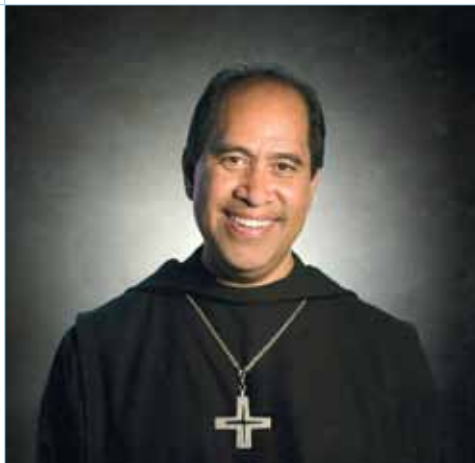


THE VALYERMO
Chronicle

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



Nº 229 ✕ AUTUMN 2010



This is the first conference given by Abbot Damien on the day following his election as Abbot. It seems appropriate to share it with the entirety of our monastic family.—Editor.

EAR FRIENDS,

I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY ADDRESS THE whole community this morning before our chapter meeting.

First of all, because I was not at the Monday morning meeting, I was not able to officially welcome our brother Francis back home. Welcome home, and I am happy that you are home. And I take this opportunity, as I did two years ago, to publicly thank you Father Francis for all you've done for this community and this Abbey for the 16 years when you were Abbot, and the many years before that when you were Subprior. Thank you very much for your dedication and your love for this community. I also thank you, the community, for your support of me these past two years, and thank you to the chapter for your vote of confidence in me.

These two years have not been the easiest for the community as we all know, but they were very important years for us, pivotal years, crucial years for the community and for monastic life here at Valyermo. Thank you and congratulations to you for all your hard work these past

two years, your determination, your prayers and your sacrifices. Let's not forget the thousands of others who have been praying and sacrificing for us as well.

Thankfully, the two years are over. We can now officially close that chapter of our history, because it is now history, and we can move onto the next chapter. We can move forward. But let's remember to take what was both good and bad from those two years and build on them, learn from them, grow because of them, for the sake of our vocation and for the sake of the future of the house. And I am not just speaking of the junior monks sitting in this room. I am also speaking of the monks of Valyermo who will come here long after we are gone. We have to always somehow strive for the balance of living for ourselves in the present, living for the monks who will come after us, and honoring those who have gone before us.

Considering the history of our community, going back all the way to China, one cannot dispute God's faithfulness to this community. How can a community endure all the hardships and sufferings that this community has experienced and still live? Yes, it speaks of the persistence, the perseverance and the sheer determination of our founding fathers. But it also, and more importantly, speaks of the faithfulness and goodness of God. Do not doubt for one moment, my brothers, that God's hand is in this place and on this place; that God's hand is in this community and on this community; that God's hand is on you and on the person sitting next to you ... shaping us, forming us, molding us to be the best monks we can be. It is His hand that has been at work in this community since China, and it is His hand that is at work in this place in the desert today: taking our good intentions and our best efforts, as well as our bad decisions and our stubbornness, and making them work for the good, for His glory. God's hand is in this place, and He simply asks us to place our hand in His and trust Him, through thick and thin, and allow Him to lead us. And because He is a faithful God, He will not disappoint.

But this requires that we let go of our own will. The *Rule* of Benedict is filled with verses that speak of the monk letting go of his self will. We've all seen at one point or another, a mother holding her child by the hand and trying to lead the child in one direction, while the child is digging his heels into the ground and trying to go in the opposite direction. It is difficult, but not impossible, for that parent to lead a child who does not want to be led. It is similar in our relationship with God. We must continue to work at making God's will, our will. Trusting that the way He wants to lead is best for us. There is no other way that Valyermo can flourish and prosper.

We all have our own ideas of how we can improve things here, our own ideas of how we can continue to encourage life and growth here at Saint Andrew's, but they are exactly that: our own ideas. At some point we have to take our own ideas and discern whether they are also part of God's plan because it is for God and because of God that we are here. Let's not forget that. The moment we forget that God is the reason we are here, the more complicated, complex, unfocused, and misdirected our lives become. But this requires much prayer, reflection, discussion, process, and perhaps even more disagreements than we would prefer. But we can do it. I know it. I've seen it. I've seen this community in action doing exactly this these past two years. This is what I mean when I say, we have to put our hands in God's hand. Using the systems, the procedures, the customs already set in place, the tools that God has given us to discern His will ... to help us through, and to discern, the next chapter of our lives here at Valyermo, a chapter that will affect the rest of the book: What is the vision for this community? Why have I come? Why do I remain?

May God continue to bless our community and may He be glorified in our lives, in this place, and in all we do.

Abbot Damien ✧

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Some Partially-Digested Thoughts about GOD and FOOD



BY BR. BEDE HAZLET, O.S.B.

Like cows, monks are ruminants. What we ingest of the Word and of words in *lectio divina* and other reading and experience (a voracious theological and literary appetite and broad tastes are typical of the breed) we later regurgitate and chew over and swallow again for further digestion. It's a long process. I mention this because what I am going to write about is a bunch of ideas that I am still chewing over, so much of what I shall have to say will be tentative in character.

I have been thinking about the morality of food for a number of years. At first my interest in it was more or less exclusively focused on the suffering of animals on “factory farms,” and indeed the animals that produce much of our food are treated very badly in the largely hidden world of industrial animal husbandry. This is perhaps most vividly the case with animals raised for slaughter, but it includes dairy cows and laying hens to a very large extent—and the male calves and chicks that are byproducts of the dairy-and-egg business.

In time, however, my sense of moral unease about food has expanded, as has my awareness of the great complexity of the issues involved. The abuse of animals whose flesh and milk and eggs we consume is certainly a great evil and one that has a peculiarly vivid emotional resonance for me, but I have come to see it as one symptom among many of a much deeper set of problems. Very much is wrong with the way most of our food is produced; wrong in ways that harm not only farm animals, but human beings, the land itself, the water and the air.

Let me begin where my own musings began years ago, with the question of animals. And let me begin to talk about animals by saying a word about death. Death is not something that has ever bothered me as much as, perhaps, it should. Certainly our tradition does not permit us to regard it as “natural”; in the narrative world of Scripture death is an intruder in the primeval Garden, the result of alienation from God. But here in the only world any of us has ever known, the fallen world, death is for practical purposes natural enough. In fact, it is an essential part of the cycle of life. Every form of life feeds on the death of some other form, and every generation must pass away to make room for subsequent generations. If one form of life is to live, other forms must die. This is a deep mystery. What it implies about God I am still trying to understand. In certain moods I rail

against it. In others I perceive in it a certain dark beauty. In any case I accept it. In my own religious imagination at least, a primal regret that death should be is counterbalanced by an equally primal intuition—deeper than the level of conscious faith—that death need not be feared, is not the end of those who die, and brings the sweetness of the end of suffering. At the level of conscious faith, I trust in the great Paschal movement of the incarnation of the Word, in which the mystery of irresistible

“If one form of life is to live, other forms must die. This is a deep mystery.”

death stands revealed as inseparable from the mystery of life in its fullness.

Here at the over-lapping of the mythic Paradise that was, the fallen world as we know it now, and the heavenly Jerusalem for which we wait in hope, the question of food and the death of animals comes into theological focus. Practically speaking, human beings are omnivores. From time immemorial we have eaten the flesh of animals, have consumed their eggs and milk (in a system that requires the death of the surplus male offspring of hens and cows). I am even given to understand that there are certain nutrients we need that can only be obtained naturally from animal foods (although it is now possible to synthesize these artificially). We have been breeding domesticated animals as livestock for so long that they have become as dependent on us as we are on them; our lives and theirs are inextricably intertwined.

