



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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SISTER REBECCA MARY BONNELL, HSM

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

I was asked to give some remarks at the end of Sr. Rebecca Mary's funeral Mass on Jan. 7 before the final blessing. This is the text of what I spoke to the gathered community and friends:

Sister Rebecca Mary was a woman of faith and prayer, wisdom and wit. She represents a large and important portion of my life, 60 years in fact. I entered the community here after high school, when I was still 17, and SRM was a second year novice, with her class of 10. There were 4 first year novices and I was one of 10 in my class of postulants. We, in the novitiate, were a group of 24 mostly teenagers. I found out years later, that this circumstance was something of a trial for SRM. In my case, she was a generation older than me. It was obvious to me that all the novices looked up to her as someone they could trust, confide in, receive encouragement and good advice from. Sister was recognized, even in those early days, as holy. I was certainly one who agreed with that assessment. I was kind of in awe of her.

Sister Rebecca Mary was raised in a Protestant household. She was the youngest of three girls. Her earliest memories were of sitting on her very loving father's lap and hearing him read from the Bible about how Jesus was born at Bethlehem. She said she always believed that Jesus was the Son of God and that Christmas was a most special and joyous time of the year. Her parents did not go to church on Sundays regularly, but she was always



edified that her oldest sister, Jeanne, of her own initiative, did. When Patty was still young, her father bought a used car and in the glove compartment discovered a rosary. He took it out carefully and showed it to little Patty. She said, "What is it?" Her Dad said, "I do not know, but it is something Catholic and very sacred. Put it in your jewelry box and keep it there. We can't just throw it away." So she did, always remembering the reverence her Dad showed for a sacred, religious object.

As a young adult living and working in Seattle, Pat made friends with some young Catholic women: Norma Reynolds, Donna Davidson, and Marilyn Simon, in particular, and they remained close friends all of their lives. One Saturday, Norma



L to R: Donna Davidson, Sister Rebecca Mary as a SSMO novice, and Norma Reynolds at the convent of St. Mary of the Valley in Beaverton, OR in Sept. of 1965.

and Pat were planning activities together in Seattle, but Norma said, "At 3 o'clock, I need to go to my parish church to go to confession. You can come with me and just sit in the pew until I am done. It won't take long." Pat had somehow picked up the notion that she should not go to a Catholic Church for Mass, but since this was not Sunday Mass, maybe just sitting inside the church on a Saturday afternoon would be acceptable to God. I heard her tell this story many times. She said when Norma opened the church door and they walked in, she was forcibly struck by the Presence of God. Sister said it was almost like a physical force because it was so strong. She sat in the pew, waiting for Norma in line for confession, realizing that in a way she did not know or understand, Jesus was truly present there. She was always clear that this was the beginning of her conversion to the Catholic faith.

Her conversion process was intellectually very satisfying and convincing. Yet she admitted she had somehow learned to be prejudiced and kept wondering if

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SISTER REBECCA MARY

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she could become Catholic without using that term? She said it took a lot of prayer and trust in God to agree to being known as a Catholic. But then came the climax!

When Pat had finished her instructions with the parish priest, he told her she would come into the Church on Christmas at the Cathedral of St. James in downtown Seattle. She received baptism, confirmation and first holy communion at Midnight Mass with the Seattle Archbishop presiding at a Papal High Mass, with a four-part choir accompanied by an orchestra. She was particularly thrilled with the trumpets and tympani. The Knights of Columbus made the liturgy all the more solemn and memorable by their presence. She always did say "What a way to come into the Church! And on my favorite day too."

Sister Michael Francine Duncan, SSMO called me on the morning of Friday, Dec. 20, to tell me Sister Rebecca Mary could be dying. Sister asked me if I wanted to speak with SRM and, if so, Sister Michael Francine would put the phone to SRM's ear. I agreed and one of the things I told her was "Sister, we are all praying for you in this illness. We want you to be healed and at peace. It is close to Christmas and that has always been your special day." So Sister Rebecca Mary did die that afternoon, 5 days before Christmas. I think the Lord's timing was perfect. We are having Sister's funeral during the Christmas season and the chapel is so beautifully decorated, featuring extra angels whom SRM so loved.

I have one last story to tell you before I conclude.



After Sister Rebecca Mary and I left the SSMO community to become hermits in Idaho in 1981 and founding Marymount Hermitage in 1984, she told me one thing that still troubled her. She said she had received her religious name, "Rebecca", which she loved, but that the community had given her the feast day of St. Raymond of Penyafort. "What does Raymond have to do with Rebecca?" she asked me. I said, "I do not know, but you can change your feast day to a feast of your choice, if you want to." So she chose the feast of the Triumph of the Cross, Sept. 14. SRM had real tragedies, trauma, illness and suffering in her life and I

understood why she clung to the Cross of Christ. One of her great devotions was the Chaplet of Mercy, which she prayed especially for the dying and recently deceased.

