

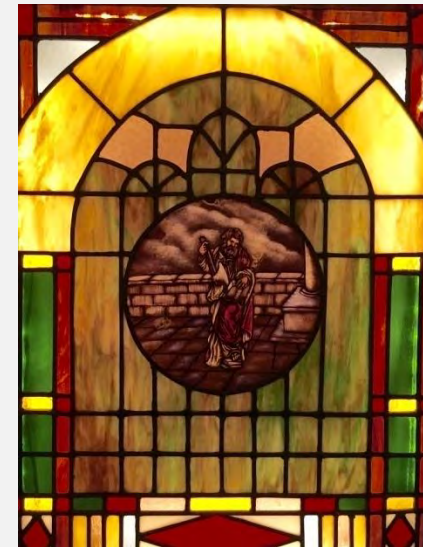


"Indeed, our affiliation with the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross has brought tremendous spiritual blessings to us and our dear ones. The Cistercian habit has become an effective and visible sign of the healing and reconciling presence of our Lord, Jesus."

Obsculta

"Listen with the ears of your heart"

December 2019



"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 Outside of a Monastery
Founded 1981

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

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News From The Abbot General



Of Special
Interest In
This
Obsculta

- Oblate Janice Joy visits the Abbot
- The Abbot found out about Janice
- Welcome +Br. George, OCCO
- Stefanos receives an honorary doctorate.
- You are in a Garden
- St. Mary and New Year's Resolutions
- Abbot's personal prayers
- Sacred Priests
- Independent Anglican Church
- +Perry Ruby dies
- Daily Prayer for the Order
- Who we are and what we do.
- Looking for more Priests
- Members' comments
- Contact us



Greetings Cistercians and Friends:

Br. Brendan, OCCO has been diagnosed with a potentially life threatening injury. He is now out of the hospital and at home resting. Please keep him in your prayers.

Br. Brendan, OCCO has held many important positions in our Order and is currently on the Abbot's Council.

Over the many years that he has been a Cistercian monk we have spent a lot of time together. If you go to [Vimeo.com/Cistercian](https://www.vimeo.com/Cistercian) you will see some wonderful videos produced by him.

Br. Brendan, OCCO reports that when he was hospitalized he was pleased that we responded so quickly and one of our members offered to visit him with the Holy Eucharist.

This is an excellent witness that although we are a dispersed Order we are indeed a community.

I selected the photo above as a symbol of just how fond I am of Br. Brendan, OCCO. But let it be known that I hold each of you as dearly.

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A Visit to the Abbot's

Janice Joy Ariza, OCCO/obl



You might be wondering what a visit to the Abbot's is like. We talk with him on the phone, engage in conversations on Facebook or a lively video chat which are all great, but an actual encounter with the big smile and hug is beyond joyful. It is a true delight to spend time with the Abbot and his wife, Kathleen, in their beautiful home. They are a real team working together to plan for my stay to be an experience of mind, body and soul with everything I love to do. We had meaningful conversations around excellent meals in the most interesting historic locations and popular favorite restaurants. I would say my favorite and most delicious meals were those Kathleen prepared for us. She is a southern cook through and through!



My pilgrimage to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, began as a fulfillment of a promise I made to my late son-in-law, Br. Benedict Thiessen. Some of the last words he spoke to me before he left to be with the Lord were, "Keep involved with the Abbot and the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. Do it for me, and for your Christian walk with Christ." I said yes, of course, not knowing or realizing the depth of love and commitment I would be receiving and giving.

There were so many times when Br. Benedict was there with us. When the Abbot celebrated the Mass for my Oblation ceremony, when the Abbot, Kathleen and I said the Rosary or when I received the Abbot's blessing, I could hear him say, "This is so awesome." Blessings and Peace



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Janice Joy Ariza, OCCO/Obl *Becomes our first female Oblate*

Visited The Holy Cross Monastery
November 6-12, 2019

The Charism of St. Benedict

This morning while I was reading “a discourse on the Psalms by Saint Augustine, bishop” I was simultaneously evolving this article. I wanted to write about Joy’s 6000 mile pilgrimage from Olympia, Washington to the Holy Cross Monastery in Winston Salem, North Carolina.

