



F R O M   T H E   H E A R T   O F

# The Pelican

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FALL 2004



**THIS ICON OF MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE, PAINTED BY TWO UKRAINIAN ICONOGRAPHERS, NOW GRACES OUR NEW CHAPEL. MAY OUR LADY BLESS US ALL WITH HER PEACE.**

## Dear Friends in Christ,

ON OCTOBER 2, we celebrated the first anniversary of our foundation, the day on which St. Theresa joined me in Naples one year ago. The occasion prompted us to recall the many blessings which we have received this past year and to look at the upcoming year with renewed focus. Establishing a monastery dedicated to the Queen of Peace challenges us to take concrete steps to create an ambience of peace on many levels: in our own hearts, with each other, and with all those who come to the monastery searching for peace in their own lives. Elsewhere in this newsletter, I offer a few words on peace based on the *Rule of Benedict*. Here I would like to tie peace to JP II's new apostolic letter, *Remain with us, Lord*.

If peace is the tranquility of order, then it finds its locus in the cosmic point of all order: the Eucharist. The broken body of Christ gathers together the innumerable discrete fragments which make up our own weary lives. In this way, the Eucharist is the axis point of convergence and unity which heals our centrifugal tendencies to go out from the center, separating the parts farther and farther from each other. The Eucharist turns that outward force back on Itself to the center of love which unites all the fragmented pieces. For that reason, the Eucharist is the "still point of the *frantic* world" where renewal begins and ends in itself. Christ's passionate love remains with us in this Eucharistic self-gift, and like a magnet, it draws all to Itself in love.

I have noticed that holy people are often sought out because others feel good around them: their very presence exudes a deep peace which affirms others in love. If this is true of reflected holiness, how infinitely more true is it of the peace which pervades a person who spends time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. A person's fractured life comes together into a whole as one attempts to adore the Lord in body, soul and spirit. Focused on the Lord, the soul is restored to singleness of purpose.



The Holy Father would like every Catholic this year to go deeper: to interiorize his or her faith in a profound way by revitalizing the two great Eucharistic mysteries: the Mass and adoration of the Bl. Sacrament. Before each mystery, we are as it were transported back in time to Christ's redemptive act of love, and into the future kingdom where with all the angels and saints, we will be adoring the Lord with hearts full of gratitude for all eternity. The Mass and adoration of the Eucharist unite those two points in the present and slowly transform my being into a single note of praise which harmonizes with all the other "adoring notes" around the world.

It has often been in front of the Bl. Sacrament that I have received the peace I needed to carry on. Centering on the Lord, handing over to him all that I carry with me into the chapel, brings with it a peace that the world cannot fathom. Every moment I spend with him alone enables the Lord to act in my life more profoundly. This is borne out in the following story told me by a Franciscan friar whom I met in Gaming, Austria some years ago, Fr. Sam Tiesi, T.O.R. Fr. Sam had gotten the inspiration to ask for a perpetual adoration chapel (a portiuncula) for the students at Franciscan University in Steubenville, and — endorsing the idea — his superior told

him to go and do it! Since he knew no benefactors and had no knowledge of architecture, he was dismayed and discouraged at the thought. Taking his concerns to Jesus in the Bl. Sacrament, he received this message: “Sam, if you take care of adoring me in the Bl. Sacrament, I’ll take care of building your portion.” Needless to say, the chapel was built. A lesson for all of us this year: if we take care to spend time alone with Jesus in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, he’ll take care of everything else in our lives. That’s a promise! Furthermore, an added fruit will be peace. May the Queen of Peace lead us all to the Eucharistic source of all peace.

