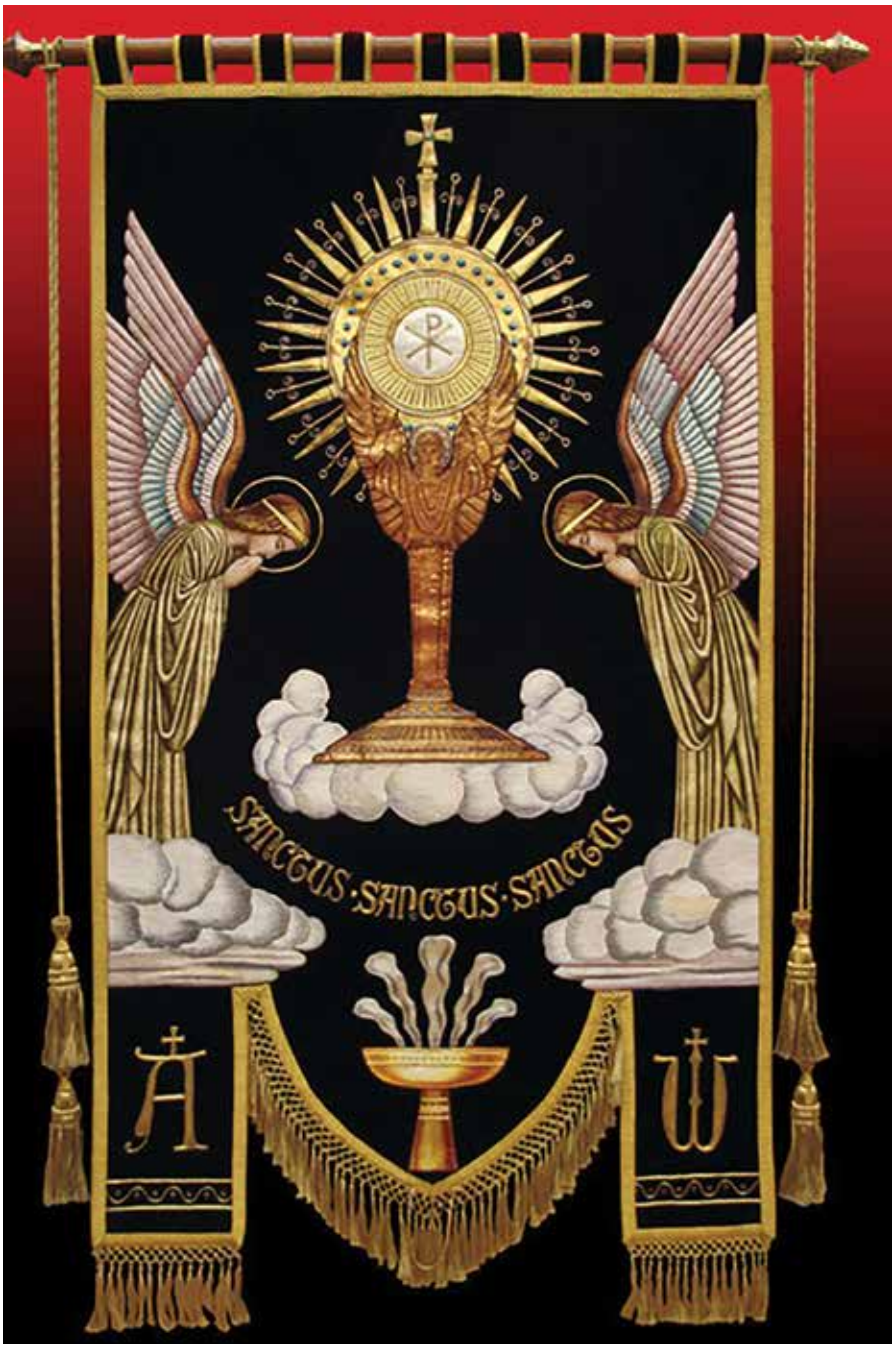
Spirit & Life



Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Clyde, Missouri

May-June 2025 Vol. 121:1

Single copy $2.50 ISSN 0038-7592 USPS 510-880

From Sister Dawn Annette

Recently we had a chance to be with our Benedictine brothers of Conception Abbey. We have a special relationship with them going back 150 years. During this get-together, I was moved by the charity these men showed to one another. The younger monks served the elders, pouring coffee, carrying plates, or offering a steadying arm. It was so obvious they cared for each other. They put effort into including one another. They were affirming of their peers and encouraging to their juniors. They demonstrated not only Christ's commandant to love one another, they demonstrated affection.

In his book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis introduces affection as one of four kinds of love. He also addresses *eros*, romantic love; *philia*, friendship; and *agape*, the Christ-like love that is a selfless and unconditional love. I had never heard of *storge*, simple affection. Lewis points out that this form of love is perhaps the most common and most accessible experience of love.

Affection is the bond formed when people are thrown together. It grows in the medium of familiarity. When very different people are thrown together, sharing time and space, a sense of community forms. It doesn't depend on shared interests or shared attraction. It arises from shared experience, regular routines, daily interactions, and a willingness to work together. Affection is a humble thing that develops between family members, schoolmates, people who have served together in military units, or even travel companions.

It certainly applies to members of religious communities. We didn't choose each other. We chose this way of life. Perhaps more accurately, God chose us for this way of life and drew us to this motley group of people. We share a common life. We hold possessions in common. We work for the good of community at whatever the community needs doing. In the process, we begin to move from singularity to cooperation and into communion. This communion creates and sustains community.

It is important to understand that while a member of the community may have close friends, community is not just friends living together. Friendship implies a level of agreement or a deep level of understanding between people. Affection is more of a sense of appreciation for even the most unique individual, just because he or she is part of my everyday life. Affection requires a commitment to presence. Gathering together becomes the daily practice of that commitment. Sometimes the only thing that gets me out of bed in the morning is knowing my sisters are in church and I should be with them. I want to be with them. I love them, affectionately.

Perhaps this is what the people of Antioch noticed about the members of the early church. They knew who the Christians were by the affection they showed to one another.

Sr. Dawn Annette Mills, OSB
Prioress General

Works Cited
Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*. London, England: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd. 1960

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.benedictinesisters.org

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

Who We Are

We, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, are a contemplative monastic community dedicated to the Eucharist. We serve the Church through our prayer and common life according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. We adore Christ in the Eucharist and seek him in all that we do, all whom we meet, and all that we encounter.

Spirit&Life

Volume 121:1 May-June 2025

FEATURES

7

3 **Grace for One Another**
Rev. Patrick Caveglia, OSB

5 **Peace: Our Quest and Aim**
Mary S. Sheridan

7 **Spiritual Stigmata: A Meditation**
Jeanette Martino Land

8 **Moosping Around After Being Corrected**
Rev. John Hagemann, OSB

9 **Evening Love Song**
Patricia Leyko Connelly

10 **Water Walking**
Elizabeth Gould

11 **A Morning Prayer**
Sr. Jean Frances Dolan, OSB

12 **Jerusalem Needs Three Lovers**
Rabbi Allen S. Maller

14 **An Altar in the Woods**
Patricia Leyko Connelly

15 **Expressions of Gratitude**
Sr. Mary Clare Buthod, OSB

DEPARTMENTS
From Sr. Dawn Annette
From the Editor...2
Book Reviews...18
Community News...19

Cover image: Sean, OSB. Hand-embroidered banner used in Corpus Christi processions, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, early 1900s.

