

MOUNT ANGEL | Letter

FALL 2024



See, I make
ALL THINGS NEW!



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60 Years a Priest of Jesus Christ



Consecrated to God for Life



Entering a Life-Giving Ascent



Mass of the Holy Spirit

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DEAR FRIENDS,

This fall issue of *Mount Angel Letter* has the theme of the Lord's words, "See, I make all things new!" However, reading the issue, one could ask, "What's new?" Each year, we celebrate the profession of vows and jubilees of 25, 50, or 60 years. As it has for the past 136 years, a new year of study and formation has begun in the Seminary. As you read this issue, you'll see all those and more happenings covered. What's new is the ever-present and always new ways that the Holy Spirit works in every event of life. That is as true for you as it is for us here at Mount Angel.

In September, we celebrated the monastic professions of three brothers and welcomed three more into their year of novitiate. Each of these men is a sign of hope for all of us at Mount Angel Abbey, and I hope it is for you as well. Three of us elders in the community are preparing to celebrate our 50th jubilee of profession in December. We also have an interview with Abbot Gregory Duerr, whom many of you know and who celebrated 60 years of priesthood in May.

In the *Monks' Corner*, you will read that I was in Rome recently for a meeting of Benedictine abbots worldwide. It was profoundly moving to hear of the hopes of my brother abbots and the works of their communities. Their stories echoed and strengthened my hopes for our community here at Mount Angel Abbey.

On August 26, we opened the new academic year at Mount Angel Seminary. At the Mass of the Holy Spirit, I installed Fr. Jeff Eirvin as the Seminary's 10th president-rector. I have known Fr. Eirvin for many years and could not have been more pleased with his acceptance of this role. You can learn more about Fr. Eirvin in his own words in the Seminary section of this issue.

I hope you will be inspired and filled with joy to read about all of this. None of it would be possible without your friendship and support, and you are constantly in our prayers of gratitude.

God bless you,

The Right Reverend Jeremy Driscoll, OSB
Abbot and Chancellor
Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary





Abbot Primate Jeremias Schröder, OSB, addresses the Benedictine Congress following his election on September 14.

Keeper of an ancient tradition

Beginning Friday, September 6, Abbot Jeremy and over two hundred other abbots, priors, and superiors from the worldwide Benedictine Confederation gathered for two weeks at Sant'Anselmo, Rome, for the Benedictine Congress 2024. The meeting is held about every four years, and this year the abbots elected Abbot Jeremias Schröder, OSB, of St. Ottilien Archabbey in Eresing, Germany, as the abbot primate of the Benedictine Confederation. Abbot Primate Jeremias will be the unifying head of the world's 6,000 Benedictine monks and also becomes the abbot of the monastery of Sant'Anselmo in Rome. He also will serve as the Grand Chancellor of the Benedictine Pontifical Atheneum of Sant'Anselmo. Of his time at the conference, Abbot Jeremy said, "It was a meeting full of good spirits and contacts," and he described the election of Abbot Primate Jeremias as "joyful and solid."



Three men begin novitiate

On Monday, September 2, Br. Alexander Delsman (left), Br. Zachary Sturm (center), and Br. Townsend Poissant (right) entered the novitiate and received the monastic scapular and the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. They will study, pray, and share more deeply in the life of the monastic community while discerning the vows of *stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience.*

MOUNT ANGEL INSTITUTE

Supporting arts & culture

For 1,500 years, the Rule of St. Benedict has recommended a balanced life of work and prayer that has built up a civilization of peace in monasteries around the world. Certain practices, or "rich ways," have sustained Benedictine monastic life and attracted others to practice them. The Mount Angel Institute at Mount Angel Abbey strives to share these rich ways through presentations, art exhibits, and concerts at the Abbey throughout the year.



This fall, Mount Angel Institute's Artist in Residence is Tomasz Misztal. The Last Supper sculpture in the dining room of the guesthouse was created by Misztal, who presented a talk at Mount Angel on sacred art on September 13.



