

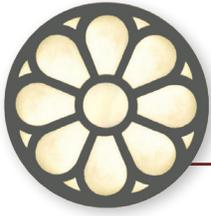
# Reflections

of the Benedictine Sisters

# Merry Christmas



from the  
Benedictine Sisters of Mt Angel



# Welcome

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*Dear family and friends,*

I greet you this holy season of Advent! Just around the corner is Christmas, the celebration of our God breaking into the world with the GOOD NEWS, that Jesus has saved us. Advent is a season of waiting. We have had quite an experience of waiting over this year.

WAITING for a return to life as it was...

Our life and world will never be again in quite the same way.

In the last *Reflections*, I shared a quote from Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.:

“Above all, trust in the SLOW work of God  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something NEW.”

Hard work – patience! Advent is the season of waiting. We celebrate and wait with Mary who was pregnant with new possibilities in her Son Jesus. Jesus is coming again to each one of us. We celebrate that we are also pregnant with possibilities in Jesus.

We are waiting with FATIGUE.....

Fatigue with forest fires, the electoral process, on-going COVID, and the usual aches and pains that life brings to us on this side of heaven. Fatigue with being confined and not being able to welcome all of you to Eucharist and our home for reflection and peace.

WEARING MASKS is proving to limit spread of COVID-19 and also flu and other germs that we tend to communicate to one another. As we limit our physical contact, please reach out with phone calls, Zoom, FaceTime, and even good old fashioned letters to stay engaged with the people you love. We are all called to the ministry of PRESENCE right now WHILE WE WAIT.

May our Gracious God grant us unwavering faith, enduring hope and a love that is patient as we end 2020 and look forward to 2021.

Be well and know we are with you always in prayer and love! A very Blessed Christmas and a joyful, healthy New Year from all the Benedictine Sisters.

*Sister Jane*

Sister Jane Hibbard, SNJM  
Pastoral Administrator



# A Message About our Christmas Vigil Mass



Every year, on Christmas Eve, we welcome family and friends to our chapel to celebrate Mass. We sing Christmas carols, we pray together, and end the evening sharing stories over hot chocolate and cinnamon rolls. This year will be different as we continue to deal with the reality of the coronavirus. Although our community will continue to celebrate the Christmas Vigil Mass, we will do so without our family and friends in attendance. You all remain in our thoughts and prayers, and we look forward to the time when we can celebrate with you again.

Visit our Facebook page or our website on December 23 for a special video of our sisters singing Christmas carols. This is our small gift to you this holiday season. We hope it brings you joy and happiness. From all of the Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel, Merry Christmas!

## Gift Shop Virtual Open House



Through December 18

[www.benedictine-srs.org/openhouse](http://www.benedictine-srs.org/openhouse)

Just in time for Christmas!

Go online and check out our virtual open house featuring a selection of our most popular items ready just in time for Christmas.

Limited number of items made by the sisters include:

*Prayer Shawls by Sister Marietta*

*Hats by Sister Mechtilde*

*Scarves by Sisters Dorothy Jean and Mechtilde*

*Scrubbies by Sister Marietta*

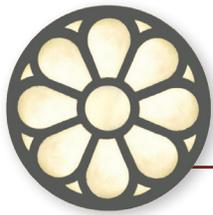
*Rosaries by Sister Rocio*

We also have our famous buttermilk coffee cakes available and two delicious flavors of Pacific Honeybee honey.

Available for contactless pickup or shipping (just pay the cost of postage). Not all items available for shipping. Place your order online or call our office at (503) 845-2556 to place an order over the phone.

*Free gift with every purchase!* While supplies last.





# Sisters Reflect

## on an Age of Uncertainty

We recently asked some of our sisters to reflect on their time in the monastery during the pandemic – sheltering in place during an age of uncertainty. Although a few things around the monastery are returning to normal, the lives the sisters have lived over the last nine months has been unlike any other time in our history. Here are what a few of our sisters had to say about prayers, spiritual practices that helped them get through, and aspects of monastic life helped them keep a calm and serene center in their life.



“When we first learned that we were dealing with a serious pandemic, I felt like we should do something beyond the usual. I saw an article on the bulletin board that said

Pope Francis was calling for Catholics to pray the Rosary. I asked Sr. Jane if we could do a group recitation of the Rosary. More sisters must have suggested the same idea, because soon it was announced that we would do a daily Rosary at 4:15 p.m. in the chapel. I find this time helpful as it gives me a special opportunity to pray for people. I find it to be a peaceful time, and I especially enjoy the view out the chapel window towards the sequoia tree.”

