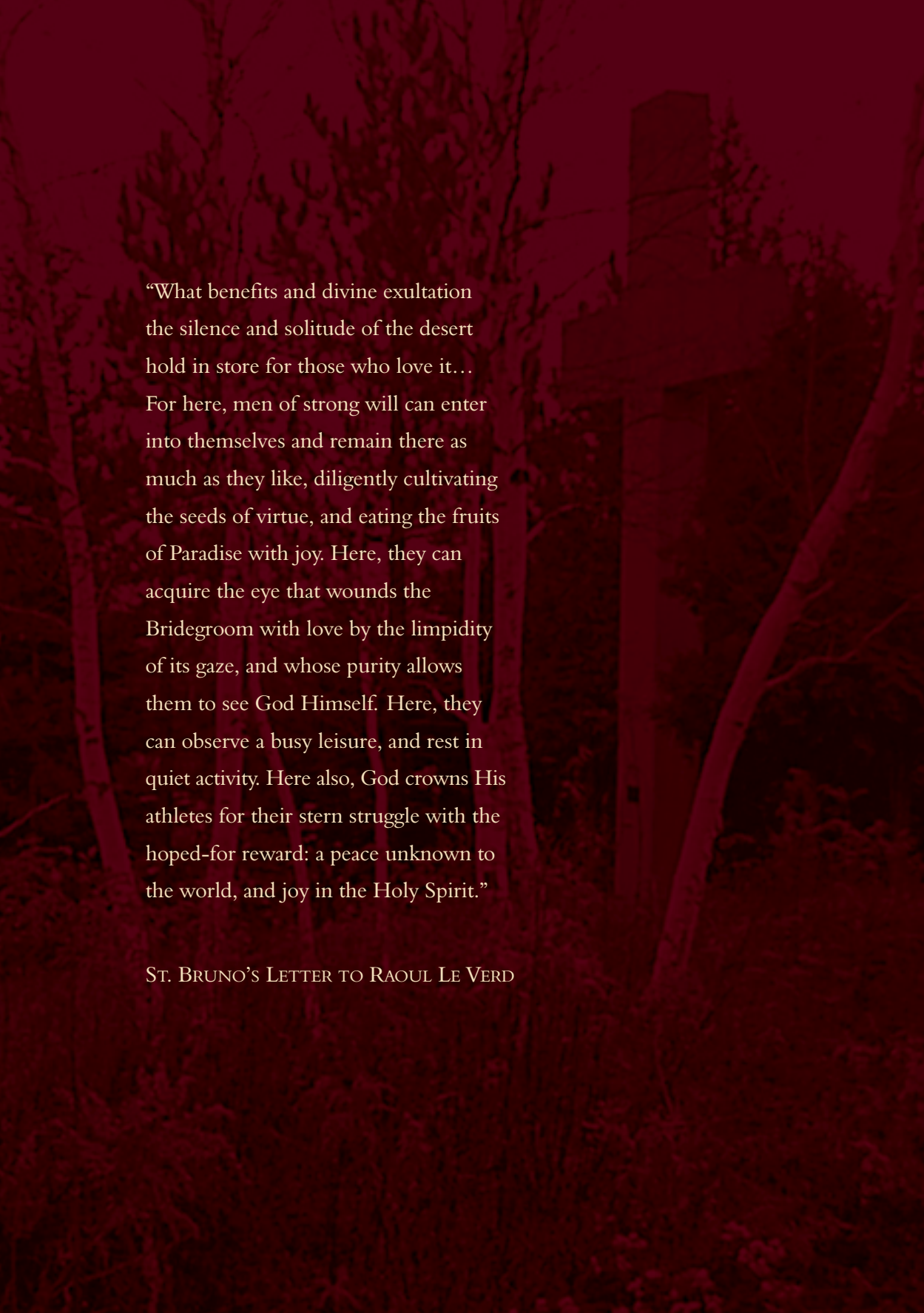


THE CARTHUSIAN LIFE



“What benefits and divine exultation
the silence and solitude of the desert
hold in store for those who love it...
For here, men of strong will can enter
into themselves and remain there as
much as they like, diligently cultivating
the seeds of virtue, and eating the fruits
of Paradise with joy. Here, they can
acquire the eye that wounds the
Bridegroom with love by the limpidity
of its gaze, and whose purity allows
them to see God Himself. Here, they
can observe a busy leisure, and rest in
quiet activity. Here also, God crowns His
athletes for their stern struggle with the
hoped-for reward: a peace unknown to
the world, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

ST. BRUNO'S LETTER TO RAOUL LE VERD

THE CARTHUSIAN LIFE



O Bonitas

Charterhouse of the Transfiguration

April 20, 2003

RESURRECTIO DOMINI

FOREWORD

We are so grateful that you, the Carthusians, have been “Called to the Desert” in Vermont’s splendorous Green Mountains! Your prayerful presence in our beloved state achieves a beautiful blend of solitudes in which to live your very special vocation for the salvation of souls. Vermont is blessed by your very presence, for



surely your spirit of peace and prayerful devotion radiates throughout the Green Mountains themselves, encouraging us to visit their deserts, encouraging us to seek closer, more intimate ties with ourselves and our Creator. We are enriched by your very special vocation which some see as sacrifice, but which you welcome as intimacy with Christ.

We are also most grateful for the special prayers you offer for the people of Vermont, the Faithful and for those we hope to call back to the Faith. And we pray to Mary, Mother of God, Mother and Patron of the Carthusians, that she continue to

grace and nurture you in your blessed solitude. How pleased Christ her Son must be with His Carthusian servants, His most loyal witnesses, who seek only the salvation of souls. Surely He hears your intercessions on behalf of the faithful.

My Carthusian Brothers, you are glorious in your simplicity, and radiant in your quiet devotion to Christ and the salvation of His people. We are grateful that your tradition of spiritual poverty remains unbroken after nine centuries! May you continue to serve the Church and the world until the end of time.

