

# CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE



**A Journal of  
Our Life**

*Spring 2023*

## Tributes Abound in Memory of Sister Mary Forman

When Sister Mary Forman passed into eternal life around 11:00 pm on April 20, bells began solemnly tolling from the monastery, resounding across the Camas Prairie.

That was but one tribute to a woman who touched many lives, in many ways, throughout her life.

No sooner had the announcement of Sister Mary's death been posted on Facebook, than fond memories were shared.



"I knew Sr. Mary when she was a novice," wrote Peggy Barnett. "I came for a retreat she gave. What a beautiful, gifted woman."

Cody Magnus recalled, "I had the privilege of taking S. Mary's Suffering and Healing class at St. John's. Almost nobody has shaped my theological imagination or stoked my intellectual curiosity like she did."

From being a "gifted educator and leader," "supportive friend," and "visionary," to the first to greet visitors when they arrived at St. Gertrude's, as well as "brief but meaningful conversations" with guests, those who interacted with Mary - according to their comments on Facebook and Instagram - felt honored to know her.

"Sr. Mary lived out her Gospel beliefs in total commitment in bringing a message of love, patience, and acceptance of all," Spike Cunningham summarized. "She was a gentle breeze leading us all to the fullness of life."

Sister Barbara Jean Glodowski appreciated Sister Mary's leadership style. "The thing I miss the most is her organization," she said. Sister Mary's absence is definitely felt as the transition toward the future continues.

Among Sister Janet Barnard's memories, she recalled how Sister Mary had long hair for a number of years. "She braided it and wrapped it on the top of her head," Sister Janet related. Both involved in ministries away from the

*Continued on page 7*

### 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 Cecile Uhlorn: “Music and community: these are my life”

One could argue that “Sister Cecile” and “music” are synonymous.

Sister Cecile grew up in a household filled with music. Her parents, Aloysius and Scholastica Uhlorn, were both musicians and their twelve children were immersed in music at home on the farm in Ferdinand, Idaho. The family enjoyed singing together, and Sister Cecile became especially adept at singing harmony. One of her many gifts was the ability to play almost any instrument by ear.

Sister Cecile shared her love of music in many ways. She taught music throughout her life and spent six years playing and teaching the organ at St. Andreas Monastery in Sarnen, Switzerland — the motherhouse of the Monastery of St. Gertrude. While in Sarnen, the Sisters there were in the process of electing a new prioress and, as the voting proceeded, Sister Cecile contemplated which fanfare should be played as the newly elected prioress was introduced. The Sarnen Sisters were so expeditious in their election that Sister Cecile didn’t have time to practice the fanfare she chose! She played it flawlessly nevertheless.

Sister Cecile was not only a musician, but a teacher and leader, as well. She taught elementary school in communities across the prairie. Serving as campus minister at St. Augustine’s in Moscow, Idaho, and at St. Martin’s in Lacey, Washington, Sister Cecile worked with young people who

were learning how to make their faith their own, instead of simply an extension of their upbringing. “They were excited about their faith, and it was wonderful to be a part of that.”

Today, Sister Cecile’s music continues to bring the St. Gertrude’s community together. She wrote many of the antiphons sung by the Sisters daily during the Liturgy of the Hours. Just as the Psalms are spoken in unison as “one voice,” so Sister Cecile’s antiphons are sung in “one voice.” Although Sister Cecile is no longer able to live in community at the monastery, that unifying mystery of “one voice” surely reaches across the prairie to her home at Cascadia of Grangeville, a skilled nursing facility, surrounding her with the love and care of her monastery family. In return, her blessings grace us all. ✕



*Sr. Cecile while serving as campus minister at St. Martin’s in Lacey, Washington.*



*Sr. Cecile receiving 60 roses on her 60th birthday in Sarnen, Switzerland.*

Please note these corrections to the article titled *Sister Clarissa: A Dedicated Life* in the Winter 2023 *Canticle*:

Sr. Clarissa was born and raised in Cottonwood, Idaho; the name of her best friend in high school is spelled “Clarice”; and the core of the *Rule of St. Benedict* is hospitality, simplicity, and peace.

