



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*

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### LETTER *from the* ABBOT



EAR FRIENDS,

THE LEPER IN ST. MARK'S GOSPEL (1:40-45) who was healed by Jesus was also cautioned by Jesus to "say nothing to anyone" about the miraculous healing. Ironically, though the leper trusted and believed in the healing power of Jesus, he obviously didn't seem to put a whole lot of stock into Jesus' admonition because he "went out and began to proclaim freely" all that Jesus did for him. He flat out ignored the command of Jesus.

The question is raised as to why Jesus didn't want the leper to spread the news in the first place. It does seem odd that Jesus would say to the leper "don't tell anyone." After all, isn't the whole idea of Jesus coming into the world so that people would know about Him?

Today's Gospel reminds us that God's ways are not our ways. God has His reasons for doing what He does, even though they may not make sense to us. But again, they don't have to. What we have to remember is to trust in the One who knows all things.

The Gospel shows us, unfortunately and surprisingly, that what God wants doesn't always

happen — because we get in the way with our bright ideas. Believe it or not, there are times when we can obstruct the will of God by doing something that seems logical and natural and harmless — and even good — to us. But we have to remember that not all things that *appear* to be good and harmless are good and harmless, which is why it's important for us to make it a habit to take time to ask in prayer and listen prayerfully to what the Lord wants us to do, not what we want to do.

The leper trusted enough in Jesus to approach Jesus, but for some reason, he didn't have enough discipline or faith or courage or something to do what Jesus wanted him to do.

One of our antiphons at the Vigil Office is "Commit your life to the Lord and trust in Him." Of course, we've committed our life to Him. The question now is do we trust Him? When things don't make sense to us, when things don't go our way, do we have enough faith to trust in Him and wait for Him? To listen patiently for His answers?

Yes, of course we have enough faith because God Himself gives us the faith we need. All that is needed is a little — the size of a mustard seed. The real question is how strong is our faith? If our faith is weak, it is most likely because we have not done the necessary work — the work needed to nourish and nurture our faith, to cultivate and develop it through consistent, persistent, regular and committed prayer and acts of kindness, charitable deeds, works of mercy.

God gives us the faith to believe; it's a gift. But God can't make us believe. Just look at all the baptized atheists. He can't make us pray. Look at all the Christians who don't pray. He can't make us perform kind deeds. He can't make us keep our mouth closed when we want to make fun of someone or verbally rip someone to shreds. He can't make us forgive someone or be generous to others. He gives us the tools to do good things. He gives us the faith, but He can't make us use the tools. That is our responsibility.

The leper in Mark's gospel challenges us to live a deeper and more committed life as followers of Christ; to ask God to help us develop our hearing so that we can become very familiar with the sound of the voice of the Lord.

The hope this Gospel pericope gives us is not just that our God can heal, but also that God can work with our disobediences. Even though the leper didn't do what Jesus asked him, God worked with it anyway. God figured out a way. We hear at the end of the pericope that because of the leper's disobedience, Jesus had to remain in the outskirts of the town, in the countryside. But many people still came to Jesus from every quarter — because our God is bigger than our disobediences, and He is greater than our mistakes and more powerful than our sins. God always finds a way to come to us despite ourselves. May He be praised!

*Abbot Damien* ❄

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Winter, with its earlier darkness, is a time for contemplation, reflection and digging deep into the soil of our hearts. Hence the Chronicle's current cover. But as that dark carries us into Lent, we are also moving into the Spring of resurrection. Let us pray that we use this time well.

—*The Editor*



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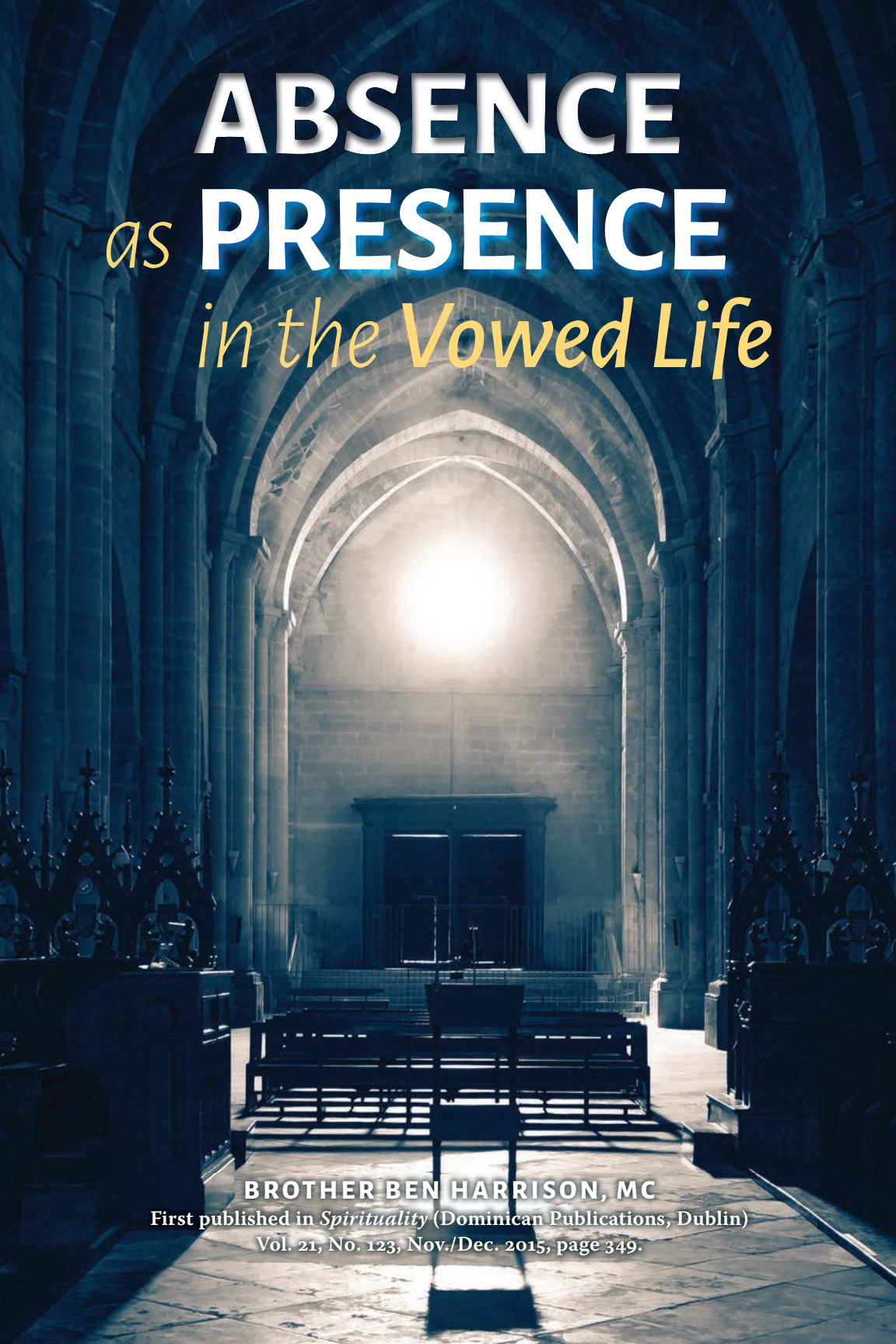
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Saint Francis of Assisi in His Tomb (detail),  
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# ABSENCE *as* PRESENCE *in the Vowed Life*

**BROTHER BEN HARRISON, MC**

First published in *Spirituality* (Dominican Publications, Dublin)

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**D**ON'T KNOW HOW THESE TWO trains of thought fit together, but I'm going to try to work it out: there is the letter I wrote to the bishop complaining about church documents, and then there's the little paragraph I found in one of those documents that seemed like a diamond in a box of pearls.

