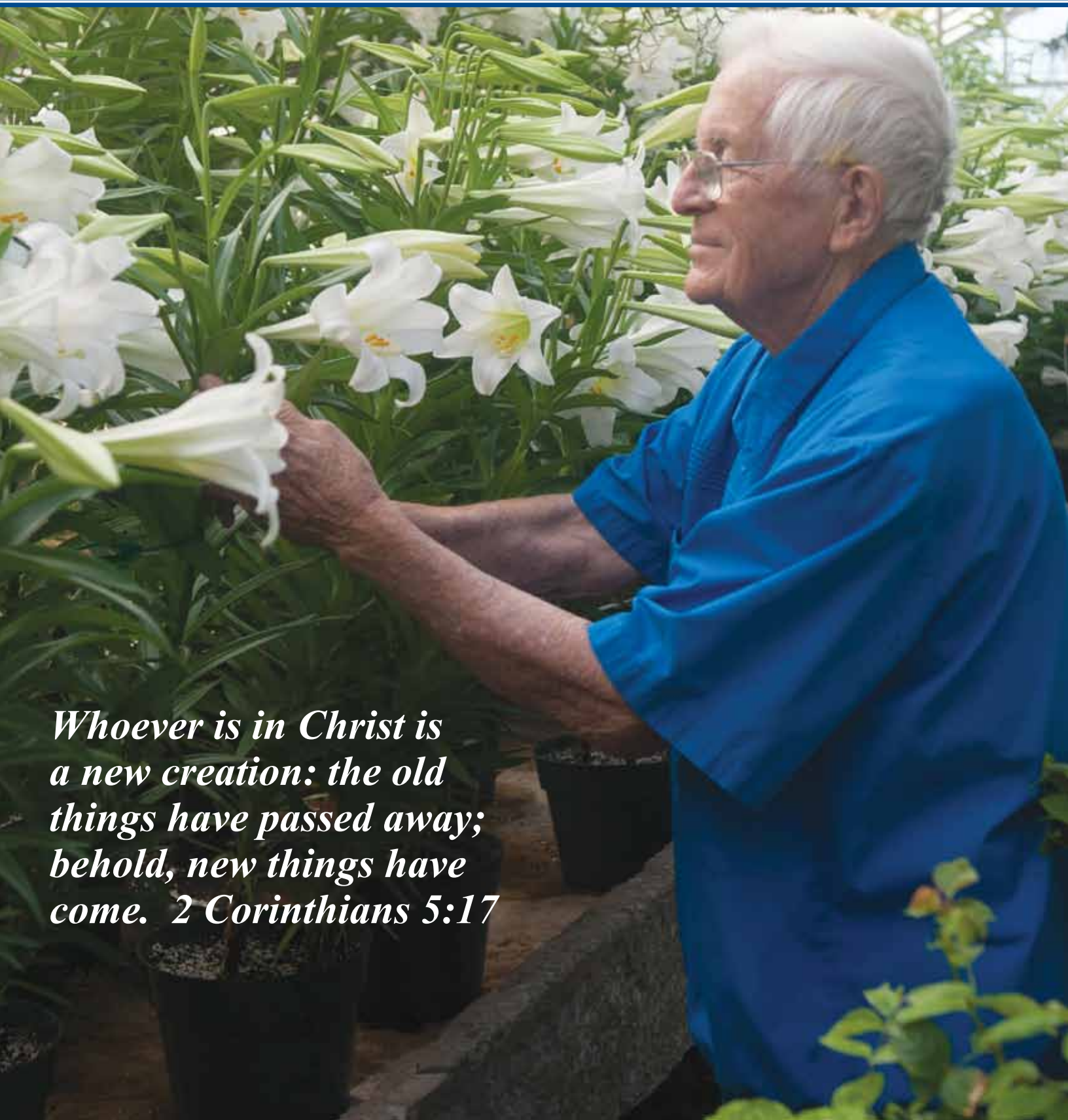


Magazine MonksOK

Volume 8, Number 1



Publication of The Benedictine Monks ✕ St. Gregory's Abbey ✕ Shawnee, OK 74804



*Whoever is in Christ is
a new creation: the old
things have passed away;
behold, new things have
come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

GAUDETE! Reflections from Abbot Lawrence



“The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.” Pope Francis thus sums up the mission of the Church in his proclamation of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy – *Misericordiae Vultus: The Face of Mercy* (MV). Even as he announced the opening of a year in which all members of the Church could experience more deeply the mercy of God, he also linked

our experience of that mercy with the call and responsibility that God gives us to announce and share that mercy with those who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ, who reveals the merciful love of the Father.

Jesus is the perfect revelation of God who is mercy itself. As Pope Francis writes, “The signs [Jesus] works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.” (MV 8)

Jesus himself knew that the message he proclaimed and the wonders he worked were the definitive signs of the Kingdom of God foretold by the prophet Isaiah. When John the Baptist sent his own disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the Messiah, Jesus responded to them by saying: “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.” (Luke 7:22) Jesus knew that his ability to transform the lives of others through his words and miracles revealed the day of salvation.

