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**St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality**  
**EVENTS 2011**  
**September 2011**

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Dear Friends of St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality!



*"The Manifestation of the Heart"  
Spiritual Guidance in the Benedictine  
Tradition*

This features as the month's theme in our SSCS events 2011. It is a special digest of the retreat conferences given by Sr. Jeanne Ranek, OSB, to three clusters of sisters this September. Sr. Jeanne is a member of the Benedictines of the Sacred Heart in Yankton, South Dakota. A seasoned spiritual director and discernment facilitator, she audaciously made the long trip to the Philippines, her first, to lead our retreat discernment for the election of a new prioress in January 2012.

Unfolding the wisdom of the Holy Rule in our reflections, she encouraged us to lay bare our "hopes and concerns" as we approached the election of a new leader for the priory. Her prayer themes grounded us in the Word of Scripture and in the Rule of Benedict as we pondered the meaning of our inner journey in search of God's will for the future leadership of the priory. There is a transforming logic to these themes as they drew us into their inner dynamism.

Day One

*"Manifestation of the Heart: Telling our Sacred Story"*

Day Two

*"Humility: Finding out who we really are"*

Day Three

*"Taming the will: Detachment"*

Day Four

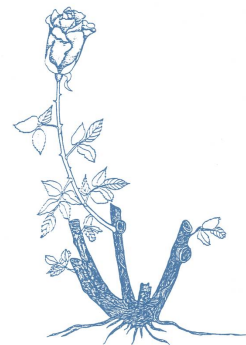
*"Metanoia in the Wilderness: Lamentation and Purification"*

Day Five

*"Interior Freedom: Key to Spiritual Discernment"*

Day Six

*"Lectio Divina as Manifestation of Hearts – Divine and Human"*



In silence and communion with the Lord the sisters embarked on a journey of self-knowledge, humility, detachment, and conversion to arrive at interior freedom. On the seventh and eighth day they set directions for the future of the priory and surfaced the names of possible candidates for prioress. The symbol of a young and growing rose plant accompanied their sessions. It was the symbol of the journey of the heart from an old root into the flowering of monastic maturity in the discernment of the Spirit.

## Panning for Gold

**Gold panning is the method of removing gold from the earth. In the following extracts we shall attempt to recover nuggets from the conferences to savor them and delight in them once again.**

### The Manifestation of the Heart

*“Telling our Sacred Story” affords a pre-eminent avenue to self-knowledge, humility and personal integration.*

*What is your story? It is important to tell your story. Why? Our task is to be faithful to the stories that are ours. We need to be aware of the story we are living.*

*When we responded to a vocational call, we chose a story line, a world-view, a set of values and behaviors to imbibe and live.*

*Our commitment to a life-long conversion of heart challenges us to make habitual choices that move us from a narrative world contrary to the Gospel into a narrative world of the Gospel. Monastic living constantly invites us to transfer our stability of heart from various elements of a culture alien to the Gospel to inhabit another world of stories, the culture of Gospel and of Benedictine life.*

*Benedict designed his variety of monastic life to encourage a life-story marked by discernment. Permeated by the Word of God through a life of lectio, we Benedictines are daily surrounded by everything that is needed for a life of discernment.*

*Where does the longing of my deepest heart lead me?*

*What is it that I desire? What story am I living?*

### Humility: Finding out who we really are

*When we say that someone is a humble person, what do we really mean? Most of the people I think of as “humble” are self-possessed, confident, not arrogant or puffed up with self-importance... They have a good measure of self-knowledge. “Self-knowledge has been considered an absolutely essential precondition for spiritual advancement, for*



*transformation in Christ.” Cenobitic life is a school of humility because our sisters are*



*pretty good mirrors... However, I suggest that just living in a house of mirrors won't make us humble. We need to go within, make an interior*



*journey in order to really grow in self-knowledge and humility.*

*But, it is so easy to avoid the inner work required for real transformation. Inner work*

requires time and silence and tons of psychic energy. It is possible to be consumed by our good works, by the endless demands in our various ministries, that the inner work just waits on a back burner.

Self-knowledge has been considered an absolutely essential pre-condition for spiritual advancement, for transformation in Christ. Self-knowledge is not only a pre-requisite for prayer, but prayer reciprocally helps us to know ourselves: “Nothing more deeply penetrates the heart than prayer. When we pray we enter into the holy presence of God and are

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### Taming the Will: Detachment

In a story entitled “Fire on the Earth”, Anthony de Mello speaks to the way we forage for things we think will bring us feelings of security and well-being – moving from one job to another, one acquaintance to another, one spiritual technique or guru to another only to find temporary thrills... Most people are not prepared to see the truth of this futile and anxious search until have suffered repeated disillusionment and sorrow... For they absolutely refuse to understand that happiness is not in these things.