First, I was responding to the bishop's enquiry about ways in which we can celebrate the year dedicated to consecrated life which Pope Francis has called. I was saying that I am a bit overwhelmed by all the material coming out concerning religious life, from the Vatican and elsewhere, and that I feel that there is something missing from or muted in all this discussion of religious vocations. I find that the approach taken to this subject in official documents is normally rather sedate, measured and socially pragmatic. What I mean is that the religious life, the way of consecrated life to which monks and nuns, brothers and sisters are called, is described in a way that focuses on how useful their way of life is for the Church and society. Of course the documents acknowledge that religious life is a personal love for and following of Jesus as he leads us home to the Father, and there is consequently a logical focus on the practicalities of this discipleship and the attitudes that foster it. But to my mind this is not enough to attract young people with energy and verve.

What I feel is missing is a sense of the passionate longing and love for God that is what drives people to commit themselves to such a way of life. To quote my letter, "even appeals to youthful idealism and reforming zeal will only be kindled if those appeals are placed on a fire already burning with passion for God, or at least with desire for that passion. And I believe that even seasoned religious still on that journey of discipleship also need that passionate longing, or at least a clear memory of it ... to keep them moving forward in a direction true to their original call." Though the bishop thought that all that enthusiasm might

be a bit too much to ask of the increasingly elderly religious who welcome candidates, two cloistered nuns, one in her 60s and another in her 80s, emphatically ratified my statement.

Regarded strictly as a career choice, religious life has little to offer that can't be found in other less demanding types of work and life-styles.\* The only way vowed religious life makes sense is as a radical way of giving yourself totally to God. This was what inspired the great founders of orders through the centuries — they were in love with God, fascinated with Christ, and filled with a desire to pour themselves out through prayer and service to share in his saving mission to the world. "We follow Jesus precisely as the Way leading ultimately to ecstatic union with the exuberant God who is a consuming fire, who explodes all our categories, who atomizes our selfish mind-set, and ravishes us to realms beyond our domesticated dreams" (my letter to the bishop). I suppose what I'm saying is that, as much as we might wish that we were noble and generous enough to give all and expect nothing in return, most of us have enough self-interest that we need some nice resinous kindling in order for the fire to get started and catch hold. If we are to be passionate, there have to be some passions in us for the Spirit to ignite.

Of course, if we say that this passionate love of God or the desire for it has to be there to make sense of vocation, we are suggesting that the person who comes seeking entrance has had some sort of experience of God already. Is it *unreasonable* to expect that? Perhaps, but perhaps not. Many people who are considering vocations are attracted by the lives of religious they know and by the examples of saints whose lives they have read, who have just such a passionate love for God. That is why they come, because they want to

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\* This thought is developed at greater length in an article I wrote, published in *Human Development Magazine*, (vol. 33, no. 2, Summer 2012) entitled 'Eros and the Call to Religious Life.'

be near such heat, to have their own hearts kindled by those already aflame with God's love. And many who come have had previous powerful spiritual experiences in nature, on pilgrimages, in shrines, on retreats, through the various tragedies and blessings of ordinary life, even in their families and parishes. These experiences may not look explicitly "religious", whatever that may mean, but we need to learn that the Spirit of God is not limited to religious channels and can touch people's lives and hearts in powerful ways, as Jesus himself did, even in the most hellish circumstances.

I could explore these themes at greater length, but let me go on now to the second train of thought that seems to me to be connected with what I have said so far.

In the document *Keep Watch!* (from the Vatican, Sept. 2014, CTS, page 54) in a discussion of the prophetic and mystical aspects of consecrated life, you will find two sentences which read as follows:

We are sites of the gospel when we are women and men who desire: who await an encounter, a reunion, a relationship. This is why it is essential that our rhythms of life, community settings and all our activities become places that preserve an "absence": an absence which is the presence of God.

When I was reading the document and hit that passage I had to stop and read it again. And again. I found it astounding. It seems to me to capture the whole significance of religious life. It is the only section in any of the

documents that have come out so far in this year of consecrated life that I felt I had to mark for future reflection. True, the words are not full of the passion I have been speaking of. As words they are neither colourful nor impelling. And yet they opened for me a clear vista of the meaning of my vocation. My vocation as a person called to live a life of contemplation in action, a life consecrated to God by the vows, at the service of Jesus in his Church and in his poor, is characterized precisely by an absence which is, or at least awaits, the presence of God. I think that religious life should look and feel as different from ordinary life as a Cistercian abbey church does from a normal parish church, or as a Zen meditation hall does from a university classroom.

The religious life clears space in the midst of the cluttered and noisy circumstances of my crowded, busy, distracted days so that I can wait quietly for the One who alone gives it meaning, so that I can welcome him when he comes, so that I can attend to him like Martha and Mary did when he visited their home in Bethany. As an institution, the religious life clears exactly such a space in the midst of our harried and self-obsessed Church. And the Church itself will not be able to clear such a space of waiting and presence in society at large unless it holds dear those values which are characteristic of and distinctive to religious life. Further, if the Church is not a "site of the gospel," a place where the good news is not only preached but experienced, it is not serving its purpose.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *In the previously published version of this article the editor added, in the first line of text, "absence and presence" after "these two trains of thought." The two trains of thought I am talking about are not, as the editor supposed, absence and presence. Rather the first train of thought is that expressed in my letter to the bishop regarding the lack of passion in the Church's official discussion of religious life. The second train of thought is my reflection on the ramifications of absence as presence following on from the quotation from the document Keep Watch. The "working it out" is the resolution I reached in the last line of my article, that the sense of absence resulting from the practices of religious life (as explained in the article) makes room for a sense of the presence of God's passionate love for us and ours for him in the same way that the empty platform of a hearth provides the space for a fire to dance in ecstasy. The two trains of thought seemed not to have any connection to each other, but in fact they do: the absence as presence makes the passion possible.*



Everything about the religious life has to do with making time and space for the one thing necessary. The vows make space in our hearts, our minds, our wills. The vow of poverty makes space in the actual physical clutter of our material possessions, to say nothing of our acquisitive instincts and our preoccupations with security and money. Chastity makes space among our relationships and gives us time that would normally be filled with the concerns and business of family life. Obedience simplifies our choices as we need to spend less time figuring out what we want and more time discerning what God wants.

Our prayer times—meditation, contemplation, *lectio divina* and spiritual reading—ring-fence periods in our day of work and social activity so that we will have time to ponder God's words, God's Word. The traditional disciplines of monastic life make time and space in radically simple ways—fasting makes space in our very guts and amidst our appetites; vigils carve out a section of wakefulness in the unconscious hours of our sleeping; the regular "hours" of the divine office can seem like an added burden and an incessant interruption of our work, but their purpose is to keep us focused, to keep our priorities centred on the One who *is* our praise in the great assembly.

