

THE ABBEY OF OUR LADY OF
NEW CLAIRVAUX
VINA, CALIFORNIA



GESTA MONASTICA

News from the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux

FROM THE ABBOT'S DESK

To our cherished friends,

After a brief stint of winter frost, the first signs of spring have begun for us here in northern California! Oh, how I look forward to welcome a new season. The change in sunlight, colors, and temperature that a season brings all symbolize for me an inner renewal of heart that allows me to see life with a fresh perspective. Opportunities beckon, and hope is born anew as the old season passes away.

We continue to welcome new postulants and it is our joy to introduce more of these new men to you in this issue of the Gesta. With so many new men arriving we find ourselves with the happy problem of being pressed for space to house these new postulants. Yes, we are near capacity but I am not complaining for we are grateful for God's largesse. How great God is we sing in Psalm 8 and may we never forget it.

You friends are part of God's largesse as is apparent as you page through this Gesta.



You share in our ministry of witness to God's generosity. We are grateful that you have chosen to be partners to collaborate with us so that in all things God may be glorified. For all things, whether in season or out of season, serve to build God's Kingdom for the benefit of all (2 Tim 2:4).

God bless you all with a blessed Lent and Easter!



Fr. Paul Mark

Father Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO
ABBOT

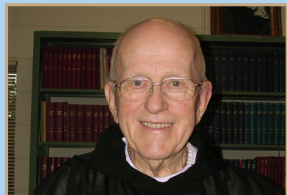
Abbotts past & present ...

"To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the abbot must always remember what his title signifies and act as a superior should. He is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery..."

~ Rule of Saint Benedict, Chapter 2

In this volume, we take a quick look at several monks of Vina who have served as abbots.

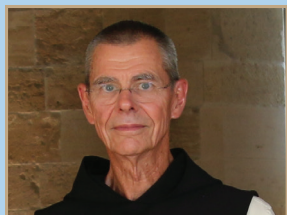
- Dom Bernard Johnson was the second abbot of Vina (1968-70).
- Dom Thomas Davis served as Vina's third abbot (1972-2008).
- Dom Mark Scott served as abbot of Ava (2001-2007) and New Melleray Abbey (2014-20).
- Dom Paul Mark Schwan has been serving as abbot of Vina since 2009.



Dom Bernard Johnson
(died 2017)



Dom Thomas X. Davis



Dom Mark Scott



Dom Paul Mark Schwan

AROUND THE ABBEY CLOISTER



Father Paul Jerome celebrates 96 years.



Brother Curtis receives a copy of the Rule.



Brother Duc receives the white habit of a postulant.



The abbot clothes Brother Nhat with the postulant habit.

NEW POSTULANT

Curtis Okolovitch was born in Tampa, Florida. He grew up with his parents and two sisters north of the Tampa area. He was raised Catholic and became active in his home parish church during his teens. Curtis later studied at the Florida State University and received his Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology. He went on to serve as a missionary with Saint Paul's Outreach ministering to college students at the University of Central Florida. Curtis then went on to work as an environmental field scientist in New Jersey doing site remediation.

Reflecting on the words of scripture, particularly Chapter 15 of John's gospel as well as the writings of Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, led Curtis to a greater awareness of God's abiding presence in his life. Desiring to seek God more interiorly and knowing people who have been great examples of living the religious life in a consecrated way, brought about in Curtis the desire to pursue the monastic life.

Aside from being an avid reader and fan of the Harry Potter series, Curtis' favorite verse in scripture comes from Matthew's gospel: "Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." When asked to share some words with someone who is considering to join a monastery, he says, "It's often only in the communal life that we learn to appreciate the Spirit's gifts in others, recognize and develop our own."



Brother Curtis from Tampa, Florida.

FROM THE VOCATION DIRECTOR

In Luke's gospel, Jesus tells the rich, young man to "sell all you have, give to the poor ... come follow Me." As vocation director, I encounter young men today who continue to hear that same call. In Luke's gospel, the young man walks away sad. The men with whom I have the privilege to walk in their vocational discernment have chosen to heed Jesus' call to discipleship as Cistercian

monks. They exude a certain kind of hope. It is a hope rooted in God's promise. In his Rule, St. Benedict puts this prayer on the lips of the new monk: "Receive me, Lord, as you have promised and I shall live; do not disappoint me in my hope." Our faith is in a God who fulfills that promise. Thus our path of discipleship as monks is one of joy even as we learn to give up all that we have.



NEW POSTULANTS (continued)



Brother Nhat from Garden Grove, California.

Nhat Nguyen was born in Vietnam. He lived there until he was twelve and later moved with his family to southern California. He graduated from high school and attended college in Orange County for a few years. Nhat went on to do various kinds of jobs from construction work, winding coils, delivering pizza, and becoming an Uber driver.

