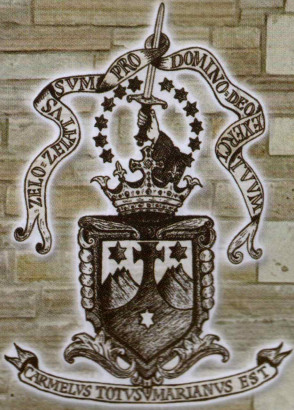


The Chapter House seen behind two hermitages.



The Carmelite Monks of Wyoming

Dear family and friends of the monastery,

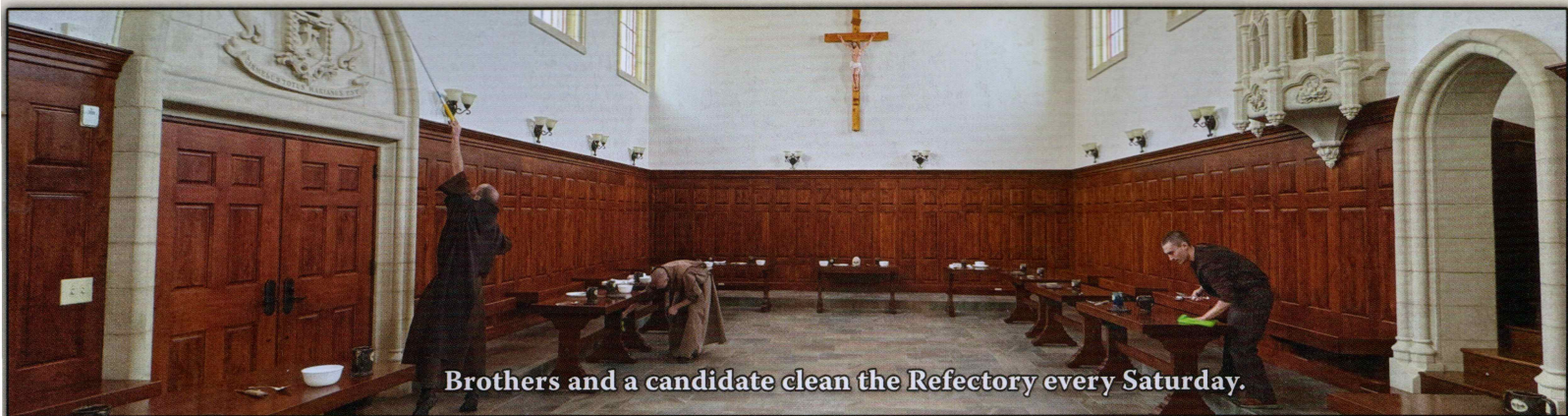
April, 2024
Newsletter No. 2

The monks—assembled in two parallel lines in the middle of the refectory (dining room)—appear as a true army in battle array at this midday hour. Each monk faces forward with hands quietly folded under the long woolen scapular, holding in his hands a small prayer book called a *Preces* that contains the many paraliturgical moments of the Carmelite day and countless prayers and devotions inherited from the living Carmelite tradition. There in this unique noon formation the monks are arranged by choir rank according to the date of religious profession with the priests at the front headed by the Prior and Sub-Prior. All the monks stand at attention below the crucifix mounted in the center of the wall. The monks are gathered in prayer.

The refectory itself is an austere space with few furnishings: apart from the aforementioned crucifix, only the simple wooden tables and benches lining the walls. Each table is neatly arranged with two cloth napkins folded into thirds with a plate, paper napkin, and eating utensils hidden underneath. Each place setting also has a

large monastic mug with two handles to remind the monk of gratitude: on the one hand to God and on the other hand to the Carmelite family—without which he would not be a monk and his vocation impossible. In the middle of each table, between the two napkins, a glass pitcher filled with drinking water and a hot pad have been prepared. It is lunch time.

Standing at attention, a monk appointed Reader, or Lector, for the week asks for the Prior's blessing by singing "Benedicite." All of the monks respond in chanted tone with the words of King David from the psalms: "The Lord lifteth up all that fall: and setteth up all that are cast down. The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season." The monks' stomachs are hungry; aptly do these words capture the Fathers' and Brothers' sentiments after a full morning of prayer, of work, and of study. Mindful that every blessing comes from God, and His Providence brought the



Brothers and a candidate clean the Refectory every Saturday.



The reader asks for a blessing in the Refectory.



A father leads adoration with a newly donated monastrance.



The Easter offertory at Mass.



