



MARYMOUNT HERMITAGE NEWSLETTER

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Life as a response to God's love

by Sister M. Beverly, H.S.M.

LOVE calls Sister Rebecca Mary to move from Marymount Hermitage to assisted living in Beaverton, OR.

LOVE continues to call Sister Mary Beverly to live her hermit vocation in Mesa, Idaho.

During Holy Week and Easter of this year, Sister Rebecca Mary was hospitalized with complications from bronchitis. It was during that time, her physician, Dr. Andrew Peterson, advised her that, with increasing frailty from Parkinson's disease, living at Marymount Hermitage was no longer feasible or safe for her. On May 2, 2011, Sister Rebecca Mary moved to St. Mary of the Valley to be cared for by the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon in the infirmary wing of their motherhouse. When Sister Rebecca Mary needs more advanced care, she can be moved to

Maryville Nursing Home, owned and operated by the Sisters on the same campus.

Joanne Wood, our friend and a member of the Board of Directors for Marymount Hermitage, interviewed me by e-mail to assist in telling our major community news.

When and why did Sr. Rebecca Mary leave Marymount?

On May 2, I drove Sister Rebecca Mary with her personal belongings to Beaverton, Oregon. Increasingly, it has been evident that Sister needs more care than can be provided at Marymount Hermitage. We have lived together in our house next to chapel these past ten years, so that I could assist her in whatever way I could. Dr.

Father Ed White, pastor of St. Stephen Martyr Parish in Renton, WA was here on retreat in March of this year. We had this photo taken of us with our friend not realizing it would be the last photo of Sister Rebecca Mary and me at Marymount Hermitage. Photo at right: Sister M Beverly, Father Ed White, and Sister Rebecca Mary, H.S.M.



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Peterson wanted her to be cared for in a safer environment and to have access to more advanced medical care than could be professionally provided in our area. Sister Rebecca Mary would have preferred to live and die at Mesa, but obviously this was not God's will for her.

Why did you go to the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon in Beaverton?

Sister Rebecca Mary really loves Idaho and we had casually, over the years, thought about finding an assisted living in our local area or in Boise. However, the reality is that we do not have the financial resources to provide her with the quality care she deserves. We originally belonged to the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon and we left that community in 1983 to become hermits in Idaho. Sister Rebecca Mary had been a member of the community for about 17 years, so she is well-known and loved by the Sisters. We had an offer, which predated this current health crisis from the past SSMO leadership team, that if she needed infirm care, Sister Rebecca Mary would be cared for by the Sisters. With the projected cost of medical care these days, the Sisters of St. Mary's gift to us is awesome and generous, a gift of love.

How is Sister doing now?

Sister Rebecca Mary does not need active nursing care at this time but is assisted with some personal care by the C.N.A.'s on staff in the infirmary of the convent. A nurse is on duty day and night and a doctor comes one day a month so that most regular medical care can be given at home, at St. Mary of the Valley. In early May when she arrived in Beaverton, Sister was suffering not only from her chronic illnesses, but a lingering cough from the bronchitis.

St. Mary of the Valley is located on the corner of TV

Highway and Murray Road, both 4-lane roads with heavy traffic, and frequent police and rescue sirens. In terms of noise, it is the farthest thing from our silent mesa. Giving up her home, her way of life and routine, especially the silence, was difficult for Sister Rebecca Mary, especially in the beginning when she was still so sick. Since May, she has made a remarkably good adjustment based on the fact that she loves the Sisters and they love her, and that she sees this new situation as God's will for her. The Sisters and staff have assured me that having her with them is a blessing to them. Sister Rebecca Mary's health is fairly stable now and she has her daily schedule of prayer, work and study, adapted to her new home. She is still making regular rosaries and book marks, which I later sell.

Can you describe the convent in Beaverton?

