



# BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE

Summer 2006



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

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## *Benedictine Nuns*

*Yesterday*



Mother Leonarda and the Sisters pose on the gangplank of the Bremen in 1931.

*Today*



Mother Mary Anne and the Sisters stand before the *Cor Jesu* Monastic Chapel in 2006.

*1931-2006 ~ 75 years*

*A Life of Prayer, Work and Stability*

## Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



On February 25, 779, St. Walburga died in her monastery in Heidenheim, (Bavaria) Germany, and this date has become her feast day. On February 25, 1931, Mother Leonarda and the first nine Sisters arrived at St. Vincent Archabbey and College, Latrobe, PA, where our Sisters would cook and serve until 1987. Seventy-five years later, on February 25, 2006, Sr. Petra Littlejohn made her solemn monastic profession as a Benedictine Nun of St. Emma Monastery.

Profession of religious vows is rooted in one's Baptism. In Baptism we are consecrated to God and called to live our life in union with God, to bring God to the world we live in, to share intimately in the life of the Fa-

ther, Son, and Holy Spirit. Perhaps that is why the guests were so moved by this ceremony of public vows by which a woman gives herself to God in a visible way. The vows read "before God and all His saints, before the Prioress of this monastery and Rt. Rev. Douglas Nowicki OSB, the nuns of the monastery and all gathered here."

Solemn profession climaxes the discernment and initial formation process. A woman exploring a possible call to our community visits a number of times, completes a three-month live-in and then asks to enter. Each stage of the process is a two-way interaction: both the individual and the community are discerning. "Is this where God is calling me to spend my life?" "Does this person seem to have a vocation to

our particular community?"

Upon entering, the woman begins a one-year postulancy, the literal meaning of which is "to try." After mutual agreement on the next step, this postulant becomes a novice and receives the

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full Benedictine habit and white veil. This two-year novitiate is a more intense living of the religious life with greater emphasis on the study of its theology, prayer, history, etc. Again, if it is mutually discerned that a woman is being called to our community, she makes vows for three years and receives her religious name.

By February 25, Sr. Petra had completed her initial formation and was ready to pronounce her vows for life. In the center section of this *Touchstone*, the photos and the accompanying prayers of the ceremony highlight the various moments of the ceremony and what each one means. The monastic profession ceremony is rich in history and symbolism with the singing of the Litany of the Saints, reading of the vows, singing of the *Suscipe*, receiving the double veil, the ring, the wreath, and the breviary.

On February 25, 2006, we thanked God for His goodness and providential workings within our community during our first 75 years in the United States and through us at St. Vincent Archabbey and College and here at St. Emma Monastery and Retreat House. We also celebrated our future as God led Sr. Petra to make vows to our community for life. Just as a baby is God's desire that the human race continue so is the gift of a religious vocation to a community the means by which God continues a community. So many people pray for us and pray for vocations to our community. We are grateful for both intentions.

### Benedictine Nuns Daily Prayer Schedule

Vigils ~ *Lectio Divina I*  
5:30 a.m.

Eucharist ~ 7:00 a.m.

Vespers ~\* 5:00 p.m.  
(\* Times may vary)

Lauds ~ 6:30 a.m.

Terce

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

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





## A History of St. Emma: Part II

*The second of a series of installments of our 75 year history in the United States*

On the cover, we see Mother Leonarda and the nine Sisters aboard the BREMEN on their way to St. Vincent, Latrobe, PA in 1931. Basically, these Sisters understood no English. Several had made vows just months before. Mother Leonarda had taught in the elementary school for girls attached to the Abtei Sankt Walburg for 30 years. They had no knowledge of American culture. What they did have was great faith in God and generous hearts.

The cleanliness standards of the hired men who had been in charge of the college kitchen and dining rooms before the Sisters arrived did not match the Germanic, Benedictine Nun standard and our Sisters immediately began to clean—often on their hands and knees (a broader tradition of times past). They learned some American recipes from the Sisters of Mercy just across the fields at St. Xavier Convent. These Sisters also assisted them in other practical and caring ways.

