



St. Placid Priory

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Spring - Summer

February, 2022

On Being Benedictine

By Anna-Camille Wooden, OSB

The *Rule of Benedict* has been around for more than 1500 years. Its imminent demise along with the end of monasticism has been heralded periodically throughout that time. And yet...the slow work of God continues, and Benedictine influence and values continue to spread.

On Being Monastic and Modern

An article in the most recent **Global Sisters Report** titled “The Rise of Monasticism in the Modern World” charts the rising interest in a new expression of monasticism: rooted in centuries of tradition yet responsive to an increasingly diverse group of seekers. “Monastic traditions—including stability, silence, community, hospitality, love of learning, and continual growth, to name a few—are speaking to this moment, and those ranging from the nonreligious to apostolic Catholic sisters are listening.” **Linda Romey, OSB** observes, “If monasticism is a doorway to a more contemplative life, that means it is a doorway to the future, to a deeper knowledge of what it is to be a human creature made in the image of God.”

On Being Benedictine in the 21st Century

“Being Benedictine” is an ongoing forum for discussing the future of Benedictine life. Its primary organizers, **Judith Sutura, OSB**, **Linda Romey, OSB** and **Judith Valente, Oblate OSB** were all interviewed and quoted in the **Global Sisters** article. Their website describes their beginning and purpose: “Being Benedictine in the 21st Century” launched its website in

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. —Teilhard de Chardin

early 2019. Six months later, registrations were open for the first ever gathering of the universal Benedictine community—vowed, non-vowed, oblates, men, women, seekers, canonical, non-canonical—to take place in Atchison, Kansas, June 2020. A dozen Benedictine and spiritual leaders endorsed the purpose of the gathering. Quickly, 200 persons representing forty monasteries registered.

“The intent of the gathering was not to dwell so much on exploring what is but rather to focus on ‘What are the important questions we haven’t yet asked?’ Through listening and dialogue informed by Benedictine values, the teachings of Vatican II, and inclusive theologies—inclusive of women, the environment, the oppressed, the refugee—our goal was to come away from this conference with a new roadmap for spreading the light of Benedictine spirituality well into the 21st century.”

When Covid lockdowns made gathering in person impossible, the conference went on through Zoom. There were more than 200 participants representing over 50 monasteries. I attended that first conference in May of 2021 with Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB as the keynote speaker. I came away inspired and newly convinced of the power that Benedictine values have to change the world. St. Placid Priory was also well represented by our Oblates. The online forum held a second meeting in November 2021 with discussions built around 5 themes: Building Blocks of the Benedictine Community: Vowed Members and Oblates; Benedictine

Community: A Spiritual Heart Changing the World; Benedictine Formation: A School for Beginners; Being Benedictine: Seeing New and Renewed Ways to Live Our Charism; and Benedictine Prayer: Single-hearted Seeking of God.

If you visit **beingbenedictine.org** you will find access to all the documents of these meetings and plans for the future. And you would be most welcome to join the conversation.

On Being Benedictine in the World

Everyday thousands of Benedictine Oblates go about their lives witnessing to the Gospel and Benedictine values. They are lay monastics in the world, a bridge between the monastery and the world, bringing the world an example of a different way to be.

Brian and Anna Peterson are St. Placid Oblates and world travelers. They reflected on traveling as Benedictine Oblates:

“A part of ‘being a Benedictine in the world’ that we love is seeing other parts of that world. We have been blessed with time spent in Australia, across North America and several trips to Europe. Around the time we became Oblates, we also discovered Celtic spirituality, and the combination has guided our travels since. A trip to France ended with five days spent at Taizé, a restful, refreshing retreat before the return trip home.

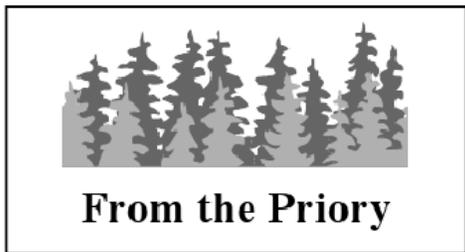
Time in Italy was wonderfully spent at Assisi, Subiaco, and Monte Cassino in addition to Florence and Rome.

