

The Abbey Message

Subiaco Abbey

Vol. 80, No. 3

Winter 2025

Inside

Abbot's Message

Abbey Journal
Fall Notes

Development
The Value of Volunteers

Academy
Fall Semester Highlights

Alumni
Alumni News

Contact Information

Abbey: (479) 934-1001

Academy: (479) 934-1000

Coury House: (479) 934-1290

www.subi.org

www.subiacoacademy.us

Nervous? Yes. Afraid? No.

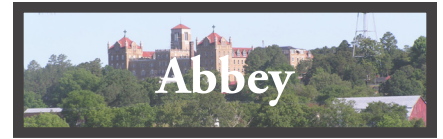
by Linda Freeman, Director of Development Operations

Imagine making the biggest commitment of your life and being asked these questions: Are you nervous? Are you afraid? What would be your response?

On the beautiful fall day of November 22, Fr. Raban Heyer, OSB, was surely pondering these thoughts as he had fulfilled his journey to becoming an ordained priest in the Benedictine order of Subiaco Abbey. Emotions visible on the surface that day seemed to be rejoicing and glorious praise to God for the gift of a young priest! But for the one being ordained, my guess is there were many, many other feelings running inside his mind and heart.

As the days leading up to the ordination unfolded, the young 35-year-old priest had a long checklist of items to review and prepare for. Having come to Subiaco Abbey in September 2014, the young monk moved through the novitiate, temporary profession, and solemn profession in a four and a half-year span. Two and a half years later, Br. Raban answered yes to the call of his Abbot and began theological studies for the priesthood at Sant'Anselmo in Italy. Fast forward to the summer of 2023, and Br. Raban was ordained a deacon by Bishop Anthony Taylor. He then returned to






Rome to complete his studies before his priestly ordination here at Subiaco a few weeks ago.

In the absence of Bishop Taylor, the service was presided over by Bishop Francis Malone of the Diocese of Shreveport. Having known Fr. Raban as their paths had crossed in his time as a teacher in the Little Rock area, Bishop Malone referenced the questions in the title of this article during his homily at the Ordination Mass. In our discernment of our individual vocations in life, there are often times when we feel nervous and afraid. But for Fr. Raban, fear did not seem to be prevalent. He may have been quite nervous, but to those attending the beautiful service of becoming a Roman Catholic priest, Fr. Raban seemed content and filled with peace, knowing that God was beside him on this day and every day going forward. Standing tall in the presence of his brother monks of Subiaco Abbey and many diocesan priests and religious friends from around the state and abroad, fear had no place in Fr. Raban's mind and heart on this very special day of committing himself as a priest forever.

A key part of the Liturgy of Ordination is the Promise of the Elect. In this part of the Mass, the elect is questioned by the presiding bishop regarding his willingness to undertake the priestly office, to exercise the ministry of the Word wisely in preaching and teaching, to celebrate the sacraments properly and faithfully, to pray without ceasing, and to unite himself daily to the sacrifice of Christ, the High Priest, for the salvation of the world. Finally, the elect makes a promise of respect and obedience to the diocesan bishop and to his legitimate religious superior, that being Abbot Elijah Owens.

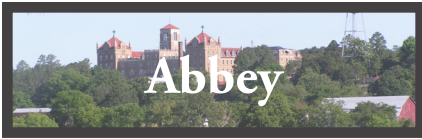
Once a person reaches a point of making a lifelong commitment, they often reflect on the various elements of their past that played a role in the journey. Being a member of a large family myself, it's easy for me to spot how Fr. Raban's loving and close-knit family helped encourage and form him into the unselfish, calm, and caring individual he is now. Along with his parents, Charles and Ellen Heyer, six siblings plus spouses, a host of nieces, nephews and friends, Fr. Raban enjoyed a week-long celebration of his dedication of self to God and in service of His people. The career and life experiences, both before coming to Subiaco and while a monk in formation here, allowed for a deepening of his faith and a growing desire to be closer to God every day. The intense studies he undertook in priestly formation increased his ability to see Christ in all whom he meets, while ready to assist them with whatever problem or trouble they are experiencing in their own lives.

In addition to his monastic duties at Subiaco, Fr. Raban serves as an English instructor at Subiaco Academy, a cross-country and track coach, a member of the student enrollment team for the Academy, and a beloved mentor to the young men who come to the Academy for their secondary education.

The emotions of nervousness and possibly even fear will not end for Fr. Raban now that he is an ordained priest. However, as Bishop Malone commented to Fr. Raban, "This was all part of God's divine plan and always had been, so we are filled with joy and the absence of fear for what God is about to do and what he can do through you." 



Photos by Simon Kossoff



A Divine Encounter at a Chinese Buffet

by Abbot Elijah Owens

“*Tempus fugit*,” or “time flies,” is an ancient Latin aphorism that captures the fleeting nature of our days. For us monastics, time is not merely a sequence of hours or the ticking of a clock; it is the fabric of life itself—a resource given to us to shape, mold, and offer back to God through meaningful living. We often ask the boys in our Academy NOT ‘What are you going to do with your life?’ but rather, ‘What is God calling you to do with your life?’

This simple monastic perspective underscores a balanced approach to time, blending work, prayer, and study as vital elements of a life lived well to hear GOD’s voice amidst the cacophony of sounds from the world. The psalmist prays, “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). This prayer invites us to consider time not in quantity but in depth and meaning. I am reminded of this through the example of one of our ministry partners, Dr. Gary Oliver, who felt called by God to reach out with a beautiful ministry for leaders called “Going Deeper Together,” which helps them to rest, recover, and recharge. It is so easy to let the world disorder our lives when lived solely for ourselves that we lose sight of the rhythm and balance that God richly wants for each of us.

