

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

2015 Theme:
Celebrating the
Year of Consecrated Life

This issue:
Commitment

LIVING FOR A MIGHTY PURPOSE

A Message from Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner

Commitment gets mixed reviews these days. There are those who see commitment as limiting possibilities and closing down options; others agree that commitment does indeed limit options but it also helps individuals to live with greater direction, focus and purpose. I love how George Bernard Shaw says it: "This is the true joy of life: being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one." Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life has given me the opportunity to reflect on the many ways in which those who live religious commitments find that "mighty purpose," limit their options, and use up their lives making meaningful contributions to the world.

Our community story is built upon such commitments. The nuns of Engelberg, Switzerland, our foremothers, were founded in approximately 1119 A.D. and flourished in spirit and number. By 1345, with the profession of 90 novices, membership was well over two hundred! Then many trials hit the community: the Black Plague swept through the nuns' cloister claiming the lives of one hundred and fifteen sisters; war brought the nuns to great poverty; on June 16, 1449, a fire ravaged their buildings, furniture and equipment. They lacked resources to rebuild and wondered what the future would hold for them.

The civil authorities of Sarnen, Switzerland offered to build the sisters a new home if they agreed to teach the girls of the parish. Seven sisters, deeply committed to a future for their community, accepted this invitation and arrived in Sarnen late at night on February 18, 1615. Through their commitment to continue their life together, four hundred years of prayer have reached beyond their alpine cloister walls to embrace the needs of the world! Think of it! Four hundred years of prayer and service because of the commitment of seven sisters!

The story continues as three sisters from that Sarnen community, Sisters Johanna Zumstein, Rosalia Rubli, and Magdalene Sutter brought a daughter house into existence in the United States in 1882. When the sisters arrived in Gervais, Oregon their living quarters were not

ready so they took shelter upstairs in the former Matt's Saloon, which was home for them for four months. From here the sisters settled in Uniontown, then Colton, and finally made their way to Cottonwood, Idaho, in April of 1909. Through the determined commitment of Mother Hildegard Vogler, and the sisters who accompanied her, for 106 years prayers have gone out from this monastery hilltop and their ministries of education, healthcare and Benedictine spirituality continue to embrace the needs of the people. Though in different form now, present ministries continue to address the needs of our times.



I am blessed to live among so many who search for that mighty purpose through which to give their lives; I also admiringly remember the commitments of those who have died. I can think of many but will only mention Sister Mary Kay Henry. Many were blessed to experience her exceptional gifts as teacher, religious educator, motivator, and director of our development office. Her last mighty purpose in life made the community's dream of Spirit Center come true. For three years she concentrated on completing our capital campaign while undergoing the harshest chemotherapy available to stop the cancer which eventually took her life. Today Spirit Center continues to offer a serene environment for retreatants to relax, renew, and rejuvenate their spiritual lives. This number has grown to nearly 3,000 people a year and it continues to grow. The work of Spirit Center supports people in their spiritual growth that in turn is shared with the wider world.



The commitments that you have made to us and our ministries over the years help us to continue our work. Your prayers give us strength, your friendship gives us joy, your words of encouragement bolster us up in the hard times, and your generosity keeps us moving ahead. Thank you! ✕

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 MEG SASS: HOW COMMUNITY EMPOWERS COMMITMENT

"Monastic life has taught me how to pray," says Sister Meg. "In particular Sister Josepha, who was challenged by being both blind and deaf, taught me to pray for perseverance, to pray that I stay faithful. I want a relationship with God and I really believe doing it with a group of people whose emphasis is on prayer is the best way to do that."

Sister Meg began her journey with the St. Gertrude's community over fifty years ago. Raised in Twin Falls, a rapid succession of events in her teens led her to recognize her call although her parents gave her the freedom to explore religious life at her own pace. "It was their levelheadedness that helped me both discern and live my vocation," says Sister Meg.

After entering, she completed her junior and senior year of high school and started college as a novice. Then she finished her Bachelor's degree at Gonzaga University and University of Idaho. In 1962, she made her First Monastic Profession. She taught school for 13 years before heading to Chicago's Loyola University for a Master in Pastoral Studies. "Chicago was a wonderful time," she remembers. "I got to experience all the different cultures and had my first entrée into social organization."

Back in Idaho, Sister Meg found herself working with an ecumenical team of ministers in Lewiston that were focused on improving care of the elderly. Soon she became the head of Parish Social Ministry for the Diocese of Spokane. She helped found an outreach services center called Our Place in 1987 that is still serving the community to this day.



