

SISTER VERONICA ARYEEQUAYE PROFESSES HER LIFE VOW IN THE ORDER OF ST HELENA

Reflections by Sister Veronica, OSH

It was a long fight and a long wait, but it has all been worth it. When Chapter in July voted me to Life Profession, it didn't come as a surprise because I knew I had worked for it. My first response was to call those who had fought with me; my sisters here in the states, Eliza, Dorothy, and Grace.

I called my sisters and asked them to get themselves prepared to cook! It took a lot out of me trying to buy a live goat and having it slaughtered here at the convent. I completed most of the cooking during the week prior to the service so my sisters would only have to put the finishing touches on the meal to follow the profession service.

I sent invitations to the profession service to about a hundred people, expecting even a few more than that to attend. A couple of weeks prior to October 2nd, my profession date, I started receiving regret calls from invitees. I felt frustrated but I knew I could rely on my church family to be here.

The St Andrews congregation, Beacon NY made my day a great one. They came in numbers and supported me in every way they could. Two young ladies from the parish played the violin and the flute during my service.

Sr Cintra Pemberton, as liturgist, worked tirelessly putting together the

service liturgy and hymns. I was determined to have the J B Dykes version of the *Veni Creator* sung, so there was lots of communication between me and Ghana to get it.



The service went well, I appreciated Sr Rosina's sermon, and the hymns were good. I tried hard not to break down in tears while saying my vows, and I was successful as long as I projected my voice. Finally Rosina asked me to stand so she could address me directly. Hearing her say the truths broke my strength, and I could no longer hold back my emotions. She reminded me of my commitment and the things which lie ahead of me. One thing she said which I'll never forget is how seemingly small the OSH crosses are and yet how heavy. She also said that having it is never the end of the struggle but the beginning.

I felt on top of the world and very happy with the way the service went.

When the final hymn was sung, I couldn't help but dance down the aisle and then other sisters followed me. It was so instinctive that most people in the chapel joined in the dance, making it

almost impossible for my elder sister Eliza, the deacon, to dismiss us. She shouted at the top of her voice, singing, "Depart in peace to love and serve the Lord."

For me, the party was the best time of all. Seeing everybody enjoy the foods I had prepared and how fast the food disappeared was much comfort. I

was glad that everybody got something to eat, and we had a nice time partying together. There was music and we danced a little.

At the end of the day I was very tired, but I felt like I belonged not here on earth but in heaven. My joy was full and I was in very high spirits.

I take this opportunity to thank all who made this day a great one to remember. My special thanks will always be to my OSH sisters, especially the Leadership Council for the parts they have played. I thank also Sr Rosina for her beautiful words which I ponder. And I thank, of course, the numerous friends and relatives who supported me with prayers, presence and gifts to grace the occasion.

FOURTH TRANSFORMATION

The Rev Canon Mary Michael Simpson, OSH

This summer, with the help of our Bishop Visitor, The Rt Rev Steven Charleston, we sisters began our fourth effort at transforming the Order of St Helena. This work seems appropriate as we approach the 60th birthday of the Order on November 8, 2005.

In 1945 the sisters in Versailles KY formed the Order of St Helena when they placed themselves under obedience to the Rule and Superior of the Order of the Holy Cross. The sisters were trying to get back to the roots of the religious life, as were those priests and laywomen in the Oxford Movement who formed the first Anglican religious orders.

Vatican Council II, although it had jurisdiction only over Roman Catholics, shook the whole religious world of the 1960's. It began with liturgical change, but since the Eucharist and Daily Office were the center of our lives, if those could change, then nothing was immune. Structures crumbled – clothing, silence, our understanding of the vows – much that we had taken for granted.

I think perhaps it was because our first sisters had been through such radical change in forming the Order, they were more aware than they might otherwise have been that change was possible without destruction. During the succeeding decades, we dispensed or transferred the vows of nine life-professed sisters – some left for marriage or lesbian relationships, others went to contemplative communities, one became Roman Catholic and another Orthodox.

