

From the Foot of the Cross



The Passionist Nuns of Saint Joseph Monastery in the Diocese of Owensboro KY

Autumn 2012



Recently, our Golden Jubilarian, Sr. Mary Elizabeth of the Holy Spirit, graciously took time with the editor of "From the Foot of the Cross" to share some of the thoughts resting in her heart now that she has reached the 50 year vantage point as a vowed Passionist cloistered Nun. Here is what she shared:

WHAT ARE YOU MOST GRATEFUL FOR?

"It's impossible to narrow it down to just one or two things, when there's so much for which to be grateful!

"To dwell in the house of God, loving, serving Him, praying and chanting the Divine Office all day every day, offering reparation and penance — all of this I have learned is so valuable for today!

From the outset, the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) has been a special grace in my life. It is the very prayer of Christ, and the prayer of the Church that we are privileged to offer to God for His people."

A Celebration of Fifty Years in Passionist Vowed Life

Sister also spoke about the value of community life, where we "help each other grow and mature in Christ's love by living His virtues." She underlined the importance of being teachable and willing to learn every day.

Sr. Mary Elizabeth said she loves the silence of our contemplative life, and the fact that our life is centered around the Holy Eucharist and the Sacraments, with time for prayer which nourishes and strengthens us through the day.

She confided that she often ponders the opening chapter of our primitive rule (written by St. Paul of the Cross) where our founder tells us that our life is founded on the two great commandments—that of loving God and neighbor and how the important thing in our daily life is to love God, remain in His divine presence, and to try to grow in knowing and remembering the Passion and Death of Jesus. Another guiding theme of these last 50 years has been the constant search to do God's will and not her own. Sister said this theme has been like a golden thread weaving through her life.



Sister's Jubilee Mass held July 8, 2012 L-R: Msgr Bernard Powers, Fr. Ray Clark, Fr. Joe Mills and Fr. John Schork CP (Passionist). Servers in back – seminarian Jarrod Kaelin and Dwayne Roby. Greg Mills also served but is not pictured.



Betty on her First
Communion Day
at St. Mary Magdalene
Church May 7, 1944

Over the years, Sister said her appreciation of the value of contemplative life for the Church has also increased. She quoted our Constitutions:

"Keenly aware of the infinite grandeur of God, they live by a special contemplative commitment for the praise of His glory, knowing this to be the fundamental reason for their existence in the Church. Convinced of the absolute necessity of God's grace for the fruitfulness of the apostolate, they offer their unceasing prayer and joyful penance that God send zealous workers into His harvest, convert sinners and open the minds of non-Christians to hear the Gospel."

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A YOUNG WOMAN WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING PASSIONIST LIFE?

"Find a quiet place of silence to listen to God's voice to you. Be still before God; be open to what He tells you, saying: 'Speak, Lord, your servant is **listening**.' Then have the patience to wait, as God's providence directs you through circumstances.

"There are so many 'voices' drumming for your attention, drowning the voice of God. Remember that created things are temporary. The more you get, the more you want. It's not in getting that brings one true happiness, but in giving. Set your heart on unchangeable things, and look toward eternity. Try to go to daily Mass and Communion, and regularly to confession.

"I will never forget when the big turning point came for me: While the radio was playing music, I was reading the *Imitation of Christ*, and came across a quote from the Gospel that really came alive for me. It was like a search light flashed into my heart, giving me a terrific grace that set me free to answer God's call.

"So, I say to any of you who may feel drawn to Passionist life in our community: Keep the eyes of your heart fixed on Jesus lifted on the Cross and see there his overwhelming love for you, drawing and beckoning a response to leave all and come follow

his Way of Love and keep our Mother Mary company who is the model of compassionate love for her beloved Son and all the souls for whom He died to save and bring home with Him in the happiness of the heavenly kingdom.

"A good sign that one is called to be a religious would be that the attraction to give one's life to Jesus **keeps coming to mind** whether in events, circumstances or through the people in your life. Courage. 'Do not be afraid!'"

Sr. Mary Elizabeth is the daughter of the late Frank and Frances Sauer, of Stanley/Sorgho, KY. Born during the year of the 1937 flood of the Ohio River, she always laughingly claimed that she was washed in by the waters similar to Moses in the Holy Bible!

SR. MARY ELIZABETH'S VOCATION STORY

God works in each soul in the way He chooses. The seed of a vocation is planted by him within the soul from the beginning as is seen in the call of the prophet Jeremiah: *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations."* In order to help the seed of a vocation to grow, God uses persons and events in our lives but all the while He continues to be the One who calls.

