



# THE FONT

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE ORDER OF SAINT LUKE

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## ABBOT'S LETTER

The Order of Saint Luke is dedicated to liturgical and sacramental scholarship and practice – that is at the heart of our charism as an Order. Fascination with and devotion to worship draws each of us to the Order, and our work as an Order is centered in this. In other words, we do not exist for fellowship and mutual support alone. However, those of us who have found a home in the Order find great solace and strength in the loving community that the Order fosters.

During spring council, those of us who were present lived into both of these facets of the Order. We celebrated daily eucharist, gathering around the table and lifting our voices together to cry “Holy, holy holy...” We began each day with morning prayer and ended each day’s work with compline (though some especially holy souls followed compline with a pilgrimage to a local pub). In our discussions, we considered how to provide more opportunities for liturgical education among OSL members, especially those who are not members of chapters or associations. We worked together to deepen our charism as an Order dedicated to worship.

We also found time to be present for one another. Some of this, we did as a whole group: we began spring council on Monday with a time of sharing, catching one another up on the challenges and joys of our lives as members of a dispersed Order. We ended the work of council on Wednesday by praying for one another, recalling what we had learned on Monday and entrusting one another to the healing mercy of God. We also were present to one another during mealtime conversations, during strolls around the enclosed grounds of St. Paul of the Cross, and during quiet moments between sessions. While this supportive fellowship is not the *raison d’être* of the Order, it is a sweet and important part of our time together.

I share all of this for two reasons: first, I want to give everyone a glimpse of spring council. But secondly, I want to encourage each of you to come to retreat in October. At retreat, you will fill each day with worship alongside your siblings in the Order. We will rise with Zechariah’s Song of Praise, and we will turn to rest each night

accompanied by Simeon's Canticle of trust and gratitude. We will have the marvelous opportunity to explore what makes Lukan spirituality **Lukan**, by learning from Dr. Karl Kuhn, this year's retreat speaker. But we will also knit ourselves back together as members of a dispersed Order, finally reunited. In October, we can rejoice in the presence of a great cloud of Lukan witnesses, and we can urge one another on as we retreat for a few days from the cares of work and family. If you have been to OSL retreat before, you are familiar with the busy but affirming swirl of learning, praying, and laughing that happens when we gather together. If you have never attended a retreat with the Order, consider joining us in St Louis this year. You'll find a flier for retreat with information and a registration link in this edition of the Font.

Yours, grateful for the bonds of this community,

Sister Abbot

## From Our Provincial General

Hello, siblings!

I have some wonderful news to share with you all from the recent spring meeting. Join with me in celebrating the Carolinas Association and the South Texas Chapter! Both groups have already been meeting and carrying out their work for months now, but they were finally affirmed and are official. Pray for both groups, especially Br. Stephen Ball, the founder of the Carolinas Association, and for Sr. Dianne McCleary, the South Texas prior. Congratulations to both groups - way to go!

For those of you keeping score at home, this makes THREE chapters in Texas- but don't let them have all the fun! If you are not currently associated with a chapter or association and would like to find community with the Order, check out the list of chapters and associations on our website under the "Get Involved" tab. If you don't see a chapter in your area, reach out to the Provincial Companion of your area. I'm sure they'd love to meet and pray with you, and you never know how many other people in your region might be looking for the same thing and just waiting on you to say something and get the ball rolling! And here's more good news: I crunched some numbers, and out of our life vowed members and those who reaffirmed annual vows in 2024 and 2025, just shy of 75% of members are involved in at least one chapter or association. So again, if you're looking for connectedness within our dispersed Order, finding a chapter or association can help you get connected to three-quarters of our membership!

Finally, we had some hearty discussions about the purposes, functions, and rules concerning chapters and associations. Technology has quickly outpaced guidelines, and our ecumenical growth has challenged what chapters can be and do. Abbot Heather, Sr. Celia, Br. Scot and I will be revisiting our definitions and guidelines between now and October, but we'd like your help.

