

Obsculta

"Listen with the ear of your heart."

December 2025



**"We are embedded icons,
living sacramentals; who sustain, grace,
and hold together the fiber of our communities."**

The quarterly newsletter of
The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common
Observance
*Worldwide Membership of Monks Living Outside of a
Monastery*

Founded 1981

Abbot General Isacc Simon, OCCO

Cleveland, OH

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++Isacc Simon, OCCO
Abbot General

A Personal Letter of Welcome to Our New Abbot General

Reverend Father Abbot General Isacc Simon, OCCO

With sincere joy and deep gratitude, we, your brothers welcome you as the newly elected Abbot General of our Order. We thank God for guiding the community to choose you, and we receive your leadership with open hearts and willing spirits.

We hold a profound appreciation for the weight and grace of the office you now assume. Your role is not only administrative but paternal—one who strengthens unity, encourages fidelity to the Rule, and helps each of us grow in the Cistercian way of simplicity, silence, and charity. Please know that you do not carry this responsibility alone. You have our prayers, our respect, and our full cooperation as you begin this sacred service.

We want you to feel at home among us. We stand ready to support you in whatever ways we can—through our work, our prayer, and our shared commitment to the vows that bind us together. We look forward to your visits, your guidance, and the quiet wisdom that comes from a heart rooted in Christ.

May the Lord bless your leadership with clarity, peace, and strength. May St. Benedict and St. Bernard intercede for you. And may our entire Order grow in unity and holiness under your care.

With fraternal devotion, Every one of us without exception.

Our new Abbot General, Bishop Isacc Simon, OCCO tells us about himself.

Cuyahoga Community College - Associate of Applied Science in Nursing - May 2010

Cleveland State University - Bachelor of Arts in Psychology - September 1995

St Paul Bible Institute and Seminary -Master of Biblical Theology June 2021

St Paul Bible Institute and Seminary - Doctor of Biblical Theology July 2022

I have been blessed to walk with others on their spiritual journey, as they sought the Lord God Almighty. I have performed weddings, funerals, house blessings, baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, and consecrations.

I have helped others discern whether they truly have been called into ordained ministry. I have provided spiritual direction, visited the sick, been a volunteer hospital chaplain, celebrated the Eucharist weekly, taught bible study, and provided biblical counseling.

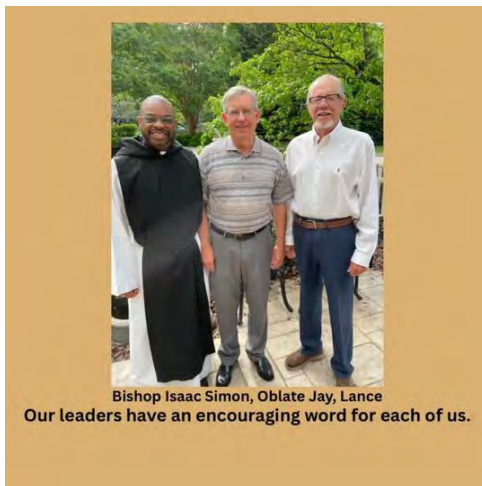
As my faith deepened, I began to realize that I needed greater spiritual awareness, to hear God's voice more clearly. This need led me to explore a dispersed religious life. The myriad examples of individuals who "thrived" as religious aligned with my need for greater spiritual awareness.

Ultimately, this journey brought me to the Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance. Here I was inculcated in the way of Benedict (as reformed by the Cistercian movement). Entering making vows to God, Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO and the Order helped me achieve that greater spiritual connection, I was desperate to find.

These several years later, I am thrilled to call myself a Cistercian. I am overjoyed at what living the religious life has helped my life to become. I earnestly believe I am several steps closer to God. I believe God has called me as a laborer in His vineyard. Indeed, the harvest is plentiful,



**++Isacc Simon, OCCO
Abbot General**



We created four amazing short videos with AI assisted songs.

Isacc Simon, OCCO is being endorsed by our leaders.

Abbot General Isacc Simon, OCCO is thanking everyone for their vote.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/9GL5orH8fUw?feature=shared> <https://youtube.com/shorts/zGa-b79VomQ?feature=shared>



Directions
Click any box and it will turn on!!!

The Cistercians are welcoming Abbot General Isacc Simon, OCCO.

Isaac Simon's consecration and elevation.



