

ST. PAUL'S MONASTERY NEWSLETTER

April 2023



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This year, the monthly newsletter features themes from Benedictine values. This issue highlights the value of silence.

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WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

*Excerpts from With Grateful Hearts The Past We Own
written by Sister Carole Sweely, OSB.*

With the establishment of this new foundation—St. Paul's Priory—the Sisters received this note from St. Benedict's Monastery written by Sister Mariella Gable:

This Note was received by Mother Loraine Tracy, Prioress of St. Paul's Priory

Only a few days have passed since you left us, but we cannot help sending you this letter to tell you how hard it was to see you go—a real wrench to the spiritual body of which you had so long been a member.

We have in the past done so many things together: chanted the Divine Office and knelt shoulder to shoulder at the same Communion rail, worked together and worried about the same problems, eaten our lawn suppers in the same big family, and loved the same gardens and trees. And we have learned to know each other's little human eccentricities like the back of our own hand.

And now you are gone.

But we know that the bond that made you one with us in the past is not broken. You will create a new, autonomous center of spiritual energy, but our gladness in your success and our sympathy for your trials, as well as our personal love for every one of you, will be with you at every moment of your new life.



St. Paul's Priory
301 Summit Ave

We hope you don't mind our telling you this—though you knew it without our saying so.

You are in all our prayers that God may bless your new priory, and in our hearts with sincerest love and tender memories.

—The Sisters of the Convent of St. Benedict,
Saint Joseph, Minnesota



Mother Loraine Tracy
Prioress of St. Paul's Priory
(1894-1966)



WELCOME LETTER

Sister Linda Soler, OSB

I remember in high school at St. Bernard's in my grade school religion class, the teacher asked, "Who would you be on Easter morning? Mary, Peter or John?" I will never forget how one student responded he would be Jesus, and the teacher corrected him and said no one is Jesus. Whew, I'm glad I didn't offer that answer. I felt for that student because who doesn't want to be like Jesus? However, there was sarcasm as he was trying to be the class clown.

Isn't Jesus in all of us?

I still reflect on that question. I do know I would not be a Mary of Magdala because I would not want to be up that early. John may have been a fast runner, yet he appears to be a cautious man. Hands down, I can relate to Peter only because it would not be a challenge to outrun me (LOL), but I am certainly known to have a curious spirit, and Peter does appear to be high energy. Plus, he loved water... "He throws himself into the sea..." (John 21:7). Yep, I would prefer water over a good run any day. What's important is how Mary, Peter, and John have something to offer each of us, and there is no right or wrong to the question.

Who would you be on Easter Morning?

All roles play a vital part of the Resurrection, and every believer is a marathon runner by keeping their eyes on the Risen Lord.

My father was legally blind, so I am sensitive to stories that relate to a blind man. Here is one I will not forget. There was a blind man, he sat on the sidewalk every day, asking for money. His sign read "Help me. I am blind." People passing by vaguely noticed him. Then one day, a Good Samaritan took pity on him, and he did something with his sign. It caught the people's attention, all of a sudden, the donations were flowing in. It was because the sign was changed to read, "It's a beautiful day, and I can't see it." So, it circles back to our Easter joy in your heart. Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. I am Swiss, so I am far from being Irish, but the prayer of St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland reads "Christ before, Christ beside me, Christ within, never to part."

The empty tomb of Jesus is a message of new life. They saw and believed. It is a sign of a new beginning, for everything is being emptied. The Lenten journey is over as we sing our Alleluia to praise the Lord for the gift of new life. May this Easter inspire you to new hope and happiness through God's divine grace, so that in all things God may be glorified.



OBLATE REFLECTION

Shirley J. Riedmann, ObISB

Silence...

I grew up proudly in a large, Polish Catholic family. There were fifteen of us under one roof with one and a half bathrooms: dad, mom, nine children two years apart with twins at the end, a partially disabled adult aunt, and two uncles who just returned from the Korean War. Silence as the saying goes was “priceless.” We were, and still are, a very prayerful family.

Prayer was one time when the din of a rambunctious household came to a halt so we might give praise and thanksgiving to our God for all the gifts and graces he bestowed on us as a family. My grandparents were WWI immigrants, so we always included the extended family who remained in Poland.

