

living everyday  
*sacredness*

Observing Sacred Seasons  
Keeping Sabbath  
Benedictine Leisure

## A Message from Prioress Sister Mary Forman

As I write this reflection, we have just celebrated the rich liturgies of the Christmas Season, with one feast day following upon another: Christmas, the Feast of Incarnation; St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr; Holy Innocents, the commemoration of all children and innocents caught in the violence of the times, for whom Christ came as human, lived, died and rose; Thomas á Becket, martyr of the medieval English Church; one ordinary (ferial) day; Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus on the journey to avoid Herod's reign of terror; the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God; and New Year's Eve, with its blessing of time and seasons. For the latter, we have a Vigil service, in which we recall and name loved ones who have died in the previous year; then we bless bell ringers, who call us to prayer, and our watches, clocks, calendars and appointment books, which remind us of times and seasons of holy days, holidays and ordinary days.

Now it is the season between New Year's resolutions and Lent, when we resolve to live holier lives by means of lessening the amounts of food, talk and frivolity in our lives (Rule of Benedict 49) and embrace fasting, silence and solitude for prayer. The community took up the ancient practice of reading (*lectio*) and pondering (*meditatio*) and prayerful reflection (*oratio*) on silence and its related practice of *contemplatio* during the weeks of Advent 2016. As a result of our study and shared discussions we chose to reinforce practices that encourage being aware of God's presence, like keeping silence in the Chapel hallway out of respect for those praying in Chapel, and encouraging one another to offer a nod or wave in

places in the house where we keep silence. These practices are intended to recognize the Christ that dwells in each one and to honor the silence out of which we speak.



This conscious choice to observe the holiness of silence is our way to live everyday sacredness. We also have the custom of Sabbath Sundays, whereby we keep silence and engage in solitary reflection on scriptures, usually on the last Sunday of the month. We give ourselves a Sabbath from talking and working in order to rest in the Lord, who rested from divine labors after six days (eons) of the creative work of making the universe and all its creatures.

Lately, it has occurred to me that New Year's resolutions, so often broken within a few days or weeks of being made, might best be thought of in terms of on-going practices that encourage mindfulness and deepening awareness of who we are from God's perspective. I offer a few suggestions here.

- What authors might we read to nurture our spirits and call us to rest in God, so as to rise refreshed for the work of justice, reconciliation and/or peace?
- Who might benefit from our slowing down to notice the beauties all around us in the winter wonderland of snowy days and to give God thanks for such beauty?
- Where might balancing time for leisure in creative activities that recreate our spirits with the work, in which we support our families and communities, lead us?

*Continued on page 6*

### 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 Barbara Ann Bielenberg

As a nurse and Benedictine Sister, Sister Barbara Ann Bielenberg has sought out places where she can best integrate her work in health care with pastoral care sensibilities that are inspired by her vocation. As the Director of Mission Integration at St. Mary's Hospital and Clearwater Valley Hospital, she has the opportunity to do just that: leverage her 42 years of nursing with coordinating spiritual care in a hospital setting.

Alternating between the hospitals' locations in Orofino and Cottonwood, Sister Barbara Ann oversees an ecumenical team of 12 chaplains, visits patients, and provides quarterly in-service days on the hospitals' core values. She sees her primary work as helping to create an atmosphere of dignity. She knows that having patients who feel respected and cared for often begins with staff who also feel respected and esteemed.

Sister Barbara Ann's integrated approach to health and spiritual care emerged in the early '80s when she attended a program at Gonzaga University designed to provide theological education and spiritual renewal to priests and nuns. After receiving what she calls a "spiritual update," Sister Barbara Ann was inspired to create a parish nurse program that saw to parishioners' both spiritual and medical needs.

Her insights to healing come not only from helping others; she has come through a few health challenges herself. In the last couple years she has had both ankles completely replaced. In 1980-1981 she required some major surgeries and in early December 2011 was struck with Bell's

Palsy, a diagnosis that is similar to a stroke and required extensive therapy to regain control over the right side of her face. "It really made me think," she says. "It was time to slow down."

Slowing down was something new for her. As the oldest of six, she grew up on a farm in Genesee and then in Uniontown. She was educated by the Holy Names Sisters the first 8 years and then the Sisters of Notre Dame. Her parents were German immigrants and devout Catholics. Barbara Ann longed to attend high school at St. Gertrude's Academy and had a cousin who was a sister at St. Gertrude's. It didn't take long for her to begin thinking about entering.

