

T H E V A L Y E R M O

Chronicle

S A I N T A N D R E W ' S A B B E Y

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LETTER *from the* ABBOT

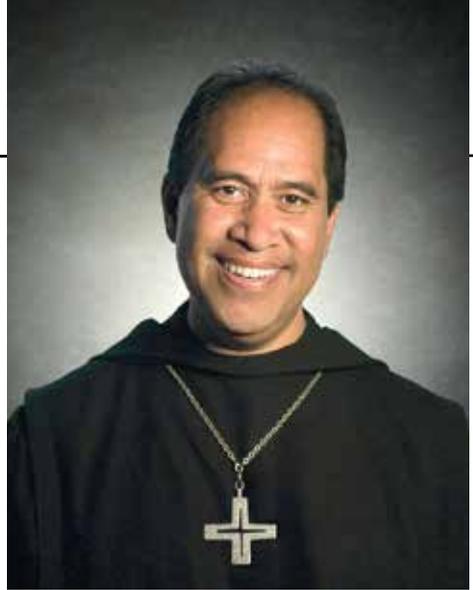
Dear Friends,

LAST YEAR IN THE EARLY SPRING when the temperatures were cooler, I used to like hiking up to our cemetery in the early mornings, praying the rosary as I did so.

I remember one particular morning. It started out as usual: a near-perfect morning at the Abbey, still and quiet and beautiful. The rabbits and squirrels were out and about playing and foraging for food before the hawks and other birds of prey woke up.

After about fifteen minutes of hiking uphill — and out of breath (!) — I finally arrived at the cemetery, where as usual, I was greeted by the statue of the Blessed Mother carrying her infant Son, which stands there over the graves of the monks and oblates. As I stood directly in front of the statue, I was overwhelmed with the sense of the presence of the Blessed Mother. So I thanked her for being there with me. Then I shifted my position so that now I was in the line of sight of the baby Jesus, and I thanked Jesus for sending her to me. Then I thanked Jesus for sending her to me. Then I thought to myself, “why doesn’t Jesus Himself come to me?”

There’s no way Jesus Himself would come



to me, I thought. I’m not faithful enough, and I’m not *that* special to Him like other people I know. *They* have a closer relationship to Him, which is why He gives them “the special” gifts and the particular works that accompany the gifts. So there is no way He would come to me. But maybe one day, when I am little more prayerful and faithful and less sinful, *maybe* He Himself too might come to me.

As I stood there in front of the statue thinking this and perhaps praying about this, I looked into the eyes of the Infant Jesus. For some reason I was unable to look away from His gaze



even though I wanted to. My eyes were fixed. (I have never had a devotion to the Infant Jesus in any way, and quite honestly I really couldn't understand that particular devotion.) But as I looked into the eyes of the Infant Jesus, they locked; my eyes with His eyes and His with mine.

In this prayer of gazing at each other, I "saw" the Infant Jesus holding His outstretched arms toward me, just as babies do when they want to be picked up and carried.

Then it hit me. Babies don't judge like adults do. They don't hold grudges. They just trust and love. It was always me and not Him who prevented "this" from happening, who prevented Him from coming to me. His outstretched arms were always waiting for me.

Immediately, a sense of peace and love and "good enough-ness" came over me as I "carried" the Lord in my arms and in my heart, as I received Him and "allowed" Him to be with me.

That image of the Infant Jesus with outstretched arms, waiting and wanting me to pick Him up and carry Him will be with me for a very long time. It will always remind me of the Lord's desire to be with me and the non-judgmental trust and love He has for me.

But that's not all. There was more that 'ordinary' day. As I was lost in thought and prayer over this "revelation", the morning sun which had been slowly rising finally made its way up and over the hill. In an instant, I was physically enveloped in the brightness and warmth of the rising sun, while simultaneously sensing a deep feeling of joy, love, gratitude and "good-enough-ness" from the risen Son.

I stood there motionless, still, and in awe; no thoughts running through my mind anymore, just receiving the love and life of God in that place where the dead wait to be raised to new life by Him. Alleluia!

Abbot Damien ✨

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PO Box 40,
Valyermo, CA 93563-0040
saintandrewsabbey.com

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Francisco Ribalta (1565-1628),
Christ Embracing St. Bernard (detail)
(between 1625 and 1627)
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

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ALTHOUGH THERE ARE TWO dominant motifs of the Christian life, and both are essential, it seems that the Cross has dominated the Western theological tradition far more than the Incarnation. This orientation is evidenced in the exaggerated emphasis often placed upon self-denial and dying to one's self. And, to be absolutely clear, both our Lord and St. Paul (principally) *do* discuss the importance of this ascetic emphasis.

But Incarnation and Cross are not contrasting, competing, or contradictory orientations. They form a unit, a trajectory pointing in one particular direction. The direction is resurrection. The Incarnation of Christ leads to the Cross of Christ which, inevitably, leads to the Resurrection of Christ. To focus upon only one, or even two, is to miss the clearly stated point: "If Christ was not raised, [Christians] are to be most pitied above all [persons]." Resurrection-life is the goal of Incarnation and Crucifixion.

Saying **Yes** *to* **No**

DR. DONALD P. RICHMOND, OBl.OSB

During the season of Lent we have capitalized upon the disciplines of self-denial. This is good. Disciples do practice spiritual disciplines. Disciples do practice healthy self-denial. We should and we must. Nevertheless, we must

also ask ourselves about the purpose of the disciplines. The purpose of the disciplines of denial is to strip away those things that are not essential in order to make room for those things which are essential. Renunciation makes room for resurrection. In short, our “no” should always lead us to a “yes.”

I truly wonder, however, how many of us are living in the “yes” of God. How many of us, experientially, are living resurrected lives? Having denied ourselves, or having added some positive disciplines to our lives, have we experienced the “yes” that saying “no” has sought to produce?

If not, there are at least five reasons why our “no” has not resulted in a “yes.” Each of these are rooted within the story of the resurrection of Lazarus as found in St. John 11. These are: Insufficient Waiting, Insufficient Praying, Insufficient Weeping, Insufficient Fellowship and Insufficient Action.

In the story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead we read about Martha and Mary imploring Jesus about Lazarus. They want Jesus to come and to heal Lazarus. After all, Jesus loves this family. Why would he not come? Why would he not heal? But what does Jesus do? *Jesus waits*. In a similar way we, too, must wait as we practice our penances, our practical forms of repentance. It takes time and trial to shed the garments of the unnecessary. Job had his days of waiting. Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish. Jesus spent three days in the tomb. Job’s waiting resulted in justification and renewal. Jonah’s waiting resulted in the repentance of a city. Jesus’ waiting resulted in the resurrection from the dead. Without waiting there was no reward. Insufficient waiting may be the cause of our not experiencing resurrection.

Martha and Mary also prayed. They insisted that, if the Lord had come, Lazarus would not have died. Can we imagine them not being persistent in prayer? Can we imagine

that Martha and Mary just sent a message to Jesus and did not perpetually petition the Father? It is likely that they prayed and prayed and prayed. And, initially, it may have looked like their prayers were unanswered. But this was not the case. They *were* heard. Lazarus *was* resurrected, albeit only after Martha and Mary had understood that the greater glory of God was at stake. Prayer prepares the tomb of the heart for resurrection. If we are not experiencing resurrection it may be because of insufficient prayer.

