



# Monastery Mosaic

September /2010

## From the Prioress

Dear Friends,

Many of you read the letter from Sr Jill in the September issue of the Bethlehem Retreat Centre newsletter describing her experience as director of the Centre. I realize that some may not know the history of the Retreat Centre so I'm going to briefly elaborate on Jill's letter. Those of you who have been with us from the beginning might find a few surprises.

The corporate ministry of the House of Bread monastery is Hospitality and one important way we exercise this ministry is through the Bethlehem Retreat Centre.

The House of Bread monastery was established in Nanaimo in 1974 and as part of the Benedictine outreach Sister Augusta Marie Raabe initiated a retreat ministry from the monastery to the people of Nanaimo and beyond.

This effort was broadened thirteen years later when Bishop Remi De Roo, wanting to establish a Retreat Centre, bought property and asked Sr. Jill if she would take the leadership in its establishment. With the agreement and support of the Prioress and community, Sr. Jill said *yes* and the Bethlehem Retreat Centre was born.

In the following years Srs Claudia, Pat, Germaine and Phyllis lived and worked at the Centre welcoming all who came. Sr Rose Mary was the business manager and other members of the community contributed a variety of services when time permitted from their other ministries.

In time Karen Nicol, Patricia Morton and Erlinda Pascual came to live at the Retreat Centre as volunteers and continued the practice of offering gracious hospitality to individuals and groups. Today Diane Keno continues the tradition.

As Sr. Jill said in referring to those early beginnings, "the building (Retreat Centre) was neglected and in poor repair." In fact, Sr. Claudia used to come after work each day from the Monastery, which was then situated at Killarney Place, to spend several hours cleaning up after the workmen and to look after the bookkeeping. Many of you remember those times and took an active part in helping in many ways.

In 2001 the Benedictine sisters purchased the Centre from the Diocese with the support of many individuals, groups and organizations. After a concerted fundraising effort a twenty year loan was taken out by the Benedictine sisters to complete the purchase. With the leadership provided by Sr Jill, the support of the Benedictine community and many, many friends the Centre continued to grow.

In 2003 Sr Mary Ann became the Director of the Retreat Centre and today continues to provide the leadership necessary for continued growth. She is assisted in this work by an Advisory committee who give hours of volunteer time, by Lucia Gamroth who shares her skills in many areas, by the sisters who continue their involvement in a variety of ways and by you with your continued generosity.

The Retreat Centre remains as a ministry of the House of Bread and is a place where Benedictine values and beliefs about humanity, healing, spirituality and peace are given expression through hospitality and presence.

I hope this brief historical snapshot has been helpful. I want to thank all of you who over the years have contributed your time, your prayers and your financial contributions to help grow this ministry.

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What does the future hold? I do not know. There is no crystal ball. What I do know is that we will do what we have always done and that is to take creative and responsible risks as we put our trust in the guidance of the Spirit.

Sister Barbara

### **News from the Monastery**

Agnes Kim had been a novice over the past year here at the monastery. The time of Novitiate allows both the person and the community to enter into a discernment process to determine if this is the place God seems to be calling one. It is similar to an engagement entered into by two people in preparation for marriage. After prayerful reflection it was discerned that Agnes seems meant to use her many gifts in a different walk of life. Please keep her in your prayer as she continues to discern and follow God's call.

After seventeen years the fence in front of the monastery was freshly painted by several volunteers and sisters. The lovely archway was rebuilt with the financial contributions given to honour Sister Claudia. I have no doubt that she appreciates it.

October 15-17 the House of Bread monastery will sponsor a Monastic weekend. This is a weekend for single women who are interested in learning more about the Benedictine way of life. If you know someone who might have this interest, please have her call Sr Germaine at the Monastery.

### **Associates and Oblates**

In July the Oblate team attended the Northwest Regional Oblate meeting in Mt. Angel, Oregon. It was an opportunity to pray and share with other Oblates and Oblate directors from the Northwest as well as meet and participate in the liturgy with the Benedictine sisters of Queen of Angels Monastery. We were the largest contingent so Canada was well represented.

Our next Benedictine Retreat day is Sunday, October 3, from 8:45-3:30. The theme is *Work and Leisure*.

The consistent feedback we receive from these retreat days is that they are well balanced between sharing and silence and between personal and communal prayer. I hope you will take the opportunity to rest and reflect in an atmosphere of peace.

### **Monastic Wisdom**

We are meant to pay attention to our desire as a pointer, leading us toward what God has in mind for us, toward fullness of life.

In the words of a poem by Mary Margaret Funk, OSB,

*Desire carves out capacity to shelter  
the unknown,  
to welcome mystery  
To fall on knees before the One the heart has  
always longed for.*

Our deep longing for life is the means God uses to form our essential being, shaping us to share in the ongoing creation of the world.

#### Desiring Life

Benedict on Wisdom and the Good Life  
by Norvene Vest

Benedict does not give me certainty. He does not give me easy answers. He gives me a focus, shows me the stance. He is forming me so that I can respond to each new situation, each new demand. He knows about the weakness and frailty of human nature and how we tend to cling when we are frightened and insecure. That sort of dependency is disastrous. Benedict has such a respect for each one of us that he pays us this compliment of refusing to stifle our freedom.

#### A Life-Giving Way

by Esther de Waal

P.S. If anyone can tell me how to get rid of those green squiggly lines that show up on the newsletter I'd appreciate it!