

# The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

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## A Disciplined Faith: Service

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands...laid aside His garments and took a towel...and began to wash the disciples' feet."  
John 13:3-4*

Over the past two years we have been examining the disciplines described in Saint Brendan's *Rule* that contribute to the image and life of Christ within us. And as the word *discipline* implies, each one requires practice and effort in order to achieve a place of constancy in our lives. We have looked at the classic Christian disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude (silence), and submission. In this issue we will focus on the discipline of service.

One of Christ's greatest acts was to take up a towel and wash His disciples' feet. It wasn't walking on water; it wasn't raising the dead; it wasn't feeding the multitudes. Nevertheless, this humble act of service has become bar none the gold standard for every believer who truly desires to emulate the life of Jesus within themselves (John 13:14-15; cf., Matthew 20:25-28). Put another way, while not every servant is a Christian, every Christian should desire to be a servant.

Our initial reaction to the thought of service might be a sigh, a frown, or even an intense emotional withdrawal. We churn out thoughts like, "I'm too busy to do anything for anybody else," or "That's why I give tithes to the church, so that I'm free from having to do stuff," or "What has anyone ever done for me?" Sometimes we're reluctant to express our lives through

service because we don't like the idea of being caught up in tasks that are menial, mundane, ordinary, or 'beneath our station.' And yet, in a way that only God could've designed, it's the discipline of service that promotes our desperately needed freedom from things like status (i.e., 'rank' consciousness) and the stifling weight of one's own pride and ego.

The practice of true service must be differentiated from the display of self-righteous service. A one-time trip to the food bank to help hand out groceries might garner the praises of our friends as they pat us on the back for our heroic plunge into the world of chronic social need, but that's not true service. True service flows from a relationship with Christ the True Servant. True service delights in doing small, hidden things without recognition more than it desires accolades for doing large, public things. True service doesn't seek for any form of calculated compensation; its joy is found in the service alone. And finally, true service doesn't wait for the "feeling" to strike; it serves simply because there is a need, flowing out of a spontaneous reaction because it has become a part of an ingrained life-style which is always kneeling before the cross and throne.



The value of service for a disciplined faith is that it knits grace and humility into our lives. As we seek the good of others through simple, hidden service, a change in our own spirit occurs. What kind of a change? As the towel of Christ is wrapped around our waists, pride (the original sin) and haughtiness (its cousin) are made to suffocate and die. The Church needs to remember this because it's the towel on earth that will eventually be replaced with the white robe and the wedding gown in heaven.

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But that's not all. While we must desire to live our lives in service to others, we must also desire to be *servants*. That doesn't sound like much of a distinction, but it truly is. You see, when we offer ourselves in service we're usually still in control of deciding who to serve and when to serve (and even when not to serve). Being a *servant*, however, takes us to the next level—it “ups the ante”—because it means we must let go of any perceived “right” to be in charge of our lives. Like Jesus, we must serve at the need of others, not at our convenience (cf. Matthew 14:13-14). Even the Apostle Paul often referred to himself as a bond-slave or bond-servant of Christ (e.g., Romans 1:1), poured out as living sacrifice, a drink offering, to God (Romans 12:1), for the sake of Christ in the service of others. He knew that his life in Christ also meant that he had given up the right to his life. And like all biblical paradox I mentioned above, our servanthood becomes the source of our greatest freedom. It's true. Willing, joyful servanthood nullifies our enslavement to self-pride or entitlement (which is the greatest form of slavery).



How do we serve? Through gentle, perfect courtesy toward those around us (cf. Titus 3:2); through generous hospitality, even to strangers (cf. 1 Peter 4:9); by lending aid even before it is requested; through taking on tasks in your community or church that nobody else wants to do; by reaching out to God's most precious—the “widows and orphans” who are so often forgotten; to bear the spiritual and emotional burdens of those around you (cf. Galatians 6:2); even through the act of listening to those who feel they have no voice and are marginalized by

the people and circumstances around them. Sometimes service is even accomplished by personally submitting to the service that others would try to show you—because to deny others the chance to serve you would be a reflection of your pride.

In the end, our service (or lack of service) is somehow factored into our final reckoning when we come to stand before the throne of the Lord. Personally speaking, I hope to hear Jesus say, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....For truly I say to you, to the extent that you *did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me*” (Matthew 25:31-46). Even Revelation bears out this aspect of our servanthood as the Apostle John records, “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, *according to their deeds*” (Revelation 20:12).

