

PATHWAYS



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THOUGHTS FROM THE prioress

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As I write this letter, we were visited with snow two days in a row, a portent of the winter days to come and a reminder that Advent, the season of waiting and reflection, will soon be with us. We also anticipate a season of celebration with family, friends, and colleagues. It is a time to gather and share with gratitude the blessings of the year and to draw strength from the bonds that have formed us, shaped by the stories we tell, some familiar and some new.



The Sisters recently had the opportunity to hear the familiar story of our founding as Benedictines in the United States and of our own Community when Sister Ephrem Hollermann, OSB, of St. Benedict's Monastery joined us for our September Community Day. We heard again how the Benedictine charism was preserved at St. Walburg Abbey in Eichstätt, Bavaria, our Great-grandmother house, by thirteen nuns who emerged elderly but full of courage following the suppression of religious houses in Germany in the early 1800s. That contemplative community adapted to new life and government-mandated self-support by taking on the education of girls. Within 17 years they were able to send three sisters, including Mother Benedicta Riepp, to found a new community, St. Joseph's Convent in St. Marys, Pennsylvania. We also heard the story of our own founding, which was presented in the afternoon.

Sister Ephrem began her presentation by sharing a quote from a book by Karen Fisher called *A Sudden Country* about the trek of a family on the Oregon Trail, which she called the inspiration for her historical writing. It reads: "Ideas will not save us...not right or wrong, not peace or retribution. Our stories are all we have. The only thing that can ever save us is to learn each other's stories." This 'saving' happens not only with the telling of stories but with reflection on their meaning, then and now.

She further encouraged us to identify the external forces that shaped community life then and shape our life now. She asked us to recall the formative experiences that they and we have undergone, and to imagine the emotional, spiritual, and psychological effects of those experiences, then and now; and finally, to consider how we might draw strength and hope from our founding stories for our time and for our future.

We recognized in those stories the psychological, emotional, and spiritual price of dealing with hardships. These included poor nutrition, early death from typhoid and tuberculosis, the stress of balancing active and contemplative life, financial instability, and the lack of autonomy in decision making. But we also saw that in the face of trial they were able to adapt and sacrifice in order to take on the challenge of the new with courage and resilience. Their dedicated focus – seeking God, educating German immigrants, and spreading the Benedictine charism – led to the founding of 49 houses of Benedictines in the U.S., Canada, Japan, Taiwan, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, all from that first frontier community in Pennsylvania.

We saw, too, that there will always be challenges and barriers as we face the unknown. By learning from them, we too can stay focused on our charism and unity, because we are working for a common goal: seeking God together in community while promoting the Benedictine way of life. We saw that every new foundation called for hidden strengths and gifts from each member, so in our Community's direction statements we committed ourselves to calling forth the gifts of all of our Sisters as we move toward the new, asking what the world needs from us today.

Inspired by the stories from your own history, we invite you to recognize the strengths passed on to you and that you are passing on to your children, your friends, and colleagues, so that each can be inspired and ponder the gracious gifts that have been given to you to share in this Advent season.

Blessed Advent,

Sister Beverly

Sister Beverly Raway, OSB

ADVENT REFLECTION

A Season of Holy Waiting

by Sister Kathleen Hofer

Advent: a season of waiting, a season that looks forward to a new beginning, a season of hopefulness for the new year.

Waiting is something very few, if any of us, like to do. It seems like such a waste of time – so unproductive. As much as we may dislike having to wait, there are times when we have no choice. Are these times, then, times of emptiness for us? Or are we able to learn to pause and more fully experience the world around us, to enrich our lives during these times of waiting?

Advent is a wonderful time to practice the virtue of patience when we must wait. It is a time to get in touch with our inner spirit, a good time to allow our waiting moments to be in tune with the beginning of the Church Year as we ponder and wait for the coming of the Christ Child. Advent is a time of holy waiting and preparing for the Prince of Peace.

Times of waiting are part of the Church Year. Times of waiting are plentiful throughout the scriptures. The Apostles waited for the coming of the Spirit. The father of the prodigal son waited for his return. The people of Israel waited for the Messiah. Mary waited for the birth of her child.

In the spirit of Advent, during our waiting we strive to be still, to listen to the prophets, to quietly let the sense of the coming of something new take hold of us. The visions of the prophet Isaiah for peace are brought to us frequently during Advent as he writes of a peaceable kingdom:

“Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair” (Isaiah 11:6-8).



With the coming of the birth of Christ a sense of new beginnings takes hold – a quiet hopefulness and anticipation of something new. The coming of the birth of Christ brings a subdued call to new life within each of us, the possibility of hope and peace for all in the world. The Prince of Peace is coming!

May God be fully present in our waiting this Advent. May we treasure the quiet and the inner peace of this most holy season. May our precious waiting prepare us to more fully experience the wonder and the beauty of celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Christ Child.

Have a Blessed Advent!

VOCATIONS UPDATE

The Season of Vocations

by Sister Lisa Maurer

The four weeks of Advent each have a specific theme. The purpose of each is to focus us on the true meaning of the season – the life of Jesus. These four themes of hope, preparation, joy, and love are also themes that can be found in our vocation. Whether you are called to live your life of holiness in marriage, the priesthood, religious life, or the single state, we are all called to be people rooted in the life of Jesus and living in hope, preparation, joy, and love no matter the season.



