



PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE PRIORY PRESERVE

Saturday, July 8, 2023

*Honoring the 75th anniversary of
St. Paul's Monastery*

About Priory Preserve

When the bells of St. Paul's Monastery ring out over the Priory Preserve, it's hard to believe that you are in the middle of the city. Maplewood's largest and most diverse preserve, the Priory has wonderful examples of our historic landscape.

Venture out into the open rolling hills dotted with gnarled apple trees and patches of remnant prairie. A small oak savanna sports tall prairie grasses and small bur oaks stretching their craggy limbs. Wander the oak woodlands with its high canopy, calming ferns, and lovely spring wildflowers.

The adventurous will want to seek out the wetlands: wooded wetlands, grassy wetlands, the fern bog, a rich fen, all teeming with unusual insects and chorusing frogs. Volunteers have created an Interpretive Trail Guide for the preserve and Friends of Maplewood Nature have generously paid for publication of the brochure. Stop by Maplewood Nature Center to pick up a copy, or download a printable version of the Interpretive Trail Guide (PDF) from the City of Maplewood's Parks and Natural Resources website.

About St. Paul's Monastery

St. Paul's Monastery is a Community of Benedictine Sisters and Benedictine Associates, plus hundreds of Oblates, volunteers, and friends from the community. We live the *Rule of St. Benedict* based on Gospel values. Through our liturgical life and wise stewardship, we create sacred space to respond to the needs and challenges of church and society.

Our community consists of 19 Benedictine Sisters, four Benedictine Associates, approximately 180 Oblates, and many volunteers and friends. We are all united in service to God's people in our beautiful Benedictine Monastery. Our offerings include community prayer, our retreat center, spiritual renewal experiences, and outreach to the persons living in our neighborhood and in the larger community.

Members of our community have served in different ways, such as in parish leadership, healthcare, education, pastoral care at St. Therese Homes, and in various roles in social justice initiatives.

St. Benedict and St. Scholastica are our models of a unique way to live the Gospel and welcome guests to become part of our daily life. We welcome you to come and learn more about the *Rule of St. Benedict* and Benedictine Spirituality.

A JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP

Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: **That they may associate in peace!**

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

The Spirit of Pilgrimage

Prayer Leader: Why Pilgrimage?

Pilgrimage is an essential physical demonstration of the spiritual faith in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and recognizes it as one of the earliest traditions of the practice of the Catholic faith. As the great 20th century mystic (and pilgrim) Thomas Merton writes, "The geographic pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey...One can have the one without the other. It is best to have both."

Today's Pilgrimage is through the Priory Preserve—formerly property of the Benedictine Sisters (stewarded by the City of Maplewood). This is ancestral land. Joining with the Benedictines in central Minnesota, we acknowledge that the space we hold today is the original homelands of the Dakhóta and other First Peoples. We honor, respect, and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples forcibly removed from this territory, whose connection remains today.

The first step we now take now draws us prayerfully into the Priory Preserve. We will stop 12 times to pray together, much like the format of Stations of the Cross, allowing time for communal prayer, Scripture and meditations, sacred silence, and the practice of *visio divina* with creation. Questions will guide our journey and our conversations between Stations.

With gratitude we recognize the City of Maplewood for permission to reprint elements of their guide and for making today's pilgrimage a safe journey in their ongoing maintenance of this sacred place. We honor the Benedictine Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery and their commitment to the *Rule of St. Benedict* and Benedictine values of stewardship and hospitality.

Let us now begin our pilgrimage through the Priory Preserve.

STATION 1

Geology: Cool Beginnings

44° 59' 28.562" N 92° 59' 17.886" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Imagine standing on a huge glacier, nearly a mile thick reaching south from Lake Superior. Feel the cold air brush against your face. The glacier advances and recedes, picking up rocks and sediment as it grinds its way over the landscape. The climate warms and the glacier retreats north, depositing sand, gravel, debris—sculpting this land before us now.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 65

Choir 1: You provide for the earth;
You drench its furrows

Choir 2: Level it, soften it with showers
You bless its growth.

