

Obsculta

“Listen with the ear of your heart.”



**Forty-two Years
Serving the Lord**

December 2023

“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



Greetings, Dear Cistercians and Friends:



Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO is going to be my successor. We have done the discernment and training. I am filled with pride and love. Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO is more like my son, nepotism at its finest.

February 6-9th, 2024, is the retirement Convocation of passing the crozier and consecrating Prior Matthew Pius a bishop. I do hope that you will join us.

We have a Good, and loving God.

We have only four extra rooms. If you are a friend of the Cistercians or a friend of one of our members you are eligible.

Call FAST and get your reservations. These rooms will go FAST.

Email: Abbot@bellsouth.net let him know that you want to join us. Leave your name and number. He will get back to you.

Thy will be done by Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO



For many years, I have made “Thy will be done,” my life motto but how often do we pray the Our Father, and rarely pause to meditate on the words, “Thy will be done” and how we can respond to the call of God to act on His Divine Will?

For me, at least, saying “thy will be done,” and living out, “thy will be done” for many years was something far too often easier said than done. Life got messy, family gets complicated, things at work go from bad to worse and back to good (rinse and repeat), and eventually we all find ourselves stopping and asking God to help us because we are in over our heads.

That was my life until I became a Cistercian. When I first met Abbot Oscar Joseph, even before joining the Cistercians, I know he could see from the very beginning that God had brought me to him. And for me, all the years of worry and constant anxiety and sometimes frustration with what God wanted from me, figuring out how the words, “thy will be done,” looked for me stopped being an endless cycle of anxiety and became a tangible and identifiable path for me to walk.

For an entire year before joining the Cistercians I worked with our dear Father Abbot trying to discern what the path forward for me, my Parish, and the two Oblates I had at the time was. Abbot Oscar Joseph was always there if I had questions or concerns, and finally when I had reached the point where I knew God was calling me to follow Abbot Oscar Joseph, I asked him, “what can I do to get away from the chaos?”

We prayed together, we discerned together, and at the end of the day, we listened to each other. When he confirmed everything I believed that God was calling me to, I knew that this Bishop not only talked the talk but he also walked the walk, and more importantly Abbot Oscar Joseph knew that I was seeking to do the will of God. The path was clear for the first time in a very long time, and I told God (and still do today) that whatever He calls me to that, “Father, thy will be done.”

At my Solemn Life Vows, Abbot Oscar Joseph reminded me that my only goal in this life is to become a Saint, but he reminded me that having a dual vocation as a Priest also meant that I had to teach others how to achieve the same level of sanctity that I am trying to achieve as well. Those words, since that day, have been a constant daily reminder that it’s not only about me, it’s about sharing the ability to become a Saint with everyone who’s willing to take upon themselves the life God has called us to and to be the leader I was called to be as a Parish Priest. But with Leadership comes a heavy burden, because it’s not just about me or my life.

Thy will be done by Prior Matthew Pius, OCCO Continued

Selfishness and Leadership are two words that cannot go together in any way, shape, or form no matter how hard you try they are mutually exclusive. I knew that, but I had not seen it lived out in a practical sense until Abbot Oscar Joseph came into my life. From day one, Father Abbot has been concerned with not only his salvation but all of ours as well! The blessings we have received just from being in his presence is insurmountable, but then the wisdom and love he's imparted to us, shows us how God, while still a Parent, loves us beyond condition. He embodies the Abbot as laid out in Saint Benedict's Holy Rule. He is Christ present to us. However, like any other good in life, there comes a time when we must change not out of fear but because we know it is God calling us to do his will and it is necessary for us if we wish to continue to see growth not only in our lives but also in our Order.

For over 30 years, Abbot Oscar Joseph has dedicated hundreds of thousands of hours to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, and for over 20 of those 30 years, he has served diligently as Father, Abbot, and Archbishop. We owe him everything that we are today. We owe him a great deal of gratitude, respect, and love. We owe it not only to Abbot Oscar Joseph but to each other to continue the good work that God has begun in us, and to see it through to completion.

In February 2024, we are not saying goodbye to our beloved Abbot but rather, "until next time," whether it be on this side of eternity or the other, we know that we will see our beloved Abbot Oscar Joseph again. In February we are going to live out the literal sense of "Thy will be done," together as a Cistercian Family just simply by one generation of leadership stepping down and retiring to live out the rest of this life as God has called him, and by welcoming in a new generation of leadership and to follow me, as your Abbot General into the future.

