

A MONASTIC NOVITIATE FOR THE JOYFUL SERVANTS OF THE CROSS COMPRISING OF THESE 12 CONFERENCES, ACCOMPANIED BY PRESCRIBED PRAYER AND REFLECTIVE EXERCISES

CONFERENCE FIVE: Once the pruning process has been accepted as an experience to be welcomed because of the compassionate skilled methods of the one doing the pruning, God, (y)our loving Father, you now have an opportunity to dispose of much of the debris that has been a part of the tangled vine of (y)our former sel(f)ves. (You)We can own up to (y)our part in any misdeeds done, ask God's forgiveness for any sinful elements and receive the reconciliation that he freely and generously offers. *On Easter night Jesus breathed on the Apostles and said: Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of men they are forgiven, if you hold them bound, they are held bound.* God, You made your priests your judges and dispensers of your merciful forgiveness and peace.

My dear brother(s), there is, in spiritual housekeeping, the need for regular and consistent “dusting and polishing” of the spiritual vessel that one is. The Church, our spiritual Mother therefore recommends that, at least once a year, her children avail themselves of the direct application of the forgiveness brought about by the death and resurrection of her Lord and Savior. She gives us access to the great Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of Peace – in order not only to reconcile us to God, who is truly offended by our sin, but also to the Body of his Son, the Church, which is also wounded and offended by our sin. We are all part of the one body, and suffer and rejoice as each of us succeeds and fails! The two great seasons of Advent and Lent are particularly suitable times to celebrate this truly liberating and grace giving sacrament. For less serious sins scripture tells us *to confess our sins to one another* – so to keep the channels of grace and peaceful life flowing to their optimum degree. It is recommended that each monk seeks reconciliation away from the monastery, as the constraints placed by the seal of confession, by confessing to any resident priests in the monastery, might hamper the smooth operation of monastic life.

The Spirit of God the Father is so very eager to help you to confess your sins at the appropriate time and place – all he needs is your willingness to cooperate with him in honestly and forthrightly identifying your sins and then to relate them to his duly authorized representative, an external priest. The greatest saints were sometimes the greatest sinners who found the right confessor! Rejoice, brother(s) – you are on the right path!

Conference Five: Prayer/Action

O Holy Spirit, help me to resolve to make confession a regular part of my Catholic monastic observance; *(quietly reflect on seeing yourself relating your sins to Jesus as he is represented by your confessor)*

O Holy Spirit, help me to make living a sin-free life a top priority for myself; *(reflect for a few moments on the stress points where it might be easy to slip into lesser sins that only add up in time to weightier ones)*

O Holy Spirit, give me a grateful and loving heart for the tremendous gifts of life, peace and friendship that you offer in the Sacrament of Penance! *(pray a heart-felt prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God who loves you so very much – and is pleased with every bit of effort you are making as you progress in the search for a more perfect way in which to live out the Gospel message)!*

Amen.

[It would be helpful to read the Conference and Pray the Prayer, with its accompanying exercises, each day until the next conference!]

Given: (Date)

Abbot Peter Anthony, jsc