I remember an email from a young man named Clifford, who was teaching at a poor Catholic elementary school in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He had reached out to tentatively explore what life as a monk might entail. I arranged to meet him in Pine Bluff when I was doing a “vocational swing” through several schools and parishes in the southern part of our state. Young Clifford was a smart man who knew the potential for a free meal, so he met me at an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet. A few hours later, after I watched him bankrupt the restaurant with about 7-9 plates of food, we bid goodbye with my gift of some Subiaco hot sauce. I watched his back as he got into his beat-up little car and wondered what God had planned for him.

Fast forward to the photo where I watched this young Clifford, now “Father Raban,” offer his first Mass on our altar at Subiaco. From Pine Bluff, he moved to Little Rock to teach, answered God’s call to explore monastic life, and professed as a monk in 2016. God then called him to become a priest to offer the sacraments for our monastic community, our students and guests, and all the people of God. Time flies but look where God had led this young man! That young boy chowing down on countless plates of Chinese food was now a monastic priest of God because he allowed God to lead him, deepen his relationship, and let his life to be lived in accord with the divine rhythm of God.

In the end, *Tempus fugit* is both a warning and an encouragement. Guided by the wisdom of Saint Benedict, we can transform fleeting time into a timeless offering of love and purpose, moving ever closer to the divine rhythm for which we were created. If your life has been a little out of order, then maybe it is time to take a moment to reconnect with the divine rhythm that I promise will lead you down paths you would never have expected. In the words of our Holy Father, St. Benedict: “May we prefer nothing to Christ, and may He bring us all together into everlasting life.”

+Abbot Elijah Owens



The Abbey Message
is a composite quarterly
publication of Subiaco Abbey.

Publisher
Abbot Elijah Owens, OSB

Editor in Chief
Fr. Jerome Kodell, OSB

Send changes of address
and comments to:

The Abbey Message
Subiaco Abbey
405 North Subiaco Avenue
Subiaco, AR 72865-9220

Subiaco’s Website
www.subi.org

The Abbey Message E-mail
frjerome@subi.org

The New Name for Sanctity

by Fr. Jerome Kodell, OSB

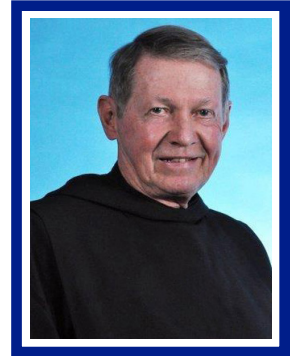
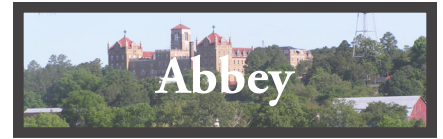
The words “saint” and “holy” make people squirm. What do they mean? If someone calls you holy, is it a compliment or a jibe or a joke? These are slippery words that don’t mean the same thing to everybody. Some people think that holy means pious, and that you can judge holiness by how you bow or kneel, or how you fold your hands or tilt your head. But murderers can be pious, and sexual abusers, too, as we know well by now.

But there is something correctly identifiable behind these words, something that everyone can recognize. It’s just that the traditional words have been so misused that they are no longer helpful.


There is another familiar word which means the same thing but doesn’t carry so much baggage. What we are trying to describe when we think of holiness or sanctity is *integrity*. According to Webster, integrity is the quality or state of being complete or undivided. When applied to human beings, this describes people who are consistent in living the authentic commitment to which they have dedicated their life. It might be a faith or it might be a philosophy. Persons of integrity are not threatened or intimidated by people who challenge their commitment, but neither do they expect others to imitate them. They are whole and they are free, and they let others be free. To the person of integrity, it makes no difference who agrees or disagrees. Though situations and challenges change, that person is constant, undivided, the same indoors and out-of-doors, in private and in public.

In terms of Christianity, a saint is one who is a faithful disciple of Christ ready to die rather than depart from Christ or his teaching. We have many examples through history, but also from our own time. One who is especially striking in recent history is the Austrian farmer, Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter, who was martyred for his faith by the Nazis in 1943. He was not noted for piety in his early life. He had fathered a child out of wedlock. But once he decided his commitment to Christ and his Catholic faith, he was immovable in his integrity. He was willing to serve in the Austrian/German army during World War II, but he would not take an oath recognizing the absolute authority of Hitler. He gave absolute authority over his life only to God.

He resisted the advice to cooperate from his pastor and even from his bishop, but he would not yield. He was given every chance to capitulate, but he would not. He was a man of integrity. He knew who he was. In a documentary on his life, a German commander offers



him the last chance. “If you will simply agree, you can be free.” “I am free,” he responded, and he was.

Jesus scandalized his contemporaries because he dined with those considered public sinners. They thought that made him a sinner. But he was a man of integrity and could go anywhere and still be himself. For a person of integrity, it is not a matter of where you are, but who you are wherever you are. We may not be able to work miracles or have mystical visions or even look holy, but with God’s grace we can strive for integrity, which is what we signed up for at baptism and is what the Father desires for all his children. 

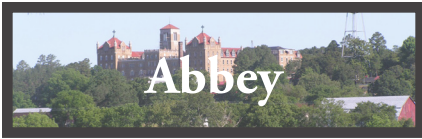
PRAYER HOTLINE 1-800-350-5889

Let us join you in praying for your needs. Prefer to email?
Please direct your requests to prayer@subi.org

Prayers requested for family and friends can include a wellness or sympathy card sent to them from the monks of Subiaco. Please provide the name and address to send the card with your requests.

Memorials for deceased family and friends or **Living Tributes** for birthdays, anniversaries, or special occasions are available at www.countrymonks.org/supportus or call 479-934-1001.