Psalm 96

Choir 1: You let the skies ring with joy;
Let the fullness of the sea exult;
Let the bounteous land rejoice!

Choir 2: All the woodland trees dance with joy
In the presence of God!

Sacred Silence

Reading

If we approach nature and the environment without...openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #11

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

Along the trail you will find large rocks deposited by the glacier called glacial "erratics." Glaciers sometimes leave a footprint—lines etched into bedrock—that tells which way they traveled.

- **Where are the spiritual footprints on your faith journey? Or put differently, who are the faith anchors for you from previous generations?**

STATION 2

Where Habitats Meet

44° 59' 29.600" N 92° 59'20.855" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Habitat is like a neighborhood for a particular group of plants and animals that have found a good home with the right mix of food, water, shelter, and space. One neighborhood bumps up against the next. Do you see how the grassland runs right up to the woodland here? Scientists say that there is more species diversity at the meeting place than within either of the habitats.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 145

Choir 1: All creatures look to you with hope,
And you sustain them in their need.

Choir 2: You are generous to all creation
Nourishing all who live.

Sacred Silence

Reading

There is a growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet... Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #19

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

As you continue your walk through the Preserve, look for the areas where habitats meet and ponder the gift of the Benedictine tradition in holding spaces where "habitats" meet.

- **Where do the habitats of your life meet? How does this space bring life and light to the world?**

STATION 3

Wetlands: Soggy Soil

44° 59' 27.937" N 92° 59' 22.903" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: The wetland before you is a wet meadow. People affectionately call it the Fern Bog because sensitive fern grows here. Wetlands provide food, water, and nesting sites for many types of animals. Some wetland creatures spend their whole life in the wetland, while others live part of their life on land. In addition to providing habitat, wetlands serve as giant sponges and strainers—filtering polluted runoff. Here, some water flows southward to Beaver Creek, Beaver Lake, and eventually the Mississippi River.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 104

Choir 1: You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
They flow between the hills.

Choir 2: They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
The wild beasts quench their thirst.

Choir 1: On the banks dwell the birds of the heavens;
From the tree branches they sing their song.

Choir 2: From our dwelling, you water the hills
And earth drinks its fill of your gift.

Sacred Silence

Reading

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet... The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #48

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

Some Benedictines live the majority of their lives in the monastery as vowed religious Sisters or Brothers. Some Benedictines live part of their life in the monastery and the rest out in the world. Together, Benedictines provide a vital habitat to our hurting world.

- **Wetlands serve as giant sponges and strainers—filtering polluted runoff. How does the Benedictine way of life operate like a wetland?**

STATION 4

The Shredders & the Decomposers

44° 59' 27.555" N 92° 59' 28.521" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Imagine what your home would look like (and smell like!) if the garbage and recycling were left to pile up month after month. In nature, rotting and decay are the norm and almost everything is recycled. The shredders and the decomposers are the garbage and recycling factories of the natural world. No one fertilizes the forests or the grasslands. In their quest for food, the shredders and the decomposers work together to cycle nutrients through the system.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 103

Choir 1: God is gentle with all who believe,
Knowing of what we are

Choir 2: And remembering that we are dust.
As for us, our days are like grass;

Choir 1: We blossom like the flowers of the field.
The breeze comes and we are gone.

All: Never to be seen again.

Sacred Silence

Reading

Quoting Saint John Paul II: Christians in their turn “realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.” When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This... has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #19

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

St. Benedict, in his holy Rule, exhorts his followers to “keep death daily before their eyes” (The Rule of Benedict, 4:47). From the first days of the Benedictine tradition consecrated women and men religious regarded such meditation on death as a way to live daily life more fully and in a detached way.

