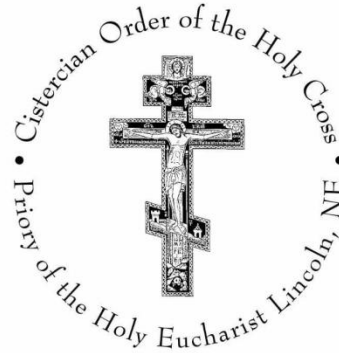


# Obsculta

“Listen with the ear of your heart.”



**Forty- one Years  
Serving the Lord**



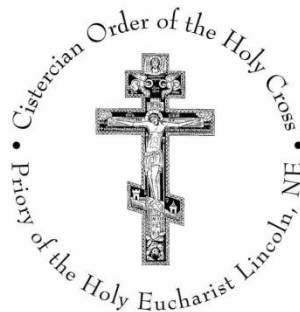
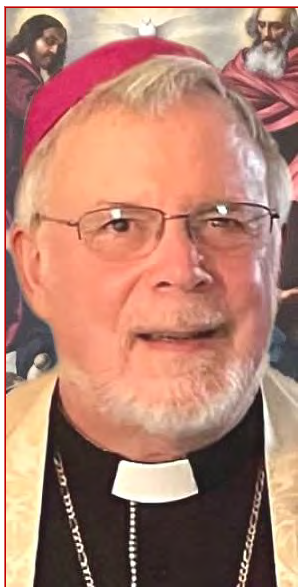
**December 2022**

**“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.”**

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)



Dear Cistercians and friends:

This year certainly was filled with prayers and sacramental life including Baptisms, an ordination, hundreds of Masses being celebrated and thousands of hours in personal and community prayer. We celebrated my twentieth anniversary of my Episcopate. I believe that our Good Lord is pleased with our efforts. Our fire for Divine intimacy has a new flame.

**We have improved our Postulant and Oblate formation program and added three new Spiritual Directions programs.**

I encourage everyone, regardless of your spiritual maturity, to read the texts in the Postulant/Oblate program. I have done so and they have brought me back to the basics of the Cistercian charism. The going back was really a going forward . It lit a new and brighter flame for our vocation. That flame inspired the article on opportunity and a revisiting the meaning of our vows. You will find them in this Obsculta.

**Everyday I can feel the supportive presence of God, our membership, and those we have served.**

**The Cistercian Shop is now opened .** Our membership can now purchase several items with our Blessed Shield displayed on them and informally show the honor and pride we all share in the Cistercian Order. There is more information in this Obsculta.

**Religious life is not an extra, not a luxury, not a peculiar path for exceptional souls in the pursuit of Christian perfection.**

**One doesn't enter the religious state because he is holy but because he wants to become holy.**

***Religious Vocation: An Unnecessary Mystery, By Fr. Richard Butler, O.P.***



## ***An Important message from the Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO Page 1/4***



I was recently asked: Do residential monastics offer more opportunities for spiritual maturity than external monastics?

During my seven years of residential monastic-style living, I used to think one needs to be in the monastery for real spiritual growth. When I stepped out into the world, my eyes were opened.

Each charism has unique perspectives, goals, and methodologies; thus, it is impossible to say whether a residential monastic life is more valuable than a nonresidential one. Throughout much of Christian history, both groups have been present and have contributed to the kingdom of God according to their missions.

If you stood two men with true contemplative, monastic vocations, one residential and the other external, together, their vocal style, vocabulary, and experiences would quickly identify the one living behind the walls and who was living in the world.

The question is not answered based on one's presentation, appearance, or missionary work. Rather we must examine which monastic environment produces the opportunity for a more mature spirituality, external or residential.

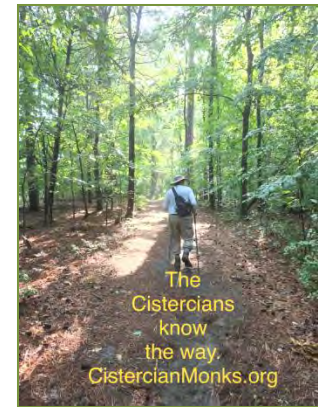
### **What is spiritual maturity?**

Using the model found in the Rule of St. Benedict, we might say that the more spiritually mature individual would be willing to listen wholeheartedly to God and others and act on it through stability, obedience, and conversatio. The behaviors of which are illustrated in the chapters 4, and 7 in the Rule of St. Benedict.

The Rule of Saint Benedict is the practical application of the Holy Scripture. It operates from within, like yeast, inspiring and enabling change.



## ***An Important message from the Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO Page 2/4***



### **Define the different environments.**

Benedictine/Cistercian residential monks usually live in a protected, disciplined environment that gives them the necessary direction and support to mature spirituality. They are aided by a clear structure of disciplines and authority to help them process personal and corporate conflicts. They are also influenced by the community's particular limitations, prejudices, and frailties.

The external monk has to face and conquer the harsh realities of life, countless relationships, marriage, financial failure, and perhaps hunger and loneliness.

These trials are often within a wide variety of communities such as family, employment, and church, with their particular limitations, prejudices, and frailties.

