Volume 21 | Winter 2017

GESTA MONASTICA

News from the Abbey of Our Lady 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

Requiescat in Pace: Br. Joseph Knapp (1925-2016)

Brother Joseph arrived to Vina in 1955 when the Abbey of Gethsemani sent monks to establish Trappist-Cistercian monastic life in California. Brother was 91 years old when the Lord called him.

Brother Joseph was a simple, down-to-earth monk with a good sense of humor. While not denying a stubborn streak, Brother Joseph was a humble and obedient monk. This was evident in his last days by the compliant, docile spirit with which he cooperated with his caretakers. He was also quite well read in areas of philosophy and theology with a keen, active mind eager to understand eternal truths. He was devoted to his patron Saint Joseph, always wearing a medal of St. Joseph. An icon of Saint Joseph held a prominent place in his monastic cell.

On November 2, 2016, Brother had a major stroke from which he never recovered but quietly ebbed away. The community gathered for the anointing of the sick and later offered the Commendation for the Dying. The last four nights before his death the brothers kept vigil by his bedside. He peacefully crossed over into eternity the morning of November 25, 2016, in the presence of a nurse-attendant while the brothers were at the Conventual Mass.

"But when we shall have progressed in this manner of life and in faith ... persevering in the monastery until death, we may share now by patience in the sufferings of Christ"

~ From the Rule of Saint Benedict

ABBOT'S DESK

A word from our Abbot
Father Paul Mark Schwan

Christmas came and went, the New Year followed and now we prepare ourselves for Lent. The temporal and liturgical seasons create a rhythm to our lives. When we acknowledge this movement of time as a friendly part of our existence we learn so much from this "Divine clock." We discover the harmony that orders our days, the symphony governing the universe.

In our Christian belief God creates and orders all things according to the plan we name Divine Providence. A number of the psalms speak of the enveloping love encircling our existence and all creation. Psalms 34 and 139 are particular favorites of mine that constantly remind me that God is here, God-with-us, in Hebrew Emmanuel.

It is this Truth that comforts and encourages a monk, and all believers, in the daily challenges that are sure to come in life. People are born, grow, mature, age, decline, and die but God's Providence envelopes each moment of life to provide hope, sustenance, love, joy, etc. Providence provides meaning to life.

Here we live in total trust that God will provide abundance though the deadness of winter would appear to mock our belief. Some of the signs of God's providential largesse bursting into our lives here at the monastery include Brother Luis who prepares to make his solemn profession this spring, young men who continue to seek out the monastery as a vocation, the daily charity of the brothers in the care given for one another and in receiving guests, the projects completed to maintain the monastery as a worthy house of God, and the continuation on construction of our permanent church.

We lost our beloved architect Dave Richen to cancer in October. His love of beauty, his ability to listen, and his gift to inspire others has made our master-site plan possible. We owe so much to him and know he continues with us as we move forward through his appointed successor Dennis Thompson. This is part of God's Providence.

You too are part of God's providence for us monks in your friendship and prayer. May God grace you with a Lent in the joy of the Holy Spirit to celebrate an Easter of even greater joy. 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 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.

Behind the Scenes:
Housekeeper Extraordinaire

Paula Spangler's dedicated work as housekeeper of the abbey's guest quarters help provide retreatants with a sense of monastic simplicity. We honor her contribution with this article written by Michelle Nagy.

Paula feeding our koi fish at the abbey .

I can only begin by saying that Paula Spangler contributes in tremendous ways to the everyday function of the Guesthouse at the Abbey. As week and weekend retreats continuously ebb and flow throughout the year, a great deal of the success of these retreats is based on the experience of those who stay. Paula's care enhances that experience with her warmth and intelligence.

Paula brought with her a plethora of knowledge almost fourteen years ago when she first began working at the monastery. This was due to having an exceptional cleaning business with her husband John, taking care of regular clientele who had large homes or businesses and who expected a certain standard of maintenance. Their services were always in demand. When John was offered another opportunity for employment, Paula decided to accept the housekeeping position at the Abbey.

Paula's expertise however, far exceeds keeping the guest rooms, dining room, chapel and Welcome Center, clean and ready for use. She is continually observing any needs which may arise in the Guesthouse. This may include anything from monitoring and making sure all supplies are available, or caring for any stray animals which may need her loving attention. This might be a good time to mention Paula and John's generous hearts spilling over in volunteering to care for the many cats who have found their way to the Abbey. They make sure that these felines receive health care and a safe place to call home, since the Guesthouse can really only accommodate the three cats present at this time.

As a porter at the Abbey, I cannot express enough the appreciation of those of us who are fortunate to be her co-workers in the guest area, recognizing the ongoing contribution Paula makes to help assure that everything

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ABBEY CHRONICLES 2016

November - Brothers Stephen and Guerric were ordained to the transitional diaconate by the Most Reverend Myron Cotta, Auxiliary Bishop of Diocese of Sacramento .

