



Monastery of the Ascension

# THE DESERT CHRONICLE

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## More Monks at Work

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, O.S.B.

**T**HE MARCH ISSUE OF THE DESERT CHRONICLE CONTAINED ARTICLES ABOUT THE WORK OF SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. THIS ARTICLE WILL TOUCH ON THE WORK OF THE OTHER MONKS. However, a monastery is more than its vowed members. The rest of this issue of the Desert Chronicle will describe ministries and social justice activities done by the oblates and others connected with the monastery.

The business office, oversees the budget, pays the bills and the taxes, manages investments, keeps track of medical expenses and insurance, and so forth. For several years, Br. Tobiah has been helping Fr. Andrew (who works long hours there) there, and more

recently Fr. Jerome has lent a helping hand. Br. Tobiah is in charge of the grounds. He is assisted by several volunteers, such as Jeanne Berriochoa who tends with loving care the interior courtyard visible from inside the church, and Anita Koehn who takes care



of the planters and islands along the building and in the lawn on the southwest part of the grounds.

The kitchen crew, coordinated by Fr. Boniface, is headed by LuAnn Kraft, a chef who is remembered fondly by countless visitors. Fr. Ezekiel and Br. José assist her. Br. José also spends part of two days each week at St. Jerome's helping immigrants with their paperwork. Several monks, oblates, and friends of the monastery

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# Benedict TEEN

*By Pete Espil*

**B**ENEDICT-TEEN IS A RETREAT FOR TEENAGERS HELD EVERY SUMMER AT THE MONASTERY OF THE ASCENSION. It is an opportunity for teens to live, work and pray alongside the monks for a few days and nights and thus learn a little bit about monastic life and the Rule of St. Benedict.

My connection to the Monastery goes all the way back to when I was a teenager. In fact, I was first introduced to Catholicism during a youth group field trip to the Monastery when I was 16 years old. My short visit so many years ago had such an impact on me that I felt it would be a good idea to provide this same experience for other teens.

The Benedict-TEEN retreat lasts 4 days and 3 nights. During the retreat the teens join the monks for all prayers and liturgies. They eat all meals at the monastery and also take part in work projects during the morning. After lunch each day the teens have a short rest time and then we take them down to Dierkes Lake to go swimming and enjoy the outdoors. Each evening after supper, the teens hear the “stories” of some of the monks. The monks tell the teens about their lives and how they found their way to the Monastery. On our last night in the monastery, the teens have the opportunity to experience the sacrament of confession and spend some quiet time in personal reflection. Before we leave on the last day, the teens each receive

a St. Benedict medal and a copy of The Rule of St. Benedict.

This year will be the third year for this retreat. While the feedback thus far has been 100% positive, what all the teens say they enjoy the most is the interaction with the monks. They love getting to know the monks through their daily interaction with them. None of the teens ever want to leave on the last night and we always end up staying up too late talking, laughing and sharing. This year we expect 28–30 teens from several Idaho parishes as well as teens from Tennessee and Utah. We have grown since our first year when only 12 teens attended.

If you would like more info about this retreat, feel free to contact me (Pete Espil) at my email address, [juanpedro.espil@yahoo.com](mailto:juanpedro.espil@yahoo.com)•

*(Pete Espil has been a youth minister in Twin Falls, Nampa and Caldwell, in Murfreesboro, TN, and Salt Lake City, UT. He is beginning a master's program in social later this year at the Boise State Campus in Twin Falls. His wife, Jaime Thietten, is a Christian musician. Together they put on a radio show for teens on stations of Salt and Light Radio, a Catholic radio service with stations in Boise and Twin Falls.)*



work at the parish soup kitchen there about once a month. Br. Sylvester is in charge of decorating the chapel and serves as sacristan, which means preparing everything for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours each day and putting things away afterward and cleaning the chapel. He also works with volunteer Georgella Hartwell and the rest of the monks to remake the beds and clean the rooms in the Guest House. Fr. Jerome cleans part of the building (a job he took over when Br. Selby went to attend Seattle University and take care of his mother). He also does considerable work in parishes from Boise to Pocatello.

Fr. Eugene has had to give up his prize-winning garden, but he continues to do some mathematics tutoring. Fr. Nathaniel from Brazil is a stalwart in the scullery and works at adding English to the other languages he speaks fluently. He also does pastoral ministry to the local Portuguese communities. Fr. John Koelsch, who retired from the diocese of Boise to a trailer on the property, helps with the dishes.

Fr. Hugh's work includes editing the *Desert Chronicle* (and finding or writing copy), coordinating the oblates (and writing their Link), serving as priest-in-residence at St. Paul's Catholic Student Center at Boise State University during the school year, and coordinating Road Scholar Programs at the monastery, which are offered in the summer but require preparation and attention throughout the year. He does research and publishes books and articles on medieval religion and monasticism.

