

# The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

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## A Disciplined Faith: Meditation

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, My Rock and my Redeemer."*

Psalm 19:14

We have been blessed over the past month to have a number of retreatants visit us at the Priory House; folks from Connecticut, Arizona, and Florida. The topic of spiritual disciplines always popped up during these visits. And since a part of Saint Brendan's ministry is to help members of its Fellowship discover

and practice the ancient disciplines of Christian faith, I thought it would be good to explain each of the disciplines in our *Rule of Life* in a little more detail. Why is this important?

The early monastics experienced Jesus as the defining reality of their lives. This passion stripped away all other competing loyalties and expressed itself in a faith that was not only focused but intentional. They gave their full attention to those things that would shape them into vessels of holiness. They understood that God would only dwell in hearts that felt like home to Him, and they lived their lives accordingly. St. Benedict understood the vital place of the spiritual disciplines for his monks and wove those disciplines throughout his *Rule*. As you can imagine,

they touched on every part of daily life, ranging from the amount of food to be eaten, the types of conversation that could be shared, and even the frequency of prayer.

To help us understand the often complex world of spiritual disciplines, we've taken 15 of the most essential disciplines and grouped them into three broad categories: the **INTERIOR** disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), the **EXTERIOR** disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission, service, purity, temperance), and the **CORPORATE** disciplines (confession, worship, spiritual direction, hospitality, celebration). Practicing these disciplines enable us to take a complementary role with the Holy Spirit in preparing our vessels as holy habitations for the dwelling of God. That's right. The disciplines are something *we do*

after entering into a life of saving grace. It's taking to heart Paul's own faith strategy: "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27, NLT). The spiritual disciplines are also a means by which we are shaped by

God's grace—they place us squarely before God so that He can transform us. With these things in mind, let us turn to the first of the interior or inward disciplines, meditation.

Forget the New Age or eastern idea of meditation where you empty your mind of all thought while intoning long, resonating syllables like "ohhhhhm." Christian meditation has nothing to do with emptying one's mind. Rather, the psalmist declares, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." He follows

Spiritual  
Disciplines  
training  
for  
holiness



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this several verses later with, “I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word...For You Yourself have taught me” (Psalm 119:97,101,102b). The strength of Christian meditation is that it fills us with the mind of Christ and the grace to be obedient to what the Holy Spirit says. Put simply, meditation leads to obedience and obedience is the outcome of meditation. Said another way, meditation without change and growth is a hollow endeavor.

What is meditation? Meditation is the activity or process by which we create the spiritual space where Christ can create an inner sanctuary in our hearts. Meditation is instrumental in transforming us into portable sanctuaries, thus allowing us to carry Christ into all that we are and all that we do. Even when our daily times of meditation come to a close, the lingering aroma of meditation clings to us throughout the day.

How does meditation work? While on the one hand meditation is our work and our responsibility, the results of meditation are from Christ Himself. You see, since meditation opens us to an inward fellowship with Christ, that fellowship becomes the catalyst for the transformation of our inner, spiritual selves. Pay careful attention to what I’m about to say (I know it might sound confusing, but spend some time on this next sentence): *When we welcome the eternal flame of Christ into the depths of our yielded souls, that Divine Fire will inevitably consume all that is impure, freeing us to walk in increasing alignment with all that is holy.* Did you get that? Meditation (and with it, the work of Christ within us) leads us to a detachment from the things around us so that we may embrace a greater attachment to God. And in so doing, our lives become increasingly redirected by the Holy Spirit so that we can daily live in a greater Christ-like manner.

I know that all sounds a bit lofty; the holiest of Christian writers have spent centuries trying to explain it, and maybe once we’re in heaven we’ll finally understand it. In the meantime, let’s turn our attention to how someone actually *does* Christian meditation.

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All genuine methods and manners of Christian meditation are built on the bedrock of what the devotional masters called the *meditatio Scripturarum*, the meditation upon Scripture. Oh, that means daily Bible reading, right? Just a moment. This is more than just reading or studying the Scriptures. It’s the method by which one seeks to internalize and personalize the message in order that the *written* Word may become a *living* word within the believer. It goes far beyond a busy Christian’s morning glance at *The One Minute Bible* before heading out the door.

