

*Ecumenical Lay Associates of The Monastery of The Holy Spirit, Conyers, Georgia*

*(Lay Cistercians)*

Fr. Anthony Delisi had gifted me the opportunity to develop a Lay Cistercian group after my commitment to St. Benedict and The Monastery of The Holy Spirit (MOHS) on Michaelmas, 2009. This followed about a year and a half of visiting and sharing together. Our journey as a group followed soon thereafter.

Our Spiritual Journey began together at The Church of Our Saviour, a Catholic parish in the Anglican Tradition in Atlanta, Georgia. Here we began to share our lives and time together around the study of the Rule of St. Benedict (RSB). We met weekly during the Advent and Christmas season and soon saw a core group develop. Recognizing the call of our spirits to follow the RSB, and seeking a deeper and more meaningful way of life, we began meeting together at the MOHS on a monthly basis in the Spring of 2010.

By this time we were a group of 6 who had moved deeper in the study together, developing a solid foundation of education and formation, or as we like to say developing a trellis around the RSB for our spiritual lives and growth. Collectively we knew by our experiences at the MOHS that we were indeed called to follow in the path of the current group (which had started in 1987) into a walk as Lay Cistercians.

We petitioned the current group of Lay Cistercians to become an affiliate group, following in the way of St. Benedict and honoring and living into the Cistercian charisms. Our request was met with a vote by the Lay Cistercians. Approximately 45 in number at the time voted UNANIMOUSLY to accept us as brothers and sisters as an affiliate Lay Cistercian group. This gift manifested on Holy Saturday 2010.

One year later, on Holy Saturday, 2011 we made our formal entry as a group as novices, 9 in number. Today we number a group of 15, 8 juniors and 7 novices who participate in a 5 year formation program. Our education/formation program is centered on our way of life. Daily prayer, lectio divina, the Rosary, monthly gatherings, and weekly Eucharist are central to our way of life. Further we feel we are called to share the Cistercian charisms and the RSB with the world at large in our individual settings of worship and work.

As we have developed, and as we continue to share in the Cistercian life together at MOHS and with the monks' guidance and prayers, we seek to answer the whisper of our call into a deeper spiritual life cultivated through our practices and time together. As an Ecumenical group we feel we have been given the ministry to bring the RSB, the Cistercian charisms, and monastic practices to a broad group of Christians in the world. We are Lay Cistercians of the MOHS, and cherish being part of the International Cistercian family. –

*Pax Michael Trent Thompson*