

The Navigator



The Newsletter of Saint Brendan's Monastic Fellowship

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FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITHFULNESS

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you?”
2 Corinthians 13:5-6a*

Well, that’s an interesting opening verse. We’ve tried over the past 12 years or so to start every article in *The Navigator* with a verse of Scripture that captures the essence of what follows. In this case, it almost sounds as if the Apostle Paul is linking “the faith” and “Christ Jesus” as two inseparable sides of the same coin. More than synonyms. More than “two peas in a pod.” Rather, a total entwining, a total conjoining, a total fusion of one with the other to the point where you can no longer tease them apart.

Now try to understand for a moment what that means in relation to the Fruit of the Spirit. Sue and I have both written, several times, that these nine elements Paul writes about are not separate fruits—allowing you to somehow pick and choose one or more as the special fruit *you* produce while ignoring the others—but that they are ALL facets of the one, single Fruit that should be hanging from the branches of our lives; luscious, full, ripe, attractive, and complete. And as integrated facets or characteristics, they ALL share and contribute to the virtues found in the others. In fact, the One Fruit of the Spirit would be an incomplete corruption if any single facet were missing. That means, because of the unique characteristics of Number 7 (faithfulness), Christ is wo-

ven through all of them and, in turn, all of them point to Christ.

I seem to be getting way ahead of myself. I usually set up each article with some kind of humorous introduction, a clever segue, and a biblical (and often technical) exposition of the topic. Today I just jumped right in; no dipping my toe into the pool. Today was the cannonball-off-the-diving board approach. So before I go any further into the deep end of the pool, allow me to backup just a little bit.

We’re coming to the end of our series on the Fruit of the Spirit. Today is faithfulness and gentleness; the seventh and eighth

characteristics in Paul’s list. That just leaves self-control, right? Not so fast. There are indeed nine characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23, and all of them are a part of Saint Brendan’s *Rule of Life* in our chapter, “To Become Christ-like”. But our *Rule of Life* also adds two additional elements—the virtues of mercy and humility (which means it’ll take us another issue or two to complete the list). This chapter begins with a brief introduction which concludes with these words: “Taken together, these allow us to imitate the likeness of Jesus Christ as

we cooperate with both God’s grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit in order to produce that precious Image within us.” That’s right, the Fruit of the Spirit isn’t about us at all; it’s all about Jesus! His Image! His Glory! That, after all, is the role of the Holy



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Spirit—to point to Christ. Doesn't it makes sense, then, that the Fruit of the Spirit should also point to Christ?

Well, that's exactly what's happening with faithfulness, the seventh characteristic of the Fruit of the Spirit. Oh, there's lots of other geeky-Greek stuff [which I really love!] happening in this list in the go-to critical Greek text of the New Testament, Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*—stuff we don't see in our English translations, but that's for another time. Suffice it say, this one characteristic is chock full of profound truth that every believer needs to know; truth about themselves, but even more, truth about Jesus Who abides within them.

Here's the deal. For those of you reading a translation of the Bible that says 'faithfulness', know that this term is just a translator's extrapolation of the thought-sense of what he believes Paul was trying to say. In fact, the biblical mind of the ancient Near East had no concept of faithfulness at all—it's not even a Greek word. The word that Paul wrote in this list is *pistis*; faith, not faithfulness. And not just faith, but quite literally the very stuff of faith itself. It's something you cling to or refuse. You are either sustained by it or you reject it. There's no 'sliding scale' of steadfastness where faith is concerned. The stuff of faith is an "all in" or "all out" way of life which completely does away with the discussion of faithfulness. What, then, is this *stuff* we're supposed to cling to, nurture, and display in a life of spiritual maturity?

I suspect that, as Paul was writing this, he was making a reference to the direct content of THE Faith: the truth that the risen Christ Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:8-9). This is eternal truth, and not just for believers, but for unbelievers, angels, and even demons (Matthew 8:29; cf., James 2:19). It is truth before which everyone and everything will eventually bow (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10). However, to believe in a victorious, resurrected Christ also requires us to believe in a

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suffering Christ Who died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:11; Revelation 13:8). Why? Because belief in the resurrection also requires belief in the cross and the crucifixion.