Understandings gained through the women's movement influenced the decision to elect one of our sisters as Superior, rather than continuing under the Superior of the Order of the Holy Cross. For the first time, we considered the idea that sisters had something to say about their ministry, rather than being put in any job that needed doing. We had from our beginnings run a girls'

prep school, and when we had no sister who was both capable and willing to be its principal, we first hired a secular principal and later closed the school.

Along with our work at the school, we had always offered schools of prayer, quiet days, and children's missions in parishes, often with a member of the Order of the Holy Cross. But with the energy released by no longer running an institution and the freedom to explore new areas, our ministry became more diversified.

The work of prayer and intercession continues to be basic to our life and work, and maintaining the internal life of the community occupies some sisters' time. Our convents in Vails Gate and Augusta offer a ministry of hospitality, and a number of our sisters conduct retreats and conferences and offer spiritual direction, there and elsewhere. In response to my recent query to all sisters about ministry, two sisters mentioned their work of "healing touch," and one of our Ghanaian sisters spoke of storytelling and intergenerational workshops.

Six of our sisters are priests. They serve in that capacity not only in our convents but celebrate and preach in parishes, one being the rector of a parish. Another sister plans to enter seminary next year.

Other sisters work in parishes; one in a program for the homeless and hungry, another on the vestry, one working with a women's group, and several in religious education.

Two sisters are psychoanalysts in private practice, and others offer the ministry of "listening." One sister is a hospital chaplain, and another began training in September to work as a prison chaplain.

Several sisters identify themselves as writers – poetry, books, articles, etc. Producing *The Saint Helena Psalter* and the new *Saint Helena Breviary*, due out in Advent, has consumed many

hours of sister-time. One sister writes icons and works for the well-being of women in Afghanistan.

In the late 1980's, we undertook a group self-study which changed the structure of government of the Order and increased the trust among us. We changed from having a Superior, with its implication that the rest of us were inferior, to a Leadership Council. Now, the Leadership Council and the Board of Directors share responsibility for governing the Order, with the ultimate responsibility resting with the Chapter.

As of 2005, we have recently refurbished the convent in Augusta, but our other buildings – in Vails Gate and Manhattan – are old and require a great deal of time and energy for maintenance. We are faced with the challenge of making them both income-producing and supportive of our mission rather than a drain on our energy. We are exploring numerous ways of doing this.

Memorials for the founding sisters adorn our cemeteries and chapel wall, and we trust those sisters continue to contribute to the welfare of OSH and the world through their intercession. The sisters of the second generation are ageing and graying and have less strength and energy than we once had. The third generation has borne responsibility in recent years, and fortunately there is a fine group of women coming along to fill the ranks.

As of this 60th birthday of OSH we are 16 life-professed sisters, three sisters under annual vow, and one novice. At our meeting this summer, we each contributed a word which we wanted to characterize our future. As different as we are, each from the other, these words were complementary rather than contradictory. The future is open and exciting, and we know not where it will lead us. We ask your prayers as once more we venture forth.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS



Sr Cornelia teaching Sunday school at The Church of Our Savior in NYC

The Augusta sisters were privileged to have six evacuees from three different families spend September with them following Hurricane Katrina. The sisters were touched by the courage of these folks and will always remember the gift of their presence. Godspeed to all survivors and families affected by the recent storms here and abroad.

Sr Cintra Pemberton participated in June in the Summer Refresher Course at the Virginia Theological Seminary, a program led by the Rev Philip Roderick, founder of the Quiet Garden movement. In July, **Cintra** and the Rev Joe Bowden led a day of prayer for Church of the Holy Comforter, Martinez GA. In August, **Cintra** led a weekend retreat for the Daughters of the King from St Alban's, Lexington SC, and then participated in a reunion of pilgrims from Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill NC, who had traveled with her last year to Scotland. Soon after Labor Day, **Cintra** began year one of the EFM program which she is enjoying immensely.

Sr Claire Lofgren traveled to England this summer to be with the sisters at Burnham Abbey for the 100th anniversary celebration of the Society of the Precious Blood and to attend the annual meeting of the Society of Ordained Scientists, of which she is a member. She also visited friends at the Community of the Resurrection,

Mirfield, and her god-daughter in Durham. **Claire** moved to the Vails Gate house in mid-October. On October 8 **Claire** made her first profession of the Annual Vow. On hand were friends and family from several states and Canada including five women from St John's Church in Charleston, WV where **Claire** had been assistant rector.

