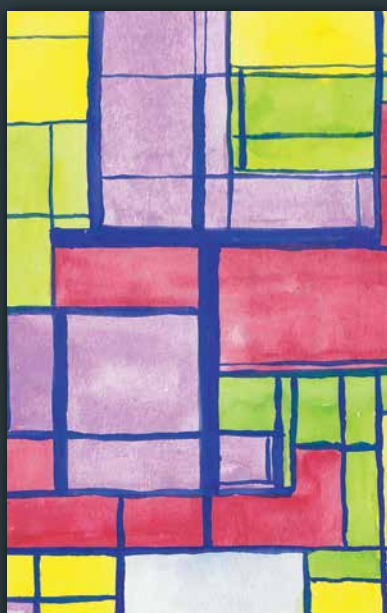
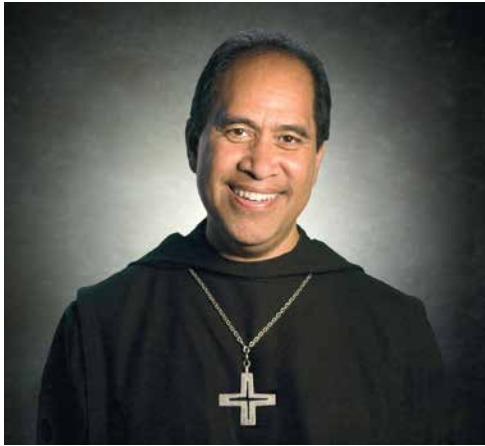


THE VALYERMO
Chronicle

S T . A N D R E W ' S A B B E Y



Nº 236 ✱ MIDSUMMER 2012



I could and only managed to cut five cords of firewood. I used to cut seven with my old saw, and you said this new saw guaranteed ten cords."

The salesman was surprised and confused. So he said, "Here, let me try it outside on some wood we keep there." They went to the woodpile outside. The salesman pulled the starter cord, and as the motor went *vrrooomm*, the customer jumped back shouting, "What's that noise?"

The salesman immediately realized that the customer had been trying to saw wood without the power of the saw to help him. In other words, he didn't turn it on; there was no power; he was doing all the work himself instead of allowing the machine to do it for him. He used this high-powered machine as if it had no power.

It is very much like the follower of Christ who attempts to live the Christian life alone, without the help or empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He or she ends up feeling frustrated, tired, confused and discouraged. It is important to remember—and to remind each other—that God has given us a high-powered instrument, so to speak, namely the Holy Spirit who lives inside us, to help us with the challenges we face in life. The Holy Spirit is the fortifying power in our life who strengthens and encourages us in life's difficult moments. He is the gentle power in our life who heals, comforts and consoles us when we are hurt or are in sorrow. He is the guiding power in our life who leads and directs us when we are disoriented or lost. He is the supportive power in our life who accompanies us when we feel isolated, afraid or lonely.

Even though life can and does throw us curve balls, we have within us the power to hit those curve balls out of the park. We have the power within us to overcome life's obstacles and difficulties, "...for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). But like the man in the story, all we have to do is turn on the power. And we do that simply by calling on the Holy Spirit. It's as easy as that because he loves us too much not to respond. Come, Holy Spirit!

Abbot Damien ✠



From the Editor

AS HIGH SUMMER BATHES Southern California in radiant sunlight, this issue of *The Valyermo Chronicle* brings you an eclectic selection of things to read under the shade of a tree somewhere.

Inside, you'll find previously unpublished work by two poets: our own Br. Peter and frequent guest Garrett Brown.

Part Two of Fr. Luke's series on the monastic community's years in China brings that history to a difficult turning point. And on the subject of turning points, by the time you read this Br. Ben will have taken up a new assignment with his order, the Missionaries of Charity, in England. As we pray that his ministry among the poor there might be fruitful, we look forward to his future contributions to these pages from a British point of view.

Br. Cassian continues his series of meditations on the *O Sacrum Convivium*, and a homily by Fr. Abbot responds to requests by readers to hear more frequently from the community's preachers.

Those of you who particularly look forward to Fr. Philip's quarterly book review will be disappointed by its summer hiatus this year, but worry not: his literary insights will return in the Michaelmas issue.

We experiment this quarter—motivated initially by frugality—with glossy paper stock. This will we trust have the aesthetic advantage, too, of inviting colors to stand out more boldly and crisply as themselves.

Wishing you peace,

Bede Hazlet, OSB ✠

THE VALYERMO Chronicle

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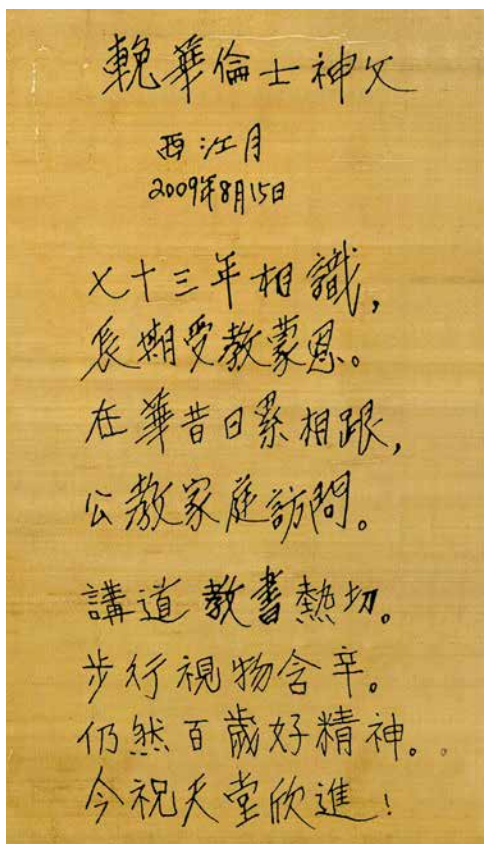


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Two Poems

BY BROTHER PETER ZHOU BANGJIU, OSB



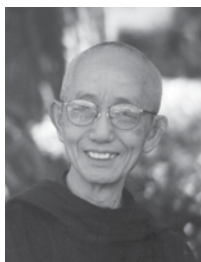
Lamenting the Death of Fr. Eleutherius Winance

*To the Tune of Xi Jiang Yue
(Moon over the West River)*

August 15, 2009

For seventy-three years
We were acquainted with each other.
I received your instruction and guidance
Over a long period of time.
In former days,
In China,
I followed you several times
When you visited Christian families.

You were very fervent:
In preaching and in teaching;
You endured hardships
In walking and in seeing things.
A venerable elder of one hundred
You remained still vigorous.
Now, we wish you
To enter Heaven with joy!

