

# The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's  
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## Abiding on the Altar

Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

*“We are the sheep of His pasture;  
...enter His courts with praise”  
Psalm 100:3-4*

The first Sunday of this New Year saw a significant milestone in the life of Saint Brendan's. We celebrated the Eucharist in Holy Trinity Chapel. That in itself is not earth shattering; the Eucharist is celebrated here on a regular basis. It was significant because we were joined by people who were NOT here on retreat. Holy Trinity Chapel opened its doors for Sunday worship to whoever wanted to come!

You see, for almost five years Mother Sue and I have been serving in local churches, providing pastoral cover, preaching, teaching, and music – often to the neglect of Saint Brendan's. Those obligations came to an end on the last Sunday of 2010 and now we can devote our full prayer and labor to this ministry. Praise God! I want to thank our bishops and our many prayerful friends who kept reminding us that it was time.

Being such a significant event, the inaugural service of 2011 required an equally significant *word* from the Lord. After all, we were laying the foundation for a new parish family associated with Saint Brendan's. And as much as this word from the



Lord would be directed to the small group that assembled here, it would also be directed to Mother Sue and me and, by extension, to the entire Saint Brendan's fellowship. What did God want to say?

I'm a firm believer in preaching from the lectionary, so it had to begin there. The prescribed texts for that first Sunday were Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 84; Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a; and Luke 2:41-52. They were probably the same for many of you as well. What Mother Sue and I didn't want, however, was for Holy Trinity Chapel to simply 'be' another church, providing one more 'flavor' for people in the area to pick from. What was God calling us to be? If it wasn't going to be reflected this first Sunday then we were simply one more "house church" on the bloated and littered denominational landscape.

Along with this concern was the fact that we've also been agonizing with what appears to be the failure of the larger Church in so many ways – its theology, discipleship, evangelism, worship, education, outreach. I can't count the number of times we would read a church-related article, listen to a news story, hear about a situation, witness an activity, or even try to help someone seeking spiritual direction and, at the end of the day, just shake our heads and say, How did the Church become so stupid? I know; that puts me in jeopardy of calling the Body of Christ 'raca' (Matthew 5:22), yet we can't help but recognize that much of American Christendom has lost its way.

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## “The only reason a sheep enters the Temple is to be sacrificed!”

In many quarters of Christianity our faith has grown selfish, undisciplined, disobedient, worldly, flippant, Word-less, gluttonous, syncretistic, and shallow. A harsh diagnosis to be sure, but I believe that many of you are seeing similar symptoms in the churches where you live. *Where did we go astray?!* That's why we want to be very intentional about the kind of witness that Saint Brendan's brings into this picture.



The final part to the puzzle was how God brought us to Psalm 100:3-4 at the end of 2010. It became our “theme verse” for December, reminding us that we were made and called to be His sheep. The psalm also tells us (actually, orders us) to enter His gates

and courts (i.e., referring to the Tabernacle or Temple) with praise and thanksgiving. These were comfortable and familiar things to ponder – a perfect text for *lectio divina* – until one morning when Mother Sue turned to me and, with a look that told me we were entering a paradigm shift, said, “The only reason a sheep enters the Temple is to be sacrificed!” And there it was: our focus for 2011; for us personally, for the local fellowship that God would gather around Holy Trinity Chapel, and for Saint Brendan's as a whole. Let me repeat it again: The only reason a sheep enters the Temple is to be sacrificed.

The question now was whether or not the lectionary readings for January 2<sup>nd</sup> would support this ‘word from the Lord’ for 2011. Guess what? God is faithful. I'll show you how the Holy Spirit connected the dots for that inaugural service.

In Jeremiah 31:7-14, verse 10 was the key, “...He will watch over His flock like a shepherd.” Who makes up this flock? All kinds of people. According to verses 8, 13, and 14 it's the young, old, infirm, handicapped, pregnant, men, women, clergy; folks from every class, status, and circumstance who hear the call of the Shepherd. Unfortunately, reading it in Scripture is easier than practicing it in church. After all, we're a lot more comfortable

in church when everyone else looks just like us, especially if we have to sit next to them. But God's call isn't just for the clean or beautiful or

healthy or educated or financially solvent. He's looking to populate His fold with the wounded, the outcast, the captive, and the brokenhearted. Is this where Holy Trinity Chapel begins?

In Psalm 84 we see a parallel to those words God gave us earlier in Psalm 100; the “courts of the Lord” (vs. 2) and the “house of God” (vs. 10). Psalm 84 is an invitation to enter this place of God's habitation, but it comes with a stipulation. In verse 4 the only people who can enter into God's presence are those whose “walk is blameless.” ‘Blameless’ comes from the Hebrew word *tamiym* which means without blemish, perfect, without spot, or undefiled. This was the ceremonial vocabulary used to describe the standard of suitability for any sacrifice brought to the Temple, including sheep.