Celebrating & Adoring Christ in the SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

The *Christian in the World* lecture series for fall 2024 focuses on *Celebrating & Adoring Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist*. The talks are dedicated to deepening our awareness and appreciation of Christ's saving presence in the Eucharist as it is celebrated at the altar and as he is adored in the tabernacle.



Missed a talk you wanted to hear? Check out *Seek Things Above*, our podcast channel where you'll find past MAI content.



Fr. Michael Niemczak and Tomasz Misztal

A place of encounter

Unexpected connections are made on the Hilltop, where several thousand visitors pass through each year. Such a meeting happened recently when two people with connections to the recently beatified Ulma family of Poland met. The Ulma family of nine was beatified as martyrs for hiding and protecting Jewish families in Poland during WWII. Fr. Michael Niemczak, a faculty member at Mount Angel Seminary and a relative of the Ulmas, and artist Tomasz Misztal, creator of artwork for the Ulma family memorial in their hometown of Markowa, Poland, were introduced to one another in the guesthouse lobby.



JOY characterizes MONASTIC LIFE



During a recent homily, Abbot Jeremy spoke about monastic life, saying, “Again, and again, Jesus teaches us – in what we could call ‘Gospel logic’ – that the one who loses his life will find it. The seed must die in order to bear fruit.”

This year, on December 15th, Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, Fr. Nathan Zodrow, and Br. Claude Lane will celebrate their 50th anniversary as monks of Mount Angel. Over the decades, they have each persevered in that “Gospel logic,” committed to the losing and finding of self in Christ in monastic life.

Reflecting on 50 years of monastic profession, we asked them what has been a source of joy and peace over the years. Not surprisingly, the responses were quite similar:

Abbot Jeremy: “The joy I have in the beauty revealed by the perseverance and dedication and goodness and holiness of the people I have lived with and worked with over the last 50 years.”

Br. Claude: “I cherish living my life with men who share the same ultimate trajectory. This is the primary joy. It has been all grace ever since I arrived here in 1972.”

Fr. Nathan: “One of the consistent joys of my life in the monastery has been the community life. I love being part of a mission that is shared by many brothers. The variety of personalities, characters, and talents of those who answer the call continues to amaze and delight me.”



We invite you to join us, in person or through our livestream, for our Golden Jubilee Mass of Profession

DECEMBER 15 | 10 AM | ABBEY CHURCH
MOUNTANGELABBEY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM

60 years A PRIEST OF Jesus Christ



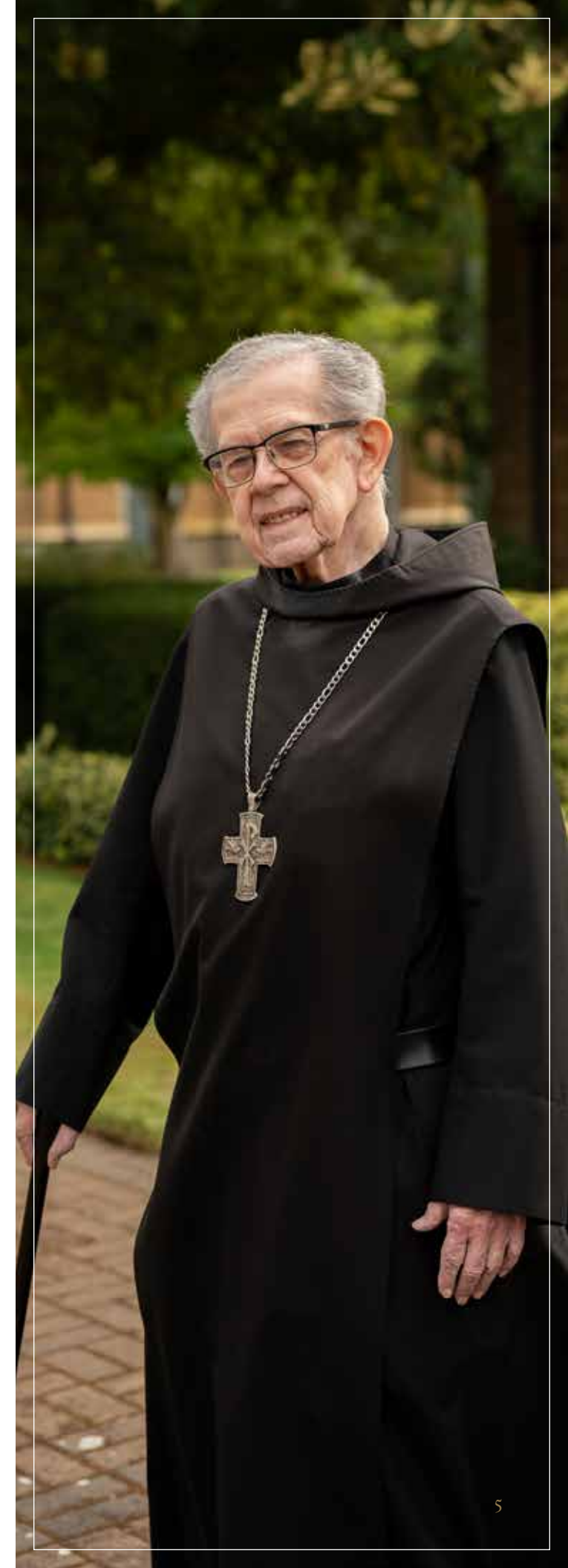
As Abbot Gregory Duerr and I reflected on his 60 years of priesthood, two things especially struck me: his deep love for and identification with Christ’s priesthood, and his love for the people he has served. Unable to come up with just one joy of the priesthood, Abbot Gregory said, “The joy of the priesthood is about the *countless* times when I have been able to bring peace and love and joy to the hearts of my brothers and sisters, through exposure to the loving mercy and kindness of Jesus Christ.”

