

The Navigator

The Newsletter of the Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
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CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Sue Andraeas, Prioress

*“As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.”
Proverbs 27:17*

Do you know what the hardest part of my day is? Juggling my ‘to do’ list. Trying to decide which projects I need to accomplish on my own, which would best be done if Alan and I team up, and which need to include others for their sake. Since the COVID pandemic, we hear many of you saying something similar; life seems to demand more, it seems harder to get things accomplished if teamwork is required, and people seem less joyful and less motivated. There is less peace. I’ve noticed something else too. There also seems to be less courage. Less bravery. And during my time of meditation each day, I’ve been thinking about those two characteristics. A lot. They seem to be connected with the quality of service we receive, the accuracy of jobs done, and the motivation to get them done.

America was founded upon independence. In fact, one of the first truly American documents is called the *Declaration of...Independence*. We are, or were, an independent nation comprised of independent people. The wild west was tamed by rugged individualists. DIY books, videos, and podcasts are everywhere because people want to do things themselves. But recently, people also began seeking community in new and deceptively non-community ways. A few newsletters back, I mentioned the

label on my mustard squeeze bottle included a way to become part of the ‘mustard community.’ I thought it was funny then. Mustard community? Now, I see it as something more sinister.

The paradox of demanding independence yet craving community isn’t working. The isolation of COVID lockdowns where we worked, worshiped, shopped, and schooled from home has led to a steep rise in depression and anxiety¹ while at the same time resulting in a steep decline in proficiency and productivity.² Evidently, we are not as independent as we had thought. We search for connectivity, in places like social media and other ‘online communities’ to link up with like-minded people who share our hobbies, beliefs, or even to receive medical care or an education. But it’s difficult to be a community, or a classroom, or a patient, when we only share what a computer connection can reveal, and when others can share only the ‘data points’



they want to share. It’s easy to fake an identity on a two-dimensional screen. Community requires personal interaction, not cyber connection.

This is where courage and bravery come in. We need to risk actual involvement in each other’s lives. If we’ve learned anything in the past few years, it’s that businesses have figured out how to make money by providing in-person yet

anonymous services that used to be performed by known friends, neighbors and family. This is what I mean. Our little area of Maine is quite rural. The lack of population means there aren’t many resources in the form of stores, recreation, and entertainment options, or medical offices. Even if there were,

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the population wouldn't supply enough employees to make them function well, and the lack of revenue would soon shut them down. That means we drive well over 30 miles one way to get to any store larger or more specialized than a dollar store or gas station mini mart. These larger, more specialized stores and medical practices are over 100 miles away. A five-minute medical checkup in Bangor takes well over five hours!

It used to be a common practice, when people were making trips to these places, to ask neighbors if they needed anything. It's become less common. So have neighbors taking up neighbors on their offer! And in areas less rural, it's easier to call Uber Eats or other agencies that will deliver groceries, restaurant take-out, pharmacy, and big box purchases than to 'bother' a neighbor. Pizza deliveries used to be a unique niche. Now everyone delivers. And we'd rather pay a stranger to bring us things than ask a neighbor. It's acceptable, and expected, to offer help. But it's not as acceptable to accept that help. Humility and meekness, the need to rely on others, are viewed today as admissions of guilt or of weakness. Helplessness. They are not! Read that again: humility and meekness are not synonymous with helplessness, guilt, or weakness!

We live in a global 'community' where people are quite bold in voicing their personal beliefs and opinions. It's easy to take a stand for or donate funds to a 'cause' rather than a known individual. Anonymous disconnection is easier than personal involvement. Most of us are not as humble and meek to listen to the beliefs and opinions of others when we don't agree with them than to see that person rather than their offensive ideas. Heightened anxiety and anger, coupled with fierce independence and lack of community, are undoing families, neighborhoods—entire nations. At the same time, they are quick to expect their 'community' to take care of them without contributing anything back. They seek to receive 'assistance' from

“The community of Jesus is many peoples and many lifestyles, but one common language of praise and worship of Christ as Lord and King.”

their government, schools, local agencies, and so on without considering that someone somewhere is funding that support. They can't see what their lack of participation in their own life and in their community is doing to them emotionally.