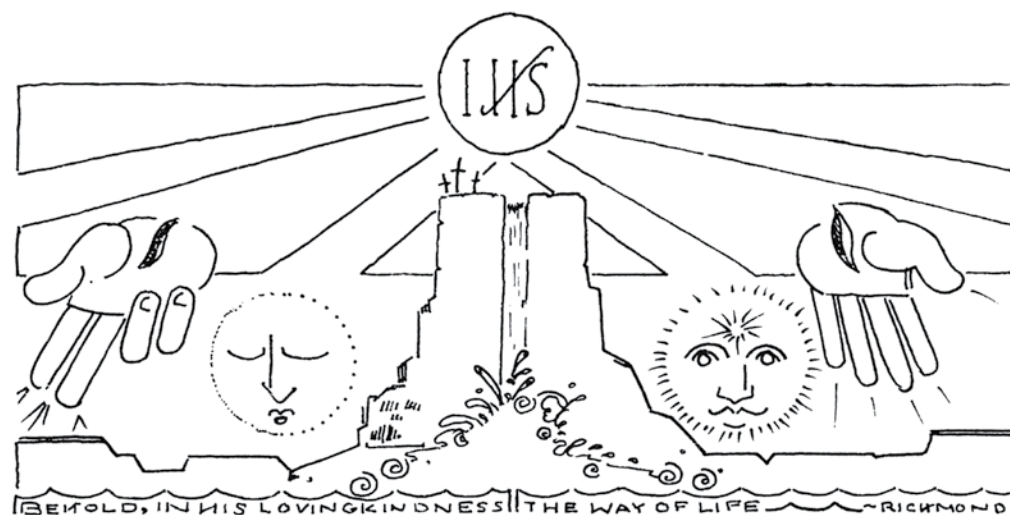
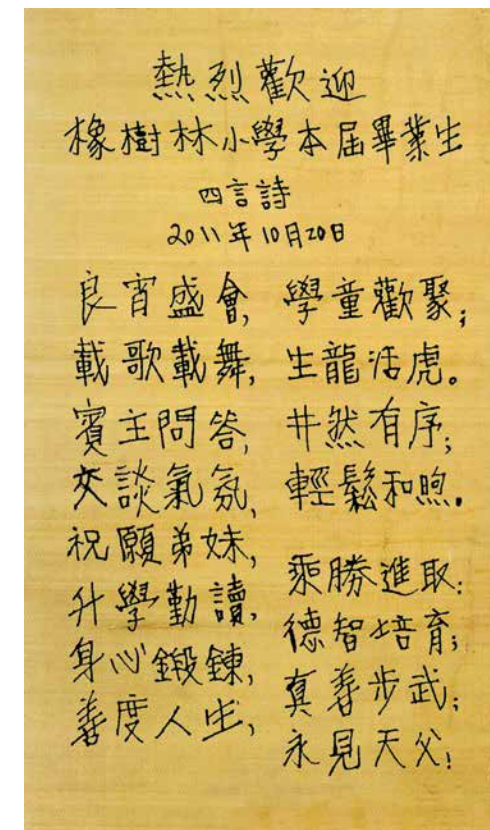


Br. Peter entered St. Andrew's Priory, Xishan, as a student in 1938 (at the age of twelve), making his monastic profession in 1950. Imprisoned by the Chinese Communist regime from 1955 to 1981, he rejoined his monastic community at Valyermo in 1984. He is the author of *The Mountain Pierces the Blue Sky* (a volume of poems), and *Dawn Breaks in the East* (a memoir).

Welcoming Warmly This Year's Fifth Grade Class From the Oakwood School *In the Poetic Style of Siyan Shi* October 20, 2011

A happy and pleasant evening,
At a grand party
The pupils come, getting together joyously.
They sing and dance,
Full of vim and vigor,
Like dragons and tigers.
The questions and answers
Between the guests and the hosts
Are carried out orderly;
The atmosphere of conversations
Is light-hearted and genial.

We bid you,
Our young brothers and sisters,
Keep forging ahead on the crest of a victory:
Going to a higher school,
Studying diligently,
Cultivating character and intelligence;
Building up the body and the mind,
Pursuing the truth and the good;
And ultimately,
Having lived a good life,
Seeing our Heavenly Father forever and ever!



COME, SILENTLY (IN FOUR PARTS)

BY GARRETT M. BROWN

Do we ever leave the words?

I have had moments when the words
left me

An opening, a gap,
this silent pause. Can the words be
something else?

The silence within the silence.

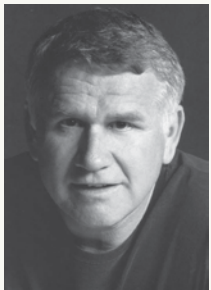
Where the words become raw earth,
small dusty mounds, and the loose twigs
scattered along and over the green and
russet moss beside the white tree stumps.

Lines of thin wood, like pick-up sticks,
but leaner, broken, dried, white, red,
black, brown. The sticks

And in their
leaning left, I attempt to read the
motley cracked cursive.

No silence—language everywhere.
No silence but curves like commas either
side, and just beyond

There is no progress
but the deepening of the wound.



Garrett M. Brown,
is an actor, writer,
and often when he
and his wife Marie
come on retreat to
Valyermo from their
home in Long Beach,
he is a painter, too.
His play, Ameri-
cana, was produced in New York in 2009
and his play, Ambulance Men, about the
three men who picked up Marilyn Mon-
roe's body the night she died, was produced
in Los Angeles in 2002.

I like the self-consciousness of silent breakfast.

I am eating so many things other than
food. The shy glances, his smacking lips,
eyes averted, then he and I catch looks,
and what seemed judgement becomes a slow
squint, a smile.

There is nowhere to
hide but in the food itself, finally.
Fingering, spooning, ladling, the push-pull
of knife, the swivel of spoon, and if I
could really slow enough to taste the big
round blueberries. I do, until another face,
a wondering about her, is he a rabbi turned
Catholic?

It is not words but thoughts,
small clouds, aggregates, phrases: 'alpha males,'
'travel,' 'retreat,' 'conversion,' or names,
'Bonhoeffer,' 'Merton,' 'Fr. Joseph who appeared
this morning.

And another small red train
(of thoughts) leaves the station.

I ask for
dreams, I look for signs, I try not to write
in my head as I walk the desert floor.
I counsel, Be here. Look. Listen. Be present—
and the sprinkler with its spray and drippings
in frozen icy highlights becomes a new
hieroglyph to decipher.

Finally, the silence
defeats me. I turn on everything: words, books,
journal, writing efforts, this desert, this
monastery, my very own life, so full of gifts—
words, paint, gestures—are all false idols,
they will not save me—

I collapse.
All fall down. Silence. But for my sobs, moist
cheeks, red eyes.

Why don't we know more about
men who cry, that reckoning?

And in those tears,
do they ache, too, for so much that now
resembles failure?

(In whose eyes, we caution. Surely not
God's. But in that moment, please
understand, there are no voices. This is that
other silence—abyss, loss, exhaustion,
bottom—)

Silence meet failure. Meet No Exit. Meet
the broken door that goes nowhere. Prison
(and prism) of the selves.

Career/work; man and wife; failed
marriage, or two, three; estranged wounded
child/daughter; scorned friends, colleagues,
neighbors; broken, dysfunctional brothers,
exiled sister, suicide dad,
polyanna mother—

Pick one, or A and B, or three, or All of the
Above—

Tears ransack, ramble, mix of helplessness,
self-pity,

The Effort Guy falls down, go boom.
Splat. Phlaw. Nowhere. No how.

And when does it shift?

When she taps on your glass door, smiles, cocks
her head silently, as if she knows?

Somehow she sees
and still she taps her heart and points to you,
then leaves.

Is it shame's voice then?

What resounds is that I am worthless,
poor, weak, a fraud.

And yet, she looked on me and
smiled.

The room is quiet. Workers outdoors, already
arrived. I am shy as I leave my room

but each man,
Hispanic, black-haired, tanned, each one in turn
greet me, accepts me—anoints me.

Little do they know how they bless me.

They are God, too, and the stones and the poplars
and the blue sky brightening—

Let me lie down among the white blossoms.