Hope

***“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)***

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, place our trust in Christ’s promises, and rely not on our own strength but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1817). This hope is the longing for the happiness that God placed in our hearts when he gave us our vocation. Hope is what keeps us going day after day, amid the ups and downs of life. Hope inspires our activities and gives the energy to live our vocation.

Preparation

***“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” (Isaiah 40:3)***

Being prepared is important, not just for someone going on a camping trip or someone awaiting the birth of a baby. We all need to be prepared if we want to be ready to answer God’s call. The best way is to pray and be open. When we make time for God and are open to his blessings, we make it easier for God to work in our lives and reveal his plans for us.

Joy

“When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.” (Matthew 2:10)

Joy is more than just a feeling. It is a fruit of the Spirit. Joy is dependent on who Jesus is, rather than on who we are or what is happening around us. It is found in abiding in God’s presence. The shepherds were filled with joy at seeing the star because their joy came from recognizing that God was in their midst. As we say yes to God and live our vocation, we will find a joy that is true and lasting.

Love

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)***

St. Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us that love is at the heart of every vocation. “I understood,” she says, “that love comprised all vocations.” Each day, we can ask Jesus for the grace to love as He loved – freely, faithfully, and generously. The more we receive Christ’s love and share his love in our vocation, the more fulfilled and happy we will be.

So, this Advent, take some time to reflect on your Vocation. How are you living in hope? How prepared are you to say “yes” to God’s call? How can you be more joyful? How do you share the love of Jesus?

***If you or someone you know wants more information about vocations,
email vocations@duluthosb.org or visit www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations***

MONASTERY PROFILE

Friend and Volunteer: Marilyn Mayry

by Theresa Butler and Marilyn Mayry

Creative. Advocate for women. Listener. Seeker. Artist. Community builder. These are several of the words that describe Marilyn Mayry, friend of the Benedictine Sisters, Oblate Candidate, and volunteer at St. Scholastica Monastery. Marilyn's ministry includes leading book discussion groups at the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment, working at the Monastery's information desk, and participating in groups including the Oblate Community and the Feminist Theology committee.

Currently, she is working on an oral history project, collecting stories from the lives of many of the Sisters. "Many people do not know the breadth of amazing things these Sisters have done and are doing throughout the course of their lives. Their dedication to peace, justice, and care for the world are so inspiring, so touching. They must be preserved and shared." The plan is to archive as many Sisters' stories as possible, in their own voices, so others may learn about their inspirational lives and the work they have done, not only in Duluth but throughout the world.

Marilyn grew up in Chisholm, Minnesota and was one of three children. Her home was bilingual. Her ancestors were from Ukraine and Finland. Living on the Iron Range afforded her a neighborhood that was rich in different cultures. Her parents and extended family modeled community values through their lives of hard work and their family and civic commitment.

Marilyn was baptized and confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church and also attended the Greek Catholic Church that her grandparents had a role in building. The services, led in Ukrainian, were very rich in imagery and singing, and the beauty and depth of this experience had early influence and impact on Marilyn's interest in the arts and spirituality.

Marilyn received her bachelor's degree in education from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and her master's degree in counseling from the University of Wisconsin-Superior. For 40 years she taught various levels of students, including junior high, high school, and college. Her last 15 years of teaching were at Lake Superior College where she taught Language Arts, including the fundamentals of writing, composition, and research writing, and helped tutor in the learning center.



Marilyn Mayry volunteers at the Monastery reception desk, welcoming all.

Following her retirement from teaching, Marilyn decided to pursue the chaplaincy program at St. Mary's Medical Center where she was first introduced to Sister Judith Oland. Later, they came to know each other in yet another way through visits at the Benedictine Living Community-Duluth, where both of their mothers lived. Sister Judith had a profound influence in Marilyn's life in many ways, including their time working together leading a team of spiritual directors from Peace Church in Duluth.

Marilyn continued to get to know the Sisters by participating in the Shalom Spiritual Direction program from 2010-2012. There she met Sister Michelle Dosch, Sister Jean Maher, and Sister Jeanne Ann Weber. The Shalom program was life changing for her, inspiring a deeper and richer attention to what truly matters in life.

Her time with the Sisters and the Shalom program reawakened her previous work and her love for creating performance. As a result, with the support of Sister Jean Maher, Sister Dorene King, and others, Marilyn organized an art show at McCabe Renewal Center, displaying the artwork of Janet McKenzie and a performance with dancers, musicians, and writers

around McKenzie's religious artwork and icons at Peace Church called "*Holiness and the Feminine Spirit*," a reflection on the sacred that connects us all beyond race and gender.

Marilyn has led book groups for the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment with some of the Sisters, including Sister Mary Catherine Shambour and Sister Lois Eckes. Currently she is leading a book study using Sister Joan Chittister's book *The Monastic Heart: 50 Simple Practices for a Contemplative and Fulfilling Life*.

As a friend and volunteer, Marilyn continues to learn many lessons in the company of the Benedictine Sisters. One memorable moment was when she talked with Sister Judith after visiting a family whose son was dying. She told Sister Judith that she did not know what to do or say to comfort the family when she went to see them in the hospital room, so she just listened.

Sister Judith immediately responded, "Never say you just listened, that is the heart of what matters." Marilyn says she carries those words with her all the time and shares this wisdom with others.

Marilyn says she is so thankful for all the ways she has gotten to know the Sisters. "Each Sister I have known has truly impacted me in some way. What they bring out is love, and what they do is the work of love. I hope to continue to hear their words and their stories, to be cognizant of their work and their ways of love. Coupled with examples of the work and love of my family, and friends, I hope I can carry forward the values, connection, love, inclusion and peace-making that I have had the amazing opportunity to witness and be a part of over these many years. I so appreciate the Sisters! It is an honor to be among them."

Please Pray for Our Deceased Family and Friends

Barbara Gherty Moore	1/29/2022	Mary Jane Kumsha	7/5/2022
Ellen Marsden	3/14/2022	Arleen A. Borden	7/5/2022
Mary Jean (Meyer) Henke	4/23/2022	Richard L. Peterson	7/10/2022
David Smith, PhD (former volunteer)	5/8/2022	Geraldine Ogren (niece of +Sr. Generosa Martin)	7/16/2022
Roy Juntunen, MD	5/13/2022	Fr. Brennan Maiers, OSB	7/22/2022
Mary Chabot	5/17/2022	Gary Lyons	7/29/2022
Victor Manuel Castro	5/21/2022	Lucille M. Rich	8/19/2022
Ethel Costello	5/31/2022	James Andrew Houle	8/20/2022
Walter M. Felten (brother of +Sr. Mary Felten)	6/2/2022	Denice Marie Maciej	8/23/2022
Kenneth H. Graves	6/3/2022	Denis Del Monte (brother of Sr. Kathleen Del Monte)	8/29/2022
David Anthony Knecht	6/4/2022	Dolores K. (Kozar) Maki	9/11/2022
William Donald Rudie	6/5/2022	Arthur C. Laliberte	9/14/2022
Joseph J. Wisocki, III	6/6/2022	Norma J. Schleppegrell	9/18/2022
Barbara Urbanski Schiller	6/7/2022	Dr. Richard L. Dobbs	9/28/2022
James Elmer Hongisto	6/14/2022	Diane Garasha	10/12/2022
Eugene Stelman (father of Sr. Joan Marie Stelman)	6/15/2022	Daniel Spielman Jr.	10/14/2022
LaVeryn P. McKeever	6/25/2022	Orval M. Chalman	10/24/2022
Eileen Del Monte (sister of Sr. Kathleen Del Monte)	7/1/2022	James W. DeRoche	10/31/2022

The Benedictine Response to the War in Ukraine

by Sister Therese Carson

*"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing,
I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25: 35-36).*

This past February, after a long military build-up at the border, the Russian army invaded Ukraine. Once more the unthinkable has happened. Every day on our televisions we see missiles striking civilian targets, armies fighting across the no man's land between them, and refugees fleeing their homes, leaving behind everything to reach safety with their bewildered, weeping, and traumatized children. The rising death toll on both sides and reports of atrocities sicken us, and we ask, How can we help?

In Ukraine, Poland, and many other countries, Benedictine monasteries and the convents of other religious orders have opened their doors, welcoming refugees with shelter, food, and compassionate care. A Benedictine Sister in Poland said, "It is in this situation that we realize the commandment of love."



A Benedictine Sister in Poland helps children confront and express their emotions through art, in hope it will help them work towards healing.

One community stepping up to help is the Benedictine Sisters of Immaculate Conception

Abbey in Żytomyr, Ukraine, about 90 miles west of Kyiv. Hit by missiles in the first days of the war, the Sisters retreated to their basement for safety, bringing with them a few families who had sought shelter with them and the consecrated hosts from their tabernacle so that "we will have the precious company of Jesus." From the street, passersby paused to hear them chanting the Liturgy of the Hours, a witness of hope. As the shelling grew worse, they moved to a bomb shelter for greater safety, but the noise and fear were exhausting. After a nearby school was destroyed, they retreated westward to a monastery in Lviv, where they continued to welcome refugees.

Early in the war, Mother Klara Sviderska, the young Abbess at Immaculate Conception, described their experience in the AIM Global Report in March (go to <https://aim-usa.org/newsletters> and select 2022 Vol 31 No 1).

"We see the distressed faces of those who managed to escape, lost in the uncertainty of tomorrow ... they don't know how to live after the violent experience. Through their tears we offer them a smile, we assure them that all they have suffered is over ... They are surprised that we smile because they have forgotten how to smile ... A woman thanked me for the smile saying: 'I know you smile to support us, but you cry when no one sees.'"

"All we can do is give them the opportunity to live and smile, or at least moderately relieve their pain for what they have lost and ... to accept this new reality. We encourage them to mourn every victim of this war, but at the same time to pick themselves up and serve others.

"Opening our doors for everyone is not easy ... But many barriers are collapsing here. Many borders have been erased, and even if social differences cannot be eliminated, we live in serenity. This is our process to peace, of welcoming everyone and creating *koinonia* [fellowship] within the Church, to support one another through the tensions that diversity creates, fostering organization and constructive dialogue."

