**2013 Theme:** "Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:5

This issue: Peace

#### A MESSAGE FROM PRIORESS SISTER CLARISSA GOECKNER:

"Inner peace is won

when we repeatedly

show mercy towards

ourselves, forgiving

ourselves, and loving

begin to accept God's

gift of peace, we begin

to radiate peace and

~John Dear, "Living Peace"

love to others."

ourselves..... As we

"Behold I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

The New Year gives us a clean slate, a new page and a fresh start. This invites us to make a resolution to better ourselves in some tangible way; it also presents an exciting opportunity to partner with God in bringing a bit of freshness to the world.

Peace is one of the deep longings in our world today. News of war, fighting, and violence never ends. We have sung about peace throughout this Christmas season, and many Christmas seasons before that, praying and longing that it might be a

reality. What stands between us and peace seems insurmountable — much more than one person could address. Our challenge is where to begin.

Brazil's former Archbishop Dom Helder Camara, the great advocate of the poor, while giving a talk in Berkeley, was asked this question: "You have faced death squads, would-beassassins, corporations oppressing the poor, violent government opposition and even hostile forces within your own church. Who is your most difficult opponent?" Dom Helder waved his arm around in the air and it finally ended up pointing to himself as he said: "Here is my most difficult adversary. Here I have the greatest struggle for peace!"

We must begin with ourselves. The author, John Dear, in his book "Living Peace" writes: Inner peace is won when we repeatedly show mercy to ourselves, forgive ourselves, befriend ourselves, love ourselves and accept God's gift of peace. As we learn to accept ourselves and accept God's gift... we begin to radiate peace and love to others. From this stance we can commit ourselves to peacemaking words and actions that transform our homes, communities, and beyond.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, reminds us that Jesus is our peace and He shows us the way to inner peace as well as the way to be peace in the situations that surround us. Jesus saw people with the eyes of compassion rather than judgment; he saw the strengths of each person rather than their weaknesses; and he emphasized the blessings of diversity not the threats. Jesus was inclusive.

Paul expresses the same invitation but in different words: we are

to see one another as friends, fellow citizens, all one body, belonging to one household. (Ephesians 2:19) He says that God has destroyed barriers and the dividing wall of hostility. If

we seek to live a life of peace, then we must learn to love everyone, even our enemies. Mother Teresa says: "If we have no peace, it is because we have ourselves, befriending forgotten we belong to each other."



Benedict realized the importance of peace and founded monastic communities within his war-torn world to address the violence he encountered. Hugh Feiss, OSB, in his book "Monastic Wisdom" writes: Benedict saw monasticism as a many-sided effort to achieve peace: within the individual monk, between monks, between the monastery and the

surrounding communities, and the whole church and society. "Benedictinism," says Sister Joan Chittister, "simply sets out to gentle a universe riddled with violence by being a peaceful voice for peace...."

To make this happen, Benedict insists that all in the monastery are to be received as Christ. Since failures are inevitable, he said our day must never end without reciting the Prayer of Jesus for all to hear, therefore healing, cementing, and erasing the pain and struggle of community life, of family life, of global life where we all live together at one another's expense. (Joan Chittister)

Continued on Page 7...

## SISTER STORY

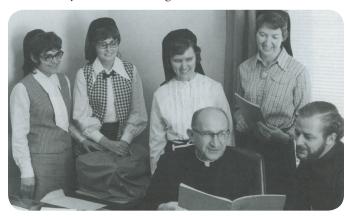
#### SISTER CORINNE FORSMAN

In her nearly 56 years as a Benedictine Sister, Sister Corinne Forsman has served as elementary school teacher; pastoral and retreat minister; vocation director; assistant prioress; mission director at St. Mary's and Clearwater Valley hospitals in Cottonwood and Orofino, Idaho; and now, innkeeper of the Inn at St. Gertrude. Rilke's poetry helps her reflect on her ministries, the momentum of living, and weaving the patterns of life together. "Themes circle through life," she says.

Sister Corinne witnessed the Council of Renewal (Vatican II, 1962-1965) and the great theological changes it inspired in the Church, individuals, and monastic community. "Vatican II told us to go back to our monastic roots and so we did," explains Sister Corinne. "We embraced our identity as Benedictine monastics and asked ourselves what could that mean? It means we work, live, and pray together. Praying together is our primary ministry."

