

APRIL 2020

DO YOU BUT HOLD FAST TO GOD'S
DEAR HAND, AND GOD WILL LEAD YOU
SAFELY THROUGH ALL TRIALS.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Each moment of our lives offers an opportunity for us to be aware of our dependence on our Loving God. It may be helpful to remind ourselves of God's great love and care for us at a time when the world around us is consumed with fear because of the COVID-19 public health pandemic.

In these strange times, we learn every day of more people falling sick, another sporting event cancelled, another closed border or ban on travel, and a deeper dip in the stock market. We are startled to encounter empty store shelves and even online shops closed or empty of certain supplies. We may find ourselves looking with suspicion at those around us when we hear a slight cough or snuffle.

Benedict knew that fear was a powerful force: "Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road leading to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset" (*RB Prol 48*). Yet fear isn't the only force, or even the most powerful. Love is stronger than fear. Benedict continues, "As we progress in this way of life, and in faith, we shall run on the path . . . our hearts overflowing with love" (*RB Prol 49, paraphrase*).

Benedict invites us to remember that we are in God's presence always. That presence is love. In these strange times, we are called to remember that we are not alone.

We have one another, and we have a loving God guiding and guarding us. We can choose love over fear, and then let God's love guide us.

The Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery encourage you to take care of yourselves and those around you. We are grateful for your prayers. Know that we hold you in our love and prayers now and always.

Sister Jacqueline Leiter, OSB
Monastic Leadership Team

Complete Trust in God

Do not look forward to the trials and crosses of this life with dread and fear.

Rather, look to them with full confidence that as they arise, God, to whom you belong, will deliver you from them.

God has guided and guarded you thus far in life. Do you but hold fast to God's dear hand, and God will lead you safely through all trials.

Whenever you cannot stand, God will carry you lovingly in his arms.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow. The same Eternal God who cares for you today will take good care of you tomorrow and every day of your life.

Either God will shield you from suffering or God will give you the unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace then and put aside all useless thoughts, vain dreads, and anxious imaginations.

—St. Francis de Sales



IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM



These days, one phrase from the *Rule of Benedict* has been guiding our discernment: “Each should try to be the first to show respect to the other, supporting with the greatest patience one another’s weaknesses.” This, Benedict says, is the “good zeal which monastics must foster with fervent love” (RB 72).

As a matter of respect and fervent love for the vulnerable members of the Monastery and the wider community, the Monastery and Benedictine Center are taking steps to help limit the spread of COVID-19. We hope you will join us in taking steps in your own life to help keep the vulnerable among us healthy.

The safety of our guests, staff and Community—especially those particularly vulnerable—is of utmost concern to the Sisters of St. Paul’s Monastery. COVID-19, or coronavirus, has become a serious threat to public health. In order to ensure the safety of the monastic community and you, our faithful friends and guests, we are ceasing all public access to the monastery until further notice. This includes all chapel prayer services (including Taizé Prayer), Benedictine Center retreats and programming, and visits for other purposes.

We continue to hold you, the community, and the world in our hearts and our prayers during this time. The prayers which we pray at our Liturgy of the Hours are offered and united for the world. Please pray for us as well.

—the Sisters of St. Benedict of St. Paul’s Monastery

Watch our website at www.stpaulsmonastery.org for future updates.