These broader and more threatening life experiences give the external monk more significant opportunities to listen, exercise his vows, and live humbly with a greater capacity to love than those residing in a monastery.

### **How do the external monks accomplish this positive growth without an already existing residential structure?**

Those who come to us seeking to be first order monks or oblates have frequently survived many hardships. They are responding to a God inspired yearning for a simpler Spirit filled life which is focused on the God who has already taught them about courage and true charity. Their only yearning is for humble, prayerful service.

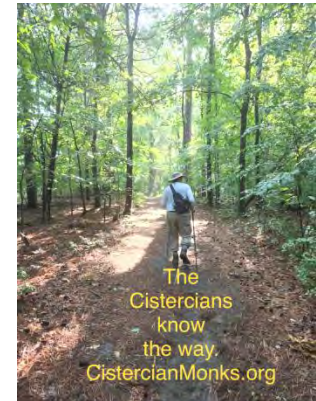
External monks model, but do not attempt to duplicate, the residential monastic lifestyle. Instead, while living in a heretic and often threatening world, they create an environment pleasant to God that will sustain a life of prayerful listening and provide the opportunity for spiritual growth/maturity.

The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross provides an extensive detailed Manual of readings, writings, reflections, and disciplines that teach the Benedictine/Cistercian way. Each person receives mentorship and support. Our members feel part of a contemplative community.





## **An Important message from the Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO Page 3/4**



We are incredibly thankful for our Orthodox residential monastery. They have developed a deep spirituality among themselves, the people to whom they minister and have been a real asset in guiding the externals.

A rather famous residential Cistercian monk was asked which population had more miracles, those living in our outside of the monastery. He said, "those living outside the monastery because they need them more." He recognized the difficulties of pursuing a religious life in the world.

These are God's very words describing what God has called The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance 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.***

***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.***

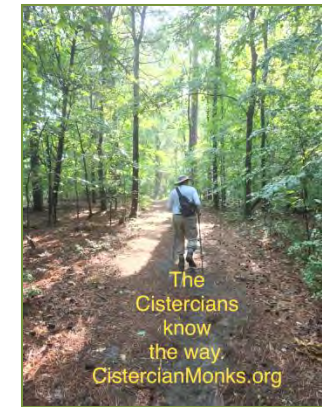
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross has thrived in our Good Lord's grace for forty-one years. That makes us the oldest external dispersed religious order of our kind in the United States.

We have helped hundreds of people who in turn have helped thousands to mold their difficult opportunities into moments of emotional and spiritual growth.

We are receiving applications from the Americas. For more information go to: [www.CistercianMonks.org](http://www.CistercianMonks.org)



## An Important message from the Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO Page 4/4



The Abbot General of the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Oscar Joseph, OCCO, Ph.D., D.S.T. writes:

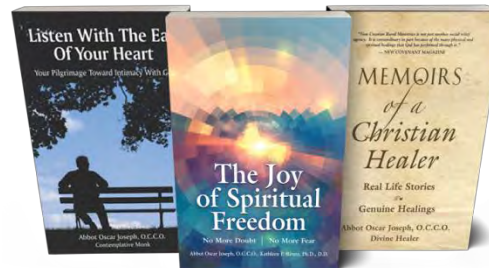
During the past 40 years soliciting God's Good Grace and the wisdom of the Rule of St. Benedict I have helped untold numbers of anxiously wounded people move from chaos to order, brokenness to wholesomeness, and earth bound to seeking the Divine. Difficulties rightly utilized can become opportunities.

*"My brothers, consider it a great joy when trials of many kinds come upon you, for you well know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must complete its work so that you will become fully developed, complete, not deficient in any way."*  
James 1:2-4

*"Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that hardship develops perseverance, and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope."* Romans 5:3-4

Recently I wrote a book, using the Benedictine/Cistercian model, on how to create a healthy interior life while living in a world that is contrary to anything spiritual.

*Listen with the Ear Of Your Heart, Your Pilgrimage Toward Intimacy With God.* For more information on this book and others go to: [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)





***“Be still and know that I am God.”***  
***by***  
***Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO+***



As we move closer to Advent and Christmastide there is no doubt there are a lot of people in the world who feel lost and defeated especially after the last several years of Civil and Political unrest in the world. However as a young Cistercian Monk and Priest it never ceases to amaze me when I see God move in small, large, and mysterious ways even in the midst of Chaos. For instance, my Aunt Donna was diagnosed with Stage Four Lymphoma earlier this year and for much of the year my Grandparents have spent copious hours on the phone, and traveling back and forth between Nebraska and Florida to bring my Aunt as much comfort as possible so that she could spend the rest of her days in peace. In all of that chaos, I spent hours in prayer praying for the intercession of Saint Peregrine to heal or at least slow the progress of my Aunt Donna's cancer, I invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary under the name of Our Lady of Sorrows, and Our Blessed Lord kept repeating to me, “Be still and know that I am God.”

