

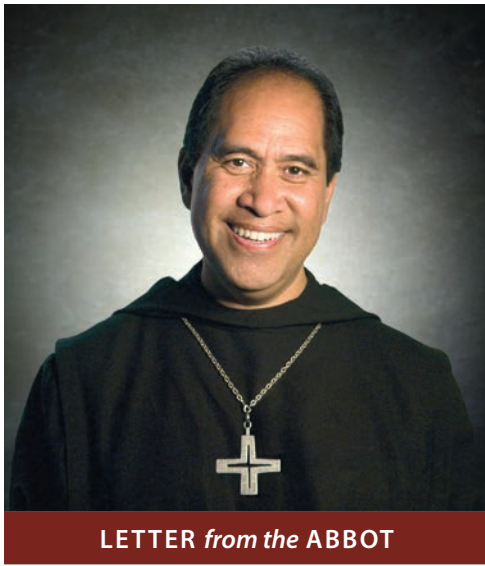


S T . A N D R E W ' S A B B E Y  
T H E V A L Y E R M O  
*Chronicle*

Nº 247 ✧ AUTUMN 2015







In a word, it is not convenient. The Christian life is not about “easy” or “better” or “faster.” It’s not about surrounding ourselves with the most and best of everything so that we can live comfortably. In fact, the Christian life is not about us at all. It’s about God and others. That’s the difficult part to embrace because that means we are not only responsible for our self, but we also have a responsibility for the care of others, even those we don’t know. We are asked to do for others, to give to others and to sacrifice for others which is not always convenient in our busy world. We just don’t have the time.

The truth is this: the Christian life is not easy, nor is it meant to be easy. We know that we Christians are called to think about the other person and to love them and care for them. But let’s be honest. The irony is even after we try very hard to do the things that Jesus asks us to do, there is no guarantee that our life will be any easier. That doesn’t seem fair. The truth is when we follow Jesus it only seems to complicate our life which is why people choose to follow Him only sometimes or not at all. To commit to Jesus full time and whole heartedly is just too difficult to do.

We are not followers of Christ because it’s fun or because it will make more people like us. Quite the contrary these days. There was a time when people who went to church on Sunday, or people who were nice and law-abiding and who believed in God were very much appreciated and respected by others. Not so anymore. Yet, it shouldn’t surprise us too much. The cross is a reminder to us that the way is hard. Our life as Christians will always be difficult because we follow the way of the cross. We will undoubtedly experience hardships and sufferings and persecutions; however, it is only for a time. The cross, though it is necessary, is only part of the Christian way. The other part is the Resurrection. New life. Eternal life. The cross and sufferings only last for a time, but the new life in Christ lasts forever. This is what we always have to keep in mind as we make our way through life in this passing world of conveniences.

*Abbot Damien ✧*

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

THE AUTUMN SEASON ONCE AGAIN brings us to a time of harvested fields left fallow until Spring planting, an ever-recurring part of life’s inexorable rhythms of life and death and rebirth. Despite the late-summer heat, Fall is already at the Abbey with shorter days and leaf-strewn driveways. At the Abbey we have certainly been witness to this cycle of mortality and growth: Fr. Luke’s mother passed away in late July after an extended illness; Br. Angelus’ father died peacefully, and surrounded by his family, in September.

One other significant passing has to be mentioned: Sr. Karen Wilhelmy, CSJ, also died in September. Many of you knew Sr. Karen from her work in the guest house and also from the fact of her very long friendship with the Abbey. She had been a stalwart presence, a woman of great generosity, of fine intellect and warm friendship. Affectionately known as “Kaiser” Wilhelmy (referring to her German roots and, occasionally, forceful opinions), she shall indeed be missed — but her love for the Abbey continues even in her passing, as she requested of her superiors burial in our cemetery with our other oblates, friends and monks. So many of whom she knew so well.

May they all rest in peace.

—The Editor



# THE VALYERMO *Chronicle* NUMBER 247 ✧ AUTUMN 2015

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“The Harvest Moon” (detail), ca. 1833,  
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**S**T. THOMAS AQUINAS DIDN'T DO THEOLOGY so that we wouldn't have to," said retired San Francisco Bishop George Niederauer. Consider the so-called theological virtues: faith, hope and love. Whether or not the Angelic Doctor's explanation of them can be improved on, there is always the need to think about them in terms of our own time, as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien did.

The traditional order of these virtues is faith, hope and love (or charity). Faith is first in the natural order of things — it is first in what Aquinas calls "the order of generation": you can't love what you don't know. Influenced by Aristotle, Aquinas defines the human person as a rational being. Given that description of the human person, it makes sense that an activity of the intellect would have pride of place. To know and to want to know: these are natural for rational beings as such.

# Eucatastrophe

JANICE DAURIO, OBL. OSB

How about love? Love is first supernaturally. It is the greatest in the order of perfection. Perfected love is the virtue toward which we are always working and the one of which we are always falling short. We both seek it and accept our failing to achieve it. As perfected, it's beyond human nature.

Then there's the middle virtue: hope. Hope is the Goldilocks virtue: it's "just right," neither too natural nor too supernatural. Hope is the virtue for humans as existential, questioning beings, thrown into the world seeking transcendence. Hope is what we want when startled out of sleep by existential dread: Is there more life after death? Does life have value? Does anything matter? Does life have meaning? Hope is the 3 AM virtue.