Monasteries in Poland and other countries have been overwhelmed with the needs of refugees. Children experience war first hand and are traumatized. Mother Klara wrote, “I see the horror of war ... in the eyes of the people I meet. These are families who have already seen tanks in the squares of their cities or who have had their homes destroyed. They knock on our door without knowing anyone, they see the monastery on the street, and they come and ask for refuge.” At a Polish monastery in Staniątki, Mother Stefania Polkowska said, “We do not treat them as refugees but as guests who have found a shelter with us, a safe place where they can feel good. We know each other by name. With every day we feel more and more like one big family.”

People all over the world have responded to the needs of the Ukrainian people, sending money and opening their borders for refugees. The CIB – *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* (Latin for ‘International Communion of Benedictines’) keeps us connected with developments. In September, women religious from CIB Region 7, which includes Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania, held their annual General Chapter. Delegates listened as Mother Klara Sviderska shared through videoconferencing the amazing journey her Community has walked since the war began. As Russian troops withdrew from parts of the occupied territories, many Ukrainians have returned home, and Mother Klara and her Sisters were able to return to Żytomyr after three months in Kyiv. The trauma experienced by the inhabitants of the war zones was visible in the emotions of the Sisters from Ukraine who came to Chapter; they were unable to speak but just kept crying.

And you may ask, what are we doing to help? With the whole world, we pray every day for the people of Ukraine and also for the Russian people who have been misled. We encourage everyone to bring this in prayer to God. A few of us here are working with other concerned Duluthians to bring an extended family to our town, where they can heal from unimaginable trauma.

And we financially support those working in Ukraine, Poland, and elsewhere through donations to the CIB. Mother Blandyna Michniewicz, Abbess of the Monastery of Benedictine Nuns of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Warsaw, forwards these funds to religious communities for the needs of refugee families.

Last summer as the war unfolded, our Sister Jayne Erickson wrote a poignant hymn to God, our ‘Hiding Place.’

*O Lord, you are our hiding place.
In times of trouble, we seek your face.
O Lord, may your unfailing love rest upon us.
We hope in you. We hope in you.*

*Deliver us from all fear.
Help us, Lord, we place our trust in you.*

*Fill our hearts with the peace of Christ.
Though war is raging, may we rest in you.*

*O Lord, you are our hiding place.
In times of trouble, we seek your face.
O Lord, may your unfailing love rest upon us.
We hope in you. We hope in you.*

Sunflower and Stork – oil painting by Irene Mokra of Lviv, Ukraine. The stork symbolizes hope and peace. Every year the storks return to nest in Ukraine and are considered good luck when they build their nest on your roof.

Used with permission of the artist.



If you wish to donate directly to Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum for this cause, go to the PayPal account at: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=6BYD8DLXSS6GY

CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND ENRICHMENT UPDATE

Advent Greetings from the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment!



As I write this, all around me, the voice of Fall is saying, *Let go...Let go...* The brilliantly colored leaves are testament to this voice, entrancing the eye with their swirling patterns as they fall to the soft carpet below on the ground. I feel within myself a letting go, as warm days give way to chilly mornings, fall scents, and colors. In the occasional early snowfall I glimpse the winter ahead.

As we make way for the slumber and rejuvenation of winter, we at the Center continue our varied and exciting online programming, accessible to anyone who can click on a link in an email! We have multiple ongoing offerings, plus some special seasonal ones. We invite you to join us in any or all the following spiritual enrichment opportunities:



- **Benedictine Conversations** (monthly, informal conversations with a guest interviewee each time)
- **Visio Divina prayer sessions** (monthly)
- **Embodying the Mystery: An Advent Retreat** (December 10, 2022)
- **Lenten Retreats** (dates vary)
- **Feminist Theologies Committee offerings** (dates vary)
- **Christophany Discussion Group** (held twice a month with reflection on the writings of theologian Ilia Delio)
- **Soul Collage Circle** (held monthly with introductory sessions as requested)
- **Centering Prayer groups** (ongoing online prayer groups)
- **Center for Spirituality and Enrichment blog** (monthly on various topics)
- **Spiritual Direction ministry** (open to anyone who would like to have a companion walk with them on their spiritual journey)
- **Outreach programming** (programming we create and facilitate for outside groups, organizations, parishes, and dioceses)

All of these offerings can be found on our retreat website (retreatduluth.org). If you missed any in the Benedictine Conversations series, we also have an Archive page (retreatduluth.org/benedictine-conversations-archive).

Due to our circumstances with the renovation of the Monastery and the ongoing uncertainty of the pandemic, we continue our ministry at the Center with Zoom events. We hope to be onsite soon, while still maintaining online programming to keep up our connections with all those who do not live in the Duluth area or who are homebound in any way. We are deeply grateful to each of you who have participated in and supported us on this journey; *you remain our inspiration and our joy in this ministry!*

As we welcome the Season of Light, Advent 2022, I offer you a lovely poem for your Advent reflection called “Eccentric God” by Chelan Harkin.

