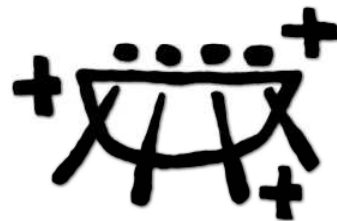


The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
Volume II, No. 5 — Fall 2007

Silence: the Discipline of Quietude

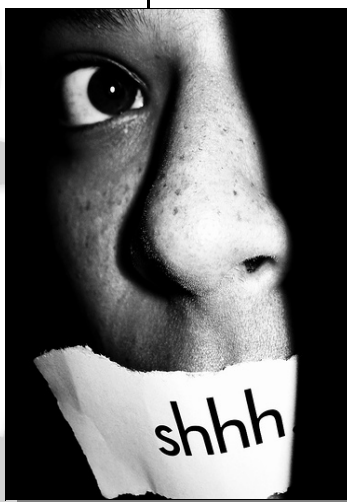
Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

wells up from inside ourselves. The noise is found inside of us. The things around us just amplify its voice.

Ours is a cacophonous society. Clamor and din press against us nearly 24 hours a day. We're assaulted by televisions that are turned on the moment we wake up, water-proof radios in our showers, MP3 and I-Pod ear buds dangling from an ever-increasing number of heads, cell phone headsets worn like crowns of glory, satellite radio receivers that you can pop out of your car stereo and pop into your home stereo so that you don't miss a beat, non-stop cable news stations, streaming internet audio on our computers, talking crosswalk signals at street intersections, talking self-checkout cash registers, talking ticket machines at parking garages, even talking escalators. The list is absolutely endless.

While a great deal of this noise is simply the march of technology, a large portion of it has been conscripted by the enemy to keep us from the ideal state of Psalm 46:10 — **"Be still, and know that I am God."** But we mustn't be content to stop there, either; Satan isn't the exclusive source of distraction, and it's easy to place all the blame on him when quietude is so elusive in our lives. Yes, our surroundings might prevent us from cultivating an atmosphere of stillness and silence. Yes, the enemy employs noise and commotion to overwhelm our spirits. But much of what besets us actually

Truth be told, we're noisy. We talk too much. Or for those of us with cell phones and nimble thumbs, we 'text' too much. Or for those of us with computers and a modem, we e-mail too much. Is talking evil? Heavens, no. But it is interesting to see how many of the ancient monastic rules called upon the religious brother or sister to be a person of few words (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Some rules went so far as to require vows of absolute silence. Those monasteries still exist to this day.



The Bible, particularly Proverbs and James, speaks of the inherent evil of the tongue and how quickly it can paralyze the spiritual atmosphere between believers. The simple encouragement of Jesus is that our **"... 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one"**

(Matthew 5:37). And the opening chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon is built around verse 11 which says, **"Beware then of useless murmuring."**

Much of what we say is idle; much can lean toward gossip; much can be injurious; much is controlling; much of it is self-promoting or self-deprecating;

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and much of it is simply a reflection of our own internal chaos and clutter. Our heads may be filled with lots of thoughts and opinions, but not everything needs to be given voice, because once we say it we are subjecting others to the content of our hearts: anger, spite, fear, foolishness – things that desire the center of attention rather than being brought under submission to the Lord. Much of what resides within us needs to be tempered and redeemed by the Holy Spirit rather than be laid out for public display. Spiritual silence begins this tempering and redeeming process.

Silence, solitude, quietude – these are the characteristics of inner peace and fulfillment. You can be in the middle of a shopping mall at Christmas time



and have a quiet spirit. Likewise, you can live in an isolated, mountain cabin and never experience deep inner silence. We need to remember that we carry within ourselves a portable sanctuary, an internal copy of the heavenly sanctuary, and it needs to be carefully tended so that it becomes a place where we can hear the holy hush and whisper of God. Silence is not

just the absence of speech; it is the readiness to listen without the conflict of noise, especially our own noise. When we discipline ourselves in silence and solitude we learn how to listen, when to speak, what to speak, and what to refrain from speaking, and how to listen (cf., Ecclesiastes 3:7; Proverbs 25:11).

One of the definitions of quietude is tranquillity. Quietude contributes to an outward atmosphere of tranquillity, and quietude reflects the inner quality of tranquillity. It sounds good, but how do you get there? What are the opportunities for silence in your day that you're not already taking advantage of?

- Begin by simply filling yourself with the silence you experience when you first wake up, turning off the radio or alarm clock and

“We carry within ourselves a portable sanctuary,...and it must be carefully tended...so that we can hear the holy hush and whisper of God.”

just listen for a few moments before you sit up and start your day. The Holy Spirit is meeting you there.

