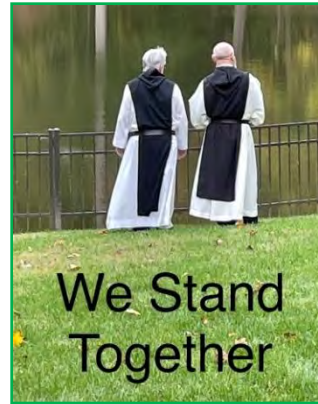


Obsculta

“Listen with the ear of your heart.”

March 2022

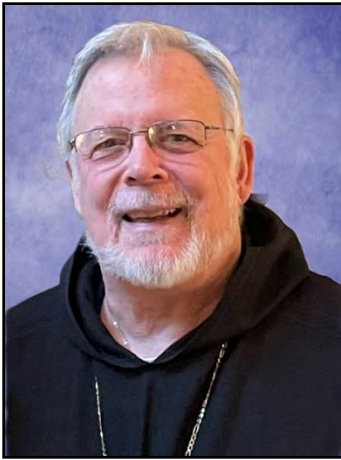


“Gratitude will open our souls to the unity of God, self, and others. Gratitude moves us from limitations and fear to expansion and love. Gentleness will lead others to God’s eternal intent of true joy and freedom.”

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

Celebrating Forty One Years



Celebrating 25 Years of Abbot's Service

Dear Cistercians and friends:

It is hard to imagine twenty-five years! They have been years of personal growth beyond my imagination.

In the beginning I remember asking God what He would have me do. The Divine infusion of information was beyond my understanding. Fortunately, I was surrounded by others who inspired, clarified, and helped me put it all together. God told me that the Cistercians would be to the USA what the monasteries were to Europe during its dark ages.

Subsequently, we have been called leaders in the Benedictine movement in the USA.

Recently the Priory of the Holy Eucharist has joined us. Its mission is to train and ordain Cistercian priests. More holy prayerful priests are drastically needed.

"By 2020, there will be about 31,000 Roman Catholic priests--and only 15,000 will be under the age of 70. Right now, there are more priests aged 80 to 84 than there are aged 30 to 34. By 2020, a quarter of all parishes, 4,656, will have no priest. The religious orders will soon be virtually non-existent in the United States." Information is taken from Kenneth Jones' Index of Leading Catholic Indicators.

I pray daily that our Order will grow in numbers and holiness. God is powerfully using us.



Celebrating 25 Years of Abbot's Service Janice Ariza OCCO/Obl



Thank you, dear Abbot, for giving 25 years of devoted leadership and service to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

There are so many ways you have blessed all of us with your listening ear and heart of gold.

I am so grateful to my son-in-law, Br. Benedict Thiessen, O.C.C.O., for seeking you out as his pastor, teacher, and friend that I now may have you in my own life.

Br. Benedict used to say, "Stick with the Abbot. He is the real deal."

I certainly have found that you are a genuinely kind and caring man of God.

Thank you for being there for me and my family.





Celebrating 25 Years of Abbot's Service **By Rev. Br. Raphael, OCCO+**



Many congratulations to Abbot Oscar Joseph on his 25th Anniversary as Abbot of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.

As the most recent solemnly professed member of the Order, I have less experience than all of you of the accomplishment represented in this anniversary. However, I've been lurching around the planet long enough (72 yrs) that I can extrapolate and gain some idea of the scope of his accomplishment in guiding the Order for a quarter century, especially during the times in the life of the Church and of our society that we are undergoing.

Such dedication, in any field of endeavor, deserves recognition and expressions of gratitude from those touched by it.

But we know there is much more involved when it comes to apostolic work. It comes less from ability, ambition, or personal desire than from direct commission from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "By their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20).

Those of us who are observing this anniversary will have known a few prelates in our long struggles in discipleship. They come in all shapes and sizes and bring to our encounters with them varying degrees of the experience of wisdom, grace and compassion, or betimes of its blistering absence.

Bishops and Abbots are human beings and disciples raised to the heavy and fearful responsibilities of apostles. Our beloved Oscar Joseph leaves no doubt in one's mind of his divine calling, his apostolic zeal, pastoral love, and holy wisdom. God has blessed the Order with an anointed pastor. God grant him many years with us. I am thankful from my heart to serve with him in the Church, out here on its borders, with the absolute minimum of institutional malaise, where the air is fresh and bracing, in independence and freedom to follow God's lead as each of us discerns it. Again, to our Most Reverend Oscar Joseph, God grant him Many Years.



