A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in fallen leaves and moss, leading into a dense forest of tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a hazy, golden atmosphere. The path is flanked by mossy logs and undergrowth.

Managing for Ecological and Spiritual Values

*A Brief History
of Monastic Forestry*

BY JASON M. BROWN



Catholic monks typically stay in one place for their careers. Consequently, over the centuries, monks have embraced sustainable forestry practices to protect the land around their monasteries.

Before graduating from forestry school, I joined a European forestry field trip. One of the more memorable stops for me was the Pleterje Charterhouse, a monastery in Slovenia of the Carthusian Order, among the most austere and contemplative in the Roman Catholic tradition.

The monastery is surrounded by a buffer of farmland and forest that isolates the monks from the surrounding area, contributes to the monastery's industry of fine liqueurs, and provides space for the monks to take recreational and contemplative outings. The forestland is comanaged by the Slovenian government. I began to wonder what kind of spiritual relationship these monks had with the forest, how that spirituality affected management, and whether monastic institutions in North America also had forests.

Although monastic communities no longer manage the vast tracks of land they owned in the medieval period, contemporary monasteries are often land rich. Many have shifted from production-oriented landscapes toward more ecologically minded values and land management strategies, and several now practice ecologically sustainable forestry. In this short essay, I will give a brief history of the relationship between monks and forests in Europe and North America and provide a

A path on the Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey property in Oregon takes visitors to the namesake's shrine and, on the other side, a recent patch cut of Douglas fir in the uneven-aged forest.

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contemporary case study in the transformation of what I am calling monastic forestry.

THE FOREST AS DESERT

Monasticism began in the deserts of Egypt, Assyria, and Judea. Early hermit-monks such as St. Anthony the Great (251–356 CE) saw the desert as a liminal space—a space between earth and heaven. They fled to the deserts to awaken to God’s presence within, and in some cases to escape persecution, conscription, and the confines of respectable household life.¹ Some eventually became known as desert fathers and mothers.

The harsh climate and stark landscape of the desert were an astringent for the soul. Jerome (347–420), an early church father, wrote that “the desert loves to strip [the soul] bare”: the desert was the ideal place to learn to control the passions that kept one from realizing union with God.² Just as the soul must be stripped of its excesses, the desert stripped down life to its most basic elements and taught the hermits how to find God.

As Christianity and monasticism spread into Europe, the vast forests of the continent took on significance as spiritual deserts. Solitaries and hermits often set up in woodlots and forests, where laypeople and disciples would seek them out for healing or instruction. The holy men and on rare occasions women who dwelled in the forests were the European equivalent of the desert fathers.

In his literary history of forests Robert Pogue Harrison writes that Christian civilization sought to bring the vast forests of Europe under the sign of the cross.³ Forests were cleared and agricultural settlements expanded. The improvement of agricultural practices and the spread of Christianity went hand in hand; missionaries and kings alike fused Christian theology with an agrarian worldview. Celtic and Druid sacred

groves were annexed into churchyards, holy wells, or sites of pilgrimage that honored Christian saints or apparitions of the Virgin Mary.⁴

The medieval historian Georges Duby, writing in the 1960s, considered monastic institutions the drivers of the first wave of European deforestation (800–1100), which he referred to as “great clearances” (*grands défrichements*). In environmental histories like Duby’s, the residents of monastic institutions were painted as “holy frontiersmen” taming the vast wild forests of Europe—hardly a sustainable enterprise.⁵

Even though monasteries were part of many European settlements’ expansion, the monk as ax-wielding pioneer is not consistent with evidence presented by contemporary environmental historians who have studied medieval monasticism’s relationship to the forests of Europe. Monks certainly embodied an agrarian worldview that sought to Christianize the cultural landscape and transform the forest wilds into an ordered, agrarian paradise-garden. But the narrative put forth by older historians is often an exaggeration—often because the monks themselves may have overstated the extent of their forest clearing in their monastic histories.⁶ And because monasteries produced most of the period’s written records and histories, monastic documents became historians’ primary source for tracing environmental history in Europe.

