

From the love of God proceeds the unity of the spirit; from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the bond of peace; from the communion of the Holy Spirit, the bond that is necessary for the members of the community so that they can live community life. The love of God brings about the unity of the spirit, because he who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

~ Baldwin of Ford: On the Coenobitic Life

We are all called to union with God; and in this call, we are also invited to communion with each other. To use a traditional image, we can envision ourselves as spokes on a wheel. The closer we get to the center, representing the God whom we seek, the closer we also draw to one another, supporting each other in this ongoing search.

Over the past few months, we have been reminded in an unexpected way of the need for this communion: in our families, our communities, our workplaces, our friendships, our Church. Suddenly, our breakneck speed through life has been slowed, if not stopped; our plans have been disrupted; forced to wait, we have been invited to take a more contemplative stance, to enjoy our communities in a new and unexpected and at times extremely challenging way.

In the midst of the uncertainties and the seeming chaos, we are still committed to building a new monastery – for this project provides yet another way of forming lasting communion. Each brick, each window, each room and element of the monastery we are planning manifests our work together: to form a physical place of encounter with God, and in so doing, to help realize an ever deeper spiritual bond with one another.

While many of you have not been able to attend Mass, we have remained blessed with that privilege, and have taken the responsibility of our prayer even more seriously. We offer our liturgy and our small sacrifices for all of you, who are suffering so much more than we are. And although the virus is still among us and the full reach of its effects remains uncertain, we are more convinced than ever that God wills and desires our life of prayer — so vital as we continue to seek Him together.

NEWS

EVENT WITH ARCHBISHOP BERNARD HEBDA IN THE TWIN CITIES



On February 20, Sr. Bede and Sr. Joanna traveled to the Twin Cities (MN), where they both grew up. Archbishop Bernard Hebda graciously joined the sisters and about 50 guests at W.A. Frost in St. Paul for an evening presentation about our community and project. The guests were able to view renderings of the new monastery, learn about our contemplative vocation and plans to build, watch a video about our life, and ask questions. The Archbishop spoke warmly and movingly about the need for prayer, the vital importance of the contemplative life, and the wonderful opportunity we all have to work together to build something beautiful for God. We are grateful to Archbishop Hebda, to all who joined us, and of course to God, as He continues to bless our efforts.

DONOR HIGHLIGHT: THE CHILD'S MITE



We have received many precious gifts, monetary and otherwise, large and small, during this campaign. One that particularly touched our hearts came from a friend in the Twin Cities. Then-four-year-old Gianna Therese Burns, who has since turned five, generously gave what we suspect is her life savings — the entire contents of her piggy bank. Her spirit, like that of the widow in the Gospel who gave to God all she had (see Mk 12:42; Luke 21:2), is an encouragement and inspiration to us all. The photo to the left shows little Gianna Therese, holding a picture she drew of herself with the sisters — a reminder of our friendship in Christ.

PROJECT UPDATE: THE GIFT AND POWER OF SOLIDARITY

Solidarity, which springs from human and Christian brotherhood, is manifested in the first place by the just distribution of goods, by a fair remuneration for work, and by zeal for a more just social order.

The virtue of solidarity also practices the sharing of the spiritual goods of faith which is even more important than sharing material goods.

~ Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 414

From time to time we all wonder whether our little bit, be it our work or our material goods or our prayers, makes any difference. We seem so small and helpless in the grand scheme of things. The teaching of the Church, however, reassures us that our efforts in solidarity with one another, even if insignificant in our own eyes or the eyes of the world, are of great worth in the economy of salvation.

We have many generous friends and donors, with whom we share a true communion of material and spiritual goods. We cannot express how grateful we are to all of you for your faithful friendship and support; the vitality and effectiveness of our hidden life of prayer depend not only on our fidelity to our vocation but also on your willingness to participate with us in it as you can. Over the years, many of you have given to us and asked us to use your donations for our needs. We were not always certain whether we would need these gifts for major maintenance costs in our current buildings or for the new monastery – so we saved and invested what we could while continuing to live as frugally as possible. Seeing the progress of the current campaign, however, and considering advice from our financial advisors, we have at last discerned how best to use the combined fruits of your labor and generosity as well as the work of our own hands. Having planned and prayed and worked prudently together for a new home over the past twenty years, we are now able to allocate \$2 million to the project. Along with another significant and generous pledge from a local foundation, this contribution brings us much closer to our Phase 1 goal: \$9.5 million of the \$10-12 million we need.

We are hopeful that these recent advances, which we see as God's blessing and confirmation on our path forward, will propel us as quickly as possible toward the completion of Phase 1 and carry us into Phase 2 (requiring an additional \$6-8 million). We ask you to join us in working to raise the remaining \$2.5 million for Phase 1, so we can keep the momentum going: to complete the final design plans and begin building as soon as possible. And perhaps Our Lord will hear our prayer to be able to build both phases at once.

We fully recognize the importance of the many urgent, more tangible needs in our world at this time. Remaining closely united in prayer with all who are suffering most from the coronavirus and its effects, our hearts go out especially to those who have died without a full funeral, those who have been most involved in caring for the ill and providing necessary services, and those who are particularly afflicted by the lack of employment and the crisis in the economy. We pray, too, for all those impacted by the violence, hatred, and despair that have lately convulsed the country. In the midst of the darkness, however, we also praise and thank God for the moments of grace and light that have been so manifest over the past few months: those moments that remind us that no member of the Mystical Body of Christ is without dignity or purpose, and that we must all remain at our posts, fulfilling our vocations, for the physical and spiritual health of all.

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We understand that many of you are unable to donate at this time, given the current crisis in the economy; we invite you to join us all the more earnestly in prayer. We have also heard, however, from many who are eager and able to continue giving. Humbled by God's loving providence at work in our lives and through all of you, we thus continue toward the new monastery even during these uncertain times and offer the following ways for you to join us in our efforts:

Please pray with and for us every day.

Spread the word about our vocation and project.

Share with us 5 - 10 names we may add to our newsletter mailing list.

Please be assured that we do not share our mailing list with others; the information is secure.

Some of you were helpful in responding to this request last time; thank you!

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;

By distributing our materials.

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 outlets:

Newspapers, online publications, radio stations.

Make a pledge (perhaps as a lasting gift in honor or memory of someone you love).

Ask your company to match your pledge.

Consider including our monastery in your long-term gift planning, including your will or another legacy donation.

Share any other ideas you may have with us.

Thank you to all who responded to our previous newsletter. Please be assured that we are keeping the intentions you shared with us in our hearts. For more news, updates, and photos, please visit our website: build.valleyoffourlady.org.

May Our Risen Lord fill your hearts with His peace, and the Holy Spirit guide you in all things.

Love, by a certain instinctive movement, longs to pour itself forth and transfer the good it possesses to someone it loves with all its love; it longs to have it in common, to take the other as a companion and to share its possession with him. In the view of charity, everything good shines with a more beautiful light when – so far as is proper – it is held in common with another.

~ Baldwin of Ford: On the Coenobitic Life

CONTACT

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You are also welcome and encouraged to contact our consultant, Paul Merline. His work on our behalf is helping us maintain our cloistered, contemplative life in the midst of the campaign. You can reach him directly by phone at 608-516-3237 or by email at pmerline@mcdonaldschaefers.com.