The Oblate Brief

by Jeanette Redford, Obl.S.B.

"I will stand at my guard post, and station myself upon the rampart, and keep watch to see what He will say to me..."
Habakkuk 2:1

My abridged version of this scripture is, "Each morning I will rest my elbows on the windowsill of the Lord and listen to see what He has to say to me." Other versions crop up now and then but the origin for all the variations is Habakkuk. I do want to listen and hear but oftentimes I think, and I have heard others say, that it is hard to hear, and know, what God wants us to do.

Consider this: St. Benedict begins the Rule with "listen," and encourages us to incline the ear of our heart and to take up "the strong, bright weapon of obedience." But if we think obedience only means doing what a superior tells us to do willingly and promptly, we are missing a huge kernel of the dictum. We are called to obey the commandment of love toward everyone...all the time. St. Benedict says we ascend the proverbial ladder to God by descending the ladder in humility. Scripture says to "humbly regard others as more important than ourselves" (Phil. 2:3) and to "anticipate one another in showing honor." (Rom. 12:10) St. Benedict puts it this way: "Vie in paying obedience one to another." This was in treatment of fellow monks, but it is good for us, too, especially in our own families.

The French term *noblesse oblige* translates to "nobility obliges." It means that people of high social rank or wealth have an obligation to act in a generous and honorable way to others. As children of God, it makes sense that we, the King's children, are also in a position to act in a lovingly generous way toward all. We must. St. Augustine said, "Beauty grows in you to the extent that love grows, because charity itself is the soul's beauty."

If we obey God well in this command of charity, perhaps we won't need to worry so much about knowing what God wants us to do. We will be doing it.

The October retreat had 35 participants. Fr. Gregory was ill with Covid, but Br. Roch filled in. We all love and missed Fr. Gregory, but we also love Br. Roch, and it was genuinely nice to have him lead us once more. Three attendees became novices: Justy Brubaker, Joe Brock and Jessica Lester, and five people made their Oblation; Jose Comancho, Caleb Parrish, Jane Brandon, and Mark and Kristi Brasfield.

The Spring retreat will be held the first weekend of May, 2025. If you have any questions about being an Oblate please contact Fr. Gregory at FrGregory@subi.org or call the Oblate office at 479-847-1391 x 1041. 

Brother Benoît Stelly Professes Vows

Christian Stelly, a native of Opelousas, LA, made his first monastic vows as a monk of Subiaco Abbey for three years on September 8, feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, receiving from Abbot Elijah the monastic name Brother Benoît. Benoît is the French spelling of Benedict and was chosen to reflect the French and Cajun heritage of his grandparents, who influenced his vocation.

Brother Benoît has been working during the time of his novitiate as assistant sacristan as well as assisting in various monastic projects. Recently he was appointed Subiaco Academy Porter, with an office at the Academy entrance where he assists visitors and facilitates messages among the various departments of the Abbey and Academy.

Recently Brother Benoît along with Brother Augustine Defoore was instituted an Acolyte by Abbot Elijah to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Abbey Masses.



Abbey Journal

by Fr. Mark Stengel, OSB

SEPTEMBER

The surfer films The Endless Summer I and II came to mind as a relentless heat dome settled in over the south-central U.S. in September and October. Perfectly clear days with temperatures in the mid 90's—an endless summer—became the norm. Workers on Rebsamen Stadium and our solar installation were able to make up for lost time, and local ranchers “made hay while the sun shone.” After two and then three weeks of this, the Abbey gardeners and groundskeepers had to pull out the hoses and sprinklers, really for the first time this year. Fr. Richard kept his habanero peppers happy, and Br. Adrian provided water for the watermelons. Br. Francis put in long hours tending to wilting flowers. The remnants of hurricane Helene came close in late September, but brought only several cloudy days and some drizzle.

Fr. William Wewers, Academy class of 1959, and now pastor of Holy Redeemer Church in Clarksville, conducted the dedication of the new artificial turf football field on Friday, September 27. He was a long-term Athletic Director for the Academy before taking up pastoral duties just across the river. Father gave a history of 100 years of Academy sports and blessed the new facility. The current Trojans



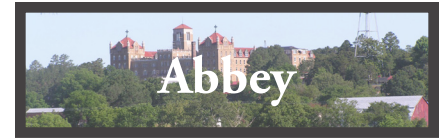
defeated the Rosebud Ramblers by the score of 36-0, playing with a dramatic double rainbow in the eastern sky.

In Genesis, the rainbow after the great flood gave promise to Noah of God's fidelity and mercy, of better times to come. We pray that the rainbow gracing the first game on the new turf will likewise prove to be an auspicious portent. And we do need special blessings at this time.

Here is one such blessing. Brother (now Father) Raban's return from his studies in Rome and now his teaching and coaching presence in the Academy puts another young energetic monk “out there” in front of the students, working with them. That's what we need. The beautiful new football field/soccer pitch is on a par with that of any professional team. We don't have the stands to accommodate 80,000 fans. But maybe this “field of dreams” will draw 2,000 fans and 200 students! We've built it; now they need to come.

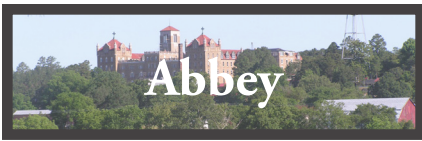
OCTOBER

Logan County Judge Ray Gack declared a burn ban on October 1. October remained perfectly and completely dry until the last day of the month, making it the driest October since 1893. Shoal Creek parishioners had their entire 40 acres on River Mountain Road burn, but their home was—miraculously, they said—spared. Years ago, Fr. Paul Hoedebeck, in his retirement, spent much time scraping and raking the East Park paths. He used to burn the debris in place, oblivious to or scornful of county burn bans. Thankfully, no “Third Great Fire” occurred, and he was never hauled off to jail.



