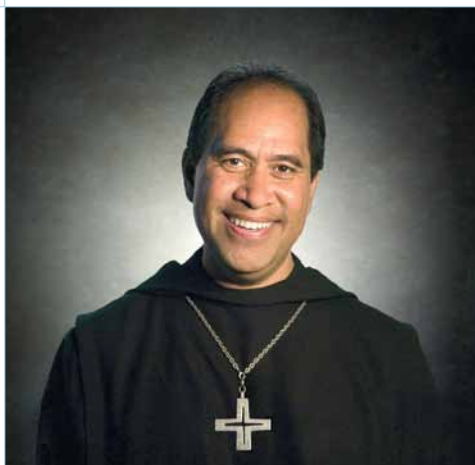


THE VALYERMO  
*Chronicle*

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



Nº 233 ✠ FALL 2011



was clearly 'working', something had changed. In one of my meetings with my (new) spiritual director, he asked me the big question, "How is your prayer life?" I quickly responded, "Good. I pray the Divine Office every day with the monastic community without fail." He said, "Good, but what about your *personal* prayer time?" Silence. I was silent because I had no answer for him. If truth be told, my personal prayer time was really non-existent. Every free moment I had was spent studying.

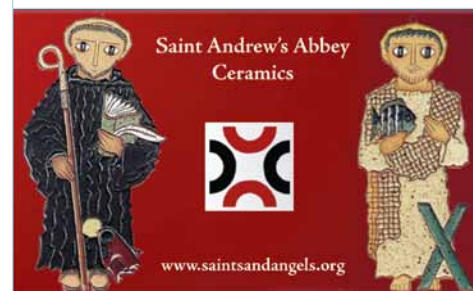
That semester and every one after that, my spiritual director challenged me to spend more time in private prayer, alone with the Lord—and he wasn't talking about ten or fifteen minutes either. He was talking more like *at least* an hour a day. I knew that this meant I would have less time for studying, which would mean my grades would eventually begin to slip. Nevertheless, I knew my spiritual director was right. He told me that spending personal time with the Lord in prayer is essential for every Christian, but especially for a monk whose life is dedicated to the Sacraments and service of God's people.

So even though it would be difficult for me, I was ready to accept the fact that I would be getting lower grades from here on out. However, to my surprise, even though I spent more time in prayer and therefore less time studying, my grades did not slip. I was still getting good grades. Not only that, but I started to play racquetball almost every day for

an hour. I joined a choir, then I led a choir, and I was even on the student body council. I couldn't believe it. My biggest fear in spending more time in prayer was that it would take precious time away from some other important tasks and projects that needed to be done, but that was not the case at all.

Many of us think that to commit more time to personal prayer means taking time away from other important tasks, and because of that, we don't actually make time for prayer. The truth of the matter is it does. Making time for personal prayer *does* take away time from other things. However, somehow God works it all out. I don't know how he does it, but he does, and it doesn't make sense. How is it possible to spend less time working, but accomplish more? It's not, but with God all things are possible. Only God can do something like that, and he wants to do that for each of us if only we take the time to spend with him in private, personal prayer.

*Abbot Damien* ✠



# THE VALYERMO Chronicle

NUMBER 233 ✠ FALL 2011

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**T**HERE ARE SOME GIFTS IN LIFE that take our breath away, so unexpected, so beautiful, so full and so unrivaled are they in their meaning. Some of these gifts have material value. Others, symbolic value. Still others, personal, restorative, or spiritual value.

But all gifts, no matter their import, have only *relative* value—except for one: the Eucharist. The Eucharist encompasses every grand quality of the gifts mentioned above, and all of the values therein. But unlike other gifts, no matter how singular or sublime, the Eucharist has *eternal* quality and value, because the Eucharist *is* Christ, the Gift par excellence of God's own self.

This is the first of a series of five reflections on this gift beyond all measure. These reflections are not intended to be theologically exhaustive dogmatic treatises, nor are they intended to “break new ground.” They are simply the sharing of my heart about the One I love from the proverbial “monastic cell” that He has given me to pray in and to share from. I claim no vision or insight beyond what every baptized Christian is called to, which is to say that I can speak only from the love and intimacy to which He has called me and to which He has called *all* of us, and from which my life and yours is intended to flow. Every human person is created from and called to share in an eternal communion of love, and the Eucharist is God's great facilitation of this unitive call. Those who live that call to the full we call “saints,” and while there have been many saints and seers in Christ's Church that can be rightly called “Eucharistic mystics,” one in particular may help us in these reflections to focus more carefully on the wonder of who Christ is in the Eucharist.

That saint is the “Angelic Doctor,” Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas is a doctor of the Church, one as learned and erudite as he was mystically in love. His writings continue to be a well-spring form which the Church draws some of her deepest theological and spiritual insights,



BENOZZO GOZZOLI, "THE TRIUMPH OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS," 1471 (SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

## Greater Love Hath No Man:

### A REFLECTION ON THE EUCHARIST

Part 1 of 5: "As I Have Done for You..."

BY BROTHER CASSIAN DIROCCO, O.S.B.

and Thomas himself was affirmed in his importance perhaps no more clearly than when he offered a piercingly eloquent reflection on the Eucharist in the thirteenth century. After writing, Thomas was praying before a crucifix when Christ told him, “You have written well of me, Thomas ... what do you ask of me?” Thomas’ reply was simply, “Only yourself, Lord.” Some years ago while on pilgrimage, I myself prayed before that same Crucifix and begged the Lord not for the eloquence of Aquinas, but rather to *be in love* with Love Itself as was the Angelic Doctor. In some sense, I wanted what Thomas had; not jealously, but indeed ardently, because in Thomas’ colloquy with our Lord I saw poignantly the very center and summit of Christian life: Christ is not only the gift-giver. He Himself *is* the gift! And Thomas—as we are all called to do—lived the insight of that gift through his intimacy with Christ in the Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that “Man can only find himself by making a total and complete gift of himself,” and further elucidates the nature of that self-gift in telling us that “Christ reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear.” That “supreme calling” made clear in Christ is to become an *alter Christus*, another Christ, by imbibing, loving, and living Christ’s self-gift in being that self-same gift to others. The nature of this gift is Eucharistic, for under the “appearances” of me, I make *Him* present. St. Teresa of Avila reminds us of this when she tells us that “Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Your eyes are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out on the earth. Yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good. And yours are the hands by which he is to bless us now.” Blasphemy? No, orthodoxy. St. Teresa, too, was a doctor of the Church.

The world only needs me insofar as I can be the light of the world that Christ tells me in the gospels that I am. That light is *His* light. If I am sharing another light besides His, I am

sharing only “me,” and that is the perennial recipe for counterfeit gods. But, if we dare to be empty of our own lesser lights, then the Church has the chance to be the organ of salvation for all that Christ founded it to be.

