

# The Navigator



The Newsletter of Saint Brendan's Monastic Fellowship

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## PILLARS OF MONASTICISM: JOY

Fr. Alan Andraeas, Prior

*"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." — 1 John 1:4*

We began an ambitious newsletter project back in the Fall of 2014—to take each element of our Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life* and expand them from their original, concise length (usually



two-to-three paragraphs each) into full teachings. We did this, two articles at a time, with every edition of *The Navigator*. It has taken seven years, but we've finally made it! We wrote 15 articles on the monastic disciplines (interior, exterior, and corporate). We wrote 11 articles

on the fruit of Christlike spirituality. And this issue will feature the final article on the four foundational underpinnings of monastic faith. That's 30 teaching articles in total (not counting the introductory articles as we moved from one section of our *Rule* to another), covering our understanding of what it means to walk as a Friend or Oblate of Saint Brendan's. If compiled all together, it would amount to an entire co-authored book on Celtic and Benedictine spirituality (hmmm, not a bad idea!) And what's more, there isn't a single element of our *Rule of Life* that is beyond the scope of what every Christian should be doing as a matter

of their daily life and faith. With that in mind, let's turn to the fourth and final pillar of monasticism: joy.

We've already looked at the first three pillars or components of what our vow looks like—stability, fidelity, and obedience (or if you prefer, sticking to our walk with Christ, wanting nothing else except Christ, and yielding in all things to Christ). Again, this is the same thing that Jesus asks of every believer, so it shouldn't be a surprise. Just as some people eat, sleep, and breathe the martial arts, or Pokémon, or Pampered Chef, or Game of Thrones, or NFL football, a Christian should eat, sleep, and breathe Jesus. Our fourth element of joy, however, is a bit different. In this context, joy isn't a facet of the vow as much as it is the condition or environment in which the other three facts are accomplished.

If you remember, Sue wrote about joy as an expression of the Fruit of the Spirit back in *The Navigator* summer edition of 2019, but here it takes on a slightly different meaning. Within the environment of joy, the call to spiritual stability is no longer a monotonous sameness but a joyful familiarity. Within the environment of joy, the call to spiritual fidelity is no longer a tedious standard but a joyful unity. And within the environment of joy, the call to spiritual obedience is no longer a dutiful burden but a joyful surrender.



What, exactly, is this joy? Do you know those people in church who are always jubilant no matter what? They remind me of that expression, "I'm just one, big

'Hallelujah' from head to toe!" Well, it's not that. Do you know those people in church who never have anything bad to say

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## “Joy sees God. Joy gives back to God”

about someone else? It’s like that sweet, old lady who was once told, “I bet you can even say something nice about the devil.” “Well,” she said with a smile, “he’s always on time!” That’s not the kind of joy I’m talking about, either. It’s not being giddy, ecstatic, happy, jovial, cheery, or glad. It’s not being in high spirits or walking around on cloud nine. Any of those things can be manufactured and worn as a mask.

Joy (Greek, *chará*) is the seed of heaven nestled deep within our lives; a seed which releases the aroma of heaven to those around us. This divine ‘effervescence’ makes itself known through our words, our deeds, and even the exercise of our spiritual gifts or ‘charisms’ (Greek, *chárisma*). It’s this joy that characterizes our lives as we abandon our captivity to things below in exchange for the things above (cf., Romans 14:17) and ultimately results in our return of heartfelt thanksgiving back to heaven (Greek, *eucharístia*). In



fact, you could say that joy and heaven are inextricably linked through Christ. To have Christ is to have heaven (cf., Matthew 4:17; John 14:3), and to have heaven is to radiate joy (cf., Matthew 13:44).

That last sentence points to some profound ramifications. For example, while the call to devout life—lay or professed—is a serious endeavor, there is absolutely no criteria that requires it to be a grim, somber manner of life (John 15:11; Acts 2:28; Romans 15:13; 1 Peter 1:8). I heard a pastor once say that the sour faces he saw on many Christians made it look like they had been baptized in pickle juice! I must admit that, while spoken with irony, his observation is often more true than not—there are folks in the Church who actually work hard at perfecting a demeanor of caustic dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the Celtic spirit of joy was able to find God in every task, discipline, circumstance, and breath. It’s the sense that even the smallest element of creation bears the imprimatur or ‘thumbprint’ of God and is a cause for delight. Everything dis-

plays the connectivity between nature and man as well as between the Creator and the created.

