



## Obsculta

"Listen with the ear of your heart."

**December 2024**

**"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  
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Greetings, Cistercians and Friends,

As I look back at my calendar, I realize just how busy I've been lately. The most joy-filled experiences have come from helping our members, both locally and from a distance, in developing their prayer lives and in creating a lifestyle that supports true holiness.

September was a month of preparation for my road trip. I enjoyed a four-day private retreat at the St. Francis Prayer Center, which was a peaceful delight.

On October 9th, I embarked on my "Northern Road Trip." It was well-planned and fruitful. My first stop was a visit with Darryl and his wife, Rhonda. Their hospitality was extraordinary; I felt as if I were with family. Darryl, who is a postulant, volunteered to assist with our social media advertising.

The next two days were filled with travel as I drove nonstop to Niagara Falls, NY, to spend three days with my daughter Michelle, who is also on my Abbot's Council, and her family. We hiked, engaged in deep conversations, attended Mass at the famous Basilica, and enjoyed some much-needed downtime together. Our time was truly joyful and meaningful.

After that, I took a short four-hour drive to Fair Haven, NY, for a three-day visit. I wrote my Memoirs on that little village where I received my spiritual gifts. Although reliving the past was interesting, looking forward to what lies ahead is even more exciting.

Goodbye, Fair Haven, and hello to my hometown, Springfield, MA! It was a joy to see and minister to both sides of my family. Several relatives I had never met before attended the family reunion, which was incredible! They welcomed me with warm Italian love, full of hugs and kisses.

My final stop was breakfast in Pennsylvania with Oblate Linda. She was a delightful host and made sure I enjoyed some wonderful local food. She even gave my wife a gift of bread.

A big thank you to everyone who made this trip so delightful, and to our Good Lord, who was always present.





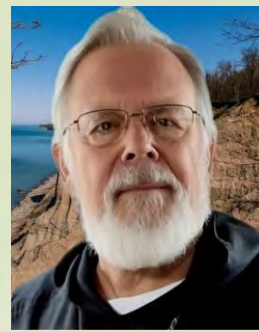
Oct 9-22, 2024

“Northern Road Tour”  
paid for personally

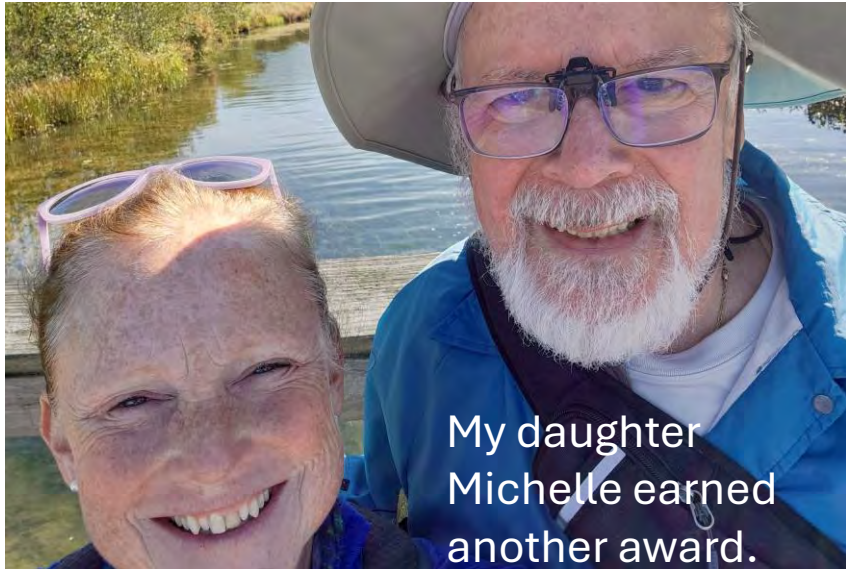
Total 2375 miles  
49 hours driving

11 states  
7 cities  
5 hotels  
1 home

Visited two Cistercians  
Three families  
Village where I received  
Spiritual Gifts







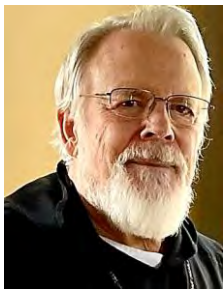




**The Italian side of my family.**







## **The Abbot visited our home. By Postulant Darryl**



On October 9<sup>th</sup>, my wife and I had the honor of hosting a visit from our Abbot General Oscar Joseph. As the sun began to set, casting a golden hue over the landscape, we felt a mixture of anticipation and excitement. The archbishop's presence in our home was a momentous occasion.

As we welcomed him into our home, the archbishop's warm smile and kind eyes immediately put us at ease. He greeted us with genuine affection, his demeanor radiating the humility and grace that he is so well known for. My wife offered him a seat in our living room, a cozy space on the couch, while I got him a glass of peach tea.

Before we started to talk, the Abbot General produced forth gifts for my wife, Rhonda and me. We were so surprised! He gave Rhonda a gold chain with a beautiful crucifix attached, and for me he produced a beautiful black scapular that, with a few minor adjustments, will fit me fine. Also, he gave me some Ora Et Labora patches and pins. So generous!

