



# Obsculta

“Listen with the ears of your heart”

March 2018



*“Indeed, our affiliation with the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross has brought tremendous spiritual blessings to us and our dear ones. The Cistercian habit has become an effective and visible sign of the healing and reconciling presence of our Lord, Jesus.”*

*“The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross serves God in a variety of ministries throughout the world. Our union with each other, developed through common prayer also unites us to Jesus Christ, whom we ultimately serve with joy.”*

The quarterly newsletter of  
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance  
*Worldwide Membership of Monks Living Inside and Outside of a Monastery*  
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<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HolyCrossCistercians>

# News From The Abbot General



Of Special  
Interest In  
This  
Obsculta

- Meet our new Chaplain
- Welcome our new members
- The Philippines in jail
- Really Good News article
- Called or chosen, article
- Our monasteries
- Global Fraternity for Christian Unity
- Teaching videos on Vimeo.com
- Mary, The Mother of God
- Who we are and what we do.
- Stephen Harding Seminary/College
- Prayer for the Order
- Contact us

Greetings Cistercians and Friends:

God is so very pleased with us. I believe that He is preparing us for a new positively dynamic movement . I am not sure exactly what, when or how but I do trust that God knows and has a perfect way of doing His will. We are happy to follow. The joy of obedience!!!

What I do know is that we are being blessed with many new friends and supporters of the our Order. One even said that we were leaders in the Benedictine movement in the United States. WOW!!!

Our new Chaplain, The Rt. Revd. Richard Kalbfleisch, is eager to serve our community. Soon I will be contact each member with information and give his contact information.

Postulant "Buffalo Burt" is walking the streets evangelizing. He has gathered quite a group who are now worshipping at The Cathedral of St. George the Martyr, of The Independent Anglican Church (Canada Synod) (IACCS), for which he is a deacon and we are In Communion.

As you know we are sponsoring the Global Fraternity for Christian Unity. I am more than pleased with its growth. Each week I present a question and ask for responses. And great responses they are.

Although we are no longer in communion with the Orthodox Anglican Communion we do hope that our Good Lord will bless them.

## The Rt. Revd. Richard Kalbfleisch Chaplain for our Order



I have been asked by the Abbot General to serve as the Chaplain Bishop of the Order. This I humbly accepted on December 17, 2017. I have been asked to serve the Order's clerics as a temporary bishop should the Abbot die prematurely. I will assist the Vicar General in a smooth transition in voting for a new Abbot General pursuant to the Constitutions of the Order. Once a new Abbot has been duly elected, I will have the honor to consecrate and install the elected Abbot for the Cistercian Order. I have also been appointed to serve as a member of the Abbot General's Council and to perform any other Sacramental or spiritual development service as directed by the Abbot General. I will do my very best to dispense these duties with all diligence and, by the grace of God, to the best of my ability.

**Our members now have a Spiritual Director and Counselor**

### Position of Chaplain

1. Should the Abbot/Bishop die while in office the chaplain will serve the Order's clerics as a temporary bishop so that they may continue their vocations uninterrupted.
2. The Chaplain will assist the Vicar General in a smooth transition in the voting process of a new Abbot General. If there is no Vicar General than the Chaplain will contact the members and get consensus in nominating and then electing a new Abbot General as the Constitution directs. The Chaplain is encouraged to seek the advice of the Abbot General's Council.
3. The Bishop Chaplain will install the new Abbot General and consecrate him a bishop for and in the Cistercian Order.
4. The Chaplain will aid the current Abbot General in the spiritual development of the members of the Order as the Abbot General directs.
5. The Chaplain will perform Sacramental services for the Cistercian Order as the Abbot General directs.
6. The Chaplain is a member of the Abbot General's Council.

# Welcome New Members



Introductions: The Rt. Revd. Richard Kalbfleisch and On November 25, 2017, my wife and I were accepted as postulants by Abbot General Oscar Joseph. We are both filled with happiness and joy to begin this move in our life toward a more perfect union with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as we learn through the conversion of our hearts, obedience to the Rule of St. Benedict and to our Abbot, and the stability to remain always a part of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross for as long as our life may be. We look forward to taking our novitiate vows. My wife and I are both 62 years old and retired from secular employment.

