

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

2012:
Healing Our Culture

This issue: Hospitality



A MESSAGE FROM prioress sister clarissa goeckner:

During World War II, a German widow hid Jewish refugees in her own home. As her friends discovered the situation, they became extremely alarmed.

"You are risking your own well-being," they told her.

"I know that," she said.

"Then why," they demanded, "do you persist in this foolishness?"

Her answer was stark and to the point. "I am doing it" she said, "because the time is now and I am here."

Each year, on New Year's Eve, we hold a special vigil. At one point in the ritual, we hold up our blank calendars to receive a blessing on that great unknown that lies ahead. Wanting to live for something that will make a difference in our time, I ask myself the question that was asked of the German widow: What am I doing because the time is now and I am here? What are we as a community doing because the time is now and we are here?

"Hospitality, rather than being something you achieve, is something you enter. ... It is not something you do, as much as it is something you become."

— *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way to Love*
by Fr. Daniel Homan & Lonni Collins Pratt

In 1990 we embraced hospitality as one of our core values. Then as now, so much of life is marred by division, lack of acceptance, inhospitality, and violence. In 1999 we again named hospitality — healing hospitality — as one of the gifts that we would bring to the world through us as individuals and as a community.

How do we create hospitable places that are healing at the Monastery and beyond? First of all the Scriptures invite us to be hospitable to the Word of God, letting it touch us, change us, and transform us, setting us free to be persons of hospitality. As we pray, we make our hearts hospitable to Grace. "The best kind of hospitality seeps into your soul and shapes your identity... It is about the heart you make ready. Yours." (*Radical Hospitality*, Fr. Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt.) We are challenged to BE hospitality to one another and to our guests.

From this center we intentionally choose to offer ministries that express healing hospitality. For example, we provide a hospitable place at Spirit Center to welcome those who seek rest, renewal, refreshment, and a healing space within which to re-imagine their lives. The Healing Center supports these goals. Our Inn welcomes the modern day seeker. Our Historical Museum, which cares for the stories of our past, provided four Symposia to heal relations with the Nez Perce Tribe. This summer the 5th "Chinese Remembering" will be held

to mark the massacre that left 34 Chinese miners dead. Through remembering, our hope is that healing can move the hurt of this incident from hostility to hospitality. Our Stewardship of the Land Ministry calls us to bring healing to our small piece of the planet. It is our privilege to share this land with those who are on retreat or our guests.



The Sisters engaged in ministries beyond the Monastery also seek to create a hospitable space and presence for those they serve: the students at Collegeville, Minnesota and Sacred Heart School, Boise; patients in St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, Clearwater Valley Hospital in Orofino, St. Luke's, Jerome and St. Joseph's Counseling Center in Spokane; parishioners in Redmond, Washington and St. John's Cathedral in Boise; at-risk youth in Los Angeles; prisoners in Boise; and those in elder care in Grangeville and Spokane.

At the beginning of each year there is an opportunity to begin again, to make all things new. It would be a missed opportunity not to select some way to make the world a better place. What is the commitment that invites you to say with conviction: "I am doing this because the time is now and I am here?" ✕

OUR MISSION

Eager to welcome God's transforming power in ourselves and our world, we, the Benedictine Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, seek God together through monastic profession and respond in Healing Hospitality, Grateful Simplicity and Creative Peacemaking.

SISTER ANGELA UHLORN

There are many ways in which attending Mass at the Monastery is a unique experience. The three-story space is filled with silence as the sisters and guests take their seats in the chairs or prayer stalls. Light from the ubiquitous Idaho sunshine pours through the massive rosette windows and down the walls. The bells toll and the procession begins. The sisters' voices alight into the silence with delicate clarity. As you listen, you begin to hear simultaneous, breathtaking tones. You look about to see who is singing harmony. By the third or fourth song you've figured it out: It's Sister Angela.

Sister Angela Uhlorn has radiated music all of her life. She was born and raised on a Camas Prairie farm in an exceptionally musical family of twelve children. (Sister Angela's sister, Sister Cecile, is the Monastery organist.) "My mother was so gifted," Sister Angela recalls. "I could play by ear but she encouraged me to take a home course in music."

