

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

I've mentioned in the past that I began my preparation for the priesthood at the Abbey of the Immaculate Conception – a Benedictine monastery – in Missouri. This year the abbey is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding. I find it remarkable and inspiring that the history of the monastery notes that the daily prayer of the monks began for the first time on December 24, 1873 and has continued without interruption ever since. Not only is the commitment to daily prayer remarkable, but the reason why the monks pray is also extremely important. That reason was explained by the founder of the monastery in his diary:

"The primary intention was this: the monastery, standing under the protection of the Immaculate Conception and St. Columba, was to become, besides a place of cultivating learning and the land, most importantly a School of the Lord's Service according to the Rule of St. Benedict – a center of prayer – as had existed in great numbers before the storms of the ecclesial and secular revolutions in the old world: places where, through the solemn celebration of the liturgical services, God the Lord of heaven and earth would be glorified, thereby calling down abundant blessings upon the people both near and far."

Conception Abbey, like other monasteries throughout the world, exist to bring about spiritual benefits not only for its own members but also for all the people of the world through the blessings of Almighty God. They are meant to be schools teaching other Christians how to better glorify God in prayer and worship. However, we must not think that this role of being centers of the Lord's service are only confined to monasteries and other religious houses. Every parish; yes, every family, is also meant to be a school of the Lord's service. It is within the family for example that we are taught the importance of the Christian virtues and also how to live them out in our lives. It is also within the family that we learn as children the crucial knowledge that we live and act not so much for ourselves and our own selfish desires, but for God and for other people. It is in the parish that we as Christians come together to praise and worship God according to the ways taught to us by the very first disciples of Jesus Christ. When the Mass is being celebrated here at St. Anne Church, we are thanking and glorifying God and at the same time receiving from God the blessings of His grace that bring about repentance for sins, reconciliation with God and our fellow man, strengthening of the desire to live a holy life according to the teachings of Jesus, and everlasting life with God. The next time you come to Mass (or any other liturgical service at St. Anne Parish such as Eucharistic Adoration or Stations of the Cross) remember that you are coming to pray not out of a sense of habit, but rather as a man or woman seeking to join with your fellow Christians throughout the world in praising God and asking for His blessing upon all peoples.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor