

# The Chalice

## of St Laurence the Archdeacon and Martyr

*Newsletter of the Benedictine Fellowship of St Laurence, Tallahassee Creek, Colorado* Autumn 2007 Vol. I, No. 1

Who is St. Laurence ?

**S**T. LAURENCE, one of the early deacons of the Roman Church, was one of the victims of the persecution of Valerian in 258, like Pope Sixtus II and many other members of the Roman clergy. *This essay continues on page 7 of this letter.*

Why 'The Chalice'?

**T**HE CHALICE comes from the legend that as Archdeacon of Rome, Laurence was given stewardship of the treasures of the Church. When the pagan Emperor Valerian demanded these be handed over to him, it fell to Laurence to save one precious object from destruction. St. Peter had brought to Rome from his See at Antioch a chalice of singular importance, the very Cup of the Lord's Supper in the upper room. Laurence arranged for this Holy Chalice to be taken away to Spain and kept by his family there. This Chalice, now dated to the first century B.C., is yet in Spain at the cathedral in Valencia.

What is the Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence ?

**T**HE BENEDICTINE Fellowship of St. Laurence is a non-profit independent corporation established in law for religious and charitable purposes. These purposes include the development of a campus in Fremont County, Colorado for spiritual retreats and worship according to the traditions of Orthodox Catholic Christianity, especially that of the Rule of St. Benedict combining quiet, prayer, contemplation, spiritual reading, and work. If it please God there may

some day be one or more monastic foundations occupying portions of this campus.

Where is this Campus owned and sponsored by the Fellowship of St. Laurence?

**T**ALLAHASSEE Creek resides in a large mountain valley before dropping quickly to the Arkansas river about 15 miles West of Canon City, Colorado. The Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence own this valley surrounded by Bureau of Land Management forests and accessible from County Road 21A off State Highway 9 in Fremont, County. The creek flows through the length of the valley and flood zones have been clearly surveyed and marked.

What are the plans for developing this campus for the benefit of the Faithful?

**O**UR PLAN is to take the existing hunting lodge and, across the meadow, add a large Chapel with guest rooms in the undercroft. Construction of the Chapel and guest rooms is planned to begin in Spring of 2008. The architectural planning phase is now complete and a general contractor has been engaged. Father John Connely owns a copy of the architectural drawings which can be seen at St. Mark's Church in Denver. A color presentation of the Chapel is reproduced in this letter. The focus of all these plans is on the worship of God the Holy and Undivided Trinity. The Chapel takes its form from the needs of the Liturgy as served in the classical Western Rites. Provision has been made to serve the

Byzantine Liturgies here also. We expect the Divine Offices to be served in this Chapel as well as the Divine Liturgy. We are advised to follow the pattern of other Retreat venues and not to consecrate the Altar but rather have the Clergy who serve there bring their own Antemension so as to serve the Liturgy with the faithful.

What sort of retreats will be conducted at the campus?

**T**HE WILDERNESS setting presents a first advantage to the pilgrim who is seeking a refuge of prayer and closeness to the heart of God. We are reminded by St. Theophan the

Recluse that there are three worlds of our experience: First, we experience the artificial world of human society with its rules and conventions and assumptions of power and privilege and stifling banality for the most part. Second there is to be found the world of unspoiled nature where the majesty of God's Creation impresses the soul with wonder and, God helping, a certain humility at the magnitude of the earth and sky and heavens. Finally there is the Church wherein the impulses of wonder and hope and faith are realized, with repentance, in the act of worshipful thanksgiving. And so the pilgrim is, by God's help, moved from illusion to reality in a turning the heart to God. The form of retreats at St. Laurence would follow this

outline in emphasis on quiet and prayer and edifying talks and reading of the sort well known to readers of St. Benedict's Rule. One would assume a Priest would lead some of his faithful through these exercises for a few days and then, God helping, all would return to their usual routines somewhat repented, somewhat refreshed

and somewhat more wise. Different age groups would, of course, respond to different programs.

Who are the people that might be involved soon and in the future?

**S**OME respect for the Catholic and Orthodox

traditions of faith and discipline must be assumed before any benefit could be expected from St. Laurence. We have assured the neighbors and the civil authorities that this will not be a 'Christian Disney Land' with go carts and horse races and ATVs running up and down the hills. There is also no need to impose the sort of 'experimental' goofiness in worship or behaviour that has emptied the pews of so many parish churches. Clown Masses and other revisionist claptrap really should better be left at the venues where they have become familiar and are likely destined to die. So, back to the Benedictine models of quiet and plainchant and the beauty of holiness, God being our helper.



