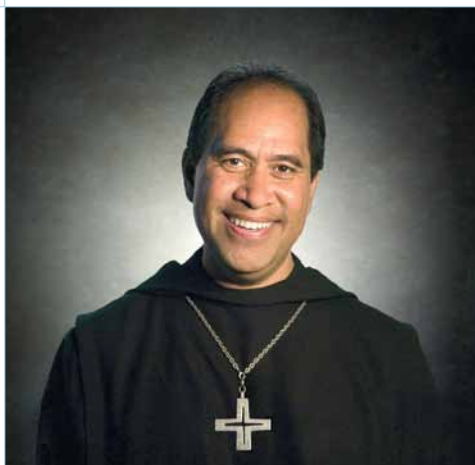


THE VALYERMO
Chronicle

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



Nº 232 ✨ SUMMER 2011



is very bad and I do not understand much). The response was virtually the same: *está bien Padre* (that's fine Father); *es suficiente* (it's enough).

I couldn't believe this was happening to me. Needless to say I felt useless. I was confused and frustrated. I was not frustrated with the people—far from it—but I was first of all frustrated with myself because I couldn't communicate with them. Mostly, however, I was frustrated and confused at what God was doing.

In between each confession, in the seconds that transpired as one penitent was leaving and another was arriving, I prayed quickly, frantically, and sort of angrily: God *what* are you doing? These are *your* people! *Why* are you doing this? They come here for guidance, and there's nothing I can do for them! What do you expect me to do if I can't communicate with them?"

I foolishly thought maybe there would be a miracle; that God would suddenly allow me to speak and comprehend Spanish fluently. When that didn't happen, I contemplated simply getting up and leaving. But I didn't want to make a scene, and I didn't want the people to think I didn't care about them because I really did. So I sat there.

When it was clear to me that I was not going to get any answers from God anytime soon, I finally said to myself, "It'll soon be over. Just be open to the Holy Spirit; just be present to the people; just trust that God knows what he's doing; just be yourself; just try your best." ... just ... just ... just ... just!

After about an hour and half of hearing confessions, it was done. I was exhausted. I was perplexed. I was frustrated. I was embarrassed, and I was surprised at what God had just done.

That evening I shared my experience with one of the monks. I asked him, "What do you think God was/is saying to me?" He laughed to himself and shook his head. Then he said, "God doesn't need your intellect. He doesn't

need you to pass a language proficiency exam before he can use you; nor does God need for you to understand each situation in order for his grace to flow through you. He doesn't need anything you have. The only thing he asks of you is that you be faithful to what he wants you to do. Period. And this time, all God was asking you to do was sit in that confessional, smile, be present to the people, and give them absolution. Nothing more. When God wants to use you, there's no need to analyze, just get out of his way, and let it happen. You'd save yourself a lot of stress if you did that."

Because I remember preaching homilies with similar messages, I was cut to the heart and reminded of the words of Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "O how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe...." Sigh.

The memory of this experience will be with me for long time. And while I will be brushing up 'big time' on my Spanish, this experience has given me much to learn from, to reflect upon, and to remember. May we all continue to be faithful to what God asks of us so that he may be glorified in all we do.

Abbot Damien ✧



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Homecoming:

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



GLORIA AND ROBERT VAHLE

GLORIA WOOD VAHLE

I have been an ordained Presbyterian minister for many years, now honorably retired. However, my husband Bob and I, both life-long Protestants, have begun the process of becoming Roman Catholic. This choice may sound to some to be a radical step but it is actually the result of a slow and steady process which, I believe, has been led by God's Holy Spirit. We have become increasingly disappointed with liberal Protestant denominations in their support of values of contemporary American society which conflict with Biblical teaching. On the other hand, during our years of involvement with St. Andrew's Abbey we have increased our awareness of the vast spiritual riches of the pre-reformation Church. We have discovered that much of what is good in present day Protestantism is true of Roman Catholicism, and we have come to appreciate the centrality of the Eucharist (CCC. 1391)

I was born into a Baptist family. I was baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The *Catechism* tells us that every valid baptism is the gateway to life in the Spirit (CCC. 1213). This act sealed by faith my relationship with God.

In my teen years my father left my mother and me, but he promised to provide help for me to go to art school. However, when the time came he refused to help me with the funds I needed. I remember very clearly sitting on the back stoop of our house. I spoke to God, "You will have to be my Father now." That act of faith firmed up a relationship with God which would hold me safe in the years to come. God was my Father, Jesus was my Savior. That remains firm to this day.

Finally, I did go to art school in Los Angeles, and while there a friend and I began a Bible study with our fellow students. I had hoped that my career in the art field would allow for evangelism opportunities similar to that at art school, but I found my fellow

artists were for the most part hardened to the gospel. It was then that I heard, but rejected, a call to full time ministry. I still felt I could serve God while working as an artist. I enjoyed the creative challenge in the animation field and was well paid for my talent.

I realized I needed something broader than Baptist theology and joined Hollywood Presbyterian Church. I worshipped there for many years and worked on contemporary worship services during the Jesus Movement and I also was enlarged by contact with the Charismatic movement. I attended classes at Life Bible College and got a BA there. Then, I taught a Bible class of Charismatic believers at the Presbyterian Church. During this season I first visited St. Andrew's Abbey with our Church group. It was a new and different culture but an attractive one.

As I entered middle age I began to read a lot of Church history. I began to realize that many of the decisions and stands of the early Catholic Church, which I had been taught to question, made perfect sense if seen within the context of their time and place. In this time frame I asked these questions: How did the scriptures fit in with experience? How was I to understand the words of correction and direction which came with such rapidity in my life? Where was I headed?

After a season I entered Fuller Theological Seminary where after five years of study, while working part time in animation, I received a M.Div. degree. I was approved to seek ordination in the Presbyterian Church. I did this despite having real concerns over the Biblical injunctions against women in authority over men. I did not like hospitals, but I was ordained to the position of Chaplain of Queen of Angels/Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. While working at the hospital I began to spend more and more time at St. Andrew's Abbey in the high desert of Southern California.

A Benedictine abbey, it was quiet, very hospitable and had intellectually challenging and satisfying retreats.

After three years, I found an opportunity to pastor a small church in Lake Hughes. I asked the small congregation what they needed and they said they needed someone regular. As I began to preach every Sunday in the little white church, I took time every week at St. Andrew's Abbey. I took my computer and prepared my sermons, away from phones and interruptions. I was the sole pastor of that small, but growing Church for nine years. Some lovely ministry happened and people's lives were changed. I loved it in spite of the on-going conflicts. As the church grew I found that serving the Eucharist was as important to me as preaching the sermon. We began to have the sacrament weekly, rather than monthly, as is the Presbyterian custom. I had no doubt that our Lord said this was His Body, His Blood, for us. Some people wanted a service with no creed and no confession of sins, still the little church thrived for a number of years.

