

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD  
THE MONASTERY  
ABOVE MANCHESTER VILLAGE

---

By Anita Rafael  
*Stratton Magazine*  
2017



---

Charterhouse of the Transfiguration  
2018

*We want to express our sincere gratitude to Marcia Lissak, Publisher of Stratton Magazine, for her kind permission to publish this article in our Carthusian Booklets Series.*

*Photos pages 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15: Charterhouse of the Transfiguration.*

# PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

## *The Monastery above Manchester Village*

By Anita Rafael

STRATTON MAGAZINE  
HOLIDAY 2017, PP. 101-105

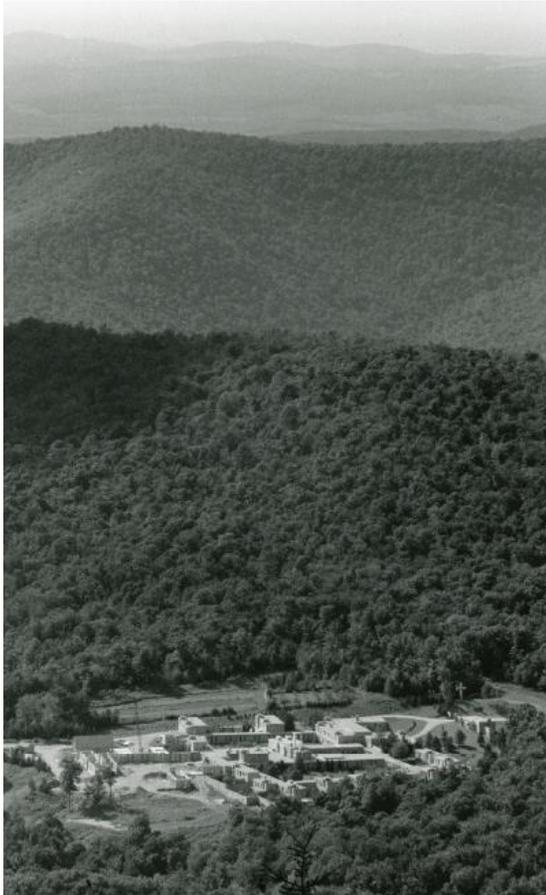


The brittle, yellowed pages of old guidebooks to the Manchester area will tell you that there is a small hotel called the Sky Line Inn on the peak of Mount Equinox, but you will find no mention of a monastery. Today, on the same footprint where the hotel once stood, there is a modern visitor center, built in 2012, and inside, there is a great deal of information about the monastery located low on the west slope, and about the religious Order that owns the entire mountain.

In a deep side valley, well below the summit of Mount Equinox, and located between two man-made basins (Hopper Pond and Lake Madeleine), there is a monastery where a small group of Carthusian monks live in silence, in prayer, and in solitude, but not entirely without an awareness of the way in which the world turns. From Memorial Day weekend through October, when the five-mile Skyline Drive is open (it is a toll road from VT-Route 7A south of Manchester Village to the top of the mountain), visitors may park their cars at a turnout at a midpoint on the climb called “the saddle.” From there, they have a bird’s-eye view of the monastery, far down in the distance. That scenic overlook is as close as the public ever gets to the monastery.

The singular mission of the 15 Brothers and Fathers who live at the monastery on Mount Equinox, from the time they find their vocation until the day they die, is to pray for the entire world. The monastery, officially called the Charterhouse of the Transfiguration, is one of 25 Carthusian sites around the world, and it is the only one in the United States. It opened in 1970. There are two others in the Western Hemisphere, in Argentina and Brazil. Most are as remote, or more so,

than the Mount Equinox location, to abide by the Order's call for seclusion. Although there is no monastery for Carthusian nuns in America, there are four in Europe, plus one in South Korea. The Order was founded by Saint Bruno in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD in France.