Neither angels nor animals ask these questions. Asking them is a distinctly human act. A "Yes!" answer to these questions is more than we have a right to expect, but a "Yes!" answer is what we cannot help hoping to hear. "Yes!" is the meeting place between natural and supernatural, earth and heaven, human and divine.

J.R.R. Tolkien gave us in our own day a new term to enliven the traditional virtue of hope: *eucatastrophe*. In a letter to his son Christopher, he recounts the story of a gravely-ill little boy who unexpectedly recovers:

"I was deeply moved and had that peculiar emotion we all have — though not often. It is quite unlike any other sensation. And all of a sudden I realized what it was: the very thing that I have been trying to write about.... For it I coined the word 'eucatastrophe': the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears.... It is a sudden glimpse of Truth, your whole nature chained in material cause and effect, the chain of death, feels a sudden relief as if a major limb out of joint had suddenly snapped back...."

Family and friends gathered around the deathbed of the beloved have this eucata-

strophic longing. The nonreligious try to be "realistic," to avoid the false hope of the happy ending. Cynics take that unsummoned desire that there be more as a cruel cosmic joke. Christians are the fools. "Gandalf put his hand on Pippin's head. 'There never was much hope,' he answered. 'Just a fool's hope.'"

Tolkien's story of the miraculously recovered little boy should put us in mind not of some similar cure which we have heard of or, better yet, witnessed, or best of all, experienced. It should put us in mind of those many more stories with no cure, no recovery.

Tolkien was no romantic. In another letter he wrote that "as a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic," he realized that each person's history, and human history in general, is "a long defeat" — though it contains (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory."

Biblical literalists miss the importance of stories and myths; whether historical or not, their



point is to stimulate in us what everyone wants but tries to hold back: hope. Even when these unexpected or miraculous reversals of fortune, like the little boy's cure, occur, they are hints only, even a tease. But then there is that real Hope, rightly placed, in shadows and stories. It's not being saved from suffering or being cured in greater numbers that is distinctly Christian, but believing that those experiences, when they come, point to that postmortem final reversal of fortune.

We have every right to hope for strange, happy reversals in this life, but those reversals, when they come, are symbols in the true sense: they embody hope but more importantly point beyond themselves. That little boy's recovery only symbolized what Tolkien meant by eucatastrophe. Here is what Tolkien finally said about it in that same letter to his son:

It perceives — if the story has literary 'truth' ... that this is indeed how things work in the Great World for which our nature is made. And I

concluded by saying that the Resurrection was the greatest eucatastrophe possible in the greatest Fairy Story — and produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled, as selfishness and altruism are lost in Love.

At the end of a long discussion with our pastor, a woman exclaimed, "But if God exists, that changes everything!" *Benedicite!* Well said. ✧



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# The Spiritual Life

## FROM *Project* TO *Response*

FR. AELRED NIESPOLO, OSB

**I**SUSPECT THAT AMONG THE CORE PROBLEMS WE OFTEN, IF UNKNOWNLY, face is how to approach our spiritual lives, our lives in the Spirit, and to discern what we expect from that kind of life. At the seminary where I teach and assist in spiritual direction, I have come to use two words to name fundamental and opposing approaches to the spiritual life: “project” and “response.” I think these words sum up how we interpret for ourselves, consciously or not, what living a life in Christ means — and all too often we emphasize the wrong one.

We frequently talk and hear about our relationship to God and about how we as Christians have a life-long mission, an obligation, to deepen that relationship and to help others find their way to God at the same

time. Successfully fulfilling this mission depends partly on how far we permit ourselves to encounter Christ and allow the encounter to challenge us to question ourselves and examine how we live out our lives, and partly

on how much the way we live actually causes others to question their own presuppositions and values — this is a very real requirement for Christians, too.

We can look at the saints and at all the admonitory examples of conversion, sin, doubt and reconciliation, and find those same things in our own hearts and in our own seemingly ordinary lives. But one thing I have learned in my own journey is that there is no such thing as an ordinary life with, and in, God. We all struggle, even if we do so quietly, with the big questions: the questions of sin, of figuring out how to deal with the need to love and to be loved, of helping others to love, of discovering that our life in God and in Christ really depends on allowing grace — God’s love — admission into our hearts, so that it can manifest itself by and in our lives through our genuinely personal response to that love. We all have to recognize that our lives both have and need a foundational meaning and purpose. And it is grace, which is our life in the Spirit, that tells us we need this foundation and what it truly is.

The difficulty of course lies in our choices: what we choose to see or limit ourselves to see, what particular things we choose to give us meaning and purpose. The wrong choices we make are called sin, and are often grounded in a refusal to honestly respond to God, or are imposed by our limitations, and are not what our own genuine responses would be.

But no matter by what practical means we choose to live in the world, what we do or how we live, we must be grounded in a *response* relationship to Christ, as Jesus intends, or else we will be restless, aimless, unsatisfied, living out a false and secular agenda, even in a life we think of as ordinarily good, or religious, or spiritual.

