



Chronicle of the Abbey

Second semester 2025



Abbaye
Saint-Joseph
de Clairval

DEAR FRIENDS,

THE PREVIOUS chronicle addressed the central place of the Divine Office in the life of the Benedictine monk—the choral, communal prayer: Saint Benedict recommends that one “prefer nothing to it” (cf. *Rule*, ch. 43, 3). For this reason the Office always retains a privileged place in the monk’s heart. Yet he does not forget that Our Lord asks still more of His disciples when He exhorts them to “pray always and not lose heart” (Lk 18:1).

Consecrated to the service of God, the monk offers Him an eminent sacrifice of praise: certainly first through choral prayer, but also in every other aspect of his life, which he strives to nourish and enliven by an uninterrupted prayer. Hence, in addition to the Divine Office, there are privileged moments that allow him to cultivate a secret prayer capable of renewing his relationship, in the deepest part of his being, with the God who is present everywhere. This is precisely what Saint Benedict teaches when, at the heart of his Rule, in the magnificent chapter on humility, he reminds us that we live under God’s gaze, “convinced that He regards us from heaven continually and at every hour” (ch. 7). Therefore we must constantly keep before our eyes the holy fear of God and take care never to forget Him.

Thus the choral prayer, personal prayer, the readings—above all the *lectio divina* (meditated reading of Sacred Scripture)—and even manual labor are all permeated by the awareness of God’s presence at the heart of our lives. In this way the monk fulfills his “principal office, namely the humble and noble service of the divine Majesty within the enclosure of the monastery, in a hidden life” (Second Vatican Council, decree *Perfectæ caritatis*, no. 9).

Each day the monk of Saint Joseph devotes at least one hour to personal prayer (oraison, meditation, thanksgiving after Communion) in order to root himself in an authentic relationship with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He thus desires to live fully what Saint Paul writes to the Thessalonians: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Th 5:16–18).

Pray Without Ceasing



Rejoice Always

SOME echoes from Flavigny and Solignac: On 2 July the Primate Abbot of the Benedictine Order, Dom Jeremias Schröder, visited us in Flavigny. On his way he made an impromptu stop to visit the priory of Solignac. He presented the community with a project for a monastic jubilee to mark the 1,500th anniversary of the foundation of Monte Cassino by Saint Benedict (529–2029), who evangelised Europe “by the cross, by the book and by the plough”, as Saint Paul VI proclaimed on 24 October 1964 in the letter *Pacis nuntius*.

On 5 July we welcomed back to Flavigny our Father Vincent, who definitively resumes his place among us after many years of teaching at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

On 11 July, the solemnity of Saint Benedict, Mgr Antoine Hérouard, Archbishop of Dijon, celebrated Pontifical Mass in our church. During recreation he reviewed the joys and sorrows of the diocese: joy at the

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numerous adult baptisms, hope for priestly vocations, but also sorrow over the deaths, in the past two years, of six active priests.

On 15 August our Father Thomas celebrated his golden jubilee of religious profession: fifty years of monastic life in the service of God and of the monks, whose tireless infirmarian he was and remains.

On 23 August M. François-Xavier Pons, staff member of Aid to the Church in Need, presented the community with the dramatic situation of Christians in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali), who face systematic persecution organised by Al-Qaeda.

On 11 September our novices and their “guardian angels” travelled to Solignac to strengthen fraternal bonds and assist our brothers in their various tasks. In the same month two confessionals were installed in the abbey church of Solignac to accommodate the increasing number of faithful wishing to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Blessing of the new workshops: a shower of graces!

On 26 September the Abbot solemnly blessed the new workshops in the presence of the craftsmen involved, the mayor and the municipal council of Flavigny.

For the continuation of the “Heart of the Monastery” construction project, the death of our much-regretted architect, M. Noël Gigou, somewhat disrupted our initial plans. Nevertheless, we resume the work with confidence under our new architect, M^{me} Isabelle Blondin (Arnay-le-Duc), counting on the unfailing support of Saint Joseph and our generous benefactors!

True Fraternity is a Remedy

On 10 October the novitiate, accompanied by the Abbot, made a pilgrimage to Mesnil-Saint-Loup near Troyes, where Abbot Emmanuel André, in the second half of the nineteenth century, sanctified a Champenois village and founded the Benedictine monastery of Notre-Dame de la Sainte Espérance, affiliated to the Olivetane congregation.

On 11 October Bishop Bozo paid his final visit to Solignac before departing for La Rochelle. He confided that the monks’ establishment in Solignac had been one of the great joys of his episcopate.

On 21 October Father Silouane, former superior of the Congregation of the Brothers of Bethlehem, gave a series of conferences on “our monastic roots”. Drawing from the writings of Saint John, he outlined four major stages of the spiritual life: recognition of one’s sin (*metanoia*), observance of the commandments (especially fraternal love), combat against the three concupiscences, and reception of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

On 28 October in Solignac, the statue of the Blessed Virgin venerated by the people of Solignac was enthroned under the title of Our Lady of Holy Hope. About ten priests took part in the ceremony presided over by Father Pierre Morin, diocesan administrator.

On 2 November Father Jean-Mariam de l’Enfant-Jésus, formerly a priest of the diocese (Abbé Vincent Sauer), who had professed solemn vows the previous Sunday as a Carmelite in the Toulouse province, addressed the community.

Two priests of the diocese of Dijon, friends of our abbey, died in November: Father Marc Géraud, a still relatively young priest who had given us a second-hand car, and Father Jean-Charles Rochet, a canonist and faithful friend of the abbey for forty years.

For Christmas night the Child Jesus gave us the gift of a beautiful layer of snow that fell during the evening. After Midnight Mass everything was white!

On 31 December Father Éric Millot, former Vicar General of Dijon, presented us with “Petit Béthanie”, a house of welcome for priests in difficulty in the Aube department. We retain this sentence from his talk: “True fraternity is a remedy for much unease.”

Give Thanks in All Circumstances

In Solignac the five-day Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are offered once a month, following the same pattern as in Flavigny. During the course of 2025 more than thirty retreats have been preached by the monks of our two monasteries to over six hundred retreatants.

This monastic chronicle reveals, beneath the diversity of events, the invisible work of unceasing prayer. Saint Francis of Assisi, whose death the Church will commemorate in 2026 on its eighth centenary, expressed it thus: “Almighty, just and merciful God, of ourselves we are nothing but poverty; but You, for Your own sake, grant us to do what we know You will, and always to will what pleases You, so that, inwardly purified, inwardly enlightened and set ablaze by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow in the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.”



Enthronement of Our Lady of Holy Hope at Solignac

“Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances”: may this word of Saint Paul accompany us all throughout this year, in which the monks of Saint Joseph will continue to carry you in their intercession.



The monks thank you for each of your alms and pray for you.

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