes “working binds us to ourselves, to one another and to God.” As all of us continue to do God’s work, may this be true. ✕

*Sister Clarissa Goeckner*

\* *Of All Good Gifts: A Statement on the Nature of Stewardship in the Lives of American Benedictine Sisters*. Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses. St. Joseph, Minnesota, June 19, 1980.

# Sister's Story

## a Mother and Daughter Story

**"Listen! Listen! St. Benedict speaks. Attend with the ear of your heart."** So begins a poem/hymn by Sister Benita Hassler, who expresses her life-long devotion to Benedictine values by sharing a wide range of gifts – as poet, musician, artist, missionary and teacher. Her mother was also a teacher, in a one-room country school in Montana, and eventually entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude 16 years after her daughter – as Sister Veronica.



**Photo** Sister Veronica and Sister Benita, mother and daughter, at Bishop Kelly High School in Boise, 1976.

**"Hear the Voice of our God ~ in your hearts, in the Word, in each other, in the world ~ Calling all to listen and obey."** Sister Benita entered St. Gertrude's in 1949 when she was just eighteen. Her decision went against the advice of both her best friend and her father, who resisted his daughter going so far away from Montana. But she embraced monastic life and soon began a 55-year teaching career – including 30 years in Idaho Catholic schools – where she could express her love of art, music and language.

**"Put on the Mind of Christ ~ while you pray, while you serve, growing in love, full of joy ~ Moving all to be alive in Christ."** Sister Benita credits her mother as her biggest influence. "She showed me by her example many monastic values, especially her seemingly unlimited love for each member of her family and her voluntarily simple lifestyle."

\* Poem/Hymn: *Listen! A Tribute to St. Benedict and the Rule*. Sister Benita Hassler, OSB. March, 2007

**"Hasten in all Good Works ~ ardent hearts, humble trust, sharing your lives, full of peace ~ Spreading harmony to all the world."** In 1963, Sister Benita was among the first to be missioned to Bogotá, Colombia to teach in the newly built Colegio San Carlos. Sister Benita taught art and music in the primary and secondary schools there. Her mother, Sister Veronica, later served alongside her in Colombia for two years.

Once back in Idaho, Sister Benita began teaching Spanish and English in the public high schools in Rupert and Caldwell. In 1984 she was named "Most Outstanding Foreign Language Teacher in Idaho" and was celebrated for her contagious enthusiasm and ability to motivate. In 2000, Sister Benita became a volunteer, teaching English, GED and computer skills to Hispanic families. She and former student John Irwin also initiated a program that provided recycled computers for her students.

**"Come, Holy Spirit, come ~ Freeing Love, Compassion, Path of Justice, Healing Fire ~ Bringing all to Everlasting Life."** Now Sister Benita rises early to write, compose music or paint. During the day, she helps the Sisters in the infirmary email their families and friends. Much of her creative work is focused on tributes to community – including her mother's legacy. "It is my joy in this present moment to celebrate all creation and cherish the earth," she writes, "to grow in love in humble gratitude, alert for God's surprises." ✱



**Photo** Sister Benita (left) helps Sister Mercedes Martzen on the computer.

# Membership

## *Oblates make connections at Mt. Angel*

About thirty oblate directors, assistant directors and oblates representing seven Benedictine communities in the Northwest convened for the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD) on July 15, 16 and 17. The meeting took place at Queen of Angels Monastery in Mt. Angel, OR and included St. Gertrude's oblates Kay Totten, Nikki Nordstrom, and Jeannette and Fred Kelley. "This was a time of fellowship," Kay Totten said, "of insight, and of being able to be connected not only to my own oblates from St. Gertrude's, but to other oblates from throughout the region."

In addition to community prayer, the group attended forums such as "The Promise of Contemplative Practice for Leaders" by Jodi Kilcup, an oblate from Queen of Angels. "I feel a renewed sense of hope for our communities, country and our world," remarked Jeannette Kelley. "My hope comes from listening to these oblates and their leaders as we discussed the presence of committed people living the Rule of Benedict in their daily lives."

Nikki Nordstrom added, "In the end what I was drawn to was the recurring theme of the commitment to adapt the strengths of monastic life to the changes in the 21st Century; to extend its reach and accessibility by using both the human spirit and the advances of technology for all those drawn to this way of life." ✱



**Photo** St. Gertrude's oblates attend the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors.

# Developments

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

**On August 3rd we welcomed Theresa Henson of Seattle as our Marketing/Communications Manager responsible for our publicity and promotional materials.**

Our vision for monastic economics means embracing sustainability and "greening" so that we may contribute actively to the coming of God's reign by living "healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking." Our strategies for financial viability of the community underline mission, membership and ministries as the urgencies for "the greening of the bottom line." The enclosed Stewardship Report details your remarkable financial generosity during FY 2010. We also celebrate the professional talents and many volunteer hours you shared!