As to my clerical background, I was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood in 2004 and founded the St. Francis of Assisi parish church in Charleston, South Carolina, January 8, 2005. The parish had over 60 families. In May of 2006 I was consecrated a bishop.

My wife and I have lived in Frankfort, Kentucky since June of 2013 where we serve a small oratory, Holy Cross Chapel. I also have a priest in Bowling Green, Kentucky who is under my oversight.



## Mrs. Sandra G. Kalbfleisch

Sandra introduces herself by reporting a 26 year marriage to Bishop Richard. They met while he was serving in the Navy and married in 1992. We are blessed with four adult children and seven grandchildren.

I have completed two years of nursing school at West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania and have worked in nursing at several hospitals and nursing homes in the Phoenixville, PA area.

Sandra eagerly points out that she has been instrumental in +Richard's work as a priest and bishop over these past twelve years of public ministry.

Now that we are both retired from secular work, we seek to grow closer to God and are drawn to the simplicity of the Rule of St. Benedict and the 1500 year history of the countless monks and nuns who have followed the Rule to grow as much in the likeness of Christ they could in this life through vows of stability, obedience, and conversatio.



## Flight of the Believer-Inmate in Prison Bars Br. Mervin, OCCO

It is very sad to know that the word “Bilibid” (Filipino word for prison referring to inmates) always entails danger, hard core criminals, animals and sometimes “evil”. But do they represent the inmates? I for one will say it isn’t true because God cares so much not just to the righteous but most especially to the lost and least.

We are surprised and corrected when we started the prison ministry; hesitant but determined to influence the inmates through a Christ-Like-Life everyday manifestation inside the compound. We changed the name of the church and adapted ours, “Church of the Holy Cross” in order to emphasize the powerful works of Christ on it.

We are surprised and corrected because we never realized that there were few inmates who would embrace dedicatedly the Gospel and the Savior; not realizing that this subservience would entail harassment, insults and even physical punishments.

We’re surprised and corrected again because we never expected that God who is transcendent would manifest Himself in a way we couldn’t grasp such as making the water during the mass when poured into our hands to look like milk; in the devotion to Mary while the inmates were praying the rosary, the face of Christ glistened and reflected on the curtain and the notorious or hard core criminal testified that he had seen it.

These inmates who witnessed the two manifestations of God shifted their lives 180 degrees to a full dedication to the ministry of ours. Both were attending regularly the religious activities and one of them is now our acolyte.

God who is true to His promises that He will forgive and save those who will come to Him in repentance and truth. Praise God for His faithfulness.



Br. Mervin, OCCO



Br. Jess, OCCO



David L. Smith, Jr., Postulant  
Archbishop David  
Ohio

Now here is some really Good News Part 1

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 15:3).  
**God became man.** This is a biblical truth which we Christians accept at face value. God became man in order to enact His plan of redemption. This plan of redemption is based on the unique concept of the kinsman-redeemer.

According to Hebrew tradition, if a person was unable to claim their inheritance due to poverty, it was the responsibility of the nearest male relative to redeem the inheritance, restore the rights of the impoverished relative and avenge his wrongdoings. The person responsible for completing these acts was called the kinsman-redeemer.

**God became man. So,** how is it that God acts as our kinsman-redeemer? God as Creator is the nearest male relative of all of creation. Specifically, it is the Word of God (Jesus) who spoke us into existence. It is God as Father who directed God as Son who spoke, and God as Holy Spirit who accomplished the tasks of Creation.

So why did Jesus, the Christ, take our human nature upon Himself? Because “all things were made by him.” (John 1:2) Jesus made the first order of Creation, and it was debased by sin. The presence of sin placed upon the souls of all humankind such a taint, that our very essence was changed into something less than was intended. This corrupting of our human nature made us ineligible and unable to receive our inheritance as God’s children. We had become anathema to God. We had become “corruption”, that which will fade away; but our inheritance was to live for all eternity with God. Thus, we had acquired a debt that we would never be able to escape if left to our own devices.

**God became man.** Even though we brought about our own destruction, our Heavenly Father could not bear the thought of losing us. He loves us so desperately, so passionately, and so fully that He would not abandon us. Yet, He will not diminish His glory to allow us to stand in His presence. Instead, we must have the taint of sin removed from our souls. We must have our debt paid in full. So God acted on our behalf. God the Son became our kinsman-redeemer. He paid in full the debt which threatened to separate us from God. That problem was dealt with for nothing must be allowed to “separate us from the love of God.” This was God’s choice, not ours.

