

Dear Friends and Visitors

The Lord be with you—



Summer is here. Our inner courtyard is abounding in colorful flowers. Fr. Justin's cousin in California has a greenhouse operation and has shipped a great variety of plants to him. The planting was a lot of work. Now the maintenance is less demanding. He says he has been bitten by the Rose Bug. Now we have a rose bush at the base of 2/3 of our pillars. The whole display was a fine setting for our procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the feast of Corpus Christi.

At New Melleray in the 50's we would gather flowers from all the surrounding grounds, then pluck their blossoms and petals to make floral arrangements on the floors of the enclosed inner cloister. The procession would walk over and on the flowers as the monks, celebrant with monstrance, and guests made the round from the church through the cloister

Our new warehouse is going ahead; concrete footings and floor are poured. The Amish workers are putting up the studs and the framing. We will need no electricity, plumbing, or windows. A large overhead door at each end, and translucent panels along the sheet metal sides, will give plenty of light.



Andrew Freeman completed over six months of intern living here. He decided that our enclosed contemplative community was not the life to which he was called, so he returned home. Gary Hunter, driver of an 18-wheeler, has returned as a transitional oblate. The few years that he was away were transforming. He found a program on-line, which helps a person come into more self-knowledge and offers skills for dealing with one's own inner and outer challenges. It was difficult, but made a remarkable change for Gary. Richard Zolper is making an observership in our community at this time, also.

I was dragging my tail a bit. The bad news of swine flu epidemic is counterbalanced by the good news that it is only a 24-hour flu and mild. Some of us had it. I decided to take a week of retreat at our Franciscan neighbors. Our Lady of Angels is a place of such peace and release and it is only a mile away. Then Bro. Dominic drove over and told us that lightning had knocked out all the electric power at the abbey. The bakery was all right, though. We found that the three transformer fuses had tripped on the electric pole, which burned out the phase monitor, coil, and switch in the nearby pump house. The lightning stopped at that point. Those earlier obstacles kept it from traveling down to our submerged pump-the deepest ground of all. We were able to replace the damaged items in two days, are up, and running. (I went back to the Friars' retreat house.)

Fr. Francis at O.L.A. asked me to be celebrant at Mass on the feast of the Sacred Heart. He said, "You don't have to prepare a homily-just say something about contemplative prayer." This is what I came up with:

What does a cat do when it is bored and has nothing else to do (besides sleep)? It starts licking its fur, grooming itself (and building up hairballs inside.) Someone told Thomas Merton that this was his occupational hazard at prayer. He tended to keep looking back at himself: "How am I doing? What stage of prayer is this?"

What is prayer? Each person has his or her own description. Boiled down to its simplest form, I would see prayer as just taking time to be with God.

How does a person pray? We are made up of mind, heart-body and will. Each person finds one of those three to be predominant in their make-up. The mind person is always thinking, "For heaven's sake, do something!" Lectio divina is a good approach to prayer for him/her. When a scripture passage comes alive, then mind (heart and will) can quiet down and simply be with God.

The heart person goes with the flow of emotions. (Something triggers a reaction and they are off to the races. Mind and will say, "Where are we going. Why are we doing this?" They are able to pour out everything in prayer. Then quiet comes and their heart (mind and will) are able to be still and be with God.

The will person can give an impression of coldness or forcefulness. Something needs to be done, so without a lot of reflecting, or of sensitivity towards others, they start to work. They can most naturally let everything within quiet down and simply be with God.

Usually we come to prayer with upraised and empty arms, trying to place ourselves in the presence of God. We may be able to quiet down after a bit. Sometimes, though, a peace may descend on us, which gives a sense of integration and wholeness. All of our inner tumult and imbalance are healed by this sense of the presence of God.

On occasion, some people might find that when they come to pray, they do not have to put themselves in God's presence. He has taken the initiative. He is there even before we turn to Him.

St. Paul describes contemplative prayer when he says, "May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding keep your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus. May you be filled with all the fullness of God." Fr. Robert, our hermit monk, also says that this experience of peace is a contemplative union with God.

We do not and cannot make this experience happen. It is God's gift to us. It is the work of the Sacred Heart. He tells us that if we knew the gift of God, we would ask Him, and He would give us living water springing up within us to eternal life. Our Lord is speaking about the Holy Spirit.

No matter how difficult or how consoling a prayer may seem to us, we can at most, be morally sure this was a mystical experience of union with God. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion at Mass, we have the certitude of faith that this is a mystical experience of union with God.

We come to prayer and Holy Communion not like a cat to groom our self, nor to get an experience of spiritual high. We come to deepen and grow in personal union with God, and to share more fully in Christ's ongoing work of reconciliation. By their fruits, you know them. It is authentic if little by little our minds, hearts, and will are becoming more Christ like.

In the Sacred Heart,

Fr Cyprian



1st row..left-right: Bro. Dominic, Bro. Boniface, Bro. Thomas,  
Fr. Alberic  
2nd row: Bro. Francis, Bro. Lazarus, Richard, Fr. Cyprian,  
Fr. Justin, Paul, Bro. Andrew