This kind of meditation—many refer to it by its classic name, *lectio divina*, or divine study—is not a superficial, rushed exercise. Rushing reflects the discordant, internal state of our lives, and that’s exactly what God wants to undo and redeem. Meditating on Scripture is better accomplished by taking one text, one parable, a few verses, or even a single word and entering into that

passage through sanctified imagination until it takes root in you. And that’s the place where Christ can daily shape and transform us for His glory.

While the term *lectio divina* (pronounced, *leck-see-oh d’veenah*), or simply *lectio*, may be a familiar term tossed around in many church circles, very few people actually know the steps involved. Some books give four steps, some six. I don’t want to miss anything important, so I’ll give you all six. They are (with really cool Latin names): *Silencio*, *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio*, *Contemplatio*, and *Incarnatio*. Here’s what each one entails.

**Silencio.** This is our preparation for holy reading. *Lectio* is not rushed or pressured; it’s not something that you squeeze in-between the cracks of your schedule. It’s entered into prayerfully, deliberately; like preparing to go out with your spouse for a special evening date. We need to take time to engage in an internal shift in our spiritual posture. When John Wesley spoke of reading the Bible, he said we must intentionally come before the



## 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...

**Let no day pass by without reading some portion of the sacred Scriptures.  
And give some time to meditation. Nothing feeds the soul and enriches the mind  
as much as those sacred studies do. —Theonas of Alexandria, c. 300 AD**

text “with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixed resolution to do it.”

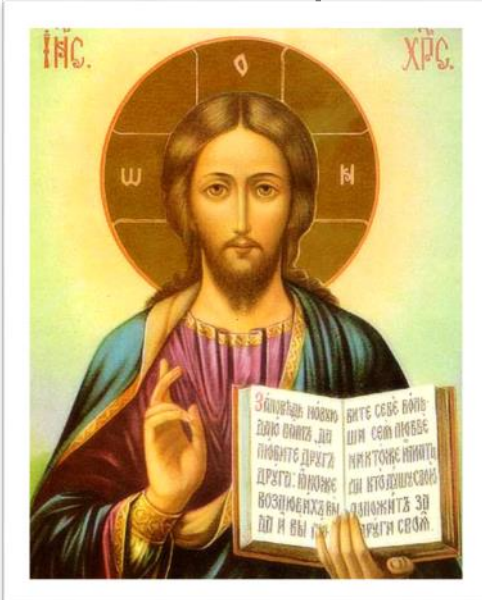
**Lectio.** This is the process of simply reading the Word of God; even if it’s only several verses. But it’s a reading of the text the same way you let a throat lozenge dissolve on the back of your tongue; slowly, deliberately. It’s a reading in such a way that places you right into the text—being jostled with the crowd as you press in to hear what Jesus is saying; feeling the sun on the back of your neck as you walk from village to village with the disciples; smelling the incense or even the blood of the daily sacrifices as you stand in the Temple courtyard; experiencing the wonder of gathering up manna on that first day it fell from heaven. *Lectio* allows your imagination to participate in your reading.

**Meditatio.** If *lectio* is viewed as receiving food, *meditatio* is the process of chewing or ruminating on that food. This process may involve looking up unfamiliar terms, examining cross-references, or doing some background research. It also involves a reliance on the Holy Spirit to speak into our hearts, teaching us what things we ought to know—and not just for the sake of gaining knowledge, but so that we might respond to what God is saying. Also, whereas the actual act of *lectio* might take a short portion of our day, *meditatio* may very well occupy the bulk of our day.

**Oratio.** This is simply described as talking to God about what we’ve read and how it engaged us. Did the text stir in us love, joy, sorrow, motivation, repentance, conviction, desire, need, confusion, or consecration? We pour out to God how the text has probed us in light of our circumstances, relationships, and church life.

**Contemplatio.** This step of *lectio divina* moves us into a spiritual posture of relinquished waiting on God for whatever He wants to do in us, with us, and through us. It is how we put into prac-

tice the words of Psalm 131:2, “I still my soul and make it quiet, like a child upon its mother’s breast; my soul is quieted within me.” This is a posture of rest and trust—happy to be in the arms of God—and grateful for what is given. If our spirits are quiet enough, the Holy Spirit usually tells us the response that God desires of us. If not, then resting and trusting is right where He needs us to be for that day.