+ *Kenneth A. Angell*

Most Reverend Kenneth A. Angell
Eighth Bishop of Burlington

Half a century has passed since the Carthusian Order started its foundation in the United States. The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration sprang from the Church's desire that our form of solitary life take its modest place within American culture. Thanks to a generous benefactor, the community settled in a beautiful, austere and perfectly isolated region which, to this day, offers a solitude unique in our Order.


This brochure attempts to explain what a Carthusian monk seeks when he withdraws to a desert so stripped and far from human society. For, in fact, what is a charterhouse? It is not only the buildings in a forest setting filled with silence. Nor is it a social and economic life that desires self-sufficiency and poverty. It is not even primarily a monastic observance which has weathered many centuries.

No, a charterhouse is foremost a small community of solitary men united by the same ideal: to seek God in the depth of the heart. The Statutes of the Carthusian Order call it "the more ardently seeking, the more quickly finding, the more perfectly possessing God Himself in the depths of our souls." (1:4) And again: "To the praise of the glory of God, Christ, the Father's Word, has through the Holy Spirit, from the beginning chosen certain men, whom He willed to lead into solitude and unite to Himself in intimate love." (1:1)

There you have the whole Carthusian vocation! All its aspects exist only for this quest for the one thing necessary in the hearts of men. The monks attentively seek it alone in their cells, and together as brothers form a small church united around the daily Eucharist.

Does a life so withdrawn have meaning in our present world, so preoccupied with material success? Yes, certainly! For the solitary enters himself in search of an essential quality of the human soul that every human being carries. The silence of a charterhouse creates the space where the Word can freely sprout into truth and life. All have the capacity to know it—even those who reject it. We have all experienced a longing for this silence. But the noise and agitation of our society quickly mask it. Because of their silence, the Carthusians maintain a symbolic aura well beyond their merits, expressing the universal language of human destiny.

Would that the reader perusing the pages of this brochure be led to awareness of his own need for silence!



fr. marcellin theeuwes
prior carthusiae

Fr. Marcellin Theeuwes, Prior of la Grande Chartreuse
Superior General of the Carthusian Order

CALL TO THE DESERT

In 1084, St. Bruno led a small band of followers into the wilderness of the French Alps to embrace the call of Jesus Christ that “whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:33) St. Bruno lovingly assured them that in the “School of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” their sacrifice would blossom with beauty, delight and the spiritual benefit of many as they learned “a divine philosophy that alone shows the way to true happiness.” (St. Bruno’s letter to Raoul le Verd) In a tradition unbroken for over 900 years, Carthusians live as sons and daughters of St. Bruno, inspired by the Desert Fathers of early Christianity who thronged to the desert to lead solitary lives in poverty of spirit.



The Carthusian monastery, known as a Charterhouse, has always perceived itself as a desert where God draws His people “to speak to their hearts.” (Hosea 2:16) God guided Moses and the people of Israel to the wilderness of Sinai to speak intimately with them, teach them and form them into His children. This solitary landscape nurtured God’s covenant relationship of love and fidelity that sought to purify the Israelites of their sins and test their hearts. This biblical desert evokes the physical solitude of a monastery ideally situated in a mountain valley, far removed from contact with the exterior world.

The Carthusian enters an austere silence and solitude stripped of comforts and consolations found in the city. This heart of the desert is a territory of testing and purification. There God leads the faithful on a journey of self-emptying that surpasses the illusionary happiness of worldly success and possession. In his message on the Order’s ninth centenary, Pope John Paul II called this a radical break with the world “which is not contempt for the world, but an orientation given to one’s life for the constant seeking of the only good: ‘You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced.’ (Jeremiah 20:7)” This holy seduction opens up to an ever-deepening relationship with God.

The Order follows its own Statutes, rather than any monastic Rule. The Charterhouse is “a holy ground, a place where, as a man to a friend, the Lord and

His servants often speak together; there is the faithful soul frequently united with the Word of God...there is earth joined to heaven, the Divine to the human.”

(Statutes 4:1) As in the biblical desert experience, “The journey is long, and the way dry and barren, that must be traveled to attain the fount of water, the land of promise.” (Statutes 4:1) In the shared struggles that each experiences in solitude, the Carthusians always have found solace and strength in the maternal love and guidance of their principal patron, Mary, the Mother of God.

SERVING THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Although called to a solitary life, the Carthusian does not live for himself alone. He embraces austerity for the love and glory of God in accordance with His will, and for the intensely desired well-being of the world he has forsaken. Pope John Paul II affirms, “The Carthusians present the world to God daily.” (9th Centenary

Message to the
Carthusian Family,
May 14th, 2001)

All who
choose this solitary
life participate in
Christ’s prayer
and sacrifice for
the salvation of
all souls and serve
the Church as
faithful witnesses.
“In embracing a
hidden life we do
not abandon the
great family of



our fellow men. Apart from all, to all we are united, so that it is in the name of all that we stand before the living God.” (Statutes 34:2) Moreover, the Carthusian Order embraces penance so as to share in the saving work of Christ Who redeemed humanity from the bondage of sin through constant prayer to the Father and offering Himself to Him in sacrifice.

Pope Paul VI maintained that “dwellers in solitude” are not strangers to the

body of the Church and the world. “The contemplative life pertains to the fullness of the Church’s presence....Those who live such a life move the people of God by their example and also contribute to its development by their hidden mysterious fruitfulness.” (Pope Paul VI, Letter to the Carthusian Family, April 18, 1971)

Pope John Paul II also affirms that Carthusians do not follow their distinct vocation at the margins of the Church. “Rather it places you in its very heart. Your presence is a constant call to prayer. I too entrust to you my apostolic ministry as



Pastor of the universal Church. With your life give witness to your love for God. The world is watching you and, perhaps unknowingly, expects a great deal from your contemplative life.” (Pope John Paul II, Message to the Carthusians, October 5, 1984)

The Statutes reaffirm the Holy Father’s message. “Making Him the exclusive center of our lives through our profession, we testify to a world excessively absorbed by earthly things that there is no God but Him. Our life shows that something of the joys of heaven is present already here below; it prefigures our risen state and anticipates in a way the final renewal of the world.” (Statutes 34:3)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church regards the consecrated life as a special sign of the mystery of redemption at work within the Church. It is like a Sacrament—an instrument of God’s Will. “To follow and imitate Christ more nearly and to manifest more clearly His self-emptying is to be more deeply present to one’s contemporaries, in the heart of Christ. For those who are on this ‘narrower’ path encourage their brethren by their example, and bear striking witness that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes.”