We began our conversation with light-hearted topics, sharing stories about our families and discussing the weather. The archbishop listened attentively, his presence exuding a calm and reassuring aura. He spoke of his recent travels and the various family members he was to visit at various places in the country, each tale enriching our understanding of his role and mission in the wider world.

As the evening progressed, our discussion turned to more profound topics. The archbishop shared insights about the challenges facing the Order and the importance of fostering a strong sense of community and compassion through the management of our presence on several social media accounts. He asked me to oversee this endeavor, and gave me a flash drive full of material to help me along on this path. His words were both inspiring and thought-provoking, encouraging us to reflect on our own contributions to our faith and our community.

It wasn't long before we were all getting hungry, so we went out to eat at a nice restaurant. We continued our conversation over dinner, the archbishop's presence making the evening feel particularly special. He spoke with wisdom and humility, emphasizing the importance of love, patience, and understanding in all our interactions.

One moment that stood out was when the archbishop shared a personal story about his kayaking adventures, and sharing how the Lord got him through some rough waters. This story resonated deeply with us, reminding us that even those who seem unwavering in their faith experience moments of vulnerability.

As the night came to a close, the archbishop offered a heartfelt blessing for our family. His words were a source of comfort and inspiration, reinforcing our commitment to living a life of faith and service. We thanked him for his visit, feeling profoundly grateful for the time he had spent with us.

The visit from the archbishop was a reminder of the power of faith, community, and the simple act of coming together to share stories and support one another. It was a truly memorable experience that left us feeling uplifted and inspired to continue our journey with renewed purpose.



### Oblate Linda, OCCO/Obl writes

Abbot Oscar Joseph was on tour of the northeast part of the US in October. His last stop before turning homeward was Mohnton, PA, in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country. I visited with him one morning, and we enjoyed great fellowship- lots of laughter and mutual encouragement. Abbot sampled some Pennsylvania Dutch favorites for breakfast- waffles and ice cream. Yes, we eat ice cream for breakfast here! Thank you, Abbot, for coming to visit me. Next time we will sample shoo fly pie.





## Postulant Darryl

Cistercians have deeply influenced me this year in several profound ways. Their disciplined and contemplative approach to life has provided a much-needed counterbalance to the chaotic and fast-paced modern world.

I have found immense value in adopting the Cistercian practice of silent reflection. In a world where noise and constant connectivity are the norm, the Cistercian emphasis on silence has offered me a sanctuary for introspection and personal growth. It has enabled me to filter out distractions and focus on what truly matters, enhancing my overall well-being and mental clarity.

The Cistercian dedication to manual labor and self-sufficiency has also inspired me to incorporate more meaningful and productive activities into my daily routine.

Furthermore, the Cistercian commitment to community and simplicity has resonated with me. Their way of life has encouraged me to foster stronger relationships with those around me and appreciate the beauty of living simply. By prioritizing meaningful interactions and minimizing materialistic pursuits, I've discovered a greater sense of fulfillment and contentment.

In essence, the Cistercians have provided me with a roadmap to a more balanced, reflective, and enriched life. Their teachings and practices have not only helped me navigate the complexities of the modern world but have also guided me toward a path of personal and spiritual growth.



