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Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Clyde, Missouri * Tucson, Arizona * Dayton, Wyoming



From Sister Pat

Dear Friends,

A major theme for the Advent-Christmas season springs from the title "Emmanuel," which, as St. Matthew tells us in the first chapter of his gospel account, means God is with us. This is an intriguing and challenging truth for us who are striving to

know Jesus better and follow him more closely in our lives.

Jesus was born into and nurtured in the Jewish faith. He was likely taught to avoid associating with Samaritans and the Roman invaders of his homeland. Such teaching basically said God-with-us was not God-with-them. Yet it is intriguing to note that as Jesus grew in knowledge of his heavenly Father, he gradually cast aside that teaching. Even though his encounters with Samaritans, Roman gentiles, and even women, might have initially been a bit testy, after a few verbal volleys he began to understand that these people were worthy of his compassionate care and healing touch. God was with(in) them too.

I believe it is possible that as Jesus grew in the self knowledge of his own divine nature, he was able to recognize it in others. Rabbi Arthur Green says,

Any Judaism that veers from the ongoing work of helping us allow every human being to become and be seen as God's image in the fullest way possible is a distortion of our religion. That ongoing challenge requires us in each generation to widen the circle of those seen by us as fully human, as bearing God's image, as we seek to expand the bounds of the holy. As we find God's image in ever more of humanity, we open ourselves to ever more of God's presence.

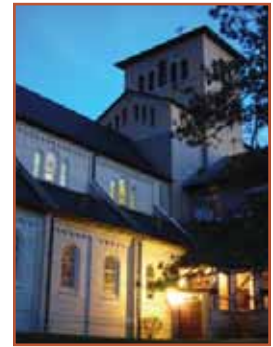
The truth that Rabbi Green expresses also holds true for us Christians. God with us is conveyed through every human being.

God sent his only Son, fully human and fully divine, to dwell on earth. His life was his lesson: he saw as no one else seemed to see, that humans are indeed made in God's image, that God is indeed with us in each manifestation of his creation. As His followers, may we come to know and accept this Incarnation lesson.

In the Lord Jesus,
Sr. Pat Nyquist, OSB
Prioress General

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FROM THE EDITOR

Everyday Christmas

When this magazine reaches you, Christmas decorations will already have replaced pumpkins, bats and broomsticks. While the secular season gears up for Christmas sales, the liturgical season moves into the quiet, reflective mode of Advent longing. Birth is the culmination of a long period of gestation, not an isolated event without a history. This issue has little about Christmas festivities but, hopefully, it invites reflection on the birthing process.

Paradoxically, while our whole life is a preparation for our own decisive birth into eternal life, we can quietly give birth to the Holy One in countless ways, Christmas or not. This is especially urgent in view of the pressing social neediness in our own neighborhoods as well as far away. There is something almost obscene about the pressure to buy brightly packaged, glitzy toys, and baubles that only the rich can afford. What options do we have in response?

The Advent liturgical readings offer suggestions for action as well as reflection. While we experience with dismay the increased polarization of our political process, the Advent Scriptures bring a message of inclusion: wolf and lamb, calf and lion, cow and bear, all grazing and lying down together (Is 11:6-7). Wherever we can build bridges instead of walls, we give birth to Emmanuel—even a very simple bridge could ease movement from suspicion to understanding.

Justice is a major concern of the Advent prophets. Micah describes concisely what God asks of us: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God (Mi 6:8). To do this is to give birth to *right relationship* in our

communities—always a Christmas event. Especially when depressing news dominates the media, we need to recognize and affirm each new appearance of God and God’s grace among us, however dramatic, or quiet and seemingly ordinary.

“Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 Jn 4:7). God takes flesh in *our* lives and in the lives of those around us, whenever we act unselfishly from love. In *Enter the Story*¹ Fran Ferder eloquently describes this process:

Incarnation of the holy happens whenever we act justly, love tenderly, and walk in truth with our God. Sometimes it develops slowly, when we consciously set out on the long journey toward integrity, and honor that commitment over the course of our lives. Other times an opportunity for giving birth comes upon us when we least expect it, when we are ill prepared for the demands of love that rise up in front of us—an apology is called for, a truth needs to be announced, words of forgiveness must be spoken, affirmation is needed.

Even if we, like Mary, cannot choose where and when we may be called upon to birth the Holy One, we can be alert to the small opportunities we have in our ordinary relationships and commitments. We can also affirm those who act in ways that are life-giving. Because it is so easy to criticize unkindly or aggravate a climate of incivility, honest affirmation requires effort and creativity. We have choices to make, but what better opportunity is there to honor the coming of God into our midst?

Sr. Lenora Black, OSB

¹ Fran Ferder, *Enter the Story: Biblical Metaphors for Our Lives*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010) p. 69.

Thank God for Gratitude

MARY S. SHERIDAN

Every fall, we are inundated with messages about being grateful. Gratitude, we are told, is a debt that we owe to God and others. We are “obliged” (obligated) or “ beholden” (indebted) to them, to use the old expressions. We ought to pay this debt, and to feel under its obligation until we do.

Gratitude is a conflicted virtue for many people. It is easy to accept thanks, but harder to be thankful. Politicians sneer at the words “needy” and “dependent,” and those who minister to the impoverished are misguided. By receiving from others, we learn, we have failed to live up to the American ideal of bootstrap self-sufficiency. Never mind that the ideal is impossible and destructive to any sense of community if it could be achieved. “You owe me” (said or unsaid) quickly translates into “you own me.” Nobody wants to be owned.

This is a miserly approach to thankfulness. What we often fail to realize is that gratitude, like so many other virtues, benefits ourselves as much as those to whom we are grateful. This is one of the insights of “positive psychology,” a relatively new field which focuses on what goes *right* in human behavior, not just what goes wrong.¹

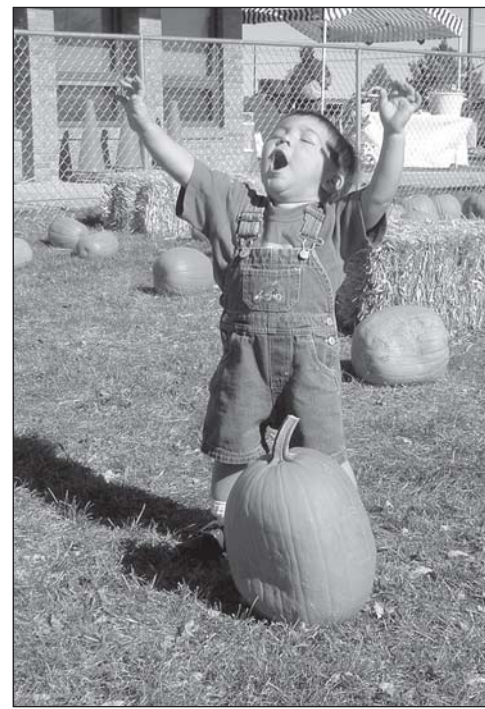
What are some of the things that gratitude does for us? To begin with, it bonds us to others in ties of mutual interdependence and love. When my friends help me, as they did with a recent garage sale, I feel closer than if we simply meet for lunch. I want, in

turn, to be a better friend to them, to help them in their challenges.