**Incarnatio.** Incarnation is when our spirits takes on flesh. When our holy reading brings us to a place of response, we must do something about it. Again, Wesley said it well: “Whatever light you then receive should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately. Let there be no delay.” This step actually brings us full circle back to *silencio*, placing ourselves before the text to seek the whole will of God “with a fixed resolution to do it.” *Incarnatio* is the fulfillment of that resolution.

The classical discipline of spiritual reading is in many ways the foundation or anchor for the other disciplines because it is the entryway to the daily, transforming work of Christ within us. There are, of course, other forms of Christian meditation practiced as a part of monastic spirituality, but it is always best to begin with Scripture, even if we stumble over a lot of bumps in the beginning. It is a progressive discipline and, like any skill, it takes time to develop (trust me, I’m no master; I’m working on it myself!). But it is a vital complement to a life of intentional devotion and consecration. As such, we highly encourage every member of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s to desire and practice a time of meditation on a regular basis. In the next edition of *The Navigator* we’ll look at the interior discipline of prayer.

Rejoice!  
Fr. Alan Andraeas

## ANNOUNCEMENT REMINDER!

**We have recently changed our email address.  
The old email address is no longer in service.  
Please make a note of the new address:**

**[st.brendans@myfairpoint.net](mailto:st.brendans@myfairpoint.net)**

**We have also changed to a new web server and  
have begun the process of updating the website.  
Still lots of work to do, but you can visit the new  
site (including our new photo gallery) at:**

**[www.saintbrendans-online.org](http://www.saintbrendans-online.org)**

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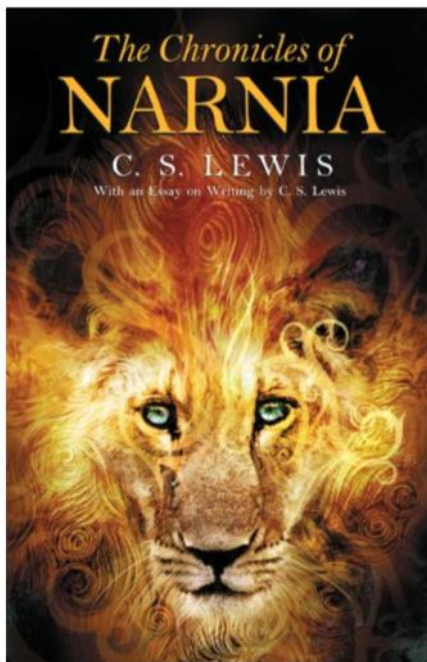
## A Reading List Book Review: The Works of C. S. Lewis

Sue Andreae, Prioress

I saved the best for last. When it comes to contemporary Christian authors, there's one who, in my opinion, stands far above all others: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963). It doesn't matter what kind of book you're looking for, Lewis has probably written one. Do you want deep theological truths? He's done it. Children's literature? Yep. Letters and radio addresses? Of course! Biographical 'walking with Christ' kinds of books? Absolutely. What about science fiction? Believe it or not, he's done that too. And all his books have a way of pointing to Christ in such a unique, simplistic—but not simple-minded—way that makes him one of the best, if not *the* best apologist of our day. (By apologist, I don't mean he is sorry for his faith. No! An apologist is someone who defends their faith systematically and logically.)

If you've never read any of Lewis' books, you may want to start with The Chronicles of Narnia. While these are usually considered children's books you can put out of your mind that they contain child-sized theology, sketchy character development or half-baked plots. The series contains none of these! It's an adventurous 7-volume epic tale that transports the reader from Creation, through deliverance and healing, to Armageddon, the Rapture and the final Kingship of Christ, *but* only some of the action occurs on earth. The bulk of the story takes place in Narnia, a world where Jesus reveals Himself not as a man but as a kind-yet-untamed Lion, and children from war-torn

England serve as angelic messengers. I've read them, as an adult—all the way through—and I never tire of them. The Hollywood movie versions are not true to Lewis' books. Hollywood producers are interested in entertainment and making money, not in demonstrating the wild love of Jesus the Lion of Judah and His transforming power over the lives of those who vow to serve Him! If



the books are read well, they will instill the truth that faith is an exciting adventure!