In this context of the Fruit of the Spirit, faith refers to Christ and what He has done. Just like the opening verse says at the top article, to have faith is to have Christ. Paul isn't referring here to the 'gift of faith' that can 'move mountains' (cf., Matthew 21:21). Instead, Paul is referring to the very core of The Faith, Jesus Himself, Who created the mountains (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17). This is what and WHO stands at the very bedrock of our precious orthodox doctrine (Jude 3, 20; 2 Peter 1:1; cf., 1 Timothy 1:2; 2:7; Titus 1:1,4; 3:5).



Finally, this Faith—once we understand it as being the core of Eternal Truth, Jesus Christ—calls us to engage in obedience to Christ. What is meant by obedience?

Safeguarding it. Properly handling it. Defending it. Sharing it without alteration, diminution, or aggrandizement. Shaping our lives by it. And resisting all competing 'truths' for its place. This is the monastic's call and life because our lives aren't about us at all; they're all about Jesus.

The Fruit of the Spirit—what a glorious impartation is ours! To think that, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is resident as King within us; the very Rock of Ages Himself; Eternal Truth; the Faith our Christian forebearers willingly died for because to renounce the Faith (Jesus) was worse than losing life itself. Faith, in interaction with all the other characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit, is all about producing "that precious Image within us" (cf., Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10). So says our *Rule*, and so say I to you.

Rejoice!
Fr. Alan Andraeas

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WE COVET YOUR PRAYERS!!!

Please continue to pray for the needs of Saint Brendan's:

- For necessary remodeling of the Priory House so that we can host more retreatants and guests.
- For the continuing exterior and interior construction Holy Trinity Chapel, including flooring, deck, wheelchair ramp, and interior of the Sacristy.
- For discernment as we continue to define and refine Saint Brendan's role in the Body of Christ and this local community.

From Gentleness to Jesus

Susan Andraeas, Prioress

*"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."
Philippians 4:5*

We are coming to the end of our study of the Fruit of the Spirit. If we look at the past articles, we'll see that we are not just talking about how we are to *behave* or what we are to *be* but what we are to *produce*. I'm not sure we've come right out and said it that way before but think about it for a moment. We're not talking about the 'characteristics' of the Spirit, or the 'consequences' of the Spirit, or the 'effects' of the Spirit. No, St. Paul made it clear that he was talking about fruit.

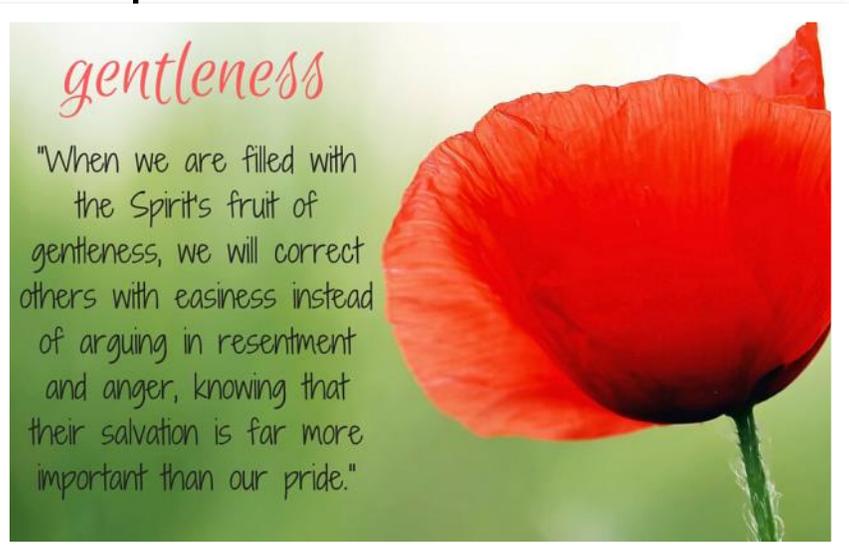
The word he uses to describe the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) means fruits and vegetables—something that is designed to create more of the plant it came from. Jesus says to produce fruit worthy of your repentance (Matthew 3:8) and that He is the vine and we are the branches (He's talking about a grape vine: He is the part that grows up out of the ground, connected to the roots; we are the parts shooting out of that main part, usually tied or trained along horizontal cords that serve to support us as our fruit ripens).

