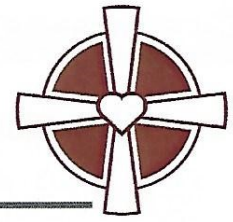


The Gleaner



An occasional newsletter of the Federation of St. Gertrude

Number 69 ♦ July 2018

Message from the President by Sr. Jeanne Weber



In case you thought the federation president's job was all work and no play! Sr. Val (Nanaimo) and myself at Cathedral Grove on Vancouver Island. Photo by Sr. Barbara.

My travels in the month of June included trips to Cullman, AL for the Federation of St. Scholastica general chapter, and to Nanaimo for a “get to know you” visit. The sisters in both places excelled in their hospitality and I was grateful to be able to enjoy the beautiful settings of these monasteries. I especially enjoyed getting to know the sisters at Nanaimo as they shared their time and presence with me and treated me to some of their local attractions.

I would like to reflect a bit on the theme for the St. Scholastica federation chapter. They focused on dealing with the “critical junctures” facing our monastic communities at this time in our history. The program committee did a fine job of putting together an interactive workshop on the tools and technologies that we have in our monastic repertoire as we face these junctures. These tools include first and foremost, a deep desire for God; then our monastic vows of obedience, stability and *conversatio*, as well as contemplation and compassion. I recommend to you two resources which they used in preparation for their chapter: An article titled “Present Moment-Presence of God”, by Brian J. Pierce, O.P. in the June 2017 issue of the

American Benedictine Review. And a YouTube video of Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP, - “Community Life and Mission: Toward a Future Full of Hope”. It can be found at this website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D9AAfuZAzA> or by googling “Timothy Radcliff YouTube.”

I’d like to focus my remarks on two messages that spoke to me from these sources. First, we are not alone in the place in which we find ourselves at this time in monastic history—becoming smaller and older communities whose future is uncertain. We walk not only with all of our religious sisters and brothers who are facing these same critical junctures (including our monastic sisters in the other federations and congregations), we walk with God who never abandons us.

Second, I wonder if the invitation of God to us in this time and place is to become even more deeply aware of the presence of God with and in us, in every moment of our individual and communal lives, and especially in the midst of these unsettling and destabilizing critical junctures. Brian Pierce’s article invites us to cultivate, ever



Message from the President, cont.

more deeply, the monastic charism of contemplation, of attending to the presence of God in this moment. He asserts that “God is always here and now,” and that we need to ask ourselves, Are we paying attention? In a section on breathing as prayer, he compares the gift of breath to the gift of manna. As the Israelites could only gather manna for one day, calling them to trust in God to supply what they needed each morning, so we can only take one breath at a time. He adds, “The word *surrender* is important here, for we are being invited in each moment to let go and trust that God will provide us with the next breath, the next moment of life” (202-203). He relates the prayer of mindful breathing to our monastic vow of stability, a commitment not just to remaining in one monastery, but to “being present, here and now, rooted in God, making the choice not to run away from every difficult situation that presents itself” (204). Cultivating our awareness of the presence of God in every moment and in every situation, no matter how difficult, will not only give us the strength and courage to face those situations, but will be a powerful witness to the world around us, a witness that doesn’t require large numbers of young members. “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).



*Happy
Feast
of
Saint-
Benedict*

To log into the Federation website

www.federationofstgertrude.org

In the middle of the home page, you’ll see a box that says “Login for Federation Members.” Click this button and enter this information:

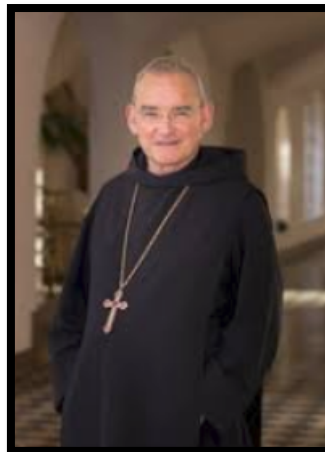
User name: fedmember Password: Gertrude2013

You can now click on “Member Files” to access the directory, other Federation documents, and past issues of *The Gleaner*

President’s Schedule

- ◆ July 24-29—Federation of St. Benedict Chapter, Bismarck;
- ◆ August 5-11—LCWR Assembly, St. Louis;
- ◆ August 30-September 16—CIB Symposium, Rome;
- ◆ September 16-22—Maria Rickenbach, Sarnen;
- ◆ October 17-23—Federation Council, Winnipeg.