Lewis' space trilogy centers on a philology professor who is kidnapped by bad men and taken to Mars. He is later taken by angels to Venus, and finally finds himself in an all-out battle that contains angels, demons, bad men, good men, and, of all people, Merlin. Its fantastic stuff, and all written in a way that uses civilizations on other planets as well as ancient Earth literature to explain Biblical truths. Alan and I just finished reading these books aloud again, and I was, again, sad to see the last one end. They are just excellent.

Then there's a whole gamut of teaching works, beginning with Mere Christianity. They are not hard to read but they are challenging to absorb and even more challenging to live. In other words, they are not light uplifting 'milk' for your faith but are meaty and filling. And isn't that what St. Paul says we are to strive for (1 Corinthians 3:2)? Reflections on the Psalms explains the need to read the Psalms as mystic poetry rather than just instructional sermons. He wrote letters and teachings that were read over BBC radio programs which are again appropriate for our volatile world today. He wrote a fictitious but enlightening book called The Great Divorce that changed forever my views of what heaven will be like. The Problem of Pain explains why suffering is necessary, even among animals who have never sinned and do not deserve to suffer our plight. But perhaps my favorite among this group of Lewis' books is The Screwtape Letters. These fictitious letters, written by one demon to his apprentice demon, are classic illustrations of spiritual warfare and temptation.

Lewis does a masterful job of putting himself in the shoes of a demon whose job it is to lure a new Christian away from true faith. The instructor, Screwtape, identifies God as 'the Enemy' and makes it rather clear that going to church is not a problem for them. Neither is listening to sermons, studying Scripture, or becoming dogmatic in one's belief system. Their only threat is a Christian who truly surrenders his life to a submissive relationship with Jesus and who actually strives to lay aside his own egoistic agenda and replaces it with God's. For example, in one letter, Screwtape is explaining that trap of self-possessiveness. He writes:

We produce this sense of ownership not only by pride but by confusion.... Even in the nursery a child can be taught to mean by "my Teddy bear," *not* the old imagined recipient of the affection to whom it stands in a special relation (for that

is what the Enemy will teach them to mean if we are not careful), but ‘the bear I can pull to pieces if I like.’ And at the other end of the scale, we have taught men to say “my God” in a sense not really very different from “my boots,” meaning “the God on whom I have a claim for my distinguished services and whom I exploit from the pulpit—the God I have done a corner in.

Notice the difference between ‘mine to care for’ and ‘mine to do with whatever I wish?’

Lewis also recognized what has often been referred to as ‘the tyranny of the new.’ He acknowledges the rhythms of Creation—the seasons, the varying crops that are produced to enjoy within each—and then has Screwtape use those ‘ordained rhythms’ to devise his own trap.

Now just as we...exaggerate the pleasure of eating to produce gluttony, so we pick out this natural pleasantness of change and twist it into a demand for absolute novelty. This demand is entirely our workmanship... [and] is valuable in various ways. In the first place, it diminishes pleasure while increasing desire. The pleasure of novelty is by its very nature more subject than any other to the law of diminishing returns.

And here is where, I think, Lewis’ insight has real value for the Monastic Fellowship of St. Brendan’s! I have been asked several times if it’s okay to vary the sources for devotions, jumping