It is easy to see how in all the above aspects of our religious life we are creating time and space for our relationship with God. We are preserving, as the quotation says, or perhaps better, *reserving* absences in the "rhythms of life, community settings and all our activities" in order to invite or discover God's presence there, in the emptiness of our need and our longing.

But what about our community and our work? Do they too represent an absence? I see two ways in which they fit the pattern we are discussing. In one way they serve as the instruments by which God displaces our self-centredness and uproots the invasive knotweed of egoism that threatens our little

plot of land. Living with and caring for other people are as effective as any bulldozer in forcing us to get out of our own way and God's.

And then, secondly, once that time and space are cleared, our brothers and sisters in community, and the brothers and sisters to whom we minister, bring the very presence of God into that cleared space. A tent of meeting is erected outside the camp. And not only are we thus privileged to welcome Christ who comes to us in the other, but we are able to offer the hospitality of time and space to that other, who is as desperate as we are to experience the freedom and joy of the Spirit, the presence that dwells in the midst of absence.

So I have said that all of the most distinctive characteristics of consecrated life serve to create an emptiness, an absence, an open space and a free time, at the very heart of our lives and our communities. And the point of that is precisely that that absence either prepares us for a presence or it harbours a presence, *the Presence*. This is the paradox at the heart of religion—we experience the mystery most easily in silence, in the wilderness, in the cave, in the night, in our poverty, when we are able to see past the ten thousand things and gaze into the eyes of the One Who Waits. We experience the Presence most profoundly as an absence, the *Todo* as a *Nada*.

It is like a great cathedral or a landscape with mountains. You may spend some time looking at the stained glass or the carvings, the rocks or the trees that frame the scene. But eventually you will settle down, and the dominant impression will be one of vastness, of immensity, of towering height, of silence. You will sense a presence in the enormous emptiness of that resounding void.

Or perhaps you will be drawn to the smaller scale, to the bower of trees and rocks, the grotto with its spring, the little chapel in the crypt, the forgotten shrine in the forest. There also the main thing is the space: the burrow,

*Please turn to page 9.*

# IN THE Wake OF *Laudato Si*

SR MARY WOLFF-SALIN

SOME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO — SOMEWHAT TO MY SURPRISE — I FOUND myself breeding dogs. My motives were not of the purest. True, I had wanted a dog for years, as I grew up with big dogs. But in religious communities it is rather rare to find a dog, except outside the house as a guardian. But in my case I was going to breed dogs — even more rare for a nun. Partly my motivation was that I was working as a psychotherapist and wanted an alternative source of income. And partly ... I really didn't know what I was doing! Fortunately I had a superb mentor in the breeder from whom I got my first dog — a woman with a profound respect for nature and its guidance and ways. She taught me a lot along these lines.

So one fine day I went up to Maine to get my first Great Pyrenees pup. I had never had this breed; in fact I had only once seen one walking on the grounds near our house. But I needed a dog that could combine gentleness with being a guardian. This breed, fluffy and soft with knowing eyes and big paws seemed to fill the bill. How little I knew! I had heard that Pyrs could be stubborn but had no idea what that meant. As my mentor pointed out, originally they guarded sheep

over miles of mountain between France and Spain. They could only do this by being independent, using their own heads — and, if necessary, being fierce. They were very much on their own for weeks on end. This was not a dog one would want to train to the immediate military style obedience that is so precious in some breeds and makes them so useful. On the other hand, as a friend of mine said of one of my dogs, “You look into her eyes and know there’s a person in there.”



This is not a small thing to understand. We humans have a history of treating dogs or animals like things, to serve our pleasures or needs, even to discard at will. In the case of factory farming they are objects, to be tortured, butchered, eaten for the sake of profit. But if those dark eyes looking into yours belong to an independent being with rights, feelings, desires, awarenesses of its own — maybe some awarenesses even we don't have — then

what? Psychologists speak of “emotional intelligence.” Often dogs are far ahead of us in this. They know things we don't begin to know. Dog can determine that this lovely polite charming man has a hidden temper, is even dangerous. Or that this woman is gold all through. And on and on. Balaam's ass may not be so unique after all.

Then there is the issue of emotional responsiveness. Leave your house and return. Chances are your dog will be jumping for



joy, maybe even showering kisses on your return. Does your wife or husband greet you that way — with such unrestrained happiness? Why not? Obviously years of history leave their mark, good and bad. We would probably be exhausted by such a demonstration every day. And yet small children react similarly if left free. It's worth pondering. The intensity and purity of a dog's joy in welcoming bears reflection on what we may have lost in the ways we get along with each other.

But hasn't the dog negative history, too? Training, scoldings, separations? But somehow the dog forgives. (Unless it has been abused beyond bearing, and often even then. It is we humans who create vicious dogs.) "I don't like it when dogs growl at me," one hears. A dog growls in order not to bite; that is its language. A dog may have a job: guard this family, this property, this flock, these animals. If he perceives you as a danger his growl is his warning. Listen and obey. There is a beautiful story about an Irish Wolfhound killed by his master who saw blood on his baby's cradle. Only then did he see that the baby was unharmed and there was a wolf dead in the corner.

On another note, I remember saying to one of my dogs "I wish you could talk." The look she gave me said clear as day, "I do. You don't listen." From that day I worked to learn to listen.

## ABSENCE & PRESENCE *from page 7*

the den, the womb, the nook that awaits the coming, the abiding, of the One who brings warmth, belonging, presence.

And so this, perhaps, is how these two insights fit together: the empty space that is the hearth, the fireplace, the altar, the holy of holies, the secret chamber, becomes the place where the fire, the passionate love that is at the heart of religious vocation, finds its home and blazes high. It may bring warmth to the whole house, but it dances on the bare stone hearth with its own ecstatic joy. ❄

I had considered taking that same dog to a workshop I was giving about nature. But I knew she would have gone around the circle, placing herself directly in front of each person, eye to eye, until the relationship was established. A good object lesson perhaps but one can hardly give a workshop that way. So the left brain won again. And how do I know that some people might not have gained more from the other experience?

Which brings me to another main point of this discussion. Dogs, animals, bring us into relation with the world of nature as nothing else can. Before the great tsunami in Malaysia the animals fled the coast. The natives saw it and followed. The western tourists saw nothing and many drowned.

We have much to learn if we can be humble and open enough to learn about the world around us from our four-legged friends, if we can learn, like Francis, to see them as our brothers and sisters who can open new horizons to us. This might be a step toward Isaiah's Kingdom of Peace. ❄

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# LOOKING AT EUCHARISTIC THEMES



## IN THREE ANCIENT TEXTS AND HOW CONTEXT MATTERS

MATTHEW RIOS, OSB

IT HAS BEEN AN ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE THAT HISTORY IS NOT ESTABLISHED BY RIGID OR SCIENTIFIC UNIVERSAL LAWS BUT NEEDS TO BE recognized in its complexity and diversity. In looking at the history of our worship we ought to examine closely the ancient texts, paying close attention to their contexts and examining the details of what they actually say and why they say what they say in the first place. The *Didache*, the writings of Justin Martyr, and the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch demonstrate how the Eucharistic practices and beliefs of the early church (2nd–3rd centuries) developed during this period in their own contexts and among their intended audiences. In this article, I wish to address the question, “What are the major Eucharistic themes the ancient texts contributed in their own time and location?” In answering this question, perhaps we will come to appreciate the depths and richness of the shape of what we celebrate as the “source and summit” of our life, the Eucharist, today. Ancient texts are always fascinating and we never go wrong when we look back to our deeper roots to discover how they now relate to us.

