

**Dear Associates and Friends,
The Lord be with you!**

The Easter Vigil was celebrated with a providential touch. Both weather and weather predictions were cloudy and raining. Yet at 3:30 a.m. we found a clear sky with bright stars and moon. The rite of the New Fire was done outside, and we followed Fr. Peter carrying the Easter Candle into the church. Not long afterwards the drizzly weather returned all day, but did not dampen the spirits of Alleluia.

Early in April Abbot Joseph came from Vietnam to bless and constitute our group of his monks here as a formal Monastic Formation. His community recognized that this experiment was bearing good fruit, so they voted to take this next step. Abbot Mark came from New Melleray to share in the Mass and ritual.

Our Fr. Alberic remains the canonical superior of our Trappist Abbey. Fr. Thaddeus was appointed leader of our Vietnamese monks, so he now is the functional superior. The Roman Empire had a Triumvirate at one time. We have a triumvirate for a while, as a pastoral move in the program of our gradual blending and transfer.

On Friday, April 13th, Bishop Rice presided at our community Mass, as he recognized and established our Vietnamese Cistercian monks as a Monastic Foundation residing in his diocese.

The last week of April was a gathering of the clan. Fr. Paul, director of our Family Brothers came from his Missouri hermitage. The two Johns from Texas were here. Dick and Fr. David from Oklahoma came. Suu arrived from Vietnam. Br. Andrew from Vietnam via France was here. This seemed a celebration of our growth and developing program of Family Brothers.

During the Vietnam War Br. Andrew served South Vietnam as a diplomat in France. Afterwards he lived in the United States and was granted American citizenship. Some years later he returned to France to be with his family there. After his wife died, he wanted to live a life of prayer in a monastery, so he is here now.

After a crew constructed the car port in one day (from pre-formed pieces) behind our kitchen, Fr. Bruno and Br. Ambrose said, "We can make one ourselves." Frs. Alberic and Thaddeus said to go ahead. Starting from long steel square poles and sheets of roofing, Fr. Bruno cut and patiently welded, until trusses, uprights and cross pieces were finished. Br. Ambrose did earth moving and heavy lifting with the Caterpillar backhoe and tractor. The skeleton frame is in place. Now the roofing and finishing paint job remains to be done.

Fr. Basil was regular assistant baker. His right wrist became stiff, painful and weak. His Asian background gave him confidence in acupuncture. After two treatments he finds his wrist is improving. For the present Fr. Basil works at decorating with cherries and nuts, and wrapping the fruit cakes.

For some reason our iris flowers have not appeared yet this year. At least the dogwood trees are blossoming nicely all through the woods.

A pair of Anatolian Sheep dogs adopted us. They are still young, but big and strong. They act friendly, but are very skittish at unexpected moves, as if they had been abused when little. They have been named Sammy and Simon (for whatever reason). Hopefully, coyotes and armadillos will be warned off by these two brothers.



Someone said, "If our Lord was so humble, compassionate and forgiving in His day of defeat, how much more so was He in His day of victory."

Our Risen Lord spent the whole Easter Day as the Good Shepherd quietly appearing to first one, and to another, and then to a group of others. He was gathering His scattered flock together.

All during the forty days after His resurrection, the Risen Lord revealed Himself in ordinary human form, giving proof of His Resurrection. He told His eleven Apostles on the mountain at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel that all power in heaven and on earth was given through Him. The coming of Christ in power and glory began at His resurrection, yet He did not overwhelm His friends nor His enemies with a great display of majesty.

Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven grows like a seed planted in the ground. The coming of the King of Heaven also grows like a seed planted in the earth.

There are three exceptions to His gentle, humble appearances. The Risen Christ opened heaven and appeared as the glorified Son of Man standing at the right hand of God to the deacon Stephen on trial before the Sanhedrin. The Risen Christ appeared in a blinding, powerful light to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus, telling him that by persecuting His disciples, Saul was persecuting Christ Himself. The Risen Christ appeared to John in exile on the island of Patmos; first as the glorified Son of Man delivering messages in seven letters to the Churches of Asia Minor, then later in a vision of heaven where the Lion of Judah, who conquered, appears standing before the throne of God as a Lamb, who was slain.

What is the Holy Spirit telling us from these passages of Scripture about the coming of our Risen Lord into our own life?

Perhaps, first of all, that we should recognize Him in the breaking of the bread. The Risen Lord comes to us most often in the most hidden humble form of Holy Communion in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He makes Himself our daily spiritual food and drink—so that Christ lives in us, and He lives in our neighbor. What we do to our neighbor, we do to Him.,

The second thing we can learn is that the risen glorified Son of Man is watching over each and all the local churches: Guiding, encouraging, correcting and warning each local church/our monastery to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us as the Body of Christ on earth today.

Finally, we can keep our eyes fixed on our merciful and compassionate High Priest, living always as the Lamb of God interceding for us before the throne of God, as He did for St. Stephen who prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and "Do not hold this sin against them."

In the Sacred Heart,

Your Ava Monks

