

October 2018

Dear LCG Sisters and Brothers,

Some of you are aware that I was diagnosed in January 2018 of having a recurrence of melanoma cancer. The cancer was located in my left lung and pelvic areas. I began a regimen of chemotherapy that is currently ongoing. More recently a melanoma lesion was located in my brain that required radiation treatment. I am basically tolerating the chemo drugs without significant side effects. I am managing the treatment fairly well and engaging in normal daily activity. I have regular scans to assess the progress of treatment.

I am grateful for the expressions of warm regards and prayers that I have received from many of you. I especially am appreciative of the loving support, encouragement, and prayers from my wife and family, my St. Mary Church (Oxford) faith community, our Cincinnati LCG community, the monks of Gethsemani Abbey, and friends.

I would like to share with you a few personal reflections on my experience with my illness. We all face the aging process and our mortality. In spite of our efforts to avoid serious health issues, the reality is that any of us can encounter a life-threatening illness at any time. Yes, I admit some fear at the time of my initial diagnosis of cancer, however, I soon experienced a deeper sense of the presence of God in my life that resulted in less fear and anxiety. I eventually was able to honestly accept my illness as gift.

The gift has been one that has allowed me on a deeper level to embrace the mystery of my life in God. As a result, I feel that I have strengthened my commitment as a baptized Christian and a committed Lay Cistercian. I experience in my daily life tremendous support through my attempts to integrate elements of a lay form of monastic spirituality defined by the Cistercian charism. Living the LCG Plan of Life daily has taken on a deeper dimension in my life. My spiritual practices of prayer, lectio, spiritual reading, and participation in the Eucharist and daily Office has grounded me deeper in the mystery and fruit of contemplative life.

I am experiencing more each day a greater sense of joy and peace. I hold the Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey and the monks of Gethsemani in my daily prayer. The life we live in God is ultimate gift that we share in thanksgiving and love.

Your brother in Christ,

Mike Johnson