So, how do we do that? Our Blessed Mother has the key, and Aquinas (to whom we will now return) recognized it: it is a Eucharistic key which she gives to all of her children who ask. She herself said, “*Magnificat ánima mea, Dóminum.*” My soul *magnifies* the Lord! Who but the *Theotokos*—the God-bearer—can say such a thing so fully? And yet, we as her children are similarly drawn into the fullness of that same “magnification” by living a Eucharistic life full of the Son she gives to us. The great Fulton Sheen once said that no one has ever had more right than Mary to say, “This is *my* body, and this is *my* blood,” for all that Christ has of His humanity comes from her. And as she gave Christ to the world in His first coming so long ago, she still serves as the perfect and pure means through which He comes to us today. Whenever we pray the Magnificat, we open our hands and our hearts to receive Mary’s grace of living a truly Eucharistic life. In this recognition and in his great love for Christ and His Blessed Mother, Thomas composed a beautiful antiphon—a short verse or phrase that encapsulates a prayerful theme—for the Vespers Magnificat of the feast of Corpus Christi. It is this antiphon that we will use in our upcoming Eucharistic reflections to hopefully more fully understand and pray about its indispensable significance in our lives. The antiphon, *O Sacrum Convivium*, is:

*O sacrum convivium! in quo Christus súmitur:  
Recólitur memória passióis ejus:  
Mens implétur grátia:  
et futúrae glóriæ nobis pignus datur, allelúia.*

O sacred banquet! in which Christ is received,  
the memory of his Passion is renewed,  
the mind is filled with grace,  
and a pledge of future glory is given to us, alleluia.

Please turn to page 21.



# Valyermo Charism

BY EILEEN PRENDERGAST, OBL O.S.B.

**A**T THE OBLATE PENTECOST Meeting, Abbot Damien asked, “What is the Valyermo Charism?” It started me thinking after I left that day. Most oblates have a perception of the charism. At a deep level, I’m sure it holds a special meaning for all of us.

The dictionary definition for “charism”—“a compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others”—was too much about the person. Valyermo is much more than a personal attraction. The second meaning—“a divinely conferred power or talent”—is perhaps a little closer, but it does not explain the charism that we know and feel.

The Greek term *charisma*, denoting “any good gift that flows from God’s benevolent love,” comes closer. It is my personal belief that the charism at Valyermo is very much an effect of the Holy Spirit acting upon those who are open and welcome the Spirit to work within them. We Catholics sometimes underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. He is with us always.

Valyermo is a sacred space. Within this stillness we come burdened by the many aspects of our life. Here in this place we can set aside all the urgencies that trouble us. Here in this sacred space we can be more open and present to God’s love for us. God’s love is an integral part of this process. I believe that the charism of Valyermo is found in its many sacred spaces which ready the soul to be touched. God’s love is always with us, but when we come to Valyermo, and stand in its sacred space, we let go of our inner clutter and allow God to touch us in unexpected ways.

Valyermo is a place of extraordinary grace. When we come to Valyermo we experience the sacred. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the love of Christ surrounds us. It is that charism that speaks to each of us in a

special way, unique to our need. Each one of us is called to hear God speak to us in different ways. The words of St. Paul spoke to the Corinthians centuries ago. His words are relevant today.

Paul gives thanks and speaks eloquently of the transcendent love of God in 1 Corinthians 1:4-7:

“I give thanks to my God always for because of the grace of God that has been given to you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“For in every way you have been enriched by Him.” God’s presence in our hearts gives us the grace that we need. Each of us is called to listen with our hearts, to be open to God’s love. The special grace of Valyermo is that, for a brief window in time, we are apart from the relentless demands that keep us too busy. In the stillness of this desert, in the quiet of our hearts, we can listen and hear with heightened awareness. We may be actively seeking God or we may be just a casual visitor. It does not matter. If we allow our hearts to be opened just a little, we will be transformed by God’s grace.

## SACRED SPACES

From the moment that we enter the gate, we are enveloped in the silence of the place. We are wrapped in an invisible blanket of love. There is a sense of relief as the pressure of driving is relieved. We’ve arrived safely. The concerns that we have brought with us are lightened, we are safe. As we breathe in the air letting the gentle breeze float around us. The leaves of the trees whisper their song. We find ourselves smiling, glad to be here. I like to believe that we have placed ourselves in God’s hands even if we are not fully conscious of His presence. We will be transformed in this sacred space.

There are many sacred spaces in which we are touched by the grace of God. Some of

my favorites include the Chapel, the lounge, the cemetery, the gardens, and in particular Fr. Eleutherius’ Garden.

The Chapel is the first place we see as we drive into the parking area. I love its quiet simplicity, the stones, the altar, the Crucifix, the stained glass windows. When I hear the wind rustling through the transept it feels like God’s whispering presence. I thank God for letting me be here in this holy place. I ask him to lead me in whatever way I need to be led.

The lounge is home to many a conversation, continuing responses to conferences, deeply personal sharing. We meet new friends connecting on our shared journeys. It is a meeting place, a collecting place and a work/writing place with wi-fi for those who need it. I have been deeply touched by listening to and sharing with the many who have crossed my path.

I think of it as a place for a modern day *Canterbury Tales* in which we Benedictine pilgrims share our stories, not always knowing how our stories will touch and enrich each of our journeys. The grace of God is ever present leading us in ways we do not imagine.

The cemetery has always been a special place for me. I do not now how I was drawn to that place but from early on, I loved to walk to the cemetery, sometimes by the roadway, sometimes by climbing to the top of the bluff and walking overland. Nowadays, I drive, but always I take a special delight in watching the sun rise above the mountains in the predawn hours. Sitting by the altar, enveloped on God’s creative love, watching the dawn break in the awesome silence, the panorama of color unfolding

before my eyes is a visual charism. “Let all the earth fear the Lord, all who live in the world stand in awe” (Ps 33:8).

In the morning light I would visit the monks’ cemetery and reflect on their lives. At first I did not know any of those who were buried there, but now I count many friends with whom I have walked and talked. The same is true for the oblate cemetery which also includes my son, Michael, as well as oblate friends. In this exquisite place, en-

circled by the distant mountains, valleys and the desert plants.

I contemplate the wonder of life and the mystery of death. The miracle of the desert is that no matter what season, the desert flowers endure. One dies, another springs up. There is a resilience to both life and death. “O precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful” (Ps 116:15). I

try to keep in mind that death is simply another transition. In this place we hold sacred the memory of our dead. The charism here is God’s loving forgiveness for us and for those that we love. “O give thanks to the Lord who is good, whose love endures forever” (Ps. 105:1).

