

# GESTA MONASTICA

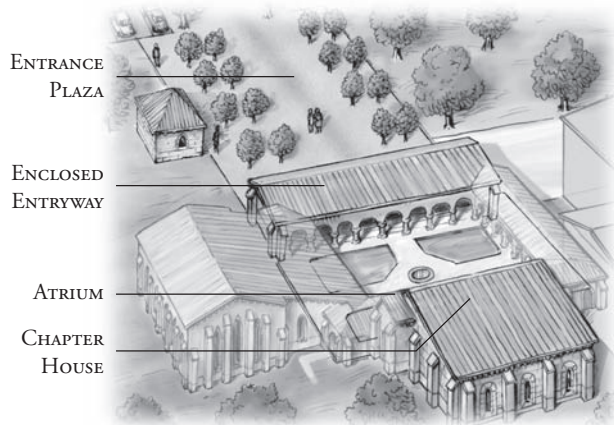
NEWS FROM THE ABBEY OF NEW CLAIRVAUX

Volume 6, Issue 2, Fall 2006 • Visit the Abbey online: [www.newclairvaux.org](http://www.newclairvaux.org) • Sacred Stones: [www.sacredstones.org](http://www.sacredstones.org)

## Phase II Construction Continues

*Following this Phase the Chapter House will be Open*

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, we have reached our next goal of \$1 million toward Phase II of the Sacred Stones project. As reported in the Spring issue of Gesta Monastica, these funds allow us to continue our work to complete the Ovila Chapter House.



*Phase II will consist of finishing the Chapter House interior, erecting the protective atrium, and constructing walkways, an enclosed entrance building, outdoor entrance plaza, and parking area.*

As we go to press, construction crews are already pouring the foundation of the protective atrium that will span one side of the medieval building. After the atrium is erected, we will finish the interior of the Chapter House and reconstruct its portal arches. In addition to preserving the Sacred Stones from the effects of the weather, the atrium will provide a lovely space for visitors to view this magnificent Gothic portal before entering the Chapter House.

The remaining work of this phase will be constructing an entrance building and plaza, as well as walkways that will lead around a courtyard to the Chapter House and atrium. Also included are restrooms and a paved parking area. These features will render the Chapter House complex user-friendly and ready to be used by our community and open to the public.



*Work crews are officially beginning Phase II as we go to press.*

The total cost for Phase II is \$3.5 million, and we have \$2.5 million to go. With your continued support, we will reach this milestone and open the doors of the Chapter House in welcome.

## What's Included in Phase II

**COMPLETING THE CHAPTER HOUSE** – The interior of the Chapter House will be one room of 1,850 square feet. It will feature a vaulted ceiling consisting of six units with two major columns in the middle. One monastic bench will run along three sides of the room, opposite the portal.

Completing the interior will include preparing the walls and installing the original and matching stones and veneer stones, re-building the portal arches and rib stones, completing the ceiling, and installing the flooring, electrical, mechanical, and lighting throughout as well as Cistercian glass for the windows.

**ATRIUM** – The atrium, which will span the entire front of the Chapter House, will provide necessary protection for the priceless 800-year-old stones and will be constructed concurrently with the Chapter House interior. The atrium will be a long, light-filled stone and masonry room featuring two Gothic-style windows and stone columns, and will measure 32.8 ft. wide and 70.8 ft. long. The atrium will be used as an auxiliary space for the Chapter House, and will also be used for functions such as receptions and conferences.

**ENTRANCE PLAZA** – Making the site accessible and welcoming is a high priority. Visitors will arrive from a paved driveway and parking area, and enter the Chapter House complex through a plaza which will be a spacious open area for people to meet. Approximately 12,000 square feet and bordered by a 4 foot high wall, the plaza will feature stone benches for seating and 18 lemon trees (symbolizing family values, good life, and love) to provide shade, as well as to set an inviting stage for visitors to gather before viewing the Chapter House. The plaza will also be used for events and informal gatherings.

**ENTRANCE BUILDING** – The plaza will lead to the formal entrance to the complex—an enclosed entrance building of limestone and concrete masonry, similar in style to the Chapter House. With dimensions of 101 ft. long by 25 ft. wide, its front opening will be a triple portal—three huge wooden doors—located in the center of one of the long sides.

