



FROM THE HEART OF

The Pelican

NUMBER 24

WINTER 2023



MEDJUGORJE!

Editorial

SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE

DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

Merry Christmas!

Although I sincerely mean this greeting, there's a small part of me holding back as I write it, conscious that some people are not having a very Merry Christmas this year. The ravages of the war in the Middle East, with threats of other countries getting involved, adds a certain heaviness of heart to our festivities. But isn't it precisely the darkness of sin and evil that Christ came on that first Christmas to dispel with his divine Light? There is always reason to be merry, because Christ is always with us, offering his victory over sin and death into our darkened and troubled world.

Being merry is more than a feeling of festive elation; it's also a choice. I learned this as a young religious many eons ago while reading the autobiography of St. Therese. I was duly impressed with her ability to control her emotions as she hid her disappointment or discontent from her fellow Sisters, putting on a cheerful countenance when she was tempted to be sad or annoyed. I tried to do the same with varying degrees of success. One day however I received a strong confirmation that the Lord was very pleased with this kind of practice. Two weeks earlier I had been out with another Sister and had lost a small string purse with a single dollar in it. The purse was new and this was one of my first trips out as a novice. I felt pretty chagrined as I returned home and confessed my carelessness to the senior Sisters. I remember clearly that the day was September 1st, the beginning of the month of Our Lady of Sorrows. Remembering what I had learned from St. Therese, I decided that I was not going to let this get me down; I was going to put on a good

face and be cheerful. Two weeks later, on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, what comes in the mail but my purse, with the dollar still in it! Some kind soul had found the purse and dropped it in the mail. I had forgotten that it also contained a card with my name and address on it. I took the returned purse as a confirmation that heaven was happy with my cheerfulness and was rewarding me. It was a very small incident, but it taught me a big lesson: being cheerful amidst contrary feelings is a choice that heaven smiles upon. On a much bigger scale, this truth was well known by the saints as is so evident in Mother Teresa and Padre Pio who continually exhibited much joy in the midst of great suffering. Jesus is our joy, after all, which far excels any earthly adversity.

As we approach the beautiful season of Christ's Birth, let us be merry. We rejoice because we have a Savior who cares enough for us to leave his blissful home in heaven and come down to our dismal world to rescue us from the ravages of sin. We



FROM THE HEART OF

The Pelican

ISSUE 24: 2023

The Benedictines of Mary,

Queen of Peace

687 Moss Road

Rutherfordton, NC 28139

Phone: 704-827-2490

email: qopbenedictines@gmail.com

web: www.qopbenedictines.com

Editor: Sr. Gertrude Gillette

Layout: Michael Schrauzer

need Jesus, the world needs Jesus, and there won't be peace until every nation acknowledges him as the Prince of Peace. May we welcome him with open hearts, and each other with open arms, as we celebrate with joy the appearance of the Face of God in a little Child. Let us make merry this Christmas, eagerly awaiting his return: Come Lord Jesus! +

News & Updates

Our exciting news for this issue of the Pelican is a fantastic **pilgrimage to Italy** and **Medjugorje** which took place at the end of September. We arrived in Italy two days earlier than the scheduled tour in order to visit our Benedictine sites: **Norcia** where Saints Benedict and Scholastica were born;



Abbey of Montecassino Courtyard



Subiaco

Affile where St. Benedict worked his first miracle; **Subiaco** where he lived for two years in a cave and founded twelve monasteries, and finally **Montecassino** where he lived the last twenty-five years of his life and is buried there along with St. Scholastica. We even made a side trip to Assisi and saw the beautiful body of the young Blessed Carlo Acutis. And in Rome, we visited **Sant'Anselmo**, our Benedictine College and home of the Abbot Primate. We were truly blessed at each holy place!

After meeting up with the rest of the pilgrims (a really wonderful group of beautiful Catholics!) we had the joy of praying at the major churches in the Eternal City. Outside of **Rome**, we visited **Lanciano** where we saw



displayed the earliest recorded *Eucharistic miracle* which dates to the 8th century; **San Giovanni Rotondo** where we saw *Padre Pio's* confessional, his room, the crucifix before which he received the stigmata, and his incorrupt body; and the *Shrine to St. Michael* at **Mount Gargano** which commemorates the Archangel's apparition to the local bishop in 490 A.D., requesting the shrine and offering his protection.