Monks tended to exaggerate the wildness and remoteness of their locales to accentuate their role in its cultivation—in the words of the prophet Isaiah (35:1), to make the forest-desert wilderness “blossom as the rose.” Doing so, of course, complemented the monasteries’ theological reason for being and mirrored the allegory of cultivating souls as a garden of God.⁷ Consider Stavelot-Malmedy, double Benedictine

monasteries built in the seventh and ninth centuries in the Ardennes region of Belgium. The land for the monastery was donated by Sigibert III, the Merovingian king of Austrasia from 633 to 656. He located the monastery on royal land “in our forest called the Ardennes, in an empty space of solitude . . . in which a throng of wild animals springs forth.” The official history of the monastery described a barely populated, rugged wilderness at the community’s founding by Saint Remaclus in 650. This description paints the area as wild, uninhabited, and even dangerous. Writing in the late 900s, Heriger of Lobbes, in his biography of Saint Remaclus, the *Vita Remaculi*, described the place as “confined by mountains” and “impeded by swamp,” with people “not fully established” who were “bound up in idolatry”: a place fertile for conversion, both spiritual and agricultural. In reality, however, the area had been cultivated and occupied for many years by pagan inhabitants.⁸

THE MONASTIC SENSE OF PLACE

Monastic communities in the Middle Ages were often sited on the margins of towns and settlements, frequently in rural and agricultural landscapes. This served both a spiritual and a practical purpose. A rural location made a monastery more self-reliant economically, helped the monks focus on their vocation of prayer, contributed to an atmosphere of silence, and served as a buffer between the sacred and the secular.

Unlike clerics or itinerant friars, the “mendicants” who ministered to lay people, monks took a vow of “stability”: they committed to stay in one place and with one community for the duration of their lives. They could leave the property for monastery business, and a few transferred their vows to other monasteries, but the ideal was to tether oneself and work out one’s



salvation in the place. Even today, this vow is often described as an admonition to become “a lover of the place”—a phrase attributed to Abbot Stephen Harding in *Exordium parvum*, a twelfth-century history of the Cistercian order, founded c. 1100.⁹

As in the Middle Ages, today’s novice monks spend many hours a day working out their vocations, stripping away negative aspects of their former secular lives. Much of this “discernment,” as the process of obtaining spiritual understanding is called, takes place on the typically large rural properties where monks live. The monks are discerning not only their call to a lifetime of monastic spirituality and the pattern of community life, but also their call to live in a *particular* place. These three to five years of spiritual formation, which involve study of scripture and monastic history and spirituality, are also intertwined with the land itself.

The town and abbey of Stavelot, c. 1735, about 1,100 years after the abbey was established. Though described by a monk in the late 900s as being located in wilderness when founded, the area had actually been inhabited by non-Catholics for some time.

As one monk who lives in a Trappist community in central California described it to me:

You become part of the land. Our vow of stability grounds us, and an image that was really helpful for me was the idea of these trees [points] taking root . . . The longer I stay here, the more I can see myself growing in ways I never thought possible. It’s of course not always easy, staying in one place, but the [longer] you stay [the higher you can] reach.¹⁰

This monk expressed a sentiment that is common among contemporary monks—being rooted in a particular

place imbues monastic spiritual practices with the features and rhythms of the land. Those features and rhythms often include trees and forests, whose growth was analogous to this monk’s own journey into monasticism. Trees and forests are in fact common symbols for the monks themselves, who strive to stand tall and quietly pray.

MANAGING MEDIEVAL MONASTIC FORESTS

At the peak of monastic influence, before the rise of the friars in the thirteenth century, and later the violent expropriations of the Protestant Reformation, entire counties were controlled by monasteries. Historian Walter Horn writes,

As a manorial entity, the Carolingian monastery thus differed little from the fabric of a feudal estate, save that the corporate community of men for whose sustenance this organization was maintained consisted of monks who served God and spent much of their time in reading and writing.¹¹

The abbeys drew their wealth from a wide swath of the surrounding territory, using a tithing system that supported their learning, prayers, and charity. The Cistercians, who saw themselves as reformers of the predominant monasticism, departed from this manorial system and instead employed a caste system, distinguishing between “choir” monks and *conversi*, the lay brothers who worked the land. This arrangement was not original to the Cistercians, but it presaged the rearrangement of labor during the eighteenth-century enclosure movements and industrial revolution.¹²

Medieval monks saw themselves as bridging earth and heaven until the Second Coming of Christ. That created an incentive to manage land with some measure of productive sustainability. Forests and forest products were highly valued resources that were often managed by intensive forestry techniques. Pollarding and coppicing, for example, allowed for multiple uses of forest spaces and rapid regrowth. Forests were also valued for their fruits, nuts, medicines, and fodder for pigs. Even as the expanding population greatly reduced Europe’s primary forests, the monasteries managed their forests and groves on a sustainable basis. In fact, although their lands might not meet modern definitions, their broad-scale management techniques may have been at least baseline sustainable.

