

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
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LABOR ANALYSIS REPORT FROM SAINT BRENDAN'S

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

We're back, newsletter-ly speaking. During the months you haven't heard from us, much has occurred here—expanded pastures; nearly completing the chapel; retreatants and guests; purchasing, raising, and processing pigs; editing the Breviary (our devotional book—more on that later); and much more. We'll try to report all the details soon.

When Saint Brendan's was founded, it was a society of lay monastic prayer warriors. That term, "lay monastic" has taken us nearly 20 years to define. I still can't define it but perhaps I can describe it by comparing it to something else. Lay monasticism is very much like vocational monasticism—meaning men and women who have taken vows to serve God as monks and nuns. Vocational monastics give up mostly every other aspect of their lives to serve God in this manner. Lay monastics also seek to devote their lives to serving God but by incorporating their 'devotional' into their 'worldly.' Both are *callings* and, by that, I mean that the decision to live a monastic life is initiated, directed, and perfected by God. (In fact, every Christian life begins and ends with God's calling us through the Holy Spirit.)

Maybe it would help to compare these two spiritual callings to professional and amateur sports. A professional football play-

er, for instance, disciplines every part of his life in order to be good at the game and valuable to his team; his diet, water intake, sleep, physical condition, mental condition, relationships, free time, et cetera. Everything contributes to—or detracts from—the Game. He often sacrifices other hobbies, relationships, and freedom to make his own decisions in order to be a better asset to his team. Vocational monks and nuns do the same. There is no facet of their life that doesn't come under scrutiny in order to improve their 'game.' And what is their game? Prayer. The constant, consistent, dialogue or communion with God.



Like professional athletes, there are different 'positions' which require different disciplines. To continue with our football analogy...a quarterback's physical skill and conditioning are quite different from that of a linebacker—the guy who throws the ball is trained differently than the guy keeping the other team from tackling the guy throwing the ball! Likewise, some monastic orders are better at poverty, or charity, or teaching, et cetera. A

professional athlete plays for money and other perks. He makes his living from his sport. A vocational monastic's livelihood comes from the monastery or convent. (Difference: there aren't any opportunities for endorsements for monetary gain. Prayer seems most effective when there's nothing to gain by it except communion with God—which is plenty!) Whether the monastery supports itself via the production of a craft or food or service—or begging—there is no other

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income source. No other means to support their 'habit' habit, so to speak.

An amateur athlete, on the other hand, plays for free, for the love of the game. In fact, the term 'amateur' is based on the word for love, or passion. In short, he can't make a living by playing. He plays at his own expense



and maintains a job to support himself and his ability to play. He organizes his life and relationships to make time to play; organizes

finances to support the purchase of clothing and equipment—or the cost of joining a team; and balances work, family, and other non-sport obligations with practices and a game schedule. Sacrifices are made to pay for uniforms, equipment, and the medical bills that always come with sports injuries. Amateurs are often just as dedicated as the professionals but there are reasons why 'going pro' isn't an option.

Lay monastics also have other jobs, families, duties—distractions. Since our lives and livelihood don't depend on our diligence at remaining 'spiritually fit,' or making time to 'play,' the pressure of a lay monastic to remain disciplined isn't as great. It is possible for us, like amateur athletes, to step into—and out of—the 'sport' at will. And if the love of the sport, for an athlete, doesn't border on fanatical, most amateur athletes are eventually distracted enough, or prioritize other activities higher than, the game they love. And they are content to dabble at it. Or watch from the sidelines. Or pretend they are still athletes when they are just someone playing the game. For a vocational monastic,

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it is more difficult to leave 'the game.' For a lay monastic, it's more difficult to 'stay in the game.'