Welcome Rev. Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO Priory of The Holy Eucharist Pastor of Trinity Chapel (Nebraska)

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” -John 15:5

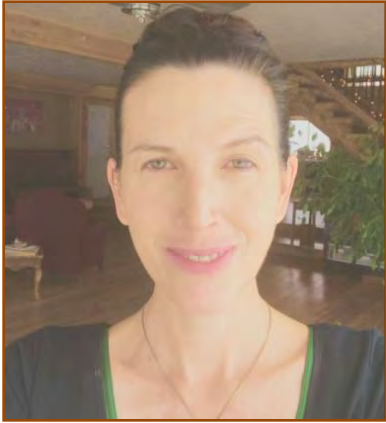
When I started my journey to the Priesthood I had no idea where our Blessed Lord would lead me on this path. All I knew was as long as I remained following him, that the path though difficult, would lead to places I never could've imagined. I've been on two U.S. pilgrimages (Alaska and California) and I've had the blessing of speaking to crowds all across the United States about being a Young Priest and also giving my life totally to God in the 21st Century.

The freedom I feel since coming to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is indescribable. I feel like I have finally found the place where I fit in in the world and I've found a family that genuinely wants to see me succeed and does not criticize me when I admit I don't know something. It's another blessing from Our Lord and for that reason and many other reasons I don't believe in coincidences because God tells us he has a plan.

While my mission has not changed, the opportunity for growth is astronomical. I cannot thank His Excellency, Abbot Oscar Joseph for providing me with the opportunity of a lifetime. I know that there are men of all ages who were told they would never have the opportunity to become a Priest because of (*insert reason here*), but in a world where accepting that you've been called to Holy Orders couldn't be more countercultural, the world needs to hear the message that the time to work in God's Vineyard is now.

I look forward to our journey together as part of the vine.

Welcome to our new Postulants



Greetings fellow Cistercians I am Marguerite McKenna. The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross came to my attention while seeking a practical avenue through which to offer my devotion to Christ. I have long been struck by the role monasteries play in the preservation of Christian culture including and especially during times of social change. As the world outside is “re-set” to accord with globalist ideology I reasoned, so too may one’s inner life be transfigured to accord with the singular event of Christ’s deed on Golgotha

In commencing my year of postulancy, I hope to deepen the peace of our LORD, Jesus Christ within me. With your prayers and support I aim also to strengthen the inner discipline needed to sustain it.

I look forward to Christian fellowship within the Order, to exploration of Saint Benedict’s rule in personal practice, and to more fully uniting with the spirit of monasticism in the years to come.+

Greetings to you all in the most holy Name of Jesus! My name is Allen Yount. I am 57 years old. I live in Greeley, Colorado with my lovely wife of almost 18 years Nicki.



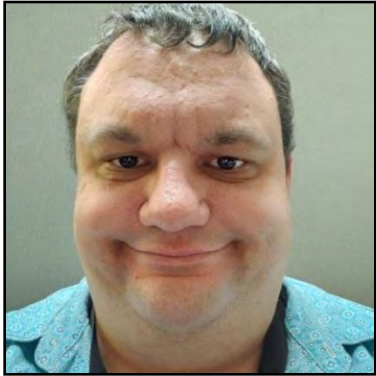
I'm a "Pastor's Kid," the son of a pastor in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. I myself am an ordained pastor in the LCMS like my dearly departed Dad, although I haven't been in active Ministry since 2009.

I have become strongly drawn to Benedictine spirituality in the past several years. It did take a while to get past what I was TAUGHT the Rule of St Benedict said to being able to read what it REALLY said. Then I encountered golden passages like: "Never despair of the MERCY of God." Time passed,

I started to feel like God was calling me to become an Oblate. So I searched for opportunities. Then an opportunity found ME. I was Facebook friends with the Lord Abbot General Oscar Joseph, who after reading a number of my posts, personally invited me to apply to become an Oblate. Talk about opportunities! But God was not done there.