Jesus did not teach the mercy of God in terms of some vague theory or ideal. Rather, he manifested God’s mercy in ways that all can see, understand and, most importantly, imitate. Jesus teaches that mercy is not a concept – it is an action. Pope Francis writes: “As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviors that are shown in daily living.” (MV 9)

It should come as no surprise, then, that Jesus reveals the criteria by which humanity is to be judged in terms of the degree to which we have revealed the mercy of God not through words professed but through concrete acts of compassion toward others. (cf. Matthew 25:31-45) As Pope Francis observes: “We cannot escape the Lord’s words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry

and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison.” (MV 15) Matthew 25:31-45 provides the foundation for what the Church teaches are the “Corporal Works of Mercy.”

If we look to the gospel, we see that one comes to eternal salvation not simply by professing Jesus to be Lord, but rather by manifesting the love of God the Father as he did. In Matthew 7:21 we read, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” In fact, Jesus indicates that those who will experience salvation might not even have known that they were accomplishing his will when they performed simple acts of mercy toward those who were the least of his brothers and sisters.

And so it is that Pope Francis calls us to put into action the corporal and spiritual works of mercy during this special jubilee year. “It is my burning desire that during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty.... Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead.” (MV 15)

In his Lenten message this year, Pope Francis emphasized that practicing the corporal works of mercy also helps us to escape from the isolation that is all too common in our contemporary culture. “For all of us,... this Jubilee Year is a favorable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God’s word and by practicing the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited.” (Message for Lent 2016)

All Christians are called to extend the corporal works of mercy to those around them. This includes those in consecrated life.

For that reason, this issue of *MonksOK!* includes reflections by monks of St. Gregory’s Abbey on the corporal works of mercy in our way of life. These reflections are not meant to draw the admiration of others. Rather, we hope they will both help others to understand our way of life and to inspire others to see how they also can make the corporal works of mercy part of their everyday life.

Pope Francis writes, “Without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.” (MV 10)

May we all find hope and joy by sharing with others the mercy of God!

Jesus teaches that mercy is not a concept – it is an action.

Manifestations of Mercy

Reflections on the Corporal Works

Editor's Note: These reflections are offered by monks of St. Gregory's to give insight to their monastic life and to encourage others to find ways of practicing the works of mercy in their daily lives.

Give Food to the Hungry

Br. Damian Whalen, OSB



In my experience it is often hard to distinguish between physical hunger and spiritual hunger. A meal with family and friends can often feed the soul as well as the body, especially when the meal is offered as an act of hospitality or kindness. Offering a place at our monastery table to guests, pilgrims, and even strangers is the most common way that we help to feed the hungry. It also wouldn't be uncommon in the monastery for monks to offer soup or sandwiches to the poor or the homeless, since people in a variety of circumstances and for many reasons find their way to our door, seeking assistance.



Within the monastery itself there is a long tradition of calling on the monks to serve at table by bringing food to the members of the community and guests who are gathered for meals in the common dining room (refectory). When members of the community are sick or, for various reasons, confined to their rooms, monks will be called upon to bring meals to the members of the community who have special needs.



On feastsdays or holidays we often will take extra care to prepare the meal and the table for these special events. This extra service provides us with a way to express care and appreciation for the community as we celebrate birthdays, anniversaries or special days in the life of the community. Not only do we attend to the physical needs and nourishment of the community but we provide for the well-being of the monks by helping to nourish our souls and spirits as well.

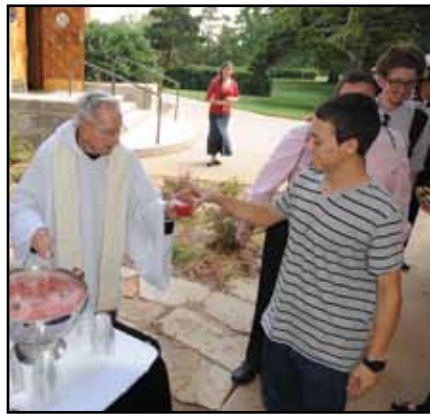
Give Drink to the Thirsty



Rev. Manuel Magallanes, OSB

Giving drink to the thirsty is not only a "nice thing" to do for another. It is much more. We as Christians, and especially as monks of St. Gregory's, are challenged by Jesus to give drink to those that are thirsty. We are not to spiritualize it. The mandate is brutally concrete. Give drink to the thirsty.

At the monastery, as it is true throughout this country, "drinking water" is plentiful and seemingly very available. It is not a problem; so we may ask, "Why make an issue?"



It may be for that reason that we are not as concerned about practicing this corporal work of mercy as we are about the others.

Yet we do practice it. This corporal work of mercy is our best way to express our love and concern for one another on a daily basis. It is practiced at meals when we offer water and drink to each other at table. It is visible when a monk brings water or refreshment to another who may be sick, disabled or elderly. It is certainly there when a monk goes into town on a regular basis to keep the community snack bar replenished with juices and drinks or to bring bottle water to those that request it. And, of course, it is always there when a monk offers a guest something to drink.

What may not be very visible, but is certainly practiced every day at the monastery, is when a monk becomes aware of the fact that another may be thirsty or in need of refreshment and asks, "Brother, do you care for a drink?"

Continued

Manifestations of Mercy

Reflections on the Corporal Works

Continued from page 3

This Corporal Work of Mercy also reminds me of an incident that occurred when I was the Catholic Chaplain at the federal prison, F.C.I. El Reno, in El Reno, Oklahoma. It was an exceptionally busy place, since it was also a main Federal Transfer Center in the country. It had a special unit that was “designed to house holdover inmates in-transit to other facilities.”

In December 1987, we received an unexpectedly large number of Cuban prisoners who had rioted and taken control of two federal institutions (Atlanta and Oakdale, Louisiana). Most of them were refugees that Fidel Castro sent to us in 1980 from Mariel, Cuba. Thus they were referred to as “Marielitos.” Some of these were “successfully integrated into our American society; but many ... were detained because of criminal backgrounds or mental illness.” Many had already completed their sentences but could never be re-admitted into our society. Some of these were being detained indefinitely and facing deportation for having committed minor offences. Neither our country nor Castro wanted them.

The “Marielitos” arrived into our receiving area early that morning. I became aware of their presence that afternoon when word about a disturbance in the hold-over unit reached me.

I remember thinking to myself how fortunate I was to be in the security of the Chaplain’s Office that afternoon, far away from the uproar. But I soon got a phone call from the lieutenant to report to the receiving area immediately. A riot was about to break out and “no one could speak Cuban.” I could hardly understand the lieutenant myself from the noise in the background. I made certain I had my Roman Collar on and rushed to the site.

The inmates were still crowded into one or two of the large cages set up to receive new arrivals. I approached the bars and shouted into the cage to get their attention. The uproar only got worse. Finally I motioned to one of the prisoners and hollered, “Con quien puedo hablar? ... To whom can I talk?”

This person seemed to understand me and soon brought me another individual. I gestured to that man that I could not hear him because of the uproar. He then turned to the crowd behind him and with a motion of his hand everything immediately quieted down. Now, that was scary.

I asked him, “Que es lo que necesitan? ... What is it you need?”

“Water.” he said. “We have not been offered any water since we left the last institution.”

The deafening silence had brought in other officers to check what had happened. “What did you do?” they asked.

Barrels of water were immediately brought in to wash and drink.

Clothe the Naked

Br. Dominic Ramirez, OSB

St. Martin of Tours is best known for giving half of his cloak to a beggar who later appeared to him as Christ with the half cloak. We can imitate this generous saint by giving clothes to the needy.

Here at St. Gregory’s – through the generosity of our students, staff and faculty – I have collected clothes for recent immigrants who have come to this country with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Many have even saved the clothes we gave them to send back to Mexico.

It doesn’t take much time to go through our wardrobes and select any clothes that are superfluous and send or give them to someone in need – either directly or indirectly through the many non-profit organizations in our cities. Thrift shops would be happy to make them available to the needy at a low cost. You can also donate time or money to organizations that provide low- or no-cost clothing to the poor.

And remember – any single thing that we give to another person in need, we are giving to Christ Himself.



Visit the Sick

Abbot Lawrence

In his *Rule*, St. Benedict teaches that “Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ, for he said: *I was sick and you visited me.*” (RB 36). The Abbot in particular must have special concern for the sick and elder members of the community because if there are shortcomings in this regard he will bear the responsibility.

In ten years as abbot this passage has become very important to me. Certainly health emergencies involving monks have taken me on many trips to the ER. And since I serve as the “health-care proxy” and hold “power of attorney” for all of the monks, I have been involved in discussions with several of my confreres

and their physicians regarding end-of-life care and in the decision to discontinue medical treatments. In between these situations, the words of Jesus and St. Benedict challenge me to become increasingly attentive to the needs of all members of the community and to express my concern by inquiring about their well-being, giving a word of encouragement and even assisting with the bodily needs when they are most vulnerable.



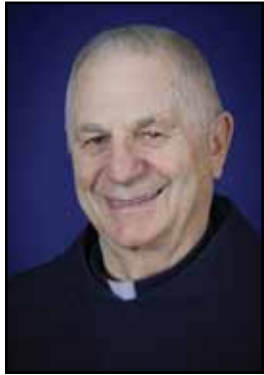
and their physicians regarding end-of-life care and in the decision to discontinue medical treatments. In between these situations, the words of Jesus and St. Benedict challenge me to become increasingly attentive to the needs of all members of the community and to express my concern by inquiring about their well-being, giving a word of encouragement and even assisting with the bodily needs when they are most vulnerable.