When we first moved to Dennysville and Saint Brendan’s was born, it was like living in the middle of Psalm 148. Take a look at that psalm. The psalmist ‘commands’ every element of creation to enter into the praise of God; to jubilate in His presence—angels, stars, sea creatures, lightning, fruit trees, birds; the list goes on. Every morning, as part of her routine, Sue still goes out and literally commands Saint Brendan’s to bless the Lord: “Trees in the meadow, bless the Lord; clouds in the sky, bless the Lord; frogs in the pond, bless the Lord; goats and chickens, bless the Lord; labor of our hands, bless the Lord.” There is no such thing as Psalm 148 without a foundation of joy in our lives, and there is no ability to be a blessing back to God without that same foundation. Joy sees God. Joy gives back to God.

Don’t get me wrong here. This pillar of intentional, disciplined life isn’t a call to some kind of ‘Pollyana’ Spirituality. Divine joy is the wellspring from which we encourage one another. Divine joy also kindles our hope in an unshakable God; a hope we can demonstrate to a world that is currently destitute of hope. This is, after all, the admonishment of the Apostle Paul: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). That is why the pillar of joy which should characterize every Christian’s commitment to intentional life and faith.

When St. Benedict wrote his *Rule* in the sixth century at the Monastery of Monte Cassino, believe it or not, but he wasn’t writing it for cler-



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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 and the 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.

gy. What he was building was a religious community of laity; ordinary people who wanted to live extraordinary lives under total consecration to God through the aid of the Holy Spirit. Ordination to Holy Orders was not a requirement. Rather, his *Rule* was a guide for the layman who desired an ordered structure for life in which he or she could imitate Christ. His *Rule* was the footpath by which ordinary people could present themselves to God through total conversion as 'living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1-2).

You've now seen Saint Brendan's *Rule of Life* spelled out over the past seven years as an adapta-



tion of St. Benedict's Rule. Our hope and prayer has been to assist you through this process of intentional conversion. Why? Because the goal of intentional conversion is Christ Himself. And what better gift can we give you than that? Or as St. Benedict would say, "They should value nothing whatever above Christ Himself." The last 28 editions of *The Navigator* have been humbly centered on Jesus, the Living Word, Who took our human nature upon Himself, ordering His life through prayer, obedience, and labor as the perfect image of the Father in heaven. And just as Christ imitated the Father through His earthly flesh, we—in our own strivings through prayer, obedience, and labor—may also come to walk in the imitation of His Son. ✕

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...

**"God and eternal things are my only pleasure."**

**Henry Martyn**

*Anglican priest and missionary to the peoples of India and Persia (1781-1812)*

**"Joy is the wine that God is ever pouring into the hearts  
of those who strive with Him."**

**G. A. Studdert Kennedy**

*Anglican priest and poet; served as an Army chaplain at the Western Front in WWI (1883-1929)*

**Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts / Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men/  
From the best bliss that earth imparts / We turn unfulfilled to Thee again.  
We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread / And long to feast upon Thee still /  
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead / And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.  
Our restless spirits yearn for Thee / Where-er'r our changeful lot is cast /  
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see / Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.**

**"Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts"**

**Text: attrib. Bernard of Clairvoux (1090-1153); Music: Henry Baker (1835-1910)**

## It's All Joy

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

*"Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

*And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

*James 1:2-4*

Here we are. The last newsletter of 2021. Fr. Alan summarized what we have been writing about for the past years rather well. The backstory, the trials and testing that the Lord has brought us through during the past sixteen years, is in the summer 2021 edition. It's been grueling, but the final result is this: Saint Brendan's has foundational documents for our work of prayer (*The Breviary*); for worship (our Eucharistic Liturgy and a Psalter that contains both antiphonal reading cues and a brief explanation of the author and/or historical information for most psalms); and *The Rule* (an intentional way to align our hearts and spirits with Christ's—and then with fellow believers—and then with everyone else).

Alan has also written a great book, *Sacred House*, that outlines worship, our ultimate relinquishment to God, and how sacramental house churches (like Holy Trinity Chapel) have been integral to Christian history—and how they will affect the future. The international interest in his book is both exciting (people all over the world are interested in what happens HERE!!) and sobering (why are so many church leaders moving away from the 'business model' church? Where is the Spirit leading us collectively?)

