

5-17-2017

A Reflection on St. Gertrude

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ISSN: 2472-2596 (print)

ISSN: 2472-260X (online)

Recommended Citation

Udouj, Reginald OSB. 2017. A Reflection on St. Gertrude. *Obsculta* 10, (1) : 109-111. <http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol10/iss1/11>.

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A REFLECTION ON ST. GERTRUDE

Br. Reginald Udouj

St Gertrude is affectionately known, back home at Subiaco,
as one of our girls.

There are four bells hanging in the tower
that stands tall over us monks,
as well as over the surrounding country side.

On one side of each bell is forged a Cross,
on the other side of each bell are the names of saints
Hildegard, Mechtilde, Cecelia, and Gertrude,
they mark the passage of time,
they call us to mass, they call us to prayer,
they announce the deaths of our brethren.

They Guide us.

From the time I entered Subiaco, as a novice,
until I came to Collegette, I was the abbey bell ringer.
St Benedict called this the most important of positions,
but I am not sure that it always goes to the sharpest tack in the box.
I would ring the bells before mass, and before prayer,
to let everyone know that it was starting.
And after each prayer I would ring the Angelus.
Gertrude was the Angelus bell,
Gertrude would toll for us as we prayed.

Some days here, as I finish prayer
I will stand there in the silence straining to hear those bells,
straining to hear Gertrude's call.

Behold the Handmaid of the Lord,
Let it be done to me according to thy will.

Mary heard God's call and she answered
Gertrude knew how Mary felt,

Gertrude tells us in tonight's reading,
"When I consider how my life was spent before that day"
That day, a day in 1281, when a 25 year old Gertrude
had **the** first of her visions.

Visions that altered her life, visions that she saw as a new birth.
Like most of us here tonight, Gertrude was educated in the Arts,
Gertrude was educated in Languages, in the sciences.

Gertrude was smart and learned
but there was something missing in her life.
In Gertrude's first vision, she was called to more,

Gertrude was called by Christ
and for the first time was able to fully gauge the depths
of the void in her life.

Gertrude changed her focus after that encounter with Christ,
she shifted her attentions outwardly
to others,
to her sisters

Gertrude told us this morning, at morning prayer
that, "you came to my aid by giving me a natural dislike of evil,
and a natural delight in what is good".

Gertrude then told us that, "you have also provided me with necessary
correction from those among who I lived".

I do not hear those faraway bells,
but that is ok, because I **do** not need them.

I look around this room
and there are **bells** everywhere,

every one of us is a bell to one another.

every time I offend someone, **bells will ring,**
every time that I offer support, or some small act of kindness,
bells will ring.

We are all here because we have been called.
Some of you, may know what you have been called to do.

You are the lucky ones.

The rest of us simply must be satisfied
in knowing that God has called us to this place,

at this time,

for a reason, a reason that we will hopefully know someday.

Until that day, we are called to simply go about our lives
as best we can, to ring out

when we see one of our sisters or brothers is hurting
as well as when they are celebrating.

We must always remember to be there, **to be present.**

St Gertrude the Great

Pray for us.