

THE ABBEY OF OUR LADY OF
NEW CLAIRVAUX
VINA, CALIFORNIA

GESTA MONASTICA

News from the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux



Father Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO
ABBOT

Welcome!

We invite you to share in the life of our Abbey by taking a moment to read and ponder the monastic life described in the stories and reflections contained here in Gesta Monastica.

Solemn Profession of Vows

Brother Luis Cortez shares his reflections on making his monastic consecration and solemn profession of vows as a Trappist-Cistercian monk.

I will be making solemn profession on March 25th. This month! What does this mean to me? This reflection can only take the form of a love letter...



This is a love letter to my God and Savior who gently draws me closer in the intimacy of silence, solitude, and separation from all things that obstruct my seeking His beautiful face. This is a love letter to my God who has lavished upon me the treasure of ancient yet ever-new love songs that delight His heart; love songs that pulsate passionately with

sublimity and grit—the Psalms. This is a love letter to my God who has captured my heart and who will never let it go.

This is a love letter to the Church that houses so many beautiful vocations and that affords me the privilege of living the Trappist-Cistercian vocation. This is a love letter to the People of God who afford me the privilege of offering sacrifices of praise to God on its behalf. This is a love letter to Mother Church who has raised

(continued on Page 3)

ABBOT'S DESK

A word from our Abbot
Father Paul Mark Schwan



Dear friends,

Nature is clothed in her very best greenery, her music the twitter of songbirds, her jewelry the rich carpets of flowers. After a winter of abundant rains, who of us cannot rejoice in the good things God has done for us.

Our Easter song of Alleluia fills the air, the mind, and the heart with gratitude for the gift of salvation. The renewal of our baptismal promises resonate like the monastery

bells ringing full peal announcing to the world, "HE IS RISEN!"

We are in the season of rebirth, a time for renewal, a moment of change. Blessed Gueric, one of our 12th century Cistercian abbots, describes this so well in his 34th Sermon for Easter when he says, "Only, be grateful for God's grace; and as you have been transformed into a new creation by Easter's healing action, so walk always in newness of life...May our Lord Jesus Christ grant you this, who on our account was dead for three days but now lives and reigns for ever."

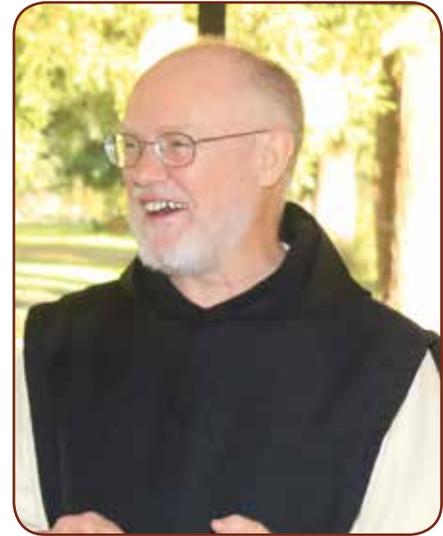
With every reason to hope therefore we invite you to rejoice with us in the accomplishments

and events highlighted in this newsletter. You have helped make these things possible by your friendship, prayer and support of our mission to make known the gospel of Jesus Christ to our world. A blessed Easter to you all.

Thanks for reading,

Fr. Paul Mark

Fr. Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO
Abbot



Capital Campaign Prayer

Blessed are you, God of all creation. You know our hearts and our desires. Guide all that we do for your glory. Bless the gifts for this Capital Campaign as you blessed the loaves and fish. Make them fruitful for the glory of your Name. We place our trust in you, O Divine Architect, that through your guidance we may use these gifts to make visible your Kingdom. May all who have begun this work be always guided by the light of faith, hope and love. Through Christ our Lord.

Solemn Profession of Vows

(continued from Page 1)

up St. Benedict of Nursia who has become a spiritual father and guide to me. This is a love letter to the Body of Christ whom I serve with undivided heart.

