

*"When you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me."  
Christ has received what you have given;  
He who has given you wherewith to give has received what you have given;  
He who will at length give you Himself has received what you have given.*

*~ Saint Augustine: Sermon 60, On Almsgiving*

Lent is a time when we pray, fast, and give alms with renewed zeal. These practices are essential to our spiritual health and can bear great fruit in our lives.

Spending time with God in prayer is the foundation of all we do. Even if it's only five minutes a day, that time is the source of every grace we need and draws us closer to God and to our neighbor. Fasting reminds us that we do not live by bread alone but in complete dependence on God's providential love for us. And almsgiving is a way of sharing the fruit of our prayer and fasting: By denying ourselves a little and growing in love and trust, we become more free to give of ourselves and our resources to others.

Perhaps some of you wonder: How do nuns give alms? One way is through tithing: We support ourselves by making altar breads, and from our income, we give at least a tenth to those in need. Blessed Aelred of Rievaulx, one of our Cistercian Fathers, describes additional ways when he writes to his own sister, also consecrated to a life of prayer:

What good then will you be able to do to your neighbor? Nothing is more valuable, a certain holy man [St. Gregory the Great] has said, than good will. Let this be your offering. What is more useful than prayer? Let this be your largesse. What is more humane than pity? Let this be your alms. So embrace the whole world with the arms of your love and in that act at once consider and congratulate the good, contemplate and mourn over the wicked. In that act look upon the afflicted and the oppressed and feel compassion for them. In that act call to mind the wretchedness of the poor, the groans of orphans, the abandonment of widows, the gloom of the sorrowful, the needs of travelers, the prayers of virgins, the perils of those at sea, the temptation of monks, the responsibilities of prelates, the labors of those waging war. In your love take them all to your heart, weep over them, offer your prayers for them. Such alms are more pleasing to God, more acceptable to Christ, more becoming your profession, more fruitful to those who receive them.

*~ From Rule of Life for a Recluse, 28; transl. Sr. Mary Paul Macpherson, OCSO*

We are grateful that you continue to join us in this good work of giving our lives to prayer and sacrifice for the needs of the world.

# PROJECT UPDATE

As most if not all of you know, we not only met but exceeded our matching gift goal of \$1 million, and we did so well before the deadline. Words cannot convey our gratitude to God and to all of you who helped us so generously. Thank you.

With your help, we have raised about \$12.8 million and are now working to complete the architectural design, with the goal of breaking ground in late summer of 2022. Given this momentum, we are planning to construct the entire monastery in a single phase. We realize this goal is ambitious, but we are convinced that the savings in cost, time, and trouble will be well worth the effort.

In order to build everything at once, however, we must raise an additional \$1 million by October of this year and then continue on as quickly as we can to the total \$18 million for the entire project.

We know many people are struggling at this time, and you are already very generous in your support of us and our project. It is difficult to ask you for more, but we trust that God's continued blessing means He truly does want this monastery to be brought to completion. Inspired by His generosity and yours, therefore, we do ask: Will you please continue to help us as you can? You can find suggestions about how to do so on the back page of this newsletter.

We remain grateful for your ongoing assistance.



With soil testing complete, we are furthering our architectural design, delving into material selections, seeking in-kind donations, discussing road options, and exploring selective logging possibilities on the new property.

*What, dearest brethren, will be that glory of the charitable; how grand and consummate the joy, when the Lord begins ... to grant heavenly things for the earthly, everlasting for the temporal, great for small, ... to open up the kingdom of heaven by the faith and truth of His promise!*

