



*Stones from (1) Subiaco Abbey; (2) Monte Cassino Abbey (the Mother House of us all); (3) St. Bernard Abbey in Alabama.*

Soon, the sun begins to sink. Vespers, the sixth canonical hour has been observed. Dinner has been served. Again, a basic, simple meal (chicken, salad and a green vegetable). It's close to the end of the first full day, and the sun sinks behind the monastery building.

The rows of concrete blocks are up one level higher than when we arrived 24 hours ago.

In the evening glow, the monks start chanting "Compline," the last canonical hour of the day, but the prayerful atmosphere is broken by the sound of heavy motors. From somewhere nearby, a squadron of six military helicopters streak through the sky.

What a contrast! On the ground, a monastery following a rule of life more than a thousand years old and dedicated to prayer and peace. Flying overhead the high tech weapons of war. We hadn't seen a TV for 30 hours, didn't listen to the radio, hadn't read a newspaper. Bosnia, baseball, politics, had been wiped from our concerns, from our need-to-know. But the choppers were a reminder that life outside awaited us. In another day, we'd be back in Charlotte, back in the offices where there is little opportunity for silence, little time for contemplation.

But we return with the memory of this extraordinary place, a memory we hope will help us make our lives a little more relaxed, a little more meaningful.

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