<https://youtube.com/shorts/aSODv-CxVRg?feature=shared>

<https://vimeo.com/1100893142?fl=pl&fe=sh>

By Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

BIG THANK YOU



June 27–29, 2025, set a new personal record for just how much one person can experience in a few days! Add to that the long list of duties Br. Isaac Simon, OCCO, undertook for us—and, of course, the 90-degree heat—and I am left with one word: gratitude.

I am deeply thankful to God, to Abbot General Isaac Simon, and to all the wonderful people at the Church of the Transfiguration in Cleveland, Ohio. It was truly a joy to worship together and reconnect with so many dear friends, both old and new.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone—clergy and laity alike—who made these days so meaningful.



Trustee and Oblate Jay and Trustee Lance are participants in the Winston Salem NC Chapter. They are loyal members who have volunteered to hold corporate offices for ++Isacc Simon in Cleveland, OH.



We celebrate Prior Jorge, OCCO, from Colombia, SA . He has volunteered to help the poor in his country and also stood firm with the RC diocese in his area that they responsibly take care of a needed local church. He has a BIG Heart for the poor and God has blessed Prior's efforts



We also give thanks to Prior Jorge's army who are helping him to help the helpless.

I offer us this page as a reflective moment to illustrate how a genuine healer sets the captives free as an icon of hope. Prior Jorge, OCCO becomes one with God and the person with whom he is praying.

Prior Jorge, OCCO writes, “Every time I have the old and sick or the poor child in front of me, I see my Lord Jesus Christ in them. I give them all I am.”

from Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO



The emotional atmosphere in this image is deeply solemn and tender. The monk's expression conveys reverence and compassion—his gaze is focused, his posture gentle, as if holding the moment with sacred care. There's a quiet intensity in his presence, a sense of spiritual gravity and protective grace.

The other individual appears subdued, perhaps burdened or reflective. His lowered gaze and stillness suggest vulnerability, humility, and a quiet openness to receive. There's no resistance—only a silent surrender to the moment, as if he's allowing himself to be seen, held, and healed.

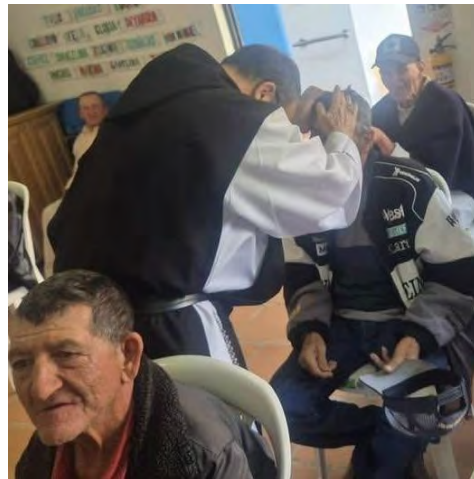
Together, their shared stillness evokes a powerful emotional current: sorrow, mercy, and the fragile hope of restoration. It's not dramatic—it's intimate. A moment of human ache met by spiritual tenderness. Ai



The monk's touch is tender, deliberate. His expression, though not fully visible, radiates solemn compassion. There's a sense of spiritual responsibility in his posture, as if he's holding not just the moment, but the man's pain, with sacred care.

The seated man's face reveals vulnerability. His eyes are lowered, his body still. There's a quiet ache in his presence—perhaps sorrow, perhaps longing—but also a willingness to receive. He's not resisting; he's allowing. There's humility in his stillness, and a flicker of hope in his surrender.

Together, they form a moment of emotional intimacy—one soul offering mercy, the other quietly reaching for it. It's not dramatic. It's sacred. Ai



Do Cistercian Contemplative Benedictine Monks Make New Year's Resolutions?

From the Abbot's Desk

As the world turns its calendar to January and many people draft lists of resolutions, the monastery remains steady in its ancient rhythm. Visitors sometimes ask whether monks make New Year's resolutions. The question is understandable—after all, monks are men committed to growth, discipline, and conversion of life. But the monastic answer is both simple and profound.

A Life Already Ordered Toward Renewal

For a Cistercian contemplative Benedictine, the entire monastic vocation *is* a resolution. St. Benedict calls the monk to *conversatio morum*, the ongoing conversion of life. This is not an annual exercise but a daily one. Each return to the Divine Office, each act of obedience, each moment of silence is a renewal of intention.

In this sense, monks do not wait for January 1st to begin again. The monastic day itself is a cycle of continual beginning—Vigils at dawn, the steady work of the hours, and the quiet examen of Compline.

