



# BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Summer 2004



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

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## Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB

On January 14, I accompanied our Abbess, Mother Franziska OSB, back to Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Germany, for a three-week visit. Our 40 founding Sisters entered this Abbey about 70-75 years ago so a visit there is always a wonderful visit "home" to our roots. This was my third visit and Mother Franziska and the Nuns again welcomed me warmly and each time I feel truly "at home."

What a mix: a Gothic, 16th century crucifix, an Abbey with nearly a thousand year unbroken history, an American nun from a daughter house in Greensburg, PA, a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of monastic profession—my life in a nutshell!

The Gothic crucifix above the tabernacle in the Nuns' choir shows Jesus with a broad smile on His face. I have never seen a smiling Jesus on another crucifix. How profound! Most of us, I suspect, find it challenging some days to "take up our cross daily and follow Him" but to do so in such a generous manner as to smile is definitely a stretching concept.

One evening as I sat in the chapel, I wondered what all this particular crucifix had "seen" since it was brought by a woman entering the Abbey in the 1600's. What had this crucifix

"seen" in the hearts and the minds of the Sisters who had prayed there during these several hundred years?

How long did it take for the name of Christopher Columbus to become a name familiar to these nuns? In 1600 could they ever have imagined that 250 years later some of their members would be sent to St. Marys, PA in 1852 to establish the first foundation of Benedictine women in America? That 80 years later from 1931-39, forty Sisters would be sent to St. Vincent Archabbey and College, Latrobe, PA (our foundation) and in 1934-35 yet another group to Colorado?

During the renovation of the nearly 400 year old building that is now the Guest House for the Abbey, the workers came across a window casement and stones from the previous foundation, evidence of the Thirty

Years' War. In 1634 the Swedes had burned the city and the abbey buildings except for the church built just a decade earlier.

During the Secularization from 1806—1835, the Abbey was not allowed to receive new members, their income was taken away, and they were given a pittance to live on—and permission to live there until they died out.

In 1835, the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this ab-bey's founding, King Ludwig allowed the Abbey to re-open; thirteen nuns were still living and still living the monastic life. Just 17 years later, they would accept the invitation of Abbot Boniface Wimmer OSB, founder of St. Vincent Archabbey, to send Sisters to "the new world."

This crucifix knew only too well about "wars and rumors of war" including the more recent First and Second World Wars and the misery and death that they all inflicted including worries about the Nuns' safety. The terrible inflation after the First World War and the great number of women entering Abtei St. Walburg were two main factors behind our Sisters coming to St. Vincent.

Besides these "outer" historical events that were "seen" by this crucifix, there were the interior movements—major and minor of the heart of each nun. Benedict knew the complexity of the human heart and his Rule addresses, frees, forms, and channels the hungers of the human heart for God. The Sisters would have taken their struggles of belief and unbelief, peace and anger, hurt and forgiveness, generosity and selfishness, recollection and distraction, pride and humility, obedience and self-centeredness, reliance on God and reliance on self, becoming always more like Christ and stagnation to Jesus Christ before this crucifix.



"Smiling Jesus" crucifix above the tabernacle at Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Germany.

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# Prioress' Reflection

Continued from page 1

They would also have included the intentions of all their relatives, friends and benefactors as well as the broader intentions of the Church and the world.

And here I was an American Benedictine nun in my 60<sup>th</sup> year of life and 40<sup>th</sup> year of monastic profession praying in this ancient Abbey about all of these same things before this same



Mother Franziska and Mother Mary Anne

crucifix! Benedict says that a monastery is a school of the Lord's service; what have I learned? That God is faithful, God sees one through, God is present in situations in retrospect when at the time, one desired to see more evidence of His sustaining power or involvement in a situation. On one level, I was always blessed to "know" this reality but life has given me occasions over and over again to experience this reality also known as Divine Providence in ever-deeper ways.

I consider myself blessed to be a farmer's daughter for I know that some winters are longer, some springs are wetter and some summers are drier. Perhaps last year, there was a drought, the year before a flood, the year before a bountiful harvest and in the previous year, the price received for the crop just covered the cost of planting. It does not matter: each spring the farmer goes out again, plows, harrows, plants and prays to the Lord of the harvest to bless this year's crop. The farmer can never skip sowing or God cannot bless the harvest.