– Sr. Rebecca Pirkel



“The prayers that help me the most include those I share with my Benedictine Sisters in community during Holy Mass and when we pray the Holy Rosary together.

The spiritual practice of being in our chapel, next to the Blessed Sacrament and asking for God’s help for our community’s needs, our family’s

needs, and the needs of our country and the whole world has been truly helpful to me. My monastic life has helped me remain calm and serene by teaching me to live in faith knowing that God is the answer to all concerns, sufferings and insecurities. If I live this fully, it will help me find serenity and happiness all my life, because I trust in God and He will be assisting me with all my needs”

– Sr. Rocio Moreno Soto

“During this time of uncertainty, I find our monastic life a blessing. Besides our regular routine of praying the Liturgy of the Hours together, I find myself peacefully in prayer early

in the morning before the Blessed Sacrament. During this time, I reflect on the readings for Mass and spend quiet time with Jesus. It helps me to relax and focus on the day ahead, trusting in God’s presence with me.”

– Sr. Regina Rausch





“I have rediscovered the Rosary. I grew up praying it with my family, and also with my Benedictine Sisters in my first years in the monastery. Then, in my busy teaching years, I stopped praying it because of the little time I had left, but I continued communal prayer of the Divine Office and lectio. Since the coronavirus pandemic started, I have joined a group of eight to ten sisters who daily pray the Rosary for those suffering, in whatever way, from the virus. In doing so, I have come to a renewed appreciation of this prayer, reflecting on the mysteries of our salvation.”

– Sr. Christine Rausch



“The prayer I pray continually is the Novena of Abandonment. I pray it over and over. Total surrender to Jesus has deepened my trust in Him and His will for me, even when circumstances are difficult. If you pray it, miracles will happen. I have also committed and consecrated myself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Praying the Rosary daily with the added exclamation, “Spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love all over humanity,” is a prayer for the salvation of souls. I tend to be praying some short prayer all day long. Constant prayer keeps me focused on God and the needs of others. I give alms; do acts of charity, and fast from food in solidarity with the poor. Prayer for me is moment to moment conversation with the God whom I love.”

– Sr. Miriam Hendrikson



“The Psalms answer any need that we may encounter as we go through life. Many verses relate to situations that arise from the pandemic. Psalm 86 is a prayer in suffering and distress, ‘When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.’ Psalm 3 is a prayer to trust in God in times of danger, ‘I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.’ Psalm 41, trust in God when in sickness, ‘The Lord sustains them on their sickbed, and restores them from their bed of illness.’”

– Sr. Joseph Fennimore



“Walking helps me contemplate and reflect. I walk outside, sometimes to the cemetery, or to one of the gardens, or to the Grotto of the Blessed Mother. I go out there and thank the Lord for the world and His many blessings. I ask Him for peace in our world. Watching the plants grow and bloom brings me peace. While I’m outside, I also pray the Rosary and I pray for each one of my Benedictine Sisters. I continually seek and pray for peace.”

– Sr. Theresa Henscheid



# Sisters Reflect

on Meaningful Art Around the Monastery

Our monastery is home to dozens of spiritual and inspirational art, gardens, and sacred places. We asked some of our sisters to share their favorites pieces of art, or places around the monastery they go to seek peace. Here are what a few of them had to say:



“Our chapel is blessed by a large fabric art piece created by Eleanor Van de Water. Her goal was to depict St. Benedict’s vision of the whole world gather up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. For

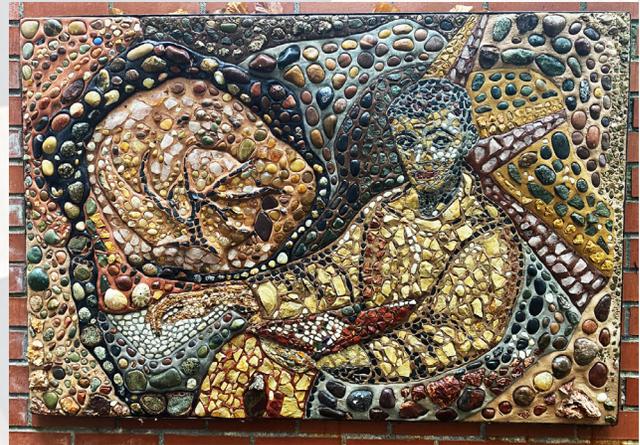
Benedict, it was a contemplative experience he had, a sense of oneness with all creation. Eleanor used many pieces of silk fabric accented by sparkling gold, silver, copper and crystal nuggets to give the appearance of light. This art piece challenges me to think of light as a source of beauty and joy. How can I be a source of light? I can’t change all the darkness and chaos in the world, but I can bring light in small ways as I interact with my sisters and others that I contact by phone, email or letters. Benedict’s vision is a challenge to bring the light of hope and beauty to others each day.” - Sr. Maureen Niedermeyer



