

MOUNT ANGEL | Letter

FALL 2023



*The joy of life
consumes me!*



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Fall 2023 | Volume 76, Number 2

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Iconography
Institute



Professions
& Jubilees



Seminary
2023–24

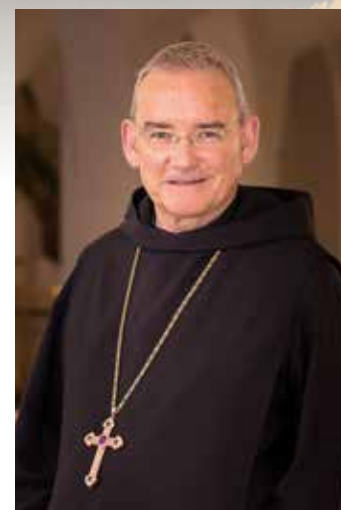


Ann Henry,
1924 – 2023

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DEAR FRIENDS,

As I was reviewing this issue of *Mount Angel Letter*, Br. Matthew's reflection on his solemn vow ceremony (pg 6) reminded me that joy sometimes unexpectedly breaks through the darkness. During the ceremony, the monk lies face down in front of the altar under a funeral pall. It is a stark reminder that in taking monastic vows, we must die to our "old self" and put on a new life in Christ.

Br. Matthew writes that, surprisingly, his thoughts were not on death as he lay under the pall. Instead, he heard the voices of his monastic brothers all around him praying in the words of St. Paul. He knew that a community of brothers surrounded and supported him. At that moment, he writes, "The joy of life consumed me and filled me with so much peace and expectation as I begin the rest of my life here in whatever the Lord has planned for me."

The stories and photos throughout this issue remind me that joy can be the quiet, interior peace of confidence in God's love. It can be the joy of a diverse community of people who come together in a common faith, as with our seminarians returning to begin a new year of study and formation. It is recognizing Christ is with us through times of pain or disappointment. For Br. Ambrose, one of five younger monks learning iconography (pg 2), it can be as simple as recognizing the face of Christ while mixing raw, earthy pigments for an icon.

In a community such as Mount Angel, joy is always rooted in our gathering daily for the Eucharist and throughout the day as we celebrate the hours of the Divine Office. I hope you share our joy as you read through this issue of *Mount Angel Letter*. Please let it remind you that each time we are in choir around the altar, both for the Eucharist and the Divine Office, you are with us in our prayers and in the joy we experience in Christ.

+ Jeremy Driscoll, OSB

The Right Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, OSB
Abbot and Chancellor
Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary





Children's Book Club

On July 15, August 5, and August 26, the Mount Angel Institute sponsored Children's Book Club events at the Abbey Bookstore and Coffeehouse. Br. Anselm Flores, OSB, read "Islands of the Ocean: Stories from the lives of Celtic saints" to a group of children while their parents enjoyed complimentary coffee and tea.



MOUNT ANGEL INSTITUTE

Summer Highlights

The Mount Angel Institute (MAI) at Mount Angel Abbey sponsors a variety of programs and events throughout the year. Here are some new MAI initiatives that began over the summer with great success.



Find out what's coming up from Mount Angel Institute.



RECREATING THE *face of Christ*

Our holy Hilltop witnessed a historic homecoming this past summer. After a decades-long hiatus, the Classical Iconography Institute hosted an intensive iconography workshop for 33 students, including five Mount Angel monks – Br. Alfredo, Br. Isaiah, Fr. Michael, Br. Sherif, and myself.

We learned how to paint in the traditional Byzantine style, employing the ancient medium of egg tempera (not to be confused with egg *tempura*!) – a handmade mixture of egg yolk, vinegar, and natural pigments. As I used these raw, earthy materials to reproduce the face of Christ, I felt him inviting me – *tangibly* – to participate in the mystery

of his Incarnation. Similarly, as I shared some heart-to-heart conversations with my fellow students, I felt called to imitate Christ in his capacity as great high priest – sympathizing with the weaknesses of others and interceding for them at the throne of grace (cf. Hebrews 4:14-16).

