



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Winter 2004



Benedictine Nuns • St. Emma Monastery • Greensburg, PA 15601

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Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB

You will read this as we conclude the liturgical year with the Mid-afternoon office in Ordinary Time on November 27 and begin the new Church Year with First Vespers of Advent.

That same day we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the dedication of St. Emma Retreat House and the Blessing of the Addition and Renovations to the Retreat House.

It seems fitting that these liturgical prayers frame the celebration of the past 50 years of the Retreat

House and the blessing of the addition and renovations by which we look forward expectantly to the continuing "Advent" of God to the retreatants and to us.

On the closing of the Marian year, December 8, 1954, the retreat house was actually blessed. Our founding Prioress, Mother Leonarda, wanted that day for the blessing and the contractors worked very hard to meet that deadline. This year is the 150th anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception under whose

patronage the retreat house is placed.

The first bishop of the new Diocese of Greensburg, Most Rev. Hugh G. Lamb who also resided at St. Emma, had the blessing. The Greensburg Knights of Columbus held the first overnight retreat the end of January 1955. Since that time more than 150,000 people have come to St. Emma to meet God in a deeper way.

For many, these are "quality time" hours with God, the way they desire every day to love and serve Him. For some, it is a time "to come home" to the Prodigal Father after a time of writing one's own rules for happiness and success. For some, it is a time to try to understand the God who "could have prevented" the death of a spouse or a parent or a child.

For some, it is the fresh experience that "our" God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to take on our humanity. For everyone, it allows God to re-charge their batteries to begin again to bring God's love to their families and to those they meet.

The addition to the existing retreat house includes the 4-story elevator, a large conference room and a residence. The renovations include conference rooms, the completely gutted and expanded kitchen that meets the current state codes, the renovated dining room and handicapped accessible rest rooms.



We remember you, our relatives, friends, and benefactors, in our daily Eucharist as well as in The Liturgy of the Hours which we sing six times a day. Once a month the Eucharist is offered especially for you and your intentions.



We hold you in our hearts as we offer our

lives consecrated to Christ through our daily ora et labora.

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Prioress' Reflection

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These improvements enhance the hospitality that we exercise in welcoming "guests as Christ." They also improve and update the facilities that provide our basic livelihood.

The ending of one liturgical year and the beginning of another also provide a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon our community.

When the Retreat House was dedicated in 1954, our community consisted of the nearly 40 Sisters who came from Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Germany in the 1930s to St. Vincent Archabbey and College, Latrobe, PA where they served until 1987.

Only in 1960 did Mother Leonarda find it possible to build the novitiate building for the "advent" of American women who began to enter the following year. At this 50th anniversary celebration of the Retreat House, most of our members have entered in the past 10 years!

We have recently experienced one of the major harvest seasons of our community as God called six of our nuns to Himself from August 19, 2003 through October 3, 2004. Since our original members all entered about the same time and were about the same age, their bodies and souls have all matured about the same time. We saw their faith maturation in their prayer life, in their facial expressions, and in their longing for the final Advent of God into their earthly lives.

We are blessed to still have three of the founding Sisters. Sr. Gaudentia (90) and Sr. Pancratia (89) participate fully in our prayer life – arriving at least half an hour early for 5:30 a.m. Vigils! They also help with the dishes for the monastery. Sr. Hedwig (82) resides at St. Anne Home, Greensburg, PA (685 Angela Dr.) where she offers up all the effects of her Parkinson's disease for us and for your intentions.

As in every harvest, the seed for the next season is contained in the ripened fruit. The wonderful legacy

that is ours of the dedicated lives of prayer and work of our original Sisters is the fertile seed for our new vocations.

Let us reflect and give thanks for the past comings of our Lord in our lives and await His further Advents in 2005.

This month we look forward to two women becoming postulants (the Latin root word means, "to try") and beginning their formation as Benedictine nuns.

