



ST. PAUL'S MONASTERY

E-NEWSLETTER

December 2020 Edition



As Advent begins, we approach winter and the darkest time of the year. Daylight hours are shortened, and the night is long. This year, darkness takes on a new meaning. During this pandemic, our experience of darkness may be tinged with the depth of many feelings: fear, sorrow, loneliness, and hopelessness. As we journey through this present darkness, how we long for light!

Benedictines are reminded of this light each morning as we chant the Benedictus prayer of praise, which includes the verses:

*Praise to you God of Israel
The bright dawn will break upon us.
You give light to those in darkness,
You guide our feet in the path of peace*

These words hint at a connection between God's promise of light in our darkness and the path of peace; the path on which God has set our feet.

Walking in the darkness, especially in an unknown place, can be scary. We stretch out our arms, reaching ahead to avoid bumping into imagined obstructions. We take each step gingerly for fear of falling or making a misstep. Yet this promised path of peace is not a solitary path we tread alone, but one guided by our loving God who accompanies us.



One cannot be guided on a path unless one is willing to follow. We each must take the next step, and the next step after that, if we are to walk with God. The prophet Micah proclaimed, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6.8).

In our darkness, may we have the courage to follow, and to humbly walk this path of peace with our God. May we have the courage to live and be the people of justice and mercy that God is calling us to be. Following this path, we may truly anticipate the Light of Christ breaking upon us with the dawn.

Sister Jacqueline Leiter, OSB, Monastic Leadership Team



CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTERY

*A festive online event with the spirit of
Christmas at St. Paul's Monastery*

SAVE THE DATE
12.12.20

Online Marketplace

Shop the entire week
of Dec. 7-13 for all your
holiday gifts.

Silent Auction

Saturday, Dec. 12
3:00-4:30 p.m.

Our 13th annual
Christmas at the
Monastery is online
this year. Join us
for a Social Hour
with the Sisters,
a Silent Auction, and
an online Marketplace.

Virtual Social Hour with the Sisters

Saturday, Dec. 12
3:00-4:00 p.m.

Live chat with the Sisters.



Register for all events: stpaulsmonastery.org/christmas/

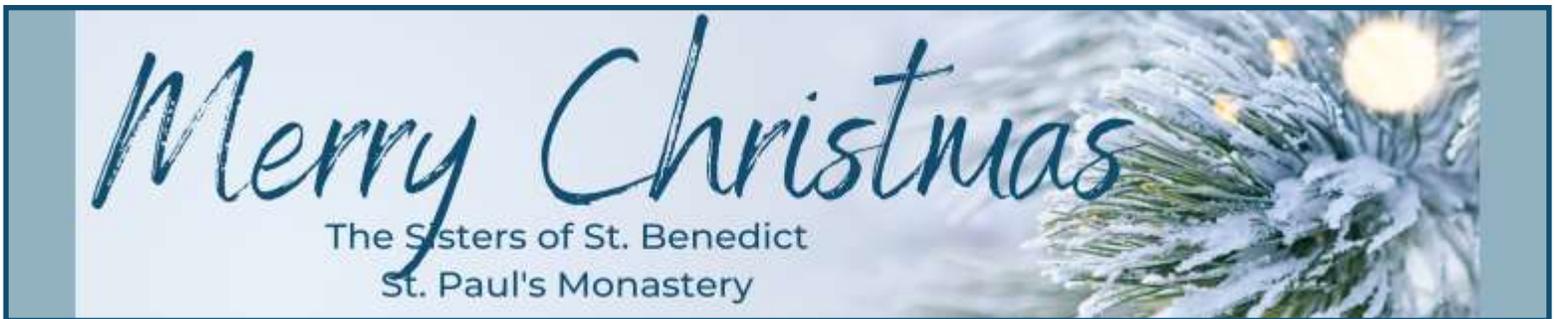


Christmas at the Monastery

by Sister Catherine Nehotte, OSB

Our annual Christmas at the Monastery event is almost here. A whole new way to interact virtually is inviting us to create an event that is different from the past. We are planning an online auction, marketplace, and a virtual social hour with the Sisters. We hope you will be able to join as we make new memories with you.