My finished icon of Christ's face now hangs in my monastic cell, daily reminding me that the workshop in which it was painted was much more than an art class; it was a deepening of my monastic – i.e., *Christian* – vocation.

– BR. AMBROSE STEWART, OSB

The Classical Iconography Institute was founded at Mount Angel Abbey in 1987 as the "Iconographic Arts Institute." In 2022, it reincorporated under its current name at Saint Mary's Cathedral in Portland. The Institute plans to continue the tradition of an annual iconography workshop at the Abbey.



The Beauty of Light: Still life oil painting

On August 13 – 14, Silverton artist Helen Bouchard led a painting workshop in the Abbey Bookstore and Coffeehouse, teaching students the essential skills for creating a still life painting. A classically trained oil painter and devotee of art history, Bouchard is also an employee in the Abbey Bookstore.



BREWING BEER, FORMING FRIENDSHIPS

The Benedictine motto *ora et labora* (“pray and work”) took on a special meaning at the Benedictine Brewery in the summer and early fall. Fr. Martin Grassel, OSB, head brewer and general manager, worked vigorously to provide beer for the Abbey’s Saint Benedict Festival on July 8, the brewery’s fifth anniversary celebration on August 26, and the local Mt. Angel Oktoberfest, from September 14 to 17 (which draws about 350,000 people!). Many prayed there would be enough beer for all!



Illuminating the Word

Benedictine monks are well known and celebrated for their preservation of art, culture, and knowledge throughout the centuries. At the Mount Angel Abbey Library, this tradition of historical preservation continues in various ways, perhaps most famously through its collection of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

Br. Albert Klotz, OSB, sometimes gives presentations on these manuscripts to tour groups at the library. After seeing the sharpness of the text and intensity of the colors close-up, visitors are often stunned to learn just how old these illuminated manuscripts are. Illumination refers to all of the decoration in a manuscript, including large, colorful capital letters, patterned borders, and the central images known as miniatures, all of which are produced with colored pigments and gold leaf.



Learn more about the
illuminated manuscript collection.



RENEW Facilities Campaign



We are so grateful to all who have contributed so far to the Renew Facilities Campaign! With your help, we have reached the goal needed to complete the work scheduled for 2023. Thank you! Together, let’s see these projects through to the finish line for the sake of the next generations of monks, seminarians, and all who participate and share in the life of Mount Angel Abbey.



Learn more about the
Renew Facilities Campaign.

LEAKY ROOFS	BRICKS & MORTAR WASH, TUCKPOINT, SEAL	ESTIMATED COSTS
Anselm		\$1,000,000
Aquinas		\$100,000
	Anselm	\$66,000
	Aquinas	\$113,000
	Monastery & church	\$203,000
	Damian Center	\$73,000
	Annunciation	\$65,000
	Guesthouse	\$53,000
	Press Building	\$130,000
	Contingency	\$300,000
Mount Angel Facilities Endowment		\$1,000,000
THREE-YEAR CAMPAIGN TOTAL		\$3,103,000



Mount Angel currently has 17 facilities endowments that hold a combined \$4 million. Our goal for this Renew Facilities Campaign is to grow our facilities endowments to \$5 million. These funds are invested and provide ongoing annual income that is used directly for maintenance or emergencies.

*Will you help us maintain our
Hilltop home, where life is lived with the
intention of sharing the peace, beauty,
and open space with all who come?*



Br. Matthew prepares to proclaim his lifelong commitment to the monastic community of Mount Angel.

The joy of life consumes me

There is so much that happens in the beautiful Mass of Solemn Profession, but one thing that people keep asking me is: “What were you thinking about as you were buried under the pall?” Enacting the ancient monastic practice of mystical burial, in a very real sense I was buried, modeling the posture my body will someday take up again at my actual funeral. As I lay there on the floor, the brothers around me were taking up the words of St. Paul, rephrased in the first person, proclaiming the mystery at hand: “I have died, and my life is hidden with Christ in God. I shall not die but live, and proclaim the works of the Lord” (cf. Colossians 3:3).