Alan and I have tried to move forward with the development of this property, the building of the chapel, the establishment of a local congregation, and with a vibrant and involved Fellowship at large that also contains Oblates—people who have made promises to God to relinquish their lives, their belongings, and their livelihoods to the work of Christ. But progress has been very slow. VERY slow! We are beginning to see that we needed to finish these foundational documents, particularly *The Breviary* and Alan's book, so that we would know who God is calling us to be. While we have our role models (St. Benedict, St. Seraphim, St. Columba, and St. Brendan—more about them later), this is a new work. God never exactly duplicates the same work twice but continually draws us, all of us, closer and closer to Himself as He pre-

pares for the return of Jesus. For Him, it's all the same work; molding and shaping the Church to be a Bride for His Son.

There are missions and ministries similar to, but not exactly like, Saint Brendan's popping up all over the place. Like lay monastic groups in the past, these are comprised of people who question the direction the Church at large is taking, with its focus on congregational size, financial security, sale of 'church goods' and the power and clout of its leaders. Most monastic groups throughout history emerged to focus upon the work Christ scripturally outlined from the beginning: caring for the poor, healing the sick, raising up children to know and worship Jesus as their Savior, protecting the weak, and most of all... letting go of all the attractions of the Kingdom of Earth in order to live—now—in the Kingdom of God. It is the process of becoming holy.

Holiness doesn't mean that we *look* and *act* like Christians. Image and behavior can be faked! No, the ancient definition of

holiness (*qothod* in Hebrew) means to be set apart for God. Aaron, the first priest, was told to wear a golden sign as part of his vestments. The sign read 'Holy to the Lord' (Exodus 28:36). In the Book of Revelation, we learn that we are to be a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:5-6). This means that we may ALL be set apart for God; and we may all partake of the Sacrifice on the altar, the Body and Blood of Christ. THIS is what we are aiming for here, and we hope and pray that, as members of the Fellowship, you are too. We want to be set apart from the world so that God can use us (set apart,



made holy) in a way that draws others to Christ. To that end, and with this final look at the final part of *The Rule*, we are focusing on Joy.

What WE learned as we plowed through *The Rule* one part at a time is this: In the three larger sections (Fruit of the Spirit, Disciplines of Faith, and Pillars of Monasticism), each section contains Joy. In the Disciplines, it's under the community discipline of Celebration—the spiritual expression of communal belonging. As Alan explained, joy isn't giddiness, or happiness, or any of the other worldly facets of 'being positive.' Joy cannot be

**"We want to be set apart from the world so that God can use us in a way that draws others to Christ."**

produced externally, nor is it based on external circumstances. Joy comes from the internal source of our spirit rejoicing in proximity to Christ Who is residing in us regardless of what is happening to us externally.

## “A spiritual kingdom does spiritual prepping.”

A spiritual kingdom does spiritual prepping! Prepping for what? He warned that families will be divided and even betray each other, that monetary systems will break down, that there will be constant wars and rumors of wars. In Mark 10, as well as other places, Jesus tells us that the blessings of ministry will come with both great reward *and* persecutions. When we've read lines like that all these years, what did we think? That He was talking to someone else? I believe it is now our turn, here in the West, to learn that the truest joy can be found in the midst of suffering because that is when Christ draws most near.

So THIS is how I think we, the Church—we, the Fellowship of Saint Brendan's—need to prep. Learn the disciplines Alan's so masterfully outlined in *The Rule*. Every member, new and old, was provided with one. Do you need to purchase another copy? Let us know and we'll make it available online and print more. Go back and reread how to practice the disciplines we've covered. They are NOT OURS! They are the practices outlined by intentional followers of Christ since the early church.

