



Sisters of St. Benedict  
**St. Paul's Monastery**

# PASSAGES



**Fall 2006**

Volume 17 Issue 1

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## *A Call To Leadership*

A Message from the Prioress, S. Carol Rennie -----

I often read about the role of leadership and its call to service. But what does leadership call us to be as individual persons? Recently, the well-known Benedictine Joan Chittister was interviewed on NPR's Speaking of Faith about the place of monastic tradition in contemporary society. She offered some insights that help cast light on the challenges to the role of leadership.

Leadership belongs to everyone, Sr. Joan said. We all desire to be available to God's people and to follow the gifts given to us by God. The biggest challenge, however, is to find ways to be sensitive to the impulse of the Spirit and then to respond in grace. For me this means being alert to our particular context and what it might require at this time, given these issues, and in light of the gifts we have as a community.

Leadership is also a work of the heart. There are things we will live or die for because we passionately believe in them. While we may have a vision for the future, we must recall time and again that God's vision for us is always larger than the path we see at this moment. We all prefer clarity, but to live in a place of ambiguity is a discipline we need to cultivate intentionally. This is certainly the case for St. Paul's Monastery. Sister Joan helps

us remember that at one time religious communities needed to be a strong labor force for the Church. We built buildings, managed institutions, and made things happen. Our ministry was clear, visible and tangible. Today, there seems to be less need for monastic communities to build or manage. Rather, we are perhaps called to be something else for our witness to God's promise and faithfulness is no less significant than the wonderful work we have accomplished.

While our membership is declining, we can be confident other things are emerging even though we may know not what. To be patient in the face of uncertainty is not easy, but we can draw strength from Jesus' example as he walked the path to Jerusalem steadily and trusting in God. We hear the echo of that steadfastness and trust in the Rule of St. Benedict when he writes, "If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts." We ask for your continued support as we listen for God's voice in the initiatives at work in this community. Pray with us each day as we ask God for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as we discern our future together that with united endeavors we may provide for the needs of others and ourselves.

May God's peace be yours in all ways.

*Dear Friends,*

During World War II, a German widow hid Jewish refugees in her own home. As her friends discovered the situation, they became extremely alarmed. "You are risking your own well-being," they told her. "I know that," she said. "Then why," they demanded, "do you persist in this foolishness?" Her answer was stark and to the point. "I am doing it," she said, "because the time is now and I am here." (Introduction to A STATEMENT ON THE NATURE OF STEWARDSHIP IN THE LIVES OF AMERICAN BENEDICTINE SISTERS)

Yes, the time is now and we are here! Weighing heavy on my heart is the reality that our big, 40-year-old Monastery needs new boilers to the tune of \$189,000. The truth is, we will recoup some of this expense as we sell the building but

the chilling fact is, the time is now and we are here!

God has blessed us in the past and I know he will bless us now. God's love and your friendship are signs of what happens. We will continue our prayer and good works, hold you dear, and try our best to make our world a better place because "The time is now and we are here!" As in the past, we thank you for your part in helping us carry out our three-fold promise.

With a grateful heart,



Sister Lucia Schwickerath, OSB  
Development Director

PS: As scripture says, "We are no longer strangers but friends!" Thank you for your friendship.



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Sisters of St. Benedict  
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St. Paul, MN 55109-5097

Phone: 651-777-8181

Fax: 651-777-4442

[www.stpaulsmonastery.org](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org)

Contributing Writers:

S. Virginia Bieren  
S. Pat Collins  
Tom Dupont  
Jean Hartmann  
Victor Klimoski  
Kathleen Lindstrom  
Joan Mellor  
S. Carol Rennie  
S. Lucia Schwickerath

Layout Design

Dupont & Associates

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# *Making Benedict Practical*

Victor Klimoski

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People may be curious to see an upcoming Benedictine Center event with the title, “Benedict and Babies” (November 8). What on the earth is the staff thinking, they might wonder? For the past six months, the Benedictine Center has been considering its future in extending the ministries of the monastic community.

It is clear that we want to demonstrate how Benedictine spirituality offers fresh insight into the issues of everyday life, big and small. For “Benedict and Babies,” Sam Rahberg, associate director of the Center, will reflect on the wisdom he’s discovered in Benedictine spirituality as he and Beth navigate the rigors of raising two small children. It illustrates how the Rule of St. Benedict and the wisdom of the tradition that has grown up around it speak to the practical realities of twenty-first century American society.

