



Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani

May 2007

“In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from your lips, never suffer it to leave your heart. And that you may more surely obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, you shall never go astray; while invoking her, you shall never lose heart; so long as she is in your mind, you are safe from deception; while she holds your hand, you cannot fall; under her protection you have nothing to fear; if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favor, you shall reach the goal” **St. Bernard of Clairvaux**

LCG Community News:

Midland, MI (submitted by Bob Siegel)

The Midland LCG community continues to be blessed. We have just finished a review of the book “Monastic Practices”. This project has taken us about a year. We take one chapter a month and each of us discusses how that specific practice impacts our life, how we are affirmed by the practice and how we are challenged. It has been a grace filled endeavor. Our next study project is to study the Rule of Benedict by chapter and share our experiences.

Columbus, OH (submitted by Mary Guilbert)

Our Lay Cistercian family is growing! We now count from 16 to 18 each month. Don Buckingham is taking us through the Exordium and we find it a fascinating journey. We are blessed to have members traveling from Jackson, Mt. Vernon and as far away as Cleveland each month.

Last December Linda Boerstler made her commitment and will be formalizing it at the retreat in September along with Paula Cassidy and Marge Kielkopf. Nancy Skidmore will make her commitment in the late fall as she will be traveling with her husband, Jim and cannot come to retreat. If you are ever in town, we'd love to welcome you!

Bardstown, KY (submitted by Bryan Sherwood and Michael Brown)

Our group has been reading and discussing [A School of Love: The Cistercian Way to Holiness](#) by M. Basil Pennington. So far we have discussed St Bernard and St Aelred. We have also recently begun a study of the Rule of St Benedict using Brian Taylor's book. There are approximately 20 people on our email distribution list including some LCG members in Tennessee. An average of about 10 people are able to make it to the monthly gathering at Gethsemani. We meet before mass for formation, followed by Tierce and Mass with the monastic community. We've also started having potlucks with each of our monthly meetings as a way to get to know each other better. We typically meet on the first Sunday of each month.

Indiana (submitted by Carol Andrejasich)

Indiana LCG members met on March 3 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Carmel. Mike Johnson spent the day with us and shared his perspective on elements of lay Cistercian life and aspects of the Greater Cincinnati LCG community. There was a great deal of discussion on what brought all of us to LCG and how to live as an LCG member.

In addition, a Prayer Service of Commitment for our five candidates was held in the Day Chapel and conducted by Mike. Three of these candidates will become full-fledged LCG members in September at the ceremony at Gethsemani Abbey.

There was a great deal of sharing and many opportunities for us to get to know each other as many of us had met for the first time.

There were also a number of questions, many related to clarification of what is a lay Cistercian, how to live as a lay Cistercians and ways to build community. Another interesting discussion related to various books members have read or are reading. We are very grateful to Mike for spending the day with us and for his valuable insights.

The Indianapolis group continues to meet monthly. In late April, the northern Indiana group met for the first time. A joint meeting is being planned in late summer.

Greater Cincinnati (submitted by Mike Johnson)

On the weekend of March 9-11 ten members of our community participated in a "Cistercian Experience" weekend. We used space at the Moye Spiritual Life Center on the grounds of the motherhouse of the Sisters of Divine Providence in Melbourne, Kentucky. Fr. John Fischer, a community member, had proposed to offer this experience for us, as he participated in a similar Benedictine experience previously. Fr. John made a wonderful temporary oratory/sacred space for our use during the weekend.

We basically lived as "lay" monastics during the two and a half day experience that included celebrating the liturgies of the Eucharist and Hours (Vigils at 6:30AM), chapter meetings, manual labor, grand silence, reading of the Rule of St. Benedict, quiet time for meditation and reading, and of course, a brief social time before Compline. A candidate, Sue Kephart, planned our social time with included cheese and wine. Ray Geers gave us a talk on the topic of lectio divina. During our chapter meeting on Sunday morning, a few of us shared our responses to the survey questions from the International Lay Cistercian steering committee.

The weekend resulted in a blessed time for community building for our local LCG community. It will become one of our annual events. The dear Sisters of Divine Providence were delighted with our presence, especially for all the manual laborers we provided them on Saturday. We grew in our identity as lay Cistercians



LCG Forum: (Web discussion group) (submitted by Jane Endriss)

(If anyone would like to join the LCG forum web discussion list, please send an email to Jane at JEndr@aol.com)

The LCG FORUM has been discussing several topics:

- Theoria Physike
- Rance
- Evil and its manifestations in the world today
- Silence in a busy world
- The documentary "Into Great Silence"
- Sola Scriptura
- Lenten discussion

From our members:

Praying with the Abbey of Gethsemani by Timothy Sanders

On the wall up and behind my computer, I have a clock set for Eastern Standard Time. Below it is an enlarge copy of the Daily Schedule at The Abbey of Gethsemani. This allows me to look up during the day and see where the Brothers would be during their day. In my mind's eye I can see the Choir as they recite The Hours.

