

At Ephesus



Immediately after Midnight Mass, our four newly-minted postulants joined their slightly older seniors to make a total of eight.

Dear Family Friends and Benefactors,

Greetings in the Lord! It is now the time of year when we can say "Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come." (Canticle of Canticles 2:11-12) We have indeed begun pruning our orchard, and witnessing the brave crocuses and snowdrops poke through the bare earth as the first heralds of spring. The season of Lent is a time for a new springtime within our souls, in which the Lord invites us to deep interior renewal and growth. May the season be a time of pruning for all of us, so that we may bring forth beautiful spiritual fruit in our lives!

Much exterior growth has taken place in the community as well. We now have eight postulants at the Abbey and four at Monastery of St. Joseph in Ava, where construction has continued on through the winter months. We are so grateful to God for the 'fiat' of these young women, and have already received nine requests for entrance in this coming year. So, the obligation to continue building is incumbent upon us, as we would have no room to house any more Sisters. As it stands, we will have to leave the church unfinished, as moving the community into a larger living space will take priority.

Sadly, some major benefactions in which we had placed great hope never materialized, so it was necessary to secure a loan from the bank, unfortunately at a very high interest rate of 8.6% with about \$7 out of \$18 million left to go. We are inquiring with other religious houses and groups about loans of any amount with lower interest rates, as we want to be the best stewards of the gifts given to us as possible. Perhaps someone reading this, while not in a position to give a major gift, would consider a low or no interest loan to assist in this manner? We would be delighted to hear from you if so!

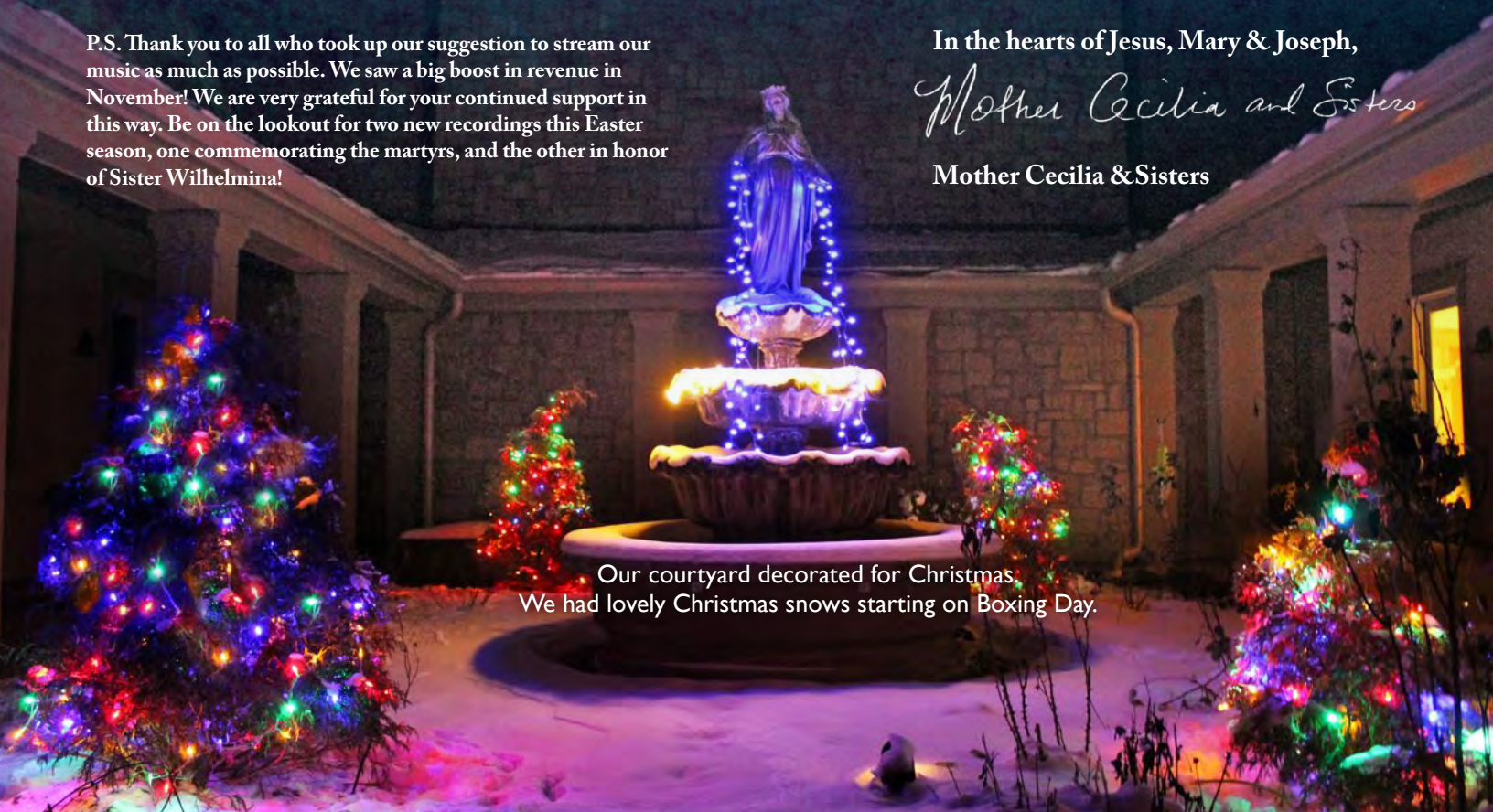
Please know of our deepest gratitude for all of you who have supported us in so many ways; we know that the Lord Himself will be your reward exceeding great. We will be most grateful if you would pass on our need to any and all of you know, especially during this season of heightened almsgiving. Above all, let us pray for one another, that each one of us may be renewed this Lent with greater love for the Lord and each other, zeal for our holy Faith, and trust in God's loving providence. May He bless you now and always~

