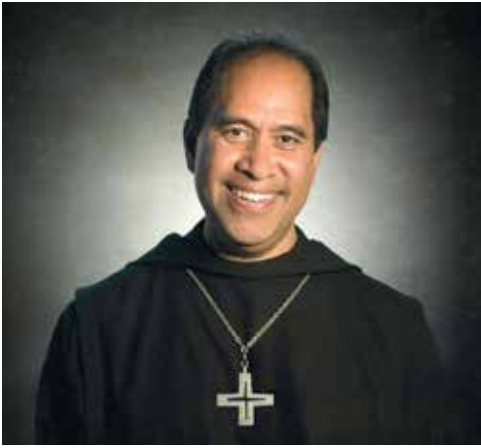


THE VALYERMO  
*Chronicle*

ST. ANDREW'S ABBEY



Spring, 2014

## EAR FRIENDS,

I had a feeling that my letter for this issue of the *Chronicle* would be too late for the feast of Pentecost, even though Fr. Aelred had been ‘encouraging’ me for quite some time to get my letter in as soon as possible. So I decided to submit a reflection about the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

There are many Eucharistic miracle stories that have been passed down to us through the centuries. One very well-known one is the story of the miracle at Orvieto. According to the story, a priest who doubted the Real Presence was celebrating Mass. After the consecration, the host started to bleed onto the corporal and stained the corporal. According to the story that same corporal is enshrined in the church where the miracle occurred in 1263.

Whether or not you believe the story is unimportant. What *is* important is the meaning of the story: that Christ is present in the Eucharist even when we doubt; that He comes to us even when we don’t believe. Such is God’s love and faithfulness

towards us. Even in the midst of our disbelief and moments of weakness and sin, He is faithful.

For some strange reason God wants a relationship with us unfaithful and disobedient people. And He doesn’t want just a normal, ordinary superficial kind of relationship, because God is not into superficiality, but He wants a close, personal, and intimate relationship.

When a person is in a close relationship with another, there is a natural kind of sharing that occurs, and the closer the friendship, the deeper the sharing. Ultimately the goal in the relationship is to share equally. But in our relationship with God, it’s different because there really is no equal sharing. There is nothing that we can share with God or give to God that would equal or even come close to what He’s given us. Even when we say that we’ve dedicated and committed our lives to God as a priest, a Sister, deacon, a married person, the fact of the matter is, even *that*—even our vocation—comes from Him.

What it boils down to is this: in our relationship with God the only thing we can give Him is nothing. It sounds odd and unfair and even wrong, but it’s the truth. In our relationship with God, we have no choice but to come to Him in our poverty, with nothing, empty-handed. And then He takes our impoverished lives, our nothingness, our empty hands, and He fills us with His richness. *We* give him nothing, and *He* gives us everything; His very Self. Such is the mystery and the beauty of this great feast.

Abbot Damien ✠

## EDITOR'S NOTE

In so many ways our lives as Christians, particularly as Roman Catholics, are often built around the visual image of a spiritual experience: some are extraordinarily beautiful, and others seem to be rather badly made tat that can set our aesthetic teeth on edge. Of course we shouldn't confuse purely aesthetic values with what may, in fact, help our personal devotion and life of piety. I have often found in beautifully made art work, or in not so beautifully made art work, a way of entering into the mystery of a life with God. A number of feasts this late Spring offer rich, and powerful visual images: the Sacred Heart, Corpus Christi and above all the descent of the Spirit upon those assembled in the upper room represented on this issue of the *Chronicle's* cover.

The Acts of the Apostles narrate that the apostles had been praying. They all waited and prayed because the ascended Lord had told them to wait and to pray. Now, as at Sinai, God manifested himself in what sounded like the wind that swept over the waters at creation, and appeared as tongues of flame.

This is an image one would find on an icon: hieratic, formal, glowing with light and gold showing us that God is making his presence known. And with this presence there is a new commandment: to proclaim the Good news in languages none had before spoken or understood.

But here at the end of the Easter Season we must not forget an earlier upper room. Another kind of image: the first so splendid, so transcendent, so filled with its powerful theophany; this second image so much closer to our own lives: the evening on the day of the resurrection. The disciples have heard of the empty tomb. But they were confused, untrusting and fearful. So fearful that they met and hid behind locked doors. This is hardly

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# THE VALYERMO *Chronicle*

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Icon of the Descent of the  
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# Actions of Grace

BY BROTHER BEN HARRISON

## Word-song ♦ A HYMN

When time was not  
the Singer, pondering,  
whispered softly to himself, "I am."  
Then looking deep into the abyss of naught,  
the fragrant night that was  
his silent dwelling and himself,  
he breathed the Word, "You are," and loved.  
Then breathing deep,  
in ecstasy of joy he shouted,  
"Let there be!"  
Thus he began the song,  
singing each atom into action,  
teaching each aught to be,  
speaking forth spinning globes,  
and pulsing galaxies,  
a cosmos full of wonder, colour, dance.

