



CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF
OUR LIFE

Winter 2022



A Message from the Prioress

by Sister Mary Forman

Marcella, Interpreter of Scriptures

Marcella was a wealthy aristocratic woman of a senatorial family, cousin to Pammachius, friend of Jerome and son-in-law of Paula. Widowed after only seven months of marriage and refusing to remarry, she lived with her mother Albina in their home on the Aventine in Rome. When Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria was in Rome during one of his many exiles in the 340s, it's likely that Marcella met him and thereafter formed a community of ascetical women in her and Albina's home. Among the other members of this community were Asella, a virgin, Principia, another virgin, and for a time Paula and her second daughter Eustochium.

These women were studying the Bible and raising questions when Jerome came to Rome in 382. Marcella had heard of him and persuaded him to give readings and lectures at her home. She sent letters to him asking questions on the Bible. The nineteen letters sent from Jerome to Marcella during his four years there are what form the bulk of her "liber", as Jerome referred to them. Jerome actually called her a feminine monk as follows: she undertook the *propositum monachorum* [purpose of monks] and was the first to be known by this *nomen* [name] (ep. 127.5), that is, monacha as he calls her elsewhere.

He was not just her teacher, mentor and spiritual guide, but in his explanation on Psalm 44, ep. 65.2 to Principia of 395, Jerome speaks of Marcella and her companion Asella as teachers "in the study of scriptures and holiness of mind and body." Jerome's responses to Marcella's questions indicate that she was reading the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. We have none of her letters, so it has been necessary to glean from his responses the kinds of matters that occupied her interests.



In ep. 127, Jerome's epitaph on Marcella after her death, he described Marcella as follows: she lived an ascetical life for many years, often quoted Plato's maxim that philosophy was a form of meditation on death (ep. 127.6); she frequently came to Jerome, after they met, with questions on the scriptures and even disputed his responses, in order to learn even more. Even after Jerome departed Rome, she would often answer questions put to her after long study and meditation on Scripture, as if Jerome were answering through her (ep. 127.7). She had heard about monasticism from the bishops of Alexandria, who had visited her, and inspired her to start her

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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 story

Sister Chanelle

Sister Chanelle grew up on a dairy farm in Nampa, Idaho. She was the 12th child in her family. Her early years were spent helping on the dairy farm, she says, "...rolling milk cans that were as big as me into the back of the pickup truck!" Her mother was a quiet and prayerful woman who deeply influenced Sr. Chanelle's eventual decision to become a Sister.

Her father was from Switzerland and spoke German, so Sr. Chanelle was given the opportunity to spend a semester at St. Gertrude's in Cottonwood where they still taught German at the boarding school. After that semester, she took a Marian Year Pilgrimage all around Europe. The highlight was being present for the canonization of Saint Peter Chanel, who would eventually become her namesake.

By the time she returned, she knew she wanted to become part of the community at St. Gertrude's but she dallied to help her sister with her newborn daughter. Even today Sister Chanelle says she has a unique bond to that niece, but after a letter from the Formation Director at St. Gertrude's created some urgency, she finally arrived at the Monastery and in June of 1956, she made her First Profession to the community. From there, she was sent to nursing school and spent the next ~20 years working as a nurse in Cottonwood and Jerome, Idaho. She delivered many babies during that time, and she even runs into adults named Chanelle sometimes, only to learn that they were named after her when



Left: Sister Chanelle's signature smile.
Below: Sister Chanelle greets a visitor



she helped deliver them!

After 20 years of service away from the Monastery, Chanelle returned home and took a well-deserved break. Never one to sit still for long though, she was soon in charge of running the infirmary on site at the Monastery, providing critical care to the Sisters themselves.

Eventually, in 1984, Sister Chanelle had the lovely opportunity to spend a year in theological study with many other Sisters and emerged from that growth-filled year with newfound inspiration to return to the medical world, but this time as a chaplain. She worked in Spokane at Sacred Heart as a chaplain, mostly with dialysis patients. She spent 14 years praying with, singing with, and being present for people during some of the hardest times of their lives. The work she did was profound and satisfying.

(You can hear a recording of her singing one of her favorite songs on the St. Gertrude's Monastery podcast. It's in

Episode Two of the podcast. You can hear about her name in Episode Five.)

While most people would be considering retirement after nearly 40 years of work, Sister Chanelle started her THIRD career then, as the hospitality specialist at The Inn At St. Gertrude's. If you stayed there during the first 8 years of its existence, you probably met Sister Chanelle and enjoyed some of her Heavenly Hash, or fresh chocolate cake.

