



Chronicle of the Abbey

First semester 2025



Abbaye
Saint-Joseph
de Clairval

DEAR FRIENDS, READERS, AND RETREATANTS,

THROUGH our conversations with some of you, we have noticed that the monastic life of our community often remains a mystery, even to those familiar with the Benedictine tradition or who have visited other monasteries. What, then, is a Clairval monk, whether living in Flavigny or Solignac?

A Clairval monk is above all a seeker of God, a man who has heard the Lord's call to the monastic life: "*Who is the man that desires life and longs to see good days?*" (Prologue to the Rule). In responding to this call, he commits himself to a fraternal community, guided by the Rule of Saint Benedict and under the leadership of an abbot. His vocation is to *praise, honor, and serve God* through a life dedicated to prayer, spiritual reading, and work, in the hope of one day beholding his Creator in the eternal Kingdom.

Prayer is the beating heart of the monk's life. Seven times a day, he gathers in the choir to celebrate the Divine Office: Vigils, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. These pivotal moments in the community's life are offered to God in humble and reverent adoration, in thanksgiving for blessings received, in intercession for all humanity—especially those who do not pray—and in union with the Life, Passion, and Death of Christ for the redemption of the world's sins.

This prayer, called the *Opus Dei* (the Work of God), is the monk's primary occupation, his true work. It is nourished by his personal prayer and spiritual reading.

To better share our life with you, we will now offer a chronicle of our community's significant events every four months. Through these annals, you will follow the life of the Saint Joseph Abbey of Clairval over the months. We hope this will help you better understand our vocation and mission, so that you may continue to accompany us with your friendship and prayers!



*+fr Jean-Bernard
abbé*

ADDRESSING the Benedictine monks of Vallombrosa on 28 June, Pope Leo XIV gave thanks "for the gift of your monastic life, reminding the entire Church of the primacy of God as the source of joy and the foundation of personal and social transformation." Our life of prayer, centered first on the adoration and free praise of God, extends to thanksgiving for blessings received and intercession for the great intentions of the Church and the world. With this perspective, we wish to review with you the significant events of this first semester.

Throughout the month of March, we offered several novenas of prayers to Saint Joseph, seeking our own conversion, new monastic vocations, and financial support for our projects at the "heart of the monastery."

On 26 April, our postulant Aubin donned the monastic habit, taking the name Brother Joseph-Marie. Now a novice, he has joined the novitiate alongside Brother Bernard-Marie, with the intention of joining the Solignac community after his formation, while Brother Bernard-Marie will remain in Flavigny. We give thanks to the Lord for the hope that these new vocations inspire in us.

In fraternal communion, we surround our sick Brothers with our prayers and care, while recognizing the fruitfulness of their sufferings offered in union with the Passion of Christ. Our Father Jacques, weakened by Parkinson's disease, was hospitalized in the neurology department in Dijon from 4 March to 17 April. A subcutaneous dopamine pump was installed, and the

positive results allowed his return to Flavigny, to the great joy of his Brothers. On 15 and 22 April, our Father Thomas, also afflicted with Parkinson's, suffered two consecutive falls, requiring knee surgery. Back at the abbey, he resumed his place in the choir in June, still full of zeal for the Divine Office.

At our Limousin priory of Solignac, the magnificent stalls from the Abbey of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers, donated by the nuns of that monastery, have been installed in the choir of the abbey church. Additionally, a two-hectare adjacent plot was acquired to provide guests with a space conducive to rest and contemplation, while preserving the monastic enclosure. Our "sisters," the bees, housed in some thirty hives, produce abundant honey, a living image of God's Providence toward us.



The ancient choir stalls from Sainte-Croix Abbey arrive in Solignac

In Flavigny, from 31 March to 2 April, Fr. Frédéric Dumas presented the theology of the body of Saint John Paul II to the Fathers and student monks, emphasizing that true love is expressed through self-giving and communion among persons.

On Saturday, 5 April, our prayer became reparative, marking the centenary of Our Lady's request to Sister Lucia of Fatima regarding the first five Saturdays of the month: the community recited the Rosary, followed by the act of reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On 21 April, we sang the *Subvenite* for Pope Francis, who passed away that morning. In the days that followed, our prayer intensified, in union with the entire Church, to implore from God a worthy successor to Peter. The election of Pope Leo XIV, announced on 8 May, filled us with joy.

On 11 May, we joined in the thanksgiving of our Father Emmanuel, who renewed his monastic vows on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his first profession.

On 13 May, the sister communities of Flavigny and Solignac made a pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial to mark



Jubilee pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial

the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary. This pilgrimage allowed us to gather fully (except for our sick Brothers and their caregivers) for the first time since the founding of Solignac in 2021. In the afternoon, Father Robert Huet, S.J., gave a conference on the message of the apparitions, suggesting applications for our monastic life. We took the opportunity to renew our consecrations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the chapel of the apparitions.

On 30 June, our architect, M. Joël Gigou, returned his soul to God after a long illness. Our Father Abbot celebrated his funeral on 4 July in Versailles. The deceased had drawn up the plans for our construction projects, both those already completed and those in progress.

We express our gratitude to God for the successful completion of our Saint Joseph workshops, officially handed over on 27 July. In these new buildings, the monks will now work in a more suitable environment, so that *in all things, God may be glorified*, as Saint Benedict exhorts (RB 57). We express our deep gratitude to all our benefactors, whose generosity made this first phase of construction possible; we keep them in our prayers, grateful for their support, which has enabled this material achievement in service of our spiritual life.

Through these events, our monastic life is sustained by prayer—adoration, praise, thanksgiving, intercession, and reparation—which binds us to God and to one another. We strive to live out the precept of our Father Saint Benedict: "Let nothing be preferred to the love of Christ" (RB 4, 21).



Ancient painting of Saint Benedict at Subiaco donated to us by a benefactor

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