

Dear Associates and Friends,  
The Lord be with you!

Ash Wednesday renews our spirit of following Christ on His new Passover journey. Dom Columba Marmion's book Christ the Ideal of the Monk is a perennial standard for the formation of novices. Dom Columba, who has been beatified by Rome now, reminds us that the monk comes to the monastery in order to seek God truly, as a penitent and contemplative.

Our local turkey buzzards are awkward scavengers on the ground, cleaning up what has died. But in the sky they are graceful gliders soaring on the currents of the wind. Together that can picture the life of penitent and contemplative.

The partial government shutdowns slowed down the processes of entry and assimilation for our Vietnamese monks. Fr. Bruno is waiting for his Green Card to arrive. Brothers Ambrose and Gabriel are beginning to apply for Immigration status. Brothers Martin and Peter Tuy have appointments for their interview at the American embassy in Vietnam. So we steadily move forward.

A moderate sized white wood decorative cross showed up atop the entrance sign at our driveway. It was the creative inspiration and work of Fr. Bruno. He also crafted the cross-shaped water fountain in our inner courtyard pond. He has a gift and skill for repairing things also, so now he is in charge of regular maintenance work.

In the past Brother Boniface was our one cook and bread baker. Now we have five Vietnamese monks taking turns cooking for the Community and guests. Fathers Thaddeus and Bruno, Brothers Ambrose, Alphonse and Gabriel all prepare good meals for us. Brother Gabriel also bakes bread and is teaching our new Brother Joseph both to cook and bake. The Vietnamese Sister Martha in Springfield also helps them learn American dishes.

Fr. David Garrick, grandson of Joseph Pierson the donor of this monastic property, has been Guest Master at our Holy Family Guest House for five years. Recently he has suffered a series of health issues from surgery for cancer to pneumonia and back injury. He decided to take up residence with his brother George in Tulsa, OK. Fr. David and George moved some of his belongings to Tulsa. Fr. Thaddeus and Br. Ambrose drove a van with more of his things to George's home. He still has a sizeable library of books and CD's in the basement of our Holy Family Guest House, which Fr. David will arrange for relocation in time.

Our Family Brother James came from Texas for a visit and made his one year commitment just before Lent. Brian from St. Louis is applying for acceptance as a Family Brother. Randy from Indiana made a first visit considering the Family Brother Program. Dick Ortez, Family Brother who was in a coma during Advent and Christmas, has begun gradual recovery. Family Brother David, who lives in Oklahoma close to Dick's present hospital, brought him ashes on Ash Wednesday. Dick's good friend Don McCroskey has kept up regular visits and reports on Dick's condition. He also brought Dick ashes, as well as Holy Communion, on Ash Wednesday. We are grateful for all the prayers for Dick's recovery from his long state of coma.

Br. Gabriel has three rabbits living in the sheltered enclosure of our inner courtyard. They stay hidden in undergrowth during daylight, but at night forage out for food and exercise. After Compline Br. Gabriel calls to them, and tosses out small sweet potatoes, carrot peelings, etc. onto the lawn for them. Sometimes the rabbits will run along the tile walk of the courtyard meeting a monk on his way to 3:30 a.m. Vigils. They seem more playful during nights of a full moon. Rabbits are associated with Easter, along with eggs. So we have a symbol of the end goal of our Lenten journey.



**St. Paul speaks to us about community life. He says we are all members of the Body of Christ. A body is made up of many different parts. Each part of a living body has a special function...a particular role to play which contributes to the well-being of the whole body.**

**The living body needs eyes to see, ears to hear, hands to work, feet to walk, a heart to circulate blood, lungs to breathe.**

**Each part is different from the others, yet all fit in and work together in unity for the good of the whole body.**

**So in the Church, which is the body of Christ, St. Paul says there needs to be a variety members: Apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, helpers, directors, workers.**

**All have received a share in the same Life of Christ by being baptized in the Spirit of Christ and drinking the same Holy Spirit of Christ.**

**St. Paul is speaking to new converts in the small Church of Corinth. He says that they were babes/little children in Christ. They still need to grow more out of a natural worldly spirit. Paul is shepherding them to live more in the Spirit of Christ, so they might work together to build a more true Christian community. The Holy Spirit is a Family Spirit.**

**St. Paul is conscious of our being adopted children of God. He urges us to live as a true family of God. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts, which each member uses to build up this Christian community, this family of God, the Body of Christ.**

**St. Paul will end by telling them, and us, that there are many gifts, but the greatest gift is charity. Our Lord Jesus has lived a full life of divine and human love. We are called to follow Him, growing always more fully into His image and likeness, by living and building up our own Christian community here, the body of Christ on earth.**

**In the Sacred Heart,**

**Your Ava Monks**