“When I go to the cemetery, my eyes rest on the white crucifix, which stands magnificently at the south end. It was there when I entered the Benedictine Sisters in 1961, and probably many years before that. It speaks

to me of Jesus Crucified, Jesus who conquered death and rose to new life. I gain strength as I make my earthly journey to heaven and my faith is bolstered in God’s promise of everlasting life, when I meditate on the cemetery crucifix. Then my eyes scan the rows and rows of “saints”, the sisters, oblates and friends who are buried in our cemetery. This will be the place where I will be laid to rest among my sisters. I will be in good company!”

– Sr. Dorothy Jean Beyer



“I love the mosaic of St. Benedict by Sister Anne Ryan; it really speaks to me. When I found it, it was hanging on a wall outside of the Shalom Prayer Center. It was in need of repair. Stones and shells were missing. Stones had to be found, glued and varnished.



Finding a permanent home was really a thrill for me. Benedict is there looking out for us.”  
- Sr. Angela Meister



“In the chapel, I have always found the art piece of Benedict’s vision of the world to provide endless meditation. The Eucharist is at the center.”  
– Sr. Judith Bloxham

“Some bells around the monastery that catch my attention mark times and events from past, present and future. The bell in St. Scholastica’s Garden reminds me of St. Luke’s School in which I taught. It vibrates memories when I ring it on July 4. Ringing the bell in St. Joseph’s Garden to the four directions reminds me of people I know from far and wide, connecting friends and relatives, and events of history. Our monastery bell calls us to daily prayer, and accompanies sisters to the cemetery as they make their last journey on earth. The bells from St. Mary Parish Church celebrate many events, including marking the hours of the day. Historic hand bells from our sisters remind me of the many years of their teaching and service. Bells symbolize a unique call to talks, events, celebrations, setting tones and resonances to all who want love and freedom in so many ways. Each bell has a message. Let us listen to all and remember.” – Sr. Joan Pokorny



“The crucifix in the cemetery is special to me. I like the quiet of the cemetery. It is a good place to pray. With my illness, I fluctuate with remission. This is the paschal mystery – the living and dying of Jesus. I also very much enjoy the fabric art in the chapel. It is a gift from my Dad to the community.



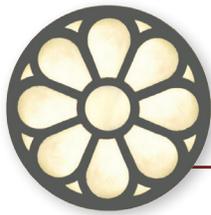
I’m reminded of Dad’s care for me and his generosity to the community. He stayed in our guest house as he waited for his furniture to arrive. He was in transition to Mt. Angel Towers where he spent his final years. I will always miss him and the rest of my family.”  
– Sr. Susan Casey

“I like the simplicity and steadfastness of the two white statues of Mary. The one on the front of the monastery welcoming guests and standing strong, year after year, even through the earthquake. The other statue in the grove, quietly standing with us, is also dear to me. They are both beacons of peace and hope.”



– Sr. Donna Marie Chartraw





## *Being an Oblate during a pandemic*

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*From Mary Blankenship, Oblate:*

Thinking about how my oblate life has changed, I know that the pandemic has brought a wrenching sense that the entire world has changed in ways that may well be permanent. I think of pioneers of the past leaving long-established homes to travel into the unknown to put down new roots. Generations of monastics, for example, left established communities to create missions in new places, with all of the attendant uncertainty and danger.

In a real sense, that is our current experience. We have been catapulted into an uncertain reality, with our familiar underpinnings gone. We long to see in real space the faces we love. We yearn not only for the liturgy, the voices of the sisters in community prayer, the rich conversations, but the quiet of the chapel, the smell of old wood and candles, the giant Sequoia. Home.

