



Sister Perpetua Steiner Enters Eternal Life with Joy and Gladness



Sister Perpetua Steiner, OSB

On September 13 our dear Sister Perpetua (Margaret) Steiner rejoiced to meet her Savior. Though we can rejoice with her, we also miss her. At a full life span of 100 years and a prodigious memory, she took with her a great historical resource for our life as community. There were few details she was unable to remember and, when asked, she relayed the stories in full context. She had a natural curiosity about everything and that paid dividends to us as a community.

Born July 14, 1915, to George and Frances Steiner eighteen miles south of Richardton, the fourth of twelve children, she learned many skills on the farm at an early age that served her—and us—well throughout her life. She followed her older sister, Sister Frances, into the convent while our motherhouse was at Garrison. Even though her formal education only went through fifth grade, she kept well informed and had such skills that she was never behind in anything.

In her early years in community, Sister Perpetua served as cook, housekeeper and laundress in our schools and convents, but those jobs usually came with a big garden and subsequent canning especially in the boarding schools. She delighted in cooking at Mandaree for summer camp too—yes, she was always busy about something. In her last years on mission she was at St. Vincent's Nursing Home in Bismarck, helping the residents in the dining room and doing the housekeeping and laundry for the Sisters serving there. When asked what she thought of retirement she remarked, "I just say retired but I keep working to help keep going."

Sister Perpetua was a gifted crafter and seamstress, but she was utterly amazing with a crochet needle and thread. One of our favorite pieces of hers is a tiny May basket she made which measures about 2 ½ x 2 ½ inches. While she never seemed to use a pattern, she crocheted pieces like this basket with easy grace and speed.

In 2014 she celebrated her 75th jubilee of monastic profession with her classmates Sisters Monica Thome, Brigid McLean and Annella Gardner. Appropriately, Sister Monica, a fellow resident at St. Benedict's Health Center in Dickinson, was at her side when she entered eternity.

Sister Perpetua dearly loved her family and they loved her. For her 100th birthday this summer they arranged for 100 Masses to be said for her by her nephew Fr. Greg Staudinger. This was surely a perfect gift for her because prayer and Eucharist were the cornerstones of her life. When she knew she was dying, she was more than eager to meet the Lord to whom she had given her life.



Sister's May Basket

Opportunity Alert! Exercise Your Caring Heart into a Giving Heart

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing oneself" (Leo Tolstoy). Actually, you can change the world and yourself on Giving Hearts Day, February 11, 2016. It is a great opportunity to do marvelous good and keep your giving heart fit and happy!

Our southwestern ND collaborative, "Pledge from the Edge," has grown to thirteen member organizations now, so our hopes for a successful day are even higher. Though each entity raises its own funds, we work together to save costs, widen our reach, and build our non-profit budgets to provide goods and services for those we serve. We strongly believe in collaboration, not competition. Each charity meets a portion of the variety of real needs in our area, so we keep our eye on the "whole," the benefit of the many.

YOU are invited to join in our mission! You can contact any of the charities to offer your time and energy to Giving Hearts Day in planning, hosting, calling, fundraising, etc. In this busy 24 hours we would welcome volunteers to help.

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Our “Pledge from the Edge” group gathered here at the Monastery for our training and for our first collaborative meeting. Sara Stolt (front row on the right) conducted our training and is ably conducting the Giving Hearts Day event.

You can give money which says, in effect, you appreciate the work that is being done in meeting real needs in southwestern ND but cannot actually participate in the work. The first major challenge for each charity is to raise a minimum of \$4000 for the necessary matching funds for Giving Hearts Day—it is a requirement to participate in the event. Hopefully donors willing to give larger gifts will step up for each of our non-profits to help build the match by the deadline, February 3, 2016. Each charity collects its own matching funds and then sends a statement to the Impact Foundation that it is secured. February 11 is *the* day for online giving. Every gift of \$10 or more will be posted on the charity’s website and the matching funds will transfer into the total amount raised.

Those who donate \$1000 or more who do not wish to give online can send a check *dated February 11, 2016*, to any charity prior to the actual day so a photocopy can be sent to the Impact Foundation to add to its online total. Any checks of less than \$1000 are, of course, welcome, but they do not count toward the total online. It is the *online giving on that day* that sets each charity up for the possibility of more money from various awards (such as, largest percentage growth in new donors, largest percentage of second time gifts, etc.). Besides, it is really ups our heartbeats to watch the totals increase in real time!

A third way you can really help us is to pray for the success of Giving Hearts Day in general—everyone can give prayers! In 2015, we raised just over \$11,000, up from our first total of nearly \$7,000 in 2014. In 2016, with your prayers and help, we hope do even better.

We have listed our collaborative members as of today in alphabetical order. What a wonderful opportunity for all

of us to better our world and ourselves! Volunteer with, give to and pray for all of us: AMEN Food Pantry, Assumption Abbey, Badlands Choice Clinic, Badlands Ministries, Best Friends Mentoring Program, Dickinson Backpack Program, Dickinson Catholic Schools Foundation, Home on the Range, House of Manna, Richardton Healthcare Foundation, Sacred Heart Benedictine Foundation, St. Benedicts Foundation, St. Luke’s Home Foundation & Park Avenue Villa, and, possibly, North Dakota Hands and Voices.

As our shirts say so beautifully, “Find a charity to love” on Giving Hearts Day, February 11, 2016.

