

The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

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A Disciplined Faith: Hospitality

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for by this some have entertained angels
without knowing it.”
Hebrews 13:2*

Many Americans are able to boast that we have guest rooms or spare rooms in our homes. Sometimes they're used for storage or turned into a home office or equipped as a hobby/craft room, but as a rule, our homes are blessed with space. Much, much more space than other homes in any other country of the world. At the same time, we're often quite reluctant to use that extra space as an extension of our faith and trust in Christ—even while giving thanks to God for the homes He has given us.

Whether we like to admit it or not, this is all part and parcel of a much larger issue we each wrestle with: the notion that “what's mine is mine.” Oh, we're quick to nod in agreement during a sermon that reminds how everything we have comes from Lord and that all we have should be used in the service of the Lord, but the principle and the practice are very often two different things. That's why we're examining this second-to-the-last corporate discipline in Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life*; the corporate discipline of hospitality.

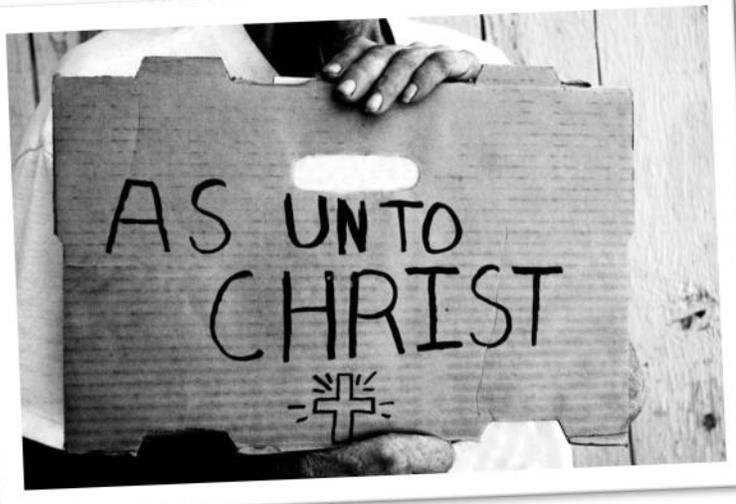
To state it as simply and succinctly as possible, your life is not your own. Your time, your resources, your provisions, even your home belong to the Lord and to everyone He brings across your path. [Once more, all of us can probably nod in agreement with that statement. But let's keep unfolding this and see what it actually means.] Accordingly, God expects us to participate in this Christian 'condition' through the gift of hospitality, using all that we have and all that we are as His appointed means to minister to the needs of Christ by ministering to the needs of those around us. As Jesus said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”* (Matthew 25:40).

And the other side of the coin? Remember what James wrote? *“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily*

food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”

James immediately concludes this statement with the declaration that such a faith is dead (James 2:16-17). Yeah, but that's James; he's like a Christian Green Berets! Well, then, let's try Jesus—He's cut from a “kinder, gentler” cloth. What did He say? *“Depart from Me,*

accursed ones into the eternal fire;...For to the extent that you did not do it of one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” (cf., Matthew 26:41-46). Ouch! Hopefully you're getting



IN THIS ISSUE OF “THE NAVIGATOR”

A Disciplined Faith: Hospitality	1
Monastic Muse	3
House Guests?	3
The Final Word: Clement of Rome & Aristides of Athens	6
Holy Hymnody	6
Housekeeping Bits & Pieces	7

the sense that our call to hospitality isn't just a philanthropic 'church' thing to help us feel good about ourselves, but is a "gamebreaker" to Christ for those who bear His Name. With that said, let's go a bit further.

Hospitality is derived from the same root stock as our English *hospital* and *hospice*, reflecting at its very bedrock the cordial welcome and care given to the sick, the injured, the stranger, the underprivileged, and the destitute, often by a religious order (cf., Luke 10:33-34). It is one of the highest and clearest expressions of Benedictine spirituality (cf., Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9). That's because, at its root in the Greek (*philonexia*), hospitality is grounded in the neighborly, brotherly love (*philos*) we share with everyone. As the *Rule* of St. Benedict states in Chapter 53, "Reception of Guests,"

Any guest who happens to arrive at the monastery should be received just as we would receive Christ Himself, because he promised that on the last day He will say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'... The greatest care should be taken to give a warm reception to the poor...because it is in them above all others that Christ is welcomed.

