

The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's

Volume XV, No. 1 – Winter 2019

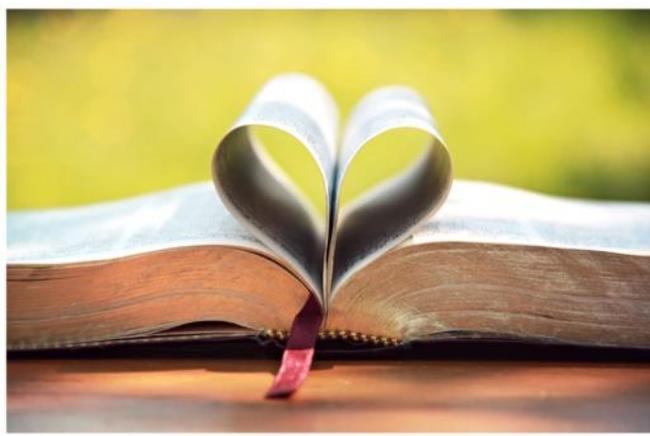
The Only Thing that Matters

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*"God has anointed you with the oil of joy,
for He delights in your beauty."
Psalm 45:7,11*

The Summer 2018 newsletter was a reflection on how we (Sue, me, and you) got to where we are as a ministry. The Fall 2018 newsletter posed some thoughts and questions on where Saint Brendan's needs to go and the best way to get there. Perhaps it's good now, at the start of a new year—and the Season of Epiphany—to consider who Christ is AND who we are in Him. I know this is important for me because last year was a mess. Spiritually, medically, physically, emotionally, there wasn't a single part of my life that wasn't tested, and in that testing the 'old me' would bubble up to the surface and Jesus would be pushed into the shadows. Does that only happen to me?

Our devotional life—indeed, every facet of our faith—is very much shaped by (1) who we believe the Lord to be, (2) what we believe He thinks of us, (3) how we view our own sense of self-worth, and (4) how we imagine He responds to us. And do you want to know something? Deep in our hearts we usually get it all wrong. Oh, we know all the Sunday school answers and what our daily devotional aides say but, in our hearts, echoes of the Old Adam are still calling out from behind the bush because, quite frankly, we're naked and afraid. Let's



not enter 2019 with that kind crippled faith but as a brother or sister of Christ now, as a joint heir with Christ in the power of the resurrection, and as the Bride of Christ in His Kingdom yet to come.

Some folks say that our understanding of the Lord is based on our early relationships with our own fathers, or shaped by that original witness of our need for salvation that frightened us to prayer, or from the indoctrination we received from a particular denominational viewpoint. Lots of things contribute to our 'picture' of the Lord, shaping Him as a God of shock and awe, anger, indifference, harshness, judgment, or wrath; someone we don't want to cross; someone we dare not disappoint. Hear this and hear it well: the attributes of God's nature and character are as infinite as eternity itself, but He is only known by His

love as manifested through Jesus Christ. His entire being can be discerned and defined through this simple yet amazingly profound statement in 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Not that God contains love, or God is comprised of 27% love, or God only demonstrates His love on Tuesdays in months with five weekends. Read it again. God IS love. If we miss

that or substitute it with something other than exactly what it says, our faith can be hijacked by the Old Adam and we end up creating God as something other than what He really is.

So, now we might ask, "What does this God of love think about me?" Even love has its limits, right? I need to prove myself lova-

IN THIS ISSUE OF "THE NAVIGATOR"

The Only Thing that Matters	1
Monastic Muse	3
Not Everything Yucky Is Bad	3
Holy Hymnody	4
Life at the Priory House	5
The Final Word: St. Catherine of Siena	6

ble, right? (Good luck!) My old secrets and sins, my poor choices, even my failures and temptations might push me beyond God's reach, right? Love comes with strings attached (i.e., He'll only love me if I...), right? That might be how our earthly experiences with imperfect love work, but that's not how God's love works. Think about those classic Bible memory verses, especially the one that says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We know it intellectually, but what we know in our heads often has a hard time making its way down to our hearts, especially the fact that His love for us IS NOT contingent on our lovability. He loves us...in spite of us!

