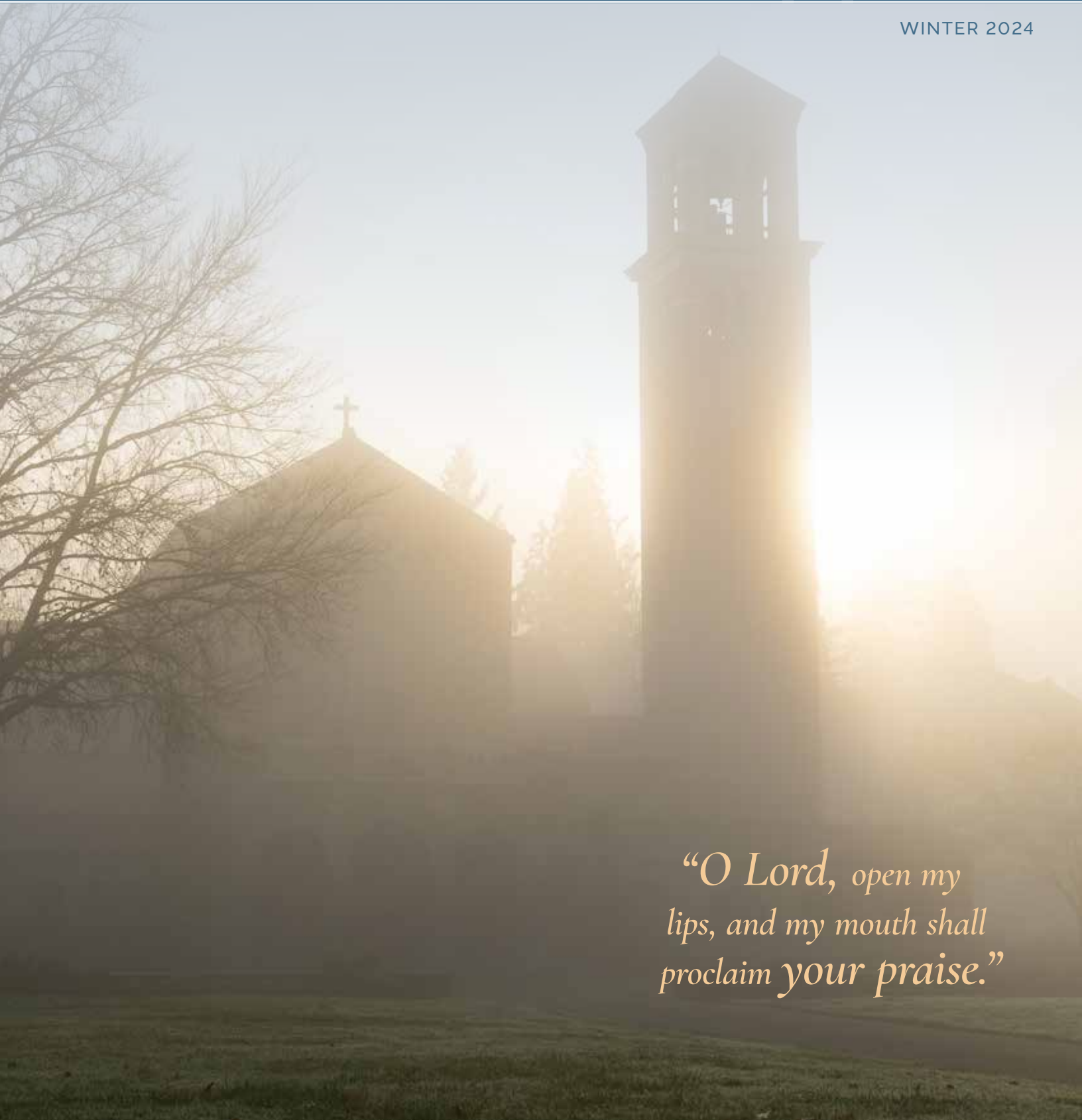


MOUNT ANGEL | Letter

WINTER 2024



*“O Lord, open my
lips, and my mouth shall
proclaim your praise.”*



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A winter of honors
& celebration