"My father had hoped that one of his children would become a priest or nun. I was very close to my dad but also realized that I truly did have a vocation." She entered St. Gertrude's at the age of 15 and finished high school at St. Gertrude's Academy. She was professed on August 14, 1965.

But while she had found her path, coming of age in a religious community was still challenging. At that time, St. Gertrude's was a convent, not a monastery, and followed a pre-Vatican II structure of organization. Sisters were more cloistered than they are now. As a novice, Sister Barbara Ann could only write her family two times during that year and receive letters twice a year. "I cried for three weeks when I left my family. It's not easy to grow up as a teenager in a convent," muses Sister Barbara Ann.

"But I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't belong to this Benedictine community. I can't live without love and support, and my sisters give me that. My relationship with God wouldn't be the same and I wouldn't be as knowledgeable in a spiritual way without my community. We support each other in sharing our gifts with others and that makes a difference. Our community has always been about meeting the needs of the time. God has always been with us and will continue to be with us." ✕



Sister Barbara Ann (shown with Sister Channele on the left) was back on her feet after double ankle replacements at last summer's Raspberry Festival Fun Run & Walk.



# vocations

## Sister Karen Martin Makes First Monastic Profession

On Thursday, December 8 — Feast of the Immaculate Conception — Karen Martin made her First Monastic Profession. “We have witnessed a centuries-old tradition of monastic profession, where Sister Karen professed the three-fold promise of St. Benedict’s Rule of ‘*conversatio*,’ — fidelity to the monastic way of life lived in this monastery; stability — seeking God in relationship with God and her sisters; and obedience — listening to the voice of God calling her,” explained Prioress Sister Mary Forman in her reflection following the Profession.

Sister Karen was born in Perham, Minnesota, to a farming family. Several influential teachers helped her overcome difficulties in family and development. Karen graduated as valedictorian of her high school class and went to the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota. Within a few weeks she attended Mass at Sacred Heart Convent Chapel. “At Mass I sensed a transcendence — a meeting of heaven and earth; the inspirational music and beautiful chapel certainly facilitated prayer.” At the age of 21, she was confirmed Catholic.

Karen considered religious life after college graduation but decided to wait. She went to work at St. Mary on the Mount Rehabilitation Hospital and the VA Hospital in St. Louis. After a year she entered military service as 2nd Lieutenant and was Active Duty Air Force for 6.5 years. During this time she earned a M.S. in nursing. After her military service she worked as an RN until she moved to Anchorage, Alaska, in 2000 and earned a B.S. in Medical Technology. She worked as a lab tech and medical biller for the next several years.



Then her “next huge, life-changing experience” happened: She was hired as the organist for Sacred Heart Cathedral in Fairbanks where she was surrounded by people for whom “God was not simply a part of life. God is life.” She learned about *lectio divina* and other forms of prayer. “Christ eventually became the center of my life. I developed a mindfulness of God,” she says. “Also, since faith is not just about God and me, I made the leap to forming lasting friendships and becoming part of a community.”

Having always heard the call to religious life, at the age of 53 she decided to take action. She did an internet search for Benedictine communities and discovered St. Gertrude’s. She made her first visit in January 2013, returned for two more visits, and became a postulant in September 2013.

Karen plays organ for Mass and prayer, plays the clarinet with the all-sister group, “The Von Gertrude Ensemble,” works in the Development Office, and helps with a variety of other projects around the Monastery. She is also enjoying the Idaho climate that is comparatively warmer than Alaska.

“We travel on our earthly journey aware, alert, thankful, only partially at home, and with a barefooted soul,” wrote Sister Karen in a recent reflection. “We all start at different places and grow at different rates on our way... Each day we are called to listen to God, those around us, and God’s Holy Word. We are called to live the ordinary life extraordinarily well.” ✕

Read the full version of this story on the blog at [www.stgertrudes.org](http://www.stgertrudes.org).

**Are you discerning becoming a sister?  
Please come to a vocations event:**

### **Easter Triduum Journey**

April 13-16, Thursday 3:00 p.m. to Sunday 1:30 p.m.  
Share with us in the mystery of Easter.

### **Come and See Week**

July 9-16, Sunday 7:00 p.m. to Sunday 1:30 p.m.  
Spend a week living monastic life with us.

