

CANTICLE OF ST GERTRUDE



A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

SPRING 2024

A Broader Meaning to “Vocation”

In Catholic media articles, the term “vocation” is most often used as it applies to those who enter religious communities and profess vows. Every November, National Vocation Awareness Week is celebrated, described by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as “an annual week-long celebration of the Catholic Church in the United States dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life...”

Flipping through the pages of a secular dictionary, however, the definition of vocation reads, “a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation.” (*Oxford Languages via Google*)

This definition includes references to health care professions, and can even encompass more creative endeavors, such as writing, art or music, along with accounting, teaching, and so forth.

After all, the word “vocation” comes originally from Latin: *vocare*, meaning “to call.”

As the community of the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude continues to evolve, many ways of being called are being discovered - and discerned. The Sisters of the monastic community, of course, have each spent many years growing spiritually as part of their vocation to the vowed religious life. They welcome and honor those who feel a calling to integrate Benedictine spirituality and the wisdom of the *Rule of St. Benedict* into their lives as part of their own unique vocation, as well.

Since the late 1980s, the Oblate Community of St. Gertrude has made it possible for lay people



The Center for Benedictine Life community shares Morning Praise.

Continued on page 3

From the Prioress

The World Needs Benedict Now More than Ever: Stuff and Enough

Am I the only one who is often overwhelmed by having too much stuff, or sometimes feeling that my stuff owns me, rather than vice versa? You would think that, in a monastery, we would live lives of the utmost simplicity, having transcended society's emphasis on accumulating stuff. Well... no. Unfortunately, even here, we struggle with accumulation of possessions and all the issues connected with "stuff."

All of us, maybe even especially people who live in Benedictine monasteries (!) would do well to reflect on what St. Benedict had to say about this situation.

Benedict, in his monastic Rule - or guidebook for a life focused on seeking God - said that every person in the community should have all the basic things they need. Since the Rule was written in the 6th century, he did not include what most people consider "essentials" today: like cell phones and personal computers. But, he did say that each monk should have the tools they need for work, their own bed (which was unusual at that time) and bedding, a full set of clothing and shoes, a writing tablet, a stylus, handkerchief, knife, belt and needle.

This doesn't sound like much to us, but everyone was supplied with what they need; not what they *want*, but what they *need*. Throughout his guidebook, there is an emphasis on making sure everyone has enough. There are provisions to make sure there is enough food; if anyone needs help doing a job, help was to be given. Benedict's basic agenda removes everyone's "excuses" for not being able to live a truly monastic life focused on God.

Isn't that a radical thought in today's world? Most of us who are reading this have more than "enough." We have housing, more than enough food, access to health care, income, a support system, etc. Is there really any reason we can't live a life focused on God, even outside a monastery? But for many - or most of us - our stuff gets in the way of enough. We spend so much time lusting after, shopping for, accumulating and then dealing with our stuff, there is not much time or energy left for our spiritual life.

Benedict had very strong feelings about the subject, but in Chapter 34 of the *Rule of St. Benedict* - titled "Distribution of Goods According to Need" - we find an example of his answer to the question of how stuff should be handled: "It is



written: Distribution was made to each one as he had need (Acts 4:35). Whoever needs less should thank God and not be distressed, but whoever needs more should feel humble because of his weakness, not self-important because of the kindness shown him. In this way all the members will be at peace."

What would our lives look like if all of us, (including professed monastics!) lived according to this principle? We would all need to take a very hard look at our needs vs. our wants. Can we deeply, honestly evaluate whether we need a new phone, blouse or book, or do we just want a new phone, blouse, book, etc. What is our attitude: are we humbled by our sense of greed and entitlement, or are we completely oblivious to the need to evaluate our wants vs. our needs? Can we begin to imagine what it would feel like to be happy simply having enough rather than feeling like our stuff owns us?

Perhaps Benedict can be our guide to moving from the "tyranny of stuff" to the "freedom of enough."

