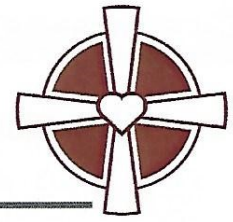


# The Gleaner



An occasional newsletter of the Federation of St. Gertrude

Number 76 ♦ January, 2021

## Message from the President by Sr. Jeanne Weber

From the time we put out the last edition of *The Gleaner* in September until now, we've gone from having no cases of Covid among our monastic communities to nine of the fourteen monasteries having had outbreaks. This is not surprising given the rate at which the pandemic has accelerated throughout the country. I am aware that the pandemic adds a significant layer of stress to our monastic lives. Months of isolation from family, friends, and colleagues, physical distancing even within our monastic communities, not to mention anxiety over how we might fare in a Covid outbreak, cannot help but take a toll on us. I wonder if we aren't seeing that emotional toll in the number of deaths we've had since the beginning of the pandemic. Collectively, twenty-nine of our sisters have died this past year as compared to sixteen in 2019 and seventeen in 2018. We may also be noticing shorter tempers in ourselves and others, or other signs of grief, such as difficulty focusing or feelings of sadness and depression. In all of this we stand in solidarity with millions of people around the world who are undergoing these same trials. I hope that we can be gentle with ourselves and others as we experience this stress.

As I reflect on the pandemic, I also find many things for which to be grateful. I am thankful that most of our sisters who have gotten Covid have weathered it fairly well (which is not to make light of how miserable one can feel with this infection and how long it takes to get one's energy back). I am tremendously appreciative of our monastic leadership. Many meetings have been added to your schedules and difficult decisions have led to more than a few sleepless nights. One prioress observed that so much of our normal way of life has had to be re-invented during this pandemic, from serving meals, to celebrating liturgy, to accompanying the ill and dying. I am also grateful to the members of our communities for hanging in there and following the guidelines that help to make life safer for everyone, even when that has meant being quarantined in your rooms for Christmas! And lastly, I'm grateful that a vaccine is finally becoming available to many of us.

To close I share with you an Advent reflection by Anne Kitch which has meant a lot to me in this time of uncertainty and anxiety, gratitude, and hope. She reflects on the text of Psalm 116: "I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him" (Ps 116.1).

"It has been a long road and I am weary, yet the destination still lies ahead. The Advent road will inevitably usher me to the manger where I will gather with friendly beasts, and shepherds, and angels, and other bystanders to bask in the light of holiness.

"At the same time, I know that the way of faith I travel continues on, and that the destination on this path will forever be ahead.

"But as I look back on the way traveled and travailed, I see the presence of love over and over again. So I know that love must be ever before me as well."\*

Let us take heart in the knowledge that on this journey, so often marked by uncertainty and travail, the true light, which is love, has indeed already dawned, even if we may not be able to see it except in hindsight.



\*Copyright Anne E. Kitch 2020. Anne E. Kitch is the rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Phillipsburg, NJ.



## Mary Rose (Anselm) Hammerling, OSB—1929-2020

The Federation of St. Gertrude marks the passing of an era with the death of Mary Rose Hammerling, OSB. On November 23, 2020 Sr. Mary Rose died as gracefully as she had lived in a Benedictine life of 68 years. She led the Federation of St. Gertrude as president from 1981-1990. One of her major accomplishments during that time was revision of our constitutions in light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. Prior to being president, Mary Rose served as first counselor of the Federation and prioress of her own community in Winnipeg. Many remember her as wise, courageous, gentle and kind. We include some of those memories below.

Mary David Walgenbach: We are monastic! Sister Mary Rose Hammerling repeated the “monastic” word often during the writing of our Listen II document. Guided by the lived experience of the communities of the Federation, scholars of the Rule, and Father Dan Ward as the navigator through canon law, Mary Rose led us with a listening heart and with clarity of purpose in a document that claimed our identity as monastic sisters.



I experienced Mary Rose’s spirit of adventure when she accompanied me to Africa to meet two Benedictine communities with whom my community in Madison might establish a sister relationship. We flew to Nigeria and stayed with Missionary Sisters from Ireland in Lagos. The next day we took a bus to Onitshaensis Archidioecesis where we would meet a driver to take us to the Monastery. Neither of us had ever been to Africa.



