

# Uxolo

Volume 13 No.1

April 2011

The Newsletter of Mariya uMama weThemba Monastery



## Coming Full Circle

After all of our Christmas celebrations, we had a joyous beginning to the New Year when Br. Robert James made his Life Profession in the Order of the Holy Cross on the Feast of the Holy Name on the 1st of January 2011 in the Church of St. Peter on the Rock at the monastery. Yes, this Life Profession ceremony marked an important milestone for Br. Robert James and for us, but it is also only a continuation of life-long seeking and desire for

“God’s love that undergirds all our efforts”, as Br. Robert put it himself.

Br. Robert James’s adventure took him from his desire to be a Xaverian Brother in his teens to becoming an artist and art therapist, counsellor, hospital chaplain and a rector for 17 years in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. He got to know the Order in his seminary days and eventually became an Oblate. He joined the Order as a postulant in 2006.



**Brother Robert James made his life profession on the feast of the Holy Name, the 1st of January 2011.**

His life has now taken him full circle where he has come to the place where he “ended up back

with [his] first love, that deep desire to serve God and be [himself] in a religious order, in a monastic community” as our Superior, Br. Robert Sevensky, OHC described it in his sermon for the event.

Many of his friends from South Africa and the US were present, including his nephew, John Magliula, all the way from Long Beach, California. The Celebrant was the Rev. Janet Vincent, Rector of St. Columba’s Church in Washington, DC, his good friend for many years. She was present at Br. Robert James’s First Profession two years ago being the preacher at that time. So it was another wonderful symmetry to have her here again.

As our only ordained member of the community, Robert James celebrates the Eucharist for us each day. Also with his great love for and knowledge of liturgy, Robert James has helped us to look at how we perform our own liturgies here at the monastery. While in charge of the Scholarship Fund, he has been a devoted friend and mentor to our children as well as being faithful attending to their needs for education. His art work continues with drawings that adorn the walls of the monastery as well as many people's homes both in South Africa and the US who have been fortunate to buy one. His artwork is for sale with funds going to help the Scholarship Fund.



After the vow is read out loud to the congregation, Brother Robert James then signs his vow on the altar.



Brother Robert James receives his profession cross from the Superior and then places it around his neck.

Soon he will be leaving for Rome to engage in the Monastic Formators Programme for three months, the same excellent programme that Bros. John and Daniel attended. Please pray for him in his time there and for us as we will miss his presence.

We are so grateful for his interesting journey that has now brought him back to being a monk in the Order of the Holy Cross and look forward to where the road in our community takes him now.

*The whole world was brought before his eyes, gathered up, as it were, under a single ray of sun. -- Life of Benedict, Chap. XV*

# HOLY CROSS SCHOOL ...

## Year Two

~Br. Timothy, OHC



Holy Cross School Year Two Class

There was much scurrying in early January to get the little house we use for Holy Cross School ready to begin our second year of teaching. We increased the size of the school by one bringing the total enrolment to thirteen. With the afterschool no longer sharing the

space, the school was able to move into all three rooms. Now there is a “fantasy” room where a small wooden kitchen, an old typewriter and computer, and a mattress for the dolls provide ample resources for play. An additional toilet was installed, and a colourful seesaw for the playground. Windows were washed and new blinds ordered for the windows. Growing children call for larger tables and chairs. A TV monitor and DVD player were mounted on the wall for educational videos. The “reading” room, loaded with all kinds of books and puzzles has a new carpet complete with cushions for the children to sprawl on. And, the staffs even have a microwave. All of this along with new posters and workbooks mean that the children have plenty of stimulation to keep them busy and learning. When the door opened on 19 January, there were wide eyes and expressions as the learners explored the new things.

Ntombekaya Meyki, the Grade R teacher, plunged eagerly into her second year of teaching ably assisted by Travis Shields, our Young Adult Service Corps Volunteer from the Episcopal Church in the USA. This year we created a child development internship at the school to give a young person experience and training in early education and development.



