



Passages

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New Development, TRAILS EDGE, Creates Community Space

Elizabeth Johnson

SINCE 1965, the monastery on Larpenteur Avenue has created a sacred space for the community. With a new development, the Sisters of St Benedict will soon expand this space to a new challenge—creating affordable homes for those in need. Part of a partnership with CommonBond Communities and the Tubman Family Alliance, the new Trails Edge Townhomes development will provide 48



affordable homes to families earning less than 50% of the area median income. By working with CommonBond Communities, an organization started by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and now the largest provider of affordable housing in the Upper Midwest, the homes will maintain affordable rents to prevent Maplewood families from becoming cost-burdened. Residents will also have access to CommonBond's pioneering, on-site Advantage Center. Advantage Centers are technology-based learning centers located in or close to CommonBond homes that work to stabilize families, help their children succeed in school and, when ready, help families move to market rate housing or homeownership. The center will provide residents at Trails Edge with what they need to be— a vital part of the Maplewood community.

INCLUDED in the 48 large two and three bedroom homes, Trails Edge Townhomes will also provide 4 two bedroom homes for those currently experiencing long-term homelessness. These residents will receive supportive services from the Tubman Family Alliance, an established provider of family violence services and prevention programming, including youth and family support, transitional housing services and counseling support for victims of violence. Many of the residents will be from Tubman's East Metro caseload. By including the four homeless units, CommonBond is working with the state of Minnesota toward their goal of developing 4,000 additional units for those who are defined as homeless by 2010.

IN conjunction with a larger redevelopment of the St. Paul Monastery, Trails Edge Townhomes transforms an underutilized area in the community, adds to the tax base and provides needed housing options for community members. The collaboration of three well-established non-profits creates a strong partnership to address the needs of lower income families, reducing redundancy among services and creating a model for others. Through this collaboration, we can create a space for our community members to grow and prosper. 🏠

Crucifix by S. Irene Uptegrove, OSB

LIVING INTO HOPE: A life that moves us toward vision

IN the Rule, St. Benedict describes the role of the porter. The porter has one foot in the cloister where prayer and study shape its life. The other foot of the porter is in the world for the porter's job is to greet all as Christ, welcoming them as brother and sister. As a monastic community, we live as "porters," attentive to all that forms us within the walls of the monastery as well as in the areas of ministry to which we direct our talents and energies. We do this out of a vision of life in which balance, moderation, and the common good ground us in the wisdom of the Gospel.

SOME women choose to commit themselves to this vision, making a lifetime promise to seek God in monastic community. There are other ways, however, that enable men and women to participate in the Benedictine way. Some persons, Catholic and Protestant, become Oblates as they learn to integrate Benedictine values into their lives and careers in the world. Still others use the resources of the Benedictine Center to tap into the wisdom at the heart of monastic life: conversion in mind, heart, and body to a new way of being fully present in the world. Some people join us for one of the daily liturgies or at our monthly celebration of Taize Prayer. AS much as the sisters value life in the cloister, we also rejoice at what we learn from guests whether they come for one visit or many. We are heartened by them even as they come to appreciate how prayer, study, and reflection equip them to live life to the fullest. So much of what we do by word and deed is to encourage new generations as they learn how balance, moderation, and the common good help them understand what really makes a good life.

THE mission of this community remains strong because we feel called to bear witness to the light that is Christ. We move into a new future that holds as much promise as it does challenge because we are fundamentally people of hope. We have experienced God's generosity in guiding us in our decisions and confirming us in our actions. We have also experienced the generous support of you, our readers, who remind us that we do not journey alone. Be assured of our continued prayers for you and your loved ones. 🙏

IN PEACE,

The Sisters of St. Benedict,
St. Paul's Monastery
Sister Carol Rennie, OSB
Prioress



Carol Rennie, OSB

OBLATES' CORNER

Sue Buelow, Oblate

*So here's what I want you to do, God helping you:
Take your everyday ordinary life—your sleeping,
eating, going to work and walking around life—
and place it before God as an offering.
Embracing what God does for you is the best thing
you can do for God. Romans 12:1*



OBLATES will be focusing this year of formation on designing a personal rule of life based on "The Rule of Benedict." We will begin with our retreat in September, "See the Sacred in the Ordinary" with Rev. Joan Delamater, then explore the Prologue of the Rule with Mary White, OSB, culminating with the renewal of our commitment to the monastic way as Oblates with Carol Rennie, OSB. She will lead us in our transition from our present monastery to the new.