So, was I thinking about death? Not really. Of course, we should always keep the prospect of death before our eyes, and keep our souls ready to meet our Creator, because “you know neither the day nor the hour” when God will call us home (Matthew 25:13). But in those moments under the pall, hearing all the voices of everyone around me, praying through the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass as a newly consecrated monk, all I could think of was: life. I have been called to the joy of a new life in Christ in this monastery, with these brothers, for these family members and friends gathered around me, and for all who will at some point be impacted by our lives up here on this Hilltop, all to proclaim the glory of God. The joy of life consumed me and filled me with so much peace and expectation as I now begin the rest of my life here in whatever the Lord has planned for me.

– BR. MATTHEW SISLOW, OSB



Seek Things Above

In a simple ceremony September 7, before the hour of Vespers, Sherif Kamal and Brandon Contreras were received into the novitiate. During the ceremony, each received the scapular and a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict, which they will study in great detail throughout the coming year.

“The novice should be clearly told all the hardships and difficulties that will lead him to God.” (cf. Rule 58:8)

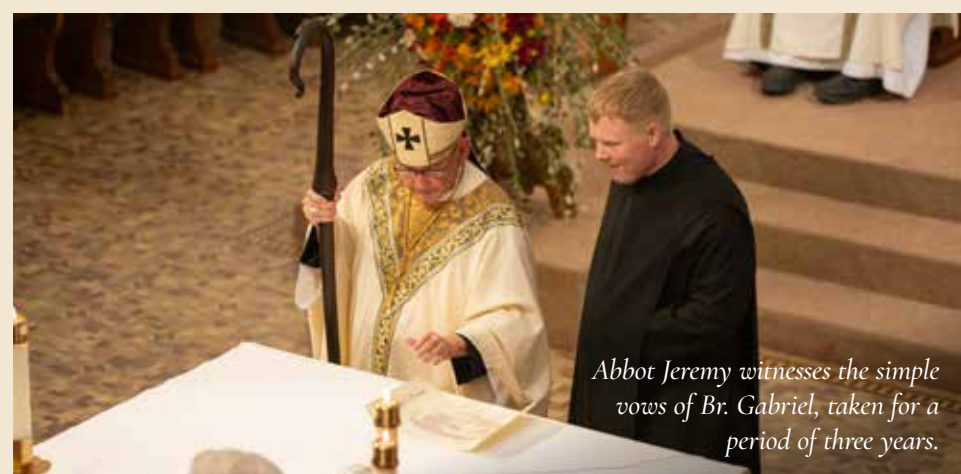


Learn more about monastic life at Mount Angel Abbey.

