

# The Navigator



*The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's*

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## An Introduction to the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

A lot has transpired over the past year — faith has been challenged, friendships have been tested, churches have experienced the turmoil of identity — yet through it all God continues to miraculously perfect and sustain His Son's precious Bride. Perhaps some day we'll finally understand why He chose vessels of clay. Perhaps some day we'll also come to realize that the best place for clay to be is on the Potter's Wheel. God, continue to work in us until Your image is perfected and we are made into vessels fit for use in the temple of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

In the middle of these tests, God has allowed Mother Sue and myself the opportunity of bringing into fruition the vision of Saint Brendan's that was planted in us almost seven years ago. Much of that vision took root within the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov. More of it will fall into place as God leads us deeper into the call of lay monasticism. Thank you for hearing — and heeding — this same call. Thank you for your desire to walk this path with us. We look forward to building Saint Brendan's with you to the glory of Jesus Christ who bids each of us, "Come, follow me."

Where is Saint Brendan's right now? It's on the ground floor. In fact, much of the 'basement' is still being built so that the

proper foundation is in place — things like new articles of incorporation, new constitution and by-laws, a common Rule, completion of the Breviary so that we're joined as a family in common monastic development, etc. This will take some time. Please be patient.

## An Ecumenical Ministry

What will Saint Brendan's become? That's the exciting part. Since you, the founding members (in the Navy we would call you 'plank owners' — the first crew of a newly constructed ship), represent different cathedrals, different bishops, different independent communions, different episcopal government, yet one Lord and Savior, the very first burden we had was to ensure the ecumenical nature of Saint Brendan's.

This ministry will open its doors to any person upon whom God has placed the call of intentional

lay monasticism. We received that permission with blessing and encouragement, thus allowing us to adopt as our name the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. As the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's, you are counted as the Friends and Oblates of Saint Brendan's Monastic Retreat Community.

Sounds confusing. Not really. The property here in Dennysville, Maine, is the loca-

**"The monk is in the monastery.  
The monk is also on Wall Street,  
on Main Street, and down on the farm."**

— Mark Plaiss

"The Inner Room: A Journey into Lay Monasticism"

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tion of Saint Brendan's Monastic Retreat Community. As members-at-large, you will be organized as the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. The Monastic Fellowship will be made up of two groups of people: Friends and Oblates. Let me explain how these two groups will operate.

## Friends of Saint Brendan's

"Friends of Saint Brendan's" will be an introductory level of membership designed for those individuals who, while keenly interested in lay monasticism, want to begin by simply receiving the newsletters, gaining access to teaching materials, having the opportunities to work through the recommended reading lists and study guides; opening to them a fellowship within a larger, kindred family of believers called to the same way of life. Friends have no other obligation to Saint Brendan's. Their encouragement, however, will be to put into practice all that they learn and then give that 'fruit' back to their local churches through joy, prayer, and holiness. This level of membership is open to anyone regardless of age, gender, denomination, or communion. Because of this, when your friends make the comment that what you're doing sounds like something God is working in them and can they be a part of it, you can say 'yes.'

## Oblates of Saint Brendan's

"Oblates of Saint Brendan's" is the second group within the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. Being an Oblate (or making 'oblation') is more intentional. Oblates have requirements. Oblates will make structured advances in their spiritual formation, preparing them for life-long promises to the monastic standards of obedience, stability, and fidelity. Oblates are expected to be members in good standing of a local church or parish, live according to our modified Rule of Saint Benedict, receive the Eucharist on a regular basis, fully participate in their church's sacramental life, have a teachable heart open to a Spiritual

Director, and be yielded to internal and external shaping through the Daily Offices of prayer and worship. All Oblates begin as Friends; watching, learning, testing, and growing in familiarity with the lay monastic movement. When they are ready (but not less than one year) they can request an application for acceptance as an Oblate of Saint Brendan's, working through the requirements of Novice and aspiring toward Full Oblate.

## Oblation: A Life-Long Promise

Everyone entering a monastic life binds themselves to certain promises or vows. For professed monastics (monks and nuns), these are the traditional vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty; otherwise known as the "Counsels of Perfection." In the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov we came to practice these as obedience, sexual purity, and simplicity. The Benedictine tradition, which predates the Counsels of Perfection by centuries, understood these vows to be stability, conversion, and obedience. Our monastic life at Saint Brendan's will be based on this earlier Benedictine tradition — though slightly modified to make it appropriate for lay monastics — and will be structured around the pillars of obedience, fidelity, and stability. A member ready to become a Full Oblate makes life-long promises to these pillars of monastic life. These three components are further broken down into sub-components which embrace

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the full character of a calling to lay monasticism. I will share these more fully in upcoming newsletters. The most significant thing for Oblates to remember, however, is that the origin of their call goes back for centuries and that they have been an indispensable part of both monastery life and church life throughout the history of Christendom.

## What do we do?

This process will take some time. We want to make sure that it's done right. As pieces of this ministry fall into place we'll make them available to you. We want to make sure that everybody has a copy of the Constitution; that everybody has copies of the packages that new applicants will receive; that everybody has an opportunity to acquire the Breviary authorized for use by the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's; that everybody fully understands their requirements for observing the Rule and for retreats; and that everybody is aware of our vision for how summer monastic opportunities will be conducted here at Saint Brendan's. The only thing we ask right now is that you pray for us to hear God clearly!

In the meantime, this corporate and private life of lay monasticism is not a complete mystery. You already know the things you should be doing.

- Be intentional about coming before God through (as a minimum) Morning and Evening Prayer — the Breviary will be ready soon; in the interim continue to use the Society's Customary or the BCP if you wish.
- Be intentional about your time spent in the Word of God; not only for study but for devotion.
- Be intentional about your prayers. Where you would normally pray for the CEC Bishops both national and international, if that's no longer your "chain of command" then be in prayer for those in direct episcopal authority over you. If your home is still in the CEC, continue to lift up her leadership as they seek

the Lord for renewed direction.

- Be intentional in those things that simplify your life; practice a spirit of "de-accumulation" so that your treasure remains in heaven and not here on earth.
- Be intentional in your study of things that are holy. Find good books on lay monasticism; begin some research on the Rule and life of Saint Benedict; examine the life and lore of Saint Brendan; find information on Celtic Christianity and see how it stands as a wonderful fusion of Eastern and Western expressions of faith.
- Be intentional in your sacramental life. Attend worship as often as you can; receive the Eucharist as often as you can; take advantage of confession as frequently as necessary.

Exciting things are just ahead. Be in prayer for Mother Sue and me as we work through the details of this new ministry. And again, tell your friends that there's a place for them.

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

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## Ancient Quote of the Month...

In every newsletter I would like to add a quote from one of the ancient prayers or writings of our Church. Let me introduce you this month to Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), a catechetical teacher in Alexandria, Egypt. The quote below regarding prayer is from his largest work, *Miscellanies*, which he wrote in 195 AD as an apologetic against the rampant gnosticism of his day and the superiority of true Christian life, knowledge, and wisdom.

"The whole life of the spiritual man is a holy festival. His sacrifices include prayers, praises, and readings in Scriptures before meals.

They also include psalms and hymns during meals and before bed — and prayers also again during the night.

By these, the spiritual man unites himself to the divine choir."

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