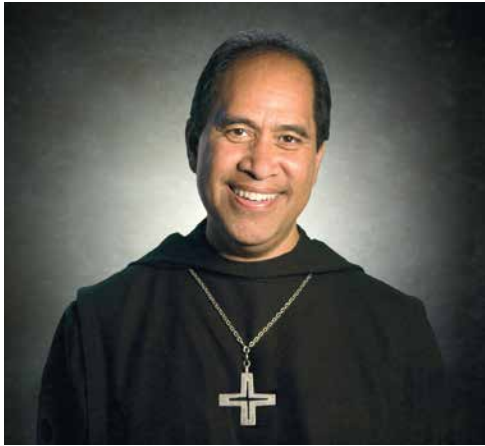


THE VALYERMO
Chronicle

ST. ANDREW'S ABBEY



Nº 238 ✧ CHRISTMAS 2012



we make Christmas a holiday only for those who can afford it. Likewise, when we stay as close as we can to the meaning of Christmas, then *everyone* can celebrate Christmas without having to feel guilty or depressed about not having certain “traditional” items; then everyone can celebrate Christmas without having to embellish their answer to the question, “So what are you doing for Christmas?”

With this mindset, Christmas can in reality be celebrated all year long. Not necessarily with Christmas carols being played in the stores every day, (though some people wouldn’t mind), or lights hung up around the house or the Christmas tree in the living room year round, but certainly the deeper meaning of Christmas: Emmanuel, God with us. God cares about us. God loves us. Who would not want to celebrate this truth all year long: that the all-powerful Creator God longs to live among us sinners, to make his dwelling with us?

When we remember this reality, then we realize that Christmas never really ends because the Incarnation never ends. Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh and remains ever so. He is the love of God and the kindness of God revealed, so that we who are weak in faith are able to see the invisible God. This is the deeper meaning of Christmas, which can be lived out and celebrated all year long, no matter who we are, where we are, or in what situations we happen to find ourselves.

May the joy of the Blessed Mother and Jesus her Son be with you always. Merry Christmas!

Abbot Damien ✧



From the Editor

CHRISTMAS 2012

THE HOLY FATHER HAS PROCLAIMED a Year of Faith from October 11, 2012 until November 24, 2013, to coincide with, among other things, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and (though Pope Benedict may not have had this in mind) the fifty-sixth anniversary of the beginning of monastic life at Valyermo (and—I’m quite sure he didn’t have this in mind—the fifth of the beginning of my own life in the cloister here).

In his letter announcing this the pope emphasizes that “the door of faith is always open.” You cannot be forced to cross the threshold but the door will never be shut in your face. At Christmas, it opens very softly on a scene of the God who is love made vulnerable, an infant born in circumstances of poverty and surrounded by a motley if representative crew of mother, step-father, animals, wise men, and shepherds, with forebodings of violence and vagrancy already a distant rumble on the chill night air, overpowered for now by the joy of angels.

In the present issue of *The Chronicle*, themes of winter-time and Christmastide intermingle in poetry, prose, and visual art, while the book review and homily (I now intend to include one in each issue) allude to some of the Council’s themes.

Wishing you joy in the Word made flesh,

Bede Hazlet, OSB ✧



EAR FRIENDS,

At the writing of this letter, the eastern part of the United States has been ravaged by super-storm Sandy; many people have lost their lives; millions are without power; and thousands have lost their homes. As I sit here in warm, sunny, beautiful Valyermo praying for these people, I can’t help but wonder what Christmas will be like for them and others like them who have no control over the difficult and tragic situations they have to endure.

The more I think about this question, the more I am reminded of how important it is for us to keep in mind that Christmas means more than just nice presents and a day off of work. It’s something deeper, more significant. It is the beginning of God’s plan to save us. It is the beginning of our hope. It would seem that an event of this magnitude ought to be celebrated more than just once a year.

When we reduce the celebration of Christmas to lights, gifts, decorations, and food, then we truly lose the deeper meaning of this important event. Then

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Lectio on a Changeable Day

BY GLORIA WOOD VAHLE, OBLOSB

AM LOOKING BEYOND MY DESK OUT the window at the weather, which is playing: moving back and forth between sunshine and gray. The forecasters tell me that we can expect heavy rain tomorrow but today the weather just keeps shifting back and forth. The drizzle occasionally gives way to snow flurries filling the sky with a curtain of busy white, then it lightens up and I can glimpse a spot of blue, and a shaft of sunlight breaks through. I am reading and praying, trying to discern where I am at this moment in my life's journey. It seems my life is always moving from sunshine to shadow and out again, and yet I know that it moves forward toward a God-given purpose.

There is a stability that underlies the appearance of all changeable and shifting seasons. The weather speaks to me of how its changeableness resembles my life-experience. Faith assures me that there is a stable, ordered plan which proceeds regardless of my emotional and spiritual instability. "He gave us new birth by the word of truth in fulfillment of his own purpose" (Jas 1:17). God is unchanging. He is "the Father of lights in whom there is no shadow due to change" (Jas 1:18).

