



St. Placid Priory

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Autumn—Winter

August, 2024

Walking Together

by Angela Hoffman, OSB

There is something in each of us that challenges us to find our true and genuine self. I don't think most of us can discover ourselves unless another one walks with us to challenge us and to draw us out. We are seeking to be known and fearing it at the same time. Will I accept the "real me" after I meet me? What if I don't like the "real" me? What if someone gets to really know me but then rejects me?

Most of us need a real friend to help open us up to the potential placed in us by God. We have a wonderful example in Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. "Two of them that same day were making their way to Emmaus... discussing as they went all that had happened. In the course of their lively exchange, Jesus approached and began to walk along with them..." (Luke 25:13-15)

Jesus wanted to know "where the disciples were" with their experiences. He asked questions and did not make assumptions. First, he developed a relationship with them. He took them where they were and drew them beyond this to important insights. This allowed them to discover step-by-step who they were and who he was. Their hope that he was going to overthrow the Roman rule and restore the Kingdom of Israel was not God's plan,



so of course they were disappointed and dejected. The truth gave them life and hope, so when Jesus was not needed there anymore "he vanished from their sight" (Luke 24,31). The two disciples were now enabled to pass the good news on to the others.

What a wonderful example Jesus has left for us! Although there is always the possibility for misunderstanding or for breaching a boundary, "listening with the heart" is necessary.

St. Benedict knew how important it was to listen, that he mentioned it several times in his Rule. As we walk with each other, we know that God's love surrounds us. Just as Jesus did not judge others (even though he could have had good reasons to do so), we are challenged to drop stereotypes and the need to be "right." As Jesus was gentle with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, genuine kindness and gentleness are essential for us as well. It is a privilege and a gift to be able to make a positive difference in each other's lives. This is what Community is for!

To know and to be known!

To love and be loved!

To care and be cared for!

St. Benedict says "Listen, the time is now!" May we be willing to run the risk of misunderstanding or of being misunderstood. We are all anointed to be companions to each other on the journey. As we journey with each other, may our hearing become listening. May our sight become insight. May our gratefulness become greater.

God of tenderness and compassion, thank you for giving us wonderful companions on our journey to You. May we always know your boundless mercy, understanding and acceptance, and be able to experience these through each other and everyone we meet.



On February 10, the Solemnity of Saint Scholastica, we hosted the **Benedictine Scholars from Saint Martin's University** for Evening Praise, dinner and a visit.

With gratitude we honored **Sister Dorothy Robinson's** 25 years as sub-



prioress on February 13, while we also celebrated Mardi Gras and St. Valentine's day. The same day, **Sister Redempta Ndunguru** returned to Tanzania, delayed by 2 weeks due to Covid.



On February 16, **Sister Anna Camille Wood** became subprioress to prioress Angela Hoffman. Congratulations, and many blessings on this journey!

On February 24,

Sister Angela Hoffman attended the **Homecoming & Distinguished Alumni Awards** event at the invitation of **Saint Martin's President Roy Heynderickx**. On the same evening, **Sisters Angela, Baptista, Laura and Sonja** attended the **Abbey Church Events**. The **Cavatina Duo**, flute and guitar, was stunning, according to Sister Laura.

Sister Aileen Bankemper arrived from **St. Walburg's Monastery, KY**, on March 2 and began a workshop for us on March 3.

Six of the community came down with Covid during March, and were isolated at various times. Other members cared for them, bringing meals and so on. That's the most we've had sick in one time period. We were happy to see that siege end!

On March 20, **Sisters Angela Hoffman, Laura Swan, and Paz Vital** attended the Closing Ritual of Transfer of **Queen of Angels Monastery** to **Catholic Community Services**. They were glad to be present at an otherwise sad time. Some of their Sisters were able to attend as well.

Sisters Angela Hoffman, Laura Swan, Monika Ellis, and Paz Vital attended Vespers and dinner on March 21 with the **Saint Martin's monks**, whose ranks were low due to many attending the Chrism mass at the Cathedral. Sisters enjoyed the intimate conversation with the monks.

On March 23, **Sisters Laura Swan and Paz Vital** with Spirituality Center Coordinator **Janice Ariza** participated in the **Puget Sound Writers Guild** workshop with **Eric Witchey**.

Eleven lovely students from **Saint Martin's University** joined us for Mass, dinner and conversation on April 2. We were saddened to hear later that former member **Gilda Warden** passed away unexpectedly that same day.

April 6, **Sisters Angela Hoffman, Sharon McDonald, and Sonja Weber** attended **Abbey Church Events** and enjoyed Tenor Daniel McGrew accompanied on piano by Sophia Zhou.

Sisters and Brothers began arriving April 30 for the Northwest gathering of the **Religious Formation Conference** and the **National Religious Vocation Conference (RFC/NRVC)**, which we hosted this spring and for which **Sister Paz Vital** did much of the planning. We enjoyed a banquet to celebrate their presence on May 2, and the meeting ended May 3.



Members of the Religious Formation Conference (RFC) and the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC)

On Saturday, May 4, **Sister Laura** accompanied **Sister Deotila, Sister**

Senorina and Father Hugh to Sister Deotila's graduation at **Saint Martin's University**.

Also on May 4, volunteers from **Calvary Chapel North Thurston** with **Pastor Sam Christensen** graciously put in several hours working on our grounds. They made a big difference and we are grateful!