The reason a priest can bring this grace to others, Abbot Gregory explained, is not because of himself but because of Jesus’ priesthood working through him for the sake of others, beautifully summed up in one of his favorite Scripture verses, “Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

This love is deeply rooted in Abbot Gregory’s 66 years as a professed monk, which ultimately connects to the same fundamental truth. “As a priest,” he explains, “you’re a servant of Christ, you are making Christ present and bringing to others his saving grace, his reconciling love; and if you’re a monk, you’re here *because of* Jesus Christ, because you’ve chosen him, you’ve chosen what you might call a ‘marriage relationship’ with Jesus ... a spiritual marriage.” The two vocations complement each other perfectly.

When Abbot Gregory was elected 11th abbot of Mount Angel Abbey in November 2009, he chose as his abbatial motto, “He shall be peace” (Micah 5:4). How fitting this verse is for this beloved priest and monk of Mount Angel Abbey, who has been an instrument of Christ’s peace to countless men and women during his many years of loving service.

– BR. MATTHEW SISLOW, OSB





Choosing to respond with love

I chose Anthony of Egypt as my name for many reasons. The most obvious one is that it connects me with my Egyptian heritage, a part of me that makes me the man I am today. I also deeply relate to St. Anthony's experience of leaving all behind for God as soon as he hears the calling. I also had to leave much behind: a successful career, an excellent salary, family, and friends to follow God in obedience to my calling. I love that St. Anthony never shies away from facing his demons; within that theme, I admire his courage and perseverance in facing adversity. He inspired me as I took my vows and entered my own desert to be courageous, to have faith in God despite my weaknesses, and above all, to tirelessly face all that stands between me and the monastic goal of purity of heart, hoping entirely in God's grace.

– BR. ANTHONY OF EGYPT KAMAL, OSB



Consecrated to God for life

The decision for me to make solemn vows became clearer as I realized what God was offering me and what he was calling me to. It is a calling to be set apart and consecrated to God for life, that I may live for him alone. The aspect of a sacrificial offering has also been a major theme leading up to solemn profession.

God in his love saved me from a life completely separated from him. From the valley of the shadow of death, he has led me to the still waters of monastic life. He has shown me a life full of hope, and I have grown and flourished since entering. In return for his goodness, what else could I do but offer him my life? The words of Psalm 116 have resonated with me ever since the start of my monastic journey:

“What shall I repay to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord; May it be in the presence of all his people! Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his godly ones.”

