

The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

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A Disciplined Faith: Prayer

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:
for unto Thee will I pray."*

Psalm 5:1-2

In the last article we examined the internal discipline of Christian meditation. In this article we'll turn our focus to the internal discipline of prayer. St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) wrote that prayer was nothing more than "converse with God."

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Placing it as the central discipline of our monastic formation makes sense, doesn't it? And yet prayer is one of the most complex and least understood facets of our faith.

Peter Kreeft wrote an excellent primer on prayer from the sacramental point of view. E. M. Bounds is considered by many to be the don of Protestant prayer. Richard Foster is a treasure trove of information concerning the discipline of prayer. Various 'faith' ministries follow such notables as Oral Roberts where teaching on prayer is concerned. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann covers the Orthodox heartbeat of prayer through his seminal writings on the Lord's Prayer. And the list goes on. The funny thing about each of these representative camps, however, is that they focus on just one aspect or layer of prayer. No one can truly "corner the market" on prayer because it's simply too big. After all, it's

prayer that joins us to God Who is above and beyond all. It's our conduit to the eternal; only a hubris person would think that his teaching alone is the end-all of that which connects us to the other side of this present reality. But here we are, attempting in only a page or two to describe the essence of a monastic prayer life. Nevertheless, we must give it a try.

The internal discipline of prayer sits at the center of monastic formation for the simple reason that it ushers us before the throne of God, and no one who approaches the throne of God does so unchanged. Therefore, the act of prayer is synonymous with a willingness for growth and change in one's life. The opposite is also true: if we are unwilling to change, we are equally

quick to abandon prayer. A life of praying rightly (cf., James 4:3), then, will inevitably lead us to transformed passions and interests because, through the agency of prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts rather than our own. Over time, prayer will shape our 'spiritual eye' so that we see the things of earth as God sees them.

The 17th century mathematician, physicist, and Christian philosopher, Blaise Pascal, is paraphrased

as saying, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ." The actual quotation reads, "...the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself." In any event, it's a point in our favor. It means that something within us innately craves and cries out for God. Or as



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St. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.” That does not mean, however, that prayer is instinctive in the same way that newly-hatched sea turtles automatically crawl toward the water. Real prayer is something we must learn; otherwise the disciples wouldn’t have to ask Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). That means prayer is something we need to foster and grow into—some days we will succeed and other days we will stumble, but to not pray at all is to fail. The heart of a monastic should recognize and cultivate this yearning for prayer, even more than our yearning for natural food.

Prayer, transforming prayer, can only begin by quieting the noise in our hearts; by subduing all that competes for our attention through the aid of the Holy Spirit even if we’re in the middle of a crowded, distracted environment. Believe it or not, but the Holy Spirit can surround you with a holy ‘hush’ even if your natural senses are being assaulted by confusion. Psalm 46 speaks about falling mountains and roaring oceans and quaking earth, yet in the middle of that din we find

this beautiful encouragement: “Be still, and know that I am God” (v. 10). The ability to hear God is the necessary prerequisite to prayer and the Holy Spirit will help us in that endeavor.

But what about prayer itself? The actual ‘stuff’ of prayer is not difficult or complicated. After all, didn’t Jesus teach His disciples to come to the Father like children (cf. Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17)? Even Paul says that we can approach God as our *Abba* or Daddy (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). When we come to the Father in this fashion—with openness, honesty, and trust—He is faithful to meet us with heaven’s storehouse of timeliness, provision, and peace. In time we’ll find that our prayers are more like a reflex action to God’s prior initiative as, through our words, we confirm and intercede on earth for what He has already purposed in heaven.



“In time we’ll find that our prayers are more like a reflex action to God’s prior initiative.”