Working out of a spiritual tradition as rich and enlivening as Benedictinism provides a solid reference point of the questions seekers have about living a faithful, good life. Three particular Benedictine

values guide the Center in its programming decisions: finding God in the ordinary, practicing moderation, and seeking the common good. Throughout the coming year, for example, Mary White OSB will be offering a monthly event on practical questions of the spiritual life. Each session builds on a Scripture text, inviting participants to reflect on how the Word casts light on a particular challenge or concern, a practice Benedict made mandatory for his monks from the very start. The series begins September 18 with a noontime discussion of “knowing we are unconditionally loved.” The series will alternate between noontime and evening sessions to accommodate people’s various schedules.

A twelve-month calendar of program highlights is available for viewing at [www.stpaulsmonastery.org](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org) where you can also sign up on-line. The Center publishes a detailed catalogue of events three times a year and a weekly e-bulletin. In addition to scheduled workshops and retreats, the staff is ready to help individuals design personal days of prayer and directed retreats.

# Our Visionary Architect Dies

S. Pat Collins

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1990 Visit at St. Paul's Monastery  
Val Michelson, S. Rose Alice Althoff

Valerius (Val) Michelson, the renowned architect who designed St. Paul's Monastery in the 1950's, died August 3, 2006, at his St. Paul home. He was 90 years old. Preceded in death by his first wife Natasha of St. Petersburg, Russia, and son Eric, he is survived by his second wife Helgi, his son Andrei and his grandson Valeriy.

Michelson came to America in 1949 at the invitation of European architect Marcel Breuer who recently had been commissioned to design the new church at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN. Breuer asked Michelson to serve as the resident architect for the massive structure.

Following the completion of the abbey church, Michelson accepted the commission to design St. Paul's Monastery (then called St. Paul's Priory) in St. Paul and with his family decided to remain in this country. He taught design and architectural structure at the University of Minnesota for 22 years. He designed several projects including the Temple of Aaron in St.

Paul, St. John's Preparatory School and the bridges that span Interstate 94 from downtown St. Paul to the State Capitol.

Mr. Michelson was interested in the Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery to the end. This was lived out as he shared a meal with the Sisters a month before his death. He loved classical music. At times, the strains of Beethoven in the background and his heavy accent made him next to impossible to understand by phone. Mr. Michelson never hung up before asking, "How are the Sisters?" His love was both professional and personal.

S. Rose Alice Althoff is the last surviving person on the monastery building committee on which she served with Michelson. S. Rose Alice remembers "Val" as an inspiration to the sisters, always generous with his time, and often a challenge when it came time for big decisions. This pioneering modernist once said that St. Paul's Monastery was the most treasured of his works.

# *Creating Another Sacred Space*

Tom Dupont & Jean Hartman

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Throughout our history, we have repeatedly created a sacred space in which to live, work and respond to the current needs and challenges of church and society. Our monastery has been the spiritual center for our ministries since we officially moved in on January 2, 1965.

In the true spirit of Benedict, we want to continue to respond to current needs and challenges, and are excited about sharing the hospitality of our space with those who have the greatest need.

After three years of searching we have found two partners who can use our beautiful building and live with us on our land. They are Tubman Family Alliance and CommonBond.

Tubman Family Alliance is a full-service family violence prevention agency. One of the services it provides is short-term safe housing for women and children. In addition to short-term housing, Tubman would use the Monastery building to provide offices for their Ramsey and Washington County Legal Program, a Jobs education and Training Center, on-site space for a health and wellness center, a Community Education Center and Research Center.

CommonBond is the largest affordable housing developer in the Upper Midwest and currently owns/operates 56 housing communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. CommonBond was established in 1971 by the social justice ministry of the Archdiocese. It is now a separate corporation but has maintained close ties to the Archdiocese which has representatives on its Board. CommonBond would propose to develop two housing communities on the east side of the Monastery property. One would be a 40 unit senior housing building with surface parking. The second would be a 50 unit rental town home development. Common Bonds communities combine top-quality affordable housing with an Advantage Service Center that fosters self-reliance and builds community.



The decision to move in this direction is a result of proactive, strategic planning over the last thirteen years. It was 58 years ago that 178 sisters left St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, MN, to establish a new foundation in the archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. As the membership grew to 210 sisters, plans were made to build a monastery at

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the corner of Century and Larpenteur in Maplewood, MN, but first the Archbishop asked that a high school for girls be built. Archbishop Murray Memorial High School opened in 1958. The sisters were actively involved in teaching and in administration. In 1965 the sisters moved into their new monastery next door. In 1971 Hill School merged with our school and became Hill-Murray school.