– BR. ISAIAH VARGAS, OSB



I was glad we got to do our profession on September 3, the Feast of St. Gregory. Abbot Gregory gave our retreat in preparation, and when we began, he had a picture of Jesus in the center of the table and told us that Jesus was the reason for our monastic profession. That struck me as so simple and so powerful. Then, as I was writing my document for vows, these words came to my attention as to why I want to make profession: I want to pattern my life more closely on the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In my following of the Lord, I was led to this Benedictine community of Mount Angel.

– BR. JOSEPH CONTRERAS, OSB





ENTERING a life-giving ascent

Upon arriving here at Mount Angel Seminary, I was gifted a book entitled *Struggle and Ascent: The History of Mount Angel Abbey*, by Fr. Joel Rippinger, OSB. This book details the establishment of Mount Angel Abbey and Seminary beginning with the missionary activity of the Benedictine community in Engelberg, Switzerland, to the present day. It was fascinating to learn the stories of those who went before us, sacrificing their lives to establish a community of prayer and work here on this hilltop in Western Oregon.

As the title of the book suggests, upward movement, or ascent in the spiritual life, ordinarily happens through struggle. Furthermore, ascending the mount of true communion with God and neighbor, in characteristic Benedictine fashion, does not happen without the struggle of sacrificing ourselves for the other in Christian charity. As I embark on this wonderful work of priestly formation and education as the 10th president-rector of Mount Angel Seminary, I am fully aware that I am entering into a well-established formative community, and simply by being here, I am caught up in the struggle and ascent that is both purifying and life-giving!

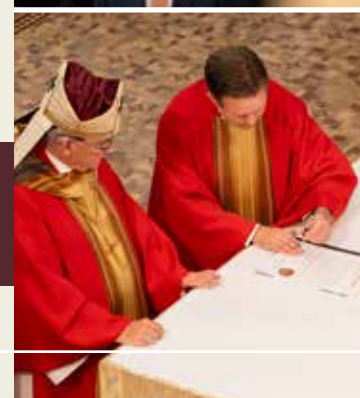
I am very excited about the years ahead living on this Benedictine hilltop, and I ask that you join me in praying that the Lord will bring to fulfillment the good work he has begun in all of us for his glory and the sanctification of his people. What a privilege it is for us to be called to such *ora et labora!*

In Christ,

Rev. Jeff Eirvin

Very Rev. Jeff Eirvin
President-Rector
Mount Angel Seminary

Very Rev. Jeff Eirvin, STL, of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon, was installed as the 10th president-rector of Mount Angel Seminary by Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, chancellor, during the Mass of the Holy Spirit on August 26, 2024.



“Here comes everybody!”

The Mass of the Holy Spirit, celebrated on August 26, opened the 136th academic year of Mount Angel Seminary with Abbot Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, chancellor, presiding.

Quoting St. Paul in his homily, Abbot Jeremy said, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit. ... Wisdom, knowledge, faith, mighty deeds, discernment of spirits...’ That describes Mount Angel monastery and seminary, hard at work on any given day. Together, we manifest the mystery of the Church, the one Body of Christ.”

Abbot Jeremy continued, “This divine communion and our share in it guides the whole vision of Mount Angel Seminary, including its structures, the graduate Theology curriculum, and the undergraduate Christian Humanism curriculum. Deepening this communion is the goal of our formation program.”

Looking at the composition of the student body and faculty this year, it is a testament to the unity in diversity that is the hallmark of Mount Angel. The gifts of the Spirit, coming from every corner of the western United States and beyond, form one Body in Christ. Experiencing this communion while at Mount Angel, these men will return to their home dioceses and religious communities well-prepared to celebrate how the Body of Christ is manifest.



Renewed by the Eucharist

In Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, where crowds normally roar for the Colts or scream for big names in popular music, 60,000 people came together this past summer to pray silently before an enormous monstrance, adoring Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Among that crowd of worshippers at the 10th National Eucharistic Congress were seminarians from different dioceses who are at various stages in priestly formation at Mount Angel Seminary, participating in what Pope Francis called “a significant moment in the life of the Church in the United States.”