At the end of the day we are invited to Compline, the beautiful night prayer and blessing. We walk out into the night into the deep silence of this place. We are aware of the magnificence of the sky, the wonderful mystery of the stars. A gentle breeze floats across the parkway. “He fixes the numbers of the stars and calls each one by name” (Ps. 146:4). The mystery of the night embraces us. The lingering refrain, “Keep us Lord, as we wake, guard us as we sleep: so may we wake with Christ, and take our rest in peace,”

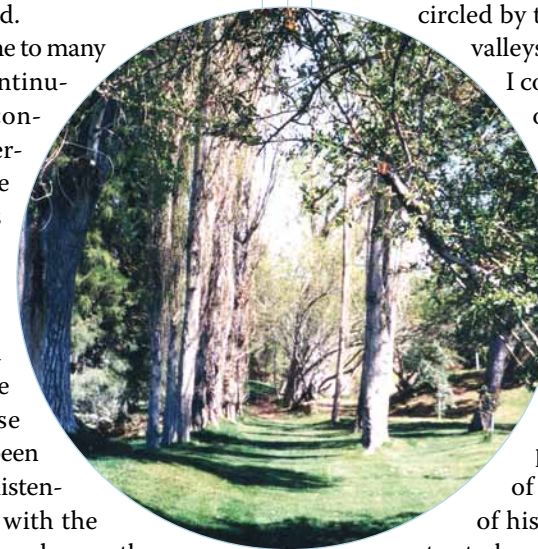


PHOTO: SUZANNE FARLEY

invites us to sleep.

Meals are always announced with the bell on the walkway, outside the guest office. We come to breakfast in silence. It is a prayerful time. We may hold the prayer from Lauds in our heart, or we may filter out the images from our sleep, inviting God to bless and guide us on this day. The sun comes through the huge glass window, dancing across the tables.

The gardens are especially beautiful in the cool of the morning. It is a time to simply soak up the love of God, letting the warm rays of sun touch us with its warmth. I particularly love Fr. Eleutherius' Garden, where each plant was blessed and planted by this singularly holy man. There is a special peace in this place. The charism here must be growth in the love of God. Each plant, each space has been reclaimed from the desert. An apt symbolism for the growth of our souls. We too, must struggle to form roots, to hold on and be nourished by the love of God, who over time will sustain us.

Just before noon, the bells call us for the Conventual Mass, the highpoint of the day. The familiar ritual envelops us, we stand, our thoughts meander, the entry procession, Mass begins. We focus on prayer as we stand before God preparing our heart and mind for the Eucharist. "O Lord you are good and forgiving, full of love to all who call" (Ps 86:5). In this place we are truly embraced by the sacred. We bring our deepest selves to be united with Christ.

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I personally have been so touched and formed in the forty-plus years that I have come to the monastery. My story is unique to me, but not so different from many who have come this way. The challenge is to find the right words to weave into a coherent charismatic experience.

When I first came to Valyermo I was deeply broken from inside and out. I could

not believe that God could even begin to forgive me for the mess that I had made of my life. For years I stubbornly clung to my despair. I almost seemed to dare God to break into my heart and find anything good.

My two younger children were in a private school that I could not afford at that time. I felt that they needed to be there to protect them from our disastrous family environment. I asked for God's help with this impossible task. When I returned home, I was at daily Mass. A woman that I knew slightly, came up to me and asked if she could do anything for me. I thought that perhaps she was offering to babysit for me. No! She made herself clear, "Could she perhaps help pay the children's tuition?" I could not believe my ears. This angel did indeed pay my daughter's tuition for the next six months. In God's eyes, it may have been a small miracle, But in my eyes God had worked an incredible miracle. I am still overwhelmed by the immensity of God's love.

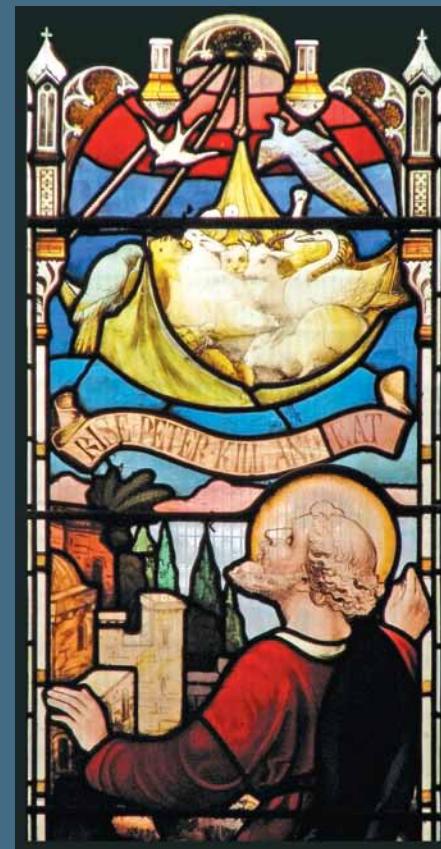
Not everything at Valyermo is miraculous. God clearly looks into our hearts and walks with us. The Charism is there for anyone ready to open his heart. I continued to struggle with deep despair as God patiently helped me to walk through some of the most difficult day's of my life. My learning curve slowly opened my eyes to a continuing growth process and transformation. I thank God for having led me to this holy place. ✠

**Eileen Prendergast** has been an oblate since 1992 and has worked with Fr. Philip,



writing a newsletter for the Claremont Oblate Chapter, for many years. She worked as a special education teacher for seventeen years in the L.A. Unified School district. Now retired, she remains active in both parish and Abbey activities.

## who are you CALLING PROFANE OR UNCLEAR?



A SHEET FULL OF ANIMALS AND  
HUMAN SOLIDARITY IN ACTS 10

BR. BEDE HAZLET, OSB

**e**ating between meals isn't supposed to be good for us, so nutritionists will be pleased to know that, if Acts 10 is anything to go by, the first pope was not in the habit of snacking. We read there that while staying in Joppa with somebody named Simon the tanner, Peter is peckish one day around lunchtime. Getting

a little fidgety, we might surmise; tempted to reach for a Snickers, perhaps; feeling a little in-the-way as lunch is being prepared. He wanders up to the rooftop terrace where at that hour of the day it must be rather warm; we would hardly be surprised if we found him dozing. In any case he slips into a trance, and what he sees that afternoon on the roof is of enormous importance for his understanding of the Gospel and our own.

It is in some ways unfortunate that in our Bibles the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are separated by St. John's Gospel: the two really constitute one work narrating in elegantly panoramic style the origins of Christianity. The story is written in the New Testament's best Greek, and gives indications that the author was familiar not only with the classical literature of that language, but with the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Probably he was a Gentile who had associated himself with Judaism as a "God-fearer" before becoming a Christian. Certainly his work reflects an interest in the relationship of Gentile Christians to both Jewish Christians *and* pagan Gentiles: he is keen to show on the one hand that Christianity has credentials for respectability in the pagan world and should not be associated with certain Jewish movements that were subversive of Roman authority, and on the other that Gentile converts to Christianity need not become Jews first.<sup>1</sup> This latter concern finds vivid expression in the passage we're concerned with here.