We are extremely proud of Hill-Murray and the role the perseverance of our sisters played in creating the school. We will be forever linked geographically and historically. Hill-Murray has become one of the premier Catholic schools in the Twin Cities. In addition to our previous work of building and establishing Hill-Murray, several other pieces of the plan are now falling into place regarding women, children and affordable housing.

We are now engaged in implementing our strategic plans that will establish a lasting legacy of our work here on earth. In envisioning the future, we reflected on God's invitation and here is our response:



- ♦ To continue to live on this sacred land with the sisters who have gone before us.
- ♦ To share our campus with women, children and the elderly.
- ♦ To share our human and natural resources with those in need.
- ♦ To share the peace and beauty within the walls of this monastery with others who many not experience peace and beauty in their lives.

The sisters are planning to build a new, smaller monastery on the north open parcel of the Monastery land. This new facility will renew our community and keep us active in ministry and prayer. Over the next two years we will be discerning our path to renew our current ministries and create new ministries as part of our Benedictine legacy.

Please keep us in your prayers as we continue our journey and renew our commitment to the tradition of creating sacred space here on the corner of Century and Larpenteur.

# *Sister Cleo: A Profile in Serving*

Kathleen Lindstrom

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When Cleo Schoenbauer joined the Benedictine order in 1951, friends bet she wouldn't last a week. As a former homecoming queen, cosmetologist, bank teller, party-goer, softball player and self-described "life of the party," Cleo, they thought, was too loud and "laughed too much" to fit into convent life.

Well, that was 56 years ago, and needless to say, those friends were wrong.

In August, S. Cleo retired as the pastoral minister at Maternity of Mary Catholic Church in St. Paul, leaving behind a 33-year legacy of love and service to this Como Park parish. She came to Maternity of Mary as a young teacher in 1953, when the new church was surrounded by farmland that was filling up fast with young families living in basement homes. She taught eight years before moving on to other jobs in the Benedictine community.

In 1981, after serving 8 years as Prioress, she returned to the parish as its first-ever pastoral minister; and, for

the next 25 years, came to love and serve the needs of its members. How did she do that? "By listening," she explains. "When people came to see me, they just wanted to talk, so I just sat and listened."



Based on what she heard, S. Cleo created programs and services designed to address some very human needs. Here are a few of them:

- ♦ Green Tape—parishioners donate food and money to feed the hungry. While other parishes eliminated similar programs, Maternity of Mary remains robust and is one of the main contributors to the local food shelf.
- ♦ Prime Timers—a group for "seniors" who socialize every three weeks.

When introduced as "Senior Citizens," no one joined because no one saw themselves as "senior." So S. Cleo held a contest to change the name. With 80 members, Prime Timers is still going strong.

- ♦ Holiday collections—at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and other holidays, she organized efforts to give



*St. Paul's Monastery is pleased to announce*  
**The Second Annual  
Faith Lift for Moms**

Joan Mellor

This year's keynote speakers include Jacquelyne Witter, PhD, Director of iLLUMINARE, a lay ministry program of St. Paul's Monastery. Jackie will speak on Coming As You Are for All You Can Eat: Feasting at the Table of the Lord with a message on how Christ gives inspiration to mothers as they go about their everyday business of 'feeding others.' Kristine Berggren, a columnist for the National Catholic Reporter will speak on Grow Where You're Planted: A Look at Our Lives as American Catholic Mothers with a message of concrete ways to live a balanced life as an American,

Catholic, Christ-centered mother in a world where Gospel values, American culture, and our idea of womanhood easily conflict.

Twelve workshops will be offered on three themes: Spirituality & Prayer, Personal Wellness, and Family Relationships. Sister Paula Hagen, National Director of MOMS, will lead the prayer rituals during the conference. ThreeSpirit (Mike Looney, John Theis, Amy Kuebelbeck) will be the featured musical group. Taizé Prayer with Wendy Barton Silhavy will also be featured.

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**WHAT:** A weekend conference featuring motivational keynotes, educational workshops, encouragement, music and prayer to affirm the sacred role of motherhood.

**WHEN:** **Friday, October 27th 6:30-9:30pm**  
**Saturday, October 28th 8:00am-4:30pm**

**WHERE:** Church of St. Joseph  
1154 Seminole Avenue, West St. Paul, MN 55118

**COST:** \$70 (includes Conference, Friday wine & cheese reception, Saturday breakfast & lunch)

**REGISTRATION:** **Brochure and online registration available at:**  
[www.stpaulsmonastery.org/momsconference](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org/momsconference) or **Call:** 651-777-8181 x104

**Sponsor:** MOMS (Ministry of Mothers Sharing), an outreach ministry of St. Paul's Monastery.

meals and gifts to needy families.