We are able to plan this event because of your generous sponsorship. Your contributions have allowed us to continue this wonderful experience. I want to express my most sincere gratitude to all of you. As sponsors you have stepped up in a big way to support us this year. I would like to thank each and every one of you for helping us to continue this great tradition. Please keep us informed of any prayer intentions you may have. We appreciate your prayers and support. God's continued blessings on you!



THANK YOU, SPONSORS!

GOLD LEVEL



SILVER LEVEL

Patti Strickey

Mike Dickson

Michael & Janis Nash

Terry & Maynard Johnson, Jr.



EVENT SPONSOR LEVEL



Hill-Murray School

The Catholic Benedictine Prep School, Grades 6-12



Sandra Burton



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Reflections on Hope

by Sister Mary Lou Dummer, OSB

In October, seventy people logged into the annual Oblate Retreat via Zoom to hear Abbot John Klassen, OSB, St. John's Abbey, speak about Stability, Hope and Praying the Psalms. The pandemic we are experiencing has and will bring massive change to our world, to our country, to our nation. How do we respond as Monastics and Oblates to this "new normal?" What do we as individuals, as families, and as communities have to let go of? To answer that question, Abbot John said that hope is essential to the Oblate vocation. Hope is not expectation. Hope embraces the future, while expectation tries to determine it. Hope is nurtured, confirmed, and sustained by the Liturgy of the Hours, by Eucharist, by Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer. Even when we are not with each other, we do these things not as individuals but as a community of faith. Hope is the essential and nonnegotiable basis for Monastic and Oblate commitment. The following poems and personal reflections were written by Oblates as a response to Abbot John's presentation. They were featured last month and again this month. I hope you enjoy these reflections as I have. Thank you, and let us continue to pray for each other as we live out our Benedictine Values.

My Retreat Reflection

I will never forget the power of hope over expectation. I think I am guilty of the expectation thing, when hope would be so much more satisfying. My prayer journal contains lots of reflection, some lament, praise, thanksgiving and blessings. It has been a lifeline during these days of being rather shut up in and away from others. The Daily Office has been a staple, and even if I didn't do my own, I can tune in to many from churches here and there whose laity as well as clergy are praying Morning and Evening Prayer plus Compline as a regular occasions. True Blessings. Yes, we will get through this and we will be fine. That must be hope and not expectation!

-Gwen Odney, Oblate

Oblate Retreat

Andy and I have decided to take the Abbot's recommendation to reduce our watching TV, reading the newspaper, and surfing on the computer. The first thing I realized was I had more primetime when I wasn't tired! For example, I had time to pray with the psalms that Abbot John talked about. I have made a new quiet spot for my prayer time. Seems I need to periodically change things around from my daily readings and where I pray. It is in the basement, next to a fireplace in an old green wingback chair. This space is rarely used and seems to have a quiet energy that I am seeking.

-Linda Larson, Oblate



Retreat Psalm

O God, as I praise you
Peace has come, expectations have waned, Hope has been restored.

My soul sits quietly while
My spirit rests in your love.
Calmness has replaced turmoil.

Let my prayer sustain me in troubled times.
Let me always remember that hope is the source of life and will pull me into another day.

Alleluia!

-Linda Manders, Oblate

My Pandemic Psalm

Oh God, you give me what I need, when I need it. Though I may wonder – and get angry, scared, indignant, confused, frustrated – Your good plan eventually reveals itself. In these times, You give so many unexpected gifts:

New, renewed and deepened friendships.

Financial security, at last.

Birds to raise and love, bringing mindful meditation each time I feed them and clean the coop. Just watching them reminds me of the sacredness of all life and my deep maternal gifts of love and compassion.

Time and space to care for my aging Ginger, my sweet cat companion who, at age 19, is beginning to fail. Her decline and eventual loss is another lesson in patience and compassion from You. May she pass peacefully, quietly, in her sleep. And let me be a comfort to her all the days of her life.