What we encounter in Acts 10 is a tale of two visions, carefully crafted to make a point. Early in the chapter we meet the Roman centurion Cornelius who lives at Caesarea (about thirty miles from Joppa, where Peter is staying). Luke describes Cornelius in terms that might have applied equally well to himself: a man "devout and God-fearing...who used to give alms generously to the Jewish people

1. See Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 262-273.



and pray to God constantly” (v. 2, NAB—the translation used throughout this article). An angel appears to Cornelius one fine afternoon and after the usual introductions announces that his “prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a memorial offering before God” (v. 4). The Greek word translated here as “memorial offering,” or other words related to it, are used by the Septuagint translators with reference to various categories of sacrifice oriented, in the words of Francis Giordano Carpinelli, toward “maintaining a people acceptable for cultic intimacy with God.”<sup>2</sup> These include money collected after a census offered as a memorial of expiation (Exodus 30:16) and flour offered by the poor (who cannot afford an animal sacrifice) as a guilt offering (Leviticus 5:11-13). Hinting at things to come, Luke insists here that the prayers and good works of this Gentile soldier—someone who represents the imperial authority that was such an intrusive and resented presence in Jewish life at the time—have been similarly received by God.

The angel instructs Cornelius to fetch Peter from Simon the tanner’s house and he sends some servants to do so. The narrative then shifts to Peter in Joppa for the second and still more striking visionary tale. The circumstances, as I mentioned at the outset of this article, are all too human: it’s lunchtime! Peter is *hungry* and wanders up to his host’s rooftop terrace as he waits for a meal to be prepared. In commenting on this passage the Venerable Bede suggests that the apostle’s true hunger is for the salvation of the world.<sup>3</sup> This cosmic hunger is certainly evident in the wake of Peter’s vision, but I suspect what he really wants as he lounges in the noonday heat is lunch, and as his stomach growls and his eyelids grow heavy he is confronted by a weird and

to him offensive vision of ritually prohibited food: a sheet descending from heaven full of “four-legged animals and reptiles and the birds of the sky,” with a voice that says to him, “Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat” (vv. 11-13). He indignantly declines: “never have I eaten anything profane and unclean” (v. 14), but the voice insists that “What God has made clean, you are not to call profane” (v. 15). The dialogue is repeated three times before the sheetful of creatures is hoisted skywards.

It is initially tempting to think that Luke is trying to make the kind of point here that will find application primarily in the kitchen: Christians need not regard themselves as bound by Jewish dietary laws. Indeed, later in Acts “the apostles and presbyters” of the church at Jerusalem decide that Gentile Christians need follow only a very limited program of dietary restrictions (15:22-29). But what follows the vision makes clear that its meaning—and Peter’s understanding of it—has to do with something else entirely, something much deeper.

While Peter is wondering what to make of the vision, the servants of Cornelius arrive to invite him to the centurion’s house and (at the bidding of another voice from heaven) after offering them hospitality overnight, Peter goes. There is a moment of awkwardness (Cornelius seems to think the apostle is an angel), but once this has been cleared up Peter looses no time in getting the true burden of his vision off his chest: “You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean. And that is why I came without objection when sent for” (vv. 28-29). “God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean”: the former Dominican theologian James Alison calls this “one of the most important lines in our history.”<sup>4</sup> It indicates the accelerated development that Peter’s

understanding of the Gospel has undergone in the last twenty-four hours or so. The unclean animals gathered in a sheet filled him with repugnance at first and left him puzzled “about the meaning of the vision he had seen” (v. 17). He then realized that, puzzled or not, he needed to go to Cornelius, and it was only when he entered the presence of this person whom he ought to have found so alien and off-putting (a Gentile! a Roman soldier!) that the truth of the vision hit home.

Crucially, as Alison also observes, Peter does not say, “God has shown me that no one *is* profane or unclean” but “that I should not *call* any person” so.<sup>5</sup> The thrust of the vision is not descriptive but prescriptive, a mandate (as Peter understands it now) touching the ethics of the use of words. In the names we call one another a theology and a kind of demonology of the word are alike vividly apparent. The eternal Word of the Father named the universe into being in the beginning—“Let there be light, and there was light,” and so on (Genesis 1:3). The Word will name us into eternal life at the end—remember the evocative intimacy of the “white amulet” of Revelation 2:17, “upon which is inscribed a new name, which no one knows except the one who receives it.” In between, in this world both good and fractured, how we name each other has immense power to construct either a social and ecclesial reality that evokes the patterns of the City of God, or one that imprisons and suffocates behind the adamantine ramparts of a kind of Hell. People and groups of people have a tendency to become what they are routinely called.

By abandoning the language of exclusion and indirectly calling Cornelius by a name they both share (“I myself am also”—that is, just like you—“a human being,” v. 26), Peter is doing more than indicating that in Christ’s Church there is to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile. He is establishing that, in the Kingdom over which Christ presides, all the

usual methods of sorting people into categories like “profane” or “unclean” or otherwise unacceptable simply on the basis of who they happen to be (Gentile, in this instance) dissolve. “In truth,” as Peter says later in the chapter, “I see that God shows no partiality” (v. 34).

The billion or so Catholics in the world today are indeed an astonishing cross-section of the human race, and within the community of the Church a remarkable number of human barriers of the “you’re-profane-we’re-not” type have in practice, over the centuries, come down, giving concrete expression to that oneness in Christ which must ultimately override all other distinctions. In a real sense the Church welcomes all, invites all together to aspire with God’s help to live out the law of the Gospel, and is ready with God’s pardon and healing when we fail. This is an achievement of the Holy Spirit that is easy to overlook precisely because it is so much a part of everyday ecclesial reality (especially here in Southern California). The Church has learned much about, and is still learning, how to *call* all human beings fellow-creatures of the triune God, fellow-bearers of the divine image and likeness; how to *call* all baptized persons sisters and brothers in Christ. But much remains for us to learn if we aspire to be true disciples of Christ who is “Lord of *all*” (Acts 10:36, my emphasis). Who do you still regard as beyond the pale? Who do you still *call* profane or unclean, name into unacceptability? If, like St. Peter in the presence of Cornelius, you allow yourself to encounter such people “without objection” (v. 29), you may be surprised to discover in them a tenacity of hope that puts your own faith to shame: in the dark and silent chamber at the heart of their experience of exclusion, the Spirit has touched them, Jesus in his abandonment has met them and brought them to his Father’s house. Name them God’s creatures now, brothers and sisters, and hope with them one day to be called by your own truest name in God’s kingdom. ✠

2. “‘Do this as my memorial’ (Luke 22:19): Lucan soteriology of atonement,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (January 1999): 78.

3. See Francis Martin, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Vol. V: Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 124.

4. *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 101.

5. Ibid.

## I

*"Suffering needs time. It cannot survive in the Now."*

—Eckhart Tolle.

The profoundly broken vs. the heroic over-striving towards perfection.