In spite of us? Believe it or not, what we bring "to the table"—especially our self-worth—plays very little into the relationship

God desires to have with us. It's rare to find someone who has a really good opinion of themselves—we're often troubled by our appearance, or how we stack up against other co-workers, or that we're not good enough or smart enough or earn enough or perhaps that we even come from the "wrong side of the tracks." Truth be told, although we're practiced at putting on a good mask, we spend much of our time secretly fretting over our low self-worth. Quoting

the Apostle Paul, our 'life verse' is usually something like, "I know that no good thing dwells in me" (Romans 7:18). Guess what God wants to do with all of that? He looks inside at the personal defeat we cling to, He quiets those nagging voices with His love, and then He does something absolutely spectacular—He rejoices over us...with singing! "Naw, you're making that up!" Am I? Here's exactly what it says in Zephaniah 3:17—"He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." God takes you to Himself, comforts you, and sings you a love song. How excellent is that?!

Does God actually think that way about me? Oh, it gets even better. All of salvation history, from Genesis to Revelation, is the story of how the Lord desires us for Himself. We can't even begin to imagine what happens to His heart when we take even a single footstep in His direction. Imagine the words of

"And it all leads to that place where He wants you as the co-eternal Bride of His Son, Jesus Christ. "

the Lover and the Beloved in the Song of Solomon as if they were God's own thoughts and words about you. Here's what God says in Song of Solomon 4:9, "You have ravished my heart, ...you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes." Taking a step toward Him? That's what happens when we even glance at Him! Do you make someone's heart flutter? Well, you certainly make God's heart flutter! God looks at you in ways you can't even begin to imagine. And it all leads to that place

where He wants you as the co-eternal Bride of His Son, Jesus Christ. That's what Psalm 45 is all about, the Messiah and His Bride, the Church—"Listen, O daughter, the King will delight in your beauty.' And she shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors and shall enter the King's palace" (Psalm 45:10-11,14-15).

This is who we are in Christ; loved, cherished, desired. If we can carry even a glimmer of this hope into the new year, it will be a great year. What happens next—how we respond to this love in Christ—will be the focus of the next few newsletters as we spend some time with the Fruit of the Spirit. Until then, let me encourage your heart with these words from Isaiah:



*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
My soul shall be joyful in my God;
For He has clothed me with the
garments of salvation,
He has covered me the
robe of righteousness.
And as the bridegroom rejoices
over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you.*

Isaiah 61:10; 62:5

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...

“We must turn away from the life that is eagerly sought after by the multitude, and earnestly live the life that resembles that of Christ.”

—Origen (185-255 AD), called the “Father of Christian theology, authoring over 2,000 works.

Not Everything Yucky Is Bad

Sue Andraeas

*For the word of God is alive and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates
even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
Hebrews 4:12*

We made it to 2019! I didn't think 2018 would ever end. Have you ever had years like that? Or months? Seasons? I was just explaining to a friend that the blessings of 2018 were sort of like learning to eat yucky vegetables. I am not a big fan of brussels sprouts. Never have been. Never will be. But as a kid, I was told to stay at the table until I finished my allotted 3 nasty, green orbs on my plate. I soon learned that you can't hide them in a glass of milk. Nor can you feed them to the dog. If you smash them up in your mashed potatoes, it just ruins the potatoes. Best thing to do is take a deep breath, cut them in half, chew them as few times as possible, and just swallow them!!

Sometimes blessings from the Lord are very much like this. I don't mean actual brussels sprouts, but that not all blessings are fun warm-fuzzies packaged as prosperity. Some are more like a sword that separates joints and marrow (see the verse above). And for Alan, this was quite literal. Twice! His shoulder muscles were cut from the bones.

