

The Navigator



The Newsletter of the Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendon's

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Fruit of the Spirit—Love

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God, ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."
Matthew 22:37-40

In our last newsletter we began to examine the Fruit of the Spirit in the life of a Christian. With this edition, we'll begin to unpack what that Fruit is and how we give it back to God through our relationships with Him and with one another—and perhaps with some surprises along the way. I'll begin with the Fruit of Love and Sue will continue with the Fruit of Joy.

As Christians we believe we have a pretty good handle on the idea of love because one of the first things we learn as 'Babes in Christ' is that "God is love" (1 John 4:8,16). And then our reasoning goes something like this: "Okay, that's what God is; that's how we're supposed to be; that's what our faith is all about. Got it. Now I'm an expert in Christian love." Not so fast!

Did you know, for example, that in the King James Version of the Bible, there are at least ten different Greek words in the New Testament that we have crammed into our single English word for love? And as you can imagine, not all love is the

same—my love for pizza is not the same as my love for Sue (and I'm sure she's happy to know that!). Nor does that count all the other Greek words used in the KJV for loved, lovedst, lovely, lovers, loves, lovest, loveth, and loving. So when we say that "The fruit of the Spirit is love, ..." (Galatians 5:22), what does that actually mean?

For starters, the love that Paul starts this list with (*agape*) can, by itself, most completely describe the flawless character of Christ. That's why love is given as the first descriptive attribute (one of nine) of the Fruit of the Spirit. This also means that love should be the foundational principle most carefully duplicated in our own lives—not in lieu of the others, but as the standard for how the others are to shape us from within.



The Bible tells us many things about this kind of love. For example, *agape* describes God's attitude toward His Son (John 17:26). It also describes God's attitude toward mankind as a whole (John 3:16; Romans 5:8) and especially toward those who believe in His Son (John 14:2). And while *agape* defines the essential nature of God (1 John 4:8), it is perfectly revealed to the world through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 2:4; 3:19; 5:2).

Agape can only be known from its actions. It expresses itself in obedience to the commands of God (John 14:15,21,23; 1 John 2:5; 2 John 6). It shapes our attitudes toward fellow believers (John 13:34) and in how we deal with all people in general (1

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Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:7). It especially governs how we behave toward our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44).

Now here's the clincher. *Agape* rarely flows as an impulse from our own feelings, being rather selfish in our interests. Instead, it requires us to move contrary to our natural inclinations. That's because *agape* is for more than those people with whom we are 'in love'. When *agape* is fully alive in us, it will especially move us toward the unlovely (and there are lots of reasons why we don't consider certain people 'appealing') because those are the people that God wants to touch most of all (cf., Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:31-32).



“God uses *agape* to circumcise our hearts so that we can fully live under the ‘royal law’ of His kingdom. “

Perhaps that's because God uses *agape* to circumcise our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33) so that we can fully live under the “royal law” of His kingdom; the law of love (James 2:8). God uses His *agape* within us to seek the welfare of others (Romans 15:2); to work no ill toward any (Romans 13:8-10); and to seek regular opportunities for doing good deeds, especially toward fellow believers (Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 13; Colossians 3:12-14).

And finally, since the love of Christ is most clearly seen in the crucifixion—willingly laying down His life for all mankind—the key to Christlike *agape* must also be self-sacrifice, preferring others over ourselves and seeking nothing in return. Our lay monastic goal, then, is to grow in this love for God and others with the same deep, self-sacrificing love that Christ poured out upon us. ✠

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...

“He that has love is far from every sin.”

—St. Polycarp (69-155), Bishop of Smyrna. Died in martyrdom bound and burned at the stake (and when the fire failed to kill him, he was finally stabbed).

“Loving one's enemies does not mean loving wickedness, ungodliness, adultery, or theft. Rather it means loving the thief, the ungodly person, and the adulterer.”

—St. Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Christian apologist and missionary theologian to the Greek world.

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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 Holy Trinity Chapel and the official dedication in September.
- For favor with Fr. Alan's 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.

I've Got the Joy...Down in My Heart

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

“For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”
Hebrews 12:2

Fruit of the Spirit. We've all read this list before. It looks like a great description of Christian character and we should all strive to accomplish these attributes. Many of us have attended conferences and Bible Studies designed to take a more in-depth look at these words to transform them into 'tasty fruit' that we would all like partake of. But as we looked at this list in the last newsletter, and tried to discover what Paul was telling the Church at Galatia as he differentiated between 'acts of the flesh' and 'fruit of the Spirit' (and that whole conversation can be found in Galatians 5:19-23), we began to realize there was something else going on other than just two opposing lists.

Paul says in verse 24, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires...”. If we *belong* to Christ, we are *crucified* (a.k.a. dead)! In the last newsletter, we distinguished between our view of fruit (YUM!!) and a tree's view of fruit (the means to make more trees). From a tree's perspective, it created yummy fruit so that the seeds are eaten, digested, and 'planted' somewhere so that new life could sprout from it. Paul always chose his analogies carefully. He understood that new life comes from death. He is explaining this necessary step to the Galatians. Somehow, in our generation, we tend to forget or misinterpret or skim over the 'death part.'

After explaining that if you want to belong to Christ you have to have your fleshly passions 'crucified,' that is, put to death, Paul says it's the only way to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Sin cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Human nature is sinful. We can't participate in that 'sin list.' But the list he gives next—love, joy, peace, etc.—can also be human nature. We are 'joyful' when good things happen to us. We love our families and friends. There are peaceful places we can go to relax (most of us anyway). We aim to be patient and kind and good, faithful, and we *work* at enduring the hardships of earthly life. But oh! There's the problem. There's the rub. We are *working* at, striving, to develop habits and characteristics. Does this mean we are 'working' and 'striving' our way into the kingdom of heaven? Uh oh!

