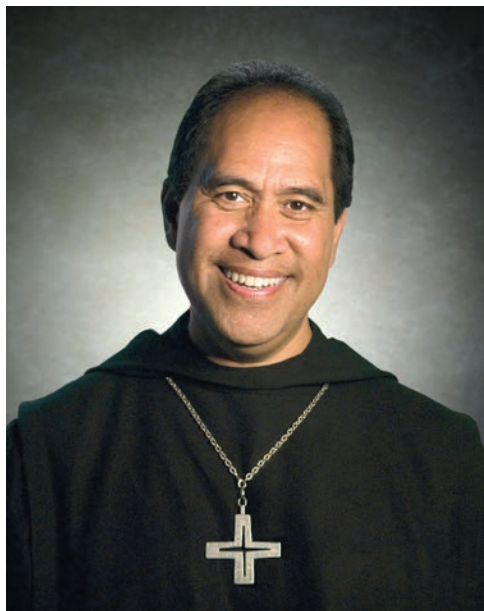


ST. ANDREW'S ABBEY
THE VALYERMO
Chronicle





LETTER from the ABBOT

vegetarian dishes that are made to taste like meat. So, meat flavored vegetables. (I don't understand that one.)

I realized that what this older monk said had other implications, at least for me. It's almost as if the original taste of the food or drink is not enough; it's not satisfying; it's not exciting enough; it needs 'something more' to be better — and I'm not talking about more salt or pepper; but something to even try to make it what it's not in order to satiate the appetite.

I think something 'like this' can happen in our emotional life and even our spiritual life. One of the deepest yearnings of the human person is to be known and loved; to be known fully and to be loved fully for who we fully are. Only God can fulfill this deep yearning in us because only He knows us completely.

Still, we spend a great deal of our life seeking people who are capable of knowing us fully and loving us completely. And while on this journey, we run into people and situations that make us feel less than loved. In these situations, we begin to think that we are not good enough for people, and maybe not even for God, the way we are. So in our efforts to *be* good enough, we do things, say things, and add things to our life hoping to make us more appealing to people and to God — if it is even possible to be *more* appealing to God. We say more prayers, do more kind deeds, pray more rosaries, and make more and more and more donations to the Abbey!

Of course all these things are good in and of themselves, (especially the last one.) But in reality, they don't necessarily make us more appealing to God. They don't necessarily make God think more kindly toward us. They don't necessarily make God love us more.

Sometimes we can find ourselves adding more and more of these 'good things' to our life, hoping that they make us better people, but in reality, there is no 'thing' that can do that. Only God can do that. The only thing we can add to our life that will make a lasting difference is God.

It is when we realize this truth do we finally have the perspective that is needed: the perspective to put in right order the list of all the 'things' that can satisfy our appetites and deepest longings, with God at the very top; or perhaps more accurately, with God as the only one on the list.

Something to think about the next time you are enjoying a cup of coffee — black or with flavored creamer.

Abbot Damien ❖



EDITOR'S NOTE:

Winter is very much a time of interior pilgrimage, of meditation, reflection: an opportunity to look at what we have made of our lives. Winter, especially after the joy and bustle of the Christmas holidays, becomes a time of ordinary silence and the deeper silence that prepares us for the darker Lenten drama of the journeying and suffering Christ. Winter silence can give us perspective on how even in the tragic drama of Holy Week, our hope lies in a Risen Lord. Our articles this quarter reflect these themes, and movements: fittingly the book reviewed in this issue is Shusako Endo's complex and moving novel *Silence*. May we use the time well—to dig deeply into the mystery of our life in God.

—The Editor

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The Census at Bethlehem (detail),
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EAR FRIENDS,

ALMOST EVERY MORNING I START THE day with a cup of coffee to which I add either French vanilla or hazelnut flavored creamer.

A few years ago at the monastery, as I was pouring a cup of coffee for one of the older monks of our community, I asked him if he wanted me to add any French vanilla or hazelnut flavored creamer to his coffee. He kindly responded in a 'teaching moment' sort of way, "When I drink coffee it's because I like the taste of coffee. If I wanted hazelnut, I would eat a hazelnut."