By high school, the young musician's life was as robust as her music. She dove into school activities as well as social ones – which included the affection of a particular young man. But through all the excitement of her teens, another call began to come through. "God began making my call known through other people," she explains. "Many important people in my life, particularly an older man and one of the sisters who was

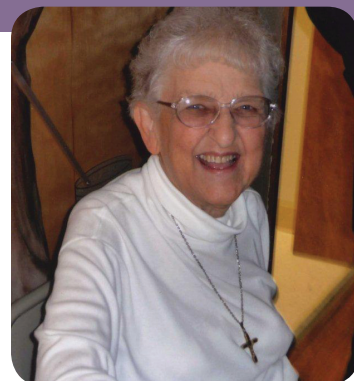
teaching me violin, began to tell me they thought I had a call to religious life."

She made her First Monastic Profession in 1955 and continued her music lessons with Sister Anna. Sister Angela began her first teaching job in Nampa, also helping to teach music after school. Later, she taught at Genesee, Our Lady of Lourdes in Lewiston and St. Gertrude's Academy, leading a large Glee Club and smaller ensembles called "tentets."

In 1969, Sister Angela was sent on mission to Bogota, Colombia to teach 5th grade boys. However, a severe injury to her elbow from a horseback riding accident cut her time there short and prevented her from ever playing violin again.

Upon recovery, Sister Angela entered parish work beginning with St. Mary's and St. Jerome's parishes in Boise. Her focus remained on Spanish-speaking parishes where she could use the language skills she learned in Bogota.

Sister Angela came home to the Monastery in 2000 and now leads the St. Gertrude's Academy alumni program as well as the Monastery schola (or choir). "Music has kept me renewed in my calling. I am proud and happy to bring the gift of music to so many people." ✕



Sister Angela: over 56 years of Monastic Profession.



Sister Angela leads the St. Gertrude's Academy Glee Club, 1966.

UPCOMING PROFESSION

Sister Kim Marie Jordan will make her Perpetual Monastic Profession on March 10 at 7:00 p.m. in the chapel. She first visited the Monastery in 1997 and made her First Profession in 2007. "I used to think I chose to come here," she says. "Now I know that God chose this place for me."



Sister Kim Marie Jordan



FINDING UNITY IN COMMON PRAYER

Over Christmas I tried recording some of our common prayer in order to try posting it on the web. What surprised me the most was how good we sounded. Well, we sounded better after I made sure that I didn't sing while I recorded the community singing. But despite the occasional cough and background noise we were remarkably clear and together. No one would mistake us for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but for an average bunch of women trying to sing together we weren't bad. It also made me think about what it means for us to pray together as a community.

Most people think of prayer as a solitary activity but for Benedictines prayer is a community practice. Our communal prayer shapes, molds and transforms us from a collection of individuals who happen to pray together into a community united in heart and mind through prayer.

In our American society we tend to value the individual above all else. We pride ourselves on being independent and self-reliant. Americans celebrate the myth of the rugged individual single-handedly conquering all odds. Community is often an afterthought; working together is not as prized as going it alone.

But for Benedictines the heart of our way of life is community and perhaps nowhere is this expressed more clearly than in our practice of prayer. In our monastery we gather morning and evening to celebrate the divine office, the ancient prayer practice of psalms, hymns, readings and blessings.

Common prayer is truly a practice. We practice day after day, month after month, year after year. We practice because we hope that through the long work of years we will no longer be a collection of individuals who happen to be praying at the same time and place, but we will become one body at prayer. Through the unity of our prayer we express our unity as a community, a small manifestation of the greater Body of Christ. In praying together each of us has to put the needs of the whole community first. The best singers have to make sure they are not standing out and trying too hard to lead the rest of us. Those of us who are not natural singers have to try hard to listen and blend in as well as we can. All of us have to learn to be patient and forgiving with those who are not only musically impaired but also rather loud and oblivious about their impairment.

Even when we sing and pray in unison our minds may be busy wool gathering in complex and unique fantasies.