Isolation and lethargy go hand-in-hand with depression and psychosis. Believe it or not, but our failure to accept personal help and our desire to be uninvolved in the lives of others

come from the same cause. Both are symptoms of selfishness: "I control my impersonal involvement with others so that I don't need to reciprocate with my involvement in their lives;" and "I want my needs met by impersonal services so that I don't have to show personal gratitude for those involved in caring for me." Can we, the Church, offer any suggestions? I believe the answer is 'yes.' And I believe it comes in restoring the word *community* to its original definition and purpose.

Let's backtrack to Genesis 11. The Tower of Babel. The world wasn't so populated in those days, and everyone spoke the same language. They were one, big, happy community. But they lacked humility. They wanted to be independent—of God—so they would not need to rely on Him or show gratitude to Him. God brought them down a few pegs by giving them different languages—breaking up the community a bit so they couldn't communicate with each other. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is heard discussing this 'reliance contingency' of community with the temple leaders of His day, leaders who

wanted to control the masses without becoming involved in the personal aspects of their lives. In Jesus' dual command familiar to most of us, He says we are to Love God with all we've got and lovingly involve ourselves in our neighbor's lives (Matthew 22:37-39, my interpretation). Relational sacrifice and personal involvement. Bravery and meekness required.

Fast forward to Acts 2. The disciples are still hiding in their upper room, waiting for the Holy Spirit to land. And land He does! First, there's all kinds of wind and noise. Then there's flames of fire everywhere. And finally, these men all began speaking in languages they never even learned. The people down below heard their own familiar words being spoken by strangers. God was restoring community by restoring the interpersonal bond of shared language. Peter boldly delivered a sermon that linked these people from 15 diverse nations and ethnic groups into one community of unity found within diversity. The community



Saint Brendan's Fellowship

38 Cemetary Road

Dennysville, ME 04628-4326

207-726-5129

st.brendans@myfairpoint.net

www.saintbrendans-online.com

www.facebook.com/st.brendansfellowship

www.facebook.com/holytrinitychapel.maine

of Jesus is many peoples and many lifestyles, but one common language of praise and worship of Christ as Lord and King. They didn't know it yet, but they were going to become the first generation of Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic church—emphasis on the ONE. By the end of his sermon, these people who had been independent strangers just moments ago begin asking what their unified response should be. Peter gave them four steps. None of them are DIY. None can be completed in the isolation and privacy of your own life.

1. Repent. This word means to admit fault to someone else and then to stop doing it. There's the humility and meekness part. It's tough to admit fault to someone else and ask them to let you know if you start doing it again.

2. Be baptized. You can't do that on your own either. Getting in the water by yourself is just a bath.

3. Receive the Holy Spirit. Now you'll NEVER be alone again! You're spiritually 'plugged in' to God's community! Now the real test of bravery begins!!

4. Be saved from (or get out of the danger of) this perverse (crooked, bent, twisted) generation. In other words, join the community of God by getting out of the world's fake community.

The people listened to Peter! Several verses later, and I'm sure months and months elapsed here, Luke, the author of Acts, reports the following (Acts 2:42-47):

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many

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...

"Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

A German Lutheran pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, and key founding member of the Confessing Church, Bonhoeffer was executed in a Nazi prison camp just days before its liberation by the Allies (1906-1945).

HOLY HYMNODY

We are one in the Spirit / we are one in the Lord /
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

We will walk with each other / we will walk hand in hand /
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

We will work with each other / we will work side by side /
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love.

"They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love"

Text and Music by Peter Scholtes; based on John 13:35

wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



To share a common life of service and worship? Later in the description, Luke adds that this first group of what would later be called Christians went so far as to sell personal property for the good of the community. Wow! Humility, meekness, AND sacrifice!! (Love *is* sacrifice, after all.) But the result, God’s blessing poured upon them, speaks for itself. “The Lord added to their number DAILY those who were being saved (v. 47).”

