

Bishop Johnston
September 24, 2010

Sixtieth Anniversary of Assumption Abbey

"There is an appointed time for everything."

Today, a centerpiece of our celebration is the marking of time - and so the words from Ecclesiastes take on a special meaning. We mark, as all Catholics do the passage of sacred time- this is an important part of a monk's life in particular. He marks the hours of each day with the Sacred Liturgy-"the Liturgy of the Hours" . . . taking on his lips the words of the Psalms, singing them in simple chant, of the magnificent glory of the Lord.

This beautiful act of praise sanctifies and spiritualizes the hours of time, transforming it.

However, we also mark today the passage of historical time-sixty years to be exact. Sixty years of prayer and work by monks . . . by men who thought they might be monks . . . and by friends of monks! Many, thank God, are with us over these days of reunion and celebration.

As we mark these days and the passage of sacred and secular time, how powerful the words of the first reading strike us, come alive, and take on a special meaning in light of the history of this abbey!

I would go so far as to suggest, knowing what we do about the history of this monastery that the words of this reading could serve as a summary of these 60 years:

- there is a time to be born and a time to die
- a time to plant and a time to uproot the plant
- a time to tear down and a time to build
- a time to weep and a time to laugh
- a time to mourn and a time to dance
- a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them
- a time to seek and a time to lose
- a time to keep and a time to cast away
- a time to mend and a time to sew
- a time to be silent and a time to speak

As we listen to these words, images of the shared life here come to mind. The lives of those who are a part of the history of Assumption Abbey are a type of "incarnation" of this well-known passage from Ecclesiastes.

We realize also, as the passage concludes, that in the midst of these events in time, there is the time-less-the eternal, which God has placed in our hearts, and to which we journey as pilgrims . . . a journey on which monks accompany one another.

But, there is another part to this life here in this place. There is a deeper reason why men come here and some stay here: to know "the Christ of God."

Jesus draws forth this confession of faith from Peter in today's reading from the Gospel.

Yet, the confession is somehow incomplete, leading to our Lord's gentle rebuke. He wished them, and us, to know him in light of his crucified love.

It is only in light of his death and resurrection that we will come to know him fully and truly. Similarly, it is only in this light that we come to know our true identity. Monks and others have come here to find Christ and to find themselves. Monks come here to find Christ, to know him, and to know his crucified love, and to understand that they are known and loved by him.

Paradoxically, many come to this monastery and have found the road to Emmaus. At the heart of this place is the Holy Eucharist.

The prayer, the work (be it blocks or fruitcakes or whatever) all leads to the altar where we find the Christ of God-crucified and risen.

May God bless the men who have "done time" here. (I have always found a bit humorous the parallels between prison life and monastic life)

May God bless you monks; especially those who have gone home to God-and all the other lives that have been a part of this holy place in the Ozark woods over these sixty years.

May God bless also all of your benefactors and friends, living and deceased; we think especially of Joseph Pierson, and his family.

Lastly, we pray that God may bless us all-and may the Christ of God gather us to himself, we

creatures of time, and lead us all into the timelessness of eternity, to the new and eternal Jerusalem, which we even now glimpse in our hearts.