

# The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

Volume XIV, No. 4 — Fall 2018

## We're All in This Together

Susan Andraeas, Prioress

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish:  
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."  
Proverbs 29:18*

Alan and I were reading a mustard container one evening while we were waiting for our dinner to finish cooking. We found this particular label quite amusing because, in an effort to be trendy and exciting (difficult when you're selling a common, untrendy condiment), the package designers really had to work at it. And they weren't entirely successful. Right on the front of the squeeze bottle it read: "We Promise" followed by a list of 3 things: "Real Ingredients" (as opposed to the imaginary ones found in other mustards?), "Great Taste" (what else would they say? Adequate taste? Typical mustard flavor?), and "Our Community." That's it. "Our Community." Alan and I tried to imagine what a 'Mustard Community' would be like, or how we might join. What would the expectations be? Hot dogs at every meal? What would our contribution be, other than to buy more mustard?

That bottle of mustard is nearly empty now, but I've thought about those three promises often. I even went to the Official Mustard Website one afternoon to see what this 'community' might offer. (Recipes, blogs, comments from other mustard 'community' members, and an opportunity for me to share my 'mustard

experience.' Experience?? IT'S MUSTARD!!) While doing other things, I began thinking more seriously about what a real community *is* and what it *does*. (Sad that God needed to use poor marketing techniques to get me to ponder this, isn't it?) This process began several months ago, even before our last newsletter where Alan and I began to put down on paper how Saint Brendan's got to where it is now—geographically, logistically, spiritually, and every other way. And I think my nostalgic recollection of Saint Brendan's early days collided with my pondering what a Mustard Community might involve, or maybe this truly is the work of the Holy Spirit. Time will tell.

PLEASE NOTE: This next section is not to be taken as whining, complaining, scolding, or anything like that! I happen to like statistics. I tend to view them rather objectively. And I think it's important that we—all of us together—look at our Fellowship from the same perspective every once in a while, particularly since your correspondence with each other is so limited. So here it is. No hard feelings on my part. I PROMISE.

- Alan and I spend, collectively, about 15 hours on each newsletter. (Now you know why this once-monthly publication has been reduced to a quarterly one.) That includes time to write the articles, research the various components, finding pictures, layout, printing and mailing the paper copies, and sending the email copies (usually twice since I always forget to attach it to the email!). The last newsletter took almost twice that amount of time since Alan had to do it almost entirely with one hand. He had just had his left shoulder replaced and could-



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n't use that hand to type. This issue will also be done one-handed since he's having the other shoulder replaced a few days from when I'm typing this.

- First-hand distribution, the copies that are sent directly by us, goes to almost 70 people. Our distribution goes to 3 countries and at least 15 states. From there, it is often redistributed via our bishop (to other clergy), friends, family, etc.
- On the average, we receive 2-3 responses back (not counting the ones that tell me that I forgot to attach the newsletter to the email... again. Thanks for looking out for me, gang!). We occasionally receive an email stating that the reader appreciated our articles, pictures, or other components.
- Maybe once per year, we will receive a response asking for clarification about something, or someone disagrees with a point we've made and wants to discuss it further. But, for the most part, those 15 or so hours spent on a newsletter each quarter seem to have, from our limited perspective, no impact on the Saint Brendan's Fellowship; they do not create any more of a sense of community than the mustard label did. And many times we have to ask if people actually received them because we hear from no one and assume something went wrong in the transmission.

When I began teaching in the public schools, a well-seasoned colleague (one who had taught me years earlier) gave me some of the best advice of my professional career: "Teach the masses. But only pour your heart out to the students who really want to learn." I used to think if I tried hard enough, I could spark interest in my more blasé students and inspire them to be more curious and involved in their growth and maturity. But the truth is, you can't force anyone to learn, or improve, or be more interested in anything. It didn't take me long to realize that I was pouring out the best of my time and talent on students who were neither grateful nor interested. In doing so, I had less time and energy to spend with the students who were interested in receiving the extra help. I'm still teaching. I'm still trying to inspire, but now it's for people to seek a more authentic, inspired walk with their Savior. And it may be time to re-evaluate how I spend my time so that I'm working with those who are genuinely seeking a more authentic life rather than spending time trying to convince people to follow

"Jesus would say, 'Follow me,'  
and then start walking;  
He didn't beg or coerce."

