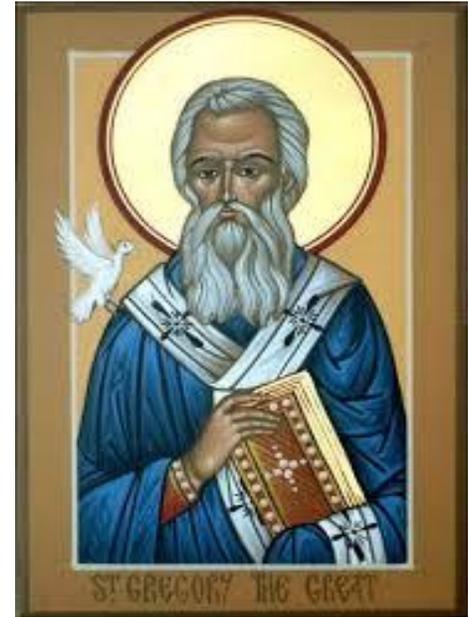


The Dove

The Sisters of Saint Gregory ~ Autumn 2020
Quarterly Newsletter

A canonically recognized Christian Community of the Episcopal Church, and its Partners in the worldwide Anglican Communion. We are women of prayer; lovers of God; servants of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We bear witness in the church and in the world that the universal call to holiness may still be experienced as a vocation of uncommon attentiveness to the things of God.



Message from our Community Leader Sr. Connie Jo



Hope Bearers in the Barren Places

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

My Dear Sisters,

As I reflect upon the last year, and perhaps the last several years, Habakkuk has been a word of hope and strength for me. Covid certainly has caused a hitch in all our plans, but we have hope because of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ, knowing that He is with us through it all. We have had 7 years of fallow land of no inquiries for vocations, and then suddenly, we are blessed with 12 inquiries, and 3 new women in formation in a year's time. GOD is good. God places us on high places and gives us sure footing so we will not fall. We have confidence in the placement that the LORD has moved us to be. And so we continue in the hope that is in Jesus Christ. It is this hope that we, out of obedience, must share. We are called to be "hope bearers". We are to be bearers of hope, and love, and peace even when the times seem so barren.

I am confident GOD will place our feet on high places and call us to walk in the path to which He calls us.

A Blessed Advent Journey and A Joyous Christmas be yours.

Sr. Connie Jo



Carol Joy Walkingstick Theobald Gallagher is an American author and bishop in The Episcopal Church

Appointed: September 5, 2018

Diocese: [Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts](#)

Ordination: 1990

Consecration: April 6, 2002; by [Robert D. Rowley](#)

Education: [Princeton Theological Seminary](#), [University of Delaware](#), [Episcopal Divinity School](#), [Antioch College](#)

A Prayer for Strength in 2020

Rt. Rev. Dr. Carol J. Gallagher ~ Bishop Visitor

Dearest Creator who lifts the sun every morning placing it aloft so that we might see the road ahead and not fear the coming journey. We have faced dark and scary days and watched as illness consumes we have lived with anxiety and fear frustrated by continuing isolation. You know the aching of our hearts you hear our tearful night prayers you listen even when we've given up and are always acting for healing. Strengthen us for the days ahead let us never lose heart and always pray may we be bold love and compassion trusting that you are in our midst today. Amen.

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All inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to the Editor: The Rev. Deacon Sr. MaryCatherine Robertson – ssgsister@gmail.com

Visit the SSG website at www.sistersofsaintgregory.org. for more information regarding our Community, Vocations, and Prayer Requests. You may also contact us via surface mail at Box 251, Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada N4G 4H5

The Dove is posted online via our Facebook page. Should you wish to have it sent directly to your email address, please contact the Editor.



It's been quite a year.....

As Covid set in, and with it the realization that things were no longer the same, that we would need to find new ways of going about the business of life, our Community found themselves more and more thrust into the world of technology.

Beginning in April with the cancellation of the NAECC Conference in Cincinnati, Srs. Connie Jo and Carin Bridgit bravely embraced the idea of an online Zoom Conference! Even the keynote speaker, The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church addressed the Conference via Zoom.



The Sisters held their first official Zoom Meeting at which they met to discuss various matters, including the review of several new applications from women wishing to join our Community. In the past, interviews with candidates are held in person during our week of Convocation, but this year, things would be different!

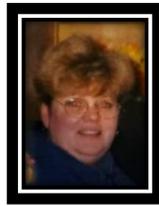


In January, Sr. Connie Jo flew to Las Vegas to be with Sr. Eugenia Theresa in order to interview an applicant. Srs. Mary Ann and MaryCatherine joined them via Facebook Video Messenger. Then in the summer, two more candidates were interviewed on a Zoom Call in which most of the Sisters were able to participate! They say that technology is both a blessing and a curse, but this year it has been a blessing that has allowed us to be with one another in new ways.