Certainly I recognize that I as abbot need to continue to grow in this area, and also need to help the entire community to grown

in mutual care and compassion. And yet, it has been through my involvement with care of infirm and elder members of the community that I have been invited to experience the greatest graces and personal growth. Visiting with the infirm and elders has helped me to learn patience, attentiveness, and the spontaneity or flexibility that is needed to exercise charity. It has helped me to appreciate the challenge that all people face in our society when navigating the worlds of healthcare, hospitals, medications, health insurance and the benefits and limitations of Medicare and Medicaid. (I thank God our office manager, Lynda Hail, provides such knowledgeable and dedicated service to our community regarding these last items!) It has also provided me with many privileged opportunities to get to know at a deeper level the men with whom God has called me to journey in life and to be inspired by their own faith and trust in God. For that I am truly grateful!

Shelter the Homeless

Fr. Paul Zahler, OSB



A roof over your head is one of the very basic human needs, and one of the most important Corporal Works of Mercy in the Church. Yet, we come across many human beings living on the street as they are homeless. People from all walks of life can be victims of homelessness, but we as a society have the ability and moral obligation to extend a helping hand to our fellow human beings. It is observed that in this highly competitive world, some of our brothers and sisters fall into

homelessness due to poverty, drug abuse, handicapping conditions and intellectual disabilities, to mention a few.

I have come across many people with disabilities on the brink of homelessness and have had opportunities to assist them through various programs. People with developmental disabilities, being a lifelong condition, make up one of the most vulnerable groups in society. I had an opportunity to get involved in assisting with their housing needs based on their physical and mental functioning levels. The key philosophy we incorporated in our system, is that we are all God's children and irrespective of their functioning levels, they have a right to live and take a prudent risk in the share of daily living. We also realized that resources are limited but through effective utilization of human and natural resources we can solve homelessness. The holistic approach to marginalized people is to bring out their full potential through recreation, employment and community living. In 1977 we took potentially employable adults that had been institutionalized for up to 28 years of their life, from Pauls Valley State School, by setting up community living homes with HUD. They all began to live in their own homes, began to work and many among them became tax payers. We have seen a miraculous transformation in their eyes when they began live independently. We used a very small grant to achieve this milestone in their life.

We have been instrumental in solving housing challenges for people with developmental disabilities for the last forty years. We understand that every situation is different but the basic phi-

losophy we apply is love for our fellow human beings, and a trust in their potential. We as a society have a lot of natural and human resources and if we channelize those resources with the power of love, solutions will emerge. In our Home Integration, Inc. program (HOME being an acronym for (Help Organize Mainstreaming Efforts), we provide 24 hours per day/7 days a week services to individuals in their own home and neighborhood. Though it is funded by the state, we create solutions to housing, and community living.

Homelessness is a global problem. How we treat our less fortunate human beings will define "who we are". We have to draw strength from our spirituality and value orientation. If we are spiritually rooted in the right sense, all the diversities will vanish. We will be able to open our hearts and souls to embrace humanity. The challenges of housing needs to be addressed holistically by integrating home and community living. It is possible, if we love our fellow human beings with our heart and soul.

Visit the Imprisoned

Rev. Adrian Vorderlandwehr, OSB

A prison may be one of the last places you might expect a sacred encounter. But it happens almost every day. The highest hurdle for a prisoner is to understand that there is no sin so great that God will not forgive. It is a powerful indication of the great mercy of God that Jesus has left us a sacramental sign by which our sins are be forgiven.



As Abbot I had occasion to visit one of St. Gregory's monks, Father Daniel Suellentrop, OSB, when he was serving as a U.S. Army Chaplain at the military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. I didn't meet with any prisoners there, but Fr. Daniel gave me his approach to ministry to prisoners. He said that he told them that during their imprisonment, they should use the uninterrupted time to study, pray and be reconciled with God. I found Fr. Daniel's approach to be helpful when I was assigned to be the pastor at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in McLoud, Oklahoma. Along with that assignment came the duty of Volunteer Catholic Chaplain at Mabel Bassett Prison for women, which was close by. It took a while to get approved and undergo the day of training for prison volunteers.

The chapel at Mabel Basset is inside the yard and Mass was scheduled for two o'clock on Saturday afternoons. The hour coincided with open recreation for the prisoners, so there I was, parading alone across the yard teeming with women outside their cells in the open yard mingling, exercising, playing games and soaking up as much sunshine as they could collect in an hour. Some days the chapel would fill, but there were only a few Catholics who attended regularly. But all those attending wanted a rosary because they thought it could be worn as jewelry. So my solution was to obtain a supply of "Breakaway Cord" Rosaries advertised as ideal for prison ministries. They all got blessed and delivered personally, and I trusted the Lord would lead some of recipients to prayer and faith, but they wouldn't stand up to

Continued

Manifestations of Mercy

Reflections on the Corporal Works

Continued from page 5

being worn like a necklace. I think it was just after Christmas when I asked one of the women prisoners who was walking with me as I was leaving after Mass what Christmas Day was like. She replied that it was “just like living in the monastery where everything happens the same time every day. You eat, sleep, work and pray on a fixed schedule. The only thing different is what you make of it.”