Until we learn detachment from all that does not satisfy our deep hunger, we will continue to cling to our attachments, our illusions and never really “catch fire.”

“Detachment means being stripped down – so that the weight of what we cling to does not hold us back.” Progressive detachment and deeper conversions are part of the itinerary for the spiritual journey.”

*The Challenge: To Notice and To Let Go.* One way of noticing our attachments is to pay attention to what upsets and grieves us... The pain comes from the shattering of an illusion – an illusion built on avoiding reality by pretending that things won’t change.

Of course, we need to just let go. But, letting go is not easy... Grace is needed. And we know clearly when grace has been at work, releasing

enlightened to our very core. Everything is revealed.” The spiritual masters accord pride of place to humility: in fact, it is considered absolutely a fundamental for the spiritual path... For Cassian it is the “mother and mistress of all the virtues.”

“The sentiment which, in the end, will prevail for the truly humble person is an unshakeable confidence in God’s mercy of which she has tasted at least a glimmer even in the midst of failure.” No fault or sin is ignored or excused but, rather, they are submerged and engulfed in mercy.

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us from a grudge or hurt or possession to



which we’ve been clinging with all our might – perhaps for a very long time... Delusion accompanied by an inflated ego has to go first.

The challenge of mortification or detachment is not necessarily the giving up of things or pleasures. Rather, the challenge consists in the on-going struggle to establish a proper relationship with all things... We need to die to lesser loves so that God’s love may burn in our hearts.

### Metanoia in the Wilderness: Lamentation and Purification

Laments give voice to our experience of pain, sorrow, loss, oppression. We are not talking here about murmuring – the grumbling that Benedict detests. Murmuring is destructive. Lamentation, on the other hand, is a kind of grieving. It is accompanied by a spark of hope

– no matter how unbearable the pain, it has the power to transform us.

Personally we experience injustice, betrayal, illness hardships. What calls for lamentation in your life? Childhood experiences, perhaps, that have cost you way too much in the way of happiness? Misunderstandings in community that have left scars and distance between you and another? Untimely deaths which wrenched a loved one away leaving you with more sorrow than a heart can bear alone?

Naming experience is part of coming to the true self-knowledge. It is a necessary process if we are to continue to grow spiritually. St. John

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### “Interior Freedom: Key to Spiritual Discernment”

What is truly critical for an authentic discernment?

Diadochus of Pontus counsels: “We must maintain great stillness of mind, even in the midst of our struggles. We shall then be able to distinguish between the different types of thoughts that come to us: those that are good, those sent by God, we will treasure in our memory; those that evil and inspired by the devil we will reject.

Discernment is possible only in a spiritually-mature environment. It requires of discerner(s) a constant following out that releases us from our un-freedoms of fear, ignorance, control and prejudice. Of course, we are all in process, more or less available to the Holy Spirit’s ways.

#### Commitment to the Outcome

Because of the very nature of spiritual discernment, our consent to and active support is required and given in advance of whatever results emerges. That is so counter-cultural as to require of us commitment to what we are about. This kind of entrustment can be very challenging, because it requires me to trust every other sister to listen well and offer whatever fragments of insight, questioning and real wisdom she has.

**We hope that these extracts from the unpublished manuscripts of Sr. Jeanne Ranek give our friends a taste of the desire for God and his presence experienced - vaguely perhaps - in their own sacred story.**

of the Cross says that we suffer our self-knowledge in the process of being purified for God... As we gradually grow in humility, we begin to look upon our own unfinished condition more gently and with more acceptance, entrusting the project to God’s care as we increasingly notice that we cannot do it ourselves.

**(The transformation of prayer from an ego-dominated consciousness into a mystic consciousness will not be touched here.)**

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#### Election Discernment

Election discernment is holy time, a sacred event, *kairos* time for a community. In a communal discernment, the Holy Spirit is powerfully available to a community. Nothing is static; it is ... a time of radical openness to being changed – often in ways we could not have anticipated or thought possible. We are called to ready our hearts for a *metanoia* experience.

The time of communal discernment – when a whole group is gathered to choose a prioress and to do that (as best as we can at the moment) in a discerning mode – that experience is itself a transformative moment for community.

And in fact, we have to ask whether this isn’t a particular gift monastics have to give to the larger culture at this time in history.... It is our privilege and it is our gift to others.

