



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

2150 Hermitage Lane Mesa, Idaho 83643-5005

Website: www.marymount-hermitage.org

Tel. (208) 256-4354

E-mail: SisterBeverly@marymount-hermitage.org

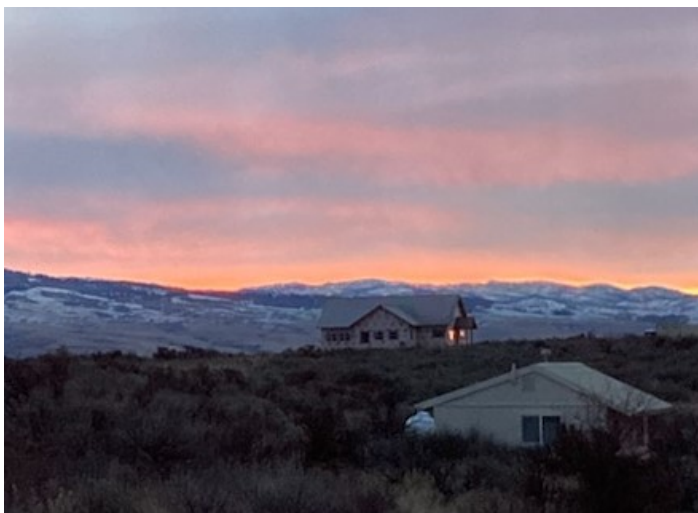
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A LIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

"Then God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light. God saw how good the light was..." (Gen. 1:3-4a) The first word God spoke was "light" and it was good because it was created from his being, Eternal Love. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent his beloved Son to earth as the Word of God to reveal himself more fully to mankind. The Word identified himself in these words, "I am the light of the world." (Jn. 8:12a) Light is necessary for life on our terrestrial home. Jesus continued, "No follower of mine will ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life." (Jn. 8:12b) We even use this root word of light to express a new understanding with the word "enlightenment". To be enlightened is to see the truth in a new or deeper way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (Jn. 14:6a) So if we follow Jesus on the right way, we ourselves become, as he calls us, "the light on a mountaintop" (Matt. 5:14) full of truth and grace. Since we are human beings with a body and a soul, for us "light" has both a physical and a spiritual meaning.



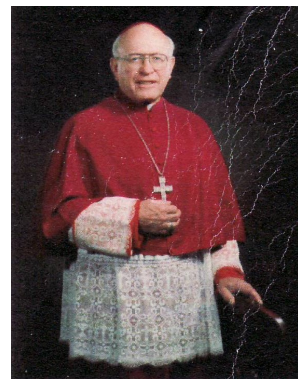
PRELUDE: Thank you to the many people who wrote to say how much my letter, telling of "The Miracle of the Light" at Jubilee Guest House, meant to them spiritually. I am grateful to God that he used my experience and words to spread his hope and encouragement to others. This article is in three major sections. I want to report on

the success of the latest fundraising effort with the Matching Grant. I also want to put Jubilee Guest House in its historical context in the development of Marymount.

I. PAST: Marymount began legally on October 31, 1983. We wrote, with the help of a lawyer, the Articles of Incorporation for Marymount Hermitage, Inc. as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in the State of Idaho. Sister Rebecca Mary and I thought the date was auspicious since it is really All Hallows' Eve, the night before All Saints' Day. The communion of saints always inspired us. We believe that only by doing God's will would enable us to be the saints God created us to be.

Both Sister and I were perpetually professed religious of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon (SSMO), in Beaverton, OR, and had known each other and lived together for 15 years before leaving the community to become hermits. Bishop Thomas Connolly of the Diocese of Baker in eastern Oregon, was helping us in the beginning. Bishop brought us to Idaho on Palm Sunday weekend in 1981 to meet his best friend, Bishop Sylvester Treinen, Bishop of Boise. We originally had no intention of leaving Oregon, but Bishop Connolly said, so humbly, "Bishop Treinen is better able to take care of you than I am." Bishop Treinen really wanted us to move here.

Our intention was to apply to the local bishop to be canonical hermits of the diocese, a long, mutual discernment process by which we would become attached to the Diocese of Boise, with the bishop as our religious superior. Bishop Treinen welcomed us graciously and we realized this was God's will for us: Idaho was our new home. We lived and worked at Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise for three years, 1981-1984. Bishop Treinen was asking us to permanently staff and run the Retreat Center. However, we explained to him that our vision for our eremitical, contemplative life was based on the early Desert



Most Reverend
Thomas J. Connolly

July 18, 1922 - April 24, 2015

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Fathers of Egypt and Palestine in the first years of the Church. We desired a life in a remote place, which describes many locations in Idaho. With real prayer and sacrifice, Bishop Treinen finally agreed with our proposal and introduced us to a rancher in Mesa, whose mother had wanted to give property to a religious community so she could attend daily Mass. Jim Ball generously offered us 100 acres anywhere on his 3,000 cattle ranch.