Likewise, gratitude helps bond

us to God. When we begin to recognize the many things, large and small, that God does for us each day, we cannot help but respond with love. Did God have to create the double rainbow I saw recently? My heart fills with thankfulness: “Behold the rainbow! Then bless its Maker, for majestic indeed is its splendor” (Sirach 43:11). Once I begin consciously to notice God’s work, it is all around me—the break in traffic, the bit of coral on the beach, the dollar store clerk who has a smile for each customer. Each reflects the goodness of God, and we need these reflections badly to counteract the “stern judge” image of God that is still too prevalent.

Gratitude is also good for our psychological and even physical health.² Cognitive psychologists know that the stories we tell ourselves are powerful. If we constantly remind ourselves, for example, that we have been poorly treated and our lives are not going well, then this becomes our truth. We will seldom fail to find confirmatory examples. If we tell ourselves that we are blessed, however, then that becomes our worldview, and our daily experiences bear it out. If we can change the story we tell ourselves, then our view of the world can change as well. Emmons found



¹ See, for example, Emmons, Robert A., *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), Ch. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 30-34.

this to be true when he instructed his research subjects to keep a “gratitude journal.” Although he cautions that personality change doesn’t occur overnight, Emmons says that, “If you want to dramatically improve the quality of your life,”³ simply write down regularly the things you are thankful for. Another version of this advice is to remember, at the close of the day, three things for which we are grateful, and thank God for them.

Gratitude can do powerful work in helping to resolve the conflicts and disappointments of our lives. Most of us have, at times, truly been poorly treated in ways that we have not deserved. Most of us have, at times, truly been blessed—also in ways that we have not deserved. Most families have elements of dysfunction, but they are seldom *only* dysfunctional. If the negatives are all we see, our resentments grow and our disposition sours. If we can remember the good parts and be grateful for them, our lives will be happier. We will be less depressed. We will find it easier to forgive. This does not mean denying the hurtful times, but seeking a balance in our memories and being open to the good recollections. I have found that praying for this gift is helpful.

Overall, says Mary Jo Leddy,⁴ a spirit of gratitude frees us from the endless dissatisfaction that is taught to us by a consumption-oriented economy. Recognizing what we have helps us to recognize what is “enough.” This is balm for our souls, not just our pocketbooks. Leddy also recognizes how gratitude enriches our spirituality, saying:

Gratitude is the foundation of faith in God as the Creator of all beginnings, great and small. It awakens the imagination to another way of being, to another kind of economy, the great economy of grace in which each person is of infinite value and worth.⁵

Even though Leddy’s work is with refugees, she considers her vocation to be gratitude.⁶

One author who has focused extensively on gratitude

is Benedictine Brother David Steindl-Rast. Henri Nouwen, in his preface to Steindl-Rast’s book, *Gratefulness: The Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life in Fullness*,⁷ describes him as a man whose life is constantly enriched by gratitude:

Whenever Brother David came to visit me he surprised me with his gratefulness—not just gratefulness for what I or others did or said but gratefulness for the many gifts I had come to take for granted. He saw flowers with an expression of discovery and surprise, he looked at the sky as a marvelous piece of art, he admired poetry, music, and handicrafts with a spontaneous enthusiasm, and he kept discovering endless new occasions to say thanks and offer praise to his God who keeps showering him with new gifts.

Steindl-Rast also believes that gratitude forms loving bonds between the giver of gifts and the giver of gratitude. He sees this as circular, saying, “We grow in love when we grow in gratefulness. And we grow in gratefulness when we grow in love.”⁸ And later, “Growth in grateful love is also growth in prayer.”⁹

So important is gratitude to Brother David that he founded “A Network for Grateful Living” (www.gratefulness.org). This virtual community website contains many resources for grateful and more spiritual living, from the individual level to the global. Other resources are also easily available on the Internet using “gratitude” as a search term.

Truly, our lives are blessed when we stop to give thanks. For our own sakes, let us cultivate it as a habit. In this season, and throughout the year, let us thank God for the gift of gratitude. ✱

³ Ibid., 35.

⁴ Leddy, *Radical Gratitude*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Ibid., 2.

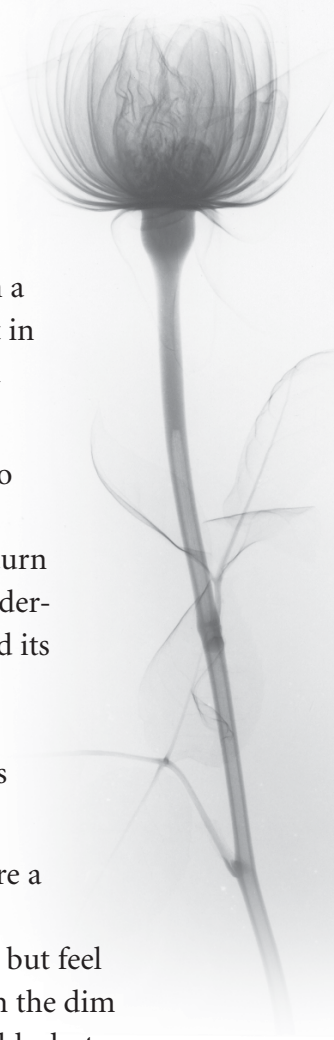
⁷ (NY:Paulist, 1984).

⁸ Ibid., 176.

⁹ Ibid., 177.

The Art of Gentleness

SR. BEDE LUETKEMEYER, OSB



In one of his poems, Rilke used the phrase, “the art of gentleness.”¹ Yes, gentleness is an art but it is also a virtue. If it is an art and a virtue, it must be learned and practiced. If it is to be practiced, it may help to learn its nature. Gentleness is such a subtle virtue that drawing some comparisons may give us more appreciation of its qualities than would a multitude of words.

It may seem strange to think of airplane landings in connection with gentleness. The experience of a “gentle landing,” one that leaves us wondering when the wheels touched the ground, is one example we can give about gentleness. Many factors are involved: the landing strip, the weather, the state of the aircraft plus the skills of the pilot. So it is with practicing gentleness in daily life. There are situations, personalities, the state of stress, and our own level of virtue.

We all know the distress of experiencing the opposite: a “bumpy” landing! Carrying this comparison into daily life, we know it as the “bumpiness” of rough words that serve to spoil a perfect day, or on the other hand, a gentle piece of advice that sets us firmly on our way again when things have gone badly.

Gentleness. Think of a thunderous waterfall and then of a rippling stream. Think of a tornado and then of a soft breeze. Think of a boxing match and then of a mother’s tender touch of her infant.

The past months at Clyde have gradually shaped us into curious and informed observers of the big project of deconstruction and reconstruction of parts of our monastery. Massive machinery had to be used. How often there were remarks made about how this equipment was so powerful that it could

move tons of debris or take down a huge wall of the building, and yet in another operation gently nudge a large piece of concrete into place!

Gentleness is almost impossible to find in an angry person who is imprisoned in a self that cannot turn outward to others. In order to understand the depths of gentleness and its difficulty, we must, as in so many other things, go to the Gospels to learn from the Lord of Gentleness himself.

We need but place ourselves before a Christmas Crib. Seeing this scene through the eyes of a child, we all but feel the touch of God coming through the dim light of the stable, barely perceptible, but nonetheless real. God touches us as the infant he is, and the Father touches the Son in the infinite caress of gentleness that he wishes to give to all humanity.