When we exercise the discipline of hospitality, we extend to others the grace of God Who is faithful in granting His grace toward us. As God is faithful in feeding us, clothing us, and sheltering us, we are to be faithful in the same to those around us. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us how important this is. He says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2).

Abraham discovered this to be true when he opened the hospitality of his tent to three strangers (Genesis 18:1-5), only to find that he was providing rest and refreshment for the Lord Himself! And in that gift of hospitality, God blessed Abraham with a deeper understanding of His will and provided Abraham with the unique opportunity of interceding for the welfare of neighboring Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:9-33). What we sacrifice in the service of hospitality toward others is used by God to reap a harvest of spiritual and tangible benefits that far

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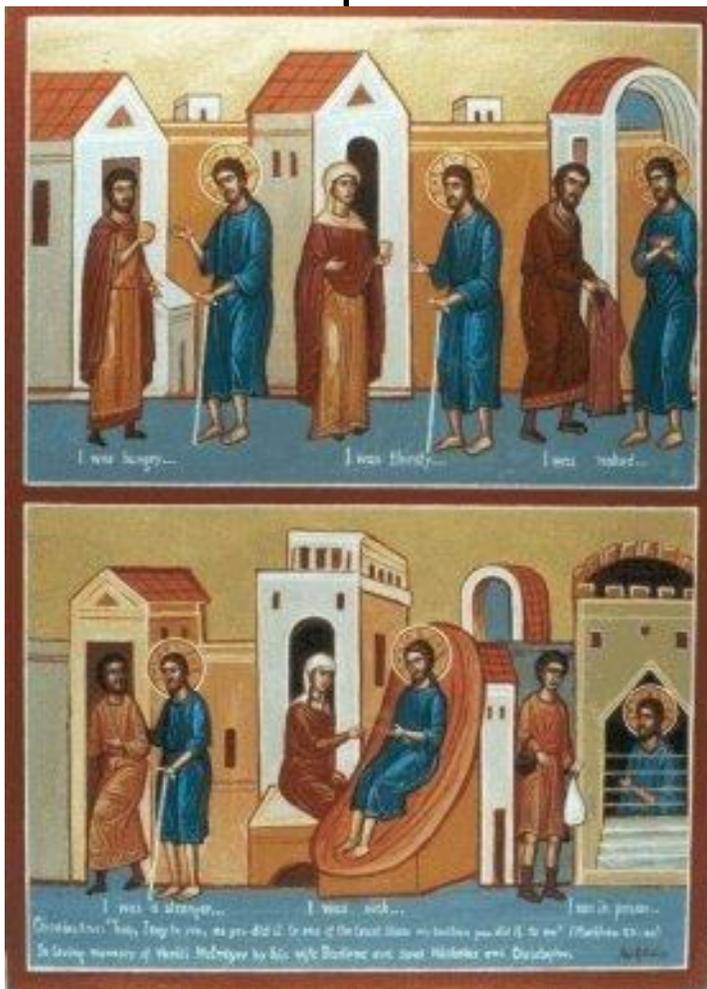
exceed our understanding of the immediate moment (cf., 1 Kings 17:8-24).

It's our desire that the members of Saint Brendan's will joyfully avail themselves to any individual in need, not seeking for personal return (cf., Luke 14:12-14). This can take many forms: providing a temporary place of rest for the displaced or the endangered; offering meals to the hungry; tending to the material

needs of the destitute whom God may place in our care for a time by washing their clothes, providing the means for them to bathe or shower, arranging to have garments or shoes made available to replace what is worn beyond reasonable service—any of those things that can return a sense of wellbeing and dignity to their lives. These sacrifices of hospitality can be performed by the individual or, if circumstances make such service dangerous for the individual, through the local church. In fact, the Priory House at Saint Brendan's is often open to cyclists who are simply hungry and tired; and while they're with us, we invite them to join us in Morning and Evening Prayer.

