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# BENEDICTINE TOUCHSTONE



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*Send down your  
Holy Spirit  
to enlighten  
our minds and  
our hearts  
with the desire  
to serve You.*

# Prioress' Reflection

By Mother Mary Anne Noll OSB



Do we ever wonder what Jesus was like that He could invite

people working in a family fishing business to follow Him – and they did? What explanation did they give to themselves? “If anyone ever told me that I would be doing this, I would have said they were crazy! I just know that He seems so authentic, seems to have something that I desire, seems to speak to the very depths of my being. I need to follow.”

In this day of fast food deliveries, take-outs, and tail-gating parties, can we imagine being in a crowd of 5,000 so taken by a speaker that our knapsacks were empty and we really did not even notice or mind?

Then Pope John Paul II died. We and the entire world watched people stand in line for 12-16 hours just to see his body ever so briefly. They said it didn't matter how long they had to wait in the heat or the cold with little food or drink. Why?

Because Pope John Paul was authentic, Christ-like. He truly lived what he believed. How touching to see photos of him in prayer, whether holding his papal crozier before his face, or during the Eucharist before millions or in his private chapel. He seemed to really “know” the Father and to have that relationship which we all desire.

Someone once remarked, “If we are the salt of the earth, why are not people who come in contact with us thirstier?” People experienced John Paul II as “salt” and they thirsted for what made him who he was. And he was a moral compass – not a moral weathervane.

These people experienced in Pope John Paul II a window into the Divine. His faith-filled being made God easier to see, made a relationship

with God something attainable, made joy in living a possibility despite incredible losses of his family and the trauma of war.

In this issue of *The Benedictine Touchstone* we focus on “vocation,” on our call to serve God. The question of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is “How can we best serve God?” This call comes from our Baptism and expresses itself as a call to single life, married life, religious life or priesthood.

Each of us who have experienced our lives as a “vocation” has our own story of how we came to that realization. I was a sophomore in a public high school when someone suggested that I pray to know God's will for my life. Was God perhaps calling me to religious life? After my junior year, I visited St. Emma Monastery and entered after my graduation from high school – 43 years ago! What did I experience? God seemed so real to me that I could not imagine doing anything else with my life.

After my visit to St. Emma and prayer, St. Emma Monastery seemed the place where God wanted me to spend my life trying always to love Him and others more as a Benedictine.

In the following article, Sr. Maria, shares her reflections on her role as novice-mistress. Some of our newer Sisters tell how they perceived that God was calling them to religious life and, in particular, to our monastery.

All of our vocations are so intertwined. We pray for

the church and all of you six times a day and during Mass. We provide a setting where you can come to deepen

*God seemed so real to me that I could not imagine doing anything else with my life.*

your relationship with God. Our wonderful volunteers work shoulder to shoulder with us to help make the hospitality in prayer and personally possible. You also enable St. Emma Monastery and Retreat House by your prayer, your financial support, and the example of your lives dedicated to God.

Jesus told us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send more workers into His vineyard for the harvest is great and the laborers are few. ***We need to implore the Lord of the harvest to send more dedicated laborers (“salt”) into each vocation so that the world will “thirst” even more for God.***

## Prayer for Vocations

*Heavenly Father,*

*We thank you for the many gifts*

*You have given us on our life's journey.*

*Send down your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and our hearts with the desire to serve You.*

*We ask you to call many sons and daughters from our families and parishes to dedicate their lives to the Church.*

*Give all that You have called the grace to respond generously to serve You and their brothers and sisters as priests, deacons and religious.*

*May they persevere in their vocations and grow into faithful disciples of your Son.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

*(written by second year novice)*

## Thoughts of a Novice Mistress

“You cannot buy a vocation for a million dollars,” our Abbess Mother Franziska says. Yes, it is first and foremost a precious gift of God to an individual. The Lord calls at different ages and at different times.

I personally heard His call in my soul first when I was twelve years old. Then again when I was 17. A faithful family and the example of devoted

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religious sisters and priests in my parish had an inspiring influence. After completing my education and teaching three years I was sure that the longing in my heart to devote my life in a special way to God was real. At the age of 26, I entered Abtei St. Walburg, Eichstaett, the Motherhouse of St. Emma Monastery. It was the best decision I ever made and I never regretted it.

