

Voice of the Cloud

the newsletter
and program catalog
of

MONS NUBIFERUS SANCTVS

Epiphany/Lent 2015



Contemplative Practice
and Prophetic Witness

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THEORIA, LEITUORGEIA, DIAKONIA, KOINONIA
(Contemplation, Liturgy, Service, Communion)

VISION STATEMENT
All in the fullness of Christ.

MISSION STATEMENT
Mons Nubifer Sanctus is a place set apart for the meticulous study and practice of contemplative Christianity. Our programs emphasize rigorous discipleship grounded in the fullness of the catholic faith, fostering truly Christian character, wakefulness to the divine love which sets creation free from the bondage of sin, and authentic union with the Triune God.

The principal training center of the Christian Order of the Cloud, Mons Nubifer Sanctus is open to men and women from all walks of life who desire to deepen their life in God through the practice of still prayer, timeless worship, sound theological study, koinonia and fellowship, unpretentious work, participation in the life of the Church, and sacramental intimacy with God's great creation.

OUR CORE VALUES
We encourage Authenticity and Maturity
For the development of Virtue and Clarity;
We seek Reconciliation and Renewal
For the realization of Flourishing and Fullness
Consummated in the Love of God which sets creation free
from the bondage of sin.

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New Year's Epistle

GREETINGS and best wishes to you all for a happy and healthy 2015 and an increase of the fruits of faith in your lives and hearts. The church year, which began on the 1st of Advent, has already borne us through another Christmas season and conveys us towards Lent. A brief early thaw a week or so ago has given us a remembrance of the spring to come, which now sleeps beneath the frozen earth. In the prayerful darkness of this season, when even the trees turn inward and drop to their roots and all the world sits in silence, we should be reminded that God calls us out of the frenetic drum of worldly life into an intimate and inward communion with him.

The ultimate Reality at the heart of all existence is a Spirit of peace, harmony and infinite love; it is in the image and likeness of this Reality that you have been fashioned, as we are reminded in Genesis 1. Looking at human affairs in the world around us, however, it can be difficult to discern peace, harmony and love. Infants and children are being brutally slaughtered in the Middle East; a \$3 billion per year child pornography industry booms globally with 50% of this revenue being generated right here at home in the United States; at the current rate of species extinction it is predicted that by 2100 over half of all presently existing species of life on this planet will be gone forever, and all of this great loss of life is related to human activity, overconsumption and exploitation. With such decidedly bad news pummeling about we might wonder if God can exist at all, or if the Christian faith has any bearing on our contemporary situation. Certainly much of the Christian faith has become conventional and unreal, largely because its language has been tossed about but its story has not been particularly lived or practiced in a deep, life-changing way. We've dressed up worldliness with Christian clothes, but the clothes don't transform the wolves who wear them; we've confused salvation with a passing life of passing pleasures. As our culture strips itself of Christian adornments, however, Christians are left with an opportunity to truly stand apart and witness to the verity of the faith, but to do so will demand a concerted effort and real sacrifice. Living the Christian truth, walking the Christian walk, practicing the Christian faith as handed down to us in the fullness of

the Anglican tradition, these indeed have the power to transform a life, and so to transform life itself. But we must first cease from using Christianity as a means of feel-good, quick-fix therapy as if God were our servant and not we his; we must truly desire that he transform us. This means that we must deal with the problem of evil, and we must show up and avail ourselves to God even when doing so doesn't feel particularly "fun."

If we do not first deeply wrestle with the problems of evil and suffering, which are the problem of sin, then our spirituality becomes stifled. We must face the hard fact of sin – in the world around us but, most importantly for our own spiritual growth, chiefly and primarily in ourselves – before we can come to that Reality which I have proclaimed to you, the Reality of God's peace and love. It is no coincidence that the forerunner to Christ is the Baptist who cries "repent," which literally



means to turn around, to be transformed. A moment of clear self-assessment and unsentimental honesty might give us a clue as to why such a transformation is necessary; and one small taste of God's light and love in the depths of our prayer will remind us of what we have forsaken in our constant efforts to exist apart from him. Much of our effort in life seems to be an attempt to quell the reality of our absolute dependence on God and his creation for our very existence. We pass through life futilely pretending that we somehow exist by the merits of our own exertions. But who among you has chosen birth? Who among you chooses the surety of death? Existence, this very life, is something we receive and not something we create, and so it is

something that we must give back. Why not pause to wonder at this miracle, and take some time to give thanks? The greatest tragedy of this program of denial is that by denying that our lives and existence have a source we are by necessity denying the source itself, and the water runs clearest at its source. We've lost touch with the infinite ground of life who is God, and so we have lost touch with love, with peace, with harmony. We have entered instead an existence that is compromised and confused; God's infinite life in us has become obscured and locked under a spiritual winter of the soul.

Just as the early thaw gives remembrance of spring, so does prayer give us a remembrance of the life that is to come – should you accept it; should you seek it; should you treasure it above all else. As spring lies in wait beneath the frozen soil; as it lingers in the depths of the ice-bound mountain lake; as it bubbles beneath the petrified brook, so does the spring of redemption wait within you. Christ has won it for you; and the Spirit has implanted his resurrected life in your soul; and he will be quickened by your spiritual engagement of the Christian life and will move across these frozen waters like an Easter breeze. And the waters will run again. And you will taste that fullness of life for which you were made, to which you are called, and into which you now move so steadfastly. Your suffering will be turned to compassion; your anger to justice; your apathy to service; your confusion to peace, and it will be you who proclaims to an anguished world that Reality in which it even now exists and which it has so tragically forgotten. In the face of all of the jeers and snickers and cynical jibes of this fallen world you will proclaim this love, pointing that same fallen world to the Truth and Beauty towards which it even now reaches in its own heavy-eyed way. It is for the sake of this Reality that we gather as the Church; that we live the Christian faith; that we return, again and again, to the reception of that one Blessed Life which has been broken for us, and offered for us, and is offered to us day by day that we might commune with Him and live in Him.

My gratitude goes out to you for your support in 2014, our first year. Many blessings and opportunities have been opened to us in this brief time, including our partnership with the wonderful parish of Saint James Lake Delaware. My hope is that you might continue to hold the ministries of Mons Nubifer Sanctus dear in the year to

come that my deepest prayer for our work would come true: that Mons Nubifer Sanctus might be a place of spiritual refuge, the hub of a community of deep prayer, and help to foster the renewal of a Christian spirituality of substance in the West. May this work nourish and heal the world, and may all who enter into training at Mons Nubifer Sanctus be transfigured into that blessed form of true humanity and true Godhood which has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus. Will you make time for this in 2015 and show up to do the most important work we will ever do: to remember, and to enter into, that Blessed Life which gives us our lives?

With Best Wishes and Prayers,

Fr. James Krueger+



The Guesthouse is Open!

OUR guesthouse at the historic and stately Saint James Lake Delaware is open to anyone who wishes to spend time at Mons Nubifer Sanctus for a personal or group retreat. We especially encourage you to book your space during the first and third full week of each month, anytime between Sunday and Sunday, but we can accommodate you other times as well. When staying you will be following a relaxed prayer vigil schedule, accommodated to your needs or the needs of your group, with periods of silent and sung prayer throughout the day and plenty of free time for rest, study, and contemplation. Group and individual spiritual direction and/or teaching will be available, as will the sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession), Eucharist, and Anointing. Please contact the guesthouse at 607-832-

4401 to discuss your retreat. Meals and lodging will be provided and no charge will be asked for your stay, only that you make a contribution according to your ability to give. You may also want to plan your stay around or attend one of our programs; see page 12.

Treasurer Fr. Paul Hunter and Board Member Dr. David Sherwood joined founder Fr. James Krueger for a two day Prayer Vigil and board retreat between Christmas and New Year's, and then welcomed an interesting and lively array of guests for the New Year's Program. Below are some photos from that event.



Signs of the Saints

An excerpt from Johannes Eckhart's *On Spiritual Endeavor*

WE must learn to free ourselves of ourselves in all our gifts, not holding on to what is our own or seeking anything, either profit, pleasure, inwardness, sweetness, reward, heaven or our own will. God never gives himself, or ever has given himself, to a will that is alien to himself, but only to his own will. Where he finds his own will, he gives himself and enters in with all that he is. And the more we cease to be in our own will, the more truly we begin to be in God's will. Thus it is not enough for us to give ourselves up just once, together with all that we have and are capable of, but we must renew ourselves constantly, thus preserving our freedom and simplicity in all things.