Sr Mary Therese's Clothing as a novice took place on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. The service and celebratory meal were attended by OSH sisters and Associates, Brother Bede Thomas Mudge OHC, the Rev Elizabeth Broyles, **Mary Therese's** sister Laura, and close friend Oma Gloria. **Mary Therese** expresses thanks to all for prayers and support as she continues to live deeper into the OSH community.

Sr Ann Prentice has received physical therapy for both knees during the past four months and would appreciate prayers for healing. Thanks to **Sr Mary Therese** as driver, **Ann** was able to have a week's vacation in Vermont, visiting her sister, aunt, and cousin. **Ann** worked in the chapel with the special celebrations for **Srs Ruth, Veronica, Mary Therese, and Claire**. She enjoys her ministry of spiritual direction and hospitality.

Sr Ellen Stephen spent significant time during the last four months with long-time friend and OSH Associate, M Scott Peck, during his last illness. She made several extended visits to be with him and his wife, Kathy. Dr Peck died on October 24, and **ES** attended his funeral at the family cemetery and church in Quaker Hill CT. In late August **ES** spent five days with the Community of St John Baptist in Mendham NJ as facilitator for their Discernment Week. In early October, **ES** presented **Sr Mary Therese** for her Clothing, attended the glorious Life Profession of **Sr Veronica**, and preached at the First Profession of **Sr Claire Lofgren**. As Vocations Director, **ES** is corresponding and conferring with a number of inquirers and aspirants to the Religious Life in this Order.

During the last months, **Sr Mary Lois** has divided her time between her work in Manhattan and traveling to



Sr Claire, a member of the Society of Ordained Scientists, in England with other Society members

Vails Gate. She participated in the long retreat with the Vails Gate community in August and in meetings, clothings, and professions, times of much celebration with the Vails Gate household.

Sr Ruth took a four-week sabbatical in the UK, spending a week each with the Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage and the Community of St John Baptist in Begbroke. Two more weeks were spent with the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, **Ruth's** spiritual director's community. On September 10 **Ruth** celebrated her 40th anniversary of Life Profession and 80th birthday with a glorious Eucharist and dinner and with many friends, family, and OSH Associates present.

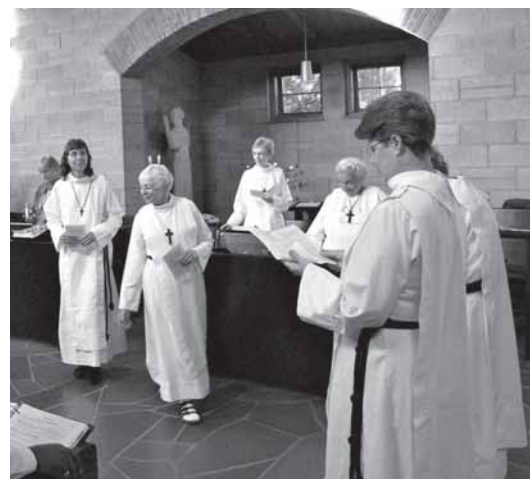
Sr Linda Julian enjoyed vacation in New Mexico in July and returned to New York to continue her practices of therapy and spiritual direction. She has opened a small therapy practice on Monday mornings in Katonah NY and enjoys continuing education classes at the Westchester Institute in Bedford Hills NY. **Linda Julian** is making plans for a mini-sabbatical trip in January 2006: "In the footsteps of C G Jung in India," and is excited by and grateful for this extraordinary opportunity.

In July, **Sr Mary Michael** began to feel like herself again after recovering from last winter's pneumonia.



Left: On October 8, Sr Claire Lofgren made her first profession of the Annual Vow.

Right: On October 2, postulant Diana Moore was clothed as a novice, taking the name Sr Mary Therese.



More Community News...