In the Abbey bookstore I found something that met my need in stressful times. I began to read the lives and writings of the saints and others beginning with the desert fathers and mothers. The saints of the past were as much my heritage as a Protestant as they were for present day Catholics. After all, only one quarter of Christian church history has occurred since the Protestant Reformation. One of my favorites was the anchoress, Julian of Norwich. Later, when Bob and I would become Oblates of the Abbey I would chose her for my namesake. I came to realize that Julian, and most of the Catholic saints down through the ages, believed in salvation by grace. Many Protestants believe that Catholics believe salvation is by works, not by grace.

After three years in the pastorate I began a doctoral program in Christian Spirituality

at Fuller Seminary. I chose as my doctoral project a study of the saints and others of the Church and considered in greater depth what had drawn me for years. I put the material into an interactive format for teaching to a congregation. I called the class "Friends for the Journey." It focused on the spiritual friendship shared by the saints and writers.

One of the elders at the Lake Hughes Church was a very dear, gentle, man, Bob Vahle. He had come to the church with his wife in an attempt to heal his marriage, but she eventually left him. He had returned to his Christian faith and continued to grow in effective service after his wife divorced him. I felt secure enough to be his friend in the belief that no pastor could ever marry a member of his or her congregation; so we became close friends. Bob preached well and was very intelligent; we made a good team. I encouraged him to attend retreats at the Abbey. He took classes at Fuller and applied to the Presbytery to become a certified lay pastor and was accepted for the program. Then one day he came over and said, "Why don't we get married"; after all, I was his best friend. He was quite a bit younger than I, and I had been his pastor though his divorce, so I figured this would be a no-go with the Presbytery (a body that acts like a Bishop). However, they surprised me and gave us their complete support. We fell deeply and wonderfully in love and our dream became to share the pastorate as a married couple, but the local leaders were rejecting. In 2000 Bob and I were married in the Lutheran Church by a woman pastor who had become my friend in the Doctoral program.

But why become Catholic? We are becoming Catholic because of the need for a Biblically faithful, morally solid and sacramental world view and the stability that offers. Being married was a dramatically healing experience for me. There is a need in our society for a sacramental view of marriage. Our marriage had been in the church; we

took Eucharist in the ceremony and meant our vows to be lifetime vows. Shortly after our marriage we started the process of becoming Oblates of St. Andrew's Abbey, another lifetime vow. The Oblate group which meets monthly became our most essential source of fellowship.

We loved the Abbey and enjoyed its retreats and the oblate meetings, but it became increasingly painful to be left out of Eucharist. We spoke to our patient and kind Spiritual Director, Fr. Joseph, of our interest in becoming Catholic; he was very welcoming and referred us to Fr. Vaughn, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Palmdale, where we now attend. We were moving ahead quickly; then when we looked at the RCIA forms we realized we had a problem with canon law. We wanted a high view of marriage and now we had to deal with the fact that Bob needed an annulment from his first marriage. So now we are in a waiting period and hopefully using it to learn and grow in grace.

The Scriptures, especially Ephesians (Eph. 2:11-22) tell us that it is God's will for there to be one united Church. Jesus prayed for our unity and still prays for us to become one (John 17:20-23) (CCC. 1398). Bob says very simply, "The Protestant Reformation was a mistake." The Church needed to be reformed, but the resulting splits and weakness from the Reformation seem to never end.

For Bob and me, becoming Catholic is a big step culturally, but it is not a change of faith. That faith is firmly established on Father God and on Jesus our Savior and in the Holy Spirit who works in His disciples the life of Jesus according to his purposes and plans. Bob and I are among the many baptized, separated brethren (Directory on Ecumenism, Vatican II: II, 10) ... and we are coming home. ✠

CCC= *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second ed., NY, Doubleday, 1995.

DV= Vatican Council vol. 1, Austin Flannery ed. NY, Costello Pub. 1975.

Sacred Reading

**Selections from a conference
given January, 1964 to the monks of
St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts,
by Fr. Vincent Martin, o.s.b. (1912–1999)**

THERE IS ONE ASPECT OF OUR life which is terribly important and which I believe is fundamentally a matter of attitude and personal conviction.... In St. Benedict's mind the content of monastic life has three principal elements: the *Opus Dei*, manual labor, and sacred reading. These three are so closely inter-related that basically they are not too different, one from the other. They form the tripod which is the monastic life. Pull out any one of the three and the tripod will certainly fall. The third one, sacred reading, is consequently *as* important as the *ora et labora*.

The content of our prayer and the spiritual quality of our work are dependent essentially on the quality of our sacred reading. The *Opus Dei* is communal—we pray it together. By and large, also, our work is in common—it is a community effort. But sacred reading is private enterprise in the monastery; that is where we are on our own; that is where the person comes to the fore; that is where there is not much help from the community. This is why the motivation of the monk is so important when it comes to sacred reading. At these times each monk is alone with God, turned to the tradition of the Church, seeking there how to render his prayer more fruitful, how to make his work yield more spiritual profit, how to make his whole life more God-centered, more God-directed. It is there we try to learn that mysterious language of sign and symbol which speaks to us of God. Remember what I told you [in a previous conference] about learning Chinese—



it takes a long time of sustained hard work and application just to make some modest inroads. Is it surprising, then, that to learn to find God in the language of contemplation, beyond the shadows of this world it takes time, a long time, much attention, much hard work? If all we have to offer the Lord are occasional snatches of time that scarcely allow us to warm up and get into what we read—we are hardly even recollected when we have to quit—then I don't think it is possible for a monk to really enter into the spirit of contemplation, to learn the language of the Lord.

In the novitiate we need help and guidance to get us started properly in this difficult task, in this greatest of all the arts of a monk, the art of sacred reading. But we have to be convinced of its importance, convinced that

it is one-third of our life. We must put forth effort to use well those periods of free time which are a blessing from God, and not fritter them away in extraneous reading, flitting from one thing to another butterfly fashion, never really acquiring anything—just a few passing impressions, a few feelings which are not in any way related. There is no continuity, no growth, and therefore no possibility of any depth. We must map out a definite plan of our own to guide our reading.

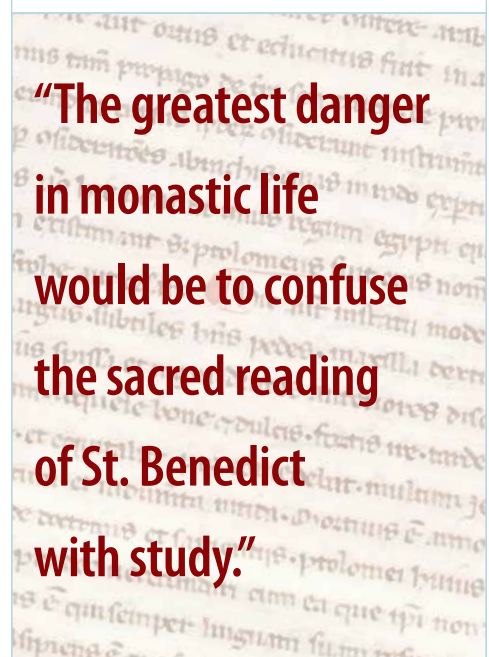
What St. Benedict means by sacred reading really takes place at ... two levels... It is at the same time an intensification, a deepening of our awareness of God and of our love for Him. Under the official prayer of the Church, beneath all the work we are given to do there is always present the possibility of a personal relationship to God, the possibility of a deeper contact with Him, which is purely spiritual. It has to happen. However, it will not happen during the Office, it will not happen during work if we are not careful to permit it to happen in the solitude of these moments of recollection.

