

MONASTIC CUSTOMARY OF ASSUMPTION ABBEY

August 2013

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1. FOREWORD

1.1 The Monastic Customary of Assumption Abbey sets forth the values we judge important in our life together. Rules and regulations are given by way of embodying these ideals in external, practical form. This Customary describes monastic life as practiced at Assumption Abbey and indicates what the community expects of its members.

1.2 This Customary is based on principles found in the Sacred Scriptures, in the *Holy Rule* of Saint Benedict and in the current edition of *The Constitutions and the Directory* of the American-Cassinese Congregation of Benedictine Monasteries.

3. In a general way, we say of ourselves:

We are a monastic community seeking God through Jesus Christ by remaining open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We strive to balance the essential monastic practices of liturgical prayer, lectio divina, private prayer and works of service to the people of God both within and outside the monastery.

We live under a rule and an abbot in a community of celibate members united in fraternal love and sharing a community of goods. We pursue life-long monastic formation by which we are willing to be influenced, moved and changed by God, abbot, confreres and others.

We observe this discipline in the enclosure of the monastery or in the various places outside the monastery to which we have been assigned. Wherever we may be we endeavor to maintain a simple life style which facilitates contemplation and union with God.

2. Seeking God

1. Overview

2.1.1 In Chapter 58 of the *Holy Rule* Saint Benedict makes seeking God the principal criterion for acceptance into the community.

2.1.2 The first practice in our search for God is celebrating the liturgy, which is an eminently monastic means of encountering God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. The second practice we engage in seeking God is *lectio divina* and personal prayer. *Lectio divina* upholds the highly respected place that Sacred Scripture has in the Church. Seeking God includes a life-long practice of reading, reflecting on and praying the Bible. Personal prayer fosters relationships between God, ourselves and the world.

4. We also seek God in and through each other because we believe the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us. This faith animates the manner in which we treat one another; as a faith community we make mutual love a primary goal in life so that love of God and love of neighbor become one. At the same time we are aware that as God's people, graced and saved by Him, we still offend one another and are sinful, immature and selfish; we also are virtuous, responsible and loving. Mutual forgiveness and support are interrelated.

5. In a still broader sense, and because of the Incarnation, we seek God in all creation as well as in events of each day and in all the affairs of the world.

6. In summary, as monks of Assumption Abbey, we strive to cultivate a love for the liturgy, for Sacred Scripture, for prayer and for the world. In these, we seek and find God. The goal of all these is contemplation and transformation in Christ.

2. Liturgy

2.2.1 The day begins with and is punctuated by the liturgy. The liturgy is largely constituted by the Liturgy of the Hours (*Opus Dei*) and the Holy Eucharist, which is called the Conventual Mass.

2. The liturgy is celebrated with dignity and reverence. Bodily posture that exhibits humble joy, respectful awareness and sincere devotion is expected from monks; so too is punctuality.

3. The rituals prescribed by the Church and monastic tradition are respected.
4. The liturgy director is concerned about all aspects of the liturgy, coordinating the work of those involved in the planning and execution of the community's public worship under the final supervision of the abbot. He also conducts instructional sessions for the community as needed. He, or someone so assigned, prepares the weekly list of liturgical assignments. To promote harmony, unity and a positive experience of liturgy for all, the liturgy director, with the approval of the abbot, will at times issue specific directives concerning details of liturgical performance. All monks are urged to cooperate responsibly with these directives.
5. The liturgy director is advised and assisted by the liturgy committee of which he is the chair. The liturgy director and music director should be included in planning professions, ordinations and other special liturgies.
6. The master of ceremonies is concerned with the detailed performance of liturgical events. He appoints and instructs the ministers for each service, posts instructional or informational notices for the community and coordinates the action of the liturgy in progress. He also trains acolytes in their service.
7. The music director selects the music for the Divine Office and Holy Eucharist and is usually the director of the schola. He conducts community rehearsals, as needed, to teach new materials and to improve performance.

2.3 *Lectio Divina* and Private Prayer

- 2.3.1 The monk is a man of prayer, striving always for an increasingly intimate union with God. That striving is grounded in and nourished by the essential monastic practices of *lectio divina* and private prayer.
2. *Lectio divina* is primarily the reading of, meditation on and praying over the Holy Scriptures. This practice leads, only with God's grace, to contemplation. In a broader sense, spiritual reading includes commentaries on Scripture, patristic writings and spiritual classics of all times.
3. Private prayer is a personal response of faith in God. God is addressed as Thou or You and is the focus of one's whole consciousness in a personal relationship of union or communion. A prayerful response to God takes form in adoration, thanksgiving, petition and propitiation.
4. *Lectio divina* and private prayer help the monk root himself in the Word of God in the context of present realities.