Yet, as a believer in unchanging things, I still resemble this day with its continually shifting moods. My thoughts go this way and that with little regard for God's stability and consistency. In *Thoughts Matter*, Mary

Margaret Funk says, "Thoughts, feelings, passions come and go. Thoughts not entertained move on" (p. 120). Some things are best allowed to be changeable. Our thoughts can come and go; doubts and fears are occasional visitors to our minds and hearts and yet there is a part of us deep within that can remain stable and solid because the unchangeable God has grasped us and settled us. As Meister Eckhart says, "we can sink into him."

There is a deep work being accomplished by God in us. We are unaware of the majesty of his labor. For he is at work in us, enabling us to will and to work his good pleasure (cf. Phil 2:12). This deep change is often ignored by us. In our concern over the transitory surface of our lives we can forget that God desires for us to experience the transformation only he can work. We can learn to become stable, remaining faithful in our spiritual practices. We should not expect our prayers and readings to transform us immediately without a struggle. And yet we know that God, the unchangeable One, works with us and within us to transform us into his image as we release our troubled thoughts and wait on him. ❄️



Gloria graduated from Chouinard Art Institute and worked for many years in the animated film business as a background painter and color stylist. She studied at Fuller

Theological Seminary for ordination as a Presbyterian minister and later returned to complete a doctorate in Christian spirituality. After serving as a hospital chaplain and as pastor of a small church for ten years she is now retired, though she continues to give spiritual direction.

SNOW on the MOUNTAINS

Adagio pianissimo

Per Cristo Gesu

"Be still and know that I am God"

Snowfall, soft, sifting, is silence
Made visible, come down to earth,
Mantling the mountains with fresh
Innocence, stillness its sheer gift,

Snow falling is what heaven has
To say, snowing a pure mercy,
Stilling all the voices in and out,
Silence itself Your word of grace,

You wanting me, still, in the hush
Of white and purple mountains, which
Genuflect before Your sapphire vault,
You, Word already spoken, stoop to

Succor me with balm of spirit's quietude,
Gently, kneeling down, You wash from me
The soot of my sins, my terrible, deep
Fears, Your inexplicable snow calms

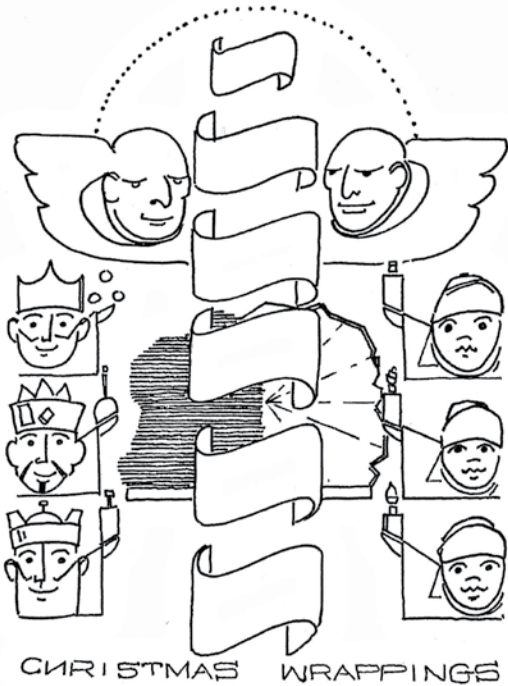
My poor soul, homes it even in this life,
Comforts it with Your most direct touch,
Which silence alone, before the Holy
Unspeakable, knows and simply loves,
rallentando

Soft caress of snowflakes, so fragile,
Is a prayer heard, how I long to dwell
In Your Ingathering, to enter the gate
That opens before me so quietly.

*Dedicated to Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB
February 23, 2007*



Fr. Gregory made his monastic profession in 1970. After many years of giving retreats and spiritual direction (among other things), chronic illness led him from Valyermo to Mary Health of the Sick, a skilled nursing facility in Newbury Park, where he now lives (and where he is happy to welcome visitors).



T H e M A R I A N E N C L O S U R E

DR. DONALD P. RICHMOND, OBLOSB

“A cold coming we had of it”¹

Commenting on the reading from The Rule of St. Benedict for December 25, and the need for some to travel beyond the bounds of the monastery, Dom Delatte writes, “Surrounded and protected by a spiritual enclosure...the monastery may...accompany [the brethren] continually.”² How desperate we all are for the nurturing of the “spiritual enclosure.”³ How frequently we travel the world and its “labyrinthine ways”⁴ without the comfort, constancy, and direction of our “cells.”

