



Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani

Fall 2007

LCG Community News:

Midland, MI (submitted by Bob Siegel)

The Midland community is continuing on with the living the Cistercian charism in our ordinary time. We are currently studying a document titled, "Introducing Benedict's Rule"-A Program of Formation, which was developed by Michael Casey, OCSO and David Tomlins, OCSO. To prepare for the celebration of the fifteenth centenary of St. Benedict's birth in 1980, The Benedictine Union of Australia and New Zealand decided to mount an education program for its members, to bring them up to date with contemporary work on Benedict's Rule. This program leads to an in depth dialogue by all of us on how each chapter of the Rule is significant in our daily lives. It will take us about a year for finish this study.

We also had our annual week long retreat at the Abbey in conjunction with the LCG retreat, for those of us who were able to attend which was 6 of us. God is good to us and we are finding that we find more time between our monthly meetings to share and be with one another, which is really what community is about.

Columbus, OH (submitted by Mary Guilbert)

The Columbus Group is growing. On November 10th. six people will make their commitment. Bob Siegel and his wife Dee **were** planning to come but he is not able to travel at this time. Please remember him in prayer. There is here in Columbus, a facility for the elderly called Mother Angeline McCrory Manor. The Carmelite Sisters of the Aged and Infirm have the home. Sister Pauline, the superior has graciously opened their large chapel for our commitment ceremony. Sr. DeChantel, OP will be the organist. Fr. Larry Nolan, OCSO, their chaplain, will be in attendance. Don Buckingham will be leading it. Afterwards all will come to Mary's house for refreshments. Please pray for them all.

Don Buckingham is teaching us all in the Exordium. He was an Evangelical minister before he and his wife, Gay became Catholics. He is a marvelous teacher of the Bible and Cistercian learnings.

Also the Bishop of Columbus, Bishop Frederick Campbell has sent us a letter telling us how pleased he is to know that Lay Cistercians are here. He hopes sometime in the future to speak more about Cistercian teachings. Of course we have invited him to come.

Kentucky Lay Cistercians (submitted by Michael Brown)

The Kentucky Lay Cistercians continue to meet on the first Sunday of the month at Gethsemani. Our meetings consist of a formation and discussion period, Tierce and mass with the monastic community, and a shared pot luck lunch. Usually, Fr Michael joins us for the formation part of our gathering and Br Paul often joins us for our shared pot luck lunch. Three of our group made their commitment at this year's retreat. They are Sunnie Reichart, Steve Taylor, and David Reeves. Three other people have recently entered into their discernment period. They are Mike Roberts, Joe Dittman, and Marta Garcia. Currently, we are reading and discussing Brian Taylor's book on the Rule of St Benedict entitled "Everyday Spirituality". Some members of our group will be present at the USA regional meeting being held at Gethsemani. We will be acting as hosts to all those who will be visiting from other Lay Cistercian and monastic communities.

Indiana (submitted by Charla Banner)

The Indiana/Indianapolis LCG group is expanding the scope of its on-line group this August with the discussion of various relevant books beginning with "Monastic Practices" by Charles Cummings OCSO.

Two new applicants have come forward in the Indiana region and are beginning their formation process. They are Bill Yater of Indianapolis and Bill Daily of Batesville.

Our members in formation in the Goshen and Fort Wayne area hosted the Indiana Gathering of LCG's—a day for discussion and prayer---on August 26th at A Quiet Place Prayer Center in Milford, IN.

Chicago area (submitted by Bob Johnson)

Led by Mary Haley, we introduced members to exercises and consideration of the Annual Retreat theme: Walking With Another On the Journey. Thus, we shared and led the group to actively participate in methods and thoughts offered at Gethsemani: the better to know and cherish our common spiritual journey and enhance integration in our lives at home, work and play of the Cistercian chrism.

Aided by meeting in a quiet, secluded section of St. Peter's, a large Chicago loop church, we read and prayed excerpts on faith and prayer from *The Spiritual Guide* written by Miguel de Molinos, a 17th century Spanish priest. "Let her [your soul] be silent, and desire neither to act nor to think; let her forget herself and plunge into that obscure faith. How secure and safe would she be, though it might seem to her that abiding thus in nothingness she would be lost."

Greater Cincinnati LCG Community (submitted by Mike Johnson)

It was a joy for our community to plan for and to facilitate the 2007 LCG Annual Retreat at Gethsemani Abbey held on the weekend of September 28-30. Three of our candidates made their commitment as Lay Cistercians. They are: Ray Geers, Henry Marksberry, and John Neiheisel. We plan to continue our reflections on the theme of the retreat, "Walking With Another On the Journey," during our November community formation day.

The community shared a fall Day of Prayer on Saturday, October 13, at the Monastery of St. Clare that was lead by our candidate, Bill Warfuel. The day included a period of Eucharistic Adoration. An Advent Day of Prayer will be held on December 8 and facilitated by Ray Geers.

Our community will welcome our newest candidate, Chris Yoder, at our community formation meeting on Saturday, November 10, with a blessing and prayer following Morning Prayer. We will continue our group study of the Exordium, plus share reflections on Fr. Michael's paper, "Companioning and the Plan of Life" and Ray Geers' written reflection, "Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7:56-58."

An additional meeting will be held in a few weeks to plan our 2008 schedule of meetings and days of prayer, plus identify our new leadership and formation team members. Mentoring of candidates will be a shared responsibility.

Northeast community: (Submitted by Jane Endriss)

- The Northeast community celebrates its newest LCG member, Michelle Oliviere from New Hampshire. Michelle Oliviere has been invited to attend a December meeting of the lay Cistercians at Mount St. Mary's, Wrentham, MA, as part of an team effort to enhance the LCG formation process. She will discuss their formation process in contrast to that of the LCG.
- The Northeast community is holding its first meeting on November 10th. We plan to show a video of the Abbey of Gethsemani, discuss Cistercian spirituality, and begin a discussion on "The School of Love" by Basil Pennington. Since our Northeast community presently encompasses members who are live at quite a distance from one other, we are attempting to try various means of keeping connected with our group. Currently we are planning a teleconference, as well as quarterly retreats in various local area retreat houses. We currently have 2 candidates (Rick Marsili, Tom Hoban) and 1 applicant – as well as 11 members.



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)

From our members:



Cistercian Corner: (submitted by Steve Taylor)

Have you read the *Charter of Charity*?
How about the *Exordium Parvum*?

If you have read them, then no doubt you asked yourself what those founding documents of the Cistercians have to do with us as Lay Cistercians? It's simple. They inform us of the lives and struggles of those men led by Robert of Molesme, to bring about nothing less than a reformation of monasticism in the western church.

The founders were rebels. Rebels against the Cluniac system of Benedictine monasticism. It was a very successful system, and one that fit beautifully with the feudal government of the day. Those men who left Molesme had it made: they lived safe lives, where they were well fed, and didn't really work very hard. Their faith in God and love for the Rule would not permit them to stay at Molesme. They seceded from the union of Cluny/Molesme Benedictines, and that made a lot of people very angry. No doubt the black monks felt betrayed and held up to ridicule. We know this because it is recorded in the *Exordium Parvum*, and later Cistercian writings, particularly of St. Bernard.

We can understand how Stephen Harding and those with him when he composed this *Exordium*, felt when they say, *[we] who have tirelessly borne the burden of the day and the heat; and may sweat and toil even to the last gasp in the strait and narrow way which the Rule points out; till at last, having laid aside the burden of flesh, they happily repose in everlasting rest.*

The quote is from the first paragraph of the *Exordium Parvum*. The *Exordium Parvum* is my personal favorite among the various *Exordia* that exist, i.e., *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Exordium Magnum*. For the next few issues at least we will take a tour of this magnificent document, with a single minded intention: to find guidance in their journey as it is recorded, for our journey as Lay Cistercians, as we struggle to define ourselves in the here and now of 2007/2008/2009 ... until 2080, 3080 when we who are alive now see from heaven the Lay Cistercians on earth celebrate their one thousandth year.