Drepung Gomang Sacred Arts Tour, a group of eight **Tibetan monks** from **Drepung Gomang Monastery, India**, arrived on May 7 to stay at the Center for a few days. The monks travel the States for the purpose of sharing the precious and endangered Tibetan culture, and to raise much needed funds for their monastery in India. **Sister Sonja Weber** took them to see some sights. Before leaving, they gave us a traditional Tibetan blessing.



Sister Sonja Weber with Tibetan monks of the Drepung Gomang Sacred Arts Tour

Sisters Angela Hoffman and Laura Swan attended the **Catholic Women's Charity** mass and breakfast on May 8 at **St. Patrick's** in Tacoma.

We had the privilege of hosting **NADI (Novice and Director Institute)** this year, which began the evening of May 13 and continued through May 24.

This is an important time for Benedictine women who are novices to come together with their directors and other Sisters to learn more about what monastic profession means. All of us enjoyed being with them, and they seemed to enjoy being here, especially the outings and a service day at **St. Vincent DePaul's clothing bank**.

On May 15, **Sister Redemista Nkonyani** was elected Mother General of her Congregation. Sister Redemista spent several years here with us, going to school at **Saint Martin's College** (now University), before obtaining her degree in canon law in Leuven, Belgium.

Our friend **Walter Siegl**, with children **Kathleen and Jim**, arrived May 17 with the cleaned-up Stations of the Cross for re-installation. The outdoor

stations had accumulated moisture inside their protective covers, and needed to be restored.



Walter Siegl with Kathleen and Jim

The **Tahoma Chapter of the Young Ladies Institute** came for a visit on May 29. We enjoyed refreshments and catching up, and as always they brought us many useful paper products—as well as new puzzles for our puzzle fans.

The **Contemplative Outreach Leadership Retreat** was held at the Spirituality Center May 29-31. **Sister Anna-Camille Wooden**, who has been involved with Contemplative Outreach for several years, hosted.

On June 6, we learned that **Sister Beatrice Kapinga** has been elected Prioress at **St. Agnes, Chipole, Tanzania**. Sister Beatrice was here studying at **Saint Martin's** also, along with Sister Redemista.

Sister Angela attended the meeting of **ACS Chemistry for Life** in Pullman, WA, June 23-27. She presented on “The Chemistry of Historical Archaeology.”

On June 28, we celebrated **St. Placid Priory's Foundation Day** (1952); our community is now 72 years old. We also celebrated the **Feast of Benedicta Riipp, OSB**.

The monks of **Saint Martin's** joined us for a leisurely afternoon with coffee and pie on June 29. Their company and enriching conversation was cherished by all.



Monks of Saint Martin's visited Sisters of St. Placid

On July 13, **Sisters Angela Hoffman and Sonja Weber** attended a touring

of **Sandy's Flats**, a former Olympia Inn purchased by **Interfaith Works** and converted into new 26 units of permanent supported housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

Rest in Peace

Gilda Warden
d. April 2, 2024—former Priory member

Renata Siegl
d. May 13, 2024—friend of the Priory

Enhancement of Monastic Life



St. Placid Priory Sisters invited Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB, Ph.D. and Prioress at St. Walburg Monastery, Kentucky, to speak on “Enhancement of

Monastic Life” from March 3-5, 2024. Sister Aileen’s goal was to provide “ways of building a community of trust, while transforming conflict into behaviors that enhance community life.”

She gifted us with insights about attitudes and behaviors that both impede and enhance community life. Topics included negativity, murmuring, assumption making, attribution, capitulations, passive aggressive behavior, individualism and entitlement. Positive actions in response to these were tied to the Rule: willingness to give up one’s will (RB chapter 5), commitment to values of connectedness, interdependence, mercy and empathy” (RB 3), participation by patience in the sufferings of Christ (RB Prologue v. 50), engagement in honest, open dialogue within parameters (RB 3:2-6), participation in mutual obedience, support and love” (Prologue 47), and investment in relationships with authenticity (RB 4:68). After these teachings, she invited us to do a self-reflection.

Other topics included “Interpersonal Boundaries,” “Response to Stressful Situations,” and “Celebrating What Is Right with the World.” We discussed several of these topics with the understanding that we bring ourselves to community with our histories of trust, fears, and talents. We came away with a better understanding of how

we can each contribute to a healthy community.

Knowing that our strength comes from within, as we “listen with the ear of our heart,” as Benedict reminds us in the Prologue of the Rule, we will be open to the light that brings us closer to God and God’s desire for us.

by *Angela Hoffman, OSB*
& *Lucy Wynkoop, OSB*

Walking Together (With a lot of help!)

Maybe it is because I am getting older, maybe I am just able to do a better job of noticing and appreciating, but the first thing I thought of around the theme of *Walking Together* was how our lives in community are supported by all the people who fix, repair, cook, organize, answer phones and fire alarms, and clean for us. There was the fire department crew that answered our (false) alarm last week. In their very heavy, warm gear they went up into the attic to check it out. All was well. They then shut off the alarm and helped us understand about resetting the system.

