



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



Spring 2022

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

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Take from My Heart
everything that is
lacking in yours.

– English Translation



Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB

In a crowd of people, I ask, "Who longs for good life?" and all hands shoot up. I continue, "And what is the good life?"

I can see their minds swirling with responses gathered mostly from merchandisers who offer endless

products whether in old-fashioned print or on an iPhone. Basically the answers promote buying things, adding things that are outside of you that are supposed to touch the unnamed "God-hunger" or "the good life" desires welling up from within our human hearts.

In the Prologue to his Rule, St. Benedict asks his prospective monks and nuns the same question, "Who longs for good life"? To their affirmative answer, Benedict responds, "Keep your tongue from evil and let your lips speak no deceit." Seriously!

This quote from the Psalms expresses the ultimate, divinely inspired "counter-cultural" directive. Keep your tongue from evil and deceit will never be found in our politically correct manuals. Imagine! Good and honest speech will bring about a good life for you!

Actually a very famous person, Jesus, offers the same divine insight: "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). This message rings loud and clear: good and truthful words produce good and therefore a good life both for the speaker and the listener.

Talk is cheap but the results can be very expensive: life-giving or life-taking. We watch speakers frenzy crowds and either violence or non-violence result. Do many people in

our culture seriously consider that evil and deceitful words are forms of evil? News shows do not just repeat the news but often in the repetition in needing to fill 24-hour news broadcasts, they help add an angle or slant or "spin" to the news so that the frequent repetition breeds familiarity which brings about assumptions.

What do practical applications of St. Benedict's admonitions to avoid evil and deceitful talk including murmuring look like in monasteries, homes, workplaces, and church settings.

Avoid the talk show approach: too often, talk shows demonstrate speech without responsibility. What do we say about someone not in the room? Do we use the popular platform of "I hear this or someone said that." This speech attributes motives, repeats gossip, and quotes from anonymous sources in high places. If there is a problem, do you speak to the responsible people to make them aware or do you just talk about these same people?

Be aware of the very unsocial, very destructive attitudes of much social media that features bullies, ridicule, gossip, and family disagreements on the world stage. We know how often that young people commit suicide because of what has been

said to them and about them on what is standardly called *social media*.

Fifteen hundred years ago already, St Benedict admonishes his monks over and over again to **avoid murmuring**. Murmuring undermines trust and relationships not only in monasteries! Murmuring often creates a **clique** created by shared dissatisfaction with leadership, with what others are doing, how things are done, and negative incidents. The murmurers talk among themselves rather than taking the responsibility to address these concerns to the proper authorities.

Continued on page 7



Benedictine Nuns Daily Prayer Schedule

5:20 a.m. ~ Vigils
 6:25 a.m. ~ Lauds
 7:00 a.m. ~ Eucharist
 8:40 a.m. ~ Terce*
 11:45 a.m. ~ Sext/None*
 5:00 p.m. ~ Vespers*
 7:00 p.m. ~ Compline*

*Times may vary; check with us.

You are welcome to join us!

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Sister Margoretta Celebrates 60th Jubilee

A vocation story: it begins with an invite that Jesus sends to a heart asking that a person follow Him as a consecrated religious and that involves leaving aside the reality of having a family, possessions, and making independent decisions.



Bishop Kulick with Sr. Margoretta

Having received that invitation as a Catholic high school student, on November 6, 2021, Sr. Margoretta Judy OSB celebrated her 60th anniversary as a Benedictine nun!

Due to COVID concerns, we planned two celebrations of this wonderful Jubilee. On Saturday November 6, the Very Reverend Larry J. Kulick, our Greensburg Diocesan bishop, offered Mass as the main celebrant, gave the homily, and received the renewal of her vows. Her extended family and personal friends joined us for that celebration.

The following day, November 7, Rev. John-Mary Tompkins OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA was the main celebrant at another Mass of Thanksgiving, gave the homily, and Sr. Margoretta re-newed her vows again! Our many volunteers happily joined us and each other as they congratulated Sr. Margoretta on her 60th anniversary of monastic vows. We

all say **Ad multos annos!** For many more years!

President of St. Vincent College, Latrobe, Rev. Paul Taylor OSB concelebrated Sr. Margoretta's Mass on November 6. He remembers her fondly as his fourth grade teacher at Sacred Heart School, St. Marys, PA.