- Look around your house and see where you can designate a quiet place – a large closet where you can set a chair and a cross or candle, a corner in your basement, anyplace where you can tell your family that if you're there you are not to be interrupted for at least five minutes. This might even be the bathroom for some busy households.
- Start to turn off the many things at home that talk back at you. Determine to shut off televisions, computer games, stereos, even the ringer and answering machine on your telephone for a set period of time each day, even if it's just an hour or two. Be pro-active in creating a quiet atmosphere where you live.
- Find a place on your way to work, perhaps an area with a pretty view, where you can pull over for a few minutes and, with the radio turned off, sit still and experience the solitude.
- Try performing your obligations and actions throughout the day without feeling the need to justify what you do through a constant stream of explanations or verbal justifications.
- Try a day of silent retreat. This will require some coordination with family and co-workers beforehand, but it will help you find different ways of relating to people without being dependent on words.

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- Plan a retreat at least once a year (even if it's just a hotel room for 24 hours) where your only goal is solitude in order to hear the voice of God.
- And as you begin to practice and experience these moments of quiet, begin also to globally curb the amount of what you say – each of us can probably get along with only half of what we normally say.

While these things describe the introductory 'mechanics' of silence, nothing can be exchanged for the power of God's grace when our prayers begin to express our desire for silence. It's easy to outwardly orchestrate our lives without transforming our hearts. In fact, people may even be impressed with our heightened piety. But that comes with its own consequences. Rather, we must pray for God to restructure us spiritually while we set our hands to the work of outward change. Only then will we bear the genuine fruit of silence.

The fruit of silence and quietude is a keener ear to hear what the Lord is saying. It also produces a keener ear to listen to the hurts and wounds of those around us, allowing us to be a salve and a living prayer over their lives. That's because inner peace helps to pave the way for our ability to better love and respond to those God desires to touch.

We don't want to be a people characterized by our "**much speaking**" (cf., Matthew 6:7). Rather, a monastic heart should desire transparency – almost a quiet invisibility – so that it's Christ who shines through us and Christ who responds to those around us. It's hard to do that with a fountain of words flowing from our mouths unless we've first been quiet enough to hear what God desires to speak through us. Silence, both internal and external, is one of the most important disciplines we can cultivate. For through intentional practice of silence and solitude we can discern the voice of God, and with Christ, say, "**These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father**" (John 14:24). ✕

Prayer Thoughts...

"When you hand a concern over to God in prayer, you also hand Him the responsibility for the outcome."

— Fr. Ed Meeks, Senior Rector
Christ the King Church, Towson, MD

How Do I *DO* Simplicity?

Mother Sue Andraeas, Prioress

I have heard this question several times in the past few months. It comes from both those new to a life of monasticism, and those who have lived this life for a while. The typical answer is something like the following: "Simplicity is a life of prayer, meditation, contemplation, the imitation of Christ." While this is a true answer, it really doesn't help much. It's still just a list of activities – albeit good ones – but does little to help us understand how to live our moment-by-moment, day-in-and-day-out lives, does it?

What I've learned in the few years of living here at Saint Brendan's is that a life of simplicity has next to nothing to do with what we *do*. If you've been receiving these newsletters for any length of time, you know of the 'simplicity' of our lifestyle here. Many of you have even been here to witness it first hand; woodstove rather than furnace, garden rather than supermarket, modem rather than DSL, one television channel, one bathroom, one-room chapel in the house. But these things do not make life

"Simplicity isn't a lack or reduction of activity. Simplicity is a state of being."

simple, just rustic. And, as you can imagine, taking care of a woodstove takes a lot more work than turning a dial on your furnace thermostat. Tending a garden is more strenuous than tending a shopping cart. Simplicity does not mean less action; in fact, it usually means more.

You've also been reading about, or have witnessed during a retreat, the times of prayer – the Offices – like bookends around our meals; Lauds and Terce with breakfast, Eucharist and None with lunch, Vespers and Compline with dinner. But these times do not make our schedule *simple*, just organized, again by adding more activity rather than taking it away. And, these are still just exterior activities and elements of our life and are not simplicity. The truth is, the most ascetic monk living in the most austere monastery is not necessarily living a life of simplicity. That's a shocker, isn't it! Once more, the exterior daily rituals have next to nothing to do with a life of simplicity.