Two big rocks, either side.

I pass through among the smaller stones.

Frozen earth, cracked, bleached.

"The broken peoples, in despair for God is with us..."

White necklaced night, its clear cold a comfort as I rode it for nine hours into this new morning, Valyermo.

Yesterday's early evening rain frozen now into the dull earth.

In two days Christmas. But just this morning, like every day, Christ was born again. He will die again soon. He will rise again,

while the mountains bristle their white and black strokes.

"...Voice that carries the word from one person to the other (or others) passes away. The word remains...task of the priest is quite simply to be a voice for the word: 'He must increase, but I must decrease'...the voice has no other purpose than to pass on the word; it then once more effaces itself...it is not he who matters, but the other."

—Benedictus, Dec.23, Pope Benedict.

## II

*God is more easily lost when thought found.*

White light of morning.

Dull glow of cold, clouds and waiting, day before Christmas.

Three monks chat as they maneuver about the dining hall, setting the luncheon tables.

White light is here, too, church-like.

Watched the San Gabriels this morning on my slow walk to Lauds. From the old entrance road next to the absent orchard, the mountains loomed blocky, large. Closer, I saw again their great bodily length, yet they receded, less dominant. The green-black splotches dotted their white behemoth girth.

These mountains, too, are God here. I bow to them. I watch. I praise them.

This is also family, here in Valyermo. The years now. Rituals, traditions. The monks, old, a few new. Their friendship. Their jokey as well as solemn camaraderie: Fr. Aelred cuffing my head, "Next time you come, get a haircut!" I point to my placard: "I'm on a silent retreat." "I know, I know," Fr. Aelred's loud whisper as he lightly twists my left cheek. My mother's concern, too, as she grew older. Why? My mixed brown and grey curls are unruly after a restless night's sleep, but at 60, I like that I can still grow my hair longish. My mother's image of me and then I'd show up so rag-tag? Is that it with Fr. Aelred, or is it the obeisance to God? He is also the one who scolds me for always arriving ten minutes late to Lauds and sometimes Compline. But, his cudgel of attentions I finally do appreciate.

## III

*"It is Heaven all the way to Heaven."*

—Catherine of Siena.

Christmas morning, no snow, but sun, then winds.

I walk to Lauds, pray, ponder. This lassitude—merely five hours sleep or real despair?

Life seems bigger, longer. I sometimes wonder if I can keep doing it...ego and soul, community and solitude. How much energy it takes to simply talk. What silence reveals.

I walk along, not silent, talk aloud to God, simple words, questions, some heartache which I confess to, until I see it:

Quick glance at the desert floor, dried riverbed, but then—a candy cane hung there in the sky. Ribbons of colors, a complete arc, and the pot of gold? Gratitude. I'm not alone.



## VERTIGO OF NAMING

BY GARRET BROWN

Garrett M. Brown is an actor and writer, and an appreciative retreatant of St. Andrew's Abbey. His play *Americana* was produced in New York City in the spring of 2009. He and his wife Marie Pal-Brown have been visiting Valyermo for the past fifteen years or so. The basic thrust of this poem was written on a Christmas retreat, 2008.

PHOTO: JOSEPH BILLE

## IV

*"Life is the destiny you are bound to refuse until you have consented to die."*

—W. H. Auden.

Frozen earth, pock-marked, tire tracks caught in time and dull iced mud.

Tree stumps of the cut choir, aisle of once great trees, renamed the "twelve disciples," eleven on the cleared side, the one with new growth, in between the still-standing ten.

I miss those trees, their humble but majestic throng, that branched cathedral-like threshold.

They are now like us, diminished, stranded, broken, exposed in a new way. No longer the great ship's bowels enthroned midst desert sands and rocks, bound for dried riverbed.

These changes blindside us, shake the dull rafters, renew life's promise of inevitable destruction.

I miss Fr. Werner, too, his French accent's inquiries, bowed head, and buoyant unceasing surprise, twinkle of the eyes.

Almost like God's, this Lauds, that loves the desert with such thanks:

I want to see forever. ✂

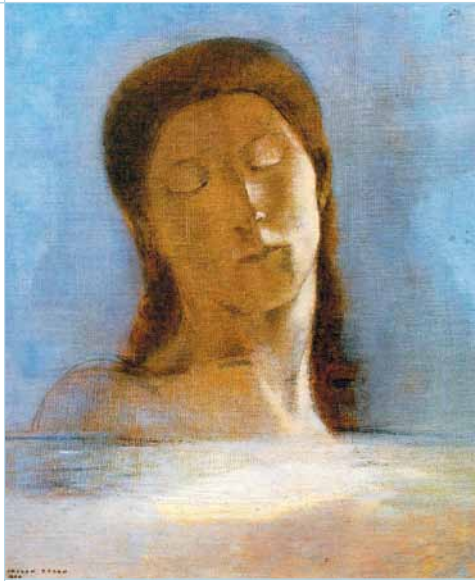
# silence OR A Song?

BR. BEN HARRISON, MC

**B**ACK IN THE EARLY YEARS OF Christian monasticism, there was a desert monk, Brother Zachary, who was known for humility and silence. When he was near death, the abbot Moses asked him, “What do you see?” Zachary answered, “Nothing better, Father, than to keep one’s peace.”

Zachary’s silence said a lot. To my mind, Zachary was saying that his secret relationship with God was sufficient for him. He did not want to speak of it to others, because it was none of their business, and, anyway, what can one say about such things? Perhaps also he was more aware of his unworthiness than of his exceptional gifts. In any case, Moses understood and responded, “You are right, my son. Keep your peace.”

I have always admired people like Zachary, the hidden, quiet souls who find their identity in their relationship with God rather than by stockpiling a composite self-image from the reflected fragments of other people’s impressions. There is something rock-solid yet unassuming about such people. I remember how reassured I felt when I read that Thomas Merton had selected, as a quotation for his ordination card, the passage from Genesis that speaks of Enoch: “he walked with God. Then he vanished because God took him.” (Gen 5:24) That idea of vanishing had always appealed to me, and it pleased me to know that Merton had a similar fascination with it.



ODILON REDON, “EYES CLOSED,” 1890 (SOURCE:WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

In my case, I would have to admit there is probably a neurotic desire to remain unnoticed or a fear of being the center of attention. For a child, invisibility is sometimes preferable to constant criticism, and for an adult, it is preferable to constant demands. I think there is a healthy sort of hiddenness, an appropriate moment for camouflage. In basic training, we learned very quickly to vanish into the background when the sergeant was scanning the squad for “volunteers” to clean weapons or other such chores. And it is sometimes a relief not to have to compete for attention or approval, to relax into an easy anonymity.