If we look at it that way it's easy to see that these years are our foundation, and that by turning to the foundation documents of the Cistercians, we can be guided by their experience of the journey.

October Arias (submitted by Br. Paul Quenon, Abbey of Gethsemani)

Cricket singing solo
plays his one string violin,
stroke, pause, stroke, pause, stroke.



Isn't that God dancing? (Submitted by Linda Boerstler, Columbus, OH)

Isn't that God dancing?
Head thrown back –
hands raised,
feet moving lightly
across the universe?

Laughter exploding
from the deepest place
in His heart, delight
the angels who applaud
at this demonstration
of unrestrained joy!

Yes! Today is the day
of salvation, when He
sees the faces of all
who love Him,
who gave for Him
who were not afraid
of the momentary sting
of death!

Doesn't He grab my hand
and whirl me through
the banquet hall, me –

his bride, and laughs
when I make a misstep
and almost stumble?

Don't the stars – tossed
far into the sky
stretch to shine
their new morning glory
on this simple scene
of celebration?

Don't the choirs sing
Hallelujahs to the rising swell
of music such as has
never before been heard?

Don't the saints
cast off their crimson
stained garments
in exchange
for the
wedding robe?

Isn't that God dancing?
And it is me, who dances with Him?

Love's Heroic Twin (submitted by Charla Banner, Indiana)

Twisting in a vortex
Intertwining with each other,
Come the two most blessed
Gifts that grace the earth.
Love leads the way embracing
Mercy.

The slate wiped clean so
Man can once again write
A new life, a favored life,

And if falling again
Mercy can be called forth anew
As Lazarus was bid from the tomb

When the night gathers around,
May small mercies we have offered
Dance down upon us,
Luring us forward, washing us clean.
Love and Mercy copulating
Producing Life the miracle intended.

The Impact of a Small Gesture (submitted by Bill Fahrenkrug, Wild Rose, WI)

I don't know when I really started doing it but it has now become a part of my jogging routine which I have been doing for over thirty years. The gesture is a simple hand wave and a smile to all the people I meet on my jogging route. It is rare that I don't get a wave and smile back. For the most part these people are strangers. I have no idea who the person is but they are all offered the same wave and smile.

While at first glance this simple gesture may seem small and almost insignificant, but for me, it represents my fundamental attitude toward my existence, the Mystery of God and my fellow human beings. I accept you just as you are and I hope you accept me just as I am. No conditions to meet, no roles to play or fulfill. No expectations. I think this desire to simply be accepted as we are is a universal one and it has the fundamental element of love woven into it, that is, we all want to love and be loved unconditionally. Whether the people who wave back have this same intent or not I don't know, but they get a wave and a smile regardless of what they think or feel toward me. So this is what is involved in my wave and smile.

In a world so torn apart by differences, hatred and misunderstandings, perhaps the only way that change can happen is to begin small with small gestures of love. I want to encourage others to perhaps do some small gesture like this with the same type of acceptance in it. These little gestures can go a long way to establishing justice, peace and love in a world that is desperately crying for it. But there will never be peace without justice and there will never be justice without love. Never underestimate the power of a small gesture of love, that unconditional acceptance of others.

Church Bells (submitted by Amanda Ames, Wisconsin)

I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The church bells, and there are a lot of church bells, remind me of the church bells at Gethsemani. On my second visit to the abbey, they were ringing one afternoon as I was hurrying along the path out of the woods, hurrying so I wouldn't be late for Vespers. The pleasure and the ease with which I hurried towards God that day have stayed with me. But it seems it's not always that way.