Our spiritual fruit should not make more of us, or of our spiritual idiosyncrasies. No, our spiritual fruit should make more images of Jesus. He also tells us that, as branches attached to His vine, we will either be pruned so we produce better fruit—or, if we don't produce fruit, we'll get lopped off and become kindling (John 15:5).

So St. Paul is not simply using a metaphor here with his description of spiritual fruit. We ARE producing spiritual fruit! Something is flowering, growing, maturing; something that is feeding others so they can also be Christ-producers; something that matures in us by the Holy Spirit as He supports us like those horizontal cords (are you seeing the shape of a

cross supporting your spiritual grape-y branches??); and as John the Baptist realized, Jesus will increase on the earth only if we decrease.

The Holy Spirit's presence in us, and His work through us, makes us less (we are pruned) and Jesus more. We can't fake our way through these characteristics produced by our faith. The earthly equivalents may look the same but they will not produce Christ for the sake of others. It's like the difference between a poorly raised, pale-red, old hybrid tomato that's been on a grocery store shelf for a while compared to the heirloom tomato you JUST picked out of your garden. They may look the same, and we may call them by the same name—but one is fabulous and the other a poor imitation.



For a real example, we can't be kind and good while we're at church and then criticize the sermon, the musicians, or the odd person who sat in front of us while we drive home. We can't act patient and gentle in public so that people think we are when, in reality, we FEEL impatient and angry. If Jesus is our vine, then our branches can't produce sweet juicy grapes on the outside and sour grapes on the inside without it being 'fake fruit.' If we are truly allowing Christ to live and grow in us, what we produce will be constantly and consistently Christ-producing fruit and it will reveal ALL the fruit(s) of the Spirit because what—

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...

*"It is only imperfection that complains of what is imperfect.
The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become toward
the defects of others."*

—Francios Fenelon, (1651-1715) Roman Catholic Archbishop, theologian, poet, and writer;
spiritual counsel to the royal court of Louis XIV of France.

WHO—we are truly revealing is Christ, not ourselves or our spiritual maturity.

In review, HE is the Vine. And, somehow, HE is also the fruit! WE are only the branch—the ‘vehicle’ that the sap runs through. Others eat the fruit. Jesus gets the glory. WE get pruned if we’re doing well and we get removed if those sour grapes are not worth anything in the Kingdom of God.

Not much of a ‘warm fuzzy’ thought, but it should be! If you are thinking that maybe this fruit thing is not something you want to pursue, my guess is that you’re looking at it from the wrong perspective. If you approach the Holy Spirit’s production of Christlike fruit in your life and wonder, “Great—but what’s in it for me?,” then Alan and I have not done a very good job of explaining how monastic Christianity works (really, it should be how all Christians understand their faith). We do not follow Jesus for personal gain! Personal gain is a ‘side effect.’ We follow Him because He is Lord. He is God. We follow him because he has chosen us!! IMAGINE!! God has chosen us! And still, we so often want to know what’s in it for us.

Instead of looking at it as a personal thing, maybe it would help if we think of it this way. Pretend you are back in elementary school. Physical Education class. The coolest, most athletic, impossible-for-him-to-lose team captain has picked you to be on his Red Rover team!! (Two teams lined up, hand in hand, facing each other. You take turns

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calling someone from the other team to charge toward your line, crash into one set of linked hands and try to break through. If you break through the other team’s line, you bring a ‘convert’ back with you to your line. If they break through yours, they take one of your team back with them. You play until there’s only one person in one of the lines.) So the can’t-lose captain has just called your name to be on his team. Do you ask what’s in it for you? Or do you spontaneously run over to that team, basking in the thought that the cool captain chose you, not even thinking about the game to come but already imagining the win?

