

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
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Monastery in Miniature

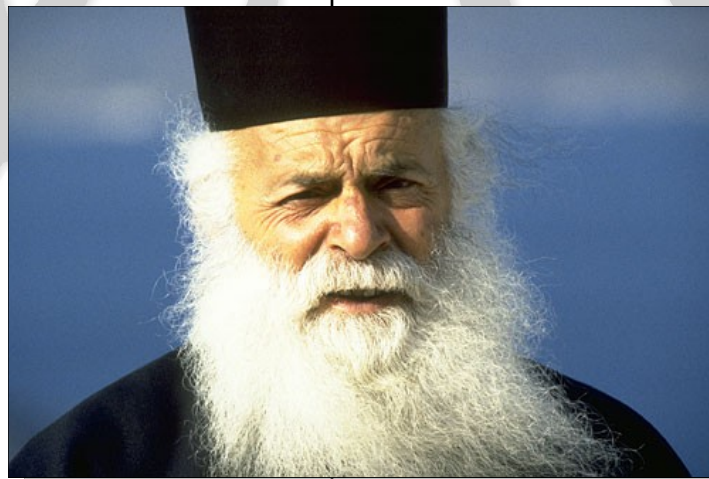
Fr. Alan L. Andraeas, Prior

***"This is the one I esteem:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit,
and trembles at my word."***

Isaiah 66:2b

Saint Benedict's "little rule for beginners" has shaped Christian living for over fifteen centuries. In fact, except for the Holy Bible, the *Rule of Saint Benedict* has been printed more than any other book in human history. Next to the Scriptures, it is regarded by many as the most influential text in Western society. Benedict's *Rule* can tell our Saint Brendan's fellowship a lot about monastic life (and the good thing is that you don't have to be a monk or nun to get a copy!).

Some folks think monastic life is that 'thing' you do inside a monastery enclosure. You have to get a funny haircut (a 'tonsure') or you hide your hair from sight; you have to wear a poorly-fitted habit with a chunky, knotted rope around your waist; you have to learn how to chant in Latin; you're required to work in the vegetable patch every day; you have to make silly church crafts that nobody wants to buy; you can't say a word while eating; you have to scrub the floors



on your hands and knees; and you have to pray at odd hours throughout the night. No, it doesn't sound very appealing to me either, but that's a far-from-accurate stereotype of monastic life.

What, then, is monastic life all about? The answer is found in the Vatican II decree, *On the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life*. In it we find this simple statement: "A monastic's first duty is the humble, devout service of God's majesty within the bounds of the monastery." According to Benedictines (and this would apply to all religious orders) this 'humble, devout service' is the rhythmic cycle of prayer, immersion in Scripture, worship, and obedient servanthood, unfaltering day after day, season after season, which gives monasteries their distinctive atmosphere; so much so that many laity see them as 'places apart' for retreat, refreshment, renewal, spiritual direction, and untainted worship — and they put their names on waiting lists for months at a time in order to visit these monasteries for even a single weekend.

Now are you ready for a rude awakening? Oblates (i.e., long-distance lay monastics) are monasteries in miniature! You don't wear a religious habit, you don't call your dining room a

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**“A monastic’s first duty
is the humble, devout service of God’s majesty
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refectory, you don’t pray in an oratory (at 3:00 AM!), you don’t shave the crown of your heads, and you may not work in a vegetable patch, but as an extension of Saint Brendan’s your life must reflect the “humble, devout service of God’s majesty” within the framework of YOUR monastery. And what is your monastery? Your home, your family, your church, your place of work, and your neighborhood.

The time you spend in prayer, in Scripture, in devotional worship, and in servanthood (in other words, all of those things that help us die to self as living sacrifices), unfaltering day after day, season after season, will aid in transforming you to the point that others can’t help but see you as a ‘person apart’ – which is what every Christian should be because we are not of this world. And as a monastery-in-miniature you should be the one that others seek out for spiritual direction, refreshment, prayer, or even for a ‘good word’ or benediction.