What Jurisdiction or Ecclesial Corporation owns the property at St. Laurence?

**A** VERY good question in this era of rampant litigation and court settlements to pay for abuses real and imagined on the part of clergy and teachers and others in the employ of non-profit corporations. The massive financial settlements of the Archdioceses of Boston and Los Angeles come to mind. It is well to remember the Orthodox Church in America where millions of dollars of designated funds seem to have gone up the nose of those trusted with the stewardship of the Church's money. Not even the "9/11" Fund was respected in those episodes of creative bookkeeping. It would be so convenient to sell a few hundred acres of Colorado wilderness to salvage the bottom line for a distressed Denominational headquarters. So we have very carefully avoided liability connexions with any ecclesial entity. That may disappoint some who salivate at the prospect of easy plunder, but, sad to say, legal precautions simply have to be made these days. I seem to recall a nice old Church in central Denver that was turned into a dance hall to pay off debts of the Episcopal Diocese. Too many churches and not enough venues for drinking and drugs and dancing one must suppose. The chapel dedicated to God the Holy Comforter is now the cigar and cocktail room. Anyway, our object is to provide a nice place of retreat for the benefit of the faithful, and, so far as possible, a prudent reduction of opportunity for thieves and frauds and bankrupt bureaucrats.

What prospect for monastic life is seen for this campus?

**S**UCH matters are entirely up to the purposes of God the Holy and Undivided Trinity. There is a real interest among many in the Oblate program attached to the Benedictine monastery of Christ the Saviour which is soon to move to a handsome facility in Hamilton, Ontario. It would seem prudent to provide more opportunities for a vital oblate life in

the parishes and see where that leads in terms of Vocations to the life of repentance. Given the campus is over 500 acres there should be room, with charity, for several Godly purposes to be realized there without compromising the character and needs of any.

What about the adornment of the Chapel? Is it to be properly byzantine or romanesque or plain or decorated?

**T**HE prudent rules set forth in the ORDO of the Western Rite Vicariate allow iconography in a 'Western' or Romanesque mode to be incorporated in the adornment of the temple. We plan for a pleasant interior of Romanesque inspiration using the most technically sturdy and practical materials. The plan is for a very high 'R Value' in the fabric of the building with minimal maintenance requirements and a maximum of natural light. The interface with the mountain valley will be enhanced by a covered ambulatory around the entire structure. We are not building on a rock in the Irish Sea or a flat high plain in Germany or a high hill in Italy but rather in a mountain valley with a sunny side and a dark side and with a stream running through the midst. Modern concerns for access and health issues and fire suppression all impact the design of these buildings. This is compatible with the function of a building that absolutely supports the chanting of the Divine Offices and the offering of the Divine Liturgy.

What about the out-of-doors? Is there opportunity for hikes and quiet walks?

**D**EPENDING on the physical vigor of those involved there are simple walks down the valley. There are also challenging trails that lead up to about 9,000 feet to the top of Table Mountain. From the high ground one can survey Pikes Peak to the North and all the canyon lands in between. To the South and West are the grand Sangre de Christo mountains. Table Mountain itself is a wonder of rare

species of plants of which some, we are told, exist only here.

What other programs might be of interest to the faithful?

**C**ERTAINLY the opportunity for youth retreats must be evident to any who see their children travel long distances to as far as California or Pennsylvania for such experiences. The facility at St. Laurence is limited to about 60 at any time and so will never produce events on a large scale that might threaten the commercial interests of established camps. Parochial retreats up to 20 women or men could be readily accommodated as need and schedule allow.

**I**T is also evident that there is a need for consecrated and dedicated places of Christian burial in the Colorado area and for Orthodox monks and oblates. We have therefore set aside a large pleasant hillside for a cemetery or necropolis where burial in hallowed ground will be readily available and affordable. It is time for believers to take back the Burial of the Dead from the secular commercial interests that now dominate what they call an 'indus-



try' -an industry fraught with bankruptcy and malfeasance and greed and sheer incompetence. The fact is that in Colorado you have every right to choose all the services regarding Christian burial. We cooperate with the Archdiocese of Denver for these services. Fine caskets can be obtained from monastic workshops and support the cause of religion while supplying the need. The Archdiocese of Denver Mortuary have offered a complete catalogue of services for a reasonable

cost to any of the faithful who care to make plans ahead of time and spare their survivors the pressure of making arrangements. It would be prudent to talk to your Priest about such matters and avoid a lot of complications and costs that have nothing to do with the decent Offices of the Requiem

Mass and burial and the provision for blessings and prayers according to the Church's ritual. Our plan is to offer the Requiem Mass at St. Laurence on a regular schedule including Memorial Day for all the Faithful Departed.