(Part One, #932)

THE HISTORY OF THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER

THE BEGINNINGS

Twenty-four Carthusian communities today nurture a sacred lineage founded in the Medieval world of 11th-century France. St. Bruno, a highly respected and much loved Dean of the cathedral school at Rheims, France, grew inflamed by a call to the monastic life. He eventually withdrew from university life and, in 1084, settled along with six companions in a wild uninhabited region in the mountains outside the city of Grenoble, France. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they gradually developed a semi-eremitic form of monastic life, which became known as Carthusian. *Carthusian* and *Charterhouse* evolve from the Latin name of the mountain range, *Cartusia*, where this small band of monks settled. The French name is *Chartreuse*.

Gradually similar groups appeared in the same region. Drawn to the spirituality of St. Bruno and his monks, these early followers repeatedly requested a written account of this manner of life. Eventually, Guigo the fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse (as the first community became known) wrote *The Customs*, which the other groups adopted as their rule of life.

For many years, the leaders of these groups sought to strengthen their relationship with the community of the Grande Chartreuse, and finally persuaded the Prior to hold a common chapter in his house. At this first General Chapter in 1141, all the Priors united with the Grande Chartreuse in promising obedience for themselves and their monks. Coincidentally, a community of nuns in Prebayon, France, spontaneously embraced the Carthusian life.

Looking back on this humble beginning, Pope Pius XI observed that God chose Bruno, a man of eminent sanctity, to bring the contemplative life back to the glory of its original integrity. “To that intent, Bruno founded the Carthusian Order, imbued it thoroughly with his own spirit and provided it with those laws which

*“I am living in the wilderness
of Calabria, far removed from
all human habitation. There
are some brethren here with
me, some of whom are very
well educated, and they are
keeping assiduous watch for
their Lord, so as to open to
Him at once when He knocks.”*

St. Bruno's Letter to Raoul Le Verd

might efficaciously induce its members to advance speedily along the way of inward sanctity and of the most rigorous penance...[and] also impel them to persevere with steadfast hearts in the same austere and hard life.” (Pope Pius XI, Apostolic Constitution, “Umbratilem,” #7, July 8, 1924)

THE ORDER’S DEVELOPMENT

The General Chapters of the Carthusian Order have continued ever since this earliest beginning to guarantee its continuing authenticity and distinctive charism. Like any living organism, the Carthusian way of life has evolved with vitality and integrity. Yet its basic structure has retained its original form for over 900 years. The Order has managed to escape the evils of two extremes: rigid atrophy and loss of identity. “The Carthusians have so well retained the spirit of their founder, father and lawgiver,” Pope Pius XI commended, “that unlike other religious bodies, their Order has never...needed any amendment, or, as they say, ‘reform’.” (Pope Pius XI, Apostolic Constitution, “Umbratilem,” #7)

The Second Vatican Council invited the Carthusians to re-examine their unique lifestyle in a changing contemporary world. The Church advanced guidelines that the Carthusians used to perpetuate the essence of St. Bruno’s teachings. As an example, whereas before the brothers and the fathers had separate places during the Liturgy,

the brothers may now join the fathers at Mass and in the chanting of the Office.

In the Vatican Council’s renewal, the Holy See acknowledged that Carthusian monastic life allowed little room for revisions. “Nevertheless, we observe with pleasure the praiseworthy effort made by the Chapter to conform, with wisdom and prudence, your



Statutes to the conciliar and post-conciliar objectives for the updating of the religious life.” The Holy See also expressed satisfaction in “the jealous faithfulness with which...the (General) Chapter has known how to conserve that which from its origins has charac-

terized your Order...your special eremitic vocation to prayer, thanks to a life dedicated to God in contemplation and solitude, without which the Order would lose its reason to exist.” (Letter of Cardinal Ildebrando Antoniutti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes 1963-73)



THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD

For over nine centuries, the Popes have nurtured the enduring vitality of the Carthusian Order and have encouraged its members to remain the “Poor of Christ” or *“Pauperes Christi”* as the early Carthusians were known. “They who have left the transitory things of the world and serve God by a life entirely consecrated to Him... have chosen the better portion...liberated from the hindrances whereby the spirit of man is kept from the contemplation of divine truths.” (Pope Paul VI, Letter to the Carthusian Family, April 18, 1971) Today, the Carthusian continues to symbolize a beggar standing before the presence of God emptied of all but his constant striving for complete availability to Him.

The Order includes monks from every continent on the globe. The community has spread from La Grande Chartreuse, the Motherhouse in France, to seven other countries in Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, England and Slovenia) and two in the Americas (United States and Brazil). There are currently 24 Carthusian monasteries (including six houses of nuns). Already in the new millennium, foundations have been established in Korea and Argentina. The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration alone has monks from Canada, Ethiopia, France, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines and the United States.

The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration was established as the first Carthusian Monastery in the western hemisphere. In November 1950, the Reverend Father sent two monks to explore founding a monastery in the United States. For ten years, a small group of fathers and brothers lived on donated property near Whitingham, Vermont. In 1960, the Foundation transferred to a secluded area in Arlington, Vermont, also donated.

This beautiful property provides an ideal setting for monastic life in the “desert” of a quiet mountain valley lost in deep woods. The monastery encompasses over



11 square miles on a mountain-side near a small rural town in southwest Vermont. The Charterhouse nestles in a deep ravine surrounded by a huge natural buffer zone accessed by a single long private gravel road.