What does this entail? Living like a Christian. Oh, not like a contemporary, Western, North American Christian (who is so often in love with himself more than he is with Christ), but as a Christian whose life is yielded to the full authority of Christ, in full discipleship to Christ, in order to become an icon of Christ; a ‘person apart.’ It means surrendering a lot of things: habits, preferences, time, agendas, treasure, personal comfort, pride, and ego; all of those things that so easily conspire against the deeper call to prayer, Scripture reading, worship, and humble servanthood.

As a fellowship that seeks to examine and live out a call to lay monasticism, that’s exactly what Saint Brendan’s is all about. For our Oblates, if you thought otherwise, I hope you don’t feel deceived, although I think we’ve been pretty consistent over the years in defining Saint Brendan’s purpose. For our Friends, you, of course, are under no obligation except to support and encourage this ministry. However, may I be so bold as to remind you that the classic disciplines of Christianity (those things we would consider today as something monks and nuns do) were actually practiced by

ALL believers in the Early Church. In fact, I’m on pretty firm footing when I say that Christian life was intended to be a disciplined life, and that disciplined life was to be practiced by all Christians. The only difference was that some lived out their religious disciplines in a closed community of vowed, celibate believers and others lived out those same disciplines in the context of families and neighborhoods.



Are we, the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s, a ‘people apart?’ When we’re in the company of other folks, can they tell by our conversation, behavior, choices, and attitudes that we’re different? Can our pastors and rectors look to us as individuals of deepening faith and commitment? Are we known as people who are passionate about godliness, devoted to servanthood, unafraid of humility, and disinterested in the limelight? Do we discipline our thought lives, our appetites, and our bodies? Are our minds saturated in Scripture, quieted by contemplation, and quickened by prayer? Do we hunger for worship and times of devotion? Are we obedient to the godly authority placed over us or do we question, second-guess, or grumble over the spiritual direction we receive (whether it comes from myself and Mother Sue or from the clergy in whose churches we hold our memberships)?

As the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s, each one of you is a monastery in miniature. That means your first duty is “the humble, devout service of God’s majesty” within the bounds of the ‘monastery’ in which God has placed you. Let’s commit ourselves to being a ‘people apart’ for the honor of Christ and for the majesty of God. ✕

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A Cloud-Covered Race

M. Sue Andraeas, Prioress

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Hebrews 12:1

I like Hebrews 12:1. Way up here in this rather remote area of Maine, it's easy to forget that we are connected to a 'great cloud of witnesses' as Alan and I pray the offices or celebrate the Eucharist, just the two of us. Even on a Sunday morning, our 'parish' is small, and there is not another Anglican or member of St. Brendan's fellowship joining us. Not yet. (There is a very faithful group that meets here on Sunday mornings, however, and we are greatly blessed and encouraged by them!) While this 'great cloud' is comforting, it also comes with an obligation. But I don't know that I ever noticed the obligation before this Lenten season.

Every year, just before Lent begins, people ask me what I am giving up – for Lent. Or they tell me what they are giving up – for Lent. Or they mention what they are adding – for Lent. This year, those kinds of comments did not sit well with me and, as usual, I figured it was my own rebellion that was causing the problem. Then I realized something. If I am to give up

something – or add something – to my usual spiritual walk, it had better not be because of the calendar month, or because of the church season I am entering. It had better be for Jesus. (St. Paul said it this way in Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”) I'm not to give things up, or add things – not even a word – in the name of Lent or preparation for Easter or even for spiritual growth. I am to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus ('in the name of' means that I do it in his authority for his sake; think 'power of attorney' when you see that phrase), and thank the Father for the opportunity to do it!

This revelation has changed my Lenten perspective entirely. Lent is not for my preparation or for my growth alone. Lent is for Jesus. Lent is a time for



me to see where I am falling short in my representation and devotion of *Him*. It is a time for me to take deliberate steps to alter what I do so that my hidden sinfulness is exposed – *for his sake*. AND I am to thank God for the opportunity to willingly give up whatever it takes – or add whatever it takes – so that the Holy Spirit may reveal

those weaknesses in me *for Jesus' sake*. Like everything else in my life, Lent is not about me. Lent is about my Savior because my life is not my

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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...
3:

“The entire life of a good Christian is, in fact, an exercise of holy desire. By desiring heaven we exercise the powers of our soul. Now this exercise will be efficient only to the extent that we free ourselves from desires leading to infatuation with this world.”

