

A Grateful Remembrance FROM THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Passionist Nuns, 8564 Crisp Road, Whitesville, Kentucky 42378



Winter 2005



A Memorial to Christ Crucified

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS ON CRISP ROAD

A Journey of Faith

THE HOLY SPIRIT LIT THE FIRE
THAT BURNED WITHIN
THEIR HEARTS

NOT PERMITTING THEM TO REST
UNTIL THEY DID THEIR PART

FOR THEY WOULD BE
HIS HANDS AND FEET,
THE EYES AND EARS HE'D NEED
IF GOD THE FATHER'S PLAN FOR
THEM WAS GOING TO SUCCEED.

TEN YEARS ALREADY!

December 21st is the anniversary of the big move to our monastery here in Whitesville. This historic occasion begins a year-long celebration of 60 years of Passionist contemplative life in the Owensboro Diocese. Throughout the coming year, our newsletters will commemorate the miracles the Lord has done and continues to do. Join us as we take a walk down memory lane....

The Miracle of Whitesville — A Vision Takes Shape



The beautiful land on Crisp Road as we first saw it in Fall of 1991

It all began in 1989 when we engaged two professionals to plan the renovation of our chapel on Benita Avenue in Owensboro, and the construction of a small retreat house separate from the monastery area. Nothing was further from our minds than a relocation of the monastery!

Our goal was to fulfill the Church's desire that *"religious communities for their part, [and] contemplative institutes in particular...should offer to men and women of our day helpful opportunities for prayer and spiritual life, thus meeting a need for meditation and a deepening of faith which is acutely felt at present. They should also offer suitable opportunities and facilities for sharing in their own liturgical celebrations...."* (*Directives for Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church*, April 23, 1978)

During the planning process, a shared vision began to take shape:

- ◆ we came to a deeper desire for a **chapel** that would facilitate guest participation in our liturgies;
- ◆ we became more and more convinced that city encroachment on the **silence and solitude** of our monastery was a growing threat;
- ◆ we had new awareness of the **value of the retreats** we had offered at our monastery until 1968;
- ◆ in discussing our **need for vocations**, we came to realize that many of us had entered the community as a result of making a retreat at the monastery.

Although the planning process stirred a new vision in our hearts, it resulted in a verdict we were unprepared to hear: we had an "architectural dilemma!" Try as we may, it just wasn't possible to carry out this vision on our four-acre plot in Owensboro.

Then our first miracle happened - a movement of the Holy Spirit surprising us all! Without it being on anyone's agenda, we came to a unanimous decision that we needed to relocate the monastery. And miracle this truly was for 18 women who rarely had unanimous agreement on anything!

Our bishop (surely more than a trifle worried about our small community with its big ideas) showed cautious openness to the project, responding with kind benevolence: "If you wait until you have the money, you will never do anything for the Kingdom of God."

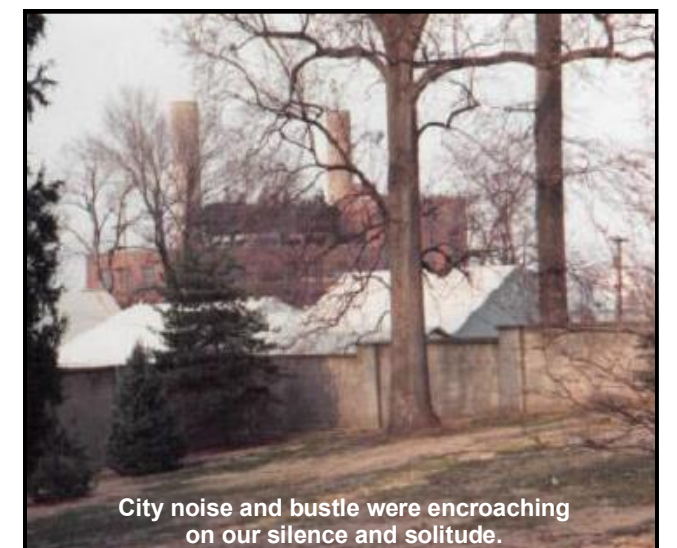
And so, with just the strong call burning in our hearts and total trust that "nothing is impossible for God", we launched forth, after deciding against investing in a \$20,000 feasibility study that might have proven us insane! Convinced that if God wanted it, nothing would stop it, we began to take one small step at a time. If God didn't want it, He would show us. The entire project was placed daily in the care of St. Joseph, to whom we had always entrusted the temporal concerns of our

monastery. We began to spread the relocation prayer and to enlist the help of relatives and friends.

