



*Blessing of the Land, Feast of St. Mark, Rogation Day, April 25.*

## God Manifested in Open-Heartedness

*by Sister Mary  
Forman, Prioress*

In the winter 2017 issue of the Canticle, we focused on “healing hospitality.” In this issue we take up another aspect of our vision statement: “grateful simplicity.” Simplicity is one of those concepts that conveys ambiguous reactions, as Sr. Jeremy Hall writes:

Ambiguity attaches to the concept of simplicity... We have done strange things to the very term in the English language. The word “simple” has come to mean insignificant, trivial, intellectually deficient, lacking in good sense, silly. Indeed, something similar has happened to “silly”— it used to mean blessed, innocent, holy, without guile. Perhaps those of us attracted to the simple won’t much mind being called silly. “Simplicity” hasn’t fared a great deal better. Dictionaries only say what it is not, and we understand what it is only by implication — it is not complicated, embellished or elaborate, affected; not deceitful, complex, artificial; not vain, distracted, pretentious, ostentatious.<sup>1</sup>

An exploration of what simplicity means from the Rule of Benedict will assist in understanding the spirituality of simplicity for Benedictines.

One use of the adverb “simply” occurs in the chapter on the oratory, that is, in RB 52.4, where any member, who “chooses to prayer privately, ... may simply go in and pray, not in a loud voice, but with tears and heartfelt

devotion.”<sup>2</sup> “Simply” means both one can simply enter the oratory AND simply pray. To pray simply means to do so without a loud voice. On the other hand, *simpliciter* could mean “without making complications, embarrassment,” as in RB 61.3; another possibility is that one could pray “alone, for its own benefit.”<sup>3</sup>

Another occurrence of “simply” is found in RB 61.3, whose immediate context of RB 61 reads as follows:

A visiting monk from far away will perhaps present himself and wish to stay as a guest in the monastery. Provided that he is content with the life as he finds it, and does not make excessive demands that upset the monastery, but is simply content with what he finds, he should be received for as long a time as he wishes. He may, indeed, with all humility [of] love make some reasonable criticisms or observations, which the [superior] should prudently consider; it is possible that the Lord guided him to the monastery for this purpose. (RB 61.1-4, RB-1980)

Twice in this section Benedict highlights that if the visiting monk is content or rather *simply* content with

<sup>2</sup> RB 1980: *Rule of St. Benedict In Latin and English with Notes*, edited by Timothy Fry, et al. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981). Future references from this work will be cited as RB, followed by chapter and verse numbers.

<sup>3</sup> *La Règle de Saint Benoît [RSB], vol. 5: Commentaire* (Parties IV-VI), Sources Chrétiennes 185, edited by C. Mondésert, introduction, text, translation and notes by Adalbert de Vogüé (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971) 631.

*Continued on page 6*

# sister story

## Simple Listening, Simple Silence

### Sister Gerry Marie Smith



highly trained." Another commented: "If love, insight into reasons for human behavior, cooperation, support, patience, and hard work are criteria for judging performance, Sister Gerry's rating is a solid ten."

Her ministries have also included parish work. She received her master's in counseling in 1995 and began working as a therapist. As a mental health counselor, Sister Gerry Marie has been recognized for undertaking a heavy caseload of emotionally and physically abused children and adults. "She was known for taking the most difficult cases and was the most respected therapist," wrote another colleague.

In her careers as educator, counselor, and spiritual director, Sister Gerry Marie has encouraged people to laugh at the difficulties and pray through what is not easy.

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Gerry Marie grew up in a large family and learned early on how to find the lighthearted and grace-filled spaces.

Her priest recognized her contemplative spirit and introduced her to Mother Regina O'Connell of St. Gertrude's. "I resonated with her Irish disposition and the beautiful Celtic tone of her faith," recalls Sister Gerry Marie. She made Profession in 1971.

She began classes at St. Gertrude's College and then transferred to Lewis-Clark State College where she could express her athletic gifts by playing basketball. She also studied at Whitworth and completed her teaching credential at University of Idaho.

Sister Gerry Marie has taught in Boise, Pocatello, Seattle, and in DeSmet at the Coeur d'Alene Tribal School. Regarding her work with the Coeur D'Alene Tribe, a colleague wrote: "She is one of the most skillful teachers and counselors...compassionate, creative, and

It was her own childhood and her first career in teaching that gave her a heart for children. "I could notice the woundedness in children," she says, "I learned I can put into the hands of God the pain I feel for others."