For at least nine months our Lord was carried within the womb of the Virgin. Our Lady “surrounded and protected” our Lord, being a “spiritual enclosure” for him. Overshadowed

by the Holy Spirit, Mary was the overshadowing presence in our Lord’s life. What did this mean for both our Lord and our Lady? What does this mean for those of us—in fact all of us—who walk this weary world?

Hail

As Christians we have all experienced the calling of God upon our lives. Initially the experience of this calling may be sweet. To hear the voice of God can indeed be intoxicating and wonderful. God’s voice can communicate, as Thomas Cranmer has said, “comfortable words.”

But, equally, the call of God can be frightening. In fact, I would suggest that the call of God is almost always a frightening prospect. When God calls it is almost always with an expectation. The “Hail” of Mary included the prophetic potentiality of her “piercing.” The same is true for us. To be favored is to follow Christ along the way of sorrow. As such we must truly know the voice of God, the announcement of God’s intention, if we are going to be sustained on our journey through life. This word of and from God must form an “enclosure” for us.

Full of grace

The incarnation of Christ required our Lady to embrace a similar poverty. God’s great condescension in some way involved the graced condescension of Mary. This perpetual poverty of spirit was the sacred enclosure in which Mary abode. In this poverty of the great denunciation, Mary experienced the grace of the blessed life: the kingdom of God was born within her. Similarly, like our Lady, our task of incarnation requires the grace of God’s overshadowing and abiding presence. We too, with her, must receive the God’s enclosure of grace in order to do God’s will in the world.

The Lord is with thee

Of course this was not of Mary’s own doing. While truly a holy woman, the ability to abide in such abnegation was beyond her. She needed God. God needed to be with her just as, through the Holy Spirit, God was within her. Whether she traveled the road of pre-marital

humiliation before friends and fiancé, the hill-top experience of Elizabeth’s affirmation, the valleys of homelessness and displacement, the hard-tack existence of Nazareth, or the question of her crucified Son, it was only “the Lord is with thee” that sustained her life. The same “enclosure” is necessary for us.

Blessed art thou

One well-known survivor of the Holocaust, on being told that the Jews were God’s “chosen people,” replied that he wished that God had chosen some other people. This is quite understandable. We might ourselves have the same response. Likely we have had similar experiences. The favor and blessing of God come at a price. With this calling, with our following “hard after God,” there is always the experience of “the very dead of winter” and “times we regretted.”⁵ Often, if we are honest, we do not feel very wise in our decisions. Advent affirmations do not always seem advantageous. However, like it or not, there is always the Passion in our Advent. Mary knew this, as must we.

Christians in North America often overlook this. We frequently assume that the “blessing” is entirely “sweetness and light,” or at least this is what we want the blessing to be. Our Lady had the piercing “sword” of blessing. We also must adjust ourselves to the words of Col 1: 24, asking God to make our own sufferings and sacrifices of salvific impact. To be chosen, to receive the “blessed art thou,” suggests radical submission to the “wrappings” (enclosure) of Bethlehem, Golgotha, and grave.

Blessed is the fruit of thy womb

Jesus is the blessed fruit of Mary’s womb, but how did Mary experience her pregnancy? I cannot imagine that it was pleasant. I would imagine (as an ignorant male) that pregnancy involves embracing some gut-wrenching realities. But, beyond these, our Lady had other difficulties with which to contend. There were, I imagine, very few comforts to enjoy. Moreover, upon traveling from place to place, she did not even have the sorry comfort of

turning upon Joseph and saying “Look what you did to me.” No, she was quite alone with only the comfort of the Word and the womb.

This speaks specifically to the calling we receive and the vision we are given by God. Bringing spiritual life into the world necessitates the discomforts of bringing this calling and vision to birth. This will require, like our Lady, living within the enclosure of God’s promise just as Jesus, the true Promise of God, lived within the protective and prayerful enclosure of Mary’s womb.

Jesus

When I experience low points in my walk with God I am prone to wish that Jesus, which means “he who saves,” would save me “now.” At the best of times I do not travel well. People annoy me. Transitional places bore me. I do not like crowded airports and jumbo-sized passengers with the miniscule intellects who want to share with me the girth of their life, learning, and limbs. Although I have long outgrown the “are we there yet” stage, I do so much want to be “there.”

I think our Lady wondered when she would arrive, when Jesus would arrive. I think she may have felt, in spite of her heart “ponderings,” that a little salvation along her way might have been most useful. Likely she traveled in company with others, with the “camel men” and their “cursing and grumbling.”⁶ And we also travel with and among others—both a trial and an opportunity. This is why both she and we need the grace and mercy of the enclosure to sustain us. She had her “ponderings” in her wanderings. Do we? We desperately need the salvific enclosure that Jesus—and Mary—provides.

Holy Mary Mother of God

Some people in the early church had, and some even today have, a very hard time with the idea of Mary being the “Mother of God.” I think we need to take this a step further, edging maybe a bit uncomfortably toward “Catholic” thinking.