Sister Chanelle's smile continues to brighten the halls of her home at the Monastery, while her service to the surrounding community continues to ripple out positive effects in every direction. ✕



Thoughts from the Redwoods

by Jane Somerton, Obl.S.B.

Kate and I recently visited the Redwood National Park in Northern California. Hiking in torrential rain, we basked in the glorious majesty and magic of that forest.

After hiking for an hour or so I began to “see with different eyes” the wonder of that forest. Soaking in the rain and the beauty of the place, the plants, the critters, the fog, and, most of all, the redwoods, my vision shifted. I was gobsmacked by the abundance and variety of species living in, on, and because of those amazing ancient living things. Redwoods are “not just trees — they are part of complex communities of living things interacting with their environment.”¹ So much like we are!

That day, as I slowed down enough to carefully observe the area around fallen redwoods, the magic of the earthy creation by which we were surrounded became reality. In the image below are fallen redwoods, each having completed their original mission of standing tall, shading, and nurturing the environment around them.

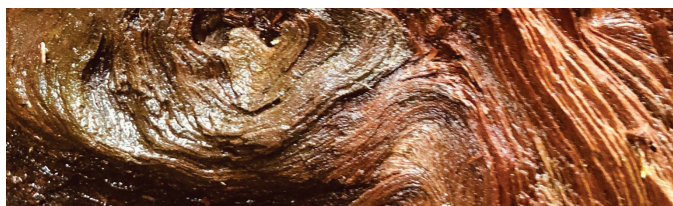


Are they still redwood trees? Yes, but in new forms and with a new mission. Each one continues to support the environment around it in addition to hosting an abundance of new life. From microscopic organisms to ferns and other epiphytes, fungi, huckleberry, current, elderberry, sorrel, alder, etc. Fully living and thriving new redwood trees grow around, in and on the fallen trees. Had it not been dumping rain I would have laid down and fully

immersed myself in the amazing energy of those trees. Instead, I hugged them. A parallel reality touched my mind and heart in the redwood forest that day and I have been ruminating on it since.

Benedict founded his monasteries as a radical alternative to a world of chaos in the 5th century. Since then, Benedictine monasticism has continually adapted to “respond to the needs of the times.” Point of fact or my opinion: creative adaptation to change is a primary Benedictine charism! Benedictine monasticism has never stayed the same for long. Large monasteries and magnificent contributions to our world gave way to smaller communities, which again grew large in numbers. And now, many monasteries are declining or coming to completion. Much like the beautiful redwood environment that is constantly in transition, nourishing the world around it, our St. Gertrude’s nurtures the world around it and extends its reach well beyond. And it is changing and actively adapting as are most monastic communities in north America. We cannot predict with certainty what the future will bring but we do know that healthy growth will continue to come if we look to the future with creativity and grace.

Benedictine spirituality is not just about me and my personal journey but that is the critical first step, yes? St. Benedict has set out a practical and do-able roadmap and Benedictine monasticism now has many forms as it has adapted to “the times” and needs of society. Will we look and feel the same in five years, or ten? Not likely. But, just as the amazing abundance of life growing in, around, on, and because of fallen redwoods and their symbiotic network beneath the ground, monasticism will continue in new, wonderful ways. And so too, St. Gertrude’s. As we nurture each other and in turn enrich our personal circles of influence, may we, with grace, continue to live into our oblate promises and may hospitality, simplicity and peacemaking remain our priorities. ✠



¹ <https://www.nps.gov/redw/index.htm>

spirit center

A Place For Everyone

by Tim Oberholzer

The Rule of St. Benedict embodies hope. The Tools for Good Works conclude with, “never lose hope in God’s mercy.”(RB 4:74) Benedictine life seeks true happiness by trusting the promises of Jesus through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is hope in practice. The Monastery of St. Gertrude is a place of hope. Spirit Center is a place for hope.

A Place for Seekers

“Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days? (Ps 33[34]:13) If you hear this and your answer is ‘I do,’ God then directs these words to you.”(RB Pro:15-16)

Hope desires “the kingdom of heaven and eternal life.”(CCC 1817) Benedictines constantly seek this kingdom as desire’s true fulfillment. Spirit Center uses this way of life to respond to the hunger for depth and meaning and to support the individual spiritual journey of all faith traditions.