*If you think
the Eccentric God who made
the octopus
is gonna judge you
for your sins,
I'm afraid you've missed
the mark.*

*If you think this
Wild God
that spins galaxies
as a pastime
cares to get fussy
about your mistakes
or has ever made anything
that wasn't born
perfect and luminous,
you might need to repent.*

*If you can't yet admit
how lovable
and infinitely worthy
the fullness of your human nature is
and if you think God
wants to do anything
but perpetually pour
an abundance
of love gifts
upon you,
well, my dear, your soul
just might need
to go to confession.*

Please visit our website at retreatduluth.org or email dcarrillo@duluthosb.org for information on the Center, to sign up for our weekly emails, and to find out more about our ongoing and upcoming events and offerings. We have something for just about everyone! Nestle into winter and join us as we endeavor to discover more deeply our Eccentric God.

In the Light of Christ,



Dawn Carrillo
Director of the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment



ADVENT REFLECTION

“God is with us!”

by Rev. Dave Mesner, Oblate of St. Scholastica Monastery

Mrs. Baldwin, my fifth-grade teacher at the Edgerton, Minnesota elementary school, loved to have us stand at the blackboard (yes, it was black back then!) and diagram sentences grammatically. I now give her credit or blame for my daily excursions into biblical syntax. She taught us much, but I don't remember a class on the power of the *inclusio*. An *inclusio* creates a grammatical unit through repetition and contributes to the meaning each element within that unit. Wow! The power of grammar!

The famous *inclusio* in Matthew's Gospel delights us in Advent, at least every three years:

“... they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us’”
(Matthew 1:23).

“I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

What if we considered the entire Gospel to be an exposition of “God with us?” What if we understood ourselves to be personally and communally addressed by the “us” and the “you” of the Infancy Narrative and the Great Commission? What if we experienced Matthew as not simply theological history, but as a document of transcendence carrying the presence of the living Christ to us today?

Matthew invites us to interpret the stories of the genealogy as real life “God with us” experiences of faith for Abraham, David (see 2 Samuel 7 and 2 Samuel 11-12), the five women, Joseph and the Magi, and Rachel weeping for her children. How was “God with them?” And how is God “with us” in our experiences of promise, failure and loss? What places become for us dynamic equivalents of exile in Babylon, flight to Egypt, and return to Galilee?

The reference to Isaiah 7:14, “the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and will call him Emmanuel,” functions as the pivot point of Matthew's Infancy Narrative. “Emmanuel, God is with us” fulfills the presence of God in the stories of the genealogy in the birth and naming of Jesus as the Christ. It thus becomes the theological premise of the “God with us” stories of Matthew chapter 2. We gather around this text in our worshiping communities on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18, 2022.

The final words of the resurrected and living Christ in Matthew bring his presence to worshiping communities today and into a future beyond today. I think Mrs. Baldwin would love the nuance of a literal translation of that promise: “I (emphatic), with you (plural), I AM!” We will next gather around this stunning promise on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, the first Sunday after Pentecost, on June 4, 2023. But thanks to the power of Matthew's *inclusio* we needn't wait that long to experience the presence of Christ. Every narrative and teaching discourse of this amazing Gospel carries this truth: God is with us!

“O come, O Come, Emmanuel,” on December 18, June 4, and every day!



*Our Mother of Consolation,
Icon by +Sister Mary Charles McGough*

Monastery Renovation Update

by Sister Therese Carson

As the renovation project for Stanbrook West enters its final month, we look back on what has been accomplished since last spring.



New mechanical equipment for distributing steam heat

Sustainability Our Community works to create a sustainable campus, where our presence rests lightly on the earth. In this renovation we are helped by building codes that create an efficient use of energy. A new HVAC system (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) includes high-efficiency variable speed fans that are more quiet and adjust to better balance the temperature and control the airflow.

By renovating rather than razing and building new, we are reducing waste and energy use. There is lots of ‘embodied energy’ – the sum of the energy required to produce, transport, install, remove, and recycle any goods or services – in building materials: concrete, steel, bricks, and so forth. Demolishing a building produces a lot of waste that consumes energy to transport and recycle. Almost everything removed from the building has been reused or recycled.

The renovated space will be a healthier environment in which to live and work. Most materials are ‘low-VOC’ and do not release volatile chemical pollutants into the air. Volatiles cause health problems and deplete the ozone layer. Environmentally friendly cleaning products will further reduce air and water pollution. ‘Track-off’ mats at high-volume entryways will prevent dirt from being carried in, thereby requiring less floor cleaning. An indoor air quality monitoring system will measure particulates, gasses, and chemicals on each floor and automatically adjust the ventilation.



New windows in a bedroom

New windows and doors have a ‘thermal break’ in the framing that prevents heat loss. Glass is double-glazed and has a low emissivity (‘Low-E’) coating that allows visible light to pass through but deflects infrared and ultraviolet, to keep us cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

A photovoltaic array (solar energy) on the roof will generate up to 3,000 kilowatts of electricity per hour. Energy efficient fixtures and LED lighting will use 85% less electricity than the old incandescent bulbs.



Spruce stump

Sadly, many trees had to be removed for the project. They were all shredded and used as mulch on our woodland trails.

