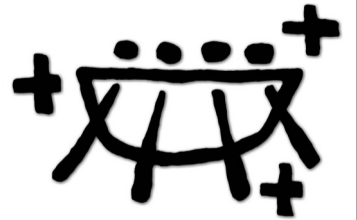


# The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's  
Volume III, No. 2 — Early Spring 2008

## What Is Monasticism?

Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

*"Then many who were seeking  
righteousness and justice went down  
to the wilderness to dwell there..."*  
1 Maccabees 2:29

What is monasticism? I've been asking that question since 1987. I was attending Ashland Theological Seminary at the time; a Brethren-affiliated seminary in Ashland, Ohio. While at the seminary, I was also fortunate enough to serve as the student-pastor a small church in Mohicanville, Ohio. Mohicanville was just a crossroads and a couple of houses; the population was probably not more than 75 people. The closest post office to the parsonage was about ten miles down the road in Hayesville, Ohio; population, 180.

I was caught up short at the post office one day on church business, coming face-to-face with a strange, bearded man dressed in a black cassock, sandals, black leather belt, *klobuk* ("stove pipe" hat), and a long prayer rope tucked into his belt. I didn't know what to make of him as I drove back to the parsonage. I began asking around and soon discovered that he was one of the monks at Saint Gregory Palamas Greek Orthodox Monastery just outside of Hayesville. It was a new monastery, having been established just five years earlier. Needless to say, that old German farming

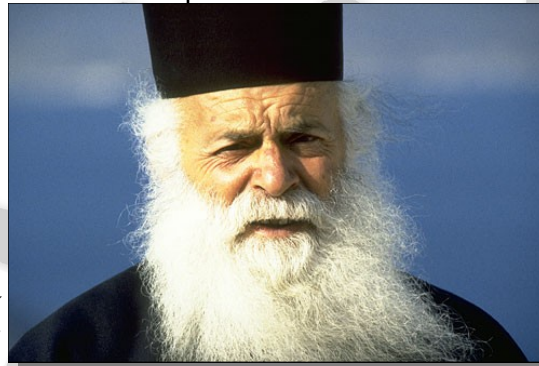
community wasn't quite sure how to accept such a visibly *different* group of men as their next-door neighbors.

Those years were a time of growing for my spiritual formation. I was studying and preparing for ordination as an Assemblies of God pastor, and was applying for ecclesiastical (denominational) endorsement as a Navy chaplain. I had visions of accomplishing great works for the Lord both in and out of the military; godly service that would conclude with my humble acceptance to serve our nation's political leaders as "Chaplain of the Congress." Lofty dreams, to be sure! And yet I was internally challenged by a modest, humble man whose call

from God was one of quiet meditation, ceaseless prayer, ancient worship, and monastic labor, all accomplished from within a setting of intentional hiddenness. How very different from what I was being taught. And yet my heart was strangely pricked with the notion

that, from heaven's vantage point, perhaps he was the one who moved mountains while all I could do was make noise. Maybe there was something to this thing called monasticism.

*(Continued on page 2)*



## IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

What Is Monasticism?	1
Is This Going to Hurt?	4
Membership List of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's	7

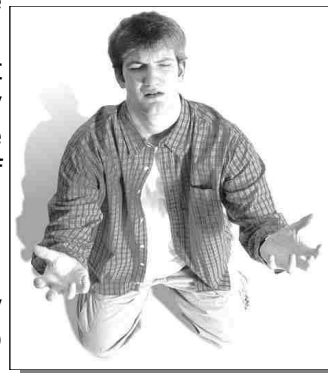
Well, here it is over twenty years later and Mother Sue and I are still just chipping away at the very tip of the monastic iceberg. It's starting to make sense, however, as we continue to seek the Lord's will and favor for the lay monastic vision of Saint Brendan's. A part of it came into focus while reading the book, *The Monks of New Skete: In the Spirit of Happiness* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1999). In it are found these words:

*"The nature of monasticism is to provide a healthy context in which such a rule of life is followed wisely and with safeguards and the support of others. By examining our attitudes toward sleep, work, eating, recreation, speech, sexuality, study, worship – to life and death – we can learn to express our dedication tangibly through our total life: body and soul, mind and spirit. We can train ourselves to bring each element of our life into line with our relationship with God, the absolute mystery at the heart of all reality."*