This is a far cry from what we normally understand to be hospitality: of simply offering our guestrooms to friends (or those referred to us) who want to spend the night as they pass through town; giving them a meal and a bed to sleep in. And while these acts

are certainly a form of hospitality, we often offer our hospitality to those who can otherwise afford those same accommodations on their own. The Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's is called to extend this sense of hospitality beyond family, friends, or the guests of others who don't have room in their homes, but also to those who are often turned away from hospitality in other settings. Even more, we also trust that every



Look carefully at this icon. You will see that it is Jesus who is hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick, and in prison.

member of the Fellowship will make it a point of prayer, asking God to reveal and provide those opportunities to share what God has already shared with us (cf., Luke 14:21b). And for those who have access to a copy of the *Rule* of St. Benedict, please take a few minutes to read once more chapters 36 and 53 on how to act toward guests and strangers.

I'll leave it here for now. Sue has done a prayerful and excellent job of fleshing this out even more in her own article. Please read it with mindfulness. In the next issue of *The Navigator*, we'll finish our tour of the monastic disciplines with the corporate discipline of Celebration.

Rejoice!
Fr. Alan



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 all guests that come be received like Christ, for he will say, ‘I was a stranger and ye took Me in’ (Matthew 25:35). Therefore, let suitable honor be shown to all, but especially to pilgrims.”

—St. Benedict of Nursia (480-543 AD), from the *Rule of Saint Benedict*.

House Guests?

Sue Andraeas

“Practice hospitality.”
Romans 12:13b

Finally, a spiritual discipline I feel I might know a little about. From the beginning, Saint Brendan’s has been a place where we try to follow the Benedictine model for welcoming travelers. In the beginning, those travelers were mostly from our Fellowship. Over the years, however, others have found us as well. Some are seeking a place to heal, or to grow in faith. Some are truly travelers, looking for a place to get cleaned up and rest for the night. Some were simply freeloading, taking advantage of our charity. Sometimes, as Scripture says, we were ‘entertaining angels.’ Other times, we were certain we were harboring demons! In every case, however, I found that if I looked for Jesus in the person who was sharing our home (our kitchen,...our bathroom), I would find Him.

People often tell me that they cannot ‘practice hospitality’ because they don’t have a guest room; because they live alone

and don’t feel comfortable letting strangers in their home; because they don’t have the time or resources; because they are too busy, too afraid. Scripture is rather clear, however. St. Paul’s letter to the Roman church wasn’t a suggestion but a command: “practice hospitality!” So NOW what? Let’s back up, take a breath, and look at exactly what Paul was commanding them—and us—to do.

The Greek word St. Paul uses means something along the lines of ‘treat strangers as brothers.’ It doesn’t necessarily mean you have to bring strangers into your home. Maybe we misinterpret this word, at least in the USA, because people who work in the *hospitality* business usually work for hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, etc. Maybe that’s why we have assumed that hospitality requires beds and meals—a financial investment and potential risk to ourselves and our property. That’s not the case.

Romans 12:13 is part of a lengthy list of behavioral expectations for followers of Jesus Christ. We are being commanded, among other things, to count strangers as brothers or sisters (fellow members of the human race—God’s most beloved creation) wherever we encounter them. That means, for example, that you have an opportunity to practice hospitality every time you go shopping, or to a museum, or come across others when hik-

ing, or go to church and a 'new person' enters the sanctuary. "But I'm shy" you may argue. Can you smile? Say 'hello?' I'm surprised how many times we take our guests shopping with us, or to a restaurant for a meal, and they are surprised by our frequent conversations with strangers. Granted, it's much more common in rural areas like ours, but not impossible other places! Try it. Just make eye contact and say hi. Or say something about the produce—or whatever you are both shopping for. And in your head, you can be saying, "And may God bless you." It's not a difficult habit to create. The worst thing that will happen is they'll look at you like you're bonkers. That's ok. We are, after all, called to be 'peculiar people' (1 Peter 2:9).

have a little talk with Jesus about it. And maybe with your pastor or priest! Brotherly love begins at home. And at church.