Oblates
in Rome



Priestly & diaconate
ordinations

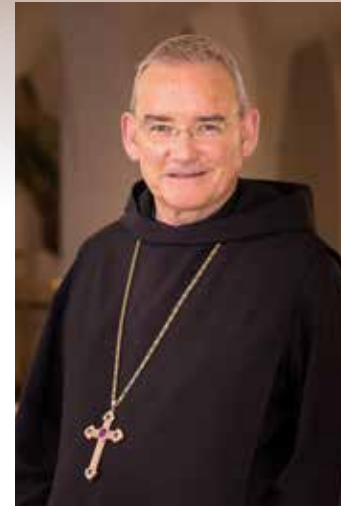


Affirmed by
God's call

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DEAR FRIENDS,

I hope you find as much joy as I do in knowing spring is near. While we have seen beauty this winter, many of us are emerging from weeks of deep cold and dark skies. However, the season of Lent that we're in moves us steadily toward the brilliant dawn of Easter and the Resurrection of Christ, our Savior.

We monks experienced great darkness and sorrow last fall with the unexpected death of our dear Br. Gregory Benavidez. Many on retreat at Mount Angel in recent years may have met him. He quietly prepared coffee before sunrise for our guests and had deep conversations with

those needing a good listener. He was also the head sacristan, deeply devoted to the liturgy. Above all, Br. Gregory was a quiet, gentle presence within our community.

Our faith helps us remember that light always follows darkness, even the darkness of death. A few days after the death of Br. Gregory, we celebrated the priestly ordination of Fr. Charles Gonzalez. The contrast was a mixing of darkness and light in the community that symbolized dramatically the ebb and flow of our monastic day.

In this issue, you'll find a set of reflections titled "From Darkness into the Light," which shows how each day in the monastery is centered on the celebration of the Mass and ordered by the hours of the Divine Office. The Rule of St. Benedict calls this daily rhythm of prayer the main work of a monk's life, the "work of God."

I hope these and all the stories of life on our Hilltop are beacons of light for you. Thank you for your prayers for us here at Mount Angel. We deeply value your friendship and remember you daily as we move from the pre-dawn darkness of Vigils and into the celebration of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist.

God bless,

+ Jeremy Driscoll, OSB

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



A WINTER OF *honors and celebration*



In early February, Abbot Jeremy traveled to Rome to participate in discussions with the Dicastery for Divine Worship on the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Abbot Jeremy was among the main speakers and shared Mount Angel Seminary's curriculum of Communion Ecclesiology with the gathering of bishops. A discussion in five languages followed his presentation. More information and photos of the event are on our website here.



While Abbot Jeremy was in Rome, he was granted the title “Professor Emeritus” of the Faculty of Theology at the College of Sant’Anselmo. He also received the “Diploma of Merit,” given to those who have left a profound mark on the culture, research, and life of Sant’Anselmo, the Church, and the Benedictine Confederation. In thanks, Abbot Jeremy said of his alma mater, “I carry Sant’Anselmo in my heart. ... It was a grace to study and then teach in a place like Sant’Anselmo.”

Fr. Ephrem IN ROME

“I received this like a gift, an opportunity not just from my community, from my abbot, but from God. He wants to teach me something here,” says Fr. Ephrem Martinez, OSB. In July 2023, Fr. Ephrem traveled from Oregon to Italy to begin a two-year program of study at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

Shortly after he arrived in Italy, Fr. Ephrem traveled to Assisi for immersion in Italian before settling in Rome at Sant’Anselmo with his fellow student from Mount Angel, Fr. Israel Sanchez, OSB. Fr. Ephrem is studying for his Licentiate in Theology with a specialization in spirituality so he can later teach at Mount Angel Seminary’s Graduate School of Theology.