*Sr. Gertrude*

October, 2004



**FROM THE HEART OF**

## The Pelican

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Queen of Peace Monastery

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## News & Updates

**BY SR. THERESA**

✦ **Health Update.** May 20 was “D Day” for my return from St. Petersburg and the long period of cancer treatments there. I have been doing fairly well recuperating from the chemo treatments. Chemo attacks the whole human system besides the cancer cells and leaves some hallmarks of its presence. The test that tells the activity of cancer cells is called the Tumor Marker or CA 125. The normal level registers at 0–35. When the tumor was discovered a year ago my marker was at 325; it now registers 12. That is a happy sign of recovery. I still have the “sleeping feet and numb fingertips” syndrome, but this too shall pass. So again I would like to express my gratitude for all your prayers for my recovery. Please continue to pray for a full recovery!

✦ **Monastic Visitors.** Toward the end of May, we welcomed two young women to stay with us for ten days and join us in the monastic life: Pat Ciavarella and Maureen Cleary. They are continuing to discern the path that God wishes them to follow so we commend them to your prayers.



*Monastery of St. Pierre, Solesmes*

✦ **Workshop at Solesmes.** In June, Sr. Gertrude had the wonderful opportunity to participate in a Gregorian workshop at Solesmes, France along with two members of Ave Maria's Music Department. What particularly impressed her was the spiritual quality of the monks' chant. This was in part due to the humility of the monks who disappeared behind the music, singing solely for the glory of God. She also very much enjoyed getting to know the Abbess and nuns of St. Cecile's where she stayed during the week's workshop.

✦ **Annual Retreat ... a Treat!** At the end of July we drove to the Trappist monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit, in Conyers, Georgia, to make our annual retreat. It was a great experience of special graces for both of us. We joined the community for Vigils at 4:00 a.m. and participated in the Divine Office with the monks throughout the day. Several of the monks gave us conferences that rekindled our enthusiasm for the monastic vocation. Being immersed in many hours of silence all day was a wonderful experience too. We were glad to get to know another form of Benedictine life which our Trappist brothers live for the benefit of the whole world.

✦ **More visitors.** In August, another young woman came to visit in time to witness the visit of Hurricane Charley. Speaking of the



*Abbess and nuns of St. Cecile, Solesmes*

hurricanes, what a season! Fortunately, our buildings are built to sustain 140 mph winds so we did not have to evacuate our villa. The students were also quite safe in their dorms. Most importantly, we were blessed not to receive a direct hit from any of the hurricanes. The outside rim of Charley gave us 80 mph winds and a lot of rain, but minimal damage to Naples and virtually none here on the campus. The other hurricanes passed us by completely, thanks be to Our Lady whom we believe protected us.



*Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers GA*



*Asha Auguste, with Sr. Gertrude & Sr. Theresa*

As for our young visitor, Asha Auguste, who came to us from the island of St. Lucia in the Caribbean, our brush with Charley did not seem to daunt her spirits or lessen her expectations. We were delighted when she asked to come visit again.

#### ✦ **New Chapel for Queen of Peace Monastery.**

Many Florida homes have a screened in porch called a *lanai*. We have been given permission by the city of Naples to enclose our lanai and convert it into a chapel. That meant installing windows and a door that are hurricane proof, painting the area with a light color, tiling the floor and purchasing chairs with kneelers and benches. (See pictures on pages 7 and 11.) It is wonderful to see the transformation of a porch into a very prayerful chapel for the celebration of the Divine Office five times each day and a weekly offering of Holy Mass. We have many benefactors to thank for making our chapel a reality. We promise them a remembrance at all of our prayers each day. We ask the Lord to give them a fitting recompense for their goodness to us.

✦ **Thanks be to God and to you our benefactors!** On October 2 we celebrated our first year as a fledgling Benedictine community. To celebrate the event we listed all the blessings we have received from so many unexpected and generous sources during this first year of our founding, bringing them to the Lord in prayerful gratitude.