Let me stand among the big trees

Let me join the two big dogs and
weave and sniff among the damp field
of short grass

Let me lean on great white fences
and ponder—muse

Let me be the small moments, the
interstices where no words can enter,
no words yet found

Let me be the dirt road, that lazy curve
and crunch of stone

Let me be the gravel path, the crushed
rock, the loose pile of chopped wood,
bleached now, almost white in the desert sun

Let me be the little bird in the poplar
garden, so cheery and chatty—
Whee! Chop-chop-chop—

Let me walk and walk and scoot and fly
and soar and rise and swoop again and again

Let me be the wood burning and the fine
smokey smell

Let me be the scrub brush, dried and lazy,
now rust, now lavender

And the twigs, let me be thin and clever,
ready to crack a joke

The wide river bed, grey dry stones, a full
army with only a thin ribbon, wet and moving

Let me gurgle with those few stones, let me
run with those waters, let me shimmer like
a glass stairway

Let me return, too, slowly, this descent,
ascent, so many moves and shifts

Silence has so many tempers, fulcrums, doors,
rooms

Let me return as a man, still broken,
still questioning, still tender

Filled now with the wordless wonder of going,
coming

never ending

I watch the damp twilight fields.

No human voice. A brief bird vibrato.

I walk on.

It is a kingdom of broken crumbling earth, stones, roots, twigs, and long grasses, bent and swayed where giant bodies take their rest.

All silent, austere.

Are the dead this silent?

All those who are absent now, is this their other language?

I walk to the old fence posts, the tall thick upright one, brown, aged, burnt. It holds the other, thin, brown and grey, that leans just under its chin, as if it had fallen.

A foot away, a smaller post, one-third the height, upright, child-like, a thick, brown punctuation. Black wire, a circuitry of it, weaves among, all crazy-8's, no regimen.

Further on, before the triad of white tree stump drums, is one other post, yellowed, grey, a loner. Stiff, modest, it leans into the setting sun.

These fence remnants soldier on, make no sounds, no words. Nothing

of this world, its ways, of getting, spending. No idle chatter. No glib comments.

And yet they enter me like a sacred conversation. I see them. But—they see me. Not words nor glance but something closer to the edge, just this side, perhaps, of the infinite.

Those three white drums of tree-trunks, they are the white ankles of some now lame and halt giantess; they are parts of the Venus de Milo's missing arms.

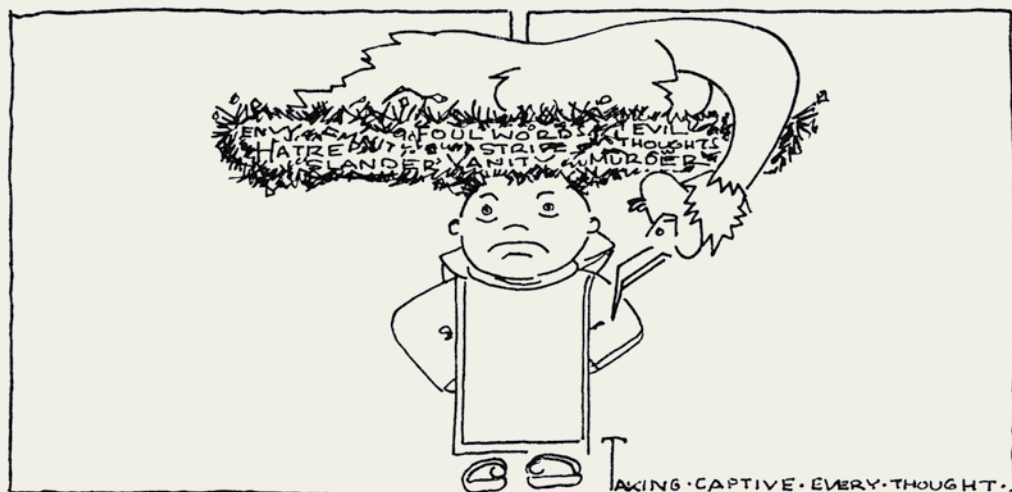
A white pipe, black end, sticks from below the orchard earth, like some great cigarette—how the earth smokes!

A concrete cylinder, just as thick, less bawdy, tries to imitate the white tree stumps. In vain.

Later, seated by the glass doors, the silent portion of dinner, I watch the two shepherd mutts dance and fake fight—long pause—then the one, black-marked, tongue dangling, starts again the rough-house.

Br. Peter and I both watch, while he—I recall the line from Ethel Merman, "Peel me a grape, Olive,"—and there, Peter's twisted bony digits carefully pinch and sever and ply and tug—they deftly detach red skins to reveal green grape, before he casually plops into mouth.

While the dogs dance on. ✠



THE BENELECTINE FOUNDATIONS

IN XISHAN AND CHENGDU

1929–1952

PART TWO OF THREE

FR. LUKE DYSINGER, OSB

2. Active Ministry 1934-1942: Xishan, Priors Gabriel Roux and Raphael Vinciarelli

IN THE WAKE OF DOM JOLIET'S resignation and withdrawal Abbot Neve chose to visit his new daughter-house in person. He undertook a canonical visitation of Xishan in 1934 and stayed at the monastery for two months. With him he brought as reinforcements from St. André Dom Raphael Vinciarelli and Dom Thaddeus Yong-An-Yuen. He appointed as prior of the Xishan community Dom Gabriel Roux, who had transferred his vow of stability from Solesmes to St. André, and whose vision of monastic life more closely approximated that of Abbot Neve. Prior Gabriel planned to transform the Xishan monastery into "a center of learning which would



Fr. Luke has been a monk of Valyermo since 1980. He teaches moral theology and church history at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, and serves the monastic community as librarian.



serve first the Nanchung area, and later the whole province of Szchewan."¹ He envisioned an elementary school that would serve the local Catholic community, to be staffed by laypeople but financially supported by the Priory, as well as a school for oblates to be trained as monks, and a seminary that would serve the local diocese of Nanchong. The elementary school was built first and was in operation by 1935; and although the seminary buildings were not completed until two years later, Prior Gabriel encouraged the monks to make themselves available to teach Bishop Wang's seminarians. Thus Roux was present at the priestly ordination of the first deacon taught by his monks; however, he had earlier contracted typhus and was too weak to offer the liturgical responses at the ceremony. He died very soon afterwards, on April 9, 1936, having served as superior for less than two years.

Following the death of Gabriel Roux, Abbot Neve appointed Raphael Vinciarelli prior, a position he would retain throughout the community's history in China, and for ten years after its canonical transfer to Valyermo in California.

¹ T. Yong An-Yuen, *Chinese Adventures of an Indonesian Monk*, \$1.

The first months of Prior Raphael's administration were overshadowed by uncertainty as to the future of the Xishan community. The rural location of the monastery was criticized as too remote for an effective apostolate by certain influential monks of St. André: chief among these was the celebrated Dom Lou Tseng-Tsiang who had joined St. André in 1927 after retiring from a career in Chinese politics. Although he would never return to China, Dom (later titular Abbot) Lou attempted to influence the direction of the work in China "from behind the scenes" in Belgium by means of influential friends. He persuaded a Shanghai philanthropist, Mr. Lo Pa Hong, to offer St. André a plot of land in the distant capital of Nanjing. Prior Raphael and Dom Thaddeus had already undertaken an initial reconnaissance of the area in 1936 before the death of Prior Gabriel. Following his appointment as prior, Fr. Raphael sent Fr. Thaddeus back to Nanjing to await developments. As time wore on it became apparent that Mr. Lo Pa Hong's support was conditional upon the return to China of Lou Tseng-Tsiang. When it became clear that this would not happen, the prospects for a shift in focus from Nanchong to Nanjing vanished, and the commitment of St. André to the monastic venture in Xishan became more secure.