So I encourage all of you, if you can, to join us for the Convocation in February, and if you can't, I suggest sending a well thought out letter to our beloved Father Abbot. This transition by the time it is over will include a lot of tears, but at the same time, we still get to have our dearly beloved Abbot Oscar Joseph with us as a fellow Brother Monk.

I send all of you my blessings!

We have only four extra rooms. If you are a friend of the Cistercians or a friend of one of our members you are eligible.

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During the Convocation February 6-9, 2024, we will have the rare opportunity to meet and learn from dedicated Abbots, Bishops, priests, monks, and oblates. There will be opportunities for group and individual prayer, private confessions, and encouragements.

All this done in a warm, receiving, and a truly Cistercian atmosphere.
God is so Good to give us this rare opportunity.

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Join me Please

*I will be consecrated
to the sacred Episcopate
and to the
Office of Abbot General
2:00 pm at the
Saint Francis Retreat Center
477 Grogan Rd.
Stoneville, North Carolina*



FEB
8
2024

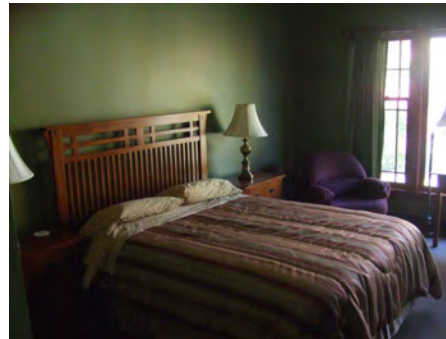
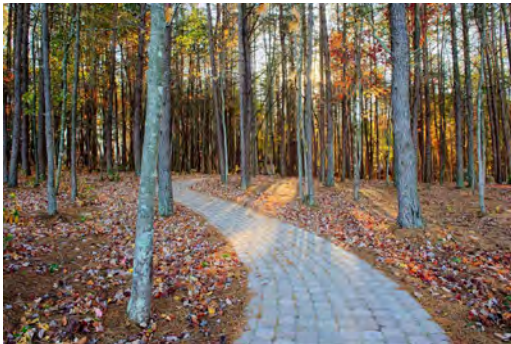


February 6-9, 2024

Welcome to St. Francis Spring Retreat House in Stoneville, NC



A restful and inspiring place of warmth and community



No matter what the season a beautiful place inside and out. At the end of the day, you will have your own place of rest and reflection.

**We have four rooms remaining.
Come join us.
Email me and we will make it so.
Abbot@bellsouth.net**

Come join us. We have four rooms remaining.



The Elevation of Prior Matthew Pius to Abbot General and Consecration to the office of Arch-Bishop will happen here.



Abbot Oscar Joseph will hold meetings here. He will be available to visit with you.

We will have encouraging moments of prayer, discussions on managing your monastic goals including overcoming obstacles. And every evening is a social event.

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*I made it out
Come join me*

*I will be consecrated
to the sacred Episcopate
and to the
Office of Abbot General
2:00 pm at the
Saint Francis Retreat Center
477 Grogan Rd.
Stoneville, North Carolina
On the 8th day of
February 2024*



Come and meet your new Abbot General.

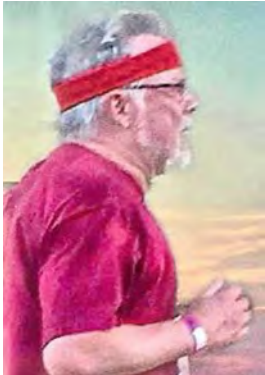
Matthew Pius is a gift from God given to lead us into the future. He is smart, energized, able, loving, heart felt and just plain terrific. Most importantly he is a holy man committed to Cistercian monasticism and our charism.



We have a question.
The Abbot General Oscar Joseph, OCCO has spent 26 years with
us.

What is he going to do after he retires?

Is he going to be a
top Ultra runner
again?
Or is he too old?



Or maybe become a
barber?



Or maybe go back
to teaching college
or write more
books.



Perhaps he will go
just plain horse
crazy!!!



What does a cool 77-year-old monk do?



Hike the trails, love his cat, or just plain get some well-deserved rest.

What will our cool old Abbot do in his retirement?

You will get the answer to that and a whole lot more at the Convocation.

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CISTERCIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY CROSS

CONVOCATION

Ora et Labora



St Francis Retreat Center
477 Grogan Rd., Stoneville, NC

FEBRUARY 6-9 TH 2024



This will be the
BEST EVENT EVER!!!

Rev. Prior Matthew Pius Hagood, OCCO

*Will be consecrated to the sacred Episcopate
and to the
Office of Abbot General*

On the 8th day of February 2024

2:00 pm at the

*Saint Francis Retreat Center
477 Grogan Rd.
Stoneville, North Carolina*

Reception following

We have only four extra rooms. If you are a friend of the Cistercians or a friend of one of our members you are eligible.

