



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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Volume 30, No. 1

January, 2013

A VISIT TO MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE

By Father Hugh Feiss, OSB

On October 13, four Oblates and I joined four friends for a day of retreat at Marymount Hermitage. The hermitage was founded by Sister Rebecca Mary Bonnell and Sister Mary Beverly Greger and dedicated in 1984 by Bishop Treinen. It is located just outside of Mesa, ID, about two hours drive northwest of Boise. The complex consists of a chapel and a central residence and five hermitages for guests and those discerning a vocation. It is situated on 100 acres 3200 feet above sea level on a high desert mesa with broad vistas.

It is not incongruous for hermits to be engaged in hospitality. It is reported that Cassian, a fourth-century visitor to the monks of Egypt who became an influential spiritual writer, was surprised that a hermit was willing to break his fast to eat with his visitors. The hermit told him Jesus said it is not right for the friends of the bridegroom to fast while he is among them. St. Benedict taught the same: every guest who shows up is to be treated as Christ, lovingly and humanely. In keeping with this tradition, Sister Beverly welcomed us.

Sister spoke to us about desert spirituality and guided us in private lectio divina of the Scriptures. She gave us a word for meditation: the biblical teaching, "Be still, and know that I am God." She told us to close our eyes and listen very carefully to the sounds and the silence. Then we were to open our eyes and see the life around us, abundant in the apparent emptiness. Then we were to ask God for the gift of stillness so that we might begin to pray interiorly. After this exercise, we celebrated Mass in the lovely chapel and had a brown bag lunch in a common room connected with the library. Then we again



Our group with Sister Beverly in front of the chapel.

pondered a word from the Bible.

Hospitable solitude is only one of the many paradoxes involved with the hermit's vocation. As Sister Beverly told us, the hermit's vocation is at the heart of the Church. Hermits are not trying to avoid people; their aim is to seek God. The Bible and the lives of the saints present the desert as a place of peace and closeness to God, but it is also a place where the Israelites, Jesus, St. Anthony and the later desert fathers wrestled with temptation, with the unruly thoughts and images and desires that came into their heads.

As winter closes in, Marymount becomes somewhat more difficult to access for those of us who don't have four-wheel drive, but once spring comes we hope to return again to Marymount to be still and to know that God is.

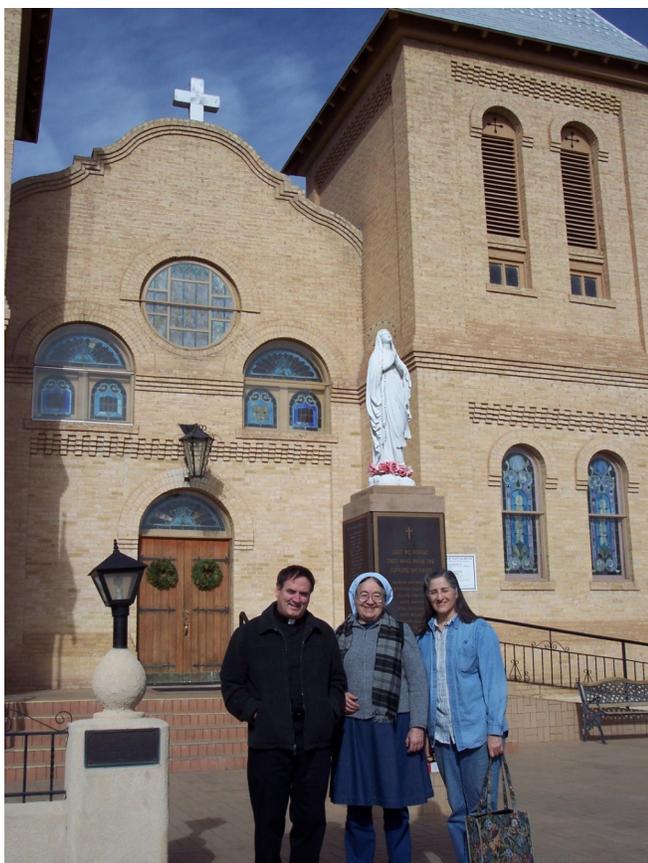
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The Desert Chronicle of the Ascension Monastery, Jerome, Idaho.

Read Sister M. Beverly's article on page 2...

A WINDOW INTO JANUARY

By Sister M. Beverly

I spent about two or three hours each day this week listening to Christmas music and writing thank you notes for gifts and donations. It is a wonderful work but I will admit my hand is beginning to ache. Snow is piling up outside and the real winter cold has begun. It is a season I enjoy very much for its beauty and silence. My days have only been punctuated with conversations with the two men who do snow removal. The strong wind of the last two days added difficulty to their necessary work. The other work and conversation was regarding the common house because the main water pipe had frozen. Dan Duke, even though he was sick, came to work on it and did so successfully for which I am greatly relieved. Today is January 11 and the Christmas season will end with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord next Sunday. Alas for my Christmas music! I hope to finish my correspondence today and tomorrow.



Father Bill McCann, Sister Beverly and Lucille Dungan in NM.

Today is another milestone in a bittersweet way. My former confessor, Father Don Riffle, will be buried from the Boise Cathedral today. Please pray for the repose of the soul of this great and very beloved priest. Thank you.

Christmas and New Years are still very much with me in memory. I was privileged to spend Dec. 20-26 with my family in San Antonio, TX. I stayed at my sister Lucille's house and was able to visit not only the Dungan family but my Dad and his wife who live nearby. On Dec. 26 Lucille and I and the Dungans traveled by car to Anthony, TX. There at the very border of TX and NM, Lucille and I visited our aunt and uncle overnight. Lucille and I then went on by rental car to Las Cruces where we spent the morning of Dec. 27 seeing the historic district including a very old and beautiful church in Mesilla. I stayed at the diocesan retreat house in Las Cruces to visit my spiritual director who is the rector of the Cathedral. It has been three years since I was able to travel to NM to see Father Bill McCann, so this opportunity was really graced for me. I flew on Dec. 31 to Phoenix, AZ to visit the rest of my extended Echeveste family. It has been twelve years since I was there and we have had marriages, births and deaths in that time. It was so good to reconnect. I flew home to Boise on Jan. 3 and drove back to Marymount on Jan. 4. It was a beautiful trip and I am still praying over the impressions and graces.

Last January, I taught three classes in Boise and was working diligently on editing The Fire King, Sister Rebecca Mary's last of three children's books. I was also called to jury duty! It was a very busy month but fortunately the weather was rather mild and made traveling easy. I am always grateful for work, but I am also very relieved that this year for January, I am able to give myself more to prayer, study and silence. God is good!

If you read this, please drop me a line so I know. I am happy to write monthly on the 15th as long as people are receiving it. You are welcome to ask questions for future posts. Mass is offered monthly for all benefactors of Marymount Hermitage.

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 on 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!
