

JUNE 2020

Channel of God's Goodness

Many years ago, I attended a contemplative prayer retreat at our Monastery. It was lead by Sister Ludwiges Fabian, a Tutzing Missionary Benedictine. She introduced me to a lovely story which I would like to share with you. Consider yourself as the bamboo tree in the story below.

The story calls us into a deeper understanding of how we can serve as to bring life to others. We experience joy not in being praised or being accepted but in feeling how we function as a channel. We no longer ascribe to our own selves the good we do because we know that it is God's life passing through us. Our joy and fulfillment is found in realizing that we are the channel of God's goodness.

At this time of uncertainty, how are you experiencing the call to serve as a vessel that brings life to others?

In prayer and in God's service,

Sister Catherine Nehotte, OSB
Monastic Leadership Team

Another Kind of Beauty

(as told by Ludwiges Fabian, OSB)

Once upon a time there was a beautiful garden located in the west end of a large and famous kingdom.

The king of the garden (master gardener) used to recreate in its shade when the heat of the day had reached its limit.

A noble bamboo stalk was the most beautiful of all the trees, bushes and plants in the garden and also dearest to the heart of the king.

Year after year passed and the bamboo ever grew in its elegance and leafy charm.

It knew only too well how much the king loved it and enjoyed its beauty.

One day the king thoughtfully approached the beloved bamboo. And the tree full of veneration lowered its crown in a whisper (you know Chinese bamboos, those small leaves are very elegant).

The king said, "My beloved bamboo, I need you. I really need you."

It seemed as if the day of all days had come, the day for which the bamboo had been created.

The entire garden was suddenly still.

(continued on page 2)



Even the wind held her breath.

Then after a long and silent pause, the bamboo lowered its crown and said,
“Lord, if you cannot use me unless you trim me then...
do with me as you wish.”

“My beloved Bamboo, leaves have to be removed and branches chopped off.”

“OH LORD! FOR HEAVENS SAKE, DESTROY MY BEAUTY BUT LET ME KEEP MY LEAVES AND MY BRANCHES!”

“Without using them, I cannot use you.”

The sun hit her face. A butterfly anxiously took to flight and the bamboo trembling with expectation at the things to come said, “Lord... cut them off.”

“My beloved Bamboo, more still I need to do with you.
I have to split you into two and even your heart I have to cut out.
Without doing this I cannot use you.”

At this the bamboo bowed to the ground, then responded...
“Lord, cut and divide.”

So the Lord of the garden cut his beloved Bamboo,
chopped off its branches, removed its leaves
split the stem into two and cut out the heart.

He then lifted it from the ground and carried it to a spring near some dry fields.

One end of the pole he connected with the spring.

The other end he guided to the water channel in the fields.

The spring sang a welcome greeting as the clear glistening water shot joyfully into the thirsty fields which had been waiting so long for water.

The days passed and the rice was planted and sprouted; the seeds grew and harvest time came.

And the beloved bamboo, once so glorious, in all its brokenness and humility had become a great lesson: When it was still a beautiful tree, it grew only for itself and enjoyed its own beauty, but in its brokenness, it turned into a channel which the Lord could use to let his fields yield much fruit.



*rich shades of green
picture of perfect blending
harmony and peace*

by Sister Rose Alice Althoff



Reflection on the Good Shepherd

Scripture: John 10:1-10

by Sister Linda Soler, OSB, Monastic Leadership Team

Sheep are mentioned more than 200 times in the Bible, more than any other animal. Sheep were important as sources of wool, milk, and meat, and throughout the Bible, sheep served as symbols for God's people. Jesus is portrayed as the shepherd of his chosen flock in the prophetic words of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and most famously in the 23rd Psalm, all in which belongs to the Good Shepherd.

Sheep are followers. Following isn't something sheep have to think about—it's an instinct. Sheep remember faces. They recognize faces of other sheep and of humans who work with them regularly. They are almost human, because sheep remember who treats them well—and even more, they remember who handles them harshly. Sheep find safety in numbers, and when grazing, sheep will keep at least four or five other sheep in view. They are very social and extroverted animals, for they do not do well alone, and they support each other by sticking together at all costs.

To be lost is a life-threatening situation for a sheep.

When Jesus begins a statement "Amen, amen I say to you," it is serious business in the Gospel of John. Twice Jesus says this to make a strong point, and he also says twice that he is the gate—for he is the true gate. The Pharisees, who deny Jesus as the way, are like thieves who climb over the wall of a sheepfold, instead of entering through the gate.

The message of this parable is that Jesus is the true shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd willing to die for those who put their faith in Him. Any other person who claims to be the true shepherd is a robber or thief, for they are a false shepherd. Imagine a world where people do not expect to be served but are all eager to serve and care for one

another! Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares, watches, and protects those who believe in Him. This is a wonderful message for anyone who seeks peace with God.

