



Abbot's Message Abbey Journal Abbey News Gather Us In Academy Alumni Development



The Abbey Message

Subiaco
Abbey

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2

News of our Apostolates for Friends of Subiaco

Fall 2005

Chapel/Conference Center Blessed

by Br. Mel Stinson, OSB.

On Saturday, September 24th at 2 p.m., the dedication of the new Coury House Chapel and Conference Center was held. Approximately 125 guests filled the meeting room and foyer for this long-awaited event. Br. Mel Stinson, OSB, Guest Master and Director of Coury House, recognized and acknowledged several special guests:



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is a composite

"There are so many people and groups that have worked tirelessly to bring us to this day.

"Our architect, Wallie Sprick '77, of Wittenberg, Deloney & Davidson, took the needs of Coury House and transferred them into a very beautiful building which complements the other buildings here on the hill and provides us with a modern chapel and conference center that will meet the needs of Coury House for many years.

"Builder Leo Anhalt '58, Contractor from SSI of Fort Smith, and his crew, led by Ken Hart and Darrell Jackson, did great work in construction.

"Thanks also to Sam Little, Director of Maintenance for Subiaco Abbey and the maintenance staff for their hard work during construction; and to the monastic community, the Abbey Retreat League, our friends, supporters, and benefactors who have contributed to the ministry of Coury House and Subiaco Abbey."

Brother Mel also recognized the Knights of Columbus who contributed a great deal of work in installing a sprinkler system for the grounds and handicap ramps along the sidewalks, Loretta Norman and the Flower Depot Nursery, Mayflower, AR, for their donation of trees and shrubs, and Br. Francis and the candidates for their excellent job in landscaping.

Brother Mel recognized Anna Lucich for her donation of the antique stained glass windows, created by Emil Frei Art Glass,



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Publisher:

Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB

Editor in Chief:

Fr. Mark Stengel, OSB
email: frmark@subi.org

Editorial Staff:

Fr. Richard Walz, OSB
Mrs. Timmie Geels
Hermine Fox
Don Berend

Design and Layout:

Fr. Richard Walz
Br. Jude Schmitt

Send changes of address and
comments to:
The Abbey Message
Subiaco Abbey
405 North Subiaco Avenue
Subiaco, AR 72865-9798
Abbey E-Mail: Abbey@subi.org

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St. Louis, Munich, Bavaria, which are now in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. The windows were originally donated to St. John's Seminary for the Diocese of Little Rock by the class of 1923.

During his opening remarks, Br. Mel stated: "As you enter the lobby of the new addition, you will notice the beautiful icons of the Holy Family and Sts. Benedict and Scholastica, and the striking icon of Christ, the Pantocrator, Christ the Teacher. These beautiful icons, as well as the iconic crucifix above the present altar, written by John Gaudin of Little Rock, demonstrate the dedication to the ministry of hospitality and to the spread of the Gospel of Christ by the monks of Subiaco."



Abbot Jerome leading the blessing ceremony

Br. Mel continued: "Based on the Gospel of Christ, St. Benedict's Rule teaches us as beginners in the monastic profession, that all that we do, we do in the name of Christ, for Christ, and to Christ. We are to show to one another the reverence we would show to Christ Himself, and to receive all guests as Christ. Through this ministry of hospitality, we offer a place of rest, a place for spiritual renewal and learning to all people who "come in peace seeking God."

Before blessing the new addition, Abbot Jerome recognized those deceased who have played an important part in the history of Coury House, Fr. Herbert Vogelpohl, OSB, and Dorothy Stanford, Secretary, and acknowledged Jean Rockenhaus for her 32 years of dedication as Coury House Secretary.

Coury House was dedicated in 1963 in honor of the Holy Family. In the Benedictine spirit of hospitality, Coury House has for 42 years offered a place apart for families: the families of the monks of Subiaco Abbey, families of Academy students, and our extended family of Oblates, Alumni, Retreat League members, retreatants, and family of friends we have come to know over the years.

A champagne reception followed the dedication ceremony and an open house was held on Sunday afternoon. ✕

The Abbot's Message

**"It is not the job of the leader to
know the way, but to stay in
contact with God, who does know
the way."**

The Meeting Tent

As the pilgrim people of God made their way through the wilderness on the way to the promised land, at



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every stage Moses would set up a meeting tent outside the camp. This was not a tent for public meetings, as the name might imply, but a place to meet God. "Anyone who wished to consult the Lord would go to this meeting tent outside the camp" (Ex 33:7).

