



Leadership

Perspective, Imagination and Providence

Reflections from Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner

Leadership is a hot topic these days. Because leadership has failed so many people in our time, authors and others seek to explore its dimensions that inspire, empower and elicit integrity and service.

Since we will be choosing a prioress through discernment in March, leadership is getting a lot of attention here at the monastery as well. We are studying the Rule of Benedict and Sister Ruth Fox, OSB's book *Wisdom Leadership* to reclaim our ideals, inform our conversations and be led by that wisdom.

Benedict puts it plainly: the leader represents Christ in the monastery. The prioress is to mirror in her life the qualities of Christ and relate to each member with humility, respect, compassion, and forgiveness, always encouraging growth. As a Christ figure, a catalyst for

transformation, she recognizes the best in each person and invites that to come forth.

Building on Benedict's teaching, Sister Ruth presents the prioress in her roles of teacher, spiritual leader, healer, counselor, and steward. This "Canticle" issue will highlight qualities of the prioress as teacher and spiritual leader.



Photo Sister Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress

Assuming an explicit teaching role, the prioress draws from foundational sources: Scripture, the Rule of St. Benedict, Monastic Studies, and community celebrations to challenge and inspire the community. Joan Chittister expresses this concept so well: It is the prioress' distinct call and privilege to inspire the community for the journey through earthen darkness to the dazzling light that already flames in the heart of each member.

While sometimes the prioress is in a formal teaching role, she is always teaching by example. Her joyful participation in community life, her reverence for each sister, her patience and perseverance in trying times, her empathy with those who hurt, her celebration with those who have excelled model to the members how they are called to respond to one another. This mode of instruction is difficult but definitely influential.

As **spiritual leader** of the monastery, the prioress leads the community in expressing its worship of God with faithfulness, authenticity and beauty. From liturgy

Continued on page 7.

**"May the gift of leadership awaken
in you as a vocation,
Keep you mindful of the providence
that calls you to serve.**

**As high over the mountains the
eagle spreads its wings,
May your perspective be larger than
the view from the foothills.**

**When the way is flat and dull in
times of gray endurance,
May your imagination continue to
evoke horizons."**

*from "A Blessing for One Who Holds Power"
by John O'Donohue*

Sister's Story

"Great things for the Lord"



If you were ever lucky enough to have Sister Lucy Keaney as your nurse, you knew you were in good hands: Your bed was clean and wrinkle-free, your back was rubbed, your teeth were brushed – and Sister Lucy seemed to always come into your room exactly when you needed her. What's more, she had the ability to keep you laughing and could quickly correct any unruly patient down the hall.

Her reputation as an excellent caregiver grew over her 32 years at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood and her subsequent seven years of providing in-home care. "She was always very conscientious about the way things needed to be done," said Sister Agnes Reichlin, who, as Director of Nursing at St. Mary's, trained Sister Lucy in the LPN program. "We could always depend on her... so bright and hard-working."

Sister Cynthia Schultz, a registered nurse and Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapist, credits her solid start in healthcare to both Sister Lucy and Sister Agnes. "Lucy witnessed what it means to give good patient care. She was very meticulous, conscientious, hard-working and a complete joy to learn from as a new CNA. Later as an RN alone on nights, I always felt confident with Lucy; she knew what to watch for."

Sister Lucy was born in 1924 in Alameda, California, the last of her parents' four girls and one son. She was named Gertrude after her mother, and in a seeming stroke of destiny, after the patron saint of the religious community she would eventually enter at the age of 25. At her First Profession she became the namesake of St. Lucy.

Gertrude grew up in San Francisco, attending Catholic school and reading nearly everything she came across. "Even through my phases of wanting to be an actor or dancer, I always wanted to be a Sister," she says. In her reading she discovered the story of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who lived and taught a spirituality of attending to everyone and everything well and with love – an influence that would define Sister Lucy's life of faithfully tending to the sick and infirm.

Although life in the city was vibrant, the Keaney family endured hardship.