**God became man.** God chose us and that has made all the difference in the world. God chose us because He wanted to have us with Him. God chose us because His love for us would not allow Him to do otherwise. So He took our human nature upon Himself. He came and “dwelt among us.” He tabernacled with us so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

We must choose God because He will not force us to love Him. The sacrifice He makes for us, and the gifts He gives to us are freely given. The debt He has extinguished is one we could never repay. But if we acknowledge Him, if we choose Him then it makes His sacrifice worthwhile. If we choose God He knows a joy which is without bounds. If we choose God there is cause for a heavenly celebration. There is such wondrous rejoicing because that which was lost has been found.

David L. Smith, Jr., Postulant  
Archbishop David  
Ohio

Now here is some really Good News Part 2



**God became man.** Two thousand years ago God set into motion a plan to grant us access to our eternal inheritance. Remember what you are: a child of God. Remember your inheritance: eternal life with God. Choose to accept that you belong to God and claim that which is yours. Remember that this corruption can put on incorruption. The taint of sin does not have to remain as a chasm which prevents us from accessing our inheritance. Prepare yourself to accept all that God offers. We relive and give thanks for the coming of the Christ. But we also prepare ourselves to receive Him again. For He has promised to return to claim all those who have chosen Him and have accepted His sacrifice and the gifts He freely offers.

**God became man.** He taught us how to prepare ourselves to receive Him. The plan of preparation is laid out in the Holy Scriptures, but it can be reduced to a few simple words: believing in the Christ as the Son of God, accepting His crucifixion and resurrection in our hearts, and being willing to confess the same with our mouths. In other words, all we have to do is believe that He has done what He promised He would do so that we could receive our inheritance. May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: Bless + you and make you joyous. May He fill your hearts with a yearning for the Christ and give you the desire to receive your inheritance.

Kenya

## Welcome Noah Otieno Omondi



Thank you Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO, It is with great joy that I thank you and your community for welcoming me to become an Oblate in the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. I can't hide my joy in becoming a family in Christ, I thus wish to express my commitment in the Lord's service in any way I can. Once again thank you and I promise to follow you as my guide in this journey of the Lord's service.

From the Abbot: I am impressed with Noah's enthusiasm and commitment to fully participate in the life of Christ.



## **Called or Chosen by Dr. Kathleen, Marion Scholar**

Several years ago I reviewed Scripture searching out verses having to do with being “called” or “chosen”. The verse, “many are called; few are chosen” refused to leave my thoughts. Along with the mental nagging of this verse was the voice of God saying to me that the Hebrews are His chosen people because they chose to be chosen. Hmm, what could this all mean?

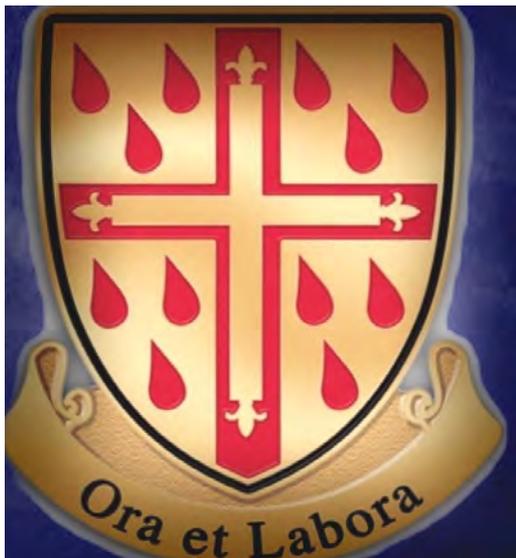
Taking a large concordance in hand, I wrote down, then read, passages of Scripture having to do with calling and choosing, hoping to better understand the difference between being called by God or being chosen by God. Scripture tells us that God has placed knowledge of Him in each and every person. After the flood, God told Noah that the rainbow is a sign of a covenant, created by God, between Him and all living creatures. Thus, all people of all ages have been “called” by God and have the ability to enter into a relationship with Him.

