

ST. PAUL'S MONASTERY NEWSLETTER

January 2023



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WELCOME LETTER

Sister Linda Soler, OSB



When I was a child, we would play Christmas songs and the image of Santa was a welcoming one—**until** December 25—then it was all about Jesus; no more Santa. As a child that brought me sadness because I was such a believer in Santa.

At the age of 61, I still believe in Santa throughout the year, but Jesus is the reason for season. January 1 was the day we would start taking down Christmas decorations, no worries as this happened after **first** attending Mass.



We did not take down the Christmas tree and the manger scene until after the Three Kings arrived at the Feast of the Epiphany. It was my job to make sure those kings at the manger were getting closer to the baby Jesus. Every once in awhile I still move those Kings at the home of siblings when they are not looking.



At the Monastery there is a “both and” on January 1 as we not only say Happy New Year, but Happy Feast Day as we honor the Solemnity of Mary. Having restored this feast on January 1 in 1974, Pope Paul VI said in 1974 about Mary, “...she is held up as an example to the faithful for the way in which in her own particular life she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God, because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and the spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and most perfect of Christ’s disciples.”

This is why we need the birth of Jesus to prepare ourselves for upcoming journey of Lent leading to Easter.

Here’s to a bright New Year and here’s to the newness which is yet to come, and to the memories that we hold. A new year is not a celebration without thanking God for who we are and for the gifts we share.



BENEDICTINE ASSOCIATES NEWS & UPDATES

Sister Karen Sames, OSB, Associates Director

The Associates are now focusing their energies on reflection on the year just past and the new year that is beginning. Some exciting changes have happened this past year—such as being able to attend Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours at the Monastery in person. The associates are actively participating in our liturgies in various capacities.

We are able to hold our formation meetings in person and our Advisory Board meetings in person. We still hold onto the COVID-19 Zoom communications when necessary.

Some events we participated in have been virtual, including livestreaming Eucharist on selected Solemnities and Feast Days. Father Michael Joncas' Advent Retreat was also livestreamed. The major fundraising event, *Christmas at the Monastery*, held the silent auction over the internet. We were able to attend a Christmas Tea and a Christmas wine and cheese gathering in person due to the generosity of our benefactors. Our winter formation classes will focus on "Being Benedictine." Pat and Linda will facilitate the conversations. Maybe we will even have some time to play Dominos!

As we look ahead, March 21 will be the renewal commitment ceremony for the Associates. They will spend time in reflection as to their desire to commit for another year as a Benedictine Associate or not. Some questions that they will reflect on include but not limited to: How have you experienced life at St. Paul's Monastery this past year? How would you describe the impact of your participation in formal Associate formation this past year? How did you grow spiritually or what insights did you gain? Describe the impact on you spiritually from your participation in community prayer, ministry, and any enriched experiences you have had this past year. What did you value most from your Associate experience this past year? The Sisters also participate in the evaluation process of the program and Associates by filling out their comments for the Associates to read. May this new year shower you with abundant blessings and joyful memories. Peace.



*frost-bitten windows
revealing God's artistry
pictures of God's love*

Sister Rose Alice, OSB (1930-2013)



OBLATES REFLECTION ON PRAYER

Taylor Croissant, OblSB

Christmas is my most favorite time of year, not just because we gather to spend time with family and friends but because of the wonderful liturgies and music that go along with the season. One area that I find more fulfilling each year is to use this period as a time to develop my prayer life.

Prayer is one of the areas that I struggled with most when I made my Oblation in 2017. I did not grow up in a religious household and I had no examples outside of Mass on Sundays of people who prayed fervently. St. Benedict's call in *The Rule* to "prostrate oneself frequently in prayer" (Chapter 4) seemed utterly foreign to me.

At a surface level, *The Rule* says little about private prayer despite so much being devoted to community prayer. St. Benedict clearly felt prayer was the work of the community and therefore, provided more direction for how they monks were to pray together. Private prayer seems to be relegated to confessing sins to God daily and putting nothing above the love of Christ.

While this seems like scant direction, it is instead a call to a cultivation of a deep faith and continuous prayer throughout your life. In Chapter 20, St. Benedict demands "humility and pure devotion" in prayer. In Chapter 52, he states that if one is called to private prayer "let them go in and pray, not with a loud voice but with tears and an attentive heart."