When I was transferred from that parish, I continued going to the women’s prison for over two years because the new pastor did not get his required training. Then the Archbishop contacted me asking me to respond to a male prisoner near Lexington who said they had not seen a priest for several years. Thus I started offering Mass at two prisons for men near Lexington, Oklahoma. That was seven years ago now. During that time, we have baptized or received thirty men into the Catholic Church. They were prepared by other prisoners as I only have one hour for Mass. Again, it seems that this is evidence that there is real hunger for faith and reconciliation. Some have expressed their amazement that I have pursued this ministry so consistently. But that is the commitment of our Benedictine vow of stability. We do not move from place to place, but stay in one place, praying and witnessing to the Mercy of God who calls us to be the school of the Lord’s service.

One more benefit of working with prisoners. You come in contact some very nice people. Among the prisoners, there are many men and women who have just made a mistake in their lives and are waiting for the day of freedom, but whose faith is firm and they pray regularly and do their best to serve the Lord. They are searching and ready to return to the Lord.

But you also meet some wonderful people who volunteer to minister. Two such ladies drive from Ada to Lexington once a week and have done this for over thirty years. Another couple drives from Edmond to Mable Bassett for their weekly visit with the women. Then there are the Precious Blood Sisters from Wichita who have a ministry of writing letters to prisoners and providing literature for prisoners about their ministry. Another man has developed correspondence courses on scripture and Catholic doctrine and communicates regularly with prisoners throughout the country. So visiting the imprisoned is not always limited to physical contact, but can be accomplished by mail and by prayer. I can assure you that the prisoners appreciate any and all such contact from the outside.

Visit the Imprisoned

Rev. Basil Keenan, OSB

Visiting the imprisoned is a corporal work of mercy that is very necessary but also difficult. Many people are afraid to enter prisons and visit prisoners. At times that is well-founded; but my experience with medium and minimum security prisoners over many years is that I have never been harassed by them.

However the current rules for visiting “offenders” (the current official term for those imprisoned) are such that only those who have gone through training and been certified are allowed to visit them.

Certainly the offenders, both male and female, are a group of persons who need spiritual help more than the general populace. They are isolated from the general populace, even from their own families except for infrequent visits under strict surveillance. Those who choose to come to Mass or other services are, for the most part, persons who are looking to God and others to help them live good lives. Both Catholics and some non-Catholics attend Mass. At times one or another seeks counseling and or the Sacrament of Penance. I see them and try to treat them always as my brothers and sisters in Christ, encouraging them to live for Him and find in Him the strength they need to endure their present state and, more importantly, the strength to turn away from whatever led them to be imprisoned. Often enough my message is that they have to cut off all ties and tendencies toward who or what was the cause of their imprisonment. While I try to avoid harping on this theme, I clearly emphasize that unless they do this they will be back in prison.

Even those who never visit prisons and “offenders” need to pray for them, asking Our Lord to give them the strength to live their lives in Him and with Him and for Him both while they are in prison and especially after they leave prison.

Bury the Dead

Br. Kevin McGuire, OSB

As Gibran Says, “Work is LOVE made visible.” Perhaps grave-digging is very basic to that concept of care for the human body.

It seems most natural for me to reflect on this subject, which has been a continuing effort all my life here at the Abbey. Indeed, I was in my junior year at St. Gregory’s High School (in 1956), when one of the monks tapped me on the shoulder and asked that I come out after class and help him dig a grave for one of his conferees who had just died. Little did I know that such was to be the first seed planted in a Vocation that has spanned the remainder of my life. Because it struck me as uncanny and somehow a wonderful witness to vow of Stability... that a long life should lead to being buried in the very ground so familiar to one’s path and efforts throughout.



Bro. Henry was 75. A few years later, I was privileged to help bury Bro. Francis, who was 5 months into his 100th year, and the only Centenarian of our community. (He had told me several times that he’d asked God if he couldn’t live to be 100, and said ‘I think He’s going to let me do it’. He died in the very early hours of March 21st, the Feast of St. Benedict, 1964.) What stability, what single-minded dedication to a simple, humble &

prayerful life!!!) It fired my imagination as a young monk, and has given me a vivid sense of his companionship throughout the years ever since!!!

Being the only monk here who operates the backhoe and also LOVES outdoor physical labor “24/7”, I essentially ‘fell into’ the job of digging graves in our cemetery all these years; always *by hand* until we got a machine in the mid-70’s. Counting the many Oblates, it is well in excess of 50 graves that I have prepared since those early ones. And I have remained sensitive to every other aspect of cemetery maintenance besides, because it is a very prominent part of our campus as a visitor comes up the main drive. Not to seek a pun, but it has given me an abiding sense of rooted-ness & stability HERE, and of fulfillment of St. Benedict’s maxim “to keep death daily before one’s eyes.” I look upon it as “very fitting” that the cemetery here is right beside the so that burial follows immediately upon the funeral Mass for a given monk!!