As believers of a disciplined faith, we can pray for God's leading in how to deepen our lives of service. It can begin with something as simple as: “Gracious Lord, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, bring me someone this day whom I can serve, and open my eyes to the many opportunities You place around me. Use me as Your vessel.

Transform me into the conduit of Your grace. And in all things, may there be less of me and more of Thee.” This kind of prayer takes courage because, if it helps us to look and act more like His Son, then it's exactly the kind of prayer that God delights to answer. As a monastic fellowship, may we be eager to embrace a life of service and servanthood. To see what the *Rule of St. Benedict* says about service, read chapters 35 and 48.

Rejoice!  
Fr. Alan Andraeas

## 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 God does not live within us in the Person of His Holy Spirit, we will live like the rest of the world. All of our good works will have a defiling contamination. Only God is the source of genuine love. This is why we Christians say that God is love. It's easy for the ministry [of the Church] to take the place of the One for Whom we minister. Yet the work of Christ will never save the world. Only Christ will save the world.*

—Dr. Dennis Kinlaw, President of Asbury College (1968-81, 1986-92),  
from his book *We Live As Christ: The Christian Message in a New Century*

## Service With a Smile

Sue Andraeas

*“Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till He have mercy upon us.”*

*Psalm 123:2 (RSV)*

Service. This is the discipline we seem to understand the best, and the one we can ‘do’ the most. There’s not a single member of the Saint Brendan’s fellowship who isn’t involved in some kind of service either within their church, or volunteer work in their community, or to their family! I was wondering why, then, is it considered a discipline if it’s so easy. And why can it lead to such harm; burn out, exhaustion, depression, compassion fatigue, and the like? There must be something I’m missing.

Prayerful pondering for ‘service discernment’ has been the fodder for my meditations for the past month. Not that I’ve had a lot of time for meditation! Let me state that more accurately: not that I’ve *made* much time for meditation lately. Yes, that is a confession. With Alan back to full-time work at the post office (until the beginning of August), the garden in full swing, chapel construction moving forward (and me here alone which makes me the foreman), continuing education for our puppy Baily, and 434 bales of hay put in the barn in the past 2 weeks...meditation time seemed luxurious. I was wrong. Once again, my blunders through lay monastic life have become my teacher. And, once again, I advise you to do as I say and not as I do—or as I did.

The dictionary I looked at had seven definitions for ‘service’ as a noun, seven as an adjective, and four as a verb. They covered everything from ‘helpful activity’ to ‘supplying maintenance and repair’ to the ‘breeding of livestock.’ Interesting. In every case, what they all seemed to have in common is that *something* was being used *somehow* to benefit *someone*.

Something/someone was being the *servee* (receiving the service), and something/someone was being the *server* (doing the service). What none of the definitions even remotely hinted at was WHY the *something* was being done in the first place! But, in my brief moments of meditation, it seemed to me that the motive for doing the service seemed more important than the *what*, the *how*, or even the *to whom*. So I decided to let my ‘imaginative prayer’ explore this question more fully.

I began thinking about the ‘server’ of the service—the servant. I tried to think of movies or TV shows where there were masters and servants, and one immediately came to mind: Samwise Gamagee of J.R.R Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Whether you know him from the books or from the movies, I’m sure you recognize that Sam (Frodo Baggins’ trusty sidekick) epitomizes true servanthood. Sam thinks only of his master’s wellbeing. And even when Master Frodo’s wishes are downright wrong (like the time he incorrectly thinks Sam is plotting some deviant scheme and sends him away at a time when Frodo most needs his help) Sam is obedient. The best proof of Sam’s self-denial comes at a key point in their voyage when it becomes apparent that Frodo needs to make his treacherous trek without his warriors and body guards. He explains to Sam that he is continuing his quest alone and Sam replies, “Of course you are going alone—and I am going with you!” True servanthood, as Samwise so perfectly

portrays, requires total denial of self and total awareness of the one being served. Service, as it turns out, is not simply ‘doing good deeds.’ It requires that we first give up our rights to ourselves. Service is done by servants, not masters.