I don't believe you can pass (this is extremely important) immediately, from the signs and symbols, from the reality of this world, even from the human relationships in fraternal love, immediately, directly to God, to relationship with Him. You can have a wonderful sense of what water is and a great appreciation of its cleaning properties—and never get the idea of Baptism! A real understanding of the nature of things is not, by itself, going to lead you to the knowledge and discovery of God. You can be a wonderful community from a natural point of view: all be gentlemen, and be well organized, very efficient, etc.—and never be the Church, never be the Body of Christ.

There is a reason why God started by revealing Himself to man *before* He sent His Son to become flesh, to become our Brother. The reality came before the sacrament. God revealed Himself increasingly to Israel as the

transcendent God beyond understanding. It was only when deep faith in the living God was fully established that the full sacrament could come, that the Word could be made flesh, and that the flesh could become a better expression of the mystery of the Word.

We must first establish the reality, the contact with God; in a very imperfect manner, it is true, as a beginning, as a seed planted in



the ground which will have to grow through the contact with sacramental reality, through learning the language of God. But, if this contact with reality beyond sign and symbol does not exist, the language will not work. This is why we *need* these moments of pure prayer, why we need these moments when we go beyond signs and symbols, when, all alone we are able to know our relationships with God, to know that we are a child of God, to know that we are the brother of Jesus Christ, to know that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit—to know these realities in the context of faith and hope and charity, to live them fully in a deep intuition—then we can slowly start to learn how to use the things of this world, how to use the liturgy, our work,

the fraternity of this community, to keep this contact with God—maybe not with such intensity or conscious awareness, but still as a true genuine communion with God.

On the other hand, if we can commune with God and be real contemplatives only in those few moments of our existence in which we forget the world, forget the worship of the Church, when we forget our brethren and our work, etc. and abstract completely from everything—then, at that moment, we can really be in prayer with God—it may be very beautiful. But in our life we don't have too many, really, of these moments except if we are pushing hard to abstract ourselves from what we are doing. So, in choir—I'm there, but I don't care about the priest at the altar, I don't care what the brethren are singing; I just go through the motions, and that's all. On the work front, peeling potatoes—or knitting!—are about the only "compatible" chores you can do and still be in contemplation. But, if you do any kind of work which calls for your attention, something important, you cannot possibly be aware of God—if to be aware of God you have to abstract completely from reality. On the contrary, if you learn, patiently, that language which takes really more than two years to learn, and many many hours of hard work; if you learn all the things in nature, in the liturgy, in your work, in your relations with your brothers—if you can see in the face of a man the image of God; if you learn that, the time may come when tens, and hundreds, and thousands of things are going to talk to you of the living God. And then maybe after forty or fifty years ... in the monastery, maybe you can achieve the dream of the old monks of perpetual prayer, because you are constantly united to the living God, because everything you know, everything you see, everything you feel and experience comes to you from the hands of God and everything speaks to you about Him. But, if you have no respect, no love,

if you have no desire or understanding of sacred reading, that will never happen. You may be a good monk, an efficient monk, the joy of your superiors, leave all your brethren in peace—spiritually you will be an automaton, a monastic machine—functioning very well—but not a contemplative, not a child of God, not one who from year to year can grow more deeply into the meaning of work, into the meaning of prayer, into the meaning of brotherhood, into the meaning of life.... Today, much more than in St. Benedict's day, time is a problem—still there *is* time.

Fr. Sertillanges says that it is impossible to work well intellectually—not collating data all day long, but writing creatively, thinking creatively—more than two hours a day. But, really, if a monk has two hours a day of *genuine*—but genuine—sacred reading, I wouldn't worry a minute.

In closing, I want to point up emphatically one more thing. I am speaking of sacred reading; I am not speaking about study. You may be studying Greek. Swell. It will be a great help to you someday for sacred reading; but when you study Greek, you don't do sacred reading, you work. If you collect historical facts and organize your mind, this is not sacred reading, it is work. These things have to be there; there is a certain minimum of knowledge and experience—you need purposeful preparation for the fruitful reading of Scripture and the reading of texts of the tradition of the Church. The greatest danger in monastic life would be to confuse the sacred reading of St. Benedict with study—not only the humanistic studies, but also what we call today sacred studies. I am referring to genuine sacred reading in the monastic sense—which is not meditation, which is not necessarily a constant contemplation, but which is done in such a way that it is always a readiness for contemplation when the Holy Spirit is calling you to it, and which is the essential basis to assure the full spiritual living of our Divine Office and of our work. Amen. ✠

IN 1941, AN AMERICAN HISTORIAN, Garrett Mattingly, published *Catherine of Aragon*, a richly readable and scholarly recounting of the life of the first consort of the Tudor tyrant, Henry VIII. In his foreword he tells us that his research into “renaissance diplomacy” (the title of a book he published while a professor at Columbia) led him to see that

Queen Catherine ... was a different person, more cultured and thoughtful, more forceful and decisive, than the one I had read about elsewhere, and as I followed the history of the Spanish Embassy in England, I began to realize that the key to its activities, and to much of what went on in England for a third of a century, lay in the personality and the decisions of this Queen. I have tried to restore her figure to something like what her contemporaries saw. Two things in her story have chiefly fascinated me: the way the decisions of persons by no means gifted with genius but strategically placed may influence the course of history, and the way that the divided loyalties common in thoughtful persons during a time of rapid change may affect their conduct in unexpected ways, and consequently give a twist, sometimes, to remote events. Surely Catherine's decisions influenced English history—and therefore the history of the whole world—as vitally, and as unexpectedly, as the decisions of her husband, Henry VIII.

In his “Note About Sources,” Mattingly acknowledges that “political conditions in Spain in 1936” kept him from the origin of Spanish sources—the translations available to him “can be used only with extreme caution.” He was hoping to augment them with material from Vienna, but again “war has delayed publication ... other gaps may yet be filled by a more careful sifting of Spanish manuscripts” (pp. 442–443).