As we grow older, most of us can recall innumerable friends and relatives of notable and various virtue-whose lives we have shared, example, love and inspiration we cherished, and whose funeral we may have attended; and for whom we still have deep & active love!! It seems obvious that we should invoke their patronage and intercession before the Throne of Grace in Heaven. After all, there are an extreme number of souls-not only those relatively FEW canonized Saints, who are in God’s presence for all eternity, Especially while seeing the continuity within the Mystical Body of Christ, we can further FEEL that goodness... by specifically including those souls’ concern for our well-being in our daily strivings to be more Christ-like. “Ask and you shall receive” says the Lord!!!



It is the final act of reverence for God’s finest creation, the human body...to offer Christ’s Eucharistic oblation in the funeral Mass, and then gather around the open grave to commend our loved on to the dust from which they came. May your Eternal Light shine on them O Lord! Amen.

Bury the Dead

Br. Benet Exton, OSB

I have noticed on Facebook and other places articles about high schoolers serving as pall bearers for the homeless and those who have no family or friends to attend to their burial. This service on the part of these high schoolers is a corporal work of mercy. This work of mercy is also mentioned in chapter four of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. When we attend the funeral of a family member, friend, or especially someone who does not have anyone

we are performing a work of mercy.

At the funerals at the Abbey we monks and others join in the actual burial of the deceased by shoveling some dirt into the grave or taking some of the dirt and putting it into the grave. It has also been known for some people to stay behind and to help to complete the burial of the deceased.

Brother Kevin here at the Abbey is the main person who opens the grave. Sometimes he does this with only a shovel, especially in his younger days. He uses a backhoe or other means now days as he has aged. All of this that Br. Kevin and his helpers have done is a work of mercy.

**Do you ever wonder
where God is leading you?**

**Are you interested in becoming a monk
of St. Gregory’s Abbey?**



**Contact Fr. Boniface Copelin, OSB, for more
information. 405-878-5455 or frboniface@stgregorys.edu**



Fr. Simeon and Br. Benet led a group of sixteen students and two staff members from St. Gregory’s University on a pilgrimage for spring break. The pilgrims visited historic mission sites in Arizona, California and New Mexico. Abbot Lawrence joined them in Montebello, CA, to visit the parishes that monks of St. Gregory’s Abbey founded and staffed between 1905 and 1997, as well as Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles where some of the monks who served in California are interred. This photo captured the group after they celebrated Mass at St. Benedict Parish in Montebello.

Year of Consecrated Life Celebration with Oklahoma Priests

Priests from both the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and the Diocese of Tulsa gathered at the Abbey on January 5, 2016, for a day of celebration. The monks had invited them to a special Mass and festive luncheon in observance of the Year of Consecrated Life, and in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the election of Abbot Lawrence. During the luncheon Abbot Lawrence thanked the priests for their service to the Church and humanity, as well as for their friendship and support of the monastic community. He emphasized that they are always welcome at the Abbey and assured them of the ongoing prayers of the monks.



University Students Volunteer at Abbey

Students from St. Gregory's University volunteered at the Abbey on Saturday, February 27. They dedicated their Saturday to a "Work Day at the Abbey," which had been organized by the SGU Office of Faith Integration, Development and Evangelization (FIDE). Among other things, the students helped in clearing brush and trimming overgrown shrubs in preparation for spring.



Abbey Church Restoration Continues

A significant phase of the Abbey Church Renovation project is not underway. A local contractor has begun the process of repairing and painting the plaster surfaces of the interior of the church. This includes the side chapels, the confessionals and the upper walls and ceiling of the church. Abbot Lawrence noted, "In many ways this will be one of the more noticeable or dramatic phases of the restoration work. The need for new paint became increasingly apparent with the restoration of the stained-glass windows and the installation of our new lighting system. The increased light in the church shows how cracked and dingy the existing paint has become since it was last painted about forty years ago."

The pain-staking work will take three to four months to complete. After the painting phase is finished there will be a few more minor items to complete the multi-year church restoration project. Abbot Lawrence stated, "We are truly grateful to the many donors who have contributed to this restoration process, including those who continue to make payments toward their pledges. We would not have been able to pursue this needed

restoration of our beautiful Abbey Church without the generosity of so many."



Abbey Appoints Development Director

Abbot Lawrence has announced the appointment of Danielle Roberts as the Director of Development for St. Gregory's Abbey. Danielle began her service in this role on January 9.



Abbot Lawrence observed, "The appointment of a full-time residential Director of Development is an outgrowth of the strategic planning process that we have engaged in at the Abbey over the last two years. We have benefitted greatly from the leadership and service of Development Director Bob Allen. He has prepared the way for us to make this important step." Bob Allen has served as Abbey Development Director for the last five years. He will continue to serve as an advisor to the Abbey.