In his *Rule*, Benedict mentions sheep three times—Chap. 1, "The Kinds of Monastics;" Chap. 2, "The Qualities of an Abbot or Prioress;" and Chap. 27, "How Concerned the Abbot or Prioress Should Be About the Excommunicated" (using the lost sheep as a metaphor). Benedict invites us to listen with the ear of the heart, and we are also invited to listen to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, in the same way.

To be in the Lord's flock is to be in a life-changing, transformative relationship with the Lord. To know the Lord is to see our life changed by that very relationship. It is to know the voice of Jesus and be able to distinguish it from others, so that in all things God may be glorified.



The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

—Psalm 23:1–4 (NRSV)



Making a Difference

by Sister Jacqueline Leiter, OSB, Monastic Leadership Team

You sometimes hear a story about a student who is thankful for a former teacher who taught her something that made an impact on her life. As a teacher, I want to share this story about a former student, Maggie Thompson, for whom I am grateful. Maggie, daughter of Oblate (and artist) Peggy Thompson, is making an impact on many people's lives.

I first met Maggie (pictured below) years ago when she was a kindergartner. Maggie was a very creative child and loved art. What made Maggie stand out among her classmates was that she was a peacemaker. When her classmates quarreled, she tried to step in and negotiate peace. When another child was sad or distressed, Maggie was there to offer comfort.

Today, Maggie continues to be an artist and peacemaker. She is an accomplished textile artist at [Makwa Studio](#) in Minneapolis. When she heard about the critical shortage of PPE (personal protective equipment) in clinics and hospitals around the country, she immediately set herself to using her creative skills to protect and care for others.

She used the CDC-approved design to create protective facemasks that are both functional and beautiful works of art that honor her Fond du Lac Ojibwe heritage. Maggie sews ribbon on each mask, which to her symbolizes identity, survival, and adaptation.

For each [Ribbon Mask](#) purchased, Maggie donates two additional masks to hospitals, clinics, schools, elder residences, and shelters. The Ribbon Masks made it possible for Maggie to hire others to help her sew and sustain the project and enable the donation of hundreds of masks to over a dozen organizations serving people in need.

Maggie's work inspired some of the Sisters at the Monastery: Using her website's easy to follow [pattern and instructions](#), we're sewing masks for Sisters and for the nurses and others who provide care for our elder Sisters.

We are grateful for the good work Maggie is doing and the way that she models the Gospel mandate to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). In the dark times of this pandemic, Maggie Thompson is a shining light.

Contribute to the Ribbon Mask Project!

Do you have a supply of sewing materials that you can contribute to the Ribbon Mask Project? Maggie welcomes your donation of cotton weave fabric and elastic. Your donation will provide more masks to clinics and shelters! Please contact Maggie via her website:

<http://makwastudio.com/contact>





Praying My Way Through This New World

by Beryl Singleton Bissell, OblSB

March 15, 2020

My dear Sisters, I hope you have been adapting to the worldwide Covid-19 monastic lifestyle. If it were not for the fear and suffering so many are experiencing, I would so love to be back with you! I crave a ceasing of the constant noise in which we live, a quieting of my spirit.

At least Mother Nature is enjoying a bit of a break. A bit less pollution to relieve the pressure we place on her. How much longer it will last is the great unknown. For the vulnerable amongst us, it might necessitate continual distancing for the unforeseen future.

I've been reading, thinking, journaling, and praying my way through this new world, trying to understand the forces unleashed by the Covid-19 virus. Empty streets, shopping centers, sidewalks, restaurants, and other gathering places testify to the power of this viral force to change lives and lifestyles. While disheartened by the forces of selfishness, anger, and hatred that threaten the world's healing, I am moved by the huge wellspring of compassion and generosity this pandemic unleashed in the world.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to maintain confidence and equanimity when observing the ineptitude and power mongering of those entrusted with our care.

As is often the case when confronted by paradox, I found light while arranging the books on my "constant-read" shelf. In a small gem titled *Calm Surrender* by favorite nonfiction author, Kent Nerburn, I resonated with his words.

"When we reaffirm the goodness that sprouts from the soil underneath walls of hatred or indifference, we are practicing a kind of forgiveness. We are saying that hatred and indifference are not worthy of our anger. We are turning away from the great force of animosity, and underscoring, instead, the goodness struggling to find voice in its shadow."

I trust that you, my dear friends, embrace "the goodness that sprouts beneath the walls of hatred," and, by doing so, nurture the hope and acts that will heal the world. Many of us might question God's presence in events like this pandemic, but I choose to believe that God is with us. That God understands our pain. That God suffers with us and, as Julian of Norwich proclaimed during the besieged fourteenth century, that ultimately "all will be good."



