

Monastic Scribe 109 – September 25, 2026

I AM PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

There is a saying that goes, “Think globally; act locally”. I think we have to consider what this means and why we need to embrace it today as there is so much individualism and passivity in both religion and country today.

Africans have the word Ubuntu to express that I am because you are, that we are all one people. That leads, in society, to keep the common good before our eyes and in our decisions. We cannot live in our own cocoon, whether that means in our family, our society, in our religion, our country, or in the world. I am rightfully glad that I am American, Catholic, white, male. I rejoice in our differences but do not accept my own identity, religion, ethnic group, country, gender as really better than another. We complement each other, not try to dominate another.

There are those who believe in American exceptionalism, that we are superior to other countries, that we have to be number one in everything. I have lived in Canada, in Italy, in Ireland and I have loved the people there but I know well, especially after a while, that I am an American and proud to be an American. Right now I am concerned with the threat to democracy and the forces of unbridled capitalism and authoritarianism to overcome the strengths of our country. But I accept the good and bad and do what I can to help the common good. I have an obligation to vote, to pay taxes, to be informed and interact with the power forces of our day. Though I am an American, I am first a human being in union with all humanity and all peoples of the earth. The gifts of God’s creation belong to all inhabitants of the earth. A precarious world order has prevailed in the world since the two world wars, not perfect but challenging. We have enjoyed and still need the United Nations, UNESCO, NATO and all programs that respect our own independence while cooperating with others. Business corporations need to know their place in this world order. I encourage all not to fear the state of reality but to have confidence in our country to face the issues while we respect other countries

I am a Catholic and my faith gives me guidance and hope in the face of all obstacles. At one point in the Middle Ages, Christendom was the system of the superiority of the Catholic Church among all peoples. The Catholic Church tried to hold to its place as superior to all others, secular and religious, and there are some remnants of this mindset in Christian Nationalism and Clericalism. The

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Second Vatican Council shifted us to be servants of the world. Popes Francis and Leo have demonstrated what this service can be. There are groups who have split from the Church rather than accept this teaching. Antisemitism, anti-Muslims, inferiority of women, continued clericalism are the result of these divisions. I, as an individual, must embrace the needs of all people in my prayers, to identify with other people's sufferings, to understand and feel with other peoples.

I am a Benedictine monk. Benedictinism goes back to Saint Benedict in the fifth century. Monasteries have been sources of service, education, hospitality to strangers and pilgrims, places of inspiring liturgy. Each monastery is an independent, autonomous unit unlike other religious orders like the Jesuits, Franciscans and many other male and female communities. There is an advantage to this autonomy. We are people of a place through our promise of stability. We belong to the place and people where we live. We are people of the earth and promote good care of nature. But there is a danger to this way of life as well. We can become very comfortable and cozy in our separate ways of life. So we need to always remember we are part of, and need, the universal church, the Pope and churches throughout the world, and we are part of a local diocese.

We also need a Benedictine center in Rome to keep us connected. We need to keep up with the work and lifestyle of other monasteries so we may learn from other monks and nuns. There is currently a Jubilee celebration of Benedictines throughout the world leading up to the year 2029 which will be the fifteen hundredth anniversary of Benedict founding the monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy. We are, with other Benedictines celebrating this year dedicated to Awakening, next year to Listening, 2028 to Growing and 2029 to Flourishing. Both monks and Oblates contribute to their own communities but feel associated and aware of other Benedictines in this world.

If nations churches and monasteries must be part of a bigger world, so must each individual person. We need to think globally even as we act locally. We are part of a bigger story and should not be overwhelmed by the state of the world, country or church. I can't withdraw into my own comfortable enclave. To get past the passivity that weakens our country and our church, we need to get involved. First of all by educating ourselves. We must read and study and get past the headlines on my iPhone. The news on many radio and TV stations is rather superficial. When it comes to religion, most of us really have to learn what it is all about. Catholics

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should be reading the Pope's encyclical, "Magnifica Humanitas" and thinking about social doctrine, AI, positions on war and peace. With so much available on-line, it is easy to hear a good lecture on meaningful topics.

An old plan for Christians came from the Belgian, Joseph Cardijn and is called the See-Judge-Act method of a practical framework to address social, political, and moral issues. Pope John XXIII proposed we follow it in his encyclical, "Mater et Magistra". To see (or observe) is to learn the facts and review the concrete situation. To judge (or analyze) is to form a judgment; it is to see how moral, meaningful, or challenging the facts are. Then to act is to ask what can be done and how can I get involved.

What to do? Observe, judge, act is a good plan. Have you tried it? You can let me know at: joycet@glastonburyabbey.org.

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Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.