Visitors coming through the entrance will look across a main hall to three doors that will open out onto a courtyard. This outdoor area will be framed by walkways that will lead from the entrance

building to the atrium and Chapter House. The walkways, paved with limestone or cast stone light-colored pavers, will serve as the foundation of the future cloister.

**SAN JOSE CHAPEL** – To the left of the entrance building's main hall will be the intimate 32 ft. x 25 ft. San Jose Chapel—a convenient space for private prayer or meditation.

**DONOR AREA** – A donor recognition alcove will be located to the right upon entering the foyer. This space, measuring 22 ft. x 25 ft., will feature prominent, lasting acknowledgement of those whose gifts made the project possible. Their names, and those of the living and deceased who have provided for the abbey in their estate plans, will be a permanent reminder of their generosity. The dramatic focal point of this area will be statue of St. Bernard – an exact replica of the one from his grave in France.

**PARKING AND RESTROOMS** – A new parking area with shade trees will be created in front of the entrance plaza. Looking across the plaza to the entrance building, a stone restroom structure will be placed to the right.

## Our Divine Savior Parish – Pillars of the Community

This summer, the Sacred Stones project received an unexpected gift from Our Divine Savior parish in Chico. The community raised more than \$2,000 from a special collection at mass on behalf of the Ovila Chapter House, which has struck a chord with members of the parish. "It's quite exciting to us that something so old is being brought back to life," parish secretary Mimi Atkins explains.

"I love Vina," says Divine Savior pastor Father

Simon Twomey, who has visited regularly since 1970 when he first came to California from Ireland. "When I walk in to the monastery, I feel the essence of prayer. It's like a little bit of heaven on earth."

Mimi Atkins also has a special relationship with New Clairvaux that began many years ago when she would come up for retreat and prayer with a group from the parish. "It's the most beautiful

place," she says. "Full of peace and acceptance."

The parish decided on the special collection because they wanted to play a role in completing the Chapter House. "We are very grateful for the parishioners' initiative and generosity," Father Thomas says. In recognition of their participation, a Pillar of Support will be named in honor of the parish within the Chapter House complex.

## A Word from Abbot Thomas:

It is with great joy and thanksgiving that I announce the continuation of the Sacred Stones reconstruction. The work that is now underway – Phase II – will include finishing the Chapter House interior and erecting the portal arches, atrium, entrance building, entrance plaza, parking area, and walkways. At the conclusion of this phase, the Chapter House complex will be open to the public and ready for use by our community.

The total cost for this portion of the project is \$3.5 million, and thanks to your generous response, we currently have \$1 million in hand. Because it is our policy to take on only that work for which we can pay, the construction is proceeding more slowly than it might otherwise. However, aside from obvious fiscal prudence, we are finding that this policy allows us to build wisely, with fewer errors.

With \$2.5 million still to be raised to finish the Chapter House, this is an important time to widen our circle of friends, to consider expanding a personal commitment, and to invite others to get involved. I'm particularly thankful for the volunteer leadership of Jane Flynn and our Development Committee (formerly the Steering Committee) who will guide the campaign going forward. We're also blessed that our young winery has attracted so many weekend visitors who often tour the building site and are inspired to participate. At this time of great momentum, I hope you will want to join us in a way that's meaningful for you.

### Special Welcome and Thanks

As always, there are many people to whom I owe thanks:

- The members of the **Development Committee** who've formed a **Finance Committee** to be headed by **Rick Lynch**, a **Facilities Committee** led by **John Deterding**, and a prayer circle, through which clergy and religious sisters and brothers will support our efforts through prayer.



- **Brother Jean**, a fellow Cistercian monk from France, who has assumed duties as Sacred Stones tour guide. (Pictured with Development Committee member **Mike Conway** and his wife, **Joan**.)

- **Mary Jennings** who joins our team as Campaign Director. Mary comes to us with wonderful enthusiasm, and I hope you will have the chance to meet her soon.