The main building is encased in rough-hewn granite trucked up the mountain from a Vermont quarry. Its ingenious construction incorporates huge monolithic blocks that suggest the Carthusian ideals of permanence, solidity and simplicity. The natural beauty of the unpolished stone evokes the Order’s lifestyle of steadfast endurance. The rough surface still carries the marks of drill rods inserted by the nameless workmen who pried free the 3-ton slabs, a visible human touch on a building dedicated to a life of intrinsic anonymity.

In the silence of his individual hermitage, the monk aspires to that glance that wounds God’s Heart, and that purity of love that allows God to be seen. In fidelity to solitude and silence, he fulfills his part in manifesting the fruit of redemption in the Church and in the world. Seeking a gradual reformation of the soul, he sits at the Lord Jesus’ feet, meditates on the Word of God, and aspires to a perfection of charity in union with God.

The monk journeys through the desert of silence, and thus no visitors are allowed in the monastery. The Charterhouse only admits those called to consider a Carthusian vocation, and only after a careful process of discernment and fulfillment of certain requirements.

At the heart of its solitude, the Charterhouse of the Transfiguration sustains a broad international culture of monks from all over the world. This multi-ethnicity is significant for a world so often torn apart by ethnic rivalries and excessive nationalism. Bonded together by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the monks affirm the supremacy of God and contribute to a harmonious family of humanity in search of their loving Creator.

The spiritual life lived from within the Mystical Body of Christ transcends all ethnic cultural conditionings and nationalities. Following in the footsteps of St. Bruno, the Charterhouse provides an opportunity to explore how brothers in Christ can live in peace: “Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.” (Psalms 133:1) As St. Paul reminds us, “In Christ we are a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“Through the centuries, the Carthusian Order has preserved intact this life hidden from men and united with God,” observed Pope Paul VI. “It is moreover in the best interests of the Church that this Order continues to prosper, in such a way that its members, desirous of rendering God the honor due to Him, might continually give their whole attention to this effort...It is therefore a pleasure for us to express publicly our paternal love and esteem for this religious family.” (Pope Paul VI, Letter to the Carthusian Family, April 18, 1971)



THE CARTHUSIAN WAY OF LIFE

In the House of God are many dwelling-places. The Charterhouse includes fathers, converse brothers and donates. All have left the world and sought the solitude of the desert in order to consecrate their whole life to the Lord. All follow Jesus Christ as the first exemplar of the Carthusian way of life. All are monks who share a common vocation experienced in different ways. This diversity enables the

family to fulfill its role in the Church with greater perfection.

"We cannot here pass over in silence a Mystery that merits our deepest consideration; the fact that this same Lord and Savior of mankind deigned to live as the first exemplar of our Carthusian life, when He retired alone to the desert and gave Himself to prayer and the interior life; treating His body hard with fasting, with vigils, and other penances; and conquering the devil and his temptations with spiritual arms."

(Statutes 2:10)

All three states of Carthusian life are equally called to a common contemplative ideal. "The complexity of the personal journey, psychological fragility, the difficulty of living faithfully over time, invite us to make sure that we neglect no means to offer to all who ask to enter the desert of Chartreuse a formation that includes all the dimensions of the person....Directing them along the path of interior freedom and docility to the Holy Spirit...." (Pope John Paul II, 9th Centenary Message to the Carthusian Family, May 14, 2001)

The physical structures of the Charterhouse reflect this diversity and encourage the respective Carthusian vocations. The hermitages of the fathers exist in one wing and the cells and work areas of the brothers in another. A common cloister unites these two living arrangements and gives access to a third shared area containing the Church, chapels, refectory, Chapter House and other areas essential for community life.

A candidate moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit chooses his path according to temperament, natural inclinations, endowments and needs. The father spends most of the day secluded in his hermitage, in prayer, study, and preparation for the priesthood (all are eventually ordained). The brother maintains his human and spiritual equilibrium through five or more hours of work daily, in addition to hours in his cell spent in prayer, spiritual reading, study and other exercises of monastic life.



Both vocations are authentically Carthusian. The brother allows the father (or cloister monk) to remain in his hermitage and carry out his calling in reclusion (except when called to leave his hermitage by the Rule). The cloister monk's continuous solitude grounds the brother to his own calling of silence and solitude in the more exterior activities of his life. Candidates to both come from similar backgrounds. Both have an identical goal of the contemplative life. Both are essential for the community to function. Together, these two vocations strengthen each other; if either were lacking, the Carthusian life would not be possible.

THE FATHERS

The father or cloister monk spends the greater part of his day in a hermitage, a separate four-room dwelling (normally of two stories) with an enclosed garden. The lower floor includes the garden, a workshop and a wood storage area. Here the monk cuts wood for his stove, and undertakes manual work according to





his talents and interests. The upper floor entrance is an anteroom (called the *Ave Maria*). Here the monk offers a Hail Mary when returning from the outside before entering the second room (called a *cubiculum*), where he spends the greater part of his day. This principal room includes an oratory, a study table with bookshelf, a dining table at a large window overlooking the surrounding mountains, a bed with rustic mattress, a woodstove, closets and a bathroom. Here the monk prays, studies, reads and engages in manual work.

All activities nurture a deeply contemplative life. At the oratory the monk recites both the Canonical Office and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin at fixed times throughout the day.

These practices establish his mind and heart in God, and direct his whole being to attention, love and union with Him. He offers prayers throughout the day in a simple sincere way that ever strengthens the fundamental direction of his life. His studies are a lifelong task that steadily builds the foundation necessary for the contemplative life. “For they are mistaken,” the Statutes read, “who think that they can easily attain to interior union with God, while previously having neglected the

study of the word of God, or later abandoned it altogether.” (Statutes 5:2)



The priesthood itself is envisaged in its monastic and contemplative dimension. The Carthusian priest has absolutely no outside ministry. He exercises his priestly service strictly for the community and vocational retreatants. His vocation becomes a means of greater conformity to Jesus, the High Priest, Who unites the monk in a special and sacramental way to His life of prayer and sacrifice.

