



Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey
8400 Abbey Hill • Dubuque, Iowa 52003

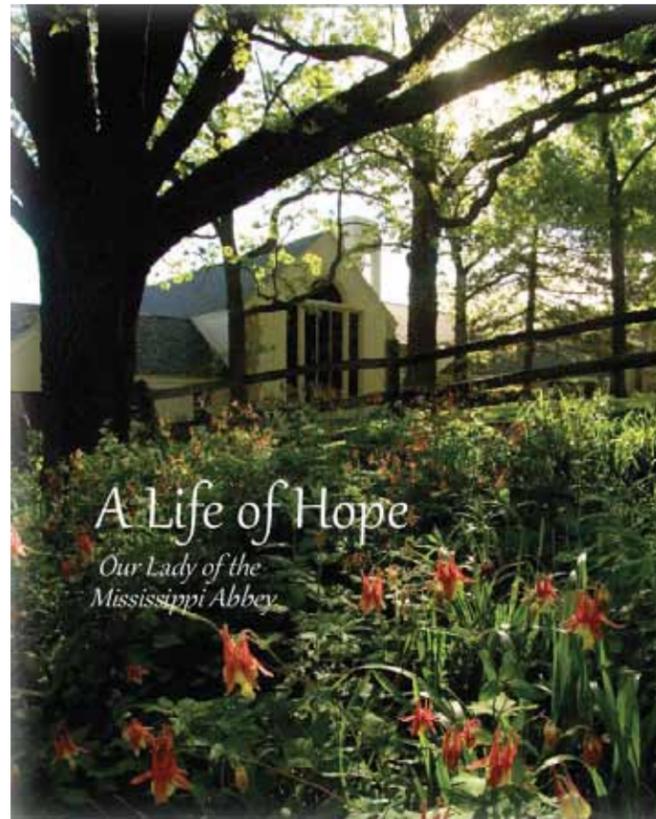
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the printer just before Christmas, and we were thrilled to see how beautifully it turned out. One of our friends wrote to us, “After reading this book and enjoying the rich photography throughout, it would be difficult for anyone to go away without feeling a very intimate connection to your very beautiful Abbey on the Hill.” We want to make sure all our newsletter readers are aware of this opportunity to share further in our life. The book is available via our candy website.

You are always in our prayers. May Jesus bless you abundantly this summer!

The Sisters of Mississippi Abbey



It has been a quiet winter and spring at Mississippi Abbey – always a blessing for a monastic community! After all the jubilee celebrations of the last year and a half, it is good to settle into the ordinariness of our life, the daily routine of prayer and work.

In recent years we have begun looking in a more long-term fashion at how we support ourselves. Most businesses take this kind of planning for granted but our candy business has been sort of “running itself” for so long that most of our planning has been year-to-year. If not day-to-day...

So we asked a few business-savvy friends, and one of our brothers at New Melleray, to join M. Rebecca and a few other sisters in an Industry Exploration Committee. It quickly became clear

to our advisors that, while we do have a few critical issues to address, our candy business is basically in fine shape. The biggest weaknesses are our dependence on one major piece of equipment which is no longer made and difficult to service, and the aging of our community.

While we have many machines in our candy factory, the caramel wrapper is such an essential piece that it is referred to by us sisters simply as “the machine,” and the crew that operates it is “the machining crew.” Our present “machine” is a work of art, but rather ancient. Some years ago we were blessed to find a machinist in driving distance who is able to care for this machine periodically; but he is retiring. We have a second “machine” which has been sitting in the “machining room” at candy for years, but we have



All Souls' Day, November 2. Procession to our cemetery.



One of our three new freezers. The other two are just as large!

never been able to adjust it well enough that it actually works, so that we could actually *use* it to wrap caramels. It is painted a handsome Kelly green and in its own way adds a lovely note to the machining room, but probably feels pretty lonesome and wistful passing the years unused, as it watches our regular machine wrap away, surrounded by devoted sisters.

About 70% of the candy we sell passes through the machine, and the problem of not having a back-up or potential replacement is so serious that we were considering changing our industry to something else altogether. However, our advisors were sufficiently impressed with the state of our business, and especially with our devoted clientele, that it seems best to try to solve the Machine problem instead. To this end we have purchased a few derelict machines of the

same basic type and are hoping that we will eventually get at least one of them up and running.

As for our labor force, after 50 years as a monastery, plus sending a large contingent to found a new monastery in Norway in 1998, we are a smaller and older group than the young things who had physical strength and energy to burn in our early decades. Since founding Tautra we have come to rely increasingly on employees and volunteers to fill up our candy crews. They have been a tremendous blessing, but we are still under great pressure in the fall season, and that is increasingly hard on those members who are aging. Our advisors have been especially concerned that our business not have an adverse effect on the quality of our monastic life. We are here for God, and our candy work is a means, not an end in itself.



Our Advent wreath



One of our sisters grew some giant pumpkins. These are a few of the pumpkins we carved to line our refectory on Halloween. Don't worry – the terrified little pumpkin being swallowed by the monster pumpkin did escape, just before they all went to Pumpkin Heaven.

So we are re-organizing our production a little, hiring a few more helpers, and starting to have small crews of employees, in addition to our crews of sisters, making candy year-round. However, our candy has a limited shelf life and about 80% of it is shipped out in the last months of the year. How could we shift more of our production to earlier in the year and still have fresh candy? The solution has been the construction of three enormous freezers (at least, they seem enormous to us!). We are already starting to fill them up for next fall. What is even better, this means our candy will be fresher all year round, as we're putting it in the freezer right away instead of having it sit in our warehouse for weeks or even a few months.

It's an exciting time, and we are going about it rather slowly so we can figure things out peacefully. Every change takes time and planning, and there are always unforeseen consequences. Since a big part of the reason for our re-organization is to keep the monastic quality of our life and work, it would be counterproductive to make changes so fast that they consume our attention.

We have some other good news to share with you. Our Sr Mary Therese made her first profession on December 20! It is always a joy in a community to see new life growing and flourishing, and we ask your prayers for our new junior professed sister. She will renew her vows annually until that time when, we hope, she makes final profession.

We are also happy to tell you that *A Life Of Hope*, our book about our monastery, has finally seen the light of day. The first copies arrived from



Srs Mary Therese, Gail (junior director) and Anna.