



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Fall 2008



Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • Greensburg, PA 15601

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*O Lord our God, hear
the prayer of your people.*

*Through your grace,
prepare the heart of our
Sister, and open it
to the working
of the Holy Spirit.*



Burning candle with Sr. Maria Johanna's initials on it symbolize the gift of herself to Christ. The veil with white lining, ring, wreath and the Breviary (to pray with the community and the church the Liturgy of the Hours) are given at Solemn Profession.

Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



The front cover shows the veil, wreath, ring and breviary that Sr. Maria Johanna received when she made her Solemn Vows

on May 18, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. These symbols externalize her special commitment to Jesus Christ as a Benedictine nun.

An advertisement that came in the mail offers another option. In front of me a glossy flier entices the reader with not only an opportunity of but the assurance of "CREATING, SHAPING, and ENHANCING the IDEAL YOU."

I read with wonder that by being tucked, peeled, reduced or padded, I can become happier and more self-confident! Can the IDEAL me really be created in an operating room or a doctor's office? I also wonder about the cost in money and discomfort if not pain—and the chance of these promises being fulfilled?

Jesus has offered His way to "creating, shaping and enhancing the ideal me." But the image is not that of a beautiful young woman as pictured on the ad but that of a crucified Man.

I began this reflection on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. A cross—to speak of a cross is almost un-American.

Benedict in his Rule tells us that our manner of acting should be different than the "world's." The "world" says to look out for Number One, to pamper yourself, you deserve the best, to do it your way.

In the Prologue to his Rule, Benedict calls the monastery a school of the Lord's

service, a school in which we are enrolled for life with Solemn Vows. We promise through our Benedictine vow of "conversion of life" to continue to learn, to be disciples, to change, to grow during our whole life in order to become more Christ-like.

Learning to grow in the love of God is real "hands on" learning. We all want the end product of patience; we just do not want to do the lesson plans to become patient. We all want to be more prayerful; we just resist taking the steps to bring this about. We all want to be more loving; we just do not want to put love where there is none or to love those who stretch our capacity to love.

Perhaps we Benedictines should use the initials "OJT" after our initials OSB (Order of Saint Benedict) for we are always "on the job trainees" in learning to prefer "nothing whatever to Christ."

Benedict says that he hopes to introduce nothing that is harsh or burdensome but for the sake of charity or amendment of faults, there may be "a little strictness. Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation." What good advice for our times!

In a culture that is obsessed with getting results NOW, perseverance is not a predominant virtue. When love as been described as "never having to say you are sorry," and doing whatever feels good, it makes love seem easy and cheap.

Some of us recall the communes based on "love" in the seventies. Since love was not rooted in giving of self and not based on God's love but on what people could get out of it, the communes could not survive.

Christian love is hard and relentless. Chapter 13 of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is not poetic but specific and

demanding. What are the evidences, the litmus tests, the tell-tale signs, the fingerprints, the proofs of Christian love?

Some convincing evidences of Christian love include:

- A patient response when one's patience is sorely tried
- A kind attitude and response instead of returning a mean or nasty one
- Not casting past injuries and hurts in concrete but allowing, by the grace of God, for something else to happen so the relationship might be rebuilt
- To rejoice in another's gifts or good fortune instead of feeling threatened or jealous
- Experiencing anger or a temper flare-up is no license to explode but energy to be carefully channeled
- No bragging or snobbishness or putting people down
- Does not act as if the world revolves around one's self

To love in this way is our call in Baptism. Christian love is how we are to respond to another human being – whether or not we like that person! Monastic life is one way of living out this call. May we all grow in this counter-cultural Christian love whatever our vocation or state of life. Indeed, this practice of Christian love will "enhance and shape the ideal you and bring you happiness."

Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB

The Touchstone is published by the Benedictine Sisters of Westmoreland County for our friends and benefactors:

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Benedictine Nuns Daily Prayer Schedule

5:30 a.m. ~ Vigils ~ *Lectio Divina I*

6:30 a.m. ~ *Lauds*

7:00 a.m. ~ *Eucharist*

Terce

11:45 a.m. ~ *Sext/None*

5:00 p.m. ~ *Vespers*

7:30 p.m. ~ *Compline ~ Lectio Divina II*



Novice Pronounces 3-Year Vows; Becomes Sr. Walburga

On August 30, 2008, our novice, Sr. Sheridan Fremming pronounced her vows for three years during Mass. The community and congregation (mostly St. Emma Volunteers) audibly approved Sr. Sheridan's new name in religion of "Walburga"! She also received the black veil to replace the white veil of being a novice.

Sr. Walburga hails from Dallas, Texas, where she worked as a secretary at Medical City Hospital.

St. Walburga was an English Benedictine nun from the 8th century who went to Germany. In 1035 the Abbey of Sankt

Walburg was established at the site of her relics. How God connects us through grace-links over centuries and countries! This Sr. Walburga traces her monastic life from England



to Germany in the 700's, from Sankt Walburg Abbey through our founding Sisters at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA in the 1930's and just a few years later from Latrobe to establishing St. Emma's in Greensburg. Grace now brings Sr. Walburga from Texas to Pennsylvania!



Our chaplain, Fr. Joseph Sredzinski, Sr. Walburga, and Rev. Tom Cloherty, All Saints' Parish. Fr. Cloherty was Sr. Walburga's parish priest in Dallas. He flew in the night before, then left immediately after the ceremony to return home in time for Saturday evening Mass.

Catholic *Heart* Work Camp Brings Young Volunteers to St. Emma

In God's great Providential Plan, the Catholic Heart Work Camp followed our Flea Market. These young people pay \$400 for a week plus transportation and bring sleeping bags in order to work hard several hours a day in imitation of Jesus and to grow in their Catholic faith through this service and prayer, skits, teachings and music.

About 245 youth and their adult leaders stayed at the Bishop Bosco Center, North Huntingdon, PA and went in groups of 6-7 to their service sites each day. The thirteen participants who worked here came from Illinois, Tennessee, Michigan, Rhode Island, Ohio and three from our neighborhood. We invited them to pray Sext/None (Noonday prayer) with us each day.

Even though nearly all of the remaining "fleas" had been boxed and removed Saturday, one group focused on all the clean up afterwards: sweeping, mopping, and moving items either "back to" or "forward to" their new home. This gave them a lot of exercise before they became part of the cleaning crew.

The second team too quickly made headway in housecleaning the bottom floor (28 rooms) of the retreat house so that the top floor (25 rooms) also became part of THE PLAN already on Tuesday! They washed windows inside and out, wiped down the furniture, scrubbed and waxed the floors, and moved the furniture back into position.

These groups said how much they liked working here; possibly ice cream and cookies upon departure each day helped! The last afternoon the community met these young people over dessert so that these young people had a chance to meet and interact with each of the Sisters. This visit also allowed us to say how grateful we were for their gracious, willing presence and how touched we were by their faith.

For more information, check out www.heart-workcamp.com.



Solemn Monastic Profession of Sister Maria Johanna, OSB

May 18, 2008 • Feast of the Blessed Trinity

Examination by the Prioress

... Are you now resolved...

... to unite yourself more closely to God by the bond of solemn profession?

... to seek God in all things, to persevere in our monastery dedicated to St. Walburga and Blessed Emma and to be faithful to our community in good times and bad until death?

... to prefer nothing to Christ, to strive after daily conversion, and to lead your life with the gospel for your guide, according to the Rule of our holy Father Benedict?

... to follow the obedient Christ, who came to do the will of his Father?

I am.



Singing the Entrance Hymn



The Reading of the Gospel

One of the strongest supporters of Sr. Maria Johanna's vocation, Fr. Joe Linck longed to participate in her Solemn Vows. He knew he was seriously ill, and three months later, the 43-year-old Connecticut priest lost his battle to cancer. "I gave my life to God at ordination and my life is His for whatever He wants."

