



## Interdependence

Whether it's spring, as in your part of the world or autumn, as here in Argentina, what fascinates me at this season is the sky, especially a sky with flocks of migratory birds leaving or arriving. We can learn so much from our feathered little siblings. Their lightning-speed, co-ordinated direction changes prove that they possess a community orientation without losing their individuality.



If only we could learn from them! How important it would be for us, without losing our independence, to always think in terms of interdependence. If only at every major decision, we could think first of our whole human family, as naturally as a mother thinks of her family whenever she thinks of herself.

Jesus thought that way. He taught a way of living together that he called “God’s kingdom” and that we could call “God’s family” – a community life that is closer to that of the birds than to the social order of his time or of ours. He said, “look at the birds of the sky” (matt 6:26) and built a “we-thinking” community. It was, as we would say today, “modeled on nature” – nature at whose innermost mystery we encounter God.

For this Jesus lived and for this he had to die, since the “i-thinking” power pyramid recognizes quickly what threatens it at its root. Rome punished this nonviolent threat by crucifixion. But all who were ready to live as God’s family were saved from deadly “i-thinking”.

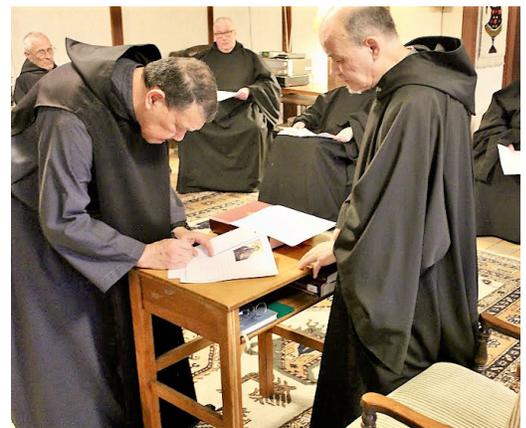
It was a catastrophic development that the church soon fell back from the network structure to that of the roman power pyramid. But within that frame and in spite of it, communities continued to spring up, realizing the original ideal: for example, the first disciples of saint Francis, lover of birds. Every monastic community, too, is an attempt to live as God’s family. Saint Benedict tells his monks “not to pursue what one judges useful for himself, but rather what he judges better for others” – “we-thinking”.

Throughout the world today groups are forming that never heard of The “Kingdom of God”, but are converting from “i-thinking” to “we-thinking” and modeling their shared lifestyle on nature. Their awe of nature, whether they know it or not, is awe of God, who confronts us as nature’s inmost mystery. It is time to weave these small beginnings into a global network of “we-thinking” so that the whole human family can work together and sing together. This is my greatest hope and my wish for you and for all of us.

Your brother, David Steindl-Rast

### Brother Joseph Professes Vows

On April 9, 2023, Novice Joseph de la Fuente pronounced simple triennial vows in the presence of the Mount Saviour community. “The desire to become a monk continues to grow. In community life, I have found fraternal support, experience of joyful witness to grace, and challenges to see



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## NEWS

For updated and expanded notes, visit the Monthly News page on our website: [www.msaviour.org](http://www.msaviour.org)

**9/30/22** Restored triptych rehung behind the Tabernacle in the crypt.



**11/26/22** Monastery closed due to COVID-19 until 12/15.

**1/26/23** Sr. Maureen McCabe, OCSO gave our yearly retreat through 1/30.



**4/9/23** Br. Joseph professed simple vows.

**4/17/23** Dropped vaccination requirement for retreatants.

**5/7/23** Sr. Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ delivered the Winzen Memorial Lecture.



**5/27/23** Annual Sheep Shearing Day. This year: 161 lambs from 93 mothers.



### IN MEMORIAM

Ellen Laponsky Obl.

Bill Yankalunas

Thomas Wingert Obl.

Fr. Joseph Janaczek Obl.

Robert Filipiak, Sr.

Fr. Dominic Hanh Nguyen OSB

Dolores Trotta Obl.

Paul Ferreira/George Cormey

Paul Colucci

Tom Cornell

Jack Bartlett

Joseph Bucci

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beyond myself,” he said.

Brother Joseph is a first-generation Filipino immigrant who, along with his family, settled in southern New Jersey in his early teens. The majority of his siblings are medical professionals and, despite initial studies in history, his interest in science and medicine proved greater and he obtained a Master of Science in Nursing from UCLA. He worked for many years in California as an advanced clinician in critical care and interventional cardiology. He is also a board-certified advanced clinician in Australia, where he practiced in the remote aboriginal communities of Far Northern Queensland in the Torres Strait Islands, an appointment that also allowed him to help provide health-care in neighboring Papua New Guinea. Brother Joseph continues to use his nursing skills at the monastery together with his work as sacristan and cook, as well as cleaning guest houses, lawn mowing and learning monastery archival work.