# spirit center

## A Letter to the Afflicted

by Tim Oberholzer

To you who hang on the last thread of faith or clutch at straws,  
To you who suffer the crushing loss of a loved one, a job, a home, everything,  
To you who feel small and forgotten,  
To you who live fearfully on the margins yet hope for justice,  
To you who love unconditionally, forgive quickly, and receive others' wounds deeply,  
To you whose innocence has been shattered,  
To you who catch arrows, defuse threats, right wrongs, and shield the defenseless,  
To you whose service encounters ingratitude and hostility,  
To you who preach the good news of mercy, forgiveness, and salvation to an unbelieving world,

You are welcome here. The strength of Benedictine life lies in community. Together we strive for the kingdom of heaven on earth. Through healing hospitality, grateful simplicity, and creative peacemaking, we share faith in a loving God, comfort those who mourn, see the overlooked, champion social justice, refresh the exhausted, restore the broken, support the advocate, embrace the burnt-out, and sustain all who live and preach the gospel.

St. Benedict advises "care of the sick must rank above and before all else." (RB 36.1) We experience afflictions in many forms: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. In times past, Sisters from the Monastery of St. Gertrude cared for physical illness in hospitals and nurtured intellectual health in schools. Today, care for the hurting and the seeker flows through the evolution of the Center for Benedictine Life and the ministries of Spirit Center, the Historical Museum, the Inn, St. Gertrude's L.I.V.E., and Spirituality & the Arts. No matter your affliction, you are Christ to us. We welcome you as Christ. ✕



### Spirit Center upcoming retreats

More information at  
[www.spirit-center.org](http://www.spirit-center.org)

- Jun 16-23 Come to the Quiet
- Jun-Jul 29-2 Exploring Nature's Gifts (full with waiting list)
- Jul 14-16 Parables in Pictures
- Jul 21-23 Creative Peacemaking
- Aug 15-17 Mappa Divina
- Aug 21-27 Living as a Monk in Everyday Life



**Tim Oberholzer** oversees Spirit Center and is a 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 recently completed the Stewards of the Mystery spiritual direction training program. Tim is a remarried widower, an ultramarathon runner, and an avid reader.



# *museum musings*

## Raspberry Social is Set!

Mark your calendars for Sunday, August 6th for the Raspberry Social! All new Living History characters will be stationed throughout the museum and you'll meet them, along with four new historical Sisters and the abbot who built the grotto.



## Historical Museum at St. Gertrude



Open Monday - Saturday  
from 9:00am - 4:30pm  
*History is for everyone!*  
Adults \$6 Students \$3  
Free for children 6 or under

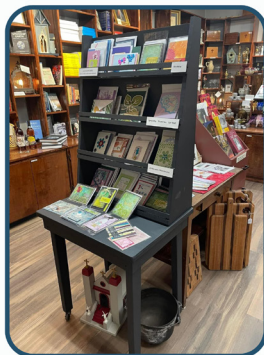
### Gifts for any occasion!

Featuring items  
handmade by our Sisters:

- Soaps & Salves
- Lip Balms
- Teas
- Crocheted items
- Greeting Cards

Also handmade:

- Wine & Mead
- Charcuterie boards
- Wine tumblers
- Lanterns
- Local historical books
- Raspberry Jam



465 Keuterville Road, Cottonwood, ID 83522

208-962-2050

[www.historicalmuseumatstgertrude.org](http://www.historicalmuseumatstgertrude.org)

## Free Museum Admission for Student Groups

As a former fourth grade teacher, Mary Schweitzer has a deep understanding of the importance of education. She also has a generous heart. With a gift to the Historical Museum, Mary continues to share her dedication to kids and education by sponsoring admission fees for formal school groups. Thank you, Mary, from all of us at the Historical Museum and the students who benefit from your kindness!

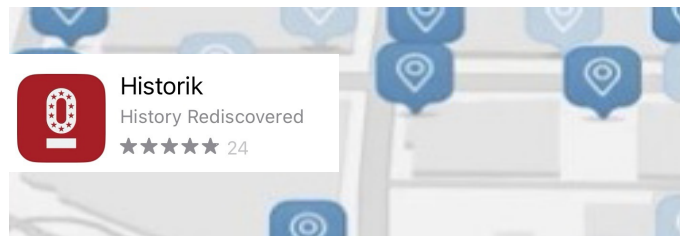


## Historik App

Look for the Monastery, Chapel, Stations of the Cross, Grotto and Museum on a new free app called “Historik” which shows the historical sites near your location. This is a newly developed app so more historic sites are being added regularly. The developer of the app, Chris Whalen, lives in Coeur d’Alene so north Idaho has many stories to enjoy. St. Gertrude’s is the first historic landmark in our area to join.