For all of us the question of how we live our life in Christ is the most important question we can ask. The question is not simply about whether or not God exists; it is far more personally involving than that. It is rather *how*

do we find the God that eternally exists in the kind of life we live? How do we experience God in this life? in the kind of love we allow ourselves to receive? in the kind of response we allow ourselves to make? And at what point does the fact that God exists change the way we live and grow, both spiritually and in the world? The danger for us lies in turning our lives into a “project” with a pre-defined response, instead of allowing our lives to respond organically and *develop out of* a real experience of God. We think we know what is holy, instead of encountering what the holy is in our lives and what makes us as individuals, truly children of God, sons and daughters of the Father.

We have to hold onto an important fact: *God is an experience which we live out in our lives. He is not set apart from our lives; he is an integral component, a foundation everything is built upon. We live out our lives as a response to that experience of God in the Spirit.*

As Catholics we believe there are fundamentally two ways to experience God. The first is through trying to understand the actions of God in what we call revelation, and by revelation I mean scripture, church teaching, church tradition, and the explorations of theological study (for example, studying the Catechism of the church, its blueprint of the spiritual and ecclesial life of the Christian, essentially the history of how we have sought the Holy). The second way is through our response to that body of revelation, to the faith defined by our reason and translated for us in our Church life: through our prayer life, our personal life. God is in all things, and a chief aspect of our life in God is to find him in our experiences of life. That is why our faith, and our theology, if you will, is grounded not simply on whether we believe God exists or not, or on what we do or don’t do, but rather on how we experience God, and how deeply we *allow* ourselves to see the revelation of God in all aspects of life — in what we do, in how we act, in how

we allow others to change us, in how we allow the experience of living in the world to influence how we live out our theological faith, and in how that faith informs the way we live in the world.

This is not some theoretical notion or project. Recently, while reading a book about the faith of Medieval Christians (specifically the English Christians before the time of the Reformation), I reflected that they were not only concerned with living their daily lives around such concepts as the seven virtues, or the seven deadly sins, or the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, but with what were termed the seven Corporal Works of Mercy: the things that a person who lives a life in Christ *ought to be doing* — actions that needed to be performed. (The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are, you may recall, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, relieving the prisoner, housing the stranger, and burying the dead.)

What really struck me is that these actions were not, in those Medieval times, regarded primarily as a checklist of things you needed to accomplish in order get to heaven. They weren't a project for holiness. Rather they were *responses* to, and of, mercy. Mercy was at the very core of the people's *response* to their experience of the centrality of God in their lives and of God's love; they were not concerned with "scoring points" with God. Their actions, their willingness to help those who were in need or in pain or alienated, arose out of their relationship with God, which was built on love and compassion. They were the natural outflow of what it meant to them to experience God.

The practical result of living this kind of

life therefore is that it is lived for another and not for oneself — not unlike Jesus on the Cross. It is our response that teaches us the real nature of Christ's obedience. There was a unique combination here of the fact that love of God elicits a sense of love in us, which then overflows into a show of love for those who need love. It all begins with allowing God into, and allowing Him to define, our experience of life. And just as our experience of God deepens the more we pray, and the more we love, and the more we grow in the sacramental life of the Church, so our ability to live love, to demonstrate in real ways the ability to love, in short, to live a life in Christ, grows the more we love. Our love builds on the experience of past love. Our lives build on the foundation we established with Christ. And the striking thing is that this is not some *extraordinary* mystical experience, reserved just for the saints we read about, but it is something for us ordinary folk, who live ordinary lives, who struggle daily to discover the depths of God and our own personalities. It is about how we try to get through the day without making a mess of things. It is about how we try to do some good because we have *experienced* God's love, not because we want to earn God's Love.

We don't come into the world with a ready-made self. We enter the world with the capacity to become a person. We are shaped by our experiences of life, of reality, of our life with others, in community. That is why our role as an example or model, as a parent or friend, is so important, because in that capacity we help those new to the world, or new to a Christian experience in the world, define who they are. *There are*

*consequences in the lives of others from what we ourselves do.* In short, we help others to find God or to dismiss God by the way we live and act.

How then do we wake up to the reality of God living within us? The first step of course, before we can change our lives, is to honestly assess them and admit that they do indeed need changing. And here is where the uneasiness that God causes in us helps: we find we are not happy in our hearts and so we seek change. This is, in a very real way, the role of suffering: it is a way of waking us up so that we can respond to God's presence in everything that happens to us.

We are asked to discover God in human experiences, in the day-to-day life and struggles we all face. We are asked to encounter God by listening to that small voice within us that tells us we can go beyond where we are, beyond who we are, that we can break out of the small world we live in (or think we live in) and attend to greater things. We are asked to discover God precisely in our limitations, in those things that tell us we are mortal, and weak, like when we are alone, or dealing with illness, psychological struggles, poverty, misunderstandings, or when families and friendships fall apart. We are asked to discover God in the awareness that the meaning of our lives comes through responding to God, not by fitting God into a "project" that ultimately trivializes love and those foundational realities that allow us to question where we are in our lives, where we want to go, and what our hearts are telling us about love or the lack of love. We are asked to discover God by seeking the genuine truth of life, by cultivating a sense of what genuine goodness and personal human freedom really are, by appreciating the need to see and encounter that which is beautiful in the world, that which raises our hearts up and does not drag them down to the gutter, all those things which honestly tell us who

we really are without making us afraid of what we might find. And we are asked to find God in a conscience that is being continually formed by revelation, community, church and personal faith. All of these things tell us about human experience, tell us how we are to be constantly concerned with God in our lives.

