



THE COMPANION

March, 2025

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

This issue of *The Companion* provides different perspectives on Lent and spiritual practices available to us as members of our contemporary Benedictine community. Chapter 49 of St. Benedict's Rule calls us to "live our lives as a continuous Lent" May this issue of our newsletter contribute to you having a holy and blessed Lenten experience as a new or continuing CSL member.

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With your help, we will continue to provide a newsletter that provides a range of articles related to CSL's charism, membership, and community. All offers to contribute articles or to help prepare the newsletter are welcome.

Peace and blessings to all, Br John David, Editor, in partnership with Abbess Martha, Newsletter Sponsor, and Sr Julian, Interim Copy Editor.

Reflections on Lent

Love Bade Me Welcome by +Bishop Scarfe

In one of my favorite movie comedies, “Clockwise”, John Cleese plays the Headmaster of an English Comprehensive School who is being recognized by his peers including HMs of private (public in UK) schools. He credits the success of his efficiently run school to his philosophical belief that “the first step in knowing who we are is knowing where we are and WHEN we are”.

It is not my intention to distract you from the serious approach of Lent with a reference to a farcical film (but if you know anything about John Cleese, you can imagine how the story line might go and you might actually find some sabbath rest in its chaotic cycle of humorous situations which includes a scene in a Cistercian monastery). However, there is some truth in the headmaster’s philosophy – in the significance of knowing WHEN we are, and for a bishop to know where we are! (A corollary aspect of a bishop knowing where you are is that of remembering the nature of the Bishop’s chair in any particular place and thus preparing for a soft or hard landing)

God has placed the heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. God has also tasted the ins and out of incarnational life, and the evangelists often made reference to Jesus’ awareness of time and of the season. We often link this with his mission and purpose; his setting of his face to Jerusalem for example as we will embrace in the Gospel soon. But he also lived with the rhythm of a religious life. He took off onto the mountainside after any significant moment – like feeding the five thousand; and he retired too before important choices – the calling of his disciples, and his final commitment to drink the cup His Father was offering. On most occasions He was alone, and sometimes He brought his closest followers along. Inevitably they did not manage to measure up to coming alongside their Lord in His profoundest experiences. They may not have known where or when they were, and so probably not at that time who they were. But nevertheless, God was at work shaping them to become the persons we now celebrate.

I like to think that the process of the Spirit continues to work similarly in each of us. And that we grow over the years in that sense of location and timing. It is the gift of the liturgical year to hold us firm in these things. Epiphany stretches us to think globally and cosmically. We bless homes where people live, and we realize that every home deserves a blessing across the breadth of humanity. Our eyes turn outward to the heavens beyond, and the gift of glory. It ends, however, with the cross casting its long shadow, and so we are invited to turn.

Lent is that process of reaching the same vision of glory from within. Traveling within ourselves encounters a different reality – it is the self we prefer to hide from, it is the self that obstructs beauty, it is the self that holds us back or blocks our way to beholding that glory to which we have set our face from within. As children we knew when this was. As

we played and as the shadows lengthened, we would anticipate our parents calling us back into the home to rest for tomorrow, and to pass through the night. This is the WHEN I am, as Lent beckons me.

And so, we engage more intensely than usual our engagement with issues of forgiveness, recovery of neglected or lost things, the reordering of ourselves in fact passing through the night– getting rested and ready for Easter and its outpouring of new life and energy into the when-ness of Ordinary time.

This year, God has given me an early Lenten gift that I would like to share with you. Sometimes it takes several turns around the block for me to see the obvious, and this morning a beloved prayer of George Herbert actually “Bade me welcome”. I finally heard the different voices within the prayer “as if for the first time”. Maybe you will too.

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back, Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick eyed Love, observing me grow slack from my first entrance in, drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning: “If I lacked anything?”

“A guest”, I said, “worthy to be here”

Love said, “You shall be he”

“I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear, I cannot look on Thee.”