The Rule as a Perpetual Guide

The Rule of St. Benedict does not mention New Year's resolutions, but it offers something far more enduring: a spiritual architecture that shapes the monk's heart every day of the year. Listening with the "ear of the heart," cultivating humility, and preferring nothing to the love of Christ—these are not seasonal aspirations. They are the monk's permanent orientation.

Thus, while the world may adopt resolutions for self-improvement, the monk lives within a framework that continually calls him to deeper fidelity.

A Quiet Moment of Intention

Still, the New Year is not ignored. It can serve as a gentle moment of reflection—a pause to consider how one might enter the coming months with greater charity, attentiveness, or interior stillness. If a monk makes a "resolution," it is usually simple, quiet, and rooted in the Rule: praying with greater recollection, softening the heart toward a brother, or embracing the daily rhythm with renewed gratitude.

Becoming More Fully Who God Calls Us to Be

We are the Oldest and the Best

by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO and his Ai

Our wonderful Monastic Order has a number of unique characteristics that make our mission richer in value than most other dispersed monastic groups.

One unique feature is that we have a wide range of memberships coming from a wide variety of church backgrounds. We celebrate each other's background and try to accommodate their preferences.

We have a blend of five theological perspectives. I will give a brief description of what each has to offer and finally describe what a blend looks like. **1.** Anglican, **2.** Catholic, **3.** Orthodox, **4.** Protestantism, and **5.** The Rule of St. Benedict

1. Anglican

What it offers:

Anglicanism emphasizes a “middle way” (*via media*) between Catholicism and Protestantism, valuing tradition, reason, and scripture together. It fosters liturgical richness, and adaptability, welcoming a diversity of theological views and encouraging thoughtful engagement with contemporary issues. The Anglican ethos brings a spirit of dialogue and balance between tradition and reform.

2. Catholic

What it offers:

Catholicism offers a deep sense of continuity with the historic Church, sacramental life, and universal communion. It stresses the importance of the Church's teaching authority, the value of tradition, and the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) as means of grace. The Catholic perspective brings an emphasis on unity, hierarchy, spiritual discipline, and a global faith community.

3. Orthodox

What it offers:

Orthodox Christianity offers a strong sense of spiritual mystery, liturgical beauty, and theological depth rooted in ancient tradition. It prioritizes the mystical life, the experience of the divine through icons and worship, and the centrality of the Holy Spirit in transformation. The Orthodox perspective brings the riches of contemplative prayer and a holistic, incarnational spirituality.

We Are the Oldest and the Best continued

4. Protestantism

What it offers:

Protestantism emphasizes individual faith, the authority of Scripture, and justification by faith. It often encourages personal engagement with the Bible, direct access to God, and a focus on grace. The Protestant perspective brings the value of conscience, reform, innovation, and active mission in the world.

5. The Rule of St. Benedict

What it offers:

The Rule of St. Benedict is a guide for monastic living centered on balance, humility, prayer, work, and community. It offers practical wisdom for shaping daily life into a pattern of spiritual growth, stability, and mutual service. The Benedictine tradition adds structure, discipline, and a deep rhythm of contemplative and communal life.

What a Blend Looks Like

A blend of these five perspectives would create a community or spiritual order that:

- **Combines a balanced discernment of Anglicanism**, fostering respectful dialogue and openness in belief and practice.
- **Rooted in the unity and sacramental richness of Catholicism**, embracing a universal faith, reverence for tradition, and the transforming power of the sacraments.
- **Inherits the mystical depth and liturgical beauty of Orthodoxy**, cultivating a spirituality that values mystery, prayer, and the experience of the divine in the life of the community.
- **Values the scriptural-centered, reforming spirit of Protestantism**, encouraging personal engagement with scripture, living faith, and actively bringing renewal and mission to the world.
- **Grounds it all in the practical rhythm and wisdom of the Rule of St. Benedict**, shaping daily life with balance, humility, prayer, work, and communal support.

This unique blend results in a spiritual community marked by unity and diversity, stability and adaptability, contemplation and action, personal faith and communal tradition.

The Cistercian Order of the holy Cross is a unique community that continually draws from the richness of Christian history and practice, inviting members to grow personally and together rooted in ancient wisdom, open to ongoing reform, and deeply centered in the love and service of God and neighbor.

How a Monk Responds to Dryness in Prayer

Periods of dryness in prayer are a normal part of monastic life. They are not signs of failure but invitations to deeper faith. In the Cistercian contemplative Benedictine tradition, a monk responds to such dryness through the very vows that shape his life.

Obedience: Listening in Silence

When prayer feels empty, the monk does not force emotion or seek new spiritual “techniques.” Instead, he listens more deeply—to Scripture, to the Rule, and to the quiet movements of the heart. Obedience teaches him to trust that God speaks even when God is not felt.

Stability: Remaining Faithful

Dryness can tempt a man to restlessness or discouragement. Stability anchors the monk in his place of prayer:

- the same choir stall
- the same psalms
- the same silence

He remains faithful to the rhythm of the Office, trusting that God is present even in seeming absence.

Conversatio Morum: Allowing Purification

Dryness often reveals hidden expectations—desire for spiritual sweetness, reassurance, or progress. Conversatio morum invites the monk to let these fall away. He asks how God may be purifying his heart, calling him to love God for God’s sake alone.

A Quiet Perseverance

The monk prays simply and steadily. He does not measure success by feelings but by fidelity. Over time, he discovers that God often works most deeply in the hidden, silent places of the soul.

How a Monk Uses His Vows to Resolve Problems

In the Cistercian contemplative Benedictine tradition, a monk does not approach difficulties according to personal preference or emotion. His life is shaped by three vows—**obedience, stability, and conversatio morum**—and these vows provide a clear, steady framework for responding to any problem that arises within the monastery.

Obedience

Obedience teaches the monk to listen—to the Rule, to the abbot, and to his brothers. When a problem emerges, he seeks God's will through legitimate authority and communal wisdom. Obedience prevents impulsive reactions and fosters humility, patience, and discernment.

Stability

Stability roots the monk in his community and in the relationships God has given him. He does not avoid difficult situations or withdraw from challenging brothers. Instead, he remains present, trusting that grace is found not by escaping conflict but by working through it faithfully.

Conversatio Morum

Conversatio morum—conversion of life—reminds the monk that every difficulty is an invitation to grow. Rather than focusing on another's faults, he asks how he himself is being called to deeper charity, humility, and transformation.

Together, these vows guide the monk to listen, remain, and be transformed. They are not abstract ideals but practical tools for daily life.

How a Monk Uses His Vows to Resolve Problems

Continued

A Practical Example: Resolving Conflict Between Brothers

Two monks—Brother Andrew and Brother Paul—are assigned to clean the refectory each evening. Brother Andrew feels Brother Paul works too slowly. Brother Paul feels criticized and discouraged. Tension grows, and their silence becomes strained.

Obedience

Both monks bring the matter to the abbot, not to accuse, but to seek guidance. The abbot listens, offers correction where needed, and may give them a simple directive—such as dividing tasks more clearly or adjusting their approach. Obedience requires each monk to accept this guidance with humility.

Stability

Neither monk avoids the other or asks to be reassigned simply because the situation is uncomfortable. Stability teaches them to remain faithful to their place and to one another, trusting that peace is found through perseverance, not escape.

Conversatio Morum

Each monk reflects on his own part in the conflict:

- Brother Andrew may recognize impatience or a tendency to control.
- Brother Paul may see that he has been inattentive or overly sensitive.

Both commit to small, concrete changes—clearer communication, greater patience, more careful work.

The Fruit of the Vows

By living their vows, the monks not only resolve a practical issue—they deepen their brotherhood. The conflict becomes a moment of grace, a place where the vows move from theory to lived reality.

Our God Lord has entrusted ++Oscar Joseph, OCCO with this ministry.

**Beacon of Hope International
Statement of Purpose & Mission**

At Beacon of Hope International, we are devoted to guiding souls into deeper communion with God through the sacred journey of trust. We believe that learning to trust God is not merely a spiritual discipline—it is a transformative pilgrimage. It begins in surrender and unfolds through prayer, silence, and service. Trust is not passive; it is a courageous act of faith, a deliberate resting in divine providence even when the path ahead is veiled in mystery.

As we yield to God's rhythm, trust becomes the gateway to grace. It anchors us in peace, liberates us from captivity, and draws us into union with the Eternal. In this surrender, we become vessels of hope—living icons who reflect the light of Christ to a world longing for sacred presence.