She is feeling so well that for the first time in several years she is increasing her psychotherapy practice. Her apartment was painted in early October and she feels grateful for the freshness. In mid-October, **Mary Michael** enjoyed a Vermont weekend with its beautiful fall colors.

Sr Ellen Francis is busily filling icon commissions and continues to write grants for projects in Afghanistan.

Sr Cornelia traveled to the Augusta convent and offered the retreat, "Making Prayerful Choices." Following that she was off to Eastern Point Retreat House to make her annual eight-day retreat.

Sr Rosina continues as supply priest at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Louisville GA. She attended the Black Clergy Conference in Atlanta and preached at **Sr Veronica's** Life Profession. In late August, **Rosina** and **Sr Cintra** went on a personal pilgrimage to civil rights sites in Atlanta and Alabama, coordinated by the Rev William King. They were warmly welcomed by friends and OSH Associates in Montgomery, Selma and Birmingham. While in Birmingham they stayed in the home of Gerri Aston. The last few days of their pilgrimage were spent with the Roman Catholic Benedictine sisters at Sacred Heart Convent, Cullman AL.

Sr Clare and **Sr Cintra** are natives of New Orleans and were greatly relieved to learn that their family members were safe following the storm. **Sr Clare** enjoyed a brief visit from her two sisters, Connie Way from Sewanee TN, Peedee Gamble from New Orleans, and niece Brian Gamble from Baltimore.

Sr Magdalene enjoys iconography lessons with Fr Damian Higgins, thanks to the generosity of Bill and Jo Booker from Augusta. In August **Magdalene** led a quiet day on "Praying the Anglican Rosary" for the Daughters of the King from Grace Church in Waynesville NC. **Magdalene** stayed in the Asheville NC mountains for a lovely retreat in the home of Clare Barry. In September, **Magdalene** spoke to a women's group from Good Shepherd, Nashua NH, and then spent relaxing time at Lake Winnisquam with high school friends, Jan Mederos and Kathy Olson. **Magdalene** took vacation in early October with her son and friends in California and Colorado.

In April, **Sr Barbara Lee** had major back surgery and has spent most of the past several months recovering. She is slowly getting back to church and her many outreach ministries. **Sr Ruth** spent late October visiting **Barbara Lee**, and the two hosted an OSH Associates gathering in Seattle.

In August **Sr Jean Campbell** was an official representative from the Episcopal Church USA to the meeting of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) held in Prague, Czech Republic. At that meeting she retired from her position on the IALC Steering Committee. As rector of Trinity Church, Fishkill NY, **Jean** has been



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instrumental in networking youth ministries among churches in Southern Dutchess County with the *Journey to Adulthood* program. In October **Jean** led a workshop on tools for worship at "Doing Church" for the Diocese of NY.

Sr Elsie is working with the Green Meadows Neighborhood Association in rewriting its constitution and bylaws. She helped organize and publicize the annual neighborhood picnic held at the Augusta convent on September 25. Two dozen neighbors brought salads and other goodies to go along with **Sr Linda's** hot dogs and hamburgers from the grill.

Sr Linda continues with healing touch work and education in this field. She especially enjoyed coordinating the body prayer workshop at the Augusta convent in October. **Linda** recently led two adult education classes on praying the Anglican rosary.

Sr Benedicta has completed successful cataract surgery and is thankful for sight without glasses. She has added tutoring in mathematics to her ministry repertoire.

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THANK YOU for your donations for the saint helena during the past fiscal year. We are grateful for a \$10 annual contribution from readers, when possible, to offset costs. Please mail your check to OSH Newsletter Editor, P O Box 5645, Augusta GA 30916-5645. Note "newsletter donation" on memo line.

Please remember us in your will.

Email augustaoffice@osh.org if your mailing information changes.



Sr Linda pretending she knows how to cook burgers and hotdogs at the Augusta neighborhood picnic



Srs Cintra Pemberton and Rosina at a Civil Rights memorial in Kelly Ingram Park, Birmingham AL



Sr Benedicta, ever-faithful to her handwork

CONVENT PROGRAMS 2005-2006

Augusta

DEC 2-4 – *Praying with Icons*, an Advent silent retreat led by iconographer, Fr Damian Higgins, and Sr Magdalene, OSH

Learn the ancient art of praying with icons. You will be introduced to Eastern Orthodox mysticism with its strict attention to the Gospel and representations of the Holy. You will learn about colors, symbols, styles, and praying techniques. Icons representing the Advent of Christ will receive special attention. Bring icons which hold special meaning for you.

