



*"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."*

**"Persevere in prayer. Gratitude will open our souls to the unity of God, self, and others. Gratitude moves us from limitations and fear to expansion and love."**

# Obsculta

"Listen with the ears of your heart"

October 2018



*"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."*

**Member of the Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod**

The quarterly newsletter of

**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance  
Worldwide Membership of Monks Living Inside and Outside of a Monastery**

Founded 1981

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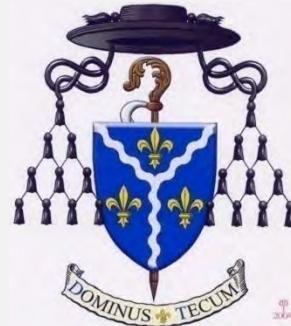
[www.CistercianMonks.org](http://www.CistercianMonks.org)

# News From The Abbot General



## Of Special Interest In This Obsculta

- Meet our New Vicar General
- Meet our New Chaplain
- Rev. Br. Brendan, OCCO retires
- Meet our New Oblate, Janice
- Memorial to Br. Benedict, OCCO
- Independent Anglican Church news
- Global Fraternity for Christian Unity
- Who we are and what we do.
- Looking for more Priests
- Stephen Harding Seminary/College
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- Contact us



Greetings Cistercians and Friends:

September 13th at 11:15 Pacific time Br. Benedict, OCCO passed from this life to the next. His family saw Christ present surrounded by angels.

That was so very fitting. Br. Benedict, OCCO was a holy, kind man and loving husband to his wife Alexis.

He impacted every one whom he came in contact including the hospital staff of his home town of Olympia in Washington State.

I had the privilege of praying with him and his family several times during his last few days. He received the sacraments and was prepared to go home.

Br. Benedict, OCCO took his life vows on April 30, 2018 and was the first person in the Order's history to be commissioned to the position of sub-deacon.

Just weeks later his mother-in-law, Janice Ariza, was accepted into our Oblate program.

I knew Br. Benedict, OCCO for more than eight years. He was always faithful to me, the Cistercian Order, and his childhood dream of becoming a monk.

Br. Benedict, OCCO had served his country as a Marine.

## The Rt. Rev. David Smith, OCCO

### Meet Our New Vicar General for our Order



Archbishop David Smith Jr. has been in ordained ministry, in some capacity, for over 30 years. His vocation originally began in a local Baptist church in Cleveland, OH and has progressed to him receiving ordination as a Western-Rite Orthodox priest, and as an Anglican priest, and consecration as a Western Rite Orthodox bishop.

Since entering ministry his experiences have been varied included, teaching bible study for Athletes in Action, helping to write theological training programs, co-hosting a Christian radio program, part-time parish ministry, and most recently serving as an Examining Chaplain.

Chaplain Smith works bivocationally combining a career in ministry with a career in healthcare; previously he was an educator in public education and at several career colleges. His pursuits outside of ministry include becoming an amateur chef/gourmet cook.

## Rev. Br. Columcille, OCCO

### Meet Our New Chaplain for our Order



Rev. Br. Columcille, OCCO has a number of distinctions with the Cistercian Order.

Br. Collumcille, applied for admittance into the Order in October 2004. A year later we met at his home in Arizona and I accepted his novice vows. In 2006 we had a convocation in his home town of Arizona City. Many Cistercians were present. During that same time Br. Columcille, OCCO took his life vows.

Since the inception of our Order in 1981 we have had a number of priests join us from other jurisdictions but we have never had our very own priest. At the convocation in 2006 Br. Columcille, was ordained by Rt. Rev. Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO and became our very first priest in the Order and for our Order.

That same year Br. Columcille, OCCO became our very first Dean. He was elevated to the position of Dean of the Western USA.

He has also served on the Abbot's Council and an assistant to the President of our seminary, Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary.

