

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
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Guiltless before God: The Christian and Logismo!

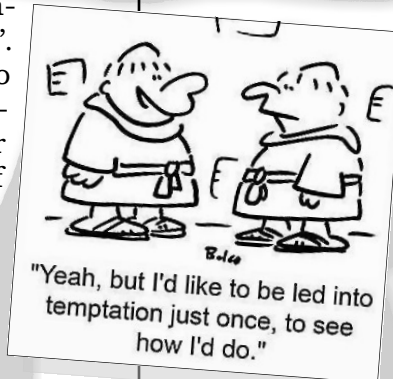
Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

*"...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."
– Genesis 4:7b*

"Therefore, be it resolved..." I wonder how many of us have entered into 2010 with sparkly, brand new resolutions – aspirations, really – to turn aside from godless activities, or undo bad habits, or finally quench those thoughts and imaginations which conspire to hold us captive to the 'old flesh'. We've all done it; every year trying to convince ourselves that we'll live as better icons of Christ than we did the year before. Yet somewhere in the back of our minds, even as we brace ourselves with sterling resolve for the calendar ahead, we're already admitting to ourselves that it won't be any better than last year; that we'll succumb to our temptations just as we have every year prior – forfeiting the game once again to Satan even before it begins. Aren't we a sad lot? And for the record, yes, I frequently find myself among this confederation.

Typically, we make a resolution to either end something that we've been doing or to begin something that we haven't been doing. In

matters of Christian faith, it's a conscious repentance of things that bring hurt to the Lord or a conscious conviction to engage in things that bring honor to the Lord. I suppose it's no surprise that starting something which pleases the Lord is much easier than stopping something which disgraces the Lord. Oh, how difficult to lay aside those things which so easily entangle us (cf. Romans 7:14-20). If there were a prayer we could cry out to the Lord, I imagine for many of us it would be similar to the cry of the father in Mark 9:24 who blurted out, "I do believe; help me to overcome my unbelief," as



he sought deliverance for his boy from an evil spirit. But rather than a struggle between belief and unbelief, our prayer would be, "I do repent; help me to overcome my unrepentance!"

The struggle for many Christians isn't the desire to walk in faithful obedience to the Lord – we all want to be

holy tabernacles fit for His dwelling. The struggle is how to mortify (or make as dead) the mind and deeds of the old Adam (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5); how to overcome those pockets of unrepentance in our lives. It's frustrating to move throughout our day in seeming victory only to find ourselves sud-

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

Guiltless before God: The Christian and Logismo!	1
Monastic Muse	3
Where We Stand: State of the Fellowship	5
Goals for 2010	6
Membership Renewal Dues	Back Page
Charitable Contribution Notice	Back Page

denly snatched up by an image or thought so obviously influenced by the enemy that we recoil at its presence yet find it equally hard to relinquish that thought to the blood of Christ. And there it lingers to fester and taunt us; clear proof of the immaturity of our faith, or perhaps even a witness to the enemy's claim that it's all a sham – that we really have no genuine faith at all. Welcome to the world of *logismoi* (λογισμοί).

What are *logismoi* [singular, *logismos*]? For that answer we need to step into the world of Eastern Orthodox monastic spirituality. It's a world very unfamiliar to most of us, but the insights of the Eastern Christian tradition are treasures we should not so lightly ignore. *Logismoi* are more than just thoughts. They are impressions, images, and desires that, according to the Holy Fathers, can literally take on a palpable feeling in the air that surrounds us – like living things buzzing around us or 'pressing in' that go far beyond 'bad vibes' or 'negative waves.' Once they gain a foothold inside a Christian they can undermine every trace of devotional and spiritual life right down to the very foundations of our faith.

Logismoi constantly assault our hearts and minds in order to prevent us from experiencing the full reality of God. Like poison in our bloodstream, *logismoi* seek to contaminate our spirits at a very deep, fundamental level. Not surprisingly, those Christians who seek to live out intentional, consecrated lives are often under the greatest assault from *logismoi*. Why? Because according to Eastern Orthodoxy, Satan wants to prevent a believer from attaining to *theosis* (full sonship, sainthood, or god-likeness) while in this physical life.