5. An open and receptive silence is essential to union with God in *lectio divina* and private prayer. We mutually support our lives of seeking God by maintaining an atmosphere of silence and recollection in the cloister at all hours.

2.4 Obedience

- 2.4.1 The monastic vow of obedience is given ultimately to God within the context of the Church and the *Holy Rule*.

2.4.2 A man joins a monastery to be a monk, not to follow a particular career. In making assignments the abbot will consider the needs of the community and respect, to the extent this is possible, the talents and aptitudes of each monk.

2.4.3 Whenever obedience is an occasion for frustration or suffering, as it will at times be, a monk acknowledges that it is dealt with by faith and trust in God much in the manner of our Lord, who became obedient unto death.

5. Stability

2.5.1 The vow of stability is made in response to the utter reliability and faithfulness of God toward his people. It expresses our commitment to persevere until death in the monastic life at Assumption Abbey, whether within or outside the monastery.

5.2. Throughout our history many monks have led exemplary lives on mission as pastors, chaplains and teachers, bringing to their work our unique Benedictine charism.

5.3. If assigned outside the monastery, willingness to come back to the community at the Abbey as requested or upon retirement, is an expression of the fidelity and love we give to God by being faithful and loving monks.

2.6 *Conversatio*

2.6.1 Through the Benedictine vow of *conversatio morum*, we strive for conversion to Christ by living according to the monastic way of life with conscious and zealous effort.

- 2.6.2 Our striving to conform ourselves to Christ is initiated and sustained by God's grace. The monk disciplines himself to be single-minded in his spiritual, intellectual, emotional and relational life so that love will grow and Christ be glorified.
- 2.6.3 Our striving for conversion also includes a community effort in which, through open dialogue, we seek to improve our monastic observance by addressing abuses that may be present, divisions that diminish the credibility of our witness or practices that are incompatible with the vowed life.
- 2.6.4 In general our *conversatio* calls for that kind of personal and corporate responsibility that will make real our decision to follow Christ by practicing the good zeal Saint Benedict speaks of in Chapter 72 of the *Holy Rule*.

2.7 Poverty

- 2.7.1 God is the wealth of the human heart. The life of a monk is marked by simplicity, austerity and self-restraint. As a community we subscribe to the principles of stewardship in our use of and care for God's creation. A monk does not own anything. All things are held in common.
- 2.7.2 Personal items purchased by monks which cost more than what is stipulated by the Senior Council are to be approved in advance by the abbot.
- 2.7.3 Assumption Abbey charge accounts in Richardton and Dickinson are under the supervision of the business manager. In every case, the purchaser signs a corresponding receipt which is given to the business manager to facilitate control and payment of purchases.
- 2.7.4 A monk assigned on mission has access to the common checking account for ordinary expenses or for petty cash. When he returns to live at the Abbey, he will turn unused checks for the common checking account and credit cards in to the business office.
- 2.7.5 Stipends, stole fees and gifts are handed in to the business office by all monks on a timely basis. Mass intentions are the responsibility of the one receiving them, either by offering the Masses himself, or by giving them to the *stipendarius* (custodian of Masses).
- 2.7.6 All salary checks of monks are to be issued in the name of Assumption Abbey. When this procedure is not possible the monk consults the business manager for another acceptable arrangement in view of IRS implications.

- 2.7.7 Inheritance and gifts of cash, even though received in the name of the individual monk, belong to the community in accord with our vows. These are given to the business office. Acceptance of other gifts of considerable value requires the abbot's approval.
- 2.7.8 Up to three percent of the cash income of the community will be designated to relieve the needs of the poor and to support causes that depend on the generosity of donors, especially those of the local area. The monastic chapter approves an alms list annually. Appeals for alms directed to individual monks, except in cases of emergency, are referred to the senior council, which prepares the annual alms list.