December - Father Paul Kao was elected to become abbot of our daughter-house of Our Lady of Joy Abbey in Lantao, Hong Kong.

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runs smoothly. We, along with all visitors, are blessed to reap the benefits of her hard work and dedication.

This article would not be complete without conveying the appreciation of the monastic community for all Paula does to help facilitate an efficiently-run Guesthouse area. It can be an often overlooked position in the everyday workings at the Abbey, but with hospitality being a key aspect of the Cistercian charism, the monks want to acknowledge the vital part Paula plays in assuring that all will be well in the Guesthouse.

"Let all guests coming to the monastery be received as Christ Himself for He shall one day say: 'I was a stranger you took me in.' Let due honor be paid to all, but especially to the household of the Faith and to strangers."

~

From the Rule of Saint Benedict

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.

Farewell, David Richen (1940-2016)

David Richen, architect and consultant for our Master Site Plan, passed away last year in November. Over the years Dave met with the monastic community to prepare the building plans for areas needing development. It became apparent that the monks needed a new church. The 12th-century Spanish Cistercian Chapter House seemed to him to be the ideal place to start. While the interior of the Chapter House did not immediately lend itself as a "church" space, Dave was able to design it so it can function as a church where our daily liturgical services can occur. Although Dave may no longer be around to witness for himself the fruit of his labor, his spirit lives on in the architectural designs of our new church at the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux. See below for a 3-dimensional rendering of the new church.

Dave addressing our donors during the Ground-breaking event in May 2016.

View of the Choir

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

Friendship with Jesus

By Brother Christopher Cheney, Vocation Director

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most well-known of Catholic practices, portraying an image of Jesus' heart as the representation of His burning love and compassion for humanity. Most people think of this devotion in terms of its modern form derived from St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. However, predecessors to the modern devotion arose unmistakably much earlier, and in which Cistercians played a prominent role.

One of the defining elements of the Cistercian movement was the emphasis on the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, on relating to Christ in his human dimensions, as Jesus. The early Cistercian fathers were eloquent about the sweetness of Jesus and about cultivating a tender, close and loving personal relationship with Him. It was important to feel his human love. Saint Bernard emphasized meditating on his Passion and said that the piercing of Christ's side (heart) revealed his goodness and the charity of his heart for us.

Why is the tender human heart of Jesus such an important Cistercian theme? We are human, and we come to God in and through our humanity. God in his awesome Divine Love made himself a real and fully human person through the Incarnation, so that we could personally relate with him on our level and thus, he could lift us up into participation in his Divine life. It sounds paradoxical, but it is the teaching of Saint Bernard and other mystics that we only reach the highest levels of contemplative prayer through the sacred humanity of Jesus. Our humanity is taken up to the Divine in his humanity.

Cultivating and treasuring this loving friendship with Jesus continues to be a central pillar of Cistercian sprituality today. As the Constitutions of our Order state, "[It] is only through the experience of personal love for the Lord Jesus that the specific gifts of the Cistercian vocation can flower. Only if the brothers prefer nothing to Christ will they be happy to persevere in a life that is ordinary, obscure, and laborious."

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

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

By Mike Prym, Development Director

In the early afternoon, I received a call. The person said their insurance policy was nearing its renewal period. A call from the agent verified this information. "I feel he is pressuring me to renew, but I am unsure. I am thinking about surrending the policy and give it as a gift, but I am not sure what to do. Maybe I should renew it. What do you think I should do?" I said, "Pray for wisdom and the insight from God. Ask to seek His direction about the course of action you are considering. Seek the gift of peace, as an indicator of your future path of action." We scheduled a time to return a call in a few weeks.

When I made that call, I heard the same voice but with clarity not heard previously. Something changed. Without any prompting, the donor volunteered, "I made a decision. I concluded no one has the right to tell me what to do with my money, only I can make that decision. I want to give it to your charity." I inquired further, "Do you need more time, talk with family members or are there other charities you want to consider?" The clear and emphatic response: "No."

We fundraisers are bound to a code of professional ethics that preclude us from unduly influencing a donor's charitable intent. When working for faith-based charities, like the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux, an additional step remains to be taken beyond seeking a donation. It is the role our spirituality plays in our decision to make a charitable gift. Discernment, prayer, seeking God's will, among others, inform our gifting decisions. They offer a way for our faith to seek understanding to answer the question, "How can we make a return to the Lord for all that he has done for us?"

Fundraising embraces relationships, not transactions. Undertaken on behalf of religious organizations, it not only includes the relationship between a charity and a donor, but affirms the donor's relationship with God. It is my privilege to accompany you in your faith-filled decisions to raise much-needed funds to support our new abbey church.

