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Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Clyde, Missouri

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From Sister Dawn Annette

When I was a child, I began to plan for Halloween when the trees began to change color. Would I carve a scary jack-o'-lantern or one with a goofy grin? Would I dress as a princess or a cowgirl? How far would I go trick-or treating? Would I go with friends, or would I have to take my little brother and sister? How much candy would I get?

As a young Presbyterian, I hadn't heard much about the holy days in this season. All Saints Day and All Souls Day were overlooked. Now I know All Saints is a solemnity and a holy day of obligation. All Souls is unique and has a long title, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. From my years in Tucson, I learned to treasure the Day of the Dead, as it is known. This year, Halloween is simply Tuesday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time.

Now, instead of fussing over pumpkins and black cats on October 31, before First Vespers of All Saints, the sisters at Clyde gather in our Relic Chapel and chant the litany of the saints, including the name of the patron saint of each sister. Then we process into our Adoration Chapel, where we sing the rest of Vespers. We look forward to this moving ritual every year.

The Relic Chapel opened in 1930 to house over six hundred relics of saints. Many of these relics came from donors in Europe who received help for devastated monasteries, convents, and seminaries after World War I. Now people come from all over to venerate them. A book lists each one and gives its location in the chapel. Many visitors look for the relic of their patron saint.

We are surrounded by saints as we seek their intercession. We are aware that not all the saints are included in the litany. We have many other saints who are up the hill in our cemetery. We have a book sitting on a table in the hallway, a necrology, which has a photo and biography of all our deceased sisters. It is kept open to the current date so that we can pray for the sister on the anniversary of her death.

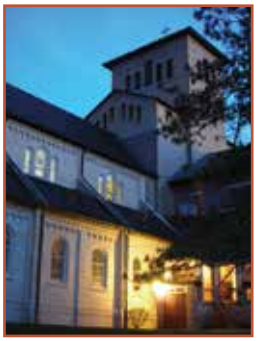
There is another book next to it: the birthday book. This book includes a photo of each sister and a bit of family history. Some sisters have added a baby picture. We sing a blessing over the sister who is celebrating. We are still working toward sanctity, but the effort is worth celebrating.

We don't have necrology and birthday books for family members, but we share stories and memories of those dear to us. We pray for our family members and friends, both living and departed—and for yours, too.

Soon it will be Advent and we will be preparing for another birthday, that of our Savior. We wish you a holy and blessed Advent and a very merry Christmas.

Sister Dawn Annette Mills, OSB
Prioress General

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration



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Who We Are

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration are a contemporary monastic community with a distinctive dedication to the Eucharist. We serve the Church through our contemplative prayer, and witness to God's presence in our world through community life, hospitality, and a ministry of the word, in ways uniquely appropriate to our monastery.

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FROM THE EDITOR

In 1957, a full-scale reproduction of the Mayflower departed from Plymouth, England, with a crew of thirty-three men and sailed across the Atlantic to Provincetown, Massachusetts. A few weeks later, this reproduction, called Mayflower II, was towed up the East River to be docked in Manhattan. My mother took my brother and me to see it. It is now permanently docked in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Mayflower II is almost an exact replica of the original ship. A lower deck ladder has been replaced by a staircase and electric lights have been added. To be honest, I don't remember much about it except that it was tiny. I could not imagine crossing the ocean in it. It was not at all like the luxury liner Queen Mary that we had also had the opportunity to tour.

The original Mayflower had a crew of about thirty as well as one hundred and two men, women, and children who had to travel as cargo. The voyage lasted ten weeks. The Pilgrims, motivated by religious zeal and firm convictions, had to have been very brave to risk such a dangerous journey.

The passenger list of the Mayflower is available online. The list does not include any of my ancestors who arrived from Hungary and Poland about two centuries later. Their trip by steamer would have been shorter, but it would have been difficult. Their quarters in steerage would have been crowded, damp, cold, and dirty. As did the Pilgrims, they sought a better life and religious freedom in America. All immigrants have to be courageous to take what little they can carry and begin new lives in a foreign land.

The Bible frequently reminds us that we were aliens and sojourners in a strange land. The Lord tells Abraham, "Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you" (Gn 12:1). Jacob, fleeing from his brother Esau, pauses on the way and receives God's blessing in a dream (Gn 28:10-15). Every year, the ancient Israelites recalled their status as refugees when they offered the first fruits of their harvest:

> Then you shall declare in the presence of the Lord, your God, "My father was a refugee Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as a resident alien. But there he became a nation great, strong, and numerous." (Deuteronomy 26:5)

This declaration recalls Israel's history and is an affirmation of faith and dependence upon God.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were refugees. After the Magi departed, we are told:

> The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-14)

Christians are addressed as "aliens and sojourners" in the First Letter of Peter. We read, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and sojourners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against the soul" (1 Pe 2:11). We are only sojourners here on earth and are travelling to our heavenly homeland. We are urged to be holy in every aspect of our conduct (1 Pe 1:15) and to act with reverence. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), and we need to live according to heavenly values.

Some people fear that migrants and refugees are violent criminals. But the migrants and refugees are us.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Hidden Saints Are Among Us

Rabbi Allen S. Maller

Elie Weisel tells us that God created humankind because God loves stories. The more than thirty-six *Lamed Vavnik* stories are some of the stories that touch my heart the most.

The Hebrew term *Lamed Vav Tzadikim* refers to a special group of at least thirty-six unknown righteous people who are hidden in the world. Their role in life justifies the value of humanity in God's eyes. The source of this tradition is the Talmud which states that in every generation, thirty-six or more righteous people "greet the Divine Presence," or the *Shekhinah*, which has come to mean the feminine aspect of God (B. Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97b; B. Talmud *Sukkah* 45b). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hasidic and Yiddish proletarian writers expanded this Jewish tradition by adding that if even one of the minimum thirty-six was missing, the world would come to an end.

The *Lamed Vavniks* are scattered throughout the world. On rare occasions, one of them is discovered by accident, in which case their identity must not be disclosed. The *Lamed Vavniks* do not know that they are one of the thirty-six. Unlike those who are rich, famous, scholarly, powerful, beautiful, or successful, the thirty-six are very important people because, in a generation that has only the minimum thirty-six, if one of them is absent, society will destroy itself through cynical, self-centered hedonism. Consequently, we should honor all the poor, simple, honest, unselfish, hardworking, and long-suffering people around us. One of them may be one of the thirty-six.

The minimum number differed from sage to sage. Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai believed, "The world is not able to stand except by thirty men righteous like Abraham our father" (*Bereishit Rabbah* 35:2, sefaria.org). Rabbi Simeon ben Jehozadak says there are forty-five people "in whose merit the world continues to exist" (B. Talmud *Hullin* 92a; *Midrash Tehillim* 5:5, sefaria.org). According to Rav Judah, the number thirty represents the number of "righteous gentiles among the nations of the world" (B. Talmud *Hullin* 92a).