Both of these verses recommend prayer be kept brief and pure. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus speaks of those who pray loudly so others may hear ... [Click here to continue reading.](#)

MAPLE TREE CHILDCARE CENTER

Jennie Schlauch, Maple Tree Childcare Center



On December 14, musician Will Hale visited Maple Tree Childcare Center. Will sang many songs with the children including holiday selections and an original Christmas song. The toddlers and preschoolers greatly enjoyed the music and movement.

Pictured to the right are the preschoolers in action.





CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTERY

Melinda Markell, Communications & Marketing Coordinator

As a new staff member working in Mission Advancement at the Monastery, I can say I began working at the perfect time. I arrived just before the start of Advent. The team was already busy mailing Christmas cards, planning meals, retreats, and a silent auction.

The Monastery hosted two of these events onsite, a Christmas Tea and a night to Celebrate the Season, which featured a silent auction. My role in the onsite events was as photographer. You may say I had a kind of bird's eye view. I didn't necessarily know how it all came together, but I enjoyed the interactions between the Sisters and their visitors. They were gracious hosts who went to every table and expressed great care in finding out how everyone had been and how they were spending their holiday season.

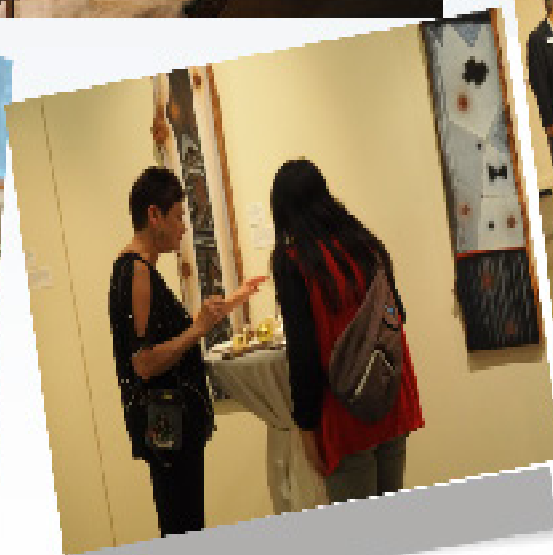
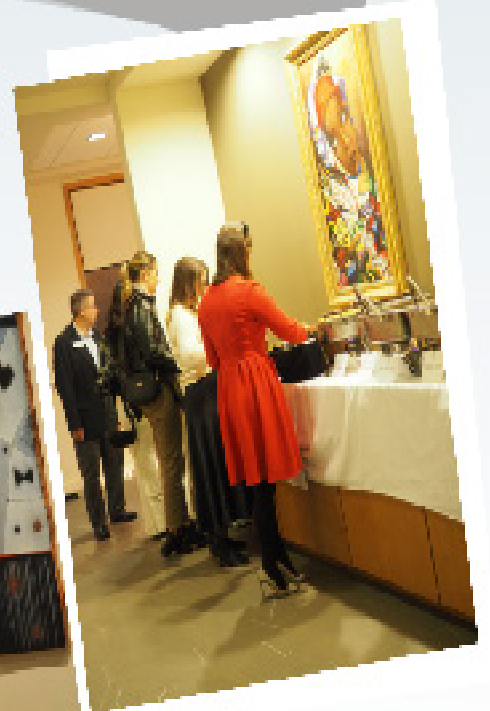
The visitors themselves seemed very happy to have this occasion after COVID restrictions. Some dressed in heels and others in suits and some others wore their best Christmas sweaters. They enjoyed the comradery and distributed many hugs. You got the feeling that they hadn't seen each other in a while, and maybe they hadn't.

This all took place amidst Christmas decorations both inside and out of the Monastery building. A creche the size of a small town graced one wall. This is the personal collection of Sister Jacqueline Leiter. The figures are all beautiful polymer, wood, plastic, resin, and fabric depictions and provide a good picture of what activities took place just prior to Our Savior's birth. There were bakers, musicians, herders, merchants, flocks of animals, all leading their way to the manger with an open cradle, anticipating the special night to come. Around the corner, with thanks to Hill-Murray staff, every table was decorated with lit glass candles, wreaths and ornaments.