Our Sisters have been faithful recipients of God's "advents" in the ordinary and the daily. The ordinary time upon reflection and perspective seems more transparent of God's various comings into our daily lives than at the time. The Sisters experienced the "coming of God" as fidelity to His promises, the faith to believe that God was in the daily, the grace to see God as good when circumstances argued against that, and the strength to begin again to love God and others more fully.

God came in the passage of time and season consecrated by their prayer and the daily offering of their

lives. Daily they used "the tools of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar" (Rule of St. Benedict Chapter 31). God came in His word in the Scriptures, the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These opportunities are given to us as well.

We give thanks to God for the many ways the over 150,000 retreatants have experienced His "advents" through the graces and blessings received at St. Emma Retreat House since 1954.

We are grateful to our first generation of nuns that formed these years. We thank God that we are privileged to be the second generation of nuns to pray for and to welcome the retreatants now and in the years to come.

We thank you, our volunteers, friends, and benefactors who have supported us generously in so many ways over these decades. We count on your earnest prayer that God may bless the Church with more vocations to the consecrated life and to the priesthood.

Let us reflect and give thanks for the past comings of our Lord in our lives and await His further Advents in 2005. Blessed Advent and Christmas!

Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB

Benedictine Nuns • Daily Prayer Schedule



5:30 a.m. Vigils

Lectio Divina I

6:30 a.m. Lauds

*7:00 a.m. Eucharist
Terce*

** 11:45 a.m. Sext/None*

** 5 p.m. Vespers*

(Times may vary)*

*7:30 p.m. Compline
Lectio Divina II*

All are welcome to join us in prayer.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Formation Process

How long does it take for a woman to become a nun at St. Emma? After she visits a number of times and spends three months as a live-in, it takes about 6 years from the time she enters the community. After a year of postulancy, if both the community and the postulant discern that it is right for the woman to continue, she asks to become a novice. After two years of novitiate and the accompanying discernment on both sides, the novice may ask permission to make vows for three years. After this period of temporary vows and mutual discernment, the Sister requests the Community to be permitted to make vows for life through solemn profession.

Novitiate News

Completing her second year of novitiate, Sr. Angela Uhloft will make vows in January 2005.

At the end of July, Sr. Sandra Chverchko completed her first year of novitiate while Sr. Laura Walters finished hers at the end of August. They are both in their second year of novitiate and continue to receive classes on the monastic life.

Serra International Convention Attendees

Mother Mary Anne and Sr. Maria attended the Serra International Convention held June 24-27 in Pittsburgh. His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments in Rome, gave the keynote address. Rev. Mark Gruber OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA was the featured speaker. Nearly 700 Serrans from around the world attended. Toni Moran of Stockton, CA won the beautiful wax Madonna that our Sr. Corona had made.

Takes

Monastic Studies Course

Sr. Mary Clare is taking the class, "The Rule of St. Benedict" taught by Rev. Nathan Munsch OSB at St. Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, PA.

New Bishop Visits

On July 1 we were delighted to welcome Most Rev. Lawrence E. Brandt, Bishop of Greensburg, for his first visit. He had lunch with our community and caught a quick glimpse of St. Emma.

Other Guests



Mary Greco and Mother Mary Anne

Mary Greco from Schenectady, NY volunteered during July and August. We appreciate all the wonderful help Mary provided to keep the flower beds weeded and to restore order to the tools in the garage.



Mother Maria Michael Newe OSB and Mother Mary Anne

Mother Maria Michael Newe OSB, Abbess of the Abbey of St. Walburga in Virginia Dale, CO visited us September 15-20. Since their founding Sisters and our founding Sisters all came from Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett in the 1930s, we share the same wonderful roots. We look forward to more visits in the future.



Veronika Spitzner

For three weeks during September, Veronika Spitzner of Germany visited us before beginning her university studies in Munich. We are grateful for all her wonderful and enthusiastic help.



Signs of Autumn:

Above, the Nuns enjoy a special treat of cooking dinner over a bonfire in the crisp, cool air.

Left, the leaves begin to display their glorious hues.