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply, “who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame, go where it doth deserve”

“And know you not”, says Love, “Who bore the blame?”

“My dear then I will serve”.

“You must sit down”, says Love, “and taste my meat”;

And so, I did sit and eat.

Love calls us in from our playing; calling us to a night’s rest, to a Holy Lent, knowing there is an Easter freshness in the morning, forty days and a Holy Week from now. God knows where we are and when we are, God also knows who we are, and smiling still takes our hand as Love’s guest.

An Invitation to Lent by Abbess Martha, OSB+

As we’ve been approaching Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent, my mind is drawn to two things. The first is our invitation to a Holy Lent from page 265 of the BCP: “I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.” The second is from Chapter 49 of *The Rule* when we

are urged to live a continuous Lent, but reminded that “since few, however, have the strength for this,” we should use this time to “wash away...the negligences of other times.”

Every year I wonder what a “Holy Lent” is supposed to be. Growing up, my Lenten world was awash with trying to figure out what I was going to “give up,” and that is certainly the practice both St. Benedict and our own Prayer Book imply. But I’d like to suggest a different approach—or perhaps mindset—for you this year. Instead of “giving up,” with the goal to be just getting through the forty days without too many slip-ups and looking forward to resuming the practice again after the Easter Vigil, what about using this time to begin something new? For example, instead of saying, “I’m giving up meat for Lent,” turn it into something positive: “I’m using Lent to cut back on red meat and create habits of eating more plant-based meals.” The same types of statements can be created with anything we’d like to change, from becoming healthier to cutting back on screen time.

This year I’d like to challenge you to make your Lenten practice something that will move you closer, even if in just a tiny way, to the continuous Lent Benedict encourages. Make it something between you and God; it need not be shared unless you choose to do so for accountability.

Many blessings, brothers and sisters. May you have a meaningful and Holy Lent.

On Lent by Br Daniel Moore, Obl/OSB

A member at my church, an engineer named Hal Plenge, passed away in January. One afternoon when I was talking to him after church, he told me a story that I’ve been thinking about a lot since his passing. The story goes like this...

One day his train was traveling along a straight path and up ahead on the tracks was ... what he claimed was ... the biggest wild turkey that God had ever placed upon the earth.

Hal blew the whistle, and the turkey looked up, saw the train coming and turned around and started running ... straight down the tracks. The train got closer and closer, and that turkey kept on running. But finally, the train got close. And the turkey stopped, turned around, puffed itself up, and got ready to fight it.

Of course, the inevitable happened. Hal said, “The train won.”

There's a good message there as we come into the season of Lent. We go through life without thinking much about our own mortality. We act as though we will live forever with all the time in the world. But one day, we realize that that isn't going to happen. But the best of us turn. We will fight the good fight until the end. We will live each day as a

celebration of life. But in the end, the Lord calls us home. So, fight that good fight. And always strive to be the person that God has created you to be.

Peace and Joy.

Every Lent Is the Same, Yet Different by Sr Julian, OSB

Lent is Lent is ... Lent at its core is a constant in our lives, not unlike Christ who centers and grounds our CSL community. Yet, Lent feels different this year and I've been reflecting on how specific changes, welcome or otherwise, shape us and our response to the world and to God, as we move from one stage of our lives to the next.

Looking back, it was no surprise that Lent was not on my radar screen before my becoming a member of CSL. My focus was on making new year's resolutions (some kept), as I was steeped in the secular world and related priorities. Then in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic came along and seemed to change all the rules. Despite uncertainty, we moved forward one step at a time, while remembering times past and those who died. Thankfully, my monastic lifestyle and spiritual practices gave me perspective and hope. I re-discovered my love for the liturgical seasons and my faith communities. We modified a Holy Week ritual by having a homespun communion with loved ones, present only as favorite photos and memories, until hybrid services opened things up a bit...

