St. Paul's Monastery

Passages

Volume 27/Issue 1 Spring 2016

Living the Year of Mercy at the Monastery

Greetings From the Prioress: *Living the Year of Mercy at the Monastery*

God has heard our human plea to be rescued from our culture of violence. On December 8, 2015, Pope Francis opened the *Door of Mercy* through which "anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope."

Let us recognize God's compassion in this *Jubilee Year of Mercy*. We at St. Paul's Monastery are celebrating the *Year of Mercy* in many ways. We invite you to join us by praying with us, attending our programs and events or being refreshed during a personal retreat.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish sinners, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offences willingly, comfort the afflicted, pray for the living and the dead

On January 1st, all the Sisters and Benedictine Associates were home for a beautiful liturgy that celebrated the feast of Mary Queen of the Universe. As we left the liturgy to continue the celebration with a festive meal, we entered the dining room through "*Our Monastic Door of Mercy*" and received a blessing. Each of us had prepared a personal request for God's mercy which we shared at our tables. We are holding one another in prayer throughout this year.

Pope Francis has prayed Psalm 23 many times. He has also experienced verse 6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" personally. When you read his writings, you learn that he has constantly seen and expressed mercy as being God's first attribute. In his latest book, *The Name of God is Mercy*, he inspires all of us to open our eyes and hearts to the ways we are called today to be faithful to our innermost spirit of love, compassion and joy as we let mercy expand and include all God's people.

Our innermost spirit will come alive as we open the doors of our minds to ponder all of the experiences of God's mercy in Scripture; open our hearts to our feelings of compassion, and open our souls to the grace of God's presence in our daily life. Be open and experience God anew in this *Jubilee Year of Mercy.*

Your friend in Christ,

Sister Paula Hagen

Sister Paula Hagen, OSB
Prioress, St. Paul's Monastery

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Cover art: *Prodigal Son* by James McNeill Mesplé. Guests can view this print in the Monastery's Benedicta Riepp Room.

Doors of Mercy at Century and Larpenteur

by Sister Mary White, OSB

We Sisters enjoy deep friendship with all our campus neighbors: Tubman Center, CommonBond Communities, Hill-Murray School, and Maple Tree Monastery Childcare Center. They continue our mission to serve women, children and families. We remain connected to them by serving as employees, volunteers and board members.

In addition to these professional relationships which have developed in recent years, there is a historic aspect of our Monastery's presence at Larpenteur and Century Avenues that cannot be overlooked: We continue a centuries-long lineage of monasteries that have served as Christ's hands in corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

I am reflecting on some of the ways we at St. Paul's Monastery allow doors of mercy to swing both inwardly and outwardly. As we daily receive God's mercy and love from the people we serve, we also allow this mercy, as best we can, to flow back outward through education, shelter, retreats, housing, child care, and prayer.

One of our doors of mercy opens into the Harriet Tubman Center East, formerly the home of our monastic community. I serve on Tubman's Board of Directors and had a chance to tour their new facility last fall. Tubman has creatively modified the interior of our former building to best utilize the space to fulfill its mission. During the tour, I became vividly aware of the Benedictine history of mercy.

I walked past what had formerly been our "monastic archive," a room with a thick, heavy door. This room had securely housed our important documents, photos and art pieces for posterity. It brought to mind the many centuries during which Benedictine monasteries were centers of education and culture and served as repositories for ancient manuscripts and precious works of art. Their efforts kept them safe for posterity.

Monasteries also opened their doors to serve as centers of hospitality to travelers, artists, friends, and strangers. Our doors are still wide open to those who want to pray with us, seek temporary solitude, or desire to serve God as a member of our community. In addition, we extend ourselves into communities beyond our own.

Sister Mary White (photo: John Doman)

We moved to Maplewood in 1965 during the height of the Cold War. One of the first things we included in our building was a 200-bed fallout shelter stocked with food and water and designed to protect occupants from a nuclear attack. Our space was designed to serve not only us but also other residents from the neighborhood.

> *There is a historic aspect to our Monastery's presence at Larpenteur and Century Avenues: We continue a centuries-long lineage of Benedictine monasteries that have served as Christ's hands in corporal and spiritual works of mercy.*

Twenty-five years ago, we turned our unused boiler and laundry building into Maple Tree Monastery Childcare Center. Very few child care options were available to parents so we decided to provide skilled care for infants to preschoolers. Along with the voices of teenagers from Hill-Murray School, we now have the voices of young children in our neighborhood.