Returning home after that visit, I flew back into Milwaukee into the depths of mid-winter. We were low over Lake Michigan and I was peering out the window seeing gray, gray and more gray. As I looked at the city below and at the curve of the lakefront, I saw mounds of worn out snow along the shore as well as waves whipped up by the wind. It seemed to me to look exactly like photos I had seen of Churchill Bay in Canada, where they film the polar bear documentaries. I had been very sad to leave Gethsemani, very sad. I'm pretty sure I cried most of the way to the airport. As I looked down at the city, the general bleakness of the scene matched the entire bleakness of my being. I thought, "I can't believe You sent me back to this!"

I live in a part of Milwaukee that is very old and residential, with each home very near its neighbor, back yard up against back yard. After my first few visits to Gethsemani, I would come back and say, "Oh, I can't live here in the city anymore. It's too noisy...that family down the block with their cookouts all summer. Yikes. That Nature Center across the way whose members fill up street parking, leaving us residents to scramble to find a spot. That Harley-Davidson rider across the alley!!! I can't take this neighborhood any more. I need solitude..."

I would alert my family and friends, "I'm looking for a place outside the city..." I would drive out in the country on weekends, scouting. I'd go through little Wisconsin towns asking, "Is God here for me? Here? Is God over there?" I would come back depleted and sad. I told my spiritual director and she smiled. "Maybe the question isn't, is God here or there but is God here?" and she pointed to her heart.

How had I missed that?

In the months that followed, somehow, the family two doors down began to seem rather sweet to me, and the quarrels I overheard sounded liked good, honest people trying to work things out. Then I discovered that the Nature Center has a butterfly park and the building, both inside and out, has a warm, woodsy look and feel to it, and it is a thing of natural beauty on the eastside of the city. And the Harley rider...I've realized that each morning when he goes to work, he sort of coasts his motorcycle out of the alley. Then, and only then, does the rumble kick in...

At this point, I would love to be able to relate the steps I followed to produce the complete shift in my experience of Milwaukee. My ego would thrill to share its discoveries, so that the next time confusion and disconnect set in, those steps could be followed again and wholeness regained.

But all I can claim is simply that I remember the moment when it happened. It was a Sunday night. I was laying down on the couch, terribly sad, distraught, worn out with the struggle of trying to make sense out of where I was and what I should be doing to draw closer to the Lord. I had tried hard but nothing had worked. It was still Churchill Bay in my heart. Having no energy to pray and no wit to beg for help, all I could honestly say was, "I know you are with me, Lord." That was pretty much it. I really don't know how I got through that night but it was pretty clear that (A) I did and (B) I didn't make it happen. At all.

So now, things look different to me, not just Milwaukee but a lot of things. It has something to do with...grace and miracles and, of course, humility. If I were better versed in the psalms or the Bible or Thomas Merton, I could quote some sort of a thing here, maybe, and connect the dots. Then, again, I rather like not really grasping the whole of it...

At any rate, I'm sitting here, now, in front of my open dining room window and looking out at the neighborhood. There is a cool breeze coming off the lake signaling our best season, Fall, is upon us. And somewhere, not too far away from me, I can hear some church bells ringing.

Reflections on the Silence of Nature (submitted by Natalya Shulgina – Georgia)

+++

...Magnolia seeds
...like red drops of blood on grey concrete...
...are silently re-telling the story of Your life

Why cannot I be more like this magnolia?

+++

Purple eyes of periwinkle
looked into my heart and asked:
- Are you at peace?

...What can stand in the face of such simplicity?
Not the lie of "I am fine,"
nor the hide-n-seek of "How 'bout ya'self?"

Silence is the answer.
In fact, silence is beginning of peace.

+++

Leaves do not mind being scattered.
My mind does.

Perhaps, it is because they are being carried by Your Spirit,
and I allow different winds to blow at my heart.

