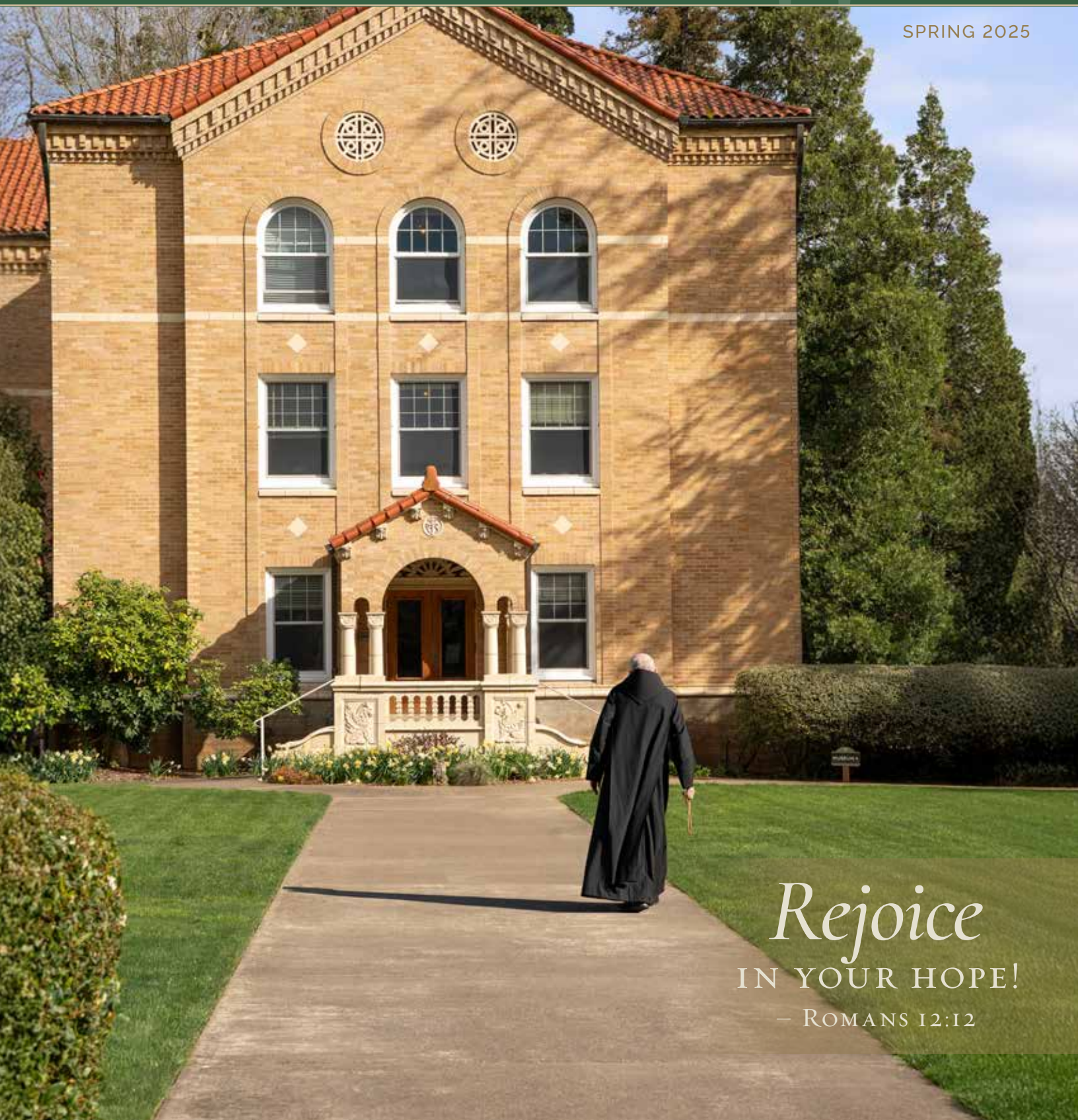


# MOUNT ANGEL | Letter

SPRING 2025



*Rejoice*  
IN YOUR HOPE!  
— ROMANS 12:12



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Spring 2025 | Volume 78, Number 1