Good Catholic parents helped to cultivate the seedling of my vocation by bringing me up in the love and fear of God through word and example and by the Catholic education they provided at the cost of many personal sacrifices. My mother highly esteemed the dedicated priests and sisters in our parish from whom she received much support for her faith in times of sorrow and difficulty. She often remarked that she would like to see one of her children be-



Marguerite, John, Papa (Frank), Mama (Frances), Katherine, Bud and Marylene with inset of Sr. Mary Elizabeth, on their Mama's birthday - November 1961 - about 7 months before her death.



In a talent show during her military years.

come a religious and give the Lord a return of love as she had witnessed in the good priests and sisters. My schooling was under the wise direction and guidance of the Ursuline Sisters. During this time the Sisters often hinted that I might have a religious vocation and they advised me to think and pray about it. Their prayers and encouragement were a strong support.

While in high school an unexpected sorrow touched my life. Once as I was prayerfully pondering over it there seemed to be an inner call similar to that given to Isaiah when our Lord summoned him: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? 'HERE I AM.' I said, 'SEND ME'." This 'sending forth' would not be a going into the world but rather a withdrawal from the world to follow Christ more closely in the prayer, solitude and silence of His sacred Passion. Although the Passionist Nuns and their life was known to me only vaguely, I felt drawn at the this time to their cloistered contemplative life. Now, it is clear to me that this attraction to the Passionist vocation was God's answer to my request that He send me forth into a life of love, prayer, penance and reparation. The Passionist Nun, in imitation of Mary at the foot of the Cross, spends her life in worship of the Father in union with Jesus Crucified, while praying that all souls will turn to Him for pardon, grace, and peace.

After the completion of high school the attraction to the cloister remained but while my mother was anxious to have one of her children be a teaching sister she was frightened at the thought of the cloister, mistakenly thinking she would never again see her daughter. Amidst tearful entreaties I decided to postpone my entrance and take a college course instead. At the end of my first year at college, my mother became seriously ill. The surgical and hospital expenses cut deep into my dad's pocket and in order not to deplete the family funds I felt I needed to be self-supporting and find work.

The thought of a religious vocation slipped further into the future although the call was still deep in my heart. Continuing to pray for Divine guidance, I nonetheless listened to other 'voices' urging me to see the world, so I enlisted in Women's Air Force. Looking back, it is evident that God permitted this for my greater maturity. It also gave me the opportunity to realize more fully HOW MUCH the world needs persons totally dedicated to Our Lord, to make atonement with Him by prayer and loving sacrifice. Even though there was a certain liking for my life in the military. I was restless and inwardly searching as the conviction deepened that nothing in this world can truly satisfy the longing of the human heart.

With only six months of my enlistment period remaining, God intervened through people and events to help me know and fulfill His designs. At this time I was reassigned to work in the Chaplain's Office. One day the chaplain, Fr. Wood, asked me the unexpected and soul searching question, 'Elizabeth.



Betty began basic training in the Air Force in August 1957 after a year of college at Mount Saint Joseph. She was stationed in Colorado Springs and served in the military until January 1960.



Fr. John Wood, CSV was very instrumental in Betty following her call to Religious Life.



Gathering flowers with which to decorate the refectory (monastic term for dining room)

did you ever think of being a Sister?" My surprised response was another question: "How did you know, Father?" Gods hour had struck!

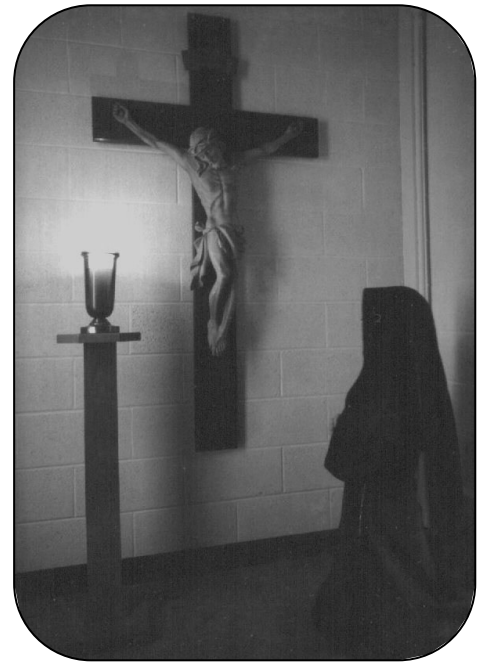
Father was a "voice crying out in the wilderness" of my heart. Putting myself under Father's capable direction I followed his advice to attend daily Mass and to read good spiritual books. Armed with these and other spiritual aids, especially a novena of prayer to our Mother of Perpetual Help, my hope was strengthened and my hidden early desire was revived. Father Wood helped me obtain my release from service and I was free to return home to fulfill the plan God had for me from all eternity...*loving and serving Him under the banner of the Cross*. With much trepidation I told my parents that I had applied for entrance to the Passionist Nuns. Much to my surprise they made no objection. Perhaps my stint in the military had sufficiently detached them from my physical presence.