Read about St. Benedict. We have modeled Saint Brendan's after him because he was a 'normal Joe' who was fed up with worldly comforts distorting the teachings of the Church. Read about St. Columba, St. Aiden, and the other early Celtic monks. We have modeled St. Brendan's after their evangelical style of

working alongside of those you witness to rather than the 'hit and run' style of many contemporary evangelists who preach salvation but do not disciple beyond that. Saint Brendan's is also modeled after St. Seraphim of Sarov, a Russian example from the 1700's who travelled wherever God led with only the clothes on his back. And, of course, we modeled Saint Brendan's after St. Brendan himself, a man who left everything familiar, everything comfortable, got in a little boat and trusted God to direct his path—and amazing things happened. None of these models are by accident. All lived through terrible, difficult times. All watched their nations and churches crumble under the weight of sin and corruption. Alan's "Old Guy" quote at the end of the newsletter is

from St. Seraphim whose most notable work is *The Joy of the Holy*. You should read it. Or read about the lives of the Celtic

'I am my Beloved's, and He is mine—His banner over me is love.' Remember that song? Christ in us produces the fruit of Joy. Worshipping with other believers, particularly in the receiving of the Eucharist, creates communal joy. Living a life of fidelity (faithfulness), simplicity (worldly detachment), and obedience (surrender to God alone) will automatically produce joy. Why? Because there are no earthly habits or attachments to draw us away from our heavenly kingdom.

When we started this journey through *The Rule*, we had no clue how drastically different life would be when we reached the other end. We weren't preparing for a pandemic, supply chain failures, national unrest, global unrest, or soaring prices, food shortages, and all the other current events we are facing. We couldn't imagine a world with online schools, workplaces, and even churches; or where every day our nation would be polarized by conflicting 'truths' about, well, about everything; or where almost everyone would lose a friend or loved one to a disease that none of us had even heard of at the beginning of this newsletter series. But here we are. Changed. Permanently.



Nobody is the same person they were even two years ago. And I don't think the changes and worldly problems are going to go away anytime soon. In fact, I believe we are just getting started. For many, the response is prepping: storing food, medicine, water, supplies, ammo and weapons. How should a Christian prep? Which of the dozens and dozens of prepping styles should we adopt? The answer is...Jesus already told us. The ancient Church Fathers and monastic leaders already told us! The Old and New Testaments already tell us!! The Church *is* the original preppers! (In fact, Jesus' first sermon is TOTALLY a prepper sermon, "REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND!" Get it together folks, and be ready!)

Jesus warned His disciples that things were going to get tough, and that true religion was caring for those who couldn't care for themselves—particularly orphans and widows. Care for the sick, train up the young in things of faith, set your mind on things above, practice hospitality, don't trust in the strength and power of the government or military (horses and chariots), don't worry about what you're going to eat or wear because the Lord will provide it. Jesus told us that, in this world we WILL have trouble, but He has overcome it. These spiritual acts would prepare His followers for what was to come.



saints I mentioned. Or, if you want something more contemporary, try the books by Corrie Ten Boom—or others who lived through intense persecution because of their faith.

With this newsletter completed, Alan and I are going to take a publication break. It takes nearly a week to write articles, research biographies, tie in hymns and quotes—and then do the layout, publishing, and distribution—for each edition. We have happily poured out those 40 hours for each newsletter for over 14 years (totaling almost a full month of time every year!), teaching and training those who have embarked in this foundational journey with us.

We are grateful for those of you who have offered feedback, who have helped to ‘test drive’ our Eucharistic Worship book, our Rule, our Prayerbook, and our Psalter, or who have read and commented on Alan’s manual for house churches. These five writings, based on other sources but uniquely ‘tweaked’ to fit God’s work in this place, are nearly complete. Alan’s medical adventure has come to a close (for the most part) and now our focus must now turn to the establishment of the Saint Brendan’s property.

The many, many building projects needed here have been repeatedly placed on hold as we focus on these books and manuals—and rightly so. The property’s numerous fields and trails have been left to go fallow and need to be reclaimed. Outbuildings are needed for storage of equipment and housing of retreatants. In the past, there were no funds for any of these projects as the Lord forced us to turn our attention to the foundational documents of the ministry.