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**Special Thanks** to the Monastic Advisory Council for *Mount Angel Letter*: Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, Abbot Peter Eberle, Fr. Pius X Harding, Fr. Odo Recker, Fr. Ralph Recker and Fr. Vincent Trujillo

**Contributors** to this issue include Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, Tomas Sandoval, and Ethan Alano

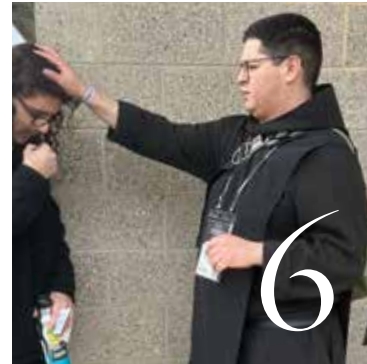
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Abbot Jeremy Appointed



Conference Connections



The Future of Theology



Guided by Mission, Driven by Faith

*Please note our mailing address:* Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary, PO Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497. All other Abbey mail should be addressed to 1 Abbey Drive, Saint Benedict, OR 97373.

*Would you like to receive* our publications, invitations and news via email? Simply send your email address to [news@mtangel.edu](mailto:news@mtangel.edu).

*Do you have special requests* regarding the mail you receive from the Abbey? Give us a call at 503.845.3030. Please send address changes or comments, along with your mailing label, to Mount Angel Abbey & Seminary at PO Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497.



## DEAR FRIENDS,

In this first issue of *Mount Angel Letter* for 2025, I am pleased to share that you will read many stories of hope in connection with the central theme of the current Jubilee Year, “Pilgrims of hope.” In *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis’s Bull of Indiction which opened the Jubilee Year, he writes that, “In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite not knowing what the future may be.” We can have a firm “expectation of good things to come” because Christ has conquered sin and death through his Paschal Mystery and will come again in glory. It is this hope that we celebrate and ponder throughout the Lenten and Easter seasons.

At the very beginning of 2025, some of our monks and seminarians traveled to Salt Lake City to participate in SEEK25, a conference organized by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) with thousands of participants. For many, it was a sign of great hope for the life of the Church here in the United States.

There are also signs of great hope for the Church across the globe. In December 2024, Dr. Shawn Keough, Mount Angel Seminary’s academic dean, participated in an international congress at the Vatican organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education on “The Future of Theology.” I asked Dr. Keough to travel to this congress because I knew Mount Angel had an important contribution to make on an international level. I already see a renewed enthusiasm and confidence among our Seminary faculty and students in the theological contributions they are making in service to the greater Church.

I pray that these stories and the others you will read in this issue inspire hope in you. As you read, I encourage you to reflect on how the Holy Spirit is working in your own life. Here I take St. Paul’s words as my own to bless and encourage you: “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*” (Romans 15:13).

In Christ,

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



ABBOT JEREMY APPOINTED AS  
*Member of Vatican Dicastery*

On January 11, the Holy Father Pope Francis announced his appointment of Abbot Jeremy as a member of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Prior to this appointment, Abbot Jeremy had served as a consultant for the dicastery for 20 years beginning in 2005 under Pope St. John Paul II.

Abbot Jeremy's appointment as a member, along with two American female theologians, received national attention in Catholic media because of the historic nature of the appointment. Prior to Pope Francis's reform of the Roman Curia in 2022, only bishops and cardinals could be members of a dicastery. Abbot Jeremy, Professor Mary Healy, and Professor Donna Lynn Orsuto are the first non-bishop and non-cardinal members of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.



