

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
Volume VIII, No. 3 — Summer 2013

What Must I Do? The Intersection of Devotion and Action

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

“And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in;...”

*from the BCP post-Eucharistic prayer
(1662, 1928, and 1979 Rite 1)*

The sermon this past Sunday at Holy Trinity Chapel was about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). I suspect that

many of your churches made use of the same lectionary Gospel reading for July 14th. The parable of the Good Samaritan is pregnant with multiple levels of interpretation and it would take many weeks of preaching to mine all of its spiritual gold. But when it's made to stand apart from its context (as so often happens), this parable sadly degrades into a discourse in philanthropy; a 'feel good,' though powerless, story divorced from the catalyst that prompted Jesus to share it with the expert in the Law. Why? Because the parable is the ultimate answer of the initial question: **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** The lawyer's question leads to



the parable and the parable is Christ's answer to the lawyer's question.

What must I do? That seems to be the million dollar question even among Christians. Even though we stand on the shoulders of those Reformation giants who realigned the Church's understanding that **“the just shall live by faith”** (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) and **“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”** (Acts 16:31; cf., Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 10:39), there always seems to be an irksome little corner in our brain that says, “Yeah, but...” I suppose that sense of hesitation comes from what some see as the other side of the equation: **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works”** (Matthew 5:16),

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works” (Ephesians 2:10), **“Command them...to be rich in good deeds”** (1 Timothy 6:18), **“...so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Timothy 3:17), **“...in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works”** (Titus 2:7), **“...that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works”** (Titus 3:8), **“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”** (Hebrews 10:24), and **“Live such**

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE OF “THE NAVIGATOR”

What Must I Do? The Intersection of Devotion and Action	1
Our Common Life	3
Monastic Muse	3
Chapel Construction Update	6
Life at the Priory House	7

good lives among the pagans...that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us” (1 Peter 2:12).

Did you happen to notice how the scriptural injunctions to live an engaged, active, demonstrable faith—one that is clearly evident to others, and by that I mean more than letting your neighbor see you head off to church on Sunday morning—far outnumber the verses that invite us to faith in Christ? Why is that? Because like a muscle, faith will atrophy when it’s not exercised in the imitation of Jesus Christ. Although I’m not trying to stir up that age-old debate between faith and works, there is an element of our *Rule of Life* (pp. 64-67) that speaks about the spiritual discipline of service (see also St. Benedict’s Rule, chapters 35 and 48). That’s right. ‘Service’ is a spiritual discipline—a life of intentional devotion is and must be a life of humble service. If it isn’t then we run the risk of stumbling into those Scripture admonishments that say, **“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead”** (James 2:14-26) and **“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”** (Matthew 7:19).

I’m not exactly sure when or why the Church began to embrace this divorce between relational faith with Christ and contextualized faith with our neighbors and those in need. But it hasn’t always been this way. This dual aspect of faithfulness can be seen as far back as Psalm 50:23 when the psalmist Asaph wrote, **“Whoever offers praise glorifies me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.”** Here’s an interesting observation: It’s not the relational praise that secures our salvation; it’s our good conduct that garners the blessing of God. Think about the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem. The multitudes shouting their praises and halleluiahs as Jesus rode by...and not more than five days later that same crowd was screaming for His crucifixion. Praise glorifies the Lord for sure, but action imitates His lordship in our lives. A priest friend of mine once relayed



how he went to another church to take delivery of an old, heavy marble altar and a complete set of Stations of the Cross also carved from stone. The priest from that church refused to help move the items by saying, “These hands were made for chalices, not callouses.” How sad. He enjoyed raising the chalice in praise, but his conduct was far from that of genuine servanthood.

Why am I writing about this? So often we think of our spiritual/monastic disciplines as a collection of those things we use to ‘sharpen’ our interior life. But monastic life is also lived out in a real world among real people who not only need to see Jesus in us but receive the ministry of Jesus through us. Yes, it’s about the practice of meditation, prayer, fasting, solitude, and *lectio divina*. But it’s also about giving the cup of cold water, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, and visiting the prisoner in Jesus’ name (cf., Matthew 25:31-46). Do we make these tangible

signs of faith a part of our personal commitment to Christ or do we leave them for others to do? Does our faith reside only in our head and heart or does it flow through our hands and feet? I think Jesus would be the first one to say that a person of faith is also a person of action—**“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).



Good Sam Club

Please remember that as Friends and Oblates of Saint Brendan’s, a part of our call to intentional devotion and monastic discipline is the exercise of servanthood—the call to be Christlike as well as the call to do the works of Christ. Works don’t save you but they are certainly the fruit and aroma of a life that has been touched by the redeeming grace of God. Or as John Wesley once said, “The love of God is the principle and end of all our good works.” ✠

“But monastic life is also lived out in a real world among real people who not only need to see Jesus in us but receive the ministry of Jesus through us..”

