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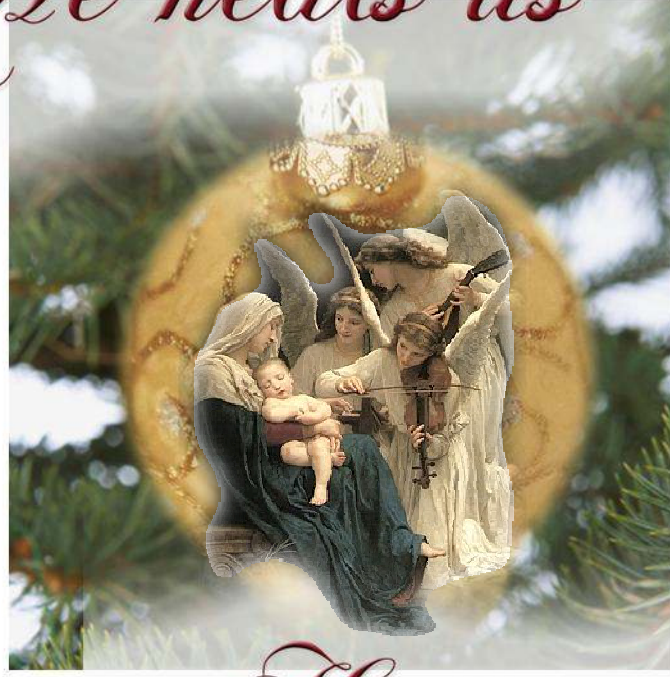
Deo Gratias Per Jesum In Sanctissimo Sacramento

Dear Friends of St. Joseph Monastery,

This scene should not only remind us of the reality of that first Christmas, but also bring us great comfort. Our lives are not picture-perfect, they often don't

It seems that one of the temptations at Christmas time can be that we have heard the story of Our Lord's birth so often that it has become glossed over, a picture-perfect fairy tale. But to really understand what Christmas means, we need to look deeper than the images on the front of Christmas cards.

He heals us



make sense to us. They are full of things contradictory and painful, things that don't fit into the right tidy little compartments we would prefer. Living and dying in this fallen world entails plenty of worries, sorrows, and distress. And that's okay!

Think of what it meant for God Himself to choose to descend to this earth and take on a human body, to choose to submit Himself to the pain of human existence. Our Divine Physician was unwilling to apply any remedy that He had not Himself endured. And so, he comes among us, a helpless baby, feeling the pain of hunger, of cold. Even the most comfortable, pampered life possible on this earth would have been a huge suffering for Him, but He chose still more.

as He wounds

Our Lord came to show us that as Christians we should not be surprised at this. We cannot escape from the Cross if we hope to enjoy the Resurrection. When the Word became flesh, He agreed to suffer the same symptoms we have been infected with since original sin. He came to walk with us along the Way of the Cross in order to show us that it does lead to a cure -eternal life with Him in Heaven. Our Divine Physician will not let our infection fester within us, but wants to apply the saving remedy we need, for He heals us as He wounds.

There was nothing picture-perfect about the Holy Family's first Christmas. Think of Mary and Joseph's anxious search, miles away from their own home, for a place for Our Lord to be born. Turned away again and again, they must settle for a smelly cave and Our Lord's first resting-place will be in a feeding trough. Then, soon after His birth, they are told to flee into a foreign country and all the baby boys in Bethlehem are slaughtered by the order of an insanely jealous king.

As our Christmas gift to you,
a Novena of Masses
 will be offered at St. Joseph Monastery for you and all your intentions. Thank you for all that you do for us, and know that you are always remembered in our prayers!