Weeping must also not be overlooked. *Martha and Mary wept*. Their friends wept. *Jesus wept*. All too often we want to press too quickly through the weeping to the resurrection. All too often we want the crown without the cross. All too often we want to bypass Golgotha and the Grave in order to enter the Garden of the Resurrection. But repentance, and its sister penance, must have their tears. Tears are the salt of repentance which opens the tomb of the heart. It is the cleansing that prepares us for catharsis. As writes the Psalmist, “those who sow in tears / shall reap with joy.” No Grave, no Garden. “No” before “yes.”

As well, *Insufficient Fellowship can prohibit the experience of resurrection*. It took others to comfort Martha and Mary. It took others to “roll away the stone.” It took others to remove the shrouds that bound Lazarus. We need each other! I have a number of younger friends who insist that they do not need Church. It is a common trend associated with the Christ without Christianity movement. A great many others feel the same way. And, to some degree, I “get” it. But it is unrealistic as well as unbiblical. With whom do they worship? With whom do they pray? With whom, according to Acts 2: 42, do they share common lives? How are Sacraments administered? Without others — who, with us, petition and weep — we are unable to roll away the huge stony

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On Loving God

FROM TRAILHEAD TO SUMMIT WITH ST. BERNARD

DR. ANTHONY LILLES, *Academic Dean, St. John's Seminary*

ONCE A GOOD BEGINNING has been made, the monk should, according to the end of the Rule of St. Benedict, “set out for the loftier summits.” St. Bernard’s teaching *On Loving God* flows from this effort. He illuminates the summit of loving God, from its bodily trailhead to its spiritual glory in heaven. Written to fulfill the dying request of a friend, St. Bernard explains how loving God is the pathway to becoming what we are: the image and likeness of the Trinity.¹

St. Bernard does not present the love of God as limited to any passing religious feeling or sentiment. Love of God is a passion subject to development — movement of soul that undergoes change, even transformation. Intrinsic to the relational reality of humanity, loving God unfolds in degrees, each one more perfect than the last.² The higher one goes, the more intense and extensive one’s love becomes, until this human passion takes on divine proportions.³

Though he refers to personal experiences, he is relentless in proposing that what we know only by faith presents a higher object and motivation for our love than all other things accessible to our natural powers of knowledge and understanding. What we love and why we love are more important than changes in understanding and in feeling as we love.⁴ As our love for God reaches higher and higher degrees, the object and motivation of our love is transformed within us. They are, in St. Bernard’s teaching, raised above themselves, from bodily to spiritual, from natural to supernatural, from what is most innate to us to what is pure gift from above.

This is a refreshing perspective when compared with the contemporary technologized approach to self-improvement. Rather than

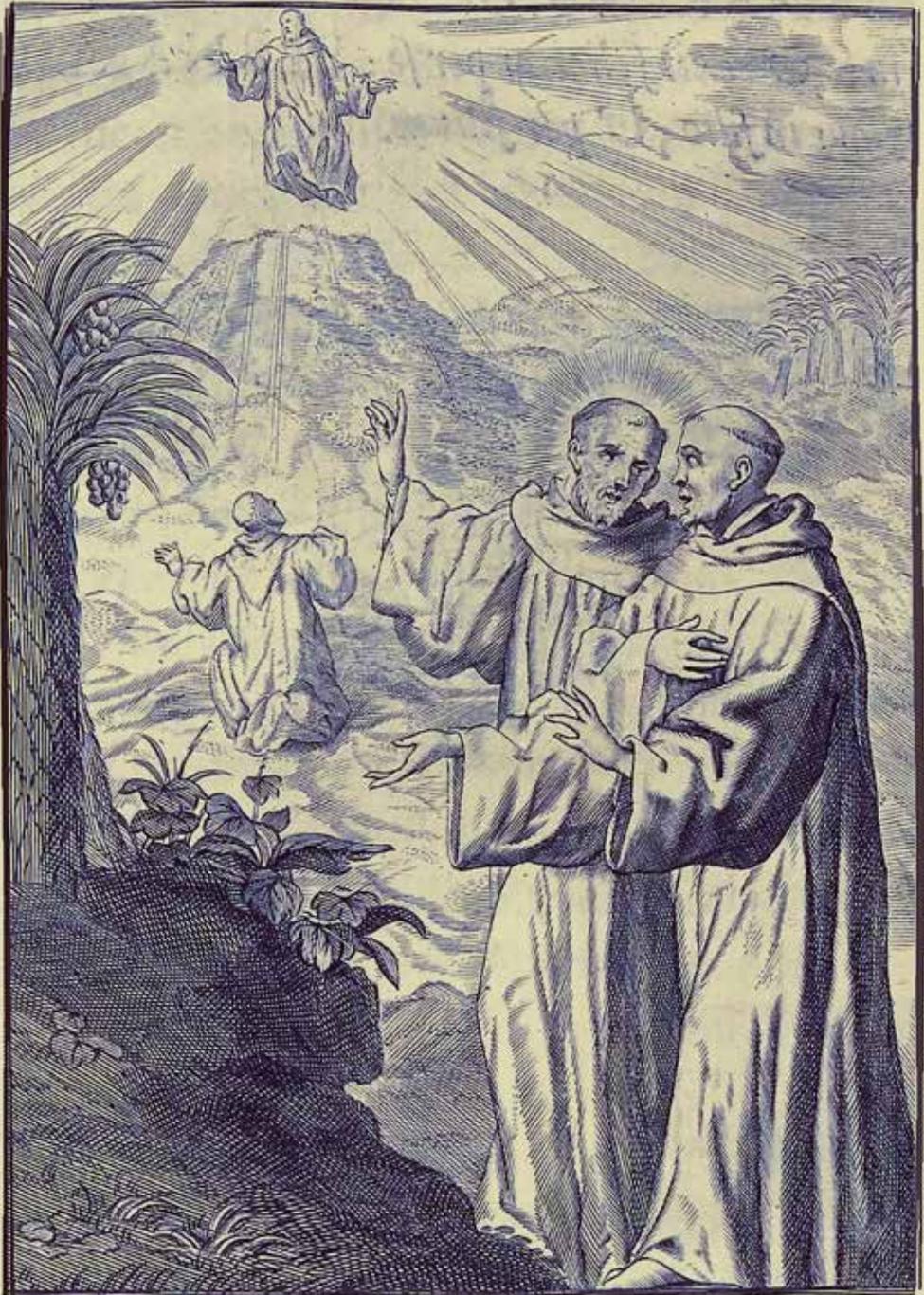
surmounting the self through techniques, St. Bernard proposes the redemption of self through an obedient faith. What is known in the obscurity of faith is more certain than experiences and achievements — even achievements of interiority and consciousness. Devotion’s object and motivation have a primacy over psychic states and the accomplishments of mental gymnastics.

Not the product of one’s own psycho-spiritual industry, the secret to loving God is disclosed in the relation of the Son to the Father, who for the sake of the Father, laid down the life that He loved. For St. Bernard, Christ’s revelation of love on the Cross is a mystery that draws the human heart and communicates a new power into it. Vatican II has affirmed that the Savior stands at the center of our efforts to love God and reveals the truth about the Father’s love and our high calling before God.⁵ Meant to participate in Christ’s gift of self in loving obedience to the Father, the human “self” is a great mystery that because of God’s love, should be loved.

Now we get to what I consider to be the most surprising facet of St. Bernard’s teaching. The love of God that St. Bernard holds out has as its highest motivation, the Holy Trinity; but as its highest object, the created self — the human person. One should have expected the highest degree of the love of God to be the most altruistic, and, thus, the most disinterested in self. Yet, instead, St. Bernard surprises us by proposing what seems to be the opposite. He argues that, in the life to come, love of God culminates in loving ourselves for God’s sake.