Each monk participates in God’s creativity through manual work—summer gardening, wood splitting to fuel his winter stove or other solitary occupations. Prayerful labor encourages a monk to discover and accept a small part of the

Cross of Christ just as Christ accepted His cross for all humanity. Man imitates God his Creator through work, “because man alone has the unique characteristic of likeness to God....The spirituality of work should show the maturity called for by the tensions and restlessness of mind and heart.” (Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, “On Human Work,” #25)

Work can bring the body and mind into balance as it reposes the spirit that otherwise might be too easily fatigued from the rather intense life of prayer. It “honors the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from Him...it is a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the spirit of Christ.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Three, #2427)

Solitude and enclosure are essential elements lived not for their own sake, but as a privileged means of attaining intimacy with God. By restricting contact with others and subduing the ability to move about at will, the mind and entire direction of the hermit’s life is stabilized on the “one thing necessary.”

All other austerities must be viewed in the same spirit. For example, the father wears a hair shirt. The fasts and abstinences follow the example of Christ in the desert. By restraining the desires of the body, the mind is liberated to embrace and become inflamed with the life of God within.

No radios, television or newspapers are provided within the monastery. The Prior determines and communicates whatever outside news he considers vital to the community. Letter writing and visits are infrequent and normally restricted to the immediate family.

These practices are properly understood in the context of obedience as effective methods for drawing the monk to the very heart of God. “For, as all who wish to live according to a rule must observe obedience with great zeal, we, in the measure that the way of life we have embraced is more exacting and more austere, must obey it the more ardently and carefully; lest if—which God avert!—obedience is lacking, such great labors may well go unrewarded.” (Statutes 10:11)



The Father's Schedule

The typical weekday schedule of the cloister monk is as follows:

11:30 PM	Rise. Matins of our Lady.
12:15 AM	In Church. Canonical Matins and Lauds. Angelus.
2:15 or 3:15 AM	In cell. Lauds of our Lady. Retire to bed.
6:30 AM	Rise. Prime of our Lady and Canonical Prime; mental prayer.
7:45 AM	Angelus. In Church: Community Mass, followed by private Masses.
9:00 or 9:30 AM	In cell. Free time. Mental prayer. Terce of our Lady and Canonical Terce; spiritual reading, study and some manual work.
11:45 AM	Angelus. Sext of our Lady and Canonical Sext; dinner (always meatless; on Friday normally bread and water only). Free time.
2:00 PM	None of our Lady and Canonical None. Study or spiritual reading, manual work.
4:00 PM	Vespers of our Lady.
5:00 PM	In Church. Canonical Vespers. On return to cell: free time. From Easter to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross: a small meal. From the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to Easter: a collation of bread and a drink. On Fridays throughout the year: bread and water only.
7:00 PM	Angelus. Examination of conscience. Compline.
8:15 PM	Retire to bed.

Such a day passes with extraordinary rapidity.

THE CONVERSE BROTHERS

The converse brother, like the cloister monk, is called to find God in the silence of both his solitary cell and in his workshop. His living space includes a *cubiculum*, identical to that of the fathers, and a second, smaller room called an *ambulatory*. In his *cubiculum* the brother recites the Canonical Office and the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, and engages in prayer, spiritual reading and study. The brothers in formation follow a course of study that lays a strong foundation for prayer. All activities foster a contemplative prayer in which they find God and remain united with Him both in their cell and during work.

A morning work period follows time in the cell and assistance at Mass. Likewise, afternoon work time is preceded by further spiritual exercises in the cell. For, "In union with Jesus, a workman's son, they glorify the Father and associate the entire man in the work of redemption." (Statutes 15:1) The brothers normally work alone. But whether alone or with another, their silence safeguards and nourishes the

solitude of mind and spirit necessary to remain attentive to God and His guidance.

The work itself reinforces a life of active contemplation and obedience that encourages prayer and greater union with God. The tasks can be anything that meets the material needs of the house: cooking, baking,



carpentry, gardening, landscaping, secretarial work, bookkeeping, laundry work, repairing machinery, electrical work, book binding, cutting wood in the surrounding forest for winter burning. The labor provides balance and variety to an intense life of prayer. When offered in obedience to God the Father through the person of his superior, it anchors the brother more firmly in the life of Jesus, who always did the Will of the Father.

Like our Lord Himself, the brother uses his natural talents and supernatural gifts in full liberty of spirit to accomplish the tasks assigned him, sharing lovingly in the work that Christ came to do. “It is through man’s labor that not only ‘the fruits of our activity’ but also ‘human dignity, brotherhood and freedom’ must increase on earth.” (Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, “On Human Work” #27) This “ancient monastic tradition assures us that such work contributes greatly to the practice of those virtues from which flows perfect love.” (Statutes 15:2)

Fasts and abstinences are the other austerities that, in part, form the life of the brothers. These practices allow a brother to imitate Christ in His fast in the desert. Such mortification of the flesh frees him from the tendencies of his lower nature and enables him to follow the Lord more readily and cheerfully.

For the brothers, the distinctive intensity of their solitude and enclosure offers a pathway to spiritual and psychological equilibrium and yet differs from that of the fathers. This seclusion also tends to that purity of heart, which alone promises a vision of God. Like the cloistered monks, the brothers receive their outside world news only through the Prior and restrict their infrequent visitors and letter writing to family members.

These and other austerities are properly understood only if seen as effective means for drawing the monk to God and allowing God to become the very center of his life. With that goal, the brothers struggle with great zeal to observe obedience, knowing that if obedience is lacking, any labors however great may well go unrewarded.

Concerning the brothers, St. Bruno wrote with joyful heart, “Of you, dearest lay brothers... ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,’ because I see the riches of His mercy towards you... Indeed, what you love, what you know, is shown by what you do. It is clear that you are wisely harvesting Sacred Scripture’s sweetest and most life-giving fruit since you observe with great care and zeal true obedience. For true obedience, which is the carrying out of God’s commands, (is) the key to the whole spiritual life, and the guarantee of its authenticity...” (Statutes 11:9)

The Converse Brother’s Schedule

The typical weekday schedule of the brother is as follows:

12:00 (midnight) Rise.

12:15 AM In Church. Canonical Matins, return to cell by 2:00 AM, prayer, Angelus and retire to bed.