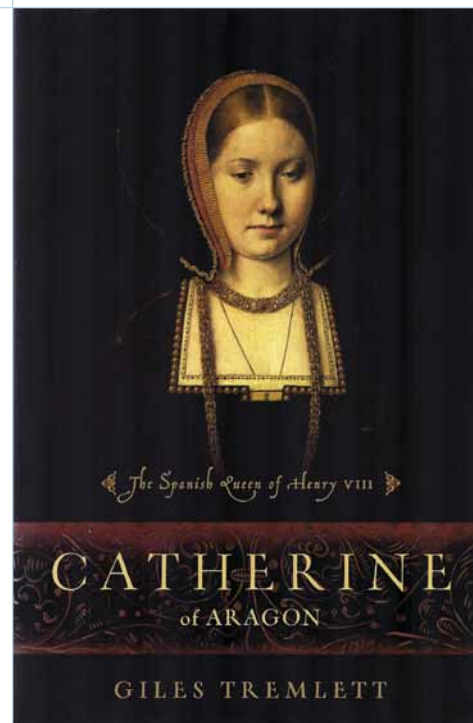
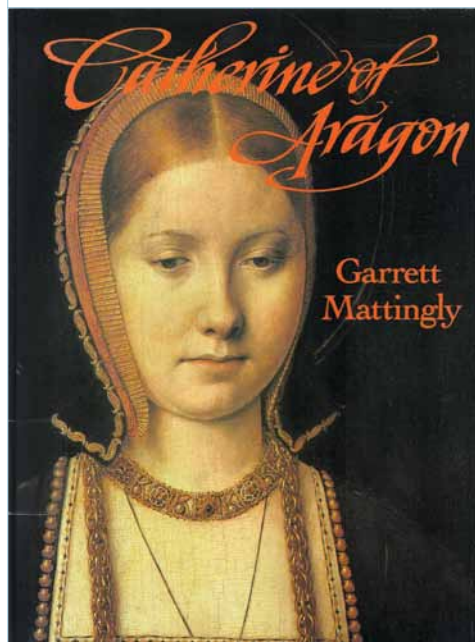
QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW

by fr. philip edwards, o.s.b.

The Book-of-the-Month Club made this book (without revisions) available again in 1990 (Mattingly had died in 1962). The dust jacket in glossy black featured a stunning portrait by Michel Sittow, reputed to be her favorite painter, which has its home in Vienna's Museum of Historical Art.

Now, an English journalist, Giles Tremlett, who (according to the blurb on the dust jacket) is “the *Guardian's* Madrid correspondent” and “has lived in and written about Spain for the past twenty years,” has brought a new account that benefits from greater access to Spanish sources. The dust jacket is also a glossy black with the Sittow portrait prominently centered, and the title is again *Catherine of Aragon*, but with the explicit subtitle “the Spanish Queen of Henry VIII.”

Tremlett's “take” is much the same as Mattingly's:



CATHERINE OF ARAGON

The Spanish Queen of Henry VIII

Giles Tremlett

Walker Publishing Company, 2010

ISBN 978-0-8027-7916-8

... the voices in the Spanish manuscript tell a different story from that narrated by the English witnesses; the Spanish witness also add details to some other events in Catherine's life. Their voices have been included in this author's attempt to approach Catherine, at least initially, via her native Spain and her Spanish family rather than through her Tudor in-laws.

For this writer, who is not a Roman Catholic, it is Catherine's intensity of character that sets her apart. It makes her much more than a passive victim caught in the tumultuous river of history. Catherine of Aragon, in short, made her choices. She was fully aware of the extreme consequences these

may have brought both for her and for England. Her strength lay as much in what she did as in the knowledge of what may have happened as a result. Henry VIII never met a tougher opponent on or off the battlefield” (Introduction, pp. 3–5)

Youngest (and most like) daughter of the redoubtable Isabel of Castile, who, with her wily consort, Ferdinand of Aragon, reconquered for both church and crown a kingdom which would become under their grandson, the new Charlemagne, the center of worldwide empire, Catherine was intended for royal greatness. The dank grey of Welsh Ludlow Castle is hardly the equal of the golden shadows of the Moorish Alhambra of her preteen years, but Princess of Wales and Queen of England she truly was: patroness of arts and letters, victorious general on the battlefield, staunch believer in the Prince of Peace and His Petrine Church, she is a presence in history to acknowledge and recognize, to remember and honor.

Both writers concur in this; one is hard-pressed to choose between the two, Tremlett has the glossier (and fewer) pages and color reproductions of the portraits; his style is leaner and more cutting-to-the-chase, but both writers are eminently readable and fully annotated. The Mattingly classic holds its own, and while it may be a bit more of a grandfatherly wingback compared to the younger writer's Danish Modern, it is not at all overstuffed and snoozy. Mattingly's wider historical scope gives us more fleshed-out characters, especially those we know on the English side of the story, but his focus is the same. Tremlett does come through with the Spanish scene and the formative environment of Catherine's beginnings.

I hope our librarian will keep both volumes on our shelves. ✧

THE CHURCH AND THE SHORE

People hungry for the transcendent, longing for the timeless, say, “Oh, the church. The church is a carnival!”

For people from the Midlands, speaking of the sea evokes boardwalks and cotton-candy, casinos and roller coasters—but that is only how things are at the end of the train-line, where the highway meets the coast. For if you want to get to the ocean, you almost always have to go first to a popular beach or a busy port. But if you really want an experience of the sea, you have to walk past all that, past the sunbathers and the moated sand-castles, and put your bare feet in the sudsing surf. Let the ocean speak to you. Perhaps it will invite you in for a swim, or perhaps it will call you out on a pier, or even into a ship, far out into its mystery. Or perhaps it will gently entice you along, gathering shells, beyond the last houses, to a private cove, where it can speak secretly to your heart.

It is the same with those who have a hunger for the transcendent, for that which puts our human concerns in perspective. They go to a church seeking the Holy One, and often enough church seems like a crowded resort or a busy boardwalk, full of things that have little to do with God and of people who seem interested only in cotton candy and bingo. But God is there, just as the sea is, waiting, just beyond the confusion. All we have to do is walk down into the sand and put our feet in the water.

Many of the people whose superficiality we complain of will, at some moment of their day, turn and gaze at the waves and drink in the power and the peace of the ocean. Each one has his own relation with it—whether the swimmer, the surfer, the diver, the fisherman on the pier, the couple gazing silently from the cliff’s edge, the monk in his island hermitage, the navigator far out at sea, the sailor on night watch—even the tree bending beneath

DIPTYCH HOYTPID

TWO IMAGES OF THE CHURCH • BROTHER BEN HARRISON, MC

Sometimes I feel the need to explain to others, and even to myself, why I am drawn to the Church despite the fact that it often seems an obstacle and a scandal. When I focus past its outward flaws and when I recognize my own, I see how much I need it. Here are two of the answers I have found, two separate images that help me know the church’s deeper claims on me.