More recently, a series of health issues drained my energy and challenged many of my assumptions. I recall during this time my spiritual director suggested that I didn't need more discipline during Lent, but perhaps I could consider what gave me joy and how a sense of freedom can arise from trusting God *completely*. Among other things, I remembered how serving as a Godly play (Sunday school) teacher with second graders gave me great joy and a sense of freedom to play and wonder outside the perimeters of who I thought I was or people perceived me to be.

I applied these and other insights to prepare for this year's Lenten season. I knew I needed to dig deeper—given headline news about the cold winter, political uncertainty, and shifts in approaches by local parishes and communities, and given on-going age and health-related issues. One thing I started doing as part of Epiphanytide is a more fun (for me) variation of journaling (which I do not enjoy) that tapped into my art interests and use of metaphors and puns in thought provoking ways for me and others. One outcome was a page of countercultural and Christ-centered "good news".

This approach was reinforced when I recently learned about *Poetry of Presence: An Anthology of Mindfulness Poems* (Cole-Dai and Wilson, editors, 2017). One of the

poems by Thich Nhat Hanh, titled “Good News”, reminded me that we are all in the “same boat” and that I need to remain centered through Christ and my monastic and residential communities, and not to be distracted by all that is around me. Doing so allows me to focus on times of stillness, and gifts of beauty and love around me each day—and on what I can do through a word or act of kindness. One of God’s blessings will be to rise from the ground this Lent, not unlike a daffodil reaching toward the sunshine and the light of Christ. May it be so.



Lenten Practices by Br William Marion, OSB

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday which falls on March 5th this year. Our parish, Grace and St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs, offers three services for Ash Wednesday at 7AM, noon, and a choral Eucharist at 7 PM. I generally attend all of them, and participate as either an Acolyte, Chalice Bearer, or Lector. A very solemn day of services.

On the first Sunday of Lent, at GSS we will pray the Great Litany, as a procession of choir and clergy circles through the nave, which is always a moving experience.

Cindy and I do not necessarily “give up” certain foods, chocolate, or wine during Lent, but rather make a lot of additional time for reading, contemplative prayer, and church related activities. I spend time considering my blessings from the Lord and how to further do His will.

In addition, we participate in the Lenten book study group meetings on Sunday afternoons during Lent, this season, we are reading and studying “*River through the Desert*” by Richard Sewell. We will also participate in and officiate our weekly chanted Noonday prayer office in the chapel at GSS on Fridays, as well as online offices offered by CSL.

We anticipate the coming of Holy Week: at GSS we celebrate Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Several Good Friday services, the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday – all culminating in Easter Sunday!

What Do People Usually Give Up for Lent? by Br Jérôme, n/OSB

I know what I have done in the past, but I got curious to know what *others* have done, so I asked Microsoft Edge, my favorite browser. Here are the answers I received: fasting (giving up certain foods or drinks); prayer (committing to daily prayer or meditation); almsgiving (donating money or goods to charity, volunteering time at local

shelters, food banks, or community centers); acts of kindness (performing daily acts of kindness or service for others, writing letters or reaching out to those in need of companionship); and personal sacrifices (limiting time on social media or other distractions, giving up a personal habit that hinders spiritual growth.)

Reading over the list, I noticed that all these “classic” Lenten acts aim to deepen our relationship with God and enhance spiritual growth through different practices. Some have more to do with self-discipline, others, with reflection and repentance, and yet others with building community and solidarity—though I realize these may be categorized in other ways than mine—giving and kindness, for example, could be considered the same.

Fasting—the big one—for example, focuses on self-denial and sacrifice to remind us of spiritual hunger and dependence on God, but shouldn’t we, as Benedictines, always do that? Yes, we should: in Chapter 49, Saint Benedict mentions that the life of a monk should be a continuous Lent. In my case, letting go of chocolate for Lent has proven to be tough, but it is also very self-serving, due to my constant struggle with diabetes. Maybe I should give up broccoli this year? ☺

Prayer—probably #2 on the “Lenten Hit Parade”, seeks to enhance communication and connection with God, but, although we can always do more, isn’t it self-serving to “sacrifice” by doing something we love to do in the first place? More on that later.