After receiving my application, on a video call with me and my wife, the Abbot General told me to my astonishment and to my delight, that not only could I become an Oblate, but in my life station I could actually enter the pathway towards becoming a monk. And so, brothers and sisters in Christ, here I am today, completely unworthy, blessed beyond words, a new Postulant.

Welcome to our new Oblate Postulants



Hello friends and fellow Cistercians! My name is Brian Caley and I recently joined the Cistercian order as an Oblate in my year of Postulancy. I joined the Order because I felt God was calling me to deepen my spiritual life and further advance my devotion to Him and His ways. I am looking forward to what this journey holds for me.

So a few things about me....I am a cradle Catholic who left the Church and came back 5 years ago after a powerful reversion experience. Since then I have been doing all I can to get closer to God. My search has led me to take up the path of becoming a spiritual director through Mayslake Ministries. God willing I will be graduating in June of this year. I have learned much about spiritual direction over the past 5 months and looking forward to learning as much as I possibly can about the subject.

When I am not studying for spiritual direction I am spending time with my lovely wife Ruth, reading, gardening, or I am at my day job as a Systems Administrator. I have been in the IT field for 23 years and have worked a myriad of jobs over the years.

I live in Dover Pennsylvania and attend Immaculate Heart of Mary church in Abbotstown. My patron saint is Charbel Makhlof. My favorite spiritual book is Life of Christ by Blessed Fulton Sheen. I am an Iraq war vet; I spent 8 years in the Army as a cable systems technician. +



Greetings fellow Cistercians I am Jay Van Norman. I met Abbot Oscar Joseph a little over four years ago when I was going through a very challenging period in my life. He introduced me to the Rule of St. Benedict and the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross. He became my spiritual director in late 2019 and he has been a light unto my path, leading me to know, love and serve God better. At his invitation, I made my oblate promises in January.

My desire at this point in my life is to grow in my awareness of the presence of Christ every where that I go, in everything that I do and in everyone that I meet. I have great faith and trust that my association with the Order will help me to do just that.

I live near Winston-Salem, North Carolina just a few miles from our Abbot's home and our monastery. My wife, Karen, and I have been married for almost 29 years and we have two grown children (boy and a girl) who live nearby. I just turned 70 (which is an undeniable fact even though I don't feel a day over 45) and I recently retired from a 40-year career in banking. I'm enjoying the transition away from the work-a-day world and into the slower pace of life in retirement. My days are full with reading, praying, studying, spending time with Karen, visiting with friends and neighbors and by serving my local church through the music ministry, financial administration and leading a vision navigation team.



Father Joachim Seeger, Ph.D., D.D. OCCO/Obl

Am I living my life? About the fullness in holiness

As you get older, you think about your life. Have I achieved what I could have achieved? Am I on the right path? How should I use my remaining time? Getting older should mean growing in inner freedom. Who would trade inner progress for youth?

Our life is like a knotted carpet. It needs a lot of knots if it is to be colorful. Knots are ugly. However, we only see the carpet from behind during weaving. Only at the end of life does God show us our miracle of life. Is our longing still awake for a successful life that is beautiful in the eyes of God?

Actually, it's quite simple: Our goal is to become holy in our current state. To become holy means to live perfect love. Holiness is not a copy – the holier it is, the more “original” a person becomes. Because the Holy Spirit works very differently in people, because people are different.

What does this holiness look like that we should strive for? A 7-year-old girl said, “A saint is someone who has their heart fully opened to God.” And a 10-year-old said, “A saint is someone who is like Christ.” How does that work? Holiness begins with wanting to get better. The Boy Scouts say, “Today I want to do better than yesterday, and tomorrow better than today.” We let go of the bad and reach out to the divine. A saint is a forgiving sinner who keeps coming back to God. He is like a child who gets up immediately and lets his father treat him. Passive people say, “Holiness is: God does everything, I can't do it myself.” Active people say, “I do everything, I'll get started right away.” Both have to learn: working for the kingdom of God is necessary; but the power we have to do this comes from God, we have to acknowledge that. The passive is on the beach waiting for a boat. The active paddles like crazy. The right way is comparable to a surfboard: You stand on the board and wait for the wind. Anyone who has tried it knows that standing on the surfboard also requires a certain amount of skill. The “Surfer” is ready, exposes himself to God...and lets himself be carried. Whoever wants to be great should be your servant. Holiness is attractive.