**A** WATER COLOUR wash over the basic architect's rendering of the West portal of the chapel shows some of the solutions involved while building at the base of a hill side. The East end, furthest from this perspective, projects into the meadow beyond and the West end is on higher ground. This permits a very interesting structure with a large Vesting room and Sacristy to the East of the Altar and a pleasant meeting room above the Sacristy with its own staircase and a suite of guest rooms on the lower level. The floors of the entire facility are heated and so economy and comfort and quiet are assured as there is no forced air machinery blowing heat from a few noisy registers. This site is not connected by power lines to a grid and so every measure has been taken to reduce electric load, like ample windows and a combination propane and wood fired boiler system.

**E**LECTRIC POWER is supplied to the buildings from a solar array and automatically supplemented with a separately housed heavy duty generator. The latest generation of computers and storage devices are very modest users of electricity. Water needs at the site are supplied by several wells. Water rights for St. Laurence have been worked out by a water attorney and are ample for a year round population of 60 persons with irrigation for gardens. These water rights have added considerable value and potential to the property. Access to the chapel and guest rooms is not arduous as the road is well maintained and in fact, the Fremont County Road Department and equipment are located on Highway 21 a few miles from the property. They do a very good work of keeping the road clear and repaired. It ends at the entrance to the St. Laurence property.

Mary Gay Sullivan Coit is an Archdiocesan iconographer whose studio is at St. Mark's Church in Denver. In addition to commissions for churches and individuals, she has begun a scheme of icons for St. Laurence's chapel. She has produced two icons of the Mother of God, Our Lady of Walsingham and Our Lady of Glastonbury and icons of St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome and St. Gregory the Great (the four Latin Doctors of the Universal Church.) Recent icons include St. Cecilia and St. Benedict of Nursa. Many of these are available as reproductions at :

[www.andrewespress.com](http://www.andrewespress.com)

Here she offers a brief introduction to the icon of the Protomartyr Stephen and the Archdeacon and martyr Laurence.

**T**HE ICON of St. Stephen (Left) and St. Laurence was written in the Spring of 2007 by Mary Sullivan Coit for the Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence. The materials and methods employed in the writing of icons are the same methods used since medieval times. Mineral pigments tempered with egg yolk and 24k

gold leaf are applied in a traditional manner. Prayer and contemplation are important ingredients of iconography.



Usually an iconographer does not sign the icon or would sign it "by the hand of..." because he or she recognizes that without God's grace there would not be an icon.

The designs on the border and in the halos of St. Stephen and St. Laurence are adapted from ancient Roman designs. The emblem at the top of the panel contains three palm branches inside a crown. Palms are a symbol of martyrdom as is a crown. There are three to represent, of course, the Holy Trinity.

The two Saints are depicted together because they were both deacons of the Church and because they are buried in the same tomb in Rome. This icon was written in the western Gothic style. The saints are young, beardless and tonsured. The sticharia is red to indicate that they are martyrs. The blue patches on the front of their garments indicate that these extraordinarily valiant young men are indeed, "Suns of the Church." They are holding the *Basilica di San Lorenzo al Verano* where their hallowed relics are entombed side by side.

## Who is St. Laurence ?

Archdeacon and Martyr; died 10 August, 258.

**S**T. LAURENCE, one of the early deacons of the Roman Church, was one of the victims of the persecution of Valerian in 258, like Pope Sixtus II and many other members of the Roman clergy. At the beginning of the month of August, 258, the emperor issued an edict, commanding that all bishops, priests, and deacons should immediately be put to death (“*episcopi et presbyteriet diacones incontinenti animadvertantur*” -- Cyprian, Epist. lxxx, 1). This imperial command was immediately carried out in Rome. On 6 August Pope Sixtus II was apprehended in one of the catacombs, and executed forthwith (“*Xistum in cimiterio animadversum sciatis VIII id. Augusti et cum eo diacones quattuor.*” Cyprian, ep. lxxx, 1). Two other deacons, Felicissimus and Agapitus, were put to death the same day. In the Roman Calendar of feasts of the fourth century their feast day is on the same date. Four days later, on the 10th of August of that same year, Laurence, the last of the seven deacons, also suffered a martyr’s death. The anniversary of this holy martyr falls on that day, according to the Almanac of Philocalus for the year 354, the inventory of which contains the principal feasts of the Roman martyrs of the middle of the fourth century; it also mentions the street where his grave is to be found, the Via Tiburtina (“III id. Aug. Laurentii in Tibertina”; Ruinart, “Acta sincera”, Ratisbon, 1859, 632). The itineraries of the graves of the Roman martyrs, as given in the

seventh century, mention the burial-place of this celebrated martyr in the Catacomb of Cyriaca in agro Verano (De Rossi, “Roma Sott.,” I, 178).