I consider myself blessed to be

a farmer's daughter because we saw the glory of God in nature, in the miracle of spring in Pennsylvania, in the growth of plants and animals, and experienced that death was a part of life. We also experienced our dependence upon God and our lack of control over life so evident in our lack of control over the weather.

Our lives are all like that. There are periods of growth and decline, bounty and scarcity, glory and dailiness. It does not matter what happened yesterday or the day before; we need to trust God by planting today the seeds of starting again, trying to be faithful, and trusting that God's fidelity and Providence are far greater than we can imagine.

The long history of the Abtei of St. Walburg evidences God's faithfulness through the hills and valleys, sunshine and shadows that each historical period and that each life brings. The nuns there and our founding Sisters have all experienced God's fidelity in each day's slice of life.

In my forty-two years in the community, I am blessed to know all but five of our founding Sisters in-



A bon voyage program was held for Mother Franziska and Mother Mary Anne before they left for Eichstaett, Germany.

cluding the first three Prioresses. I have experienced first-hand their lives of faith, prayer and dedication that have given us both their incarnated values of monastic life and beautiful St. Emma Monastery. I am blessed to see women enter who also desire to incarnate these same Benedictine values of prayer, faith and dedication. They try to see the daily round of prayer, work and community living as the way of giving their lives to God and for one another.

May our eyes continue to be enlightened and our hearts quickened to recognize God's fidelity, to revel in His constant love, and to give Him thanks. May God bless you.

## Experience Monastic Life

Single women, ages 18-40, are invited to meet our community and experience our monastic manner of life by participation in the **Monastic Live-In Experience** July 8-12, 2004. This is an opportunity for women who wonder what a monastic manner of life is like, who think they might have a religious vocation, and who will have the chance to "try it out" by living with the Benedictine Nuns at St. Emma Monastery for a few days. These women join the nuns in their daily schedule of prayer, work and community life. Please contact Mother Mary Anne OSB for further information. Such a visit may also be scheduled anytime.

# Construction Update

After planning for the 4-story elevator, new conference room addition and renovations for several years, we signed the contracts on March 25. Immediately they began the renovations in the basement beneath the retreat dining room. On Tuesday of Easter week, our chaplain, Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Shuda, officially blessed the project. Since it poured down the rain, all he really had to do was to bless this abundance of water and we know the project will be successful—and safe for the workers.

The weekend of April 23-25 was the last weekend the retreat dining room and kitchen were used until the renovation and building are finished in September. Meantime all the cooking is being done in the monastery kitchen and the baking in a nearby room that has been turned into a temporary bakery. Retreatants are eating in the original house.

Behind the scenes of the last two paragraphs were the many decisions about what was to be re-used, re-used and stored in trailers here, re-used and used in the meantime. There followed trips too numerous to be counted by volunteers and the Sisters moving dishes, cooking utensils, food supplies, shelving, etc., by tractor and small wagon, little red wagons and old-fashion "muscle" power. It is truly amazing how well everything is again organized and working in their temporary locations.

Within five days of the last use of the retreat dining room and kitchen, the men had removed all of the drop

ceiling, the ductwork, the wiring, and the flooring in the dining room and all the appliances including the dishwasher in the kitchen. The wall was knocked out between the dining room and where the dishwasher had been.

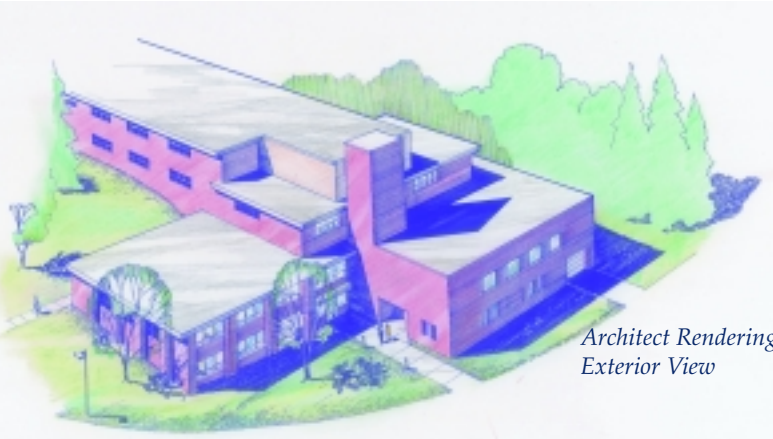
Outside the necessary trees have been cut down and one can see clearly the size of the two story residence and conference room as well as where the elevator goes. Around the corner one sees how much more space the kitchen will have with its 10' by 14' corner addition.