Srs. Ruth Fox, Kathryn Huber, and Mary Rose

Mother Patricia Alufuo, Abbess, met us after breakfast and showed us around the monastery. It is a contemplative community with over 100 members. The Office, sung in Latin, began at 3:30 am. After our tour Mother Patricia suggested that we read from the Chronicle of the community each day. There were many stories about walking to the river, to wash clothes and bring water back for drinking and cooking. Walking to the river was at least a half hour. One Sunday afternoon Sister Mary Rose and I decided we should experience walking to the river. About half way there we heard a loud swish in the bush. We looked at each other and instantly fell to the ground. Gradually we stood up. We locked our hands together and continued our journey to where people were washing their clothes, bathing and talking. After a quick return to the monastery and talking with Mother Patricia we determined that a well near the

gate would be very helpful for the sisters and the people in the area. When I returned home I began fundraising for digging the well for Mother Patricia’s community. I also determined that my next adventure would be with Sister Mary Rose.

Dan Ward: Mary Rose...Anselm...can be remembered for many traits from her gentle ways to her smile and for fun and sometimes mischief. I won’t tell a mischief story when she and I gave a party and got into trouble for spending too much money! Most of all, I remember her for her life and love of monastic life. In monasticism, she became the leader and torch-bearer for Benedictine women to reclaim their monastic identity and be recognized as monastics by the Church. She labored with so much conviction that the Listen document of the Federation of St. Gertrude would be a document on monastic life not convent life. As I travel to various Benedictine women’s communities in North America and see “Monastery” at the entrance, I say “Anselm, you did it!” She really was the re-founder!

Ruth Fox: I followed Sr. Anselm (Mary Rose) as Federation President. She was a beautiful person who helped me in every way in my new roll. She told me it was an awesome opportunity to be invited into communities and to share in their life. She was wonderful person to work with. She welcomed me and we had a great friendship and monastic relationship. We were a great support to one another. Her support, respect for me, her encouragement, and her service were a welcome model for me. Thank you Sr. Mary Rose.

Sister Karen Violette of Crookston: What a gift it was to have Sister Anselm, president of our federation, living among us for nine years. It seemed right for Sister to office from the States for the convenience of correspondence, travel and monetary exchange. Sister Anselm loved a good time. Once in a while our administrative team would take time off to enjoy each other



Anselm always joined us. We would 'let our hair down' —lots of good food, laughs and stories. We are grateful for all she shared with us—her time, talents and love.

Sister Mary Rose last visited the Crookston monastery for its centennial celebration banquet on May 12, 2019. Sister Shawn Carruth, prioress, asked for her blessing before Sister Mary Rose departed for Winnipeg and the moment was caught on camera.

Joella Kidwell: Mary Rose's greatest contribution to the Federation was the completion of Listen I and II. It was a work that took several Chapters and much work in between to complete, get approved by the member monasteries, the Federation Chapter, and ultimately by Rome.

Sister Mary Rose touched in with me after I was president, often just with a word of support. I always visited with her when I was in Winnipeg and we reminisced together on the respect and cooperation that Benedictine women have worldwide.

I remember meeting Mary Rose on a street near the Vatican in Rome in the early 1980's. During our conversation she shared what was happening in the early discussions aimed at creating a bond between Benedictine nuns and sisters, and how thrilled she was to be a part of it. Sister Karen Joseph remembers the first symposium for the nuns and sisters at San Anselmo in Rome. There was tension, and it was obvious that the nuns were uncomfortable with the gathering, seeing the sisters from the US and Canada as more like oblates than religious women. But that changed when Sister Anselm, who was one of the main speakers, gave her presentation. Karen said that it was a powerful presentation and after her talk the whole atmosphere in the room changed. Kathy Huber, who was also present, relates that at the end of Anselm's talk, an Italian abbess stood up and proclaimed, "We are one, not two!"

Kathy Huber: As Federation President, Sister Mary Rose presided at my first election as prioress in 1989. She was a supportive presence both as the process unfolded and during my first year as prioress.

Sister Mary Rose phoned the following November to share her excitement because the Vatican had finally approved the *Listen* document. Though I intuited the importance of this event, I had no first-hand knowledge of the efforts needed to produce such a document. However, during my tenure as Prioress and Federation President, I came to appreciate the great wisdom contained in that document.

Later as I served as Federation President it was a joy to spend time with Sister Mary Rose on my trips to the Winnipeg community. Mary Rose was gracious, hospitable, and eager for one-on-one conversations. She loved the member monasteries of the Federation loved to receive updates. One of her last major acts as Federation President was the Promulgation of the *Listen* document on the Feast of Scholastica in 1990.



