

For October 9, 2009 Groundbreaking

On the trailer:

Br. Paul Richards – to lead singing, then steps down.

Br. Benedict Leuthner, OSB
Abbot John Klassen, OSB
Fr. Robert Koopmann, OSB
Mr. Mario Monesterio
Mr. Dwight Jelle
Mr. Nathan Franzen

3:00 pm **Br. Benedict:**

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Br. Benedict Leuthner, Treasurer of Saint John's Abbey. Thank you for coming today to join with Saint John's Abbey, Saint John's University and Westwood Renewables, for the groundbreaking of this new endeavor –

the Saint John's Solar Farm.

To begin our program, please join in singing "All Creatures of our God and King".

SONG led by Br. Paul Richards

Br. Benedict: At this time, I am pleased to introduce the leader of our Saint John's Benedictine community, Abbot John Klassen, who will share a few comments on why Saint John's has begun this work. Abbot John...

ABBOT JOHN USES SPEECH HE BRINGS ... OR AS BACK-UP ...

ATTACHED is draft version "Just in Case".

Abbot John:

Good afternoon and welcome members of Saint John's Abbey - students - faculty - staff - regents and board members - arboretum board members - and neighbors and friends of this project.

Welcome also to our government representatives here today from

- The Avon Township Planning Commission;
- The Avon Board of Supervisors;
- Representatives from the Stearns County Commissioners ...
- And Stearns County Environmental Services.

Welcome to those here from our Minnesota State Legislature:

- those from the **Minnesota House of Representatives**
- those from the Minnesota Senate
- and to those representing our United State senators.

Welcome to the contractors and suppliers on this project; and welcome to those investing in the solar farm.

Finally, I would like to extend a special welcome to our partners on this project --- Westwood Renewables and Westwood Professional Services --- who have been instrumental in the vision for this solar farm. Joining us are Mr. Mario Monesterio, founder and Principal of Westwood Renewables; Mr. Dwight Jelle, President of Westwood Professional Services and Mr. Nathan Franzen, General Manager of Westwood Renewables.

As we begin this afternoon's groundbreaking ceremony, and I look out at this 4 acre field that was just recently filled with corn stalks, many things are going through my mind. As a former science teacher, I start to think-- what's the research behind this solar energy, how is the electricity generated, what is different about a photovoltaic solar panel that makes it work so well here in our climate? I look forward to hearing from Westwood Renewables in just a few minutes to hear more about these details.

In making the decision to approve hosting this project on Abbey land, our monastic community discussed the benefits of bringing this technology to Saint John's. Now that this energy source is just weeks away from being ready to provide electricity to our campus, it is exciting to think how we are bringing our State and our campus another step closer to carbon neutrality.

A few years ago, in 2007, then-president, Br. Dietrich Reinhart (on behalf of Saint John's University) was one of the charter signatories of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. Through this charter, Saint John's has made a commitment to strive towards the ultimate goal of carbon neutrality. It is part of an ongoing commitment to good stewardship that all of Saint John's values and embraces. This commitment includes both small-scale and large scale projects, including conservation efforts such as putting electrical meters on all campus buildings to learn where we can reduce energy usage; or the recent recycling audit which has provided information to ensure we reuse and/or recycle as much as feasibly possible; and the installation of more energy efficient lighting systems in many campus buildings.

On a larger scale, Saint John's has just completed building the McKeown Student Center which is our first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building. And now we stand next to this energy site that will accelerate us into a new era -- using new strategies for energy production. We want this field of solar panels to become a symbol that Saint John's is committed to green energy and to sustaining our environment.

In addition to this solar farm providing carbon-free electricity, it is also VERY exciting to note that Saint John's and Saint Ben's students will have access to cutting edge solar technology for studies and research. Another huge benefit ... the arboretum will add this site to their campus educational tours to school groups from across Minnesota -- thus introducing a whole new generation to the capabilities of solar technology. Another aspect of the shared program with Westwood Renewables is the potential for Saint John's to become a venue for energy seminars and symposiums; and for visiting scholars and experts in the solar field who will use the data obtained from this solar array to advance the study on the feasibility of solar power in Minnesota and similar climates.

Let me end by saying, Saint John's is extremely excited to play a role in introducing a solar energy source of this magnitude to central Minnesota and to the upper Midwest.