Obviously, the first thing was to find land. From the outset, St. Joseph sent us generous helpers who believed in the value of Passionist contemplative life. Some offered to donate land. Others gave generously of themselves, escorting us all over the county to inspect prospective sites. We ended up with five possible locations, but the Nuns were sharply divided on every one of them! Meeting this impasse, we enlisted professionals to walk us through a decision-making process which resulted, not in a choice of land, but in our throwing out all five sites! Being back to square one, and weary after our four-month search, we were advised to rest for a while. God had other plans.

That very evening Vernon Wathen called about land for sale on Crisp Road in Whitesville. The next day, Sept. 24, 1991, the feast of St. Vincent Strambi, Passionist, two of us inspected the site, finding it very much to our liking. However, knowing that the community would have to reach an agreement on the purchase, we laughingly decided not to get too enthused until the rest of the Nuns saw the property themselves.

A few days later, three carloads of Passionist Nuns visited the site. You should have heard the excited, happy and grateful unanimity exploding that day! At last, God had shown us our promised land. The site met all criteria: a rural location, enough land to protect our monastic silence and solitude into the future, great natural beauty to lift the heart to God, and sufficient space not only for a larger chapel and monastery, but also for a small retreat house. A couple of the younger members thought that the best part was the three and a half acre lake stocked with fish!! ...Continued at bottom of page 3



City noise and bustle were encroaching on our silence and solitude.

A Tribute to St. Joseph

Protector and Guardian of our Monastery

*St. Joseph gathered up his tools, writing in the Book
That he was going down to earth to take a closer look
At the Miracle of Whitesville he'd heard so much about
From the Sisters of the Passion who had made their prayer a shout.*

*Heaven had been busy as the angels could attest
For they had been the messengers who carried each request
Direct to Joseph's workshop where he carried every one
To intercede on their behalf with his beloved Son.*

*The Holy Spirit lit the fire that burned within their hearts
Not permitting them to rest until they did their part
For they would be His hands and feet, the eyes and ears He'd need
If God the Father's plan for them was going to succeed.*

*All of heaven stopped to watch the pieces of the Plan
Fall into place as through His grace the nuns were given land
An architect and builder were inspired to help them build
Turning prayers into blueprints to construct what God had willed.*

*Alliances were formed for them as craftsmen all convened
To turn demand into supply, converting peaceful scene
From wooded lake and flowered field into a Place of Prayer
Where God would come into the hearts of all who gathered there.*

*St. Joseph stood inside the gate and looking to the knoll
Saw the Monastery rise and heard the bells which toll
A peal of gladness through the land inviting all to prayer
For pilgrims who have gathered here to seek the Holy Way.*

*The Patron of the Passionists then praised his Holy Son
Thanking Mary for the work he knew that she had done
For this Miracle of Whitesville that he had heard about
From the Sisters of the Passion who had made their prayer a shout.*

By Ken Alderson of Louisville
*The original poem was entitled
Miracle of Owensboro.

From that day on, the miracles of God gained momentum. The Catholic property owner gave us a large reduction on the price. With a generous grant from our long-time friends of the V.J. Steele Foundation, the land was purchased, and plans for the new monastery could begin.

The journey was not all joy, of course, and we didn't expect it to be. Passionists know that new life in the Church comes forth only by a profound sharing in the Passion. Our relocation journey is a treasured memory of a communal experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our hearts burn within us as we ponder these things, remembering them with you.

Keep reading as we celebrate the miracles the Lord has done through the goodness and generosity of faith-filled people like yourselves....

