



Summer – Fall

August, 2023



Zentangle® by Monika Ellis, OSB

Greening

By Angela Hoffman, OSB

“I (God) am the breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits.
I am the rain coming from the dew
that causes the grasses to laugh
with the joy of life.”

Gabriele Uhlein, Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen (Santa Fe: 1982), p. 84

Hildegard of Bingen

(1098 – 1179), a Benedictine Abbess whose reputation as a visionary, healer, scientist, author, speaker, poet, artist, and musician, was well known in her lifetime. Fortunately for us, many of her books, songs and other works have been preserved. They include several themes, including light, the centrality of God within and through creation, and the creative energy of God which she called “viriditas” or “greening.”

Hildegard had a balanced, wholistic, imaginative and creative view of the universe. She challenged the translation of Genesis that directs humans to “subdue the earth”. How could humans subdue creation when we are part of creation? Like many of our Native American tribes, Hildegard did not try to separate the Creator from creation. God is in us and in all of creation and all creation is in God.

For Hildegard, viriditas is not just the fruitfulness of growing things in the spring and summer. The fruitfulness of God permeates all of creation all of the time. She was a true environmentalist. Because she did not separate body from soul as did St. Augustine and many other Christian writers, she saw the soul as “the freshness of the flesh, for the body grows and thrives through it just as the earth becomes fruitful through moisture.” (Weldell C. Beane, W.C. Doty, eds., *Myths, rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader, Vol II* (New York, 1976), p. 416.)

According to Hildegard, the Divine Word calls all of us to a creativity that enhances the creativity of God and that “bears fruit that lasts” (John 15.16). Let us praise God’s creative hand in our environment and in all of creation just as Hildegard did. We can use her rich imagery as we pray through the beauty of our environment and all the cosmos, whether animate or inanimate and in all seasons of the year.



On January 14, Novices **Sonja Weber** and **Paz Vital** joined **Sister Laura Swan** for a stunning performance by the **Maxwell Quartet** at the **Abbey Church Events**.

Sister Laura Swan represented our community at the January 18 **Archdiocesan Convocation**, which presented the process for re-evaluating parish structures with some mergers. Many of those attending were deacons, sisters, brothers, priests and pastoral staff. The initiative is called **Partners in the Gospel**, and its goal is to “reinvigorate and renew our local Catholic Church.”

On February 1, **Sister Angela Hoffman** departed for Cullman, Alabama, for the week-long **Conference of**

Benedictine Prioresses meeting. The Abbots gathering joined them for three days.



Conference of Benedictine Prioresses
Sr. Angela Hoffman is on the left

Irene Zander, our late **Sister Damaris Zander's** niece, and her daughter and daughter in law stopped by on February 6 to pick up a box of Sister Damaris' things. **Sister Laura Swan** welcomed them and they stayed for an enjoyable visit.

In mid-February, before **Sister Sharon McDonald** left on her long-deserved sabbatical, we honored her years as prioress at dinner with gifts, songs, and stories.

March 1-4, members of the **Monastic Technology Group** arrived to visit and consult with our **Sister Raphaela Cady**. **Sister Tamra Thomas**, St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN, **Sister Michelle (Missy) Sinkhorn**, Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, IN, and **Sister Stefanie MacDonald**, St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, IL, spent some time at St. Placid Priory and also joined Sister Raphaela on a trip to Portland, OR to investigate technology equipment for their group project.

We heaved a communal sigh of relief in March as, after 13 months without a finance office employee, we brought our new bookkeeper on board! She is a gem and has relieved several of us of our jobs as part-time bookkeeping clerks. Welcome, **Lynn Carlson!**

On the Solemnity of the Passing of Benedict, March 21, **Sister Maureen O'Larey** attended the funeral of **Arlene Unglaub**, one of the last surviving members of the **Benedictine Boosters**—who were our faithful supporters for many years.

On March 22, **Novice Paz Vital** and **Sister Maureen O'Larey** participated in a vocations gathering at **Saint Martin's University**.

Sister Angela Hoffman accompanied some of her former students from the **University of Portland**, on March 24, to a meeting of the **American Chemical Society** in Indianapolis, IN. Sister Angela returned home on March 29.

On April 11, our Monastic Congregation president, **Sister Nancy Bauer** (St. Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, MN) arrived to spend a few days with us to get to know our community better. Sister Nancy will be present for our 2024 Visitation.