I would like to share two fables about events that may have never happened as they are told because such events always happen in other ways. The theme is the power that a pure-hearted person's righteous plea should and sometimes does have:

> Once there was a great drought. A rabbi called all the Jews of his village to the synagogue. They prayed day and night, but still no rain fell. Then the rabbi declared a fast, and asked God to answer their prayers.
>
> That night he heard a voice from heaven, saying, "God will send rain only if Rahamim, who always sits in the back corner of the synagogue, prays for it."

"But he's an ignoramus," protested the rabbi, "and I am not sure how kosher his home is." Silence was the response. When Rahamim came to the synagogue the rabbi said, "Tomorrow you will lead the congregation in prayers for rain."

"But I do not know how to pray," said Rahamim. "There are so many others who know more than I."

"Even so," said the rabbi, "it is you who must lead the prayers."

The next day the rabbi called all the people together to pray. The synagogue was filled. All eyes were on the place where everyone expected to see the rabbi. How great was their amazement to see poor Rahamim standing up there before the Holy Ark, holding a clay jar with two spouts in his hands. "Now I ask that you pray with all your heart," he told the congregation.

So they opened the Ark, where the Torah scroll was kept, and the people poured out their hearts to heaven, wailing bitterly and beating their breasts. Then Rahamim lifted up his jar, first placing one spout to his eye and then the other to his ear. There was a rumble of thunder and then the sky opened up, drenching the earth with rain.

The rabbi later asked Rahamim, "Why did you bring that jar to the synagogue? What did you do with it?"

"Rabbi, I'm a poor, ignorant man," Rahamim replied. "What I earn as a shoemaker barely feeds my many children. Every day they cry for bread, and I have little to give them. When I hear their cries my heart breaks, and I also cry. So, I collect my tears in this jar. When you asked me to come here to pray, I looked into the jar and said, 'Master of the Universe, if you do not send rain, I will break this jar in front of the whole congregation.' Then I heard a voice that said, 'Ask again when you stand before the congregation.' So I did and I heard a voice say: 'Do not break the jar.' And then it began to rain."

It is a *mitzvah*, a good deed, to spread the knowledge of these fables. Here is another one:

Once there was a poor farmer who had to sell all he owned because for two years in a row insects ate up his crops. Then, in the third year he went into debt in order to feed his family.

He once asked his moneylender why it was so hard for poor people to make a living. The moneylender said, "I do not know. Only God knows. You should ask him."

The farmer, who was a good-hearted but simple person, took the moneylender's statement literally, and decided to go and ask God directly. But the poor farmer did not know where God lived, so he asked his wife. She told him to go and ask the people in a synagogue. "Which one?" he asked.

There were several different synagogues in their village, and the framer's wife thought he should go to the most religious one, the one where the men prayed for four hours every Sabbath and where they read the prayers faster than anywhere else.

The farmer went to that synagogue to ask where God lived, but the men there were praying so hard that no one had the time to answer the poor farmer's question. They just ignored him. The poor farmer then asked a man who was walking by on the road. He told the farmer to ask the men who spent the entire day studying Talmud.

The farmer went to the study hall, but the students there did not want to interrupt their studies to give an answer to the poor man; he left, feeling sad and rejected. The farmer met an old woman who was carrying a heavy basket. He took her basket and carried it all the way to her home. She thanked him and then asked him why he looked so sad.

The farmer told the old woman that he was looking for God because he had an important question to ask him, but he did not know where God lived. The woman smiled at the poor farmer and told him that God lives right here. "In your house?" he asked in surprise.

"No, not in my house. God lives in the good deed you just did when you carried my heavy basket for me. Most people think that God lives in your heart when you do good deeds for someone else, and they are right. But God does not just live within each person; more important, God lives between people when they help each other." Then the woman asked him, "What is your question for God?"

The poor farmer replied, "The moneylender told me to go and ask God why it is so hard for poor people like me to make a living. I did not know where God lived, so my wife told me to go to a synagogue, but the people there were so busy praying or studying that they had no time to answer my question."

The woman asked him if he and his wife loved each other. He told her that they loved each other very much. She asked him if he and his wife loved their children and he answered her that everyone in the family loved each other very, very much. Then she told him, "You are a poor farmer because the insects ate your crops, and because other people did not offer to help you when you were in need, the way you offered to help me, even though I did not ask you. Many people are so busy doing things for themselves and their families, or for God, that they do not notice when strangers are in need."

"But" the old woman added, "while you are a poor farmer, you are not a poor person, because you love your family, and your family loves you. No one who has people who love him is poor. Thank the God who lives within, between, and among loving people who help one another, that you are a rich man."

When the farmer went home to his wife and children, he told them how much he loved them and how wealthy he felt because of them. Then the rich man who was a poor farmer went to work planting seeds for his next crop. ✲

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Just as the stars are high and exalted above all mortals, so, the righteous. And just as the light of the stars can be seen from one end of the world to the other, so, the light of the righteous. And just as the stars are sometimes revealed and sometimes concealed, so, the righteous.
— Midrash

Winter Haiku

In my winter dream
Glorious sun warmed us all
Creation's blessings!

Trees in winter's glow
Anointed in holy frost
Awaken my heart!

Winter's gift calls us
In whisper or reflection
Come now and be still.

Silence speaks to us
Listening in deep quiet . . .
Hear what you long for!

Patricia Leyko Connelly

Taken from *Sacredness Surrounds Us in Every Season: Contemplative Reflections in Haiku Prayers, Photos, and Long Poems.* Foreword by Judith Valente. Patricia Leyko Connelly, 2023

In All Things May God Be Glorified

Melanie Supan Groseta

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake,
not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn.

Henry David Thoreau

Earthworms are glorious to me. When I took a gardening course, we had a guest speaker come who raised earthworms in tubs by feeding them compost material. I was enchanted by his project, and I wanted to do it, too. My husband and I constructed our earthworm motel, a large plastic tub vented on the bottom and half-filled with soil. We added earthworms and kept the soil moist and dark. We fed the earthworms banana peels, watermelon rinds, wet newspaper, and other forms of compost that we collected. The earthworms then did their thing, producing richer soil and lots of babies. By the following year, we had two tubs of earthworms, and I took one of them to the Girl Scout camp for the girls who were in a gardening unit. The girls loved the worms; they handled them amidst great giggles before adding them to the soil of the camp garden plots.

As a child, I was fascinated by the little mounds of soil that earthworms piled upon the solid earth after a rain and the pinpoint hole in the ground where the earthworms had come forth. Occasionally, I would glimpse an earthworm slithering back down into the hole, returning into the earth for shelter. Rarely, a few worms would stay above ground. I would pick them up and watch them curl up, extend, and curl up again on my palm.