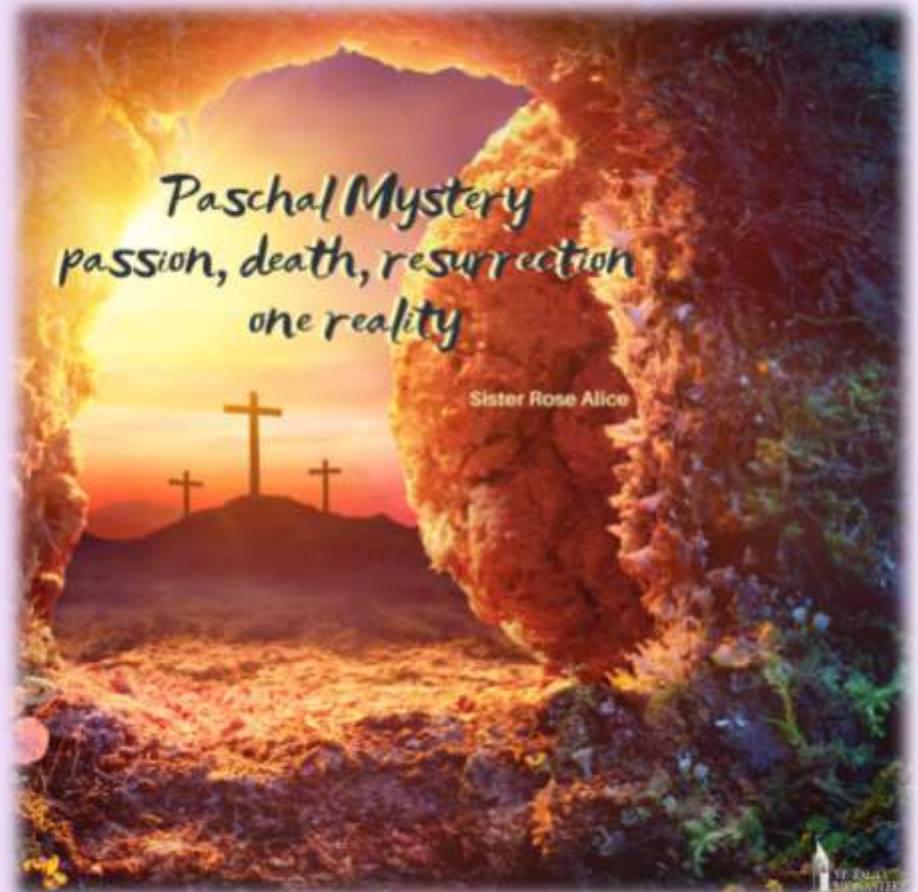
Pandemic

by Lynn Ungar

(Published with permission by author,
<http://www.lynnungar.com/poems/pandemic/>)

*What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.*

*And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.*



Catholic Sisters Week

March 8-14, 2020



Dear Friends,

The Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery continue to hold you in prayer. May you feel the support of a loving God as you are held in the palm of God's hand! Although we have needed to limit access to the monastery you can be assured of the Sisters praying the Liturgy of the Hours three times daily (at 8:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.) for you, your families and the whole world. If your schedule allows, you too may also hold those times as special moments of prayer.

God's Love is with us no matter where we are or who we are with. Let us renew our love for one another in a spirit of prayer and peace!

As part of National Women's History Month, Catholic Sisters Week occurs every March. It's a celebration of the lives and legacies of Catholic Sisters. To celebrate this year, we shared responses on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) throughout the week from the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery about religious life. Above you can read a few of the reflections on why religious life is still needed today, which are even more pertinent in the light of our "new normal."

The Sisters—even in this new paradigm—continue to "get something done." More than ever, people need to hear about our ever-present and loving God. You will find positive and uplifting messages of hope on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages, and we invite you to follow us. We are thinking of additional ways to further build a hope-filled, virtual community; please stay tuned for more information in the coming days.

We encourage you and your loved ones to remember "(to) hold fast to God's dear hand, and God will lead you safely through all trials. Whenever you cannot stand, God will carry you lovingly in his arms" (St. Francis de Sales).



A Librarian's Joy

by Sister Louise Inhofer, OSB

A perk I enjoy as the Monastery's librarian is the opportunity to become immersed in the many books in our collection. I can sit in my office and read; not always for entertainment, but to acquaint myself with the books and their authors.

What a help it is when someone is not sure what to read. After a while I learn what her/his preferences are and can make recommendations as new books are added or discovered. Yes, it's almost like a treasure hunt, discovering a new title or author for myself too.

