THE COMMUNITY OF THE MOTHER OF JESUS | AUTUMN 2026 • VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3 | WWW.CMJRELIGIOUS.ORG

The Annunciation

The Official Newsletter of The Community of the Mother of Jesus

A vowed religious community in the monastic tradition of the Episcopal Church

Quodcumque Dixerit Vobis Facite • Est. MMXI

> *"To notice the needs of others is a graced moment that calls us beyond ourselves to encounter the very presence of God before our eyes."*
> **— Pearls from the Way of Cana**

Greetings from the Steward Guardian

Br. William White, CMJ — Steward Guardian

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As the days grow shorter and autumn settles in around us, I find myself reflecting with gratitude on our time together at this year's Annual Gathering. There is something special about the opportunity to step away from the ordinary rhythms of our individual lives, come together as a community, and remember the larger story of which we are all a part.

Our gathering was, in many ways, a celebration of both continuity and new beginnings. We welcomed new members into the life of our community, celebrated a first profession of vows, and looked ahead to the future of our common life together. These moments remind us that our community is not simply something we belong to, but something we continually become. Each of us, through our prayers, our commitments, our relationships, and our service to the neighbour in need, contributes to the life and unfolding of our shared vocation.

Now, having returned home, we find ourselves once again in the ordinary places of our lives. The conversations, liturgies, and shared meals have given way to familiar routines, responsibilities, and ministries. Yet I hope we carry something of that time together with us. Perhaps it is a renewed sense of connection, a particular conversation that continues to linger, or simply the reassurance that we are not walking this path alone.

As I begin this new season of serving as your Guardian, I am increasingly mindful that the life of a community is sustained less by the work of any one person than by the faithfulness of all its members. Our calling is not to have all the answers or to solve every challenge, but to accompany one another with patience, tenderness, and trust. It is in these ordinary acts of presence and care that our common life takes root and bears fruit.

Thank you for the many ways you continue to make this community what it is. Whether through prayer, correspondence, acts of service, participation in online connections, or the quiet faithfulness of daily life, you are an essential part of our shared vocation. May this autumn be a season of renewed attentiveness, deeper connection, and gentle encouragement. And may we continue to discover, together, what it means to serve the neighbor in need and follow where Christ is leading.

Yours in Christ,
Br. Will, CMJ
Steward Guardian

Annual Gathering 2026: A Harvest of Grace

Br. Stephen Wetmore, CMJ — Founder and Steward Guardian Emeritus

- Annual Gathering 2026 is here and gone! And Br. Joshua survived the invasion of the army of spiders on the door and under the door into his room! Maybe we should sing for him, "Spidermonk! Spidermonk! Friendly neighbourhood Spidermonk!"
- Brothers Zeke, Will J, David, and Mike entered our novitiate. We welcome Bishop Jos as our Bishop Visitor. Fr. Joe professed first vows and was given the Marian title "*Our Lady of the Milk*" (Nuestra Señora de la Leche) and, for his patron saint, *St. Maria Faustina Kowalska*.
- We elected our new Steward Guardian, Br. Will White, and Br. Stephen concluded his tenure as the Steward Guardian when he gave Br. Will the gift of his obedience on Friday afternoon, October 2nd. The food at Bellwether was the best, and our waistlines showed that after we got home!
- On Wednesday evening, the Community surprised Br. Stephen with a cake and birthday party for his 75th, and presented him with a lovely pillow and quilt, recognizing his years as founder and Steward Guardian. They were hand-crafted by Br. Don.
- Next year, the Annual Gathering for 2027 will take place at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat House in Detroit, Michigan. The dates will be November 15th through the 20th.

A Message from the Founder

The week at Bellwether for the Annual Gathering was such a good and holy week in so many ways. Yet for me it was one of those weeks in which, when I was by myself, I just couldn't pray. The beautiful liturgies of the week fed my soul. The presence of seventeen of us lifted me up. Yet, when I would go to my room, prayer just wouldn't happen. I wasn't especially troubled by that, as I was, after all, praying when we gathered together in the barn or when we prayed in the north meeting room.



Autumn peace at Bellwether Farm Camp, Retreat, and Education Center, Wakeman, Ohio.

I know myself well enough to know that when I cannot pray, there is something else going on. That something else, whatever it is, serves as a roadblock to prayer. And my spirit did not perceive what that was until Friday of that week. And what was that roadblock? It was that while my mind, heart, and soul were more than ready to hand on the leadership mantle to Br. Will, my body was not with the program. By the time Br. Dylan was ready to give his presentation on Friday, my body went into full rebellion. And so I retreated to my room. I needed to give myself that space and time to look at what my body was saying, and own what it needed me to hear. My body did not want me to pass on the torch to a new Steward Guardian.

My alone time that day became a time to tell my body that I heard what it was saying, but at the same time to tell myself I was okay and that it was indeed a good and holy thing that I could pass on to another the role of leadership in this Community. But I also had to acknowledge that my body's rebellion also stemmed from a real concern about how the Community would respond to, work with, and grow under the guidance of a new fearless leader.

By the time we got to the liturgy where I gave my obedience to Br. Will, my body was with the program. The tears in the liturgy were life-giving. The giving of obedience fed me. And taking my seat in the assembly, in the midst of my siblings, and not in front of them, was so right and freeing for me. That night, I could pray in my room.

Since I returned home from Ohio, it has been a surprising adjustment for me. I have not missed having to deal with Community issues. That has been a gift to my time and to my time with Stan. But I will confess that my mind has been surprised at how the

messages in my inbox have fallen off. However, that is as it should be. I have enjoyed watching our new Steward Guardian and our Stewards work to lead and serve us. And I know that my role now is to be the one who goes to his room and prays that they and all of us be people of justice, tenderness, humility, and contemplation. And as Thanksgiving Day in the USA approaches, I offer to God my prayers of thanks for you as you read these words.

