Spirit & Life

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From Sister Dawn Annette

We think of angels during the Christmas season when we see angels perched on the top of the Christmas tree or on the roof of the stable. However, autumn is the time to celebrate angels. September 29 is the Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, archangels, and October 2 is the Memorial of the Guardian Angels.

Angels surround me as I pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Beneath the large mosaic of Christ the High Priest that adorns the apse of our chapel, a row of angels dances around the altar. On one side of the altar, angels bear scrolls on which are inscribed the words, *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.* These are the words that the angels sang at Christ's birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will" (Lk 3:14). On the other side, the scrolls read, *Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te.* "We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you."

The nine choirs of angels surround Christ, who stands in the center of the mosaic. Isaiah described the highest choir, the seraphim:

> Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered. One cried out to the other: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!" (Isaiah 6:2-3)

The seraphim sing antiphonally, as we do for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Next come the cherubim, attendants at God's throne. Symbols of God's power, they guarded to way to the Tree of Life after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gn 3:24).

The thrones form the seat of God's authority and mercy. They express God's stability and power. The seraphim and cherubim, along with the thrones, contemplate God directly.

The choirs of dominions, principalities, powers, virtues, archangels, and angels are next in order. The Letter to the Ephesians lists them, stating that Christ is "far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph 1:21). I recognize Saint Michael, who carries a sword and shield. He is the leader of the angels and battles the dragon: "Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon" (Rev 12:7).

A band of cherubs surrounds the mosaic. They, too, are God's attendants.

There are more angels throughout chapel. Two mosaic angels are above the wooden statues of the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The archangel Gabriel greets Mary in the mosaic of the Annunciation. In the Nativity mosaic, angels hover over Jesus' crib. Two angels kneel at Mary's feet in the mosaic of her Coronation. In the back of chapel, an angel holds a staff for Saint Anselm, and yet another holds an open book for Saint Gregory the Great.

Angels are everywhere, but we don't see them. Attendants at God's throne of glory, they are also our guides and protectors. Angels are models for us of prayer, praise, and service.

Sr. Dawn Annette Mills
Prioress General

Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Benedictine Monastery
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, MO 64432-8100
Telephone: (660) 944-2221
Email: sister@benedictinesisters.org
www.clydemonastery.org

Our Lady of Rickenbach Health Care Center
31970 State Highway P
Clyde, MO 64432-8100
Telephone: (660) 944-2203

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.

Spirit&Life

Volume 119:3 September-October 2023

3

9

13

FEATURES

3 **The Pain of Betrayal**
Sr. Mary Clare Buthod, OSB

6 **Discovering My Christian Namesakes**
Melanie Supan Groseta

9 **Climate Change, Spiritual Practice, and Mom's Meatloaf**
Sr. Marya Grathwohl, OSF

11 **The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
Irene Rosen

13 **His Eye Is on the Sparrow**
Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

14 **Sparrow**
Rev. John P. Davis

16 **Two Hymn Texts**
Sr. Marietta Crahan, OSB

DEPARTMENTS

From Sr. Dawn Annette
From the Editor
Book Reviews.....18
Community News 19

STAFF: Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB, editor; Wilmarie Ehrhardt, OSB; Dawn Annette Mills, OSB; Kelley Baldwin; Bede Luetkemeyer, OSB; Kathleen Gorman, OSB, and Mary S. Sheridan.

ART AND PHOTO CREDITS: Kathleen Clare Lahl, OSB p. 19; Kelley Baldwin, p. 20; Nancy Rose Gucwa, OSB, p. 20 & back cover; Lynn Marie D'Souza, OSB, p. 21; Tracy Hayden, p. 21; ; **Wikimedia Commons**: dankeck, cover; Infrogmation of New Orleans, p. 2; Getty Center (Public Domain), p. 3; mrbonaparte, p. 6; Trevor Harris, p. 8; Avustfel,, p. 9; Pianobits, p. 11; Rhododendrites, p. 13; Marie-Lan Taÿ Pamart, p. 14; Kritzolina, p. 16.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Sharon Nicks, Types

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e-mail: spiritandlife@bspa.us

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FROM THE EDITOR

When I was in elementary school, my best friend lived in the apartment building next to ours. We met when we were both four years old. We walked to and from school together. After school, we played endless games of jacks and pick-up-sticks on the steps that led to the basement of my building. I don't know what made us think that we needed our own telephone.

Regardless of need, my friend's father bought us a two-way toy telephone that really worked. I have no idea how her dad set it up. The connecting wire ran from her apartment, up to and across the roof of her building, over the alley to the roof of my building, down to my fifth-floor bedroom window, and finally under the window to the toy phone on the bookcase. We used the toy telephone for as long as it lasted, which wasn't very long; wind and rain took its toll. Still, we remained friends long after we were too old for jacks and pick-up sticks. Eventually, my brother discovered her, and she became my sister-in-law.

I can't help but think of the old Bell System telephone company commercial. The words of the jingle were "Reach out. Reach out and touch someone. Reach out. Call up and just say 'hi.'" The phrase "reaching out" has many meanings. Literally, it means to stretch out your arm or hand to touch something or somebody. Reaching out is to show somebody that you are interested in them or that you want to help them. Reaching out means to establish and maintain a friendly relationship with someone. Reaching out takes initiative and demands time and effort.

Jesus reached out to heal a man with leprosy:

> And then a leper approached, did him homage, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I will do it. Be made clean." His leprosy was cleansed immediately. (Matthew 8:3)

Jesus reached out to open the eyes of a blind man:

> When they arrived at Bethsaida, they brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Putting spittle on his eyes he laid his hands on him and asked, "Do you see anything?" Looking up he replied, "I see people looking like trees and walking." Then he laid hands on his eyes a second time and he saw clearly; his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly. (Mark 8:22-25)

Jesus stretched out and caught Peter when, walking on water, he was frightened and began to sink (Mt 14:31). Jesus reached out to Zacchaeus by inviting himself to Zacchaeus' house (Lk 19:5). He ate with tax collectors and sinners at Matthew's house (Mt 9:10-17).

Often, we do not even notice the poor, elderly, or disabled among us, yet these are the people with whom we are to build our Church. Saint James teaches us:

> For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Sit here, please," while you say to the poor one, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? (James 2:2-4)

Maybe we should think of connectivity in ways unrelated to cell phones, Internet, or social media. Let's reach out and touch someone in whom we see the face of Christ.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

The Pain of Betrayal

Sr. Mary Clare Buthod, OSB

"Mom, hurry, Maria's crying!" called Jane. Maria's mother, Jackie, went quickly to Maria's room. Tears and sadness outlined Maria's heart-like face as she sobbed into her pillow.

"What's wrong, Maria?" Maria's mother asked.

"Tom and I were going to the senior prom together, but he put this in my locker today." Maria read:

> Maria, I have changed my mind and decided to take Ann to the prom. Just wanted to let you know. Tom.