Once when we were about thirteen or fourteen, four of us went on a camping trip. I was exploring the area while the others were setting up camp, and when I wandered back they were busy gathering wood. I climbed into Henry’s hammock and lay there quietly, even when they called me. They got irritated and went off looking for me. Coming back ten minutes later, they had begun to worry. When I coughed from the hammock, their worry turned to anger. I had enjoyed that sense of being invisible. I suppose there was an element of power,

but even more than that, it was a liberating exercise for me to realize that a time will come when I am not there, when people will look for me and not find me.

I take a similar pleasure in being lost in a crowd without the need to distinguish myself, even in my own mind, from the human mass. Once I had made an appointment with a nun who ran a center for homeless people in London, and when I got to the center there was a long queue of men waiting to go in. I didn’t want to push my way to the front and demand special treatment, so I waited peacefully in the line for nearly an hour until it was my turn to enter. I felt totally accepted and at home as one wanderer among many. And when we brothers worked in Manchester Prison, occasionally a new officer would mistake us for a couple of convicts and tell us to go to our cells – both we and our prisoner friends were delighted with this moment of undercover solidarity. Does the charm of such moments depend on the knowledge that one is not really a homeless man or a criminal? Or is it the recognition that one could very easily be either or both? Or is it the truth that in our basic humanity we are equally indistinguishable and equally original?

St Paul says that we should in some ways see ourselves as already dead with our lives “hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3) The hidden life has been cultivated in the history of the church by hermits and cloistered contemplative monks and nuns, but also by ordinary people living unobtrusively in faithfulness to their obligations. To see oneself as unexceptional is to shed the protective husk of individuality and let the naked seed fall into rich humus.

The point of all this is that there is a part of me that positively yearns for such hiddenness, anonymity and invisibility. There is part of me that wants nothing more than to be so invested in my relationship with God that I am utterly unconcerned with

how others see me; and so committed to simple service to others that I am unaware of the impression I make on them. I suppose what I’m saying is that self-consciousness seems to me one of the greatest burdens of our divided human consciousness, and self-forgetfulness one of the greatest liberations.



But there is another side to my personality that wants to sing my song, that longs to tell my tale. Even at the age of twelve I was thinking of writing my adventures. I already saw life as an itinerary and wanted to chart my meanderings. At that point I suppose I fancied myself interesting enough to warrant a wide readership. Since I liked to read, as I went through the trials and sorrows of adolescence, it helped me to put things in perspective if I imagined myself as a character in a novel and thought how, as an author, I would describe my circumstances and my feelings.

As time passed, I realized that one of the things I found most interesting in the writings of others was their description of ideas and insights that I had believed up to that point to be uniquely and privately my own. It was a tremendous relief to know that others were as strange and wonderful as I. It was clear, then, that what would be of interest to others was the candid and minimally censored sharing of personal experience (even if part of a fictional narrative), not with the view of impressing others with my utter uniqueness, but with the view of making it possible for them, as well as for me myself, to recognize with greater clarity something previously inchoate or devalued in our awareness.

Even more than that desire to communicate, however, there is a desire to make sense of my experience. Telling one’s story allows one to put incidents and insights in order, to see patterns and draw conclusions.



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|---|---|--|---|
| <div>✂ THE VALYERMO CHRONICLE</div> <p>It allows one to preempt the interpretation of one's life, in a sense, to have first crack at deciphering the message of one's journey. I have always been a meaning monger—desperate to find purpose and direction in what happens in my life. For instance, whenever I have some sickness or physical complaint, I try to understand what God, my body or my unconscious is trying to tell me. It doesn't seem that I am willing to accept that things happen by chance.</p> <p>However I am also convinced that all of the tentative and partial meanings I may find are insufficient and unconvincing. The little meanings that one accrues through human relationships and social conventions (family bonds, friendships, accomplishments at work, creativity, knowledge, achievements), though valuable, are ultimately unsatisfactory and inadequate. The statistics regarding depression, addiction and suicide among successful people are sufficient testimony to that. I need more than such relative, ad hoc meanings. I crave a final meaning, a gold-standard valuation. My life has ultimate meaning only insofar as it relates to the Ultimate itself, to God. My relationship with God <i>is</i> the meaning of my life.</p> <p>So, then, the purpose of telling my story is to pour it out as a libation. The purpose of singing my song is to raise my voice in praise. But doing it, strangely, increases the effect: mysteriously, the expression of faith deepens faith and the gesture of love strengthens love. We follow the pattern set by God himself, whose tenderness abounds and overflows in Jesus, the Song of God; and then flows forth forever as a Spring of living silence, a Sigh of love.</p> <p>Thinking about my compulsion to write, I recently asked myself what, now that I am getting old, I would like to say "before I depart and be no more." (Ps 39:13) And the answer came almost immediately: I want to tell other hungry, searching, dissatisfied souls that "you can get there from here."</p> | <div>THE VALYERMO CHRONICLE</div> <p>What does that mean? First, "from here" means from the particular coordinates where one is stranded, including the particular personality in which one is clothed at this point. From this exact position, being this precise person, with this predicated past and these specific qualities—you can get "there". When I said "there", I didn't mean "heaven" or "the hereafter" or some distant, future state of bliss—I can't assure myself, much less anybody else, of reaching that destination. What I meant was that we can get to a place a few steps short of that: the threshold of the temple, the caravansary by the holy well. From there it is only a short distance to the place of seeing, the cleft in the rock—where we stand before the presence of That which cannot be described, hear the Name of the One who is Truth itself, are invited to cross the last border.</p> <p>How can I say that "you can get there from here?" Where do I get the audacity to tell you that? Because "there" <i>is here now!</i> Whenever I am repentant, humble and thankful, God is near. Any moment when I am able to let my ego identity fall aside, allow my categorical thinking to sink into the cloud of forgetting, I stand on that ledge, ready to be lifted into light.</p> <p>Once I was walking in a deep valley below summer-seared cliffs in Sicily. There was a little stream burbling among the roots of towering Lombardy poplars. Far back in a tangled, shadowed bower a nightingale sang its rich, fluid song, solitary, insistent, ringing loudly up the canyon. A small, brown thrush, secretive, rarely seen, yet its song, so poignant, so powerful, split the noonday heat asunder like a ripped veil. It said to me, "You can get there from here, from here, from this very here." And the silence responded, like whispering water, "Here. Here." The silence and the song continued their antiphonal exultation. And my soul, in silence, shouted, "Here!" ✂</p> | <div>THE VALYERMO CHRONICLE</div> <p>AM NOT UNAWARE THAT MY comfortable freedom to say this (both on paper and <i>viva voce</i>) is indeed a hard-won "right" wrested by my WASPish forbears from the grip of inquisitorial and monar-chic authorities intent on hierarchical control and vested privilege. I concur with Voltaire in your "right" to disagree with me; my spirit rejoices in Jefferson's epistolary credo engraved on the frieze of his Tidal Basin Memorial: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man"—and in his anti-Federalist ripostes honed to lapidary succinctness later in the century by Emerson: "the less government the better".</p> <p>Alas, if only we noble savages were all pure and altruistic creatures of light and love, flitting and fitting exactly and ecstatically—our anarchic bombs bursting simply a pyrotechnic kaleidoscope of joy and creativity in some eternal Fourth (or fourteenth) of July summer's night.</p> <p>Such flaming fantasies of whiggish whimsy have been pretty well scotched and scorched and ash-trodden under the steel-toed, iron-heeled boot of inexorable "progress" in industry and warfare these past two centuries. It is true that the shell must be broken open to free the yolk and egg white to make an omelet, but who wants an omelet grimy, gritty and greasy from a trampled egg? The old order had its prophets, court jesters, visionaries and holy fools—and these were often "martyrs" as well, but their word could still be heard and remembered even by the tyrant who may have done them in (cf John the Baptist and Thomas à Becket). The true freedom of the spirit, humbly acknowledging its creaturehood, is expressed in Psalm 118V(119):32, "I will run the way of your commands, you give freedom to my heart," and in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."</p> <p>I remember that as a teenager in the curfew-restrictive years of WWII, I spent many pleasurable hours browsing through the stacks of our local library. One of the treasured finds was a book of essays by a British author whose</p> | <div>✂</div> <div> <div>QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW</div> <div>by fr. philip edwards, o.s.b.</div> <div>  <div> <div>THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY</div> <div>Gilbert Keith Chesterton</div> <div>© 1908, Dodd, Mead and Co.;</div> <div>1935, Gilbert K Chesterton;</div> <div>1975, Sheed &amp; Ward, Inc.</div> <div>ISBN: 0-8362-0594-4</div> </div> </div> </div> <p>name evoked an enveloping Edwardian overcoat/overstuffed sofa—or a popular American cigarette! His enthusiastic energy and forceful aphorisms both held and repelled—so memorable and many, in fact, that I cannot bring a single instance to mind! I want to credit him with "a thing worth doing is worth doing badly" but suspect it may well have come from Oscar Wilde or some earlier, even anonymous, wit; in any case, I could not pinpoint it on any page in that book unshelved so many years ago. (What has stayed with me—but, without, alas, a pungent quote—was a minor, sort of "aside," essay inveighing against a common social practice of having music played while at table when food and conversation are of the first order. Hypocrite that I may well be in practice, I still concur wholeheartedly with his judgment that if the music is worth listening to it should be listened to without distraction, otherwise silence the music and attend to the table fare itself.) I do remember being impressed with his ability to turn things topsy-turvy and never to miss a step. At times the plethora of pun-packed paradoxes are too much of a brandy-soaked suet pudding overstuffed with succulent plums bursting not yet prunified, glutting to oblivion rather than energizing to clearer understanding.</p> <p>This "nightmare" of 1908, is as vivid and engrossing as ever, a kaleidoscopic dissolving and resolving, now black and white, then multicolored, always shifting between deception and revelation, enshrining the great YES of the crucified Word made flesh who is Truth never false nor far from the blazing and bitter anarchist. ✂</p> |
| 16  |   |  | 17  |