## *Brother Brendan, OCCO retires as the Vicar General*



What is there to say about Br. Brendan? Well actually, a lot. . Br. Brendan is one of the most interesting, in depth, trustworthy, funny, loyal, wise, sensitive, thoughtful, embracing, sincere, practically spiritual, adventurous, individuals that I have ever met.

Br. Brendan, OCCO and I began communicating about 2006. He, like many of our members, was disappointed with corporate church. So he, like many of our members, had to figure out whether he could trust me and the Order. On August 31, 2010 Br. Brendan, OCCO was accepted into Postulancy. He took his life vows April 20, 2013. On that same day he accepted the position of Vicar General and has been a valuable asset to myself and the Order for eight years.

Br. Brendan, OCCO has visited Holy Cross Monastery and has spent more time with me than any other monk ever. What a joy!!! Although he has retired from the Vicar General position after such a long service he continues to remain on the Abbot's Council.

So Brother, thank you for all of your hard work and for being a dear friend. Enjoy your retirement and continue to grow in your monkish ways.

### **My Fellow Cistercians**

### **Welcome Oblate Janice**



**My name is Janice** . Abbot Oscar Joseph knows me, however, I have not gotten to know many of the Order yet. I am often aware that I need to emphasize and embrace the joy part of my name, since life has many challenges to persevere through. Br. Benedict introduced me to The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. After he married my daughter, Alexis, our family went on a journey with him to find an order that had the elements of faith and exemplified true gospel meaning. We often had long theological discussions relating modern day practices to ancient ones. These lengthy talks were education and wit-sharpening, but what we really had in common was a love for our Lord Jesus Christ, and the belief that prayers are always answered in miraculous ways.

I live in Olympia, Washington. My three grown children, Alexis, Loren and Gabrielle live here, too. We also have the joy (there's that word) of Gabrielle's three children living with us. They are all under the age of 6 and keep us all on our toes. All of us enjoy meals together, hiking, camping, movies, books and lots of talking. I love the arts and have been truly blessed with children who are exceptionally talented in almost all artistic endeavors. My work has been in galleries and museums, as well as a good portion of sales and business thrown into the mix. Now I am working at for the Benedictine Sisters at St. Placid Priory at the Priory Spirituality Center. I coordinate spiritual retreats for all kinds of people. The Center has retreat rooms to stay in as well as programs for personal development on various subjects relating to one's walk with God.

If I were to describe myself, I would say that I am an extremist. My walk with Jesus has been one of finding balance in my life and being able to let God work it out. This quest has led me to prayer and intercession and a desire to live the Word of God. Being a part of an Order seems to have the elements of the balance I seek.



Rest in Peace  
Dear  
Br. Benedict, O.C.C.O.



# *This was written and delivered by Br. Benedict, OCCO's wife, Alexis*

## Eulogy

Thank you everyone for being here, We are. blessed to have so many friends who care.

Br. Benedict, OCCO was born Burt David Thiessen in 1975. He was very proud of that year and of being a disco baby. He was also honored to have his middle name be that of his second dad David Menard. He loved his parents Kyle and Deborah and always said that they are both strong and amazing people. He admired them and was proud to be their son. He was also very proud of his brother Ben, and always talked about how his brother was a genius and genuine soul. Even though he gave Ben a hard time through their lives growing up, He loved him deeply.

The name Br. Benedict is his religious name. Three months ago he took his life vows as a Monk and also became a Sub Deacon with the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. His superior Abbot Oscar Joseph was not only his boss, but a close friend. The Abbot couldn't be here today, but he is here in spirit.

Benedict was cut from a different cloth. One foot was in this world and one foot in heaven. He had conversations with Jesus and Angels, and then could have conversations with the most hardened people you could imagine. He loved doing jail ministry, and everywhere he went people were just drawn to him. He was truly unique and the type of person you never forget.

As a kid he would play video games with his dad and has many fond memories of that time. That love of video games carried on through his life and he made many great friends on X-box live. He not only played games with these friends, but would talk to on the phone and prayed with them as well. .

