



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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Year of Consecrated Life

By Sister M. Beverly, HSM

Pope Francis has declared that from November 30, 2014 (the First Sunday of Advent) until February 2, 2016 (the feast of the Presentation of the Lord) will be the Year of Consecrated Life to be observed by the whole Church. There are a variety of reasons for this celebration, one of which is the 50th anniversary of the important Vatican II Council documents Lumen Gentium (*Light of the World on the Church*) and Perfectae Caritatis (*The Perfection of Charity on the Renewal of Religious Life*). Today being February 2, 2015, I would like to share my thoughts on consecrated life and on the Holy Father's apostolic letter Witnesses of Joy.

What does "consecrated life" mean? Your first image might be that of a nun. You would say, "A nun is living the consecrated life." That is true. We call vowed religious women "sisters" or "nuns". But what we tend to forget is that men can live the consecrated life also. Men, who are either priests or brothers, can live a vowed religious life in community. Think of Jesuit priests or Benedictine monks. Actually, according to the Code of Canon Law, which is the small book of all Church law, there are four ways of living the consecrated life: hermits, consecrated virgins, secular institutes and religious, both contemplative and active, male and female. Hermits and virgins are the most ancient forms of consecrated life and were present in the early Church. As life together evolved, most early religious communities for centuries were contemplative and cloistered. With rise of the mendicant orders in the late Middle Ages, the emerging form of religious life was active and mobile, such as missionaries, itinerant preachers and teachers. Think of the Dominican and Franciscan friars. In more re-



Sister Mary Beverly and Mary Chamberlin in chapel.

cent centuries, you find the inspiration and founding of active religious women's communities. Certainly the history of our country shows the heroic contribution to culture and civilization made by women's communities who established schools, hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes and other social services especially in pioneer days and remote places. I have discovered in my travels in the American West that if you want to find the Catholic church in town, follow the blue hospital signs and they will take you to it. Why? Because when the Sisters built the first hospital in these towns, it was always near the Catholic church, the heart of the local parish!

Referring to the four canonical ways one can be publically consecrated in the Church, I am a hermit. With regard to exterior aspects with religious Sisters, there are no easily observable differences. I profess public vows; I wear an identifiable religious garb; I follow an approved Rule of Life; I am called "Sister". The differences come in interior, less observable ways. For instance, one feature of religious life is the emphasis on living in community, working and praying together. As a hermit, I live alone. Religious

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have superiors within their own communities and the structure of obedience is within that framework, according to a Constitution. As I wrote in December at the time of the appointment of the new Bishop of Boise, as a canonical hermit of the Diocese of Boise, the Bishop is my superior. My vow of obedience is to him. I use his name in my vow formula. My life of silence and prayer is most like that of a cloistered religious, however I am not cloistered...a big difference! Poor Clares, Carmelite or Dominican nuns would not be going out to parishes to sell items to support themselves. Hermits do. In fact, many of the ancient stories about the earliest hermits of the Egyptian desert tell of their adventures going to a city to market their baskets and other hand-made items.

When Sister Rebecca Mary and I left our previous religious community to become hermits of the Diocese of Boise, Bishop Treinen was very anxious that there be no break in our consecration. He saw to it that in the papers from Rome releasing us from our former community, our religious vows would only expire upon making our vows as hermits. In his memorable homily that day, July 13, 1988, he used a vivid image to explain the difference in our consecration. Bishop Treinen said, "When I am fishing (and he was a great fisherman!), while the fish is in the river, it is one word in Spanish, and when it is on my hook and I pull the fish out, it is another word. In English, it is still a fish!" It was Bishop's way of explaining that our lives as hermits were different, but that the differences were subtle. As a poignant epilogue to this, I just want to mention that as a gift to us when we left our community, the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon gave us our gold rings which symbolize our betrothal to the Lord. It is really my only personal possession and I do treasure it for what it means. I was originally consecrated to the Lord as a religious on August 15, 1967 and, by His grace, the consecration has only deepened over the years as I became a hermit at God's invitation.