Please keep Fr. Ephrem in your prayers as he adjusts to life in Rome and studies to serve our Hilltop community.



Fr. Ephrem Martinez, OSB, (second from left) with fellow Italian immersion students in Assisi.



I N M E M O R I A M

Brother Gregory Benavidez, OSB | 1980 – 2023

Our Br. Gregory Benavidez, OSB, died October 27, 2023. He was 43 years of age and had been professed a monk of Mount Angel for 13 years.

Br. Gregory was born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1980, the youngest of nine children, and was baptized with the name Josue. His family later embraced another religious faith, and after moving around the southeastern states and Mexico, the family settled in Salem, Oregon, in 1993.

In 2006, feeling a call to return to his Catholic roots, Josue entered the RCIA program at St. Joseph’s Parish in Salem. Through the process of RCIA, he came to love the Church’s liturgy and began to study the lives of the saints. In due course, he received the sacraments of reconciliation, confirmation, and Eucharist.

Josue began to explore monasticism and attended discernment retreats at Mount Angel Abbey in 2008. He entered the Abbey in the following year and made his profession as a monk in 2010, receiving the name Gregory. Br. Gregory had the reputation of being a consistently gentle person with a good sense of humor. He was attentive to his assignments but always quietly and without fuss.

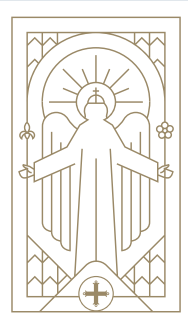
Br. Gregory’s love for the liturgy endured throughout his monastic life. For several years, he served as head sacristan and loved preparing the vessels for the altar and setting out the vestments and books for Mass. He was often the crosier bearer at Solemn High Masses at the Abbey church. Masses. Br. Gregory was also assigned to work in the guesthouse, where he was much loved by the staff and the guests. He took St. Benedict’s instruction to heart that “all guests who arrive shall be received as Christ.”

For almost ten years, Br. Gregory faithfully maintained the terraces and the rooftop terrace herb garden at the guesthouse. On most mornings, well before 6, he made pots of coffee and provided ice water for guests. Whatever needed doing, Br. Gregory did it faithfully and thoroughly.

Br. Gregory was known to work hard, without fanfare, and often out of sight. We have heard many stories from guests and visitors to Mount Angel about how Br. Gregory would give them impromptu tours around the Hilltop.

He was a big man, with a very tender heart. We miss him greatly.

– COMPILED BY THERESA MYERS





⊕ Oblates represent Mount Angel in Rome

When Mary Gallagher first heard about the Fifth International Congress of Benedictine Oblates, she felt strongly that she “needed to go for some reason.” Mary was one of three oblates of Mount Angel Abbey, along with her husband, Tim, and Fr. John Forman, who traveled to Rome in September 2023 for this international gathering of oblates that happens every five years.



With 157 delegates from 23 countries, the congress boasted a wide representation of oblates associated with Benedictine monasteries who each embody the Holy Rule of St. Benedict in a unique way. Held at Sant’Anselmo, oblates listened to speakers such as Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, OSB, and participated in workshops to share best practices for supporting their monasteries, oblate formation, and encouraging others to become oblates. “All the ideas that people from various and different countries said worked for them; we’re doing it here at this Abbey,” says Tim Gallagher.

During the congress, the oblate delegates met Pope Francis in a private audience, which was a surprise for many. The Holy Father reflected with the oblates on the Benedictine search for God, enthusiasm for the Gospel, and hospitality. “To be in his presence, the inspiration of a man that loving toward a whole room of strangers; that was the thing that came across. He was the exemplary loving presence of Christ in that room,” shares Fr. John Forman.

Since returning from such an international and unique experience, gratitude has been a consistent theme among the oblate delegates, especially gratitude for Mount Angel and what happens on the Hilltop locally. “The most important thing I learned is how blessed we are here at Mount Angel to have our monks and our community and our oblates,” says Mary Gallagher.