Nhat was raised a Catholic from birth and recalls being taken to church everyday with his mother when he was younger. This practice had instilled in him the desire to be closer to God. He finds that the monastic way of life through praying the Divine Office throughout the day and through solitude within the community allows him to discover more of God's love. His favorite verse comes from Mark: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" For Nhat, "God is always known for love, mercy, truth through his teachings, words and his followers (the saints)."

Duc Vuong was also born in the south of Vietnam. He grew up with his parents, grandmother and three siblings. While in Vietnam, Duc earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees in the field of English and education. He taught at a college in Vietnam for a few years and spent some time teaching in South Korea before making his way to the U.S. While in the U.S. he studied with the Divine Word missionaries at Epworth, Iowa for four years. But his journey ultimately led him to discover the contemplative way of life.

Duc was raised in the Catholic church and since entering the monastery he has found new meaning in living the contemplative dimension of our faith. As an ardent follower of Jesus, one of his favorite books is entitled, "On the Way with Jesus" by Rudy Pohl. Naturally, his favorite verse in scripture is from Matthew's gospel: "You who have followed me, in the new age, will receive a hundred times more."

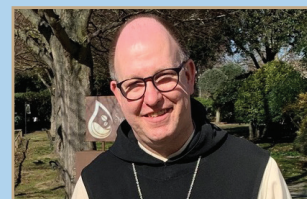


Brother Duc from Vietnam.

Looking Ahead ...

Almost all of the superiors of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance from across the continents gathered in Assisi, Italy in February 2022 for Part One of the General Chapter. At this particular Chapter, their main task was to elect a new Abbot General. On February 11, the abbots and abbesses elected Dom Bernardus Peeters.

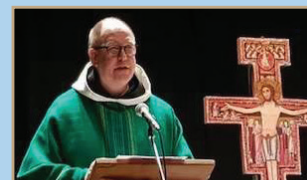
Dom Bernardus is from the Netherlands. He entered the abbey of Our Lady of Koningshoeven, Tilburg in 1986. He was serving as abbot of Tilburg at the time of his election as Abbot General.



Newly elected Abbot General



Dom Bernardus served as abbot of Tilburg for 18 years.



Dom Bernardus addressed the superiors at Assisi.



Superiors observing COVID protocols at the General Chapter.



Dom Bernardus Peeters

TO CONTACT THE VOCATION DIRECTOR:

Father Gueric Llanes

Email: godseeking@newclairvaux.org or Tel: (530)-839-2161



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We are pleased to acknowledge and thank these special friends who have supported us with gifts during 2021. We are grateful to everyone who has been a part of this effort, and indeed for every gift of every size. In thanksgiving for your generosity, our monastic community will remember the intentions of all our benefactors in daily prayer.



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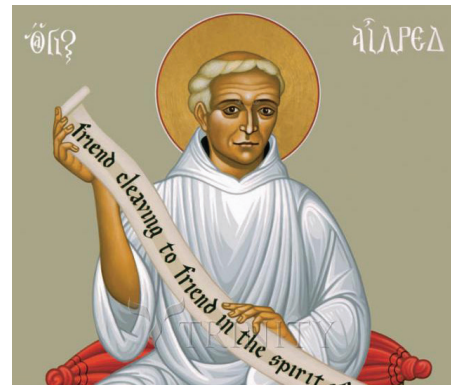
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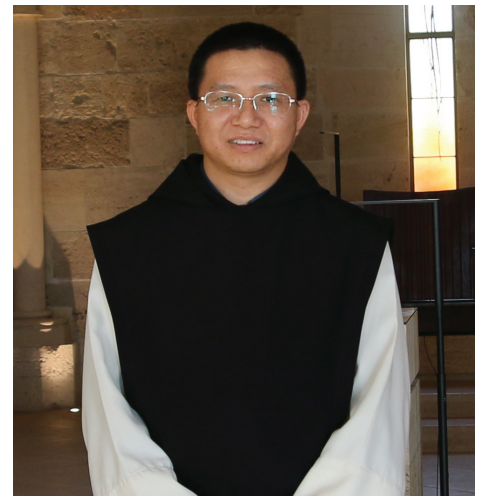
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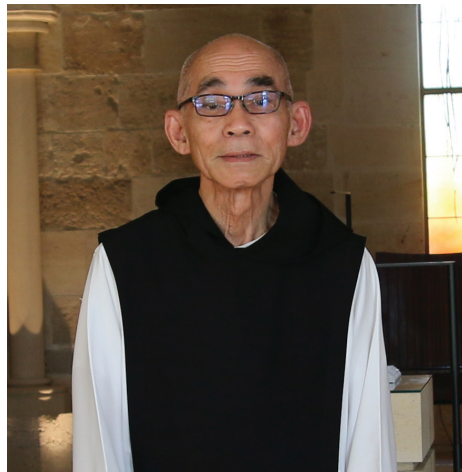
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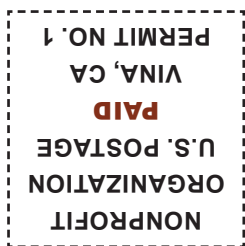
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