Maria began crying again. "I am so embarrassed," she choked out between sobs. "What will the other kids think? It's too late to get a date now. Do I go to the prom alone? Oh, Mom, I'm so hurt and angry."

"Let's call dad and the other kids together. We'll figure out something," said Jackie. They all gathered in the living room. Mark, Maria's father, gave Maria a warm hug and welcomed his children, Jane, 12; Joan, 15; and Robert, 18. As they sauntered into the room, their eyes lit up to see the snacks spread out on the table.

"Wow!" said Jane. "Cool snacks! This is a big deal!"

Maria's mother had placed snacks and hot chocolate on the round table which stood in the center of their front room. Five armchairs ringed the table. They took turns picking up cookies and then began drinking hot chocolate. When they saw Maria' tears, they became quiet. Maria's mother smiled at each of her children and then invited them to join her in prayer. Maria's mother's prayer was calm; she asked for comfort for Maria and wisdom for Tom.

"Sweetheart," Mark began, "Tell me about this note that Tom left in your locker." After Maria read the note, the other kids responded with anger at Tom and comforting words for Maria. "I just want to sock him in the nose!" exclaimed Jane.

Jackie turned to Mark and said, "Please tell us about the harm of betrayal, Mark."

Mark began, "Betrayal is very serious because it can destroy trust. Broken trust requires forgiveness. Trust is a gift from Jesus, and he counts it among his most treasured gifts. As we look at betrayal together as a family, we need to begin with Jesus, our greatest

friend, who reminds us that his betrayal led to his resurrection and that good comes out of evil. Jesus came to earth to bring peace, love, and trust. He chose twelve men whom he taught about his Father's kingdom of love and forgiveness. Do you remember what he called his twelve followers?"

"Apostles," they all said together.

Mark continued, "Yes. One of these Apostles was named Judas Iscariot. Jesus had taught Judas about compassion, caring, and the reward of heaven. Jesus allowed Judas to be keeper of the funds and to give money to those who were in need, but Judas kept a great deal of the money for himself. Judas really liked money. He liked money more than he liked Jesus.

"After sharing the last supper with his apostles, Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane with Peter, James, and John. He asked them to stay awake and pray. Jesus was in agony, and he said, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done' (Lk 22:42).

"The third time that Jesus left the Garden to be with his apostles, Jesus found them asleep. Jesus was sad. Suddenly, the noise of an armed band of soldiers, led by Judas, entered the Garden. Judas had agreed upon a sign to betray Jesus. He ran up to Jesus and kissed him. Peter was so angry at this betrayal that he cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus rebuked Peter and miraculously healed the man's ear (Jn 18:2-3; 18:10-11).

"Joan, why would Jesus perform this miracle when he knew that he would be condemned to death?"

Joan said, "Because Jesus believed in a kingdom of love and peace. He did not believe in retribution and revenge."

"Thank you, Joan." Mark continued, "When Jesus was brought into the courtyard of the High Priest, he heard a serving girl ask Peter if he knew Jesus. Three times Peter denied Jesus.

Jane, how do you think Jesus felt when he heard Peter deny him?"

Jane answered, "He would be sad to the core of his being. I want to run to Jesus even now, throw my arms around him, and tell him that I love him with my whole heart."

"Jane, I know Jesus hears your words. Your words are prayers and treasured by Jesus," said Jane's mother.

The other children joined in, "Jesus, we love you. We don't want anyone to break their trust in you."

Mark smiled and then continued, "The soldiers bound Jesus and led him to be questioned and crucified on a cross. Judas' betrayal led to Jesus' death."

Jane interrupted, "Jesus is God's Son. Why did God allow Judas to betray his only begotten Son?"

Mark explained, "Jesus's violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate set of circumstances but was part of the mystery of God, as the Catechism says. This plan was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of the Trinity. We all have free will. Jesus honored the free will of Judas. Jesus also knew that many of his children would undergo betrayal, and he wanted them all to know that they are not alone. Jesus is always with them."

Maria said, "I never thought of the horrible sadness that Jesus must have felt when Judas betrayed him. Imagine standing there surrounded by cruel men ready to handcuff you, and suddenly one of your own people kissed you to turn you in. Jesus really does understand how horrible I feel after receiving Tom's note. Tom's note is nothing compared to the horrible betrayal of Judas. Jesus did it all for us!" Maria shared through her tears. Joan was sitting beside Maria and reached over to put her arm around Maria's shoulders.

"Maria," her older brother, Robert, said, "My good friend Bill has a brother who is a senior. His brother's name is Marcus. Bill told me that Marcus really likes you and would like to go to the prom with you, but he thinks you already have a date."

"Marcus, the most wonderful boy in our grade? I would love to go to the prom with him!"

"I'll let his brother know." Robert picked up his phone and called Bill. Bill confirmed that Marcus couldn't wait to take Maria to the prom

"Oh, my goodness, Dad! Is this the resurrection you talked about?"

Mark said, "You know your mother went through this same betrayal when she was in college. Her steady boyfriend stood her up, but your mom had someone who stood by her." Mark looked at his wife and winked. Jackie smiled back.

"I think that you all know who my all-time favorite date was!" Jackie broke into the conversation.

"Daddy!" they all yelled. "Way to go, mom!"

"Kids," Mark asked, "why do you think that I began tonight's discussion with Judas' betrayal of Jesus?"

"Because you wanted Maria to know that Jesus is standing right beside her, and he knows through experience how cruel betrayal is," Jane said.

"I don't ever want to betray anyone; tonight, I learned how horrible betrayal is," announced Joan.

Maria said, "I want to be like Jesus and forgive Tom the way Jesus forgave and healed the servant's ear."

Robert closed his eyes and said solemnly, "Tonight I learned how much a boy can hurt his girlfriend. I don't ever want to do that to someone."

As Jackie and Mark climbed the stairs together, Jackie said to Mark, "We have great kids, don't we?"

Mark responded, "Jesus helped us every step of the way!"

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Dancing Creation

The trees are dancing all around me!

Dancing in this summer breeze.

Music provided by a faithful choir of birds!

The hummingbirds add harmony after sipping from the nearby flowerbed.

And the bees and butterflies add to the dance, a dance they know by heart.

All is orchestrated by the Divine Maestro.

A masterpiece of creation!

The colors, sights, sounds and smells of this earth fill up our senses.

This dance goes on day and night,

in season or out, whether I notice it or not.

I pray you don't miss it!

God's aliveness in this dance of creation!

Patricia Leyko Connelly

From **Sacredness Surrounds Us in Every Season**, Patricia Leyko Connelly, 2023

Discovering My Christian Namesakes

Melanie Supan Groseta

It was late morning on a weekday. The gray block buildings were locked. I rang the doorbell to the church office, but no one answered. I called the church telephone listing the next day. A male voice answered, "Father Rankin."