The Day of the Big Move — and Many Other Days Too!



Yes, ten years ago, on the first day of winter, Dec. 21, 1995, with a cold breeze sweeping off the lake and snow flakes brushing against our faces, 18 Passionist Nuns accompanied by an army of volunteers moved a whole monastery from Benita Avenue in Owensboro to 8564 Crisp Road in Whitesville! This was the day of the big move and we could hardly believe it!

In a joyous celebration, the new monastery had been blessed by our bishop a few weeks before, while the unfinished chapel would not be completed for several more months.

With no hot water or floor coverings in many areas yet, we had a formidable challenge before us as winter began. There was, however, more than enough work to keep our minds off these inconveniences. It was enough for us that God was calling us to celebrate Christmas on Crisp Road.

The trucks pictured above at Benita Avenue, along with many others, were quickly loaded and began the fourteen mile drive to Whitesville. Fr. Leonard Reisz had enlisted several St. Vincent de Paul men with their truck to assist in moving the heavier items, and the Durchholz brothers from Southern Indiana drove huge semi-trucks over to assist in the move. Tony

Lanham and his son Brandon, plus countless others impossible to list, set to work with vigor to help in this arduous move.

Excitement filled the air, as the array of trucks, jammed to capacity with furniture and all manner of items, pulled up by the statue of St. Joseph at the front monastery entrance. The Durchholz brothers, most of whom are about six foot five, often stopped us in our tracks as they lifted heavy furniture with incredible ease. Had it not been for all these helpers, we probably would have had a few broken backs!

Smaller trucks and cars were everywhere, as all available vehicles of relatives and friends had also been enlisted. A monastery is not just where we live. A monastery is a little city of God, where we work, where we welcome visitors, and most especially where we gather in chapel seven times a day to worship God and intercede for the Church and the world. It would be like trying to move your home furnishings, your work place, and your church all in one day!!



Our first Christmas tree hurriedly put together by Jim Wedding, David Jarboe, David Jr., Mother (then Sr.) Catherine Marie, and H.C. Higdon. Jim Wedding stayed on as our caretaker for 8 more years.

Soon, the empty refectory (monastic dining area) and recreation room were nearly piled to the ceiling with furniture and boxes, all carefully marked for their destination. Just getting them to Crisp Road was only the first step. Then all had to be directed to its assigned room. The process had only begun.

That evening, we ate in the retreat house, hardly believing that we were actually at Crisp Road! Tired and weary, yet happy chatter filled the room as each one marveled at the outpouring of generous help from relatives and friends that had made possible not only that day's big move, but the entire relocation itself.

Early the next morning, Dec. 22, our first Mass was celebrated in what is now the retreat house library. Jesus, the Living Bread come down from heaven, had taken possession of His new home! Since that day ten years ago, the celebration of the Eucharist, and Our Lord's Real Presence with us in the Blessed Sacrament, has remained at the center of our Passionist contemplative life, strengthening us in times of suffering and trial as well as times of joy.

Our first Christmas on Crisp Road—amid mountains of unpacked boxes and furniture—volunteers managed to put up a Christmas tree. One of the Nuns found a crib set buried amid the hundreds of boxes piled everywhere. Yes, it truly was "Christmas"—for new life in Christ was being born in our hearts for the sake of God's people everywhere. The vision was slowly being fulfilled.



