



Leadership

Nurturing Trust and Compassion

Reflections from Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner

In our last “Canticle,” we considered the prioress as Teacher and Spiritual Leader. In this issue, we explore her role as Healer, Counselor and Guide. These roles place her in a more personal relationship with each Sister, one requiring trust, confidence and compassion.

How is such a relationship of trust begun and nurtured? We have just finished the season of Lent – the springtime journey that gives us the opportunity to look at where our lives need renewal. In our community, it is a tradition that before or during Lent, the prioress meets with each Sister to have a conversation about her spiritual journey. Each Sister asks:

What in my life needs to be forgiven?
What in my life needs to be healed?
What needs to be left in the Ashes of Ash Wednesday?
What in my life is moving into springtime?
What gives me energy, meaning and hope?
How is God calling me to growth and change?
What are my concerns? for my health? for my ministry? for the community?
How will my Lenten practices open my heart to seek the God of my life more deeply?
What support do I need from my prioress to continue on this journey?

Each Sister brings to this conversation a listening ear and a willing spirit. The prioress comes ready to listen with the ear of her heart to the needs and longings of each Sister. Since it is her responsibility to seek healing on all levels, the prioress must approach, not only these conversations but everyday interactions with the skill of a wise physician. She must understand many temperaments, know many medicines, and apply remedies with patience, understanding, forgiveness, wisdom, compassion and/or challenge. As Benedict

cautions, she must make sure "that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak have nothing to run from." *RB 64.19*

Here is a story that illustrates our challenge to live into the springtime of our souls. Once there was a man who owned some fish. One day he noticed that their fish tank needed cleaning so he put the fish in a bathtub while he cleaned the tank. When he came back to get the fish, he noticed that they were swimming in the same limited amount of space even though they had the entire bathtub in which to move. The man decided to coax them into wider waters. Neither algae nor fish food tempted them to move beyond their self-imposed limitations.

Like the fish in this story, we tend to stay where we are comfortable. Change, conversion and transformation are key values of Benedictine life and always invite us to move beyond self-imposed boundaries. It is this journey that the prioress and members make together, always encouraging and inviting one another to swim in the deeper and wider waters of love and service. Listening, patience, encouragement, challenge and wisdom support members as they seek to make the journey that the 4th century desert mother Amma Syncletica says is so difficult because it is “one inch long, but a mile deep!”

May all our journeys take us, with the support of family, friends and community members, out into the wider and deeper waters of generosity, love and service! ✕



Sister Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress

Sister's Story

Sister Mary Bernice Wessels



St. Bernice in 1965.

At the age of 60, Sister Bernice was sent to Rome. She wasn't going on vacation; she was going back to school. After serving 20 years as a school teacher, three years as missionary to South America, and 15 years as a pastoral associate, Sister Bernice was embarking on a new career. She was going to study Canon Law.

"With all my lessons in Italian, I had to study three times as hard," she says. "I also had to write the thesis and take the orals. I prayed and prayed to pass."

The prayers worked. As a Canon Lawyer, she sat on the diocesan tribunal in Boise working on annulment requests. "It was a very hard ministry. It was almost all paperwork although we traveled three or four times a year for interviews with the petitioners," she recalls. "It was a good learning experience but I am glad it was only four years."

She then returned to pastoral work, which has been her favorite. After spending two decades teaching elementary school (her first career), Sister Bernice was sent to Cali, Colombia, to work in a parish Bishop Treinen had founded. She spent three years as head of the religion program, conducting her ministry all in

Spanish. "We were surrounded by 60,000 poor people," she says. "But they were some of the happiest people I've come across."

She returned to Idaho and was appointed by Bishop Treinen to administer three parishes that didn't have a resident priest. "I was shocked to the bottom of my toes when Bishop Treinen asked me. I thought 'Oh my goodness, how can I do that kind of work? That's for priests...not for me.' I really was afraid. But God was so good and the people wonderful. I loved it."