Though anyone could go to the tent, it was critical to the journey that Moses, the leader, should visit the Lord in the tent, and so all eyes were on him. "The people would all rise and stand at the entrance of their own tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent." When they saw the column of cloud descend to the tent, they knew Moses was conversing with God, and seeing this, all the people would worship at their own tents.

The way through the wilderness was uncharted. The people knew that they would make it through only by the guidance of God, and therefore it was vital to their interests that the leader stay in contact with God. Moses did not know the way, and he did not have to, as long as he stayed close to God.

This is always the pattern of spiritual leadership. The journey to the promised land is always in the wilderness, and no human leader knows the way. It is not the job of the leader to know the way, but to stay in contact with God, who does know the way. The main responsibility of a spiritual leader - the Pope, a bishop, a religious superior, a pastor - is to go to the meeting tent to be with God every day. The people do not expect their leader in the faith to know everything, and they become concerned when leaders think they do. What gives confidence is that the leader is close to God. This doesn't put an end to the errors of human weakness, but it protects from ultimate error.

The Gospels tell us that the key ingredient to discipleship is faith. "Your faith has been your salvation." This is not just any faith, such as believing the truth of the teaching, but faith in its personal meaning as trust. Salvation comes from putting our trust in God and in his son Jesus. Growth in knowledge of the faith comes from study, but growth in trust comes only from personal contact with God, which is another name for prayer. We are not asked to put our trust in human leaders, but in God. But the closer our leaders are to God, the more at home they are in his tent, the more we can put our trust also in them.

Everyone is called to intimacy with God, not only the leaders. But it is easier for people to seek a close relationship with the Lord themselves if they know their leader is praying. "As Moses entered the tent, the column of cloud would come down and stand at its entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses. On seeing the column of cloud stand at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and worship at the entrance of their own tents" (Ex 33:9-10).

Something happened to Moses when he went into God's presence, something he seemed to be the last to notice. When he came down from Mount Sinai after being with God for forty days, the people noticed that his face had become radiant, an outward sign of something happening within. The same thing happened to Jesus on Mount Tabor (Lk 9:29). The inner transformation this represents is offered to all who spend time with God in the meeting tent. In the Latin Bible, the meeting tent is tabernaculum, the source of our word tabernacle, which the Church very appropriately adopted as the name for the place of the Blessed Sacrament. The meeting tent with God can be pitched anywhere in our lives, but the tent of the Blessed Sacrament is a privileged place to spend time in the divine presence.

Religious life in the Church is easier to understand than it is to explain. It makes sense more by intuition than by logic. The meeting tent of Moses gives one means

of access to understanding its place in the Church. Religious life is to be a sign or emphasis of a particular part of the spiritual journey that is true for every disciple. All of us are called to holiness, all are called into intimacy with God, all are called to the tent every day. Some are invited to do this as a sign to the Church, to be as Moses was for the people in the wilderness, a hopeful reminder that God is with us on the way. Religious don't do this instead of others, and they don't necessarily do it better. But their life is a sign of hope. The other members of the Body of Christ want religious to be holy and to pray, not instead of them but with them, keeping their eyes "fixed on Jesus" as a reminder and encouragement for all to do the same. It should come as no surprise that religious communities, with their antennae up, are often among the first to sense and to respond to a new need or new opportunity in the Church and in the world, a new direction in the wilderness. What are they to do about it? Only time in the presence of God will reveal the answer to that.

There is "one thing necessary," and when the journey is over, what will have made the difference for the religious is whether or not he or she has gone faithfully to the tent. And it is the same for all of us. ✠

Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB

Abbey Journal

July

Through June and July, Arkansas climatologists were speaking about the "deepening drought" and "rainfall deficit", and "sinking water table." Subiaco proved exempt from all these dire climate woes, receiving rains just as needed. When this happens, we attribute our good fortune to "right thinking and virtuous living," and pray for the poor sinners around us. In August and half of September, the situation was reversed. When this happens, we employ other handy maxims, such as "The Lord rains on the just and the unjust," and "The Lord tests those whom he loves." We do hear many Vesper petitions regarding rain during the summer months. These are often prayers of thanksgiving, and "for rain as needed" for both sinners and saints.



Brs. José Rios & Michael Endres made their Solemn Vows on July 11 while Fr. Leonard Wangler, junior master, assists.