Sister Meg (third from right) at the celebration Mass of her Golden Jubilee in 2012.

After 13 years in Spokane, Sister Meg was called home to the Monastery to be assistant prioress to Sister Jean Lalande. This term of leadership saw the building of Spirit Center that now serves nearly 3,000 people a year. "Like everyone else in the world, even the Monastery is challenged to walk in uncertainty. But you make the commitment and whatever the future brings, God is already there," she explains.



From 2006 until 2014, Sister Meg served at the Boise diocesan center as Regional Coordinator for Parish Life and Faith Formation, working with the northern part of the state from Riggins to Canada. She recently moved home to the Monastery where she is taking an active role in liturgy, especially in playing the organ for Mass and prayer.

"It is a real transition," she explains. "But there is more time for Lectio and it is easier to stay involved with community. My life has been very focused on direct ministry. Now I am noticing new things about living in community. The threads of our daily commitments weave together. We all do our parts, and when you are bogged down other people pick up the pieces. Some people are especially faithful to prayer. There are other people you can count on to start a conversation when you are tired. We have people active in social justice and other programs that make us an effective community. Commitment isn't possible without other people."

Sister Meg has pondered how a monastic community in rural Idaho can change the world. "There are so many problems in the world we can't even imagine," she says. "Many people don't even have a cup of water. The Monastery says maybe we can't fix these problems, but can keep our commitments to prayer and we can pray. We can tap into the power of God for whom nothing is impossible."

"I wake up every morning and make the commitment to what God is asking, I promise to listen and then to say yes. There is such a power in commitment. I know people are afraid of commitment but that what you commit yourself to will carry you and hold you — and what you commit yourself to is God." ✕

COMMUNITY

PRIORESS SISTER MARY FORMAN

Sister Mary Forman is the 14th prioress of the Monastery of St. Gertrude and will be formally installed on June 13th, 2015, at 1:30 p.m. All are welcome to celebrate with us. She replaces Sister Clarissa Goeckner, who served as prioress for ten years, serving an initial term of six years and then a second term of four years.



Sister Clarissa said, “Good leadership activates the imagination of the community to find new possibilities, wider vision and renewed commitment. Sister Mary’s energy and passion for the Benedictine way of life will certainly activate our imaginations to find these new possibilities, wider vision and inspire us to a renewed commitment to prayer, justice and peacemaking. Sister Mary’s leadership is so right for us at this time.”

Sister Mary grew up in Boise, Idaho, where she was employed as a pharmacist after graduating from Idaho State University in 1970. Before entering the Monastery in 1973, and afterward, she continued her work as a pharmacist. She also taught release time classes and served in various parishes as a youth minister, pastoral associate, DRE and as retreat minister at the Monastery.

Sister Mary’s interest in monastic studies has guided much of her work, beginning with teaching Latin at the Center for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. She was a counselor for the Federation of St. Gertrude and the past president and board member of the American Benedictine Academy.

She has been an Associate Professor in Monastic Studies at the School of Theology, Saint John’s University, and has also taught at the College of St. Benedict. “I see this time as a grace-filled opportunity for the community for us to deepen our Benedictine charism and the unfolding of our vision and mission. I trust that the support and prayers of our employees, oblates and partners in ministry will carry us forward.” ✕

Experience Monastic Life With Us

Upcoming session dates: June 17 - July 15, 2015, August 1 - 29, 2015, Long-term option is September 2015 – June 2016. General and caregiver options.

To apply, email membership@stgertrudes.org

GOLDEN JUBILEES

This summer we will celebrate the Golden Jubilees of Sister Barbara Ann Bielenberg, Sister Margie Schmidt, and Sister Elisa Martinez on July 25 at 1:30 p.m. in the chapel.

Sister Barbara Ann is the Director of Mission Integration at St. Mary’s Hospital and Clearwater Valley Hospital where she is able to integrate her 42 years of nursing with coordinating spiritual care in a hospital setting. Sister Margie Schmidt is the Director of Pastoral Care at St. Joseph’s Regional Medical Center in Lewiston where she visits patients and families regularly, leads prayer services, visits hospice patients in their homes, co-chairs the ethics committee, coordinates local minister visits and teaches community workshops on the dying process. Sister Elisa Martinez is engaged with Soledad Enrichment Agency (SEA) in Los Angeles, whose mission is to provide high-risk youth and their families with alternatives to gangs, drugs and violence. Her transformational work with youth and the surrounding community has earned her the Heart of Gold Award and the St. Michael’s Parish Guardian Angel Award. ✕



Golden Jubilarians: Barbara Ann Bielenberg, Sister Margie Schmidt, and Sister Elisa Martinez. Please join us in celebrating a combined 150 years of powerful ministry from Idaho and Washington to Los Angeles and beyond.

