



**Good Practice 12:
St. Catharinadal Monastery
Oosterhout, The Netherlands**

SKIVRE Training Scheme



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St. Catharinadal Monastery



St. Catherines, house of light, hospitality and culture

Description

■ Norbertine monastery of Sint Catharinadal Oosterhout, The Netherlands

Sixteen sisters live in the Norbertine monastery of Sint-Catharinadal in Oosterhout. The sisters have traditionally paid for the maintenance of the enormous monastery complex by restoring old books. But today there is less of a demand for this and the sisters have to look for a new source of income.

The big question is of course how this can be achieved if the number of active sisters continues to decrease in the future. In 2011 it was decided that the monastery would continue a plan for the future was presented in 2014. By setting up a "learning and inspiration house" with an accompanying guest house, the sisters offer people the opportunity to retreat and get away from the daily bustle. Taking a moment to reflect on life's questions in peace and quiet can be welcomed by increasing interest, whereby the boundary between faith, meaning and spirituality is experienced less sharply today than in the past. It also offers interested people the opportunity to become acquainted with monastic life, with the sisters hoping that new entrants will follow.

In addition, within the framework of the future plan, commercial activities have been developed for a sound financial basis. The sisters realised that besides the shop, the restaurant in the monastery, and the renting out of rooms, something else had to be added. A vineyard was



laid in 2014 and in 2017 a winery, restaurant (the Blue Camer) and monastery shop were opened. This would generate income for the preservation of the monastery. The first wine was presented in June 2018. The wine bears the name of the monastery: "Sint-Catharinadal". "I don't want to start a beer brewery," said Maria Magdalena (60) during a brainstorming session. But when the word vineyard fell, she became enthusiastic. The prioress wine suits us. As the Gospel of John says: "Christ is the vine and we, the people, are the branches."

Now there is a 7.5-hectare vineyard with 35,300 vines at the monastery. The first 11,000 bottles were produced in 2018. In the years following they've already used the winery production idea as a base to build relationships through several networking events. Ultimately, they are aiming to produce 50,000 bottles.

■ **Networking and how they benefitted from it**

A lot has preceded this bottle of wine. For inspiration, the sisters visited the monks of Koningshoeven Abbey in Berkel-Enschot, who brew the Trappist beer La Trappe and were advised by a South African winemaker. The maintenance of the vineyard was cooperated with a municipality reintegration company. This gave people with a "distance to the labor market" the opportunity to work there. The grapes were picked by volunteers. After 3 years from the start, the monastery finally has its own bottle of wine.

■ **Overreaching results due to networking**

Through networking, the sisters met people from different groups in society such as policy makers, social related organisations, and civil society organisations such as the local Rotary Club. Together with the latter a special donation programme was developed and a very special and exclusive support club was built.

The rotary club created a possibility to support the winery financially by becoming a member of the exclusive Wine Sharers Guild. An official contract: Named an "Act of Connection" is drafted, one provides a certain amount of sponsorship and in return one becomes every year a special package of wines plus the opportunity to participate in special events, such as f.i. a breakfast in the winefield, a special lecture etc. In this way the rotary club has built a continuous scheme of sponsors plus a lot of ambassadors.

The monastery is a real pioneer in developing high quality relationships for the longer term, with the participation of representatives of organisations and service providers who create real added value.

■ Why is this a good practice

The decision to go out to different groups in society, explaining their idea, the challenge they were facing and their ambition to solve this opened windows, new ways to find solutions, new and meaningful partnerships. This has led to a new model to support the maintenance and sustainability of the monastery without losing the authenticity and the spiritual meaning of the monastery.

Pictures



Picture 1. Breakfast at St. Catherines in the Winefield, © website St. Catherines

Source/link

This good practice article and also the pictures on the front page are available on the official website of St. Catherines Monastery under the following links:

<https://sintcatharinadal.nl>

Country

The Netherlands



Topic

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