"Is this the Church of St. Melany?"

"Yes, it is."

"Oh, good. My name is Melanie …."

I couldn't get the words out fast enough. I gushed out my request: I wanted to see the icon of my namesake, Saint Melany. He said that he had time right then. Could I come over? I practically flew into my car. When I got to the church, I rang the office bell, and a man in his fifties, wearing casual clothing, opened the door. "I'm Father Rankin," he identified himself, smiling. "You must be Melanie."

Father Rankin invited me into his book-filled office. We chatted for a few minutes before he took me on a tour of the dimly lit sanctuary. Before us was the iconostasis, the screen bearing the icons, which formed the doorway into the Holy of Holies. I was captivated by the display. All were robed, haloed, and luminescent in brilliant hues. Four pairs of eyes searched mine. Father Rankin pointed out the larger-than-life icon of my namesake, Saint Melany, in the far-left corner adjacent to the central *theotokos* icon. Tears filled my eyes. The icon of Saint Melany drew me deeply into her radiant brown eyes. She was holding the Church in one hand and a scroll bearing the Christ symbol in the other. She wore a white veil with red trim, and she was draped in a gown of purple and red. Swirls of blue ocean and barren brown cliffs were her backdrop.

I wanted to sit and gaze at her, but I followed Father Rankin's lead and moved on. At the end of my visit, Father Rankin gave me two small icons of Saint Melany. I had them laminated at a copy store and gave one to a woman at my church who was also named Melanie.

When I was growing up, I had never heard of Saint Melany. I felt jealous of girls who had names like Theresa, Cecilia, Elizabeth, Catherine, and, most especially, Mary. I knew about those sainted women from the holy cards given as rewards in my catechism classes. There was no holy card for Saint Melany. We never talked about her in catechism class.

My mother had dreamed about the name she would give her first daughter. Having seen *Gone with the Wind* as a teenager, she fell in love with the Southern belle in Margaret Mitchell's novel. In 1950, my mother, a moderate Protestant, married my father, a Roman Catholic. She assented to my father's wishes

that their children be raised Catholic and named after Catholic saints. Fortunately for my mother, the Church had added Saint Melany to its list of saints in 1908, over fifteen hundred years after her birth.

We had a beautiful red leather-bound Douay-Rheims Bible that my father bought in 1954. As a child, I loved looking at the works of the Old Masters depicting strange people in robes and sandals. My favorite was the one of the dark-robed man standing next to docile lions. I combed the illustrations for pictures of my namesake but to no avail. I found her name on the list of saints, but my parents did not know who she was. I set the question aside for many years.

In 1997, I began attending meetings to become a Benedictine oblate. Our oblate director, Sister Dawn Annette, gave a lecture series on monastic history. In one of her first lectures, Sister Dawn mentioned Melania as a desert *amma*, or mother, of the fourth century. This knowledge was my first clue as to her identity. Shortly afterward, I attended the Hesychia Interfaith Spiritual Direction School where a faculty member spoke about the tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Despite my past study of other world religions, this was one tradition about which I knew next to nothing.

"In Eastern Orthodoxy, an icon of the patron saint of the church is displayed in the sanctuary to the left of the icon of the *theotokos*, the God-bearer," Dr. Kavar said. I recalled that a little Byzantine Catholic Church named Saint Melany's was in Tucson. I went up to Dr. Kavar after class and asked him, "Do you think there will be an icon of Saint Melany at this church?" He nodded, saying, "Of course, Melanie."

After seeing the icon at Saint Melany's, I wanted to know more so I googled her name. I discovered that there were two women named Melania considered saints in the fifth century. The little Byzantine church's patron was the granddaughter of the first and was the one accorded sainthood by the Roman Catholic Church. Both women had been born into great wealth and status in Roman society. Both had become desert monastics. Both were mentioned in ancient sources such as Palladius's Lausaic History.

Melania the Elder

Melania the Elder lived from about 341 to 410 CE. Born in Spain and a citizen of Rome, her family was Christian at a time when the Church was starting to exert tremendous political power in the Roman Empire. She was widowed at the age of twenty-two. She had one son, Publicola, who became a Roman senator and the father of Melania the Younger. When Publicola was ten, Melania the Elder placed him under others' care so that she could become a renunciate. She crossed the Mediterranean to Alexandria and visited the desert hermits. After six months, she moved to Jerusalem and established a monastery on the Mount of Olives where she lived for twenty-seven years. At the age of sixty, she traveled to Rome to visit her son and granddaughter. Melania the Elder had been an adherent of Origen and was strongly influenced by her contemporary, Rufinus.

Melania the Younger

Melania the Younger, named after her grandmother, Melania the Elder, was born into Roman aristocracy in 385. When she was fourteen, she married Pinianus, obeying the will of her father. However, her heart's desire was to live an ascetic life. Following the stillbirth of a son and the death of an infant daughter, Melania convinced Pinianus to give up conjugal relations for a renunciate Christian existence.

After her father died in 405, Melania and Pinianus moved to their villa in the suburbs. Their altruism was celebrated among Roman and Mediterranean Christians. They transformed their lavish villa into a hospital. They aided the poor, ransomed slaves, and financed church buildings.

When Visigoths invaded Rome in 410 CE, Melania the Younger, her mother, Albina, and Pinianus fled to their Thagaste estate in northern Africa. For seven years they established monasteries, discoursing with Alypius and Augustine of Hippo.

In 417, CE, Melania, Pinianus, and Albina migrated to Jerusalem. They stopped in Alexandria and met with the bishop, Cyril. After Albina died, Melania spent fourteen years praying in a solitary cell. Then she established a monastery for women and became a mentor to the novices. Although there was no formal rule, Melania instructed the sisters in a way of life that included six periods of prayer and psalmody throughout the day. After Pinianus died, Melania spent a year mourning in solitude and established a second monastery for men.

At age 54, Melania the Younger died penniless in Jerusalem. When she died, her cousin, Paula, was by her side. Her biographer, Gerontius, noted that she paraphrased Job at the time of her passing on December 31, 439 CE: "As it has seemed good to the Lord, so it has come to pass" (Job 1:21).

As *ammas* of desert monasticism, Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger are my Christian ancestors and my Christian namesakes. In the little bits that I know of their lives, I have become aware of the common threads that run between their stories and my own. My professional life as a registered nurse and as a massage therapist has led me, like Melania the Younger, to work in hospitals and to care for people who are sick, frail, and, at times, dying. Like both Melanias, I possess a monastic heart. Like Melania the Younger, I descend from women of strong Christian faith, two grandmothers and one great-grandmother. Even in this small way, "as it has seemed good to the Lord, so it has come to pass."