While I fully understand what Our Blessed Lord meant in that statement, I must admit that I am a natural worrier. But when you have a Grandmother who borders on Saintly, from a young age you have “worry ends where faith begins,” drilled into your head by the time you reach 18 years old. Earlier this week, my Aunt Donna called with her Oncologist on the phone, and the Doctor said, “Donna's cancer is in full remission, it's a miracle.”

This same woman hadn't undergone any chemotherapy or any other treatment to treat her cancer, and just when you think things were getting bleak, God moves. She was completely healed from her cancer, and though she still lives with Lupus she has found a new appreciation for life. So as we prepare for Advent and Christmastide remember that we have much to be thankful for even when things seem like they are coming to a disastrous end I remind you of the words that Our Blessed Lord spoke to me, “Be still and know that I am God.”



## My First Year as Priest: By Br. Raphael, OCCO+



Abbot Oscar Joseph asked me for a few thoughts on my experience of the first year of priesthood. I received solemn vows and ordination to the priesthood in late October of 2021. As a hermit living in retirement, I say Mass in solitude. After early experimentation with traditional and contemporary Anglican and Roman liturgies, I settled on the Tridentine rite in English as the one best adapted to solitary celebration. I celebrated daily for the first 6 weeks, and after that on Sundays and on two to three days during the week. It took me more than 10 months before I felt that I had truly prayed my way into the Holy Liturgy. Three prayers served as my doorway into such a sense of “worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24):

A short prayer at the foot of the altar steps that initiates the Liturgy of the Catechumens: “Put away our iniquities far from us, O Lord, we beseech thee, that with pure minds we may be worthy to enter into the Holy of holies.”

The prayer immediately after the consecration of both elements: “Wherefore, O Lord, we also thy servants and thy holy people, being mindful . . .”

The prayer immediately after the Post communion: “Let my bounden duty and service be pleasing unto thee . . . a propitiation of thy loving-kindness.”

The first prayer hits one with a sense of shock at what we are being asked to do: to enter the “Holy of holies” which under the Old Law only the High Priest could enter once a year in a purity attained on pain of death. Such is the priceless access that Christ affords in grace to each of us as we approach the invocation of his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

The second prayer also reminds us of what it means to be present at the Holy Sacrifice. In witnessing the Eucharistic making-present of his once-for-all self-offering on the Cross, we truly realize, make real, our identity as his Holy People.

The third prayer confirms that we have partaken in Christ’s opening of the gates of the Father’s heart, releasing the outpouring of mercy whereby his love once again flows into us, as in our primordial memory of blessedness.

These prayers spoke to me somehow in a personal way: challenging, teaching, healing. From the invitation they issued, I was able to make my way gradually more and more into the truly wholesome action we perform in our participation in this Most Blessed of the Sacraments.





The Abbot writes: I had some rather moving experiences that I thought you might appreciate.

A young couple approached us to bless their home and rid them of evil spirits that periodically show up. We interviewed them at length, during which time they expressed a desire to be water baptized and lead a Christian lifestyle. We gave them some education. They would be baptized the next day during Mass.

During the entrance rite, I saw the heavens open and experienced the joy of two lost sheep being found. It was a wonderful baptism and reception of the Holy Eucharist.

Immediately after, we drove to their home and performed a powerful blessing and exorcism. The couple experienced new freedom in their home.

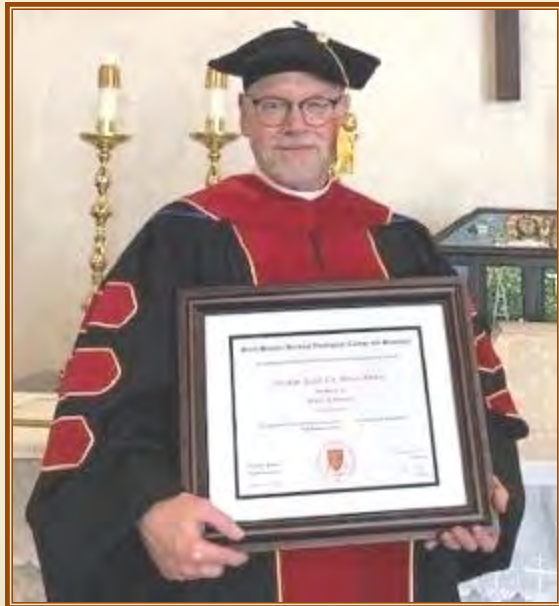
I attended a "Celebrate Life" service for the father of a friend of mine. His father was a Pentecostal preacher. During my early morning prayers, I wondered what I might say should I be invited to do so. What came to my mind was the joy of heaven receiving a faithful servant's return home. And our Good Lord speaking to the mourners, "be still, listen with the ear of your hearts, and they will experience His comfort."

It was an excellent service celebrating the Preacher's devotion to God and the Kingdom. The service was far different from the one we would administer. Nonetheless, I was moved by everyone's respect for the Preacher, his family, and the sacrificial life led by them all. Clearly, God shows up everywhere.

That is the message I wanted to share. God is always there for those who know Him well, those who don't, and even those who are angry with Him. Everyone.