All aspects of prayer encourage us to become one heart, one mind. We all strive to come to chapel when the bell rings, dropping what we are doing and making the common prayer a priority. We come and sit in silence, becoming present to what will happen. When the clock chimes we rise as one and the leader lights the candle to signal the beginning of prayer. We bow in unison at certain points and remain seated for a while even after prayer is finished.

Most of the unity in prayer is external. Even when we sing and pray in unison our minds may be busy wool gathering in complex and unique fantasies. But the discipline slowly, gradually and with great effort leads to transformation. Through practice, through daily, small exercises of becoming one community in prayer we are slowly transformed.

In prayer and in the rest of community life we grow into the reality that we are not simply isolated individuals who happen to live with others but through the course of our life together we are transformed into a community, into one body knit together in Christ, struggling to love as we have been first loved by God. ✕

Volunteer Voice: Daniel Kaufman

"I really like this prayerful rhythm that ingrains itself into the very fabric of the day. The Office is even more intentional than praying based on when you eat or go to bed. You're saying 'I intend to set aside three times a day exclusively for prayer' rather than 'I plan on eating and, oh yeah, I'll pray beforehand.' There's never a sense of getting to the end of the day and thinking that I need to catch up on prayer because



prayer has been the day's very framework."
— Daniel Kaufman,
Monastery Volunteer,
Spokane, WA

SPIRIT CENTER RETREATS

FARMHOUSE REFURBISHED

With its grand view of the Camas Prairie and quiet location, the Monastery farmhouse is becoming known as a great place for group retreats. Groups up to 16 can find a haven to deepen connections while being enveloped in the Monastery atmosphere.



Spirit Center team members Mary Schmidt, Sister Gerry Marie Smith, Sister Lillian Englert, Sister Bernadette Stang and Sister Katie Cooper get in the spirit for the fix-up.



The Spirit Center team is excited about the completion of upgrades that began with the renovation of the stairs. The once narrow and slippery stairwell has been widened and freshly carpeted. The basement also features new carpet and window shades. There are handmade quilts throughout the farmhouse and a circle of new rocking chairs in the living room for engaging sessions of group work. Future plans include refurbishing the bathrooms and a new covered entry and porch to provide safety and assistance with people who have difficulty with steps.

Groups in the past have included church women's retreats, knitting and quilting intensives, and youth groups. Some groups have been coming for over 20 years, finding the farmhouse a cozy and cost-effective place to gather. There are 14 beds, 3 bathrooms and a full kitchen. Retreatants may eat with sisters in the Monastery dining room or fix their own food. "The Monastery makes us feel so welcome time after time when we retreat there," says Vivian Parrish who has been coming to the farmhouse with her prayer group since 1988.

For more information about holding your group retreat at the farmhouse, contact Spirit Center at 208-962-2000. ✕

Retreatants bring home the art of iconography

Last summer at Spirit Center, Father Damian Higgins led a week-long retreat on the art of iconography. By the end of the week, each person had completed a 7" by 10" icon of St. Michael the archangel. One might think that a second endeavor of writing an icon would result in an artwork of a similar size. But not for Sarah Connolly (left) and Linda Moore (right), two of the retreat participants who returned to their Boise homes to initiate icons that would tower over them at nearly eight feet tall.

After the retreat, Sarah began reading all the books she could find on icons. When she discovered the 12th century *Annunciation of Ustyug* from Russia, she felt immediately inspired and presented the idea of creating them to the September meeting of her Liturgical Environment Group at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in southeast Boise. "We wondered if it would be possible to get it done by Advent," Sarah recalls. "But Linda just said: 'If we don't finish it, we don't finish it. Let's give it a try.'"

Jane Woychick, also a member of the liturgical group, offered two old barn-style garage doors from her 1913 house. "It was an answer to go ahead," says Sarah. "Together, they were very near the size of the original *Ustyug* icon panel."

"We were so blessed with support," adds Linda. "We could tell the Holy Spirit was guiding us." They decided to use all the traditional methods they learned at the retreat. "We layered just like we learned from Father Damian: from dark to light."