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Climate Change, Spiritual Practice, and Mom's Meatloaf

Sr. Marya Grathwohl, OSF

The Book of Genesis tells us that the Lord saw that all he had made was very good and entrusted human beings with the responsibility of being stewards of his gift of creation. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus reinforces the goodness of the natural world by reminding us of God's care for all his creatures. In light of these biblical teachings, then, care for our common home, even apart from considerations of the effects of climate change, is not simply a utilitarian endeavor but a moral obligation for all men and women as children of God. With this in mind, each of us must ask: "What kind of world do we want for ourselves and for those who will come after us?" —Pope Francis

In calling to mind the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, we come to realize that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults, and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change. —Pope Francis

She's failing. It's caused by a diagnosis that qualifies her for hospice care: COPD. The letters mean nothing to me. But I can see she's not getting the air she needs for her usual energetic life. That means everything to me. I travel from my Wyoming home to Cincinnati where she lives in my sister's home to be with her regularly.

I help organize my mother's doctor appointments, pick up meds, coax menus that appeal to her, and buy groceries. I sit with her as she dozes in her

recliner in the living room, facing a window full of flowers we planted together. She joins me in the mornings for the fresh air of the garden, praying her rosary as I gather myself for the day.

Today it's meatloaf, and I'm chopping onion and celery, fine as possible. She usually blends them in a food processor. This time, Mom lets me do it my way. "You're a good cook," she says at dinner. "May I suggest that next time you do it my way?" Essence of spiritual practice.

Climate change is all about air, about the atmosphere that sustains almost all life in our common home, Earth. We live within the world of air, "the world-mothering air," wrote Gerald Manley Hopkins. "Breathe in the living Jesus," we recall the Easter message as we pray. Breathe within the received Spirit of hope.

I walk with Sachiko, my friend from Japan, along Prune Creek in the Bighorn Mountains. The air is thin, swept sparkling by recent rain. She pulls at it gratefully. She lives in an industrial city and repeatedly says how much she's enjoying the clean air.

We've already surpassed the 350 parts per million, the carbon count deemed the tipping point into climate disaster.

In the Bighorns, drought is weakening thick pine forests that clothe the long slopes. Drought stressed trees cannot fend off mountain pine beetles which

feed on the living layer beneath bark, killing the trees. The slopes are striated with rust-colored dead trees awaiting forest fire. The beetle epidemic has killed more than 70,000 square miles of trees throughout the mountain west.

Higher up, along the trail that leads to an ancient pilgrimage site, the Bighorn Medicine Wheel, pika chirp alarm from hiding places in limestone talus. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of one. The National Wildlife Federation describes them: "With round bodies, prominent ears, no visible tail and weighing just 5 ounces, pikas are unmercifully cute." They live at 10,000 feet. Their life cycle is timed to that of seed-bearing plants whose cycles are in rhythm with the seasons. Earlier springs mean the plants flower and go to seed sooner. This earlier aging of vegetation may mean increased stress for pikas, especially if they are raising families. Pikas can die if exposed to temperatures as mild as 78 degrees. Once they reach the top of their mountain habitat, they have nowhere else to go. Pikas are decreasing in number due to climate change.

We know about sea levels rising, endangering coastal populations. We know about super storms, heat that kills vulnerable human populations, the increase in asthma in children who live near power plants, and how fracking endangers water purity.

This is why practices that break our addiction to fossil fuels become spiritual practice. They are life-saving practices of hope. They are Easter Jesus practices.

Lowering thermostats in winter, shifting budgets to thoroughly insulate homes and install solar and wind power, observing the old 55 mph, lobbying for stricter air quality standards: are all lifesaving. They are today's spiritual discipline, holy practices that reverence the sacred Earth community.

This time, Earth suggests, please do it my way.

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A member of the Sisters of Saint Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana, since 1963, Sister Marya Grathwohl lived for more than thirty years in African American, Crow, and Northern Cheyenne communities, as teacher, principal, and pastoral minister. Her work is shaped by what she learned from them: spiritualities of respect for nature, social justice, and resilience in life-threatening difficulties. An activist and writer for a flourishing earth community, she worked to revitalize a 350-acre farm in Indiana for natural food production and to create a women's center in Northern Cheyenne country designed with wind and solar energy, ground-source heating and cooling, water catchment, raised-bed gardens, passive solar greenhouse, composting, and native prairie restoration.

She is the founding director of Earth Hope *and works in environmental restoration through farming, restoration, and other ecology projects. Sister Marya gives retreats, workshops, and lectures that help people connect their faith with ecology. Her new book,* This Wheel of Rocks: An Unexpected Spiritual Journey, *is scheduled to be published by Random House in November 2023.*

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Irene Rosen

Several years ago, I had a wonderful opportunity to spend a few weeks in Jerusalem. On Friday mornings before the beginning of the Sabbath, I would meet with a friend to explore the holy places of three faiths: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. One morning, we walked through the crowded streets of the Old City visiting Crusader sites that were less popular with tourists but with which my friend was well-acquainted.

We wanted to pay a visit to the Church of Saint Anne. It is the best-preserved Crusader church in Jerusalem. The church marks the traditional site of the home of Jesus' maternal grandparents, Anne and Joachim. It is the Catholic version of the birthplace of the Virgin Mary, and we wanted to light candles and pray for a little while. For some unknown reason, perhaps because it was off-season, the church was closed.

Close to the Church of Saint Anne is a small chapel under the care of Greek Orthodox monks and nuns where we went instead. Beneath the chapel, a crypt is carved into the rock that Orthodox Christians believe is Mary's birthplace. We climbed down a long flight of narrow stone steps to the crypt. We were the only ones there. We lit candles and prayed in the dark silence of the crypt.

Another tradition holds that Mary was born in Sepphoris, a town in Galilee where a fifth-century basilica that honors Mary's birth has been excavated. Yet another tradition holds that Mary was born in Nazareth in the house where the Annunciation took place. Others say that she was born in Bethlehem.

The Bible does not give us the names of Mary's parents, nor does it tell us when and where Mary was born. Saint Matthew skips the Annunciation and reveals only that "when his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18). Saint Luke provides us with the account of the Annunciation from which we learn that Mary was living in Nazareth and was betrothed to Joseph (Lk 1:26-27).

The apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*, a second-century infancy gospel of unknown authorship, attempts to fill in the missing facts about Mary. The author claims to be James, the brother of Jesus, supposedly Joseph's son by a previous marriage. He expands on the canonical infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. The author relies on the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, although he is ignorant of Jewish practices. The *Protoevangelium* reveals the names of Mary's parents as Joachim and Anne. It speaks of Mary's miraculous conception, her upbringing, her marriage to Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem, Jesus' birth, and subsequent events.