The Sisters cooked the meats and vegetables that basically came from the monastery farm and huge garden. The Sisters separated the cream from the milk (from the herd of dairy cows), made butter and cottage cheese, and canned hundreds of gallons of fruit and vegetables in gallon jars that filled banks of shelves.

The Sisters got up at 4:00 a.m., prayed, meditated, had Mass and went through the connecting halls to have the food and the dining rooms ready for 7:00 a.m. From at least 1962, the Sisters who worked in the dining rooms always had their lunch at 10:20 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.; the cooks always ate after the meals were served.

After finishing their lunch, the Sisters went to the various dining rooms. After serving, dishes, setting the tables and preparing for the next meal, the Sisters then had a “break” that always included prayer and spiritual reading. In the early years, this “break” often included a long walk. Before 4:00 p.m., the Sisters were again in their dining rooms and kitchen. They ate supper from 4:20 p.m.—4:45 p.m. Meals were normally accompanied with table reading unless it was a major feast day.

After serving in the dining rooms, there was again the clean up and preparation for the next day. The cooks in the kitchen had similar clean-up and preparation. Again the Sisters went “home” to the convent attached to the end of Bede Hall (the original gym, auditorium and music suites that Kennedy Hall replaced). They ended the day as they had begun it — with prayer together.

The “bakery Sisters” made wonderful pies, cookies, cakes, etc., that went very well with homemade ice cream. The huge brick oven was first heated with coal and

later with gas. The oven held 72 pies! A Sister skilled in handling a long handled, flat paddle that held three pies at a time or one large tray, deftly placed the unbaked goods in the oven to maximize space – and later retrieved the delicious baked goods using the paddle.

Also, during the Depression, St. Vincent’s often fed 40 “knights of the road” who came for a meal. Our Sisters cooked for and served them. Trying to extend Benedictine hospitality, Sr. Monica said, “Good morning, Mr. Bum!” She thought that “Bum” was his last name!



In this photo, Sister balances three pies on a long handled, flat baking paddle in this photo from the 1940s. The oven held 72 pies.



Sisters go through the meal line.



Sisters are ready to chop cabbage. Notice the gallon-sized jars in foreground.

## Solemn Monastic Profession and Monastic Consecration Ceremony of Sister Petra Littlejohn, OSB

St. Emma Monastery • Greensburg, PA • February 25, 2006

The Solemn Profession and Monastic Consecration of a Benedictine Nun encloses many symbolic signs, ancient antiphons sung in Latin, and special prayers, which express the deep meaning of this rite.

*"Consecrated life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit. In every age there have been men and women, who, obedient to the Father's call and to the prompting of the Spirit, have chosen this special way of following Christ, in order to devote themselves to Him with an 'undivided' heart."* (John Paul II, in: Consecrated Life)

**The ceremony begins after the Gospel of the solemn Mass.**

(1) The candidate for profession lights her **candle** and approaches the altar singing:

**Et nunc sequor...**

*And now I follow with all my heart: I fear you, and I seek to see your face. Lord, do not disappoint me but treat me according to your kindness and the multitude of your mercies.*

(Dan. 3:41-42)



(2) After the Homily of the Celebrant the **monastic Examination by the Prioress** of the Monastery follows. The Sister is asked several questions concerning the seriousness of her resolution. One of them is the following:

My Sister, are you resolved to prefer nothing to Christ, to strive after daily conversion and lead your life with the gospel for your guide, according to the Rule of our holy Father Saint Benedict ?

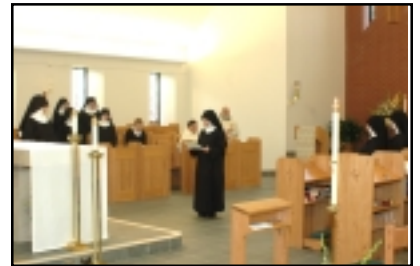


The Sister answers each question with a clear and trusting: I am.