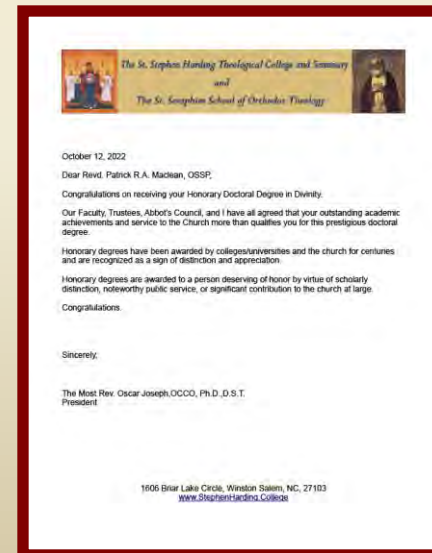
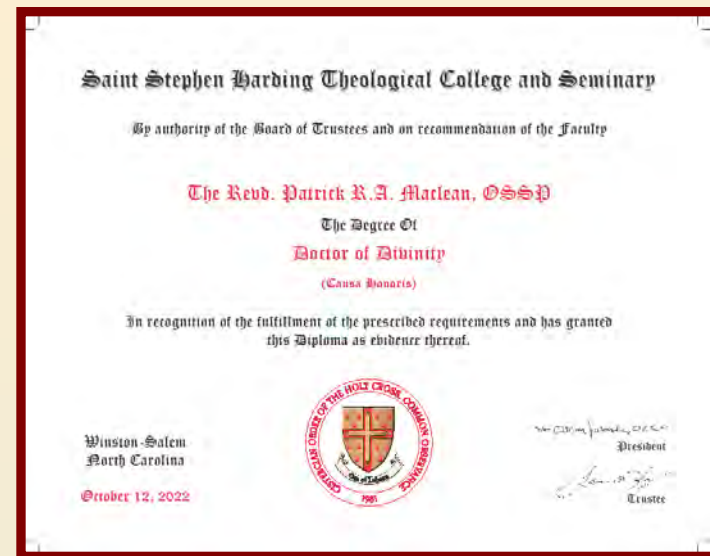
## Rev. Dr. Partick MacLean

Receiving my Doctor of Divinity degree from St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary. Heartfelt thanks to [Abbot Oscar Joseph](#) for his wise counsel in this. Laus Deo!



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.

## Honorary Doctoral Degree





## The monastic vows of **Stability**, **Obedience**, and **Conversatio** can apply to every area of our lives.

By  
Jay Van Nostrand, OCCO/Obl

I am thankful for the gift of music. Playing the trombone has been a big part of my life for the last twelve years. I play in several musical ensembles, primarily the orchestra at my home church and in a community band sponsored by another local church. Both as a performer and a listener, music relaxes me and it is great recreation in the best sense of that word. At its highest and best I'm able to join with others to glorify God during worship services and other gatherings.

### **Making music as part of a group is also a wonderful illustration of our vows of stability, obedience and conversation in action.**

Members of musical ensembles, first and foremost, make commitments to the other players and to the conductor to be present and to play as well as they can at rehearsals and performances. Without this **stability** the group will not be successful no matter how talented.

Successful musicians are **obedient** on two levels. They play pieces as they are written by the composers and they follow the guidance provided by the conductor. Disobeying the score (making up your own notes, timing and volume) or disobeying the conductor (setting your own tempo for example) would result in chaos and be very unpleasant for the listeners.

In a musical performance a set of markings on a page, a collection of inanimate objects (instruments) and the efforts of people with certain talents and skills are transformed into a sound experience that can evoke the full range of human emotions. This sort of transformation, where the creation is much greater than the sum of the individual parts, is analogous to what we promise in our vow of **Conversatio**. It's also what our Good Lord and Shepherd wants for us individually and in our order.

# ***Want to Learn About Life? Talk to Your Cat***

## **Stability**



Every morning just before prayer time Mister, the cat, and I sit on the stairs and commiserate about Cistercian life.

This morning he was rather insistent on getting his nurture.

This morning Mister said, “Every morning I wait patiently for you to wake, stumble towards your coffee, and say hi to me. I have waited all night for my ritual of stair nurture.”

“This has become my place, our place, where we really speak with each other. I been have waiting for years to mature enough not to be distracted by every little thing. Now at last I can focus.”

“I look forward to the certainty that our time will happen. I position myself while you drink that coffee. If you even appear to be going away from our stair I cry out. It is more than a meow. It is a cry of my need.”

“ I want the growth and safety that Stability provides.”

“Thank you, Daddy”

**Stability is a rooted engaging commitment to place, time and relationships.**

Expectations found in genuine stability:

### **External**

Reliable patterns in persons and life events where one can productively live their life while attending to the present moment.

### **Internal**

Inner stability is focusing on God and responding to the moment with love.

Face one's pain and destructive emotions.

Look for the best in others and an eagerness to forgive.