Prayer Requests

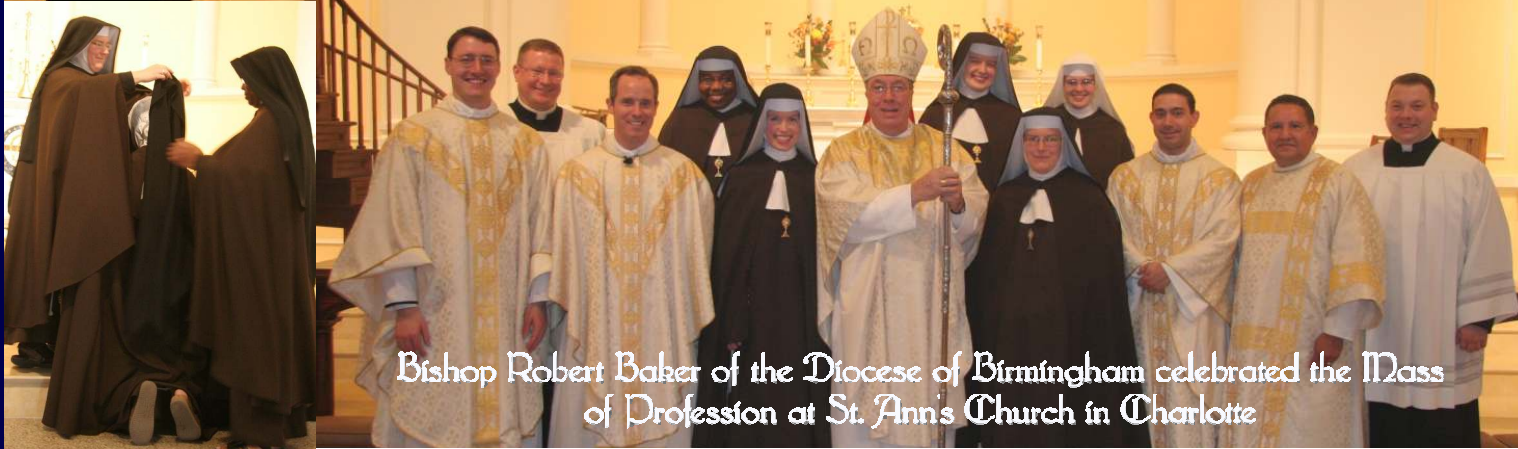
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Merry Christmas from the Charlotte PCPAs

The Profession of Vows of
Sr. Mary Raphael of the Divine Physician, DCDA
November 21, 2010
Solemnity of Christ the King



I first felt the call to Religious Life when I was twelve years old and entered a monastery soon after completing high school. However, a serious illness in 2008 kept me from renewing my temporary vows, and the Lord took me on a journey I never expected. Going back into the world, my eyes were opened not only to my own brokenness and need for healing, but I saw this need all around me. It was a difficult time, and yet also a period of great hope and grace, as I discovered in a deeper way the healing Presence of our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. During those two years, I personally witnessed drug addicts turn their lives over to God by spending time in adoration. I saw troubled marriages restored, wounded relationships healed, bitterness turned into forgiveness, anxiety transformed into peace.

If you think about it, our journey as Christians is one of healing - from the wounds of sin to our restoration as children of God. As we grow in the life of grace, God desires to heal us by drawing us close to Himself. I tend to think of healing as a "being made whole," becoming who we are meant to be. God takes the very things that cause us pain and suffering, transforms them, elevates them, and uses them for our good.

And the Divine Physician is the one who bore our sickness and carried our pains (Isaiah 53), showing us that paradoxically it is often the Cross itself that brings deep healing into our lives and the lives of those we love.

At the end of 2009 I received a major healing, so that I could pursue the vocation I still felt called to, and yet I don't believe that healing was just for me.

Especially as contemplative nuns, our life of prayer can be a source of healing for souls. And all of us - Consecrated Religious or not - can be instruments of healing through our witness and our charity and concern for each other. I personally have found that the smile is a powerful tool for healing and touching hearts, for as Bishop Baker said in his homily at my Profession, "Joy is a sign of God's Presence," and His Presence among us is indeed the Divine Remedy.



During the last few months, we have continued our search for the land God has chosen for our future Monastery. To the left, is a photo taken on the property we are now considering, on the Feast of St. Helena, Finder of the True Cross. Please keep us in your prayers as we discern God's Will.

If you feel God is calling you to take an active role in establishing a Eucharistic Throne for Our Lord in the Diocese of Charlotte, please email us at nuns@stjosephmonastery.com

Cloister Q & A

Q. Where did Sr. Mary Raphael come from and why was she invested and professed on the same day?

A. A lot of people have been asking about Sr. Mary Raphael's recent unique ceremony. Sister was a professed Nun in another Monastery of our Order when in 2008 a serious illness kept her from renewing her temporary Vows. At the end of 2009, she received a major healing, so that she could pursue the vocation she still felt called to. Canon Law and the Constitutions of our Order do not require the novitiate to be repeated if a Sister leaves the Order after First Profession. So, after a period of discernment, Sr. Mary Raphael was able to once again receive the Holy Habit and make the Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We rejoice with her at this wonderful grace which is so beautifully expressed in her new name and title!



Sr. Mary Raphael rejoices with her family on her Profession Day.

Q: When a Nun is invested, what happens to her hair after it is cut?

A. Traditionally, after the investment ceremony, we give our hair, which has been cut as a symbol of our break with the world and our desire to belong to God alone, to our mothers who treasure it as a memento of our "Fiat" to God's call.

Send us your questions about our life and we will publish our answers in future issues of this newsletter.
Questions can be mailed to: 3452 Willow Oak Road Charlotte, NC 28209
Or emailed to: nuns@stjosephmonastery.com