Before I learned about worm motels, my husband and I took trips to the plant nursery to hunt for earthworms. After securing permission from the management, we carefully went around to each pot, tipping them off the ground to one side. Behold! Beneath each pot, earthworms could be found resting on the ground as a means of escaping the excess moisture caused by watering. One by one, we picked the worms up; they hung from our fingers, twisting and turning. We placed them in a can of soil, carried them home, and transferred them into our front and backyard gardens.

As a gardener, I spent time working the soil in my flower bed in preparation for my new plantings. I would always feel a sense delight whenever my trowel uncovered earthworms because I would then know that my garden bed was alive and rich with nutrients. As soon as the soil was turned, the earth-

worms adjacent to my trowel swiftly burrowed more deeply underground.

I recently discovered a poem by Lynn Unger that unites me with the earthworm:

> Imagine. The only thing that
> God requires of them
> is a persistent, wriggling, moving forward,
> passing the earth through
> the crinkled tube of their bodies
> in a motion less like chewing
> than like song.

Who knew that earthworms were such holy creations of God and that they supported the world with their unglamorous function of digestion? This poet understands the earthworm's place in the world. She says that earthworms have something valuable to tell us about God and about creation itself. This poem is prayer indeed.

My daughter recently gave me a book called *The Song of the Cell* by Siddhartha Mukherjee. When I read it, I recognized that the earthworm is made up of cells just as we are. These little creatures possess an animating spirit that pervades their worm bodies to function as they do. It reminds me how amazingly living organisms are made up of cells that function in a unified way within themselves, among each other, within tissues, and within organ systems at large. Whether it's an organism as small as the earthworm or as complex as a human being, organisms operate at the cellular and intercellular level to maintain physiological functions.

With the invention of the microscope in the seventeenth century, cells were first seen and studied by humans. Up until that time, humankind had no idea about this teeming world beneath our range of vision. Since that first discovery, science has advanced, discovering more about cells and cellular functioning. We know, for instance, that all cells come from cells. We've discovered more recently that "systems of cells with specialized functions, communicating with each other through short- and long-range messages, can achieve powerful physiological functions that individual cells cannot achieve" and that the body functions "as a citizenship of cooperating cells" (Mukherjee 366-367). As simple as the earthworm is, there is an intercellular dynamism that allows them to perform the bodily functions of movement, digestion, and procreation.

If I had a microscope or a video to bring the magnifications to rest on my own retinas, I could see the wonder of cells and the interactions of cells, but as a young student, I came to see the cell as something inert and having only limited meaning. Today, I understand cells from a different point of view. Biological organisms have an inherent animating holism deriving from cells and systems of cells. They may be one-celled or multi-layered cellular beings, of which human beings seem to be the most complex with thirty-seven trillion cells. Living organisms are wriggling balls of energetic matter. What makes them alive and growing is God's animating breath that allows organisms to wiggle, flail, and cry. The elegant movement of oxygen, carbon dioxide, nutrients, and organic waste flow within bodies by the means of harmonious cellular functions and intercellular functions, something so elemental and at the same time so complex and mysterious. The science of life is God's splendor writ large.

I salute the earthworm and its participation in the cellular dynamics of life itself. ✲

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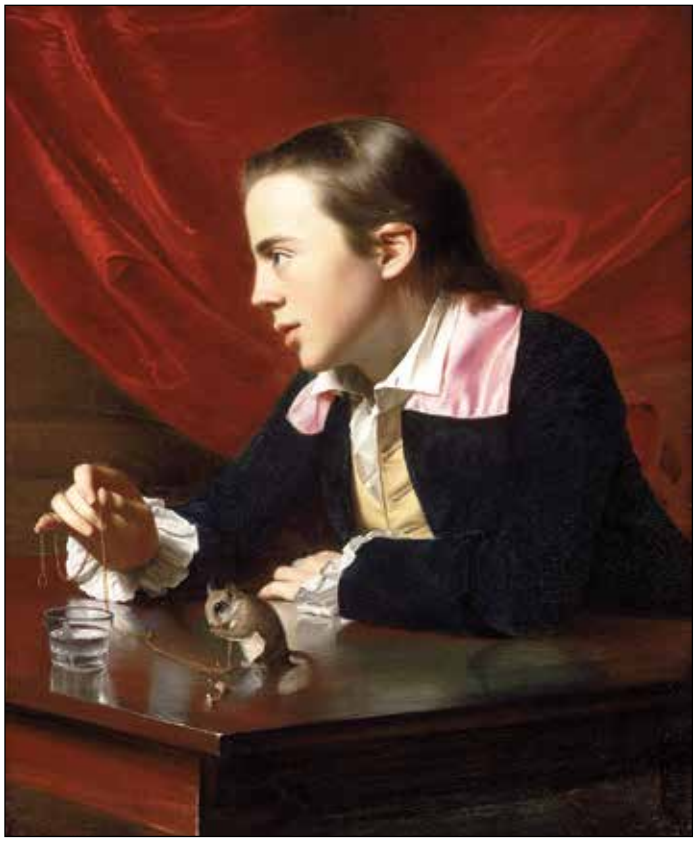
Patience as a Basic Christian Virtue

Abbot James Wiseman, OSB



When I was growing up, one of the most dynamic cities in our country was Detroit, which gave us the saying, "As goes General Motors, so goes the nation." Yet not many years ago, Detroit became the most populous city in the country to file for bankruptcy. There was no single reason for this, but one astute observer of the situation, Stephan Richter, noted that both management and the unions were at fault and that reversing the decline would not be easy because it would require collaboration among many groups: companies, government, trade associations, and universities. Such cooperation is hampered by an American ethos of individualism and personal independence that resists doing the right thing for the long haul. We live in an instant-gratification world that often makes us reluctant to put off what might be most pleasant to attend to what is more important and demanding (www.nytimes.com/2013/08/16/opinion).

The wisdom so much needed in economic life is what our monastic tradition teaches as necessary for a fully Christian life. In the Prologue to his Rule, Saint Benedict is insistent that his followers do today what will be of avail for eternity. He writes, "The Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, his holy teachings." Just a century earlier than Benedict, the monk Saint Nilus of Ancyra commented on Jesus' teaching "by patient endurance you will win life for yourselves" (Lk 21:19) when he wrote in one of his letters:

> The Lord did not say by your fasting, or your solitude and silence, or your singing of psalms, although all of these are helpful in saving your soul. But he said: 'By patient endurance.' For what has more power than this virtue? What more firmness or strength than patient endurance?... This is the queen of virtues, the foundation of virtue, a haven of tranquility.... It makes those who practice it stronger than steel. (www.myfaithwalk.org)

Closer to our own day, Frederick Faber, a disciple and friend of his fellow Oratorian Saint John Henry Newman, emphasized in the chapter on "Patience" in his book *Growth in Holiness* that this virtue can make us most like our Creator, whereas our tendency to rush around in multi-tasking pursuits is very unlike God. Faber makes this point in a forceful way:

> God is slow and we are precipitate. It is because we are for but a time, and he has been from eternity. Thus, grace for the most part acts slowly, and mortification is as long as leveling a mountain, and prayer as the growth of an old oak. God works by little and little, and sweetly and strongly he compasses his ends, but with a slowness which tries our faith because it is so great a mystery. (145)

The same insight is at the heart of what Pope Francis's teaching in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel*. Pope Francis wrote that "in the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional" (§62). Because of this mindset, he lamented that "it has become very difficult today to find trained parish catechists willing to persevere in their work for some years" (§81) while some priests and other ministers fall prey to a burdensome fatigue because "they lack the patience to allow processes to mature; they want everything to fall from heaven.... They are unable to wait; they want to dominate the rhythm of life. Today's obsession with immediate results makes it hard for pastoral workers to tolerate anything that smacks of disagreement, possible failure, criticism, the cross" (§82).