Monastery Renovation Update...Continued



Retention basin being lined with layers of various soils

Flood control In the disastrous storm of June 2012, ten inches of rain ran unchecked down hillsides, taking out trees, roads, and buildings, and filling creeks and Lake Superior with red mud. To prevent erosion and pollution, codes now include installation of water retention basins near buildings and parking lots. These collect and hold rain and snowmelt coming off rooftops, pavement, and soil. The water slowly percolates through layers of soil into the groundwater and discharges slowly into Lake Superior.



New entrance near parking lot

Barrier-free welcome In the present Monastery, getting inside can be challenging as our front entrance is ten feet above grade. The new entry is a short, level walk from the parking lot, and the walk is heated in winter to prevent icing. At the front of this photo is a low brick wall; at center, the walkway awaiting steam pipes for snow melt and concrete. At back is the glass-walled entry hall. Beyond it is the upper courtyard garden.



Installing landscaping at new front entrance

Native landscaping Some planting was done in early October to give everything time to grow new roots before winter. Native trees, shrubs, and perennials survive cold winters, require less irrigation, and provide a food source to native pollinating insects, mammals, and birds, thus promoting biodiversity. They do not become invasive, like the buckthorn and goutweed that are displacing woodland plants in Minnesota.



Entry and enclosed gardens

Accessibility to the outdoors Beyond the new entry is a barrier-free garden for visitors and Sisters to enjoy. At the back of this and one level down, in the light well for the second floor, is an enclosed garden for Sisters who live on Benet Hall.

As we age even a slight barrier can keep us indoors, which is not good for our physical and emotional health. These gardens provide safe and secure areas to walk and sit in the sunshine.



Gathering space and kitchenette

Hospitality Near the dining room is an open gathering space where we can welcome visitors, make coffee, converse, or prepare a light meal.



Dining room and Chapter room

Common table Our dining and meeting rooms are one large room, the largest in the renovated space.

St. Benedict's vision of community includes sharing meals together in a spirit of friendly camaraderie. At the common table we practice hospitality with one another, share a meal, and listen to our stories.

Four times a year we meet in Chapter and more often for Community days to discuss matters and make decisions. The Rule directs that every voice should be heard with respect, for "the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger." (RB 3)

Although our infirmary, Benet Hall, has its own dining area, the Sisters who live there are welcome to join the whole Community for meals.



Barrier-free bedroom and bath; windowsill at left

Barrier-free living Bedrooms are slightly larger and, more importantly, barrier-free. Each private bathroom is designed to allow use of a wheelchair or walker. This will make it possible for us to remain independent longer. Even young active Sisters will appreciate these accommodations.



Interior of link from Monastery to Chapel

Common Prayer Walking to prayers and Mass will be made safer in winter with a link that connects the far end of the Monastery with the front of the Chapel. A ramp runs downward from the Monastery's first floor to a new chapel entrance.

Looking to the future The renovation is expected to be completed in early December, and the Community will begin moving from our temporary rooms in Stanbrook to our new space sometime in January. We plan to hold an Open House in late spring 2023, when we will be ready to receive visitors.

HIGHLIGHTS

Sister Charity Nkwera graduates

Sister Charity came to us in August 2020 from St. Gertrude Monastery, our Twinning Community in Imiliwawa, Njombe Region, Tanzania, to complete her education. On May 14, she received her degree in Psychology and will continue at The College of St. Scholastica to earn a master's degree in Social Work.

The former prioress of St. Gertrude, Sister Sylvia Kilongo, was on sabbatical with a Benedictine Community in Nebraska, and so was able to attend the graduation.



Sister Charity walks with confidence to receive her diploma.



Sisters Charity Nkwera, Sylvia Kilongo, and Agnes Atai Ondodia (from Uganda) enjoyed a trip to the beach where they wet their feet in frigid Lake Superior.

Petition is sent to the Vatican

On June 2, we mailed to the Vatican the petition for transfer of sponsorship powers from the Benedictine Sisters to a 'ministerial public juridic person' or MPJP, the canon law equivalent of civil law's corporation. Sister Beverly Raway and Amber Terch, her executive administrative assistant, brought the contents to the nearest DHL postal service provider in North Branch, Minnesota. We received notification of its safe receipt a few days later.

If approved, the petition will ensure the preservation of the charism and spirit of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica Monastery well into the future.

Sister Beverly Raway used the term "epic" in describing this accomplishment. This project is the culmination of efforts that began more than 20 years ago, with concentrated efforts over the past four years. The establishment of an MPJP will make certain that the Sisters' sponsored ministries in healthcare and education continue to adhere to Catholic identity and Benedictine charisms. As the availability of Sisters to provide oversight to their sponsored ministries decreases, we are proposing to transfer sponsorship to an entity called Duluth Benedictine Ministries, which will be overseen by the Sisters.



Sister Beverly Raway and Amber Terch

CHUM Duluth Rhubarb Festival

Sister Kathleen Hofer and Sister Dorene King volunteered at the annual fundraiser for this worthy nonprofit. Sister Kathleen sold tickets for the silent basket raffle and Sister Dorene ran the children's coloring contest. All proceeds go to providing shelter, meals, and social services for the impoverished of Duluth.