A feudal-era monastery with a significant history of forestry is the

Hermitage of Camaldoli, founded in 1024 in Tuscany. Abbot Romuald (951–1027) was a contemporary of Saint John Gualbert (985–1073), patron saint of foresters, who planted trees for food and timber in his monastic allotment. Romuald set his monks to planting white fir (*Abies alba*) to ensure a steady supply of wood. With a large monastery at the base of the mountain and a cluster of hermitages up higher, Camaldoli became an exemplar in sustainable forestry practices. It even served to inform the Italian forestry code during the nineteenth century.¹³ Today the Hermitage, which is still in use, is one of the oldest continuously occupied monasteries in Europe. Since World War II it has become part of the Casentino National Park, which encompasses 36,000 hectares (89,000 acres) and is among the largest in Europe.¹⁴

The extent of monasticism’s influence on the European land base began to wane with the French Revolution and the secularization of Europe. Industrialization—supported by institutionalized forestry, the primary goal being volume of timber—was now the main driver of land-use change. As North America was colonized and the nations of Canada and the United States grew, Roman Catholic monasticism established a modest presence here, largely through Benedictine seminaries and universities. Their generally large, rural properties were primarily engaged in farming and maintaining monastic self-sufficiency through traditional manual work. Today, more than 150 Benedictine and Trappist monastic communities are active in the United States and Canada, most of them founded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The transformation of the United States’ agricultural economy in the 1960s to greater efficiencies and productivity forced many monasteries to “industrialize” by moving away from agricultural production to value-added

products, such as fudge, cheese, and fruitcake.¹⁵ Declining vocations and aging populations have also pushed property management toward leases or contracts with professional managers. Despite these major changes, land remains integral to the monastic way of life and spirituality. Communities very seldom resort to selling or downsizing their properties, but at least one Benedictine monastery, Saint Procopius’s Abbey in rural Illinois, has sold a portion of its property to local land developers, with the claim that what resulted was a more spacious and thoughtful development.¹⁶

BRIDGING MONASTICISM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

Monasticism has retained much of its medieval character, especially an overall agrarian worldview, with human beings cooperating with God to improve the land through cultivation. The image of the biblical paradise-garden is a strong motif that remains central to the monastic tradition of manual work.

