

Winter Got You Down? Plan NOW for a Summer Retreat!

The Six Day **Silent** Retreat • July 15—21, 2016

Retreat Master: Rev. Tom Acklin OSB

Each morning, this guided retreat includes Mass with Benedictine Nuns, conferences by Fr. Tom, and confessions/spiritual direction. The afternoon and evening offers the precious gift of time for prayer and reflection—and to be—before God. Participants are invited to pray Vespers and Compline with the Benedictine nuns.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will also be scheduled. Weekend only or other options may be arranged.

Retreat House accommodations: private rooms each with sink, and ceiling fan. A/C in chapel, lounge, and dining room.

6 days \$390 **Weekend only \$165**

The Encounter with **Silence** • July 15--22, 2016

Retreat Master: Rev. John-Mary Thompkins OSB

Silence provides the fertile ground in which the Word of God heard in the four Scriptural based conferences each day takes root. Mass is also celebrated daily. Bring your Bible and your notebook.

Limited to 15 people.

Reservations: Monastic Guest House 7 rooms: A/C, private bath, fee \$500. Retreat House: private rooms with sink, ceiling fan, fee \$435

Busy Women Retreat August 5-6/7

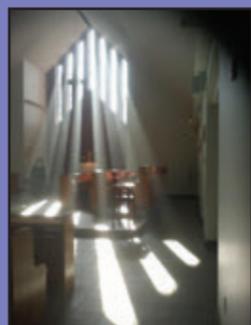
Make time for yourself with this 24-hour retreat. Friday 4 pm – Saturday 4 pm offers reflections, personal time, Mass Saturday morning with confessions and a time for sharing. Mother Mary Anne OSB will offer the reflections. \$90

For those who can also stay Saturday night, retreat will conclude Sunday at 11 am. \$150

Visit and Vespers in December



On December 27 we welcomed guests for our annual Christmas Open House known as Visit and Vespers. The weather was warm and very rainy at times. Warm: the front door of the B&B stood open all afternoon and the A/C was turned on in our chapel during Vespers. Rainy: sometimes it poured! At least 160 guests visited throughout the afternoon and about 90 guests prayed Vespers with us.



Please remember us when revising or making your will.

Our legal name is: The Sisters of Saint Benedict of Westmoreland County

Our Federal ID-# is: 25-1017575

Calendar of Retreats • 2016

- Feb. 19-21** **Silent** Lenten men/women, Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB
- Feb. 26-28** **Silent** Lenten men/women, Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB
- March 2** Evening of Recollection DCCW, Bishop Malesic 3-8:30 p.m., \$20
- March 4-6** **Silent** Lenten men/women, Rev. Bill Kiel
- March 10** Evening of Recollection, Knights of Columbus
- March 11-13** Men/women, Rev. Max Maxwell, OSB
- March 19** Day of Recollection men/women, Rev. Anthony Wozniak, 10 am - 5:30 pm
Theme: *Divine Mercy*, 4:30 pm Mass for Palm Sunday, Call Fr. Wozniak for reservations: (724) 600-0992, \$30
- April 8-10** Lay Carmelites
- September 9-11** **Silent** women/men Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB
- Sept. 23-25** **Silent** women/men Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB
- Sept. 30-Oct. 2** Married Couples
- Oct. 7-9** Women's Retreat, Mother Mary Anne OSB
- October 14-16** Legion of Mary (non-members welcome too)
2016 fees: Weekends \$165

“Redding up?” We Take Donations

Do you live in Western Pennsylvania and are you “redding up”? Are you looking for a place for cherished items that will make a difference and find a good home? Needing to close out the family homestead? St. Emma's welcomes donations of all kinds including furniture in good condition.

Our **GIANT Flea Market, June 16, 17, 18, 2016**, exists because of your donations and our wonderful volunteers. We always welcome new volunteers. Please, *NO old large TVs, baby seats or cribs.*

CHRISTMAS SHOPPE

We thank all the volunteers who prepared and worked in any way for *The Christmas Shoppe* held November 12-14, 2015. The items were of high quality, re-giftable, cleaned and beautifully displayed. The food was delicious. Thanks also to the donors and to those who came.