They needed to be right! Now, we build—with actual hammers-and-nails, brush hogs, and fencing. So this will be the final newsletter for a few years. We will still be available for spiritual direction, for intercession, and all the relationship-building activities of the past. But we pray that YOU will investigate for yourself, begin—and continue to work on—living lives of disciplined, intentional, HOLY faith based upon what you give—and give up—rather than upon what you receive and learn. Above all,

we pray that you make Christ your greatest desire, your dearest friend, your most reliable teacher...and your Joy. ✕

Rejoice!  
Sue Andraeas

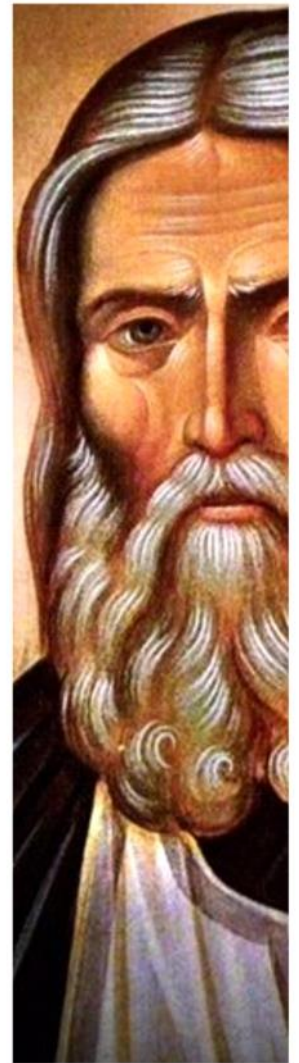


## The Yoke of Christ



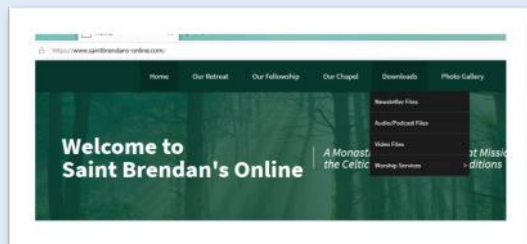
The folks at Holy Trinity Chapel were reminded on Sunday, August 22, of what it means to be a family. Fr. Alan revealed a new installation that is now fixed over the exit doors of the sanctuary. It featured an ox yoke that was used for the training of young oxen. The yoke was given to Holy Trinity Chapel by our local hay farmer, Ron Kilby. It was used for years by Myron Curtis, the father of chapel member Helen Kilby. The yoke was made out of steamed and bent wood by Percey Seeley, the grandfather of another chapel member, Leeann Farley. According to Leeann, Percey and Myron were cousins and spent a lot of time together. Percey made the yoke about 70 years ago in his barn which sat directly across the street from where Holy Trinity Chapel located today. Fixed to a portion of 100-year old barn door found in the loft of Saint Brendan’s barn, the words from Matthew 11:29 were also added—“My yoke is easy, my burden is light.” Those words were selected to reflect the grace and presence of Christ within this local agrarian community. In fact, given its interconnected history, the yoke has finally come back home in more ways than one, drawing together our worshipping community under Christ as a true family in history, faith, and blood; especially *His* blood.

**The Final Word: St. Seraphim of Sarov (1754-1833)** — Russian monk, mystic, and priest venerated in both the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. His ascetic practices and spiritual direction won him the epithet *Starets* (Russian, 'Spiritual Teacher'). He is among the most renowned monastic figures in Russian Orthodox history.



When the Spirit of God comes down to man and overshadows him with the fullness of His descent, then the human soul overflows with unspeakable joy, for the Spirit of God fills with joy whatever He touches. This is that joy of which the Lord speaks in His Gospel: *A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour has come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. And ye now, therefore, have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and this joy no man taketh from you* (John 16:21-22). Yet however comforting this joy may be which you now feel in your heart, it is nothing in comparison with that of which the Lord Himself said by the mouth of His Apostle that that joy *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Foretastes of that joy are given to us now, and if they fill our souls with such sweetness, well-being and happiness, what shall we say of that joy which has been prepared in heaven for those who weep here on earth? Now it is up to us to add labours to labours in order to *go from strength to strength* (Psalm 84:7), and to *come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Ephesians 4:13), so that the words of the Lord may be fulfilled in us: *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall grow wings like eagles: and they shall run and not be weary* (Isaiah 40:31); *they shall go from strength to strength, the God of gods shall be seen in the Zion* (Psalm 84:7) of intuitions and heavenly visions. Only then will our present joy (which now visits us little and briefly) appear in all its fulness, and no one will take it from us, for we shall be filled to overflowing with ineffable heavenly delights.

## Let Us Know How We're Doing!



As you can imagine, the activities on a homestead keep 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.

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