

Dear Friends and Visitors

In the Sacred Heart

Fr Cyprian, Abbot

Just now the evening sun is giving an attractive mellow touch to the buildings and area around St. Johns Hospital, and to the slick streets and huge piles of snow, as people dig out from the record sleet storm and blizzard of snow. Bro. Dominic is in a 7th floor room of the new curving front wing of the hospital. Our men have been taking turns being with him.

Bro. Dominic had been noticeably declining for about a month. Then his left eyelid drooped and became swollen. The Urgent Care clinic set him to the Emergency Room. After a week of tests they found that he has myeloma. Myeloma is a disease that means his bone marrow goes wacky making too many red blood cells. These cluster as tumors in bone, flesh and organs. The tumors can be benign or cancerous. The MRI and PET scan showed tumors in Brother's eye sockets and all through his body. They are cancerous and incurable.

The doctors started low radiation with a narrow focus on the eye socket tumors in order to save his sight. They told him that with chemotherapy, he would live a few years, and without chemo he'd live a few months. Dominic is absolute about no chemo. When his radiologist learned of that, she extended his radiation treatments by about five weeks. Dr. Helen Kim, a peppy and petite Korean, will focus on the largest blood tumors, which are troublesome and protruding from his skin. This is being done as a comfort measure.

Bro. Dominic has completed his rehab and is transferring to a nursing home, which has transportation for his daily radiation treatments at the hospital. His brother, Richard, is coming from San Jos  , CA for a good visit with Uncle Bobby, (as Dom's nieces and nephews call him.) When we suggested that he might accept and offer all of this up for God's blessing on our small community's need for persevering vocations, Bro. Dominic said with a kind of wonder in his voice, "Can I do that?"

Last year Rozanne Elder had agreed to come and give us conferences (probably on "her monk" William of St. Thierry) during the second week of January. In the meantime, Oxford University invited her to travel to England and spend a year there as a research scholar in residence. This was the third year in a row that unforeseen events prevented her from being our January ongoing monastic formation speaker. The first two years she arranged for graduate students from the Kalamazoo Medieval Institute to substitute for her. This year we contacted her

personal secretary, Karen McDougal, and suggested that in recognition of Cistercian Publications 40th anniversary, she come and tell us something of the beginnings, events and persons involved in that history. Karen hesitated and e-mailed Rozanne in London, unsure of whether she should agree to this. Rozanne emailed back, "Go for it!" Rozanne may not just be playing "hard to get", since she told us not to stop trying to snag her next January.

As things turned out, our biannual Visitation and meeting of our Commission of the Future took place the fourth week of January. The General Chapter will convene next September at Assisi. We asked especially that the Visitor, abbot of our mother house, New Mellerey, give a decision in his Visitation Report about reopening our novitiate at that time. Dom Brendan, along with his co-visitors, Dom Joseph of Snowmass and Mother Kathy of Redwoods, interviewed each monk, two family brothers, and Sister Rachel, who has worked over the years with our community.

In the end Dom Brendan was convinced in his viewpoint and conscience that our few and aging monks are not equipped to give a satisfactory monastic formation to new candidates. He listed among the many reasons for his decision: our track record of not one new candidate persevering these 60 years, even after final vows and ordination--including our recent solemnly professed monk, who left five weeks after his final vows; the diversity of five community monks; two lay brothers, and two hermits in our small group; the lack of younger members to function as a bridge between our core community and as peer support for new candidates.

On our part all of our monks favored reopening the novitiate next General Chapter, though a few questioned the advisability. We see the lack of fruit in persevering new candidates, yet a steady fruitful growth in other vital monastic areas. Such as: fourteen monks in our cemetery who persevered to the end, ideal monastic buildings, a self-supporting industry, good monastic observance, a prayerful community of united monks, whom our Abbot General finds warm and welcoming, and a steady number of men asking admittance to the type of monastic living, which we have developed here. We also have a complete formation study program, (compiled by Fr. Mark) and qualified teachers. All this is the fruit of the persevering work of past and present monks, along with God's grace.

