

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



Being Mercy

A Message from Prioress Sister Mary Forman

As I reflect on this Year of Mercy that **Pope Francis** has asked us to ponder, I have been asking friends and the sisters of my community, "Who is the most merciful person you have known?" Not surprisingly, the first person who comes to mind for many is **Mother Teresa** and her loving care of the street people of Calcutta, for whom she prayed that their last dying moments would be in the arms of someone who loved them. Other examples of mercy incarnate have been shared with me.

One such person who comes to mind is **Father Michael Lapsley**, an Anglican priest from South Africa. I met him when he gave a lecture to the students of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in fall 2012, entitled "Pain Knows No Boundaries: An Interfaith Journey of Healing and Hope." Father Michael had survived a letter bomb delivered to his home in Zimbabwe. He lost both hands and one eye and has gone on to found the National Institute of Healing of Memories in South Africa and elsewhere.



On April 27, 1991, in the Anglican Cathedral in Harare there was a Mass of thanksgiving celebrating the first anniversary of his survival. In his address he said, "The people who sent me the letter bomb are more victims than I am. The bomb has deepened my faith, my compassion, my wholeness, and my commitment to the cause of justice and liberation in South and Southern Africa."* Father Michael is no plastic saint, but a real human being, who has known incredible suffering and has allowed that suffering to be transformed into compassion and mercy toward his enemies.



One of my sisters told me that the example of mercy in the community for her is **Sister Wilma Schlangen, OSB**, who worked most of her life in the gardens and kitchen without fanfare or being in the limelight, yet she was beloved by so many, who had come to the Monastery for a kind word, for her raspberry

jam, or just to have her listen to their cares. Sister Wilma's mercy was heartfelt and she seemed to know who needed a kind word or an honest word that would push them to be better.



Another sister told me that Mother Regina was mercy personified for her. **Sister Regina O'Connell** served as prioress during the years of transition around Vatican II. When some sisters were questioning whether their vocation was truly of God or had been the vocation of a beloved parent or other relative, she would listen to their struggles and encourage them to do what was true for them, without a word of guilt or judgment. Her listening gave many the freedom to pursue lives of great value, of witness to faith and prayer, while undertaking another way to be Christian in the world.

A person who personified mercy and unconditional love was **Sister Petronilla Lieser**. She served as parish visitor and confidante to people at Orofino parish. She always had time to listen to troubles and pray on behalf of whomever came to her and her kindness was rewarded by their growing in their faith and service of the community.



Another example of mercy was Sister "Road Runner," as she was fondly called, that is, **Sister Herman Joseph**, famous for her little red wagon, which carried goodies and surprises for the men and women in the nursing homes and the homebound in Grangeville. No one was allowed to be lonely if Sister Herman came to visit and no doubt she heard many a "confession" as she listened to people's concerns and longings and then she prayed for them like Jesus would.

I heard an account of a mother who adopted ten children who were considered "unadoptable" for various reasons. One of the

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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 Elisa Martinez and the Culture of Belonging

Sister Elisa Martinez has spent the last thirty years working to provide high-risk youth and their families with alternatives to gangs, drugs and violence. Her work has taken her through dangerous streets, fractured homes, and recently, to El Salvador where she and her colleague Father Stan Bosch have been journeying with Catholic Charity Caritas staff to provide healing in the gang-afflicted country.

El Salvador's gang crisis emerged in the Salvadoran Civil War (1979-1992) in which half the country's population fled the violence, many to the Los Angeles area. Numerous youth, often seeking a stable community, became involved in gangs. When the gang members ran into the law and were deported, they established the gangs back in El Salvador. Now there are an estimated 25,000 gang members in the country.

"It has been a privilege to go there and journey with the community there," says Sister Elisa. "We have also visited a prison. Many women are serving a sentence of twenty, thirty, forty years and some of their families are in LA. I can only imagine how isolated they feel and alone."

Sister Elisa and Father Stan also co-direct a mental health program at Soledad Enrichment Agency (SEA) in Los Angeles that was founded by a group of mothers whose sons had been killed by gang violence. SEA's mission is to give at-risk youth an opportunity to succeed. Sister Elisa, who holds a Master of Social Work, is Directress of Programs and supervises nine social work interns from three local colleges — Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Long Beach, and University of Southern California — who provide therapy and case management across the SEA's many locations in the Los Angeles area.



Sister Elisa and youth at a SEA camp outing.