2.8 Chastity

- 2.8.1 We believe celibacy is a sign of the presence of the Kingdom and that it anticipates the condition of the resurrected. All desire, including sexual, is seen as a longing for God who alone can fulfill it.
- 2.8.2 As celibates we reach out to others in a chaste and loving manner: to each other in the community—to the junior monk as well as the senior; to those we prefer as well as those with whom we differ; and to guests, male and female, whatever their faith or social and economic backgrounds.
- 2.8.3 No sexual abuse of any kind will be tolerated. The community provides opportunity for input regarding mature human relationships, including sexuality. All civil norms regarding sexual abuse will be followed and all policies and procedures in **Safeguards: Guidelines for Prevention of Sexual Abuse** will be adhered to.

3. Formation and Vocations

3.1 Initial Formation

- 3.3.1. The formation director bears primary responsibility for all initial formation. As novice master he has direct responsibility for the formation of candidates and novices and shows a general concern for the effective functioning of the entire formation program. In addition, all members of the community share in the work of initial formation through their lived example of monastic fidelity, as well as through their interaction with the newer members at prayer, at work, and in social settings. Foundational to all formation, both initial and ongoing, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of each monk.

- 3.1.2 The director of formation, with consultation of the abbot, nominates a formation committee of which he is the chair. This committee will discuss all aspects of formation and the specifics of the program offered. It will also evaluate candidates, novices and those in temporary vows and offer its recommendation to the abbot and chapter.
3. The philosophy and policy for basic formation is formulated by the formation director with the help of the formation committee, and is reviewed periodically. The senior council approves any changes.
4. Formation during candidacy, novitiate and temporary vows covers historic and current monastic topics and insights into the nature of a human person. Formal classes for candidates, novices, and juniors explore the content of Sacred Scripture, Liturgy, Catholic doctrine, and Benedictine documents (*The Holy Rule, The Constitutions and Directory*, and this customary, as well as monastic history before and after St. Benedict, along with other appropriate course offerings. The formation director solicits help from others versed in these fields.
5. The junior master is responsible for the ongoing formation of monks in temporary vows. He is their immediate superior and is ex-officio a member of the formation committee.
6. Duration of formation for candidates is at least six months; for novices, one year and a day; for juniors, from three to nine years; for the finally professed, a life-long effort.

3.2 Ongoing Formation

- 3.2.1 Life-long formation is the personal responsibility of each monk. He achieves it by actively seeking to improve his understanding of seeking God in the monastic life and then using this understanding to form his monastic practice.
- 3.2.2 *Religious are to apply themselves to conversion of heart to God, examine their conscience even daily, and frequently approach the sacrament of penance* (Canon 664). Each monk is encouraged to have a confessor and spiritual director. One person may function in both capacities. Monks are encouraged to receive the Sacrament of Penance monthly, or at least every three months.
- 3.2.3 Ongoing formation is promoted in many ways, such as:
 - communal and private prayer, *lectio divina*, study of the *Holy Rule* and Sacred Scripture;
 - daily fellowship and adjustment to the demands of life in common;
 - correspondence and gatherings with monks on mission;

- conferences of the abbot during Vespers and other occasions;
- homilies at the Eucharist;
- frequent community meetings;
- the annual retreat;
- occasional conferences hosted at the Abbey;
- theological and monastic renewal programs;
- the *Abbey News* and the *Assumption Abbey Newsletter*;
- senior council, committee, and chapter meetings.

3.3 Vocations

- 3.3.1 Vocations are the concern of every member of the community. Each monk is encouraged to make initial contact with prospective candidates, help them contact the vocation director and visit the Abbey. Most importantly we pray for vocations. We also recognize that the example of a joyful, prayerful and warmly hospitable monk is a powerful attraction for prospective candidates. Our vocation efforts include the Abbey Vocation Committee and the Vocation Committee Advisory Board.
2. The vocation director attends to various requests for information regarding our community, invites men for visits, schedules monks to give assigned talks, periods of work and tends to their needs during that period of time. Once a person enters the candidacy program he passes to the care of the formation director.

4. Community

4.1 Purpose

- 4.1.1 Our community exists because God wills it and men have responded to the call from God to join it. With each monk serving under the *Rule* and an abbot in his search for God, a unity of purpose and a common bond is formed to help all grow in conversion to Christ for life.
- 4.1.2 A monk is expected to invest himself in the community and sacrifice for the community. His faith, hope and love are lived in the context of community.
- 4.1.3 Participation in the community's liturgy, in *lectio divina* and private prayer are primary ways a monk seeks God and devotes himself to build the bonds on monastic community. Conversation at table and during recreation is also an important avenue for sharing something of ourselves so confreres might know us better and strengthen the bonds of fraternity and charity.