Sisters Angela Hoffman and **Anna-Camille Wooden** flew on April 19 to Philadelphia for a Leadership Conference, returning Friday, late evening, April 21. It was a whirlwind trip, but as Sister Anna-Camille noted, "One of the best conferences I've ever attended."

On April 21, **Novices Paz Vital** and **Sonja Weber** with **Sisters Raphaela Cady** and **Laura Swan** attended the regional **National Religious Vocational Conference and Religious Formation Conference (NRVC/RFC)** gathering at the former Marylhurst University in Lake Oswego, OR. **Sister Joanne Doi, MM** presented on Inter-cultural Spirituality.



National Religious Vocational Conference and Religious Formation Conference

April 23-27, **Sister Anna-Camille Wooden** co-facilitated a six day **Centering Prayer** retreat at **St. Andrew's Retreat House** in Union, WA.

Listening with the Spirit participants graduated on April 26, and gathered in person for the ritual and celebration. They had been participating for two years via Zoom, and were delighted to meet at last face to face.

On May 3, **Sister Maureen O'Larey** attended the funeral of longtime community friend, **Anne Claire Jesse**, at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Tacoma.

Our Monastic Chapter met on May 4 and voted that **Novice Sonja Weber** and **Novice Paz Vital** are ready to make first profession on July 11. A happy day!

On Cinco de Mayo, May 5, our new blog went live with **Novice Paz Vital's** first post, titled "**Living at St. Placid.**" Find our blog at: blog.stplacid.org

Novices Paz Vital and **Sonja Weber** departed on May 8 for the **Novice & Director Institute (NADI)**, hosted this year by **Sacred Heart Monastery**,

Cullman, AL. **NADI** is a 10-day retreat which helps Benedictine novices, under the tutelage of experienced Sisters, prepare to make first profession.



Novice & Director Institute (NADI) 2023.
From left to right:
Sr. Patricia; N. Paz; N. Dorothy;
Sr. Karen-Ann; N. Sonja

On May 20, St. Placid Priory hosted an **online vocations day**. If you are discerning a Benedictine Monastic vocation, consider talking to **Sr. Lucy Wynkoop**. Call her at 360.438.2595 or email lwynkoop@stplacid.org

Our friends from the **Young Ladies Institute, Tahoma #67** in Tacoma, WA, visited us to catch up after several years of pandemic. They brought us many useful household things, and as always, gave us a generous donation. We enjoyed lively conversation and a special dessert.

Work party to clear away ivy and brush: We are most grateful to about 20 members of the **Calvary Chapel North Thurston** for their help on June 3, 2023. They made a big dent in pulling ivy and making our grounds look lots better. They hauled away two overflowing truckloads of it. There is still a lot more to go. **Sr. Raphaela**, **Sr. Angela**, and others have been trimming back trees and bushes next to the buildings.



Members of Calvary Chapel North Thurston clearing away ivy and brush.
We are grateful to them!

Sr. Raphaela has been busy transforming space in the monastery. She

has a keen eye for design and understands the need for both pleasing and utilitarian spaces inside and outside of the monastery buildings. Two recent projects have been moving cabinetry from the Formation classroom to the Medical Room, and putting bookcases in the classroom to replace the cabinetry. Because of her spatial expertise, our classroom is now invitingly ready for new women in Formation and our medical room has become easily accessible for all medical needs.



New bookshelves in our Formation Classroom

Sister Anna-Camille Wooden made her Perpetual Monastic Profession on January 15, our patronal Feast of St. Placid. We celebrated afterward in our dining room with laughter and joy.



VOCATIONS UPDATE

Two students from the University of Portland joined us for a weekend to learn about our Community. They stayed at the Spirituality Center, met with a group of Sisters, ate with us, and took part in the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass.

We are happy to host individuals or groups who are interested in doing this. Please contact Sister Lucy (lucywynkoop@gmail.com), Sister Angela (ahoffman@stplacid.org) or call 360-438-1771, and we will gladly schedule a visit.



Sarah Vargas and Ashley Robertson visiting the Sisters in the community room

We remember
our friends and family members
who recently died:

- + Feb. 13 **Arlene Unglaub**
- + March 15 **John Gonneville,**
(Sr. Therese's brother)
- + April 8 **Anne Claire Jesse**

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Keeping Our History Alive

The community has been gathering each month to honor the lives of the Sisters who founded the community. We read their biography aloud, pass their picture around and then share memories. We are recording this sharing so that their stories will continue to be remembered. For those of us who are newer to the community this has been a gift, we are getting to know our ancestors and their Benedictine lives.