AWAKEN! by Timothy Sanders

(Based upon the Zen Buddhist tradition of being hit by a wooden stick called a "keisaku" in order to focus – and stay awake)

The Ancient Monk at The Guest House Reception Desk asks, "So, Retreatant, I see you have brought Thomas Merton to read, Yes?"

The Retreatant proudly replies, "Yes, Father, That is true. I have brought much to read."

"Whack!", "Whack!", "Whack!", resounds as The Ancient Monk strikes the Retreatant with a goodly green cane of bamboo.

The Retreatant yells, "What the Hell was that for?"

The Ancient Monk speaks firmly, "Take all those books back to your car, and leave them there. When you come back to The Guest House, I will be gone.

Those books are not sacred. Your time here with The Brothers is sacred, more sacred than you know, more sacred than you can imagine. Will you simply walk were Father Louis has walked, or will you take off all your clothes, find a heavy rock and dive headlong into The Deep Waters of Gethsemani in which Father Louis swam?"

Morning reflection by Joe Gentilini

I try to get up early in the morning while it is still dark. I get the coffee ready, grab the paper outside the front door, and then sit down in the chair that my Mom used to love to sit in. Our dog Kelly, a cream-colored Terrier mix and who weighs about 14 pounds, waits patiently until I sit down and then sits by my feet, looking longingly up at me until I give her the signal that it is okay to jump up on my lap. Kelly sits with her back to me as I rub my hands through her coat and then looks back to me as if thanking me for her morning massage. She then lies down and curls up in my lap while I say Morning Prayer and a few others in which I remember all those people in my heart. Afterwards, I just sit softly petting Kelly on my lap and seeing her curled up with her eyes closed in rest.

Kelly is dependent on Leo and me – for feeding her, for taking her out a few times a day, and for holding and loving her. She trusts us not to hurt or abandon her. As she sits in my lap, resting in the security that she is safe, I think of how God takes care of me, of us. I depend on God for my very life. While I'm aware of some incidents over the years when I was conscious of God's protective hand, I'm sure in the next life I'll see just how completely I was held in his arms.

Just as I hold Kelly on my lap and love her, I am aware that the Father holds me, loves me, and takes care of me and mine. Thank you!

Thought for the day: (submitted by Bob Johnson)

Prayer is a conversation directly with God, being always with God, having one's soul united with Him and one's mind inseparable. A person becomes one with the angels and unites with Him in perpetual praise and longing for God. St. Symeon of Thessaloniki

Wings of Adversity
"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."
Proverbs 24:10
by Handmaiden in "Hidden Treasures"

It was a particularly windy day as I went for a walk a month or so ago. But the sun was shining so brightly. And it was a clear and cloudless day with a deep blue sky overhead. It was a day meant for walking and meditating. I needed the silence and the solitude as much as I needed air and food. Maybe more. And so, I began my silent walk, absorbed in Him and nothing more.

I'm not sure at what point I noticed the little bird in flight, struggling against all odds to withstand that forceful wind. Indeed, this tiny creature was flying straight INTO the wind! I watched him with a sense of fascination at his plight, secretly admiring his grim determination to keep going forward in the face of such resistance. But also, I wondered at his foolishness to challenge such an immeasurable force. He was so small in the face of it, so obviously outmatched!

I was a little horrified, too, at the thought that the little bird would become overwhelmed in this effort and would exhaust himself, falling to the ground from the useless exertion. But he continued to fight for every inch forward - and I continued to watch, spellbound by the scene which was unfolding in front of me.

Yet he didn't exhaust - and he didn't fall. He actually rose higher and higher in the air until he must have risen above the treacherous air current. I watched with a sense of awe as he flew freely then, unencumbered, without opposition, and with great speed, straight up into the wide open expanse of sky. I stood amazed.

It occurred to me then how much our lives are like that.

We, too, seem to constantly face the winds of adversity which move against us.

We, too, continue to fly into those winds with Faith backing us up, and Hope leading us on, and Love lifting us up.

It occurred to me then that the very resistance which comes against us in our lives is the very thing we need which forces us to be able to rise ever higher in our spiritual walk.

It occurred to me then that the great hope we have is that we, too, will eventually rise above the treacherous winds in life that oppose us; that we, too, will be able to freely soar, spiritually unencumbered, into the great beyond.