And all of these things are to be shared. We may share our search for God with others who are further along the road, or lag far behind, but we must all help each other — by being merciful, by praying together, by experiencing the sacraments Christ has given to us, by allowing God to enter into the ordinariness of who we are and transforming it into the extraordinariness of who Christ is. By sharing who we are.

We are told the experience of heaven is endless, never exhausted, never completely grasped. The same can be said of each of us — we are never exhausted, never completely grasped — as we relate to God, and to each other, and as we allow ourselves to relate to ourselves — all so ordinary in so extraordinary a way.

I think at the root of turning a life of "projects" into a life of "response" is growing in the wisdom that aging often gives. "Projects" are so often the concern of those of us who are still young in our spiritual lives: we must do this and this and this in order to be holy. And how discouraged we are when we fail to accomplish this project of self-perfection. But for those more experienced in the interior life, the quest for holiness consists much more in listening and responding to what the Spirit is saying to us and to the Church, and being grounded in our personal experience of living, because we have learnt that everything in our lives is important — to ourselves, to others, and to the church. We are not to become projects; we are to become vital and living responses to God's love and mercy and compassion. ✠





FROM BAPTISM TO FUNERAL, THE ENTIRE LIFE OF THE CATHOLIC IS ORIENTED TO THE EUCHARIST.

At the conclusion of infant baptism the ministers, family, godparents, and friends of all the newly baptized process with the candles lit from the paschal candle to the altar around which everyone sings the Our Father. This rite begins a communion rite that will end only at the first communion of the children baptized — it is a down payment on first communion in the same way that the anointing with chrism is a down payment on the sacrament of confirmation.

At the funeral of all but the ordained, the body is placed before the altar feet first, indicating the primal orientation of the Catholic: toward the Eucharist. (The bodies of the ordained are oriented toward the assembly indicating their re-orientation in service to the baptized.)

When, at the ordination of priests, the baptized offer the prepared chalice and paten to the bishop, he in turn puts them into the hands of the newly ordained priest with the words:

*Receive the oblation of the holy people, to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross.*

These words, however, are not addressed just to priests. They could well be addressed to all the baptized!

The Latin of the first two clauses points us to a world of meaning: “*Ag-nosce quod agis, imitare quod tractabis.*” Not just the proverbial “*age quod agis*” (“do well what you are

doing”) — which is important enough — but “recognize, realize, discern; be responsible for what you are doing.”

And “*imitare quod tractabis*” means more than “imitate what you celebrate.” It means “copy what you are touching and handling” and by extension “copy what you are seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling.”

Learning the mystery of the Lord's cross, the paschal mystery, from the Eucharist means discerning what really happens at Eucharist at its “epicenters” (the Eucharist action is an ellipse of epicleses — the epicle-

sis for consecration and the epiclesis for communion) and copying what we touch, see, hear, taste, and smell in the ever widening “concentric” ellipses which radiate out from these “centers.”

The two focal points of the Eucharist are the Word and the Meal. The Word of the Father spoken on His Breath pulls us in from our weekly lives. The Spirit-breathed Word

# Understand What You Do, Imitate What You Celebrate

PAUL F. FORD

WHAT THE MASS TEACHES US

transforms the bread of our afflictions and the wine of our joys into His very Body and Blood; and the Spirit-changed Food and Drink begins the process of changing us and our world for the new week ahead and forever into the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

It is *all* of the Word of God read at Mass that effects this transformation, not just the words of institution. The entire liturgy of the word tells us Who it is we are receiving under the signs of bread and wine. The liturgy of the word is not something tacked on at the beginning of the Mass to instruct us or edify us. As the 1981 Lectionary for Mass introduction says of every liturgical celebration, and thus *a fortiori* (actually *a fortissimo*, if you will permit me) of the Mass,

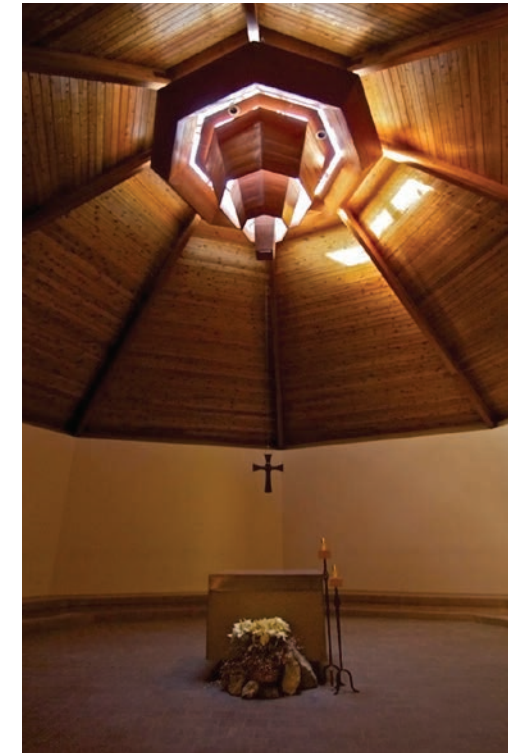
... the liturgical celebration, founded primarily on the word of God and sustained by it, becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power. (§3)