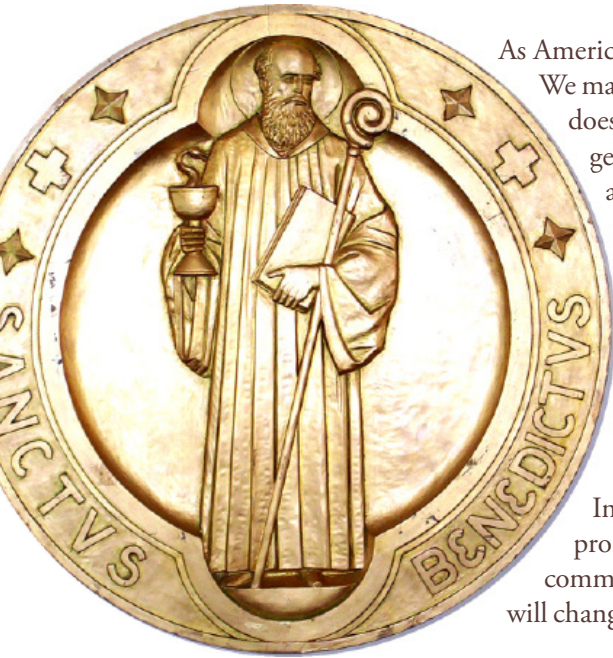
NEW OBLATES

On April 12, at the conclusion of the spring oblate retreat, Mary Curtis of the Spokane area group, Becky Stanton of the Boise area group, and Linda Whitely of Puget Sound area group made their oblations at morning prayer. We are overjoyed at the richness of our growing community. ✕





COMMITMENT THE BENEDICTINE WAY



As Americans we are always on the move. We go away to school. We frequently change jobs. We may change churches and political parties. Staying in one place, literally or figuratively, does not seem to be part of our makeup. Whether it is because we desire change, we get bored, want new challenges, get frustrated, for whatever reason we tend to be always moving on.

In some ways this is fine but the problem is that when we don't like how things are going we immediately think of moving or changing. Frustrated with how things are going on the job? Change jobs! The relationship with our spouse or our friends isn't what it once was? Get divorced or find new friends! Our church or political party has changed and we don't agree with what they are saying? Leave the church or the party!

In this culture of constant change Benedictines point to another way. One of the promises that we make at our Monastic Profession is "stability." This means that we commit to be part of this particular community, this monastery, for the rest of our lives. We will change, the community will change, the world will change but we say that we won't leave.

Making this promise is probably a lot like marriage vows. At the time you make them it doesn't seem like it could be that hard. But of course the insidious challenge comes years down the line. We don't live in the same community we enter. We change, everyone else changes, the world changes around us. Our enthusiasm may fade, our understanding of this way of life might change radically. We begin to see the limitations, the brokenness, the pettiness of a group of people trying to live together and frequently failing to be their best selves.

But the real issue is what do we do with these struggles, this disillusionment? To be a Benedictine means to stay and work it through. This is stability. Stability means doing the hard inner work of refusing to leave when things are not what I expected or hoped for. Stability is a source of deep humility when I recognize that my desire for something different, my anger or frustration stems from my own limitations as much or more than anyone else's. Stability also forces me to realize that I cannot be self-sufficient, I need the support of others. The journey is about us. We are in this journey together and cannot venture off on our own.

We live in a society that encourages us to think that we don't really need to do the hard work of transformation. But Benedict knew that the spiritual journey is one that happens when we go ever deeper in the same place. By making the public promise to stay with our commitments, to stay within what may feel like the confines of our lives and limitations, only then will we really face our problems which are usually staring back at us in the mirror. In stability we don't take the easy way out, we stay and face our need for grace. Through stability we come to embrace our limitations which are the source of our need for God. ✠

Sister Teresa leads the upcoming cohort program, Living as a Monk in Everyday Life, that explores how the Benedictine monastic life can be lived by ordinary people seeking God in their everyday lives. The program begins with a directed retreat, followed by nine months of intensive remote instruction and a concluding retreat. Initial retreat: August 21-28. Learn more and register at www.Spirit-Center.org.