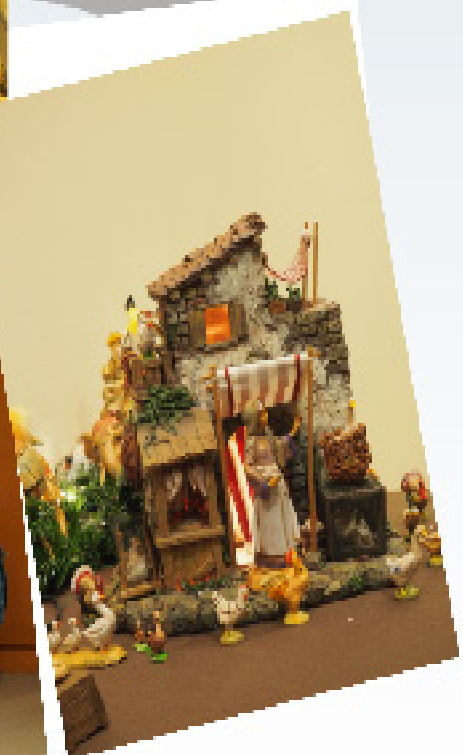
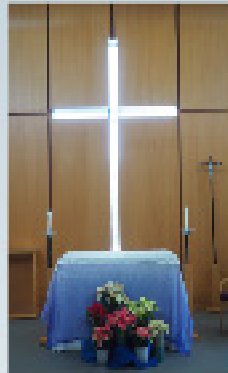
The food was provided by Lake Elmo Inn. Their buffet was a feast of colors just the same as the painting above it. There were grilled vegetables, bacon wrapped chestnuts, and smoked salmon among other options. The desserts were just as varied and colorful, lovely enough to photograph. You can see that photo on the following pages.

Behind these tranquil and peaceful scenes, the sip of wine, and bite of hors d'oeuvres, there was a bidding war in our Silent Auction. Attendees discussed amongst themselves their present standings and debated whether to bid more. The auction items were all lined against one wall where they could get a peak at their potential winnings and be inspired to competition. **Was it a great night?** To an outsider, it sure looked that way. The staff though would love to hear from attendees. Success takes great planning and consideration. What better to consider than personal experience! Be on the lookout for a survey. We would definitely appreciate your input!

IMAGES FROM CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTERY



IMAGES FROM CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTERY





MISSION ADVANCEMENT NEWS & UPDATES

If you've spent time delighting in the quiet of the Monastery you may have noticed a Sister standing prayerfully near a statue of the Virgin Mary just outside the dining room. Three times a day a Sister repeatedly strikes a singing bowl to call the community to prayer in the chapel.

The tone of this bowl hangs in the air as Sisters begin to enter the chapel from the monastic enclosure. Guests of the Benedictine Center in similar manner emerge from the prayerfulness of their retreat rooms to join the Sisters. Staff, too, hear this call to be one with the Sisters in their greatest gift to us—their prayer life.

Through the vibrating tone of the singing bowl emerges the sweet voices of our Sisters in song as they pray for us all and the great needs of our hurting world. At the core of all of Mission Advancement's work is this Benedictine charism: a prayerful life of contemplation rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ in service to the Church and to the world. ***Your support makes all the difference.***



Over the last 12 months, the Sisters celebrated the great feasts of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict among all the feasts and memorials of the liturgical year. They hosted a Benedictine Festival in July welcoming 250 guests to the Monastery for a joyous afternoon. The Sisters held their first Blessing of the Animals liturgy out on the Monastery grounds. And, just last month welcomed guests to Christmas at the Monastery for an Advent Retreat, livestreamed Mass and Evening Prayer, and two in-person events.

All this is possible through those who sustain and empower the Benedictine way of life—a life centered on prayer; a life marked by the search for God in all things. Our Sisters, Associates, and Oblates commit to this prayer and modeling their lives on the Rule of St. Benedict. All our supporters—donors, benefactors, volunteers, prayer partners—sustain and empower this great work of prayer and the mission of the Sisters. And your prayers and friendship, as a partner in this great journey that is being Benedictine, make all this even more meaningful. ***Thank you for your vital presence in the life of St. Paul's Monastery.***

The Sisters are excited to celebrate much with you in 2023. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of this Monastery. This year also marks the 40th year of the founding of the Benedictine Center.