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Meet our new Abbot General and Archbishop. Matthew Pius, OCCO

He was born in Tampa, Florida, and raised by his uncles, Abbot Giuseppe Trafficante, FDC and Father Joseph Doyle, S.J..

After his conversion in 2012, he followed Christ and has lived in Nebraska full-time since he was 23 years old.

Following a call to the Monastic Life, Prior Matthew joined the Order founded by his Uncle Giuseppe, The Fratelli Della Croce.

After years of studying at the Monastery of the Fratelli Della Croce and greeting pilgrims to the Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Fatima, Ohio, he returned to the Midwest in 2017 and began preaching and administering the Sacraments at Trinity Chapel. Father Matthew pastored at Trinity Chapel.

Shortly after the death of his Uncle, due to COVID, Father Matthew found himself without Episcopal oversight. He found temporary refuge in the Celtic Orthodox Church before coming to finally rest in the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross as a Life Professed Monk in May of 2022.

He is currently serving as the Pastor of Saint Alberic's Church in Lincoln, Nebraska and of a Mission Church in North Platte, Nebraska.

In addition to his pastoral duties, Prior Matthew Pius also works as a Chaplain and Volunteer Coordinator for Gentiva Hospice.

In his free time, he enjoys gardening, reading, teaching, and spending time outdoors. Prior Matthew Pius also enjoys spending time with his three half Sisters, six half brothers, and his 20 nieces and nephews.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO writes: "During our first visit Matthew Pius suffered from a lifelong debilitating ailment. We prayed for healing. Not only was God gracious in permanently healing him, but God also transferred what is good and holy in me to Br. Matthew Pius.

God's gift to us is a wonderful newness solidly grounded in our history and charism."



We warmly welcome Abbot Dan. He has been a trusted friend for years. We are making his and his Monastic group's dream come true. We will be consecrating him to the Episcopate.



Abbot Dan Nobles was elected and installed as Abbot of Christ Mission Anglican Benedictines in June 2019. Abbot Dan was ordained as a Priest serving the Anglican Communion after completing more than 30 years of military service and retiring as a Colonel in the US Army.

He completed his seminary education through Trinity Theological Seminary, earning a doctorate in Theological Leadership. He began his monastic journey as an Oblate and pursued vowed Religious Life. Prior to his election, Abbot Dan served the Order as Dean of Monastic Formation.

A little more about me; I grew up in rural Alabama, the youngest of six boys. Inheriting values of faith and service to others from my parents. Connie and I met in Kansas. We married and raised two daughters. Today, 43 years later, we enjoy 7 grandchildren.

Retired from the Army, I entered seminary and earned a PhD, studying the stresses faced by Christian leaders and ways of promoting their wellbeing. Seeking a different path of spiritual growth, I discovered the Order of St. Benedict, and found a community of faithful disciples who seek to be with our Lord more than trying to do Christianity. Sounds strange, doesn't it?

As I learned to pray contemplatively, it was as if my second lung began to breathe. My life became less hectic, and my soul found peace.

To me, monastic spirituality is being with God in community. As we serve others, we realize that God is serving through us. My advice to others - seek to be with God rather than insisting on doing for God. As He fills you with Himself, He will do mighty things around (and sometimes through) you.

You will have the opportunity to meet these exceptional Bishops.

Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO, is a Cistercian bishop and was the head of the Cistercian Order for a quarter of a century. He holds a M.S. in Education, doctorates in Sacred Theology (Scripture) and Christian Counseling, and several honorary degrees. He is also a writer, teacher, counselor, spiritual director, healer, and media personality.



He became a priest in 1993 and worked as a pastor of a local conservative Anglican Church. He taught various subjects at community colleges. He established New Creation Rural Ministries, which aided the poor, the St. Matthew's Institute for Healing and Intention Growth, a counseling center, and the St. Stephen Harding Theological College and Seminary. He has authored several books on spirituality, such as *Memoirs of a Christian Healer*, *The Joy of Spiritual Freedom*, and *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*.

He has been a prominent figure in the Benedictine movement in the US and has offered spiritual direction and healing services to hundreds of people for over three decades. He has been on TV and radio shows to share his wisdom and stories. He retired from his counseling practice in 2019 and now focuses on his duties with Cistercian Order and leading healing services, retreats, and seminars.