It occurred to me then that strength is tested in adversity; that strength is proved in adversity; that strength is, indeed, gained in adversity.

It was a beautiful day. I continued my walk in silence, absorbed in Him and nothing more.



Prayer intentions:

- Br. Raphael has asked us for prayers for his upcoming surgery which is scheduled on May 24th.
- Please remember Fr. Seamus in your thoughts and prayer for his upcoming profession of solemn vows on May 17th.
- Please remember Michelle Oliver's son-in-law in your prayers. His name is Mike and he was just diagnosed with PPL - a form of lung cancer. He has a wife and a one year old daughter.
- Please pray for Kathleen Ellison's mother who has been seriously ill.
- Please pray for Ann Krause, a friend of Jane Endriss', who is having part or all of a lung removed on May 24th due to a tumor.



Have something to share?

Do you have books, tapes or other things you might be willing to share or give to someone? Donors with items to share (or give away) could POST the item in this newsletter. Any payment or fees for shipping would be handled between the donor and the person receiving the items.

Notes from Bob Siegel:

Replies or comments to Bob can be sent to:

Bob Siegel 1714 Sayre St. Midland Mi. 48640 or

E-mail: bobdee8@chartermi.net

The following is a list of the people who have entered the mentoring program between January 1, 2007 and May 1, 2007 I thought it would be nice to put it in the newsletter so we can all be praying for them, their mentors and their communities. Bob

CANDIDATE		COMMUNITY	
Jerry Domann,	Kentucky	Paula Casady,	Columbus
Jonathan Phillips,	Greater Cincinnati	Gay Buckingham,	Columbus
Kate Pentecost,	Tennessee	Natalya Shulgina,	At Large (Georgia)
Dennis Wisniewski	Tennessee	Josette Jermolowicz	Michigan
Bobby W. Rose,	Tennessee	Gardo Blado	Texas
Nancy Skidmore,	Columbus	Michelle Oliver	New Hampshire
Harvey Doremus,	Columbus		



UPCOMING EVENTS

Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Retreat

2007 Annual LCG retreat will be held **September 28-30, 2007** at the Abbey of Gethsemani. All of the rooms at the abbey are now booked, but Mike Johnson has made arrangements with two other local retreat houses to house our guests for the retreat. Please contact Mike Johnson at LCG503@aol.com if you are interested in attending.

LCG Annual Picnic at the Abbey of Gethsemani – Sunday, July 8, 2007. The picnic will be held on Sunday, July 8th following the 10:30 am Mass. The picnic is a “potluck” – please bring a dish to share. The exact location of the potluck on the Abbey grounds is yet to be determined.



Announcements:

A Trip To Holy Land (submitted by Eve Van Sickle)

Greetings, Lay Cistercians. In 2005 I made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The readings over Lent have had me revisiting that trip often in my thoughts and prayers. Having carried a cross through the deserted streets of Old Jerusalem ending before the altar over the rock of Calvary, I know I experience the Triduum at a much deeper level now. On the trip we had mass in the tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, around the rock at the Garden of Gethsemani, on the top of the Mount of the Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee - each place, as it is named in scripture, evokes a clear and vivid memory for me. Everyone on the trip said the prayer experience was like nothing they had ever experienced before, impossible to describe. Father Rob Waller, who led the pilgrimage, has such a love for the land and the people, I believe anyone traveling there for the first time should go with him. Father Waller will be leading another pilgrimage in July - I won't be able to go, but I wanted to send this on to all of you just in case you might be interested.

Often, questions of safety arise. Father Rob can address these better but I will tell you that I never once felt afraid on our two week trip. The Israelis are grateful for our \$8 billion in foreign aid and the Palestinians are grateful that we remember them and that we come. I found the people of the Holy Land had no difficulty separating me from the policies of my government and I was always treated as a welcome guest. Below are few lines about the pilgrimage. It is my hope that you will all be able to make this trip at some time in your life. If you think that it might be in July, give Father Rob a call or send him an email.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: Like No Other Many pilgrims to the Holy Land are lucky to spend four hours in Bethlehem. We sleep four nights in Bethlehem. Many pilgrims never speak to any of the local Christians, the "living stones." On our two Sundays we "break bread" at Mass and afterwards with the Catholic parishes in Beit Jala and in Aboud. The dates for the pilgrimage are July 25 - August 8, 2007. Our detailed itinerary can be sent to you or to anyone you suggest. The cost is \$3,100 per person, based on double occupancy. Was it mentioned that we sleep three nights in a retreat house on the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee and three nights in the old city of Jerusalem? There will be about thirty people in our group. As a "wait list" becomes necessary, persons who are first to express their interest are given priority. Contact Father Rob Waller at rwaller@cinci.rr.com or at 513-831-3353.