Please mark your calendar for 2016:
November 10-11-12.

Tee Time for a Nun

August 31, 2015, we held the Fifth Annual Tee Time for a Nun. One hundred and eleven guests golfed at the adjacent Han-nastown Golf Course and joined us for dinner, prizes and fun with the nun. Thank you all who came and the volunteers who always make all things possible.

Mark your calendars for the Sixth Annual Tee Time for a Nun on August 29, 2016.



Spring 2016

BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • 1001 Harvey Avenue • Greensburg, PA 15601

Website www.stemma.org • Phone: (724) 834-3060 • Fax (724) 834-5772 • Email benedictinenuns@stemma.org



Dedication of the
Saint Padre Pio Shrine
November 22, 2015

Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



The Pope is coming! As soon as we learned the dates of Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia, I cleared that weekend on our calendar and we knew we were going. That was early October 2014. In no time it was the end of July 2015 and we had no specific plans. I thought we would "hear" of groups going but we did not—until the very end of July. To our great surprise and joy, five of us were able to join the bus group from Our Lady of Grace and St. Bruno Parishes here in Greensburg.

After Mass at Our Lady of Grace with most of the pilgrims, we boarded the bus. Visors—light brown or fluorescent green were given to each of us on our bus. You guessed it—we received the fluorescent green! This color not only added a very practical way for the five of us to keep together but provided an unexpected source of contact with many people. People asked if they could take photos of us because we wore those brightly colored visors! With each permission, they also received one of our business cards with the encouragement to check out our monastery on the web!

We stayed near Reading, PA, took the bus to Lancaster and caught AMTRAK to the 30th St. Train Station only a mile from the Papal Visit to the World Festival of Families and the Papal Mass. We unexpectedly received tickets to both events. Waiting hours to go through security was our first experience of "the Church." People ask if we saw the Pope and how close were we to him. Yes, we saw him Saturday night literally "drive by" but Sunday he very slowly passed and perhaps only 20 feet away.

Not only did we see the Pope but most pilgrims, I think, would say they experienced the Church universal—from every nation and

language, the young, the old, families and many with young children, laity and religious. We know the burning request of one fish to the other: I want to see the ocean. The second fish replies this is the ocean and you are in it. That was our experience of the Church while we waited to see its visible head and be at Mass with the Pope as the main celebrant.

Upon joining the group before the security check, a woman asked if we were from St. Emma's. Her daughter volunteered in the Ukraine for a year after high school with Catholic Sisters and spent May 2014 on a personal retreat here as she was re-entering her regular life. And others we met had also been to St. Emma's: "Are you from St. Emma's? I attended a Catholic Heart Work Camp there;" "Several of us from Milwaukee visited St. Emma's for a weekend as part of our religious discernment year;" "I attended Capture My Heart while at Franciscan University;" "I made retreats there."

We also met the president of the Jesu School in Philadelphia which is one of the poorest of the inner city schools. How inspiring to hear of the wonderful programs and the wonderful results of the dedication of this school! Some of the dance team performed for the Festival of Families.

People talked to one another; everyone was so friendly and we met people from across the country and saw them from around the world. This "reunion" flavor continued throughout the Benjamin Franklin Highway where the Pope came for the Festival of Families and for the Mass on Sunday. Flags of the various countries



adorned each light pole adding a visual reality to the universality of the Church as well as a practical marker where people could meet!

Two sisters (biological – not nuns!) invited us to use an empty chair and a blanket on the ground. Soon a 16-year-old and some other relatives joined them. This teenage girl had a bored look to accompany her "attitude." I heard a lady say, "We are here to see the Pope" and the girl asked in all sincerity, "Who is the Pope?" After a short answer was given, I asked if I could add some information. I said that we Roman Catholics believe that Jesus meant what He said to Peter that you are Peter and upon this Rock, I will build my church, thus creating the role of the Papacy. Pope Francis is the 266th Pope since that time. The young woman was amazed.

