

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

Winter 2019

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



Song of Creation:

JOY

Photos by Oblate Mykel Stevenson

A Message from the Prioress

by Sister Mary Forman

Joy over Incredible Things

"The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy" (Ps 126:3), the psalm refrain for the Second Sunday of Advent.

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22) along with love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23), all ways to manifest the presence of God. The Greek word for joy is *χαρά* [chara], whose meanings also include the notions of cheer, calm, delight, and gladness; to wish someone well or farewell is to wish them joy.¹ The Latin word for joy is *gaudium*, used twice uniquely by Benedict in his rule, chapter 49.6-7 on Lent, with reference to "the joy of the Holy Spirit" (vs 6) and looking "forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing" (vs. 7). So whether the season is one of longing for the celebration of the resurrected Christ in our midst at Easter or longing for the celebration of God incarnate at Christmas, we Christians who believe that God-is-with-us, show that fact with the expression of joy.

1. See *χαρά* and *χαίρω* in "Greek Dictionary of the New Testament," in James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1980) 77.

Joy is our theme for this reflection, joy over the incredible things we have seen (cf. Luke 5:26). In these weeks of Advent, there have been several occasions of joy. During the first week of Advent, I travelled to the parish in which I was baptized. The experience was one of palpable joy. At the ceremony around the advent wreath the celebrant asked the children gathered around what each candle signified. As he pointed to the fourth candle, he asked, "Who is coming?" and the children all shouted, "Santa." Of course, the congregation burst out laughing. Meanwhile a boy had gone over to the altar and was jumping up and blowing, trying to extinguish the candle, but he could not quite coordinate his jumps with his breath. Then his mom intervened to remove him from the sanctuary.

The other moment of joy occurred when a couple of children, who had come up in the communion line for their blessing, ran down the aisle with smiles on their faces back to their families. Would that we all could skip down the aisle with such glee (spiritual joy) after communion or a blessing!

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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.

community

Welcoming Dan Johnston to Our Leadership

Dan Johnston is the Monastery's new director of operations and finance. He has been a Benedictine oblate since 2001 with Saint Martin's Abbey in Lacey, Washington. He learned about St. Gertrude's through a St. Martin's oblate newsletter which announced the program "Living as a Monk in Everyday Life." He participated in the program in 2017 and "have been head over heels in love with the community and the place every day since." He also loves distance running, dogs, hillbilly music, haiku, the desert mothers/fathers, Isaac the Syrian, Meister Eckhart, the San Francisco Giants baseball team, the Golden State Warriors basketball team, and being able to participate daily in the monastic honorarium.

How has your path prepared you for St. Gertrude's?

Professionally, I have been blessed to have a set of diverse leadership experiences across a 25-year career in government. These experiences have generally clustered around finance/budget, technology, and organizational change management. For the last dozen years, I have been mostly engaged with organizational efforts to achieve, what I call, "better tomorrows" — helping organizations shape the future in the face of changing environments.

How about spiritually?

Borrowing the golden words of the 14th century Persian poet Hafiz, "This place where you are now, God circled on a map for you." In hindsight, things appear clear. Looking back on life, nearly everything that has gone before seems to have prepared and nudged me to the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

How did you first discover Benedictine values, tradition, spirituality? What resonated for you?

For me, the "discovery" of Benedict was a threefold path of silence, reading, and proximity. Since I can remember, I have been drawn to deep silence and interior stillness. Within the robes of silence, I found that mind and body dropped away, the affairs of men fled, and the great heart of the world gently unfolded, blossoming open. Like many others, reading the likes of Thomas Merton, Esther DeWaal, and David Steindl-Rast helped deepen and sharpen my awareness and understanding of Benedictine spirituality. I also had the great good fortune to attend school and Mass regularly at St. Martin's College (now University) in Lacey, Washington. This proximity gave me extended exposure to monks who embodied the Rule and the opportunity to become a Benedictine oblate 20 years



ago. Taken together, these experiences helped me place my heart on the path.

What do you think Benedictine values, tradition, spirituality offer the world today?

Hope! For me, the essence of Benedictine spirituality is that in the midst of great silence and interior stillness stirs the ineffable presence of God who moves each of us and the world according to His will. Through our silence, the Word echoes within us and through us. In this way, hope is born and re-born anew, world without end.