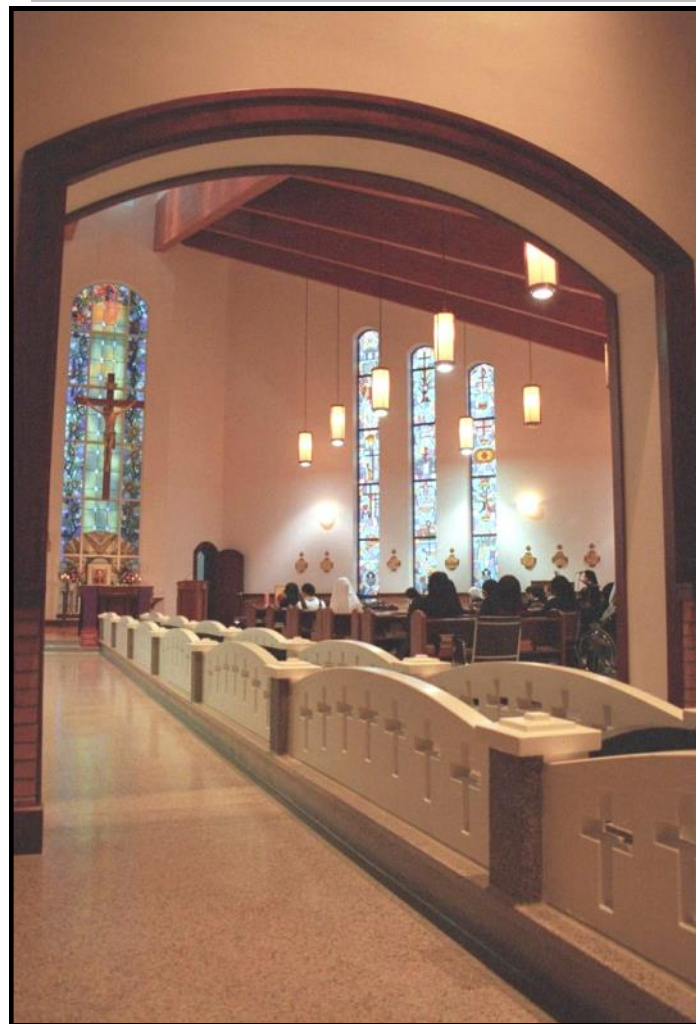
We have a very special gratitude for our

Sr. Mary Agnes who was superior throughout the time of the construction of our new monastery and chapel.

Her many gifts, not the least being her fine business skills, helped to bring the vision of our relocation to fruition.

May God richly bless and reward her for giving so fully of herself!

The Vision Fulfilled — Our New Chapel



guests to participate more easily in our sung Masses and Liturgy of the Hours. It is a great joy as we pray the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours, often to have guests fully participating in this official prayer of the Catholic Church. Whereas this was virtually impossible in the chapel on Benita Avenue, our new chapel greatly facilitates this participation in our prayer.

Because the Real Presence of Our Lord in the reserved Sacrament of the Eucharist is at the center of our life and mission, a six-foot high tabernacle is set in a stained glass window wall in a central position behind the Altar of Sacrifice.

All aisles lead directly to the elevated sanctuary where the octagonal Altar of Sacrifice stands in the midst of the assembly. The octagonal design stems from ancient Christian tradition, which saw Easter as the 8th day which is actually the first day of the new creation brought about through the sacrificial death of the Lamb on the cross.

Suspended overhead is a 11-foot handcarved crucifix enshrined by a stained glass window framed with the "Passion Flower." Christian piety sees in this flowering vine the images of the crown of thorns, the nails and the scourges of the suffering Christ. The windows of the nave and Melvin Wathen's handcarved Stations of the Cross add to the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery portrayed throughout the chapel.

We can never be grateful enough to the Mr. Al J. Schneider family who donated the chapel in memory of Mr. Schneider's wife, Thelma, as well as the countless others who donated statues, altar, tabernacle, stained glass, pews and so forth.

May God richly bless and reward all who have helped build this "House of God and Gate of Heaven!"



At the heart of our relocation project was the desire for a chapel where guests could more easily join in our liturgical singing during Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

The chapel is the focal point and visible sign of a community dedicated to prayer. Standing peacefully beside the lake, with woods framing it on three sides, the buildings send forth silent testimony to the primacy of God. The chapel and retreat house wings reach outward from the Nuns' living area in a gesture of welcoming hospitality. The prominent tower housing a cloistered Eucharistic chapel and the two Reconciliation towers highlight the importance of these two Sacraments.

The 82-foot stainless steel cross is a majestic expression of our Passionist charism to keep alive the grateful memory of the Passion of Christ. Behind the cross is a stained glass window depicting the liturgy of heaven, with the slain Lamb of God standing in triumphant glory. The chapel roof's swift ascent portrays the human heart's ascent to God in prayer.