*Read more about Abbot Jeremy's appointment.*





# Striving in Hope

50 YEARS OF MONASTIC PROFESSION

“For 50 years now, we have been saying with [Saint] Paul: ‘I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me,’ said Abbot Jeremy during his homily on his Golden Jubilee of Monastic Profession with Br. Claude Lane and †Fr. Nathan Zodrow. On December 15, 2024, Gaudete Sunday, these three monks, who have shaped so much of Mount Angel’s recent history and legacy, renewed their monastic vows of stability, obedience, and fidelity to the monastic way of life. They first made these vows into the hands of Prior Anselm Galvin on September 8, 1974.

At a private gathering with family and friends after the liturgy, Abbot Jeremy, Br. Claude, and Fr. Nathan watched a surprise video put together by members of the monastic community which contained photos of them along with their stories of how they came to Mount Angel Abbey. Below are some excerpts from those stories, showing how God called these men to follow him as monks of Mount Angel:

**ABBOT JEREMY:** “I was so impressed by the life of the monks. I found that the more I learned, the more I felt drawn to follow in the footsteps of those monks who had dedicated their lives to prayer and work.”

**BR. CLAUDE:** “In the summer of 1971, Gary Zodrow and I visited Mount Angel Abbey. As we drove up the hill, seeing the Stations of the Cross, we didn’t need words—both of us thought: “This is the place.”

**FR. NATHAN:** “There was something nearly overwhelming about the drive up the hill. We stayed for the vespers hour, where I was smitten by chant, the divine presence, monks in habits, and the quiet hospitality. It seemed to be the answer to our question.”



— ETHAN ALANO

[View photos from the Golden Jubilee Mass on Flickr.](#)



## MONASTERY ORDINATIONS

All are welcome to join us in person or on livestream as our brothers receive Holy Orders.



### ORDINATION of a DEACON

Br. Matthew Sislow, OSB

May 24th | 10 am  
Abbey church



### ORDINATION of a PRIEST

Br. Anselm Flores, OSB

June 28th | 10 am  
Abbey church  
First Mass of Thanksgiving  
June 29th | 9 am



As this issue of *Mount Angel Letter* was being finalized, Fr. Nathan Zodrow, the 10th abbot of Mount Angel Abbey, passed away to the Lord on April 8, 2025. A funeral Mass and Christian burial were celebrated for Fr. Nathan on April 12, 2025. Please pray for his eternal rest and for his monastic brothers, family, and friends who mourn his passing. The next issue of *Mount Angel Letter* will include a longer tribute to Fr. Nathan’s life and legacy.

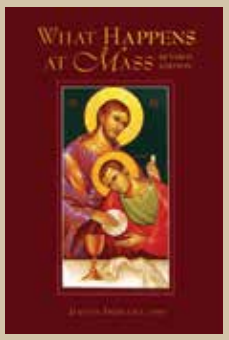
## ABBOT JEREMY ON “LET ME BE FRANK”



On February 19, 2025, Abbot Jeremy appeared as a guest on “Let Me

Be Frank,” a video podcast from the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Veritas Catholic Radio hosted by Bishop Frank Caggiano, the Bishop of Bridgeport. Abbot Jeremy and Bishop Caggiano discussed monastic life, being an abbot, life on the Hilltop, the Dicastery for Divine Worship, liturgy, silence, liturgical music, and what happens at Mass.

A previous guest on “Let Me Be Frank,” Fr. John Riccardo, described Abbot Jeremy’s book *What Happens at Mass* as the single best book he has ever read on the Mass. As a result, Bishop Caggiano invited Abbot Jeremy to be a guest on the show.



[Watch the episode here](#) or listen on your favorite podcasting app.





## SEEKING THINGS ABOVE *at* SEEK

“If you want to know what the pulse of the American Catholic Church is, that is SEEK,” says Fr. Charles Gonzalez, OSB. He, Fr. Odo Recker, OSB, and Br. Isaiah Vargas, OSB, traveled to Salt Lake City at the beginning of 2025 to participate in SEEK25, a young adult conference organized by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). Held at Salt Palace Convention Center from January 1–5, more than 17,000 people gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, pray, hear inspiring talks from dynamic Catholic speakers, and connect as fellow disciples.