**Ntombekaya Myeki in a quiet moment with Siphokuhle Kavana teaches how to use the abacus. Maths concepts and counting are an important component of their education.**

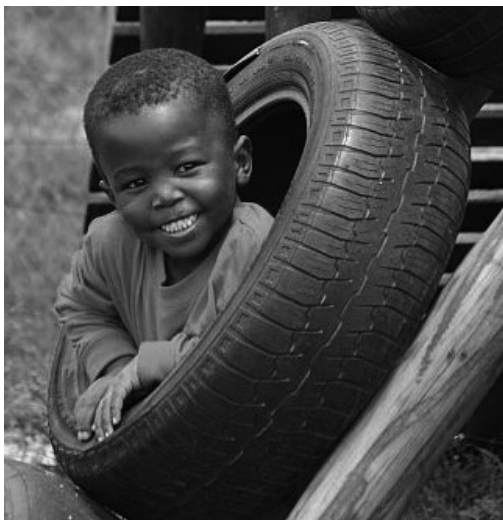
Supported by the Holy Cross Scholarship Fund, Bongisani Soxujwa is guided by Ntombekaya and Travis and receives regular performance evaluations. Every Thursday, Br. Josias teaches the subject of faith, and prayer is a regular part of each day. Thus, thirteen learners receive the full attention of four adults.

It is this individualised attention that makes the children excited about school and learning. Absenteeism is rare, and staff attendance is perfect. The children know that the school will be there for them every day. They are learning that they are loved and are being taught to love each other. And love is what a monastic school, a school for the Lord's service, is really about. If children are safe and know they are loved, they will learn. Last year's work taught us that. The parents' enthusiasm also teaches us that each time we meet with them.

The vision of the future of Holy Cross School is spreading. More parents are asking us to consider their children in the future. And, in order to accommodate the demand and move on to Grade One in 2012, we must build a larger space. To help us meet this goal, many people and organisations have come forward from around the world. We received a gift of £15,000 from Merton Priory Parish in the UK. Christ Church, Washington, DC donated \$12,000 as part of its continued support of Holy Cross in South Africa. The Weatherup Foundation in the U.S. has pledged three years of support for the increasing costs of operating the school. In January, the students at the Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown hosted a day long "swimathon" that raised R10,000. And, many, many individuals have given to bring the dream of an expanded school more and more into reality.

Our local contractor has assured us that if we break ground on the new five classroom building by July this year, we would be able to occupy it in November. Plans are drawn and approved by the Municipality. Besides the classrooms, there will be a large assembly room, office and storage and a teachers' lounge. The entire school precinct will be walled and a security system installed. In keeping with what has already happened, the school will be well resourced, attractive and comfortable with ample ground for playing. In January 2012, we will add Grade 1 to the existing Grade R, and each year following a room will be equipped and a grade added up to Grade Three or perhaps Grade Four. It's all very exciting, demanding and tremendously rewarding to the monks and the children.

Vision always carries with it quite a high risk factor. We never can be assured when we start that we have the end in sight. One has only to study scripture from the wandering of Israelites in the desert to the meanderings of Irish monks and pilgrims. And, faith is the "knowing" that enables vision to become reality. Faith urges us on. Faith, like love, will not let us go once we have said, "yes."



Simamkele Xawuka

This is what we see happening at Holy Cross School. The cry of the poor is Christ's invitation to new life. The joy of the faces of children and their parents is the vision of love reflected and the assurance that we are running while we have the light of life! (John 12:35.)

*All that Christ desires in you is within yourself, and there it is His pleasure to be. – Thomas à Kempis*

# One School Supports Another

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, a sunny Saturday, The Diocesan School for Girls Interact club hosted a “swimathon” for all the DSG girls as an opportunity to raise funds for the Holy Cross School. DSG is an Anglican school in Grahamstown.



**Seventy five girls were either in the DSG pool or on a flotation device throughout the day to help Holy Cross School**

Girls were asked to donate R150 each to swim for a period of time in the school’s indoor pool. The ‘swimathon’ began at the very early hour of 5am when some sleepy yet tenacious girls dived into the pool and began their laps. The Interact girls decided upon the criteria which appeared to be that one needed to be in the pool or poised on a floating device. Approximately seventy five girls involved themselves ranging from all ages. The senior girls were stoical and determined in their support of the event especially in the colder, earlier hours of the morning. As the day progressed the fun increased and a happy day was enjoyed by all the girls who participated. It provided the opportunity for team swimmers to swim alongside girls with little pool confidence giving everyone a delightful time.

