



Obsculta

“Listen with the ears of your heart”

March 2019



“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.”

“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.”

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
1606 Briar Lake Circle Winston-Salem, NC 27103 336 918-0975

www.CistercianMonks.org

News From The Abbot General



Of Special
Interest In
This
Obsculta

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Greetings Cistercians and Friends:

This has certainly been a fruitful season.

We have begun Volume Two of the Order's history. Yes, we have been around for thirty-eight years.

We have created the Companions of the Holy Cross to give honor to those who have inspired us.

+Br. Isaac Simon, OCCO visited the Abbot General at the Holy Cross Monastery.

The website has been updated.

Our monks have reported blessed opportunities to be icons of hope in their communities.

We are praying for and ministering to Ted Williams, member of the Abbot's Council, who is currently battling cancer. Please continue praying.



A Weekend Visit to Holy Cross Monastery by Brother Isaac Simon, OCCO

Recently, I had the delightful opportunity to spend a long weekend visiting Abbot General Oscar Joseph at the Holy Cross Monastery, located in Winston-Salem, NC. During the visit there was much laughter, learning, spirituality, and a sense of family. The visit began on a Friday evening when I was greeted by the Abbot and Kathleen. Upon my arrival at the monastery, I received such warm hospitality it seemed as if I was returning home, instead of visiting a new place. Sitting around the dinner table we fellowshiped and I had the amazing opportunity to see what it means to live in a home dedicated to the Lord God Almighty.

Several times the Abbot and I sat in silence in the monastery chapel. Here we waited upon the Lord and presented ourselves to receive godly instruction. While each of us received different “messages” they were connected each to the other. We both also received confirmation that the paths we were walking with the Lord, especially as they related to the Cistercian Order, were in accordance with the will of God.

The weekend ended with me refreshed, renewed, and glad that I had been called by God and allowed to make this commitment to serve as His monk. As a bishop, I am called to serve God, because of the compassion He has for His people. As a priest, I am called to serve God, by bringing the sacraments to the world. As a deacon, I am called to serve God, by being His hands among His people. But, as a monk, I am called to be in conversation with God constantly, in all that I do and all that I am. Every breath, every thought, and every action are called upon to serve God. I am grateful for this opportunity to dedicate my life to God in this manner.

Praise ye the Lord! The Lord’s name be praised!



Reflections after Hearing from the Lord God by Brother Isaac Simon, OCCO

I have often heard the voice of God speaking to me. I cannot describe what that voice sounds like, but I know it when I hear it. This voice has spoken to me, perhaps for the entirety of my life; however, I have been cognizant of it since I was a teenager. When He speaks to me there is no doubt that it is Him. Scripture says “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27). When the Lord speaks to me sometimes He provides encouragement; sometimes He provides instruction; sometimes He admonishes and rebukes; and sometimes He speaks love to me.

On a recent visit to Holy Cross Monastery (located in Winston-Salem, NC), the Lord spoke to me. Portions of the words I received from God included:

- Apart from His grace, we can do nothing.** It is His breathe that gives us life, and His Son’s blood which allows us to have life and to have life abundantly. So we should focus on Him.
- Keep the main thing, the main thing.** God is the main thing for Christians. It is not about us, our ideologies, and our man-made structures. No, it is about the One who created us in His image. The One who was, and is, and is to come.
- We are to remain faithful to God.** This means we are to be persistent in our faith, even when the way seems unclear. Have no doubts about the One who knew us before He put us in the womb, and has ordained us for His purpose. It is our faith that God desires. Faith in God means we trust Him to really be God and Father for us, just as He has promised.

These words were linked to similar words received by Abbot General Oscar Joseph and Trustee Lance, when we all sat in silence together, in the chapel. This connection was made evident when we shared with each other our chapel perceptions of God. As we shared these experiences, I could hear the voice of God resonating within their words. They too had heard the voice of God, and had been changed forever. Being in the presence of God causes a change. The change that has occurred in my life has made all the difference in the world. I will continue to wait for and listen to the voice of God. Amen.