The solar field, six acres of panels across the highway from the football field, was supposed to come on line in early October. There was a brief power outage, and a contretemps between Abbey and power company officials at the site of the main switches on October 2nd. A major glitch was found – an essential component not in place, and apparently some paperwork not completed. This turned out to be a two-way meter which could measure both the electrical output produced by the solar panel field, and the flow back into the public power grid when excess power was produced. It was finally installed in late November and the solar field was activated on November 25. The report is that it is producing all the power that we need.

Subiaco Oblates filled Coury House for the twice-a-year retreat the weekend of October 11-13. It turned out that Oblate Director Fr. Gregory was sick that weekend, so his predecessor, Br. Roch, was pressed back into service. The Oblates participated in all prayer times with the monks, filling the guest section of the choir stalls, and overflowing into the monk section. It is so good to have a full house for our prayers. Fr. Patrick had coached the Oblates well so that they, in their zeal, did not run away with the psalms. We have had runaways or “train wrecks” in the past, but this time all was calm and prayerful. The Oblates had a meal in the monk's refectory, and all enjoyed a social in Coury House following the final oblation of six new Oblates during Saturday Vespers. Abbot Elijah stressed to them that they really are members of the community, and that there is



a spiritual and physical bond now between Oblate members and monk members.

The October 14th weekly bulletin asked: “PLEASE CONSERVE WATER.” With no appreciable rainfall for two months, the Abbey lakes were about four feet below full. The alarm was sounded early this time. Some years ago—I think in 2012, the lakes got about 14 feet low, and the upper lake was entirely drained into the lower two. At that point, the Abbey and town had to patch into the Paris water lines, which supplied water until the lakes refilled.

NOVEMBER


The month began with a dramatic shift in the weather. In the first five days of November, we got eight inches of rain. What a blessing! Lawns and pastures that were brown and crispy underfoot, as in the dead of winter, greened up in two days’ time. Cows had green grass again

after being on a baled hay diet for several weeks already. The lakes nearly filled, but it takes at least six inches of rain to begin a flow in the bone-dry timbered watershed. Fire bans were cancelled. The St. Benedict Parish CYM (Catholic Youth Movement) was able to host an outdoor Mass and a bonfire for S’mores on a Sunday afternoon. The rains came too late for some crops. A local farmer said that the soybean harvester has a device that detects the yield (bushels per acre) as the crop is being harvested. When the counter did not even register, he unhooked the combine and just plowed the rest of the field under.

Fr. Richard’s earlier watering paid off as the peppers kicked back into high gear. “They thought it was spring again,” he said, as they set another heavy load of peppers. Now, at November’s end, the plants have all been uprooted and carried inside, so that the last of the fruit can be picked. Father estimates that about 1,200 pounds of peppers will be stored in the freezer, ready to become Monk Sauce. That’s a lot of heat, and a good wintertime activity. If you get cold, just sample the product.

October and November are the prime months for making peanut brittle. The factory hummed with activity, and it was just a hum, because one has to attend closely to the job and not to chitchat, in order to keep the assembly line running smoothly. A full crew includes a person to prepare the batches in the cooking skillets, a chief cook, two stirrers, a breaker, two packers, and a troubleshooter to fetch, carry, and stack. On a typical day, around 220 tins are produced. But during “Epic Week,” with the hotshot crew of Fr. Richard, his sister Juanita, Dennis and Dawn Epping (from whom the week gets its name), John from the kitchen staff, Buddy and Kathy Gough, Jim and Carolyn Narens,

Ron and Gary Geels, the work hours expanded, with Fr. Richard taking the role of an Egyptian taskmaster. He had set a goal of 1,500 tins for the week, but they ended up with 1,643, and were able to quit early on Friday. Epic indeed! Many local and not so local volunteers assisted with this sweet work. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I hope that they all, like me when I help, were able to take an occasional sampling as a quality control measure. It’s scriptural: “Do not muzzle the ox . . .” (Deuteronomy 25:4)

In a community meeting on November 29, Abbot Elijah announced a schedule change. Beginning on December 1, all afternoon services—Office of Readings and Sunday Benediction) will begin at 5:15, rather than 5:30. This is the first substantive change in the *horarium* for many years. After about 40 years of the same schedule, even a 15-minute change seems substantial. The change is meant to head off the desertion rate from Office of Readings. Increasing numbers of monks were leaving early for various little tasks and duties that needed to be done right before supper. So now all are to remain present for the entirety of the office, and then go do those tasks. Those without such tasks will have to find something to do and a place to do it, until reporting to the refectory at 5:55. There is one recliner in the mail room. That sounds like a good spot for me. 



Hope Happens

by Linda Freeman, Director of Development Operations

The 1998 film, *Hope Floats*, starring Sandra Bullock and Harry Connick Jr., portrayed a middle-aged housewife, Birdie Pruitt, who was publicly humiliated by the announcement on national TV of her husband having an affair with her best friend, and her journey back to self-discovery and self-worth, learning to lean on and trust others to help her through the hardships, and finding happiness and peace in her life and that of her child.


Listening to a podcast in the days between Christmas and New Year, the topic of Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope was being discussed. Pope Francis stated that we must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. There's a lot to dissect in that statement and questions in our own minds to be answered. For me, the first question is, "Does hope just happen?" Thinking back through some of the events of my life, I can hardly say that it did. Hope is and will remain for me a growing process throughout my spiritual life.

