



# MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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## GROWING IN HOLINESS

By Father Bill McCann



On July 1st, 35 pilgrims made their way to Marymount Hermitage for a day of prayer and reflection in the high desert surrounded by majestic mountains and a great cloud of witnesses. The theme for this pilgrimage day was “How to grow in holiness?”

Why would someone want to grow in holiness? For one reason Jesus said, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians writes, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, making holiness perfect.” (2 Cor. 7:1)

At the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers exhorted all baptized believers to pursue holiness of life regardless of their vocation, of their state of life. Catholics sometimes believe that if you are serious about your faith you should enter religious life. According to this way of thinking, it's acceptable for a layperson to go to Mass on Sundays and avoid any kind of serious sins and that would be just fine. It's not just fine. Jesus has strong words for a lukewarm form of Catholicism. (Rev. 3:15-16)

Jesus, however, came that we might have life and have it to the fullest. St. Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is man fully alive.” Why would we not want to be fully alive and experience the fullness of life that Jesus wants to share with us? Another way to describe holiness is that it is the capacity to love God and to love others. To grow in holiness, in other words, is to grow in our capacity to love God and others. Jesus wants us to be true disciples. There is a form of Catholicism that I call “cultural Catholicism.” A cultural Catholic is satisfied with the trappings of their Catholic religion, but they never accept the demands and challenges of true discipleship. They never come to a point where the Lord is the very center of their life and the governing principle by which they live. The cultural Catholic has never really submitted their will to the will of God, and they still cling



Continued on page 2

# GROWING IN HOLINESS

(Continued from page 1)

to their own agenda. On the other hand, a true disciple can say as St. Paul said in his letter to the Galatians, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself up for me."

(Gal. 2:20)

To grow in holiness and become a true disciple, Jesus tells us that we need to count the costs. In the Gospels, Jesus presents several illustrations to show us that the cost is to give ourselves completely without reservation to God. For example, he says that if we love our spouse, father or mother, children, brothers and sisters, and even our own life more than him, we are not worthy of him. (Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37) In another place, Jesus tells us that we cannot be his disciple unless we are willing to renounce all our possessions. (Lk. 14:33)

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus describes a true disciple as a person who finds a treasure buried in a field and with joy goes and sells all that he has in order to buy that field to obtain the treasure. (Matt. 13:44) In short, Jesus says, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 10:39)

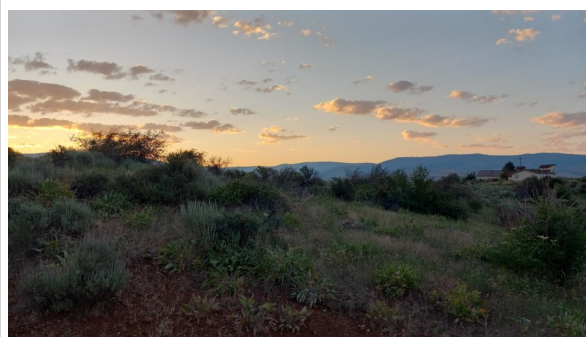
If we have come to the point of making this conversion to a discipleship way of life, there are some essential practices needed to live out this discipleship and grow in holiness of life. First, we must deal with sin. We must have no tolerance for sin in our lives. In our baptismal promises, we vowed to reject sin and refuse to be mastered by it. St. Paul says that we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh. (Rom. 13-14) Jesus says that if our eye causes us to sin, we should pluck it out. If our hand causes us to sin, we should cut it off. (Matt. 5:29) In the sermon on the mount, Jesus makes it clear that just avoiding external actions of sin is not sufficient. We must also deal with the dispositions of the heart.

Secondly, prayer is the very lifeblood of our relationship with God. As with any interpersonal relationship, communication is the foundation. We must carve out a special time every day to spend significant time with the One we love. Ideally, this is a time where we can be removed from the activities and distractions of daily life in order to seek the Lord in the silence of our heart. There are many forms of prayer such as the rosary, novenas and other devotionals and memorized prayers, but I believe we

must also include time for a sincere heart-to-heart with God whereby we express to him our joys, our sorrows and our fears.