Sr. Teresa Jackson OSB

Sr. Teresa Jackson OSB
Prioress

Continued from page 1

- of all Christian denominations - to maintain a close relationship with the monastery as they pursue their vocation "in the world," whether married, single, widowed, employed or retired. Participating in the Oblate formation program involves three years of dedicated study and joining in activities sponsored by the Oblate groups, of which St. Gertrude's has nine around the Pacific Northwest. One thing the Oblates learn about the scores affiliated with the monastery: this is no "part time" leisure activity. It is a very real vocation, to which the individual devotes his or her life. The wisdom and practices of Benedictine spirituality become the foundation of each day's routine, adding a specific slant - if you will - to every thought, word and deed.

Another variation of the term "vocation" can be applied to employees at the Center for Benedictine Life. Some hired on recently, others have devoted decades to working with the Sisters and helping to spread their charism far beyond the Camas Prairie.

Janis Lance, for instance, retired at the end of April 2024, having dedicated over 30



Janis Lance

years to keeping the monastery's finances in good order. Judy Snyder has also worked for the Sisters nearly as long. Michele Byers, whose voice can be heard answering the phone at times, has kept the Mission Advancement Office organized for 25 years. On the Sun Porch, where caring for the Sisters is the job of dedicated

health care staff, the smiling face of Lynn Welborn has been a constant for many years. Peggy Matson, the housekeeping supervisor, ensures the offices and living spaces are clean and welcoming - in the monastery and Spirit Center - and has done so for nearly four decades.

This willingness to collaborate in the mission of the Center for Benedictine Life is truly a vocation in its own right, and the Sisters frequently express gratitude to their employees for sharing their time and talents in such generous ways.

A newer type of vocation is being discerned by six women who have expressed an interest in being part of the Benedictine Cohousing Community. They gather via Zoom each month, and periodically in person, to create a fresh way of living the Rule in conjunction with the monastic community of Sisters and each other.

Even those who do not formally have a relationship with a monastery can integrate Benedictine spirituality into their lives, a vocation in and of itself. Listening with the ear of the heart, as St. Benedict advises, is the best way to hear "the call" to where it is possible to serve, to share, to love, to grow - for everyone!



May 24-26

Contemplative Photography

May 31-June 2

Rooted

June 7-14

Come to the Quiet

July 9-11

Forgiveness

July 12-14

Faithful

July 15-19

Journaling:

The Sanctuary of the Heart

July 26-28

A Sip of Silence

Upcoming Retreats

Register at: www.spirit-center.org

Lent, Visitation...



With Ash Wednesday coming early this year, it almost seemed like the Christmas decorations had barely been put back in storage before Sister Teresa Jackson marked the heads of the CBL community members with ashes created from last year's palm branches on February 14.

At the end of the month, three Sisters from the Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude arrived for the Visitation, an event that takes place every five years (or so) to provide a look at how the monastic life is thriving.

The Visitors, shown below, were (left to right): Sister Clare Carr of Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado; Sister Jennifer Kehrwald and Sister Jeanne Weber, congregation president, both of Yankton, South Dakota.



...Easter and Music!



On Palm Sunday, March 24, the palms were blessed during Morning Praise, with a procession into the chapel proclaiming, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The solemnity of the Triduum included the CBL community members washing each others hands, and veneration of the cross on Good Friday. A bit of levity lightened the mood on Holy Saturday morning, when the Sisters came together to decorate Easter eggs. The Easter Vigil saw the blessing of the Easter candle and baptismal water as the Resurrection was celebrated.

On April 14, the Valley Ringers, Valley Singers and Grangeville United Methodist Church bell choir performed their spring concert in the monastery chapel. The Idaho County Orchestra provided "A Tribute to Mozart" on April 28, too!

Tim Oberholzer Named Executive Director

The Center for Benedictine Life is proud to share some fantastic news!

During their February meeting, the CBL board of directors voted to appoint Tim Oberholzer as the new executive director.

When he arrived at the monastery in 2018, Tim had already been influenced by many Catholic charisms in his life. Dominican, Jesuit, Holy Cross, and Salesian communities had all contributed to his formal education from grade school through a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Notre Dame and graduate level studies of philosophy and theology at St. Mary's Seminary through the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas.