Construction Overview

In the Summer *Benedictine Touchstone*, you saw the architect's sketch for the additions/renovations of the retreat house and photos of the construction at that time. As we now write, the construction is nearly finished and we share with you more photos.

Although the work on the basement began in March, the retreat dining room and kitchen were used through the last weekend of April. After that, meals were cooked in the monastery kitchen for the retreatants (as well as for the nuns) and the "meals on wheels" traveled through the two long halls to the original house where the groups ate until September.

We marveled at the demolition: the kitchen was completely gutted, the



Mother Mary Anne checks out the roof of the retreat house.

heating and air-conditioning boxed duct was removed from the dining room, vinyl tile was removed, the wall came down between the kitchen and dining room while tables and chairs, extra dishes, pot and pans were carried to the storage trailer.

"Décor" white shower curtains partitioned the "still able to be used" rooms in the Retreat House from the new construction and the renovation. As for dust control, it was about the same as smoking and no smoking sections next to each other!

The earth from the newly excavated areas filled in a bank toward the Monastic Guest House. The result is the "turn-around area" for large delivery trucks and buses; it also serves

as additional parking for 15 cars.

We reported the events of the day to one another as the steel beams were set, the insulation was placed on the roof by crane, and the cement blocks began to rise.

We marveled at the skills and craftsmanship of the various trades. Building is such a carefully orchestrated movement with each trade needed at the right time. We watched the myriad colored electrical wires wend their way from fixture to panel to entrance panel. The pipes for the hot water heating and the vinyl hoses under the sidewalk that carry the warm water to melt the snow as it falls form intricate patterns and exact designs.

We watched the metal studs go up that defined the rooms, the dry wall sheets that covered them and the plasterers finishing the seams. We awaited the painting to see how the swatch of paint color looked like in room size.

In mid-September the new kitchen equipment began to arrive along with the pieces that we reused which had been in storage.

The new equipment for the serving line was in place for the weekend of September 19. How fitting that the first group to eat in the renovated dining room was from St. Marys, PA! These women started to come in 1955, the first year the retreat house was opened.

The weather finally allowed the grass to be planted the week of October 25. That week the cabinetry for the coffee corners arrived as did the new chairs for the dining room and conference room. The original dining room chairs found new homes in the two smaller conference rooms and in the Nuns' Refectory.

This fall, vinyl-clad, double pane windows replaced the original 50 year old windows in the retreat house that no longer even held the paint yet alone saved energy.



Gutting the dining room.



Laying the tile floors.



First meal is served in newly renovated dining room.

We congratulate our architect, Peter Cecconi Jr, Greensburg, Raimondo Construction Company, Greensburg, Farrell Electric, Scottdale, and Jay Squared Mechanical, West Newton for another project here at St. Emma that was beautifully and practically designed. The finished product shows that it was built with fine craftsmanship and great care.

Three P's in Charitable Options

By Robert J. Allen

An important series of questions we must ask ourselves is: *What do I own?* and *What owns me?* When we consider the depth of these questions we begin to answer an ever more important question: *Who am I?* followed by: *What do I want to do with the rest of my life?*

The three P's I refer to are: People, Property and Planning.

We know God loves us but too often we let "stuff" get in our way of thinking that is how we measure God's love. In fact, God's love is not only immeasurable, but it is constant – unlike "stuff" – because it has no end. The



measure that begins to allow us to understand His gifts to us is how we use what He gives us.

In Charitable Giving there are many options because there are special provisions for each of you covering ev-

everything you have title to or own. When you plan, you can design your estate to care for one another, your family, your church and many special needs you want served.

St. Emma is grateful for its many benefactors and friends and now more than ever we can help you through Planned Gifts that provide income, tax deductions and a charitable legacy, by planning how to use your property in a way to serve the people and charities you care about.

Call us for an Educational Illustration or for a personal visit by our Planned Gift Consultant at no cost or obligation (call 724-834-3060).

St. Emma Capital Campaign Report, Phase II

Monastic Life: A Gift Received, A Gift Shared

We are very grateful to all our benefactors and the over 100 new donors who have joined in supporting our Capital Campaign. Thank you!