In September 1999, I came to St. Emma Monastery to be novice mistress (formation director) – that means to introduce “newcomers” into the monastic way of life. St. Benedict simply says in his Rule: “A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention” (RB 58,6). Winning souls – for whom? For the monastic life? For

St. Emma Monastery? I think first of all for Jesus Christ. He should be the only motivation for an entrance, the focus and center of all those who feel drawn to religious life. Then the “narrow way” with all its challenges, difficulties and hardships one

experiences at the beginning will become wide. St. Benedict encourages the newcomer in the Prologue of his Rule: “As we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the paths of God’s commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love” (49).

Before a woman enters our monastery, we invite her to spend time with us in prayer, work and community life to discern whether God is calling her to the monastic way of life at our monastery and if she herself is truly seeking God.

The time of formation includes postulancy (one year), novitiate (two years), and temporary vows (three years).

At the end of this time the Sister consecrates herself by solemn vows to God and unites herself forever to her community.

As Benedictines we seek God in prayer, in work and in community. It is truly a wonderful life “to prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (RB72,11) that “in all things God may be glorified” (RB 57,9).

– Sr. Maria, OSB  
Novice Mistress



Photo Credit: Ed Zelachoski

One day I received a “wake-up call” from God: an overwhelming experience of His love for me. This changed me from being a “ho-hum” Christian to one focused on God. I offered Him my life, my will, my possessions, and asked Him to guide me. Prayer and doing his will became my priority; worldly pleasures no longer satisfied. When I visited a monastery, I found others who were living the spiritual life, with regular community prayer and Mass as their priority. It was a glimpse of Heaven, and it still is.

– Sr. Petra, OSB  
Temporary Vows



Although many things happened to me on my journey, the call to vocation came as a surprise. I really felt the love God had for me and the radical change that occurred afterward.

– Sr. Mary Antony, OSB  
Temporary Vows



*We believe that the divine presence is everywhere...But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office. (RB 19,1-2).*



I have felt called to the religious life ever since I was very young. I had great influences in my life; my aunt, Sister Ruth Hollen, RSM and my cousin, Sister Coleman Krise, RSM were among them.

I was called to a more contemplative community, and I came in contact with Mother Mary Anne and the Sisters ten years ago. I was drawn by their schedule of prayer and work. Rising early in the morning to praise God is fulfilling to me. It starts the day off in the right direction, and our day concludes with prayer that brings the day to a perfect end. – Sr. Sandra, Novice OSB

*Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart (RB, Prologue 1).*

As an adult, I studied for the ministry in the Methodist church. In these classes we studied worship and the rites of Baptism and Confirmation from the early church to the present. I was impressed that the roots of all that the churches do were in the Catholic church. That is what brought me to go through the RCIA and to become Catholic.

Shortly after I became Catholic I began to think about religious life again. During this time my spiritual life also deepened. I started going to daily Mass and to pray the *Liturgy of The Hours*.

One day at my parents' house, of all places, I came across a copy of the Rule of Benedict, 1980. My parents had picked it up in a book sale. I took the book home and began to read. As I read the Rule of Saint Benedict I realized that the Rule described the kind of life that I wanted to live and the kind of community I wanted to live in.

– Sheri, vocation live-in



Vocation. A calling. A way of life that leads you closer to God.

The power of prayer. After my initial desire to consecrate my life to Christ I found myself searching out how and to what order this may be fulfilled. One day someone

very close to me called me out of the blue and simply asked for my prayers. I had to fight very hard not to rush to him and help him by my personal presence. So I prayed very hard, lit candles and offered daily Masses and sufferings up for him and his situation. About a week later he called and updated me. He was doing so much better and he said that it felt like I was with him the whole time.

I knew that it was God that he was feeling. It confirmed in me the power of prayer. There are many ways for someone to offer their lives to God and his kingdom. But for me this experience led me to the more contemplative, monastic life that I found at St. Emma. It offered a balance between prayer and work that I had been searching for in a community. The power of prayer is the way God has chosen me to further His divine kingdom.

– Sr. Maria Johanna, OSB, Temporary Professed



*“Listen to the ear of your heart”*  
(Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue, 1). Discernment. Two incredible life-long processes. It took me twenty years to begin them and now there is no turning back. The future of my vocation relies on the fact that “Each and every day I can begin again.” It is never too late to begin.