Aaahhh, now we’re getting somewhere! The game hasn’t begun. There will certainly be progress, and setbacks, effort you need to make, pain from the charging and the being charged. But none of that matters when your name is called—YOU were chosen to be on the cool captain’s team! Well, that is exactly what’s happened. Jesus has called you. This earthly life isn’t the victory—it’s the game. It’s the progress and setbacks, effort and pain with some rest in between so we can continue toward

our earthly ‘game’ goal. We use the strength of our Captain and the strategies He suggests. What pours from Him binds us all and makes us strong, like a whole row of can’t-lose captains. United with one goal: Victory for Jesus. To make the other team (whose captain rules the kingdom of darkness—you



When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found:
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
All other ground is sinking sand.

"The Solid Rock"

Lyrics: Edward Mote (1834); Music: William Bradbury (1864)

remember him...) know that Christ is King, not of Red Rover but of all of Creation and all of Heaven!! What a great game. What a great team. What a great Captain. What a GREAT GOD!

Gentleness. I looked all through the Greek and Hebrew meanings of this word and guess what I learned. I learned that it means gentleness. If you need that explained better, we can add synonyms such as tenderness, mild-mannered, soft and light (as in touch), courteousness, or chivalrousness. These are attributes that mean we lay our personal feelings, thoughts, and reactions aside and look at the person or situation (the other team) in front of us as God would see it—and act accordingly. I struggle with this, I have to admit. It's really tough to lay aside my own self-righteousness in order for Christ to pour through me as I look at people or events that bug me.

I'd much rather set the record straight and very loudly, very boldly explain why I'm right and everyone else is wrong. I'd much rather stomp around and slam things on the table so people pay attention to my anger over injustice or wrong accusations, or for ignoring me when I try to explain that my ideas and philosophies and views about things, or not noticing when I've done something well. But if I act that way, it means I'm responding to things based on the 'what's in it for me?' way rather than the 'yay—I'm on the winning Red Rover team!' way. It weakens my ability to play as a team player, and that hurts the entire team—especially my Captain! And make no mistake. Jesus, our captain, is right here in the line with us. We may not visibly see Him from our place in the line but trust me. He's standing right there! He's with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). He stands with us, enduring what we endure, expecting us to make the play for our team.

We, the team, all win even when it looks like we, the individual, are losing the immediate play in front of us. The Church is our team. Jesus is our Captain. The Church wins—the Bible says so. We need to be a team player and not just someone standing on the field so we can identify with the winning team without really being part of it. Does that make sense?

“Our spiritual fruit should not make more of us, or of our spiritual idiosyncrasies. No, our spiritual fruit should make more images of Jesus.”

Christianity is not a spectator sport. And participating isn't just what happens inside a building on Sunday morning. The Church is people, not property. We are to pour out Christ's love to everything and everyone we come in contact with, especially people from 'the other Red Rover team.' Why? Because others need to meet our can't-lose Captain, Jesus. Because He is near. He is here! He is at hand—ready to act, ready to speak, ready to heal, ready to save. Old English would have used the term *nigh*. Close in proximity in both time and space; pushing in.

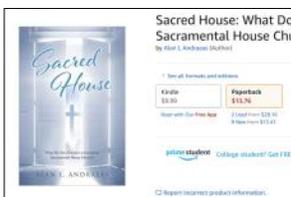
The world needs our Savior. I'm sure you've noticed! The lack of gentleness is destroying not only America but the world. Harsh and bitter words, divisive accusations, violent actions, mean looks—this is the type of fruit the world—the 'dark kingdom team' would have us produce. Satan, the other team captain is not like our Captain. Our Captain is meek and humble, gentle and lowly, riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:5). No, Satan produces 'fruitless deeds of darkness' (Ephesians 5:11). Be light. Be constant and consistent fruit. Repent of the need to be seen or heard for your own sake, but rather let the Holy Spirit work gently through you to bring Christ into our broken relationships, neighborhoods, communities, nations. United in that one Vine, all the factions and divisions dissolve until there is only 2 teams: those who live for Christ and those who don't. Let the bickering and strife remain on the other side. Let us stand together in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Rejoice—no matter what!
Sue

HOUSEKEEPING



Saint Brendan's has a new website: www.saintbrendans-online.com. Take note, we are now a .com rather than a .org. We're also testing new download options under its own dropdown menu on the main page. It will get better with time.