This is a love letter to the brothers of the community of New Clairvaux who walk with me and support me along this narrow path unto the Kingdom. You have carefully trained me



The ancient Cistercian custom of prostrating on the knuckles during the "Sucipe" or act of monastic consecration.

in the ancient monastic disciplines of our Order; you have borne patiently with

my shortcomings; you have helped me become a better disciple of Jesus the Christ; and, now, you welcome me with hearts expanded into your company until the last day of my sojourn on earth. Thank you.



Full-length prostration during the prayers of consecration.

And this is a love letter to those men who will join our community and help us keep the light of Christ burning brightly for our world sorely in need of illumination and warmth. Come, and burn for all.

(continued on Page 4)

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

For young disciples in our Church, that they will hear Christ's call to follow him in the monastic way of life. Send to us future generations of monks who will joyfully walk with you in obedience, fidelity and stability here in Vina according to the Rule of Saint Benedict.



The monk signs his name on a hand-written copy of his vows and places it on the altar.

(continued from Page 3)

This is a love letter to everyone: May the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless you. And may Mary, Queen of New Clairvaux, intercede for us.

With love,
Br. Luis, OSCO

“God regards you, too, as a flower, and he is well pleased with you if you do not lack the beauty of an honorable way of life, the fragrance of a good reputation, and the intention of gaining a future reward . . . He has deigned to summon and rescue us . . . who became for us wisdom from God the Father, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, God through all the ages of eternity. Amen.”

*~ From a Sermon on the Annunciation of our Lord
By Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*



The new solemn-professed monk is clothed with the white Cistercian cowl.



Guesthouse - Scheduling 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**. Due to limited number of available rooms, please schedule in advance.

Vina Memoirs

Dom Thomas Davis and Brother Pierre LaPointe recall the early years of the monks at Vina.

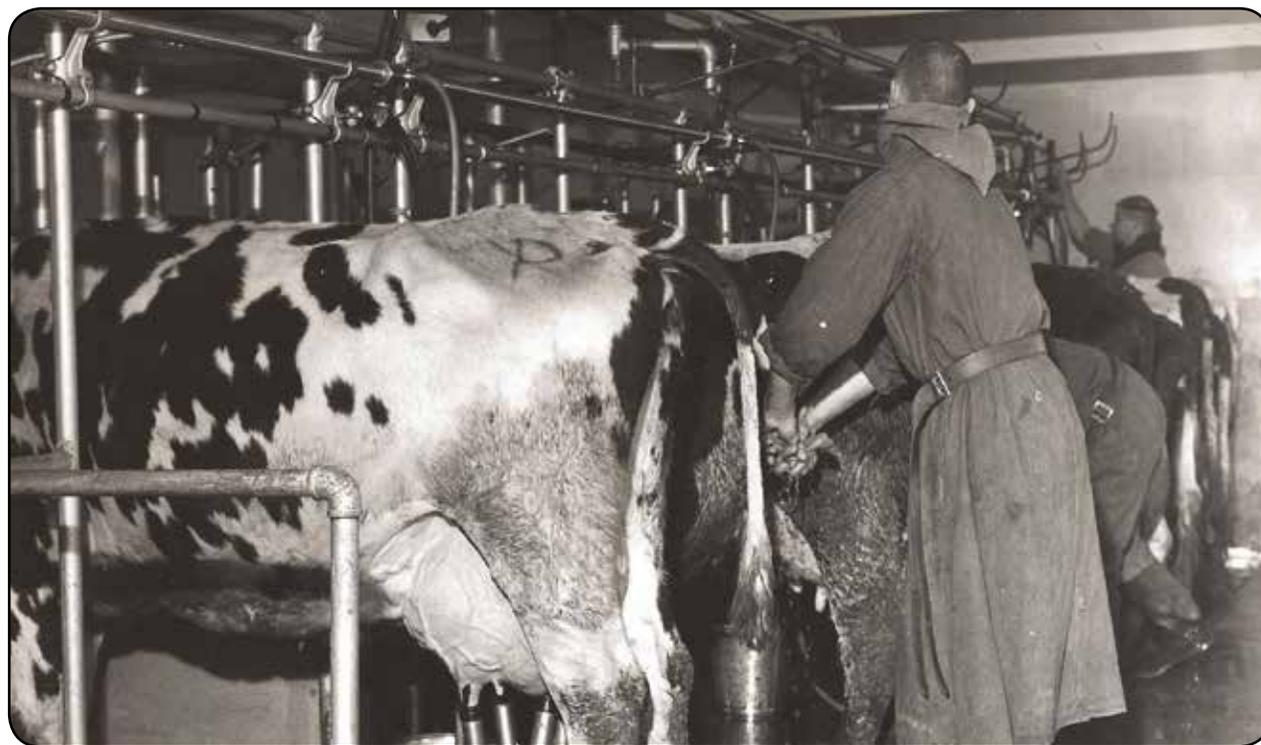
One of the selling points in the purchase of the Vina ranch, soon to become New Clairvaux Abbey, was a fine dairy herd of Holsteins. Holsteins with their black and white colors are rather iconic of 18th-19th century Trappist means of self-support. Monks live by manual labor, and a dairy herd “fit the bill.” Work