It is also very beneficial for us if we do not content ourselves with maintaining virtues such as obedience, poverty and the rest in the mind alone, but ourselves practice the works and fruits of virtue, testing ourselves while wishing and desiring to be exercised and tested by other people too. It is not enough for us to perform the works of virtue, exercising obedience, accepting poverty or disgrace or practicing humility or detachment in some other way; rather we should strive ceaselessly until we attain the essence and ground of virtue. And we can tell if we have attained this or not by asking whether we find ourselves inclined to virtue above all else and perform the works of virtue without prior preparation of the will, practicing virtue without the ulterior motive even of a great and good cause, so that the virtuous act in fact happens spontaneously on account of love of virtue and without asking 'what for?'. Then and only then do we have the perfect possession of virtue.

We must train ourselves in self-abandonment until we retain nothing of our own. All turbulence and unrest comes from self-will, whether we realize it or not. We should establish ourselves, together with all that is ours and all that we might wish or desire in all things, in the best and most precious will of God through a pure ceasing-to-be of our will and desire. ...

Johannes Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, trans. by Oliver Davies (London: Penguin Books, 1994).

Contemplative Practice and Prophetic Witness

Fr. James Krueger

I'VE recently happened across numerous photos of the violent protests which racked Ukraine's capital city last year. For three months a volatile crowd of protestors, swelling at one point to some 300,000 people, camped in the bitter-cold streets of the city. Among the tumult were numerous priests. Wearing the vestments of their office and carrying crosses and icons, they were highly identifiable amidst the chaotic clash of people. Photos show them blessing both police and protestors, tending to the wounded, ministering to the dying, and praying among the dead. They set up prayer tents and at least one church building's nave, a cathedral, served as a temporary hospital and shelter. The most striking photos show them, some alone, some with one or two others, standing between the lines of police on the one hand and the angry mob on the other. One photo, for an example, shows a resolute bishop who alone served as a human shield to quell the violence; another shows two priests, with votive candles burning and crosses in hand, doing the same. Perhaps the most provocative photo pictures a young priest giving absolution to a penitent on the rubble-strewn and frozen streets. The penitent is kneeling in the ice before the priest, who has draped his colorful broad stole over the penitent's head in typical Orthodox fashion, in an open area between protestors and a line of riot police. The defensively positioned ranks of police, with their shiny helmets, black riot gear and silver body shields, form the ominous and unlikely background



to the intimate rite. Despite the situation around them I am struck by the calm, matter-of-fact look on the priest's face as if he might be standing in his own church receiving one of his parishioners. These scenes immediately bring to mind the identical nature of prayer and engagement, of contemplative practice and prophetic witness in the world.

The temptation to separate contemplation and activity has hounded Christianity from the beginning, and from the beginning it has been rejected. When the disciples wanted to take up arms Jesus pointed them to the cross, to God's way of love and forbearance, that they might remove the plank from their own eye before poking another's eyes out. When the disciples wanted to hide behind locked doors, to wall themselves off from the clamoring world, Jesus penetrated through and sent them out into the world's danger. Though Mary chooses the better way by sitting at the Lord's feet her discipleship will be fulfilled only when she goes out from the garden and proclaims the impossible and glorious emptiness of the tomb. Without first learning to retreat

one's advancing becomes chaotic, confused and contentious; without knowing how to advance one's spiritual life becomes flimsy, sentimental and tiresome. In contemplation there must be decisive, prophetic action; in action there must be openness, recollection and prayer.

Contemplative practice is not the domain of the lazy priest or the indolent monk. Living a contemplative life certainly means guarding against undue stresses and frenetic activity, but a life that is contemplative is not just a life lived at ease. Though relaxation, poise,

and the quelling of free-floating anxiety can be by-products of a deep contemplative practice, these are not its goals. On the contrary, the contemplative is a soldier, and her practice is preparation for, and the certainty of, a face-to-face confrontation with evil. The contemplative runs from the distractions of the world only to expose the clamor of evil and sin in the quiet of stillness and the light of an unwavering gaze; to confront there the enemy face to face as if in a mirror – in other words, to meet the enemy in her own heart. Realizing that I and my foe are one sheds a wholly different light on the command to forgive one's enemies and pray for one's persecutors, even as it brings to its logical conclusion the need to love one's neighbor as oneself. If we can face the enemy with forbearance in the crucible of contemplative practice in a safe place of prayer we will learn to face him anywhere. Like the priests in Ukraine we might then stand peaceably in the midst of the frenzy of hatred and strife as an articulate instance of the strength of love. Self-gifting love is the true goal of contemplative practice, not self-actualization, and it is this love which gives us true poise and freedom from anxiety; we become free to witness courageously to the world and to respond appropriately and unreservedly to suffering.