Watch your email for the many events planned over the next 18 months to celebrate this significant anniversary year and powerful ways we hold memory of the last many decades in order to embrace the future boldly in the Holy Spirit. ***St. Benedict and St. Scholastica: pray for us!***



Standing in the Sacred Sliver of Space Right Before a Choice

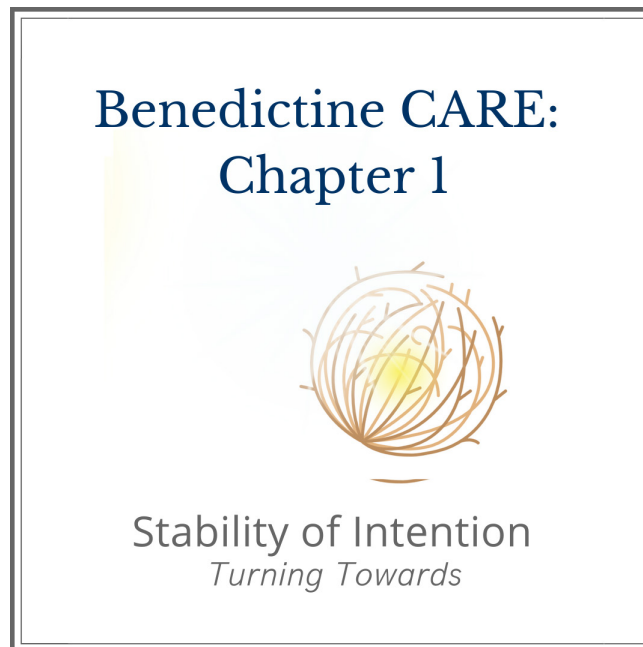
excerpt from: Benedictine CARE Chapter 1: Stability of Intention

In Benedictine CARE, we are practicing bringing our relationship with the divine into the most ordinary of daily lifestyle choices around food, fitness, and fun. We are exploring together a simple practice of “Turning Towards” our inner wisdom, our true Self, our “Lighter voice” in the most ordinary of moments. Listening for their divinely-led guidance.

Right before a choice, we are given the chance to practice strengthening our intention to prioritize our relationship with the divine. Our attention—our Stability—right here in this tiny space before a choice influences which choice we will make.

This tiny sliver of space is sacred because it is only here, in this moment, that we can align our will with “Thy will”.

Benedictine CARE brings study, prayer, and practice together in navigating the ordinariness of daily lifestyle choices. We’d love to introduce this to you.



[Click Here to Learn More](#)



HUMILITY THE FIRST STEP

Sister Jacqueline Leiter, OSB

Every evening, the liturgy of the hours ends with Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat. Mary is a beautiful model for us of humility. Humility is about knowing who we are, and who we are in relationship with our God. Mary knew that she

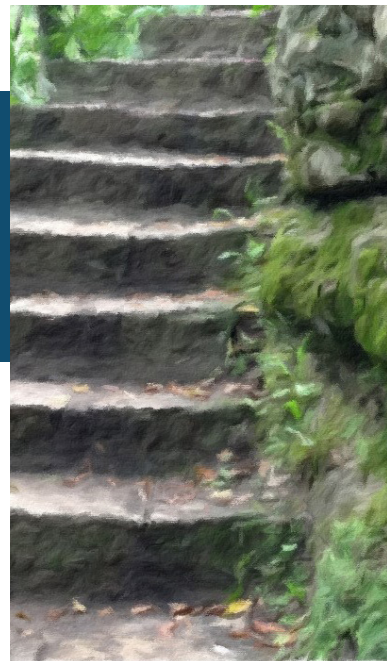
was small and lowly in our world. She remembered God's love and mercy shown to Israel throughout history, and her own dependence on God. She knew that she lived within God's love and care. In humility, Mary was filled with joy and praised God.

We also learn about humility in the *Rule of Benedict*. St. Benedict lays out 12 steps as a way of life to bring us deeper into a loving, gentle, and truthful relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves.

The first step of humility is about keeping a reverence (awe) for God always before our eyes, and never forgetting it (RB 7:10). We are always within God's presence. This is expressed in Psalm 139: *O God, you search me and you know me. You know my resting and my rising . . . Your presence surrounds me, your blessing is ever upon me.*

Sometimes human experience makes this awe and sense of presence tangible to us, for example, the birth of a child, seeing the Northern Lights shining around us in the dark night sky, or even receiving a kind word when it was needed. We may feel a wonder for God's greatness, and we may also feel our own smallness. This is not a smallness that makes us worthless or poor, but one that makes us realize our own dependence on God's love and mercy. It makes us realize that we are not in the center, not in charge, but that we live within God's love and mercy.

