

Dear Associates and Friends,

The Lord be with you.

Our January change of pace is completed. The final week was given to our annual retreat. Fr. Casimir Bernes, former abbot of Holy Trinity Abbey in Utah, was our director. His personal gift seems to be the grace of a contemplative vision for all the elements of earthly life. He shared values and lessons embedded in art, literature, daily events, music, history, and peoples' lives. Fr. Casimir's last conference asked each of us to express what being a monk meant to us personally-expressed in SIX WORDS. Quite an engaging give and take flowed from that. We are grateful to Dom David, abbot of Utah, for lending Fr. Casimir for our retreat.

A magnificent snowfall left a foot of snow on the ground here. We had hardly any winter at all last year. It has been years since such a good blanket of snow adorned our woods. But then Washington D.C. topped us with their two feet of snow and two snowstorms, which shut down government function for a day.

John O'Shaughnessy, or financial advisor, came in early February. He congratulated Fr. Alberic on his skills and progress in bookkeeping this past year, (except for an oversight in the realm of Federal Income Tax.) Our fruitcake business is steady and solid, so the monastic effort of supporting ourselves by our own labor continues well.

Each monk chose a book for his Lenten reading. These were distributed Ash Wednesday evening in Chapter. Every weekday the period of 7:00-7:30 p.m. is devoted to Lenten reading, as part of the forty-day observance. One man has his special Ash Wednesday greeting, "Hello Dusty."

February 1st began the new baking season...125 cakes, 5 days a week.

Here is a summary of Assumption Abbey's homework. We work on this project at a Community Sharing every 1st Friday. This is our February result. We used the SIX WORD approach, which worked so well for Fr. Casimir's retreat.

#### ASSUMPTION ABBEY'S HOMEWORK

Dom Brendan reminded us in his visitation report of November 2009, that the General Chapter's mixed commission asked us to consider seriously our areas of concern in preparation for the 2011 General Chapter. He named four areas. They are as follows:

Have we a unified vision with such diversity among the solemnly professed (4 choir, 2 lay, and 2 hermits)?

Do we provide good conditions for human and spiritual growth?

We need to present a document of formation to our new men.

Improvements in carrying out our liturgy.

Each first Friday our community has an Accountability Sharing. We will devote those monthly meetings to those areas, using the SIX WORDS format, which Dom Casimius used so well at the end of our January retreat. Each member boils down his answer to six words, then the floor is open for sharing.

Here are two documents that accompany Father's talk:

Six Words

Six Words Answers

FEBRUARY Topic: Unified vision with such diversity of life style at Assumption Abbey.

QUESTION: What does Monastic life in our community mean to you?

In the Sacred Heart,

Fr Cyprian