This thread continues into the New Testament reading with Ephesians 1:3-6 and 15-19a. Verse 4 shows us that God's flock is made sacrificially acceptable *through* Christ, chosen *in Him* to be “holy and blameless” in His sight. Just as the priests of the Temple had to inspect every animal brought to the altar, God inspects us through the ‘lens’ of His Son and He determines that we are blameless in Christ. Again, like the Hebrew, this is the Greek word *amomos* which means (you guessed it) unblemished, faultless, and spotless – the vocabulary of the altar.



The Gospel option we used was Luke 2:41-52, the story of Jesus as a boy at the Temple. It's

the Feast of the Passover which, as you may know, sacramentally drew the celebrants into a

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'dynamic participation' with those ancient events culminated in the Jewish Exodus out of Egypt. And as you can imagine, the climax of that week-long celebration was the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb and the sprinkling of blood, just as Moses gave the Passover instructions to the Jews in Goshen the instructions which preserved their first-born sons when the death angel swept through the land of Egypt. And now we find Jesus, the Lamb of God, the *perfect* Passover Lamb, in the Temple telling His parents, "Did you not know that I had to be about my Father's business?" (vs. 49). A more literal rendering of the Greek would be, "Did you not know that I had to be about the *things* of my Father?"



How does this all tie together? Just as Jesus was ultimately obedient to His Father to die as the Passover Lamb, we are also to live in that kind of sacrificial obedience. We are the sheep of His pas-

ture. We are to enter into His courts. Through Christ we are made blameless. And as Mother Sue said, the only reason a sheep enters the Temple is to be sacrificed. That's far from the contemporary Christian message proclaimed in many churches. Yet German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote prior to his martyrdom in the waning years of Nazi Germany, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."

This is God's focus for us, for Holy Trinity Chapel, and for the fellowship of Saint Brendan's for 2011. We want to learn what this kind of sacrificial life looks like for God's sheep. If Paul calls us to offer up our lives as living sacrifices in Romans 12:1-2, we want to know how that kind of Christianity is put into practice. We have a long way to go in discerning all the ins and outs of making it happen but it's imperative that we not lose sight of this word. Why? Because I think we'll soon discover that, as the coming days grow spiritually darker, the safest place for a true Christian to be is *on the altar!* ✕

## Be All That You Should Be!

M. Sue Andraeas, Prioress

***Herein is our love made perfect,  
that we may have boldness in the  
Day of Judgment: because as he [Christ] is,  
so are we in this world.***

1 John 4:17 (KJV)

Here it is, January. Time for the next New Year's Resolutions. It always strikes me as odd that we wait until the New Year to make resolutions since it is usually on the heels of a rather indulgent, excessive holiday season. Credit card debt is higher, belts are a little more snug due to all the holiday sweets, emotions are a bit depressed after all the hype and activity. (Maybe it would be bet-

ter to make our resolutions during Advent!) According to the 'Top 10' lists, the most popular resolutions are to lose weight, to be happy/worry less, to get out of debt, to quit smoking/drinking, and to improve relationships with intimate friends and family. Those are all very noble resolutions. But do you know what they all have in common? Each one is a desire to be free from self. Look at them again.

The bondages that we – Christians and non-Christians alike – want to be free from are bondages to self! We want to lose weight; to be free from gluttony. We want to be happy; free from

**“Your life is NOT about you.  
Your life is about Jesus”**

## 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...

**“from the very beginning, this was inculcated as a precept of Jesus among His hearers: that men are to despise the life that is eagerly sought after by the multitude, and are to be earnest in living the life that resembles God.”**

— Origen (c. 248 AD)





anxiety and worry. We want to get out of debt; be free from greed. We want to break addictions; be free from idolatrous connections to things that destroy us. We want to be closer to others; be free from being the center of our

existence. It seems to me that maybe we really *do* know what is best for us. But when we word it as a New Year's resolution – something that we will do for ourselves – we fail because while our desires are correct, our motivation is not. It is possible to want the right thing for the wrong reason.

So, then, what is the right reason, the correct motivation, for wanting to be delivered from gluttony, greed, addictions, idolatry, or self-centeredness? To answer that, we need to remember why we were created in the first place. We were created to glorify God! Then we were pulled from the darkness of our sin in order to be saved – not for ourselves but to be Christ's ambassadors in our day. That's right. Your life is NOT about you! Your life is about Jesus. He paid the price for our sins, for our redemption. He did this wonderful thing for us not just so we can avoid hell – although that is a 'perk' of our redemption. No, He redeemed us out of obedience to His Father so that we would be free to be – like Him – light and salt to a lost world. We are to be Christ's ambassadors, Paul says. We are to continue Christ's ministry of reconciliation. We are to reconcile the world to God. These are Paul's instructions in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, are they not?