Recently I had an opportunity for sustained

meditation on Quinten Metsys' (1466–1530) "Our Lady teaching Our Lord to Read." Here we find Marian Theology at both its best and its most challenging. Our Lady is robed (enclosed) in a lush and lavish crimson gown that, quite literally, bathes (floods!) the entire picture. Everything is enclosed within the folds of this crimson tide. On her lap sits our Lord. Together they read a book—likely the Bible or a prayer book—that, with Jesus, dominates the central part of the painting. Although a detailed theological analysis of this painting is beyond the scope of this article, one imperative must be emphasized:



The blood of Christ
which he did bleed
Contains a lesson
we must heed:
That Lady-blood
was Lord's to know
And from our Lord
and Lady
flow.

In this painting, which affirms the "Mother of God" emphasis, Metsys communicates Mary's important role in redemption: the blood of Christ which saves us first ran in Mary's veins. As such, the "outer court" of our Lady's flesh and blood served as the enclosure for the Holy of Holies which is Christ himself. Similarly this blood of Lord and Lady must be an enclosure of grace, of holiness, for us.

Pray for us sinners

The key to Benedictine spirituality is "the work of God" which is prayer. It is of note that Jesus told his disciples that when they pray they should go into their "closets" (hear

"cell," "cloister," or "enclosure") and be with God alone. Being in secret with God is the key to effective prayer. Bearing God's secrets in the "womb" of our hearts is our key to being in the world.

Mary housed a secret: God in the flesh, by the power of the Holy Spirit, lived within her. This is hard, if not impossible, to comprehend. Even Joseph needed convincing. He needed to dream a bit differently—as does each of us.

But dreaming God's dreams requires praying God's prayers. As such, we must learn to live within the "enclosure" of God's grace and Mary's "Yes." With Mary we must have the "secret" of God enter us, and, like Mary's, our ponderings of prayer must serve as the "cloister" of our considerations and commission.

During our lives we will take the far journey, in fact many such journeys. By the grace of God, however, "at dawn we [come] down to a temperate valley / Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation / With a running stream and water-mill beating the darkness / And three trees on a low sky..."⁷ Pray. Pray for us sinners. ✂

- 1 Eliot, T.S. *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1980): "Journey of the Magi," pp. 68–69.
- 2 Simon, G. A. *Commentary for Benedictine Oblates: On the Rule of St. Benedict* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009) p. 484.
- 3 Simon, *Commentary*, p. 484.
- 4 Thompson, Francis. "The Hound of Heaven."
- 5 Eliot, *Complete*: p. 68–69.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid. Emphasis mine.



Donald P. Richmond, *DMin*, is an Oblate of Saint Benedict attached to Saint Andrew's Abbey, and Director of Catechetical Ministry with Holy Innocents Catholic Church in Victorville, CA.

QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW

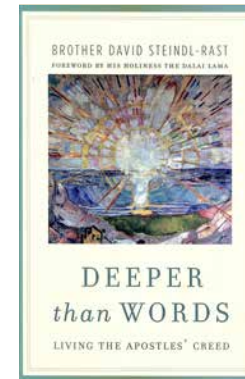
by fr. philip edwards, osb

As a (quasi)adult convert, a belated vocation, and a generally slow-on-the-uptake human being in whose family tree the males rarely survived into their seventies (but whose own father did just make it to eighty-one), it was awesome indeed to realize that this year I became a Golden Jubilarian in July, the eleventh, and was duly so fêted—and "caned"—on the following Sunday, the fifteenth.

It was duly humbling, as well, to be reminded by gracious replies to my brash invitations that many others, far worthier of honor and distinction, were celebrating not simply fifty but sixty or seventy or more years of monastic profession—and then, of course, to remember as I feverishly try to meet the October deadline for inclusion in this year's-end issue of our *Chronicle* that Church and World celebrate in this very month, again on the eleventh, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council by the wonderful window-opening octogenarian Papa Giovanni Roncalli who deliberately chose the date then devoted to Mary's Motherhood.

It was the same date, similarly chosen fifty-six years ago by the regathered community of missionary monks—also with an Italian "papa," Prior Raphael Vinciarelli—as an appropriate Foundation Day when, "canonically erected," St. Andrew's Priory could begin at Valyermo its official presence as a Benedictine house of prayer and work, renewing its mission of encouraging the local church to take root and its own place within the house of faith in this New World corner of the Pacific Basin.

It would seem, then, "truly right and just" that the present octogenarian (once Council *peritus* and now) Papa Benedetto should wish to inaugurate on this same day the beginnings of a Year of Faith, dedicated to a deepening of



DEEPER THAN WORDS:
Living the Apostles' Creed
by Br. David Steindl-Rast

remembrance and renewal, a probing of the What and Why we believe and do.