Please consider participating in our mission, membership and ministries during FY 2011 by supporting **ENDOWMENTS** for Spirit Center and the Historical Museum; **OPERATIONS** such as membership promotion, care of elders and greatest need; and **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS** – especially our *Water Resource Initiative* to replace five miles of pipe that draws spring water from Cottonwood Butte to the Monastery cisterns for irrigating the grounds, providing fire safety and likely becoming a resource for geothermal heating and cooling in Spirit Center and possibly the Museum and Inn. Thanks to all who have already made gifts to this initiative and to the Fund for Alternative Energy. We are actively planning for "the greening of our facilities" by converting to solar and geothermal power where and when that is feasible. ✱ *Give a gift online at [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org). Info: 208-962-5062 or [develop@stgertrudes.org](mailto:develop@stgertrudes.org)*

Thanks to you who have included us in your wills. We invite others to consider that or a legacy through some other form of planned giving. Our legal name is Idaho Corporation of Benedictine Sisters. Thank You.



## *Building community to end poverty*

**Benedictine monastic philosophy is noted for its emphasis on community.** A commitment to community not only provides a vital path for individual spiritual growth, it also builds connections that promote collective sufficiency. Within the context of relationships, St. Benedict believed, all of our needs are met. It is no coincidence then that on September 13 and 14, Spirit Center hosted its second Poverty Summit – an event created by The Center for Community Building to End Poverty. Spirit Center's own director, Mary Schmidt, is a co-founder of the organization that has a goal of bringing 377,000 people out of poverty by 2020.

"In a true community," says Mary Schmidt, "no one gets left out." Through relationships, she explains, people can develop a "future story" rather than just getting by moment to moment. The Poverty Summit helps leaders learn ways to strengthen their communities through gaining insight about realities of impoverishment.

The organization also facilitates the Circles™ program in which a person making the journey out of poverty is surrounded by a team of 3-4 people within the same community. They provide not financial assets but "community assets": emotional support, ideas and networking as the individual begins setting and meeting their goals for economic security. Testimonials from the program report empowering transformations.

With Idaho ranking high in national poverty levels, the work has a heightened urgency. For more information visit [CenterToEndPoverty.org](http://CenterToEndPoverty.org). ✕



**Photo** Mary Schmidt opens the Poverty Summit at Spirit Center on September 13, 2010.

## *Spirituality & the Arts* at St. Gertrude

**"In the spirit of St. Benedict who encouraged expression of artistic gifts in the monastic community, the Benedictine Sisters of Idaho seek to integrate spirituality and the arts."** So begins the mission statement of the newly-launched Spirituality and the Arts program.

The premier season kicked off on September 26<sup>th</sup> with a mid-day Mass featuring jazz music, art exhibits and an afternoon concert by "The Sharp Five Jazztet" featuring Fr. Gary Uhlenkott, S.J. Future events include a retreat about the medieval mystic/artist Hildegard of Bingen along with a candlelight concert in the Chapel on October 23 of Hildegard's music by vocalist and flutist Katherine Ramos Baker.

"By embracing the profound mystery of artistic experience," concludes the Spirituality and Arts mission statement, "we aspire to the transformation of individuals and the world."

To learn more, visit [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org). ✕

## Upcoming Retreats

### **Hildegard of Bingen: Her Artistic World, October 22 – 24, 2010**

Explore the fascinating life of St. Hildegard of Bingen through music, art, herbs and history.

### **Losses of Our Lives, November 19 – 21, 2010**

Learn how to respond to loss without holding on too tightly, and ways of experiencing the sacred in loss.

### **Silence the Christmas Noise: Advent Retreat, December 1 – 15, 2010 Private Retreat Options**

Set aside a few Advent days and prepare yourself for the true meaning of Christmas.

### **Come to the Quiet, January 21 – 28, 2011**

Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community.

**Retreat Info: [www.SpiritCenter.org](http://www.SpiritCenter.org)**

## *Sharing Our Blessings* by Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth

An essential element of Benedictine economics is the sharing with others what we have. One of the ways the Monastery does that is by including a sum of money in our annual budget that can be requested by any of the Sisters to help address some need in our world. We call this our Social Justice Assistance Fund.

With this money we have given scholarships to local women as they continue their education, as well as to students in Los Angeles and Bangladesh. We have helped a husband and wife team finance their volunteer medical work in Uganda. Through this fund we have supported organizations such as Idaho Women of Color Alliance and Family Promise who carry out works that reflect our Benedictine values.