Many times, events and struggles happen in our lives that cause doubt, fear and despair. Hope is the counteractive "medication" for those emotions. Hope provides strength and stamina for managing the hardships, knowing that God is in control and will provide for our needs in his perfect way and timing. Hope helps us look beyond the current situation with trust. But how do we get to a place where hope happens?

I like to think of my spiritual journey as a staircase, taking one step at a time. First, I learned to build my prayer life (step one). There's no real set of rules for this; just find a way that works for you (and your busy schedule) to spend time talking to God – about literally anything! Prayer is daily communication, expression, renewal, and rebirth. It can be filled with thanksgiving, asking for forgiveness, special intentions, or just reliving with God the things that happened in your day. As prayer becomes stronger and more frequent, faith and trust begin to deepen and feel more real (step two). Here, I do have to admit that working in a monastery and seeing the daily example of the monks in prayer is constantly encouraging. I invite you to make it a point to come to Subiaco sometime in 2025 if you are looking for that boost of inspiration in your prayer life. The monks welcome you to join them in their daily prayers.

Step three involves the same virtues as the shaken housewife experienced in the movie *Hope Floats*; those being humility and grace, though not necessarily in the same form of humiliation. Humility is a calling to die to self, to trust that God is in control of your life. Open mindedness plays a big role in humility by allowing us to grasp the greater power of God's gift to us – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to imagine all that he can do through us to help others. Grace is what we experience when we allow that work to happen.

There are various other steps in my spiritual staircase and from time to time, there's occasional stumbling, but that's something else hope does for me. It gives me belief that God forgives my stumbling and will renew the grace and spirit within to pick myself up and try again. Whether hope floats or hope happens, it is a process of growing in knowledge and understanding of God's love and purpose for us. And that fills me with HOPE!

May the Jubilee Year 2025 bring renewed strength as you fan the flames of hope and continue your journey, wherever God may lead you. 

Through their ministry of prayer and hospitality, the monks of Subiaco offer the opportunity for a peaceful and spiritual final resting place. The Subiaco Abbey Columbarium is a repository for the ashes of people who have been cremated. For more information, we invite you to contact Glenn Constantino, Procurator at:

479-438-2653 or
gconstantino@subi.org






The Value of Volunteers

by Linda Freeman, Director of Development Operations

One of the most beautiful experiences for the monks of Subiaco Abbey is working with the many volunteers who enjoy supporting the mission through manual labor. Each year, Subiaco Abbey and Academy is blessed by a growing number of lay people who give of their time, talent, muscles and sweat to assist with various tasks from stuffing envelopes for mailings (like the one you are currently reading) to helping produce peanut brittle and monk sauce and any number of things in between. Where would we be without their help?

Many non-profit organizations rely heavily on volunteers to keep expenses down and revenue to support their cause up. Fortunately for the monks, they get this benefit, but even more importantly they have time to share the history of Subiaco, discussions about Benedictine practices, and detailed information about the ministries of this place. Throw in a few musings from the monks, and suddenly the “work” being done takes a back seat to the enjoyment of assisting in God’s work at Subiaco.

Every November, the monks, along with the Development staff, invite all the volunteers to share in Mass and the noon meal as a token of appreciation for their help. It’s a real treat to be able to join the monks in their refectory to break bread and enjoy lighthearted conversation. All volunteers are also given a small gift as a thank you for supporting Subiaco through their gift of volunteerism. The giving of these gifts is followed with much appreciation by the volunteers to the monks who are often the makers of the gift. That too is a real treat.

Even though the monks try to convey their appreciation for all the volunteers do, they could never truly equal the value these folks bring to our mission. But added to those gifts, every volunteer knows that the monks are continually in prayer for them and whatever their needs may be. That very important “bonus” brings to light the full appreciation of the monks and the value of our volunteers. We would be lost without you! 



Spring Festival Coming Soon

If you have been around Subiaco at all, you are familiar with the annual Spring Carnival that takes place in March and benefits Subiaco Academy. This event is a longstanding tradition but one that will take a bit of a twist in 2025.

Adapting to change is not a favorite thing for most of us, but we find after doing things the same way for years that we sometimes need to spice things up a little. This year, our annual fundraiser for the Academy will feature area vendors and crafters, along with the usual great foods, games and musical entertainment, a raffle for cash prizes and other items, and an auction.

Mark your calendar for this event scheduled for Saturday, March 8, 2025, and follow us on social media and our websites for more information. We look forward to seeing you there!



Begin the Year with Peace of Mind: Create Your Estate Plan

by George Lensing, Director of Estate & Gift Planning

Happy New Year!

We hope your 2025 is off to a wonderful start! As we enter a new year, we are reminded of the new beginnings that God offers us. In the words of Jesus from John 14:1, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God.” This is a powerful reminder that, no matter what the future holds, we can trust in God’s plan for us. It is with this faith that we move forward, filled with hope and anticipation for all that this year will bring. We look forward to sharing this year with you, walking together in faith, love, and purpose.



Creating an Estate Plan

One of the most important things we can do for our loved ones is to create an estate plan. As Matthew 25:34-40 encourages, “Come, you who are blessed by my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me....Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.” Having faith in God gives us the courage and peace of mind to plan for the future, and a well-crafted estate plan is a crucial part of that.


Now, let me ask you, “What percentage of adults do you think already have an estate plan?” You might guess 5%, 10%, or even 20%, but the reality is that 100% of adults have an estate plan. Confused? Well, if you have not yet created your own estate plan, the state will step in with a default plan, and, spoiler alert, you will not like it. Without a plan, your estate will go through the probate court process, which can take two years or more and come with significant costs—money that could have been used for your family or charitable organizations like Subiaco Abbey.