Yet, in the Catholic tradition as in other religious and philosophical traditions, the ac-

ceptance as morally permissible of this fact of life as we know it has always existed in tension with an element of ethical and ascetic dissonance—a discomfort manifest with particular clarity in the monastic tradition, in which a preoccupation with the loss of Eden and a desire to anticipate its eschatological recovery or transcendence have historically joined with a (now rather quaint) belief that meat inflames the unruly passions over which monks seek to gain mastery, issuing in a long tradition of at least partial abstention from animal foods. The words of the great Benedictine scholar Adalbert de Vogüé are worth quoting at length on this subject:

In the beginning, according to Genesis, human beings were vegetarians. They were not allowed to eat the flesh of animals until after the flood. Though Christian ascetics did not reject meat as evil in itself, as the gnostics did, they gave it up out of nostalgia for that early bliss as much as in an attempt to rule the passions. They were preceded and accompanied on this blessed path by the élite of the pagan world. Benedict, like many others, also based himself on the creation narrative in distinguishing four-footed animals from other living beings: birds and fish emerge from the waters on the fifth day, whereas land animals and man appear on the sixth. Poultry and fish are also less “exciting” than the flesh of four-footed creatures... While making these distinctions, monasticism has always sought to eliminate animal products as much as possible... (*Reading St. Benedict*, pg. 39)

The outlook of the Catholic tradition as a whole toward the killing and eating of animals might thus be described as a tension between a prevailing attitude of acceptance and a critical attitude embraced by an ascetic or prophetic minority. I find the same tension within my own mind, and continue to wrestle with it. These days I am not (as

I once was) inclined to see the eating of meat as morally dubious. I can accept animal death for the sake of human life as part of the inscrutable cycle of life in this world, and as part of (now almost extinct) agricultural rhythms which I'll discuss below.

What does trouble my conscience is the suffering of animals used for food. The systematization of this suffering on modern factory farms is terrible—beneath our own human dignity, whatever else it may be. It is, however, part of a much larger set of issues which two books have recently helped me to see in a new perspective: a volume of Wendell Berry's essays called *What Are People For?* and Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. In what follows I'll draw heavily on both books although I cannot claim to represent the views of either writer, and I encourage you to read them both for yourself.

Historically the typical American farm was not very big and was home to a wide variety of creatures: the family who owned and worked the farm; horses who aided them in this task; some livestock of different kinds (chickens, cattle, pigs); an assortment of crops (wheat, corn, some vegetables and fruit). Farms like this were almost like little terrariums: more or less self-contained and self-sustaining systems. The animals' waste kept the land fertile; what grew on the land fed the animals; the produce of the animals and the land fed the farming family and the surplus was sold to provide them with an income. Crucially, the great source of energy behind all this was simply the sun, nourishing the plants by photosynthesis that in turn fed the animals, some of which worked the land while others with the plants provided human food.

This sort of farming was (at least relatively) good for all concerned in it. Growing a variety of crops in rotation and spreading animal manure on the land kept the topsoil fertile and healthy. Allowing the animals to live and eat in something like their natural pattern (the cattle, for example, grazing in pastures)

allowed them to flourish in their own way, their lives marred only by a few traumatic moments (like slaughter). Wendell Berry has written with particularly compelling (and more than merely elegiac) eloquence about the human dimension of this kind of farming. It not only created a livelihood for large numbers of people, but it did so in a way that was essentially meaningful (if also difficult), intimately related to and helping to sustain the cycle of life. It fostered bonds of community that could be relied on in difficult times, and generated an entire farming culture (or, more accurately, many such local cultures).

In the course of the twentieth century all this changed dramatically as the result of an enormously complex series of circumstances which Pollan skillfully describes. Today, farms of the kind I've described are very rare. The vast majority of land devoted to agriculture in this country falls into one of two categories, corn-and-soybean operations and feedlots, both types of establishment generally owned by or feeding into a system controlled by a very small number of enormous "agribusinesses." Modern corn has been hybridized or genetically engineered to produce astounding yields per acre and is used for a very surprising array of purposes ranging from the sweetening of soft-drinks to the fueling of "biodiesel" automobiles, but one of its biggest uses is the feeding of animals in industrial feedlots or other "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations" (CAFOs). This is a freakish anomaly, since many of the animals so fed do not consume corn as part of their natural diet. Cows, for example, have a digestive system designed to deal with grasses (ruminating, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, like monks at *lectio*). For them to survive on corn their diet must be supplemented with various additives, their impaired health managed with drugs.

This industrialized pattern now utterly dominates the American agricultural scene.

It has the advantage of producing enormous quantities of food comparatively cheaply (including huge surpluses of corn) but unlike its predecessor, the small, mixed farm, it is harmful for nearly all concerned. Since plants and animals are separated in this system, fields must be artificially fertilized with industrially-produced chemicals (contaminating groundwater, rivers, the Gulf of Mexico) while the excrement of livestock on feedlots becomes a serious source of pollution. As mechanization reduces the

*“From a Christian
point of view,
[mechanized farming]
is a failure of love for
God, because it is
a failure of love for
his own Creation.”*

number of people needed to work a given acreage and as small farms succumb to big corporate competitors, a whole way of life and its associated culture are vanishing, while former-farmers drift toward cities to look for much less meaningful work, cut loose from the supportive cultural network of their rural homes. The lives of animals are rendered incalculably more miserable than they would have been on a traditional farm: whether they be cattle or chickens or pigs, whether the commercial product they generate be eggs or milk or their own flesh, the story is much the same: overcrowding

in factory-like pens or sheds awash in their own excrement, or perhaps confined to the maddening solitude of a tiny cage (like the typical egg-laying hen); an alien, corn-based diet; constant antibiotics to keep disease at bay amid stressful and unsanitary conditions; terror and pain in an industrial slaughterhouse. The great source of energy behind this sort of agriculture is not so much the sun as the fossil fuels that power the factories where fertilizers are made, the farm equipment used to work the fields, the feed mills that turn corn into food for livestock, the trucks and trains that connect the distant components of this vast machine.

This system vividly and systematically fails to respect the dignity of all the creatures involved in it, interrupting natural ecological cycles powered by the sun in favor of artificial ones powered by fossil fuels, with harmful consequences for human beings, animals, plants, and the land itself. From a Christian point of view, this is a failure of love for God because it is a failure of love for his own Creation; a failure of reverence for God expressed in irreverence toward the works of his hands. But it is not easy to see how the situation can be changed.

Wendell Berry seems to think that what is most needed is a deep and sweeping cultural change based on love—love not of abstractions (the environment, animals, social justice) but of concrete realities: love of the land and people and culture of one's own home place; love of the plants and animals from which one's own food is taken; love of good food made from fresh ingredients. In his essay "The Pleasures of Eating," Berry offers a list of practical recommendations on a more individual scale that I think are worth reproducing here in full:

1. Participate in food production to the extent that you can. If you have a yard or even just a porch box or a pot in a sunny

window, grow something to eat in it. Make a little compost of your kitchen scraps and use it for fertilizer. Only by growing some food for yourself can you become acquainted with the beautiful energy cycle that revolves from soil to seed to flower to fruit to food to offal to decay, and around again. You will be fully responsible for any food that you grow for yourself, and you will know all about it. You will appreciate it fully, having known it all its life.

2. Prepare your own food. This means reviving in your own mind and life the arts of kitchen and household. This should enable you to eat more cheaply, and it will give you a measure of “quality control”: you will have some reliable knowledge of what has been added to the food you eat.

3. Learn the origins of the food you buy, and buy the food that is produced closest to your home. The idea that every locality should be, as much as possible, the source of its own food makes several kinds of sense. The locally produced food supply is the most secure, the freshest, and the easiest for local consumers to know about and to influence.

4. Whenever possible, deal directly with the local farmer, gardener, or orchardist. All the reasons listed for the previous suggestion apply here. In addition, by such dealing you eliminate the whole pack of merchants, transporters, processors, packagers, and advertisers who thrive at the expense of both producers and consumers.

5. Learn, in self-defense, as much as you can of the economy and technology of industrial food production. What is added to food that is not food, and what do you pay for these additions?

6. Learn what is involved in the *best* farming and gardening.

7. Learn as much as you can, by direct observation and experience if possible, of the life histories of the food species. (*What Are People For?*, pp. 149-150)

My own approach is very much in flux and I am not prepared to commend it to anybody’s emulation. I am seriously questioning the vegetarianism I have espoused for some years now; I am more and more inclined to accept that animals have an essential role to play in what Berry calls “the *best* farming,” and it is part of the cycle of such farming that some of these animals must be killed and eaten. We and they seem to be inextricably interdependent. I remain, however, inter-

“I am seriously questioning the vegetarianism I have espoused for some years now.”

ested in the specifically monastic approach to food that de Vogüé describes, and am as concerned as ever about the cruel treatment of animals on factory farms—really, the circle of my concern has expanded to include not only these animals, but the whole network of toxic relationships in which industrial agriculture, and we who eat its products, are enmeshed. I suppose what I aspire to is the minimization of my engagement with the destructive aspects of contemporary agriculture as much as I can within the specific context of each situation that presents itself. What this should look like in practice is something I must continue to chew over. I hope you’ll join me in these ruminations. ✧

Brother Bede Hazlet, O.S.B., is currently continuing his monastic formation and priestly studies. His occasional essays for the Chronicle are part of a continuing series intended to encourage both reflection and personal challenge.