If the clandestine enemies of the world are greed, hatred, envy, strife, murder, apathy, corruption, partiality, rapaciousness and so on, then we've only to sit down quietly to find them. This sitting down to find them and so to face them is the prophetic action of the true contemplative. He is not playing games; he is not running away; he is not trying to be spiritual or make a show. He is merely responding to the imperative of the world, and by doing so taking deep social action by remaining still. "I will fight for you," proclaims the Lord, "you have only to be still." (Ex 14:14). Some Christians believe that the more they do the more apparent God's kingdom will be, as though God's kingdom somehow depended on them. But it is God's kingdom, not ours, and it is already a reality from the beginning, revealed and reclaimed by Christ, and awaiting, beckoning, awaiting – that we might enter it and be blessed. This is why sin and strife are such a great tragedy, because the banquet is laid before us while we starve beneath the table, curled up and close-mouthed. Be filled, and then you will be food to the world.

It seems to me that the actions of these priests, at least as

they come to me in these photos, came from a place of true faith. Faith makes no show, nor does faith act anxiously and restlessly; faith needn't make work for itself, for it knows to its marrow that "all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."¹ This was the great proclamation of faith from the pen of Julian of Norwich in the midst of the Great Plague. Who would have believed her? Who believes her now? Contemplative action must be a spontaneous surge rolling from out of this restful sea of faith; only then will such action provide true Christian witness to the world; only then shall we proclaim to the world that it is God's and that God can be trusted; only then might we inspire the world to put down the gun, to cast aside the blade, to strip off the armor and dive into the great sea of forgetting, which is forgiveness. And if the world smites us with bitter jibes, taking us into its sights and taking us down then we, too, shall forget and sink into the blessed verve of God, and it shall be little different than sitting still.

1. Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. by Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

Upcoming Programs

Winter/Spring 2015

PROGRAMS at Mons Nubifer Sanctus are open to all. Each program is aimed at enhancing the appreciation and practice of the Christian life. We emphasize the costliness of Christian discipleship, encouraging spiritual maturity and union with God. Whether of an academic, practical, or spiritual nature, every program is designed to embolden us towards this end, and so is circumscribed by the practice of prayer. Each day consists of an early morning period of still prayer, followed by a sung morning prayer service. Noon and evening prayer services will further punctuate the day. If staying overnight the day closes with another period of still prayer and the nighttime service called “Compline.” The daily schedule for overnight programs will also include a period of silent work. During this time guests and staff complete the chores necessary to make our time together possible and comfortable, such as kitchen and housekeeping duties, while practicing the safeguarding of a prayerful heart in the midst of daily activity.

Overnight retreats begin with arrival and registration between 2 and 4 pm on the starting day, and end at 2 pm on the final day. All participants are asked to be present for the duration of the scheduled activities from beginning to end as each portion of the schedule represents an integral part of the curriculum and is essential to the contemplative formation on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus.

We are located at Saint James Church Lake Delaware, 55 Lake Delaware Drive, Delhi, NY 13753, on southbound State Route 28 halfway between Delhi and Andes in the northwestern Catskill Mountains of New York State. We are accessible by Trailways bus line from New York City and points south and east, and from Cooperstown and points north and west. Unless otherwise indicated all programs are offered for a freewill donation according to your ability to give, but require pre-registration. If you cannot afford to give anything work scholarships are available; please inquire. See our website, especially the “Attending a Program” page under the “Programs” tab, and feel free to contact us for further information or to register for a program.

+ Sat Jan 24: Guard What Has Been Entrusted to You: Surveying the Interdependence of Scripture and Tradition in the Historic Christian Faith. 8:30am - 4:30pm, breakfast and lunch provided.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. . . . O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. 1 Timothy 6:11-20.