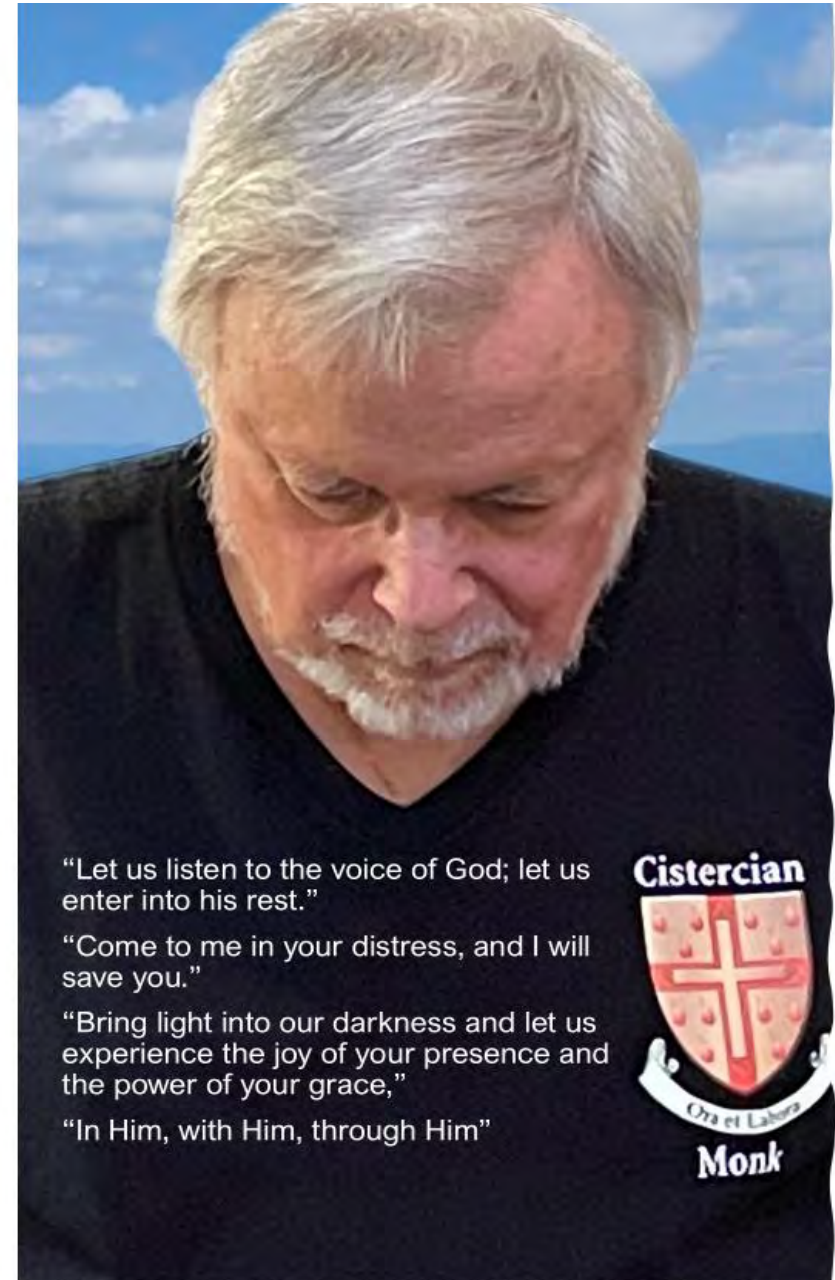


**Oblate Linda, OCCO/Obl**  
**Give us encouragement in troubled times.**

Jesus told us we would have trouble in this world. He also said He overcame the world. What comfort it is to know that He has done this for us, that it is accomplished, even as we live into the problems of our present age as His faithful witnesses.

Anyone who is listening to the news even a little bit, knows that there is trouble everywhere in our world today. Although the world has changed much since “What A Friend We have in Jesus” was composed, the instructions to the followers of Jesus have not changed. Line four firmly reminds us to, “Take it to the Lord in prayer.”

Do not be discouraged, brothers and sisters. Our charism is prayer. Never has the world needed it more. We walk by our faith and not according to what we see. Keep your eyes fixed firmly on the Lord and what He Himself has called you to do. You were born for this time. It is no mistake that you live, right here, right now. A great deal has changed in the world, even during our lifetimes, even since yesterday. But the instructions have never, never changed. Romans 12:12 reminds us: “Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.” Let us continue in what the Lord has given us to do. Prayer is our great privilege and work for the Lord.





by  
Jay Van Nostrand, OCCO/Obl



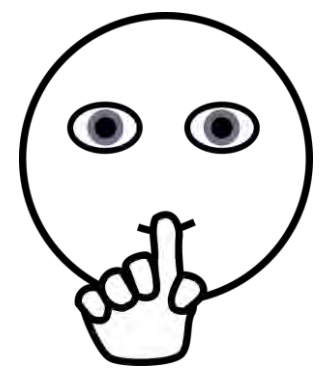
My last visit to the St. Francis Springs Prayer Center was a mid-week personal retreat this past August (2024). Virtually silence, the other visitors who were there when I arrived were part of “The Big Silence” which is a four-day retreat program inspired by a BBC video series of the same name. The series was created by a Benedictine order in England.

I was intrigued with the idea of an extended and intentional period of silence and I was curious as to what that might be like. The video series was required pre-work for the retreatants I resolved to watch it when I got a chance. A few weeks later my wife and I spent 10 days at a cabin in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina. While there we began watching the series together.

The series is a reality-TV style presentation of how five people from very different life circumstances and religious backgrounds experienced, reacted and responded to an eight-day almost totally silent retreat. What we saw and heard inspired an ongoing series of transformations in both of our lives as individuals and in our marriage. The results have been profound and far-reaching. A full discussion isn’t practical here but I can give you a taste of how we’re being moved.

One of the themes in the series is how different the silent retreat experience is from what people generally experience in modern Western culture. Early in the series the participants talked a lot about how things were different back in the “real world” from how they were in the monastery. What we began to realize, along with the participants, is that what we usually think of as the “real world” is actually what man has made of God’s world.

So, where the so-called real world is characterized by stress, conflict, hyperactivity, non-stop noise, pollution, isolation, ennui, fear, lack of spiritual connection, etc. etc., God’s world – as we get a glimpse on the monastery campus – reflects beauty, peace, community, quiet, tranquility and a sense of God’s presence. My wife and I came away with a new way of looking at our lives and we were both resolved to reorder our lives spend more time in God’s world in order to grow closer to Him and less in and being driven by man’s world. We’re patiently listening for His voice and looking forward to where and how He will lead us.







