

The Sisters from California and Texas made their first snowmen.

At Ephesus

BENEDICTINES OF MARY, QUEEN OF APOSTLES

Dear Family, Friends, and Benefactors,

Greetings from Gower! It has been some time since our fall newsletter, and though we often highlight special events, like professions and feast days, we thought it might be a nice change to simply give you a pictorial view of our regular day-to-day life here at the abbey. The stability of our daily routine is a great boon to the life of contemplation - a life that allows us to fix our attention, whether we are at work or in prayer, on the Face of our Beloved Spouse.

It is this beautiful Face that we remember especially during the Lenten season now upon us, which was so cruelly disfigured throughout His Passion. During the Good Friday liturgy, the Church bids us chant the Reproaches- words that express the sentiments of His Heart as He hung on the Cross: *My people, what have I done to thee? Or in what have I grieved thee? Answer me. I fed thee with manna in the wilderness, and thou hast beaten Me with blows and scourges. For thee I struck the king of the Chanaanites; and thou hast struck My head with a reed. I gave thee a royal sceptre: and thou hast given to My head a crown of thorns.* As these words strike our hearts, we can only imagine His compassionate gaze fixed upon us as He, the meek Lamb of God, was fixed to the Cross, pouring out all of His Precious Blood to save us from our sins.

The magnitude of the sacrifice of Christ is a tremendous impetus to offer our own every-day sacrifices with fervor and generosity, as we undertake the daily dying to self that is necessary to carry out well the duties of our state in life. We can always draw courage from beholding the suffering and loving gaze of our Redeemer. He gave Himself to us in joy, "as a Bridegroom coming forth from His bridechamber." We can surely all find it in our hearts to return that joy to Him with the gaze of our own faces and hearts.

Though Lent is a penitential season, St. Benedict's Chapter on Lent in the Holy Rule contains his only uses of the word "joy!" So we hope to continue this holy season in the right spirit, "not fasting as the hypocrites do," but persevering in a spirit of joyful hope, until we behold His glorious face at Easter and in eternity. Please know of our many prayers that we may all be united there one day~



Tuning up our organ!



Feeding our three-day-old "Ola" who arrived for the feast of St. SchOLastica.

In the Heart of Our Redeemer,

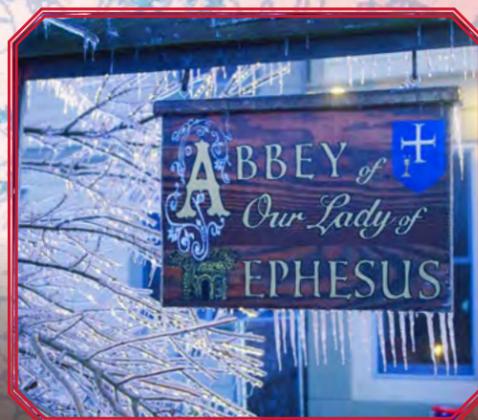
*Mother Cecilia, OSB
C. L. B. S.*



Candlemas procession at the Abbey.

ADVENT &

CHRISTMAS



The Advent hoarfrost, Christmas ice and post-Christmas snows transformed our grounds into a winter wonderland.



The chanting of the *Rorate* Mass by candlelight.



Christmas Midnight Mass.



The Sisters at Ava enjoy a Christmas recreation.

Below: A Christmas game for the Novitiate, trying to identify the hands of their fellow Sisters.

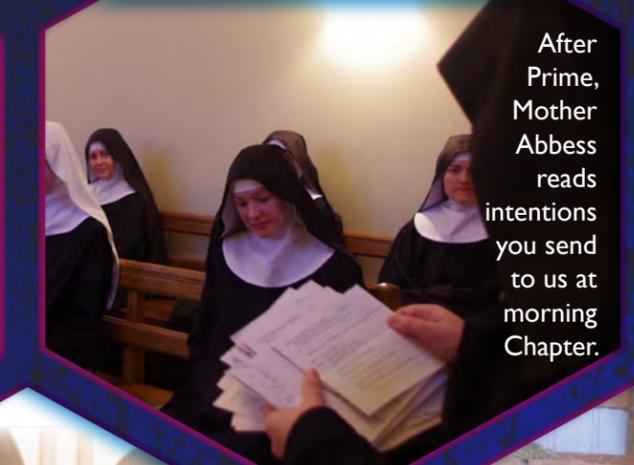


The Novitiate traditionally takes over the house on Holy Innocents' Day. After serving a meal which they have carefully planned and prepared, the novices and postulants entertain the professed Sisters. Above left is the skit in Ava, and below, that at the Abbey.





Matins begins fifteen minutes after rising, and takes almost an hour to chant, though longer on Sundays and Feasts.