OBLATE Marilyn Thompson, shares the importance of formation for herself, "The year of formation is only the beginning in the life of an oblate. When I read my notes from our sessions together, I'm reminded how much learn-

Continued on page 3

Maple Tree Childcare Center

Jennie Schlauch

2008 has been a year of activity and progress for the staff and children of the Maple Tree Childcare Center which is located on the grounds of St. Paul's Monastery.

All of the classrooms and the director's office have been remodeled with new windows, blinds, carpeting, cabinetry, countertops, fresh paint and more! The rooms look beautiful and the new storage space is very welcome.

The toddlers and preschoolers have enjoyed watching the construction of the monastery structure.

Both groups have had special unit teaching on building and even had their pictures taken sitting on a forklift! McGough construction superintendent, Bob Frei (aka Bob the Builder), has been very accommodating to the Maple Tree children.

Over the summer, the Maple Tree children made several visits to the monastery to enjoy having snacks with the sisters. Our annual 4th of July parade was a highlight as well. Special thanks to Monica Roy for assisting in the success of these visits. 🙏



Young monastics with caregivers



Young monastics

FUTURE MONASTICS

Future monastics in very early formation came for a 4th of July visit July 3, 2008, from the Maple Tree Childcare Center. They kept their silence not speaking one word nor shedding a tear! It was a challenge to get smiles for a picture taking stranger but their presence lightened the sisters' hearts especially those on the Health Care floor. These darlings do not yet know the joy they give others by their simple appearance amid our daily monastic tasks. So, these young monastics gave others lighter hearts and hidden smiles. 🙏

OBLATES' CORNER *continued*

ing with the Oblates and sisters is continuing to influence my life. What I learn and observe about relationship is a part of my marriage, family, friends and work. Being with Oblates who are as busy as I am and are taking the time for Lectio Divina is a reminder to me how important this practice is to spiritual health and well being. As Sister Carol said at formation on March 16th, "We are never finished growing."

WE end the formation year in May, welcoming new Oblates to their Final Oblation, and journeying with the sisters of St. Paul's Monastery to 2675 Benet Road— a "new place" where we can listen, learn and grow in our lives as Oblates. 🙏

JUSTICE AND PEACE

LaVerne Hudalla, OSB

This year we have reinstated a Justice and Peace Committee. Our concern about justice and peace has been kept alive and nourished during recent years by the dedication and drive of Sister Mary White who keeps us alert to both local and national needs.



Justice & Peace Committee: Left to right: Sisters Mary White, Margaret Kramer, LaVerne Hudalla, Joan Utecht, Catherine Nehotte, and Jean Hartman.

Our mission statement is:

Guided by the Gospel and Rule of St. Benedict, our mission is to raise individual and community consciousness of the value of peace, human dignity, and the sacredness of all creation.

Locally we will partner with those who serve women, children and those in need.

Our contribution to these partnerships will be in time, space and/or monetary contributions.

Regionally we will minister to those detained within the criminal justice system and support those exploited in the workplace.

Nationally and globally we will support the following organizations:

- *Sisters Online, a national web site for women religious to share information and encouragement to lobby for justice*
- *Bread for the World*
- *Catholic Charities, USA*
- *(an organization related to global warming, to be determined)*

In light of our mission statement, additional donations have been made to our local Catholic charities, student service projects at Hill-Murray School and Tartan High School, a Hill-Murray scholarship for a needy student, MICAHA (Metropolitan Affordable Housing), School Sisters of Notre Dame mission in Kenya, St. Stephen's Human Services in Minneapolis and Queen of Angels parish in Austin, Minnesota, to assist in their work with the immigrant population. Funds earmarked for this purpose through donations and community budgeting make our outreach possible. 🏠