Holiness is the most beautiful face of the Church. But she also attracts evil tongues. One rubs oneself against holiness. In this way the saints become the shining sign of God's love in the world.



Fr. Kevin J. Fletcher and his wife Kim are outstanding people. The Good Father is helping the Cistercians on an important ministry so I thought that you would like to meet him.

Hello, my name is Kim. I am a Deacon for the St. Nicholas Catholic Church in America. I would like to introduce you to my husband: Fr. Kevin J. Fletcher. He is a priest for the St. Nicholas Catholic Church in America. We are under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Michael Callahan, O.C.R. However, he is also Santa Claus, and I am his Mrs. Claus.

We have an outreach ministry from our home, and being Santa is a big part of our ministry.

It's not all about the toys and presents those children ask for at Christmas. It is about being Present as a Christian. While Santa is all about Christmas, and helping children to get their wish list granted, we are also about making sure that children know that without Jesus, there is no reason for the season.

Over the years, we have had many opportunities to witness the miracles of Christmas.

One child in particular asked Santa for something special. They wanted nothing more than for their father to be home for Christmas. You see, their father had been deployed overseas and normally would not have been home till after Christmas.. Santa was able to contact the base from which this young father had been deployed from and talk to their commander and told him who he was and the hope that the young man could be home for Christmas for that young child. It was to be granted.

In 2020, Santa would be at Cabela's in Avon, Ohio and would also be able to visit a family with a child that had special needs around Christmas, who were unable to afford anything at Christmas.

This child was five years old and had never met Santa Claus. He had been born with many health issues and had spent the majority of his young life in hospitals and he was ready to meet Santa by 2020. We visited with this family and their special five-year-old little boy. He was overjoyed and his Grandmother was overjoyed and tearful as she saw what was going on. When we got into our car that night after our visit, Santa and Mrs. Claus broke down and cried tears of joy.

There have been many times that while out as Santa and Mrs. Claus, that people have seen something in us, and they come up to us and ask if we would pray with them or for them, in their time of need. We are always happy to do so.

We have had children that only ask for peace within their families. We have been blessed with being in the right place at the right time. When they say that "God Works in Mysterious Ways", that is so true! He Truly is a great mystery!!!



Brother Elias Rivas OCCO

Sexuality in the Bible. A book that presents us with how to approach sexuality in connection with spirituality without prejudice and in accordance with the message expressed by the various authors that make up the various biblical texts in a simple and taboo-free way. Through it, the author takes us on a historical journey in its different contexts, demolishing myths and confusing concepts around sex as a grace from God for the exaltation of Love.

When you don't have time to think about God...

Brother Elias Rivas. OCCO



Too little to think about God...



Too young and strong to think about God...



Too happy to think about God...



Too tired to think about God...