Paul continues (in the sixth chapter) by admonishing us not to put a stumbling block before anyone. You ought to read that list of things which he says removes stumbling blocks! It begins with 'endurance, hardship and beatings,' continues with 'truthful speech and in the power of God' and ends with 'having nothing yet possessing everything' (2 Corinthians 6:4-10). Oh, yeah. And in the middle

of this list of 'reconciliation requirements' is – are you ready? – 'dying and yet we live on' (v. 9). In short, we are called to be like Christ. We are called to die.

Did you know that Christ's temptations in the desert were not just His own? If you look at the three temptations – and His three answers based upon Old Testament Scripture – you will find that each of His 'victories' undoes a temptation that the Israelites fell to during their 40 years in the desert. Satan tempted Jesus with bread. His response, 'Man does not live by bread alone...', was what Moses said when admonishing the Israelites for complaining about manna. Satan tempted Jesus by telling Him to jump off a high pinnacle to see if God would dispatch angels to protect Him. His response, 'Do not test the Lord your God,' was what Moses said when cautioning the Israelites about their whining at Massah as though God would not care for them even after delivering them from Egypt. Finally, Satan tempted Jesus with earthly power. Jesus told Satan to leave. "Worship God and serve Him only," were the



same words Moses had spoken to remind the Israelites to steer clear of other gods. (Compare Deuteronomy 6-8 with Matthew 4 for yourself). So what does all of that have to do with resolutions and reconciliation – and death?

Well, after 40 days of fasting, Jesus undid what the Israelites had done during their 40 years in the desert! He was reconciling,

'balancing,' their fall to temptation with His resisting of temptation. We are called to do what Jesus did. In fact, He said we'd do even greater things! John records Jesus as saying, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He *will do even greater things than these*, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12, NIV). Our faith in Christ does not remove the stain of sin; that was His job. But our faith in Christ CAN help to rec-

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**"We are called to continue the work of reconciliation, the work of 'balancing' the fall to sin, by resisting sin."**

oncile the world with God through our relinquishment and by not giving in to temptation. We are called to continue the work of reconciliation, the work of 'balancing' the fall to sin, by resisting sin. And how



do we do that? By dying – yet living. That's what Paul said – be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)!

So what tempts you? Too many helpings at the Chinese buffet? (Your chance to 'undo' the sin of gluttony – and in doing so, you will be healthier.) Too many beers during the game? (Your chance to 'undo'

the sin of drunkenness – and have a sober mind.) Passing along a good, juicy story about a co-worker or neighbor? (Your chance to 'undo' gossip – and keep your thoughts pure.) Stomping around or griping when something doesn't suit you? (Your chance to 'undo' anger – and to relinquish your right to having your own way.) Look at your 'pet vices' not as a personal trap or something to overcome for your own sake but an opportunity to 'die' to that vice – for yourself, for the Church, and beyond.

Later in his life while exiled on Patmos, John wrote three little letters that are recorded in Scripture. They are found near the back of the Bible; tiny things but they really pack a punch. The first one is the longest, and is mostly about love. But don't think you are going to read it when you need a nice 'warm fuzzy' kind of emotion. It is not the mushy kind of love that we are accustomed to. It is Christ's kind of love – the kind that requires self-sacrifice for the sake of others. It is the kind that lets go of sin so that we can help the world see Jesus. It is the kind that gives us confidence for the Day of Judgment.

Look at the verse at the top of this article again. Perfected love creates boldness; we know we belong to Jesus because, like Him, we love to the point of sacrifice (aka, death). Perfected love makes us like Jesus in this world. And how was He? Hated, despised, mocked, killed – yet dead, He is alive. Perfected love makes us like that in the world. How, then, can we be that kind of sacrificial love when we are bound by the very things that Jesus spoke against: gluttony, idola-

try, greed, lust, selfishness – all those things that fill our New Year's Resolutions? And how can we keep from these things unless our goal is to be Christlike – to remember that the last 'self' thing we did was giving our lives to Christ – and, in Him, we are now part of HIS body, HIS ministry, HIS reconciliation. We are now a building block within the Church – not a stand-alone monument. When we indulge our vices we not only harm our own souls but they weaken the Church because they weaken Her testimony of Christ's love to a world that needs it now as much as it ever has!