S. MARY CHARLES BRANOVSKY died August 21, 2008, after a brief illness. She was 93 years old having lived her monastic profession for 71 years. In the halls of Archbishop Murray Memorial High School, she was a principal, an assistant principal, a math and a commercial subjects teacher. She had a quick wit, a ready response for the varied excuses of high school students no matter the topic. She was extremely well organized which affected every facet of her being. In the early days of the teaching sisters living in the high school before the present monastery had been built on the corner of Larpenteur and Century Avenues, the sisters who were living in the music department at that time and in the guidance department area, had to do their own cooking. Some did not know how to cook having left home at an early age and many convents had their own wonderful cooks. Back then, S. Mary Charles would ask her devoted sisters Dorothy and Rose, to bring in casseroles and delightful surprises that would bring smiles to the diners after a long teaching day.

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Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS)

MOMS National Leadership Training & Conference

In late June, leaders from across the country gathered at the monastery for training, ongoing formation, visioning and spiritual enrichment. As these women continue to provide leadership to their regions through **MOMS** retreats, training workshops, network meetings, and consultation, they empower others to use their spiritual leadership skills in their homes, communities and beyond.

Today, when we look at the characteristics of our society, of family life and the many roles mothers have in families, we are called to realize that a mother needs a great deal of support in order to provide the spiritual nourishment that family life requires and our society needs.

Through *Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS)*, women receive this support, encouragement and affirmation of God's call to the vocation of motherhood. They discover their God-given giftedness and are challenged to live out their Baptismal call.



Front row, left to right: Shawna Davidson – Kansas City, KS, S. Paula Hagen – retreat director, Joan Frazier – Dubuque, IA, Anne Burczyk – Orlando, FL, Renee Crock – Davenport, IA, Tami Heintl – Phoenix, AZ. Back row, left to right: Jennifer Burger – Indianapolis, IN, Mary Boespflug – national director, Christine Jurisich – Sacramento, CA, Lori Gross – Bismarck, ND, Jean Glaraton – administrative assistant.



On the Journey Retreat Series

MOMS is publishing the third retreat of these 3-hour parish-based retreats. *In God's Hands* author Mary Del Vecchio, right, and editor-designer, Jean Glaraton, left, work on final revisions. Mary Del Vecchio is an oblate and a member of **MOMS** Advisory Committee. She is publishing parts of her doctorate with the *In God's Hands Retreat*. The first two retreats of this series, *Choice-making* and *Emptying Your Cup: Finding Peace through Letting Go*, are being facilitated in parishes across the country.

S. Paula Hagen, retreat director, oversees the writing, editing, and revisions of the *On the Journey Retreats*, and her *Life-Giving Spirit-Filled* retreats continue to be in demand. We now provide training for parish leaders on how to facilitate the *On the Journey Retreats*.

View the latest improvements to the **MOMS** website. Go to www.stpaulsmonastery.org and click *Ministry of Mothers Sharing*.



The Illusory Quest For Balance

Victor Klimoski

Who does not want peace of mind? Who would turn from the opportunity to feel in rhythm with life? Where are the few who say they are at their best when they are overscheduled, harried, and haven't time for even one single focused thought? When people read about Benedictine spirituality, they are often captivated by the practices designed to help one live a balanced life. Some respond and make changes in how they choose and where they commit their time. Others sigh wistfully, shake their heads, and wonder how any one could possibly slow down the engine of contemporary life.

The purpose of the sisters' retreat and spirituality ministry offered through their Benedictine Center is to provide opportunities to challenge the assumption that the "engine is unstoppable." Our programs do not promise foolproof steps to serenity for two reasons. Each person's process of change as they seek to live in balance is different. Some would need six steps, others fifteen. More importantly, the Rule of St. Benedict teaches us that the life of a Christian is constant practice, marked by discipline and a willingness to fail and begin yet again.

This year the Center celebrates twenty-five years of service to those willing to begin yet again. In addition to retreats of all kinds, there are workshops on a wide range of topics and interests that can serve as resources to those who want to work at this notion of a balanced life. Some will find very appealing Sr. Mary Forman's yearlong program on the topic. Faculty from Saint John's School of Theology will be exploring provocative topics that deepen one's theological understanding: why people choose to be

Christians; how to navigate the roles of citizen and Christian in this election year; the consequences of believing in Jesus; and how young people's quest for God inspires our own faith. Fr.