## **Prior Jorge, OCCO**

### **St. Joseph the Worker Priory**

Following Abbot's Oscar Joseph steps and teachings who follow Jesus Christ's teachings and with my unworldly self I penetrate a life of sacrifice and miracles. Step by step shakily trembling sometimes blindly doing what I am told by God and my Abbot.

Always felt in my heart the biggest admiration and respect to the "lowest type of element in humanity" as the children, poor and handicapped children, older people, older poor people, handicapped older people. I try to bring some relief and a lot of respect either with monetary resources, some advice or just spending some time and love with them.

Now with my Abbot advice plus wearing holy habits I offer comfort in their souls and survival skills and in return I obtain an immense amount of modesty, strength, love, admiration and happiness.

I visited a very poor home but very much full of treasure as love, warmth, happiness and joy. Spent an afternoon learning from two older ladies how to feel such love and happiness with no economic means. Pray to God to help me help them to have a more comfortable life.

Then, a couple days later I spent a whole day with a poor family which have lost the head of the family and seemed have lost their path as a family. I helped them with peace and love to resolve monetary problems and at the end of the day asked me to bless them and their cattle for a safer and prosperous future.

Being a lamp on a lampstand showing in their harsh world that God is alive since I am a server of His.









**KATHLEEN, PH.D., D.D.**

Marian Scholar  
Published Author  
TV and Radio Personality



## **Would The Blessed Mother Make New Year's Resolutions?**

The history of making New Year resolutions reaches back to early Babylonians, possibly as far as 4000 years ago. Early Babylonians' resolutions would usually involve returning borrowed farm equipment in order to start the year with a clean slate. Roman tradition involved asking forgiveness from their enemies and giving gifts. The Chinese practiced rituals they believed would chase away ghosts from the past. Modern day Americans make resolutions designed to improve personal habits, such as diet and exercise, or to make better financial decisions. These resolutions are generally founded on short-term enthusiasm and are broken shortly after they are made.

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

I believe that were I to ask the Blessed Mother about her New Year's resolutions, she would look at me quizzically. The entire concept of making one resolution this year and another one next year would be a foreign concept. Her parents, Anna and Joachim, demonstrated a lifetime of stability and commitment to God. Mary demonstrated this same commitment from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion. She did not waiver and had no need for rituals designed to create a clean slate or correct a bad personal habit. Stability leads to conversion. Though Mary did not require conversion of heart to make her more submissive to God, her lifetime of stability converted her understanding of Him to be converted as the New Covenant was revealed in her Son.

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





## 21 reasons for making the sign of the Cross

**The Sign of the Cross is a simple gesture yet a profound expression of faith** for both Catholic and Orthodox Christians. As Catholics, it's something we do when we enter a church, after we receive Communion, before meals, and every time we pray. But what exactly are we doing when we make the Sign of the Cross? Here are 21 things:

- 1. Pray.** We begin and end our prayers with the Sign of the Cross, perhaps not realizing that the sign is itself a prayer. If prayer, at its core, is “an uprising of the mind to God,” as [St. John Damascene put it](#), then the Sign of the Cross assuredly qualifies. “No empty gesture, the sign of the cross is a potent prayer that engages the Holy Spirit as the divine advocate and agent of our successful Christian living,” writes Bert Ghezzi.
- 2. Open ourselves to grace.** As a sacramental, the Sign of the Cross prepares us for receiving God's blessing and disposes us to cooperate with His grace, according to Ghezzi.
- 3. Sanctify the day.** As an act repeated throughout the key moments of each day, the Sign of the Cross sanctifies our day. “At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign,” [wrote Tertullian](#).
- 4. Commit the whole self to Christ.** In moving our hands from our foreheads to our hearts and then both shoulders, we are asking God's blessing for our mind, our passions and desires, our very bodies. In other words, the Sign of the Cross commits us, body and soul, mind and heart, to Christ. (I'm paraphrasing [this Russian Orthodox writer](#).) “Let it take in your whole being—body, soul, mind, will, thoughts, feelings, your doing and not-doing—and by signing it with the cross strengthen and consecrate the whole in the strength of Christ, in the name of the triune God,” said twentieth century theologian Romano Guardini.
- 5. Recall the Incarnation.** Our movement is downward, from our foreheads to our chest “because Christ descended from the heavens to the earth,” Pope Innocent III wrote in his instructions on making the Sign of the Cross. Holding two fingers together—either the thumb with the ring finger or with index finger—also represents the two natures of Christ.
- 6. Remember the Passion of Our Lord.** Fundamentally, in tracing out the outlines of a cross on ourselves, we are remembering Christ's crucifixion. This remembrance is deepened if we keep our right hand open, using all five fingers to make the sign—corresponding to the Five Wounds of Christ.
- 7. Affirm the Trinity.** In invoking the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are affirming our belief in a triune God. This is also reinforced by using three fingers to make the sign, according to Pope Innocent III.