It would be easy to give more examples of this teaching from the Christian tradition, but the need for patience, for slowing down, has also been prominent in other religions. Since the Second Vatican Council has urged Catholics not only to tolerate but also to promote the positive values found in other religious traditions, it is worth hearing something about the value of patient waiting in the teaching of a remarkable Buddhist author who died in Sri Lanka in 1994 at the age of 93. His name was Nyanaponika Thera, which means something like "the venerable one who is inclined toward wisdom." His best-known work was titled *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*. In that book, he says a lot about the crucial value of patient waiting. Here's a brief summary of his teaching.

What Nyanaponika means by "the heart" of Buddhist meditation is mindfulness which he discusses under several aspects. The first and most relevant aspect is what he calls "bare attention," a matter of clearly recognizing what is going on in our mind at any given time. The immense practical value of this is that it can help prevent us from pursuing rash courses of action. In his words:

> Very often a single moment of mindfulness or wise reflection would have prevented a far-reaching sequence of misery or guilt. By *pausing* before action, in a habitual attitude of Bare Attention, one will be able to seize that decisive but brief moment when mind has not yet settled upon a definite course of action or a definite attitude but is still open to receive skillful directions…. Bare Attention slows down, or even stops, the transition from thought to action, allowing more time for coming to a mature decision. Such slowing down is of vital importance as long as unprofitable, harmful, or evil words and deeds possess an all too strong spontaneity of occurrence … without giving to the 'inner brakes' of wisdom, self-control, and common sense a chance to operate. (29)

In hearing these words, each of us may be led to reflect back on things we have once said or done but now regret and on how the wrongful action could have been avoided if only we had patiently taken the time to reflect more carefully on the long-term ramifications of what we were inclined to do and if we had first, in all humility and honesty, sought the advice of some trusted friend or counselor.

Up to this point, I have been discussing patience from a religious or spiritual perspective, but patience is a virtue valuable in many kinds of activity. Jennifer Roberts, a professor of the history of art and architecture at Harvard, once wrote an article titled "The Power of Patience." Near its beginning, she said she had once given her students an assignment to go to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and to spend three hours looking at a particular painting by John Singleton Copley, a work known as *Boy with a Squirrel*. The students were to write down any observations, questions, and speculations that arose from their observation. She said that the time span of three hours was deliberately chosen to seem excessive, but when she had done it herself before assigning it to others, she was amazed at how much she discovered. After some time, she discovered that the shape of the boy's ear precisely echoed the ruff along the squirrel's belly, apparently indicating that the painter

was making some kind of connection between the animal and the human body and the sensory capacities of each. Still more time had passed before she noticed that the boy's fingers held a chain that exactly spanned the diameter of the water glass below. It took another forty-five minutes before she realized that the seemingly random folds and wrinkles in the background curtain were perfect copies of the shape of the boy's ear and eye, as if Copley had imagined those sensory organs imprinting themselves on the surface behind him. And so on. Professor Roberts' main point was that this lesson about the power of patience goes far beyond art history, for she said that "it serves as a master lesson in the value of critical attention, patient investigation, and skepticism about immediate surface appearances." This led her to argue that there are few skills that are more important in academic or civic life in the twenty-first century. Her overall conclusion was that if the virtue of patience was originally understood as something rather passive, as the ability to forbear or suffer unpleasant situations, today it is better understood as something active, allowing us to take control over the fast-paced tempo of contemporary life that would otherwise control us.

I will briefly conclude this article with an anecdote from the literature of the early monks of the Egyptian desert. One day a visitor asked one of the monks: "What do you do all day long?" The monk replied: "We fall and we get up, we fall and we get up." As long as one keeps getting up, as long as one patiently cooperates with the best advice available, as long as one lives according to what Saint Benedict called the patience of God (*patientia Dei*), there is every reason to hope that the ultimate outcome will be good, no matter how much patience is called for. ✲

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FORM OF BEQUEST FOR A WILL

I give, devise, and bequeath to the Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Missouri ... (state here the amount of money or description of the property willed). For wills, bequests and estate planning, our legal name is: Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration.

Festivity

The feasting of
Mary's being
conceived ... means?

Could it be a feast
in honour of the God
who does impossibly?

As calling into being
she who would be
asked to believe
in the impossible?

Stirring the waters
in womb darkness,
like first creation,
God hovers-over:

"Let there be she
who will one day
be visited by me,
when I will come
and ask: Will you
let me do in you
the impossible?
Bring to birth the
One who is Love,
enfleshed in you?"

This (strange
sounding) feast
invites festivity.
It celebrates
the One,
only one,
who was then,
forever is, all
Yes to Love.

It resounds:
Rejoice!
As God
formed her
heart willing
to trust the
coming of Life,
she stands—
in littleness
made strong
in mighty God—
as reminder.

Of what?
That God
can and does
the impossible
in us. And so
that mother's
way of hers
companions
our labouring
to allow the
Holy Spirit's
desire that
we let God
be all Love.

As such,
she says:
"Let God do
impossibly in
you. You,
too, yes
(what is
true) to
being named,
wholly claimed,
by God's love."

Patricia Coulter

Patricia Coulter received her certification in the Franciscan Internship Program in Spiritual Direction and Directed Retreats and her doctorate in ministry from the University of Saint Michael's College, University of Toronto. She is the recipient of the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice cross for her pastoral work with adults and children in the ministry of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

Advent Weaving

Br. Ricky, OSB-F
assisted by
The Rev. Dr. Jane Tomaine

Deck the halls with lots of action.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Tis the season of distraction.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la.
Don we now our panicked rushing.
Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la.
Troll the constant frantic wailing.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la!

Hello! My name is Brother Ricky, OSB-F (Order of Saint Benedict-Feline). I'm a member of the Benedictine Feline Cloister in Mountainside, New Jersey, and novice master. I welcome you to this article and mew, "Your blessing, please."

A quick question as we begin: Did you sing the above version of "Deck the Halls?" If not, I invite you sing this catchy version now. I'll mew along with you.

