

Mepkin Abbey Garden Newsletter

November 2018



A NEW SUPERIOR IS CHOSEN

The big news for November is that Father Joe is Mepkin's new Superior. Please read the article at the end of this Newsletter for details.

October brought some break in the hot weather and we continued working on maintaining the grounds and gardens. You will remember we also had Hurricane Michael to clean up. No real damage, just loads and loads of small sticks, twigs and moss. We have planted both new trees and shrubs, kept spent blooms pruned, along with the usual picking up debris and moss as a daily chore. With the Creche Festival upon us, we started our labor intensive mulching around all the trees.

GARDEN UPDATES:

The Store and St. Clare stay the same except for many packages coming in for

both Stores preparing for the Creche Festival. Next month we will have photos of the decorations if I can ask Fr. Jonas or Craig to take pictures for me.

Cloister:



This beautiful tree is on the right side of the Church and always is so beautiful in the Fall.

Labyrinth:



This is always the most striking scene in the Labyrinth.

Orchard:

Norm and I have been inspecting the figs looking for late fruit. There is an extra benefit in that we can determine which variety they are. Some of the plants we started from Brother Joseph's bush and others from my plants at home. We look forward to a heavy crop one year. Enzo (Mepkin's chef) had a bowl full of figs that I had brought from home months before. He had frozen the excess and was going to use them just like fresh. I had never thought of that. I am usually in a tither to preserve some whole figs (had two for lunch desert on ice cream) or stew some for compote. The fruit when ripe don't last long but they are GOOD.

We have been harvesting some oriental persimmons. George Neil grafted some scions from his persimmons to native persimmon root stock. We have a remote planting of the trees and thankfully the deer leave them alone (perhaps the fruit is out of reach). The fruit ripen about time for the Creche exhibit and are a blessing of their own. The fruit are about the size and appearance of a ripe tomato but the color ranges from orange to red. The orange are firm but not astringent and the red are ripe and sweet but have a jelly like consistency. A treat for those who like it.

We are planning for a way to better protect our citrus. We basically built an enclosure around the plants and tried to cover them and to light a bulb when a freeze was expected. Thanks to Craig and Dottie the plants were mostly

protected. We think a bulb failure on one of those 15 degree nights cost us a couple of plants. There were farmers with large crops that lost everything so we were fortunate.

If you have a parachute canopy or two we can use them to cover the plants. Geronimo!

Howard



Ripe Oriental Persimmons

Dottie's note: These are so delicious. I first had them years ago in Italy and look forward to this treat each Fall. Hopefully they will be for sale at the Store during the Creche Festival along with some wonderful recipes. I just cut them and have them as fruit for breakfast. Try them! You'll like them!

Also in full fruit are the Orange Trees we try to protect in the winter.



Orange Trees

Columbarium:

The new sculpture bed is coming along as you can see. The Sweet Grass makes a wonderful contrast at this time of the year.



Three Oaks Construction sodded the lawn where the construction had torn it up and now it is a sea of green. Very serene and peaceful over there.



Columbarium Lawn

Between the Columbarium and Luce Garden is a field that is situated on the bluff above the Cooper River. Often, we see Retreatants and Visitors sitting in the benches there taking in the scene you see below.



Scene from the Bluff above the Cooper River

Luce Garden:

Luce continues to be a popular spot for weddings, and the Volunteers keep it in such beautiful order. In October, we had seven weddings, the Garden is closed to weddings during the Creche Festival in November, and three weddings are scheduled in December. We are always making improvements to the entry into Room One, as you can see.



Entrance into Room One



View of Luce Lower Pond. Is it any wonder people want to be married in this beautiful and serene setting?



The Susquehanna Camellias are in bloom and the Japonica Camellias in full bud. They signal the first sign of the beauty to come through the next few months.

Odds and Ends:

We would like to thank the Charleston Catholic Youth Group for coming again one Saturday and helping us get a start on mulching the Live Oak in the Oak Allee at the entrance. We so appreciate the work you do for us.



Charleston Catholic Youth Group

Each Fall the Garden Program has a lunch and meeting to discuss what we have done all year and to present the Goals for the following year. As you can see from the photos below, we have a great time.

This year the preparation for the lunch was done by Sylvia Bras—and what a fabulous job she did. Thank you, thank you, Sylvia for all your work in making this a special day for our Volunteers. Thanks to Craig also for helping Sylvia, leading the meeting and presenting the Goals for 2018.