This love of “self” has a paradoxical relationship to the Gospel “whosoever loves his own life will lose it” (John 12:25). How do we

Veni, de libano, veni coronaberis. Cant. 4.



*Per visionem ostendit BERNARDVS se
51. caelestem montem Libani ascendere.*

reconcile St. Bernard's proposal with what the Bible teaches regarding dying to oneself? Saint Bernard's answer might be summarized in the following way: just as Christ loves Himself and his human nature for the sake of the Father, and so, offers it as a gift of love to the Father, so too must each Christian strive to love themselves and their humanity for the sake of God. Just as Christ loved his humanity but for love laid it down, so too our love for God starts in the concrete exigencies of bodily life and leads to a new kind of participation in His love in heaven.

The first degree of loving God, love of oneself for one's own sake, weaves together basic bodily needs, the instinct of self-preservation and the command to love our neighbor.⁶ This first step up the mountain delivers us from the tyranny that exterior bodily exigencies can hold over our hearts.⁷ The problem is not with the body or the needs of the body. The problem is with our broken power of self-preservation that inclines us to over-indulgence. Loving God heals our selfishness because it binds us by divine command to the plight of others who share this same innate but thwarted capacity. Thus, even to love ourselves for our own sake is inextricably bound to the relations with others that God commands us to have.

Not selfish, this love of self for one's own sake is profoundly connected to those whom God has put in our lives. This is not a love of self alienated by sin and disconnected from others. Just as Christ reveals Himself as the One in relation to the Father, St. Bernard sees the "self" not as the Freudian "ego" but as the person-in-relation to others and to God. Every moment spent with a loved one or any little sacrifice made to take care of them is a joy - because somehow these other people we love are connected to us. The "self" co-inheres, or at least it is meant to co-inhere in those we love. This means taking care of them is a wonderful way to take care of oneself.

This means loving God orders the spirit over

the body, the invisible over the visible, so that what is most interior to man is much more expansive than his exterior needs.⁸ For Saint Bernard, when we see His great love and begin to love Him enough to follow His commands, the Lord already implicates us in the lives of others. As we identify with others and perceive their hardships, we gladly sacrifice to relieve them of their burdens. It is in this self-sacrifice that the deeper questions about our identity (who we are) and our purpose (what we are meant to do) begin to be manifest, that first hints of the greatness to which we are called are made known.

Behind St. Bernard's insight is the truth that we start loving God because we realize that only He can save us.⁹ One believes because, on some level, one does not want to perish — one loves oneself, at least enough, to seek salvation. In a culture as nihilistic as ours has become, this is important to affirm — for the existence of one's very "self" is a precious gift from God. God sees each human person as the special object of His divine love and, thus, also desires that each one should not perish but live. To beg God for the gift of one's own salvation shows that the soul and God are in agreement. This agreement between God and the soul is the implied basis of the first degree of love.

When we choose to live like this, the discipline of the Christian life makes a lot of sense. Daily prayer, giving up unnecessary things, small acts of love that no one notices, being fully present to and cherishing those God has entrusted to us, being passionate and pursuing excellence in work given to us, praying before meals and sharing them with others, avoiding insobriety and gluttony, persevering in our love for one another; all of these practices simply flow out of a life that has been touched by the love of God enough that at least loving oneself for one's own sake is possible, *"the more surely you know yourself loved, the easier you will find it to love in return."*¹⁰

God desires, however, that our love for Him not end on this note but, instead, helps us attain an even higher perfection. Beyond loving ourselves for our own sakes, He wants us to learn to love Him, at least for our own sakes. To lead us to a more profound love of God, God allows us to discover our own inadequacy. In tribulations and trials, weaknesses and failures, we discover the sheer goodness of Divine Providence, “*Man who is a bodily animal (1 Cor. 2:24), and does not know how to love anything but himself, begins to love God for his own benefit, because he learns from frequent experience that in God he can do everything that is good for him (Phil. 4:13), and without him he can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).*”

St. Bernard observes that the Lord is generous in answering our prayers. As we become aware of God’s goodness to us, self-concern changes. When we begin to perceive how good God is to us, we come to love the Lord because of what He has done and is always doing for our sakes. In this second degree of love, what is most innate to our nature — that is, self-preservation — is even more completely healed. Rather than thwarted by selfishness, our whole bodily existence is open to the mystery of God’s goodness to us on a personal level.

As good as this is, to live a life out of this kind of love of God is still more bodily than it is spiritual. The exterior exigencies of the moment can threaten this kind of love, because our love is attached to the ways that we find Divine Providence in them. We are made to offer a more perfect self-gift to God. This is why St. Bernard proposes that a more beautiful love of God beyond a love rooted in what He does for us. Through the grace of Christ given us, we have the possibility to learn to love not only for our own sakes, but for God’s own sake. In this kind of love, we glimpse the hidden source of Christian contemplation and mission.

What does it mean to love God for God’s own sake? This is to begin to see Him quite

apart from and completely above anything that He has done for us, “*the faithful soul sighs deeply for his presence and rests peacefully in the thought of him, and until it is fit to have the glory of god revealed to it face to face (2 Cor. 3:18), it glories in the ignominy of the Cross (Gal. 6:14).*”

On the Cross, we see not only what Christ did for our sakes, but also what He did for the Father. On the Cross, Divine Beauty draws us. Love is beautiful and God is Love — and the mystery of His completely obedient and surrendered love is laid bear on Calvary. To behold Him, to cherish his love in itself, is not within our natural power, but we were created to be open to this vision. When we sit in silence before the Lord, wasting time in his presence, we open ourselves to God’s power to raise us above ourselves.

Contemplative prayer, under the influence of mystical grace, is this openness to God. Such prayer is receptive to a subtle movement of the Holy Spirit by which He prays in our hearts. When we permit the Holy Spirit to do this, He communicates a new kind of love, a divine love that makes us fall in love with the God who is Love. It is with this divine love, the love God has for himself, that we begin to see, to contemplate the beauty of the Lord from His own perspective, “*God, then, loves, and loves with all his being, for the whole Trinity loves — if the word “whole” can be used of the infinite, the incomprehensible, absolute Being.*”¹¹

The immensity of God’s love can seize the soul. As we fall in awe over how the Son allows Himself to be loved by the Father and has received everything from Him, something of the Son’s deep devotion to the Father that lives in all His words and deeds is instilled in us also. This communicates and evokes a transformative love to the soul, so that the soul is able to go beyond a love for the sake of self, and begin to love for the sake of God — to love for Love’s sake.

As lofty as falling in love with Love for Love's sake is, Bernard believes, that "loving God for God's sake" only anticipates an even more profound kind of love awaiting us. In this highest degree of love, we are touched by the Lord's own loving desires toward humanity. What He loves, we have come to love — and He loves each of us, the men and women He created. Not a general hope for human nature, but an eternal plan for each human person specifically. Here, St. Bernard says the lover of God learns to "love oneself for God's own sake", "*when no entanglements of the flesh hold him back and no troubles will disturb him, as he hurries with great speed and eagerness to the joy of the Lord.*"¹²

This hastening of unimpeded love points to a new fullness for one's personal existence. Only those who have passed through the mystery of death can know this "eagerness to joy" because their bodily life no longer weighs them down. St. Bernard's summit of loving God is only the beginning of a new story, one much more real than anything we have ever known this life — yet one that brings to fulfillment all our efforts here and now. The human "self" is made lovable in a new way as God becomes *all in all*, "*In those who are holy, it is necessary for human affection to dissolve in some ineffable way, and be poured into the will of God. How will God be all in all (1 Cor. 15:26) if anything of man remains in man? The substance remains, but in another form, with another glory, another power.*"¹³

Just how human affection dissolves and is poured into the will of God while, at the same time, the substance of man remains can be understood in light of the bridal analogy that runs through St. Bernard's treatise. The human "self" remains in heaven even as it is poured out because it is taken up into the great nuptial mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:23).