♦ ♦ ♦

Parola, Logos, Verbum, Word.  
Every pebble, bud, or chick, or child is  
a new pronouncing of that original Word,  
every bespoke word  
a fresh enunciation of that primordial Speech.  
Each name, each verb, each exclamation,  
reiterates in part that primeval Utterance,  
springs forth from out and drops back down into  
the pregnant silence of abyssal deeps,  
the welcoming emptiness that is his listening.

♦ ♦ ♦

Sometimes that Word is a command:  
Let there be! Come! Do it! Give!  
Sometimes an affirming call:  
Yes! Amen! So be it! Live!  
Sometimes it's a voice of calm:  
Peace! Fear not! Om! Shalom!

Yet again, a cry of love:  
I do! I'm here! Je t'aime. Come home!  
Once more, perhaps, a hymn of praise:  
Laudate! Glory! Baruch! You!  
And then a shout that speaks release:  
Aha! I see! It's finished! Mu!

♦ ♦ ♦

One Word shouted, sung or sighed  
in a thousand tongues, ten thousand songs,  
by crickets, frogs,  
by winds and rain,  
by beggars and brigadiers.  
When said to human hearts  
that Word's enfleshed  
and answers to a name that saves:  
an image worth a thousand words,  
a person hidden in ten thousand signs.

♦ ♦ ♦

That Word, addressed to us,  
awaits an answer.  
And the perfect answer is  
the whispered repetition of that name:  
Yeshua, Jesus, Issa, Gesu.  
In the Word that bears that name  
hides and resides every word said  
us-ward by the Singer,  
and every answering word, sigh, hymn or plea  
uttered by our hearts and lips –  
Eleison, Alleluia, Thanks, Amen.  
That one Word –  
the womb through which all turning worlds were born.  
That one Word –  
the harbour where all homing souls return.

— MARCH, 2014



## *Wind-rush* ♦ A PRAYER

JOHN 3:5–8

O Fathomless Night,  
O Unknown Deep,  
You, source and sender  
of my Sire the Wind,  
Maker and master  
of my Mere the sea –

Child am I of two-  
fold immensity:  
Offspring of Spirit  
(Cloud-caster, Wind-wright)  
And ancient Water's  
vast humility.

Your passionate Desire,  
from the first dawning,  
Sighed upon the void,  
over fertile depths –  
Your whispered Word called  
forth a universe.

Speak that Word again,  
upon the welter  
Of this self-clogged soul.  
Breathe the warmth of life  
Into this mired clay.  
Shake these earth-bound limbs.

Sheer, High Absolute,  
Bright Thunderhead, You  
Tower far above  
the driving storm's surge.  
Call me now, livened  
by your Breath, to seek

Free as wind to go,  
Hasten where it will.  
Child of the Wind and  
Water now, I cry,  
"Cease not my God, to  
call me, till I fly!"

– JUNE, 1984

♦ ♦ ♦

## *Storm-child* ♦ AN EXHORTATION

YOU ARE STORM-BORN, CHILD OF ELEMENTAL forces! True, a still small breeze can ruffle the surface of a pond. But in earth's early eons, raging tempests tormented and whipped into towering swells the surface of the ocean's awful depths. I like to think that those were the images in his mind when the Lord said, in effect, "To reach the domain of the One who fills all space, you have to be totally remade, conceived this time, as at the genesis, by Spirit breathing over deeps, by wind blowing over seas." Your parentage this time must be the uncreated Breath of God, whispering, or rather roaring like a storm, and the vast deep nothingness, the utter void that preceded "Let there be!"

Baptism is two things — death and life. Our clutching, clawing selves are shipwrecked, drowned, irretrievably smothered in the settling silt of the silent

deeps. But under the life-stirring shout of the Spirit, accompanied by the joyful cries of wheeling sea-birds, new life emerges from those pregnant depths, a life this time not destined to crawl forth merely onto mud, but this time to fly and dive upon the currents of water and of air. To reach the freedom of the children of God means yielding to the elemental forces of God's Spirit alive within us — water, wind, earthquake, fire — that storm within our hearts, longing to be unleashed as love to transform the world and complete creation. Is it something to do with that indomitable desire within us that he refers to when he says, "The kingdom is subject to violence, and the violent are taking it by storm"? This is not a violence of destructive wrath but an eruption of exuberant creativity.