Almsgiving refers to acts of charity and generosity, providing help to those in need and practice selflessness. Again, I do not doubt for a moment that we all give a lot of personal resources and time to worthy causes and institutions, nor do I doubt that we can always do more of that, for sure. Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4 relate similar observations, that the Poor Widow has put more in the temple’s treasury than the rich man, because she gave all she had to live on. The value of giving is therefore relative to our own financial situation.

The acts of kindness and personal sacrifices focus on daily acts of service and kindness to embody Christ’s love and compassion in everyday living and removing obstacles to spiritual growth. So, can we return to being killjoys after Lent? Can we indulge in bad habits and distractions again after Easter? I figure that’s a big no.

Here are a few ways to observe Lent I intend to pursue, not necessarily one at the exclusion of the others:

1. Spend time in nature, reflecting on God’s creation and finding moments of peace and contemplation.

2. Dedicate time to learning a new skill that can be used to serve others, such as cooking, knitting, or gardening. (I'll probably go with cooking and gardening; I have already ordered lotus seeds to grow this spring and give the resulting potted flowers to neighbors. Okay, okay... that can be classified as random acts of kindness, but give me a break...)
3. Practice *mindful eating* by savoring each bite, reflecting on the source of our food, and being grateful for it.
4. Combine physical activity (I know... that too, is self-serving) with prayer by taking prayer walks in my neighborhood when the weather is not so treacherous.
5. Declutter my home and donate items I no longer need (did I ever?) to those in need, creating a more peaceful living space.
6. Explore different forms of worship, such as listening to worship music, attending different church services, or participating in online faith communities. Following the last Novice Two segment on Contemplative Prayer during which I read and pondered on Cynthia Bourgeault's *The Heart of Centering Prayer: Non-Dual Christianity in Theory and Practice* (Shambhala, 2026), I found an Indiana University group of CP practitioners that I am meeting for the first time (on Zoom) this Saturday. Yes, Lent is coming early for me this year.

These ideas may help you observe Lent in meaningful and unique ways, deepening your spiritual journey and connection with God. If you have any questions or need further details, feel free to ask me! 🙏

My God, Help Me, an 11th century prayer collected and shared by Br David, OSB

Deus meus adiuva me, [My God, help me.]

Give me your love, O Son of God,

Give me your love, O Son of God,

Deus meus adiuva me.

In meum cor, ut sanum sit, [Into my heart, that it may be sound,]

O noble King, give your love quickly,

O noble King, give your love quickly,

In meum cor, ut sanum sit

Domine da quod peto a te, [O Lord, give what I ask of you,]

Give, give quickly, O clear, bright sun,

Give, give quickly, O clear, bright sun,

Domine da quod peto a te.

Hanc spero rem et quaero quam, [This thing I hope for, and this is what I ask,]

Your love to me in this world,

Your love to me in the next world,

Hanc spero rem et quaero quam.

Tuum amorem, sicut vis, [Your love, as you wish,]

Give me quickly what I ask again,

Give me quickly what I ask again,

Tuum amorem, sicut vis.

*Quaero, postulo, peto a te, [I search, I ask, I beg of you,]
My life in heaven, Son of God,
My life in heaven, Son of God,
Quaero, postulo, peto a te.*

*Domine, Domine, exaudi me, [O Lord, O Lord, hear me,]
Fill my soul with your love, O God,
Fill my soul with your love, O God,
Domine, Domine exaudi me.
Deus meus adiuva me,
Deus meus adiuva me.*

Source: Mael Ísu Ua Brolcháin, d. 1086

Art Note



*What spiritual practices will you
have in your backpack during this
year's 40-day walk through Lent?*