As I continued to ponder this discipline of service, I was shingling the chapel. Actually, I was de-shingling the chapel! If you’ve never put cedar shingles on anything, let me give you a quick primer: it’s a lot of rectangles of wood that are



thicker on the bottom and paper-thin on the top. The trick is to put them on a vertical wall, with the bottom edge of the row being perfectly aligned (and aligned to WHAT varies from row to row—sometimes to each other, sometimes to a window, sometimes to some odd measurement so that the next row aligns with a window), and none of the gaps between shingles can line up with a gap in the previous row. Easy concept to grasp. Tough to stay focused on row after row, on a ladder, in the heat and bugs. Easy to get off course. So I was ripping five rows of crooked shingles from the wall and muttering to God about the sloppiness of the man we hired to do the job (he’s doing much better on other walls!!) while swatting mosquitoes and trying to keep Baily the Wonder Mutt from ‘herding’ chickens. I was thinking about how a hammer makes a lousy mosquito swatter (experience talking there), and that a pry bar is better for removing nails than a hammer is

**“True servanthood...requires total denial of self and total awareness of the one being served.”**

**“Without submission, we do not belong to God. Without submission, Christ cannot Have His way in our life. Without submission, we belong to ourselves.”**

(although it is almost as bad for swatting mosquitoes); about how we have a ‘tea service’ but not a ‘coffee service’ and why that might be, and why we don’t have a ‘wrench service’ or a ‘screwdriver service.’ (It probably has something to do with the elite of the British Empire and their servants, but...another day.) I was thinking about how, when serving the Lord (which should be done with gladness) I so often found it to be much like work—and was not very glad to be doing it. (Why is that?) And, finally, I was thinking about our term “Worship Service” and thinking about who was being served, realizing that much of the time, WE are being served. So...whom are we worshipping? And this is when things began to come together.

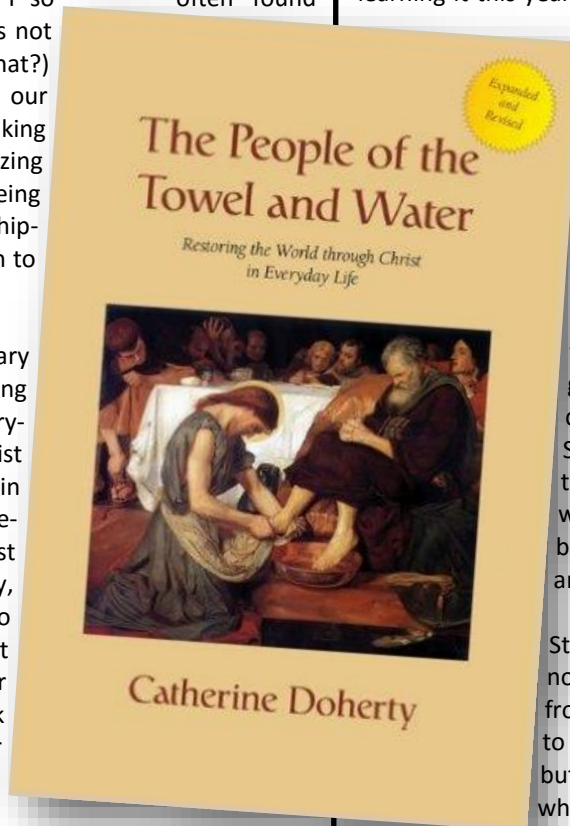
In Celtic monasticism, the primary teaching—when it comes to relating to others—is to see Christ in everyone, friend and stranger. See Christ in your family, in your friends, in your colleagues, even in your enemies. Look for the image of Christ in them. But more importantly, serve Christ as you serve them. So whether you are doing some great deed, as Samwise Gamgee was, or you are washing yet another sink of dishes, or checking the motor oil and other fluids in your spouse’s car yet again, you are (as a Christian) to be doing it as unto Christ. Catherine Doherty, in her wonderful book *The People of the Towel and Water*, mentions how we, as Christians, are very quick to volunteer our service to some great evangelical work, and then find ourselves mending sheets or cleaning toilets, and we feel we are no use

to God because we are doing such menial things. Her explanation is that we are more concerned about our image than we are in serving our Lord and Master. If we were thinking about Him rather than self, the work we are asked to do would be irrelevant; being in His service—in any capacity—would be enough. If we are disgruntled with the work God has called us to do, then the WHY of our service becomes evident. We wanted to do something that makes us look good! We are being self-serving.