There are the many instances when Jesus’ patience might have been tried to the point of giving a less than gentle response. We witness his gentle acceptance of the woman at the well and her evasive answers, his gentle treatment of Zaccheus who was so glib in justifying himself, and most of all we see his gentleness with the children who interrupted his busy day.

Gentleness can sometimes be thought of as a lack of strength. We hear often about the practice of “tough love” which captures the idea of gentleness combined with the proper amount of firmness and

¹ *Pictures of God: Rilke’s Religious Poetry*, Annemarie S. Kidder, “Anticipating the Passion” (from *The Life of the Virgin Mary*), First Page Publications, 2005.

severity. Gentleness allows love to shine through the pain of honest correction. St. Benedict is a master of the art when he urges the Abbot to keep his own frailty before his eyes so as not to crush the bruised reed (Rule 64:13). Gentleness arises out of honest knowledge of ourselves and awareness of our own weakness.

Actually, the Rule of Benedict might be called a manual of instruction in the art of gentleness. While he expects good order and discipline in the monastery, Benedict lets it be known that the guests, the sick members, the young and the old are to be treated with patience and consideration. This extends to those who have merited punishment but whom he is to care for after the “loving example of the Good Shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep in the mountains and went in search of the one sheep that had strayed” (Rule 27:8).

St. Hildegard of Bingen, a Benedictine who experienced dramatically the gentle touch of God in her life, gives us the famous phrase: “Thus am I, a feather on the Breath of God.” She sees the paradox of terror and gentleness in God’s manifestation of Divine Wisdom: “For She (Wisdom) is awesome in terror as the Thunderer’s lightning and gentle in goodness as the sunshine.”²

Another monastic writer, Evagrius, includes a significant number of sayings on gentleness in his “Proverbs.” Evagrius does not so much describe the nature of gentleness, as to tell us the results of its practice: “In the gentle heart, wisdom will rest.” “Better a gentle worldly man than an irascible and wrathful monk.” “A gentle monk, the Lord loves; but the rash one, he will banish from himself. Out of gentleness, knowledge is born; out of rashness, ignorance.”³

From even these few examples, it is apparent that

gentleness is associated closely with the inner life. Only when we begin to come in touch with the Spirit within us and around us, and the necessity for a minimal degree of asceticism, are our eyes opened to appreciate the virtue of gentleness. The Spirit within us is the Spirit of Jesus who said, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you” (Jn 15:4). Jesus has given us these words as the essence of the spiritual life. It is in knowing him intimately that we begin to understand what it means to imitate him, not only in our external actions but also in the thoughts that give birth to words and actions. They will be gentle words and actions only if they spring from that knowledge.

Our inner life spills over into all the senses, especially the sense of touch. Once again, our spiritual master, Benedict, gets to the heart of the matter when he tells us to handle all the tools of the monastery as the vessels of the altar. We could apply this to all created things, especially to the gentle handling of human hearts, the most delicate of all God’s vessels.

Perhaps no one has expressed the quality of gentleness more beautifully than Rainer Marie Rilke in his poem about the falling of leaves in autumn, symbolizing for him the falling of all creation into the hands of God:

AUTUMN

*The leaves are falling, falling as from far off,
as though far gardens withered in the skies;
they are falling with denying gestures.
And in the nights the heavy earth is falling
from all the stars down into loneliness.
We are all falling. This hand falls.
And look at others; it is in them all.
And yet there is One who holds this falling
endlessly gently in his hands.*⁴

Rainer Maria Rilke
(translated by Cliff Crego)

² Quoted in *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine*, Barbara Newman, University of California Press, 1998.

³ *Ad Monachos*, (in Greek and English), Translation and Commentary by Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, The Newman Press, New York, #59 ACW 2003, pp. 47, 56.

⁴ http://cs-music.com/features/cards/poster_mountainfall.html.

Popcorn in a Spiritual Light

SR. DAWN ANNETTE MILLS, OSB



I spent much of my youth in Valparaiso, Indiana, one of the two largest popcorn producing regions in the United States. Fifty-five percent of the world's popcorn comes from Nebraska and Indiana. If you add Ohio, Illinois and Iowa, you account for eighty percent of the world's popping corn.

As the home of Orville Redenbacher, developer and grower of one of the best known varieties of gourmet popcorn, Valparaiso was so proud of its native son and its popcorn crop that it became the self-proclaimed "popcorn capital of the world." Rooted in such a famous popcorn environment, I developed an extraordinary interest in popcorn. As our community moves into commercial popping of this delicacy, I want to share some of my "Lectio Popcornica" and the reflections it has generated.

Popcorn is an ancient food. Some believe it was the first form of corn cultivated, because it stored well and was easy to cook. For Native Americans it was a staple food for over 8,000 years. Corn may have begun its long evolution as a kind of grass. In the Americas, popcorn was cultivated by the Aztecs and Mayans in Central America and Mexico, and by the Incas in South America. The Aztecs decorated their Gods of Rain and Maize with strings of popcorn. North American Indians also strung the popped kernels on grass strings and used them for decoration in jewelry, bouquets and headdresses.

Native Americans introduced popcorn to the Pilgrims as part of the first Thanksgiving. According to legend, the brother of Chief Massasoit brought a

deerskin bag

full of popped corn to that harvest celebration.

Popcorn became part of American culture as festive food for parties, barn raisings, quilting bees, and family gatherings. Butter, grease, salt or sugar and cinnamon were added as flavorings.

It was used later as Halloween "jack-o-lantern" teeth and as Christmas decorations. Popped kernels were strung and placed on trees, often with cranberries, to give a festive look for the holidays. Mixed with syrup, popcorn was formed into balls as a favorite treat for generations of children. Today it is identified with watching even the most high-tech movies, whether in the theater or at home.

Popcorn differs from other types of corn in that its hull is rigid and has just the right thickness to allow it to burst open. Each kernel of popcorn contains a small drop of water surrounded by soft starch. It needs about 14% moisture to pop. The kernel's hard, impermeable outer surface keeps air out and water in, allowing the heated kernel to act like a pressure cooker.

As the kernel heats up, the water begins to expand. Around 212°F the water turns into steam and changes the starch inside each kernel into a super-heated gelatinous glop. As the kernel continues to heat to about 350°F, the pressure inside the grain builds to 135 pounds per square inch before the kernel finally explodes. As it explodes, steam inside the kernel is released. The starchy glop inside the kernel becomes inflated and spills out. This puffy starch cools instantly and forms into the odd shape

we call popped corn. A kernel can puff out 40 to 50 times its original size!

Reflecting on this process, I find a connection between the popping process and the process of spiritual transformation. The transformation process takes place in our deepest center, changing us from the inside out. In both transformations there are external catalysts—the kernel needs to be heated and the soul needs to be stimulated by grace. As the fire heats the corn, the flames of love, the Divine Fire, must engulf us.

First, God waits till we have reached a certain level of maturity. Until we have matured enough to endure the process. Until our faith is firm and God knows we can take the pressure. Sometimes, though, it seems God gets pretty close to edge.

