



# *Benedictine Connection*

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*The Sisters wish you a blessed Easter season.*

*May the Risen Christ give you health, joy and peace.*

# Goodness

SISTER DOROTHY LEVANDOSKY, OSB ADMINISTRATOR



*Dear Friends,*

Having journeyed through the holy season of Lent, with the traditional practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, we are elated to be in the Easter Season, singing Alleluias, and delighting in the signs of spring, the promise of new

life.

Some 2500 years ago, Aristotle wrote that “*The happy person lives well and does well; for we have practically defined happiness as a sort of good life and good action.*”

The Rule, written by Benedict with the Gospel ever before him, is bursting, if you will, with references to living the monastic life well. In the Prologue, he suggests that, first of all, when we prepare to do some good work, we should beg God with urgent prayer to bring it to completion. He asks us to consider all the good things that God has already given us. He quotes Psalm 34 in asking : “*which of you desires life and longs to see good days?*” And once we have figured that out, he exhorts us to put on, like a belt around our waist, the faith that leads to the performance of good works. Indeed, if we wish to dwell in the tent of his kingdom, we shall not arrive there unless we run by good deeds. He exhorts us not to be puffed up by our own egos and importance, for we are not to be impressed by our good performance, for we know that what is good in us could only come about through God working in us.

Benedict warns the leader of the community not to play favorites in the monastery for she must not love one, more that another unless she considers her better in good deeds. The leader is to take good care of everyone.

Ah, and then we have the *Tools of Good Works* ( Chapter 4) in which Benedict chastises all who run down the good name of others, suggesting rather that we use good, holy, edifying words. When we see something good in ourselves, we are to credit it to God, not to ourselves. He asks that with good reason, we learn to steer clear of pursuing our own will, that out of love for Christ we are to develop good habits and delight in virtue. Valuing peace in the monastery, he suggests that in the absence of the superior, one or two should always be left with the community to preserve good order.

Finally in the 72nd and second last chapter of the Rule, we read about *The Good Zeal That We Ought To Have* ...the good zeal that separates us from vice and leads to God and eternal life.

Let us enjoy the good life. Let us strive to see good in our world, in each other and in ourselves.

*Sister Dorothy Levandosky OSB*

# Monastery Highlights

## CHANGE

## SISTER DOROTHY LEVANDOSKY, OSB



"The only constant in life is change." wrote Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher some 2500 years ago. Commenting, Plato wrote: *"Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river."*

We are in the midst of change every day. We have lived here at 225 Masters Avenue since 1961 where we have experienced monastic life and ministry, expansion and development, diminishment and delays. We have shared our joys, our resources and our worship. We once numbered 132 and now we are 12. Change brings about both grief through our memories and excitement in our anticipation of the future.

Even as we with bidding goodbye to this home, we are looking forward to being in our new home in less than year. Partnering with Réseau Compassion Network (formerly the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba), our new monastery, which we will lease for as long as we require it, is being planned for 419 Youville Street in St. Boniface. We hope to mark our departure in ritual and celebration. Stay tuned!

Sr. Dorothy Levandosky signing the papers to conclude the sale of the Monastery to SERDC. Right side—Sr. Mary Coswin Back row, Ray Simard— Project Manager, and Michael Willcock—Lawyer.

## GIFTING CEREMONY



On Dec 3 a gift-giving ceremony led by Doug Mercer of the South East Tribal Council was held in the Chapel to honour and thank the Sisters of St. Benedict for the past two years of collaboration. The Sisters were gifted with star blankets and a song sung by Nelson James. In return Sr. Dorothy led the community in a song of blessing. Sr. Mary who was absent was gifted with her blanket by Paula at the Foundation meeting later in December.



# Monastery Highlights

## WELCOME SISTER JEANNE



Sr. Jeanne Weber, President of St. Gertrude Federation visited the community in January.



The community during Sr. Jeanne Weber's visit( back row- second from the right) Missing Sr. Catherine Labinowich



Winnipeg treated Sr. Jeanne to a mountain of snow. She did her part in clearing the way into Sr. Dorothy's parking spot. Good sport, Sr. Jeanne!



( L to R) Daniel Lussier—CEO Réseau Compassion Network, Bob Lafreniere - CFO, CN, Sr. Dorothy Levandosky, Ray Simard—Project Manager of new Monastery, Sr. Jeanne Weber, President Federation of St . Gertrude on the day plans for the new Monastery were shared.