The Bride participates in the Bridegroom's love of her for His sake. Just as her relation to her bridegroom defines a bride, the relation that

Christ the Bridegroom establishes in heaven defines the human "self" with a new form, glory and power. The human person remains a distinct creature, but as a Bride who participates in the divine life of the Bridegroom. Like a Bride who gladly embraces the greatness to which she has been called in marriage, she cares for herself, adorns herself, for the sake of her Bridegroom whose love for her she well knows.

This is astonishingly optimistic regarding the destiny of the human "self" in God. Unlike some religious traditions in which the "self" is an illusion to surmount on the pathway to salvation, St. Bernard sees the "self" as saved by God and raised into friendship with Him. Created by the Word of the Father, the human person and his free spiritual center is now in the Son who, in his resurrected humanity, dwells in the Father. Christ's relation to the Father, with all its joy, is not only for himself, but also for all His friends in communion with Him — as they are constituted in His Bride, the Church, "*for in the most passionate and most chaste embrace of the Bridegroom and Bride, the rush of the river makes glad the City of God.*"¹⁴ ✠

Notes

1 See Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Diligendo Deo*. An edited translation of this is provided in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G.R. Evans and introduction by Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., in the *Classics of Western Spirituality*, New York: Paulist Press (1987) 173–205. See also Jean Leclercq's introductory comments, 35–42.

2 See *De Diligendo Deo*, XV.39, in Bernard of Clairvaux, 204.

3 See XV, 39, 205.

4 St. Bernard introduces the object and motive for love as an organization principle for the degrees of love in his letter to the Carthusians (see XV, 39) but develops this more fully in *De Diligendo Dei* XIII.23–IX, 29, 192–197.

5 See Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

6 See VIII.23, 192.

7 See VIII.23, 192.

8 See II.2, 175.

9 See III.7, 179.

10 III.7, 179.

11 IV.13, 184.

12 IX.29, 196–197.

13 IX.28, 196.

14 XI.33, 199.



The Last Day of the Retreat

BRO. BEN HARRISON, MC

Note to Chronicle readers: My retreat this year was at St. Beuno's in North Wales (where G. M. Hopkins wrote The Wreck of the Deutschland). However I have often felt the 'anticipated nostalgia' described below, that painful sense of loss before the event, when I have had to leave Valyermo after a few days or a week's retreat. So I trust you to transpose the details of sense from rural Wales to high desert California: the smell of juniper and sage; the croak of ravens playing on the thermals and the lonely whistle of an oriole from a Joshua tree; the baking heat of midday sun and the flutter of poplar leaves in the sunset breeze; the views of the forest-crested mountains to the south and the salt flats glimpsed between hills to the north. May the song ring true wherever it is sung. —Ben

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WHY THIS GREAT SADNESS WHEN-
ever I come to the end of a retreat, or have to leave any place where I have felt your presence, Lord? I was walking in the hills of North Wales on this cool autumn afternoon, sunlight filtering through clouds over the green hedge-bordered pastures of the Clwyd Valley, with Snowdon's crags snagging distant clouds and Llandudno's Orme recumbent on an argent sea. Contorted trunks of hedgerow ash and thorn fill my foreground, and in the middle distance, clumps of sedge and bracken and gorse; sheep and crows, a hawk waiting in a sycamore. And I want to weep. Why?

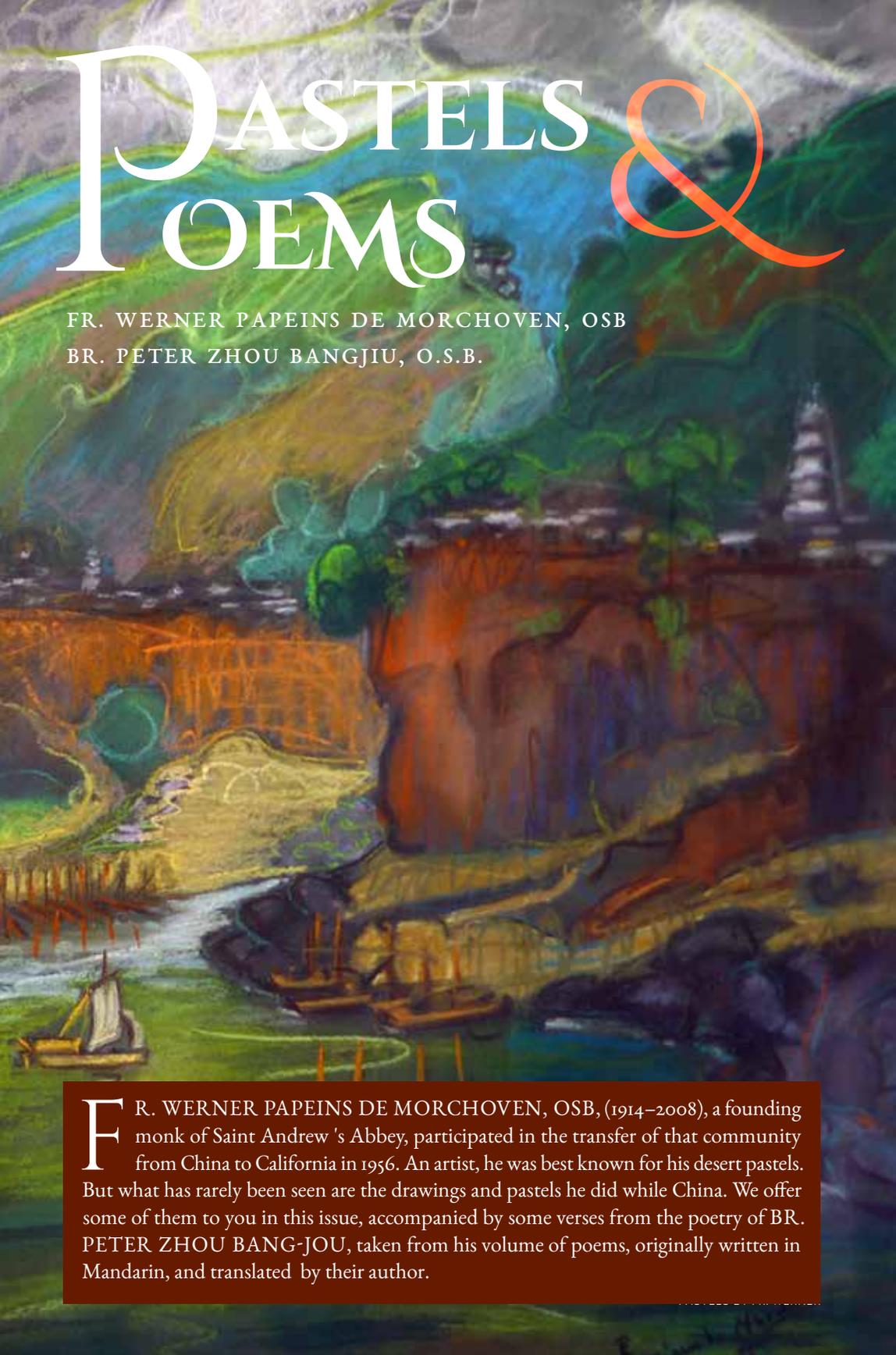
Because I love it, and I can't get enough of it, and I can't keep hold of it. It is escaping me. Tomorrow I will leave it. Its moment too will leave it in the lurch. Who knows what will stand in this place next year, in ten years, a hundred? This, this now is so beautiful, so delicious to my

senses that I want to eat it, taste it, consume and be consumed by it, make it part of me, make love to it, breathe it, be one with it.