I started babysitting at ten years of age in the neighborhood. With the money I made, I purchased a monthly subscription to *The Lives of The Saints* through our Catholic school book drive. When I finished my assigned chores, mom allowed me to go off by myself to read in peace and quiet for an hour.

It was through those courageous stories that I was introduced to the importance of silence, solitude, and stability in life—perseverance in our search for God. As the years progressed, I was fortunate to participate in various ecumenical religious retreats; Buddhists, Tibetan, Muslim, Jewish spiritual traditions; ashrams and, eventually, the *Rule of Benedict* all focused on the silence of mind, body, heart, and soul.

In Benedictine Oblate Formation, I was impressed to learn that silence is a cornerstone of Benedictine life and spiritual development. Benedictine spirituality forms us to listen always for the voice of God, and to know our place in the world. The Word we seek is speaking in the silence within us.

When I look back over my formative years from childhood to today, prayer, silence, solitude, and peace have always been my underlying anchors in life. We cannot experience stability when our lives are full of narcissism, distractions, noise, and chaos.

Mother Teresa reminds us, “...in the silence, God speaks. May the Lord meet you in silence and touch your heart.”

Reference:

Chittister, Joan. (2017). Chapter 6. *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*.

MAPLE TREE CHILDCARE CENTER

Jennie Schlauch, Maple Tree Childcare Center



Maple Tree
Childcare Center

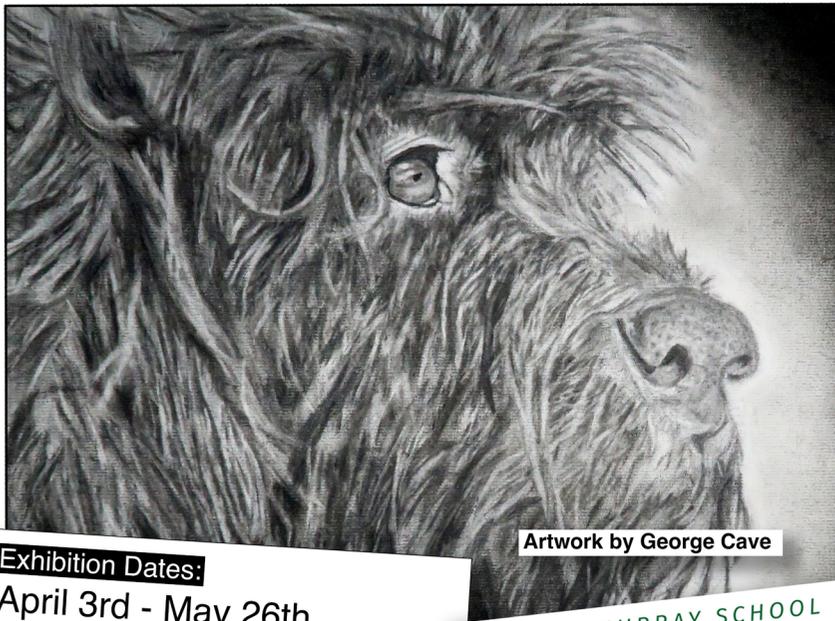
Maple Tree Childcare Center held a staff in-service day on President's Day which was Monday, February 20.

We reviewed materials as required by the Department of Human Services, but the highlight of the day was a presentation by Sister Linda Soler.



She spoke on Benedictine values and challenged the staff with interesting facts and many humorous anecdotes.

We all appreciated her time and the care that she extended to all of us.



Artwork by George Cave

Exhibition Dates:

April 3rd - May 26th

Gallery Hours:

Mon-Sat, 9am-4:30pm, Sun, 1pm-4:30pm

**Closing Reception
& Art Awards Ceremony**

Wednesday May 17th, 6-7pm



UPCOMING EXHIBITION

HILL-MURRAY SCHOOL

**St. Paul's Monastery
2675 Benet Road
St. Paul, MN 55109**

Dates: April 3-May 26

Gallery Hours:

Mon-Sat 9:00am-4:30pm

Sun 1:00pm-4:00pm

Please call 651-777-8181 to let the Sisters know you will visit.

