

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



mercy
for the
earth

A Message from Prioress Sister Mary Forman

Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* reminds us that while humans are made in the image of God, every creature serves God's purpose and the whole of the universe speaks of God's love. The Pope goes on to say that certain places carry the meaning of our relationship with God, such that going back to them in our memory "is a chance to recover something of their true selves." Thus, in exploring "the sacredness of the world, [we] explore [our] own."*

Growing up in Boise, Idaho, it was possible from my home on the bench to see the Boise foothills and the Owyhees; the sight of them reminded me of the opening verses of Psalm 121: "I look to the mountains, from whence comes my help; my help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Even to this day, when sitting outside the monastery eating my breakfast, I can look on the Gospel mountains and the same verse comes to mind; it is a deep reminder of the God who made the mountains and all that lives there and is the source of my help, awe and wonder. When travelling back to Idaho from Minnesota, where I was teaching for many years, as soon as the car was climbing the mountains of Montana across Lolo Pass into Idaho and I could smell the fresh air and the scent of the pines, I knew that I was home.

How different was the experience for my mother, who came from the East coast and for whom the sound of the Atlantic waves was a reminder

of home and the awesomeness of an unfathomable God, who was as faithful as the sea's vast presence.

A friend of mine, who grew up on the flat prairies of North Dakota once stated that the very vastness of the plains, with its waving grasses and sounds of crickets and meadow-larks brought her a sense of home, the God who cared for each little creature and provided the grain and seeds for a wide variety of prairie grasses. The sighting of the first prairie crocus was a sign of Christ's resurrection for her; the seemingly overlooked silver casing, bursting open with its delicate purple flower turning its face to the sun, spoke to her of the hope of new life.

While it is inspiring to draw into ourselves a sense of the divine from our reflection and experience of the earth, its creatures and beauties, eco-theologian Thomas Berry reminds Christians in particular that we too quickly move from "the merely physical order of things to the divine presence in things," when he writes: "Even our sense of divine immanence tends to draw us away from the sacred dimension of the earth in itself. This is not exactly the divine presence... it is also important that we develop a sense of the reality and nobility of the natural world in itself... The natural world is not simply object, not simply a usable thing, ... to be manipulated



Continued on page 7...

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 story

Sister Margie Schmidt

Each year Sister Margie Schmidt gives away hundreds of plants from her pastoral care office at St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston. She has rooted and planted each one herself and has christened them the "Pastoral Care Prayer Plants." They aren't exactly free, though; each person who takes a plant must promise to pray for someone in need of healing.

Sister Margie's crop results in a harvest of prayers, a natural approach for someone raised on a Greencreek farm on the Camas Prairie. In fact being a farmer's daughter has influenced much of her pastoral ministry. "There is something about the work ethic," she says. "For a farmer, the land comes first. For me, the needs of the people come first. If I need to stay later, I do...like a farmer does. This, to me, is the Gospel."

What do patients need the most? "To be comforted," says Sister Margie, "to be reassured that they will be cared for, their wishes respected, their beliefs honored." As director of pastoral care, Sister Margie visits patients and families regularly, oversees a team of chaplains, leads televised 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. She is an academy certified chaplain and a licensed professional counselor. "I love it. It's hard work... good work. If you do your job well, you are drained at the end of the day. I've learned to rejuvenate in a hurry."

Sister Margie is particularly excited about the hospital's growing initiative on palliative care that began in 2008. She was a part of the original team of five that began the initiative. "It's adding an extra layer of support to patients and their families when they are faced with a life-limiting illness," she says. "It's about really considering patients and their needs, and spending time with the family to explain options and treatment possibilities."

Sister Margie has presented on palliative care at the Idaho Healthcare Conference in Boise and experiences the rapid changes in healthcare as both positive and sometimes challenging to keep pace with. "Everything I have done in my life has led up to this. To me it is such an honor to be able to be present to people — which is mostly what my work is about. I don't find it a burden. I find it a great privilege. Each person touches my life in some way."

She is able to serve at St. Joseph's along with Sister Kim Marie Jordan, who is a social worker. "We may not see each other often, but I feel a lot of support with her there. Our values and approach to ministry are similar."