- **Where do you find the wisdom of Benedict to live each day fully as a disciple of Christ, keeping death daily before your eyes?**

STATION 5

Oak Woodland: Layered Living

44° 59' 21.507" N 92° 59' 31.303" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: This oak woodland is like a layered cake. The canopy is the umbrella-like top layer of mature trees, a mass of intertwined branches, twigs, and leaves. The middle layer of shrubs and tree saplings has adapted to life in the shade. The forest floor is carpeted with ferns, wildflowers, sedges, and grasses. Oaks produce acorns, a culinary highlight of the forest. With their high protein and high fat content, acorns are the main course meal for jays, squirrels, and turkeys.

Sacred Silence

Psalms 9 & 37

Choir 1: Let the skies ring with joy;
Let the fullness of the sea exult;

Choir 2: Let the bounteous land rejoice.

Choir 1: All the woodland trees dance with joy
In the presence of God

All: Who comes to govern the earth.

Choir 1: Be still and wait in patience

Choir 2: For God's promise is forever.

Sacred Silence

Reading

We are faced not with two separate crises [layers], one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #139

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

St. Benedict, in the Prologue to his holy Rule, calls upon followers of the Benedictine way of life to *listen with the ear of our hearts*. So much life has voice in the oak woodland from the movement of the wind in the boughs, to birds and other wildlife, and if we could listen closely enough we could hear the steady growth of the trees themselves.

- **How do you listen for the creative power of God in your life, the layers of Divine Presence? What catches the attention of the ear of your heart standing before the awesomeness of creation?**

STATION 6

The Changing Landscape

44° 59' 22.389" N 92° 59' 29.083" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: John, one of the long-time residents in this neighborhood, would tell you this preserve is forever changing. In recent times, disease and invasive species have made dramatic changes in this woodland. In John's lifetime, buckthorn, a non-native shrub, invaded this woodland and changed the character of the woods. Our native woodland shrubs could not compete and the shrub layer became a monoculture of buckthorn. Buckthorn's dense shade made it difficult for woodland sedges, ferns, and wildflowers to thrive.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 121

Choir 1: Ever watchful, you guide my steps
Guardian of Israel, you never sleep.

Choir 2: You guard and shade me, O God.
You stand at my side.

Choir 1: By day the sun shall not harm me,
Nor the moon by night.

Sacred Silence

Reading

Along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us.

Pope Francis’ Letter on the Environment Laudato Si’ #231

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator’s praise arise;
Let the Redeemer’s name be sung
Through ev’ry land and ev’ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

There are many invasive ways the world can impact our faith—some for the better, some not. The Benedictine Tradition has adapted time and again to the needs of the time, as the teaching of the Second Vatican Council reminds us, that we are stewards of this time gifted to us by God.

- **The Benedictine practice of *conversatio morum* (the conversion of life) forms disciples of Christ. How is conversion active in your life? What are your changing landscapes?**

STATION 7

Wanted: Dead Trees

44° 59' 17.614" N 92° 59' 31.054" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Dead trees—standing or down—are important for a woodland. When a large tree dies it may be colonized by insects and other organisms before it falls. These in turn attract birds and other animals. They come not only for the meal—dead trees make great houses for birds and mammals, too. Once a tree falls to the ground, it can be home to a host of insects and animals. Ants, beetles, slugs, and centipedes are busy foraging for food. If you're lucky, you may spot a salamander hiding out and enjoying the cool damp soil!

Sacred Silence

Habakkuk 3:16-19

Choir 1: Though the fig tree blossom not
Nor fruit be on the vines

Choir 2: Though the yields on the olive fail
And the fields produce no nourishment

Choir 1: Though the flocks disappear from the folds
And there be none heard in the stalls

All: Yet will I rejoice and exult in God!

Sacred Silence

Reading

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #160 and #202

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

In John's Gospel, the Lord teaches us "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24).

- **How do we die to self in our service to the Kingdom so that many will live through our witness of life in Christ?**

STATION 8

Oak Savanna: A Rare Landscape

44° 59' 25.062" N 92° 59' 21.902" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Pause a moment in the cool shade of this bur oak grove. You are in an oak savanna—a landscape with scattered oak trees and a ground over of prairie grasses and flowers. The bur oak is the icon of the oak savanna. It has especially thick and corky bark, which protects it from prairie wildfires. Wildfires were essential to the savanna because they kept trees and brush from taking over the grassland. Much of Maplewood was once oak savanna. Today, savannas are one of the rarest landscapes in America. Maplewood is fortunate to have two or three tiny examples remaining.

