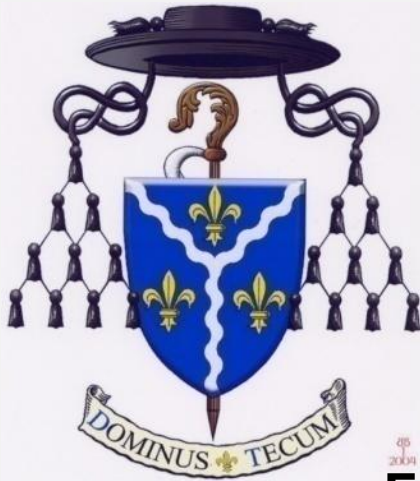


# Obsculta

"Listen with the ear of your heart."



## Celebrating Forty Years Ora et Labora



February 1981 - February 2021

**"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. Gentleness will lead others to God's eternal intent of true joy and freedom."**

**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**

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



# Celebrating Forty Years Ora et Labora

February 1981 - February 2021

If you are married or single, and believe that God is calling you to a closer life with Him... If you always wanted to be a monk, hermit, oblate, or priest but never thought you could because someone told you “no” or you thought it was impossible for some reason. We are here to help you fulfill your vocation.

Our typical member is a married working man/woman who is active in their church and community and who wants to advance in their spiritual life. Several of our members are advanced in age and have a physical disability.

We seek men who reside in the USA, with a call to priesthood through ordination or incardination and accept those who are currently bishops or priests who wish to stay in their existing jurisdictions

**“There is *no other group* that can lay claim to our holy foundation, structure and government, programs, membership, formation opportunities and requirements, not to mention our longevity at 40 years! The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance is alone in its legitimacy, tenacity, and excellence.”**



*Over the past twenty years God has spoken to me directly and often regarding the Cistercians.*

*He has always been encouraging.*

*Clearly He has sustained us through His grace.*

*Below our Good Lord's describes what He wants us to be.*

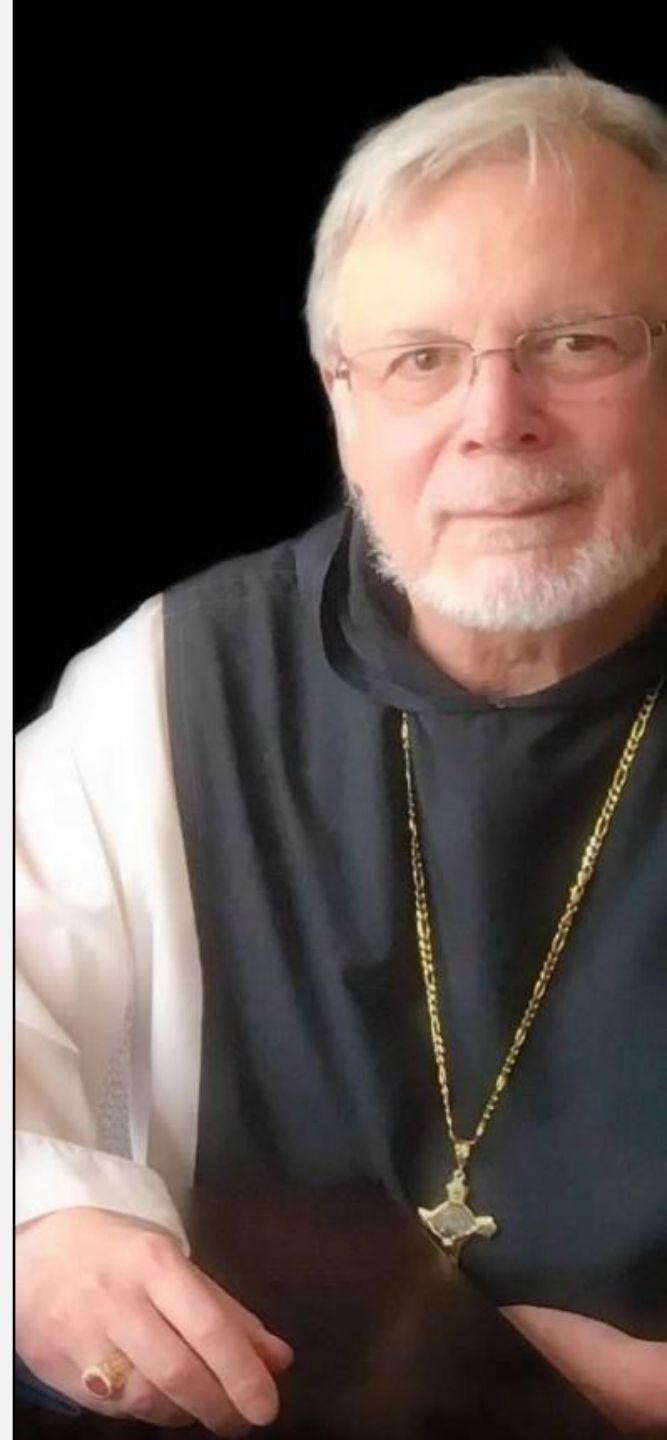
**“We, The Cistercians of the Holy Cross, are embedded icons, living sacramentals; who sustain, grace, and hold together the fiber of our communities. Our martyrdom is conversatio, stability and obedience.**

