



BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Fall 2007



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

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*My soul is yearning for you, my God,
like a deer that yearns for running waters.*

- Psalm 42

Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



Fifteen years ago, a man came again with his Methodist Church for their annual spiritual

weekend retreat. He wanted permission to change the sign on our door from "Retreat House" to "Treat House!" His weekend retreats had been real "treats" for both his soul and his body."

What does "retreat" conjure up for most people? During a time of military conflicts, "retreat" signifies being overrun, running from the enemy, and finding a position from which to rethink.

Corporations have retreats; people meet away from their work site to plan without the usual interruptions or ambiance.

There are religious retreats: a time apart from the daily cares and concerns in order to pray, reflect, spend more time with God, and let God speak to you.

The Summer Edition of this *Touchstone* reflected on "receiving guests as Christ." In this issue we want to focus on hospitality expressed in retreats and to retreatants.



Both the Latin and the Greek roots of hospitality refer to both guest and host. When it comes to prayer and retreats, we tend to think of ourselves as welcoming or hosting God, of spending time and quality time with God. We look at possible dates,

Why do more people not make retreats? Is it perhaps too hard to believe that God does provide "watering holes for the soul" in the dry and often shifting sands of our daily life?

retreat centers, various programs, themes, settings, and approaches to spirituality to find a good fit.

Do we ever think that God desires to be our host? Do we ever think that the desire to pray or the nudge to make a retreat is actually an invitation to spend time with Him?

On a retreat Jesus desires to speak with us as his beloved, child, friend, brother or sister, spouse of the soul.

The wording of the invitation differs from person to person. Perhaps His message is:

- Come aside and rest awhile.
- I have come that you may have the fullness of life.
- I say to you, your sins are forgiven; ARISE and walk.
- I have desired to eat this meal with you.
- I call you friend.
- I know mine and mine know ME.
- I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Jesus prepares the finest of wheat and the finest of wine as He gives Himself in the Eucharist. He calls us to an oasis where there are truly living waters.

So much of our advertising sells "mirages" of refreshment, meaning and

renewal. There is the getaway weekend, adventure travel, the spas in which to relax and to pamper oneself because it is deserved.

Many people think they are not religious enough to make a retreat. Some think that retreats are for the really good people or for religious fanatics or for the really bad people.

After all, what is so different about the retreat format offered here? A person can go to Mass, pray daily, and even read religious periodicals at home.

Since we are creations expressed in time and space, settings are important. Look at the importance given to the sports stadiums as a validation to the necessity of sacred settings and buildings.

Have you ever considered taking a vacation that included God specifically? Will you allow yourself to be "treated and feted by God?"

It is so helpful to come to a sacred setting, to have time away from the dailiness of our lives to once again see the forest of God's providence from the daily trees, to gain perspective on where we have been and where we are going as individuals, parents, spouses, business people, workers, etc.

In this issue, we highlight the Silent retreats and the *Encounter with Silence* and share some reflections of the people who have made them.

Those of us blessed by the yearly opportunity of making a retreat cannot imagine life without it. It is the opportunity to let ourselves experience God's love afresh, to be renewed in mind and heart, to have our hearts re-humanized and to begin again to love God and others more practically.

By making a retreat, we allow God to "treat" us.

Farewell, Father Bob

Since January 1998, Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Shuda served as our chaplain. Besides presiding at our daily Eucharist during which he gave very striking homilies on the daily Scripture readings and giving various series of conferences to our community, he also offered the Anointing of the Sick, presided at First Vows, at funerals, celebrated all the liturgical rites in our previous very small Sisters' Chapel, in the Fatima (retreatants") Chapel during the year of construction and for the past five years, in our very beautiful Cor Jesus Monastic Chapel. We thank him for his years of priestly service and wish him God's continued blessings in his retirement years.



God's blessing to you, Father Bob. You will always be in our prayers.

Welcome, Father Joseph



Rev. Joseph Sredzinski has been appointed our new chaplain beginning July 5th. Most recently pastor at St. Hubert's, Point Marion, PA, Father Joseph has served in various parishes and taught in several schools during his 37 years of priesthood. For the past 26 years, he has also served as national chaplain to the Polish Falcons, a fraternal organization for those of Polish descent. Welcome!



During the festive community meal honoring Msgr. Shuda for his years of chaplaincy, the Sisters presented selections from "Prayers from the Ark" by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold.