With financial support from our families and friends, we raised enough money to purchase 5 small, very cheap, modular buildings, which served as the chapel, common house and 3 hermitages. In October 1984, we began our life as hermits with a Trappist monk from the Oregon monastery as our chaplain. Sister and I lived in our hermitages for almost a year before we had water and electricity to those 2 buildings. This fact endeared us to locals, who were very poor and living as pioneers themselves. As for being hermits, townspeople were not too sure. They would say, "The Sisters can't be hermits because they smile at us when they are in town."

II. PRESENT: During the early years of 1984-2002, our intention was for the Hermit Sisters of Mary to grow as a women's community. With that in mind, we raised money to build a new, larger chapel and 2 on-site buildings, somewhat larger hermitages and much more energy efficient, to house future Sisters. Women did come and go to discern, but no one remained to stay. In the meanwhile, we made 2 or 3 hermitages available for retreatants, so the buildings would not sit empty. Not that many people came in the early years, but the small fee at least maintained the buildings.

In the Jubilee Year 2000, we made a major decision, which changed our lives significantly. Sister Rebecca Mary, a generation older than I am, was beginning to need help. So by 2002, we had raised money to purchase a very nice, double-wide modular building and placed it near the chapel. This is Holy Family House. She and I did not actually discuss this issue at the time, but in my mind, this move meant we would not have women join us. In 2011, Sister Rebecca Mary was too frail to live safely at Mesa, and the SSMO's (with no obligation to do so), in all charity, invited SRM to return to their motherhouse in Beaverton, Oregon, so they could care for her in their infirmary. She lived there until her death on Dec. 20, 2024. She is buried in the community's cemetery, which is near the chapel.

It was after May 2011, that I received two distinct graces. One was that I embraced my vocation as a hermit in a much deeper way, whole-heartedly accepting to really live alone here. My greater intimacy with the Lord has been a source of deep joy for me, more than I could ever



imagine. I can pray for more hours of the day. I also began to see how the ministry of hospitality could be expanded to accommodate the retreatants. To foster this development, in 2018, I raised, by God's grace, \$250,000 to build the 2,000 sq. ft. Mercy House, which is mainly a very large library (photo above) with smaller auxiliary rooms. Now retreatants had another sacred, silent, beautiful place to be during their retreat, other than their hermitage or the chapel. I also began hosting Days of Pilgrimage, which were designed as one-day, silent retreats with Mass and two teachings. The several day retreats each year were attended by 30-40 people and were much appreciated. Since Marymount was only closed for a month during the Covid pandemic, I received many more requests for reservations for retreat from out-of-state individuals and married couples. The retreat ministry was growing in ways no one could have predicted. God wrote the script!

III. FUTURE: Beginning in October 2023, it became clear to me in prayer that the Lord was asking me to build a guest house. I could agree with the need, since there were too many times I would have to refuse potential retreatants for lack of space. This discernment included first of all, Bishop Peter Christensen, who has been so supportive of me and my vocation since his installation in December 17, 2014 as the Bishop of Boise. The project was presented to the



Sister Beverly and Bishop Peter Christensen outside the door of the Boise Cathedral on Easter 4-16-2017. [Photo by Bobby Sieker]

Board of Directors of Marymount Hermitage, Inc. and they agreed with the plan. Since the year 2024, when this decision was made, was the 40th Anniversary of Marymount Hermitage, I named the new building "Jubilee Guest House". The site clearing and foundation began in July, 2024 and construction continues to date. Fundraising was a serious enterprise with the goal of \$850,000 as the estimated construction cost for this 4,000 sq. ft. building. It is a

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deep joy to me that God has brought a beautiful, radiant, new light to the mountaintop, which is Marymount at Mesa. The “light” is the faith and prayer, generosity and sacrificial gifts of many people. **As of March 2, 2025, the fundraising effort, especially with the Matching Grant initiated on January 10, 2025, a total of \$880,000 has been donated for Jubilee Guest House.**

Anyone still interested in donating, is welcome to do so. Bishop Peter would like me to have 10% over the total cost estimated for construction for a contingency fund. For the guest house to be open and operative, I need furnishings for the building. Checks donated for Jubilee House will be used for that building and its needs. Donations that are unspecified will be used for the general maintenance of Marymount, which includes the road and the other 12 buildings on campus. Questions about specifics for donations can be found on the website under the new section marked **Jubilee Guest House**. There you can also see a graph of the construction progress and photos of the various stages. [Jubilee House still needs painting 1/2025.]



“Into the future” is the topic I want to touch on as a conclusion. When I am not able to live here anymore what will happen to Marymount? This is a worthy question and a valid concern. The Articles of Incorporation specify that the assets of Marymount and the corporation will belong to the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon when there are no Hermit Sisters living here. That means the SSMO’s will be responsible for Marymount Hermitage. What will they do with it? They ask me that too! The truth is I do not know. This is not my place. It belongs to God. When the time comes, the community will pray, discern and decide the way forward. They have many creative options for ministry. The Lord sees the whole picture. We can see only a small portion of it now. We need to trust God and know that all that comes from his hands is good, for the benefit of the Church, his beloved Bride.