It is not easy to always remember always that we are in God's presence. St. Benedict tells us: Every time you begin a good work, you must pray to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection (Prol. 4). [Click here to read more.](#)



Magnificat

*My heart is radiant overflowing with joy,
for you have loved my lowliness.
You have shown me great favor;
all people will call me blessed.*

*Your mercy extends throughout the ages
toward those who revere your holy name.
You have revealed your strength,
scattering the proud of heart.*

*You dethrone the powerful
and lift up the lowly.
The famished are filled,
the rich sent empty away.*

*Your people Israel you have remembered,
true to your lovingkindness,
just as you promised long ago
to Sarah and Abraham.*



REFLECTION REGARDING PRAYER

Ann Siverling, OblSB

When I found out the theme for the January 2023 newsletter was “prayer,” I felt overwhelmed. It seems to me that the topic of prayer is about as big as the topic of world history from the beginning of time until now. Where does one even begin? I reflected on things I had learned and sources I knew of regarding prayer.

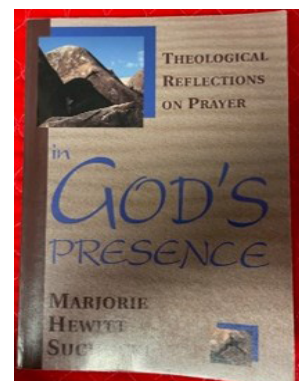
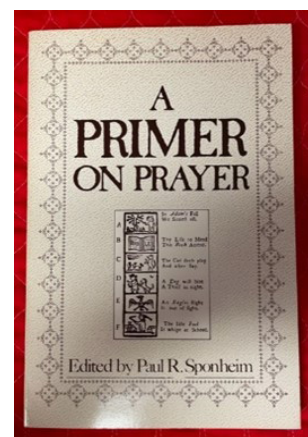
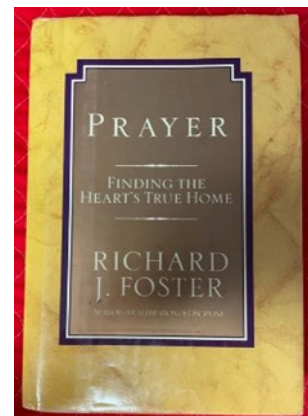
The first one to come to mind was the time someone gave me the “formula for prayer.” At the time it was helpful. On some level it reminds me of the prayers we all know as the “Psalms.” The idea was that when one prays, one begins with adoration of God, then thanksgiving to God, then repentance of one’s sins, and, finally, after all that has been complete, one came make their petitions of God. It is a nice formula because it includes several different ways of relating to God, but if I were to have to utter a prayer in an emergency, I probably would skip the first three and move right into the petition!

Then I remembered Richard Foster’s book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*. (I love that title). It is a lovely book if one is look for a list of all the different types of prayer and essays on them (i.e., Prayer of Tears, Prayer of Rest, Healing Prayer, and many others). For someone who is new to prayer, all this information could be invaluable. But I still had a gut feeling that there is more to prayer than just all these different types.

I next reflected on a book written by many of the former professors from Luther Seminary and edited by Dr. Paul Sponheim. This book is called *A Primer on Prayer*, and the word “primer” conjures up feelings of being at the school of prayer.

But this still didn’t seem to be a good enough definition of the experience of prayer. Prayer seems to be all about relationship—a relationship between God and God’s precious children. But is it possible there is more still to prayer than each of our individual relationships with God? I remembered one of my favorite books from seminary: *In God’s Presence* by Dr. Marjorie Suchoki.

In her book, Suchocki provides a unique image of prayer. She states that when we pray it is like we open a window of communication with God. But what happens when that window is open is that God can connect us to others whose windows are open. [Click here to read more.](#)





REFLECTION THE POWER OF PRAYER

Karen Fleming

When I was a child growing up in my Iowa home, I remember my mother praying in the early hours of the night. We were supposed to be in bed sleeping, but sometimes I would get up for a drink of water, and there she was—sitting in her favorite living room chair—deep in prayer with her assortment of prayer books.