These were her favorite ministry years. After twelve years of teaching elementary school, she began work at the Catholic Education Office in Boise during the implementation years of the Council. The mission was to work with the many catechists throughout the diocese of Boise in the area of the theology of Vatican II and its effects on catechesis and methodology.

"There was such a searching spirit with people, such hope, and such a sense of God's spirit infusing the Church with new life and vigor. The Church indeed was 'shaking loose the barnacles and opening the windows' that kept parts of it stale and rigid." In the summers, Sister Corinne attended the Seattle University Master of Religious Education program, learning from some of the best theologians in the country. "What grand stepping stones in my life!" exclaims Sister Corinne. "This education gave me such a clarity in understanding the world, the Church and life!"



Catholic Education Office, 1972: Sister Corinne (second from left) with Sisters Bernadette Stang, Gertrude Wemhoff, Beth Mulvaney, Bishop Sylvester Treinan, Father Bill Wassmuth.

"She who reconciles the ill-matched threads of her life, and weaves them gratefully into a single cloth."

~Rainier Maria Rilke, "Book of Hours: Love Poems to God"



During these renewal years, Sister Corinne experienced many of her close friends leaving religious life for a multitude of reasons. She worked hard at giving herself permission to leave if need be and in so doing, found "the freedom to stay, the desire to re-choose monastic life at every change."

Born Mary Kay Forsman in 1938 to Frank and Gertrude Sprute Forsman on the Camas Prairie, Sister Corinne became inspired to enter religious life after seeing a movie about a missionary in China. She entered the Monastery in 1955 when she was 17 and made First Profession two years later.

Sister Corinne was influenced by several generations of Sisters before her; some had taught her in elementary school. By 1985 she began to serve the community as assistant prioress and became keenly aware of how the generations shift onward. "I learned so much in caring for the Sisters in the infirmary. Sisters Celestine and Ildephonse were teachers of mine and I was able to be present for them while they died. I saw how God often calls people in their dying process to continue to touch lives and be ministers in a new way. Sisters Cyrilla and James taught me similar lessons."

She was inspired by her parish work in Clarkston, Walla Walla, and Jerome. "I ministered to people of all ages when they were at crucial times in their lives. There is a bond that happens that never goes away," she says. "As innkeeper, I know parish work helped me a lot in being able to meet the public and share healing hospitality. I often get to encounter former students and others I ministered to years ago."

Another role that stays with her is vocation director. "Once a vocation director, always a vocation director," she laughs as she describes how she is always keeping an eye toward new members. "I love my monastic community and am very proud of it. I see us very much as frontier women. I love how we live out the liturgical life. We are a stable group with a rich tradition and history. Because of that strong foundation we are also a community that is moving forward. We continue learning how to listen to God's voice to change and grow into the future."



#### BEHOLDING SOMETHING NEW

What is the "new thing" that is happening in monastic life? It is easy to get caught in an expectation that the future will either look like the past or that it will magically appear one day, completely new and readymade. But the writer of Revelation hints that the new is happening now. If we learn to look with new eyes we can see amazing new things here at the Monastery. The membership ministry is inviting people to become Benedictine in new and creative ways.

Benedictine life has survived for over 1,500 years because it is rooted in people's deepest desire to live a life centered on



God and to share God's love with the world. In our own history, we were founded as a missionary community to provide education and health care to German immigrants. For over 130 years women have entered St. Gertrude's and responded to the needs of the times, ministering in education, health care, social services, pastoral care, and many other areas.

But perhaps it is time to embrace the promise of Revelation: "See I am making all things new." This is a profound promise of hope if we are willing to face our fears and embrace the challenge of the future. In this simultaneously profound and frightening promise is the reality of membership in these days. Like all but a very few religious communities in the country, we are not experiencing large numbers of young women who decide to make a lifetime commitment as we have in the past. And yet something new and amazing is happening. Perhaps the Prophet Isaiah's words are appropriate: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19).