Yet we already know that oblates are adventurers in a new land, birthing a new way of living the Benedictine charism. The pandemic, with its dangers and uncertainties, has accelerated that journey. It is already a voyage of discovery toward an unknown shore, where we carry traditions forward into the future. Meanwhile, we live out our fundamental connection with the monastic tradition and the community that nourishes us while literally apart.

In this new land, we do not wait for months for letters from home to come by sailing ship. We see one another, smile and pray together through the amazing gifts of the electronic age. Creative ways of connection are evolving all around us, and we are privileged to employ them in sustaining our relationships with one another.

Whether virtually present for the funeral mass of a beloved sister, attending an online retreat or pursuing our oblate study on Zoom, we are mindful of the home we have left and the uncertainty of our return. Still, we are strengthened by a strong sense of connection between this new world and the one we are missing.

For me, with my heart in both places, in the middle with “feet planted firmly in the air,” as a Benedictine of a sister monastery characterized our dilemma, there is undeniably anxiety and loss. But rising with each day, is a “yes” of hope at the deep awareness that this stream we travel in is timeless, our companions are with us on every side and the breeze of the Holy Spirit guides us as we go.

*From Rae Parlier, Oblate Director:*

In March 2020, as restrictions were implemented to try and quell the contagion, I was just starting to get about after a knee fracture that occurred in January. I was pleased with my progress made possible by physical therapy and my determination to get my full function back. During my confinement I had begun to ponder in a deep way the concept of Stability.

According to the Rule of St. Benedict Ch. 58, Stability is one of the several promises made publicly and signed in a document at the altar at the time the novice is received into the monastic community. Similarly, the oblate promises to “live the Gospel in service to God’s people and to live according to the monastic values and spirituality found in the Rule of St. Benedict”. This promise is also made in front of the community of sisters at Mt. Angel, fellow oblates, family and friends. In 2007, I made this promise after two years of Inquiry and Candidacy. During this time, I tried to understand and begin practices that would shape my future life.

During my convalescence the concept of Stability was made real for me. Since I live in a rural setting, I literally have to get in my car and leave to do anything outside of my domestic sphere. Coupled with that is my mindset that says, “something to do, somewhere to go.” I never considered the default to be my staying at home and the exception, leaving it. I was beginning to see that gardening and cooking and household duties were being done by me with more attention and intention. I valued the time to be around as my husband blissfully puttered with a radio playing in every conceivable location. I took to heart what Rachel Strubas writes in her book, *Benedictine Promises for Everyday People: Staying Put, Listening Well, Being Changed by God*, “saying many no’s for the sake of a few enduring yeses, turning down and away from options in order to go all-in on this dwelling place, this occupation or vocation, this partner, family congregation or community.”

The three-month confinement has now been eclipsed by more than six months of pandemic shutdown. I am being pushed to a new understanding of Stability at a yet deeper level. There are no escapes for diversion, no vacation planning, limited contact with family, friends and spiritual companions. I feel like I am being asked to find the meaning of my life inside me. I have become acutely aware of my attitude and how I spend my time. This coincides with the Benedictine value of Listening. I listen to my self-talk and then get to choose what to do. Then follows the Benedictine value of Conversion: going in the direction of God.

It goes against the grain to say one is grateful for adversity. However, if I have compassion and mourn for the losses, surely I can claim the blessing.

To become an Oblate, contact Sister Maureen at 503-845-6141



## Monthly Events

**Supervision for Spiritual Directors via Zoom**  
2nd Friday, 9am–11am, Sep–May  
\$20

All spiritual directors are welcome to attend the monthly supervision meeting for on-going formation and education featuring spirituality topics, prayer and skills of the ministry. Next meeting is December 11, 2020. Call Sr. Joan Pokorny at (503) 949-6284 or email her at [jpokornyqam23@gmail.com](mailto:jpokornyqam23@gmail.com) to inquire or register.

### Book Talk via Zoom

**Meeting/Discussion Online, Through June**  
Monthly Book Talk led by Tim Nelson and Linda Jensen. Upcoming meetings are December 12 (share your favorite poetry) and January 16 (*Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne). Check our website for a full reading list and future dates. Contact Sr. Dorothy Jean at (503) 845-2556 to register.



### A Time to Journal with Evelyn Wemhoff

2nd Saturday, 1–3 pm, All Year, Online

This opportunity is for anyone who has previously attended a Progoff Intensive Journal Workshop and desires to strengthen his/her own work in the Journal. Contact Evelyn at [evelynhwemhoff@comcast.net](mailto:evelynhwemhoff@comcast.net) or by phone at 971-273-0700 if you are planning to attend.