About R10 000 were raised from the event and we are grateful for their support and the growing relationships between our two schools.

*May your service of love be a beautiful thing; want nothing else, fear nothing else, and let love become free to be what love truly is. ~ Hadewijch of Antwerp*

# Scholarship Fund Update

-Br. Robert James, OHC

As I write this update, everyone is finally where they need to be as we begin this new academic year. We are supporting 55 learners this year. Thirteen are at Holy Cross School. Twelve attend Graeme College, Victoria Primary, and Victoria Girls H.S.



**Bongisani Soxujwa, one of our three who are doing internships. Bongisani is assisting Ntombekaya Myeki in the Holy Cross School.**

There are eighteen attending various primary and high schools in Grahamstown and nine in tertiary learning. We also have three who have begun internships. Nyangayetu Soxujwa, in a partnership with Kuyasa and Rhodes, Methuli Mfiliba with the Isibindi Project in Ezibeleni, and Bongisani Soxujwa at Holy Cross School.

In response to our request for sponsors, three of our girls will now be covered by a grant from the Masikhulisane Trust here in South Africa. We have also had a number of inquiries about full or partial sponsorships. We are happy to discuss any questions or concerns with you.

Before this new academic year began we held a mandatory two day programme for the girls we sponsor beginning at age 12. Children, and particularly girls, are at high risk for physical as well as sexual abuse. Conservative figures estimate that more than half of South African children have been, or are being abused. There is great silence and shame around this issue. Nompumelelo Magwa, Peliwe Dunga, and Nosipho Nzwana directed our programme. They are involved with the Isibindi Project in Alice and have had extensive experience with young girls. Through group work, art, discussion, and writing, a safe place was

created to explore and receive support around past experiences, as well as learning healthy coping skills for the present and future. Follow up sessions will be arranged during the next school break. Psychotherapy was, and will continue to be an option offered for any who could benefit from it. A similar programme will be planned for the boys in the near future.



**At the After-School Programme Farewell, the children performed plays, music and dancing to an audience of the teachers, the monks and distinguished guests.**



**We said goodbye to June Walters as director of the After-School Programme for six years. This took place in November of 2010. June is seen here with our volunteer, Travis Shields, and some of the children who benefitted from her skill and care.**

At the end of last year, our After School Programme officially ended after nearly six years of operation. The event was celebrated by children and staff with music, drama, dancing, and food. The children offered gifts and a tribute to June Walters whose skills, dedication, and commitment were instrumental in the programme's success. At the beginning of this year we created a Resource Centre in the classroom next to the Guest House Office. There is internet access, a library, and materials for school projects. Travis Shields, assisted by Bongisani Soxujwa, is available to assist learners with

homework and projects Monday-Thursday from 2-4 PM. The former facilities shared with Holy Cross School are now being used exclusively by the school until new accommodations are built.

# From the Novice Master

~Br. John, OHC



I would like to thank all who have given me and Josias the opportunity to speak at your formation groups, Vocare and meetings in various Dioceses throughout the Province. I think all of these events were excellent ways for us to educate the Province about the monastic life and help respond to the common refrain: I didn't know the Anglican Church had monks and nuns.

Recently, I was able to speak to a group of potential leaders in the Diocese of Cape Town. It was refreshing to speak to a vibrant and eager group of people who seemed to have a genuine interest in what monasticism was all about. I talked to them about Benedictine monasticism particularly, giving them a picture of what it looks like especially in our context in South Africa.

This year, I am planning to travel to other areas of the Province and am always open to speak about monasticism, especially to young people. So please, consider me when you are planning an event for young people, people in formation or just those who would like to learn more about monastic life. Don't be surprised if you get a call from me asking how I can help educate your group about our vocation.