The parking lot has the tags indicating the safer entrance closer to the farm and the expanded parking lot.

During Holy Week a concrete ramp was poured to replace the steps leading to the stained-glass window Walburga Shrine.

And immediate GOOD NEWS for the retreatants: a ceiling fan was installed in each room in April so there is no need to bring along a fan this summer! It will also help bring the heat down to you from the ceiling in the winter.

Meantime we are trying to raise additional funding for this \$1.8 million dollar project that impacts so many areas of our retreat house facility and will make it even more wonderful for its next 50 years. We appreciate your prayer and your help for this goal.



Architect Rendering:  
Exterior View



Above: On April 6, Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Shuda, officially blessed the project. He and Mother Mary Anne put their umbrellas to good use as it poured down rain.

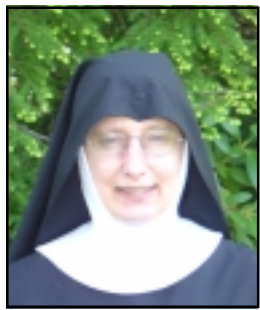
Above right: Architect Peter Cecconi, Jr., points to a sketch of the finished building.

Right: The blessing of the project.



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Triennial vows



Having completed her two-year novitiate, Sr. Paula Martin made her temporary vows for three years during the Eucharist on November 30 and received Mary Antony as her religious name. Originally from Clarksburg, WV, Sr. Mary Antony had worked as a critical care nurse.



*Sr. Mary Antony receives her black veil during the temporary profession ceremony.*

## Mother Franziska Visits

Our New Year had a wonderful start with the arrival of Mother Franziska, Abbess of our motherhouse, Abtei St. Walburg on January 2. Her visit, as always, was too short.

During her visit, she conducted a visitation of our monastery with the assistance of Rev. Mark Gruber OSB (St. Vincent Archabbey) and presided at the election of the Prioress on January 6. Mother Mary Anne was re-elected to a third term of five years. Her blessing was during the Eucharist on January 7.

We thank both Mother Franziska and Father Mark for their roles as visitators in affirming our monastic life as well as for their insights how we might live our monastic life still more fully.

## Special Occasions

On March 16, the monastic community celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sr. Gaudentia. Sr. Gaudentia entered our motherhouse, Abtei St. Walburg in 1931 and professed vows on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, 1933. On February 8, 1934, she came to St. Vincent Archabbey at the age of 20! For over 50 years she worked in the monastic refectory years until she came with the last group of Sisters to St. Emma in May 1987.

Many of you remember Sr. Gaudentia as being in charge of the retreat house dining room from 1987 until 1997. Each day Sr. Gaudentia participates fully in *The Liturgy of the Hours* and spends much time in additional prayer. She still helps with the monastery dishes and sets the table for the nuns.



*Sr. Gaudentia setting tables in the monastic refectory.*

On the eve of Mother Mary Anne's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, the monastic community celebrated this special occasion. The festive dinner was prepared by two of our vocation guests. Entertainment included breaking open a piñata and a wonderful program of music and song by Sr. Maria and the Novitiate accompanied by photos of Mother Mary Anne from baby to Silver Jubilee of vows. On Pentecost Sunday Mother Mary Anne marked 40 years of monastic profession.

## Attends Bishop's Ordination And Installation

On March 4 the Most Rev. Lawrence E. Brandt was ordained and installed as the fourth bishop of our Diocese of Greensburg. Mother Mary Anne represented our community at the ceremonies. The monastic community joined the thousands of others who enjoyed the ceremonies via a live telecast.

## Participants In Vocation Programs

On January 16 Sr. Maria, Sr. Renata and Sr. Mary Antony represented our community at a vocations evening sponsored by our Benedictine brothers at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA. On April 21 Mother Mary Anne and Sr. Renata attended the Vocation Program for the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown at St. Francis University, Loretto, PA.