Danielle is a 2000 graduate of St. Gregory's University with a major in Communications. Prior to this appointment, Danielle has served as Associate Director of Advancement and Alumni Director at St. Gregory's University, Area Director for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Shawnee, and as Executive Assistant to the Provost of St. Gregory's University. She is a member of the Shawnee Kiwanis and Jaycee clubs and is a graduate of Leadership Shawnee.

Abbot Lawrence further observed, "With her experience as an alumna and former staff member of St. Gregory's University, Danielle has a head-start in knowing the monks and being familiar with our history and the ways our community serves the Church and broader public."

As Development Director, Danielle will oversee all aspects of the Abbey development program, including communications, special events, donor relations and Abbey involvement with other community organizations. Danielle resides in Shawnee with her husband Jesse and daughter Macy.

From the Director of Development



Welcome to the Spring Edition of the MonksOK magazine!

I am Danielle Roberts and am so excited to have been given this opportunity to be the Director of Development for St. Gregory's Abbey.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I was born and raised in Granite, OK, and was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Mangum. I attended Granite High School all 13 years and then attended St. Gregory's University. After graduating in 2000 with a Bachelors in Communications, I joined the staff of St. Gregory's Office of Institutional Advancement, where I served for six years as the Associate Director of Institutional Advancement, gaining experience as Gifts Processor, Special Events and Facilities Rental Coordinator and finally as Alumni Director. In 2006, I became the Area Director for Big Brothers Big Sisters for Pottawatomie, Seminole & Pontotoc Counties.

In 2007, I married the love of my life Jesse Roberts and in 2011 we had a baby girl, Macy, who is the light of my life. I was blessed to be able to stay home with her for two years and loved every minute of it.

I decided to go back to work in 2013 and became the Executive Assistant to the Provost at St. Gregory's University. St. Gregory's has been part of my life for 20 years now. Wow...I can't believe this but it has been a blessing to be here.

Our family attends St. Benedict's Catholic Church in Shawnee. My husband and I were married in the parish and he entered the Church there last year. We absolutely love our church family. I have taught Religious Education classes, helped with the St. Benedict Carnival, am a member of the ACTS family (which has brought me closer to God and my Church) and also am the leader of our Faith and Journey group. In my spare time, I love to watch sports. We are avid OU and Thunder fans. Along with all this I have been a Mary Kay consultant for eleven years, which has been a blessing helping women feel better about themselves and watching them grow.

As Director of Development, I will be fundraising and promoting the Abbey within in our community and state. Our next fundraiser will be our Golf Tournament, which is in the 5th year. This brings friends and alumni in from all over the state and Kansas together to play for mission of St. Gregory's Abbey. I hope to take my experience to bring more attention to St. Gregory's Abbey to help them grow in their mission and service to the Lord. Please don't hesitate to call or email me if you would like to help St. Gregory's Abbey.

As Scripture tells us: "Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want. A generous person will enriched, and one who gives water will get water." Proverbs 11:24-25

Danielle K. Roberts

SAVE THE DATE
St. Gregory's Abbey
5th Annual
Golf Tournament
Monday,
June 20, 2016

Lincoln Park
Course West
Course

For more information contact:
Danielle Roberts, Director of Development
405.879.5656
dkroberts@stgregorys.edu

Rest in Peace

Rev. Louis (Richard) Vander Ley, OSB

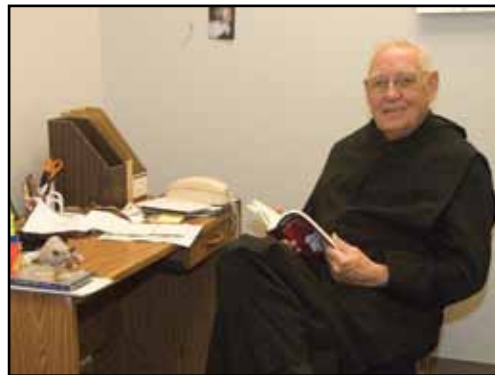
July 22, 1935 – February 27, 2016

Rev. Louis Vander Ley, OSB, entered eternal life on Saturday, February 27, 2016, strengthened by the Sacraments of the Church and the presence of monks of St. Gregory's Abbey. He was 80 years old and had completed 55 years of monastic life.



Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Chandler, OK, and at St. Benedict Parish in Montebello, CA. His final assignment outside the Abbey was as Associate Pastor at St. John the Baptist Parish in Edmond, OK, while also assisting regularly at St. Philip Neri Parish in Midwest City. He was known for his humility, down-to-earth preaching and devoted ministry in hospitals, nursing homes and prisons. Fr. Louis served on the Board of Directors for St. Gregory's College/University from 1977 to 1989 and from 1993 until 1997.

Father Louis was born on July 22, 1935, in Chicago, IL, to Richard and Marie (Verhaar) Vander Ley. He was raised in All Saints Parish in Chicago and graduated from St. Rita Catholic High. He completed one year of studies at the University of Illinois before being inducted into the U.S. Army in September 1955. After honorable service, including a tour in Germany, he transferred to the U.S. Army Reserve in July 1957.