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

ART AND PHOTO CREDITS: Cover: Sean, OSB; Beyond My Ken, p. 2; Ammar-sabaa, Unsplash.com, p. 10; Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, p. 19; Maria Victoria Cutaia, OSB , p. 20; Kelley Baldwin, p. 21; Wikimedia Commons: Estabiano, p. 3; Juan Rizi, p. 5; Uoaei1, p. 7; Hans Memling, p. 8; Patrician Leyko Connelly, pp, 9,14; Johann Jaritz, p. 10 (Extract (drowning Saint Peter) of Herbert Boeckl`s fresco "Saint Peter`s rescue from the Lake Galilee" (1925) inside the cathedral of Maria Saal, Austria); XInannax, p. 11; yeowatzup, p. 12; Texas State Library and Archives Commission, p. 15.

LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Sharon Nicks, Types

Published with ecclesiastical approval

Change of Address:
Please notify us promptly of change of address, giving both old and new addresses, with ZIP codes.
e-mail: spiritandlife@bspa.us

Spirit&Life (ISSN 0038-7592) is published bimonthly by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100. Periodicals postage is paid at Tucson, AZ. Postmaster: send address changes to *Spirit&Life*, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100.

Subscription information
Our magazine has no set subscription price. However, we are most grateful for any donation our readers wish to make toward publication of the magazine.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS: Articles should normally be between 900 and 1800 words. Poetry should generally be fewer than 50 short lines or 25 longer lines. Send materials by email attachment if possible (MS WORD or WORD compatible) to spiritandlife@bspa.us. Otherwise, mail to: Editor, *Spirit&Life*, 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432-8100. Payment is in copies of the magazine.

FROM THE EDITOR

Graduation marks the completion of a course of studies or degree and the beginning of a new venture. A high school graduate may be looking forward to college or starting a career. What I remember most about my high school graduation is the pair of new shoes I was wearing. To match our white caps and gowns, my shoes were white silk and had French heels.

Normally, I wore sneakers and bobby socks. The reason for this attire was that the high school gym was on the sixth floor and our lockers were in the basement, too long a journey to take in the five minutes we had between classes. I was not used to heels. For our graduation ceremony, we stood on the stage of the auditorium. My feet hurt. I could barely walk the breadth of the stage to receive my diploma.

After the ceremony, my family walked to a restaurant to celebrate. "Let's take a taxi," I begged. My fervent plea was refused. "It's only eight blocks to the restaurant," I was told. Cabs are expensive. I took off my shoes and hobbled the rest of the way in my stocking feet.

My college graduation is another story. All fifteen schools of New York University were to graduate at the same time. The ceremony was to be held outdoors, rain or shine. It poured. My cap fell in the mud. We stood in lines until the ceremony was canceled. I don't remember what shoes I was wearing; I should have worn boots.

I attended a very competitive city-wide all-girls' public high school. Shoes were important. We could tell who was who by the shoes they wore. Girls from the Upper West Side wore stockings and heels. After school, they hung out at the nearby drugstore. Less sophisticated girls from the Lower East Side or from one of the outer boroughs wore sneakers and bobby socks. We took the subway home promptly at the end of the school day.

Jesus paid no attention to shoes. The folks he knew went barefoot or wore sandals. That is why their feet needed to be washed. Although this was a task for a slave, Jesus didn't hesitate to perform this act of hospitality. Peter was embarrassed and consented only when Jesus told him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me" (Jn 13:8). The Gospel does not tell us if Peter or the other disciples thanked Jesus or not. Jesus taught his disciples to wash each other's feet:

> If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. (John 13:14-15)

Neither did Jesus care about clothes. In the Sermon on the Mount, he taught:

> Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. (Matthew 6:28-29)

In Luke's Gospel, Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, so he probably wasn't wearing his best clothes when Jesus invited himself to dine at his house: "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house" (Lk 19:5).

If we are Jesus' disciples, we must try to do what he would do. Jesus did not make class distinctions. His disciples came from all social backgrounds; they were rich and poor, educated and uneducated, slave and free. Jesus welcomed anyone who would listen to him. So should we.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

Grace for One Another

Rev. Patrick Caveglia, OSB

What do enemies do? They get even.

Everywhere we look in recent history, we see enemies getting even. Irish Catholics got even with the Protestants; it didn't matter that they all confessed Christ. The Tutsis and Hutus took turns getting even in Rwanda; it didn't matter that 75% of both tribes were Catholics. Bosnians and Serbs tortured and killed one another after living peacefully as neighbors for generations. Israel and Hamas continue to struggle violently over the Holy Land. Ukraine and Russia are trying to even the score with more and more sophisticated weapons, at a terrible cost.

To us, Jesus says: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Lk 6:27-28) Jesus is challenging the world's ways by saying: "The world has a system that's based on keeping score and getting even. If somebody hurts you, you retaliate and hurt them back. Even good relationships are all about keeping score. If someone gives you a gift, you give a gift in return. If someone invites you to dinner, you reciprocate. But what credit is there for you in that?"

Jesus asks the question, "what credit is there for you in that?" three times. (Lk 6:32-34) The Greek for "credit" can be translated as "grace." Jesus asks: "What grace is it for you to love someone who loves you? What grace is it for you to do good to someone who does good to you? What grace is it for you to lend to someone who will later lend to you?" Jesus' point is simple: How are we gracing one another? We're to be grace for one another like Jesus has been God's grace for each one of us. Grace is pure gift, no strings attached. Grace is Jesus dying for us on the

cross and giving us everlasting life without us doing anything to merit it. What good is God's grace for us if we don't become grace for others? That's Jesus' question: What good is grace if you don't pass it along, even to your enemies?

Every time we gather for Eucharist, we confess our sins and profess God's forgiveness. But we know that there are unresolved situations among us. We know of families in which siblings haven't spoken to one another in years. We know of spouses who are in trouble and won't talk to each other. We know of children who can't be honest with their parents. We know of friends who have betrayed friends. We know that reconciliation is difficult, especially when someone takes away something that can never be given back. When innocence or life is taken away, reconciliation and forgiveness are very difficult. But in all these moments, forgiveness is a grace. To accept forgiveness is a grace. To give forgiveness is grace. Grace always comes as a gift from beyond us.

What Jesus tells us today is: "Give up getting even and give up guilt. I come from God with life, to be the real bread of life for you. My grace will allow you to forgive and to be forgiven. You'll be signs of my new measure for giving and living, a measure 'pressed down, shaken together, running over.'

(Lk 6:38) Come, enter your future where we won't keep score. Come, enter a life where you can forgive and be forgiven. Come, become a friend."

What are we to do? First, we should ask God for the grace of forgiveness. We need forgiveness for our sins and hatreds, for times when we treat others badly and want to get even. Then we need to ask for the grace to forgive others. We'll need God's strength to live without wanting to get even with others. Then, as we celebrate Eucharist, we see in this mystery which we celebrate the power that restores us to friendship with God and each other.

When we are invited in this Eucharist to share a sign of peace with those around us, may our embrace, handshake, or smiling bow be symbolic of our commitment to work for true reconciliation with anyone from whom we are estranged. Jesus pleads with us: "Make time to be reconciled with others. Make that phone call to express forgiveness. Write that letter of reconciliation. Sit down and talk with that person. Stony silence, resentment, and getting even are cancers. Forgiveness is the only cure."