The grounds of St. Mary of the Valley are beautiful and extensive with trees, shrubs, flowers, lawns, and lanes. Sister can walk outside, which she sometimes does with a Sister friend. The room that she has on the third floor of the convent was specially chosen and prepared for her by the SSMO Council and the house Superior. It is in a section of the building which is quieter than other places. It is only a few steps from the balcony of the large community chapel. On the other side of the same hall is a smaller chapel for the infirmary wing. Sister Rebecca Mary loves being so close to the Blessed Sacrament and has an opportunity to attend daily Mass in either location. There are three chaplains and other retired priests living near by and they are readily available for confession and the anointing of the sick. The spiritual blessings of living in a large convent simply cannot be calculated in material terms alone. I am grateful and glad that Sister Rebecca Mary will be able to live her religious life fully until the Lord calls her home for good.

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The Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon and the specific entities (convent, schools, nursing home, child care) on campus publish a monthly e-mail newsletter. The November edition features Sister Rebecca Mary's visit to the fourth grade classroom to talk about her two children's books which the teacher, Sister Barbara Rose, had already read to them. You will enjoy that article and accompanying photos on-line at ssmo.org One young man asked, "Are you shaking because of Parkinson's?" Sister Rebecca Mary was grateful for the question and calmly said, "Yes." The children also asked her about her third book, The Fire King, and she said we hoped to publish it in the summer of 2012. (This presumes Sister M. Beverly can get her work done!) The young people loved the characters and the story line and wondered if Sister had written more stories. She told them she actually has a fourth book with the story and illustrations almost finished, but it is still a question of whether or not this will ever be completed. Sister Rebecca Mary visited that classroom twice and it was a memorable experience for her and the children.

Will Sister Rebecca Mary return to Marymount Hermitage?

We both see this move as permanent. There is no anticipation that Sister Rebecca Mary will be able to live again at Mesa. We even moved her recliner so she has her own chair in her bedroom. At her request, she has received from the house Superior some charges and now keeps the napkin holders full in the community dining room and rings the noon Angelus on two days a week. Her only real complaint is that she does not have enough work to do!

How can we contact Sister Rebecca Mary?

Friends from Idaho and her family from the state of Washington have visited Sister often these past months and she loves having reminders of home and the sense that she is not forgotten. She would

Marymount Hermitage chapel and bell tower under the sign of God's love: a rainbow!



rather not be available for e-mails, but you may call her at 503-644-9181 during normal business hours. You can write to Sister Rebecca Mary at this address: 4440 S.W. 148th Ave. Beaverton, OR 97007

Do you intend to remain at Marymount?

Yes, I will continue living my hermit vocation here as long as I have my health. If I take Sister Rebecca Mary's good example, I may live here until I am almost eighty years old and that gives me about twenty years yet! Seriously, it is all in God's hands. He gives the vocation. He gives the grace. At a major juncture in life like this, my vows are a great source of strength and encouragement for me. My vows specify I will live in stability (meaning *permanently*) at Marymount Hermitage under obedience to the Bishop of Boise. I am a canonical hermit of the diocese and to be faithful to that, as long as I am able, is my desire and goal. I feel deeply within my heart that God has prepared me for this phase of my life and I am grateful to the Lord for His abundant graces.

I know that people worry about me being so alone. This is, after all, a very remote location and a hard land in which to survive. In prayer shortly after Sister Rebecca Mary left Marymount, a parable came to me. This is the image and the story: *I have a young friend who got married this May. Stephanie married her first and only love,*

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Brad, in the Catholic Church in Weiser. They were able to spend their honeymoon at the Oregon coast. It was the first time she had ever seen the ocean. (All this is really true!) Imagine the scene of Stephanie and Brad walking hand-in-hand on the beach, the sound of the waves washing in, and the panorama of a spectacular sunset beyond them. Would you look at this scene and say: "I feel so sorry for Stephanie. She is all alone." ? No, of course not! She is not alone. She is with her beloved. Well, I am Stephanie. I am with my Beloved. You just cannot see him...except with the eyes of faith. I really feel like this is the honeymoon period of my life. Please do not feel sorry for me, but do pray fervently for me because what I most need is a strong faith, and that is a gift from God.