Sister Margie transitioned to hospital work from parish life ten years ago. She served as St. Stanislaus' parish life director for five years after serving seven years as the pastoral associate. Before that she worked in the parish in Emmett as youth and family minister for six years and in Payette as pastoral associate for nine years. The change was initially difficult. "These are short-term relationships. At the parish when somebody died, I continued the relationship with the family. I don't do that here. That's somebody else's ministry now...I have to believe that someone else will follow through with them. It took me a long time to resolve that."

She also marvels at the diversity she experiences. "My community now is anybody, it's more ecumenical. I love being part of something so big, coming in each day and greeting my colleagues. And it's an honor when people accept me into their lives. They teach me so much."

Sister Margie also finds support from her monastic community. She entered St. Gertrude's right after high school and was professed in 1965 joining two aunts and her sister. Though at first she wasn't so sure about her vocation. "I hated it," she declares. "I was so homesick. But my friends rooted me there. Friendship is so important." She taught school for 12 years in Boise, Pocatello, Nampa and Grangeville. She went to Seattle University to get her Masters in Religious Education and began a career in parish ministry. She received a Masters in Counseling (M.Ed) from College of Idaho in Caldwell in 1993. "The community has always supported me in the ministries that have chosen me. I will always be grateful. I know because of their support and that of those who have gone before us, we can do great things. It's a profound responsibility." ✕

community



On Saturday, June 11, Sisters Rose Marie Nutsch and Esther Velasquez (with yellow roses) celebrated their Golden Jubilees (50 years) and Sister Sue Ellen Drexler (pink rose) celebrated her Silver Jubilee (25 years).



On Monday, July 11 — the Feast of St. Benedict — the community celebrated the jubilees of Sister Chanelle Schuler and Sister Jean Lalande (60 years) and Sister Valine Kachelmier (70 years).



This summer, two students from Whitworth University, Kaley Alness and Katie Waltar, participated in the Monastic Immersion Experience for ten weeks through the Ekklesia Fellowship program at their school.



"The Benedictine sisters have had a presence in the Magic Valley for over a hundred years. Without their vision and mission to serve Christ in all, we would not be here today." — St. Luke's Site Manager Curtis Meier at the Memorial Bridge Dedication on August 2 celebrating the sisters' influence in founding the hospital that is now St. Luke's Jerome Medical Center.

Warm up with Benedictine Hospitality...
inn at St. Gertrude
Reserve online at www.InnatStGertrude.com
or call 208-451-4321
Cottonwood, Idaho

STAY AT THE HISTORIC MONASTERY OF ST. GERTRUDE



Sixteen Benedictine oblates and directors from four communities gathered at Spirit Center August 26-28 for the 5th biannual gathering of the Northwest Region of the North American Association of Benedictine Oblate Directors (NAABOD).

spirit center

A Passion for the Earth

In the twelve years since its commissioning by the sisters, the *Passion of the Earth* art and poetry installation at Spirit Center has inspired thousands of guests and retreatants, guiding them in a cosmology celebrating God's creativity despite the human capacity for destruction of the earth. The seven-part progression is a reckoning with human greed while affirming the enduring abundance of God and unfailing invitation to become expressions of hope and healing.

The project is a collaboration of art and text by Sister Teresa Jackson and artist Melanie Weidner, a Quaker. Sister Teresa envisioned the project after encountering a community in Maine that had created a "cosmic walk" inspired by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme's *Story of Creation* as well as the Catholic Stations of the Cross.

"I thought it would be interesting to take those two ideas," says Sister Teresa, "the ideas of the story of creation as it is being told now and the idea of the passion of Christ and blend it into: What is the passion of the earth? What is the suffering of the earth as we misuse it? What is the passion of God in creating this beautiful gift that is our planet, our earth? Poetry and art have the power to help people think in completely new ways. My hope has been that in doing the project this way that it will open up new vistas, new ways of understanding and living that people may not have experienced otherwise."

Quaker artist Melanie Weidner illustrated the seven story parts, or stations, in fabric design. She began with sketches that incorporated the intended installation site in Spirit Center — which had not yet been built. Her creative journey included a devastating car accident in which the fabric for the art was recovered from the wreckage and she experienced more deeply the hope and recovery that can come from destruction.

"This is a transformative story, a justice-making story," says Melanie Weidner, "to speak up for the voice of the earth. This is where spirituality and prayer and the contemplative and art all come together. What we want to do is inspire people: that this planet, this whole story of 14 billion years is



all about dying and rebirthing and how can we be a part of the rebirthing?"