*By Karen, Postulant*

*The Lord calls at different ages  
and at different times.*

When I was 12, I had a very profound experience of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Some months later I began being drawn to the Catholic Church. I was falling in love with “His” true Church, reading everything I could about the Church. I wanted to come into the Catholic Church, but my parents would not let me at that time. This was the beginning of my journey to my vocation.

Some years later, in 1995, I was received into the Church. In 1997, I was blessed to go to Medjugore with a dear friend. It was there that I believe my vocation to religious life began to blossom.

A few years later, one of my friends at my parish, asked me if I would like to make a retreat with her at St. Emma. We made a retreat at St. Emma, and I loved it. The more I came back to St. Emma on retreats the more I was drawn here.

Finally around the year 2000, the retreat master suggested that God was calling me to religious life and perhaps this is the place where He wanted me to be. So, here I am, almost ready to profess first vows.

*– Sr. Laura, Novice OSB*

Often I am asked, “Why did you choose St. Emma?” My answer is usually that I did not, St. Emma chose me. It was all God’s idea.

I’m a convert and I’ve described my life as a roller coaster ride with the Holy Spirit. My first visit to St. Emma was very emotional for me. I had never met a “nun” before, never experienced “community prayer” or the tug in my heart that felt like God had just brought me home. In my heart and mind the search for where God wanted me was over.

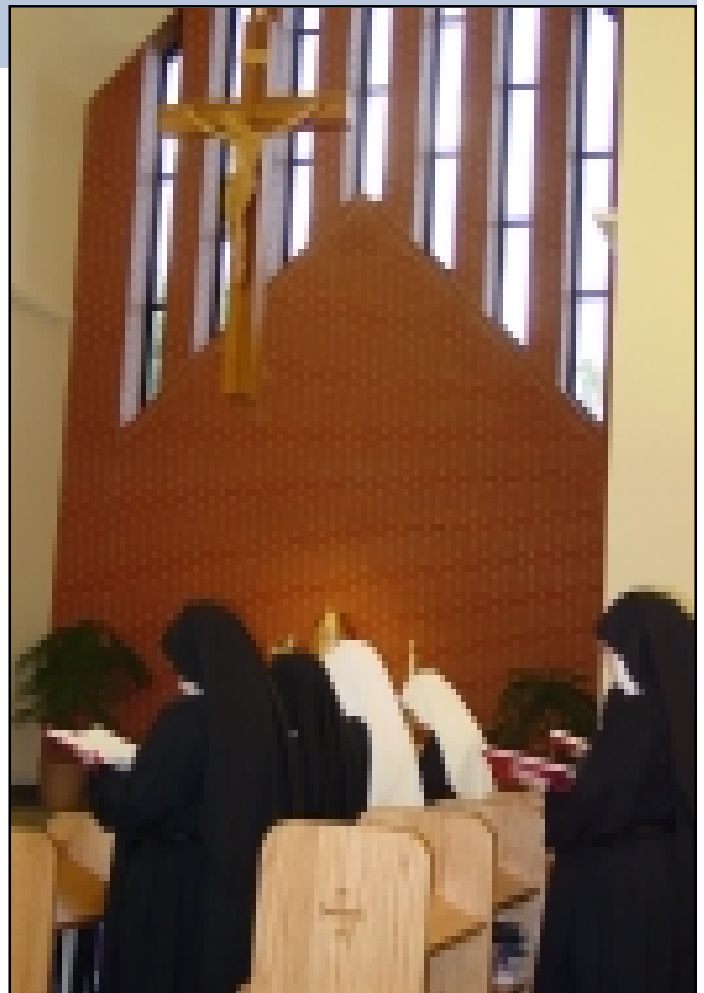
Mother Mary Anne and my spiritual director asked me to visit other communities to “make sure.” I did; they were all wonderful experiences, but St. Emma was “home.” This journey so far has been a constant “yes” to God and a daily letting go of my own will. Nothing that is really worthwhile is easy!

There is something about this place, something holy. It’s in the air, the land, and the structures that make up St. Emma monastery. It’s in the lives of the people we touch every day. It’s in the grace of starting over every day. As scripture says, “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Math. 17:4).

So again I ask, ‘Why St. Emma?’