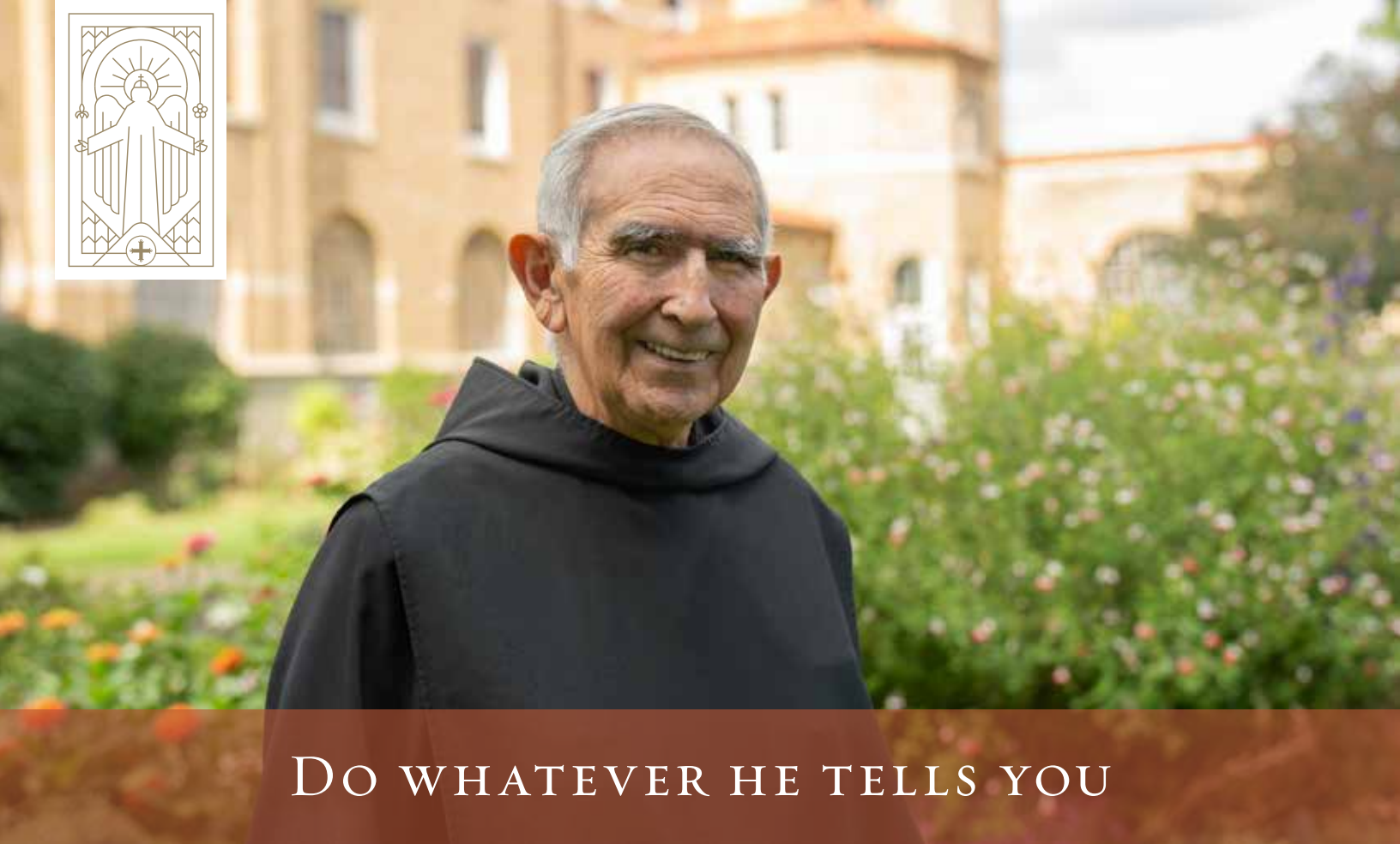
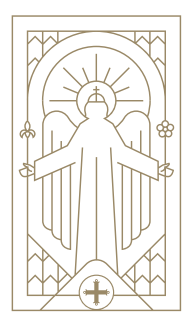
Nothing is impossible with God

In the process of discerning the name I wanted before professing simple vows, I took some time to look back at everything that led up to this point. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I joined a group of parishioners in doing the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary, which was developed by St. Louis de Montfort. Throughout the process of preparing to make this consecration, I felt a deeper connection to Mary, beyond that of praying the rosary daily. On the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the day our group did the Act of Consecration, I remember hearing in the Gospel reading at Mass the account of the Annunciation. A verse that has stuck with me then and throughout my novitiate has been, “Nothing will be impossible for God” (Luke 1:37). This verse continued to provide consolation since I first heard it and was especially important during times that were difficult, to remind me to trust in Our Lady’s intercession and in the strength of God. Drawn on from this revelation, I began to look deeper into the name of Gabriel and found that it comes from the Hebrew *geber* and *el*, which translates to, “God is my strength.”

– BR. GABRIEL (ANDREW) BRANDS, OSB



Abbot Jeremy witnesses the simple vows of Br. Gabriel, taken for a period of three years.



DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU



“I’m grateful for the years that I have been here and for the people who have been encouraging me along the way,” reflects Fr. Prior Vincent Trujillo, OSB. On March 25, 2023, Fr. Vincent celebrated his 60th jubilee of monastic profession, having made his first profession of vows as a monk of Mount Angel Abbey in 1963.

Before entering the monastery as a brother at the suggestion of Fr. Bernard Sander, OSB, Fr. Vincent did not know much about Benedictine monasticism, but he did have three aunts who were Benedictine nuns. “I always said that it was those three Benedictines who prayed me into the monastery,” says Fr. Vincent gratefully. As a brother for twenty years, Fr. Vincent was involved in nearly every work of the monastery, including doing laundry for almost one hundred monks, taking care of over one thousand chickens, butchering cattle and pigs, and coaching basketball in the high school seminary, to name a few.

In his tenth year as a brother, Abbot Damian Jentges, OSB, asked Fr. Vincent to live and work in the seminary as assistant dean and then dean, making him the first brother ever to serve in those roles. In addition to teaching calligraphy for 35 years – an art he studied at Reed College under Lloyd Reynolds –

Fr. Vincent was instrumental in developing and directing the Hispanic ministry program in the seminary and creating a vibrant art department and studio with Fr. Philip Waibel, OSB. When the high school seminary closed in 1978, Fr. Vincent approached Abbot Anselm Galvin, OSB, about studying theology to be ordained a priest, and the abbot responded warmly: “we’ve been waiting for you to ask that question for a long time.” With that affirmation, Fr. Vincent completed his seminary studies and was ordained a priest on December 8, 1982.

As he begins his fifteenth year as prior, a position he never expected to hold, Fr. Vincent is as active and busy as ever, faithfully living out his responsibilities to the Lord and his brother monks. Speaking from his personal experience, he advises new, younger monks to “be open to do whatever you’re asked to do because you’re going to be in for some surprises.”

– ETHAN ALANO

“The will of God has always been what’s more adventurous and challenging and happy than planning out my own path,”

remarks Fr. Konrad Schaefer, OSB, who celebrates 50 years of monastic profession this year. Making his first vows as a monk of Mount Angel Abbey on September 1, 1973, and now celebrating his jubilee as a monk of Our Lady of the Angels Abbey in Cuernavaca, Mexico, Fr. Konrad has experienced firsthand the depth and breadth of following God’s will.

The vow of obedience has been a consistent theme in Fr. Konrad’s life. Asked to further his knowledge of biblical languages for teaching at Mount Angel Seminary, Fr. Konrad began a doctoral program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. On the day he was finishing a first draft of his dissertation in 1991, he was asked to fly back to the United States that same day because of the threat of the Gulf War. While Fr. Konrad did finish his doctorate after that major interruption,



The adventure of obedience

FR. KONRAD
SCHAEFER, OSB

it was on God’s timeline, not his. “Obedience has always been greater than what I could have done for myself,” he reflects.

In 1995, Fr. Konrad was sent to Our Lady of the Angels, a daughter house of Mount Angel Abbey, to serve as prior. Faithfully embracing this responsibility for 25 years away from his home in Oregon, Fr. Konrad made the difficult decision in 2017 to transfer his monastic vows from Mount Angel to Our Lady of the Angels. With the latter community on the path toward becoming an abbey,

Fr. Konrad “wanted the brothers to feel a certain security” during the transition and moving forward.

For monks in formation and those discerning religious life, Fr. Konrad encourages them to “be open, know yourself, and trust the sharing of your path with a listening heart.”

