



ABBAYE SAINT-JOSEPH DE CLAIRVAL  
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## *Chronicle for the Year 2022*

### DEAR FRIENDS OF SAINT JOSEPH ABBEY,

Last February 22, our community celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its existence in an intimate setting. In 1972, Fathers Augustine, Anthony and Peter began a long journey that would lead sixteen years later to the canonical erection of the monastery of Saint Joseph. We give thanks for this half century and for the happy or painful events that have marked it. "All is grace", said Saint Therese of the Child Jesus shortly before her death. From February 20 to 22, we prayed the rosary in the church to give thanks and to ask for Our Lady's help for the future. For one year, every Wednesday, before the office of Compline, we sing an antiphon in honor of our Patron and Protector Saint Joseph.

On February 11, 2022, Pope Francis named Msgr Antoine Hérouard Archbishop of Dijon, replacing Archbishop Roland Minnerath, who had reached the age limit after eighteen years of service to the Church in Dijon. Archbishop Minnerath came to say goodbye on February 17. He is retiring to Strasbourg, but does not forget our Abbey, which he took care of with so much devotion as ecclesiastical superior. Our Father Abbot thanks him and assures him of our grateful prayers. The new Archbishop of Dijon came on June 3 to meet the community. At recreation, he recounted the main stages of his priestly life marked by many responsibilities. Since 2017, he was Auxiliary Bishop of Lille, and since 2019 Apostolic Delegate for the Shrine of Lourdes. Bishop Hérouard's motto is "*Deus dilexit mundum*" (Jn 3:16): God has so loved the world. It is because He loves us that God sent us His only Son to redeem us and merit our salvation.

The monastic family of Saint Joseph's Abbey is now divided into two living quarters: the mother house located in Flavigny, and Saint Joseph's Priory founded in the former Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's Abbey of Solignac, in the diocese of Limoges. Since the erection of the Priory in November 2021, ten monks representing various age groups live permanently in the buildings and ensure the singing of the Divine Office in the magnificent Romanesque abbey church. Last winter was harsh for the founders due to the almost complete lack of heating. The winter of 2022-2023 will hopefully be more benign

thanks to the temporary installation of wood-burning stoves (or, failing that, electric radiators), pending a more durable solution: a wood-burning boiler room, which is under study. The passage of time has not spared the Maurist buildings (early 18th century). The monks have courageously set about the task. The kitchen was relocated to a more convenient place, closer to the refectory. The roofs, very damaged in places, will have to be repaired. The



*Bishop Bozo meeting the monks in Solignac on August 15*

refurbishment of the guesthouse will take place at a later date. From the spring of 2023, Ignatian retreats will be organized at the Priory, but the number of participants will remain limited by the number of rooms available (a maximum of ten).

Bishop Pierre-Antoine Bozo of Limoges came to Flavigny on May 22, accompanied by Mr. Damien Deleersnijder, the diocesan project director. He celebrated the conventual Mass and spoke to the community about their young Priory. On the evening of May 22, the monks of Solignac took possession of a piece of land located below the monastery, which had been on loan to the municipality for three years. At the end of July, this land—separated from the buildings by a public street—became accessible from the abbey by an underground passageway, formerly dug by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and restored to its original condition by drainage work. A vegetable garden has been installed in this field, the embryo of a future farm. On August 15, Bishop Bozo celebrated the Assumption Mass at Solignac and met with the community. The links forged by the monks with the locals—while respecting the monastic enclosure—give hope that the Priory will integrate well with the neighborhood.

Let us return to Flavigny. A small episode of Covid affected some of the monks in January, forcing the closure of the monastic guesthouse. The retreat planned for January took place at the Tyburn Monastery of the Benedictine nuns in Saint-Loup-sur-Aujon, about 50 miles away from Flavigny.

The canonical visitation provided for by our Constitutions took place from March 20 to 29. It was carried out by Dom Jean Pateau, Abbot of Fontgombault, and Dom Marc Guillot, Abbot of La Garde. The visitors began by going to the Priory of Solignac, and then proceeded to Flavigny. The charter for the canonical visitation was read to the community on March 29 after being approved by Bishop Hérouard. This text includes a word of encouragement and an invitation to watch over certain points of observance.