The Feast of the Passing of Saint Benedict (March 21) had occurred during Holy Week this year, putting a damper on celebrations involving meat and drink. These festivities were transferred to July 11, the Solemnity of Saint Benedict. Usually this summertime feast is hardly noted, with monks scattered to the four winds for education, parochial ministry, vacations. This year Abbot Jerome asked all the community to be present for the solemn vows of Brothers Michael Endres and José Rios. The weather cooperated with a cooling rain on the 10th. Brothers José and Michael both serve as cantors, so they were able to acquit themselves



well in the three-fold singing of the "Sustain me, O God" on successively higher pitches. At the conclusion of the profession ceremony, all the solemnly-professed members of the community greet the newly-professed with the sign of peace. On this occasion, it really is an embrace or hug of peace, with murmured greetings, words of affection, promises of prayers. At a solemn profession, community life is seen at its most expressive and most impressive.



Fallen wall near the cemetery

Also impressive was the tub of Corona beer at the reception dinner. Brother José had seen to it that his family from Mexico would feel at home as they-and we-enjoyed this familiar cerveza.

Brother Peter Pusch was able to be home from Illinois for the profession of his novitiate classmates. He is currently on leave from the Abbey, so that he can assist in the emotional and physical rehabilitation of his sister, who was paralyzed in an auto accident.

Sometime during the night following the festivities of the 11th, a section of the retaining wall above the Abbey cemetery collapsed. The breach revealed the construction techniques of this 100-year-old wall. It had been built to provide a level platform for the construction of the new monastery building just after 1900. No mortar was used. Interlocking courses of stone extended eight feet back from the smooth face, and then rubble from construction filled in behind. The crew hired to put the wall back up had a hard time duplicating the workmanship of the original wall. We wonder which parts of the wall will now endure for the next 100 years. My money is not on the just-completed reconstruction.

A real Arkansas heat wave set in for the last two weeks of July, with highs up to 104° for about ten days. The month ended with-once again-a nice rain, just in time, and several delightfully cool days.

August

Each year it begins earlier! The return of the football players for pre-season practice is the first visible sign of the approaching school year, and this year they returned on August 1. Of course the heat wave returned also. Just when one might consider filing charges of child abuse, it was noted that the evening conditioning drills for the footballers occurred in the swimming pool. The coaches are not heartless beasts after all!

The Abbey farm mostly uses round bales, which require fewer workers and less manual labor to get them into the barn. However, the small "square bales" are handy for special uses, and the farm tries to have some on hand. Hauling hay-the square bales-is also a time-honored "rite of passage" for Novices and Candidates. Novice Brandon and Candidate Paul went through this passage on August 4. They proved willing and able, but the ancient square baler did not. It had forgotten how to tie a knot since its last outing. A week later, with the baler tuned up, they got another chance to experience the "hard and rugged ways" by which we go to God.



James Joseph, "Jesus" came to visit us in August.

Beginning August 11, "Jesus" visited for two weeks. With long brown hair, a full beard, bare feet, and pure white robe, a Jesus look-alike showed up at the Abbey.

He is a "barefoot evangelist" named James Joseph. Now in his thirties, he has been a roving street preacher for the past fourteen years. Of course, his appearance generated great curiosity, positive interest, and some negative reaction, probably similar to the reactions Jesus himself provoked. A very quiet man, he spent most of his time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He was here for a time of personal spiritual renewal.

On August 11, Brother Anthony Pierce's father and Brother James Lindsay's mother died. Both of these deaths were sudden and unexpected. The loss of a parent is another occasion when monks rise to the challenge of mutual support.

At the end of August, our good friend from Subiaco, Australia, Tony Costa, visited for several days. He had been the mayor of this "down under" Subiaco for several terms and is quite a flamboyant character. He spoke to Fr. Raphael's parishioners at Shoal Creek about the Catholic Church in Australia. Without hearing his message, it is safe to say that the people were well entertained.



Fr. Leonard Wangler & Br. Thomas Moster were among the monks helping to harvest our crop of grapes for 2005

The grape harvest began on August 27. This is one of the few remaining community projects, when "all hands" are invited to the vineyard. Brother Joseph Koehler reported afterwards that 35 different monks had participated. Some had come, he said, through the heat of the day, some had come at the 11th hour, and one-bettering the Gospel parable-had come only for the payment of wages! All received the same daily wage-a cold libation and some friendly banter in the wine cellar. This year's harvest was good, with very little of the mold and mildew that often taints the crop. Dry weather and low humidity during the final stages of ripening are the keys. Those conditions had prevailed during August and on into September.

