



THE COMPANION

October 2024

The Newsletter of The Companions of St. Luke — An Offering

The members of The Companions of St. Luke, OSB, work hard to be what St. Benedict conceived when he created his Rule – A School for the Lord's Service. Our careers and our community service are our work, which is balanced with prayer, meditation, and study. We have tools and resources that help us to live in this school and to link each of us together as a community, even though each of us live in different places. This newsletter is one of these links.

This issue includes short pieces about change coming to our convocations and about members who have experienced change in other ways: the trees blew down or members have moved in locale or ministry. The next issue (November) will include longer pieces, reflecting on Advent and spiritual journeys.

We will continue to look at ways to make the newsletter self-sustaining and provide good, solid information to those who are interested. Let us hear your thoughts please!

Peace and blessings to all,
Br John David, Editor

Reflections about Our Summer Convocation

➤ *Lessons Come in Unexpected Times* by Sr Madeleine Sophie, OSB

When I was a new priest, there was a cautionary tale making the rounds that went like this: It was time for the children's sermon and, as usual, the priest had a prop, this time a stuffed animal. After a brief introduction, the priest pulled the stuffed animal out from behind her and held it up. "Can anyone tell me what this is?" she asked. No one volunteered, so she called on the child usually most eager to share. "Billy, what is this?" Billy looked uncomfortable but responded in that special voice only children have: "I know I'm supposed to say, 'Jesus,'" he answered, "but Rev. Anna, it looks like a squirrel."

Asked what the most memorable part of Convocation June 2024 was, I know I'm supposed to say, "Taking my first Annual Vows." And yes, that was memorable, powerful, moving and, as I am beginning to realize even more than I did beforehand, life-altering. When I look back on this Convocation, I will remember those moments. But I will also remember, with gratitude, the truly spectacular fall I took on Thursday night, not because I enjoy falling, or its after effects, which are still with me.

I will remember because of what it allowed me to experience first-hand. When I wrote my reflection on the vows a few weeks ago, I realized that Benedict had provided in the Rule three role-models of what the Rule is supposed to produce in us: the Cellarer, the Porter, and the Superior. All are expected to manifest in their lives gentleness, humble love, and a genuine eagerness to serve. It's one thing to grasp that in theory from an ancient document. It's quite another to receive that from my brothers and sisters. But as I lay on the ground waiting for the ambulance, and waited in the ER for the test results, and was greeted by "a welcoming committee" at the Abbey, and then wads of being chauffeured around; I realized how grateful I am and how I must learn to live out for others the same kindness, humility and genuine love. Thank you.

➤ *How did a monastic field trip turn into a gift of grace?* by Sr Clare, n/OSB

At Convocation, Br. Ronan and I were tasked by the Abbess to go to Maryville to collect food reinforcements for our vegetarian and vegan brothers and sisters. We were given permission to have lunch while there, as we would likely miss lunch and Noon Prayer while away. Br. Joseph Elias and our new postulant, Adriane, accompanied us with lists of supplies needed by various other Companions. While shopping at the Walmart with Br. Ronan I had the opportunity to come to know him at a more personal level. You see, there's nothing quite like grocery shopping with someone you don't know to bring into focus their demeanor, their priorities and their way of dealing with a crowded and noisy secular world. I found myself smiling at the picture we must have struck to the rest of the shoppers – his being so tall and my being so short! And yet we accomplished our mission with apparent ease and efficiency. We then met the others at the check-out counters to take our haul to the car. It was a time of trust building, community bonding and open hearts reaching out to others in the love of friendship. I treasure the memory of this brief time with Br. Ronan, Br. Joseph Elias and Adriane; they now reside in the warmest places in my heart. And that is how a monastic field trip turned into a gift of grace and belonging.

Perspectives on Change

➤ **Welcome Potential New Members!**

New applicants are in the gathering stage as our Porters, Br David and Sr Catherine Ann, plan to finalize preparations with them in the near future. We will keep you posted as the process moves forward.

➤ **A Chat with** Sr Madeleine Sophie, Convocation Administrator, and the Editor

This month, October, was our last Convocation at Conception Abbey in Missouri. We've said our fond farewells; and we are not going back.

Plans are afoot to go to these places in the future:

July 2025 - St. Benedict Center, Schuyler, NE
October 2025 - TBD (maybe Baltimore, MD)
June 2026 - St. Benedict Center, NE
October 2026 – TBD.