Wit and Humor in the Bible

BRO. PATRICK SHERIDAN, O.S.B.

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (1867–1947) was an English mathematician who turned to Philosophy in his later life. He once wrote, “The total absence of humor from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all literature.” Indeed it would be *quite* singular if it were true. Mr. Whitehead attributed this alleged lack of humor to the fact that the ancient Jews were a depressed people because they were continually attacked and overrun by foreign powers. Perhaps Mr. Whitehead would have been well advised to keep to mathematical formulae and musings on the meaning of life and leave literary analysis of Scripture to others. I suspect, admittedly without having thoroughly researched his life, that Al was not a person with whom it would be fun to share a pint of Guinness and swap jokes at the local pub.

Dr. Chaya Ostrower, in his doctoral thesis, *Without Humor We Would Have Committed Suicide*, takes a position on Biblical humor which is the exact opposite of Whitehead’s. According to Dr. Ostrower, himself a Jew, it is precisely because of the calamities suffered by the Jewish people that humor is an integral part of their Scriptures. He maintains that humor is a quality of perception that enables us to experience joy even when faced with adversity. A person under stress can deal with negative emotions resulting from that stress by emphasizing the amusing or ironic aspects of the situation. I read of an American serviceman

who underwent an amputation of his legs due to a combat injury. He quipped, “Well, at least I’ll save a fortune on shoes!” This was his way of coping with a stressful situation by belittling its gravity.

Humor can aid in dealing with adversity by replacing negative emotions with pleasurable feelings, even if only temporarily. Humor adjusts the meaning so that the event is not so powerful. Humor can shift the way we think, and distress is greatly associated with the way we think. Ostrower maintains that it is not so much situations that generate stress; rather it is the meaning we give to situations.

Every culture has its own idea of what is funny. If you were to watch a random selection of foreign comedy shows, at times you would be laughing out loud, at other times you would be scratching your head and thinking, “What’s funny about that?” The ancient Middle East was no different; it had its own comic traditions, mainly word play, irony and sarcasm. This is important to remember when studying Biblical humor; it is not what we, in Twenty-First Century America, think of as comedy. There were no stand-up comedians in Ancient Jewish tradition, although some of the best comics of the Twentieth Century were Jewish—Henny Youngman, Mel Brooks, Milton Berle, Woody Allen, Jack Benny, the Marx Brothers, to name a very few.

The Old Testament portrays even God as laughing at times. In Psalm 2:4 the Psalmist writes, “He who sits in heaven laughs, the Lord has them in derision.” Psalm 37:13, “But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.” Psalm 59:19, “But you, O Lord, laugh at them, you hold all the nations in derision.” These verses all indicate that one day the Lord will laugh at evildoers. Of course, the type of laughter attributed to God in these instances is not happy or fun loving, but sarcastic and derisive. God is shown as laughing at people who do not

realize the futility of their plots if God does not approve of them.

It is important to remember that while the Hebrew Bible employs humor, its purpose is not to entertain but to teach. Much of the humor found in the Bible is meant to illustrate that evil is wrong and at times even ludicrous. It is essential to remember that, whichever literary genre is used by Biblical authors, the authors themselves are writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; the message they are conveying is the message that the Holy Spirit intends them to convey. The method they employ to convey that message will vary from writer to writer.

Sarcasm is a type of humor often portrayed in the Bible. During the Exodus from Egypt, Dathan and Abiram stand out from a group of chronic complainers as world-class practitioners of the art.

“The Hebrew Bible employs humor ... not to entertain but to teach.”

When a rebellion against Moses’ authority was started by one Korah, Moses attempted to make peace and summoned Dathan and Abiram, Korah’s co-conspirators. Their complaint to Moses dripped with so much sarcasm that Moses immediately protested to God about them. In Numbers 16:13 Dathan and Abiram ask Moses, “Is it but a small thing that you brought us out of (Egypt) a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, but you also have to lord it over us?” Now the phrase “land of milk and honey” was used by Moses and the Lord to describe the Promised Land of Israel, not Egypt. Dathan and Abiram were well aware of this fact. In effect they were saying that we were already in a land of milk and honey; we had it pretty good in Egypt. Apparently they forgot little details such as oppression and slavery. The Scripture reveals a good deal

about the personality of Dathan and Abiram from their nasty remark to Moses.

We also learn much about the character of the Israelites from their way of asking Moses for help, just *seven days* after their triumphant exodus from Egypt. They were trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s fast approaching army. In Exodus 14:11 the people ask Moses, “Was there a lack of graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the wilderness?” Such an impudent remark when all seemed hopeless sheds much light on the character of the Chosen People as portrayed in Scripture. One would think

that humility and prayer might have been a more appropriate response in time of great danger than sarcasm.

It is not surprising when we read that these complainers eventually went too far and met a bad end. Numbers 16: 31-

35 relates the fate of Dathan and Abiram; the earth opens and swallows the two men as well as their entire household.

As for the rest of the Israelites, they did not escape unscathed. In Numbers 14:2, after hearing their spies report how strong the inhabitants of Canaan are, and fearing that they will not be able to defeat them, they say to Moses, “We wish we had died in the land of Egypt, or in this desert we had died.” God seems to have had enough. In Numbers 14:28-29, God has Moses and Aaron tell the Israelites, “Surely as you have spoken in my ears, so I will do to you. In this dessert your carcasses shall fall.” We learn from Scripture that the Israelites did indeed die in the desert during their forty years of wandering; only their children made it to the Promised Land. *Be careful what you wish for, you may get it.*

The Hebrew Bible sometimes portrays God as being sarcastic, especially when the Israelites complain after all he has done for them. In Judges 10:14 the Jewish people have been worshipping idols, yet they turn to God for help when their neighbors oppress them. What does God say to this? “Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress.” In effect he is saying, “Oh sure! Now you want my help. I wasn’t good enough for you to worship, but now that you’re in trouble you come crying to me.” By having God react in a sarcastic way, a way similar



to how many of us would act, the inspired author makes God more understandable. He is not merely some distant all-powerful Deity who neither cares for nor gets involved in the

affairs of human beings; his feelings can be hurt, just as our feelings can. However, since he genuinely loves his straying people, he winds up coming to their defense even though their track record indicates that they will continue to stray. This is a powerful lesson which the Hebrew Scriptures teach over and over again: God is faithful, loving and forgiving.

In I Kings 18:20-40, the prophet Elijah challenges four hundred fifty prophets of the god Baal to a “Smackdown on Mount Carmel” in order to find out whose god is really God. Two bulls are cut in pieces and laid on two altars. The respective gods will be called upon to rain down fire from heaven to consume the offering; whichever god sends down fire to consume the offering wins. A crowd of people is looking on and rooting for their favorite. The

prophets of Baal get first try. They call upon their god from morning until noon. Nothing happens. They were so exhausted from jumping about and yelling to the sky that many of them were limping. They even tried cutting themselves with “swords and lances until the blood gushed out upon them”; still no answer. Elijah seems to be enjoying their discomfort and begins to mock them and their (false) god. “Cry aloud (yell louder) for he is a god (isn’t he?); either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” A number of the sources I consulted in re-

searching this passage contend that “gone aside” can be translated as “relieving himself.” So Elijah is saying that perhaps your “god” is away or thinking about something else or is taking a

snooze or using the water closet (is one door marked “gods” and the other “goddesses”?). In using this type of sarcastic, cutting humor, what is Elijah saying? What is the inspired author telling his readers? Baal is no god at all. No true God needs a nap or goes so far away that he can’t hear the prayers of his people or needs to relieve himself as mere mortals do. There is only one God, the true God, far above all other “gods” and human beings — the Lord God of Israel.