– ETHAN ALANO



Learn more



3 Abbeys | A Common Heritage

In December, Abbot Jeremy traveled to Conception Abbey in Missouri to join the celebration of that Abbey’s 150th anniversary. Like Mount Angel, Conception Abbey is a daughter house of Engelberg Abbey in Switzerland. While there, Abbot Jeremy, Abbot Benedict Neenan of Conception Abbey (center), and Abbot Christian Meyer of Engelberg (left) had the pleasure of meeting and celebrating the anniversary Mass together in the Abbey church.

Sharing the rich ways of BENEDICTINE LIFE

The Mount Angel Institute offers programs and events to share the rich ways of Mount Angel’s Benedictine monastic life with Church and World. This spring, diving deep into monastic life and



Christian in the World

its relevance for all is a prominent theme. The winter/spring *Christian in the World* lectures include four monk speakers presenting

on monastic spirituality. The first two lectures are available online now at mountangelabbey.org/citw. The final two will be in the Mount Angel Library auditorium on March 9 and April 13 before going online.

On March 10, the **Mount Angel Chamber Choir** will offer a concert of sacred choral music in the Abbey church at 3:30 pm. The program will feature composers across the centuries, from the high medieval Hildegard von Bingen to present-day Fr. Teresio Caldwell, OSB.



Learn more

Lenten reading recommendations from monks



FR. TERESIO CALDWELL, OSB

Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper
by Brant Pitre

ABBOT PETER EBERLE, OSB

The Lord, by Romano Guardini

BR. ALBERT KLOTZ, OSB

Moral Reflections on the Book of Job
by St. Gregory the Great

FR. AELRED YOCKEY, OSB

Champions of the Rosary
by Fr. Donald H. Calloway, MIC

FR. JOHN PAUL LE, OSB

Be Healed, by Bob Schuchts

ABBOT GREGORY DUERR, OSB

Christ in His Mysteries
by Blessed Columba Marmion, OSB

BR. LOUIS DE MONTFORT NGUYEN, OSB

The Power of the Cross: Good Friday Sermons from the Papal Preacher
by Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa

BR. ALFREDO MIRANDA, OSB

Food, Faith, and Fasting: A Sacred Journey to Better Health
by Rita Madden, MPH, RDN

FR. MARTIN GRASSEL, OSB

On Watchfulness and Holiness
by St. Hesychios the Priest



Fr. Charles Borromeo Gonzalez, OSB

ORDINATION TO PRIESTHOOD

“The gift you have received, give as a gift” (Matthew 10:8). This is the scripture passage on the back of my priestly ordination card, and it captures what I felt on the day of my ordination, November 4, 2023.

That day, I received multiple gifts: the gift of the priesthood, being surrounded by family and friends, and celebrating all of that on the feast day of my patron, St. Charles Borromeo. **Now, as an ordained priest-monk, I get to give that gift to others, especially the seminarians here as I help guide them in fostering their own gift of a priestly vocation.**

*“The gift you have received,
give as a gift.” (Matthew 10:8)*

Working with the seminarians has been a great privilege. As a recipient of the many years of formation I received as a seminarian, it is an honor to help the seminarians see how the Lord is working in their lives. There have been moments where I have been inspired by how much I see the growth in their lives as Christian men. We strive to help form men after the heart of Christ here at Mount Angel

Seminary, and I have witnessed this even in my short time working in the seminary. I am grateful for all the prayers and support I’ve received, and I ask for your prayers for all the newly ordained priests, that we may minister with love and compassion.

Br. Anselm Flores, OSB

ORDINATION TO DIACONATE



What does dancing have to do with being a deacon? It’s an unusual question, but it’s why I chose part of Fra Angelico’s *The Last Judgment* as the image for my ordination card. I focused on the image of heaven, which depicts a group of the blessed – both angels and human beings – holding hands and dancing in a circle, in seeming harmony, in tune with each other, watching each other, and in time with one another.