1. If you're involved in a chapter or association: what do you think the main purpose of a chapter is? Has its function changed over the time you've been involved? What makes your group tick? What adaptations have you made/strengths have you uncovered? What frustrations do you have and what help might the wider connection offer?
2. If you're NOT involved in a chapter or association: are there reasons why it doesn't appeal to you? What do you wish a chapter or association would do or offer?

Please email your responses to: [provincialgeneral@saint-luke.net](mailto:provincialgeneral@saint-luke.net)

Your Provincial General,  
Br. Brett Isernhagen

## **The Order of Saint Luke**

### **Retreat 2025 - October 20-23**

### **Guest Speaker: Dr. Karl Kuhn**

Dr. Kuhn is the Grace Chair of Religious Studies at Lakeland University in Madison, WI. He has written two books on Luke: *Luke: The Elite Evangelist* (Liturgical Press, 2010) and *The Kingdom According to Luke and Acts: A Social, Literary, and Theological Introduction* (Baker, 2015).



We will gather at Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in St. Louis, MO. Mercy offers us comfortable places for worship and gathering indoors, as well as Stations of the Cross, a Grotto, an 11-circuit labyrinth, and a walking path, all outdoors.

There are a variety of rooming options at Mercy: 38 double rooms, 7 singles, and 16 singles that share bathrooms. Early Bird prices (until Aug 1) for the retreat, including all meals, plentiful snacks/coffee, and all programming are as follows:

Double room (shared with a roommate) - \$432

Single room (with shared bathroom) - \$462

Single room (with private bathroom) - \$495

Commuter price (for those staying elsewhere) - \$290

We encourage you to register early – please do so here:

<https://saint-luke.net/2025-us-fall-retreat/2025-registration/>

If you have questions about the retreat, visit [www.mercycenterstl.org](http://www.mercycenterstl.org) or contact our Chancellor General: [pastorcelia@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcelia@gmail.com)

## **Dispersed But United**

A question for your consideration. When was the last time you were present at a retreat of The Order? I know “Covid” messed us up as a nation but that was five years ago. I reluctantly accept that virtual is good (compared to nothing) but it is never going to be as good as face-to-face or in-person gathering. Won’t you consider joining your siblings in a face-to-face encounter this year? I am about to register as I put this edition together. And if it is too late to put it on your calendar for this year (2025), please consider blocking out dates in October 2026. See you (hopefully) in Saint Louis, MO in October.

## **Important History - Ours**

Some Highlights from the Report of the Historian, Spring 2025  
Br. Mark W. Stamm

I have served as a guest editor for *Doxology* (35:3, Ordinary Time 2024). My article, “Presidents, Abbots, and Other General Officers of the Order of Saint Luke” appeared in that issue. That study is the first extended, finished piece of scholarship to appear from my efforts as historian for the Order.

A second piece of similar length, “Whatever Happened to the Third Period? A Discussion of Events Within the Order of Saint Luke, 1968-1984” is completed and has

been submitted to Doxology. It addresses the period that is (essentially) missing from Br. Hoyt Hickman's "The Story of the Order of Saint Luke." It was a time of fascinating liturgical developments and Order members & friends played key roles in many of them.

I hope to maintain some manner of connection with Doxology, using it as an outlet for the historical investigations that I and others write.

- Br. William (David) Collette has written an excellent article on Saint Gemma Galgani, her connection to the Passionist Order, her presence in many places within the St. Paul of the Cross Retreat House in Pittsburgh, and thereby her connection to us.