*The monks traveled to SEEK with two goals in mind: to connect with young men considering monastic life and to share the life of Mount Angel Abbey with old and new friends. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, both goals were accomplished far beyond the monks’ expectations.* “We were able to gather a hundred names and email addresses of



men who are seeking to know more about monastic life and want to include Mount Angel in their discernment,” says Fr. Odo, Director of Vocations.

Mount Angel’s booth at SEEK was well-trafficked and made visitors feel like they were on the Hilltop. Br. Isaiah wrote calligraphy by request, and he noticed how grateful people were that monks still practice and cultivate this art. Many visitors came back to the booth multiple times, and “people became good friends of us right there and then,” says Br. Isaiah.

Because of the scale of the conference, the monks reconnected with many Mount Angel Seminary alumni and other friends of the Hilltop. “I was struck by the tremendous love that so many people have for Mount Angel,” says Fr. Odo. “It was for me a great opportunity to see how much a Benedictine monastery is able to impact the world.”

— ETHAN ALANO

### Renew Campaign Update



Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we are in the final stages of our 3-year \$3.2M Renew Facilities Campaign which began in 2023. In summer 2024, replacement of the Anselm Hall roof was completed, one of the campaign’s largest projects.

Brick buildings on the Hilltop are currently being pressure washed, tuckpointed, and sealed in this last phase of the campaign while we continue to work to complete the necessary fundraising for the project. We hope to celebrate the completion of the Renew Facilities Campaign at the 2026 Abbot’s Appreciation Mass and Brunch.



Support the final phase.

### Mount Angel Seminary Sees National Coverage



In March 2025, the *National Catholic Register*, a newspaper owned by the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), published a story on Mount Angel Seminary. Author SueAnn Howell, a journalist from North Carolina, interviewed Abbot Jeremy, Fr. Jeff Eirvin, Fr. Michael Niemczak, Dr. Myrna Keough, Deacon Justin Coyle, and seminarians Deacon Ed Burke and Jeremy Berka for the story, which gives an overarching view of a thriving Seminary community at Mount Angel. This is Howell’s second Mount Angel story, the first being her coverage of Mount Angel monks climbing mountains in summer 2024.



Read the full story.

### Learning to See



“Anyone can benefit from learning to see like an artist,” says Helen Bouchard, the Mount Angel Institute’s Artist-in-Residence for the month of February. Bouchard, a Silverton artist trained in classical painting and drawing, is also an employee in the Abbey Bookstore and Coffeehouse. On January 25, she gave a talk in the library auditorium where she shared ways to gain a better understanding and appreciation of beauty and art. You can learn more about Helen Bouchard and her art on her website, [helenbouchard.com](http://helenbouchard.com).



Listen to the podcast.



### In Gratitude

On October 15, 2024, the feast day of St. Theresa of Avila, Theresa Myers, former Communications Manager and Editor of Mount Angel Letter, retired from her work at Mount Angel Abbey. Theresa began working at Mount Angel in 2016 and was instrumental in enhancing and elevating all of Mount Angel’s communications. In this magazine which was marked by her expertise and elegance for many years, we give thanks for Theresa’s service to the Hilltop and pray for peace and blessings in her retirement.



## FORMING THE FUTURE

### *Pastors of the Church*

*The 2024-2025 academic year at Mount Angel Seminary welcomed Fr. Anh Tran, an alumnus (Class of 2018), as Coordinator of Pastoral Formation. Being asked to take on this role has been a privilege for Fr. Tran. “One of the blessings,” he said, “is getting to know these guys and working with them through the difficulties they’re facing in certain ministries.”*

As Coordinator, Fr. Tran oversees the Seminary’s service at the surrounding parishes, food pantries, or nursing homes, to name a few. At the beginning of the academic year, seminarians are given one of these on-site assignments. However, their placement is not merely an “assignment”; it is, as Fr. Tran said, a seminarian’s response to the loving God he has encountered: “Once we encounter God in our lives, we can’t go back. We have to serve God in some way.”