How has your life changed in the past few months?

I miss Sister Rebecca Mary very much. Life is very different for me in some ways. I am slowly getting used to living alone again. I have lived as a hermit for 32 years. Most of those years I was in a hermitage by myself, eating, praying, working, studying, sleeping alone. I have a well-developed daily schedule and that in itself is a great blessing.

One of the biggest adjustments for me is praying Lauds and Vespers alone. In the 45 years that I have been a religious, I have always had a community to pray with me, even if it was only one other Sister. Now, I sometimes have retreatants or neighbors with me, but the days when I ring the Angelus bell and no one comes to pray makes me feel sad and lonely. My adjustment is not as difficult as Sister Rebecca Mary's, however, and I take heart from her example of courage and peace. We can always offer our suffering for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls. That is a profound consolation to me. I also re-

member a saying of our friend, Father Mark, who is a Trappist monk, and has been a very solitary and ascetical hermit for over 45 years. He says quite emphatically to me, "You are NOT alone!" I am not. Our Lord, Our Lady and all the angels and saints are with me. I remind myself of this when I am praying the office in chapel, seemingly by myself. In reality, all of the Church, heavenly and earthly, is praying with me.

The other huge (but temporary) difference is that I have been driving to Beaverton for about a week each month since May. That has been a labor of love and a source of joy for both Sister Rebecca Mary and me, and our Sisters and friends in the community there. My trip in November will be the last one I will make this year and next year I will go less frequently. I have my own life to live. With my responsibilities, I am too tired and stressed trying to do four weeks' worth of work in three weeks each month. Sister Rebecca Mary and I will miss each other but we both are moving ahead in the way God seems to be indicating.

One significant aspect of my life which has changed is that I do not have Sister Rebecca Mary to consult when untoward things happen here and I need advice and discernment about how to proceed. As a practical matter, I have to rely more on my priest friends and lay friends for their counsel, encouragement, wisdom and help. God has blessed me (and us) with great friends. I ask God to bless those who continue to support me spiritually and materially in such generous ways.

How has Marymount Hermitage changed in the past few months?

The sign on our chapel reads: "We have come here to seek God in silence and prayer..." Marymount Hermitage is a place where I can live to seek God in solitude and the deep intimacy of prayer. This is the most essential definition of Marymount. That has not changed. I could not have founded such a place without Sister Rebecca Mary who is so holy, deeply wise, spiritually intuitive and theologically orthodox. Now that Marymount is well-established, Sister's contribution is more spiritual and from a distance. Naturally, we miss having Sister Rebecca Mary with us. Many have told me that her pres-

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ence here is still very strong and I can well believe it because, of course, she prays fervently for me and for protection and guidance for Marymount.

When I am home, I keep the same prayer schedule which is published in the brochure. The Angelus rings as usual; I am in chapel praying at the specified hours; and I am keeping up with my normal work. Sister Rebecca Mary is not here to help me with household chores and correspondence, but I still try to thank our benefactors in a timely way. We have ten buildings and hundred acres and obviously I cannot take care of all this by myself. We have wonderful neighbors and friends, volunteers and paid help, who have always helped with maintenance chores and that continues to be a blessing and a necessary contribution to the physical functioning of Marymount Hermitage.

When I met with Bishop Driscoll at the end of May to apprise him of our news, he was concerned for my well-being and hopeful that people would continue to support me generously as in the past. He asked if I had any needs and what

impact this would have on me financially. I told him that honestly, I did not know but would have a clearer picture a year from now. One major financial difference is that in the past, Sister Rebecca Mary has donated her Social Security checks (which amounted to about \$600 a month) to Marymount Hermitage. She and I agreed that, given the overwhelming generosity of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon, we wanted to make some small return to them by having her donate her personal income to the community. That, of course, takes a big chunk out of my budget here, but God has blessed me so wonderfully with opportunities for work and with regular benefactors. I personally am not in need. My responsibility to Sister Rebecca Mary consists mainly in providing her clothing and other personal incidental items like phone cards and stamps.