According to the *Protoevangelium*, Anna laments her childlessness. The Lord hears her prayer, and Anna miraculously conceives a child that she promises to present to the Temple:

> An angel of the Lord stood by, saying: Anna, Anna, the Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall

> conceive, and shall bring forth; and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world. And Anna said: As the Lord my God lives, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God; and it shall minister to him in holy things all the days of its life. (427)

According to the *Protoevangelium*, Anna and Joachim brought Mary to the Temple when she was three years old. She received food from the hand of an angel. Mary lived there until the age of twelve. Since her menstrual blood would have defiled the Temple, the priests put her under the care of Joseph. She spent her time spinning purple and scarlet yarn for the veil of the Temple. When she was sixteen, an angel of the Lord appeared to her, telling her that she would conceive by the power of the Lord.

Devotion to Mary is ancient. One of the oldest hymns, *Beneath Thy Protection, Sub Tuum Præsidium*, dates from the middle of the third century and is still in use by the Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches:

> Beneath thy compassion,
> We take refuge, O Theotokos [God-bearer]:
> do not despise our petitions in time of trouble:
> but rescue us from dangers,
> only pure one, only blessed one. (en.wikipedia.org/)

After the Council of Ephesus declared Mary to be the *Theotokos* in 631 CE, devotion to Mary became more popular. The first liturgical commemoration of Mary's birth is connected with the sixth century dedication of the Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem. In the seventh century, Byzantine Christians celebrated the feast as the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Since details of Mary's birth are found only in apocryphal sources, the Latin Church was slower to adopt the feast. Probably brought to Rome by Eastern monks, the feast was celebrated there by the end of the seventh century.

The *Protoevangelium of James* and other apocryphal accounts of Mary's birth and childhood are legendary and cannot be accepted as factual. Nevertheless, we can still gain inspiration from them. The *Protoevangelium of James* asserts Mary's perpetual virginity, that is, she remained a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus. In our own times, Saint Pope John Paul II considered Mary's virginity to represent her total self-gift to God. He wrote in his 1987 encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater, On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church*:

> Mary consents to God's choice, in order to become through the power of the Holy Spirit the Mother of the Son of God. It can be said that a consent to motherhood is above all a result of her total self-giving to God in virginity. (www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/)

By emphasizing the miraculous circumstances of Mary's birth, the author of the *Protoevangelium of James* intended to glorify Mary and to assert her role in redemption. Pope Francis stated in a 2023 homily delivered on the Solemnity of the Mother of God:

> *Holy Mother of God!* This was the joyful acclamation of the holy People of God echoing in the streets of Ephesus in the year 431, when the Council Fathers proclaimed Mary the *Mother of God*. This truth is a fundamental datum of faith, but above all, it is a marvelous fact. God has a Mother and is thus bound forever to our humanity, like a child to its mother, to the point that our humanity is his humanity. (www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2023)

Whether her own birth was miraculous or not, Mary gave birth to God's own divine Son in his human nature. She is the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church because of her faith, trust, and obedient love. Having carried Jesus in her womb, nursing him, and raising him to adulthood, she is the first disciple of Christ and a sublime model for us to follow.

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His Eye Is on the Sparrow

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Every day, I eat breakfast shortly before dawn sitting by a window that looks out at an old maple tree. In winter, I've observed its bare branches covered with snow. In spring, I've noticed the emergence and growth of its green buds. I've noticed when the old tree comes into full leaf in summer and when the leaves turn yellow and gold in autumn. The sparrows that make their home in the nearby hedges alight on the lower branches where they hold lengthy conversations of chirps and chirrups. Higher up, robins prepare to hunt for worms and cardinals show off their plumage. I suspect that most of the birds I detect in the dim light of early morning are house sparrows; the others are just passing through.

Just a few feet away, a hundred or more sparrows live in the hedges. The hedges offer protection from our cats and provide hiding places from other predators such as hawks and owls which can be spotted on our grounds. Without the protection of the hedges, raccoons would make a tasty meal of sparrow eggs.

The house sparrow is an invasive species in this part of the world. It is native to most of Europe, the Mediterranean Basin, and a large part of Asia. Now more than fifty species of sparrows are the most widely distributed wild birds. Sparrows were introduced either intentionally or accidentally to many regions, including parts of Australasia, Africa, and the Americas. In 1852, birds from England were released to control the ravages of the linden moth which was defoliating the fruit trees and elms of Manhattan. The little grey and brown bird thrives in areas of human habitation and avoids woodlands, grasslands, polar regions, and deserts. It enjoys a varied menu of seeds and insects.

God loves sparrows. His Son was mindful of them.

Scripture tells us this:

> Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29–31)

Similarly, escaping the pressing crowds by climbing up a mountain, Jesus took the opportunity to teach his disciples:

> Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? (Matthew 6:26)

Here, Jesus referred to winged creatures that may or may not have been sparrows.

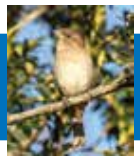
Jesus spoke about generic birds in the same way that he spoke about sparrows, using them as a symbol for God's providential care of all that he created. He compared birds to his and his apostles' itinerant ministry:

Continued on page 15

Sparrow

Sitting on my hedge
checking out the traffic
all alone
seemingly content.
Do you have a nest?
A family? A flock?
You're all alone in
brown
and gray
and taupe —
pretty, in a muted sort of way
but never noticed
never seen
by most
unless in swarm or flock
when chatterings at dawn or dusk
perhaps call forth attention
but at best distractedly, carelessly,
for you are only sparrows.
Only sparrows
whose scout sits lonely vigil on my hedge in camouflage
but who is known
known by Him — yes — Him,
the Lord of the heavens and the earth
Creator of all things
visible and invisible
all creatures great and small
yes, known by Him
for every feather
every color
every pattern
every member of your family
and your flock.
He — yes — He knows you, sparrow on my hedge,
He knows you, precious one,
and holds you in the palm of His love.

Rev. John P. Davis



His Eye Is on the Sparrow

Continued from page 13

> A scribe approached and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."
> Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." (Matthew 8:19-20)

Jesus and his disciples lived a simple, rugged life. They had few possessions. When they were together, the women who followed them provided for their needs. Luke tells us in his Gospel:

> Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources. (Luke 8:1-3)

When his followers went to heal the sick and to preach the good news of the kingdom, the women probably stayed behind with Jesus. Jesus instructed the Twelve:

> Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. (Luke 9:3)

Similarly, when Jesus sent seventy-two disciples out in pairs to every town and place that he intended to visit, he told them, "Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way." The disciples had to depend on the generosity of the local people for food and shelter.

God takes care of birds and wild animals. Won't God take care of us just as he does the other creatures that he has made? If we believe in God's providence, then we should also be free from fear and anxiety. Jesus tells us not to be afraid. When he first called his disciples, he told them not to be afraid (Lk 5:10). When Jesus and his apostles were in a boat during a violent storm at sea, Jesus calmed the waves and wind, saying to his apostle, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" (Mt 8:26). When his apostles saw Jesus walking on the water, they were afraid; Jesus said to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter tried to walk on water too, but he became frightened and began to sink. Jesus said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 8:31).