### Spiritual Direction via Zoom

**By Appointment, \$55 with Sliding Scale Available**

Sr. Dorothy Jean and Sr. Joan are currently offering Spiritual Direction sessions via Zoom or by phone. For more information, please contact Sr. Dorothy Jean at (503) 845-2556 or by email [dorothyjeanb7@gmail.com](mailto:dorothyjeanb7@gmail.com), or Sr. Joan at (503) 949-6284, or email her at [jpokornyqam23@gmail.com](mailto:jpokornyqam23@gmail.com)

## Currently Paused

These monthly workshops will return when the monastery opens to the public again.

Monthly Dream Group: Language of the Soul, Taizé Prayer Service, Prayer of the Heart Contemplative Prayer

Visit our website for the most up-to-date information on these workshops.

## Shalom at the Monastery is Zooming!

by Sr. Dorothy Jean Beyer, OSB

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Benedictine Sisters have gone to a new way to present retreats and to do Spiritual Direction. Sister Joan Pokorny and Sister Dorothy Jean are having spiritual direction appointments by Zoom and phone. It is not the same as person to person, which is definitely preferred, but phone and Zoom have proven effective and convenient. In addition, it allows the spiritual direction ministry to continue.

The Blue Sapphire of the Mind retreat at the end of August was done via Zoom. Sister Laura Swan, OSB, a Benedictine sister from St. Placid Priory in Lacey, Washington, led the retreat from her monastery. Retreatants were in California, Washington and Oregon, comfortable in their own home. No driving, no dealing with traffic. The retreatants are continuing to meet via Zoom to discuss the book every two weeks.

The November 7th retreat by Dean Schlecht on Love's Dual Foundation with Zoom accommodated people as far as way as Texas, California, Colorado, and New Jersey. Therefore, Shalom at the Monastery can reach many more people via Zoom.

In any catastrophe, there are blessings in disguise. Our God is a God of surprises and is always watching over us. We are grateful for the opportunities that come our way. At the same time, we are constantly praying for those who are suffering from any disaster. Zoom is one of those blessings.

Shalom at the Monastery has a number of retreat opportunities scheduled for 2021 via Zoom. We invite you to participate from your comfy, favorite chair in your home. In meantime, we pray for the end of the pandemic and hope to see you face to face here at the monastery for a retreat and/or for spiritual direction soon.



## Upcoming 2021 Retreats

### Progoff Intensive Journal Workshops for Beginning the New Year

January 20 – February 4, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

\$210 - \$625

As you begin the year 2021, You may want to begin a Journey in your Life

In a deep and quiet atmosphere, you will use the Progoff Journal Workbook to make life decisions and sustain your personal growth. The workbook is an active instrument. Its structure makes it a dynamic vehicle for journal feedback techniques. The journal self-adjusts to the needs and potentials of your life.

Life Context Workshop (Jan. 20-21) helps to focus your life and begin to shape a perspective of your full life history and explore who you are most deeply and what your life is trying to become. (\$225)

Depth Context Workshop (Jan. 27-28) guides you to draw upon your unconscious depths of dreams and imagery for active feedback. This workshop is grounded in Process Meditation. It can give energy for personal change and consideration of inner directions. (\$210, prerequisite Life Context)

Life Integration Workshop (Feb. 3-4) The creative process draws us in guidance for the future from our past journal entries. We stay with them long enough to see where they are leading us. (\$210, prerequisite Depth Context).

Each workshop is online through Zoom

Daily schedule: 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. PST

Each workshop is on Wednesday and Thursday

All three courses available for only \$625 – a savings of \$20!

Evelyn works with programs and planning at Shalom at the Monastery in Mt Angel, OR which offers spiritual growth programs. Evelyn is a Spiritual Director, retired licensed, counselor and former director of Woman Spirit Center in the Seattle area that offered programs for women seeking to develop their lives. This position followed her own life as a Sister of a Benedictine community. Leading the Intensive Journal has been part of her life for thirty years.