When she was ten, her father died from tropical malaria contracted during business abroad and her only brother disappeared for several years into the chaos of World War II, losing a leg in combat.

Going from San Francisco to Idaho didn't take long. Her older sister, Madeleine, entered St. Joseph's Convent and was soon working at an orphanage in Lewiston, Idaho. It was on a trip to visit her that the young Gertrude discovered St. Gertrude's. "I entered to do great things for the Lord," she says, "and I learned that just living a religious life is a great thing."

Now Sister Lucy is a resident in the Monastery infirmary. Although she is officially retired, she still tracks patient care for her Sisters and shares her classic San Francisco-style sense of humor, lifting spirits and strengthening the feeling that everyone is indeed in good hands. ✕



Photo Sister Lucy operating the sterilizer at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, Idaho.

Membership

Stuffin' for the Sisters

The Canticle you are reading has been touched by human hands. Yes, that's right: every single issue of the Canticle is hand-stuffed by a group of Oblates and volunteers in Clarkston, Washington – about an hour away from the Monastery.

Recently the Canticle collators gave themselves a name: "Stuffin' for the Sisters." When the Canticle is finished at the printer, approximately 19-25 people meet at Jack and Regina Sullivan's house at 7:30 a.m. In the living room and out on the porch overlooking the Snake River, Regina sets up stuffing stations. Each volunteer sits amidst stacks of Canticles, envelopes, reply envelopes and anything else to be included in the mailing. With plenty of snacks and coffee, the group sets in and finishes the stuffing by late afternoon.

The mass of Canticles is then ready for labeling and sorting which is also done by hand by Office Manager Michele Byers and a team of Sisters at the Monastery. "I know firsthand how much work it is," she says. "It is a huge effort that keeps the Sisters from getting overwhelmed."

"Our group has some really strong, motivated people in it," says Oblate Regina Sullivan. "We all consider it a blessing to be able to help." ✽



Photo Christine Stewart, Mary Lou Amadei and Tom Cahill of "Stuffin' for the Sisters."

Developments

Grants Department Established

In November, the Monastery welcomed Dr. Catherine Raven Fehér as the new Grants Director. With over twenty years in grantsmanship, Catherine has successfully led a small non-profit organization as well as tribal organizations to financial success through her grant writing. She is also the award-winning author of four books.



Photo Dr. Catherine Raven Fehér

"I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve," she says. "I like being involved with something historic and ancient. And as a Benedictine Monastery, this is both." Catherine moved from Spokane where she was teaching at the Spokane Tribal College. She took residence in Cottonwood and is enjoying being closer to nature.

Catherine has immediately set to work on behalf of the Monastery's environmental projects, including replacement of the water pipeline from Cottonwood Butte. She is also seeking grants for the Historical Museum's living history initiatives. "There's lots to do," she says, "but there are terrific opportunities here." ✽

Give a gift online at www.StGertrudes.org

Info: 208-962-5062 or 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.

New certified spiritual directors

In a blessing of prayer, song, bubbles and beads; Sisters Meg Sass, Miriam Mendez and Katie Cooper graduated with spiritual direction certificates on November 12. “We put beads on a string and hung it on a cross,” explained Sister Miriam. “The beads represented our worries, joys, etc., anything that would distract us from being fully present at the sessions. The bubbles represented the joy of Christ’s presence that keeps bubbling up.”

The two-year program is conducted by Mission Centered Education and Christian Formation and Direction Ministries in Boise. The requirements include 200 contact hours of instruction, supervised practice, experiential learning, small and large group process and communal prayer. “The individual supervision was a real gift,” said Sister Meg Sass, who ministers at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Boise. “Becoming certified makes us more responsible as a community.”

For each of the Sisters, pursuing certification was a natural next step in their ministries. “I always had people that came to me,” said Sister Katie, “In this program I learned more about how to be where they are, not where I am.”



Photo Sister Katie Cooper hugs program director Peg Wuelfing after receiving her certificate.