Mount Angel Ongoing Formation and NRRO



Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, abbot of Mount Angel Abbey, continues his presentations on the Benedictine virtue of humility with the community through the summer. The presentations are both inspiring and challenging. Abbot Jeremy with his wealth of wisdom and experience is a huge blessing for the community.

In April of this year, we entered into the NRRO (National Religious Retirement Office) Planning and Implementation Assistance program. With guidance from our NRRO consultants, we are developing plans for strengthening our future. One of the areas of focus is our development and fundraising efforts. During the week of July 9th, Sister Georgette Lehmuth, OSF, President and CEO, National Catholic Development Conference, will visit us and do a development department audit. We are blessed with much support as we plan and embrace our future.



Martin **We're Not Getting Younger!**

Preparing for the future, we struggle with the same question we face in our daily lives: How do we “let go and let God” and yet make preparations? Perhaps it goes back to that saying of St. Augustine “Work as though everything depended on you and pray as though everything depended on God”.

Here at the Dwelling Place we've recognized a few clues that we are getting older. We now struggle with things previously taken for granted. Mowing the grass can still be done by some of us and we can still plant and maintain vegetable and flower gardens but it takes longer. But weed eating the property or shoveling the hill are tasks we can no longer physically do.

And then there are health issues. Clues to the aging factor among us include members needing hip replacement, cataract surgery, and grab bars added in the showers. The list goes on.

To help us face this reality, Sr. Kathy Curtis introduced a “game” one evening as the community was gathered. Each member drew a piece of paper out of a basket. We were then told the key to the marks on the paper. If your paper had a blue streak, you had “gone home to Jesus”. If the streak was yellow, you had suffered a stroke and needed assistance with all personal care. If the streak was red, you were recovering from an illness/injury and needed some help but could still function. And if there was no streak, you were healthy, working and caring for others and the community property etc.



Srs. Kathy Divaio and Kathleen Weigand

“Didn't we just do this yesterday?”



“Dining With Friends after a Day's Work.”

Srs. Jan, Kathleen, Eileen and Kathy and friends Keith and Jane Deck

As a result of the draw, in a community of seven there were three who must care for the others and maintain the monastery. And our youngest two members had drawn a blue and a yellow! And so our discussion was on how can this be done given these circumstances? We realize that now, while we still have salaries coming in, we need to get our living spaces handicapped accessible. Some of this is already done. Our infirmary is in good shape but other areas need work. Our business offices are upstairs and there is no elevator. The bathrooms in residences have bathtubs, a problem for someone with mobility issues.



Volunteers Keith and Jane Deck assist with some painting.

Martin cont.

We are researching the cost of an elevator and making the some bathrooms handicapped accessible. We also are planning financially for providing in-home care for members who need daily assistance and medical care and possibly live in maintenance personnel. In the meantime we continue to be blest with volunteers who generously spend a week or so painting, planting, repairing etc. We also contract with two trusted local men to do work that we cannot do.

Taking an honest look at ourselves is difficult but when we do, we are quick to see that we are very blessed and we trust more fully in God's guidance!



Winnipeg Welcoming a New Postulant

Sister Virginia Evard, prioress, welcomes Mele Rakai as a new postulant as Sister Mary Coswin, formation director, holds the door. Mele, a native of Fiji, came to us from Calgary, Alberta. She is an Engineer (land surveyor) by profession, but is now into T-4 big time.