# Monastery Highlights

## FEAST OF ST. SCHOLASTICA



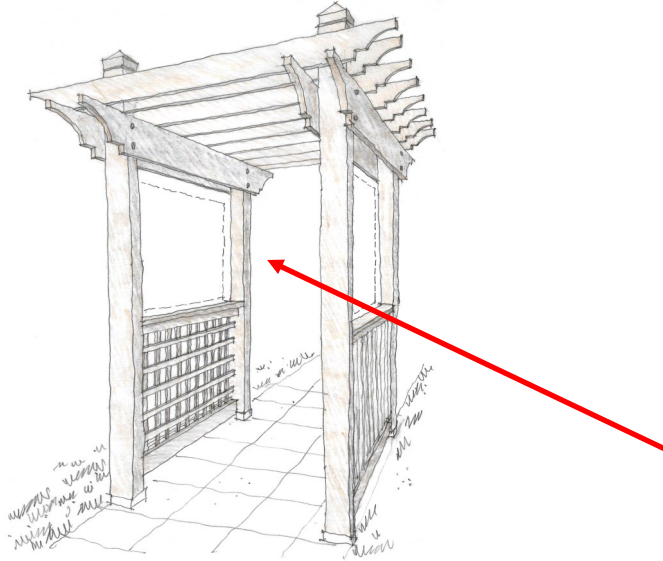
We celebrated the Feast of St. Scholastica in style on Feb.10 with sung Evening Prayer followed by Eucharist with Archbishop Gagnon. The day was topped off with a delicious meal, His Grace sitting with us Sisters and sharing stories well past meal time just like Benedict and Scholastica on that momentous day in the 6th century. Conversation lives on!

## LENT



Sister Dorothy distributes ashes to the community on Ash Wednesday.

## CEMETERY PROJECT UPDATE



Perspective: Entry Portico

So many of you have expressed support for the upkeep of our Cemetery and so we would like to share with you the anticipated final stages of the redevelopment of the Cemetery, known affectionately as "God's Acre". The drawing on the left is of the portico or entrance into the cemetery property, a distinguished place which will hold 4 panels on which a short form of our story as Sisters of St. Benedict will be told. Here on the right is one panel.



To provide education for young women in Winnipeg, a new Motherhouse and Academy were built in 1961 in Winnipeg. Times were changing; during a self-study and renewal undertaken by the sisters in 1970, a difficult decision was made to close St. Benedict's Academy. Many of the sisters went for studies in theology, religious education, spirituality, spiritual direction and administration to prepare for new ministries, including leadership in the Federation of St. Gertrude. In 1980, the 1500th anniversary of St. Benedict's birth, the Sisters initiated the Oblates, a group of women and men of any denomination who commit themselves to live Benedictine spirituality in their daily lives in the world.

By summer of this year the project will be complete. Come visit a loved one or simply rest in this sacred spot.

# Monks in Everyday Life

**I**n 1980, while all Benedictines were celebrating the 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Benedict's birth, our Monastery initiated an Oblate community. We invited family members and friends to consider following the spirit of the Rule of St. Benedict. Its ancient wisdom....commitment to Christ, prayer, hospitality, study, listening with the heart, stability and reverence for young and old alike. Since that first gathering until now women and men from many Christian denominations have been part of the Oblates. Here is a reflection from Nancy Philips who is a serious inquirer.

## BENEDICTINE INQUIRY IN A TIME OF PLAGUE

My journey as a student of the Benedictine order actually began unofficially many years ago. My first spiritual director was Sr. Mary Rose Hammerling. Sitting with her gentle, pastoral approach, she introduced me to the rule with the words of St. Benedict: "Listen carefully, my daughter, with the ear of your heart, to your Master's instructions. It is advice from one who loves you. Welcome it. Eagerly put it into practice". These were words of hope and solace for me at that time .

In a journal I was keeping of my early sessions in spiritual direction, I noted, "My greatest enemy in spiritual growth is finding quiet space in which to allow thoughts and prayers to rise to the surface and form into words" . This longing has remained with me and encouraged me to continue to seek that quiet space that would feed my soul. At Sr. Mary Rose's beckoning, I explored Esther De Waal's "Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict" and Sr. Joan Chittister's "Wisdom Distilled from the Daily". So much about The Rule made a great deal of sense to me and I longed to know more.