She has found that guiding others to prayer allows her to deepen her own prayer life. "With intentional listening people can get in touch with growing toward the fullness God has called them to. Jesus withdrew from his apostles to pray and we should also withdraw from the world to pray.

"Silence can take us to the experience of God's love. I recommend finding a half hour each day where you can be with your soul. Quiet your mind with deep breathing, focusing on the breath. If a half hour is too much, try at least ten minutes.

It may be difficult at first to be quiet and listen and wait for our loving God. Embrace yourself for all the gifts you have been given, 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." ✕

*Watercolor painting: "Passing to Prayer" by Don Collins, 2012 Artist-in-Residence. Prints available in the Book & Gift Shop.*

# membership

## New Oblations



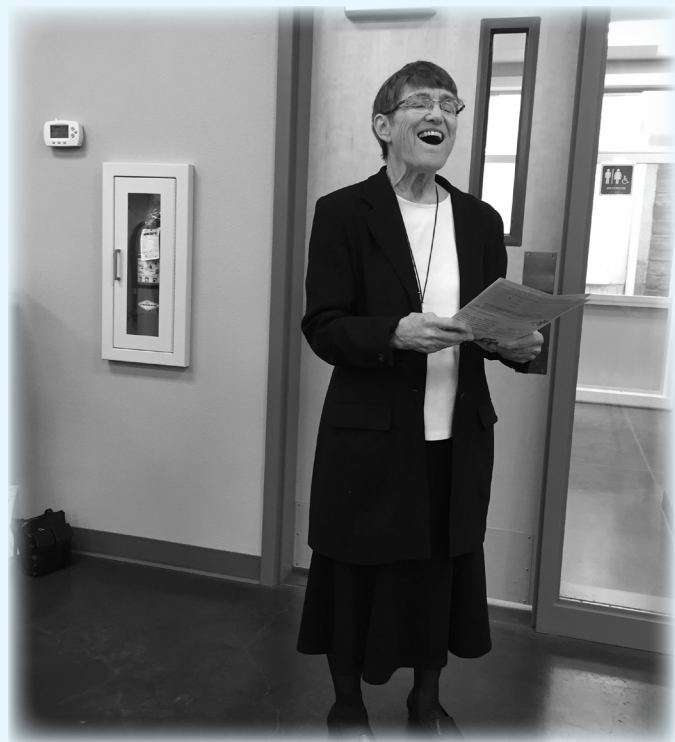
On April 6-8, 52 of our over eighty oblates gathered for the annual Discernment Weekend. On Sunday, we welcomed new Oblates Lynnette Nilan of Helena, Montana, and Leslie Moyer of Clarkston, Washington. Barbara Aston, who first made oblation in 1994, renewed her oblation. We also welcomed four new oblate novices. In addition there were four inquirers from our recent Inquiry Day. Learn more about this vital part of our community at [stgertrudes.org](http://stgertrudes.org). ✠

## COMING UP!



**Plan to join us! Dates: October 8-12, 2018**  
**WHERE:** Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude  
**INFO:** Contact Nikki Nordstrom, OblSB, at [nikki@stgertrudes.org](mailto:nikki@stgertrudes.org) or call 425-949-9744

## Vocations



"To women who inquire about professed life, I say what I personally love at St. Gertrude's is the lovely, faith-filled sisters with whom I share prayer, meals, ministry, joys, pains, and sorrows.

"When I am giving a tour, I say, 'There are three important rooms in our monastery: the chapel where together we break the bread of the Eucharist, the dining room where we break the bread of nourishment, and the community room where we break the bread of our hearts.' What else we offer is our rural setting. We are nestled in a hillside that gives us the opportunity to feel God's presence in creation.

"Our focus on spirituality and the arts and history is vital. We just presented a concert performance by the Palouse Choral Society titled 'A Tribute to Native American Culture,' which inspired so many people. Our museum, which is well known in the Northwest, is also an example of that focus. Of course, our goal is seeking God, and to reach that goal, any ministry fits."