+++

By the dirty stream
on a pile of old leaves
in the middle of an afternoon
and everything else that was going on in the world
a large grey cat slumbered peacefully...

She must know You better than I do.

+++

Conversion (submitted by Natalya Shulgina – Georgia)

Sometimes I want to kiss the world...
...These magnolia corns bursting with (red) life
...this dew on a blade of unpretentious grass
...the mirror of the lake,
and the rabbit who ran away too fast, not knowing that I wanted to kiss him ☺
...This Blue Heron who walks so mindfully through the water
...and a big fish that came into the shallow and got scared and small fish that is always there
...these Sisters-Pines who prepared a sanctuary for me—so soft, so secure,
and a deer who stood in there and looked at me for 15 lo-o-o-ong minutes

And sometimes I feel the world kisses me...
...like when today's Sun touched me on my forehead, blessing
...these pebbles that fell into my sandals and tickled my feet
...this magnolia leaf who became my friend for a day,
and this breeze who cuddled me so gently that I stood there—
so, so still—for 15 lo-o-o-ong minutes

Is this not what "conversion" is about?
To be falling in love with the world that *You* created, and coming to know that the world loves you back...

Lal Ded (Kashmir, 14th c)

[translated by Jane Hirshfield] (submitted by Judith Weddle, Tennessee, who says: "I was recently introduced to some beautiful spiritual poetry and would like to submit one for consideration to be included in the next newsletter. It really spoke to me as a new person in the fellowship.")

"I was passionate,
filled with longing,
I searched
far and wide.

But the day
that the Truthful One
found me,
I was at home."

How To Save A Ton Of Money On Books!

(submitted by Timothy Lee Sanders, Alabama)

Check to see if your local public library is registered with an "Inter-Library Loan Program". This is basically an agreement between one Library with an entire network of other Libraries. This agreement may be local, regional, or in some cases even national. The way the program works is that you go to your Library, and by way of a huge computer data base covering all the Libraries in the system, you get to see if a particular book you are looking for is available to be loaned to your Library. Often, there is a nominal fee (for me it is \$3.00 per book to cover postage). Be sure to ask the librarian to make sure the book is sent "Media Rate": that is the new fancy term for the old fashioned term "Book Rate". It can be a LOT cheaper than sending things via regular postage. Note, you are liable for all overdue fines. In some cases, this can get pretty pricey. I have seen some overdue fines as high as a \$1.00 per day. Also, if you lose the loaned book you are both responsible for full-price replacement, and possible disbarment from the program in the future. Ouch! The only real down side is that new books which have only recently been published are often not released to the Loan Program for a long while (often a year or so). The upsides are: you get to review a book at a nominal fee; copy the pages you want; return the book; and over time save a ton of money! Happy hunting!

LCG retreat:



The 2007 annual LCG retreat was held at the Abbey of Gethsemani on September 28 – 30th. The theme of the weekend was "Spiritual Companionship" (presented by the Greater Cincinnati Area LCG group). The weekend provided time for studying the importance of spiritual companionship, prayer, and included the commitment of new LCG members. The LCG members now number 175 in 30 states and Canada. Our newest community is in Ontario Canada.

Prayer intentions:

Please pray for the soul of Ray Vaughan, a former Dominican priest and friend of Joe Gentilini, who died in August following a heart attack

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

I read in "A Year with Thomas Merton" one of those kernels that we can read over and over and all of a sudden it is "WAM-POW-KAZOOM" right between the eyes. This was from the reading for October 3rd which he wrote in his journal on October 27, 1957. He said "The fresh air we need is the air of the Holy spirit "breathing where He pleases," which means that the windows must be open and we must expect Him to come from any direction. The error is to lock the windows and doors in order to keep the Holy Spirit within our house. The very action of locking doors and windows is fatal."