– ETHAN ALANO

Join us in prayer as

**BR. CHARLES
BORROMEO GONZALEZ, OSB**

*prepares for his
ordination to the priesthood.*

November 4, 2023 | 9 am

Celebrant: Bishop Liam Cary, Diocese of Baker

Livestream at

WWW.MOUNTANGELABBEY.ORG/LIVE-STREAMING



Leading through service



“Whatever God calls us to be, it’s going to be exciting,” shares Ramses Yates, a seminarian for the Diocese of Yakima. Through the vote of his fellow seminarians, Yates has been called to serve as the discipleship (those studying philosophy) chairman this year. Together with Deacon Michael Williams of the Archdiocese of Las Vegas, who has been elected as the configuration (those studying theology) chairman, they serve their brothers as co-leaders in the seminary community.

Yates appreciates the opportunity to “practice what I’m wanting to grow into” as a leader. With the implementation of the new Program of Priestly Formation in seminaries across the country, he looks forward to growing “in leading people into the unknown.”

Humbled by his classmates’ desire to elect him, Deacon Michael wants to practice “empowering others,” a leadership skill he admires in his ordinary, Archbishop George Thomas. He hopes the seminary can continue to build “fraternity and cohesiveness,” “growing into something greater” by being united in Christ.

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST IN HIS PEOPLE

Directed experience in pastoral ministry is an important dimension of preparing for priestly ordination. Many of the dioceses who send men to Mount Angel Seminary aim for a full year in a parish setting for each seminarian during his years of studying theology. The goal is to configure one’s mind and heart more and more to the mind and heart of Christ.

“This is really what I’m made for,” shares Edward Burke, a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Anchorage-Juneau. Burke served at St. Benedict Parish in Anchorage as a pastoral intern last year. “Getting to love Christ in his people ... was a huge help to me and my spiritual life,” he says. Edgar Lozano-Cuevas of the Diocese of Sacramento did his pastoral year at St. Patrick Parish in Grass Valley and appreciated “getting to know what the priestly life is,” seeing firsthand the joys and real challenges of diocesan priesthood. Returning to Mount Angel this year, he recognizes that he “can never be 100% ready to serve the people in the parish” and that preparing to serve “goes for the rest of our lives.” Serving at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Bakersfield last year, Martin de Jesús Ortega Ascencio of the Diocese of Fresno witnessed the hunger the faithful have for the sacraments. “People are looking not only for the priest; they are seeking the Lord,” he reflects.

Mount Angel Seminary opened its 135th academic year on August 28, with the monastic community, seminary faculty, staff, students and friends to celebrate the Mass of the Holy Spirit. Abbot and Chancellor Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, was the main celebrant and homilist. The Rev. Stephen Clovis, Director of Human Formation, gave the Inaugural Address, titled “In the Secret of My Heart, Teach Me Wisdom: The Formative Community and the Gift of Authentic Freedom.”