Sacred Silence

Psalms 33, 104, and 1

Choir 1: Let all the earth stand in awe.
Let all who live be holy.

Choir 2: You make grass grow for cattle
And plants to serve our needs.

Choir 1: Happy indeed are those
Who follow not the counsel of the wicked

All: They are like trees
Planted beside flowing waters.

Sacred Silence

Reading

All is not lost. Human beings... are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start... and [embarking] on new paths to authentic freedom. *Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #205*

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

In the world today, we may feel the loss of faith. 75 years ago the Monastery looked very different from how it does today. Some may say the way of faith is rare, we know the Monastery to be rare—but how fortunate is Maplewood to have this example of religious life remaining at the Monastery and through the ministry of Hill-Murray School.

- **As the bur oak has especially thick and corky bark protecting it from wildfires, what virtues and practices of the Benedictine way of living provide you with protection from the fires that may rage any given day?**

STATION 9

Lichen: Best Friends

44° 59' 29.291" N 92° 59' 12.587" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: This pretty red rock has a couple of tattoos. The white/grey patch is actually lichen. This tough little life form is a relationship between two organisms: a fungus and an algae. Over the years, lichens can break down the substrate they live on and begin the process of creating soil. Eventually a seed may fall, germinate and grow, shading out the lichen and a plant may replace the lichen. Imagine living long enough to witness the whole process!

Sacred Silence

Psalm 145

Choir 1: Age to age shall proclaim your works,
Shall declare your wonderful deeds.

Choir 2: They shall acclaim your splendor and glory
And tell of your wondrous works!

Sacred Silence

Reading

The current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty, which in turn becomes “a seedbed for collective selfishness.” When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume.

Pope Francis’ Letter on the Environment Laudato Si’ #204

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator’s praise arise;
Let the Redeemer’s name be sung
Through ev’ry land and ev’ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

Lichens are sensitive to air pollution. Some lichen are used as air quality indicators. There are a lot of lichens at the Priory Preserve where air quality is good.

- **How about in your life? Like the lichen (two organisms working collaboratively) are others able to see indicators of engaged faith as you live as a disciple in the world?**

STATION 10

Stewardship: Together We Can

44° 59' 26.537" N 92° 59' 16.970" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: This urban nature preserve is too small and isolated to thrive on its own ecologically. Natural forces such as wildfire have been removed from the landscape. Pressures have been added such as pollution, invasive species, and altered waterways. Maplewood actively manages this preserve with the help of contractors and many volunteers. The grassland before you is slowly being converted to prairie. In the wetlands, naturalists have introduced biological control of a beetle species to manage plant populations. In the woodlands, contractors and volunteers have removed buckthorn and managed deer populations.

Sacred Silence

Psalm 103

Choir 1: The love of God is everlasting
Upon all who are reverent.

Choir 2: Justice reaches out to all generations,
To those who keep the covenant.

All: God touches all in the heavens and on the earth;
Everything is full of sacred presence.

Sacred Silence

Reading

A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production... This shows us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers. "Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic—act." Today, in a word, "the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle".