**8. Focus our prayer on God.** One of the temptations in prayer is to address it to God as we conceive of Him—the man upstairs, our buddy, a sort of cosmic genie, etc. When this happens, our prayer becomes more about us than an encounter with the living God. The Sign of the Cross immediately focuses us on the true God, according to Ghezzi: “When we invoke the Trinity, we fix our attention on the God who made us, not on the God we have made. We fling our images aside and address our prayers to God as he has revealed himself to be: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

**9. Affirm the procession of Son and Spirit.** In first lifting our hand to our forehead we recall that the Father is the first person the Trinity. In lowering our hand we “express that the Son proceeds from the Father.” And, in ending with the Holy Spirit, we signify that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, according to Francis de Sales.

**10. Confess our faith.** In affirming our belief in the Incarnation, the crucifixion, and the Trinity, we are making a sort of mini-confession of faith in words and gestures, proclaiming the core truths of the creed.

**11. Invoke the power of God’s name.** In Scripture, God’s name carries power. In Philippians 2:10, St. Paul tells us that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” And, in John 14:13-14, Jesus Himself said, “And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.”

**12. Crucify ourselves with Christ.** Whoever wishes to follow Christ “must deny himself” and “take up his cross” as Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 16:24. “I have been crucified with Christ,” St. Paul writes in Galatians 2:19. “Proclaiming the sign of the cross proclaims our yes to this condition of discipleship,” Ghezzi writes.

**13. Ask for support in our suffering.** In crossing our shoulders we ask God “to support us—to shoulder us—in our suffering,” Ghezzi writes.

**14. Reaffirm our baptism.** In using the same words with which we were baptized, the Sign of the Cross is a “summing up and re-acceptance of our baptism,” according to then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

**15. Reverse the curse.** The Sign of the Cross recalls the forgiveness of sins and the reversal of the Fall by passing “from the left side of the curse to the right of blessing,” according to de Sales. The movement from left to right also signifies our future passage from present misery to future glory just as Christ “crossed over from death to life and from Hades to Paradise,” Pope Innocent II wrote.

**16. Remake ourselves in Christ’s image.** In Colossians 3, St. Paul uses the image of clothing to describe how our sinful natures are transformed in Christ. We are to take off the old self and put on the self “which is being renewed ... in the image of its creator,” Paul tells us. The Church Fathers saw a connection between this verse and the stripping of Christ on the cross, “teaching that stripping off our old nature in baptism and putting on a new one was a participation in





Christ's stripping at his crucifixion," Ghezzi writes. He concludes that we can view the Sign of the Cross as "our way of participating in Christ's stripping at the Crucifixion and his being clothed in glory at his resurrection." Thus, in making the Sign of the Cross, we are radically identifying ourselves with the entirety of the crucifixion event—not just those parts of it we can accept or that are palatable to our sensibilities.

**17. Mark ourselves for Christ.** In ancient Greek, the word for sign was *sphragis*, which was also a mark of ownership, according to Ghezzi. "For example, a shepherd marked his sheep as his property with a brand that he called a *sphragis*," Ghezzi writes. In making the Sign of the Cross, we mark ourselves as belong to Christ, our true shepherd.

**18. Soldier on for Christ.** The *sphragis* was also the term for a general's name that would be tattooed on his soldiers, according to Ghezzi. This too is an apt metaphor for the Christian life: while we can be compared to sheep in the sense of following Christ as our shepherd we are not called to be sheepish. We instead are called to be soldiers of Christ. As St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6, "Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. ... take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

**19. Ward off the devil.** The Sign of the Cross is one of the very weapons we use in that battle with the devil. As one medieval preacher named Aelfric declared, "A man may wave about wonderfully with his hands without creating any blessing unless he make the sign of the cross. But, if he do, the fiend will soon be frightened on account of the victorious token." In another statement, attributed to St. John Chrysostom, demons are said to "fly away" at the Sign of the Cross "dreading it as a staff that they are beaten with." (Source: [Catholic Encyclopedia](#).)

**20. Seal ourselves in the Spirit.** In the New Testament, the word *sphragis*, mentioned above, is also sometimes translated as *seal*, as in 2 Corinthians 1:22, where St. Paul writes that, "the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment." In making the Sign of the Cross, we are once again sealing ourselves in the Spirit, invoking His powerful intervention in our lives.

**21. Witness to others.** As a gesture often made in public, the Sign of the Cross is a simple way to witness our faith to others. "Let us not then be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and on everything; over the bread we eat, and the cups we drink; in our comings in, and goings out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we rise up; when we are in the way, and when we are still," [wrote St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#).

*Why is it so difficult to receive from others and our Good Lord? Someone struggling with low self-esteem or self-worth might find it hard to accept validation even when it is given. They might doubt its sincerity or feel undeserving.*

by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

## The Solution

### Let us call it God's esteem

Think about this... We have been taught that self-esteem is vital to our happiness and is gained by acquiring things, positions, and power. How quickly all that can be destroyed by one simple mistake, someone's critical judgment on our efforts or even a natural disaster. The consequences of this erroneous teaching are anxiety and depression.