All aspects of the seminarians’ formation culminate in this formation of shaping *pastors*. Regarding what it means to be a pastor, Fr. Tran said, “[It is] taken from the image from Scripture that Jesus is ... laying down his life for his sheep. A pastor is one who’s able to set aside his own desires and wants in order to do what he’s supposed to do.”

While seminarians receive invaluable formation from their service, they give equally in return. They may assist catechists in parishes, accompany the sick and dying, visit the elderly, or aid pastors in the liturgy. However, Fr. Tran says one of the greatest impacts to the surrounding community is their witness: “Nowadays, there are a lot of questions that people ask, like, ‘Where is God? I don’t see him.’ It will be the presence of these seminarians that speaks: ‘God is present.’”

Fr. Tran trusts that God will give him the graces necessary to continue to aid in the formation of the future pastors of the Church. “[Trust], I think, is key in all ministries ... In the end, God is looking out for us.”

— TOMAS SANDOVAL



### *Mount Angel and the Future of Theology*



“I think we’re really at the forefront of theological work in the Catholic global situation here at Mount Angel Seminary,” says Shawn Keough, PhD, academic dean.

At the request of Abbot Jeremy, Dr. Keough traveled to Rome in December 2024 to participate in an international congress on the “Future of Theology” with around 600 participants from six continents. Organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the congress was held at the Pontifical Lateran University.

After hearing Abbot Jeremy speak about Mount Angel Seminary’s curriculum at the February 2024 plenary assembly of the Dicastery for Divine Worship, Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, decided that he wanted the first talk of the Future of Theology congress to be about the liturgy as the fountain of theology. Though unable to attend to give the talk, Abbot Jeremy asked Dr. Keough to go because he wanted Mount Angel to be represented. “*This is a talk about the future of theology, and I knew that Mount Angel had a contribution to make at that level,*” says Abbot Jeremy.

A unique element of the congress was the inclusion of speakers from non-theological disciplines. A celebrated Franco-Belgian novelist, Éric Emmanuel Schmitt, gave a talk on the relationship between literature and the transcendent, which reminded Dr. Keough of Mount Angel Seminary’s focus on Christian humanism. “If it’s relevant to being human, it’s relevant to priestly formation; it’s relevant to the work we do here at Mount Angel Seminary,” says Dr. Keough.

At the Seminary, the fruits from the congress are continuing to unfold. In March, the Seminary’s annual Theological Symposium focused on the history of Communion Ecclesiology at the Seminary for nearly 30 years and its continued relevance for the work of theology into the future. “I [see], in a new way, the importance of what we’re doing here and the importance of it for the whole world,” says Dr. Keough.

— ETHAN ALANO

## *New Books* WITH MOUNT ANGEL CONNECTIONS

From Deacon Owen F. Cummings,  
Regents’ Professor of Theology at  
Mount Angel Seminary:



*Visiting the Visitation:  
Reflections on Luke 1–2*

Published July 2024 by Wipf and Stock.



*How Great Thou Art!  
Theological Perspectives on Creation*

Published August 2024 by Wipf and Stock.

From Dr. Paul Chilcote, an oblate of  
Mount Angel and Methodist theologian.  
Includes a foreword by Fr. Odo Recker,  
OSB, and an endorsement by  
Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB.



*The Fullest Possible Love: Living in  
Harmony with God and Neighbor.*

Published 2024 by Abingdon Press.

# SEM NARIANS Seek AFTER THE LORD

*Over 17,000 Catholic young adults* gathered in Salt Lake City for the Catholic young adult conference, SEEK25, organized by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) from January 1st to January 5th.