- She brought widows and widowers together to socialize on a regular basis.
- She introduced the current program of bringing communion to shut-ins.

Nancy McMahan, the parish administrator, says S. Cleo "has an aura of approachability. She's very open and caring and kind. Anyone going through a difficult time found her very easy to turn to. She made everyone feel at ease."

The former homecoming queen and cosmetologist always knew that there was more to life than parties and dances. At a retreat in St. Paul's Monastery, she found out what it was. "As soon as I walked through those doors," she recalls, "I knew God was calling me to be here." She entered the community that September, and since then has been sharing her gifts and her laughter with a troubled world needing exactly what she has to offer.

## Calendar of Events:

**3rd Wednesdays** Sin & the Cinema

**Sept. 17-Nov. 1** Exhibit:

Art of Kirsten Malcolm Berry

**Oct. 7** 5:00 Sister Jeron Osterfeld -  
“Lifetime Achievement Award”  
at St. Bernard’s Alumni Banquet

**Oct. 22** Golden Jubilee Reception for  
S. Mary Claire Inhofer

**Oct. 27-28** MOMS “FAITH LIFT” Conference

**Nov. 12** 11:00 Legacy Society:  
Mass, Brunch, Program

**Nov. 12-Dec. 31** Exhibit: Art of St. Paul’s Monastery

**Nov. 16-19** Living with Dying Retreat

**Dec. 2** 9:00 Mary of Nazareth:  
An Advent Retreat

**Dec. 31-Jan 1** Crossing the Threshold:  
A New Year’s Retreat

**Jan. 7-Feb. 17** Watercolor Exhibit of  
Peggy Thompson

## *The Cloister Shop*

S. Virginia Bieren

Many of our friends may not know that for a number of years the Sisters of St. Benedict have operated a lovely little Gift Shop, called the Cloister Shop, in the Monastery. It has taken many forms from an international flavor of lovely gifts from Europe, to the crafts and handiwork of the Sisters themselves.

When the Benedictine Center was remodeled in 1990, a semi-circular shaped shop was built around the bottom of the famous spiral staircase in the Monastery lobby. There it has been a source of inspiration to many as they entered the big, wonderful doors of the Monastery.

During the past year a study committee of Sisters and their friends met monthly to discuss how the shop might be enhanced. The brainstorming brought some wonderful ideas: involve volunteers to staff the shop, hold regular hours, publicize the new hours, invite the parishes in the area to “Come and See,” and select items to enhance the spiritual and personal life of those visiting the monastery for workshops, retreats, spiritual direction and visiting of friends and relatives.

The theme of the shop has always been that of warm hospitality as guests continue to be greeted with the spirit of St. Benedict,



“Receive all as Christ.” The hospitality of Sister Anne Boeckers and Sister Richardine Schackmann, who have operated the shop for the past nine years, made everyone feel welcome. Holding longer, regular hours has become more and more difficult for the Sisters to staff alone.

On August 1, an Open House was held as the Cloister Shop presented a new mode of operation. Thirty-five sales

associates were trained to operate the shop on a rotating basis and become ambassadors for the Monastery as they take on the ministry of service to guests in the shop.

New one-of-a-kind gifts are now gracing the shelves and walls of the shop as guests enter the shop anytime between 10:00 and 3:00 Monday through Saturday and after the Eucharistic Celebration and Brunch on Sundays from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

We are grateful to Sister Anne for her graciousness over the years and wish her well on her retirement from the Cloister Shop. She has been the contact for many people as they brought in donations to the shop. She has ministered to many as she listened to them and brought them comfort, compassion, and a friendly ear. Thank you, Sister Anne, for your service to God’s people in their need and your service to the Monastery for your detailed operation of the Cloister Shop over the years.

Word of mouth of the visitors has brought many new faces to the Cloister Shop. It has been a busy and rewarding time for those who minister there. Fresh displays are arranged weekly as new merchandise arrives. New artists have brought their items to the Shop on a consignment basis that presents an interesting diversity of talent in the area. Beautiful bronze pieces from Germany and Ireland were a part of the display in late summer. Wooden palm crosses have been a favorite with guests. Greeting cards have been popular as well as the lovely work of a sculptor who presents his characters from the Scripture in miniature in a unique way.

Rave reviews of the enhanced shop have been common among the guests at the Monastery. So we say, “Come and See” what has happened to the Cloister Shop.



Sisters of St. Benedict

**St. Paul's Monastery**

2675 Larpenteur Avenue E.

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