Now approaching her 60th year of Monastic Profession, Sister Bernice has made yet another career change. She left pastoral work in 1999 and after a respite, worked for 10 years at the Historical Museum of St. Gertrude. Recently Sister Bernice became the Monastery librarian.

Born just a few miles down the road from the Monastery in Greencreek, she knew by the time she was in first grade that she wanted to be a Sister. "This seemed to be the place God wanted me to be and I've been very happy."



Sister Bernice at work in the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, 2008.

Sister Bernice knows firsthand that a life in God is a life of adventure and discovery, and her vision for her community is grounded in this perspective. "I have great hope for us. Just look at what our foremothers accomplished," she says. "We have weathered many trials through the years and God has always been there. We have to share the deep heritage we have of true Benedictine living." ❖

What is the purpose of a monastery?

Today our Monastery has hundreds and hundreds of visitors every year. People come for retreats, for spiritual direction; they come to volunteer, to serve on committees and help with projects. Women and men make a commitment to St. Gertrude's as oblates (lay members). Women enter to become Sisters (vocations). All of these people are being renewed, formed, fed and shaped by the practice of monastic life. For all who come here, their association with St. Gertrude's is a way of honoring their call, their passion to grow in faith.

Let's talk about it: monastery@stgertrudes.org

To the 6th century Italian, it might have seemed like the world was disintegrating. Rome had fallen and Italy was besieged with Barbarian invasions. Benedict of Nursia, with his heart full of spiritual aspirations, realized that Christian communities needed to organize to provide the external stability necessary for the internal freedom to grow in God. In his Rule, he offered practical guidance for transformation, which is about the daily, slow, hard work of faith. It happens through community, being committed to one another and “bearing one another’s burdens.” As Benedictines we are transformed through prayer. In daily communal and private prayer we open ourselves to God’s light as well as to the pain of the world. Our life is about service; we use our gifts to become the hands and feet of Christ in the world through our ministries.



**St. Benedict
of Nursia.**

A summer of art at Spirit Center

"**Painting is an engagement with Mystery** and an invitation to be transformed by the creative process," says Dr. John Jerry-Anthony Parente, who will lead **Watercolor as a Spiritual Practice** this summer, July 11-14. This retreat is supported by a grant from the Idaho Commission on the Arts and is among many upcoming Spirituality and Arts programs scheduled at Spirit Center.

"The transparency of watercolor allows for the expression of the transparency of the Divine in all," says Parente, who is a nationally-exhibited artist and holds degrees in art, theology and spirituality. He has taught art and spirituality for 25 years; he now teaches at Chabot College in the Bay Area and at workshops across the country. All levels are welcome. The cost is \$295 per person for shared room or \$340 single.

August 15-19 Father Damian Higgins will teach **The Sacred Art of Traditional Iconography**, an encounter with sacred Christian art. "Whether we know it or not, we're an iconographic people," says Father Damian. "We're surrounded by images we respond to, but mostly they advertise. They direct us toward a product. Holy icons direct us not toward themselves, but toward the Divine."



Queen of Heaven icon by Father Damian Higgins.

Father Damian is an iconographer whose numerous works are featured in churches and collections around the world. He has taught iconography in Ukraine, Canada and the USA. He is a priest-monk of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and leads the Community of St. Symeon the New Theologian in Augusta, Georgia. All materials provided and no artistic experience needed. The cost for the week-long retreat is \$492.

According to the Spirituality and the Arts mission statement, the Benedictine Sisters "believe art is the domain of every human being" and the Spirit Center retreats are an effort along with "artists, through dialogue and hospitality, to contemplate, to express and to explore the unity and mystery of all creation."