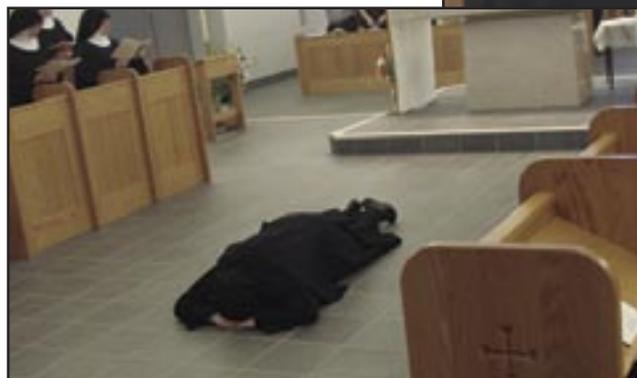


Sister Maria Johanna carries her lighted candle.

The Sister sings:

"And now I follow with all my heart: I fear you, and I seek to see your face: Lord, do not disappoint me: but treat me according to your kindness and the multitude of your mercies.

Examination by the Prioress



Prostrate during the Litany of the Saints



Presenting her profession card to Archabbot Douglas Nowicki, OSB.



Singing the Suscipe

... If you uphold me by your promise, I shall live; let my hopes not be in vain.

– Psalm 119:116



Blessing of the Ring, Wreath, and Veil



Presentation of the Ring



Offertory
Parents Dan Uhlot and Susan Hoover presenting gifts.



Kiss of Peace
with Sister Maria



After the ceremony
with Mother Mary Anne



“What I longed for, now I see; what I hoped for, I now possess; in heaven I am espoused to him whom on earth I loved with all my heart.”

Please Support the Annual Appeal

By Robert J. Allen

As we begin to see the leaves in the trees change color and the warm summer humidity exchanged for brisk cool air, our mind tells us that another year is coming to an end. The optimist would say, "No, it's just the beginning of a new Season."

For Benedictines who take the vow of stability, it is a continuum of

Each gift is another yes to God's call to be good stewards.

singing praise to God and to pray for you and me as we journey from one Season to another. Each of us each day, in fact, six times a day, and our needs are lifted to God in prayer by the Benedictine Nuns of Saint Emma Monastery.

The Annual Appeal is how we can become a participant in their wonderful community. Each gift is another "fiat," a "yes,"

to God's call to be good stewards. Each gift is a way to sustain the daily cost of living the community experiences. Each dollar will be used to help, feed, educate, and provide heat, insurance, needed expenses for the Benedictine Nuns. This along with the many Volunteers is how Mother Mary Anne and the Nuns can make your dollar become two dollars.

After your prayerful consideration and looking toward your own need, please support the Benedictine Nuns in this 2008 ANNUAL APPEAL with your pledge or donation.

God will Bless You and Reward your Generosity.



IRA Tax Free Giving Available Again This Year

- The IRA owner must be at least 70 1/2 years-old
- Charitable gifts must be completed by December 31, 2008
- Gifts must be made in an outright manner – gifts to fund gift annuities or charitable remainder trusts do not qualify
- A maximum of \$100,000 per donor may be given
- The distribution must be made directly from the trustee of the IRA to the charitable recipient
- A gift from your IRA counts toward your minimum annual distribution requirement

Source: Internal Revenue Service

Visit our Bookstore

Hours:

Monday – Saturday 10 am – 4 pm

Visit online anytime:
www.stemma.org

Refectory Windows Update

The update on the refectory windows project: Glass has replaced two solid panels on the eastern wall, flooding the room with light.

Volunteers replaced the good and faithful wooden porch floor of 45 years outside the refectory; it no longer a faith experience to step onto it and wonder about the "bounce."

Watch for the upcoming updates! Thanks for your generous response for this large maintenance project!



Ugandan Sister Makes Retreat

Recently Sr Cecelia Fuathum LSIMG (Little Sister of Mary Immaculate of Gulu) made her annual retreat here at St. Emma's. Studying counseling at Walsh University, Canton, OH, Sr. Cecelia has already served her community as a teacher from elementary school through college and as principal.