Members in Transition

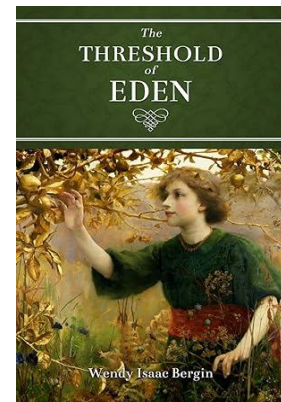
STEPPING ACROSS THE THRESHOLD by Sr Anna Grace, OSB

Thanks to the marvels of modern technology, I started attending St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Brenham, Texas virtually several months before I moved here in October. The first service, I watched as we began with the blessing of prayer shawls knitted by women of the parish. These shawls are presented to people on the church's prayer list. Would this group have room for one more?

I was welcomed with open arms, especially by the women of the prayer shawl ministry. It was here that I met my new friend, the gifted Wendy Isaac Bergin. Wendy reminded me of that first servant to whom God was so generous in St. Matthew's Parable of the

Talents. Not only does she knit beautifully, she is also the principal flutist at The Opera in the Heights in Houston. And she writes novels.

I'm sure I'm not the only Companion with a sizable "to be read" pile of books. *The Threshold of Eden (Where Grows the Tree of Life, Book 1)* quickly leapt to the top of mine. Reading this book was an immersion experience. *The Threshold of Eden* explores the connections between the natural world and the spiritual realm. Our relationships with one another and with "this fragile earth, our island home" are in the forefront of the story. Other important themes are living and dying, forgiveness, repentance, and especially the power of love and prayer to bring healing to our wounded world. That last phrase is from, of course, the charism of The Companions of Saint Luke, and so I highly recommend that *The Threshold of Eden* be added near the top of our sisters' and brothers' "to be read" lists.



A Lesson in Patience by Br Ronan, n/OSB

I've recently learned a lesson about patience. As I reflected on it, I realized it might be helpful for others. As many of you may remember, I need surgery on my foot to repair my peroneal tendon as well as to remove some bone. The day before my surgery, I found out that I would not be having my surgery due to something that showed up on a pre-op EKG. I was quite frustrated when I received that phone call in the moment. However, after some time passed, I realized this was my primary care physician wanting to be sure that there wasn't something else going on. Instead of staying frustrated, I became grateful that my doctor was ensuring there were no underlying heart issues. I know that the surgery will happen, but instead of dwelling on what I couldn't have, I chose to focus on living in the present.

Lent and Easter.

My Life Lately and in Coming Months by Sr Gianna, n/OSB

In February 2022, I was drowning in work. COVID-19 greatly diminished the blood products available for patient use, and being the laboratory medical director for four hospitals that administer varying amounts of these to their patients, I was getting calls all times of the week from the lab techs and the doctors, with different expectations and experience. This period was the tipping point. I received a call from the administrator of

an affiliated pathology group about an unrelated matter, and within an hour, he told me of a position that would fit my expertise. I sent my CV.

August 1, 2022 was my first day at that position. The new job gave me time to reflect on God's pull to more involvement in the church. The local Episcopal church felt right. I sang in the choir, but I had this feeling of "not enough". Soon thereafter, one of the members of the Order of the Daughters of the King told me about an upcoming study group for their order. I attended. This seemed like I was on the right track, but still not enough. I had been researching religious orders in the Episcopal church and found CSL.

Now, I am over half-way through my first year of Novitiate formation, which feels just right. I no longer desire to have my profession as the center. So, this past Fall, after a series of events, I left regular employment. I am taking extended time off to rest and get ready for my next adventure: *locum tenens*. It's the doctor version of travel nursing, with the exception that assignments can be as short as a week. This will allow me to set my own work schedule. This is exactly where God has put me.

Editor's Note: Sr Gianna was elected in January by her peers to be the Council representative for CSL's Postulant and Novices.