Br. Catfael spends quite a bit of time rolling in the dirt in the courtyard xeriscape and occasionally delivers a mouse to the back porch. He is a frequent visitor at church services, which he joins in from the courtyard. He is also taking Portuguese lessons from Fr. Nathaniel. Recently his friend Dr. Allen gave him a haircut ("the lion look" with everything shaved short except head, end of tail and feet). He is thinking about writing his memoirs. •



## Boise Catholic Worker Lazarus House Hygiene Bank

*Ellen Piper, MSW*

DOROTHY DAY WAS KNOWN TO HAVE SAID, "OUR RULE IS THE WORKS OF MERCY." As a Catholic Worker, I am constantly learning what it means to do works of mercy. Often it requires St Benedict's command to listen and incline the ear of our hearts to those we serve.



Many times in the past the women who come to stay at the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality would tell me they have no way to acquire hygiene items once they leave the homeless shelter system. I would just purchase the hygiene items needed.

One day a young woman exercised her autonomy and did not want me to purchase her hygiene items. She asked me to take her to a Christian community that provided hygiene items to the working poor. I dropped her off, and after waiting two hours she was told there were no more items left for her. She was disappointed when I picked her up and through her frustration she told me what I had been unable to hear the poor say in the past.

As I listened as if for the first time, I heard that often a poor individual cannot wash their hair, clothes or body to prepare for a job interview and so often they just do not apply. Men who don't have shaving items are too self-conscious to apply for a job because they are afraid they will be judged a bum for not being clean shaven. Women especially suffer when they are poor because they are unable to obtain certain hygiene items that are unique to being a woman. Hygiene items cannot be purchased with food stamps.

I decided that Lazarus House, a Catholic Worker Outreach Center on the Boise Bench, would become a hygiene bank location for those in need. We opened for the first time the second Saturday in February. We can only accumulate enough inventory to allow us to open once per month, so great is the need. This past second Saturday in May we served 200 people and expect the number served to continue to grow.



If you would like to help us with this work of mercy please donate the following items: soap, shampoo, deodorant, tooth paste and tooth brushes, laundry detergent, dish detergent, toilet paper, razors and shaving cream, and women's menstrual products. They can be dropped off in the blue collection box at the back entrance to Lazarus House, 3704 Overland Road. If you have any questions feel free to call me, Ellen Piper at (208) 850-4398. •







# Capstone Missions

**I**N 1997 SOME PARISHIONERS OF ST. JEROME'S PARISH IN JEROME, ID, IN WHICH OUR MONASTERY IS LOCATED, UNDERTOOK TO DO SOME REPAIRS ON AN ORPHANAGE IN TIJUANA, AND WENT THERE IN JUNE 1997. That Christmas one of the two sisters at the orphanage and nine of the children came to Jerome and stayed at the monastery. From that small beginning grew Capstone Missions, which sends groups of volunteers several times a year, and also provides financial support for the orphanages. Br. Selby was on the original steering committee. Marvin McKay, a friend of the monastery, is one of the experts who lead the construction projects. Students from St. Paul's Catholic Student Center at Boise State University, where Fr. Hugh is a chaplain, constitute the majority of those on the annual January trip. They drive straight through from Idaho in vans and with a truckload of supplies. After working for five or six days, they get up very early and drive back straight through, arriving back in Boise about midnight. Below are some reflections from three people who have been on many of these trips to help the orphanages in Tijuana.

## **Guadalupe Rodriguez, Hermiston, OR. Reflection on Volunteering in Tijuana**

Being allowed to work in Tijuana is always an honor I am reminded of when getting to look into the familiar eyes of the children. The trips are always a mystery that slowly reveals itself, as the tasks at hand may not be anticipated by some of the people on the trip. The trips feel like some form of a family reunion when I encounter other Capstone Mission's members who have been there constantly. The trips are an opportunity to use my hands, feet, mind, and heart, to serve and to be served.

*(Lupita graduated from BSU in December 2012 with a degree in fine arts and is hoping to spend next year as a volunteer overseas.)*

## **Becky Wilsey, Boise, ID. Do Small Things with Great Love**

The first mission trip down to Tijuana for me meant leaving

the country for the first time and seeing how people lived in another part of the world. My eyes were opened. The second mission trip down to Tijuana for me meant filling that desperate need to do more, to continue the never-ending, unfinished business of serving the poor. My hands were bruised. The third mission trip down to Tijuana for me meant revisiting the places, the people, the friendships I had grown to love. My heart was touched. The fourth mission trip down to Tijuana for me meant facing the realities of the disparities and injustices of this world head on. My perspective on life changed. The fifth mission trip down to Tijuana for me meant humbling myself, seeking God's will, and to "do small things with great love." My will was transformed.