#### **Sr. Kimberly Installed at Fort Smith**

Sr. Kimberly Prohaska (center) was installed as the 14th prioress of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith Arkansas on Friday, October 30, 2020. Though elected in January of 2019, her installation was postponed twice due to the pandemic. Sr. Jeanne Weber, Federation President, (left) installed Sr. Kimberly during a celebration of the Eucharist presided over by Bishop Anthony Taylor (right) of Little Rock. The Mass was followed by a festive banquet in the community refectory. The community plans an open house for Sr. Kimberly's family and friends and the public when travel and gatherings are possible.





**News from Madison**

In August Sisters Mary David Walgenbach and Joanne Kollasch took Sister Denise West and Novice Everline Jeruto on the road to Sioux City, Iowa to visit our community's roots. We toured the grounds where our sisters founded St. Vincent's Hospital in 1907 -- now it is part of the Mercy Sisters health care corporation. Joanne recounted, "The hospital served the local community and in those days the sisters never turned anyone away."



Srs. Joanne, Mary David, Denise and Novice Everline in front of St. Vincent Hospital School of Nursing, which is right behind the hospital. It was one of the first schools



Mary David and Joanne recalled their time as junior sisters, training as nurses, and caring for their elderly sisters. We also stopped by Calvary Cemetery where many of our sisters are buried, including our foundress Mother Gertrude. We enjoyed finding the headstones of the sisters whose stories we hear every week from reading our necrology in our morning chapter and felt grateful for their pioneering spirit and all their hard work which led to the blessings of community which we experience today. Sister Lynne (left) enjoyed her week-long personal retreat taking long walks and tending to the garden (we had a bumper crop of leeks!)

**Cottonwood Sister Featured in Idaho PBS Series**

Sr. Kim Marie (right) being interviewed by Marcia Franklin (left) of Idaho PBS.

In August, Idaho PBS featured Kim Marie Jordan of Monastery of St. Gertrude in an installment of their series "The 180", about people who have made a huge change in their lives. Kim Marie, who was married and had two children before she entered the community in 2005, says, "The interviewer, Marcia Franklin, really did her homework about us. She actually came to my final profession in 2012; after reading about it in the paper, she drove up here to observe." The link to PBS Story: [https://youtu.be/q9me68\\_8BD0](https://youtu.be/q9me68_8BD0)







News from Ferdinand

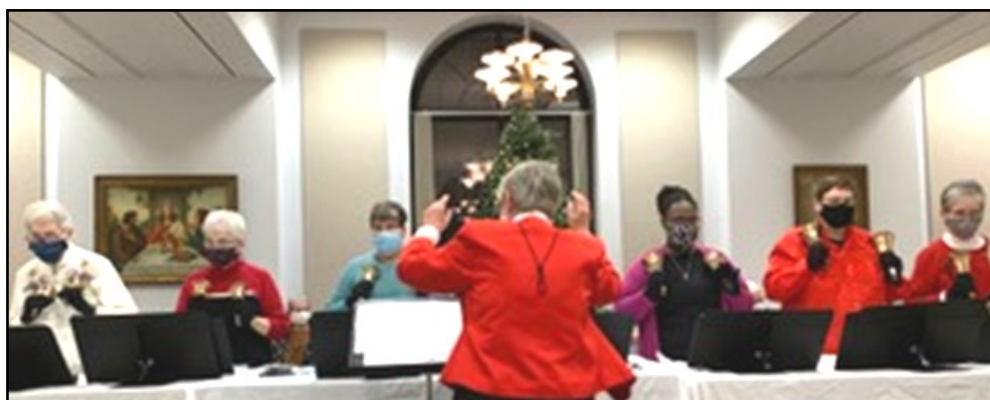


On Christmas night, a group of sisters made hors d'oeuvres for the community

Ferdinand Sr. Dolorita Libs (right) turned 100 on December 20. She joins two other sisters in their 100s, Srs. Theresita and Benita. The staff of the Hildegard Health Center arranged for a special meal that day, and Sr. Dolorita was able to visit with community members and had some virtual visits with her family.



While this Christmas was unlike any other due to pandemic restrictions in place, we celebrated well. On Christmas Eve, we enjoyed singing some parodies on Christmas carols inspired by COVID-19 and listening to a harp duet and our bell choir.



Crookston Christmas News

If you're brave enough to go out in the cold, as are Sisters Kathleen McGear, Kathy Kuchar, and Anita Whalen (left) of Crookston, you'll get treated to a winter wonderland. Or you can choose to stay inside and have cookies and hot chocolate after a robust caroling session. Below: Srs. Anita Whalen, Lorraine Kraft, and Karen Violette, with Sr. Anne DeMers at the piano and Sr. Agatha Hermann looking on.