We are experiencing larger numbers of people who want to connect with monastic life. Last year we had 12 women participate in the Monastic Immersion Experience, 25 people as live-in volunteers, staying for a few days or several months, and 10 artists who came for our first ever artist residency program. We have a strong community of

68 oblates who commit to living Benedictine spirituality in their lives. We have a new postulant and several women discerning vocations.

These people demonstrate a new reality of monastic life. The Monastery



reminds everyone of the opportunity to live a life with God at the center, a life of meaning, a life grounded in love. There is a hunger for precisely the vision of life that Benedict articulated 1,500 years ago. The membership ministry (vocations, volunteers, and oblates) is working to provide ways for all sorts of people to connect to monastic life and become Benedictine in new ways.

Indeed, a "new thing" is being born in our midst. The need we respond to today is to share the depth of our faith, our spirituality and our way of life with the many people who yearn for more. Our spirituality has always driven our ministries, whether education, health care, pastoral work and so many other things. Today our ministry is our spirituality, sharing our life, inviting people to our Benedictine way of being. "Behold, I make all things new." ■



Above: Immersion participant Sarah Teetsel, Volunteers Frank Halter and Carla Robinson, and Immersion participants Karen Sherwin and Mariza Campos on a December trip to Coeur d'Alene to see the migrating Bald Eagles. Above, left: Volunteers Suzanne St. Pierre and Tom Weber plant perennials at the Inn. Above, right: Immersion participant Miracle Ryder.

## SPIRIT CENTER RETREATS



#### EXPERIENCE RENEWAL WITH A PERSONAL RETREAT

When the noise of your life leaves you feeling threadbare and worn, unable to discern God's voice and too distracted to care for your inner self, making space for the rest, time alone and deep silence of a personal retreat at Spirit Center can rejuvenate your body and spirit.



The peace of the Monastery invites quiet reflection and the daily rhythm of prayer provides the framework on which a restorative personal retreat can be built. For many retreatants, praying with the Sisters in the chapel is a highlight of their stay and nothing beats the oldfashioned, nourishing meals enjoyed with the community.

Among the options for building your restorative personal retreat is meeting with a **spiritual director**. Although time alone is inherent to a personal retreat, time spent with one of our in-house spiritual directors can help you to spend your days with mindful intention.

Whether you have one session or several, **Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy** (BCST), under the hands of Sister Cynthia Schultz in the Healing Center is an opportunity

for profound inner healing and renewal. According to Sister Cynthia, recipients often find themselves in a rare state of deep relaxation. For information or to schedule a session, contact her at 208-962-5085, info@cynthiaschultzbcst.com or visit her website at CynthiaSchultzBCST.com.

Your personal retreat may also include an afternoon spent in either the **Monastery library** or the small retreat library at Spirit Center, where you'll find books to enhance your retreat experience. A walk up the gravel road into the solitude of the **Monastery forest** is certain to awaken your senses and leave you with a unique sense of grounded stillness.

Settle in at Spirit Center's **creativity space** and allow yourself to explore the relationship between spirituality

and creativity. You will find art supplies with which to experiment and realize new modes of expression. Perhaps, through art, you'll discover a new form of prayer to expand your daily spiritual practice.

A personal retreat can help you find the silence and space needed to nurture your inner life. Make time to experience renewal at Spirit Center this year!



## Take in the view. Take your time.

For your next retreat, consider the bus! Have someone else drive while you take in the scenery. Some people have found that riding the bus is not only a less stressful way to travel in winter, but more peaceful and economical at all times of the year. The Cottonwood area is served by Northwestern Trailways and we are happy to transport you from the bus stop and back. Find affordable rates and purchase tickets at NorthwesternTrailways.com.

Retreatants coming from a distance often extend their stays by a day or two, making the experience "worth the trip." While one person might choose to come a day early to pray and prepare himself to go into retreat, another might elect to stay a day afterwards, in order to process her experience before returning to daily life. A night's stay at Spirit Center is \$85 donation, which includes meals. Ask about the opportunities to come early and stay late when you register for your next retreat. Call us at 208-962-2000 to learn more and/or schedule to be picked up.

## CARE OF THE LAND

#### MEET A MYSTIC

The rooms in Spirit Center are named for famous mystics and monastics. Each issue of Canticle features one of them.