— St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (c. 430 AD)

own but was bought at a very precious price (see 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23).

But that's not all. It gets even better. If I am short-sighted enough or even stubborn enough to decide Lent is for me – this verse in Hebrews 12 reminds me that it is not. Let's back up one chapter. Hebrews 11 is that great 'Faith' chapter. It begins with a definition of faith ("the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen") and continues by citing a spiritual 'Who's Who' of both Old and New Testament giants of faith. From Abel to the Unknown Martyrs of the first century, we are given the account of their faithfulness to a plan that had not yet been completely mapped out. And the author of this Who's Who in Hebrews begins chapter 12 with, "Since, therefore..." admonishing us to take action because of this cloud of faithful witnesses. And what is that action? It's three-fold.

First, we are to throw off or cast aside everything that hinders our faith. Second, we are to cast aside the sin that easily entangles us. Third, we are to run the race set before us with perseverance. Why? BECAUSE of the faithful who have gone before us. "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses..." They are not watching from a great distance. They surround us. They were faithful, not just for their own sake and their own prize but for our sake. They were faithful to leave markers for us to follow. Even if we think we live out this spiritual life on our own, this portion of Scripture reminds us that we live in a 'cloud community' whether we want to or not! We owe them, and we repay them by casting off the weights that hinder us, casting off the sin that we so easily get tangled up in, and by living out the life Jesus has set before us in a way that leaves markers for those who come after us.

There's something else often overlooked in this short verse. Notice that the first thing we need to cast off isn't the sins that entangle us but 'everything that hinders.' St. Paul said,

"We owe them, and we repay them by casting off the weights that hinder us, casting off the sin that we so easily get tangled up in."



"Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). In verse 23 of that same chapter he repeats this thought again, but changes the last phrase to, "but not everything is constructive." In other words, some things that the law allows, things that are not actually sinful, can master us or be unconstructive to our spiritual development. Said another way, there are some permissible things that, if taken to excess or allowed to become too important, become our masters.

How do we know what they are? Well, I think that the normal 'bumps and bruises' of life reveal them quite adequately. If the electrical power to your house is cut off and you go into withdrawal because you can't use your computer or television, you've got a 'weight that hinders.' If some unexpected event comes along that causes you to panic because you thought you were in control of your schedule, your money, and your family, you've got a 'weight that hinders.' It might be an object or pastime, but often it is an attitude or opinion. The most obvious examples would be activities, types of books or TV shows, or computer sites that steal away our time or become addictive; it might be the sense that you control your life, are independent and can manage your own affairs, are indestructible or spiritually elite. It could be food that is not unlawful to eat but that becomes addictive or destructive in the way that we it.

Those things then become our 'blind spots' or even our masters, and when they are revealed we need to cast them off – and thank God for showing them to us! Oh, we do not feel enslaved by these weights. They usually seem harmless, comfortable or enjoyable – even fun. It's our 'comfort foods' or 'down time activities' or sense of accomplishment and independence that, should they no longer be available to us, suddenly cause us to respond with fear or anger. At the very least, we feel like we've lost a dear friend when those activities or objects are removed from our lives, or our opinions challenged. THOSE are the very things that we are instructed to cast aside willingly so that

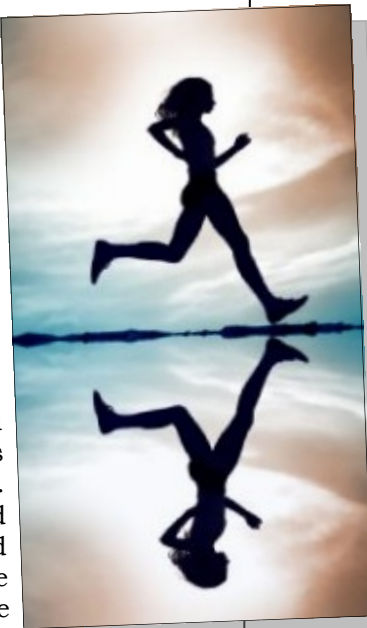
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they do not hinder us – thanking God for the opportunity to do so! And we are to get rid of those wonderful hindrances not expecting a reward for ourselves but do it for the sake of Jesus and for the ‘great cloud’ that surrounds us. (Somehow, our contemporary life affects them. What a mystery! Our pet ‘hindrances’ need to go *because* of them!)