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**Simplicity isn't something you do.
It's something you are.**

Simplicity isn't a lack, or reduction, of activity. Simplicity is a state of being. It's not even a mental state, but a spiritual one. Simplicity isn't about not thinking, or thinking correctly. It's about *being* simple. That doesn't mean stupid or naïve. It doesn't mean ignorance. Rather, it means *being* nothing except what God has created you to *be*. We spend our lives creating a reputation for ourselves, increasing our net worth, attaining stuff – and more stuff, developing habits and preferences, learning more and more information. None of that, in and of itself, is bad. But it can become bad (and, at times, it can be downright evil!) if we assume that any of those things *are* us. If our things, our knowledge, our status, or our habits *become* us, become how we identify ourselves, we are no longer simple. We have added to ourselves something that God never intended to be part of us.

Sometimes, it's not what we add to ourselves, but what we detract from ourselves. We forget that we are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). We forget that one day the children of God will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3), and inherit heaven (James 2:5). We feel too unimportant (co-laborers with Christ unimportant?), too weak (even though the Holy Spirit works through us?), too boring (even though you are the tabernacle of Christ??). We make our lives complex by reducing ourselves, by being less than what we were created to be.

OK. If simplicity is about who we *are*, then what are the spiritual disciplines all about? What about the meditation and prayer and imitation of Christ? Well, if we are to be what God created us to be – no more and no less – how do you think that will happen? Do you think that we can just go to church on a Sunday morning and **POOF!** we will be what God wants us to be? How will we know who we should be unless we understand, first of all, who God is? We learn about our Father through Jesus who reveals Him to us (Matt. 11:27). The more time we spend reading the Gospels, getting to know Jesus (and I don't mean getting to know facts about Jesus but really knowing him), the more we know who we *are* rather than just what we

are to *do*. The more we give up earthly things – whether that be through fasting, relinquishing possessions, giving up bad or sloppy habits, or through tithing – the more we will realize that those things are not part of us; that we can live without them.

Perhaps the hardest thing to let go of, though, isn't a tangible thing but our reputation – our image. Are we willing to be a fool for Christ? Are we willing to do things that make us feel silly, different, unpopular, radical? Are we willing to listen to someone else's boring (in our opinion) stories rather than interrupting with our own very interesting (in our opinion) ones? Are we willing to let someone else choose the restaurant, or activity – even if they pick one we are not fond of? Are we willing to treat someone we truly dislike with the dignity and honor they deserve as a child of God? Are we willing to love when it costs us dearly, and we receive nothing in return? If not, perhaps we need more time spent alone with Jesus! We are not yet simple.



Another misconception is that a life of simplicity will suddenly give you lots of 'free time' to pray. Free time is a myth! No time is free, only well managed. It is all a gift from the Lord, and we will need to explain to Him why we spent it the way we did. I used to wake up in the morning wondering how I was going to accomplish all that I had to do AND still find time to pray the Offices. They were such an intrusion on my time. MY time! HA! What did I have to do that was so important that I had no time to spend with God? It's the same things you have to do – laundry, mowing the grass, cooking meals, writing to friends, cheating on Sudoku puzzles, on and on. (I was griping about this to God one day, asking Him how He expected me to do 'all of this work' at Saint Brendan's and still stop six times a day to pray. It didn't take me long to realize that Saint Brendan's will not be in heaven – it is an earthly

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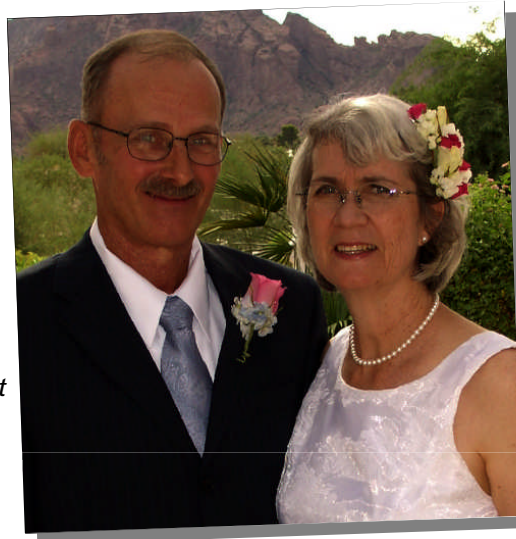
ministry – but God will be in heaven. If I'm too busy for Him now, will He be too busy for me then? Ouch.)

We have the tendency to think that the work we do is so incredibly important, that our times of recreation so justifiable, that without us, things would just fall apart. The truth is, apart from God, we can do NOTHING (John 5:5). Realizing this truth is the beginning of simplicity. What you do in your own strength, by your own reputation, through your own knowledge, or with the aid of your own financial stability is... nothing! God can accomplish more through the poverty of a simple person than He can through the wealth of a complex person. Be simple. Be who God created you to be – nothing more, nothing less. ✕

Fellowship Happenings

Many exciting things have been happening within the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. Here are just a few...