His bones removed. Titanium replacements screwed in. Muscles re-attached. Then came the endless days of ice and slings and not being able to lie down. Then therapy. And now? He's got scars and memories of the process—and his shoulders work again! But perhaps the hardest part of 2018 wasn't the actual



logistical trials. Perhaps it was fighting against what God was doing, both *for* us and *in* us. Along with the surgical cutting-apart-and-putting-back-together, both Alan and I experienced this on a spiritual level.

We have both been born again for many years. That is the wonderful redemptive power of Christ that takes our dead spirit and, through his miraculous work, grants us eternal life. An amazing gift!! But it doesn't do much for our souls (the 'invisible' part of us; our mind, will, memory—both conscious and subconscious, desires, emotions) or our bodies (that are, after all, fashioned out of earthly chemicals and water tainted by sin—not to mention assaulted by our own sins and those of people around us). So, if you think about it, being born again makes the various facets of our selves at war with each other. Our eternal, perfected spirits tug us toward heaven while our bodies are in a perpetual downward slide toward death and decay, and our minds and wills are pulled in both directions.

Sometimes, the Holy Spirit draws us closer toward heaven by allowing us to experience glimpses of the glories of our eternal home. Other times, however, we require rehabilitation and 'spiritual therapy' that strengthens our resolve and, at the same time, reveals deeper and richer truths of our Lord and Savior that can only be experienced in 'the valley of the shadow of death' that King David wrote about in Psalm 23.

I love looking at Scripture in the original languages. Greek and Hebrew are more poetic and somehow more precise at the same time. But Hebrews 4:12 says exactly what it looks like it says. “Sword” is sword. “Marrow” is marrow.

“Joints” are joints. The Greek word for ‘word’ is *Logos* and is the same word St. John used in the beginning of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Logos...” It is the way he describes Jesus; not just the incarnate Jesus but the Jesus who was present at creation and will be present for the ‘new heaven and new earth.’ What this verse in Hebrews is announcing, then, is that Jesus is alive and active—not just a part of our spiritual history but part

of our current events. He is not a 'blunt instrument' but sharp and effective.

He separates our perfected spirits from our tainted memories and habits, and failing bodies. He 'judges' (or discriminates) the 'thoughts and attitudes of our hearts,' meaning that He can tell not just what we're thinking and/or feeling but the motivation behind it. And He is waiting to heal those memories, attitudes, desires, habits, whatever, that keep us from experiencing His love. But we have to be willing to allow Him to reveal those places in our heads and hearts where we have not allowed Him to be effective. We need to come to terms with our spiritual brussels sprouts. And I'm not talking about on a cognitive level—that you *comprehend* what I'm saying. It has to be on a relational level—where we know PERSONALLY, and trust COMPLETELY the One who wields that wonderful, double-edged sword, and allow Him to spiritually remove all that keeps us from being like him: Holy.

Last year, Alan and I published a newsletter looking at where we had been. The next one looked at where we feel the Lord is leading. (THANK YOU for your wonderful responses. You have no idea how necessary your kind words and encouragement were!) This is looking at the present. Where we are now. Those 2018 brussels sprouts are gone, thank God! I still don't like them, not the real vegetable or the 'crucible' I'm allowing them to represent here. But allowing the lesson—and healing—of unwanted events to take

“He is waiting to heal—NOT REMOVE—those memories, attitudes, desires, habits, whatever, that keep us from experiencing His love.”

hold is indeed a blessing. Keep reading to the end of that chapter in Hebrews. It ends with our Great High Priest who came to terms with all the bumps and bruises of this world but did not fall to their deadly effects of sin. He is more than able to perform whatever spiritual surgery we may need.



In the weeks ahead, we're going to be looking at the fruit of the Spirit. That's fruit SINGULAR. One fruit with many facets to be sure, but all are characteristics of this Savior/Shepherd/Priest who shows us the way out of earthly traps. And as we navigate through these traps, with the aid of his Holy Spirit, we

don't just *act* more like Christ. We *become* more like Christ. That is my present goal. My only goal. Is it spooky? Sure! That sword sounds 'wicked powerful' (as they'd say here in Maine), and the one who wields it is a pro. But I say bring it!