- All of our friends who have introduced others to the Sacred Stones project. (Pictured: **Martin** and **Toodie Jennings**, left, and their friends **Loretta** and **Charlie Cantoni**, right)



- **Louanne Lagomarsino** of Chico for being our good friend through the years, and most recently for her valuable docent services.

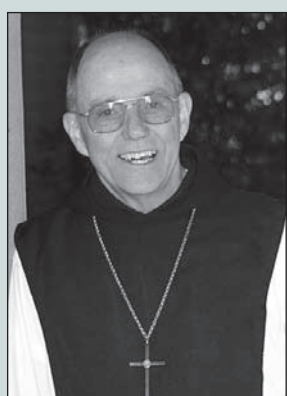
- Good friend **Maryanne Brenner**, a wonderful Chico chef and caterer, for all the ways she assists us.



In prayer,

*Thomas X. Davis, OCSO*

Abbot Thomas



GESTA MONASTICA, the newsletter of The Abbey of New Clairvaux, is published twice yearly. For address correction, to obtain additional copies, or more information on articles, please contact Valerie Husek at 530-839-9936 or visit [www.sacredstones.org](http://www.sacredstones.org).

Publisher - Abbot Thomas X. Davis, OCSO  
Editor - Victoria J. Coe

# We Are Getting Younger

By Father Paul Mark Schwan

Our community is growing. On August 15th, the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary, our Cistercian patroness, four young postulants entered the novitiate in Chapter, and at morning mass, we received a Lutheran minister into our Catholic faith. On September 14, our two senior novices, both young men, made their first profession of vows—Stability, Fidelity to Monastic Life, and Obedience. They now begin the third phase of formation called the juniorate under the tutelage of junior director Brother Gerard Arsenault. This phase includes among other things the study of philosophy, scripture, theology, and liturgy. Not many monasteries in our Order enjoy such youth. We are grateful to God.



Our Young Monks: Brother Michael, Brother Thomas, Brother Francis, Brother Christopher, Brother Stephen, Brother Peter Damian with young-at-heart Father Thomas

Meet our new novices:

**Bay Nguyen**, 28, received the name of **Brother Stephen**, one of the three founders and the third abbot of Citeaux, St. Stephen Harding. Brother Stephen, from Bac Ninh, Vietnam, grew up on a farm in the north of Vietnam, near the nation's capitol of Hanoi. He served in the Vietnamese armed forces for two years. After being discharged from the military, he operated a business marketing motor bikes. He entered Chau Son Cistercian Abbey in 2002 and transferred to Vina in February 2005.

**Hieu Pham**, 26, received the name **Brother Francis**, after St. Francis of Assisi. Brother Francis, from Buon Ma Thuot, Vietnam, in the central highlands, grew up on a farm where his family grew coffee. He attended a liturgical school for musicians in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), with special training in choir directing and organ. He directed a parish choir and coordinated the liturgy for two years before entering Chau Son Abbey in 2002. He also transferred to Vina in February 2005.

**Hai Nguyen**, 26, received the name **Brother Michael**. Brother Michael was born in Kon Tum,

Vietnam, where he worked on the family farm. He was accepted to study at the National University in Ho Chi Minh City but chose instead to follow God's call and entered the Chau Son Abbey in 2002. Like Brothers Stephen and Francis he transferred to Vina in February 2005.

**Christopher Cheney**, 32, retained his baptismal name and so is known as **Brother Christopher**. Brother Christopher, our only native born novice, was born in Petaluma, California and lived and worked for a number of years in Santa Rosa, holding a position with Safeway Supermarkets prior to entering. Brother Christopher began postulancy in September 2005 here at Vina.

Meet our newly professed brothers:

**Brother Peter Damian Tran**, from Vinh, Vietnam, entered the Cistercian Abbey of Chau Son, near Da Lat City, Vietnam in 1999. He is the oldest of eight children raised on a small rice and shrimp farm in the north of Vietnam. Brother Peter was asked by the abbot of Chau Son to consider transferring to Vina at Christmas 2001. He gave this serious thought and discerned that God was calling him to come to America. After a year of English studies in Ho Chi Minh City he arrived in January, 2003 and entered the novitiate on September 14, 2004. Brother Peter is quiet and studious, an avid reader with excellent retention of material he has read, as well as a dependable and able worker. Brother Peter is responsible for the monastery laundry, serves as one of our assistant cantors for both Divine Office and Mass, coordinates all the liturgical readings used in the liturgy and cooks once a week.

