



January 30-31, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the spring of 1944, six Trappist monks from The Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky traveled to rural Georgia to found the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. They were met by the only Catholic family in Rockdale County, Georgia to take them to their new home near Honey Creek. The monks spent that first year living and praying on the top floor of a barn, while farm animals occupied the ground floor. For over 65 years, Georgia's founding Diocese of Savannah, and later the Archdiocese of Atlanta, have been blessed by the prayers, hospitality and service of these men of God.

The monks have lived from the work of their own hands, first through farming, and more recently from their gift shop and the sale of food products, Bonsai trees and stained glass, as well as a green cemetery. In the spirit of hospitality, the monks have opened the monastery as a place for retreat and reflection to individuals, church groups and faith-based organizations such as the Cursillo and Knights of Columbus. The monastery also offers spiritual counsel and respite to priests, deacons, and other spiritual pilgrims.

In recent years, the monks' mandate of self-sufficiency has been challenged by the medical costs of caring for their aging brethren. Many of you have contributed to help with this care in recent years.

I am pleased to report that the Monastery of the Holy Spirit remains 40 strong, and has the most members making their Solemn Professions of any monastery in the U.S. To continue to attract those considering monastic life, the monastery is seeking to restore fiscal sustainability, be good stewards of the land entrusted to them, and continue the tradition of spiritual hospitality. The monastic community has undertaken the *Season of Renewal* campaign to grow their industries and accommodate more visitors and guests.

The monks labored diligently – gathering wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of cement – to build the magnificent Abbey Church and many of the buildings that stand onsite to this day. Now, they need our help and generosity to preserve the monastery as a spiritual oasis in our hectic world.

On the weekend of January 30-31 I am asking all parishes and Catholics in our Atlanta Archdiocese to consider how they can help in this effort, which will help keep this sacred place alive and available for generations to come. Brochures and envelopes are available for distribution. Also, you may want to visit their website, at www.trappist.net, for more detailed information about the Monastery campaign.

Along with Abbot Francis Michael and the monks of the Monastery, I add my personal message of gratitude to those pastors and parishes who have already so generously supported this effort by hosting receptions and second collections in the past few months for this most worthy campaign.

I am honored and blessed by the presence of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit in our Archdiocese. With deep appreciation, I recognize their 65 years of faithful service and encourage your financial support for their *Season of Renewal* campaign.

Your faithful servant in Christ,



✠ Wilton D. Gregory,
Archbishop of Atlanta