Michael Byron will lead a morning of reflection for Advent, and Fr. Paul Feela will preach a retreat on forgiveness as part of our observance of Lent. Jim Smith returns for a retreat on shaping a Paschal heart. We are also continuing our focus on spiritual practices – activities people can learn and adapt that help them be attentive to their spiritual growth no matter how busy life becomes. This includes Sr. Virginia Matter's excellent leadership on centering prayer.

Two major events mark the program year. Our resident Benedictine scholar will be Sr. Meg Funk, OSB, of the Beech Grove monastery. Sr. Meg's writings link the most ancient of spiritual traditions to people's daily efforts to create lives anchored in Christ. In February, Cistercian monk Fr. Thomas Keating will be our guest for a special program we are launching to train leaders of contemplative prayer. While he is here, Fr. Keating will give a public presentation on contemplative prayer.

Finally, we will continue to host art exhibits featuring Twin Cities artists whose work draws inspiration from their spiritual lives. In addition, there are workshops in which participants can work with artists learning in a hands-on way how their crafts help give expression to one's deepest longings for God.

This brief sampling of offerings (for a complete list, go to www.stpaulsmonastery.org) only illustrate that this area of ministry outreach by the monastic community embodies the principles of prayer and learning so central to the "Benedictine way." We are also ready to welcome those who are simply looking for a place to be still, to sit quietly and think or read or pray. Our personal retreats, with or without access to spiritual direction, can be an excellent way to begin yet again to take on the challenge of living in balance. 🙏

MOUNTAINS, WEBS, DESIRES

Sister Genevieve Glen, OSB, from the Abbey of St. Walburga in Virginia Dale, CO, graced our community retreat June 8-13, 2008.

The theme for this series of ten presentations was “Upon this Mountain: Images of Eucharist in a Monastic Community.” Using Biblical and literary allusions along with stories and humor, it was sheer delight to connect and appreciate substance and being. Mountain views, webs, desires that devour and those that feed, from cups of wrath to cups of salvation—these were just some of the topics explained, taught and processed for understanding and appreciation.

Sister comes from a semi-cloistered community of 23 belonging to the Federation of the Bavarian Monasteries of Nuns. Originally from the San Francisco Bay area, Sister was a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in Houston, TX, for 25 years, then transferred to her present Benedictine community in 1990.

Her expertise lies in systematic theology, spirituality and liturgical studies from St. John’s, Collegeville, MN, and the Catholic University while making good use of all in formation courses for their community, varied presentations around the country and for publications. One of her great loves is writing along with reading, nature walks and cooking. She writes articles in pastoral publications, has written collections of hymn texts and is about to publish a book of poetry. She has presented papers at the American Benedictine Academy with workshops for the Monastic Institute at St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville and varied Monastic Liturgy Forums. 🏠



Genevieve Glen, OSB

WHAT DO YOU SAY?



Marie Fujan, OSB

Marie Fujan, OSB

TODAY an apple appeared on my desk. I felt like a teacher again and rightly so, since teachers and students are returning to school now after Labor Day.

THE apple, on my computer screen, reminded me of an assignment which is overdue. How does that happen? It isn’t because the “dog ate it” or that my little brother hid it. You see I have no dog and my little brother is retired.

THERE is a reason for my tardiness; not an excuse, but a reason. The article should have something to do with “call” or commitment or vocation since I am part of the monastery vocation team. However, any one of those topics could fill the whole newsletter and that is not my assignment.

THERE is another reason for my tardiness; not an excuse, but another reason. Various scripture passages caught my attention and St. Benedict’s Rule is a master architect’s plan for A School for the Service of the Lord. How could I choose? I am tardy because I couldn’t or didn’t select one. And yes...I should have started earlier.

FOR students and teachers, questions are a vital part of any classroom and of education in general. Recently there was a question in the Sunday Gospel that each of us needs to answer. Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?”