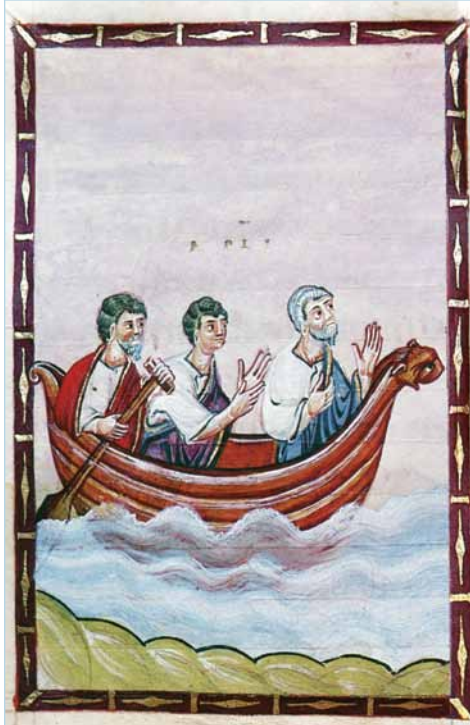


ILLUSTRATION BASED ON AN ILLUMINATION FROM THE CODEX EGBERTI

the wind’s wail, the gull turning on a wing-point, the dolphin leaping in the storm’s wake. The sea makes them all one and draws them into a song of haunting loveliness.

Oh, the church, the church—place where little souls meet the Infinite, place where the fathomless deep makes love to land. Don’t be afraid of the church. Christ is the place where the transcendent Godhead meets and marries his creation! And the Church is his Body, his Bride. Yes, it is crowds and casinos, but it is all those other things too. Just keep walking, keep seeking, keep letting yourself be called—past the confusion, past the noise, toward the wonder of the wild and living deeps.



THE SAVING HAND

People say, “How can you stay in the church with all its weaknesses, controversies and corruption?” My response: I am a lost soul who regularly experiences my need of a Savior—and Jesus is the loving Savior who has come to find me and calls me to follow him. I trust him, need him and want to give my heart to him.

The Church, as St. Paul said, is his body, and so I cling to it as to him, and I love it for his sake. “How,” they ask, “can you cling to something that is so obviously fallen, that so pitifully fails to live up to its high calling? Isn’t that evidence that it is not what it purports to be?”

When mankind was lost and could not find its way to God, God spoke his Word to it and said, “Come to me.” But we could not come—we lacked the courage, the strength, the will. So he came to us as one of us to be a bridge across the chasm.

And when he became one of us and took upon himself our humanity, he took his descent from sinners—he took to himself that whole lineage of wretchedness, misery, perversity and treachery that is the history of man, and of God’s chosen people. He took that to himself, to his heart. It is true that the heat of his holiness purified and burned clean the raw material of our humanity when he first approached it in Mary, and it is true that his holiness continues to cauterize, cleanse and heal certain souls who allow him to approach them intimately.

But for us who yearn for him while still fearing to give ourselves totally to him, he comes more gently, more gradually—and for this reason we can still fail him, each in our own way; still betray him, each to our own degree.

Through it all he loves us and looks at us piercingly, as he did Peter when he denied him. Jesus gazes at us with a terrible tenderness, with a searing sorrow, with pity, with love, with a challenge to let him make us new. He does not let us evade the truth of our betrayal, but he no more stops loving us than the sun stops shining, can no more stop calling us than earth’s gravity can release its hold on us.

I cling to the church because it is the hand the Lord holds out to me drowning in my swamp of self. I do not refuse that hand because it is too human, because it is rough, scarred and caked with the mire of human misery. On the contrary, I cling to it because he is my only hope and it is *his* hand that he holds out to me. Under the calluses, the wounds and the muck, I feel the warmth and strength of *his* grip on me, and I pray that he will never let me go. ✠



"ALTARPIECE," 1989-1992. OIL EMULSION ON PANEL, GOLD, GRAPHITE, ACRYLIC

"What did you go out to see?"

REFLECTIONS ON ART AND FAITH IN THE DESERT

BY MICHAEL SCHRAUZER

MANY YEARS AGO, while on a weekend retreat at the Abbey, I found myself wandering down a dusty path leading to one of the less-visited corners of the monastic property. Being in a pensive frame of mind, I was absently scanning the random pebbles and stones on the ground before me when something oddly regular and artificial caught my eye. Stooping down, I picked up a perfectly circular metal ring, about eight inches in diameter, made of what seemed like very stiff wire, heavily rusted from years of exposure.

I say it was perfectly circular, but actually it was not quite perfect, for the circumference was broken by a gap of about an eighth

of an inch. At first I was disappointed, even irritated. I wanted my find to be whole and perfect. That this thing was almost but not quite what it "should" have been seemed to me to sum up all the disappointments and failed promises of life. (I said I was in a pensive frame of mind.) But then I remembered something I had read in a book about symbols. While the circle is usually interpreted as an emblem of eternity and divine perfection, it has, as all symbols do, negative connotations as well, namely, the idea of being locked inside the self and closed off from the outside world, or being trapped in endless cycles of humdrum existence and repeated sins. But the gap in the broken circle allows commu-

nication between the inner and outer realms, and represents the shattering act of Christ's resurrection and the grace of the forgiveness of sins, which destroys "the futile way of life" and breaks the shackles of sin and death.

Many people come to the Abbey looking for meaning. On my walk I had found it quite literally lying at my feet. That rusted piece of metal was probably a piston ring for some long-ago disintegrated motor, cast off and forgotten, but for me it was something beautiful, a work of art, a symbol I could actually hold in my hands. I took it home as if it were a rare treasure and hung it on the wall of my studio for inspiration; I even had thoughts of incorporating it into one of my own artworks (though that piece never materialized).

The larger lesson I took from this incident was that life is profoundly and inescapably meaningful, as long as we keep our eyes open. Meaning can appear in unexpected places and in seemingly-insignificant forms, but it can be found everywhere we look, in every *thing* that surrounds us in life, in art and nature. Of course, like God himself, meaning cannot be seen, not directly. But then, that is not entirely true — meaning *can* be seen, if we recognize that beauty is just the visual form of truth, incarnated in matter. When we see a beautiful thing, we are seeing an aspect of the divine Beauty, which is the splendor of Truth shining on the eyes of the soul. Our earthly eyes, all too easily beguiled by the delights of art and nature, are actually designed to lead us from these visible things in an ascending path up the royal "Way of Beauty," the *Via Pulchritudinis* (as a recent Church document termed it), to the invisible God who is the Author of all their meaning and truth and beauty.

St. Andrew's Abbey, set in the midst of great natural beauty, is well-known as a haven for the arts. Father Maur's ceramics, Father Werner's pastels, the exhibits and arts and crafts displays that were so integral to the Fall Festival, the conferences on

literature, music, film, and dance, and so on inspired, and inspire, countless visitors and retreatants. Individual works of art are scattered all around the Abbey too, though in keeping with the monastic atmosphere, most are relatively quiet and unobtrusive, and almost blend in with their surroundings: the rough-hewn Stations of the Cross, the Needle's Eye, the Madonna and Child statue, and the open-armed Jesus. More noticeable perhaps are the large Crucifix on the outside of the chapel, and within, the tabernacle, the stained glass windows, and the old carved Crucifix, to say nothing of the various pictures and sculptures in the common areas.