One big change occurred before Sister Rebecca Mary moved away. Mike Nourse, our nearest neighbor, who for many years prayed daily Lauds and often the holy hours with us, moved to Boise in February. In June, his wife, Ceara, also moved so that together they can care for her mother in her home. We both missed Mike's spiritual support in praying with us, but I also missed the help he gave us for the small day-to-day and seasonal chores around the place. Since the end of August, John Hayes, another good friend and neighbor, has moved to Portland, Oregon. When you do not have many neighbors to begin

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November Retreatants:

Pictured at left with Sister M. Beverly, are Father Kenny St. Hilaire, from the Diocese of Spokane, Catherine Wolfer and Marjorie DiLorenzo, both from Boise, ID.

Photo by Judith Cullinane.



Father Kenny St. Hilaire, pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in Spokane, WA, gave us a musical gift at the end of the ladies' retreat. Father plays classical music like a professional pianist. We were so grateful; even the piano was happy!

with, the loss of three is quite a blow, as those who live in remote, rural areas can attest. Mike Nourse has graciously agreed to join me and Joanne Wood, on the Board of Directors for Marymount Hermitage. Thank you, Mike!

The news article (suggested by the Bishop) in the Idaho Catholic Register about Sister Rebecca Mary moving brought in some donations and one couple donated one thousand dollars so I could buy a newer car for the long trips to Beaverton. Those specific donations and our entire savings account enabled me to purchase a 2010 Toyota Matrix. In six months, I have logged over 12,000

miles. A gift of a life insurance policy donated by friends was cashed in early and netted about \$4,000 and that enabled me to pay the bills in May while I was not able to work. God always provides in a timely and abundant way! I still think, all in all, Marymount Hermitage, in its essential features, is still very much the same. I am grateful for that. The biggest changes for me are interior rather than exterior.

Will Marymount continue to be a place for silent retreats?

The focus of Marymount is the same: I live a life of prayer to give witness that God exists. Those who want silence and solitude to search for and find God in prayer are welcome, as always. I continue to host people who want to make private retreats. There are three people here as I write this: two women from Boise and a priest from Spokane. The Blessed Sacrament is permanently reserved in the chapel and people travelling on Highway 95 can come, by way of a pilgrimage, to pray in "Our Father's House." The chapel is always open for that reason. I am grateful to those who honor, by their love and faith, the Eucharistic Presence of Our Lord Jesus. Neighbors and retreatants can join me for daily Lauds and Vespers and the evening holy hours, according to the published schedule. Parish groups can request days of prayer here. I hosted the CCW from St. Agnes Parish, Weiser, the first Saturday in early October for a day of prayer. My presentations for such programs focus on faith and prayer and give practical help for the spiritual life.

Will you continue your parish sales in the surrounding area?

We make our hand-made gift items available on our web site and through order forms in the yearly newsletter. However, as a matter of fact, the craft items sell best when I am personally visiting a parish which I try to do monthly, except during winter months. I am deeply grateful to local pastors who allow me to set up tables after weekend

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Masses. This work is really the main source of earned income for Marymount. The “local area” includes the large territory from Grangeville to Boise in Idaho and also eastern Oregon as well. I well remember that our founding bishop, Bishop Treinen, wanted us to work to support ourselves, and we have always worked hard. This is very much in tune with the Rule of St. Benedict upon which our eremitical Rule of Life is based. I will continue visiting parishes to do sales as long as I have the strength and health to do so. My hope is that I also give a small public witness to religious life in general which is such a blessing for the Church.

Will you also continue teaching in the local parishes and other places?

Making flower cards, rosaries, baby booties and other hand work, like propagating aloe vera and jade plants, is a part of my daily work, but once or twice a month, I accept invitations to teach in parishes or give retreats. The teaching I do is basically to help people learn their faith more deeply and to pray better. I have been offering parish classes on the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The Pope has just announced that he is initiating a “Year of Faith” from October 11, 2012 until November 24, 2013 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of this great pastoral and ecumenical council. The main point of my classes is to help people read these documents for themselves to personally discover and enjoy the perennial treasures of the Church.