Our Common Life

M. Sue Andraeas, Prioress

**"You are not your own; you were bought at a price.
Therefore honor God with your body."**

1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 (NIV)

O God, your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those, both night and day, who work while others sleep, and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*taken from "An Order for Compline"
Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

Saint Brendan's Monastic Retreat Center and homestead just celebrated its 8th anniversary on July 10. Alan and I arrived on the property that afternoon in 2005, with only what we could fit in an old Bronco II, the back of an even older Volvo sedan, and a cargo trailer filled with construction tools and a washing machine. We were here less than two weeks when the first retreatants arrived. (They had to stay at a local motel; even our bedroom was not useable yet!) Life here was pretty rugged in those days. In fact one person's comment was, "Oh—so you camp for a living!" It wasn't far from the truth back then. We still have just one tiny bathroom (with a shower; no tub), unfinished floors in some rooms, unfinished walls in others, and the bulk of the original 1804 side of the house is still without electricity, heat, or in some parts, floors or even walls. Still, we have visitors on a weekly basis, many staying for meals or overnight.



I can't remember the last time that I went a whole week without cooking for at least one other person—not that I'm complaining in the least. I love having other people here! Plus we have 3 goats that must be milked twice a day, eggs to collect from 33 chickens and 8 turkeys, as well as 7 turkeys being raised for meat and 11 turkey babies (poults) that hatched just yesterday. (We'll be ready to put chicken eggs in the incubator in a week or so.) There's also the 2 donkeys, the chapel that we are constructing (not BEING constructed for us—we are doing the work!), a congregation that meets here on Sundays, and another group that meets on Wednesdays, a confirmation class and a rather large garden, our academic studies, plus our combined times of prayer and our own personal times of devotion/meditation. And then there's you folks, many of whom we are blessed to hear from on a weekly basis. Again, I'm not complaining; this is what God called us to do, and we're trying to find His perfect will in it all.

People often ask what the 'main focus' of our ministry actually is. What part is the 'most important?' The answer is easy. Worship and prayer. The next question that usually follows is, 'Then what's with the farm? Wouldn't you have more time for ministry, worship and prayer if you didn't have to deal with the animals?' On the surface, that would be a logical conclusion.

The first (daylight) Office of the monastic cycle, Lauds, is supposed to be the first spoken words of the new day. "Lord, open our lips, and our mouth will show forth your praise" (Psalm 51:15). But

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...

**"If we want our message of love to be heard, it must be sent out with our hands.
To keep a fire burning, we must continually labor at stoking it."**

— Mother Teresa, 1910-1997

by the time we begin Lauds and speak those words, I've already fed the dogs, sang to 3 goats as I milked them, fought my way through 6 baby goats to dump grain in their feeder, scratched donkey ears and given them morning treats and hay (in that order), filtered and bottled several gallons of milk, and perhaps started a pot of cheese. (Alan has done an equally diverse set of chores, but his starts with brewing coffee and ends with walking dogs through the woods to leave a scent that will keep predators away for the day.) So it's true—we put in over an hour of farm work before God gets our undivided attention, and that's just the morning chores.



It *would* seem as though worship would stand a better chance if we'd ditch the animals so we could focus on the work of prayer, worship, and the outreach that naturally flows from a life surrendered to *that* type of labor. Without the animals we could get 'real' jobs and have the cash on hand to finish remodeling the house. And, of course, we could get away. We could go to Bangor for concerts (Alan and I are both musicians), or camping and white water rafting on the western side of the state (where we STILL have not been). All in all, life would be easier if only we'd get rid of the 'anchors' in our barns. One of the songs I wrote for our goats has a verse that sums up in a humorous (or is it cynical?) way what being a farmer is all about: *"Your friends will think you're a bore / 'cuz you can't have fun anymore / All your life is one big chore / and all your money goes to Clyde's feed store."* It's not exactly that bad, but the verse reveals the sober lessons we were learning a few years back;

lessons concerning the difference between responsibility and bondage, between freedom and license. The kind of freedom that comes from not being 'tied down' looks good on the surface, but I'd have to disagree about the effects it would have on us and on the worship and prayer that happens in this place.

Less than 100 years ago, before most families had at least one car, a telephone, televisions, computers, and 'disposable' income, chores were not considered work. In fact, chores were simply part of daily life, much the same way we think of morning showers, charging cell phones, or starting a pot of coffee today. Making meals, hanging laundry out to dry, chopping wood for the cook stove, milking the cow and collecting the eggs, and maybe even carrying water from the well were things you did *before* you began the day's work. If you didn't do your chores, someone else in the family would have to do them because they *had* to be done or life

would get bad—for everyone in the household. In many homes there was also the care of a horse or two. Failure to check hooves, monitor hay and grain consumption, and cleaning out the barn meant you may lose not only your means of transportation but also your means to provide food for yourselves. Your day was not 'yours' until you had completed the communal tasks. People who lived in towns and cities had it a bit easier, but even they had to shovel coals out of the furnace, make their own meals from scratch, and do laundry by hand.