Father Michael Niemczak, Coordinator of the Propaedeutic Stage, and 15 propaedeutic seminarians from Mount Angel Seminary joined the broader Church for this event. “It was overwhelming in a great way,” seminarian Joe Nguyen of the Diocese of Orange said as

he recounted his arrival, “because they were all seeking after the Lord. It was overwhelming with joy and excitement.”

What drew Fr. Niemczak to bring these young men to SEEK was “the contact with the broader Church ... and being inspired by their faith.” *God’s presence at SEEK in the lives of so many young Catholics gave the seminarians hope for the future of the Church.* His hope was that the men would take their experience there and return to work with “great joy and zeal in [their] corner of the vineyard.”

A profound moment of introspection for the seminarians was the Eucharistic Adoration and Confession night. Fr. Niemczak recounted it beautifully: “There are hundreds of priests and *thousands* of penitents in this endless stream of mercy.” For seminarian Vince Vanzuylen of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, it was a moment to see how Christ could use his wounds as “a means to love all people” in imitation of Christ’s Sacred Heart. According to



Fr. Michael Niemczak

Fr. Niemczak, that night helped the seminarians realize “that the Lord is not done with them in their own personal conversion; it keeps getting deeper and deeper and deeper.”

Fr. Niemczak is hopeful that the propaedeutic seminarians will use their experiences at SEEK to go even deeper with Christ to become the saints that God has created them to be.

— TOMAS SANDOVAL



## Finding a spiritual home OBLATES OF MOUNT ANGEL

“People are looking for a way to God,” says Fr. John Paul Le, OSB, Director of Oblates. Oblates of Mount Angel Abbey, who number over 660, find meaningful ways to grow in Christian discipleship through following the Rule of St. Benedict in the world. “Having a rule to guide them can lead to greater sanctity and also greater happiness,” he says.

Fr. John Paul and Br. Ignatius Olivarez, OSB, the Spanish Program Director, have both noticed a growing interest among the local community in becoming an oblate. Local oblates have the added benefit of participating more regularly in Mass and the Divine Office in the Abbey church as well as oblate formation days, retreats, and socials hosted at Mount Angel. Whether oblates are local or live far away, Br. Ignatius tries “to encourage as much as possible that to become an oblate, they need to love the place, because as monks, we are vowed to a place.”

The oblates receive much support in living their Christian discipleship through their spiritual association with Mount Angel, but the monks’ work with the oblates also strengthens their own monastic vocations. As one who teaches oblate novice classes, Fr. John Paul is constantly reading and growing in his intellectual formation to better serve the oblate novices. For Br. Ignatius, the many prayer requests that come from oblates remind him that “you’re not just praying for yourself and your family and the monastic community, but there are people in need.”

From June 19–30, the monks will lead a large group of oblates on pilgrimage to Switzerland and Italy to visit important Benedictine pilgrimage sites, including Nursia, Montecassino, Subiaco, and Mount Angel’s motherhouse, Engelberg Abbey.

— ETHAN ALANO

## VICTOR MITRE Guided by Mission, Driven by Faith



*“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

— 2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV

It is the witness of his dutifully loving grandfather that Victor Mitre attributes to what led him to a career in philanthropy and to his role as the new Executive Director of Development at Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary. His grandfather, an immigrant from Mexico, worked as a carpenter and cement mason and faithfully served as an usher at his local Catholic parish. “The opportunity to observe him serving others with humility and respect was one of the greatest gifts I have received in my life,” Victor reflects.

As Mount Angel Abbey’s new Executive Director of Development, leading the development and communications efforts, Victor works closely with Abbot Jeremy and Fr. Philip, Procurator, to advance the monastery’s mission with strategic vision and deep respect for the monastic tradition.

*“What drew me to Mount Angel Abbey was that it is purposeful,” Victor explains. For him, development work transcends traditional fundraising: “We have to care for the monks. The monks care for us through their daily prayers.”*



Victor’s two decades of leadership in faith-based and nonprofit advancement demonstrate his deep commitment to collaboratively serving others and fostering a shared vision. His experience securing transformative gifts is coupled with a dedication to stewardship, ensuring these resources are faithfully directed towards fulfilling Mount Angel Abbey’s sacred mission.