For more than 10 years, Tim has immersed himself in Benedictine spirituality. During the autumn of 2012, he visited monasteries of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (the Trappists). He entered New Melleray Abbey outside of Dubuque, Iowa, in 2013, living the Rule of St. Benedict for five and a half years. Deep prayer and reflection led him to leave the community prior to making final profession. He moved to Idaho to be closer to his parents.

Tim first heard of the Monastery of St. Gertrude in 2018 through an Indeed.com job posting for the innkeeper position at the Inn at St. Gertrude. Joining the staff, he transitioned into the role of hosted



groups coordinator at Spirit Center in August, 2019, following the unexpected death of Sister Jeanette Von Hermann. He was named interim director of Spirit Center the following year. With Covid-19 halting in-person retreats, and the Sisters occupying Spirit Center rooms while the monastery renovation project was completed, Tim stepped up to navigate the new world of online programming, and facilitate the retreat ministry's emergence from pandemic restrictions.

Away from the Center for Benedictine Life, Tim and his wife relish life with a childlike enthusiasm. (Many have noticed his socks rarely match.) They enjoy backpacking, hiking, biking, paddleboarding, kayaking, and climbing trees. Tim runs 6 days a week and expects to run the famed Boston Marathon in April 2025. In his downtime, he enjoys reading and often has several books underway at any given moment.

Congratulations, Tim!

*Welcoming All in the Spirit of
Benedictine Hospitality*

inn

at St. Gertrude

All the Comforts of Home



www.innatstgertrude.com

The Year of the Elevators

During his time in Rome, Pope Francis has encouraged Catholics to observe a Year of Mercy (2015-2016), a Year of St. Joseph (2020-2021), and a year dedicated to prayer (2024) in preparation for the Jubilee Year in 2025.

Here at the Center for Benedictine Life, since mid-2023, we've been (unofficially) observing the Year of the Elevators, marking the malfunctions and, then, complete failure of the main elevator in the monastery, and a similar situation with the elevator at Spirit Center.



The Spirit Center elevator

With the monastery elevator, quite a bit of prayer was involved in those early days when the elevator would abruptly prevent its occupants from reaching their destination, the door opening just an inch or two, then closing and the car returning to the first floor. At other times, it would just stop, leaving the occupants trapped.

Even more prayers rose heavenward on the day, last December, when the technicians completed the total overhaul and the elevator was pronounced safe by the inspector, with the Sisters taking the first ride upward after months of having to climb stairs - some with walkers or canes!

In those final days of repairs in the monastery, the elevator at Spirit Center gave up the ghost. Attempts at making temporary repairs were unsuccessful, providing operation for not even 24 hours. Even the maintenance crew wouldn't ride in it, so unsure were they of getting out again!

Both these ailing elevators required hours, days, weeks of effort to arrange for their refitting. Project manager JoAnne Zimmer volunteered her time, researching options and negotiating with contractors to get the work done. The Mission Advancement office diligently

applied for all available grants and funding to pay for these expensive renovations, with many thanks to generous donors who continue to share from their abundance so the CBL community can be "lifted up" in a most tangible way.

While the Spirit Center elevator waits patiently for the parts to be shipped and the technicians to schedule their arrival, accommodations are made for retreatants who have difficulty with stairs to room on the main floor. The housekeeping team have supplies stashed on each level, rather than carrying loads up and down multiple flights of steps. The Sisters who minister in the building take their time moving between levels, an exercise in perseverance and dedication to those they serve.

With prayers of petition transforming into prayers of gratitude as the restoration of the Spirit Center elevator will eventually bring this very long stretch to a conclusion, those who are part of the Center for Benedictine Life hope these mechanical wonders - and necessities! - operate properly for many years to come!

Community Walks 2024

May 18, 2024
MONASTERY OF ST. GERTRUDE
Cottonwood, ID

Meet at the Museum

Hosted by:
Megan Sherer & Julie Ferraro

WALK THE PRAIRIE
and beyond

A safe family event that gives you a chance to get out and explore your local communities!