## Art Exhibit Opens May 1st

A community art show “Icons of the Prairie” opened in our Spotlight Gallery May 1st and runs through mid-August. Pictured is a painting of Cottonwood made for the exhibit by Steve Burns, President and CEO of the Idaho Community Foundation. Copies of the print are available in our gift shop and online. Make sure you don’t miss the show!



## PANDEMIC POINTS OF VIEW

*A Collection of Covid-19 Stories  
from Idaho County*



## Pandemic Points of View

*Pandemic Points Of View* is a book of local community stories on the challenges of the pandemic. Panic at a liquor store... A commercial cook who lost her sense of taste and has never fully regained it... Doctors who spend up to four hours per shift trying to find a hospital willing to take critical patients... A mortuary suffering a space crisis. This book not only does the important work of collecting the area’s history but is also a fundraiser for the museum, available in the gift shop and the online store.



**Carla (Nuxoll) Wilkins** is the Director of the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude. A local from Greencreek with a mother who worked for the Sisters at St. Mary’s Hospital and two great aunts in the Monastery, she’s quite familiar with the history of the area. She earned a business degree from Lewis Clark State College, loves history, reading, ballroom dancing and spending time with her family. FUN FACT: Her first-grade teacher was Sr. Barbara Jean Glodowski and she’s still taking classes from her at the Monastery’s Lunch & Learn sessions.



# rest in peace

## Sister Benita Hassler

August 4, 1931 - March 30, 2023

Sister Benita Hassler, 91, passed into eternal life on March 30, 2023, at Grangeville Health and Rehab, Grangeville, Idaho, a skilled nursing facility. She had been a Benedictine sister for 74 years.

Sister Benita was born in Wolf Point, Montana, on August 4, 1931, to George and Veronica Brost Hassler. She entered St. Gertrude's in 1949 when she was just eighteen. Her decision went against the advice of both her best friend and her father, who resisted his daughter going so far away from Montana. But she embraced monastic life and soon began a 55-year teaching career - including 30 years in Idaho Catholic schools - where she could express her love of art, music, and language.



Sister Benita credits her mother as her biggest influence. "She showed me by her example many monastic values, especially her seemingly unlimited love for each member of her family and her voluntarily simple lifestyle." Her mother was also a teacher, in a one-room country school in Montana, and eventually entered the Monastery of St. Gertrude after she was widowed, 16 years after her daughter - as Sister Veronica.

In 1963, Sister Benita was among the first to be missioned to Bogotá, Colombia, to teach in the newly built Colegio San Carlos. Sister Benita

taught art and music in the primary and secondary schools there. Her mother, Sister Veronica, later served alongside her in Colombia for two years. Once back in Idaho, Sister Benita began teaching Spanish and English in the public high schools in Rupert and Caldwell. In 1984 she was named "Most Outstanding Foreign Language Teacher in Idaho" and was celebrated for her contagious enthusiasm and ability to motivate.

In 2000, Sister Benita became a volunteer, teaching English, GED and computer skills to Hispanic families. She and former student John Irwin also initiated a program that provided recycled computers for her students. In her later years, Sister Benita rose early to write, compose music or paint. During the day, she helped the sisters in the infirmary email their families and friends.

Sister Benita is survived by extended family members, and her Benedictine sisters.

A rosary vigil was held on May 1 in the chapel at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, with the Mass of Christian Burial on May 2.

Blackmer Funeral Home, Grangeville, Idaho ([www.blackmerfuneralhome.com](http://www.blackmerfuneralhome.com)), handled arrangements. Memorial gifts can be made to the Monastery of St. Gertrude, 465 Keuterville Road, Cottonwood, Idaho 83522, or via the website: <https://stgertrudes.org/donate>

*Enjoy Benedictine  
hospitality  
on the scenic  
Camas Prairie*



*"And to all guests let due honor be shown."  
-St. Benedict*



*inn* at St. Gertrude  
[www.innatstgertrude.com](http://www.innatstgertrude.com)



*Continued from page 1...*

monastery, the two would only see each other during the summer and, one summer, Sister Janet discovered Sister Mary had cut her hair short.

Sister Mary's appearance may have changed in that way, but Sister Janet added, "What I know of the Rule - the didactic part of the Rule - I learned from her."

Sister Teresa Jackson, during her reflection at the Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Mary on April 26, noted, "Over the last month of her final illness, and since her passing, we have heard and read so many people commenting on the incredible impact Mary had on their lives, as a friend, teacher, writer, retreat leader and more."