Let me clarify several things before we go any further. First of all, the Holy Fathers remind us that *logismoi* are not our own thoughts

“Not surprisingly, those Christians who seek to live out intentional, consecrated lives are often under the greatest assault from *logismoi*.”

which seek to bring up dirt from the basement of our souls. *Logismoi* are not from within, they are from without. Therefore we should not feel obsessively guilty about these thoughts because we are not their source; Satan is. However, if demonically contrived *logismoi* can find a place of support and nurture in our passions, they become extremely devious and will seek to push us toward sinful behavior whether in thought or deed. Second, *logismoi* (and the enemy behind them) will initially convey the sense that it's okay to entertain a particular sin because God is compassionate and will forgive us anyway. But once we fall prey to the temptation, that same *logismos* will change its tune and convince us that God is a ruthless, merciless Father who will toss us into the fires of eternal judgment thus creating agonizing guilt within us. In fact, much pathology suffered by Christians is the result of playing host to these mixed messages in our spirits.



How do we cope with *logismoi*? How do we stand against them? How do we claim victory over them? We must remember that *logismoi* seek to separate us from God and, in deed, that has been their attempt since the Garden of Eden. What we seek to do as Christians is not only re-enter that relationship with God through the blood of Jesus

(Continued on page 3)

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Christ, but to maintain that relationship in ever deepening intimacy. No wonder this is the kind of life that exists under constant bombardment from logismoi. So how do we gain the “upper hand” so to speak? We must begin by understanding how logismoi attack the believer.

According to Eastern Christian tradition, logismoi perform their work in five stages. The first stage is the initial assault; that moment when we become consciously aware of a thought or temptation that seeks to push aside godliness; a suggestion that wants to usher us toward an ‘indulgence’ which we would normally reject as a part of our life in Christ. We could plug all sorts of examples in here. For some, it’s the temptation to ‘pad’ the work hours on our timecard in order to receive a larger paycheck. For others, it’s running a full-blown fantasy in our heads with an attractive person who caught our eye at the health club. There is one thing to remember at this stage: no matter how sinful the temptation may be, we are not judged by God as being sinful or accountable.

Everyone is assaulted by logismoi; but such assault has nothing to do with the quality or cleanliness of our souls. Satan can only gain the advantage when we begin to dwell on such things as, “Why do these thoughts constantly come to me? What’s wrong with me?”

Why me?” Even Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. What we want to begin praying for very early on in our Christian lives is what the Eastern monastic saints referred to as *apathia*, literally an apathy or distaste for selfish, egotistical passions. Since our selfish passions are really the only place where Satan can reach us, the sooner we develop a disinterest in carnal things the quicker those pesky logismoi will fall because they’ve hit a wall rather than a receptive imagination.



The second stage is interaction. This is the start of an internal dialog with an irritating logismos. This is where we begin to toy with the thought, “Should I add a few extra hours to my timecard? What would be the harm? Is there a way to justify the increase?” Even so, no sin as yet has been committed by the Christian. We can examine an individual logismos – looking at the pros and cons of the temptation – without actually being accountable. Didn’t even Jesus ponder, “if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me?” (Matthew 26:39). In this case, the logismos Satan was holding out to Jesus was the temptation to forgo the crucifixion. But there was no room in Him for the logismos to take hold – “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” For spiritually weak people, however, this kind of flirting with the temptation is the precipice of a slippery slope.

The third stage is that of consent. This is an alignment of our wills with the logismos to actually commit the temptation – in this case to

(Continued on page 4)

MONASTIC MUSE

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

“No one can boast of being so free from sin
as not even to have an evil thought [logismoi].”

— Methodius (c. 290 AD)

“...as desirous as the enemy is for our souls, God is even more so.”

steal money with an inflated timecard. That’s when guilt and accountability enter the picture. It is the beginning of sin. The moment you decide in your heart to consent, you are well on the way to actually committing the act. Take heart, though. This is still within the realm of consent and desire. Action has not yet taken place. It is, however, a place of spiritual warfare at the mental level; a place where the intangible and mental can be just as real as the physical (cf. Matthew 5:28). If we can invoke the name of Christ into this war, confess where our minds are taking us, and plead the blood as a shield to the warped arrows of the enemy, we can still avoid the next stage of logismoi.