Every work of art is a visible sign of something invisible, and all these artistic objects are there to remind us that the Abbey is a holy place. We may walk around the grounds admiring the trees and plants and the desert environment, but the monks want to ensure that as we do we will come across reminders of where it all comes from and what it is all for. These little epiphanies and artificial theophanies, devised and planted by the hands of artists, are meaningful in themselves as works of art, but as *sacred* art they give an explicitly supernatural meaning to the natural spaces around them and direct the prayerful visitor through them off toward the hidden things of God.

Nature is God's art, of course, so it too is charged with meaning, and meeting it in its stark desert guise is an essential part of the Valyermo experience. For many, in fact, finding God in Nature, in a glorious sunset, in a glittering night sky, in a delicate flower, is much easier than finding Him in art. Whether it is from educational neglect, the excesses of Modern and Postmodern art, or the distractions of electronic media, appreciation of art in its less showy traditional forms has suffered much in recent times. There is indifference, ignorance, and even hostility to art in some quarters, even in the Church, to the point that Art and Nature are sometimes

set up to be implacable enemies, like Mordor and the Shire. And just like them, the one is obviously evil and the other obviously good. Natural is “real,” artificial is “fake.”

As we know, words and meanings shift over time. I tell my students a well-known (but probably apocryphal) story about St. Paul’s Cathedral in London: After the original edifice was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666, architect Christopher Wren was employed to design the replacement. Upon its completion years later, Queen Anne toured the cathedral and remarked to Wren that she found his work “amusing, artificial, and awful.” Though her review sounds insulting today, at the time it was high praise: she meant it was thought-provoking, artfully done, and awe-inspiring; calling it “natural” would have branded it crude and unrefined.

The ages-long face-off between the artificial and natural realms follows inevitably from our being thinking, acting minds set free in the heart of God’s creation: anything we do there is artificial by definition. It is reflected in two different approaches to life and art: realism and idealism. Realists honor Nature as the best possible model for artistic inspiration and imitation, one which the artist may reverently and haltingly approach but never quite reach, whereas idealists, perhaps inspired by the idea of the immaculate Paradise, judge the world as it is now to be full of flaws and shortcomings in need of fixing. Fixing them and showing the world as it *should* be is a job for human artistry. Realism is the “default” philosophy for many people, but lest you think you have nothing of the idealist in you, recall the last time you brushed your hair or put on makeup and nice clothes or “composed” a photograph and smiled when you had your picture taken. More generally idealists are inclined to look past surface appearances and focus on the essential core, the meaning behind the matter. That explains the “unrealistic” style of icons, for example, as well as the innocent

faces and harmonious compositions of the Renaissance. A realist might counter that this is indeed unrealistically remote from real life. Besides, art itself depends on Nature for its material existence and inspiration, since every work of art is made from rearranged bits of preexisting matter: art is, as the saying goes, “the mirror of nature.”

Fortunately, we do not have to choose between these two factions, as there is truth in both ways of thinking. Nature and ideas together inspire art, and I would add that art itself inspires art. So the Abbey and what it stands for, its natural setting, and the works of art it hosts — all these are inspirations for artists to make more art.

I have been honored several times to have my artwork exhibited in the Fall Festival Art Gallery, and I know that my aesthetic vision has been enriched by my visits to the Abbey, starting back in the ’80s. Coming from the murk of L.A., the panoramic views and the sharp clarity of the desert air and sky were nothing short of revelatory. *This* was the way the world “should” look. There was something honest in the way the light and shadows showed the shape of the landscape, something fascinating and strangely consoling in its arid simplicity. For artistic purposes, I was never drawn to pine-covered hills, babbling rivers and white-capped mountains; that sort of thing always struck me as a visual cliché. In the desert, it seemed that every obscuring distraction had been stripped away to expose the foundation of the world.

But copying the appearance of a landscape (or anything else) in paint was never my primary artistic goal. I think I always had an instinct for blending realism with idealism, a desire to beautify nature and use its forms and features to communicate meaning and not just make a pretty picture. Probably this comes from Catholic incarnational thinking and a sacramental approach to material things: creation has been sanctified by Christ, and everything is a symbol for a greater re-

ality. So painted skies and landscapes easily become stand-ins for Heaven and Earth, or time and eternity. Representations of fire and water, simple geometric shapes and mathematical proportions, and actual materials like gold leaf and lead lend themselves to a wealth of symbolic possibilities. Their arrangement in triptychs and compartmentalized frames is a reflection of the interconnected design of creation and the hierarchy of relationships between Nature and Man and God.

Arranging things is what art and design are all about. For many years I have also been designing the periodical you are holding in your hands, the *Valyermo Chronicle*. Probably most people do not give graphic design a second thought (in fact, if you do, you are likely a designer yourself, or are looking at a very good or a very bad design), but I think even this humble art form is capable of meaningful expression. When I lay out an issue, for example, I try to match the design with the content and produce a workable union of form and meaning, or more simply, something pleasing and readable. No doubt in all these artistic endeavors I have failed far more often than I have succeeded, but my intention has been to bring some beauty and meaning into the world.

But no matter whether you are an artist, or simply enjoy looking at art, or prefer being out in nature itself, it is worth thinking about where you do find meaning, and what things or places awaken your awareness of God. You might also ask yourself if some kinds of art or some things or places are better suited to the task than others. As an artist, I might be expected to argue that art is the superior medium, and that best of all are the great masterworks of religious art. Certainly one advantage art has over Nature is its capacity to capture our attention. Nature is everywhere, but a framed picture hung on a wall or a sculpture set on a pedestal, by being deliberately set apart from all the other things around it, announces that it is something spe-

cial. It invites us to pause and investigate why it was put there and what it is trying to say. To be sure, Nature invites those questions, too, and yes, everything is meaningful, at least *in potentia*. But a work of art is concentrated meaning. It may signify nothing more than the artist’s desire to make something (which already alludes to God’s own creativity and his sharing of himself with Creation), or it may openly express the deepest and highest aspirations of the human soul. On the other hand, there is a lot of artistic junk out there, and unattractive parts of Nature, too; we must choose wisely what we spend our time with.

Perhaps friends of the Abbey don’t need reminding about any of this. But it strikes me that the entire Abbey itself is a work of art, built up by the monks’ tireless labor to be perfectly attuned to and framed by its natural setting. Father Eleutherius’ garden, the duck pond, the orchards, the walkways that lead gently from the cluster of modest buildings to the outlying cactus-strewn hills and back again — all these are the works of human hands inspired by Benedictine hospitality and designed to create an oasis of peace and welcome. And at the heart of it all, conferring on it the greatest and deepest meaning possible, is the chapel and the living body of Christ.