The Gospel at Mass told the story of Mary Magdalene encountering Jesus in the garden outside the tomb on Easter morning, and not immediately recognizing him. Sister Teresa pointed out, "As her sisters, her monastic community, we knew that Sr. Mary, as prioress, struggled like Mary Magdalene." Sister Mary - like so many - did not find it easy to deal with her own vulnerability, in order to "embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us all together in our monastic way."

Yet, as Sister Teresa added, "We all know that throughout Sr. Mary's life there were many times that the Risen Lord spoke her name, many times that she recognized him and cried out in joy. We can think of Sr. Mary as we look at the picture over the altar in that recognition and joy. As her sisters we also know that in her last days, the Risen Christ once again called her name, 'Mary,' and she was able to see and embrace a new reality."

Sister Mary's blood sister, Barbara Allen, gave a heartfelt eulogy at the conclusion of the Mass, drawing tears from many in the crowd that filled the monastery chapel. Once the urn containing Sister Mary's ashes was incensed, she was carried from the chapel in procession by her community.

Sister Teresa had concluded her reflection with this image: "And now we know she is living in the eternal reality of the Risen Christ calling her by name, a reality where she is always being embraced in love and, in turn, embracing all of us in the same love."

## Words and Photos in Abundance

A new, smiling face around the monastery has already tackled a number of challenges since relocating from Atchison, Kansas, in mid-April.

Julie A. Ferraro is our new marketing and communications specialist, and media relations coordinator. She has an extensive background in journalism - including editing, layout and photography - and communications: websites, social media, as well as many types of computer software. She will be involved with expanding the reach of the Center for Benedictine Life through the *Canticle*, the website, posting lively photos on Facebook and Instagram, the monthly eNews and many other ways.

Julie has worked with a number of religious communities and Benedictine organizations over the past decade, assisting with communications, accounting, archives and computers. She is a mother of four grown sons, and grandmother of six. In her spare time, she enjoys watching classic movies and writing fiction.

Visitors to the monastery will recognize her by the camera suspended around her neck, so be sure to smile!

Welcome, Julie!





# Benedictine spirituality

## When Sunday Morning Isn't Enough

Do you ever sense a longing for “more” in your faith life? Perhaps it’s a sense that your practice of Sunday morning church attendance isn’t enough. It might be a longing for a deeper prayer life or a chance to integrate your faith with a call to meet the needs of the world. You might have a sense of wanting a community in which you can share your faith with others.

Our sisters came to America in 1882 to meet the needs of German speaking immigrant communities. That need is no longer there. But a new need of many today is for a deeper, richer faith life and relationship with God, a need that may be more than a traditional parish or Church can fill. Today, St. Gertrude’s is becoming the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude to better meet the needs of a spiritually hungry world.

In the past the emphasis of St. Gertrude’s has been on sisters providing a variety of ministries to others. Today we are pioneering new ways to help people understand that St. Gertrude’s is a Benedictine community beyond the sisters, a community that seeks to share the transforming richness of Benedictine life outside of the monastery as well as inside.

Benedict pioneered a way of life focused on seeking God above all else. He established a way of life for ordinary people who wanted to pray, be of service and grow in faith. Benedict emphasized that our faith life is lived in community and that we need to have practices and structures that help us to live out our faith in everyday life. Through frequent prayer, reflection, spiritual practices, support and a simple lifestyle he encouraged his disciples to be transformed through the living of their faith.

Today we are showing people how they too can live this sort of life beyond the physical boundaries of the monastery and without taking monastic vows.

A few of our programs that help people do this include:

- **St. Gertrude’s oblate community:** A dispersed community of people who make a commitment to live Benedictine values and practices where they are. Oblates are women and men, Catholic and Protestant, single and married, from multiple states who gather regularly in small groups.
- **Spirit Center:** the Spirit Center offers multiple retreats and programs on Benedictine life and spirituality including in-person retreats, hybrid programs, and offerings over ZOOM through St. Gertrude’s L.I.V.E.
- **Benedictine Cohousing Companions:** This new community, in the formation stage, welcomes women to live at the monastery and be fully immersed in monastic life without taking religious vows.
- **Lunch and Learn:** Our employees have regular in-services conducted over the lunch break to learn more about our Benedictine values and how they are integral to the understanding that “We are St. Gertrude’s.”

Do you have “enough” in your faith life? Are you experiencing a spiritual hunger? St. Gertrude’s can support you and you can support us as we live Benedict’s invitation: “Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.” ✠