✠

***Sister Bernadette is the Vocations Director  
and can be reached at 208-962-5003 or  
[vocations@stgertrudes.org](mailto:vocations@stgertrudes.org).***

## Warmed by Quilts

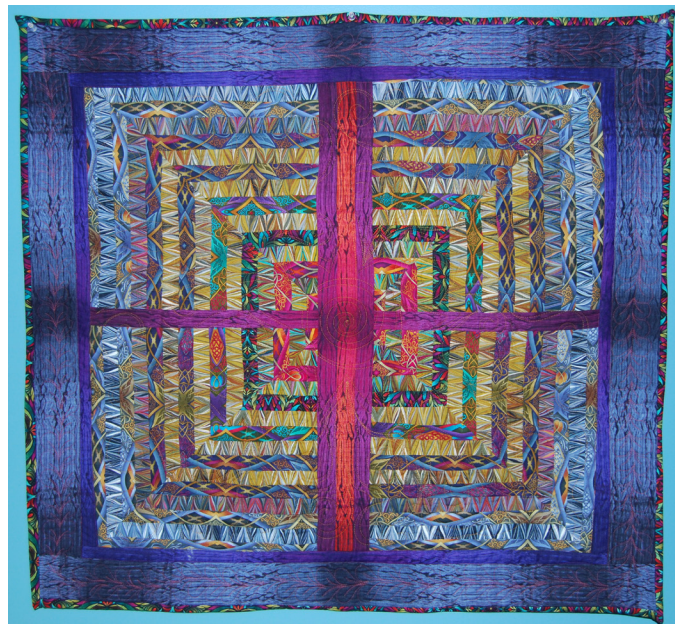
by Krista Green, Spirit Center Manager

After remarking on the stunning view and the beautiful, open lobby, guests at Spirit Center notice the quilts. On the beds and on the walls, multi-colored quilts are a recurring theme in both Spirit Center and the Farm House.

When the Spirit Center building was in its early stages, Sr. Lillian Englert's sister, Rose Marie Fitzpatrick, offered to make a quilt for each of the 22 bedrooms. Today each room has a quilt on the wall and several have quilts on the beds.

The Farm House is cozily decorated in a farm theme with handmade quilts on every bed. Some were created by Rose Marie, others were created by members of Sr. Bernadette Stang's family including Kathy Olmscheid, and Alma and Marie Stang. Fabric artists and friends of the monastery, Marilyn Sachtjen, and Denise Arellano, donated quilts seen at Spirit Center and the Farm House, as well.

The four twin beds in the "Bunk House" room at the Farm House are covered with denim quilts crafted by members of the Spirit Center team and Monastery employees.



On the beds and walls, hanging in the hallways, and draped over couches, quilts created by many hands bring warmth to the space and testify to the love and care surrounding the sisters' retreat ministry.

The harmonious combinations of color and shape in a quilt reflect the sense of community felt by many guests at the close of a retreat. At check-in, a group of retreatants appears like a pile of fabric scraps. From soft pastels to vibrant jewel tones, they display calicos, stripes, and bold geometrics. By the closing session of the retreat, the jumble of fabrics has become a beautiful quilt, each scrap an integral part of the whole.

Beautiful, homey quilts are as much a part of the fabric of life at Spirit Center as the varied collection of retreatants who sleep beneath them. ✕



*Upcoming Retreats*  
at Spirit Center

**June 4-6 ~ Zentangle: Creating Art and Wellbeing**

**June 15-22 ~ Come to the Quiet**

**July 27-29 ~ Accentuate the Positive: A Mixed Media Art Retreat**

**August 10-12 ~ A Sip of Silence**

**August 17-19 ~ Introduction to Centering Prayer**

**September 10-16 ~ Living as a Monk in Everyday Life: A Benedictine Spirituality Cohort**

**September 18-20 ~ A Watercolor Journey**

**October 1-5 ~ The Creative Word**

**October 22-25 ~ Spiritual Directors' Retreat: Reaching Across Cultures**

**November 13-15 ~ The Compassion Meditations**

208-962-2000  
[www.Spirit-Center.org](http://www.Spirit-Center.org)



# community

## An Array of Spring Highlights



On April 29 we celebrated the release of Sister Evangela Bossert's new book, "The Golden Bean," illustrated by 17-year-old Olivia Bigley. Sr. Evangela's friend Jameson O'Ryan coordinated the publication.