“Trips to Ireland and Scotland were pilgrimages to sites significant to the Celtic world (we call our 2014 trip the Magical Mystical Tour, apologies to the Beatles). That trip ended with a

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week-long retreat on the island of Iona. Being Oblates flavors our interactions with people in general, and while traveling in particular. We have heard stories of rudeness of people in other countries but have never experienced it, as we travel with, and live out, our Benedictine values of hospitality, greeting the stranger, living a prayerful life in (world-wide) community.”

Monasticism is alive, well and doing the slow work of God: healing, uniting, building God’s peaceful kingdom.



From the Priory

Sister Julian Cleary attended the national Leadership Conference of Women Religious gathering via Zoom, August 11-13.

On August 14, **Sister Laura Swan, Candidate Paz Vital** and **Novice Tricia Burns** attended the Solemn Profession of **Brother Damien-Joseph Rappuhn** at **St. Martin’s Abbey** and visited with the monks afterward at an outdoor buffet luncheon.

A St. Placid High School Alumna, **Barbara Coic Darnell**, came by on the Solemnity of the Assumption to visit with **Sister Lucy Wynkoop**, and brought us a salmon caught on a fishing trip with her husband. A special treat!

On August 18, **Sister Laura Swan** began a three-day Visitor training for members from the four Federations / Congregations of Benedictine Women in the United States.

Sister Julian Cleary participated in a continuing legal education seminar presented by **Northwest Immigrant**

Rights Project on September 3. The topic was Asylum Proceedings.

Labor Day afternoon, September 6, **Sister Laura Swan** was interviewed by **Radio Awakened** host **Michael Sapiro** about the Desert Mothers. Radio Awakened airs Wednesdays 4:30-5:00 pm Mountain time on KRBX, Boise, ID (or listen online at radioboise.org)



Dorothy Robinson, OSB

The community of St. Placid Priory celebrated the Silver Jubilee of **Sister Dorothy Robinson** on the Feast of the Birth of Mary, September 8. Sister Dorothy has served as subprioress for a number of years. She is grateful for all the blessings of her 25 years of monastic life and for her Benedictine Sisters.

The **Benedictine Scholars** from **Saint Martin’s University** joined us on September 25 for lunch outdoors and a tour of our new Stations of the Cross, designed and produced by our friends, **Renata and Walter Siegl**.

On September 28, most of the St. Placid community attended Mass at **Saint Martin’s Abbey**. **Archbishop Paul Etienne** was the celebrant, and we had an opportunity briefly to visit with him. *See photo at right.*

Sister Sharon McDonald, our Prioress, joined the **St. Placid High School** graduating **Class of 1971** for

their 50th reunion at a restaurant in downtown Olympia, on October 10.

November 4, **St. Martin University students** from **Kathleen McKain’s** class came to work in the monastery yard this morning. We have many trees and lots of leaves. Thank you, SMU students!



Postulants Paz Vital and Sonja Weber with candles in chapel after their ritual

On October 17, at a ritual during Evening Praise, Candidates **Sonja Weber** and **Paz Vital** became Postulants. We all celebrated at a gathering, afterwards, in our dining room.

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Archbishop Paul Etienne and Sister Sharon McDonald, Prioress of St. Placid Priory, outside Saint Martin’s Abbey

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Sisters Raphaela Cady, Laura Swan, Novice Tricia Burns, and Postulants Sonja Weber and Paz Vital attended the **Sacred Music Concert at Saint Martin’s Abbey Church**, on October 30.

Sister Laura Swan spoke via Zoom, on November 10, with a group of women who have formed a **Beguine** community outside Dublin, Ireland. Sister Laura said, “They wanted to discuss my book, *The Wisdom of the Beguines*, which they have studied, and we talked about possibilities around a modern Beguine life. What do the medieval Beguines have to offer them today? And what might be different in light of today’s concerns?”

On November 14, **Sister Laura Swan** and **Postulants Paz Vital** and **Sonja Weber** attended the **Multicultural Mass at Saint Martin’s Abbey Church**.

The new, dark blue chasuble created by **Sister Monika Ellis** for Advent was blessed by the community and **Father Justin McCreedy** on November 18. On the First Sunday of Advent, November 28, **Abbot Marion Nguyen** seemed happy to be the first to wear the new chasuble.