## Bequests

*We have received several bequests since our last newsletter. We remember Elizabeth Groetsch and Joseph Silvaro in a special way in our prayer for their ongoing generosity to us – even beyond their deaths.*

*Many thanks to the daughters of Cora Bailey, Al Lovis, and John Robinson who, in the midst of their grief and loss, thought of St. Emma as a place to direct donations in memory of their beloved parent.*

## Know Your Options

By Robert J. Allen

"Over the years, I have made 20 or more telephone calls each week to ask people if they would like to know more about Planned Giving; the majority of my calls reveal that people either do not know or do not care about a Planned Gift.

I know that the people I contact are generous because they are donors to the charity I am calling about; but I often get a sense that they don't think they have a large enough estate or accumulated wealth to think about a Planned Gift.

So why am I writing this article? The fact is most people could benefit from a Charitable Planned Gift. Maybe the words "Planned Giving" are not fully understood. After all, they range from a Will to an Annuity to Charitable Trusts, Life Estates or Life Insurance.

Annuities and Charitable Trusts not only help with tax deduction but they also give the donor an income. Often the answer is: "I need to take care of my children." I agree, but donations through a Planned Gift

and taking care of the children are not mutually exclusive. Actually more often than not, you can give more to your family through a Planned Gift and keep the asset. There is an Old Testament passage that tells us, 'You can't keep it unless you give it away.' How true this is on Planned Gifts!

For more information—FREE WITH NO OBLIGATION, please call or write to us. In the spirit of good stewardship, we will send this information to you for your consideration."

## Various Facets of Community Life



*The Benedictine Nuns of St. Emma Monastery after prayer.*

From November 17-26, 2003 Rev. Donald Raila OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey lead our community retreat that consisted of wonderful conferences on St. Benedict's 12 steps of humility.

After a successful surgery in December, our novice, Sr. Sandra stopped breathing early the next morning and was on a respirator. That evening she experienced her first (and

last!) helicopter ride to Presbyterian Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA where she spent the next week. Sr. Sandra is doing very well; both Sr. Sandra and the Community are very appreciative for all your prayers.

At the end of January, Sr. Angela Uhlott, completed her novitiate year according to canon law. Now in the midst of her second year that is prescribed by our Constitutions, Sr. Angela continues to live the life of the community and receive classes in the Novitiate.

This year the Feast of St. Scholastica brought us two special guests. We were happy to have the Most. Rev. Anthony G. Bosco with us once again for the celebration of the Eucharist followed by a festive meal with our community. That evening, Rev. Albert Schmitt OSB, a monk from the Abbey of Beuron, Germany, currently rector at Collegio St. Anselmo, Rome visited us with Rev. Kurt Belsole OSB, rector of St. Vincent Seminary.

During Lent, we joined the millions of movie-goers who saw *The Passion of the Christ*. Hopefully Hollywood and the television media will get the message that people do desire to see spiritual and uplifting movies.



Any consideration in your will

—

your way of having your  
values continued  
with your money after your  
death

—

would be most appreciated  
by us,

**THE SISTERS OF SAINT  
BENEDICT**

**OF WESTMORELAND  
COUNTY**

*(legal title).*



## +Rest in Peace

**Sr. Maria Haeusler OSB**



After a brief illness, Sr. Maria, 87, died on March 14, 2004. The sixth of twelve children born to Josef and Franziska (Pritzl) Haeusler, her blood sister, Sr. Gabriele (also of our community) is just two years older.

She entered Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Germany, December 7, 1935 and professed vows on April 21, 1937. From 1937-1966 Sr. Maria was assigned to the Convent of St. Walburga, Boulder, CO and Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, CO. From 1966-87 at St. Vincent Archabbey and College, she helped in the kitchen and worked in the college dining room. She had sewn many clown dolls besides.

At St. Emma she helped cook for the monastery and volunteers until two years ago. Since that time she spent extra hours each day praying in the chapel.

On January 21 Sr. Maria was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Two weeks before she died, she fell here, broke her hip and the next morning, it was operated on. Divine Providence used Sr. Maria's broken hip to get her to St. Anne Home, Greensburg, PA so that Sr. Gabriel, presently a resident at St. Anne's, might be able to visit her daily and to be with her when she died.

