

Dear Associates and Friends,

The Lord be with you.

Holy Mother Church celebrates March 25 as the feast of the Annunciation (perhaps the Incarnation would be a more striking title) figuring nine months before Christ's Birth. St. Luke has Mary hasten to visit her aged cousin, Elizabeth, who is six months along with her pregnancy. A decent time lag gives May 31 for the feast of the Visitation. This year the Visitation brought the blessed event of Bro. Lazarus' solemn profession of monastic vows. This gives our community a share in the joyful company of Sarah, Rachel, Naomi, and Elizabeth, who all had the reproach of barrenness removed in their old age. This is our first homegrown final professed monk to still persevere, as we celebrate our sixtieth birthday this year. Bro. Lazarus encountered some heavy challenges during his six or seven years of probation and initial formation years, but the fruit shows that both he and we have the right stuff needed for good monastic formation.



Bro. Lazarus' father was far too ill to come from Biloxi, Mississippi. His sister and her husband take care of their father, so Brother preferred a quiet, small ceremony. Word got out however, and all enjoyed a grand celebration.

The new infirmary and novitiate wings have a central air conditioning and heating system. When the days began getting nice and warm, we found that the motor of the air conditioning circulating pump overheated and cut out. Gary Hunter and I did some reverse engineering and discovered the bearing housing was clogged with goop and the bearing was past rehabilitation. He found the parts we needed on the internet. Our air conditioning man came and did a flush and refill job with the system's fluid. Now Wally, our sole infirmary resident, has his much-needed relief from the heat.

Fr. Donald had a very serious bout of illness a month or so ago. The nursing home staff, Jill, and the monks feared that Fr. Donald was not going to make it through this illness. Today, he is doing better than he has for two years. He is attending different activities and enjoying his little corner of the world. He enjoys getting mail and notes. If you would like to send him a card or a note, you can send it to this address:

Fr. Donald Hamilton  
c/o Heart of the Ozarks Nursing Home  
P.O. Box 727  
Ava, Missouri 65608

Gethsemani Abbey had Michael Casey come in June for a seminar on our Father, Aelred of Rievaulx. They invited Trappist monks or nuns, who would be interested, to come and share in the conferences. We were very late in replying to the invitation. All the rooms were filled up, but Abbot Elias graciously stretched things to make places for our Bro. Joe Reisch and Sr. Anne Marie. They found the meeting very worthwhile. Michael Casey, working from Aelred's chapter talks and letters, opened up for them a different picture of the man than the standard view.

Dom Brendan received a letter from our Abbot General stating that our practice (of having long-term observers live within the community) goes against the 2008 General Chapter's vote that we must not receive candidates until the next General Chapter in 2011. He accepts the fact that we began that policy in good faith because of a misunderstanding. This is disappointing for our three observers, but if we are true monks then we see and respond to this in the light of the obedience of faith.

Bro. Boniface had a birthday coming up, so he checked the expiration date for his driver's license. He found that it expired in 2009 and he had been driving without a license for a year. Boni studied a Missouri state booklet, then went to Ava for his written exam-flunked it twice and found out that he had studied an outdated booklet. Therefore, he got an updated booklet, studied and went down to Gainesville for another test. He passed his second written exam, did the practical driving test, and got his license back. Now he must be more careful about what year his new license expires.

Mid-summer is not the best time for a Lay Advisory Meeting. Only one or two would have been free to attend this June, so we have tentatively postponed it till October. Our Abbot General Eamon Fitzgerald may also be able to visit us in October.

### Immaculate Heart of Mary

St. Luke inspired by the Holy Spirit, tells us twice about Mary's contemplative habit of pondering things in her heart. There is a trail of things she would have pondered.

After the Angel Gabriel received Mary's acceptance of his message, Mary could have questioned, "What do I tell Joseph? Should I tell Joseph? What are God's plans for the baby growing within me?" One thing was clear: her aged cousin Elizabeth would need help the next few months. Mary expressed the thoughts of her heart in her song Magnificat for Elizabeth.

At the birth of Jesus, the rough and tumble shepherds, with their story of a choir of singing angels had come and gone. At the presentation in the temple, Simeon, with his joyful words of fulfillment and his sobering prophecy about the Sign of Contradiction and a sword piercing Mary's heart, had come in and out of their life. The magi from the east, with their tale of a blazing star, and the angel's message to Joseph in a dream about Herod, had sent them on the way to Egypt. All of these events gave Mary much food for thought and prayer in her heart.

Then, taking care of her growing Son at Nazareth, His three-day loss, and finding Him in the temple, with his strange reply of being about his Father's business. Jesus' training as a carpenter/builder. Joseph's last hours and his death. All seemed the ordinary pattern of daily life for years on end.

One day, when news came to Nazareth that Elizabeth's son John was preaching and baptizing by the River Jordan, Jesus left town. The news started coming back about Jesus preaching, healing, driving out demons, and teaching through the towns and villages of Galilee. His hometown people gave Him the Bum's Rush, when He came back to Nazareth. His relatives

tried to corral Him as loco. Both enthusiasm and opposition grew stronger. Mary pondered all of these things in her heart, seeking to find the meaning of these recent developments in the light of her earlier memories.

The usual pilgrimage caravan of neighbors and relatives arrived from Nazareth at Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Some of Jesus' disciples came in the middle of the night with the panicked news of His arrest and deliverance to the High Priest. Mary and some female companions made their way to Pilate's courtyard, where mobs of people were clamoring. They saw from a distance Jesus brought out, beaten, bloody and crowned by thorns. They heard His death sentence. The women managed to hurry to a place on the way to Calvary ahead of the soldiers. When Mary's eyes met Jesus', a sword pierced her soul and a wound opened in her heart, which has never closed.

Mary stood by the Cross, and heard her divine Son bid farewell by establishing a new family relationship between Mary and those who believe in Him. "Woman, behold your Son. Behold your Mother." This is the nucleus, the first core of the new People of God, the New Covenant family of God, the Body of Christ on earth, His Church. Three days later, there was the healing reunion of Mary with her risen Son, her Lord and her God.

After Pentecost Mary's role was to confirm the true humanity of the Son of God, and to encourage counsel, and pray for the Infant Church. Now Mary could ponder the events unfolding in the lives of the Apostles and disciples in the light of her Son's own personal history-seeing Jesus' life/mystery continue and grow in the lives of His members.

When the world had grown much older, and the Church spread among all lands and peoples, God saw that Christians needed to have the Gospel message renewed in their midst. Therefore, He sent the Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church to give the Miraculous Medal to a Daughter of Charity novice, Sr. Catherine Labouré.

On the front of the medal was the image of Mary with an inscription surrounding her; O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. On the back of the medal, there is a monogram of the letter M entwined in a cross and below it are two hearts-both aflame, one ringed by a crown of thorns, the other pierced by a sword.

Some fifty years later, God again sent Mary to a sickly little peasant girl with the words, "I am the Immaculate Conception", confirming Pius IX's definition of that dogma of faith. Finally, some 150 years later God again sent Mary to three little shepherd children with the request for prayer, conversion, sacrifice and a message of a blessing or a curse. The curse of terrible wars

and violence. The blessing that in the end her Immaculate Heart would triumph and the world would be granted a time of peace. She asked us to dedicate ourselves to her Immaculate Heart- as Pope John Paul II did for the whole world, and as our Bishop Johnston did this year for his whole diocese, and as our Order and community does each feast of Our Lady's Assumption.

In the Sacred Heart,

Fr Cyprian