



FROM THE HEART OF

# The Pelican

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## Editorial

SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE

### DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

**H**AVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A difficult situation where a word or some sign inserted itself and you knew it was from the Lord? I'm not referring to the way He speaks to us daily in the people we encounter, the things we read, the nature that surrounds us; rather, I mean that really personal word which goes straight to the heart and is exactly what you needed to hear at the moment. Some years ago when I was very unsure of a way forward, such a word was given to me. The gist of it was: everything will turn out well, but "you must remain faithful and humble." *Faithful* and *humble*. These words have been my constant companions—like a child's invisible friends—for years. I'm not at all sure I have got them right, but they are a comfort to me as I continue to reflect on their meaning and try in some way to put them into practice.

What does it mean to be *faithful*? There's no fanfare for the faithful, no feeling of a great accomplishment. There's only steady perseverance amidst the mostly ordinary—and sometimes not very pleasant—tasks of one's vocation. It's a virtue required of every person: to do one's job, to be steadfast in committed relationships, to stick it out when it would be easier to throw in the towel and call it quits. Unfortunately, examples of fidelity are much rarer in our day, mainly because many do not turn to God for help. It takes *grace*, divine help, to stick to a commitment when it makes no sense on the human level. Excuses abound for those who got far less than what they had bargained for and want out. This is perhaps why Jesus encourages us to persevere... to be faithful... to endure: "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt 24:13). It is heartening to realize that just staying



the course and crossing the finishing line is a victory worthy of eternal life. What could be so holy about faithfulness that its reward is so grand? Perhaps because over time, this virtue, this steadfastness cannot be lived without a dying to self, an eroding of what we think our life should be or should have been. It is less and less about what we want and more and more about



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*Cover:* Among the monasteries we visited in New England was Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Massachusetts.

Photo by Fr. Patrick Kokorian of Most Holy Trinity Monastery.

## News & Updates

doing the will of God, without glory, without a pat on the back, just being faithful because we *love* the One who is asking this of us.

And what about being *humble*? It means accepting the honest truth of who we are without pretensions or fantasies. It means having our feet on the ground (the Latin cognate *humus* means soil, dirt, ground) of reality. It means soberly acknowledging mistakes made and gratefully glorying in God's mercy. Personally, we are little no-bodies: we are the smallest community in the world, we are at the bottom of the canonical ladder and we don't seem to be on the radar of those looking for religious life. But like St. Paul, who could say:

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed... (2 Cor 4:7-9)

so we too are not discouraged! I think of us as the Lord's humble earth which he is breaking up and weeding and adding nutrients to and doing all that the Divine Gardener has to do to prepare his soil for the sowing. In his time, He will plant his seeds in the soil of his Mother's monastic garden. In asking me to remain humble, heaven wants me remain docile, pliable and accepting, not asserting my own plans or expectations, but surrendering all into his hands. How many of our lives have gone the way we thought they would? Very few, I suspect. I certainly never imagined the turns my life would take. But I thank God for it all. When you give yourself to God and truly mean: "...then do with me what you will" you know deep in your heart that all is well and you wouldn't have it any other way. Let us pray that we may all be faithful and humble servants of the Lord. +

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\* Words of St. Alphonsus in his meditations on the Stations of the Cross.

**S**O FAR, THIS YEAR HAS BEEN marked by funerals and trips. In early January, Sr. Gertrude went to the funeral of her former superior, **Mother Mary Clare Vincent, O.S.B.**, who passed away on Jan 2, 2016 at the age of 90. Her funeral was held the same day as that of our dear friend, **Peter Leparulo**, who died suddenly in December in San Diego, California. May they both rest in God's loving arms.



In late January, both Sisters attended the wedding of Sr. Gertrude's nephew and godson, **Garrett Gillette**, and **his bride, Michelle**, who is now expecting their first child. May the Lord bring them to the fullness of love and happiness and may He be their strength and anchor. While in San Diego for the wedding, we heard of the passing of another dear friend, **Lucille Delorme**, who at 95 was as sharp and witty as she was joyful. God bless her.