**Featuring artwork by
Hill-Murray students.**

**Awards reception
May 17, 6:00pm-7:00pm**



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

We asked our volunteers the following: What would you say to someone to encourage them to volunteer at the Monastery?

To learn more about volunteering at St. Paul's Monastery, go to our Volunteer page: <https://www.stpaulsmonastery.org/volunteer-at-st-pauls-monastery/>

Thank you for all you do!



Karen Fleming—
The Sisters' happy attitude nourishes ones soul.

Maria Varsho—[St. Paul's Monastery] is a wonderful and peaceful place to be. You get to know the Sisters, and meet oblates you haven't met before.



Janie O'Connor—
It's like being on a mini retreat.



Jane Wagemaker—
If one needs some affirmation in their life, [St. Paul's Monastery] is the place to be.



Gary Summerville—
It feels good to volunteer for people and an organization who's purpose is giving to the community.



Mary Dean—
[Volunteering] is an opportunity by which you will receive more than you give.



MONASTERY EVENTS A SPECIAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS

On March 10, 2023 Spiritual Director Sheryl Rose facilitated a special Stations of the Cross. The Sisters, Oblates, and Monastery staff members walked the Stations of the Cross (following a printed guide) on an indoor canvas labyrinth. Offering the two together as a pilgrimage gave participants the opportunity to experience the passion of Christ on a personal level in an ancient yet new way.

SOME HISTORY

Stations of the Cross

From early Christianity, when pilgrims came to Jerusalem, they visited sites where Jesus was known to have been. Eventually, following in the footsteps of the Lord, along the way of the cross, became a part of the pilgrimage visit. The traditional stations came about during the crusades, when it was no longer safe to visit the holy sites. In the 1500s, villages in Europe created “replicas” of the way of the cross, commemorating the places along the route in Jerusalem. Eventually, the traditional set of 14 stations was placed in almost every Catholic Church in the world.



Our prayer was based on an alternative collection of stations, which were first introduced to the world on Good Friday of 1991 by Pope John Paul II. While the familiar stations include details from non-scriptural tradition, such as Jesus falling three times, and Veronica wiping his face. The new stations are all moments drawn from the gospel accounts of Christ's Passion.

The Labyrinth Walk

Historically, the Labyrinth pre-dates the Stations by several hundred years. Christians have used the labyrinth as a symbol and prayer focus since the early 4th century. Medieval Christians visited pilgrimage cathedrals and likely walked stone labyrinths there as an alternative to taking a hazardous pilgrimage to Jerusalem to walk in the “footsteps of Christ.” Modern “pilgrims” walk the labyrinth path as one of many tools to enhance prayer, contemplation, meditation, and/or personal growth.





REFLECTION SOLITUDE OF TREES

Melinda Markell, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

On New Years Day this year, I forgot my church was having services online. When I arrived and realized the parking lot was empty, for a moment I was angry. Of course, I thought better and recognized the Lord must have had some purpose in it. As a child, when I felt troubled, I went to Crosby Park for walks by the river. I pass those same familiar trails on the way to my church. So, I returned to them.

I parked beside the outdoor firepit and prayed to God, “I wanted to go to church to gain some wisdom for the coming year, can we do this here instead?” Everything along the path was covered in snow and a vast solitude rang out all around me. I had to contemplate, I instinctually sought this out as a child. As an adult I easily write it off if I don’t feel there is time and I suffer for it.

This is a world of vibration, and everything and everyone has one. We grew and evolved hand-in-hand with trees and wilderness. The need for this type of vibration must be inherent within every human, whether we can recognize it or not. But we live in a very loud world of our own creation instead. I believe we are like tuning forks in that we vibrate in sympathy to whatever is around us. So, what does all this vibration do to our own state of being?

Meanwhile, I begin my walk along the trail to the river, the particular squeak and crunch of the snow under foot. I don’t often experience the woods in snow. I am not a big fan of winter weather or cold. But it is well worth it to go out. The trees surround you with stillness and you are allowed to be quiet yourself. The more you do, the slower you become and the more adept you become at listening. You realize there are vibrations here also.