“In the end, philanthropy is about relationships,” he says. “People give because they believe in something bigger than themselves.”

Victor deeply appreciates the dedicated development and communications team, the Abbey Foundation of Oregon Trustees, and the many benefactors who support Mount Angel. As a result of their combined efforts, Mount Angel Abbey amplifies its significant message, values, and contributions to the Church and the wider world, positioning it to further advance the Church.

“We have an amazing gem on top of the Hilltop,” Victor says. “I invite everyone to experience the greatness that is here, to pray with the monks, and to consider how they might participate in sustaining this sacred place today and for generations to come.”

— TOMAS SANDOVAL



To learn more about supporting Mount Angel Abbey, visit [mountangelabbey.org/giving](https://mountangelabbey.org/giving)



# Mark your calendar!

## PROGRAMS & EVENTS

### *CITW: Language of Iconography Iconographic Faces of Mary*

May 17 | 9:15 – 11:45 am | Library

### *Chanting the Roman Missal Workshop*

May 17 | 9:30 am | Damian Center

### *Fellowship & Ecumenical Encounters*

June 14 | 9:15 am – 3:15 pm | Library

### *Bach & Beer: Baroque in the Brewery*

June 20 | 7:30 pm | Brewery

### *Marian Icon Exhibit*

July 1 – 31 | Library

### *Oregon Bach Festival Concert: Bach's Mass in B Minor*

July 5 | 2:30 pm | Church

### *Saint Benedict Festival*

July 12 | 12 pm – 4 pm

### *Abbey Bach Festival*

July 23 – 25 | 6 – 9:30 pm  
July 26 | 10 am children's concert

### *The Why's, How's, & Where's of Deep Reading:*

*A Convivium for Bibliophiles*

Retreat: August 11 – 13

### *Seminary Benefit Dinner*

November 8, 2025  
Hilton Portland



To learn more, visit  
[mountangelabbey.org/join-us](http://mountangelabbey.org/join-us)



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

### WEEKDAYS

Vigils: 5:25 am

Lauds: 6:35 am

Mass: 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

Mass: 9:00 am

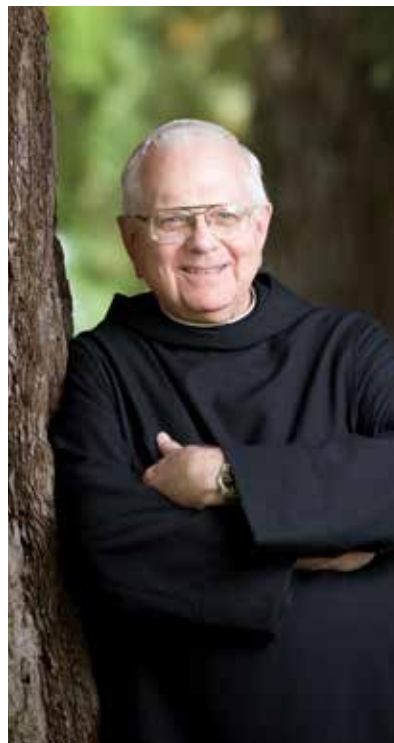
Midday Prayer: Noon

Vespers: 5:20 pm

Compline: 8:05 pm

[MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM](http://MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM)

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



Fr. Paschal Cheline, OSB  
1936 – 2015

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,  
contact Susan Gallagher  
at 503.845.3030 or 503.312.5425  
[plannedgiving@mtangel.edu](mailto:plannedgiving@mtangel.edu)  
[mtangel.giftlegacy.com](http://mtangel.giftlegacy.com)

Please note, when writing your will, please  
leave bequests and other estate gifts to:  
The Abbey Foundation of Oregon  
Box 497, Saint Benedict, OR 97373-0497  
(Tax ID number: 04-3703021)