Recovering addicts sometimes say that their drug of choice was *more!* More of whatever they could get hold of. But maybe that's not just addicts, maybe human beings simply always want, always need — more! Maybe it is not greed but simply fact. And all our addictions and vices are merely proxies, substitutes for the only thing which is big enough and deep enough to satisfy our need for more.

Just as we need an unlimited amount of air to breathe in a lifetime, we need an unlimited amount of love, care, beauty, tenderness, giving, goodness, meaning. Maybe we are simply *made for more* — more good than we can fit into any lifetime. There is only one who really and ultimately has enough, who

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PASTELS & POEMS

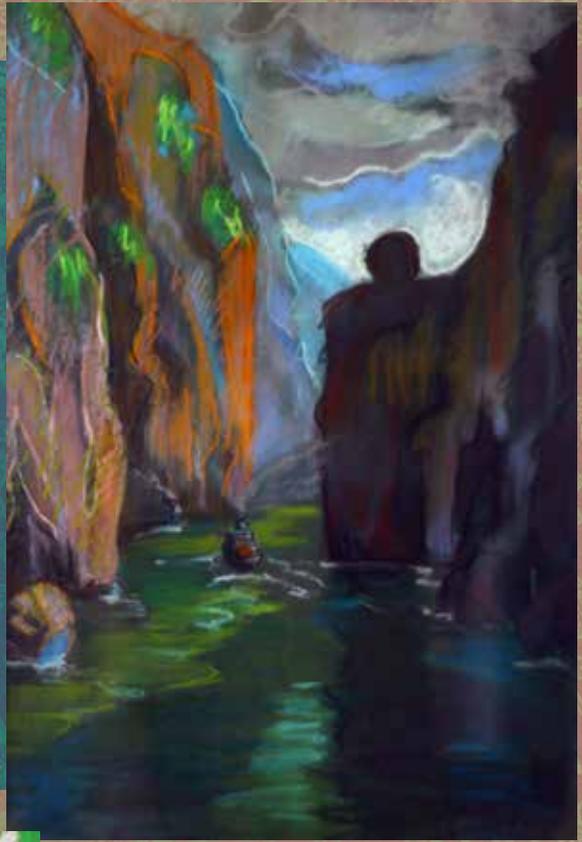
FR. WERNER PAPEINS DE MORCHOVEN, OSB
BR. PETER ZHOU BANGJIU, O.S.B.

FR. WERNER PAPEINS DE MORCHOVEN, OSB, (1914–2008), a founding monk of Saint Andrew's Abbey, participated in the transfer of that community from China to California in 1956. An artist, he was best known for his desert pastels. But what has rarely been seen are the drawings and pastels he did while in China. We offer some of them to you in this issue, accompanied by some verses from the poetry of BR. PETER ZHOU BANG-JOU, taken from his volume of poems, originally written in Mandarin, and translated by their author.

On an autumn day,
With gentle sunshine, clear sky and
crisp air,
The lake is a beautiful sight.
The Sun Lake to the north of
the island
And the Moon Lake to the south,
Both mirror the moonlight.

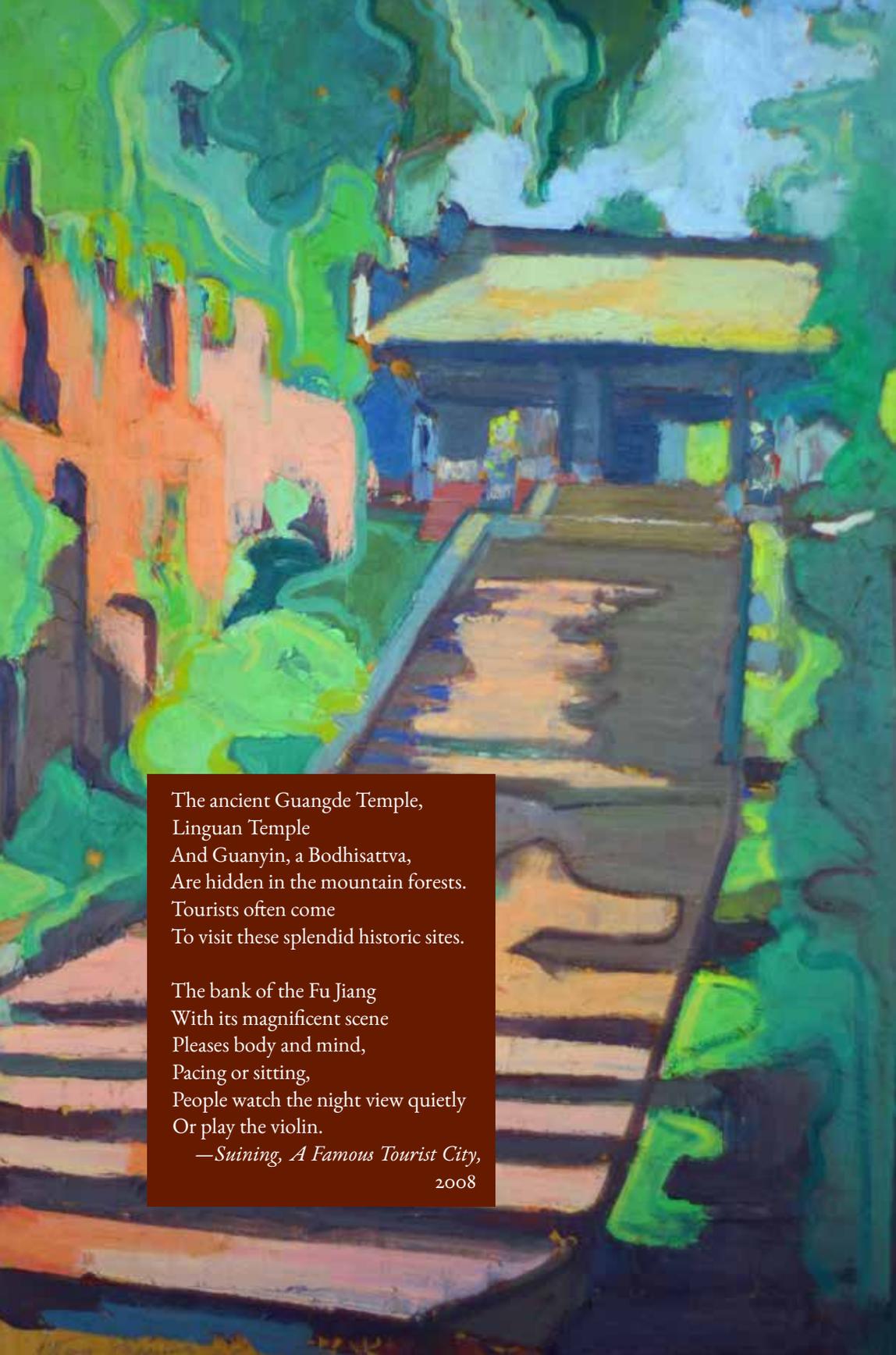
The lake is surrounded
By green mountains,
hills and trees,
It has a vast expanse of blue water.
Touring the scenery in a boat,
I feel flattered in the heart
And pleased in the eye.
I sing my grateful praise
To the Lord, our King.