For any questions regarding gifts of life insurance, tax-free IRA gifts, or including the Abbey in your estate planning, please contact:

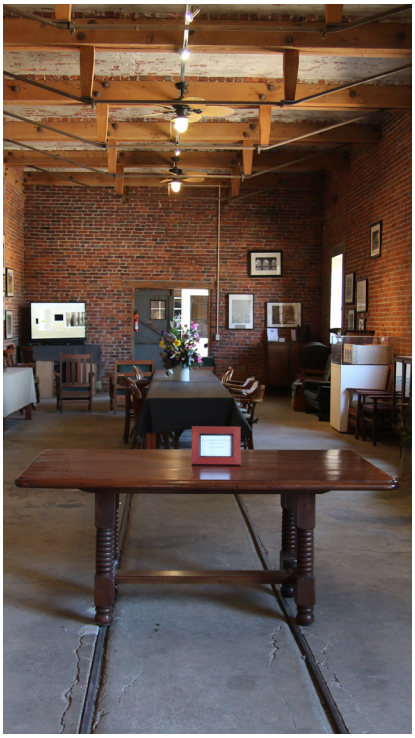
Mike Prym
Tel: 530-839-9936
Email: mikeprym@newclairvaux.org

The Ovila Room

By Judith Rojas, Docent

Obsculta ... et inclina aurem cordis tui.[1] "Listen .... and incline the ear of your heart." Everyone coming to the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux comes to listen. They listen to the Tasting Room staff tell about the wines. They listen to the docents tell about the Abbey and California history, and about the life of the monks living there now. They listen to the monks chanting the hours, or saying Mass. Sometimes, if they are really lucky, they listen to the silence, the silence that allows them to hear with the heart.

The Ovila Room affords a special opportunity to begin listening and hearing. Santa Maria de Ovila was a Cistercian monastery built in 12th-century Spain near the town of Trillo, about 90 miles north of Madrid. In the 1930s William Randolph Hearst purchased parts of the monastery and brought the dismantled stones to California. In the 1970s some of these stones were donated to New Clairvaux, and now, in the 21st-century, a fully reconstructed 800-year old chapter house, in the process of being turned into a new church, stands on the property. A new chapter in California history, wedded to the past. Guided tours of the chapter house are given upon request. These tours start in the Ovila room, located in a corner of the winery, once part of Governor Leland Stanford's Great Vina Ranch. Ovila. It's a lovely room, named after the Spanish monastery, the ruins of which still exist in Spain.



When you first walk in to the Ovila room, there is expectation, then curiosity. After a few minutes, the warmth of the red bricks starts to help you feel relaxed and you're ready to ease into the room and look at what it has to offer. The wood framed windows add character, and you can look out and see orange trees, or a monk riding by on a bike or golf cart. Of course you notice all the photos and artifacts placed around the room. The life-sized wooden

1 From the Rule of Saint Benedict.

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 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.

crucifix will certainly catch your eye. There is so much here. As you sit down to wait for the tour to begin, you might notice the train rails running down the center of the room. You find out this part of the winery was once where coppers worked, making barrels. The rails were used to move the barrels. The last thing you notice is the large television screen where you might watch a video about the monastery.

As a docent, I've often had the pleasure of seeing a bus load of tired visitors descend from a very modern bus and walk to the Ovila room, a well-aged, welcoming space. What an impressive start to the tour. For me it is symbolic of the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux ... the timeless lived in the present. This is what the visitors will be listening to. I will be listening to them asking questions and making observations. I will be listening to the voices of the past and the present all around me. And when I'm really lucky, I'll be hearing all of this with the ear of my heart.

Obsculta. There is much richness all around.

As a docent, Judith conducts tours for visitors who come to the abbey and learn about this historical land and how Cistercian monks continue to live the monastic life according the Rule of Benedict.

CONTACT INFORMATION

DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT - Mike Prym

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - Brother Guerric

Email: mikeprym@newclairvaux.org

Telephone: 530-839-9936

Have you included the Abbey in your will or trust?

New Abbey Church Construction

At the start of the new year, we have had much rain in Northern California. Despite the wet weather, progress has been made in setting up walls for the guest entryway, tabernacle room and sacristy. In addition, new roofing can now be seen giving a sense of balance and symmetry. The monks continue to give praise and thanks to God and to offer up prayers on behalf of all our generous donors.

MONASTIC IMMERSION WEEKEND

MARCH 31 - APRIL 2, 2017

WHAT IS THE LIFE OF A MONK IN THE 21ST CENTURY? The monks of Our Lady of New Clairvaux Abbey invite single, Catholic men, ages 18-35, to immerse themselves in the ancient yet living monastic tradition for the weekend of March 31st to April 2nd. Tell your friends!

FOR MORE INFORMATION: **www.newclairaux.org/become-monk**

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 to the Adoration of the Holy Cross on Good Friday, the monks follow ancient Cistercian customs leading up to Great Paschal Vigil on early Sunday morning.

Abbey of New Clairvaux

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

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