Continued on page 7

The *Benedictine Touchstone* is published by the Sisters of St. Benedict of Westmoreland County for our friends and benefactors:

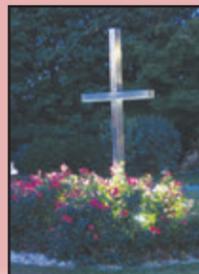
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Benedictine Nuns Daily Prayer Schedule – Join Us!



5:25 a.m. ~ Vigils
6:30 a.m. ~ Lauds
7:00 a.m. ~ Eucharist
Lectio Divina I
8:40 a.m. ~ Terce
11:45 a.m. ~ Sext/None
5:00 p.m. ~ Vespers
7:00 p.m. ~ Compline ~
Lectio Divina II

Prioress' Reflection

The conversation continued for maybe 25 minutes, and I invited her to check out our website. I also invited her to come and volunteer and to pray with us if she was looking for a different experience.

A nearly 30-year-old man was taking photos with a very professional looking camera. I asked if he was covering just the Pope's visit to Philly or if he had also done Washington and New York? His answer was that he had just broken up with his fiancée (with whom he has a child) because he didn't want to live with her anymore until they were married; he was wrestling with his moral conscience. Needless to say, the answer caught me completely off-guard. What a need he had to share that reality of his life with someone, and I was the blessed recipient. I assured him that we would pray for him. Just then the Pope buzzed by that Saturday night. Was this man changed from a photographer to a pilgrim by his being there?

Women wearing headpieces and dresses out of the same fabric and their husbands matching long shirts, made the dozen couples from Tanzania stand out. One of them asked if we would please pray for them as they went back to Tanzania and tried to live out what they had experienced at the Festival of the Families. And, yes, it was the first time they had ever attended such an event.

"Excuse me, my daughter wants to meet you because she wants to become a Sister when she grows up; she is six years old." What a sweet girl! We learned that she was one of six sisters. The family adopted the oldest daughter 18 from China and planned to adopt a second girl from China. That did not materialize but we met Masha who was born in Russia and had pronounced physical problems that made walking with braces and special crutches necessary. This 13-year-old smiled constantly: she knew that she was loved and obviously she loved this family. The next day we met the entire family. Nearly at the last minute they discovered that there was an opening in a campground near Philly so they drove their

camper overnight from the state of Indiana. What an inspiration!

The Mass on Sunday with Pope Francis as the main celebrant and the universal church gathered around him was as special as we expected it to be. To pass time before the Mass began, some teenage boys near us entertained themselves appropriately by tossing a foam ball between them. When it was time for the Eucharistic Prayer and the Consecration, they knelt on the ground the whole time; many people did so. Watching the Mass on the Jumbotron was wonderful; one could see up close and yet be part of a million people praying together.

Fifteen hundred priests distributed Communion. An attendant carried a huge yellow and white umbrella complete with papal coat-of-arms over each priest. To see priests from various countries distributing Holy Communion and the eagerness and reverence of the pilgrims to receive the Body of Christ was impressive.

After distributing Holy Communion, the Pope sat in silent prayer, head bowed, eyes closed. He did not fidget nor look up to see how much longer Communion would take nor nervously play with his fingers thinking about what he would say next. This was a man deep in communing with his Lord and Master. I could only wonder how he prayed or did he just sit in wonder of so great a gift as the Eucharist.

Inspirational describes the people who pushed their loved ones—children of all ages, spouses, friends, the elderly—in wheelchairs and specialized wheelchairs over great distances so they could also see the Pope. What a manifestation of love for God, the church and the ones they were caring for!

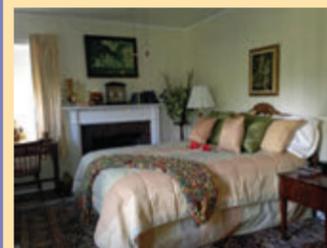
Heading toward the train station for the final time, we rested on some steps. A young woman from *US Weekly* asked to interview me for an article on the Pope. I had no idea what the magazine was so I thought she meant *USA Today*. *US Weekly* ran a wonderful five-page report of Pope Francis' journey to the United States. My quote, "Pope Francis is the visible GPS, God-positioning-system for our faith."

