

At Ephesus



The reception of new postulants on December 12

Dear Family, Friends and Benefactors,

It is truly hard to know how to begin this missive, as we have had perhaps the strangest weeks we have yet known. As some of you may already know from our online Christmas message, we have been battling mold poisoning. Our novitiate members were preparing for their annual "takeover," skit and meal for the feast of the Holy Innocents. They fished through some fabric and old cardboard in our storage area next to our root cellar, set aside for garden purposes. Then Sisters literally began dropping in choir. We realized that in the preparation of their surprise, they had uncovered a nest of toxic mold. So we shuffled our five sick novices along with Sr. Josephine to the retreat house, along with senior Sisters to care for them. Sr. Josephine had gotten worse again, and we believe mold poisoning was a large part of her many health difficulties. Back at the house, after professional cleaning, etc. we rolled up our sleeves to continue making our house mold-free.



In our annual Thanksgiving pictiory game, Mother Abbess displays her drawing talent.

There was not time to decorate, nor prepare a Christmas video, nor do anything but step into clean-and-survive-mode being as short-handed as we were. but all the Sisters agreed it was the most authentic Christmas they had yet experienced, fully united to the Holy family in their sufferings.

We had a lovely reunion at Christmas, however, as the Sisters felt well enough to come to Midnight Mass and the Dawn Mass. Our Sr. Philomena was also able to come home from Texas, where she is caring for her father, who is now dying as I write, and she has returned to his side.

I headed down to Dallas for fundraising for our daughterhouse, where we received an incredible offer to stay at a mold-free house while receiving treatment at a clinic specializing in mold poisoning. The Sisters are improving while they are there, so we ask that you keep them and all of us in your prayers!

We are also still full-steam ahead on our construction project in Ava, though the fundraising efforts have still been quite slow. But we know the Lord will see us through with the help of Saint Joseph! Thank you also for all your help in that area as well. May God reward you for everything!



On St. Cecilia's day, the Sisters sang an ode to the community's favorite Matins aid: COFFEE!

In the Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph,

Mother Cecilia, OSB



All together in the parlor after Midnight Mass



The celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe continued as the new postulants took a crack at a traditional pinata.



The most wonderful time of the year...The Sisters look forward to stuffing and mailing our Christmas Cards.



Our altar servers serenaded us with "Joy to the World" with accordion accompaniment.



Sr. Benedicta's nieces and nephews merrily provoke a snowball fight!



A welcome home to Sr. Philomena for Christmas

Post-mold cleaning as we prepared to make our old beams hypoallergenic with beeswax finish.



Assembling a new greenhouse



In all our trials, we turn to our Mother!



On January 30, we celebrated the centenary of Dom Columba Marmion's death. He was born in Ireland in 1858, and served as a parish priest in Dublin for five years. He entered Maredsous Abbey in Belgium, and was elected abbot of Maredsous in 1909. He was beatified in 2000. His feast day is October 3, the date of his blessing as abbot. His works, forgotten till recent times, were formerly required reading for many Diocesan seminarians.

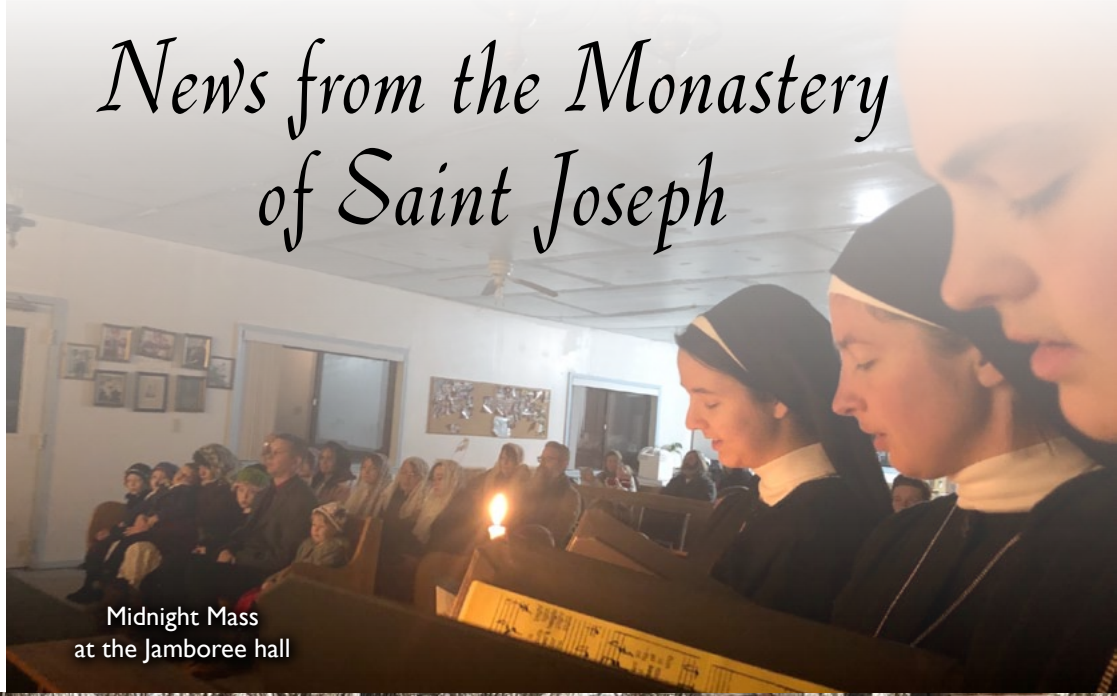
There is a sum total of sufferings, of humiliations and sorrows, which God has foreseen for the members of Christ's mystical body in order to "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." We cannot reach perfect union with Christ Jesus unless we accept that portion of the chalice which our Lord wills to give us to drink with Him and after Him.

-Blessed Columba Marmion, Christ the Ideal of the Monk

News from the Monastery of Saint Joseph



Sr. Mary Pia is lit up as St. Lucy on December 13.



Midnight Mass at the Jamboree hall



The Sisters caroled for the hermits of Assumption Abbey



A Christmas concert



Both Ava and Gower enjoyed a white Christmas.

The Ozarks are alive with the sound of construction! But the Sisters enjoy the peace of the seclusion.



The blessing of the Construction Site of the Monastery of Saint Joseph in Ava, with the monks of Assumption Abbey in procession.



We are grateful to Bishop Edward Rice for conferring the blessing!





The concrete is poured!



The Sisters can hardly wait for their new home to be finished!



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