Fear is an automatic response that occurs when we perceive danger. It warns us so that we may take appropriate action, whether that response is to flee or to fight. We need to have fear. Fear warns us not to approach a bear. If you see a bear, move away quietly and leave the area. If you must, make loud noises to scare it away. But if you see a mouse, you do not need to scream. The timid little creature is more frightened than you. This I know from experience.

Anxiety is not the same as fear. Anxiety is worry about something that may never happen. It is unfocused. Anxiety is something I'm very good at. I have an active imagination; I can picture catastrophic events and the worst possible results of decisions. These days, my anxiety usually has something to do with computers.

There are two antidotes to anxiety: faith and trust. All we have to do is acknowledge our dependence on God. We can watch the sparrows and reflect on Jesus' words, well worth repeating:

> Do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? (Matthew 6:25-26)

We can sing a well-known hymn in our hearts:

> I sing because I'm happy,
> I sing because I'm free;
> For his eye is on the sparrow,
> And I know he watches me. (hymnary.org/text)

This is much easier said than done. We cannot free ourselves from anxiety on our own. We must pray for the grace to do so.

Hymn Texts for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Sr. Marietta Crahan, OSB

I

Holy Mary, blest among all women,
Fairest flower of our human race;
On your birthday heaven rejoices,
Child beloved, so full of grace!

What a blessing for your loving parents
On that holy day that saw your birth.
For their daughter had been chosen
To be Mother of God on earth!

Glory be to God the Father,
Who has sent us his beloved Son,
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Ever Three and ever One!

II

We celebrate in Mary's birth,
A loving God's own saving plan,
To choose as Mother from our earth,
The child of Joachim and Anne.

The prophets had foretold a sign,
That humble hearts in faith could read:
A virgin born of David's line,
Will bear God's Son, the promised Seed.

And Mary was this chosen one,
So now the Church for endless days,
Reveres the Mother of God's Son,
And joins in everlasting praise!

Sister Marietta Crahan, OSB

June 10, 1930 — May 24, 2023

Sister Marietta Crahan was born on June 10, 1930, in Detroit, Michigan, to Gerardine A. (Cronin) and Bernard Earl Crahan. She was the second oldest of eight children, seven girls and one boy. Although baptized Mary Margaret, she was always called Molly until she received the name Marietta at profession.

Molly was born with a large birthmark on her face. Her parents took her to the Shrine of Saint Joseph in Mount Royal, Canada, where Brother Andre, CSC was still living. Brother Andre took Molly in his arms, blessed her, and gave her mother some Saint Joseph oil, telling her mother to apply the oil to Molly's face and to pray to Saint Joseph for two weeks. Molly's birthmark disappeared.

The Crahan family moved a few times before settling in Peoria, Illinois, when Molly was in fifth grade. She attended Saint Mark's School, where she was taught by Dominican Sisters. She attended evening devotions and sang in the choir. There was a life-size crucifix in the church. Of this she wrote, "I believe that was when and where I fell in love with Jesus Christ."

Following grade school, Molly went to the Academy of Our Lady, taught by the sisters of Saint Joseph. She spent time with her friends at the Catholic Youth Center. The Center had been started by Msgr. Haas, a cousin of our Sister Mary Callista Haas. By her junior year, Molly and two of her friends considered entering religious life. Molly won a partial scholarship to Fontbonne College in Saint Louis, but she turned it down. After high school graduation in June 1948, Msgr. Haas and his assistant arranged to drive the three friends to Clyde. Molly's decision became certain after she entered the Clyde chapel.

Molly entered the postulancy on October 2, 1948, and the novitiate on August 11, 1949. She made her first profession on September 8, 1950, receiving the name Marietta after Saint Maria Goretti. She made her final vows on September 8, 1955.

In her early years, Sister Marietta helped in kitchen and in the Correspondence Department. She also helped with the canning, learning how to can apple sauce, juices, and jellies. Her first transfer was to Kansas City in 1956, where she managed the Correspondence Department. She spent time in San Diego before moving to Kansas City and then Clyde, serving as portress and wrote for Spirit&Life. She served as Clyde prioress from 1977-1983. Following her term, she moved to Saint Louis, then to San Diego. When elected to the General Council in 1990, she moved back to Saint Louis, where she served as Secretary General, secretary to the Prioress General, and continued the revision of our office books.

In 1973 Sister Marietta was asked to serve as chair of the Congregation Liturgical Commission. Her first task was to begin compiling the Congregation's office books. In preparation, she spent six weeks studying at Saint Meinrad's Archabbey and later attended Saint John's University. She wrote, "Although I have served generously and willingly in many departments in community, the greatest privilege for me has been to compile and revise our books of prayer for the Liturgy of the Hours. What a privileged sacred task this has been!"

In 2015, failing health caused Sister Marietta to move to Our Lady of Rickenbach. For several years, she was unable to communicate except by her bright eyes and her smile. Death came gently in the afternoon of May 22, 2023. Her blood sisters, Kathleen Dotson and Eileen Broughton, and a number of community sisters were with her. Sister Marietta is survived by her sisters Kathleen and Eileen, nieces, nephews, and her monastic family. Her funeral liturgy at Clyde and her burial in our Mount Calvary Cemetery were on May 24, 2023.

"May the 'Liturgy of Life' that we share always be an unceasing hymn of praise and adoration."

BOOK REVIEWS

MARK'S GOSPEL: HISTORY, THEOLOGY, INTERPRETATION by C. Clifton Black, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2023, 558 pp, $59.99 hc.

C. Clifton Black is a professor of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. A prolific writer, he has written, edited, or collaborated on twenty books and published more than two hundred essays, articles, and reviews.

Black is a well-known scholar of Mark's Gospel. This volume is a collection of essays that Black has written on Mark over the years. I am usually plowing through biblical commentaries so this was a refreshing change of pace for me. The essays cover a broad range of topics and include scriptural commentary. Other topics are historical studies, literary analysis, theological argument, and pastoral considerations. Black explores the Gospel's provenance, authorship, and attribution, recent approaches to the Gospel's interpretation, literary and rhetorical analysis, the kingdom of God and its revelation in Jesus, and Mark's theology of creation, suffering, and discipleship.

I appreciated Black's inclusion of exegetical studies for preachers, which he contributed to the website *Working Preacher*. The studies provide a solid foundation in exegesis but also enable the reader to apply Jesus' teaching and example to one's own life.

Black's new offering combines critical scholarship with clear, sometimes elegant, and often witty writing. He refers to the "dopey disciples" who never understand Jesus (399-400). One section is headed, "More Marklarkey: Or, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Temple" (400). I enjoyed this book. I recommend it for serious students of scripture and parish libraries.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

SHATTERED: A Son Picks Up the Pieces of His Father's Rage by Arthur Boers. Foreword by Andre Dubus III, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 216 pp, $22.99 hc.