*~ Saint Cyprian: Works and Almsgiving, Ch 26*

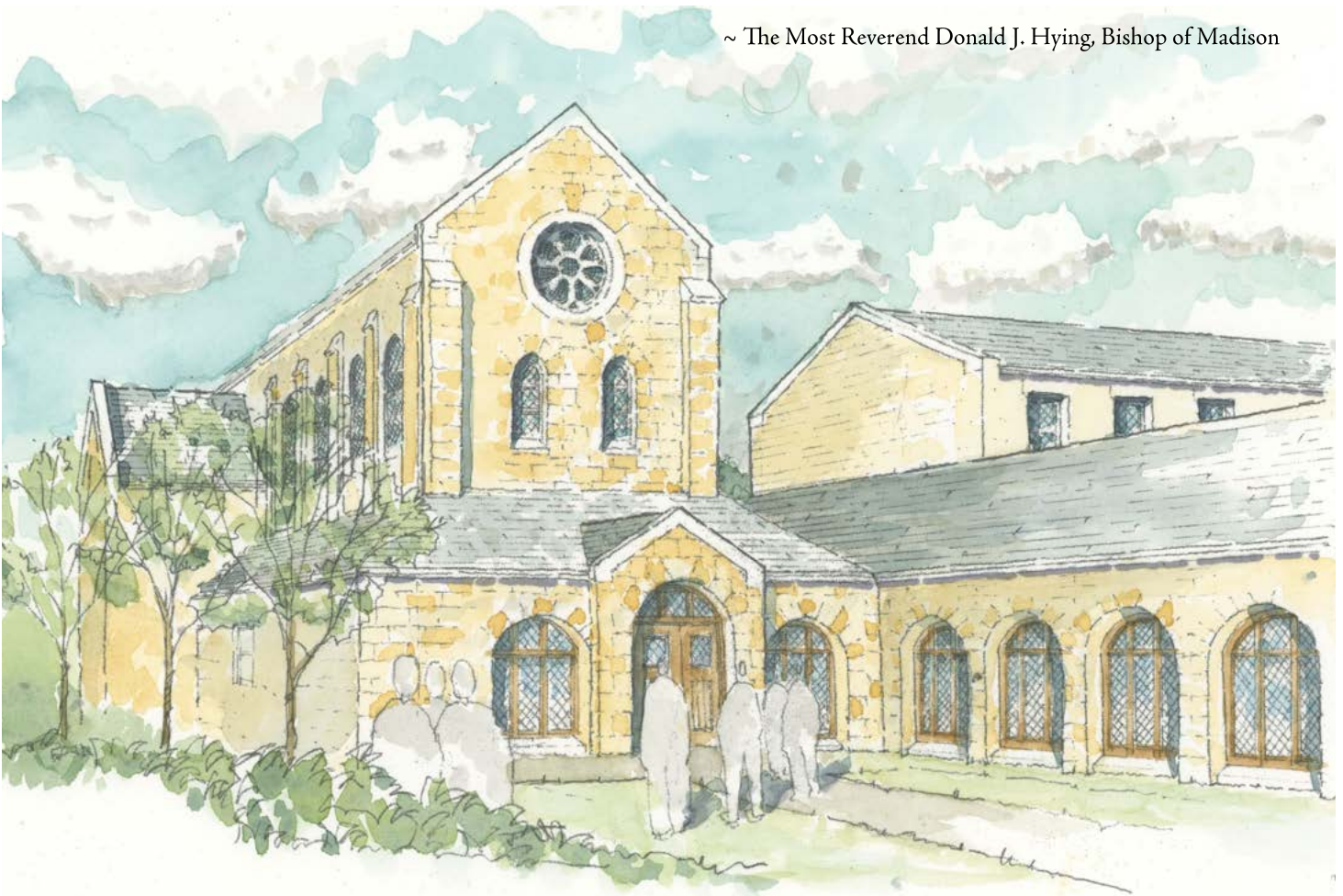
## A WORD FROM OUR BISHOP

The prayerful presence of the Cistercian nuns in our diocese is one of the greatest blessings we enjoy. Their hidden lives of prayer and sacrifice are sources of grace and favor for the whole Body of Christ. The Church extends the evangelizing mission and saving action of Jesus Christ through time and space. In this context, our beloved sisters deeply share in the prayer life of our Lord. I have always been intrigued by the mystery of the incarnate Son praying to the Father. God praying to God. What did Jesus say? We do not know, but ultimately, those nights of prayer were an expression of the perfect communion among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

While every baptized Christian is called to a deep life of prayer that unites us even in this life to God, our beloved cloistered sisters have dedicated their entire existence to this pursuit. The generous support given for the building of their new monastery manifests the value of a cloistered, contemplative community in the life of the Church. I encourage everyone to pray for the sisters, as they pray for you, to unite your daily activity to the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to support the building project as the Holy Spirit prompts you, and to witness your Catholic faith boldly to those around you. Such prayer, charity, and witness constitute the heart of the new evangelization.

In this season of Lent, we joyfully enter the desert with the Lord, seeking prayer, silence, penance, and charity as sacred ways of spiritual freedom. We pray for each other, desiring to make this the best and most fruitful Lent of our lives. Our Cistercian sisters are daily in the desert with the Lord; and the fruit of their sacrifice is joy, love, peace, and blessings for all of us. As bishop, I am grateful to God for them and for all of you, as we seek to live as sons and daughters of so loving and provident a Father.

~ The Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of Madison





# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Pray with and for us every day.
- Share with us any ideas you might have about in-kind contributions. Since we are now selecting building materials, we are in a better position to explore such possibilities in earnest.  
*Please visit our website for further information about this opportunity.*
- Send us the names of your friends, relatives, coworkers, and acquaintances we may add to our mailing list.
- Speak with your pastor about ways your parish could help: by publishing bulletin articles, which we have written and can share with you; by taking up a collection for our project, particularly during Lent; by distributing our materials, etc.
- Talk to a few friends and bring them for a visit to our current monastery or our new property.
- Help us connect with good Catholic media.
- Make a pledge, perhaps in honor or memory of someone you love.
- Ask your company to match your pledge.

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

**[build.valleyoffourlady.org](http://build.valleyoffourlady.org)**

Here you can find the following additional information:

- History and background
- News, including details on the advantages of building in a single phase
- Architectural renderings and photos
- A video about our life, created by a sister
- A list of the materials for which in-kind donations would be particularly appreciated
- Other ways to participate in our task of building a new monastery

## CONTACT US

If you have any questions or ideas, please contact us at [nmfund@valleyoffourlady.org](mailto:nmfund@valleyoffourlady.org) or 608-643-3520, ext. 7.

You are also welcome to contact our Director of Advancement, Paul Merline. His work on our behalf is helping us maintain our cloistered, contemplative life amid the challenges of the campaign. You can reach him directly by phone at 608-516-3237 or by email at [pmerline@valleyoffourlady.org](mailto:pmerline@valleyoffourlady.org).

*Thank you,  
and may God bless you.*