So, I want to share this with you, our extended community. Some of you also knew and called these Sisters friends and teachers. Each future new-letter will feature one of our founding sisters, we have already featured Sr. Damaris Zander and Sr. Nathalie Karel. Each Sister left us treasures from their lives and I will be sharing those treasures with you.



This month we are remembering Sr. **Michon Sassman**. She was born in 1920 in Madison Wisconsin, and passed away surrounded by her St. Placid community in 1996. She made her Perpetual Profession in 1944 at St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph Minnesota. She was a teacher at Holy Rosary in Tacoma and All Saints in Puyallup before

teaching from 1974 to 1982 at St. Placid High School. She is remembered as a woman of God – compassionate, caring, nurturing, sincere, always grateful and gracious.

In her archival box is a booklet of her poems *Thoughts Throughout the Years* published in 1995. Here is the last verse from one of those poems titled *An Evening's Meditation*.

by Anna Camille Wooden, OSB

The green gloom thickens;
Birds and squirrels are still.
Blue skies deepen; stars strike out until
Their sharp, clear glitter sparks
From every tip of pine tree sentinels.
It is the time to enter in and kneel
In dream-ful peace...
Anxieties cease, and He restores the oil to
Emptying lamp with fresh renewal...
The centuries answer
Benedictine afterglow!

OBLATES

The Year of the Mystics

The Oblate year of study began with the question: what is a mystic? It ended with a presentation on the "kitchen" mystics, those men and women who practiced their mysticism amid the pots and pans and work of an ordinary life. It was a rich year, and each Oblate came away with their own understanding and new questions. Here are reflections from two Oblates on what this year has held for them.

This year the Oblate Community studied Mystics and Mystical traditions. We met mystics from different centuries, religious traditions, cultural settings, mystical practices, and historical and life conditions. From their times, from peace and war, plague and trials, oppression, and protest, from political activism to contemplative lifestyles, we heard voices speak to us. They invited us to join them and to seek peace that transcends our lifetimes. They called to us: listen to the still small voice calling you, treasure your dreams, trust your visions, write your reflections, and honor your callings. Then they whispered: There is a deeper love in front of you than you have yet known. Join us and fall in love, fall in love, fall in love.

Catherine Taylor Obl OSB

Mystics hear the heartbeat of God. This past year's dedication to exploring

the mystics through history and across religious traditions has been insightful and inspiring. The mystics' approach to discerning God's presence in their lives has something to teach us about the many different ways God is present, approachable, and eager to be in relationship with us. There's no one formula that's best when it comes to communicating with God and touching the Heart of Love. All that is required is sincerity and willingness. God takes care of the rest. That's what the mystics have taught me.

Laura Tenisci Obl OSB

More Oblate News:

On June 25th we held our yearly oblate rituals: welcoming new candidates, oblates and oblate affiliates renewing their promises and candidates making their oblation. This year there were other things to celebrate as well. For the first time since 2019 we were holding these ceremonies in person, during evening praise. Any of those who made their oblation during the 3 Covid years were invited to come and sign their oblation certificate at the altar. We welcomed new Oblates **Marcia McLaughlin** and **Laura Lasworth**, and new candidate **Lissa Valentine**.

We also celebrated the official transfer of oblation to St. Placid community by **Saima Scott** (from Erie PA). It was truly an evening of joy and communion.

by Anna Camille Wooden, OSB



The Welcome sign is out! The Center is sweeping its steps and dusting off the furniture, ready to receive with open arms all those who want to make a retreat or have a meeting in a beautiful and contemplative wooded setting. A steady building-up to our capacity is happening, and the use of our Zoom Hybrid systems are highly appreciated. Presenters are utilizing the large screen to show instructional power points and videos to in-person participants and those coming in virtually. New technological improvements help us to extend our reach and help more people to participate. The message is the same and with just as much meaning to receive all guests as if they were Christ.

Janice Ariza, Center Coordinator

Prayer Practices 2023-2024 is a certificate program to explore 20 ways to pray to support a prayerful life. You will learn to connect with the sacred in diverse ways in order to help yourself and/or to guide others. If you are a spiritual director, pastor, pastoral counselor or work in a ministry, different prayer practices enrich your work with others. It is an opportunity to be grounded in your own practice and get to know new ways to let that personal prayer experience permeate your entire life. Presenters will show how the prayer practice of each has touched their own lives.