and prayer, ora et labora, as St. Benedict styles it. Thus the monks coming to Vina became proud owners of a large herd of some 200 cows total with about 124 of them requiring daily milking and selling the milk to McColls Dairy in Redding.

At 2 am rising, choir monks would go to chant the Opus

Dei, the Divine Office, brother monks to prepare vegetables for dinner, with others off to the milking barn for a good three hours' work. The cows then went out to pasture where prune and walnuts orchards now stand. All novices had the honor of cleaning the barns of manure. Cows returned for a 2 pm milking.

(continued on Page 6)



Please visit our new website to learn more about the
 Monks of Vina at the
 Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux.
www.newclairvaux.org

(continued from Page 5)

A hundred acres of alfalfa with an equivalent acreage of corn kept four silos filled. The monastery's pellet mill



provided fine alfalfa pellets. 1000 gals of milk produced every two days supplemented the financial income.

A brother was educated at the University of Davis for artificial insemination. Ten to fifteen calves were born monthly. Two fine bulls kept the process going. Several brothers were trained to provide all veterinary needs.

Times change! A decision was made to auction off the herd with its 40 registered cows. The need was for a more

contemplative and quiet life style for the brothers. In 1962 cattle trucks with trailers arrived and removed the entire herd in one day. The herd was very much a part of the monks' life. There was a feeling of emptiness, absence, and quiet. Gone with the herd was the odor of manure, flies and magpies!



View of the Gathering Space

Have you included the Abbey in your will or trust? Let us know so we may thank and welcome you to the St. Bernard Society.

Mike Prym

Tel: 530-839-9936

Email: mikeprym@newclairvaux.org

Journey toward Monastic Profession

By Brother Christopher Cheney, Vocations Director

Saint Benedict in his Rule for monks uses the image of Jacob's ladder upon which the monk is to ascend through stages of humility. It is a vision of a life at the end of which God makes his dwelling in the heart and soul of the monk.

Initial Contact and Correspondence

Those who want to know more about our Trappist-Cistercian life will often initiate contact with a particular monastery. The Vocation Director gives them the opportunity to listen to their hopes, dreams and desires, and provides information and resources about our Order and way of life.

Initial Visits

The best way to learn about any vocation is through first-hand experience; a chance to come and see! Therefore, usually the first step is a short visit of 3 or 4 days arranged directly through the Vocation Director.

Aspirancy

The next stage is a visit of about 2 weeks during which the aspirant would be able join the monks in choir, work with the brothers in the morning period, meet with the Vocation Director for interviews and have the afternoons free for reflection and reading.

Observership

When the candidate is ready, he may arrange

to do a 3-month long Observership, where one lives inside the cloister with the monks, taking part in various monastic activities.

Postulancy

The postulancy is a yearlong probationary period of further learning and initiatory monastic experience. A white smock is given.

Novitiate

We have a two-year novitiate: a time of intense monastic formation and study. The novice is given the white novice's habit which consists of a white robe, white scapular, cloth cincture and cloak.

Simple Vows

At the end of the novitiate, he may be allowed to make simple vows and receive the black scapular and leather cincture.

Solemn Vows

The final stage is the monastic consecration and profession of solemn vows of Obedience, Fidelity to the Monastic life and Stability. This is symbolized by the woolen cowl with which the solemnly professed monk is clothed.