**Stability is achieved through persistence, patience, and humility. Focus on God and prayer.**





## ***Want to Learn About Life? Talk to Your Cat*** **Obedience**

*Should I miss our morning stability promise on the stairs Mister is sure to take ownership of my chair. His attitude is a clear demand that I keep the promises that I have made. My focus should first be on him. After all I did promise to do everything that I can to not only maintain but advance our relationship. He consistently reminds me to do the doings of the stability that I had promised.*

**Cistercian Obedience is not blindly obeying the law under threat of punishment.**

**For Benedict obedience is an action taken when we exercise both physical and emotional stability.**

**Obedience to others is the way that we live out our obedience to God.**

**Obedience is accountability in community and in relationships by focusing on the needs of others.**

**Obedience is putting God at the center of our lives thus giving a balance between our needs and the needs of others.**

**Obedience is the recognition that I cannot always be in control and to listen to those who are.**

**Obedience is to take only an action that is endorsed by those who show wisdom and understand.**

**Stability is a rooted engaging commitment to place, time and relationships.**

Expectations found in genuine stability:

### **External**

Reliable patterns in persons and life events where one can productively live their life while attending to the present moment.

### **Internal**

Inner stability is focusing on God and responding to the moment with love.

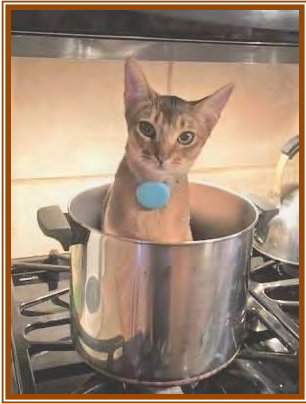
Face one's pain and destructive emotions.

Look for the best in others and an eagerness to forgive.

**Stability is achieved through persistence, patience, and humility. Focus on God and prayer.**

# ***Want to Learn About Life? Talk to Your Cat***

## **Conversatio Morum**



**Cats are wonderful little creatures given to us by God to make us better people. I have noticed that cats, like people, will only do what gives them pleasure including sitting on the stove not realizing that the fire below will ultimately destroy them.**

### **Conversatio Morum Conversion of Life**

Your life's journey need not always be a rocky, difficult uphill battle. You can drop burdensome-beliefs, attitudes, behaviors that hinder you in your search for God in all things and your decision to prefer nothing to the love of Christ

As you grow spiritually you will find yet more hindrances to let go of so continually strive for conversion in your own personal behavior and faithfully persevere in living the monastic observance.

Never become complacent or slothful in your efforts to grow in holiness or careless or lazy in performing your religious duties or serving the community.

Constant renunciation of things, ideas, judgments, behaviors you would have thought you couldn't do without.

Change your ways so that your heart will change. Your new and opposite behaviors will change who you are. Criticism can become mercy. Fear of rejection can become confidence.

Do things differently so that you will come to see things differently.

Conversation Morum is changing behaviors to respond to God's plan for your life and your vows of stability and obedience by practicing the presence of God.

Keep your death always before your eyes so you are reminded to live everyday to its fullest in the very presence of God.





# ***Want to Learn About Life? Talk to Your Cat***

## **Stability/Obedience/Conversion of Life**

*Should I miss our morning stability promise on the stairs Mister is sure to take ownership of my chair. His attitude is a clear demand that I keep the promises that I have made. My focus should first be on him. After all I did promise to do everything that I can to not only maintain but advance our relationship. He consistently reminds me to do the doings of the stability that I had promised and my need to change my behaviors.*

**Stability is a rooted engaging commitment to place, time and relationships.**

Expectations found in genuine stability:

### **External**

Reliable patterns in persons and life events where one can productively live their life while attending to the present moment.

### **Internal**

Inner stability is focusing on God and responding to the moment with love. Face one's pain and destructive emotions. Look for the best in others and an eagerness to forgive.

**Stability is achieved through persistence, patience and humility. Focus on God and prayer.**

**For Benedict obedience is an action taken when we exercise both physical and emotional stability.**

**Obedience to others is the way that we live out our obedience to God.**

**Obedience is accountability in community and in relationships by focusing on the needs of others.**

**Obedience is putting God at the center of our lives thus giving a balance between our needs and the needs of others.**

**Obedience is to take only an action that is endorsed by those who show wisdom and understanding.**

### **Conversion of Life**

Is openness to possibility of changing behaviors to respond to God's plan for your lives and your vows of stability and obedience by practicing the presence of God, charity towards others, and keeping your death always before your eyes so you are reminded to live everyday to its fullest.

# Humility is not a weakness. It takes a lot of charity and courage to be humble

*“So, my brothers, if we want to reach the most exalted peak of humility and quickly reach that celestial glorification, to which one ascends through the humiliation of the present life, with our ascetic exercise we have to raise the ladder that appeared in a dream to Jacob and along which he saw the angels descending and ascending. There is no doubt that for us that descent and that ascent can only be interpreted in the sense that with pride you go down and with humility you go up. The ladder so erected, then, is our earthly life which, if the heart is humble, God raises to heaven.”*  
*From the Rule of St. Benedict*

1. “So the first degree of humility is that in which, always remaining in the holy fear of God, lightness and dissipation are decidedly avoided.”

2. “The second degree of humility is that in which, not loving one's will, one does not find any pleasure in the satisfaction of one's desires.”

