

## **THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Our Silent Supporters**

This past week, I observed my annual five-day retreat, as priests are required to do each year per Canon Law. The place I have gone to for several years is a place that inspires a great sense of support and solidarity within the Church, the Body of Christ. It is a very small monastery near Steubenville known as “Holy Family Hermitage”. Within the Catholic Church, as St. Paul often mentions in his letters, are a number of different vocations and gifts that together build up the entire Body of Christ and allow Jesus to act within His Church to bring the world to salvation and to build the Kingdom of God. We here at our Hardin County parishes live many of those vocations, especially in the “active” world: as parents, as spouses, as college students, as teens or young adults, as widows or senior citizens, as well as our three parish clergy who are ordained to serve the Body of Christ in the midst of the very “active” life and needs of our parishioners in the thick of the challenges of the secular culture. Our various vocations – lay and clerical – to mission and to holiness, are not easy. But we have a lot of supporters within the Body of Christ that we don’t always think about: those in the various religious orders, particularly those who are members of the “contemplative” orders.

Contemplative religious orders have a vocation to pray, to intercede, and to do penances for the needs of the rest of the Church, including you and me. And they do so in silence, solitude, and austerity. Holy Family Hermitage is one such group. They are members of the Camaldolese religious order, founded by St. Romuald in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the Steubenville group (located in Bloomingdale, OH) is one of only two Calmaldolese hermitages in our nation. They are “hermits” in that they observe one of the strictest and most austere ways of life permitted for religious orders within the Church. Holy Family Hermitage currently has six hermits (ranging from their 20’s to their 80’s) who each live in a separate “cell” (a small cabin) but who share some meals together and worship together in their chapel with daily Mass (at 6:00 a.m.) and seven periods of prayer (called the “Liturgy of the Hours”) from 4:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. They observe a vow of silence five days each week (speaking only when necessary to complete work tasks), and they divide up the work of the hermitage from maintenance to writing to preparing their meals (all vegetarian) to tending the small guest house. They are not permitted to leave their property except with the permission of their head hermit (the “Prior”), usually for medical appointments or food shopping. But the main purpose of their vocation as hermits is two-fold: to study and write about the dynamics of the interior spiritual life for the benefit of others (they publish books which are available on a website maintained by lay friends), and, most importantly, to pray for the needs of the entire Church – including people like you and me in the more “active” world. They are keenly aware of the challenges posed to us Catholics by our secular culture. And so, they offer their life of solitude, silence, prayer and penance for our benefit and our own vocations. And they do so, day after day, year after year, with very little recognition and no desire for “fame”. It is, I think, a great comfort knowing that we have such individuals willing to offer their lives for our benefit, and to silently support us as we face the daily spiritual battle for holiness in our work, families, college campuses, and schools. They, too, are with us in the battle with their penances and lives of self-denial. May we pray for and give God thanks for these and all our contemplative religious.

Fr. Ferguson is available to help you with any questions or concerns you may have; please contact him at [hamilton.college@outlook.com](mailto:hamilton.college@outlook.com) or at 419-634-2626.

## **THOUGHTS FOR OUR PARISH CHILDREN by “Jackie”, the Pastor’s Cat**



Hi boys and girls! My name is “Jackie”, and as you know, I am Father Ferguson’s cat! I’ve had another tough week. That’s right! Father Ferguson went away all week to do a “retreat” – that’s when you spend a lot of time praying to God all day long. Well, he didn’t take me with him, and I was all alone in the house all week. No laps to sit in. No tummy rubs. No attention. I felt pretty sad, and even a little mad. I was tempted to bite and scratch Father when he finally came back! But then I prayed to Jesus and He told me that even if I miss someone I love, Jesus will always be there for us. Have you ever missed someone when they were away for a while, like a best friend, or a parent? Try talking to Jesus, and He will always be there to know you are never alone, since He loves you all the time. Have a “purr”-fect week!