This is the second year that I am teaching a monthly Scripture studies class at Nazareth Retreat Center in Boise, Idaho. The class is offered on the evening of the second Tuesday each month and is repeated on the following Wednesday morning. The class is based on one Old and New Testament image. Last year the biblical images we studied related to the sacraments: light, water, olive oil, and wine. This year the images point to the Mass: wine, cup, altar, sacrifice, lamb, victim,

blood and bread. This is a serious, two-hour study, consisting mainly of reading from the Bible and my offering comments and guiding the group reflection. This is not meant as a purely academic effort. It is rather to be able people to read the Bible with more understanding and to help them use Scripture more readily for personal prayer. It is an implicit teaching on how to do the kinds of prayer which are termed *lectio divina* and *meditation*.

In January of this year, I helped Father Oscar Jaramillo give a ladies’ retreat for Sacred Heart Parish in Emmett, Idaho. In mid-October, I was invited for the first time to teach at the “All Valley Theological Conference” in La-Grande, Oregon hosted by the pastor for the surrounding area. For the last six years at the end of September, I have driven east of Sandpoint, Idaho to give the annual parish women’s retreat at a wilderness lodge in Clark Fork. I am happy to receive invitations from priests who want me to teach in their parishes.

I have also been giving a silent, directed, weekend retreat at Nazareth in Boise once a year with assistance from Father Brad Neely, the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Grangeville, Idaho. We began two years ago and have focused each year on one Person of the Holy Trinity. The next retreat is scheduled for May 11, 12 & 13, 2012 and the theme is the Holy Spirit. Anyone interested can access information and make reservations by contacting Nazareth on-line at nazarethretreatcenter.org

God has given me gifts as a teacher and it is work about which I am passionate. When I made the difficult sacrifice of giving up being an elementary school teacher to become a hermit, I had no idea (or hope) that God would give me back this gift of teaching in a new way. I have come to love sharing with adults about the spiritual life and this study and work have beautifully enriched my own prayer life.

What do you see for your future and the future of Marymount Hermitage?

When driving is not so easy for me, I plan, God willing, to give classes and directed retreats here at Marymount Hermitage. This is the reason I am committed to maintaining the five hermitages for use by retreatants. At

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some future date, I can do more national advertising which undoubtedly would bring in more retreat business. I am happy to report that the web site enables retreatants to find Marymount and I just received two e-mails from priests who want to make sabbaticals here next year. My life of prayer is the most fundamental, but I also have to be creative about how to support myself. Teaching and hosting retreatants is an obvious direction for me and Marymount Hermitage.

When I can no longer live at Marymount, I anticipate, and it is part of our corporate legal documents, that Marymount will always (in so far as is humanly possible to plan) be used by and for a religious community. I really believe God intended Marymount Hermitage to be founded. Sister Rebecca Mary and I have been grateful for the privilege of living here, but beyond that, it continues to belong to God and He will provide for its future in ways best known by Him for the good of the Church. I trust Him for that.

Is Sister Rebecca Mary still a Hermit Sister?

Sister Rebecca Mary canonically (which means *according to Church law*) remains a Hermit Sister of Mary. In the new diocesan directory, it will indicate that she is in residence at St. Mary of the Valley. So there are still two Hermit Sisters of Mary living in two different locations.

Will someone be joining your order?

In the beginning, Sister Rebecca Mary and I were so enthused about our hermit life, that we thought women, religious and lay, would readily join us. Many women have discerned their vocations with us over the years but no one has stayed. Over the last thirty years, we have come to understand that our vocation is rare and our life here is difficult. We, in the United States, are also, historically, in the midst of a vocation crisis. There is the mystery that, although we built Marymount for a community of women hermits, maybe it was not really

God's will. That question still remains to be answered. I get letters and e-mails from women discerning an eremitical vocation and asking about our way of life, so I really cannot predict what will happen. We definitely ask for your prayers about this and also for the incredible blessing of a resident chaplain.