OUR answer will set us up for responding to every call and every commitment and every vocation. I would be grateful to hear your answers. What do you say? 🏠

S. MARY CHARLES BRANOVSKY *continued from page 4*

SISTER’S ministry took her to Cathedral H.S., St. Cloud, as registrar, St. Boniface H.S. in Cold Spring, St. Bernard’s, St. Paul, St. Joseph’s Home, St. Paul, Regis H.S., Eau Claire, WI, Archbishop Murray Memorial High School in Maplewood, St. Mary’s in Bismarck, N.D. and Hill-Murray School until 1984. She also served as administrative secretary and community chronicler.

RETIREMENT gave her a different perspective on life shedding responsibilities of many years while preparing her for quiet solitude and peaceful companionship. We pray she may be received joyfully amid family and friends and guided by that Daystar into the everlasting Light. 🏠

BENEDICTINES “TENDING TO THE TURNING POINT”

Karen Sames, OSB

On the weekend of June 20-23, 2008, thirty Benedictine sisters from across the USA gathered at St. Paul’s Monastery. The topic was “Tending to the Turning Point” with Jane Becker, OSB, from Ferdinand, Indiana, as the key speaker. All discussion was enriched with her lectures and reflective questions as groups discussed at individual tables leading to open dialogue in the large group.



All Benedictines Workshop with Jane Becker, OSB.

Many of our Benedictine communities are facing similar challenges. This gathering gave an opportunity to share what Benedictines are facing collectively and how others may have already handled the transitions they’ve been through. During one of the open discussions one member of the group stated, “It sounds like we are all from the same monastery.”

Social events included a picnic at Keller Regional Park and a banquet with entertainment by the Partners in Praise (a young womens’ choral group) led by Julia Fahey.

It was a wonderful time for meeting new friends, connecting with old friends while networking with others of similar interests—vocation work, artists and leadership responsibilities. Missing were the international connections with Taiwan, Puerto Rico, Japan and the Bahamas who were unable to attend due to exorbitant flight costs. 🙏



Jane Becker, OSB

BOOKS FOR THE 3%

June 17 and 18, 2008, we were graced with the presence of Linda and Fred Mayntz from Charleston, South Carolina, who have a book ministry for the minority of Catholics in their area and for all book lovers. With the downsizing of the present monastic library, many spiritual and theology books will be headed their way into the land of GONE WITH THE WIND and the many wonderful stories of Eugenia Price.

Losing their only son in an accident, Linda and Fred decided to use his college fund to build a suitable place to operate their book ministry so they have been involved in their present book ministry since 1993. After Fred’s retirement, they relocated their used book ministry from Greenville, S.C. to Charleston, S.C. Then turning over their new bookstore to someone with more energy and new ideas, they knew they wished to remain a part of the ministry, so now spend their time with USED books offering them to people around the world who are interested in good Catholic books. Folks in their area are only 3% Catholic. If you wish to help them in their wonderful ministry, their email is stantbooks@aol.com 🙏

A FINE TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

Lucia Schwickerath, OSB

The first big snowfall of the year did not keep over two hundred people from attending Christmas at the Monastery last December. The event was a big success in spite of the fact that the snow came and just wouldn't quit. From all indications, it will be even bigger this year! December 6, 2008, is the date.

This will be the last special event at the present monastery and also marks the 60th anniversary of St. Paul's Monastery. In 1948, 178 Sisters founded St. Paul's Monastery on Summit Avenue in St. Paul as a daughter-house community from St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN. Happy Birthday, sisters! Come celebrate with us before we move into the new monastery in 2009.

The invitations have been mailed. If you would like to attend this event, which is by invitation only, please contact us as soon as possible at vbieren@stpaulsmonastery.org and give us your name and address to receive an invitation.

Christmas at the Monastery will include delicious food, a silent auction, raffles, the Random Sample Quartet and a homemade bakery with the sisters' favorite goodies. It will be a fine time to meet your friends and those of the sisters. Beautiful Christmas items will be available in the Cloister Gift Shop! You won't want to miss this event! If you enjoyed last year's event, this year's will be even better! Do join us! 🙏

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

November 3

**Opening of the Christmas season
Cloister Gift Shop**

November 16

Legacy Society brunch

December 6

Christmas at the Monastery event

It is Time...

...to start thinking about end-of-year gifts.