Peace!
-Br. Stephen Wetmore, CMJ

Milestones in Vows, Novitiate & Episcopal Accompaniment



The Community of the Mother of Jesus gathered for Chapter and Annual Gathering 2026 at Bellwether Farm, Wakeman, Ohio.

First Profession of Vows — Fr. Joe, CMJ

During our Gathering liturgies, Fr. Joe professed his first annual vows under the Rule of the CMJ. He was received with deep joy and bestowed the devotional Marian title "Our Lady of the Milk" (Nuestra Señora de la Leche), choosing St. Maria Faustina Kowalska as his patron saint. May his ministry be richly blessed as he lives out our charism of prayer and presence.

Clothing of the Novices

The Community welcomed four brothers into the novitiate stage of formation, clothing them in our habit. Please uphold them in your daily prayers as they engage the Scriptorium manuals and discern their vocations:

- Br. Zeke Cochran — Winston-Salem, North Carolina
- Br. William Jornov — Sumter, South Carolina
- Br. David Mehling — Clyde, Ohio (worshiping at St. Paul's, Fremont, with Fr. Brian Bechtel and Br. Bill)
- Br. Mike Benevenia — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Welcoming Our Bishop Visitor: The Rt. Rev. Jos Tharakan

We joyfully welcome the Rt. Rev. Jos Tharakan, XIV Bishop of the Diocese of Idaho, as our new Bishop Visitor. Bishop Jos's deep pastoral warmth and vision for community accompany us as we grow into our next chapter of active service. We also extend our profound gratitude and warmest prayers for a happy and blessed retirement to our Visitor Emeritus, the Rt. Rev. William O. Gregg, who faithfully shepherded our community through its formative years.



Welcome Mother Thea Joy Browne, CMJ

Transfer of Vows & Active Religious Ministry

On Saturday, July 18, 2026, during our Quarterly Day profession liturgy, the Community joyfully received Mother Thea Joy Browne, CMJ, transferring her religious vows from the Sisters of St. Gregory (SSG).

Mother Thea Joy is an ordained priest living in Bakersfield, California, and has lived faithfully under vows for many years. With the blessing and release of her superior and Bishop Visitor in the SSG, she sought a community where she could continue an active, vibrant life of service, prayer, and pastoral accompaniment.

Having professed annual vows with the CMJ and received our habit and veil, Mother Thea Joy is studying our formation manuals with Sr. Karoline as her spiritual companion, moving toward final vows alongside her sisters. We rejoice in her infectious joy, pastoral intellect, and frank wisdom!

CMJ Virtual Book Club: Autumn Reading Reboot

Looking for a quiet space of theological reflection, fellowship, and Marian insight? All members, companions, and parish friends are warmly invited to join Sister Karoline for our upcoming Book Club series.

• Current Book: Meditations on Mary, Our Mother by St. John Henry Cardinal Newman (Tan Books, 2019).
• Meeting Time: Sunday evenings at 7:00 PM Eastern (via Zoom) (*subject to change*).
• How to Join: Email Sr. Karoline Kramer at zsofsky@gmail.com for the Zoom link and reading schedule. Come as you are, bring your favourite cup of tea, and join us in contemplative conversation!

Sustaining Our Common Life: 2027 Pledge Invitation

Stewardship as an Act of Consecrated Gratitude

As we begin planning for the year ahead, we invite you to prayerfully consider making a financial pledge to the Community of the Mother of Jesus for 2027. Stewardship is more than meeting an administrative budget; it is one way we give thanks for what God has entrusted to us and participate in sustaining the life, prayer, formation, and outreach of this community.

Whether you are a professed member, novice, Companion, or a friend holding us in prayer, your generosity makes a vital difference. We invite 100% participation among our members and Companions.

• Pledge Online: Visit www.cmjreligious.org/pledge or scan the QR code.
• Steward of Giving: Contact giving@cmjreligious.org with any questions.
• Cheques: Payable to The Community of the Mother of Jesus, 133 Clyde Avenue, Apt 2N, Evanston, IL 60202.

SCAN TO PLEDGE
cmjreligious.org/pledge

Community Prayer Rhythm, Service & Contacts

Weekly Virtual Rosary & Chat
Join members and friends every Monday evening via Zoom for structured prayer and fellowship:
• Chat begins at 6:30 PM ET / 5:30 PM CT
• Rosary begins at 7:00 PM ET / 6:00 PM CT
Zoom link and scripts available by request.
Contact Br. Jason La Follette, CMJ:
brjason@anglicanmarians.org

Community Leadership & Ministry
• Steward Guardian: Br. William White
guardian@cmjreligious.org
• Steward of Prayer: Br. Don Laconi
laconi@uakron.edu
• Steward of Service: Br. Dylan Stewart
service@cmjreligious.com
• Vocations & Information: info@cmjreligious.org

Community Resources & Gift Ideas
• The Rule & The Office: Daily Prayer in Mary's Way of Discipleship
Available on Amazon (https://a.co/d/03GTpqMD)
• Official Community Apparel & Goods:
cmjreligious.threadless.com

Autumn & Advent Intercessions
• For Br. Will as he enters service as Guardian.
• In gratitude for Br. Stephen's founding years.
• For our novices: Zeke, Will J, David, & Mike.
• For Fr. Joe, CMJ, in his professed vows.
• For Bishop Jos Tharakan and our wider church.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

The Community of the Mother of Jesus is a recognized Christian community in the monastic tradition of the Episcopal Church, united in prayer, communion, and active service across the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, and Mexico.