The cast included Noah, his ark, and the animals (only one by one!) which emerged from the ark only after the rainbow appeared! The program also included musical selections.



Discerning a call to religious life?
If you are between the ages of 17 and 40 (and single), we invite you in the name of Jesus Christ to "come and see" our monastic life.

Prayer Enrollment Cards Available

We now have available Prayer Enrollment Cards for

- + Birthdays
- + Healing
- + Memorial Cards (for the deceased)
- + Friendship

Each packet contains a beautiful card for you to send or give and a form with return envelope to mail to us with the name of the individual for whom you are requesting prayers. *Suggested donation: \$10.00*



Men pray the rosary around the Rosary Path.

A Retreat Journey

“For a Christian living in today’s society, making a retreat should not just be an opportunity but a necessity.

“The everyday life brings stress, anxiety, hard work, and fatigue. I realize my need to step aside from the world and to seek the lasting good. That goodness I seek is the Lord, Who can be found in a retreat in a special way.

“When making a retreat, it is in the silence that I hear God speak to me and it is in silence of my heart where I communicate with Him and develop a more personal relationship with Him. To praise Him, to reflect on His great love, to see His beauty in nature, and to meet Him in the conversations of the other retreatants brings healing grace and joy to my heart and greater peace to my soul. To seek the Lord and rest in Him is a great way to spend a ‘vacation’— and to return to daily life energized and refreshed.” – *Retreatant*

First Silent Retreat Leads to a Second

Angela Gaughan, of Pittsburgh, attended both the Weekend Silent Retreat and the Silent Directed Retreat this year.

“My first silent retreat experience was in March. The first session of silence was nerve wracking and hard,” she explained. “What I found by the end of the weekend was that I didn’t want to leave the silence. It was a peace that I hadn’t had before, and I had to go back for the longer, six-day session.”

“When you have to opportunity to take everything...all that you are... before God, and you do it silently, all the distractions fall away. The voice that you hear is so clearly God, it’s such a gift,” she said.

In addition, the silent retreats “allow me to do the work I do.” As the Youth Minister at St. Bernard’s Parish, in Lebanon, PA, she said, “I’ve found that I can’t go on a retreat with 200 kids, if at first I haven’t been silent. It’s a real gift.”

Angela attended her first silent retreat with something specific weighing on her heart. Her sister, the mother of three young children, is ill, and she questioned why she was suffering so much. “I had the chance to empty myself and just listen. I found that I can trust and accept a bit more than I could before,” she said. “It’s not going to make her better, but it makes me stronger for her,” she explained.

“I would do both of the retreats again. They’re both valuable,” Angela said. “Don’t be afraid of it; give it a try.” Her voice becomes thoughtful, “When you go to visit a friend, you don’t walk in, sit down, and set out your agenda for the visit. It’s the same way when we go to our Lord. We should take who we are, what’s going on, and be with Him. It’s about sitting with a friend and sharing.”



Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB, (St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA) gives a conference.

Yearly Silent Retreat Gets Her ‘Through the Rest of the Year’

“Twenty-five years ago I made my first Silent Retreat at St. Emma’s. It was shortly after my husband of 25 years died suddenly during Mass. The youngest of my five children was eight. Until my mother died two years ago, we had four generations living in my home. My mother, my daughter and her two adopted girls from China, and myself,” explained Bernadette Nichols of Penn Hills, PA.

She has attended the Weekend Silent Retreat every Lent. Her everyday life is somewhat hectic. “I enjoy the peace, solitude, and feeling of spirituality that I get from St. Emma’s,” Bernadette said. “I go to daily Mass at home, but it’s totally different here, where I can pray and think of spiritual things. I need that weekend to get through the rest of the year,” she explained.

“I’ve heard Mother Mary Anne speak about the monastery being an oasis in a desert. That’s exactly what it is,” she said. “All the troubles of life are out there, but you have this place to go and enjoy the refreshment of the Lord.



Retreatants attend Vespers with Sisters.

Describing Retreats

Like many other specialized groups, we can speak our own language of “retreatese.” For years, we have listed retreats as Silent, Directed, regular, personal, or the *Encounter with Silence*. We hope this article begins to de-mystify the labels and appeals to your heart.

Our **regular** retreats include the traditional elements of conferences: presentations, Eucharist/homily, personal prayer, opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The **silent** retreats offer the same elements listed above. But beginning with the opening Eucharist until the concluding meal, the retreatants give, receive and share the wonderful experience of receptive silence. One retreatant described it as “being freed from the need to make small talk.”