There were also the 2 young plumbers who came to fix one sink plugged by a profession ring and toothbrush (mine – I used the toothbrush to try and get the ring out of the drain, and dropped the toothbrush). They also repaired a faucet, checked out a slow leaking shower drain and installed 2 new instant hot water devices. All with good humor, patience and no need to wonder how a toothbrush ended up down a drain. We have had a work crew here for a couple of weeks repairing water damage that affected 4 of our rooms including our infirmary rooms. One day when a particular drying process took longer than expected, they stayed until the job was done, on a Saturday night! Always respectful and efficient. A crew from the Lacey Water Department came to fix a city water main on our property that had sprung a leak. When they fixed one leak, another appeared. Four times this happened, and they fixed all four. They were easy to work with and kept us updated on their progress.

And there are the folks whom we see every day. Nico who prepares delicious meals, homemade bread and deserts, Janice who is the welcoming face of the Spirituality Center, and

Katie who is the welcoming voice at the reception desk. Yuni who does anything and everything she is asked, including the shopping, and does it with graciousness and a smile. Lynn who keeps our books, and keeps us honest. And Suk, our housekeeper and cleaning wizard, who leaves everything cleaner and shinier than she found it. All of them have worked above and beyond their job description, have helped out on jobs probably not officially listed in their job description and kept us going through the ups and downs of any given day. We have even tapped their family members too: Yuni's son, Raphael Jr, one of the most remarkable young men I have ever met, has helped me with gardening chores and Nico's daughter Mia makes a mean chocolate chip cookie.

Walking together means working together and depending on the work of others. So this is my shout out to all of you who keep us going with your talents, skills, kindness, patience and good humor. May God bless you all as you have blessed us.

by Anna Camille Wooden, OSB

Walking With Sister Baptista Khati

This last year we have had the privilege of hosting **Sr. Baptista Khati** of the



Institute of the Sisters of Mary in Kakamega as she completes her certification in hospital chaplaincy at St. Peter's Hospital. Born in Kakamega, Kenya, she lives with a community of

her Sisters in Oregon where she has been a teacher at the Catholic school of St. Thomas Academy. Growing up in a Catholic home she says her parents were her role models, especially her father who was a Catechist in the church. When she left high-school she joined the Sisters of Mary. In Kenya, before she was sent to the US, she taught Catechists, worked in the formation of the young members of her community and work with inmates and their families. She said it helped her to learn from and work with people of dif-

ferent faiths while deepening her own. She came to the U.S. seven years ago, where her desire to be a chaplain deepened even as she enjoyed her teaching work. Her draw to chaplaincy work is driven by a desire to walk beside people in their life journey, not walk ahead of them or behind them but alongside them, wherever they are and whatever they are facing in their lives.

I asked Sr. Baptista what she had found difficult to adjust to here in the United States. Her answer came quickly: "driving." In their communities in Kenya there are usually only a few sisters who do the driving; they provide rides for others. She needed to be able to drive here in the States, so she got her license. First there is the issue of driving on the right instead of the left side of the street as they do in Kenya. Then there are the highways, and most difficult...snow. Kenyans do not typically encounter snow on the road, so this was a big adjustment. She described her experiences of driving in the snow—there was a lot of skidding and sliding. "The car never goes where you want it to!" Computers were a challenge. They have them of course, but again, as with driving, there are designated sisters who work on them and do the work for others. She said if she needed something typed, she gave it to one of those sisters and they did it for her. And she also spoke of the distance she is from home, there are times it feels like a long, long way.

When I asked her what has been good about coming here, she said, "the positive welcome." She has found people friendly and helpful. She has found staying at St. Placid "like a retreat," it "has been a home for me." When she comes home after a difficult day, she finds peace and caring here. Hers is an apostolic life, ours a monastic one, yet we have shared meals, prayers, celebrations and stories. She has pitched in and helped with dishes and laundry, even after her already busy and intense days. We have walked together and we are both blessed for it.

When she finishes her chaplaincy on August 26th, she will receive the word on her next assignment. Maybe she will go back to Oregon, maybe back to Kenya, maybe someplace entirely new. That is the apostolic life. We, who live a promise of stability, find deep satisfaction in providing places

of rest, comfort and renewal to those whose life journey brings them to us.

I asked Sr. Baptista what advice she had for those who travel a spiritual path. First, she said, trust in Divine Providence, especially when you don't see the light at the end of your tunnel. Keep an open mind. She said, "If I don't find what I expected, I learn to love what I find."

Mungu akubariki, God bless you,
Sister Baptista!

by Anna Camille Wooden, OSB

VOCATIONS UPDATE

"God what do you want me to do with my life?"

April 15 – 19, our vocations director Sister Paz Vital attended the North American Benedictine Vocation Formation Conference (NABVFC) symposium "Hope for the Future: Trusting God in Uncertain times" at St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska. Benedictine vocation and formation directors explored the future of Benedictines in these changing times. The consensus was to bring up-to-date ways of communication for a new generation of seekers. Some monasteries who already are relying on using social media shared their insights and experiences about using these means to connect with women interested in religious life. This is the present tool to let new generations know that Benedictines are still here after more than 1500 years. Like everything else, Benedictines also recreate themselves. Nowadays many Sisters no longer wear a traditional habit, they are still continuing to follow the Rule of St. Benedict, and are praying in monasteries and ministering to their surrounding communities.



NABVFC's 2024 Core Team. From left to right: Sisters Maria Victoria Cutaia, Jill Reuber, Cathy Bauer, Paz Vital, Michael Marie Rottinghaus, and Ann Mucznski.