Beryl is a Minneapolis Star Tribune "Best of 2006 Minnesota Authors." Her book The Scent of God was a "Notable" Book Sense selection for April 2006; her second book, A View of the Lake, was named a Minneapolis Star Tribune 2011 best regional book. You can read more about Beryl at: <https://www.berylsingletonbissell.com/>



Trust

by Karen Fleming

This word keeps coming back to me: *Trust*. Why? Is it familiar? Oh yes, I now remember. On the back of paper currency and in small print, on the front of metal coinage it reads "In God We Trust."

When money and unemployment and uncertainty gives us reason to be anxious, can our minds be pushed beyond all worries and cares to something better? Can these clanging priorities be quieted so that we can listen for the still small voice of God?

The other day, after a curbside drop off of gifts for the Sisters, I spent a quiet time walking the lovely Monastery grounds. It was a Sunday morning, and I could hear the uplifting and joyful voices of the Sisters singing praises to our God and prayerful praises for the world, as we live each day with hope.

Sometimes I feel like a prisoner in my home of "shelter" and ask myself what is the purpose of this Pandemic? What is God's purpose in allowing it to ravage the world? We try to follow the rules set down for our safety and health and our blessed healthcare workers work step into danger each day to save others as this virus continues to spread.

I have actually enjoyed some of this time at home: I watch and listen to various pastors and priest giving scripture readings for discernment and wisdom. One pastor suggested reading Proverbs each day of May; May has 31 days, Proverbs has 31 readings.

Another pastor concentrates on the study of the book of James for encouragement. Priests and pastors have had discussions about this time in our lives and what it might mean: And all of these are available on my computer.

I also find more time to spend with my husband, along with some of my "addictions": reading, writing, crocheting, playing the piano, and praying. The peace is awesome, the blessings overwhelming.

James 1:2b—3 says "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Peace, love, hope, and perseverance to all God's children!



Tomb-Time for Spiritual Gestation

by Mary Elizabeth Ilg



In Joyce Rupp's book, *Prayer Seeds: A Gathering of Blessings, Reflections and Poems for Spiritual Growth* (Ave Maria Press, 2017), the author discusses the idea of "tomb-time," which we must pass through with Jesus to get to the Resurrection.

Ms. Rupp states that most of us move quickly from the darkness and despair of Good Friday to Easter Sunday without spending sufficient time for reflection on the liminal space when our Savior lay dead in the tomb. For three days the world stopped, before the heavy stone was rolled away to reveal the greatest of miracles. The dark space of the tomb is where growth and transformation can occur in our lives, if we do not turn away, "seeking quick alleviation." We can allow ourselves to feel the confusion and discomfort of grief and defeat, before moving forward, into the light of understanding.

Ms. Rupp offers the following prayer:

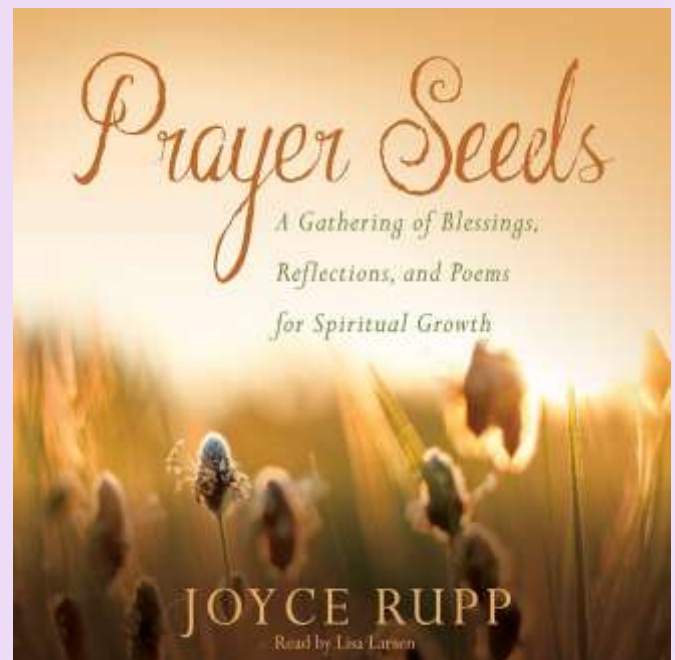
Risen One, I turn to you as my model of spiritual growth. Open my entire being to your grace-filled presence. Teach me repeatedly how to enter into my own tomb-times.

Grant trust in my ability to abide in the tomb of indecision and uncertainty, those times when I encounter confusion and do not know where I am going or what might happen next.