The internship helps train social workers to be effective in assisting in gang-afflicted communities. One intern wrote, "This internship provided me with insights I was not familiar with. For instance, I know that youth that are involved in gangs are not necessarily 'bad' or dangerous like society and the media portrays them to be. I learned that the students are very receptive and open to help. They just need someone to support them and journey with them along the way."



Sister Elisa first learned about SEA in 1975 while she was directing the Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Boise. She met a religious brother who was the director of SEA, then in its third year and he shared stories of the young people and families affected by the culture of violence and drugs in Los Angeles, and about SEA. Intrigued, Sister Elisa connected with the brother each time she visited her mother and sister in southern California. He took her to the neighborhoods and she began to know the people there. She was offered a job.

"When I came on board," said Sister Elisa, "I found that I had a lot to learn about the gang culture and the families who live in these neighborhoods." She began her work by visiting families during the day and going to the streets in the evenings. "I would go out and find a gathering of gang-involved youth and begin visiting with them," she said. At first, they were suspicious of her actions. "They looked at me like I was some kind of crazy woman or a narc." Despite their reluctance to accept her, Sister Elisa kept going back.

Her involvement with gang members has given her a deeper understanding of the conditions faced by those who live there. "I discovered mothers who were ashamed because the community criticized them for having a son or daughter affiliated with a gang." These mothers feel alone and trapped. Many of them raise their children alone and work long hours for less than minimum wage to pay rent and feed and clothe their families and the children. Their unsupervised youth are searching for love, family and respect "and they create it in the only way they know how — through their 'homies,'" she said.

For this reason, one of the goals of SEA is to work with parents to strengthen the family unit and build parenting skills

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Four New Oblates from Four Directions

On Sunday, April 3, four new oblates joined the St. Gertrude's community: **Judy Murray** of Olympia, Washington; **Esther Wheeler** of Nine Mile Falls, Washington; **Becky Bishop** of Stevensville, Montana; and **Angela Padley** of Eagle, Idaho. There are currently over 70 oblates of the Monastery of St. Gertrude engaged in nine area groups throughout the Pacific Northwest, from Puget Sound to Montana, and North Idaho to Boise.

Oblates are men and women, married or single, active in any Christian denomination, who closely associate themselves with the Monastery of St. Gertrude through an initiation process and formal oblation (promise). The four recent oblations took place in the chapel, in the presence of the sisters and other oblates, and celebrated several years of formation and discernment. Prioress Sister Mary Forman blessed the new oblates as well as oblates present who renew their oblations each year at this event.

Angela Padley, who is mother to a 10-year-old son and works as an analyst in the healthcare field, learned about the oblate program during a retreat at Spirit Center. She began attending meetings of the Boise oblate group and became a novice two years ago. "Benedictine spirituality holds all the principles of how I want to live my life" she says. "In our world it's easy to get lost in the chaos and accumulation of stuff. This spirituality has a grounding effect and guides in daily discernment. It is a current and constant flow you can tap into."

The oblate inquirers are companioned by mentors. Becky Bishop was mentored by Sister Bernadette Stang and Tamara Kittelson-Aldred, Judy Murray was mentored by Pat Thrasher and Peg Griffin, Esther Wheeler was mentored by Lyn Russell, and Angela Padley was mentored by Julie Ann Horras.

"The charism of St. Gertrude's just resonates for me. It is a life-giving spiritual foundation," says Judy Murray, who has two sons, two grandchildren, two daughters-in-law (and her brother is the mayor of Seattle). She became aware of the Benedictines when she attended a master's program in Counseling Psychology at St. Martin's University, in Lacey, Washington. Saint Martin's University was founded by the Benedictine Monks of Saint Martin's Abbey. The abbey is on the university campus and monks are professors and administrators. Here, Judy met Father Killian, who first showed her Benedictine spirituality by his example. St. Martin's also has a long history with the St.



The new oblates (left to right): Judy Murray, Esther Wheeler, Becky Bishop, and Angela Padley.

Gertrude's community, as many sisters used to work there. Judy is a part of the South Puget Sound oblate group. "They are a dynamite group of women — we just clicked."

The process of becoming an oblate at the Monastery of St. Gertrude is modeled after both the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and the process of initiation into the monastic community. The model draws from both traditions, each of which have elements of developing lived tradition, a wisdom source, shared prayer and outreach. These elements are developed in the three phases, outlined under the aspects of Community, Message, Worship, and Service. The three phases are: Inquirer (listen and observe), Novice (listen and learn), and Oblate (listen and live).