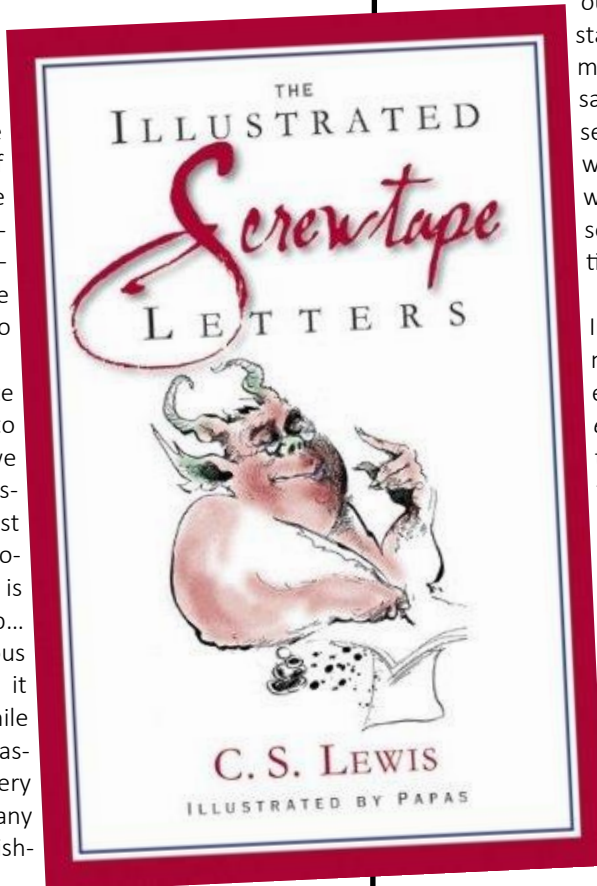
If the books are read well,  
they will instill the truth that faith  
is an exciting adventure!

from the Breviary to other devotional guides and styles. While we want to avoid being legalistic and not require the Fellowship (comprised of believers from many denominations) to use only

‘our’ Breviary, we also know the danger of constantly changing the format of your ‘prayer meetings with God.’ There is something to be said to letting the ‘change’ be dictated by the seasons of the Church rather than our own whims, boredom, and ennui. I’m not sure I would have come to that conclusion without seeing it from the perspective of Lewis’ fictitious demonic mentor.

In 1962, a year before his death, Lewis wrote a new ending for the Screwtape Letters. He added a make-believe toast made at the *Tempter’s Training College* in hell which speaks of the great fortune that has come to them in the form of public education. As a teacher, I found this additional chapter prophetic, but I’ll let you explore that on your own.

Please continue to send your comments concerning YOUR experiences with the authors I’ve written about, or about others you’d like to share. Part of lay monastic life is recreation; *re-creation*. Good books play a big part in that process, and I’ve only covered a small corner of good contemporary literature available.



Happy Reading and REJOICE!

Sue Andraeas

And tho this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him—  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure:  
One little word shall fell him.

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”—Text and Music: Martin Luther, 1527

# Life at the Priory House



**TOP LEFT:** Saint Brendan's set up a table at a local horse show and craft fair where Sue is visited by our Maine State Representative, Beth Turner. **TOP MIDDLE LEFT:** Saint Brendan's received two tours of elder hostel "Road Scholars" who came to the property to learn about sustainable farming and food processing; visitors came from CA, NY, TN, TX, MA, KY, and many other states. **TOP MIDDLE RIGHT:** Susan Ober, a member of the Monastic Fellowship from Connecticut, finishes up a weeklong retreat to Saint Brendan's. **TOP RIGHT:** Fr. Alan and Clay Landwehr shorten a number of recently acquired pews to better fit inside the chapel. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Clay and Marcia Landwehr, Monastic Fellowship members from Arizona present a new sign for Holy Trinity Chapel during their weeklong stay at Saint Brendan's. **MIDDLE CENTER:** Fr. Alan anoints and prays a blessing over Kagan Curtis during a Sunday morning chapel service. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Jeff Felter, a Fellowship member on retreat from Florida, helps to exercise the donkeys with a trip to the Dennysville post office. **LOWER MIDDLE LEFT:** A local group of "shape-note" singers bring the wonderful sounds of Appalachian hymnody into the chapel; the acoustics in the new chapel were fantastic! **LOWER MIDDLE CENTER:** Our local carpenter, Terry Kinney, and his helper, Michael Stevens, finish framing, sheathing, and adding the roof to the chapel entrance. **LOWER MIDDLE RIGHT:** During the annual visit of Bishop Richard Lipka, Greg Noyes receives the Rite of Reception and is made a member of Holy Trinity Chapel, the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, and the Anglican Church in North America. **LOWER LEFT:** During his retreat to Saint Brendan's, Jeff Felter is advanced as an oblate from Postulant to Novice during a midweek Eucharist.



# Prayerful Perspective

There are many times when we feel ungrateful. We *know* we're loved by God and that He blesses us, but we can't see those blessings with our own eyes. The following may help.