Sometimes the work we want to do is not the work we were designed to do. And this may be true even if our natural, earthly gifts lie in that area! This is a tough concept to grasp. Alan is learning it this year. He is the most naturally gifted administrator I know, especially when it comes to making sense of the military and federal government’s administrative insanity! Even so, he is not called by God to do that work anymore. He’s doing a great job at the post office, but it is robbing him of all his energy, his time, his health and his joy. Think of it this way. A butter knife is great for many kitchen tasks, but it makes a lousy screw driver. Have you ever tried to use it in that capacity? A nice, heavy hammer is great on nails—until the nail is beside a window pane and your aim is less than perfect. Samwise Gamgee was called to serve Frodo through an epic task. Once it was done, he was not allowed to continue to serve Frodo, but was sent back to his home—to his wife and children and community.

Stress, burn-out, and compassion fatigue are not so much the result of the work load but from doing a task we were not called by God to do—or maybe we are doing the right task but with the wrong motive. And Who decides what task we are called to do when? Our heavenly Master of course! The angels in heaven sing this line as part of a praise hymn to Christ: “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God” (Revelation 5:10). For as long as I’ve been reading that passage of Scripture—and it appears in a Canticle in Morning Prayer twice a week—I’ve only focused on how cool it is that God has drawn to Himself a kingdom of priests from all over the world. We ALL get to eat from the sacrifice at the altar; we all get to receive Communion! WHY???? In order to serve our God.

It’s not about us, my friends. It’s not even about each other. Church is not for us. Church *service* is not supposed to be directed at us. Fellowship, intercession, works—yes! Those are ‘people-oriented’ disciplines! But our *service* is to be directed to God, and God alone. Or as St. Paul admonished the Colossian Church, “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” (Colossians 3:17). In Psalm 100, the line ‘we



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**“Servanthood begins here: grateful  
relinquishment of all rights to ourselves  
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service of God.”**

are His people, the sheep of His pasture’ is followed directly by ‘enter into his gates with thanksgiving.’ Why do sheep enter the temple? To be sacrificed! Servanthood begins here: grateful relinquishment of all rights to ourselves in joyful abandonment to the service of God.

That comes as close to a definition of ‘worship’ as any I’ve seen. Service must begin with, and end with, worship. They are inseparable. Service must be rendered only to our Master, Jesus Christ, as He comes to us in others. He does not ‘rent out’ his servants! Our service, whether from the pulpit—or the kitchen sink, with a Bible in our hand—or a mop, done in public—or totally anonymously, must have one goal: it must glorify God. And the only way that can happen is if we are in close contact with God, through Jesus Christ. Service isn’t the easiest of disciplines. Quite the contrary! True service can only be done once we have learned to lay down our life, take up our cross, and follow Him! Make time for meditation. Make time to spend alone EVERY DAY with

your master, sitting at His feet, waiting on Him as a good servant would, fixing your eyes upon Him alone, just as the Psalm at the top of this article says. See what happens to your life of service—and how it affects both your motivation and burn-out level. And let me know how it goes. I need to learn this one more than anyone else I know!

Sue Andraeas



**Come, all Christians, be committed / to the service of the Lord.  
Make your lives for Him more fitted / Tune your hearts with one accord.  
Come into His courts with gladness / each his sacred vows renew.  
Turnaway from sin and sadness / Be transformed with life anew.**

**"Come, all Christians, Be Committed" Text, Eva B. Lloyd.  
Sung to 'Beach Spring' from the *Sacred Harp*, 1844.**

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In Memory  
David A. Holifield  
March 29, 1966 – February 5, 2016

As Christ has promoted His servant David Holifield to serve Him in heaven, we rejoice! He has been, through his emails, prayers, and many gifts of many kinds, a great supporter of the ministry of Saint Brendan's and we miss him. Please continue to pray for his wife Audrey and their two young children, James and Geneva.

