

Dear Associates and Friends:
Christ is Risen, Alleluia—

That traditional Orthodox Paschal greeting receives the response:
HE IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA!

The early heat wave in February/March has resulted in a magnificent blossoming of roses within our monastic courtyard, behind our Guesthouse wing and all along the side of the bakery building. The Filipina, Sr. Rose has been supplying our chapel with graceful arrangements of the roses and Fr. Donald's perennial irises.

April has been busy for Bro. Francis, our vocation director. Jim Roedl, who has assisted in L'Arche communities for many years, is spending several months within our community for a needed period of quiet and renewed prayer. He is our laundry man during May and June, while Fr. Robert carries out his yearly two months as chaplain for our Trappistine Sisters at Santa Rita in Sonoita, Arizona.

Joseph Gallina is making a first visit for discernment about a possible long-term residence here. Steve Ellsworth and Mike Cronin have returned in their process of exploring our Family Brother program, which offers living fully within our community for short periods, along with time back at their home in the meantime, or residing in our Family Brother quarters. A form of one foot in the monastic life and one foot in secular life.

Fr. Paul Jones, who has been a Family Brother over 25 years is their director and works with these men here during his weeklong visits every month. Bro. Francis works as his assistant full time.

Fr. Donald continues being happy at the Heart of the Ozarks nursing home in Ava. Sometimes he is more alert at our weekly Mass in his room, and sometimes less so. Little by little, he is drifting more into his second childhood. The chronic skin infection in one leg keeps his nursing staff and Jill, our health care aide, on their toes.

Our security guard's work at Bryant Creek's low-water bridge and his patrolling of our woods have made a real improvement in those areas. He has a horseshoe pit, basketball hoop, swing set, and a sand box (besides the poured concrete "Vandal Proof" privy) at the creek and a sign, "Be Nice or Go Home."

Good Shepherd Sunday

One of our best-known and loved psalms tells us that God is a shepherd: *"The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing I shall want. He leads me into green pastures."* Considering our human track record, God may feel that at times His is shepherding or herding cats.

God chose human shepherds in the Old Testament to be leaders of His people. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were nomad shepherds. Moses spent forty years shepherding his father-in-law's flocks before he led the tribes of Israel on their forty-year desert journey to the Promised Land. God took David from his father's flocks to become the king who would unite the Northern and Southern tribes into one kingdom.

In the New Testament God sent His Son first as a carpenter—perhaps to teach Him to love working with wood as a preparation for His final great work on the wood of the cross. When Our Lord began His public ministry, He called fisherman to follow Him, to show that the boundaries of His new kingdom reached out beyond Israel to catch people of all nations and races. Yet He described His own personal role by saying that He is the Good

Shepherd, Who truly cares for His sheep. He lays down his life defending His flock. This is the command He has received from His Father. He has power to lay down His life and to take it up again.

In today's first reading St. Peter declares that this teaching of Christ has been fulfilled...Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and died and now is raised from the dead. The power of His name has healed a man crippled from birth. There is no other name given to the human family by which we are to be saved. Salvation comes from no one else.

What is this salvation, which Jesus Christ alone can give? In the Old Testament, God, the Shepherd of His chosen people, promised to give this wandering nomad people a homeland...their own personal land flowing with milk and honey, where they could settle and put down roots. They could plant vineyards, have fig and olive trees, their own fields for sowing and harvesting, their own pastures to feed cattle and flocks. That fulfilled the dream and desire of the homeless tribes of Israel.

As the centuries went on, the people found that this was not enough. Their prophets, psalmists, and wisdom teachers expressed a longing for the fullness of life, freedom from suffering and death, for resurrection from the dead.

The prophet Ezekial saw the vision of a valley filled with human bones. The Word of the Lord came upon them, the bones began to be covered with sinews and flesh, and a great throng of people came to life. The negro spiritual, "Dry Bones", catches and expresses well that yearning for a salvation reaching beyond our short mortal lifetimes.

After the third day when Our Risen Lord began appearing to Mary Magdalene, the other women, to Peter and the other Apostles, they thought, "This is it!"—the resurrection of the body—eternal life on earth. However, this was not the salvation, which God planned for them and for us. Our Lord Jesus told Mary Magdalene to not keep clinging to Him, but go tell His brothers and sisters that He is ascending to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God.

Christ is using family language—brothers, sister, Father. He is revealing to us a little more about the salvation, which He has won for us.

In today's second reading St. John explains still more about the fullness of salvation destined for us. "See what love the Father has bestowed on us"—that we are already adopted children of God, sharing in a real created way in God's divine family life now. However, it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. When the disciples saw the risen Lord Jesus, they saw His living human body. John's vision in the Book of Revelation saw a majestic human being, just as Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor saw the glorified humanity of Christ.

John goes on to say in today's second reading that our final revelation and fullness of salvation will be a divinization, a transformation into a created image and likeness of the divinity of Christ. We will become like Him, because we will see Him as He is—not only in His risen humanity, but also in the Glory of His divinity.

St. Paul perhaps came closest to a glimpse of the divinity of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. Afterwards he would write about the Glory of God shining on the face of Christ...and about being transformed from glory to glory. In fact, St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles tells us that Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the Glory of God and Jesus at God's right hand.

In this fullness of salvation, we will be raised from the dead, sharing in the Resurrection of Christ. It will be a transforming union with God, often described as seeing God face to face, the beatific vision. Perhaps this could also be described as being filled with the living Glory of God. God is light and love. The Father and Son pour their mutual divine life and love into the Holy Spirit, and we will be receiving a real created adopted share in this inpouring of divine Glory—this family life and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, the hour of the coming of you divine Son, our Good Shepherd, with His gift of salvation.

In Our Risen Savior and His Mother,
Your monks of Ava