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A Story from Century at Larpenteur

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At the beginning of the new millennium we became more and more aware of the need for affordable housing for low-income families and seniors in our area. We decided to sell part of our land to CommonBond Communities, a compassionate and dependable housing company that ensures safe and affordable housing for families.

And so it was the occasion of revisiting the archive room in what is now the Tubman building that I came to recall our own local history as well as a much broader history. I was reminded of the history of Benedictine monasteries over the centuries and throughout the world that have used their resources to help shelter many of the world's most precious treasures: humans, manuscripts and cultural artifacts. How blessed we are to be part of that heritage!

May we be worthy of this legacy. May we remember Pope Francis's message that anyone who enters through the *Door of Mercy* "will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope." May we speak from the heart of our faith: that God is love and that God's Person has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' life through each of us. May we allow signs of this Life, especially those that favor the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, continue to teach us mercy.

Sister Mary White celebrates her 50th Jubilee as a Benedictine Sister this year. Words she lives by are "God has spoken and I have heard. 'I am the Source of your strength.'" (Ps. 62)

In Memoriam

"May Christ bring us all together to everlasting life." –Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 72

Sister Bernadine Frischmon, OSB

July 23, 1941–October 18, 2015

Sister Bernadine (Elizabeth Ann) Frischmon was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, the seventh of John and Loretta (Tart) Frischmon's nine children. She received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation at St. Joseph's Church in Lino Lakes, Minnesota, and entered St. Paul's Monastery in September 1959. She made her first Profession in 1961, and her final profession on July 11, 1965. Sister Bernadine celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2011.

Sister Bernadine began Benedictine Ministry as a cook and then, called to teach young people about their faith, completed her degree in Catechetics and Pastoral Ministry at Notre Dame College of Ohio. Sister used her skills at Maternity of Mary in St. Paul, St. Augustine's in South St. Paul (36 years), and at the Cathedral of St. Paul. She also taught summer school at the Indian Mission in Ball Club, Minnesota for 29 years.

Sister was blessed with many trips to various parts of Europe. When not traveling or teaching, Sister Bernadine pursued her favorite hobby at which she excelled: fishing.

A Fisherman's Prayer

God, grant that I may live to fish until my dying day

And when it comes to my last cast, I then most humbly pray,

When in the Lord's safe landing net I'm peacefully asleep,

That in His mercy I be judged as "Big Enough to Keep"

Sister Bernadine is survived by her Benedictine Sisters, Associates, and Oblates; her siblings John, William, James, Joan, Mary, Alice, Audrey, and Janet; and many nieces, nephews and friends. Thank you to all who were a part of and who immeasurably enriched her life.

While we will miss her joyful presence, we know she is praising God with the Christ she loved and faithfully served.

In Memoriam

continued from previous page

Sister Richardine Schackmann, OSB

April 10, 1919–February 16, 2016

Sister Richardine (Hildegard) Schackmann, age 97, died peacefully at St. Paul's Monastery. Born to Peter and Catherine (Loesch) Schackmann on April 10, 1919 in St. Nicholas, Minnesota, Sister Richardine was the sixth child in a farming family of four boys and three girls.

Receiving the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation at St. Nicholas Church, she entered the Scholasticate at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, in 1935. After her first vows in 1938, she began her ministry in domestic service. Sister Richardine made her final profession on July 11, 1941.

Her ministry took her to the Church of the Sacred Heart in Robbinsdale, Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in St. Louis Park, St. Joseph's Orphanage, the Church of Saint Bernard and Maternity of Mary Catholic Church in St. Paul, the Church of the Assumption in Richfield, St. Mary's Hospital and Home in Winsted, the Archbishop's Residence in St. Paul, and St. Therese Home in New Hope. She came home to retire at St. Paul's Monastery in 1998.

> *What is more delightful than the voice of the Holy One calling to us? See how God's love shows us the way of life.*
> –Rule of Benedict, Prologue 19-20

Sister was a charter member of St. Paul's Priory when she together with 177 other Benedictines from St. Benedict's Monastery moved to St. Paul in 1948. She was a quiet and joyful person. Her ministry in domestic service meant being alone in the convent while others were teaching. It, no doubt, contributed to her contemplative and peaceful spirit. Sister was an avid reader and often appeared in the library sleuthing for a good book, likely by Henri Nouwen. Sister Richardine celebrated her silver jubilee in 1963, her golden jubilee in 1988, and her diamond jubilee in 2013.