... the word of God unceasingly calls to mind and extends the economy of salvation, which achieves its fullest expression in the Liturgy. The liturgical celebration becomes therefore the continuing, complete, and effective presentation of God's word. (§4)

... the Scriptures are the living waters from which all who seek life and salvation must drink. (§5)

The more profound our understanding of the celebration of the liturgy, the higher our appreciation of the importance of God's word. Whatever we say of the one, we can in turn say of the other, because each recalls the mystery of Christ and each in its own way causes the mystery to be carried forward. (§5)

... the participation of the faithful in the Liturgy increases to the degree that, as they listen to the word of God proclaimed in the Liturgy, they strive harder to commit themselves to the Word of God incarnate in Christ. Thus, they endeavor to conform their way of



life to what they celebrate in the Liturgy, and then in turn to bring to the celebration of the Liturgy all that they do in life. (§6)

What can the very bread and wine teach us? Here we all need to invest in and meditate on our Benedictine sister Photina Rech's book, *Wine and Bread*, one of the most important books I have ever read on the Eucharist. Rech was a cloistered Benedictine nun who was research assistant to the great German Benedictine (male) liturgists. As she read the Fathers and Mothers of the Church, she took note of every significant passage on every material thing, posture, and gesture the liturgy uses.

Looking *through* the signs of wine and bread as through a window in the wall (the lovely phrase of Ronald Knox), Sister Photina reveals the deepest meanings of the Eucharist. For instance, bread is not just any food and wine just any drink. Grains of wheat are gathered and crushed and worked by human

hands and baked. Grapes are gathered; their blood is spilled by human hands and allowed to be transformed by fermentation. Rech shows us how the signs are not emptied of meaning by transubstantiation; but, as Herbert McCabe tells us, bread finally becomes what it was always meant to be: Bread, the very Body of Christ. And wine becomes what it was always meant to be: Wine, the very Blood of God.

My deepest experience of this wisdom of realizing and copying the eucharistic elements and action happened in the chapel of New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California. The monks there have the custom of exposing the Blessed Sacrament after evening prayer. One of the brothers goes to the tabernacle and removes one of the smallest and simplest monstrances (really a lunette) and reverently carries it into the rotunda and places it on the plainest granite altar, a candle lit, a vase of flowers on the floor before it. On the perimeter of the rotunda the monks and guests sit or kneel in silence.

Earlier that day I must have heard the gospel of Wednesday in the fourth week of Lent:

Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. (John 5:17–21, NRSV)

I reminisced on Jesus watching St. Joseph, learning the carpenter's trade by seeing, and

doing and asking. At that moment I realized that in the Eucharist Jesus is only doing what his Father is doing: giving us life, our bodily life and our everlasting life. With this realization, I could only fumble for the words that J.R.R. Tolkien, a frequent communicant and visitor to the Blessed Sacrament, used so eloquently:

So it may be said that the chief purpose of life, for any one of us, is to increase according to our capacity our knowledge of God by all the means we have, and to be moved by it to praise and thanks. To do as we say in the *Gloria in Excelsis*: Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam. We praise you, we call you holy, we worship you, we proclaim your glory, we thank you for the greatness of your splendour. ✠

#### FOR FURTHER READING

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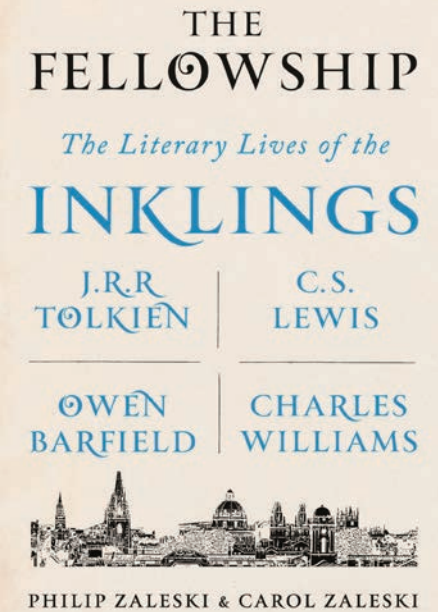
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#### QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW by fr. philip edwards, osb

THIS IS A SUBSTANTIAL BOOK, bulkily bustled with a "literary apparatus" of one hundred and thirty pages of notes, bibliography and index. Yet despite that it is not too heavy to hold in the hand and read at leisure in a comfortable chair. Appropriately, those one hundred-plus pages support a subtle presentation of the Oxford style of writing — conversational, something to be enjoyed over a mug or a pipe — and the lack of *Wissenschaftlich* rigor that would have been imposed by a multitude of bristling superscriptive barbs of tiny numbers for every citation and allusion makes for a smoother reading experience. This is most welcome, considering the level of detail within the 500-plus pages of text that come before the back matter.

The type fills those pages, but with generous spacing it is never stingily cramped or reduced to minuscular illegibility. The typeface itself is elegantly and slimly forthright, except for the serifs in the titles, which tip and curl to convey Tolkien-like "runishness." Economically (I would suppose that cost may have been a major consideration) eschewing any intrusion of printed color, this is a classically crisp study in black and white — the one concession to visual imagery being a slim sheaf of good, glossy photographs of random interest (both Mrs. Morris and Elizabeth Taylor are there), sandwiched in the middle of the book.