Sr. Maria accepted her diagnosis with admirable serenity and acceptance of God's will. She was buried on the feast of St. Joseph, the patron she chose on the occasion of her silver jubilee of monastic profession.

**Sr. Boniface Wagner OSB**



Just eight days later on the Solemnity of the Passing of our Holy Father St. Benedict (March 22), our Sr. Boniface Wagner, 95, passed into eternity. She was the youngest of nine children born to Johann and Margret (Herold) Wagner.

Sr. Boniface entered Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Germany, September 29, 1930, professed vows on June 24, 1932 and was assigned to Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, CO in February 1934. On March 11, 1935, Sr. Boniface, Sr. Augustina Weiermueller (later the 58<sup>th</sup> abbess of Abtei St. Walburg, Germany) and Sr. Rita Strohmeier founded the Convent of St. Walburga in Boulder, CO. (It was relocated to Virginia Dale, CO in 1997.) Sr. Boniface was the main cook and also helped with the farming. She was assigned to St. Emma Monastery in October 1964.

Here at St. Emma, Sr. Boniface was well known for her delicious

homemade bread that she baked for the retreatants until she was 92 and the delicious honey she harvested from her bees until she was 89. She accepted numerous bee stings as "belonging to the territory." She also had a large vegetable garden each summer – complete with red raspberries for the Sisters' breakfast and zinnias for her bees and for the altar.

During the early part of construction for the *Cor Jesu* Monastic Chapel, Sr. Boniface spent hours every day watching the excavation and the laying of the block until she could no longer see what they were doing. She knew how many men were working and when their breaks were.

Due to her garbled speech, we thought she was having mini-strokes. In mid-February we were shocked to learn she had three malignant brain tumors that had metastasized from an unknown site. Her eyes sparkled and her hand clasp was firm nearly to the end. In fact she prayed with the community until 10 days before her death. She held a large crucifix and from time to time kissed it so tenderly. It was watching the "pure of heart" return to God. She was buried on March 24.

Five from her family became members of religious communities: two sisters became Franciscans, and her sister, Sr. Pia, was one of the original group of Sisters to come from Abtei St. Walburg, Germany, to St. Vincent Archabbey on February 25, 1931. A brother died as a Salesian novice after a sports accident.



**Benedictine  
Nuns**

**Daily Prayer  
Schedule**

5:30 a.m. Vigils

Lectio Divina I

6:20 a.m. Lauds

6:50 a.m. Eucharist

Terce

\* 11:45 a.m. Sext, None

\* 5 p.m. Vespers

(\* Times may vary)

7:30 p.m. Compline

Lectio Divina II

## RIPPLES

### Snow & Ice

We enjoyed the numerous snow and ice storms as everyone else in January and into February and it took so long for the ice to melt for good. The snow and ice were the reason that the Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania needed to cancel their retreat in January—the first time in nearly 30 years.



### Thank You!

Many thanks to all who donated items for or purchased items at our flea market April 21. Many thanks also to the volunteers who helped to organize and work this fundraiser which raised \$2000 in four hours!

### Oak Felled

The nearly dead, beautiful oak that has welcomed the thousands and thousands of retreatants since 1954 had to be cut down. It was like losing a friend.

*Farewell, friend: The beautiful oak that has welcomed thousands of retreatants had to be cut down this spring.*



### Pro-Life Prayer Vigil

The Pro-Life Prayer Vigil on January 21 had the best attendance ever.

### Summer Activities

During the summer, we will send you information on the various things that are happening here—including the celebration for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Retreat House and the Blessing of the new addition.

Our Advent newsletter will detail the wonderful services that our generous volunteers provide and list some of the wonderful gifts that we have been blessed with. Meantime, may God bless each of you.