Does this revamped jingle ring true for you in this pre-Christmas season? All of us in the Feline Cloister and our Worldwide Novices, too, have observed the frantic whizzing around of our humans as the holidays approach. In Advent, humans are busier than ever as even more "to dos" are piled upon an already crowded schedule: baking cookies for friends or teachers, buying gifts, attending school and church holiday concerts, decorating the home, visiting friends and families, entertaining, and perhaps even creating special worship services.

Now I mew that much of this action has good intentions and springs from a generous hearts. Yet, we felines observe a wide-spread amnesia regarding Saint Benedict's instructions for moderation and balance. Humans can and often do get swept up in the cultural blitz of pre-Christmas. We felines get exhausted watching it and opt for a good read or, even better, a nap. I have mewed repeatedly to Amma Jane that in the rush, she can lose her spiritual center in God. She can miss the peace and beauty of Advent.

Benedict asks us to act differently from the usual way of the world which tilts toward excess. We are to put the love of Christ first in how we approach everything and to "prefer nothing whatever to Christ." Even for us felines, the challenge is to remember these two practices and to act on them.

Part of the problem is an imagined separation of the sacred and the secular. Humans can view some activities as spiritual, like church, reading the Bible, or prayer, and view the rest, like shopping, running errands, and working, as secular and somehow separate from God. Not so. Saint Benedict declares that the Divine Presence is everywhere. What you and I need is to be intentional about bringing all parts of life together into one sanctified whole. That way we live with and from God.

May I suggest that we become weavers? Don't panic, please. No need to run out and buy loom and yarn, although it must be satisfying to work at a loom and see something beautiful emerge. What I'm suggesting here is that we find a way to weave all parts of our life together into a sacred whole. The process of weaving gives us an illustration for forming a life of unity and

beauty, a life infused with Christ. Here's how.

To weave, a loom is set up with scores of threads or yarn that run front to back from where the weaver sits. These threads are called the "warp." The weaver wraps a small device called a "shuttle" with more thread or yarn. The shuttle is then woven back and forth, above and below the warp threads. This creates the "weft," an Old English word meaning "that which is woven." The weaver works foot pedals that raise the warp threads in various configurations to create the pattern of the woven cloth.

Here's my idea of what this process can mean for us. You and I sit at the loom of our lives. Each warp thread is a facet of our life, an activity, a role, a responsibility, a task, a community that we are a part of. There are many colors and textures, some bright and shining, some dark and dull. As we look intently at the warp, the combination of parallel threads may be beautiful. Yet the threads are just existing by themselves. There are empty spaces between each thread so that nothing can be held or supported. The threads of the warp are isolated and weak.

This is what the many facets of our lives can seem like at times, separate and isolated tasks to be dealt with, finished, and checked off on the to-do list. Like the warp on a loom, they need to be joined together and strengthened. And so, we use the shuttle to weave the weft yarn into the warp. What is our shuttle?

Christ is our shuttle. The yarn of who he is will join the warp of our lives into a solid and glorious unity, a unity that is strong, purposeful, and that hangs together as a whole. Jesus tells us how to work the foot pedals so that his presence can create tapestries of infinite beauty, unique for each of us. As you weave the shuttle of Christ back and forth through the threads of the loom, with him you are weaving together the myriad parts of each day, each hour, each minute. The warp of life begins to make sense as we see everything as it is joined together by Christ. All we need do is to pick up that shuttle and let Christ move through the warp of our lives.

A Tool for Weaving Christ into Your Life

You sit at a loom where the multi-colored threads of your life stretch out in front of you – some are colorful, some may be dark, some may even be laced with tiny gold threads woven in with the cotton or the wool. Pick up Christ the Shuttle, wound with the threads of His Love. Draw him through all the threads of your day. As you begin a task, do your best to pick up the Shuttle and weave Christ into what you do and say. Let Christ help you create a tapestry of beauty and strength that is patterned with his peace. With Christ as your Shuttle, he will join the threads together into a unified whole.

Through the spiritual practice of weaving Christ into our day, we are better able to live the love of Christ and to prefer him above all else. We acknowledge his presence with us. Shopping? Christ is there. Decorating the home? He is there too. Filling the house with Christmas carols? He is definitely present. As we do our work, we can envision the shuttle of Christ making sense of it all, bringing all into a unity, making all holy and blessed. We can also pause even briefly throughout the day to envision the loom and Christ who brings all together. We can let him help us see everything we do as infused with his life-giving and creative spirit.

Are you ready to start weaving?

Thank you for reading my article. It was great being with you. Have a blessed Advent and a joyous Christmas! ✲

Your Benedictine feline friend,
Brother Ricky, OSB-F
Novice Master of the Feline Cloister.

Celebrating Christmas

Archbishop Jerome Hanus, OSB

I am often asked, "Which feast day in the church is the most important?" There are two feasts that rank high, Christmas and Easter. Which one is more important?

If you look back in history, clearly Easter was more central to the early Christians. Jesus had been crucified on Good Friday. To his friends and followers, initially that seemed to be the end of the story. They buried him outside Jerusalem and prepared to go back to their former lives, returning to their homes, devastated that all their hopes had been crushed.

Then, on Sunday morning, they hear the startling reports, first from the women who went to his grave, then from Peter and John, then from several more of his disciples. Jesus had risen from the dead. He had appeared to his disciples. He had spoken with them. He even shared a meal with some of them.

It is from Easter and from the resurrection that the faith of those first Christians was born. All those first Christians were Jewish so that the Sabbath, Saturday, was the day on which they gathered for religious services. They continued to do that for a few years. But Jesus had told them that they should gather and imitate what he had done on Holy Thursday at the last supper. So, they began to have religious gatherings to celebrate the Eucharist. What more fitting day to do that than on Sunday because Jesus had risen from the dead on Easter Sunday?

So, every Sunday became a little Easter and the Sunday closest to the Passover became the greatest feast for Christians. But that doesn't mean that Christmas was neglected or ignored. The gospels were written to help people come to faith in Jesus. Saint Matthew and Saint Luke included several chapters telling the stories of Mary and Joseph. Those Christmas stories are very familiar to us. They have inspired much religious art, many religious customs, and precious memories for all of us.

It was not until Saint Francis of Assisi appeared in the pages of Christian history that many features of our Christmas celebration were developed. Certainly, Saint Francis celebrated Easter and Holy Week with great fervor. He even experienced the wounds of the crucified Christ in his own body. He knew that Easter celebrates the powerful victory won by the adult Jesus Christ.

Saint Francis also loved Jesus as a baby, newly born of Mary, lying in a manger. His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, writes this about Saint Francis: "The birthday of the Child Jesus Francis observed with inexpressible eagerness over all other feasts, saying that it was the feast of feasts, on which God, having become a tiny infant, clung to human breasts. Pictures of these infant members he kissed with thoughts filled with yearning, and his compassion for the Child flooded his heart and made him stammer after the manner of infants. His name was like honey and the honeycomb in Francis' mouth" (II Celano, Chapter CLI, 199; 192).