The ideal of every monastery is live by the work of its members' own hands. In the initial stages of founding a new Benedictine community with only four hands available, God sends others to give us "a hand" in many ways. We thank Ave Maria University for providing us with one of the villas for our temporary monastery until we can build a real one at the permanent site of the new campus. We are grateful for those who support us monetarily each month, to those who have enclosed the lanai and have given us furnishings for the new chapel, for those who have built the altar and hand-crafted a beautiful tabernacle to be a home for the Blessed Sacrament, for the gift of tile and the tile layers, for the friends who have helped up move into and furnish Queen of Peace Monastery, for professional advisors who have assisted us with advice and services, and for all those who have been praying for us during this initial year here at Ave Maria University.

Our prayerful good wishes attend each one of you every day.

On Thanksgiving Day, which is almost here, we will give special thanks for your care and concern for Queen of Peace Monastery. God will not be outdone in His generosity toward you!



✦ **Into Eternal Life.** On June 23, the eve of the feast of St. John the Baptist, God called my brother Dr. John Scheuren home to eternal life. He had a massive heart attack while riding his John Deere tractor doing his favorite thing, mowing.

My sister-in law became concerned after 10:00 p.m. because he usually quit mowing a bit earlier than that on the warm summer evenings. She and my cousin found him about 11:00 p.m. on the tractor between the seat and dash. The coroner said he must have died instantly shortly after he started the job about 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.

John was my “little” brother who took care of me during the bout with cancer. He got me the best doctors, nursing care, and chemotherapy available at St. Anthony’s Hospital where he had practiced for many years. I was a guest at John and Bev’s home for over six months. John insisted on 8–10 hours of sleep every day, that I drink gallons of water every day and that I walk a couple of miles every day. Even with that regime, he always told the doctors the reason I was doing so well was because there was an army of people praying for my recovery. How right he was!

At the end of May, before he and Bev drove to the Midwest for his 50th anniversary of graduation from St. John’s Prep in Collegeville, MN, during his routine medical check a lung tumor under the sternum, next to the large artery going into the heart was discovered. It was inoperable and he faced many months of chemo and radiation with no hope for recovery.

We are comforted that God spared him that long road of suffering and brought him home early. We all miss him very much, but we do not want him back to endure that long illness. May he rest in peace with all the saints and may his good works follow him!

## *Silence – Humble Handmaid of Peace:*

### PART I

*(Subsequent parts will appear in upcoming newsletters.)*

**BY SISTER GERTRUDE GILLETTE, O.S.B.**

SILENCE AND PEACE are often the first signs that visitors notice when they arrive at a monastery. This is not accidental, for both are an essential part of the monastic life as St. Benedict envisions it in his Rule. This brief study would like to explore the ways in which silence and peace work together in the monastery. Our method will be first to say a word about the possible background to Benedict’s concept of peace, then to examine those passages in the Rule where peace (*pax*) is specifically mentioned. We will then be in a position to define very broadly the vision of peace which inspired Benedict as he wrote his Rule. Next, we will examine his concept of silence, according to the terms he uses to express it in the relevant chapters of the Rule. Finally, we will give a short *praticum* or application at the end of each of the sections on silence, relating Benedict’s teaching on silence to his notion of peace in the monastery.

### Peace

Both the civil and the ecclesiastical worlds of Benedict were repositories of a traditional understanding of peace. As a Roman citizen, Benedict would have been cognizant of the *pax Romana* established by Augustus and so fragilely held together in his own day. In its heyday, it was maintained by authority and just laws, based on the philosophy which asserted the natural equality of all human beings. In contrast, the peace which Christ brought to the world is not an external sense of order and justice but an in-



ternal peace based on a right relationship to God and to our brothers and sisters. At the base of the right relationships are, to be sure, certain external injunctions, but these are enlivened and perfected by charity. St. Augustine shows that there is an underlying unity in both concepts by defining peace “as the tranquility of order” (*pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis*). As we will see, Benedict’s concept of peace has much in common with that of Augustine. His idea is not, however, articulated in philosophical or abstract terms but emerges from the practical implications of peace making in the community.