Since the fourth century St. Laurence has been one of the most honoured martyrs of the Roman Church. Constantine the Great was the first to erect a little oratory over his burial-place, which was enlarged and

beautified by Pope Pelagius II (579-90). Pope Sixtus III (432-40) built a large basilica with three naves, the apse leaning against the older church, on the summit of the hill where he was buried. In the thirteenth century Honorius III made the two buildings into one, and so the basilica of San Lorenzo remains to this day. Pope St. Damasus (366-84) wrote a panegyric in verse, which was engraved in marble and placed over his tomb. Two contemporaries of the last-named pope, St.

Ambrose of Milan and the poet Prudentius, give particular details about St. Laurence’s death. Ambrose relates (*De officiis min.* xxviii) that when St. Laurence was asked for the treasures of the Church he brought forward the poor, among whom he had divided the treasure, in place of alms; also that when Pope Sixtus II was led away to his death he comforted Laurence, who wished to share his martyrdom, by saying that he would follow him in three days. The saintly Bishop of Milan also states that St. Laurence was burned to death on a grid-iron (*De offic.*, xli). In like manner, but with more poetical detail, Prudentius describes the martyrdom of the Roman deacon in his hymn on St. Laurence (“*Peristephanon*”, Hymnus II).

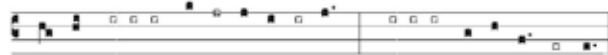
AUGUST 10

### SAINT LAURENCE, DEACON AND MARTYR

THE INTROIT. *Confessio et pulchritudo. Psalm xvi.* Tone VII.



**G**LORY and worship • are before him: \* [Choir] power and honour are in his • sanctuary.



*Ps. ibid.* [Cantors] O sing unto the • Lord a new song: \* [Choir] sing unto the Lord, • all the whole earth.

[Cantors] ✠ Glory be to the Father and to the Son and • to the Holy Ghost: \*

[Choir] As it was in the beginning, is now, and • ever shall be, \* world with-out end. Amen. *Cantor and Choir repeat, Glory and worship, &c. as far as the Ps.*

THE COLLECT.

**G**RANT to us, we beseech thee, almighty God: that we may quench the flames of our sins; even as thou didst give grace to blessed Laurence to overcome the fires of his torments. Through, &c.

**T**HE Benedictine Fellowship of St. Laurence is a registered charity, and qualified 501 (c) (3) corporation under Federal statutes. The BFSL is tax exempt under Colorado State statute.. It has been quite an adventure these past four years, by God's help, to find this property, to buy this property, and to deal with many levels of government and many voices both for and against this vision of a campus set apart for the spiritual development of very many Christians both laity and clergy and monastics who simply seek a place apart from the demanding routine of daily life and work. I happen to believe that great good can be done here. I happen to know that prayer is never wasted and that the effects of prayer are beyond calculation both for those in this life and those who have passed on to the next. Lord have mercy.

**S**O, what can be announced at last is that the legal issues have been settled and established. The water rights and mineral rights and homeowners' association rights and other vexing issues are miraculously settled and secure.

**N**OW, with the building program only six months away in April 2008, it is opportune to advertise this wonderful project to all those who put their trust in God's providence. We appeal to all who see merit in this development of 560 acres of a beautiful Colorado mountain valley with a Church in the midst of it. The front gate at St. Laurence is 140 highway miles from the front door of St. Mark's Church in Denver and close to the population centers of Colorado Springs, Denver, and much of the Front Range. Please consider a donation to the BFSL in your charitable giving this year. Any amount will help both for the cash needs of building and also to establish a broad base of support. None of this would be possible without the evident Grace of God the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Please join your prayers to ours that this venture will bring a much needed Illumination of Grace to the midst of this mostly clueless and darkened world.

**F**OR more information go to our website:      **[www.saintlaurenceosb.org](http://www.saintlaurenceosb.org)**

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