He also loved heavy metal, bagpipes, Gregorian chant, and ComTrus, for those of you who know who that is. Benedict often said that all he knew was guns, poker and religion, but he was so much more than that.

I also have to mention how close he was to my family. He bonded with them as if they were his own flesh and blood. He called my Mother, Janice, Mom, and he meant it. He became great friends with, and was truly amazed by my brother Loren, whom he called the smartest and most interesting guy, and then said, "I love that guy!"

When Benedict and I met, my sister Gabrielle was only 10 years old. Benedict would often watch her after school. She was his little sister and he loved and adored her. We didn't have kids of our own, but he loved my sister's children, Battle, Goldie, and Hazel as much as he would have loved his own children



## Eulogy part 2



My husband was a deeply devoted man, not only to God, but to his family, friends, and any stranger who needed a prayer or a friendly conversation. He had a gift for making anyone feel like family. He could see people's hearts and never held a grudge.

When Benedict and I met 18 years ago we were drawn to each other and we quickly became inseparable. We were only apart for 2 weeks the entire time we were together.

We were/are both very stubborn people, so you can imagine there was some head butting in our household, but I loved him with all my heart and I know he loved me with all of his.

He called me "Rexiss" and I called him "butthead" and he thought that was awesome. He was stubborn and difficult (as his parents can attest) but he was also the kindest, sweetest, and most caring man I ever knew. He was my Viking Monk, intense, funny, and kind.

Benedict was always full of life despite being in so much pain for so long. He wanted people to see the strength, not the weakness, and tried to maintain that until the end.



He never blamed anybody for his faults and was way too hard on himself. Being a former Marine, he would hide his pain and often push it too far. I would tell him that he needed to show people how much he was actually suffering, but he couldn't do it.

He was my soul mate, my best friend, and the love of my life. I never once regretted being with him and I never felt gypped by his illness. I would have taken care of him forever. I am the person I am today, and a better person, because I was blessed with the presence that is Benedict.

A big piece of my heart is missing, but I know that that piece is in heaven. I want to put a special mention in here for our cats, Spartacus, Maximus, and little Benedict, because he adored them.

I also want to thank Chris and Michele Baker, and Seth and Angie Hodge, for being a constant support through this very hard time. You are not just good friends, you are family.

Thank you.



# Alexis Thiessen Tells Her Story



Although it was Benedict's and my life long journey to get to heaven, Benedict kept hanging on for me. I sat next to him with a rosary wrapped around our hands and I prayed that he would not suffer, and I told Benedict I loved him, He didn't take his eyes off of me the whole time, until his last breath.

The room glowed like candle lite and there was peace.

My niece who is 1 ½ watched him go and then put her hand on everyone's face and said "soft". Her way of comforting us. Our family and friends were there.

Abbot Oscar Joseph was a constant support through our lives and in this time of sickness and death. The few times that Benedict was able to talk with the Abbot, he would perk up and have such joy to hear his voice or see him on video chat.

On September 13, Benedict passed away and I became a widow, surrounded by my friends and family, and the peace of Jesus. On September 21 we had the funeral, and on September 26 we buried Br. Benedict. It felt so final.

I know that he is in heaven and that gives me comfort, but grief is a tricky thing. I have anger that I am alone, I have hope in the future, and I trust God to get me through this as he has gotten me through everything else taken care of him forever.

I knew God had bigger plans for Benedict and I know that he is on a new mission for the kingdom of heaven. I miss him every day. His smile, his jokes, the way he made me feel so special. I sometimes can't believe he is gone. I have to move on because God wants me here still, but my heart is torn in half. That half went to heaven, and one day I will be reunited with it.





## In Memory of Br. Benedict's Hospital Stay

### by Janice

#### The Days of Passing

My dear son-in-law, Burt David Thiessen, passed away three weeks ago today. In the days before he went onto be with our Lord, we all witnessed the beauty of being a believer. Br. Benedict was Burt's chosen religious name. St. Benedict and The Rule was his lifelong path. Benedict was an amazing influence throughout the last 20 years and will continue to be with me until our family is reunited in heaven.