What inspired us to "see the Pope"? A yearning to experience the universality of the church. We in St. Emma Monastery may already experience it more than most people do. It is not uncommon to have religious or priests here from Africa, India, South America (Brazil just last week) as we welcome guests to our monastery.

Perhaps the surprising and amazing aspects of being in Philadelphia are again the ramifications of a monastery. It is a God-stone set in a lake, constantly sending out waves that proclaim that there is a God who longs to love us and give Himself to us, that we can know and love him. We are always awed at the number of people that God touches through this monastery. The question, "Are you from St. Emma's?" affirms yet again the place of the monastery in the wider church and in the wider world.



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to St. Emma's. We will use them
in one of our fundraisers!**



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Pilgrimage to Mercy

By Barbara Mayer



A security checkpoint in Philadelphia.

“We’re going to see the Pope!” my friend exclaimed. We had our tickets for the Papal Mass on Sunday; I even had a seat! We were to meet in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and travel by bus into the city. We started out with three buses leaving for Philadelphia at 9 am. I was assured we would be early enough to get to the 4 pm Mass. We had to park four miles outside the city at the Eagles football stadium, joining 400,000 other pilgrims on the subway into the city. We made it into the security lines by 12:30 pm. If all went well, we were to be through security by 2:30 pm. Our spirits were

high, as we were only two blocks from seeing “the Man.” The huge crowd was oppressive but congenial. I was amazed at the orderliness of the crowd. Of course we were all on a mission: to get inside quickly so we could find our spots for viewing and participating in the Mass.

I’m sure the TSA agents thought they were going quickly, but for us, waiting in the crowd for four hours was maddening. By 3:00 pm, we knew we weren’t going to make it to the beginning of Mass. By 4:00 pm, we were desperate to get in. By 4:30 pm, we had entered the gates, just as the Pope was beginning his homily. Our only hope was to get a view on the Jumbotron and maybe receive communion. It was a chaotic scene, people jammed shoulder-to-shoulder, talking, straining to get a view and hear anything being announced over the speakers. My friends had disappeared, separated from me by the hordes. My spirits were falling; the day was a dismal defeat, nothing was going as planned, and my hopes for catching even a glimpse of the Pope were dwindling. Then He arrived.

People went still, many got down on their knees, and all was silent as the Eucharist was raised over the altar. The One we had really needed to “see” made His presence known. The frenzied crowd stilled itself into the Body of Christ. The moment stretched on and on, people remaining in quiet reverence. My spirits lifted, emotional tears streaming down my cheeks. My pilgrimage to see the Pope, while not what I had signed up for, turned into an encounter with the Lord.

God’s mercy surrounded me and I began to understand that the day was really about the journey—not the ending—and the people I met along the way. Their merciful actions lifted and supported me through the disappointment and into this moment. The family who made 150 sack lunches for our group; the seminarians who sang “Salve Regina,” impromptu and a cappella while we were in line on the street; the father who lifted his baby up over the crowd which made everyone cheer; the teenagers who started “the wave” to entertain the tired crowd; the parish priest who donated the cost of the buses; the strangers on the street handing out bottles of water; the security agents who tirelessly screened one million pilgrims. This realization of how God had been touching me all day through the people I met, made me realize that my pilgrimage was not to see the Pope, but to see God’s mercy.

CELEBRATING LEMONADE:

BLACKTOPPING PROJECT COMPLETED

“What a difference this new blacktop makes for St. Emma’s,” exclaimed a visitor! Also, our regular volunteers have commented on how well this massive project has turned out, what a good job the black toppers did, and it was worth every dollar for this long-term improvement. May God bless you for turning this lemon into lemonade!



Vocations Encounter:

Are you a single woman between 16 and 35? Are you wondering about a call to a religious community? Looking for special prayer experience with a monastic community Palm Sunday OR during Holy Week and Easter?