I Attend St. Anne's near Philadelphia by Andromeda Sibley, nObl/OSB

I am a first year Novice Oblate in The Companions of Luke, and am very glad to get to know all of you. I am an academic librarian at a small Christian college outside Philadelphia. I have three sons, the youngest of them at nineteen, still living at home, looking for his first job while planning on going to community college. My middle son is twenty-two and moved out in 2020. My oldest son would be thirty-eight this year. He died by suicide after serving six years in the Air Force. He was deployed to the Middle East three times and earned many awards and medals.

I first learned about CSL from Sr Madeleine Sophie when she began attending our Episcopal Church, St. Anne's in Abington, PA. I have been a member of St. Anne's for about twenty years. I've served on vestry, knit with the prayer shawls group, manage the garden club, and enjoy serving as lector and Eucharistic Minister. We have a vibrant contemplative prayer group that meets every week. I have found that the Daily Office and Lectio Divina work especially well for me when I combine them with 20 minutes of quiet prayer.



St. Anne's Episcopal Church
in Abington, PA

I grew up in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, where my dad is an ordained minister. In the 1980s my mom discovered an Episcopal church near her work where she began to attend the noon day prayer service. She passed away in 2020 and I am happy to

have her library of Benedictine books. Many of the books are on the Novice Oblate year-one reading list, and I often come across her margin notes, which is a special delight.

I Attend Holy Family in Chapel Hill by Jason Lentz, nObl/OSB

I live in Chapel Hill, NC with my wife Luzita. My three stepchildren are grown and we are now empty nesters, apart from our two senior cats Cosmo and Hera, and our one-and-a-half year old dog, a German Shepherd/Pit Bull mix named Mina.

I attend the Episcopal Church of the Holy Family here, where I was confirmed in March of 2017. I currently serve on the Altar Guild, as I have continuously since the beginning. I have also served as a Lay Eucharistic Minister and a Lay Eucharistic Visitor, and I was on the Prayer Team. I am a regular guest in the Music Ministry as well.



Episcopal Church of the Holy Family in Chapel Hill, NC

I was raised in a fundamentalist church which I left in my early 20s. I am a cancer survivor, and I first encountered the prayer book during my recovery from surgery in 2013. I had not been in any church since leaving my church of origin. I visited a quaint little parish in western NC, met the prayer book, spent an afternoon with the delightful members of the parish, and experienced an opening of heart as I toured a contemplative path on the parish grounds, surrounded by mountain views and peace and quiet. God began his slow, persistent work of conversion in me. Persistent because of God, slow because of me. Three years of daily prayer and growing courage finally brought me to Holy Family on Advent 1 at the end of 2016, and I've been there ever since. I have the good fortune of a work-at-home job, doing consultative work for health access at Duke Health. I've been with Duke since 2013, and hope to remain here until retirement, God-willing.

Outside of work I am a musician, working on electronic music and in a variety of other contexts; I also play oud and various middle-eastern percussion instruments, west African percussion, and I am the guitarist for a Senegalese rock/fusion band named Kaira Ba, which regularly tours the entire eastern U.S.

As I work through formation, I am challenged to let go of many deeply ingrained habits of thought and action. It feels like a slow breaking down and rebuilding that is long overdue. May God, who is ever faithful, continue the work he has begun in me and in us all.

Peace.

Inquirers and Applicants by Br David, OSB

As CSL's porter, assisted by Sr. Catherine Ann, I welcome people who inquire about CSL and assist them with their discernment during the application process. After an application and supporting materials are submitted, the superior and the deans of formation review the material and conduct interviews.

After we receive an inquiry, an initial interview is conducted. Applications were sent to each person who requested one after the interview. We follow up with each applicant monthly. Our application is an important tool for them to focus their discernment to see if Benedictine life is a true call for them. It is very clear in describing the expectations of membership. Although initial interest is high, the information provided with the application and the process itself causes the serious, prayerful consideration by the inquirer of their interest in becoming a Benedictine religious.

Between May 1 and December 31, 2024, we received 20 inquiries from the US, the UK, Africa, and Australia. This process has resulted in the following data for 2024-25:

- Five applications have been submitted to date and awaiting interviews;
- Eleven people withdrew; and
- Four people are still in discernment.