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #206

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

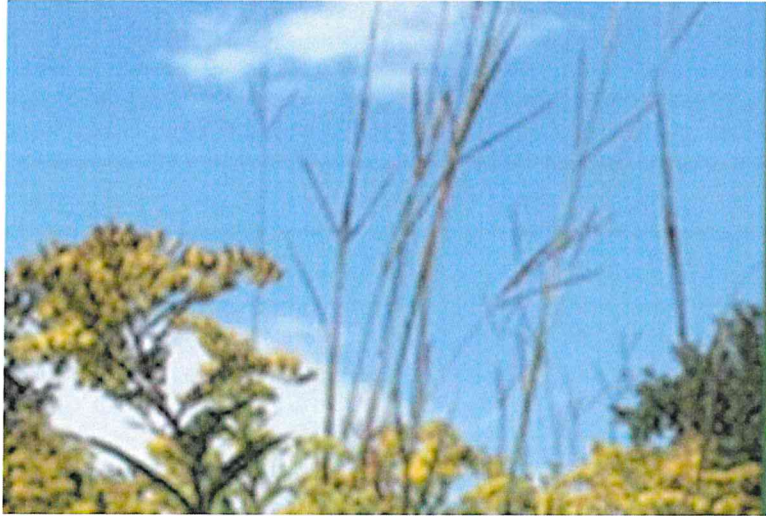
The stewardship of gifts is a Benedictine value lived well by the Sisters, Associates, and Oblates of St. Paul's Monastery. Stewardship is partnering with the Creator in our care of all creation and the blessings the Lord bestows upon each person.

- **How are you aware of the gifts given to you by God?**
- **As a steward of these gifts, how do you engage your gifts in the service of the Kingdom of Heaven?**

STATION 11

Prairie Patches

44° 59' 26.106" N 92° 59' 18.577" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: A kaleidoscope of bright wildflowers blooms in this prairie grassland. Prairie grasses and flowers are famous for their deep roots, which are often as long as the plant is tall. Try to visualize the prairie world under your feet. These tremendous roots enable prairie plants to find water deep in the soils and survive in drought conditions. In pre-settlement times, Maplewood didn't have vast prairies. It had small pocket prairies like this one, tucked in among the oak savannas, woodlands, and wetlands. Each year, part of the prairie root system dies and begins to decay, releasing nutrients and adding organic matter to the soil. This process creates the rich soil that was highly sought after by early European settlers as farmland.

Sacred Silence

Psalms 104 and 136

Choir 1: You make grass grow for cattle
And plants to serve our needs,

Choir 2: So we may bring forth bread from the earth,
You alone do great wonders.

All: You provide for all living creatures,
To you we give thanks!

Sacred Silence

Reading

[Concern for others and the natural environment attunes us to] the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society. An awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #208-209

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

The Benedictine tradition has shaped generations for centuries. These deep roots may not be immediately recognizable, but the rich soils produced by the Benedictines are producing so much fruit today—and for generations to come!

- **Where are the deep roots of the Benedictine way of life for you, for your family?**

STATION 12

Apple Trees: Snacktime

44° 59' 27.216" N 92° 59' 20.064" W



Call to Prayer

Prayer Leader: First, let them pray together

All: That they may associate in peace!

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 53

Standing in the Presence

Prayer Leader: Johnny Appleseed probably never made it this far west, but his legacy of planting apple trees did. There are nearly 50 apple trees in the Preserve. Apple trees provide food, cover, and resting space for many creatures.

Johnny Appleseed's dream was for a land where apple trees were prolific and no one was hungry. So, when they ripen, help yourself to one of these old varieties of apples.

Sacred Silence

Psalms 17 and 85

Choir 1: Keep me as the apple of your eye when I awake,
I will be filled with the sign of your glory.

Choir 2: O God, you make us prosper
And our earth shall yield its fruit.

All: Justice shall walk before you
And peace shall follow your steps.

Sacred Silence

Reading

I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world.

Pope Francis' Letter on the Environment Laudato Si' #216

Song of Praise

From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue!

Question for the Journey

The poem, "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree" first published in 1761 begins: "The tree of life my soul hath seen, Laden with fruit and always green; The trees of nature fruitless be, Compared with Christ the Apple Tree." From the barrenness of winter, to the flower-laden spring, to the lush bounty year of harvest, the apple tree can walk us through the liturgical year, and the life of faith.

- **How are you fed by the Word of God, by the practices of the Benedictine tradition (e.g. lectio divina, liturgy of the hours, sacred silence, community life)?**

A JOURNEY CONTINUES

Concluding Prayer

Prayer Leader: Listen, Child of God, to the guidance of your teacher.
Attend to the message you hear and make sure that it pierces to your heart, so that you may accept with willing freedom and fulfill by the way you live the directions that come from your loving God.