The text known as the *Didache* (mid- to late-first century) has been traditionally associated with a community either in Palestine or, more likely, in the region around Antioch. It represents about a half a century of writing down, and editing, augmenting, and transforming an early collection of sayings into a presumed baptismal instruction and communal manual for early Christians. We learn from this document about the Eucharist, with baptism described as a rite of initiation, and that the people assembled for a common meal and gave thanks on the Lord's Day (Sunday). It talks about travelling prophets and teachers who used distinctively Jewish discourse, and reveals how the community represented by the *Didache* modeled their prayer on seemingly Jewish originals. Liturgical scholars have had difficulty in coping with it as a text. It does not fit neatly into a linear history of the Eucharist or of ministry. It is a document written for or by a Christian community in the process of change. One concrete example of this is that while it recognizes the authority of travelling prophets, it also suggests that authorities within the community itself (such as elders) are superseding these.

In its final form, the *Didache's* sixteen chapters fall into four sections: 1. The way of life and death; 2. Religious practices; 3. Leadership roles; and 4. Eschatological sayings. The Eucharist is treated in the sections on religious practices (Ch. 9–10) and leadership roles (Ch. 14). Among the religious practices, the *Didache* includes a set of blessings to be said before and after a meal. It also includes what may be the earliest reference to the "Lord's Day." The history of the text's development to its final form provides a view of a Christian community very close to the beginning of Christianity. It is deemed to have developed from being Jewish in its understanding of life, needing protection from the influence of the Gentile world in which it was immersed, to a community that eventually separated itself from other Jewish communities.

Food and meals were very important in the life of the community (as they were for Jews in general); so was fasting (1:3, 7:4, 8:1). Community members were to avoid eating meat offered to idols (6:3) and joining idolatrous practices connected with "the way of death." As the Lord taught them, they were to pray to the Father, "Give us today our daily bread." They were also to provide itinerant apostles the bread they needed to reach their next destination; but everyone was to work for his/her own food. The first fruits of the winepress, the threshing floor, cattle and sheep were to be offered to the prophets, or in their absence, to the poor, and the same was to be done with baked bread or newly-opened jars of oil (12:3–6). But the Eucharist was the most important meal in the life of the community.

The complexity and diversity of the completed text (and the community itself) can be glimpsed from the observation made by most scholars that the *Didache* ties together three distinct and at times unrelated threads/stages of development.

The first stage corresponds to the community's early years when it appears to be closely associated with Judaism. The meal prayers in Chapter 9 correspond to a Jewish prayer that opens, "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe." For the cup, it continues with, "who creates the fruit of the vine," and for the bread, "who brings forth bread from the earth." In the *Didache* we find, "We give you thanks our Father for the holy vine of David your servant." For the bread, "We give you thanks Father for life and knowledge." It is notable that at this stage the prayers do not contain any Christology, meaning any reference to Christ in his divinity and humanity.

By the second stage, the community had separated from other Jewish communities and needed to distinguish itself as distinctly Christian. It is at this time that Eucharistic prayers became part of the instruction, relating specifically to the role of Jesus. It is through and for Jesus we give thanks (9.2),

who “made known to us life and knowledge” (9.3) and “faith and immortality” (10.2), and it is through Jesus that God has “graciously given spiritual food and drink and eternal life.” A special instruction excludes those who are not baptized in the name of the Lord from eating or drinking in their Eucharist (9.5).

Stage three is characterized by the community’s recognition that it needs to protect itself from false prophets, apostles, and teachers and choose good leaders worthy of the Lord (15:1-1), and so separate itself from other Christian communities. Here also is defined the requirement that the assembly gather on and celebrate the “Lord’s Day” (14), where the term “Lord” refers not simply to “the Risen Lord” but the Lord God.

The epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (circa 50–117) date to the early second century, when Eucharistic issues were internal to the Christian communities. Ignatius wrote seven epistles to Christian communities in Asia Minor while under arrest and on his way from Antioch to Rome, where he was to be martyred. Four were written in Smyrna, where he met delegations from Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles, with a letter to Rome entrusted to the Ephesian delegation. Three letters were written from Troas to the church of Smyrna, Philadelphia, and to bishop Polycarp of Smyrna.

In these letters, Ignatius focuses on the importance of internal unity. In his letter to the Romans he pleads that no one interfere with his forthcoming martyrdom, professing his conviction that the success of his martyrdom depends on the peace and unity of the churches. Thus he calls for obedience to bishops and avoidance of false prophets. The context of our period and location is a Hellenistic society, which is reflected in his literary style and rhetoric and in his conceptions of communal life from the Hellenistic club and city.

Ignatius references the Eucharist in several of his letters, using the term for the first time in its technical sense to denote a specific rite

involving bread and wine. Among the dominant Eucharistic themes in his letters are: 1. That the Eucharist is basic to being a Christian; thus he speaks of the “altar of Eucharistic sacrifice” as a sign and guarantor of Church unity (Eph4.2; Mag 7.2; Trall 7.2; Phd 4). 2. That the Eucharist has implications for the humanity and divinity of Christ, for Christian spirituality and the meaning of martyrdom (his own martyrdom). 3. That there are ministers for the Eucharist, centered on the ministry of the bishop, with the presbyterate, and deacons whom he referred to as fellow slaves. 4. That the Eucharist is “medicine of immortality (Eph 20.2), an antidote against death for life in Jesus forever (Smy 7.1). 5. That breaking the one bread requires one assembly at one altar (Eph 5.2, Mag 7.2, Tr 7.2, Phd 4). 6. That concern for the flesh in the Eucharist must transform into concern for the poor.

Ignatius ties the Eucharist directly to his ideas concerning the unity of the church as focused on the bishop (Phd 4, Smyr 8:1-2). In his letter to the Ephesians, he encourages the people to assemble frequently for prayer and thanksgiving (Eph 13.1), but gives no clear indication as to how frequently and on what day or hour they should gather. In the letter to the Smyrneans, the words “eucharist” and “agape” seem to be used interchangeably (Smyr 8:1-2), though agape is defined no more clearly than eucharist. What is explicit however is that the bread and wine are “medicine for the soul” (Eph 20.2). The Eucharist is also related loosely to discussion of the flesh and blood of Christ (Phil 4, Smyr 7.1).

The writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 103–165) that speak about the Eucharist are found in what is known as the *First Apology* and the *Dialogue with Trypho*. While Ignatius dealt with Eucharistic issues internal to the Christian communities, Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century was concerned with Eucharistic issues arising from the Christian encounter with world at large. For him and his audience the Eucharist had become a part



of a Christian philosophy, which had to compete with a host of contemporary philosophical schools and mystery cults with which it might be easily confused. In that wider world, Christianity had to present and account for itself; it also had to defend itself. The Eucharist in particular needed an apologist, one who could present it, describe it, and explain it. Justin, a lay person with philosophical credentials, took on the challenge.