A quiet person who has slowed their own thoughts enough can take time to piece out all the quiet vibrations. The woods, the river, the walking path, they are not just one solid quiet but many smaller ones. When fully tuned in, we can recognize that the trees are in there singing. It is just that they are so quiet you have to really be still to hear them.

We feel alone in this modern world perhaps because our own inner tuning misses what is so natural to our general state. The Lord gave me this reminder for the coming year. When I begin to feel distressed and overwhelmed or sad and lonely, it may be that I am just vibrating too much. Time to go hang out with my friends in the woods and seek a smaller, sweeter vibrational state.



MISSION ADVANCEMENT NEWS & UPDATES

Are you excited for the 75th anniversary of St. Paul's Monastery and the 40th anniversary of the Benedictine Center? **We definitely are excited to share this important year with you!**

First, mark your calendars!

- June 18, 11:00am—Opening Mass at St. Paul's Monastery
- June 24, 12:00-3:00pm—Benedictine Festival
- July 8, 8:00-11:00am—Pilgrimage through the Priory Preserve
- August 15, 5:00-7:00pm—40th Celebration of the Benedictine Center
- October 1, 1:00-2:00pm—Blessing of the Animals
- November 2, 5:00-7:30—All Souls Day Celebration
- December 2-9—Christmas at the Monastery Events
- June 22, 2024—Benedictine Festival concluding the 75th year of celebration

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Would you like to volunteer to support any of these events? We hope you will plan to join us in making each of these events a success. Contact Jason Wittak, Events and Volunteer Coordinator, at jwittak@stpaulsmonastery.org or 651-777-8181, ext. 409.

SPONSORS SOUGHT!

Sponsors are essential to the vitality of these moments of encounter at St. Paul's Monastery. Sponsorships at any level are warmly welcomed! Contact Travis Salisbury, Director of Mission Advancement, (612-325-9830 or tsalisbury@stpaulsmonastery.org) if you can extend the hospitality of a sponsorship for one or more events this anniversary year.

INVITE OTHERS!

And, most importantly, expanding our welcome. Will you commit to inviting your friends or your family to join you in celebrating the Sisters of St.

Paul's Monastery and their mission and ministries?

All are welcome here at St. Paul's Monastery. Our Benedictine value of hospitality extends to all who seek the Divine, all who endeavor to listen with the ear of their hearts, all who want to be in relationship with God through the power of community.

Together, we will fill 365 days of gratitude, of love, of hope, and of faith for these Sisters who have ministered so well for these last 75 years in the Twin Cities and beyond. Together, let's witness to them our gratitude. Together, let us witness to a future full of hope.

Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica: pray for us!





BENEDICTINE CARE WELLNESS PROGRAM

Psychological Mindfulness vs. Contemplative Spirituality

- “Body, Mind, and Spirit”
- “Integrative Health”
- “Mindful Eating”
- “Mindfulness and Stress Reduction”

These healing words are easy to find today in descriptions for various healthcare and wellness services. This is a positive movement as researchers confirm more of what has been intuitively known—that our lifestyles directly influence our health. Teaching individuals techniques to better regulate their physiology (like heart rate and brain signaling) naturally through breathing and meditation is of tremendous value. Encouraging and giving patients permission to not be shy about bringing their spiritual beliefs into conversations with their doctors is also positive. As humans tend to do (eventually), we are moving in the right direction.



Going forward, there is still a vulnerable area within holistic health. There is a need for clarity on the incomparable difference between psychological mindfulness and contemplative spirituality.

Spirituality grounded in tradition is clear: there is only one goal sought in contemplative practice—to bond with God. This relationship is prioritized above all as we demonstrate the earnestness of our intention through giving our limited time to just be with God without expectation or hidden health motive—only shared time to nurture our relationship. As our Benedictine tradition assures us, the results of this strengthened relationship with the divine provides the true source of what we need for wellbeing and increased quality of life.

The gentle supplement we can share with others as conversations increase about mindfulness is that to be a contemplative practice, the intent must be to nurture your relationship with the divine. If the goal is better control of thoughts, relaxation, or stress management, that is psychological mindfulness rather than contemplative spirituality. Mindfulness techniques play a valuable role in choices for *Lifestyle as Medicine*, but not in our intent to bring spirituality forward first. *Contemplation is prayer*; it is not a stress reduction technique.