The reason I bring this up is to show you that in the Communion of Saints, there are hidden blessings we probably will not know about until heaven. If we were not having a funeral Mass today, the liturgy for January 7 is the feast of St. Raymond of Penyafort! I believe that this is all in God's providence. St. Raymond, known for his compassion and mercy to those who were sinners and suffering, could be saying, "Sister Rebecca Mary, you changed your feast day, but I continued to pray for you as my spiritual daughter and you became well known for the virtues that were mine: faith, prayer, compassion and mercy."

CORRESPONDENCE: *I thought you might like to read some of the lovely sympathy notes I received. People speak of Sister Rebecca Mary, her gifts, and how she impacted them in their lives. God bless all of you who remember me in your prayers during my time of grieving.*

"Dear Sister, I just received word about Sister Rebecca Mary. May she rest in peace, and may God give comfort to your heart. Enclosed is a donation in her memory..."

Love and prayers, Father Kenny" [WA]

"May God's love bring you comfort and peace during this difficult time, Sister Beverly. Sr. Rebecca was a sweet person. I know she hasn't been with you in awhile except in your prayers. She had such talents. She is home now; it doesn't mean she won't be missed here. Everyone missing her and grieving just shows how much she was loved.

Thinking about you lots. Pam & Brian" [ID]

"Dear Sister Beverly, I was so sorry to hear about Sister Rebecca. She was a special person...I always enjoy hearing what is going on with you and Marymount Hermitage. God bless, Kitty" [ID]

"Dear Sr. Mary Beverly, In my recent copy of the Idaho Catholic Register was the story of your co-founder, Sister Rebecca Mary. You wrote about her in your recent letter to me and when I first met you, you spoke about her in describing your founding of Marymount Hermitage. Please accept this memorial offering in her name and I continue to pray for you and the completion of the Jubilee Guest House. God Bless You, Fr. Phil" [CA]

"Dear Sweet Sister Beverly, thanking God for your loved one's life, and thinking of you with sympathy during this difficult time. Please know that we are thinking of you with sorrow in our hearts at the news of Sister Rebecca Mary's passing. Please put this memorial [donation] toward the Jubilee Guest House in her memory.

With our love and sympathy, Laurene and Ernie" [ID]

"Good morning, dear Sr. Beverly, I received your letter about Sister Rebecca Mary's passing last week. I was filled with sorrow, some shock, and relief for her to be in heaven now in the closest way to God...I send

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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!

CORRESPONDENCE

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you love and peace during this time of great loss to you.

Immediately, I thought of her spirit and John's reuniting and how lovely that was and is for them. I know there are many who are gone before her that so loved her, too. Thank you for all the things that you sent me—the newsletter, the information on the Mass for Sr. Rebecca Mary, and her obituary. She was such a remarkable woman. I will always remember her laughter, her friendship, her sweetness, her strength of being, her friendliness, her musical abilities and playing with her and John at St. Mary of the Valley, her love of humanity and her path of



L to R: Bob George, Sister Rebecca Mary and John Hayes. These friends of ours from nearby Indian Valley, ID used to help us plan and play music for the great feast days like Christmas and Easter. John moved to Portland, OR where he met and married Sandy Pullella. John died in May of 2024.

solitude, her love of God, and her love of the wide open plains and the mesa of Idaho.

When she came into my life from John and my visits, my life felt so enriched with the beauty of a deeply spiritual woman, who cared so much and exuded such a loving essence...I wish deep peace for you, Sister Beverly, in all you are doing and know that your life is entwined with God's.

Thank you for the love and prayers you have given me and this world. In deep appreciation and prayer, Sandy" [OR]



L to R: Sister Rebecca Mary, Father John Baptist, OCSO, and Sister M. Beverly visiting our good friend and my spiritual director at the Trappist Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Carlton OR in September of 1988.

MEMORY BOARD

These are some of the photos from Sister Rebecca Mary's albums, which Sister Charlene Herinckx, SSMO, selected for the large and lovely display board, which was set up in the foyer near chapel on the day of the funeral.



Above: Sister Rebecca Mary with Liana Greger. My niece is now 23 and is the daughter of Tom & Leslie Greger of Beaverton, OR.

Sister Rebecca Mary with Tom Greger, my youngest brother, who died on Jan. 17, 2021.