What do enemies do? They get even. What should Christians do? We should work to be reconciled as friends. That is the clear message in Jesus' Sermon on the Plain from Luke's Gospel (6:37-38):

> Forgive and you will be forgiven.
> Give, and gifts will be given to you;
> a good measure, packed together, shaken down,
> and overflowing,
> will be poured into your lap.
> For the measure with which you measure
> will in return be measured out to you.

Saint Paul echoes this idea in another mode: he reminds us that we Christians should be living out our discipleship by modeling our actions according to Christ. Paul says: "Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one." (1 Cor 15:49) It really is so logical, so simple. Why then do we have so much trouble acting as images of Jesus in our world?

What does the image of Jesus look like to us? What are the qualities we see reflected back to us from Jesus, that we are to live in our world? Think of the icon of Christ that most attracts you. What do you see there? I see mercy, compassion, self-sacrifice, and love. Jesus came to extend the Father's forgiveness to all of us who would accept it, and then to model for us how to extend mercy to others. His compassion is one way mercy is given as we suffer with others prayerfully, proactively, helping others in concrete ways. That is really the way of self-sacrifice. Jesus teaches us by his own life that we should be more concerned about serving others than serving ourselves. And all those virtues will lead us to the one virtue that will last — love as we abide in happiness with the Father, Son, and Spirit eternally.

Rev. Patrick Caveglia, OSB, is a monk of Conception Abbey, Conception, Missouri. He currently serves as library administrator and instructor in theology at Conception Seminary College.

Stop judging, that you may not be judged. For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you. (Matthew 7:1-2)

PEACE
Our Quest and Aim

Mary S. Sheridan

For a long time, I puzzled over Benedict's instruction in the Prologue to his Rule to "let peace be your quest and aim." With wars in so many nations and a country that seems torn in half by very different world views, I didn't know where to begin. But as I thought about it more, I realized that Benedict couldn't expect the average person to bring about world peace except, perhaps, through prayer. Even our leaders and diplomats don't seem able to do that. Benedict was focused on peace within the community — a peace that might ultimately spread, but the main focus was on home.

When I looked up "peacemaking" on Google, I was directed to many articles on conflict, its sources, and its remediation. There are such things as creative conflict, respectful disagreement, advocacy for justice. Peace, it appears, is the minimizing of unproductive, ill-tempered conflict. That is a good thing. With this in mind, I thought about the communities in which I have participated: my family, my neighborhood, my workplace, my Oblate community. What are the principles that Benedict would have us follow to make each of these more peaceful? The answers were, of course, right in the Rule. They had been staring at me there all the time.

The basis of community is relationship: personal relationships and power relationships. Benedict balances these. Those in leadership are to listen and to make decisions for the good of the group. Today, we use the term "servant leader." Those not currently in leadership, and that can always change, are generally to "go along with the program," contributing suggestions but also falling into line once the decision is made. How much easier my job as an administrator would have been if our faculty group had done what I wanted, given better ideas, or at least told me that they didn't plan on doing it! How much easier I could have made my boss's job, for example, if I turned in my reports on time. Benedict would call this "obedience" necessary to superiors and to one another. Today we're not big on blind obedience, doing something that doesn't make sense just because it is commanded. Perhaps "cooperation" comes closer to Benedict's ideal, at least for everyday living, and it certainly makes for more peaceful surroundings.

At a more subtle level, the ways that groups are organized can help or hinder peace. I remember seeing an organizational chart for medical residents, physicians in training, in a particular specialty. The first year there were five residents. The second year, four. The third year, three, and so on. And the supervisors wondered why the residents didn't get along with one another. Are our businesses, clubs, and families set up to promote and reward fairness and cooperation or to promote conflict? People do what is in their best interest.

Each member of the monastic community is to do their job and only their job. As a volunteer for the Benedictine Sisters, I could see that each task was assigned to someone and that things went more smoothly because people quietly and faithfully did their jobs. I also learned not to interfere in the jobs of others, to ask permissions, and to honor the chain of command. The result was a peaceful community rhythm. Imagine the difference it would make in a

family if chores were divided and done as they were supposed to be. Idealistic? Of course, but what an ideal to strive for.

By the same token, Benedict suggests that we need to mind our own business. If one member of the community is in trouble, only those in authority are to administer the correction. Sides should not be taken; the community is not to be divided by ideas of who is right and who is wrong. Imagine the trouble that would be saved, to say nothing of the hurt feelings, if we all refrained from useless gossip, arguing, and trying to control one another. I recall that, when I was a child, the couple who owned the beauty shop where my mother went were having difficulty in their marriage. Was it her fault? Was it his? It seemed like the discussion among the patrons went on for months, chattered about endlessly. There was little peace within the shop and its clientele. How much better it would have been if the couple had kept the problems within their marriage and sought help in a more productive way. How much better if the clients had just thought to mind their own business. Benedict provides for help, sending wise, elderly monks to reason with the recalcitrant. But this is done only by those wise, elderly monks whom the Abbot selects. The rest of the community is to stay out of it.

Of course, there is a place for the constructive exchange of ideas, for compassionate friending, and for mutual efforts to understand and assist one another. We need the humility Benedict advocates to approach one another as equals, not as the ones with all the answers who have taken it upon themselves to teach the rest. I also think about the basic courtesies that used to be taken for granted: please, thank you, a friendly smile, cutting others a little slack. Popular culture is too quick to recommend breaking off relationships. The way of Jesus is not to judge but to listen (as the Rule of Benedict Prologue begins) and to forgive. Will these ideas do away with all conflict? Unfortunately, no. But to the extent that we can strive for them, we can make a more peaceful community around us.

There is another aspect to peace that is important: peace within ourselves. Facing our problems, working to understand them, and consulting with the wise elders in our lives can go a good way towards peace of heart. Dealing with faults such as procrastination can reduce conflict in our lives, internal and external. In prayer, with words and without, we can ask God to help resolve our burdens and forgive our sins. Trust in the love and mercy of God—a grace we can pray for—is another way of reducing internal conflict. So is praying for those who irk us.

The Buddhist spiritual teacher Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of this work of internal and external conflict resolution as something profound: "being peace." I love the idea that, through spiritual practice, one can do more than put on peacefulness as an external behavior; one can become peace in their very essence. I am reminded of a colleague who seemed to embody this. Groups were better, it seemed, simply for her presence. For Hanh, becoming peace comes through mindfulness and meditation which he defines as being "aware of what is going on" (Hanh 2). Hanh acknowledges that "life is full of suffering," but that it is also much more. There is the beauty of nature, the joy of friendship, the wonder of new life (Hanh 1). If we do not make joy a part of our lives, we cannot pass joy along to others.

Yes, these are times full of conflict. But, if nothing else, we do not have to be complicit in the conflict. We have advice from our own Holy Father Benedict, as well as other spiritual teachers, to lead us beyond war with ourselves and others. We can make it our goal to leave our surroundings a little quieter and more pleasant. If we follow this advice, and with God's grace, perhaps we may even, someday, become peace.

Works Cited:

Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Being Peace.* Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2020.