All of that sounds very encouraging...until we come face-to-face with scriptural injunctions like 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.” How do we pull that off? An impossibility, you say? Is there something helpful in the original Greek that just didn’t translate correctly into English? What does ‘without ceasing’ really mean? It’s our usual translation of the adverb *adialeiptos* and it literally means ‘uninterruptedly.’ And like any good adverb, its job is to modify or qualify the verb, in this case, ‘to pray.’ But that’s not all. The verb ‘to pray’ is itself rendered in the Greek as a present tense, middle voice, imperative of command—in other words, something akin to a military order with an exclamation point at its end. That doesn’t leave a whole lot of wiggle room. It’s clear what Scripture is asking of us: that

our prayers should reflect constancy (Colossians 4:2) and perseverance (Luke 18:1; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18). And while it is impossible to always be on our knees, Paul is certainly exhorting us to live in a devotional frame of mind that always recognizes the presence of God as a conversational companion. In fact, it is very possible to live in a spirit of abiding prayer even while engaged in the duties of daily life.

From a more practical point of view, Saint Brendan’s Rule of Life suggests several ‘methods’ of prayer that can help to achieve the ‘manner’ of prayer described

above. Throughout the course of each day, the spiritual discipline of prayer can take the shape of spontaneous prayer, (e.g., a burst of praise, a plea for wisdom, a cry for help, an intercession in response to someone’s request), structured prayer (both private and corporate, particularly through the Liturgy of the Hours as offered in The Breviary of Saint Brendan’s), praying in the Spirit (this kind of prayer comes in two kinds: with the full engagement of our rational minds as the Holy Spirit gently guides our own words, and through the exercise of the ‘prayer

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...

Prayer is the fortress wall of our faith. It is her weapons and missiles against the foe, who keeps watch over us on all sides. And so we never walk unarmed.

—Tertullian, c. 198 AD



language' of tongues or through the 'groaning' of our hearts for those things that only the Holy Spirit knows—cf., 1 Corinthians 14:2; Romans 8:26-27), and even the prayer of listening (submissive silence in order to hear God's voice and to know God's will; after all, prayer is communication and true communication is two-way).

In the end, the earthly 'grand prize' of a disciplined prayer life is to carefully wed all mortal activity with the fragrance of prayer until it seems to take no time while concurrently occupying all of our time. It is this ability which allows us to tend to all of our necessary, tangible obligations while simultaneously—and on a much deeper and more profound plane—dwelling in prayer and adoration, fully participating in the divine breathings of the Holy Spirit. For St. Benedict's own directions on prayer, take some time to read chapters 19, 20, and 52 in the *Rule of St. Benedict*.

In the next edition of The Navigator we will examine the discipline of fasting. ✠

Rejoice!
Fr. Alan Andraeas

Who's Talking to Who?

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

"Pray without ceasing."
1 Thessalonians 5:17

Confession: I have not been very faithful at praying at the appointed hours the past few weeks. Ok, not for months. Our goal is Morning, Noon, and Evening Prayer, but we've been feeling rather successful if we pray in the morning. That's not to say we don't pray. We do! I'm talking about these structured, intentional times of communal prayer. What I've been doing instead is stacking fire wood and making sure the barns are ready for a cold winter; that the snow blower and plow are prepped for service and that the animals we have are also prepared for cold temperatures—or butchered; that the windows' summer shades are exchanged for insulated window covers (this house is DRAFTY!); and that the vehicles are snow-ready with good tires, working 4-wheel drive, etc. (and this Advent found both of our vehicles needing repairs at the same time—during the first blizzard of the season—not fun).

On top of that, several projects had been delayed because of the relentless rains of autumn: things like reinforcing the foundation of the goat barn, resurfacing the driveway, and finishing up the mucking that should have been done in the summer. All this on top of Alan's not being able to walk without a cane due to his fall. He couldn't help with the daily animal chores (except to fill water buckets once the outside faucets

were turned off to protect them from freezing). He couldn't drive himself to his two physical therapy sessions per week (THANK YOU to Greg and Bill who helped out with that!). And this handicap on his part brought its own frustrations for him. I'm not complaining. Life on a farm is supposed to be physical labor and I'm not opposed to it in the least! But what this schedule did do for me was force me to look at Saint Brendan's—and especially our work of prayer—in an eyes-wide-open way.

It caused me to think, and think hard, about *what* I pray, *why* I pray, and whether my prayers are simply fulfilling a scheduled 'spiritual chore' or if I'm trying to accomplish some greater work. So while Alan's writing to you about the discipline of prayer from a theological, informational sort of way (which is good), I'm going to write about how these disciplines play out, for me at least, in the daily 'goings on' of Saint Brendan's.