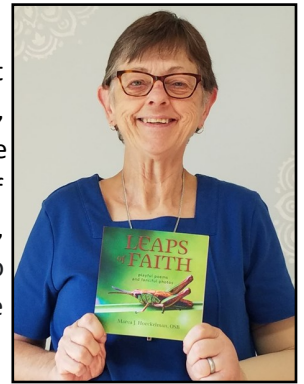






### Sister Marva Jean Hoeckelman Becomes Published Author

Sister Marva Jean Hoeckelman of Mother of God Monastery in Watertown has authored her first book, *Leaps of Faith: Playful Poems and Fanciful Photos*. She describes *Leaps of Faith* as a quirky, faith-filled book of poems and fanciful photos depicting contemporary monastic life in middle America. She uses imagination and personal experience to shake up some of the stereotypes of vowed religious held by secular society. The book includes humorous character depictions, experiences of enjoying the outdoors, and personal encounters with God. The poems are easy to understand and appreciate whether one is a poetry aficionado or not. At this time it is available through ACTA Publications or Amazon—or, coming soon to a monastery bookstore near you.



### News from St. Martin Monastery, Rapid City



Sisters Margaret and Theresa Hinker and Joan Tetrault

Since we were a bit more housebound this year than usual, the sisters suggested some special celebrations to enliven our stay-at-home lifestyle. In September we decided to welcome each season with a progressive dinner. Some sisters prepared decorations and set tables with an Autumn theme while others assisted with food preparation, serving and clean-up. We had appetizers and drinks in the conference room, the main meal in the

dining room and dessert in the health care dining area. We welcomed Winter in much the same way on December 21 and look forward to a Spring celebration in March. Christmas, of course, featured our customary gift exchange after a festive supper.

On Thanksgiving Day our Sister Marmion Howe, 100, passed into eternal life after a rich and productive life of teaching, counseling and spiritual direction. We had her funeral in our chapel attended by only the community, but we were supported and consoled by a group of her former coworkers, oblates and friends who came for her burial in our community cemetery.



Clockwise from lower left: Srs. Mary Wegher, Marmion Howe, Jennifer Kehrwald, Jane Frances Mullaney, Therese Furois, and Lorane Coffin.



Since summer we have been entertained by a small herd of whitetail deer who frequent our yard. We watched twin fawns and their cousin grow from tiny spotted creatures to almost full grown, and we marveled at the way they could negotiate the electrified fence that encloses our back lawn and gardens. Before long, they had passed on their technique to their elders, and soon we had seven deer, including a three-point buck, going through the fence and grazing outside our dining room

#### President's Schedule

**(God willing and the Covid don't rise!)**

- February 26-March 2: Cottonwood-Election
- March 3-8: Beech Grove-Election
- March 11-15: Martin-Election
- March 16-20: Beech Grove-Federation Council
- April 7-10: Mt. Angel-Fed. Finance Committee
- May 12-15: Elizabeth NJ—Meeting of Presidents
- May 16-22: Atchison-Conference of Prioresses
- May 23-29: Ferdinand-Visitation
- June 4-6: Beech Grove-Installation
- June 12-20: Beech Grove-Federation Chapter
- June 24-26: Cottonwood-Installation



### Kentucky Sisters Help Santa in the Hollers

The sisters of the Dwelling Place Monastery who are parishioners of St Martha's Catholic Church are very active in a parish outreach ministry to the poor called Neighbors Helping Neighbors. The ministry is focused on the community of Mud Creek in Floyd County, home to some of the poorest families in our region. Throughout the year, Neighbors Helping Neighbors distributes food as well as cleaning supplies and personal care items to these families. It is at Christmas time however that the ministry shines, providing gifts for children and adults alike. This year several of our sisters helped sort and wrap the many gifts but due to Covid only our Sister Jan Barthel along with Terry Milon from St Martha's Parrish delivered presents that had been donated from across the region to Bertha Tackett of Mud Creek to distribute.

In the Winter 2020 edition of their newsletter, the Sisters on Mt. Tabor shared their hopes and dreams for the new year. The following is Sr. Kathleen Weigand's poetic sharing.



Bertha Tackett, Terry Milon, and Sr. Jan Barthel.

