



Peter Cihelka/News & Messenger

Sister Cecilia Dwyer does the honors during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia's Place of Peace at the Saint Benedict Monastery near Bristow on Monday.

Ceremony opens Place of Peace

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On a gorgeous spring Monday, the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia gathered outdoors to celebrate three major events commemorating their rich history.

Highlighting the day was a special ribbon-cutting to inaugurate the first phase of their newest project — a Place of Peace at the Saint Benedict Monastery near Bristow.

At the ribbon-cutting, Sister Louise Dowgiallo, who headed up the project, said, "Today we are celebrating a project that began four years ago. We are in the process of transforming 110 acres into a place where all who seek quiet, prayer, meditation, beauty and peace may come and find that.

"As the Linton Hall Road corridor becomes more urban with upwards of 16,000 houses, our goal is to offer this prayerful, beautiful outdoor sanctuary to anyone seeking a meaningful spiritual experience as a gesture of welcoming them to the Benedictine tradition of hospitality."

Loop One, the peace loop, consisting of a labyrinth and peace

silos, which was open for the first time to the public following the opening ceremony.

Sister Cecilia Dwyer, Prioress, told the gathering that "The Benedictine Sisters came to the state in 1868, settling first in Richmond before establishing the foundation of the Benedictine Community at 'Lintonford' in Bristow the spring of 1894 which, she said, according to records was 'nothing more than a blackberry patch with lots of thorns.'"

Dwyer said the purpose of the sisters locating in the area was to minister to the needs of the people and "the Place of Peace will follow this tradition."

Monday's ceremony marked 138 years of the Sisters in Virginia and 112th of the anniversary of the establishment of the Motherhouse.

"The gifts of time, talents, expertise and financial support by benefactors, churches, volunteers service groups and businesses have contributed to our stability, viability and legacy of service," said Dwyer.

Other highlights of the groundbreaking event included the Knights of Columbus-4th Degree Color Guard; Linton Hall

School's Fife and Drum Corps; presentation of Outstanding Stewardship Award to Mattie Parrish in honor of her late husband, Harry Parrish; a multi-media presentation; and a catered luncheon reception by The Inn at Vint Hill. Tours of the grounds were also offered.

Dana Pfeifer, director of development and community relations, served as master of ceremonies at the event, saying, "This monumental occasion is the culmination of years of work in the development of this project. It is the vision of the of the sisters to share this one-of-a-kind, unique concept and their home with the residents of Prince William County and the larger Northern Virginia and metropolitan D.C. area.

"It will be a place for families and other groups to gather, to enjoy nature and the wildlife this area fosters through its open green space, conservation and ecology efforts."

The monastery is located at 9535 Linton Hall Road, south of Manassas off Va. 28.

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