Throughout his administration as prior Raphael Vinciarelli supported and encouraged the educational projects initiated by Gabriel Roux. The elementary school flourished, and the seminary where both diocesan seminarians and monastic oblates were taught was completed in 1937. Both institutions remained in operation until 1942. Prior Raphael was also in favor of external apostolates, and under his leadership the number of monks involved in both part-time and full-time ministry outside the monastery increased. This was partly influenced by the political situation in China at the time. Following the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 the capital of China was moved to Chongqing. The Ordinary of Chongqing, Archbishop Yupin, requested

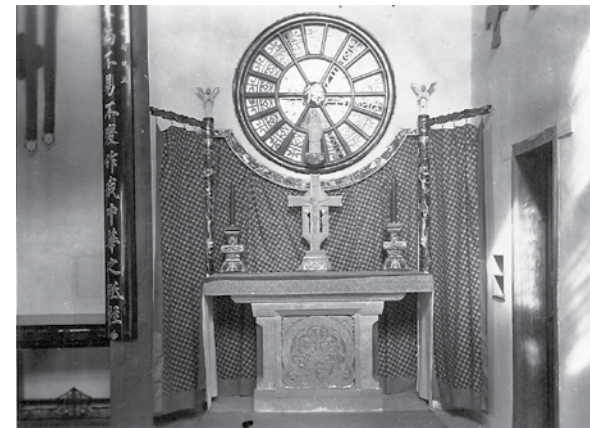


that Prior Raphael permit Dom Thaddeus Yang to assist in what might be termed "Catholic News Ministry," first in Chongqing, then in the southwestern city of Kunming, then back again in Chongqing from 1939 to 1942. Fr. Thaddeus's work brought him to the attention of Generalissimo and Madam Chaing Kai-Shek who, now aware of the monastery's existence and resources, began to request assistance from the monks. Of three new confreres who arrived from St. André in 1937, two were assigned to full-time ministries outside the monastery in service to the Kuomintang. All three had initially been sent to parishes in nearby Suining for immersion in Chinese language and culture. In 1938, after a brief return to the Priory during which he and Prior Raphael were able to visit Dom Joliet at Hopatchang, Dom Vincent Martin was asked to serve as superior of a quasi-monastic medical corps created by the increasingly famous Fr. Vincent Lebbe.² Chaing-kai Shek had convinced Fr. Lebbe to undertake covert propaganda work behind

² Despite skepticism and opposition, Fr. Lebbe transformed his newly-created "Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist" into a medical corps attached to the Third Army Unit. Dom Vincent Martin served as their superior until he was captured by the Japanese in 1940.

Japanese lines; Fr. Lebbe thus entrusted to Dom Vincent leadership of the religious community he had founded, the Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist.³ In July of the following year Dom Thaddeus suggested that Prior Raphael send the second new arrival, Dom Wilfrid Weitz, to Chongqing as French language tutor to Madame Chiang-kai Shek. Thus only the third new confrere, Dom Eleutherius Winance, remained in Xishan to serve as assistant novice master and professor in the seminary.

In 1940 Germany invaded Belgium. The Abbey of St. André was commandeered by the German army, as it had been during World



War I, and the monks were dispersed. This effectively isolated the foundation in Xishan and cut off all financial support from Belgium. The community had been heartened the previous year by the arrival of two new monks, Dom Alberic Deloring and Dom Werner Papeians de Morchoven; however it became increasingly clear that the only possibility for survival lay in additional external ministries that would enable the monks to support themselves. In October, 1941, Bishop Rouchouse of Chengdu offered Fr. Hildebrand an assignment in K'Long

³ Fr. Lebbe was very familiar with Belgian Benedictines and the community at Xishan. As is described above, he had travelled to St. André in 1926 with the newly-ordained Chinese bishops who encouraged Abbot Neve to make the foundation. Vincent Lebbe's brother, Bede Lebbe, was a monk of Maredsous, of the same monastic congregation as St. André; in fact, Bede Lebbe had provided a monastic scapular to the Little Brothers to use as a pattern for their habit.

Lai; and four months later Fr. Wilfrid obtained a position teaching English in Chongqing. In May Bishop Rouchouse found pastoral work for Fr. Alberic in Hopatchang. However, by 1942 the monks who remained in Xishan were in desperate financial straits: they had barely enough money to feed themselves, and none to pay the elementary school teachers. In the spring Prior Raphael reluctantly approached Bishop Wang for money to pay the teachers; however the bishop was able to offer only the equivalent of about fifty dollars. Providentially, at this juncture Abbot Alcuin Deutsch of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, sent

an unexpected donation that enabled the community to pay the teachers at the end of the academic year; but the school would be forced to close definitively seven months later for lack of funds.⁴ Again Prior Raphael approached Bishop Wang, this time requesting that the bishop permit the monks to serve in parish ministry in his diocese. The Bishop's reply was as unexpected as it was disheartening: "No. Why don't you send your monks to the diocese of Chongqing where Fr.

Wilfrid learned Chinese so well." There were undoubtedly complex political and financial reasons for Bishop Wang's refusal of assistance;⁵ but whatever his motives, his decision constituted an effective expulsion of the monks from his diocese. ✠

⁴ The elementary school closed in February, 1943.

⁵ Dom Werner Papeians de Morchoven, who accompanied Prior Raphael during both interviews with Bishop Wang believed that the bishop was afraid to support the monks because of Fr. Raphael's Italian ancestry. China had sided with the Allies, and at this time Italy was part of the Axis. Fr. Werner believed that in the highly-polarized political climate of wartime China the bishop feared reprisals from local authorities if he showed favoritism to one who might be suspected of complicity with the Axis Powers. Chiang Kai-Shek had sought to forestall this through a letter supportive of the Xishan monks he had sent to Bishop Wang, but in Fr. Werner's opinion "the bishop didn't believe it." Oral History Project: Fr. Werner, Archives of St. Andrew's Abbey, Valyermo, California, 2008.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE CAMEOS FROM the Old Testament prophets concerns Baruch, the scribe who wrote down Jeremiah's diatribes. Baruch is fretting and fearful about the chaos that his master is calling down on the nations, and God says to him, "Now I am knocking down what I have built, tearing up what I have planted: I am going to strike the whole earth. And here you are asking for special treatment! Do not ask, for I am now going to bring down disaster on all mankind.... As for you, I will let you escape with your own life, wherever you may go" (Jeremiah 45:4-5, Jerusalem Bible).

I feel as though God is speaking to me as well, with a twinkle in his eye. Since childhood I have been susceptible to whatever fears and terrors the media were serving up at the moment. And indeed I have escaped them all with my own life—so far! I think I was about eight or nine, riding somewhere in the car with my mother, when we heard on the radio that the draft age for the Korean War was going to be lowered, as I recall, to nineteen. I remember thinking, "Oh, no! It'll be me next!"

It would be emotionally exhausting to try to rake through the whole list of disasters that I imagined overtaking us. Just a brief sample would include, on the international scene: an invasion from Russia (I was going to hide out in the woods), or later, the domino effect of Communism's spread from China and Southeast Asia, possibly through Cuba and points south; or all-out nuclear war (as illustrated in the movie *On the Beach*); or the totalitarian



Catastrophizing with BARUCH

BR. BEN HARRISON, MC

menace described in Orwell's 1984; or various racial, ethnic and religious conflicts and terrorism. On an environmental level, I anticipated the effects of over-population (the subject of a short story I wrote in eighth grade); killer fogs like those in London in the '50s; various kinds of industrial contamination like the flaming, oil-coated rivers in Ohio; acid rain; deforestation, desertification, and urban sprawl. Then there were the possible natural disasters: comets, a sun-spot-induced new ice age, earthquakes, and, more recently, the eruption of the Yellowstone mega-volcano and global warming.