Next, we are to cast off sin. That one should be obvious by now. We aren’t to ‘pussyfoot’ around the edges of it; we are too easily entangled by it! Finally, we are to run the race set before us. Us. Not set before someone else. We each have a spiritual task that can be overshadowed by our choosing to run a different race. A champion marathon runner, put on a track for a 100 yard dash, will fail miserably. That is not the race set before him. Someone training for the 50 yard dash will not win the 2,000 yard hurdles. We cannot run someone else’s race for them. (Parents, are you listening? You cannot run your child’s race. Children – you can’t run your parent’s race, either!) Likewise, we cannot run a different race just because someone tells us we should – or because we think theirs looks holier, or easier, or more exciting – or ours seems too hidden, or too exposed. We have to run the race God has designed us to run because it is the only one we can win, and we are not the only ones who stand to lose if we fail! That ‘great cloud’ is counting on us. So are those who come after us.

Generally, I don’t ‘give up’ things for Lent, other than sleep. (That’s never by choice. If you know anything about agriculture and animal hus-

bandry, you know what is added to the schedule in spring!) And as Alan often says, if you feel there is something in your life that you need to give up for Lent, you probably don’t need to take it back again after Easter. If it was important enough in your life that you see it as a roadblock to your faith while preparing to go to the cross with Jesus, or influential enough that your missing it would remind you to think of Jesus, perhaps it’s a ‘hindrance’ and it needs to be cast aside all the time.



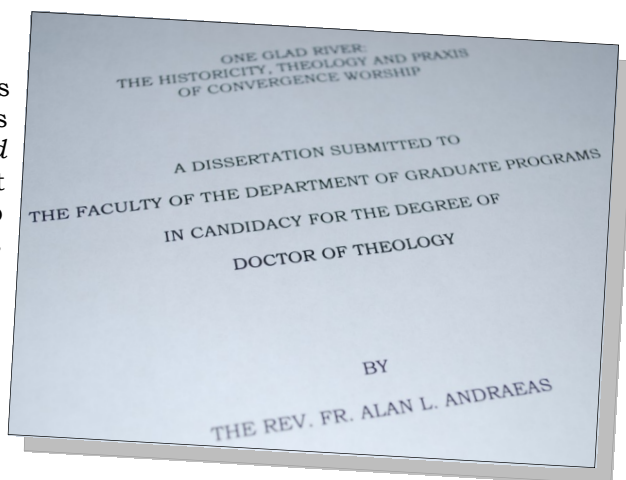
Being a monastic fellowship means we are at least beginning to realize that our spiritual journeys are interconnected – with each other and with our Christian brothers and sisters across time and space. We are not looking to be an ‘army of one’ in our faith. There is a prayer in the BCP, a part of Compline, that petitions: “And grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other’s toil.” Our life is common—or communal; we cannot do it alone. I depend on you to give up what hinders you as much as you depend on me to give up those things that hinder me. I need you to run your race well – YOUR race. And you need me to run mine well. Most of all, Jesus not only requires it but is worth it. So is that great crowd that surrounds you and me. A blessed Lent to you. Re-joice! ✧

Almighty God, Thou hast surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses; Grant that we, encouraged by their good example, may persevere in running the race that is set before us, until at last we may with them attain to Thy eternal joy; through Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. [from the Saint Brendan’s Breviary, Morning Prayer]

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Th.D. — One Step Closer

The month of March brought Fr. Alan one step closer to his Doctor of Theology degree. After many delays, Fr. Alan’s dissertation, *One Glad River: the Historicity, Theology and Praxis of Convergence Worship*, was finally printed and sent to his doctoral dissertation committee. M. Sue helped to review and proofread the thesis several times over. This was no small feat seeing that the final dissertation was 427 pages long! Should the committee accept the dissertation, Fr. Alan’s next task will be to ‘defend’ his thesis by recording a seminar in which he teaches the entire work to a live audience (this is in lieu of travelling to the seminary in Missouri and sitting through a traditional defense of the dissertation with his committee).