AN EARLY PHOTO OF THE MONASTERY

During a season where the amount of time and effort spent on planning holiday parties and gift shopping sometimes supersedes the few moments we may take for reflection, thinking about the way in which these holy men live and worship alone up on the mountain, the highest in the Taconic range, offers us solemn inspiration. Little is

ever written about the monks, and few people know their names—even less is told about the paths these individuals have taken to be able to fully adopt the lifestyle of considerable sacrifice that their Order compels.

“These monks have made a deep commitment,” explains Jeremiah Tarr, a member of the monastery’s Equinox Foundation board of directors. A retired Rutland businessman, he is one of five people who manage the business affairs for the monks. The monastery is funded by the earnings from the Skyline Drive and Toll House gift shop, by the logging on their 7,000 acres of land, by the leases for the various communications towers at the summit, by the sale of hydroelectric power generated by the waterways on the mountain, and by donations.

“Serving the monastery is one of the most rewarding things I have been part of in my life,” he says, “but I could not live like they do. A cloistered existence such as this is difficult, and yet, I have seen that, even in silence, these men express such profound inner peace and are happy.”

The monks who live at the monastery are either Brothers or Fathers. For four or five hours during the day, the Brothers un-



### ***THE ORDER***

The name “Carthusian” was taken from the Chartreuse Mountains in southeastern France. In a valley in this range, Saint Bruno and his six companions built his first hermitage in 1084. As early as the 1700s, the monks were distilling the green liqueur called Chartreuse, although at the time, it was intended as a medicinal elixir. To this day, the exact recipe—a combination of 130 herbs, plants, and flowers—is only known at any given time to the two monks in France who, working in great secrecy, prepare the botanical mixture for the distillery. Open for tours, the cellars are located 18 miles north of Grenoble in the town of Voiron.

dertake the manual labor that keeps the monastery functioning, such as cooking and baking, for example, while the Fathers dedicate themselves entirely to contemplative prayer. Each “day” actually begins at 11:30 p.m. for the monks because they believe that “nocturnal praise” is all the more ardent.

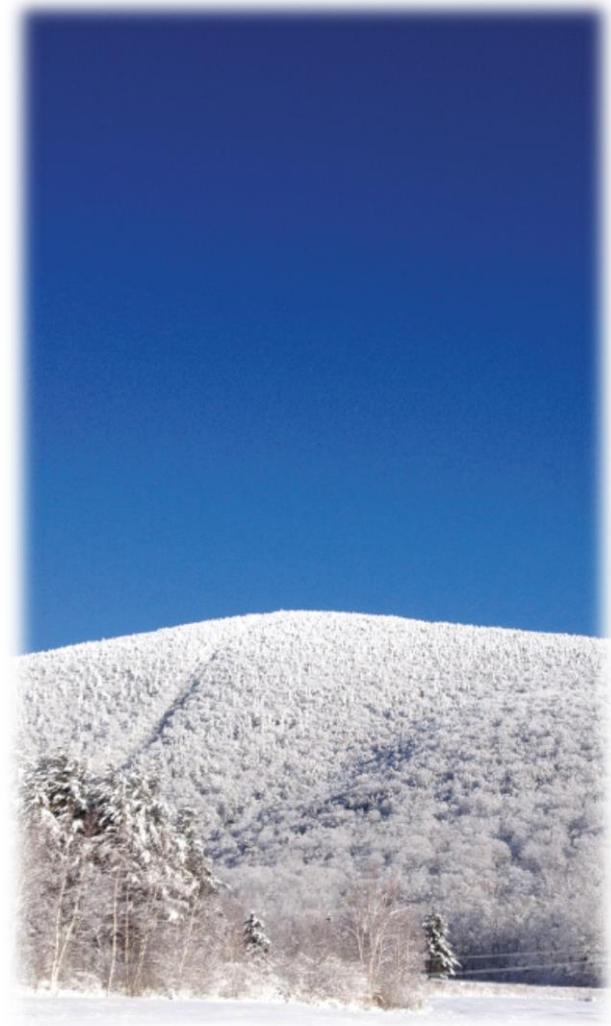
Together in church, the monks sing the Carthusian Chant, which is a form of Gregorian chant. Throughout the day and night, that is, every single day and every single night, at the toll of the tower bell, the Canonical Hours—Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline—and multiple Masses are repeated in Latin. In the interims, the monks study, meditate, and pray alone in their cells. A man who is accepted into a Carthusian monastery, say, at age 35, and who lives there until his late 80s, spends a half-century solely dedicated to this practice with the intention of illuminating both his mind and his heart.