When we poor mortals look for images of infinite vastness, our experience gives us the sea and the sky. When we look for signs of irresistible power, we are drawn to mountains, hurricanes, the thunderous fire-flash of many lightnings. And when we need to build ourselves a refuge from the inhuman immensity of the cosmic scale, we use these same elements, domesticated, to make a stone cottage with a fire-bright hearth, near a purling spring. He is as much at home in one as in the other: in the vast open reaches of space as in the intimate recesses our cozy hut.

And we? Are we willing to be with him wherever he chooses to go? Will we allow the storm of his love to shatter our security and shake us into life? When we, half-sleeping, prayed that psalm, we asked him to put anew, right spirit in us, to remove our stony hearts and create there hearts of flesh. When we last heard that story of the dry bones, we imagined him clothing our listless limbs with flesh, quickening, quaking our earth-snared souls with his warm breath. Will we let him do it?

Wake up! The clouds break over us! Who knows his plans? He is irrepressible in his artistry, reckless in his originality. Storm-child, are you ready? Nothing can stop you. Only his Word can still you. Progeny of sea and sky, only his will can tame you, you are as free as unbounded love. Soar, stoop, swirl, caress! The life you live is yours no more. Whisper, shout, murmur, bless! Make joy where hope lay dead before!

MARCH 2014 ❄



**Ben Harrison** is a Missionaries of Charity brother based in Manchester, England. He has been in brothers' communities in Europe and the U.S. for twenty years. St. Andrew's has been an important anchor-point for his spiritual journey since his first visit in 1972.

## EDITOR'S NOTE *continued from page 3*

the triumphant image of a church faithfully expectant of its savior. It is in this locked room, to these frightened disciples that Jesus comes and stands among them. He goes to them, for it is *always* Jesus as Emmanuel, as God With Us — the hallmark of the Incarnation — who comes to us. Firstly, Jesus wishes them peace. And secondly, he shows them his wounds. These wounds are more than his assurance to them that he is indeed the crucified one, now living. He is saying that it is through his wounds, though his complete participation in our fearful, suffering and dying humanity, that we are given peace. He says it is through his wounds that we are healed. That we are made free through the Spirit.

Jesus tells us that as he became incarnate for us, and that we must incarnate him in our own lives for others. He breathes on us. He breathes the Holy Spirit, and enunciates the heart of the Gospel: the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sin centers on the gift of his wounded humanity to our own. Christ shows his wounds to those who are wounded, and who live behind locked doors.

This is what this image-filled season of Passion, Resurrection, Pentecost, Sacred Heart and Eucharist means for us: letting Jesus into the locked rooms of our hearts, and minds, accepting his peace. There is always the danger that we will see only ourselves, minimizing God's grace in our lives, stunted by our own grief and pain, alone and solitary, in that locked room. But the Gospels tell us that God is with us, and comes to us, and continually calls us to life, in order to give life to others. 🐦



# The Holy Spirit Guiding Early Christians on a Personal Search for Holiness and Power

A MONK'S READING OF TWO ANCIENT TEXTS:

*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity & The Life of Antony of Egypt*

FR. MATTHEW RIOS, OSB

THE HOLY SPIRIT BREATHES AS IT pleases and in every context there is not only life given but a fullness of life. The history of Christian spirituality in the early church is a history of a people's search for God and a union with God that is marked by the continuing engagement with the Gospel of Jesus Christ along with the political-social-cultural context of the times. The pursuit for holiness is anchored on the continuing revelation of the Spirit as people experienced life

in their contemporary world, in their ethos. It is exhibited in how the early Christians received, ruminated and interpreted the text in the sacred scriptures according to what were their lived experiences, according to what they felt needed, and according to what they expect and aspire in the present and future life. Along this path of living the holy life, the question of power is a necessary issue that the Christian believer/seeker would find. Power in how it is to be defined and how it is

to be exercised is an integral element in the people's experience of life.