Scott McLaughlin is the retired Metropolitan Archbishop of the Orthodox Anglican Communion, a global network of national churches of about 1.5 million members. He holds a B.A in Biblical Studies, an M.A. in Church Administration, and a D.Min. in Pastoral Theology. Beginning his service to the Lord in 1981 as a Baptist pastor, he was “converted” to the Catholic expression of the faith as an Anglican in 1984. He was consecrated to the Episcopacy in 1999. During his episcopacy, he oversaw the formation of 22 new parishes in the United States and began new national churches in Ghana and Italy. He served as President of St. Andrew's Theological Collage and Seminary in the USA, and established seminaries for theological education of Anglican clergy in Europe, Africa, and Asia. In 2009, he authorized the formation of the Orthodox Anglican Society of St. Francis and became a brother in the Society. He has authored and edited texts for theological education and



liturgy, including *Orthodox Anglican Principles*, *Special Introduction to the Old Testament*, *An Anthology of Readings for the Study of the Holy Order of the Church*, *The Franciscan Daily Office and the Little Brothers' and Sisters' Book of Praise and Prayer*. In 2018, McLaughlin founded the Church of Universal Compassion, and has just completed the liturgy for this jurisdiction of the Church, *Ascension: The Prayers and Sacraments of the Church of Universal Compassion*.

You will have the opportunity to meet these exceptional Bishops.

Peter Brewer COS is the bishop and Minister-General of the Community of Our Saviour, an Anglo-Catholic religious order. He holds a BA in Economics and is a graduate of both the USAF Staff and Command School and the USAF Reserve Forces School. Bishop Brewer retired from the US Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel. He studied at the University of the South and at the University of London School of Theology. He has a MDiv from Holy Trinity College and Seminary, 1991. He has served various parishes in both the Southern Episcopal Church and in the Anglican Province of America as well as being a Hospice and a Hospital Chaplain. Bishop Brewer was consecrated as Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of the South, Southern Episcopal Church in 1992 and later consecrated (sub-conditione) as the Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of the Eastern U.S., Anglican Province of America in 2003, retiring as Suffragan in 2010.



Robert (Rob) Lyons was born on August 28, 1978 in Alameda, California, the son of Buddy R. Lyons and the late Kathy A. Lyons. He was raised, first in St. Petersburg, Florida and later in Anderson, Indiana by his grandmother, Theresa E. Lyons, and his great-uncle, Eugene V. Zirkelback, both departed. In 2006, Rob met Kristen McCormack. The couple wed in 2007, and are the parents of three children – Clare, Brendan, and Grace.



Bishop Rob was ordained to the priesthood for the Charismatic Catholic Church of Canada in 1997 by Bishop Richard Johnson. He also served the Primitive Episcopal Church and the Synod of Saint Timothy before incardinating with the American Catholic Communities in October 2016. During his ministry, he has served pastoral assignments in Anderson, Chesterfield, Indianapolis, and Bargersville, Indiana. Currently, he serves as Pastor of Saint Mary's Church in Greenwood, Indiana.

In January 2022, he was elected to by the College of Bishops of the Communion of International Catholic Communities to serve as auxiliary bishop with right of succession in the American Catholic Communities. He was consecrated in June of 2022. In April 2023, he was installed as the third diocesan bishop of the American diocese.

Alongside pastoral and episcopal duties, he currently serves as the Manager of the Eskenazi Health Center for Spiritual Care and Education in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he has ministered since July 2000.



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



Cistercian Shield Decal / Sticker

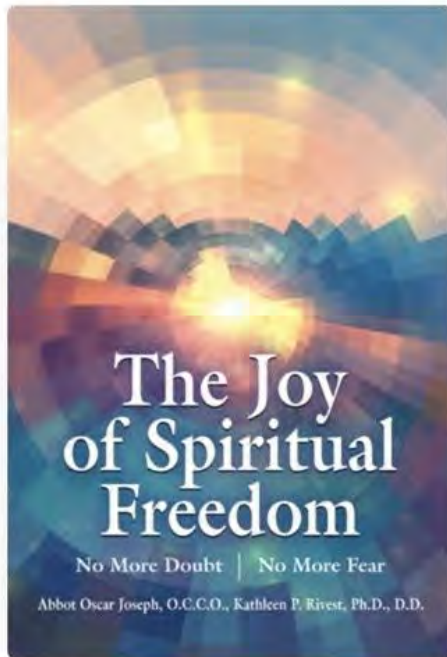
The Shop is reserved only for our members, oblates, their families, benefactors and friends of the Order. It is not available to the general population.



