

MOUNT ANGEL | Letter

WINTER 2021



LIFE ON THE HILLTOP IN
THE MIDST OF A *Pandemic*



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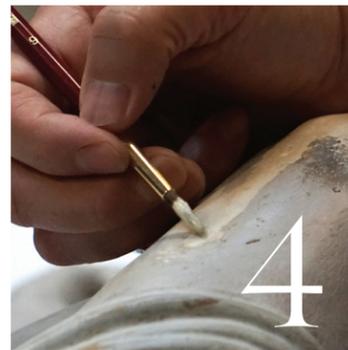
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The "Little Flower" of Benedictines



Sacred Art as Spiritual Practice



Seminary Life in a Pandemic



A Gift of Beauty and Peace

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DEAR FRIENDS,

I am glad to write to you in this winter issue of the Mount Angel Letter. Despite the challenges faced in 2020, these pages are full of good news about the monastery and seminary. I hope the stories and photos will be a source of joy for you and provide hope as we move into the new year.

Some of you may have noticed, we did not publish a fall issue of *Mount Angel Letter*. What can we say, except, *Covid, Covid, Covid?* Here on the Hilltop – as for so many of you – we experienced an intense and sometimes dangerous fall. In addition to the pandemic, we faced encroaching wildfires and heavy smoke for several days in September. In the midst of that, we were grateful to have postulants move ahead into novitiate; novices make their first vows; and our Brother Anselm Flores make

his solemn, lifelong commitment as a monk of Mount Angel. We thank God for the gifts these men bring to our community.

The coronavirus caused doubt until the last minute as to whether we could welcome the seminarians to the Hilltop for the fall semester. It took much careful planning by the seminary staff to make it happen. With the generous cooperation of students and faculty, we all made it safely through to the Christmas break, and our seminarians have now safely returned for the spring semester. In the midst of it all, we monks and seminarians have prayed unceasingly for each of you.

As a community, we have done lots of virtual outreach these past months. Our Saint Benedict Festival, the Bach festival, and our monastic liturgies have all been live-streamed. I've been doing a weekly video series since Holy Week. Even our annual Seminary Benefit Dinner became a virtual event. You can read more about that on page 11.

We have heard from many of you what a consolation this virtual window into our way of life has been. The *doing* of this outreach has been a good reminder to us as to why we live as we do, in the presence of Christ, in companionship with him. Together, let us live with Christ as authentically as possible and share as best we can the hope and joy that is ours.

In Christ Jesus,

The Right Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B.
Abbot and Chancellor
Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary





A NOTE from FR. MARTIN GRASSEL, O.S.B.



Despite the shadow of COVID-19, I am grateful to report a successful summer for Benedictine Brewery. Although the coronavirus and smoke from nearby wildfires closed the brewery taproom at times, we were able to sell beer in bottles for take-away, and our friends kept coming for more!

A new Oktoberfest lager made its debut in October. In November, a timber frame pavilion was built alongside the brewery, doubling the sheltered

and heated seating for our guests. Later in the fall, another new beer appeared, an ale made with locally grown wild rice. Brewers enjoy playing a little, and everyone likes to try new things. So watch us at Benedictine Brewery on Facebook, and test the latest offerings when they go on tap.

Taste and believe that the Lord is good, even in these times of trial!

MOUNT ANGEL WELCOMES OBLATES



One moment of encounter at Mount Angel Abbey can become a source of grace for the rest of one's life.

"I first came to the Abbey over ten years ago," says John Littel, of Washington. He remembers when he first heard the chanting of the Divine Office. "I knew in my bones this was a spiritual practice for me."

This first encounter grew into a deep sense of belonging and blossomed years later when he made his profession as an oblate of Mount Angel Abbey. Littel joined the ranks of those who live out the Benedictine charism of prayer, work, and hospitality in their homes, families, and communities. Over the years, Littel has volunteered his skills as a carpenter to help furnish the renovated guesthouse. "My connection with the Mount Angel community continues to deepen my faith," he writes, "and is a treasure to me during very difficult times for the Church."