In the course of his writings Justin gives us a picture of the kind of things that actually happened at worship within a Christian community in Rome. In one place he describes a baptism followed by the sharing of bread and wine. Elsewhere he recounts an act of worship with readings, teaching, prayers, and the sharing of bread and wine with no concomitant baptism. We can infer from what he tells us that prayers were offered standing, and that

during celebrations with baptism members of the community greeted one another with a kiss of peace. Bread and wine were brought in and the “president” offered a thanksgiving to the best of his ability. The gifts were presented informally and some of the bread was held in reserve for the sick. The food was referred to as the “eucharist,” and only believers could participate. As in the *Didache* and Ignatius of Antioch’s epistles, Justin also relates the bread and wine to the body and blood of Jesus. He offers the institute narratives from the Last Supper as an explanation for the event, but he provides no examples of specific prayers. Justin also chooses the term “president” rather than “elder” or “bishop” for the main celebrant. He uses the term “deacon”

for those who are going to bring the bread to the poor and the sick and “lector” for those who read.

After describing the baptismal meal with the Christian assembly, he indicates that “this food is called by us Eucharist” (66). He also said that “those called by us deacons” distribute “the eucharisticised bread and wine and water” (65). Justin explains that the food is parallel to the person of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist to the incarnation, the word and prayer coming from Jesus to the word of God, the Eucharistic flesh and blood to Jesus’ incar-

nate flesh and blood, and our salvation to the transformation of our flesh and blood. For Justin’s community, the whole of Christian life was lived in remembrance of Jesus, which they accomplished by recalling the celebration in which they were regenerated (baptized) and first joined the assembly to celebrate

the Eucharist. Justin concludes with an explanation as to why they hold their common assembly on the day of the Sun. Sunday, he says, is the first day of the week, the day on which God, transforming the darkness and matter, created the world. It is also the day on which our Savior Jesus Christ arose from the dead. ✖



**Fr. Matthew Rios**, initially a monk at the Monastery of the Transfiguration in the Philippines, came to the United States and entered Saint Andrew’s Abbey where he made simple profession in November of 2001. He completed his monastic studies at St. John’s in Collegeville, Minnesota, and did post-graduate work in liturgical studies.

# *Anonymonks*



DR. DONALD P. RICHMOND, OBL.OSB





**W**HAT IS A MONK? ALTHOUGH the answer to this question may seem apparent, in fact it is far more elusive. When we move away from etymological considerations, about which there may be a bit of ambiguity, the word “monk” may elicit different understandings and interpretations. As just one example we will recall that one ancient Desert Father, when asked this very question, responded “A monk is a person who sees sin approaching from a long way off.” Other definitions, often distinct from etymological identifiers, also exist.

These things noted, however, there is something to be said for a far more common and comprehensive definition: A monk is a person who dwells *alone*, either as a Hermit or within a diversity of community expressions, for the purpose of seeking God, combating evil, cultivating a robust life of prayer and effectively engaging the world. Monks are, as such, spiritual athletes who, with the Patriarch Jacob, wrestle through life’s many dark nights (Genesis 32:24-32) in order to receive the graces of brokenness (Genesis 32:25), blessing (Genesis 32:26-28) and benediction (Hebrews 11:21).

Of course, and essentially, it must be appreciated that this framework suggests that that there are many people who live monastic lives without in any way being formally connected to a monastery. In fact, to some degree, every Christian is called to live a solitary life which is entirely committed to God for the priorities and purposes identified above. And, while not in any way wanting to diminish the importance of monastic vocations, it is my contention that (at least in some ways) the hidden Christian, the Anonymonk who simply wants to live a life of absolute devotion to God, is also a monastic.

In order to help us appreciate the importance of Anonymonks, an analysis of Matthew 6:1-21 is in order. Within the context of community (Matthew 5:1-2), commitment

(Matthew 5:3-16) and *caritas* (Matthew 5:17-48) our Lord calls every Christian into the hidden life (Matthew 6:1-21). These, I believe, poignantly parallel the Rule of Saint Benedict and any other Rule of Life that is informed by Holy Scripture and sacred tradition. The Sermon on the Mount, as found in St. Matthew 5-7, is the normal Christian life for every disciple of Jesus Christ — hiddenness being crucial to it. The hidden life of the Gospel is the life of the Anonymonk.

Upon examining St. Matthew 6:1-7:5 we find at least four foci of Anonymonks. Anonymonks are *hidden persons* who engage in *hidden prayer* and, as such, provide *hidden hope* and *hidden help*.

**Hidden Person.** St. Matthew 6: 1a provides us with the *disposition of discipleship*. Matthew writes: “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them” (*Orthodox Study Bible*). In this text we read that the call of every committed Christian is a call to hiddenness and anonymity. Like every other human being, the Christian wants attention. When we do something well, we want to be acknowledged. To some small degree, of course, this is not entirely wrong. Honor is due to those who do things well, who are exceptional. We should seek to demonstrate respect to those who deserve our respect (and, in fact, to those who do not deserve it). But we should not seek it for ourselves. In fact, the Christian should embrace and cultivate anonymity because it helps us properly “die” to ourselves. When we say “no” to the praise that might rightfully be due us, it provides us with the unique opportunity to die to ourselves and live entirely to God. The hidden life is therefore the life wholly lived for God! Is not this hiddenness and wholehearted devotion to God the life of the monk? The hidden person is an Anonymonk.

**Hidden Prayer.** As we move more deeply into St. Matthew 6 we read about the *disciplines of discipleship*: Hidden alms (6:1-4), hidden prayer (6:5-15) and hidden

fasting (6:16-18). (The emphasis upon money throughout the text is quite interesting because Matthew, before his calling and commitment to Christ, was a Tax Collector.) Each of these, albeit hidden prayer specifically, forms the function and the focus of every Anonymonk.

Poverty, especially spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3), is foundational to Christian discipleship. It is the beginning, middle and end of spiritual formation. A wealthy monk is not a monk at all as monetary wealth is antithetical to Christ's calling and our *caritas* commitments. Being poor, preferably in spirit, helps us to remain open to God. Poverty helps us cultivate dependent and expectant lives. This does not mean that the Anonymonk cannot have money. This does not mean that the Anonymonk cannot own property. What it does mean, and must be understood, is that the love of money is the root of all evil, contrary to community, insensitive to the needs of others, and the seed of spiritual destruction and social disintegration.

Similarly, fasting is critical to Christian commitment. While there may be those who are unable to engage in full or rigorous fasts, a spirit of doing without (of saying "no" to our appetites) is critical to spiritual formation. This is in keeping with our Lord's emphasis upon self-denial and taking up our cross in order to follow him. And this must be a discipline that is buried deep within us! Fasts need not be long or arduous, but they need to be consistently committed to. I have a friend, as an example, who can no longer engage in arduous fasting. As a response to this, my friend consistently asks himself a question: "Of what, today, can I deny myself?" Saying "no" to self is the mantra of the Anonymonk.

Hidden prayer is foundational to the Christian life. Although our Lord did not in any way reject corporate prayer, a time and a place for fixed liturgical worship, he also tells us to go into our closets, alone, for prayer (6:6-7). Hidden prayer is the vitality of public worship.

Without a pronounced life of private prayer we are unable to worship fully or well. Jesus constantly hid himself away at night for solitary prayer. This devotional life resulted in a life of devotion. It was the hiddenness that in some way empowered the holiness. As it was with the Master, so it will be with each of us who will only and always remain novices. Prayer, hidden prayer, is the life of the Christian. Prayer, hidden prayer, is the mark of the Anonymonk.