Spiritual Stigmata: A Meditation

Jeanette Martino Land

As I was praying and meditating before a crucifix, I contemplated Jesus' five wounds, the sacred stigmas of his passion. I recalled that at least four hundred individuals are reported to have borne the stigmata, the visible marks mirroring the five sacred wounds inflicted on the body of Christ at his crucifixion. Indeed, only a chosen few have been blessed with this mystical gift and its accompanying, intense sufferings, most notably Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Pio. In addition, some suffer from invisible wounds.

My pondering led me to David, the young shepherd boy who placed his faith in the power of God and bravely went out to meet Goliath with "five smooth stones" in his bag and a sling (1 Sm 17). It boggled my mind when I tried to picture this little shepherd boy marching out to fight a giant of a man, ready to pit his five stones against the mighty sword wielded by a lifelong soldier. Humanly speaking, I would have to conclude that David must be crazy!

But David has God on his side and boldly proclaims that the victory will be the Lord's. Clearly, the battle is the Lord's, not David's: "And so, without a sword, David defeated and killed Goliath with a sling and a stone!" (1 Sm 17:50). David's faith in the living God prepared him for battle.

I asked myself, "How can I prepare for the very real spiritual battles that challenge and confront me daily on my spiritual journey? What 'stones' do I have to put in my bag to be prepared to slay the Goliaths of my day and to equip myself for battle against the temptations of this fallen world?"

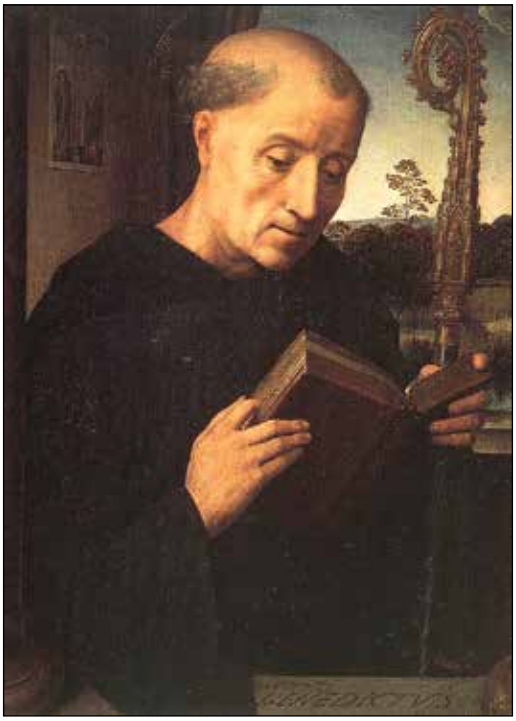
In my meditation, I realized that David carried five stones and Jesus bore five wounds. Could there be a connection? Could David's five stones be likened to the concept of spiritual stigmata, marks of my faith in the risen Lord; signs that I am a Catholic Christian soldier in the army of Christ, ready to bring the light of Christ into this age of darkness? Could these five "stones" be what Our Lady repeatedly has said in her many apparitions: prayer, scripture, fasting, reconciliation, and Eucharist?

Surely, when I pray unceasingly; feed my mind with the Word of God in Scripture; voluntarily fast as a form of spiritual discipline (fasting need not be limited to food); confess my sins and become reconciled to God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation; and participate in the greatest prayer, Holy Mass, where Jesus feeds me with His own Body and Blood in Holy Eucharist; these five "stones" become channels of grace to equip me to persevere in holiness on my spiritual journey into eternal life. These spiritual stigmata are the badges of courage I need to "fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope, and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment" (Prayer Before a Crucifix, mycatholic.life/catholic-prayers).

Jesus preached a love that would heal and restore: "by his wounds we were healed" (Is 53:5). May I die to myself and atone for Jesus' suffering and death by offering to his blessed wounds the balm of my spiritual stigmata, the signs of my abiding love for him.

Moosping Around After Being Corrected

Rev. John Hagemann, OSB



I have a distinct memory of parental advice given to me and my siblings after we had been corrected. It went something like this:

> Now don't be moosping (double oo sound as in "foot") around. You need to take to heart what I said to you when I corrected you and just move on now. Take the correction and try to be better! No moosping around!

One of my sisters tells me that "moosping" was a made-up word. Made up or not, I remember it and like it. Nonetheless, my parents, especially my dad, used that word. I have never forgotten it.

If you examine the Rule of Benedict, you will soon find that there are numerous chapters on the penal code, punishment for offenses of the monks. You might wonder why such a code is necessary if monks already want to live a holy and upright life. However, all must remember monks are just ordinary people who have faults and failings just like other people. It is a falsehood to believe that those who live in a monastery are faultless and already saints. In the time of Benedict, many individuals came to seek entrance into the monastery who had lived a wayward life previously and may have developed bad living habits. Therefore, in order to keep the community functioning in a healthy way, there needed to be boundaries for behavior and the means to enforce such behavior.

Over the years of living monastic life at Mount Michael, I have found that it is much easier if the one making the correction chooses a suitable time to do so and takes careful consideration of the manner in which the correction is done. How and when are very important. It is wise not to make the correction at the very moment when the mistake happens since the person making the correction may feel very strongly and even overreact to the situation at hand. It is better to wait until emotions cool. On the other hand, the correction should not be ignored. And the how should always be done in a gentle way. A heavy hand or a loud, scolding tone will very likely only make things worse.

Of course, the natural human reaction to correction is to bristle and to react negatively. Sometimes the reaction is so strong that in the end the correction itself is totally lost. Even monks moospe around. Some may decide to leave the community. Those are reactions that speak loudly and may indicate that the individual really does not want—or is not able—to do what it takes to live a monastic life. Monastic life always demands listening, especially to one's superiors and even to peers. Refusal to listen is not conducive to spiritual growth. None of us see ourselves as we really are. We need others to mirror us back to ourselves. It is this sort of thing that helps us become better people and better monastics.

Thus, correction does occur in monasteries. We use an adjective in front of the word most of the time. We say, "fraternal correction." It is meant to be done in a brotherly or sisterly way to help the other person become better.

I cannot say that I always took correction well and that I did not moospe around. But in over fifty years that I have been in monastic life, I know that it is

Continued on page 11

Evening Love Song

Without a sound
And in the deep silence
God whispers words of love

In the gentle sun setting over the ocean waters
In colors I don't think I've ever seen before

It's as if the earth is hushed all at once
In this sacred moment

Clouds seem paused in midair
The waters are calm and still
Even the birdsong has faded for now

Creation in silent adoration . . .
Listening
to this evening love song!

Patricia Leyko Connelly

Water Walking

Peter didn't think. (It was nothing new.)
Peter didn't plan when out he flew.
Out from the boat with the waters tossing,
Into the deep where the Lord was crossing.

Peter didn't think, just threw off his clothes.
No life jacket. Though a fisherman knows
Better than most you can't walk on water.
But he saw Jesus and it didn't matter.

Peter didn't think until he looked down,
Saw his feet sinking, was afraid to drown.
Saw his knees go. To the Lord he cried.
And Jesus soon was at his side.

Peter didn't think, but still felt shame
When Jesus grabbed him and called his name.
Where is your faith? Why do you doubt?
Do you still not know what I'm about?

Peter didn't think, but now he knew
Walking on water asks something of you.
When Jesus calls, one thing you need:
At least the faith of a mustard seed.