October is also a good month to experience the Central Coast and a (blood) brother's generous hospitality again made possible a few peaceful days of vacation in Pacific Grove to write. A casual glance at his morning paper glimpsed a photo of Joan Baez singing for Esalen's fiftieth birthday party. No glimpse or mention of Brother David, himself an octogenarian "still full of sap, still green," sheltering and stoking the traditional embering coals of *hesed* and *emmet* into the sacred flame of truth and mystery, who became a monk of Mount Savior in New York nearly sixty years ago, but I remember seeing him at New Camaldoli as he was about to go across the road to pursue his interfaith ministry more fully there. We enjoyed hearing his book about Chant (that accompanied the bestselling CD from Silos a few years ago) as table reading for our recent Music Workshop in the wake of my own Jubilee. Although the present book follows an academic format which makes it suitable for study and discussion—and is certainly meant to be taken seriously by all who may read it—it does not bear (nor seek?) an ecclesial *imprimatur* apart from the eloquent Foreword by the Dalai Lama but is simply a valiant (and also eloquent) sharing of personal thought and experience of one formed by traditional Catholic creedal culture who has learned and appreciated the shared universal wisdom of the way of the Buddha.

What we call the Apostles' Creed, according to F. X. Murphy (could he be the same as the Redemptorist who gave us the scoop on Vatican II under the pen-name Xavier Rynne?) in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, has its roots in the pre-Nicene baptismal rites of the Roman Church, particularly in the Roman Creed as described by Rufinus of Aquileia very early in the fifth century. As (Fr.?) Murphy tells us, "By the pontificate of Innocent III (d. 1216) the *textus receptus* of the Apostles' Creed was universally acknowledged in the West as the official creed of the Church and was commented on as such by Thomas Aquinas (*Exp. Super symb. Apost.*) ... it was recognized as a basic statement of Christian belief by Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli during the Reformation. It was put forward by the Anglicans at the Lambeth Conference of 1920, and at the World Conference of Faith and Order in 1927 as a basis on which the unity of the Church might be erected" (p. 437). It is an approved alternate to the more elaborate Nicene formulation for liturgical proclamation, and is certainly a worthy and orthodox Christian "mantra." For Br. David, it is important to believe beyond the legend that this text is truly apostolic in time and authority.

Credo come about usually to clarify points of conflict and to exclude and set apart; until Vatican II, councils were convened to clarify and condemn errors and heresies. It would be truly wonderful and healing if our certitudes could radiate Good News and genuine faith, hope, and love, and draw us all into the One in whom all things live and move and have their being. The truth of all the broken sinfulness of humankind that is still to be dealt with in even the most faithful of the baptized is always to be recognized and brought back to the Cross. (The glorious cover art, Edvard Munch's *The Sun*, a burst of intense white light almost cruciform radiating and fragmenting into colors of earth, sea, and sky, while holding the bonds of the rays, calls to mind a sacred *mandala*

Buddhist sand painting and dynamically images a living unity in diversity.)

In this point, I would take issue with the author as he meditates on "CRUCIFIED;" I concur with his initial remarks: "If CRUCIFIED was considered worthy to be mentioned in the Creed, a solemn profession of faith, there must be more to it than historical information ... when we profess that God's tangible presence in the world was CRUCIFIED, we express our faith that we can encounter God in the most horrible fate. In the midst of crucifixion—a scene seemingly screaming

*It would be truly
wonderful and healing
if our certitudes could
radiate Good News
and genuine faith,
hope, and love....*

out God's absence—God is present. When we recite the word CRUCIFIED in the Creed, we have the opportunity to become aware that there is never anything so terrible in life or death as to prevent us from walking into it with trust in God's presence..." (pp. 85-86). My own response is a resounding "Amen!" but my problem is with his following argument that "this faith does not presuppose any particular interpretation of Jesus' death, no why or wherefore.... The most important aspect of CRUCIFIED in the Apostles' Creed is the absence of any interpretation (in contrast to the 'for our sins' of the Nicene Creed)" (p. 89). Perhaps I have too much of a vested interest in the "official priestly sin and forgiveness system" (p. 90) in holding to "the most widely disseminated and most thoroughly