We are also getting requests for groups of young people to come and visit us so they can see our life in action first hand. We are delighted to have groups experience our rhythm of prayer, our community life and a practical example of monastic spirituality as it is presented here at the monastery. So please contact me or Br. Daniel in the Guesthouse to schedule your stay with us.

Also we have an annual **Enquirers Week** where we invite all young men over 20 and with Matric who might want to explore the possibilities of a monastic vocation. **This year the dates are the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of September.** During that time, the participants would engage in our life of prayer, work and study while members of the community share their knowledge and their own personal experiences of the monastic

vocation. It is a great time to discern whether the monastic life might be for you.

Many enquiries have come in from all over South Africa and the rest of Africa, including a young woman who is considering starting an Anglican Benedictine community in Nigeria. The immigration situation in South Africa is certainly difficult, but it is good to see that there is interest in monasticism among Anglicans all over Africa.

Roger Stewart, our postulant, continues to do well in his formation with not only experiencing our life but studying the Benedictine Rule and joining a class with Br. Josias, our annually professed monk, about women mystics. We are looking forward to his Clothing as a Novice on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April. The ceremony will take place during Vespers. The period of being a Novice is two years before he would be eligible to profess Annual Vows. This is a period of further testing and formation as well as a more engagement in our monastic community. Please continue to pray for him as he is drawn into our life.

I am struck that Dioceses use the word *formation* in their nurturing of future leadership. Formation is a common word in monastic life certainly, but it is not just a way of training people to learn the “skills” of monasticism. It is an integrative “forming” of the individual into a conversion of heart for him to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ”, as Benedict would say. This involves the whole being, heart and mind, and this process can be just as true for Diocesan formators as it is for monastic ones. If formation works the way it should, an individual who is seeking ways to “serve” God in their Diocese hopefully would not see formation as just obtaining all the skills needed to be ordained or to work in various ministries of the church. Hopefully they would be seeking to be “new creations”. That is what formation is truly about. .

*When the soul has become nothing for love, so  
as to have him who is all that is good, then is it  
able to receive spiritual rest. -Julian of Norwich*

# The Great Dance of Life

-Wendy Sweetman, AHC



It came as a surprise to me to discover that monks were also ordinary people. At that time I'd just started out on what is often loftily referred to as "The Spiritual Journey", and did not yet know that this is a process rather than an event. I expected all religious folk to be impossibly pious, and most things were black and white: people were either sheep or goats and monks were way up there with the saints and angels. It didn't help that one of these particular monks was reputed to play the harp. Whilst we may smile wryly at this naïve world-view, I do think it was a good and necessary stage for me and an integral part of my spiritual formation.

My association with the place itself, had begun a few years before the monks arrived when it was Hillandale: a place of retreat for me and my contemplative community, then in an early stage of development. Since the arrival of the Order of the Holy Cross brothers and the transformation of Hillandale into Mariya uMama weThemba Monastery, it has also become a place of worship, of fellowship, friendship and community. Being an Associate of the Order of the Holy Cross and familiarity with the Rule of St Benedict has brought increasing depth and maturity to my spirituality, perhaps most of all the understanding that it is not separate from ordinary life but part of the great dance of life where all is sacred. The monastic rhythm and flow of work, study, prayer and service exemplifies this fundamental truth. Being an Associate in Grahamstown brings added blessings: proximity to the monastery allows me to share the life on a regular basis. Being present at high days and holidays and celebrating these together with the monks and the wider community is an amazing joy and privilege. Associate's meetings are another highlight, these enable us to share in the ordinary life for a few hours each month: beginning with the chanting the psalms

at Vespers and ending with Compline. Between these two Offices a sociable sharing of a simple meal takes place followed by a more sober but always insightful discussion of some aspect of Benedictine life. This often leads to a deeper foray into what it means to be fully human.

