

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Valley of Our Lady Monastery

Summer 2023 Campaign Newsletter

- Construction Update
- Project History
- Project Update & Appeal
- Reflection

Top photo shows a bird's-eye view of the New Monastery in-progress; Bottom computer-generated rendering, from the same perspective, portrays the completed New Monastery



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

We remain grateful for the continued support of so many. It's exciting to see the New Monastery take shape and your generosity bear such beautiful and lasting fruit.

The New Monastery follows the traditional monastic floorplan: a quadrangle with a central courtyard and a chapel along one side of the quadrangle with the sanctuary facing east. Construction is progressing from south to north, with the Communion Wafer Workshop the farthest along and the chapel lagging somewhat. Construction is on schedule for the community to move in early December, with the chapel due to finish in March.

There are many moving parts and pieces to coordinate, especially so we don't end up with a 100-ft crane as a permanent lawn ornament in the enclosed cloister courtyard! Thus, the construction team has left part of the chapel and North range of the quadrangle open to allow temporary access to the courtyard.

The work-site is closed to visitors; however, we are coordinating periodic small-group tours of the New Monastery. Contact us if you would like to be informed of upcoming opportunities: nmfund@valleyofourlady.org

- The main masonry structures are completed: two stairwells, an elevator shaft, & belltower
- The Communion Wafer Workshop and Southwest Extension: framed, sheathed, roofed, & windowed; plumbing and electrical conduit being installed; the stone wainscot on the exterior nearly finished
- The South Range of the quadrangle: framed on the basement, first, second, and third levels; roof and windows in progress
- The Guest Wings extending from the chapel: framed; roof in progress
- The West Range of the quadrangle: framed on the first and second floors; roof in progress
- The East Range of the quadrangle: framing somewhat delayed by (recently arrived) steel decking for the archive room; framing now moving quickly
- Excavation: the driveway, initially roughed in, completed, pull-offs formed; grading for the cemetery and septic mound completed

Visit our website for the most recent photos and videos of the construction: build.valleyofourlady.org/news/



I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit. ~John 15:5

PROJECT IN REVIEW

1999

Mother Paula and the community first discern that our buildings (intended to be temporary) will not sustain our community for long and our property will not allow for expansion. They begin to look for another property to build a real monastery to ensure the future of the community. Eventually a property in Highland is found.

As our first American superior, Mother Paula guided our community through the many challenges of the early years and the upheavals following Vatican II



2006-8

In a two-year span, nine young women join our community. The nuns re-envision the size of the new monastery to fit the growing community. We discern that the property acquired in Highland would not be able to house the proposed larger monastery.



Bursting at the seams: Our community is blessed with many new vocations

2011

After long-searching and discernment, the 229-acre Brigham property is purchased and re-zoning begins.

2016

Our current buildings are assessed; it is estimated to take more than \$6 million to simply bring the monastery up to code and remove hazardous materials, not including any improvements or additions. The need to relocate is confirmed, with some urgency added.



An aerial view of the Brigham property looking North

2018

A basic Master Plan is designed. An \$18 million budget is estimated for the proposed building. A feasibility study is conducted. The results suggest hesitation over our ability to raise the full amount. We are advised to build in two phases, with the first phase estimated at a more conservative \$12 million. *For the Glory of God* capital campaign is launched in October 2018.

2020-21

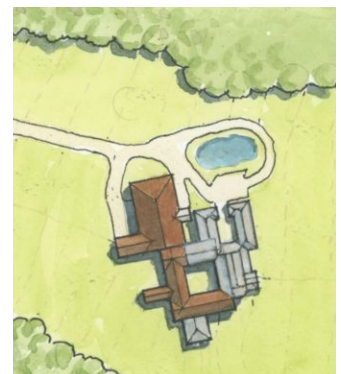
With the help of a generous gift-matching challenge, in December 2020 we reach the goal of raising the **\$12 million needed to build phase one.** With so much unanticipated support, we are able to switch to one-phase construction. We continue to refine the monastery design; in particular, re-shape it to better fit the lay of the land.

2022

The pandemic does not lessen the generosity of our supporters. We meet our **goal of raising \$18 million by January 2022.** However, the pandemic does greatly impact construction costs. On account of unprecedented inflation, **we need to raise the budget to \$24.5 million** and come up with a path forward. With much excitement, excavation and construction begin in September 2022.

2023

Construction continues through the winter and spring at a rapid pace. Bids for each part of the work come in unpredictably high. Value engineering reduces every aspect of the project, but costs continue to increase - **the final project cost comes in at \$26 million.**



Originally, we were going to build in two phases. With so much support we are able to build all at once



Monastery construction continues at an aggressive pace to keep costs down and get the sisters moved in soon

WHAT'S THE SCOOP?