To learn more and reserve a space at these events,  
call Vocations Director Sister Bernadette Stang at  
208-962-5003 or email [vocations@stgertrudes.org](mailto:vocations@stgertrudes.org).

# spirit center

## Sabbath, Silence, and Seasons

An Interview with Fr. Meinrad Schallberger (FM),  
Monastery Chaplain; and Sister Gerry Marie Smith  
(SGM), Spirituality Ministry Team

### Why do we need Sabbath?

**FM:** We need Sabbath because we are not machines. We need to remember we're not God. Build, build, build...Sabbath takes us out of building mode. In the creation story even God rested on the 7th day. We are human and can't do everything. We take time to be with people and learn to live in communion, thinking about the needs of one another. Sabbath makes us more loving, more human. God made us to be human.

*"There are two happy outcomes to leisure: mindfulness and patience. We put aside our heedless habits and begin to pay serious attention to the world outside.....everything is to be done at the opportune time, as Benedict insists (31:18, 68:2)."*

*~Michael Casey, ocso,  
Strangers in the City*

**SGM:** Jesus withdrew from his apostles to pray and we should also withdraw from the world to pray. God wants us to seek that love. All people are called to that love.

### Why do we need silence?

**SGM:** Silence can take us to the experience of God's love. People are busy...they have children, work. I recommend finding a half hour each day where you can be with your soul. Quiet your mind with deep breathing; focus on the breath. If a half hour's too much, try at least ten minutes. It may be difficult at first to be quiet and listen and wait for our loving God.



Sister Gerry Marie

Embrace yourself for all the gifts he has given you, even the ones you may not want. God is always inviting us to wholeness. In silence you can know how deeply you are loved by God.

**FM:** Through Spirit Center, the sisters give leisure and silence to people. They offer a place to slow down. Society doesn't always allow you to experience this. That's the beauty of this place: people can come and slow down to get a glimpse of God's life.

### Why should we observe the liturgical seasons? (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, etc.)

**FM:** It spreads out the mystery of Christ over a whole year. Instead of lumping it all together, it puts it in bits and pieces for our growth. Not too much all at once: it's God's slow, gentle way of working with us. ✕

## About Our Chaplain

With the exception of a four-year hiatus, Father Meinrad Schallberger has been the sisters' chaplain since 1999. He is a Benedictine monk from the Monastery of the Ascension in Jerome, Idaho, and his connection to the sisters goes way back. "My dad and his brother came to America from Switzerland directly to St. Gertrude's. My grandmother knew Mother Hildegard Vogler, so she sent the boys to Cottonwood when they immigrated." As he is also a chaplain for nearby St. Mary's Hospital, his welcoming and wise pastoral presence is experienced by many. ✕



For upcoming retreats at Spirit Center see page 8.



# Spark! Art. Faith. Creativity.

Spark is a creative community sharing a spiritual journey that meets for a Sunday afternoon at the Monastery three to four times a year. All Spark events are free.

## Upcoming: The Road to Emmaus Art Challenge

We invite any and all to create something around the theme of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). You can use any medium you want (if it involves performance, the length would be 10-15 minutes).

Beginning Sunday, March 19, we will send weekly emails sharing artistic inspiration. Then, on April 30 — the Sunday of the Gospel of the Road to Emmaus — there will be a gathering at the Monastery after Mass for people to share their works and celebrate the spark!

To learn more and accept the challenge email [creative@stgertrudes.org](mailto:creative@stgertrudes.org) or call 208-962-5065.



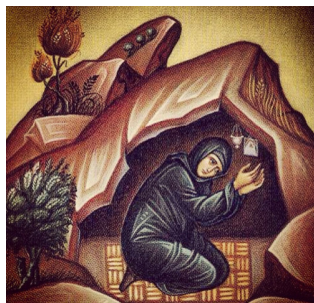
The Road to Emmaus  
by Jim Janknegt.

## Meet a Mystic: Amma Syncletica

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

Amma Syncletica was among the Desert Mothers and Fathers (Ammas and Abbases) who took to the silence of the natural world in order to draw closer to God. This meant a life of severe deprivations and hardships, but also great spaciousness and beauty. The result was the emergence of profound early Christian teachers that influenced later saints and leaders, including St. Benedict.

Amma Syncletica lived from mid-fourth to mid-fifth century in Alexandria, Egypt. Some twenty-seven of her “sayings” have been preserved by the women who joined her in the desert as disciples of Christ.