Sister Paz was invited to participate as a member of the 2024 Core Team for NABVFC. She will be updating their website—an exciting and challenging task for her.

One wonders if Saint Benedict (480-574 AD) would ever have imagined that Benedictines would spread all around the world... And who could have imagined that the internet would be the best way to spread the Benedictine monastic way of life?! A life that was so counter-cultural back in the 6th century and is counter-cultural now in the 21st century.

Benedictine women and men profess three vows, unique compared to other religious orders: obedience, stability and conversion of life. *Obedience*, from the Latin verb “obedire,” to listen with the ear of one’s heart. *Stability* by living in a monastery in community with other religious women or men with whom they are praying together, working together, and studying the Scriptures and the Rule of St. Benedict. The last vow or promise is *conversion of life*, or “conversatio morum”: searching to be close to God every day; falling and rising every day. In Benedictine vows, poverty and chastity are implied.



Delaney Donaldson and Bianca Frank discerning a vocation. Here with Sr. Paz Vital

The task of vocation directors is to let you know that you are not alone in your time of discernment, but that they are there to provide help and support. **Vocation directors are more than happy to help you discern God’s will for**

your precious life. Young women need to know that religious life is a great option in the ocean of possibilities for a meaningful life. In this day and age, life is full of distractions, false promises for happiness and instant rewards. The narrow way, the path to God is at hand and women and men don’t have to walk it alone. If worthwhile things could be achieved without effort, everyone would do them. Benedictine life is for tough cookies!

by Paz Vital, OSB

In May we hosted the **Novice & Director Institute (NADI)**. Three novices and three directors flew in from three states (Nebraska, Indiana, and Virginia). Our theme was “*Like a Tree Planted by Streams of Water*,” with a particular focus on care for the environment. These are ten days for the novices to spend time together in person and to deepen friendships. There are daily sessions of input and processing. Besides our Sisters, Oblates Laura Tenisci and Marilyn Freeman along with longtime friend Julie Barrett also presented—and were well received. Participants were thrilled with all our trees, and once we took them up to Mt. Tahoma (Mt. Rainier), they understood the term “mountain!” The Institute concluded with a banquet, orchestrated by Sister Monika. We appreciated the positive energy they brought to our community, and they each seemed reluctant to leave.

by Laura Swan, OSB

We are happy to host individuals or groups who are interested in learning about our community.

Please contact:

Sister Angela Hoffman
(hoffman@up.edu),

Sister Anna Camille Wooden
(camillewooden5@gmail.com)

or call 360-438-1771
and we will gladly schedule a visit.

FROM THE ARCHIVES Keeping Our History Alive



Sr. Placidia Haehn (1909 – 2002), founding member and first prioress of St. Placid Priory.

“I am hopeful that the community will continue to be what St.

Benedict would want us to be. I hope we can be faithful to our community living and helpful to those who come to us, in whatever way we can, physically, mentally, or spiritually. I hope in the few years I have left that I can continue to be of help to others.”

Sr. Placidia Haehn, quoted in the book *The Wisdom of the Benedictine Elders*, by Mark McGinnis, p. 215.

It’s quite an undertaking, starting a new priory, a daughter house. St. Benedict’s Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, was the mother house. Sr. Placidia was elected St. Placid’s first prioress, one month after its founding. Sr. Placidia was born in Holdingford, Minnesota, but had been living in the Northwest since 1930, when she began teaching at Holy Rosary School in Tacoma, later serving as principal until the call to found the new Priory came in 1952. In *Wisdom of the Benedictine Elders*, she says of coming to Washington, “I thought I was going to the end of the world. I had never been out of Minnesota.” The first Priory was located in West Olympia, near Mud Bay. In 1961, after several years of untiring and effective fund raising, the new St. Placid Priory and High School, now Northwest Christian School, were opened. Sr. Placida and the community of St. Placid formed deep and abiding relationships with the larger community around them: Family, friends, students and their families, parishioners from the local churches. Sr. Placidia had the gift for making friends and keeping them.

Sr. Placidia is remembered for her deep faith and trust in God, for her dignity and simplicity. She embraced the challenges and opportunity of the Second Vatican Council, leading the community into new dreams and possibilities with grace and trust in God. “After entering the community and beginning to understand it and the Rule, I felt this was my way to virtue. The Rule is wonderful in its way of life. It gives a structure to live by. Whatever spirituality I have was gained through trying to follow the Rule.” *Benedictine Elders*, pg. 215

Sr. Placidia had a liturgical spirituality rooted in the prayer of the church. She was faithful to the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharistic Adoration. She loved the liturgical seasons, decorating her living and workspace for the season. As a faithful friend she was known for her tender and light sense of humor. As she says in her interview in *Wisdom of the Benedictine Elders*, “There have been many problems and worries along the way, a lot of this and

a lot of that, but somehow the Spirit has always been there, and it has been a peaceful experience.” pg. 214.