Christ’s first community on earth. They worshiped together. They paid attention to their church leaders—who were doing the work of God. And this next line is the kicker: They were together, in person. They had everything in common (Acts 2:44). I used to think of this as a sort of ‘equipment locker’ where believers could borrow things that they needed; shovels, cooking pots, a donkey and cart. But the Greek word used for *all things* is more comprehensive. It means their individual lives were shared in a way that made the group more holistic, a unified unit. And the Greek word used for *in common* is really interesting. It means to strip away the holiness of something that originally set it apart for a specific task (such as a holy vessel in the Temple) and turn it into something mundane (like a normal, old cooking pot in a house). A ‘de-

I’m sure we’ve been spared the down-and-dirty of that community. There’s a lot of ‘moving parts’ that go unmentioned, like finding houses and food for everyone (many were kicked out of their families for ‘denying’ their Jewish roots), dealing with people who weren’t using their best sharing manners, etc. There are always deadbeats. But that’s part of community life as well. We bump into each other and, if we are humble, we are made better servants of Christ in the bumping (see the verse at the top of the article). Perhaps that is why the Church doesn’t see the same signs, wonders, and growth today. We Christians have become blunt iron because we’re not spending enough time bumping into each other in the sharing of a common life. We

consecration’ of sorts. What Luke is trying to convey, I think, is that they were losing their sense of individual ego—of the arrogant god of self—and becoming brave enough, humble and meek enough, to love their community of believers as much as they loved their own, separate private lives. Unity of community rather than a group of lone wolves.



need to do less egocentric, individualistic living and more humble, meek, brave, and courageous community living. The braver we are, the more unified we become as the Church, the happier we’ll be. Even better, the more Christ will be glorified.

And isn’t that what monastic life—and lay monastic life—is all about? Being brave and courageous enough to trust others?

Rejoice!
Sue Andreaas

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Sue Andreaas

¹<https://covid19.nih.gov/covid-19-topics/mental-health>

²<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/impact-of-covid-19-united-states-gdp-productivity/>

“We Christians have become blunt iron because we’re not spending enough time bumping into each other in the sharing of a common life.”

The Prior's Ponderings



His wrath toward man's iniquity will be total and complete. But what about us—those who love the Lord? Is this wrath our fate as well? No. Interposed

[The Prior's Ponderings' will be a series of short Scripture studies on things that grab my attention. Contemplate them. Pray about them. Share them if you are so led.]

The Bible uses a lot of imagery to describe profound spiritual truth. It must. Otherwise, how can we, with brains of clay, possibly comprehend the eternal mysteries of God unless the Lord presents those truths in a way more suited to our simple human understanding (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:6-9)? That's why Jesus taught mostly in parables about things like sheep, fish, coins, bread, weeds, and rebellious children; and even then, He would have to ask, "How is it that you fail to understand?" (Matthew 16:11).

And so it is that God also speaks to us about things of incredible importance through the imagery of cups. I have a favorite coffee cup, but that's not what God means. When you read through the Scriptures, you'll find references to three distinct cups. They are: (1) the cup of iniquity, (2) the cup of foaming wine, and (3) the cup of blessing. What do these mean and why are they important?

The cup of iniquity is pretty obvious. It's everything that all of humanity has been doing in defiance of God since the very beginning. We see illusions and references to this cup as early as Genesis 15:16; as spoken by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:32; and as a key reason for God's judgment in Revelation 18:5-19. For lack of a better description, it's mankind's "slop-bucket" of sin and transgression, and God will absolutely deal with it.

God ultimately comes against our cup of iniquity with the second cup: His cup of foaming wine. We see this reference in Psalm 75:8. God holds this cup in His hand, and He will pour it out—to the very last drop—on all the wicked of the world. Perhaps this outpouring of wrath is what we see referenced in the 'wine of God's wrath' in Revelation 14:10 and the 'bowels of wrath' in Revelation 16:1.