3. “The third degree of humility is that in which the monk for love of God submits to the superior in absolute obedience, in imitation of the Lord, of whom the Apostle says: “ He became obedient unto death”.

4. “The fourth degree of humility is that of the monk who, despite encountering difficulties, opposition and even unprovoked offenses in the exercise of obedience, silently and voluntarily accepts suffering and endures everything with patience, without getting tired or giving in according to the warning Scripture: “Whoever has endured to the end will be saved.”

5. “The fifth degree of humility consists in manifesting with a humble confession to one's abbot all the bad thoughts that arise in the soul or the faults committed in secret.”

6. “The sixth degree of humility is that in which the monk is satisfied with the most miserable and gross things and considers himself a worker incapable and unworthy of everything that obedience imposes on him.

7. “The seventh degree of humility consists not only in qualifying as the most miserable of all, but in being convinced of it from the bottom of the heart.”

8. “The eighth grade of humility is that in which the monk does nothing beyond what the common rule of the monastery and the example of superiors and elders spurs him on.”

9. “The ninth degree of humility belongs to the monk who knows how to dominate the language and, faithfully observing the silence, remains silent until he is interrogated.”

10. “The tenth degree of humility is that in which the monk is not always ready to laugh, because it is written: “The fool in laughing raises his voice”.

11. “The eleventh degree of humility is that in which the monk, when he speaks, expresses himself peacefully and seriously, with humility and gravity, and pronounces a few sensible words, without raising his voice.”

12. “The twelfth degree, finally, is that of the monk, whose humility is not purely internal, but shines in front of anyone who observes him from all his external attitude.”

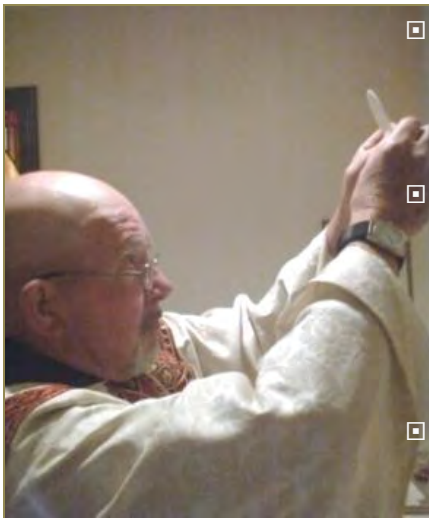




# Monks make great Priests



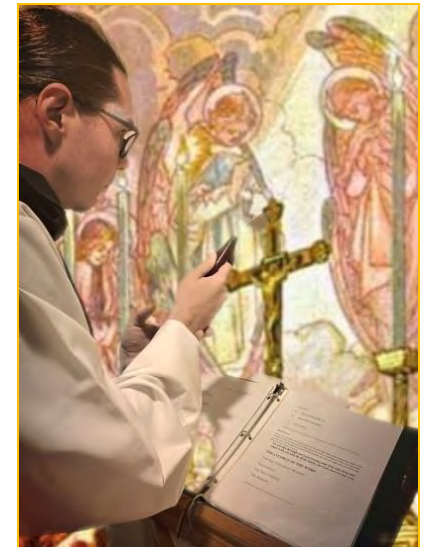
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is happy to receive male applicants for Holy Orders, Priests. We would also consider incardination for other rightfully ordained clerics.

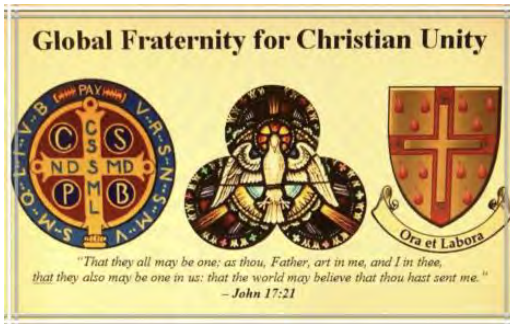


While we require the traditional qualifications for ordination/incardination, the educational requirements may be individually tailored.

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.





A Beacon of Hope  
@abbotprays

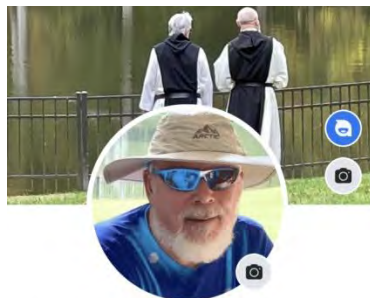
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Eucharist  
@HolyEucharistPriory



Abbot Oscar Joseph



Trinity Chapel  
@TrinityChapelLNK



Saint Alberic's Church  
@StAlbericsChurch







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



*These are Your Volunteers*



# Attention Seekers

One fashion or another, we are all seekers. We seek safety, security, love, and community. It is easy enough to know when what seek has been achieved. Seeking a Godly life and doing His perfect seems fraught with confusion and often despair. That need not be the case.

Scripture and tradition are filled with direction. Essentially, God calls each of us to seek perfection and holiness. Unfortunately, we make it difficult to understand and practice because we fill the journey with unrealistic expectations.

Some of us want God to speak directly to us. Others wish to receive a level of peace and certainty. And most want the short easy road to perfection and holiness. Let us use common sense and reason.