[Watch video: A Benedictine Approach to Holistic Health](#)



HUMILITY

THE NINTH STEP (SILENCE)

Sister Jacqueline Leiter, OSB

Silence in the monastery is intended to foster and support our interior life of prayer. In the ninth step, however, we see different purposes: Keeping silence and not speaking helps avoid sin, (or at the very least, helps us keep out of trouble). It can help us to keep our direction and purpose.

“The ninth step of humility is that one controls the tongue and keeps silence, unless asked a question; for the scripture shows that in a flood of words, you will not avoid sinning, and that the talkative one goes about aimlessly on the Earth.”

Why is Benedict telling us to keep quiet and not speak? Communication is essential for human relationships. We can't be community without some sort of interaction. Benedict knows this, and he wants us to be intentional in our speech. Clearly, Benedict does expect us to speak, for in the *Tools of Good Works*, Benedict tells us to *speaking the truth with heart and mind*.

The problem for most of us is that we have divided hearts, and we fail to speak from the heart. We often speak without considering the impact of our words on others. We speak without understanding, or even knowing our own intentions or the source of our words. Instead of speaking from the heart, we speak rashly from a selfish, broken place disconnected from God's kindness, mercy, and grace. We may even find ourselves in a conversation only to speak our own point, without a heart open to listen.

If the goal of humility is to become transformed and become more like Christ, then our exterior words and actions will need to match our interior heart. As we journey along the steps of humility, little by little we may become more Christlike. Though inside we may be lacking, practicing on the outside can help us grow into the people God is calling us to be.

One way to “practice on the outside” is to work at slowing down our reactions, and our human desire to speak in every situation. If we wonder whether or not we should speak or stay silent, we can ask ourselves three questions: Is it loving? Is it true? Is it necessary? If what we are thinking of saying passes this test, it might be worth saying.

Modern culture is filled with meaningless noise, making us uncomfortable with silence. We may seek to fill the void with meaningless talk. This kind of talk can be distracting. In teaching ourselves to slow down and wait before speaking, we allow a space of silence. This ensures meaningful speech, which is true to our values and close to our heart. Becoming friends with the silence by pausing can help us stay better grounded and true to our heart's direction.

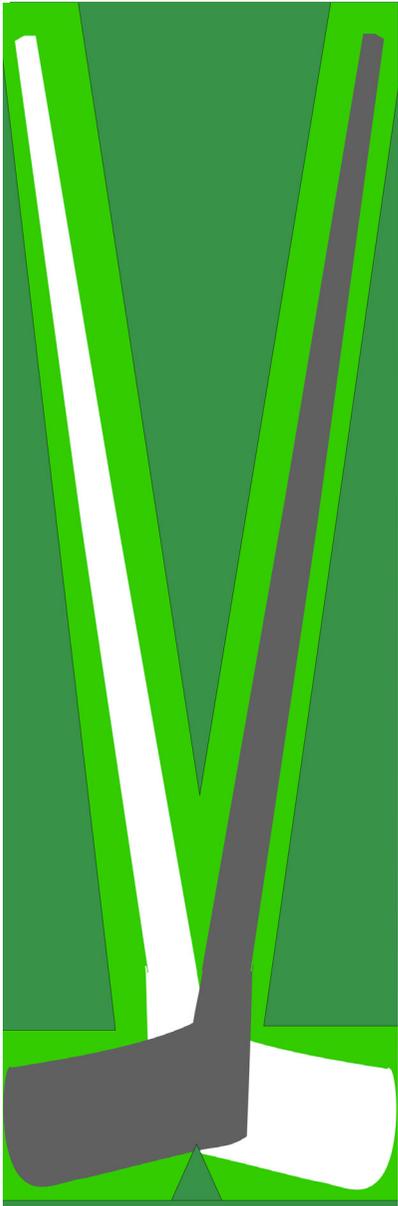
HILL-MURRAY PIONEERS 4AA CHAMPIONS



VICTORY HILL-MURRAY!