Elijah calls on the Lord after thoroughly dousing his offering with water (just to add insult to injury) and fire comes down from heaven to consume Elijah’s offering; the Lord 1, Baal 0; game over. Furthermore, just to show that there is a serious point to this contest between a god and God, after his sacrifice is consumed by fire, Elijah has the four hundred fifty false prophets of the false

IMAGE CREDIT: ELIJAH’S SACRIFICE, DURA EUROPOS, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

god Baal seized and slaughtered; a grizzly outcome indeed and a warning about what results from worshipping any god but the Lord God of Israel.

Job, the man who suffered tragedy upon tragedy due to what is essentially a gentleman's bet between God and Satan, became quite sarcastic as his life became increasingly miserable. One of the most enduring questions asked by humankind is: Why do bad things happen to good people? In the culture of the Ancient Near East, up to and including New Testament times, the thinking was that if something bad happened to a person, it was the result of some sin committed by that person. The inspired author of the Book of Job is dealing with that question.



In Job 12:4, Job gives an explanation regarding the righteous person that suffers: "The completely righteous man is a laughing-stock." This is a bitter, sarcastic statement from a man who has been, from the modern point of view, unfairly beaten down by the tragedies visited upon him. Job knew that he had not sinned in a manner that warranted the evils heaped upon him. He stubbornly maintained his blamelessness in the face of the criticism of his friends. Job demanded an opportunity to confront God and know the reason for all his suffering. Job gets his wish and in Job 38:4 God says to Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" In other words, "When you create *your* own world, then you can tell me how to run mine." This is

a sarcastic and not very appealing God to our ears. Job has been vigorously protesting against the ancients' concept of cause and effect; he steadfastly maintained his innocence. Our Christian faith tells us that Job was correct; there is no cause and effect regarding every calamity that occurs in life. Job's contemporaries believed that justice or recompense was accomplished by God in this world. Job doesn't deny this; he lives in the (stubborn?) hope of it and God gives him recompense in the end. The problem is

that the recompense is being withheld; this is Job's problem, the problem the inspired author is trying to resolve. Though God is sarcastic, and the answer to Job's question eludes him, Job still trusts in the goodness of God. Essentially, God tells

Job how inscrutable is His Person and his designs, and Job can only fall into reverent silence. This is the Book's lesson: faith must remain even when understanding fails. At this stage of Divine Revelation, the author could go no further. Quoting one commentary, "More light cannot be thrown on the mystery of suffering innocence until God opens up the prospect of a future life in which recompense is made and until humanity learns the worth of suffering when it is united with the sufferings of Christ." The inspired author of the Book of Job did not have this assurance. He did the best he could with what God had revealed up to that time.

Wordplays are a clever and interesting type of humor. The reader feels that the

author is being mischievous and purposely using a word in a clever manner. For the believer, the wordplays in the Bible can make its truths more accessible.

Many of the wordplays in the Bible are possible because the Hebrew Bible contains neither vowels nor punctuation. Vowels in Hebrew, marks that appear beneath letters, are a very late innovation. Words written without vowels can be read in a variety of ways and thus can be given different meanings.

Like everything else in the Bible, wordplays are not intended merely to entertain but to teach. The Hebrew word *shachath* means "ruin" or "destruction," but can also connote "corruption" or "decadence." In Genesis 6:11-14, the word is used to describe the utter decadence of humankind before the Great Flood. In 6:17, the same word is used to describe what the flood will wreak. So not only is the Bible telling an engrossing tale, but it is emphasizing the connection between decadence and destruction.

We have seen that the Bible likes to denigrate false gods or idols. *Etzeb*, a root word, is used to mean "idols" in numerous places in the Prophets and the Writings. The word *etzeb* also means "sorrow," "pain" and "distress." People who worship idols are in distress because idols never listen to them.

Gilulim is also used in many places in the Hebrew bible to mean "idols." It comes from the Hebrew word *galal*, which means "dung" or "excrement." You get the idea.

Toevah is used a number of times to refer to an "abomination," something as "disgusting" or "loathsome" (Leviticus 18:27) as incestuous relationships. This word is also used in places to refer to idols (Exodus 8:22, Deuteronomy 7: 26).

Irony is a favorite device of the Hebrew Scriptures. The following examples are just a very few of the numerous instances of irony in the Old Testament.

In the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis (Chapter 37), his brothers sell him into

slavery to the members of a caravan carrying "spices, balsam and laudanum." Twenty years later, when Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to ask the Grand Vizier (Joseph) for food in the midst of a famine, they bring him a gift of "spices, balsam and laudanum."

In the Book of Exodus, the Egyptians drowned the firstborn Hebrew males in the river, and God drowns Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

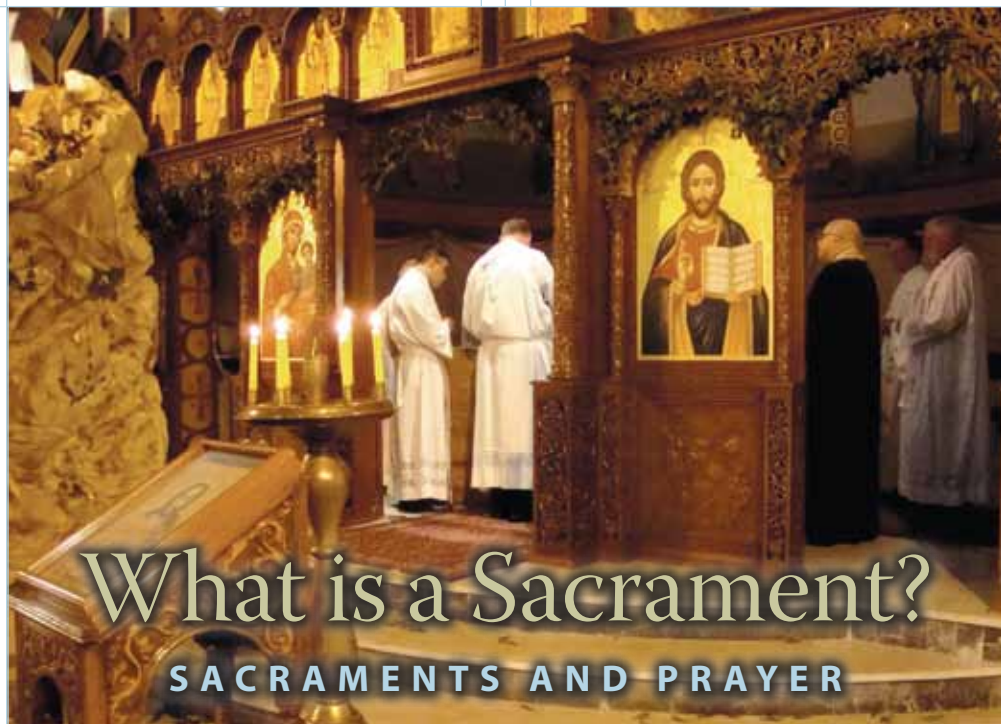
In the Book of Numbers Miriam, Moses' sister, criticizes his marriage to a Cushite woman. The Cushites (Ethiopians) were dark skinned. Miriam's punishment was that she became leprous or "white as snow" (Numbers 11:9).

The Israelites complained that the manna given to them by God was not sufficient food—they demanded meat (Numbers 11:19). God answered that he would give them meat until it came out of their nostrils and made them sick. "I shall give them meat to eat for a whole month ... Until you are sick of it and cannot bear the smell of it." God sent quail to supply meat.

This article has attempted to show that there is more than one way to read and appreciate Holy Scripture. The Bible was written by human beings who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. These writers made use of literary genres with which they were familiar, including a rich tradition of humor as their culture perceived humor. God was pleased to let them employ their preferred method of revealing the truths that the Spirit wished to reveal. When we learn to appreciate the richness of these Sacred Writings, we gain a greater understanding of God's saving work. Let us rejoice in the Lord! ✧

Brother Patrick Sheridan, O.S.B., is currently in his fourth year of theology studies at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, where he has become well-known not only for his academic work, but also his stand-up comedy.

IMAGE CREDIT: WILLIAM BLAKE, GOD SPEAKS TO JOB OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



MASS AT MELKITE CATHEDRAL, KOMS, SYRIA (SOURCE: ARCHBISHOPTERRY.BLOGSPOT.COM)

What is a Sacrament?

SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER

This is the second part of a four-part series by Fr. Maximos Davies of Holy Resurrection Monastery on the Byzantine Catholic approach to sacramental theology.

