



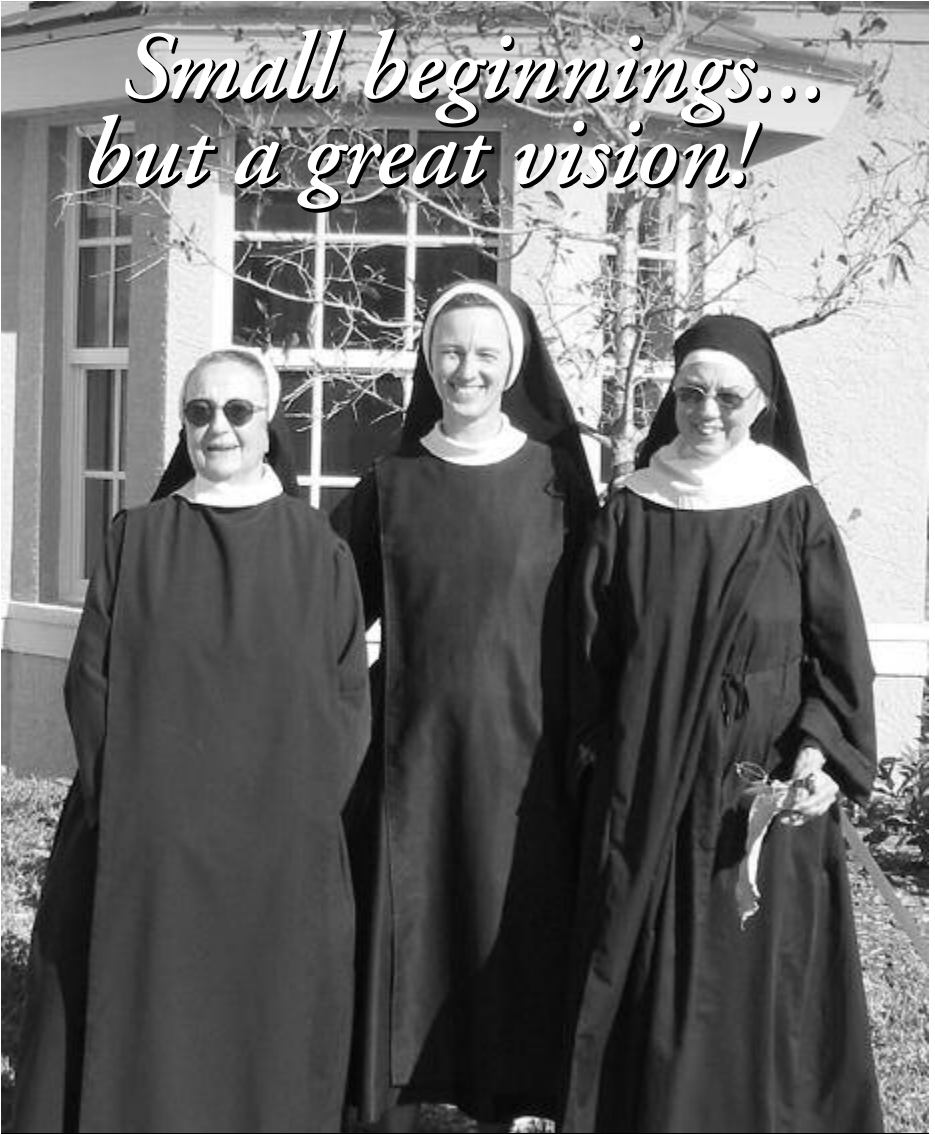
F R O M T H E H E A R T O F

The Pelican

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

MARCH 2004

*Small beginnings...
but a great vision!*



QUEEN OF PEACE MONASTERY:
... AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

Queen of Peace Monastery: An idea whose time has come.