The icons were finished by Advent, blessed at Mass and placed into the altar niches. "One thing that helped is that we told our families right away so we wouldn't give up," says Sarah. "They were rooting for us. All their prayers made the difference." ✕



Read expanded story at www.StGertrudes.org

MEET A MONASTIC

The rooms in Spirit Center are named for famous monastics. Each issue of *Canticle* will feature a profile of one of them.

Julian of Norwich, an English mystic, is often referred to as a “spiritual optimist.” Her faith deepened when she became deathly ill and experienced visions of Christ. She later wrote these down in “Revelations of Divine Love,” the first book written in English by a woman. She soulfully believed that no matter the circumstances, we are always held in the divine frame of God’s creation. The solution to everything, she taught, was the rediscovery of the transcendent love of God who holds no wrath, only absolute love and mercy as humans gain hard-won self-knowledge from their errors. Her most famous line, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” sums up her beliefs and is a handy prayer when the going gets tough. ✕

Find books on Julian of Norwich by visiting the Book Blog at the online bookshop at www.StGertrudesGifts.org.



THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY-BUILDING TO END POVERTY

The Center for Community-Building to End Poverty (CCBEP) was launched in 2008 through a partnership between University of Idaho Extension, Community Action Partnership (CAP) and the Monastery of St. Gertrude Spirit Center. CCBEP addresses the impact of poverty on people and communities and provides transformational education and training, creates and models best practices, and engages community leaders in strategies to end poverty.

In the last two years, 1,200 people participated in sixteen poverty simulations. Over 700 individuals completed the “Bridges Out of Poverty” seminars in thirteen Northwest communities. Both of these programs help change the perceptions, knowledge and understanding of community members in regard to the issue of poverty.

In addition the Center is working with a variety of partners to create and implement a “Pipeline to End Poverty” demonstration project in the Lewiston, Idaho area. Our future goal is to pilot a similar project in a rural community. The organization is also engaged in a “Bridge the Gap from Poverty to Resources” school collaboration project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since education is a major pathway out of poverty, the goal is to increase retention of low-income students at Walla Walla Community College and provide professional development for faculty and staff. This spring the “Bridge the Gap” project will also be offered at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston through funding provided by the Albertson’s Foundation.

Another initiative is creating and piloting a “Leadership to Make a Difference Institute” to teach core leadership skills to individuals wanting to address poverty in their own communities. For more information email Mary Schmidt at mschmidt@stgertrudes.org. ✕



Participants from the Leadership to Make a Difference Institute held earlier this year at Spirit Center.

Upcoming Retreats
at Spirit Center



Register online at
www.Spirit-Center.org

Jan. 27- Feb. 3, Come to the Quiet

Feb. 17-24, Centering Prayer

**March 2-4, Holy Darkness:
Let Justice & Peace Embrace**

March 16-18, Celtic Spirituality

**March 20-22, Creative Expressions
from the Earth**

April 20-22, God’s Earth, Our Home

April 24-26, Losses of Our Lives

May 4-6, Tea with the Mystics

May 8-10, Immanence and Art

June 22-29, Come to the Quiet

208-962-2000
retreats@stgertrudes.org

“A tradition of welcoming
people of ALL beliefs.”

BORN INTO ETERNAL LIFE...

April 4, 1920 – October 16, 2011

SISTER AELRED OAKLEY, OSB

Dancing into the arms of God

Sister Mary Aelred Oakley is at home with God, now able to dance freely and to her heart's content as her beloved Irish music fills heaven. She was born into eternal life at 9:30 p.m. on October 16 at the age of 91. She entered this life on April 10, 1920 and grew up in an Irish neighborhood in London, England where she attended St. Joseph's school and excelled in religion classes. She also began attending the Church of the Most Precious Blood with a friend. In 1932 she received First Communion and was confirmed in the Catholic faith.



In 1949 she moved to Canada to be with her sister who had married a Canadian during World War II. She was introduced to the Monastery by her local priest and eventually entered in 1965 at the age of 45. A few years later she completed her AA degree at the College of St. Gertrude. She made her First Monastic Profession on August 7, 1967.