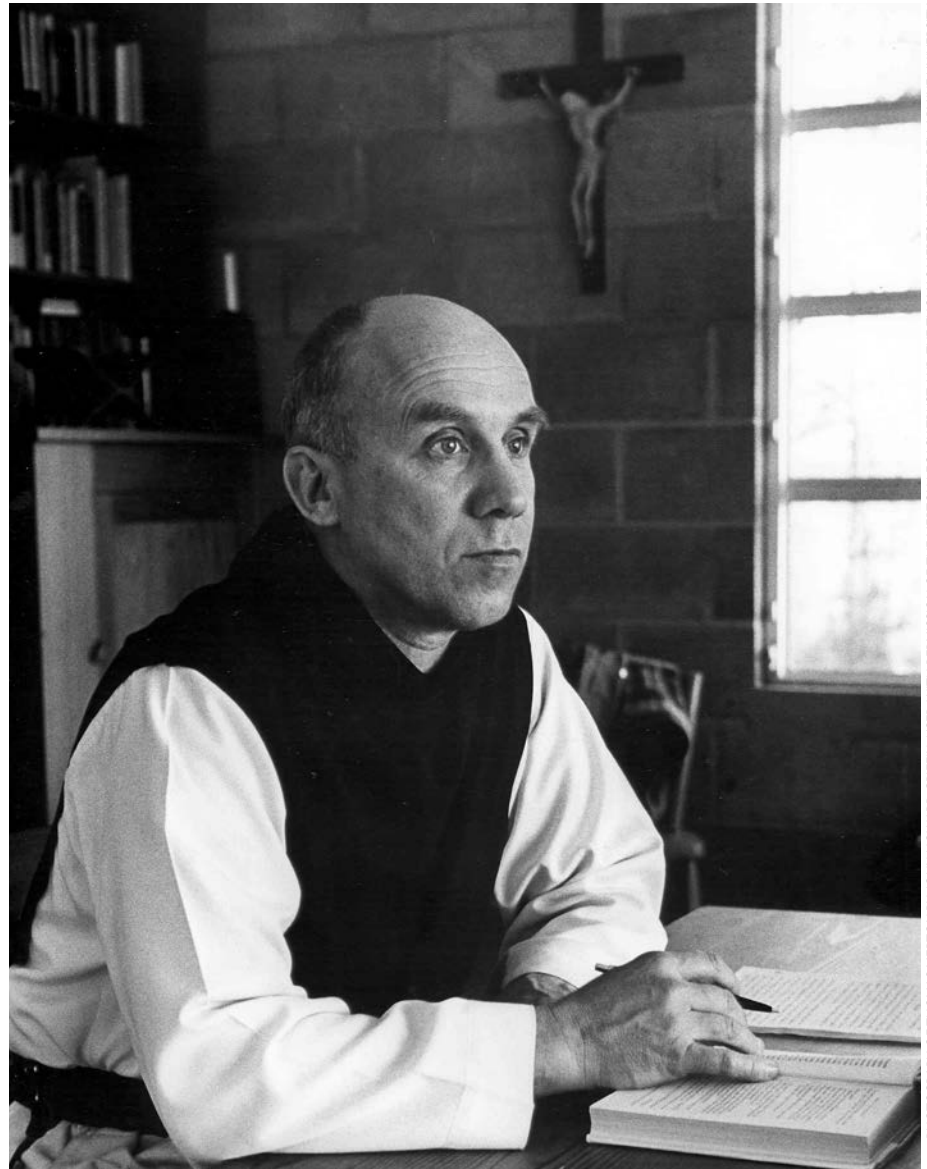
Beginning with the 1962–1965 Second Vatican Council, however, when the Roman Catholic Church sought to update its practices, monasticism has addressed progressive movements in contemporary society. For example, the life and work of the twentieth-century contemplative Thomas Merton (1915–1968) represents a bridge between monasticism and environmentalism. A Catholic convert who became a monk at Our Lady of Gethsemani Trappist Abbey in Kentucky in 1941, he wrote a bestselling autobiography entitled *The Seven Storey Mountain* shortly after he entered the monastery and went on to popularize contemplative spirituality through dozens of books and articles. Merton expounded on a wide variety of other subjects as well and wrote thousands of letters to contemporaries on religion, literature, and politics.

Merton was a talented nature writer. In his journals he recorded

daily weather reports, and he documented his encounters with birds and other wildlife, including a not-so-friendly encounter with a snake in his outhouse.¹⁷ Merton's spiritual writing often included reflections on the sacredness of nature, especially birds and trees. In his book *New Seeds of Contemplation*, an essay entitled "Everything That Is, Is Holy" hinted at a theology that resonates with Saint Francis of Assisi (1181/1182–1226), the patron saint of ecology. In it, he meditated on creation's unique connection to God: "We do not detach ourselves from things in order to attach ourselves to God, but rather we become detached *from ourselves* in order to see and use all things in and for God."¹⁸ Instead of a dualistic or Neoplatonic view that matter and spirit are at odds, Merton saw matter and spirit as inseparable. Merton even compared the creatures at his monastery to saints because by their very nature they praise and give glory to God.¹⁹

Merton was always discerning a call to greater solitude and silence in the tradition of the desert hermits, and he loved to wander alone in the monastery's forests. In fact, he was tempted to move to Camaldoli Hermitage and later considered hermitage locations in Alaska. As he wrestled with his vocation as a monk seeking greater solitude, he briefly entertained the possibility of being stationed at the monastery fire lookout on Vineyard Knob, the highest point on the abbey property, but the distance of the Knob from the church and his inability to drive dissuaded him.²⁰ Eventually Merton was permitted to move to a small hermitage less than a mile from the monastery. There he was surrounded by forest, and his journals are rich with Thoreauvian observations.