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

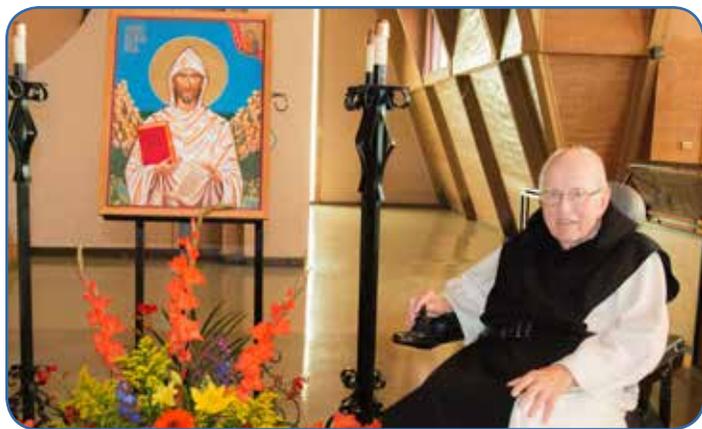
Calendar of Events 2017

JANUARY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 26 - Solemnity of Cistercian Founders Saints Robert, Alberic, and Stephen Harding. 	FEBRUARY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb 7 - Dom Elias Deitz of Gethsemani Abbey conducts the visitation. 	MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mar 8 - David George nurse at Meppin Abbey concludes the Wellness Conferences in Vina. • Mar 25 - Bro. Luis makes his solemn profession. 	APRIL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr 16 - Resurrection of Our Lord on Easter Sunday
MAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 24 - Solemnity of the Ascension 	JUNE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun 4 - Solemnity of Pentecost 	JULY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jul 11 - Solemnity of Saint Benedict • Jul 22 - Blessing of the Grape Harvest 	AUGUST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aug 15 - Solemnity of the Assumption Patronal Feast of the Cistercian Order. • Aug 20 - Solemnity of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, abbot and doctor of the church.
SEPTEMBER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sep 14 - Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross which begins the monastic fast. 	OCTOBER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oct 7 - Ordination of Bro. Stephen and Bro. Gueric to the Priesthood. 	NOVEMBER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov 4 - St. Bernard Society dinner with the Abbot. 	DECEMBER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec 8 - Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Patronal Feast of the USA.

Abbey Tour Information

Guests are welcome to take a self-guided tour any time between 11-5. We are open 7 days a week. A guided tour can be arranged through the Development Office for groups of 20 or more. The abbey does request that groups who make private tour reservations make a donation towards the completion of the Master Site Plan. The suggested donation is \$10 per person.

For information, contact Development Office or visit our website: www.newclairvaux.org.



REQUIESCAT IN PACE: Father Bernard Johnson (1925-2017)

Father Bernard began life as Henry Albin Patrick Johnson, born to Cecil and Mary Callahan Johnson on the Fort Lyon Military Base, Las Animas, CO. His father was a medical patient and his mother a nurse. Soon after his birth the family moved to Pineville, LA, and when he was eight years old the family moved to his mother's home in St. Louis, MO.

In 1943 upon graduation from high school Bernard joined the navy who sent him to study medicine. He served as a Pharmacist's Mate, third class, in the Pacific theatre in the last months of WWII.

Two months after his discharge from the Navy he made his way to the Abbey of Gethsemani. His cousin, Father Placid Sorber (a founder

of Vina) was a monk of Gethsemani. Dom Frederic Dunne, abbot of Gethsemani, had other plans and invited Bernard instead to travel with him to Gethsemani's new foundation, Holy Spirit Monastery, Conyers, GA, to enter there.

Bernard remained 21 years at Conyers and was sent to help Vina in 1967. He was elected Vina's second abbot in 1968 but resigned in 1970. In 1971 he was elected to serve as a Permanent Councilor and moved to Rome. In 1977 he was elected Procurator General representing the Abbot General and the Order to the Holy See. He served the Order generously in these two positions until 1990. During this period he helped to oversee the new Constitutions of the Order and the preface to the Constitutions.