The Priory House: Something's Always Going On



TOP LEFT: Leonardo, the first goat kid born this spring. **TOP RIGHT:** M. Sue warming up Olaf, the last buckling to be born. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Time for bottle feeding. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Our neighbor, Kathy, joins M. Sue in holding Noah and Matilda. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Bill and Noelle, new homesteaders in the area, bring over some of their heritage-breed turkeys for a lesson in how to butcher and dress them for meat. We processed four turkeys that day. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Fr. Alan sets some "cold frames" in place along the Priory House so that M. Sue can begin the garden a month earlier this year.

The Final Word: Saint Gregory of Nyssa (c. 394 AD)

We shall be blessed with clear vision if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, for He, as Paul teaches, is our Head, and there is in Him no shadow of evil. Saint Paul himself

and all who have reached the same heights of sanctity had their eyes fixed on Christ, and so have all who live and move and have their being in Him.

As no darkness can be seen by anyone surrounded by light, so no trivialities can capture the attention of anyone who has their eyes on Christ. The one who keeps his eyes upon the Head and Origin of the whole universe has them fixed on virtue in all its perfection—on truth, on justice, on immortality, and on everything else that is good, for Christ is goodness itself.



It says in Scripture, “The wise, then, turn their eyes toward the One who is their Head, but fools grope in darkness.” No one who puts a lamp under a bed instead of a lampstand will receive any light from it. The world considers those people as blind and useless who make the supreme Good their only aim and who give themselves up to the contemplation of God, but Paul made a boast of this and proclaimed himself a fool for Christ’s sake. The reason he said, “We are fools for Christ’s sake” was that his mind was free from all earthly preoccupations. It was as though he said, “We are blind to the life here below because our eyes are raised toward the One who is our Head.”

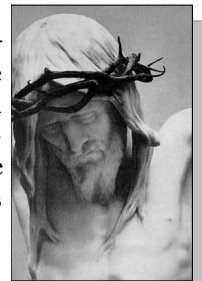
And so, without board or lodging, he traveled from place to place, destitute, naked, exhausted by hunger and thirst. When people saw him in captivity, flogged, shipwrecked, led about in chains, they could scarcely help thinking him a pitiable sight. Nevertheless, even while he suffered all this at the hands of others, he always looked toward the One who is his Head and he asked: “What can separate us from the love of Christ, which is in Jesus? Can affliction or distress? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger or death?” In other words: “What can force me to take my eyes from Him who is my Head and to turn them toward things that are contemptible?”

He bids us follow his example: “Seek the things that are above,” he says, which is only another way of saying: “Keep your eyes on Christ.”

Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) was a Christian bishop and saint in what is now modern-day Turkey. He was a younger brother of Basil the Great and a good friend of Gregory Nazianzus. His importance has

long been recognized in the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Eastern Catholic, and Roman Catholic branches of Christianity. Gregory along with his brother Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus are known as the Cappadocian Fathers. They attempted to establish Christian thought as superior to Greek philosophy. Gregory wrote about the nature of the Trinity, the infinity of God, the doctrine of salvation, and even a strong critique against slavery. Gregory also defended the Nicene Creed against the Arians.

QUICK NOTES ON HOLY WEEK. Observed throughout most of Christianity, Holy Week is the week preceding Easter Sunday as a period of special devotion to the passion and suffering of Christ. The various traditions of Holy Week began to develop in Jerusalem around 350 AD, with the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Believers could safely make pilgrimages to the Holy City wherein they sought to re-enact the last scenes of the life of Christ with liturgical drama. In modern practice these ceremonies continue to be observed in many churches through the special liturgies of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Paschal Vigil, and Easter.



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- If checked, this will be your final copy of the Navigator unless you renew your annual membership.