"The oblate community was the missing link in my spiritual growth," says Esther Wheeler. "God led me there because I was yearning for a deeper relationship with God." Esther, who has a Ph.D. in biochemistry and spent her career as a college professor, retired with her husband to the Spokane area so they could be closer to their grandchildren. She learned about the Spokane oblate group through Barbara Wodynski and began attending meetings and retreats at the Monastery. "The rhythm of peace at the Monastery spoke to me. In my relationship with God, before my oblation I was like a child clinging to the mother's skirt: 'I want more! I want more!' Now, being part of the oblate community, I have this experience of melding into God. I am swimming in this ocean of life." ✕

Learn more at www.StGertrudes.org

SPIRIT CENTER RETREATS



A Space for Mercy and Grace

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28



Susan Hardy-Gormsen knows that God loves her and is working in her life. She also knows that God led her to Spirit Center during a period when she desperately needed it.

Susan's husband of 34 years, Michael, died after five years of steady decline following a diagnosis of dementia and, finally, a stroke. During that time, Susan had to take over running their business in addition to being her husband's full-time caregiver. She was surprised to discover that she continued to have the strength to keep going and she knew that strength had to be coming from God. She also recognized the hand of God in the people who came into her life to offer support, counsel, and friendship.

After Michael died in the fall of 2011, Susan felt lost. "I was in such a dark place and didn't know how to go on," she said. A friend encouraged her to attend to a knitting group that met at the Pullman library. Although Susan didn't consider herself much of a knitter, she went. There she met Pam, who has become a close friend, and heard her talking about the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

It happened that Susan had just registered for "Losses of Our Lives." When Pam heard this, she exclaimed, "Me, too! I'll pick you up and we'll go together!"

Susan's first experience at Spirit Center made a deep impression on her. Not being Catholic and never having been to a monastery, Susan hadn't known what to expect from the sisters. "I was overwhelmed with gratitude because they made me feel so welcome. I felt like they had been waiting for me to come."

One night during her stay she woke up and looked out the window at the deep, dark, star-scattered sky over the prairie and watched the sun rise. The black of the mountains against the sliver of light filled her with wonder and "It came to me that there's more than what we see, if we take the time to look."

Since that first visit, Susan has become a regular retreatant, both for facilitated and personal retreats. She appreciates the time and space to reflect and remember what God is doing in her life. Her spirit is renewed by the peaceful rural setting with its prairie views and natural forest.

"I am so grateful to the sisters for what they've done. Coming to Spirit Center has made a difference in my life. When I come here, I feel like I'm coming home." ✕

Upcoming Retreats
at Spirit Center

June 6 ~ The Word that Dwells Among Us (8-week online retreat) with Sister Teresa

July 7-10 ~ Herbal Wisdom for Today with Sister Carlotta

August 12-14 ~ Introduction to Centering Prayer

August 29-September 2 ~ The Sacred Art of Iconography

September 26-October 2 ~ Living as a Monk in Everyday Life: A Benedictine Spirituality Cohort with Sister Teresa

October 11-14 ~ Spiritual Directors Retreat

October 28-30 ~ Soul Mask: A Portrait of Your True Self

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



Meet a Mystic

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

Dorothy Day was born in 1897 in Brooklyn, New York. Her father took a newspaper position in San Francisco and she witnessed the 1906 earthquake along with the subsequent self-sacrifice of neighbors in crisis — a formative experience about individual action and Christian community.

As a young adult and emerging writer, she became interested in social action and the power of the written word to effect change. She was jailed for her participation in a nonviolent protest advocating for women's right to vote. From then on, civil disobedience was a part of her advocacy for the poor and disenfranchised, and for peace.

As she searched for focus and became a mother, she was drawn to the Catholic faith and converted. Here she discovered a foundation in the sacraments and the inspiration of the saints that would support and inspire her for the rest of her life. She considered the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount a mission statement. However, the Great Depression had begun and she struggled to find Catholic leaders dedicated to living this Gospel message. She wrote, "Where was the Catholic leadership in the gathering of bands of men and women together, for the actual Works of Mercy?" She felt that the needs of the times called for saints that not only ministered to the victims of society, but also worked to remedy the ills of society that created such victims.



Dorothy with grandchildren.

Shortly after intensely praying for clarification about her own call she met Peter Maurin, a French immigrant who had a vision for social justice and its connection to the poor that was partially inspired by St. Francis of Assisi and papal documents on social matters. Peter helped Dorothy find a grounding in Catholic theology for social action. She began the publication *Catholic Worker* in 1933 and the Catholic Worker movement was born. Along with the publication, *houses of hospitality* emerged that provided food, clothing, and shelter to *guests* on a no-questions-asked basis. "We cannot love God unless we love each other," said Dorothy.