We affirm that:

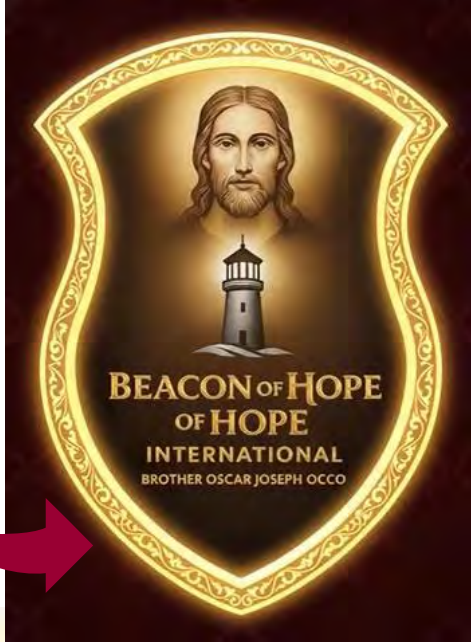
- Trust in God enables us to break through our captivity and become one with Him.
- Gratitude opens the soul to communion with God, self, and others—transcending fear and awakening love.
- Gentleness is the path to true joy and freedom, guiding others toward God's eternal intent.

Through these virtues, we seek to embody the mission of Beacon of Hope International: to radiate divine light, restore sacred identity, and lead others into the fullness of life found only in God.

How We Accomplish Our Mission

We accomplish our goals by building trust in God, forming people in spiritual identity, and serving others with compassion and clarity.

Click



**Brother Oscar Joseph,
OCCO**

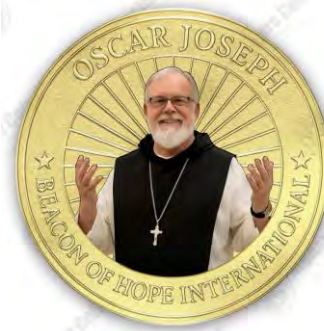
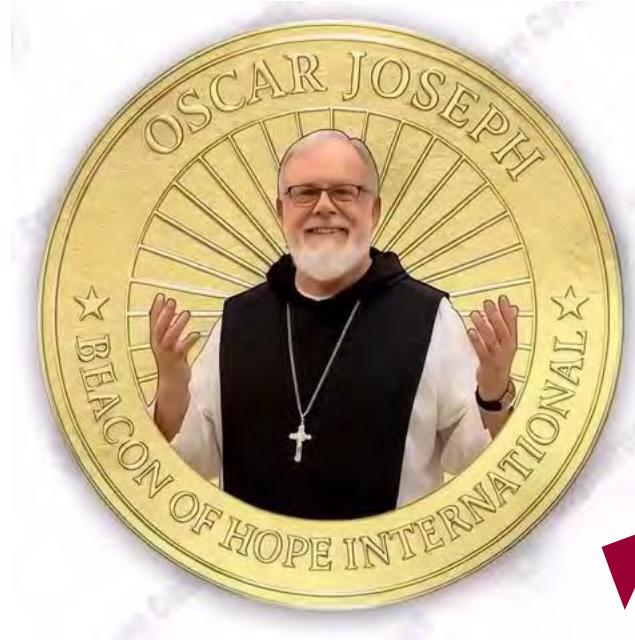
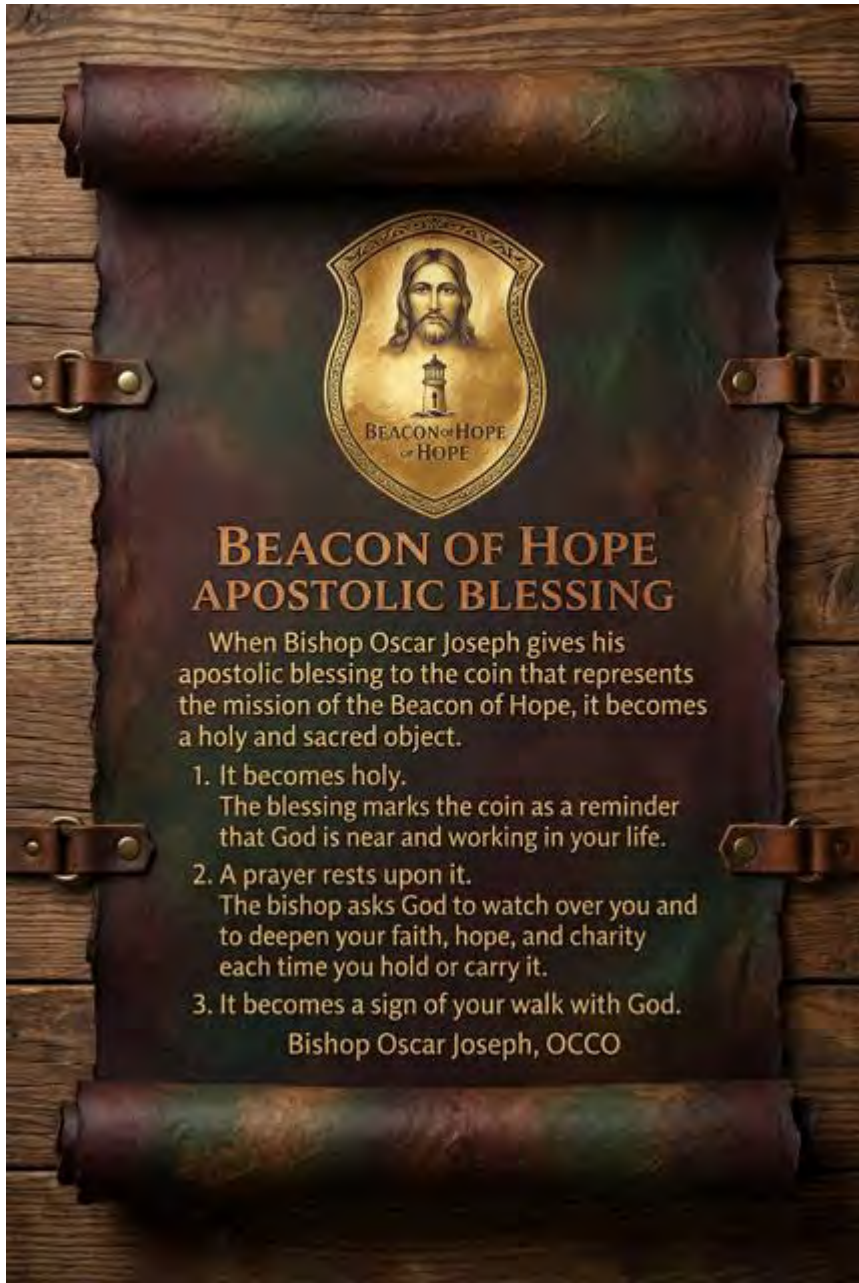