6:00 AM Rise. Prime of our Lady and Canonical Prime, meditation, spiritual reading, possibly study. Optional assistance at the brothers’ Mass. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament if desired.

7:45 AM Angelus. In Church: Community Mass. Return to cell for Terce of our Lady and Canonical Terce. Free time.

9:30 AM Work begins.

11:45 AM Angelus. Return to cell, Sext of our Lady and Canonical Sext; dinner, (always meatless; on Friday normally bread and water only); None of our Lady and Canonical None. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament if desired.

1:30 PM Work resumed.

4:00 PM End of work and return to cell. Wash up and free time.

5:00 PM In Church, Canonical Vespers.

5:30 PM In cell. Prayer, spiritual reading and study. Supper, except on Fridays and during Advent and Lent, when a simple collation of bread and a drink are taken. On Fridays throughout the year: bread and water only.

7:00 PM Angelus. Examination of conscience. Compline said before going to bed.

8:00 PM Retire to bed.

The brother’s life is especially well-balanced, partaking as it does in the solitude of the cell and in work.

THE DONATE BROTHERS

Living among the fathers and converse brothers are donate brothers who have likewise sought the solitude of the Charterhouse in order to consecrate their whole life to the Lord. Each brother has an alternative option called donation. Instead of vows, he makes a promise to the House and the Order of obedience, chastity, and living without personal possessions within the monastery, although keeping the ownership of whatever he might otherwise possess. He follows the same stages of probation as the fathers and converse brothers. After this probation period and the vote of the community (including perpetual donates), the Prior may admit the brother either to perpetual donation or to a donation renewed every three years. The donate brother has greater flexibility in his schedule. For example, he is not held to assist at the night office, although encouraged to do so.

LIFE IN COMMUNITY

The grace of the Holy Spirit unites solitaries into a communion of love, in the likeness of the Church, which remains one, even though spread throughout the world. The Sacred Liturgy, especially the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is the noblest form of community life, since it establishes the deepest and most intimate communion. When we join in it each day, we have but



one heart and one soul as we present ourselves before God. This unity of the Carthusian family is consummated in Christ, who is Himself present and at prayer.

In solitude, the monk remains, in the depths of his soul and by prayer, always united not only with his brothers in the monastery but also with the whole human race. For, “If we are truly living in union with God, our minds and hearts far from becoming shut in on themselves, open up to embrace the whole universe and the mystery of Christ that saves it.” (Statutes 34:2)

The community meets three times each day in Church to chant the Latin Gregorian of the Mass and the Divine Office according to the Carthusian Rite. The

brothers either join in the chanting or remain in silent prayer. Such gatherings unite the community on the deepest level into a communion in charity. In the middle of the night they rise and together, for several hours, chant in a spirit of vigilant waiting for the return of the Lord, nourished by readings taken from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. Although the chant is done in Latin, the readings, the prayers and the other non-chanted parts of the Office are in the vernacular.

Sundays and Solemnities are special expressions of community life and can be called “family days.” On these days all of the canonical hours except Prime and Compline are chanted together in Church. Conventual Mass can be concelebrated and the noon meal is taken together in the refectory while one of the monks reads from the Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. After the Office of None, the entire community gathers in the Chapter House to listen to the Martyrology for the upcoming week and a reading from the Gospels or the Statutes, and to discuss any issues concerning the community’s welfare.



Every week the fathers share a fraternal gathering with friendly conversation following their common chapter, and once a week they take an afternoon walk together through the forests. The brothers, whose cenobitic life is more pronounced, meet monthly for conversation after common

chapter, and walk together one afternoon a month. Twice a year, both fathers and brothers enjoy an all-day outing, and on one of these share an outdoor lunch. All community walks are secluded from contact with outsiders.

These gatherings are occasions in which the monks grow in knowledge and understanding of each other, and allow the love, which their cell life nourishes, to flower into fraternal charity. Conversely, this family spirit sustains the monk in his solitude. The solitary life and communal life thus interact in a meaningful way, united in the loving embrace of Mary, the Mother of all Carthusians. For we honor, with a very special affection, the Blessed Virgin Mary who watches over our solitude with maternal care.



The Officers of the House work in the service of the whole community. The Prior's principal service is to mirror to all the love of the heavenly Father thereby uniting all into one family. His dress and appearance show no outward sign of his office. He is normally elected by the community to serve until relieved of his charge by the General Chapter.

The Prior appoints all other Officers. The Vicar, the second in the House, assumes discreet and watchful care over the cloister monks. The Procurator provides such care on behalf of the converse and donate brothers, and is entrusted with the material responsibilities of the monastery. The Novice Masters are responsible for the formation of the young and for assisting vocational retreatants in their discernment. In whatever service they render, the Officers are called to maintain vigilantly the spirit of their vocation through a life given to prayer in solitude.

Pope John Paul II views the contemplative search for God as "inseparable from love of the brethren, love that makes us recognize the face of Christ in the poorest among men...St. John does not stop recalling it: 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.' (1 John 4:7) St. Bruno understood it well, he who never separated the primacy he gave to God, throughout his entire life, from the deep humanity to which he bore witness among his brothers...." (9th Centenary Message to the Carthusian Family, May 14, 2001)



MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CARTHUSIANS

Since its origins, the Carthusian Order has paid a special homage to the Mother of God. Mary is the Order's principal Patron (along with St. John the Baptist), ever the Christian, full of redemptive grace. As the Mother of Christ and of the Mystical Body, she begets her son spiritually in the soul. In this awareness, the Carthusian naturally prays with and to Christ's Mother.

For every Christian, and for every human being, Mary is the one who first believed. Out of her faith as Spouse and Mother, she desires to act upon all those who entrust themselves to her as her children. And the more her children persevere and progress in this attitude, the nearer Mary leads them to the "unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:8) They recognize ever more clearly the dignity of man in all its fullness and the definitive meaning of his vocation, for "Christ fully reveals man to man himself." (Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, #22)

Mary plays a primary role in the solitary life of the monk. As far as human

frailty allows, his soul continually strives to draw close to God and remain faithful to this spousal covenant of love. This effort unites the Carthusian in a special way with the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we are accustomed to call *Mater Singularis Cartusienis* (the Mother in particular of all Carthusians). We honor her with a special affection by daily reciting her Little Office and by consecrating our church and community to her Immaculate Heart.