## Around and About THE ABBEY

### CORRECTION

In our last issue we published the names of students who had submitted entries to the Hugo Story Contest, but many names were inadvertently omitted:

*From Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School, Santa Clarita:*

Sebastyan Enriquez  
Kayla May Jaramillo  
Kevin Popp

*From Notre Dame Catholic School, Wichita Falls, TX:*

Keith Brinkman  
Karl Josef Dabalos  
Angelique Frando  
John Herring  
Savannah Klein  
Jordan Lott  
Brett Mitchell  
Ben Moffat  
Brandon Pruett  
Ramon  
Elizabeth Sanchez  
Matthew Salerno  
Melanie Schmidt  
Amber Villalobos  
Mary Grace Wallig

Please accept our most sincere apologies.

### MONKS' FEAST DAYS

|           |    |                            |
|-----------|----|----------------------------|
| September | 3  | Fr. Gregory<br>Fr. Matthew |
| October   | 4  | Fr. Francis<br>Fr. Luke    |
| November  | 3  | Fr. Martin<br>Fr. Carlos   |
| December  | 20 | Fr. Isaac                  |

### BR. JOHN MARK'S STUDIES

In August, Br. John Mark Matthews, OSB, departed for St. Joseph's Abbey and Seminary College, Louisiana, where he will be studying philosophy.

### FR. MARTIN'S RETURN

Also in August, Fr. Martin Islas, OSB, returned to Valyermo after an extended period of discernment in other monasteries. Please join us in welcoming him back!

### FR. MATTHEW IN BERKELEY

Last June, Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB, moved to Incarnation Monastery, the Camaldolese house in Berkeley where he had been living during his doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union, in order to discern the possibility of transferring his stability there. Please pray for him as he seeks God's will.



### COMMUNITY OUTING

Late August saw the community's annual outing to Carpinteria for a day at the beach. Thanks are due to Frances Morehart for hospitably entertaining several carloads of monks!

### OBLATE NEWS

This year's remaining oblate meetings held at the Abbey will take place on September 11, October 9, November 13, and December 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](mailto:retreats@valyermo.com).



### FR. PATRICK'S PRIESTING

On Saturday, July 16, the Most Reverend Alexander Salazar, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, ordained to the order of presbyter Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB, at St. Mary's Church, Palmdale. As the monastic community rejoices with Fr. Patrick and his family, we wish also to express our gratitude to the pastor, Fr. Vaughn Winters, and parishioners of St. Mary's for their hospitality.



### VISITORS FROM POLAND

The monastic community was delighted to welcome this summer three visitors associated with the Benedictine monastery at Lubin, Poland (a house of the Congregation of the Annunciation): Fr. Izaak Kapala, OSB, Prior (left), Fr. Maksymilian Nawara, OSB (right), and Tomasz Jedrzejewski (center), a friend of the monastery and sponsor of the trip. All three spent a couple of weeks with us. Fr. Maksymilian then completed an intensive 27-day retreat at the Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in Santa Rosa (with which Lubin has a longstanding relationship) followed by a few days' rest here before his return to Poland.





**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](mailto:development@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.

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

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## GREATER LOVE *from page 5*

When we pray this antiphon, we join Christ in the upper room where He instituted the sacraments of the priesthood and the Eucharist. We anticipate what He himself was anticipating there: the total immolation of Himself so that His Bride—*you* and *me*—might have life. He approached that night as a servant of the servants whom He had called, the servants who were to bring His life and message to the furthest corners of the world *through* His Body and Blood, and he gave them the same charge that all of us who call ourselves Christians must dare to take up: "As I have done for you, so you also do for one another" (Jn. 13:15). He said this after washing their feet, but it encompassed much more than that. Time in the upper room was the beginning of a *kairos* time—a time grounded in human experience, but fully open to the Divine, where past, present, and future are integrated into an eternal *now*. Christ showed his disciples that what begins as servant leadership ends in the royal priesthood—a priesthood consecrated in the Blood of the Lamb, and vivified in every present moment by His rising—which *all* baptized Christians are called to share. In other words, glory comes through a life poured out, and the very source and summit of that passage to glory is the Eucharist, *is* Christ Himself.