The more I thought about what he said, I began thinking of other 'flavored' foods and drinks that are now available: sour cream flavored potato chips, honey nut flavored cheerios, bacon flavored mayonnaise, raspberry flavored tea, cherry flavored coke, kiwi-strawberry flavored water, jalapeno flavored olive oil, barbecue flavored sunflower seeds, pumpkin flavored beer. There are even



DR. DONALD P. RICHMOND, OBL. OSB

CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE IN PILGRIMAGE. Although we may have never walked the royal roads to Canterbury, Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostella or Walsingham, to mention only a few, we all follow Christ in the company of others. As such, and importantly, we are all (and together) pilgrims on the way.

Understanding that we are pilgrims is essential to our spiritual discernment and development. Embracing a pilgrim's perspective regarding life and living helps us to both see and be as God intended. To refuse and reject the pilgrim perspective automatically, and dangerously, shifts us into a position of spiritual stasis.

Historically, pilgrimages provided passionate physicality to what might have been experienced as stationary religion practices. In earlier centuries, people were not as mobile as we are today. Multitudes lived and died within a dozen or two miles from where they were born. For those who could not physically leave their homes and responsibilities, other means of pilgrimage were provided. Many of these same practices are available to us today.

THE PURPOSE OF PILGRIMAGE

There are three broad purposes for pilgrimage: Prayer, praise and re-setting priorities. Christians took to the roads in order to *pray*. Some might have wanted work. Some might have wanted healing. Others entreated God's blessing upon courtship, marriage, family or business endeavors. To undertake a pilgrimage was to demonstrate how serious the petitioner was about her request. Similarly, pilgrimages were also undertaken to *praise* God for some

gift — or sets of gifts — the petitioner received. Having pilgrimaged a particular petition, and having received the request, the pilgrim wanted to give proper thanks to God. Walking was, in such a case, an act of physical praise. Finally, pilgrimages were taken in order to reset *priorities, principles and practices* in life. To pilgrimage was to re-vision life. Consequently, pilgrimages were acts of spiritual discipline by which the pilgrim learned to eliminate the unnecessary and focus upon what was essential.

THE PRACTICES OF PILGRIMAGE

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey taken by a pilgrim from one place (often "secular") to another place (often "sacred"). Chaucer's pilgrims, as an example, were progressing to Canterbury to see the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket. I began one of my pilgrimages, covering the California Missions, in Santa Barbara and slowly worked my way up the coast to the mission's most northern outpost. Other people have either greater or lesser ambitions.

But a pilgrimage does not only involve movement from one geographic location to another. It can, *and must*, include making interior progress. Pilgrimage is about soul-development, about traversing our interior wilderness in order to more fully enter the promises and purposes of God. As Noah Ben Shea wrote in *Jacob the Baker*: "We are the wilderness we must pass over in order to enter the Promised Land." As such, because the former pilgrimage (exterior) must serve the latter pilgrimage (interior), it is important to appreciate what forms of stationary pilgrimage are available to us.

Churchgoing, the functional practice of getting to our places of worship, can be shaped into a pilgrimage. How often do we waste time commuting to worship and work? When we frame the drive in terms of pilgrimage, our hearts and minds will become radically reoriented.

Church-walking, the practice of reverentially and reflectively entering our houses of worship as we progress from the Parking Lot, through the Foyer and into the Sanctuary, can be shaped into a pilgrimage. In a well-apportioned church building, every item has both practical and theological significance.

Liturgy is a pilgrimage. Intentionally participating in the Order of Worship can and must be shaped into what great worship is intended to be and do. Each and every part of the Service of Worship (Mass) is intended to take the participant on a journey into the heart of God in the company of others.

Practicing Lectio-Divina — "Reading," "Marking," "Learning" and "Inwardly Digesting" Sacred texts — can be shaped into a pilgrimage. Similarly, saying the Daily Offices can be a pilgrimage.

Practicing Visio-Divina — devoutly attending to Sacred Art — can be shaped into a pilgrimage. Creating of sacred space in our homes can be the place to which we pilgrimage on a daily basis.

Practicing Audio-Divina, such as listening to Bach's *Mass in B-Minor* or Handel's *Messiah*, can be shaped into a pilgrimage.

