

Dear Friends and Visitors

The Lord be with you. At last, it begins to look like Spring, here in the Ozarks. The trees on the hillsides are decked out in all shades of pastel green. Yellow dandelions are popping up everywhere. The Dogwood blossoms look like a snowfall through the middle canopy of our woods.



Fr. Alberic attended the Novice Director's Meeting at our Abbey of the Holy Spirit in Georgia. This was a combination of conferences given by Dom Joseph of Snowmass and Mother Gail of Mississippi, and is a pastoral sharing among our Trappist and Trappistine Novice Directors.

Fr. Justin Trinidad made his second visit here from Canada. It was such a long bus ride for him. He will prepare to make his observership here at the Abbey. He is a Filipino with Canadian citizenship.

Our Lay Advisory Committee held a lively weekend gathering here in mid-April. The two topics were Martha Fly's concentric circles design and descriptions of opportunities for involvement at Assumption Abbey. Mike Melton gave his presentation of our Guest House renovation project. Gena and Tom Valli, along with Steve Rossel, of St. Louis will be carrying out this project on long weekends, over an extended period this year. This thorough renovation should serve well for ten or fifteen years. During that period we will continue a savings program, so that we can then fully remodel and extend our Guest House, using our own funds for the project.

Fr. Paul Jones, our liaison with the Associates of Assumption Abbey, will host a retreat for members of the group at his Hermitage Retreat Center. This is located on the shores of Pomme

de Terre Lake, just north of Springfield.



Fr. Mark gave a three-week course on the Gospel of St. Mark to our fairly recent and quite isolated Trappistine Monastery in Nicaragua. Now he has returned to St. Benedict's Abbey at Snowmass, Colorado the home base for his sabbatical year.

The fifth week of Easter brought the liturgy's memorial of Blessed Gabriella and of Blessed Rafael.

Pope John XXIII prayed that the Second Vatican Council would bring a new Pentecost. The Council Fathers asked the whole Church and each religious Order to undertake a renewal. This involves two steps. First, go back to our sources...Our Lord Jesus in Scripture and the special vocation of our Founders...in order to clarify and deepen the particular graces of our own calling. Second, express anew our vocation in forms, which will have meaning for people of our own time and culture; meeting them where they are.

Our Trappist-Cistercian Order has gone to the abundant writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelred, William of Thierry, the two Gertrudes, Mechtilde, and others. New English translations and studies of their spirituality have appeared, as well as a more full history of the 1100 and 1200's, with two Cistercian Popes, some Cardinals, and many Bishops from our Order, as it spread all through Europe and beyond. The renewal of lectio divina, as the traditional form of prayer for the monk, has brought us back more to Scripture.

What about the second step? Pope John Paul II beatified the Trappistine Gabriella, who came from Sardinia to enter the Convent of GrattaFerrata. She made vows after wrestling with her

strong temperament during the novitiate. With her abbess's permission, she offered her life for Church Unity. Shortly afterwards, Gabriella came down with tuberculosis and died. The Pope called her the Patron of Church Unity.



Pope John Paul next beatified the Spanish Oblate Rafael Baron. He studied architecture, but was looking for something deeper. He applied to our Abbey of San Isidro, but had to leave after a time, due to diabetes undermining his health. He came again after convalescing, but had to leave again. Finally he persevered the third time, but medicine and treatment were hindered by the Civil War. Blessed Rafael died as an Oblate, unable to make vows because of poor health.

After that, Fr. Michael Tanzi was proclaimed Blessed. He had been a native Diocesan priest in Nigeria, who built up a thriving parish. He dreamed of bringing monastic life to Africa, so he entered the Trappist Mt. St. Bernard in England, taking the name Cyprian, an African bishop, martyr, and father of the church. After his novitiate and final vows, his abbot prepared to make a foundation in Nigeria with Fr. Cyprian Michael as superior. However, he became ill and died before the founders left England.

Most recently, Fr. Marie Joseph Casant, monk of Our Lady of the Desert, in France, was beatified. He has been described as a nightmare vocation. Timid, a slow mind, no skills at manual labor, an inferiority complex, and troubled by scrupulosity; describe some of his problems. He was advised by his pastor to try the Trappist, since he could not make it elsewhere. After years of discouragement and depression, he finally qualified to be ordained a priest.

Tuberculosis had taken hold of him, so he celebrated Mass only a few times.

Then there are the seven Trappist monks of Mt. Atlas in Algeria, who were beheaded by terrorists.

What is the Church and the Spirit saying to us and to our Order? All these monks and nuns of our own time are Little Ones. The Glory Days of St. Bernard are past. Now we seem called to live his hidden and fruitful desert spirituality in a way he was not privileged to walk. Our Lord rejoiced that the Father had hidden the mysteries of the Kingdom of God from the powerful and wise of this world in order to reveal them to the Little Ones. Today our monks and nuns meet the world as Little Ones, a sign of contradiction, as Our Lord Jesus did and continues to do.

Fr Cyprian, Abbot