



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



Fall 2014

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

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*Every task, however humble,
Fills the soul with grace anew;
Ev'ry deed of love and kindness
Done in faith is done for you.*

Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



Harvest time, seed time, thanksgiving, volunteers. Since this Fall issue always gives tribute to our wonderful volunteers (we don't have any other kind!), I should perhaps list volunteers first, then thanksgiving, seed time and harvest time. Perhaps I should begin with thanksgiving for the volunteers since we experience the harvest of the wonderful seeds of their generosity, fidelity, love for God and for us that we receive!

Eighteen years ago on her 80th birthday the beginning of February, Sr. Aleydis, our main cook for the retreat house, suffered an incapacitating stroke and we had no Sister to replace her. Somehow we managed through the busy time of Lent and the longer summer retreats of that year.

The beginning of that September I remember reminding God that we had 10 weekend retreats coming up. He needed to show me if we could do it with volunteers or did we need to hire someone. Eighteen years later we still have no one on the payroll! What an ongoing answer!

God's loving Providence has greeted us and continues to greet us each day! Although I do have to admit that His loving Providence does not always arrive early—but God always comes through! How many times a large weekend looms in front of us; I know that we are short-handed and God draws people out of the woodwork to help us. That was our experience on our two recent retreats in September.

People ask how do we get our volunteers? I answer that God sends them; otherwise they would never be so generous and work so hard! I just answer the phone and say, "Thank You" for your generous offer. Truth be told, I sometimes also call

a volunteer and say, "Please!" It is always amazing to ask someone to help cook for a group of 60 and that person responds not only affirmatively but adds, "Thank you for calling me." Most people would expect to hear a personal tone to, "Sorry, the number you have dialed is out of order"!

For the sake of this article, I just looked up the definition of "volunteer" in several dictionaries on-line and was rather surprised by what I found—or didn't find. The general definition of a volunteer is someone who offers to do something for an organization without being paid. This is like describing a human being as an upright mammal.

To paint a picture of our volunteers, we need to include these descriptive words: committed, dedicated, faithful, concerned, caring, responsible, going beyond, involved, and generous in the gift of themselves in whatever areas they can help us. They also look out for us by giving advice, reminders, and suggestions that help stimulate us and guide us.

The lives of the volunteers and that of our monastic community are intertwined. Our volunteers don't volunteer for an "organization" but out of love for God, for us, and for our guests whom they also help welcome as Christ. We pray for them and their concerns and needs—and they pray for us and rejoice with us in how God blesses us and them. The people who volunteer here have formed a community among themselves and have become friends. Many add that our prayer for them is the best gift they receive.

We also have those "volunteers" who cannot physically help us but pray for us every day; many have physical limitations and sufferings that they offer us for us as well. Just recently a man in a nursing home told a visitor that he prays for St. Emma's every night. We want to thank

all of you who sustain us by your prayers whether or not you can physically set foot on St. Emma's.

Many of you are in all of our categories—including who help support us financially and prayerfully—and sometimes from a great distance.

If we had to pay a salary (even one—yet alone more!), we would never be able to make the improvements or to maintain St. Emma's the way we do. Imagine getting major repairs done and only having to pay for the parts and not for the labor. That is what happens when you donate here: the money pays for the usual parts and the volunteers provide the labor of love.

When people write Thank You notes for their experience here as a retreatant, a guest in the B&B or a guest at one of our events, they usually mention our "wonderful volunteers" and that is how they experience them.

Harvest time, seed time, thanksgiving, volunteers. Now I end with "thanksgiving for the volunteers for we experience the harvest of the wonderful seeds of their generosity, fidelity, love for God and for us!"

May God reward you abundantly,

Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB

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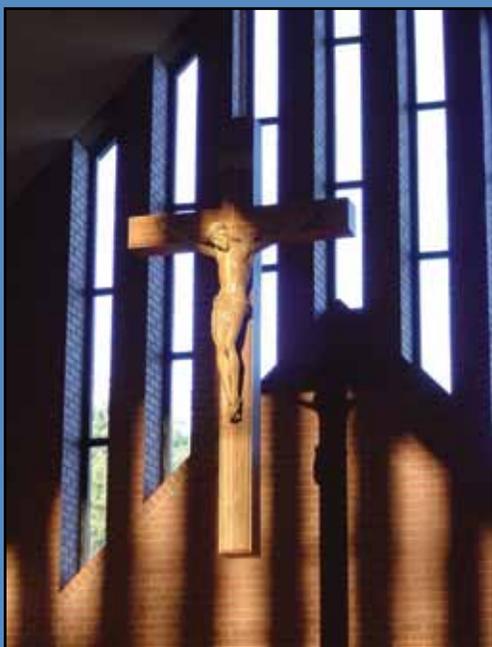
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Aspects of our monastic life seen on Thanksgiving Day:



- The Sacred Scriptures in the middle
- Elements of the Mass above: host, wine, chalice
 - Benedict to the right
 - The Rule of St. Benedict below him
- To the left, Sr. Gaudentia's profession candle (she died in the 79th year of her vows!)
 - Sr. Gaudentia's wreath encircling her candle. The wreath she received at first vows
- The open Liturgy of the Hours representing the six times a day that we gather in prayer
- Glass pitcher and bowl symbolizing hospitality in receiving one another and guests as Christ



*A single woman between the ages of 16 and 35?
Ever wondered what "more to life" might be?
Feel an attraction to loving God that precludes the normal,
wonderful pursuits of family, finding your own way,
and the regular possessing and having?*

*Monastic life? A pattern of religious life that has guided, formed and freed
the hungers of the human heart toward Christ for over 1500 years!*

*Like to visit? Experience our beautiful way of life:
November 28—30, 2014
December 28—31, 2014*

*Experience Palm Sunday, March 28—29, 2015
Experience the Sacred Triduum in our monastery April 1—5, 2015
or Holy Saturday to Easter Sunday April 4—5, 2015*

*Our Volunteers
are not paid,
not because
they are worthless,
but because they are
PRICELESS!*





2014 St. Emma Flea Market *Extraordinaire*

Extraordinaire! We looked for a word to separate the experience of our Flea Market from others based on the following and similar comments.

"Your Flea Market needs another name. This is no ordinary Flea Market—it is more like walking into a department store for everything is clean and so beautifully displayed."

"Thank you for having this."

"We look forward to it each year."

"Wouldn't miss it!" I didn't see anything in the local paper yet; are you having the Flea Market this year—don't want to miss it."

"When is the Flea Market so I can schedule vacation days to come and work at it?"

"Everyone is so friendly."

"I had no idea what was here at St. Emma's or if we were allowed to stop."

"You mean all of this is donated?"

"Your volunteers do all of this?"

We pray for all you who donate items, volunteers who wash and box items carefully, those who set up the displays as well as those who work during this time. A special thanks to the group from St. Agnes, Irwin, who came extra to help with the "day after" clean-up on Monday.



This flea market took in nearly \$39,000. This is money that we use for operating expenses. We thank you for your generosity and assistance.

**Mark your calendar for next year's dates:
June 18, 19 and 20.**

4th Annual Tee Time for a Nun Promotes Fellowship, Fun, Funds

On a picture-perfect warm, sunny September 8, 100 golfers enjoyed our golf outing at the adjacent Hannastown Golf Club with dinner following at St. Emma Retreat House.

Larry Stimple, George Smith, Pat Merlino, and Wally Lyons won First Place—Congratulations to each one of you. Other prizes were also awarded. As usual we nuns sang for our supper.

Mark your calendars for next year's outing: August 31, 2015.

We nuns are so grateful for all who golfed, who gave gifts, who helped organize this Tee--and all visible and invisible volunteers it takes to make this a wonderful event. We cleared \$11,000 which will help with the ongoing maintenance of the monastery.



Listen and Live the Gospel

By Mary Kay Swenson

*“Hear the Word of the LORD, you nations,
proclaim it on distant coasts.” – Jeremiah 31:10*

As Christians, we know that we are called to “Proclaim” God’s Word to the world – and often we strive to do just that. But, notice in Jeremiah’s call we are told to “Hear the Word of the LORD” – he calls us to first LISTEN.

Listening is not always an easy task. To hear God’s Word, we must take the time in a quiet place to read and reflect on God’s Word. Benedictine Communities, such as St. Emma’s Monastery, practice an ancient form of meditation known as Lectio Divina or Divine Reading. Lectio divina is an ancient practice of sitting with the Word of God, praying with and over the Word of God, and being formed by the Word of God.

As a means of deepening your spiritual life and of uniting with the Sisters of St. Emma’s, I invite you to spend an hour each day (or even each week) in *Lectio Divina*. Here is a quick overview of how to pray using *Lectio Divina*.