Next, we need to be juicy! St. Hildegard of Bingen, the 11th century mystic, called this juiciness *veriditas*. Living in the fertile Rhine valley, Hildegard saw the green vegetation around her as a sign of God's life force bearing fruit in abundance. She repeatedly called her community to open themselves to the green juiciness of God. She said, "We are greening with life, we bear our fruit for all creation, limitless love, from the depths to the stars, flooding all, loving all."



Veriditas is the spiritual process of "greening" the heart. The ancient Israelite people believed that the heart was the center of a person. What we mean by mind and soul and heart, were, for the Israelite, located in the heart. When the heart was dry and barren, the Word of the Lord would not take root, virtue could not grow, and love could not increase. The moist heart, a green and juicy heart, on the other hand, was considered receptive and fertile. The moist heart would hear the Word of God and bear fruit a hundredfold.

The moist heart was capable of transformation. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as Living Water in John 7:37-39, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"

We have to let go of what we thought we were, the kernel of ourselves, and let God shape us into who we are meant to be. We have to become malleable, flexible, and compliant—capable of being formed, conformed, reformed, and transformed. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of us being clay in the hands of the potter. This can be likened to the superheated starchy glop in the hands of the popcorn popper.

Popcorn is a concrete example of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some" (1 Cor 9:22). May we learn to be as flexible, adaptable, and nourishing to as many souls, as popcorn has been for us. *

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popcorn>;
<http://www.popcorn.org/>;
<http://www.answers.com/topic/popcorn#ixzz1WAPEBNjE>

Active Waiting

GERRY KEIRNAN

“Good is the Lord to the one who waits for him, to the soul that seeks him; it is good to hope in silence for the saving help of the Lord.”

Lamentations 3:25-26

Throughout the years, I have developed many “spiritual boyfriends.” Anthony de Mello and Henri Nouwen were but two who entered my life in their writings. Although they have died (it is evidently dangerous to be my spiritual boyfriend), the wonder of having spent much time with these authors is that they continue to speak to me.

As I prepare for Advent, Nouwen once more touches my heart. He reaffirms this Coming again and again into our lives, and encourages us to wait patiently. He tells us that patience comes from the Latin verb *pator*, which means “to suffer.” Hm-m? But he also tells us to live *active waiting*—in other words, to “live the present moment to the full in order to find there the signs of the One we are waiting for,”¹ the Jesus who is now and who is to come. To do that, we must be aware of the signs of him in our everyday lives. “Waiting,” says Nouwen, “is essential to the spiritual life . . . Waiting for God is an active, alert—yes, joyful—waiting.”²

Let’s take this apart. You may be saying to yourself, “active waiting”? Advent is far too active as it is. But is there room for seeking Him in your everyday life, alertly, joyfully, instead of running frantically from store to store? Is it the active waiting of Mary as she prepared for his birth? Of course, times were different, but pregnancy was the same . . . humming to the little one growing beneath her heart, yearning to see

his little face, preparing little robes and blankets, and talking endlessly with her spouse about this being created out of God’s love.

Look once more at the Father’s love for each of us, and his ever quiet but active waiting to bestow upon us his Gift of Gifts. Since the darkness of sin descended upon all humankind, he hinted again and again of his son, who would lift us once more into the long awaited Light. There would come a new Adam. An ark would be prepared once more within a virgin’s womb to save all humankind. He would send an only son who, like Isaac, would carry the wood of sacrifice. His son would be the embryo within the womb, as was Samuel, and hear and feel his mother as she sang and danced in joy over the divine one resting within. This Son of David would reign forever, and Gentile Kings would “pay him homage” (Mt 2:2). The prophets of old would speak of him—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah—and he would fulfill each prophecy.

Finally, the Father readied a barren womb to conceive, and Elizabeth brought forth the precursor. The babe waiting in her uterus was filled with the Holy Spirit and leapt for joy. John was the final one “to prepare the way of the Lord” (Mt 3:3). And in the midst of darkness, Light entered the world! He was surrounded by the love of Joseph and Mary; he was recognized by the marginalized of His time and by

¹ Nouwen, Henri J.M. , *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith* (New York: HarperCollins ebooks, 2006); <http://books.google.com/books?id=zdGDKDVHODAC&pg=RA10-10-PA19&lpg=RA10PA19&dg=Waiting+is+essential+to+the+spiritual+life+nouwen&source=bl&ots=x00XRPjBgO&sig=LR8MRebTWGZuhUcJWRLYR5tz8cw&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false>, Entry for November 20.

² Ibid., Entry for November 19.

Simeon and Anna whose lives were dedicated to waiting. The Father has reached to each of us with his beloved son, that we too might be his beloved sons and daughters. (Don't forget to send him a "thank you card" this Christmas.)

Some years ago, I had the privilege of making a retreat in Los Altos, California. Before my thirty days were over, I learned to make an examination of conscience (Jesuit style) with the help of my spiritual director. Allow me to share some of its blessing. First I make an act of God's presence in thanksgiving, aware of what I truly mean to God. Next I reflect and pray for the gift of being able to see God in every experience of the day. This is the primary and positive grace of the examination. The Spirit then helps me to see any of my ways (interior or exterior) which were not of God. After reflecting, I ask for the gift of gratitude for gifts received and of sorrow to heal my failings. Next I look over the immediate future with a renewed sensitivity to God's presence and call to me. Finally I ask for those graces I will need for the future. It seems to work best if done at midday and at night before bed. I find it to be a positive practice of "active waiting," looking for the signs of God in my life. Try it this Advent.

Now, what of this talk of patience = suffering? Waiting is part and parcel of our lives. As kiddies,

we suffer until school gets out (teachers also). As teens we suffer until that "certain someone" notices us. As adults we suffer until we get that job, or loan, or even until we get a live voice on the phone!

Look again at those prophets who were in despair and wanted to run away from it all, those kings who messed up royally, those barren women who were scorned by the other ladies at the well. What of God's chosen ones who trudged out of slavery, yet complained daily, and whose offspring would later trudge into Babylon because of their sinfulness? Sorrow? Who gets through life without it? Waiting prayerfully for your child to return to his God takes patience. You wait to heal after the death of a loved one, and go through years of the grieving process. That's patience. Perhaps you are one of his little ones who wait for food, wait for clean water, wait to have a home of your own, wait to be noticed by the "haves" when you are a "have not." Life takes supreme patience. Truly we are all the "ones who hope in silence for the saving help of the Lord (Lam 3:26)." May we, as Nouwen says, pay "attention to what is happening right before our eyes and [see] there the first rays of God's glorious coming."³

Happy Active Waiting! *

This article was previously published in The Hawaiian Benedictine, and is reprinted by permission.

³ Ibid., November 20.

Scintilla

We were created waiting.

There was not a spark yet, nor even half a spark,
instead, there was an empty space
within the cracking darkness
where a spark could be when it was time.

It was the memory of sunshine in a vein of coal.

It was the thrumming shadow of the moment
of creation.

It was the point of entry for the light,
but it was not the light.

You were the light,
and you were waiting.

