

At Ephesus

Dear Family, Friends and Benefactors,

The chanting of the Rorate Mass

We hope and pray this missive finds you all in the grace and peace of Our dear Lord, Who has shown Himself to us in the flesh. Much has transpired in these wintry months here at thickly snow-blanketed Ephesus, and the more thinly dusted Monastery of St. Joseph in Ava. Both houses are thriving, thanks be to the good God, and we pray it is likewise with you.



It's been almost a year since we got our rescue puppies, Josie & Bella. We were fully resigned to losing little Bella (right) due to her pre-adoption "four flat tires" according to veterinary surgeon, Dr. David Allen. But in an extraordinary act of charity, he operated on all four, and we have an almost-new canine!



Sr. Wilhelmina's gravestone arrived in November. Her frequent visitors always leave consoled, and her grave is the main destination for all our rosary walks, especially as Sister was so devoted to the Holy Rosary.



Our community retreats took pace in November, led by Fr. Dan Nolan, FSSP at the Abbey and Fr. Sean Kopczynski, MSJB at Ava. That same month, Sr. Annuntiata of Clear Creek came to live among us. Sister's companion in religion recently passed to her eternal reward, and as Benedictine life is communal, we happily undertook a mutual permanent adoption so Sister would not be alone. We are glad to have her back, having known her for so many years, and to have one more voice in choir raised in praise of the good God Who has brought us together.

Sister came amidst our fall entrances, and now we have a posse of bubbly postulants in the house, and another at Ava. They are all learning the ropes of *ora et labora*, with plenty of fun in the mix! They have been the greatest enthusiasts of our winter recreations, taking full advantage of the snow for snowball fights and sledding, even some ice skating too!

Fortunately, there has not been too much severe weather to deter them from acclimating to this way of life, neither has it significantly set back our construction progress. *Thanks to you all, we successfully met our matching gift* with funds to spare, and have begun work on our lay guest house!! Guests at the monastery "which are never lacking," as St. Benedict says, will have ample space come summer to share in our liturgical prayer. Ava also now has some savings set aside for their permanent construction when the Sisters outgrow their temporary monastery.

Sincere and humble thanks to all of you, our dear family in Christ. May He ever lead us more surely along the path of salvation, and may He bless each of you. Please know of our prayers for you all, as always!

In His Merciful Heart,

*Mother Cecilia, OSB
L'Esper*

*Saint Joseph
Novena of Masses*

*March 19th-27th
Enroll loved ones at
benedictinesofmary.org*



Christmas at the Abbey



The procession into Midnight Mass always begins with our Sr. Emmanuel uncovering the Christ Child beneath the tree, and ends with our youngest postulant placing the Christ Child in the creche.