Hostess Sylvia



Setting



YUM! Bill, the mechanic in the garage, brought his grill and fixed Hamburgers and Hotdogs. Oh my, were they good. Sylvia had Chocolate Brownies and another chocolate choice for dessert. Baked Beans, Slaw, Potato Salad and all the fixings rounded the menu. You can see this is the most important feature of our meeting. Everyone went home full and happy!



Bill (the cook) and Craig (our Boss)



Still in prayer circle waiting on the line for lunch. We thank the Brothers for providing the cost of the lunch. They are very supportive of our program.



Pam and Ted Russo. They have Volunteered at Mepkin in various areas for years and years, but now mostly reside in the Eastern USA. They were surprise guests and we had a great visit.



Another special guest was Doris Walker (Miss Doris) who came to visit all of us. She "retired" last year and have we ever missed her. She took care of St. Benedict for years.

Several other notes: The Abbot has given us permission to repair the Greenhouses and to develop a Memorial Arbor, so keep tuned and we will keep you in the loop in the coming months.

Many thanks to Fr. Jonas for photos, Howard for supplying the Orchard report, and to Langhorne for editing. The Creche Festival is from November 12-18 and November 23-December 1.

"The human need to connect with nature is profound. Time and time again, plants have been shown to help people deal with discomfort. A well-known 1984 study conducted at the University of Delaware found that hospital patients in rooms with a view of trees needed less pain medication...."

"I dig in the garden. Looking at an oak or a willow tree is like Xanax with leaves...." Oprah Magazine

Happy Thanksgiving to each and every one of you. We have so much to be thankful for in this wonderful country. See you next month! Dottie

MEPKIN ABBEY SELECTS NEW SUPERIOR

Moncks Corner, SC -- On Nov. 3, Fr. Joseph A. Tedesco will become the fifth leader of Mepkin Abbey, a Trappist monastery located on the Cooper River outside of Moncks Corner. The monks chose Fr. Tedesco to be their new superior, and Fr. Elias Deitz, Abbot of Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky and Mepkin's Motherhouse, confirmed this choice. Fr. Tedesco succeeds Fr. Stan Gumula who has led the Mepkin community for the past 12 years.

Fr. Joe, as he is known in the community, entered Mepkin in March 2008 and made his solemn profession as a monk on June 28, 2014. He has worked on the farm, cooked and supervised the kitchen, managed the Abbey Store and Reception Center, and served as director of monks in temporary vows.

"The Holy Spirit was truly with us as we journeyed together as a community to come to know what God was asking of us," said Fr. Joe. "This helped us to clarify how to go forward. I feel blessed to know as I begin the spiritual leadership of Mepkin, that we are open to the Spirit, supportive of one another and energized as a community. So, I can say that we are full of gratitude for the past, hopeful for our future, and approaching our present with passion. This is the gift we have given to each other."

The son of Anthony and Anna Tedesco, Fr. Joe was born in Philadelphia. He has two sisters (one is a member of the Society of the Holy Child) and two brothers (one his twin.) He attended Catholic grammar and high schools in Philadelphia, received a B.A. in theology from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in 1975, and an M.A. in Theology from St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore in 1979. He was a priest in the Diocese of Trenton and served there from 1979 to 2007, in parishes as associate pastor and pastor and in various diocesan roles.

In 2015, Fr. Joe published "Food for Thought: Mepkin Abbey Fare" which contains the mostly vegetarian

recipes he cooks for the monks and visitors.

Mepkin Abbey is part of the Roman Catholic Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, commonly known as Trappists. Currently, 17 men are members of the monastery. They follow the Rule of St. Benedict, spending their days in prayer, work and spiritual readings and welcoming visitors all year long. Some visitors come just for the day; others come for retreats lasting several days to a week; some men come for several months as part of the monastic guest program. Every November, Mepkin hosts its annual Creche Festival and this year almost 8,000 people will come to see some of the abbey's collection of nativity sets from around the world.

Founded in 1949, the monastery has had four leaders. Fr. Anthony Chassagne served as the founding superior from 1949 to 1954 and as abbot from 1954 to 1974. Fr. Christian Carr was superior from 1974 to 1977 and as abbot from 1977 to 1990. Fr. Francis Kline was abbot from 1990 to 2006, and Fr. Stan Gumula, the current abbot of Mepkin, was elected in 2006. His terms ends on November 3 when Fr. Joe will assume spiritual leadership of the community, serving as its Superior. Because of age requirements, Fr. Joe could not be elected abbot.