**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 Pax of our contemplative lives provides the necessary stillness to speak without words. The rhythm of ora et labora and the earnestness of our vows are our martyr’s cross.**

**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.**

**Gentleness will lead others to God’s eternal intent of true joy and freedom.”**







## Br. Columcille, OCCO+

Br. Columcille, OCCO+ was ordained to the Holy Priesthood of Christ in April of 2006 thus making him the very first monk in the Order to be ordained by a bishop of the Order.

In the photo on the right Rev. Br. Columcille, OCCO is giving ++ Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO his priestly blessing.

### Summary report of findings from research project commissioned by Lord Abbot General researched by Br. Columcille, OCCO+

As the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross approaches our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO++ asked for research regarding any other religious orders/communities based in the United States that are like ours. The following information sketches my methods and results.

There are approximately 140 internet search engines and web directories available today. I decided to limit myself to the five most commonly used in the United States: Google, Yahoo, Bing, Ask, and Duck Duck Go.

Then, I made a list of descriptors for our Order, our mission and the opportunities/services provided to members. These included (but were not limited to): *dispersed, non-residential, religious order/community, apostolic succession, Independent Anglican, Independent Catholic, conservative, monastic, monks, vowed religious, priests, ordination/incardination, brothers, sisters, novice, life-professed, formation, postulant, oblate, seminary/theological college, extern, rule, constitution, abbot.*

With these descriptors identified, I began the process of searching for them singularly, or in conjunction with one another, using my five search engines one at a time. I started with directories and continued on to individual sites. With the vast results, I limited my time for each group, concentrating on any "about us" information that could provide structure, membership and mission statements. I used this data in comparison with the aforementioned descriptor criteria related to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.



Continues on the following page

Over the course of about seventy hours, I collected, categorized, and edited a pool of religious groups. The vast majority of these groups were easily culled by failing to meet the key descriptors of our Order. Many were exclusively Roman Catholic or Anglican, etc. so failed in comparison to our more ecumenical membership. Others were extremely liberal, ordaining women to the priesthood, having no claim to apostolic succession, etc. These were removed when compared to our more conservative charism both socially and liturgically. Others failed by a lack of clear structure and/or mission statement. These were more like loose confraternities made up of mostly laypeople. More of a Third Order aspiration, but without any guiding Rule or discernable leadership. And of course, there were dozens of dead links and references to groups I could not find, or that had a severely outdated “cover page” and nothing else. One has to assume that these groups are now defunct, if they ever existed in the first place.

Lastly and sadly, there were the pretenders. And there were *a lot of them!* These groups usually had very few members and seemed more to be *role playing* at being monks, hermits, even priests and bishops. I shudder to think of the people they have misled into grievous spiritual harm.