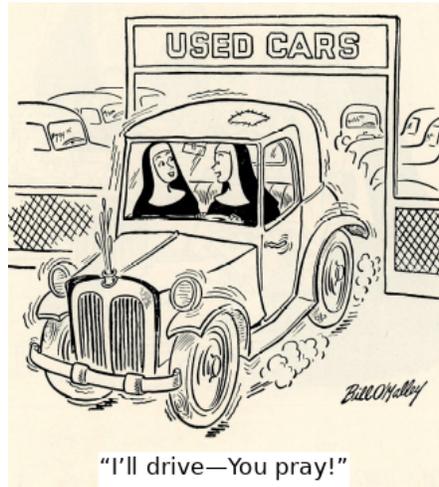
December 3-5 were our days of **Direction Setting** in preparation for our **Discernment and Election of Prioress** coming up March 11-13. **Sister Aileen Bankemper**, Prioress of **St. Walburg Monastery**, Covington, Kentucky, facilitated our talks.

We always look forward to the **Winter Solstice**, (December 21 in 2021) when we bless and light our Christmas tree in the evening. This picture was taken in day time, but we usually sit in the dark and enjoy the lights on the tree for a while after the blessing.



From the Archives Keeping Our History Alive

In a small box, tucked away in our library archives, are three small paperback books of cartoons; numbering less than 100 pages each, they are from the 1950’s. Two of them are books of “nun” cartoons and one is titled *Benedictine Humor*. We have no idea how we happened to have them; I am guessing they were gifts from community friends. The cartoon accompanying this article is from a 1950 book titled *Two Little Nuns*.



The two Sisters in it are young teachers, and their adventures throughout the 60 or so cartoons reflect many of the stories I have heard of Sisters’ lives at that time. The magazine where they originated, *Extension*, is still in publication. I discovered this magazine is published by the Catholic Extension organization, founded in 1905 to support isolated, rural Catholics without churches and priests. *Extension* was started in 1906 and has been in print ever since.

In the Works from St. Placid: A “Monastery Cookbook”

The last archives article was about Sister Damaris’ recipe collection and the good food she and other Sisters had prepared through the years. It struck a chord with many of you who had enjoyed these goodies in the past. We are putting together a cookbook with the most familiar recipes--and stories about the founding Sisters--who, in addition to being good cooks, were also nurses, teachers, principals, administrators, musicians and writers. Stay tuned!

A Leadership and Life Coaching Program for Religious Women: A Ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh

“We believe that as a global society we are in dire need of cultivating better relationship skills that can help people develop stronger communities of support and belonging. By learning coaching skills as religious women, we can share more deeply our intrinsic values with others and can become even more consciously a sign of ‘Christ in the world.’ Using scripture as an authentic basis for a coaching program and by helping religious women develop coaching skills, we can more consciously address these fundamental societal issues.” **For women religious and for any religious woman.**

For more information about this two-year program, please go to <https://www.osbpg.org/leadership-home> You may also contact **Roberta Campbell, OSB** at 412.716.9687 or email rcampbell4530@gmail.com

Cohorts 1 & 2 are underway now. Cohort 3 begins Oct 4, 2022, and Cohort 4 begins Jan 19, 2024.

OBLATES

The Oblates are deep into this year’s program “Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration.” Using materials from **JustFaith Ministries**, each session includes discussion of assigned reading, small and large group sharing, Lectio Divina, and connecting to the Rule of Benedict. The meetings are planned and facilitated by the Oblate team of Susan Johnson, Bonnie Westmark, Barbara Williams, Marilyn Freeman, Anna and Brian Peterson, and Kathy Androes-Downes. We have also welcomed guests who are interested in doing this study with us.

The Oblates had an Advent retreat led by St. Placid Oblate and presenter Kathryn Rickert. The day long Zoom retreat was a study of, and reflection on, the Magnificat. We had music and silence, discussion, meditation and acquired a deeper understanding of this most beautiful of hymns.

SYNOD 2021-2023

By Julian Cleary, OSB

In October of 2021, **Pope Francis** convened a Synod with the theme: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*. While Synods have typically involved bishops and clerical hierarchy, in this call for synodality, Pope Francis has invited the entire People of God to journey together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Synodality, stemming from “Synod,” refers to the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. As the People of God walk forward together, they listen and participate in the mission of the Church, in the communion that Christ establishes. These three dimensions of communion, participation and mission are equally important and dynamic, and are fundamentally interrelated. They form the pillars of this Synod.

While other Synods have focused on themes such as the family or the Amazon or even the production of documents, this Synod is entirely different. The objective of the current Synod, according to the *Vademecum*, the Synod’s Official Handbook, is **To Listen**. For the People of God to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.