**Brother Thomas Tran**, from Da Lat, Vietnam, entered the Cistercian Abbey of Chau Son in 2000. He is the oldest of five children. His parents operate a vegetable and flower business. Brother Thomas's story of arrival here at Vina and his formation parallels that of Brother Peter. Brother Thomas is gregarious, enjoys a party, and has great aptitude and enthusiasm for learning and experiencing new things. Brother Thomas is the community organist, accompanying the brothers' chanting of the Divine Office. He is involved in the varied work demands of the Abbey Ranch, operating farm machinery, helping in the winery, and wherever there is a need to keep our orchards and vineyard healthy and productive.

Our new brother in Christ:

**Sigurd Oluf Lefsrud** is a Lutheran pastor and civil lawyer from Bremerton, Washington. Sig, as he is better known, has made three month-long retreats here at Vina since 2004 to discern his life direction and ultimately made the decision to become a Catholic. He is beginning studies for a Doctorate in Theology from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium this autumn.

## Mary Jennings Joins the Sacred Stones Campaign

This summer, Roseville native Mary Jennings joined the Sacred Stones team as Campaign Director. Mary will be working closely with Father Thomas, Jane Flynn and the Development Committee as we move forward to complete Phase II and the overall master plan.

"I'm delighted for this opportunity," Mary says. "The Abbey is special beyond words and the Sacred Stones project is an expression of those special qualities."

A graduate of Cal State Chico, Mary comes to us after earning a masters degree at the Monterey Institute for International Studies and completing additional coursework at UC Davis. Her professional experience includes work at Heifer International, Freedom from Hunger, and Habitat for Humanity. "I have always been attracted to great causes that

make a huge impact," she explains. "Naturally, the Abbey caught my interest."

"The Abbey has long been a place where people come to visit and their lives are transformed. Through the Sacred Stones project and the authentic Cistercian architecture of the Chapter House, Vina will touch the lives of people in an even more powerful way. I'm so excited to be a part of this."

Mary can be reached at 916-960-3453 or [me.jennings@comcast.net](mailto:me.jennings@comcast.net).



We are delighted to welcome new Campaign Director Mary Jennings (right) who'll be working closely with Development Committee Chair Jane Flynn.

# Thanks to you, our New Clairvaux family, the dream is becoming a reality

In 1994 when our community was awarded the Sacred Stones, we had no organized fundraising. In the years that followed, we began to share our story with a growing circle of friends and eventually raised \$3 million to get us started rebuilding the Ovila Chapter House.

One half of this total – \$1.5 million – came from people who named the Abbey as a beneficiary of their estates, and slightly more than \$550,000 was generated through grants from private foundations. The rest – approximately \$950,000 – was contributed thanks to the commitment and

*“The ability of the monks to pursue this is particularly impressive. There’s a lot of dedication and there will be a unique history to it when it’s finished.”*  
-MARTIN JENNINGS

vision of people like you.

Last year, we asked you to help us finish the Chapter House, and as of this writing you responded with a total of \$1 million. This great support has enabled us to continue construction on this phase of the project.

Once the Chapter House is open, people from all walks of life will have the opportunity to experience the transformational spirituality, the simplicity and beauty, as well as the compelling history of this rare example of Cistercian architecture on American soil. Another \$2.5 million will fund this vision and make it a reality. Based on our past and current fundraising success, friends like you will make the greatest impact, and allow us to achieve this goal.

Martin Jennings, a native of San Francisco who

remembers seeing the stones in Golden Gate Park as a young boy, now lives in Fair Oaks and has become interested in the Trappist Order. He explains why he and his wife wanted to get involved with the project at a level that was meaningful for them. “If these monks can rebuild this chapter house, it demonstrates the hold they have on people’s faith and imagination,” he says. “The ability of the monks to pursue this is particularly impressive. There’s a lot of dedication and there will be a unique history to it when it’s finished.”