On entering our chapel, one is immediately aware of the water channel serving as the material separation between the cloistered area and that reserved for guests. Highlighting the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, the water channel connects the altar in the sanctuary with the baptismal font in the entrance area. The use of baptismal water—a symbol of our oneness in Christ—shows that although our vocation as Passionist Nuns sets us apart for a life of prayer in an enclosed area, we are not thus "cut off" from our brothers and sisters in the "world."

The design of the water channel permits a more visible presence of the Nuns while safeguarding the cloister. It also enables



Fr. Danny Goff
(RIP)
blessing
the land
October 5, 1993



Memories Cherished

The above photo was taken at the time



Sr. Frances Marie, Sr. Mary Bernadette and
Sr. Mary Cecilia - our three living foundresses
during our relocation project



Dedication of Monastery



Installation of the 82' cross



ed in Our Hearts



the Chapel was dedicated in April 1996.



Installation and Blessing of the Bells October 7, 1995



Chapel, Mercy Sunday, April 14, 1996



Owensboro Bishop John J. McRaith leads us in prayer during the Groundbreaking Ceremony October 24, 1993



Postulant Teresa (w/ Sr. John Mary) greeting Mr. Al J. Schneider and Louisville Auxilia-Bishop Emeritus, Charles G. Maloney, for the Blessing of the Monastery on November 26, 1995



A Vision of Solitude - The Monastic Life

Our Holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, always wanted his monasteries founded in areas of solitude and peace. As we explained on page 2 of this newsletter, the growing noise from the busy area around our Benita Avenue monastery, caused increasing concerns for the future of our monastic solitude.

With children playing ball games in the dead-end street outside our chapel windows, and loud trucks and motorcycles racing up another adjacent street beside the chapel, our times of Eucharistic adoration and contemplative prayer were becoming an endurance test.

We often wondered how it would be possible for future generations of Passionist Nuns to preserve the spirit of silence and solitude if city noise continued to grow. Then God called us on an exodus journey to these 170 acres of woodland where the atmosphere is more conducive to prayer and contemplation. The rugged and dense woods surrounding the monastery provide a natural "cloister" protecting our solitude while providing a place to marvel at the beauty and wisdom of God reflected in creation.



The relocation "gives me great hope for the life of our community. Having the monastery in a place of greater solitude and quiet, surrounded by the marvelous beauty of God's creation, will deepen my love for my contemplative life of prayer...and intimate union with the Blessed Trinity. It gives me hope also that we can preserve our monastic charism for the future. And as we become better known, and our special mission in the Church more appreciated, our Heavenly Father will open a way to draw vocations to our community."



From reflections written by Sr. Frances Marie Livoti, one of the original foundresses of the Benita Avenue monastery. She died three years after we moved to Crisp Road. Another foundress, Sr. Mary Cecilia, together with the first one to enter our monastery from the Owensboro Diocese, Sr. Rose Mary Boteler, also went home to God since we moved to Crisp Road.

May they and all our community who have made that great Passing Over with Jesus to the "house of the Father" intercede for us who are still on pilgrimage here below. May they rest in peace, and may all the souls of the faithful departed rejoice in the eternal vision of God's glory.

A Vision Restored - Retreats

"Come to an out of the way place and rest a little" (Mark 6:30-34)

Contemplative institutes in particular...should offer to men and women of our day helpful opportunities for prayer and spiritual life, thus meeting a need for meditation and a deepening of faith which is acutely felt at present." (Directives for Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church, April 23, 1978)

An important part of our relocation vision was the desire to return to hosting the retreats our community had engaged in until 1968. During the years of the international revision of our Rule and Constitutions, our community grew to a deeper understanding of this aspect of our long tradition. It is best expressed by the following excerpt from a recent biography of our Holy Founder, St. Paul of the Cross:

"Like the priests and brothers, the sisters [Passionist Nuns] were to take the vow to promote the memory of the Passion of Jesus. This they would do within the setting of their contemplative life, by offering women the possibility, at certain times of the year, of making retreats within the cloister and by teaching catechism to young women and instructing them on how to meditate on the Passion. The examiners wanted to take these points out of the Rule, as they seemed somewhat unconventional for contemplative nuns, but Paul would not agree to their being removed as he saw them as expressions of the specific nature of the Congregation". (Paul F. Spencer, C.P., As a Seal Upon Your Heart, Rome 1994 p. 181) Because of our Founder's insistence, the Pope approved the retreats and catechism, over-ruling the examiners.