“We are so proud of Sisters Katie, Miriam and Meg,” says Prioress Sister Clarissa. “They received wholehearted support to go ahead because our dream is to supply quality spiritual companionship to those who come to our retreat center.”

With private retreats up 29% from last year, Spirit Center director Mary Schmidt is excited about the new graduates. “It’s wonderful that each member of our staff here at Spirit Center is now a certified spiritual director,” she says. “We’re finding spiritual direction a very important component of our retreat ministries.”

What exactly is spiritual direction? It is support for someone who is seeking to become more attentive to God’s presence and respond more fully to the mystery of grace. That may sound like a difficult task in this world – but as many of the saints found, the spiritual journey can go much better with companionship.

To schedule time with a spiritual director and/or plan a retreat, call 208-962-2000 or email retreat@stgertrudes.org. To schedule time with Sister Meg in Boise, call her at 208-859-1839. ✕

Upcoming Retreats

“To Have and To Hold”, February 11 – 13
Engage in a married couples retreat that includes presentation, prayer and reflection.

Building the Reign of God, February 25 – 27
With Jesus as our example, explore how we feed the hungry today.

Valuing Your Life: Living Your Values, March 25 – 27
Learn about values – including your own.

NEW! Spirituality & the Arts mid-week, small group “Creative Expressions” retreats:

Harmonic Needles: Grace-filled Knitting, March 22 – 24

Artists in Our Midst with Fr. Eamon, May 3 – 5

Retreat Info at www.SpiritCenter.org

Benedictines for Peace

An essential element of Benedictine economics is “Let peace be your quest and aim.” This exhortation from the Rule of St. Benedict clearly states his expectation that monastics will take leadership in promoting God’s reign of peace in the world. Benedictines have long adopted as their motto the Latin word PAX to symbolize their charism as peace-makers.

Through our membership in National Benedictines for Peace, the Sisters and Oblates of the Monastery of St. Gertrude join with others in a peace-filled response to the violence that threatens our world today. The daily praying of the psalms awakens us to a vision of peace and challenges us to work toward making that vision a reality in our hearts, in our community, in our world.

Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth serves on the steering committee that provides leadership to National Benedictines for Peace. By means of regular conference phone call meetings she works with three other Benedictine Sisters from around the United States to share ideas and coordinate responses that promote peace. These activities may include prayer vigils, letter writing, educational events and public witness. “Being a member of this committee is an exciting part of my ministry as the coordinator of our monastery’s social justice office. Peacemaking is an essential element in the Benedictine tradition. By uniting with other Benedictine communities we can provide a stronger witness to a peaceful world.” ✕



Photo Awakening to a vision of peace.

Thank you, Lyle!

Lyle,

Thank you for directing our Historical Museum for the past eleven years. Your leadership has brought significant growth, development and openness to the possibilities our museum holds. Through your skills, knowledge and abilities as director, you secured sizeable grants, instigated major improvements, initiated a historical journal, introduced the fall lecture series, mentored volunteers, garnered many important recognitions and awards, facilitated intercultural conversations and brought momentum to the Raspberry Festival.

Through your values and convictions you made the Museum an expression of reconciliation and peace. Your dedication put our museum on the map and it has become a destination for research, history and a place to savor the beauty of the many stories it holds. A million, million thanks. We will truly miss you. Blessings on you as you go forward.

Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner and Community

New Museum Director

Dr. Sam Couch, who replaced Lyle Wirtanen as Museum Director on January 3, is no stranger to the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. While completing his dissertation at University of Idaho, he worked at nearby archeological sites at Warren and frequently found himself at the Monastery. Calling the museum a “gem in the gem state,” Dr. Couch’s dreams as museum director include building on the work of Lyle and Sister Alfreda to expand the reach of the Historical Museum to national and international levels. “The history of the frontier American west is so diverse and filled with incredible stories,” he says. “Sister Alfreda did a remarkable job with the first generation of Idahoan frontier people. Now their descendants are building a new world for us too. We must capitalize on their contributions in Idaho County and the world beyond.” ✕

Visit the Museum’s new website!
www.HistoricalMuseumatStGertrude.org

Care of the Land



“An amazing wonder...”