Looking closely at ancient texts, I raise the question: "How did the early Christians allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit in their negotiation between power and holiness? Was it possible at all to be holy in the face of a broken, violent, and pagan world? Was there any vested power at all for Christians who were in the minority and mostly marginalized? In answering the question, it is necessary to draw the picture on the early church's socio-cultural locations which the two texts, Athanasius' *The Life of Antony* and *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, are located. We know that both texts were written within the period 202-400s. In the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas (201/203), it was a period of serious persecution among the Christians as it was a time **before** the Edict of Milan (313) when Constantine ruled the empire and an atmosphere of toleration was then dominant for the Christians. Perpetua and Felicitas were in Carthage where there were the existing pagan practices and beliefs and notably one of them is the cult of Saturnus. Among the characteristics of this pagan cult was the belief of appeasing the gods for "eye for an eye" for "life for a life" and that a worshiper is a slave of the named god. It is also a cult that teaches that the offering of human life to the god is a good virtue, and an efficient practice for one's salvation. The bond of society is anchored on the family, and women were meant to be lower citizens with the sole vocation of giving birth and nursing children. There is also the culture that the project of immortality is anchored on begetting children as they would say, "I live my immortally through my child." It is also a patriarchal society whereby the father is unquestionably the dominant ruler of the household. Carthage is ruled by the Roman empire with its strict and clearly defined laws. Part of those laws is the element of asserting total obedience and loyalty to

the emperor and thus Christians have that pervading fear and challenge of living their Christian convictions that there is no ruler on earth higher than their God who is the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ. It is also necessary to mention that Christians value their faith and that the expression and nourishment of that faith is in in their liturgical consciousness and practices, particularly Baptism and Eucharist.

In the account of the martyrdoms of Perpetua and Felicitas we find the drama of a woman raising an infant, another woman who is pregnant with a child, a few catechumens, and a male leader who were condemned to die for refusing to bow down to a foreign ruler and renounce their Christian faith. We also find the drama of visions and conversations between the main protagonists and villains (prosecutors, executioners, Perpetua's father.) Here, it is significant to mention how Perpetua's father persistently asked her to renounce her faith and how she consistently disobeyed. We also find the story how people were violently put to death by wild animals. Here, it is to be noted how Perpetua, herself, guided the sword to her neck, as she was not overwhelmed and with dignity faced her death and how a wild heifer failed to kill her. The accounts also speak of how the protagonists received affirmations of their faith through visions and how much they were assured of victory and how much their martyrdom will reward them in the afterlife. Among the visions, we have Perpetua meeting her dead young brother needing help and through her prayers her brother recovering. She also had visions of encountering someone who assured her the goodness of her endeavor and the vision that she was battling a demon/evil not just an animal beast. She also had the vision that she is fighting as a "man" which her gender as a female is of no bearing. Their companion Saturus also had a vision of what is to come, heaven, and how that heaven is made





of angels, garden, and peace. Visions, brave postures and actions, firm faith, all these we find in the accounts which points to what it means to be holy and how much one has power over one's body and soul. It is an account that clearly demonstrates how power is negotiated by women and the ordinary people and such power is not solely vested on men and how much that power being negotiated becomes an instrument of the pursuit of holiness and Christian's way of living out their faith and union with God. The account of martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas also clearly demonstrates how martyrdom equates the balance of power between males and females, between the elites/ the clergy and ordinary people. The account of their martyrdom clearly established the reality that through martyrdom the holy men and women of the early church found concrete rewarding expression of their faith, and through their martyrdom it has planted the seeds of faithfulness to Christ and to his church, both ways of attaining holiness as exercise of a strong and solid power.

More than a century later, the bishop Athanasius (born 395) wrote the *Life of Antony*. It is a period that is characterized by a relative freedom among the Christians and the life of blood martyrdom has receded with the Edict of Milan. However, the Egyptian society where Antony was located, was still under the oppressive Roman empire. It is common to see Egyptians contemplating to flee from the world due to oppressive taxation and oppressive manual agricultural labor. Christians were looking for relief and meaning in their lives. They were looking for new expressions of an ideal lived experience as Christians.

The story in the *Life of Antony* begins with the call of a young man to respond in a liturgical setting to the gospel call "to renounce everything, give to the poor, and come and follow me." Antony as a young man responded to that call in a literal manner. After a few days, he further heard, "not to be afraid" and leave everything to God. He thus left the world, including his young sister (to the care of a community of women/virgins) and initially

*Please turn to page 12.*



## GOD'S GRANDEUR

### *The High Desert in Late Spring*

WORDS: Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ

IMAGES: Suzanne Farley

All photos taken at Saint Andrew's Abbey,  
Valyermo, California\*

\* Except background image, which is modified  
from an image by "Tambako The Jaguar" from  
Flickr.com.







## *God's Grandeur*

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men, then, now not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with  
toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell;  
the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black west went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
bright wings.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.