Bishop Sylvester W. Treinen, Bishop of Boise, was our founding bishop, but his best friend, Bishop Thomas J. Connolly of Baker, OR, was also a close friend of ours. Bishop Connolly gave us a retreat one year at Marymount Hermitage and visited us often when he was in the area. This photo taken on May 31, 2004.

We recorded Sr. Rebecca Mary singing her original music for the psalms in Hebrew and her playing the guitar, which was her main instrument, and the zither, which was one of her many fun instruments. The CD of songs will be sent **free** to any who ask. It was offered to her friends and family members after her funeral. Many CD's are available!



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COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM



WINTER WEATHER: We were having a fairly mild winter with only two storms, which each brought about 5-6 inches of snow, so that the road had to be plowed, but in the last few weeks, temperatures have been below zero overnight and day time highs only in the teens. Having grown up in southern Illinois, I have always loved winter and snow and with my fat down parka, do not mind the cold. But this winter, I have been struck by how very beautiful the scenery is in the very crisp, clear cold air.

These two photos of Mt. Council are an effort to share the desert winter beauty with you. Doesn't the full moon over white remind you of the Eucharist? Then just at sunset, the light on the mountain is full of pink hues. Gorgeous!

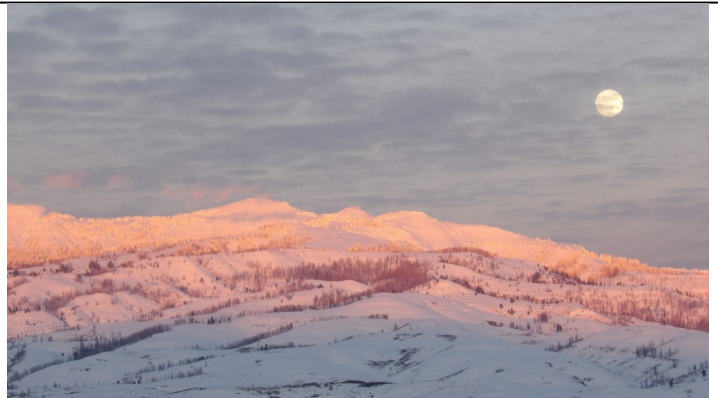
MAINTENANCE OF MARYMOUNT: With all the fundraising for Jubilee Guest House, I want also to remind readers and thank benefactors, who send donations to help keep Marymount clean, repaired, supplied and maintained. As I say, "With 100 acres and 12 buildings (soon to be 13!), I will not run out of work any time soon." I work hard to earn my own living, as our founding bishop, Bishop Sylvester Treinen, wished, but I do need help for Marymount Hermitage's campus, which has expanded over 40 years. Some friends are kind enough to send money each month, and, with these funds, I can hire needed help in a variety of capacities for maintenance. God bless you!



Brian Bauer of Indian Valley, ID plows the lane & drive-ways.

JUBILEE GUEST HOUSE: This is a winter photo of the new building. Since Dec. 30, McCabe Roberts of Council, ID and his crew have installed the exterior siding and soffits.

The exterior painting will be done in the spring.



Most of the crews this winter have been working on the interior of the Jubilee Guest House. The building is insulated now. Currently, the sheet rock is being installed.

FUNDRAISING: "The Miracle of Light" letter which was mailed February 3 has elicited a wonderful response both in kind, encouraging notes and generous, sacrificial donations. I will certainly reach the goal of \$250,000, the estimated amount needed to complete the construction of Jubilee Guest House. Those wishing to contribute, while the Matching Fund Grant is applicable, are invited to do so soon. Donations please with a check only. Please make checks out to Marymount Hermitage and write *Jubilee House* on the memo line. If you need a tax receipt, please request it at the time of your donation, and it will be enclosed in the personal thank you note, which I promise to send to each donor. Thank you for faith-filled prayers that this project can be completed in 2025. God bless you!

MEMORIALS

SISTER REBECCA MARY, HSM

by Laurene & Ernie Houghton, Cambridge, ID
Father Kenny St. Hilaire, Colville, WA
Michael & Marcie Pape, Boise, ID
Mark & Barbara Wimer, New Meadows, ID
Catherine Wolfer, Boise, ID
Nancy VanDyken, Bozeman, MT

DR. RICHARD CORNISH

by Sylvia Cornish, Kennewick, WA

MICHAEL E. NOURSE

by Ceara M. Nourse, Mesa, ID
Johnny Serpa, Pocatello, ID

TERRY & MARLENE YOCHUM

by Clare Arnzen, Boise, ID

BISHOP SYLVESTER W.

TREINEN,

BISHOP OF BOISE

by Juanita Bilboa, Boise, ID