This reading touched me in a particular way as I was working with three ladies from three different towns in Ontario Canada to form a Lay Cistercian Community. These three are hungry for Cistercian community and other Lay Cistercians with whom they can share their lives.

I hope that we will all keep Nancy, Cynthia and Diane in our prayers as they journey on this new adventure in their lives, of forming their Lay Cistercian Community.

I further encourage all of us to be open and keep the windows open as the Spirit leads the LCG in whatever journey the Spirit desires, after all who would have ever thought that we would ever have 9 communities of Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey.

Please keep the following people in your prayers. They are the LCG's who have entered Mentoring between May 1st and October 1st of this year:

Gary Wagner, IN.

Tina Peters, IN

Bill Daily, IN

John Deguara, IN

Dan Erwin, NJ.

Charles Smith, GCLCG

Don Harbaugh, OH. Columbus

Jerry Thompson, OH. Columbus

Mark Salchak, OH. Columbus

Mike Haughton, OH. Columbus

Elissa Wihite, OH. Columbus

Chris Yoder, OH, GCLCG

Tim Elam, GCLCG

Nancy Berdusco, Canada

David Achenbach, IL.

Doroth Tanner, MI.

Joseph Dittman, KY.

Darryl Glass, KY.

Marta Garcia, KY.

Bob Beckman, TN.

Juddy Weddle, TN.

Pat Minderman, TN.

Rick Marsili, PA.

Tom Hoban, PA.

David Lee, WA.

Natalya Shulgina, GA



UPCOMING EVENTS

Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Retreat - Plans are underway for the September 2008 retreat. The dates are Sept. 26, 27,28. More details soon.

LCG Annual Picnic at the Abbey of Gethsemani – Sunday, January 8th – Ehipany Sunday. For more information, check the LCG website.

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:

An excerpt from “My First Encounter with the Little Flower” (condensed for the newsletter)

It was a fair early October afternoon when we set out from La Grande Trappe. Seats were arranged in the camion for Father Bernard-Marie and myself in the pickup section of the truck... The roads in Normandy at that time were execrable, punctured all along the route by holes left in the pavement by broken slabs that were indeed removed but never replaced. The driver was expert in dodging and circumventing the depressions sometimes still holding water from the latest rains...

Dom Jean-Marie turned his head to call back to us in the dark, under-canvas cover, “Lisieux lies on the other side of the hill we are climbing. From the elevated outskirts you will get your first look at the home of Therese.” Two minutes more and faint lights loomed up, as evening had fallen. I had expected to run into an ancient, quiet town in the most sanctimonious setting and atmosphere where angels loved to assemble and enjoy heaven upon earth.

Almost incredibly, before us rose a miniature Pittsburgh, smoke bulging out from factory stacks, and curling up to add further dusk to deepening darkness. It was evident that we were driving into the habitat of men, not angels.

...We had rooms assigned to us in the chaplain’s spacious house....We were indeed far removed from the manufacturing district we had looked down upon when we ascended the hill... I blessed the winds wafting over from the Carmel. They were luscious with the breath of the Little Flower and the scent of roses.

[The next morning], we left the house, crossed the street and approached the entry that opens out on the sidewalk. Already gathered inside the enclosure were Mother Agnes, Celine, the sprightly sister subprioress, Magdalen of St. Joseph, the sister cellarer, and another I do not at this writing identify. They were veiled and waiting for Reverend Mother to give the cue, when suddenly five faces appeared, all in smiles.

In the first place, the interior chapel – the room had been cleared, and the couch of Saint Therese received first attention. My personal attention to this relic climaxed at the moment we had left the room in the company with Mother Agnes. I..took a seat with some complacency on that mattress. I do not believe that it was the actual sack for straw used by the saint. The one on exhibition was too fresh and so well stuffed that no saint would be able to hold his or her balance, much less sleep thereon. In fact, I recall seeing “relics” of St. Therese with the identification, “from the couch of the Little Flower”.. ...Even the floor had been taken up to furnish such treasures [relics]...