**Hidden Hope.** Matthew 6 also provides us with the *direction of discipleship*. The committed Christian, the Anonymonk, does not live for himself. With John Donne we assert "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." This social construct may surprise some people. Often, when people think about monks, they think about men (or women) living solitary lives. That is, they think about people who are divorced from normal social activities. Although to some small degree this perspective may contain a measure of truth, it is far from functional fact. Monks do lead hidden lives of hidden prayer, but, upon devoting themselves to these priorities, they always have eyes that look beyond the "enclosure." The "Our" of the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples (6:9-13) simultaneously moves inward and outward. The "inward" addresses the "our" of a committed community life. Our Lord's *disciples* asked him about prayer. Jesus taught *them* to pray the "Our Father." But, and very swiftly, the "inward" gives way to the "outward." It is not just "me and God" or "we and God," the "our" requires forgiveness, and this forgiveness means that we understand, appreciate and address the fact that there are those who, by their attitudes and actions, seem to be entirely "other." These "others" are beyond the bounds of the comfortable enclosure of "us" and dwell in a "them" that may be repulsive to "us." As such the hidden prayer of the Anonymonk will always propel her beyond herself into the world of "men"



who are in dire need of forgiveness (6:14-15). And, although such examples DO exist within churches and within the monastic enclosure, Matthew's non-judgmental emphasis in chapter 7 seems to push us beyond barriers of Christian comfort. The many monks with whom I am familiar are almost always moving well beyond their comfortable enclosure in order to more effectively engage with others.

Forgiveness forces us "inward" in order to wrestle over our own failures and resistances. Forgiveness makes us ask ourselves hard questions. Forgiveness is a crucifixion of our own injured inwardness in order to help us face the unwanted, unsought, and often unhealthy outwardness of other people. Forgiveness says "no" to our supposedly righteous demands for justice, replacing demand with denial and justice with mercy. This provides a hidden hope because forgiveness, often unsought, is the hidden fabric of the universe. Without forgiveness, cosmos is chaos.

**Hidden Help.** Finally, and importantly, Matthew 6 briefly and broadly provides us with another direction for disciples: Helping. It is to be noted that when Jesus finished his teachings, in Matthew 5-7, he immediately entered a life of service. Philosophy resulted in practice. Saying resulted in doing. Going up the mountain (Matthew 5) resulted in coming down the mountain (Matthew 8). This is a pattern:

Jesus lived the silent and solitary life  
BEFORE public ministry (Matthew 1-3).  
Jesus wrestled in the silent and solitary  
desert BEFORE public ministry  
(Matthew 4).  
Jesus prayed in solitary places BEFORE  
public ministry (Matthew 4 and  
elsewhere).  
Jesus solitarily suffered and died BEFORE  
public resurrection.  
The Apostles and other disciples were  
solitary BEFORE public ministry  
(Acts 1-2).

St. Paul lived a solitary life BEFORE  
making more pronounced public  
appearances (Galatians 1: 15-2:1).

Monks, old and new, seek to live silent and solitary lives BEFORE and AS they enter into the real world with real people who have real problems. Their hiddenness provides the means for biblical helpfulness, functional holiness and practical evangelism. This is the same for the Anonymonk, the person who wants to devote herself entirely to God.

Monks do not simply live in enclosures that are far-removed from everyday life. Although there are elements of hiddenness unique to the vocation of monasticism, the hiddenness that monks cultivate is the hiddenness to which every committed Christian is called. We are all challenged to monasticism. The serious Christian will hear and heed this call and this challenge. As such, every genuine Christian is in some sense an Anonymonk. ❄️



**Dr. Donald P. Richmond,** a widely published author and illustrator, is an oblate of Saint Benedict with Saint Andrew's Abbey in California.

### ABBNEY NEWS

**Warren Ermish** (now Br. Augustine) was invested as a Novice on January 24.

**Br. Paul Ortega** will make Simple Vows on the Feast of the Annunciation, which this year is on April 4, because of early Lent.

**Br. Angelus** will make Solemn Vows sometime over the summer, date TBD.

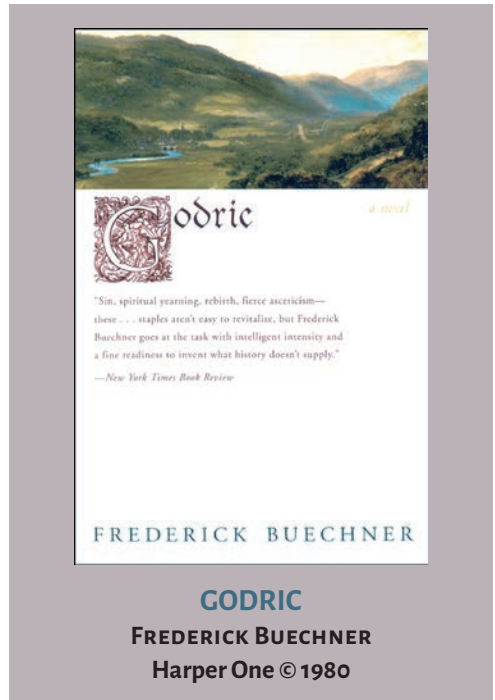
Let us pray for all three men as they take their next steps in the life of St. Benedict and Saint's Andrew's Abbey. ❄️

## QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW

by fr. philip edwards, osb

I DO NOT REMEMBER WHEN I WAS FIRST made aware of Frederick Buechner. I would like to think he was put before me by the Misses Maclean (they most probably spelled it McClean, alas), three spinster public school teachers in the Eagle Rock area in which I grew up. I actually “sat under” two of them, Miss Linda at Dahlia Heights and Miss Emily at Eagle Rock Central, as a second- and third-grader. The third, Miss Rebecca, taught at Delevan Drive (where a great high school buddy, Robert Knox, was grade schooled); she was one of the faculty chaperones for a joint fifth grade field trip to Los Angeles Harbor, but I seldom saw her. They all lived on the next street over from our house and when I was a callow and morose teenager they would occasionally let me visit and encourage my sense of literary and ministerial vocation, recommending the examples of such writers as A.J. Cronin and L.C. Douglas. They would surely have preferred a fellow Presbyterian, especially an active ordained minister, but since Buechner’s first novel was not published until 1950, when I was already approaching graduation from the University, legally come of age and about to enter into Newman’s “fullness of faith” with the Roman Catholic communion, and Buechner himself was just being acclaimed as a writer and only on the verge of entering into pre-ordination studies at Union Seminary in New York in 1954 (my last year in the Coast Guard, stationed in New Jersey), they could hardly have told me anything of him in the early 40s!

What I do remember is that his name would come up from time to time as someone “you should know” as a great contemporary writer of spiritual insight, but somehow I never did have in hand or read anything of his until I was commissioned to review *Godric* for this *Chronicle*! Now I have discovered that since the days of Father Wilfrid, several of Buechner’s books



have been nestled here and there in the stacks of the monastic library — but not *Godric*, nor the prizeworthy first novel, *A Long Day's Dying*. If *Godric* is at all typical we must have them all!