**To conclude, I can proudly say this to you: Father Abbot, Brothers, Sisters, Oblates and friends; we are *unique*. There is *no other group* that can lay claim to our holy foundation, structure and government, programs, membership, formation opportunities and requirements, not to mention our longevity at 40 years! The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance is alone in its legitimacy, tenacity, and excellence.**

My God bless and protect this Order and all of the earnest, holy people who that make it our true spiritual home. Amen

*Dearest Brother Columcille, OCCO+ the Cistercians will always be grateful for your labor of love and faithfulness.*

In the  
beginning  
1981



Fr. Veal and Bishop Mote



Now our Abbot General  
since 1997

++Oscar Joseph, OCCO

February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1981 the statutes and rule governing the Oblates of the Order of St. Benedict were presented to six postulants by Sister Eileen Waddle, OHT (Order of the Holy Trinity) in the presence of Rt. Rev. James Mote, Bishop of the Diocese of the Holy Trinity, Anglican Catholic Church (ACC). Present at this meeting were: Flora Runyon, Jenny Moon, Larry Gomez, Evelyn Bartree, Sally Farrow and Bernice Reed. The date of investiture was set for March 19, 1981, St. Joseph's Day, in St. Mary's Church, Denver, Colorado. The Rev. Eric W. Veal was the receiving priest.

Novices were instructed to wear habits at all meetings, synods, processions and any major feasts as directed by Sister Eileen, Directress of Oblates. Habits for Oblates consisted of a full scapular, black in color, with the symbol of the double Trinity in white on the breast, a white cincture, and for women novices, a white veil. Under the clothing a jubilee medal of St. Benedict was to be worn at all times; on the outside a crucifix and attached to the cincture a rosary. One year and one day after investiture of novices, Oblates presented themselves for final profession, renewing this oblation once each year on the anniversary of their profession.

Candidates Larry Gomez, Bernice Reed and Flora Runyon were received after Mass during a simple ceremony as the first Oblates of the Order of St. Benedict.



By the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene 1981 there were eleven Oblates. See Bishop Mote in center background.

*Right foreground is Bernice Reed. Years later she will become Mother Superior Benedicta. It was she who passed the leadership on to Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO. Abbot General of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. Consequently the leadership of the current Order goes back to the very beginnings although the names and the people have changed.*



February 1984 Archbishop Louis Falk, ACC, Anglican Catholic Church, regularized the Oblates as the Society of the Common Life, Preserving the Rule of St. Benedict. Rt. Rev. William O. Lewis, ACC agreed to be the Episcopal visitor

Over the years Mother Benedicta held firm to the Order's heritage and goals despite the turmoil in the Anglican church and the culture surrounding it.

Abbot Oscar Joseph proclaimed her to forever be honored as the "Mother of our Congregation".

We have been faithful not only to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict and our progenitors but to our treasured Anglo-Catholic heritage.

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



**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance**, is 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."





**The “We Got Your Back Program” was inspired by Br. Benedict, OCCO.**

***Br. Benedict often said, "Miracles are always happening because God loves you. He's got your back."***

Br. Benedict was a life professed Cistercian monk who went on to heaven on September 13, 2018.

He was an exceptionally holy monk. Br. Benedict was humorous, captivating and a dear lover of our Lord.

His wife, Alexis, describes Br. Benedict as “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.”

**In loving memory of Br. Benedict and our love for the Cistercian Order we have founded**

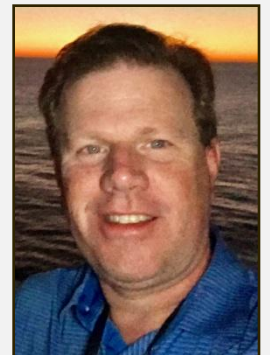
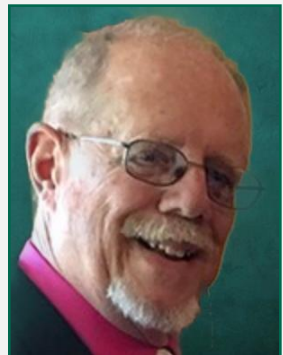
### **The “We Got Your Back Program”**

#### **Four areas of support**

- Spiritual Support
- Enrichment Support
- Making Life Easier Support
- Financial Support

This program is also available to the Independent Anglican Church, Canada Synod clergy and families.