As of November 8, 2004 we have received in cash and pledges \$639,798.00 toward our \$1,800,000.00 goal which is being used for the renovations and addition to the retreat house. On behalf of the monastic community of St. Emma Monastery, we invite all who read this good news to join us, our donors, and volunteers, to renew and expand our Retreat House for a place of Peace and Prayer for all who come to our monastic grounds.

With gratitude,

Mother Mary Anne Noll, OSB

Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB
Prioress



Wish List

Are you storing something because you have no use for it but it is too good to discard? We would be grateful if any of your items match any of our wish list:

- Coffee makers (12-cup, 25-30 cup and 55 cup)
- Overhead projector
- Media cart for classroom (3)
- Old-fashioned iron
- Golf cart (only to haul supplies!).



*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: 75-231-104

+Rest in Peace

Sr. M Corona Broich OSB

Sister M. Corona Broich, 91, died at St. Emma Monastery, Greensburg, PA on August 19, 2004. Paula Broich was born on October 28, 1912 in Duesseldorf, Rheinland, Germany, the only child of Franc and Maria (Hermann) Broich.



Sister Corona entered Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, Bavaria, November 3, 1932, professed vows on September 14, 1934 and was one month shy of her Seventieth Jubilee.

Sister Corona was assigned to Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colorado from 1935-1969, to the Convent of St. Walburga in Boulder, Colorado from 1969-1976, and to St. Emma Monastery in May 1976.

During her 28 years at St. Emma, the multi-talented Sr. Corona was in charge of the retreat dining room, washed dishes, made habits for our community, did the shopping, cleaned, worked in the gift shop and made thousands of wax angels for sale. She was greatly beloved by the retreatants and visitors to our Catholic Book and Gift Shop.

At age 82, she re-arranged material on the shelves in the sewing room – while she stood on an ironing board! When the Prioress asked her if she fell, she became indignant and said that she did not fall – it fell! Indeed the supports on the ironing board had completely disconnected! That night she was the hit of the emergency room personnel asking again and again, “Sister, was this an ironing board or a surf board?” The result was a “running” – not “walking” cast on her ankle.

The words of Benedict’s Rule, “to run the way of God’s commands” resonated deep within Sr. Corona’s being for she “ran” to carry out her various duties with a speed at which everyone marveled. She undoubtedly qualifies as the patron saint of the ASAP!

Since at least 1980, Sr. Corona knew that she was going to die “soon” and she had picked out one feast after another or the anniversary of the death of a family member, etc., as the date for certain on which she would die. When told on August 15 that this was the feast of the Assumption, she replied that “maybe our Lord will come for me today.” We actually expected that she would die on a major feast day so that our Lord could “make up” for all the times that she was sure He would come and then stood her up.

During these last months when she was bedfast, the Prioress took her Holy Communion every morning. Sr. Corona folded her hands together so devoutly and asked with expectancy and such fresh faith, “You bring me Jesus?” After receiving Holy Communion, she began the questions of who, what, why and when in order to keep up with what was happening in the community.

Not only was she quick in movement but she always planned and worked ahead so that she would be finished early. Sr. Corona knew both aspects of the psalm verse about being more anxious to see the Lord than the sentinel to see the dawn. At 2:50 a.m. on August 19, Sr. Corona ran into the arms of her loving Father when He finally said, “Arise, my love, my beloved one, and come.” She arrived early for her first dawn in eternity.

Sister M. Gabriele Häusler

Sister M. Gabriele Häusler, 89, died suddenly at St. Anne Home, Greensburg, PA on October 3, 2004 after patiently enduring effects of many mini-strokes. Kreszenzia Häusler was born on August 29, 1915 in Neumühle, Bavaria, Germany, the fifth of twelve children born to Josef and Franziska (Pritzl) Häusler.



Sister Gabriele entered Abtei St. Walburg,

Eichstätt, Bavaria, February 9, 1937 and professed vows on March 19, 1939.