If you haven't read the book, *The Wisdom of the Benedictine Elders*, I recommend it highly. It is a collection of 30 interviews with Benedictine elders, men and women, born between 1901 and 1925. I can't think of a nicer way to spend my time than with these wise and gracious people.

by Anna Camille Wooden, OSB

OBLATES

The Oblate year came to a close as it traditionally does with the renewal of Oblate promises and the receiving of new candidates and Oblates. The ceremony is held during Sunday Evening Praise, the Sunday before the Priory's Foundation Day of June 28th. We didn't have anyone making their Oblation this year, but we did welcome 4 new candidates: Cynthia Avila, Stephanie Delaney, Allyson Essen, and Lorna Shreveland.

During this year of Oblate candidacy, they will meet with their Sister mentor and Oblate mentor monthly, and next spring they, along with their mentors, will decide if they desire and are ready to make their Oblation. They can choose to extend their candidacy for another year as well.

After Evening Praise the new candidates, along with family, friends, Oblates and Sisters had a celebration dinner. The dining room was filled with the sound of laughter, good conversation and the creation of new bonds of community. Benedictine Oblates are one of the treasures of monastic community.

Oblate Reflection

I don't remember how long ago, but I was interested in Centering Prayer and looking for a class to help me figure out how it worked and I discovered that St. Placid Priory was having a beginning class on Centering Prayer as part of a silent retreat. So, I signed up and came. We were greeted by a Sister and given a short tour – which included showing us where we would eat, this chapel with its wonderful windows of the elements and the foyer with the four seasons, and the LIBRARY.

We were also encouraged to attend the Liturgy of the Hours, and I, trying to do

“what is right,” did so. It sang to my soul.

After I went home, I asked my then husband, who had a weekly meeting on Fridays at noon just down the road from here, if he could leave a little earlier and drop me off at the Priory so I could attend noon Praise. Then I would sit in the library and read until he could pick me up. This is the half – there are around 20 references to “study or reading” in the Rule. And while I would wallow in the library here, and I have a personal library of over 3,500 paper books plus Kindle and audible books, it's not all studying. There is quite a bit of what can be called “recreational reading” (or actually, reading as an escape). So, we'll call it half. But it is an important Benedictine value.

I did this and it went on for several months until one of the sisters, who has since passed away, stopped in the library and asked if I would like to come to lunch – hospitality - all of chapter 53 of the Rule.

I continued to come to Praise and lunch and then one day, Sr. Mary Giles asked if I would consider becoming an Associate. We talked about what it was and what it entailed and on October 28, 1997, I became an Associate. By this time, my work had changed and because I am fortunate enough to live about a half an hour away from here, I was and am able to come to Evening Praise on a regular basis. I did this for several years, and lunch turned into dinner on multiple occasions.

My joy in participating in the Liturgy of the Hours – the Opus Dei, the Work of God – only increased and it became an integral part of my faith practice. I found out later as I studied the Rule, that it is also an integral part of being a Benedictine: chapter 43, verse 3: “Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.” I have friends who notice when, for whatever reason, I'm not able to participate in the Opus Dei as often as I like. I'm not as centered, I'm not as calm. They actually ask me if I have been “seeing the Sisters” as they put it.

Then the Sisters decided they wanted Oblates. After I had done some research on what an Oblate was and what would be expected of me, I decided to become an Oblate. So, I started my

Oblate Candidate Year. Sr. Mary Giles was my mentor and as we talked and studied, I was worried that I wouldn't have the correct answer to “What do you seek.” She told me that the correct answer was whatever it was that I was seeking (that was helpful). She did add that however, that if I was seeking great riches and fancy clothes (I wasn't) that probably I shouldn't be searching for it here.

As I continued my discernment, I also found in chapter 31, verse 10 of the Rule, something that I think is very important and have carried with me, as a reminder: “regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar.” And as my personal monastery is my home, “all utensils and goods” becomes much more, it becomes EVERYTHING. Not just “utensils and goods,” but everything: personal belongings, relationships, the earth, and all that lives on the earth, especially people, all of it, should be treated as sacred vessels.

I also realized that asking myself “what do I seek,” should not be a one-time question or even an annual question. It should be asked on a regular basis. And equally important is asking myself “why am I seeking it and why am I seeking it here?” All of us Sisters and Oblates have answered that question ourselves.

Because I discovered that I was inadvertently trying to follow parts of the Rule of Benedict even before I knew it existed, and because my relationship with the Priory means so much to me and my spiritual journey, I seek to deepen and strengthen my relationship with God and with the Sisters of St. Placid Priory. To the best of my ability to follow the Rule of St. Benedict as a laywoman, and in joyous ritual and ceremony formally make these commitments public.

This is what I still seek. May what we seek, and why and where we seek it, be a blessing to all we encounter.

by Tess Sutton, Obl. OSB

Oblate Voices

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be

poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” (Luke 6:37-38 NABRE)

I am a Baptist preacher’s daughter. One of the small-town churches where my dad ministered was in Wyoming. It was during the Vietnam war, 1971. My older brother and sister who had left home for college were anti-war. My brother sent me a big pink anti-war button that had the question on it: “Would Christ carry a draft card?” I proudly affixed that button to my change purse inside my wallet. One day, I lost my wallet at the high school I attended. It was turned into the secretaries office. The school secretary was a member of my dad’s church. Her husband was a deacon. Her son was serving in the military in Vietnam. The secretary opened my wallet to find out who it belonged to, and found that button affixed to the change purse. That antiwar button started a small war of dissension within that Baptist church. My dad lost his ministry at that church partly because of that button. We moved away.