And perhaps Your greatest gift, just what I needed, is the gift of loving home, finally finding contentment in this internal dwelling, physical and invisible, that I call home.

At last, comfort in my own skin. At last, pleasure in place.

Satisfaction and contentment, born from not running around. This relief brings Stability and Hope in a home here on Earth, and also an everlasting place with You.

These are my pandemic gifts. All from You, just what I needed. I await in joyful hope the surprises You bring next. I Hope without expectation, no outcome in my heart other than to remain open to Your will. More will be revealed. Amen.

-Anne Rodenbery, Oblate

Newsletter Name Change

by Mission Advancement

Earlier this year, the newsletter went through a change to make it more in line with current branding standards. We thank all of you

for your feedback on the changes. We love hearing from you.

What the newsletter does not have is a name. We have always just called it the newsletter or the eNewsletter.

In November, we asked for ideas for a name. Thank you for all the submissions. The Leadership team and staff continue to re-imagine the newsletter and its name. Stay tuned as we will make these changes early in 2021.



Democracy in Action

by Jennie Schlauch, Program Director, Maple Tree Monastery Childcare

On November 3, the Maple Tree preschoolers cast their votes to choose their favorite animal and their favorite food. Dogs took the number one animal spot and ice cream won by a landslide, as the top food choice. Democracy in action!



Connecting faith & finances for good.®

With Thrivent Choice®, you can recommend where some of Thrivent Financial's charitable outreach funds go. Since 2010, more than \$330 million has been distributed to churches and nonprofits nationwide. With DIRECT CHOICE DOLLARS®, you can give to the charities of your choice!

Get started now!

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

Go to

smile.amazon.com

and choose

“St. Paul’s Monastery”

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!

Thank you for your generous support this year

by Mission Advancement

The end of 2020 is quickly approaching. December brings the beginning of the Advent season, many Christmas-time events and celebrations, the start of winter, and planning for resolutions in the new year. Before the calendar turns, the Office of Mission Advancement at St. Paul's Monastery would like to say *thank you* to each and every one of you for your continued prayers and generous actions as witnessed through your donations, planned giving, and commitment of time to the Monastery.

You may have seen an email, received a mailing at your home, or read a promotion in social media about some of our events this year. These messages have all been part of our intention to reach out to as many of you as possible, to stay in touch, and to let you know of different ways you can help support the mission of St. Paul's Monastery.

We featured [Beacon of Hope](#) in March and it was intended to reach out to our broader community of friends to offer the prayers and spirit of Hope of the Sisters in the midst of the pandemic.

In May, we launched the first ever [Virtual Open Door](#), allowing online visitors to see the Sisters and what they are doing. This led to the [Support a Sister Sheltered in Place](#) campaign. You, the donor, got to spend some valuable time on the phone or in Zoom calls with a Sister.

[My Benedictine Legacy](#) was launched in June to ask you to consider your legacy and include St. Paul's Monastery in your will/estate planning. Thank you to those who graciously added the Sisters to their legacy planning.

[Sisters' Circle](#) also came out this year, providing another way to support SPM through sustained monthly giving.

“Only together can we participate in the unity of the Spirit as we learn to relate to each other out of compassion and love. When action and contemplation are united, our lives and actions begin to heal our suffering world by their very presence.”

Father Richard Rohr, OSF ([Center for Action and Contemplation](#))