Sister Gabriele was assigned to Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colorado (1939-1943). What began as a two-year assignment in the United States ended as a lifetime assignment due to the outbreak of World War II. In 1943 she was assigned to St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania where she also worked in the kitchen with salads and vegetables. After serious back surgery in 1961, she came to St. Emma where she helped cook for the retreatants until 1999. The cumulative effect of a series of mini-strokes made it necessary for her to go to St. Anne Home, just days after she celebrated her 60th anniversary of vows.

As a cook, her specialties were vegetables, home-canned tomatoes, jams, jellies, applesauce and apple butter. Sr. Gabriele had a knack for adding the right seasonings to enhance the taste.

Picking apples was her passion – from the first apple in July to the last in December. Of course the best ones were the highest in the tree. Even into her 80’s, Sister Gabriele climbed a stepladder and/or used the apple picker to get every last one on the very top.

The words of Jesus to His disciples to “Gather up the fragments so that nothing might be lost” resonated deeply within her. Whether it was a bag, a box, a plastic container or a quantity of food that was less than a serving, she put Jesus’ words into practice.

How fitting that Sister Gabriele’s death occurred during the harvest season! Just recently one Sister repeated Sister Gabriele’s test for determining if an apple was ready to pick. One twisted an apple: if the apple separated from the tree easily, it was ripe. On October 3, after all these decades this “apple of the Lord’s eye” was ready for the harvest.

Thanks, and Many Thanks

Christmas is synonymous with gift giving because God gave us the very best gift He had – His own Son. This is the opportune time to name the gifts given to us throughout the entire year.

We are grateful to our wonderful volunteers who help mangle the sheets, clean the chapels, plant and weed the flowers, work in the gift shop, cook for the retreatants, cut the grass, deal with the leaves, wash windows, sew and mend, wash drapes, remove snow, help in the office, do dishes, work the Flea Market, iron, run errands, drive the Sisters to appointments, bake desserts, bake Easter and Christmas cookies, cook for us during our retreat, trim shrubs and cut down trees. The generosity of these people manifests God's Providential care for

us and makes the miracle possible that we still have no hired help.

We thank the volunteers from the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, Greensburg, and Seton Hill University, Greensburg, who worked here as part of their annual volunteer days. We also thank the neighbor boys who not only planted a small garden for us but also weeded our other large gardens.

Many thanks, too, for the items for the Flea Market, the delicious baked goods and food, the flower plants, the bed linens, furniture and equipment, homemade items for the Gift Shop and the many etceteras.

Our thanks to all who responded to our survey mailing this summer. We read the prayer intentions enclosed in the survey aloud to the community so that each Sister could remember them in her prayer. We also thank those of you who anonymously enclosed a donation.

We were very touched by your response to our offer of praying for your deceased loved ones in a special way during November through the All Souls' mailing. These names were also read to the community and then placed before the statue of the Sacred Heart that we pass every time we enter or leave chapel. Besides our prayer for those of your loved ones who have died, we also pray for you for whom the loss is so great that it is difficult for you to continue.

The Diocese of Greensburg has again entrusted to us some of the prayer intentions that people submitted when they gave to the Diocesan Stewardship Campaign. These intentions were read aloud as well.



Volunteer Dan Power washes the outdoor crucifixion scene at the end of summer.

In Memoriam

- Angie Galletta died November 27, 2003. Nunzio and Angie had attended married couples retreats for 38 years and had been great promoters of these retreats.
- Rev. Godfrey Burkhardt OSB, not only set up our accounting system 35 years ago but also was always available to answer any questions.
- Franz Scholz, Germany, brother of our Sr. Hedwig, who had often visited her.
- Maria Peis, Germany, the sister of our Srs. Maria and Gabriele Haeusler. The three blood sisters died within in six months of one another.
- Our sympathy to our Sr. Petra and her family on the death of her stepmother, Elizabeth Crowley.

