

Dear Friends and Visitors

Meteorologically June in the Ozarks has been wet and relatively cool. We have enjoyed wonderful rainstorms, so much so that we have had to irrigate the lawn in the cloister garth only about three times this summer. In spite of that, with the rain, the grass is carpet thick and forest green, but the sod so soggy we cannot get in to mow, either. We use a rotary push mower for doing that job when we can. A visiting college student was watching Fr Mark mow with this efficient and silent machine. He remarked that he had never seen one before, but that his father had told him of them.

In the middle of June Fr Richard moved to Mercy Villa in Springfield. Mercy Villa is part of the Mercy Sisters St John's hospital system. We had cared for Fr Richard here at the monastery since his general collapse at the end of October last year. We enjoyed the assistance of a local Hospice group, as well as a fine Home Care agency in Ava. But come mid-June, our major caregiver, one of our senior monks himself, had, to use a vulgar term, burnt out. Fr Mark urged Fr Cyprian to take two weeks away at the motherhouse, which Fr Cyprian gladly agreed to. The decision was then taken to put Fr Richard in Mercy Villa until we could work up a home health new care schedule. As it has turned out, though, Fr Richard seems to be thriving at Mercy Villa! He does say that he misses us, as we miss him. But at Mercy Villa Fr Richard is surrounded by people, both fellow residence and the many staff people who are so cheerful and kind. He takes his meals with the other residents in a common dining room, and there is much in the way of entertainment for the residents. Most importantly, he is receiving excellent care on all levels. We will reevaluate Fr Richard's situation later in July.

A young man from Arkansas, Tommy H., spent the month of June as a live-in guest of the monastery. He has just completed a year teaching at the Benedictine Subiaco Academy in his home state, and will commence a doctorate program in Theology at Catholic University, Washington, DC, in the fall. Tommy brought participated fully in the life of work, lectio, and prayer, and contributed his skills of cabinetry and carpentry on a few significant occasions. We are happy to invite men to spend longer periods as live-in guests, and good experiences such as the one we had with Tommy make us even more willing to do so.

We have introduced a new Psalm Schema for our Opus Dei. The monks get together seven times a day for the Divine Office, or Opus Dei. Each "hour" of prayer consists of mainly of reciting or chanting psalms. According to the Constitutions of the Order and following St Benedict, each monastery is free, within certain clear parameters, to arrange the hours of prayer according to local conditions. One of the parameters is that each of the 150 Psalms of the Bible be included within the course of two weeks. We have, then, a "two week Psalm

schema."

The new Psalm Schema is based upon the distribution of the Psalms as given by St Benedict in his Rule, particularly in Chapter 18, with the major difference that St Benedict followed a one week schema. Our Schema differs from Benedict's, too, in that the Psalms for the Sunday offices of Vespers, Vigils and Lauds have a paschal flavor to them. In general, though, our new Schema follows the canonical order of the Psalms as found in the Book of Psalms in the Bible. It is not clear why the Psalms of the Bible are arranged the way they are. But we are not wrong to accord some element of "inspiration" even to the arrangement of the Biblical canon. We trust that by following the Biblical arrangement, and St Benedict's, we will over the years come to have even greater appreciation for these ancient and incomparable prayers and poems, and that they will form our community in ways that we could not arrange for on our own.

Below we offer examples of monastic teaching from the monks of Ava. First, a homily from our senior brother, Fr Donald Joseph Hamilton:

Fr Mark, Abbot