

Dear Friends and Visitors

If you read the news feature for July, you will have learned about the "Western Superiors" meeting that Fr Mark attended in California. In the photo included here, you will be able to see the western superiors in casual California attire.



**"Western" Abbots and Abbesses, OCSO
(l to r) Joseph of Snowmass, Brendan of New Melleray,
Peter of Guadalupe, Nettie of Mississippi, Kathy of Redwoods,
Thomas of Vina, and Mark of Ava**

But now it is August, or past August. One of the best things that can be said about August is that the exchange of missiles and gunfire between Hizballah and Israel has come to an end. War has not come to an end, though, and that is cause for continued and sustained prayer on our part, in particular prayer before Mary, the Mother of the Lord, who in the month of August was honored as the one Assumed into Heaven and as the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

The US is engaged in a "War on Terror." It was declared by the current president five years ago, in response to 9/11. Then, it was "War on Terrorism." Whether or not you could imagine any success to such a war, at least it made sense. "Terrorism" is a method of operation, just like throwing spit wads in class was a method of operation. And just as the faculty could clamp down on spit-wad-throwing, so one nation can set itself to clamping down on terrorism (never mind that at the heart of the method of terrorism is invisibility and unpredictability, justas at the heart of spit-wadding).

But "terror" is not a method. Terror is an emotional response to an event or a threat or a thought or a memory. There can no more be a war on terror than there can be a war on joy or exhilaration or sadness or despair. At least, not a war using bombs, missiles, torture and all that. In fact, such a war merely goes to consolidate terror and make it chronic and habitual as an emotional state. How many children will not grow old with terror as much a part of them as their DNA is? And what tactical weapon will remove that from them, ever?

When you think of it, war on terror was fought and won by Christ, once and for all. To live, baptized, in communion and friendship with Christ insulates us against the response of terror. Even when we are terrorized by terrorists, there is, for those in Christ, in whom Christ is, a deep seated joy, a peace, a confidence that is the victory banner raised over terror.



Our Lady of the Angels Friary
(l to r) Br. Mark, Br. Josef, Fr. Fred

Terror as an emotional response is often if not always connected to anticipatory thoughts. These are thoughts of worry, of pessimism, of fear of losing myself, my ego; thoughts of inadequacy, jealousy and resentment. Christ frees us from these kinds of thoughts, because faith in Christ is a deep conviction that we are loved infinitely. St Paul talks about the "elemental spirits." These are our thoughts, or they social and cultural pressures that make us seem

somehow out of place in the world. Christ has scuddled these spirits, and replaced them in our hearts with his own Holy Spirit. The war on terror has been won. The president's War on Terror is a vague, hopeless, wasteful and misplaced use of noble humanity that will only increase what it hopes to destroy.

August 2 was, in the Franciscan liturgical calendar, the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels. This is significant, because the friars who live on our property have named their House of Prayer "Our Lady of the Angels Friary." On this day, our Franciscan brothers invited the monks of the Abbey to their Friary for a solemn celebration of the office of None, and a fine early supper. During the supper, the Friars presented to Fr Mark the annual lease payment, a basket of fish. There is an ancient and charming story behind this basket of fish, and those who are inquisitive will find it by searching primitive Franciscan lore connected with the original "Our Lady of the Angels," the

Portiuncola, in Assisi, Italy.

A few days later Abbot Mark and Br Francis went to St Louis. Friends of the abbey hosted in their home a dinner for them and several people interested in doing a 60 to 90 minute documentary on Assumption Abbey. It is too early to tell what will come of this project, but at this point it seems quite possible. The producer and his team are all solid Catholics working in St Louis and devoting their talents and expertise to the needs of the Church and of not-for-profit organizations. On the same visit, Mark and Francis were able to meet and visit with Fr Charles Bouchard, OP, director of the acclaimed Aquinas Institute in St Louis. Fr Bouchard gave our brothers a thorough tour of AI new home in a marvellously renovated 19th century factory just south of St Louis University.

On the Feast of St Clare, Fr Mark returned to Our Lady of the Angels. This time it was for solemn Vespers, presided at by our beloved bishop, John Leibrecht of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau. Bishop Leibrecht had been invited to formally bless the Friars' newly completed compound, and the Friars were kind enough to invite Fr Mark for the occasion, which included a fine dinner after Vespers and the blessing. The next day, Bishop Leibrecht paid us a visit at the Abbey. He spoke with us for about an hour, then joined us for our midday meal. Bishop Leibrecht submitted his resignation a year ago when he turned 75, but so far his resignation has not been accepted, nor, naturally, has a replacement been appointed.

On the 11th of the month a man began his six-week period of Observership. During the Observership, a man lives the full life of the monastic community, the best way for him to observe both the brothers and the "life," but also, more importantly, to observe his own interior response to our way of life. A man is accepted as an Observer after several visits to the monastery and after some informal interviews with the vocation director, the abbot, and one or two other monks. If the man and the monks feel there is a possible vocation, then the man will request to make an Observership. The next step, if the man and the community discern positively, is to enter as a Postulant.

At the same time, two other young men are spending extended periods of time simply as live-in guests at the Abbey, following the monastic schedule of prayer and work, and receiving some elementary instruction in monastic spirituality. It is gratifying to the monks to be able to share our life, even for a brief time, with generous and sincere men.

Two important celebrations take place in August, Solemnities of the Assumption of Mary, on the 15th, and of St Bernard of Clairvaux, on the 20th. Mary of the Assumption is, of course, the

patron of Assumption Abbey. She is also the special patron of the entire Cistercian Order. St Bernard, for his part, was the man who early in the history of the Order articulated in an enduring and compelling way the spirituality of the Cistercian reform. We were pleased once again this year that several of our Associates of Assumption Abbey spent the days before and after our patronal feast day here at the Abbey. Please see Fr Abbot's homily for August 15 in the Homilies feature of our web site, and his chapter talk on the Solemnity of St Bernard in the Chapter Talk feature.

On August 28 we receive the expected news of the death of Dom Francis Kline, abbot of Mepkin Abbey in South Carolina. Dom Francis, in his 58th year, finally succumbed on August 27 to the aggressive leukemia that had been diagnosed four years earlier. Fr Mark and our Associate Joseph drove to Mepkin to attend the funeral which took place on August 30. All but two of the Trappist superiors of the US Region were present, with Dom Francis's monastic family of Mepkin Abbey, his parents and brothers, other monks of the Order, and some invited guests. A memorial service for the public was planned the following day which nearly 2000 people were expected to attend.

As September begins in the Ozarks, the weather is taking a decided turn toward autumn. Nights and days are cooler, and the cloister cat is spending more time inside than out. The night sky is glorious, and in the shadow of God's wings, we fear neither the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, as the Compline Psalm says.

Fr Mark, Abbot