Select a small Bible passage – a few sentences or a paragraph. You will pray it four times as follows:

First, pray the verses slowly. A slow, thoughtful reading of a section of Scripture allows you to savor the text and turn the words over in your mind and heart. Be attentive for a word or phrase that may speak powerfully to you.

Next, pray the verses again, but this time allow a word or phrase to ruminate and speak more powerfully to your heart and mind. This inner pondering will invite you into further dialog with God.

Now, pray the phrase or word directly to God using ideas or images. Interact with Him as the One Who loves, cherishes and accepts you. Share with Him what you have discovered in your heart.

Finally, rest in God’s embrace and become aware of simply resting in His loving presence.

St. Emma’s bookstore offers several books on *Lectio Divina*. I personally recommend **Lectio Divina Bible Study: The Mass in Scripture** by Stephen J. Binz. I found it to be a great spiritual tool as well as informative in areas of our Catholic faith.



Robertshaw Bed and Breakfast

Coming to the Greensburg area for a graduation, wedding, special event or to get away? Planning your next year’s Christmas trip?



Make the Robertshaw Country House Bed and Breakfast your home away from home.

www.robertshawbedandbreakfast.com

*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

May They Rest in Peace

We pray for Msgr. Joseph Funaro from the Brooklyn Diocese, a friend of our community since his days in St. Vincent Seminary where our Sr. Seraphina and Sr. Benigna served in the dining room. Msgr. died August 14, 2013 and had remembered us in his will. May God bless him for his faithful years as a priest.

We are grateful to the family of Mrs. Helen Tamasy, West Newton, PA for suggesting St. Emma’s in her obituary as the recipient of memorials given in her memory. We pray for her and her grieving family.

YE OLDE CHRISTMAS SHOPPE:**NOV. 13-15**Re-Giftable Items for All Occasions, for your Santa list
– or for yourself**November 13, Thursday only \$5 fee: 2 -7 pm****November 14, Friday 10 a.m.- 6 p.m.****November 15, Saturday,****10 am - 1 pm 50% off most items – 1 - 3 pm Bag sale**Pierogies, hamburgers, home-made pizza, fish,
Homemade cookies and other treats – *Eat in or take out!*Organizing or re-organizing your closets? Making room for
the upcoming Christmas gifts? Downsizing?
*We appreciate your thinking of us: please bring items now.***Calendar of Retreats****2014****Dec. 11**Advent Evening of Recollection
Rev. Max Maxwell OSB, 3:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.**2015****Jan. 21**

Pro-life Prayer Vigil, 3 - 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 20-22

Silent Lenten (men/women)

Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB

Feb. 27-3/1

Silent Lenten (men/women)

Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB

March 6- 8

Lenten (men/women), Rev. Jean-Luc Zadroga, OSB

March 13-15

Silent Lenten (men/women), Rev. Bill Kiel

April 10-12

Lay Carmelite Retreat, TBA

July 17-23

6-Day SILENT Retreat (men/women) TBA

(You are welcome to come to part of the retreat)

July 17-24

Encounter with Silence (men/women), limited to 15

Rev. John-Mary Thompkins, OSB

July 31-Aug.1

Busy Mom's Retreat

Sept. 11-13

Silent Retreat (men/women),

Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB

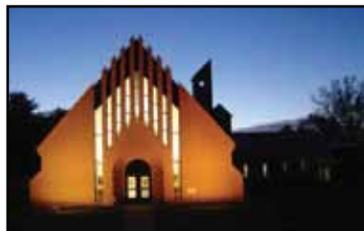
Sept. 18-20

Silent Retreat (men/women),

Rev. Boniface Hicks, OSB

Oct. 2-4

Weekend Retreat, Rev. Bill Kiel

2014 fees:
Weekends \$160 • Couple \$310**60th anniversary****1954—2014 St. Emma Retreat House****Join us on Saturday December 13, 2014***In Thanksgiving, reminiscing, reflection, rejoicing in God's activity
through St. Emma Retreat House*

10 am Welcome and presentation/Open House

11:30 am Mid-day prayer

Refreshments throughout afternoon

1:00 pm Reflection and Open House

3:00 pm Reflection and Open House

4:30 pm Vespers of 3rd Sunday in Advent

Reflections by Mother Mary Anne OSB

*Please use the enclosed card and envelope to
send us a special memory
of St. Emma Retreat House.*