misunderstood interpretation, which insists that Jesus died *for our sins*" (p. 89); I also rejoice in the bare-bones simplicity of the Apostles' Creed and accept it as a true articulation of my Christian faith and true bridge across denominational and sectarian divides, but the phrase "for our sins" is an essential part of the Scriptural record of Apostolic teaching and more than just an attempt at "interpretation." Br. David acknowledges that the early Church did apply "the Isaian interpretation" of the Suffering Servant, citing the key Pauline text from his First Letter to the Corinthians (15:3), "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" and then saying, "Isaiah's scriptural interpretation gave meaning to the cruel death of Jesus and was of prime importance to his followers and has been so to Christians ever since" (p. 90). It is not a vengeful god, but the mystery of evil and the human need for blood sacrifice and salvation that looks to the Lamb that was slain, once and for all, that stands at the foot of the Cross. Jesus promises the Samaritan woman that the time is already upon us when they who worship truly will do so in spirit and truth, but that salvation is still "from the Jews," rooted in that long history of sacrificial slaughter of lambs and goats and pigeons and all; somehow, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb 9:22). Yes, the voice of prophecy is also heard, "It is obedience that I want more than sacrifice" (1 Sam 15:22); "What are your endless sacrifices to me? says the Lord, I am sick of holocausts of rams and the fat of calves ... your hands are covered with blood, wash, make yourselves clean ... cease to do evil, learn to do good, search for justice..." (Isa 2:11, 16-17). I confess that horror and trepidation overcome me at the prospect of the restoration of the Temple if it means the restoration of the sea of sacrificial slaughter glorified in the account of Solomon's dedication (1 Kgs 8:62-66; 2 Chr 7:1-10); the Letter to the Hebrews

expounds beautifully the Christian argument that the fullness of time has given once and for all the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin in the one (pointed out in the Fourth Gospel as the) Lamb of God, but for the Hebrew not yet convinced of the messianic authority of Jesus—nor of his epistolary followers—? I had thought of trying to consider the two books recently acquired for our Library that treated the influence of the Enlightenment on monks of the period between Reformation and Revolution and am continually mulling over questions of history, myth, development/evolution, letter/spirit, etc., etc. For the moment, I must allow the point that the *textus receptus* of the Apostles' Creed opts not to include the phrase "for our sins," much less "and for our salvation;" I do not disagree nor find fault with Br. David's alternate Scriptural interpretations in themselves but find them complementary and even subsidiary to the traditional one he wishes to uproot and cast aside. I will in this let him have the last word: "What is important, however, is not the interpretation of suffering but our effort to relieve the suffering of others and to bear our own with faith in God's love. On this path, which in Buddhism is the Bodhisattva path, we may hope to find the joy of meaning in suffering which cannot be put into words" (p. 93).

The Lord's Prayer has found in AA a place as a recited formula of faith beyond sectarian bounds, so possibly the Apostles' Creed may serve a bonding function in gatherings of seekers and sayers of the transcendent. The closing chapter ("AMEN," of course) with a lengthy but enjoyable recounting of such a gathering of traditions of Word, of Silence, and of Understanding, in a classic circle dance, makes a case for universal confession of the Trinity. The personal experiences that conclude each chapter are in themselves worth having the book in hand. Read it.

PS—Seek not for 2 Titus for it is not; seek rather just before Titus, 2 Timothy, where the references will fall into place (p. 81). ✧

HOMILY

for the Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

SEPTEMBER 30, 2012

BY FR. PATRICK SHERIDAN, OSB

The readings this weekend show us something about paranoia.

In the first reading, from the book of Numbers, two men prophesied who didn't belong to the group of Israel ... and yet their prophesying was approved by God. In the Gospel passage today, the Apostles see a man combating an evil spirit with success ... he didn't belong to the group of disciples ... he played for the wrong team but he played well. When the disciples complained to Jesus, he said: "he who is not against us is with us."

We believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. We believe the Church, his Body, is the place where we receive his word and his sacraments and his life. What about people who do not visibly take part in Church life, or those who in good faith don't believe in the Church? What about those who were never evangelized at all? (Think of Native Americans before 1492, of Australian aborigines before 1789.) Of all the people of various cultures and religions who lived and died before Christ came. Even today so many are in a situation of it being practically impossible for them to hear the Good News because of their education, their milieu, and/or the image they have of a less than perfect Church. Are all these people excluded from salvation?

No, says the Church. As members of our Church, we Catholics are not always enthusiastic about acknowledging the spread of God's Spirit in other churches, in non-Christian religions and, indeed, in every creature. It came as a shock to some when the Second Vatican Council recognized the presence of the Holy Spirit in the development of the Ecumenical Movement among non-Roman Catholics. The recognition of the presence of the Holy Spirit



outside the Church does not mean we have to neglect it inside the Church or compromise on the doctrines taught by the Church under the guidance of that same Spirit.

There is no salvation outside the Church. But the Church is not confined to its visible boundaries, to those whose names are in its baptismal registers. St. Augustine said, "We know where the Church *is*, but we don't know where it *isn't*." In Noah's ark, says Augustine, among the refugee animals, there were some who were not good types for ark-life, but they too were saved. In the water around the ark there were schools of excellent fish – never in the ark, but never outside God's cosmic plan.

God loves all humans without exception. No human being at any time is outside the heart of God. God wants all persons to be saved. Christ has given himself to include them all. The Spirit is present in all of them. Vatican II taught us to respect the mystery

of freedom in these people, and to love them, and to realize that they can give us a special kind of help on our own way to God. That doesn't mean that all religions are the same. The Catholic Church has the fullness of salvation.