It is intended to “Inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.” --Preparatory Document 32, quoted in the *Vademecum* 1.3.

And when the listening and participation phase has been completed, Episcopal Conferences and Synods will be held in the Oriental Churches, and a Continental Phase will occur in

which 7 international meetings will take place. The Synod will conclude with an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2023, with Pope Francis, who will listen to all the processes that have occurred during the two-year synodal process.

We all have been invited to listen and to participate in this Synod. And, over the course of the next couple of years, we may begin to hear the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

This process of listening, communion, participation, and mission is something especially relevant to life at St. Placid Priory now. Every four years a prioress is elected at the Priory. The prioress, through her pastoral ways and her infusion of Gospel values—as pertain to the community Mission, leads the community toward the Kingdom of God. St. Placid Priory is beginning to undertake its own synodal process as the community listens to the Holy Spirit, re-identifies the Priory mission and invites a prioress and the community to participate in this work of the Holy Spirit. All ears will be listening to what the Spirit has to say.

GOINGS ON AT THE CENTER

The Spirituality Center is still a place for connecting with God. Instead of being in one of the retreat rooms or meeting spaces, we sit in a desk chair or on a couch—participating with a group on a computer screen. It is different, but it works. Participants regularly attend our offered **Zoom Programs** to learn something new about themselves and others, and to share their thoughts and impressions. And spiritual directors make phone calls or use video platforms to keep their relationships strong with directees.

In looking over the past year, our Long Term Programs garnered great interest. Meeting every month with the same group of people filled a

void many are experiencing. Connecting to God, to oneself and to others has brought a consistency and a rhythm to faith and to the pursuits related to spiritual growth. **Oasis, Spiritual Tools for Artists** and the **Enneagram** have a core of participants who look forward to being with each other while exploring a focused subject. **Listening with the Spirit** has a large group of 17 dedicated students learning to be spiritual directors. They are honing their skills in order to companion seekers on their journeys with God.

For now, this part of our spiritual lives is done remotely. And God is at the Center.

—Janice Ariza, Center Coordinator

Modern Mystics

We have finished Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and have had some lively and spirit-filled discussions last quarter. Merton wrote this book from within and for a conservative, white, male, strict monastic system, and while his writing is often prophetic and encouraging, we have each had to tease out its meaning as to what resonates for us in our own walk. Merton's use of paradox has also led to thought-provoking discussions.

We selected for winter quarter *The Naked Now* by Richard Rohr, meeting for discussion via Zoom on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Be on the lookout for next quarter’s sign up on the Priory Spirituality Center website. We welcome new members to Modern Mystics! —Carlos Herrera

Cinema Divina, with Marilyn Freeman leading, is a delightful way to spend a Sunday afternoon. I have been involved with this group since pre-Covid-19. Once a month, Marilyn leads the group into Lectio using a short video experience. I am always inspired! I enjoy writing Haiku, and I composed this one in response to Cinema Divina on February 7, 2021:

a joyful heart
led by the spirit
spreads joy abundantly

—Cheryl Gudger

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Have you ever passed by someone in an art museum – or any museum for that matter, and wondered what they are seeing as they stand absorbed in art? Well, join the crowd on the fourth Thursday of every month at 1:00 pm on **Zoom Spiritual Tools for Artists!** It is fascinating, intriguing, challenging and rewarding to see art through another’s eyes and spirit. We laugh and maybe cry



The Bedroom by Vincent van Gogh

or quietly scream as we are invited to see new and different visions and perspectives. Then invite God to the party, and it becomes amazing. My life and spiritual journey would be less without this monthly adventure so beautifully led by Janice and Evan. Hope to see you on-screen,

—Suzy Petty

The **Oasis** program has introduced me to enriching books, authors, insights, and spiritual practices that I know I would not have discovered on my own. In addition, it has been a gift to sit down quietly with one of the Priory Sisters each month, to just talk and explore life and faith. These Spiritual Direction sessions have been a refreshing time of renewal for me. I am so grateful for the Oasis connection each month.