One of the principles on which the monks base their common life is **conversion of life** and for me this has come to mean simply a peeling away of all the layers of the false self. This seems to happen in a subtle and pervasive way, usually becoming apparent only in retrospect. It is a process which can't be rushed and there are no shortcuts, nor are great feats of heroism required; it is the work of the Spirit responding to the faith and intent demonstrated in the following of one's Rule. "The essence of all perfection is a good will" states the anonymous author of the Cloud of Unknowing. Of course, perfection is not something which can be attained in this life, I can only be willing to allow imperfections to be peeled away. "Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death overtakes you." It is an ongoing transformation sustained by commitment and practice: the daily cycle of prayer, reading of Scripture, silence and fellowship, the responsibilities of work and family, the awareness of God's presence in every aspect of life.

I have to confess that I have always had something of a love-hate relationship with the idea of method, system, **structure**. These are highly charged words indicating too much control and organization. My professional life demands a high degree of these qualities so when it comes to everything else, I prefer a more spontaneous, creative approach. So it comes as rather a surprise to discover that it is this very quality which is so essential to my inner life and spiritual growth. I'm not referring here to a legalistic adherence to rules and regulations, but rather an accepting attitude to the wisdom and guidance available to me. This has helped me to realise a freedom I never thought possible. What a paradox! The discipline of adhering to a system which balances all aspects of one's life creates the stability which generates the freedom. This is what the Rule has taught and continues to teach me.

*...We will reflect on our own lives in regular self-examination, believing that what God wants of us, as of every human being, is growth toward the fullness of the Image in which we are made.--Rule of AHC.*

## Some Visitors at the Monastery

Sr. Cornelia Ransom from the Order of St. Helena in Augusta, Georgia returned to us for a few months. Always a pleasure to have her here.

Our good friend Esther Colquhoun came to us for a few weeks in December as well as our Associate, Hannelie Duvenage. They both helped to celebrate Christmas with us. Also helping to celebrate Christmas with us were our volunteer, Travis Shields' parents.

Brother Robert James's nephew, John and our friend and Brother Robert James's old friend, Janet Vincent was with us for his profession.

In March, students from the College of the Transfiguration came for a restful morning on silence. And the Presidents Award were back for their annual meeting.



**Brother Robert James with Janet Vincent and John Magliula.**



**Esther Colquhoun with Brother John.**

---

## Two Visiting Brothers

Also returning to visit was Brother Andrew Colquhoun with an OHC brother who was here for the first time, Brother James Michael Dowd. Both serve on a committee of the Order to explore funding possibilities for Holy Cross School in the United States. They came to get more acquainted with the school and the staff as well as to get a picture of the life and work of the monastic community.

Brother Andrew was delighted to be back and there were many emotional reunions for him. Brother James Michael was certainly touched by so much here in South Africa and here at the monastery. He says that he will be back again. So I am sure we will see more of them both.

# The Guesthouse at Mariya uMama weThemba Monastery

As part of the Benedictine ministry of hospitality, the monks of Mariya uMama weThemba Monastery offer a 24 bed, fully equipped guesthouse for those seeking a quiet place of prayer and retreat and for conferences and meetings.

**We welcome:**

- parish groups
- families
- pilgrimages
- other groups
- and individuals

**We are also ecumenical. All faiths are welcome.**

**The Guesthouse is open from Tuesday morning until Sunday afternoon.**

Besides spiritual guidance when requested the monks are available to offer such retreat topics as :

- praying with Scripture
- quiet days
- Benedictine spirituality
- schools of prayer

**To make a booking:**

**The Guesthouse**

**Tel.: (046)622-8111**

**Fax: (046)622-6424**

**Email: [guesthouse@umaria.co.za](mailto:guesthouse@umaria.co.za)**

# IZZIT?

## News of the Community



**Timothy:** Last October, I made a lovely trip to the United States for a combination of reasons. While there I visited with old friends in New York City, spent two weeks at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park and the remainder of my time in Washington, DC as the guest of Christ Church, Georgetown and St. Columba's, Washington. The first night in Washington, I stayed with friends at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria and arrived

the afternoon of the tragic fire that claimed the historic seminary chapel. With so many of the seminary community, I stood sadly by and watched the chapel burn. The remarkable work of the Alexandria Fire Department managed to save adjacent buildings which most likely would have burned without their expertise! The next day I moved to Georgetown where I spent the week preaching, speaking at a dinner in support of Holy Cross School, visiting the outstanding work of the Bishop John Walker School in Anacostia and conducting a quiet morning for the parish. I even managed to renew a connection with an old friend I hadn't seen in over 20 years. The following weekend I moved in with the Rev. Janet Vincent, Rector of St. Columba's and had delightful time with the parish the next day. I am very grateful to everyone in Washington who made my stay so welcome. It felt very much a homecoming to me!