Rejoice!
Sue

**Refiner's fire /
My heart's one desire /
Is to be holy /
Set apart for You, Lord /
I choose to be holy /
Set apart for You, my Master /
ready to do Your will /**

"Refiner's Fire"

Brian Doerksen, "Draw Me Close: 25 Top Vineyard Worship Songs" Album, 2002 .

Life at the Priory house



TOP LEFT: With electric and heat installed in the chapel, our carpenters can do winter indoor construction for us. To make things even more comfortable, Holy Trinity Chapel is completely insulated. **TOP RIGHT:** With all the insulation in place, a sacristy is constructed in the rear of the chapel. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Sheets of beadboard are cut down to serve as panels for a wainscot all around the chapel. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** After the wainscot comes the horizontal installation of 1x6" boards for the upper part of the walls. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Between all of the construction, we made it over to the Dennysville Congregational Church for their Christmas presentation of Nine Lessons and Carols. The Choir is making their procession forward to the choir boxes after having just finished singing Frank Boles' setting of the 15th century poem "Adam Lay Ybounden". By the way, this church is over 200-years old and was originally built in the Puritan tradition. If you look closely, it still retains the original Puritan pew boxes and every pew box has its own door. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The entire church was lit only with the lights on the twin trees and candles; a beautiful setting!

The Final Word: St. Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380) — A ‘Third Order’ Dominican, St. Catherine was a mystic, scholar, theologian, and saint. Her writings were so profound that she was declared a “Doctor of the Church” and spiritual patroness of Italy and Europe.

[In the style of the spiritual and mystical writing of the day, St. Catherine’s works are often written in the ‘first person’ voice of God.]

When My heart saw that you could be drawn in no other way, I sent Him to be lifted onto the wood of the cross. I made of that cross an anvil where this Child of Humankind could be hammered into an instrument to release humankind from death and restore it to the life of grace. In this way He drew everything to Himself: for He proved His inspeakable love, and the human heart is always drawn by love. He could not have shown you any other greater love than by giving His life for you [John 15:13]. You can hardly resist being drawn by His love, then, unless you foolishly refuse to be drawn.

I said that, having been raised up, He would draw everything to Himself. This is true in two ways: First, the human heart is drawn by love as I said, along with all its powers: memory, understanding, and will. If these three powers are harmoniously united in My name, everything else you do, in fact or intention, will be drawn to union with Me in peace through the movement of love, because all will be lifted up in the pursuit of crucified love. So my Word of Truth indeed spoke truly when He said, “If I am lifted up high, I will draw everything to Myself.” For everything you do will be drawn to Him when He draws your heart and all its powers to Himself.

Second, what He said is true also in the sense that everything was created for your use to serve your needs. But you who have the gift of reason were made not for yourselves but for Me, to serve Me with all your heart and all your love. So when you are drawn to Me through Him, everything is drawn with you because everything was given to you.



HOW TO CONTACT US

The Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan’s
38 Cemetary Road
Dennysville, ME 04628-4326
207-726-5129

st.brendans@myfairpoint.net
www.saintbrendans-online.org
www.facebook.com/st.brendansfellowship
www.facebook.com/holytrinitychapel.maine

WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

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

- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.
- For the continuing interior construction of the walls and ceiling in Holy Trinity Chapel, and the safety of those who labor in God’s house.
- For favor with medical concerns and upcoming surgeries.
- For discernment as we continue to define and refine Saint Brendan’s role in the Body of Christ and this local community.



We're on Facebook!

The Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's now has a Facebook page! We've made it public for anyone who wants to follow. Go to www.facebook.com and, in the search box, type Saint Brendan's Fellowship. We're just learning this stuff, so please be patient; and PLEASE participate!

