



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

The Pelican

NUMBER 9

WINTER 2009



**SISTER SCHOLASTICA'S
PROFESSION**

Editorial

BY SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE, O.S.B.

Dearest Friends in Christ,

We take these beginning days of the year of Our Lord, 2009, to wish each of you a very Happy and Blessed New Year. As we look back at the second half of 2008, we are reminded of the words of Ecclesiastes:

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die ...
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.*
(3:1-2,4)

The end of the summer brought the joyful event of our novice, Sr. Scholastica's, first profession, and the end of the Fall semester brought the sad occasion but lovely death of our dear Sr. Theresa. Beginnings and ends, ends and beginnings — a rhythm which marks our journey until we come to Him who is the Alpha and the Omega all bundled into One, where our final end is the beginning of all beginnings. Even this issue of *The Pelican* has been designed with two distinct front covers to show that both events — the profession and the death — are miniature beginnings and ends in their own way. In a few days our country will swear in a new president, thus marking another end and another beginning. In the Old Testament, the prophets announced “the Day of the Lord” as a future event when the Lord himself would bring about a change of momentous consequences, heralding in — not the end of the world — but the end of one era and the beginning of another. Our country, our world, may very well be on the verge of such a change. What lies ahead? One bishop with stark clarity recently remarked that America has now entered into its Gethsemane. The economic crisis in its turn has millions in trepidation. Life and death, joy

and sorrow. What lesson lies therein? Certainly, the ups and downs of life are integral to the journey itself. But more importantly is the perspective itself. The problem of our world will not be solved on the economic level, but on the spiritual level. Only when God is once again recognized as Lord and Savior will the harmony be reestablished and peace and security return. In the meantime, prayer sustains us, connects us to our Source, and fills us with the strength and courage to endure whatever is asked of us. May we have the wisdom to appreciate the lessons to be learned in the many beginnings and ends that are our life here below. And may what God has begun for each of you in this New Year of 2009 come to fulfillment by his grace and love. ✚



FROM THE HEART OF
The Pelican

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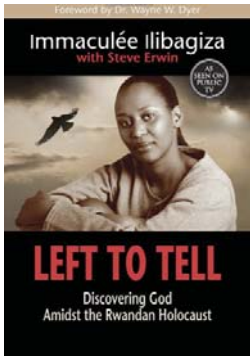
Credits:

Editor: Sr. Gertrude Gillette, OSB
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Sr. Gertrude, et al.

News Updates:

Besides Sr. Scholastica's profession on August 15, 2008 (featured in this half of the newsletter), and Sr. Theresa's death on December 7, 2008 (featured in the other half of the newsletter), the only other significant event in the last six months was a lecture we attended just before Thanksgiving:

On November 22, we were privileged to hear **Immaculée Ilibagiza** speak. Immaculée is the author of *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*. Impressed with her book, which we read in the refectory, we wished to meet this remarkable young woman in person. She brought out in this talk an aspect of her heroic story which was not featured in her book, viz., the part



that Our Lady played in the story of the tragedy. Thirteen years before the genocide began, Our Lady appeared in Kibeho — a remote village in Rwanda — to encourage the nation to take

certain measures to prevent the impending danger. Although thousands flocked to the apparition site, including Immaculée herself, Our Lady's messages were not heeded and the country fell victim to one of the worst massacres in recent history.

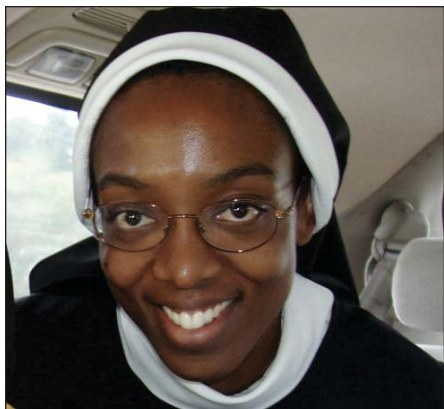
This story, like so many others, shows the loving concern of God the Father in allowing Our Lady to appear so frequently and in so many places in our times. The apparitions of Kibeho have since been officially approved, precisely because what Our Lady predicted — “Rwanda would become a river



Immaculée Ilibagiza

of blood” if the people did not pray and pay heed to her requests — did in fact happen. It is sad that Our Lady receives official recognition only after the fact ... when it is too late. Our Lady's words — like those of the prophets of old — are taken seriously only when the consequences of sin reach a horrifically sobering hellish point. But it need not be that way. Immaculée was miraculously spared during the holocaust in order to spread Our Lady's words to the rest of the world.

We in America, in particular, need to ask ourselves if the consequences of the sins of our own nation are not leading us in a like direction. This is not to imply that genocide is in our immediate future, but most prayerful persons realize that a sobering purification is overdue. May Our Lady's request at Kibeho for greater love and more prayer find hearts ready to heed her words. (*Our Lady of Kibeho: Mary Speaks to the World from the Heart of Africa*, also by Immaculée Ilibagiza — and *Left to Tell* — may be purchased from amazon.com). +



First Profession of Sister Scholastica Auguste, O.S.B.

