

Dear Friends and Visitors

The Lord be with you this Easter Season—

Fr. Donald celebrated both Christmas and Easter in a novel way. Christmas Eve he went to the hospital with bleeding and Good Friday he again went to St. John's in Springfield with pneumonia. Therefore, I offered Mass in his room twice on Christmas day and once on Easter. Each stay lasted only a few days. He was happy to return to Heart of the Ozarks nursing home. Fr. Donald said, "I'll tell you a secret—I kind of like it here."

St. Benedict devotes one chapter of his Rule for Monasteries to the role of cellarer (as in Root/Storage Cellar). This person has responsibility for all the material side of the monastery, yet can do only what the abbot indicates. Ordinarily, a monk is cellarer. We lost Fr. Theodore a few years ago and have had no equal replacement. Vicky Thompson had been taking care of a lot of that area, but she recently retired. An Associate member from Cuba, Mike Melton, has the experience and background needed for that role, so we have hired him as our cellarer. (One can say that the cellarer is responsible for everything and can do nothing.)

Our Trappist Abbey at Vina, CA, elected a new abbot, Dom Mark Schwan. They have contributed much to our community over the years—providing priestly studies for our Fr. Alberic, and allowing at different times, their Bro Dominic, Bro. Francis and Dom Mark Scott, to come here to help. Bro Dominic and I went to the Abbatial Blessing on March 21. I had the chance to express our gratitude. Bro. Dominic was able to enjoy a reunion with his monastic brothers at Vina and with his blood brother, Richard, at San Jose.

The Guest House renovation continues. Gena Valli and her brother, Tom, have completed seven guest rooms, substantially. Now they are tackling the final two rooms, which will include a handicapped friendly shower and a hospital bed. They will then go over all the finishing touches for that area.

Holy Week's liturgy was enhanced by Fr. Justin's skill at piano accompaniment and a visiting priest's (Fr. Brian Christie) violin. They played Schubert's Ave Maria after Communion for the feast of the Annunciation. It was a beautiful and rare way for us to celebrate the Incarnation.

On Easter Saturday, our Lay Advisory Committee gathered for their annual sharing. We divided into three groups—each treating separate sections of our Employee's Handbook and our Harassment and Sexual Abuse Policy. The need for something about safety at work and possible drug/alcohol abuse was brought up. The group includes nurses, lawyers, businesspersons,

teachers and religious sisters. Abundant resources were at hand. We also started work on possible student groups visiting here for a monastic experience or work project in our economically depressed area.

The same Easter Saturday, the Neighborhood Watch Group met at our low-water bridge at Bryant Creek. The newly elected sheriff was present. His men have been making nighttime arrests down there when drunkenness or drug abuse is found. Word is spreading, so that the roughnecks will go elsewhere, and families can come for picnics, fishing, swimming and enjoy again, what nature has provided.

Moses asked the Lord God to let him see His Face, but received the answer that no one can see God and live. God sheltered Moses in a cave and passed before him, so Moses could at least see His back as He passed by.

However, another passage tells us that, when Moses had given the Words of God's covenant to the people and they promised to accept and live out their human side of the covenant union with God, the Lord God called Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders to the top of Mt. Sinai. There they saw the God of Israel with a heavenly blue pavement under his feet. These nobles of Israel gazed on God and He laid no hand on them. They ate and drank before him.

This shows what a close union is made between God and His people by that covenant love of friendship, that covenant-working partnership.

Centuries later Isaiah would use the image of a Messianic banquet to picture the coming Day of the Lord, when salvation would extend to all nations. On this Mountain of the Lord of hosts there will be made a feast of fat, rich things, of wine well refined. He will destroy the veil, which is spread over all the nations. It will be said on that day, "Behold, here is our God, we have waited for Him. Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

After the exile, the prophet, Zechariah, foresees all the nations of the world going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Tabernacles, the great final harvest feast.

Our Lord Jesus at the Last Supper accomplished this Messianic banquet, celebrating the New Covenant union of God and humans. He told the Twelve that the hour had come, for the Day of the Lord, His hour of glorification.

This Messianic banquet of the Last Supper fell far short, and at the same time far exceeded, what the people expected and were looking for. Such a hidden, poor sharing of a meal, but at

the same time the food and drink were the Body and Blood of God made man. He tells them they are gazing on the face of God when they see Him. The New Covenant relationship is a personal mutual indwelling and sharing of life. God the Father, dwelling in the Son, and the Son dwelling in us. We are dwelling in the Son, living members of His Body on earth, the Church.

Yet this is not the fullness of salvation. Christ gave His Apostles a fuller share in His Priesthood at the Last Supper to sacrifice the Eucharist in His memory. The Eucharist is the renewal and continuation of His redeeming sacrifice and communion. St. Paul writes that whenever we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.

Each Eucharist, each Mass is a celebration of the coming of the Lord, a renewal of the new and eternal covenant union in Christ. At the same time, it is a prayer for the final full coming of the Lord, the final full Day of Judgment and Salvation. In the prayer before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we tell the Father that we are waiting with joy for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our covenant love of friendship, covenant-working partnership, with Our Lord Jesus is like any other relationship: either growing and deepening, or weakening and perishing. We can join the prayers of the Church. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come, Lord Jesus." Our Lord responds, "Behold, I am coming soon."

In Our Risen Savior

Fr Cyprian, Abbot