**THE HOLY SPIRIT** *continued from page 9*

settled in the outer fringes of the village where he was living. Living outside the normal geographical and social life, Antony decided to go further in solitude, crossing the river toward the desert, entering and living in a tomb, encountering and wrestling with demons and beasts, going further to his “inner mountain” and practicing a gradual increase in asceticism accompanied by a life of unceasing prayer. The story tells us that Antony in seeking his solitude in the desert became victorious in every form of encounter with demons and he tamed them all by naming them, engaging them, and with the help of Christ and with His cross. The story tells us that to “die in the desert” or to renounce the material world for the sake of following Christ is an ideal path for the Christian. It also tells us that the path to holiness is the path of seeking Christ in the desert away from the world of pagans and that power is vested to anyone who has Christ in his body and spirit. Flight to the desert is a serious battle and the enemies are powerful and many, but one can be victorious as Antony has proven with the help of Christ who is truly God and truly a man like Antony.

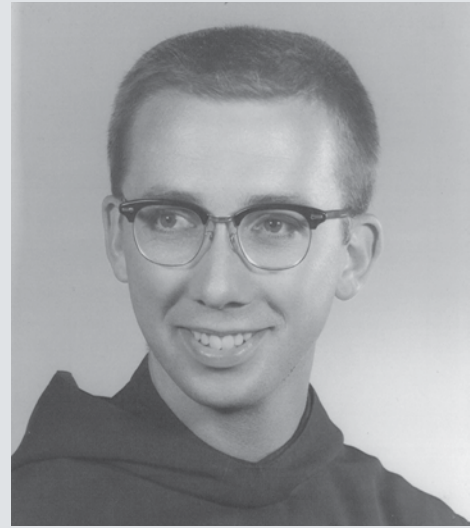
The story speaks profoundly how the renunciation of material wealth is a powerful tool of negotiating power and an effective path to holiness. Through the story, the Early Christians found a model in Antony that became a paradigm for many succeeding generations of Christians including church leaders and theologians in their search for the holy life. The story also speaks about how the monastic and ascetic model of Antony is an expression of imitation on the life of Christ both in practice and rich in spiritual meaning. As Antony returned to the world, he was made “new” and had not aged at all and like the resurrected Christ he found the fullness of life. As Antony imitated Christ in becoming singularly focused on renouncing his own

will to the will of God, he has freed himself from bondage from all forms of oppression first from oppression that comes from within (through self-knowledge and abandonment to Christ) and he became an instrument in freeing others through his acts of hospitality to those who visit him in the desert and his visit to community leaders when they needed him. As Antony lived the life of solitude with a balance of unceasing prayer and work, he has also revealed a paradigm of a path to holiness that is also a path of exercising power: the power of the self-sufficient man/woman, and the power of one who will not be dependent to any foreign and oppressive political power, except Christ who as God continues to abide in every man/woman.

Contemplating the lessons from these two primary texts today, is there anything new in our present context? Do we not find new or similar forms of oppression, maybe even deeper and wider oppression in our new pagan and materialistic world? How much do many of us in both the monastic world and beyond search for freedom from bondage from similar forms from sin, and other oppressive forces that are counter cultural to our Christian identities and values? I continue to search for answers in my cell, where the Holy Spirit abides, and I hope and pray that my cell will teach me everything. ✠

*BORN IN the Philippines, Fr. Matthew worked as a Certified Public Accountant before receiving his initial monastic formation at the Monastery of the Transfiguration in the Philippines. He came to the United States and entered Saint Andrew's Abbey, where he made simple profession in November, 2001. He has studied liturgy in the Philippines, and completed his theological studies at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. He was ordained to the priesthood on July 23, 2005.*





### † FR. JOHN BOSCO STONER, OSB

***Father John Bosco** (1943–2014) died on the first of February. He served the United States as a Navy Chaplain, and also served the Eastern Churches as a bi-ritual priest. He filled many jobs and positions at the Abbey, primarily in charge of property grounds and maintenance, and as buyer for the community. He also served the Antelope Valley Catholic communities as both priest and confessor. The Abbey church at his funeral on February 7 was filled twice over by many of the people whose life he touched with his kindness and pastoral care. The following is the homily given by Abbot Damien at that liturgy.*

#### **Abbot Damien's funeral homily.**

**F**IRST OF ALL, ON BEHALF OF THE monastic community and Ron Stoner, the brother of Fr. John Bosco, I thank you all for your prayers for Fr. John Bosco and for your presence here today.

This whole week people have been sharing stories about John Bosco...fun stories and funny stories; but most of them have been stories about his little acts of kindness. And these little acts of kindness are often what endeared him to many people.