After a three-year formation period, Sister Scholastica was admitted to profession, pronouncing her first vows on the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, August 15, 2008. Sr. Theresa and I felt like proud parents witnessing the marriage of their eldest daughter. It was a day of much joy and many graces for the community.

One concern we had as we planned for the profession was our chapel; the space was totally inadequate not only for the ceremony itself but also for the guests who wished to be there. A solution was found when Abbot Isaac Camacho, O.S.B. of St. Leo Abbey, our nearest monastic "neighbor," offered us the use of his Abbey Church. The offer became even more attractive when we discussed a possible date for the profession. By a providential coincidence, our first choice (August 15) had already been chosen by the monks for the solemn profession of their own Brother Timothy. *Ecce!* The feast of Our Lady's Assumption became the happy occasion of a double ceremony in the tradition of Benedict and Scholastica's fraternal meeting and joint consecration: a solemn profession of a monk and a simple (or first profession) of a nun at the same Mass.

All was carried out without a glitch, even the last minute microphone clipped to Sr.

Sister Scholastica before and after her profession

Scholastica's habit so that her gentle, sweet voice would carry throughout the abbey church. We again thank Abbot Isaac and his gracious community for the splendid ceremony as well as for the fine reception which followed. It was also a joy to see the Sisters from nearby Holy Name Priory, and the several friends from Naples who followed us to the Abbey for the great day. The day ended in the evening with a second reception at Ave Maria for the friends and family who could not make the three-hour trip to St. Leo's. We thank all of you who have prayed for and supported Sr. Scholastica in her journey thus far. God bless you! We ask that you continue to pray for her!

For those unfamiliar with a profession ceremony for a Benedictine nun, the following summarizes the six main parts:

1. An initial examination, in which the novice is questioned regarding her intent, along lines such as: "Are you resolved to commit yourself to the Lord according to the Rule of St. Benedict?" "Yes, I am."

2. The profession of vows, in which the novice reads out her profession chart in a clear voice for all to hear. The vows take into consideration the particulars of place and community. For Sr. Scholastica's profession chart, see separate box on next page.

3. The signing of the profession chart on the

altar, symbolizing that profession is a giving of oneself to Christ in a sacrificial way.

4. The *Suscipe*, a prayer the novice sings with arms outstretched, asking God to receive the act of surrender to him which she has just completed. The *Suscipe* is sung in English or Latin: *Suscipe me, Domine, secundum eloquium tuum et vivam. Et non confundas me ab expectatione mea.* (Receive me, O Lord, as you have promised, and I shall live. Do not disappoint me in my hopes.)

5. Giving of the veil. Traditionally, the novice's white veil is exchanged for the black veil of the professed sisters at this point.

6. Final prayers over the newly professed nun, that she might be faithful to her commitment and flourish in the community she has embraced, and that she might always receive the support and encouragement she needs from the Lord and from her sisters. ✚

My Profession Day

BY SR. SCHOLASTICA AUGUSTE, O.S.B.

My profession day was quite possibly one of the happiest days of my life. One of the reasons is because I felt a tremendous amount of love on that day. I had begun the day feeling a little nervous and concerned because I would have to sing at some point during the Mass by myself. This was a huge challenge and source of concern for me as I have always been nervous speaking out before others, let alone singing in front of a whole church full. As I prayed for courage to face the congregation, I realized that I should take my focus off the people around me and instead direct my attention to the Lord himself who would be before me. This way I could concentrate and ponder what I wanted to say to the Lord as I was singing. Amazingly, that helped me realize that the *Suscipe* was really my moment to ask the Lord to search my heart and in the midst of my brokenness, fears and shortcomings, to please receive me as his handmaid. For me that moment was going to be

Profession Chart

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

On the fifteenth day of the month of August
in the year of Our Lord 2008,

I, Sister Scholastica Asha Odara Ayana Auguste,
from the island of Saint Lucia and the
archdiocese of Castries in the West Indies,
renew my baptismal commitment with
the firm purpose of preferring nothing
to the love of Christ;
kneeling before you,

Mother Gertrude Gillette, O.S.B.,
superior of the monastery of Queen of Peace,
a cell of the Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe
of the diocese of Cuernavaca, Mexico,
along with the nuns of this community,
and Father Abbot Isaac Camacho, O.S.B.,
and his community as witnesses,
in the presence of God and all his saints,

I promise for three years,
stability, conversion of life and obedience,
according to the Rule of Our Holy Father Benedict,
the Constitutions of the
Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe,
and the Congregation of the Annunciation.