On May 14, Bishop Deenihan of Meath in Ireland, visited us accompanied by his two vicars general and his chancellor. He explained the situation of the Benedictine Priory of Silverstream founded in his diocese in 2012 and canonically erected in 2017. The founder, Dom Mark Kirby, has retired for health reasons. As a result, this community is in need of guidance to meet the expectations of the



*The choir of the Abbey of Solignac*



many young men who have joined. Bishop Deenihan asked our Abbot to “lend” him our Father Basil, well known to the brothers in Silverstream. Father Basil has been appointed Prior Administrator for one year. At the request of the Bishop, the monks of Silverstream will take turns to stay in Flavigny for a extended period of time in order to get to know our customs and to benefit from our monastic experience. For our part, we are happy to enjoy the fraternal presence—and the generous work—of these young monks.



*Projected view of Saint Joseph's Abbey after the work*

In June, we received the positive endorsement from the mayor of Flavigny and from the “Bâtiments de France” on the construction projects of the new building in the “heart of the monastery”, in view of the restructuring of the internal services of the Abbey, in particular the kitchen and the infirmary. These new premises will allow us to better

assist our Brothers who are sick or who have entered old age. The work will begin at the beginning of 2023. In view of the construction, some workshops will have to be moved. For this first phase of work, the structural work companies will arrive in December. Before that, the Brothers electricians have moved the existing networks (heating, electricity, water, weak currents, fiber) in order to carry out the earthworks in complete safety, and to allow the icon, mail order and bookbinding workshops to continue their work.

On July 10, Bishop François Touvet of Châlons-en-Champagne, came to preside at the first Vespers of Saint Benedict, and then addressed the Community. He gave us news of his diocese where he is trying to create “spiritual oases in the desert to attract new Christians”. He also told us about his difficult mission with the members of the “Verbe de Vie” community, whom he must accompany following the dissolution of the institute.

Burgundy has not been spared by the drought and heat wave this summer. Water restrictions were imposed by the prefecture. Unwatered lawns turned yellow under the burning sun. The daily prayers of the monks “*ad petendam pluviam*” (to obtain rain) were answered by the intercession of Our Lady. On August 15, the day of Her Assumption, a heavy rain came to water the earth... and our grateful hearts. The showers of the following days made the meadows green again, for the joy of our eyes and the more earthly nourishment of the cattle.

On August 18, we celebrated St. Bernard Tolomei, heavenly patron of our Abbot. The abbatial office is delicate: the abbot must often “juggle” with difficulties. This reality was highlighted by Father Prior with a masterly juggling act performed with three balls, accompanied by the flute and the piano.



*Juggling act for the Abbot's feast day*



*Monastic profession of Brother Pierre-Joseph*

We had the joy of participating in the monastic profession of three young Brethren from our Abbey: on August 15, Brother Pierre-Joseph pronounced his temporary vows; on October 1, Brother Timothée pronounced his perpetual vows, and on November 26, Brother Odilon took the same step. The ceremony of perpetual profession by which a monk commits himself for life to a monastery by the vows of stability, conversion of life and obedience, is the culmination of a process of about seven years. During this period, the abbot, the novice master and the community verify whether the brother fulfills the three conditions set forth by St. Benedict: "We shall look to see if the novice is truly seeking God, if he is zealous for the Work of God, for obedience and for

humiliations" (*Rule*, chapter 58). The Lord never allows himself to be outdone in generosity. He asks for the sacrifice of the goods of this world, but gives in return eternal goods.

On October 28, during the Mass celebrated on the feast of the holy apostles Simon and Jude, highly venerated in Flavigny, the Abbot instituted five young monks as lectors. This liturgical ministry confers on them graces of state to read the Holy Scriptures during the Mass or the Divine Office.

The community's annual retreat was preached from November 15 to 22 by Father Michel Jorrot, Benedictine abbot of Saint-Maurice de Clervaux in Luxembourg. The general theme of the retreat was taken from a verse in the Prologue of the *Rule* of St. Benedict: "Let us hasten to do now what will profit us for all eternity."

#### A WORD FROM FATHER ABBOT IN CONCLUSION

*In thanksgiving for these fifty years and in gratitude to our Father Saint Joseph who has watched over us in our spiritual as well as our temporal needs, I wish, in the name of my brothers, to thank you for the support of your prayers and your contributions.*

*We do not forget any of our benefactors and friends, living and deceased, who have accompanied us throughout these years.*

*We know that we can still count on your help today. May the Lord Himself be the reward for your generosity!*

*+fr Jean-Benoît  
abbé*