Other projects that I'd like to pursue in the months ahead:

- Further research on the Rev. Dr. George Hedley, a director of the Order during the 1950s and professor/chaplain at Mills College, a women's college in the San Francisco area. As I understand it, circa 1960 Episcopal Bishop James Pike gave Hedley, a Methodist presbyter, something along the lines of a supplemental ordination, ostensibly enabling him to better minister to his many Episcopal Church students at Mills. There was some controversy relative to this act, some of it airing in *The Christian Century*. Given that numerous members of the Order have spent time on a bridge between the Episcopal Church and Methodism, including (admittedly) yours truly, I want to explore this earlier example of a dynamic that, in some ways, goes back to John Wesley and 1784.
- A reprinting and short reflection on OSL friend Laurence Stookey's sermon explaining the phrase "Remember your Baptism" as he delivered it at the August 1975 unveiling of "A Service of Baptism, Confirmation, and Renewal" (UMC Supplemental Worship Resources #2, 1976). David Bort reported on the service in the *Work/Worship Newsletter* and distributed copies of it to the OSL mailing list. More need to know this story that there was a time - just fifty years ago - when that phrase "Remember your baptism and be thankful" was not commonly known.

## **Pastoral Care In The Order**

Dear Siblings

It's been a few months since I have submitted an article here, and perhaps it is time for a further introduction about my call to the role of Pastoral Care Officer for the Order. (and a picture!).

When I professed membership in the Order in 1997, to me it was a way for me to live out my call to the sacraments while in seminary. When I moved from Chicago and Garrett-Evangelical in 2001, I sought out the local chapter, since that was really the only way I knew to connect. Unfortunately, due to my status as a mother of three little ones, I could not often attend chapter meetings.

And then I found the Cyberchapter – simply a Yahoo Group (yes, I am dating myself) where folks wrote in from all over the world sharing their thoughts, prayer concerns and joys, and what it meant to be Lukan. While in the Cyberchapter I met (virtually) the Rev. Tom Beveridge, who was the Pastoral Care Officer. Br. Tom always had a word of encouragement or hope, and very much a listening ear.

I attended my first retreat in 2006, and there realized the joy of being together with my fellow members of the Order, in worship, in learning, and perhaps most of all in sharing our lives with each other. I began to attend retreats yearly, and fairly quickly got myself a “job” as the Director of Periodicals. That came just in time, as I spent the years from 2009-2017 enduring a very painful separation and divorce. The Order quite literally held me, and sometimes I felt as though I were just living waiting for the next General Council or Retreat so I could see my dear siblings in person.

What does this all have to do with being your Pastoral Care Officer? Simply that, as I have received so much from the Order, I want to offer it back to you. I am not a licensed pastoral counselor. However as a student of humanistic psychology and empathetic listening since high school (my MYF counselor got me into Carl Rogers and Martin Buber), I find no greater sacred space than that in which I get to listen to your story, and reflect back where the Spirit may be at work. I will of course hold all conversations in confidence with the usual caveat of being a mandated reporter

I invite you to reach out to me via email ([dianne.covault@gmail.com](mailto:dianne.covault@gmail.com)) or our WhatsApp group. Starting in June, I am going to try a new way to connect via virtual office hours – check the General group of the WhatsApp for a zoom link.

Finally, I would like to know if there are other ways I can be of service to you. If you have ideas, or if you have concerns, or if you would like me to contact someone in the Order to offer prayer, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Fear Not



Sr. Dianne Tobey Covault



## A Sermon

[This sermon was delivered at the Spring Council Meeting. It is printed here per the request of some of our siblings, realizing that not many of us heard this sermon.]

Wednesday Eucharist Preaching at Spring Council

There's a sweet spot, in the middle of retreat – and of Spring Council as well. At the very beginning of these days apart, we may still be discombobulated from travel, still fretting over tasks to be accomplished during these few days. At the end of retreat or Council, we're sending our thoughts and emotions into the future, worrying about getting to the airport, or about what we'll face back at home. But right in the middle – right about now – we hope that we're able to let go of everything else and simply be present, to God and to one another and to ourselves.