A reading is chanted at midnight office.

sun and rain that grew the vegetables and fruit about to be eaten, as well as moved the benefactors to make it possible to acquire the ingredients for this basic sustenance, the monks face each other and bow their heads silently reciting an "Our Father" in humble appreciation. The Prior continues in his rich tenor tone in Latin, making the sign of the cross with his right hand over the meal: "Let us pray. Bless us, o Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord." Each monk responds "Amen" as the aroma of the noonday meal catches the attention of a few, and the sun shines its bright rays into the dining room to settle upon the crucifix with a brilliant glow.

Our Reader now seeks a personal blessing from the Prior from high aloft in his reader's tower to which the Prior continues: "May the King of everlasting glory make us partakers of the heavenly table. Amen." The Prior knocks upon his wooden table, and each monk ascends the single step to take his proper place at the rustic tables as he quietly arranges the Scapular in his lap and the wooden Rosary beads.

The Reader now takes in hand the Gospel and begins in baritone to sing: "In nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Amen. A continuation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark." Each monk attentively listens, mindful that man does not live on bread alone but on the life-giving Word of God. This day the monks have fittingly arrived at the words of the angel to St. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome when they came to anoint Jesus. The reader continues, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." Again, the Prior's knock signals a change as the Reader continues, "A continuation of The Life of Father De Smet, SJ: Apostle of the Rocky Mountains by Father Eugene Laveille," and the Reader begins to read from the middle of the chapter where the last night's evening meal had ended. At this juncture, each monk takes the cloth napkin before him, folding it into the Scapular near the neck to not soil his Holy Habit with food. Previously unnoticed, a small piece of bread on each plate receives a kiss from each monk as a sign of gratitude not only for the food about to be eaten, but especially for the Bread

of Life received earlier at the Conventual Mass.

Simultaneously, a small contingent of monks appear, one carrying a tray of freshly baked tilapia, another a heaping bowl of homemade mashed potatoes, and still a third a salad bowl, while the final monk carries a tray of condiments and salad dressings. While some of the monks quietly pour water in their mugs and others intently listen to the biography of Fr. De Smet and his early missionary labors in their own Wyoming land, the serving monks begin to go around the dining room—beginning at the table of the Prior and Sub-Prior—with this hearty yet simple meal that was prepared by the Brother Cook and a few of his assistants during the morning work period. As the monks receive the necessary nourishment to continue their monastic prayer and labors into the afternoon, each finds himself captivated by the reading and truly thankful for the filling refreshment. After each monk has been served and all have begun to eat, the servers again make a second trip to each table offering perhaps a bit more fish to one, or potatoes to another, and perhaps a little more salad dressing to the third. Finally, two servers emerge one with a bowl of fresh strawberries and another with a small bowl of whipped cream accompanied by shortcakes in case any of the monks might like a little desert to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection. Of course, the Reader continues in his monotone singing all the while. Apart from the reading and the quiet sound of plates and cutlery, no sound can be heard from the twenty-five monks gathered at table. Each monk's eyes are lowered in prayer as he seeks to find inspiration in the biography being read this day.

Noting that most of the monks have now finished their meal, the Prior once again knocks upon his table to announce that the reading is completed. Each monk lowers his cloth napkin and rises from the table to resume the formation of two columns once again before the crucifix as the community begins to sing in Latin according to the Gregorian melodies: "Let all thy works, O Lord, praise thee: and let thy saints bless thee." How Good is God to provide so generously for these monks and to attend to their littlest needs such as a bit of nourishment for the poor body! The Prior's prayer best captures the monk's sentiment as the Prior sings in Latin on behalf of all: "We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits, O Almighty God, Who livest and reignest forever.

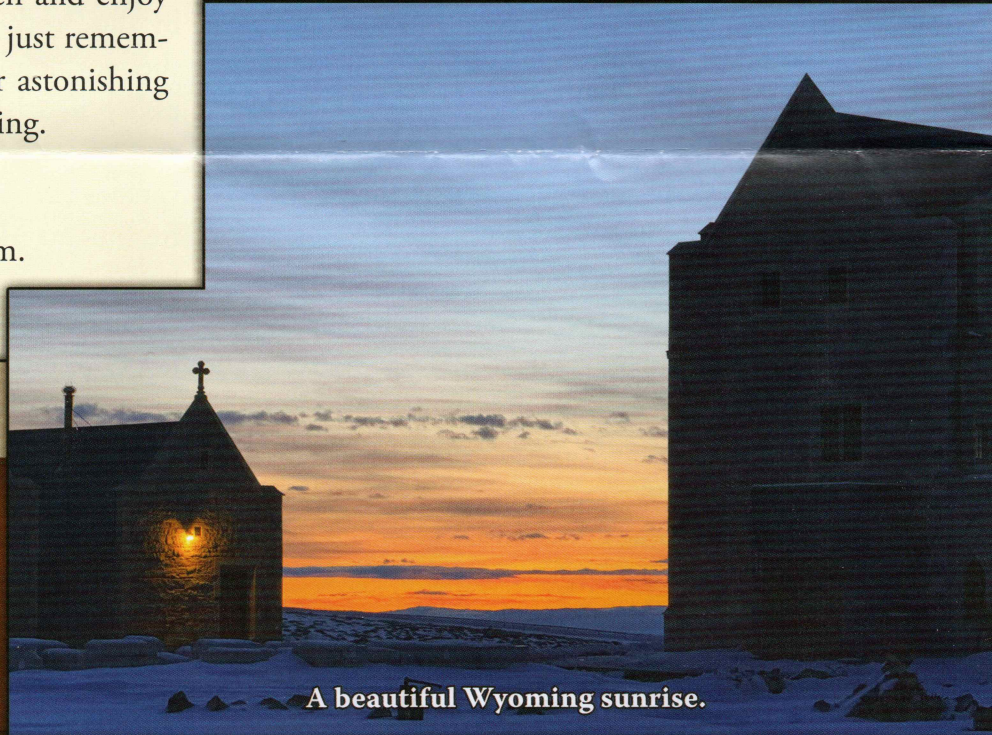
Amen.”