Triduum - Easter Schedule

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

Holy Thursday

5:45 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

5:45 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

5:45 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
 7:00 p.m. Compline



"Do you see what I saw?
 A star, a star, dancing in the night
 With a tail as big as a kite
 With a tail as big as a kite"

(Adapted from *Do you hear what I hear?*)

To follow the star. Did you see our YouTube meditation on the Kings following the Star? Might that same star be leading **you** to follow Jesus Christ as a Benedictine Nun at St. Emma's.?

www.stemma.org/vocations

Do you know this internal dialogue?

What am I missing in my "good life"?

But one more thing and I will be happy

What about being a nun?

You've got to be kidding!

I was away from the Church.

But I was not away from you.

God couldn't want ME?

Why not?

But I couldn't do what I want.

Has that made you happy?

What happens when you pray about this?

I am both confused and drawn to God

How would I know?

Could we be part of your discernment process
 OR is God calling you to St. Emma's?

First Annual All Saints' Tour October 29, 2022

“Amazing! Could not believe how thoroughly these youngsters memorized their lines as they portrayed the various saints. Far more wonderful than I could ever imagined! Did you notice the weather?!” These responses sample the wonderful reactions of the guests.

Home-schooling families led by The Catholic Schoolhouse planned and beautifully brought this celebration of Saints to reality with a welcome by the Archangel Gabriel. Saints included Walburga, Lucia (for Our Lady of Fatima),

Emma, Therese the Little Flower, Scholastica, Benedict,

Veronica, the Risen Jesus with His Divine Mercy, Padre Pio and Joan of Arc. Each “Saint” gave each participant an appropriate treat: holy card, medal, rosary, chocolate rose, scapular etc. Luminaries lit the way while young home-schooling guides led the groups from place to place.

Afterwards, participants enjoyed treats made and sold by the families. The “saints” donated all proceeds to St. Emma’s. Thank you! May God bless you for bringing the Saints alive!

And the weather? Having rained the whole day, the sun broke through the clouds at 3:30 pm providing blue skies, and an amazing rainbow for the 4 pm opening! Once again, God’s timing was amazing!



Thanksgiving Guests



The Sisters who visited for Thanksgiving are Sister Yosari Menjivar, Oblates Mother of Orphans, El Salvador; Sister Yen Thi Hai Cao, Sisters of Divine Providence, Vietnam; Sister Hoa Thi An Bui, Sisters of Divine Providence, Vietnam; and Sister Donatha Gerard, Franciscan Sisters of Saint Bernadette, Tanzania.

Besides the usual Thanksgiving display in our *Cor Jesu* Chapel highlighting elements of our monastic life, we welcomed these four Sisters who are pursuing their four-year degrees at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA for our traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. They had never decorated tables nor cookies before! Amazingly creative, these Sisters bubbled with ideas of bringing these new skills to children back home.

All of us enjoyed the rich cultural exchanges between the two Sisters from Vietnam, a Sister from El Salvador, one from Tanzania—and us Americans! We learned about the charisms and history of their Communities, their individual vocation journeys, their cultures, and the challenges they face in trying to bring Jesus into the lives of the people they so generously serve.

Lenten Meditations

Check our website stemma.org for our meditations on the Crowned Head of Christ and the Sorrows of the Blessed Mother during Lent. We will share some of the beautiful art pieces that we have and accompany them with hymns and reflections.



We Love Our Volunteers!

St. Emma’s can always use help in the following areas:

Help cook for the retreatants and prepare for events; doing dishes is a great option also! Help clean—many opportunities! Like the outdoors? Adopt an area like the Last Supper Shrine! Hearts and hands are very much appreciated! Call Mother Mary Anne at 724-834-3060

Our needs are simple and flexible, any time you have to give is appreciated! God’s Blessings.

Christmas Decorating Is the Gift We Give to Each Other



Because of COVID concerns, we did not offer any public Christmas displays for a second consecutive year. Because of the nature of the Incarnation – the visibility of God in human form—we, of course, displayed many Nativities within the monastery. Decorating for Christmas is the gift we nuns here at St. Emma's give to one another.

