

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Valley of Our Lady Monastery

Lent 2023 Campaign Newsletter

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Gratitude

First and foremost, the contemplative nuns of Valley of Our Lady Monastery want to express our sincere gratitude to every donor for their support and to assure you of our prayers. We are humbled by the generous support of so many. This New Monastery project has been a two-decade long vision of our community that is now, through your help and prayers, becoming a reality. We are all the more humbled by people's generosity in the midst of these uncertain economic times. Your so valuing our monastic life and our hidden fruitfulness for the Church and the world encourages us to live out our vocation more generously and with greater devotion, that we may more truly live *for the praise of His glory* (Eph. 1).

Excitement

Our community also wants to share its joy and excitement as our new monastic home takes shape. As one sister expressed her eagerness: Can't Wait! Can't wait till we have a new fresh start! Can't wait till we have more space! Can't wait till we dwell in a building built specifically for the monastic life! Can't wait till we're living in the tradition of our Order and with a more fitting Cistercian Church! Can't wait till we live far away from a highway and traffic! Can't wait till we live in buildings that aren't falling apart! Can't wait!

Spiritual Preparations

While external preparations are made on the building, we are not neglecting spiritual preparations for our move. The transition will be an upheaval to our monastic life. We've been discussing as a community how not only to maintain our monastic, contemplative life during this challenging transition, but find ways to grow more deeply into it, allowing the move to be a refining fire to our vocation. One sister encouraged us during this Lenten Season to cultivate a deeper interior silence and more constant prayer such that as things get busier and louder exteriorly we may maintain an interior cloister and silence. Another sister reflected: We have a once-in-a-[cloistered]-lifetime opportunity to experience actual going-forth, detaching from one living place to another; an "exodus" of sorts. Another recommended we cultivate a prevenient gratitude to God, to be ready to receive all as gift.

Sad Farewell

We also wanted to announce that Sister Bede was unexpectedly elected the superior of Frauenthal Abbey in Switzerland earlier this year. She has been a member of our community for more than 15 years and many of you met her as she lead our fundraising efforts. We were sad to see her go, but send our love and prayers as she pursues this new calling.

Join Bishop Hying for a Spiritual Pilgrimage March 28

'**Santiago: The Camino Within**' is a full-length film featuring Madison's Bishop Hying as he prayerfully walks the famous Way of St James through Spain. The film will be released in theaters nationwide on March 28th (for one night only). Valley of Our Lady is honored to be a 'preview' before the film. Visit our news page for links to the trailer, participating theaters, and tickets: build.valleyofourlady.org/news/

PROJECT UPDATE

Groundbreaking

After some unexpected delays we broke ground on September 6th. The excavation revealed that bedrock was much closer to the surface than the soil borings suggested. Some exciting explosions made way for our basement along one side of the cloister.



Foundations and footings

Hard work has continued through the winter months to install a firm foundation for the monastery.



Taking shape

Undaunted by the Wisconsin winter, construction has continued to move forward. The first wall went up on February 3rd. Like a new shoot emerging from the snow in the Spring, the monastery has continued to grow and take shape.



Design continues

With the help of many we continue the planning and refining process, including exterior and interior finishes.



Moving in

God willing, we still hope to move in by the end of this calendar year. Given the complexity of the construction of the chapel, this part of the building will lag some months behind the rest of the monastery and will still be in process when the sisters move in.

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord,
they never cease to praise you. ~ Psalm 84:4*



Left & Front Page: A bird's-eye view of the building site, compliments of Architect Kevin Clark's drone

Below: The completed elevator tower and western stairwell



CHALLENGES

Inflation and Supply Shortages

Our project is plagued with the same challenges every construction project is experiencing in these difficult economic times. The construction industry is seeing unprecedented inflation and supply shortages. Bids for each part of the construction have come back unpredictably high. We have worked closely with our professionals to value engineer every aspect of the buildings in order to reduce costs. Our contractor has worked diligently to find materials that will not delay construction. Three bids are still pending, making the total cost of the project uncertain. **However, the cost will very likely exceed what we have raised thus far.**

Budget increases

Before putting the project to bid we were alerted to the staggering increases in construction costs, with some projects costing nearly twice as much as estimated. With some quick redesign and good advice, we were able to simplify the scope of the project. However, even at this point it was clear we needed to increase the budget or else not build the chapel. The community was unanimous in desiring not to definitively postpone the building of God's house in favor of ours. We instead increased the budget and found some means to help make up the difference.

The budget may again need some increases as the final bids come in. The only alternative would be to further eliminate finishes (such as no flooring), furnishings (such as no cabinetry), and landscaping (such as no trees to create enclosure) and redesign the already reduced chapel. These measures would only delay the expenses, not eliminate them. The more economic choices of materials come with the ongoing burden of higher maintenance and replacement costs. The sisters are concerned about **the long-term spiritual and financial impact of prolonging the project** after we move in. The new buildings will allow us to keep a stricter enclosure, but this will be undermined if workmen need to enter the enclosure for future installations. Also, those sisters closely involved with the project need to reengage their monastic life after long interaction with the world. The more economic choices of materials come with the ongoing burden of higher maintenance and replacement costs.

Our Lord was well aware of all the challenges this project would face. We trust in His Providence to help us see it to completion.

What's Next

We wanted to update you on the project as we prayerfully await final project bids; these will provide some much-needed clarity on the total project cost. With construction in high gear and on a timeline projected to get us moved in late this year, decisions will need to be made quickly. Please watch for additional updates as they become available.

In the meantime, please:

- Join us in prayer, through the intercession of Our Lady of Good Help and St Joseph
 - * For the Holy Spirit's guidance in all our decisions
 - * For safety for all workers at the site
 - * For funds needed to complete the project
 - * For blessings on all our benefactors
 - * For graces needed for the sisters during the transition
- Continue to help us spread the word about our project among family members, friends, and acquaintances
- Ask your company to match your pledge or gift
- Consider leaving a legacy and remembering Valley of Our Lady in your will
- Consider reaching out to our volunteer Director of Advancement, Paul Merline at (608) 516-3237 or pmerline@valleyofourlady.org to discuss possibly accelerating or increasing your pledge, if you are able to do so, or to let us know about others who might be interested in learning more about our project.

For Updates

- Visit our news page. We try to update photos every 7-10 days: build.valleyofourlady.org/news/
- Let us know your email address for periodic project updates (via our contact page or email us at nmfund@valleyofourlady.org)

Lenten & Easter Blessings

Mother Anne Marie and the sisters of Valley of Our Lady Monastery would like to wish you a blessed Lenten Season and Joyful Easter! May we recommit to our Lenten practices with greater devotion as the season draws to a close, and open ourselves to the outpourings of grace during the Holy Week and Easter celebrations.

*God has rescued us from the power of darkness
and transferred us into the kingdom of His Beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

~ Colossians 3:13-14