A Place for Followers

“See how the Lord in his love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide.”(RB Pro:20-21b)

Hope places “trust in Christ’s promises.”(CCC 1817) The St. Gertrude’s community responds to the transforming power of the gospel through healing hospitality, grateful simplicity, and creative peacemaking. Spirit Center draws upon these core values to offer contemplative space for learning, renewal, and crucial conversation.

A Place for Strugglers

“What is not possible to us by nature, let us

ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace.”(RB Pro:41)

Hope turns to the Advocate for strength, relying on “the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.”(CCC 1817) The Rule of St. Benedict acknowledges weakness and impossibility. A community dependent on grace supports the hard work of ongoing transformation. Spirit Center offers a place of peace sustained by a praying community to hear the Spirit’s promptings and persevere in grace.

Do you desire to see good days? Are you on a faith journey? Are you struggling? We have a place for you. ✠

Spirit Center
upcoming retreats

More information at
www.spirit-center.org

Mar 4-6	Lenten Yoga Journey
Mar 8-10	A Watercolor Journey
Mar 18-20	Prayer Awakens
Mar 25-27	Hearts on Fire: The Medieval Mystics and Their Spirituality
Apr 4-10	Centering Prayer Intensive
May 27-29	Redefining Retirement: A Spiritual Practice
Jun 3-5	Justice Impels



Tim Oberholzer oversees Spirit Center and is a novice spiritual director. Tim spent five and a half years as a monk at New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, Iowa, before discerning out of monastic life and moving to Idaho to be closer to his parents. He earned a business degree from the University of Notre Dame, studied philosophy and theology at the University of St. Thomas, and currently participates in the Stewards of the Mystery spiritual direction training program. Tim is a remarried widower, an ultramarathon runner, and an avid reader.

Historical Museum Spring Lecture Series

We're trying something new this year — an afternoon lecture series. It will give guests the opportunity to enjoy our museum and gift shop prior to the lectures and drive home while it is still light.

All lectures are in the In Johanna Room at the Spirit Center at St. Gertrude's.

March 10, 2022 3:00 PM

Mary Reed presents

Fortitude: The Sisters' Long Journey to America

The journey begins with a legend in the 6th Century and ends with the successful founding of a new home at the Monastery of St. Gertrude's in Cottonwood. During these centuries the Sisters faced the challenges of plagues, fire, poverty, and political upheavals with courage, faith, and fortitude. Museum Open House follows lecture at 4:00PM.

March 17, 2022 4:00 PM

Loren Davis and David Sisson present

The Importance of Cooper's Ferry Site for Understanding the Early Archaeology of the Americas

Archaeological excavations conducted at the Cooper's Ferry site in the lower Salmon River canyon of western Idaho produced a long record of repeated human occupation beginning at ~16,000 years ago.

This early archaeological record is interpreted to show that people lived in a camp along the Salmon River where they hunted extinct horses, made stone tools, and left behind equipment caches in anticipation of future activities. In this presentation, we will discuss the evidence recovered by the OSU-BLM team and how it informs our understanding of ice age life in western Idaho and beyond.

March 24, 2022 4:00 PM

Amy Canfield presents

The Politics of Protest: How Women Won the Vote

The presentation will examine the different methods, tactics, and philosophies women used in their fight for voting rights.

March 31, 2022 4:00 PM

Steve Burns presents

A History of Animals in Idaho and Around the World

Idaho is rich in natural history, particularly when it comes to animals. We will explore the history of wild animals in Idaho and their counterparts around the world. We will then turn from the past and look to the future of animals in the wild. ❧



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at St. Gertrude

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own ascetical community. Jerome states: “My revered friend, Paula was blessed with Marcella’s friendship, and it was in Marcella’s cell that Eustochium, that paragon of virgins, was gradually trained.” (ep. 127.5)¹

In his responses to Marcella’s questions, for example in ep. 28, apparently Marcella “had demanded [Jerome’s] opinion on [the term] diapsalmate,” the pause in music. He first excuses himself from explaining by saying that the brevity of a letter would not do it justice. Then he says: “But what is beneficial to my ἔργοδιώκτην [task mistress/slave driver]? [cf. Ex. 3:7] For your desire is stirred up more by silence. Therefore, lest I drag you very long, consider a few words for many” (ep. 28.1)², after which he does explain the meaning as a way to speak of meter, or pausing for a breath in singing the psalm. The biblical Greek word for slave driver, ἔργοδιώκτην, in the Septuagint is taken from Exodus 3:7. It is as if Jerome is both teasing Marcella and playing to her knowledge of Greek.