Reflecting on his monastic vocation, he says, “My faith and reliance on God did not come easy at first but, with faithful engagement in prayer, perseverance, and constant surrender to the plan of God, I have become a willing participant in a transformation that has provided opportunities to experience peace. Each day is different, but I have become a person of greater flexibility who relies on the workings of the Spirit.”

### Silence

“Silence can exist without speech, but speech cannot exist without silence. The word would be without depth if the background of silence were missing.”

– Max Picard, *The World of Silence*

I learned silence early. My father was a solid, quiet man, so some of my fondest memories of him are of times when we were quiet together: fishing out on the lake, working in the yard, driving somewhere on an errand. We had our chattier moments, of course, but what I loved about being around him—and I always wanted to be around him—was not having to say anything at all. He showed me the purity of silence, a purity that grabs you and holds you to the luminous insistence of the moment: to the smell of cut grass, the blue of the sky; to the warm undercurrent of a father’s love for his son, a son’s love for his father. It was my mother, however, who introduced me to the meditative and creative aspects of silence. On Good Fridays growing up, after a spare Lenten lunch (a scoop of cottage cheese for her, a bowl of tomato soup for each of us kids), she would head for the master bedroom with her rosary and prayer book, telling me to play quietly in my room. So I’d close the door and be very quiet, think about Jesus and try to color as sadly as I could.

It is, therefore, not terribly counterintuitive that I’m now an oblate with a contemplative order of monks. I’ve been with the monastery seven years now, and all of my exchanges and conversations with the brothers probably wouldn’t add up to a week’s worth of chat. Though if you factor in the hours and hours we’ve prayed together, we have, in a sense, never shut up. But the rest, as Shakespeare said, is silence. And it was the profound silence of the place, really from the very first moment I settled into it, first felt it, without having yet prayed with the brothers, without having yet done anything retreat-y, that told me my life had just changed in a significant way, in a way I couldn’t quite understand at the time—and probably still don’t entirely understand now.

One of the aims of monastic life is the attainment of interior silence, and it is indeed something I work at (make that: “work at”; monastic spirituality throws a lot of things into air quotes). But I also think, in a chicken-or-the-egg kind of way, that people who are drawn to monasticism already have a sense of the silence within them: the silence we come from; the silence we’ll go back to. In between we fill it with the narrative of our lives, the thoughts and phrases, sometimes complete sentences, of lived experience bouncing off the walls of Time, but we’re still basically a silence—a silence in which only one word is spoken. Only one. And monasticism is about getting quiet enough to hear that one Word. I remember one Saturday afternoon at the monastery when I was down in the crypt sitting before the Blessed Sacrament. I’m sure I was praying initially, but then suddenly I fell silent. Words gave out, just kind of fell to the floor. And as I sat there, the longer I sat there, I realized that silence actually had a texture, a thickness. It was thick with presence. With the presence of

#### REMINDER

Our online ordering page

<https://www.msaviour.org/managedcart.html>

can be used to order products from the monastery.

These include candles, artwork, woolen goods, clothing, greeting cards, books, honey and specialty items.



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God, I thought for a moment, a fraction of a moment. And then even the word “God” fell to the floor.

I get up at 4:00, 4:30 every morning so I can, even at a distance, pray Vigils with the brothers. Despite the propaganda about New York being “the city that never sleeps”, it’s actually fairly quiet at that time of the morning, the neighborhood calm. And sometimes in the silence, in those deep pools of it between the Psalms, I’ll suddenly get a line for a poem, sometimes just a fragment, but very often something in perfect iambic pentameter. Just comes to me out of the silence. And the more it’s happened, the more I’ve realized that that’s the way it always happens, even, later in the day, when I think I’m working on the poem. My “work” is really just putting myself in the spiritual disposition—the emptiness, say, between the rules of a sonnet—to pull more lines from the silence. Michelangelo famously claimed that a statue already existed in the raw block of marble, and that all he was doing was releasing something that was already there. I’ve come to see the writing of poetry as much the same thing: it’s not so much an act of assemblage as of carving; of letting my own words drop, as they did that afternoon in the crypt, and carving a poem out of the silence I first experienced there. It’s only in that silence that I feel how consistently and delicately my life is poised on the edge of grace, and every poem I write—at least every one that works—traces that edge. It was the same visit I had that experience in the crypt that I wrote Monastery Song...



**I seek the mundane joy, the movement dry  
from psalm to psalm, from phrase to holy  
phrase,  
from breath to breath, that thus my numbered  
days  
might one by one toward endlessness apply.  
I seek within the silence to descry  
the heartbeat of some deeper song of praise  
and let its sacred rhythm as it plays  
in me my very fiber magnify.  
I claim the dream of father Jacob here,  
my head set restless to the pillow stone:  
the midnight dream of an ascending grace;  
and wake with him to daylight’s strange ve-  
ner  
to know again what I have always known:  
that truly God is present in this place.**

**Written by Oblate Jeffrey Essmann**

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

*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**