#### **Texts: RB Prol. 17**

The first reference to peace is found embedded in a quotation from Ps 33[34]:14-15, which Benedict puts in the mouth of God as he addresses a prospective monk: “If you desire true and lasting life, ‘...avoid evil

and do good, seek peace and pursue it” (*inquire pacem et sequere eam*). Peace is a fruit; it is not something which one can make by simply willing it, but the effect of order when everything is in its place or everyone is given his or her rightful due. Yet here Benedict says to seek and pursue it, meaning to strive for what makes for peace by avoiding evil and doing good. This is the true harmony which should govern the order of the world and, more specifically, of the monastery.

#### **RB 4.25: Tools of Good Works**

“Tool” number 25 reads: “Do not give a false peace” (*pacem falsam non dare*). This injunction is surrounded by others of a like nature which deal with acting towards our brothers and sisters in a kind, forgiving, and non-deceptive way. Thus not giving a false peace means to bear no secret ill-will towards another while pretending that all is well. This would be poignantly true at the kiss of peace

which was given in the church prior to receiving Holy Communion (see below RB 63.4), but it must also refer to every occasion of deceptive peace. In community living where “one must maintain daily signs that one is at peace with the other members” this injunction challenges us at the very core of community life. If one harbors a secret resentment, but pretends that all is well, there is no real peace between the two concerned nor in the community at large. There is only a semblance, a shaky visage which is meaningless. On the other hand, one is not allowed to vent anger. There are only two solutions to resolve this unhealthy situation: to forgive the other utterly and move forward in true peace, or to pull the brother or sister aside and seek to resolve through charitable dialogue the area of contention preventing a harmonious relationship and inner peace. The latter solution is in accord with the advice given by Benedict in our next instance:

#### **RB 4.73: Tools, continued**

“If you have a quarrel with someone make peace before sundown” (*cum discordante ante solis occasum in pacem redire*). Whatever the way that one makes true peace, perhaps through an apology or through a humble clarification of some misunderstood word or action, what is presupposed is good will on each side so that a mutual desire for peace brings about a peaceful resolution of the conflict and a restored fraternal relationship. This does not mean that there will not still be differences of opinion, but peace can reign where differences are respected. On a more profound level, acceptance of personal responsibility for where the relationship went sour (for example, speaking too quickly without sufficient sensitivity towards another, making a rash judgement, thinking only of oneself, etc.), and admitting these can go far in healing a relationship broken by a quarrel.

#### **RB 34.5: Whether All Should Receive Necessities in Equal Measure**

“Thus all the members will be at peace” (*Et ita omnia membra erunt in pace* [v.5]). From the first verse of this chapter — a quotation from Acts 4:35 — one would presume that all the members of the community will be at peace if each one has what he or she needs. Certainly there is potential for a fragile peace where true needs of individuals are left unfulfilled. However, that is not exactly what Benedict says here. Rather, peace comes when one is content with what one has. Benedict realizes that justice is not mechanical, distributive justice where everyone gets the same amount regardless of differences. On the other hand, objective inequality (one person receiving more than another) can also lead to complaints, so Benedict strongly (*ante omnia*) condemns any murmuring or gesture of displeasure over distribution. He refuses to indulge a monk’s self-pity. The root of the problem seems to be in comparing what one has received with that of another. Envy is a destroyer of peace. It is the abbot’s task to decide who are the weak who receive more and the strong who receive less. Benedict’s point here is that peace is the fruit of acceptance: resign yourself to the fact that there are differences in this world and that one will at times have less than others. If one accepts this basic understanding of corporate life, there will be peace among the members.

#### **RB 53.4–5: The Reception of Guests**

Benedict prescribes a ritual for receiving guests: a sign of respect (a bow or prostration), a prayer with them, and the kiss of peace. He is insistent that the kiss of peace should be preceded by the prayer, so that the prayer will be the ground for the unity expressed in the kiss of peace. This may indicate that Benedict wants only to receive

“orthodox” guests, and not the Arians roaming the Italian countryside of his day. Even in our ecumenically conscious age which gladly receives visitors of all religious confessions, we realize that we are not truly united (*sociare*) in peace as long as other barriers to full communion exist.