Thirdly, we need to have our mind transformed. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans says, "Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may discern what is the will of God." (Rom. 12:2) This indicates that there is a worldly way of thinking and a godly way of thinking. We need a transformation of our mind, so that we can see things the way God sees them. Whether we recognize this or not, we are greatly influenced by the society in which we live. With the internet, social media, T.V. and smart phones, we can pretty much marinate our minds in worldly ways of thinking. In addition to daily prayer, the reading of the bible, the word of God, helps us to reorder our way of thinking, so as to conform to God's mentality.

Growing in holiness may seem to be an impossible task. In a way, it is. St. Therese of Lisieux wanted to be a saint from a very early age. She set out to read about the heroic deeds of saints. She says that this gave her a headache. She realized that she was not capable of these heroic acts. She asked Jesus to show her a different way to sanctity. Soon after she saw in a Roman hotel a recent invention—the elevator. She realized she needed a spiritual elevator to lift her up to God. She came to believe that it would be the arms of Jesus that would lift her up to himself. This came to be known as her "little way" to God. St. Therese's little way is simply the way of humble love and trust. The scriptures tell us that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. To grow in holiness, we must humbly recognize our need as we stand before God. We must recognize our spiritual poverty. This will draw the grace of God to us. We must always cooperate with the grace of God, but we must recognize that to grow in holiness, we must above all rely on God's grace to transform us.



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The MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER is published by Marymount Hermitage, Inc., a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation in the State of Idaho. The Hermit Sisters of Mary are a canonically approved, Catholic community of women hermits, following the Rule of St. Benedict. The newsletter is published each month by the 15th on our website only. The purpose of the newsletter is to share the spirituality and material progress of Marymount Hermitage. Please pray that we may be faithful to our way of life in prayer and penance, solitude and silence for the sake of the Church and the world. Donations are sincerely appreciated and are tax-deductible. Thank you in advance to those who have remembered Marymount Hermitage in their wills. God bless you!



# COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

**LANE COMPLETED:** After 40 years, Hermitage Lane is complete. It travels in from Highway 95, past the chapel, up the western hill and at the "T", the lane continues north and south to hermitages #7 and #6. It is a solid gravel road thanks to the expert work of Ray Groves of Council, ID.



*Stage One of the new lane addition was to grade it properly for the first time.*

*At the top of the hill, the gravel parking lot on the right was repaired and the new rock was seamlessly added to the entrance to the T.*



*The new end of the lane turns right at the storage shed, goes north to hermitage #7 and makes parking there in the muddy season possible now.*

*A long portion of the lane is wider than a roadway and permits parking when we host Days of Pilgrimages and special Masses for celebrations of a historic nature.*

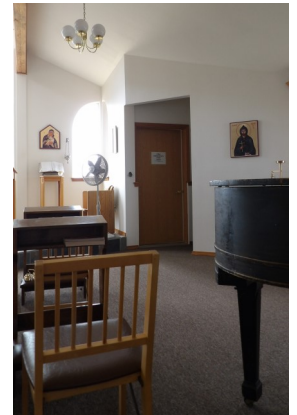


*The biggest advantage is that the new lane goes to hermitage #6 where Father Bill lives. There is convenient parking by the front door for his car & bike too!*



## NEW RUG IN CHAPEL:

The slate tile remains for the center aisle and the sanctuary. The new brown, commercial grade rug was installed on each side of the body of chapel.



**MAINTENANCE PROJECTS PLANNED:** The exterior work, needed for the other buildings, will be described in future newsletters. In the meanwhile, I ask prayers that I can find available and experienced contractors and sub-contractors to complete these projects either this fall and/or next year. A Boise non-profit is providing substantial funding for the two completed projects and the necessary work on my house. More funds will be needed for these future capital projects. The Lord always provides, and I trust him for all that we need.

**DAY OF PILGRIMAGE:** The next group retreat is scheduled for Sept. 2. Fr. Dominique, VS, is our presenter and his topic is "The Book of Revelation: Food for Our Hope". Registration is limited to 30. Please call or email me to register. See *Calendar of Events*.