

Dear Friends and Visitors

The Lord be with you. We should start off with a note of gratitude and appreciation for the 7 years of hard work and solid accomplishment, which Abbot Mark gave to our community. When Fr. Theodore died and Fr. Richard developed cancer, everything fell into Fr. Mark's lap...our chants, study program, forestry, bakery and finances. His skill in organizing got all those things in order, including our website that you are now looking at. He, then set in motion a committee for the future, the Assumption Abbey Associates and our Lay Advisory Group. Fr. Mark left our house in good condition at the end of his abbatical term. He is now enjoying a well-earned sabbatical year. First at our monastery in Snowmass, Co., then with Mother Gail for visitations and retreats given to our nuns and monks in the Philippines and India.

Meanwhile, back here at our little monastery in the woods, I will be working with our Monks, as we carry on to completion the projects Fr. Mark began in vocation work, the Divine Office, monastic formation, refurbishing the Guest House wing, and our bakery. Our Monks are united in peaceful relationships and generous cooperation. When people ask me how I am doing as temporary superior, I say that I am ok-not as apprehensive as the first time Our Lord gave this service to me. We are grateful also, for your willing support and your sharing in our Trappist-Cistercian spirituality.

February (from the Latin "fever/flu") lived up to its name here in the Ozark foothills. Hardly any winter weather in December and January, then 2 ice storms with thick coatings of freezing rain, topped by sizeable hail, covered again with freezing rain. Br. Lazarus (from warm Mississippi) said it was like walking on slippery marbles.

Br. Thomas developed pneumonia, which did not yield to the first antibiotic, but was knocked out by another round of them. He can now work in the bakery and his repair garage, but not outside yet. Br. Tom is the one who usually clears our road and parking lot from snow and ice with his tractor and plow.

We began Lent with the traditional liturgy of being signed with ashes. (Hello, Dusty.) One special practice is our Lenten reading. Each Monk receives a book, which he is to read during Lent. The bell rings at 7 P.M. and we all spend the last  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour of the day before Compline at our Lenten reading. This year I chose Pope Benedict's,

Jesus of Nazareth. For me this book is true lectio divina. There is such a wealth of insight and fruit of his own personal prayer and Christian living. He values and uses the work of today's historical/literary analysis, but adds the dimension of faith by recognizing that each different

book of the Bible has a unity and continuity beyond its human author. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of each and all the books.

After spending January as a sort of spiritual R & R, we began baking fruitcakes again in February. Last year's product was of top quality, so we are striving to do as well this season. Our baker and external oblate, Joe Reisch, is using real vanilla this year to add that much more flavor.

Our community voted unanimously to begin a thorough refurbishing of the Guest (Retreat) house wing. This should be good for 10-15 years. In the meantime John O'Shaugnessy, our financial guru, is working up a budget, which includes a savings program for the building fund. In 10 or 15 years we are hoping to have saved enough money to pay for an added wing and a total remodeling of the Guest House.

Dom Filomeno, abbot of our daughter-house in the Philippines, says he is working to send at least 1 maybe 2, of his Monks to help here quite soon. That is certainly welcome news. Br. Francis continues his Vocation Director's work with prospective candidates on their way to make and Observership of living for 6 weeks within our community, as the next step in the discernment process. We appreciate the help of your prayers for new vocations to our monastic life here.

In the Sacred Heart

Fr Cyprian, Abbot