BY SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE, OSB

“Why another Benedictine house?” The inspiration was sown while I was doing graduate work at CUA in the mid-90s. My experience of the different styles of living the Benedictine charism broadened as I met monks and nuns from other Benedictine monasteries. In particular, I felt a real rapport with the life-style of the monks who spent some of their monastic day in the classroom. I began to dream.... “Wouldn’t it be nice if....” I wasn’t interested in a full time

job as a professor, but I was intrigued by the idea of living monastic life and still being able to teach a course or two. Up till then, I was aware of only two types of Benedictine life available to women in the U.S.: the very enclosed and the very active. The alternative of having a women’s monastery near a Catholic university was a very attractive idea; however, for years it remained just that, viz. “a nice thought.”

I had the good fortune of teaching in Garming, Austria for 2 1/2 years (1996–1999) which enabled me to visit Benedictine houses in Europe during that time. One house in particular, in the town of Eichstätt in Bavaria, was itself near to the Catholic university in that town. I learned from the Abbess that the nuns had been involved with education for many years, some even at the University level (in manuscript work) from time to time. So, I thought, maybe my idea wasn’t too far-fetched, after all. Nevertheless, it didn’t begin to take on any concreteness until I went to Rome in 1999. I had gone to Rome with the intention of being there for a good long time, but after barely six months in the Eternal City, while I was still learning Italian and settling into my new assignments, I was thunderstruck one day in August to receive a very strong – even impelling – grace indicating that I should return to the US and help to found a new monastery along the lines of what I had been contemplating for years. Up to that point, I had presumed that I was an anomaly among the Benedictine women of the world, but with the grace came the conviction that there were other women who desired the same kind of monastic life.

Quite frankly, the impetus brought with it several levels of fear. Wanting to test the



FROM THE HEART OF

The Pelican

Issue 1: Spring 2004

Queen of Peace Monastery

1025 Commons Circle

Naples FL 34119

Tel: 239-280-2411

email: sr.gertrude@avemaria.edu

Credits:

Editor:

Sr Gertrude Gillette, OSB

Layout:

Michael Schrauzer

Photography:

Michael Scheuren, et al.

spirits, I decided not to mention the idea to anyone while silently praying over it. After 5 months, I felt like Jeremiah trying to keep in the word of God (cf. Jer. 20:9), so I resolved to broach the subject to several of the “powers that be” in Rome in order to receive some discernment in the matter. I therefore spoke with the Abbot Primate (Marcel Rooney), the President (Abbot Thierry) of the Subiaco Congregation (to which my house in Petersham belonged) and a few weeks later to my spiritual director (Fr. Raphael Simon, OCSO). The consensus was: “the idea has some merit to it; let’s just wait and see if anything comes of it.” I was very happy with this feedback. It meant that the idea itself was worthy of consideration, but I didn’t have to be concerned about whether it would ever come to pass or not. I seemed to be “off the hook” so to speak, for the time being... but the respite proved to be short lived. At the beginning of March 2000, I received an email from my spiritual director telling me that I should begin the steps towards starting the new foundation. He thought he had a couple of people interested in the venture and he had even taken it upon himself to approach my superior (Mother Mary Clare Vincent, OSB) and to obtain her permission! Needless to say, I was bowled over. What had been for years just an “idea” was suddenly a mission: “go do it!”

One of the first things to consider was a location for the new foundation. I had already planned to attend an ordination in Boston in May; I therefore decided to use the time in the States to inquire into possible sites and I made some appointments to start the process rolling. But the Holy Spirit was one step ahead of me. At the dinner reception which followed the ordination, I had the good fortune to sit with the Healy family, cousins of the newly ordained priest, Fr. Bob Oliver. I had come to know the Healy

family over a period of years first in Washington DC, then in Austria, and finally in Rome. It was at this meal that Mr. Nicholas Healy invited us to consider setting up our new foundation near Ave Maria College, a fledgling college of which he had become President some months previously. This surprise invitation turned out to be more feasible than “my own plans” and so during the next year I visited the campus in Ypsilanti, MI twice, laying out the vision of the foundation and interviewing for a position in the theology department. In the meantime, I continued to fulfill my obligations in Rome and looked forward to finishing my commitment there in June of 2002. I was also joined in Rome by a “consorella” from my community in Petersham, Sr. Mary Joseph McManamon, OSB. We often talked about the foundation and shared many ideas in common. There were also other Benedictine sisters with whom I had shared my ideas over the years, including Sr. Theresa Scheuren from St. Lucy’s Priory near Los Angeles, CA, and Sr. Philippa Edwards from Stanbrook Abbey in England.