After Prime, Mother Abbess reads intentions you send to us at morning Chapter.

A Lenten Day in the Life of the Benedictines of Mary

Sisters take a brief breakfast while standing, imitating the Israelites.

The office of Terce precedes Holy Mass.



Josie and Bella love to play in the snow. Many of the Sisters do too!



A period of *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading) and prayer follows Matins.



The Office of Prime is chanted immediately after Lauds.



Morning chores include milking and tending to the animals.



The *schola* leads the chants of the Mass.



The daily sung High Mass is truly the center of the day. All other offices revolve around the Mass, like the planets to the sun.



Instruments may be practiced during free time.

5:00 RISE ✕ MATINS ✕ LECTIO ✕ 6:50 LAUDS, PRIME & CHAPTER ✕ MORNING WORK ✕ 10:50 TERCE ✕ 11:00 CHANTED MASS, SEXT ✕ FREE TIME ✕ 1:10 LECTIO



Lauds (above right) imitates the sunrise sacrifice offered in the Temple.



Instructions in the Ava sewing room.



The morning work begins in silence, broken only by necessary questions or directions.



Correspondence and orders are brought to the mailbox.



The morning's milk is prepared.



The Novitiate processes out to the Angelus bell after Mass and the Office of Sext.



All are encouraged to "spend time with Our Lady" during *Lectio*.



A hive is readied for the bees' spring expansion.



Silk is carefully cut for a maniple.



A meal for priest guests is prepared at Saint John's Retreat House



Formation class for the Novitiate follows free time.



The loft of the Abbey church is a quiet place for afternoon mental prayer.

"Tantum Ergo" is sung at Thursday Holy Hour.



The sacristan extinguishes the candles after Holy Hour.



A room at St. John's Priest Retreat House is prepared for a new guest.



Garden work never ends, even in the cold of winter!



Named for the evening star, Vespers parallels the evening holocaust of the Temple. On Sundays, Our Lord is exposed on the altar.



After the Office of None, dinner is taken in silence while a Sister reads.



The Rosary is said privately three times a week. The other days, it is said together before the Office of None.



Salad is portioned before None in the refectory (dining room.)



A nourishing meal is served later than usual during Lent.

The refectory is cleaned.



Before Mass and the Offices of Lauds and Vespers, the Sisters line up by rank in the hallway intended for this purpose, called the statio.



The cantress warms up for her duties in the liturgy room.



(HOLY HOUR) ROSARY ✕ 3:00 NONE DINNER ✕ RECREATION ✕ AFTERNOON WORK ✕ 6:00 VESPERS, LECTIO ✕ 8:00 COMPLINE ✕ 9:00 LIGHTS OUT NIGHT WATCHES

Correspondence is a happy task, but takes much time (and patience for the recipients!)



Having kept silence through the day, recreation is an hour to talk...



Back to work after recreation.



Wrinkles are ironed out in the laundry room.



The work of the day concluded, the community gathers for a reading in the chapter house.



Each Sister bids a silent good night to Our Lady after Compline.



...Mostly while lending a hand where needed, such as a firemen's chain to bring in wood.



...Sometimes having fun, as can be seen by Sr. Agatha threatening her younger sister!



Some handwork needs to be done in the Ava sewing room.



Arranging flowers for the altar.



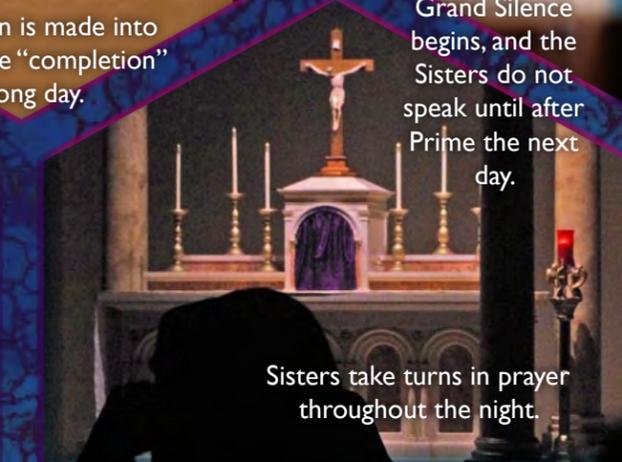
The library is a frequent setting for Lectio.



A procession is made into Compline, the "completion" of a long day.



Grand Silence begins, and the Sisters do not speak until after Prime the next day.



Sisters take turns in prayer throughout the night.

For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to Him that judged Him unjustly. Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed.

-1 Peter 2:21-24

Calling the
Sisters to
prayer amidst
a snowfall
in Ava.