The dust jacket itself aptly images what is within the book's black covers. The word "Inklings" is set in the largest (and thus boldest) type, with the top-lined "The Fellowship" slightly smaller but as bold. The names of the four protagonists of the group appear in the middle area, a bit shorter and lighter in tone than the title text. Bannering across the lower part of the cover is perhaps the



#### THE FELLOWSHIP

*The Literary Lives of the Inklings:*

J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,

Owen Barfield, Charles Williams

Philip & Carol Zaleski

2015, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York

veritable hero of the book: Oxford, with its boldly-black spires and domes and scattered grey muddles of trees. Finally and humbly, without any runish swashes, are the authors' first and last names as complete individuals, coupled by an ampersand, squarely in the middle of the line.

Philip and Carol Zaleski are husband and wife, both Ivy League professors and widely published writers of essays and reviews. Both have authored books singly; Philip is the editor of two anthologies of spiritual writings. This volume is their third collaboration, per the series title page. What they have accomplished here by reading, researching, interviewing, consulting, connecting, collating and digesting what must have been an enormous



body of sources is to bring forth a finely interwoven tapestry of the lives of these writers. Smooth without being “slick,” the text draws us into the day-to-day of the Inklings’ literary world and offers a behind-the-scenes view into the context and subtext of their creative experience.

What I have yet to mention concerning the dust jacket is the beginning line of the subtitle, another bit of slim sandwiching, “The Literary Lives of the Inklings.” Perhaps because of the italic lowercase typography it seems to slip into the grey muddle of the Oxford trees, but it is an important indicator of what the book intends to be: a quartet of biographies deftly detailing the lives of four men who loved being with one another to talk, read works in progress, discuss, debate, drink, and take rambling walks together.

“Interest in the Inklings often first dawns in the minds of readers who have fallen in love with Tolkien and Lewis, and wish to enter more deeply into their spiritual and imaginative cosmos. But there are others who, though immune to the evangelizing power of Faerie, are curious to know more about a movement that arose not long ago in the colleges and pubs of Oxford and continues to cast a spell upon our culture” (p. 12).

The authors appear to like these men, yet they are not blind to what is less likeable about them. Overall, the writing masterfully presents the life stories of this quartet, along with thumbnail sketches of many other members of the Inklings and other important influencers, both personal and professional. Starting with Tolkien, we hear about the family environment they were born into and their early development. Charting boyhood trials and triumphs, first friendships, relationships with teachers and mentors, following the course of their scholarly careers, we also come to understand how their experiences of loves won and lost, eventual marriages,

professional career starts and interruptions, and wartime service impacted their literary output.

The narrative stops and starts to mark the points at which their lives intersect. Oxford was that place of intersection. While short, the sub-chapter on Oxford is a delightful presentation of the history and myth of Oxford, including its grittier reality as the setting not only for scholarship but also manufacturing and trade.

“To live and work in such a rarefied intellectual ambience, with chapel, scriptorium, and Faerie woodland close at hand, among gifted companions who could share a pint and spin off a limerick or cleriehew at will, was a rapture that never quite realized itself. For one also had to contend with troublesome families, threadbare pockets, cantankerous colleagues, dim students, urban congestion, and — twice in the Inklings’ lifetime — war” (p. 6).

At length we learn that each man led his separate life. Beginning in 1932 their bond was nurtured and sustained by Thursday evening meetings in Lewis’s rooms at Magdalen College. Eventually the Inklings also met on Tuesday mornings at a local pub called the Eagle and Child, also known as the Bird and the Baby to those in the inner circle. The active membership of the circle at large waxed and waned with the personal and professional circumstances of the members over the course of the next seventeen years.

“Lewis characterizes the Inklings as a group of Christians who like to write. That might do as a description of the genus. But Inklings *authenticus*, the actual species, shared more precise characteristics, including intellectual vivacity, love of myth, conservative politics, memories of war, and a passion for beer, beef, and verbal battle” (p. 198).

“The members’ shared Christianity also included a wide spectrum of views. Tolkien was Catholic; Barfield, Anthroposophist; Lewis, a “mere Christian”; Charles Williams, Anglican with a dash of ritual magic. Differences notwithstanding, the members were glued together by shared adherence to the Nicene Creed ... and a shared set of enemies, including atheists, totalitarians, modernists, and anyone with a shallow imagination. Above all, they were friends, encouraging, provoking, enlightening, and correcting one another (p. 198).

The last Thursday meeting of the Inklings was held on October 27, 1949. After that “Tuesday mornings at the Bird and Baby — a brilliant social hour but nothing more — would have to suffice; the Thursday night meetings had died from neglect” (p. 371–372). The authors discuss the factors that led to the end of the Inklings, which has been attributed to the death of Williams, or to the participation of members who preferred critical commentary over critique, thus inhibiting those who might have otherwise continued to read from their works in progress to the group. The conclusion of their analysis: “the membership was aging ... each was approaching that stage when many men settle into themselves and long for the armchair as much as the podium.... None of these core members harbored doubts about the value of their long association with the group. It was simply time for a change” (pp. 373–374).

In the brief but highly cogent Epilogue the Zaleskis fully assay their thesis — hinted at, spoken of, but not fully-spelled out in the biographical text. Their assessment of twenty-first century literature, film and culture at large leads them to assert that “today they constitute a major literary force, a movement of sorts. As symbol, inspiration, guide, and rallying cry, the Inklings grow more influential each year” (p. 509).