When Alan fell, I knew immediately that it was serious. I can't explain how I knew other than to say that the Holy Spirit seemed to 'dump' that information into my head. Quickly. And that was odd. I mean, one minute, my thoughts were on moving things from one place to another behind the chapel, and the next minute I was reorganizing my chores to accommodate Alan's

inability to assist. It wasn't by choice that I was thinking ahead; I was being prepared for what has been an arduous physical (for Alan) and mental/spiritual (for me) journey. Not all prayer is us talking to God. Prayer can also be God talking to us.

I did not question my faith—not for a moment did that happen! I didn't doubt that God was in control, or that He still loved us, and I never saw the accident as punishment. But

“God wants to be known, and wants His will to be known. He has revealed His plans to us. So why can’t we figure out what to say when we talk to Him?”

prayer is not always such an easy thing to define in a nice, neat package beyond just ‘talking to God’ (as if that weren’t huge enough).

From the time I was very young I’d hear people praying for some desired event—for healing or rain or restoration of a broken relationship—and

what I began to question was my understanding of the role of prayer in daily life, and perhaps the whole purpose of prayer. We pray for the work of Saint Brendan’s daily. And still Alan fell and was seriously hurt. We pray for all of you as well, yet the emails you send do not reveal a life especially void of struggles. In fact, I’d say the opposite! Does that mean prayer doesn’t ‘work?’ Or that God didn’t hear? Or that we didn’t pray hard enough? See what I mean?

then end it with ‘if it be Thy will.’ And I remember thinking, ‘What a copout! Don’t you KNOW His will?’ I was taught, as a child, that God always answers prayer, and that sometimes His answer is ‘yes,’ sometimes ‘no,’ and sometimes, ‘yes but not now.’ That seemed like another totally ridiculous explanation of prayer to me! I could ‘pray’ the same prayer to a ceramic figure on my dresser and expect the same three Options!! There MUST be a way to know God’s will enough to know how to pray!!

I was in the barn with the donkeys one day, about 3 weeks after Alan fell, and asking God how I should be praying for him. I suppose it would seem obvious to pray for complete, miraculous healing but it didn’t *feel* right to pray for the obvious. I found myself mentally reviewing the people that Jesus healed in the Gospels and it began to occur to me that none of them were healed instantly once their suffering began.



I had seen righteous, godly people die of horrible illnesses in spite of the many prayers of our congregation. Had God not heard? Had we prayed incorrectly? *WHY* was His answer ‘no?’ I was offered the explanation that God is mysterious; His ways are mysterious. But what I read in Scripture is that while His ways were not our ways, while they are higher than ours (Isaiah

One woman had been hemorrhaging for 12 years. Another man had been born blind for no other reason than for God’s glory to be revealed, but by then, he was an adult. Even Jesus’ friend Lazarus had to die before he was healed! How could I be sure that Jesus was ready to heal Alan’s ankle or if there were more significant things that would come from his injury? And if that were the case, then to pray for healing would go contrary to what He needed to work into Alan and into those who were caring for him.

It also occurred to me that rigidly praying the Offices would not help me to explore any of these possibilities. Yes, James 5 states that those who are sick or suffering should pray, should have the elders in the church lay hands on them in order to be...to be what? Healed? Actually James 5:15 reads, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” The Hebrew word here for ‘save’ is the same word used to be saved from eternal punishment, *sodezo*. (Healing is mentioned in verse 16, connected to confession. Hmm...) My point here is not to deny that Jesus heals us (He does!) or that miraculous healings still occur (they do!) but that

55), Scripture also reveals God’s mysteries.

Look in Romans 11 or 16, or in 1 Corinthians 15, or Ephesians 1 and 3. God wants to be known, and wants His will to be known. He has revealed His plans to us. So why can’t we figure out what to say when we talk to Him? James 4:3 reveals that we ask and do not receive because we ask wrongly. So I was back to... how do I pray for Alan rightly?