Fr. Louis served as Prior and Junior Master at St. Gregory's Abbey from 2006 to 2011. He retired from active assignments in 2012 due to the increasing effects of Alzheimer's disease. He died of complications of Alzheimer's and pneumonia on February 27, 2016.

Fr. Louis first visited St. Gregory's Abbey while he was in the Army Reserve and was attracted by the life he found. He professed vows on July 11, 1960. He completed a B.A. in Philosophy at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN, and theological studies at St. Gregory's Abbey. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 29, 1966. After ordination he completed a M.A. in Economics at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA.

Fr. Louis was a confrere who exhibited the "good zeal that monks ought to foster with fervent love." He provided positive encouragement to all and did not seek preeminence for himself.

Fr. Louis served in various pastoral assignments, including as chaplain at St. Gregory's College/ University, Bishop McGuinness High School in Oklahoma City, and the University of Central Oklahoma. He also taught religious studies at Bishop McGuinness and courses in theology and social sciences at St. Gregory's.



A Vigil for the Deceased was held at St. Gregory's Abbey on Wednesday, March 2. Mass for Christian Burial was celebrated on March 3, with interment following in the Abbey Cemetery. A large congregation gathered to entrust this humble and beloved monk and priest to the Lord of Mercy.

Fr. Louis served as pastor at St. Wenceslaus Parish and the National Shrine of the Infant Jesus in Prague, OK, at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in McLoud, OK,

information please contact Danielle Roberts, Abbey Director of Development, at 405-878-5490.





Following their established custom, the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey solemnly received the body of Fr. Louis back at the monastery on February 29, where it was available for public visitation until the day of the funeral. A vigil for Fr. Louis was held in Abbey Church on March 2, at which Fr. Adrian Vorderlandwehr, OSB, reflected on his own journey with Fr. Louis in monastic life. Mass for Christian Burial was celebrated for Fr. Louis on March 3. Abbot Lawrence presided and Archbishop Paul S. Coakley and Archbishop Emeritus Eusebius J. Beltran of Oklahoma City concelebrated. Interment followed in the Abbey Cemetery. A large congregation gathered of priests, religious sisters and lay faithful joined the monks to entrust this humble and beloved monk and priest to the Lord of Mercy.





Subprior Joachim and Prior Boniface light their candles at the beginning of Mass on the Feast of the Presentation on February 2. The Year of Consecrated Life was brought to a close on that occasion.



Fr. Martin lights a votive candle in the Divine Mercy Chapel in the Abbey Church. Hundreds of pilgrims have made their way to the Abbey Church during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Abbey Church is an official pilgrimage destination for the Jubilee Year of Mercy. It is open to visitors from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily.

FEAST DAY OF MONKS

- April 5 - Br. Benet Exton, OSB
- April 23 - Br. George Hubl, OSB
- May 6 - Br. Dominic Ramirez, OSB
- May 15 - Br. Isidore Harden, OSB
- May 16 - Fr. Brendan Helbing, OSB
- June 3 - Br. Kevin McGuire, OSB
- June 5 - Fr. Boniface Copelin, OSB
- June 15 - Fr. Manuel Magallanes, OSB
- June 29 - Br. Novice Peter Shults

MonksOK is published four times per year by the **Benedictine Monks of St. Gregory's Abbey** for our friends, Oblates, and sponsors.

Publisher

Abbot Lawrence Stasyszen, OSB

Editor

Rev. Maurus Jaeb, OSB

Director of Abbey Stewardship

Robert J. Allen

Director of Development

Danielle Roberts

Photographer

Br. George Hubl, OSB

Theresa Bragg

Public Relations & Design

Susan Garrison

If you have questions or comments about this publication, please address them to:

1900 W. MacArthur Street

Shawnee, OK 74804

Phone: (405) 878-5480

E-mail: MPJ@stgregorys.edu

or visit us on the web at:

Abbey Retreat Schedule for Summer 2016

Three weekend retreats for the public will be hosted by St. Gregory's Abbey during summer of 2016. Each retreat will incorporate the theme of "Mercy" in observance of the Jubilee of Mercy. The dates are as follows.

June 3-4, 2016: The Way of Mercy presented by Fr. Charles Buckley, OSB

June 10-12, 2016: Mercy in Benedictine Spirituality presented by Abbot Lawrence Stasyszen, OSB

July 8-10, 2016: Mercy and the Sacred Heart of Jesus presented by Prior Boniface Copelin, OSB

Each begins on Friday evening and ends after lunch on Sunday. Retreatants join the monastic community for Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours and meals. Housing is provided in the student residence halls of St. Gregory's University. Registration fees will be announced at a later date. If you are interested in learning more about making a retreat at St. Gregory's Abbey or in receiving our retreat brochure, please contact the Abbey Office at 405-878-5490.

Cover Photo: Br. Andrew Raple, OSB, anticipates Easter months in advance in order to cultivate lilies to bloom on the correct date.