To register or get information, contact Evelyn Wemhoff at 971-273-0700. To pay for the workshop(s), make check payable to Evelyn Wemhoff and mail to P.O. Box 21083, Keizer, OR 97303

### Everything Ablaze: Teilhard's Mystical Vision presented by Stephen Harding Coffey, OSB Cam.

February 19-21, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

\$90 per person

This weekend retreat will serve as an introduction to the spirituality of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, scientist and mystic. Teilhard believed that a vibrant Christian life can set the world on fire. We will explore six key themes that are central to his vision: God in world and matter; a spirituality of evolution; love and loving; our inner depths; the cosmic Christ, and the Sacred Heart of the universe. Each conference will be followed by time for meditation and prayerful reflection. The format will follow David Richo's *Everything Ablaze*, a rich resource for meditating on our call to discover the universe's Sacred Heart.

Stephen Harding Coffey, OSB Cam., an ordained monk of the Camaldolese community of California, resides at Monastery of the Risen Christ, San Luis Obispo, CA. He is engaged in extensive retreat ministry as well as spiritual direction for priests,

## Upcoming 2021 Retreats

religious, and laity. He formerly served on the staff of Shalom Prayer Center, Mount Angel.

To register, call the Benedictine Sisters at (503) 845-2556 or send a check payable to Benedictine Sisters, 840 S. Main St., Mt. Angel, OR 97362, by February 16, 2021, Attn: Sr. Dorothy Jean Beyer

### **Have No Fear, Be Not Afraid: It is All About Love** presented by Nancy Hendricks

April 24, 2021

Via Zoom

\$50 per person

We will be discussing the approximately 350 times it says in Scripture to “not be afraid.” We will be walking through Scripture highlighting all the times that God assures us that we are always in God’s care.

About the Presenter: Nancy’s career began in horticulture, raising berries and vegetables on the family farm. With her husband, she slowed down when they sold their produce stand in 2016. She decided at that time to pursue her Master’s Degree in Pastoral Ministry from the University of Portland, and graduated in May, 2020. Nancy has been attending retreats at Shalom Prayer Center since 1987. She has been an oblate with the Queen of Angels Monastery since 2012, and looks forward to offering retreats at Shalom at the Monastery.

To register, call the Benedictine Sisters at (503) 845-2556 or send a check payable to Benedictine Sisters, 840 S. Main St., Mt. Angel, OR 97362, by April 21, 2021, Attn: Sr. Dorothy Jean Beyer

### **World Labyrinth Day: Take Steps Together for Peace**

May 1, 2021, 1pm

Outdoor Labyrinth, West End of Shalom Building

Come and celebrate World Labyrinth Day with the Benedictine Sisters at Mount Angel, Oregon! Please gather at the labyrinth at the west end of the

Shalom building. At 12:45 p.m., there will be a brief explanation of the Peace Walk on the labyrinth. We will then walk the 20-minute Silent Peace Walk, using the format of Benedictines for Peace.

To register, call Sister Dorothy Jean Beyer, 503 845-2556 or email [dorothyjeanb7@gmail.com](mailto:dorothyjeanb7@gmail.com)

### **Mark Your Calendar for these Great Retreats Next Fall 2021!**

Retreats may be in-person or via Zoom. Check our website for the latest updates.

### **Retreat on Cardinal Basil Hume: A Pilgrim’s Search for God**

October 1-3, 2021

Retreat on Cardinal Basil Hume: *A Pilgrim’s Search for God* (Gracewing, 2019) presented by the author, Sister Gertrude Feick of the Cistercian Monastery of Our Lady of the Redwoods Abbey, Whitethorn, CA. The retreat will focus on the gift of Cardinal Basil Hume, Benedictine monk, Archbishop of Westminster, pastor, preacher and resounding voice of Benedictine spirituality.

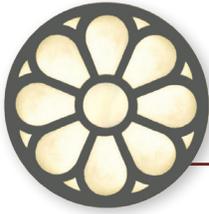
### **Ammas, Monks, Archetypes presented by Father Stephen Harding Coffey, OSB Cam.**

November 5-7, 2021

This retreat will take a look at four monastic figures: Amma Syncletica, St. Benedict, St. Hildegard, and Thomas Merton and their corresponding archetypes: the warrior, the sage, the visionary, and the inner monk. It will include an introduction to the figure, lectio divina on the theme, visio divina of an icon of the figure, and personal reflection on the archetype and its shadow through mandala making. Let figures from our sacred tradition become relevant to our lives as they help us to illuminate parts of ourselves that need further development to grow in wholeness and in our relationship to God.