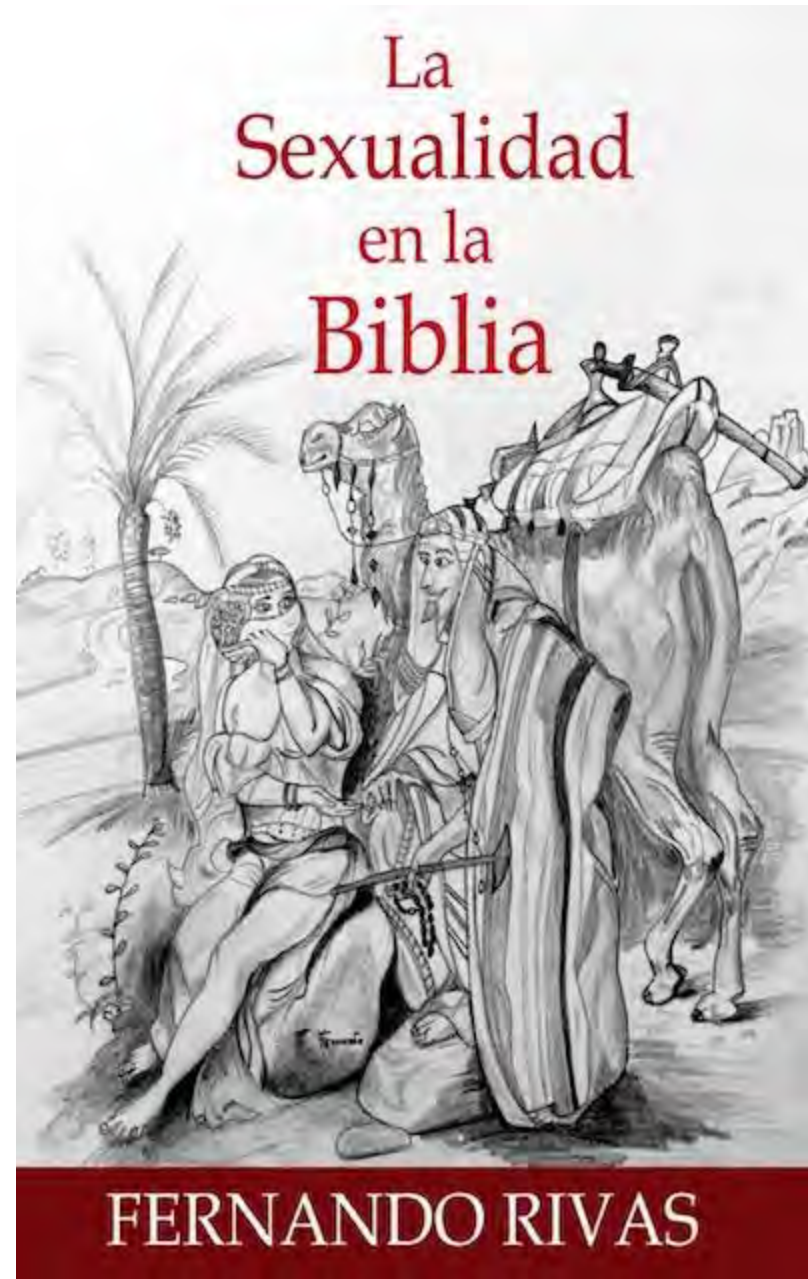


To busy to think about God...



Too late to think about God...

I used a Spanish to English translator app on an eBook version of Br. Elias book. I can endorse it as an excellent scholarly presentation. Well worth the read. Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO





Spiritual Joy

How to live and maintain a joy filled prayer life.

By Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO



A short video series

Forgiveness from God

Forgiving Others

What is Human Love Really?

Guilt

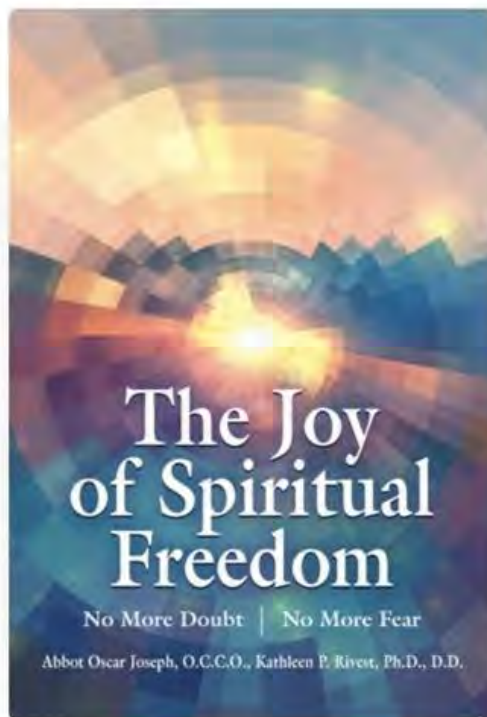
How to Maintain a Prayerful Life

The Rule of St. Benedict

Perfectionism

Praying the Scriptures

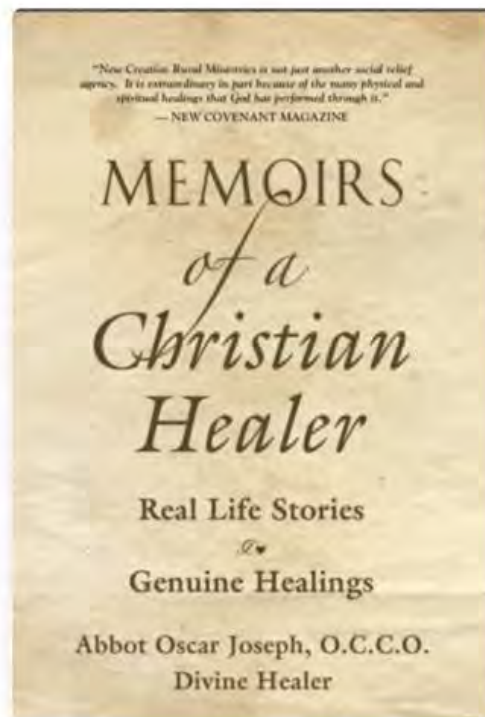
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8997874>