Sister Aelred's broad range of ministries included work as secretary, librarian, caregiver and domestic. She provided administrative support for St. Gertrude's College and Academy, Prioress Regina O'Connell, and the parishes of Sacred Heart in Boise and Saints Peter and Paul in Grangeville. Later she served as a home helper and babysitter. At the Monastery, she helped with clerical work, cleaning, and food preparation and preservation.

Sister Aelred enjoyed reading, art, visiting, knitting and especially dancing. She danced for the residents at Grangeville's Senior Center and Clarkston Seniors' annual talent show. She also attended Irish dances and the Scottish Highland Games. She treasured time with family and trips she took with them to places such as Alaska, England, California and Hawaii. Among many other things, she will be remembered for her dry wit and inimitable British accent. ✕



Sister Aelred dancing.

April 4, 1918 – October 20, 2011

SISTER JOSEPHINE VINCKE, OSB

Reflecting the unsurpassed warmth of the Mother of God

Sister Josephine Vincke was born into eternal life at 2:15 p.m. on October 19 at the age of 93. Sister Josie (Katherine) entered this life on April 4, 1918, the fifth child of ten born to Frank and Katherine Vincke. When her parents died within two years of each other in her early teens, she went to live as a boarder in the Benedictine Convent of St. Scholastica in Louisiana. To assuage her grief, she memorized poetry and Bible verses, sowing the early seeds of a contemplative life and an ability to move through difficult times with wisdom and beauty.



She was professed at St. Scholastica's in 1932. Sister Josie was a natural in the classroom and taught grade school for the next four decades, mostly in Louisiana. She earned her

B.S. in Education from St. Mary's Dominican College in 1949.



The late Sister Wilma and Sister Josie at Lake Kookanusa.

In 1988 the Benedictine community in Louisiana had to close its doors and Sister Josie chose to come to St. Gertrude's in Cottonwood. On August

12, 1988 she began her process of transfer and was fully incorporated into the Monastery in 1990.

Sister Josie will be remembered for her very gentle soul. In her deep grace and compassion she had a way of connecting with people and making them feel special. Those who knew her also knew that she faced significant challenges in her life and saw how she was able to be with others who also faced suffering. Numerous students remember her as a deeply nurturing and accepting teacher. One former student wrote, "No grade school, high school, college, or graduate school teacher was as important to me as Sister Josephine... her heart and soul reflected the unsurpassed warmth of the Mother of God and the saving grace of the Holy Spirit." ✕

December 16, 1911 - October 22, 2011

SISTER MERCEDES MARTZEN, OSB

Serving Christ, Serving Others

Sister Mercedes Martzen was born into eternal life on Saturday, October 22 at 7:35 p.m. She was 99 years old. Clara Lucille Martzen entered this life December 16, 1911 in Idaho to parents who had immigrated to the Camas Prairie from Luxembourg. The second of four girls, she was strongly influenced by her mother's faith and enjoyed helping with the family farm. She became Sister Mercedes when she made her First Monastic Profession at St. Gertrude's in 1933.



Immediately after Final Monastic Profession Sister Mercedes was trained as a nurse and specialized in labor and delivery. She worked at all the Sisters' hospitals: St. Valentine's in Wendell, St. Benedict's in Jerome, and St. Mary's in Cottonwood. Between 1957 and 1971 Sister Mercedes helped with 258 deliveries at St. Mary's Hospital.

After 1971, she began focusing on home care for the elderly. She was also active in promoting the Hospital Guild and the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. One of the most dynamic times of her life was when the religious community embraced the changes of Vatican II. "These changes have done something in our lives, made us a more vital people and a more vital community."