## *Seeing the Environment through the Lens of Spirituality Symposium moved to 2021!*

The date in 2021 has not been determined. Be sure to visit our website for a new date and time for this event.



## What the Benedictine Sisters mean to me: Sr. Gemma Piennett

From Dr. Catherine M. Ellison

Now that I have retired from medicine, from my practice of neurology and I look back upon the origins of my curiosity in the natural world, I see Sister Gemma.

First year of college, 1970, at Mt. Angel College in Mt. Angel, Oregon, I took a “Natural History” class taught by Sister Gemma. She led us out into the fields, the forests, and into nature where I recall her assignment to observe and record everything that happened and that existed on a 10-foot square plot of land near the college for a month or more. From the nearly invisible insect crawling around, to the huge and magnificent Douglas fir trees, I watched. A great horned owl lived in one of my trees; how she would swoop through the air silently on her proud wings. I found the leavings of her rodent dinners at the base of the tree.

Maybe Sister Gemma just “led a horse to water” and “let him(her) drink,” but her enthusiasm and curiosity were infectious. What a devoted and beautiful life Sister led, and how giving was her mode.

And I’m not even Catholic, rather Jewish! Her devotion and love of life spoke volumes of a pure heart and, at times, I was jealous of her protected and spiritual life. I went on to work for twenty-five years at Providence Hospital in Portland, where I would meet Sister Maureen, so I’d have to say that the Benedictine Sisters have definitely touched my life.

*Would you like to share a story about a Benedictine sister that has touched your life?*

*Please email or send us your story*

*(info@benedictine-srs.org / 840 S. Main St., Mt. Angel, OR 97362)*

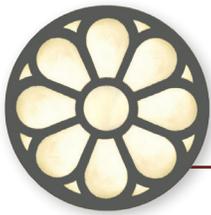
### If a Benedictine Sister has had a significant and positive impact on your life...

please consider a planned gift or bequest to honor them. By doing so, you will help ensure Queen of Angels Monastery remains a safe place for the sisters. The Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel have called Oregon home since 1882.

Please note: The legal title and address for the sisters is:

Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel  
840 S. Main St, Mt. Angel, OR 97362

Tax ID #93-0387331



## Honoring Our Retired Sisters: Sr. Maureen Niedermeyer, OSB



Sister Maureen Niedermeyer, teacher, musician and chaplain for over fifty-four years, was born in September, 1935, in Portland, Oregon. She was the first of three born to Joe and Hazel Niedermeyer. During her time at Sacred Heart Catholic School,

and later St. Mary's Academy in Portland, Sister Maureen was called to monastic life. "The sisters were always so happy," she said looking back at her time in Catholic schools. "I always wanted to know what made them so happy."

After high school, Sister Maureen earned an Oregon scholarship to Marylhurst University, but after one year at the university, she had a change of heart. "I wanted to join the monastery right after high school, but I'm glad I listened to my family and used my scholarship. I did a lot of much-needed growing during that time," said Sister Maureen. On August 8, 1956, she joined the Benedictine Sisters of Convent Queen of Angels.

After some teacher education, Sister Maureen was assigned to St. Luke's Catholic school in Woodburn, Oregon, to teach second grade. Her first class in 1957 had forty-nine students. It would be the start of a twenty-eight-year-long teaching career in Woodburn, Salem, Silverton, Mt. Angel and Stayton.

In 1984, Sister Maureen was called to a new ministry. "I felt in my heart, I wanted to be a chaplain in a hospital." While still working for St. Paul's Catholic Church in Silverton, she began her training. In 1986, she was hired by Providence Health to serve as a chaplain at Providence Medical Center. "It was the hardest and most wonderful thing I ever did," she remembers. "I was there to give comfort and hope."

Throughout Sister Maureen's life, music has

played an instrumental role. Her mother, a talented violinist, encouraged her to start playing the piano at the age of six. She was a member of the Portland Symphonic Choir for twelve years, and traveled to Russia and Estonia as part of "Bridges of Songs for Peace." As part of her chaplaincy with Providence, Sister Maureen would go from unit to unit, playing the harp.

In 2007, after twenty-four years with Providence, Sister Maureen retired, but her retirement was short lived. She was asked to oversee music at St. Mary Parish in Mt. Angel. In 2011, she retired, again, after fifty-four years of work as a teacher, chaplain and musician.