(3) After the invocation of the Holy Spirit the Schola sings the Litany of Saints responded by all gathered for the ceremony. **The candidate for profession lays prostrate before the altar as a sign of giving herself totally to God.**



(4) Having placed her hands in the Prioress' hands as an expression of her obedience to her Superior **the Sister reads the profession card** which she has written with her own hand.



(5) **She signs the document on the altar**, shows it to the Prioress and the Celebrant and places the profession card on it as a sign of her gift of herself to God.





**(6) The Sister completes her monastic profession singing with confidence:**

*Suscipe me,  
Domine...*

*If you uphold me by  
your promise, I shall live;  
let my hopes not be in  
vain.*

(Psalm 119:116)

**(7) Now the Solemn Consecration of the newly professed follows.**

**The celebrant, with hands extended, prays over the kneeling Sister the prayer of consecration, which ends:**

“We beseech you, Father: pour out your Holy Spirit on this our Sister. May her monastic life be marked by love for you, and may she keep her bond with Christ in all fidelity. May she serve the Church with heartfelt love, and may she show your kindness to all men and women. And when she comes at last before the throne of grace, may she not hear in fear the voice of the dread judge, but rather may she hear with joy the voice of Christ, her bridegroom calling her to the wedding feast of heaven.”

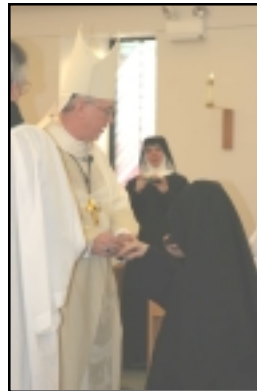


**(8) After the Celebrant has blessed the Insignia of Profession –the Veil with the white lining, the ring, the wreath and the book for the Liturgy of the Hours –they are presented to the Sister.**

**The Prioress puts the veil on the newly professed. The Sister intones the antiphon:**

*Regnum mundi...*

*The Kingdom of the world and its entire splendor I have despised for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ: whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, in whom I take delight. My heart overflows with noble words. To the king I must speak the song I have made. (Psalm 45:1)*



**(9) The Celebrant places the ring on the finger of the Sister:**

Receive the ring of faith, the seal of the Holy Spirit, that you may be called spouse of God. You are betrothed to Jesus Christ, he Son of the Most High Father. May He keep you undefiled in His love. Serve Him faithfully that you may one day be crowned eternally.

**(10) After having received the wreath as a sign to win the crown that is imperishable, the Sister sings:**

*Ecce quod concupivi ...*

*What I longed for, now I see;  
what I hoped for, I now possess. In  
heaven I am espoused to Him whom  
on earth I loved with all my heart.*



At the end of the ceremony the professed Sister exchanges the **Kiss of peace** with each member of the community. Then the liturgy of the Eucharist continues.

# Benedictine Stability and the Annual Appeal

By Robert Allen, Director of Stewardship

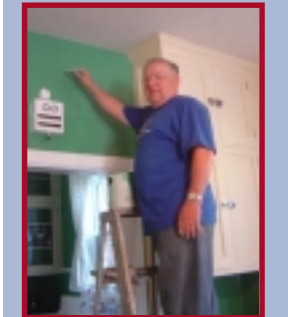
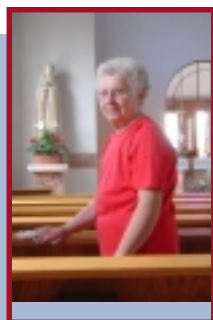
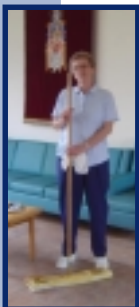
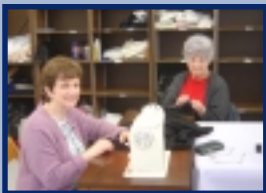
The Benedictine Nuns of Saint Emma Monastery have been gathering together in prayer in the United States for seventy-five years, several times each day, 365 days a year and before that, the Motherhouse – Abtei Sankt Walburg — in Eichstaett, (Bavaria) Germany did the same since 1035!