I remember once Fr. John Bosco and I were at Costco. We were in line to pay and he was carrying on a conversation with the cashier (which he almost always did, even if he didn't know them). Just as we were about to leave, he reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a snow globe: a glass sphere shaped object that encloses

a miniature scene of some sort and when you shake it and snow starts to fall everywhere ... and he handed it to her. Well, it was obvious that she liked it; she was all smiles and couldn't stop thanking him. And he just smiled and walked away with a look of satisfaction on his face. When we were alone, I asked him about that interaction, and he said, "That cashier once told me that she collected snow globes. So I bought her one." He loved to do simple things like that ... to surprise people with gifts.... He also loved to joke around. One of our oblates shared that, "one day in the refectory, during breakfast, she was stirring her coffee with her knife, and John Bosco walked up to her and handed her a spoon and said this is for buttering your toast." We all have funny stories and fond memories of John Bosco.

But if we see today as only a day for sharing funny stories and fond memories of Fr. John Bosco, then perhaps we've missed the significance of his life, and even the significance of this day. John Bosco was more than just a nice, fun-loving man. And today is more than just about remembering nice thoughts about John Bosco. John Bosco was a man of faith... why else would he have joined the monastery after high school? Why else would he have given his life in service as a monk and priest, if not that he was a man of faith?

It was his faith in a loving God that gave him purpose and direction in life...and which inspired him to do the kind things he did for people. He certainly was not a perfect priest or a perfect monk or a perfect community member... but no one is... since we all have our flaws and defects.... But that is precisely what gives us hope in moments like these. That is what will give *us* hope when we too find ourselves at the hour of our death... that we don't have to be perfect to inherit eternal life... we don't have to be perfect to be accepted by God. God receives us even with our imperfections and defects. The sacrifice of Jesus has made it possible for all sinners, like John Bosco and us,...when the time comes ... to look death squarely in the eyes, with courage and confidence, knowing that there is life on the other side ... that there is a place specifically for us on the other side....

This is why even though we are sad today on some level and will even shed tears because John Bosco has died, we can still be joyful and celebrate...because we know that he is very much alive...and healthy... as many people have already said, "he's in a better *place*"...the *place* which Jesus himself has prepared for Fr. John Bosco from the beginning of time.

May he rest there in peace. ✠

# Love & Lectio



## GROWING IN LOVE with LECTIO DIVINA

**THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH. THE THIRD DIVINE** personage of the Triune God. The *Pneuma*. The Paraclete. The Holy Spirit.

Where God and Jesus speak to us more directly in works or scripture, the Holy Spirit speaks wordlessly to the deep recesses of the heart. It was the Holy Spirit and *lectio divina* that led us to each other.

**MICHAELA:** I was at a crossroads in my life when I discovered St. Andrew's Abbey. How did I find the Abbey? It was the Holy Spirit working through another who introduced me to the Abbey, and it was the Holy Spirit who guided me on my journey there.

Rounding the bend on the high desert road leading to Valyermo, I caught a glimpse of a wooded oasis. Turning through the gate, I could sense the holiness of this place. The silence which permeates the day was astounding, and the voices of the monks chanting the psalms during Divine Office were uplifting. My heart began to know peace.

Many on retreat introduced themselves as *oblates*. "What is an oblate?" I asked. "We are lay members of the Abbey," I was told. Oblates live by the Rule of St. Benedict, study the desert fathers, and practice *lectio divina*.

I read Joan Chittister's *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*, registered for Father Luke's retreat on psalmody, and soon began my studies to become an oblate.

In taking time away from the busyness of Los Angeles to visit the monastery, I found peace in silence. In my daily routine, I began to find wisdom in the Rule and strength in scripture. Balance was coming into my life, and I was learning to allow the Holy Spirit to guide me.

It was almost two years before I was able to attend Fr. Luke's retreat on *lectio divina*, and it was during this retreat that I met the man who would become my *soulmate*.

**MAURICE:** It was 2008. I had been filled with renewed zeal for my faith. I had been surrounding myself with God. I went daily to Mass. I volunteered at my parish's food bank. I was a Knight of Columbus. Every chance I got, I would enrich my spirit. A friend of mine told me about St. Andrew's Abbey and suggested going on a weekend retreat. I had always wanted to go to an abbey to help deepen my faith. Instilling the contemplative into my spirituality was just what I needed. So in June of that same year, I went to Fr. Luke's *lectio divina* retreat.

I remember walking Stations of the Cross. Since it was my first time at the Abbey, I got turned around and began walking it backwards. As I was making my way down the path, I came upon Michaela. This had been the second or third time I had run into her. As I awkwardly greeted her, I had an unexpected sense of comfort and familiarity in her presence.

We bumped into each other, quite literally, in the Abbey Bookshop. I had gone there to look at books on the desert fathers and was bent over peering at the titles. When I rose, Michaela and I backed into each other. We then began a conversation about the fathers.