Jesus 'for real.' Jesus would say, "Follow me" and then start walking; he didn't beg or coerce. There's much church leaders can learn from that! There's much I can learn from that!!

When St. Benedict was writing his Rule for his community of brothers, he wasn't trying to control behavior. And he wasn't 'advertising' so that people would join his community. He was simply trying to provide guidelines for relationships within the group that would best assist everyone who was interested in being part of the community to get along with each other as they lived their life for Christ. He didn't want to leave anyone behind that was earnestly trying to be part of the community. Some rules (his word—keep thinking 'guidelines') aided those who were really good at living a disciplined life and needed to be reminded to be humble. Some rules helped the less confident, physically weak, or emotionally wounded so that they would be encouraged with even baby steps of progress. Some rules expelled those who were disrupting communal life, and others allowed for penitent outcasts to rejoin the community. Nobody was left in charge of any one area of communal life for



too long, not even the abbot. By switching the leadership roles, the community never became stagnant, nor did it become the work of one person; it remained God's work. (Alan and I have often mentioned that our Benedictine leadership time limit is up, and we need to pass the torch to someone else in the group. But we are not geographical community, and no one has arrived to begin training to fill our positions. Not yet.)

I don't want to be part of a mustard-esque community. I don't want to drum up 'real ingredients' or 'great taste' kinds of characteristics for our Fellowship just so our 'community population' list is long. I don't want a long distribution list to give the illusion of success if it is not spiritually effective. In fact, that's why Alan and I have everyone recommit to their membership in the Fellowship every year. (This, by the way, is that "Last-Newsletter-Unless-You-Contact-Us" newsletter.) We give everyone THREE MONTHS to recommit to another year of membership. It's our only requirement. There are no more annual dues or other requirements on your part. In that sense, it IS sort of like the Mustard Community! But that's where I hope the similarities end!! And this might be a good place to begin our discussion about what lies ahead.

The Saint Brendan's Fellowship was never intended to be a close-knit group like the one St. Benedict began. These days, it's nearly impossible to achieve a close, consistent group of people in our culture even when they all live close to each other! Our original vision was to design a way for people to be exposed to lay monastic life prior to making any commitments to it. To work with each member of the fellowship, individually, in order to develop spiritual disciplines that fit their unique lifestyle and calling would be time-consuming, and it would all but prohibit our ability to develop relationships with our neighbors here; we'd never be part of the Dennysville Community. That's what nearly happened in the earlier years of our time here! We were so busy with retreatants and newsletters and oblates and phone calls that we didn't know the people living around us. That's DANGEROUS! Praise God for shaking us up in a way that forced us to connect with our neighbors who are now our friends!

No, from the beginning, our goal for Saint Brendan's was to work with Christians who were interested in a closer relationship with Christ no matter what their denominational background was, or how long they had been a Christian. We wanted to work with people who didn't want to 'do devotions' but to live a devoted—a devout—life; ones who were willing to give up whatever prohibited them from reflecting the love of Jesus to those around them. They didn't just want to 'be fed' but take what had been learned and put it into practice by doing the things Jesus commands His followers to do—feed the hungry, care for the sick, watch after orphans... you know the list! We wanted to work with people who wanted to push beyond denominational lines, to look back to a time when the Church was united in purpose; to watch and listen for Christ's return, and to remember what signs to anticipate. I think we are on the right track for this kind of Fellowship! And we are grateful for each of you!!

Now for the 'vision' part. I already mentioned that this is the time when you need to let us know if you wish to continue as part of our Fellowship. But I'd like you to consider going a step further; I'd like you to prayerfully consider what role YOU might play in the ministry work of Saint Brendan's. This year has been particularly difficult for us. Alan has had four major surgeries in as many months, and I had major oral surgery and a few injuries. It's quite clear that we are not able to do this work alone. We have completed an incredible list of construction projects thanks to wonderful neighbors, skilled laborers in our area, and family members who have come to pitch in. THANK YOU! And we have experienced the humble blessing of being on the re-

ceiving end of ministry and outreach, and we are grateful! This isn't a sly attempt to ask for funds. (I think it's important for Christians, especially in the USA, to realize that 'doing' ministry and 'funding' ministry are two different things.) Instead, I'm asking for your prayerful ideas, inspiration, and vision. THAT kind of contribution. I'm asking you to move beyond 'member' to 'co-laborer,' especially our Board of Directors, oblates, and from those who have been here on retreat. You know better than most what kind of work the Lord is doing here. As we look

forward to 2019, I'd love to hear your thoughts on the following topics. Pray about it. Ponder for a bit. Then, you can email, write a note, or call. Tell us what you think about:

- Expanding the Saint Brendan's (much neglected) website to

include blogs, places for members of the Fellowship to chat with each other. I know there are other forums for this as well. (Discord comes to mind as a place where a cyber group can meet but I have no idea how it works, what it costs, etc. We are not internet-savvy people and could really use the help in this area in particular.)