*(Becky is a BSU graduate and mother of two. The photo is a sign in a Missionaries of Charity building in Tijuana that Becky helped re-roof.)*

## **Nicole Poll, Nampa, ID, Journal Entry, Tijuana, January 2013**

There is something incredibly exhausting about this work. Physically, the work is long and demanding. Psychologically, the stress, the shock of it all, the conflicting personalities grate against increasingly raw nerve endings. Spiritually, it is so easy to reject grace, to allow the otherwise tiny irritations to fester in our hearts. And yet a deeper, more subtle, more profound grace persists. It permeates. However early it is called upon, it provides the energy to continue for the rest of the week. And under this crisp Tijuana sky we find that grace.



Under the eaves of St. Joseph's such grace is found, not only to continue the week, but also to continue the Capstone mission for the many years to come. This afternoon the board of Capstone met with Corazon de Vida, Door of Faith, and Raul and Anahi of St. Joseph's to discuss how to further this ever-evolving mission for both St. Joseph's and La Hacienda. I suddenly find myself aware of an entirely new vision for them both, one that extends so much further than construction on a few run-down homes. I finally realize that we are providing a chance, an opportunity at a life for these children. Yes, we installed new lighting at St. Joseph's, patched a leaky roof, painted newly installed doors. But more than that, we helped build a little firmer a foundation upon which these children can continue to grow. I continue to contemplate the idea of dignity this trip, of the dignity inherent in our humanity but which is so often denied these children. More than construction, we are honoring, even restoring, their dignity as humans by the work we do. As humans, they deserve to be free from fear, to live securely, to be loved. And yet that is not always the reality. This is the underlying reason we are here, to allow God to restore what has been lost. At la Hacienda, crews continued to sort and organize the mountain of books for the study rooms. Work also continued on building the exterior walls of the compound. We hired several local masons to work on and direct the construction because this project requires expertise we simply do not have. Not only has the dignity of each worker been validated through the recognition of their skill, but also the children at the Hacienda will have a beautifully constructed, high quality, protective wall. They will be a little bit safer, because they deserve to be so and God has put us in a position to aid in that.

At Verdad y Vida the same work continues. Appreciation for a clean sanitary bathroom is rarely so deep as after seeing how awful they can be. And so we fix them. Because the women and children at Verdad y Vida deserve access to clean, functioning bathrooms. They deserve it by virtue of their dignity as people. And so the crew there continued work on installing new sinks and completing installation of new toilets. It is dirty work, work that is often more than people can handle. And yet we do it because we have been called to fill this need. We are more than carpenters, more than painters, plumbers, electricians, translators, sorters, and carriers. We are fillers of needs. We are restorers of dignity, bearers of hope. Even in our darkest moments, we are called to bring light back to the people entrusted to us. We are Capstone.

*(Nicole graduated from BSU in May 2013 with a degree in psychology and Spanish, May 2013. She and Lupita volunteered in Tanzania in the summer of 2012).•*







*This cover has been added since November to create an outdoor auditorium (my definition!). The new classrooms are on the right.*

# San Gabriel, Columbia, Coffee Project

By Anita Koehn

## Editor's NOTE:

*[Anita Koehn is a research scientist with the United State Department of Agriculture. She has mobilized her fellow oblates to sell fair-trade and farm-gate coffee that she roasts. All the money goes to the two schools described below.]*

IN NOVEMBER OF 2012 I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO VISIT FR. GERSAIN PAZ IN COLOMBIA AGAIN, AND THE SCHOOL THAT THE CHARITY HE FOUNDED, FUNDESIA, SUPPORTS. We spent most of the time in Cali with a short trip to Monterilla in the mountains. The school in San Gabriel in Cali has about 720 students now with classes in both the morning and the afternoon. They were in the process of adding new classrooms to one of original structures when I was visiting, so they were building and teaching students at the same time. Now there are two buildings with three floors of classrooms each including a library/science room, computer room, a kitchen, an apartment for the family that is responsible for security, and office space for the administration.



Below is a photo of Helen and Yitza, two of the students we supported with coffee funds and donations in 2012. Helen is now my friend on facebook so we have chatted a few times and she is doing well in school. The last time I chatted with her, her mother

was having health problems and her father was working in a place that filters water. She has one younger brother. Unfortunately, because the community of displaced people is very fluid with people moving in and out, Yitza may not be studying at San Gabriel at this time. We sent \$800.00 in February, 2013 and that money has been spent to provide shoes, uniforms, and school supplies for as many students as possible for this semester.