Rejuvenated with a healthy meal and inspired with love of God and zeal for souls by the holy reading, the monks begin to process two-by-two, youngest to oldest, to the chapel as they alternately chant Psalm 50(51): Miserere mei, Deus or “Have Mercy on Me, O God.” While for want of space, the monks’ return to the chapel will be our reflection next month. For now, may it bring you true Christian peace and joy to know that this daily routine continues with unbroken succession within these walls after the manner of all the Carmelite saints. As the monks stand in prayer, as the Reader sings the paragraphs from the text, or as the monks quietly listen and enjoy their noonday meal, know that you are not just remembered, but loved as we thank God for your astonishing generosity and holy friendship without ceasing.

Until next month, dear ones, God love you!
Fr. Daniel Mary of Jesus Crucified, M. Carm.
Prior



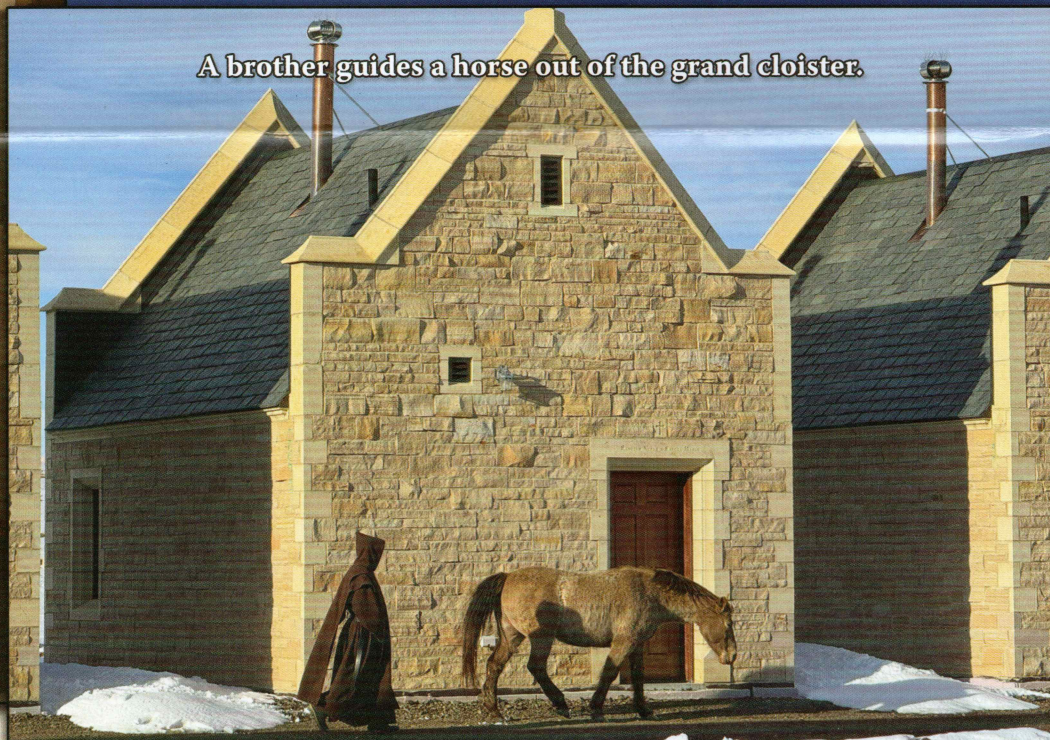
The Monastery buildings at dusk.



A beautiful Wyoming sunrise.



The arched Refectory passage in the morning.



A brother guides a horse out of the grand cloister.