When Arthur Boers was three years old, his father threw a potted geranium, aimed at his mother, through a picture window:

> My mother ducked. The pot passed her by and struck the pane, the bump at first barely audible. The surface gave slightly, shimmering and reverberating, a soft tinkling cymbal, then spidered suddenly in all directions. Chiming splinters hailed down. (3-4)

This is Boers' earliest memory of his childhood. Throughout his moving memoir, Boers uses the image of shattered glass to describe his father's violent and abusive behavior toward his family and especially toward his oldest son. It was the generational pattern in the family for fathers to beat their sons. Boers has struggled with his own expression of anger.

Boers grew up in Canada. His parents were hard-working Dutch immigrants, members of the strictly Calvinist Christian Reformed Church, and earned their living by constructing glass greenhouses. He forgave his father despite the beatings that he received at his hands. Eventually, Boers left his denomination and became a Mennonite minister. Deeply influenced by Henri Nouwen, he came to love the sacraments and developed an interest in liturgical theology. He yearned for "awe, wonder, mystery" (202). He was eventually ordained as an Anglican priest and became a Benedictine oblate.

Boers' beautifully written memoir would be most helpful for anyone who was or is involved with abusive family relationships, but all will find it well worth reading. His detailed description of the Dutch immigrant experience and his own varied spiritual journey is fascinating.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

THE INCOMPARABLE GOD: READINGS IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY by Brent A. Strawn. Collin Cornell and M. Justin Walker, editors. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 508 pp. $59.99 hc.

Brent Strawn is a professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School and is also a professor of law at Duke University School of Law. He is an ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church and regularly speaks and preaches at churches across the country. A prolific writer, this book is a collection of eighteen of his most provocative essays on the nature of God. Several essays are published here for the first time.

The collection is divided into three sections: readings, biblical theology, and practice. The first section includes the portrayal of God in Genesis, God's mercy in Exodus, and the art of poetry in the psalms.

I was drawn to Strawn's essay, "Revisiting Elisha and the Bears" (131-163). In this essay, Strawn instructs his readers how to use a difficult passage, 2 Kings 2:24, as *lectio divina*. In the second section, biblical theology, Strawn discusses the Trinity in both testaments, participation in and with Christ, and the metaphor of the child. A comparison of Tolkien's orcs with the biblical Canaanites (287-328) inspired me to re-read *The Lord of the Rings* after many years. Strawn's third section, practice, includes his sermons on various topics, including the integration of faith and scholarship. I very much appreciated his unique insights and applications.

At first, I found some of the essays quite technical, but I soon became quite fascinated and found the collection helpful. Strawn writes with a keen sense of humor. I recommend this book for serious readers, students, and parish libraries.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Spring Oblate Retreat

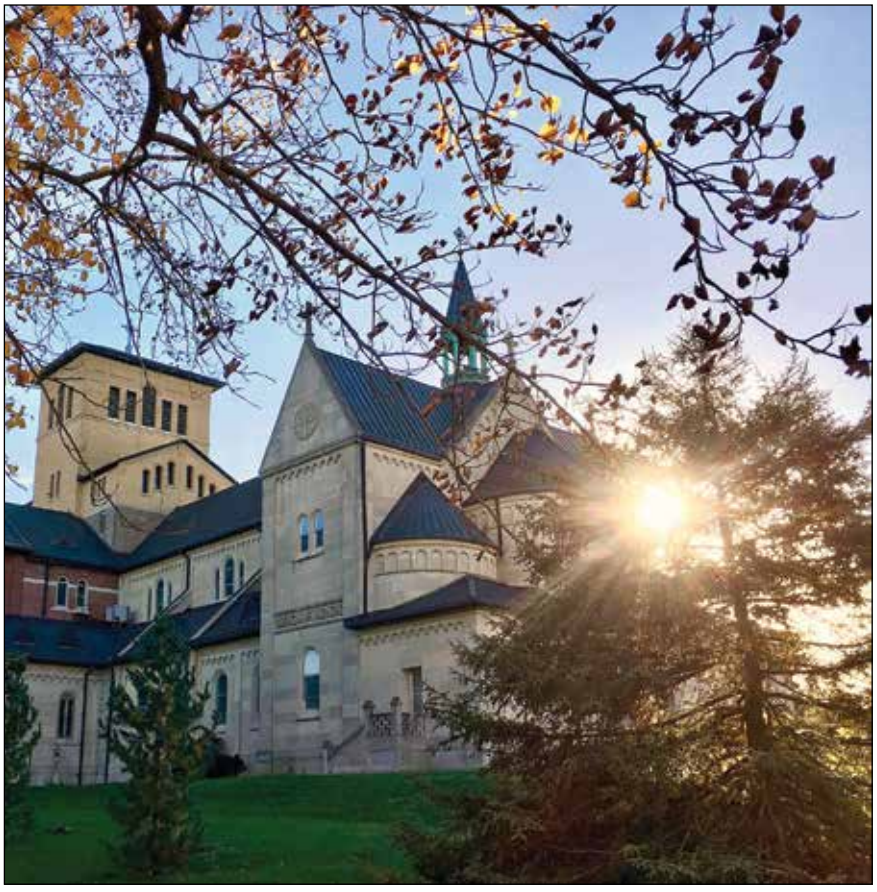
Not even wild weather could dampen spirits during this spring's oblate retreat at the Benedictine Sisters' monastery in Clyde, Missouri. After a long separation due to the pandemic, and a hold on the traditional, in-person annual retreat, three oblates from the Kansas City, Missouri, area joined Sister Kathleen Clare Lahl, Oblate Director, and members of the community for a weekend in May.

The retreat included a morning conference centered on the topic *God's Call of Love*, followed by personal sharing, solitude, and prayer. Oblates joined the sisters for meals, Eucharist, and the Divine Office. "They all welcomed the quiet time for rest and relaxation," Sister Kathleen Clare said. "They were also grateful for private time in the Adoration Chapel."

During Vespers one evening, a tornado warning sounded, and everyone left the chapel to take shelter. "We prayed Vespers seated in the protective shelter of an inner hallway, accompanied by the sounds of howling wind, pouring rain, and golf ball-sized hail pounding upon the roof," Sister Kathleen Clare said. "As we completed Vespers, the storm suddenly ceased, and the oblates returned to the guest house in the peaceful light of the setting sun."

Want to learn more about becoming an oblate? Contact us:

Sister Kathleen Clare Lahl, OSB
(660) 944-2221 ext. 174
kathleenclr@gmail.com
www.BenedictineSisters.org



Employee Honored for Three Decades of Service

(Above) Retiring employee Brenda Holtman (left) and Sister Lynn Marie D'Souza share a laugh during Holtman's celebration of more than thirty years of employment with the community. (Below) Sister Sean Douglas handcrafted Brenda's parting gift.