Ordering new books is such a joy as well. How to choose though, can be a problem as there are so many wonderful books out there. Book reviews in periodicals and even reviews from readers in Amazon are a big help; a chance discovery of a new title is also valuable. This is also how I find new titles by some of our favorite authors.

Of course the content needs to enhance the library collection of a Benedictine Monastery. After the title and author, there is a quick check to see if we already have it and how popular it is by checking how many Sisters and guests have reserved it.

Benedictine authors such as Michael Casey, Joan Chittister, Terence Kardong, Mary Margaret Funk, and many more are always a safe bet. But there are other popular authors too, such as Joyce Rupp, OSM, Richard Rohr, OFM, Henri Nouwen--and don't forget Esther DeWaal, Kathleen Norris, C.S. Lewis and John Shea. Have I forgotten your favorite author? I'm sorry. Tell me about her/him.

Another perk is seeing the books as they arrive and being able to read or at least peruse them before they are on the shelves for others to enjoy. I hope all of you, our readers, are in good health and can stay that way. Now would be a good time to spend some free time with a good book or two.



The Sisters' Blessing

**Now may the God of Love bless you with peace.
Give to you every good that you may do God's will.
To Christ be glory forever, Amen!**

[Click here to see the Sisters singing a blessing in Chapel](#)



Tell the Story

by Tinka Bloedow, ObISB

One of my favorite hymns of childhood was *"I Love to Tell the Story"*
"...of unseen things above."

This has now become a haunting song in my heart with new words for today:

*"They want you to tell their story
of unseen things on earth.
Where parents shackled still weep
And In cages their children sleep
They want you to tell their story
Of fleeing and hunger and thirst,
Of love for family and friends
and fear that never ends"*

Last February, five brave women spoke at the Monastery about their trip to Nogales, Mexico, on the U.S.-Mexico border. One day, the group traversed rugged terrain, the trail of pilgrims, to leave caches of water and canned food. Hopefully, the supplies will be found and provide sustenance and hope to people fleeing the terrors of the desert by night. They are not making these treacherous journeys for a better life. The asylum they seek is for safety and life itself. The presenters, with hearts overflowing with compassion, wore provocative necklaces, each bearing a red circle on a metal cross created from tuna cans found empty in the desert. The women spoke of a map they had seen...covered with red dots...each representing a body found in the desert. The red dots silently remember someone's life and story.

We must tell their stories...

The Pope has said that in a world that is unfortunately afflicted by a **virus of indifference**, works of mercy are the best antidote. This type of virus is far more insidious a threat to our global community than the coronavirus. Who among us thinks about these desperate and precious families? They travel only in darkness through a dangerous desert. They dare not even venture ahead by the light of the moon. How do they navigate and find their way? A barrel cactus, which grows pointing to the South, becomes their compass to the North. These cacti and hope lead them on.

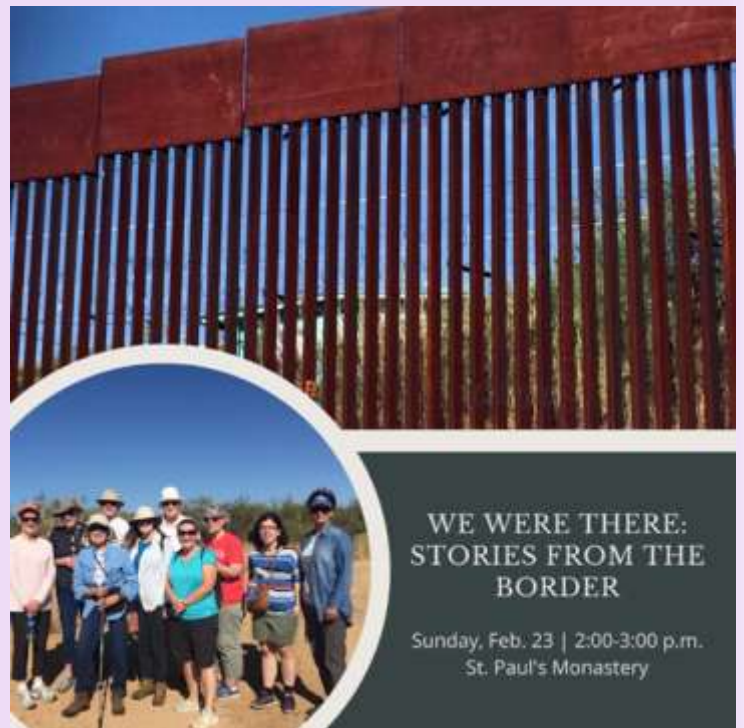
Where is our light, our compass, whose life must be saved in our midst?