The fourth stage is captivity. This is the place where retreat is no longer possible and the suggestion of the logismos is embraced as an act – or even as a habit – with the lure of being repeated over and over. Psychologists would call it addiction. Even so, many people have been delivered from such bondage and captivity. The whole nation of Israel is proof that God can deliver us from slavery.

The final stage is passion or obsession. The logismos becomes an entrenched reality within the soul of the individual; actually woven into his spiritual fiber. When we reach this stage it’s like giving the key to our hearts to Satan so that he can get in and out whenever he desires. Sadly, many Christians are at this stage, struggling desperately to gain mastery over their obsessions but without success. They are fully aware that what they do grieves the heart of God. They can reason with their minds with absolute clarity about how destructive these acts are but they cannot separate themselves from the logismos that controls them.

Are these people beyond hope and help? When we reach the stage of obsession with a logismos it sounds like a part of our soul is possessed by the enemy. In a manner of

speaking this is true. Yet through the grace of God everything is possible, including deliverance and healing. But more often than not, it can’t be done alone. This is where godly brothers and sisters come in who can see our struggles and who are led by the Holy Spirit to come alongside of us in prayer and warfare.

Confession with a trusted brother or sister (or clergy) begins the process toward deliverance because confession draws us into transparency, and Satan hates transparency! Transparency with a caring friend opens the door for us to become accountable. That means we don’t have to carry the burden by ourselves anymore – someone else is helping us to carry the load; and through them, it’s Christ who is truly shouldering the burden. Accountability with that person often leads us to regular self-

examination, repentance, and a changing of our ways under the cover of their encouragement and prayers. This is also the doorway through which the Holy Spirit can take our external steps toward godliness and shape them into internal thoughts and intentions toward holiness. As we continue to ‘clean house’ and seek those with spiritual authority for full deliverance and healing, the logismoi will find that they have nothing left to which they can cling. This may take some time, but remember – as desirous as the enemy is for our souls, God is even more so.

“Therefore, be it resolved....”
Go ahead; make your resolutions to drink less coffee, to exercise more, to watch less TV, and to be more consistent at

daily devotions. But also be resolved to recognize logismoi for what they are and to allow them no anchor points in your life. *Apathia* and *theosis* should shape our resolutions for 2010. ✘

For additional reading, see Kyriacos C. Markides, *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality* (New York, NY: Image, 2002), pp. 115-130.



Where We Stand: State of the Fellowship

M. Sue Andraeas, Prioress

While governors are getting ready to make their State of the State addresses, we thought it would be prudent to take a look at where Saint Brendan's has been this past year – and where we are headed. Statistics can tell us a lot. So can financial accounting records. But these reports do not always tell the whole story. So... *this* account is part numbers, part inventory, and part prose. I pray that it gives you a better picture of the events of the past year as God blessed, admonished, increased, pruned, and clarified the vision of HIS work on this little property – and beyond.

FELLOWSHIP:

The Fellowship of St. Brendan's now includes 31 official members:

Oblates - 8 (3 Life Vowed, 2 Novices, 3 Postulants)

Friends - 23 (7 new members in 2009. No losses.)

DOCUMENTS:

The Celebration of Holy Eucharist. The text that is used during Communion services at Holy Trinity Chapel was approved and published for use on the property. (We will have copies available for sale in the near future.)

Federal filing of not-for-profit status (501(c)3) has not been completed, nor will it be. With the current changes in federal policy— ones that would dictate what cannot be preached from the pulpit (views concerning homosexuality, gay “marriage,” etc.)—we decided it would not be in our best interest to allow governmental influence (control) on our doctrine. While there are certain financial advantages to 501(c)3 status, tax exemption being key, the leverage such filing would give the State would be too ‘expensive’ spiritually.

Study Guides for several more books have been developed. Email or call to request them.