Many of us desperately need these contemplative times, even if we're not very good at contemplation. When my family lived in Iowa, I used to play music at a monthly Taizé service which featured 10 minutes of silence at its heart. I needed that silence, but as an extrovert I wasn't very good at it. It took monthly practice to be able to settle into the quiet and to slow down my thoughts. I can vividly recall the resumption of Taizé services after a summer away from them, looking forward to the quiet, but then just feeling the thoughts zooming around my mind, unable to land or pause.... I rejoice that the Order is a home for both extroverts and introverts, those who naturally settle into the spiritual disciplines of contemplation and meditation, and those of us who struggle with them.

I suspect that if pressed, many of us might admit that part of our attraction to the Order of Saint Luke comes from romanticizing the opportunities for contemplation that we assume the monastic life affords. The resonant sounds of unhurried, ethereal chant echoing against stone.... The peace that silence and dedicated time for prayer provide... The solitude that allows phrases of scripture to permeate our thinking and living.... That sounds good, doesn't it?

So it is natural for us to come to council and retreat looking for increased space and opportunities to be contemplative. And at first glance, our readings for today's eucharist echo this desire: we see Paul and the author of Acts himself "outside the gate by the river," sharing the good news with women who have ears to hear. We see the heavenly Jerusalem, a location so holy and so static that there is no longer movement from day to night. What could be more restful than the stopping of time?? We also hear Jesus, sitting with his disciples, sharing a philosophical Johannine meditation about peace. Ahhhhh....

And yet... I was struck by how much coming and going I found in these texts. Paul is begged, or instructed, by his Macedonian dream man to "Come," and so he goes.



When the crew gets to Phillipi, after all that crossing and sailing, they don't rest but they go outside. Once there, they meet Lydia who again tells them to "Come." There's enough moving around that we might get the sense that Paul had worn out his previous travel companions, and so the "we" passage in the book of Acts that begins here denotes the point where the exhausted prior guy "tags out" and Luke, fresh and ready, "tags in."

Even in that seemingly static city, the new Jerusalem, things are not as still as we assume. Our reading begins with John being whisked away by the Spirit (one hopes the Spirit also provides some Dramamine, in case all that whisking has been getting to John's stomach). Not only John is moving, but all of Jerusalem itself is on the move, coming down out of heaven, from God. A whole city, soaring through the sky! Do the inhabitants of this city feel the motion, or are they like those of us on earth, unable to feel the spinning of our "swiftly tilting planet" because of its enormous size?

And that quiet picture of Jesus, sharing thoughtful philosophy with his disciples? Jesus' teachings are positively a-whirl with motion: Jesus and the Father will *come* to make a home in the hearts of those who keep his word; God will *send* the Spirit, just as God *sent* Jesus; Jesus is *going away*, but also *coming*. Is no one staying put?

The divide – or better yet, the balance – between action and contemplation has been a challenge for Christians since Mary and Martha (though I have to give a shout out to Mary Stromer Hanson, who suggests that both Mary and Martha offered ministry, though in different places). There have been Christians who hear God calling them to lives of contemplation, on pillars or in caves or as walled-in anchorites. There have been Christians who hear God calling them to travel the globe, sharing the good news of Jesus, or to tend to the poorest of the poor in hospitals. There have been religious Orders dedicated to silence and simplicity and prayer, as well as religious Order dedicated to maintaining an active presence in the world, bringing about God's kingdom in ways both profound and incremental.

What kind of order are we? I want to pull here from the work of two siblings who have thought about this question: Br. Daniel Benedict and Br. Scot Bontrager. Br. Daniel, who was abbot at the time it was published, wrote an introduction to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Book of Offices and Services, our beloved Red Book. In his introduction, he explores the question of Lukan Spirituality – who are we as Lukans? How do we manifest the character of our Order? Br. Daniel finds that we are – or at least our spirituality is – liturgical, charismatic, oriented to those on the margins, prophetic and countercultural, communal, and apostolic.