I began praying for wisdom to know *how* to pray for Alan—and me—to be healed in whatever way God needed him to be healed, and to figure out the reason for the suffering in the meantime so that our suffering was not wasted or turned to

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anger, frustration, or lack of faith. I prayed to learn patience. I prayed to be given the grace to expect to see—and comprehend God’s plan for us personally, as a couple, and as spiritual leaders. I prayed for eyes to see, and ears to hear, what God was doing in this place and in our lives. I prayed for wisdom—because He has said that ‘wisdom prayers’ are always appropriate, and that He will always answer that prayer in the affirmative (James 1:5). I found myself thanking God for this injury because it put Alan in a place to receive care rather than offer it, and to learn that he is valuable for himself and not just what he can do. I saw the slower pace that we walked first as an annoying delay but later as a gift. I have found courage, endurance, and physical strength (and know-how) beyond what I expected.



So...did God answer our prayers for Alan’s healing? Yes. But not in the way that most people—even most Christians—

would have thought. God was speaking during those conversations even if we had to grow and stretch a bit to hear Him. (Remember, prayer isn’t just us talking to God; it’s being in the right spiritual place to hear His response!) Alan’s ankle is still healing. But he is a changed man, partly because of the injury, and partly because our prayers have realigned us with God’s plan for Saint Brendan’s. And I have also gained from Alan’s injury. No one’s life happens only for himself.

What are you praying for? Are you sure? Do you know why you are praying that way? Are you and God talking about the same thing during your prayer time? Do you know what God is working in the midst of your crisis, your pain, and your circumstances? Are you willing to lay your agenda aside to see what His is? Are you listening when you pray, or just talking? Pray about it!

Sue Andraeas

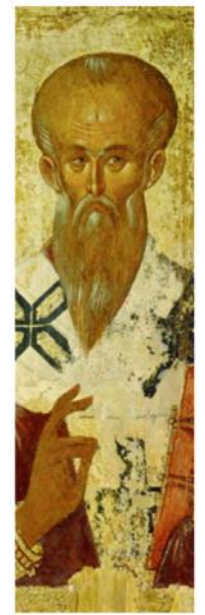
The Final Word: Clement of Alexandria

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

As for *times* of prayer, nothing at all has been prescribed except clearly to “pray at every time and every place.” However, the outward observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable. I mean those common hours that mark the intervals of the day—the third, the sixth, and the ninth—which we may find in the Scriptures to have been more solemn than the rest.

Just as we read this to have been observed by Daniel, we also pray at a minimum of not less than three times during the day; for we are debtors to Three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of course, in addition to our regular prayers that are due without any admonition, we should pray at the entrance of light and of night. Furthermore, it is becoming for believers not to take food nor go to the bath before interposing a prayer. For the refreshments and nourishments of one’s spirit are to be held prior to those of one’s flesh.

In Luke’s writings, the third hour is demonstrated as an hour of prayer. It was about this hour that those who had received the inaugural gift of the Holy Spirit were thought to be drunkards. And then there is the sixth hour, at which hour Peter went up on the roof. Finally, there is the ninth hour, at which hour they entered the Temple. Why should we not understand that, with absolute perfect indifference, we must pray always, everywhere, and at every time. Still, these three hours are distinguished in human affairs. For they divide the day, distinguish business, and reverberate in the public ear. They have likewise always been of special solemnity in divine prayers. Again, this is a practice that is sanctioned also by the corroborating fact that Daniel prayed three times each day.



In seasons of distress and grief / My soul has often found relief /
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare / By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

“Sweet Hour of Prayer”—Text: W. Walford; Music: W. Bradbury, 1878

Life at the Priory House



TOP LEFT: Day visitors from Washington, D.C., Laura and Adam, enjoyed a meal and a beautiful, fall afternoon at Saint Brendan's. I think they wanted to take some of our cats home with them. **TOP RIGHT:** The holidays are a great time for doing it up right, including roast turkey. This is one of the turkeys we raised; a beautiful 24-pounder. It could barely fit in the oven! **MIDDLE LEFT:** Every truckload of hay delivered to the goat barn is tested for quality control by...a goat! **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Local friends and neighbors, "Pilly" (L) and Ron (R), help to wrap the chapel in vapor barrier and install flashing around the windows in preparation for winter. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Just because there's snow doesn't mean the donkeys don't get their treats!