If you would like to experience this Holy Week either as a part of your general

discernment to religious life or to the monastic life, please contact St. Emma’s 724-834-3060 or email vocations@stemma.org.

Reflections from the Benedictine Nuns Who Attended the Papal Visit:

It was truly inspiring to see people from so many different countries and cultures and so many religious willing to stand or sit on the ground or roadway or any available space, and that the Pope’s final words after Mass were, “Pray for me. Don’t forget.”

– Sr. Margoretta Judy OSB

Like a caravan of camels (buses), heading to Jerusalem (Philadelphia)...this was a respite from the thousands of tragic and heart wrenching prayer requests we are blessed to hold up to God in prayer daily. This was a peek into heaven, a confirmation that, as my head hit the pillow at the end of the day, this convert was reassured that this is right, this is true, this faith...this is HOME.

– Sr. Renata, OSB

It was a wonderful time of people from all over the world coming together to celebrate their love of Christ and the universal church.

–Sandy Cherveko, lay associate

Having the opportunity to take part of the papal visit was a lifelong dream come true. Having the experience of the greater universal church was such an overwhelmingly uplifting experience. Seeing so many young people excited about their faith gave a sense of the future for the Church. During the Papal Mass everyone was so attentive and reflective as to what was going on during the Liturgy.

– Sr. Maria Johanna OSB



Sr. Margoretta receiving Communion.



On July 13, the diocese of Greensburg welcomed our fifth bishop, Most Rev. Edward P. Malesic. In September, Bishop Malesic joined us for prayers, met a number of our volunteers and joined us for lunch, and a tour. Years ago, when he was a priest in the Diocese of Harrisburg, he made a private retreat here.

Triduum - Easter Schedule March 24–March 27

We invite you to join us
Benedictine Nuns
for the most sacred days
of the year:



Holy Thursday

6:00 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)
9:00 a.m. Terce
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)
7:00 p.m. **Mass of the Lord’s Supper**
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
(until 10:00 p.m.)

Good Friday

6:00 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)
9:00 a.m. Terce
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)
3:00 p.m. **Celebration of the Lord’s Passion**
7:00 p.m. Compline

Holy Saturday

6:00 a.m. Tenebrae (Vigils and Lauds together)
8:30 a.m. Terce
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)
8:30 p.m. **Easter Vigil**

Easter Sunday

6:25 a.m. Lauds
7:45 a.m. Terce
8:00 a.m. **Mass**
11:45 a.m. Sext/None (Midday Prayer)
5:00 p.m. Vespers
7:15 p.m. Vigils and Compline

Dedication of St. Padre Pio Shrine November 22



About 270 guests joined us for the Mass of Christ the King with Bishop Edward C. Malesic as the principal celebrant and homilist. Bishop Malesic spoke movingly about the need to choose the standard of Jesus over the standard of the world and the devil. He also mentioned Padre Pio as one who had chosen Christ over the world and the devil in his life.

After Mass and after the congregation gathered at the Shrine, the sun split open the clouds and focused on the Shrine and the whole central slice of St. Emma's with its brilliant rays. When the blessing was finished so was the sun; the clouds enveloped it for the rest of the day.

In the words of a participant, "The opinion of everybody I talked to (and my guess is everyone who was there) was that Sunday was a very special day. As I thought about that, the following

came to mind. I think that day was the body of the Church as Christ intended it. Think about it for a moment; we had a bishop, archabbot, priests and deacons (and a seminarian), professed religious, and laity of every sort and station. All united in one common purpose, praising God with one voice. The focus was not specifically about the profound sculpture, the artist or even about Padre Pio. Rather the focus was on the love, mercy and forgiveness of Christ. Too often we are a body divided or distracted but this was like something out of the Acts of the Apostles. Of course the sun bathing the sculpture in brilliant light just at the right second was the icing on the cake.

Fr. Tom Acklin, OSB, simply remarked, 'Padre Pio is on the job.' It was a great Grace and privilege to witness it let alone be a participant. All I can say is WOW!!"