While finishing our last year in Rome, we learned that Ave Maria College had decided to move to Naples, Florida! Since the new – albeit temporary campus – would not be ready until August 2003, the question was: What to do for the interim year? We decided that Sr. Mary Joseph should stay in Rome while I would go as scheduled to Michigan, to teach several courses at the Orchard Lake campus while awaiting the move to Naples. A year in Michigan alone had not been part of my plans, but again, by God’s providence, it turned out to be a “Subiaco Year” of preparation, prayer and grace. During that year, I was encouraged by the desire of Sr. Theresa Scheuren to join me as one of the founders of the new community. I visited her for several weeks in California over Christmas and

she reciprocated in March as we made plans for the new house in Florida.

Finally, we arrived together on August 14 at Ave Maria University. We were warmly welcomed amidst all the excitement, dust and confusion of the first days of the new university! We were not only starting something new, everyone around us was part of the whole new venture to start the first Catholic university in 40 years! And so we were on the ground floor of several great ideas at the same time. We are still reeling in the excitement of the first year.

And now? The first days of the foundation have been a delight not unmixed with gall ... due the discovery in November that our beloved Sr Theresa needed to undergo cancer surgery followed by several months of chemotherapy. All is progressing well, but we would very much appreciate your prayers for Sr. Theresa's complete recovery. May the Lord leave her here among us for many years to come!

I will leave Sr. Theresa to share some of her own experiences as co-founder, followed by a word on the name of the newsletter by Sr. Philippa, who was our beloved guest for two months.



The Name & Vision for the New Monastery

BY SR. GERTRUDE

Peace is a traditional Benedictine motto. Monasteries are generally known for exuding a certain aura of peace. Since Peace is so desperately needed in our world today ... peace at the international level, in our country, and in our families ... it seemed to us that we should dedicate our monastery to this gift which Christ bestowed on his Church: My peace I give you (Jn 14:27). It is our desire to seek this peace and to live it in harmonious relationships with our sisters in loving openness and trust, grounded in our common prayer and service to each other. And what better patron to help us achieve this than Our Lady herself, who is the Queen of Peace? She was the first to embody the peace which Christ, the Prince of Peace, came to bring us, and so we pray to her to teach us how we might also embody this peace in our own monastic family and among all those whom we touch in our daily lives. This peace naturally embraces the larger ecclesial community, and so we are in the first place in union and harmony with our holy father, John Paul II – the visible source of unity in the Church – as well as with the bishops in communion with him, most particularly our own ordinary, Bishop John Nevins. May Christ's desire that "they all be one" (Jn 17:21) take firm root in our Church today and extend to all the Christian churches in our life time!

And what particular monastic traditions are we endeavoring to establish? We've decided that "living under a rule and an abbot" in our particular context means first of all to give praise to God as a community gathered for prayer. Our common prayer includes 5 of the Hours of the Divine Office: Vigils/Matins, Lauds, MIDDAY, Vespers and Compline, with Vespers in Latin each evening (with the traditional Gregorian



From left to right: Sr. Theresa, Sr. ????, and Sr. ?????.

Chant), and Lauds in Latin on major solemnities. Our common vision is also reflected in a common habit – the traditional monastic habit – which at the moment is black; however, we are contemplating changing this to another more user-friendly color adapted to the sun in southern Florida, at least for the summer.

The cloister of the monastery is an essential part of every house. Time together with the community whether for prayer, work or recreation ... and time spent alone is part and parcel of our monastic life, which the cloister nourishes and protects. At the same time, our desire to work in association with Ave Maria University militates against a strict interpretation of the cloister. We don't foresee every sister working at the University! but neither is teaching and other such work, incompatible with our vision of the monastic life. The proper balance will no doubt be a challenge to be worked out in prayer and discipline.