There is a world full of natural wonders out there, and an well-nigh inexhaustible treasury of human art, but everything about them will be wasted if we don’t eventually follow them to God. The 1987 Georgian film *Repentance* ends with an old woman remarking, “What good is a road if it doesn’t lead to a church?” Something similar could be said about art and nature, and our lives. ✠

Michael Schrauzer has been visiting the Abbey since the mid-1980s. He holds an MFA from Claremont Graduate School. His column, “Eyes to See,” appears in *This Rock* magazine. He writes and makes art and designs in Coronado, California. He can be contacted at mshroud@gmail.com.

Around and About THE ABBEY



HUGO'S ADVENTURES

By Jada Lin Hodgson

Chapter 1: Lost

My name is Hugo. I am a dog but not just any dog. I am a dog that has done many things and seen many things. Since I am just a dog I can't remember everything I saw and heard but I will tell you all that I remember. What made me run away? I got scared by a crash of thunder. When I ran away I thought, "This is your chance, Hugo. Come on: chose your path, go back home like a coward or escape to strange lands or somewhere strange and unique." So I chose option two and kept on going forward to strange places. I was getting a little homesick and hungry but then I thought, "Finally, a time to myself and the voice in my head." So I kept walking on until I saw something. It was a little forest! When I got closer I saw there was a bridge to the forest and a squirrel guarding the entrance to the forest. But he wasn't doing a very good job because he was just sitting there eating nuts. When he saw me he said,

"Halt!" and I said,

"Hello, my name is Hugo."

"Hello," he said, "my name is Embrocous."

"Hi, Embrocous! Can I cross?"

"Yes, if you will take me with you."

"Sure," I said, "Why not?" So we became companions. And so we set off, the voice in my head, Embrocous, and I.

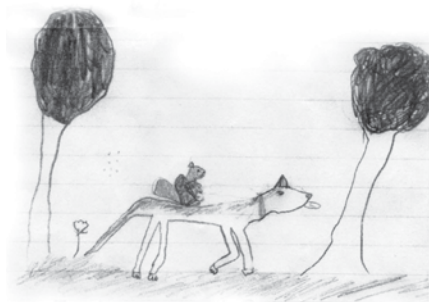
Story Contest

The story contest announced in our last issue elicited a wealth of creative responses. Forty-one entries reached us from young writers and artists in fifth grade or below in California—and Texas! Deciding which entry to publish here was no easy task. All the work submitted was a pleasure to read and our sincere thanks go to everyone who took the time and put forth the effort to take part in the contest. Our congratulations, however, go to **Jada Lin Hodgson** (age eight) from St. Ann School, Ridgecrest, CA, whose story and drawings appear below.

Although we are only printing one story, we thought our readers might enjoy seeing a wider selection of the artwork that accompanied many of the other entries.

MONKS' FEAST DAYS

June	29	Br. Peter
August	8	Br. Dominique
September	3	Fr. Gregory
	21	Fr. Matthew



Chapter 2: Companions

Embrocous and I were good companions. Often we got lost, but I helped find our way back on the trail. We found our poor forest path had seen its last of us as we came to a little ghost town. At least we got a place to rest. We set off in the morning to find a new place to sleep. After that we set off into some different woods. This time we found someone new: a raccoon named Marmaduke. He said, "Help, someone, please! I'm being chased by a pack of hungry wolves!"

We had no choice but to let him come along. I mean we couldn't just leave him there and get eaten by the wolves, could we? No, we couldn't. So we took him in.

"Oh, thank you thank you thank you thank you!" he said.

"Okay, alright. Let's go before the wolves get the scent of us!"

So we left until we came to an oak tree where Embrocous insisted on picking some acorns. I heard Marmaduke whisper,

"Snob. He thinks he can..."

By that time I gave him a little nudge in the arm.

"Ow!" he said, "What was that for?"

"For saying something bad about our friend," I said.

"Well," said Embrocous, "we can get going now, off we go."

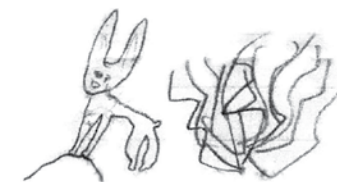
We walked and walked until we came to a desert and we saw a jack rabbit run across the place and stop when he saw us.

"Pretty strange for a fox," he said. "Who are you anyway?"

"I'm not a fox! I'm a dog!" I said.
"Oh! So that's why you're so strange looking," he said. "Can you help me? A snake wants to eat me!" he said.
"Okay. What's your name?" I said.
"My name is Bran."

Chapter 3: Home

We walked and walked what felt like one hundred miles! But fortunately we didn't. We came to a forest and we wandered around until we saw a fox.



The reddest fox I have ever seen! I walked over to her and said,

"Hi, my name is Hugo. What's your name?"

"Zendaya," she said. "Can I come to where ever you're going?"

"Yes," I said. "Okay."

So my friends helped me get home and I took them to their homes and then I traveled back to my home. And that is the story of my adventures.

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All proceeds will benefit the monastic Community at Saint Andrew's Abbey.

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO SENT IN WORK FOR OUR STORY CONTEST!

Abigail Mailes, *Pearblossom, CA*
Zyre Lagarile, *Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Catholic School, Santa Clarita, CA*
Caroline, *St. Ann School, Ridgecrest, CA*
*Notre Dame Catholic School,
Wichita Falls, TX:*

Kacey Meyering Lucas Pena
Christoffer Gravaas Manh Nguyen
Ellen Parkey Victoria Chapa
Tanner Beard Cecilia Parker
Julian Bras Allyson Karr
Kamryn Macha
Jack Trivette
J.B. Lim
Devyn Quintero
Trisha Palomo
Julia Jachimowicz
Andi Sanchez
Pernille G.



A NEW FACE...

The monastic community was delighted to welcome **Frank Echeverry** as an observer this past April.

...AND THE RETURN OF A FAMILIAR ONE

Paul Cloney also came back to Valyermo in April to resume his observership.

Please join us in praying for both these men as they progress in their discernment!

VOLUNTEER AT ABBEY BOOKS & GIFTS! Volunteers are always needed and greatly appreciated in various departments of the Abbey, but just now there is a particular need in Abbey Books & Gifts. To offer the gift of your time in the shop, or to inquire about other volunteer opportunities, call 661-944-8959 or email development@valyermo.com

OBLATE NEWS: Upcoming oblate meetings held at the Abbey will take place on June 12 (Pentecost), August 14, and September 11. Conferences begin at 2 p.m. in the Conference Center. Reserve your place for lunch by calling the Retreat Office at 661-944-2178 or emailing retreats@valyermo.com.

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

WHEN YOU WRITE.... In writing to St. Andrew's Abbey (rather than to an individual monk), please indicate the nature or your correspondence or the department for which it is intended on the outside of the envelope—e.g., "Retreat reservation," "Development Office," "Mass request." *This will help to ensure the timely delivery of your letter.*

THE CHRONICLE IS NOW ONLINE If you prefer to read this publication online just send an email, including your name, 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.