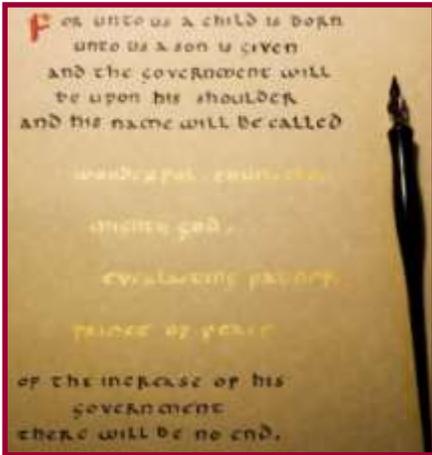
In the coming days and weeks many of you will be participating in our first ever virtual [Christmas at the Monastery](#). As we strive to continue to bring you this beloved annual tradition, Christmas at the Monastery offers you a virtual social hour with the Sisters, an online marketplace, and the traditional silent auction. We hope you can join us for any or all these great festivities. The link above allows you to register for the social hour with the Sisters if you have not already done so. In the words of Father Richard Rohr, together we can “participate in the unity of the Spirit” by being with each other online, in thought, and in prayers. We hope you will join us!

In whatever way you have given to us in 2020, we sincerely thank you and appreciate each of you. If you have not donated this year or would like to give an additional donation as part of year-end giving, here is a [link to our donation page](#). It is a great potential tax deduction and a generous way to end 2020.

The Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery appreciate your gifts and look forward to seeing all of you in 2021.



The Benedictine Center is offering online programs via Zoom. Your presence would make the conversation richer. If you have not used Zoom, the Benedictine Center staff is glad to help you become familiar with the program when you register.



Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! [online]

with Father Michael Joncas, December 1, 7—9 pm

The liturgical season of Advent in the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite has two distinct foci: the mystery of the coming of Christ at the end of history (Parousia) and the mystery of the coming of Christ in history (Christmas). We will explore how these foci are expressed in the lectionary readings and hymns of the day for the Sundays of Advent of Year B as well as Advent texts, ceremonies and customs from Advent in other rites. Immersion in these texts and rites should help us develop Advent spirituality, living in the tension

between already and not yet. [Click here to register.](#)

School of Discernment [online]

December 4—6

The School of Discernment is an opportunity to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit under the guidance of skilled teachers and listeners and with the benefit of wisdom from the monastic tradition, now available online. The framework includes sessions on the practice of discernment, reflection questions for quiet time, and one-on-one meetings with a spiritual director, all via Zoom.



No one will be obligated to share publicly about the particulars of their own stories, but each will have the opportunity to do so as they choose. Spiritual directors will be available to assist with the process of discernment and any questions and insights as they arise. [Click here to register.](#)



SoulCollage Sunday Circle [online]

with Barbara Sutton, December 13, 1:30—4 pm

SoulCollage® Sunday Circle will provide open space for creating and exploring your SoulCollage cards with facilitator Barbara Sutton. It is a casual afternoon for those new to and experienced with SoulCollage to bring their circle wisdom forward each month! [Click here to register.](#)

[Life Transitions: Finding God in the Center of the Unknown](#)



*A four-week, online retreat led by
Sister Paula Hagen, OSB, and
Christine Jurisich*

Sat., January 16—Sat., February 13, 2021

Change is a part of life, but that doesn't make it any easier. Have you experienced dramatic changes and loss? Or are you sensing something subtle from within as a result of having more quiet time? However your life has been impacted this year, it is important to give yourself the sacred time and space to honor, reflect on, and discover new life in this time of change.

You will appreciate this retreat if you...

- Are trying to cope with loss: of a loved one, relationship, or job, or just loss of normalcy
- Want to make meaning out of your time of transition
- Want to feel supported as you navigate this uncertain time

In our four weeks together, you will have the opportunity to...

- Explore prayer practices and tools to help you through transitions and uncertainty
- Be empowered to see God in the center of transitions in your daily routine, in the people around you, and in forgiveness and letting go
- Be in contact with others who are in transition
- Learn about the stages of grief and how to navigate them

[Click here to register.](#)



Christine Jurisich's work in retreat ministry began fifteen years ago as a participant in *Ministry of Mothers Sharing* (now *Within Ministries*), which was sponsored by the Sisters of

St. Benedict of St. Paul's Monastery. For ten years thereafter, the Sisters mentored Christine as she developed her ministry as a national retreat facilitator-trainer and writer. Christine is an author, retreat facilitator, and foundress of the "Retreat, Reflect, Renew" Ministry.