CISTERCIAN HISTORY

For the next several newsletters, we are going to include excerpts from "*Gethsemani Speaks*" written by Father Edward Knecht, the abbey's archivist in the 1950's through the 1970's. The excerpts included here are used by permission of the Abbey of Gethsemani:

"Our Confreres in Holy Cross Cemetery" by Brother M. Nivard Stanton.

Just ten miles from our monastery, in the cemetery of Holy Cross Parish, lie buried seven Trappists. They belonged to the community that settled on Pottinger's Creek in 1805 under the leadership of Dom Urban Guillet. This small band of monks and helpers who forms a sort of third order was sent to America in 1803 by Dom Augustine De La Strange. They tried without success to establish a settlement in Pennsylvania, Kentucky Missouri, New York, and Virginia. They went back to France in 1814 to found the monastery of Belle Fontaine.

The community suffered seven deaths while they were in Kentucky. The Compendium of the History of the Cistercian Order, pages 276-278, says that three of them were priests: Fathers Basil, Dominic and Robert. The tombstone in Holy Cross cemetery names two priests, Fathers Basil and Dominic, and five unnamed brothers.

We have a few biographical details about Father Dominic Maussier from the Cistercian menology (July 28th). He had been a Carthusian monk and was imprisoned during the French Revolution. He endured the ordeal of the slave ships for three months. They were lodged in filthy bunks in the hold, and given very poor food to eat.

We don't know whether Father Dominic suffered the torments of the Conona desert in French Guinea, a penal colony for political prisoners. We know that some monks of our Order won the crown of martyrdom in the infamous location. They had to endure the torrid heat, mosquitoes, insects, and the chatter of monkeys, with hardly any care of living provisions.

The menology says he was set free after three months and fled to Switzerland, where he joined the monks of La Trappe at the monastery of La Val Sainte. He accompanied Dom Urban to America and, being exceedingly weak from his travels, died shortly after the arrival of the community in Kentucky.

The monks of Gethsemani have often looked northeast to Rohan's Knob which borders Holy Cross cemetery and said a prayer for their seven confreres buried there, and to ask also for the assistance of their prayers.

From Fr. Michael Casagram OCSO:

There has been a lot of discussion of how to define Lay Contemplatives or Associates in relation to Religious communities. Sr. Sandra Schneiders has done a lot of work on this which many others may be aware of but I have just found out about from her book Finding the Treasure. Both chapter one and especially two, may be very helpful toward working through this question of membership. There is a unique relationship going on between "associates," "volunteers," "co-members," and "lay members" that calls us to a deeper reflection on their presence in the life of the Church today. So I would just like to raise awareness of this resource and ask for feedback.

Sr. Sandra Schneiders has done an enormous amount of work on Religious Life today and the Junior Masters and Novices Masters of the US Region will be meeting with her June 12th-21st at New Melleray Abbey to discuss the vows. She has done a lot of homework from which we can benefit. She has three volumes on Religious life and all issues related. Her commentary on St John's gospel is said to be one of the best.

Blessings, Michael of Gethsemani
Email: mcasag@monks.org



Contributions to Newsletter

If anyone would like to contribute an article, poem or prayer request to the next LCG newsletter, please sent it to Jane Endriss at JEndr@aol.com

Administration:

LCG advisory meeting

The next LCG advisory meeting is scheduled for June 23rd. If members have concerns or suggestions, please discuss them with your LCG area coordinator before time, so that the item can be discussed, if needed, by the advisory council.

Kentucky: Kathleen Ellison (fabledpromise@aol.com) and Bryan Sherwood (bhsher@qx.net)

Chicago, IL: Bob Johnson (rvjatty@ameritech.net)

Columbus, OH: Mary Gilbert (aboundo@earthlink.net) and Don Buckingham (dbucking@columbus.rr.com)

Indianapolis, IN: Carol Andrejasich (carol.andy@prodigy.net) and Charla Banner (charla81048@aol.com)

Greater Cincinnati: Mike Johnson (LCG503@aol.com)

Midland, MI: Bob Siegel (bobdee8@chartermi.net) and George Schaller (jgschall@mindnet.org)

Pennsylvania: Jane Endriss (JEndr@aol.com)

Tennessee: Gray Matthews (matthews@memphis.edu)

LCG Forum: Jane Endriss (moderator) (JEndr@aol.com)

Abbey: Fr. Michael Casagram and Br. Paul Quenon