A chance encounter at the Abbey led Martha Marquez to become an oblate. "What great fortune, to be in the right place, at the right time, meeting the right person," she says, remembering her first encounter with Fr. Ephrem Martinez, O.S.B., assistant oblate director. They had not met before, yet he invited her to consider becoming an oblate. Not a coincidence, she says, but a "God-incidence."

For Marquez, being an oblate means accompaniment. "I am not alone; I belong to a family that loves God and venerates St. Benedict." The grace of oblation pours over into all other aspects of her life. "My family and I are more united. We enjoy going to Vespers together at the Abbey. Being with the monks is like visiting our cousins, cousins who always listen and give comfort."

For information on the oblate program at Mount Angel, see mountangelabbey.org/oblate or contact Fr. Odo Recker, O.S.B.

The "Little Flower" of BENEDICTINES

Maria Fortunata Viti, a Benedictine nun of the Santa Maria de' Franconi monastery in Italy, was known for her piety and constant prayer. She spent her days sewing, mending, and washing clothing and linens for her sisters. When she died in 1922 at 95, few people outside of her community noticed.

After Sr. Fortunata's death, however, people came to pray at her gravesite. Healings were attributed to her intervention, and people began to call her the "Little Flower" of the Benedictines. Church leaders investigated the claim of miracles, and in 1935, her remains were exhumed and moved to the cathedral in Veroli, Italy. Some 5,000 people joined the procession.

Fr. Thomas Brockhaus, O.S.B., a monk of Mount Angel Abbey and editor of *St. Joseph Magazine*, a publication of Mount Angel, learned about Sr. Fortunata and promoted devotion to her in the magazine. He attended her beatification ceremony in 1967 in Rome. He stayed at her monastery while in Italy, forming a friendship between the two Benedictine communities.

When Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B., and Fr. Odo Recker, O.S.B., led a pilgrimage to Italy in the fall of 2019, they were warmly welcomed by the nuns at Santa Maria de Franconi. Fr. Odo has now taken the lead in spreading her devotion and promoting Blessed Fortunata's canonization in the United States.



A Prayer for a Miracle

Lord, you humble the proud but exalt the humble. In your love for your humble servant Fortunata Viti, you worked wonders to raise her to the rank of Blessed. If it is your will to raise her to the rank of Saint, grant the miracle I ask for through her intercession. Trusting in your love, we pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Blessed Fortunata, pray for us.



Let Us Pray

O Blessed Handmaid of the Lord, Blessed Mary Fortunata, at the end of your long life spent in prayer and work in a Benedictine convent, you promised to continue in heaven the good you loved to do for others. Hear our prayer.

When you looked upon God's creatures and saw the beauties of nature, you cried out: "O the power and love of God!" Raise our minds and hearts from the things we see to the things we cannot see, even to the Lord who made us.

You gave yourself generously every day to the love of God and others. Help us transform our lives into a witness of convincing faith, in obedience to the teachings of the Gospel.

O humble daughter of St. Benedict, you took the lowest place, conforming your life to our Savior's Passion. Help us to abandon all pretense and privilege to become humble in imitation of Jesus. We pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Art is important to life at Mount Angel. Art involves the capture and expression of

beauty, and as such, it reflects the Divine beauty that we hope to contemplate for all eternity.

- ABBOT EMERITUS GREGORY DUERR, O.S.B.



Sacred Art as a Spiritual Practice

When I was a child, I would look at an old crucifix. I felt Christ looking back at me, and he said many things to me.

With my eyes, I saw an old, broken sculpture, and thought, "I want to repair you." Yet, I also saw the symmetry of the body and the blending of colors. I could see and touch its texture and proportion. It was beautiful.

From that moment as a child, I wanted to dedicate myself to the art of restoration. If that broken crucifix awakened such emotions in me, what would happen if it were intact? Even though I was a child just starting to learn the Catholic catechism, I was moved, seeing that Christ loves us so much that he gave his life for us. I wanted to understand the unconditional love that God transmits through sacred images.

There is a recognition in the soul of the close relationship between the created world and the Creator. Sacred art speaks to us about the divine, the infinite beauty of God and the perfect reflection *par excellence*: Christ the Lord, the visible image of God.