2023-24 ENROLLMENT

119 TOTAL ENROLLMENT
AT MOUNT ANGEL SEMINARY

78 SEMINARIANS, FROM

15 DIOCESES

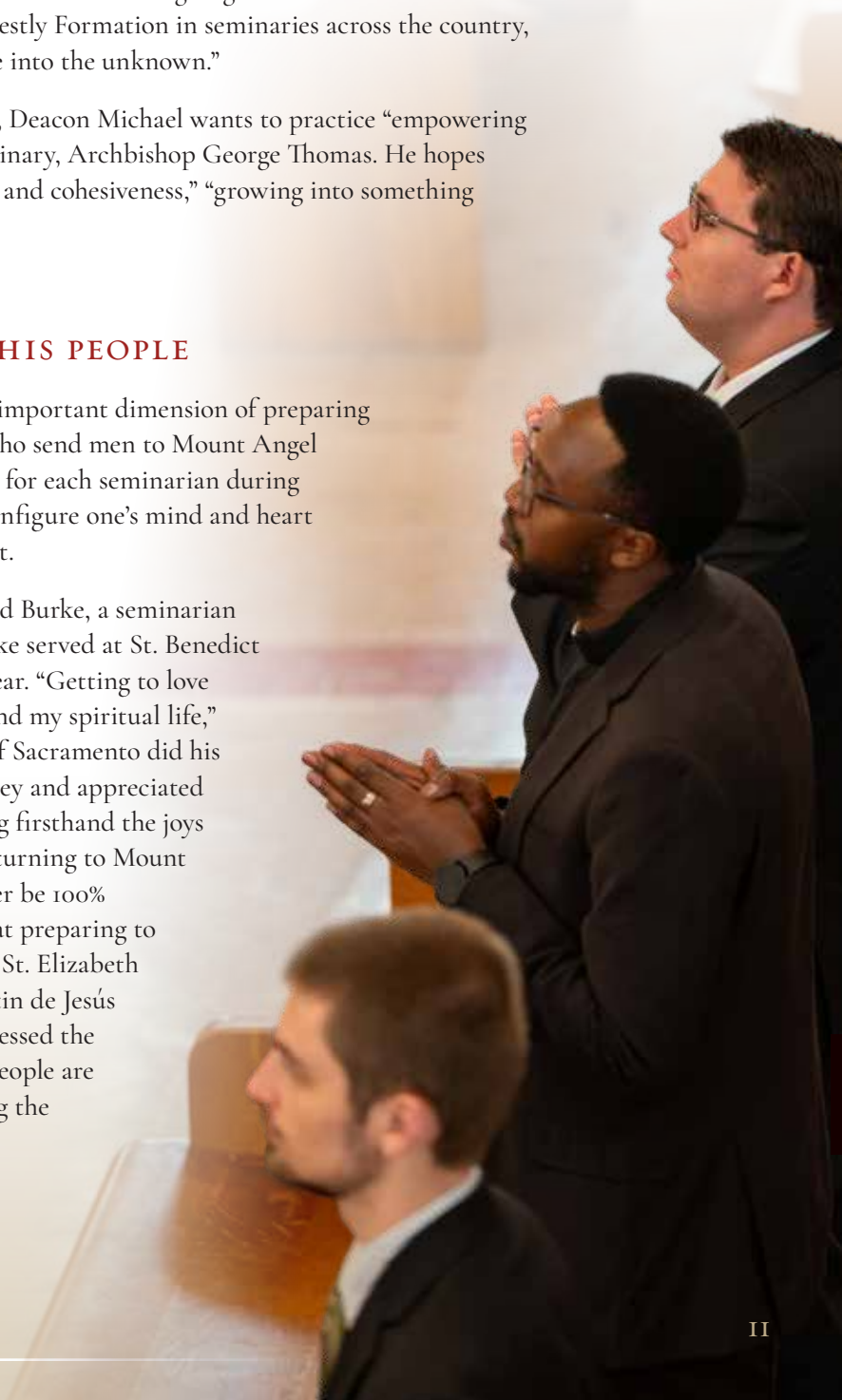
6 RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

41 NON-SEMINARIANS ENROLLED IN

13 MASTERS PROGRAM

18 DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

10 NON-DEGREE STUDENTS





LOVING THE PRIESTHOOD

Fr. Michael Niemczak

When Archbishop John Wester of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe asked Fr. Michael Niemczak if he would serve on Mount Angel Seminary's priestly formation faculty, he responded with a firm "yes."

"I just love the priesthood," shares Fr. Niemczak. "To be in a place that tries to teach future priests what the priesthood is all about, that was exciting for me." Fr. Niemczak arrived at Mount Angel Seminary in July 2023 and currently serves as the coordinator of the propaedeutic stage of seminary formation. That means he works with the men new to seminary life, whether they are right out of high school or have already completed college and had a career.

Fr. Niemczak describes the essence of the propaedeutic stage as "discovering with [the seminarians]: what kind of man are you going to be, and is that man a priest?" From the perspective of the universal call to holiness, Fr. Niemczak likes to share with the seminarians that "the goal is not that they have an 'Fr.' in front of their name; it's that they have an 'St.' in front of their name."