What does this have to do with a labor analysis report? EVERYTHING! Why? Because the first most important labor of monasticism—vocational or lay or otherwise (meaning, of EVERY CHRISTIAN)—is prayer. Of course, it is! Prayer is communication, and communion with God. It's not just our talking with our words but also our movements, our thoughts, our actions, our facial expressions. Our very being. (Don't believe me? Next time someone makes a meal for you, intentionally be late and see what your actions communicate to the cook. Or...volunteer to clean up after the meal and see if that communicates a message more conducive to your feelings for the cook!)

We were taught, in the early stages of our monastic formation, that prayer doesn't interrupt our earthly labor. Earthly labor



interrupts our prayer. As it turns out, either *all* earthly activity interrupts prayer OR all earthly activity can *become* prayer. Does that mean we need to verbally be speaking when doing our earthly activity, or do it on our knees? No. That's silly. And impossible. Rather, it means that there needs to be balance, intentional

scheduling of activities in time and intentional scrutiny over what activities we allow to distract us from concentrated prayer. (See our very, very many past newsletter articles about spiritual disciplines...) Vocational monastics wrap their entire day around a schedule of prayer, called the Offices. These Appointments with God occur roughly every three hours. For the most part, they look like this:

- Lauds – morning
- Terce – mid-morning
- Sext – noon
- None – mid-afternoon
- Vespers – evening
- Compline – just before bed

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There are two others, Vigils and Matins, that occur around midnight and 3AM but they are often omitted.

When Alan and I began our labor of prayer, we found stopping every 3 hours difficult mainly because we were doing messy jobs, and the cleanup and restarting made progress impossible. So we made the Offices 'bookends' to meals.

- Lauds – breakfast – Terce
- Sext – lunch – None
- Vespers – dinner – Compline

As 'amateurs,' this concession made sense for both our spiritual and physical labor.

Over time, however, we added animals—and congregations—and jobs off the property—and medical 'adventures.' We rationalized that a less rigorous prayer life might be in order, and we were encouraged in that direction by several people

both within the Fellowship and outside it. We adopted the pattern that many Christians have followed for centuries: Morning and Evening Prayer. Sometimes, less is more. We thought. We were wrong. Less is less. Less discipline, less structure—letting go even just a little—leads to the unraveling of all. (Ask an elementary teacher what happens to class discipline on 'special' days when the regular schedule is set aside. We are God's children. We become just as wild, just as fast!) We told ourselves, and our retreatants, that we *used* to keep the monastic offices but were now too busy. (Sadly, only one looked disappointed; he was here to study disciplined monastic life—and we failed him.)

But an interesting thing happened when we cut out those prayer offices. We didn't work harder. (Well, some days we did—and do.) Rather, we 'played' more. We started playing games after lunch. We started spending more time watching

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 the Father sent upon earth a purse full of His mercy.
It was only a small purse, but it was very full. As the Scriptures
tell us: "A little child has been given to us, but in Him dwells
all the fullness of the Divine nature."

Bernard of Clairvaux

*From an Epiphany sermon of Bernard—Burgundian Saint, mystic, theologian, and
Abbot of Clairvaux Abbey, France (1090-1153 AD).*

HOLY HYMNODY

*Of the Father's love begotten / Ere the worlds began to be /
He is Alpha and Omega / He the Source, the Ending He /
Of the things that are, that have been / And that future years shall see /
Evermore and evermore!*

*O ye heights of heav'n adore Him / Angel hosts, His praises sing /
Pow'rs, dominions, bow before Him / And extol our God and King /
Let no tongue on earth be silent / Every voice in concert ring /
Evermore and evermore!*

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

Text: Aurelius C. Prudentius (4th cent.); Music: Plainsong chant (13th cent.)

DIY videos...and then other videos. In other words, the time we had been spending communicating with God directly, with words, had become times of communicating with God through our actions, and what we were communicating was that we weren't paying attention to Him. (We weren't just being late for a meal, to use the example



above—we were not showing up at all!) It didn't take long before we were rationalizing why we could entirely skip Evening Prayer ("It's Friday night—to a Jew, it's already Saturday and we don't pray the offices on Saturday." "We had a mid-week Eucharist service." "I'm too tired."). Or Morning Prayer ("We can get our shopping done quicker if we leave earlier." That doesn't even make sense!) Lord, forgive us. Fellowship, forgive us.