Each monk wears a white, hooded robe; the Fathers also wear a rough, woven penitential garment underneath called a hair shirt; and each lives alone in their own cell, spending most of the day and night there. Each cell has an oratory to kneel in prayer, a desk, a chair, and a bed with a thin foam mattress. Each monk eats his single daily meal alone, delivered to him in covered metal containers through a small compartment with a hatch, except for one communal meal a week. Those in the Carthusian Order eat vegetables, fruit, eggs, and fish, but no meat.



THE LONG CLOIS-  
TERS (PASSAGE-  
WAYS) REMAIN UN-  
HEATED, EVEN  
THOUGH THE ANNU-  
AL SNOWFALL ON  
THE MOUNTAIN  
AVERAGES MORE  
THAN EIGHT FEET.

The monastery is a large complex and austere throughout—the cells, the cloister, the church, the chapter room, the refectory, the Brothers’ chapel, and the kitchen are built of 18-inch-thick, Vermont-quarried, unpolished, gray granite and bare concrete. The long passageways remain unheated, even though the annual snowfall on the mountain averages more than eight feet.



MT. EQUINOX ON A WINTRY DAY

Each monk warms his own cell with his own wood stove, storing cordwood on the lower level. “It’s been logged off the mountain by a contractor,” explains Tarr, “and long lengths are stacked in the monks’ individual woodbins through an exterior opening.” Each monk keeps a sawbuck and tools by the woodpile—saw, wedges, axe, and hatchet—to cut and split the firewood to fit into his stove, which gives him some physical activity during his protracted hours of silent study. In summer, he may tend a small garden plot outside his cell, planting what he will: flowers, herbs, or vegetables.



A CELL GARDEN & DAHLIA'S



SPLIT LOGS & WOODSTOVE IN A CELL



Tarr says, “Once a week, the monks take a long walk together outside. They walk during the winter, too, and then they wear snowshoes. During their walks, they can have conversations with each other.” The monks have no televisions, no radios, no telephones, and no internet. Their families may visit them, but only for one or two days, typically once each year. There is a building at the perimeter of the grounds where the monks may reunite with relatives, and since the



THE WEEKLY WALK

day that the monks took up residence no women have ever passed through the gates. In the cemetery at the monastery, the graves have plain, unmarked crosses.

At a time when there seems to be a perpetual and mounting need for churches, missions, and ministries working to soothe social angst and ease human suffering, it seems anomalous that Rome would approve of any Catholic Order that withdraws unto itself. Vatican Council II, opened in 1962 by Pope John XXIII and closed under Pope Paul VI three years later, acknowledged that, even in the modern world, it is the unconditional duty of contemplatives “to devote themselves exclusively to God in solitude and silence...no matter how pressing the needs for active apostolate might be” [*Perfectae Caritatis/The Fulness of Love*, 7]. The Church validates the Carthusians’ belief that their way of life provides “the most apt mean” through which a union between the human and the divine can occur.

It is inexplicably reassuring to know that at almost any time of day or night, in the worst blizzards of this winter and every winter, high on this darkly forested mountainside, there are monks with enduring faith praying for all mankind. The next time you look up at Manchester’s ridgeline, pause your gaze on the highest peak, and, at the very least, whisper amen.