Faith-based Family Conversations:

Values, Health and End-of-Life

Wednesdays: **April 27** and **May 4, 2016**
8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
St. Paul's Monastery at 2675 Benet Road

Conversing with family about faith-based healthcare directives, financial decisions and estate planning

Presentations and discussions will be illuminated by the New Testament and the Rule of St. Benedict

Presenters:
Tara Mattessich, J.D. and Pat Plunkett, J.D.
Larkin Hoffman Attorneys

Sister Marie Fujan, OSB
St. Therese Senior Care, Services and Communities

Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB
St. Paul's Monastery

Fee: $25 for one or $40 for both seminars

Register by ***April 19, 2016***

More details: Call Thekla at 651-777-6850

The *Door of Mercy* at St. Paul's Monastery

by Linda Anderson, Benedictine Associate and Communications Director

Pope Francis' extraordinary Jubilee calls all of us to be merciful, just as God is merciful. As a Monastic Community, we reflected on this call and discerned how we live mercy. We recognized that our charism of hospitality is intricately linked to our way of living mercy. St. Benedict implores us to open our doors to all who present themselves at the Monastery; see Christ in every person, and receive every person with compassion and empathy.

I remembered the first time when I visited St. Paul's Monastery. My children attended Hill-Murray School and one day I simply walked over. I came with a feeling of apprehension, not sure what I would find behind the door. Was this a place where I would be welcomed? Was this a place where I would find a spiritual connection? Was this a place where I would find peace? Once I crossed the threshold, I knew that the resounding answer to these questions was "yes!" Today, I open those same welcoming doors daily as a Benedictine Associate and lay employee. I am embraced by a Benedictine community of women who, since St. Scholastica (480-543 AD), have welcomed all as Christ.

Above (l-r): Bonnie Fazekas, Chris Folkenson, Linda Anderson in the Monastery foyer (photos above and below left: John Doman)

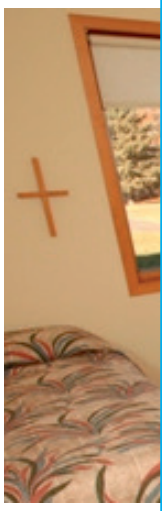
When I reflected on my experience, I wondered what it is that makes me feel welcome. Two gracious expressions of Benedictine hospitality came to mind: Bonnie Fazekas and Chris Folkenson, lay employees who have been with the Monastery for years. You will experience their hospitality as soon as you enter the Monastery foyer.

If you arrive on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning, Bonnie Fazekas is usually the first person you meet. She has been a Monastery front desk receptionist for over 28 years, and she will greet you and assist you with kindness and quiet efficiency. "There have been many changes at the Monastery over the years, but I still look forward to each day and to be a welcoming presence."

When you participate in a retreat, you will also experience Chris's hospitality. She has served in Benedictine Center Guest Services for more than 16 years. Along with day-to-day housekeeping duties in the Monastery, Chris prepares the all guest rooms. She knows that each person comes for a particular reason and ensures that their room provides a welcoming sanctuary. Each room conveys a feeling of peaceful welcome. "I've always gone by the thought of making each room look and feel warm and inviting because that's how I would want it to look if I were a guest staying here."

Our doors are open for you! Above, Hill-Murray students welcome guests, 2015 Christmas at the Monastery

Just as at the Vatican, our Monastic *Door of Mercy* is open to all. Perhaps you, as I did many years ago, wonder what kind of welcome you will find here. Or perhaps you've enjoyed the Monastery's hospitality for many years. Wherever you are in your life, the Sisters and staff at St. Paul's Monastery welcome you as Christ. Know that our Monastic *Door of Mercy* is open for you.



Above: Guests

Photo: © L'Osservatore Romano/Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis's Angelus Message and St. Benedict

In his Angelus message on 21 July 2013, Pope Francis shared that "St. Benedict sums up the kind of life indicated for his monks in [three] words: *ora et labora*, pray and work. It is from contemplation, from a strong friendship with the Lord that the capacity is born in us to live and to bring the love of God, his mercy, his tenderness, to others. And also our work with brothers in need, our charitable works of mercy, lead us to the Lord, because it is in the needy brother and sister that we see the Lord himself." (from *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*)

on retreat at St. Paul's Monastery (photo: John Doman)

Monasteries and Retreats

by Samuel Rahberg, OblSB and Benedictine Center Director

Photo: John Doman

Over the centuries, women and men have looked to monasteries as places where the setting and spirit of hospitality helps them regain their bearings.