### Hopes for 2021

I hope for days of laughter  
I hope for days of love  
I hope for days of the simple life  
I hope for days of good health

I hope for days of enough food on all tables  
I hope for days of healthy employment  
I hope for days that will bring an end to homelessness  
I hope for days of knowing that everyone matters

I hope for days of good conversation  
I hope for days of growing  
I hope for days of searching out goodness  
I hope for days of healing relationships

I hope for days of time with family and friends  
I hope for days of quite solitude  
I hope for days of flowing creative spirits  
I hope for days of spirit filled reflection

I hope for days of peaceful sabbaths  
I hope for days of healing spirits  
I hope for days of holding on to those you love  
I hope for days of letting go

I hope for days of warmth  
I hope for days of refreshing coolness  
I hope for days of knowing God's love  
I hope for days of eternal gratefulness.

*Kathleen Weigand, OSB*

### News from Beech Grove

Like all the communities of the Federation, our Christmas was anything but what we have experienced in the past. We missed having family and friends join us for liturgies and meals. In true Benedictine spirit, however, we plowed on and enjoyed beautiful liturgies (somewhat abbreviated) and delicious meals.

Being tested and re-tested for the virus has become a standard procedure and although we've had sisters test positive and placed in quarantine, we've avoided having anyone with serious symptoms. In spite of it all, we find ourselves grateful for community, for one another and for the blessings of wonderful support from our families and benefactors.

With this submission to The Gleaner, we send a promise of prayer for all our sister communities, for Sr. Jeanne and for the Federation council as we look forward to the blessings of a new year of hope and promise.



Beech Grove Chapel at Christmas





### From the Archives of the Monastery of St. Gertrude

The Benedictine Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude sprang forth from a humble beginning in 1882 as Sr. Johanna Zumstein, unable to speak English, closed the deal on the first living quarters for the Benedictine Sisters in Gervais, OR. Soon the three missionary sisters from a cloister in Sarnen, Switzerland, converted the run-down building into a well-run monastic community. Their first missionary endeavor was helping on the Indian mission in Grand Ronde.



The 1st house in Gervais, Oregon

The road to Idaho from Oregon meandered through Washington where our pioneering sisters were called to educate children in the rural areas near Uniontown and Colton. In 1884 the sisters established St. Andrew's Convent and Academy in Uniontown. In ten years they outgrew their space and moved to nearby Colton, WA, where they opened St. Scholastica's Convent and Academy. They began several schools in the area and expanded their ministry into Idaho by staffing schools in Genesee and Cottonwood. They also conducted many summer religious schools at small missions throughout eastern Washington and northern Idaho.



Mother Johanna Zumstein, OSB

In 1907 the Benedictine Sisters again outgrew their space. Given a piece of land near the new prairie town of Cottonwood, ID, Mother Hildegard Vogler determined to relocate the motherhouse and novitiate there. Three miles from town, the new site, with a frame house and chapel, provided a view across the prairie of the Clearwater and Bitterroot Mountains, glimpses of the rocky Seven Devils mountain range and a permeating aroma of pine which reminded the Swiss sisters of their homeland.

In the 1920's the present Monastery of St. Gertrude was built from blue porphyry stone quarried from the hill behind it. The chapel is on the National Register of Historic Places. By the time the new convent was completed and dedicated to St. Gertrude the Great, the Benedictine Sisters were engaged in many works for the Church.



Original Cottonwood frame buildings.

The Benedictine Sisters have continued to be pioneers in religious life. In 2005 they opened the Spirit Center, a 22 bed retreat facility that serves thousands of people every year, offering an extensive range of retreats and a specialty in arts and spirituality programs. 2010 marked a new venture based on the ancient Benedictine charism of hospitality. The bottom floor of the Sister's guest house was redone and re-opened as the "Inn at St. Gertrude's a bed and breakfast. The Inn has become a successful business and destination for hundreds of people a year.



1920 porphyry stone building.

An exciting new venture planned for 2022 is the "Benedictine Companions Co-Housing Program," Cohousing is a movement designed for people who want to live create an intentional community. We are currently in the process of adapting this idea to open an intentionally Benedictine form of cohousing for up to nine women in a residential floor of our monastery that we are in the process of renovating for that purpose.

The Benedictine Sisters continue to minister in the state of Idaho, and in Washington and California and to touch the lives of people throughout the world. Their ministries are varied because the needs of the times are so great.

In 2008, the sisters were awarded the Kessler-Keener Award for their work in human rights. For almost 140 years we have lived the gospel message through prayer and work. Our communal life of prayer and contemplation is the leaven for our lives of presence and service. We remain the only community of women religious with a motherhouse in Idaho.