Also, note this: None of the suggestions on this list ask you to give money to an organization so that someone else can practice hospitality FOR you. True, there are many good organizations! But I think St. Paul's command (admonition, if you prefer) implies a more personal touch. Besides, giving money is alms, not hospitality.

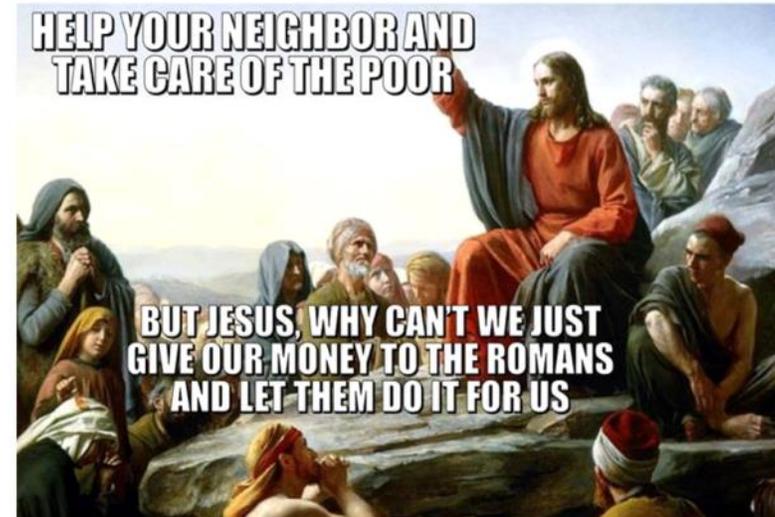
Finally, you'll notice a direct correlation between hospitality and blessing. They are definitely related! I think of it this way:

There is a connection between faith and works. Faith is the internal, invisible condition that is made manifest through the external and visible doing of good deeds in the name of Jesus. Without those deeds, faith dies (James 2:9). A blessing is the spoken or silently prayed "calling down" of God's provision upon another. Hospitality is the action that makes God's blessing—and by extension, His love—tangible. It's not enough to say, 'be warm and well fed' and do nothing (James 2:16), but we often do just that. We pray for God to provide food, clothing, and shelter—and then think our work is done. The intercession, the blessing, is the beginning. Our call to hospitality then requires us to provide the means for others to be warm and well fed! Get it? Ok. The list.

- Start smiling and waving at strangers as you drive by them. You are safe in your own car, so it's a good way to move beyond the fear of being noticed by unknown people, and to begin training yourself to practice hospitality. Bless the other driver as you go by. Decide to do a 'smile-wave blessing' to someone each time you drive somewhere. Hang something from your rearview mirror or radio dial to remind you.

- Make eye contact and smile at one person each time you go into a store (and the 'Walmart Guy' who is paid to do this is a good place to start, but see if you can 'smile bless' someone else who is shopping). The single mom with the cart full of screaming kids could probably use a friendly smile. An encouraging word would be even better!

- Alan and I have bought meals for strangers at fast food places, picked up restaurant tabs for strangers who looked like they were having a bad day, given some of our just-purchased groceries to people begging along the street, and given fast food gift certificates to moms who couldn't afford to take their kids out for a burger and



Are you thinking of moving to the next level? Do you want to provide substance with your hospitality? Here are some ideas. This is hardly an exhaustive list, but one that might get you thinking of other possibilities. Before we begin, keep these things in mind: Hospitality is not what we've referred to as an 'external' discipline; it is not one that we are to practice individually. This is the way the *entire* Church is supposed to behave, first amongst each other, and then with those outside the Body of Christ. If you cannot be hospitable to the person down the pew from you on a Sunday morning, you need to

"I found that if I looked for Jesus in the person who was sharing our home..., I would find Him."

fries. (You'd be surprised how sad that is for a child who hears other kids talking about Happy Meal toys and has never had one of his own!) We rarely give strangers cash; it can be spent on anything. But we have often purchased an extra meal to be given to someone needing it outside the restaurant, paid fuel companies to fill another person's oil tank, or given needy people gift certificates for grocery stores.