Bernard was a model of St. Benedict's exhortation to prefer nothing to the Work of God (the Divine Office). He was faithful in attendance, singing with strong voice, right up to his last hospitalization.

Having lived with congestive heart failure and diabetes for many years he was hospitalized twice in three weeks. The brothers and monastery health care staff lovingly attended him. On the evening of February 20, the brothers gathered around his bedside to offer the prayers for the dying. He crossed over into eternity, entering into the joy of his beloved Master whom he had served so well on February 21 in the presence of Father Lawrence and Brother Pierre.

CONTACT INFORMATION

DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT - Mike Prym, mikeprym@newclairvaux.org

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - Brother Gueric, gueric00john@newclairvaux.org

ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR FOR DONOR RELATIONS - Carissa Anderson,
carissaanderson@newclairvaux.org

Telephone: 530-839-9936

ST. BERNARD SOCIETY¹

By Mike Prym, Director of Development

Our wonderful donors and friends sustain their relationship to the vision and mission of the monastery in many ways. One choice includes the Abbey in their estate planning through the St Bernard Society.

The St. Bernard Society bears the name of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). St. Bernard was a spiritual writer, propagator of Cistercian reform and Doctor of the Church. He entered the Abbey of Citeaux, France at age twenty-two, bringing five of his brothers with him. Just three years later, he was sent to establish a new monastery in 1115 at "Valley of Light:" Clairvaux.

His writings and personal charisma attracted many to Clairvaux and other Cistercian monasteries. During his 38 years as Abbot, the community at Clairvaux grew to several hundred, and 300 new Cistercian monasteries were founded. St. Bernard's writings on grace and free will, humility and love created a solid foundation for the spiritual life.

Established in 2003 by Dom Thomas Davis, the St. Bernard

¹ Thanks to Dom Thomas Davis for his assistance.

Society recognizes and acknowledges those of you who have made your commitment through thoughtful planning to provide for the future needs of the Abbey. By making your commitment, you receive the assurance of daily prayers, a monastery pictorial book and a biennial dinner hosted by the Abbot.

Among the ways you can participate with your legacy gift are:

- Create a bequest through your will or trust
- Designate the Abbey as a beneficiary of your 401K or IRA retirement plan
- Appreciated Assets
- Real Estate
- Property
- Life Insurance
- Establish a Charitable Remainder Unitrust or Annuity Trust

Estate planning reflects our relationships, priorities and spirituality. It bears witness to those we love and the communities worthy to receive

our final gift. Our spirituality prioritizes our planned gifts for family, loved ones and our charitable and religious organizations.

The next St. Bernard Society dinner hosted by Father Paul Mark will be on Saturday, November 4, 2017, starting with Vespers at 5:45 pm. If you have included the Abbey in your estate planning or intend to do so, please let me know so Father can thank you and extend an invitation for this catered event to held in the Ovila Room.



Vina monks building the "wooden-Gothic" church in 1960.

Church Construction

Our present abbey church was only meant to be temporary until a more permanent one could be built. That was in 1960. Now in 2017, the new space in which we will gather, worship and pray is taking shape steadily. Constuction continues even in the spring rains as plumbing pipes are laid in the ground, the sprinkling and electrical systems are installed, and our wood workers are piecing together the church furniture and abbey door. We bless God for your continued support!



Our wood workers Doug Eperly (left) and David Clark (right) preparing materials needed for our choir stalls and church door.



Holy Triduum at the Abbey 2017

Celebrate the Triduum with the monks at the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux! From the Evening of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday at 4:30 p.m. to the Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday at 4:30 p.m., the monks follow ancient Cistercian customs leading up to Great Paschal Vigil at 2:30 a.m. on early Sunday morning. Easter Sunday Day Mass is at 10:30 a.m. More information will soon be posted at www.newclairvaux.org.

Abbey of New Clairvaux

Abbot Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO
26240 7th Street
Vina, CA 96092
Tel: 530-839-2161

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
VINA, CA
PERMIT NO. 1



Gesta Monastica

NEWS FROM THE ABBEY OF OUR LADY OF NEW CLAIRVAUX

www.newclairvaux.org
📷 monksofvina | 📘 newclairvaux.abbey