Other Upcoming Retreats at Spirit Center

Gardening of the Soul: Holistic Living, July 17-19

Introduction to Centering Prayer, August 14-16

208-962-2000, www.Spirit-Center.org

Herbal Wisdom for Today, August 20-23

**The Sacred Art of Traditional Iconography,
August 31 - September 4**

MEET A MYSTIC

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



St. Walburga came from an aristocratic family in England that also turned out to be a family of saints. Her father was St. Richard the Pilgrim, her brothers Saints Winibald and Willibald, and her uncle St. Boniface, the evangelist to what is now Germany. Educated by the nuns of Wimborne Abbey, she was literate and able to write the life story of her brother

Winibald and an account of his travels to Palestine. She is sometimes referred to as the first female author of both England and Germany. With courage and commitment to her purpose, she joined Boniface and her brothers as missionaries to the Frankish Empire and eventually became abbess at a monastery there. On the voyage to the continent a storm arose and Walburga knelt on the deck to pray. The storm ceased. For this reason, she is invoked as a special patroness for facing storms. ✕

A COHORT FOR EMBRACING THE ARTISTIC CALL

There are two cohort programs at Spirit Center. One is *Living as a Monk in Everyday Life* (see left page) and the other is *Embracing the Artistic Call*, a new type of retreat program aimed at those who want to grow in their creativity, in a community. Together, artists explore new media and take on the adventurous work of creating more committed creative lives. The inquiry process has already begun for next year's program. To learn more and inquire, visit www.Spirit-Center.org. ✕



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With our bed & breakfast, we offer the beauty and peace of our monastery for your renewal. Enjoy Benedictine hospitality this summer!

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Be
still
and know...

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clients at the Healing Center at
St. Gertrude and in Moscow, Idaho.**

Cynthia Schultz, RN, BCST, APP



Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapist

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BORN INTO ETERNAL LIFE...

IN MEMORIAM: SISTER BERNICE WESSELS April 14, 1933 ~ April 8, 2015

"A life in God is a life of adventure and discovery."

Sister Bernice Wessels was born into eternal life on Wednesday, April 8, 2015, at her home, the Monastery of St. Gertrude. She leaves an inspiring, spiritual, and intrepid legacy as a teacher, parish administrator, missionary, canon lawyer, and community member.

She was born in Greencreek on April 14, 1933, and knew by the time she was in first grade that she wanted to be a sister. She made her First Profession at the age of 18 on August 20, 1951. "This seemed to be the place God wanted me to be and I've been very happy," she said.

She graduated from St. Martin's in Lacey, Washington, in 1965, with a B.A. in education and a minor in Spanish. She spent two decades teaching elementary school and then was sent to Cali, Colombia, to work in a parish founded by the Diocese of Boise. She spent three years as head of the religion program, conducting her ministry in Spanish.

She returned to Idaho and was appointed by Bishop Sylvester Treinan as administrator of St. Anne's in Arco and St. Barbara's in Mackay. She was the first woman to serve in this capacity in the United States. She also served as administrator at St. Catherine's in Hagerman and St.



Anthony's in Wendell. Then, at the age of 60, Sister Bernice was sent to St. Thomas Aquinas University (otherwise known as the Angelicum) in Rome to study canon law, completing her studies in Italian. After achieving her Licentiate in Canon Law (J.C.L.), she served in the diocesan tribunal in Boise for four years as a canon lawyer processing annulment requests. She eventually returned to pastoral work in Caldwell, her favorite, which included visiting homes, teaching children, and teaching literacy classes for Mexican women.

She left pastoral work in 1999 and after a respite, worked for 10 years at the Historical Museum of St. Gertrude as a museum technician. In 2011, she became the Monastery librarian.

Sister Bernice held that a life in God is a life of adventure and discovery, as her journey through religious life attests. She had a very strong sense of justice and passion for people being treated fairly. She was a courageous woman who ventured into new endeavors that stretched her immensely and she did so with great faith and a sense of mission. The Mass of Christian Burial was on Tuesday, April 14. Memorial gifts in Sister Bernice's honor can be made to the Monastery. ✕

SPIRITUALITY AND THE ARTS AT ST. GERTRUDE *Save the date!*



The Gonzaga University Concert Choir, directed by the innovative and charismatic Timothy Westerhaus, will return for their annual performance on **Sunday, September 13 at 1:30 p.m.** They will also provide music for 10:30 a.m. Mass that day. All are welcome and the concert is free. You will experience a wide range of sacred and secular music by this robust 60+ person choir, in the acclaimed acoustic setting of our chapel. It is an experience not to be missed!