After a week in Italy, we said goodbye to our kind and serene chaplain, **Fr. Jack Barrow**, who had to return to his parish in Florida and continued on with our

indomitable tour director, **Maria Paolic**, to Medjugorje, where we stayed at her own *Two Hearts* hotel, run with loving and gracious hospitality by her daughter, Lucy. One cannot adequately describe the peace, love and joy found in this little village; it has to be experienced. The villagers round the clock have put into practice the five "stones" or practices which Our Lady has requested: **Mass, Confession, the Rosary, Scripture** and **Fasting**. By joining in with the daily schedule alongside thousands of pilgrims from around the world, one naturally feels the fruit of these practices: a strong sense of our **Catholic identity** and **unity around Our Lady** as well as **peace** in abundance. This truly is a piece of heaven on earth. At the end of our trip, we were granted one more incredible gift: we were escorted to the house of the visionary **Marija Pavlovic**, where we were present for an apparition of Our Lady! Needless to say, it was a holy moment that each one of us will forever treasure. Thank you, Mother Mary!





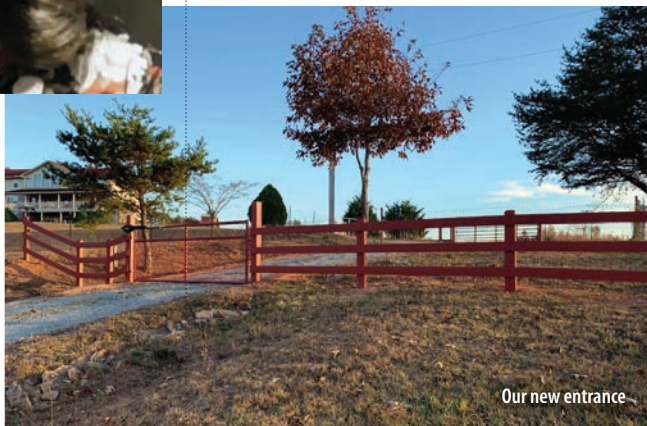
Marija Pavlovic

A special thanks to John Staab and the Petersons for watching our farm while we were away: God bless you!

This Fall, our parish has started a Women's Group called **Daughters of the Visitation** which meets every Thursday to grow in spiritual fellowship while learning from the wisdom of the Church's tradition. This year, Sr. Gertrude is leading them with texts on *Prayer* from the great authors of the past. The rest of the Fall has seen the usual influx of guests, retreatants, a neighborhood gathering, conferences and a month-long visit from an old friend, Sr. Mary Benedict. We

did manage with help to harvest a nice crop of sweet potatoes and the lettuce and spinach have been planted for the winter. We wouldn't mind if life slowed down a wee bit!

One recent improvement to the property is a new fence and gate which serves two purposes: to enhance the entrance and to keep the dogs more secure within the fences.



Our new entrance



Bruno with Lady



Our little Lady

One last "little" thing: **Lady**—a 10-week-old Maremma puppy—came to us in early November as the latest addition to the farm. +



Marriage Feast of Cana

IN THE BEGINNING CHAPTERS of his Gospel, John counts the first seven days of Jesus' ministry, purposely alluding to the Creation narrative in Genesis. Just as at the end of the seven days of Creation, there are two married people in paradise—Adam and Eve—so John presents Jesus' first miracle taking place at a wedding where the bride and groom are present but in the background. The wedding with its nameless couple is the stage, as it were, to introduce another bride and bridegroom: Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom come to earth to woo his Bride the Church. In this way, John—the one who has given us that great definition: God is love—presents Jesus' mission as one of

espousal love. And what is Mary's role? To bless her son as he leaves her home to wed his Bride, to arrange the practical details, and then to send him on his way with her maternal support.

Mary: They have no wine. We can understand wine on two levels. First, the hosts are running out of *physical wine*. Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerick mentions that the invited guests were responsible for some part of the festivities and that Jesus and Mary were responsible for the wine. When it began to run low, Mary naturally turned to Jesus to make him aware of the situation. Note Mary's way of making a request: she doesn't say: "Son, will you please work a miracle to provide more wine for the wedding?" Her request does

not specify what he is to do. She simply states a fact: **they have no wine**. We all have many things that we ask God for on a regular basis . . . for a cure for a friend who is sick, for a particular job opportunity, for a change of heart for someone whom we find difficult, etc. In other words, when we ask for something, we often *tell God how we want him to respond to our prayer*. Mary didn't do that. *She simply made known the situation to Jesus* and waited to see what he would do. She never doubted for a moment that he would do something. I believe that this kind of prayer is the most effective . . . to lay the situation before the Lord and then trust that he will act in the most advantageous way and at the best time. It also frees us from any anxiety whether he will respond to our prayer as we asked.