On April 22 the Palouse Choral Society, directed by Sarah Graham, performed "A Tribute to Native American Culture." The concert opened with the signing of the Lord's Prayer by Chelsea Leighton and Gabriella Lewis of the Nez Perce Tribe (The Nimiipuu) and singing by soprano Jill Freuden.



On April 8 The Valley Singers performed an Easter Cantata that featured soloists Heidi Korponay and Jody Dow. Photo by David Rauzi of Idaho County Free Press.



The latest round of clothes that Sister Placida Wemhoff has sewn for underprivileged children.



Mom's Quilt Group spent a week working on projects including this quilt that will be raffled at Raspberry Festival.



Sisters Mary Forman, Prioress, and Janet Marie Barnard, Procurator, waiting for the candles to be lit at Easter Vigil.

If you would like prayer support from our community, please call us at 208-962-3224 or visit [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)

Continued from page 1...

the life of the monastery and is not demanding, again repeated twice (here in vs. 2 and in vs. 3), s/he should be invited to stay. To be simply content, that is, wholeheartedly given to the life as one finds it, according to Esther de Waal, reflects the attitudes of the primitive community in Acts. There the members of the Christian community “gladly share in the goods of this world, having all things in common and seeking to use them wisely...to be open to the good of all. It is also a sign of being open to God; having nothing of one’s own is to need others, and more than that, to need God.”<sup>4</sup> Such a monk manifests the simplicity of one who depends solely on God and what God provides.

Being open to God, that is, simply content with life, is intimately connected to gratitude. The word for gratitude in Hebrew is *hen*, meaning “favor” and *hanan*, “to show favor” and in Greek, *charis* and *charisma*.<sup>5</sup> *Charis* in Greek has many meanings, including grace, outward beauty, favor, kindness, goodwill, thanks, gratitude, delight, gift, and pleasure. Gratitude in Latin is *gratia*, the same word for grace or favor. “To show gratitude” or *gratiam referre* literally means to relate/show/manifest grace, so that being grateful is revelatory of the grace of God in one’s life. To have gratitude or *gratiam habere* literally means to have/possess/consider grace in one’s life. One can also have a “grateful heart,” that is, *gratus animus*, which has to do with the fact that the capacity of one’s being is that of grace, favor toward oneself and toward God and others.

Benedict’s word for grace, favor, thanksgiving, gratitude is *gratia*, which appears six significant times in his rule.<sup>6</sup> In Prologue 31, Benedict writes about giving God credit for how God works in one, when he says: “In just this way Paul the Apostle refused to take credit for the power of his preaching. He declared: By God’s grace I am what I am (1 Cor 15:10).” Similarly, in Prologue 41, he states: “What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace.” A slightly different understanding of *gratia* appears in RB 5.19, where Benedict relays the consequence for murmuring: “For such an act [obeying with murmuring] it follows

that there is no favor.”<sup>7</sup> One might also state that there is no grace in obedience with murmuring, for such an act does not flow from a grateful/grace-filled heart. In RB 20.4, God’s grace is what inspires prayer after the Divine Office: “Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace.” In this verse, it is clear that God is the source of the grace that allows for prayer. With respect to the distribution of goods in the monastery, Benedict states: “Whoever needs less should give thanks to God and not be saddened” (RB 34.3).<sup>8</sup> The final example occurs in RB 66.5 concerning the Porter’s greeting to a guest knocking at the door of the monastery: “As soon as anyone knocks, or a poor man calls out, [the porter] replies, ‘Thanks be to God’ or ‘Your blessing, please.’” Both of these replies indicate an attitude of one graciously acknowledging the presence of the divine in the guest, by either giving thanks or asking a blessing of the divine one.

Thus, most frequently the Rule of Benedict strongly indicates that *gratia* is the word for grace or thanksgiving, an act of one who is grateful for all that comes to her from God, the source of the grace. Only once in RB 5.19 is there the sense of one not receiving a favor, because of obeying out of an ungrateful heart, which even here speaks to a lack of gratitude in one’s life for the opportunity to practice obedience, that is, listening and responding from an open-heartedness on the part of a Christian disciple.