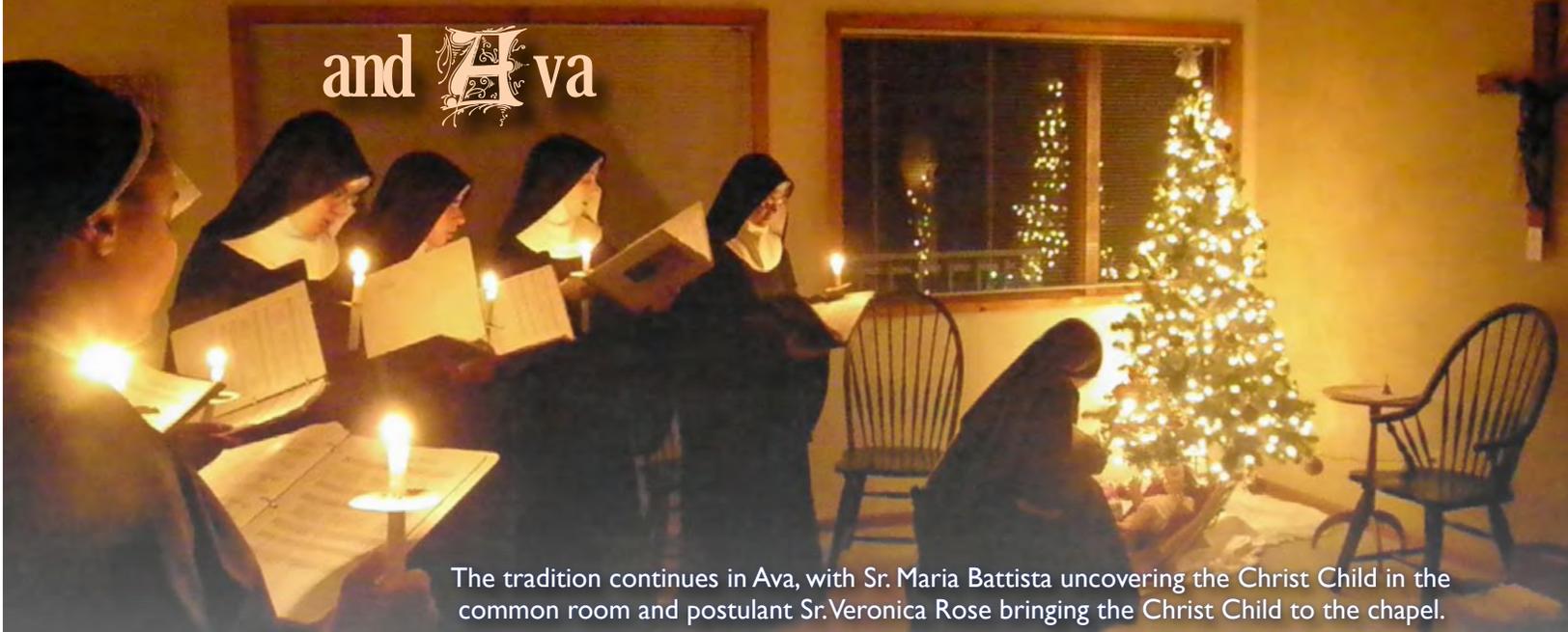


A beautiful statue of Saint Tarcisus now adorns the end of the church's side aisle, thanks to Bill Fitzgibbons and friends



Our long-time friend Fr. Michael Barone blessed the doorways for Epiphany.

and Ava



The tradition continues in Ava, with Sr. Maria Battista uncovering the Christ Child in the common room and postulant Sr. Veronica Rose bringing the Christ Child to the chapel.

Fr. Jambon blesses St. Joseph's doorways.



The Christmas Octave sees an increase of recreation and free time. The rustic beauty of the Ozarks grants our Ava Sisters a peaceful setting to catch up on solitary prayer.



The Sisters bow to receive a blessing from our Eucharistic Lord at St. Joseph's Monastery when ringing in the New Year 2020. May it be a year of many blessings for our first daughterhouse.



Did Sr. Erin miss her vocation as a pitcher... or Sr. Caecilia as a pirate?



In the annual Novitiate Holy Innocents' Day skit, Sr. Wilhelmina visited a future daughterhouse to restore discipline among the inobservant novices and postulants. They then begged Mother Abbess to keep them on the straight and narrow!



Above: Sister Annuntiata opens a gift box from her family, one among many sent by family and friends, which were opened and shared throughout the Christmas Octave.



The Sisters are not the only ones who love the snow!



When the snow failed, there was ice to substitute in our winter sledding recreations.



In an equally humorous Holy Innocents' skit in Ava, Sisters donned Franciscan habits to enact Mother Mary Francis' Christmas play. Below: Mother Abbess breaks in a snowplow for our UTV, kindly delivered and assembled by faithful friends and family.



Left: Our local Christmas tree farm always gives us beautiful wreaths and trees.



Left: A carefully constructed gingerbread house and its multitudinous inhabitants confected at Ava.



Above: Sr. Maria Stella's family sent goodie packages from Germany to Gower and to the Sisters at Ava.



Our pioneers gather around their elegant 12-foot tree!



Winter is a time to catch up on vestment making!



Winter Work

The Sisters in Ava continue the work of House of Ephesus.



Replicating the Madonna by Sassoferrato in Ava.



Heedless of the wind and weather, our "barnies" continue their tasks each day.



Our hoophouse from the outside...



and the inside!



Scattered among the rows of luscious green lettuce, tomato and cucumber plants are bottles of black-dyed water to absorb and retain heat.

Left: The first harvest of "winter greens" is brought in, the fruit of green thumbs that do not hibernate!



At morning Chapter, Mother Abbess continues to read all the intentions that you send to us.



EXTENDING HOSPITALITY

The guesthouse construction has begun! The ranch-style building will accommodate a large family and single retreatants.

BENEDICTINES OF MARY, QUEEN OF APOSTLES
8005 NW 316TH STREET
GOWER, MISSOURI 64454



In justice thou shalt be built up, and in the
day of affliction thou shalt be remembered:
and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the
fair warm weather. —ECCLESIASTICUS 3:17