—Teresa Enslin

While Covid-19 is still of concern, we are offering all of our programs and retreats via **Zoom**. Please register on our website at stplacid.org It’s pretty easy, but if you have trouble, you may call Janice Ariza at 360.438.2595 for help, or email: spiritualityctr@stplacid.org

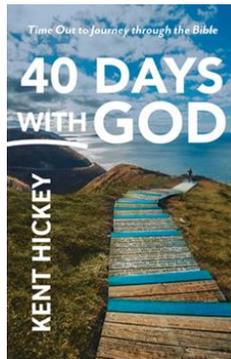
Find a list of programs and retreats at this web address: stplacid.org/spirituality-center/weekend-programs

To read a color version of our newsletter, please look online at stplacid.org under the menu item **News**.

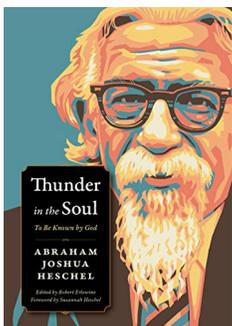
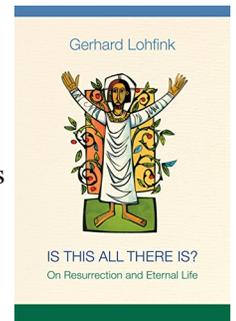


Sister Laura's Scriptorium:
Books that Merit Attention

40 Days with God. Time Out to Journey through the Bible by Kent Hickey, Paraclete Press, 2021. “With God, toward God, in short time and tight spaces” as the author states. These short “every day” reflections (Breezy Days, The Croucher, etc.) on a passage of scripture entice us to remember the God who is always with us, always in our midst. Humor throughout.

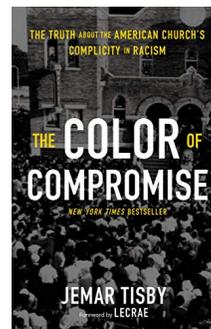


sources that have influenced some of our thinking and our questions around death, dying, and what happens next. His attitude is respectful and positive. Maybe this is a good choice for your Lenten reading.



Thunder In The Soul: To Be Known by God, by Abraham Joshua Heschel, Plough Publishing, 2021. Heschel was an extraordinary person, whom I teach as the most important Jewish leader of the 20th Century; his writings influenced Christianity as much as Judaism. Action in defense of Justice was the ultimate prayer for him. And “God is where you let God in.” This is a fine introduction to

Heschel for all who are not familiar with this extraordinary rabbi.



The Color of Compromise. The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism, by Jemar Tisby, Zondervan, 2021. The Bible has been used to justify slavery, then Jim Crow Laws, to resist the Civil Rights movement. How do people of faith justify racism (the judgment of people for how they look)? This is well-

written. Our Oblate community and Sisters have been reading and discussing racist policies.



Is This All There Is? On Resurrection and Eternal Life, by Gerhard Lohfink, Liturgical Press, 2017. Lohfink is one of my favorite authors. In clear language, grounded in serious scholarship yet written for the non-specialist, Lohfink explores



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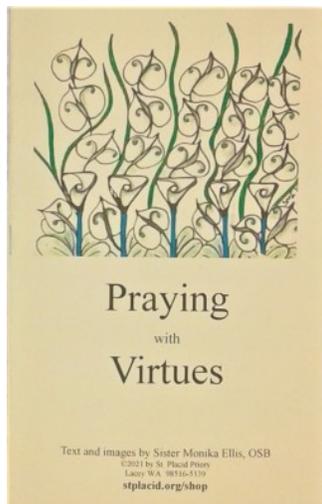
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Explore The Priory Arts Shop online at stplacid.org/shop where Sisters and our friends create beautiful things—for your enjoyment and inspiration, for giving as gifts, and to help support our ministries.

“I am so impressed with the booklet *Praying with Virtues*, which can be purchased online from the Priory Art Shop: stplacid.org/shop. This booklet was written and illustrated by **Sister Monika Ellis**. It includes information about the virtue, biblical references, encouragement to pray, and space for writing personal thoughts. I must have purchased at least 30 copies, and given them to friends and family. As an Oblate of St Benedict, I find that giving these booklets is a great way to spread Benedictine Spirituality!” —Cheryl Gudger, OblSB



Spirituality Center Staff

Janice Ariza – Center Coordinator
Lucy Wynkoop, OSB – Program Coordinator
Mary Giles Mailhot, OSB – Staff
Monika Ellis, OSB – Staff

Weekend Hospitality Staff

Kathy Androes-Downes, Obl. OSB
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Liz Langeland, Obl. OSB

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Second Right turn is our driveway

Coming North on I-5

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