†



VIEW FROM MANCHESTER FROM THE TOLL ROAD

### ***DETAILS***

The access road to the monastery is monitored, gated, and private. The public may not enter. To view a photo gallery of the site and the spaces inside the monastery, visit [transfiguration.chartreux.org](http://transfiguration.chartreux.org) and choose the tabs for The Landscape, Inside the Monastery, and Inside the Cells. To ask for prayers or Masses for any person, living or deceased, you may write to the monastery and send the name of the person or people who they are for, along with a note describing intention of the appeal. Normally, there is no acknowledgment. The monastery accepts offerings by check of a stipend of \$10 per Mass (or whatever the donor can afford). The mailing address is Charterhouse of the Transfiguration, Carthusian Monastery, 1084 Ave Maria Way, Arlington, VT 05250.

For details on the Skyline Drive, open Memorial Day through October, visit [www.equinoxmountain.com](http://www.equinoxmountain.com).

— CARTHUSIAN BOOKLETS SERIES —

1. *Two Letters and the Profession of Faith*, by Saint Bruno.
2. *Silence and Solitude: Two Essays on the 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saint Bruno's Death*, by Cori Fugere Urban and Philip F. Lawler.
3. *Architecture of Contemplation*, by Robert H. Mutrux.
4. *Carthusian Life and Its Inner Spirit*. Reflections of a Former Retreatant.
5. *Contemplatives in the Heart of the Church: The Solemn Teaching of Pope Pius XI on the Apostolic Value of Carthusian Life*.
6. *The Solitary Life*. A Letter of Guigo, Fifth Prior of the Grande Chartreuse. Introduced and Translated from the Latin by Thomas Merton.
7. *Captivated by Him Who Is Only Love*. Message of Pope John Paul II for the Ninth Centenary of Saint Bruno's Death, to Reverend Father Marcellin Theeuwes, Prior of Chartreuse, Superior General of the Carthusian Order, and to All Members of the Carthusian Family.
8. *Carthusian Saints*, by a Carthusian Monk.
9. *Saint Bruno as Seen by His Contemporaries: A Selection of Contributions to the Funeral Parchment*. Translated by a Carthusian Monk.
10. *The 'Silent' Summer of 1944: The Martyrdom of Carthusians Who Hid Refugees from the SS Military Troops*, by Giuseppina Sciascia (L'Osservatore Romano).
11. *Carthusian Nuns*, by the Nuns of the Charterhouse of Notre Dame, France.
12. *The Silent Life of the Carthusians: A Modern Version of the Classic Text*, by Thomas Merton.
13. *The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration: Two Historical Essays*: Professor Kent Emery, Jr. and *Analecta Cartusiana*. With a Picture History.
14. *Saint Bruno, Pilgrim of the Absolute: Carthusians Reflect on Their Father and Their Life*: 1. La Grande Chartreuse and Serra San Bruno.
15. *Saint Bruno, Pilgrim of the Absolute: Carthusians Reflect on Their Father and Their Life*: 2. The Charterhouse of the Transfiguration.
16. *Saint Bruno, Pilgrim of the Absolute: Carthusians Reflect on Their Father and Their Life*: 3. The Houses of the Nuns: Nonenque, Benifaça, and Notre Dame.
17. *Saint Bruno, Pilgrim of the Absolute: Carthusians Reflect on Their Father and Their Life*: 4. The Houses of the Nuns: Trinità, Vedana, and the Annunciation.