The piece expresses the sisters' values for caring for the land. Guests at Spirit Center experience environmental stewardship and a tenderness toward nature that supports transformation and growth. They are invited to return to their lives with deeper reverence for creation and devotion to the earth's care.

"The gift is our land and our community," says Sister Lillian Englert of the Spirituality Ministry team. "Retreatants that come here will be surrounded by the sensations of nature. We come to know God through nature. Nature gets us away from our littleness."

Sister Meg Sass, who coordinated the construction of Spirit Center adds, "That's what we wanted the new Spirit Center to say: this is going to be a place where things are changed, things are transformed. Transformation, as eager as we are for it, is hard and the strength to go through it comes from seeing other things and other people that go through it: mountains shaped by glaciers or a blade of grass that changes a little bit of rock into soil. Nature models and mirrors transformation."



Passion of the Earth creators Melanie Weidner and Sister Teresa Jackson.

"You're going to take care of what you love," says Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth, coordinator of the Monastery's Care of the Land committee. "That is such a strong part of being Benedictine. As Benedictines we make a solemn promise to be stable, stay put, not move somewhere else. We know we are a part of the whole ecosystem that happens here. We have a passion for the earth and the earth has a passion for us. It's a giving, mutual relationship."

Sister Mary Kay Henry (who passed away in 2010) led retreats in the new cosmology articulated by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. "We certainly see this whole *Passion of the Earth* project as going beyond the artwork and the text. We see it as the foundation for a much larger project that shares a new vision of spirituality and how we connect in our relationship with God and relationship with the earth. This new cosmology recognizes the ongoing development of the universe and it sees human beings as creatures of amazing beauty, profound powers, and awesome responsibility. When I look at the *Passion of the Earth* in Spirit Center I find myself drawn into a cosmology that rests on interdependence. It requires all the creatures bringing their best in order for this story that God has in mind to reveal itself, to unfold. We can always

make a new choice, and that right in the painful parts of the human experience is where God's abundance keeps coming. God doesn't go away — God keeps creating." ✕

The retreat, "The Passion of the Earth: A New Story of Creation," is coming up on April 28-30, 2017. Visit www.Spirit-Center.org to learn more and register. Reflection cards and DVD are also available online at www.StGertrudes.org.



Sister Mary Kay Henry with the *Passion of the Earth*.
Photo courtesy of the Lewiston Morning Tribune.

Meet a Mystic: Hadewijch of Antwerp

"...so powerfully am I touched by Love."

Hadewijch of Antwerp lived in the 1200's and was a member of the Beguines — a community of urban, lay religious women organized for charity and spiritual growth. She lived an intense love relationship with the Divine that she expressed through passionate poetry.

Her total surrender to love sent her through soaring joy and vision as well as sorrow and feelings of abandonment — bringing her to deep transformations and insights. She asks, "How, alas, can anyone / Remain old, fainthearted at Love's presence?" As a woman of passion, she came to understand that passion's greatest fulfillment was faithful service — in this way she encourages others "to live Christ."



choice to live and love with passion. They knew intimately a passionate God who freely and generously invited them to share in that passion. They responded affirmatively and call us to do the same. Passion involves a transformation in which service to others, healing, relief, comfort, hope and forgiveness take on a radically new character. The experience of passion wounds with the fire of love and opens the door to the utter fullness of humanity in God."

O soul, creatures
And noble image,
Risk the adventure!

Consider your law and your nature —
Which must always love —
And love the best good of love...
ever keep on to the end
In love.

~ Hadewijch of Antwerp

In her lecture on Hildegard of Bingen and Hadewijch,* scholar Elizabeth Dreyer concludes, "Hildegard and Hadewijch stand as reminders that we are not alone in our

*Dreyer, Elizabeth. *Passionate Women: Two Medieval Mystics*. 1989 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. Published by Paulist Press, New York.

born into eternal life

Sister Angela Uhlorn, OSB

July 19, 1935 — May 12, 2016

Bringing the gift of music...

Sister Angela Uhlorn, OSB, was born into eternal life on May 12, 2016. She will be

remembered for her service in education, music, and parish work and also for her sense of humor and love of God.



Sister Angela Uhlorn was born and raised on a Camas Prairie farm in an exceptionally musical family of twelve children. She played several instruments and was a vocalist. She made her First Monastic Profession on June 13, 1955 and continued her music lessons. Sister Angela began her first teaching job in Nampa. 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.