Spirit Center director Mary Schmidt hopes these retreats will be about more than just the artwork. "There is the opportunity for community-building," she says. "The group process of creative engagement can help develop the inner spiritual strength that can change the world." ✕

Upcoming Retreats

July 11 – 14: Watercolor as Spiritual Practice with Dr. John Jerry-Anthony Parente

July 15 – 17: Gardening of the Soul with Agnes Reichlin, OSB and Carlotta Maria Fontes, OSB

August 15 – 19: The Sacred Art of Traditional Iconography with Father Damian Higgins

September 20 – 22: Poetry in Nature with Lillian Englert, OSB

September 23 - 25: The Everyday Monastic: The Benedictine Way for Ordinary People with Teresa Jackson, OSB

October 18 – 20: Praying in Color with Mary Schmidt and Bernadette Stang, OSB

www.SpiritCenter.org • 208-962-2000

Explore a new dimension with your retreat experience: Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy with Cynthia Scultz, OSB, RN, BCST at 208-962-5085 or visit www.CynthiaSchultzBCST.com

Healing a wounded world

The news reminds us daily that we live in a wounded world. Children are dying from starvation or preventable diseases, civilians and soldiers alike are killed in meaningless conflicts, families are torn apart by uncompromising laws and so on. But the worst mistake we can make is to think that since we cannot bring about big changes, we can do nothing.

In accordance with the Gospel message of compassion, our Community responds to these needs in whatever ways we can: serving in soup kitchens and food banks, visiting the sick and elderly, financially supporting charitable organizations. But these actions, as important as they are, only address the symptoms of what ails our society. As any competent healer knows, it is even more important to search out and eradicate the root cause. In social justice work this is known as advocacy. This ministry challenges us to search beneath the symptom and bring to light the underlying toxic system. Then we work to make a change in that system.

As individuals and as a community we have been involved in various forms of advocacy work. Sisters and Oblates have joined in vigils and rallies, asking for change in the social structure. We have written letters and made phone calls to legislators, urging them to support laws that benefit people in poverty. We have acted as advocates for elderly persons in nursing homes. As stockholders we use our right to vote in a responsible manner. By joining our voice to that of larger organizations dedicated to advocacy, we find strength in numbers. ✱



From left: Sisters Sue Ellen Drexler, Chanelle Schuler, Placida Wemhoff and Wendy Olin advocate for peace and justice by writing legislators.

Pipeline project moves forward

Spring has officially sprung at the Monastery, which means the Development Office is in full gear as we sprint to the end of our fiscal year (June 30th). This has been a year filled with both the challenging sadness of loss but also the warmth generated by your tremendous love and support. We are deeply grateful for you.



Thanks to your generous response, the Water Resource Initiative is nearly completed and work begins to restore the water pipeline from Cottonwood Butte.

We are pleased to announce that the completion of our Water Resource Initiative fundraising is in sight! Just over a year ago, our Community decided that band-aid solutions were no longer going to work for our leaky pipeline. With the help of many, a plan was drawn and Sister Mary Kay sat down with our office and declared this our top priority. We spoke to many of you about this project; we are blessed by your willingness to listen and your generous response. We are also overjoyed by the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust's (Vancouver, WA) decision to award the Monastery \$149,000 toward this Initiative (which carries a \$298,000 price tag). Thank you for ensuring that our legacy of responsible stewardship of our earth's resources lives on through what is soon to be a newly reconstructed pipeline.

We look forward to sharing a BBQ beef sandwich and a piece of Raspberry Shortcake with many of you at our annual Museum benefit, the Raspberry Festival scheduled for August 7, 2011! ✱

Care of the Land



The healing power of earth

Our Earth is alive with an energy spoken by a loving God at the beginning of time. She is endowed with the power to rejuvenate herself for the nourishment and healing of all living beings. Our planet was blessed by God to “bring forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit with its seed in it”. (Genesis 1:11) Through this gift we humans are nourished and nurtured.

Here at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, guided by our Philosophy of Land Use and immersed in our daily praying of the psalms, we are continually reawakened to the sacredness of the Earth. We share in her life energy as we work the soil and eat the vegetables and fruits from our garden and orchard. The joy of eating produce that we have harvested and preserved is a special gift we share with our guests and retreatants.