Where are the compassionate ones in our midst?

Indifference is our darkness.

That seems to be far more fearsome than traveling through the desert; and the hunger, the thirst, the locked bars and separation of loved ones.

I love to tell the story of Jesus and his love. This is the story of our brothers and sisters in peril.



(continued on page. 6)

Tell the Story *(continued from page 5)*

Their stories are mine: I am hungry. I am lost. I thirst. I flee.

We are one.

As their shackles are around their ankles, ours are around our hearts.

Sing their story. It is your story too.

A deep thank you to all who have been touched and have told the stories. You are a lifeline for my heart.

About the author: Retired Lutheran Pastor Tinka Bloedow is a Monastery oblate, volunteer and member of the Social Justice Committee. "Tell the Story" is Tinka's reflection on Oblate Pat Melody's February 23rd presentation "We Were There: Stories from the Border."



What a Win!

by Sister Linda Soler, OSB

The Hill-Murray boys' varsity hockey team made the State playoffs. After three intense games (March 5—7), the team won the State Championship!

Hill-Murray is a school the Sisters have supported and cherished over the years, and the Sisters cheered them on and were with them in spirit! I had the opportunity to chaperone the team and band members for all three games.

This photo captures me with HMS senior and team Captain Charlie Strobel right after the over-time winning goal with St. Thomas Academy on March 6.



Mission Advancement News

The Monastery Community **welcomes Jeff Dols, OBlSB**, as our new Mission Advancement Director. Jeff's history with the Benedictine tradition goes back to his childhood in St. Joseph, Minnesota, where he was educated by the Sisters of St. Benedict's Monastery. He initially began his relationship with St. Paul's Monastery and the Benedictine Center when he attended Sister Virginia Matter's Centering Prayer retreat several years ago.

Jeff's relationship with the Monastery continued to deepen leading him to pursue Oblate Formation; he made his final Oblation in June 2019. Concurrent with his year of Oblate Formation, Jeff learned that he and Sister Marie Rademacher, OSB (1925-2019) had family ties. Sister Marie was his father's first cousin. During his formation year, Jeff was blessed to get to know Sister Marie and learn more about their family and her journey as a Benedictine Sister.

Jeff's professional experience is in both the for- and nonprofit sectors, having held leadership roles in multiple strategic planning and organizational development efforts. Jeff also served as Executive Director of the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Jeff holds a B.A. in Economics and an M.A. in Servant Leadership.



And Yet the Cardinal Sings...

by Jeff Dols, OBlSB and Mission Advancement Director

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner shall be well." —Lady Julian of Norwich

The weight of the world felt very heavy this morning as I walked in the pre-dawn fog and gloom through the deserted park near my house. It was as if the suffering of a world-turned-upside-down was hanging in the air with every pregnant water droplet in the low sky.



And just when it seemed the weight of it all was too heavy to bear and hope was lost, I stopped by the pond in a grove of trees, bowed my head, and softly whispered "Help us." In that still moment, somewhere in the trees off in the darkness, came a song—strangely out of place and inappropriate for my somber mood—the joyful sounds of an unseen Cardinal.

Oblivious to my human world, which was seemingly falling apart all around him, the Cardinal just kept on singing...for the trees and the squirrels and the two muskrats who are making their way across the frozen pond. None of them seemed particularly concerned about the end of the world as we know it.

For somehow this Cardinal was singing a song of hope,

connecting my heavy heart back to the Divine Love that creates and sustains all things, including everything I beheld in that moment.