# Life at Saint Brendan's



**TOP LEFT:** Helen S. visits with our newest goat kid, Xena. Helen also helps with the milking. **TOP MIDDLE:** A friend of ours, David A., came over to help on butchering day. **TOP RIGHT:** The kindergarten class of a local grade school recently came over to Saint Brendan's for a field trip. Here they are being introduced to our goat, Chester. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Shingling begins on the outside walls of Holy Trinity Chapel. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** A team of contractors arrives to install a new metal roof on the Priory House. **LOWER LEFT:** Friends come over to help us stand up and bolt together the "ribs" of our new 20' x 30' woodshop. **LOWER RIGHT:** The rear wall of Holy Trinity Chapel is being modified to receive two new windows. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** It's still "rustic" inside, but we have shifted the worship services from the house back into the chapel during the warmer summer months. The next new installation will be the stained glass window over the altar.

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**The Final Word: Saint Aristides** — Converted Greek Philosopher of Athens (c. 125 AD);  
from his *Apology on Christianity*

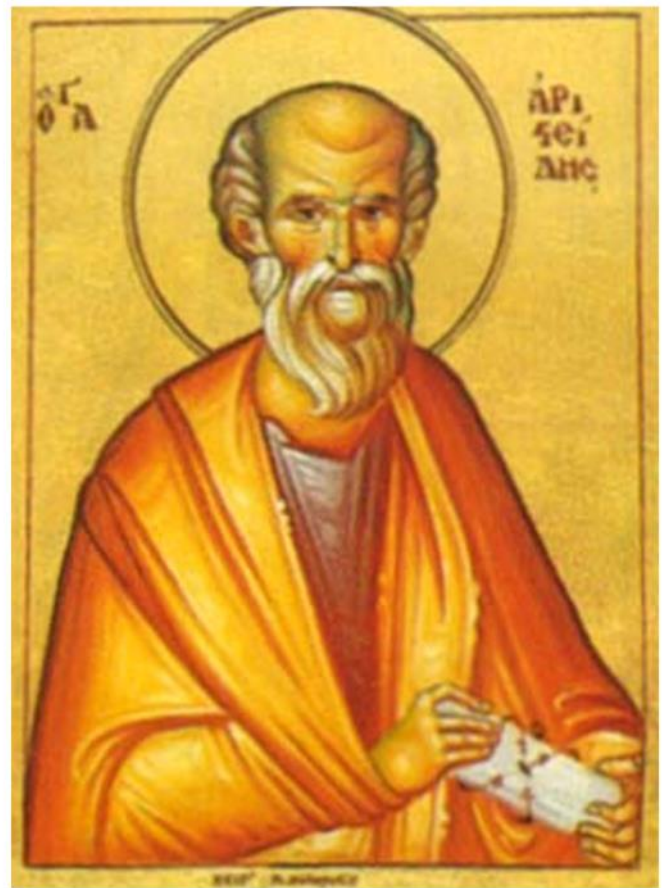
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As I have learned from their writings, O King, [Christians] have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations. For they know and trust in God, the Creator of heaven and of earth, in Whom and from Whom are all things. Therefore they do not commit adultery or fornication. They do not bear false witness. They do not embezzle what is held in pledge, nor do they covet that which is not theirs. They honor father and mother and show kindness to those who are near to them. Whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols made in the likeness of man. Whatever they would not wish others to do to them, they do not do to others. They do not eat food that is consecrated to idols, for they are pure. They comfort their oppressors and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies.

Their women, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest. Their men keep themselves from every unlawful union and from all uncleanness—in the hope of a reward in the world to come. Furthermore, if nay of them have male or female slaves, or children, out of love for them, they persuade them to become Christians. When they have done so, they call them brothers, without any distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them. And they love one another. They do not turn away their care from widows, and they deliver the orphan from anyone who treats him harshly. He who has, gives to him who has not. And this is done without boasting.

When they see a stranger, they take him into their homes, and they rejoice over him as their own brother in faith. For they do not call themselves brothers after the flesh, but brothers after the spirit and in God. Whenever one of the poor among them passes from this world, each one of them gives heed to him, according to his ability, and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted because of the name of their Christ, all of them carefully attend to his needs. If it is possible to redeem him, they set him free. If there are any poor and needy among them and they themselves have no spare food to give, they fast two or three days in order to supply the necessary food to the needy.

They follow the commandments of their Christ with much care, living justly and seriously, just as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses to them. They give thanksgiving to Him for their food and drink. If any righteous man among them passes from this world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God. They escort his body as if he were setting out on a journey from one place to a greater place. And when a child has been born to any of them, they give thanks go God.



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