

ABBOT GREGORY'S ADDRESS AT HIS ABBATIAL BLESSING
Mt. Angel Abbey :: February 26, 2010

My dear Archbishop John, and all the Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Priors and religious superiors who have so graciously joined us,

My dear brother monks of Mt. Angel, and all of the men and women religious who are with us,

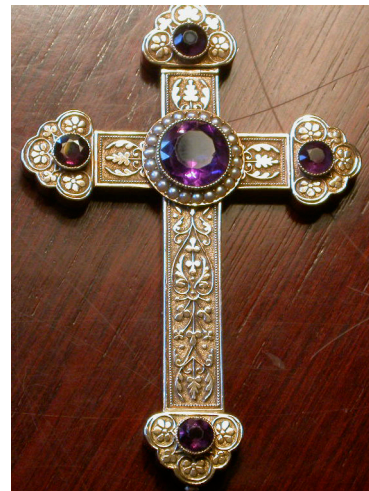
My dear brother priests in loving service to the Church,

My dear family and relatives, especially my sisters Viola, Dorine, Esther, Sharon and Barbara who are here, as well as my father and mother and my sisters Erna and Dolores who are watching from the heavens,

My dear and good seminarians,

My dear friends and guests from near and far, and all who belong to the spiritual family of Mt. Angel,

... to each of you I extend my sincerest WELCOME, and I greet you with the PEACE OF CHRIST! And I wish to say, from the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU so very much for being here today to witness the Church's blessing upon this unworthy servant, called to be the spiritual father of this monastic community of Mt. Angel, charged by St. Benedict with the care of souls, and fortified this day by the blessing of the Church to be for this community a vicar of Jesus the Good, Loving and Preeminent Shepherd of souls. If we had the time, I would call each of you by name to extend the litany of the saints whom we have invoked this day. You, after all, are the living saints, the holy people of God, and I need your prayerful intercession too, for the task before me can only be accomplished by the joined forces of three powerful realities: first and foremost the grace of God, and then the prayerful and loving support of you, my good brothers and sisters, and thirdly my personal commitment to the task—my *Fiat*—which I offer to the gracious God whose inscrutable will has been made known through the trusting election of my brother monks. To GOD be all the glory of this day—and as today's celebration fades into the glory of the daily cross of loving service, pray God that I may pour myself out in selfless libation, always mindful of the Good and Preeminent Shepherd Jesus Christ who gave his life for and to his flock.



The motto that I have chosen for my abbacy is the beautiful messianic proclamation from the Prophet Micah: HE SHALL BE PEACE. Peace is that precious fruit that blossoms and ripens out of right relationship with the Lord; it is the gift that is enjoyed within the hearts of those who are in love with Jesus; it is, says the Letter to the Galatians, one of the fruits of the Spirit, borne out in the lives of those who walk by the Spirit of Jesus along the pathway of the Gospel—even in the shadow of the cross, even in troubled and troubling times such as ours. This day, as whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, the promise of the risen Jesus is extended to us: “I leave you peace, my peace I give you.” Let us gratefully welcome that gift... by embracing the Giver, the Lord Jesus! Yes, HE SHALL BE PEACE... and when we are willing to pay the price of Other-centered reconciliation with him and with our brothers and sisters, then we shall have peace! May it be yours in great abundance! *Ubi caritas*

et amor, ibi Deus est...ibi PAX... Where there is charity and love, there is God... there is PEACE... It's as simple—and as challenging—as that!!

Yes, my brothers and sisters, as for all that is worthwhile in life, there is a price to pay for peace. It is for those who dare to dream dreams and allow themselves to be driven by a vision, for those who seek peace and integrity through their conformity to the vision... Yes, I have not only a motto—"He Shall Be Peace"—but also a vision for Mt. Angel, although I am not the architect of that vision. If my discernment is correct, my present calling is not to something radically new, but rather—like St. John the Baptist—to be one who points to him who is the supreme Architect of that glorious vision of what it means to be Christian. Thus, in word and in deed—but primarily in deed—I must point out Jesus, so that all together we may challenge ourselves day by day to conform to the Spirit and to the Gospel of Jesus, to walk by the pathway of the Gospel, as St. Benedict says. Indeed, it is also to St. Benedict that I must point, for he, too, provides us with a vision that remains eminently viable in our day—the vision of a monastic community dedicated to prayer and work, a community of monks who take to heart those two great preferences that St. Benedict proposes when he says "Prefer nothing whatsoever to CHRIST" (RB 72:11), and "Prefer nothing to THE WORK OF GOD" (RB 43:3). If the monks of Mt. Angel persevere in their commitment to both the Christian vision that has the risen Jesus as its source and center, and faithful also to the vision of Benedict that for more than 125 years has drawn men to this spot to seek God in lives of prayer and work, then Mt. Angel won't happen to be just a lovely wooded knoll rising from the floor of our beautiful Willamette Valley; it will be a "holy mountain," a Mount of Communion where God is encountered by those who seek him, and where Jesus reveals himself and speaks to those who listen to him in the depths of their hearts. The monks of Mt. Angel, as they effectively integrate the Christian and Benedictine vision, will thereby give witness to what may be called the "Benedictine charism," an approach to spirituality that is particularly Christ-centered and liturgical. Benedictine spirituality, in fact, is the spirituality of the Church, as we form community by gathering daily around the altar to be nourished and shaped by the word of God and be renewed in sharing the Lord's Body and Blood, rendering praise to the triune God in celebration of the mystery of Christ in the Eucharist and in the Hours, and also engaging in work and loving service to the Church in order to extend the kingdom of God. Yes, Mt. Angel will continue to be a school of the Lord's service where hearts are silently expanded in love, where true theologians are formed because their love of learning is driven by their desire for God; Mt. Angel will truly be a holy mountain, not in isolation but as an *ecclesiola*, a "little Church," a spiritual center within the Church of Portland, where guests and visitors can come from near and far to be welcomed in Benedictine hospitality and be renewed in the peace of Christ.

Mt. Angel Abbey stands proudly in the great Benedictine monastic tradition within the Church, and although our history has not been without flaw, we rely on the Lord's merciful patience as we strive to conform our lives to the Gospel of Jesus and the Rule of Benedict. If, as abbot of Mt. Angel, I can be of humble service to that Gospel and to that Rule by upholding the vision of what it means to be at once Christian and Benedictine, and if, in the end, it can be said of me that "He was a peaceful, wise and kindly shepherd," it will be enough. And for the rest, I will put my entire trust in the endless mercy of the Lord Jesus. HE SHALL BE PEACE!

Abbot Gregory Duerr, O.S.B.