4.1.4 Another important purpose of community is to meet the human need for companionship, friendship and intimacy.

4.2 Work

4.2.1 St. Benedict says that monks are to do “whatever work needs to be done” (RB 48: 3, 6). The abbot and senior council will try to bring together each monk’s aptitude and talents to accomplish this end. The head of a department should be consulted before changes of personnel are made in his department.

2. In doing assigned work a monk seeks God by committing himself to the needs and well-being of the community in total self-offering. Self-transcendence is striven for with care, in consultation with a good spiritual director and the abbot.
3. Each monk is urged to set aside at least one hour a day for *lectio divina*, meditation, and private prayer. He should select times best suited for himself. The periods after breakfast until 8:00 a.m. and after Vespers until 8:00 p.m. are ideal times for these activities. Silence should be observed throughout the monastery for the sake of those who choose these times.
4. A six-hour day of work, Monday through Friday—and three hours on Saturday—is normative for each monk. A coffee break of 10 to 15 minutes in the morning, afternoon and evening is acceptable for monks living in the monastery. This recess is done in the community room. The monk is generous with his time, especially when extra work is called for. He exercises personal responsibility in contributing to the support and well-being of the community.
5. At present the work of our community is quite varied. In the future, we are open to assume work that is compatible with the spirit of the monastic life practiced at Assumption Abbey.
6. Monks on mission—in parishes, chaplaincies, and schools—have the burden and responsibility of integrating their professional obligations with their monastic commitment without the moderating influence of the common life. They strive to balance these two elements in a harmonious way. All the work done by monks of Assumption Abbey, be it accomplished at the Abbey or elsewhere, is part of a common labor that unifies us and frees us to be monks whose lives are centered on God.
7. Our monastic community does not exist primarily to staff certain works, either within the monastery or outside of it. Rather, monastic life itself is its own apostolate. The work of monastic life is to seek God and so build up the Body of Christ in love. We, with the whole church, live in hope of a human life transformed through living the Paschal Mysteries of Jesus Christ. Without this

fundamental orientation, monastic life deviates from the spirit of the *Holy Rule*.

4.3 Horarium

4.3.1 The monastic horarium of Assumption Abbey is as follows:

Monday to Friday--
 6:20 AM Morning Prayer
 followed by
 breakfast
 11:40 AM Noon Prayer
 followed by Lunch
 5:00 PM Community
 Mass followed by
 Supper
 7:00 PM Vespers
 7:30 PM Quiet in rooms
 and hallways
 8:10 PM Compline
 10:00 PM Televisions
 and
 computers off and
 Great Silence
 begins
Saturday--

6:20 AM Morning
 Prayer
 followed by
 breakfast
 11:15 AM Community
 Mass followed by
 lunch
 5:10 PM Vespers,
 followed
 by supper
 6:45 PM Compline
 10:00 PM Televisions
 and
 computers off and
 Great Silence
 begins

Sunday--
 6:20 AM Morning Prayer
 followed by
 breakfast
 8:30 AM Community
 Mass
 11:40 AM Noon Prayer
 followed by
 dinner
 5:00 PM Vespers,
 followed
 by supper
 10:00 PM Television and
 computers off and
 Great Silence
 begins

4.3.2 Activities of our day revolve around the liturgy and meals, which are communal events of celebration. All members attend these events regularly.

5. Governance and Administration

5.1 Abbot

5.1.1 The abbot represents Christ in the community and assists the members in their search for God. While he is ultimately responsible for every aspect of monastic life, he seeks first to be a spiritual father and teacher of the things of God.

2. In his concern for the spiritual well-being of the community, he is diligent in:
 - encouraging a vibrant and beautiful liturgy;
 - providing adequate formation for new members and ongoing formation for the whole community;
 - preparing and giving conferences;
 - making available spiritual directors and confessors;
 - maintaining an atmosphere of silence in the monastery conducive to *lectio* and study.
3. The abbot has a personal concern for every member of the community, especially the infirm and aged. He inspires faith and hope by the example of

his life. His genuine love for all includes correcting members who fail to observe the common rule.