When challenged, my **self-esteem crumbles**, even with my best efforts at positive thinking. When I look at myself, I see garbage.

The Steps to Humility teach us how to change what we see in that mirror. Rather than seeing with our eyes and self-judgment, we now see how God sees and judges. The all-knowing, merciful, and loving God sees us, you, as precious creations that He has uniquely gifted with eternal, everlasting empowerment to continue His work of creation.

He will never change His mind or abandon you. You are in, with, and through Him every moment of every day. You are an heir to His Kingdom NOW and FOREVER. **Let us call that God's esteem.** We were created to want that Godly point of view.

However, the world wants to claim us with lies and deception. It misdirects us by seemingly pleasurable self-indulgence. The ultimate consequences are exhaustion, anxiety, and depression.

You are not alone on this journey. Your Cistercian family and leaders will guide and encourage you. St. Benedict encourages honest transparency and service to one another. Know that God has called you to holiness. He will grace and empower you. A new and exciting life is available to you and your loved ones



## From your Abbot General

***These and other traps are dividing the Church. Unity is particularly important these days. Please do your own study using the free copy and pray for truth, change, and unity as we love and care for each other.***

What entrapments hold even sincere Christians back from true intimacy with God? Why can't we readily see them, and where did they come from? There is much to say about these entrapments. Hang on, I am going deep into situations we have all struggled with and might still be struggling with. I will also teach how to be set free from those situations.

Get your free copy of ***Setting the Captives Free*** by going to [www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)  
Check out the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross.  
[www.CistercianMonks.org](http://www.CistercianMonks.org)

I have been blessed with many mystical experiences and revelations. Trying to describe God and those experiences is impossible. Trying to describe anything about God is beyond our reach. So, in our feeble attempt to define and understand God, we use metaphors, similes, and such. Worst yet, we make God from our image and likeness. We even give God a worldview that enhances our culture and is couched in a list of human emotions. Worst yet, we describe God with an immature emotional system like ours. God can be emotionally fickle, manipulative, condemning, difficult if not impossible to understand, and needs to satisfy himself emotionally.

**We have heard and possibly used phrases such as,**

"We must earn God's love by doing the impossible."

"God is described as a threat that you cannot escape."

"God will never give you more troubles than you can handle."

"God is testing you."

"God has given you troubling circumstances so you can get closer to Him."

***All these statements are false. They describe God as a trickster who plays with His people. They hold you back from trusting God. as a trickster who plays with His people. They hold you back from trusting God.***

Get your free copy of ***Setting the Captives Free***  
by going to:  
[www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)

## Being a “God seeker” is founded on Joy



<https://youtu.be/F4zG8rn81I4>



**You can have your own local Chapter.**

Chapters are NOT group therapy or a Scripture study. It is studying and finding the application of The Rule of St. Benedict and helping each other integrate that into our lives.

Any adult from any Christian background, male or female, can participate in a Chapter. Chapter leaders do not have to be St. Benedict experts. Nor do you have to be a Cistercian Monk or Oblate.

We have the book list with exercises for home use. We will coach you. All you need to do is gather up three or more of your friends or neighbors. We will help with the rest. Just email the Abbot at [abbot@bellsouth.net](mailto:abbot@bellsouth.net)

Not long ago, I had three couples in a Chapter. Look at this short video to see how excited they were. Your group will be as exciting.



**“Lord Teach Us How to Pray”  
Facilitated by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO**



**Our knowledge of prayer was greatly expanded through the teachings of the Abbot as well as the supplemental studies.**

**We had many of our questions answered about prayer. Tools were given to help answer our questions. Each person in the group was fully committed to the learning experience.**

**The retreat was a valuable use of time spent in a well-planned and followed study of:**

- .Growing toward a more holy two-hour**
- .Praying the Scriptures**
- .Importance of scheduled prayer time and place**
- .Blocks we put up that prevents meaningful prayer time with God**
- .Developing a life that includes time for meditation, stillness and quiet**
- .A Life Changing Prayer using contemplation and Lectio Divina**

**Our two-hour study time covering these topics used the teaching methods of lecture, group projects to make the topic memorable, Bible guidance, meditation and prayer.**

**I personally will take away from this study time together with the class a renewed sense of who God is to me in my life dedicated to spiritual growth, and who I am to God. I plan to work on the things we talked about to strengthen my faith and prayer life. I especially plan to work on special times and places for prayer and study.**

**One thing in particular I will use in my prayers will be a start my time with God by saying “your will be done, “ Here I am Lord, use me”. Simply things but worthwhile, and sometimes I had not thought about before this class.**

**Abbot Oscar is a good teacher brings good information, seriousness, and laughter all in one session. It keeps the class time interesting and easy to return the next session.**

**Anyone interested in taking this class would, in my opinion, find their time well spent. It opens up new thoughts about God’s word. I highly recommend this class to anyone interested in their Christian growth.**

## Praying the Scriptures

Focus will be on: What is praying the Scriptures and how can I do it? How can I hear God?