I felt a sense of connection to the clouds, the trees, the pond, the muskrats, the squirrel, and the joyful Cardinal, who kept reminding me that life goes on and hope can be found in the midst of human calamity.

As I struggled to believe Lady Julian and the seeming impossibility of "All Will be Well," this audacious Cardinal continued to invite me to connect to Hope, right there in our darkest hour.

Living the Oblate Way

By Sister Mary Lou Dummer, OSB

Living the Oblate means to incorporate the practices of Benedictine Spirituality in one's daily prayer and relationships. Oblates, like monastic women and men, do not see their lives as a static state of perfection, but rather as a journey of coming to recognize human weaknesses and then depending on God's mercy to help them grow in understanding, compassion, and caring for others.

We are blessed to have over 200 women and men Oblates; people who have associated themselves with the Benedictine Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery in order to enrich their Christian way of life. They have made a formal commitment to Benedictine prayer and values and choose to live a life based on the Gospels and *Rule of St. Benedict*. By integrating Benedictine values into their lives they become Christ's presence in their families, churches, cities, towns, neighborhoods and work places. The difference they make, helps to change the world. We asked the Oblates several questions on what being an Oblate meant to them. Continue reading to see and enjoy their answers.



Oblate Director
S. Mary Lou Dummer

How has being an Oblate of St. Paul's Monastery enriched your Christian Way of Life?

"Through the teaching of *the Rule*, and my conversations with Sister Virginia, I've come to a new understanding of the value of **praying always**. This has become perhaps the most important benefit for me of Benedictine spirituality. I've come to understand that Benedictine prayer is not just about the daily office. It's about integrating awareness of God's presence in everything I do all day long. One of the treasured keepsakes I got from Sister Marie Rademacher was a coffee mug with the words "Prayer and Work." I keep this mug visible in my home office so I can remind myself, as I go through my workday, that all work is sacred and that everything I do is of service to God." —Jeff Dols

"I became an Oblate to enrich my spiritual life. I was retired and wanted to delve deeper into my Catholic faith and spend more quiet time with God. I found the amazing Liturgy of the Hours prayer practice! I can't begin my day without prayer. It has made me more in tune to where God is leading me both personally and spirituality. How fortunate I feel to be reading the exact psalms that Jesus read every day of his life. I now have a very personal relationship with God that I never imagined possible." —Mary Ann

How do you integrate the expectations of Living the Oblate Way of Life?

"The Liturgy of the Hours is the backbone of my day's prayer—morning, noon, and compline (midday prayer with intercessions is usually prayed while walking—or on a treadmill at the gym!). Easily incorporated is reading Sister Joan Chittister's *A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. Immersion into contemplative prayer and lectio, with thanksgiving and listening to the daily readings is evident in the almost 15 spiral journals I have filled over the last six years. I am also grateful for the excellent Monastery library and for knowing that the Sisters pray for me each day." —Gwen

"Since becoming an Oblate I have been praying the Liturgy of the Hours every day. My life feels 'off balance' if I can't start the day with the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer, just as my day ends only after night prayer." —Jeanne

(continued on page 9)

Living the Oblate Way (continued from page 8)

How has being an Oblate improved your relationship with others: family, friends, strangers?

“The contemplative prayer practices I’ve learned at the Monastery, especially Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina, have become a treasured part of my early morning routine each day. Through these practices, there has been a gradual opening awareness of the one-ness of all, and the inherent radiance of Christ that dwells within each one of us. Once we start to see the world through the eyes of this Radiant Presence, it quite naturally follows to ‘Welcome all as Christ.’”

—Jeff Dols



What is your current relationship with St. Paul’s Monastery?