Eventually she became a Benedictine oblate and the Divine Office gave her an essential framework for daily prayer that strengthened her work throughout many odds. The Benedictine influence can be seen in the Catholic Worker movement's values of voluntary simplicity, community, prayer, and hospitality.

In his 2015 address before the U.S. Congress, Pope Francis included her in a short list of exemplary Americans along with Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thomas Merton. The Church has opened the cause for Dorothy Day's possible canonization and now refers to her with the title, *Servant of God*. ✕

Sister Maria Elena Nominated for Lumen Christi Award



Every year, Catholic Extension's Lumen Christi Award honors an individual or group working in one of America's mission dioceses who demonstrates how the power of faith can transform lives and communities. This year **Sister Maria Elena Schaefer** was among those nominated. The winner will receive \$50,000 for her/his ministries and will be announced this fall.

The nomination: "Drawing from her experience and language skills as a missionary in Colombia, Sister Maria Elena Schaefer volunteered to work with Spanish-speaking inmates at the Idaho State Correctional Institution (ISCI). While her formal role in the diocese's prison ministry is to help lead prayer and singing on Sundays and to lead Bible studies, Catholic faith classes, and pre-baptism sessions, she's best known for spreading hope and news of Christ's love and forgiveness. Schaefer is also responsible for the growth of the Idaho Catholic Prison Ministry and has recruited volunteer priests and lay men and women to help serve nearly 20 facilities." ✕

Our Community's philosophy of social justice follows the basic principles as outlined by Catholic social justice teaching:

- **Human Dignity** – Each person should be respected as a unique expression of the Divine.
- **The Call to Community and the Common Good**
- **The Rights and Responsibilities of the Person** – Each person has a fundamental right to and responsibility for life and to that which makes life possible.
- **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers** – Each person has the right and responsibility to work productively in safe conditions for fair wages.
- **The Option for the Poor and Vulnerable** – The whole society is strengthened when everyone is empowered to become an active participant.
- **Solidarity** – We are one human family, expressing the Church's concern for world peace, global development, and human rights.
- **Care for Creation** – We are interdependent with all creation and pledge to respect and care for it.

Sister Bernie Honored for Ministry to the Homeless

Sister Bernie Ternes found the work of her heart at the age of 52 when she visited a shelter in Seattle. "I discovered that the deepest yearning of my heart is to be among God's 'anawim' — the lost and forgotten ones," she had said.



She became a founding member of Nightwatch, a group of ministers that began walking the streets at night, checking under bridges and in alleys and sitting on barstools with those who had no hope. She also served in prison ministry and intentionally lived in transitional housing to help those in need. Engaged in what she calls the "ministry of presence," Sister Bernie felt that "just being there for them" helped these men and women recall the depths of God's love.

Never one to ask much for herself, a request she had before she died on October 3, 2014, was that a memorial cross be placed for her in the small chapel of Seattle's St. Martin de Porres Shelter, one of the places where she served. The shelter welcomes nearly 300 men a night and its chapel was a place where Sister Bernie spent much time in ministry.

Sister Bernie had expressed her wish to her Nightwatch colleague, Reverend Rick Reynolds, who now directs the program. "My life has never been the same after working with her," he says. "She had such a welcoming presence and was so respectful of people. She still serves as a guide for me about all the subtle ways we can honor people's dignity."

On Thursday, March 17, 2016, a prayer-filled memorial took place at the shelter and Sister Bernie's wish was fulfilled. A cross bearing her name along with other crosses honoring recently deceased staff and homeless were placed in the chapel. The service was led by Rita Peterson and attended by shelter director Jennifer Newman, Reverend Rick Reynolds, Reverend Rich Gamble, Oblates Nikki Nordstrom and Pat Thrasher, and others.

"Sister Bernie showed us that you can't fix all the problems but you can be present," said Reverend Rick Reynolds. "I feel very satisfied that this memorial is happening. It is very satisfying for my soul." ✕

INN AT ST. GERTRUDE

Innkeepers Win Hospitality Award



The Inn on Dedication Day, 2010.