On the last day of the retreat, I knew the Holy Spirit wanted me to get her number; it was not that the great Paraclete was starting a dating service, but a gentle urging let me know that my future was to be somehow connected with this beautiful soul that I now call my wife.

**TOGETHER:** Maurice invited Michaela to a lecture on Thomas Merton. Then, Michaela invited Maurice to join her for Sunday evening Mass followed by dinner at El Segundo Fish Company. The relationship grew through sharing our faith. We approached our parish priest regarding the wedding plans. Fr. Robert responded, "The Lord has truly blessed our parish in bring you here. I have been looking for someone to guide our lectors in *lectio divina*." How could we say no to that! Thus, we began a group which meets every Saturday morning.

*Lectio* (reading). *Divina* (divine). *Lectio divina* is contemplative and prayerful reading of scripture which brings the word of God to life in the heart of each reader. Through this practice, we hear with the ear of the heart. The experience is unique to each of us, yet it can bind us together in faith.

Oblate life has truly enhanced and deepened our spirituality. Having the opportunity to share our Benedictine traditions with our fellow parishioners has been a blessing. *Lectio divina* began as a parish requirement for weekly lectors, but we are told it has become desired spiritual nourishment. Fellow lectors come to our meetings with the worries of family, health, and career, and they leave with insight and direction from the Lord. Many tell us they have adopted the practice into their daily lives.

While *lectio divina* has become an integral part of our lives, the Holy Spirit continues to surprise us and we continue to follow. ✂



**Maurice and Michaela Russell** were married in August 2012 at St. Anthony Catholic Church in El Segundo, where they are parishioners and lead a *lectio divina* group. They are both oblates and belong to the Los Angeles group, hosted by the Sisters of Social Service at Holy Spirit Retreat House in Encino. Michaela and Maurice volunteer in the Abbey Bookshop. They share a love for great art, music, and literature.

# AROUND & ABOUT THE MONASTERY



## HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

In March 2014, **Fr. Patrick Sheridan** was the Spiritual Leader of a 12-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land “Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus.” Thirty-six pilgrims participated. The trip was organized by Mary Hornickel and John D’Isacco, Oblates of St. Andrews. They visited Cana, Nazareth, and Capernaum, and spent five days in Jerusalem.



## † ABBEY STONEMASON REMEMBERED

**Sabas Miranda** was a skilled stonemason. For over 15 years he built stone walls and decorative masonry for the monastery. All the stones were gathered from the property, with most of them from the creek area. Sabas was a quiet, prayerful man. He put his love into his work and its beauty will endure for a long time to come. He passed in early April and he will be missed.

## MONKS’ FEAST DAYS

June 29 Brother Peter  
August 8 Brother Dominique  
September 3 Father Gregory  
21 Father Matthew

## FATHER GREGORY SEMINAR

On March 20, nearly one hundred people attended a seminar entitled, “The Soul and Poetry of a Benedictine Monk,” which featured the poetry of **Fr. Gregory Elmer, OSB.**

The seminar was held at St. Julie Billiart church in Newbury Park, and was part of the University Series, which tries to connect faith with real life.

With Father Gregory in attendance, Lisa Shaffer and Bob Wolfe shared selections from Fr. Gregory’s book, *Hidden in the Cleft of the Rock, The Poetry of Fr. Gregory Elmer, OSB.* Newly published, this book is available at the Abbey bookstore. — *The Editor*







# RETREAT CENTER *Calendar* SPRING–SUMMER 2014

## JUNE

### PENTECOST RETREAT

*Friday, June 6–Sunday, June 8*

This retreat will consider monastic sources on the life of virtue that develops when one lives spiritually the precepts of the Holy Rule and the monastic tradition.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

### DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

*Monday, June 16–Friday, June 20*

Beginning with the basic makeup of the human person, many spiritual writers have tried to understand the powerful positive and negative forces, both natural and supernatural, that act upon the individual.

*Presenter:* Fr. Aelred Niespolo, OSB

### CONTEMPORARY CINEMA AND SPIRITUALITY: Summer Session

*Friday, June 20–Sunday, June 22*

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

*Presenter:* Nikki Tucker, Obl.OSB

### THE SACRED HEART OF TRANSFORMATION:

#### A Personal Journey into Wholeness

*Thursday, June 26–Friday, June 27*

If you are experiencing a deep longing within your soul, a desire to find the deeper meaning of your life, or a feeling you are in transition, you may be interested in this retreat.