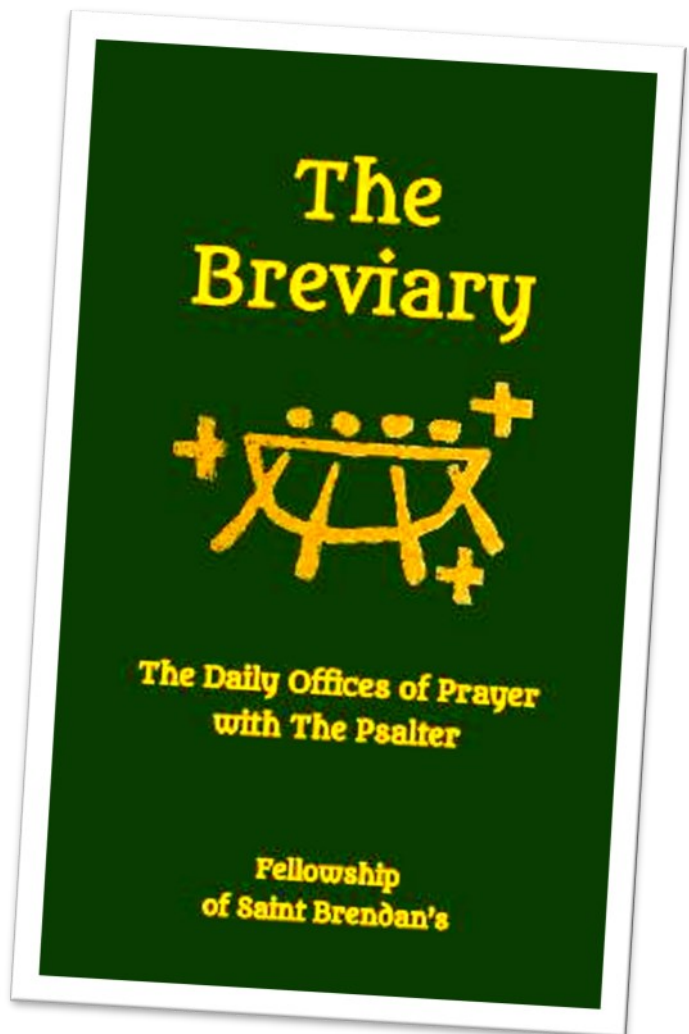
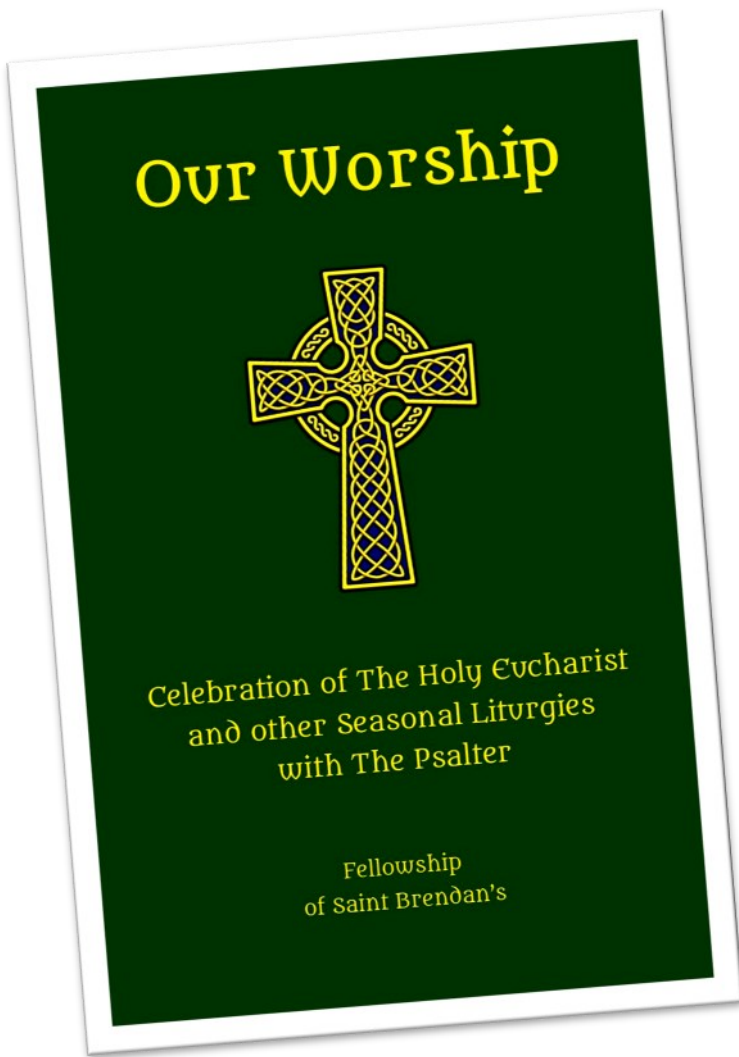
between us and God's wrath is the third cup, the cup of blessing. What is the cup of blessing? The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?" Or as the Psalmist writes in Psalm 116:13, "I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD." This cup is our medicine; our remedy against the malady of Adam's sin.