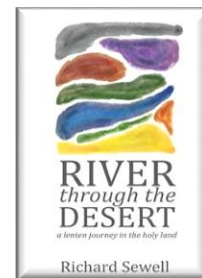
We will accept applications until mid-March 2025.

Upcoming Events

CSL's Annual Lenten Study. As we move through this 2025 season, our community will be reading *River through the Desert: A lenten journey in the holy land* by Richard Sewell. Starting the week of March 3rd, we will begin reading one chapter per week. Each chapter has a 5-10 minute video to watch and a suggested passage of Scripture to read. More information will be sent through email concerning these extra resources.

Our discussion sessions will be held on Sunday afternoons, and we will have two sessions each Sunday from which members can choose one to attend (4 pm Central Time or 4 pm Pacific Time). We will use our Vespers Zoom Room for our discussions.

- The discussion schedule is: March 9th - "The Desert"; March 16th - "The Well"; March 23rd - "The Mountain"; March 30th - "The Sea"; April 6th - "The Road"; and April 13th - "The Garden".



- If you are willing to be a facilitator for one of the discussion sessions or would like more information, please email Sr. Genevieve Lynn at srgenevievelynnosb@gmail.com.
- Postulants and first year novice-oblates should check with their formation guides to determine whether they will be reading the book for this study. Formation guides may choose to have postulants or first year novice-oblates attend the discussion sessions only, without reading the book.

Council Meetings. Effective with the February 13, 2025 meeting, Council meetings are to be held on the second Thursday of each month @ 5 pm central time. All members are welcome and are invited by the Abbess to attend these meetings that relate to Council administrative decisions and policy guidance.

- *Reports noted by Sr Marie Patricia for January's Council Minutes, for example, include:*

Formation and Education: The Committee met and identified 2025 continuing focus areas and new task groups related to online classes and document-management options.

Porter Report: Br David and Sr Catherine Ann have been in contact with five potential new members in 2025. There may be two returning members as well.

Worship Committee: There will be a service of remembrance during Lent on March 22nd at Matins. Please start getting a list of names of those to be remembered to the Abbess.

Councilmembers include the Abbess as the Chair, abbess-appointed members (prior, formation dean(s), treasurer & business manager), and elected members. Contact information for them is available in CSL's Membership Directory, maintained by Br Jérôme.

This year's election and use of zoom "break out rooms" at the January 21 Chapter meeting was reminiscent of in-person caucuses held at Conception Abbey prior to the 2020-23 pandemic. Elected members for 2025 (who may serve for three consecutive years) are: Br Florian, new representative for Oblates and Novice-Oblates; Sr Gianna, new representative for Postulants and Novices; and Br William Marion, new, and Sr Marie Patricia, returning, representatives for the Annual–Solemn Professed. With appreciation from our community for their past service, outgoing members are Br Daniel (Oblates and Novice-Oblates), Br Ronan (Postulants and Novices), and Sr Ànah Elizabeth (Annual–Solemn Professed).

Community Fellowship. At the end of 2024, CSL embarked on an endeavor to foster community building. Each month, on the third Saturday, member volunteers host the Community Fellowship Night on Zoom. This is an open invitation to join us to chat, laugh, and enjoy each other's company. Feel free to come and go as you please. Grab

a snack and your favorite drink, and let's make this a memorable evening together! We meet on Zoom from 6 PM to 9 PM Central time, but you can join and leave as fits your schedule during that time. This gives us an opportunity outside of Convocation to be able to spend time as a community in a relaxed environment. For more information, contact Br Ronan or Sr Genevieve Lynn.

- This community fellowship supplements the brief fellowship time available before the period of contemplative silence that leads into Vespers. Current zoom-based prayer times are:

Vespers: M, T, Th @ 6:30 CT and W, F @ 4:30 CT. Check the prayer calendar for additional Divine Office services held monthly for Matins and Compline. The quarterly calendar for communal prayer of the Divine Office is maintained by Br Ronan, who should be contacted if you wish to lead any of the prayer services, on a short-term or continuing basis.