Grateful simplicity means a capacity for God manifested in open-heartedness because one relies on God, who is source of grace and provident care. To show grateful simplicity is to rely on the very graciousness of God and to return that gift in how one treats others. We conclude with a prayer for gratitude:

O God, who simply and completely loves us without measure, grant us grateful hearts for our very lives and all who have loved us into life. Bless all who offer an opportunity to practice gratitude, to see your face in them and to minister to their need, for truly we are serving You in them. On our days, when we are tempted to grumble, to see the negative, or to curse the darkness, send the light of your Risen Lord to fill us with love, that we may return in small measure the grace you shower upon us. In your loving name, we pray. Amen. ✠

7 This is my own translation of the Latin phrase: “et pro tali facto nullam consequitur gratiam.”

8 This is my own translation which better indicates the giving of thanks for the Latin, “ubi qui minus indigent agat Deo gratias et non contristetur.”

4 Esther de Waal, *The Way of Simplicity: The Cistercian Tradition, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series*, edited by Philip Sheldrake (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998) 74.

5 John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc./London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1965) s.v. “Grace.”

6 Those instances are RB Prologue 31 and 41, and 5.19, 20.4, 34.3 and 66.3. Two other instances are the words *verbi gratia* in RB 24.6 and 63.8, which mean “for example.”

## Living Simply In the Midst of Abundance



Sister Carol Ann giving  
the reflection  
on Earth Day.

*"In order to live in harmony with the earth and to promote responsible stewardship we commit ourselves to choosing a life-style that will give witness to our love of the earth." ~ Philosophy of Land Use*

When we adopted our Philosophy of Land Use statement in 1993 we included this assertion that we believe there is a strong connection between our Benedictine value of living simply and our commitment to caring for the land. We gaze around us at the abundance of creation knowing that it is all gift from a loving Creator and we can be confident that there are sufficient resources available to provide for our needs. Since there is enough for tomorrow, we need to take only what is necessary for today. In other words, we promise to live simply.

How easy it is to forget that everything that makes our lives possible and pleasant comes from the earth. We become distracted by the abundance of products displayed in stores, catalogs, and pantries. But where did all of that really come from? The answer is quite straight forward. Some part of creation, whether minerals, water, plants, or animals was used to produce it. There is a moral question involved in every purchase we make. Do I need this item enough to justify what it cost the earth to produce it? We express our gratitude for the earth's self-sacrifice in providing what we need by acting responsibly in our

**"There is a moral question involved in every purchase we make."**

use of its resources. Yes, our planet is resilient but it is also finite. And we share it with many others. So we choose to live simply so others may simply live.

St. Benedict left some wise advice for his communities of monastics. He assured them that they would receive what they needed in order to live a healthy, meaningful life but they were not to hoard or make unnecessary demands. He had no tolerance for complaining or being envious. As Psalm 4 reminds us: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house." A satisfied, grateful person has no need to grab for an unnecessary excess of the earth's resources.

Nestled deep in the heart of the Book of Proverbs we find this prayer that reflects the admonition of Benedict.

Give me neither poverty nor riches,  
provide me only with the food I need.  
Lest, being full, I deny you saying,  
"Who is the Lord?" Or, being in want, I  
steal, and profane the name of my God.

In a similar vein Jesus taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread." When we have this confidence in God's love and daily care for us then we can trust in the abundance of creation and order our lives in such a way that we are truly walking gently on this earth. ✕

## Celebrating Local Characters



Installation of the third phase in a five-year remodel of the Historical Museum is under way. The new exhibit is a celebration of local characters such as Polly Bemis, Buckskin Bill, Winifred Rhoades, Frances Wisner, Ray Holes, Bill Wassmuth, and more. The exhibit remodel will be completed by this summer and is made possible by a grant from the Idaho State Historical Society. Come visit us soon to see all three new exhibits! ❖



*Some team members at work (clockwise): Keith Petersen, Shirley Gehring (with father Alfred Duman's saddle), Debra Graham, and Steve Gehring.*



## A Benefit for the Historical Museum: Come to the 26th Annual Raspberry Festival!



Sunday, August 5,  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Kids' Carnival, Fun Run & Walk, vintage sale, art show, car show, delicious food, craft booths, chapel tours, Museum visits, music, and more!



Learn more and register for events at [MyRaspberryFestival.org](http://MyRaspberryFestival.org)

# *inn*

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