Ordering this tradition in a desire to find a new way of expressing it in creative fidelity to our charism, our community unanimously decided to build a separate retreat house outside the strict cloister reserved only for the Nuns. Research in our community archives has uncovered blueprints drawn up by Mother Mary Agnes Roche, (R.I.P.) and Mr. Al Schneider of Louisville, for the construction of a separate retreat house in the mid 1960's, designs never carried out at Benita Avenue.

Our charism as Passionist Nuns includes a strong accent on the solitude of the cloister. We are unique, however, among the array of contemplative communities in that we also make the vow to promote devotion to the Passion of Jesus. One way we do this is through the retreat house.



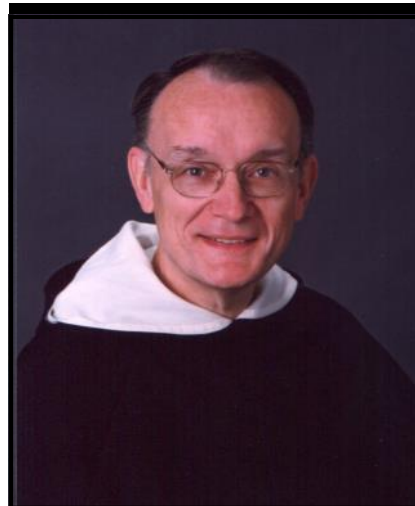
Our first group of retreatants in 1996

We can never be grateful enough for the generosity of the countless people who made the retreat house possible. It is a spiritual oasis where pilgrims of faith may renew their relationship with God and their sense of direction in life, while resting their weary spirits at the foot of the cross of the Crucified and Risen One.

The small retreat house affords guests the opportunity for silence and peace. Adjacent to and yet separated from the monastery, it allows retreatants to live for a time close to a praying community while participating in our monastic prayer. Primarily a place of private retreat for individuals, special interest groups may bring their own resource person for direction and music.

Please consider making a retreat this year!

For more information contact Sr. Joseph Marie at (270) 233-4571 or email her at sjosephm@passionistnuns.org. You can also visit our website www.passionistnuns.org



End of Life Issues

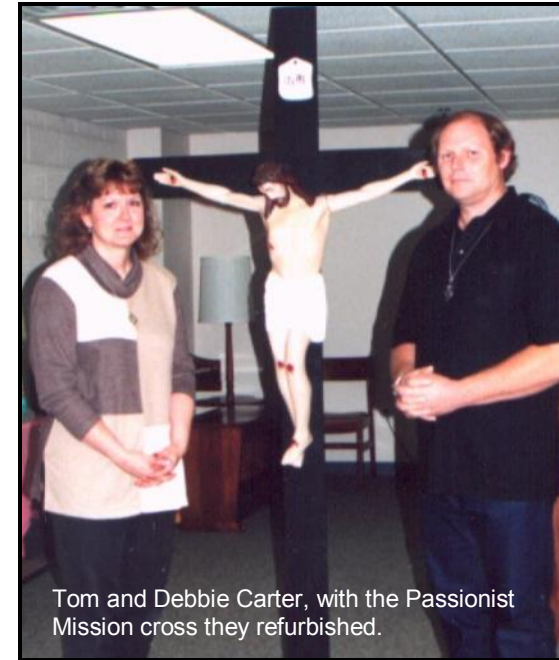
During the past year, we have learned much from the vast knowledge and experience of Brother Ignatius Perkins, O.P. as he advised us on end of life issues and documents. We look to the future now with a much better grasp of Catholic medical ethics in regard to these complex and often difficult decisions and situations.