18. *God Alone Is the Source of True Peace.* Pope John Paul II's Visit to the Town and Charterhouse of Serra San Bruno, Calabria, Italy, October 5, 1984.
19. *The Beauty of Nature Opens up to the Graciousness of God.* The Dedication of the Saint Bruno Scenic Viewing Center atop Mount Equinox, September 8, 2012 - *Homily and Addresses.*
20. *A True Link between Heaven and Earth.* The Dedication of the Saint Bruno Scenic Viewing Center atop Mount Equinox, September 8, 2012 - *Vermont Catholic and Burlington Free Press Articles.*
21. *A Beacon of Constant Prayer.* The Dedication of the Saint Bruno Scenic Viewing Center atop Mount Equinox, September 8, 2012 - *Reflections and Thoughts.*
22. *The Plenitude of Eucharistic Love.* The Letter of Pope Paul VI to the Minister General of the Carthusian Order, 1971.
23. *A Dwelling Place Worthy of God.* Saint Bruno and Saint Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, Founder and Co-Founder of the Carthusian Order.
24. *Finding the Essential in Silence.* Pope Benedict XVI's Visit to the Town and Charterhouse of Serra San Bruno, Calabria, Italy, October 9, 2011.
25. *The Fire of Divine Charity.* Spiritual Letters of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Saint Catherine of Siena to Carthusian Monks.
26. *I Come to Express to Your Community the Esteem and Encouragement of the Holy See.* Two Episcopal Addresses to Carthusian Monks.
27. *The Cross Stands while the World Turns.* The Archbishop of Canterbury's Sermon to Commemorate the Carthusian Martyrs, at Charterhouse, London, May 4, 2010.
28. *Saint Bruno*, by Dom André Louf, O.C.S.O.
29. *Personal Prayer*, by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson:
  1. *At the Threshold of Prayer.*
30. *Personal Prayer*, by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson:
  2. *Prayer in Solitude.*
31. *Personal Prayer*, by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson:
  3. *Prayer and Communion.*
32. *He Had to Renounce a Great Human Love for a Greater Love.* Memories of Our Former Prior Dom Raphael Diamond, Written by His Friend Dr. Alice von Hildebrand.

33. *The Life of Christ Rosary, also Known as the Carthusian Rosary.* Attributed to Dominic of Prussia. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Compiled and Introduced by Daniel Frattarelli.
34. *Saint Bruno's Own Words.* Sermons by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson for the 9<sup>th</sup> Centenary of Saint Bruno's Arrival at Chartreuse, Given at La Grande Chartreuse, 1983-1984: 1. Sermons I-V (1983).
35. *Saint Bruno's Own Words.* Sermons by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson for the 9<sup>th</sup> Centenary of Saint Bruno's Arrival at Chartreuse, Given at La Grande Chartreuse, 1983-1984: 2. Sermons VI-X (1984).
36. *The Prayer of the Heart,* by Reverend Father Dom André Poisson.
37. *The Interior Life,* by a Carthusian Monk.
38. *Like a Voice Crying Out in the Desert: The Meeting at la Grande Chartreuse,* by His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah and Reverend Father Dom Dysmas de Lassus, with Nicolas Diat.
39. *Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith,* Message by a Group of Contemplatives to the Synod of Bishops of 1967.
40. *Driving to the Sky: A Visit to Mount Equinox Offers History, Panorama, Gifts and Solitude,* by Telly Halkias, Independent Journalist, 2018.
41. *Praying for the World: The Monastery Above Manchester Village,* by Anita Rafael, in *Stratton Magazine, Holiday 2017.*

To order any of these booklets or other Carthusian items, please contact the gift shop (please, not the monastery) at: 1A St. Bruno Drive, Arlington, Vermont 05250. Email: [stbrunogiftshop@comcast.net](mailto:stbrunogiftshop@comcast.net) Phone: 802-362-1114 Fax: 802-362-3346 Website address: [equinoxmountain.com](http://equinoxmountain.com) †



Charterhouse of the Transfiguration  
Carthusian Monastery  
1084 Ave Maria Way  
Arlington, VT 05250  
Fax: 802-362-3584  
E-Mail: [carthusians\\_in\\_america@chartreuse.info](mailto:carthusians_in_america@chartreuse.info)  
<http://transfiguration.chartreux.org>



CARTHUSIAN EMBLEM

— 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY —

A GLOBE SURMOUNTED BY THE CROSS  
WITH SEVEN STARS SYMBOLIZING SAINT BRUNO  
AND HIS FIRST FOLLOWERS

THE LATIN MOTTO RUNS AS FOLLOWS  
"STAT CRUX DUM VOLVITUR ORBIS"  
WHICH MEANS  
"THE CROSS STANDS FIRM, WHILE THE WORLD TURNS"

