



*Hi sunt magistri nostri, qui a Magistro omnium
vias vitæ plenius didicerunt,
et docent nos usque in hodiernum diem. (Bern. PP 1, 3)*

Central Secretariat for Formation
– OCSO –

Monasterio Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, June 2021.

Newsletter 29

*To the Superiors and the Regional Secretaries of the OCSO
and to the brothers and sisters interested in formation.*

US Region

Sister Pamela, Regional Formation Secretary

Juniors

May 1-5

A course on **Sacramental Theology** was taught at Wrentham and live streamed to the Region's Juniors and the community of Mepkin. The classes were given by **Dr Michon Matthiesen**, a sacramental theologian who teaches at the University of Mary in North Dakota.

Dr Matthiesen began by inviting us to consider the full scope of the Catholic sacramental imagination, in which God reveals himself and communicates grace in ways accommodated to the human creature. God communicates through creation, through the words of Scripture, in the incarnation of his Son and in the ecclesial sacraments, which St Thomas Aquinas calls "prolongations of the Incarnation". We read a chapter from Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and pondered what prevents or helps us to see all things sacramentally. With Thomas Aquinas, we considered the way in which God uses the ecclesial sacraments as instrumental causes of grace to communicate to his creatures the fruits of Christ's incarnation and passion.

Next, we shifted our focus to the Eucharist, and spent time coming to understand exactly how the Mass is a sacrificial banquet. According to the writings of French theologian Maurice de la Taille, eucharistic sacrifice is a gift offered by human beings to God of the already completed passion and death of his Son, in union with the self-offering of Christ to

the Father at the Last Supper and on the cross. This sacrifice is completed by the reception of the gift by God, as manifested in the resurrection and ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father, where he stands as a continual offering, “the Lamb once slain who dies no more”. At Mass, our offering to God is received and returned to us in the gift of the body and blood of Christ by which we are united to his Son.

When we considered the connection between Baptism and the Eucharist, we learned that it is the priestly character given to us at Baptism which allows us to participate actively in the Eucharistic sacrifice. We do this by our self-offering, the laying down of our lives and bodies in union with Christ on the altar, as well as on the altar of our own hearts. The altar stands for the threshold between the profane and the sacred, as well as the nuptial bed on which spousal union is renewed beneath the wedding canopy.

Finally, we turned to the Eucharist and eschatology, or how the Mass is an interruption, a reminder that even as we stand before the real presence of Christ our risen Lord, our wounded Bridegroom, and our eschatological Judge, we also taste a real absence, that is the “not yet” of our pilgrim state on our way to the fullness of God’s kingdom. The liturgy draws together the memory of the past, and the memory of the future, and brings about solidarity with the dead and those yet to be born. It expresses the union of the earthly and heavenly sacrifice, sows hope and desire for that full union with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth, in which all material reality will be transparent to God.

We recognize that this concurrence of sacrifice and marriage, of oblation self-gift and intimate union, as at the heart of our monastic vocation. Monastic life is a radical living-out of baptismal priesthood, a eucharistic act, a laying down of one’s life, with Christ, for his friends and ours. Our desire is to live this more deeply and consciously at all times, but especially during the Mass, so that our desire and our capacity for sacrifice and marriage continues to grow.

The challenge in live streaming the course was the three-hour time difference between the US east coast and west coast. Though this virtual class for the Region’s Juniors was no substitute for a gathering at one of the Region’s monasteries and live teaching, the Juniors were grateful to have a class while the US remained in lock down and travel within the country from state to state was limited. They especially appreciated that Dr Michon, as she preferred to be called, was a dedicated Catholic with a deep love of and devotion to the Eucharist. She reflected her deep faith in her teaching and interactions. The opportunity for the Juniors to dialogue with her each evening by Zoom was an added enrichment.

“Great Courses”

The US Region have produced the first installment of the production of Cistercian “Great Courses” or the “*Schola Cisterciensis*”. A monk of Gethsemani and a nun from OLM are the directors of the project. Before the lockdown they visited Dr David Bell, a well-known Cistercian scholar, and recorded many interviews. After much editing the videos are now available online for English speaking Cistercians and others interested in our patrimony. These first 16 videos focus on de Rance and can be found at:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3gSIJaegeZczEqQ21hRjxQ/videos>.

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Brother Daniel M^a, monk of San Isidro and PREM student

PREM

In the middle of Easter Time, the students of the OCSO, the CCSB and the OSB have met again online for a new edition of the PREM.

Intense class days have accompanied us for almost a month. The spring weather and the good humor of the students have made the learning of Theology and Philosophy that we have been taught very bearable.



On April 19, we kicked off the *Baptism and Confirmation* subject, taught by **Br. Antonio Manuel**, from Huerta. The next subject we received was *Prophetic Literature*, from the hand of **Fr. José Luis Barriocanal**, a diocesan priest of Burgos and professor at the Faculty of Theology of that Spanish city. We continue the course with *Medieval Thought*, by the hand of **Felipe Izquierdo**, layman, professor in Burgos. The next subject was *Christology II (Dogmatic part)* taught by **Mother Rosa Ana**, from San Bernardo (Burgos). And last but not least, the complementary subject *Liturgy*, with **Fr. Diego**, from Huerta.

It should also be noted that from November to June **Fr. Carlos**, Prior of Sobrado, has taught us *“Notions of Applied Psychology”* one Saturday a month. During these months we have grown in our own knowledge and we have also acquired very useful tools for our daily community life.

The number of students continues to rise and this time we have been 33. We feel grateful for this happiness that enriches the group, creating among us a formidable environment, of great monastic wealth, where the bonds of communion and friendship are established and strengthened.