“The Eucharistic Congress had a profound impact on me as a seminarian,” says David Do of the Archdiocese of Seattle. “Being surrounded by thousands of Catholics from across the country showcased the Church’s unity and the central role of the Eucharist in our faith,” he says. The theme of unity also stood out to fellow Archdiocese of Seattle seminarian Robert Curall. *“The sheer amount of love and faith that was present there was so tangible you could feel it in the air, and the breath of the Holy Spirit was and still is very present in our lungs and hearts,”* he says.

Held from July 17-21, the Eucharistic Congress consisted of Masses, Eucharistic adoration, a Eucharistic procession through Indianapolis, keynote talks and breakout sessions, and fellowship with Catholics from across the country.

For seminarian Gino Esposito of the Archdiocese of Las Vegas, the Eucharistic Congress was *“one of the most moving experiences of my life.”* Processing into the stadium for the final Mass with over 650 seminarians, over 1,000 priests, 200 bishops and cardinals, and more than 50,000 of the lay faithful in attendance *“made me feel honored and humbled to be a seminarian, but more importantly, a Catholic.”*

– ETHAN ALANO

If you would like a renewal of your faith in the Eucharistic presence, listen to the podcast episodes of our fall 2024 Christian in the World series: Celebrating and Adoring Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.



MEET OUR NEW SEMINARY FACULTY AND STAFF



Dr. Anna Petrin

“By God’s grace, I get to study the Church’s prayer for my life, and it is the best life in the world,” says **Dr. Anna Petrin**. Originally from North Carolina, she teaches courses in Liturgical and Sacramental Theology at Mount Angel Seminary, having earned her PhD at the University of Notre Dame.

Dr. Petrin and her husband, Dr. Michael Petrin, “feel very called to serve the Church with our scholarship, to build up the Church in any way we can.” When they learned about the possibility of teaching at Mount Angel, they prayed and discerned that “this could be a place where we could live out our vocation.” As someone who studies the Church’s liturgy, Dr. Petrin appreciates how the formation of Mount Angel seminarians “happens in a context of prayer in a way that is so influenced by the monastic community here.”

For Dr. Petrin, working with seminarians who are preparing to celebrate the Eucharist is a great gift. “I really love working with students as they discern and grow into their vocation,” she says, “and as a teacher, the most exciting thing is helping someone embrace who they are and who God is calling them to be.”



Dr. Michael Petrin

“I loved this idea that God was something so much beyond me that I was never going to be able to just check the box and say, yep, I’ve answered that; I understand what God is, move on to the next thing,” says **Dr. Michael Petrin**, Professor of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary. This fascination with the infinite mystery of God is something Dr. Petrin hopes to impart to Mount Angel seminarians as he teaches about the early Church and the Fathers of the Church.

Originally from Milwaukie, Oregon, Dr. Petrin and his wife, Dr. Anna Petrin, moved from Pennsylvania back to his home state earlier this summer as new faculty at Mount Angel Seminary. In addition to teaching, Dr. Petrin serves as the Seminary’s Graduate Degrees Coordinator and Accreditation Liaison Officer. In the first role, he helps students understand their academic requirements and progress toward graduation. In the latter role, he helps the Seminary coordinate its work for academic accreditation under the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

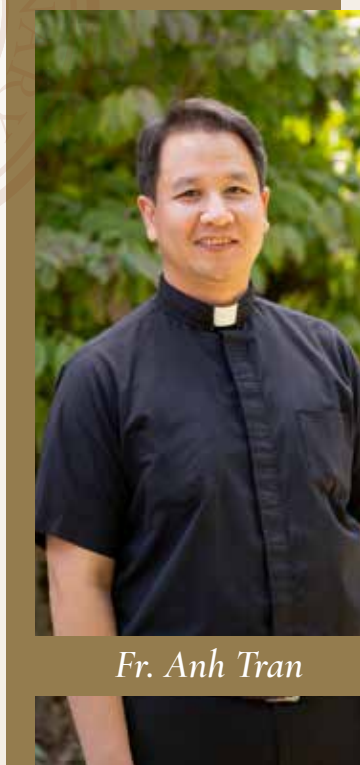
“For me, it’s very exciting to have the opportunity to play a role in forming men for the priesthood who are then going to be able to use whatever little amount I’m able to teach them to serve the People of God better,” says Dr. Petrin.