P.S. Thank you to all who took up our suggestion to stream our music as much as possible. We saw a big boost in revenue in November! We are very grateful for your continued support in this way. Be on the lookout for two new recordings this Easter season, one commemorating the martyrs, and the other in honor of Sister Wilhelmina!

In the hearts of Jesus, Mary & Joseph,

Mother Cecilia and Sisters

Mother Cecilia & Sisters



Our courtyard decorated for Christmas.
We had lovely Christmas snows starting on Boxing Day.

Opening Christmas presents



Below: Sr. Anna was the youngest postulant before Midnight Mass, so she it fell to her to place the Infant Jesus in the creche.



A Postulant Christmas concert



Above: Epiphany water blessing



Christmas AT GOWER

The annual Christmastide potluck with Gower neighbors brings rousing performances by our servers and siblings (below.) We were joined this year by Baby Wilhelmina Vogel (left.)





Caroling in the new church at Ava.



The Holy Innocents' skit.



Sr. Mary Pia presents Christmas cookies

of 2023 ... AND AT AVA

The Sisters barely fit in the temporary monastery at Ava! We continue to receive a vocation inquiry once a day on average, so the construction cannot be completed quickly enough!



Chanting Midnight Mass



Reception of Postulants





Before coming from England, Mum and Dad Jordan each baked a proper Christmas cake and let the Sisters judge which was better. It was a tie!



It was so good to catch up with our former chaplain from Nigeria, Fr. Evaristus Eshiowu, FSSP



Canadian Sr. Maria enjoys the ice on our pond



Texan Sr. Lillien is always scrapping for a snowball fight!



Snow is rare in Ava, so Sr. Vayla's juggling substitutes for the fun!

Sister-Sisters

We received requests to identify our seven sets of Sisters at the Abbey in our newsletter.