WHEN YOU TURN to the section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that deals specifically with the sacraments (Part 2), you will see that the authors do not begin with a definition of what a sacrament is. Rather, the *Catechism* leads off with a beautiful and moving discussion of liturgy in general as the “celebration of the Christian mystery.” This is quite a contrast with, say, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. The Tridentine document spends a few paragraphs on the lexical meaning of the Latin word *sacramentum* and then immediately launches into the classic theological definition: “a Sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace, instituted for our justification.”

Why the disparity? Well, for one thing the two documents are inspired by quite different

concerns. The fathers of Trent were challenged by the (quite legitimate) complaint of reformers that too many Catholics treated the ceremonies of the Church like magic. The theology of the Counter-Reformation, therefore, drew a sharp distinction between the *sacraments* “instituted by Christ” and *sacramentals* “instituted by the Church” in order to remind Catholics that membership in the Church meant participation in Christ’s love and paschal sacrifice through the “institution” of specific “memorials” of this salvation. Trent, and those who developed its theology, sought a *narrow* view of sacrament in order to center the attention of Catholics on Christ as the institutional source and eschatological end of every truly saving event. Unfortunately this concern tended to submerge the importance of the human element within the sacramental economy. Much less significance was accorded to the reception of Christ’s grace into human culture and traditions, a reception expressed and celebrated through ritual.

This concern was addressed at Vatican II

which, in contrast with Trent, sought to *broaden* the notion of sacrament in terms of the interplay between Divine gift and human receptivity. In the very first paragraph of its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council made the lapidary statement that the Church “is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.” Vatican II certainly did not suggest that earlier Catholic theology had been wrong to teach the institution by Christ of seven (and only seven) sacraments. What it sought to do was go deeper into this truth by reminding Catholics of a still older sense that the Church itself is the mysterious place in which these precious sacramental gifts are received by human beings who respond to God in the only way possible: by thankful praise for the gift, and by persistent prayer that God will continue to draw all human experience, including experiences of pain and suffering, into the embrace of His love.

The new *Catechism* is thus the fruit of a real liturgical renewal that found its finest expression in the documents of Vatican II. It is a historical fact that much of this renewal in the Latin Church was inspired by the study of and renewed appreciation for the liturgical rites of the Eastern Churches, particularly the persistence of the patristic sense that the liturgy is above all a *mystery*. One of the pioneers in this movement, Dom Odo Casel, O.S.B. put it this way: “mystery means, first of all, a deed of God’s, the working-out of an eternal divine plan through an act which proceeds from His eternity, [and which] is realized in time and the world, and returns once more to Him, its goal in eternity.” One of the essential elements in the “program” of Vatican II was to restore the lines of communication between the Latin West and the Eastern Churches precisely in order to recapture this sense of the Church and Her life as a mystery, as a deed done and

an event in which we participate. Thus it was the council fathers wrote in their Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* that in those Churches, “distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church.”

Like any ambitious program, that of Vatican II remains a work in progress. One of its most active promoters was Pope John Paul II. In his 1995 Apostolic Letter, *Orientalium Lumen*, he wrote eloquently of the beauty and richness of the tradition of liturgical prayer through which the Eastern Churches celebrate the mystery of salvation:

In the liturgical experience, Christ the Lord is the light which illumines the way and reveals the transparency of the cosmos, precisely as in Scripture. The events of the past find in Christ their meaning and fullness, and creation is revealed for what it is: a complex whole which finds its perfection, its purpose in the liturgy alone. This is why the liturgy is heaven on earth, and in it the Word who became flesh imbues matter with a saving potential which is fully manifest in the sacraments: there, creation communicates to each individual the power conferred on it by Christ. Thus the Lord, immersed in the Jordan, transmits to the waters a power which enables them to become the bath of Baptismal rebirth.

Within this framework, liturgical prayer in the East shows a great aptitude for involving the human person in his or her totality: the mystery is sung in the loftiness of its content, but also in the warmth of the sentiments it awakens in the heart of redeemed humanity. In the sacred act, even bodiliness is summoned to praise, and beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing the divine harmony and the model of hu-

manity transfigured, appears everywhere: in the shape of the church, in the sounds, in the colors, in the lights, in the scents. The lengthy duration of the celebrations, the repeated invocations, everything expresses gradual identification with the mystery celebrated with one's whole person. Thus the prayer of the Church already becomes participation in the heavenly liturgy, an anticipation of the final beatitude. (*Orientalis Lumen*, para. 11).

Notice the last sentence of this beautiful passage in which the late Holy Father speaks of "the prayer of the Church" participating already in the heavenly liturgy. In one of the hymns of the Byzantine Rite, sung as part of the consecration of a new church building, the congregation chants, "Be renewed, be dedicated, O New Jerusalem; for the glory and light of the Lord have risen upon you." The image is clear. Here and now, in this structure made with our own skill and resources, shaped by human beings from wood and stone, Christians encounter already that which the Apostle saw in his vision:

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them." (Apocalypse 21:2-3.)

The Church itself is this new Jerusalem, that place where—with the eyes of faith—the Christian has need of neither "light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (Apocalypse 22:5). The light that enlightens the Church is Christ Himself, a light too strong for natural sight. A light that can be encountered only when we are ourselves "illuminated" that is when we have "put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12), when we have, in a sense, actually become light itself

through the gift of faith. This is why in the Christian East the sacraments of Initiation, and especially Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) are referred to together as the Mystery of Holy Illumination.

Again, in the Rite of Consecration of a Church, the Bishop during the first Divine Liturgy served in the new temple asks God to make this building a place "where there is the pure sound of those who feast and a voice of gladness," and that in it the faithful may be found worthy,

"to offer hymns of praise and glory in it without condemnation to your glory and to your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit, with knowledge and full sense, and, as we worship you in fear of you, [that we may] be found worthy of your divine acts of pity, and that these supplications of ours, which we offer to your ineffable compassion for us and for all your People, may be acceptable to your goodness."

Elsewhere in the service there are prayers and hymns that make particular mention of the temple as a place for the Eucharistic sacrifice, but in this especially important prayer the Bishop says nothing about a specific sacrament. The point so strongly emphasized by this prayer is that the entire economy of salvation through Christ's Mysteries is mediated through, celebrated in and effected by prayer. The Bishop implores the Savior for that the prayer offered in this place might be worthy of the Mystery in the service of which it is made, that it be "with knowledge and full sense" as opposed to automatic and senseless. This is precisely why, as Pope John Paul points out in the passage quoted earlier, the liturgies of the East, and especially those of the Byzantine Rite, are filled to overflowing with music and poetry, incense, aromatic oils, lights and flowers. It is why so much time is given over to these rituals and why the temples themselves are so richly adorned

with icons, curtains and costly materials. These are all signs intended to make real to earthly eyes what the saints see most clearly through the new gift of sight that is faith in Jesus Christ. And these signs are sacramental signs. They are not merely pointing away from themselves to some entirely exterior reality; they actually *celebrate* what they signify. That is, these signs both call forth a response of praise and prayer and are at the same time a part of that response. They are signs not only of the profligate and unmeasured love of the Divine Bridegroom, but also of the pure and virginal (i.e. unconstrained) freedom with which the Bride, His Church, responds.

Father Jean Corbon, O.P. asks us to consider the sacraments in terms of another most beautiful image taken from the Apocalypse of St. John, "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Apocalypse 22:1). Here we touch on what is perhaps the most important insight that the Eastern Churches can offer concerning the relationship between prayer and sacraments. If the sacraments are a river, then human ritual and culture can be compared to a field prepared and ploughed by the labor of generations. People are right to speak of "empty ritual." The dry ground of human ceremony really is the dispiriting place, the field of dry bones that Ezekiel saw. But when into this wilderness the mystery of God's love flows, the river of crystal with its sevenfold stream, then the dry fields become places of life and sources of nourishment. Our prayer, however dry and futile it may seem, is thus revealed as the necessary channel without which the great river of Grace cannot flow into the parched meadows and empty places of human experience.