As I reflected on what I have learned about Joy I had visions of Jesus, St. Paul, Teresa of Avilla, St. John of the Cross, Cyprian and of course St. Benedict. I drifted away from my St. Augustine reading.

If I were able to capture what I have learned about Joy it would be balance.

Throughout her stay Joy told Kathleen and I her life story. Beneath her narrative were examples of Benedictine humility which perhaps she never recognized because they were so natural to her. Joy embraces life’s good and bad and ups and downs. While she grieves the bad she can simultaneously rejoice for the good that God can bring forth from them.

Joy succeeds in what most of us fail in, that being St. Paul’s “give glory to God in all things”. Even in the worst of times Joy can be honestly transparent, and put the occasion in perspective. Her personal victories are mirrored in the victories of her family and those around her.

Joy appreciates the value of discussion with order and purpose but relishes in a pleasant stream of consciousness. The smallest thing becomes a moment of appreciation. Her artistry embraces not only the canvas but history, nature, and storytelling. She is something of a free spirit with the balance of making her life not about herself but about service and sacrifice for others.

Joy demonstrates a perfectly balanced angst between what is and what can be.

There is much more to say but now I am almost finished reading St. Augustine, wouldn’t you know St. Augustine describes Joy perfectly. “These are the sacrifices most pleasing to God: mercy, humility, praise, peace, charity. “

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**The Most Rev. George Papathanasiou, OCCO
Archbishop of Europe
President of the Holy Synod**

Becomes a life vowed member of the Cistercian Order. We welcome him with open arms.

Bishop George is my old friend and that of The Cistercian Order. Bishop George was formerly a Benedictine monk and at one time lived “within the walls” of a monastery. He has a deep spirituality and a very conservative theological approach. His jurisdiction is represented in several European countries.

+George is the founder and President of a large medical supply company and has philanthropic endeavors around the world.



STEFANOS VASILOGLOU

From Greece

November, 2019

Received an Honorary Degree of Letters

from St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary.

Stefanos is working and supporting the Charitable Mission of the Church under Mgrs. Georges Papathanasiou and George Saint de Hirs both members of the Holy Synod. Also, he offers additional teachings to the poor students in the local University of Macedonia.

Stefanos is a permanent member of the blood donation association and human organs.

He is a member and working in the technical support of the Monasteries and chapels of the Church.

He is also does text correction in the local edition center of the Church.

Stefano is the process of writing a book with theme: *sustainable development within of the religion principles in modern times*

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You are in the Garden

By
Br. Albert Joseph, OCCO

Psalm 34 (Parts thereof)
I will bless the Lord at all times
His praise shall ever be in my mouth.
I sought the Lord, and He answered me
And He delivered me and the Lord heard me
And saved me from all my troubles.
Taste and see that the Lord is good,
Happy are they who trust in Lord.



Br. Albert with his wife Connie

It has been an “interesting” past month and half. My wife had the second of two hand surgeries, the last being the knockout punch in that we got to see what a no hands life might be like.

On top of that, during the second week of her second and toughest hand surgery recovery, my left knee started the initial process of deterioration – hello knee replacement!.

Within this context, in a conversation with a retired Russian Orthodox Abbot friend of mine, he brought me to Jesus. He said, among other things that are going on around you, “You„re in The Garden” and He won’t go to sleep on you.

Wouldn’t you know that the next chapter of my reading the Rule and commentary of Saint Benedict would happen to be Chapter 36: The Sick - Benedict says the care of the sick must rank above and before all else so that they may be truly served as Christ who said “I was sick and you visited me” (Matt. 25:36). To serve the sick and be patient with the sick is to serve Christ

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KATHLEEN P. RIVEST, PH.D., D.D.

MARION SCHOLAR
PUBLISHED AUTHOR
TV AND RADIO PERSONALITY

New Year's Resolutions



“I have to believe that were I to ask the Blessed Mother about her New Year’s resolutions, she would look at me quizzically”.

The history of making New Year resolutions reaches back to early Babylonians, possibly as far as 4000 years ago. Early Babylonians’ resolutions would usually involve returning borrowed farm equipment in order to start the year with a clean slate. Roman tradition involved asking forgiveness from their enemies and giving gifts. The Chinese practiced rituals they believed would chase away ghosts from the past.