That perspective took on a deeply personal meaning for Fr. Niemczak when he traveled recently to Poland to concelebrate the beatification Mass for the Ulma family. Born in the U.S. to Polish immigrants, Fr. Niemczak is a relative of the Ulma family, who were cousins of his great-grandfather. During World War II, the entire family – mother, father, 6 children and a 7th in the womb – was martyred in 1944 by Nazi soldiers for providing safe harbor to two Jewish families. The Ulma family, Fr. Niemczak has reflected, were not the only ones to harbor Jewish families during the war, but he is grateful that they have been the ones chosen to be the face of the heroism of many.

Fr. Niemczak brought over 1,000 prayer intentions with him from people worldwide, which he had gathered ahead of the beatification. During his time in Poland, he paused to read, remember, and pray for each intention.

– ETHAN ALANO

Listen to this podcast as Fr. Niemczak shares stories from the beatification of the Ulma family.



ANN HENRY | 1924 – 2023

Ann Henry, Mount Angel oblate, singer, songwriter, choreographer, creator of the modern dance jazz technique, and an artist-in-residence at Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary from 1964 to 1974, died August 27, 2023.



"I began [to learn about Gregorian Chant and the monks] by going to all prayer services. ... I thought if I am to learn, the Monks will teach me best ... I will get the feeling of chant. After a long time, I understood it, and I composed a whole Mass in one night. Everyman's Mass in Honor of Saint Benedict."

"Father Abbot Damian has to hear it first! ... The Abbot heard it; he played it, and said, 'You can teach it to the community.' Courageous!" (Ann Henry)

Left: Abbot Damian Jentges, OSB, Ann Henry, and Daryl Kaufmann, her personal pianist.

Sharing her musical expertise with both monks and seminarians, Ann's compositions at Mount Angel included five Masses. For the dedication of the Mount Angel Abbey Library on May 30, 1970, Ann composed music that she and seminarians performed with Edward "Duke" Ellington. Many happy hours were spent with Ann teaching music and singing to monks and seminarians alike.

In her later years, Ann made her home in Portland, Oregon, where she formed the People's Choir, serving churches, schools, and at events in Portland and beyond.

Ann will be remembered at Mount Angel for her friendship, enormous talent generously shared with so many, and as a member of the Abbey's oblate community.



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HOW TO EXPERIENCE SHAKESPEARE

An Enhanced Screening of King Lear

Join us for an afternoon of wine and snacks as we screen Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Lear* with an introduction and guided discussion by Dr. Katie Jo LaRiviere.

NOVEMBER 4, 2023
2 – 4:45 PM
MOUNT ANGEL ABBEY
LIBRARY AUDITORIUM

Together we will discuss ways to enrich your experience of the Bard's works and glean insights into the complexity of human nature using one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.

Dr. Katie Jo LaRiviere is an Associate Professor in the Department of Literature at Mount Angel Seminary.



Learn more about the Mount Angel Institute at Mount Angel Abbey and the programs and events it sponsors.

JOIN THE MONKS OF MOUNT ANGEL ABBEY for MASS AND THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

WEEKDAYS

Vigils: 5:25 am
Lauds: 6:35 am
Holy Eucharist: 8:00 am
Midday Prayer: Noon
Vespers: 5:20 pm
Compline: 7:30 pm

SUNDAYS & SOLEMNITIES

Vigils: 7:30 pm (Saturday)
Lauds: 6:40 am
Holy Eucharist: 9:00 am
Midday Prayer: Noon
Vespers: 5:20 pm
Compline: 8:05 pm

SEE MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM SCHEDULE.

WAS THERE A MOMENT AT MOUNT ANGEL THAT CHANGED YOUR LIFE?



Many recall particular monks, spiritual directors or teachers whose words and presence made all the difference.

If mentors at Mount Angel have helped you or a loved one to grow in new ways and opened doors to God, please consider planning a gift or bequest to honor them. That way, others will have life-changing opportunities as well.

**For information,
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at 503.845.3030 or 503.312.5425
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mtangel.giftlegacy.com**

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*Abbot Damian Jentges, OSB
1902 – 1974*