Creating a plan for your estate does not have to be overwhelming. When you put your affairs in order, you ensure that your loved ones and the causes you care about are protected, while also avoiding the costly and lengthy probate process.

Please do not wait another day to create a plan. Reach out to me, and I will be happy to help you take the necessary steps to secure your legacy and provide for the people and causes you cherish most. Today is the best day to plan for the people we love. I know you can do it!

Contact Us

You can reach me at 479-847-2718 or via email at glensing@subi.org. Alternatively, you can contact Fr. Reginald Udouj, O.S.B. at 479-438-3901 or frreginald@subi.org.

Thank you for being a valued part of our Subiaco family. Your generosity makes our work here possible. Wishing you and your loved ones a very happy and prosperous 2025! 



Highlights of the Fall Semester at Subiaco Academy

by Cheryl L. Goetz, Assistant Head of School for Academics and Communication

The fall semester at Subiaco Academy always seems to pass rapidly, and this year has been no exception. The faculty and students have been busy with teaching new classes, learning new material, and as always, competing with themselves and other schools.

Last year, students began to serve on an Academic Programming Committee, and in response to their desires and input from the faculty, we introduced new courses into the curriculum this year. Ms. Karoline Morris teaches Anatomy and Physiology, which is proving popular with our students who aspire to a medical field. Mr. Nick McDaniel has expanded the outdoor adventure program by adding a course in Outdoor Adventure Leadership—a course which can be taken for either science or physical education credit as it is a mixture of both. The members of this class take turns planning and leading weekend trips for the student body. Fr. Raban Heyer, OSB, is partnering with Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, to offer our students the opportunity to not only meet high school graduation requirements in English, but to also gain college credit in composition and literature. Finally, Mr. Nathan Browning has introduced a business course—Securities, Investments, Risks, and Insurance. All four of these classes have significant enrollments.

The Chaplain's office is offering a series of religious formation opportunities each morning beginning at 7:50 am (adults are welcomed to join). Student-led rosaries are prayed on Monday mornings and again on Mondays during Enrichment. Reconciliation is offered on Tuesday mornings and again on Thursday evenings at 6:30 pm. Mass is celebrated on Wednesday mornings at 9:15 am. On Thursday afternoon, Br. Augustine Defoore provides an opportunity for questions about theology, and on Fridays, a brief reading from a desert father is presented followed by a discussion.

Students attended college fairs at University of Arkansas in Little Rock, Arkansas Tech University, University of the Ozarks, and at St. Bernard's in Bella Vista—all part of the college guidance program to guide students as they prepare for life after high school.

The jazz ensemble has had a busy performance schedule, most of which are community service to aid in fundraisers for local charities. These include but are not limited to St. Vincent de Paul, St. Michael's in Van Buren, and the GEM Banquet to assist the female student scholarship program at the Colegio San Benito in Guatemala. They performed for the veterans at the Tobin Center in North Little Rock on December 6 and opened the Frontier Day Festival on October 5 and the Merry on Main celebrations (both in Paris, AR) on December 7.

The student council has been partnering with the Parents Association to encourage brotherhood. They welcomed students back to school with a water balloon challenge ice breaker. They sponsored activities during Homecoming week and after the game. They have also raised money for local charities and decorated "the Hill" for Christmas.

Fr. Leonard Wangler, OSB, received the news in November that Subiaco Academy ranked third in its division in the High School Championship sponsored by the Blood Institute. Ranking ahead of us were Malvern and Clinton, with Clinton having only three more donors than Subiaco.

On the sports front, the Academy sponsored a golf team this year. The students enjoyed their time in competition with other schools in our district. The tennis team competed at District in Hot Springs where a doubles team placed third and one player placed 3rd in singles earning them a place at State. The Cross Country



Fr. Raban Heyer, OSB



teams won the district title in both the junior and senior divisions. They competed well at state in Hot Springs. The 8 Man Football team had another competitive season and finished 2nd in state. The NICA Mountain Biking team competed at the state championship race the weekend of October 26-27. They walked away with two individual regional medals, both 5th place medals. Additionally, the team had five Top Thirty finishes out of hundreds of racers.




The basketball, climbing, quiz bowl, and wrestling teams are just getting started with their seasons but are already doing well.

Our Headmaster, Dr. David Wright was honored to be a guest on the BeatiDudes podcast while in Dallas in November, where he discussed the unique benefits of an all-male Catholic Education (episode #169). He shared why this approach offers one of the best alternatives for shaping boys into men of faith and character in today's world. Episode #170 is an inside look at our Headmaster, as he shares his conversion story.

Our faculty has had highlights as well: our art teacher Christina Stengel entered the Arts on Main Adult Art Competition. Her painting, "Broken," won the Alice Adele Boatright Award. One of our new teachers was married in October, and one welcomed a new daughter. And of course, our beloved Br. Raban was ordained to the priesthood on November 22 for which we say, "Thanks be to God."



On December 6, we celebrated a day of Reflection and Service to begin the Advent Season, with the faculty and students participating in a recollection lesson designed by the Chaplain's office to focus on the true intent of Advent. Each member of the community then spent a minimum of two hours of community service meeting the needs of those both on campus and off.

As the reader can see, our Academy continues to thrive, and we continually act to further the mission of growing our young men graciously to manhood. Our students are not only scholarly, but they are athletically inclined, they are gifted in the arts, and most of all, they are becoming spirit filled young men with a heart for community service. For that we say, "U. I. O. G. D." 



Come Away by Yourselves to a Deserted Place and Rest Awhile

by Deacon Roy Goetz, Academy Chaplain

This title, taken from Mark's gospel (6:31), reminds us that when Jesus felt the call to prayer, he withdrew from the crowds and invited his disciples to do the same. In our striving to imitate Christ, it is important for us to note that even Jesus needed to pull away from the demands of his ministry for solitude and prayer. If our Lord needed this, surely, we need it even more. Our student retreats here at Subiaco are rooted in this truth.