Ep. 59 shows her breadth of knowledge of scripture and keenness of mind. Here is Jerome’s response to her five questions on the New Testament.

1. You challenge us with great questions and numbing our nature with ease, you teach us while you ask. Your first inquiry was: what are those things, “which neither eye has seen nor ear has heard, nor have they arisen in the heart of a human, what God has prepared for those who love [God]” [1 Cor. 2:]? And how does the same apostle in turn infer: “But to us God has revealed [them] through his Spirit” [1 Cor. 2:10]?
2. The second question, in which you say that you read in a passage in my little works, what are the sheep, who stand on the right, and the goats, who stand on the left [cf. Mt. 25:33], the Christians and gentiles and not rather the good and the bad?
3. Thirdly you had asked what does the apostle say on the coming of the Lord Savior that certain of those living will be taken up into the clouds, so that they may not be preceded by those, who have fallen asleep in Christ [cf. 1 Thess. 4:14-16]; and you wish to know whether they occur thus in their bodies and

not before they die, since our Lord died...

4. The fourth is that you asked how in the gospel of John after the resurrection, is it said to Mary Magdalene: “Do not touch me; for I have not ascended to my father” [John 20:17]; and again in Matthew it was written, that the women fell on the ground to the feet [uestigia] of the Savior, when certainly it is not the same thing to touch his feet [pedes] after the resurrection and not to touch them [cf. Mt. 27:38-40].
5. The last leaf of paper contained [the question] whether after the resurrection the Lord conversed with the disciples for forty days [cf. Acts 1:3]; and was he ever elsewhere or will he have ascended to heaven secretly, and descended, and nevertheless did not deny his presence to his disciples?³

Marcella was reading the New Testament so carefully that she sees a seeming discrepancy between the Gospel of John and that of Matthew with respect to touching Jesus’ feet or footprints, and also Jerome’s interpretation of who are the sheep and who are the goats in Matthew 25:33. Jerome quotes her questions back to her before his replies; this citing of her queries indicates to me that he honored her questions. All of them are posed in the indicative, rather than the subjective usually reserved for implied questions, which indicates that they were genuine questions on her part.

Hers was a keen mind and she applied it with the assiduity of her intellect and meditation on Sacred Scripture in order to raise issues that she saw in the texts. Her questions led Jerome to clarify what he meant and how he interpreted particular passages. Finally, in his preface to three biblical commentaries (Daniel, Galatians and Ephesians), Jerome mentions Marcella as one of the dedicatees of the work.

As a woman of intelligent inquiry, deep prayer and persistent study of the scriptures, Marcella is a model of hope and perseverance. She sought out one of the great biblical commentators of the day, to whom to address her questions and in the process assisted him in his own explorations of the meanings of scripture and the pursuit of that meaning in his commentaries. She is also an example of how biblical study, undertaken in a communal setting, allows for a sincere quest to know the Lord of the scriptures for living a Christian life. ✠

1 Jerome of Stridon, “Ep. 127,” in *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, translated by W. H. Fremantle, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF] II.6 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark/Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989 reprint) 255.

2 Ibid., translation of “Ep. XXVIII.1,” in CSEL 54.227.

3 Ibid., translation of “Ep. XLX.1,2,3,4,5,” in CSEL 54.541-545.

from the development office

Learning To Listen

by Carrie Barton

I love a bright, shiny New Year. After a season of holidays – the gratefulness of Thanksgiving, the anticipation of Advent, the joy of Christmas and Epiphany – I am filled with hope for the coming year. The New Year inspires me to dream big, to reflect on where I am and where I want to go in my spiritual life.

The Prologue to the Rule of St. Benedict begins, “Listen carefully, my child, to my instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” *Listening carefully with the ear of my heart* – that’s my journey in this New Year.