The United States is collectively, and in various ways, experiencing a sort of "tomb-time" as we face the global pandemic. The grim reality of over 100,000 lives claimed by Covid-19 in the U.S. alone is something that is truly hard to fathom. We wonder how this dire health emergency could have happened in our country. A flu pandemic of this magnitude has not occurred for 100 years. Perhaps we can find some reassurance in the fact that it happened a century ago and then it passed. Though the death toll was very great, life went on. In this extended time of silence and isolation in quarantine, the silence of the tomb has much to teach us. We know that Jesus is with us always, and we can unite our suffering to his. We can surrender all of our fears to God's constant, loving care. We can look at the good that is happening in the world and reflect on the many compassionate acts and sacrifices of healthcare workers, rather than at the ugliness of a virus that seems completely out of control, moving across the country like an invisible wildfire.

Our patience may be tested as we live in confinement with family members, day in and day out. What perhaps was a happy time of family togetherness in March and April has now grown rather stale as we try not to lash out at each other in moments of stress. I personally have been very challenged by the extreme noise created by my neighbor's backyard construction project, with weeks of heavy machinery destroying my peaceful hours. I have tried not to harbor resentment. I can try to look at it a different way: What is this trying to teach me? Certainly, I need to learn to be more tolerant: *Love thy neighbor as thyself!* Not everyone cherishes the Benedictine value of silence as I do. Not

(continued on next page)



Tomb-Time for Spiritual Gestation *(cont. from previous page)*

everyone feels holy reverence for nature in all of God's creation, and others may choose to cut down every tree in sight to install a swimming pool. I pray for patience and try to Live and Let Live.

Many Catholics are feeling a great lack in their lives since they cannot attend Mass and especially, cannot receive the Eucharist, which is the life-blood of our faith that provides daily strength and sustenance. People of all faiths desperately miss their communal worship experiences. On Easter Sunday, the first time in decades that I did not go to church on this holy day, I could not stop weeping. Yet, a "silver lining" has occurred in that we can watch Mass online in our pajamas! I often watch the livestream daily Mass from the Cathedral of Saint Paul at 7:30 a.m. I would never be able to attend this Mass in person in downtown St. Paul at that early hour. God is blessing us with the Act of Spiritual Communion as we whisper into our cell phone screens:

*My Jesus...I love you above all things.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.*

On Sundays, I watch Mass on YouTube with my family as we sit together in a three-person row in front of the TV. Even the cat watches with us, perched on the back of the sofa, his tail curled around his body with contentment. Seeing the beautiful sanctuary on TV, where we cannot gather in person after many weeks, still makes me cry. Yet, we say the Lord's Prayer together. My family has grown somewhat used to this new way of Sunday worship. I am sure we will never forget this time.

Another "silver living" can be found in the way our planet supposedly is healing with significant reduction in air pollution and greenhouse gases due to the decrease in driving, air travel and manufacturing. I have noticed this during phases of the full moon, as it rises slowly over our suburban neighborhood, illuminating the roof tops and driveways, the Norway pines that are still standing. The moonlight spills like iridescent milk over the immaculate lawns. I stand, awestruck, at the threshold of my front door. The moon is as bright as a spotlight.

We know we will come together again when it is safe to do so. "God's got this," as some of my friends like to say.



One of these dear friends, a woman who is *not* a church-goer, has experienced God's tangible presence and healing peace by walking the St. Paul's Monastery labyrinth (pictured at left). Some parishes are even celebrating Mass outdoors in large church parking lots, where cars honk wildly at the Sign of Peace. We are getting creative in our ways to worship and pray. We have no other choice.

We are Resurrection people, and we know in this year of 2020 more than any other, what it means to pass through the valley of the shadow of death to arrive at God's saving light.

Saints Benedict and Scholastica,

We ask you to intercede for our world as we face the threat of the coronavirus and these unstable times. May we have your faith to be strong and your love to share with our suffering world during this pandemic.

Trusting in God's faithful love, we pray for protection, deliverance, and peace.

We ask this, in the name of the Trinity; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.



*The days ebb and flow
Life has become simple and slow
Seeking to hear God's whisper
Wondering what essence of the former will still be alive
Wondering what will die and be left by the wayside
Waiting and watching
Resting though becoming restless*

by Jamie Hales



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](#)

Prayer Schedule

***Even though our doors are closed temporarily, we are grateful
that you are 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

MONDAY–SATURDAY

Morning Prayer: 8:00 AM

Midday Prayer: 11:30 AM

Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM

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



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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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.

St. Paul's Monastery
2675 Benet Road
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55109
651-777-8181
development@stpaulsmonastery.org

To connect with or
support Community
ministries visit us at:
www.stpaulsmonastery.org