Thinking can fail. The day may come
When dark entombs and reason's numb.
When waves hurl down from every side,
And hope seems lost in the shifting tide,
Remember the path that Peter trod:
Leap from the boat to the arms of God.

Elizabeth Gould

Moosping Around After Being Corrected

Continued from page 8

good to receive fraternal correction as well as to give it.

One correction that I get occasionally from confreres or even from my family members is not to be so strong about being correct on matters. For example, I have always taken pride in remembering what class and year that alums belonged to or what year this or that happened in our history here or in my family. I like to be correct! It is sometimes information that doesn't really matter. But there are times that I admit I hold too strongly to being correct. I have learned now to just give the answer and not respond if my answer is refuted.

Another example would be when I was young and we were all eating a meal at the table. If any one of us slurped our soup or chewed with an open mouth, Dad would be all over us with correction. Another one would be coming to the meal table wearing a ball cap or any type of hat for that matter. That was forbidden by my dad. To this day, I remember that correction and honestly have a hard time with people who do such things while eating. The last human fault that was huge for my dad would be tardiness. He did not like to be late for anything. It was the practice of my parish as a child to pray the rosary before mass. Reciting the rosary was a bit of a buffer for being on time for mass. But at a certain point, we as a family could not be late for the rosary either. It was good practice for monastic life. Being late is just not being charitable to one's peers.

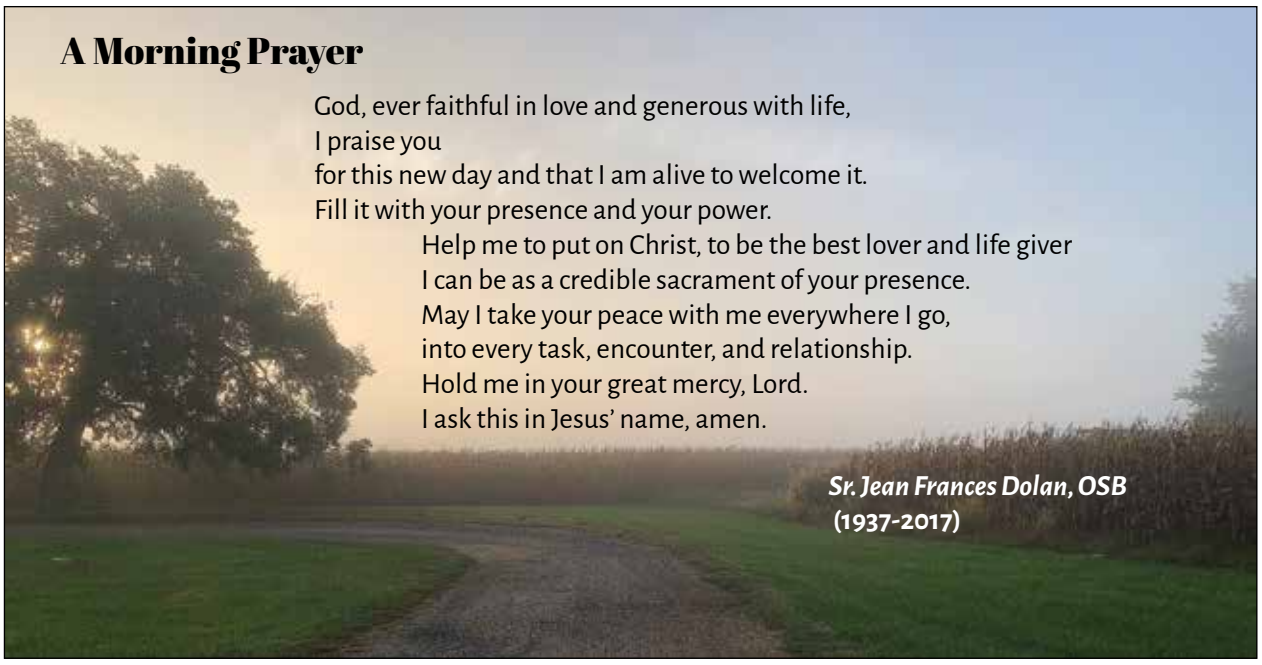
Michael Casey puts it well in *Strangers to the City*:

> Correction is probably one of those situations envisaged by Benedict in the fourth step of humility, where he talks about encountering things that are hard and contrary and meeting with undeserved injuries. His solution is simple though not easy: We embrace Christ's cross. This takes the whole incident from the plane of interpersonal conflict and rancor to a higher and deeper level, we encounter Christ, participate in his sufferings and so become more worthy to share in his kingdom. (Casey 104-105)

We all need to be corrected at times. We do need others who can see us better than we can see ourselves. We should take such correction and not moospe around.

Works Cited:

Casey, Michael. *Strangers to the City*. Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 2005.



Jerusalem Needs Three Lovers

Rabbi Allen S. Maller

The name "Jerusalem" occurs 660 times in the Hebrew Bible. Jerusalem existed as a pagan city for centuries before David conquered it a decade or two after 1,000 BCE, and it became known as the City of David. In the historical account of the Book of Samuel, after the death of Saul, David was made king of the entire nation of Israel and led his army to capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites (2 Sm 5:6-7). Upon conquering the city, David "took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. . . . He became more and more powerful, because the Lord God Almighty was with him" (2 Sm 5:9–10).

The phrase "City of David" is used of Jerusalem forty-five times in the Hebrew Bible. The City of David is very small; it covers only about fifteen acres of land. The first mention in the Hebrew Bible of Jerusalem as the "City of David" is found in 2 Samuel 5:7: "David captured the fortress of Zion, which is the City of David."

When God first ordered Prophet Mohammed and the Muslim community to offer their daily prayers, they prayed facing Jerusalem. This was the practice in Mecca for more than a decade, and it continued in Medina until seventeen months after Muhammad went to Medina. For Muslims, Jerusalem's Temple Mount encloses thirty-five acres of buildings and open spaces. At its southernmost end is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, two hundred yards north is the Dome of the Rock.

The entire area is often regarded as Baitul-Maqdis, "House of the Holy," or Al-Qudus, "the Most Holy." It comprises over one seventh of the ancient walled city of Jerusalem. However, the silver domed mosque, the Masjid al-Aqsa, and the golden Dome of the Rock are two separate buildings and not synonymous with each other. For Muslims, both buildings are within the enclosure of Al-Haram al-Sharif, referred to in the Qur'an as "the Furthest Mosque" (Qur'an, Sura Bani Isra-il 17:1).

For Muslims, the city of Jerusalem is an important site. As the home of numerous prophets of Islam such as Dawud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), and 'Isa (Jesus), the city was a symbol of Islam's past prophets. When Prophet Muhammad made the miraculous night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem where he ascended into heaven, it acquired an added importance as the place where Prophet Muhammad led all the earlier prophets in prayer and then ascended to heaven. When Muslims conquered Iraq and Syria in the 630s, Jerusalem became a Muslim city, and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem would become one of the most important mosques in the Muslim empire.

For Muslims, Islam is a continuation and further development of the teachings of earlier prophets

that are revered by all three monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Muslims believe that the message of Muhammad continues and further develops the messages of Ibrahim, Musa, Dawud, and 'Isa, which had been corrupted over time by some of their followers. Thus, the Temple of Solomon that was built on Jerusalem's Temple Mount in Biblical times was a part of their own religious history.