Through my study I came to understand that we can move from the “called” state to the “chosen” state if we do as the Hebrew people have done. This requires agreement on our part to God’s discipline. A review of Hebrew history shows us this is not easy or pleasant. It can mean enduring physical hardship, doubt, slander by unbelievers, and other difficulties, all while maintaining fidelity to holiness. No wonder it is only a few who reach this category of relationship with God.

There are benefits to enduring God’s refining fire. His promise to answer prayers increases as we become more holy, more trustworthy, and more obedient. You will recall Mary’s request to Jesus at Cana. Though Jesus said it was not yet his time, Mary’s request had to be honored. She had served at his side for 30 years and had earned the privilege of having her prayers answered. Water was turned into wine.

But that is not the end of the story. There is another category of believers, called “faithful.” The faithful have endured through long periods of time and have been found worthy of Him. Revelation 17:14 says Jesus will take with Him His, “called, chosen and faithful followers” when he overcomes, “the beast.”

Those of you who have answered the call of our Lord to persevere toward holiness should anticipate that difficulties will be put upon you. Temptations will need to be faced and overcome. The world will not like nor understand you. I pray you will continue your journey in spite of these things, because the world that does not understand you needs you. Amen.



## **Holy Cross Monastery, Winston Salem, NC**

Sacred Cross Monastery, Cleveland, OH

Our Lady of Covadonga's Respite Hermitage, Hopkinsville, KY

Monastery of the Waters of Shiloah, Tellico Falls, TN

Holy Cross Hermitage, Olympia, WA

Holy Family Monastery, Frankfort, KY.

Buffalo, NY.

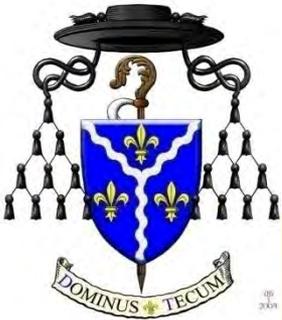
Church of the Holy Cross, Philippines

**Come and visit the Abbot  
this year in Winston Salem, NC**

Bucket  
list gone  
wrong !



## A message from the Archbishop Oscar Joseph, OCCO



**People of prayer have always been the spiritual fiber holding together the Church.**

**Heresies have torn, burned, and bloodied it's fabric but have never destroyed the faith imprinted with the image of Christ.**

**The old heresies remain. They wear the new faces of narcissistic pantheism, secular humanism, modernity and so on.**

**In our time the Church has suffered from the pervasive evil of false doctrine, pride, and division.**

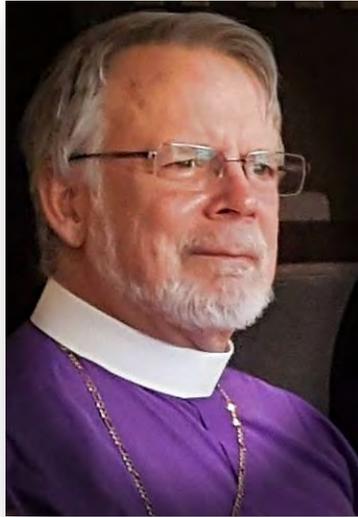
**Yet with God,s grace the Christian Church continues limping along.**

**We are pleased to sponsor The Global Fraternity for Christian Unity whose purpose is to pray and work (Ora et Labora) so: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."  
John**

***Join today on FaceBook***



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## Reflections by the Abbot

Abbot Oscar Joseph gives instructions for a more fruitful Lent.

<https://vimeo.com/18189315>

## Reflections by the Abbot

Abbot Oscar Joseph gives instructions for a more fruitful Easter.

<https://vimeo.com/18189267>



## The Four Degrees of Love by St. Bernard

<http://www.soulshpherd.org/2013/08/bernard-of-clairvauxs-four-degrees-of-love/>

The Medal of St. Benedict

<http://www.osb.org/gen/medal.html>





The Abbot says: These links have great and interesting information. Worth the read.

<http://catholicexchange.com/5-reasons-pray-rosary-every-day-2017>  
5 Reasons to say the Rosary

[http://www.catholicbridge.com/catholic/mary\\_rosary.php](http://www.catholicbridge.com/catholic/mary_rosary.php)  
Is the Rosary Biblical?