On July 30, 2020, we welcomed with great joy, 2 new postulants, Cindy Draughon-Hamrick and Dana Kramer-Rolls into the Community when we held a Rite of Admission via Zoom! On that same call, Joy Elizabeth Browne became Sr. Thea Joy as she was received into the novitiate.



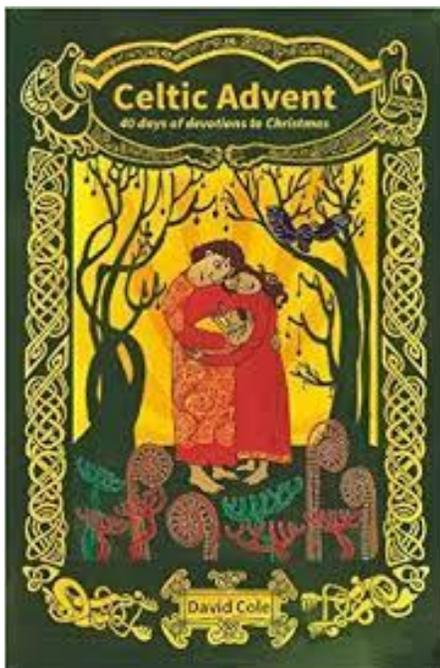
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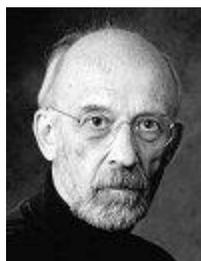
Advent 2020

As Christians heading into the annual season of preparation, we face many challenges—not the least of which is a pandemic that is snatching life around the globe. Challenges sometimes concern and overwhelm us, but they also can stimulate and motivate us to act. The themes of Advent give us four ways to channel our concern into action: **hope**, **love**, **joy**, and **peace** enable us to bring light into all our life's situations. So let us help one another through these uncertain times. We all can become the light that we want to see!

Thea Joy n/SSG



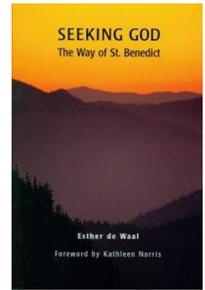
This inspirational book takes the reader through Advent to the celebration of Christmas through the eyes and beliefs of Celtic Christianity. Starting in November and reflecting on Jesus' coming at his birth as well as into our lives by the Holy Spirit and at the world's end, the author offers a unique approach to the season to help you gain a new sense of wonder in the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world.



Previously a full-time church minister, David Cole is an international spiritual teacher and retreat leader, an award-winning author and the Deputy Guardian for the Community of Aidan and Hilda. He is also the founder of Waymark Ministries, which creates opportunities for people to engage with the Christian message. His books include 40 Days with the Celtic Saints.

Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict, by Esther de Waal.

A Reflection by Dana Kramer-Rolls, p/SSG



This very valuable and readable work is an introduction to the charism of the Benedictine way in monastic and in secular life. What this is not is a review of the Rule of Benedict, nor a commentary. It is a ramble. When we say an author rambles, the common understanding is that they are unfocused, unclear. But picture a ramble in the English countryside, with a group of friends, making their way from a start to some end point, but leisurely, taking time to identify a bird, smell a flower, taste a berry from a bramble bush, share a lunch, along the way. Such is the Benedictine way of seeking God. De Waal opens up this balanced way, not a balance by standing still at the center point, but going gently back and forth, and applying this to each chapter in order to deeply explore it in meditation. She develops this theme of ambiguity, power and gentleness, ascetic rules of discipline with merciful consideration of each person's needs more thoroughly in her book *Living With Contradiction: an Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality*. Most of what we know about Benedict (480-circa 547 CE) we learn from St. Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, Book Two, written in the late 6th -early 7th century. Although de Waal feels we don't gain much knowledge of the man from the *Dialogues*, she credits St. Gregory's focus on miracles to be a valuable guide towards a Godly life. (I disagree here. In *Dialogues*, I saw the man in the legends.) Some of de Waal's chapters (*Listening*, *Stability*, *Change*) are directed towards the three Benedictine vows of religion. Some (*Balance*, *Material Things*, *People*) are focused on the ambiguity of a thoroughly incarnate religious life. *Authority* and *Praying* return again to the life within the monastery, or within the monastery of the heart. After each chapter de Waal offers a short section of "thoughts and prayers," meditative collects, saying, and quotes. She draws on works from the Patristic writers to contemporary works, and the BCP. She often quotes Thomas Merton, and Celtic prayers, gleaned mostly from the *Carmina Gadelica*, a 19th century collection of folklore gathered by Alexander Carmichael, Celtic Christianity being another area of de Waal's study and practice. One of the great values of this work is that it doesn't fall into the trap of popularizing *Obedience*, *Stability*, and *Change* (*Metanoia*). This trend has turned *Obedience* into "listening", complete with very specific manuals of instruction on how to talk in a meeting, such as that from the College of Congregational Ministries, a training program drawn from 21st century business models for team building. Similar reductionist plans are also proposed for the other two vows. Living out an ascetic life, as in a Benedictine house, is a matter of deep incorporation of the Rule and the experience of living in that community, and learning patience and forgiveness. This applies, also, to life in the world. De Waal offers a door into that life of, recognizing the dialectic tension between the complexity and simplicity of that life. The goal is to grow closer to God, in obedience to God, and knowing that we aren't in control, and we rarely even understand much of what we are called to and how to proceed, except with patience and prayer, and in faith, supported and tested by community. All in all, this book is a wonderful way to let the Benedictine life begin to seep into our bones.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