Now let us be clear: I am not making light of these dangers or minimizing the seriousness of such possibilities. It was the recognition that such catastrophes could actually happen that inspired scientists, politicians, voters, and educators to make changes and to research new ways of approaching problems.

And, I would add, it was such fears that opened us (as the warnings of Old Testament prophets did, at least on occasion) to repentance and conversion. We resorted to our God-given wisdom, prudence, and intelligence, to say nothing of the inspirations, hope, and new vision given by the Spirit.

At present there are a whole new set of possible perils looming on the horizon, creeping closer by the day. Many see all this as a sign that "the end is near." I have never been inclined to such millennialist interpretations, but I have to admit that in a way, we could be approaching, if not the end of the world, at least the end of a world, in this sense: that the classical Greco-Roman world came to its end; the feudal-medieval world gradually morphed into the Renaissance; and the world of the Western, colonizing empire builders, including the Soviets, has foundered in the last fifty years. Yes, worlds do end, though I doubt very seriously that the world is due to expire soon, whether considered as the cosmos or just planet earth. As St. Ephrem of Syria said back in the fourth century, Jesus made his end-time prophecies ambiguous enough that each age could take warning and hope through them (see the Breviary, Office of Readings for Thursday of the First Week of Advent).

It gives me comfort to believe that God is at work in all the changes that beset us (and of course, the Prince of This World is busy too). Who knows what the world will look like in fifty or a hundred years—what the boundaries of nations will be, where the cities, where the deserts, where the high tide will leave its mark, and whether that mark will be shells and seaweed or plastic litter and oil tar? True, humanity must take responsibility for its share in all this. Whether by grassroots action or inspired leadership, much can be done to improve situations.

And yet there is so much that we don't know about the built-in balances that can come into play. As in the human body, fevers and sweats,

evacuations and swellings, though they seem signs of disorder, can all serve to restore balance; so, it seems, societies and nature itself sometimes demonstrate the ability to correct and heal extreme conditions. Human history has its moments of breakthrough, and nature at times demonstrates an amazing ability to neutralize or reverse human depredations—almost as though someone had anticipated these outcomes and programmed corrective consequences! Of course, if we are too extreme or fail to respond to obvious symptoms, just as organisms can sicken and die, so, I suppose, can cultures and ecosystems.

Though I agree whole-heartedly that we must do our part, there is much more at in? play than we humans can understand or control. An unlimited number of variables seems to be in operation. God is working flamboyantly and with gusto, as he always has, building, demolishing, planting, and uprooting. Often we prefer not to blame God for the violent and cataclysmic shifts and shudders of geologic or human history, but both Old and New Testaments show him working both his wonders and his judgments on all levels. As He Who Is, he is the ultimate source of all that comes to be.

Still, as he took care of Baruch, so he takes care of each individual human being. Even when it looks like people are chewed up in the cogs or drowned in the vast tides of history, those with faith see God working out the salvation of each one. We have the lives of the saints and inspired souls throughout the ages that vouch for this fact—that even in gulags and genocides, even in persecutions and prisons, even in floods and famine, even in hurricanes and earthquakes, there are those who experience God close to them, enabling them to face terrible pain with grace and heroic selflessness. And what of the others, who die in terror and abandonment? Perhaps God has compensatory measures that will put things in perspective as part of the process, as in the story of Lazarus (Luke 16:22). If



Ben Harrison is a *Missionaries of Charity* brother based in Los Angeles. He was in brothers' communities in Europe for twenty years. St. Andrew's has been an important anchor-point for his spiritual journey since his first visit in 1972.

God knows each sparrow that falls, he who is Love also cherishes each of history's victims, desires the ultimate blessing not only of the Passover pilgrims crossing the Red Sea but also of each of Pharaoh's soldiers. How will that love work itself out? We do not know.

What, then, do I conclude? That I should do my part, but that I am not in control. That I can pray for the graces of the Serenity Prayer: accepting the limits of my powers, the courage of my convictions, and the need for discernment. But, recognizing how little power I actually have before all these vast forces, I also need to make a huge surrender. My prayer would be something like this:

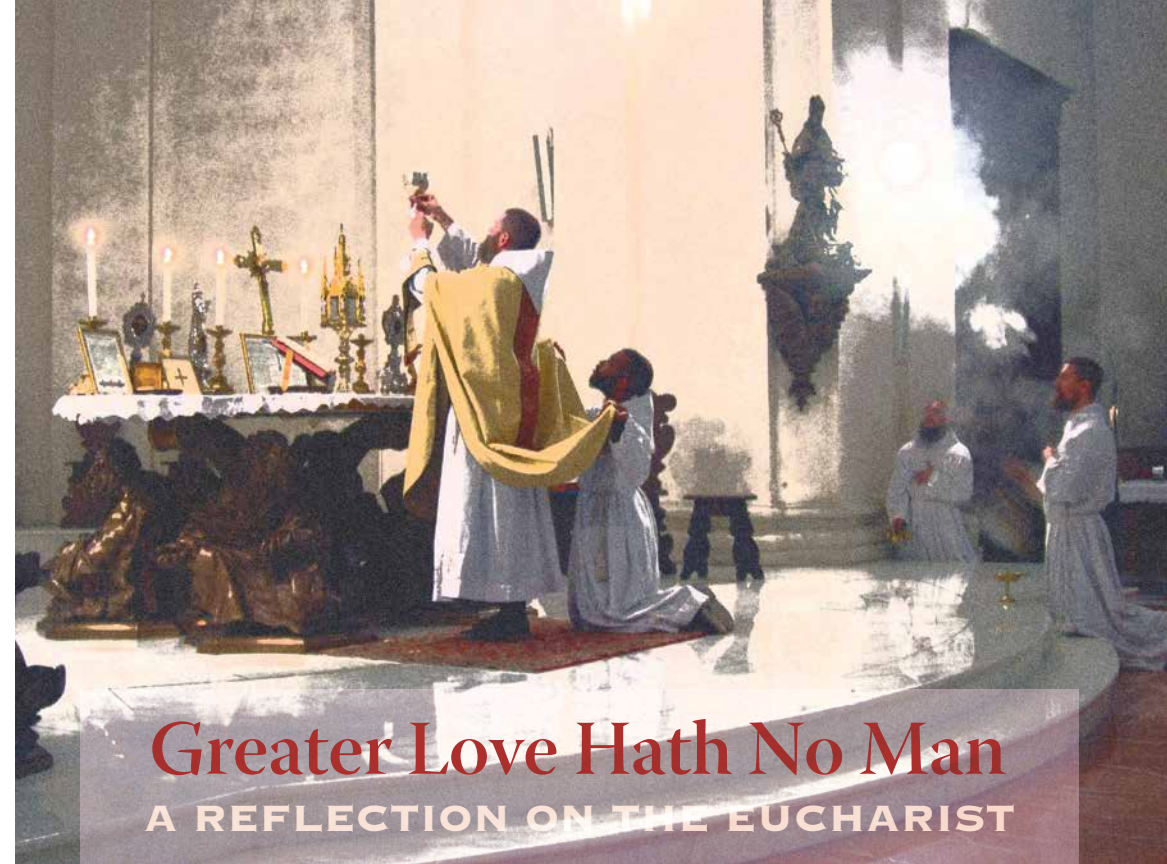
This is your world, Lord, and I have no idea what plans you have for it. Everywhere I look I see movement of peoples, conflict of cultures, noise, building, wrecking, technological advance, environmental havoc, violence and destruction. It looks to me like many of the things I value most in nature, culture, and society are at risk of being lost in the greed of acquisition and the mania for power, or of being buried under the sheer numbers of humans, with their hungry mouths and grasping hands. It scares me.