When the boys were dismissed at school before the State Class AA Tournament at the Xcel Energy Center there was a special prayer service in the Hill-Murray chapel. Afterwards, they went on to win against Gentry Academy for the last spot in Class 2A. Students Riley Zupfer and Lucas Mann scored in the second period. This victory for 2023 Section 4AA is the teams' fourth consecutive win.

It brings joy when we can share the Benedictine Spirit with our youth. Sister Linda often comments on how those students at Hill-Murray are very respectful and appreciate the gift of prayer, so that in all things God may be glorified!





REFLECTION THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Karen Fleming

The topic for April, Silence, makes me recall the Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel song, “The Sound of Silence.” The meaning of the lyrics, according to the writer, Art Garfunkel, were about, the inability of people to communicate with each other; people unable to love each other.

But noise can do this too.

Sometimes I take out my hearing aids just for the quiet or almost quiet. I cannot stand all the noise of everyday life, like the music playing overhead or the phones that are nearly everywhere. Even in the library now there is talk, like people playing cards or reading to kids, etc. I remember growing up when you were not supposed to talk in libraries, only to the librarian.

It is better to remember laying under a tree in our yard with a blanket and stack of library books. Every once in a while, I would just close my eyes and listen to the slight rustling of leaves above me, or when I opened my eyes, recognize the silent crawl of an ant onto my blanket. It was like an inner stillness.

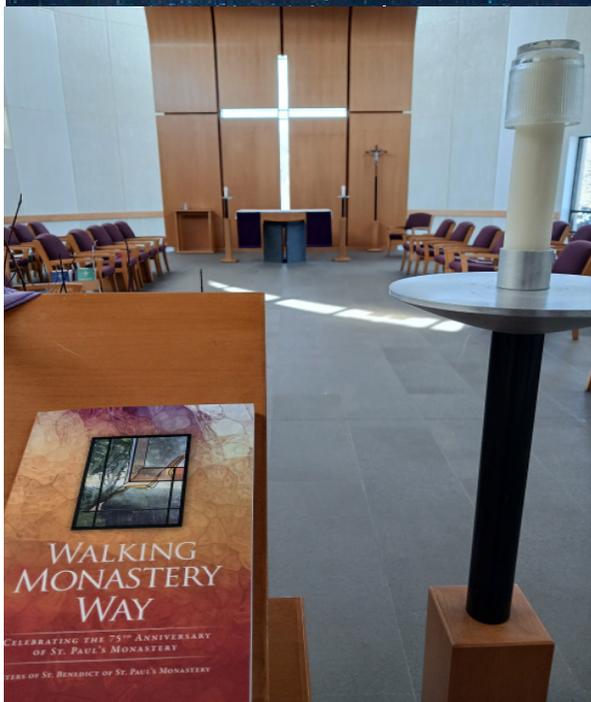
Now, I heat up my three-season porch when it is cold outside, especially when our back yard is covered with snow. I watch the rabbits, deer, and squirrels who scamper across the snow; each leaving their own distinct foot prints. They are so quiet and yet, I can hear the whisper of God speaking to me. I love to sit in my lounge on the porch sometimes just reading and just doing Bible study, and just listening to the sound of silence.

Silence like this gives us the ability to communicate with God; and by listening to His whisper, we become totally His, and able to love each other.



75th Anniversary of St. Paul's Monastery

Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB



Walking Monastery Way

Anniversary book Celebrating 75 years of St. Paul's Monastery by the Sister's of St. Paul's Monastery

Celebrate Benedictine monastic life in St. Paul through this "memoir of many voices," which features historical photos. The book can be purchased on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). You can also contact S. Lucia Schwickerath, OSB at 651-777-8181.

CHAPTER 6 EXCERPT *Walking Monastery Way*

"In today's society, I believe we serve as an oasis of peace. St. Paul's Monastery is a place of safety, quiet, and rest. Here, everyone is accepted for who they are. There's dignity in that. Some people never feel that sense of worth until they come here. I have seen people cry when they are blessed with the gift of acceptance. Their self-image is raised. We treat each person who comes here with dignity."