Experience Monastic Life

Single women, ages 18-40, are invited to meet our community and experience our monastic manner of life by participation in the **Monastic Live-In Experience** July 8-12, 2005. This is an opportunity for women who wonder what a monastic manner of life is like, who think they might have a religious vocation, and who will have the chance to "try it out" by living with the Benedictine Nuns at St. Emma Monastery for a few days. These women join the nuns in their daily schedule of prayer, work and community life. Please contact Mother Mary Anne for further information. Such a visit may also be scheduled anytime.

Special Request

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

Practical Gift Ideas

Are you already thinking of how to thank your family members for yet another gift that you probably do not need, will not like or will not use? Drop an unsubtle hint that you would really appreciate a **Gift Certificate** for a retreat or for a period of time at the Monastic Guest House or a **Gift Certificate** to the Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop. A **Gift Certificate** is also a great gift to give.

Don't know what to give those people who have everything? Give a donation to St. Emma **in their honor**. We send the recipient the wonderful news that a donation

has been given in their name and we thank you, the donor, as well.

Gifts may also be made **in memory** of a loved one with acknowledgement to the family as well as the donor.



You are cordially invited

to extend your celebration of Christmas
~ of Christ's birth ~

by joining the Benedictine Sisters
of St. Emma Monastery, Greensburg, PA for a

Christmas visit and Vespers,

December 27. 12:30 - 3:30

Enjoy beautifully decorated Sisters' Chapel and displays of 80+ Nativity displays and other Christmas decorations
Cookies and Punch

3:30 - 4:00 Christmas Caroling

4:00 Sung Vespers with
Benedictine Sisters

If able to attend, call
us with number
at 724-834-3060
or email

benedictinenuns@stemma.org



Retreat House Schedule

2005

January	24-28 Priests, <i>Rev. Lester Knoll OFM Cap</i>
February	11-13 <u>SILENT</u> Lenten, <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> (waiting list)
	18-20 <u>SILENT</u> Lenten, <i>Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB</i> (\$110)
	25-27 <u>SILENT</u> Lenten, <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> (\$110)
March	4- 6 Men, <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> (\$110)
	11-13 Women, <i>Rev. Lester Knoll OFM Cap</i> (\$110)
	19 Religious Sisters
April	17 Benedictine Spirituality, <i>Rev. Fred Byrne OSB</i> (\$32)
	23 People Concerned about Pro-Life, <i>Rev. Lester Knoll OFM Cap</i> (\$23)
	24 Widowed, <i>Rev. Lester Knoll OFM Cap</i> (\$32)
June	3- 5 Legion of Mary and OTHERS (\$110)
	10-16 6 Day <u>SILENT</u> (lay and religious) <i>Rev. Lester Knoll OFM Cap</i> (\$290)
August	5-11 6 Day <u>SILENT</u> (lay and religious), <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> (\$290)
	26-28 Men and women (\$110)

Monastic Guest House Schedule

Directed Silent Retreats 2005

February	20-25 PRIESTS, <i>Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB</i>
May	22-27 Lay/Religious, <i>Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB</i> , \$325
June	10-16 Lay/Religious, <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> , \$390
	19-24 PRIESTS, <i>Rev. Thomas Acklin OSB</i>
July	18-23 Lay/Religious, <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i> , \$325

Encounter with Silence

July	8-15 <i>Rev. Frank Erdeljac</i> , Monastic Guest House, \$400, Retreat House, \$310
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New Programs For Medical Personnel

This spring we will host two days of recollection on April 2 and again on April 9 for medical personnel: doctors, nurses, aides, staff. Rev. James Holland, St. Sebastian Parish, Pittsburgh, PA and Chris Kahlenborn M.D., Altoona, PA will be the leaders.

Program begins at 9:00 A.M. and ends with Sunday Eucharist at 4:30 P.M. and concluding meal (families are welcome to come for the Eucharist and evening meal). Call for additional information and/or reservations.



Pro-Life Day of Prayer

The Benedictine Nuns invite you to join them for the annual Pro-Life Day of Prayer to be held Wednesday, January 19, 2005 from 2:30 P.M. until 8:30 P.M. Rev. Mark Gruber OSB will be the retreat leader. There is no fee.