What peace, joy and contentment there has been in my Passionist vocation, doing what God wanted of me instead of following the "other voices" of my own natural attractions. And the thought that I could have lost this "pearl of great price" of God's special call, leaves me humbled and vigilant to thank Him every day for His ever present mercy. God is faithful! It is my daily prayer that our young people and all who seek to follow Jesus more closely will do everything possible to respond to His loving call, especially by praying daily for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. If God calls someone to the religious life, He will always give the necessary grace and help.

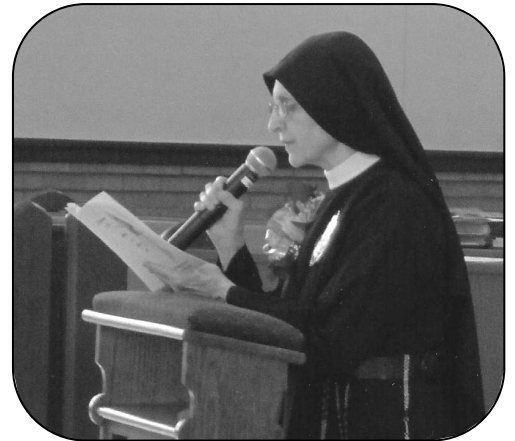
Many times His help comes through the persons and events of our everyday lives, so I pray that our youth will LISTEN ATTENTIVELY to our Lord's VOICE speaking through these persons and events and respond with courage and generosity. As our Lord in the Gospel looked on the young man with love, likewise today he is looking on YOU to help him in His saving work within the Church, to bring about His kingdom. We are His hands and feet today. It is also my prayer that parents will be instrumental in fostering and encouraging religious vocations in their families.



Sister Mary Elizabeth standing behind her sister Marguerite and surrounded by some nieces and nephews on the day of her Golden Jubilee Celebration, July 8, 2012.



An Oberammergau Crucifix - gift from Fr. Wood - arrived at the monastery before Betty did!



During her Golden Jubilee Mass on July 8th, Sr. Mary Elizabeth renewed her Passionist vows, and her spousal love for Jesus Crucified, in her life of prayer and sacrifice for the Church and the world.

Photos above and below Jim Thompson



The Passionist Family Expands!



October 20th, the solemnity of our Holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, was a glorious celebration here at the monastery, as we commemorated the 15th anniversary of the foundation of the Passionist Oblates, and received 16 new members into the Oblate formation program.

All photos this page by Larena Lawson



Left to right: Deacon Bill Bach, Fr. Joseph Mills, Fr. Rodger Hunter-Hall, our bishop, Most Rev. William F. Medley, our chaplain, Fr. Ray Clark, and Msgr. Bernard Powers



Three Passionist Oblates who have served as Animators, Debbie Ward, Dan Howard and Christie Swanson, bestow Passion Sign pins on Kerry Ledington and Ann Flaherty during the ceremony



Left to right: Kim Burris, Janie Gayhart, Anne Hagan, Rita Hardesty, in line to receive their Passion Sign pins



A glimpse from the reception after the Mass:
left to right in the foreground: Carol Hulsey, Mary Lou Payne, Gary Trogden, Cathy Roby. Chatting at the table: Linda Hill, Kathy Stiff and Debbie Stiff



After renewing their commitment, the Oblates are seated while the new members are received into the program. Standing, left to right: Kerry Ledington, Ann Flaherty, Mike Roby, Cathy Roby, Anne Hagan, Rita Hardesty, Janie Gayhart, Margaret Boehmann, Kim Burris, Dottie Pogue, Sue O'Bryan, Marilyn Beyke, Monica Rhodes, Gary Trogden, Nadine Trogden. (Not pictured: Mass server: Dwayne Roby)

At the Lord's Service



Photo Larena Lawson

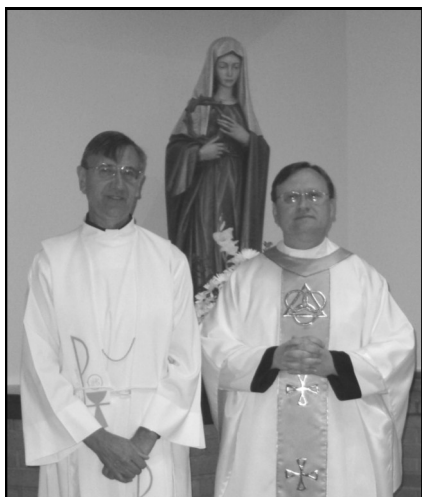
Dr. William G. Bach, one of our devoted Passionist Oblates, was ordained to the Permanent Diaconate on Sept. 15, 2012. He along with 17 other men are the first to be ordained permanent deacons for our diocese. Deacon Bill proclaimed the Gospel at our October 20th celebration of St. Paul of the Cross.