Scripture is clear. God wants every one of us to seek perfection and holiness. It is reasonable that He would provide the grace to empower us and a methodology whereby plain folks can achieve the seemingly impossible. We can conclude that our role is to cooperate with God's grace.

We use the Holy Rule of Saint Benedict to aid in developing a lifestyle that sets the stage for our Godly cooperation. We can teach you how to do the same.

Read the information and listen to the videos. It all makes perfect sense. For more information go to our website. If you want to join, the application is on the website. Blessings.

1. ***Consecrating to a religious life and live outside of a community. ( Living your life at home with a loving family and good employment can make becoming a monk easier than living in a monastery.)***
2. ***Third order oblate program. ( There is less required with this option. You can begin here if you like and move up to monk formation later.)***
3. ***Supporting men with a call to the diaconate and priesthood through ordination, or incardination. ( Men, single or married can be ordained. Ask the Abbot for more information.)***
4. ***Associates: Religious communities (residential or dispersed), jurisdictions, parishes, small or home based communities, or individual(s) who desire to be under our Abbatial and Episcopal oversight and be autonomous. (Visitors) Requirements can be flexible and dependent upon a group's or an individual's application.***



<https://youtube.com/shorts/VHGkyyT5d>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEgDX7eh1xQ>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y28MRtRBx8o>



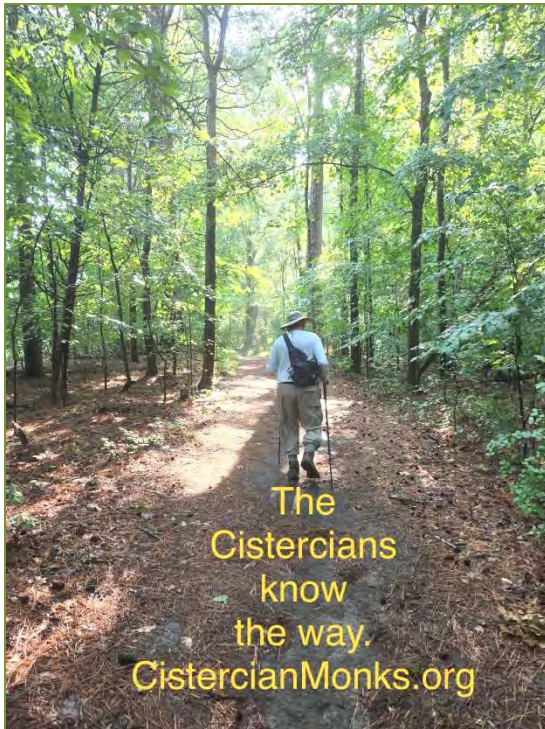




# Spiritual Joy

How to live and maintain a joy filled prayer life.

By Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO



## **A short video series**

**Welcome to the Cistercian Order**

**What is a Monk?**

**Where do we go from here?**

(How to Maintain a Prayerful Life)

**The Rule of St. Benedict**

**Habit of Prayers**

**Protecting your vocation**

**Perfectionism**

(Gold Medal Monk)

**Lectio Divina**

(Praying the Scriptures)

**Building Courage and Charity through Humility**

**Stability**

**Obedience**

**Conversatio**

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9316848>

[https://youtube.com/channel/UC8n9vm\\_1zLZ72ylj2RoH2Vg](https://youtube.com/channel/UC8n9vm_1zLZ72ylj2RoH2Vg)

### ***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.**



*The St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary*  
*and*  
*The St. Seraphim School of Orthodox Theology*



**St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary**  
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[www.StephenHarding.College](http://www.StephenHarding.College) for more information  
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***Students may enroll at any time.***

***You choose the Programs and Courses that best meet***  
***Your goals.***

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**Certificate of Studies and Advanced Studies, CS/CAS.**  
**Bachelor of Theology, Th.B.**  
**Master of Theology, Th.M.**  
**Doctor of Theology, Th.D.**  
**Honorary Doctorates D.D. or LL.D.**

**Saint Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary**  
**is a Religious Order affiliated educational institution under**  
**the authority of The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, a 501**  
**non-profit corporation. Our degrees are classified as**  
**ecclesiastically accredited.**

“Indeed, it has been a great, fruitful experience to have studied at St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary. I had finally attained one of my dreams, to have a theology doctorate, and I had done it thanks to the guidance and encouragement of the Abbot.”

“A wonderful by-product of education at St. Stephen Harding is the relationship one can develop with the personalized focus. Frankly, I want to continue studying as a result and that’s the best compliment I can offer anyone involved with St. Stephen Harding, or any student considering the pursuit of a degree. Bravo! Rev Oscar Joseph, may God continue to bless your endeavors and seminary – they have certainly blessed me!”

“I am lead to boast about the education received as well as ‘free’ insight offered from the Abbot. I must admit, I wasn’t sure I could pull this off – a Master’s degree while juggling so many other things in life, but thanks to his gentle, always humorous guidance, I was able to realize a long term ambition.”