- A Saint Brendan's Facebook group where people can post pictures, ask questions, offer testimonies, list prayer requests, etc. (This would require monitoring. Someone would have to scan and admit people who want to post on this group, and I'm not sure Alan and I have the time. I have no clue how this works either! I just know I belong to a goat group and a knitting group, and I find both helpful and encouraging. Both are well managed, so it's possible to do.) What other cyber options are there? YouTube videos? Is that a danger to the true ministry in this place? How much time would videos take to create, and how will that impact weekly Eucharistic services, farm work, etc? Would it be a positive effect or negative?

- Do you oppose a cyber presence for Saint Brendan's? Why? What other options can you suggest?

- We have tried offering an Oblate program where individuals can develop a more disciplined life which aids in the relinquishment of earthly concerns in order to become closer to Christ. This program follows through a series of levels from Postulant (learning about lay monastic life) to Novice (practicing lay monastic life) and finally making



promises to God that you will live only for Him, and it does require more intimate involvement, time and focus on our part—and on the part of the Oblate. (Think about the monastic life of a monk or nun. Now, make it available to anyone; a life of sexual purity, simplicity, and obedience to God’s call upon your life.) In the last 13 years, we have had only 13 people either begin or continue in this program. None have advanced beyond Novice except one person other than Alan and me. Did you know about this program? Would you be interested? For those of you who have started and either dropped out or not advanced, is it because of geographical distance, or a lack of input from us, or another reason? How can we help if you are interested in moving forward? Do you find it too difficult because of distance, and do we need to revamp the program, or drop it entirely?

- Do you read the newsletters? Which part(s)? What would you like to see change? What kinds of articles would you like to see? What topics? Length of articles? Series of articles? BE HONEST! This newsletter is too much work if nobody benefits from it. And if it IS helpful for you, please... LET US KNOW!
- We were asked to offer a reading list. We did, several years ago. I never heard a single response about ANY of the books I listed, or that anyone bothered to read them. Did you? Was the book list helpful? Is there some other type of resource that you’d rather see? (If your suggestion is Podcasts or YouTube videos, it’s going to take a while. I don’t have time to screen them just now. That doesn’t mean it’s not possible. But perhaps YOU can make some suggestions and we can take it from there.)
- For those of you who have received a Breviary (prayer book) from Saint Brendan’s, do you use it? What do you like? What doesn’t work for you? We are working on re-



vamping it—again. What would you like to see added to it? Or removed? Does anyone need/want a new one?

- We are also working on developing a way to sell the books Alan has written; our Breviary and Rule, his book about house churches (it just went to the publishers this month! More original books will follow!!). We have been selling prayer ropes from an Etsy site and we’re going to link this to our website but... farm life and the cyber world are rather mutually exclusive. So, once again, we are back to the internet questions. It seems to be the way things are heading, as much as I have resisted. (I don’t even have a smart phone yet! We really need help in this department, can you tell!?)

I can’t tell you how often we have felt totally inadequate, as if we’re making no progress at all, and how much easier it would be to simply convert Saint Brendan’s into a working farm with a chapel for worship and guest rooms for hospitality. But we love our Fellowship. No, let me restate that. We love the people IN our fellowship! At the end of the day, it’s not about the program. It’s relationship. And I can’t tell you how encouraging it is to have people come on retreat who then tell us that they are looking for

real estate in this area because they want to live closer to what the Lord is doing here. It happens. OFTEN! What the Lord is building here is important, and I, for one, am glad to watch it grow! But we need help getting to the next phase. A real Community is not just a mailing list or cyber connection. It’s people who work together toward a common goal; who share a common vision. The Lord provided the vision over 20 years ago. We need you to participate in that vision. We need your ideas, even the odd, quirky, brain-storming kind! We need help in the implementation. We don’t want to be a fake ‘mustard community.’ We want to really serve Christ together!