There's a difference between a day that begins with milking the *family* cow, shoveling out the *family's* barn, grinding the *family's* wheat, and drawing the *family's* water and...taking *my* shower, getting into *my* car, stopping for *my* breakfast before going to *my* job to earn *my* paycheck to pay *my* bills. One is family/community centered while the other is self-centered. (Yes, paychecks pay for things for the entire family, but most careers happen apart from home and family.) People did not go on vacations every year; financially they could not afford it, and it would be devastating if the entire family left the farm together for an extended period of time.

If we look a little deeper into the historical norm for Christians we'll find that part of daily 'chores' was also prayer. Most mainline Protestant denominations and all Sacramental communions have, from their beginnings, resources for Morning and Evening Prayer, and Chris-

(Continued on page 5)

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tians were expected to be praying at home with their families if they could not meet with neighbors at the local church or parish. In many areas, the local convents and monasteries became a place where orphans, widows, and/or people whose families were not Christian could part of a communal work and worship. Later, as societies became more well-off, making it possible for people to be more self-absorbed, Benedictine convents and monasteries became places where individuals could join a community of people interested in a simplistic community-centered way of life. The main difference, then, between life in a community of Christian families and life in a monastic community was not the daily labor or the work of prayer but who you prayed and labored with, and to what extent you relinquished your life in exchange for a life lived out for the good of others.



This is, of course, rather generalized but my point is this: life at Saint Brendan's today is not so unusual when put into the context of history rather than in our own contemporary experiences. In our culture, advertisers go to great lengths to guarantee that their products and services will let you 'have it your way,' because 'you deserve a break today,' and that the whole point of working hard is so that you have the financial means to both 'have it all' and 'get away from it all' at the same time.

Alan and I are currently reading *Let's Start With Jesus* written by Dr. Dennis Kinlaw, former president of Asbury Seminary in KY. The first portion of the book was a fascinating look at the Doctrine of the Trinity. The chapter we started today discusses the 'human problem:' sin. In a nutshell, Dr. Kinlaw is describing self-idolatry as a refusal to allow God to be I AM by giving that title to ourselves. Alan was reading today while I was cooking breakfast and the chapter

included a quote from Emil Brunner: "...God has been removed from the centre, and we are in the centre of the picture; our life has become ec-centric..." Alan paused there to ponder what he was reading. Brunner's use of 'ec' in ec-centric, he thought, was derived from the Latin *ecco* and meant human centered. I couldn't see the spelling and thought it was Greek, meaning 'out of center.' We talked about it for the next few minutes. If we are human (self) centered, we have distorted our true center—God—and are, then, out of center. We decided that our culture, then, is *eccentric* (humanistic) rather than *Theo-centric* (God at the center), and that a genuine *Theo-centric* Christian will, by cultural standards, appear...eccentric! (Well, what kinds of things do YOU talk about while making breakfast? ☺) The same friend who gave us this wonderful book is also fond of the

quote, "Oh such bondage to belong to yourself." She and I talk about the truth of this statement often. (Thanks, Camille!)

So, back to the original question concerning our animal 'anchors' and how the farm leads to worship and prayer. The animals, and especially the goats, have been a simple but effective parable to many people who visit Saint Brendan's. We cannot just leave for extended recreational endeavors. We have an obligation to 82 other creatures on the property! More importantly, we have an obligation to break from our self-centered plans and enter God-centered worship—every morning, every evening, a "chore" we do not take lightly. As

"The main difference...was not the daily labor or the work of prayer but who you prayed and labored with, and to what extent you relinquished your life in exchange for a life lived out for the good of others.."

we are lifted to heaven, Christ is brought into our midst. That *must* have an effect not only on our lives

Of your time and talents give ye, they are gifts from God above,
To be used by Christians freely to proclaim His wondrous love.
God 's command to love each other is required of every man.
Showing mercy to a brother mirrors His redemptive plan.

("Come, All Christians, Be Committed" Text - Eva B. Lloyd; Music - Traditional American Melody)

and property but on the lives and homes around ours. How could it not? My life is not mine. It now belongs to the Lord. I gave it to Him willingly. He has called us to this life, not just to build a chapel or minister to the people who come here, but to live out the parable He is telling through this place.