In 1989, my mother was in the hospital, living her last days with cancer. She was frightened at night when no one was around, so I drove to Iowa City and spent my nights at the hospital next to her in a cot provided for me. She would often speak out saying, “Karen help me.” She wanted so to see 1990, which she did, and after being with her for a week, I came to visit her one last time, and to say I was going home to Minnesota, to my family. When I told her this she said, “Don’t bother me Karen, I am praying.” She passed away four days later.

On September 21 of 2022, I watched as the ambulance took my husband to the hospital. He looked so ill, and I suspected COVID. He did test positive at the hospital.

He spent five weeks in the hospital—over a week in intensive care. His kidneys and heart were both failing. My heart was breaking after fearing I would lose this man 63 years as my husband. Helpless as I felt, I knew the only help I could get was from Almighty God. I emailed and called four churches to put my husband on a prayer list. I also contacted friends and family and the Monastery. I knew the Sisters prayed constantly and they were a sure thing.



Now, my husband is in a TCU, gaining strength as he learns to walk once again and tend to his basic needs, with help. His heart is better since they put in a pacemaker at the hospital. His kidneys are slowly coming back to normalcy, and we hope he will be back home for Christmas.

I look back to all that has happened and question, how did my husband come from a state of almost dying, to a gradual return to health? The doctors and nurses did what they could, but their knowledge could only take them so far. I believe our Father in Heaven heard the bombardment of prayers and worked a miracle.

THE POWER OF PRAYER!

“All things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” *Matthew 21:22*

January Birthdays

SISTER
MARY
WHITE
JANUARY 6TH



75th Anniversary of St. Paul's Monastery

Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB



WALKING MONASTERY WAY 75th Anniversary Book Available

Walking Monastery Way Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of St. Paul's Monastery by the Sisters of St. Benedict and St. Paul's Monastery

Celebrate Benedictine monastic life in St. Paul through this "memoire of many voices," which features historical photos.

The book can be purchased on Amazon.com. You can also contact S. Lucia Schwickerath; OSB at 651-788-1327



Commemorative

Honoring Those Who Light Our Way

**PAVERS BLESSING WILL BE HELD
AT A FUTURE DATE FOR THE
75TH ANNIVERSARY IN JUNE 2023**

Forever link yourself or a loved one to the tradition
and future of St. Paul's Monastery by purchasing an
engraved commemorative paver.



Pavers

**CLICK HERE TO PAY ONLINE
OR PRINT ORDER FORM**

Our Gathering Plaza is blessed with pavers engraved with messages from the Sisters, Oblates, relatives, and friends of St. Paul's Monastery. **Click on the link above** to print the form and create your own paver message to commemorate a special occasion or honor a Sister, your parents, other family members, or friends. The Sisters and those who visit the plaza remember your loved ones in prayer.

Thank you, and God bless you!

4x8 Paver
Three lines of text, \$130

8x8 Paver
Six lines of text, \$260

PRAYER SCHEDULE

All are welcome to join the Sisters for prayer.
Contact the front desk to arrange your visit—
masks and proof of vaccination required.

“Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.”

- Rule of Benedict, Chap. 43



SUNDAY

MORNING PRAYER: 10:00AM

EUCCHARIST: 11:00AM

EVENING PRAYER: 5:00PM

MONDAY-SATURDAY

MORNING PRAYER: 8:00AM

MIDDAY PRAYER: 11:30AM

EVENING PRAYER: 5:00PM

*For further information and to arrange your visit,
call 651-777-8181 or visit us at www.stpaulsmonastery.org.*

Community Prayer Ministry

Here to Serve You in Prayer

We Would Love to Hear From You

Let us, in fellowship, “lay (our) petitions before the Lord God with the utmost humility and sincere devotion” (Rule of Benedict, Chap. 20).

If you would like to send an online prayer request, the Monastery website has two different ways to do so. You can use the “Prayer Requests” link at the top of our home page. Or you can go to the “Ministries” tab and select “Community Prayer Ministry.” Prayer requests go to all the Sisters who pray daily for these intentions at Evening Praise, during adoration, and during the Rosary. May God bless you and your loved ones.



SEEING GOD

Exhibit submission deadline January 14

*From the Old the New Shall Rise Strong and Full of Hope
by Sr. Virginia Matter, OSB*



[CLICK HERE TO
LEARN MORE!](#)



MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery, are a community that live Gospel values as expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict. Through our Monastic life and wise stewardship, we nurture contemplative presence in service of Church and society.



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To connect with or support
Community ministries, visit us at
www.stpaulsmonastery.org
[Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)