[PAUSE]

Abbot John:

At this time...I would like to introduce Mr. Mario Monesterio ...founder and Principal of Westwood Renewables who will provide us with more specific information on this solar installation:

Mr. Monesterio:

(Br. Benedict takes over after Mr. Monasterio with the following thank you's)

Br. Benedict:

A project such as this solar farm requires hundreds of hours of behind-the-scenes work to get the permissions, permits and various project requirements in place – all within a very small window of opportunity. Saint John's and Westwood Renewables greatly appreciate the work of each person who played a role in making this solar farm possible. We specifically thank:

1. Stearns County Environmental Services for their willingness to support this unique proposal and help us create a timeline and process to get it done in a very short period of time.
2. Avon Township Planning Commissioners for working with Saint John's on the zoning issues and building permits
3. Avon Township Supervisors for their support of renewable energy
4. Saint John's Neighbors for their support and willingness to work with us on this project and for your patience with the added noise and traffic during this construction phase
5. Mark Sand - our local farmland renter – for his willingness to change his harvesting schedule so that the construction work could begin
6. Saint John's Monastic community for their steadfast support of renewable energy.
7. Stearns County Planning Commission for their willingness to work with us on a very tight timeline.
8. Stearns County Commissioners for their support of renewable energy.
9. Saint John's Physical Plant staff: Bill Boom, Gary Jorgenson, Tammy Huston and Jean Stottlemeyer.

At this time, I would ask Fr. Bob Koopmann, president of Saint John's University, to lead us in prayer:

Fr. Bob:

Psalm 19:2-7

Fr. Bob The heavens proclaim your glory, O God,
 and the firmament shows forth the work of your hands.
 Day unto day takes up the story,
 and night unto night makes known the message.

All No speech, no word, no voice is heard,
 yet their span extends through all the earth,
 their words to the utmost bounds of the world.

Fr. Bob There you have placed a tent for the sun;
 it comes forth like a bridegroom
 coming from his tent,
 rejoices like a champion to run its course.

All At the end of the sky is the rising of the sun,
 to the furthest end of the sky is its course.
 There is nothing concealed from its burning heat.

All Give praise to the Father almighty,
 to his Son, Jesus Christ the Lord,
 to the Spirit who dwells in our hearts,
 both now and forever. Amen.

Fr. Bob

SCRIPTURE READING: [next page]

Sirach

Chapter 42, 15-16; Chapter 43, 1-5

Now will I recall God's works; what I have seen, I will describe. At God's word were his works brought into being; they do his will as he has ordained for them.

As the rising sun is clear to all, so the glory of the LORD fills all his works;

The clear vault of the sky shines forth like heaven itself, a vision of glory.

The orb of the sun, resplendent at its rising: what a wonderful work of the Most High!

At noon it seethes the surface of the earth, and who can bear its fiery heat?

Like a blazing furnace of solid metal, it sets the mountains aflame with its rays; By its fiery darts the land is consumed; the eyes are dazzled by its light.

Great indeed is the LORD who made it, at whose orders it urges on its steeds.

SILENT REFLECTION

RESPONSE

Fr. Bob The sun rules in the day

All **FOR THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE IS WITHOUT END.**

Fr. Bob Bless the Lord, sun and moon.

All **PRAISE AND GLORIFY GOD FOREVER!**

Fr. Bob From the rising of the sun to its setting.

All **PRAISED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING – **ABBOT JOHN** (NEXT PAGE)

Abbot John: Let us ask God's blessing on this site, its equipment, and all who will maintain it.

[brief pause for silent prayer]

Blessed are you, Lord God,
all-powerful Creator of light.
We praise you for creating the sun
to govern the day,
for giving us light, heat and energy,
and for bringing us life and growth.

Look with kindness upon us
who will use this site to produce energy from the sun.
Let the work that we begin today in this place,
for your glory and our well-being,
help us to use the goods of creation wisely
and to care for the world you have given us.
Grant that by continuing to seek you
we may, after the darkness of this world,
rejoice to find you, our never-ending light,
in whom we live and move and have our being.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

Abbot John and Fr. Bob and others sprinkle the site with holy water. – return bowls to table on trailer.

After the 'blessing' of the field, one final announcement:

Br. Benedict:

At this time, I invite those who have been asked to take part in the official groundbreaking to step over to the field where we will pick up shovels and take a few pictures. And at the same time, I invite all of you here to enjoy some refreshments, look out on the field, and at the sample solar panel here on display, and to feel free to ask questions of any of us or those staffing the booths. Thank you all very much for joining us today.