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 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.

WE VALUE OUR FRIENDS AND DO NOT BUY,
RENT, SELL OR SHARE OUR MAILING LISTS.



SAINT ANDREW'S ABBEY

A Monastery of the Order of Saint Benedict

JOIN THE ABBEY'S Renew a Room Project!

Guests come to the Abbey for spiritual renewal. Our guest rooms have provided a peaceful lodging to hundreds of retreatants since 1950. Now, the time has arrived when our rooms need to be renewed. If you have experienced renewal at the Abbey and would like to be part of this needed project, a contribution opportunity is available:

17 ROOMS NEED THE FOLLOWING:

- New double pane sliding glass and bathroom windows
- Solid entry doors
- Bathroom Improvements
- New bedspreads and window treatments
- Plus other improvements that will make the rooms more comfortable



YOUR CONTRIBUTION IN ANY AMOUNT WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN.

Individuals, friends of the Abbey, retreat groups, Oblates:

Your contribution can ensure hospitable accommodations for guests to find rest (including yourself!). The total cost to renew each room is \$5,000 and all contributions will go directly to the fund for each of these planned improvements. Groups can combine their contributions and fund the entire makeover of a particular room, a great project for an Oblate group.

THREE WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROJECT:

1. Send Check To: St. Andrew's Abbey Business Office
Renew a Room Project
P.O. Box 40
Valyermo, CA 93563
2. You may call (661) 944-8959 to donate with a credit card over the phone.
3. Make your donation online by visiting www.saintandrewsabbey.com and clicking the Renew a Room page.

ST. ANDREW'S ABBEY P.O. Box 40 VALYERMO CA 93563-0040
WWW.SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM



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.

THE INNER PILGRIMAGE

Monday, June 20 – Friday, June 24

Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

Audrey Spindler, PhD, RD, Obl. OSB

The presenters will describe the dynamics of the spiritual journey from purification to theosis, as well as the rhythmic movements between suffering /darkness and consolation/union/joy. Material will be drawn from traditional monastics and mystics, as well as contemporary psychology.

\$380 single; \$300 shared.

BOWED DOWN WITH GRIEF

Friday, June 24 – Sunday, June 26

Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

This retreat looks at our losses and examines what happens to us when someone we love dies. We will attempt to look at grief through the eyes of faith as a personal journey with Jesus, the saints, and Holy Scripture. Time will be given for personal sharing and for rediscovering better coping skills for stress, loss, and depression.

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY FOR THE LAITY

Wednesday, June 29 – Sunday, July 3

Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

This mid-week through weekend workshop is intended to introduce and deepen for the Oblates of Valyermo those values and practices we share in common, whether as Benedictines in the cloister or in the world.

\$380 single; \$300 shared.

A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES: Reflections on Twelve-Step Spirituality

Friday, July 8 – Sunday, July 10

Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

This retreat is a personal exploration of Twelve-Step Spirituality for those in recovery and those who have seen the efficacy of these spiritual principles in the lives of those who practice them.

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

MANY ARE CALLED: A Discernment Retreat

Monday, July 11 – Friday, July 15

Monks of Valyermo

It is the vocation of every Christian to be Christ's presence in the world. While some are called to be parents; some, as single men and women of faith; some others hear a call to ministry or religious life. This retreat is intended to give those discerning ministry or religious life the time and space for quiet reflection and prayer. Brief conferences will be offered as well as opportunities to speak with a monk, but the primary goal is to simply listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

\$380 single; \$300 shared.

SPIRITUALITY AND CONTEMPORARY CINEMA: Summer Session

Friday, July 15 – Sunday, July 17

Nikki Tucker, Obl. OSB

The greatest human and spiritual truths are always embodied in stories and narratives. Today

much of the burden of storytelling is carried by movies. This year we are continuing the theme of *Major Life Transitions*. We will view four films on '...and then there were three' and have intensive discussions on how spiritual realities are shown through their plots, symbols, acting and so forth. This workshop seeks to raise and focus consciousness of the medium and offer ways to use it in the ongoing project of spiritual growth.

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

WOMEN IN EARLY JUDEO- CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Wednesday, July 27 – Sunday, July 31

Br. Patrick Sheridan, OSB,

Michaela Ludwick, Obl. OSB,

Cheryl Evanson, Obl. OSB

From Ruth and Esther to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, from Mary Magdalene to Syncletica and Mary of Egypt, the desert mothers, we will examine the importance of the roles of women in the development of Judaism and Early Christianity using both biblical texts and other writings. Time will be allotted for prayerful reflection on these texts and group discussion.

\$380 single; \$300 shared.

THE JESUS PRAYER

Friday, August 5 – Sunday, August 7

Fr. Maximos Davies

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Jesus Prayer is an ancient monastic means to "prayer of the heart." This workshop will help put the contemplative Jesus Prayer tradition at the service of contemporary Christians who seek to encounter God, "heart to heart."

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

THE ART OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

Monday, August 8 – Friday, August 12

Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

Milania Austin Henley, Obl. OSB

Friendship has always been an important and essential part of human experience. Cicero called it a "necessity." Aristotle said true friends seek the good in each other, love each other not for what they can get out of the relationship but for what they are. Spiritual friendship goes deeper and has been described in depth by Aelred of Rievaulx and St. Francis de Sales. Its most profound characteristic is that its foundation is in the love of God and the desire to share with each

other a deepening of each person's relationship with God. We will explore all these facets of friendship and focus on developing the skills that can intensify a spiritual relationship, particularly deep listening of the heart.

\$380 single; \$300 shared.

THE THEOLOGY OF EVIL AND THE NOVELS OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

Friday, August 19 – Sunday, August 21

Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB,

Buzz McCoy, Obl. OSB

Charles Williams, a contemporary of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, was a lay-theologian, poet, playwright, and novelist. In this workshop we will focus on two of Williams' seven novels: *War in Heaven*, and *Descent into Hell*. Though admittedly obscure, Williams' novels have been described as some of the noblest and most moving pages in English literature. He was preoccupied with the Christian view of evil and the contention between the forces of good and evil in the world. Accordingly, as an introduction to the two novels, we shall study the Christian understanding of evil in the world as well as the life and theology of Charles Williams.

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

PROTESTANTS ON MONASTICISM

Friday, August 26 – Sunday, August 28

Dr. Greg Peters, Obl. OSB

Though the institution of monasticism was dissolved in most Christian traditions that were born out of the sixteenth-century Reformation, there were always Protestant leaders who mourned its loss and argued for its return. This retreat will look at those authors' rationale for the re-institution of monasticism among Protestant churches and explore communities that have come into existence as a result in the past two centuries.

\$260 single; \$170 shared.

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OF ALL RETREATS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

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(click "Retreat House")

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