In the 1960s he wrote controversial essays about social justice, race, and peace. This wide-ranging and progressive thinking also made



PHOTOGRAPH OF THOMAS MERTON BY JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN. USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE MERTON LEGACY TRUST AND THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER, BELLARMIANE UNIVERSITY

Thomas Merton at his hermitage. He framed the entire monastic vocation in terms of ecological integrity.

points of contact with the fledgling environmental movement. In 1963 Merton corresponded with Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring* (1962). Merton later joined the Wilderness Society, and he began to frame the entire monastic vocation in terms of ecological integrity. In a review essay, Merton wrote,

If the monk is a man whose whole life is built around a deeply religious appreciation of his call to wilderness and paradise, and thereby to a

special kind of kinship with God's creatures in the new creation . . . then we might suggest that the monk, of all people, should be concerned with staying in the "wilderness" and helping to keep it a true "wilderness and paradise." The monk should be anxious to preserve the wilderness in order to share it with those who need to come out from the cities and remember what it is like to be under trees and to climb mountains.²¹

Integrating biblical motifs with contemporary environmental concerns, the agrarian logic of converting the wilderness to an agricultural paradise is flipped on its head, and the wilderness begins to be imagined as paradise itself.

Typical of his fellow monks, Merton engaged in manual labor. One of his jobs was as the abbey forester. Merton would spend the afternoons cutting trees for monastery construction projects and firewood. Kentucky State Forestry gave the abbey hundreds of loblolly pines, which Merton and the novice monks of Gethsemani planted. Unfortunately, most of them died within the first cold winter because they were not a cold-hardy variety.²²

Today, Gethsemani Abbey is primarily a place of retreat for those seeking to immerse themselves in the monastic rhythms of chanting and prayer. The monastery's extensive twenty-two-hundred-acre property serves as semi-protected area for retreatants and monks alike to wander and pray. Merton's hermitage in the forest is used on a regular basis by the monks and is occasionally visited by curious pilgrims devoted to Merton. There are currently no harvesting activities at Gethsemani Abbey.

CONTEMPORARY MONASTIC FORESTRY

The general cultural shift toward a valuing of wildness and ecosystem integrity evident in the writings of Thomas Merton has also influenced post-Vatican II monasticism more broadly, and by extension the monastic approach to forest management. For the most part, monasteries with extensive forests take a more or less hands-off approach, allowing forests to exist naturally without intervention or harvesting. However, in some communities, monks' and nuns' land management reflects environmental

calls for ecosystem integrity and restoration.

Redwoods monastery in California, Regina Laudis in Connecticut, Our Lady of the Rock on Shaw Island in Washington, Westminster Abbey in Mission, British Columbia: all have extensively forested properties that are not actively managed for harvest. This passive approach is likely the most common form of forest management among North American monastic communities. Trees are an amenity to retreatants and contribute to the general contemplative, natural atmosphere and range from planted arboretums to protected natural areas.

In western Oregon, the Benedictine monastery and seminary Mount Angel departs from the pattern: it maintains, offsite, a significant forested endowment property that is managed by outside contractors to generate revenue for the community. Saint Gertrude's monastery in Idaho manages more than 1,400 acres of forest and farmland. Although there is no public information about the monastery's annual harvests or management priorities aside from aesthetic and spiritual, the monastery's website includes a statement from Sister Carol Anne, the forest manager: "The forest is my heaven . . .," suggesting that the land is managed primarily for contemplative and ecosystem service values.²³

Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, is a Benedictine monastery founded in 1864 by monks from St. Vincent Abbey in Pennsylvania. The abbey property encompasses some 2,944 acres, of which 1,400 acres is forestland, and includes a large arboretum and a maple sugarbush. Since 2002, the same year it hired a forester who was not a monk, the abbey has been coordinating with Minnesota Native Landscapes and Prairie Restoration, Inc., to restore native grasses and forbs to 35 acres of oak savanna, a project that includes prescribed burning. In 2002, the abbey

received Forest Stewardship Council certification for 2,400 acres.²⁴

Holy Cross Trappist Abbey in Berryville, Virginia, recently partnered with the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environmental Management on a full assessment of the sustainability of the monastery's 1,400 acres, with recommendations for future actions: that the abbey plant more trees along roads, widen riparian buffers, and restore native hardwood forests in several degraded pastures.²⁵ In addition to assessing the abbey's state of sustainability and recommending improvements, the document also includes an appendix of monastic communities with various sustainability programs or goals.