On May 3, in Moscow, Idaho, the Inn at St. Gertrude's innkeepers won the Idaho B&B Association Bonzey Award for "The Inn-spirational Innkeeper of the Year." The Inn opened in 2010 as an expression of our core values: Healing Hospitality, Grateful Simplicity, and Creative Peacemaking. With the design help of **Oblates Regina Sullivan and Lisa Radakovich**, the lower level of the hospitality house was converted to a bed & breakfast. Innkeepers **Sister Corinne Forsman** and **Sister Chanelle Schuler** both draw on rich backgrounds in healthcare and human services as well as long histories of living the Benedictine tradition. They are joined in sharing Benedictine hospitality by volunteers **Oblate Peg and Grant Griffin**, and **Frank Halter**. ❖

Learn more at www.InnatStGertrude.com

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children had been born to a drug-addicted mother and her new mom gave the child a new name, which called forth a wholly different personality in the child. Two of the adopted brothers to this little one had suffered brain damage in their former home but as adults they have been empowered to live on their own with productive work to support themselves. "Greater love has no one than to lay down their lives for another." (John 15:13)

Every one of these people have made a difference in the lives of others because they became the embodiment of mercy, that is, the open hearts, caring hands, and listening presence of Christ when most needed. I invite you to consider a person of mercy in your own life and the way s/he has brought hope, encouragement, or another way to be in the world because of their selfless compassion. ❖

*Michael Lapsley, *Redeeming the Past: My Journey from Freedom Fighter to Healer* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012) 31-32.

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through education. Soledad Enrichment Agency includes SEA Charter School, a California public charter high school for at-risk youth, whose students have dropped out of or been expelled from traditional schools. They come from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with heavily entrenched gang activity and tend to perform at a lower academic level than their peers. Their families may suffer from alcohol and drug addiction, poverty, teen pregnancy, unemployment, and domestic violence. When students enter SEA Charter School, they know that it could be their last chance to lift themselves from the surrounding culture.

SEA Charter school has 15 school sites located throughout LA County. They are strategically located in neighborhoods to assure that students can attend without having to "watch their back." While some students are able to catch up with their peers and re-enter the public school system, others complete their education and graduate from SEA. Many former students return to work as staff at SEA. "If one person cares they never forget it," explains Sister Elisa. "That caring can come in the smallest ways...you smiled at me, you listened to me. We don't tend to listen, we tend to advise."

Last year Sister Elisa celebrated her Golden Jubilee (50 years) as a Benedictine sister. She finds opportunities to express the Monastery's core values of healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking in her work with the youth and their families. Although SEA is not affiliated with a religious institution, it is Sister Elisa's experience that these values are essential to the success of the program's purpose.

Sister Elisa has been honored with SEA's Heart of Gold Award and St. Michael's Parish Guardian Angel Award. Father Stan, who works alongside her, 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."

"The families here have taught me the resilience of faith," reflects Sister Elisa. "Regardless of shootings they may have witnessed or been victims of, despite the poverty they are experiencing, the tragedy they are involved in, they inevitably express their trust in God – that he will lead them to better times." ❖

HISTORICAL MUSEUM

New Exhibit Remodel Underway

Like many Benedictine monasteries throughout history, our monastery is striving to preserve the cultural heritage around us as well as serve a spiritual purpose. We are preserving the past for the future through our Historical Museum that is engaged in carefully curating artifacts and faithfully interpreting the stories they represent. A major exhibit remodel is underway to further this purpose.

The remodel team includes former Idaho State Historian Keith Petersen, exhibit specialists Mary Reed and Mary Jahn, designer Amber Harris, and a team at the Museum. The remodel phases will take place over the next five years: the



history of the Benedictine Sisters and their impact on Idaho (2015/2016); the history of the Museum as one of Idaho's earliest museums (2017); Idaho County's interesting characters (2018); temporary exhibit gallery (2018); treasures Gallery (2017); and History of local people (2019-2020). The first phase on the history of the sisters will be completed by early summer.



The museum has already received nearly \$10,000 in grants for the support of this project: This project is supported in part by a grant from the Idaho Humanities Council, a state-based partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Support has also come from the Idaho State Historical Society as part of its Community Enhancement Grants program and Northwest Farm Credit Services through their Rural Community Grant Program. Further support for the exhibits remodel project has come from donors who responded to our recent Spring Appeal. Thank you to all who affirmed this wonderful project with your amazing support. Come see our progress! ✕

Fun, food, art and more at Raspberry Festival!

Sunday, August 7, 2016, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Raspberry Festival is an annual fundraiser for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. This one day event features fun activities for the whole family including a pancake breakfast, grilled hamburgers, BBQ beef sandwiches, raspberry shortcake, jam and products, an arts & crafts fair, fun run & walk, live music, a kids' carnival, art show, car show, hand-crafting demos, chapel tours, Museum visits and more.



Learn more and sign up for events at
www.MyRaspberryFestival.org