Each element of life brought into line with God. Not just our record of Sunday attendance. Not just our tax-deductible tithing. Monastic spirituality harnesses our thought life, our prayer life, our work life, our family life, everything. It not only brings the visible and obvious parts of who we are before the Lord, but it also brings every closet, every locked door, and every shadowy corner of our hearts and lives into a place of submission and surrender before the living God who desires our whole being for His own. That seems to be the greatest benefit (and the greatest challenge) of monastic spirituality – that things which often go unsurrendered or undetected in "normal" Christianity are eventually brought to the surface of a monastic's life. This becomes the workbench where the monk and the Holy Spirit literally *wrestle* in much the same way Jacob wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:24-30); and when the Holy Spirit wins, we'll know that our weaknesses have been laid bare before God, face-to-face as it were; that they were touched and reset according to God's intentions for us; and that we are now able to live,...truly live (v. 30).

Fr. Brian C. Taylor, author of the slim volume, *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), quoted two profound

statements in his book. The first was a quote from Cardinal Basil Hume (1923-1999), Archbishop of Westminster, who said that obedience to a monastic Rule "makes it possible for ordinary folks to live lives of quite extraordinary value." The second was from the Trappist hermit Thomas Merton (1915-1968) who said that monasticism is "Christianity in its most perfect form." What I like best about this book is that it was written for folks who are called by the Holy Spirit to live a *lay monastic* life. Wow! Imagine that – to live "in the world" as an icon of both perfect faith and extraordinary value! To live in the world as an icon of Christ!



This prospect, however, usually causes us to throw up our hands and groan, "But I can't do it! I'm neither extraordinary nor perfect!" That's absolutely right. You're a jar of clay. So am I. But God in His eternal councils has chosen clay, us, as the medium through which to display His glory (II Corinthians 4:7-10). It actually reminds me of a song I heard several years ago on the radio by contemporary Christian music artist Bob Carlisle (of "Butterfly Kisses" fame) titled, "*We Fall Down*." It's not played anymore these days, and I don't know why – it was a great song – but these are the lyrics:

*Cursing every step of the Way, he bore a heavy load to the market ten miles away. The journey took its toll and every day he passed a monastery's high cathedral walls, and it made his life seem meaningless and small, and he wondered how it would be to live in such a*

*(Continued on page 3)*

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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*place: to be warm, well fed and at peace; to shut the world away. So when he saw a priest who walked, for once, beyond the iron gate, he said, "Tell me of your life Inside the place..." And the priest replied...*

*We fall down, we get up;  
We fall down, we get up;  
We fall down, we get up;  
And the saints are just the sinners  
Who fall down and get up.*

*Disappointment followed him home; he'd hoped for so much more. But he saw himself in a light he had never seen before. 'Cause if the priest who fell could find the grace of God to be enough, then there must be some hope for the rest of us; there must be some hope left for us.*

*We fall down, we get up;  
We fall down, we get up;  
We fall down, we get up;  
And the saints are just the sinners  
Who fall down and get up.*

I believe these lyrics truly capture what it means to be a secular monastic: people outside monastery walls who have the courage (and Christ's encouragement) to get back up whenever they fall down; learning, changing, growing; drawing closer to God every time they regain their footing. You see, we don't enter into the practice of lay monasticism already possessed of total perfection. We are not perfect monastics. We are simply called to enter into the beauty and perfection of monasticism and to allow the process (yes, monasticism is a process more than an end result) to change and transform us into icons of Christ.