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/ROSARYDI.HTMp://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/ROSARYDI.HTM>  
The Rosary Dissected

## How to PRAY THE ROSARY



We, The Cistercians of the Holy Cross, are embedded icons, living sacramentals; who sustain, grace, and hold together the fiber of our communities. Our martyrdom is conversatio, stability, and obedience. We live in and are influenced by the heretic nature of our culture. However, while clothed in our holy habits we become sacred icons. When people gaze upon us they look into their hope and see reflected back the Source of all Hope. We become sacred signs, living sacramentals.

The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is a contemplative Order that is also active in ministering to the world.

## We are icons of hope in our communities.

We pray for the world and individual intentions.

We pray for the living and the dead.

We are counselors, medical professionals, law enforcement, executives, ministers, educators, and consultants.

We conduct seminars, chapter meetings, healing services, conduct Bible studies, administer the sacraments, visit the sick, jail ministry, hospice, go to hospitals, nursing homes; and give alms, medical aid, food and comfort to the poor and suffering.

We conduct retreats for teens, motor cyclists, and local parishes.

We provide training and education for others to minister to The Kingdom of God by way of our College/Seminary.

We also provide Spiritual Direction to individuals

We develop monks and oblates. We ordain priests and deacons.

*"Your ministry has meant a lot to me. The Prayer Retreat I attended this spring was a great blessing to me. I had come to a time in my life when I felt cut-off in my prayers, wondering if I was "saying it right" so to speak. I learned that there is no "right", if it is in your heart (whether it is original words or written words) it is your personal prayer. So now I have those talks with God thru out the day (pray without ceasing)."*



**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance** is an independent dispersed contemplative Religious Order that consists of laymen and women, single or married and male Diocesan clergy, from Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Old Catholic traditions who live in the world as well as in monasteries or hermitages.



Our Cistercian roots date back to the eleventh century.

We live the Cistercian charism in our love of solitude, contemplation, work, and study as well as living under the Rule of St. Benedict, our Constitution and vows of Conversatio, Stability, and Obedience.

Our purpose is to:

- a) seek perfection.
- b) praise and worship God

Our work is to:

- a) produce educational materials.
- b) host retreats.
- c) found autonomous religious communities.
- d) prayerfully intercede for those in need and for peace in the world.
- e) perform works of charity, pastoral ministry and mission work



**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is 36 years old. We are one of the oldest Religious Orders or our kind.**

Our members come from a wide variety of backgrounds including educators, medical and mental health professionals, law enforcement, engineers, retired and disabled individuals, homemakers, and even a peanut salesman.

Our monks and oblates give sacrificially to their communities.

Additionally the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross operates The St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary and Saint Seraphim School of Orthodox Theology. They currently have 5 Certified Degree Granting Academic Institutes and provides education for a worldwide student body and several Diocesan jurisdictions.

Martyrs and monks have always been the spiritual fiber holding together the Church Catholic.

**Br. Columcille, OCCO** writes, *“I believe Cistercians, and all contemplatives to be the heart of the Church. Our intentions, made perfect through the Holy Spirit, support all of the apostolic work around the world. Perhaps the stars would fall from the sky were it not for men and women dedicated to a life of prayer and sacrifice. We are a part of something holy, and are being made holy in the process.”*



We, the Cistercians of the Holy Cross, are embedded icons, living sacramentals; who sustain, grace, and hold together the fiber of our communities.

# Monks can also be deacons and priests



## *Deacon Monks can*

- Develop local faith communities
- Do religious services
- Preach
- Baptize
- Marry
- Bury

## *Priest Monks can also*

- Celebrate the Holy Eucharist
- Hear confessions
- Give The Sacrament of the Sick



- The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is happy to receive male applicants for Holy Orders, e.g., Priest, Deacon. We would also consider incardination for other rightfully ordained clerics.
- While there are traditional qualifications for ordination/incardination, the principal interest is discerning a true vocation and developing Priests or Deacons who are fruitful ministers. Therefore, educational requirements may be individually tailored.
- We celebrate valid apostolic lines of succession, the seven sacraments and liturgical worship consistent with the historical churches. While some practices may differ, e.g., married clergy, we adhere to the dogmas constituted by true apostolic teaching.
- If you are interested in ordination or incardination, complete the application found on our website and forward it to the Abbot General. His office will then contact you.



Great videos for all occasions and needs. Good for personal study and group discussions. Can be used to introduce others to the Cistercian charism. Check them out.