Sr. Paula Jean Miller

“Formation gets in your blood,” says **Sr. Paula Jean Miller, FSE**, who begins this year at Mount Angel Seminary as the assistant to the Coordinator of Human Formation. Having worked as a teacher and formation advisor in seminaries since 1983, Sr. Paula Jean’s diverse service to the Church has included being an appointed theologian by Pope Benedict XVI for the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization and working in the chancery offices of Arlington, Virginia, and Portland, Oregon. Being at Mount Angel, she says, “God just got me back in my right little niche.”

As a Franciscan Sister of the Eucharist, Sr. Paula Jean sees her work in seminary formation as part of “the original spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi.” The beloved saint told his followers that if they were to meet an angel and a priest at the same time, they should first greet the priest, since he stands in the place of Christ at the altar giving us the Eucharist. “I truly enjoy the formation aspect and, as a Religious woman, I see work in the preparation of priests as critical to the future of the Church,” says Sr. Paula Jean.



Fr. Anh Tran

After being asked to serve in the human formation program at Mount Angel Seminary by Archbishop Paul Etienne, Mount Angel alumnus **Fr. Anh Tran** ’18 visited the Hilltop earlier this year and immediately “felt home.” Ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Seattle in 2018, Fr. Tran served as a parochial vicar in Puyallup and Redmond and then as a priest administrator in Buckley and Orting prior to his current assignment at Mount Angel Seminary.

“When I was in the Seminary, the pastoral assignments, the spiritual direction and human formation aspects, even intellectual, helped me to find out who I am and to accept who God created me to be,” says Fr. Tran. Now on the other side of the formation process, Fr. Tran is excited “to see these young men who have the heart of service for God really commit to formation.”

“Seven years in formation at Mount Angel has really gained my confidence in Mount Angel Seminary, knowing that this place has helped me to become who I am today,” says Fr. Tran. He is grateful to God for bringing him back to Mount Angel to help serve future priests, some of whom will be his brother priests in the Archdiocese of Seattle. “[God] formed me through Mount Angel Seminary, and now he gives me the opportunity to help others,” says Fr. Tran.





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*Join Fr. Odo Recker, OSB,
in a pilgrimage to Turkey,
walking in the steps of St. Paul.*

From May 12 to 25, the pilgrimage begins with four days in Istanbul, including a boat cruise along the Bosphorus up the Black Sea. Then spend time in Adana, Tarsus, Cappadocia, Ephesus and places in between. For those who wish to extend their pilgrimage, book an extra five days in Greece. Visit beautiful Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and more before returning home.

*Find more information
and reserve a space on this
unforgettable pilgrimage
through the land of St. Paul at*

MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/
PILGRIMAGE



JOIN THE MONKS OF MOUNT ANGEL ABBEY for MASS AND THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

WEEKDAYS

Vigils: 5:25 am
Lauds: 6:35 am
Mass: 8:00 am
Midday Prayer: Noon
Vespers: 5:20 pm
Compline: 7:30 pm

SUNDAYS & SOLEMNITIES

Vigils: 7:30 pm (Saturday)
Lauds: 6:40 am
Mass: 9:00 am
Midday Prayer: Noon
Vespers: 5:20 pm
Compline: 8:05 pm

SEE MOUNTANGELABBAY.ORG/LIVE-STREAM SCHEDULE.

WAS THERE A MOMENT AT MOUNT ANGEL THAT CHANGED YOUR LIFE?



Many recall particular monks, spiritual directors or teachers whose words and presence made all the difference.

If mentors at Mount Angel have helped you or a loved one to grow in new ways and opened doors to God, please consider planning a gift or bequest to honor them. That way, others will have life-changing opportunities as well.

For information,
contact Susan Gallagher
at 503.845.3030 or 503.312.5425
plannedgiving@mtangel.edu
mtangel.giftlegacy.com

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*Fr. Augustine DeNoble, OSB
1925–2019*