Photo Larena Lawson

Professor of theology, Fr. Rodger Hunter-Hall, made his public Act of Oblation here at the monastery after several years of study and preparation.

Father is on the faculty of the Notre Dame Graduate School at Christendom College.



This summer we joyfully welcomed to the monastery Fr. Gregor Lenzen, C.P. (right) and Fr. Emery DeGaal.

Having served as provincial in Bavaria for 20 years, Fr. Gregor was on sabbatical in the U.S. Fr. DeGaal is a professor of theology at Mundelein seminary near Chicago.



Special thanks to our devoted Mass servers, Dwayne Roby and Greg Mills, who participate in our liturgies with reverence and dignity



A heroic missionary in Vladivostok, Russia, Fr. Myron Effing, along with some family members, visited us in October. He is a distant cousin of Sr. Mary Andrea. His 90-minute visit was a profound education in the history of the persecution of the Church in Russia and the efforts to rebuild and re-evangelize the people. Find out how you can help at www.vladmission.org



Refurbished Calvary Scene

Sr. Cecilia Maria's father, retired Army Colonel Tim Wynn, devoted his woodworking skills to refurbishing a Calvary scene featuring the "Instruments of the Passion." Tim designed and crafted a "wayside shrine" in which to mount the ensemble, and then built a beautiful shadow box in which to display the scene. For the crucifixion scene he replaced the cross with walnut, the backdrop is maple burl and the frame is walnut. The shadowbox itself is also walnut with slip dovetail joints and the door has mitered corners – quite a work of art! May God reward you Tim!

The piece was originally donated to us by our dear friend, Charlotte Oberst.





Heavenly visitors who came to earth for Sr. Mary Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee Gaudeamus. The skit featured some of Sister's family members and recalled many precious memories.

Aha!
I finally made it!

Sr. Marie Michael trying to sneak into Heaven. The sign on the door was part of a skit for Sr. Mary Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee celebration



Monastery Happenings



Evidence of the many nature lovers in our community.

What do you suppose the fossilized rock is??

We have the tradition of decorating a wheelchair for the Sister celebrating her Silver or Golden Jubilee. Sister's chair was decorated in a very patriotic way even including a parachute!

She was picked up from her cell (monastic term for bedroom) and brought to the recreation room to the sound of the Air Force Song: "The Wild Blue Yonder" rewritten to reflect her life as a spiritual warrior.



Come learn about
Passionist Life



Sacred scripture's references to being lifted up on eagle's wings became very real as Sr. Cecilia Maria let go of an Eagle kite this summer.



We are always delighted to meet with women to share the riches of our vocation. Do you know a young woman discerning a religious vocation? Please direct her to visit our website and blog.

www.passionistnuns.org Click on the Blog

FROM THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

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November brings us to the end of the Church Year and celebrates Christ as King of the Universe. May Christ take up his throne in all hearts, triumphing over sin and the culture of death, leading us to His peaceful reign of Love!

To our dear family and friends,

During the Year of Faith (October 11, 2012 - November 24, 2013) promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we are being called into a rediscovery of our Catholic faith in many ways, particularly by the prayerful reading of the Vatican II documents and the Catholic Catechism.

God is offering us this special time of deeper conversion to Jesus Christ the one Messiah of the world who is "the way, the truth and the life". This year is meant to strengthen and renew our faith, so that we may give public witness to it. Pope Benedict wrote: ***"A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him"*** (*Porta Fidei*, October 11, 2011).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary who is proclaimed "blessed because she believed" (Luke 1:45) stir up within us a firm adherence to the Person and teaching of her Divine Son, as proclaimed by His Church on earth! And may she help us cherish the gift of faith that is more precious than fire-tried gold!

We are your close companions on this journey toward renewed faith and deeper union with Christ. In closing, we ask God to bless and reward you for the countless ways you have helped us continue our contemplative life in and for the Church. Our abiding gratitude is expressed through heartfelt prayer for you and yours.

Mother Catherine Marie and the Passionist Nuns of Whitesville