4. He presides at Senior Council meetings, at Chapter meetings and Community meetings. He prepares and posts in advance the agenda for each meeting. At his discretion he requests from the Senior Council an evaluation of his abbatial ministry.
5. In consultation with the Senior Council he makes out an annual list of work assignments, and adjusts assignments as need arises.
6. He manifests interest in the various departments and activities of resident monks.
7. He has a personal visit with each monk annually. Tibatí he visits every year, or as seems expedient. Monks are always free to report on the positive and negative aspects of their prayer and work to the abbot. He keeps regular office hours and is available for appointments at other times.
8. He admits members to the novitiate and profession of vows, and presents candidates for Holy Orders.
9. Aware that monastic obedience limits the personal options of members, he approves:
 - overnight absences of monks from their place of assigned residence;
 - round trips of over 400 miles;
 - changes of office areas and any other public spaces, and authorizes alterations such as painting, carpeting, and similar items in the monastery.

2. Prior

- 5.2.1 The prior shares the overall spiritual and material concern of the abbot. He is in charge during the absence of the abbot, and upon his return informs him of significant happenings.
- 2.2. The prior is vigilant about the day-to-day needs of the sick within the community and checks on the well-being of monks absent from community functions. Resident monks inform the prior of medical appointments and whenever they will be away from the monastery for an hour or more. He assigns rooms to monks.
- 2.3. He posts a weekly dishwashing sign and is aware of *ad hoc* work needs in the monastery and assigns monks to do the work. In general he supervises the

orderliness and cleanliness of the public areas of the cloister. He makes needed adjustments in the monastic horarium.

- 2.4. He dispenses cash up to amounts determined by the Senior Council.
- 2.5. He answers appeals of pastors and chaplains for weekend help and posts a sign of appointments for the week that is to follow. This notice likewise assigns the presiders for the Community Mass.
- 2.6. He oversees the Visitors Center and coordinates phone operators.
- 2.7. During the absence of the abbot and the prior, the subprior is in charge. The subprior is responsible for the duties of the prior while the latter is absent.

5.3 Business Manager

- 5.3.1 The business manager is in charge of all temporal and material property of the monastery and cares for the economic well-being of the community and for the viability of its various enterprises.
2. He is authorized to call upon all departments for their collaboration to ensure the smooth and efficient administration of the monastery's goods. Departments are not autonomous entities; they are subject to the business manager in all aspects regarding financial planning and management.
3. The business manager frequently discusses with the abbot the disposition of the monastery's material resources and other business trends that call for further action so that, as the *Holy Rule* states, the "house of God may be in the care of wise men who will manage it wisely" (RB 53:22).
4. The business manager oversees the availability of cars, the use of gas credit cards and cell phones, which are available for travel.

4. Senior Council

- 5.4.1 The Senior Council of Assumption Abbey has six members: three elected by the community annually for a one-year term, three appointed by the abbot for one year. The abbot presides at all meetings.
- 4.2. New members are elected at the August business chapter. In advance of the chapter, the secretary of the chapter distributes nominating ballots to all capitulars.

- 4.3. Senior Council meetings are scheduled monthly. Adjustments are made as council business demands or to accommodate council members.
- 4.4. The agenda for each meeting with pertinent background information is distributed at least two days before the meeting. The agenda itself is posted on the community bulletin board so that any member of the community can make appropriate suggestions to senior council members. Among other things, the agenda covers any matters requiring council approval as outlined in *The Constitutions and The Directory* of our Congregation. A report of the Council meeting is given to the community promptly.

5. Committees

- 5.5.1 There are four standing committees in our monastery: the vocation committee, the formation committee, the liturgy committee and the development committee. The abbot appoints ad hoc committees whenever specific needs arise.
- 5.2. The vocation committee consists of the vocation director, the abbot who presides and other appointed members. The vocation committee is assisted by a lay advisory board.
- 5.3. The formation committee consists of the formation director, who presides, the junior master, the vocation director, and one or more members of the community. The committee is constituted annually by the formation director for approval by the abbot.
- 5.4. The liturgy committee consists of the liturgy director, who presides, and other members whose expertise and interest in liturgy seem useful (cf. 2.2.5). The committee meets as needed in the interest of a vibrant monastic liturgy. At his discretion, the abbot may attend.
- 5.5. The development committee consists of the director of development who presides, the business manager and other appointed members. The committee assists the director of development in planning and implementing development efforts.
- 5.6. All committees keep the abbot informed of their activities, either through verbal reports or through the agendas and minutes of their meetings. At his discretion the abbot attends all committee meetings.