How do you see St. Gertrude's playing a part in that?

The Monastery of St. Gertrude represents this hope like few places I've ever known. It is a stunning and holy place. And this community of monastics is very special, too. The community continues to give hope and help to beginners like myself in finding and keeping to the Way. For me and so many others, St. Gertrude's stands as an important light unto the world. What the psalmist wrote of Jerusalem I believe holds equally true of the Monastery of St. Gertrude: "And her people love every stone in her walls and cherish the dust in her streets."

What excites you most about being at St. Gertrude's?

Spiritually, the gift of being able to participate in the monastic horarium. Professionally, helping preserve the wonderful tradition, culture, and spirit of St. Gertrude's, while moving confidently into the future. ✕

membership

Oblates Gather to Ask the Big Questions



Over 40 Benedictine oblates and sisters from around the world gathered at Spirit Center October 7-13, for the first ever Oblates for the Future Symposium.

Throughout the week attendees explored such topics as the history of oblates, oblate leadership, greater oblate participation in monasteries, oblate formation, and oblates developing a vision of the future. The symposium featured keynote speakers, facilitated discussions, break-out sessions, and time for informal networking and visioning with Benedictine oblates from across North America and Europe.

Oblates are lay associates of monasteries. Oblates are united in their shared commitment to Benedictine values and fidelity to the particular monastery with which each is associated. They may be married or single, men or women, of any Christian denomination. The goal of the symposium is to envision a how oblates can become a more integral part of Benedictine monastic life in the future.

"In embracing oblates as people with a different, yet vital Benedictine vocation our world will be made new," explains Sister Teresa Jackson, one of the presenters at the Symposium. "The oblate vocation only adds to the amazing accomplishments of our monasteries and our forbearers. To acknowledge the depth of the call of Benedictine oblates today is simply to acknowledge that Benedictine life and vocations are not in decline, but are actually alive and thriving in new ways."

Other speakers included Sister Mary Forman, PhD, prioress of the Monastery of St Gertrude; Jody Kilcup, PhD, an oblate affiliated with Mt. Angel Abbey in Oregon; Janis Dopp, director of oblates at St. Meinrad's Archabbey in Indiana; and Dr. Charles van Leeuwen, PhD, of the Netherlands. The second symposium, "Oblates Coming of Age in the 21st Century," will take place Sept. 10-14, 2019, at St. Gertrude's. Visit www.spirit-center.org to learn more. The Symposium is for people actively engaged in leading their oblate communities to a new future. ✕

Living as a Monk in Everyday Life:

A Benedictine Spirituality Cohort August 19-25, 2019, initial retreat



Explore how Benedictine monastic life can be lived by ordinary people seeking God in their everyday lives. Learn how to integrate monastic prayer, values, and practices into a life outside traditional monastic living. This nine-month cohort program begins with a retreat followed by nine months of intensive online instruction, a mid-year retreat, and a concluding retreat. Facilitator: Sister Teresa Jackson, OSB. Suggested donation: \$1500. **Learn more and inquire at www.Spirit-Center.org**

spirituality

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee...

by Sister Jeanette
von Herrmann



Photo by Annon Cala

This “Ode to Joy,” written by Beethoven, with words by Henry van Dyke could be the Spirit Center’s theme song. There are so many lines in this hymn that express the experience of those who come to Spirit Center to quiet their lives, walk more closely with God, and experience the work of the Creator around us in “field and forest, vale and mountain, chanting bird, and flowing fountain.” Whether they come as individuals or as part of a group, our retreatants come seeking God.

The beauty and quiet of our rural setting create the perfect milieu to invite and receive the joy that is planted in our hearts as the love of God grows there. Hearts do “unfold like flowers” before God, not unlike the spring flowers in the meadows above the Monastery. We are so fortunate to have the long beautiful trails that wind through the forest. These are paths that retreatants young and old use to discover God’s blessings. Our deer, quail, blue jays, owls, even feral cats and squirrels speak of the Creator’s vision and choice of astounding diversity of life. We notice how God cares so immensely for them and for each of us.

Joy is the reflection of God’s life, rooted deep within us, and expressed as we, like Christ, become icons or images of that divine life. The various aspects of a retreat contribute to the discovery of that joy and to the experience of God’s abiding love within and around us. The basic component

that we at Spirit Center hope to provide for all who join us is that of **prayer**, a close connection to God expressed in contemplation, the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist with the sisters, or simply **being** in God’s presence. By not talking, not having your phone turned on, not being distracted by conversation [even “holy” talk] our very being can **quiet** down, our inner jabbering can be reduced, and the Holy Spirit has a greater chance of entering our thoughts and hearts. This **silence** is what the psalmist refers to in writing, “Be silent and know that I am God” [Ps 46:10]. God also comes to meet retreatants in various other ways. They might be described as “**holy activities**” and are ways of soothing our spirits so that we can be more open to the divine. These can be walking our grounds, listening to a retreat speaker, participating in art (be it watercolor, icon writing, color books, etc.), absorbing music, meeting with a spiritual companion, or viewing the sunrise or weather moving across the Camas Prairie below us.

Whether it is an individual retreat, a retreat that the Spirit Center designs, or a retreat that your group organizes and then requests our assistance, Spirit Center’s hospitality is designed to assist you in finding joy in your search for the holy, and peace as God “calls us to rejoice” so that we may be part of God’s “center of unbroken praise.” Come join us, for a day, a weekend, or even longer. ✕



Upcoming Retreats

Embracing the Artistic Call: A Cohort Program for Exploring the Mystery of Creative Experience February 4-8, 2019 ~ initial retreat Monday 3:00 pm to Friday 1:30 pm

We will embrace the profound mystery of creative expression, nurture new artistic possibilities, and support our individual artistic journeys. The program includes two retreats and guided work at home over a 12-week period. It is open to established artists as well as those longing to live a creative life with intention. See website for details: www.spirit-center.org
Suggested donation: \$780 single



The Sacred Art of Traditional Iconography February 25 – March 1, 2019 Monday 3:00 pm to Friday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Fr. Damian Higgins

"Holy icons direct us toward the Divine." Fr. Damian Higgins is an iconographer whose works are featured around the world. Don't miss this encounter with sacred Christian art using traditional egg tempera. Materials provided; no experience necessary.
Suggested donation: \$575 single



A Watercolor Journey II March 5-7, 2019

Tuesday 3:00 pm to Thursday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Pearl Maxner

Take the next step toward becoming a confident watercolorist. Revisit the techniques learned in "A Watercolor Journey" and move forward to new skills. All materials provided. Any beginner class will serve as a prerequisite for this retreat.
Suggested donation: \$245 single / \$195 each shared



Celtic Spirituality: A New Look at Ancient Wisdom March 15-17, 2019

Friday 7:30 pm to Sunday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Sr. Mary Lonergan, OSF

Celtic spirituality can breathe new life into our spiritual practices today. Join us for a basic introduction and a new look at ancient wisdom to enlighten our modern times and re-energize our spiritual lives.

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



Pilgrimage to Purpose: The Path of the Labyrinth

April 12-14, 2019

Friday 7:30 pm to Sunday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Lara Gagne

Discover the labyrinth, an ancient archetype of the pilgrimage. Through guided walks and creative activities, learn how the labyrinth can be used to evaluate and explore the path we travel on life's journey.
Suggested donation: \$220 single / \$170 each shared



Centering Prayer Intensive

April 22-28, 2019

Monday 7:00 pm to Sunday 1:30 pm

*Facilitators: Darlyne Pape and
Donna Kreiensieck*

Enhance your contemplative prayer life and expand the fundamentals of your Centering Prayer practice through this intensive weeklong retreat in a quiet, transformative setting. Previous Centering Prayer experience is required.
Suggested donation: \$535



Hearts on Fire:

The Medieval Mystics and Their Spirituality May 17-19, 2019

Friday 7:30 pm to Sunday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Prioress Mary Forman, OSB

Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, Gertud of Helfta, and Julian of Norwich were all monastic women who experienced God as visionaries and/or mystics and served as powerful teachers for a loving relationship with God. Through an introduction to mysticism and examination of the writings of these mystics, we will reflect on our own relationships with God.
Suggested donation: \$220 single / \$170 each shared



