



The Plague That Prowls

In compliance with New York State health directives, our chapel, guest houses and gift shop were closed to the public on March 23, 2020. Because the monastery has elderly brothers, as well as brothers with underlying health issues who are particularly vulnerable to illness, we have remained closed. We miss our guests, who are like extended family members to us, and want everyone to know that we are alive and well! Not that we are without health challenges, but thankfully none of us at the monastery has been infected with COVID-19.

Our daily activities, work and prayer continue as usual, only without guests being able to join us. For the safety of the brothers and guests, we will remain closed to the public until further notice. Any change will be posted to the monastery website. We wait to see what the New Normal will be. We do know that “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” – but maybe not to our liking! We keep our absent guests, friends, benefactors, oblates – our extended family – in prayer. May no plague approach where you dwell (Psalm 91.10).



Guardian Angels with Tails

The farm has experienced multiple years of sheep and lamb losses due to predators, usually coyotes. If we were going to continue to raise sheep something needed to be done pronto to stop the losses. After weighing various strategies, the decision was made to invest in livestock guardian dogs, specifically a breed called Maremma, which seemed best suited to the particulars of our situation. We needed adult dogs that would be ready to go to work upon arrival.

Finding them was another matter. After extensive searching and phone calls, two dogs were found for sale in Mississippi. How to get two very large dogs (they top 100 pounds each) from there to New York was the next challenge. The owner agreed to meet us roughly halfway, in Cincinnati. Brothers Bruno and Mark made the 1,600+ mile trek, leaving the monastery last year at 4:00 a.m. on November 15 and returning with the dogs after midnight on the 16th. The dogs were secured overnight in a holding pen.



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NEWS

For updated and expanded notes visit the Monthly News page on our website: www.msaviour.org

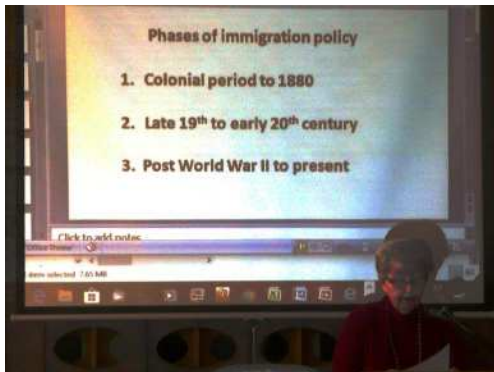
11/2/19 Blessing of new Memorial Plaque in the crypt for our deceased brothers



11/16/19 Arrival of two livestock guardian dogs



11/17/19 Patricia Ciccariello's talk on Immigration History of the United States



12/14/19 Chester Regalado received as a Postulant

1/17-20/20 Knitter's Retreat

3/2-6/20 Monks' yearly retreat with Mother Winsome from Birmingham, UK



3/23/20 Chapel, Guest Houses and Gift Shop closed due to COVID-19

3/30/20 Brother Antonio's brain surgery for hemorrhage

4/16/20 First two of 143 lambs born



5/22-23/20 Yearly sheep shearing



6/10/20 Chester Regalado (Br. Francis) clothed as Novice



7/15/20 Brother Mark's knee replacement surgery

9/1/20 Brother Antonio's open-heart surgery for valve replacement



Raccoons enjoying a visit to the monastery.

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Or so we thought. The male, Hagrid, had dug his way out during the night. These dogs are generally not used to being confined. No one had had an opportunity to bond with him, so for the next week we would only catch glimpses of him from afar. In the meantime, he was busy scoping out our property and marking it as “his” as he went. When he finished his rounds, one of us was finally able to make friends with him, which happened just in the nick of time, as he had to be taken to the vet with a dozen porcupine quills in his snout. But that’s another story, among many since then.



The short version of this story is that the two dogs have lived up to our expectations and are keeping the sheep much safer nowadays. If someone should run into them on our property and not be inside our fields, the most they will do is bark. They sleep outside with the sheep year-round, love their work, and have adopted the brothers as part of their flock to protect.

Memorial Plaque

On All Soul’s Day, November 2, 2019, a Memorial Plaque in honor of Mount Saviour’s deceased brothers was dedicated and blessed. Located in the Crypt of the Chapel, it is the inspiration and design of local artist Connie Zehr.



Connie is an Emeritus Professor of Art at Claremont Graduate University, where she taught in the Art Department from 1982-2009 and was Chairperson from 2001-2008. She has created ephemeral onsite installations in museums and galleries nationally and internationally.