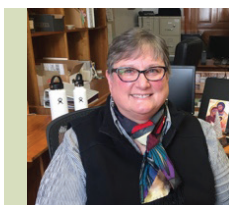
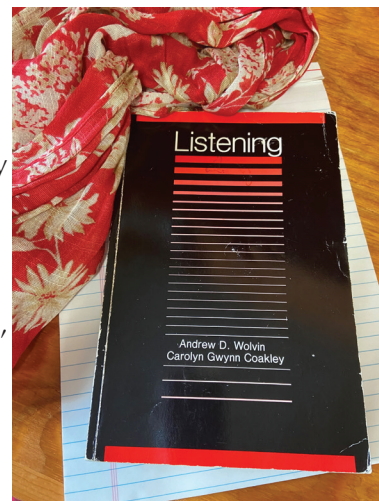
About a million years ago, or more accurately, 1989, I took a class at Boise State University called “Listening.” It remains one of the most valuable learning experiences of my life. I remember the professor talking about the emphasis we placed on learning to express ourselves through speech, but we don’t even think about learning to listen. My classmates and I discovered listening as a distinct behavior, and learned different modes of listening: comprehensive, therapeutic, and appreciative. Lastly, the class focused on intrapersonal listening which suggested, rightly, that personal perspective informs how we hear what others are saying.

And, although it was not part of the curriculum per se, I learned how to listen with the ear of my heart.

My niece, Elizabeth, was about six that summer and in fulfillment of one of my assignments, I listened to her with the ear of my heart without knowing it. We sat on the steps of my parents’ house as I listened to her tell her story. I have no recollection of what she said but I remember clearly how the connection between the two of us felt, so deep and pure. It’s a memory I treasure, a tiny piece of her that I hold in my heart, even more precious since her death five years ago.

Through the years, I’ve forgotten much of what I learned about listening. As I engage more with Benedictine life, I’m drawn back to the art of listening with the ear of my heart – listening with intention to others, to myself, and to the still small voice of God. I want to listen with the ear of my heart to you.

May the ear of your heart bring you sounds of hope, joy, and love every day of this New Year! ✕



Carrie Barton is the donor relations officer for the Development Team at the Monastery. She is a transplant from the Boise valley where she was born and lived all but three years of her life. In her role at St. Gertrude’s she sees her ultimate purpose is to invite you to partner with God to transform the lives of others through the Monastery’s mission and ministries.

We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy Name, Let Your unfailing love surround us,
Lord for our hope is in You alone.

Psalms 33:20-22

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Loaning Chinese Artifacts to Lewis Clark State College

In November, The Historical Museum at St. Gertrude's loaned 35 Chinese artifacts to Lewis Clark State College's Center for Arts and History. The artifacts will be exhibited in their gallery at 415 Main Street, Lewiston, Idaho from February 24th until August 31st.

The artifacts were given to the Sisters at St. Gertrude's in 1988 by Samuel Emmanuel. Born in Turkey in 1902, he immigrated with his family to Seattle in 1907. His interest in Asian art began while working with his father, who dealt in Asian rugs. In addition to his long and successful business career, he became an avid art collector.

In 1947, he married Winifred Rhoades, a native of the Camas Prairie. After her death in 1978, Samuel donated his extensive collection of Asian and European art to St. Gertrude's Museum as a

memorial to her. He said, "With this memorial dedicated to my dear wife Winifred, my mission in this life is accomplished."

✠

Left:

A Rosewood altar table with mother of pearl inlays. Black silk wall hanging with embroidered gold dragons. Carved simulated ivory urn with dragons and an intricate carved finial of Buddha.



Right:
Chinese altar set includes a pair of Buddhist Fu dogs (or lions) and an incense burner.



New Cookbook Available



Left to right: Judith Marvin, Ched Johnson, and Nancy Collins-Warner.

Come to the Table: Recipes for Loving and Serving is a rich compendium of writings and recipes from the community of St. Gertrude, now available from the Monastery Gift Shop. Reminiscences, poems and family stories enhance recipes in this "more than a cookbook" collection.

Ched Johnson and Nancy Collins-Warner were inspired by Sister Mary Forman's article, "Sacred Meal in Benedictine Life," in a Fall Canticle (2017). She explores the "sense of a meal being sacred" and encourages us to experience "mealtimes as a source of sharing stories and important events in the family's life together."

From the tradition of the Monastery Communion Bread (Sister Mary Geis) to a witty account of "A Perfectly Good Salad" (Spirit Center Manager Tim Oberholzer), the selections provide words to savor as well as ingredients to mix. In another entry, writer Susan Swetnam celebrates "Raspberries and Community at St. Gertrude's". Sister Teresa Jackson explores how "food and bodies" invite us to "experience the Divine."

Archival photographs accompany several of the writings. Artist and friend of the Monastery, Judith Marvin, graciously offered fresh illustrations for the cookbook. Her drawings and watercolors of raspberries, a warm pie, stuffed peppers and more, make the book visually delicious. *Come to the Table* is available at the Monastery Gift Shop (<https://stgertrudes.org/shop/>) ✠