The next station was the choir. Stalls resemble ours and are, if possible, yet more austere in their simplicity. This room is separated from the outside sanctuary by a grill where every morning the nuns attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. What attracted me most was the stall once occupied by Sister Therese. It is left vacant in the hopes, perhaps, that some fine day the saint may suddenly be found in her stall intoning an antiphon, and then vanish. As soon as the occasion offered, I stepped into a vacant stall and almost imagined myself substituting for a missing member. I well knew that this experiment would never be repeated in my life.

A small apartment next to this chapel held something exceedingly precious – the original manuscript of the “Story of a Soul”. Dom Fabian had it in his hands, and I was hoping that he would not hand it back before I had my turn. When he released it finally, Sister Cellarer laid on my lap the small writing desk or frame which the saint had used when writing her autobiography, and I was able to lay the manuscript upon it and play the part of Therese for a few precious minutes. I flitted through the manuscript, took notice of the clear though small handwriting, and the care with which this treasure had been preserved in the last thirty-three years since her death.

We all went out into the recreation grounds, the preau. You may have seen pictures of the Little Flower in the period of her illness, seated out in the sunshine on a wheelchair. Well, that interesting piece of furniture was to afford some “fun”. Mother Agnes and her staff pushed Dom Edmond into it. Then the fun stated. Mother Agnes with Sister Cellarer played horses, hitched themselves to the front (which was equipped with handle and rope), while the other three got behind to facilitate and accelerate the speed of the Carmelite push-mobile. Now the merriment arose. They started off and with a jerk, the abbot of Gethsemani lost his

jurisdiction. They ran around the arena, all the while shouting like high school girls. It did me good to see these innocent should taking a sip of the joys of life. ...

Passing along the cloister, we were suddenly halted by Mother Agnes. As we grouped around her to get the information, she pointed to a large door and said, "Here I cannot enter, but you can. You will find the reliquary with the real relics of Therese behind the so-called "tomb". You may like to step down and kiss the reliquary.....We stepped into an area that resembled the space behind our main altar. We took turns in stepping down to venerate the relics and touch some articles to the casket.

(The author ends his narrative by saying the entire experience was one he would never forget.)

From Fr. Michael Casagram OCSO:

Fr. Michael's talk on "**Companioning with the Plan of Life**" which as presented at the LCG retreat can be found on the LCG website:

<http://www.laycisterciansofgethsemani.org>

Fr. Michael's reflection on the Gospel for the vigil of All Saints

+Today's gospel seems perfect for Hollow's Eve, the vigil of All Saints with the disciples asking if there many who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus warning us "to strive to enter through the narrow gate" for fear that after having eaten in his company and known his teaching he may have to say that he does not know us, is really an invitation to simply be true to ourselves. He is telling us not to be carried away by the mores of our time, the false expectations and alienating influences of our society. The Pope has just recently advised pharmacist to become conscientious objectors when it comes to selling contraceptives or drugs that bring about euthanasia. We are living in an age where war, questions around the beginning and end of human life, our treatment of God's creation, the customs of our society often go contrary to what it means to be Christian. We are called to live from the Spirit who has been imparted to each of us by reason of our Baptism. We do well be men and women of prayer, to be in touch with that Spirit within, who intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. For it is only by the Holy Spirit that we can be true to our Christian convictions, true to our deepest selves as Followers of Jesus.

Regional meeting of the groups of lay Cistercians in the USA

A meeting of representatives of USA regional lay Cistercian communities met at the Abbey of Gethsemani on November 2 – 4. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on issues such as membership guidelines, formation, identity of the "Lay Cistercian", role of the monastic liaison, etc. The ideas discussed at this meeting will be presented at the International Lay Cistercian meeting scheduled for June 2008 to be held at the monastery of Santa Marie de Huerta in Spain.





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 April 2008. 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