Although the winter’s snows have already blanketed the Monastery grounds, it’s still easy to remember the blooms that lined the walkways far into the heart of autumn. In fact, judging by the photography inspired by the Monastery, the vibrant garden paths play a large part in how guests and community experience the campus.

It wasn’t always so. Even at the turn of the new century, those garden beds were still covered with plastic and lava rock, visible only where overgrown junipers and arbor vitae didn’t dominate. Albeit somewhat monochromatic, it was a style of landscape maintenance that was low-labor and effective when there wasn’t a gardener around. But in 2001 someone whose creativity is expressed through the selection and nurturing of colorful blooms arrived. Sister Jean Ihli entered the Monastery, took a look at those lava rocks and 20-year-old shrubs and recognized her calling.

With leadership’s support, she immediately set to work on taking out the rocks and the old plants all the way down to the roots. She ripped out the plastic



Photo Sister Jean Ihli tends to the flowers.

and could nearly hear the earth breathe a sigh of relief. Any gardener knows this is tough work. “God gave me good strong shoulders and a good back,” she says. “I was raised on a farm where I helped my dad do the work.”

*The snowflakes so lovely and white
So gently they fall, then gone from sight.
Lost forever into the night
To rise renewed from earth to sky
and to descend again at Spring’s first cry.”*

~Sister Jean Ihli

She found that in many places new topsoil needed to be brought in. Although she intended the beds around the Blessed Mother statue to be exclusively a rose garden, her vision quickly expanded to include pink mallow, gloriosa daisies, petunias, marigolds, calendula and more. The other walkway beds now bloom with a diverse array of columbines, Siberian iris, monkshood, rhododendrons, azaleas and towering hollyhocks.

And as much as she loves late summer, when everything is at the height of color, Sister Jean says her favorite part of the year is much earlier: “Every spring, as soon as you can get out and work that soil, there is an excitement to get into it...to have the soil turn...that beautiful smell of the turned earth.”

For the winter Sister Jean has moved the geraniums up to the Monastery attic, where they get lots of warmth and sun. To prepare her roses for the cold, Sister Jean covered the trimmed plants with autumn leaves and straw. To strengthen her columbines, she cuts them to the ground after their first-season blooms are spent. And her rhodies and azaleas thrive with the fertilization of coffee grounds from the kitchen. “I suspect the seeds and blooms are getting bigger every year,” she beams.

Sister Jean experiences gardening as a contemplative practice. “It is an amazing wonder what God brings to bloom with time, sun, water...” ✱

Our Daily Life

The process of discerning a prioress

In the 1970's the Community began using a specific process for the selection of the prioress. This process includes preparing everyone's minds to be full of peace, free of any fear and preconceived conclusions, and truly open to what unfolds. A prioress is elected for six years or if re-elected serves an additional four years.

On November 1, the Community began praying every evening for this process. This will continue up to election week March 13-18. That week two Sisters from other monasteries – who are skilled enough to adapt the process as needed – will come to facilitate the discernment and election. They will first guide the Community in reviewing and confirming the direction statements for the upcoming years and discerning the qualities necessary in a leader to address these particular goals. Each member identifies a couple of people she thinks live these qualities.

The facilitators then read off all the names to everyone. Each person discerns again one or two people, adding the reason why each would make a good prioress and where each person might need help in leading. Now the Community begins to realistically see who are potential candidates. Another vote is taken and the list may be narrowed down to three or four people. At this time these individuals have the opportunity to withdraw. Each nominee who leaves her name in shares what she sees as her own gifts and what her emphasis would be if she were chosen as prioress.

Another vote is taken to find out how close the Community is to consensus. Every person writes down who she believes God is truly calling. At this point there is usually at least a 90% consensus. When the names are shared, everyone moves to the Chapel for the formal ritual of a canonical election.