6. Policies

6.1 Leisure

- 6.1.1 Our monastic practice of leisure is more directly related to our life of worship than it is to our work. Thus leisure time is set aside to free our minds and hearts to be more receptive to the beauty, truth, and goodness God has placed in and around us. Furthermore, it allows us to celebrate life in all its manifestations.
2. For the monk leisure fosters contemplation by enabling him to rejoice in being at one with God, with himself and with all that is. In general leisure gives balance to the regulated elements of our work and the institutional aspects of monastic life; it is a leaven that gives quality to prayer, study and work.
3. All resident monks spend the period before evening prayer together in the community rooms in whatever leisure activities they enjoy. In addition to communal recreation, each monk is encouraged to take some time to pursue personal or communal interests in the fine arts, hobbies or sports. A monk is not to watch television for lengthy periods.
4. Vacations also provide for leisure. Monks are allowed an annual vacation of two weeks; vacations on occasions of jubilees can be longer. Transportation expenses will vary according to need and distance. Other expenses are limited by the demands of monastic poverty. The Abbot approves the vacation plan of each monk.

2. Hospitality

- 6.2.1 As monks of Assumption Abbey we seek to live the ideal expressed in the *Holy Rule* that all guests are to be received as Christ. Practically, this means that we welcome guests with genuine kindness and courtesy. In order to safeguard this important ideal, the following policies are hereby indicated.
- 2.2. As a rule, the abbot approves the stay of overnight guests. However, the guest master welcomes religious and priests; monks invite immediate family members (novices obtain approval of the formation director); the vocation director invites prospective candidates. Rooms in the guest department are assigned to overnight guests only by the guest master. Monks are to consult the guest master about the availability of rooms. Payment for use of guest facilities is not expected of religious, priests, a monk's immediate family members or personal friends, and prospective candidates.
- 2.3. Guests are welcome to our liturgies. Proper dress is requested. Practicing Catholics may receive Holy Communion.

- 2.4. Our dining facilities are shared with guests. Our reputation for genuine hospitality stems from this to a notable degree. If a monk has mealtime guests he advises the kitchen in an opportune manner.
- 2.5. Male religious and priests are always welcome in the community rooms of the monastery. The vocation director may invite prospective candidates to these areas.
- 2.6. The duties of the guest master include the following:
- to ready the guest rooms for occupancy;
 - to help guests find the church and dining room;
 - to keep a monthly record of overnight guests;
 - to prepare information sheets for overnight guests with the schedule of the liturgy and meals, and with costs calculated by the business manager. This information is for private retreatants and for those who may wish to leave an offering.
- 2.7. The director of groups schedules groups who use Schnell Hall, the north lounge and the centennial room. He informs the kitchen in advance of a group's meal needs. He also schedules for and assigns monks to clean Schnell Hall and other areas used by groups.
- 2.8. Tours are scheduled in advance through the coordinator of tours.
- 2.9. The lodging and care of the poor and homeless are under the supervision of the business manager.

3. Silence

- 6.3.1 Silence is an indispensable quality of monastic life and an essential means to seek God. At Assumption Abbey we strive to let it circumscribe our whole way of life. To achieve this ideal we arrange for silence in specific places and times so as to enhance our spirit of recollection and foster prayer and union with God.
- 3.2. Those places in which silence is always observed are the Abbey church, Saint Joseph's chapel and all corridors of the monastery. We observe silence in the monastery dining room during breakfast except on Sundays and the following:

Mother of God, March 21 (Passing of Saint Benedict), Ascension, July 6 (Dedication of the Abbey church), July 11 (Saint Benedict), Assumption, All Saints, Thanksgiving, Immaculate Conception, and Christmas.

3.3. In Chapter 42 of the Holy Rule, Saint Benedict says that monks should diligently cultivate silence at all times but especially at night. After the last hour of the Opus Dei, there is to be silence in the monastic cells and hallways. At 10:00 pm the Great Silence begins until the commencement of work in the morning (8:00 am). This period of shared silence is most conducive to *lectio* and personal or contemplative prayer.

4. Education

6.4.1 Education is understood here as professional preparation in sacred and secular sciences and arts. It is academic study as distinct from monastic formation, yet integrated with it.