What does this image have to do with my ordination as a deacon?

The piece struck me because I saw this as a revelation of the meaning of the liturgy and of what our lives could and ought to be: *we ought to*

be living with one another as if we were continually dancing with one another, in harmony, in tune, and in time, careful with the others’ steps and with one’s own.

What does the deacon do in the liturgy and in the life of the Church? The deacon makes sure that the action of the liturgy and the life of the faithful are continually moving in a blessed and sacred dance around God. It is the deacon in the liturgy who, at times, announces, “I confess,” or “Let us offer each other the sign of peace,” or “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” He makes sure the “dance” keeps going. Outside the liturgy, the deacon must embody Christ the servant as a minister of the word and of charity, manifesting the love of God to the faithful and the world. I chose this piece of art because it reminds me of my responsibility and hope for a Church and a world that can finally be at peace, dancing with joy around the God who is Love.



Fr. Pius X Harding vests newly ordained Fr. Charles Gonzalez.



The monastic schola sings for the ordination Mass.



Bishop Liam Cary anoints the hands of Fr. Charles.



Br. Anselm Flores at his diaconal ordination Mass.



Archbishop Alexander K. Sample receives the gifts.



Deacon Br. James Bartos and Deacon Br. Anselm Flores.



From darkness into the *Light*

MEDITATIONS ON
THE DIVINE OFFICE

Benedictine life is structured around an horarium, a rhythm of prayer throughout the day. The specific times of prayer are marked by the ringing of the bells, which symbolize the voice of God calling us to prayer. The Divine Office (also known as the Liturgy of the Hours) and the Mass are the framework around which everything else is structured in the monastic life. Anyone can use this model of prayer to sanctify the various parts of their day, and this rhythm of prayer can be modified according to one's own state in life. In this way, we stop and redirect our focus on things above.



VIGILS

The monk follows the path of Christ, rising from the “dead” to sing the praises of God. The light shines out of the darkness as we enter this sacred hour, forever sanctified by Christ’s resurrection. We sing with Christ, “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.”

LAUDS

We see the sun beaming down with its light and warmth, rays coming into the sanctuary. It is a new day, and the Church in the *Benedictus* canticle blesses the God of Israel, who shines from heaven on those living in the dark shadow of death.

MASS

We arrive at the peak of the day, the summit of Christian and monastic life. We enter into the hour of his passion. Every other hour of the Divine Office is an extension of this reality, that comes to us each day on the altar.

NOON PRAYER

This hour is prayed in the heat of the day, while the sun is at its zenith. It is a welcome break in our busy day, to center oneself back on God and ask for needed help. It is a time to turn our gaze back on him, to reconcile with God in case we have fallen.

VESPERS

After the day’s work is over and the shadows lengthen, we offer God an hour of extended praise, thanking him for what the day has been. Together with Mary we magnify the Lord’s greatness in the chanting of the *Magnificat* canticle.

COMPLINE

As the day draws to a close, the uncertainty of the night comes once more, and we ask to be protected from the night of this world. Together with Christ, we commend our spirit to the Father and sing a hymn to Mother Mary.

– COMPILED BY BR. ISAIAH VARGAS, OSB

You can follow the hours of prayer with us each day online at mountangelabbey.org/live-stream



A HISTORY OF ART

AT THE ABBEY

When the first monks of Mount Angel arrived in the Pacific Northwest in 1882, they already considered art an essential value in their Benedictine spirituality. The earliest recorded art purchase for the fledgling community was by Fr. Nicholas Frei, OSB, who obtained four paintings while traveling in San Francisco. Two of those pieces remain in Mount Angel's collection to this day.

Over the decades, Mount Angel's art collection has grown through gifts from friends and benefactors, such as the late Archbishop Dwyer of Portland in Oregon, purchases made by the monks, and works done by monks, notably the icons of Br. Claude Lane, OSB.