Benedict may also be referring to the need to receive guests on a spiritual plane. He may be afraid that if the human greeting proceeds the prayer, the reception will primarily take on the character of a social visit. More than which proceeds which in time, the issue is to give a priority to the spiritual element. In some monasteries today, this tone is set by the guest being escorted to the church immediately after the initial greeting. The centrality of the Lord expressed in this gesture dissipates any delusion from the “devil” (v.5) to reduce the visit to something merely human. The kiss of peace would then be a welcoming gesture to our brothers and sisters towards whom we have a spiritual responsibility.

#### **RB 63.4: Rank in the Community**

To find a reference to peace in the chapter on community rank is not surprising. One would expect to find Benedict extolling peace as a fruit of a well-ordered and well-kept structure of community rank. In fact, although implied, Benedict never says this. Peace is mentioned in the same breath as Holy Communion, as part of the instruction that the monks advance for the kiss of peace and for communion (*ad pacem, ad communionem*), and intone a psalm according to their rank in community which is fixed by their date of entrance or by the abbot. Yet, even if the term “peace” is used very technically here, there is nothing to indicate that the kiss of peace is thereby reduced to something mechanical or automatic (and certainly not something feigned, see 4.25

above). On the contrary, just as the kiss of peace given to the guests should be a genuine sign of unity (of faith in the love of Christ), so here the kiss of peace, given among the brethren according to their rank is a sign of their continued faithfulness to the Lord and to each other. That faithfulness includes a daily sign of mutual forgiveness, of unity and peace, as a prerequisite for approaching the Body of Christ, the great sacrament of unity and peace.

#### **RB 65.11 The Prior of the Monastery**

The last chapter to mention peace is that on the prior—a not too happy chapter for Benedict. The great founder is wary of priors because he sees them as a potentially divisive element in the community, creating quarrels, and thus disturbing the peace. In doing so, they put their own souls and everyone else’s in danger. Therefore, for the sake of “peace and charity” (*propter pacis caritatisque*) there should not be two heads in the monastery but one, with the ordering of the monastery depending entirely on the abbot’s judgment. If there is a prior, he is to be an assistant to the abbot and the first to set the example of obeying the Rule. In this way, there will be a harmonious running of the monastery without competition or jealousy. The concept of “order” is also very strong in this passage: *ordinare* in various forms occurs 11 times underscoring the bond between order and peace.

Here also is the first explicit mention of another pair: peace and charity. In almost all the passages on peace, however, the notion of charity is implicit, hovering as it were in the background. Its link with peace in this passage explicitly shows Benedict’s intention to make charity a vital part of peace in human relationships.

### RB 71.6–8: That They Obey One Another

Although peace is not mentioned explicitly in this chapter, nevertheless, the idea of peace so permeates it that it cannot be left out of our study. Furthermore, like chapters 34 and 65 above, it is an explicit addition to the Rule and therefore contains Benedict's personal ideas of monastic life. Whatever is implied about peace would therefore be important for our understanding of the kind of peace he wished would reign in his monasteries.

The chapter is ostensibly about mutual obedience: that not only should the abbot be obeyed, but the brethren should also obey one another, especially the juniors ought to obey the seniors "with every mark of loving attention." But Benedict goes on to widen the scope of the chapter from mutual obedience to mutual relationships—especially between juniors and seniors. If a junior brother should perceive that the abbot or any senior is in anyway (*quolibet modo*) displeased with him for the slightest reason (*pro quavis minima causa* [v.7]), the junior "should instantly (*mox sine mora*) prostrate on the floor at his feet to make satisfaction and remain there until the disturbance has been healed by a blessing" (v.8). The blessing is an obvious sign that peace has been restored. One can see this chapter as a continuation and a concrete way of acting out the injunction we have already seen in RB 4.73, where Benedict enjoins on his monks the responsibility to make peace before the sun goes down. Here the more experienced legislator has decided that some things—perhaps the smaller faults that tend to fall through the cracks — should be given no "grace period," not even that of a few hours. Instead, the younger monk is to make amends instantly, thus immediately putting right the relationship with his brother. This is truly Benedict's aim for maintaining a peaceful and charitable community.