In the Holy Father's letter, *Witnesses of Joy*, Section One is entitled "Aims of the Year of Consecrated Life". Pope Francis gives three reasons for the year: *to look to the past with gratitude; to live the present with passion; to embrace the future with hope*. One of the main expectations which the Holy Father has



Our gold ring is simple and unadorned, showing espousal to Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

for this year for those of us living the consecrated life is this: "We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness, that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere..." The Pope concludes his letter with this beautiful passage: "Consecrated life is a gift to the Church, it is born of the Church, it grows in the Church, and it is entirely directed to the Church. For this reason, precisely as a gift to the Church, it is not an isolated or marginal reality, but deeply a part of her. It is at the heart of the Church, a decisive element of her mission, inasmuch as it expresses the deepest nature of the Christian vocation and the yearning of the Church as the Bride for union with her sole Spouse. Thus, it belongs...absolutely to the life and holiness of the Church."

I would ask for myself and for all consecrated men and women, including the Pope who is a Jesuit, that you would pray for us that this might be a year of celebration, renewal and great graces for us and for the whole Church. In Pope Francis' words: "...the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full." So be it. Thank you for your prayers.

The Diocese of Boise will be celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life in ways yet to be decided. In the meanwhile, Mary and I have been invited to the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Boise for their parish celebration on February 8, 2015, which will be a Mass and reception.

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The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the Rule of St. Benedict. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Any donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!

DEATH

By Sister Rebecca Mary, HSM

You robber! You thief!
With cold, cruel hands you
snatch away our dear ones.

Your smug laughter leaves
the room silent and cold
where the dead lie in slumber.

But your victory is short for
you have lost the battle.

The suffering of the holy immortal
God, Jesus our Savior, has
won the battle forever.

All those who love God
will live again in His Presence.
His Divine Mercy will be
poured down upon them.

The river of tears shed for the
dead will turn to crystal joy.
Jesus is the Victor; may
we rejoice, Alleluia! Alleluia!

Written at St. Mary of the Valley
Beaverton, Oregon
January 13, 2015

Consider making a Retreat during Lent this year

Silent Weekend Retreat at Nazareth in Boise given by Father Brad Neely of All Saints Parish, Lewiston, Idaho and Hermit Sister M. Beverly on Feb. 27, 28 & March 1, 2015. Theme is "Praying with Mother Teresa". For details and registration, visit the website at

www.nazarethretreatcenter.org

Hermitage Retreat at Marymount Hermitage in Mesa, Idaho. Priest retreatants will be available from April throughout the year for daily Mass and confession. Visit our website for registration details: **www.marymount-hermitage.org**
Click on the Retreat Section.

ASH WEDNESDAY

By Sister M. Beverly, HSM

February 18, 2015 is Ash Wednesday. The somber rite of the imposition of ashes on our foreheads is a poignant reminder that we are mortal. One day we will die. We strive to live today as if it will be our last, like the saints did. The poem by Sister Rebecca Mary (at left) is her meditation on and reaction to the four deaths in the community at St. Mary of the Valley from mid-November, 2014 to January 5, 2015. Two of the Sisters were elderly and frail and their deaths were not totally surprising. However, one Sister was only 44 years old and died very unexpectedly in her sleep. Sister Francesca had worked doing care-giving in the Infirmary, so Sister Rebecca Mary really misses her. The last Sister to die was 59 years old, which is also very young.

Sister Rebecca Mary had the spiritual joy and consolation of being able to pray with two of the Sisters who died at the convent in Beaverton, Oregon. Sister Rebecca Mary has always prayed the Chaplet of Mercy for the dying. Now, in this case, she was actually with Sister Maureen Kalsch when she died on January 5. She did so with a smile of serenity on her face. To die in peace in the midst of a praying community is probably the ultimate good death. Please remember in your prayers the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon at their recent loss of four members. May these Sisters rest in peace and may our beloved deceased family members, neighbors and friends pray for us as we make our way to God and eternity also.

The benefactors of Marymount Hermitage are remembered each month in a Mass for them and their families and intentions. May this season of Lent be one of grace and preparation for heaven our true home. God bless you!

Epilogue: Ten years ago I had an idea to illustrate a newsletter article with photographs of hands only. Sister Mary Ellen Hanson, SSMO was on a year-long sabbatical with us in 2005. I had a series of photographs of her hands and, by God's grace, I somehow remembered this unrealized project when I was working on this newsletter. So the hands you see in the photograph on page 2 are not those of Sister Rebecca Mary or mine. They are Sister Mary Ellen's, but our rings are all identical.