End-of-year gifts are a win-win situation. The tax breaks are a great gift for you and the amount you give is a great gift for the monastery.

Here are several simple ways to give a gift:

Cash—an outright gift of cash seems to be a popular way for people to give.

Stock—a gift of long-term appreciated stock offers two tax savings. First, you avoid capital gains tax. Second, you receive an income tax deduction—based on the increased value of the stock. This year may be a great time, hopefully, for a stock gift to benefit your taxes. Before you give stock to us, give the Development office a call for transfer information at 651-777-8181.

Will—please consider remembering the Sisters of St. Benedict of St. Paul's Monastery in your will. Nearly 50% of people die without a will. That can complicate settling your financial and personal affairs. If you have not done so, this may be the time to visit your attorney and seek help in preparing a will. Charitable giving in your will can also be a great way to give.

It is also a good idea to complete a living will and include your family in the discussion.

Blessings on your planning as you consider your year-end
and future giving to your favorite charities!

FOUNDING DAY

WE have celebrated Founding Day every June 22nd for 60 years but this latest was not of the ordinary. Granted, we arrived in St. Paul in 1948 and that founding day itself was an occasion for write-ups and photos with each year after one of gratitude. This year, because of building plans in progress, two graves were moved in our cemetery, Mother Loraine Tracy's and Sister Marcelline Jung's. Because of past customs at the time of interment, any prioress would be buried at a distance from the rest of the community placing her again away from the crowd as if her (grave) responsibilities separated her after death as well. Finally, after many years of this separation, these two valiant women

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Dear Friend,

The snow has not yet begun in earnest, but we are preparing for the *Christmas at the Monastery* event. This second annual event is scheduled for December 6, 2008. It is by invitation only; therefore, please call for your invitation soon, if you have not already done so.

At that time we will also celebrate our 60th Anniversary here at St. Paul's Monastery. In 1948 we came to St. Paul and established a home at 301 Summit Avenue. Soon the house was overflowing with bright young faces and on January 2, 1965, we moved into the present building at 2675 Larpentour Avenue East. In spring we look forward to celebrating the Triduum and Easter services in the newly built monastery at 2675 Benet Road because our present building will be used as a safe haven for women and children who live with violence.

St. Paul's Monastery is a vibrant community of Sisters of St. Benedict. Our prayer life energizes us for our outreach programs. Our Vision Statement reads:

We, the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery, are a community who live the Rule of St. Benedict based on gospel values. Through our Liturgical prayer and wise stewardship, we create sacred space from which we respond to the needs and challenges of church and world.

The programs at the Benedictine Center are flourishing as we minister to those who long for spiritual nourishment; we support and nourish mothers yearning to connect with the church through family life and personal spirituality through our nationwide Ministry of Mothers Sharing (MOMS). Who ministers to the lay and religious staff in Catholic parishes? The iLLUMINARE program of St. Paul's Monastery does. This is a unique program so greatly needed in today's church with its shortage of ordained clergy. In addition, our Sisters are ministering in numerous other places throughout the Metro area.

We continue to be grateful to each of you for your generous support of us and our endeavors. Your promised prayers and generous financial support enable us to continue to care for our sisters and further their ministries. May our prayers of gratitude nourish your soul as we pray for you each day. 🙏

Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB

Sincerely in Christ,
Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB
Development Director



Lucia Schwickerath,
OSB

FOUNDING DAY continued from page 9

are with the rest of the community, their spirits now mingling once again with those they led with love and laughter amid somber moments. AFTER a service at the cemetery, the community continued to celebrate with a festive meal followed by readings from the early chronicles, a letter from Mother Rosamond Pratschner which she had sent to the newly established St. Paul's Priory at 301 Summit Avenue and the reading of names of the sixteen charter members who are left from the original 178. Thus ended formal ceremonies with loving memories of all those courageous women who have gone before us and if we are fortunate, may be waiting for our arrival. 🙏



Golden Jubilarians who entered St. Paul's Priory at 301 Summit Avenue in St. Paul – S. Paula Hagen, S. Mary Lou Dummer, S. Rose Lewis (front).