Conception Abbey

Talk about hard work! These places book years in advance and getting us in to a place that can fit is very difficult. Lots of options for up to twenty-five members, but above forty it gets hard. The Task Group is still at work and they are aware that some folks would like us to go to an Episcopal Center. There are very few places that can handle us. We pray CSL's members will be patient as good things unfold.

➤ **From** Rick Knight, nObl/OSB

Hurricane Milton is on the rear view now. Lost power, internet and water last night around 8pm [Oct 9]. The only damage was due to wind. A number of the sections of my PVC fence are out of plumb. A few sections of the picket fence in front suffered damage from fallen oak branches. My prayers were answered. Thanks be to God.

➤ **From** Sr Anna Grace, OSB

I'm in the process of moving to Brenham, TX on October 5th, God willing. Brenham is a quaint town half way between Austin and Houston, just over an hour each way. That is to say, half way between Sisters Mary Magdalene and Clare, as well as half way between my son and his family and my dearest friend.

I chose Brenham for its location. I don't know a single person there yet although I've visited the town several times. I'll be living in a 55+ apartment community and will attend St. Peter's Episcopal Church when my broken ankle is sufficiently healed.

➤ **From** Sr Genevieve Lynn, OSB

In June, 2024, I retired after serving 41 years in education. In November, I will serve as a Pastor's Assistant at Grace Episcopal Church located in Gainesville, GA.
Thank you!

➤ **From** Sr Gianna, nOSB

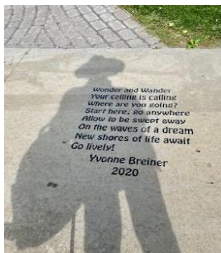
I recently participated in an immersion retreat centered around the art, music and writings of St. Hildegard of Bingen. This remarkable woman lived in the middle ages and is known for instructing popes and starting a monastic order as well. The retreat was led by Sister Mary McGehee, OSB, at Sacred Heart Retreat Center. Sister Mary is a known

authority on St. Hildegard, but as she is becoming quite elderly, this is sadly the last time she plans to present the retreat. It was a privilege to learn about St. Hildegard as well as wander the peaceful, wooded grounds, stay at the beautiful and quiet retreat center, hear the sisters chant the Office, and walk the labyrinth there. I highly recommend the Retreat Center and their programs.

Coming Home by Sister Julian, OSB

As part of my discernment about next steps on my spiritual journey, I took a mini-sabbatical in September – in the form of a three-week cruise on the Mississippi River, the Big River (see photo of me and port town sidewalk calling). Along the way from New Orleans, LA to St. Paul, MN (see photo of state room and river segments), I realized I had fallen in love all over again with the river that was an integral part of my career and life (see photo of site near original CSL spiritual center). I felt like I was *Coming Home*, spiritually and in so many other ways.

I was inspired by the rediscovery of the joy of being able to express myself through art, including the 'medium' of colored pencils (see photo of pencil drawing, in process). The drawing reflects my search for simplicity and balance and the use of whimsical symbolism. The river 'thread' (with its Great Blue Heron profile) is a call from God and contains words for nine Fruits of the Spirit. The river delta represents the Ground of Our Being, leading me to contemplate the iconic mayfly – rising to a life beyond. Godspeed.



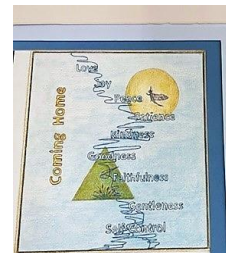
Wonder and Wander



River Diverging Segments



Blessings of the River and Land



Fruits of the Spirit

Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church by Br William Marion, OSB

My parish is Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The name is the result of combining two parishes: Grace Church (founded 1873) and St. Stephen's (founded in 1894) merged in 1923. We just celebrated our Centennial year. I have been a member for 42 years, since 1982. While I have served in many capacities there, Vestry, Choir, etc., I currently have mainly worship duties. I serve as Crucifer, Acolyte, Chalice Bearer, Lector and Intercessor, and am in charge of training and scheduling Lectors and Intercessors for all services. I am a member of the Worship Committee. I also attend and lead a chanted noonday service in our chapel on Fridays.