When you are looking for “instant”, don’t look to the Benedictines. They understood, perhaps better than any other, how time really is on your side. With time comes a peaceful existence and often, the opportunity to listen; the most important aspect of communication. Following Benedict’s opening injunction in his Rule, they seek to listen with the “ear of their heart” to God speaking to them and through them. It is often reversed when we speak or ask them to intercede for us in prayer to God. They take time to hear us, not only our verbal requests, but the deeper fear or uncertainty we are expressing. In two words: MONASTIC PRESENCE is what they offer us: often when we don’t even understand how they affect our lives...they do.

Though in a sense these Nuns accent a dimension of our lives that is beyond the now and even time, their lives are also impacted by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even though they are “not of the world” they also have to pay the world’s prices at the gas station, for gas to heat with, food and all the other etceteras that they need to keep the monastic presence “present.”

Your eye probably noticed the frame on my article before you noticed the article. These are some of the wonderful and very generous volunteers at St. Emma Monastery who make it possible for the Nuns to have NO hired help. The Nuns and the volunteers do all the regular work inside and outside at St. Emma. It is remarkable: in my experience as a development consultant for over 40 years, I’ve never seen so much accomplished for so little money because of this hard-working team of Nuns and volunteers.

These pictures are worth a thousand words—and savings of thousands and thousands of dollars! These people enable you to get the best possible return on the donations that you send to St. Emma. May God bless their generosity — and yours!







*Benedictine Presence*

**75<sup>th</sup>**

*1931 - 2006*

**You are invited to come  
celebrate with us in  
giving prayerful  
thanksgiving!**

*75th Anniversary  
Mass of Thanksgiving  
Saturday, July 1*

*1:30 p.m. Eucharist*

*Reception and Open House*

*4:30 Sung Vespers*

*RSVP by Thursday June 29*

724-834-3060

[benedictinenuns@stemma.org](mailto:benedictinenuns@stemma.org)

### **Prayer Requests and Intentions**

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

## **Retreat House Schedule**

### **Retreats**

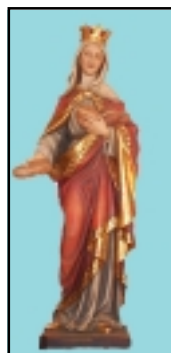
August	4-10	6 Day <b>SILENT</b> (lay and religious part time participants welcome) <i>Rev. Tom Smith</i>
	25-27	Men/Women <i>Rev. Bill Kiel</i>
September	15-17	Women <i>Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco</i>
	22-24	Women <i>Rev. Edward Litavec</i>
	29-Oct.1	<b>Silent</b> (men/women) <i>Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald CP</i>
October	6-8	Women <i>Rev. Mark Gruber OSB</i>
	27-29	Legion of Mary and OTHERS
November	3-5	Married Couples <i>To be announced,</i>
	10-12	Married Couples <i>Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB</i>
<b>2007</b>		
February	23-25	<b>Silent</b> Lenten <i>Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB</i>
March	2-4	<b>Silent</b> Lenten <i>Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB</i>
	9-11	Men
	16-18	Women
	23-25	<b>Silent</b> Lenten <i>Rev. Mark Gruber, OSB</i>

### **Days of Recollection 2006**

September	19	Women <i>To be announced</i>
October	8	Carmelite Spirituality <i>Carmelite Priest of Mt. Carmel Hermitage, Bolivar, PA</i>
December	2	<b>Advent</b> for Lay/Religious <i>Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco, 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.</i>

### **Encounter with Silence**

July 7-14  
Rev. Frank Erdeljac,  
Accommodations at *Monastic Guest House and Retreat House.*



*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*