There are several new videos available. Check them out.

The Abbot is really funny in some of these videos.  
Can you believe it?

[www.vimeo.com/Cistercian](http://www.vimeo.com/Cistercian)

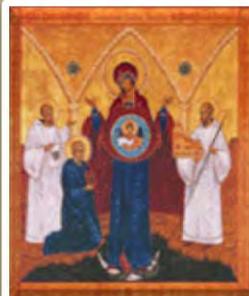
You won't believe what Br. Brendan said about the Abbot. "It will blow your mind!!!"

<https://vimeo.com/32063529>

I have really enjoyed ALL of these videos and I think that this technology is blessed by your and by our intent. I think it's really difficult for many of us to "feel" like we are a community, what with distances, languages, etc. Your videos have helped me in that regard. I think of them as chapter talks and pray for my brothers and superiors in relation to what you have said. I am honored to be part of such important work.

**Br. Columcille, OCCO**

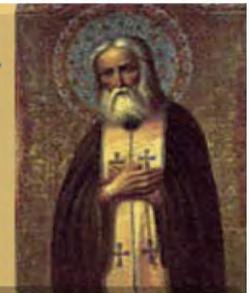
Technology gives our worldwide community one more way of coming closer together. I have produced a number of videos to provide personal messages and teaching opportunities for our members. I hope that they will be both enjoyable and inspiring.



*The St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary*

*and*

*The St. Seraphim School of Orthodox Theology*



**St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary** welcomes students to a wide variety of degrees, programs, licensing, and continuing educational opportunities. Check it out <http://stephenharding.college> for more information and application.

# Daily Prayer for the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

C. Let us pray  
C. Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
R. *Who made heaven and earth.*  
C. Holy Lord, Holy Mighty One,  
R. *Incline your ear towards us.*  
C. St. Benedict, Father of our Order  
R. *Pray for us.*  
C. Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven  
R. *Pray for us.*  
C. All the Angels and Saints  
R. *Pray for us.*

**Please pray this prayer every day.**

**All.** O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we give you praise and thanks.

May we respond to Your call in charity and courage and grow in numbers and holiness.

Bless our Abbot General Oscar Joseph with good health, growth in wisdom and grace. Help him to see the world as you do.

May our Beloved Order be blessed with leaders, both monks and clerics, who will carry forward our charism.

May our Beloved Order be blessed with the material and financial resources necessary to fulfill its mission.

We ask you, Lord, to bless us with a residential monastery in Winston-Salem where we can live as brothers and host others in a spirit of hospitality as taught by our Father, Benedict.

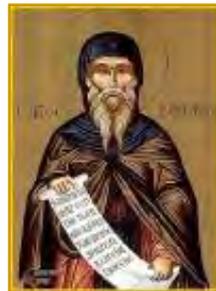
Holy Father Benedict help us to bring a contemplative balance to everyday matters, to cultivate the daily disciplines of work and prayer, to persevere in our vows of obedience, stability and daily conversion.

We pray for all those who have requested our prayers particularly members of our Order and those who are in union with us.

We pray also for those who may have given up hope or have forgotten to pray for themselves.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever.

Amen.



# CISTERCIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY CROSS, COMMON OBSERVANCE



**We serve men and women, clerical or lay, married or single by:**

- \*Helping them grow in perfection through the use of the Rule of St. Benedict, our Constitution and Manual, and community life.*
- \*Consecrating to a first or second order religious life those who want to live either in community or outside community.*
- \*Third order oblate program.*
- \*Validating and assisting those already living the religious life but not living in a formal community.*
- \*Supporting men with a call to the diaconate and priesthood through ordination, incardination.*

No dues

No fees

The Global Fraternity for Christian Unity

**How can I apply for membership?**

Applying for membership is easy. Simply go to [www.CistercianMonks.org](http://www.CistercianMonks.org), Click on the **Global Fraternity for Christian Unity** at the top of the page and complete the application form. Send it to us and we will reply shortly.

*The Cistercian charism is a refuge for ardent lovers of God. The adherence to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict and focus on contemplating God in prayer is a precious balm on hearts aching for closer union with the Lord. The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is an opportunity for men or women to become a true monk or nun in this revered tradition."*

*For more information contact  
Abbot@bellsouth.net*