In 1942 Bishop Negri of the Kulu Diocese founded her community in Uganda for girls who were denied education. Not only has the scope of education been expanded, but the Sisters now work in pastoral ministry, health care, social work, etc.

The ongoing civil war of 22 years in Northern Uganda between the revolutionaries who took to the bush and the government has produced horrible atrocities. Nearly 90% of the people in Northern Uganda live in Displaced Peoples' Camps

where people have little food. In addition, they are still subject to raids where children are abducted and forced to participate in the worst of atrocities even to their own families. If these children do find their way back, their behavior includes unacceptable elements that require treatment. AIDS takes its heavy toil as well. Sr. Cecilia's counseling degree is more than necessary to help all these people.

To learn more about these Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Kulu, check their website: www.lsmig. Any donations to these Sisters can be sent to us and we will forward it their superior.

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters around the world whose sufferings are often so different and more basic than ours.



Sister Cecelia Fuathum
Little Sister of Mary Immaculate of Gulu

Flea Market a Wonderful Success

"And a good time was had by all!" sums up our Flea Market held June 20 and 21. People enjoyed seeking out "treasures" in the thousands of "fleas" so beautifully displayed by our volunteers and eating the pierogies, haluski and halupki.

The grand total? Eleven thousand dollars (includes \$3000 clear on the food)! The "success" of this event lies not only in the money but also in the number of people who visit St. Emma's for the first time, people who wanted to see what lies beyond those few buildings visible from Route 819 but

did not know if they were welcome. May God bless you all.



Handmade Crafts and Christmas Boutique



Looking for a unique gift? Visit our store for handmade crafts, wreaths, beautiful, one-of-a-kind items.

The Boutique features previously loved items that make wonderful gifts from young shoppers and from the young at heart shoppers.

We have a very large selection of religious gifts for you to give out this Christmas and for the rest of the year.

Visit us in person or on the web at www.stemma.org

Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop

Regular Hours:
Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m – 4 p.m.

*New items added through December 10
Crafts and Boutique Gifts through Dec. 22*

Retreat Options

Have you ever thought about making a retreat or bringing your church group for a day of recollection?



www.stemma.org

“This week-long silent retreat was truly an extraordinary and beautiful experience for me. Your hospitality of place—this clean facility and wonderful food and beautiful chapel—and of heart—your kindness to me in the kitchen and generally—made it all the more special.”



– First time retreatant who attended a 6-day silent retreat in August 2007

Prayer Requests & Intentions

Please use the enclosed envelope to send us your prayer requests and intentions.

2008 Retreat Programs

For reservations, please call (724) 834-3060 or email: retreats@stemma.org

November	14-16	Couples Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy OFM Cap, \$270 per couple
December	4	Advent Evening (4 – 9 p.m.) Women, \$20 Rev. Matin Bartel, OSB
	6	Advent Day (8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.) \$28 Rev. Lester Knoll, OFM Cap, “Mary as Prophet”

2009 Retreat Programs

January	21	Pro-Life Day of Prayer (2:30 – 8:30 p.m.) NO FEE Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB, Light Snacks
February 27 - March 1		Silent Lenten , Women and Men Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy, OFM Cap
March	6-8	Men, Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy, OFM Cap
	13-15	Silent Lenten , Women and Men Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB
	27-29	Silent Lenten , Women and Men Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB
April	4	Lenten Day of Recollection (9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.)
July	26 – 31	Five Day SILENT (Women and men) Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB

Directed Retreats Held In Monastic Guest House

June 8 – 13	Rev Mark Gruber OSB
June 28 – July 4	Rev Mark Gruber OSB

Limited to 8 per session

Encounter with Silence (held in Retreat House)

July 24—31, 2008 Rev Frank Erdeljac



Please remember us when revising or making your will.

*Our legal name is:
The Sisters of
Saint Benedict
of Westmoreland County*

*Our Federal ID-# is:
75-231-104*