Relinquished life IS worship. Labor IS prayer. Farm life is hard—physically, mentally and (this year) emotionally. There is life, and loss of life. There is bounty, and there is devastation beyond our control. What better way to ‘trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding’ (Proverbs 3:5)? God has called us

here. Where has He called you? To what extent have you avoided that calling through ec-centric desires and endeavors? How much of your day is lived specifically for you? What distracts you from a ministry of worship and a labor of prayer? We may not share a common space but we do, as a Fellowship, share a common life, dependent upon each other’s ‘toil’ of intercession, one where together we learn to relinquish our own goals and agendas, comforts and diversions in order to glorify God through our Theo-centric worship.

REJOICE!

Holy Trinity Chapel Construction Update

From the day we arrived at Saint Brendan’s eight years ago, we knew that the property would eventually have its own free-standing chapel and that, until that time, Holy Trinity Chapel would be housed in one of the rooms of the Priory House. Well, this is the year of the chapel. You can’t imagine



the joy and praises that filled this place as the heavy equipment came rumbling up the driveway in late Spring to begin the excavation of the construction site. We also knew that we couldn’t get very far without your prayers, encouragements, and financial support.

On April 29th we mailed a financial appeal letter to our ministry friends and fellowship members. Thank you for your generous response. Because of your gifts, the chapel is now taking tangible shape. The footers and foundation were poured, the frost wall was sealed, steps were built down into the crawlspace, a center crib wall was built to act as the main loadbearing beam for the floor joists at the mid-span, the sill plate and rim joists were anchored down to the frost wall, and all the floor joists were fastened into place. Next comes the installation of crawlspace ventilation and the installation of the subfloor sheathing.

At that point all of our materials on hand will be used up and it will be time to order more lumber. With new material we’ll begin construction of the porch (or vestibule) on the front of the chapel so that the flooring is all tied together and then comes...walls and a roof!

We want to make sure that your generous giving is not taken for granted. As a part of our accountability and stewardship to the Fellowship, I’m including a “Balance Sheet” so that you can see what has come in and what we’ve spent. Remember, too, that we’re trying to do this as economically as possible by doing all the construction ourselves or with volunteer labor. Except for the excavation and foundation work,

Holy Trinity Chapel will be built by Saint Brendan’s members and friends.

CONSTRUCTION FUNDS

Chapel funds on hand as of April 2013	9,161.54
Designated construction gifts to-date	9,135.00
TOTAL FUNDS	18,296.54

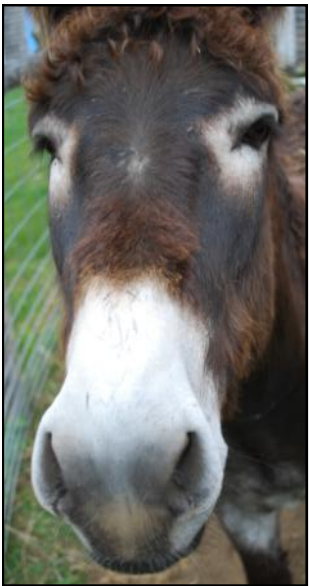
CONSTRUCTION EXPENSES

Tree removal	1,500.00
Site excavation/backfill	2,087.00
Foundation	3,787.71
Crawlspace entrance stairs	70.05
Subflooring	1,986.18
Crawlspace ventilation system	235.31
Construction tools	27.48
TOTAL EXPENSES	9,693.70
BALANCE REMAINING	8,602.84

We’ve got a long way to go and the need is still urgent. Please continue to pray and, as God leads, generously support this project with an additional gift designated for “Holy Trinity Chapel.”

Rejoice!

Life at the Priory House



TOP LEFT: Fr. Alan, M. Sue, and several members of Holy Trinity Chapel gather in front of the newly poured chapel foundation on Pentecost Sunday for a picture. **TOP CENTER:** A truck from the local lumber yard makes a delivery of all the materials we'll need to begin construction on the chapel subflooring. **TOP RIGHT:** On a visit to Saint Brendan's, Kim Roos, owner of Gardenside Dairy, is given a chance to try our new cream separator (Kim gave us our first dairy goat kid as a housewarming present as a part of our move to Downeast Maine!). **MIDDLE LEFT:** Doyle the donkey poses for a picture. **MIDDLE CENTER:** As part of a school field trip to Saint Brendan's, Fr. Alan teaches the students how to make butter from fresh cream. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** M. Sue helps to position the remaining floor joists as we build the chapel subfloor. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Newborn kittens were recently born into Saint Brendan's growing menagerie. Hopefully they'll make good farm mousers! **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** Midweek Eucharist attendees, Jane and Lorraine, are introduced to several of our baby goats. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A shipment of 20 prayer ropes is ready for the mail—a student at Talbot Seminary at Biola University ordered these as graduation gifts (in the school colors) for the rest of his classmates.

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