This spring and early summer saw Sr. Scholastica in the Caribbean for two visits (see photo next page). Her home visit to **St. Lucia**, which occurs every three or four years, was already scheduled for the month of June when her paternal grandmother, **Leila Daisley**, died in **St. Vincent** on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 3, occasioning another brief visit to the Caribbean and enabling Sr. Scholastica to see the many relatives on her father's side of





the family. Her trip to St. Lucia in June was especially heart-warming, as she visited old friends and soaked in all the familiar sights and sounds of her beautiful St. Lucian culture.

While Sr. Scholastica was enjoying the cool breezes of the islands, Sr. Gertrude gave a “Life in the Spirit” seminar/retreat at **St. Andrew’s Abbey** in Valyermo, California, the weekend of June 24–26, accompanied by Fr. Bill Adams,

C.Ss.R. (see photo below). These seminars are different from regular retreats in that one prepares the ground by lecturing and then waits in prayer for the Holy Spirit to act. As the retreatants found out, He never disappoints!

In mid-July, we hit the road again, this time for our **annual retreat** held this year at **Mount St. Mary’s Abbey** in Wrentham, Massachusetts. As is our custom, we stopped and **visited**



**several monasteries** in the New England area. In order of visitation, these were: St. Mary Abbey, Delbarton, New Jersey; Newark Abbey, New Jersey (recently featured on ABC's *20/20*), St. Gregory Abbey in Portsmouth, Rhode Island; Glastonbury Abbey in Hingham, Massachusetts; St. Anselm Abbey in Manchester, New Hampshire; St. Benedict Abbey in Still River, Massachusetts; St. Scholastica



Priory in Petersham, Massachusetts; Most Holy Trinity Monastery (of Maronite Monks) also in Petersham, Massachusetts; St. Joseph Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts (which ranks among the most beautiful monasteries in the world); and finally, Regina Laudis Abbey in Bethlehem, Connecticut. We praise God for the many graces of the retreat and for the opportunity to visit so many monasteries.

We are also very grateful to the **many friends** who offered us **hospitality** and the opportunity to renew old friendships along the way. You are too many to name, but we hold you in our hearts!

*Fr. Luke Truhan, OCSO with Sr. Scholastica near one of the cloisters at St. Joseph Abbey, Spencer, MA*



We've had several visitors this year. In January, Kelly Henson, the youth minister at **Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church** in Greensboro, North Carolina, brought us ten **young ladies** to experience life in a convent/monastery. We gave a brief presentation about our life, answered their questions and chatted with them during lunch. Later Kelly reported that we stimulated the girls' interest in visiting more houses of religious. May the Lord guide each of them as they move into their life's vocation.

Two visitors, **Debbie Loudon** and **Diana Gibson**, came in March to celebrate the Triduum and Easter with us. The latter is with us now for an extended visit during the month of August. An old friend of Sr. Gertrude, **Sally Murphy Holmes**, visited May 5, followed by one of her former students from Ave Maria University, **Jonah Kozak**, the weekend of May 6-8. +

## VOCATIONS!

If you know a young woman who is discerning a vocation, please share this newsletter with her and direct her to our website. Thank you!