*Presenter:* Kimberly Halperin Hitchcock, MA

### THE SACRED HEART OF TRANSFORMATION:

#### A Practicum for Healing

*Friday, June 27–Sunday, June 29*

The Sacred Heart icon is a powerful image illuminating the highest expression of Human and Divine Love.

*Presenters:* Kimberly Halperin Hitchcock, MA  
Fr. Carlos Lopez, OSB

### LACE KNITTING

*Saturday, June 28 9:00 AM–3:30 PM*

Are you comfortable with basic knitting and ready for an additional challenge?

*Presenter:* Elizabeth Seward, Obl.OSB

### SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATION

*Monday, June 30–Wednesday, July 2*

Searching beyond traditional definitions and expectations, we will take a close look at the art of teaching and the role of a teacher as we reflect on the spirituality of education; that is to teach is to create a space in which obedience to the truth is practiced.

*Presenters:* Elizabeth Seward, Ph.D.; Obl.OSB  
Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB

For complete details about retreat offerings, including descriptions and presenter information, please visit our website:

[SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM](http://SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM)

and click the Guest House link.

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(661) 944-2178

## JULY

**A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES:****Reflections on Twelve-Step Spirituality***Friday, July 4–Sunday, July 6*

This year's 12 step retreat will focus on a shared reading of Richard Rohr's book *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps*.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

**BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY: Purity of Heart***Monday, July 7–Friday, July 11*

In the Holy Rule, St. Benedict speaks of 'pure devotion', of 'purity of heart', and of 'pure prayer'.

*Presenters:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

Audrey Spindler, Ph.D; Obl.OSB

**INTERIOR CASTLE: St. Teresa of Avila***Friday, July 11–Sunday, July 13*

The lively and spiritually insightful St. Teresa has mapped out the soul's interior journey through the diverse "mansions" into its center, where Christ lives and is forever beckoning us into deeper levels of divine intimacy.

*Presenter:* Sr. Gertrude Gillette, OSB; Ph.D

**A JOURNEY INTO GOD WITH****ST. BONAVENTURE THE FRANCISCAN***Monday, July 14–Friday, July 18*

This retreat will follow carefully the itinerary mapped out by the Seraphic Doctor in his classic *Soul's Journey into God*.

*Presenter:* Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB

**PRAYING IN THE CIRCLE OF ST. JOHN***Friday, July 18–Sunday, July 20*

The literature bearing the name of John—a Gospel, three letters, and the Book of Revelation—comprises some of the latest New Testament documents to have been written.

*Presenter:* Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

**MORE EASTERN SAINTS EVERY****WESTERNER SHOULD KNOW***Friday, July 25–Sunday, July 27*

There are plenty of great faith heroes from the Christian East whose lives could make a real difference in the faith journey of Western Christians.

*Presenter:* Fr. Maximos Davies

## AUGUST

**WOMEN MYSTICS IN THE MONASTIC****TRADITION: St. Gertrude the Great, St.****Hildegard of Bingen, and Julian of Norwich***Monday, August 4–Friday, August 8*

This retreat will explore the riches in the writings of three women mystics.

*Presenters:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

Audrey Spindler, Ph.D; Obl.OSB

**EDITH STEIN: Her Journey****from Darkness into Light***Friday, August 8–Sunday, August 10*

Join us as we reflect on the life and times of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, a brilliant philosopher and poet, a mystic and searcher of the truth, and a Jew—a daughter of Israel.

*Presenters:* Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB

Cheryl Evanson, Obl.OSB

Michaela Ludwick, Obl.OSB

**ALL GENERATIONS SHALL CALL ME BLESSED***Friday, August 15–Sunday, August 17*

Mary's resounding affirmation expressed in the Magnificat made possible a transformed relationship between God and humankind.

*Presenters:* Abbot Damien Toilolo, OSB

Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB

**ICONS: Doors to the Holy***Friday, August 22–Sunday, August 24*

Br. Joseph Brown, a professional iconographer and Orthodox Benedictine solitary in the Western Rite, will present an examination of the theology, history, and spirituality of icons in the Christian East and West using the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the base from which all iconography springs.

*Presenter:* Br. Joseph Brown, OSB (Orthodox)

**LECTIO DIVINA: The Monastic Art****of Praying the Scriptures***Friday, August 29–Sunday, August 31*

Lectio divina, the ancient Christian art of praying the scriptures, is a way of allowing the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God: in other words, through lectio divina, the reading of sacred scripture becomes the gateway to contemplative prayer.

*Presenter:* Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB; Ph.D

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**YES**, I would like to support the monks and their ministry by donating the following amount each month:

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

*Your donation is tax deductible. • Thank you for helping us to preserve this house of prayer.*

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

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

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