What gets in the way of hearing God?

“If you want to get closer to Jesus, God the Father and the Holy Spirit this is the place to be!!!”

The Praying the Scriptures workshop Monday night might best be described as, "give me an amen " monastic "tent revival " without the tent.

"Preach it again Abbot" gave a Holy Spirit fired up "How to find God's will."

Prayers abounded.

Everyone, and there were a lot of everyone's, having such a good time Abbot had to call Amen.

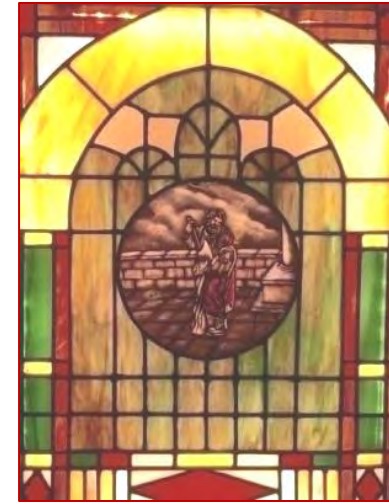
Another way that the evening might be described is... "God showed up as promised.







## 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 better life begins  
and ends  
with a truly intimate  
relationship  
with God.**

**Come visit with me  
and learn  
how to have real joy  
with your  
creator.**

Abbot@bellsouth.net



**What we have given to others.**

<https://youtu.be/y28MRtRBx8o>

**Description of the Cistercians**

<https://youtu.be/vh6OG8bn3AI>





# Set The Captives Free

*"God himself will set me free  
from the hunter's snare."  
"From those who would trap me  
with lying words and from the hunter's snare."*

By

The Most Rev. Abbot Oscar Joseph, Ph.D., D.S.T., OCCO

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



**Praying Unceasingly  
Problems and Solutions  
by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO**



## Cistercian Life

*The Benedictine/Cistercian values will help you contemplate the real meaning and experience a simple life of utmost good and happiness in your present day, time, and circumstance.*

*The following pages are intended to motivate you in your spiritual growth by illustrating God's call to everyone toward holiness and how the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross will help you to respond to God's grace in your call to the Oblature or a Monastic.*

*These pages also present brief but helpful and inspiring information explaining the Rule of St. Benedict and how you can apply it to develop a lifestyle more responsive to and blessed by God.*

**Our wonderful, tireless Abbot frequently writes life enhancing materials which are available to everyone.**

**You find the free PDF downloads at:  
[www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com](http://www.AbbotOscarJoseph.com)**



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**



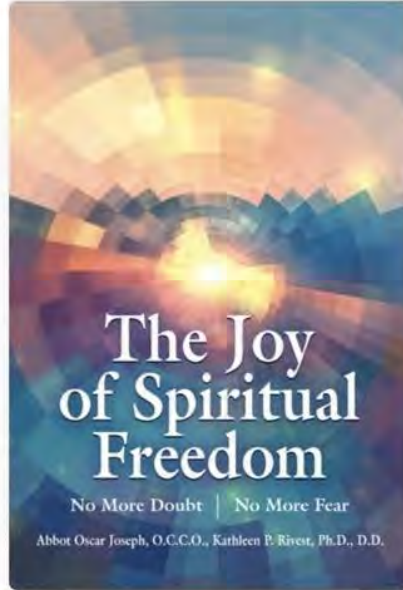
Cistercian Coffee Mug

*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*



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

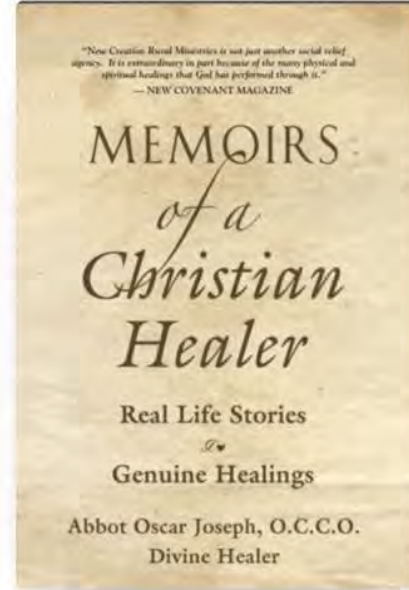




### The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

No More Doubts | No More Fear

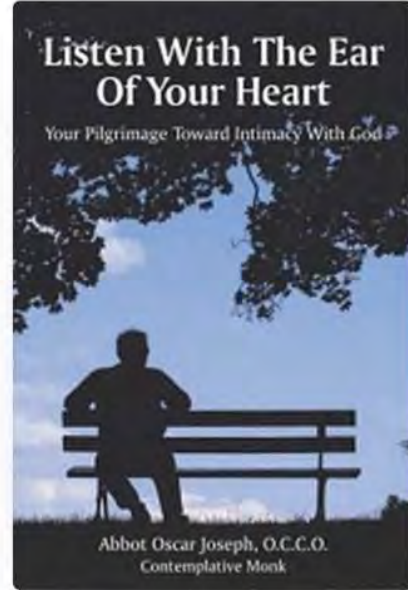
The Joy of Spiritual Freedom is the first of a trilogy that leads and inspires the reader to enter into a joy-filled relationship with a loving God. It is grounded in Biblical wisdom revealing how to remove debilitating doubt and fear. It draws from inspirational letters and case studies that illustrate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

**20% discount on each  
of the three books**



## Seekers

One fashion or another, we are all seekers. We seek safety, security, love, and community. It is easy enough to know when what we seek has been achieved. Seeking a Godly life and doing His perfect will 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.