When 'Umar, a senior companion and father-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, entered the city, he went to see where his religious forefathers such as Prophets Dawud, Sulayman, and 'Isa had worshiped. He found the area filthy and unusable as a mosque, so he decided to clean the area and built the al-Aqsa Mosque about two hundred yards south of the site of Sulayman's Temple. As was his custom, he worked alongside average Muslims in cleaning and purifying the area. They erected a basic mosque that could contain about three thousand people at the southern end of the Temple Mount, now known by the Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary.

A contemporary Christian pilgrim described the mosque as a large wooden structure built upon earlier ruins. The Muslims did not see this as trampling on the holy sites of other religions since the site of the al-Aqsa Mosque was six hundred feet away from the Jerusalem Temple site. Since the same prophets that are mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible are accepted as Muslim prophets, the new mosque was seen as a continuation of those earlier places of worship.

For decades, this simple structure built by 'Umar remained the main building on the Temple Mount. In 690, however, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik of the Umayyad Dynasty rebuilt the al-Aqsa Mosque into a much larger and more stable structure than the mosque 'Umar had built. 'Abd al-Malik's real architectural achievement, however, was what was constructed about two hundred meters to the north of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and above the rock from which some Muslims believed Prophet Muhammad ascended to Heaven. 'Abd al-Malik built the magnificent Dome of the Rock, the first Muslim building to use a dome.

The Dome of the Rock is not a mosque. It was not a separate house of worship. It was meant to complement, not to compete with, the al-Aqsa Mosque. Using the architectural traditions and mosaics that the Umayyads had learned from the Byzantines who ruled the area before them, the Dome of the Rock immediately became one of the focal points of Islamic architecture in the 700s. It is one of the most impressive buildings in Jerusalem. It has an octagonal footprint, from which rises a twenty-meter dome. Calligraphy adorns the inside and outside of the building with some of the oldest existing Qur'anic inscriptions being inside the dome of the building.

Jerusalem today is home to more than 550,000 Jewish residents and over 332,000 Palestinian residents, who rarely mix. Palestinians live mostly in the east, and Jewish residents live mostly in the western areas. As cousins, Arabs and Jews should live together, but it will take time for the painful wounds to heal. Perhaps it is time for religious leaders to understand the religious importance of repentance, humility, forgiveness, compromise, and hope for peace by overcoming more than eight decades of pain and anger. Each religious community could consider its own leadership to be essential messianic aids as is foretold: "And deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingship shall be the Lord's" (Ob 1:21). This would fulfill the culminating verses of Isaiah's messianic prophecy as enlarged upon by the prophet Micah (4:3-5):

> They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
> and their spears into pruning hooks;
> One nation shall not raise the sword against another,
> nor shall they train for war again.
> They shall all sit under their own vines,
> under their own fig trees, undisturbed;

for the Lord of hosts has spoken.
Though all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
We will walk in the name of the Lord,
our God, forever and ever.

As the Qur'an states, "It may be that God will grant love and friendship between you and those who you now hold as enemies, for God has power over all things; and God is oft-forgiving, most merciful" (Qur'an, Sura Mumtahana 60:7). Then the words of the Qur'an will be fulfilled: "From the depths of Darkness into the Light; and verily, God is to you most kind and merciful" (Qur'an, Sura Hadid 57:9).

We all will benefit from "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west, but it is righteousness—to believe in God and the last day and the angels, and the Book, and the messengers; to spend your substance out of love for him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who are sick, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and to practice regular charity." (Qu'ran, Sura Al-Baqarah 2:177)

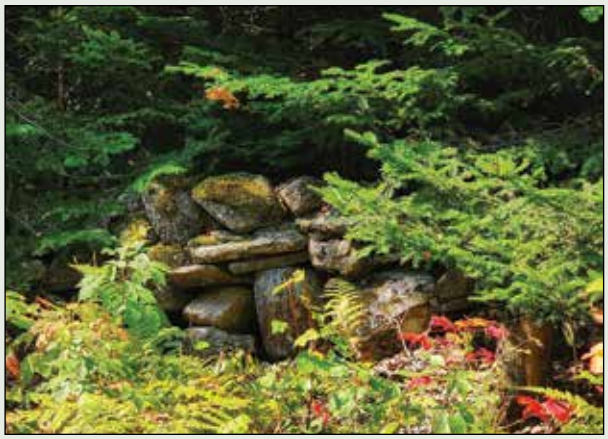
Christian support for such a cooperative venture would be very important, and anyone who can bring Jews, Christians, and Muslims together in mutual respect and cooperation would surely fulfill the greatest of all Messianic predictions: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again" (Is 2:4).

If each people truly follows the best of its own religious teachings, the Messianic Age of worldwide peace will surely have arrived. Then—and only then—will the Jerusalem Temple of Solomon be rebuilt and God's Holy Kingdom established on earth.

Works Cited:

The Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary. Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Elmhurst, NY: Tahreek Tarsile Qur'an Inc., 2001.

An Altar in the Woods



I wasn't on bended knee
My hands were not lifted to the heavens
Or clasped in petition
A simple walk in the woods
Along a road lined with trees hinting of Autumn.
A deep feeling of gratitude,
A presence of sacredness
    drew my eyes . . .
To a simple cluster of trees and a layer of stones
And there . . .
An altar in the woods welcoming me to this
    place of sanctuary
to pause even for just this one moment and
    be present
amid all the cares of the world, now amidst
    sacredness, with all the other holy creatures
    in the woods . . .
God whispers to us all, every moment, every day.
I was blessed to hear the whispers and notice . . .
A gathering of the community of the earth!
At this altar in the woods.

Patricia Leyko Connelly

Patricia Leyko Connelly is the author of Sacredness Surrounds us in Every Season: Contemplative Reflections in Haiku Prayers, Photos, and Long Poems.

Expressions of Gratitude

Sr. Mary Clare Buthod, OSB

Janice knew when her four best friends emerged from the north corner of the ballroom that she was happy to be attending her tenth high school reunion. As her friends approached her, Janice noticed that they hadn't changed. They were her wonderful "Buddies Forever."

When they joined Janice, their conversation was frenzied. Each spoke a bit louder and faster than the last. They told one another about their families and past experiences. Later in the evening, they located five chairs together at the large table and enjoyed a four-course dinner.

"I've got a great idea!" exclaimed Nancy. "Come to my room this evening and we'll talk like we are ten years younger!"

"Copy that!" responded Alice, military by profession.

"I'll be there!" resounded Lynn, mother of four.

"What shall I bring?" quizzed Janice, a school librarian.

"Just come and enjoy making a memory for life!" responded Jackie, a physician.

Gathered in Nancy's room, they listened to music and enjoyed chips and sodas, complements of Jackie. As the excitement began to waver, Lynn spoke up. "You know," she began, "I have had the same accusing thoughts since graduation. I remember when I was a child of seven. I was very sick, and my parents didn't want to take me to the hospital. Then one day I received a letter. I opened it to find a story written and illustrated by my Aunt Mable. Every day I received a new chapter of this priceless book, and I began to look forward to its arrival. When I got well, I forgot all about it. When she came to visit, I forgot to thank her. I wish that, as a child, I would have thanked my Aunt Mable and let her know how much her kindness meant. My aunt is now with God, and I didn't even go to her funeral."