PROPERTY/CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS:

- A hand pump was installed to make water available for human and animal use during power outages.
- 100 amp electric service upgraded to 200 amps.
- Solar panels and lighting installed in 3 outbuildings: goat barn, chicken coop, and Big Barn.
- Livestock increased by 30 hens, 4 alpacas, and 4 baby goats (all doelings!). 16 roosters went ‘on pilgrimage’ to the freezer, then on to the stew pot.
- Buck barn constructed to house the all-powerful and ever-destructive Chester Boy.
- A 12x20 ft loafing porch/windbreak for donkeys constructed on north side of the Big Barn.
- Fencing for goats, donkeys and alpacas expanded pastures by 2 acres.
- Driveway leveled and resurfaced.
- Drainage trench dug along driveway to prevent future flooding of driveway and donkey pasture.
- 2 outbuildings (for equipment and fire wood) purchased and erected.
- Permaculture garden expanded another 15x25 feet (thanks to our industrious ‘chick-atillers,’ who also began working on this years’ expansion of an additional 200 sq. feet.).
- Wood chipper purchased to eliminate brush piles, converting them to bedding for animals and for trails.
- Fruit/nut tree orchard expanded.
- Perennial fruit/vegetable beds expanded.
- Shingles and other supplies purchased to repair northern roof of the house.
- Post and beam support for expansion of loft area and new staircase to loft and guest room completed.
- Library increased, including new books covering sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry, teaching draft animals, fibers and weaving, and food preservation through lacto-fermentation as well as spiritual/devotional titles.
- New used pickup truck purchased for Saint Brendan's farm use. The Isuzu was sold (with 210,000+ miles).

RETREATANTS:

29 Day Visitors: Some come to tour the property, or to learn about the animals or permaculture gardening. Some come for time of prayer, or for spiritual direction.

48 Days of Overnight Retreatants: Example: a couple staying for a weekend would count as '4 days' (i.e., 2 people for 2 nights). Only one of the retreatants was a member of the Fellowship upon arrival. 5 became members after their stay. (What does that tell you about retreats and a sense of 'belonging?!) Let us know when you are ready to schedule YOUR retreat!)

1 Promise Ceremony: Dn. Nathan Haydon, TX, made Novice Promises during his retreat.

1 Intern: Stephanie, our 'busy helper', assisted 2 days per week with fence construction and milking while learning animal husbandry, gardening skills, and cheese making.

LIVESTOCK CONTRIBUTIONS:

Goats: 'Brigid' – 232.5 gallons of milk in 8 mo.; 'Anastasia' – 246.4 gallons of milk in 10 mo. A combined total of **3,804 pounds** (over 1½ TONS!) of milk from 2 first-year milkers!!!

Chickens: 30 hens – 4,305 eggs; or 359 dozen.

FINANCES — INCOME:

Holy Trinity Chapel donations and prayer rope sales:	\$1,134.98
Non-designated donations:	\$5,501.00
Sale of milk, cheese, eggs, and garden produce:	\$2,871.25
Designated Offering:	\$16.00
Tithes:	\$5,190.00
Misc. Donations:	\$10.09
Sale of vehicle:	\$1,000.00
Total Income:	\$15,723.32

FINANCES — EXPENDITURES:

Holy Trinity Chapel Supplies:	\$101.22
Pickup Truck purchase, registration, and repairs:	\$4,065.40
Other vehicle expenses:	\$888.06
Purchase of alpacas and peeps:	\$278.48
Administrative costs:	\$1,309.34

Mission/outreach:	\$69.45
Books for library:	\$35.09
Property Upkeep:	\$1,676.91
Building repair/maintenance:	\$1,313.48
Fruit/nut trees, shrubs:	\$64.95
Retreatant Expenses:	
Travel 'grants':	\$500.00
Food, guest supplies:	\$676.81
Airport transportation:	\$161.69
Tithe to UAC:	\$762.00
Misc.:	\$682.07
Total Expenditures:	\$16,202.65

What's missing? Salaries, insurances, mortgage payments, taxes, and utilities. Saint Brendan's would fail if the ministry had to carry those expenses at this time. Also missing is the milk, cheese, produce, and other supplies given at no cost to local folks in need.

GOALS FOR 2010:

As 2009 drew to a close, Fr. Alan and I were being taken – driven – in an unusual direction. We have decided to pursue it as an experiment. If you remember, Saint Brendan's was originally an experiment in returning to the original 'homestead-esque' nature of a monastery where the work, study, prayer, and rest were all lived out in a routine of agrarian life: gardens, poultry, bees, and goats or cows were cared for to provide food; the rhythm of prayer intertwined with the rhythm of tending plants and animals; the need for money-producing jobs diminished as most all needs were gained through bartering, through the honing of skills for self- (or God-) sufficiency; and through minimal use of currency or the aid of outsiders.