Fr Damian Higgins is an internationally recognized iconographer who has been commissioned for icon work throughout the US, Canada, the Ukraine and Australia. He is president of Holy Wisdom School of Sacred Arts which promotes, instructs, and creates art forms in the Christian tradition. Sr Magdalene studies iconography with Fr Damian.

DEC 31, 10:30 pm – *New Year's Eve Candlelight Vigil* and refreshments

JAN 13-14 – *Spirituality and Consciousness, Removing Barriers to God*, a Fri night-Sat workshop led by mind-body psychotherapist and spiritual director, Thomas Portney, MA/RM

This weekend will offer a down-to-earth set of tools and skills that can be used to remove the blocks we develop early in life to the direct experience of God. Exercises in mind, body and spirit will uncover misunderstandings that we hold in relation to how prayer, introspection and centering bring us closer to understanding how God wishes us to be, and live. A vital, first-person, I-am-there perspective of spirituality will be the result.

Thomas Portney has been assisting folks in "giving birth to their true selves" for 30 years. His workshops involve experience, learning, play and humor to anchor new ways of connecting with God. Thomas' work includes healing, teaching, and reintroducing others to their own healing.

FEB 13-15 – *The Path of the Heart, Encountering the Wisdom Jesus* Mon-Wed mornings, led by the Rev Cynthia Bourgeault

At the core of our being is the heart, the organ of spiritual perceiving, created for awakening, reorienting, maturing and transformation. Birthing deep heart awareness may be the most important thing we ever do. Join Cynthia as we learn of Jesus as Wisdom Master and inner teacher who opens the eyes of our hearts toward becoming fully human.

Episcopal priest Cynthia Bourgeault is principal teacher and advisor to the Contemplative Society, British Columbia, as well as founding director of the Aspen Wisdom School in CO. She has worked closely with Fr Thomas Keating, Fr Bruno Barnhart, and other Christian contemplative masters, and she has expertise in the Christian inner tradition and in Sufism.

FEB 25 – *Introduction to World Religions*, a Sat seminar led by Dr James Cutsinger, PhD Harvard

This day offers a brief introduction to the beliefs and spiritual practices of four of the world's religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and the Sun Dance Religion of the Plains Indians. Teaching and discussion will center on each faith and its comparison with Christian doctrines and practices.

James S Cutsinger is Professor of Theology and Religious Thought at the University of South Carolina. A widely recognized writer on the wisdom tradition and comparative religious thought and an authority on the theology and spirituality of the Christian East, Dr Cutsinger is recipient of numerous teaching awards and author/editor of several books including *Not of This World, A Treasury of Christian Mysticism*.

MAR 3-5 – *Silent Lenten Retreat* led by Sr Rosina, OSH

APR 29 – *Humor in the Bible* led by the Rev Linda Scales, PhD

Manhattan

MAY 6 – *Quiet Day* led by Sr Ellen Francis, OSH, at Church of the Epiphany NYC. Contact 347-408-6934 or stollenfrancis@yahoo.com for registration.

Vails Gate

DEC 2-4 – *Rejoice in God, I Say Rejoice*, Advent Retreat led by Sr Veronica, OSH

Looking forward to Christmas in a world of turmoil and much hopelessness frustrates us when we think of our Lord's command to rejoice. How can we rejoice with hope in the midst of so many uncertainties? Come and hear what God has for us in this age and how we can bring hope to the world.

DURING ADVENT, we invite you to bring your Christmas crafts and projects to the convent where you can work on them in peace and quiet in the context of daily prayer. Come for a day, a week, a weekend. Individual directed retreats may be scheduled during this time. **DURING JANUARY**, curl up by our fireplace with your craft or new Christmas book. Share the daily Epiphany services with the sisters and enjoy the sight of cardinals in the snow. Individual directed retreats may be scheduled during this time.

