

September 2013

Dear Associates and Friends,  
The Lord be with you—

A representative of Homeland Security made an onsite visit here as part of the process to validate our request for religious worker visas for the three Vietnamese monks invited to come as guests. It takes about six months for such a validation. Both Rome and the State Department move slowly. And of course, the mills of God grind slowly, but very fine.

Bro. Thomas has been able to retire our antique vintage Oliver backhoe, courtesy of Mr. John Fabick. During our concrete block plant years, Mr. Fabick had provided us with a Caterpillar bulldozer. Now at our request, Fabick Caterpillar located and refurbished a used backhoe, selling it to us for actually less than they put into it. The enclosed cab will keep Bro. Thomas from extremes of weather during his work on our roads, woods, creek, land, and cemetery.

Dr. Wittman bought Brown's cave and adjoining land in the 1950s. He had spent summer vacations with his family in their house above our family guest house. The original Mr. Brown came as a very early settler in our area. He was a widower with two little children. He found this cave with a large impressive entrance beside Bryant Creek, and he set-up housekeeping in the cave during the first winter. There are descendants of his family living in this area. Brown's cave is not extensive enough to be developed into a tourist attraction, but always now and again some cavers will visit the well-known site.

Al Wittman, son of Dr. and Mary Wittman, attended Mass at our abbey recently. His nickname as a boy was "Binky," now shortened to Bink. Bink and his wife toured the family property renewing memories and visiting with Ray Amyx at nearby Rockbridge Trout Ranch. Bink remembered the floating wooden bridge, which spanned Bryant Creek, until a super flood took it downstream. Douglas County had no bridge funds in those years, so Abbot Bruno energized a group of Catholic business and construction men to put in a concrete low water bridge.

A patch of wild onion stalks in our courtyard have produced clusters of little flowers with a pleasant delicate peppery-mint aroma. Fr. Peter, our Vietnamese monk, placed a bouquet of the stalks and flowers in front of the altar in our chapel.

Our Family Brother and long-term retreatant programs are doing well. This seems to meet the enduring reality of men with temporary monastic vocations. Fr. Alberic, our Superior, limits long-term retreatants to not more than three living with our community at the same time. This keeps the tail from wagging the dog.

We are planning a second Alumni Reunion for the anniversary day of our foundation, September 24. You can find a copy of the invitation and tentative schedule on our website [www.assumptionabbey.com](http://www.assumptionabbey.com).

Fr. Alberic and Bro. Thomas drove to New Melleray Abbey to attend their abbatial election. The result of the balloting was the appointment of Fr. Mark Scott as Superior ad Nutum for 18 months, so we will have our former abbot coming to visit us as our new Father Immediate. He will understand our community from personal experience.

---

### **The Good Samaritan**

Our Lord Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan is a precious work of art. Every work of art tells first something about the artist; it is a self-expression of the person creating it. Secondly, a work of art communicates a main message in itself. Thirdly, a work of art is open-ended. It can have more developed meanings according to the different persons viewing it.

So first, what is Christ telling us about Himself when He creates the parable of the Good Samaritan? Jesus meant that He is the One Who gives the help to the man laying half dead on the road, beaten and left by robbers. Christ identifies and expresses Himself as the Good Samaritan.

Secondly, what is the main message of this work or art? The priest and Levite personify Mosaic Law with its prescriptions of ritual cleanness and uncleanness. To touch a dead person renders a Jew unclean, so the priest and Levite pass by on the other side of the road. The Samaritan is unclean already in the eyes of the law. There is little love lost between Jews and Samaritans, but he listens to the natural law which God implants in the human heart. He has compassion on the wounded man and goes out of his way to care for him. The question is reversed by our Lord. Not whom does the law appoint as my neighbor, but to whom do I choose to become neighbor? The immediate moral of the story is that Jesus tells the lawyer to go and do likewise—show mercy.

Thirdly, what more developed meanings have the Fathers of the Church found in this precious parable? St. Ambrose from Milan in Italy says that Jerusalem is an image of Paradise, and Jericho is an image of the worldly city. Adam is going down from the Holy City because he disobeyed God's command and falls among thieves, i.e. angels of darkness who strip him of the garment of grace (union with God) and inflict mortal wounds, which would overwhelm the human family if that Samaritan does not tend to our injuries. St. Ambrose sees that this extraordinary Samaritan going down the same road is the One Who descends from heaven

and Who ascends into heaven, the Son of Man. They arrive at the inn the next day, the day of the Lord's Resurrection, and the Samaritan gives the innkeeper two coins. St. Ambrose suggests that the two coins are perhaps the Old Testament and the New Testament, which contain and reveal the image of the eternal king at the price of whose wounds we are healed.

St. Augustine from Hippo in Africa writes that robbers have left you half-dead on the road, and you have been found there by the kindly Samaritan. Wine and oil have been poured on you, i.e. you have received the sacraments of the Only-Begotten Son. You have been lifted onto his mule—His Own Body. You have been brought to the inn where you were cared for by the Church. Now we are called to perform the duties of the innkeeper. Christ gives us two coins and says that if we spend any more, He will repay us when He returns. If only we would spend at least as much as we have received. However much we spend, brothers and sisters, it is the Lord's money.

Origen from Alexandria in Egypt tells us that it is possible to imitate Christ and to pity those who have fallen among thieves. We can go to them, bind up their wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and their their burden on ourself. The Son of Man encourages us to do so—"Go and do likewise." The fact that the Samaritan promises that He will return represents our Savior's second coming.

St. Ambrose gives us the final word about this work of art, the parable of the Good Samaritan. He says, "Since no one is closer to us than He Who tended to our wounds, let us love Him as our Lord, and let us love Him as our Neighbor. No bond is so close as the Head of the Body to His members. Let us also love those who are followers of Christ, those who in the unity of His body have compassion on the needs of others."

In the Sacred Heart,  
Your Ava Monks