**Cistercian Oxford Long Sleeve Button-up Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)**



**Cistercian Polo Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)**



**Cistercian Fitted V-Neck Shirt (Men & Ladies Fit)**



**Cistercian Unisex 1/4 Zip Sweatshirt**

***The Cistercian Shop is open and doing business.***

***Find it on our website:***

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



**Cistercian Shield Decal / Sticker**

***The Shop is reserved only for our members, oblates, their families, benefactors and friends of the Order. It is not available to the general population.***

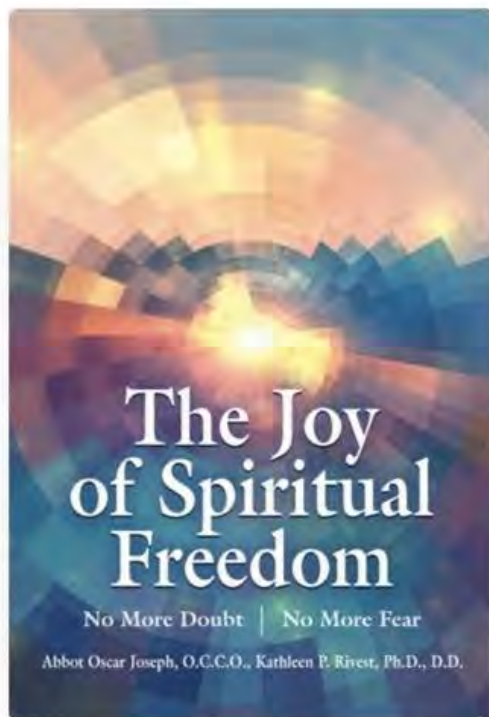


**Cistercian Coffee Mug**



**One option for each cup placed on both sides of cup**

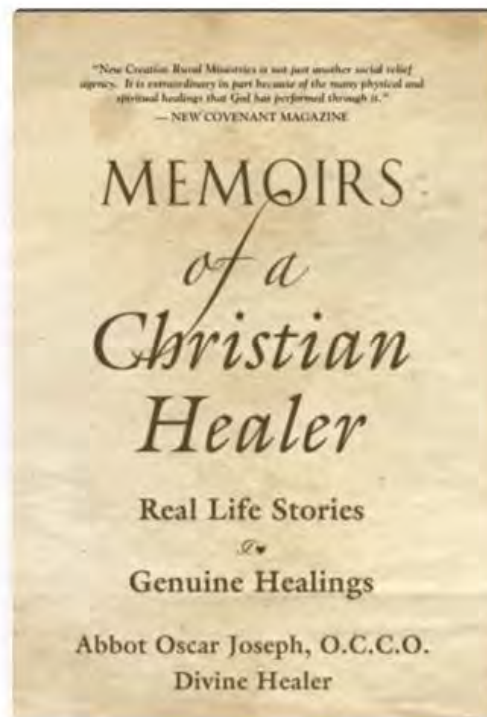




## The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

No More Doubts | No More Fear

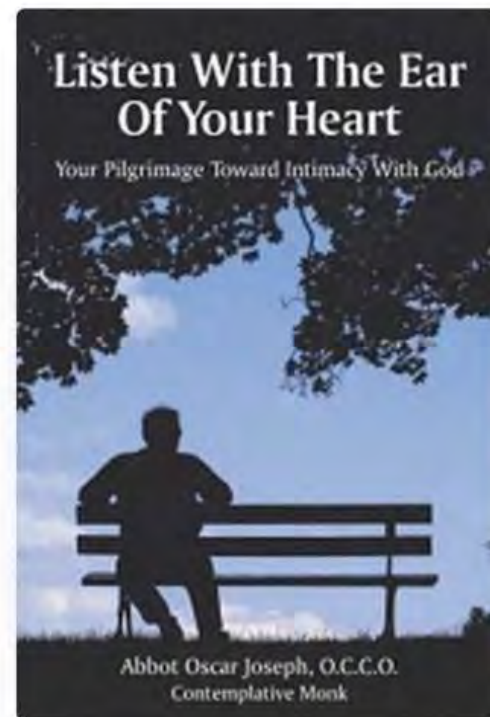
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate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



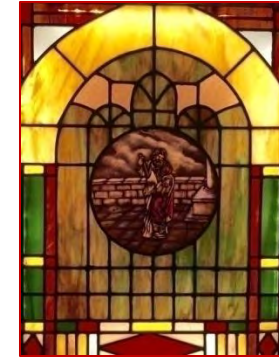
## Listen with the Ear of Your Heart

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.

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[www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)**

# 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."*

1. *Consecrating to a religious life and live outside of a community*
2. *Third order oblate program.*
3. *Supporting men with a call to the diaconate and priesthood through ordination, or incardination*
4. *Associates: Religious communities (residential or dispersed), jurisdictions, parishes, small or home based communities. or individual(s) who desire to be under our Abbatial and Episcopal oversight and be autonomous. (Visitors) Requirements can be flexible and dependent upon a group's or an individual's application.*

*"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."*

**One doesn't enter the religious state because he is holy but because he wants to become holy.**

*For more information contact  
Abbot@bellsouth.net*