Devotion to Mary leads us into a living communion with her Son Jesus and allows us to experience the depth of His love. She teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own pilgrimage of faith. Her “school” leads to a harvest of holiness as we contemplate the beauty of the countenance of Jesus and the mystery of His life. Mary invites us to follow her example at the Annunciation, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) She guides us to ask humbly for that which opens us to the light and, in the end, leads to the obedience of faith.

In addition to the Canonical Divine Office, the Carthusian begins and ends each day with Our Lady so the entire day is lovingly enclosed in her maternal embrace. The monk recites the Office of the Blessed Virgin each day in his cell. To implore the continuous protection of Mary, every Charterhouse celebrates a daily Mass in her honor. On Saturday, this Mass is celebrated as the Community Mass. On other days it is said in private.

Other daily devotions to Mary include the singing of the *Salve Regina* at the end of Vespers and the *Ave Maria* at the end of Lauds, and the recitation of the *Angelus* in her honor four times daily where each of the three Hail Marys is preceded by a *veniam* (the monk kisses the floor). Monks also recite a Hail Mary each time they enter their cell from the outside. Particularly beautiful is the Carthusian custom of reciting the Little Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary before the corresponding Canonical Hours (except at Compline when we recite her Office last). The Order thus addresses its first and last words of the day “to Jesus through Mary.”



VOCATION

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

Who is called to a life such as this? The vocation so centers in God and is directed by Him and for Him that the choice cannot possibly come from man. The hermit cannot progress along this often perplexing path unless God wishes it and calls the person to it, and gives him the graces for it. God must summon the person; otherwise it would be without substantial content or meaning, and hardly possible to live fruitfully. The most essential element in a Carthusian vocation is the grace of a call in which God makes Himself known to the soul.

THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED



The conviction of a call to this life, however, requires discernment and judgment to avoid possibilities of error. A candidate needs fairly good, though not exceptional, physical health to sustain the rigors of the vocation. In particular, given the more intense stresses of solitude, a candidate must be free of any serious emotional and psychological pathology; indeed even

lesser degrees of trauma can prove an obstacle. The common practice is, therefore, to have candidates take psychological testing before admittance into the community.

The Carthusian life requires significant human maturity and sound judgment. The Statutes allow no one under 20 to be admitted, and in fact, given the delayed maturity in the West today, a person does not enter before he is 23. Since adaptability to such a life becomes increasingly difficult after mid-life, the upper age limit is 45, though candidates over 40 are not often considered. A reposed, open and sociable character is very desirable. In addition, cloister candidates are asked to have some knowledge of Latin and a liberal arts background if at all possible, with at least two years of college. The brothers are encouraged to have a high school education or the equivalent.

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Once the applicant has contacted the community, the Charterhouse sends a questionnaire concerning personal information and references. If the Superiors discover there is sufficient possibility of a vocation, they invite him to make a retreat of at least a month's duration (if possible) at the monastery. During his retreat, he is gradually introduced to the Carthusian life and encouraged to participate as fully as his capacity permits. If at its end, the applicant remains convinced of his calling and wishes to take the next step, and if the Superiors, with the assistance of the grace of God, validate his discernment, then together they decide when he should enter the novitiate.

Once admitted, the candidate becomes an *aspirant* for a period of about six months and receives a black mantle and skullcap. He next undertakes a *postulancy* of about a year and receives a longer mantle with a hood. During this period, it is discerned whether he should proceed to the state of *novice* where he becomes a member of the community. Once admitted to the novitiate, the candidate receives the monastic habit consisting of a white tunic and a short cowl without bands over which is worn a black hooded mantle. He remains in this state for two years.

If he remains firm in the conviction of his calling, the candidate may be allowed to take the vows of stability, obedience and conversion of life (in which are implicitly included chastity and poverty) for three years. He then replaces the black mantle and short cowl with a long cowl with bands. At the end of this first term, he renews his vows for two additional years. After this second term, he leaves the novitiate and the supervision of the Novice Master to live among the solemn professed and perpetual donates where he slowly forms himself to the maturity of a solitary. If assurances appear that he is called to and capable of the Carthusian life, the monk makes his final and solemn profession.



CALL TO ACT

Although we do not use the Internet, the Order has established websites in various languages to meet conveniently the needs of those interested. The websites contain a variety of information about the Carthusian life, history, monasteries, Statutes, and diverse bibliographies, as well as email addresses, photographs, liturgies, and links to other points of interest. The official website of the Carthusian Order, **<http://www.chartreux.org>**, also will link you to the other Carthusian sites.

After reviewing the additional information on these Carthusian websites, persons who understand that they are called to this life are invited to contact:

Vocational Director
Charterhouse of the Transfiguration
Carthusian Monastery
1800 Beartown Road
Arlington, Vermont 05250
fax: 802-362-3584
eMail: carthusians_in_america@juno.com.



MESSAGE FROM THE POPE

Pope John Paul II's message to Reverend Father Marcellin Theeuwes and to all members of the Carthusian family on the 900th anniversary of the death of our Father, St. Bruno:

"I invite all members of the Carthusian family, through the holiness and simplicity of their life, to remain like a city on a hilltop and like a light on a lamp stand. Rooted in the Word of God, nourished by the sacraments of the Church, sustained by the prayer of St. Bruno and his brothers, may they remain for the whole Church and in the center of the world places of hope...where love, drawing strength from prayer, the wellspring of communion, is called to become a pattern of life and source of joy.

"As a visible expression of the offering of one's whole life lived in union with that of Christ, the cloistered life which makes one feel the precariousness of life, invites one to trust in God alone. It sharpens the thirst to receive the graces granted by meditation on the Word of God. It is also the place of spiritual communion with God and with the brethren, where the limitation of space and contacts works to the advantage of interiorizing Gospel values....(cf. #3).