Angels were present many times during our bedside vigilance. They showed up in Benedict's poker game, in the nursing staff at unexplainable moments and in the timing of a Eucharistic minister who arrives just as the family was having a video chat with the Abbot Oscar Joseph. Armies of angels met me in the hallways of Providence St. Peter's hospital leading Jesus to room 305. Once they arrived, my son, our brother, raised his hand up as if to greet the Lord, Mary and the choirs of angels. A silence entered, nurses noted the time, and we cried.

I texted the Abbot who had been constantly at our sides. God Bless technology because without it, we couldn't have had the prayers, the personal support and the insights he so willingly gave to our family. Br. Benedict was always encouraged and perked up when he heard the Abbot's voice or saw his face on video. The day before Benedict died, the Abbot joined us via Face Book video chat. He prayed with Benedict, Alexis, my son, Loren, and myself. The Abbot also shared some scriptures and related personal stories. He even played Gregorian chant and the Voyager theme. Benedict and the Abbot shared a lot of humor together. This, also, was the angelic moment when the Eucharistic minister appeared unannounced, so we all were able to participant with the Abbot in our midst. So beautiful.

My daughter Alexis stayed with her husband every moment sharing those last tangible days. She would read the prayers from everyone at the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross to him while nurses, family and friends came and went. They were such a ministry together -- kind and gracious talking about the Lord. Benedict would spread the Gospel no matter where he was. He hugged us and told us how awesome we are and said lots of "I love yous". Always thinking of us, he did not want to leave. Alexis was able to assure him that we would be ok (more importantly, that she would be ok), and that he was being called to do his finest work.

Peace Be With You



Alexis & Br. Benedict, OCCO





## The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross are Proud Members of The Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod

We are the **Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance**, an independent dispersed religious order within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and an autonomous member of the Independent Anglican Church -Canada Synod.

**"The Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod** are proud to be traditional Anglicans. Who follow, "where the saints have trod", the old, familiar path; the path that leads, in order and dignity, to warmth and tolerance.

"The discipline and public worship of the Church are, most properly, Catholic. Our adherents will experience a spread of services and style stretching gloriously all the way from Anglo-Catholic to (Low) Evangelical. Most of our congregations would be described as being Broad Church, following a via media."



On August 22, 2018 Archbishop Peter Goodrich made a truly apostolic journey to support his churches in Mozambique. It was a combination of Pauline disasters and epic Biblical miracles. Archbishop Peter was greeting by Bishop Julies and 125 singing, and dancing natives followed by visits with the Governor of Niassa Province and the Roman Catholic Bishop Athanasius as well as preaching and worshiping at several locations.

I cannot begin to tell you how much we admire his courage and faithfulness. Thank you Lord for his fruitful and safe journey.

# A message from the Archbishop Oscar Joseph, OCCO



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

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 1

**1024 members.**

**Every two weeks we have a topic for discussion.**

**Members are from all over the world.**

**New: Prayer for Intentions. A place where you can ask for us to pray for your needs.**

Prayer for Petitions is a place where people can list their personal petitions and find spiritual support for the same.. Prayers for political, social or anything other than sincerely personal needs are not welcomed.

**Has 945 members.**

***Join today on FaceBook***

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 37 years old. We are one of the oldest Religious Orders or our kind.**

We are an independent dispersed religious order within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and an autonomous member of the Independent Anglican Church - Canada Synod.

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 Memorial Day for our dear Br. Paul, OCCO is June 24th. He was a true blessing to our Order.**

- 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.



# 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.

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 pray that at all times and under every circumstance that every holy action, prayer, Liturgy, joy and even suffering that we experience is perpetually offered as a prayer for each of us, our intentions and the intentions of others. Let it be known that when you pray we all pray.**  
**AMEN.**

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.

*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  
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