Because it is what it is, a monastery of nuns, all striving, all trying, all praying, together, for Him. The best way to explain a vocation here is not in the reading of these words, but in the doing, being and experiencing of life here. Come; pray with us, work with us, ‘be’ with us. Once you experience St. Emma, you will be able to answer the ‘why?’ for yourself.

*– By Sr. Maria Renata, OSB, Solemnly Professed*





On May 10, 2005, our Sister Pancratia celebrated her 90th birthday! When talking with her about her birthday, she shared, "When I was young, nobody ever got that old. It's a nice age!" she added with a wide smile.



Jeannette Girl Scout Troop #21817 (Brownies), recently buried a time capsule in one of the flower beds which they planted — and plan to do so for the next five years.



Five second graders of Holy Cross School, Youngwood, came for a day as part of their preparation for receiving their First Communion and Confirmation.



Dave Hanna and John Kline of First Commonwealth Bank presenting the initial \$2,000 check on their \$10,000 pledge to Mother Mary Anne to the expansion and renovation of the retreat house.

### 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.*



*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*

### Prayer Requests and Intentions

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

## Facets of Our Benedictine Monastic Life

1. **Prayer:** As Benedictine Nuns we sing *The Liturgy of the Hours* six times a day with daily Eucharist, as its center and summit. Lectio Divina (prayerful reading), personal prayer and silence are essential to our life.
2. **History:** The Rule of St. Benedict has touched, freed, directed and formed the hungers of the human heart toward God for over 1500 years.
3. **Spirituality:** According to Benedict, we seek God within this particular community with its daily rhythm of *Ora et labora* – prayer and work – on our journey to prefer “nothing whatever to Christ.”
4. **Good Works:** Our monastic life is our ministry: we offer hospitality to the world through our prayer, to more than 3500 people each year by “welcoming guests as Christ” through our retreat house and Monastic Guest House (including Protestant and ecumenical groups), and to the visitors to our Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop.
5. **Faith:** God provides – and vocations are His gift. We have added a period of personal prayer before Blessed Sacrament each week with the special intention of deepening our own vocation that God may bless us with other women entering.
6. **Stability:** This monastery is a touchstone between us and God, a physical reminder to people that there are people loving and serving God, a touchstone between many people and God.
7. **Sharing Christ:** Also with our volunteers who are our “lay associates” – we have no hired help.

Representing Knights of Columbus, Council 1480 of Greensburg, Phil Manns and Bob Dietrick presented a check to Mother Mary Anne for the preparation and reseeding of lawns surrounding the



Cor Jesu Monastic Chapel. We also thank the Knights who painted rooms in the retreat house and who have pruned our orchard.

We are also grateful to the Columbian Squires, students of Greensburg Central Catholic, who cleaned in preparation for the Dedication of the Retreat House Addition and Renovation, assisted with changing the mattress covers on the 50 beds in the retreat house, helped carry many nativity sets and Christmas decorations from and to the attic, and assisted with Christmas Visit and Vespers.

## Gift of Life Insurance



Mother Mary Anne Noll reviews a Gift of Life Insurance with Robert Allen, Director of Stewardship.

### By Robert J. Allen, Director of Stewardship

Paul Swenson, a young man who understands the concept of a “little makes a lot,” has made St. Emma Monastery the owner and beneficiary of a \$50,000 Whole Life Policy. This gift of Life Insurance will cost him less than \$500 per year for 10 years.

Many people donate money to help charities but most people don't realize how their donation can benefit themselves and the charity until they consider Planned Giving.

True, as we get older, the cost of life insurance does increase. However, there are several ways to help your favorite charity through a Gift of Life Insurance. You can transfer an existing policy to the charity and the cash value is a tax deduction. You may want to consider a large gift but don't have \$100,00. However, based on age and health, you can make a life insurance gift and have payments that you can manage on an annual basis for a fixed period of time. This is sometimes referred to as a “10 Pay,” suggesting that after approximately 10 years, the premium is paid and after that time the dividend will pay the premium for you.

Always consult with a licensed Life Insurance Agent in your state. We at St. Emma Monastery are not insurance agents, but we see how these ideas might help you in your charitable giving. Usually a Whole Life Policy or Universal Life Policy best serves the charity and allows you to provide a large gift at a much lesser cost to you.