Cistercian Coffee Mug



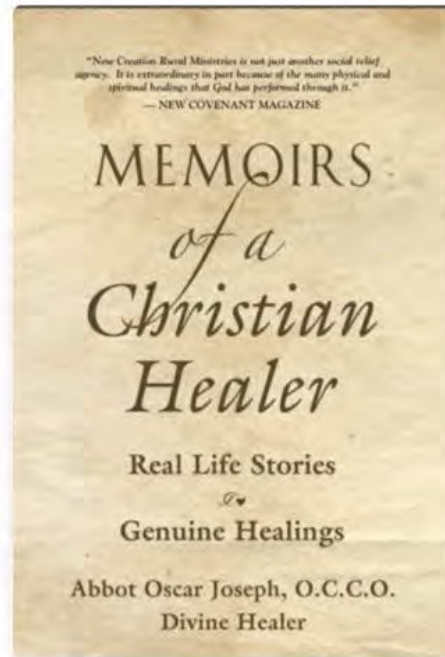
One option for each cup placed on both sides of cup



The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

No More Doubts | No More Fear

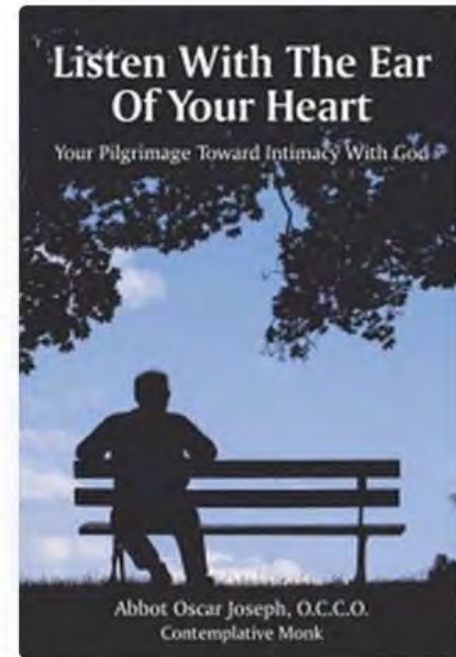
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate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

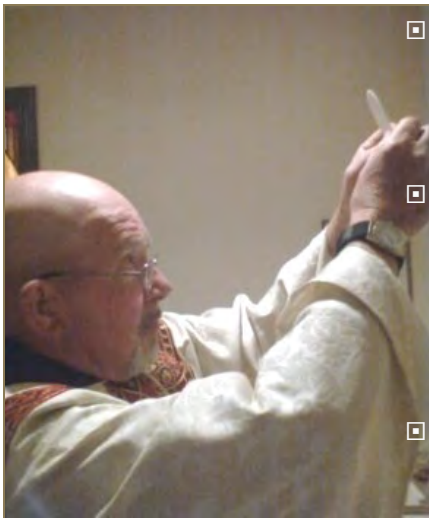
God created you to yearn for intimacy with Him. Listen with the Ear of Your Heart presents a dynamic pilgrimage utilizing Scripture, the teachings of the Church Fathers, The Rule of St. Benedict, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

**For more information and the FREE Companion books go to:
www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com**

Monks make great Priests



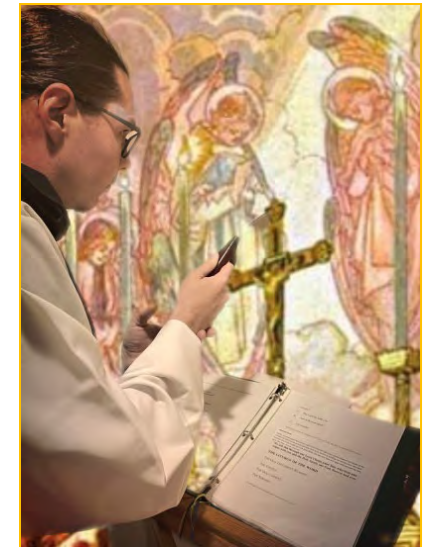
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross is happy to receive male applicants for Holy Orders, Priests. We would also consider incardination for other rightfully ordained clerics.



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.



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.**

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.

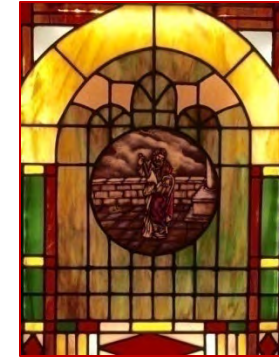
- 1. Consecrating to a religious life and live outside of a community. (Living your life at home with a loving family and good employment can make becoming a monk easier than living in a monastery.)**
- 2. Third order oblate program. (There is less required with this option. You can begin here if you 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>



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.*

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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*