Since the fall of 2020, Fr. Nathan Zodrow, OSB, Mount Angel's art curator, has prepared thematic virtual art exhibits from the collection. The virtual exhibits reside on Mount Angel's website and change quarterly. This quarter, the exhibition focuses on a selection of intaglios, a form of printmaking in which the design is etched or engraved into a metal surface before the ink is applied.



View more of the current exhibit and find archived exhibits online at mountangelabbey.org/art



Meeting Christ in the poor

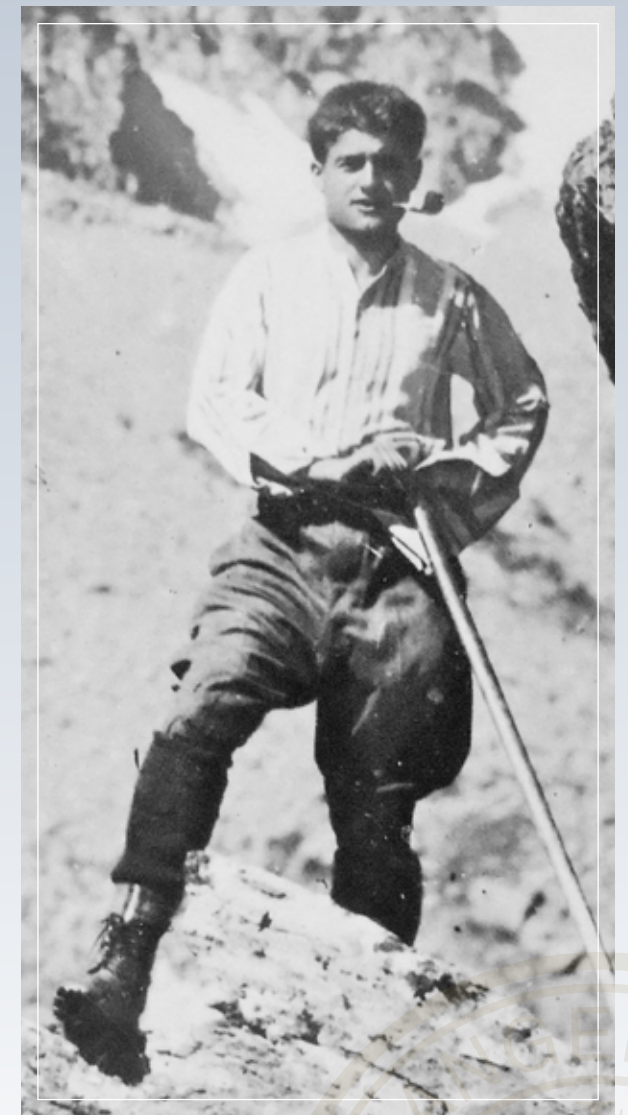
Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901–1925) is often pictured standing atop a mountain with a pipe in his mouth, revered for seeking the beauty of God's creation and the spiritual life in nature. At the same time, fed by his love for Jesus in the Eucharist, Pier Giorgio also went to the depths and made himself a servant of the poor and marginalized. Inspired by his example, the Frassati group at Mount Angel Seminary ventured to downtown Salem on December 8 to encounter Christ in the homeless.

Taking some simple supplies to distribute, the seminarians spent time talking and praying with homeless people they met on the street.

“The personal interaction with them; that’s what’s important,” says Roman Espitia, a seminarian for the Diocese of Fresno who serves as the leader of the Frassati group (in photo to left). For Espitia, keeping these people in prayer and “being able to offer them up in our Holy Hour” has been a great blessing.

In the spring, the Frassati group hopes to do another outreach day to the poor, along with a time of extended Eucharistic adoration for the homeless and their intentions.

