



# Extant Extra!

## Abiding, Enduring, Alive!

Dear Friends and Supporters of Mother of God Monastery,

This issue of our newsletter is an *Extant Extra!* Our multi-page issue *Extant* newsletter will be published twice a year and we'll use the 'Extra' issues whenever we have special updates for you. This *Extra* is our Lenten mailing and a way to invite you to be a part of our Sisters' Lenten project as well as bring you up to speed regarding a few things that are happening in our community.

### A Spiritual Pilgrimage

The sisters are going on a 'spiritual pilgrimage' to raise monies for the Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM). We have supported AIM for many years as we believe the assistance given to monastic communities in poor countries (for supplies and/or grants for formation and education of their members) is of high importance.



United States  
Secretariat of  
the Alliance for  
International  
Monasticism

**How it works:** Each sister will pledge to walk at least one mile a week within the monastery. We will measure the hallways so that miles can be accumulated and recorded. As we walk, we will pray for all of you, our sponsors and your prayer intentions.

**Your part:** Join us in supporting AIM by sponsoring a sister for a specific dollar amount per mile. At the end of Lent, we will post on our website the total miles walked by each sister. At that time, you can send in your pledged amount in the envelope included in this mailing.

### Good Works

We support many "good works" as a community in the Watertown area and beyond: the local, national and international Catholic Church, charitable organizations that care for the poor in the world at large, and monasticism, a much-needed form of religious life in the Church and in the world.

### Transformative Visioning Progress

We have begun evaluating our "sponsored" ministries: the Benedictine Multicultural Center, the Spirituality Center, and Benet Place Independent Senior Apartments. Last November, the community agreed to cease our sponsorship of the Multicultural Center at the end of our fiscal year (July 31, 2019). The Multicultural Center Advisory Board is now working diligently to find new sponsorship. Please hold us in prayer as we continue to discern our future within God's call.



Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,

S. Terri, Prioress

## National Catholic Sisters Week, March 8 -14

A component of the National Women's History Month, NCSW is a time to celebrate the richness, diversity and contributions of women religious in our lives. If it has been awhile since you touched base with a sister who has made an impact on your life, you can visit our website, [www.watertownbenedictines.org](http://www.watertownbenedictines.org) to get in touch. We would love to hear from you!



NATIONAL CATHOLIC  
SISTERS WEEK

### Pruning for Growth

by S. Barb Younger, OSB



St. Benedict's first monastery, Monte Cassino, built in 529 AD, was crushed by Allied bombs in February of 1944—the FIFTH time the monastery had been destroyed by invading forces over the centuries. They hauled away tons of debris to make way for the new. By 1956 the monks had rebuilt the monastery. They chose the Latin phrase *succisa virescit* meaning, "having been cutdown, it flourishes" to celebrate this new chapter of their Benedictine life.

Last summer, "Pruning for Growth" was chosen as our spiritual theme for the year as we entered into the *Inner Work of Transformation*, a pivotal component of the Transformative Visioning process we are engaged in. Using the act of pruning as a spiritual metaphor provides some rich opportunities for us. Gardeners can testify that cutting away a damaged branch isn't too difficult. But to press a pair of shears toward a green, growing, budding plant is a test of faith. Ultimately, pruning is an act of caring for the plant in that it removes the unproductive and irrelevant pieces to reveal the best chance that it will be maximally fruitful.

**"TRIMMING"** long, unbranched stems above a healthy bud encourages lower branches to develop.

**"THINNING"** removes selected shoots, even the main stem, opening the plant to more sunlight.

**"REJUVENATING"** cutting back all of the stems to within an inch of the ground during dormancy promoting a spring-time 'rebirth' of the whole plant.

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit." John 15:1-2*

For us, part of the work of *Inner Transformation* has been to identify, reflect on and choose to cut away the sometimes-painful parts of our life. Without having done this kind of inner work, it would be difficult for us to take a loving look at our sponsored ministries, how we care for our sisters or imagine what the future of our community might be without getting stuck or tangled in the unfruitful branches. We've learned inner work requires both faith and trust if the transformation we desire is going to bear fruit in our lives. In small groups, we are sharing the stories of our lives, acknowledging the many intersections or "graced crossroads" where we have encountered the God of infinite love in bold strokes and soft whispers. In the parable of the "true vine" Jesus makes it clear that **God chooses** to have an active role in our lives:

*"Abide in me as I abide in you.*

*Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine,  
neither can you unless you abide in me...*

*As the Father has loved me so I have loved you; abide in my love." John 15:4; 9*

Our willingness to abide in God's LOVE is the "graced crossroad" which marks all of our faith journeys. Recalling such God-encounters helps us to stay the course when life is messy! Our spiritual stamina and willingness to say YES to life is only possible when we care for ourselves by allowing God to lovingly TRIM, THIN and REJUVENATE us where needed. How else are we to leave behind that which does not bear fruit? Who or what would you rather abide in, if not God? None of us are without need; allowing the "vine dresser" access leads to life!

*"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be complete." John 15:11*



We are loved by the God who desires our "joy to be complete!"

Imagine the immensity of that statement! I encourage you to spend some time with John 15:1-17 this Lent. Give the "vine dresser" access to your heart, mind, and soul so that having been cutdown, you will flourish, for God only **prunes for growth!**