All Sister who are eligible to vote are given ballots. The votes are counted by two appointed tellers and an appointed secretary reads each ballot out loud.

After a fairly short time the newly-elected Sister steps to the front of the Chapel and affirms she will accept the call. All members then greet her as the new prioress and pledge to do their best to follow her leadership. After the ceremony there is a dinner where the public and members of the press are welcomed. ✕

Leadership story

Continued from page 1.

to monastic rituals, to blessings and anointings, the prioress is charged with growing the spiritual life of the community. Sister Joan Chittister writes: "Benedict's leaders are to birth souls of steel and light...they are to call the community to the height and depth and breadth of the spiritual life."

Idealistic? Yes! A stretch? Definitely!

As David Whyte writes in his poem "Sweet Darkness", "...anything or anyone/that does not bring you alive /is too small for you."

In striving for this vision of leadership, the prioress herself and the community members should be "brought alive" for service to one another and the many needs of our times. This ideal of leadership—one that seeks to transform us, one that brings us alive to larger realities, one that inspires integrity and service—is a model for all families, businesses and institutions that would like to change the world. ✕

Sister Clarissa Beckner



Monastery Industries

Monastic Immersion Experience

Sister Teresa Jackson, the Monastery's volunteer coordinator and vocations director, is fulfilling her vision for an eight-week, summer monastic immersion experience for women aged 18 to 60.

Each summer five women will experience daily monastic life and share in the Sisters' work which includes the retreat ministry, marketing and communications, soap-making, gardening, museum and gift store. Summer 2011 will be the program's first season. For information, call 208-962-3224 or email volunteer@stgertrudes.org. ✕



Photo Monastery introduces a new way to experience monastic life.

Sacramental gifts at the bookshop

If you are anticipating celebrating a baptism, confirmation or marriage in the upcoming year; you will find an array of sacramental gifts at the Book and Gift Shop at the Monastery. From handmade baptism gowns to children's rosaries and books to matrimonial crosses, the shop is full of beautiful and meaningful gifts. You can also order custom candles and knitted items.

The shop is a great resource for religious gifts of all kinds. "We are one of the only Catholic bookstores between Spokane and Boise," says shopkeeper Sister Miriam Mendez. For help with your sacramental gift ideas, contact Sister Miriam at the bookshop at 208-962-5002. The shop is also online at www.StGertrudes.org or find "Gertrude's Artisans" on Etsy.com. ✕

Healing Hospitality at the *inn*

As we journey through life many of us look back to events, places and people that have given meaning to who we are. It seems the Inn creates these kinds of connections. For example: In August, our guests Ron Halter and Bernie Halter Perry had grandfathers who were sponsored by the Sarnen Community (our motherhouse) to immigrate to the United States and then work the land of the newly-formed St. Gertrude's Community. These guests were also distant relatives of Mother Johanna, the foundress of our Monastery.

Two sisters, Eileen Fleming and Linda Fleming Newberry, arrived from Vernon, B.C. Their grandparents had been married in Cottonwood in 1909 and then homesteaded in Forest, Idaho.

We had guests from Pocatello. LaVonne Garner Mills, a family physician, was delivered by Dr. Collins and the attending nurse was Sister Mercedes Martzen (who just turned 99 years old!). We have had several guests that were boarders at St. Gertrude's Academy. Patrick Kelly stayed with us for a week reconnecting with classmates and just walking the halls where there is still "battleship linoleum."

Godspeed to all the guests that have blessed us with their presence these first six months! ✕

Sr. Corinne Forsman & Sr. Chanelle Schuler
Innkeepers

IN THE NEWS

Full stories at www.StGertrudes.org

- Historical Museum at St. Gertrude receives state's highest museum award.
- Lewiston house receives new windows, thanks to Oblates.
- Sister Placida Wemhoff delivers handmade clothes for the children.
- Video: Our way of looking at the world
- Video: Vocation warning signs!
- Video: Sister Elisa Martinez receives Heart of Gold Award

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