In recent years Sister Carlotta Maria Fontes has developed an herb garden. From it she harvests medicinal herbs used in Nature's Gifts Healing Salves



Sister Agnes Reichlin works with essential oils. She and Sister Carlotta will lead a celebration of the earth's gifts with "Gardening of the Soul: Holistic Living" at Spirit Center July 15-17.

and Soaps that are sold through our gift shop. She also makes herbs available to our cooks who use them to give added flavor and nourishment to the food served in our dining room. Sister Agnes Reichlin has developed an interest in the life force of plants known as essential oils and their value in healing. Many of us have benefited

from this knowledge as we deal with colds, aching muscles and other common ailments.

Sisters Agnes and Carlotta Maria regularly share their knowledge and enthusiasm by teaching classes at the Monastery on herbs and their uses. These sessions,

promoted through the Extension Program of Lewis and Clark College, provide participants with a hands-on experience of making herbal soaps, salves and

tinctures. The day's schedule often includes a field trip to gather rose hips or view the monastery herb garden. After a day of learning, sharing and laughter, the attendees leave with a deeper understanding of the importance of a healthy planet



Sister Carlotta Maria Fontes instructs retreat participants.

as well as something they have made in the class. Sister Agnes and Sister Carlotta Maria will also teach "Gardening of the Soul: Holistic Living" at Spirit Center July 15-17. **To learn more or register, call 208-962-2000 or visit www.Spirit-Center.org.** ✱

Excerpt from the Philosophy of Land Use

We, the Benedictine Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, have been entrusted with the gift of land by our loving God and Creator. Through the years our community and this land have been bonded together. With humility we recognize the earth (humus) as the source from which we (humanity) receive our life and sustenance. Our inner spirits are renewed by the contemplative environment it provides. Listening with the ear of our heart to the wisdom expressed through creation opens us to the deeper reality of God in our lives. As a source of food, water and firewood, the land has nourished and healed our bodies even providing the stone for the building which shelters us and the flowers and trees that decorate our home.....We recognize our sacred responsibility to reverence and care for our land and to make proper use of the resources it provides.

Our Daily Life

Sister Clarissa to be affirmed as prioress on June 11

On Wednesday, March 16, Sister Clarissa Goeckner was re-elected prioress by the Community after a three-day process of prayer and consensus-making. She has served a first term of six years and now having been re-elected will serve an additional four years.

Had a new person been elected, the ceremony confirming the new leader would be referred to as the Installation, but for Sister Clarissa the event is termed the Affirmation of Re-Election. Bishop Michael P. Driscoll will preside at the Mass and Sister Joella Kidwell, Benedictine Federation president, will preside at the Oath of Office.

The ceremony is powerful as it is essentially a celebration of individual commitments. The community commits to following her leadership. In turn, the prioress makes a formal "yes" to the calling made by God through the community's prayerful discernment. She commits to being their teacher and spiritual leader, their counselor and healer, and their steward.

"It is a big job," says Sister Jean Lalande, who was prioress from 1999 to 2005. "A prioress manages it with great humility, which means she gives her life for the community as Christ gave his life for the church. I felt most blessed and humbled by the faith of the Sisters. At the ceremony, I could just feel the faith and love the Sisters have for the role of the prioress."

Ultimately, in each other's presence the mutual devotion that defines the monastery is renewed for a collective fresh step into the future. Every monastic agrees to a journey of transformation through the experience of community; the journey toward wholeness is accomplished through the web of relationships that are presented in monastic life. This is guided by strong leadership – someone who, according to St. Benedict, "holds the place of Christ."

RB 2.2



Sister Clarissa Goeckner at her Installation in 2005: "I felt embraced and empowered by the whole community to move forward into the future and whatever it may hold."