A member of our Fellowship, David Holifield (California, USA) has ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS is an insidious deterioration of the nervous system, leaving its victim's brains unable to be in command of muscles. For David, ALS first hindered his walking. Later, other fine and gross motor skills became difficult. His emails became shorter and shorter as typing grew more difficult, and I now correspond with him only via his wife Audrey because he can no longer type. The nerves that control breathing are under attack. Sadly, David's brother's life was also cut short by this disease. I cannot imagine his parents' grief.

I've learned a lot from reading what David and Audrey have had to say through all the medical and pragmatic intrusions into their lives and their constant relinquishment of it all to God. I've also gotten to know their young children, not well enough, and they are a delight. It's impossible to conceive how such a destructive invasion into their lives affects the faith and spiritual growth of a child, but they have a loving family and church.

In a recent email, Audrey included a list of experiments to help people imagine, just very slightly, what life is like with ALS. I include it for two reasons. First, may it serve as a reminder to intercede for Christians who bravely suffer with debilitating ailments. (As a friend of mine noted; we so rarely know how each other truly lives.) And second, may it help you to be less prone to overlook the simple yet profound blessings we receive every day, things that go totally unnoticed. David and Audrey, James and Geneva; our prayers are with you daily.

## Empathetic Experiences with ALS

1. Pick up a 10-pound weight. Now imagine it's your fork and move it from your plate to your mouth repeatedly without shaking.
2. Sit in a chair for just 15 minutes moving nothing but your eyes. Nothing. No speaking, no scratching your nose, no shifting your weight, no changing the channel on the television, no computer work. Only your eyes. As you sit, imagine: this is your life. Your only life.
3. Borrow a wheelchair or power scooter and try to maneuver quickly through the aisles at Walmart, without speaking. Note the way people react to you.
5. Using none of your own muscles, have your spouse or child or friend get you dressed and brush your teeth. How does this make you feel?
6. Before you eat your next meal, take a good, long look at the food. Inhale deeply and appreciate the aroma. Now, imagine never being able to taste that—or any other food—for the rest of your life.
7. Put two large marshmallows in your mouth and have a conversation with your friends. How many times must you repeat yourself? How does this make you feel?
8. Strap weights to your ankles and climb a flight of stairs, taking two at a time. That's the kind of strength it takes for someone with ALS to tackle the stairs on a good day.
9. Install a text-to-speech app on your phone or iPad and use it exclusively to communicate for one day.

## **The Final Word:**

### **Clement of Alexandria**

**Theologian of Athens, Greece and Alexandria, Egypt (200-258 AD)**

As I conceive it, sanctity is perfect pureness of mind, deeds, thoughts, words, and in its last degree, even sinlessness in one's dreams. Abstinence from sins, however, is not sufficient for perfection, unless a person also assumes the works of righteousness, or activities of good-doing for Christ's sake. This spiritual man will pray that he may never fall from virtue. And once he has made it his choice to live perfectly, he subjects himself to spiritual training and discipline. In all circumstances, then, the soul of the man of God is kept strong. It is in a condition of extreme health and strength, like the body of an athlete. This beauty of the soul becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit when it acquires a disposition in the whole of life corresponding to the Gospel. Such a one consequently withstands all fear of everything terrible—not only of death, but also of poverty, disease, dishonor, and similar things. He is unconquered by pleasure and is lord over irrational desires. For it is in this manner that one truly follows the Savior: by aiming at sinlessness and in striving for His perfection. For according to the Apostle, those who strive after perfection must "give no offense in anything, but in everything approve themselves not to men, but to God."

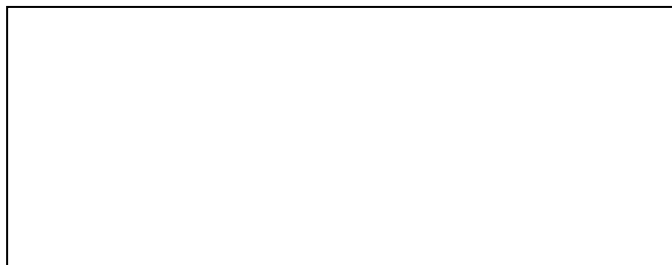




**Holy Trinity Chapel last edition...**



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