The senior class has the privilege of two retreats, one in the fall focused on leadership and another in the spring focused on sending out. Returning graduates often mention that the senior retreats are among their most powerful memories. The day retreats for grades seven through eleven are a mixture of prayer, discussion, solitude, and fellowship. The benefits of prayer are obvious, but it should be noted that these days "off the hill" are important bonding experiences as well. The individual grades seldom have the opportunity for a spiritual experience apart from the larger Subiaco community. The underclassmen retreats are always focused on a scripturally based theme. *Come Away by Yourselfs*, *The Good Samaritan*, *The Kingdom of God*, and *The Great Commandment* are some examples. Over the past few years, we have focused on chapters from the *Rule of Benedict* including "Restraint of Speech," "Humility," and "The Tools for Good Works."



This year, we are focusing on chapter 48, "The Daily Manual Labor." Using this chapter along with writings from Pope Francis and previous popes, we focus our prayer and discussions on the value and dignity of work. Work is part of being completely human and gives us the opportunity to participate in God's ongoing creation. The retreats begin with prayer on the church steps and continue with a 30-minute period of silence on the bus to read through applicable portions of *the Rule*, Scriptures, and writings from our popes. Our destination this year is Devil's Den State Park. By its name, this may seem an odd place for a spiritual retreat, but it offers powerful examples of the beauty of God's creation and the beauty of man-made elements that are examples of the dignity of work. The CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) created the park in the 1930's, and much of their impressive stonework still stands nearly a century later. Rather than just taking a handout from the government to feed their families during very hard times, the men of the CCC created beautiful structures in parks across the United States, leaving us an impressive physical legacy and a beautiful example of the dignity of work well done. It is always good to see the boys enjoy the beauty of the parks and trails. Their willingness to embrace the periods of silence and their openness during our discussions is inspiring.

Being in beautiful outdoor locations is part of what makes these retreats memorable. We are certainly blessed with a variety of gorgeous places not far from Subiaco. Our destinations over the years have included Petit Jean, Mount Magazine, Mount Nebo, White Rock Mountain, Long Pool, Haw Creek Falls, Lost Valley, and The Buffalo National River.

Our retreats are spread across the school year. Please take a moment to offer a prayer for the ongoing success of these retreats and the spiritual growth of our young men. 



Alumni What's Up

The following information about our alumni was compiled by **Tom Canada '09**, Alumni Relations Director for Subiaco Academy. Have information you want to share with your Trojan brothers? Email Tom at tcanada@subi.org.



Brit McKenzie '09 secured another term as an Arkansas State Representative for the 7th District. Representative McKenzie serves on the House Education Committee and the House Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative, and Military Affairs Committee. During his time at Subiaco, Brit was an officer on the Executive Student Council, received the Leadership Award for the Trojan Tennis team as a senior, and earned the Student Council Medal of Service. At Subiaco Academy, he learned the importance of serving others and developed a strong foundation of character and faith -- values that continue to guide him in his role as a public servant.




Hasten King '24 graduated from the Navy Recruit Training Command on September 12. Hasten's division was the top division out of the ten divisions at RTC and won the award for excellence in all parts of training. Congrats Hasten!



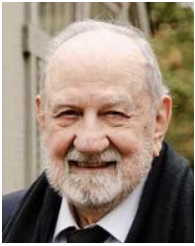
Braxton Leding '17 passed the Bar on September 5 and was sworn in as an officer of the court the same day. Braxton joins a host of Trojan alums who now serve as attorneys across the country.



Subiaco hosted a small alumni gathering at Fossil Cove Brewing in Fayetteville, AR on September 25. **Tom Canada '09**, **Coach Tim Tencleve '76**, and **Br. Adrian Strobel '62** joined around a dozen alumni for an evening of fellowship. 



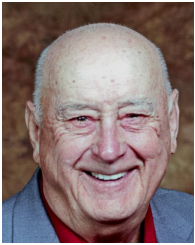
Sending Brothers Home



† **William Schmidt '55**, age 87, of Springfield, MO, passed away peacefully after a brief illness on November 14, 2024. Bill grew up in Monett, MO, and following in his dad's (**Alois Schmidt '33**) footsteps with encouragement from his uncle, Fr. Clement, he attended Subiaco Academy. After graduation he continued his education at Missouri State University (MSU) in Springfield, MO. After graduating from MSU in 1960, Bill began his military service by being commissioned as an officer and was sent to serve in Korea. He served multiple assignments both in the U.S. and abroad, including Germany (twice), Texas, Kansas, New York, and Illinois. From 1967-1968, Bill served a tour during the Vietnam War. Following his return from Vietnam, he earned a Master of Science in Statistics from Texas A&M University (1970). From 1971-1975 he was given one of his greatest honors by being assigned and serving as a mathematics instructor at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.



† **Thomas Assenmacher '57**, age 84, a retired Naval aviator and defense contractor, sailor, and shade tree mechanic, died September 8, 2024. He graduated from Southwest Missouri State College in 1962, and entered the U.S. Navy for flight training in Pensacola, FL. TJ served his Naval career as a P-3A Orion pilot, and spent most of his career at NAS Patuxent River, MD. He retired from the Navy in 1984, then worked in defense contracting, retiring in 2002. Upon retirement, TJ and his wife Kaye moved to Kinsale, VA, where they enjoyed sailing and camping.