The Memorial Plaque is a nine-panel metal print diptych with the laser-engraved names of the 15 brothers in the cemetery adjacent to the Chapel. The final design was created from a photographic image within the glass forms of a sand and glass instillation. The original layout of the instillation was inspired by Connie’s experience of the 13th/14th century sculpture of Our Lady Queen of Peace in the center of the Crypt surrounded by the light of multiple votive prayer candles. The small cross in the top center panel repeats the form of those located on the walls of the Chapel and Crypt. The Plaque measures 72” x 40” and is located on a wall behind a side altar, on which is displayed a memorial book dedicated to benefactors of the monastery.

REMINDER

Although our Gift Shop remains closed due to the pandemic, it is still possible to use our online ordering page <https://www.msaviour.org/managecart.html> to order products from the monastery. These include artwork, woolen goods and specialty items. The 50-minute documentary video of Mount Saviour, The Everyday, is also now available online through YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hFvGCZ2PG4>

READING BLOOPERS BY THE BROTHERS

From the First Letter of St. Peter: “Love one another with mutual affliction...”

From an intercession: “Purify our hearts with every evil desire.”

From the Letter to the Romans: “One of us lives for oneself...” (Perhaps the brother had someone in mind...?)

From Psalm 24 (25): “Revive the anguish of my heart...”



A THANKSGIVING REFLECTION BY BROTHER DAVID STEINDL-RAST

I wish you the joy of discovering ever new aspects of grateful living. For me an oriental carpet, of all things, has recently triggered a new perspective on living gratefully and I would like to share with you my exciting discovery.

Today's lifestyle has little room for large rugs, and so, donors sometimes give them to monasteries. One of them, at Mount Saviour, keeps our floor warm in the Crypt and I've been most grateful for it at Vigils during winter nights. There often are 6,000 knots per square inch in a fine rug of this kind. With this in mind, I'm overcome with awe, whenever I step on it. I envisage brown fingers tying knot after knot - thousands a day. I see fingers twisting fibers into threads, purple fingers of those who dyed the threads, and fine fingers tracing intricate designs. Behind those I see the hands of their teachers in those various crafts and their teachers' teachers' hands, generation after generation. (More than 2,000 years ago, the Greeks already treasured Persian rugs.) The countless hands in my imagination stand for the patience, the pride, the dedication of the vast multitude whose labor prepared this very spot for me to step on. Reverently I put my foot down. And my foot, in turn, represents all those without whom I would not be here. My ancestors alone add up to more than a billion, if I go back a thousand years, and humans who looked like you and me go back 200 times as long. Their lives form a texture, incomparably more intricate than the texture of the carpet; and the lives of those whom the carpet represents form an equally vast, inextricable web: Life that brought me to this moment meets Life that comes toward me, as my foot touches the rug.

And isn't something happening every moment? Every moment I am the point where all of life meets all of life. When this happens, a spark jumps – a spark of joy and praise. The essence of the carpet is beauty; and so is the reverence with which I tread on it. This joy, this praise is thanksgiving.



BE STILL AND KNOW

The sheep are bleating in the field
sporadically, without complaint
that winter pastures' meagre yield
would test the patience of a saint.

Yet all is silent.

The wind sighs through the waving firs
whose branches dance with cold delight.
They whisper soft in needled purrs
all morning long, all through the night.

Still all is silent.

(And voices too, along the road
or by the chapel, just a word
or two, a distant phrase implodes
and sneaks back into the unheard...)

(Into the silence...)

The silence here is loud and clear;
it rings between the prayers and psalms.
It's soft, it's fragile, cool, austere.
It simplifies the soul. It calms.

It has no tension, no release;
no memories to efface.
For lack of words we'll call it peace.
The only drama here is grace.

In silence.

- By Oblate Jeffrey Essmann

THE OBLATES OF MOUNT SAVIOUR BLOG
WE WELCOME NEW OBLATES!
<http://oblates-of-mount-saviour.blog/blog/>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS READ IN OUR REFECTORY

Truly Seeking God (Monastic Wisdom Series) by Bernard Bonowitz

Is God in My Top Ten?: Meditations for a Deeper Life in Christ by Jerome Kodell

La Verdad: A Witness to the Salvadoran Martyrs by Lucia Cerna and Mary Jo Ignoffo

Please remember us in prayer and, if possible, also in your estate planning and will.

Our legal title is:
The Benedictine Foundation of New York State