My questions to this day are... What would have happened if the secretary and her husband had not loudly levied harsh judgement within the church because she found my carefully hidden yet proudly carried anti-war button? What if instead a dialog of compassion were started as Jesus would have counseled? How do we as a religious community avoid dissension, rejection, and ostracism that is based on widely differing political viewpoints?

These questions seem even more important to answer given the political climate of today.

by Nancy Joan Brighid, Obl. OSB

Walking Together with Our Associates

Each month a group of dedicated Benedictine lay persons meet to share faith. We check in with each other and ask for prayer support for family, friends, or ourselves. The check-in is followed by the reading of a passage from the Holy Rule of St. Benedict or a current Benedictine author. We spend time with this passage using a group lectio divina format. At one point in our meeting we discuss how

the value or practice in the passage affects our lives and also how we can support each other in living out the Benedictine way. The group consists of folks in their 30’s all the way up to 70’s, so the sharing is rich and inter-generational. Some Associates have walked with the community for fifteen or twenty years while others are just beginning. Associates are distinct from Oblates. Associates do not make any public and permanent commitment like the Oblates do. There are lots of reasons for this choice, and we are happy to offer this option.

We welcome anyone who feels particularly called to the Benedictine monastic way to come and walk with us. You can spend time with us as a guest for as long as you like. We meet usually on the second Sunday of each month, from 12:30 to no later than 2:30. We are a Zoom group in order to accommodate members in faraway places. Contact Sister Monika at (360) 438-1771 or sr.monika.osb@gmail.com if you have interest in knowing more.

by Monika Ellis, OSB

Walking Together with Friends

Several years ago Renata Siegl created clay figures for a set of Stations of the Cross. They are beautifully sculpted in red-brown clay and set on a light wood background. Walter Siegl arranged to have these images installed on our grounds and he has done some additional maintenance work, as well.



Stations of the Cross by Walter and Renata Siegl

We have walked with Walter and Renata for some 25 years. Their art and their faith inspire us and their hospitality delights us. Sadly, we said good-bye to Renata on May 13 when her life on earth ended. But we will always remember her when we walk the Stations. If you have not seen these new images, do stop by and walk the path.

by Monika Ellis, OSB

GOINGS ON AT THE CENTER

A lot is once again going on at the Spirituality Center. Retreatants are coming and groups are signing up to meet in person and on Zoom. The new technology of being able to offer hybrid programs has brought many together who might not otherwise have been able to participate. Once everyone is on the screen and the sharing begins, the atmosphere is very welcoming which many of us did not think was possible. All things are possible when love is at the core of our intentions.

Janice Ariza, Center Coordinator

Walking Together in Spiritual Direction

For about 3 years now, I have had the great privilege of accompanying individuals on their spiritual paths. The sacredness of this collaboration is so immense, it is humbling. Why? Because this practice of spiritual direction is about the longing of God for us, and in turn, our longing for God. It is mysterious, mystical and real. Spiritual direction, for me, is not about the director, nor is it just about the directee. Rather, it is about the directee and God. I strive to be the mere channel through which the directee and God can meet. ‘Director’ is misleading – to ‘accompany’ is more accurate. As a spiritual director, my task is to listen. Listen to the directee’s words and heart, and listen for the whisper of the Holy Spirit in those words and heart and in response to those. Through deep listening to another, some clarity can emerge. What are the desires of this person’s heart and soul? At the same time, my deep listening is attuned to thoughts, images, feelings that may not be mine and that may be coming from the Holy Spirit to the directee. The only certainty I have about the active participation of the Holy Spirit is how the directee responds to these thoughts, images and feelings. They may resonate with the person. They may not. But if this person goes away and prays and discerns, often there is at least a kernel found of God’s active presence. God’s listening. God’s guiding. The

nearness of God. Of course, God is always present. But this spiritual practice of listening and sharing and reflecting back for the sole purpose of seeking God, is a special practice in which God is invited to be present, to speak, to come nearer. God longs for us and in the depths of our hearts and souls we long for God.

by Julian Cleary, OSB

Experiencing Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction is a way of experiencing a “trusted spiritual advisor” 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/spiritualitycenter/spiritual-directors

It is a little over four years now that I’ve been meeting monthly with my spiritual director. I have found it a great blessing to share my spiritual journey with someone who has wisdom and insight. I feel that my spiritual director really listens to me with “the ear of her heart.” And she has helped me navigate the complexities of my inner life with gentle, loving kindness. I’m so grateful for her thoughtful feedback, offering of suggested readings, and special prayers, through which I continue to gain insight and grow spiritually. And I’m continually learning new ways to integrate the Benedictine values of peaceful patience into all aspect of my life. Thank you to the Sisters of St. Placid for providing me the special ministry of Spiritual Direction. It is a gift.

by Laura Lasworth

Listening with the Spirit 2023-2025

As a student in the Priory’s Spiritual Direction Program – *Listening with the Spirit*, I’ve often wondered, “What’s the magic here that promotes such a natural and deep connection between the participants? Is it the nature of the individuals drawn to the program or the content and format of the classes?” Despite being conducted online, participating in LWS has been healing to tender wounds in my heart. I’ve been invited to bring my whole self to the process and have been met with generous acceptance. Even the

application interview, which was also online with instructors Sister Lucy, Sister Monika and Dr. Mary Pandiani, I was surprised and a little embarrassed to weep my way through most of the conversation. To be held in their loving presence, and listened to with such tenderness was a balm I wasn’t expecting in an interview, but eagerly accepted. My heart was saying – yes, more of this please.