Sister Paula Hagen, OSB, has over 30 years of experience in retreat development and as a retreat facilitator. In addition to a Master's in Family Systems, Sister Paula

trained as a retreat director at the Franciscan Renewal Center. She created and published several *On the Journey Retreats* for use in parishes nationwide and created and published the *Ministry of Mothers Sharing* Journal and materials for parishes, also used nationally.

Sisters' Words of Wisdom: Sister Mary Lou Dummer, OSB

by Ann Bechtell, Mission Advancement Assistant

What could be better than celebrating gratitude? I love that America has a holiday dedicated to thankfulness. As we Minnesotans enter the dark days, below-zero temperatures, and ice and snow of winter, it's especially heartening for us to embrace gratitude.

Something I'm thankful for was the opportunity to visit with Sister Mary Lou Dummer in November. We had several delightful discussions during which Sister Mary Lou spoke about gratitude.

About choosing a vowed religious vocation, Sister Mary Lou said that "I had no idea what was ahead of me. It turned out that I had chosen a life blooming with possibilities and *full* of surprises!" When you meet Sister Mary Lou, it is clear that the joy of the Lord and deep gratitude are the result of this choice.

"My story begins on a farm four and a half miles west of Bird Island (Minnesota), just as the New Ulm Diocese was forming. My mother and father, Ed and Gertie (Gertrude) Dummer, had a 160-acre crop and livestock farm and my seven brothers, sister and I were the 'hired help.'



Two-year-old Mary Lou Dummer in 1940 (at left) and in 1942 with older brothers Donnie (at left) and Dick (at right).



"I was the first girl born after five boys, and we were told that my mother and the doctor danced with joy upon my arrival. With seven brothers, I was a 'tomboy' playing sports and working side by side with them. We got a solid work ethic from our parents, especially our father, which I have been grateful for my entire life. Along with our work ethic, like all farm kids, my siblings and I learned to accept responsibility and take initiative.

"We were a family of deep faith and our life revolved around the farm, the Church, and school. That's what held us together. It was a nurturing life and we had *such* a happy childhood.

Sister Mary Lou with one of her seven brothers, Eddie.

"Our home was a gathering place for neighboring farm kids. We played basketball and baseball and swam in a quarry nearby. One vivid memory is that we had one bicycle, which was a lesson in sharing; and, believe me, that bicycle was in constant circulation! Whether it was work or play, though, we had a lot of fun.

"From first through twelfth grade, I attended St. Mary's Catholic School in Bird Island. I would often stay in town with one of my grandmas who loved the Sisters there and talked about them a lot. In my junior and senior years of high school, I began to hear God's call."

The summer after high school, Sister Mary Lou got a job babysitting for her Aunt Ginny and Uncle Walt Stadelman who lived in Richfield (Minnesota). "My Uncle Walt loved the Benedictines, and he took me to visit St. Paul's Priory that summer.

To read more, [click here](#).

Around the Monastery

by Mission Advancement

Sister Louise Inhofer is very busy these days as Monastery Librarian and also assisting with Front Desk and other duties. The Library continues its popularity with the Community and “fiction,” says Sister Louise, “is very popular right now.” Since the Monastery has been closed to visitors, Sister Louise has finally found time to attend to some reorganization in the Library. For example, she is making sure that author call numbers are consistent. Sister Louise has found copies of the same book shelved in different locations because each was assigned a different filing number. It’s like a library treasure hunt!



*Biography?
Memoir?
Scientific research?
What are you reading?*

*Monastery Librarian
Sister Louise says
that 'Fiction is very
popular (with the
Sisters) right now.'*



The Sisters are so grateful for their well-equipped exercise room. When the weather is inclement, the Sisters can safely and comfortably maintain their wellness activities using the safe and modern exercise equipment available to them. Pictured here is daily user Sister Catherine Schoenecker on the treadmill and Sister Sharon Schiller on the leg press.