“Five friends I had, and two of them snakes,” the tale begins. A bold and fractious crank of a hermit-monk submits to a venerated spiritual father, the universally beloved champion of spiritual friendship, Saint Aelred (here phonetically spelled as “Ailred”), to permit a persistent dogbody of a pious neighboring monk, Reginald of Durham, to preserve his life-story:

“To put your life on parchment, Godric,” Ailred says. His cough’s like the splitting of wood. “To unbushel the light of your day for the schooling of children. To set them a path to follow. Did he but know where Godric’s path has led or what sights his light has lit, he’d bushel me back fast enough. I’ve told Mother Reginald tales to rattle and blush his fishbelly tonsure pink as a babe’s bum, but he turns them all to treacle with his scratching quill. I scoop out the jakes of my remembrance, and he censures it all with his clerkish screed till it reeks of mass.... But I suffer him. For it was lowly, gentle,

dark-eyed Ailred sent him" [pp. 6–7].

This is a story whose beginning is truly in its end; even the "*media res*" in which we seem to start is nearly the penultimate moment of Godric's passing, rather than the explosive moment in the port of Jaffa when the (truly) fractious first friend, Mouse, hurls into the water the battered body of Deric, which struggles to shore to begin again the penitential path of Godric. Godric of Finchale, irascible, puritanical solitary perched on a river rock in mid-Wear in the shadow of the holy Benedictine fortress of Durham becomes a point of pious pilgrimage:

"Is he asleep, old Godric? Is he awake? Does he himself know which? He lies there staring at a crack. He mumbles holiness. They say he first saw light in Bastard William's day, and now it's Henry Second, Becket's bane, that calls the tune from France.

They say that Godric's body's scored from when the Devil, shaped like a wild boar, fetched him down and tore him. They say he healed a leper with a kiss. They kneel there waiting for him to rise or stir while Godric mocks them in his peacock heart [pp. 40–41] ...

"The tale they tell is of a leper cleansed. I do not know or seek to know, for pride lies one way, rue the other. But from that time the word went forth that there was healing in my hands. *Something* was in my hands at least and rests there yet though they're all knotted now and stiff like claws. Folk come from miles to have me touch them. Could I but touch the churlish-ness within myself or kiss old Godric clean!

Here's how it happens when they come. They go to the monks at first... The monks do the sieving, as I say, and send to Godric only those deemed worthy... to each they give a cross of plaited straw to be his proof they've sent him.... To touch me and to feel my touch they come. To take at my hands whatever of Christ or comfort such hands have. Of their own, my own hands have nothing more than any man's and less now at this tottering, lamewit age of mine when most of what I ever had is more than mostly spent. But it's as if my hands are gloves, and in them other hands than mine, and those the ones that folk appear with roods of straw to seek. It's holiness they hunger

### MONKS' FEAST DAYS

March 17	Fr. Patrick
March 19	Fr. Joseph
March 21	Bro. Benedict
April 25	Br. John Mark
May 1	Bro. Joseph
May 3	Fr. Philip
May 10	Abbot Damien

for, and if by some mad grace it's mine to give, if I've a holy hand inside my hand to touch them with, I'll touch them day and night, Sweet Christ, what other use are idle hermits for?" [pp. 42–43].

Our own dear Aelred's editorial patience has long suffered surtax upon surtax of exasperated expectations from my paralytic inability to be on time (just ask the long list of disappointed teachers following the Misses McLean) and my stretching of the laws and conventions of copyright in distended quotations of reviewed texts, but it is the text itself that matters. This text is so mesmerisingly — well, read what the *New York Times Book Review*, cited on both back and front covers of the paperback edition, says so succinctly:

"... he avoids metaphysical fiddle, embedding his narrative in domestic reality — familial affection, responsibilities, disasters.... All on his own, Mr. Buechner has managed to reinvent projects of self-purification and of faith as piquant matter for contemporary fiction [in a book] notable for literary finish.... Frederick Buechner is a very good writer indeed."

It is an excellent read, but an even better "*lectio*" — get some great good Gandalf to read it aloud to you! ❄



**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 EARLY 2016 RETREATS

## FEBRUARY 2016

### LENTEN SILENT RETREAT

**Tuesday, February 9–Friday, February 12, 2016**

During these days of silence at the monastery, the whole Church begins the sacred season of Lent. Short reflections will be offered daily with a special emphasis on the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The desert silence and the Liturgies of the monastery will provide an atmosphere conducive to deep reflection. This is a wonderful opportunity to make our Lenten pilgrimage more fruitful this year.

*Presenter:* Fr. Patrick Sheridan, O.S.B.

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

### THE FAITH OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN

**Saturday, February 13, 2016 9:30 AM–3:30 PM**

This is a Lenten 'QuietDay' reflecting on persisting in our faith. Lent is a perfect time for self-reflection. Taking the Canaanite woman as an example, this retreat day will focus on asking, surrendering, and waiting.

*Presenter:* Lisa Marion, Ph.D.; Obl. OSB

*Donation:* \$40 per person; includes tuition, morning beverages, and lunch after Mass

### WORKING THE 12 STEPS ON THE WAY: A MEN'S 12-STEP RETREAT WITH A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

**Friday, February 19–Sunday, February 21, 2016**

This 12-Step programs have been called the greatest distillation of Christian Spirituality in Western history. This retreat will incorporate the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* with its course, *The Big Book of Scripture and Tradition*, to give Christian twelve-steppers a base for living one day at a time. Participants will be given practical "do-able" exercises that bring the working of the Steps and the Followers of the Way of Jesus Christ into everyday life. Everyone is welcome, and even those whose favorite chapter is "We Agnostics," will find useful markers for the journey into happy destiny.

*Presenter:* Br. Joseph Brown, O.S.B. (Orthodox)

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

### TALLER CUARESMA EN ESPAÑOL

**Domingo, 21 de Febrero 2016 9:00 am–3:30 pm**

La Cuaresma es el tiempo litúrgico de conversión, que marca la Iglesia para prepararnos a la gran fiesta de la Pascua. Es tiempo para arrepentirnos de nuestros pecados y de cambiar algo dentro nosotros para ser mejores y poder vivir más cerca de Cristo. En la Cuaresma, Cristo nos invita a cambiar de vida. La Iglesia nos invita a vivir la Cuaresma como un camino hacia Jesucristo, escuchando la Palabra de Dios, orando, compartiendo con el prójimo y haciendo obras buenas. Nos invita a vivir una serie de actitudes cristianas que nos ayudan a parecernos más a Jesucristo. Durante este taller examinaremos nuestras vidas haciéndonos tres preguntas fundamentales: 1. ¿A qué tengo que morir? 2. ¿A qué tengo que darle vida nueva? 3. ¿A qué tengo que resucitar?

*Presentador:* Carlos Obando

*Donación:* \$40 Incluye café o té en la mañana y el almuerzo

### PRIESTS RETREAT: "GO REBUILD MY HOUSE!"

**New Dates: Monday, February 29–Friday, March 4, 2016**

The theme of this year's retreat is "Go Rebuild My House!" The apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel* will be the centerpiece for these days of retreat. (This retreat is also offered January 25–29.)

*Presenter:* Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB

*Room, board, and tuition:* \$400 single

### THE PEOPLE OF GOD WITH JESUS IN THE DESERT

**Friday, February 26–Sunday, February 28, 2016**

This retreat will reflect on the practices of Lent- prayer, fasting, and almsgiving-as essential elements of the Church's pilgrimage during this holy season. As St. Benedict calls his disciples to purify their lives and to long for Holy Easter, there will be practical suggestions on how to make these disciplines a vital spiritual reality. The monastic tradition proposes many insights for the Christian seeking deeper conversion in Christ. The mystery of God's mercy, compassion, and forgiveness will be shown as models of our own 'almsgiving' as we strive to love one another as Christ mercifully loves us.