Over our next four reflections on Thomas' antiphon, we will focus on some of the beautiful rays that emanate from the veritable sun that is the Eucharist. It is my hope that we may enter into this Eucharistic reality together, and *stay* there together by *praying* there together. In Eucharistic prayer we enter the reality of communion in all its beauty, breadth, and depth. We are created in the image and likeness of the God who is Himself a divine communion of Persons. We live that image and likeness in the Eucharistic reality, not to foster worldly autonomy or some exclusive Catholic enclave, but a familial love *for all*, from which wholeness, healing, forgiveness, and self-gift flow like the "new wine" that is Jesus Himself. ✠



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Saint Andrew's Abbey

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The monks of Valyermo at St. Andrew's Abbey have begun a new venture. "MonksInk" is designed to fulfill your printing needs and let you support the Abbey at the same time.

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*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
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- 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](http://www.saintandrewsabbey.com) and clicking the Renew a Room page.

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## RETREAT CENTER *Calendar* AUTUMN 2011

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 retreat schedule for 2012 will be available online November 1.

### THE JESUS PRAYER

*Friday, September 23 ~ Sunday, September 25*  
“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.”

*Presenter:* Fr. Maximos Davies.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### THE NEW MISSAL

*Friday, September 30 ~ Sunday, October 2*  
The First Sunday of Advent will mark the beginning of the use of the new Catholic Missal. This retreat will acquaint those involved in parish liturgy and worship with the changes and use of this revised version of Catholic worship.

*Presenter:* Paul Ford, Obl. OSB; Ph.D.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### DISCERNMENT IN DAILY LIFE

*Wednesday, October 26 ~ Friday, October 28*

For the Christian who prays every day, ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,’ discerning God’s will is an imperative that vitally touches all that we are and all that we seek to do in this life. This retreat does not address the larger question of one’s vocation in life but rather those everyday realities which engage all of us no matter what our vocation may be. Discernment requires attentive listening to the Spirit of God so that God’s invitation to holiness and the virtuous life may become more a reality for us. Ordinary decisions we make do impact our progress toward communion with God.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$190 single; \$120 shared.

### HENRI NOUWEN: BEFRIENDING TENSION

*Friday, November 4 ~ Sunday, November 6*

Henri Nouwen exemplified for us how to navigate our way through our tension-filled journey by creatively embracing spiritual polarities in our life. This particular retreat centers around the ongoing tension between our true self and our false self along with the prospect of deeper transformation we are bound to experience in our journey as we learn how to befriend the reality of such tension.

*Presenter:* Wil Hernandez, Obl. OSB; Ph.D.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### AUTUMN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

*Monday, November 7 ~ Thursday, November 10*

This retreat is open to artists at all levels, including beginners. Photographers, sculptors, and writers are also welcome to come and experience the colors and beauty of the high desert in the setting of the monastery. Escape the stress of daily life while deepening a spiritual vision in your art. (A materials list will be provided.)

*Presenter:* Deloris Haddow.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$285 single; \$225 shared.

### THANKSGIVING AT VALYERMO

*Wednesday, November 23 ~*

*Friday, November 25*

This non-directed retreat provides time to reflect on all God has given to us and to enjoy the festive celebration of Thanksgiving with the monastic community.

*Room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### THE ANCIENT ART OF NATURAL CONTEMPLATION

*Friday, November 25 ~ Sunday, November 27*

In early Christian spirituality, and especially among the mothers and fathers of the Egyptian desert, it was believed that we must learn to read three great books: the Sacred Scriptures; the story of our inner struggles and growth in faith; and the “book of nature” God’s presence in the created world. In this workshop we will study early Christian sources that describe both the interrelationship between these three “texts,” and the means by which our sense of God in creation can renew and deepen the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

*Presenter:* Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### PRIESTS’ RETREAT

*Monday, November 28 ~ Friday, December 2*

This year’s retreat includes several themes for personal reflection: Sacramental Ministry and Priestly Holiness; Pastoral Presence and Servanthood; Reading and Holy Leisure; Spiritual Maturity and Celibate Love; Daily Work and Daily Discernment. With one conference per day and one guided discussion, there will be ample time for rest, personal prayer, and reading.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$380 single.

### ADVENT AS EXPECTATION OF GOD’S INTERVENTION IN OUR HUMAN HISTORY

*Friday, December 2 ~ Sunday, December 4*

Advent is a time of watching and waiting, of prayer and expectation, united with the expectations of God’s people in history as they awaited with hope the coming of the Messiah. This retreat will explore the historical roots of our Advent customs and the meaning of its liturgical texts and spiritual themes.

*Presenters:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB,  
Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### FLESHING OUT THE INCARNATION: A MOVEMENT- AND DANCE-ENHANCED APPROACH TO MEDITATION AND PRAYER FOR ADVENT

*Saturday, December 10 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.*

The retreat will include reflection on relevant scriptures of both Old and New Testaments, and the writings of various Church Fathers and Benedictine theologians as we “incarnate” our meditations and enter prayerfully into Advent.

We will conclude the workshop with an afternoon group prayer experience drawing on movement prayers developed during the morning and applied to an adapted version of the Vespers ritual from the Coptic Rite Divine Office.

*Presenter:* John West, Obl. OSB.

*Tuition includes beverages, lunch:* \$38.

### SILENT RETREAT: ADVENT

*Friday, December 16 ~ Sunday, December 18*

Making time for silence, especially during the holidays, can be a challenge. This retreat will offer participants the opportunity to focus their attention on the Word of God and the Mystery of the Incarnation. During this weekend, we will maintain an atmosphere of silence, punctuated by a conference or conferences intended to aid in the observance of sacred silence.

*Presenter:* Monks of Valyermo.

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared.

### CHRISTMAS AT VALYERMO

*Friday, December 23 ~ Monday, December 26*

The liturgical celebration with the monastic community starts with First Vespers on Christmas Eve and ends with Night Prayer on Christmas Day. This year our Christmas guests arrive a day early—on December 23 after 3:00 pm and depart the morning of December 26.

*Room and board:* \$300 single; \$200 shared.

### THE HUMILITY OF GOD

*Friday, December 30 ~ Sunday, January 1*

Reflections on the humility of God in the mystery of the Incarnation will be the primary theme of this retreat. How this impacts our spiritual lives and leads us toward a deepening life of prayer and service will also be highlighted. Humility is seen by the spiritual masters as essential to becoming spiritually mature, refashioned in the image of Christ. And so there will be reflections on the mystery of humility as a subtle, even hidden virtue in the life of the disciple.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

*Tuition, room, board:* \$260 single; \$170 shared



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