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# The Visitation

## PART I

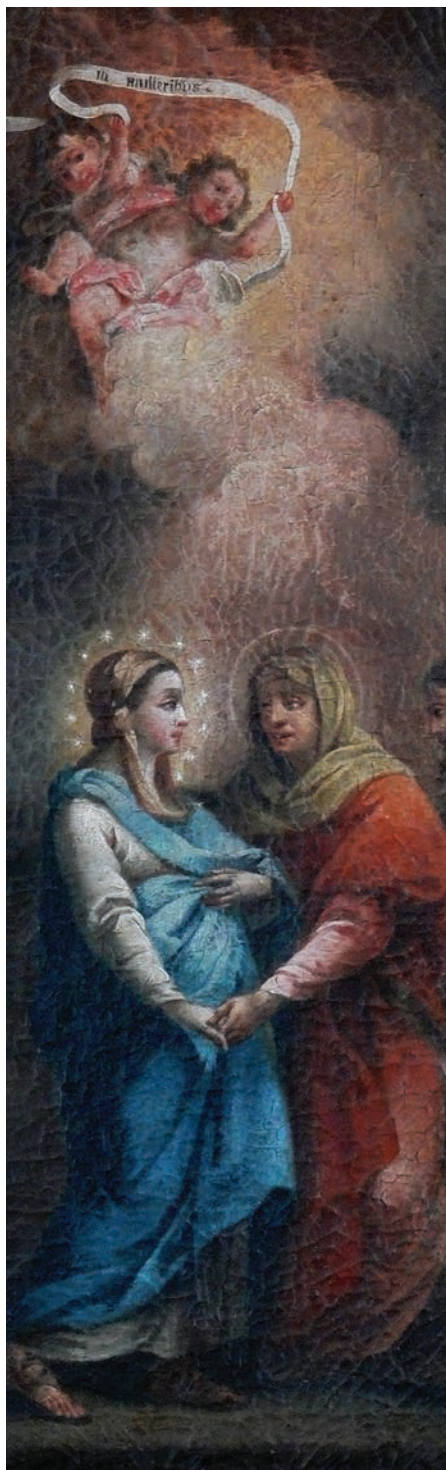
BY SISTER GERTRUDE GILLETTE

**I**N OUR LAST ISSUE, we introduced a new series on Our Lady, looking specifically at the Annunciation scene. In this issue, we move to the next episode involving Mary in the gospels, the story of the Visitation (Luke 1:39-45).

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

We can draw from this short passage, several points to ponder:

1) **Holy Friendships.** Mary must have rejoiced when Gabriel mentioned her cousin, Elizabeth, within the context of the revelation that she had just received. As a woman, Mary



would have felt the personal joy of being able to have Elizabeth as an intimate confidant in the revelation of Whom she was carrying in her womb. She knew that Gabriel was not simply telling her to be attentive to her aging cousin who was with child. Spoken in the same revelation that she had received, Elizabeth's miraculous conception could only mean that her child—the future John—was destined to play a part in the plan of God, connected in some mysterious way with her own son. If every human being needs to communicate, it is true of her who was most human: our dearest Mother; she rejoiced in being able to share God's revelation with someone also bound up in the mystery. We too should share our faith with another, for it is “through real, personal, loyal friendship, [that we] create in others a hunger for God” (Josemaría Escrivá).

2) **John the Baptist**—the one who would announce the Lord to the world—is the first to perceive His presence in the womb of Mary. John is called the “voice” of one calling out in the wilderness (Mk 1:3), who speaks the word of God. But before he *speaks*, he is the one who *listens*, the one who knows when God is speaking, the one who can perceive the difference between the human and the divine. A child in the womb can hear sounds: when little John hears Mary calling out to Elizabeth as she enters the house, he is so deeply moved that he leaps for joy. Even before he is born, John is thus beginning his ministry of pointing out the Lord... in the only way possible for him, by leaping in the womb. By the same inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth also knows Whose presence Mary is bringing to their house. So here we see Mary as a **channel or mediator of grace** from her own son to John who in turn passes it on to his mother.

3) In her joy, Elizabeth cries out: **“Blessed are you among women”** (v. 42). This phrase is used twice in the Old Testament, referring

to two women: **Jael** and **Judith**. Both of these heroic women kill an enemy of Israel and are praised afterwards in words reminiscent of Elizabeth's greeting to Mary. Jael kills Sisara and is honored in song: “Most blessed of women be Jael...” (Judges 5:24) and Judith kills Holofernes receiving the acclaim: “O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth” (Judith 13:18).