Sometimes people want a self-directed retreat, so we provide an environment that invites our guests to relax and be at home. Sometimes people prefer a guided retreat where they meet with a spiritual director who can help sort out the questions and concerns at the core of life.

There is really no pattern. What is needed is the desire for time and space and the courage to be still and listen to where the heart leads.

Personal Retreats

Benedictine Center of St. Paul's Monastery

Be still and listen. A retreat is the simplest of ancient spiritual practices. Step back from the demands of daily life and step into a quiet space to remember what is really key for a life lived well. A warm welcome, private room, spacious grounds, home-cooked meals. Let the Benedictine setting and the monastic spirit of prayer and hospitality help you regain your bearings.

To explore your options, *call* 651-777-7251
E-mail benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org
or visit www.stpaulsmonastery.org and follow the *Benedictine Center* link

A Reflection on Mercy with Sister Bertha Karels, OSB

by Terry Johnson, OblSB

What is mercy? How does it express itself in our lives? Why did Pope Francis name this the *Jubilee Year of Mercy*? I am wondering – are you? I posed a question to a wise woman at St. Paul's Monastery: "How have you experienced mercy in your 102 years of living?" Her response came in the form of stories from her life. Each of them is an example of how Sister Bertha Karels experienced mercy in ordinary day-to-day life with her family as she was growing up.

Some of the stories Sister Bertha tells are about her parents showing hospitality to neighbors. One time a neighbor, a man originally from London, came to spend the evening with her father. As he spoke, the whole family became intrigued by his British accent and they listened intently. Knowing something about stories of Sherlock Holmes, they were curious about life in London. Everyone enjoyed what this Londoner revealed about a place and a culture of which they knew little.

Above (l-r): Sister Bertha Karels and Terry Johnson

On other occasions, classmates of the Karels children were invited to enjoy dinner with the family and an evening of games. These rare and precious visits provided opportunities to get to know each other better at a time when families didn't live close to each other.

Sister Bertha recalls a story about her brother. He had noticed that the father on a neighboring farm was ill. It was almost Christmas and he saw there would be few gifts for the children. On Christmas Eve, he joined his family in putting together a basket of Christmas goodies they had made. In the tradition of St. Nicholas, he delivered them as a surprise.

Sister Bertha and I invite you to reflect on the little stories of your own life. Perhaps you will discover God's tender mercy flowing through your experiences.

Reflecting on her relationship with her mother as the eldest daughter, Sister Bertha remembers intimate conversations between them that taught her to respect confidentiality. She learned important things about adult life, including caring about other people and how to be a trusted listener.

These stories, although shortened here, are rich and filled with details and delightful descriptions of a close-knit family who prayed, played and worked together. They marked their days by staying close to nature and the natural rhythms of life that honor God's presence in all things. It was in this environment that Sister Bertha learned that God's mercy is as wide as the prairie she lived in and loved. Here, too, she began to hear God calling her to a life of service.

With a few kind words of encouragement from people close to her, she was able to answer "yes." In her late twenties she decided to enter the Community of St. Benedict (in St. Joseph, Minnesota). She continues to serve today as a charter member of St. Paul's Monastery.

In these personal little stories of ordinary life, we can find mercy expressed in love, patience, hospitality, trust, and charity. Sister Bertha and I invite you in the months ahead to reflect on the little stories of your own life. Perhaps you will discover the richness of God's tender mercy flowing through your experiences; and perhaps you will also find answers to your questions about this *Jubilee Year of Mercy* and what mercy means to you.

Experience Monastic Life

with the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery

Are you called to be a Benedictine Sister?

Come and experience the rhythm of Monastic Life with the Benedictine Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery. You will pray, work, eat, and recreate as part of the Community. Share your questions with other seekers and Sisters who live the Benedictine life.

Join others for the **Benedictine Experience: Saturday- Monday, July 9- 11, 2016**

Contact: Linda Anderson, Vocations Director

Phone: 651-209-9024 or **E-mail**: landerson@stpaulsmonastery.org

or **Visit our website**: www.stpaulsmonastery.org

Photo: John Doman

Our Children Embrace Acts of Mercy

by Thekla Rura-Polley, Development Director

A beautiful warm evening in early summer. It is getting dark as I leave the Monastery and drive past Tubman and CommonBond Communities.

Suddenly, a small child on a bicycle crosses the street right in front of my car. No lights, no helmet. I brake. Luckily I am driving slowly. I think of my daughter and sons who wear helmets and have bike lights. I look around and see more kids on bikes, all without helmets, without lights.