Francis wanted to share his love for Christmas with everyone. In 1223, Francis was at one of his favorite places of prayer, a small town by the name of Greccio, a few miles from Assisi. A landowner allowed Francis to make use of a little cave as a hermitage. It was Christmas Eve. Francis invited a local priest to celebrate

midnight Mass with him, the other friars, and the people of the area.

In that humble setting, Francis created the first Christmas crèche. He had a manger brought to the place and filled it with straw. Then he reverently took a small statue of the infant Jesus and laid it in the manger. Some of the local people probably took the parts of Mary and Joseph. Saint Francis insisted that a living ox and a donkey be included in the scene.

Saint Bonaventure, one of Francis's biographers, described the site with these words: "Many friars and good people came at Francis's bidding, and during the night the weather also was beautiful. Many lights were kindled, songs and hymns were sung with great solemnity so that the whole wood echoed with the sound, and the man of God stood by the manger, filled with the utmost joy, and shedding tears of devotion and compassion. By his order the manger had been so arranged that Mass was celebrated on it, and blessed Francis...sang the gospel and preached to the people on the Nativity of Christ our King, and whenever he pronounced his name with infinite tenderness, he called him the 'little Babe of Bethlehem'" (Roebeck 45-47).

Francis invited people to kneel before the crèche. Christians have been responding to that invitation for centuries. May we in our day also respond with joy and devotion.

We can imagine Francis saying something like this: "Yes, God is all powerful. God is the mighty One in heaven. God is the creator of all and is able to move the sun, moon, and stars. His power is manifest in thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. We believe in God's power. But God is also a little child. God wants to identify with us in our weakness. God loves us so much that he came to live with us as a helpless and defenseless baby."

A great admirer of Francis, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "It is in the child Jesus that we see most clearly the defenselessness of God's love. God comes without weapons, because he does not want to conquer from the outside but to win us over from within and to transform us from within. If anything can conquer the arrogance, the violence, and the greed of man, it is the utter vulnerability of a child; and God has taken on this vulnerability in order to conquer us in this manner and to lead us to himself" (https://archive.org).

Each Christmas, we are given the opportunity to be grateful to God. God is not a distant, disinterested supreme being. God is a loving person. God loves us so much and forgives us our sins. We now call God by the name of Jesus, Jesus the savior of the world. Jesus is the God who shares our humanity.

In 1223, Francis of Assisi explained to the landowner of that piece of property why he wanted to create that first Christmas crèche. He said, "I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed " (I Celano, Chapter XXX, 84; 43).

As we celebrate Christmas this year, as we gaze upon the Christmas crèche, we are so grateful to Saint Francis of Assisi: "The birthday of the Child Jesus Francis observed with inexpressible eagerness over all other feasts." Let us do the same. Let us celebrate with our hearts full of joy. Let us celebrate with the shepherds and the angels, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all people, so greatly loved by God." ✲

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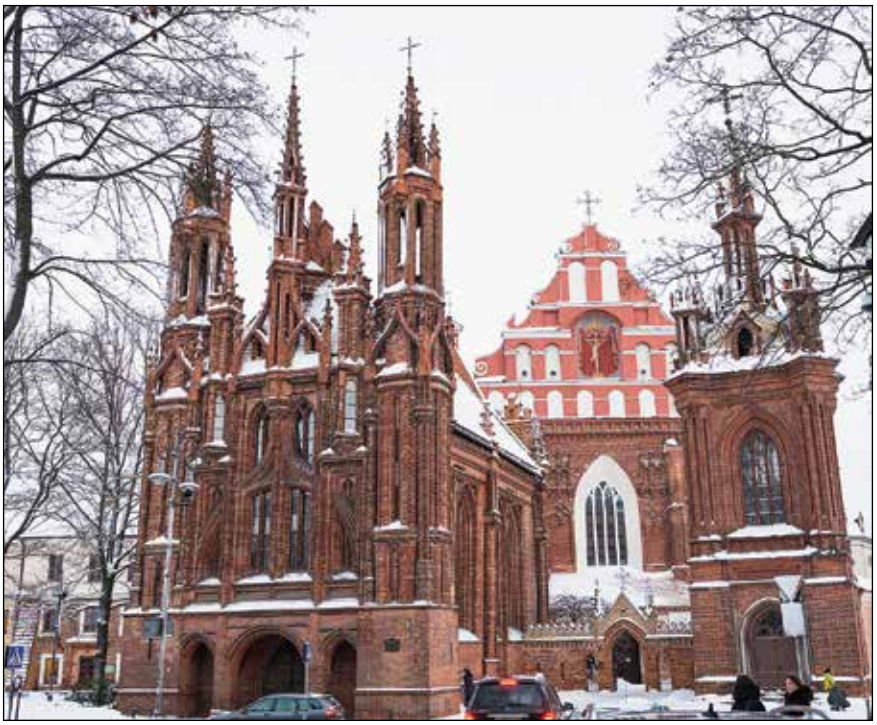
CHRISTMAS IN LITHUANIA

Rev. John Hagemann, OSB



A few years ago, a young man by the name of Tomas Butvilas spent some time with us here at our abbey, Mount Michael, in Elkhorn, Nebraska. Tomas is from Lithuania. He was part of a program from his school in Siauliai that partnered with the University of Nebraska in Omaha and provided student exchange from both schools. Tomas became acquainted with my abbey because at that time Mount Michael provided parish assistance at the Lithuanian parish in Omaha, Saint Anthony's Parish. Tomas very much appreciated spending time at our abbey and getting to know the monks of Mount Michael. Towards the end of his time in the program at the University of Nebraska, he begged me to visit him in Lithuania. Tomas knew that I loved to do garden work, and he wanted me to see how he and his family did gardening in his homeland. He also wanted me to visit all the places where he grew up.

Although I had done some traveling and spent time in Israel when I was part of a program from St. John's in Collegeville, Minnesota, I must admit that I do not travel very well, especially alone. I knew that I would not be able to rely on others in a group to help me on such a trip. I was very reluctant to travel so far on my own. However, with the encouragement of my abbot of the time and Tomas' insistence, I eventually gave in. To this day, it amazes me that I was able to do this on my own. To say that I allowed myself to be thrown out of my comfort zone would be putting it mildly. But what an experience it was!

When one takes a trip like this, it can seem like a whirlwind of activity and places to see. Since it was not a tour, we could do things at our own pace, and that made it even more enjoyable and pleasant for me. I do not intend to detail all my experiences of this trip. Rather, I would like to dwell on an experience of Christmas that has stayed with me ever since.

The experience took place with a visit to the Church of Saint Anne in Vilnius. It is a gothic masterpiece, one of the most treasured architectural monuments of Lithuania. Saint Anne's Church is not huge, but it is surrounded by legends. According to one legend, Napoleon, upon a visit to Vilnius in 1812, expressed a desire to carry the church back home in the palm of his hand.