September

Hurricane Katrina produced only a cooling northerly breeze here, but a week later evacuees from New Orleans and surrounding parishes began arriving in our area. Eighty-eight people were temporarily housed at the Methodist Camp on Shoal Creek, about 10 miles from Subiaco. Several monks visited and made arrangements for the Catholics to get to Sunday Mass. Coach Tim Tencleve took some of the basketball players down to "shoot some hoops," and others agreed to drive folks to the nearest Wal-Mart. The outpouring of generosity toward the hurricane victims was truly amazing. Perhaps the helplessness before daily tragedy in Iraq and elsewhere, primed the pump for doing something positive when an individual effort could really make a difference. Perhaps also the disgust with official bumbling promoted unofficial but effective action. At any rate, Arkansas and our local area really came through in this emergency. The Abbey's primary response has been to assist St. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana, which was heavily damaged by the hurricane. Also, Coury House housed evacuees from Hurricane Rita, and the Academy took in several students displaced from New Orleans area schools.



During the Academy's Fall Break in mid-September, the monastic community enjoyed an outing to Shoal Creek. We were desperately needing rain, and so the heavy rain during the outing was seen as a great blessing and not as an impediment. The St. Scholastica parish hall includes a covered pavilion, which was perfect for grilling the hamburgers and "roasting" each other.

The rain continued the next day and the next week, so that September ended with seven and a half inches of rain. The cattle are now happily munching new grass, the lawnmowers went back to work, and the farmers are expecting another cutting of hay.



Silent auction at the Day Dog picnic

Brother Louis Fuhrmann had planted one short row of cotton, just for old time's sake. When Candidates Paul, Kyle, and Aaron, and Novice Brandon were told to report to the cotton patch, they assumed they had mistakenly come too far South, to a "plantation monastery." They did get to see what was involved in picking cotton, and posed for some great photos.

September 24th was a busy day! Hurricane Rita drenched us with additional heavy rain, the addition to Coury House was dedicated (see page one), and the Day Dog Picnic was held. The "Day Dogs" are the Academy day students who commute daily to the school. Formerly the term "Day Dog" was a pejorative tag, but over time it has become an affectionate and honorable designation. These local folks know how to organize a party, so we monks don't have to do anything except show up and enjoy the good food and cold beer. It's a great community-building event, renewing ties with our neighbors.

After all this was over, Fr. Abbot Jerome left to be with Father Aaron Pirrera in Springfield, Illinois, where Fr. Aaron's sister Rosemary was dying. Fr. Aaron had just lost his mother three weeks before, so the blow was especially hard. No sooner had he returned, when Abbot Jerome's own mother, Clara, died on October 2nd. We invite your prayers for the four monks who have lost a parent in the past two months, and of course for their dear ones ~~✕~~

Gather Us In

"I was a stranger and you took me in."

Abbot Jerome's article "The Meeting Tent" makes the point that any and all of the Hebrews in the desert were welcome to enter the place of encounter with God. The people expected Moses to enter, but the meeting tent was not just for Moses, not just for leadership, not just for men. All were welcome. Brother Mel's account of the formal dedication of the Coury House addition underlines the Benedictine charism of hospitality. The new facility is not for the abbot or for the monks; it was built for others, as a place where all might be welcome to come and perhaps encounter God.



This issue also tells about the Abbey's and the state's response to the hurricane victims who were displaced to our area. Mostly, they

were welcomed, housed, fed, and assisted without question. This issue also tells about another stranger who showed up on our doorstep, a stranger who looked like Jesus himself. Mother Teresa's well-known saying is that the poor and the suffering are "Jesus in distressing disguise." She was able to see through the disguise, to see and to serve Jesus in the poor. Ironically, it seemed more difficult to see Jesus in the person of someone who came here not in disguise, but who did look like Jesus. There was considerable suspicion, drawing back, automatic rejection, and even hostility expressed toward Mr. James Joseph, the barefoot evangelist, who visited for two weeks in August.

I asked him about the reactions he gets, and why he chooses to look like Jesus. He said that his appearance generates a curiosity which draws people to him and provides him an opportunity to minister to them. On the other hand, and especially on the part of those who think they already "know the Lord," his appearance causes consternation, ridicule, and rejection. In either case, he says, his "Jesus look" is useful in allowing "the thoughts of the heart to be revealed," helping the one who sees him to face the truth about himself or herself.

I found this comment personally challenging, and I offer it to our readers. Sometimes a Mass celebrant adds a phrase to the dismissal: "Go in peace to love and to serve the Lord, in one another." Yes, and also in the stranger. Are we able to "take in" the stranger who comes in disguise, or without disguise? ~~✘~~

Fr. Mark Stengel

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