Luke thus shows through Elizabeth's cry: *Blessed are you among women*, that Mary is another Jael and Judith. Each of these women is a heroine, because she crushed the head of the enemy. This last phrase points directly to another one: Gen 3:15 which says that a woman would come in the future who would crush the head of the serpent:

I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he [Christ] will strike your [the serpent's] head, and you will strike his heel [Christ's humanity].

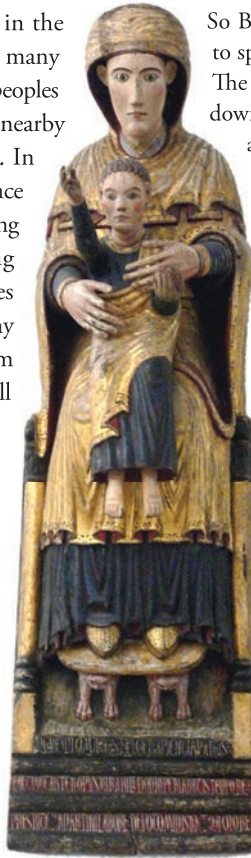
In Catholic tradition, Mary is the woman whose offspring—Christ—will defeat Satan, *the enemy* of God and mankind. Mary is often pictured in art with her foot on the head of a serpent—Satan—showing that the graces of her **Immaculate Conception**, given to her through the merits of Christ on the cross, make her the first to be totally free of Satan's evil power. Her sinlessness is the first step in crushing Satan's kingdom.

4) “And why has this happened to me, that the **mother of my Lord** comes to me?”

The term: Lord, in the Old Testament usually refers to Yahweh, but when preceded by “my” it almost always refers to an earthly lord or king. Elizabeth is then acknowledging **Mary as the Mother of the Messiah**, the one to come who would be some sort of sovereign lord. At the same time, a few references in the Old Testament do apply the term: “my lord” to Yahweh and therefore Elizabeth may also be implying the **divine nature** of the child.

5) **The Queen Mother.** Kings in the ancient Near Eastern societies had many wives, usually because neighboring peoples wanted to send their daughters to nearby kings to secure political alliances. In this way, they were a kind of insurance policy, for it was thought that the king would think twice about invading a land from which one of his wives came. Because the kings had so many wives, the queen was not chosen from among these, but instead the role fell to the *mother of the king*. After all, a person has only one biological mother, and without that particular mother, this particular king would not be sitting on the throne.

The queen mother had — besides honor — a good deal of royal authority, being one of the official counselors to the king, as well as an advocate for the people. We can see her place of honor, next to the king, in the following passage from 1 Kings 2:19-20:



So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said, “I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.”

Thus Luke is presenting **Mary as the Queen Mother**, who will give birth to the new King of Israel. As our royal advocate, Mary eagerly intercedes for us with her divine son. Let us not hesitate to approach her often for all of our needs.

*In our next issue, we will continue with Part 2 of the Visitation, showing how Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant. +*

*Madonna as Sedes Sapientiae, Italian, 1199.*

Source: Wikimedia Commons



*A Sower went out to sow...  
Some seed fell upon good  
ground and yielded grain,  
some a hundredfold, some sixty,  
some thirty. Mt 13:3, 8*

## THE SOWERS' CLUB

**W**E WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE been so kind to us this past year. Your prayers, support, and kindness have touched us deeply. Please be assured that you are in our daily prayers. We would also like to express our gratitude to all our dear friends and readers who belong to the Sowers' Club — thank you for the generous donation of \$100 which you send to us once a year. Your generosity is a terrific help to us at this time when we have only part-time employment. For those of you who have not yet joined the Sowers' Club, we invite you to consider doing so. You Sowers are planting the seeds which God in due time will turn into a harvest. Thank you again — all you “old” and “new” Sowers — for thinking of us this year.

Please make your checks payable to *Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Peace*, and mail them to: 363 Armour St., Davidson, NC 28036. Include any particular intentions that you would like us to remember in our daily prayers for you. And please remember us in your prayers as well! God’s gracious blessings upon you!

— *The Sisters*