The Book & Gift Shop of the MONASTERY OF ST. GERTRUDE



Sacramental Gifts • Fair Trade Chocolate, Tea, and Coffee • Nature's Gifts Herbal Products • Spirituality Books Including Sister Authors • and more! • Visit us at the Welcome Center or www.StGertrudesGifts.org

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER



in the forefront of this effort to be a voice for those marginalized by society.

In our scriptures we read accounts of prophets who risked everything to speak the unwelcome truth to those in power. This prophetic role is as important today as it was in the day of Jeremiah or John the Baptist. Members of Catholic religious communities have often been

Responding to the call of Vatican Council II and the U.S. Bishops to seek “Justice In the World”, women religious joined forces in 1971 to shape a new ministry of justice. They determined to form a national “network” to lobby for federal policies and legislation that promote economic and social justice.

For over four decades, this organization, appropriately named NETWORK, has been active and visible in speaking out on national issues such as healthcare, immigration, women’s rights, poverty and peacemaking. NETWORK has become an articulate and well respected lobbying force on Capitol Hill.

In the summer of 2012, NETWORK organized the famous “Nuns on the Bus” tour, during which Catholic sisters traveled through nine states to protest the proposed cuts to federal safety-net spending. In 2013 they hit the road again to draw attention to the need for immigration reform.

The Monastery of St. Gertrude is a member community of NETWORK, supporting their goals and using their resources as we strive to live out our commitment to promote justice in our world. ✕



Nuns on the Bus and friends campaigning for justice.

A HISTORY OF PLACE



When the first Benedictine sisters arrived in Idaho they were told by the local people that if they wanted to survive in this country, they needed to own land. Our pioneer sisters took this advice seriously and immediately set about acquiring parcels of land. Before they even moved to Cottonwood they purchased 80 acres of farmland and 80 acres of timber land which they added to the 85 acres of pasture land given them by John Uhlenkott.

None of these original parcels provided a suitable site for the construction of a monastery building and so the sisters negotiated with Joe and Anna Ungrund for their farmhouse and 11 acres of land. This opened the way for the community to move to Cottonwood in 1906. Two years later the land which became the convent’s cemetery was also purchased.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as more nearby pieces of property came up for sale, the sisters continued purchasing parcels of land. In 1924, the community of monks living on Cottonwood Butte disbanded and returned to Missouri. The sisters decided to buy the buildings and landholdings of St. Michael’s Priory primarily for the water from the springs located there. A pipe line was installed that carried the water to St. Gertrude’s Convent and until the 1980s this was the primary source of water for the Benedictine sisters. The land was also used for cattle grazing. In subsequent years, more acreages on the Butte were acquired and today this property provides an income to the Monastery through timber sales.

Our history as a Benedictine community is closely entwined with the land. In various ways the sisters have interacted with, enjoyed and profited from the land. In 1993 we composed a statement which articulated that deep connection as well as our commitment to be responsible stewards of that section of earth that we call home. This document entitled Philosophy of Land Use may be found on our website at www.stgertrudes.org/careoftheland.html. ✕

MUSEUM

art·i·FACT: Collection of Commitment



In reflecting upon this issue's theme of commitment, we remember the people whose commitment has made our Historical Museum possible. Sister Alfreda's lifelong commitment as a Benedictine sister gave us a museum filled with artifacts that tell the story

of the Monastery and this area. This was her "mighty purpose" through which she joyfully used her energy interviewing, researching, writing, collecting artifacts and founding the museum which had its humble beginnings in the old convent attic. Today the museum has 70,000 artifacts with 12,000 on display and is visited by over 2,500 annually. In 1977 Sister Catherine Manderfeld (pictured above) retired from teaching high school and became Sister Alfreda Elsensohn's fulltime assistant. Sister Catherine's stewardship even included tending the flowers in the beds outside. In 1999 Sister Catherine and the sisters of St. Gertrude were awarded Idaho's first ever Esto Perpetua Award for outstanding accomplishments in preserving Idaho's heritage. The Museum also reflects the commitment of many other sisters, employees, and volunteers.

Learn more at www.HistoricalMuseumatStGertrude.org

Raspberry Festival!

Sunday, August 2, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Join us for our annual Museum benefit featuring fun activities for the whole family!

• pancake breakfast • grilled hamburgers
raspberry shortcake and jam • arts & crafts
live music • Kids' Carnival • Quilt Show
Car Show • Fun Run & Walk • chapel tours
Museum visits and more

Visit www.MyRaspberryFestival.org!

ABOUT US

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.

You are welcome here.

With 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 participate:



- ✧ **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 at 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, visit 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.



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