THE RADELS
Sr. Scholastica
Sr. Misericordia
VIRGINIA

THE SMITHS
Sr. Mary Elizabeth
Sr. Consuela
MAINE

THE SIMONSES
Sr. Agatha
Sr. Marie Therese
CALIFORNIA

THE CMEJLAS
Sr. Marie Madeleine
Sr. Laetiana
WISCONSIN

THE GREENES
Sr. Maria Dolora
Sr. Corrine
MINNESOTA



Candlemas

Strong Missouri winds often blow our "candlelit processions" into "processions with candles" in Gower (left) and Ava (above) but in all things God is glorified!



These vocations that "ran in the family" now run together to the Lord!

Parting is such sweet sorrow for our friend "Al," our nickname for "Alleluia," who receives a proper burial in our courtyard each year after First Vespers of Septuagesima Sunday. We look forward to Al's return at Easter!



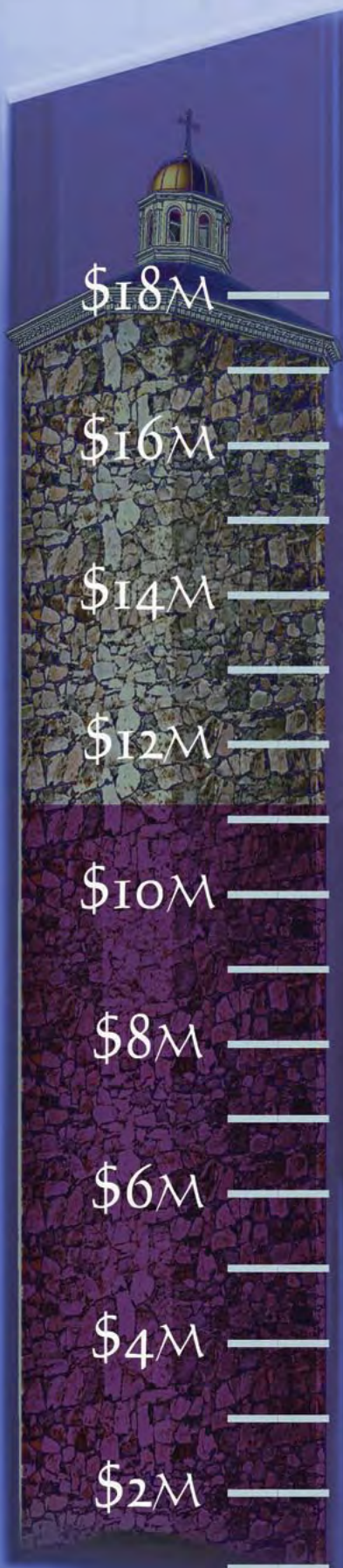
THE ZOONENS
Sr. Helena
Sr. Philippa
HOLLAND

THE JORDANS
Sr. Josephine
Sr. Margaret-Mary
Sr. Mary Solana
Sr. Elizabeth
ENGLAND



Below: It is beautiful to come upon a monastery rising in the Ozark Hills!

As you can see from the original model here compared to our actual progress, we don't have much more to go.



The monastery church
in the rising sun
Left: Looking up into the cupola

Superior of St. Joseph's Monastery,
Sr. Mary Josefa, awaits the welcome
day of move-in, hopefully this summer.



We have quite a ways to go,
but we trust in the Lord and
St. Joseph that His house will
be built!

CONSTRUCTION



Above: the bells "Maria" and "Cecilia" already ring out from their place in the bell tower.



Above: the entryway is nearly complete, as is the siding, below.

Bottom center: A Sister and construction supervisor look out over the magnificent landscape. Every room has a lovely view!