Now none of this contradicts the magisterial work of the fathers of Trent. If anything, their doctrine when properly understood teaches the same message. The very insistence that the human language comprises

the "form" of the sacrament, i.e. that the sacraments are formed by words of *prayer*, is an articulation in the Latin tradition of substantially the same insight we have found in the Eastern Churches. Prayer and sacramentals may be distinguished from the sacraments properly described (and sometimes this is pastorally most needful to do). But they may never be separated from them. The sacraments are always the emergence through the springs of prayer of that river of crystalline grace. In that sense they may never be dismissed as "optional extras." Nor may they be trifled with as though they were infinitely pliable and malleable in contrast with the rigid constraints of the canons of sacramental "validity." In the East it is precisely the importance of prayer and ritual that leads Christians to take so seriously the idea that liturgy is a work to be done, or a craft to be performed. Furthermore, this work must be carried out according to a rule that corresponds not to a merely external and arbitrary set of rubrics but to the collective wisdom of the practitioners of this craft and, above all, to those wisest of the wise, the holy Fathers. If the river is to penetrate every furrow of the human spirit and every dry place of history, then the ground must be prepared, and well prepared, by those who know the art of the husbandry of the heart.

All this has critical consequences for understanding the place of *personal* prayer, as well as strictly *liturgical* prayer within the sacramental economy. But I think that is a subject best dealt with in the next reflection as part of our discussion of the Holy Spirit. ✠

Fr. Maximos Davies is a priest-monk of the Romanian Byzantine Catholic monks of Holy Resurrection Monastery, currently living here at St. Andrew's Abbey. He is a graduate of the University of Sydney, Australia and of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute attached to the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

Pater Noster Thoughts

BRO. BEN HARRISON, MC

HUMAN BEINGS are infinitely needy. That is why no human lover, no merely human love, can ever finally satisfy us.

All children need perfect parents to give them the total love, attention and nurturing they so desperately long for. Obviously no one can live up to that requirement, and we reach adulthood painfully aware of all that we never received, and of our own deficiencies in meeting the needs of others.

But Jesus shares with us his own perfect parents. He takes us home and introduces us into the bond of total trust and mutuality he has with his Abba above. And from the cross he leaves us, each beloved disciple, his mother as our wonderfully human mother. It is only when we take our stand with Christ, praying alongside him and in the company of Mary and the saints (and sinners), that we include ourselves in the 'Our' of the Our Father.



To call God 'Father' means many things, but for me one of its meanings is this: God wanted, wants me – he wanted, wants us. I don't know what desires coursed in my father's or mother's blood when I was conceived. Perhaps it was a moment of passion – or of tenderness. Perhaps they hoped for a child, but if so it was an anonymous, a faceless, an imaginary child.

But if I call God my Father, then I believe that God, who lives beyond time, knew and desired me, precisely and explicitly me, from before my conception, from before time. He knew and wanted the deep me that

is destined to live beyond time, and he knew and desired all the passing moments and contacts that feed and form that deep me. It was his desire for me, for us, for this world and for the world to come, that moved him to speak the Word that precipitated our being in all its particularity. And it is his desire that draws us all toward the fullness of joy which calls us beyond ourselves. What a wonder – to be wanted by the Infinite and Eternal One.



Moving from the heights to the dust, the Our Father reverses my usual way of thinking and praying. (Common Catholic usage favors the simple form omitting the doxology – 'For thine is the kingdom,' etc. – which is added in some late manuscripts of Matthew's gospel.) I would normally be inclined to begin where I am and try to rise to God. But Jesus teaches us the reverse – to begin with God's glory, his transcendence, the cosmic scope of his will. Then we descend slowly, first to the earthly, the social level, then to the level of our individual needs. We conclude with the recognition of our sinfulness, the fact that we have injured others, that we are not secure in our conversion but always capable of temptation and evil. Only God can deliver us from ourselves and from that which would destroy us.

Thus I learn that we can exult in praising God, we can find joy in giving him glory, but at least for now, we mustn't get carried away with that. We must remain with our feet on the earth, our forehead on the ground and the taste of ashes in our mouth. We are called to the heights, to the ecstasy of love, but the way is down. The way is the one of humility, self-emptying, the cross, the 'x', zero.



'Lead us not into temptation.' 'Pray not to be brought to the test.' I need to live in constant awareness of my capacity to fall, I

need to remember that it is God's love and mercy that have saved me from dozens of disasters, from being overcome by my own self-destructive drives and the snares of the enemy. I have no strength but what he gives me. He has to give me 'both the will and the way'. It is a miracle that I have survived till now. Help me still!



When people use a prayer often, as we Christians use the Our Father, it is almost impossible to be attentive to every word or even every phrase. When I pray the Our Father on my own, it helps if I sing it or accompany it with gestures expressing the movements. To watch it signed by the deaf moves me deeply. It also helps just to try to feel the heft, the sway of the prayer, to allow my body to respond, even if only inwardly, to the general movements of lifting and leaning, of giving and accepting, of confiding and yielding. Even expressing only a single such action in one recitation of the Our Father helps me make 'our' prayer my own.



PATER NOSTER – A RHYME

Sky Father, Holy One, come!

Claim us and tame us,
Feed us and lead us,
Bring us up to your high home.

Unbind us, remind us
To share your great care,
Till free as the wind we roam.

Don't break or forsake us,
But guide us and hide us.
To you, Sky Father, we come. ✧

Ben Harrison is a Missionaries of Charity Brother based in L.A. He was in Brothers' communities in Europe for twenty years. St. Andrew's has been an important anchor-point for his spiritual journey since his first visit in 1972.



ABBHEY ANGELS

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Cadfael

"...THERE IS A TIME..."

Summertime: and the reading is easy, escapist and entertaining ... Of course, that could also go for Wintertime, when one wants to curl up and lose oneself in a good book.... Whatever time, however, there are some genres of literature that particularly lend themselves to escape from the weather, the mundane, and the everyday patterns etched into the way we live our lives.

Once entered into the ranks of popular imagination by nineteenth century masters such as Poe, Collins, and Conan Doyle, the detective story has continued and developed into a respectable (and often preferred) art form of popular entertainment. Its point of reference originally quite contemporary in time, place and culture has of late (i.e., within the past eighty years or so!) extended backward into previous times and places of history and forward (?) into time-warped sci-fi fantasy. From ancient Rome to pre-electronic Santa Barbara, modern adepts of this genre have artfully kept within the limits imposed on their sleuths by the time and place to sluice out "who-dunit." There are, of course, many forms of written imagination that do very well by themselves without a body in the library or a crime to be accounted and atoned for, and, indeed, the best of the detective genre are "true" novels in limning and enflashing both person and place that transcend for us the necessary puzzle-solving and retribution that roots this genre in its own rules of telling, but the genre is still a legitimate form to anchor and give shape to one's tale.



EUGENE SALANDRA

One practitioner of this genre in the mid and postwar decades of the last century was an unprepossessing but earnest maiden aunt sort of person, Edith Pargeter, an auto-didact amateur of a particular, well-known and deeply loved place, the Shropshire borderlands around Shrewsbury and the Celtic wonderland of Wales across the border. She had been writing many things, including historical novels, in her twenties and thirties, then as she entered her forties (and the century its sixties) she took up her pen name, Ellis Peters, to write a mystery novel. (She had spent a good many years in the same household as her brother, Ellis Pargeter; whether the Petrine part of the name came from her beloved Shrewsbury Abbey, I know not.) Her modern protagonist, Inspector George Felse, with his young son, Dominic, is a bit more stolid and "slow" than Innes's Appleby & Son, but both writers share a refreshing moral mindset of outlook and manner. It would be another twenty years before everything comes together with her creation of Brother Cadfael, a Welsh veteran of the Crusades, who finds his haven home in the venerable Abbey of Sts. Peter and Paul as a Benedictine brother in charge of the herb garden and its healing

mission within the Abbey walls. The closing twenty years of her life (and of the century) saw as many chronicles of Brother Cadfael, as well as a collection of three short stories telling us something of his pre-monastic life, and two companion books, *Cadfael Country* and *The Cadfael Companion*. Her twentieth chronicle was written shortly before her death in 1995 and includes "A Special Note to Readers" that tells of her passing in her sleep and recounts concisely her career as a writer:

"... Her first book was published in 1936 when she was 23; her last in 1994 [when she was 81]. Her more than 90 books include current affairs novels, historical novels such as the acclaimed *Heaven Tree* trilogy, and translations of Czech classics into English. The professionalism and scholarship that distinguished all her writing was self-taught; her formal education stopped at high school. She was especially proud of her contributions to Czech literature, the gold medal she received from the Czechoslovak Society for Foreign Relations, and the honorary MA degree she was awarded by Birmingham University.... She began the 20-volume Brother Cadfael series in 1977, setting the story in the place where she was born and would later die. As she wrote in Shropshire: A Memoir of the English Countryside, "I can travel joyfully to any of my favorite haunts abroad, but only to this place can I come home.... This is where I put my feet up and thank God."