The second 'fruit' in Paul's list is joy. Let's see if we can "work" our way out of trouble by looking at this word. Joy is not happiness.



Happiness is our emotional, and often physical, response to external stimuli. We are happy because things are going well; we unexpectedly meet up with an old friend or find a great bargain for something we really need, step outside and it's a beautiful day that we have time to enjoy—and we respond with happiness. But joy needs no external stimuli.

Joy, at least by the Biblical definition, is not giddy and excitable. Joy is calm delight. It comes from the same Greek root, *chara*, as charisma or Eucharist. It's an internal state of being rather than an emotion evoked by external circumstances. But the difference between them goes even deeper than that. Joy, like all of the spiritual 'fruits' Paul lists, are characteristics of Christ

Jesus that, when He is allowed to reign in our hearts, will seep from us like—well, like juice from mature fruit. Since that is the case, let's look at what made Jesus joyful.

Hebrews 12:2. “For the joy set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (NIV). What was the joy set before him? What did Jesus have in His mind as He anticipated the cross? Sitting down at the right hand of His Father's heavenly throne! He had that heavenly kingdom in mind as he endured earthly pain, suffering and death. The best way I can think of to relate this to something that might be more familiar to us is to think of a trip to the dentist.



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I was just there to have a cavity filled, so the whole experience is vivid in my mind; the swab of 'numbing stuff,' the 'pinch' of the Novocain needle, the pressure and whir of the drill while water flies everywhere and that little 'vacuum cleaner' sucks up all the bits of tooth being drilled away. None of it is enjoyable, but we endure it because we are looking at what has been set before us—the removal of decay and potential abscess. And if that tooth hurts enough prior to the visit to the dentist, we can look beyond that experience to a time when the tooth will no longer hurt. It's a small but maybe familiar example of enduring pain for later gain. Of course, no analogy is entirely accurate, but I hope you get the point.

In Hebrews 12, we learn of another kind of pain—the pain of discipline. God disciplines us because He considers us His children. I was disciplined quite a bit as a child (I deserved it—I

“Joy, like contentment, comes from dying to self and living for Christ regardless of the earthly experience.”

don't think I was an easy child to raise...) so I'm sort of an expert in this category. I can tell you. It wasn't fun. It did not produce joy, not in my parents, my teachers, or me! Not initially anyway. But in the long run, it DID clear a path for Jesus to live in me, work through me, and HIS joy was perfected (which, in Scripture often means completed) through that discipline! Thanks everyone who hung in there with me!!

Joy is not produced or dependent upon circumstances. Joy, like contentment, comes from dying to self and living for Christ regardless of the earthly experience because Jesus already knows what awaits us when we are reborn with our spiritual bodies in our heavenly kingdom. Joy is the fruit from *those* trees.

If you want to nurture the joy that is already in you through Christ, take time DAILY to tend that spiritual tree Christ has planted within you. Water it with the living water of Christ. Feed it with the words of Scripture. And spend time in meditation and prayer with the Author and Perfecter (Completer) of your faith. You will find that, as you set your mind on things above and not on earthly things (Colossians 3:2) that joy—calm delight—will not be something you have to work at. It will come from Christ in you. Give it a try for a few weeks and let us know what happens.✘



**Joy to the world / the Lord is come /
Let earth receive her King /
Let every heart prepare Him room /
And Heaven and nature sing /
And Heaven and nature sing /
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing /**

"Joy to the World"

Words, Isaac Watts, 1719 (based on Psalm 98); Music arranged, Lowell Mason, 1839.

The Final Word: The Venerable Bede (672-735) — English Benedictine monk at the twin monasteries of Sts. Peter and Paul in the Kingdom of Northumbria of the Angles (today, Jarrow Abbey in Tyne and Wear, England).



The only peace for souls in this world consists in being filled with divine love and animated with heavenly hope to the point of setting no store on the successes and failures of this world and of renouncing all worldly covetousness and rejoicing in injuries and persecutions suffered for Christ's sake. The person who expects to find joy in riches and in the enjoyment of this world's goods is only self-deceived. The frequent troubles of life here below and the fact this this world will end should convince such people that they are building their foundations on sand.

On the other hand, all those who, touched by the breath of the Holy Spirit, have taken upon themselves the excellent yoke of God's love and who, following Christ's example, have learned to be gentle and lowly in heart—these do already rejoice in a peace which even now is the image of eternal rest. In the depths of their souls they are separated from the commotion of humanity, they have the joy of remembering the presence of their Creator wherever they may be, and the thirst for the attainment of perfect contemplation, saying with St. John the Apostle: "We know that when it comes to light we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Life at The Priory House



TOP LEFT: Saint Brendan's opens its doors to many people, each one on their own 'pilgrimage'. One of our recent overnight guests was Jon, a cyclist born and raised in Iceland. He stayed with us during his recent cycling trip from Florida to Halifax, Nova Scotia. **TOP RIGHT:** One of our local friends and excellent equestrian instructor, Leslie, came over for a visit to share a couple of tips and techniques with Sue for horseback riding. After the 'class' they went on a wonderful trail ride. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The chapel is far from complete, but with the addition of finish trim around the windows and a beautiful shelf behind the altar, the inside of Holy Trinity Chapel is really coming together. Next step, a chapel dedication ceremony, hopefully in September!



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!