– ETHAN ALANO





AFFIRMED BY GOD'S CALL

“Priesthood is not something that just happens upon ordination; it’s something that we live out every day,” reflects Patrick Mbuiyu, a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Seattle. Patrick was one of 17 seminarians accepted as a candidate for Holy Orders during Mass in the Abbey church on October 18. In this rite, seminarians resolve to complete their preparation for Holy Orders. At the same time, the Church, through the person of the bishop, accepts them as candidates and affirms them in their resolve. Candidacy allows the seminarian “to immerse [himself] in configuring [himself] to the identity of being a priest,” says Nemesio Santana, a seminarian candidate for the Diocese of Fresno.

For many, the rite of candidacy signifies a deepening of the bond and sense of belonging among the seminarian, his bishop, his future brother priests, and all the people of his diocese. Seminarian David Hoang of the Diocese of Orange appreciates how this rite reflects “the communal aspect of vocation.” For David, the Church affirming this vocation with him lifts the burden of making that decision on his own.

“I can feel my heart just growing toward the people in my diocese,” says seminarian candidate Nathan Loe of the Diocese of Spokane. While that love for God’s people in Spokane has grown since he was first accepted as a seminarian, Nathan notes that candidacy has helped him reflect on priestly ordination as being “ultimately for [God’s people], for their souls.”

– ETHAN ALANO

Pictured above left to right: David Hoang, Diocese of Orange, Nathan Loe, Diocese of Spokane, Patrick Mbuiyu, Archdiocese of Seattle, and Nemesio Santana, Diocese of Fresno.

Fr. Jeff Eirvin joins Mount Angel Seminary



We are happy to welcome Fr. Jeff Eirvin back to Mount Angel Seminary this semester as he takes on the position of vice rector. He will work alongside Msgr. Joseph Betschart, now in his 12th and final year as president-rector.

“I am extremely grateful for the invitation to join the faculty and staff of Mount Angel Seminary in this important work of priestly formation and education,” says Fr. Eirvin. “I am especially looking forward to being immersed in the work of the Holy Spirit in our shared quest of ‘Seeking Things Above’ in every detail of life on the Hilltop.”

Fr. Eirvin is a priest of the Archdiocese of Portland and an alumnus of Mount Angel Seminary. In addition to his pastoral work in the Archdiocese, Fr. Eirvin has served on the Board of Directors of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) and has been an adjunct faculty member of the Institute for Priestly Formation (IPF) since 2019. His association with NCDVD and IPF prepares him with experience and knowledge of priestly formation that is rooted in Trinitarian communion, expressed in pastoral charity, and fulfilled in configuration to the person of Jesus Christ.

Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, Chancellor of Mount Angel Seminary, has announced his intention to appoint Fr. Eirvin as Msgr. Betschart’s successor in the role of president-rector when Msgr. Betschart’s term ends in June of 2024.

– THERESA MYERS



The gift of silence

After returning from Christmas break, diocesan seminarians at Mount Angel participate in a silent retreat before the spring semester begins. Fr. Kevin Joyce, Ph.D., a professor and spiritual director at St. Patrick’s Seminary, led the 2024 retreat with conferences on St. John



Cassian and the Jesus Prayer. For Blake Thamer of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, the Jesus Prayer was “a completely new form of prayer” that helped him “be open” to whatever God asks of him.

The silent retreat “feels like one continuous conversation with God,” according to Richard Ordos of the Archdiocese of Seattle. The conversation ebbs and flows, and “in the context of this friendship with Christ, it’s okay just to have boring time with the Lord,” he says.

Juanpablo Macias of the Archdiocese of Las Vegas “couldn’t help notice the gift that silence is,” allowing Jesus to speak to his heart. For Maliko Madden of the Archdiocese of Seattle, silence reminds him that “we were made for contemplative union, not the kind of busy action that we think defines our worth.”

– ETHAN ALANO



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*Fine Arts Quartet
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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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*Br. Gregory Benavidez, OSB
1980 – 2023*