- REGISTRATION: 8:30AM
- GUEST SPEAKER: 8:45AM
- WALKS BEGIN: 9AM

ALL AGES AND FITNESS LEVELS WELCOME
PRIZES DRAWN AT EVERY WALK | NO CHARGE TO PARTICIPATE

For more Information Call
Barbara: 208-400-0071

community Action
PARTNERSHIP
AMERICA'S PREMIER FOCUSING STRATEGIC
Area Agency on Aging

St. Mary's Health Clearwater Valley Health

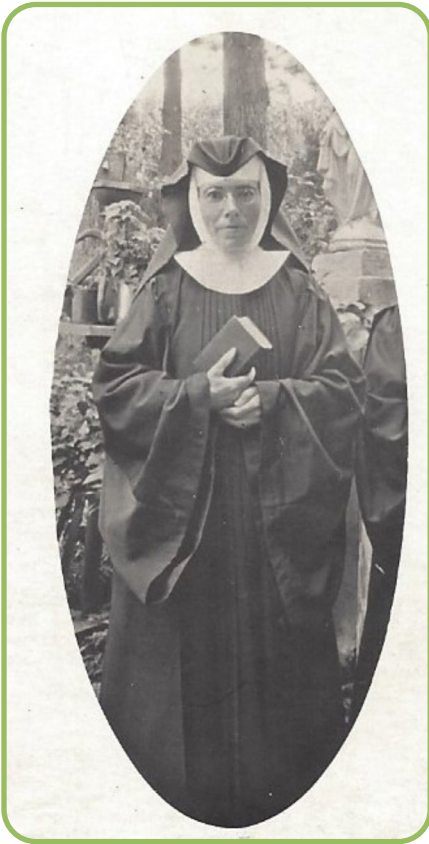
Museum Musings

A Tribute to Remarkable Lives

by Carla Wilkins

The rich history of the Monastery of St. Gertrude is widely known, but the individual tales of the Sisters who dedicated their lives to the community have largely remained untold. It was not until the late 1990s that the monastery began to publish formal obituaries for the Sisters. Last year, the museum embarked on a three-year project to craft obituaries for all the Sisters who do not yet have one.

This initiative is rooted in the belief that each Sister's life deserves recognition. The obituaries are written based on date of death, symbolizing the day they were born into eternal life. As each obituary is completed, it is published on the website www.findagrave.com.



Sister Victoria Steiner, OSB

Ring binders in the monastery contain records of the deceased Sisters, arranged according to month. Using these - along with other sources - the obituaries for those listed in the January to July binders are already available online. We continue to work on obituaries for those who passed in the months of August through December through the years. Once all narratives are completed, we will begin adding photos.

Of the 230 girls and women who professed their vows at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, 94 hailed from Europe. This project is not only honoring their lives, but also shedding light on the monastery history, in which they played an integral part.

While the stories of the three founding Sisters are well-documented, the tales of the other Sisters remain largely unknown. Five additional professed Sisters from Sarnen, Switzerland, answered the call to help the pioneer community in the early years. Sister Veronica Steiner's story is particularly poignant. At age 28, she was chosen by the abbess to serve in America, a decision that led to five years of silence from her disapproving father. Thankfully, he eventually relented, mending their relationship.

Many Sisters came to St. Gertrude's after experiencing personal tragedies. The three Schallberger sisters, for instance, lost their mother and later welcomed their two brothers, who worked in maintenance at the monastery until their retirement. All five siblings rest in the monastery cemetery. The Grasser sisters, left motherless and with an absent father, journeyed from Austria in 1913. Their devoted brother funded the creation of the exquisite altar - crafted in Germany - that graces our chapel.

Some Sisters arrived at the monastery after diverse life experiences. Sister Fabiana Moehrle of Germany served as a private detective during World War I, an ordeal that haunted her throughout her life. Sister Radegunda Bischofberger worked in a Swiss factory and clandestinely saved funds to make her journey across the Atlantic to Cottonwood.

Join us in celebrating these remarkable women and their enduring legacy by exploring their stories - and more! - on www.findagrave.com.