The microcosm of the monastic community and surrounding farms (or *manaig* in Celtic monasteries) became separated from the rest of the culture around them. Their impact to these secular cultures was not one of co-dependency. Rather, because the monastery was so different from the world, outsiders soon came to rely on them for education, medicine, the raising of children, and, of course, spiritual direction. It was their uniqueness, *not their assimilation*, that made

them appealing to outsiders! Nearly every visitor to Saint Brendan's remarks on its 'magical' quality, or its beauty, its peace – something! They know it's different. It's not just another farm or homestead. THAT is what we are looking to perpetuate and magnify in this year's experiment. Here it is!

The following Scripture from 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 (NIV) will be our guide for 2010:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. "Therefore come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

One of our day visitors this summer suggested we read a book called, "In Defense of Food" by Michael Pollan. (Don't look for it in your Christian book store; it's a secular title.) We didn't begin the book until just recently, but that was the first in a series of 'suggestions' made over the course of 8 months, all dealing with the precarious nature of our national food supply: the curious habit we, as a nation, have of buying 'nutrients' rather than food; processed food rather than whole foods; and buying food from halfway around the globe, increasing the amount of fossil fuels used to feed us everything we want – NOW! Some of the books were research types. Some were journalistic, (the accounting of a family's attempt to 'eat local only' for one year). Others were about ancient techniques of food preparation and preservation that make it more nutritious, even while removing its ability to be mass-produced for marketing and exportation.

Fr. Alan and I have made a concerted effort to remove all high fructose corn syrup, hydrolyzed fats, artificial sweeteners, and flavor enhancers from our diet. Some days we do well. Some days we do not, but we are working hard to *eat food*. We are also working harder at maintaining our 'micro-livestock' whether they be the organisms in our garden soil, the milk cultures that produce kefir and yogurt and cheese from our goat milk, or those necessary to make vinegar and natural, nutritious 'sodas.' (These are easy processes that ALL of us can do!) No, we are not turning into 'foodies' or nature worshipers! We are learning how to tend the earth as God commanded Adam to do and, at the same time, purify our bodies of everything that contaminates them – out of reverence for God, not for the sake of our own longevity or super-looking new physiques (although those might well be side effects, blessings bestowed by God for our reverence for Him! ☺).

God's temple – our bodies of 'living stones' that comprise the New Jerusalem – is being poisoned by all sorts of non-foods that we put into them (and all sorts of involvement with other things of the world; it's much larger than just food!) and, for the most part, we do not even realize it. I can't think of any Christian books that I have seen that indicate that we need to live healthy lives – out of reverence for God. Oh, there are plenty that tell us what Jesus would eat, how to exercise the Christian way, how to diet the Christian way, but the goal is always for personal gain. We are not going to 'diet' or 'exercise' for the sake of our own bodies but to begin housecleaning God's most holy temple on this property – and it's not Holy Trinity Chapel: it's us.

If you would like to take on this experiment with us, let us know. We can encourage each other. The day is coming when the Church's role as provider, sustainer, and healer of its members will need to be retaken or the Church will suffer. WE are to be this nation's caretakers – not welfare, not government agencies, not a national health care plan! WE were given the Great Commission! It begins, as it did in Old Testament times, by... cleaning out the temple, then by cleaning up those who are supposed to worship in it. ✕

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUES



Annual Fellowship dues are received from all members during January of each year. If you became a member of the Fellowship (or advanced to a new level of membership) after July of the previous year, your renewal fee is waived until January of next year. Also, if you gave financial gifts to Saint Brendan's of \$200.00 or more during the past year, your renewal fee is also waived. Please note the amount of your renewal rate and send it as soon as you can, making your check payable to "Saint Brendan's" (Memo: Membership Renewal for 2010). Thank for your prompt response. If you have any questions, please contact us right away.

Your renewal dues as a FRIEND for 2010 is: \$15.00 () Waived ()
Your renewal dues as an OBLATE for 2010 is: \$20.00 () Waived ()

ATTENTION: If you made charitable contributions to Saint Brendan's in 2009, your contribution statement is inside this newsletter.

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