If somehow you have missed meeting Brother Cadfael, either on the printed page or in the well-done BBC series starring Derek Jacobi, you would probably best begin with the author's original intention, the first of the twenty chronicles, *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, and continue on sequentially from there. As she tells us in her "Introduction" to the extra-chronicular, *A Rare Benedictine*, (1988):

"Brother Cadfael sprang to life suddenly and unexpectedly when he was already approaching sixty, mature, experienced, fully armed and seventeen years tonsured. He emerged as the necessary protagonist when I had the idea of deriving a plot for a murder mystery from the true history of Shrewsbury Abbey in the twelfth century, and needed the high mediaeval equivalent of a detective, an observer and agent of justice in the centre of the action. I had no idea then what I was launching on the world, nor how demanding a mentor I was subjecting myself. Nor did I intend a series of books about him, indeed I went on immediately to write a modern detective novel, and returned to the twelfth century and Shrewsbury only when I could no longer resist the temptation to shape another book around the siege of Shrewsbury and the massacre of the garrison by King Stephen, which followed shortly after the prior's expedition into Wales to bring back the relics of Saint Winifred for his Abbey. From then on Brother Cadfael was well into his stride, and there was no turning back."

As with so many popular series, this was originally simply an intriguing diversion into another dimension of the writer's world of imagination and expertise. She knows the "facts" of history—and of life, for that matter, although she eschews the prurient details so de rigueur of the novels of her time—and she knows her audience of the "enlightened" secularist twentieth century, wary of dogma and miracle. Continuing her Introduction, she tells us:

"Since the action in the first book was almost all in Wales, and even in the succeeding ones went back and forth freely across the border, just as the history of Shrewsbury always has, Cadfael had to be Welsh, and very much at home there.

His name was chosen as being so rare that I can find it only once in Welsh history, and even in that instance it disappears almost as soon as it is bestowed in baptism. Saint Cadog, a powerful saint in Glamorgan, was actually christened Cadfael, but ever after seems to have been “familiarily known,” as Sir John Lloyd says, as Cadog. A name of which the saint had no further need, and which appears, as far as I know, nowhere else, seemed just the thing for my man. No implication of saintliness was intended, though indeed when affronted Saint Cadog seems to have behaved with the unforgiving ferocity of most of his kind, at least in legend. My monk had to be a man of wide worldly experience and an inexhaustible fund of resigned tolerance for the human condition. His crusading and seafaring past, with all its enthusiasms and disillusionments, was referred to from the beginning. Only later did readers begin to wonder and ask about his former roving life, and how and why he became a monk.”

She goes on to say:

“For reasons of continuity I did not wish to go back in time and write a book about his crusading days. Whatever else may be true of it, the entire sequence of novels proceeds steadily season by season, year by year, in a progressive tension which I did not want to break. But when I had the opportunity to cast a glance behind by way of a short story, to shed light on his vocation, I was glad to use it.”

So here he is, not a convert, for this is not a conversion. In an age of relatively uncomplicated faith, not yet obsessed and tormented by cantankerous schisms, sects and politicians, Cadfael has always been an unquestioning believer. What happens to him on the road to Woodstock is simply the

acceptance of a revelation from within that the life he has lived to date, active, mobile and often violent, has reached its natural end, and he is confronted by a new need and a different challenge.

In India it is not unknown for a man who has possessions and great power and wealth to discard everything when he reaches a certain age—recognizable to him when it comes not by dates and times, but by an inward certainty—put on the yellow robe of a *sannyasi*, and go away with nothing but a begging bowl, at once into the world and out of it.

Given the difference in climate and tradition between the saffron robe and the voluminous black habit, the solitary with the wilderness for his cloister, and the wall suddenly enclosing and embracing the traveler over half the world, that is pretty much what Cadfael does in entering the *Rule* of Saint Benedict in the Abbey of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, at Shrewsbury.

England in the twelfth century, in the wake of the Norman invasion of the preceding fifty years, was having to come to terms with a new order of French stone and language; the monastic world itself was being influenced by Cluniac and then Cistercian reforms; the idea of what became papal exemption from local Episcopal authority overseeing visits from within “the Order” was in the air and a sort of via media, third area of sanctuary, between cathedral and castle began to be realized in the many abbeys and priories that were such a part of the English countryside. The Abbey at Shrewsbury seems not to be Cluniac but is still resolutely Benedictine with its independent abbatial authority and responsibility.

So our writer concludes that Brother Cadfael may “on occasion and for what he feels to be good reasons, break the rules. He will never transgress against the *Rule*, and never abandon it.” ✧

Around and About THE ABBEY

ABBATIAL ELECTION

ON JUNE 21, 2010, the Chapter of the monastic community, in an election supervised by Abbot President Ansgar Schmidt of St. Mattias Abbey in Trier, Germany, and Br. Cillian Ó Sé of the Abbey of SS. Joseph and Columba in Glenstal Ireland, elected Fr. Damien Toilolo as Saint Andrew’s second Abbot. He had previously served for two years as Prior Administrator. His first address to the community as Abbot is printed on page two of this *Chronicle*. Photos of his abbatial blessing will be in the Winter issue of the *Chronicle*.



Abbot Ansgar, Abbot Damien, and Br. Cillian
(PHOTO: BR. JOHN MARK MATTHEWS, OSB)

MONKS' FEAST DAYS

September	3	Fr. Gregory
	21	Fr. Matthew
October	4	Fr. Francis
	14	Fr. Luke
November	4	Fr. Carlos
December	20	Fr. Isaac

DOCUMENTARY COMMEMORATES FR. ELEUTHERIUS

What draws a man into a monastery? What is it about monastic life that explains a man giving up what other men hold essential to happiness: marriage, family, career, a life in the world? How does being part of a monastic community substitute for the gifts in life which most people seek?



This film attempts to answer some of those questions. It is a portrait of Fr. Eleutherius Winance, O.S.B., a man who lived most of his one hundred years as a monk. It is the story of how an eighteen-year-old Belgian youth entered the monastic Order of St. Benedict in Bruges, Belgium; became a teacher of Western philosophy in China; traveled throughout the world, and became one of the original founders of the monastic community at St. Andrew’s Abbey.

In *Out of the Silence*, Fr. Eleutherius and other monks at St. Andrew’s Abbey share reflections about the *Rule* of St. Benedict and monastic life. The video provides an insight into how, by serving both God and the community, Fr. Eleutherius lived a life of purpose and fulfillment.

Available through Abbey Books & Gifts, <http://www.abbeybooksandgifts.com>. Time: thirty-four minutes. Copyright 2010 Frangakis Productions.



A study in the varieties of monastic headwear: Br. Cassian in conversation with Br. Bede not long before his departure for Italy.
(PHOTO: BR. JOHN MARK MATTHEWS, OSB)

AN UPDATE ABOUT FR. GREGORY

Oblates and guests often ask very solicitously about Fr. Gregory Elmer. He currently resides, owing to the state of his health, at Mary Health of the Sick skilled nursing facility in Newberry Park. Recent and ongoing treatments have reduced his tremors somewhat and increased his mobility. He receives regular visits from members of the monastic community and returns to Valyermo periodically.

STUDIES

Fr. Matthew Rios continues his doctoral work in liturgical studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, while enjoying the hospitality of the Camaldolese community of Incarnation Monastery and pastoral ministry with his Filipino friends in the Bay Area.

Br. Patrick Sheridan is engaged in his final year of study at St. John's Seminary, Camarillo. He will be ordained a deacon in November.

Br. Cassian DiRocco, after a summer of intensive Italian language study in Urbana, is now pursuing monastic and priestly formation at Sant'Anselmo in Rome.

Br. Bede Hazlet is engaged in a course monastic and priestly formation here at the Abbey.

VOLUNTEERING

The gift of time cannot be measured. The Abbey and the monastic community need you. There are projects and positions available year round. Without you we cannot accomplish our goals. Please consider spending time here at the Abbey. We need help in: Abbey Ceramics, Abbey Books & Gifts, Development Office, Retreat Office. Call 661-944-8959 or email development@valyermo.com.

