

Dear Associates and Friends
The Lord be with you.

Faith can move mountains, and nowadays we of little faith can get a Cat backhoe and bucket to also do the job... (if the mountain is not too big.) Bro. Tom chose the latter way to level and grade a great mound and steep slope outside our new lower wing. The clay was used to extend the back yard. Now Bro. Tom will spread good black dirt with his tractor over both these areas for a more decent lawn, as well as a vegetable garden. Fr. Peter, our Vietnamese monk, grew up in a farm family, so he is keen to start the garden.

The fishpond became a disaster spot. Heavy rain (for which we are not complaining--given last year's drought) washed clay into its water. The goldfish had perished from a dose of chemical advertised to kill algae and spare fish, but which killed both. Finally, groundwater filled space beneath the plastic pond liner and upended it. Fr. Paul energetically dug in, bailed out the water, raised the ground under the pond's liner, and installed water and goldfish. A torrential night downpour tested his work. His work passed the test.

Unfortunately, Fluffy our amiable cat had crawled far back into the storm drain under our inner courtyard, and was caught by the heavy flow of the rainstorm. We found his body at the mouth of the pipe. Now the mice are out to play. Two kittens were brought in last week to grow up and spend their lives here at the abbey. We are hoping that they will stay and be the hunters that their predecessor was.

A raccoon was perched on the toilet in the fairly new concrete outhouse near our Bryant Creek low water bridge. A worker walked in and the startled raccoon jumped down the hole. What to do? The man put a sapling trunk down on a slant and left. The raccoon was gone later. He probably headed for a bath in the creek. Raccoons diligently wash their food before eating...as well as himself this time. Luckily, the Honey Dipper had pumped out the outhouse tank a couple of weeks before that happened.

A cardinal was diving into the glass panel at the back of our guesthouse. He must have seen his reflection and was defending his turf. Then he would do the same on a glass panel at the side door. He bloodied himself, but would not quit the contest. Finally, Jill plastered enough distracting designs on the glass to obscure the reflection. Now the cardinal sings victoriously at one end and then at the other end of the guesthouse.

Hummingbird feeders on the lawn of our guesthouse are doing a land-office business. The problem is that there must be a hive, wild or domestic, of honeybees nearby. The bees will cluster in a mound of five or six deep all bustling to draw nectar from the same little outlet. They pretty well force the birds away. The hummingbirds go to another feeder, or return when the bees have left.

The garden at Nazareth Hermitage is under siege by armadillos. Over the years, Fr. Leon and the Sisters have found ways to keep out deer, raccoons, rabbits and crows. This is a different animal, which digs below fences and stakes. In addition, squirrels are getting under the hood of Joe Reisch's car parked near his hermitage there. The animals are winning so far. Joe has been searching for the live animal trap, formerly used to catch raccoons.

To switch from the animal to the plant kingdom, the rose bushes at the pillars of our cloister quadrangle have blossomed so abundantly this year, that the Corpus Christi procession around the area reflected the old practice of decorating the floors of the route with flower petals and flower designs. A lovely celebration for Our Lord in the Eucharist.

Fr. Alberic drove to Texas for a rite and Mass with our former Fr. Anthony Sloan and the bishop of San Angelo. After more than ten years of service there, Fr. Anthony requested a dispensation from his monastic vows, since the bishop was satisfied and very willing to incardinate Fr. Anthony into his diocese as a hermit priest and chaplain of the small Carmelite convent in the desert at Christoval. About one hundred friends and neighbors attended the Mass and dinner afterwards.

We would like to praise God for the continuation of Mary Runde's good health but, it is with many prayers for her soul that we commend Rachel Auringer into the arms and presence of God. Rachel was one of our Associates. She lapsed into a coma and began her final journey on Monday, June 10.

Eucharistic Life

The feast of Corpus Christi has been called a celebration of Holy Thursday in the light of the Resurrection. We know that Christ's Gospel message of the Beatitudes, The Cross and the Resurrection turns our worldly values and way of life upside down. Have you reflected how the Law of Moses for Israel also had turned the values and way of life of the world around them upside down?

No other people had a covenant union between their gods and themselves. Israel's covenant meant that for them there is only one God, while the nations around them had many deities. Moses gave his people God's Ten Words of the Covenant. These Ten Commandments, by which Israel lived out their side of the covenant relationship, were a moral code head and shoulders above the laws of any other nation. The Lord God of Israel was a moral God who loved truth and goodness and hated falsehood and evil. The pagan nations pictured their fickle gods and goddesses as supreme reflections of all their own human virtues and vices.

Earthly kings ruled other nations. The Lord God was the King of His Chosen People. Even later, when Saul and then David were chosen king, they governed as a representative of Israel's divine King. This unique personal covenant relationship set them apart. Moses said, "What other nation has gods so close as the Lord God is to us...or laws as just as ours?"

For almost 2000 years, beginning with Abraham, God was shepherding His first-born people by His word spoken to them through Moses, the prophets, and sacred writers. In the fullness of time, the Word became flesh, dwelling among us. The Son of God became the Son of Man, said that He came not to destroy, but to fulfill, the Law. Under Moses, God led His people in a new direction. Our Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd led His disciples still further on a New Way, opening the journey out to the final destination of return to the Father, a new Passover to eternal life in union with God.

As God fed His people with manna, bread from heaven, on their forty year Passover journey, so the Son of God fulfills that sign by giving His disciples the true Bread from heaven for their journey. The Lord God had told Moses, "You shall not drink blood, because life is in the blood. Our Lord Jesus told His disciples that unless they drink His blood, they have no life in them. A different level of life--not created and temporal, but uncreated eternal Life. He insisted that His flesh is food indeed and His blood is drink indeed. Those who eat His flesh and drink His blood have eternal life, and He will raise them up on the last day.

On the one hand, this is outrageous talk from a wandering preacher. "This is a hard saying. Who can tolerate it?" And many no longer walked with Him. "Will you also go away?" He asked the twelve. Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

On the other hand, this is the talk of a loving parent. One woman remarked, "What a good idea. If I were God, I would want to give myself to my people as bread."

Our Lord Jesus fulfilled His promise at the Last Supper. He took bread, and giving thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is My Body, which is give for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise the cup after supper saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the New Covenant in My Blood."

That happened 2000 years ago. What a tortuous path the flock of Christ has walked since then...progress and setback, success and failure, scandal and sanctity. Through it all Our Lord Jesus, faithful to His promise that He would be with His disciples to the end, has continued to shepherd and remain with His Church, and with us, in His mystery and reality of the Holy Eucharist.

Holy Mother Church sets aside this feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ as a day of thanksgiving and worship, a day of wonder and love, taking time to come apart, to ponder, and rest with our Eucharistic Lord.

Lord, help us to live a Eucharistic life.
In the Sacred Heart,
Your monks of Ava.