Herbal Wisdom for Today

May 30 – June 2, 2019

Thursday 7:30 pm to Sunday 1:30 pm

Facilitator: Sr. Carlotta Maria Fontes, OSB

Discover what ancient herbal wisdom has to show us today. Learn how to identify and harvest herbs in order to make herbal teas, salve, and more. Come ready to hike, dig, and get dirty! Tools and materials provided.
Suggested donation: \$260 single / \$210 each shared



Come to the Quiet

June 21-28, 2019

Friday 7:30 pm to Friday 1:30 pm

Facilitators: Lillian Englert, OSB, and team

Come away for a silent, individually-directed retreat with optional faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual. Relax in God's presence surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community.
Suggested donation: \$535 single



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Since that day, other opportunities presented themselves to witness joy. One day I looked out my window to see three deer gamboling in the field behind the Monastery. One of the smaller deer butted his head against the rear of another deer, and then quickly ran (to hide?) in the Mary Garden. The other deer followed and both must have found some delectable morsels for they stayed quite some time in the enclosed garden. The deers' play echoes the delight the Song author observes, "My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag [who] stands behind the wall, gazing through ... the lattices" (Song 2:9).

As I write this reflection it is the third week of Advent, begun on Gaudete or Rejoice Sunday. At the Eucharistic liturgy we heard Paul's letter to the Philippians proclaim: "Rejoice in the Lord always I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all"



(Phil 4:4). How frequently we do a happy dance or smile when we experience a random act of kindness. One day on a trip to a meeting I stopped for breakfast at a small local café. When I went to pay the bill, the waitress told me that my bill was paid by the couple, who had sat at a nearby table. When I asked her how often such things happened, she said that I was the fifth one that day. So, that prompted me to do the same for a mom and her daughter at the table nearby.

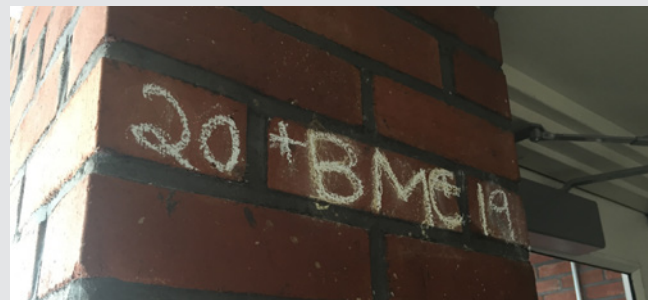
Each day people perform acts of kindness for others, often anonymously. Since the fires in Paradise, California, we have been hearing stories of firefighters moving burning vehicles away to open a road for residents to get out of town and of their taking occupants of those cars to safety. We also have heard stories of people finding and caring for the animals left behind, and of pets finding their way back to their owners. In the midst of evening news shows, it is the last segment that tells good news "inspiring America," or portraying heroic acts of mercy and kindness. Given the dark and often bewildering news clips of daily events, it helps to "rejoice in the Lord" whose love and care is incarnate in everyday ordinary folks.

What incredible things have you seen? Over what events do you rejoice? Where do you experience the joy of the Spirit as an unexpected grace in your life? Let us pray for each other to know the joy of spiritual longing:

O God, who desires us beyond our imagining,
Fill us with the joy that none can take away,
A joy in your presence, deeper than any sorrow,
A joy that surpasses understanding and surprises us,
A joy that delights in children's laughter and
deers' antics,
A joy that remembers kindnesses and passes
them on,
A joy that reminds us of the goodness of humanity
in the midst of tragedy, and
A joy that will be without end on our meeting
You face to face. ✕

House Blessing

On January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, Sister Mary, our prioress, led the community in the tradition of blessing the house with prayers and caroling. **We wish all a blessed new year!**



developments

by Carrie Barton, Donor Relations Officer



Joy! I am feeling a lot of it these days. I experience joy in every aspect of my life — living on the incredibly beautiful Camas Prairie, working with the sisters and staff of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, enjoying the comfort and embrace of a richly nurturing environment. I am filled with joy at the prospect of moving boldly into the future with this community.