It is so powerful to experience this positive receptivity to the Lord by often 50 people, all of whom have the antenna dishes of their hearts alert and waiting for the Lord to speak.

On the **directed, silent** retreats, each person spends the day in wonderful prayer and silence and has the opportunity to meet with the director each day to share what has been happening in one’s soul and to seek further guidance. The retreat master celebrates daily Eucharist with a homily.



Retreatant prays privately in Blessed Sacrament chapel.

The *Encounter with Silence* was popularized in Pittsburgh by Rev. John Hugo. Already sixty years ago, the Scriptures formed the basis of the four conferences a day that were received in a deep and profound silence.

Several times a year Dorothy Day brought people from the Catholic Worker Houses and she said it was like hearing the Gospel for the first time.

Silence Allows You To Focus Your Energy On Growth Towards Him

The *Encounter with Silence* retreat is a wonderful opportunity for a jumpstart on the conversion that we are called to daily. Six days of silence sounds daunting, but the spiritual rewards far outweigh the investment. The silence gives time to listen to God and allows you to focus your energy on growth towards Him.

Even after our lifetimes of formal Catholic education, it wasn’t until the retreat that we began to grasp what it is to truly be a Christian. Any expectations we had were exceeded, and we look forward to making the retreat again in the future.

– Christopher Goodman, 25

– Erin Curry, 22

Employees of *The Houston Catholic Worker*



Encounter With Silence Retreat

Virginia Harmon of Fenelton, PA, attended an *Encounter with Silence* Retreat. “I really loved it,” she said. “We spend so much of our time doing things and talking about things, that it is very hard for us to really take time for prayer.”

“One of the things the director asked us to do was to not read other things, just focus on the conference presentations. During our ‘free’ time, I walked in the woods and prayed. I came to understand that there was something specific that I had to do, a conversation with a person that I had to have. If I had not had this time, I would not have realized it. If I had not spent the time praying, I never would have had the courage to do it,” she said.

“Having spent the time with God, I did it easily. It was a difficult thing that I did easily,” she emphasized. “I don’t know if I could have done it if I hadn’t had a whole week praying and thinking about God.”

In addition, Virginia notes that the *Encounter with Silence* was an excellent way to learn about Catholicism. “You get what the essence of the Catholic faith is,” she said.



Rev. Frank Erdeljac (Bridgeville, PA) gives a presentation.

Archbishop DeAndrea Visits St. Emma



Archbishop Joseph A. DeAndrea

Originating from Italy and ordained for the Diocese of Greensburg in 1953, Archbishop Joseph A. DeAndrea surprised us with a visit the end of July.

Having served in this diocese of Greensburg until 1984, he served for the next 10 years at the Permanent Observer

Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York.

For next five years, Archbishop DeAndrea worked in the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

In December 1999, Pope John Paul II appointed him “Chargé d’Affaires with Letters” of the Apostolic Nunciature in Kuwait, Yemen and Bahrain, and of the Apostolic Delegation of the Arabian Peninsula. He was ordained to the episcopacy in 2001.

In August of 2005, he retired as Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait, Yemen, Bahrain & Qatar and Apostolic Delegate to the Arabian Peninsula.

Presently he serves in the Congregation of the Propaganda of the Faith. This committee of 15 has the responsibility of reviewing the nominations of the priests to be ordained bishops in the “mission” lands of Africa and Asia.

Archbishop DeAndrea spoke so beautifully of needing to surrender fully to Christ and to be passionately in love with Christ. He also greeted the young people from the Catholic Heart Workcamp and stressed the need for them to pray especially for the young Christians in the Arabian Peninsula

who can never become citizens, have no basic human rights, are often persecuted for their faith and yet are strong in it.

When we pray the Our Father, he told them to focus on the many people in the world who have NO daily bread—since we are practically guaranteed ours.

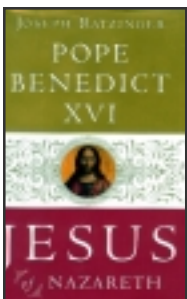
Fr. Tom Hosts Radio Show



Rev. Tom Acklin, OSB, (St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, PA) the host of “Inner Life” on a national Catholic radio network, “Relevant Radio,” has broadcast several programs from Saint Emma. The program is available at www.relevantradio.com and, in the Pittsburgh area, at 1590AM.

Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop

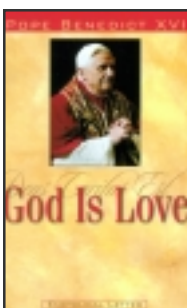
Featured Books



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\$24.95



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World Youth Day
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Encyclical Letter:
Deus Caritas Est –
God Is Love
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Apostolic
Exhortation: *Sacramentum Caritatis* –
The Sacrament of
Charity
\$7.95

Order Form: It's easy to order! Use the enclosed envelope to return your order to the Monastery or call (724) 834-7483 or Fax (724) 834-5772.

Please go to:
www.stemma.org
for more books and religious items from our Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop.

For other beautiful items that can be ordered through us, visit these websites:
www.blissmfg.com
www.jeweledcross.com
www.roman.com

Catholic Heart Workcamp

The 300+ participants stayed at the Bishop Bosco Center, North Huntington, PA, and even brought their own sleeping bags! One of 85 worksites in this area, St. Emma Monastery welcomed a team consisting of one adult and five teenagers that volunteered July 28-August 2 for six hours a day in 90 degree heat! On

Thursday a second team came as well.

These wonderful young people came with generous hearts, hard-working hands, very helpful attitudes and beautiful faith attitudes. Our “campers” came from New York, Illinois, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

What did they do? They loaded many, many loads of large branches and “trimmings” from our ubiquitous shrubs that had been trimmed off in preparation for these “campers.” They also weeded, wet-mopped our monastic chapel and the huge areas around it, washed windows, held a car wash for us and prayed with us. The brochure describing these workshops states the goal as “Worship God and Serve”; we saw this goal fulfilled by these wonderful young people. In the evening they had Mass, talks on the Catholic faith, skits, and fun.

These 300+ young people deserve headlines and in depth articles in print and TV. For more information:

www.heartworkcamp.com



Flea Market Raises \$5,300 for Sisters

When I was growing up, we did not know that one could sell “fleas”—now there is a market for everything!

On June 15-16 we once again held our Flea Market that brought many people looking for a “treasure” or “bargain” or who never had a reason to stop at St. Emma’s before.

We are so grateful to the people who donated all these items and to the many, many hours that our volunteers spent opening boxes, displaying items, cooking, marking prices, serving the food, and collecting the money. Within 2 hours of the closing, all the remaining items had been packed, the rooms swept, mopped and the tables and chairs were back in place!

The participants young and old enjoyed themselves, their “finds,” the delicious food and St. Emma’s. Many **THANKS** to all!!!

– Mother Mary Anne





2007 Recollection Programs

November 29, 2007 • Evening of Recollection
Rev. Bill Kiel, 4 pm – 9 pm \$18

December 1, 2007 • Advent Day of Recollection
Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy, OFMCap, 9 am – 4:00 pm \$25

Mark Your Calendar Now!

2008 Recollection Programs

January 16 • Pro-Life Day of Prayer • Rev. Mark Gruber OSB
2:30 – 8:30 pm *No fee, Light refreshments*

March 15 • Lenten Day of Recollection, Lay & Religious
Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm \$25

Upcoming Retreat Schedule

For reservations, please call (724) 834-3060 or email:
retreats@stemma.org

Retreat Programs

Sept	28-30	SILENT Rev. Mark Gruber OSB, \$130
October	19-21	Women Rev. Mark Gruber OSB, \$130, waiting list
November	2-4 9-11	Couples Rev. Tom Smith, \$250/couple Couples Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy OFMCap, \$250/couple, waiting list
February 2008	8-10 15-17 22-24	SILENT Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB Men <i>To be announced</i> SILENT <i>To be announced</i>
March 2008	7-9	SILENT Lenten Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB
August 2008	22-24	Men/women Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy OFMCap

Silent Directed Retreat at Monastic Guest House

January 9-13, 2008	Rev. Angelus Shaughnessy OFMCap, (limited to 8 retreatants)
June 6-12, 2008	Rev. Mark Gruber OSB
June 27-July 4, 2008	Rev. Mark Gruber OSB

Silent Directed Retreat for Priests

February 24-29, 2008 (Sunday - Friday)	Rev. Tom Acklin OSB, at Monastic Guest House
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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
5:00 p.m. ~ Vespers
7:30 p.m. ~ Compline ~ Lectio Divina II



Prayer Requests & Intentions

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



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