Many of these characteristics seem, to me, to indicate an active approach to living out the Christian calling, and our calling as an Order. We are communal rather than solitary.

We, like the apostles, are sent by Christ, living in dispersion and what Br. Daniel calls “itinerant proclamation in deeds and words.” We are liturgical, oriented to the corporate worship of the Church rather than to personal devotions or meditations.

Br. Scot has been working for years on an article about the Lukan temperament – characteristics or qualities that tend to be found in people drawn to the Order and that are in turn nurtured by the Order itself. In this work (of which I’ve seen several drafts), Br. Scot identifies community, hospitality, propriety, love of knowledge (using my imperfect knowledge of Greek, can I call this philognosis?), love of language, justice, frugality, radical equality, and joy. Again, I see many of these qualities as active ones, ones that engage us in the daily living of the communities in which we live out our Rule of Life and Service. Our bent toward hospitality, community, justice, and radical equality turn us outward, toward others. We enact our love of language and knowledge in conversation with one another and with others outside the Order. Our temperament inclines us to the doing of these things – to spiritual practices that are active and – dare I say – extroverted.

But before the Introverts among us decide to pack up and leave, let me remind us of the word “balance,” and of the impossibly interconnected way that active and contemplative postures are found in the scriptures. Paul and Luke traveled far to arrive at Philippi, but then they remained in the city for several days. Lydia did invite the apostles to “come” to her home, but, as Luke rather passively wrote, “she prevailed upon us.” So presumably they rested chez Lydia for a while? In the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no longer day and night, the nations stroll around by the light of Christ... these same nations that find healing in the leaves of the tree of life. Here, we see motion connected with rootedness, or centeredness. And, in John’s gospel, Jesus and the Father “come” in order to make a home in our hearts. Even with all of the coming and going, Jesus promises us peace.... Just not the kind of peace we might be tempted to expect. Not a peace that excludes activity.

I think we’ve all heard that contemplation feeds action, and vice versa. We know that we need to be centered, rooted, and recharged through meditation, prayer, silence, and various spiritual disciplines. We know that ceaseless activity is impossible. I think we also know that our daily lives feed our meditation and make our inner lives richer. Closing ourselves off from the world would stifle our contemplation. As Christians and especially as Lukans, we need both action and contemplation.

This balance can be achieved in as many ways as there are to live out the Rule of Life and Service... infinite, in other words. I wish there were a step-by-step checklist, because I know that I am not always – or even often? – abiding in the balance. Our scriptures today don’t give us a checklist, but they do give us an image that might help. We find that image in both Acts and in John’s Revelation.

Luke tells us that once he had arrived with Paul in Philippi, they went outside the gate of the city to a river, where there was a place of prayer. A Bible commentary that I consulted suggested that this place was a synagogue, but I like to imagine that it was something like a picnic spot, under the shade of a tree. At any rate, they were beside the water – water that somehow stays in the same place even as it moves. The river appears in John's retelling of his apocalyptic vision as well. According to John, the river is bright as crystal, filled with the water of life, and flowing right down the center of the street.... So, Venice, maybe? This river nourishes the tree of life, which brings healing to the nations. This is a beautiful, a beautiful river, both utterly still and moving with the rhythms and ripples of life.

So maybe this will do for us, for now, as an image of the balance between action and contemplation. We need to stay put, like the river, finding support within the riverbanks of prayer, silence, contemplation, the sacraments, and all of the other means of grace that keep us grounded. But we also need to keep moving, like the river, accepting the Call to Service mentioned in our Rule, responding to needs, offering our witness, and magnifying the sacraments in communities near and far. Living the Sacramental Life requires both action and contemplation of each of us. Naturally we'll each find one of those easier than the other... but we have one another upon whom to rely! We can seek help from our siblings in the Order, who, like us, are trying to find this watery balance. Together, hand in hand, we can move with the river and rest like the river. Thanks be to God, who has brought us to this community of action and contemplation!