There is little I can do to change things. I have no choice but to surrender it all into your care. Whether you lead your world to an apocalyptic end, through a cathartic process to a new stability, or just on a continuing

vacillation between order and chaos—it is your business.

As for myself, I surrender the remaining years of my life to your loving care. Let me trust Jesus as my Way through the wilderness of this world, not fretting about other people and their actions, yet willing to help when I can. Help me to be faithful in my discipleship and confident that you will show me each day's duty. I thank you for bringing me safe to this day, for my daily bread, my nightly bed, and my friends on the journey.

In Jesus you entered our tumultuous world and allowed yourself to be consumed by the warring forces of history, and thus you conquered history. I pray for my fellow human beings, in their individuality and in their families, tribes, and nations. As seeds in a basket look all the same yet each has the capacity to grow into a tree with form, fruit, and shade its own, let each person become the shape and bear the fruit that you intend. Bend to your will even the arbitrary forces of tectonic plates, the biosphere, and the human psyche. And as you infused into the brutalized body of Jesus new life and radiant wholeness, lead us and your creation toward whatever you have in mind. Lead us through our time of trial, deliver us from evil. For indeed, in time and beyond, you rule with strength and glory. Amen. ✠



Greater Love Hath No Man

A REFLECTION ON THE EUCHARIST

PART 4 OF 5: "THE MIND IS FILLED WITH GRACE"

BY BR. CASSIAN DIROCCO, OSB

THIS REFLECTION CONTINUES OUR look at the Eucharist through this beautiful antiphon of St. Thomas Aquinas, sung during the Magnificat of vespers for the feast of Corpus Christi, *O Sacrum Convivium*:

*O sacrum convivium! in quo Christus sumitur:
Recólitur memória passionis ejus:
Mens implétur grátia:
et futúrae glóriæ nobis pignus datur, allelúia.*

O sacred banquet! in which Christ is received,
the memory of his Passion is renewed,
the mind is filled with grace,
and a pledge of future glory is given to us, alleluia.

In previous reflections, we've used this antiphon to see the many ways in which Christ's Eucharistic presence touches our

lives. In our first reflection, we saw how the Eucharist shows forth Christ as the suffering servant, pouring out his very life for us. In the next reflection, we looked at how Eucharistic communion—with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and with one another—really gets to the heart of *how* we are to be "God's people." In our last reflection we saw the holy sacrifice of the Mass as the source and summit of this self-giving and communion. In this present reflection, we'll see that the body of Christ received at Mass is also the locus—the spiritual and bodily "heart"—of our life of prayer. To explore this, we'll be focusing on that second to last line of this antiphon, "the mind is filled with grace" (*mens implétur grátia*), which in some ways is both an invitation to prayer, and a promise that prayer will

be given as a gift to the person seeking it. The invitation is a simple, quiet beckoning from our Lord: “Come...be with me.” For that, at its base, is what prayer is: *being* with the One we love. The promise is a life of grace and intimacy as we enter into this prayer as we would into an ever-flowing stream.

Prayer is a beautiful mystery of the interior life. Every human person is a born “seeker,” wanting to know and to be known, to love and to be loved. The movement of the heart toward the Source of this seeking is prayer. It is something that every human person “knows” instinctively to do... and yet is it not true that the more we seek, and indeed the more we find, the more the mystery of our seeking grows? When we enter the chamber of the heart—and by heart, I mean here the “spiritual center” of ourselves, that place where the soul is truly alone with God—a whole new world is opened to us, for this is that secret place in us where God dwells. What a mystery! That the infinite, fathomless Creator of all has taken up His home in me! And yet, he *has*. This is the scandalous intimacy of the Christian life, that the “other” I seek by reaching *out* is calling to me from *within*, whispering patiently to me in that “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) that the belonging I seek has been mine all along, that I have only forgotten the direction of my search.

Everyone is a born seeker. But no one is a born Christian. This must be sought, and through baptism, the gift is given. Baptism gives direction to the heart’s cry for belonging and intimacy, for at its core, this is a cry for salvation. We experience separation, loneliness, alienation, because we have been separated from the Source of our being through original sin. It was not *supposed* to be this way; and yet, it is this way. Baptism heals that breach, and puts us on the road toward a healing at once bodily, emotional, mental, mystical and more. How could it be any other way when by this sacred washing I become

the dwelling place of God? He who has “searched me and known me” (Psalm 139:1) wants *all* of me to be healed, to be taken up into his divine life. So, while every human heart longs for God, baptism gifts us with his indwelling presence so that our longing can be transformed from a crying out to an inner resonance that seeks and finds him within. In the words of Gregory of Sinai, “Prayer is the manifestation of baptism.”

So, where does the Eucharist come into this, or rather, what place does the Eucharist have in prayer? Much the same place that a rudder has on a great ship at sea. Remember the antiphon, “Our minds are filled with grace:” the roaring waves are our mind. The desires we have to navigate the troubled waters are our heart’s longings. The Eucharist steers and directs those desires. Only here’s where the analogy ends, because the Eucharist not only guides us through these troubled waters, but is also the port of call where our hearts so dearly long to rest. Remember, the Eucharist *is* Jesus, who is the beginning, the end, and the way of love. He gives us the desires of our heart. He shows us the way to reach them. And when we rest in him, we discover that it was he and *none other* whom we were seeking all the while.

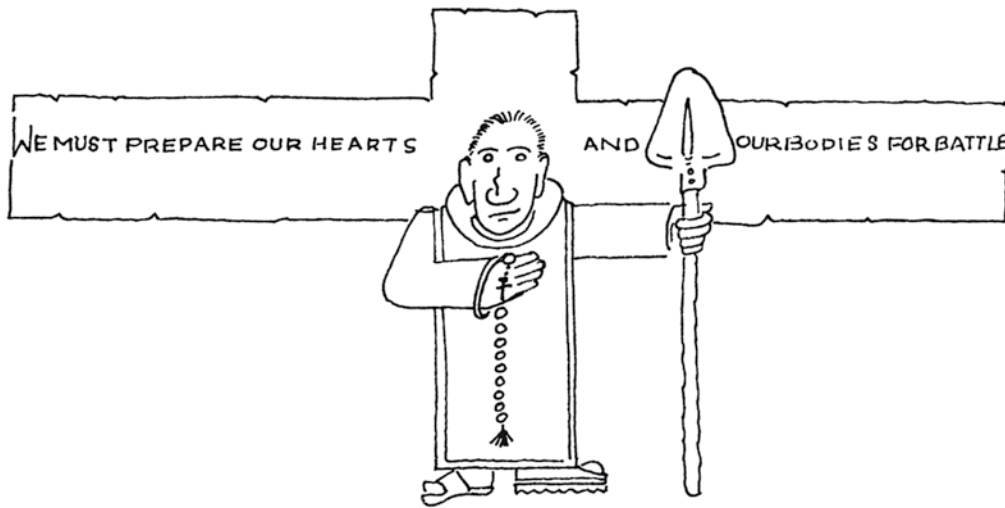
When we are at Mass, we do much more than simply “attend.” We enter into a life-changing reality that literally affects the whole created order. Through the power of Christ’s sacrifice, what happens to the bread and the wine on the altar is so absolutely astounding that despite our best attempts to explain it, it remains a singular mystery. We are left with the simplicity of truth: under the appearances of bread and wine, the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ are really and truly present. No more bread. No more wine. Just Jesus. And as if that weren’t quite enough, he allows us, *implores* us, to consume him (“unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you” [John 6:53]). No wonder St. Thomas says,

“Our minds are filled with grace”! We’ve been overwhelmed from within by grace, filled to the spiritual brim. It was this gift of grace which led the great mystical theologian Fr. Juan Arintero to say that the surest way to sainthood is to spend a holy hour in prayer after Mass, for at that time we really *are* “living tabernacles.” Our bodies, souls and minds “filled with grace,” in these precious moments more than any other in our day, we become living prayer.