Sister Lucia Schwickerath gathers with the Monastery Healthcare Sisters every Thursday to discuss “Preparing for Sunday Liturgy.” Sister Lucia says that “For years, our Community has taken the initiative to prepare for Sunday Mass by meditating on Scripture and other readings.

Sometimes a Sister does this individually and sometimes in groups—in order to share thoughts, observations and inspiration. It made sense to me to gather our Healthcare Sister members to continue this practice. When they can, the nurses and aides on duty often come to participate, too!”



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 St. 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

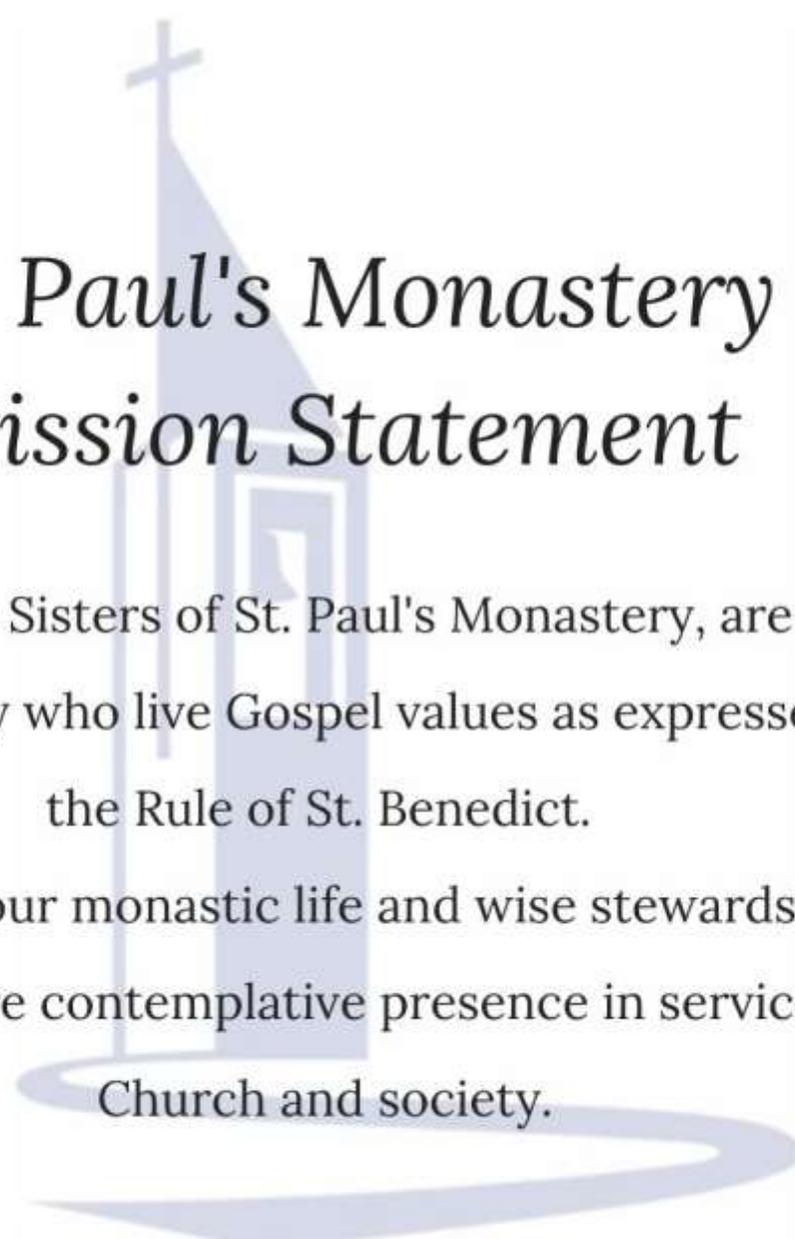
Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM

For further information, call 651-777-8181 or visit us 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](#). Or you can go to the “Ministries” tab and select “Community Prayer Ministry.” Prayer requests go to all the Sisters who pray daily for these intentions at Evening Praise, during weekly adoration, and during the Rosary. May God bless you and your loved ones.



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