St. Brigid emerged in fifth century Ireland as a gifted leader with a special calling for bringing people together in Christ. During this time, the Roman diocesan system was unknown in the Celtic world and monasteries were the center of Christian life. Brigid established many religious communities that also became centers of learning



and the arts. It is said that the most beautiful illuminated manuscript ever to exist, the Book of Kildare, was created under Brigid's leadership at the monastery she founded there. She is often depicted with a lamp that is a symbol of how she illuminated the world by inspiring peaceful, stable communities in which could thrive the development of education and creative adoration of the divine. 

•

Note: Spirit Center will host a retreat on Celtic spirituality in 2014.

# Upcoming at Spirit Center 208-962-2000 Spirit-Center.org

March 19-21 ~ If Thine Eye Be Single: Finding Focus on the Creative Path With Theresa Henson.

March 18-22 ~ Everyday Monk: An Invitation to the Monastic World With Sr. Teresa Jackson.

April 16-18 ~ An Artistic Journey with the Passion of the Earth With the Spirituality Ministry Team.

April 23-25 ~ Losses of our Lives With Nancy Copeland-Payton.

April 30-May 2 ~ Coming Into Wholeness: The Inward Journey of Life's Second Half With Nancy Copeland-Payton.

May 10-12 ~ Standing on Their Shoulders: Making a Difference in Your World With Sr. Katie Cooper.

May 17-23 ~ Centering Prayer Intensive

May 17-19 ~ The Power of One in the World Community With Sr. Carol Ann Wassmuth.

June 14-21 ~ Come to the Quiet Silent, individually directed retreat.

#### FARMHOUSE SOLAR

"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)." - Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses

Sister Placida Wemhoff and Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth, both involved in caretaking Monastery land, celebrated 50 years of monastic Profession in 2010. In lieu of gifts, they asked that their Jubilees be celebrated with contributions to the Monastery's fund for alternative energy.

The fund reflects a community vision to make the Monastery ever more earth-friendly. Significant steps toward this goal have already taken place: Spirit Center was built with solar panels and earth-friendly materials; the community has implemented a rigorous recycling program; and fundraising is underway to convert Spirit Center to geothermal heating.

Now another dream is realized: Thanks to the Jubilee gifts, solar panels were installed at the Farmhouse (a retreat space) last September. Since October the panels have generated approximately 500 kilowatts of electricity and prevented over 700 pounds of carbon from entering the atmosphere. Thermal panels were also installed to heat water.

"It's exciting," says Sister Placida. "Forty years ago I would never have imagined this. Twenty years ago we began to dream about it. This gets us closer to eventually having solar panels installed on the main building itself."

A feasibility study showed that installing solar would be initially expensive and wouldn't show cost savings for twenty years. "But it is already paying us back," explains Sister Placida. "We have smaller electric bills and alignment with our values. However, the point is not to get our investment back. The point is to save the environment."



## MILESTONES

#### SISTER KATIE COOPER

**Final Monastic Profession** 



"If you had told me 13 years ago that I would be a Benedictine Sister, I would have said you were kidding," grins Sister Katie, who made her Final Monastic Profession on December 1.

Sister Katie grew up on a Christmas tree farm in Pennsylvania. She was baptized Methodist but as she grew was greatly influenced by her mother's love and

Catholic faith. "The first time I ever went into a Catholic Church," she recalls, "I could feel that God was present there in a unique way."

A mother and grandmother, she first came to St. Gertrude's on a "Come and See Weekend" in February of 2000. "For some reason, I felt like I was at home. I knew I was on holy ground. Every time I'd come back for a different retreat the Sacred Heart would be saying, 'Follow me, follow me.'"

When she began to better understand Benedictine spirituality, she realized that this was how she had been trying to live her life all along. She became an Oblate in 2004 and says that even now, "I'm never tired of praying morning and evening prayer. There is always a new message there from Christ."

Sister Katie is a certified spiritual director and welcomes guests to Spirit Center. "All of us are laborers in God's harvest," she says. "We need to take care of one another and the earth. We do this together and I want to be part of that. God's call gives us the wisdom, the power, and the grace to be peace and to bring peace to our world." ■



Sister Katie Cooper (fifth from left) with family members that attended her December 1 Final Monastic Profession.