I have spent much time in retreat and learning at St. Benedict's Monastery. This was a place where I felt welcomed and experienced peace and acceptance on the part of the sisters. Since retirement, I have found myself wanting a contemplative spirit - valuing the Benedictine focus on a balance between Prayer, Work and Holy Leisure. As I became aware of the aging of the Sisters, I was reminded how much I value the presence of the sisters and their way of life and prayer. It seemed that the time was right to explore the path of becoming a Benedictine Oblate. An invitation from Sr. Mary created the path I needed to begin my exploration in earnest.

The opportunity to study with a fellow inquirer (Carl

DeGurse) on a monthly basis under the tutelage of a seasoned Benedictine Oblate has been a blessing. Elaine Pinto's expert guidance and call to study along with stimulating conversation about various aspects of The Rule has been a privilege and a joy. The opportunity to meet with a community of committed Benedictine Oblates has helped me to learn the meaning of Stability, Fidelity of monastic commitment (from a "lay" perspective) and obedience as I ponder God's call . I feel as though I am no longer "freelancing" on the edges of Benedictine spirituality but setting down deep stakes into an ancient community of faithful people. During these times of historic uncertainty and global change, this call to fidelity to the Rule of St. Benedict feels like a holy anchor in a world of constant change - a place where I can find the quiet space I long for -- and I feel blessed to be journeying on this path.



-Nancy Philips

## OBLATE RETREAT

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, Sister Teresa Jackson, OSB of Cottonwood, Idaho led a day-long zoom retreat for the Oblates entitled Renewing Our Relationship with God: . S. Teresa sees the season of Lent as a chance to push the "re-set" button in our spiritual lives. It's not about how ascetical we can be or how guilty we feel for our sins. Lent is a chance to re-commit to our relationship with God.



We reflected on the fact that praying with the **Psalms** can give us a language to explore the depths of what Lent and our recommitment to God means. The Oblates engaged in a combination of presentation, sharing, lectio and creative exercises to help them to "look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing" as Benedict says.

# St. Benedict's Foundation, Inc. - St. Mary Coswin

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

I wish you an abundance of “veriditas/ greening power”, as St. Hildegard of Bingen says. Spring is only possible because the former seasons have passed, as much as we loved them and all they brought. It is time for a new season.

As it is with nature, so it is with all things. As you have noted in our previous newsletters, our community has undergone significant changes with the closing of the Retreat Centre and the sale of the Monastery complex. And here comes another change. With the Retreat Centre closed, our anticipated move to a new monastery in 2023 and the accompanying changes in staff, we have decided with the help of our Board of Directors that it is time to dissolve St. Benedict’s Foundation, Inc.

The Foundation was established in 1997 through the work of newly appointed Executive Director S. Gerarda Pura, lawyer Ernie Wehrle and advisor Russell Paradossi for the express purpose of *carrying on the mission and ministry of the Sisters*.

We will entrust our funds to Dorais Charities, Inc. a foundation set up by the Grey Nuns when Réseau Compassion Network was formed in 2000. Its purpose is to support RCN’s mission activities here in Manitoba. We have excellent collaborators in Réseau Compassion Network and so the generous donations you have given to the Foundation over the years will be passed on to them for their administration. Annually the Sisters will have a direct hand in assuring donations will be made to our legacy programs (Shekinah, Centering Prayer, Retreat for the Unemployed, and other good works) .

If you wish to make one more donation to any of the Foundation’s works, you may do so before May 31<sup>st</sup>. Some of you may wonder if and how you can make donations directly to the Sisters after that. To do so you can direct your donation to *Sisters of St. Benedict* and an annual tax receipt will be issued.

Over these 25 years many of you have contributed generously to programs and special needs related to our mission and ministry. We are grateful beyond words that many needs have been met, many persons served. Be assured that your donations in the past will continue to benefit others in the future. The seeds planted in the springtime, bear their fruit in due season.

*St. Mary Coswin, OSB*

## Please Stay In Touch

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**Entrance of the current Monastery :**  
*At the very rear of the complex*  
(formerly the main entrance  
of St.Benedict’s Place)

Please send us your email addresses  
so we can stay in touch once the  
Foundation office is closed.