Christ, Our Light, is Coming

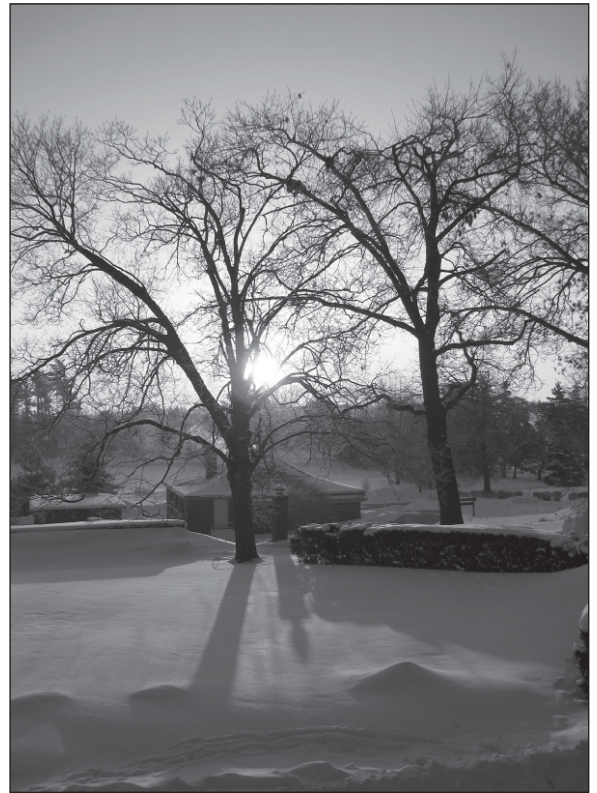
SR. JEANETTE VON HERRMANN, OSB

November will soon disappear, and in the northern hemisphere winter will approach with its shortest of days and darkest of nights. The farther north we live, the more likely we are to experience cold, rain, and gloomy weather. It is the season of the proverbial “dark and stormy night”, when the landscape becomes gray and bleak. Some of us even feel like we are moving into a time of hibernation, silently slowing down and patiently waiting for a time when we can wake to spring and new life.

As we move toward the end of the calendar year, the season of Advent (the beginning of the Church year) draws near. We appear to be moving in two divergent directions: toward both an ending and a beginning. The world around us is dying and being put to rest, while the Church encourages us to experience beginnings and the new life seen in the birth of Christ, the Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Not only is there the disparity between conclusions and commencements, there is also a profound contrast: the starkness of the winter weather and landscape stands out against the images of light that are used during Advent and Christmas. Throughout this time, there are references to Christ as the light in the midst of our darkness and the brightness along our way to the reign of God. The contrast with the world around us invites us to notice more acutely the images of light.

We often think of Easter as the time when the Church remembers Christ as the light of the world,



as we celebrate his being raised from the dark tomb into the glory of Easter morn. However, this image of light, and insight into the effect of the Messiah’s presence among us, is seen throughout the life of Christ. Yes, Easter is the culmination, but the message that Christ is our light is woven into the events of his whole life.

As we begin this Advent, waiting for the arrival of Christ, let us reflect on what God has told us about divine light. May we come to know more deeply the One who is light, who continually comes into our world, and who daily appears in our lives.

Light is associated with God from the beginning of the scriptures. In Genesis, God’s first words are “Let there be light.” Already there is an association between God’s word and light. Throughout the Bible, there are many passages in which light symbolizes the divine presence and blessing. In Numbers 6:25, God tells Moses to bless Aaron by praying, “May the Lord’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you.” In Psalm 18:28, we read, “For you light my lamp; the Lord, my God, lightens my darkness,” and in Psalm 67:1, we pray, “May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face shine upon us.”

Often God's light is used to symbolize revelation, guidance, salvation, and the personal relationship with the chosen covenantal people. In Psalm 43:3, we pray for God's light and truth to be a guide that will bring us to God's holy mountain. This theme of guidance is repeated in Psalm 119:105, in which God's living word is seen as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. In Psalm 27:1, God is spoken of as our light and our salvation, and in Psalm 31:16, we request, "Shine upon your servant and save me with your covenantal love." Isaiah 9:2 enlarges upon God's light that leads us, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned." Often the New Testament authors apply these passages to Christ, emphasizing Christ as God's light in the darkness of sin, God's path to salvation, and God's blessings of presence, life, and new creation.

Matthew writes about the Magi who follow the light of a star—the symbol of the new king of the Jews whom the wise ones seek. The light leads them to the One before whom they bow in homage. We resemble these Eastern sages, seeking and journeying in faith, wishing to gaze upon Christ, and wanting to be guided by the light of faith.

Luke also includes the symbol of light in his stories of the Christ Child's beginnings. Zechariah's prayer (Lk 1:67-79) refers to Jesus as "the rising Sun" who will "give light" and "guide our feet into the way of peace" (vv. 78-79). On the day of Jesus' presentation, the "upright and devout" Simeon comes to the Temple. He holds the child in his arms and prays, "My eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel" (Lk 2:29-32).

Later in his life, Jesus speaks to his followers and connects light and discipleship. As Christ enlightens the world, so should his disciples be light to those around them. This light of Christ must be shared so

that others, too, will become faithful Christians. Jesus tell us, his present day disciples, "*You* are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14-16). He encourages us to be like him, doing good works that lead others to the praise of the Father. Jesus enlarges upon this theme (Lk 11:33-36), commanding that we not hide the light, the grace, the life of God that has been placed within us. We must "put the light on a stand," that is, out in public where it may inspire others. The gifts that God provides for each of us are to be used for others, to lead them into the realm of light and grace. Advent invites us not only to recognize the light of Christ coming into our world, but also to make sure that light is evident. The light becomes unmistakably apparent when we have welcomed it, allowed it to take up a home within us and then offered it to others.

John's Gospel, more than any other, speaks of Jesus as the Light. In his prologue, John writes that the life within Jesus is the light for every one of us, not just for some (1:4-5). This light shines upon the darkness, on everything that separates from God. This true light illumines every person (1:9), allowing each of us to be a faithful disciple, one who knows, loves, and serves the God who fills our lives with that light and grace.

Christ offers us a choice: the light of God's life or the darkness that symbolizes the opposite. Will we choose the light and become children of God, or will we reject the light and accept the dark separation? As we struggle with the choices of life or death, light or darkness, we realize that we are not in that battle alone. The Father has sent the Christ into the world that we might "not be lost, but have eternal life." He came not to condemn but to save each of us (Jn 3:16-18). God's intent is to save, to offer light, to bring us into eternal life. Advent is a time to renew our acceptance of this gift.

Jesus clearly invites each of us to make that choice. "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me

will not be walking in the dark; but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12). This “I AM” is one of John’s Christological statements, identifying Jesus with the God who, at the burning bush, reveals his name as “I AM” (Ex 3:14). As the light of that bush draws Moses to God, so the illumination



of Christ attracts each of us. If we follow Christ, even in what seems like the dark of winter, we truly walk in the light.

This light in our midst can be understood by an allegory.¹ Imagine a group of friends, each holding a small mirror. Some of the mirrors are broken with cracks deep into their surface and so they reflect imperfectly. Other mirrors are covered with duct tape, eradicating their ability to reflect. Others are spotted, dusty and need a dose of window cleaner. Then there are those who shine and reflect very well. The leader has a laser whose small red beam can be pointed at the small mirrors. On a foggy night, the beam of light is particularly apparent. It reflects off the clean mirrors so well that it is passed on to other mirrors. However, the covered mirrors don’t receive the beam, and the cracked and spotted ones only partially pass on the light. God the Father is holding the laser and Christ is the light being passed from each mirror (disciple) to another. The fog is the

world around us, our experiences, and every grace that allows us to see light more clearly. The cracks in the mirror are imperfections of our spirits and the duct tape is those sins that isolate us from God. Our job, with God’s assistance, is to fix the mirrors of our lives, to polish, glue, or

unwrap them, so that each experience of Christ can be passed on to another disciple. This is the call of Advent: be the instrument by which the Light of the World can continue to shine for all to see.