Modern day Americans make resolutions designed to improve personal habits, such as diet and exercise, or to make better financial decisions. These resolutions are generally founded on short-term enthusiasm and are broken shortly after they are made.

The dictionary defines “resolution” as making a firm decision, or commitment, to do something. To “resolve” is to make up one’s mind. However, when considering these varying histories, it would seem that no one truly makes a commitment, a resolve, to stabilize any aspect of life.

I have to believe that were I to ask the Blessed Mother about her New Year’s resolutions, she would look at me quizzically. The entire concept of making one resolution this year and another one next year would be a foreign concept. Her parents, Anna and Joachim, demonstrated a lifetime of stability and commitment to God. Mary demonstrated this same commitment from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion. She did not waiver and had no need for rituals designed to create a clean slate or correct a bad personal habit.

Stability leads to conversion. Though Mary did not require conversion of heart to make her more submissive to God, her lifetime of stability converted her understanding of Him to be converted as the New Covenant was revealed in her Son.

Cistercians who honestly practice stability can participate in the same benefits as Our Lady. Stable Cistercians can and will grow in understanding of, and relationship with, God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And isn’t that all that matters? Everything else, whether joyful or painful, is simply temporary. Remain stable and faithful to God, the Order, your marriage, your calling, and you will grow in wisdom, joy and holiness.

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Dear Abbot what do you expect from God when you pray?

I am usually reticent to describe my personal prayer life lest it sound too much of me and not enough of God. Of course if the reader actually knew me they would know that for me everything is God. My second reservation is that this is my journey not another's. Certainly God leads and develops each of us somewhat uniquely so the reader does not have to try to duplicate anyone other's prayer life although there are many good models available, St. Benedict's for example.

To answer directly what do I expect from God when I come to prayer I first to give a preamble

I have been fortunate enough to have been raised by a stable loving Roman Catholic family. I attended a Roman Catholic seminary, have had a valuable formal and personal education in theology, Scripture, psychology, and have extensive training in various forms of prayer. God has directed me slowly and very lovingly over the fifty plus years of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, Lectio Divina, and Benedictine theology.

I have been blessed to have been immersed in a sacramental life filled with the Holy Eucharist, sacramental confession and ordination to the Priesthood and eventually to the Episcopate. I am in a loving marriage, a stable life, and am vowed religious.

Perhaps most importantly, I know that I have been and still am a grievous sinner who is unworthy to have been forgiving by a gracious God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to amend my life time and time again.

What I have learned is that I live in, with, and through God. That He is "Dominus Tecum", intimately close to me.

So what do I expect from God when I come to prayer? I expect nothing. My time of prayer is my gift of thanksgiving to Him as I grow daily to know my dependence on Him and His eager willingness to be with me.

My prayer continues throughout the day as I participate in His life. I find that he inspires and empowers me to more and more perfectly participate in His Kingdom.

I most experience Him when I celebrate the Holy Eucharist and hold the consecrated host in my hand.

I have mystical experiences not only during the Mass but when I pray with others for their needs. God has healed thousand through my prayers.

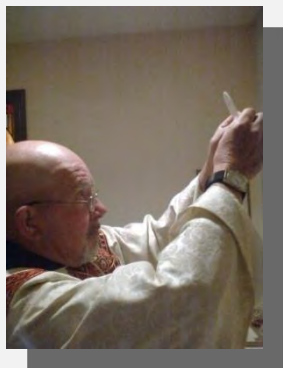
Lately I have experienced several occasions of a purging, torn apart, wailing, and being made new. I do not fully understand it but I know that in my "old age" He is preparing me for something very exciting.

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Sacramental Ministry, *God Speaks*

by Abbot Oscar Joseph



My dear priests let me begin by telling you how much you are loved by me and our Good Lord. We have confirmed you in the faith and sealed your souls with an everlasting seal that separates you from this world and brings you into our heavenly kingdom.

"Know to the depths of your soul that when you walk this earth you are also walking in the heavenlies. When you touch the afflicted I touch them also. You are Persona Christi not only when you celebrate the Great Thanksgiving but when you speak my words and raise my people up".

Lord, The Christ, has separated you out to not only represent Him but to be Him. You are no longer just a mortal man but a heavenly being here on this earth.