Sister Angela later entered parish work beginning with St. Mary's Parish in Boise and St. Jerome's in Jerome. Her focus remained on Spanish-speaking parishes where she could use the language skills she learned in Bogota. She came home in 2000 and participated in the community choir, filling the chapel with song. "Music has kept me renewed in my calling," she said. "I am proud and happy to bring the gift of music to so many people." She also worked in the Development Office as the alumni coordinator.

The funeral liturgy was held on May 20 at 1:30 p.m. ✕

Sister Lucy Keaney, OSB

September 11, 1924 — June 6, 2016

"I entered to do great things for the Lord and I learned that just living a religious life is a great thing."

Sister Lucy Keaney, OSB, was born into eternal life on June 6, 2016. She will be remembered for her excellence in nursing and faithfulness to religious life.



Sister Lucy was born on September 11, 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 on August 20, 1951, 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 said. 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. 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 in Portland, Oregon.

The funeral liturgy was held on June 17 at 1:30 p.m. ✕

Sister Louise Olberding, OSB

June 10, 1929 — September 10, 2016

I love you, God, and thanks for the good things you have done for me!

Sister Louise Olberding was born into eternal life on September 10, 2016. She will be remembered for her vivacious spirit and long ministries in education and healthcare.



Sister Louise was born in Nebraska on June 10, 1929. The family later moved to Emmett, Idaho. She wanted to be a nun from a young age and "lead people to Jesus." On her 17th birthday, despite resistance from her parents, she walked up the steep front steps of St. Gertrude's and entered the novitiate.

Sister Louise began teaching soon after her first monastic profession in 1949. She attended Gonzaga University and St. Louis University, earning degrees in medical technology and hospital administration. She ministered at nursing homes in Mt. Angel, Oregon. Later, at St. Vincent Hospital in Portland, she discovered her gift for pastoral care which she shared for 30 years with patients and staff.

In 2000, she retired to the Monastery. She offered a basic formula for deepening one's relationship with God: "Strike up a conversation with God regarding your concerns. Ask for his help. Learn to say, 'I love you, God, and thanks for the good things you have done for me!'"

The funeral liturgy was held on September 21 at 1:30 p.m. ✕

Memorial gifts can be made to the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

care of the land

by Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth

Throughout our history the Benedictine Sisters of Idaho have been involved in a wide variety of ministries. Many of the pioneer sisters served as teachers in schools. Then as the need arose they branched out into health care and pastoral work. This desire to serve others flows from living and praying together as community which is the primary ministry of Benedictines. Just as we have grown in our experience of prayer, so we have expanded our understanding of ministry.

The land purchased by the sisters when they settled in Cottonwood quickly became an integral part of our identity. This land provided stability and resources through the years and the sisters have always felt responsible for its care. But it was only in the early 1990's that we put into words what it meant to us to own land. This ultimately became a document entitled "Philosophy of Land Use." As we reflected on these convictions we gradually came to the realization that caring for this land was more than just something nice we did. It was indeed a ministry for which the total community was responsible to continue and, consequently, we officially voted to include care of the land as one of our corporate ministries.

When we are involved in ministry we use our resources and abilities to make a positive difference in the lives of others. People need clean water and air, nourishing food and quiet space. Caring for our land is one way we can help satisfy these needs. But there is another level to this ministry. Our planet itself is hurting and in need of healing. By loving and wisely managing these acres we can do our part to ease that pain. Yes, in the light of the total picture what we are able to contribute may seem insignificant but that does not excuse us from doing our part. The daily challenge is to remember we share this space with other living creatures as we carry out activities in our garden and orchard, the woods and pasture land.

In his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says it this way: "The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we [deny] the existence of others." Each day we pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Being faithful to our ministry of caring for the land is our response to that invocation. ✕

...continued from page 1

by the divine or exploited by the human...The natural world is the maternal source of our being as earthlings and the life-giving nourishment of our physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious existence. The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong...To damage this community is to diminish our own existence."**

It may well be that during this summer of record fires in the West, record flooding in the gulf states and record temperatures in the East of this country, to say nothing of the global elevation of seas, the diminishment of glaciers and the loss of islands to its creatures and peoples, that the earth is crying out for mercy from its global inhabitants. So, while I look to the mountains for help, I have to look to my own complicity in the global ecological crisis that is erupting all over our earth home. I begin my examination of consciousness with a litany of cries for mercy:

For the beauty of the earth marred and scarred by fires, Lord, have mercy.