### MONKS’ FEAST DAYS

October 4	Fr. Francis
October 18	Fr. Luke
November 3	Fr. Martin
November 4	Fr. Carlos
December 20	Fr. Isaac

“The Inklings’ work ... taken as a whole, has a significance that far outweighs any measure of popularity, amounting to a revitalization of Christian intellectual and imaginative life. They were twentieth-century Romantics who championed imagination as the royal road to insight and the “medieval model” as an answer to modern confusion and anomie; yet they were for the most part Romantics without rebellion, fantasists who prized reason, for whom Faerie was a habitat for the virtues and literature a sanctuary for faith. Even when they were not on speaking terms, they were at work on a shared project, to reclaim for contemporary life what Lewis called the “discarded image” of a universe created, ordered, and shot through with meaning” (p. 510).

*The Fellowship* is a lengthy but easy book to read and enjoy for those who are already familiar with the writings of Tolkien or Lewis and a compelling introduction to the lives and times of the Inklings as a whole for those new to them. ❖



**Fr. Philip** was born the year this monastic community was founded in China. Newman, especially his *Grammar of Assent*, was important in his intellectual formation. He made his monastic profession

at Valyermo in 1962.





## RETREAT CENTER Calendar FALL 2015 RETREATS

### OCTOBER 2015

#### CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER IN THE EARLY MONASTIC TRADITION

Friday, October 2–Sunday, October 4

In early Christianity the word “contemplation” referred to those moments in prayer when we perceive God either in the rich and complex variety of creation, or in simplicity and silence. The principal sources of contemplative prayer in the early Church were Scripture and the sacred liturgy, where the Scriptures are transformed into poetry and song and internalized through an alternating rhythm of ritual chant and sacred silence. In this workshop we will seek to discover how the early monastic tradition understood and practiced the art of contemplation both in liturgical prayer and meditation on sacred scripture (*lectio divina*).

Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$250 single, \$200 each shared

#### CENTERING PRAYER

Monday, October 5–Wednesday, October 7

Centering Prayer is a form of Christian meditation. It deepens a person's relationship with God and the indwelling Trinity. This retreat will provide a review of basic principles, practice in Centering Prayer, and information on the long-term benefits of meditation.

Presenter: Audrey Spindler, Obl.OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$200 single, \$175 each shared

#### ST. TERESA'S WAY OF PERFECTION AND THE FACE OF GOD Monday, October 26–Friday, October 30

This retreat will explore the foundational themes found in The Way of Perfection of St. Teresa of Jesus: humility, detachment, love, and friendship with Christ. Special attention will be given to the transforming energy of friendship with Christ and the connections between contemplation, global mysticism and transforming the ordinary. 2015 marks the 500th birthday of this first woman to be named Doctor of the Church.

Presenter: Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$400 single, \$350 each shared

### NOVEMBER 2015

#### AUTUMN ARTISTS' RETREAT

Monday, November 2–Thursday, November 5

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

Room, board, and tuition: \$300 single, \$262.50 each shared

#### THE MYSTICISM OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Monday, November 9–Friday, November 13

This retreat will explore the mystical journey of French Jesuit and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It will focus on his early essay, *The Divine Milieu*, with its spiral journey through the “circles” of presence, consistence, energy, spirit, and person, culminating in a personal encounter with the Cosmic Christ. As a bookend we will also explore *The Heart of the Matter*, Teilhard's spiritual autobiography written at the end of his life. The retreat will provide ample opportunity for reflection time on key passages from Teilhard's writings.

Presenter: Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$400 single, \$350 each shared

#### EDITH STEIN: Her Journey from Darkness into Light

Friday, November 13–Sunday, November 15

Join us as we reflect on the life and times of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, a brilliant philosopher and poet, a mystic and searcher of the truth, and a Jew — a daughter of Israel. Her encounter with the cross in the life of a Christian friend sparked an inner transformation that led to her baptism into the Catholic faith. Her reading of the life of Teresa of Avila brought her to the door of the Cologne Carmel where she began her contemplative journey as a Carmelite nun. Her Jewish identity and her Catholic faith collided with the oppressive Nazi regime and led to her martyrdom at Auschwitz.

Presenters: Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB, Cheryl Evanson, Obl.OSB, and Michaela Ludwick, Obl.OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$250 single, \$200 each shared

#### SACRED DANCE WORKSHOP:

**Moving in Wisdom, Dignity, and Homage to the God in Us**  
Saturday, November 14 9:00 AM–4:30 PM

A day of gathering to proclaim and manifest through dance a transformative healing dawn for the human family. What can you bring as a sign of your personal light?

Presenter: John West, Obl.OSB

Donation: \$40 includes tuition, continental breakfast, beverages (available throughout the day), and lunch following the noon Mass

#### GUESS WHAT'S COMING FOR DINNER:

**A Cooking Workshop/Retreat**

Monday, November 16–Friday, November 20

Once upon a time, up in the cold north, there was an elderly widower who grew quite fond of making a different soup each night of the week. You wouldn't believe what edible riches and delights the winter months provide for the pot on the stove. Come and spend a week of learning and fun in the monastery kitchen. Taste and see how good different veggies go together with legumes, with rice, with squash, mushrooms, breads...you get the idea!

