

# MANILA PRIORY NEWSLETTER

St. Scholastica's Priory  
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## To be Benedictine... To be Faithful... To be a Blessing A Spirituality of Cenobitic Living

This was the theme of this year's retreat developed wonderfully well by Sr. Karen Joseph, OSB from the Sisters of St. Benedict monastery, Ferdinand, Indiana, USA.

For thirty two years she had spent her life as a contemplative in the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration monastery, holding the position of Sub-Prioress at the age of 27 and other important positions like being Prioress General for twenty-three years, but over the years, she felt something was missing. She gained admission to a more active congregation, the Sisters of St. Benedict and has been a member of that community up to the present. She therefore has much to share with us.



On Friday afternoon, Sept. 12, 2014, all roads led to St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality, Tagaytay for the 73 participants comprising the first cluster retreat, among whom were the superiors and formators since they had just ended their meeting there.

On the first day, Sept. 13, Sr. Karen distributed copies of the list of conferences with suggested readings for our guidance.

- 1 - Holy Leisure
- 2 - Mindfulness: The Gift of the Moment
- 3 - On Riding the Monster Down: The Inner Spiritual Journey
4. -On Staying at Table: Monastic Stability
- 5&6 - Cultivating a Monastic Instinct: Conversatio (Part 1&2)
- 7 - Monastic Obedience: A Matter of Faith... A Response of Love
- 8 - Common Ownership: A Poverty of Sufficiency
- 9 - Monastic Prayer: Opus Dei and Lectio Divina
- 10 - Prefer Nothing to the Love of Christ
- 11 - Hospitality in the House of God
- 12 - The Power of the Common Life
- 13 - On the Spirit of Silence
- 14 - Never Despair of God's Mercy
- 15 - To be a Benedictine: Clarifying the Vision
- 16 - Keeping Monastic Profession Daily Before Our Eyes

She gave one conference in the morning and one in the afternoon and we found ourselves excited to listen to each conference. It is because of the manner she delivered them. She stood there in front of us, burning with passion, appealing to both our hearts and consciences to remain faithful to what we have vowed and to the seven monastic

instincts of listening, of humility, of holding one's tongue, of helpfulness, of bearing with one another, of reverence and consistency. She said that all problems will disappear if only we believe God saying to us: "I am with you. I love you. Trust me." This was just one of the mantras she shared with us. She quoted different famous persons from George Bernard Shaw to Parker Palmer to Oscar Romero. She showed another loving facet to Jesus' person which is quite new. She said that on that Last supper, Jesus realized that after 3 years of formation, his apostles still did not get it. They were talking instead about ambitions. Jesus knew the betrayal, the denial, yet he continued breaking the bread and passing the cup. He did not give up on them.



Among the stories she shared, one stood out as very meaningful. It is from an old movie, "The Lost Horizon", which she saw when she was young. The leader of the place up in the Himalayas called Shangri-la said to one of the survivors of the plane crash whom he thought could be a possible successor. He said: "Look at the world today. There is violence, propelled by love for power and greed, but soon evil will consume itself. I will not be here to witness that but you might. Let us stay here with our books, our music, our meditation and one rule: Be kind. When the powers will devour one another, we might be the only reservoir of hope. Our weary people might be led here and we will give them hope." Then Sr. Karen asked us, "Can we say this of our convents? Will we be the reservoir of hope for our people?" " This is really a challenge for us!

She concluded by distributing bookmarks to everyone which contained the gist of the last conference, "Keeping Monastic Profession Daily before our Eyes." She called it the 74<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict. The sisters clapped their hands showing approval. One sister commented, "This is what it's like when the retreat facilitator is a Benedictine like us."

By: Sr. Isabel Orito, OSB