- One of the most profound examples of hospitality I've ever witnessed was by a friend who had taken Alan and me to a restaurant. It was a 'business lunch' for us, but our friend still managed to compliment the (inexperienced and fumbling) waitress at least 3 times during the meal, and he personally thanked her for her service when we were leaving—giving her a HUGE tip, and I mean HUGE. His kindness/hospitality (showing brotherly love to a stranger) brought tears to her eyes—and a happy, grateful smile. Offering hospitality to those paid to offer YOU hospitality is very important! I'm sure she remembers that day as vividly as I do.

- If you are genuinely interested in opening your home to strangers, there are ways to do it a bit more safely than putting a note on a town bulletin board. (I do not recommend that AT ALL!) We use two websites to let non-Fellowship travelers



know they are welcome to stay with us for free. One site was created to help those traveling on a budget: www.couchsurfing.com. The other website, www.warmshowers.com, is designed specifically for cyclists. For both, you can set the parameters; offer them a room—or a spot on the couch, their own bathroom—or just a place outside to wash off, a place for them to pitch a tent in your yard and water from the garden hose or space



in your garage for an air mattress, the use of your tools to repair a bike, or of your wash machine and dryer. You also have the option to refuse hospitality with no explanation, so you choose who enters your home and who does not. Through these websites, we have hosted cyclists from as nearby as southern Maine, Chicago, Florida—and as far-flung as Quebec, France, South Africa, and even the Czech Republic! Notice that these are not Christian groups per se. But St. Benedict didn't discriminate between Christian travelers and non-Christian. And no one—not one single person—has ever refused to pray with us at a meal, or balked at entering the chapel with us for Evening Prayer! (The cyclists are usually gone before Morning Prayer.) Talk about combining hospitality with Christian witness!!

I hope this short list gives you some ideas, and hopefully you'll share what YOU do with us. I don't believe for a minute that

Jesus intended us to keep His free gift of salvation a secret. Nor did He mean for us to only 'be nice' to other Christians. How would others learn of Him? Rather, I deeply believe that this command to 'Practice Hospitality' right where we are is the best way we can share Christ with those around us every day.

Rejoice!
Sue Andraeas

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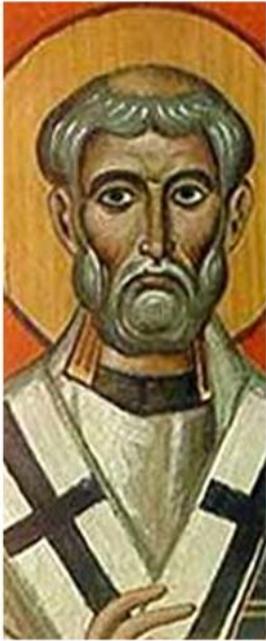
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www.saintbrendans-online.org
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WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

Please continue to pray for Saint Brendan's and these various needs:

- For final construction of Saint Brendan's wood shop.
- For strong and willing hands to labor with us.
- Praise God for the ability to minister to local people through the gifts of heating oil, fuel, food, transportation assistance, and hospital visits.
- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.
- For electric and insulation in the chapel this winter.
- For favor with medical concerns.

The Final Word: Clement & Aristides — Clement, companion of Peter and Paul, and Bishop of Rome (96 AD); Aristides, Athenian Christian philosopher (125 AD).

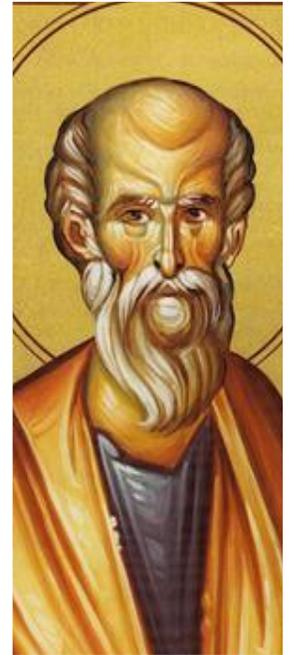


Clement of Rome:

We know many among us who have given themselves up to bonds, in order that they might ransom others. Many, too, have surrendered themselves to slavery, that with the price that they received for themselves, they might provide food for others.