Presenter: Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$400 single, \$350 each shared

#### THANKSGIVING AT VALYERMO

Wednesday, November 25–Friday, November 27

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 and board: \$175 single, \$162.50 each shared

#### ADVENT RETREAT

Friday, November 27–Sunday, November 29

On this first weekend of Advent, we will offer a potpourri of monastic insights, enabling participants to experience the Advent season as a time rooted in scripture, history, art, music, and liturgy.

Presenter: Monks of Valyermo

Room, board, and tuition: \$250 single, \$200 each shared

#### PRIESTS' RETREAT

Monday, November 30–Friday, December 4

This year's reflections will center on these themes: the priest as a servant-leader; transitions and changes that challenge us toward deeper spiritual maturity; will and willingness to embrace God's purposes in our lives.

Presenter: Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$400 single

### DECEMBER 2015

#### VENI, VENI, EMMANUEL: A Silent Advent Retreat

Friday, December 18–Sunday, December 20

During this final weekend before the Solemnity of Christmas, we will focus our attention on the Word of God and the Mystery of the Incarnation by maintaining an atmosphere of silence, punctuated by short conferences intended to aid in the observance of sacred silence.

Presenter: Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB

Room, board, and tuition: \$250 single, \$200 each shared



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**CHRISTMAS AT VALYERMO****Thursday, December 24–Saturday, December 26**

On the Solemnity of Christmas we first contemplate the mystery of the Word becoming Flesh. The liturgical celebration at the Abbey starts with First Vespers on Christmas Eve and ends with Night Prayer on Christmas Day.

*Room, board, and tuition:* \$250 single, \$200 each shared

**NEW YEAR'S RETREAT****Thursday, December 31–Saturday, January, 2****ABOUT THE PRESENTERS**

**Fr. Francis Benedict** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1967. He earned an MA in Philosophy from Loyola-Marymount University and an MS in Theology from Mt. Angel in Oregon. He was ordained a priest in 1976. He served as the Abbey's abbot for 16 years. His special areas of ministry include spiritual direction, preaching retreats, and working with 12-Step recovery groups. In addition to many responsibilities at the Abbey, he now serves as the Director of Oblates.

**Fr. Joseph Brennan** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1994 after having served as a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for over 20 years. He is a spiritual director at the Cardinal Manning House of Prayer for priests in Los Angeles as well as St. Andrew's Prior.

**Fr. Stephen Coffey**, a Massachusetts native, has lived monastic life in Olivetan monasteries in Pecos, New Mexico, Waialua, Hawaii, and San Luis Obispo, California. Fr. Stephen has ministered in several retreat centers and has also been involved in formation ministries. Besides serving as novice director, he has taught candidates for both priestly and diaconal formation, and for many years has been involved in the training of spiritual directors. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree through Washington Theological Union.

**Fr. Luke Dysinger** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1976. He is a priest and a physician who writes and teaches in the fields of mystical theology and biomedical ethics. He earned a Ph.D. at Oxford University and currently teaches at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, as well as online courses.

**Cheryl Evanson** is an oblate of Valyermo and former administrator of the Retreat Center at St. Andrew's. She earned an MA in Education from the University of Denver and was an educator/curriculum specialist for over 30 years. She has facilitated retreats and workshops including team-building, balancing work and prayer, women in scripture, and Edith Stein.

**Deloris Haddow** is an oblate of Valyermo. She is an artist and educator who studied in Europe, Ukraine, and Iran. She is involved with the California Plein Air Association and is a former member

of Faith and Forum, a liturgical art organization. She is a spiritual director/facilitator for adults, leading retreats and workshops on centering prayer.

**Fr. Isaac Kalina** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1984. Having completed his theological degree in Rome at Collegio Sant' Anselmo, he was ordained a priest in 1889. He has served the Abbey as Prior, Sub-prior, Kitchen master, Youth Director, Assistant Novice master, Vocation Director, and Junior master. He is involved in retreats and workshops, bilingual ministry, 12-step recovery, addiction counseling, spiritual direction, and grief coaching.

**Michaela Ludwick** is an oblate of Valyermo. She has a BA in International Studies/East Asia and a Graduate Certificate in Advanced International Affairs. Michaela spent many years in Asia and is fluent in Mandarin. She has co-facilitated retreats on the desert mothers, women in scripture, and Edith Stein.

**Fr. Matthew Rios** has been a monk of Valyermo since 2001. He moved here from the Philippines where he was a Certified Public Accountant and University instructor in Manila. He was also a monk in simple profession when he transferred to St. Andrew's. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2005 and has completed an MA in Liturgical Studies.

**Dr. Audrey Spindler** is an oblate of Valyermo and a presenter and facilitator of Centering Prayer under Contemplative Outreach. Having earned her Ph.D. and RD, she is a former professor of Foods and Nutrition and Director of the Didactic Program of Dietetics in the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at State University. She received over 10 teaching awards and published more than 40 refereed papers.

**John West** is an oblate of Valyermo and the founder of the Valyermo Dancers. A gifted dancer, choreographer, and liturgist, he has been conducting dance workshops at St. Andrew's for many years. He is also a lecturer and educator at the international and national collegiate and university levels. His professional associations include membership in the prestigious North American Academy of Liturgy.

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

**SAINTANDREWSABBEY.COM**(Click the *Guest House* link)

**FOR RESERVATIONS,  
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