We see this truth conveyed to us every Sunday at the altar as the sacrifice of Christ is set square between us and the throne of God. Jesus is the cup of blessing, the cup of salvation, made available to everyone who calls upon Him, and that cup of blessing shields us and delivers us from the cup of foaming wine. As the world hurtles toward wrath, God's remedy and provision is set before us if we but stretch out our hands in faith and receive it. Praise God, His cup of blessing is His Son, Jesus Christ.



For our Community Life



In support of our community life at Saint Brendan's, we have two new resources available to you. The first is our corporate liturgy, *Our Worship*. The second is our corporate prayer, *The Breviary*. Why these two books? While we receive our denominational and episcopal cover through the Anglican Church in North America, many people in our fellowship are not Anglicans. Our call was never to turn the members of Saint Brendan's into Anglicans, but to introduce our members to the Church's rich heritage of worship and prayer—those two things that stand at the very heart of Christian life and discipline.

Visitors to the Priory House are well aware that these resources have been 'works in progress' for 18 years! And while these two books are grounded on previous versions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, they have also been developed with a view toward those things that are fully evangelical, extremely conscious of the 'shape of the liturgy', and anticipatory of the move of the Holy Spirit. Profoundly biblical while remaining true to their Anglo-Catholic predecessors, we commend *Our Worship* and *The Breviary* for the private and corporate use of the Fellowship of Saint Brendan's and for those of the broader Church of Jesus Christ who "long for the ancient paths."

Our Worship includes the Sunday liturgy used in Holy Trinity Chapel at Saint Brendan's, along with liturgies for Ash Wednesday, a Bible-based version of the Stations of the Cross, Good Friday, and the Intercession Litany. *The Breviary* includes the Daily Offices for Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline, and the Intercession Litany. Both volumes contain our unique version of *The Psalter*. Both are case-laminated, hardbound books.

If interested, *Our Worship* (434 pages) costs \$25.00 (price includes shipping). *The Breviary* (400 pages) costs \$20.00 (price includes shipping). Contact us for more details if you wish to get your own copies.

[Please forgive the quality of the 'screen capture' images above. The actual books look much better!]

The Final Word: St. Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD)

Patriarch and Bishop of Alexandria from 412-444, Cyril was also counted as a Father and Doctor of the Church. His extensive theological writing also gained him the titles of 'Pillar of Faith' and 'Seal of All the Fathers'. He is best known for his role at the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) where he was instrumental in hammering out the doctrine of Christ regarding the indivisible unity of His godhood and manhood.

[The following is a series of extracts from St. Cyril's Commentary on John 11.]

In order, then, that we ourselves also may join together, and be blended into unity with God and with one another, the Only-begotten has contrived the means through the mystery of the Eucharist by which He makes us of the same body with Himself and with one another.

That fact that those who partake of His holy flesh gain this actual physical unity with Christ is attested by Paul when he says, "I am speaking of the mystery of Christ, and it is no less than this: in Christ Jesus Gentiles are now co-heirs with Jews, members of same body, and sharers of the promise."

And if we are all of us of the same body with one another *in* Christ, are we not then all of us clearly one both with one another and *with* Christ? For Christ is the bond of union, since He is Himself at once both God and man.

By the Spirit we are somehow blended together with one another and with God. And just as the power of Christ's holy flesh makes those in whom it is received to be of the same body, so also the indivisible Spirit of God Who abides in all, binds all together in spiritual unity.

Hence, the inspired Paul addresses us in this fashion: "Bear with one another lovingly. Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its source, and has peace as its binding force. There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and works through all, and is in all."

For while the Spirit, Who is one, abides in us, the one God and Father of all will be in us, binding together into unity with one another and with Himself whoever partakes of the Spirit.



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Monastic Fellowship of Saint Brendan's
38 Cemetery Road
Dennysville, ME 04628-4326

