

# GESTA MONASTICA

News from the Abbey of New Clairvaux



## Welcome!



Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO | ABBOT

### OUR ABBEY'S MISSION STATEMENT

Seeking God at this place of New Clairvaux, we are a community of Cistercian monks living the Rule of Saint Benedict. We witness God's love for the world according to the Gospel of Jesus

Christ by a life of prayer, labor and sustainable stewardship of our resources in simplicity and openness to the signs of the times. Our monastery welcomes all people in a spirit of hospitality, and engages others in collaborative relationships.



THE ABBEY OF OUR LADY OF  
**NEW CLAIRVAUX**  
VINA, CALIFORNIA

## Vina Monks at Mepkin Abbey, South Carolina

By Brother Luis Cortez

In April, three junior professed monks travelled to our Trappist-Cistercian Abbey of Mepkin in South Carolina for a two-week seminar for on-going monastic formation. The juniors from all the Trappist-Cistercian monasteries in the U.S., which includes the nuns, numbered nineteen. This year's themes were on contemplative prayer and scripture.

The Augustinian priest, Father Martin Laird, led the first week of the seminar. He led the juniors in an intensive contemplative prayer experience which involved silent prayer together for nearly five hours! We had four sessions spread through the day punctuated by a fascinating talk drawn from his extensive and intimate knowledge of the Desert Fathers'

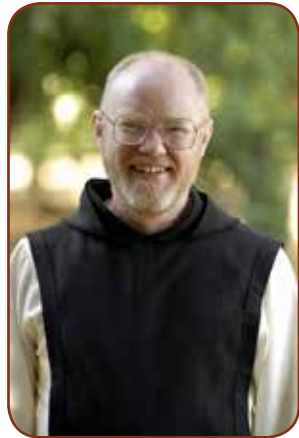
writings on inner stillness and the thoughts. This intense experience was both challenging and formative.



Sister Anne Elizabeth Sweet of Tautra monastery in Norway, led the second week of the seminar. She presented with great erudition the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. She was able to relate her monastic experience

(Continued on page 3)

**ABBOT'S DESK**  
A word from our Father  
Abbot Paul Mark  
Schwan



Dear friends, As you read we are in the midst of summer "fatness" as the native people of my native Great Plains referred to the summer months. Nature appears at its finest glory to teach us that while there are lean moments in life there is also abundance if we but have the patience to wait. Waiting, or as we monks call it "Vigils," is perhaps not a virtue contemporary society values but it is an essential part

of monastic culture. Monks rise in the early hours of the new day to wait in darkened silence for the visit of the Bridegroom Christ. This is a practice from earliest Christian times inspired by the journey the women disciples made to the tomb of Christ before sunrise.

The practice of vigils teaches us the importance of trust, belief, detachment, hope, and providence. It is this practice of vigils that has kept alive the cherished dream of a permanent house for the church of New Clairvaux since 1955. When our current, simple, wooden church was completed in 1960, it was the intention of the monks that it would serve us for a maximum of ten years.

In 1992, the monks voted to receive the medieval chapter house stones of Ovilla and they arrived at

Vina in 1994. Fundraising commenced and stone preparation, repair, and carving began. Once the stones were ready to be reassembled we broke ground in 2003. In 2012, we celebrated the removal of the scaffolding to reveal the stunning, soaring 800-year old gothic vaulting.



Finally on May 1, 2016, the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker, a most fitting day, we broke ground to resume the work to complete the structure within the next year. God willing, in 2017, we will dedicate the permanent

house for the church of New Clairvaux. You, our friends, have waited with us these nearly 25 years to see this moment. With your continued help God makes all things possible. In this edition, we honor all our friends who have contributed great and small to our Capital Campaign, and share exciting news from our vocations' office and the young professed monks and nuns of our Order. Thanks for reading. God bless you,

*Fr. Paul Mark*

Fr. Paul Mark  
Schwan, OCSO  
Abbot

# Monks at Mepkin

(continued from page 1)



to the themes found in those scriptures to great profit for her eager pupils. Having teachers from our own monastic flock is always a special help to us juniors. We were so fortunate to have such a skilled and experienced one this year.



Photo above: Vina Brothers Cyril, Luis and William (from left to right)



Photo above: Junior professed monks and nuns of our Order in the U.S. Region with Dom Stan, abbot of Mepkin Abbey and Sister Anne Elizabeth of Taura.