A lingering question hovers in the background: why does Benedict put the burden

of guilt on the junior monk? Surely the elder is not always right? The very question is of course a symptom of our own age which often lacks that lovely, natural respect that is due to the elderly, including the elderly monastics who have persevered and — whatever we think of them—have continued to pass down the monastic life through the ages. When the case is clearly both persons' fault, one must learn to ask forgiveness, even if the other person does not. It may be much harder for the senior to ask forgiveness, but a kind, humble junior will make this easier for the senior, and *a fortiore*, a humble senior teaches and makes it much easier for the junior to do likewise.

However, Benedict *expects* the junior to act first ... to ask for forgiveness presuming that it is always his fault. One may ask if Benedict is not expecting the junior to be more virtuous. It may be that Benedict wants to emphasize that — for whatever reason, however slight — something has happened to disturb the peace. Regardless of who is right or wrong, the situation is in need of immediate repair. Benedict probably expects that the younger has more to learn and more *ego* to discipline, and also probably senses that being younger, it will be easier for him to change and to grow through this situation. He must learn early on not to say: "it's that person's fault.... I'm right and I don't have to change." Here Benedict shows that he will have none of that attitude.

For example, let us suppose that one of Benedict's seniors who has been following his Rule for many years, and has thus been accustomed to a certain restraint in speech (as we will see), is approached by a junior who makes a crude joke in his presence. I can imagine the senior giving him a look that says: we don't speak like that around here. Benedict would expect the junior to drop to his knees and instantly ask forgiveness (and in so doing learn a lesson in monastic behavior). That is, not only is he expected to act a certain way in the presence of

the abbot, but before all the brethren. The purpose here is that a fault has been committed and at least one of the brothers has taken offense, thus indicating that something needs to be done to restore peace between them. Ignoring the fault will not bring peace. A little humility and a desire to be once more in harmony will merit an immediate blessing of peace, and all will be well.

From these chapters, we can say that peace is the fruit of loving, gracious and harmonious relationships in the community. It is founded on a right relationship with God first “doing good and avoiding evil” (Prol. 17), and then on showing respect to the abbot, to seniors, and to the guests, on being content with what one has, and on always acting in a genuinely unfeigned way towards everyone. If things go wrong, to make peace immediately, or at least before the sun goes down. Peace is thus the fruit of no little effort and a good deal of respect.

[Reprinted from Tjurunga 65, December 2003, with permission of the editors.]

***A clarification:***  
Some of you have enquired if our new monastery is in fact a foundation from either one of our respective monasteries. Very simply: no! Although we have both received our prioresses’ “blessing” for this enterprise, Queen of Peace Monastery is not a foundation of either St. Lucy’s in Glendora or of St. Scholastica’s in Petersham. We are on our own regarding constitutions, finances and personnel. But we carry with us many years of monastic training in our respective houses and are grateful for all we have received from them. Continuing to be united in love and prayer, we wish to transplant to this country of the sun our monastic heritages.



*New choir stalls in our chapel with their carpenter, Jay Helenius*

**Advent and Christmas Greetings.**

We know that the US Postal Service is becoming very busy this time of year so we want to take this opportunity to add our prayerful good wishes for a blessed Advent Season and a joyful Christmas celebration. May God fill you and your family with His choicest blessings.

**Mailing Assistance.**

We are sending this newsletter to many friends, even to some of you whom we have not heard from for a long time. If you wish to continue to receive FROM THE HEART OF THE PELICAN, please send us a good word (via email, phone or letter). If it is just another piece of mail that you do not have time to read, we will not encumber your mail box with it again.



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