In November, we formally closed the afterschool programme after five years of excellent teaching and bid farewell and an enjoyable retirement to veteran teacher, June Walters, who faithfully offered her expertise and experience to the rural children in our area. The programme had reached its natural conclusion, and June's retirement was an excellent opportunity to say "well done" to the teachers, the volun-

teers and the learners. We also that month concluded the first year of Holy Cross School with a school party and songs by the little ones. I was deeply moved to realize that a year, our first year, was over and that it had surpassed my expectations of what was possible. I have nothing but praise for Ntombekaya, Nomhamhase and Travis!! On the last two days three of the parents came to assist with cleaning the school and packing up things to be moved out in preparation for this year.

In January, we made ready for the return to school, getting the school house organised and stocking in supplies. Ntombekaya finished her work at Rhodes and is now a university graduate in education. If anybody deserves it, she does!!

In February I took a badly needed month's leave which I spent in solitude on the beach at Port Alfred. I walked every day either on the roads or the beach, prayed, prepared my meals and read. It was a most heavenly retreat, and I returned home refreshed, tanned and rested. Port Alfred is a largely retirement community, and I was made aware of my 65 years as I joined the queues for discount meals and tickets. Ah, it comes to us all!!



**John:** I can look back on the last few months with a sense of gratitude. First of all, the Council for the Religious Life happened at Marianhill in October, and it was the first meeting in which I fulfilled the role of Chair. We explored many aspects and issues of the religious life in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, but our main concern was the relationship between the Bishops and

the communities.

Straight from there, I flew to Cape Town to meet with a formation group in that Diocese. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting the students in the ordination or discerning process. I stayed at the Schonstatt retreat house in Constantia, which was a perfect restful place. And then, came to a church in Consort in Constantia on Sunday where I met a vibrant congregation and spoke briefly about the monastic life

The Advent retreat was special as always with wonderful and challenging prayer, reading and even walks up and down these beautiful hills. I always find our retreats happen at exactly the right point in our individual and communal life. And then, we launched into Christmas with a number of different and various international guests. The music was joyful, the food was excellent and I even cooked a ham. (My first time.) And then Br. Robert's profession on the 1st of January. I am happy that he has made this commitment with us.

Soon after that I was off to Lesotho to meet with the Executive of the Council of the Religious Life. Again ~ another successful event. We stayed with the Society of the Sacred Mission in Maseru and it was a joy to pray and share a bit of their life with them. We travelled to Leribe to meet the Community of the Holy Name sisters while also meeting some women who are trying to form a religious community in Namibia.

Now I am back home, praying, enjoying all the guests who come through our door (we've had many lately), working on *Uxolo*, being Novice Master, choosing music, making up breviary sheets and other responsibilities and fitting in some writing when I can. And simply just engaging into the heart of monastic life.

**Daniel:** We are heading for our fourth Reading Camp. As always, I am looking forward to it very much. It remains a joy to see how kids (and grownups) can change so much in such a short space of time. We keep on getting very good feedback from teachers and parents/guardians of kids who have already been on one of the Camps. It is especially exciting to hear how kids' self-confidence improves with their ability to read better.



Brother Robert James's Life Profession was indeed a joyous occasion. It was also good to see the event from a different perspective; to just enjoy it and be grateful for what it is and not to be the nervous one on the floor.

During February we also had the pleasure of having Brs. Andrew and James Michael visiting us from West Park, our Motherhouse. Time really does fly! When I saw them, I could not believe that it has been almost 18 months since Andrew has moved back to West Park and it was 4 years since I have seen James Michael when I had visited West Park.