But, *how* to pray? To ask the question is natural, but we should be careful not to complicate the answer. To ask how to pray is very much like asking how to fall in love, which is basically a three step process: 1) find “the one;” 2) open your heart to the beloved; 3) love, and let yourself be loved. Breaking down these steps a little bit, we can take great comfort in knowing that in prayer, we do not have to find “the one” (the hardest part of falling in love!), for it is *by* him that we have already been found: “Before I knit you in the womb, *I knew you...*” (Jeremiah 1:5). So, step one has already been taken care of for us by God. But step two is where we have to cooperate a little bit with this “finding,” for in step two (the opening of our heart to the beloved) we are allowing ourselves to be found. It sounds simple, and it can be. But there’s a catch: it means being found *as we are*. Not as we would rather be, hope to be, could be, or dream to be. It is *I*, who I actually *am*, that needs and seeks God’s healing love. I don’t need him to love my illusions. I need him to touch my heart. But he won’t invade me, or enter unbidden. I must open my heart to him with a simple, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). Opening my heart to him by showing up as I am—vulnerable, little, insufficient, or broken as I may be—is the way to be the “me” that he has called me to be from the moment of my conception. He restores me to myself, freeing me to love him in the full truth of my being.

Prayer is the way for me to interiorize this restoration in Christ. However I may feel, however I may look, however I may be perceived, it is in God that my life finds its meaning and fulfillment. Opening *this* life—*my* life—to the *divine* life and saying, right in the moment of prayer, “Yes, Lord, I will *let* you love me,” puts the ball in God’s court, and allows *him* to be the one who prays in me. In other words, the pressure is off. God is the “pray-er.” I am his host, fully available to be filled with his love, his intentions, his will, his life... “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). He has entered into me and taken his place in my soul on the day of my baptism. Now, in the Eucharist, he renews that gift and transfigures me from the inside out. Each time I receive the Eucharist, Christ “reminds” me of the life of faith, hope, and love with which I have already been graced, stimulating and illuminating these virtues which express the very life of God to the world.

The Mass is the heart of all of this interior action, this infusion of prayer and all that it holds for me. In receiving the Eucharist, I enter into and become Christ’s own living prayer. But as far as earthly time is concerned, Mass has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Once I receive the Eucharist, I must eventually live in a world where prayer seems so far from me sometimes. What do I do? How do I remember the gifts that I have been given? How do I renew them? How do I pray so that I may *live* my life like Jesus? Well, Jesus himself knew the difficulty that we would have in living out the call to “pray always” (Ephesians 6:18). He gives us many helps, but none greater than the gift of himself, present anywhere and everywhere that there is a church with the Eucharist reserved. There, with Jesus in the tabernacle, is an *incredibly* blessed place to pray. There, Christ waits, arms wide open to receive his children who stop in to say with the language of the heart, “I am here to love



you, and to let you love me. I am here to say 'yes' to you again, and again, and again. I am here not to speak many words to you, but to let you, the Word of life itself, speak to me in that place where words are no longer necessary."

Blessed John XXIII said that the crucifix is a reminder of how much Christ loved us "then," and the tabernacle with its burning vigil lamp is a reminder of how much He loves us *now*. What this points us toward is relationship, and more particularly, *friendship*. When Christ called us "friends" (cf. John 15:15), he called us to himself to share an expression of mutual love. Love requires commitment. And love requires *presence*. Might we find it difficult to believe someone who told us, "I love you," but avoided

spending any quality time with us? Friendship with Christ is no different. His love is already proven (remember John XXIII's saying about the crucifix and the tabernacle). Ours still needs proving. Telling Jesus "I love you" should naturally lead us to *want* to spend some time in his presence. And he is nowhere more present this side of Heaven than in the Eucharist.

So, I go...but then what? Well, just as in earthly love, when even the best moments of conversation and sharing so often pass into a precious silence spent simply enjoying the company of one another, so too in our love life with the Lord. That's it? Yes, that's it. The act of *just being* with Jesus is the all-too-simple secret of contemplative prayer, and makes our life a truly Eucharistic one. Living this *spirit* of presence with Jesus in our time between communions (for is not all time a time between communions, in thanksgiving for the last received, and in preparation for the next?), punctuated by the mutual gift of *real* presence with him in the tabernacle, allows us to carry that contemplative Eucharistic spirit of loving-sharing-being with us everywhere and to everyone. St. Thomas is right: "Our minds are filled with grace"...so that the world in which we live may be grace-filled, too. ✠



Br. Cassian DiRocco, OSB, is a monk of Valyermo. He entered the Abbey in 2007 and is currently in monastic and priestly formation in Rome, residing and studying at Sant'Anselmo (the "mother house" of Benedictine life in Rome).

Homily Preached by Abbot Damien Toilolo, OSB

EASTER VIGIL, 2012

Several years ago, I read an article about a group of US surgeons who performed an operation in France without ever leaving the United States. They did it remotely...using robots. They controlled the robots, which were in France, while they, the surgeons, were in New York. It's amazing what technology can do.

We've all heard of iPhones, iPods, and iPads. Just the other day, someone explained to me what an iCloud is. An iCloud is a nonphysical "place" somewhere "out there" in cyberspace where people can store all their computer files: like documents, photos, music, books, etc., rather than storing them in their own computers. The idea is that wherever you happen to be in the world, all your files are available to you from the iCloud. You don't have to be in your office at your computer. You can use any computer. It's amazing what technology can do.

But even in the midst of this age of advanced technology, the one thing we cannot do is eliminate death from the world. Death is a reality for us no matter who we are or what we do. We can watch what we eat, we can exercise daily and we can have regular check-ups with the doctor, but that won't eliminate death from our life or from our world.

It would seem that if we could just find a way whereby we wouldn't have to die, everything would be fine. Of course we all know that there is a way. But it has nothing to do with science or technology. Jesus is the remedy for death. His



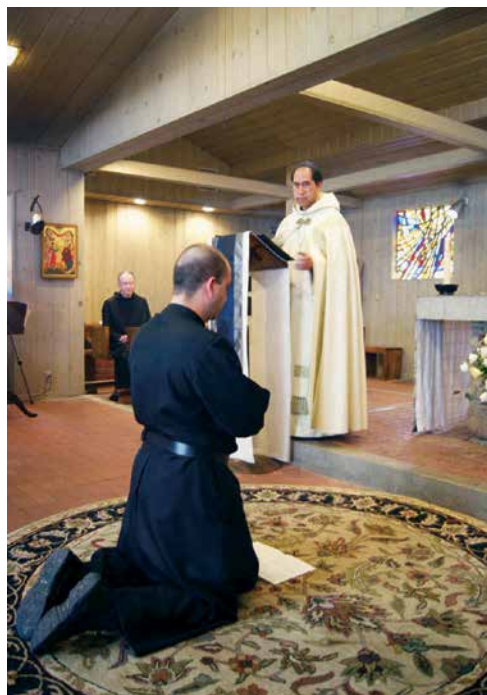
death and resurrection is what saves us from death. In other words, we will live forever. This is what we celebrate today.

It doesn't get any better than that! Jesus gives us forgiveness and he gives us eternal life—all for free. And no one can take this life away from us: not the government, not the bank, not our worst enemy, not even death can take it away from us. Such is this gift to us.