OBLATE NEWS

Remaining 2010 Oblate Meetings at the Abbey are as follows: September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 12. Conferences begin at 2 p.m. in the Conference Center. Reserve your place for lunch by calling the Retreat Office a 661-944-2178 or emailing retreats@valyermo.com.

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE !

Same Address, New Look!

www.saintandrewsabbey.com

Be sure to bookmark the site and visit often for the latest news and updates. You can now donate online with your credit card or by using PayPal.

We value our friends, and do not buy, rent, sell or share our mailing lists!

SATURDAYS AT VALYERMO

Since the opening of the Welcome Center in 2008, we have sponsored a variety of Saturday workshops that reflect the many and varied interests and talents of the monks and friends of the Abbey—workshop/retreats we hope will appeal to a diverse audience, including families. This year we have expanded our offerings and are especially pleased to include a number of series: *Ubi Caritas*, Spirituality and Relationships Series; *Cucumbers & Pickles*, Twelve-Step Series; *For the Beauty of the Earth*, Environmental Series; *Montage*, Special Interest Series; *Bless the Work of Our Hands*, Handcrafts Series; *Divine Breath*, Arts Series.

Our newest series actually harkens back to the earliest days of the monastic community at Valyermo. Since its founding in 1956, Saint Andrew's has enjoyed a tradition of a deep appreciation for and participation in the arts. For over half a century countless monks, oblates, and friends of the Abbey have lovingly shared their gifts of music, art, dance, drama, and so on. We

are pleased to offer this series of workshops to another generation of arts enthusiasts and those wishing to learn from a host of talented presenters and teachers. We hope you will participate in many of the offerings in the Divine Breath Arts Series.

DIVINE BREATH Arts Series

All the arts serving human desires and needs are derived from the breath that God sent into the human body. —Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179).

The Divine Breath Arts Series emphasizes the spiritual nature of creativity and promotes expressions of prayer and worship through a variety of disciplines, namely: music with Paul Ford and Fr. Philip Edwards; visual arts with Deloris Haddow and a company of talented artists; dance/movement with John West; drama/storytelling with Fr. Joseph Brennan and Cheryl Evanston. Complete descriptions of these and all our Saturday series are available online at saintandrewsabbey.com. Link to: Retreat House—Day Retreats.

THE CHRONICLE IS NOW ONLINE

If you prefer to read it online just send an email indicating this preference to development@valyermo.com. This is a cost-saving convenience for the Abbey.

SEND US YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Please help us stay current with your updated postal and email addresses and phone number. Doing so helps us to save money as the Post Office charges us when they forward mail we send. You can help us eliminate additional fees by letting us know when your address changes. Contact the Development Office at development@valyermo.com.

ABBAY BOOKS & GIFTS

Shop the Abbey Books & Gifts Store! Open seven days, 10–11:45 a.m. and 1:30–4 p.m.

GIVING MADE EASY

Please consider the Direct Gift Program. It is easy to give to the monks of St. Andrew's Abbey.

We accept Visa and MasterCard, or you can donate automatically from your checking account. It is safe and simple and you can make changes at any time. Please call the Development Office for full details at 661-944-8959 or email development@valyermo.com.

BEQUESTS AND WILLS

Please remember St. Andrew's Abbey if you are writing or updating your will. A bequest to the Abbey, a non-profit California Corporation located in Valyermo, CA, will help us to continue the ministry of the Benedictine monks here. It is a great investment in the future. Thank you.

MASS AND PRAYER REQUESTS may be sent to: Br. Dominique Guillen, OSB, St. Andrew's Abbey, PO Box 40, Valyermo, CA 93563.

Printed on chlorine-free
FSC- or SFI-certified paper.
Printed with vegetable oil-based inks.



RETREAT CENTER *Calendar*

THE RETREAT CENTER PROUDLY presents a new season of retreat offerings. Full descriptions are available online at saintandrewsabbey.com. Link to Retreat House. Please call the retreat office at 661-944-2178 for availability and reservations. A \$75 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit is required to secure your room for overnight retreats. Payment in full is required for Saturday workshops.



We accept Visa, Mastercard, and Discover for your convenience.

AUTUMN 2010

Friday, September 24 – Sunday, September 25
Medieval Monastic Spirituality
 Presenter: Dr. Greg Peters, Obl. o.s.B.
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

Saturday, September 25
UBI CARITAS SPIRITUALITY & RELATIONSHIPS SERIES:
God, Science, and the Brain, Part 1 of 2
 Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, Obl. o.s.B.
 Dr. Hermann Frieboes
 Dr. Laura Frieboes
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members

Friday, October 8 – Sunday, October 10
Light of the East: The History and Spirituality of the Eastern Churches
 Presenters: Abbot Nicholas Zachariadis,
 Fr. Maximos Davies
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

Saturday, October 9
12-STEP SERIES:
Cucumbers & Pickles Step 1
 Presenter: Fr. Isaac Kalina, O.S.B.
 \$38 includes lunch; three workshops in this series prepaid for \$100

Saturday, October 16
DIVINE BREATH SERIES:
Visual Arts (Oils, Watercolors, Acrylics)
 Presenters: Deloris Haddow
 Gloria Vahle, Obl. o.s.B.
 Trice Tolle
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members

Monday, October 25 – Friday, October 29
Frutti del Mar: An Adventure in Southern Italian Cuisine
 Presenters: Fr. Isaac Kalina, O.S.B., Michael Kalina
 \$380 single; \$300 shared

Saturday, October 30
MONTAGE SERIES: The Mercy of the Lord is Upon All Flesh
 Presenter: Br. Bede Hazlet, O.S.B.
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members

Monday, November 1 – Thursday, November 4
Autumn Landscape Painting
 Presenter: Deloris Haddow
 \$285 single; \$225 shared

Saturday, November 6
BLESS THE WORK OF OUR HANDS SERIES:
Made with Love—Beading, Woodturning, Christmas cards
 Presenters: Megan Runyon, Art Fitzpatrick,
 Obl. o.s.B., Michaela Ludwick, Obl. o.s.B., Amy Clinkenbeard, Obl. o.s.B.
 \$45 includes lunch and \$7 materials fee; \$120 for three family members

Monday, November 8 – Friday, November 12
Priests' Retreat: Purity of Heart
 Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, O.S.B.,
 Abbot Emeritus
 \$380 single

Saturday, November 13
UBI CARITAS SPIRITUALITY & RELATIONSHIPS SERIES:
God, Science, and the Brain, Part 2 of 2
 Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger,
 Obl. o.s.B., Dr. Hermann Frieboes,
 PhD, Dr. Laura Frieboes, PhD
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members

Friday, November 19 – Sunday, November 21
Marriage Enrichment Weekend
 Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, Obl. o.s.B.,
 Fr. Francis Benedict, O.S.B.,
 Abbot Emeritus
 \$370 per couple; \$340 if paid in full by November 1

Wednesday, November 24 – Friday, November 26
Thanksgiving at Valyermo
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

FOR COMPLETE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE RETREATS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.saintandrewsabbey.com (click "Retreat House")

PLEASE CALL THE RETREAT OFFICE AT 661-944-2178, ext. 102 FOR PRICE AND RESERVATIONS.

Friday, November 26 – Sunday, November 28
Praying with the Mothers and Fathers of the Desert
 Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

Friday, December 3 – Sunday, December 5
Advent Retreat
 Presenter: Fr. Matthew Rios, O.S.B.
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

Saturday, December 4
ENVIRONMENTAL SERIES: Human/Nature
 Presenter: Br. Bede Hazlet, O.S.B.
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members; three in this series prepaid for \$100

Saturday, December 11
12-STEP SERIES:
Cucumbers & Pickles Steps 2 and 3
 Presenter: Fr. Isaac Kalina, O.S.B.
 \$38 includes lunch; three workshops in this series prepaid for \$100

Friday, December 17 – Sunday, December 19
Silent Retreat
 Presenter: Abbot Damien Toilolo, O.S.B.
 \$260 single; \$170 shared

Saturday, December 18
DIVINE BREATH SERIES:
Movement & Dance Enhanced Prayer—Advent

Presenter: John West, Obl. o.s.B.
 \$38 includes lunch; \$100 for three family members





St. Andrew's Abbey
Postal Box 40
Valyermo, CA 93563-0040