Mr. Lance Key
Trustee and Member of the Abbot's Council



Lance Key (Trustee)
+Br. Isaac Simon, OCCO
(Vicar General)

Greetings in the name of Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ:

On Sunday March 17, 2019, I was honored to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist at the Holy Cross Monastery in Winston Salem NC., the +Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO. presiding.

I was introduced to +Brother Isaac Simon, OCCO, the Vicar General for the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

Previously, I had been told of many exciting things about + Brother Isaac Simon, OCCO. Those accolades were all confirmed the moment I met him.

The Abbot, Brother Isaac, and I had the opportunity to pray for God's perfect will for the Cistercian Order. Later we discussed what our Good Lord had spoken to us individually. We discovered a wonderful continuity and inspiration in our in our messages.

Our Lord is indeed pleased with our efforts. He encouraged us to press on in our daily honorarium and He will continue to reward our faithfulness.

Our meeting was followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. God was truly in our midst.

Later, we were blessed with a wonderful meal prepared in the genuine Southern hospitality of the Abbot's wife, Kathleen.

It was an amazing experience for me to be included in this grand day of spirituality, food and fellowship.

The Abbot Speaks Out!!!

I feel that it is necessary to point out that whatever is negative or harmful to humankind is from original sin still operating, the devil, or our personal or corporate sins. God does NOT give, cause, or use evil for His purposes.

Seldom does God give us burdens of any kind to test us in any way. Yes, throughout history, including Scripture individuals have been tested by God for the purpose of providing that individual the opportunity to grow towards God. But note that these individuals already possess spiritual and emotional maturity. I believe that it is safe to say that most of us are not among these select few. Yes, we have said and have heard otherwise from the pulpit but I believe that this is our misguided way of avoiding responsibly for our own actions. Mostly we experience a sowing and reaping. That is not to say that through grace we cannot learn and overcome from our sowing and reaping.

We often mistake the enthusiasm of young Christians to mean spiritual and or emotional maturity. Those who have been around for a long time sometimes think that just “showing up” actually produces spiritual and emotional maturity. Some mistake a desire to do good, be good, and pray ten minutes a day will actually produce anything other than false pride.

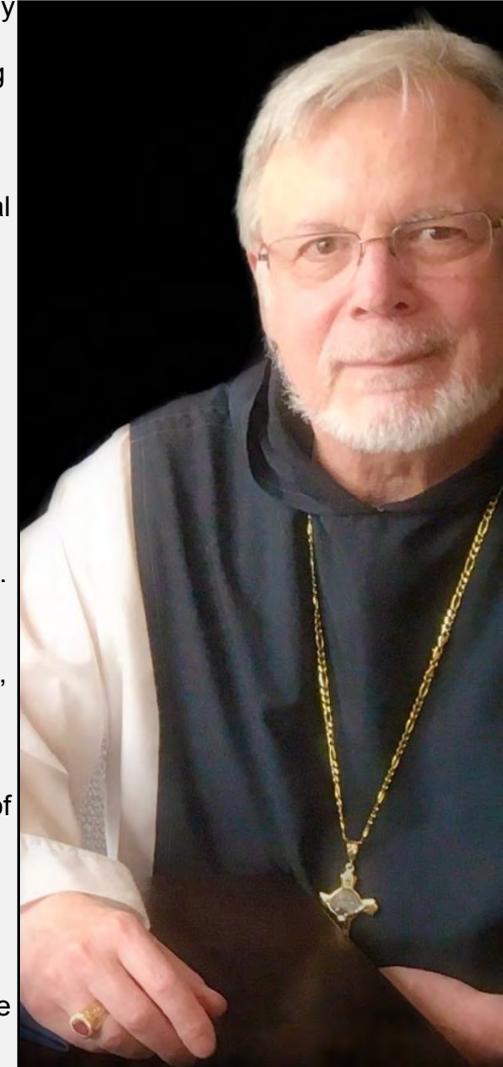
God’s grace operates more like yeast than a lightning bolt. The road to Emmaus is more about the cross than moments of emotional self-satisfaction. The closer we become to God the more He seems to become unapproachable. The more we actually understand our worthlessness the more we want to approach Him. Yes, becoming a Christian is more a life journey of dying to self and becoming more intimate with the Divine.