Some of you may still be shaking your heads – "It's too much; I don't know if I can do it." Again, you're right. That's because you're not the one who's doing it. God is. If your response to God's call is anything more than submission and relinquishment, then you're 'doing' it wrong. Think of it like Mary who just heard the words of Gabriel. What was her response? **"I am the Lord's servant,...May it be to me as you have said"** (Luke 1:38). Submission and

**"In this sense, then, monasticism — submission and relinquishment — is a type of martyrdom unto Christ."**

relinquishment. Was her earthly walk with Jesus perfect? If Scripture is allowed to speak to this, Mark 3:21,31-32 tells us that Mary and Jesus' brothers came to take charge of Him, **"for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'"** *She fell down.* And yet, by John 19:26-27, she's standing at the foot of the cross as a grieving mother; and by Acts 1:14 she and Jesus' brothers are gathered together with the other believers in the Upper Room. *She got up again.*



In this sense, then, monasticism – submission and relinquishment – is a type of martyrdom unto Christ; dying daily to the world until our standing up is more consistent than our falling down. Actually, in the first centuries of the Early Church, the Celtic tradition recognized three kinds of martyrdom: white, green, and red. White martyrs were those who, for the love of God, separated themselves from all that tempted them by practicing the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and hard work. Green martyrs were those who chastened their deeper passions and desires by disciplining their body, mind, and spirit; turning frequently to acts of rigorous penitence in order to subdue and mortify their flesh (Paul said something very similar in 1 Corinthians 9:27). Red martyrs, of course, were those who endured their own crosses of destruction for Christ's sake.

Being called to a life of lay monasticism means that we're most certainly numbered among the white martyrs, especially in this church age when so many Christians are just as consumed with the things of this world as are non-believers. In fact, God would that every believer was a white martyr. It's a good place to put the *Rule of Life* into practice; falling down and getting up. As we gain proficiency and consistency in our monastic lives – walking with the Lord down the "Highway of Holiness" (Isaiah 35:8-9) – we may find ourselves entering into more rigorous disciplines and, like green martyrs, and placing ourselves as living sacrifices on the altar of God (Romans 12:1-2) where the heat of the coals purifies us of lingering dross (Isaiah 6:6). But even there, the heat may

*(Continued on page 4)*

cause us to squirm. After all, you're still living clay undergoing a 'firing' in the kiln.

Lay monasticism doesn't require you to wear a habit and live inside a monastery. You can fall down and get up at home, at work, at school, at church, in front of your family, and in your prayer closet. The key is knowing that you've been called and that Jesus will always help to brush the dust off when you stand back up again. I know. He brushes me off almost every day. Prayerfully, as He continues to change and transform me – working the *Rule of Life* into me

## Is This Going to Hurt?

Mother Sue Andraeas, Prioress

My experience would dictate... if you have to ask, you already know the answer – and the answer is YES! When you're sitting in the emergency room, you are half hoping the answer is, "Oh, of *course* not – you won't feel a thing." Deep inside, though, you know that's not true. And you'd be right. It always hurts. When you're in the gym and you ask this question, you expect a good chuckle from those around you. After all, no pain – no gain, right? And if you are with a physical therapist, you don't even need to ask. They tell you on the way to the 'torture room,' "This is going to hurt." But we endure it, pain and all, because we know it's the only way to regain mobility. It's the only way to return to health.

I recently went to see our son, Zac, graduate from Basic Training. He is now officially in the Coast Guard. I bought a DVD of his graduation that shows a tiny bit of

what his 'boot camp' was like, and I can sum it up for you in two words: "IT HURTS!" The psychological and and physical strain – the pushups and 3 days of medical exams and vaccinations, the sleepless nights – it's just 8 weeks of solid pain. But at graduation, as the recruits were transformed into Coasties that day, the pain was not evident on their faces. What was



**"...if we know that gain usually comes only through the pain of hard work, why are we so afraid of it when it applies to our spiritual lives?"**

evident, however, was pride, confidence, and especially a mastery of knowledge that wasn't just 'studied into' their brains but went deep into the very core of their being, forged there by – you guessed it – the pain. They now KNEW the right thing to do and that right thing had become instinctive. Nobody had to remind them to salute, or to stand up straight and keep their eyes forward. Nobody will have to remind them that serving others comes first either. These things have become second nature to them now. Zac was a good kid going into Basic Training. He came out of it a mature young man with purpose and conviction. (And can you tell that we're proud of him!? ☺)