Personally, I would like to have women join me permanently, but if that does not happen, I am perfectly at peace. This is a great change in me and the result of God's special grace. Before this, I could never have anticipated being happy here by myself but now I can. I believe that my life of prayer and sacrifice is a contribution to the Church. Having a place where lay people, both men and women, Catholic or not, and priests can also come on retreat is a gift to them and to their respective vocations. We all need time and place for God in prayer. The peace and natural beauty of our mesa is conducive to both. As the Pope says so often, "The Church is renewed by saints." We cannot expect to become holy and to know God without prayer.

Do you have any particular needs for Marymount such as maintenance on buildings or needs for any new projects that would assist you in your ministry to the Church in Idaho?

When I am no longer driving monthly to Beaverton, I hope that my work will enable me to begin a savings account again. I am designating that money for capital improvements. The oldest buildings are now almost 30 years old and they desperately need new windows, more durable siding, new flooring, and major renovations like that. We had planned a few years ago, in honor of our 25th Jubilee, to install a commercial grade rug in the body of chapel but, thank God, we were not able to proceed with the project at that time. Money was donated for it and it is still a project awaiting completion when I have time to oversee the work. Recently, there was a flood in chapel from a broken water pipe, damage from which was mercifully, relatively minor. I was so grateful that the new rug had not yet been installed! The water line into chapel has been repaired but it is clear that major repairs to the infrastructure of the water system, the well and all the underground pipes for the entire

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Father Kenny St. Hilaire gives us a beautiful and moving concert on November 11, 2011 during his retreat at Marymount Hermitage.

Hermitage, will be an on-going effort and expense. I will need the help of generous donors who believe in the mission and charism of Marymount Hermitage to accomplish these future goals.

We have a large spiritual library and I would like to make books more available to others by mail. Our friend, Ellen Piper, has donated a new laptop computer and is making an inventory, processing the new books, and doing data entry of titles and authors to bring our dinosaur library into the digital age. I will need both donations of money, time and work to help with this effort in the coming years. You can see that I have plans for the future of Marymount Hermitage and how it can continue to help others in their spiritual life.

Lastly, as regards the newsletter, I will have to consider sending the newsletter digitally in the future. In preparation for that and also as a way to send you information about my classes and retreats, if you would **send me your e-mail address**, I will begin a **Memo List**. I propose that the next issue of the newsletter (still in the traditional paper form) be a tribute to Sister Rebecca Mary. In 2012 she turns 80 years old. If you would like to help me by sending a note about how you are grateful to Sister and/or how she has helped you in your spiritual life, I will publish as many compositions as I can, with archival photos. All the original notes will be forwarded to Sister Rebecca Mary at St. Mary of the Valley by Sept. 30, 2012. If you like these ideas, I welcome your contributions and comments.

Concluding remarks:

Joanne, thank you for these excellent questions.



I am sure the answers are overly long (it's the writer in me), but I hope this gives our readers more information about the current state of Marymount Hermitage and the Hermit Sisters of Mary. I welcome any further questions which you would like answered. The title for this article comes from the headline in the Sept. 28, 2011 issue of [L'Osservatore Romano](#). Please find below the quote from this beautiful homily by Pope Benedict XVI :

*Our trust in the powerful intercession of the Mother of God and our gratitude for the help we have repeatedly experienced impel us, as it were, to think beyond the needs of the moment. What does Mary actually want to say to us, when she rescues us from some trial? She wants to help us grasp the breadth and depth of our Christian vocation. With a mother's tenderness, she wants to make us understand that **our whole life should be a response to the love of our God**, who is so rich in mercy. "Understand," she seems to say to us, "that God, who is the source of all that is good and who never desires anything other than your true happiness, has the right to demand of you a life that yields wholly and joyfully to his will, striving at the same time that others may do likewise".*

Where God is, there is a future.

Homily given in Erfurt, Germany on September 23, 2011