The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

No More Doubts | No More Fear

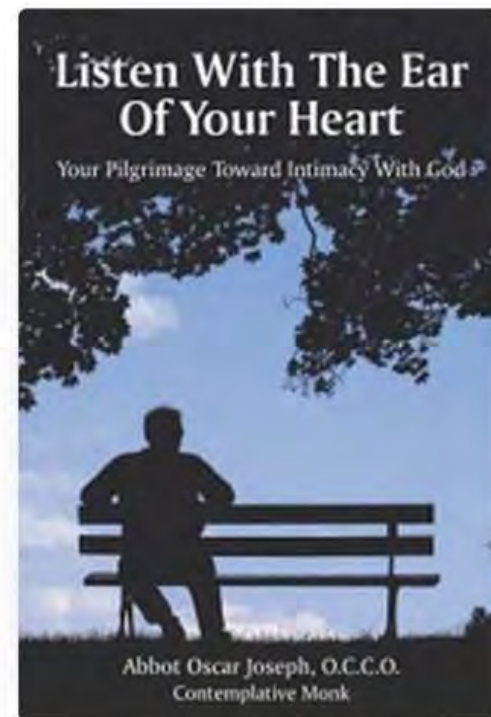
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate the Gospel path toward freedom.



Memoirs of a Christian Healer

Real Life Stories | Genuine Healings

Memoirs of a Christian Healer chronicles the miraculous works of God. You will experience the joy of victory and the sorrow of human weakness. Incorporated within the many stories the Abbot includes reflective lessons on the Healing Ministry. The many stories are of real people and genuine healings.



Listen with the Ear of Your Heart

Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy with God

God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

For more information on 20% discount and Newsletter go to
www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com



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

For detailed information go to; www.CistercianMonks.org



These are Your Volunteers



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.



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

There are several new videos available. Check them out.

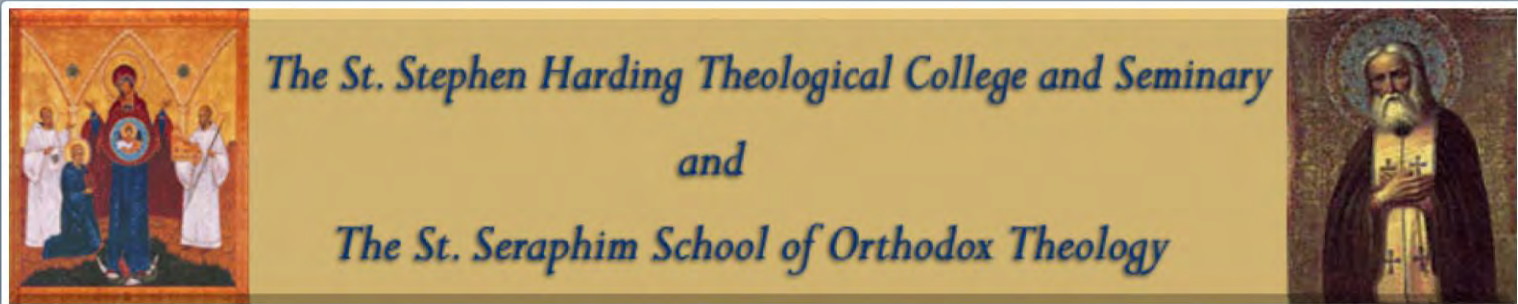
The Abbot is really funny in some of these videos.

Can you believe it?

www.vimeo.com/Cistercian

Two NEW teachings on Sexuality

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



St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary welcomes students to a wide variety of degrees, programs, licensing, and continuing educational opportunities. For more information go to:
www.StephenHarding.College

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*