And yet, it's not enough just to know this, because we all know this, intellectually we know this. But the resurrection of Christ is not a matter of the brain; it is a matter of the heart. So we have to believe it, we have to believe it to the point where we allow the love of God to shape our lives, to form our thoughts, to influence our decisions, and to affect our behavior. Because when we allow the love of God to do this in us, then it touches other people, then it bears fruit, then the message of the risen Christ is preached to the ends of the earth to the glory of God. Alleluia! ✠

Abbot Damien came to the Abbey in 1998; he is named after St. Damien of Moloka'i. He enjoys reading, music, and playing racquetball and volleyball.

around & about THE ABBEY



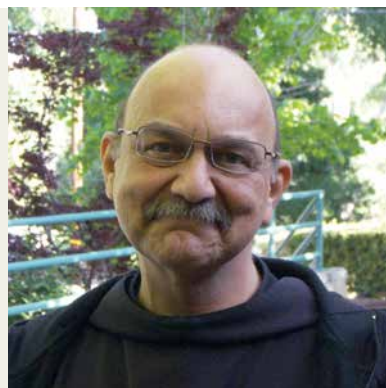
Frank about to receive his new name

...AFTER THIS HE IS TO STAY IN THE NOVITIATE (RB 58.5)

On March 26, the Solemnity of the Annunciation and our congregation's patronal feast, **Frank Echeverry** was clothed as a novice. As a monk he will be known as Br. Angelus after the Carmelite martyr St. Angelus of Jerusalem. Please pray for a fruitful novitiate.

FR. ISAAC'S HEALTH

Last spring, **Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB**, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Fortunately the cancer was detected early in its progress, so Fr. Isaac's doctors are very hopeful that the course of chemotherapy he is currently undergoing will be effective, though the treatment is itself very taxing. Fr. Isaac will reflect on his experience of this illness in the next issue of *The Chronicle*. In the mean-time, please pray for him and for all the sick.



MONKS' FEAST DAYS

June	29	Br. Peter
August	8	Br. Dominique
September	3	Fr. Gregory
	21	Fr. Matthew

DRAWINGS

The pen-and-ink meditations on passages from RB that appear in this issue are the work of **Dr. Donald P. Richmond** who, after twenty years as an associate with an Anglican monastic community, recently became an oblate of St. Andrew's Abbey. A widely published author, Don will be co-leading a course with Fr. Francis this summer on the Creed in prayer and practice.



OBLATE MEETINGS

Upcoming oblate meetings held at the Abbey will take place on July 8, August 12, and September 9. Conferences begin at 2 p.m. in the Conference Center. Reserve your place for lunch by calling the Retreat Office at (661) 944-2178 or e-mailing retreats@valyermo.com.

ABBEE BOOKS & GIFTS

Shop the Abbey Books & Gifts Store! Open seven days, 10–11:45 a.m. and 1:30–4 p.m.

VOLUNTEERING

The gift of time cannot be measured and the work of volunteers provides essential assistance to the monastic community. To offer your time, call Carolyn Jordan at (661) 944-2178, ext. 112 or e-mail her at carolyn@monksvalyermo.com.

SEND US YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Please help us stay current with your updated postal and e-mail addresses and phone number. Doing so helps us to save money as the Post Office charges us when they forward mail we send. You can help us eliminate additional fees by letting us know when your address changes. Contact the Development Office at development@valyermo.com or use the form printed in this newsletter.

GIVING MADE EASY

Please consider the Direct Gift Program. It is easy to give to the monks of St. Andrew's Abbey. We accept Visa and MasterCard or you can automatically donate from your checking account. It is safe and simple and you can make changes at any time. Please call the Development Office for full details at (661) 944-8959 or e-mail development@valyermo.com.

BEQUESTS AND WILLS

Please remember St. Andrew's Abbey if you are writing or updating your will. A bequest to the Abbey, a non-profit California corporation, will help us to continue the ministry of the Benedictine monks here. It is a great investment in the future. Thank you.

VALYERMO POST OFFICE

The Valyermo Contract Post Office is just down scenic Valyermo Rd. from the Abbey. Consider stopping by for stamps on your next visit! You'll be supporting a local institution that provides an invaluable service to the monastic community. Just turn right out the Abbey gate and you'll find the Post Office about a mile down the road on the right. Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. ✠

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WE DO NOT SHARE IT WITH ANY OTHER PARTY



RETREAT CENTER Calendar SUMMER 2012

OVERNIGHT RETREATS

JUNE

SPIRITUALITY AND CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Friday, June 22 – Sunday, June 24
Presenter: Nikki Tucker, OblOSB

BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAITY

Monday, June 25 – Friday, June 29
Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

JULY

A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES

Friday, July 6 – Sunday, July 8
Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

MUSIC AND PRAYER: HEART HEARS AND SOUL SINGS

Wednesday, July 18 – Friday, July 20
Presenters: Fr. Philip Edwards, OSB
Isolde Amadeah, OblOSB
Elisabeth Smith, OblOSB

**EL DESIERTO: UN CAMINO DIFÍCIL
AUNQUE NECESARIO (ESPAÑOL)**
Viernes, 20 Julio – Domingo, 22 Julio
Presentador: Carlos Obando

**PRAYING WHAT WE BELIEVE
AND BELIEVING WHAT WE PRAY:
REFLECTIONS ON THE NICENE CREED**
Monday, July 23 – Friday, July 27
Presenters: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
Dr. Donald P. Richmond, OblOSB

PSALMODY AND CONTEMPLATION
Friday, July 27 – Sunday, July 29
Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB

AUGUST

**THOMAS MERTON: MAN,
MEDITATOR, MYSTIC**
Friday, August 3 – Sunday, August 5
Presenters: Victoria Dendinger, OblOSB, PhD
Diana Janas, OblOSB, MSJ

**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TRUTH,
GOODNESS AND BEAUTY?**
Monday, August 6 – Friday, August 10
Presenters: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
Milania Henley, OblOSB

PRAYING IN THE CIRCLE OF SAINT JOHN
Friday, August 10 – Sunday, August 12
Presenter: Br. Bede Hazlet, OSB

DIVINIZATION
Friday, August 17 – Sunday, August 19
Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB

SILENCE: THE LANGUAGE OF GOD
Monday, August 20 – Friday, August 24
Presenters: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
Audrey Spindler, OblOSB

DEATH AND ETERNAL LIFE
Friday, August 24 – Sunday, August 26
Presenter: Br. Cassian DiRocco, OSB



SEPTEMBER

BOWED DOWN WITH GRIEF
Friday, September 14 – Sunday, September 16
Presenter: Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

DAY RETREATS

WOMEN IN MID-LIFE WORKSHOP
Saturday, June 23 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Presenter: Victoria Dendinger, OblOSB, PhD

**HACER UN ALTO PARA ESCHUCHAR
A DIOS (ESPAÑOL)**
Sábado, 18 Agosto 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Presentador: Carlos Obando

**FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES/PERDONA
NOS NUESTRAS OFENSAS (BILINGUAL)**
*Saturday, August 25/Sábado, 25
Agosto 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.*
Presenter: Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

FOR COMPLETE DESCRIPTIONS
OF OUR OVERNIGHT AND DAY RETREATS,
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ABBOT DAMIEN, please include the following prayer request for the monks to keep in prayer:

*Your donation is tax deductible. • Thank you for helping us to preserve this house of prayer.
If you wish to remember the Abbey in your estate planning, please call (661) 944-2178.
You do not need to make any donation to ask for our prayers.
Please place this card in the return envelope provided.*



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Valermo, CA 93563-0040
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