Advent invites us to move closer to the light. We are encouraged in the midst of the dying days of the year, in the starkness and dreariness of winter, in the darkness of sin, to respond to the coming light. We are invited to enter into that light of Christ’s presence, forgiveness, and life that show us the path to eternal life.

May each candle of the Advent wreath remind us of the light of grace. May each week, with each additional candle and increased light, enhance our experience of God’s presence. May this Advent bring us closer to the God who moves closer to us, to the God who is constantly inviting us to intimacy, the God who is light in our midst. ✱

¹ Thanks to Donald Kelley, Esq, of Silverton, Oregon, for this explanation.

HEIRLOOMS, HAND-ME-DOWNS, BLESSINGS AND BEQUESTS

SR. DAWN ANNETTE MILLS, OSB

My family is and was a wonderful conglomeration of wise fools, foolish scholars, princely paupers, generous squanderers, sinful saints and saintly sinners. We had a male lineage that included O. L. Mills I through IV, and females with names such as Opal and Pearl, Orpha and Bethel, Dawn and Dusk. My mother's family came to this country on the next boat after the *Mayflower*, the *William and Mary*, in 1623. My father's family countered that claim, saying they came on a boat of their own. It was not quite the truth, as great grandfather was a young stowaway in a grain barrel on a boat out of Ireland.

My family didn't have much in the way of material possessions. We had very few heirlooms, and lots of hand-me-downs. Yet, my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents left behind a glorious legacy to every member of my family. We received a rich heritage of stories, narratives, anecdotes and legends. Each was imbued with values, cautionary advice, testimonies of faith, and proclamations of God's powerful intervention.

My mother's mother, Jennie Williams Hjellming, was a can-do woman who was editor of her hometown newspaper until a rival newspaperman put her out of business by marrying her. Jennie had seven children, though they were never all



present for a single meal. Jennie died at the age of eighty-six, at a prayer meeting in her local church. She stood up and shared on her portion of Scripture, then sat down and died. She left our family two tangible treasures: her sewing box and her

Bible. Both contained pearls. The sewing box had a string of natural pearls that eventually came to adorn my sister's wedding dress. The Bible contained not only the pearls of Holy Wisdom, but the notes, comments and reflections that Grandma had penciled in the margins. In her last years, my own mother spent hours praying with her mother's Bible and found herself feeling closer to God and to her mother than ever before. It seemed that Jennie had left my mother personal messages through those marginal notes.

Bible reading was time spent personally with God and God's Word and was passed down from generation to generation on my mother's side. My generation has two precious hand-me-downs from these women: we have my grandmother's annotated Bible and my mother's own Bible as well. The only picture I have of my great grandmother, Matilda, is of her reading her Bible in her living room on a Sunday afternoon. According to my mother, love of the Bible wasn't passed down through the women only. My grandfather, her father, used to memorize long sections of Sacred Scripture to recite when he was out in the fields working the crops. His practice encouraged me to learn the Book of the Song of Songs by heart some years ago.



Part of my love for Benedictine life is the use of the Bible in Benedictine prayer. We pray together from Sacred Scriptures at least five times every day. Then we spend at least an hour on our own engaged in sacred reading of the Bible—what monastics call *lectio divina*. It feels natural to me as it is part of my family heritage.

Faith in an ever-present loving God is also part of my inheritance from my mother. Her mother was a friend of Jesus. Her mother's mother was a disciple at the Master's feet. Before converting to Catholicism as an adult, I didn't know what a nun was. But someone who lived and walked and talked with Jesus—well that was just a normal way of being in the family.



The inheritance from my father's side was a bit more secular, but just as real. My father was a troubadour prince who never set much store by

material goods. He was more the fiddling grasshopper than the industrious ant. It wasn't that he didn't put in a hard day's work, but he really believed that God who fed the birds of the air and clothed the lilies of field would provide for our needs as well. If someone needed something, he was quick to give. He knew God would not be outdone in charity. His belief in Divine Providence is one of the greatest gifts he could give his children, and I have treasured that gift all my life.

I have never in my life worried about money. I've sometimes had too much month left when money ran out, but I asked God and somehow the ends always met. Sometimes I needed to tug and stretch a little. Always, when it really counted, God provided, though he has repeatedly used human channels to do so. I was taught not to be ashamed to ask for help if I needed it, but to be prepared to do the footwork. After all, Jesus said, "ask...seek...knock."

My father enjoyed spending his free days down at the

local junk yard. There people would bring things they didn't want anymore: used furniture, old toys, things that no longer held value to the present owner and weren't worth the trouble of a rummage sale. My father never could abide to have a religious article left with the junk, so every room in our house had a cross or crucifix, sometimes even a statue or religious painting, and a Bible that had paused at the junk yard before finding a place of respect and honor in our house. We were the envy of the neighborhood because we had more toys than any other family. They weren't brand new toys, but they were new to us. Dad would find them and fix them. Mom would paint them, polish them, and make new clothes or upholstery so they looked new.

Before it became socially responsible, my parents bequeathed me the ability to reuse and recycle, to remake and make do. Even today I take their example to heart when I make gifts and recycle things for others. I see that same knowledge reflected in the choices my brother and sister make in their lives.

Memories are another treasure trove that the family passed down. My mother was very interested in genealogy, and found wonderful memories of our ancestors. We have stories about the founding of Rhode Island by one ancestor and the signing of the Declaration of Independence by another. Johnny Appleseed (the Reverend John Chapman) sat on one branch of the family tree, while a Union General from the Civil War sat on another. In between were sailors, merchants, farmers and ministers. There were also drunkards, swindlers and land-grabbers, and probably a horse thief or two. Mother's family descended from William the Conqueror. Dad's family was part leprechaun, or so he said. Mom said that Dad was also part fool. Dad always wanted to know which part.

Listening to stories and collecting them also became part of our family heritage. My favorite job in the monastery was to work with our elderly sisters and be the "official story listener." I collected in my heart



the stories of my sisters, and the stories passed down from generation to generation in the monastery, recognizing that every story, happy or

sad, holy or otherwise, is part of the patrimony of our religious family. Some stories are factual, others are true, even if the facts are a bit fuzzy. All stories hold value, because they teach us about each other, about love, humanity, hope and laughter, and Divine Providence.

Some treasured stories were told without words. My father died when my siblings and I were young children. Mom explained death with a story about a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. It was a simple way of talking about St. Paul's teaching about mortal and immortal bodies. When Mom knew that she was dying, many years later, she chose a mortuary urn decorated with an engraving of a monarch butterfly. That urn became her last words to her children—the final reminder that life is changed, not ended.