The Times Are Changing, So Must We

“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Blessed John Henry Newman could not know how true his statement would be about today’s communication. We are committed to expanding our digital reach in today’s world for vocations. It may be easier to think in terms of the variety of social media as different languages to reach different groups. The media has so multiplied in ways that Gen X, Gen Y, Millennials and beyond communicate with others. With the proliferation of mobile devices and instant communication, our ways to communicate are equally diversified. Printed material, older visuals such as DVDs and videos, and even phone conversations do not capture young attention. We must use the tools they use in an era of immediately accessible and ever-changing information/entertainment.

The attempt to engage the young of today, however, is well worth it. They have diverse interests, are independent, optimistic in their ability to change the world for the

better. They are socially connected to others and tend to trust authority, institutions and brands. Because they are interconnected, they value teamwork, relationships with their parents, appreciate previous generations. Nearly two-thirds believe in God and over a half say they pray. We need to reach out to these marvelous people because they have the qualities necessary for any call to religious life.

We just cannot reach them in the old ways. As a community we know we need to learn the new ways of communicating, so we engaged Summit Marketing. This group will help us adopt technology-based marketing channels and develop the language and skills we need to connect with these newer generations.

Pope Francis bids us to “Wake up the World!” in this year of consecrated life, to call out to the new vocations which are surely there. Our vocation awareness campaign will give us new methods to connect with the young, develop a message of who we are as Benedictine monastics, and cultivate relationships with those who may be hearing but not recognizing a call to religious life. It has become even more imperative for us to do this because we do not have the educational, healthcare and spiritual services exposure we have had in the past. We are not a highly visible location as far as geography is concerned, but with this new outreach we hope we will be a destination for future Benedictine monastics.

The Collection Basket

The Empty Bowl fundraiser, held annually in Dickinson, is a tradition we support with our hearts and our hands. This year Nichole De Leon at the United Way of Dickinson told us the event raised \$6,254 for the non-profits in Dickinson that help feed those in need: AMEN Food Pantry, Sunrise Youth Bureau, House of Manna, and Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Center. Even more wonderful than the amount of money raised, Empty Bowl uses the “hands on” approach to raise awareness of the needs of those who hunger in our midst.

Professional and student artists craft a variety of lovely bowls for purchase, ranging from \$15-\$100. The beautiful, but empty, bowl is significant because it reminds us of those who have no food. While we have provided the homemade bread for years for this event, this year we took in some homemade soup too. Caring hands form the bowls, knead the bread, and prepare soup. Hunger is personal and our response to it should be too.



We lost a good friend when Abbot Lawrence Wagner, OSB, the sixth abbot of Assumption Abbey, died. In 1960 Assumption Abbey monks responded to the call from the Cardinal-Archbishop of Bogotá, Colombia, to establish a school, Colegio San Carlos, and a dependent monastery, Tibati Priory. When our Sisters first landed in Bogotá in 1962, Fr. Lawrence, the superior, was there for us as friend and guide through adjusting to the culture, dealing with the diocese and lawyers in starting the girls’ school, and generally getting established. As in our beginning in North Dakota in 1910, it was the monks of Assumption Abbey who welcomed us to South America. Sister Annella Gardner, Kathleen Kuntz, Florence Soukup and Carol Axtmann were the founding group. We maintained a presence there 1962-75 and 1983-88.

When he was elected abbot at Assumption Abbey in 1979 he built on the warm relationship we have between our communities. When Bishop Kinney first came to our diocese and we Benedictines gathered to meet him, he asked Abbot Lawrence, “What do the monks do in the diocese?” Abbot Lawrence looked him in the eye and replied, “We don’t *do*. We *are*.”



Our establishing a girls’ school in Bogotá was not really our idea, but it is still flourishing today under the auspices of the archdiocese. Cardinal Valerio Valeri, representing Pope John XXIII, stirred the religious of North America to send missionaries to South America by saying: “This is not a suggestion only; this is a matter of obedience.” Our Congregation (later Federation) of St. Gertrude the Great responded to the call. At the time (1961), the eleven communities in our Congregation had a total of 1850 Sisters, 70 novices and 100 postulants and the forecast seemed to predict a continued flood of vocations. It was possible and imperative for us to respond to the call to serve.

As far as that flood of vocations, however, they began to dry up in the late 1960s and have waned ever since. In the history of our lives as Benedictines there have been several periods of waxing and waning in our over 1500 years of existence. Monasticism, with its essential element of seeking God, will surely continue to survive and even thrive in the near future!



For years now we mail out “All Souls” letters inviting you to send in the names of your loved ones who have died and we always get a great response. Praying for our beloved deceased (and asking them to pray for us) is a good way to keep them alive in our hearts.

When we receive these lists they are photocopied, divided into packets, and distributed to each Sister to pray for personally daily throughout November. Every evening

Benedictine Sisters of Richardton
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Fax: 701-974-2124

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at Vespers at the closing prayer, the originals, also divided into packets of about 20, are read aloud with the preface, "We pray for the deceased loved ones of. . ." When we pray individually, we read each of the names of the deceased; at Vespers we pray communally and read the names of those who submitted them.



As we approach our centennial year in 2016 we decided we needed to update our community picture. Sister Paula secured the services of our friend Deacon Joe Krupinsky

who came from Bismarck with all his equipment to take our pictures. He even went the extra mile and went to St. Vincent's Care Center in Bismarck to take pictures of those who could not come home. As a professional he has all the lighting and backdrop equipment so this was no small act of kindness.

Besides our group picture which you see in this issue as our Christmas card, he took individual pictures which will be in our new composite. As often as we do this, we will look this young for a long time.



*Let us celebrate the
coming of the Christ with
joyful praise and gratitude!*



*May our lives give witness to his living presence in our world today.
We send you Christmas blessings from our home to yours.*