While being interested in monastic life for a number of years prior, I first inquired about The Companions of St. Luke in early 2021 and became a postulant in June 2021 at our Spring convocation. I completed my novitiate and said first annual vows in June 2024 at convocation.

A book that I have recently read and highly recommend is *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Written in the 1940s, it is very thought provoking and brings together what the author sees as the fundamental truths of the religion. Check it out. It is on the CSL reading list.

Reading Corner

It has been suggested that we include a section in each newsletter with recommendations for reading material related to meditation, centering prayer, contemplative outreach, etc. If you have opinions about this, please let me know. And, of course, if you have recommendations, I would love to receive them. Books and articles recommended should still be in-print and available, as an e-book and otherwise.

Request: Please send your reply to brjd.osb@gmail.com

Online Recommendations

"The Spiritual Journey with Fr. Thomas Keating." Original Series

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBE6fmRmYU8g6CAOwq4-IEvpSnbBxKfRO>

This is a series of 31 hour-long talks (each in two parts) by Fr. Thomas Keating (1923-2018). These talks make up his foundational teachings.

"The Spiritual Journey: Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life"

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/the-spiritual-journey-series/>

This is a free online course consisting of a 5-part series of instructional videos supplemented by Scripture, commentary, contemplative voices, contemporary science, wisdom traditions and suggested practice. This program is shared as a freewill offering by Contemplative Outreach which Fr. Thomas co-founded. If you do two lessons a week, you will complete the course in a year.

Videos used in "The Spiritual Journey Course" (see #2 above)

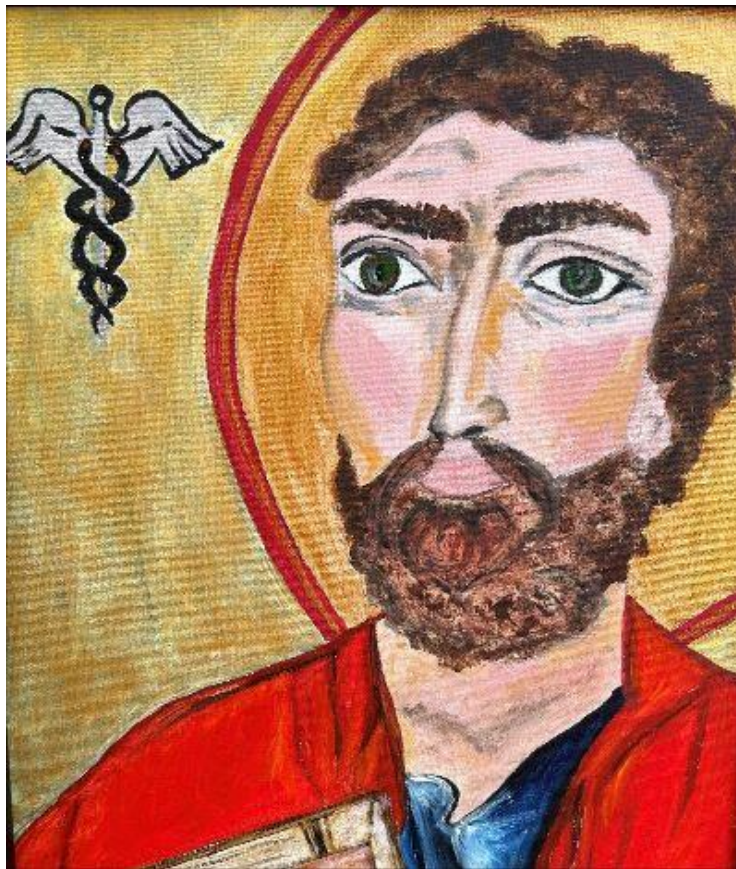
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBE6fmRmYU8gPcv9ZFQgIRPpXTW2-IVXQ>

These are the 100 videos that are used as part of the free online course and differ somewhat from the original series (see #1 above). The videos are numbered according

to the corresponding lesson. There are gaps in the numbering because not all lessons have videos.

" Centering Prayer" Mobile App

This can be found in the App Store or the Google Play Store. Do select the app created by Contemplative Outreach



This portrayal of St Luke, the dear and glorious physician, is a more modern interpretation of an icon. Like all icons, because they are sacramentals, the painting process itself is a spiritual and prayerful journey – for the glory of God, the intercession of the saint, and for the person to whom the painting will be gifted.