One will likely hear people boasting, “In our church we go by the Bible alone; we don’t add other things to the word of God.” This attitude is based in the Reformation notion of *Sola Scriptura* (scripture alone) which was articulated by Protestant reformers in an argument with church authorities who were abusing church tradition. The reformers were affirming that scripture must be the sole source of Christian doctrine. Though Christian life and doctrine must be rooted in scripture, the problems in holding to the idea that scripture on its own can be a source of doctrine are many. The chief is interpretation: there can be as many interpretations of scripture as there are individual readers, and this is intensified by the obvious inconsistencies within the texts themselves. Where, then, is the authority to be found for the proper use and reading of scripture? What are the interpretive “keys” which give scripture its unity and bearing on the Christian life, and how are these keys handed down from one generation to another in the Church? The notion of scripture alone is not borne out in the history of the Church or in the development of the New Testament itself. The New Testament writings grew out of a tradition of teaching rather than the other way around, and they interpret the Old Testament according to that teaching. This program looks at the uniquely Christian tradition of scriptural interpretation, the development of the New Testament canon, and the communal character of sacred texts and their interpretation in general. We then explore the necessity for both scripture and tradition in the Christian life and their interdependence from the beginning. Participants gain especially a deeper appreciation for the Christian’s unique relationship to the Old Testament. This retreat is in celebration of the Feasts of Saint Timothy and the Conversion of Saint Paul on the 24th and the 25th respectively.

+ Sat Feb 14: Intimacy, Sexuality, and the Christian Spiritual Life

8:30am - 4:30pm, breakfast and lunch provided.

He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:28-33.

Union with God, which is the goal of the Christian life, is described by the Saints in the most intimate of terms, and much of the language of Christian mysticism is taken from the language of romance. It is no coincidence that at the height of Western Medieval Christianity we see the concurrent flowering of chivalry, which makes a fine art of courtly love, and a deep mysticism. Scripture itself uses sexual language to describe salvation in God: Christ is our bridegroom, the New Jerusalem descends from heaven

like a bride adorned for her husband, which means that she is gussied-up for their wedding night in which their union will be consummated. This program explores the nuanced vision of intimacy and sexuality in the Christian faith, as well as the equivalence between intimacy and knowledge. We do this through a study of the language of scripture and the works of a few select Christian spiritual writers, including those writing during that great flourishing of Christian mysticism in the 14th century West. This program is offered in honor of the feast day of Saint Valentine, a 3rd century Roman martyr for the Christian faith, who died in witness to the great wonder of the human being's intimate union with God.

+ Thurs Feb 19 – Sun Feb 22: Lenten Prayer Vigil

The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into two full days of deep and regenerative silence, spending many hours together each day engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation). This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work will help us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program.

+ Thurs Feb 26 – Sun Mar 1: The Priest-and-Poet Series: Exploring Religious Language

\$200 suggested donation, includes program, lodging, and meals. Taught by award winning author and poet Marly Youmans.

Religious language is not the language of technical manuals and engineer's reports. Highly symbolic, often obscure and dream-like, and expressing human truths through the twists and turns of narrative rather than linear explanation the language of religion, and more specifically of Christian scripture, is more akin to that of the poet and novelist than that of the researcher – even when it is seemingly giving a straightforward report of historical events! This workshop is aimed at both writers and readers, and anyone who wishes to explore the intricacies of religious language in Christian scripture. Through reading, discussion, quiet reflection and journaling, award winning poet and novelist Marly Youmans will guide participants through a lush garden of scriptural readings accented by ancient and contemporary poems, writings which avoid sentimentality and grapple with the chaos and struggle of human lives and the complexities of faith, in order to better appreciate how language is used in the Christian context to stir our deepest human longings and to express the inexpressible. Participants gain an

augmented appreciation for the language of scripture and push towards these same linguistic virtues in their own writing through guided writing projects with plenty of time for group sharing and feedback. As is the case with all programs at Mons Nubifer Sanctus participants take part in the contemplative training schedule of the retreat house, which includes periods of silent and sung prayer throughout the day as well as a brief period of work. Individual spiritual direction with Mons Nubifer Sanctus's founder is available upon request. Please see our "Attending a Program" page on our website for details and contact us with any questions or concerns. This retreat is offered in celebration of the feast day of George Herbert, Priest and Poet, on the 26th.

+ Thurs Mar 12 – Sun Mar 15: Introduction to the Theology and Practice of Contemplative Christianity

If our prayer vigils seem like too much too soon, take the opportunity to dip your feet into the ocean of contemplative practice at this retreat. Participants gain a solid theological and historical foundation in contemplative Christian practice, as well as some practical knowledge. Learn how to pray deeply; how to chant the daily prayer offices in morning, noon and evening prayer services; how the Christian sacramental and communal life supports and deepens contemplative practice, and how to practice contemplative activity. Participants have the opportunity to avail themselves to individual spiritual direction and/or the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) during this retreat.