Saint Brendan's Annual Report And Statistics Summary

We suspect that our newsletter and website paint a pretty idyllic, nostalgic picture of homestead life—what with chickens and turkeys and donkeys and dairy goats. And on occasion we even toss in information about construction projects, what's going in the garden, or good folks who drop by for a visit...usually to help us butcher things. But the actual 'ministry' of Saint Brendan's is intricately and intimately folded into this far-removed, rural setting. In order to provide you with a more transparent picture of how the Lord operates in and through this place, here are some 2014 statistics that we pray will bless your hearts. THANK YOU! Thank you for the role you play through your prayers and support for this very unique ministry.

Saint Brendan's 'Fellowship' Donations	\$7,878.00
Holy Trinity Chapel Donations	\$10,301.00
Retreat Days ('retreat day' = 1 person + room + 3 meals per day)	25
Full meals served through general hospitality (not counting retreatants)	149
New study Bibles given away (value, \$50.00 each)	3
Bags of clothing received and donated to others	21
Bags of garden produce donated/given away	13
Fresh eggs donated/given away	25 doz.
Homemade yogurt given away	13 jars
Homemade cheese given away	10 lbs.
Home-butchered meat (chicken, turkey, lamb, goat) given away	9 lbs.
Live laying hens given away	11
Live sheep given away	6
Compost for gardening given away	2 tons
Educational on-site homestead tours (both school children and adult groups)	4
Celebrations of the Eucharist	90
Total number of people in attendance for worship	543
Daily Prayer Offices observed	393
Days of fasting observed	47
Spiritual direction/counseling (in person, by phone, or email)	590+
Hospital/convalescent visits	19
Non-reimbursed transportation miles driven (for retreatants and other travelers)	624
Total number of Fellowship members (Friends and Oblates)	34
Total number of regular chapel attendees	15
Personal stipends or retirement/health insurance distributions received	\$0.00

Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's Annual Membership Renewal

Name: _____

Your annual membership dues help with the ministry costs of Saint Brendan's. Dues are based on your level of membership. Please print this page (if PDF) or remove this page (if paper copy) from the newsletter, check the box that corresponds with your current membership level, and send your dues/form to Saint Brendan's. Married couples can put both names on the same form and pay only a single rate.

- Friend \$15.00
- Postulant \$20.00
- Novice \$25.00
- Life Vow \$30.00

We will wave membership dues for the following reasons (please check the box that applies):

- Individuals who have made a charitable donation of \$50 or more this past year to Saint Brendan's.
- Individuals who are in financial hardship due to unemployment.
- Full-time students.
- Members of our "prison ministry" initiative.
- International members.

All memberships expire in January unless you joined the Fellowship after March of this past year.

Your membership will be cancelled if not updated by March 31. If no fees are due, you may also reply by email. No response will be considered as your request for termination of membership. THANK YOU.

- Yes, renew my membership. My fee, if required, is enclosed.
- Please remove my membership from Saint Brendan's.

And, finally, please let us know which format you would prefer for your newsletter:

- Please send my newsletter via email as a .PDF attachment.
- Please send me a paper copy of the newsletter through the postal service.

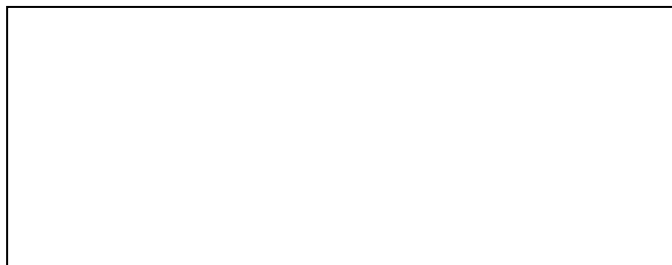
Signature: _____

Return to: Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
38 Cemetary Road
Dennysville, ME 04628

Or email us at: st.brendans@myfairpoint.net

**2015 Saint Brendan's Annual Membership
Renewal Form Enclosed.**

PLEASE RESPOND BY MARCH 15TH !



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