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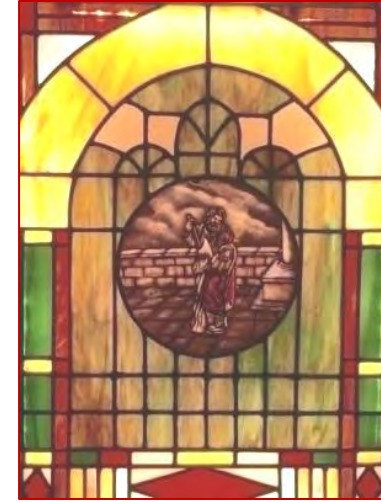
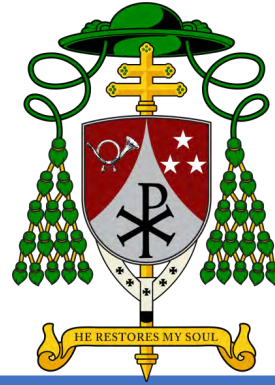
One of these treasures is The Abbot's very first book, published

Visit the new ministry page:
AbbotOscarJoseph.com

Click bottom of pictures
with arrows pointing.



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.





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



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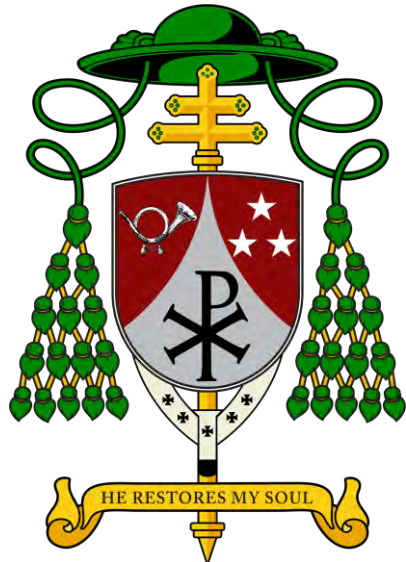
**Saint Stephen Harding Theological College and
Seminary
is a Religious Order affiliated educational institution
under
the authority of The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, a
501
non-profit corporation. Our degrees are classified as
ecclesiastically accredited.**

“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 led 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 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.