I am going to the US this year for the Chapter meeting, which I am really looking forward to. As I have said above, it's been four years since I have been there. It will be so good to see all the brothers there again, especially since some of them are getting quite frail and quite a few have died since my last visit

**Robert James:** It is a month today since my Life Profession. I have been asked many times by folks if it feels any different. The answer is “yes,” in that I have made my choice for life, and “no”, in that my life, with it's rhythms and stability, has not changed, except perhaps to grow deeper. When an old high school friend asked how it felt, my response was “like coming home after a long journey”. I felt a strong sense of continuity on that day. Our Superior, who has known me for quite a few years, highlighted it in his sermon. In a poem written for the occasion, my friend Casey, expressed beautifully how the strands of my life were woven into the place I find myself today. Having my close friend, Janet Vincent, preside at the Eucharist, and my nephew, John, present, contributed to the continuity and specialness of the day.



In addition to directing our Scholarship Fund, my ongoing ministries as the house priest and in offering spiritual direction continues. Now that all of our children and young people are settled into school, I was able to begin preparations for participating in the three month Benedictine Monastic Studies Programme. I left for Rome on 17 March. At the conclusion of the programme on 17 June, I go directly to New York to visit with family and friends. I return to South Africa on 20 July. Please pray for me during this study time abroad, and pray for the safety and growth of our children and young people.



**Josias:** I enjoyed my friend's (Thabang) Ordination on the 16th of December in Benoni. I also attended the reinstallation of Mother Zelma CR as the Superior of the Community of the Resurrection of our Lord.

I went to Ntate Monareng's funeral in Johannesburg in the middle of January. *Ntate Monareng ke emong oa bontate baKerekeng bao ke holetseng matsohong le mahlong a bona. Ntho ebohloko ke hore keile ka molora busiu pele ho lefu la hae. Feela ho*

*lokile, ho lokile, a moya oa hae o phomole ka khotso.*

We had the First Term school's parents meeting in March, which I believe went well.

I am now studying "Invitation to Theology" through UNISA. I continue with my work as usual. Br. Timothy and I will work with the Scholarship Fund during Br. Robert's time away.

For my lectio, I am using *Strangers to the City* by Michael Casey. The book is rich with wisdom and full of insights. It challenges and encourages me in my vocation.

As we are facing the Holy Week and Easter, I wish you all a happy Easter.



**Roger** I have spent the six months from October 2010 to March 2011 as a postulant at the monastery. It would be difficult for me to overstate the contrast between my life here and the life I lived in Johannesburg previously.

I now regularly rise ahead of the dawn to experience the waking of this beautiful environment before I am enfolded within the daily rhythms of prayer, study and work. It feels as if vital parts of me are also being awakened, yearnings brought to life as I learn to love and be loved while

seeking God together within a generously welcoming community.

The prayer is both personal and communal, the solitude of lectio divina and the sharing of the daily offices. The study has been of monastic history and spirituality, naturally focussing on the Rule of Benedict; a significant bonus has been the contribution made by female mystics of medieval times. I am also being coached in musical aspects which I have very much appreciated. I have gradually been taking on duties within the roster that is used here: refectory, bells, and lector. My work has mostly been concerned with care and feeding of the website, but I have also been involved in the library and in the guesthouse. I have enjoyed the opportunities to develop creatively, in both photography and writing. There have been a number of unexpected outings, including the great gift of a visit to the nearby Pumba game reserve.

I shall be entering the novitiate at the monastery after a brief return to Johannesburg, to tidy up a few matters there and to spend some time with family and friends. It seems appropriate that my clothing as a novice is to take place on a public holiday which in South Africa is known as Freedom Day.

Do not be anxious; your heavenly Father knows.

---

## An Extended Stay

As an adjunct member of the monastic community we welcome Brother Roy Parker, OHC coming from the Mt. Calvary Community at St. Mary's in Santa Barbara, California. Brother Roy is filling in as our priest as well as helping with other various duties while Brother Robert James is at the Monastic Formators Programme in Rome. Brother Roy is also an accomplished calligrapher. If you come to the monastery, you can see his beautiful work throughout our guesthouse and in our church. We are so pleased to have him with us and hope that he enjoys his second visit to the monastery and South Africa. We are also grateful for his presence during Holy Week and Easter.