"The ceremony affirms what was done at discernment time," says Sister Mary Marge Goeckner, who was prioress of the Community from 1977 to 1985. She was the first prioress to be elected through the current discernment process. Before the Vatican II-inspired revisions, the process was more like a traditional election. "Over these years of using the discernment process, we have grown in our understanding of the giftedness of each member, and by listening to this wisdom, have really strengthened the bonds of the Community."

"Everyone has a piece of the wisdom, not the whole answer" she says. "If someone leaves her wisdom out, the whole Community will be without the full answer. Benedict said everyone in the Community must be listed to. (RB 3.1-12) Our Community is very astute at doing that."

All the Community will gather on June 11 at 1:30 p.m. in the Monastery Chapel for the Affirmation of Sister Clarissa Goeckner as Prioress. The public is invited to attend. A reception will follow the ceremony. ✕

Summer 2011 Celebrations of Life Events

June 11 – Affirmation Ceremony of Sister Clarissa Goeckner as Prioress, Monastery Chapel 1:30 p.m.

July 30 – Perpetual Monastic Profession of Sister Cynthia Schultz, Monastery Chapel 1:30 p.m.

August 7 – 50th Jubilee of Sister Barbara Jean Glodowski, St. Jerome's Parish, Jerome, Idaho, 9:30 a.m.

60th Jubilees: Sister Mary Benita Hassler, Sister Lucy Keaney, Sister Mary Bernice Wessels

www.StGertrudes.org • 208-962-3224



Amenities made by artisans

The staff at the Inn at St. Gertrude B&B has endeavored to make sure both "B's" are the "Best." The beds are luxurious with pillow-top mattresses and down comforters and the breakfast is particularly special: With Monastery-made bread and jam and Fair Trade coffee, guests enjoy morning fare that satisfies both the palette and the conscience. The evening features complimentary homemade desserts.

In addition, every guest receives a welcome basket full of snacks and information about the area. Each couple celebrating an anniversary will find complimentary champagne in their room. Every suite now features Nature's Gifts soaps that are made right here in the Monastery by Sister Carlotta Maria. ✕

Visit www.InnAtStGertrudes.org to learn more.



May your stay with us be beautiful and peaceful.

Book and Gift Shop Book Blog

Discover books on Benedictine spirituality at the Book and Gift Shop Book Blog. Visit www.StGertrudesGifts.org and click "Shop for Books". Don't see anything you want? Email Sister Miriam Mendez at gsinformation@stgertrudes.org or call 208-962-5022 with your book request and it will be posted so you can make your purchase through our site. Thank you in advance for supporting St. Gertrude's in this unique way! ✕

4th Annual Chinese Remembering June 23-24, Lewiston, Idaho

Explore the history and culture of the Chinese in the region. Chinese Remembering 2011 will consist of six lectures and discussions on Thursday, June 23, in historic Lewiston followed by an evening reception. The cost to attend the lectures and the reception will be \$30. On Friday, June 24, those interested are invited to an all-day historically interpreted jet boat trip into Hells Canyon to sites thought to have been occupied by Chinese. The highlight of the trip will be a healing ceremony at Chinese Massacre Cove where up to 34 Chinese miners were massacred for their gold in 1887. The cost of the day trip will be \$120 with food and refreshments during the day.

The conference will be co-sponsored by the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewis-Clark Center for Arts and History and River Quest Excursions. Additional information will be available as planning proceeds.

For more information contact Museum Director Emeritus Lyle Wirtanen at 208-816-8600 or emeritus@stgertrudes.org. ✕



You're invited to the 19th Annual Raspberry Festival!

a benefit for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude

August 7, 2011

9:00 a.m. – 4 p.m.

- Fun Run/Walk
- Pancake Breakfast
- Raspberry Treats
- Arts and Crafts Fair, Quilt Show
- Live Music
- Kids' Carnival
- Chapel and Museum tours
- Living History Encounters and more!



Visit www.MyRaspberryFestival.org to learn more.

The festival decorating committee is looking for pink fabric, paint, tablecloths, etc.! If you have pink to give away, call 208-962-5065.