- BR. HORACIO DÍAZ

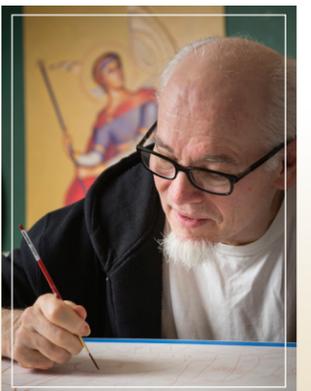
In The Work is the Blessing

Ora et Labora - pray and work. While this phrase is not explicitly found in the Rule of Saint Benedict, Benedictine spirituality embraces it in the shaping of the monk. It has been especially fruitful in the work I've been assigned this past year, helping organize the Abbey's art collection.

The details of my work often involved the digital organization and storage of the pieces. But along the way, I've been enriched in learning about the history of this patrimony from our art curator, Fr. Nathan Zodrow, O.S.B. As we went about our work, we'd discuss faith, beauty, and life.

My work included the cataloguing of icons written by Br. Claude Lane, O.S.B. (in photo at right). I spoke with Br. Claude for many hours, discussing the theological "read" of each icon - the colors, symbols, hand gestures - learning to reach the depths of what he wanted to instill in each piece. When work and prayer are united into one action, they nourish the soul and draw it closer to God, as has been my privilege and blessing to experience.

- BR. MATTHEW SISLOW, O.S.B.





I COME TO SEEK GOD...



“Amice, ad quid venisti?”

“Friend, why are you here?” are the words inscribed above the door monks enter at the beginning of postulancy. They are the same words that Jesus asked Judas on the night of his betrayal at Gethsemane. But instead of the silent disloyalty and eventual despair of Judas, the monk confidently answers: “Deus.” I come to seek God.

I entered the monastery four and a half years ago, puzzled and excited by this question: How will I seek God, the omnipotent creator and source of all there is and ever will be? I had confidence that the centuries of Benedictine monastic life gave evidence to the possibility of an answer. To seek God in order to find him is not easy, but the roads and adventures that accompany a journey with great reward are often unexpectedly difficult. Love moves me and

makes the burden lighter and sweeter. What I found here was different from what I initially expected. I did not find God as I thought I would find him.

No voice spoke, and no image presented itself in my mind. Instead, revelation occurred as I listened to the leaves of the tree in the night breeze, and the rain pattering against the brick of the church. Creation boasted of its Creator. As I watched the brothers serve one another, I realized how kindness and mercy could permeate men’s hearts. The Spirit moved unnoticed in the simplest of actions. And I understood myself clearly, more fragile and broken than I initially thought, yet still wanted. Love loves, despite everything.

How to seek God now? I answer no longer with words or explanations. I answer with what I hope may be more eloquent: I answer with my life.

– BR. ANSELM FLORES, O.S.B.

A monk is not built in a day

After an initial year of formation in the novitiate, the monk makes temporary vows of obedience, stability, and conversion of life. This marks the beginning of a three-year period of continued formation, called the “juniorate.”

Br. Albert Klotz, O.S.B., described the juniorate as a time to build, to “grow in the life of grace” through the vows and details of monastic life. “We take these vows,” explained Br. Matthew Sislow, O.S.B., “and we use them as tools.” With these tools, the monk builds a lasting foundation in preparation for solemn vows, and for the whole of his life. That “foundation” consists of fidelity to the monastic practices: the discipline of silence, lectio divina, charity, community life, humility, asceticism,

to name a few. The juniorate is about “renewing yourself constantly” through these practices, added Br. Albert, and through them “consecrating our whole person to God.” God, in fact, is the primary builder throughout this time of the juniorate. “It’s a time to be all in,” said Br. Matthew.

“God has allowed you to put to death in yourself the old man,” said Br. David Nordstedt, O.S.B., “and he is raising up in you a new man, who has a new name and a new look.” This is why the monk receives a new name and a new habit when he makes vows. “They are signs of the ways you have changed already,” he explained, “but also reminders that you still have to grow.”

– BR. ISRAEL SANCHEZ, O.S.B.

Mass of Candidacy is a Sign of Hope

It was with great joy

that Mount Angel Seminary celebrated the Mass of Candidacy for 11 seminarians in the Abbey church last October.

The rite and admission to candidacy is a prerequisite for ordination. It looks ahead to ordination, but its focus is on the seminarian's resolve to devote himself to the years of necessary preparation. Admission to candidacy is "an opportunity," notes Brody Stewart, "for both me and the institutional Church to pause and more seriously discern my vocation." Candidacy is not the end of the journey, but "an acknowledgment that I still have work to do before I can adequately serve the people of God."

Archbishop Alexander K. Sample was the principal celebrant of the Mass, joined by Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B., chancellor, several prelates from dioceses with men studying at Mount Angel Seminary, Msgr. Joseph Betschart, president-rector, and members of the seminary community.

In his homily, Archbishop Sample spoke directly to the candidates: "I believe we are living in another apostolic age. Jesus needs apostles who are willing



to pay even the ultimate price." Greater still than any trial, the Archbishop reminded the candidates, is the message of the Gospel: "We must never lose hope, because we are the disciples of Jesus. The victory is already won."

Archbishop Sample "spoke directly to us, like a father to his sons," said Adrian Sisneros. "He encouraged us as a father to persevere in suffering for Christ and for the People of God, because God is ushering in a new Pentecost."

Representing dioceses from across the western United States, the men accepted as candidates for ordination to priesthood were **Sergio Chávez**, Diocese of Salt

Lake City; **Arturo Cisneros**, Diocese of Fresno; **Tristan Dillon**, Diocese of Salt Lake City; **Agustín Henderson**, Archdiocese of Santa Fe; **Chad Hill**, Archdiocese of Seattle; **Franklin Iwuagwu**, Archdiocese of Santa Fe; **Juan Carlos Reynoso**, Diocese of Fresno; **Dalton Rogers**, Diocese of Fresno; **Darrell James Segura, Jr.**, Archdiocese of Santa Fe; **Adrian Sisneros**, Archdiocese of Santa Fe; and **Brody Stewart**, Archdiocese of Seattle.

Candidacy is the final step before ordination to the transitional diaconate. Join us in praying for these and all our seminarians.

– BR. ISRAEL SANCHEZ, O.S.B.

THE DEPTHS of DIACONATE

"After my ordination to the diaconate last August, as I elevated the chalice at Mass, I was surprised to see my reflection on its shiny, golden surface. Not on the outside of the chalice, mind you, but on the inside. I must have been holding it inadvertently (and probably nervously) at a slight angle.

There it was, my upside-down, bearded self, staring back at me from within the chalice. There I was, inside the chalice, hidden with the Blood of Christ.

It was the day of my diaconal ordination. Mass ended, and I shared a lovely meal in the cloister garden with my brothers. After eating, we all scattered because it was Saturday afternoon, which means we clean the church, refectory, hallways, lavatories, etc. I threw on my work clothes and went off to work with the rest. Any outsider looking in would have thought that it was just another ordinary, beautiful summer afternoon.

These two moments summarize well the life of a monk and deacon in priestly formation. Little in my day-to-day routine has changed. Yet, a new depth opened up before me when I saw myself reflected in the chalice. God desires nothing less than that



level of intimacy with me. He and I, hidden together in the chalice as a single offering. That is the kind of monk-priest God is inviting me to be. Perhaps this

is what Saint Benedict meant when he said to the would-be-priest: "He ought to make more and more progress unto God."

God's repeated call to me since then, as I go through the day-to-day routine of my monastic life and prepare for priestly ordination, has been: "Become more and more mine."

– BR. ISRAEL SANCHEZ, O.S.B.

Pictured: Archbishop Alexander K. Sample of Portland, Oregon, Br. Israel Sanchez, O.S.B., and Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B.



Adapting to Seminary Life in a Pandemic

Theology textbook? **Check.** Rosary? **Check.** Face covering, disinfectant wipes, and hand sanitizer? **Triple check!**

No one anticipated a fall semester in which these latter supplies would prove as necessary for seminary formation as clerical attire or a pocket guide to the breviary. But neither did many predict the ongoing effects of COVID-19 as Mount Angel seminarians returned to the Hilltop last fall to resume in-person instruction and priestly formation. Due to the pandemic, the seminary had to adapt quickly to the now familiar practices of social distancing, face coverings, and frequent washing of hands, along with other state guidelines.