**Brother Roy Parker, OHC**

## Our Superior's Return Visit to the Monastery

Br. Robert Sevensky, the Superior of the Order of the Holy Cross, arrived at the monastery from New York at the end of December. He came to receive Brother Robert James's life profession vow and then, combined that with his annual visitation of our monastery in Grahamstown.

The Superior, currently residing at Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, New York, makes these annual visits to all four houses of the Order. so that he has the opportunity to keep track of the community's monastic life as well as to help with any planning that may need to be considered.



**Brother Robert Sevensky, OHC**

He also offers advice as to the community's prayer and work and is the liaison between the house and the rest of the Order.

Brother Robert always says he enjoys his time with us, and we find him a pleasure to host. While he was here, he preached a beautiful sermon at Brother Robert James's life profession ceremony and took part in all of the celebrations around the profession. He also visited our Holy Cross School as well as got to know again some of the children of our Scholarship Programme as well as meeting our new volunteer, Travis Shields. And each of us brothers were able to spend time with him in conversation. This did not exclude some time to rest and relax with the community's life and prayer.

We look forward to his return to us and for him to see how the community will continue to grow in the next year.

*To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the abbot must always remember what his title signifies and act as a superior should. --Rule of Benedict*

# We've Just Made Donating Easier!

Donating to the monastery has now become easier through our website! You can make a donation using your credit card or other on-line means. Setcom MonsterPay provides a secure facility for processing the financial transaction. When you are on our website, go to Donations and select the area you want to support. You can specify whether you would like your contribution to go to the Monastery, Holy Cross School or the Scholarship Fund. Then, select a currency, and enter the amount. The currency is either in rands or dollars. Click the form of payment. We take all major credit cards and you can pay by Direct Deposit as well. Click the Donate button. This will take you into the Monster Pay system and just follow the directions.

Your gift will be appreciated!

---

## *Uxolo* is Now Online

*Uxolo* is now online! And it looks good! So with this issue, we are asking you to tell us whether you still would like to receive the *Uxolo* through the mail or just view it online on our website [www.umaria.co.za](http://www.umaria.co.za).

On the send back sheet, we have added a place where you can tell us which way you would like to view the *Uxolo*. If you would like to read it online, please send us your email so that we can inform you when new issues come out. We want you to keep up with our news, read about how our ministry is growing and developing, read interesting articles from our Associates and learn what the monks are doing in recent days.

We thank all of those who have sent donations to help us with printing and mailing costs of this newsletter throughout the 12 years of its existence. We also thank all of those who have sent feedback about the newsletter. Your comments are very helpful. We look forward to many more years of bringing the *Uxolo* to you, our friends and supporters.

## Mariya uMama weThemba Monastery

PO Box 6013

Grahamstown 6141 South Africa

Tel: (046) 622-8111 - Guesthouse

(046) 622-6465 - Monastery

Fax: (046) 622-6424

Email: [guesthouse@umaria.co.za](mailto:guesthouse@umaria.co.za)

Website: [www.umaria.co.za](http://www.umaria.co.za)

PBO#: 930/000/363

NPO#: 036-811

*Uxolo* is the isiXhosa word meaning peace. Benedict teaches his monks to "seek peace and pursue it". This quest has been the hallmark of Benedictine monasticism since the 6th century. We strive to continue to bring peace to not just ourselves but to all who come to us.

**On the cover:** Pheliswa Ndabambi is one of the 13 learners at Holy Cross School. She is wearing the sweatshirt with the school logo.

## Contributing to Our Monastery

Please send your gift to:

The Prior  
at the address to the left.

For our banking details, please email [timothy@umaria.co.za](mailto:timothy@umaria.co.za) or ring (046) 622-6465.

### If you are in the United States:

Please send your gift to

Ms. Barbara Fiore  
Order of the Holy Cross South Africa Fund  
Fiduciary Trust Company International  
600 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10020-2302

Please contact us or look at our website for details about tax exemption.

You can now donate online! See [www.umaria.co.za](http://www.umaria.co.za)

### Requests

If you would like to know how you can remember the monastery in your will, please contact the Prior.