This past year we helped finance a statewide study project on food stamps conducted by two AmeriCorp Vista volunteers working for the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force. This fall we will again be a sponsor of the Summit on Hunger and Food Insecurity held in Boise which several of the sisters plan to attend. Through these funds, we send the message to the recipients that we believe in them and want them to succeed in their efforts. Together we are working to transform our culture and further the reign of God in our world. ✕



## *Sweet Memories of the Raspberry Festival*

Some 3,000 people enjoyed the 18th Annual Raspberry Festival on the Monastery grounds and in the Prairie High School gym. This year's added features were the "Raspberry Rendezvous" and the reenactment of Father James Frei (aka David Stanley of Lewiston) who talked about his time as pastor in Colton and answered questions about his 100-year-old buggy displayed on the museum lawn.

The crowd was well-entertained by the traditional 10K/5K run/walk, pancake breakfast, BBQ lunch, raspberry shortcake, kids' carnival, arts & crafts fair, car show, quilt show, cultural demonstrations, tours of the chapel and Spirit Center.

The Festival is the major fundraiser for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, grossing over \$27,000 this year. It has become a tradition on the Camas Prairie, a time when families and classes gather for reunions. Participants come from Portland, Seattle, Missoula, Boise and many points in between. ✕

## Don't miss the FREE Fall Lecture Series!

Thursdays 7:00 – 8:30 PM, Spirit Center, FREE Admission

### October 14

"Less Than What Really Happened: Explorations in Historical Field Work" by Steve Branting

### October 21

"Hildegard of Bingen: Her Artistic World" by Dr. Katherine Ramos Baker

### October 28

"Salmon River History" by Cort Conley

Learn more at  
[www.HistoricalMuseumAtStGertrude.org](http://www.HistoricalMuseumAtStGertrude.org)  
or call 208-962-2050.

**Photo** With the help of the Social Justice Assistance Fund, Sister Elisa Martinez was able to send 15 inner city kids on a wilderness experience to Yosemite. In her thank you, one of the youth wrote: "Escaping from South Central LA is nice because you get to relax and notice everything is right."



**Sisters Placida (Rita) Wemhoff and Carol Ann Wassmuth** celebrated fifty years as Benedictines on June 11. Both were raised in Catholic families on the Camas Prairie.

Sister Placida's first ministry as a Benedictine sister was teaching in Catholic schools throughout Idaho and at Prairie Middle School in Cottonwood. Now she is the Director of Maintenance and Operations for the Monastery. In the winter she uses her spare time to repair antique books, make journals and sew clothes for children.



**Photo** A familiar sight: Sister Placida tending to Monastery grounds



Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth also taught in Catholic schools throughout Idaho and then served as a religious educator. Now she manages the Monastery forest and is coordinator of the Stewardship of the Land Committee and the Monastery's social justice office, which provides education and promotes action on peace and justice issues. ✕

**Photo** Sister Carol Ann stands proudly amidst young Western Larch trees in the Monastery forest.

## ***Vision for Alternative Energy Grows***

*by Sister Placida Wemhoff*

***“Throughout history monastic communities have fostered both technical development and conservation of resources, so that their gentleness and reverence toward the environment might give meaning to the prayer, ‘The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness.’ (Psalm 24:1).” – Of All Good Gifts by the Conference of American Benedictine Prioressees.***

In 2005 we took a leap and began living the model of the future by putting thermal and PV panels on Spirit Center. Our next goal has been to convert the farmhouse to solar energy as well.

But last spring we learned that geothermal energy may be a promising solution to our energy needs for not only the farmhouse, but for much of our campus. We are actively consulting with professionals to find the most ecologically and economically viable way(s) to power our buildings long-term.

Meanwhile we will proceed with putting fan(s) in the attic of the farmhouse, a solar shade on the large east window and an awning on the south window which will support a large enough thermal panel to heat the water. We will wait until the study of geothermal energy implementation is completed before determining whether solar or geothermal energy is the wiser choice for the other energy needs at the farmhouse. ✕

Both jubilarians invite those who wish to honor them to contribute to the Fund for Alternative Energy. For more information, please contact Sister Carol Ann at 208-962-5032. Give a gift online at [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org).

# Our Daily Life

**Wendy Olin celebrated her First Monastic Profession on July 24 in the presence of her family and her community of the Monastery of St. Gertrude.**



“The highlight for me was the Suscipe,” said Sister Wendy, referring to the prayer sung on her knees at the altar. “I sang it and the community sang it back. It summarized me giving myself to God and to my community for life – and my community receiving me.”

Wendy first visited the Monastery in 1986 after meeting Sister Barbara Glodowski at a teacher’s workshop. “From the moment I walked into the chapel, I felt I belonged here,” recalled Wendy. Her visits became more frequent, as she felt an ever-stronger call to monastic life.