— *Sightseeing at the Riyuetan*
(*Sun and Moon Lake*)



This early winter,
I got a copy of
The *Three hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty*
I read several pieces intensively and thoroughly,
Feeling a great joy in my heart.
The achievements of the Henguan and Kaiyuan
Were as evident as the sun;
The poetry of Li Bai and Du Fu
Were as magnificent as the rainbow.
The cold weather and the frozen ground
Make our being narrow;
The bright sunshine and the gentle breeze
Deepen our poetic inspiration.
I ardently expect
A beautiful scenery and freedom
To sing the wind and the moon,
To write sentimental poems with a
happy heart!

— *A Delight in reading some poems
of the Tang Dynasty, 1979*



The ancient Guangde Temple,
Linguan Temple
And Guanyin, a Bodhisattva,
Are hidden in the mountain forests.
Tourists often come
To visit these splendid historic sites.

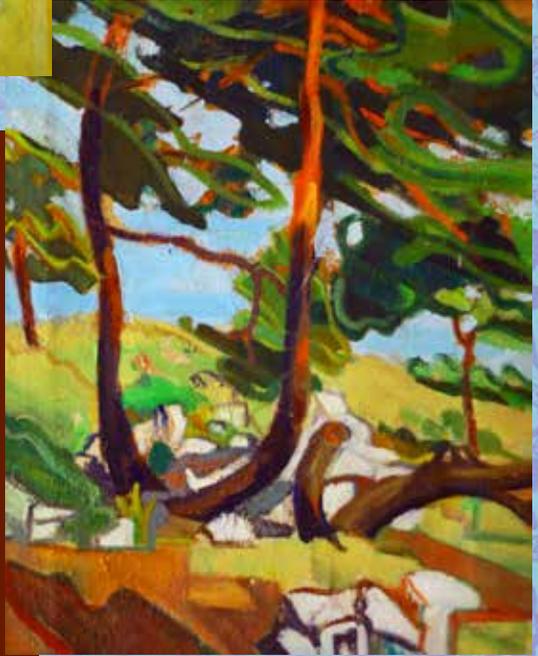
The bank of the Fu Jiang
With its magnificent scene
Pleases body and mind,
Pacing or sitting,
People watch the night view quietly
Or play the violin.

—*Suining, A Famous Tourist City*,
2008

Last evening
I left Yan'an,
This morning
I came back to Xi'an.
For a long time,
I sought the original inn all over;
Then I went to the railway station
In a hurry.

The railway station is like a market.
When we boarded the train,
The setting sun is shining.
At midnight,
The moon, the crescent, is
Like a hook;
There are high mountains
in the sky.

—*The new moon is like a book*, 2008



This morning
The weather is
gloomy and cold.
Sitting on the stall side,
I say prayers,
Or compose poems,
Or write letters for
my customers.

All alone,
I celebrate this joyous
and holy Festival,
Praying to Heaven:
“Please, Lord, kindly pour
The graces of
Your Resurrection
Into my heart!”

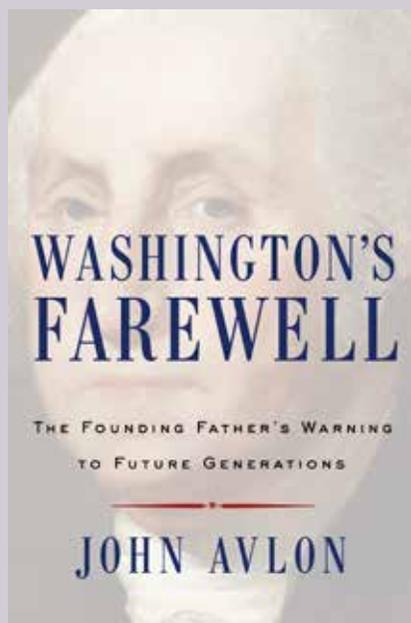
—*Easter Sunday*, 1982

BOOK REVIEW

FR. PHILIP EDWARDS, OSB

IT MAY NOT QUITE EQUAL good Godric’s “Five friends I had and two of them snakes!”, but this book’s opening line comes close in attention-arousal: “This is the story of the most famous American speech you’ve never read”—a single-liner that begins the ten pages of terse but genial paragraphs, none of which exceed more than fifteen lines (and are usually only about six), that comprise the introduction. The author kindly leaves the patrician text itself for the 17 pages of appendix following his own 288 of historical commentary and development, presented in three sections—The Crisis of Creation, Washington’s Pillars of Liberty, The Afterlife of the Idea —followed by a Conclusion. The scholarly apparatus of notes and index (pp. 307–354) is headed by his own Author’s Note (pp. 307–309) which, coupled with the publisher’s unnumbered last page, About the Author, I am sorely tempted to quote at length but must not, alas. At least, from the publisher’s dust jacket “blurb”, let me tell you that “John Avlon is the Editor-in-Chief and managing director of *The Daily Beast* and a CNN political analyst. . . . He won the National Society of Newspaper Columnists’ award for Best Online Column in 2012. He served as chief speechwriter for New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and his essay ‘The Resilient City’ concluded the anthology *Empire City: New York Through the Centuries*, winning acclaim as ‘the single best essay written in the wake of 9/11.’ He lives with his wife, Margaret Hoover, and their two children [Jack and Toula Lou (cf. Author’s Note, p. 307)] in New York City.”

This book is an offering of a popular book club and is a good companion to the works of David McCullough, especially his biography



Washington's Farewell
*The Founding Father's Warning
 to Future Generations*
 John Avlon

of John Adams and his account of the Lewis and Clark expedition: factual, sympathetically critical, and a pleasure to read.

Although the original text of the Address itself is worthy of the solemn proclamation made to the Senate each year on the day appointed as his birthday, Washington himself made a point of presenting it to the public at large in a popular newspaper, *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, shortly before his final departure from the executive mansion in Philadelphia for his beloved Mount Vernon; so it is appropriate that we are presented its history and impact by a contemporary and prize-winning journalist.

This journalist tells us in his introduction that this “6,088 word, fifty-four paragraph text—longer than the original draft of the Constitution—had been written and rewritten over five years. . . . not read aloud before an audience.” (He does inform us

later on, that on the same day he summoned Mr. Claypoole to the executive mansion to determine “what was the earliest and most auspicious moment to publish his message”, he had “presented his cabinet with a full draft of the address . . . giving them the courtesy of a few days’ advance notice, too late to make any major revisions, let alone to change course [p. 89]). He continues:

Instead of delivering the news like a European king, he delivered it directly to the American people through one of the 100 newspapers in the nation. He chose the independent-minded *American Daily Advertiser*, whose offices were five blocks down the street from the executive mansion in Philadelphia. He submitted it almost nine years to the day after the Constitution was signed.”

Addressed to his ‘friends and fellow citizens,’ the news of Washington’s decision not to run for reelection, establishing the two-term tradition, was unceremoniously bunched between advertisements for slaves, rum and tobacco.” (pp. 4–5)

Avlon intends to tell “the story of the Farewell Address: its secret composition, deeper meanings, and outsized impact from Washington’s time to our own . . . an intimate look into both the Founding Fathers’ bitter personal battles and the values they fought to secure. Then, as now, politics is history in the present tense. It is a tale of intrigue amid the founding of the two-party system and the struggle of the first president to save the United States from self-destruction. Through it all, Washington worked to establish ‘a standard to which the wise and honest can repair.’” (p. 5)

I have probably already overstepped the limits imposed by laws of copyright and editorial propriety in handing over so much of the author’s own text — and we are not yet into the main body of the text! — but I cannot

overcome my own sense of obligation to let the reader hear and see for him/herself what the author is saying. As is proper, he does it all in his introduction, but the fleshing out in the subsequent chapters continues without slack to deliver what it promises. European fear of “Americanism”, condemned by Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors*, lingers forever, it seems, but the noble experiment initiated by that motley group of “Enlightened” WASPish rebels in the waning days of the neoclassical XVIIIth century through the dawning of the romantic XIXth still flickers, depending on the consensus of enough free persons of good will (of whatever religious persuasion) to agree and keep to those standards “to which . . . they can repair”.