Initial and ongoing formation is critical for a healthy and viable community. There are abundant studies and documents regarding formation, based on both theory and experience. We respect and should strive to meet all the requirements. At the same time, monastic history through the centuries show enough examples of a monastery, or Order, pruned almost to the ground. Yet a vital and positive core group continued to pray and work, trusting in the Holy Spirit as the Formator, and flourished in the long run. A small group of seasoned veterans, who have learned wisdom from persevering through both good and harsh conditions, and who successfully

embody our Trappist Cistercian Order's guiding Renewal Decree on Unity and Pluralism, form a viable community. There is agreement on all sides that the living community is the strongest element in formation after the Holy Spirit.

Dom Brendan told our Abbot General that he would feel the greatest relief, if the General Chapter rejected his recommendation not to reopen our novitiate. For some 25 years he has given us generous and friendly support in personnel and finances. We respect his sincere conviction, though we see it differently and would choose differently. He encourages us in his Visitation Report to work out creative ways to continue our monastic witness here in the Ozark foothills. As a help in that direction, Dom Brendan said the suggestion was made that we might send our candidates to New Melleray for their formation. He must consult his community, who have always regarded their daughter house with good will. Their novice master is very fine. We will also be consulting our Abbot General.

We have a lot to pray for. Bro. Dominic is experiencing the same struggle as Nancy Melton, Anne Clement and many other friends. With trust we keep looking to our Lord Jesus, as the Good Shepherd Who goes before us and is always with us, as well as our Lady of Sorrows.

#### A Day of Penance and Prayer

The Epistle to the Hebrews describes for us the Tent of Meeting which Moses constructed. Inside a great external enclosure was the Altar of Incense and the Altar of Sacrifice in front of a sanctuary called the Holy Place. Within this was The Menorah 7-branch candlestick and the loaves of offering placed on a table. An even smaller inner sanctuary, called The Holy of Holies, contained the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest entered The Holy of Holies through a veiled opening once a year on the Day of Atonement. Having sacrificed sin offering for himself and for the people, he brought animal's blood before the Presence of God above the Ark of the Covenant. The cover of the Ark, overshadowed by the wings of two cherubim, was called the Mercy Seat and was seen as the footstool of God's throne.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that all this was only a copy of God's sanctuary and throne in heaven. Moses had been given a vision of the divine reality and told to construct a faithful earthly copy of it.

In the book of Revelation, John also saw heaven opened and the divine Ark of the Covenant appear. Then there was silence in heaven for about half an hour before the Presence of God.

The author of Hebrews says that Jesus, as High Priest of the New Covenant, entered into the divine Holy of Holies through the sanctuary of heaven, offering His own Blood once for all in sacrifice. He obtained eternal redemption and lives forever, interceding for us sinners at the throne of God, His Father and ours.

On the Day of Atonement the animal sacrifices cleansed bodies from ritual defilements of the previous year, and started people off into the new year with a clean slate. Christ's sacrifice of the New Covenant cleanses souls from the death of sin, and returns the life of the Holy Spirit within souls and bodies.

Our Trappist Cistercian Order for the USA designates January 22, anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion, as a day of penance and prayer to recognize the sacredness of the human life of unborn babies.

The Litany of Loretto gives the Blessed Virgin the title Ark of the Covenant. She was the throne of the Son of God--his resting place and footstool for nine months. Mary lived out her very demanding vocation with the strength coming from the presence of her Son during His lifetime, and from the presence of His Holy Spirit within her after Pentecost.

With the help of her intercession let us pray that Christ, our High Priest and Redeemer, pour out the Holy Spirit more fully on the people of our country, so that we all may respect the holiness of our Creator's gift of human sexuality and procreation, and accept the responsibility to preserve and nurture human life from its first beginning in the womb till its final earthly end in natural death.