“I love to go to mass at Vina,” Toadie Jennings says. “It’s so inspiring, to feel the holiness of those people. The monks are so gracious, and made us feel welcome. Father Thomas makes us feel like family. We’ve taken friends up there and they made a donation, too. We want to spread the interest among our friends.”

Dr. Julian Torres, a resident of Santa Barbara County, has been traveling to Vina for retreat for thirty years. “Coming to the monastery is an opportunity to review your life in terms of what’s really important,” he says. “We’ve all been blessed in many different ways with talents and treasures that have been given to us by God. It’s incumbent upon us to share what we have with others. The Chapter House speaks to the needs of the community; it will enhance the whole monastery.”

As we continue construction with the beginning of Phase II, your getting involved now will enable us to maintain our momentum and reach the \$2.5 million goal. “There’s always the tendency to think that someone else will do it,” Dr. Torres says. “But now is the time to step up and make a commitment. If someone has the means to respond, they can do it in a way that’s comfortable for them.”

## THE ST. BERNARD SOCIETY Honoring Those Who’ve Provided for the Abbey in their Estate Plans



*David deRoos, owner and president of Citygate Associates LLC, public sector management consulting firm in Folsom.*

I updated my estate plan and made a provision for New Clairvaux. I specified that the proceeds will go to support the Sacred Stones project, but of course I hope that it will long be completed by that time. (I would like to see it completed in five years!) If that’s the case, I trust the abbot to use the funds where they are most needed.

How I got involved might read as an unusual story. I’m an elder at a church in Folsom that’s affiliated with the North American Baptist Conference. I was introduced to the monastery in the early 90s by a fellow who was my Young Life leader and mentor in the 1970s as part of a para church outreach to high school students. He would go to Vina and one time he brought me along.

Since then, I’ve gone to the monastery at least once a year, sometimes as often as 3-4 times in one year. I just love the place. I enjoy practicing spiritual disciplines and speaking with the monks. It’s a delightful, beautiful place to slow down

and practice solitude and silence and prayer. When I found out the Abbey had a group of people named for St. Bernard, I knew I had to be part of it!

I was traveling through England in the mid-90s and I ran across the ruins of an old Cistercian monastery. I bought a book that was a compilation of medieval saints, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux. I was riveted by the samples of his writings and I started studying him. He’s turned into a hero for me. I feel a connection to this historical figure.

My connection, my interest through the name, is much more. The Sacred Stones – the history of it from Hearst to Golden Gate Park to the monks – it’s all of interest to me. It’s a wonderful way to restore sacred history and it makes perfect sense to do it at Vina. I’m looking forward to the project being used by the monks at Vina and to serve the public.

– David deRoos

*Father Thomas invites those making a planned gift to the abbey to join the St. Bernard Society. For more information on planned gifts and ways to remember the monastery through your estate, please contact Valerie Husek at 530-839-9936 or [vhusek@newclairvaux.org](mailto:vhusek@newclairvaux.org).*

## The Sacred Stones Are Taking Shape Thanks to People Like You

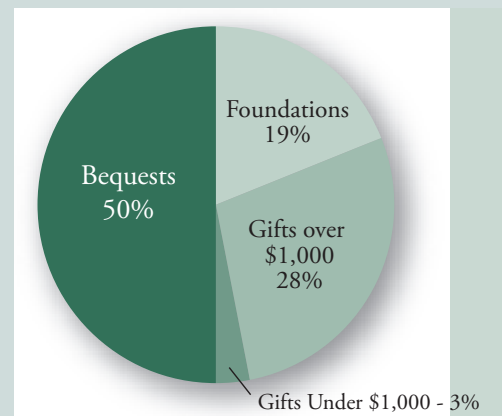
The first phase of the Chapter House reconstruction was made possible by the generosity of our wider New Clairvaux family. More than 80% of the \$3 million came from individuals, and the rest was raised from private foundations. The project received no funding from New Clairvaux Vineyard or the Abbey Ranch. As of this writing, the Sacred Stones project is not considered eligible for government funding.

