

News Letter #2

Dear Associates & Friends,

The Lord be with you.

The fifty days of Easter season counterbalance the forty days of Lent nicely, and reach their summit with Our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, where He brings the faithful souls of all the ages to share in the glory and joy of His Kingdom. In His Father's House there are many rooms.

Usually we have Dogwood blossoms filling our hills and hollows during April like a snowfall. This year hardly any of the white blossoms appeared. After the leaves had come out on the trees in May, a number of Dogwood trees produced mini blossoms. The natural mysteries and wonder of nature.

Our Vietnamese monks completed the election process for their new abbot in an unexpected and delayed way. Fr. Thaddeus Nguyen, one of the two founding group who came here in 2013, was elected by their community. However their Cistercian Constitutions require a two thirds majority for a man who has not completed ten years of final vows. Fr. Thaddeus was nine years professed. So after a time of reflection and prayer, they voted again and ended up electing a different man, Fr. Joseph Khang. When Fr. Thaddeus returned here, along with Fr. Basil, we congratulated him on his narrow escape.

The garden which Fr. Peter inaugurated last year got a late start because of the absence of our Vietnamese monks. Once they returned, a lot of work began with tiller, hoe and spade. Br. Lawrence, a confrere on his way to Gethsemani Abbey, visited his fellow monks here for two weeks, and was drafted into garden work, besides other chores.

With Br. Boniface on the disabled list, Br. Roberto is doing a lot of the cooking, so we are developing more experience and taste for Vietnamese fare. Jill has been baking the bread and hopes that one of them will gain the skill.

Br. Thomas' elder sister Caroline died. She asked to be cremated. The family had a reunion in Wisconsin for a memorial Mass. Br. Tom was able to spend a couple of weeks there with his brothers and sisters, plus nephews and nieces.

Fr. Paul did a lot of work at our Holy Family Guest house. He and Fr. Cyprian rebuilt several doors, installed some fixtures in the kitchen, and cleaned out a good amount of leftover building material in the basement, plus finishing the molding in the tub room.

Our Family Brothers John and John Paul from Texas spent a week in community here earlier during the Easter season. Then Dane from Arkansas and Vince from Louisiana were here the week before Pentecost, deepening their experience of monastic life.

A pair of swallows must be attracted to the cross shaped pond and sounds of splashing water in our inner courtyard. They have managed to construct a nest up in a corner of the cloister rafters. They carry on their housekeeping in spite of monks passing by on the cloister walk below them. One of the Psalms says: "The sparrow herself finds a home and the swallow a nest for her brood...They are happy, who dwell in Your house, forever singing Your praise."

COME HOLY SPIRIT

St. Luke tells us that, after our Lord's Ascension into heaven, all the disciples with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

They were filled with joy and confidence, filled with joy because of Christ's victory. Risen from the dead, He has returned to His beloved Father and is sharing in the glory of God, preparing a place for them. They are filled with confidence in the power of Christ's priestly intercession for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be poured upon them.

Our Lord Jesus exercised His priesthood three special times on earth. At the Incarnation when the Son of God became human, He made His priestly offering to the Father "Behold I come to do Thy will" to fulfill God's plan of redeeming the human family. Then at the Last Supper, when He instituted the sacrifice and sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Finally, on His cross at Calvary. Our Lord Jesus lived His whole life on earth as Priest and Mediator between God and human beings, but the Incarnation and Eucharist and Calvary were special moments in time when our High Priest offered Himself in prayer and sacrifice to God for our redemption and salvation.

When Christ ascended into heaven, taking His place at the right hand of the Father, this was the beginning of His work as High Priest on the level of God's eternal Now. He is always living to intercede for us. He is always offering His redeeming sacrifice to the Father for us. On the human level of time, Our Lord Jesus completed His priestly sacrifice once for all on Calvary. On the divine level of eternity, the sacrifice of our High Priest endures always Now.

The disciples were praying together with Mary, the mother of Jesus during the days after His Ascension. They did not know fully what to expect. Our Lord told them to remain in the city, waiting for the promise of the Father. John had baptized with water, but in a few days they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. They would be clothed with power from on high so they could fulfill their mission as witnesses to the Lord Jesus to the ends of the earth.

Holy Mother Church has been asking us to do the same in the days between the feast of the Ascension and Pentecost. We look with joy and confidence to our eternal High Priest, as He unites our prayers with His divine and human work as our Priest and Mediator before God. We are members of His Body. He prays that we might have His life more abundantly through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the Sacred Heart,

Your Ava Monks