I would be remiss to not mention the wonderful blessing of simply being at our monastery of Mepkin, which some monks in our house consider to be one of the most beautiful in the U.S. After having seen it myself, I can give ample support to those claims. Boasting hauntingly beautiful live oaks with hanging Spanish moss, manicured gardens, and emerald green ponds replete with friendly alligators (I think they're friendly), Mepkin is a must-visit monastery for all our

friends who read Gesta. Oh, the monks of Mepkin are not too bad themselves! Peace!

~  
"Just as it is impossible to see your face in troubled water, so also the soul, unless it is clear of alien thoughts, is not able to pray to God in contemplation."  
A Saying of a Desert Father  
~

## Abbey Tour Information

Guests are welcome to take a self-guided tour any time between 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. We are open 7 days a week. A guided tour can be arranged through the Development Office for groups larger than 20. The abbey does request that groups who make private tour reservations make a donation towards the completion of the Master Site Plan. A suggested donation is \$10 a person. The monks would never want money to stand in the way of a visit but every dollar collected gets them one step closer to completing the building project including the new church.

TOUR CONTACT: [georgiagonzales@newclairvaux.org](mailto:georgiagonzales@newclairvaux.org) or call 530-839-9936

## DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT - Arlene Herrick  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - Georgia Gonzalez  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR - Brother Gueric Llanes, OCSO  
Email: [arleneherrick@newclairvaux.org](mailto:arleneherrick@newclairvaux.org) ~ Telephone: (530) 839-9936



## 2015 DONOR RECOGNITION

We are pleased to acknowledge and thank these special friends who have supported our Capital Campaign with gifts during 2015. We are grateful to everyone who has been a part of this effort, and indeed for every gift of every size. In thanksgiving for this generosity, our community members remembers the intentions of all our benefactors in daily prayer.

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Photo above: Abbot Paul Mark presides over Ground Breaking Ceremony on May 1st joined by the brothers of New Clairvoux, special friends and donors.

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## Capital Campaign Prayer

Blessed are you, God of all creation. You know our hearts and our plans. Guide all that we do for your glory. Bless the gifts that we offer for this Capital Campaign as you blessed the loaves and fishes, making them abundantly fruitful for the glory of your Name. We entrust this campaign into your hands, O Divine Architect and Builder, that through your guidance we may use our strength, resources and talents to make visible your Kingdom. May those who enter this sacred space find a resting place in your Son as we find our own hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## CISTERCIAN HISTORY

Saint Bernard of Clairvoux was the son of Tescalin of Fontaine and Aleth of Montbard both of whom came from the highest nobility in Burgundy in 12th-century France. They had seven children: Gerard, Andrew, Bernard, Guy, Humbeline, Bartholomew, and Nivard. Saint Bernard persuaded all his brothers including his sister, Humbeline, to enter the monastery.

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Photo above: Dom Paul Mark, Architect Dave Richen, and Steering Committee Chair, Peter Schaeffer break ground.

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**Bookstore & Giftshop**

Here at the guest bookstore, we carry a well-rounded selection of books. We have a good cross section of books and Bibles from some of the top Catholic publishers from self-help, to saints, through the desert mothers and fathers, and a good selection of Thomas Merton.

Father Anthony's pottery is very popular and always sought after because people are looking for that special gift, or, to be purchased as a keepsake.

Handmade photo cards from photos taken by Brother Rafael are also included in our photo collection. This year we added an extension to the bookstore that displays Brother Rafael's framed and signed photography.

Included in the bookstore are Trappist Jams and Jellies (all varieties). They are made by the Trappist Monks of St. Joseph's Abbey.

Honey, and copies of the Icons written

by Sister Susanne, Loving Mother, Mother do not mourn, are from the Redwoods Monastery.

We also carry, embroidered baseball caps, vests, jackets, and t-shirts with the New Clairvaux logo. Olive oil and mugs are also included. Please consider this an invitation to visit our monastery bookstore giftshop.

**Contact:** [guestbookstore@newclairvaux.org](mailto:guestbookstore@newclairvaux.org)



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**Have You Remembered the Abbey in your Estate Planning?**

If you have, we would like you to share this with us so we can add your name to our growing membership in the St. Bernard's Society.

Bequests are the cornerstone of most estate plans and are

among the easiest to arrange. The Abbey wants you to contact your own legal advisor or life insurance agent. They have the technical expertise to draw up planned giving documents or bequests.

You can contact me at [arleneherrick@newclairvaux.org](mailto:arleneherrick@newclairvaux.org) or at (530) 839-9936 and I will be happy to add your name as a new member of the society.

Please accept our heartfelt gratitude in advance.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

On May 1, 2016, the community and staff welcomed over 250 donors and friends to celebrate the long awaited ground breaking ceremony for our new church. Abbot Paul Mark Schwan announced to the audience that we have raised nearly \$4 million dollars in the last two years and our over-all goal is \$6 million to complete the church and senior wing. This announcement officially kicks off the public phase of the first phase of the capital campaign. The second and third phase of the campaign will include pastoral and education centers and the restoration and conversion of the old Stanford Red Barn into a Welcome Center/Museum/Abbey Store.

We have been blessed with a wonderful master woodcraftsman, David Clark, who is volunteering his time to make the furnishings for the church from some of our own walnut wood. Other walnut for the project has been from our longtime friend Randy McLaughlin. Another master woodcraftsman, Doug Epperly, has been hired to work with David. He is providing a substantial discount to us for his fine work.

Those who attended the event were given a glimpse of some of the furniture – the choir stalls and the desks which will be used by the monks under the Sacred Stones

in the Chapter House. What was even more wonderful was the presence of the donors who got a chance to see and sit in the chairs. Karen and Rick Lynch are examples of the devotion and faith our donors continue to have in this community. The gift was made some time ago. It was so exciting to see their smiles and joy. We thank them for their gift to the Sacred Stones Project and for their continued support through our current capital campaign, Preserving Sacred Traditions.

Speaking of the capital campaign,



we continue to make visits to our faithful investors. Please don't be surprised if you pick up the phone one day and hear my voice asking if we might come visit. We are reaching out to our loyal donors to help us fund this Master Site Plan.

We are grateful for all the support our donors have given us. You are remembered in the prayers of the community daily. This is the most powerful and constant gift they can give to each of you.

Arlene Pieracci Herrick  
Director of Development

## Vocation Office: Heart of a Monk

By Brother Christopher Cheney



When asked if the number of those saved would be few, Jesus refused to give a statistical answer and cut to the heart of the question by responding, "Strive to enter." Then He went on to say, "For many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough." (Lk. 13:23-25)

I believe that in this teaching Jesus is not referring to physical or even moral strength, but to the strength of our desire. Many people may "kind-of" want to go to heaven, but, as noted in the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13), other desires and needs come first and so choke the desire for Heaven, preventing it from fully maturing and bearing fruit; thus the person never actually reaches Eternal Life.

The Heart of a Monk is the Desire for Heaven. By Heaven I mean not only the experience of bliss in the afterlife, but the state of being utterly united to God and His Will, so completely translucent to God's Presence and Love within, that It must transform and shine out within and through him. This Heaven begins now in this life and reaches consummation in the world to come. Since we only enter Heaven to the extent that we desire it, our monastic forbears rightly emphasize how absolutely crucial is the cultivation of an intense and burning desire for real, eternal life. In his Rule for monasteries, St. Benedict challenges his monks, "Are you in a hurry toward your Heavenly Homeland?" (RB 73) and among the Tools of Good Works (RB 4) exhorts the monks, "To desire everlasting life with all spiritual longing."

So how does one go about cultivating a burning desire for Heaven?

1. In order to desire anything we must perceive it as a real good. In order to desire Heaven most of all we must train ourselves to value it at its true worth: The Greatest of All Goods. To do this we should meditate of the excellence of eternal life with God and the fleeting nature of life in this world and of all passing things.

2. We must examine ourselves and our lives to see if we are really living as if union with God and His Will are, in fact, our Greatest Value. This will be seen in how we choose to live.

3. We must pray frequently and fervently throughout the day for a real longing for God and Hope for Heaven. Ask and you shall receive.

In all these things we can be sure of the Help and Assistance of God, Who desires nothing more for us than our Greatest Good and Eternal Happiness with Him in Heaven.



## Guesthouse - Schedule a Retreat

Michelle Nagy - Porter of the Abbey

If a time of retreat is something which may be of value to you, please contact the Abbey Porter, Michelle Nagy, at **530-839-2434** or email at [reservation@newclairvaux.org](mailto:reservation@newclairvaux.org). Due to limited number of available rooms, please schedule in advance.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

VOCATIONS OFFICE

For inquiries about entrance into the monastic way of life, please contact our Vocation Director, Brother Christopher.

Email: [godseeking@newclairvaux.org](mailto:godseeking@newclairvaux.org)

# Abbey of New Clairvaux

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## Gesta Monastica

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