Faith was part of our heritage. It came not just through stories, or even through words, but through witnessing the faithfulness of our parents. Mom prayed, went to church, and tithed regularly. She also gave her time and talent to causes she believed in. She was part of the Mother's March of Dimes against polio back in the 1950s. When a neighbor child was diagnosed with cerebral palsy she became quite active in raising funds for that cause. She gave in many ways during her life, and witnessed by her charity, even after her death, to her enduring values.

Dad, too, left us a testament of his beliefs. He spent time fishing with Jesus, seeking for treasures in the

field, and giving to those in need. He taught us that grown men do cry, for sad and for happy. He showed us that you don't have to stop playing when you grow up, that it's as easy to dance as to walk, and to sing as to talk. He taught us to look down on no one, except to watch over them. His life carried the message that long or short isn't a measure of fullness.

As a Christian and a Benedictine, I look to the legacy Jesus left us in the Gospels. The Eucharist itself is done, *remembering* Jesus. In his last night before his passion and death he left his disciples his example of servant leadership as he washed their feet. He left us the new commandment: "love one another, as I have loved you." And how did he love? He laid down his life. He gave all that he was that we might be made one in him, one with each other and one with the Father.

It is a custom in the monastery, when a sister dies, for the community to gather and tell stories about Sister's life, about what she accomplished, what she taught us, what we saw in her, and how we were helped by her being among us. It is a memorial service and we share memories, but it is also a kind of spiritual Last Will and Testament, as we share what we have each received from Sister's legacy. It makes me wonder how I will be remembered. What is the legacy, the Testament, the heritage I leave behind? How will my values, my causes, my hopes and dreams, my love, be carried into the future? I trust Divine Providence will take care of my soul. But what will I leave in this world?

The year's end is a good time to reflect on the memories and stories that have helped to shape our lives. While we gratefully consider this legacy, we do well to consider now, while we have time, what *our* legacy will be to those who come after us. How will they remember us, and how will we be a blessing in their lives? ✱



Bread of Life
Legacy Society

The Benedictine Sisters create a new way to show their gratitude

What is the Bread of Life Legacy Society?

The Bread of Life Legacy Society honors those who have included the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in a planned gift. Its name emphasizes the personal opportunity to leave a legacy in the context of the Adoration of the Eucharist.

Why should I join the Bread of Life Legacy Society?

How does it benefit me?

Planned giving allows you to support the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, while often receiving significant tax benefits. Joining the Bread of Life Legacy Society offers additional benefits. Society Members will be assured of daily prayers, honored in a special celebration of the Eucharist each November, and will have their names inscribed on a Bread of Life memorial in Clyde, Missouri.

Joining the Bread of Life Legacy Society also gives the Sisters the opportunity to express their undying gratitude and discuss with you your desires for the use of your gift. It allows others to be inspired by knowing you are gifting the Sisters and their ministry of prayer. There are no meetings or dues associated with the society.

What will the money go toward?

Unless specially designated, funds which come to the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration go toward the major needs of the Congregation. As always, the Sisters appreciate all gifts and we use them with prudent stewardship to support our ministry of prayer, education of newer members, and care for all the sisters.

How do I join the Bread of Life Legacy Society?

You are included in the Bread of Life Legacy Society simply by notifying us that you have remembered our Congregation as a beneficiary in your will or life insurance, or that you have named us in a charitable trust.

One of my family members gave a planned gift to the Benedictine Sisters. Can they be honored by inclusion in the Bread of Life Legacy Society?

Of course! We will certainly be happy to include those who were kind enough to include us in their ultimate gift, even before we formed the Bread of Life Legacy Society. Please contact us with the names of your loved ones, and we will be happy to include them in any and all remembrances.

Where can I learn more?

There is a wealth of information on our website about planned gifts: at www.benedictinesisters.org. Select "Donate," then choose "Make a bequest," or choose "Planned giving" and click on options on the left side to go to related articles. Or you may contact Sr. Wilmarie Ehrhardt, as described below.

Whom do I contact with questions?

Sr. Wilmarie Ehrhardt, OSB, is Coordinator of Planned Gifts for the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. You may contact her by phone at 660-944-2271, or by email at gifts@benedictinesisters.org. You may also wish to contact your own attorney, financial advisor, or accountant, to discuss the many tax advantages and opportunities tied to planned gifts for charitable purposes.

Bread of Life Legacy Society Benefits

- Planned giving often comes with significant tax benefits
- Society members are part of the daily prayers of the Sisters
- Society members are honored in a special celebration of the Eucharist each November
- Society members' names are inscribed on a Bread of Life memorial in Clyde, MO



Sister Mary Annette Leonard, OSB, was thrilled with the new slippers she received for her 82nd birthday in August.

Smiling Sisters

Sister Mary Bernardine Weis, OSB, shows off her winnings from a round of Bingo at Our Lady of Rickenbach.



Community

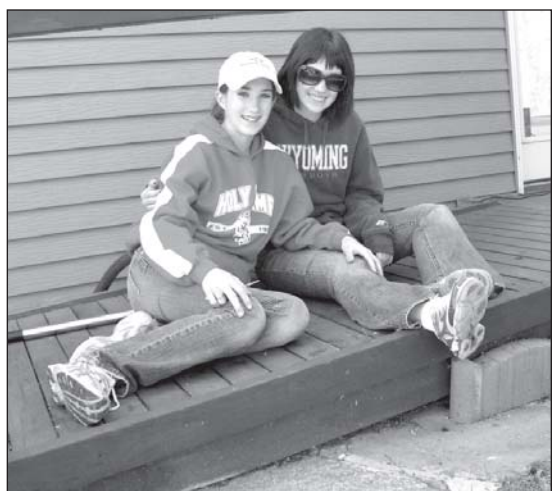
Friends helping friends

Knights of Columbus and their families spend day sprucing up San Benito Monastery



Benedictine Sisters at the San Benito Monastery in Dayton, Wyoming, were greeted with friendly faces and helping hands during the Knights of Columbus annual workday. Fifteen Knights and their families spent the day fixing fences and handling home repairs. These included repairing a leaking roof, pruning trees, installing rails on trail steps, waterproofing the porch and ramp to the chapel, and repairing a damaged swing.

“We are deeply grateful for all the help that the Knights and their families are able to give us,” Sister Josetta Grant, San Benito superior, said. “They do things that we are unable to do. It is a joy for us each year when they come to help us.”



(Top left photo) The Sisters thanked the Knights and their families with a wonderful picnic; (Far left photo) Katherine and Elizabeth Winnop, who accompanied their parents, Teresa and Terry Winnop, for the Knights of Columbus annual workday; (Left photo) Andy McFaul and his son were handy with indoor repairs.

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Sister attends Vow Camp



Sister Nancy Rose (third from left) joined seven other temporarily professed sisters and two directors for Vow Camp.

It's affectionately called Vow Camp, but it serves an important purpose: helping women prepare to take their perpetual monastic vows.

Sister Nancy Rose Gucwa joined seven other sisters from June 21 to July 12 at Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Alabama, host to the annual Benedictine Spirituality Workshop and Retreat, sponsored by the American Benedictine Formation Conference.

The two-week workshop included a focus on community building and reviewing significant aspects of Benedictine life such as Benedictine charism, the three-fold monastic commitment of obedience, stability, and *conversatio* (fidelity to the monastic way of life), *lectio divina* and contemplation, monastic prayer, discernment, cenobitic community, celibacy, sexuality and personal wholeness, Gospel ministry, reverence, stewardship and hospitality, peace and justice, and humility.