The Trappist Abbey of New Melleray in Iowa, which manages more than 3,000 acres, decided in 2019 to hire a full-time in-house professional forester to intensify its forestry operation to support a casket-making business. The abbey plans to remove invasive species and plant more high-value oak trees in maple-dominated stands in anticipation of a long-rotation selection harvest and shelterwood harvest operation.

A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY

Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey in Carlton, Oregon, illustrates the evolution from a "tree farm" approach—viewing trees as crops and forests as cropland—toward a forest management approach that seeks to improve structural and age diversity and biodiversity while generating revenue through the sale of timber.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a Trappist monastery founded in 1955 by 41 monks. The community began in 1825 in Nova Scotia and relocated to Rhode Island in 1900. In 1905 the abbey sent monks to Jordan, Oregon. That foundation eventually failed and the monks returned to Rhode



Island. After trying and failing in New Mexico, the monks then purchased a property in Carlton, not far from the former Jordan community.

The monastery sits in the Willamette Valley in the western foothills of the Oregon coastal range. The community is surrounded by rural properties on all sides, many of which have become vineyards. The founding monks grew grain in the bottomlands and raised sheep and cattle on the surrounding hillsides. During the early 1960s, the farm operation was caught up in the declining agricultural economy and the monks struggled to stay solvent. They were eventually forced to sell their livestock and lease their farmland to a local farmer, where grain and eventually grass seed was grown extensively until 2016, when the monks decided to lease the land for hazelnut production.²⁶ The monastery pivoted toward other industries: a carpentry shop manufactured church pews and other furniture, and a book bindery provided services for local universities. The abbey opened a fruitcake bakery in the 1980s and a wine storage and labeling facility in the 1990s.

A forest near the New Melleray Abbey in Iowa provides both a source of white pine lumber for the abbey's business Trappist Caskets and opportunities for quiet reflection.

Trees are now another revenue-generating crop. In 1967, the monks started a Christmas tree operation. They also began managing about 880 acres of the property for softwood timber production, planting Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and experimenting with ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*), hybrid poplar (*Populus* spp.), and Leland cypress (*Cupressus leylandii*). Plantations followed a tree farm model, with the trees planted in rows.

In the 1980s, commercial harvesting began, led by a small crew of forester-monks. The crew harvested trees in small block cuts, and replanted in tightly spaced, single-species cohorts. Native species were not necessarily privileged, though Douglas fir was the most commonly planted tree. The monastic forest management program emphasized the production of timber resources on a sustained-yield cycle, based on the scientific forestry prescriptions

of Oregon extension specialists, combined with the local knowledge accrued by the monks over many years of living there.

This timber-centric strategy was more or less compatible with a Trappist agrarian orientation to land: the forest was part of the wider farming operation, rather than an ecosystem. In this approach, well-ordered plantings were in line with the mandate to cooperate with God to order the world and make the wilderness blossom as a rose. During one of my stays at the abbey, I was walking with a young monk past a particularly straight row of Douglas firs. The stand reminded him of something the former forest manager once said:

Father Romaine, when he was with us, he was one of the main planters and he walked by here once and said, "This is what some people contemptuously call a tree farm," at which he



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obligated to purchase conservation easements for habitat restoration in the Columbia River valley because of the land it flooded for hydroelectric dams. After a lengthy process and assessment, the monastery received a substantial sum of money to keep the property undeveloped and manage the forest sustainably.

In addition, the conservation easement qualified the monastery for funds it has used to restore areas of Oregon white oak savanna, an endangered ecosystem with less than five percent of its historical range remaining. The local climate favored white oak, and before European settlement, the Kalapuyan peoples used fire to clear the forest of firs to open it up for hunting and harvesting acorns. Without fire, Douglas fir dominated the oaks, eventually shading them completely. In the past, white oak was often cleared to make way for more Douglas fir or sold as firewood. The abbey forester's ecological restoration will use historical baselines to return the ecosystem to its pre-European settlement structure. Harvesting all the trees except the white oaks mimics the historical pattern of burning. The oaks are expected to return to health and vigor, and the restored savanna will see an increase in biodiversity, especially migratory birds, songbirds, and raptors.