My experience had nothing to do with the church's architecture or its beauty. My experience had to do with the senses of smell, sight, and sound.

As we entered the church, I was immediately stunned by an odor that, at first, I could not recognize, and it was not exactly pleasant. In the entrance of church was a small penned off area with animals. There were some sheep and one large cow. Although there was straw bedding for them in the pen, the smell that dominated the place was not the straw but the urine and manure of the animals. Perhaps it was because there was poor ventilation in that area of the church and because there were so many people in the church. Because of my rural background, such an odor was not foreign to me, but it just seemed out of place. It hit me strongly as we opened the doors of the church. It just seemed out of place at the scene of the birth of the Savior of the world. In some ways, it was shocking to me.

We moved into the church for a service of Christmas carols and music. The seating was very unconventional, like bleachers at a sporting event.

There was a procession down the middle of the church consisting of a group of children and young people who were physically challenged. Some were in wheelchairs, some on crutches, and some were helped by other adults. They were all singing Christmas music from their hearts with great gusto. It was an incredible sight and sound for me.

Although it was not Christmas Day, it was the Christmas season, and this experience made Christmas so very real for me. I must admit that over all the years of Christmases, never had I been so exposed to the reality of the Christmas message. The Christmas message was presented in a quite simple and tangible way. Christ comes into our world just as it is, with all the mundane and smelly odors of it. Christ comes into the world for all people of all times and in all places even if those places are smelly.

All nativity sets include animals in the romantic scene of the birth of Jesus. But all the animals are displayed in a way that does not portray the realism of animals. One does not think about odor when one sees a beautiful nativity set. But, if there were animals present at the birth of Jesus, I am certain beyond any doubt that those kinds of odors were very much part of the scene. Furthermore, the innocence of those challenged children and young people only made the message of Christmas more real for me.

We often prefer to imagine Jesus' entrance into the world in a very romantic way, complete with shepherds and angels singing melodious music. Jesus came into a world that was not as saccharine as our glistening Christmas cards and music often portray for us. Jesus came into a world in all its shocking reality, even amidst the offensive odors of manure.

The lyrics of "Away in a Manger" lend some help with this particular scene of Christmas:

Away in a manger
No crib for a bed
Little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay
Bless all the dear children
In your tender care
And fit us for heaven
To live with you there.

After this experience of Christmas in Lithuania, I felt I should let go of those traditional and romantic images that I have carried for so many years of my life. I felt that I was not recognizing the full meaning of Christ's coming. Indeed, Christ comes into our world just as it is. We need to be open to His Presence amid the mundane and earthiness as well as the romantic and sensational. ✲

BOOK REVIEWS

UNEXPECTED ABUNDANCE: THE FRUITFUL LIVES OF WOMEN WITHOUT CHILDREN, by Elizabeth Felicetti, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2023, 176 pp, $16.99 pb.

Not having children is a part of my monastic commitment that I accepted very early on. I have never needed to give this aspect of my life much thought. I feel saddened that Elizabth Felicetti felt it necessary to write this book. An Episcopal priest, she has been pressured over the years to bear or adopt children. She has often been made to feel less of a woman, less of a Christian, because she does not have children. Felicetti explains, "I hope my words will reach someone pondering whether or not to have children, whether or not to adopt, how to go on after an abortion, or what step to take after fertility treatments or adoption proceedings have failed" (xi).

Felicetti gives twenty-five examples of women who have not had children and who have lived fruitful lives, bearing fruit for their communities and for their churches. She includes biblical women from both testaments: Miriam, Deborah, Esther, and Huldah from the Old Testament, and Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, and the Samaritan woman from the New Testament. Clare of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, and Clare of Siena represent the Middle Ages. Other examples are varied; Hildegard of Bingen and Dolly Parton make their appearance as women composers.

Felicetti writes simply and clearly; her book is meant for average readers. I found her accounts of biblical women speculative and lacking firm textual support. Nevertheless, I enjoyed her work and read it quickly. I appreciated her stories about her own life experiences. I recommend this book for all "childfree" women and for everyone.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

THE RELIGIOUS JOURNEY OF DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER: DUTY, GOD, AND COUNTRY, by Jack M. Holl, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2021, 366 pp, $29.99 hc.

Dwight D. Eisenhower is the first president I remember. He seemed like a friendly grandfather during my grade school years, but I was too young to think much about him. The first presidential election that I recall is that of 1960, when John F. Kennedy was elected. By then, although I could not vote, I was keenly interested in current events.

Holl's book is part of Eerdmans' series, *The Library of Religious Biography*, which I have found quite appealing. This volume both intrigued me and disappointed me. The author explores Eisenhower's devotion to "civil religion." American civil religion promotes "the idea that Americans are a chosen people ordained by God with a unique mission and destiny to promote democracy and the 'American way of life'" (16). Holl supports this assertion with Eisenhower's writings and speeches and says it many times over.

Holl traces Eisenhower's view back to his upbringing in a small Kansas town. His parents were Jehovah's Witnesses with ties to the River Brethren, an Anabaptist group related to the Mennonites. The Eisenhower brothers, however, did not attend church. Dwight Eisenhower was baptized in the Presbyterian Church a few days after his first inauguration as President. Holl considers Eisenhower's political and religious views to be centrist and middle-of-the-road, but he often describes him as "conservative." Once he calls him as a "conservative progressive." I find this label to be confusing, even an oxymoron.

Holl's book, despite its repetitions, held my attention and raised my curiosity. I want to learn more about this great man. I can recommend it for all general readers.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

EVA'S STORY: A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S TALE by Eva Schloss with Evelyn Julia Kent, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2019, 234 pp, $16.99 pb.

I thought that everyone knew about Anne Frank, who hid, along with her family, for two years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and who died in Auschwitz. I recently discovered, to my dismay, that memories fade and Anne's tragic story is being forgotten.

Anne's father, Otto Frank, was the sole survivor of his immediate family. After the war, he married Elfriede (Fritzi) Schloss, who had a daughter, Eva, who was the same age as Anne and had been one of her playmates before the war. She became Anne's "posthumous stepsister."