As we train to become Spiritual Directors, extending this safe space to others is exactly what we are learning to do. We are learning the work of listening with the love, non-judgement, grace and compassion of God, by receiving it. When one feels loved and safe enough to bring a wound, a fear or a doubt into the presence of another who is attuned to Spirit, deep healing results. After a year of our cohort practicing and experiencing this miraculous opening to, and sharing of love with one another, you can imagine the warmth and joy we all felt when we came together in-person at the Priory Spirituality Center last April. We were received as Christ by the Priory and one another and it was powerful in the gentlest way. We shared a day of gratitude, reflection, good food and hugs that all buzzed with joy. Again, my heart said yes, this, more of this.

What is the magic? Is it the combination of people or curated readings and discussion? Yes to both, because the intention of all the participants, content and leadership, is Love. As God designed it, as we receive, we can then give, and the magic multiplies.

by Amanda Carlson

Interviews for *Listening with the Spirit 2025-2027* will take place beginning in January 2025
Contact Sister Lucy Wynkoop for more information at lucywynkoop@gmail.com

OASIS 2023-2024

The Holy Reading Book Club is how I regard the Oasis program. Every month, we read a chapter from *Everything Belongs* by Richard Rohr, reflected on it and bared our heart and soul in a group setting. At the hybrid

monthly gathering, it felt like I was seated around a campfire with saints, mystics and wisdom teachers. I felt safe, protected and supported. I had permission to let my guards down, to be vulnerable. Listening to others’ reflections reminded me of what I’ve pushed aside, hidden and forgotten because of life’s demands. It was a refresher course on mature prayer, on glorifying and loving God alone. It was a rediscovery of and a reunion with the Christ in me. So, I can’t wait for 2024-25 Oasis. Not just to read, but to experience Brother David Steindl-Rast’s *The Way of Silence: Engaging the Sacred in Daily Life*. The title sounds like an invitation. Come join us. See the brochure for more details.

by Roy DeLeon

Prayer Practices

The *Prayer Practice* experience was wonderful! While I was familiar with many of the practices, each session leader provided a lot of rich detail and history about the specific practice. The presenters were well organized and guided our small group through spot-on exercises to make us more familiar with the different practices. With the fine handouts I am able to review each practice anytime.

by Andrea Kovalsky

Making a Personal Retreat

St. Placid Spirituality Center has been essential for my spiritual practices. I was led there by my pastor’s wife in 2015, and it instantly became a safe place to go for me. When my children were young, it was so nice to get away to a safe space, praying with other women, quieting my mind, sipping some hot tea, have silence and solitude in my cozy, simple room. I have enjoyed the amazing food, the Sisters, Janice the Center Coordinator, Praise times, the prayer rooms, books made available at the Center, and also spiritual direction. I often called during Covid times, hoping and praying that the Center might be open. I missed it so much. Once the Priory did reopen, I was determined to visit more than just once a year, but once a month! I have brought many friends there, and will continue to do so. This place is so special to me. I look forward to every visit!

by Tia Roberts

The Chipole Connection

Sister Redempta's Bus



I was asked to write this article because so many people have asked questions about Sister Redempta's bus.

I sent Sister Redempta a list of questions, seeking answers to give information about this bus which Chipole Connection raised money to purchase. The bus was purchased in Dar es Salaam on the coast of Tanzania, and driven to St. Agnes Chipole English Medium School in Namtumbo, South West Tanzania. About 500 students gathered to sing and celebrate this bus which symbolically represents a new journey in their lives.

Sister Redempta writes:

"The bus is doing well. The bus driver starts routes at 5:30 am. Usually each morning there are 4 routes. About 50 students in each route. In the evening the routes begin at 4:00 pm. All students like to ride the bus. The day students love it because they do not ride the motorcycles or walk long distances anymore. There were a lot of abuse concerns. Those concerns are gone. Parents appreciate the bus a lot. Now they pay bus fares to the school instead of paying for other forms of transportation. They say their students are safe. The boarding students ride the bus when they go for school break. We take them from school to Songea town where they meet their parents. When we have First Communion and Confirmation, students ride the bus to the parish for mass. The Standard Seven students are preparing to take National Exams in November. If they pass, they may go to Secondary School. The Standard Seven students go by bus to the parish church for Adoration each Saturday. Sometimes we go to church by bus. Other times we walk long distances.

The teachers went for a picnic at Peramiho Beach. It was Labor Day. I stayed with the students at school because all workers were gone for the picnic and everyone wanted to go.

Singing is part of our life. The students sing all the times they ride the bus."

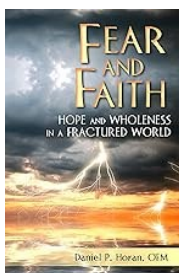
I, Sister Sharon, believe that we who support and encourage the students, their families and Sister Redempta have a lot to sing about too!

May Sister Redempta's bus always remind us of our heartfelt connection to our World Family!