If we know 'no pain, no gain' to be true in our natural lives, if we know that gain usually comes only through the pain of hard work, why are we so afraid of it when it applies to our spiritual lives? We tense up at the thought of spiritual disciplines. We act like even basic 'ascetics,' such as giving up chocolate for Lent, is some great sacrifice. Fasting is too monumental to even think of. Daily meditation? Intercession? Tithing? Simplifying our lives? OH NOOOO! It's going to HURT! Perhaps you then enter into this common rebuttal with yourself:... "God is love. He wants us to prosper – in fact He even promises us that we will! (Jeremiah 29:11 – everyone's favorite prosperity promise.) Why would He then ask us to give up that prosperity? It makes no sense." Oh, how humanistic even our thought

processes have become! It's good to remind ourselves of this sad truth every now and again, especially those of us who follow a monastic way of life. It's so easy to get sidetracked, commercialized. So let's review, starting with a simple comparison. (It'll sound like a high school essay question but don't panic; I'll do all the work. You just read and digest...) Compare and

contrast these two similar concepts: **suffering** and **sacrifice**.

**Suffering.** We think we know what it is, but we often exaggerate. I heard it explained this way once. As Americans, we are quick to panic about every lump life throws at us, but there's a big difference between a lump found in your oatmeal and a lump found in your body where a lump does not belong! Most of what Americans call suffering actually fits into the 'lumpy oatmeal' category. Talk to a Holocaust survivor about suffering. Or an Iraqi Christian living in Falujah. Or to a mother weeping over her starving child in Darphur. Most of our American suffering pales in comparison. Even so, suffering is part of the human condition. We suffer because we sin. In fact, all of creation suffers because we sin. We are the passive recipients of suffering, even though we are directly responsible for it in many ways.

**Sacrifice.** Sacrifice is similar to suffering. It can be as real as suffering. (I'm thinking of Mother Teresa and her sacrifice of the comforts of life to work in the slums of Calcutta.) It can cause inconvenience. It can hurt. Talk to a Marine – or the spouse and children of a Marine – who volunteered to sacrifice for his country. They will tell you how much sacrifice hurts. But many would voluntarily bear the sacrifice again.

Sacrifice and suffering are similar in another way. They both cause us to change. People who suffer – or willingly sacrifice – are either changed for the better or changed for the worse, but they do not come out of it the same person as when they began. How many times do we hear cancer survivors who testify to greater faith and love of life because they were faced with such great peril? Or how losing everything has taught someone to appreciate everything? The individual did not cause the suffering, but they were positively affected by it. OR... they become bitter and closed-minded; they develop a victim mentality that binds them to past suffering in a way that prohibits any present or future joy. Sometimes, our suffering is self-inflicted. We may be forgiven, for example, for

an imprudent act in our youth, but the resulting health conditions caused by that imprudence may remain. Do we take a 'victim' mentality, or do we use our suffering to point us to the Lord? Do we *sacrifice* our suffering? Interesting thought; kind of like taking captivity captive (Ps 68:18) or creating life from death (John 5:24). Sacrifice creates the same change, but here's how it's different from suffering.

Sacrifice is not passive. It's an active, cognitive decision to suffer in order to bring about a greater good. Sometimes that greater good is for ourselves. Sometimes it's for the sake of others within the body of faith. And sometimes it's for those who resist God's love. In any case, sacrifice and self-denial are the 'price' we pay for a greater reward – here or in heaven. The ascetic practices of monasticism mostly fit into this category. We don't wait for the doctor, so to speak, to tell us we need physical therapy (or, in this case, spiritual therapy). We take it upon ourselves to gain from the pain so that we have greater spiritual flexibility and health. Why? What do we gain? **We gain Jesus!** We gain the undeniable knowledge that he is with us. He is found in the sacrifice because he IS sacrifice (Eph 5:2). We, like him, are perfected through sacrifice

(Heb 5:8-9).

Willful sacrifice often hurts just as much as involuntary suffering that 'just happens' to us. We're going to feel the pain one way or another – perfect rest and painless life are, after all, promised in heaven, not earth. Jesus said that in this world, we'll have trouble. But he's overcome this world (John 16:33). We overcome with him through sacrifice. Is it going to hurt? Absolutely.

## MONASTIC MUSE

**muse** \ 'myüz \ 1: *vb* to turn something over in the mind meditatively 2: to think reflectively 3: *n* a state of deep thought...

**"The reward of sacrifice is peace."**

— St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

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## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT...