Ah, “repair” — a quaintly grandfatherish obsolescence. *Webster’s New World Dictionary’ Third College Edition* states that the second (intransitive) form of the verb developed from late-Latin *repatriare* through Old French *repairer* into Middle English *repairen*: “to go or betake oneself (to a place); 2 to go often, customarily, or in numbers; 3 [Obs.] to return.” But in the context of keeping standards, there is also resonance of the first (transitive) form of the verb, taken in this sense from the Latin *reparare* through the Old French *reparer* into Middle English *repairen*: “1 to put back into good condition after damage, decay, etc.; mend, fix; 2 to renew; restore; revive; 3 to amend; set right; remedy; 4 to make amends for; make up or compensate for (a wrong, injury, etc.)” — so that in modern “muddle through” English we can go in both ways at once, but in Washington’s it was most likely the intransitive sense intended.

In winding up his introduction, Avlon acknowledges that

Over time, the Farewell was eclipsed by the Gettysburg Address as America’s go-to civic scripture. Lincoln’s speech is approachable: a rhythmic, flowing 272 words, rather than

6,088 words at a steep incline. Which would you rather memorize? The Gettysburg Address was the New Testament to Washington's Old Testament, a poetic promise of life after death rather than rules of behavior dispatched by a distant god." (p. 8) [A clever remark, that, but in need of a better intertextual hermeneutic of salvation history!]

For those who find the Rule of Benedict a source of wisdom and life, the spirit of moderation, discretion and perseverance should resonate as positively as it seems to have for the playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda whose

hip-hop musical *Hamilton* arrived on Broadway to rapturous reviews.... According to [him], the biggest applause of the night usually comes for the song "One Last Time," which recounts the writing of Washington's Farewell Address and includes the text in its lyrics... as [Miranda] explains, turning the Farewell into a song inspired a creative marriage between form and function: "The moment where we break into Washington's actual speech is a really nice arc, because I [as Hamilton] am writing prose that Washington is turning into song.... I kind of continue delivering it as prose, while Washington elevates it.

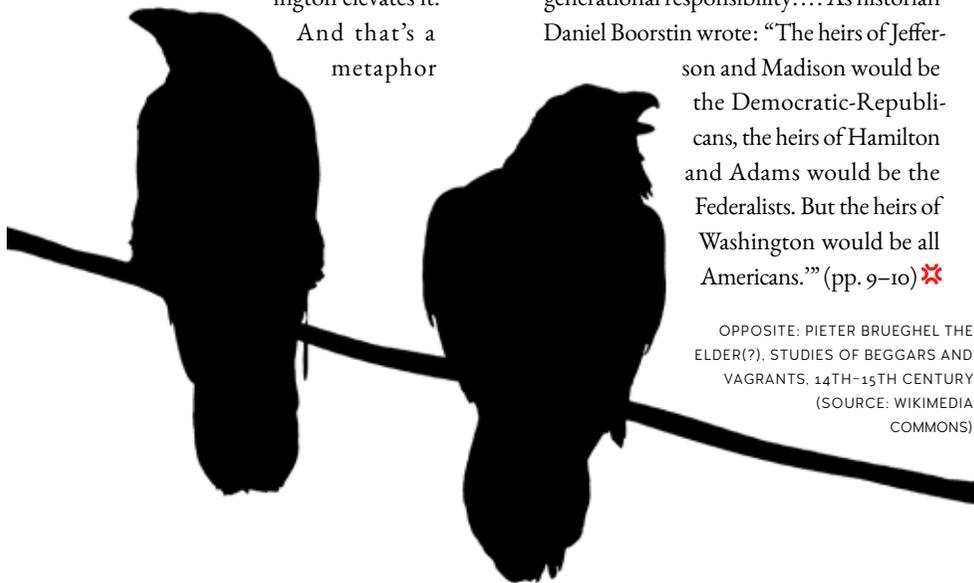
And that's a metaphor

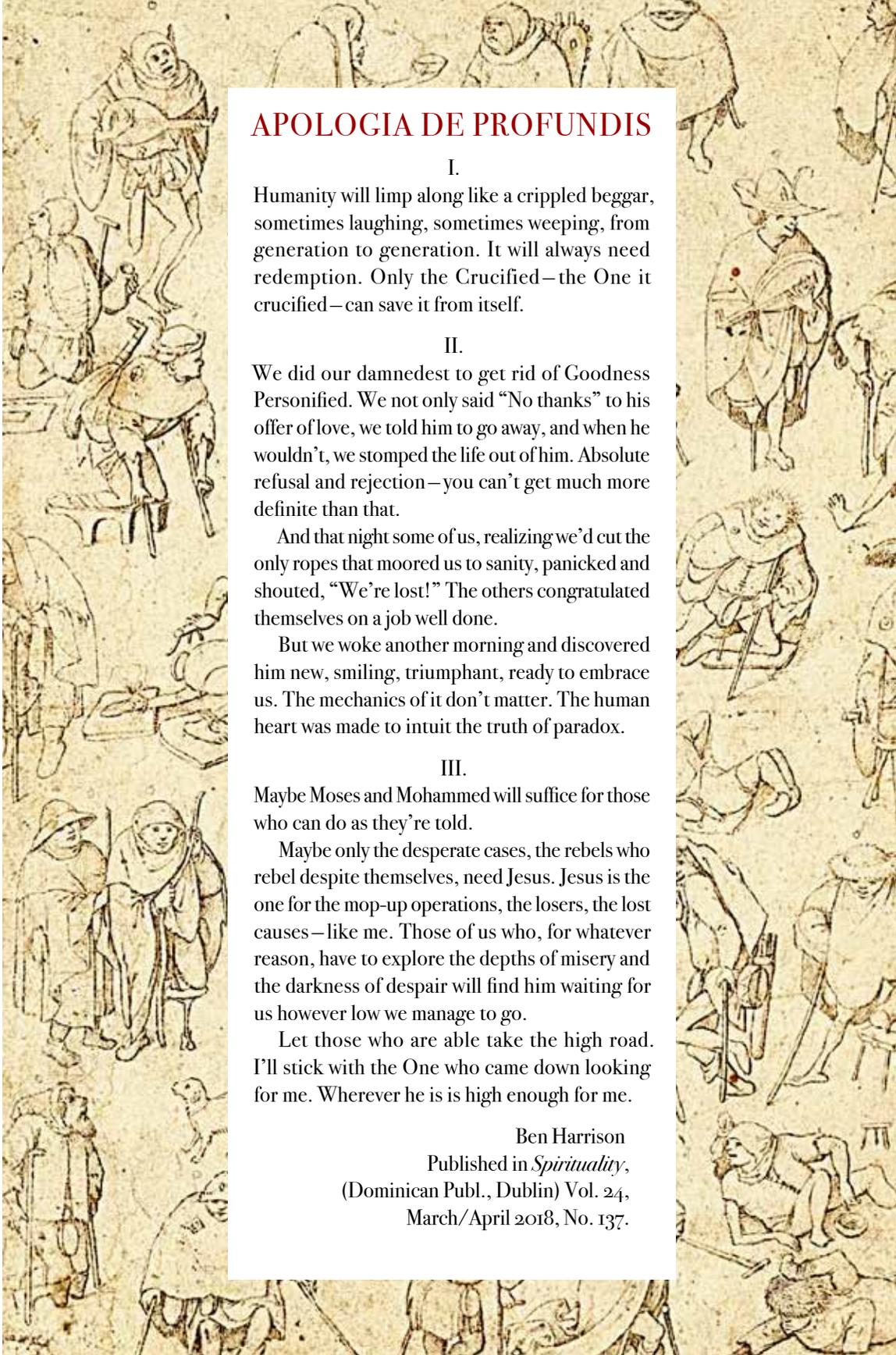
for the relationship between Hamilton and Washington: Hamilton was the idea guy and Washington elevated it by virtue of embodying it." (pp. 279–28)