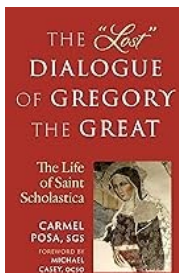
by Sharon McDonald, OSB

Sister Laura's Scriptorium:

Books that Merit Attention



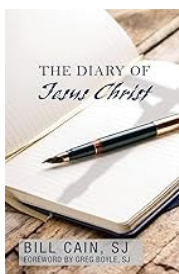
Fear and Faith. Hope and Wholeness in a Fractured World by Daniel Horan, OFM, Paulist Press, 2024. How many times did Jesus say, "Do not be afraid"? The opposite of faith is not doubt, rather it's certainty (which closes us off to hearing the Holy Spirit). "Real faith is dynamic, ongoing, at times shaky, and, at other times, seemingly crystal clear."



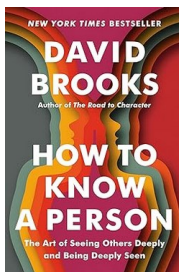
The "Lost" Dialogue of Gregory the Great. The Life of St. Scholastica by Carmel Posa, SGS, Liturgical Press, 2024. How did Scholastica come to be the twin (of St. Benedict) whose love was deeper (famous story from St. Gregory's Life of Benedict)? Through a form of storytelling called midrash (Jesus' parables are midrash) Sister Carmel creates a Life of Scholastica that recognizes the monastic tradition received from the desert. This is delightful.



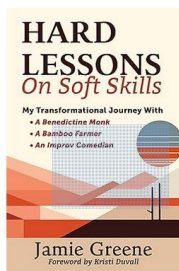
Winds of Life (The Benediction of Paul) by Patricia McClure, Wayzgoose Press, 2024. This is the first in a four-book series set in St. Alberic's Benedictine Abbey in Montana whose main characters are young Paul and Father Jacob Mackenzie Knows the Song. The writing is beautiful, her take on monks and their life together is accurate, and the story moves quickly. You'll get hooked. Patricia McClure is a Benedictine Oblate.



The Diary of Jesus Christ by Bill Cain, SJ, Orbis Books, 2021. This is utterly delightful. Cain is a successful playwright (including *Equivocation*) and the creative brain behind a 1997 TV series called *Nothing Sacred*. So, what if Jesus kept a diary? Cain riffs off some gospel passages, imagining the fully human, fully divine Jesus responding to encounters, struggles, and others' expectations. These are short pieces that made me think, and often smile.



How to Know a Person. The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen by David Brooks, Random House, 2023. Our world is deeply divided. We no longer seem to have conversations with people whose perspectives or cultures are different from ours. Brooks delves deeply into what it means/how to cross that crevice which keeps us apart. How to have hard conversations, our epidemic of blindness, and deepening awareness of the energy we bring into the place of conversation. This is well-written and worthy of our time.



Hard Lessons on Soft Skills: My Transformational Journey with a Benedictine Monk, A Bamboo Farmer, and an Improv Comedian by Jamie Greene, 2024. Greene focuses on 'soft skills,' those important interpersonal relationships that make our professional work life-giving. Greene shares how each of these three "teachers" helped him grow as a person in business and concludes each section with a set of questions for personal reflection. He provides a bibliography of resources. I highly recommend this for business leaders, non-profits, fundraisers, and people working in Development. **Greene will present at our Center in October.**

Visit Our Website: www.stplacid.org

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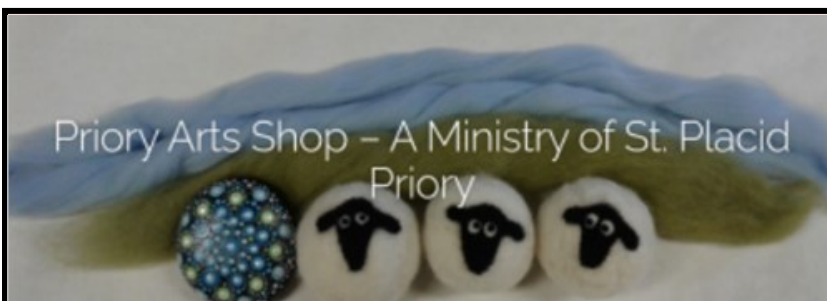
**Benedictine Sisters
St. Placid Priory**
The Spirituality Center
The Conference Center
The Priory Store
500 College St. NE
Lacey, WA 98516-5339

Autumn—Winter
August 2024

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Explore **The Priory Arts Shop** online at stplacid.org/shop
The **Priory Store** located in the main building is now open on most **Fridays from Noon—3:00 PM, Saturdays from 10:00—3:30 PM,** and by request. **Please call ahead to make sure we're open.**

Welcome to Weekday and Sunday Mass: If you have had COVID vaccinations and boosters and are feeling well, please feel free to join us for Sunday Mass at 9:00 AM and weekday Masses (Monday through Thursday) at 5:00 PM Masks are optional.
Liturgy of the Hours: We pray Morning Praise weekdays at 8:00 AM except for the second Monday. Noon praise is typically at 11:50 AM, and Evening Praise is typically at 6:45 PM (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.

Sister Laura now has a **YouTube** channel at youtube.com/@BenedictineLauraSwan
Subscribe to see what she's up to!
Ever wondered about life at the Priory?
The Sisters have a **blog** at blog.stplacid.org

Spirituality Center Staff
Janice Ariza Center Coordinator
Paz Vital, OSB Program Coordinator
Monika Ellis, OSB Staff

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