Amma Syncletica said: “In the beginning there is struggle and a lot of work for those who come near to God. But after that there is indescribable joy. It is just like building a fire: at first it is smoky and your eyes water, but later you get the desired result. Thus we must kindle the divine fire within ourselves with tears and effort.” ✕

## A New Art Exhibit



During Advent an art exhibit was installed in the dining room hallway that features artwork from “Embracing the Artistic Call” retreat participants. The artworks and artists were blessed by Prioress Sister Mary Forman during the opening. The show will be up all year until next Advent. Take in the exhibit on your next retreat or stay at the Inn!

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# born into eternal life

## Sister Carm Ternes, OSB

July 16, 1920 - December 10, 2016



Sister Carm Ternes, OSB, was born into eternal life on December 10, 2016. Born on July 16, 1920, and raised in Strasburg, North Dakota, Sister Carm (baptized Elizabeth) attended a school staffed by Ursulines who suggested she had a vocation to religious life. After seeing a postcard featuring St. Gertrude's in Idaho she became

determined to join the community.

Sister Carm's father, however, refused to take her. She started a novena to St. Therese of the Little Flower and asked the saint to persuade her father to let her go to Idaho, and, after the third novena, a miracle happened: some Idaho friends of her parents came to visit and soon she had her way out west. "Idaho was for life," she said.

Professed in 1942, Sister Carm immediately began a teaching career that spanned nearly three decades. She earned a BA in Education and a MA in Speech and Drama.

In addition to teaching in schools across the state, she taught at St. Gertrude's Academy and was often assigned as prefect of the boarder students – both boys and girls. Sister Carm also served as religious education coordinator, pastoral assistant, hospital chaplain and community archivist. She was very creative and one of her many influential projects includes the mosaic mural in the Monastery dining room that she completed with the help of students.

"When you place your dedication to God above all other things, then graces and blessings are often a reward," she said. "I love community! Everyone needs a support group to belong to, to love and be loved by – community is the best thing about being a sister at St. Gertrude's."

Sister Carm is survived by numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, cousins, and friends — and her Benedictine sisters. Her younger blood sister, Sister Bernie Ternes, OSB, preceded her in death. The Mass of Christian Burial was on Tuesday, December 20. Memorial donations may be made to the Monastery of St. Gertrude. ✕

## ...continued from page 1

- How might stopping to see and hear the surprises all around us—icicles in their glistening, eagles in flight, children's laughter and song — touch us and move us to joy and gratitude?
- What might happen if God's mystery in our lives overtook our plans and we were led into a deeper consciousness of the One permeating all that is with Divine Love?
- How might celebrating the seasons of our lives, wherever we are in our geography and life process, be a way to thank the One who has made these seasons possible?

As we ponder one or another of these wonderings, may the God of our lives lead us to the very heart of God's desire to dwell within and among us. ✕

*There are eight high altar paintings changed according to the liturgical season. Creator Spiritus was commissioned for the millennium and is based on a photo taken from the Hubble telescope.*





# peace and justice

## Nonviolence: World Day of Peace Message

by Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth



"Now is the acceptable time! Now is the time of salvation!" (2 Cor. 6:2) This phrase from scripture vividly describes for us an instinctive feeling we have about the beginning of a new year. What better time to pull out those values we claim to profess, dust them off and renew our commitment to them. Maybe this is why for the past 50 years the Pope has chosen January 1 to proclaim a message of peace to the world, challenging all Christians to take seriously the Gospel call to nonviolence.

In his 2017 World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis does not mince words. He states that "to be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence." In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), the Gospel clearly describes what it means to be a peacemaker. In this plan of action there is no room for violence of any kind whether that be angry words with a family member or military retaliation toward another country. In Pope Francis' words: "When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become one of the most credible promoters of nonviolent peacemaking".



We are challenged by Our Holy Father to "...dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds and to becoming nonviolent people and to build nonviolent communities that care for our common home." The Pope's World Day of Peace message can be found through an internet search. It makes a powerful prayer for 2017.

In our community mission statement we have listed *creative peacemaking* as one of our core values. This reflects the cornerstone of our monastery building which is emblazed with the Latin word PAX – peace. We are active members of National Benedictines For Peace which works to coordinate peacemaking activities.