All: With all this in mind what we mean to establish is a school for the Lord's service. In the guidance we lay down to achieve this we hope to impose nothing harsh or burdensome. But, as we progress in this Benedictine way of life and in faith, our hearts will warm to its vision and with eager love and delight that defies expression we shall go forward on the way of God's commandments.

The Rule of Saint Benedict, Prologue

Daniel 3 and Psalm 27

Choir 1: Bless God, all you works of creation.
All creatures of the earth bless the Lord.
God of Creation, we praise you forever.

Choir 2: Caught up in your beauty
I speak of my heart's desire.
To find the fullness of life,
Dwelling in your presence forever.

Doxology

All: All honor to God the Giver of Life,
to Christ the Risen One,
and to the Spirit, Bond of Love.
Let glory and praise be sung. Amen.

Vision for Outdoor Classroom Becomes Reality

by Abby Haldorson 2023

As a 9th grade student at Hill Murray in 2021-2022, I took on a “Reading for Action” project in my Honors English 9 class. This project required students to pick a current real-world issue, research the problems that surround it, write an essay based on the research, and plan a project to help raise awareness of the issue. Originally, I had planned on exploring disability awareness as my project. However, only a few



weeks into the project, I heard the tragic news that a friend of mine had died by suicide. I knew at that moment it was important for me to raise awareness of this issue. This inspired me to start my suicide prevention project.



I didn't want to just do a presentation or a speech; I wanted to leave a lasting impact on the community. I realized that lots of classes at Hill-Murray take their students outside, but have a lack of spaces to teach and connect. So, I decided to write a grant proposal for

\$3,000 to build an Outdoor Classroom for my school. Luckily, my grant was not only accepted, but the budget was increased to \$7,000 to complete this space.

According to studies from the Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota, spending time in a natural outdoor environment is linked to improving mental health. Being in natural surroundings has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms. By extension, the experiential model of outdoor learning has been proven to enhance peer relationships among students.

I quickly got to work designing and creating the new Outdoor Classroom which is now located in the Priory Preserve, adjacent to Hill-Murray. I named it the Experiential Center for Environmental Learning (ExCEL Learning Garden). I felt like students needed a more collaborative environment where everyone can interact and share ideas in one cohesive space outside of the classroom. To support this collaborative learning environment, I placed boulders in a circle for seating and made sure supplies are always available to check out, including small whiteboards, markers, and erasers. This way teams of students can work through thoughts and then share with the whole class.



I worked with many wonderful people at Hedburg Supply/SiteOne to find the best type of rock seating that would keep the natural beauty of the space, but also function well for classes. Once I had all of the materials to build, I needed a team to help me build it. So, I organized some amazing friends, family, and staff to help me with pulling buckthorn, prepping the dirt, placing rocks, and planting grass and flowers.



After months of planning and hard work, the new Outdoor Classroom was finally finished by October 2022. Right away, many teachers were utilizing the space for their fall classes. I noticed that many students were showing an increased interest in getting their classes outside more now that the Outdoor Classroom was built. In conjunction with building this space, I founded an Environmental Health Club at Hill-Murray that aims to strengthen students' learning and understanding between the environment and mental health.



ExCEL Learning Garden



Always remembered, never forgotten #51.

This Outdoor Classroom is dedicated to Hunter Peters. I hope it will expand to reach out to others as a peaceful and reflective space.

**Those who touch our lives, stay in our hearts forever -
Robert Louis Stevenson**



**CITY OF MAPLEWOOD
Neighborhood Preserves**

<https://www.maplewoodmn.gov/984/Neighborhood-Preserves>

Neighborhood Preserves Brochure

<https://www.maplewoodmn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10857/Maplewood-Neighborhood-Preserves-PDF>

Priory Preserve Interpretive Walking Guide

<https://www.maplewoodmn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2481/Priory-Interpretive-Trail-Guide-PDF>



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