Having completed her four years of formation, she is now free for full-time ministry. She has accepted the position of Curator of the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude and is excited about reigniting the museum’s educational programs. While schools may not have the funds to send students to the museum, she believes the museum can visit the schools. She is also renewing her teaching certificate so that she may more readily “meet the needs of the time,” reflecting a Benedictine ministerial orientation that values a heightened responsiveness to the realities of the world. ✕



## ***Sisters in Service to hold Taco Sunday benefit***

**Just a few miles down the road from the Monastery is the Keuterville Pub and Grub.** On the walls you will find (among other artifacts) historical pictures of local families with captions proudly pointing out girls who went on to become Sisters at the Monastery. Both the pub and its proprietors, Linda and Dewey Elliot, are warmly regarded by the community.

This year, Sisters in Service will be holding a benefit at this local spot. The Sisters will be serving up tacos on Sunday, November 14 from 4pm to 8pm with the proceeds going to Linda and Dewey’s son Gene and his family. Gene is fighting aggressive brain cancer and the Sisters intend this benefit to alleviate financial strain. Please join us for tacos and a very authentic experience of area culture. ✕

## **IN THE NEWS**

**Full stories at [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)**

**June 12** Infirmary Sisters take home 75 trout from Winchester Lake.

**June 22-July 13** Sisters Katie Cooper and Cynthia Schultz prepare for Perpetual Profession through a workshop and retreat.

**June 16-17** Sister Mary Kay Henry is top fundraiser at Grangeville Relay for Life.

**July 27** Sister Petronilla Lieser celebrates 70 years of Monastic Profession.

**July 29** Sister Elisa Martinez attends Immigration Rally in Phoenix, Arizona.

**July 30-August 1** The last SGA class (1970) holds its 40th reunion over the course of Raspberry Festival weekend.

**August 18-21** Monastery brings bounty and fun to the Idaho County Fair.

**September 10** 50th reunion of SGA class of 1960

**September 26** Launch of Spirituality & the Arts

**Photo** Prioress Clarissa Goeckner, Sister Wendy Olin, House Coordinator Sister Mary Geis and Sub-Prioress Sister Mary Marge Goeckner at Sister Wendy’s First Monastic Profession





## *Missioning for this moment*

**In July the sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude** gathered at home for Community Week. Sisters came from their work in Lewiston; Boise; Spokane; Jerome; St. Joseph, Minn. and Los Angeles, Calif. Other sisters stepped away from their local ministries to gather for the week of inspiration, renewal, monastery business and rest.

Community Week culminated with the annual Missioning, in which Sr. Clarissa Goeckner, prioress, called each of the 57 sisters by name and commissioned her to service for the coming year. The sisters were called to ministries that included teaching, nursing, pastoral care, leadership and outreach to the homeless. They were inspired to make their ministries an expression of the monastery's vision statement, "Prayer awakens. Justice impels. Compassion acts. Thy Kingdom come."

Sr. Clarissa's reflections advised attention to the realities of the world. "The evening news reminds us of the global issues that are part of our times," she said. "They are part of the real world that God has entrusted to us, inviting us to put our unique mark of presence, prayer and care on the needs of our moment in history."

She encouraged the sisters to see in each other the face of Christ with their special gift to offer the world. "We are not perfect, but we are who we are to accomplish what we must for our times," she said. ✕

## **Holiday Gifts at the Monastery**

Shop online at [www.StGertrudesGifts.org](http://www.StGertrudesGifts.org)

- Books and music
- Stained glass
- Fibercrafts, candles and woodcrafts
- Religious cards and journals
- Handmade herbal soaps, lip balms and healing salves crafted using herbs from the Monastery gardens

## *Healing Center at St. Gertrude*

**Known as a place for spiritual healing, the Monastery now offers opportunities for various types of restoration.** Visitors to the new Healing Center can experience renewal and balancing through Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy (BCST). Cynthia Schultz, OSB, RN, BCST who successfully completed a two-year (700-hours) professional training in BCST, offers this gentle-touch healthcare method that can aid in pain relief, enhance physical vitality and augment deep relaxation. For info visit [www.HealingCenterAtStGertrudes.org](http://www.HealingCenterAtStGertrudes.org) or call 208-962-5085. ✕



Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with his presence.

~ Paul Claudel

## *Room at the Inn...*

**The new Inn at St. Gertrude just wrapped up its first summer.** Guests have found the Inn to be a peaceful stop on their journey or as a restorative destination spot. One recent guest came to Cottonwood to discover the birthplace of his father and found the hospitality of the Sisters deeply supportive. Another guest remarked: "I didn't know I had been good enough to go to heaven—yet here I am!" To learn more about the Inn and take a virtual tour visit [www.InnAtStGertrudes.org](http://www.InnAtStGertrudes.org). ✕