FEB 3-5 – *Deep Winter Epiphany Retreat* led by

Sr Mary Therese, Novice/OSH

Deep winter provides a sacred time of natural inward reflection. As Christians, we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to enter the "cave" within where we long for a deeper union with Christ.

FEB 24-26 – *Journeying with Christ* led by Sr Veronica, OSH

MAR 10-12 – *You Will Show Me the Path of Life*, Lenten retreat led by Sr Ann Prentice, OSH

APR 18-22 – Rest and recuperation for guests during Easter week

APR 28-30 – *Crafts Weekend* led by OSH sisters. Bring your craft project and enjoy a guilt-free weekend working on it in the company of others and in the context of daily prayer.

MAY 19-21 – *ASSOCIATES WEEKEND* led by Sr Mary Lois, OSH

JUN 9-11 – *Living within the Sacred Hoop of God's Creation*

led by Sr Mary Therese, Novice/OSH

Part one of a retreat/workshop series exploring Native American spirituality and monasticism in daily life. You are invited to a "Gathering" – an experiential journey using the crossroads of two paths to reaffirm our roots and the purpose of our lives.

JUN 23-25 – *Praying with Hymns*, summer retreat led by Sr Veronica, OSH

JUN 30-Jul 2 – *Drawing Retreat* led by Sr Ellen Francis, OSH

Writers may wish to reserve the Hermitage at Vails Gate.

Both women and men are welcome at convent programs.

Contact the appropriate house's guest coordinator to register.

Volume 26, No 4, November 2005

*The Order of St Helena is a religious community for women
in the Anglican Communion, founded in 1945, which witnesses
to a contemporary version of traditional monasticism.*



Preface to *THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY, MONASTIC EDITION*

to be published Advent 2005



Is there a future for monasticism in the 21st century?

Yes, if this new breviary from the Order of Saint Helena has anything to say about it. And it does. In fact, the *THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY* speaks eloquently to the vibrancy and vision of the monastic life in our generation. For one thing, it speaks in a decidedly contemporary voice.

The Sisters of Saint Helena have been very intentional in their efforts to speak in a language that captures both the beauty and the reality of our time. In so doing, they have offered a gift to Christianity that is beyond words alone. Liturgy is theology embodied in worship. The theology that emerges from this breviary offers a clear image of God that is arising from deep within the monastic experience. It is the experience of a God who is as complex as the times in which we live: both accessible and transcendent in the same moment. *THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY* reminds us that our search for theological meaning in an age of instant responses and intimate globalism means that we must seek a God who can be both as personal as prayer but as universal as the human village. That God is on every page of this breviary.

And yet, as much as *THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY* is a work of creative, inclusive and adaptable reality in the postmodern sense, it is equally the product of ancient tradition. The balance the sisters have achieved is a question of values. Their monastic value of tradition weaves through this breviary like the chants that are the acoustic signature of this rich book of communal prayer. For any

of us who have been longing for a genuine depth in worship beyond the novelty of shallow experimentation, *THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY* is like a gift from ages past made new just when we needed it most.

Is there a future for monasticism in the 21st century? You are holding part of the answer in your hand. And it is a response filled with many surprises, many opportunities and many blessings for those who would put it to use. I pray that every congregation will become familiar with this breviary as a marvelous gift from the monastic family in our church. I would encourage congregations to use it and to delight in it as it inspires us all to discover God in our time and to worship God in our place. The Sisters of Saint Helena have shown us that the monastic vision is timeless and, therefore, an enduring gift to any of us who would sing the praises of our God.

The Rt Rev Steven Charleston, DD
President and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School
Bishop Visitor of the Order of Saint Helena
July 2005

ORDER NOW!

The Saint Helena Breviary, Monastic Edition contains the complete breviary with music and a guide to the Daily Office. Book size is approximately 9" x 6". You may order through the mail now by sending a check for \$80 (\$75 breviary, \$5 postage) c/o Office Manager at either Vails Gate or Augusta. Please include your mailing address, email address and phone number with the order.



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