At our December 2015 Monastic Chapter our community led by Sr. Denise Kuyp, RNDM an excellent facilitator, discussed the option of accepting new members in all its aspects. At the conclusion of the session when Denise asked: "Are you willing to accept new members into the community? The response was: "Yes, we are".

At our August 2017 Monastic Chapter, Sr. Mary Rowell, CSJ gave a presentation on Receiving Mature Candidates. We were so impressed with her ability to communicate with us that we invited her back to our August 2018 Monastic Chapter to help us improve our communication with each other.



Ferdinand Benedictine Hospitality Center Opening

The Sisters of St. Benedict hosted a Grand Opening Celebration and Blessing of our new Benedictine Hospitality Center July 1. The event was an opportunity for us to extend our gratitude to so many people who made this new space possible. Pictured is Sr. Anita Louise Lowe speaking with a guest. Anyone interested in staying with us at the Hospitality Center can contact us at hospitality@thedome.org. We look forward to sharing this quiet new space with those looking for a peaceful retreat.



Madison Columbarium and Memorial Garden

At Holy Wisdom Monastery in Middleton, WI, we received support to cover the design costs for a memorial garden and additional columbarium space. When we designed the monastery building in 2008, we included a columbarium with sixty-four niches on the outside wall of the oratory. Our sisters who died in Middleton are inurned there as are members and friends of the Sunday Assembly, oblates and the Community of Benedict. When we gather in the oratory for the Liturgy of the Hours, we have a physical reminder that we pray in the presence of our deceased sisters and friends.

Since the monastery building was built we have envisioned a memorial garden around the columbarium. We are grateful for this recent gift that will allow us to begin the process of making the garden a reality. The design includes seating for meditation and a new common columbarium to expand the available space for inurnment. Attached are artist renderings of the garden. We will be raising monies in the future to develop the memorial garden and include the additional columbarium.



Columbarium (above) and Memorial Garden Design (below)



Ferdinand Camp Marian

The sisters of Monastery Immaculate Conception hosted over 60 young women at Camp Marian this year. As is the annual tradition, it stormed on the campers again this year, but the rain didn't dampen the fun. Pictured are Sr. Teresa Gunter, Sr. Jill Rueber, the counselors, and our wonderful campers. We've had such a tremendous response to our camp that we may be expanding to two different weeks in 2019.



Nanaimo **Abbeyfield St. Benedict House**

In 2009 our House of Bread community noticed writing on the wall and decided we had better figure out what it meant. It didn't take long. We were seven members and although a few women had shown interest in the community, no one had remained and no one was in formation. The youngest among us was 63.



We began with the question: Do we want to remain together, or do members want to look at other options (e.g., transfer)? It was a unanimous decision to stay together and age in place. It was an important question for us because we knew things would change dramatically and would require trust, flexibility and courage from all of us. We began to make plans for our future together.

*Back Row: Srs. Rose Mary, Mary Ann, Patricia, Valerie, Germaine.
Front Row: Srs. Barbara and JeanAnn.*

Over the next nine years we sold our cabin, our guest house and our retreat center and renovated the Monastery into nine suites consisting of a sitting room, bedroom and bathroom. It all took its toll on us, Grief, frustration, courage, doubt and faith all played their part as we moved forward. Initially I started to count the number of meetings with our facilitator, architect, realtor, lawyer, accountant, financial advisor, and other consultants. I quickly gave that up. One thing we learned is that things always take longer than you think.

Our eventual goal is to found an Abbeyfield St. Benedict house. Abbeyfield is an international organization that encourages seniors to maintain an independent lifestyle while offering companionship to each other.



Garden Produce for the Winter Months

Srs. Patricia, Mary Ann, and Valerie



The values of Abbeyfield are compatible with our Benedictine values. We will remain a Benedictine community in the house while Abbeyfield accepts renters who hold similar values. The Abbeyfield board will operate and maintain the house and a live-in residential manger will assist with cooking and internal oversight of the house. Abbeyfield houses are not nursing facilities and so we know that when Home Care can no longer assist, we will need to move to a nursing facility.