As the newly hired donor relations officer, it is my privilege and pleasure to meet you and get to know you. Although I and the rest of the development team are tasked with raising funds, our ultimate purpose is to invite you to partner with God to transform the lives of others through the Monastery's mission and ministries. Your faithful and generous contributions are crucial!

It's not all about money, though. We want you to experience the joy of engaging with the Monastery community in other ways that are meaningful to you. The possibilities are endless: we encourage you to share your skills and talents, knowledge, inspiration, dreams, and ideas — as well as your financial resources.

Professor, researcher, and author Brené Brown has observed in her work that joy results from a spiritual way of engaging with the world that's connected to practicing gratitude. This idea has both corporate and personal meaning for me. Collectively, the members of this community accept your generous and faithful support with gratitude and celebrate it with joy. Thank you! My personal prayer is that you will find your unique path to joy. If that path leads you to a deeper commitment to the Monastery, then Hallelujah!

My name is Carrie Barton. I am a recent transplant from the Boise valley where I was born and lived all but three years of my life. I never in a million years expected to move to Cottonwood and work at the Monastery but, hey, I've found myself in unexpected places before. In one of those places — Kenya — friends from the Kamba tribe gave me a new name that describes perfectly how I feel about being a member of the St. Gertrude community: Mutanu. It means joy! ✕

Happenings

- Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Fall Appeal project — a handicapped-accessible van for our assisted living sisters. We are well on our way toward making this goal a reality. Updates to come.
- Want to experience St. Gertrude's but can't make the trip? Sign up for the minute-a-day prayer series at www.stgertrudes.org/prayer/minute-a-day.
- The Idaho County Orchestra gave a Christmas concert on Dec. 29 and the Palouse Choral Society Chamber Choir performed Handel's *Messiah* (right) on Jan. 12. Learn about upcoming concerts in our chapel at www.stgertrudes.org/concerts.
- Many artists of St. Gertrude's gathered on Dec. 1 to conclude a six-week art challenge on hospitality.



The works of art are now hanging in the dining room hallway to enjoy throughout the rest of the year.

New Exhibit Helps Celebrate Local Lives



From left to right: Cort Conley, Sr. Mary Paulé Tacke, Charlie Cone, Frances Wisner, Sabi Frei, Bill Wassmuth, and Ray Holes.

"Sometimes, reality is too complex, but stories will give it a form," said author Cort Conley.

The Gem State author wrapped up the 2018 Fall Lecture Series for the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude on Oct. 25, speaking on unique Idaho County characters and of some less familiar backstories.

"When I was asked to come tell stories connected to the museum's incredible new displays, I couldn't refuse because this is a special place and it has a special history," Conley said. "We all live in a network of stories, and some of them take up residence in our hearts. In the words of [novelist] Eudora Welty, 'They just come out, like a mouse from its hole.'"

Conley's presentation was the official celebration of the new Historical Museum exhibit featuring people of Camas Prairie and the surrounding river areas. From saintly service abroad to clowning to saddle craftsmanship, the reasons why these people are remembered are varied and compelling.

Sister Mary Paulé Tacke founded schools in Africa and developed a reputation for bad driving. Charlie Cone tried many different career endeavors but never gave up his love of clowning. Frances Wisner grew a broad readership as a columnist from her remote home on the Salmon River. Sabi Frei became a legend from simple dedication and good cheer. Bill Wassmuth was a human rights activist who helped thwart white supremacists in Idaho. Ray Holes sent expertly crafted saddles around the world from his shop in Grangeville. These are just a few of the people you will meet on your next visit to the Historical Museum. ✕

Meet Our New Innkeeper, Tim Oberholzer

We joyfully welcome Tim Oberholzer as the new innkeeper for the Inn at St. Gertrude. Tim brings a breadth of experience for sharing Benedictine hospitality, including spending five years as a monk of the Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance in Dubuque, Iowa, at the New Melleray Abbey.

"I feel immediately welcomed by this community," said Tim. "My goal is to learn and carry on the tradition that the Inn has had from its inception in 2010 and nurture what Sisters Corinne and Chanelle started." While Sister Corinne is serving in other ministries, don't worry, Sister Chanelle is still making dessert! ✕

www.InnatStGertrude.com
208-451-4321