Aristides of Athens:

Christians comfort their oppressors and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies. They love one another. They do not turn away 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.



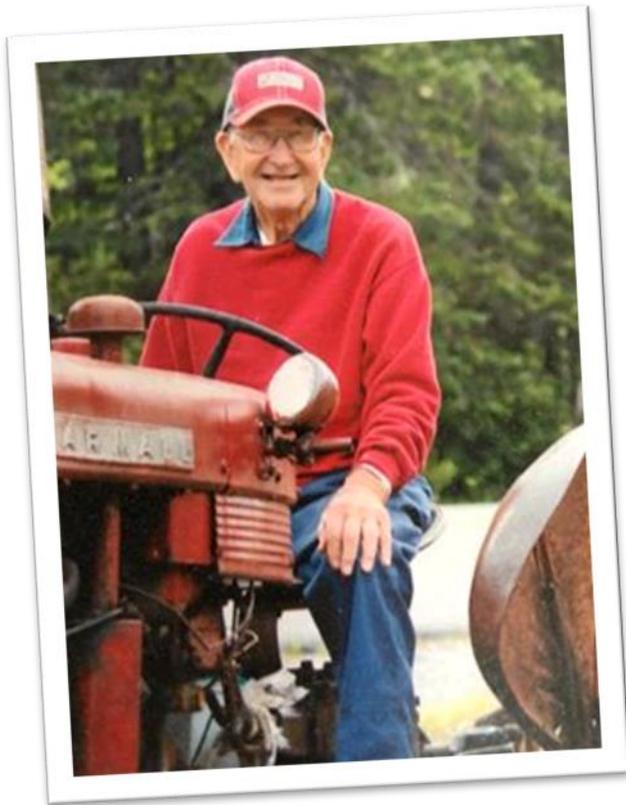
For they do not call themselves brothers after the flesh, but brothers after the spirit and in God. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted because of the name of their Christ, all of them carefully attend to his needs. If it is possible to redeem him, they offer the price to set him free. If there are any poor and needy among them, and they 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, just as the Lord their God commanded them.

**Take my hands and let them move / At the impulse of Thy love /
Take my feet and let them be / Swift and beautiful for Thee /
Take my silver and my gold / Not a mite would I withhold /
Take my intellect and use / Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose /
Take my will and make it Thine / It shall be no longer mine /
Take my heart - it is Thine own / It shall be Thy royal throne /**

"Take My Life and Let It Be"

Text: Frances Ridley Havergal. Music: Henry A. Cesar Malan.

Housekeeping Bits & Pieces



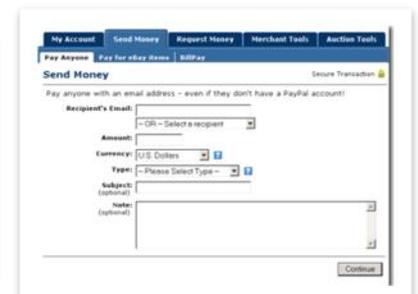
In Loving Memory
Myron Lee Curtis
1933-2018

Probably few in our Fellowship knew about Myron, but he was our hay farmer, dear friend, and integral part of Saint Brendan's. He was instrumental in our acceptance into this part of Downeast Maine and he taught us much about rural life. He loved the Lord and expressed it through his joyful, lifelong stewardship of the earth. Pray with us as we commend his soul into the care of our gracious Savior and King. And pray for his daughter, Helen, who is a faithful member of Holy Trinity Chapel. May he be blessed as God calls him to rest from his labor.

Annual Renewal and Support

- This is your **LAST** issue of The Navigator unless:
 - You made a financial contribution to Saint Brendan's in 2017.
 - You let us know that you desire to remain as a member on our mailing list **BY THE END OF THIS MONTH**. Contact information can be found on page 5.

- We no longer require annual dues or member/subscription fees, but that doesn't mean we don't have expenses. Please consider:
 - A one-time donation to the work of Saint Brendan's.
 - A monthly, automatic "Bill Pay" donation through your bank. Even \$5.00 a month (\$60.00 a year) greatly enhances our retreatant care and local ministry.



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