God never stops announcing himself to everyone. Natural virtues themselves can be arenas of this announcement. Jacques Maritain gives a lovely example of this. He tells of an atheist boy playing with his friends. The boy wakes up to the fact that he can win by tricking them. He chooses not to trick them and so he loses. They discover in him something bigger than winning and losing. Who knows if God, finding in this youngster the virtue of natural honesty, was not announcing His presence and character to him and his friends? (It reminds me of Einstein's dictum, "The Old One does not play dice." But the Old One (God) perhaps likes to have a game of chance occasionally, and perhaps likes to cheat a bit, but always in our favor, to show us that God thinks our rules of life are not

the last word, maybe even a bit of a joke that makes God smile?)

Jesus did not say, "he who is not with me is against me." He said, "he who is not against me is with me." The first is paranoia. The second is—let's call it beyond-paranoia. Paranoia is being fearful of others. Turn it on its head (meta, as in metanoia), turn it upside down, and you might get "being okay about others whoever they are" and "being okay about life however it turns out." It might be said that the only options left to us now are paranoia and metanoia.

So today's readings are basically saying two things: on the one hand, we have to learn to recognize that God can do his work through all kinds of people. St John, in his First Letter, says very bluntly: "Wherever there is a caring love (agape) there is God." Christians clearly have no monopoly on loving others. And we can add that wherever there is true justice being practiced, there is God; wherever there is true freedom being promoted or defended, there is God; wherever there is a



person, perhaps a total stranger from another race or culture, who acts as a true brother or sister to me, there is God.

On the other hand, as a Christian, through my baptism, I have been called, it is my vocation, to be for others another Christ. Far from being jealous of the good that others do, we need to hear the words of Moses today: "Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow His spirit on them all!"

We may get some indication of where we stand if we listen carefully to the scathing words of James in the Second Reading. What are our attitudes to wealth and poverty? To luxury side by side with poverty? To the glaring inequities between countries' standards of living?

I am called not only to be for myself a good person. I am called to reach out, to love, to be just to others, to be fully free with and for others, to be truly brother or sister. I am also called to be a prophet, to proclaim in words and actions that the Source of all love, justice, freedom and solidarity with others is a God who loves, who forgives, and who wants all to be saved. ✧



Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB, serves the monastic community as Subprior and is in charge of our ceramics factory.

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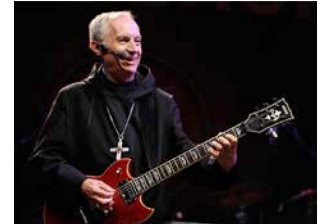
Christmas 2012



PASTORAL TRIP TO TRINIDAD

Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB, spent Sept. 7 through Oct. 8 at our sister community in Trinidad, Mt. St. Benedict Abbey, making himself available for pastoral work during the temporary absence from the monastery of two of their monks.

of St. Otilien (seen here; he's an accomplished musician among other things) for a third term.



GENERAL CHAPTER

After the Congress, Fr. Carols joined Fr. Abbot to take part in our Congregation's General Chapter, held roughly every four years—this time in Assisi. Among other items of business, the Chapter voted to accept a request by Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem (seen above) to join the Congregation of the Annunciation. We welcome this new community into our congregational family!



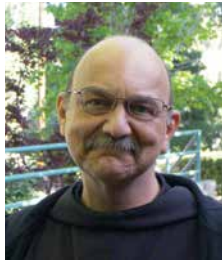
ABBOTS' CONGRESS

In September, **Abbot Damien** attended the Congress of Abbots and Conventual Priors held (roughly every four years) at Sant'Anselmo in Rome and representing the entire Benedictine Confederation. The Congress re-elected Abbot Primate Notker Wolf

LUBIN

After the Chapter, Frs. Abbot and Carlos made their way to Lubin at the invitation of monks there who had visited us last year. The monastery church is seen here.





END OF CHEMO

Fr. Isaac had his last chemotherapy treatment in September and has been slowly but steadily gaining strength. Please pray for him.

JUBILEE

On October 31 we celebrated the fifty-fifth anniversary of the priestly ordination of **Fr. Martin Yslas, OSB** (which had actually been on May 28). Please join us in congratulating him and praying for the ongoing fruitfulness of his ministry.



OBLATE NEWS

For information on upcoming oblate meetings at the Abbey, please visit the website (saintandrewsabbey.com) or call the Retreat Office, (661) 944-1278.

ABBEY BOOKS & GIFTS

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

VOLUNTEERING

The gift of time cannot be measured. The Abbey and the monastic community need you. There are projects and positions available year round and 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.

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MONKS' FEAST DAYS

January	12	Fr. Aelred
	1	Fr. Maur
	1	Fr. John Bosco
February	29	Br. Cassian
March	17	Fr. Patrick
	1	Fr. Joseph
	21	Br. Benedict

THE CHRONICLE IS NOW ONLINE

If you prefer to read this publication 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.