Maintaining a healthy student environment also included dividing the students into two groups, based on formation level and residence hall. Living

in the smaller student groups presented positive opportunities, according to seminarian Carlos Nagore of the Diocese of Tucson. “We were able to get more familiar and acquainted [with those in each group] by watching movies and going on walks around the hill to pass the time.” The smaller groups also created opportunities for interpersonal development, problem solving, and conflict resolution. “Based on the environment, we’re forced to get along. We can’t not get along,” admitted Thomas Johnson of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

While most classes were in-person, with face coverings and a plexiglass shield for instructors, a few classes were offered online. Marc Gandolfo of the Diocese of San Diego suggested that increased reliance on digital communication “has shown our human need for interaction and community.”

Amid the challenges, there was a deep gratitude among the seminarians for being back at Mount Angel, and optimism and hope loom large these days. Scott Borba of the Diocese of Fresno is convinced that this experience of living with the pandemic “is deepening our spirituality, which is allowing us to become holy, holy priests.”

– ETHAN ALANO

Virtual Events Make Connections!

This year presented an opportunity to hold the annual Seminary Benefit Dinner as a virtual event, making it available to share with friends and supporters of Mount Angel Seminary across the country and around the world! The virtual event launched November 1 on the Abbey website and YouTube and has been successful beyond our greatest hopes:

- **3,000+ viewers** at the event launch, compared to about 900 guests at the traditional in-person dinner
- **9,000+ viewers** by mid-December as people continue to watch the *Heart of the Seminary* video
- **\$1.2 million** raised from this event, which is more than any previous Seminary fundraiser! And it’s not too late to contribute. Just go to mountangelabbey.org/sbd

100 BACKPACKS for the Homeless

COVID-19 didn’t stop Mount Angel’s first-year college students from reaching out in pastoral ministry to homeless people in the nearby city of Salem. Scott Borba of the Diocese of Fresno, a pre-theology student, and leader of the



Fr. Terry Tompkins (in blue face covering) stopped by to help and to give his blessing to the project.

seminary’s Works of Mercy Committee, joined with seminarians Seth London (Diocese of Orange), Jesus Coria (Diocese of Tucson), and Juan Nieves (Diocese of Yakima), to fill backpacks with winter survival kits: warm scarves, mittens and socks, hygiene kits, snacks, and reusable water bottles filled 100 backpacks. Several fellow seminarians helped to create cards with Bible messages to go in each backpack, providing a message of hope to the recipients. It was one way the seminarians could practice the corporal works of mercy and help share the love of Christ even in this time of the pandemic.

– THERESA MYERS



SEMINARY BENEFIT *Gathering*

Encounter the Heart of Mount Angel Seminary



Heart of the Seminary

The video *Heart of the Seminary* was the feature of the virtual event, followed by a webinar-style Live Gathering with Abbot Jeremy, seminarians, and monks. Filled with music, scenes, and testimonies from life at the seminary, the entire event was a Hilltop-wide endeavor and an outpouring of love for the seminarians and all those who support them.

You can view the *Heart of the Seminary* video at mountangelabbey.org/sbd or on Mount Angel Abbey YouTube.

A Soldier, Priest, and Grateful Friend



“You wear a uniform, there’s a hierarchy, and you do what you are told. You follow orders,” Fr. John Carney said. “You have to be willing to live and die for something bigger than yourself.”

While serving two tours of duty in Vietnam, Fr. Carney ’91 received three bronze stars for his heroic actions under enemy fire. He was a First Lieutenant in the Airborne Ranger Infantry when his platoon caught fire from North Vietnamese troops. Fr. Carney took out an automatic weapon position with a hand grenade, saving his soldiers. “Just doing my job,” he said.

Nearing the end of his military service, he came to a personal reckoning, and three weeks after completing a 20-year Army stint, he entered Mount Angel Seminary.

It was a total culture shock. “My language was horrible. It didn’t work in the seminary. I thought, ‘Lord, you mean I have to be more gentle?’”