"Your story seems sad to me, Lynn, because I also had someone in my life who I never thanked. I wish there were 'do-overs' for childhoods," responded Alice. "From the time I was little, I wanted to be like my father, a police officer. Instead, I joined the Marines and served overseas for seven years. During that time, I was often homesick. I am the oldest of seven siblings, and I would try to imagine each one at different ages. When I received letters from my mom, I pretended that they didn't mean as much to me as they really did. I never considered the sacrifices she made each time she wrote to me while keeping house for dad and my six siblings.

"I saved the letters and read them over now and then. I didn't write back to her or thank her for her letters. My mother died when I was away, and I flew back home to attend her funeral. I helped my father by assuming care of my younger siblings. My deepest

regret is that I never thanked my mother for her kind actions."

"I understand only too well, Alice. As children, we don't think about gratitude," said Jackie. "As adults, we should let our hearts ring with thanksgiving. But, even as an adult, I was self-centered. As you all know, I grew up in a poor section of our town. I was determined to climb out of poverty. I saved to buy an old Jeep and became the envy of my carousing gang. Then, one evening I was pulled over for drunk driving. I went before a judge who told me that he would like to make an example of me and put me in prison for two years. Instead, he gave me a court-appointed counselor, Angela, to whom I had to report weekly for two years. Chastened, I thanked the judge. Then I surrendered to a stately sixty-year-old matronly guardian.

"I didn't like Angela because I was too arrogant to be friendly. But, as time crept by, I slowly realized that she was a Godsend. She encouraged me to go to the local junior college. She set me on a path of academic success and love for God. I did thank her when I graduated from her care and went on to the university to begin studying medicine. But my 'thank you' was shallow.

"Now, I ask myself, 'Why didn't I let Angela know what she really meant to me and how much I owe her? I received word of her death during my senior year. I had so many activities and a big test the day of her funeral. I never took time to pray for her and remember how good she was."

"Your story makes me sad, Alice. I lived next door to our two aunts and uncle," continued Janice. "Aunt Ellen and Uncle Arthur ran a printing press and would give us scraps of paper to take to our teachers. Aunt Jenny had retired from teaching. Every Saturday morning, she would ring a bell at ten, which meant story hour. Our houses were close, and we could hear her bell through the window. We huddled by the window fifteen minutes ahead of time to watch and listen.

"We loved story hour. We would leave with a book specially selected by our beloved Aunt Jenny according to our reading level and interest. Best of all, we would be in a Christmas show in the library. Aunt Ellen made costumes of Mary, Joseph, and angels. Now, looking back on my childhood, I realize that Aunt Jennie, Aunt Ellen, and Uncle Arthur brought me so much joy, and I never thought of thanking them. I just took them for granted."

"I do remember thanking my best friend," said Nancy in a hushed tone and suddenly everyone was staring at Nancy.

"Tell us!" they said together.

"The person that helped me the very most was my younger brother, Patrick," said Nancy. "I was seven years older than Patrick, and I was in second grade when he was born. Patrick was born with very severe heart problems, and I knew that I needed to help Patrick the best I could.

"It wasn't long before I was designated to be Patrick's caregiver when mom was busy in the kitchen and dad was not yet home from work. Patrick would laugh and clap his hands when I came close to his crib. As I carried him around the house, I sang to him about all the things he was seeing. There was a picture of Jesus' Sacred Heart on our wall, and I would point to the picture and explain to seven-month-old Patrick who Jesus is. Even when I was older with a challenging schedule and many interests, Patrick always took center-stage in my life and all my friends knew this and loved Patrick almost as much as I did.

"I chose a local university for my freshman year so that I could live at home and help care for my brother, who was now in school. He waited for me to help him with homework and to be with him and the

family at dinner. I was home when Patrick went to be with God in heaven. We were all with him, talking with him about Jesus and asking him to pray for us from heaven. I was never so sad and never so close to God as when Patrick died. Even today, gratitude to God for the presence of Patrick in my life can fill my heart and bring me to deep prayer. It's like I knew a saint."

There was a hushed silence before Nancy made a suggestion. "I brought some paper and pens," Nancy told the others. "What if we each wrote a prayer for the person we mentioned today? Prayer would be a wonderful way to connect with those we wanted to thank. We can read them, and then I would like to collect them, duplicate them, and make booklets reminiscent of our time together. I believe in prayer, and it is even possible that our prayers for these wonderful people mean more to them in heaven today than a forgotten thank you yesterday."

The next morning after breakfast, Janice and her friends met again to read their prayers. The group began in silence and then Nancy led them in the "Our Father." Nancy passed out booklets and each read the prayer she had written. After each prayer, a few words of affirmation were offered. At the close, Nancy prayed:

> Dear Father,
> We lift Aunt Mabel, Patrick, Alice's mother, Aunt Ellen, Aunt Jenny, Uncle Arthur, and Angela to your loving arms and pray for them with deep gratitude and delight for all the wonders they brought into our lives. May all your holy men and women give you praise and thanksgiving. May these, your chosen ones, continue to lead us to your Son, Jesus. In his holy name and in union with the Holy Spirit, we join in saying, Amen.

That was ten years ago. The friends met again for their twentieth reunion. They brought their booklets, and retold stories of their chosen person. They talked happily because they knew that we never really forget the special persons God puts into our lives.

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.

Thank you for your Will to Give

Your gift will support our life of prayer, and our prayer will be the gift we offer in return, to support you and your loved ones.

If you are reviewing your will or other estate plans because of tax law or other changes, now may be an ideal time to consider your charitable priorities. Be sure your advisor knows what these priorities are.

BOOK REVIEWS

JUDAISM: A GUIDE FOR CHRISTIANS by Tzvi Novick, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2025, 304 pp., $39.99 pb.

Years ago, I heard a priest, a gifted professor, deliver a homily in which he claimed that the Holocaust was God's punishment of the Jews for their rejection of Christ. I was horrified not only by what he said but even more by the fact that none of his other listeners seemed to react. Today, I think the teachings of Vatican II and the efforts of Pope Saint John Paul II and his successors to improve relations between the Church and the Jewish community have borne fruit, although there is much work that still needs to be done.

Tzvi Novick is himself a proof that there is growth; he is a Modern Orthodox Jew who teaches at the University of Notre Dame. His fascinating book introduces Christian readers, particularly Roman Catholics, to the major themes of Jewish theology and to Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism. Many Christians fail to recognize that Judaism, like Christianity, has experienced two thousand years of development since New Testament times. Novick understands and respects Christianity as well as Judaism. This well-written book is a most welcome contribution to interfaith dialogue and understanding.

Novick gives a systematic account of Judaism from a Christian perspective. His topics include supersession and sin; ritual law; Saint Paul; Torah study and practice; prayer and the synagogue; the sabbath and the festivals; marriage and sexuality; spirituality; and Zionism and the State of Israel. Each chapter includes recommendations for further reading and questions for discussion. This insightful and well-balanced book is a valuable classroom resource that should be used widely by religious educators. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

LATTER-DAY SAINT THEOLOGY AMONG CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES, by Grant Underwood. Foreword by Craig Blomberg. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2025, 640 pp, $39.99 hb.

Most of us have, on occasion, encountered a pair or small group of well-dressed and polite young people eager to share their Mormon faith with others. Their beliefs and concepts differ from mainstream Christianity and may appear strange, even incomprehensible. The Church of Latter-Day Saints has often been dismissed as a non-Christian cult. It was violently persecuted in its early history. Its founder, Joseph Smith, was assassinated by an armed mob.