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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 automatically donate 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. ✂



My abhorrence of moths is of phobic proportions. I suspect it stems from my revulsion when, at age six, I discovered my father's boyhood collection of carefully labeled specimens pinned artfully in their glass coffins. Or perhaps it was the plague-worthy swarm that attacked me as I opened the side door of a dark, vacant garage as a—well, considerably older person.

Admittedly, butterflies are only barely spared my loathing. While there really is little taxonomic difference, there are several differences in behavioral characteristics. It is these differences that provide fodder for my quasi-poetic musings.

Moths and butterflies evoke very different images; moths being commonly (if wrongly) associated with obsessive attraction to light and destructive behavior that leads to self-annihilation; butterflies regarded as enduring icons of transformation to ethereal beauty. Ergo, one symbolizes death; one life.

We are not unlike the *Lepidoptera*, attracted as we are to that which leads to death, yet potentially beings of beauty, freedom, and life. Moth or butterfly? The transformative power of faith is key and is the focus/theme of the 2013 retreat year. Many of our retreats and workshops will examine personal and societal transformation through the lens of faith. Others will offer practical ways to become open to healing, wholeness, and love. We invite you to join us on the journey.

Cheryl Evanson, ObI OSB
Retreat Center Administrator

RETREAT CENTER Calendar
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WINTER 2013

PLEASE CALL THE RETREAT OFFICE AT (661) 944-2178 FOR RESERVATIONS.
Note: Day Retreats are listed in color.

JANUARY

MARY AS MOTHER OF THE CHURCH AND MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Monday, December 31 – Wednesday, January 2
Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
\$250/\$200

SPIRITUAL PASSAGES, THE SEASONS OF LIFE, AND THE CELEBRATION OF LIGHT

Friday, January 4 – Sunday, January 6
Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, ObI OSB;
Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
\$250/\$200

SCARF WITHOUT BEGINNING AND WITHOUT END

Saturday, January 12 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
Presenter: Dr. Elizabeth Seward, ObI OSB
\$40 includes lunch

MID-WINTER DANCE WORKSHOP

Friday, January 18 – Monday, January 21
Presenters: John West, ObI OSB;
Fr. Philip Edwards, OSB
\$350/\$287.50

SPIRITUALITY AND CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Friday, January 25 – Sunday, January 27
Presenter: Nikki Tucker
\$250/\$200

INTER-PARISH RCIA DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Saturday, January 26 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, ObI OSB;
Diana Janas, ObI OSB
\$40 includes lunch

PRIESTS' RETREAT

Monday, January 28 – Friday, February 1
Presenter: Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB
\$400

FEBRUARY

LEARN FROM THE DESERT SILENCE AND SOLITUDE: SILENT RETREAT

Tuesday, February 12 – Friday, February 15
Presenter: Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB
\$300/\$262.50

LENTEN RETREAT

Friday, February 15 – Sunday, February 17
Presenter: Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB
\$250/\$200

PRAYING THE HOURS: LITURGICAL PRAYER AS AN INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Monday, February 18 – Wednesday, February 20
Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB
\$200/\$175

PRIESTS' RETREAT

Monday, February 25 – Friday, March 1
Presenter: Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB
\$400

MARCH

LENTEN LIGHT FROM THE EAST

Monday, March 4 – Friday, March 8
Presenter: Abbot Nicholas Zachariadis
\$400/\$350

SACRED TRIDUUM

Thursday, March 28 – Sunday, March 31
\$350/\$287.50

APRIL

LEADERSHIP AND THE RULE OF BENEDICT

Friday, April 5 – Sunday, April 7
Presenters: Dr. Michael Carey, ObIOSB;
Br. Bede Hazlet, OSB
\$250/\$200

INTER-PARISH RCIA DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Saturday, April 6 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, ObIOSB;
Diana Janas, ObIOSB
\$40 includes lunch



DREAMS AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Monday, April 22 – Wednesday, April 24
Presenters: Dr. Victoria Dendinger, ObIOSB;
Diana Janas, ObIOSB
\$200/\$175

MY LIFE—RIDDLE OR PARABLE? A MYSTERY TO BE UNFOLDED

Friday, April 26 – Sunday, April 28
Presenters: Mary Rose Betten, ObIOSB;
Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB
\$250/\$200

The 2013 retreat offerings with descriptions and presenter information are available on our website: SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM (Link to Retreat House.) FOR RESERVATIONS, CALL THE RETREAT OFFICE: (661) 944-2178



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ABBOT DAMIEN, please include the following prayer request for the monks to keep in prayer:

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If you wish to remember the Abbey in your estate planning, please call (661) 944-2178.

You do not need to make any donation to ask for our prayers.

Please place this card in the return envelope provided.



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