+ Wed Apr 1 – Sun Apr 5: Paschal Triduum Prayer Vigil

Come celebrate the most important mystery of the Christian faith with focus and intention. Immerse yourself in the poignant liturgies of the Three Holy Days through which one loves, suffers, dies, and rises again in triumph in union with Christ, culminating in the stirring and lovely Easter Vigil service. The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into four whole days of deep silence, spending many hours together each day engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation). This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work helps us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program. If you can't make the Prayer Vigil you may still want to attend all or part of our Easter Program, described below.

+ Easter Program

Free. No pre-registration required.

Details TBA. Check our website or www.stjameslakedelaware.net.

+ Sat Apr 25: Putting Forth a Word: Addressing Common Criticisms of the Christian Faith in the Light of Historic Christianity

8:30am - 4:30pm, breakfast and lunch provided.

From the existence of God to biblical interpretation and textual criticism to the natural sciences, students in this one-day intensive look at common criticisms of Christianity as put forth in the popular media. Besides never having been a monolithic “thing” which can be summarily critiqued, Christianity in its long history has, through one writer or another, addressed the problems currently being raised against it. We come to see that the “Christianity” that is so often being critiqued is, to begin with, generally an overly wooden and truncated expression of the faith with little knowledge of, or connection to, the vast treasure-house of theology and practice spanning over the Church’s 2,000 year sojourn. In the light of the historic faith, and looking especially at the vast body of Patristic writings as well as contemplative Christian practice, this program explores some of the more common criticisms of Christianity in an attempt to discern whether they really stand and, if so, how they might be addressed.

+ Thurs May 7 – Sat May 9: I Will Go to the Altar of God: A Retreat for Altar Guild Members, Altar Guild Wannabes, and the Clergy who Oversee Them

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me an offering; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall receive the offering for me. And this is the offering which you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst....” Exodus 25:1-8

The Christian life is marked by a cycle of preparation and fulfillment, and the mass perfectly expresses this truth. It is the privilege of Altar Guilds to prepare for the Communion, so when the congregation gathers to enact this sacred mystery the lamps are lighted and all is ready. Likewise, when worship is ended, the Altar Guild is there to ensure that all the objects of the church are cared for, cleaned, and returned to their proper resting place. This program explores the Christian spiritual life through the work of the Altar Guild, encouraging Altar Guild members, wannabes, and the clergy who oversee them to realize the profound teaching inherent in the painstaking

work of preparation, fulfillment, and return. Altar Guild work not only reflects the inner mystery of the Christian life, but can help us to bring the orderliness and prayerfulness of liturgy into our everyday tasks, sanctifying them also as means of encounter with God. Though there are plenty of opportunities to share tricks of the trade, this retreat is more theoretical than practical in its approach.

+ Thurs May 21 – Sun May 24: Pentecost Prayer Vigil

Celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the constitution of the *ecclesia*, the Holy Church of God, in the depths of common prayer and the heart of God's peace. The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into two whole days of deep and regenerative silence, spending many hours together each day engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation). This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work helps us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program.

+ Sat June 13: The Nicene Creed: The Doctrine of the Trinity and its Significance in the Christian Spiritual Life

8:30am - 4:30pm, breakfast and lunch provided.

Scripture requires a “key” to its proper understanding, and the great creeds of the Church have functioned in this regard, even as they have summed up the apostolic proclamation contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The single most important creedal statement in the history of the Church and down to this day is what is known as the “Nicene Creed.” Forged in the fires of fierce theological controversy in the 4th century, this creedal statement as it comes down to us is rich in theological and spiritual significance, and it provides the key to a proper reading of the scriptures. In this program we look at the contested theological issues which goaded the development of the creed, the import of these issues on everyday Christian practice and understanding, and the tangled history behind the 1st and 2nd ecumenical councils where the creed was articulated. With this as our background we then study the creed and its theology point by point, line by line, in order to gain a greater appreciation of what exactly we are affirming when we recite the creed and its bearing on the Christian life. This program is in celebration of Saint Basil the Great's Feast day on June 14.



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THE intent of contemplative Christian practice is to move beyond discursive and imaginative forms of meditation and prayer into a simple, restful, intuitive, and intimate gaze upon God. Before this can be achieved the Christian disciple must first deal with all of the sinful habits of mind and heart which divide the soul, and distract it from integration and intimacy with God. The contemplative disciplines are designed to foster this process of deep inner healing and to help to cultivate the unity of intent – which the early church writers identified as “purity of heart” – by and in which we experience union with Christ, and so with the Father in the Spirit.