It is difficult to say this but the truth is... not all churches are created equal. Those who hold the entire deposit of faith have more to offer its members. These churches are part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic church founded by Christ Himself. If you do not understand what I just said then probably your church is not one of these. Please be a seeker of truth and search out these churches.

It is difficult to say that... God’s love is not unconditional, He does have favorites, He is merciful but He is also just, there is a real hell and the earth is not it. There is a heaven and knowing that should mean that we behave really differently than we do now.

It is difficult to say that... much of what we hear from the pulpit is founded in pop psychology and the narcissism of our human nature. For example the lie of self esteem, beliefs that we can control God, personal interpretation of Scripture, we can be Christians and not be intimately involved with a legitimate church, faith alone is enough, we are not required to do holy works. I could go on and on. Again please be a truth seeker and do some research from credible sources.

Finally, our walk should lead to a profound understanding that everything is prayer, everything is God, and that we live in, with, and through Him.





Lance and Karen Key are some of our supportive cast.

Supportive Cast by Br. Camillus, OCCO

I wouldn't say I've traveled extensively but no matter where I've been, I've found peaceable people's in all cultures that became temporary & some permanent members of my supporting cast. It has validated for me that we truly are all more alike than different. There is hope in finding common ground. Among believers & unbelievers alike, we can all strive to become the best versions of ourselves through physical, mental, & spiritual practices. What would it look like for each of us if we shifted the focus from external distractions & truly took care of ourselves?

Balanced rest, nutrition, & exercise schedules are paramount for improving or enhancing the quality of our lives. But, far too often, these areas are neglected and when basic needs are not met, we struggle with maintaining our effectiveness and positivity. So, it's about the choices we make to enhance our lives or simply accept the status quo.

If we could daily embrace life in the spirit of unconditional love & acceptance and consciously walk our paths with our intentions to do no harm, we surely can become the best versions of ourselves.

Epiphanies: by Br. Camillus, OCCO

Some ardent monks spend their entire day reciting the Jesus prayer. "Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner." The emphasis is on me a sinner not you a sinner. Therefore, the focus must be on the individual man/woman in addressing their own sinfulness and requesting divine mercy, and not letting focus be distracted to the sins of others.

I have enough of my own (present, past, presumptive, and other) sins to contend with. My sins are many and I have much to address but I have peace, hope, and joy that I have the internal resources and divine support necessary in addressing them, giving them the attention due, and moving forward.

Therefore, if someone or something is enticing me to sin and I comply, I forfeit my peace, hope, and joy and I'm no longer willing to do that. Basically, I'm reclaiming my stolen love and will. As I reframe old beliefs and behaviors, there will be demons that will rear their ugly heads and I must train my mind, body, and soul through prayerful mindfulness in preparation for battles that are certain to materialize.



Janice Joy Ariza
Oblate

Greetings Fellow Cistercians,

I recently wrote an article about hospitality for the St. Placid newsletter. I work at a Benedictine Priory in the Spirituality Center, so it would be natural for me to write something on hospitality.

There is a lot written in The Rule of St. Benedict about this subject. I contemplated how to condense hospitality into practical action. My response is to treat all we come in contact with as if they were Christ. How do we look at people with the love of our Lord.? In a world where we are constantly challenged to be the next Top Chef or Oscar recipient, how do we put aside competitive nature and simply love one another?

My son-in-law, Br. Benedict, always told the greatest stories of saints and their counterparts. He often encouraged me when I would feel beaten down by the happenings of my life. Padre Pio was one of his favorites because of the pureness of his heart and his knowledge of God.

Br. Benedict would recount Padre Pio's actions by saying, "When you are having a bad day and you want to turn it around, think of how Padre Pio would answer the door." I said, "How would he answer?" Simply, "Is that you, Lord?"

I certainly do miss my son-in-law. If I feel lost or down, I think of these true words of wisdom coming from within a heart that loved Jesus.

Blessings,

WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM GOD?

Curiously enough, it is a Fear of how Grace will Change and Improve them that keeps Many Souls away from God. They want God to take them as they are and let them stay that way. They want Him to take away their Love of Riches, but not their Riches—to Purge them of the Disgust of Sin, but not of the Pleasure of Sin. Some of them equate Goodness with Indifference to Evil and think that God is good if He is Broad-minded or Tolerant about Evil. Like the onlookers at the Cross, they want God on Their Terms, not His, and they Shout, "Come Down, and we will Believe." But the things they ask are the Marks of a False Religion: it Promises Salvation without a Cross, Abandonment without Sacrifice, Christ without his Nails. God is a Consuming Fire; our Desire for God must include a Willingness to have the chaff Burned from our Intellect and the Weeds of our Sinful Will purged. The very fear souls have of Surrendering Themselves to the Lord with a Cross is an evidence of their instinctive belief in His Holiness. Because God is Fire, we cannot escape Him, whether we draw near for Conversion or Flee from Aversion: in either case, He affects us. If we Accept His Love, its Fires will Illumine and Warm us; if we Reject Him, they will still Burn on in us in Frustration and Remorse.

~ Archbishop Fulton Sheen



+Brother Isaac Simon, OCCO becomes a member of the Cistercians

On Sunday, November 4, 2018 I was blessed to make a Simple Profession of my vows as an OCCO novice. Having been in ordained ministry for over 30 years I have made similar commitments to the Lord: as a person in minor orders (cleric, torch bearer, doorkeeper, reader, exorcist, acolyte, and sub-deacon); and as a person in major orders (deacon, priest, and bishop).

Each time I made a commitment to serve the Lord I always knew it was due to His calling me and refusing to accept any other answer but “adsum domine = Here Lord/Present Lord”. The Lord God Almighty required me to answer yes and to enter his service. He had a purpose for my life and His will would not be thwarted. Since I have been ordained I have found joy in serving the Lord, but was His choice for my life, not mine, and like Jonah being sent to Ninevah, I too had to spend time, “in the belly of a great fish”.

However, choosing to become a monk (I believe) was my choice. I had a sincere and earnest desire to renew my commitment to serve the Lord in a way which allowed me to increase my spiritual connection and devotion to Him. It was with great joy that I undertook these novitiate vows to serve God in this new capacity. The opportunity to engage God in an ancient tradition which follows a tradition derived, in part, from the Lord Jesus Christ, has given me, “good tidings of great joy!”. May the Lord God find this renewed offering of my service acceptable in His sight.

Saying Yes to God’s Call by +Br. Isaac Simon, OCCO

I had a moment a few days ago when it seemed that the Lord kept nudging me to pray. I was set to eat dinner, I said grace over the meal and started to eat. After a few minutes, I said the blessing over the meal again. Before I knew it, I was saying it a third time. It dawned on me finally that God wanted to speak with me. I was being nudged by the Holy Spirit to enter into a heartfelt conversation with my Father. At first it seemed strange because I didn't have anything on my heart to pray about....but it wasn't about me....it was about God wanting to spend time with me.

Entering into His presence by invitation is an indescribable sensation. Being invited by the Lord is both an awesome feeling and a humbling experience. Who am I that the Lord should consider me? Yet how could I not accept His invitation? My answer must be Adsum Domine /Here I am Lord.