On the deeper level, what does *wine* signify? At the end of time, the prophets say that wine would be provided in great abundance. For ancient peoples, bread meant life—it was the ordinary food of the poor, but wine meant something extra added on to life—it was for celebration and was a symbol of *joy*. The grape harvest was a festive time that included feasting, singing and dancing. So in a way we could say that Jesus is kicking off his public ministry with a celebration. He has come to earth to woo his Bride and what does he find? The wine is lacking. We can understand this to mean that love, joy, and rejoicing are lacking in the religious atmosphere of his day. Mary, herself so full of love and joy, is the one who notices what is lacking in the world around her.

Jesus: **Woman, what [is this] to me and to you? My hour has not yet come.** At first, these words seem to be harsh, as if Jesus didn't want to perform a miracle and so denies his mother's request. And yet, Mary obviously did not feel rebuffed or put in her place. Instead she takes these words in a positive sense as if *invited to proceed*. How can these words of Jesus be interpreted in a positive light? What could

the words mean that would give his mother the "go ahead"?

Woman. First of all, recall that the book of Genesis is looming in the background, and remember that Eve was at first simply called "Woman." By calling his mother by this title, Jesus is deepening her own mission, as if saying: "Take your place, Mother, as the new Woman, as the one who is the partner of the New Adam. Together we must restore to the human race what the old Adam and Eve had lost. Eve cooperated with Adam in the downfall of mankind, bringing death into the world. So you, Woman, will cooperate with Me in reversing the effects of this downfall. Are you ready to take your place beside Me as I step out into my mission? I will not step out unless I have your assurance that you are as ready as I am."

Jesus' next words: **What [is this] to me and to you?** is a Hebrew expression indicating two different perspectives. Jesus is then saying to Mary: look at the wine as more than physical wine. Look at it from my side, from the perspective of *where this is going to lead*. And to further explain his meaning, Jesus next says: **My hour has not yet come.** There is the grammatical possibility that the phrase: "My hour has not yet come" is really a question: "Has my hour not yet come?" Either way, Jesus and Mary together pause and assess the immediate situation. They both understand what is going to happen if Jesus performs a miracle. Together they accept the responsibility and challenge. It is not the final hour, but it is linked to the culmination of his work because *it begins the steps which will lead to that final hour*. Note that it is love that impels them to step forward . . . love of neighbor, namely this couple celebrating their marriage and for all the guests that are present.

I believe that Mary immediately intuited Jesus' meaning, realizing that he was saying: "The time has come to initiate the moment of my self-revelation. As Eve initiated the Fall, so I invite you to initiate my ministry

by opening a way for me to manifest myself indicating that the Savior has come.* Take your place Mother and initiate my ministry. It is time. Tell the world to return to God through an act of obedience. I will have then only a limited amount of time to preach the Good News, to heal, to bring back the lost sheep of Israel and to invite the world to my wedding feast. When the nuptials take place, I will lay down my powers and surrender myself into the hands of my Beloved. Onward! Let us make the most of the time we have.”

And Mary, turning to the waiters says to them her last words in Scripture: **Do whatever he tells you.** It cannot be an accident that Mary initiates Christ’s ministry by calling mankind back to obedience. Eve had disobeyed God, Mary calls us to obey: **Do whatever he tells you.** She inspires the servants to promptly fill the six water jars, each containing about 20–30 gallons of water, and they do so, obeying both Mary and Jesus. They take the newly made wine to the steward who can’t believe that they are serving the best wine last. Note that the servants stepped out in trust and obeyed without knowing how this was going to

end. They could have looked pretty stupid by offering water instead of wine to the chief steward, but they trusted and their trust was rewarded. They are a model for us to obey the Lord even when we don’t see the outcome clearly.

The story of the marriage feast of Cana invites us to take our place as Christ’s Bride in the eternal banquet of love and joy. Mary—the Mother of the Bridegroom—intercedes for our needs, co-operates and takes the initiative to start the ball rolling in our spiritual lives and instructs us to obey her Son in every-thing. You have been invited to the eternal nuptials, will you follow Jesus where this leads? +



* In the Luminous Mysteries, the full title for the second mystery is: The Self-Manifestation of Jesus at the Marriage Feast of Cana.



WE THANK ALL OUR BENEFACTORS and Sowers for all your help this past year, which enabled us to make some needed upgrades to the property, including: a hay portico off the barn, a renovated field shed, new mini-coop for the meat chickens, a small foyer at the chapel entrance, and a new gate at the entrance of the property. We are still in need of donations to help with the usual expenses of running a monastery and farm. Thank you! We are so blessed to have you in our lives and to experience your love and kindness! As always, be assured of our prayers. ♥ God bless you!

For those new to our mailing list: the Sowers are those who kindly donate \$100 a year to the Monastery, which is especially helpful for our every day expenses. For all donations, please make your checks to:

BENEDICTINES OF MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE
687 Moss Rd., Rutherfordton, NC 28139