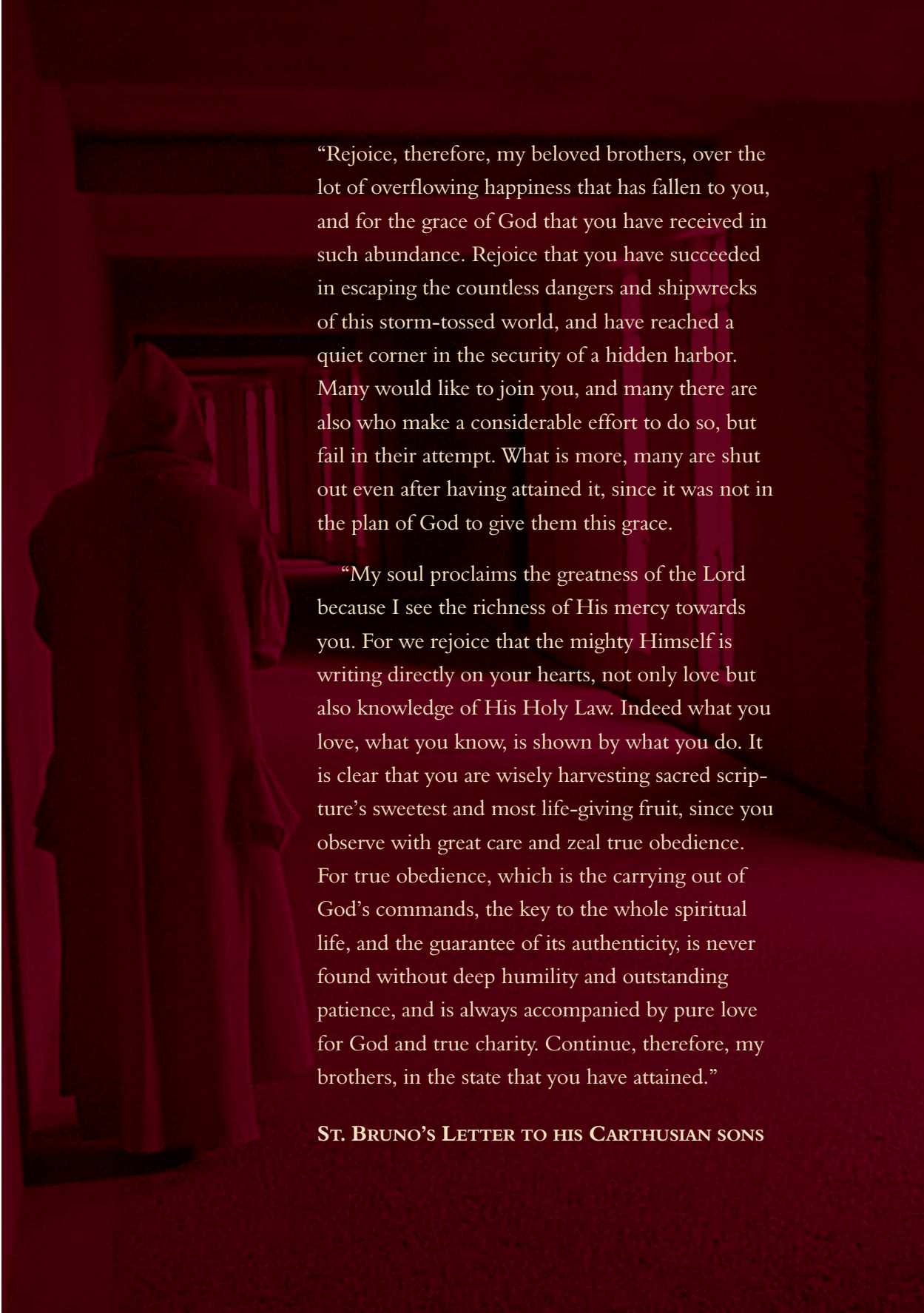
"...The ninth centenary of the dies natalis of St. Bruno gives me the opportunity to renew my strong trust in the Carthusian Order in its mission of selfless contemplation and intercession for the Church and for the world...seeking to Be rather than to Do, the Carthusian Order gives the Church strength and courage in its mission, in order to put out into deep waters and permit the Good News of Christ to inflame all humanity.... (cf. #4).

"...I ardently ask the Lord to make resound in the hearts of numerous young men the call to leave everything to follow Christ poor, along the demanding but freeing journey of the Carthusian vocation."(cf. #4).



Published with the approval of
Reverend Father Marcellin,
Superior General of the Carthusian Order,
and the authorization of the
Most Reverend Kenneth A. Angell,
Eighth Bishop of Burlington.

Charterhouse of the Transfiguration
April 20, 2003
RESURRECTIO DOMINI

A person wearing a white hooded robe stands with their back to the camera in a dark, narrow hallway. The hallway has wooden doors and walls, and the lighting is dim, creating a somber and contemplative atmosphere.

“Rejoice, therefore, my beloved brothers, over the lot of overflowing happiness that has fallen to you, and for the grace of God that you have received in such abundance. Rejoice that you have succeeded in escaping the countless dangers and shipwrecks of this storm-tossed world, and have reached a quiet corner in the security of a hidden harbor. Many would like to join you, and many there are also who make a considerable effort to do so, but fail in their attempt. What is more, many are shut out even after having attained it, since it was not in the plan of God to give them this grace.

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord because I see the richness of His mercy towards you. For we rejoice that the mighty Himself is writing directly on your hearts, not only love but also knowledge of His Holy Law. Indeed what you love, what you know, is shown by what you do. It is clear that you are wisely harvesting sacred scripture’s sweetest and most life-giving fruit, since you observe with great care and zeal true obedience. For true obedience, which is the carrying out of God’s commands, the key to the whole spiritual life, and the guarantee of its authenticity, is never found without deep humility and outstanding patience, and is always accompanied by pure love for God and true charity. Continue, therefore, my brothers, in the state that you have attained.”

ST. BRUNO’S LETTER TO HIS CARTHUSIAN SONS



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