4.2. Proposals for education are submitted to the abbot for review and for approval by the Senior Council. Proposals may originate from a monk himself or may be suggested by the community.

4.3. A proposal is to include the following information:

- area of study and degree sought;
- reasons for the study and degree—why it is for the good of the monk and/or monastery;
- preference of college or university;
- time limits, as to when studies begin and end;
- suggested arrangements for residence;
- cost estimates, itemized for tuition, room and board, transportation, and all additional expenses;
- availability of grants and scholarships.

4.4. An annual budget is submitted to the Senior Council.

6.4.5 Whenever issued, academic grades and evaluations of course work are sent to the abbot. The monk likewise keeps the abbot informed on the progress of his studies. He also advises the abbot of dates of breaks and vacations.

6. It is the responsibility of the monk, and the abbot's concern, that he be diligent about his spiritual life during the term of studies, and that he observe simplicity of life. It is important, nonetheless, that he take advantage of cultural events at his disposal.

7. Anyone wishing to attend a workshop, seminar or conference away from his place of assignment presents an itemized cost estimate to the abbot for approval. When expenses are paid by the institution to which he is assigned, the monk informs the abbot of the time of his absence.

6.4.8 Our identity as monks is distinct from the ministerial priesthood, which places the monk, in a greater way, at the service of the larger Church. Acceptance for ordination is a process separate from acceptance into the novitiate and for profession of vows. When a member of our community perceives a call from God to priesthood, he will discuss it with the abbot. To further discern the call to priesthood, the abbot may consult with the Senior Council. If it is decided there might be a call to priesthood, the monk will draw up the usual education proposal for the Senior Council. Each year the abbot will give a report to the community as to how the monk is doing with his seminary training. This report will help the community and the monk discern if there is a call to the priesthood.

5. The Sick and Elderly

1. Care of the sick is provided in accord with the principles set forth in the *Holy Rule*. The prior and infirmarian are alert to the day-by-day needs of the sick at the monastery.
2. Hospitalization and major surgery are arranged for in consultation with the abbot. In case of emergency the abbot is informed as soon as possible.
3. When a monk has a routine dental or medical appointment he informs the prior.
4. The Abbey has an infirmarian who supervises and gives care to those members who need regular health-care assistance. He may call on others to assist him when the circumstances require. In most cases we try to care for the sick and elderly here at the Abbey using the personnel and facilities available. Monks in need of specialized care may need to be admitted to a skilled nursing-care facility.
5. During serious illness, fellow monks visit and assist sick confreres as far as possible. Anointing of the Sick or Viaticum is administered opportunely. Provision is made for daily reception of Holy Communion for monks not able to attend Mass.
6. We decline the use of extraordinary means to prolong life when this use offers no hope for recovery. Better that a monk find spiritual support in prayer and in the loving care of confreres than in impersonal and expensive medical techniques. If a situation arises in which a monk is unable to decide for himself the proper procedures, the abbot will have the Durable Power of Attorney to decide for him.
7. Medical insurance is provided for monks through the business office, or, as the case may be, by employers of monks on mission.

8. The retirement of a monk on mission once again allows him to enjoy life in the community here at the Abbey, where the support of many brothers can assist him in making a successful transition. The contributions of the elderly and infirm to the vitality of the community are inestimable.

6.6 Death and Burial

- 6.6.1 Deceased monks are dressed and buried in the monastic habit. Their mortal remains lie in state in the Abbey church while a vigil service is held. A funeral Mass follows the next day. For all monks we use coffins that are simple, and burial is made in the Abbey cemetery.
2. Non-members may be buried in our cemetery in lots set aside for that purpose. The Senior Council authorizes persons to be buried in our monastic cemetery.
3. Each monk of our monastery offers three Holy Masses for the repose of the soul of a deceased confrere according to his participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Death notices are sent to monasteries of our congregation. The same notices are sent to Sant'Anselmo, Einsiedeln, other monasteries of men in the United States, and to monasteries of women where a confrere might have been known.