I am reminded of the story of the prophet Samuel as a young boy when he realized that the Lord was calling out to him. Scripture states: "The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1Samuel 3:10).

I first offered myself to the Lord at my baptism almost 35 years ago. I have served Him in ministry for over 30 years. Yet, how could I forget that He is always concerned about nurturing and deepening the relationship between the two of us? Thank you Father for calling my name and making time to spend with me. Amen.

His Excellency the Most Rev. Abbot General, Oscar Joseph, OCCC
Ecclesiastical Proclamation
on the day of our Savior's birth, 2018 the formation of
The Companions of the Holy Cross
Comites Sancti Crucis

As a medium for The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance to give their highest honor to those individuals who demonstrate extraordinary love for the Holy Cross through outstanding qualities of character such as:

Dedication to personal or corporate spiritual growth:

Demonstration of Spiritual Giftedness through evidence of genuine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Personal courage to overcome overwhelming odds through the use of:

Godly wisdom

Dedication to Justice

Uses temperance, humility, meekness, discipline

Self Sacrificing:

Charity (love and generosity) towards the Cistercian Order, or a specific member of the Order, social, physical, emotional, spiritual needs of others

Generous with their time, talents and resources

Genuine care for the unlovable

Nominations

Nominations** for receiving the highest honor of companions of the Holy Cross may be given by Members (those under vows), Postulants, Oblates, leaders, Council Members, faculty, and others directly associated with the Cistercian Order.

The petitioner should send to the Office of the Abbot General:

The contact information including, mailing address and e-mail of the petitioner, and the candidate. Include several paragraphs describing the candidate's biography and reasons for the nomination.

Upon making a decision the Office of the Abbot General will advise the petitioner on further actions.

From the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross you will receive and number of wonderful benefits.

You have an "Associate Membership*" into the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

We will give you a pin representing the shield of the Cistercian Order that may be worn.

You will have our apostolic benediction and spiritual covering/protection.

You and your intentions will be prayed for during the monks/Oblates morning prayers.

You will have access to The Cistercian leadership for personal prayer and spiritual guidance.

You may use the letters CHC after your name as a declaration that they are Companions of the Holy Cross. Example: Mary Smith, CHC.

You will be invited to retreats and events.

You will receive quarterly Obsculta/newsletter.

*"Associate Membership" is a non-voting participation in the Grace and Charism of the Cistercian Order

** Members (those under vows), Postulants, Oblates, leaders, Council Members, faculty, and others directly associated with the Cistercian order are not eligible for nomination to the Companions of the Holy Cross

**The Companions of the Holy Cross
Comites Sancti Crucis**

**Individuals who have received The Cistercian Order's
highest honor**

**Julie Brown
Alexia Thiessen**

We Welcome your Nominations

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

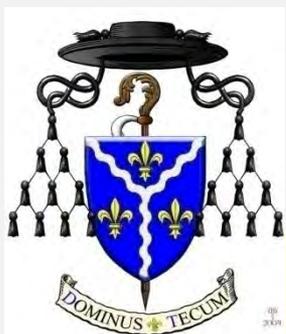
We are the **Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance**, an independent dispersed religious order within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and an autonomous member of the Independent Anglican Church -Canada Synod.

“The Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod is 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.”



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

Every few 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.

Join today on FaceBook

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.
The Abbot has proclaimed this to be our
new daily prayer. Please join him daily to
pray this together.

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.





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.

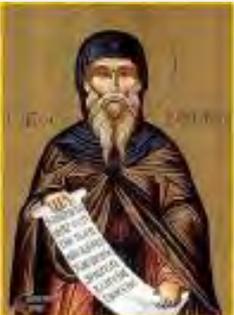
We are an independent dispersed religious order within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and an autonomous member of the Independent Anglican Church - Canada Synod.

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.

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
Abbot@bellsouth.net*