He found support at Mount Angel in Fr. Paschal Cheline, O.S.B., (d. 2015), who became his spiritual director and lifelong friend. He also remembers

his Fundamental Theology professor, a young monk named Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B.

“I remember Abbot Jeremy as the absolute best professor I ever had. His classes weren’t classes; they were retreats. He was a tough cookie, though. If you came to class one minute late, he would kick you out.”

Now 74, Fr. Carney is retired from active duty in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. He has recently reconnected with Mount Angel through the live-streamed liturgies on the Abbey’s YouTube channel. “I’ll occasionally watch evening prayer or vespers; it’s nice to see 50 or 60 monks there. They use YouTube very effectively. Wonderful videos of the liturgy, Br. Claude with icons, some of the younger monks. And the brewery,” quips Fr. Carney, “there’s something truly noble!”

Wanting to support the Abbey in return for all he has received, Fr. Carney recently updated his will to include the monks.

“I really appreciate so much of what they gave me. I am thankful for the monks and their apostolic ministries of the seminary and the guesthouse. They are observant of the Rule of Benedict, and they live the life every day.”

– STEVE RITCHIE

Thirty-one years ago, Barbara and Tom Curran received an unexpected wedding gift. Written for the couple by Br. Claude Lane, O.S.B., the gift was a stunningly radiant icon titled *Divine Mercy*.

“We found a perfect place for him in our guesthouse,” Barbara said. “We can go visit him and talk and pray with him. We are honored to have him in our home.”

The unusual gift came about through the efforts of Jean Payne, a dear friend of the Currans. Jean had a collection of small icons that Barbara admired, and through them, she became interested in the theology and art of icons. When Jean asked her friends what they might want for a wedding gift, Barbara suggested a book on icons.

Jean went one better. She met with her friend, Fr. Bernard Sander, O.S.B., (d. 2008), and through him made a connection with Br. Claude Lane, O.S.B., the Abbey’s iconographer. Eventually, the Currans were invited to visit the Abbey and met with Br. Claude and Fr. Bernard.



A gift of BEAUTY & PEACE

Tom and Barbara remember their visit as a beautiful experience. Tom said, “We met with Br. Claude and talked about how important our faith is and how much we appreciated Jean and her deep faith.”

Later, while on sabbatical in Europe, Br. Claude sketched a few images and prayed for inspiration. Upon his return to Mount Angel, he began to work on the icon. After a time, the Currans learned the icon would be of the Risen Christ, and the monks of Mount Angel would be praying for Br. Claude when he painted the face of Christ.

“We were very moved by this,” Barbara said. “Every year, we send a donation to honor this incredible gift to our lives and have always said that upon our passing, he [the icon] will be returned to the Abbey.”

“We consider him our sacred friend,” the Currans said. “An inspiration and comfort.”

– STEVE RITCHIE



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A Virtual DIVINE COMEDY

JOIN THE MONKS OF MOUNT ANGEL ABBEY via LIVE STREAM for the LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The Christian in the World lecture series is a program of study, prayer, and discussion for Catholics who want to live their faith more deeply. It seeks to help participants gain a more profound understanding of the Scriptures and the Church, and to support lay people in exploring how to live their baptismal vocation in everyday life.

The spring 2020 series, presented by Fr. Stephen Rowan, offered an exploration of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The first lecture was held in January at Mount Angel, but the final three lectures in the series were postponed due to the coronavirus. Fortunately, the lecture series was completed by Fr. Rowan in a video format. The final three, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* can be viewed on the Abbey website at www.mountangelabbey.org/citw.

For more information about Christian in the World, or to be put on a mailing list for upcoming series, please email citw@mtangel.edu.

For the first time, the Annual Report for Mount Angel Abbey will be a virtual publication only! Watch for the 2020 report, coming soon at www.mountangelabbey.org/annual-reports

WEEKDAYS

Vigils: 5:20 am
Lauds: 6:30 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: 8:00 pm

MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM

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, contact Susan Gallagher at 503.845.3030 or development@mtangel.edu.

Please note, when writing your will, our legal title and address is:
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1 Abbey Drive, Saint Benedict, OR 97373
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Fr. Jerome Young, O.S.B.
1958 – 2012