7. Practical Matters of Concern

- 6.7.1 Monks of Assumption Abbey wear the Benedictine habit as an external sign of our monastic identity. The habit is a constant reminder of what we profess to be and of our personal commitment to Christ in faith and to our confreres in mutual love. It is customary to wear the habit for the liturgy and for meals.
- 7.2. All monks are encouraged to observe good health practices in what concerns diet and physical exercise. They are expected to keep their room clean. If a monk is unable to do so, assistance is given.
- 7.3. In certain instances, a monk may take advantage of psychological counseling services. When a monk initiates counseling, the practitioner will be informed that the abbot, or his designee, will be meeting with the monk and the practitioner after 5 - 7 sessions. A release of information for this will be obtained from the practitioner. This meeting will help ensure that pertinent issues are being raised and addressed in the counseling sessions. If deemed necessary, a joint meeting will again be held after 15 - 20 sessions have been completed. Only in rare instances will counseling be continued beyond a two-year period, though maintenance sessions (1 to 2 per year) may be held.

8. Computers

6.8.1 The usage of computers is governed by monastic principles, including the principles of monastic stewardship of time and resources.

8.2. The Abbey will provide computers for common use by its members. The abbot will determine if a monk shall have a computer in his cell.

8.3. For monks on mission, computers will be provided by the employer or the Abbey. All work done by a monk on a computer, whoever owns it, even a computer at a public place or institution, without exception, is considered to be the property of Assumption Abbey. When considered appropriate, such computers may be inspected by the abbot or his delegate or by a third party.

7. EPILOGUE

7.1 This customary reflects the ideals and values, as well as the current practices and customs, of the monks of Assumption Abbey. In whole or in part, it is a living document, always tentative in the sense that it is to be reviewed from time to time. At such times changes are made that better elucidate ideals that may have become vague or even lost. Most often changes will be needed to bring the customary into agreement with current practices.

2. The Senior Council serves as an *ad hoc* committee to propose and study changes or revisions. These suggested changes then are brought to the community for discussion. If the abbot approves them they are included in the customary.

3. Each monk receives his own copy of this customary. He inserts amended sections as they appear.

UT IN OMNIBUS GLORIFICETUR DEUS!

HISTORY

The First Edition: 1983

The 1983 Customary included the following steps:

- 1) Early in 1982 members of the senior council discussed contents and format. (*Council members 1981-1982*: Aaron Jensen, Benedict Pfaller, Brian Wangler, Daniel Maloney, David Wolf, and Raphael Stovik.)
- 2) From these observations Abbot Lawrence prepared a first draft.
- 3) Later in the year the council proposed revisions.
- 4) At the Christmas meetings, December 27-28, 1982, the community discussed the document and offered suggestions, which were discussed by the senior council. (*Council members 1982-1983*: Aaron Jensen, Benedict Pfaller, Daniel Maloney, John Seiler, Odo Muggli, Terrence Kardong.)
- 5) Incorporating the recommendations of the council, Abbot Lawrence redacted the document, finishing on Holy Saturday, April 2, 1983.

The Monastic Customary was promulgated by Abbot Lawrence Wagner, OSB, on June 1, 1983

The 1992 revision

The senior council suggested at its October 30, 1990, meeting, that the 1983 Assumption Abbey Customary (AAC-83) be revised. Abbot Patrick agreed to the project.

At each meeting for twelve months, council members were assigned sections of AAC-83 and asked to make suggestions for changes. Abbot Patrick edited these. Three sections of AAC-83 were deleted or subsumed into other sections and two new sections were added (2.6: "Zealous Monks" and 5.3: "Silence"). This new version was given to council members for further critique and refinement until the October 31, 1991, meeting. (*Council members in the revision*: Odo Muggli, David Wolf, Aaron Jensen, Terrence Kardong, Brian Wangler, Boniface Muggli.)

The customary with the modifications was presented at a community meeting on December 27, 1991. A few changes were incorporated as a result of suggestions made at this meeting.

The revised Monastic Customary was promulgated by Abbot Patrick Moore, OSB, on January 1, 1992

The current document includes changes or additions up to January 1, 2002.

The 2013 revision

At the August 1, 2012, meeting of the Senior Council Abbot Brian suggested that a project for the coming year would be the revision of the Customary. Work began at the October 8, 2012, meeting. Council members were: Alban Petesch, Michael Taffe, Sebastian Schmidt, Basil Kirsch, (Anthony Baker after Basil K's death) Odo Muggli, Jacob Deiss. A rather thorough revision was done

The revised customary was presented to a community on Tuesday, May 28, 2013 during the community retreat. It was again presented to the gathered community at the August 7, 2013 business meeting and promulgated on August 15, 2013, feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, patronal feast of Assumption Abbey.