A few comments from Prayer Practices 2022-2023 were:

- ♦ Most helpful was learning from different facilitators and their unique perspectives and approaches;
- ♦ I really liked the variety/diversity of presenters;
- ♦ I loved that people of many different denominations attended;
- ♦ I loved learning with and from my classmates—there was so much wisdom within this group;
- ♦ I have used many of these prayer practices in my spiritual direction and retreat work and it was a terrific series.

Listening with the Spirit 2023-2025 is a two-year formation/discernment process to become a Spiritual Director. In the context of community, participants are invited to explore and develop attitudes and skills appropriate for those called to the adventure of serving as a spiritual companion.

"I wasn't sure what to expect when entering the Listening With the Spirit program for preparing people with the possibility of becoming a certified Spiritual Director. It was more than I could have hoped for in so many ways. The program exposed students to a wide breadth of situations that a Spiritual Director might encounter and even better, practiced what we were learning as a key to our preparation toward becoming more attuned to future directees. The facilitators were welcoming, great examples, helped us progress through depth of material and experience, inviting us into presenting for and with one another, and guided us through the art of generous listening. As a result of our interactions, not only

did we learn from each other, but we also shared an enriching experience that bonded us. There is much gratitude to be expressed for the organization, presentation, and provision from the hearts of our facilitators that makes the LWS program a formative one for those who desire to give and live into life with others by attentively listening with the Spirit."

Lynne Benson LWS 2021-2023

Oasis 2023-2024 provides contemplative time to rest, pray, and nurture yourself especially if you have a busy schedule. What would your life look like if you gave yourself two retreat opportunities at the Center and six quiet afternoons during the year? Silence, spiritual direction and an opportunity to discuss Richard Rohr's *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* are available to aid your reflection.

When is the right time? Where is the right place? The Oasis program has been sacred time for me in different stages of my life. More than a decade ago, immersed with family and career busyness; Oasis was the welcome refuge I sought. Who knew, retirement is no less busy; returning to Oasis demonstrates seeking sacred time can be Kairos timeless time! Truly at Oasis I found my shelter in sacred space. (I can even "shelter in place" through the Hybrid option sessions when travel is not possible.) The Oasis program continues to be an abundant blessing of community with fellow companions through the year. I am in awe of the sacred time spent with my lovely friends and St. Placid Benedictines for grace-filled spiritual direction and live-giving presentations. Hope to see you at the **Oasis** soon!

Kathy Androes-Downes

Cultivating Contemplative Living is a program projected for 2024-2025. Participants would meet for 8 sessions for 2.5 hours each month. The contemplative community would have a check-in, an opening guided meditation, a teaching, time for reflecting, contemplative journaling, and how the practice might be incorporated in one's daily life. If you are interested in participating in this proposed program, please contact the Center and let Sister Lucy know. Jon M Sweeney & Mark S. Burow's *Meister Eckhart's Book of the Heart; Book of Secrets; and Book of Darkness & Light* are suggested writings for participants.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction is a way of extending a “sustaining, welcoming environment,” within a one-on-one relationship. It is a dynamic process where one can listen to self in order to reflect on life’s questions in light of our Gospel call. To learn more about our spiritual directors, see: stplacid.org/spirituality-center/spiritual-directors

“It has now been four years since I first received the blessing of spiritual direction, and since that first time, I have met with my spiritual director monthly. How can I adequately give thanks for the gifts I have received? Over these four years, I have come to know that not only are others bathed in the Divine Light, the Presence of Love, I have also come to know that I, too, am bathed in that Light, and this knowing does not come intellectually, yet rather experientially. Through my director’s loving and keen listening and her inspired responses, through the many resources she has offered me, through the work of Holy Spirit, I now know that Great Mystery works in me and through me as one of “many parts, all one body.” (1 Corinthians: 12:20) And for this, I offer a prayer of gratitude for having been led here.”

Susan Johnson Obl OSB

Individual Retreats

Visits to St. Placid Priory and Spirituality Center are always a blessing! Several times I have gone for an overnight stay, followed the next day by one of the excellent day programs. Other times I’ve gone just for a quiet, personal retreat. When life seems too busy and stressful, when my time for prayer becomes fragmented, it’s time for another trip to St. Placid. Going down the tree-lined drive toward the Priory and Spirituality Center, I can already feel a sense of peace. Before long, my busy thoughts begin to relax and untangle into prayer.

Joining the Sisters for Prayer, walking the paths through the woods behind the Priory, reading scripture, sleeping a lot... all work together to restore my sense of the presence and love of God.

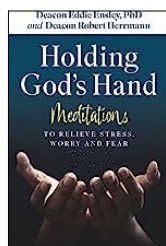
Kathleen Sallee

Watch for these and other exceptional offerings listed on the website:

- ◆ **Experience Zentangle** with Sr. Monika Ellis, OSB, monthly
- ◆ Sr. Anna-Camille Wooden, OSB will be presenting two Centering Prayer Programs: **Introduction to Centering Prayer**, Sept. 23, and a **Weekend Retreat**, October 20-22
- ◆ Janice Ariza and Evan Clendenin are continuing **Spiritual Tools for Artists** every fourth Thursday
- ◆ Author Shemaiah Gonzales is discussing her journey **writing about Brian Doyle**, November 11
- ◆ Christine Valters Paintner is inspiring writers with **Writing Into Bloom**, Dec. 2
- ◆ **Coming Alive with Howard Thurmond** led by Sr. Julian Cleary, OSB and Sr. Laura Swan, OSB, January 13, 2024

Sister Laura’s Scriptorium:

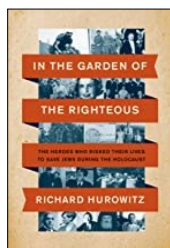
Books that Merit Attention



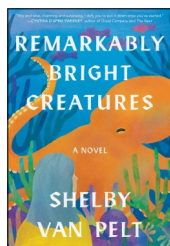
Holding God’s Hand. Meditations to Relieve Stress, Worry and Fear by Deacon Eddie Ensley and Deacon Robert Hermann, Twenty-Third Publications, 2023. This is a series of brief reflections, prayers, and guided meditations that address anxiety and stress while pointing us to a healthy way forward. I highly recommend this.



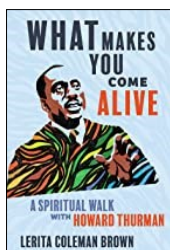
People Get Ready. Twelve Jesus-Haunted Misfits, Malcontents, and Dreamers in Pursuit of Justice edited by Peter Slade, Shea Tuttle & Jacqueline Bussie, Eerdmans, 2023. Meet modern apostles from diverse backgrounds who proclaimed the good news, even when “inconvenient.” Some you may have heard of; others not. You will appreciate this.



In the Garden of the Righteous. The Heroes Who Risked Their Lives to Save Jews During the Holocaust by Richard Hurowitz, Harper, 2023. Inspiring and well-written, these are stories of mostly-unknown people, who took risks to save Jewish lives, doing what they simply knew was the right thing to do.



Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt, Ecco, 2022. Want to meet an octopus with a snarky attitude? A mystery that you cannot imagine he could solve, but does? Listen to the **audio**. The actor playing the octopus does a stunning job. And the widow keeps up with him. Remember: all novels are morality plays.



What Makes You Come Alive. A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman by Lerita Coleman Brown, Broadleaf Books, 2023. Howard Thurman, spiritual advisor to Martin Luther King and other leaders of the civil rights movement, was a renaissance man whose spiritual teachings are extraordinarily poignant for today. Yet few know his words (“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is more people who have come alive.”) Spend this year with Howard Thurman.

Visit Our Website: www.stplacid.org



**Benedictine Sisters
St. Placid Priory**
The Spirituality Center
The Conference Center
The Priory Store
500 College St. NE
Lacey, WA 98516-5339

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August 2023

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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- ☐ New address
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- ☐ Receiving more than one copy



**Botanical Cards
made from
pressed flowers
by Novice Paz**



Spirituality Center Staff

Janice Ariza	Center Coordinator
Lucy Wynkoop, OSB	Program Coordinator
Monika Ellis, OSB	Staff

Welcome to Weekday and Sunday Mass: Beginning June 1, 2023 and until further notice, help us celebrate the end of COVID restrictions! If you have had COVID vaccinations and boosters and are feeling well, please feel free to join us for Sunday Mass at 9:00 a.m. and weekday Masses (Monday through Thursday) at 5:00 p.m. Masks are optional if you have all your vaccinations.

Liturgy of the Hours: We pray Morning Praise weekdays at 8:00 a.m. except for the second Monday. Noon praise is typically at 11:50 a.m., and evening praise is typically at 6:45 p.m. (Monday through Thursday). Please call ahead (360-438-1771) if you plan to attend the Liturgy of the Hours in case there should be a change of schedule.

Directions

Coming South on I-5

Take Exit 109
Right turn onto Martin Way
Right at next light onto College St. NE
Second right turn is our driveway

Coming North on I-5

Take Exit 109
Left turn onto Martin Way
Right at second light onto College St. NE
Second right turn is our driveway