Did you know that Fr. Alan's recent book, *Sacred House*, is available online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble? In fact, there has been a price drop at Amazon from \$17.95 to \$13.76. The book examines the history of worship, the underpinnings of liturgical and sacramental worship, house churches across the centuries, and the choice place given to house churches in the heart of God. Get a copy for yourself. Give a copy to someone you know.

The Final Word: St. Augustine (354-430 AD) — Bishop of Hippo Regius of Numidia, North Africa, and Doctor of the Church. The most notable black/Berber theologian and philosopher of the Ancient Church whose writings have deeply shaped all of Western Christianity.



Let us sing alleluia here on earth, even while we continue to live in anxiety, so that we may sing it one day in heaven full of security. Why do we now live in anxiety? Can you expect me not to feel anxious when I read: “Is not life on earth a time of trial?” Can you expect me not to feel anxious when the words still ring in my ears: “Watch and pray that you will not be put to the test?”

Even here amidst trials and temptations let us, let all, sing alleluia. “God is faithful,” says Holy Scripture, “and He will not allow you to be tried beyond your strength.” So let us sing alleluia, even here on earth.

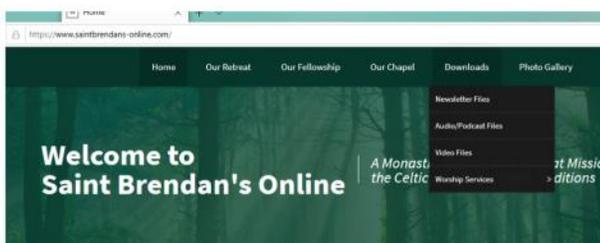
Scripture does not say that He will not allow you to be tried, but that “He will not allow you to be tried beyond your strength.” Whatever the trial, He will see you through it safely, and so enable you to endure. You have entered upon a time of trial but you will come to no eternal harm—God’s help will bring you through. When you are put in the oven therefore, keep your thoughts on the time when you will be taken out again; for God is faithful, and “He will guard both your going in and your coming out.”

O the happiness of the heavenly alleluia, sung in security, in fear of no adversity! We shall have no enemies in heaven; we shall never lose a friend. God’s praises are sung both there and here, but here they are sung in anxiety, there, in security; here they are sung by those destined to die, there, by those destined to live forever; here they are sung in hope, there, in hope’s fulfillment; here they are sung by wayfarers, there, by those finally living in their own country.

So, then, let us sing now, not in order to enjoy a life of leisure, but in order to lighten our labors. Do not be lazy, but sing to make your journey more enjoyable. Sing, but keep going. What do I mean by keep going? Keep on making progress. This progress, however, must be in virtue, true faith, and right living. Sing then, and keep going.

Let Us Know How We’re Doing!

As you can imagine, summer time on a homestead has us pressed against a wall. We need to make sure our time, energy, and resources are wisely spent. We’ve been taking extra time to add sermons, Bible studies, and video clips to the download feature of our website. Do you access them? Are they helpful? Please drop us an email and let us know. We are happy to do it, but only so long as they are beneficial. Thank you.



Life at the Priory House



TOP LEFT: One of Sue's piano students enjoys visiting with the goat kids when she's here for her lessons. Of course, the lesson comes first and then the goats! **TOP CENTER:** Nothing says the change of seasons like the sound of a chain saw...and a truckload of treelength wood for cutting. **TOP RIGHT:** Some good friends came over to help us reset the posts of the barn porch roof. The barn is 217 years old and we want it stay standing for as long as possible! **MIDDLE LEFT:** We are one step closer to our long-range plan for the Priory House: to take out the garage doors that were cut into the original 1804 house during the mid-1950s and turn that area back into livable space for retreat use and as an annex for chapel activity. **MIDDLE CENTER:** Sue's dream-come-true: a John Deere tractor with a frontend loader. We now own a mint-condition, 1986 John Deere 420. While much is still done here with a wheelbarrow and shovel, this addition will be immense help! **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Laundry day when you have a horse and donkey! **BOTTOM LEFT:** Visitors to the property—a dad and his two daughters—take some time to say hello to Molly. **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** Fr. Alan is building a wrap-around deck with steps and an access ramp on the front of Holy Trinity Chapel. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** As time permits, Alan continues working with his ham radio gear, making contacts from Russia to Brazil.

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