Books recommended by those who found them enlightening, inspiring, or uplifting.

The Practice of the Presence of God is a book of collected teachings of Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century Carmelite friar, compiled by Father Joseph de Beaufort. *"The message is very personal and accessible, with a focus on recognizing the stuff of divinity in everyday life. I enjoyed the reading."* Thea Joy

A Saint on Every Corner – Glimpses of Holiness Beyond the Monastery.
Albert Holtz, OSB *"A collection of short vignettes that witness to the 'saintliness' of men and women in ordinary circumstances. A comforting and reassuring read."* MaryCatherine

1 Corinthians 10:31



Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God
Soli Deo Gloria

Of Vows - The Rule of The Sisters of Saint Gregory

To be a Sister is to become a witness to the love of God in your every living moment; to live humbly, with patience and in service; to meet Christ in every man, woman, and child, no matter who they be; and to greet that Christ with the open arms of love. To be a Sister is also to live a life of joy and celebration, exemplified in the Daily Offices and in the Holy Eucharist. It is, in fact, to live in such a way that life itself would have no reason if it were not for the presence of Christ's redeeming love.

OF VOWS

A sister makes the vow of poverty as an acknowledgment of God's abundance. She abandons the illusion of ownership, because all things come from God, even life itself. She strives to develop a generosity of spirit that glorifies God. As a sign of her gratitude for all the gifts God has given her, she dedicates a portion of the fruit of her labor to the Church and to the Sisters. She strives to live in simplicity and, as Gregory counseled, not to become attached to possessions.

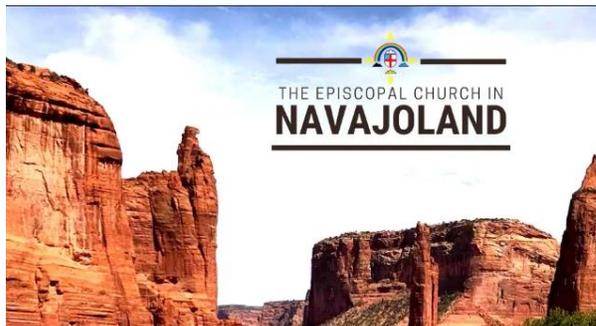
A sister makes the vow of chastity as an acknowledgment of God's love. She makes the decision to live with all in love, with respect for each person's individuality and integrity. It is not a denial of one's sexuality and capacity for love, but a dedication of the whole self to God. She strives to be free to love others without trying to possess or control.

A sister makes the vow of obedience to God, Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, to the discipline of the Episcopal Church, the provisions of the Rule and Constitution of the Sisters, and to the Community Leader, Bishop Visitor, and other pastoral officials as appropriate.



“The Community joins the Episcopal Church in affirming that the tithe is the optimal goal of giving. Professed sisters shall strive to attain a goal of at least five percent of their annual income to the Community and an additional five percent to the sister’s parish and/or other works of Charity. A sister may be temporarily exempted from this requirement in consultation with the Community Leader.”

In keeping with our practice of tithing, the Community annually dedicates 10% of their income to support various causes or organizations. This year a portion of our tithe was given in love to The Episcopal Church in Navajoland on the recommendation of our Bishop Visitor.