"We stand as a quiet presence in the world. We focus on what we can give and do for others. It's how we live. There are abundant blessings in common, everyday life."

"At a younger age, I never wanted to be a Sister, but I was raised to listen to God and to give everything to Him. I made a delayed choice as I came to realize there are more important things in life than what is valued in the world. It is true that we live simply with little need for the material, but we have our 'wealth' in the life we've chosen" (page 62).



CONCERNING LITURGY

THE NOTES YOU DON'T PLAY

Stephen Kasperick-Postellon, Director of Liturgy & Music

There's a saying among jazz musicians often attributed to Miles Davis: "It's not the notes you play that make a difference—it's the notes you don't play." (It seems the actual originator of the quote is an artist even more acquainted with the value of silence: the mime Marcel Marceau!)

A continuous stream of sound is mere noisy confusion; it only becomes music when the sounds are augmented by silence in well-chosen places.

In Chapter 6 of the Rule, Benedict invites his community to "refrain even from good words." This is a real challenge for me. One of my great joys is to learn new things and combine them in interesting ways. This means that I frequently have ideas or opinions that I want to share—and even when I don't, I'm quick to formulate them.

My wife Teresa and I went on a pilgrimage in the Holy Land in 2014. The leader of our group had plenty of knowledge and experience of the sites to which he took us, and shared them generously. But he also modeled restraint of speech in a way that has inspired me ever since.

When one of our group asked him a question and he didn't know the answer, he said, "I really have no idea." And then he stopped talking. How easy it is for me to say instead, "I really have no idea, but..." and make something up!

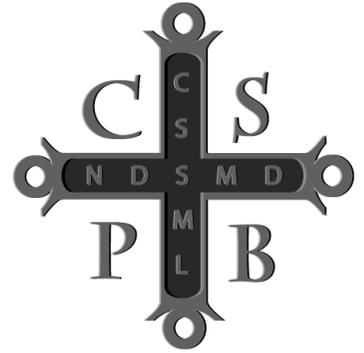
In the beginning, God broke silence, saying, "Let there be light," and at this Word there was indeed light! May the words we speak, and the notes we sing and play also be of greater value than the silence they interrupt, glorifying God and building up the people who hear.



PRAYER SCHEDULE

All are welcome to join the Sisters for prayer.
Contact the front desk to arrange your visit.

“Nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.”
-Rule of Benedict, Chap. 43



SUNDAY

MORNING PRAYER: 10:00AM
EUCHARIST: 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.*



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES URGENT NEED FOR HELP

THE SISTERS NEED YOU! PLEASE HELP AS YOU ARE ABLE WITH...

Driving Sisters to Appointments: The number of Sisters who are able to drive has decreased. The Sisters are seeking companions to drive them to medical appointments and other appointments throughout the week. [Click here](#) to spend meaningful travel time with a Sister as you provide the loving hospitality of a ride.

Tech Support for the Sisters: It's always frustrating when your phone or laptop acts up! Offer the hospitality of helping navigate small to more complex issues for the Sisters. If you have troubleshooting skills with technology the Sisters need you!

All volunteers are expected to abide by our safe environment procedures. This ensures a safe and respectful experience for both the volunteer and the Sisters. The Monastery will perform a background check before engaging volunteers for the ministry of hospitality.

Still time to register!

Triduum Retreat

Join the Benedictine community in celebrating these holiest days of the Christian year.

Led by Benedictine Center spiritual directors,
Gwen Pickering and Sister Jacqueline Leiter.
April 6, 3:00pm through Saturday night Easter Vigil
April 8, 8:00pm.

Contact the
Benedictine Center
at 651-777-7251, online
registration is now available.
Go to Events
(benedictinecenter.org)

Join the Benedictine community in celebrating these holiest days of the Christian year as we join the sisters in sitting with Jesus at the Last Supper, walking with him to the foot of the cross, and standing with Mary at the empty tomb. Allow your heart to open anew to the sacred Easter story. You will have the opportunity to join us in silence, worship, group *lectio divina*, and contemplation. There will be opportunity for rest, free-time, and individual spiritual direction. You will be home again for Easter Sunday.



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](#)