### Sacred Stones List of Funding Sources 2001-2006

Phase I: Assembling expert project team; preparing and planning the project; clearing the site; refurbishing the 800-year-old stones; purchasing matching limestone and carving new stones (to replace those that were missing); breaking ground; pouring foundations and walls; completing the outer shell of the Chapter House.

Total amount raised.....\$3 million  
Foundations: .....\$556,000  
Individuals: .....\$2,444,000

#### PHASE I – \$3 MILLION



Phase II: Completing the Chapter House interior; constructing the protective Atrium; building hardscape elements. We have raised \$1 million of the total estimated cost of \$3.5 million for this phase, which has enabled construction to continue.

Total amount raised (as of September 2006).....\$1,000,000\*  
Foundations: .....\$135,000  
Individuals: .....\$865,000

*\*100% of these funds will be used directly for construction of Phase II. Fundraising and administrative costs will be paid from a reserved fund.*

#### PHASE II – \$1 MILLION TO DATE



## In this issue of Gesta Monastica:

- *Phase II Construction Continues*
- *Mary Jennings Joins the Sacred Stones Project*
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# GESTA MONASTICA

NEWS FROM THE ABBEY OF NEW CLAIRVAUX

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## New Clairvaux Vineyard Announces Release Events

The New Clairvaux Vineyard continues its success – most of last year's wines are either sold out or going fast. Thanks to these robust sales, we have been able to meet our operating expenses for the current year. Our goal is to generate enough annual proceeds from the winery to recoup our original investment and to help to support the community's general expenses going forward.

"We are greatly pleased at the public's responses to our wines," Father Thomas said. "Many weekends our tasting room is filled with people from all over northern California."

Often people will combine the wine tasting with a tour of the Chapter House progress. "Now that construction is continuing, it is even more exciting," the abbot added. "Seeing the Sacred Stones and experiencing Cistercian architecture in person has an enormous effect on people. We are grateful to the many wine patrons who have viewed the project and become involved in the reconstruction. Their support is truly making a difference."

On August 18th, Father Thomas conducted the centuries-old practice of the Blessing of the Harvest, which this year promises to be very successful. "The fruit quality is superb," said Aimee Sunseri, winemaker. "The grapes have ripened perfectly. The overall yield will be a little lower than last year, but we are expecting the fruit quality to be better from the lower yielding vines as the fruit flavor becomes more concentrated."

Father Thomas and Aimee Sunseri invite the public to visit the monastery for two upcoming



*Brother Rafawl reports a clean, balanced fruit for this year's harvest.*

events to celebrate this year's releases. The first is the weekend of November 18th and 19th when the New Zinfandel of the St. James Block is released. This is a light red or deeply pink colored wine much in the "new" style of the Beaujolais region of France. "This is the perfect wine for the Thanksgiving meal," Aimee says. "It is getting high acclaim."

The second event will be in early December – the release of the 2006 Albariño and 2006 Viognier, also from the very productive St. James Block. "These two whites will arrive just in time for holiday festivities," Aimee says.

In addition to being the first to taste these wines and view the latest progress of the Chapter House, participants at these events will be able to enjoy tasting the barrels of the 2005 red wines that will not be bottled and released until 2007. These include the Petite Sirah, Tempranillo, Barbera, and Zinfandel. Those present will have the opportunity to purchase a "future" and thus,

because the production is limited, be assured of being able to purchase the wine when the time comes.

For more information about our wines, and for ordering (except for futures), please visit our tasting room, open every weekend from 11:00-5:00, or [www.newclairvauxvineyard.com](http://www.newclairvauxvineyard.com). Wines may also be ordered by calling 530-839-2200.

### Financial Report – Our First Year

New Clairvaux is by design a small winery with most of our sales resulting from wine tasting at our site on the weekends – up to \$2,000 on a busy day. Our venture began with a \$500,000 start-up investment that we shared with the Sunseri Wine Company. The good news is that this year our sales are strong enough to cover expenses; however, we will use these proceeds to recover this original investment and later for additional capital costs going forward. We are happy with our initial success, and we're grateful to all who've enthusiastically supported our efforts. In the future, we hope the winery will generate a small profit to support our community's general operating expenses.