The other monastic values, such as silence, solitude, fasting, humility, mutual service, and obedience, are naturally exercises and virtues which we are attempting to make a real part of our life. Please join us in praying that what God has begun, will come to fruition in his own time.

Why the Pelican?

BY SR. PHILIPPA

We have decided to call our newsletter *The Pelican* both because this attractive bird is such a feature of the Florida scene and because in Christian iconography it is a symbol of Christ. In the middle ages it was believed that the pelican fed its young ones with blood from its own breast, as Christ feeds us with his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist. The pelican was also a symbol of Resurrection as the mother bird was believed to revive her dead chicks with her blood. There are very many representations of "the Pelican in her Piety" in art; at Stanbrook Abbey for example the tabernacle in the Holy Thorn Chapel is decorated with the pelican feeding three chicks. In his hymn *Adoro Te Devote*, St Thomas Aquinas addresses the Lord Jesus as *Pie Pellicane*:

Pie Pellicane, Iesu Domine,

Me immundum munda tuo sanguine.

Cuius una stilla salvum facere

Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere."

(As translated by Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Bring the tender tale true of the Pelican,/Bathe me, Jesu Lord, in what thy bosom ran./Blood whereof a single drop has power to win/All the world forgiveness of its world of sin.")

Foundation Beginnings

BY SR. THERESA

Sr. Gertrude and I had arranged to meet up in St. Petersburg, Florida so that we could drive into Naples together. I was awaiting her arrival as she drove down from Ave Maria in Michigan, in a car which a benefactor had generously given to the new foundation. We met up on August 4, and enjoyed a few days of vacation and shopping (to set up house!) as we awaited news from Ave Maria University that our accommodations were ready. As it happened, we drove into the driveway at Ave Maria on August 14, but had to spend the next few days (or rather nights) at the trailer of some friends in nearby Bonita Springs, since the dorms were not yet licensed for occupancy. Nevertheless, it was good to have arrived, and to set up house for the seedling community.

I was able to stay for four days before having to return St. Andrew's in Valyermo to complete my work there. Sister Gertrude remained the "lone ranger" until I could rejoin her permanently on October 2, which date will forever be the "birthday" of Queen of Peace Monastery. Awaiting my arrival, Sister Gertrude had a very busy time unpacking her own belongings from Michigan, welcoming the new students, preparing for classes and scavaging for household furniture to furnish the condo assigned to us. For this purpose (since we had virtually nothing to start with), Sister made several trips to consignment shops to find the essentials for our living quarters. She became the great bargain hunter and one shopkeeper even said, "Sister, you've got to go. I've lost enough money on you today"! The monastery now has a warm homey look and someone's "junk" has become our treasure.

I arrived in time for the (postponed) opening Mass for the University's school year, celebrated by Bishop John Nevins of Venice.

The Bishop took time to give us a special blessing and to be photographed with us.

The first order of business was to begin singing the Divine Office. We had some interesting days becoming proficient in singing the melodies and establishing a rhythm because we both came from different experiences of praying the Opus Dei. We gather five times a day in our little chapel to sing the praises of the Lord. We have at least two Masses on the campus every day, which enables us to be a bit flexible in our choice of which Mass to attend. Our recent move into one of the villas on campus has provided us with a residence more conducive to establishing a monastic atmosphere. We are especially delighted to have a chapel for the Divine Office, adoration, and private prayer. We look forward to the day when the chapel will be large enough to welcome students and faculty who wish to join us regularly for the Divine Office.

A few days after my arrival, I joined the University's Development staff and, until my unexpected surgery, thoroughly enjoyed my work there. Sister Philippa from Stanbrook Abbey in England arrived for a visit in November, just days before I went to the hospital, so she walked into my shoes in the Development Office and replaced me beautifully.