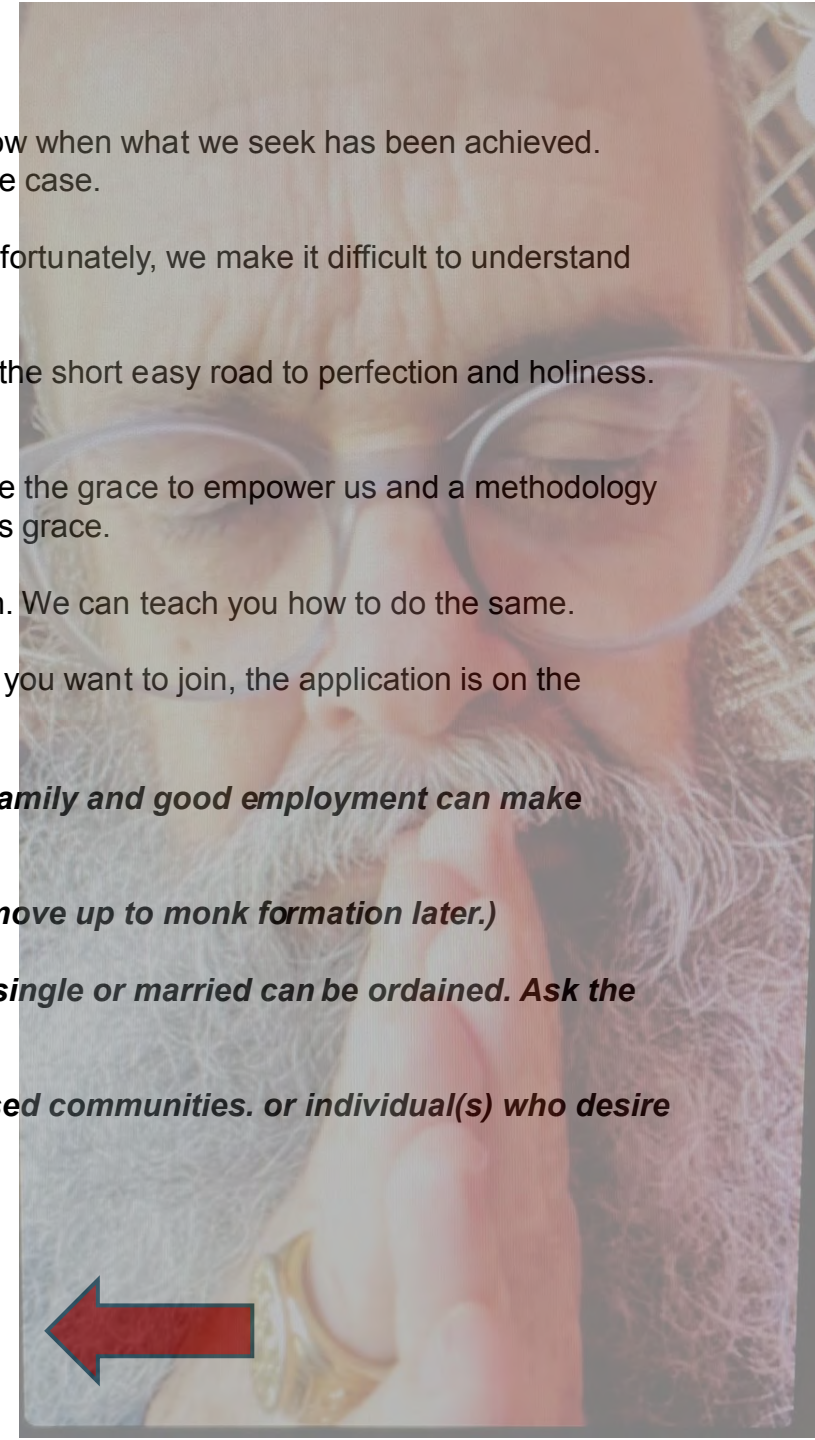
Read the information and listen to the videos. It all makes perfect sense. For more information go to our website. If you want to join, the application is on the website. Blessings.

- 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 very fruitful.)**
- 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://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEgDX7eh1xQ>

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





# CISTERCIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY CROSS, COMMON OBSERVANCE



43 years

Ora et Labora

**Cistercian Order  
of the  
Holy Cross**

**For more information contact  
Abbot@bellsouth.net**



**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.**