Grant Underwood, a practicing Latter-Day Saint, is a history professor who also holds a chair of religious understanding at Brigham Young University. He aims to bring Mormon thought into conversation with the main themes of Christian theology. He provides an overview of Christian teaching before presenting Mormon thought on each topic. I found myself amazed at the expanse and depth Underwood's scholarship.

Underwood's topics include the nature and role of God, the Trinity, and Christ; creation; humanity; soteriology; church; sacraments; the Eucharist; eschatology; and the afterlife. He is familiar with the Church Fathers and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which he discusses with sympathy and understanding. He includes a list of birth and death dates of persons discussed, a bibliography, and indices of authors, subjects, and scripture. For him, scripture includes the Book of Mormon and other Mormon texts.

Reading Underwood's book satisfied my curiosity and helped me understand Mormon beliefs, which find echoes in Christian thought prior to the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. I recommend this book for curious readers.

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

THE AFFECTIONS OF CHRIST JESUS: LOVE AT THE HEART OF PAUL'S THEOLOGY, by Nijay K. Gupta, foreword by Michael J. Gorman, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2025, 272 pp, $34.99 pb.

Googling "love" is not much help in defining love, which is a word of many and often vague shades of meaning. Google defines "love" as "an intense feeling of deep affection." But "affection" is only one of C.S. Lewis' four categories of love. Nijay Gupta, a professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary, a Baptist school, examines the concept of love from a variety of modern perspectives before he delves into love in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition, the Greek language of love, and love in the Jesus tradition. In doing so, he uses ancient primary sources, notably Saint Augustine, in preparation for his examination of love in the Pauline letters.

Gupta's approach is canonical, that is, he discusses both the undisputed and disputed letters, including the Letter to the Ephesians. He points out that "Paul's love language and themes are consistent and complementary across all thirteen letters" (xi).

Gupta's book is a word study on love. Pauline scholars generally focus on such topics as justification by faith, reconciliation, union with Christ, and the apocalyptic triumph of God in Christ. Gupta's approach is a welcome change that has added to my appreciation of Paul. Gupta goes far beyond the passage we all know from 1 Corinthians: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor 13:4-6).

Sr. Sarah Schwartzberg, OSB

BEACONS of faith and hope

The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration who attended the Monastic Congregation Council Meeting in Bristow, Virginia, were (from left) Sisters Colleen Maura McGrane, Pat Nyquist, Dawn Annette Mills, Valerie Stark, and Nancy Rose Gucwa.

Members of the General Council of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration gathered at the Monastic Congregation Council Meeting, hosted by the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses in Bristow, Virginia. This significant meeting offered a rich opportunity for dialogue and collaboration designed to strengthen their shared mission and deepen their commitment to monastic life.

In an era when the numbers of women religious in the United States are in decline, the conference served as a powerful reminder that quality prevails over quantity. Benedictine sisters from across the nation reaffirmed their dedication to ensuring that their communities not only survive but thrive. They are committed to creating sanctuaries that offer a place for women who are discerning a journey to religious life, a welcoming environment where one can grow closer to God, explore one's vocation and discern if this is the calling they are meant to follow.

The Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, known for fostering mutual assistance and encouragement, continues to promote the vision and values of Benedictine cenobitic life in both the Church and contemporary society. Sister Dawn Annette Mills, Prioress General, observed that the conference was a wonderful opportunity for women religious nationwide to gather and discuss their future as Benedictine women, emphasizing the importance of working together to overcome common challenges. Also in attendance was Sister Nancy Rose Gucwa, a member of the General Council. "It was exciting to participate in a large group of fellow Benedictine council members and share ideas on how we can help each other with common challenges," she remarked.

As the gathering concluded, there was a palpable sense of unity and renewed purpose. Despite broader trends, the commitment to nurturing thriving, supportive communities remains unwavering. The sisters left with a shared resolve to ensure that their communities continue to be beacons of faith and hope, a place where every discerning woman finds a path closer to God.

A Journey of Faith

Sister Maria Victoria Cutaia and Novice Amberina Uhlik joined thousands of participants for SEEK 2025 earlier this year in Salt Lake City. SEEK is hosted by FOCUS, a Catholic outreach organization. It welcomes parishioners, chaplains, religious men and women, college students, families, and others to take part in presentations, prayer services, women's group sessions, and more. "Each year, SEEK becomes more refined, and I love the opportunity to connect with people where they are in their faith," said Sister Maria Victoria, who serves as the Congregation's vocation director.

Novice Amberina (left) and Sister Maria Victoria Cutaia, Vocation Director, joined thousands of fellow Catholics at SEEK 2025 earlier this year in Salt Lake City.

Days were packed with opportunities for prayer, learning and connection. Daily Mass was a highlight. Standing among so many believers, lifting their voices in worship, was a reminder of the vastness of the Church.

At their organizational booth in Mission Way, Sister Maria Victoria and Novice Amberina met young adults curious about religious life. "It's always a gift to listen," Sister Maria Victoria reflected. "These conversations help us understand where people are in their faith and how we can support them."

Novice Amberina also had the opportunity to visit with the priest from her college alma mater and with a high school friend whom she hadn't seen in over twenty years. It was a joyful reunion and a reminder of how God weaves lives together in surprising ways.

The evenings at SEEK were just as moving. The night adoration session, with confession available, left a deep impression on Novice Amberina. She felt humbled to witness so many people seeking Christ's mercy. "Over 3,000 confessions were heard that night," she marveled.

Of course, SEEK also had its lighter moments. When Novice Amberina spotted a rock-climbing wall at one of the booths, she couldn't resist the challenge. Later, she laughed as she recounted the experience. "I will admit it got the better of me," she said. "It provided me with the insight that I have quite a ways to go in the trust department, which makes me laugh because I thought I had already conquered that proverbial wall. I need to work on praying with a heart open to his strength instead of relying on what my mind distracts me with. My spiritual advisor also brilliantly pointed out, 'It was a great lesson in that it's OK to fall. God calls us to humility, not pride.'"

Sister Maria Victoria and Novice Amberina reflected on their time at the conference and the opportunities it provided. "It's not every day you get to pray with thousands of people," Sister Maria Victoria said. "Being here, sharing our way of life and walking alongside these young Catholics, it's a beautiful reminder of why we do what we do."

Both women know that the seeds they planted at SEEK 2025 will continue to grow in ways only God can foresee. "SEEK provided so many incredible opportunities to see and experience Christ through others," Novice Amberina said. "It's so beautiful and vitalizing to see the energy and faith of these younger Catholics. Sharing information about our monastery with them was a wonderful opportunity to help spread the word about religious life."

Piece by piece, prayer by prayer

There are puzzles, and then there are puzzles. It took Sister Wilmarie Ehrhardt sixteen hours to complete this small and deceptively simple-looking wooden puzzle. Several sisters received similar puzzles as gifts and enjoyed the time spent assembling them to create beautiful images. The quiet time allows for contemplation and prayer for the needs of those in throughout the world.

STAY CONNECTED

FOR LINKS, VISIT BENEDICTINESISTERS.ORG AND CLICK ON NEWS CENTER – SOCIAL MEDIA.

PERIODICALS postage paid at Tucson, AZ

Spirit&Life

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