After several retreatants joined us this summer, I was painfully aware that what we had to offer them was not the same gift of prayer we had offered earlier retreatants. We were spiritually dry, and 'feeding' these dear people mostly physical labor activities—farm skills, rather than spiritual skills. It was embarrassing. We apologize to them. And to you.

We are ready to get back into the game. Back to four prayer Offices (Morning Prayer—before breakfast, Noonday Prayer—after lunch, Vespers—after dinner, and Compline—before bed). Back to physically disciplining our bodies and minds for the rigors of the labor of prayer (spiritual athleticism requires its own physical and emotional strength). Back to listening to our Coach, and back to communicating with Him, verbally and nonverbally, that while we may be only amateurs, we love Him dearly and passionately. Please forgive our poor leadership. **And PLEASE!** Hold us accountable to what we say we do and who we say we are!!! Spiritual leadership isn't a game. Leaders are held to a higher standard by God, and with harsh consequences for not measuring up. And we haven't been measuring up—and that is scary in an 'eternal ramifications' kind of way!

In the past, our newsletters have been instructional, containing teaching articles and pictures of what is happening here on the property. For contemporary (American) Christians, Christian education and entertainment have become almost synonymous. Like the Jews with their Talmud, the extra-Biblical explanations and expansions of our New Testament Scriptures are so vast, and Christians are quick to substitute the words of God (and the Word of God, Christ Jesus himself) with the books and blogs and podcasts and videos of everyone who is talking about God.

I'm not sure how to proceed with the newsletter because we don't want it to fall into that kind of publication that provides a spiritual placebo for communion with God. We don't want to be simply another contemporary Talmudic 'voice' keeping you from your prayer and meditation on Scripture. But if we are to be a Fellowship, we need some sort of 'glue.'

The best we can offer is the very thing that God has called us to be—and to do. Prayer. Pray-ers. Alan and I have been working on a Saint Brendan's Breviary, or Prayer Book, for the past 17 years. It has taken many

forms—some of them good, some not so good (particularly the versions that we were trying to make 'easier'). This week, we have finished the final proofreading of the final version. It contains the four Offices we intend to pray every weekday (Morning, Noonday, Vespers and Compline). These Offices contain contemporary and ancient prayers ranging from Orthodox to Catholic to Anglican to Protestant—and many Celtic (naturally).

Alan has bound the Offices with a reworked Psalter (the Psalms), so that it contains the best of

The Breviary



Fellowship
of Saint Brendan's

"We don't want to be simply another 'voice' keeping you from your prayer and meditation on Scripture."

both the typical version found in our Bibles (with notes explaining who wrote the Psalm and why, plus verse numbers of that version) with the ease of versions that make antiphonal reading (leader – group – leader – group) easier to follow. It's a great resource for Bible study or prayer groups that want to pray the Psalms! (The screenshots show the working copy.)

Finally, there's a Prayer Litany that we designed early on for one of our larger Fellowship groups on Long Island. They wanted an 'outline' for group prayer that also allowed for individual intercessions, silent prayers and listening to the Holy Spirit. All of these components will get their final review, and then be sent off to the publishers. (No more binders!! YAY!!!) When we know what publication will cost, we will let you know—in case you are interested in purchasing one and joining us with our intentional prayer labor of lay monasticism. This is an ecumenical prayer book because Saint Brendan's is an ecumenical Fellowship! That means the Breviary will not reflect the doctrine and discipline of one particular denomination but will, instead, reflect the best of many denominations.

Thank you for your patience during our silence and regrouping. And, prayerfully, for your forgiveness. Summer retreatants, if you are willing, we'd love another chance...