Of course, volunteers not only played a huge part in these efforts but also ran the flights of steps carrying up the many trees, nativities, boxes of decorations, fabric etc. and setting them in place for us. We thank Jim for again putting up the large trees in our *Cor Jesu* Chapel and the masterpiece in the Atrium with both lights and straw ornaments from Germany.

We thank the men who “pulled” the 6-foot lighted star from the ground to its traditional place on our bell tower. Other volunteers carried outdoor nativities, hung huge wreaths, and decorated other visible corners of St. Emma's.

We are also grateful to all those who helped take down the decorations and re-store them for their summer hibernations. I think we all share the same experience: much easier to put up decorations than to take down and put away! Your loving, caring investments of time and creativity always make St. Emma's special. Thank you and God bless you.



O Antiphons

Missed the *O Antiphons* from December 17 through 24 that we sing solemnly and shared on our YouTube? Visit YouTube and search for St. Emma Monastery.



Rain Doesn't Dampen Spirit of Flea Market

The nearly constant drizzle characterized the weather October 23-25, 2021, for our COVID adapted Flea Market/ Food Fair but did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the attendees who enjoyed what our faithful volunteers offered! For the Early Bird Special Thursday, 85 people weathered the rain to enjoy first pick. The Flea market items covered the Lounge, area outside Chapel, St. Benedict Conference Room, Retreat Dining Room, Basement Garage, and three car Garage in order to provide “safe” spaces for guests and for volunteers. The “Food Court” occupied our beautiful patio and nearby tents offered shelter for the various foods and seating (in the dry!). The \$14,500 income was amazing and more trickled in as we held a following food sale and sold more furniture!

As always, the volunteers did an amazing job of creating a “new” event by doing things differently, and, as always, welcoming “Guests as Christ.” We so appreciate their love and support – and yours.

Pro-Life Day of Prayer

On the afternoon January 19, our community prayed for all the various aspects of Pro-Life as we do every year for the last 25 years. During Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Mother Mary Anne OSB shared two reflections available on YouTube. We prayed personally at different times and concluded by singing Vespers.



When We Know We Are Right, and Then We Are Not...

By Barbara Mayer, Development Director

Megan entered my life when I was starting a new role as a member of the Liturgical team at our church. It was an exciting time as we were creating a new style of Liturgy; we were focusing on Liturgy that had more energy a different sound. Our initial group of “liturgical ministers” (we had appointed ourselves into these roles with pastoral agreement) included myself and three other women. One was the choir director, one the pianist, and then Megan and myself because we two were interested in the task. Creating good liturgy is time consuming and requires collaboration within the team; not surprisingly we all had different views about music choices for each Mass based upon the readings.

Each member of the team was to go through four weeks of readings and create a list of hymns for each Mass. At



this time, I was a mother of 4 grade schoolers and this extra job was taking a lot of time because I was deeply passionate about creating good liturgy. For me that is the most important element of the Mass. Experiencing a thematic story of music that supports the readings, gospel and eucharistic celebration is thrilling to me and brings me closer to God. I was placing a lot of personal expression and time commitment into this job, as was everyone else.

I also thought I was pretty good at it. I was connecting with the choir director on a personal level and many times we would select the same music. I felt successful and became very outspoken at our team meetings about my opinion on the music. Megan, not surprisingly, felt strongly about her music selections too, but her choices were not at all what I had in mind. Megan had a very different cultural background and that was reflected in her music choices. I didn't like her type of music; it was like a gong going off in my ear. Rarely did we, meaning me, accept her ideas. Over time it became clear to Megan that her input was not ever going to be accepted because she had a different viewpoint. Eventually she just stopped coming to meetings.

Turns out I was the noisy gong. My words took flesh, left a mark on Megan, and made her feel unwanted. I pushed Megan out of the group because I thought my ideas were more important, better, the right style for the church. Instead of listening to her and taking the time to consider her viewpoint I let my self-righteous attitude create a false universe for myself and my belief system. I never took the time to talk with Megan about her life experiences that formed her beliefs, her values, or her engaging personality. I missed a chance to expand my knowledge of music, understand a different culture, and to act out my own Christianity.

Tee Time for a Nun August 30, 2021

On June 30, 2021, a golfer from St. Vincent Monastery called to make an “early” reservation for a foursome only to discover they were on a waiting list! 110 Golfers enjoyed the outing and we appreciated the compliments!