Above are the new classrooms, the first floor originally was open on one side and they have now closed it in and added doors and two floors of classrooms. The very top portion of the structure with openings functions to keep the classrooms cooler, especially in the afternoon.

FUNDESIA has always made an attempt to have projects that could add to their income and provide job training for adults. At San Gabriel they have added a 'shadehouse' structure so they can grow flowers and other plants to sell. A future project will be to add a vocational training facility similar to what they have in Monterilla where they train students and adults in carpentry, metal work, and sewing.



This is the area just below the classrooms and the plan is to build the vocational facility here.

The teachers!! Here are the teachers at San Gabriel. Their job is challenging as the students have so much energy, there can be different ages at each level, and the usual behavioral problems.







# Lucy Stamm: Catholic Street Evangelization

*By Hugh Feiss, OSB*

STEVEN DAWSON, WHO WAS THEN A STUDENT AT PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY, FOUNDED ST. PAUL STREET EVANGELIZATION (SPSE) IN MAY 2012. Steve is a convert to Catholicism, who takes seriously the Lord's injunction to preach the gospel to all nations. SPSE is a grassroots organization that has quickly spread across the United States, Canada, Philippines, and Australia. There are currently about 50 teams active in this ministry. Oblate Lucy Stamm is a member of the Boise team, whose members share the faith in downtown Boise every Sunday afternoon. There are always at least two members present.

This form of street evangelization is simple and non-confrontational. The volunteers put up a little sign identifying themselves, which says, "Catholic Truth. Got questions? Free literature. Need Prayer? Find Peace!" They sit at a table or stand, and are usually praying when no one has approached them. On the table are rosaries and pamphlets telling how to say the rosary and what its biblical roots are.

According to Val Allen, a member of the Boise team, the process is quite simple. When someone approaches to see what the evangelists are doing, they offer them a free Rosary or brochure. "If they say, 'No, thanks,' we either invite other conversation or politely say, 'Have a great day and God bless you.'" People often come to where the literature is set out and take a few things home with them. If a person agrees to take a Rosary, this is when great Catholic conversation can ensue. The first question we ask is if the person is Catholic. Often, the response is, 'I used to be but haven't been to Mass for a long time.' That comment opens the door to a compassionate conversation that hopefully plants the seed of truth and allows the Holy Spirit to do the rest. Occasionally, we will have an opportunity to visit with someone

who is seeking for God. We then have a great opportunity to share our Catholic experiences of God in our lives, His saving grace and love, and invite them to attend Mass at one of our local parishes. We have a Google map with local parish information available for them."

Those who share in this evangelization effort experience joy and fulfillment, as they share the good news of God's grace in the world and in their own lives. Lucy Stamm says, "I think I have finally found what God is calling me to do. Once I started doing this, I look forward to when I can go out again."

To be an effective street evangelist, one does not need to be a theologian or have training as an apologist; what is required is a heart for Jesus Christ and his Church and willingness to share that with others.

SPSE offers and recommends online certification and training. Its board of advisors includes ordained clergy, deacons, and nationally known apologists such as Steven Ray and Dave Armstrong. Endorsements have been received by Most Rev. Thomas J. Rodi, Archbishop of Mobile, AL who writes, "I am happy to provide you with this letter of commendation for St. Paul Street Evangelization ... In this Year of Faith, and having been called to foster the New Evangelization, it is my hope that your organization will bring many to the love of Jesus Christ and His Church." Steve

Ray writes, "Street evangelism is as old as the gospel itself. The Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ were the first street preachers announcing the good news of salvation and the Church in the streets of the Roman Empire. This tradition was practiced by the great saints throughout history and is alive again and spreading across the globe. The faithful Catholics who make up St. Paul Street Evangelism live up to their name. Support them, follow them, join them!"•



# Road Scholar Programs for 2013



## June 17-23:

Religion and the Settling of the American West (to about 1885: California Missions, Protestants in Pacific Northwest, Mormons, Catholic Missionaries in Pacific Northwest) [enrollment closed]

## July 1-7:

Windows into the Lives of Medieval People (Village Life, Art, Chaucer and Langland, Books of Hours, Household Books; Rubbings)

## July 8-14:

Ancient Rome (History, Literature, Architecture & Engineering, Rise of Christianity) [enrollment closed]

## July 22-28:

Ireland: History, Culture, Literature and Religion (from

Ancient Times to the Present)

## August 5-11:

Quilting

## September 2-8:

Hiking amid Nature and History in the Snake River Plain

## *Oblate Day at the Monastery:*

### Sunday, July 7, 2013

Mass 9:00 AM

10:45 AM Music

12:00 Lunch: Potluck, highlighting Idaho products

1:00 Lecture and Slides: New Interpretations of Benedictine History



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