WORLD RENOWNED SCULPTOR: INSPIRATION CAME FROM "THE GOD OF SURPRISES"

BY MARYANN GOGNIAT EIDEMILLER
For The Bulletin (Latrobe, PA)

Timothy P. Schmalz worked days on end in a disturbing silence in his studio with his mind racing back to "everything horrible" he had done in the past 25 years. He thought, too, about what others had done, and he didn't like the darkness that came over him.

It wasn't right to be thinking about such things, he realized, while he was creating a sculpture of a saint.

"It was very intense and I thought that I should be thinking about angels," he said. "Then it became fascinating that throughout all this, I had not asked God for forgiveness, not once. I decided to do that, to ask for forgiveness, every time I got into that horrible mindset."

He was, after all, sculpting a statue of Padre Pio, the patron saint of the sacrament of confession. The project he was working on for St. Emma Monastery was St. Pio of Pietrelcina seated at a confessional reflecting the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

"I thought, 'Why can't I bring him into this horrible mindset?'" he said. "So for the rest of finishing the piece, I was constantly praying. I'm not saying that the negative thoughts weren't there, but they came always with forgiveness. I got to the point where every time I put a piece of clay on the piece, I would put it on with a prayer. I would say that I was the first person who benefited spiritually from this sculpture."

Schmalz called the piece "I Absolve You" and described the project as "an amazing experience" inspired by "the God of surprises."

Schmalz, who lives in Toronto, has been called the most celebrated sculptor in North America. His public monuments have honored the military, miners and historical events, and for more than 25 years he has created large scale monuments for Catholic churches. He describes them as visual translations of the gospels, and art as giving visual dignity to faith.

"The donor who wanted the St. Pio sculpture wanted it to represent his strong connection to the sacrament of reconciliation," he said. "I thought I would just do a hollow wall and then you could peer through it and see Padre Pio on the other side. It was going to be more of a traditional type of confessional booth with a picture of Padre Pio on the other side."

Things changed in 2013 when Schmalz went to Rome where Pope Francis blessed a version of his provocative sculpture, Jesus The Homeless, and he learned more about Padre Pio while he was there.

The saint's life is surrounded by controversy over alleged healings and other miracles, and the origin of the marks of the stigmata that he bore on his hands was debated by doctors and scientists.



"I remember throwing up my hands and thinking, 'He was an imitator of Christ. Why can't they just accept that for what it is?'" Schmalz said. That took him on a different direction for the sculpture. Why not have the friar's gloved hand reaching out?

"Then when you walk to the other side you see who that hand is imitating, that it's Jesus," he said. "Just as you think it's going to be Padre Pio's hand, you get an awesome lesson thrust at you when you see the face of Christ and the hand of Christ."

May They Rest in Peace

Long-time retreatant and volunteer dies

Previously from Pittsburgh, Mrs. Alma Bonner, Fredericksburg, VA died on September 9, 2015. Mrs. Bonner began making retreats here in the 1950's, volunteering in the early '70s with her family, and then weekly volunteering followed. After moving to Virginia about 15 years ago, she came less frequently but brought her husband to "make up the time." Our prayers and condolences to Mr. Tom Bonner, the eleven children and their families. Thank you for suggesting in the obituary that memorials in Mrs. Bonner's name be sent to St. Emma.



Obituary

How touching that Mrs. Mary Sklar, Kent, PA, had been so moved by God when she made retreats here that her husband and children asked in her obituary that donations in her memory be sent to St. Emma's! Mary died September 22, 2015. May Mary rest in peace and may her family find peace and comfort in the Lord.

Charlie Noll, Mother Mary Anne's brother, died on November 8, 2015, at 64 years old. A contractor, who worked here often during the last 5 years, Charlie and his men did most of the painting, floor refinishing, etc., in the B & B. He also laid the ceramic tile floors in our refectory and chapter room. The community also misses him. May he rest in peace. Thank you to everyone who sent their condolences and remembrances.

Bequest

Colette Case of New York State died on March 6, 2015 and listed St. Emma's and the Benedictine Nuns as one of the heirs of her estate; we are so very grateful. We ask the Lord to give Colette eternal peace and rest.

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