Rejoice!

## 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...

“Indeed, render to Caesar money. But render to God, yourself.  
Otherwise, what will be God’s, if all things are Caesar’s?”

—Tertullian of Carthage (160-230 AD), North African *theologian and apologist*.

# Life at the Priory house



**TOP LEFT:** Our local plumbing and heating contractor works on installing a 38,000 BTU propane heater in Holy Trinity Chapel. **TOP CENTER:** We were blessed with a visit of Sue's sister and nephew, Andrea and Dylan, from Virginia. This was their first visit to Saint Brendan's. **TOP RIGHT:** Bishop Richard Lipka shares the homily during the Holy Eucharist as part of his annual visit to Saint Brendan's and Holy Trinity Chapel. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Fr. Alan's sister, Bonnie, and several of her children, also came for a visit from Pennsylvania. They're recreating the same picture they took on that bench ten years earlier at West Quoddy Head. **MIDDLE CENTER:** We also had electrical contractors in the chapel to install LED lighting and outlets. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** It was finally time to replace the porch on the original 214-year old side of the house. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Just how many bales of hay can our barn hold?!

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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## WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

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

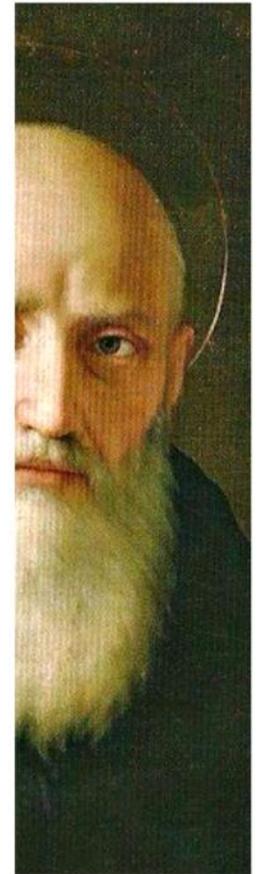
- Praise God for completion of Saint Brendan's wood shop.
- Praise God for family and friends who came and helped with chores and projects while Fr. Alan convalesced.
- Praise God for favor during many difficult surgeries and procedures.
- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.
- Praise God for heat and electric in the chapel.
- To know God's purpose and direction for this ministry.

**The Final Word: St. Benedict of Nursia (AD 480-547)** — Patron Saint of Europe and founder of Western Christian monasticism. He established over a dozen monastic communities centered in Subiaco and Monte Cassino, Italy. Most noted for the “Rule of St. Benedict.”

*[Note: These words are the final chapter of the Rule of Saint Benedict. He titled the chapter, “This Rule is Only a Beginning.” As you will read, he thought of his Rule as a tool which only scraped the surface of the fulness of life held out to Christians who desired to consecrate their hearts and lives in obedience to Christ. In fact, St. Benedict considered his own practice of faithfulness to be a negligent and inadequate shadow of what it truly could have been. A sobering thought for today’s contemporary practice of faith!]*

The purpose for which we have written this Rule is to make it clear that, by observing it in our monasteries, we can at least achieve the first steps in virtue and good monastic practice. Anyone, however, who wishes to press on toward the highest standards of monastic life may turn to the teachings of the holy Fathers, which can lead those who follow them to the very heights of perfection. Indeed, what page, what saying from the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is not given us by the authority of God as reliable guidance for our lives on earth? Then there are the *Conferences* and the *Institutes* and the *Lives of the Fathers* and the Rule of our holy father Basil. What else are these works but the means of true progress in virtue for those aiming at high standards of observance and obedience in monastic life? We, however, can only blush with shame when we reflect on the idle negligence and inadequacy of the monastic lives we lead.

Whoever you may be, then, in your eagerness to reach your Father’s home in heaven, be faithful with Christ’s help to this little Rule, which is only a beginning. Starting from there you may, in the end, aim at the greater heights of monastic teaching and virtue in the works which we have mentioned above, and with God’s help you will then be able to reach those heights yourself. Amen.



**Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart /  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art-- /  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night /  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light /**

**High King of heaven, my victory won /  
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun! /  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall /  
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all /**

**"Be Thou My Vision"**

**Text: 8th cent. Irish hymn, trans. Mary E. Barn; Music: Irish Folk melody, arr. David Allen. 1912.**

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# 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 THE YEAR**. 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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