The phrase Mt. Zion is often used in the Old Testament to refer to David’s city of Jerusalem. But in the theology of the New Testament, Mt. Zion can refer to the Church, the Bride of Christ, radiant with heavenly glory. (See Isaiah and the Book of Revelation.) I like to think, and I do believe, that the friends and benefactors of Marymount Hermitage, along with me and my life of prayer and hospitality, by God’s grace, contribute to the light on the mountaintop, which is the heavenly Church, our forever home.

COMMUNITY NEWS

By Sister Mary Beverly, HSM

AWAITING SPRING: We have had a fairly mild winter with real snow and cold, mainly later in the season. By now, most of the snow has melted. The mild winter has been a blessing for the construction crews. They have been able to work without fighting the elements.

GENERAL LETTER: Soon after March 19, you should receive the letter I mailed to report on the fundraising efforts and the success of it, thanks to the generosity of many people and the help of St. Joseph. We will celebrate his feast day and thank him for his patronage with deep joy and satisfaction. The letter is a somewhat abbreviated version of this feature article and does not have any photos. This letter entitled “The Light on the Mountain” was the second for this year and is unusual in that the only mailing you usually get from Marymount Hermitage annually is the post card before Christmas. My hope is that people read this on-line monthly newsletter, but, in rare events like building Jubilee Guest House, I feel the need to reach out to everyone. Thank you sincerely from my heart for all of you who have been praying for the completion of the construction work. I do not have a finish date yet, but will tell you that when we are closer to the conclusion.

RETREATANTS: Usually during winter months, not too many people come on retreat. I use the deeper silence and solitude for a spiritual time for myself. I work on other tasks, such as processing new books for the library. This year, twice in the month of February, Father Nathan Dail, the chaplain at St. Paul’s Student Center on the campus of BSU, brought groups for retreat. Six members of his staff came on one weekend and then 21 men came for another weekend. The larger group was 4 staff members and 17 college students. It was a privilege and a joy to have them and they promise they will come again. Now I am waiting for the BSU women’s retreat, hopefully scheduled in the fall, when the Jubilee Guest House can receive them.



BSU’s men’s retreat group with Fr. Nathan Dail and SMB on Feb. 23, 2025 in front of the Mercy House.

I loved what the men wrote in the guest books in the hermitages they occupied and in a sweet and welcome card they all wrote to thank me. I include a few

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comments here, just to share with you how edifying and charming these young men are...

"Thank you so much for creating such a beautiful place where people can go to discover God's voice through the gift of silence and nature. This experience was truly remarkable and a beautiful period of growth for my faith. I will be returning often! God bless you and all that you are doing!" ~Travis

"Thank you for creating such a sacred space! I felt so close to God and felt so much peace. I am grateful for your hospitality!" ~Grant

"Thank you for hosting us. It was truly a transformative experience!" ~Ian

"The sanctuary that you offer is life-changing! Thank you so much for answering God's call. You are an absolute blessing to these students and to all who go to Marymount! Can't wait for next year!" ~Alberto

RETREAT RESERVATIONS: It is time to consider dates for your annual retreat at Marymount, if you have come before, and, if not, it is time to pray and ask the Lord if he is inviting you to retreat here for the first time to seek him alone. See the details for applying for a retreat reservation on this website under **Retreat Information**.

NEW DONATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: If you make a once a year donation or a regular monthly donation and you need a tax receipt before April 15, 2025, please let me know ASAP! With the help of a lawyer who advised me recently, I have a new form to use. In the future, I will issue the receipt when the donation is made, if the total amount for the year is \$100 or more.



Photo by Lesley Morisse: "Hermitage Light at Dawn"

MEMORIALS

J. RON WILLIAMS
by Susan & Renee Williams,
Las Cruces, NM

REGINA ARNOLD
ROBERT A. GREGER
by Virginia Arnold,
Washington, IN

BOOK RECOMMENDATION: The new Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Old and New Testament, RSV, Second Edition is now published and available. The book has introductions, outlines, and explanatory notes for each biblical book, extensive cross-references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and an array of visual and educational aids to bring the message of Scripture into clear focus for Catholic readers. This publication has been two decades in the making and eagerly awaited. Author Mike Aquilina states, "The editors incorporate the riches of the tradition of the Fathers [of the Church] alongside the best of modern critical scholarship. From Genesis to Revelation, they manifest a rare sense of the Bible as a liturgical book and source of Catholic doctrine." This edition is considered "...simply the most ambitious undertaking of its kind in our generation." Not counting the colored maps at the back of the book, it has 2,316 pages. I will mention two small considerations. By my calculation, the book weighs about 5-6 pounds. The first evening I tried to read it, my eyes were too tired, and I could not easily read the footnotes because the font size of the text was too small. I solved that problem by using it for prayer and study early in the morning. It is one of my Lenten practices this year to spend time with Scripture in sacred leisure, so now I am slowly making my way through the Book of Isaiah. The sections about the Suffering Servant drew me for this Lent.