"Great Ideas Tend to Come with a Mess"

We are still in process. It may take another year before all the i's are dotted and the t's crossed. Are 100% convinced this will work?



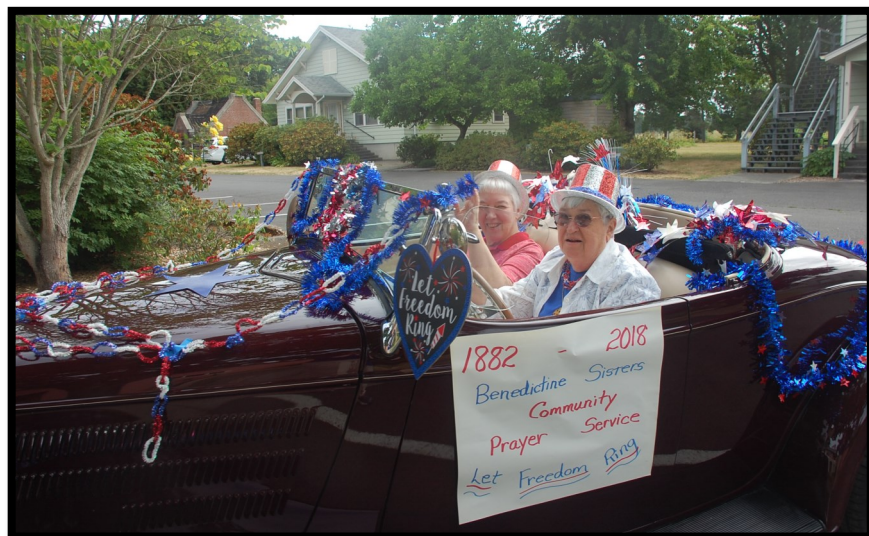
No. This configuration has never been tried before. It is an act of faith based on a great deal of foundational work .

What will our legacy be? Certainly it will be the retreat center owned and operated by the community for 28 years and now run by others. However, our greatest gift might be sharing community with others. It is central to Benedictine life , desperately needed in our world today and something we can share even when we can *do* nothing else.



*Fourth of July Parade
Mount Angel, Oregon*

Queen of Angels Monastery received the first prize, a blue ribbon, for its vintage car float at the Mount Angel Fourth of July parade. The vintage car, on loan from a vintage car buff, was driven by Sister Marietta Schindler, with Sister Susan Casey as passenger.





Beech Grove Young at Heart

Each summer we have a couple of gatherings for our younger sisters. We call the gatherings Young at Heart. We feel that it is important that we build and deepen our relationships with one another as we move into the future. In June we went out for dinner together and had an opportunity to enjoy one another's company. Last Saturday, Sr. Kathleen's sister, Carol and her husband,



Beech Grove Young at Heart group

Ron, hosted us at their home on Geist reservoir. 16 sisters gathered for a



Pizza Dinner

day of swimming, tubing, boating and eating. It was a day of conversation, relaxation and connection. We each had an opportunity to share with one another something good that is happening in our lives. It was a very enjoyable and life-giving celebration.



Participants in NADI, which was held at Yankton May 15-25. Front Row: Novice Directors Mary Reuter, Kateri Lovato, Louise Laroche, Marilyn Schauble, Kathy Perssons, Patricia Siepel, Michael Marie Rottinghaus, and Sharon Ann Haas. Back Row: Novices Laura Suhr, Mercy Hoang, Stephen Phiri, Roxanne Higgins, Kathleen McCarthy, Laura Haschke, Jennifer Halling, and Kay Fitzgerald. The theme for the institute was "Learning and Growing in the School of the Lord's Service" Fourteen sisters from Sacred Heart Monastery contributed by giving talks and leading integration sessions.