Rejoice!
Sue Andraea

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in Your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

O God, Your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those, both night and day, who work while others sleep, and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in Your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Silent Reflection

Antiphon and Nunc Dimittis

(all standing, Leader begins with)
Guide us waking, O Lord, * and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

☩ Lord, You now have set Your servant free,
To go in peace as You have promised;
For these eyes of mine have seen the Savior
Whom You have prepared for all the world to see:
A light to enlighten
And

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

† Call to Worship

(Leader selects one of the following)

Awake lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.
I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to You among the nations. *Psalm 108:2-3*

I will praise You with my whole heart; I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your Name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth.

For You have magnified Your word above all Your Name, and made me bold with strength in my soul. *from Psalm 138:1-3*

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His Name.

For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. *Psalm 100:4-5*

Antiphon

(Leader selects one of the following; additional antiphons continue on the next page)

Sing unto the LORD, all the earth;
Show forth His salvation from day to day. *Psalm 99:9a*

Psalm 51 *Miserere mei, Deus*
(A Sinner's Prayer for Pardon)

For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after his affair with Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your Loving-kindness; *
In Your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
And cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
And my sin is ever before me.
- 4 ☩ Against You, You only, have I sinned *
And done what is evil in Your sight.
- 4 ☩ And so You are justified when You speak *
And upright in Your judgment.
- 5 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
And a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 6 For behold, You look for truth deep within me, *
And will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 7 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
Wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 8 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
That the body You have broken may rejoice.

Life at the Priory House



TOP LEFT: The trim work inside the sanctuary of Holy Trinity Chapel is almost complete. **TOP MIDDLE:** Sue takes a moment to pause as we finish building a new wood crib. **TOP RIGHT:** A local team of carpenters help us to frame in the old garage doors so that we can begin building new guest rooms. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Hot day in the hayfields as Sue stacks the bales on the trailer. **MIDDLE CENTER:** Fr. Alan loads the haybales onto the elevator at a friend's barn. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** 70 sets of hats, mittens, and scarves were sent to us from Fellowship members, Clay and Marcia Landwehr, in Arizona; they were given to our local grade school—the principal, Trudy Newcomb, came to the chapel to receive them. **LOWER LEFT:** Isaac Shao, a retreatant from Boston who immigrated from China, came to Saint Brendan's for a retreat. **LOWER MIDDLE:** Fr. Alan prays over the water in the baptismal font for the baptism of one of our chapel members, Leeann Farley. **LOWER RIGHT:** A great day when the mortgage was paid-in-full; now the whole property is leased to the ministry!

The Final Word: St. Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389 AD) — Also known as Gregory the Theologian, the 4th century Archbishop of Constantinople (in modern-day Turkey); his defense of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) made him one of the greatest champions of Orthodoxy against Arianism.

Christ is born: Glorify Him! Christ comes from heaven: Go out to meet Him! Christ descends to earth: Let us be raised on high! Let all the world sing to the Lord; let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad, for Him who was first in heaven is now on earth. Christ is here in the flesh: Let us exult with awe and fear because of the hope that He brings us!

Once more the darkness is dispersed; once more the light is created. The things of old have passed away; behold, all things are made new. He Who has no mother in heaven is now born without father on earth. He who is without flesh becomes incarnate; the Word puts on a body; the Invisible is seen; He Whom no had can touch is handled; the Timeless now has a beginning; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Light from light, the Word of the Father comes to those made in His own image. For the sake of my flesh He takes on flesh. In every way He becomes human, except for sin. O strange conjunction! The Self-existent comes into being; the Uncreated is given shape. He shares in the poverty of my flesh, that I may share in the riches of His Godhead.



**May your Advent,
Christmas, and
Epiphany be truly
blessed as you
embrace God
in the flesh!**

“Prepare and purify us, Almighty God, by Your daily visitation, that Your Son Jesus Christ, at His coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself; Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.”

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