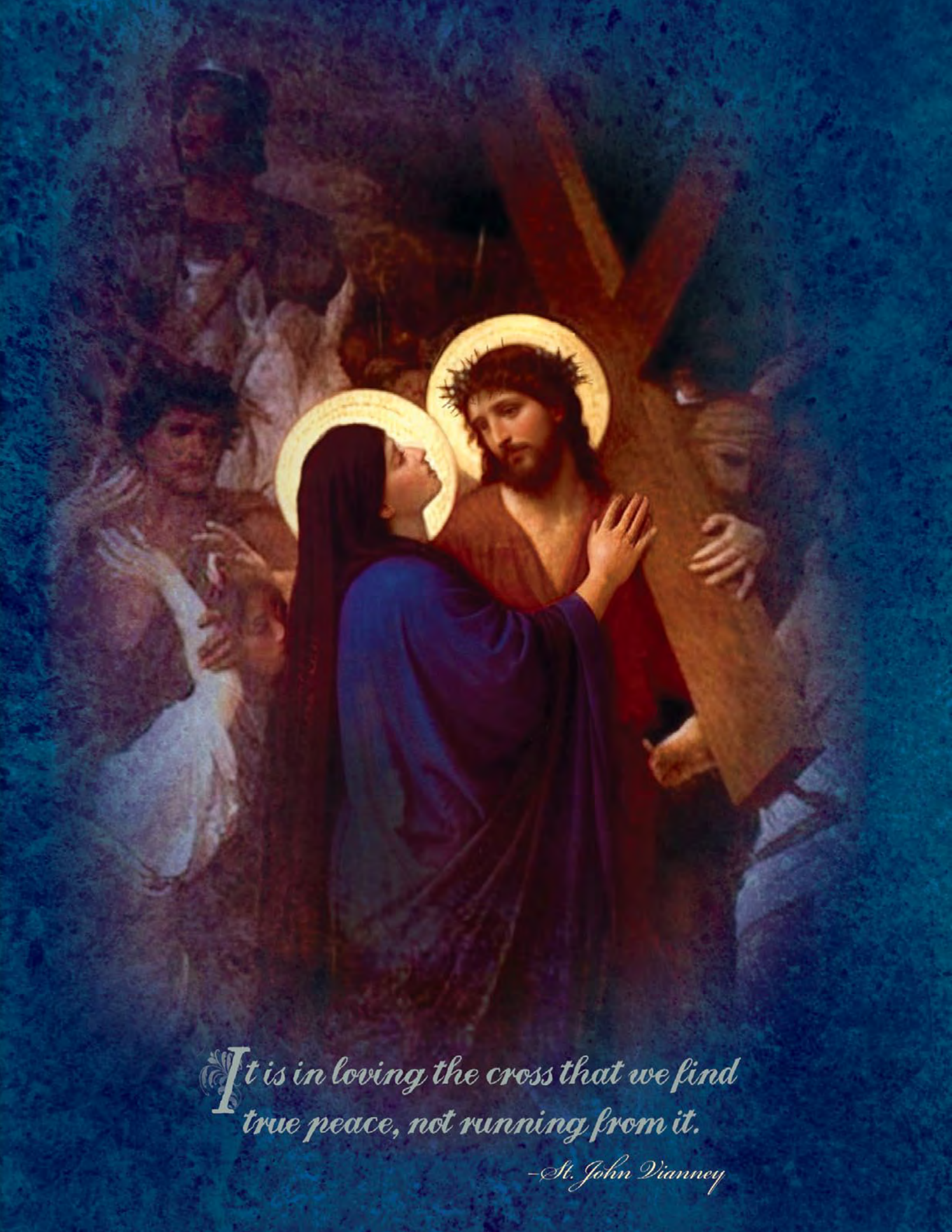
UPDATE FROM AVA

BENEDICTINES OF MARY, QUEEN OF APOSTLES
8005 NW 316th Street
Gower, MO 64454

Notice to our benefactors:
We do not and will not share
any of your personal information
with anyone at any time.

Sr. Ava, Sr. Bernadette and Maisie
clear up the patch with the first
crocuses of the season.





*It is in loving the cross that we find
true peace, not running from it.*

-St. John Vianney