- Father Richard Coleman has been consecrated a bishop in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches.
- Deacon David Hall was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Coleman.
- Nathan Haydon has been ordained to the Diaconate in the Communion of Christ the Redeemer.
- Dennis Maloney has retired from his many years of service with the power company in Phoenix, and is planning to give his time to the Christian school operated from the Cathedral Church of Christ the King.
- Deacon Tom Abbot has retired from his secular employment but continues to work from home and serve as a deacon at Church of the Messiah in Jacksonville, FL.
- Mother Sue was one of the guest speakers at a women's retreat in Emmitsburg, MD, speaking on biblical simplicity.
- We had the privilege to fly to Phoenix and officiate at the wedding of Clay and Marcia Landwehr (who then traveled to Dennyville, ME, to spend a portion of their honeymoon on retreat at Saint Brendan's!).



Top-Left: Mother Sue is pictured with Dennis M. and Fr. Richard F. (Co-Founder and first Father Superior of the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov). Middle-Left: Allison S. at the Landwehr

wedding reception. Bottom-Left: M. Sue chats with Jocelyn O. who played the harp during the wedding reception. Bottom-Right : Clay L. and Marcia S. posing for formal pictures just prior to their wedding.

Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's — What's Next?

We want you to be aware of the ongoing progress being made with Saint Brendan's and the many things that are coming together as a part of this ministry and vision.

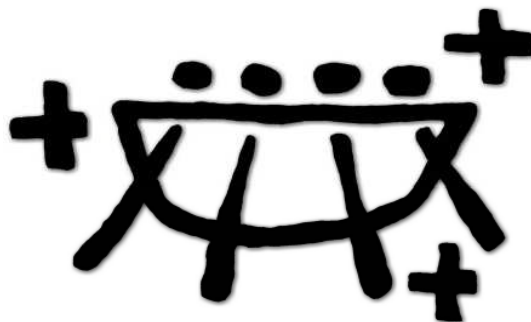
The Breviary. At the same time we sent all of our Fellowship members a working, draft copy of the Breviary, we were also applying to the Library of Congress for an official copyright for the Breviary. They came back with an initial reply stating that since the Breviary also contained original music, we had to re-apply with a different application to help cover and protect the inclusion of "performing art." That application has been submitted and we are awaiting the final response and granting of the copyright. Once the copyright is received and small corrections are made to the text (yes, we're still finding errors), the Breviary will be submitted for professional publication and made available for purchase over the Saint Brendan's web site.

The Corporation. Saint Brendan's Monastic Retreat Community has received official status as a not-for-profit corporation with the State of Maine (Charter #20060193ND). This involved not only a change of name from the original Saint Brendan's Prayer Retreat Community but a change in purpose and a revision of its Articles of Incorporation. Our next step will be to make application as a federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

The Rule. We've been asked questions about Saint Brendan's rule of life. We're taking very careful and deliberate time with this. It will be more than an outline to which you are asked to integrate with your current religious/monastic practice. Saint Brendan's will be providing a complete Rule based on the Rule of Saint Benedict. Several members of the Fellowship have already received interim draft copies for their review. It's the same dimensions as the Breviary and currently stands at 47 pages long. We prayerfully believe that this will become an essential tool in understanding what God is

calling us to as lay monastics in a contemporary world. Please be patient as you await the publication of the Rule; it's one of the most important things we can give you, and we want to make sure that it's what God wants you to have and how God wants us to live, individually and corporately.

Application to be a Friend. The last page of this newsletter is the application to be a **FRIEND** of Saint Brendan's. We are so grateful to everyone over this past year who has stood alongside of us, prayerfully lifting up this new ministry and the vision that will carry it forward for years to come. Now it's time to make our formal commitments to the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. We're asking everyone to submit this application along with the application fee by the end of December. Mother Sue and I will be doing the same thing. We know that many of you coming in from the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov were much further along than Friends or Postulants, and we'll acknowledge that in it's proper time. Right now, we need to be able to get from 'here' to 'there' and this is the best way to do that. Mother Sue and I will be doing the same thing until we, ourselves, make our Life Covenant Professions and are sacramentally installed as the Prior and Prioress of Saint Brendan's. Once that is done, we can then begin to receive the promises and professions of others. And while this initial application is for reception as a Friend, don't slacken on your monastic disciplines if you're further along than the stated requirements for a Friend. **Note:** This form is reproducible and can be shared with others who may be interested in applying.



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