Rev. Canon Cornelia Eaton

The Episcopal Church in Navajoland, is the smallest and poorest domestic diocese. It was created as an area mission by General Convention in 1978, and consists of 10 parishes and missions. The Navajo Nation, a semi-independent reservation occupying parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, has faced devastating consequences as a result of the Covid pandemic. The reservation, which spans an area larger than West Virginia, faces additional challenges in the form of isolation, poverty, lack of running water, and limited access to groceries. “The need has always been there. ... The pandemic has just exacerbated the problem.”





The Words of Our Patron.....Wisdom for Today

A child named Gregory, was born into a Christian family in Rome in the year 540. He would serve as chief magistrate of Rome and Ambassador to Constantinople; however his passion was to be a monk. He founded seven monasteries in Italy only to be elected Bishop of Rome at age 50, much beloved, revered as a holy man. Gregory faced enormous challenges. He became Bishop of Rome a little more than a century after the fall of the Roman Empire, when Rome was under siege by one conqueror after another. Famine and plague were rampant, and it was also a time of corruption, schism, despair, within both church and in society. Somehow he prevailed, beaming Jesus' light and life and love in the most desperate of needs, enabling by his leadership the liberation of hope and help to a Europe which was in abject despair. He came to be called Gregory the Great. Others called him "Great." In his own eyes, he saw himself as the servant of the servants of God. He showed how it is possible to live as a servant – an example we need today as then – someone for us to emulate in our own lives – our patron, Gregory.



At a time when the nation is facing unprecedented division and hatred, the following words of Gregory offer a way toward inner peace.

From the Forty Gospel Homilies – Gregory the Great (Homily 35)

"By your patience will you gain possession of your lives. Possession of life is based on the virtue of patience, since patience is the root and guardian of all the virtues. We gain possession of our lives by patience, since when we learn to govern ourselves, we begin to gain possession of the very thing we are. True patience consists in bearing calmly the evils done us by another, and in not being consumed by resentments against the person who inflicts them. A person who bears the evils done him by his neighbor, so that he suffers them in silence, while looking for a time for suitable revenge, is not practicing patience but only displaying it. It is written that *Love is patient and kind.* It is patient in bearing evils done by another, and it is kind in that it even loves those it bears with. Hence Truth himself tells us: *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.* It is a virtue in the sight of others to bear with one's opponents, but virtue in God's sight is to love them. God accepts only this sacrifice, enkindled by the flame of love on the altar of good works before him.

But we should know that often we appear patient because we are unable to repay evils. A person who does not repay an evil because he can't, is not patient, as I have said. We are not looking for a patience on the surface but in the heart. The vice of impatience destroys teaching, which is the nurse of virtues. It is written: *The teaching of man is known by his patience.* Each person shows himself to be less learned the more he proves to be less patient. He cannot truly impart good by his teaching if he does not know how to bear calmly with the evils done him by another. It is Solomon again who discloses how high patience is on the scale of the virtues: *Better a patient man than a brave one, a man master of himself than one who takes cities.* Taking cities is a small victory because the places we conquer are outside of ourselves; a greater one is won by patience, because a person overcomes himself, and subjects himself to himself, when patience brings him low in bearing with others in humility.

But we must be aware that it often happens to the patient that at the time they suffer opposition or hear insults they feel no distress and they practice patience, taking care also to guard their innocence of heart. But after a little while they call to mind the things they have endured, and blaze up in violent resentment. They seek ways of revenge, and lose the gentleness they had when they were willing to bear with others. They pass judgment on themselves by their change of heart.

Our cunning opponent stirs up war against two persons, rousing one to be the first to inflict insults, and provoking the other who has been harmed to return them. Because he is already the victor over the one he moved to offer the insults, his resentment against the one he couldn't stir up to return the injury is fiercer. So, it happens that he rises with all his might against the one he regards as having borne the insults bravely. Since he couldn't stir him up when the injuries occurred, he withdraws for a time from the open contest, looking for a time to deceive him in his secret thoughts. Though he has lost in the public war, he is privately on fire to practice his arts of treachery. In a period of tranquility, he returns to the victor's mind, and recalls to him his losses or his injuries. He greatly exaggerates everything that was inflicted upon him, shows that it was intolerable, and agitates his peaceful mind to such a degree of rage that often the patient one, even after his victory, is taken captive. Ashamed at having borne those things calmly, and regretting that he has not returned the insults, he seeks to do worse to the other person if he has a chance.

Whom do these resemble, except those who are victorious on the field of battle, but later through their carelessness are captured within the confines of the city? Whom do they resemble but those attacked by serious illness, who survive it, but die of a slight recurring fever? The one who truly observes patience bears with the evils done by another, without resenting them at the time, and rejoices when he thinks back over them, glad that he endured them. He does not want to have the good of patience, which he guarded when he was greatly disturbed, perish during a period of calm."