As for the weather, we give our compliments to God! Sunday night's forecast called for 83% heavy rain & many thunderstorms; Monday morning forecast said only 13% chance rain – and so it was!

After golfing at the adjacent Hannastown Golf Club, the golfers enjoyed a tailgating picnic and the announcement of the various winners at St. Emma's after the outing.

Congratulations to the first team winners: Bob Stanko, Ron Eberhardt, Jason Eberhardt, and Jonathan Eberhardt!

Save the Date

2022 Tee Time for a Nun August 29



Cover: Photo of original painting by Sr. M. Dorothea Brockman OSB, Abtei Sankt Walburg adorns our Community Room in St. Emma Monastery.

+ Rest in Peace +

We extend our sympathy and prayers to the families of the following who suggested Memorial Contributions to St. Emma's in the obituaries in their memory:

+ Mary Boyle, Greensburg, PA who died October 11, 2021.

+ Cecelia CIB Klotz, Winder, PA, a faithful retreatant for many years, died December 13, 2021.

+ John Hudock died January 23, 2022. The last surviving retreatant from the very first retreat held in St. Emma Retreat House in January 1955, John and his intergenerational family have volunteered for decades here at St. Emma. We have wonderful aerial views taken by John. For many years, John regularly helped our Sr. Franziska cook for the retreatants; at many Flea Markets, John cooked the always popular pierogies. May he rest in peace.

Prioress' Reflection – Continued from page 2

The Word of God was made flesh; every one of our words is made flesh. We hear, “I love you. You are precious. You mean the world to me. You are God’s gift to me. You are beautiful inside and out” – and we flourish, we blossom. On the contrary, we hear, “You can never do anything right, I hate you, you will never amount to anything—and we wither, deteriorate.”

Every word we speak takes flesh, indents, engraves, and leaves a mark. Often we are like suicide-bombers; we speak hateful words or words of revenge without noticing that we are destroying ourselves in the process as well!

Lenten Applications

Each year on Ash Wednesday, we hear that **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving** constitute the basic building blocks that the Lord uses during the season of Lent to change our hearts more like unto His.

Let us consider these building blocks in regard to our speech.

- **Prayer:** Lord, what should I focus on in my speech ++ Lord, help me to curtail my speech that I may hear You speak to me ++ Lord, direct my speech as you desire.

- **Fasting:** Do I need to limit my time on Social media? What hurtful attitudes does my speech betray? Do I desecrate my tongue with gossip, put-downs and vulgar speech; does Jesus feel welcome on my tongue?

- **Give alms:** Am I generous with my compliments? To whom? My spouse, my family, my friends, my co-workers. Compliments for what? For the daily care and concern that make up a home and family but often go unmentioned. How do we interact with others on the phone, in the store, the delivery person at the door or medical office? Is my speech endowed with a smile?

The Apostle James observes, “With it (our tongue) we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this need not be so.”

During this Lent, we pray, “O Lord, open my lips that my mouth declare your praise, your love, your care just as you desired.” **Blessed Lent!**

An Angel Circles around St. Emma’s

Many of you enjoyed *The Bethlehem Express* train layout at St. Emma’s from 2014 until COVID stopped the running of this train in 2020. Literally and figuratively, Bill McLay was the Chief Engineer of this amazing 18 x35 foot display including 4 trains, a trolley, homes, businesses, skiing, ice skating, a Greensburg corner complete with the Palace Theater and train station, St. Emma Monastery with model Chapel, nuns, volunteers, Padre Pio shrine, cemetery – and nativities from around the world. One year and with rightful pride, Bill showed me how he had replaced a Santa moving in circles with an angel that now encircled the *Cor Jesu* Chapel, I suggested to Bill that angel was overdone.



Bill responded that indeed “An angel hovers over St. Emma’s” and that he had experienced that time and again! He experienced volunteers showing up “when really needed”, saw people find consolation and prayers of the nuns, and knew how God drew people to this monastery.

Originally Bill agreed to volunteer just once a week and only outside. He replaced the grass cutter who had developed pancreatic cancer; his job description was to cut the field of grass that surrounded the Shrine of the Last Supper.