From its early agrarian roots and tree farm model to today's ecological working forest, Our Lady of Guadalupe has made significant changes in its approach to forest management. The Trappist care for creation has been central to the community's approach to land as it cultivates both financial and spiritual values. The monastery now sees its forests as not just a working forest but a spiritual sanctuary for both monks and visitors. One condition of the abbey's conservation easement is allowing public access for recreational hiking, and as one of the largest

A slash pile of Oregon white oak is seen in the newly restored savanna on the Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey property. The goal is to restore it to its pre-European settlement structure.

took great umbrage at because he thought it was a forest. But if you look at it compared to the other parts of the forest, it is kind of a tree farm.

This brother, raised in an era of environmental awareness, saw a difference between a naturally generated forest and a plantation. Father Romaine, however, steeped in a more agrarian approach to forestry, thought the distinction belittled the work he had done to reestablish the forest from its midcentury degraded state.

In the late 1980s, a heavy-handed clearcut near a favored picnic area angered several monks. More and more brothers and retreatants saw the monastery as a sanctuary and wanted a flourishing forest in this agricultural county. The monks eventually decided to hire a professional forester to manage the forest with more emphasis on ecological integrity.

In 1995, this consulting forester inventoried the property and wrote a management plan, guided by the monks' input, that would explicitly balance spiritual values, ecological health, and revenue generation. The

manager has since transitioned to an ecological approach to forest management and obtained Forest Stewardship Council certification, which confirms that management and harvesting conform to ecological principles.

That has meant patch cuts no larger than two acres and more commercial thinning to diversify the forest's age and structure. Harvest areas now have more standing dead trees, wildlife trees, and coarse woody debris. Harvests have focused on clearing areas around overgrown Oregon white oaks (*Quercus garryana*) and Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) to increase native tree species diversity. The monks began aggressively managing for invasive species—false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and English hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*)—and designated an 80-acre section as a remnant old-growth area, set aside from thinning and commercial harvests.

The abbey forest manager also enrolled the property in a conservation easement program funded by the Bonneville Power Administration, which is legally

intact forest areas in Yamhill County, identifiable as a large green block in area maps, the monastery will attract recreationists as well as retreatants.

EPILOGUE

Roman Catholic monasticism has a long history of using forested landscapes as spaces for prayer, spiritual symbolism, and community livelihood. In North America, the engagement with environmental and conservation discourses has shifted forest management away from agrarian approaches to more ecologically minded ones.

Monasteries remain centers for cultivating a deeper connection to place and landscape. Although monastic forests make up a tiny fraction of the privately-owned forestland in North America, they are often located in high-growth areas and thus provide opportunities for connecting protected areas and supplementing local green spaces.

These monastic properties are increasingly managed by outside professionals knowledgeable about land management challenges and solutions. With a heritage that emphasizes a monk's sense of place, monastic communities are committed to a long-term vision for their landscapes and may be more receptive to restoration or silvicultural projects that have longer time scales than conventional commercial forestry operations. Some communities have now placed their forests under nonprofit-funded conservation easements. As monastic recruits continue to dwindle, the ecological value of these properties at least will remain intact.

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24. “Saint John's Abbey Forestlands Receive Certification from SmartWood,” July 8, 2002, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, <https://www.csbsju.edu/news/saint-johns-abbey-forestlands-receive-certification-from-smartwood>; and “Certification in the Benedictine Tradition,” Forest Stewardship Council, Newsletter Stories, <https://us.fsc.org/en-us/newsroom/newsletter/id/121>. According to the Council's FSC Certificates Public Dashboard, the certificate was terminated in December 2011, but it doesn't state why. All websites accessed June 13, 2022.
25. Kathryn Buckner, Craig Cammarata, Charlotte Coultrap-Bagg, Alexander Linkow, Jessica Neafsey, and Christopher Stratman, *Holy Cross Abbey: Reinhabiting Place* (Ann Arbor, MI: School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan, 2010), iii.
26. This section comes from Brown, “Dwelling in the Wilderness,” 115–24.