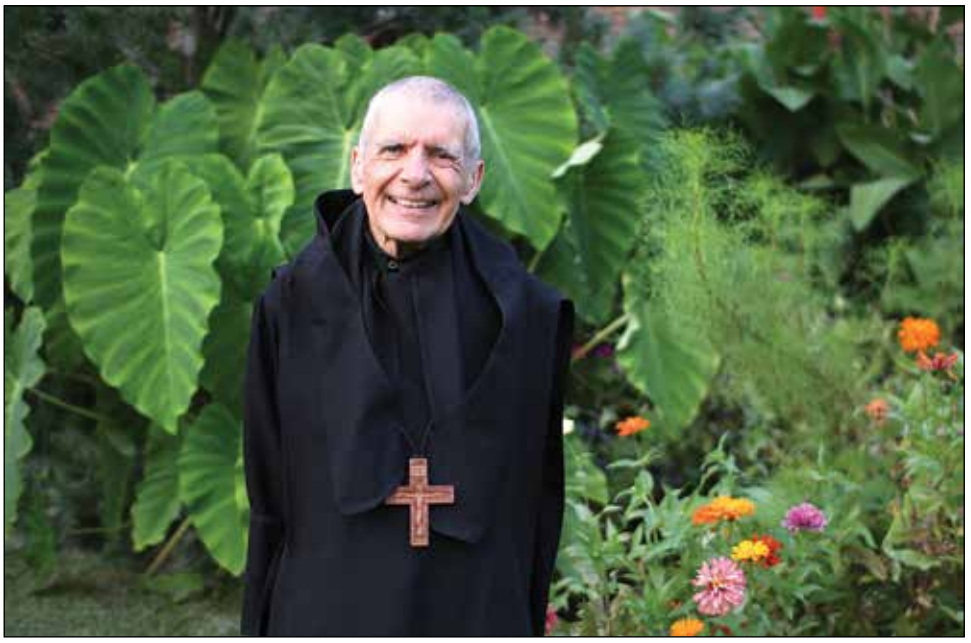
Eva and her mother were survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her father and brother perished. This short book is Eva's story. She tells it without bitterness and with great love for her family and those who helped them. Soon after the war, Eva wanted to tell people about her suffering, but people did not want to hear about it. It took her more than forty years to write her account. In an interview, Eva explained, "I was inspired to tell my story when I realized that the world had not learned what really happened, and I felt it was necessary to get down in writing what happened to me so that others would learn the truth from it (223-224)."

As we experience a rise in hate crimes, and extremist views, Eva's story is an important one. Her book is engaging; I read it straight through in one night. Like all Holocaust literature, it is difficult to read, but it must not be forgotten. We dare not deny, ignore, or forget what happened lest it happen again. Other members of my community are now reading and talking about it.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Conference is *Centered on Christ*

The Benedictine Sisters enjoyed three days of renewal and reflection in July, led by Rt. Rev. Dom James Wiseman, OSB, abbot of Saint Anselm's Abbey. Abbot James is an accomplished academic theologian and published author on subjects such as the mystical elements of Christian spirituality and the history of debates between science and religion. The conferences, entitled *Centered on Christ*, included talks on topics such as patience, forgiveness, silence, and reading.



Rt. Rev. Dom James Wiseman, OSB, abbot of Saint Anselm's Abbey, led a retreat for the Benedictine Sisters in July.

Sister Sarah Schwartzberg has known Abbot James for many years, dating back to their days as members of the board of directors of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue. The organization that promotes and coordinates interreligious dialogue with monks and nuns of other religious traditions She complimented Abbot James on his approach and how he led the conference.

> "His input was based on Scripture and the Holy Rule," Sister Sarah said. "Abbot James taught at the Catholic University of America, currently teaches at his Abbey's school and is an excellent presenter."

Sister Sophia Becker took advantage of a bumper crop of cucumbers to make pickle relish for the community.

Sheridan Oblates Gather for Faith and Fellowship

Benedictine oblates in Sheridan, Wyoming, met in July at Holy Name Church to renew their oblations. They followed that with lunch and fellowship.

(Front Row, left to right) Meg Maze and Cel Hope. (Back row, left to right): Ariel Downing and Teresa Van Buren.

(Front row, left to right): Cathy Fortier, Teresa Van Buren and Riki Shiel. (Back row, left to right): Cel Hope, Mary Moore, and Mary Slipp.

Serrans Celebrate Religious Sisters

Several members of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration attended the Religious Sisters Appreciation Day in August at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Shawnee, Kansas. The event was hosted by members of Serra Clubs in the Kansas City-Saint Joseph area, as well as Topeka and Atchison, Kansas. It was a fun event filled with a program and prayer service, bingo, a wonderful barbecue meal, and reflection.

Attending were (top photo, left to right): Sisters Maria Victoria Cutaia, Ramona Varela, Hope Rodenborn, Nancy Rose Gucwa, Lucia Anne Le, Ruth Elaine Starman. They also had a chance to say hello to Bishop James V. Johnston, Jr., of the Kansas City-Saint Joseph Diocese. (photo on left).

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Prioress General Attends Meetings and Gives Retreat

As the temperatures heated up this summer, so did travel plans for Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Sister Dawn Annette was invited to attend as an observer at the Monastic Congregation of Saint Gertrude in June at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana.

The general chapter included the leadership of the different congregations represented who invited guests such as Sister Dawn Annette. A chapter is held by a religious community or congregation and is usually mandated by their governing document or constitution, in order to elect leadership, address matters of great importance, and plan strategically for the future. Observers attend but are not voting members for elections or any decisions made.

"I most enjoyed meeting with the delegates and listening in on their future planning," Sister Dawn Annette said. "I found it most helpful for our own Congregation to listen to the updates of their constitution and listen to sisters who are making some very important decisions for the care of their sisters."

Soon after, Sister Dawn Annette traveled to Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle, Illinois, to present a retreat to its community members. She gave two retreat conferences each day centered on the theme of transition and met with the fourteen sisters individually for spiritual direction.

Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General (far right), joined leaders of three other congregations of Benedictine sisters for the Indy 500-themed chapter meeting of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Gertrude. Also pictured (left to right) are Sister Nancy Bauer, president of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Benedict; Sister Jeanne Weber, president of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Gertrude; and Sister Lynn McKenzie, president of the Monastic Congregation of Saint Scholastica.

"I enjoyed sharing the daily life and prayer of these wonderful sisters," Sister Dawn Annette said. "Their community is moving through a time of transition, and I was grateful to be able to reflect with them on God's action in this time of change."

Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General and Sister Maria Victoria Cutaia, Vocation Director, participated in the 55 & Under gathering of Benedictine Sisters in July at Immaculata Monastery of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Norfolk, Nebraska.

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Benedictine Sister Shares Medieval Scholarship

Sister Colleen Maura McGrane had several opportunities this summer to share her knowledge of medieval scholarship. She presented a paper entitled *Hildemar's Horarium: A Balanced Life?* at the American Benedictine Academy session of the 59th International Medieval Congress in May in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The International Medieval Congress is hosted by the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University and is an annual gathering of thousands of scholars interested in medieval studies. The event centered on the study of multiple aspects of the Middle Ages including history, language, literature, linguistics, art, archaeology, religion, science, medicine, music, drama, and philosophy.

In June, Sister Colleen Maura presented talks on the Rule of Benedict and on Hildemar at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert in Abiquiu, New Mexico. Wrapping up her travels, she shared a presentation entitled *Saint Benedict and Scholastica: Models of Holiness and Humanity* with the Saint Brigid of Kildaire community in July during its retreat at Conception Abbey.

Sister Colleen Maura is the editor of the *American Benedictine Review* and the author of several published works and critical translations of non-English commentary of Saint Benedict's Rule.

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