I am supposed to complete my chemo treatments in the middle of May. By then, my energy level should regain its normal level so that we can proceed with the foundation full steam! We pray that God will send us two more professed sisters soon, so that we can become established canonically, enabling us to open a novitiate and accept new members who are interested in the community. If you know of any young woman interested in the monastic life in a university setting, please have her contact Sister Gertrude at sr.gertrude@avemaria.edu. We intend to have a website soon where more information will be available.

Letter from a Monastic Visitor:

Sr. Gertrude and I have been friends for nearly twenty years, since she first visited us at Stanbrook Abbey in 1984. I saw her monastic ideas percolating over the years and so I am not surprised at her new venture. Indeed, I have enthusiastically been encouraging her to follow her dream of establishing a house which I see as both traditional and visionary. I was therefore delighted to have the opportunity to spend two months with her at Ave Maria participating to a small extent in two fledgling enterprises: the monastery and the university. My overwhelming impression of both was of great faith, hope and love – and tremendous joy. I arrived literally hours after Sr Theresa's serious diagnosis, which was obviously a great test for Sr. Gertrude, but if her trust in God wavered she did not show it. So I found myself stepping into Sr. Theresa's shoes rather than walking beside her. The Development Dept. was an entirely new experience for me; I have never opened so many envelopes, thanks to the generosity of the university's many benefactors. It was a hectic environment for one used to the silence of the monastery, but one sweetened by the unfailing good humour of my fellow-workers. I was deeply touched by the surprise party, complete with cake, which they threw for me on my last day. I thoroughly enjoyed the university's stimulating atmosphere, the instructive homilies at Mass, the varied lectures, the enriching conversations with faculty, students, volunteers and friends. Sr Gertrude's new version of the Divine Office, culled from many sources, stretched my musical powers, but worked well when we were joined by students (fortunately musical) and during the all too brief period when the little community was swelled to four by a visit from Sr Theresa between chemotherapy treatments and by the aspirancy of Pat Ciavarella. The balmy Florida winter and many natural attractions led me to whole-hearted endorsement of the Naples saying: JAPDIP – Just Another Perfect Day in Paradise. The attraction of the lakes and fountains of the Vineyards is even increased by the presence of alligators! God-willing, I look forward to the day when I can return.

*Sr. Philippa Edwards, OSB
Stanbrook Abbey, England*

Future Vistas

BY SR. THERESA

Even as the Naples campus opened with 109 students, plans were being drawn up for the permanent campus at Ave Maria, Florida, 17 miles to the northeast of Naples. The new and permanent home for the University will be ready to receive the student body in the Fall of 2006. An integral part of the new campus will be a large church and the town of Ave Maria, Florida, adjacent to the campus. If the Lord blesses our beginning and sends us other sisters, (and we thank him for the few nibblers who have visited us or contacted us showing interest) we too will move to a plot of land on the periphery on the permanent campus. There we hope to build a real monastery for the Benedictine Sisters of Queen of Peace community. God-willing, this dream will become a reality before we know it. We need your prayers to help make it happen. Thank you ahead of time.

Thanks to...you!

Our hearts are full of gratitude to the many persons who have assisted us in making Queen of Peace Monastery a reality. Our special thanks go to Mr. Thomas Monaghan, founder of Ave Maria University, Mr. Nicholas Healy, president of Ave Maria, and Father Joseph Fessio S.J., Chancellor, who have invited us, encouraged us, and who have supported us in many ways. Our monastic brothers and sisters who have shared the music of their Divine Office with us (and also have encouraged us in this venture) have our prayerful thanks. We are also grateful for the many benefactors who have contributed monthly gifts, a car, household furnishings, and warm friendships as we begin the challenging task of founding a new Benedictine monastic community in Naples. Many thanks to all of you (though unnamed you are close to our hearts) who have supported us with your prayers and enthusiasm for our work for God. God bless you all.



Queen of Peace Monastery
Ave Maria University
1025 Commons Circle
Naples FL 34119

Address Correction Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
AVE MARIA
COLLEGE