For the power of the sea engulfing the homes of the poor, Lord, have mercy.

For the sun, whose glory shines too brightly through ozone-robbd skies, Lord, have mercy.

For the indigenous peoples of Nuatambu, who have lost their homes to the rising seas, Lord, have mercy.

For all the species endangered by encroaching habitat and hunts, Lord, have mercy.

For all the mountains that have been strip-mined, Lord, have mercy.

For all the peoples forced into slave labor to put food on our tables, Lord, have mercy.

For all ecologists, artists and musicians, who remind us that we all are a community of species, Lord, have mercy.

For all lovers of the earth to rise up in mutual care for our planet, Lord, have mercy. ✕

* Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015/Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015), §84, p. 41.

** Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Book Clubs, 1988) 81.

upcoming events

Historical Museum 17th Annual Lecture Series

These events provide insights into the history of our region and are held on Thursdays during the month of October with the support of the Idaho Humanities Council. Lectures begin at 7:00 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m. A Q&A session with the presenters follows the lectures. Light refreshments are provided. With the exception of the October 20 event, the events are held in the Johanna Room at Spirit Center. FREE

October 6, 2016 7:00 P.M.

Marc Entze: "Camas Prairie Railroad"

This presentation on how the Camas Prairie Railroad was able to outlast most other similar rail lines in the United States. Dr. Entze serves on the board of directors for the Union Pacific Historical Society and teaches history at Lewis-Clark State College.



October 13, 2016 7:00 P.M.

Ivar Nelson and Patricia Hart, "The CCC in Idaho: Building Our State/Supporting People in Hard Times"



Authors and scholars Ivar Nelson and Patricia Hart will explore how the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) brought vitality to Idaho's economy and society.

October 20, 2016 3:00 and 7:00 P.M.

Keith Petersen and Sr. Mary Marge Goeckner: "History of the Benedictine Sisters of Idaho" with special tour of the new Museum exhibit

Join former Idaho State Historian Keith Petersen and Assistant Prioress Sister Mary Marge Goeckner for a guided tour of the the sisters' story as depicted in the new Museum exhibit.



October 27, 2016 7:00 P.M.

Doug and Phyllis Tims: *Merciless Eden* -- A History of Campbell's Ferry Ranch

Campbell's Ferry Ranch residents Doug and Phyllis Tims have written *Merciless Eden*, a history of the homestead that includes the story of former resident and local character Frances Zaunmiller Wisner.



For more information:
208-962-2054 or
museum@stgertrudes.org

Spirit Center Retreats

Silence the Christmas Noise: An Advent retreat

December 1-18, 2016 *Private retreat options*

Set aside a few days for calm, quiet Advent preparation this year. Choose the retreat days that fit your schedule.
Suggested donation: \$85/night (includes meals)

Hearts on Fire: Medieval Mystics and Their Spirituality

January 6-8, 2017 *Facilitator: Prioress Sr. Mary Forman*

Deepen your prayer with this introduction to the mystics.
Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared

Come to the Quiet, January 27–February 3, 2017

Facilitators: Lillian Englert, OSB, and Spirituality Ministry team.
Relax in God's presence surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community.
Suggested donation: \$515/week, \$220/weekend only



Embracing the Artistic Call: A Cohort for Exploring the Mystery of Creative Experience, February 6-10, 2017 ~ initial retreat *Facilitators: Embracing the Artistic Call team.* A 14-week program for living a creative life with intention. Inquire online or call 208-962-2004.
Suggestion donation: \$765

The Sacred Art of Iconography, February 13-17, 2017
Facilitator: Fr. Damian Higgins Materials provided, no experience necessary. *Suggested donation: \$535 single*

Learn more and register online
at www.Spirit-Center.org
or call 208-962-2000.



Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy

Cynthia Schultz, RN, BCST, APP
Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapist
Associate Polarity Practitioner
office 208-962-5085 • cell 208-451-6797
www.CynthiaSchultzBCST.com
info@CynthiaSchultzBCST.com

Seeing retreatants, Inn guests,
and clients at the Healing Center
at St. Gertrude and in Moscow, Idaho.