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration celebrated the retirement of Brenda Holtman on May 23, honoring her more than thirty years of employment with the community. Holtman worked as head cook, and the sisters loved her cheerful presence in the kitchen.

During the celebration, Sister Lynn Marie D'Souza, who serves as kitchen manager, thanked Holtman for her unfailing loyalty and dedication to her sisters throughout the years. Sister Lynn Marie gave the example of a 2008 Easter morning fire at the congregation's health care center. Brenda showed up in the kitchen that morning, still in church clothes, to help prepare the Easter dinner because she knew her sisters needed her. "It's that love and kindness that will be the most greatly missed," Sister Lynn Marie noted. "Brenda is eager to spend more time with the grandchildren and family. She will continue to be the Kansas City Chiefs' biggest fan."

The community gave Holtman a beautiful frame that Sister Sean handcrafted from century-old wood, glass, and tin ceiling pieces that she had carefully salvaged from the monastery renovation years ago. "We are grateful for Brenda's many years of excellent service to us and look forward to welcoming her back frequently for visits!" Sister Lynn Marie said.

Low-Gluten Altar Breads Twentieth Anniversary

In July, the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration recognized the twentieth anniversary of the Vatican approving their low-gluten altar breads for valid use in the celebration of the Eucharist. In a letter from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith dated July 24, 2003, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, approved the use of low-gluten altar breads for communion without requiring the presentation of a medical certificate. It was the last step in a decade-long approval process, enabling the Benedictine Sisters to begin producing low-gluten altar breads for sale.

For more information, please visit www.altarbreadsbspa.com.

Preparing a Pentecost Feast

Spending time together in the kitchen is a vital part of community life for the Benedictine Sisters. They prepare meals for each other and come together to assist in the preparation of fruit and vegetables for canning or baking.

The sisters enjoy preparing meals for special occasions such as birthdays and important religious observations such as Pentecost. For the past few years, the sisters have prepared an international meal together. "This year, we made Swedish meatballs, samosas, pickled herring, japchae, rice pudding, green beans, and raspberry pie," Sister Lynn Marie D'Souza said. "It's always a great feast."

(Photo, from left to right): Helping prepare the Pentecost meal this year were Postulant Amberina Uhlik, Sister Pat Nyquist, Sister Marie-Jona Yoo, and Sister Ramona Varela.

Neighbor Shares Summer Bounty

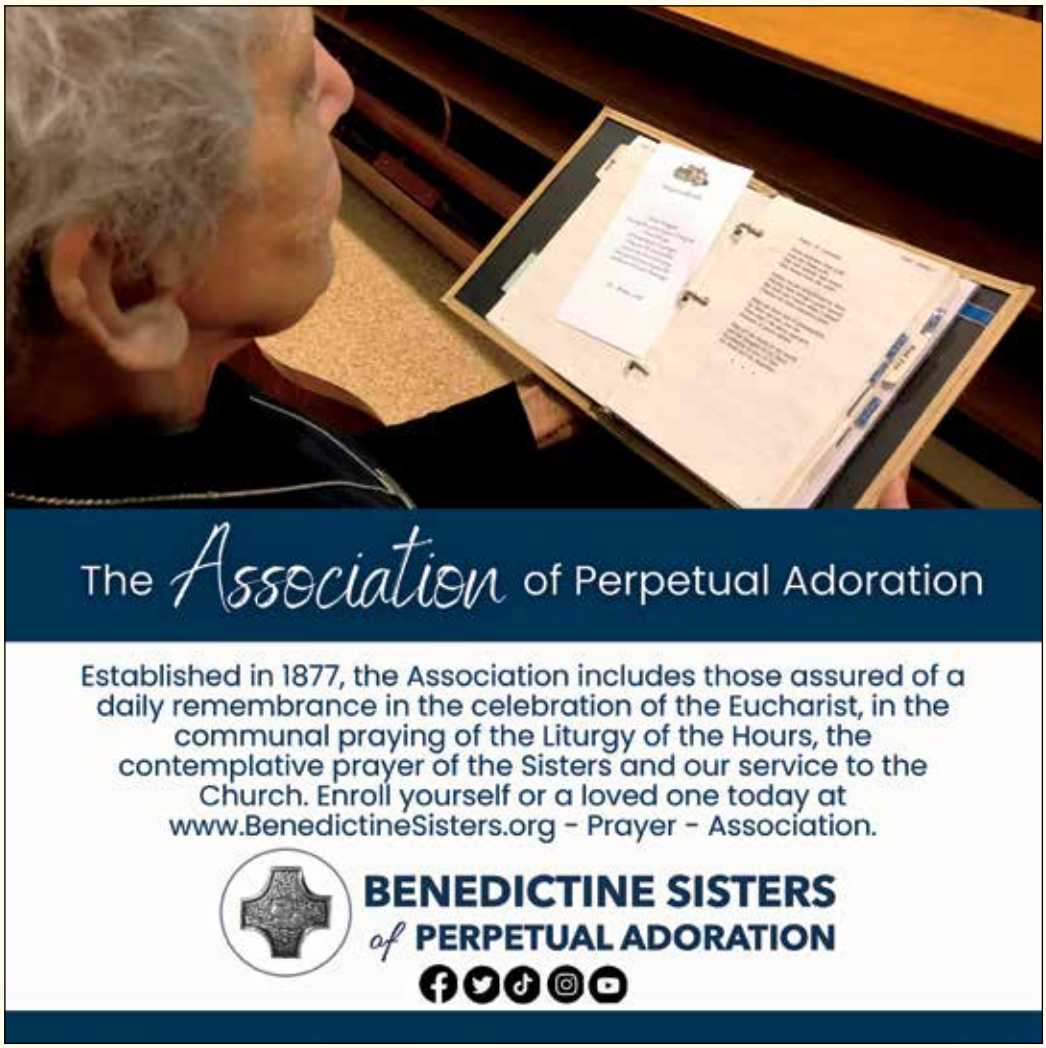
Pictured (left to right) are Postulant Amberina Uhlik, Sister Lynn Marie D'Souza, Sister Lucia Anne Le, and Sister Sophia Becker.

Thanks to the generosity of Alan Wiederholt, a neighbor of the Benedictine Sisters in Clyde, Missouri, several members of the congregation spent time picking cherries from his tree this summer.

PERIODICALS postage paid at Tucson, AZ

Life Is a Highway

When replacing more than twenty-year-old work truck with a "new" used truck, you make sure to ask the Lord for continued protection. Thanks to our Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General, for giving the blessing.



Spirit&Life

31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100
www.spiritandlifemagazine.com E-mail: spiritandlife@bspa.us
Congregation website: www.benedictinesisters.org