Sister Mercedes enjoyed embroidery work, attending senior citizen meetings, and a good game of pinochle. She also treasured trips she took to Luxembourg, Rome and Switzerland. The focus of her final years was deepening her prayer life. "All through my life God has worked

in strange and surprising ways. All we need to do is leave it in his hands, let him work within us," she said. "We can really serve Christ by serving others with our God-given talents." ✕

RETURNING TO THE EARTH

In our PHILOSOPHY OF LAND USE we recognize the deep bond that exists between us and this piece of earth where we live. Its beauty and abundance provide us with inspiration and nourishment all of our lives. We profess that "this interconnectedness is ultimately realized at the time of death when our bodies return to the earth." We wanted our funeral practices to reflect this understanding and so we looked into the possibility of constructing our own coffins of wood that would not leave materials like concrete and metal in the earth. Wood is an organic substance that will decompose and return nutrients to the soil. This also allows the body to return to the earth from whence it came.

Our maintenance personnel, Sandy Enneking and John Remacle (below), accepted the challenge and now construct wooden coffins that are both simple and attractive. The coffins are left unvarnished so we will not contaminate the soil with unnecessary chemicals. If you attended a funeral at the Monastery recently you have probably noticed that the sister was being buried in one of these homemade coffins. Laying her to rest in a handcrafted coffin that reflects the simplicity of Benedictine life is our final gift of love. ✕



Circus of Faith

A squirrel scampers through a circle of trees,
chattering vociferously
as branches give way.
Balancing precariously, she flies
between earth and sky.

Does she catch a glimpse of the hawk
circling majestically
above her?

Does she long for the wonder
of being held
on the wings of the wind?

Or is she content
with the daily challenge
in her trapeze
act of faith?



by Sister Lillian Englert

Published in *Benedictines*, Fall/Winter 2011

GRATITUDE FOR OUR GRANTS

By Dr. Catherine Feher, Grants Director



Our foundation and grants supporters have helped make 2011 a remarkable year. The Water Resource Initiative is complete thanks to the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, the



The waterline from Cottonwood Butte was replaced this fall thanks to your support.

AVISTA Foundation, the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation and the greater community. Morris Arnzen and Arnzen Construction must also be commended for their hard work on the waterline replacement.

Profound gratitude goes to the Idaho Humanities Council for their continued support of museum programs. The council also gave the museum a grant to create new interactive, interpretive displays. Thank

you to the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for their support of the upcoming Cooper's Ferry Paleo-Indian exhibit and to the Idaho Arts Commission for their support of projects at Spirit Center.

Gratitude abounds for the special corporate sponsors of the 2011 Raspberry Festival: Arnzen Construction, St. Mary's Hospital and our regional AVISTA office and Business Manager Mike Tatko. The Sisters would not be able to fulfill their missions without such gracious support. "Millegrazie," as the Italians say: "a million thanks." ❖



Creativity abounds at the Monastery! From embroidered tablecloths to knitted baptismal gowns and hand-scrolled wood art, our sisters, oblates and volunteers provoke continual amazement with their gifts. You can shop for these handcrafts and more at www.StGertrudesGifts.org. ❖

art · i · FACT: Stories from the Collection

Tonsillectomy Chair, 1920

This apparatus was used by pioneer prairie physician Dr. Wesley F. Orr to perform tonsillectomy surgeries. It has an adjustable back and headrest. Dr. Orr moved the chair from his office to our local hospital when it opened in 1931. Patients sat in the chair and were given a local anesthetic for the surgery. After the removal, they walked down the hall to the recovery room. Many sisters had their tonsils out in this chair including Sister Bernie Ternes, Sister Agnes Reichlin and Sister Bernard Lieser (shown in picture). Last summer, a young guest who had just had her tonsils out visited the Museum and declared that seeing the chair deepened her appreciation for modern medicine. ❖



Did you know?

The Monastery has been a checkpoint for the National Weather Service for over 50 years? Everyday, Sister Placida Wemhoff (right) records temperature, snowfall and rainfall. Results are sent monthly to regional headquarters in Missoula, Montana as well as weekly to our local newspaper, the Cottonwood Chronicle. Sister Placida also reports on unusual weather events such as torrential rains and wind and snow storms. The job is part of her role as Monastery Maintenance Manager that she began in 1993. It has allowed her to observe larger weather trends: "We had an average of 24 inches of rain per year until seven years ago and then it declined significantly, but with just over 21 inches in 2011, we are moving back up." ❖



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