from the LIBRARY ALCOVE

Carole Sweely, OSB

If you have time to read only one book in the near future, I would highly recommend Kim Edward's *the MEMORY KEEPER'S DAUGHTER*. The action begins in the first pages with gripping characters, a story that moves throughout the 400 pages with a reading guide to further advance your comprehension in case anything was missed during your reading. The story is filled with mostly loving characters and a few who have strong fateful flaws that appear to lead them down destructive detours. For the most part, the people are easy to be with during many of the pages and the few who are not either meet some kind of happiness or realize they have made mistakes and change their course. We always look for changes in our lives and what makes them occur and this book is filled with those opportunities for some to accept and others to deny. What makes this book so intriguing is the title. A memory keeper is a camera and the main character is given this as a gift by his wife. It is the camera that takes on a life of its own and the owner's life changes because of this timely gift. Sometimes people change because of how life meets them; they cannot cope with what they're given and all kinds of things happen, not only to them but to those they love. I loved most of these characters but did find a few hard to like mostly because they fought so hard not to love those they should have. Goodness often shines in those we might fail to find a goodness in but perspective can be a gift (that camera angle), another slant to see that which we have been denied to see. This book would be a lovely gift to self or to a reading friend.

FRANKLIN AND LUCY by Joseph E. Persico is another gift you can give yourself or to another history lover. Lucy is Lucy Mercer, Eleanor's social secretary during the last years of WWI. It was in 1918 when Eleanor discovered Franklin's devotion to Lucy; their marriage was never the same. Eleanor wished for a divorce but Franklin's politically rising star was apparent and politics with divorce then was unacceptable. Franklin's and Lucy's love did survive even though Eleanor made Franklin promise never to see Lucy again. Lucy did marry another, Winthrop Rutherford, whose wife had died leaving him with children. After, Lucy lacked for nothing except Franklin. Eventually, Lucy began to see Franklin again which was quite convenient since Eleanor was often away helping to serve as Franklin's legs throughout the country and out of it. Lucy's and Franklin's time together was often spent in the presence of others, butlers, maids, distant relatives or helpful women friends of Franklin's hovering and offering their varied assistance. Franklin was the great love of Lucy's life even though her love for others was genuine and gracious. People were easily smitten with her charming presence. It was she who was with Franklin during his last days and hours in Warm Springs, GA, leaving before his last breath had arrived. For Franklin who was so much loved by the American people and Lucy whose mere presence touched many, it was fitting these two found each other and gained that which was so precious to each. Lucy was a gift to everyone she met while Franklin's gifts were to the American people. One author says "love is a state of grace" and without it, Franklin and Lucy might have been less. A wonderful read! 📖



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Phone: 651-777-8181

Fax: 651-777-4442

www.stpaulsmonastery.org

Co-Editors:

Carole Sweely, OSB
Mary Courteau, OSB

Contributing Writers:

Virginia Bieren, SSND
Sue Buelow
Mary Boespflug
Marie Fujan, OSB
LaVerne Hudalla
Elizabeth Johnson
Victor Klimoski
Carol Rennie, OSB
Karen Sames, OSB
Jennie Schlauch
Lucia Schwickerath, OSB
Carole Sweely, OSB

Photographers:

Sam Rahberg
Karen Sames, OSB
Carole Sweely, OSB

Proofreaders:

Mary Courteau, OSB
Catherine Schoenecker, OSB

Layout Design and Printing
Graphic Design, Inc.

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Lovely Chance

*O lovely chance, what can I do
To give my gratefulness to you?
You rise between myself and me
With a wise persistency;
I would have broken body and soul,
But by your grace, still I am whole.
Many a thing you did to save me,
Many a holy gift you gave me,
Music and friends and happy love
More than my dearest dreaming of;
And now in this wide twilight hour
With earth and heaven a dark, blue flower,
In a humble mood I bless
Your wisdom—and your waywardness.
You brought me even here, where I
Live on a hill against the sky
And look on mountains and the sea
And a thin white moon in the pepper tree.*

— Sara Teasdale

*“I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
And I have been circling for a thousand years,
And I still don't know if I am a falcon, or a storm,
Or a great song.”*

— Rainer Maria Rilke