“St. Paul’s Monastery feels like a home away from home, and seeing the Sisters feels like seeing family. I enjoy coming myself and sometimes bring friends to prayer, meals, presentations, or to view the art work. My daughter and I retreat at the Benedictine Center overnight twice a year to have some mother-daughter time away from the demands of home. Serving on the Oblate Advisory Board keeps me in contact with a special group of Oblates and in touch with the formation process and needs of the Sisters.” —Gwen

***For information about Oblate formation,
contact Oblate Director Sister Mary Lou Dummer at***

Phone: 651-777-8181

E-mail: mldummer@stpaulsmonastery.org

You can read more, too, at: <https://www.stpaulsmonastery.org/membership/oblates/>

*encounters with God
thirsting foretaste of Easter
ripples of gladness*

Sister Rose Alice



Commemorative Pavers

Honoring Those Who Light Our Way

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 button below 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. Your tribute paver makes a difference in the prayers of the Sisters and all who visit the Plaza.

Thank you and God Bless you!



Order by
Aug. 14 for
Fall 2020
Installation

Sizes

4 x 8 Paver : \$125

Up to 3 lines of text,
18 characters per line

8 x 8 Paver : \$250

Up to 6 lines of text,
18 characters per line

[Click Here to
Print the Paver
Order Form](#)

A Lenten Reflection

by Andria Canty

“We are afflicted in every way but not constrained, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body of the dying Jesus so that the life of Jesus maybe manifested in our bodies” (2 Cor 4:8-10 NASB)



Lent comes from the Old English *lencten*, “spring season.” As we transition from the remnants of winter—especially in Minnesota—into the newness of spring, and gaze attentively, we can witness the changes in synch with spiritual and liturgical variations. There is the seemingly unforgiving soil of winter becoming softened and fertile. This eventually will give way to beauty and fruitful produce so, too, the work within our hearts.

The Lenten Season bids us a generous forty days to deliberately pull away from the busy-ness and noise, and to press into the milieu where we can be reconciled, restored, rescued, and renewed within the Holy One.

Many are invited: It is up to us to accept, seek, discover, and listen to the still small voice.

Perhaps we can agree that we look forward to Easter and Resurrection day festivities. However, truth be told we stand more fully appreciative of the celebration having done the work we’re called to interiorly; as we prepare to receive our Risen Savior.

Drawing upon Benedictine values, maybe we can find inspiration from the following: awareness of God (RB 19.1), respect for all persons (RB 72.7), listening (RB Prologue 1), and moderation (RB 48.9).

“We all are being transformed from glory to glory, as we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18 NASB). To this point, we’re being transfigured more and more into the image of the one who is

transfiguring us, if we’ll allow. God’s mercies are new every morning. So, no matter what the season or our state of life, God is looking for our yesses. Just as Mary Mother of God responded in “Fiat” her “Yes, to the Lord,” we are being wooed just the same.

In choosing to move towards the Light of the Cross, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and away from darkness, and with each step we’re saying “Yes.” The Spirit then continues the redemptive work in, through and around us. May we endeavor in steadfastness to the finish!

St. Benedict, Pray for us

St. Scholastica, Pray for us

All you holy angels and saints, pray for us. Amen.

Prayer Schedule

Even though our doors are closed temporarily, we are grateful for you praying with us in spirit!



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

—Rule of Benedict, Chap. 43

SUNDAY

Morning Prayer: 10:00 AM

Eucharist: 11:00 AM

Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM

For further information, call 651-777-8181 or visit us online at www.stpaulsmonastery.org

MONDAY–SATURDAY

Morning Prayer: 8:00 AM

Midday Prayer: 11:30 AM

(Mon., Fri., Sat.)

Eucharist: 11:30 AM

(Tue.—Thu.)

Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM



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 St. 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 (www.stpaulsmonastery.org). Or you can go to the “Ministries” tab and select “Community Prayer Ministry.” Prayer requests go to the Sisters in the Healthcare Center who pray for these intentions during their 3:30 p.m. daily Rosary. May God bless you today.



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Your account will appear as normal but you'll see "Supporting: St Paul's Monastery" right under the search bar, and 0.5% of your purchase will come back to us every quarter. Every little bit helps, and we are so grateful for your support!

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St. Paul's Monastery

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery, are a community who 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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