I don't usually make New Year's resolutions. This year, however, I think I will. This year, I resolve to get out of my own way so that Christ may be seen through me. I resolve to not live like food sustains me, or that money provides for my needs, or that I deserve rewards for doing what Jesus has asked me to do. (Servants are not rewarded for doing what they are told to do!) I resolve to give up the things in my life that draw attention to the world rather than to Jesus. And I resolve to not rely on my own strength, willpower, or memory to accomplish any of this! The strength will come from communion with Christ via Scripture, meditation,

## CHURCH. BE ALL YOU SHOULD BE.

worship, receiving of the Eucharist, and fellowship with others who have made the same resolve. (Most folks in the pews will not provide this kind of fellowship, I'm sorry to say. I need to be a better example for them as well.) In short, I resolve to be all that Jesus has asked me to be – no more excuses. Will you help me?

Rejoice! ✠





## The Priory House: Something's Always Going On

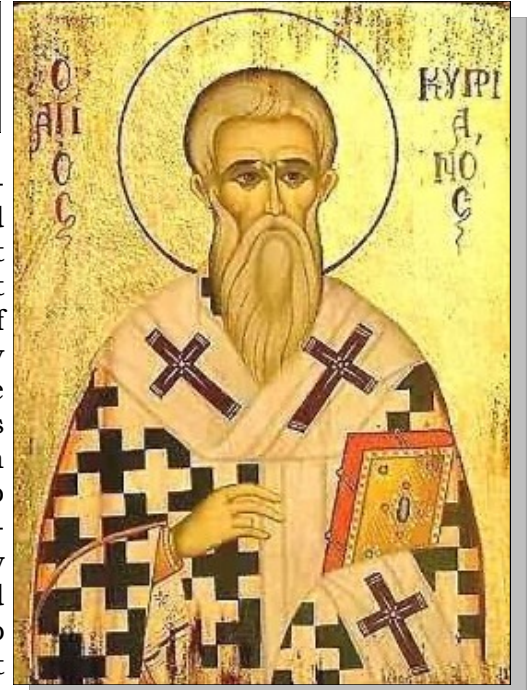


**TOP LEFT:** Our farrier, Evan, makes a 7:00 AM visit on the day of a major blizzard to trim the donkeys' hooves. Here Chula is enjoying her 'pedicure'. **TOP RIGHT:** Two new 'mousers' have been added to the Saint Brendan's menagerie—Dudley (L) and Mulligan (R). Dudley, about 6 months old, is a black and white longhair; Mulligan, about 4 months old, is a Maine Coon Cat with the potential of reaching 20 lbs. in weight! **BOTTOM LEFT:** Gathering for worship at Holy Trinity Chapel on January 2, 2011, were (back row, L to R) Fr. Alan Andraeas, Mary Greene, M. Sue Andraeas, (front row, L to R) Helen Kilby, Michelle Curtis, Rylan Curtis, and Becca Greene. It's good to know that God has a heart for house churches (cf., Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1-2)! **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Butchering day. This time it's one of our turkeys. Helping M. Sue is John King from Machias, ME. Our largest turkey that day, the tom, weighed in at 53 lbs.! As we began to pluck the feathers, John said, "It looks like a turkey under there!" Yes, but it's tastier than a grocery store bird!



## The Final Word: Saint Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 AD)

I used to regard it as a difficult matter (and especially difficult because of my character at that time) that a man could be capable of being born again. Yet, this was a truth that the Divine Mercy had announced for my salvation. I thought it difficult that a man quickened to a new life in the bath of saving water would be able to put off what he had previously been. That is, although retaining all his bodily structure, he himself could be changed in heart and soul. I said, "How is such a conversion possible, that there could be a sudden and rapid divestment of all my corrupt habits?" ...I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually parts of me and native to me. But after that, by the help of the water of new birth, the stain of former years had been washed away, and a light from above—serene and pure—had been infused into my reconciled heart. Then, by the agency of the Spirit breathed from heaven, this second birth restored me, as it were, to a new man. ...I was enabled to acknowledge that what I had been previously living in the practice of sins (being born in the flesh) was of the earth and was earthly. But now I had begun to be of God and was enlivened by the Spirit of holiness.



*[Saint Cyprian was Bishop of the church in Carthage, North Africa, during a period of fierce Christian persecution. He often had to work underground and was eventually captured and executed by the Romans. An extensive collection of letters written by and to Cyprian still remains, along with various treatises written by him. These works give tremendous insight into the structure of the Church in the middle of the third century.]*



Fall from Eden: the untold story



**From the Archives:** A young moose came to visit us in our back yard.

## **SPECIAL NOTICES:**

- 1.** The 2011 Saint Brendan's Fellowship renewal form for **Friends** and **Oblates** is included with this newsletter. If yours is missing, please e-mail or call us right away. We must have your fellowship renewal intentions/fees by the end of March.
- 2.** Tax statements for your charitable giving to Saint Brendan's for 2010 will be attached to this newsletter or mailed out by the end of the month.