Sister Kathleen Hofer records ticket sales for the basket raffle.



Sister Agnes Atai Ongodia and Sister Charity Nkwera pull rhubarb in our garden.

Summer of the Ducks

We were surprised this past spring to find a mallard hen sheltering eleven tiny ducklings in the enclosed Angelus Garden between the Chapel and Tower Hall. Many of the babies had fallen into a storm sewer and were lifted to safety by College employees. Sister Theresa Spinler installed mesh over the sewer covers and provided two small pools and a food dish.

Over the next months the ducks grew quickly and became accustomed to our presence. Then they flew away, a few at a time, to encounter the unprotected greater world. We hope some survived to migrate south this fall and, perhaps, a pair will return in the spring.



Sisters celebrate Independence Day with a beanbag toss

Although the cold, foggy weather moved our planned picnic indoors, we gathered in the Community Room for a noncompetitive game of beanbag toss. Each person was cheered whether or not she hit the hole.



Sister Josephine Krulc



Sister Josine Krausnick



Sister Dorene King

HIGHLIGHTS, *Continued*

Honoring three beloved priests

On three evenings in June and July, we honored three priests who have faithfully celebrated Eucharist with us over the years. With Father Tom Foster and Father Brian Schultz we celebrated at Evening Prayer the 40th jubilee of their ordination and, with Father Lee Flaherty, his retirement after 61 years of service.



Fr. Tom Foster and Sr. Beverly Raway

After the evening meal, we thanked each priest with a slide presentation of his ministry and a gift to thank him for his long friendship with us.

On June 2, we thanked Father Tom Foster for the many gifts of the Spirit that he shares with us each Sunday, as a good shepherd to us and to his actual flock of sheep. He continues as chaplain at St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth and as our Sunday celebrator.

On July 7, we sadly said Goodbye and God bless to Father Lee Flaherty as he retires from the Diocese of Superior and returns to St. Charles Center in Cartagena, Ohio, home of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. He brought his much-loved sister Carol Zowin who lives in Superior and helped us bless him.



In foreground: Carol Zowin and Fr. Lee. In background: Sisters Donna Schroeder, Kathleen Hofer, Clare Marie Trettel, Josephine Krulc, Pauline Micke, Charity Nkwera, and Elizabeth Farias.



Fr. Brian Schultz and Sr. Beverly Raway

And on July 14, Father Brian Schultz joined us after a long absence from Duluth while caring for his mother in Brainerd. Father Brian served for many years as chaplain at the Benedictine Living Community next door, where he brought a loving smile and attentive ear to residents, listening to their stories and letting them know they are loved. His joyful spirit was greatly missed.

Feast of St. Benedict

On July 11, the Feast of St. Benedict, Sister Beverly Horn and Sister Danile Lynch celebrated with the staff at St. Joseph Medical Center in Brainerd (no photo available). Then on July 13 (the rain-delay date in the Twin Ports), Sister Beverly Raway celebrated the feast at St. Mary's Hospital in Superior, Wisconsin.

Blessing the leadership team of the Benedictine Living Community of Duluth



Barb Wessberg

The past three years have been difficult for everyone, attempting to stay healthy while continuing a semblance of normal life. For healthcare workers it was especially stressful. On July 20, we gathered in chapel with the leadership team of the Benedictine Living Community of Duluth for a healing service. We prayed together and listened with opened hearts to the beginning of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Barb Wessberg, former CEO and executive director, thanked the team for meeting the challenges that Covid

imposed on healthcare communities. She expressed gratitude for their readiness to adjust to every development while continuing to place the residents' health and safety first. The Sisters then expressed their own thanks with a blessing and party.



Pictured left to right is Bret Reuter, Director of Mission Integration for Essentia Health East; Sister Beverly Raway, Prioress; and Kim Pearson, Hospital Administrator.



Bottom Photo

Front row: Gina Cardinal, Culinary Services Director; Didi Jezierski, Human Resources Director

Back row: Brenda Marshall, Home Health Director; Chloe Tirebuck, ADS Supervisor

HIGHLIGHTS, *Continued*

Sister Renata Liegey turns 90



On August 9, we celebrated Sister Renata Liegey's 90th birthday, with cake and a surprise visit from 'Buddy', accompanied by Sister Jayne Erickson.

Over the years, Sister Renata's ministries have included radiology technician, art instructor, massage therapist, and spiritual director. Her religious name Renata means 'rebirth.' She once said, "I gratefully give praise to God, whose Spirit continues to animate and guide me along my journey."



Diamond Jubilarians

"Listen and attend with the ear of your heart."
~Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue

On August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the Community celebrated the diamond anniversary of monastic profession for Sisters Beverly Horn and Kathleen Doyle. Congratulations to Sisters Beverly and Katie on 70 years of a faith-filled life as Benedictine Sisters. Their biographies can be read in the 2022 Annual Report and on our website under <https://duluthbenedictines.org/connect/newsletters/>.



Sisters Kathleen and Beverly read their renewal of vows.