Put your cares aside and take care of His people. Baptize them. Invite them to prayer. Hear their confessions and free them from their sins. Give them Christ's body and blood; be at their sick beds and their graves. Where you go so do I.

You are not social workers. You feed with grace, body and blood, forgiveness. You sanctify this earth and those who walk upon it. Be bold you are not mere mortals.



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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.”



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The Most Rev. Archbishop Perry M. Ruby, Jr. Th.D. KCCG KROJ-OSJ Malta OCMA



A dear friend of Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO and the Cistercian Order Died November 12, 2019

++Perry and I were friends for over 25 years. If there could possibly be one word that would describe ++Perry it would be loyalty. He was an accomplished individual. I have enclosed just some of his accomplishments.

St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary
Associate Dean/Faculty

M.P.A. – Roosevelt University

B.S. HCA – George Washington University

Th.D – St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary

Archbishop, Order Celtic Missionary Apostolate (OCMA),
The Celtic Episcopal Church.

+Perry retired from the US Navy as a LCDR, Medical Service Corp.

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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.



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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 was founded 1981. 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.

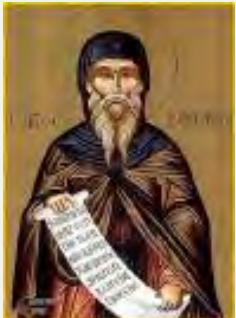
Our monks and oblates give sacrificially to their communities.

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.

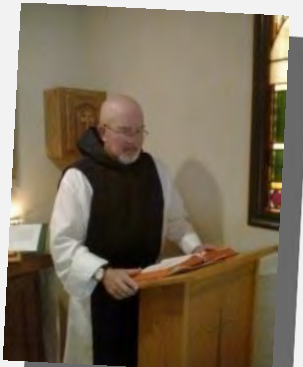
Br. Columcille, OCCO writes, *"I believe Cistercians, and all contemplatives to be the heart of the Church. Our intentions, made perfect through the Holy Spirit, support all of the apostolic work around the world. Perhaps the stars would fall from the sky were it not for men and women dedicated to a 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.



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Monks can also be deacons and priests



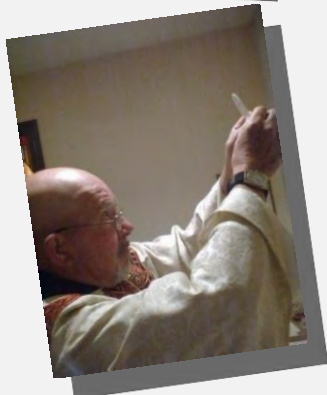
Deacon Monks can

- 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.

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From The Abbot:

Rather than list the qualities of the Cistercian Charism and discuss what we can do for you I am listing below some comments from members on what we have done for them.

“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.”

“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.”

“There were certain things that prayer, study, and scriptural research have convinced me are required in my own path. It was important for me that the order be contemplative, and that it adhered to the traditional orthodox teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I was not interested in joining an order that was too easy, or that bent over too far to be politically amenable. It was important to me that I would be well guided along the way.”

“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.”

“Each aspect of this humble expression is precious balm on hearts truly aching for closer union with the Lord. The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is an opportunity for a Spirit-led man or woman to become a true monk or nun in this revered tradition.”

“When I joined the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, the first thing that changed was my prayer life. Before, it was a life-less obligation, a burden my wife and I committed ourselves to pray at least the Morning and Evening Prayers and whenever time allows, to pray the other offices as well. This helped us to become more prayerful, teaching us to offer everything to God each day; referring to Him even the mundane things of our daily life. I started seeing myself opening more and more to my wife in terms of communication, becoming more forgiving and affirming. My relationship with the Lord started improving tremendously. Whereas before, obeying God is a duty, now it is a joy.”

Suspicious Signs of a Call to Contemplative Religious Life

Desire to grow in union with God through prayer. Love of God that manifests itself in a desire to give one's life to Him. Desire to live simply. The wish to live life with less stress and more order. Generosity. Ability to listen to others and accept direction when needed. Desire to worship God in all the moments of life.

Contact us immediately if these symptoms appear.

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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."

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*For more information contact
Abbot@bellsouth.net*