#### SISTER AGNES REICHLIN

A "Legend of Nursing"

The March of Dimes Chapter of Idaho named Sister Agnes Reichlin a "Legend of Nursing" at the "Nurse of the Year" Awards Celebration event at Boise Centre on October 27. The annual event celebrates nurses and retired nurses who have made a positive and meaningful impact on their patients and communities.

In addition to hospital work, Sister Agnes has spent years teaching and serving on hospital and community boards.



Twice she was appointed to the Idaho Board of Nursing. Now she teaches classes on herbs, tonics, and salves for Lewis Clark State College. She also directs the Monastery infirmary and is Director of Formation. She lives by Benedict's rule, "care of the sick must rank above all else."

While Sister Agnes has seen a lot of changes in medicine she is very clear about what hasn't changed. "What remains consistent is the caring and compassion for people who are suffering and trying to maintain their health," she said. "My advice to young nurses is to continue in the Profession because it is truly worthwhile. As you work in the science of nursing, don't forget to hold onto the art and heart of nursing." \*

#### SISTER ELISA MARTINEZ

St. Michael's Guardian Angel Award

On September 29 (Feast of St. Michael) Sister Elisa Martinez received the St. Michael's Guardian Angel Award from St. Michael's Parish in Los Angeles. The Award celebrates her transforming work with at-risk youth.



Father Stan Bosch, who leads the parish and works alongside Sister Elisa at Soledad Enrichment Agency said, "Sister Elisa is a very deliberate and public peacemaker, a woman of great leadership who is present all over the city working with intervention counselors, interns, and others to change lives in the midst of gang wars. From a profound interior compassion she can be tough on the exterior in order to motivate and inspire people to better life choices and become leaders by example for each other." &

## PEACE & JUSTICE

#### **WORKING TOGETHER**

by Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth, Peace & Justice and Care of the Land Committees



In our strategic plan of 2008 we set as our first goal "... to intentionally manifest Benedictine spirituality in the world." Practicing and promoting justice is an essential element of that endeavor. By joining our voices and resources with other organizations that share similar values, we can be more effective in this work for justice in our world. When we met as a community in November we agreed to apply for membership in the recently organized Northwest Coalition for Human Rights (NWCHR).

The mission of the NWCHR is "to facilitate communication and collaboration among groups and individuals addressing human rights for the purpose of promoting human dignity, inclusion and equal justice". Members of this organization share a common belief that all persons are created equal and that the dignity and worth of each human being is inviolable. These are values that we find clearly expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict where it states that everyone is to be treated with respect — the young, the old, the infirm, the stranger.

As a member organization of NWCHR we will participate in educational opportunities and collaborative actions that promote equal justice for everyone particularly those living in the Northwest. We are inspired and strengthened by others who are passionate in their efforts to oppose discrimination in all its manifestations. Members of NWCHR will include human rights committees, educational entities, law enforcement and governmental agencies as well as faith groups. Our vision statement invites us to be open to the Spirit however that is presented to us. "Prayer awakens, justice impels, compassion acts. Thy Kingdom Come." ■

# **NORTHWEST COALITION** for Human Rights





### POETRY

#### NIGHT SONG by Sister Evangela Bossert

The snow spray fans breathing drifts, Spreading white mist wings, Fluttering and dropping again Upon the desolate prairie. Midnight aches for light; Rushing wind feels against its face The warm press of my body, Bending toward sunrise.



The owl chants solemn tones of time; Frosted willows bow in grace Before conifer spires along the road. And I, knowing little of the night, Hear no sigh of longing in the owl and feel no deep desire in the willow.

But when the wind brushes snow against my face And rises then to fold me in its cold embrace, I must sing the wonder of the night.

#### Message from the Prioress, Continued from Page 1

The sun must not set upon angers or hatreds of the heart because of the great danger that these might take root and grow. Daily praying the Prayer of Jesus reminds us of our need to forgive and to be forgiven. It reminds us of our call to be at peace within ourselves and among our brothers and sisters.