In so many ways we are daily reminded of the exhortation given to us by St. Benedict in his rule of life: "Let peace be your quest and aim." ✠

For more resources on  
peacemaking visit  
[www.BenedictinesforPeace.org](http://www.BenedictinesforPeace.org)

# support

## Griffins Part of Growing Local Circle of Lay People

All types of people, not just professed religious, are nurtured by monastic life. The first known poem in English, Cædmon's *Hymn*, was written by a monastery employee who was encouraged by the abbess.

Peg and Grant Griffin, originally from the Puget Sound area, are among ten lay people in the last several years who have been inspired to move closer to St. Gertrude's. Peg is an oblate who first fell in love with the Camas Prairie and the Monastery in 1999. Grant had his first visit in 2010 and had a similar response. "Benedictine spirituality and the charisms of grateful simplicity, creative peacemaking and healing hospitality comprise values that we deeply hold," says Peg.

"The women of the Monastery express these values in unparalleled ways. Moving here has enriched our lives in terms of beauty, friendship, and deepening spiritual movement. I felt the call of the Camas Prairie in 1999, it just took us till 2015 to get here."



The Griffins are volunteer innkeepers at the Inn at St. Gertrude, donors, and friends sharing their gifts and presence in a variety of ways. ✠

# upcoming events

## Oral Histories Project at the Historical Museum



On March 1-2, the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude will host the Community Scholars Program, a project of the Idaho Commission on the Arts and led by Folk Arts Director Steven Hatcher. With the idea that nobody knows a community better than its own members, the Community Scholar Program engages populations directly by teaching its members to document themselves. A short workshop is offered to teach both the basics of oral documentation as well as an overview on the fundamentals of folklife studies. Participants learn how to collect, interpret, archive, and present their subjects.

Following the workshop, the scholars are let loose to interview, photograph, uncover, and discover the people, places, and things they decide form the foundation of their community's identity. After a determined time the group will reform, compare documentation, and decide as to what capacity the collected material will be presented. Results of the fieldwork, then, are available for local, regional, or statewide exhibits, publications, educational programs, or whatever the community sees fit. For more information and to sign up for the Community Scholars program on March 1-2, call 208-962-2050. ✕

## Retreats



### Wise Women ~ February 24-26

*Facilitators: Spirituality Ministry team*

Nurture your own inherent wisdom and honor the collective wisdom of the women around you.

*Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared*

### A Watercolor Journey ~ March 7-9

*Facilitator: Pearl Maxner* Explore watercolor techniques and learn how the creative process can add depth to your spiritual journey. For beginning and intermediate painters. Supplies provided.

*Suggested donation: \$220 single / \$170 each shared.*

### Me, a Bible Scholar? ~ March 14-16

*Facilitators: Meg Sass, OSB, and Teresa Jackson, OSB*

Listen to God's voice through prayerful reflection on Scripture stories, presentations and sharing.

*Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared*

### Celtic Saints: Their Message for Today ~ March 17-19

*Facilitator: Mary Loneragan, OSF*

Explore Celtic spirituality with the saints whose faith kept the flame of the Gospel alive in the European Dark Ages.

*Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared*

### Centering Prayer Intensive ~ April 3-9

*Facilitators: Darlyne Pape and Donna Kreiensieck*

Deepen your spiritual life by enhancing your centering prayer practice through this week-long retreat.

*Suggested donation: \$515*

### The Passion of the Earth: A New Story of Creation ~ April 28-30

*Facilitators: Boise Area Oblate Community* Join our exploration of this on-going creation journey through art, music, prayer, and sharing.

*Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared*

### A Woman's Call to Spirituality ~ May 5-7

*Facilitator: Katie Cooper, OSB* We will seek ways so that each of us can be HOPE for our world.

*Suggested donation: \$195 single / \$145 each shared*

### Come to the Quiet

**June 23-30, 2017 Friday 7:30 pm to Friday 1:30 pm**

*Facilitators: Lillian Englert, OSB, and Spirituality Ministry team* Relax in God's presence surrounded by a praying community.

*Suggested donation: \$515/week, \$220/weekend only*

**Learn more and register online at  
[www.Spirit-Center.org](http://www.Spirit-Center.org) or call 208-962-2000.**



A new exhibit that will be a replica of founder Sister Alfreda's original museum (see inset) is being installed this winter. It is the second exhibit remodel in a five-year plan of renovations. Expected completion is later this spring.