In witness thereof, I have written this document with my own hand on the day, month and year aforementioned, on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

like my day of judgement, so I wanted to get it right. I was now filled with a new zeal and determination to sing the ancient antiphon as if my life depended on how well I did it.

Once I had actually finished singing the *Suscipe*, there was a huge sense of relief, but also of encouragement in my heart. The whole experience was a lesson for me in how the Lord challenges us at every moment to do the very things we do not like to, in order to teach us to rise above our fears and shortcomings; we will be successful if we pray for the Lord's wisdom and strength.

As I reflect on the day, I sincerely want to thank Sr. Gertrude for going above and beyond in making that day one that I will always cherish. ✚

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Theresa Scheuren

BY SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE, O.S.B.

Every once in a while a really significant person comes into your life, someone who shares your dreams and is strong enough to stand at your side come what may. For me that person was Sr. Theresa Scheuren. In one way, we were a motley pair, a veritable Laurel and Hardy. But we were united in an unshakeable conviction that the foundation was a mission bigger than we were: it had a momentum of its own.



A sassy young Theresa (right) with three friends

Sister Theresa was born in Wagner, South Dakota, and attended Mount Marty High School, run by the Benedictine Sisters in Yankton, also in South Dakota. Seven months after graduating, she entered the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas — a house which could boast of some 600 Sisters at the time. Sr. Theresa made her first profession in 1949 and her final profession on August 15, 1953. In August of 1956, she was one of the founding members of St. Lucy's Priory in Glendora, California, a new foundation of Mount St. Scholastica's. She received her BA from the University of San Diego and her MA in Theology from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Sr. Theresa was a woman of many talents. Her early ministries usually involved teaching in a variety of schools in both Kansas and California. Her longest mission was that of Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado, California,

where she taught and worked as Evangelization Coordinator in the years 1956–59, 1966–69 and 1984–97. In later years she became quite adept at “picking pockets” (her term) while Development Director on projects at St. Lucy's and St. Andrew's Abbey, a monastery of Benedictine monks in Valyermo, California, where she worked before her last divinely-appointed mission in Florida.

From time to time she felt drawn towards a more contemplative way of life. She was given permission to pursue this, first as part of a small group receiving additional monastic training at Stanbrook Abbey in England (Fall, 1975), then at St. Walburga's Abbey, Colorado, (Fall, 1983), and St. Scholastica Priory, Massachusetts (Spring, 1993). However, it was not until August, 2003, that her dream was permanently realized when she joined me as the co-founder of Queen of Peace Monastery, which had been newly invited to the diocese of Venice by Bishop John Nevins, with an affiliation with Ave Maria University, Florida.

At Ave Maria, Sr. Theresa continued using her skills in the Development Department





until her illness made her abandon this work. However, she remained a vital member of the AMU community right up until the end, as is evidenced by the steady stream of visitors — friends, students, faculty and staff — who made their way to her room. Her love for each person, her gift for story telling, her non-judgmental attitude and positive spirit will live on in the memory of us all.

Perhaps the virtue that most impressed me about Sr. Theresa was her ability to forgive so easily. Several times when I knew that someone had hurt her, I'd see her shrug her shoulder and say, "she's just having a bad day, she'll be better tomorrow," or "he'll be sorry later and wish he hadn't said that." And since she couldn't stay annoyed with anyone, no one could with her either! She had the most charming way of making you feel special and important for being just yourself.

Her last days were a blessing for the community. Two days before she died she began to show a certain "glow" about her. A few hours before her death, she kept trying to get out of bed; when asked where she wanted to go, she couldn't tell us. It was as if she subconsciously knew she was going somewhere and wanted to get going! When it became clear that she was indeed about to meet the Lord, the community gathered around her, holding her hands and praying the rosary and the Divine Mercy

chaplet with her. She was totally conscious and grateful for our prayers and presence, which she communicated to us by squeezing our hands. Near the end, she suddenly looked up towards the ceiling with eyes wide open, stared intently at something or someone for about two minutes, and then half closed her eyes again. We eagerly asked her if she had seen Jesus! Alas, she no longer desired to communicate with mere earthlings. Five minutes later she went to meet her Lord, as peacefully as one could ever wish. It was 9:20 a.m., the second Sunday of Advent, December 7, 2008.

The funeral Mass took place at Ave Maria Oratory on Thursday, December 11, at 4:00 p.m., with ten priests. Her sister, Sr. Mary John Scheuren, O.S.B. and other family members and close friends — often traveling great distances — came to lay her to rest. Two memorial Masses have been planned as this issue of the *Pelican* is going to press, both in California: at Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado (January 6, 2009) where Sr. Theresa spent nearly twenty years of her life, and at St. Andrew Abbey in Valyermo (January 10, 2009), where Sr. Theresa spent the last six years of her life before coming to Ave Maria. She leaves behind two great works: the community she helped to co-found and the many many lives on which she had a lasting impact. We all give praise to God for her beautiful life. ✚



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SISTER THERESA**