To practice this, we steadfastly must choose peace rather than unforgiveness and chaos day after day after day. There is a song in the stage play "South Pacific" that says: "You have to be carefully taught to hate." What if we would make it our priority to learn, live, and carefully teach the ways of peace? Perhaps the evening news would be different!

This is challenging work. Peacemakers of our time, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., demonstrate that it is not a task for the faint hearted, but an achievement of the strong and the courageous. Paul assures us though, that we are not alone in this effort. It is God's power at work in us that will help us give the gift of peace. (Ephesians 2:8)

The New Year provides us the opportunity to ask ourselves: Where do I need to find peace within myself? Where do I need to forgive myself? Where can I bring peace by recognizing someone as a sister or brother? Who needs my compassion today? May a whole new journey begin in each of our lives as we embrace compassion and peacemaking as a way of life. ▶

## ABOUT US

#### art · i · FACT: Stories from the Collection

One of our goals for the Historical Museum is to share the stories of people who have helped define our region of North Central Idaho. This includes our founding Sisters and many others. Below is a brief overview of some beloved "Idaho characters." At the Museum, you will find artifacts from their lives and books that will help you learn more about what made these people heroic.

Polly Bemis (1853-1933) was sold by her father to Chinese brigands who, in turn, sold her to a Chinese company that shipped people to the United States. She eventually ended up in the mining camp of Warren, Idaho. Her story after arriving in Idaho is one of tragedy,



endurance, and love. "Idaho County's Most Romantic Character: Polly Bemis" and "Idaho Chinese Lore," both written by Sister Alfreda Elsensohn, chronicle Polly's life.

Sylvan "Buckskin Bill" Hart (1906-1980) arrived on the Salmon River in 1932 during the Depression and lived there until his death. His story is one of survival in the harsh environment of the Salmon River canyon. He raised his own food, built his own home, and created



unique items to survive in the wilderness. The Museum has a large collection of Buckskin Bill's handmade artifacts including utensils, rifles, knives, and buckskin bags.

Frances Wisner (1913-1986) arrived in Idaho in 1940. She lived and worked with her husband at Campbell's Ferry, and in 1945 began writing a weekly column for the Idaho County Free Press. For over 40 years, she shared her experiences and observations along the river. She



used the column to advocate for issues which she believed in, including the prohibition of air spotting (hunting from aircraft) and radio-detected hunting as well as promoting the eventual placement of the Campbell's Ferry Bridge. She was a true pioneer ecologist who composted garden waste, hiked miles of remote trails, protected wildlife, and tread lightly on the soil long before these ideas were popular. •

**Upcoming!** The Monastery and Museum founder Sister Alfreda Elsensohn will be featured in the exhibit "Essential Idaho: 150 Things that Make the Gem State Unique" that opens at the State Historical Museum on March 4. Learn more at www.history.idaho.gov/essential-idaho-exhibit.

#### WE ARE A COMMUNITY...



...committed to prayer and bringing about the Kingdom of God. For over 1,500 years Benedictines have lived lives of prayer and service to the world. For over 130 years, our community has lived this legacy of continual prayer, service, and community life and seeks to pass it on. We move into the future knowing that

our presence, our ministry, our faith, and our prayer witness to the transforming power of a way of life centered on God.

#### **Participate**

Using early Christian communities as our model, we live out the values of praying together, living together, sharing all things in common, and serving the wider community and one another. There are many ways you are invited to particpate:



- **★ Attend** prayer, Mass, or one of our Spirituality and the Arts concert events
- **Come away** to Spirit Center for a retreat
- **Visit** the Historical Museum of St. Gertrude and learn about our region's history
- **Experience** Benedictine hospitality at our bed and breakfast, the Inn at St. Gertrude
- **Schedule** an appointment at the Healing Center
- Find monastic-made crafts and sacramental gifts at the Book & Gift Shop
- **▼ Live** in the Monastery as a volunteer or Monastic Immersion participant
- **▼ Learn** about becoming a Sister or Oblate.

For more information, go to www.StGertrudes.org

We hope you are enjoying our color Canticles! Thanks to an anonymous printing donation, we are now able to print in color for the same cost as black and white. We are so grateful for the opportunity to share our life with you in this way.