Sister Maureen's story is inspiring and remarkable. Hers is one of many here at Queen of Angels Monastery. Nearly all of our sisters, although retired, continue their monastic work and ministry. Today, Sister Maureen remains heavily involved in music and liturgy for her Benedictine Community. She is involved in the Oblate program, and continues to play the piano, organ and harp.

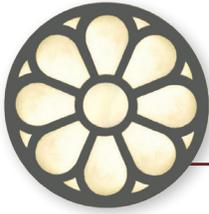
Our monastic life and ministry during retirement is only sustained through the generosity, support and love of our friends and family.

Every gift helps. We are tremendously thankful for all of you who supported our Founder's Day Virtual Celebration.

It was a huge success. However, as the pandemic continues, we too continue to need and pray for your support of our monastic community. Your gift will go directly to support our elderly and retired sisters.

Our goal for this year's annual Retirement Appeal is \$100,000. I sincerely hope that we can count on your support to help us reach this goal. Visit [www.benedictine-srs.org/retirement](http://www.benedictine-srs.org/retirement) to make your contribution in support of our retired sisters.





# Estate Planning



## Planning Beyond the Pandemic

*by Michael Trevino, Director of Mission Advancement*

Over this past year, we have seen a tremendous outpouring of support for the sisters. Our Century Club appeal back in May exceeded its goal. Our Founder's Day Virtual Celebration that concluded in October also exceeded its goal. We are very hopeful that our year-end Retirement appeal, featuring Sister Maureen Niedermeyer, will also exceed its goal. Thanks to the wonderful support of family and friends, the coronavirus's financial impact on the sisters this year has been significantly mitigated.

However, as we go from waiting for COVID to pass, to life with COVID, it is apparent the pandemic will have long lasting effects on the sisters' monastic community. Their hospitality ministry, which used to welcome dozens of groups and hundreds of guests coming for day and overnight retreats, continues to be

closed. Services in the chapel, which used to welcome oblates, family and friends every Sunday, also remain closed. Our gift shop and Shalom retreat ministry continue, although now nearly entirely virtual. These small but important sources of revenue have been interrupted, and their full return remains uncertain.

This is why planned gifts and bequests are so important to our organization. These gifts account for a significant portion of annual budget. They truly are a critical part of the monastic community's ability to care for and sustain itself. If a Benedictine sister has had a significant and positive impact on your life, please consider a planned gift or bequest to honor them. By doing so, you will help ensure Queen of Angels Monastery remains a safe place for the sisters.

*We are pleased to announce new members of the Society of St. Gertrude, a special group of supporters who have ensured the future of the sisters through their estate plans or wills.*

*John Pavlicek  
Ed Zollner  
Amy Dundon-Berchtold  
Martin & Helen Hilgers*

Please note: The legal title and address for the sisters is:  
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel  
840 S. Main St, Mt. Angel, OR 97362  
Tax ID #93-0387331

# Founder's Day Virtual Celebration: Thank you!

*by Michael Trevino, Mission Advancement Director*

Thank you to everyone who made our 2020 Founder's Day Virtual Celebration an outstanding success. Through the kindness and generosity of nearly 150 supporters, we were able to raise over \$95,000 – almost \$20,000 more than our goal. We have been truly humbled by the outpouring of support for our virtual dinner.

We hope you enjoyed the videos we created for you. If you missed them, you can still view them on our website at [www.benedictine-srs.org/foundersday](http://www.benedictine-srs.org/foundersday). A special thank you to Brant Walsh, *The Mac Guy*, who helped video tape and produce the videos.

**We would like to thank our presenting sponsor, The Larry & Jeanette Epping Family Foundation, for their wonderful matching grant.**

## **We would also like to thank the following “virtual” table sponsors:**

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## ***I want to support the Sisters. What can I do?***

**There are a number of ways you can support the Benedictine Sisters.**

*Gifts can be made in-person, through the mail, or online. Volunteer opportunities are also available.*

*Visit our website [www.Benedictine-Srs.org/Donate](http://www.Benedictine-Srs.org/Donate) to learn more. You can also contact our Development Office at (503) 845-2556 to learn about opportunities available to support the Sisters.*

# Reflections

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840 S. Main St., Mt. Angel, OR 97362

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## *An Advent Poem*

*By Sister Regina Rausch, OSB*

*The season of Advent  
is the time we prepare and wait for —*

*Angels announcing the  
Divine birth.  
Virgin's baby  
Enters earth.  
News  
Travels.*