*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, O.S.B.

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



## MARCH 2016

### PRIESTS' RETREAT: HEALERS IN CHRIST

**Monday, March 7–Friday, March 11, 2016**

This retreat for priests will highlight the ministry of priests as compassionate healers in Christ. The homilies and writings of Pope Francis will provide inspiration for our reflections on the mercy of Christ that works through us as sacrament-persons. Time will also be devoted to exploring pitfalls in our ministerial style with particular focus on compassion fatigue, a form of ministry burnout. (This retreat is also offered November 28–December 2.)  
*Presenter:* Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB  
*Room, board, and tuition:* \$400 single

### SACRED TRIDUUM

**Thursday, March 24–Sunday, March 27, 2016**

The Sacred Triduum is the holiest time of the liturgical cycle of the Church. You are invited to share the monastic experience of this sacred liturgy beginning on Holy Thursday and concluding Easter Sunday. (Since this time is rooted in silence and reflection, we ask that you plan to arrive in sufficient time to be settled in your room before 4 P.M.)  
*Room and board:* \$350 single; \$287.50 each shared

## APRIL 2016

### EXPLORING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**Saturday, April 9, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.**

Join us for a "QuietDay" of Reflection and conversation of Spiritual Gifts. Topics covered will be: What are spiritual gifts? How are they different from the Fruits of the Spirit? What are the unique spiritual gifts that God has given me? How can I serve my parish? What might God be calling me to do in His kingdom?

*Presenter:* Lisa Marion, Obl.OSB

*Donation:* \$40 per person includes tuition, morning beverages, and lunch following Mass

### A CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

**Friday, April 29–Sunday, May 1, 2016**

Pope Francis' kindness, gentleness, and desire for mercy was made evident during his recent visit to Cuba and the United States. Come spend a weekend discussing and hearing about the direction that he is setting and his plans to create a more merciful and loving Church that has room for everyone. Activities on this weekend retreat will include listening to talks about Pope Francis' ideas, exploring his prayer styles, and learning more about his personality. Participants will see a movie about Pope Francis' life, and enjoy a wine, cheese, and soft drink party on Saturday evening.

*Presenters:* Victoria Dendinger, Ph.D.; Obl.OSB & Diana Janas, MSJ; Obl.OSB

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

## MAY 2016

### SPRING ARTISTS' RETREAT

**Monday, May 2–Thursday, May 5, 2016**

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, Obl.OSB  
*Room, board, and tuition:* \$300 single; \$262.50 each shared

### PRAYING IN THE CIRCLE OF ST. JOHN

**Friday, May 6–Sunday, May 8, 2016**

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. In the course of this retreat, you will be invited to allow themes characteristic of Johannine literature to draw you into prayer as it were in the company of John's circle.

*Presenter:* Fr. Isaac Kalina, OSB

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

### THE LITTLE WAY OF ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX: DISCOVERING THE PATH OF LOVE

**Monday, May 9–Friday, May 13, 2016**

Based on the recent work of Br. Joseph Schmidt, FSC, this retreat will explore the spirituality of this Doctor of the Church, to discover its Gospel rootedness and revolutionary shift from 19th century approaches to the spiritual life. Therese's texts will be reviewed through the lens of contemporary understanding in the fields of spirituality, Scripture studies, anthropology, and psychology and human development, so that fresh understanding comes forth to enrich our lives as we walk the path of love.

*Presenter:* Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB

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

### PENTECOST RETREAT

**Friday, May 13–Sunday, May 15, 2016**

This preached retreat is for oblates of St. Andrew's Abbey or anyone interested in Benedictine spirituality. The focus of the retreat is the Rule of St. Benedict and the liturgy of Pentecost.

*Presenter:* Monks of Valyermo

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

### THE FAITHFUL DOVE FLIES AGAINST THE WIND: A VISIT WITH BROTHER PETER

**Saturday, May 28, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.**

Through the poetry that emerged during and after his long imprisonment, Br. Peter will share his faith and experiences in Communist China as Michaela sets the stage historically and ideologically.  
*Presenters:* Br. Peter Zhou Bangjiu, OSB & Michaela Ludwick, Obl.OSB  
*Donation:* \$40 per person; includes tuition, morning beverages, and lunch following Mass

## ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

**Br. Peter Zhou Bangjiu** has been a monk since 1950 as a member of the Benedictine community in China. Under Communism he suffered for his faith and more than 25 years later, was reunited with his brethren in Valyermo. His memoirs and poetry have been published and are available in the Abbey book store.

**Fr. Francis Benedict** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1967. He earned a BA 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 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.

**Br. Joseph Brown** is an Orthodox solitary in the Western Rite. He is a professional iconographer and Sub-deacon at St. Michael Orthodox Church in Whittier, CA.

**Fr Stephen Coffey**, a Massachusetts native, has lived monastic life in Olivetan monasteries in Pecos, NM, Waialua, HI, and currently at the Monastery of The Risen Christ in San Luis Obispo, CA. He has ministered in several retreat centers and has also been involved in formation ministries. Besides serving as a novice director, he has taught candidates for both the priestly and diaconal formation, and for many years has been involved in training of spiritual directors.

**Dr. Victoria Dendinger** is an oblate of Valyermo. She was the Director of Faith Formation at her parish and teaches at the Institute of Pastoral Ministry, a diocesan institute that trains and educates those wishing to become catechists or deacons. She is also a psychologist in private practice.

**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.

**Diana Janas** is an oblate of Valyermo. She earned an MSJ and is a writer and communications consultant. She is part of the RCIA team as well as the music and liturgy ministries at her parish.

**Fr. Isaac Kalina** has been a monk of Valyermo since 1984. Having completed his theological degree in Rome at the Collegio Sant'Anselmo, he was ordained a priest in 1989. He has served the Abbey as Prior, Sub-prior, Kitchenmaster, Youth Director, Assistant Novicemaster, Vocation Director, and Juniormaster. 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.

**Lisa Marion** is and oblate of Valyermo and a spiritual director in Orange County. An energetic leader, she has over 25 years of pastoral experience ministering to people of all ages and life stages. Leading numerous events both locally and nationally, she conveys her awareness of God and his love with a subtle yet honest sense of humor. Visit her website: [www.dailypax.com](http://www.dailypax.com).

**Carlos Obando** nació en Costa Rica y vive en Los Estados Unidos desde 1966. Está casado, tiene tres hijos y tres nietos. En el año 2009 obtuvo una maestría de la Universidad de Loyola Marymount, Los Angeles, en Teología Pastoral, es instructor en la Universidad de Loyola en el Centro de Religión y Espiritualidad, el Instituto para el Ministerio Pastoral y también para la Escuela de la Renovación Carismática en la Diócesis de Orange. Ha sido Director Espiritual por más de 20 años. Trabaja con la comunidad hispana desde 1979 en los condados de Los Angeles y Orange en la formación de líderes y dando retiros a jóvenes y adultos.

**Fr. Patrick Sheridan** has been a monk of Valyermo since 2004 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2011. He holds a BA in History from Adelphi University in New York. He has served the Abbey as Kitchenmaster and Sub-prior; he headed the Ceramics Department and is currently the administrator of the Retreat Center.

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

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