Until July 2005, Brother Ignatius held the chair at the Spalding University School of Nursing in Louisville. Besides serving his Dominican community in various capacities, he spent over three years at the National Catholic Bioethics Center.

Recently, he published "A Christian Journey of Hope: Moral Principles and Healing at the End of Life." The article is available from The National Catholic Bioethics Center, 6399 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, PA 19151 or by calling 215-877-2660.

We will always be grateful to Brother Ignatius for the fraternal sensitivity with which he answered our questions and concerns in a way that manifested his own deep respect for the dignity of every human person.

A Vision Shared—The Founding of the Oblates



Tom and Debbie Carter, with the Passionist Mission cross they refurbished.

During the construction of our new monastery, it was amazing to witness the providence of God at work. Among the many new friends we met were two young converts to the Catholic faith, Tom and Debbie Carter. The Carters often drove all the way from Benton IL to join the crew who helped us do the interior painting of the cloistered areas. These hard-working volunteers not only got paint all over them as we did, but they helped us save \$35,000!!

As Tom and Debbie painted our walls and ceilings, the Holy Spirit was painting in their hearts, etching a vision for the Oblates of the Passion of which they would eventually become the founding couple. From the original twelve participants, the Oblates now have 43 members, and 35 Associate members. Individual Oblates have done studies of our Passionist saints, and now some are engaged in researching spiritual themes found in the letters of St. Paul of the Cross.

"Passionist Oblates strive to be in gracious communion with all members of the Passionist Congregation, supporting and sharing as much as possible in the mission of the entire Passionist family." (From their rule of life, The Oblate Companion) We have been inspired by the devotion of the Oblates to all things Passionist, and blessed by their hard work in building a machinery garage for us, plus the rooms housing the Passionist Inspiration center and the chapel of the lower level of the retreat house. They often represent us at vocation gatherings, as they join us in praying hard for God's blessing of new vocations to our community.

Remembering Our Beloved Dead

"I am going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, so that where I am, you also may be."

John 14:3

On August 20, 2005, Lucian (Buster) Boteler, the brother of our Sr. Rose Mary (R.I.P.) and Sr. Rita Marie, went home to the Lord, after a long illness. His beloved wife, Rose Ann, had lovingly cared for him throughout this time. For 37 years, Buster worked with Green River Electric. He was a Ky. Colonel, and had served in the National Guard. The devoted father of six children, Buster will be greatly missed by all of his loved ones. Off and on for years, he had much suffering to bear. Like a Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry His cross, now Buster realizes the value of the share in the cross of Jesus that he was given. After having shared the Passion of Christ here on earth, may he now know the joy and peace of the resurrection! *"The sufferings of this present life are not even worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us."* (Romans 8:18)



"Consider the lilies of the field, they neither toil or spin, yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these."

Matt. 6:28-29

On September 22, 2005, Sr. Mary Elizabeth's sister MARYLENE WILES went home to God at the age of 85 after a lengthy illness. Marylene was a loving wife and mother, deeply devoted to God and family, thoughtful and generous to others. One family member shared a treasured memory of Marylene with us: "Aunt Marylene could light up a room with her wit and smile, and I always loved being around her. She was a beautiful person."

She found joy in flowers. As she worked in her garden she contemplated God, who bestows such beauty upon us. In the Scripture quotation above that our Chaplain Father Ray Clark used at the Wake Service, he went on to say, "And so the cascade of flowers resting on Marylene's coffin not only reminds us of her love for flowers, they teach us that "God will provide for all our needs. The flowers themselves become a lesson: Will not God who creates the flowers, care for Marylene? Will she not behold the face of God, who is beauty itself?" Our beloved Redeemer was faithful to Marylene and came toward the end, to lavish His gentle mercy upon her. May His radiant face shine upon her (for all eternity). And may her sons, Lewis and Eddie, and all her loved ones look forward to an eternal reunion with her one day in heaven. May she rest in peace!

