

## “Green” or “Sustainable?”

“Green” is a hot topic today! And “green” is what the new monastery building will be. But, what is “green”? Who decides if something is “green”? So what if it’s “green”? These and other questions will be the topic of a series of articles in the electronic *Benedictine Bridge* throughout 2009.

The color green evokes diverse images. Green is the color of plants, grass, leaves and other healthy living things. Likewise green is the color for “Ordinary Time” in the liturgical year. We’ve also heard of people green with envy. And some of us swore off green the day we left the army. Oh, yes, there are the “Green & Gold!”

When we talk about a green building we’re talking about a *healthy* building:

- A building that utilizes healthy products in its construction as well as in its operation.
- A building with natural lighting and clean natural air flows.
- A building that doesn’t waste energy.
- A building that complements its natural surroundings.

“Sustainable” is another hip word. “Green” and “sustainable” are complementary terms. Sustainability refers to the long term operation of a building or activity. Can it carry on into the future because of the way it was designed or how it operates? A sustainable building is one that generates the heat, light, water and other components necessary to continue to function. True sustainability is a designation that very few buildings achieve.

The new monastery building will be “green.” It will utilize natural daylighting in all occupied spaces. The heating and cooling will depend heavily on natural ventilation as well as the geothermal heat and cooling. About 20% of the electrical needs will be supplied by photovoltaic panels on the roof. The water is from the monastery well, with no chemical additives. The building is designed to use 56% less energy than a comparable new structure built to today’s code.

Our goal is to expand the amount of photovoltaic generated electricity in the future to make the building 100% “sustainable,” often referred to as a “zero carbon footprint.”

In future months we’ll delve deeper into the components of “green” and “sustainable” in the new monastery building and look at ways each of us can apply these principles in our daily lives.

–Neal Smith, executive director of administration  
January 2009