Convocation 2025. Sr Madeleine Sophie, CSL's Convocation Administrator, provided an update at the January Chapter meeting about upcoming convocations to allow you to begin making plans to attend convocation in July. She is still working out several details, given that CSL will be meeting at a new site in Nebraska, after several years meeting at Conception Abbey in Missouri. Stay tuned for upcoming emails from her, as more information is expected in April.

- **Convocation in early summer:** The Summer Convocation will be held at the St. Benedict Center, July 21-25, 2025 (Monday-Friday). The St. Benedict Center is a ministry of Christ the King Priory located in Schuyler, NE (<http://christthekingpriory.com/sbcabout>). For those flying, the airport will be Omaha, NE. Identification of hotel/s and transportation to the St. Benedict Center is still pending. We will also be at the St. Benedict Center in the summer (June) of 2026.



St. Benedict Retreat Center

- **Convocation in the fall:** This year's Fall Convocation will be at Bon Secours Retreat & Conference Center, Mariottsville, MD, October 20-24, 2025 (Monday-Friday). For those flying, the airport will be Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, about a 25-minute drive away from Bon Secours. It appears that the airport hotel we would use is BWI Airport Marriot which is conveniently located for us, is mid-priced, has a restaurant, and receives high marks on its customer service.

Fall Convocation 2026 will be on the western side of the country. Selection of a specific site is dependent on further research and member recommendations that meet five key criteria (capacity for 20; mobility-challenged access; ensuite baths; chapel/oratory room; and dietary options.) Please contact Sr Madeleine Sophie if you have website-based information (including costs) for a potential convocation site that meets the identified criteria.

The Mystery Incarnate

The Paschal Mystery by Rev. Sidney Breese+, CSL Chaplain

The paschal mystery of the dying and rising again of Jesus Christ and our participation therein is the theological core of the gospel; and its liturgical celebration is the central event of the church year. This celebration includes a substantial part of the year, roughly from February to June, the seasons of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Our word “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *lencton* – the time of year when the days grow long as the sun creeps higher in the sky and spring begins. Surely, after a winter such as ours, we can appreciate the “lengthening” of days.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus spent forty days fasting and preparing to proclaim the good news. Long before Jesus, Moses and Elijah had their forty-day fasts. It rained on the earth and on Noah’s ark for forty days, and the earth had a new beginning. And for forty years the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness toward the Promised Land. In the Bible, the number forty means that something important is taking place.

We enter Lent with ashes on our heads, and for forty days we prepare in various ways, as shared by CSL members and others. And these forty days have their own ways for us to pray and sing (but without ever singing “alleluia” – that word waits for Easter.) And, each Sunday we listen to some of the most important stories in the Bible, a sort of short course in salvation history.

As we journey through Lent on our way to Holy Week and Easter, I offer this blessing based on a prayer by St. Fursey, an Irish monk (d. 650).

May the yoke of God’s Law be on your shoulders.

May the coming of the Holy Spirit be on your head.

May the sign of Christ be on your forehead.

May the hearing of the Holy Spirit be in your ears.

May the sensing of the Holy Spirit be in your nose.

May the vision of heaven’s people be in your eyes.

May the speech of heaven’s people be in your mouth.

May the work of God’s Church be in your hands.

May the good of God and neighbor direct your feet.

May the dwelling of God be in your heart.

May your whole being belong to God. Amen.

Once Upon a Friday, a poem by Br Steven, OSB

They asked me everything,
But understood nothing,
Like I knew they would.
Drove me to the hill with the lash,
Strung me up,
Dragged it out as long as they could,
Then said it was time for a break.
Their little joke.
Came to kill me but I was already dead.
Poked me in the side and living water came out.
My little joke,
But they didn't understand that either.