Having noticed families eating lunch with Jesus at the Last Supper Shrine, Bill began to call this the “Lunch-time Jesus.” Although he grew up Catholic, Bill became a “seasonal” Christmas and Easter Catholic. While cutting the grass, Bill began to recall prayers and hymns that he had not prayed in 35 years. Thus, “the Lunch-time Jesus” brought Bill back to the Catholic faith; he attended Mass here daily until illness contravened. Often Bill repeated his “coming home to the Church” story; rarely did he repeat this without tears in his eyes.

Before diabetes benumbed his fingers, Bill both made wooden furniture and re-stored it so he was a natural to sell furniture at our Flea Markets outside in our three car garage. He engaged shoppers by saying what a holy place St. Emma’s was and narrated his experiences. Bill invites you to experience St. Emma’s as well—both as a visitor and as a volunteer. After a progressive illness, always accompanied by a smile, Bill died on January 15, 2022. May he rest in peace.

Bequest

Having made retreats here for 53 years, Louise Samick, St. Marys, PA, died September 15, 2021, at the tender age of 98! We are honored that Louise left us a bequest. We ask the Lord to bless her with His eternal embrace and to comfort her family.

*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



\$\$ Are You Part Billionaire? \$\$

Because of COVID, didn't have a chance to use your restaurant Gift Cards last year? Just discovered other cards tucked away from businesses with services that do not interest you? Perhaps you would just want to be generous and GIFT us with one or more Gift Certificates? These Gift Cards enhance our prizes, door prizes and baskets. Thank you very much for your consideration.

BENEDICTINE SISTERS CATHOLIC GIFT AND BOOKSTORE

Monday - Saturday • 10 am – 4 pm

Do you wear sports insignia on your shirt or jacket advertising your favorite team? Do you wear a crucifix or a medal, do you adorn your home or front yard with an expression of your Catholic faith? Would this not be

a great way to express your faith more visibly?



1001 HARVEY AVE.,
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Calendar of Retreats

- March 11-13** **SILENT** Lenten, Women/men, **waiting list**
Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB, \$190
- March 19** Day of Recollection, 9 a.m. - 3:30 pm,
Rev. Roger Statnick, \$35
- March 25-27** **SILENT** Lenten, Women/men, **waiting list**
Rev. Boniface Hicks OSB, \$190
- April 9** Day of Recollection, 9 am - 3:30 pm
Msgr. James Gaston, \$35
"The Holy in Holy Week"
- July 15-21** **Six Day Silent Retreat** retreat master TBA
Full time \$440, Weekend \$190, Fri-Mon \$235
- July 15-22** **Encounter with Silence**
Rev John-Mary Tompkins OSB limited to 15
Monastic Guest House \$570, Retreat House \$495
- October 7-9** **SILENT** weekend, Msgr. James T. Gaston, \$190
- October 21-23** **SILENT** weekend, Msgr. Roger Statnick, \$190

Legion of Mary Day of Recollection

October 1, 8:30 am-4pm, Program begins with coffee/rolls and Dinner at noon. Schedule includes Confessions, Conferences, Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Legion of Mary Prayers. \$35

Call Stephanie Cavanaugh 724-219-8895 for more information and reservations or email her at stephanie.mir@comcast.net for reservations.

St. Emma Planned Gifts

Within the last year St. Emma has been suggested as a memorial in obituaries as well as remembered in several different wills and bequests. These gifts are amazing financial blessings to the Nuns.



Remember the Nuns in Your Will

Wills and Bequests are among the simplest and most popular planned gift methods for supporting the Benedictine Nuns. The Will simply lists the **Nuns as a beneficiary of the assets**. You retain maximum flexibility and use of your assets during your lifetime. Bequests are generally deductible for estate and gift tax purposes.

Charitable Gift Annuities

An Annuity is a contract that **pays the donor a constant rate of return**. A portion of the interest income may be tax-free and a portion of the principle gift can be deducted the year of establishing the annuity.

Please call (919) 410-3525 to speak to Barbara Mayer, Development Director about a planned gift.

Longing for Prayer and Meditation?

Cannot make a weekend retreat this year? We invite you to experience peace and prayer as you walk our Stations of the Cross or make a pilgrimage following the Mysteries of the Rosary—the Gospel on a string! Meditate by the Shrine of Padre Pio, pray in the Walburga Shrine, and recall our Lady's requests at the Fatima Shrine.