***These are Your Volunteers***





# ***The Cistercians honor their members and friends in a number of ways.***

## **Honorary Doctoral Degrees**

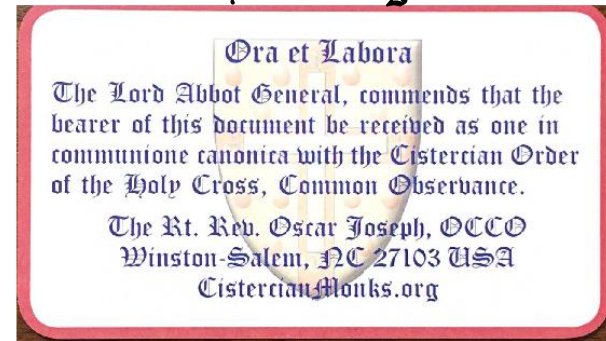
St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary offer these degrees for the purpose of rewarding or advancing outstanding persons. Honorary degrees may be awarded to a person deserving of honor by virtue of scholarly distinction, noteworthy public service or significant contribution to the church at large.

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

Is 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.

**If you are interested in receiving our blessings please contact Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO for more information.**

## **Sacred membership cards that have an Apostolic Blessing**



This Identification card celebrates and honors your association with the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. Whether you are a life vowed member or a valued friend of the Order please know that I embrace each of you and dispense upon you the riches of the Lord's blessings.

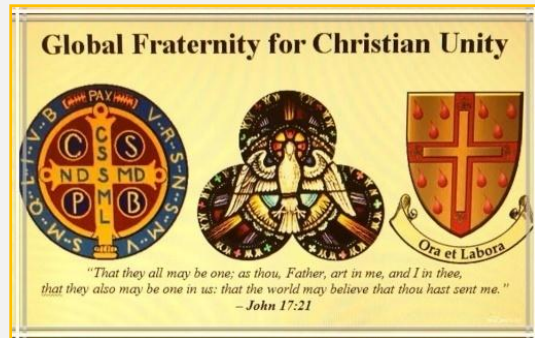
I pray that this document will remind you of our shared life of prayer, work and that you are in a communion of persons who celebrate a common faith and discipline, The Rule of St. Benedict.

I further authorize The Cistercian Order's vowed and promised members to honor their valued friends who have shown such affection for our work with this same sign of communion.

I have blessed this document with Holy Water and my Apostolic Blessing thus making it a sacred source of grace for you and reception of St. Benedict's protection.

**The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross sponsors two FaceBook Groups.  
Each group consists of 500+ active members. The groups are closely monitored to stay mission focused.**

**We invite you and your friends to participate**

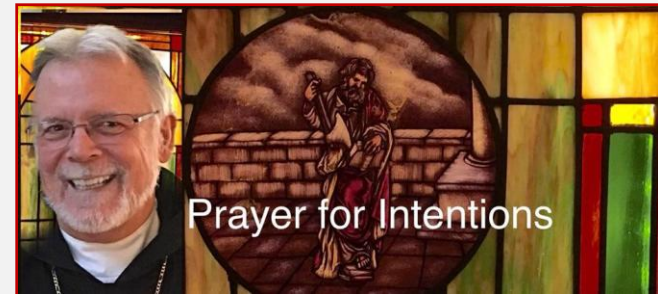


This group offers a private forum for MEMBERS ONLY In order to provide a venue of encouragement for continued spiritual formation of individuals and groups invested in the discipline of prayer in a safe environment free of criticism.

We are encouraged to develop personal prayer lives for the purpose of spiritual personal and corporate growth in unity with God and each other.

For more information about The Global Fraternity for Christian Unity please go to [CistercianMonks.org](http://CistercianMonks.org). and click the link to the Global Fraternity.

**This is a one of a kind program for  
Christian Unity**



Prayer For Intentions/Global Fraternity of Christian Unity

An online ministry of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

Prayers for sincerely personal needs.

This group has a supportive family environment.

Where "strangers" sincerely pray and give support.

**I cannot compliment this group enough. If you need  
prayer or wish to be a prayer partner with others  
please join.**

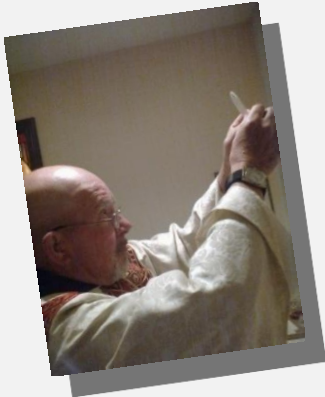
***Both groups have ministered for over two years.***

# 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. We adhere to 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.

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

***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.”*

*“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.  
[Abbot@bellsouth.net](mailto:Abbot@bellsouth.net)**



# 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, 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](mailto:Abbot@bellsouth.net)*