Dear **FRIENDS** (and any former POSTULANTS, NOVICES, and LIFE VOW members of the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov looking for a refresher course),

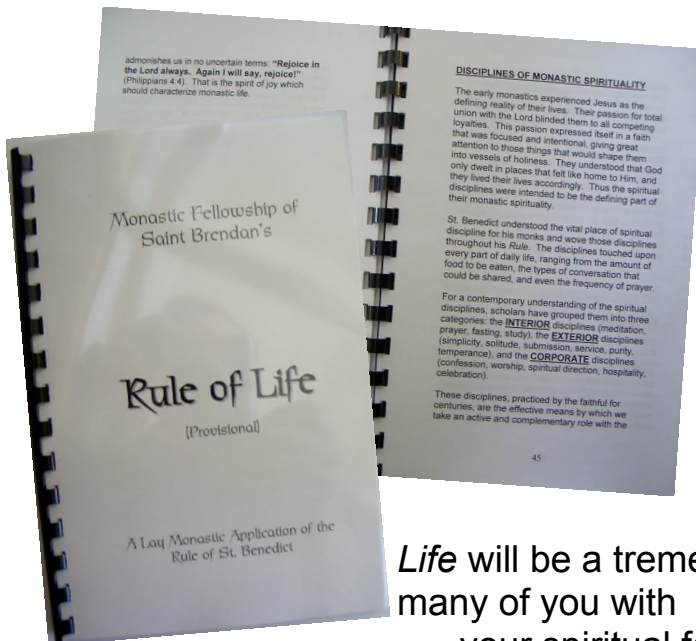
While we can't officially accept Oblates into the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's until we have made our own Life Professions, we can begin to help you with some preliminary exercises that may encourage you on your journey into the Postulancy.

Part of monastic spiritual formation is a deliberate, intentional move toward SIMPLICITY, and we have some ideas to help you get started in that critical area. This is a spiritual discipline that will have a direct impact on every other area of monastic life. Either give us a call or send us an e-mail (preferably a call), and we'll discuss them with you personally.

Rejoice!  
Father Alan, Prior  
Mother Sue, Prioress

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## Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's — *Rule of Life*



Good News! The provisional *Rule of Life* for the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's is now complete. We will be taking it with us to the Spring Clergy/Wives Retreat of the Communion of Corpus Christi for presentation to our Abbot General for his review. As soon as we have his approval and blessing, we will begin the process of making it available to our current Oblates (those who were former members of the Society of St. Seraphim of Sarov). The *Rule of*

*Life* will be a tremendous blessing for the Fellowship, helping many of you with your spiritual formation as lay monastics as it addresses

in-ternal matters, external matters, and spiritual matters. Thank you for your

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## THE MONASTIC FELLOWSHIP OF SAINT BRENDAN'S

We are thrilled to present you with our first roster of those individuals who have sent in their applications for membership in the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's. Please keep one another in your prayers, asking the Lord to bless the Fellowship and His call on each of Your lives as you seek to discern His will through a life of monastic spirituality. Remove this page, cut this list off, and keep it where you pray.

**Fr. Alan & M. Sue Andraeas (Dennysville, ME)**

**Clayton & Marcia Landwehr (Phoenix, AZ)**

**John Brown (Chula Vista, CA)**

**David Laudone (Limon, CO)**

**Jamie Collins (Peoria, AZ)**

**Judith Laudone (Franklin Square, NY)**

**Richard & Sue Fake (Lebanon, PA)**

**Dennis Maloney (Glendale, AZ)**

**Jeffrey Felter (St. Augustine, FL)**

**Donna Miller (Lubec, ME)**

**Betty Glazner (Chattanooga, TN)**

**Linda Miller (Meridian, ID)**

**Bill & Barb Guenther (Fruitland Park, FL)**

**JoAnn Munson (St. Augustine, FL)**

**Dcn. Nathan Haydon (Sherman, TX)**

**Allison Shonk (Phoenix, AZ)**

**Veronica Isbister (Sandown, NH)**

**Carolyn Talley (Peoria, AZ)**

Saint Brendan's has many other faithful friends, prayer partners, and financial supporters who cannot be listed here. Please keep them in your prayers as well. Their ministry, service, and encouragement to us is invaluable. May God richly bless them!

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