† **James E. Koch '58**, age 84, died November 13, 2024, in Russellville, Arkansas. He was born May 9, 1940, in Paris, Arkansas. He was preceded in death by his wife Charlene, his parents, one brother, and one sister. He is survived by his three children, eight grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren; two brothers, (**John Paul Koch '61**) and one sister.



† **Jim Strobel '59**, age 83, of Lavaca, Arkansas passed away December 5, 2024. He served in the United States Air Force during Vietnam and worked as a computer field engineer for IBM for several years until he retired. He then went to work at Strobel Auto Repair as a small engine mechanic. There wasn't anything he wouldn't try to fix or build to help others. He is survived by his son and daughter; two brothers, **Bro. Adrian Strobel '62** of Subiaco Abbey and **Billy Strobel '69** of Subiaco, Arkansas; two sisters, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, his dog, Paris and other family members and friends.



† **William "Bill" Nehus '60**, age 82, of Paris, Arkansas passed away December 10, 2024. He was born on July 3, 1942, in Paris to his parents, William and Ocie (Kimberling) Nehus. Bill worked in the oil field in several different capacities and later worked for over 30 years as a nurse. He was a member of the St. Joseph Catholic Church in Paris. In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by two brothers, Thomas Nehus and James Nehus. He is survived by his wife of 26 years, Kathy Nehus of Paris; eight sons, two daughters, one brother, 38 grandchildren, including **Jacob Nehus '11** and **Layton Nehus '13**, 10 great grandchildren with one more due in a few weeks, and one great-great grandchild.



† **Chris Kayser '67**, age 75, passed away December 3, 2024. To countless Atlantans, he was Ebenezer Scrooge. And Jacob Marley and Bob Cratchit. And King Lear, Shylock, Petruchio, Richard II, Thomas Becket, the Marquis de Sade and Roy Cohn. And he played a horse, in "Strider, the Story of a Horse," at the Academy Theater in 1985. For more than 40 years, Kayser was the leading man, comic relief and villain of the Atlanta theater community, playing many roles on many stages, mentoring and working tirelessly behind the scenes. "There's not a professional actor in Atlanta who is more than one degree of separation from Chris," said Christopher Moses, co-artistic director of the Alliance Theatre, where Kayser's 17 consecutive years playing Scrooge defined the role for Atlanta theatergoers. "He was the heartbeat of every show he was in."



† **Rufus Washington, Jr.** '72, age 69, passed away peacefully on September 25, 2024, at Jena Nursing Home, in Jena, Louisiana. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Sociology from Grambling State University, in Grambling. Later, Rufus pursued further graduate study in Counseling at Louisiana Tech University, in Ruston. He received a Professional Diploma in Pharmacy Technology from Ashworth University, in Norcross, Georgia. Rufus was a Technician at Grambling State University; a Researcher at Wave Technology, in Loma Linda, California; a Cashier and Courtesy Clerk at Walmart Supercenter, in Ruston; a Social Service Counselor at Health Paradigm Hospital, Ruston; and a Volunteer Addictions Counselor at Second Beginnings Peer Support Center, Ruston Behavioral Health Center.


Be Our Guest

by Fr. Patrick Boland OSB, Guestmaster & Director of Courty House

“Be Our Guest” is the title of a song from the familiar Walt Disney animated film *Beauty and the Beast*, featuring enchanted objects; like a clock, a teapot, candlesticks, etc., singing, dancing, and preparing to welcome Belle to the castle. The opening lines offer a challenge to anyone in the hospitality business, “*Be our guest! Be our guest! Put our service to the test!*” Being partial to musicals, particularly fantasy and animated films, this movie brings fond memories for me, and the words ring true to our mission at the Courty House: “*Be our guest! Put our service to the test!*” The context is fantasy but the idea is a challenge we accept.



The Courty House staff makes an effort to attend to every detail, to ensure not only your comfort, but also a place to “get away” and spend time with God: prayer with the monks, or alone in private, Eucharistic Adoration available 24 hours, daily Mass and beautiful grounds and gardens to stroll through or sit and reflect. Outdoor Stations of the Cross, hiking and mountain biking trails are available and in the warmer months we have a new swimming pool for your pleasure and a track to walk/run on.

We are honored you chose us for your retreat needs; as the song continues, we hear, “*It’s a guest! It’s a guest! Sakes alive, well, I’ll be blessed!*” And yes, we are blessed when you come to stay with us! Come! Be our guest. Put our service to the test! 

Upcoming Retreats

February

- 3-6 Cynthia’s Quilter’s Group
- 6-9 Military & Hospitaller’s/St. Lazarus of Jerusalem
- 7-9 St. John’s Russellville Confirmation Retreat
- 14-16 Breaking Bread & Word Retreat
- 17-20 Dr. Oliver Going Deeper Together 1.0 Men
- 21-23 Conway Men’s Retreat
- 24-28 Principals Retreat Archdiocese of OK City
- 28-Mar 2 Estate & Gift Planning Retreat
- 28-Mar 2 Christ the King Anglican Church

March

- 7-9 Parents Weekend
- 14-16 Diocesan Council of Black Catholics
- 14-16 Word of God, St. Joseph’s Fayetteville
- 17-19 Regents School of Oxford, MS
- 21-22 St. Mary Rose Little Rock Confirmation Retreat
- 21-23 Garza Prayer Group
- 21-24 Dr. Oliver Going Deeper Together 1.0 Women

- 27-29 Project Rachel Staff Retreat
- 28-30 Gainesville Knights Work Retreat
- 28-31 Dr. Oliver Going Deeper Together 2.0 Women



All guests, either private or on group retreats, are welcome to join the monastic community for daily prayer and Eucharist.

For more information or for reservations, call the Courty House at 479-934-1290 or email courthouse@subi.org

Upcoming events may be found on our website, www.countrymonks.org