The event concluded with a six-day directed retreat for prayerful reflection and one-on-one direction.

“Our classes on the vows, the Rule of Benedict and many other facets of monastic life brought me to a deeper appreciation of our life together,” Sister Nancy Rose said. “I look forward to continuing my journey toward and with Christ together with my Sisters.”



News & Notes from the monasteries

1. Sister Natalia reaches milestone

Sister Natalia Barela celebrated her 103rd birthday in July, becoming the oldest Sister in the Congregation's history. Friends, family, and Sisters honored her with a reception and cake.

2. Medieval Studies workshop

Sister Colleen Maura McGrane presented *Posthumous Benedictine Cooperation: Benedict and Scholastica's Resurrection Miracle in Translatio* at Western Michigan University's International Congress on Medieval Studies.

3. Low-gluten highlights

Low-gluten altar breads were featured in several publications this summer, including the *Portland Oregonian*, *Living Without* magazine, and in the Seattle Archdiocese's *The Progress*.

4. Fun at the fair

Sisters Dawn Annette Mills and Maria Victoria Cutaia hosted an informational booth at the Nodaway County Fair in July, in Maryville, Missouri. They featured handcrafted items and information about the *Sacred Stones, Sacred Stories* project.

5. Contemplative workshop

Sisters Mary Anita Valdez and Cecilia Rose Sprekelmeyer attended a workshop conducted by Father Richard Rohr at the *Center for Action and Contemplation* in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

6. Sacred Stones in the news

Clyde renovations were featured in *The Catholic Key*, newspaper of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, and on KXCV-FM, the area's National Public Radio affiliate.



Corn from the Cloister

Prayerfully Popped Is Launched

Sisters' new work provides perfect partnership

With more than one hundred years of altar bread production and magazine publishing under their belts, the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have added a new business to their income-generating portfolio—***Prayerfully Popped: Corn from the Cloister***, a line of gourmet popcorn that will be produced near the Sisters' Tucson monastery.

The Benedictine Sisters remain the largest religious producers of altar breads in the nation, but for some time have been exploring additional revenue streams. After a period of discernment and discussion of viable products, they and their partners decided to bank on the popularity of one of the nation's favorite snacks.

"Everyone loves popcorn," said Sarah Caniglia of *5k9 Consulting Inc*, a partner in the new business. "We use the highest quality corn kernels to make our popcorn superior in taste. All of the corn is grown in the United States, and we are proud of that fact."

Since May, the Sisters and other *Prayerfully Popped* associates have been selecting the right location for the business in Tucson, securing permits and licenses, designing a logo and packaging, building a website, training employees and creating recipes. They've also been busy with a more enjoyable task—taste-testing varieties of popcorn flavors.

"We've had several sessions during which Sisters tried different flavors and provided feedback," Tucson Prioress Sister Ramona Varela, said. "What a fun time we had, and I think we picked some real winners."

While the Sisters will incorporate the Benedictine spirituality of prayer and work into the new business, as they've done with all their works over the generations,

"One might call it a hot idea that really pops."

"I hope that the students learn how a business should be run with regards to integrity, honor and conscience, and bring these qualities to their future endeavors as they go out into the business world."

– Sarah Caniglia, *5k9 Consulting Inc.*

Prayerfully Popped is unique in one aspect: it's a collaborative effort among many people, not just the Sisters.

Joining in the new venture are Eller School of Business students at the University of Arizona, along with Caniglia and her business partner, Cindy Griffith. Together they were the creative force behind *LaserMonks* and are the owners of *5k9 Consulting Inc.*

This exceptional partnership allows the Sisters to keep the balance of their monastic life of prayer and work. At the monastery they will engage in such activities as labeling containers, creating gift baskets and handling mailings. They will also assist with producing and packaging at the shop, along with managing customer service needs.

"One very unique aspect of this business is that the Sisters will also get to share their lives with, and mentor University of Arizona business students," Caniglia said. "I hope that the students learn how a business should be run with regards to integrity, honor, and conscience, and bring these qualities to their future endeavors as they go out into the business world. Corporations can take a lesson from the way this business is run day to day."

Continued on next page



(left to right) Sr. Kathleen Gorman, OSB, Sr. Mary Elizabeth Krone, OSB, John Leavitt, Sr. Lucia Anne Le, OSB, Sr. Carmela Rall, OSB

The house stood firm

To assist with storm recovery efforts, please visit www.benedictinesisters.org/contribute/donation.php.

Late summer storm hammers Clyde monastery

SISTER SEAN DOUGLAS, OSB AND
KELLEY BALDWIN

The Clyde monastery was slammed with hail and high-velocity winds during a storm in late August. Some weather centers clocked the winds at 100 miles per hour. No one was injured, but more than 114 windows were destroyed throughout the monastery buildings. Other casualties included dozens of damaged trees, roofing, the bell tower, landscaping, water-logged carpets, and soaked personal items in bedrooms.

“We were very fortunate that no one was injured,” Sister Sean Douglas, Prioress, said. “After the storm, we witnessed a multitude of blessings and clear evidence of God’s work, as many employees, neighbors and friends came to help. It looks a little ragged right now, but after a time we’ll be stronger and better than ever.”

How everything will be replaced remains to be seen. Some of the destroyed items are not readily replaceable, including stained glass windows that predate World War I. “There is a difference between replacement and restoration,” said one of the General Councilors, Sister Dawn Annette Mills. “We’ve already contacted the company that originally created the windows and are eager to learn if they can be recreated.”

The Sisters quickly got back to their daily lives, including the very evening the storm struck.



(Left photo) The storm destroyed dozens of stained glass windows, including two in the Sorrowful Mother Chapel, which date to 1901. (Top photo) A twisted trunk is most of what remains from a tree after high winds mowed it down, before slamming into the north wall of the Relic Chapel. Wind and hail took out most of the windows on that side.

“We prayed together, thanking God for watching over us and were especially drawn to a passage from Matthew 7,” Sister Dawn Annette said. “The rains came and the winds blew, but the house stood firm because it was built on rock. God was our rock and our refuge.”



Prayerfully Popped Is Launched

(Continued from previous page)

Caniglia calls this a “project of love” among the Benedictine Sisters, the Tucson community, the University of Arizona, and customers. Many not-for-profit groups are struggling in today’s tight economy, and organizations are exploring creative ways to find revenue-building projects to provide long-term sustainability.



“However, there needs to be an almost perfect balance between prayer and profit for the Benedictine Sisters, always keeping in mind that when a customer purchases a gourmet popcorn gift, he or she is supporting their Congregation,” Caniglia said.

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Prayerfully Popped

(Story continued from page 21)



The Sisters hope this new business venture will accomplish several things: generate new income; forge new, lasting friendships and relationships; and provide additional ways to mentor youth in business and in prayer.

“It is a monastic value based on the Rule of St. Benedict that, before we start anything, we ask for God’s blessing,” Sister Ramona said. “With God in our hearts, everything we do is part of our daily prayer and, in fact, part of our praise, adoration and thanksgiving.”

**See story details
on page 20.**

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