To sum it up, let us return to our author's introduction:

"Our first and only independent president... refused to be subjected to an ideological straitjacket, preferring to walk a centrist path that avoided excesses and the unintended consequences of overextension in politics, finance and foreign policy. The Farewell expresses a set of foundational principles so deeply embedded in our national character that they do not seem as distinct on the surface as the partisan clashes that echo on in the name of Jefferson and Hamilton... a political philosophy of independence... based on a belief in a strong and inclusive government, led by an independent-minded executive, pursuing military and economic strength to avoid a dangerous dependence on foreign nations... [a] governing principle of moderation, balancing idealism with realism, rejecting overextension and separatism from whatever the source... a wise balance between individual liberty and generational responsibility.... As historian Daniel Boorstin wrote: "The heirs of Jefferson and Madison would be the Democratic-Republicans, the heirs of Hamilton and Adams would be the Federalists. But the heirs of Washington would be all Americans." (pp. 9–10) ❄

OPPOSITE: PIETER BRUEGHEL THE ELDER(?), STUDIES OF BEGGARS AND VAGRANTS, 14TH–15TH CENTURY (SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)





APOLOGIA DE PROFUNDIS

I.

Humanity will limp along like a crippled beggar, sometimes laughing, sometimes weeping, from generation to generation. It will always need redemption. Only the Crucified—the One it crucified—can save it from itself.

II.

We did our damndest to get rid of Goodness Personified. We not only said “No thanks” to his offer of love, we told him to go away, and when he wouldn’t, we stomped the life out of him. Absolute refusal and rejection—you can’t get much more definite than that.

And that night some of us, realizing we’d cut the only ropes that moored us to sanity, panicked and shouted, “We’re lost!” The others congratulated themselves on a job well done.

But we woke another morning and discovered him new, smiling, triumphant, ready to embrace us. The mechanics of it don’t matter. The human heart was made to intuit the truth of paradox.

III.

Maybe Moses and Mohammed will suffice for those who can do as they’re told.

Maybe only the desperate cases, the rebels who rebel despite themselves, need Jesus. Jesus is the one for the mop-up operations, the losers, the lost causes—like me. Those of us who, for whatever reason, have to explore the depths of misery and the darkness of despair will find him waiting for us however low we manage to go.

Let those who are able take the high road. I’ll stick with the One who came down looking for me. Wherever he is is high enough for me.

Ben Harrison

Published in *Spirituality*,
(Dominican Publ., Dublin) Vol. 24,
March/April 2018, No. 137.



Untitled

Put all into this? As if all can be said.
And if it could, it's only in tales
that the said becomes the done, the loved,
the undone.

Let all be translated, dissipated, dispersed
into the feminine arts.

Into feeding, feeling, waiting, listening.

Quarter it over a countryside wrecked by war.

Let judgment fall into disuse.

Like God, fear making too well.

Know that the great beauties end
on magnates' arms and museums' walls.

Foreswear the male magic of changing a thing
by changing its namelessness or changing
its name.

Why play this game of kiss and tell called art?

Make only things that will wear out.

Lull, that the infant may wake.

Sew, that the seam may split.

Feed, that they grow hungry again.

Hold them: they Will grow too big to hold.

Plant, to harvest the dead stems rattling
with seed.

Say nothing that hasn't already been said.

Should a thought stray onto the preserve of
your attention,

it will be routed by the scattershot of the chil-
dren's questions.

You are a Chemist's daughter. Be chlorophyll.

Turn light to air.

— *Ann Fleck*

SAYING YES TO NO

from page 5

obstacles in our lives. Sometimes we do not experience resurrected lives because we refuse to live common lives. Dynamic relationships often prepare the way for the experience of resurrection-life.

Finally, and importantly, *we might not experience resurrection-life because of insufficient action on our part.* Prayer always has hands and feet. Although Lazarus was resurrected, he still needed to be unbound. His shrouds needed to be loosened. Action had to be taken. We too must take action. Penance is the action of repentance. Disciplines are the actions of discipleship. Saying “no,” at least practically speaking, is the precursor to saying and experiencing “yes.” Martha and Mary, the contemplatively active and the intentionally passive of the spiritual life, must *work* together in order to see and experience resurrection-life --- real life in and by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the “yes” and “amen” of the Father. Are we learning to responsibly live in God’s abundant “yes”? ❄



Dr. Donald P. Richmond, a widely published author and monastic illustrator, is a professed Oblate for St. Andrew’s Abbey.

THE LAST DAY OF THE RETREAT

from page 11

is enough, to fill our need, our longing. Of course, that fulfilment comes to us through others, and we need others, but we also need to let it flow to us from the relationships we have with ourselves, with nature, and with God. Everyone and everything that exists is not enough without God.

But all this comes to us in daily increments, in moments and insights and encounters and surprises. We can only fill our lungs with one lung-full of air, and even that we can’t hold on to. We can only digest this day our *daily* bread. Some days, like today, present us with a banquet that we wish could go on forever. Other days leave us hungering and aware of the relentless urgency of our need. And that, too, is a gift.

This sadness I am feeling now, this nostalgia by anticipation, is perhaps a combination of the two — the awareness of the lavishness of the banquet before me now and the awareness that tomorrow’s hunger is waiting in the wings. Can I be grateful for both? Wring blessing from them both? Can this sadness lead me to gratitude, this thirst lead me to a spring, this desperate longing lure me to a fullness of grace that I can only contain by losing myself within it?

A chill blast barrels down the bracken, shakes birch-leaves free. Summer’s gold is strewn across the darkening fields. I breathe my warm breath into the cold currents. Let the wind carry it wherever it will. It has given me another bracing breath to startle my lungs alert. In and out. Give and get. To have it all I have to give it all.

Have it all! Take it. It’s yours. I’m yours. So be it. Amen. ❄





UPCOMING PREACHED RETREATS

MAY 7–11

Priests' Retreat: "God is Always on Time"

MAY 11–13

Mary: "Mystical Rose," Reflections on the Virgin Mary as Meditated by the Mystics

MAY 18–20

Pentecost Retreat

MAY 25–27

Marriage Enrichment Retreat

MAY 28–JUNE 1

Hildegard of Bingen: Prophet of the Cosmic Christ

JUNE 1–3

Leisure & the Secular: Relationship Between Faith & Activity

JUNE 8–10

In the Spirit of AA: A Twelve-Step Retreat

JUNE 13–15

The Luke Tradition: Poor Lives Matter

JUNE 16

Who Am I? Meeting the Self in The Prodigal Son

JUNE 27–29

Discernment in Daily Life

JUNE 29–JULY 1

Praying in the Circle of St. John

JULY 9–13

Benedictine Spirituality: Balance As a Fundamental Value in the Rule of Benedict & the Monastic Tradition

JULY 13–15

Dealing with Death

JULY 20–22

Summer Dance Workshop: Moving with the Elements of Life in Cosmic Kinship

JULY 23–27

Sophia/Wisdom in the Writings of John of the Cross

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SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM (Click the Guest House link)

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