Sister Beverly Raway with the Jubilarians

Sisters honored for their Ministries at Benedictine Leadership Conference

On September 16 at the Benedictine Leadership Conference, Jerry Carley, CEO of Benedictine Health System, presented Sister Pauline Micke with a gift to honor her retirement from the Benedictine Foundation Board. Sister Pauline is their longest serving Foundation board member. She also served as the mission educator for Benedictine North Dakota and South Dakota long term care communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Sister Mary Christa Kroening was given the Distinguished Leader Award; Sister Beverly Raway accepted it on her behalf from Jerry Carley. Sister Mary Christa joined the Benedictine Mission Integration Department in 1997. She wrote two volumes of prayers, several papers, and was an early champion of the belief that the spiritual dimension of healing is integral to holistic care. Her enduring legacy will continue in the 27 chapels that she guided through planning and construction on Benedictine Living Community campuses. She retired from Benedictine in 2015.



Led by Prioress Beverly Raway, the Sisters closed the Annual Conference with the journey prayer and a blessing to all who carry out our mission and ministry.

Then on September 29, Sister Mary Christa's former associates from the leadership team at Benedictine celebrated with her and the Community in the Monastery dining room. Sister Mary Christa was happy to see so many of her friends and former colleagues.



Sister Pauline Micke with Jerry Carley



Sister Beverly Raway accepts the Distinguished Leader award on behalf of Sister Mary Christa Kroening.



Top row: Janis Kivela Hooey, Anne Thoreson, Lynn Gill, Megan Kern

Bottom row: Key Leland, Sister Mary Christa Kroening, Cheryl MacPherson

HIGHLIGHTS, *Continued*

Sister Ephrem Hollermann presents on Benedictine history in the Americas

On September 24, Sister Ephrem Hollermann of St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, presented her research on our Founders' experience in North America.

In 1852, at the invitation of Abbot Boniface Wimmer of St. Vincent Abbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Mother Benedicta Riepp and two other Sisters came from Bavaria to Pennsylvania to

teach children of German immigrants. They found miserable conditions and extreme poverty, but they also had a passion for the work of God. They founded St. Joseph Convent in St. Marys, PA, the first Benedictine community for women in America. The small community grew quickly as more women joined them. The Sisters were usually paid with fish and vegetables and were the sole caregivers for the sick during frequent typhoid epidemics. Relying on God's grace, they focused their efforts on mission: love God, teach children, and spread Benedictinism in this new world.

Once established they founded a community in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Survival meant meeting daily challenges while they maintained their commitment to monastic life and responded to the call of the Holy Spirit. Once more they adapted to conditions and stayed focused. As Abbott Wimmer once said, "People plant trees though they know the fruit will benefit only the next generation."

Our Founders' experiences showed the wisdom of Jesus, who did not choose the powerful but rather those who would trust in God. We must do the same.



Sr. Ephrem Hollermann



Sisters Jeanne Ann Weber, unidentified Sister, Mary Josephine Torborg, Annella Wagner, Theresa Spinler, and Lois Eckes

Blessings for the Athletes

Sister Lisa Maurer has organized a plethora of athletic blessings for student athletes and coaches of The College of St. Scholastica this fall and winter. Pictured here are the women's basketball team and the football team. However, the list of athletic team blessings is a long one: golf, cross country, rugby, cheer, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and hockey.



Basketball team



Football team

Sisters support the Rally for Peace at Duluth's waterfront



Sister Beverly Raway and Sister Dorene King attended the Rally for Peace at Leif Erickson Park on Saturday October 1. The Monastery was one of the sponsors supporting the event in honor of the 150th Anniversary of Peace Church. The speaker was David Hogg, a survivor of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida and cofounder of the March For Our Lives movement, whose speech was “Engage in the Change: Our Generation Must Own Democracy.”

Sr. Beverly (in red jacket) stands with other sponsors and David Hogg.

Sister Theresa Spinler talks to college class on Sustainability

Sister Theresa Spinler joined Catholic Studies Director Dr. Kevin Vaughan as a guest speaker for his Catholic Social Teaching and Sustainability class at The College of St. Scholastica. Dr. Vaughn interviewed her on *Care of the Earth*.

Sister Theresa said, “Being asked by Dr. Kevin Vaughan to speak to his class on the Rule of St. Benedict and sustainability of the earth was a special event for me. I will sum up some of my words and thoughts that I shared with the class. In the Rule of Benedict, Chapter 31, Benedict says that we are to treat all things as the sacred vessels of the altar. To do that, we first must have respect and love for ourselves. Only then, can we respect all of creation.

“I spoke of Chief Seattle who in 1854, while giving up land to the white settlers, reminded them that everything that they do to the earth, they do to themselves, and we can see the results of that in today’s world. All is gift. A gift expresses love, trust and respect. All that we are and all that we have is gift. How do we reverence and share our gifts?



At front of classroom, Dr. Kevin Vaughn interviews Sister Theresa Spinler

“When asked how I became involved in care of the earth, I could only say that I was raised that way on a farm, living off the land with complete trust in God, not wasting but reusing things in a creative manner and enjoying the simple life.”

Sister Theresa takes care of our own bit of earth and ensures that we treat our land with respect, using no artificial chemicals that would damage insect, mammal, bird, or plant life.

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