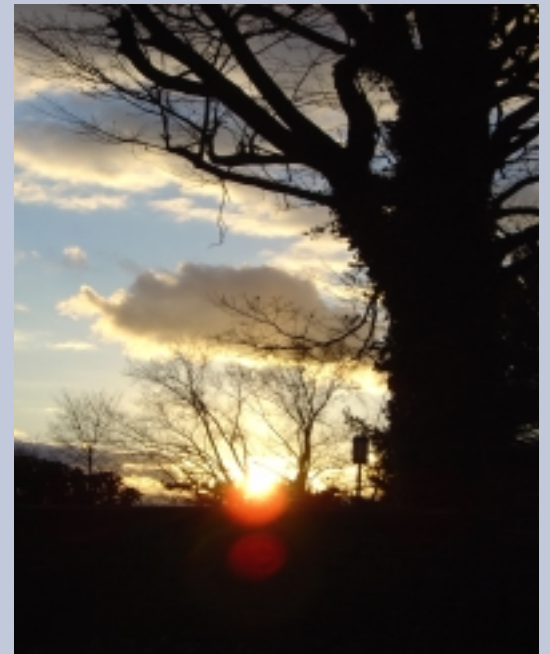


## Special Gifts

For a gift that truly keeps on giving, have you considered a **Gift Certificate** for a retreat or for a period of time at the Monastic Guest House? Or that someone special on your gift list might really appreciate receiving a **Gift Certificate** to our Catholic Gift & Book Shop.

Don't know what to give someone who has everything? People really appreciate a donation given to St. Emma **in their honor**. We send the recipient the wonderful news that a donation as been given in their name and we thank the donor as well.

Gifts may also be made **in memory of** a loved one with acknowledgement to the family as well as the donor.



*Special Request I*

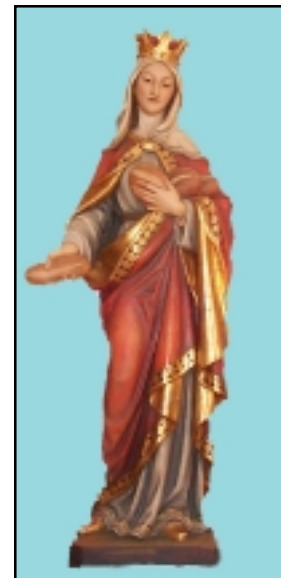
We are in the process of updating our mailing list. If you are receiving duplicate copies of the *Benedictine Touchstone*, please let us know what they are and what listing you prefer. We appreciate your assistance; may God bless you!

*Special Request II*

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

*Retreat House Schedule*

|                  |             |   |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| <b>June</b>      | 18-24, 2004 | <u><b>SILENT</b></u> (lay and religious)<br>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB \$290                      |
| <b>July</b>      | 8-12, 2004  | <i>Monastic Live-in Experience, Single women, ages 18-40</i>                                |
| <b>August</b>    | 6-12, 2004  | 6 Day <u><b>SILENT</b></u> (lay and religious)<br>Rev. Mike Greb OFMCap \$290               |
| <b>September</b> | 17-19, 2004 | Women (St. Marys, PA and OTHERS)<br>Rev. Msgr. Robert Shuda                                 |
|                  | 24-26, 2004 | Women Rev. Leo Vanyo  |
| <b>October</b>   | 1- 3, 2004  | <u><b>SILENT</b></u> (men/women) Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB                                     |
|                  | 15-17, 2004 | Women Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco<br>(Bishop Emeritus Diocese of Greensburg)                 |
|                  | 22-24, 2004 | Married Couples Rev. Edward Litavec   |
|                  | 29-31, 2004 | Married Couples Rev. Mark Gruber OSB  |
|                  | 30, 2004    | Day of Recollection for <b>People Concerned about Pro-Life</b><br>9:00 AM - 4:30 PM         |
| <b>November</b>  | 5- 7, 2004  | Legion of Mary and OTHERS Rev. Brian Welding  |
| <b>December</b>  | 4, 2004     | Day of Recollection for <b>Religious Sisters</b><br>Rev. Justin Matro OSB 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM |
| <b>January</b>   | 24-28, 2005 | Priests Rev. Lester Knoll OFMCap  |

*Monastic Guest House Schedule*

|                         |            |   |
|-------------------------|------------|---|
| <b>August</b>           | 6-13, 2004 | Encounter with Silence<br>Rev. Frank Erdeljac \$400<br>(If you stay in the retreat house, the stipend is \$310) |
| <b>Sept. 24-Oct. 1,</b> | 2004       | Encounter with Silence<br>Rev. Frank Erdeljac \$400<br>(If you stay in the retreat house, the stipend is \$310) |