When I arrive at home, I tell my children about the incident. They are astonished. They have visited the Monastery campus and know that Tubman, Minnesota's largest provider of domestic violence services, is housed in the former monastery. I suggest that my daughter Michaela consider working with Tubman for her Girl Scout Silver Award. Maybe she could raise funds to provide helmets or bike lights. Michaela talks with troop leader Faith and fellow scout Gabby, who is also working towards her Silver Award.

Gabby and Michaela meet with a staff person from Tubman and learn that the resident children don't have bicycles. Michaela and Gabby are astonished: No bikes? How can the kids live without bikes? Michaela and Gabby love their bicycles. They visit friends independently. They bicycle around the neighborhood. Tubman needs bicycles!

Practicing Mercy: Michaela repairs a Tubman bicycle

Gabby and Michaela get to work. They organize a pancake breakfast and a garage sale to raise funds for helmets, lights, repair kits, locks, air pumps, and bike racks. They collect used bikes and fix them with the help of neighborhood non-profit Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles. They develop a website to teach children bike safety and rules of the road.

Above: Michael and Benita Warns from Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles (photo: John Doman)

When all is ready, they invite Tubman residents to a celebration where they present the bikes and accessories. They also invite the Sisters of St. Paul's

Continued on next page

Excerpt From Pope Francis's Jubilee Year of Mercy Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees God. Show us your face and we will be saved.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace. May our Church, with renewed enthusiasm, bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

Monastery to the celebration. This celebration is for the whole Benedictine campus.

Everybody smiles. Some kids take off cycling through the neighborhood. For others, it's the first time on a bicycle. They beam when they master this new skill. They thank Michaela and Gabby. Michaela and Gabby see with their own eyes the difference that they are making in the lives of Tubman's resident children.

It has been a big project with ups and downs; lots of work and lots of support from many individuals. Gabby and Michaela have reached their goals. They have learned how escaping domestic violence affects children. They have learned about the services that Tubman provides to families. They have learned to work with others to raise funds, collect donations, repair bicycles, and organize a celebration.

They have learned how to better the lives of others. They have learned the profound gift of giving to others, and that no one is too small to help another person. They have learned to practice and embrace mercy.

We invite you to support the Sisters and their ministries by remembering them in your prayers and by a donation.

An envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Or contact Thekla to discuss your ability to support the Sisters and their ministries.

Phone: 651-777-6850

E-mail: trura-polley@stpaulsmonastery.org

Thank you and God bless you.

Maple Tree Monastery Childcare Center

Established by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery and named "2007 Best Child Day Care" by *Lillie News*, Maple Tree celebrates 25 years of operation in 2016. Maple Tree's dedicated staff provide a safe, happy place for children to learn the joy of sharing and showing mercy to one another.

Maple Tree offers year-round weekday programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. For further information, please call Jennie at 651-770-0766.

A Ministry of St. Paul's Monastery

A special place where children are *sheltered* and *nourished* with *love* and *learning*.

Maple Tree Monastery Childcare Center

2625 Benet Road

Maplewood, MN 55109

651.770.0766

www.stpaulsmonastery.org

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2016 Prioress Dinner

April 7, 2016
5:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Lake Elmo Inn Event Center
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Lake Elmo MN 55042

Sister Paula Hagen and the Benedictine Community of St. Paul's Monastery request the honor of your presence to

Recognize the 2016 Award Winners

Be inspired by the Community and

Advance Benedictine Spirituality

Tickets are $65 per guest or $650 per table of 10

Register by phone at 651-777-6850 or online at http://tinyurl.com/Prioress2016-Registration

Register Today!

Benedictine Community of St. Paul's Monastery
Prioress Dinner

Please Help Us… keep our records up to date. If your address has changed or is incorrect, please call **651-777-8181** to inform us. Thank you!

Upcoming Dates of Note:

April 1: Hermitage Retreat

April 2: A Day of Quiet and Solitude

April 17: Good Zeal and Beginnings: The Rule of St. Benedict

April 19: Love One Another: True Discipleship

April 27 and May 4: Faith-based Family Conversations: Values, Health and End-of-Life

May 5: Great Conversation: Waiting for a New Calling

May 12: Come, Spirit, Come

May 13: Living Waters: A Fly Fishing Retreat

May 23-June 2: Pilgrimage to South Korea, Land of the Morning Calm

Nov. 17: Give to the Max Day

Dec. 10: *Christmas at the Monastery*

For prayer times and additional events, visit www.stpaulsmonastery.org