### +In Memoriam

We extend our sympathy to the family of Walter Novak. We are deeply touched and honored that Mr. Novak and his family designated St. Emma to receive memorial contributions in his name.

## Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop



By Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger)

**Introduction to Christianity** (\$16.95)

**Many Religions, One Covenant** (\$11.95)

**Salt of the Earth** (\$12.95)

**God Is Near Us, The Eucharist the Heart of Life** (\$12.95)

**The Spirit of the Liturgy** (\$17.95)

**Truth and Tolerance** (\$15.95)

**Behold the Pierced One** (\$10.95)

**Co-Workers of the Truth, Meditations for Every Day** (\$17.95)

*Also Available:*

**We Have a Pope! Benedict XVI**

by Matthew E. Bunson

By Pope John Paul II

**Love and Responsibility** (\$14.96)

**The Jeweler's Shop** (\$12.95)

**Witness to Hope - DVD** (\$26.95)

**Mary: God's Yes to Men** (\$9.95)

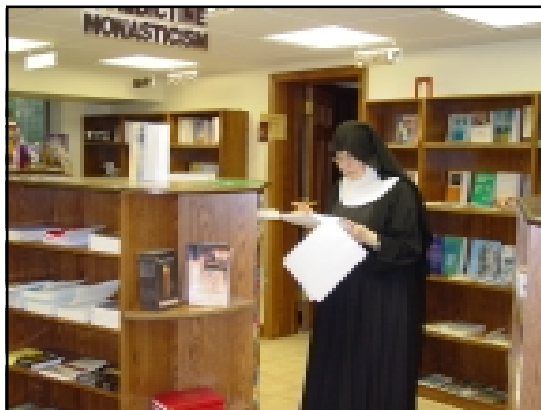
**Covenant of Love, John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage and Family** (\$14.95)



Pope John Paul II medals may also be ordered through our gift shop. Check out [www.blissmfg.com](http://www.blissmfg.com) <<http://www.blissmfg.com>> for medals available.

To order any of the above, please call *Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop* at 724-834-7483. Thank you!

*Sr. Maria checks inventory at the Benedictine Sisters Catholic Gift & Book Shop.*



## Flea Market Thanks!

Many thanks to all those who donated items or who worked in any way to help make our flea market again a success — including the shoppers.

## Retreat House Schedule

July	8-15	Encounter with Silence, Rev. Frank Erdeljac (\$310)
August	5-11	6 Day <b>SILENT</b> (lay and religious), Rev. Mark Gruber OSB (\$290) Part time reservations welcome.
September	26-28	Men/Women, Rev. Tom Smith (\$110)
	16-18	Women, Rev. Edward Litavec (\$110)
	23-25	Women Most Rev. Anthony G. Bosco (\$110)
October	30-Oct 2	<b>SILENT</b> (men/women), Rev. Lester Knoll OFMCap (\$110)
	14-16	Women, Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald CP (\$110)
	15	Pro-Life Day of Reflection, Rev. Thomas Smith (\$23)
November	21-23	Married Couples, Rev. Thomas Kram (\$210)
	28-30	Married Couples, Rev. Mark Gruber OSB (\$210)
December	4-6	Legion of Mary and OTHERS (\$110) Rev. Francis Lendacky
January 18, 2006	3	Day of Reflection for Religious and Lay Pro-Life Prayer Vigil: 2:30 – 8:30 pm Rev. Mark Gruber OSB

## Monastic Guest House Schedule

### Encounter with Silence

**July 18-15** Rev. Frank Erdeljac, Monastic Guest House, \$400; Retreat House, \$310

### Priests Silent Guided Retreat

**January 2-6, 2006** Rev. Lester Knoll OFMCap, Theme: The Priest: Witness to the Mysteries (Daily outline: Mass, One conference, one optional discussion session (evening), Eucharistic Adoration each evening, Silence.) Limited to 9.

## Pro-Life Day of Reflection



On Saturday, October 15, Rev. Thomas Smith will lead the Fall Pro-Life Day of Reflection. The day will center on how we can inspire others with the fundamental truth concerning the sacredness of life.

Program begins with registration at 8:45 and concludes with Eucharist (anticipated Sunday). Fee is \$23.00. Registration is required.

*When we are called home by the Lord, what will we say to the Lord regarding our life's thoughts, words and deeds defending, supporting, and providing for the dignity and quality of human life?*