THE PERFECT STORM

Unprecedented inflation, supply shortages, labor shortages, labor wage increases, poor bid responsiveness, the remote location, and unexpected complications, complexities, and delays all contribute to a perfect storm in which to build. Our contractor asserts that this is an unprecedentedly challenging project. While the unpredictability of the situation has led to difficulties, we are confident that Our Lord knew perfectly well the challenges this project would face. He has led it thus far; we trust He will see it to completion, in His own way.

PROJECT REVISIONS

During the past few years, new cost estimates were made at each phase of the design as the details of the New Monastery were further refined. Each time this number came in over budget we reduced the scope, scale, and quality of the project to keep us within the set budget. By the time we came to construction, the building was reduced to a bare minimum.

However, the pandemic and its unpredictable trickle-down effects have made a big impact on the construction industry; overall the industry has experienced 37% inflation. Supply shortages have also limited our options for certain materials. Labor shortages have greatly impacted the project and have led to more competitive wages. We received few responses from requests for bids - both on account of the location being remote and there not being enough workers for the jobs. We have had to continue



Limestone veneer will adorn the chapel and line the monastery's wainscot

the reductions and even eliminations to reduce costs. We are now down to the dregs of things we can remove from the project. Many would be difficult or disruptive to add back later or would compromise the monastic enclosure.

NOT ALL BAD NEWS

The winter was unusually mild and allowed for construction to continue mostly unhindered by the weather. The dry spring weather, though not good for crops, has been great for construction. Supply shortages have not caused too many delays.

Buechel Stone Corporation offered us a generous price for real stone veneer, comparable in price to the utility brick we had resigned ourselves to. The entire church exterior, the first floor of the cloister courtyard, and a wainscot around the entire building will be clad in beautiful limestone.

REQUESTING YOUR ASSISTANCE

While we had certainly hoped to build a monastery for much less, **the \$26 million goal is not too far off.** With your generous support, the New Monastery Fund (which includes donations, pledges, gifts, grants, interest earned, and dividends on investments) now stands at **\$24.6 million, exceeding all expectations!**

We ask you to prayerfully and generously consider further supporting the New Monastery project to help us cross the finish line. Together we can create a sacred space that will allow many generations of contemplative nuns to live out their vocation, for God's glory and for the good of the Church and the world, always in need of prayer.

GOT BELLS?

We're eager to reuse Church bells that have fallen into disuse and need a good home. In particular, we are looking for two bronze bells, 17-inch & 20-inch diameters. Please contact us with any leads.



Two sisters fit inside the massive scoop of an excavator affectionately dubbed 'the beast'



Peering down the newly constructed bell tower eagerly awaiting bells

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys.

~ Matthew 6:20

Are there moths in heaven?

Sr. Marie Bernadette, who has no little animosity toward moths, would be happy for a beatific vision without the vermin. Sr. Christina Marie, our resident entomologist, would be much saddened if these Lepidopterans were not included in the new heavens and new earth. How are we to interpret Our Lord's words that moths cannot destroy our treasure in heaven? Will heaven be a moth-free zone, as Sr. Marie Bernadette hopes? Or will moths lose their destructive tendencies in their glorified state, as Sr. Christina Marie argues? Or is it something about the nature of our heavenly treasure?

When we really consider it, so often the amount of time or money we spend on something has no relation to its true importance and eternal value. St Benedict admonishes us *to keep death daily before your eyes* (RB Ch 4), not in order to have a morbid preoccupation with death but to keep life in its proper perspective. In the light of eternity, our vision is clearer.

How easy it is to become anxious over our earthly cares and worldly goods. Yet, Our Lord teaches us that there is a freedom in surrendering to Him and a peace in relying on Divine Providence. He says: *Do not let your hearts be troubled* (Jn 14:1), *do not worry about your life* (Mt 6:25), *you are anxious and worried about many things; there is need of only one thing* (Lk 10:41), *your heavenly Father knows that you need them all; but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides* (Mt 6:32-33). He even assures us that what we give up for Him he will multiply in this life and add eternal life as well (see Mt 19:30).

To you, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul. It is the poor in spirit who lift up their souls to God. They do not degrade themselves with worldly things, but desire and yearn and burn for those which are celestial. In God their life is hid with Christ; on him are fixed their eyes and their love; in him is their heart and their treasure (Baldwin of Ford). Let us lift up our souls to Our Heavenly Father and ask for the grace to trust more deeply in His Divine Providence. While we may not be able to solve the mystery of heavenly moths until we see them, let us ask the Father to spare us even here the moths of worry and the rust of self-reliance.

You who look upon your poverty as a friend, and find your pleasure in humility of spirit, to you Truth unchangeable gives the certainty of possessing the kingdom of heaven. He declares it belongs to you and he guards it safe, laid up in readiness for you. All you have to do is to guard the hope of it deep in your heart to the very end, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs all honor and glory, through endless ages. Amen. (Bl. Gueric of Igny)

For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be. ~ Matthew 6:21