These, as well as a great many other practices, can be shaped into stationary forms of pilgrimage.

A POCKET FULL OF PILGRIMAGE

Praying on prayer beads, often called a Rosary, is also a pilgrimage. Initially the 150 beads were intended to represent each of the 150 *Psalms*. Prayer Beads were physical prayer-reminders for those who were illiterate, did not understand Latin, or did not have the freedom or capacity to memorize the *Psalms*. Holding the bead, possibly along with a short petition or heart-inclination, helped each person progress (pilgrimage) through their daily prayers along with the monks whose entire vocation was devoted to prayer.

Praying our beads, this pilgrimage we carry in our pocket and hold in our hand, is different from person to person and from priority to priority. Penitence requires one priority and process. Praise requires a different priority and process. Beads of praise will be pilgrimaged in an entirely different way than beads of penitence or petition. Sometimes we might simply say the Rosary, as is. If done from the heart, this is a valid and valued practice. At other times, however, we might simply repeat the "Jesus Prayer" or engage in some other form of time-tested spiritual practice using beads. Each intention or need requires alternative responses. As such, the brief proposals I make must be held with an "open hand."

Assuming that praying the beads, the Rosary, is a good and graced discipline, the next step is deciding on what type of Rosary, or beads, to buy (or make). There are a diversity of prayer beads available to us. How many beads do we want? What color? What weight? What size? My beads are made of black rounded stone and are heavily weighted. When I pilgrimage through my beads, which happen to be Anglican, I want to see (the color) and feel (the weight) of what I am actually doing. When praying on these beads, as opposed to others I have held or owned, I am reminded of the seriousness of what I am doing. I want to experience the “weight” of my beads within my hand, head and heart. Selecting our beads is a pilgrimage in-and-of itself! If we are going to take an extended hike we need to be sure that we have the proper footwear. In similar fashion, deciding upon the right beads for our journey is also important.

How we pilgrimage with our beads is also essential. I have prayed my beads in a variety of ways, sometimes centering, sometimes celebrating, sometimes repenting, and sometimes simply waiting. Each way, if properly approached and practiced, has its own value. We must not be cavalier, nor should we be overly cautious. We must have a plan, a reasonable and informed plan, and walk it out. An example is in order. When I began my practicum in counseling, I needed to participate in an eight day wilderness-training exercise. Part of this training involved me, with a topographical map and compass, guiding my companions through the Adirondacks. It took me time, effort, discernment, determination and assistance in order to successfully accomplish my task. The same can be said for pilgriaging with our beads. We need to understand and appreciate the “why” of our intentions and the “how” of praying them. We need to have a plan, walk it out, and persist. One foot, as one bead, in front of the other helps us to complete our journey simply and successfully.

THE POWER OF PILGRIMAGE

Some years ago I transferred my longstanding monastic affiliation from one monastery (on the East Coast) to Saint Andrew’s Abbey. After having been with the East Coast monastery for so many years, I thought I would be a “shoe-in” for immediate reception at Saint Andrew’s. After all, I had over fifteen years of experience! Fortunately, however, the Novice Director did not see it that way. I, like every other applicant (although I was already steeped in the monastic tradition), had to begin as a Novice and wait a year before I was formally “received.” My reception was one of the most powerful moments of my life. Pilgrimagining through the process was an empowering experience.

Using beads as a pilgrimage through prayer has been for me, and can be for you, a powerful tool. Taking the time, and making the effort, to pilgrimage through the beads into the plan of God is enriching and empowering. Maybe we should consider taking up the beads so that we can have the beads take us “further up and further in” to God’s person, purpose and power. A pilgrimage in our pocket can help us travel a far distance indeed. ✠



Dr. Donald P. Richmond, a widely published author and monastic illustrator, is an Oblate of Saint Andrew’s Abbey.



Art Oriented Toward Salvation

A THEOLOGY OF ICONS

Angelus Echeverry, OSB

T

RADITIONALLY,

iconography is less about what we see and more about *who* sees us. Its primary focus, beyond catechizing (of which it also does), is to remind us of the *presence* of the unseen. Iconography therefore, in a limited sense, imitates the work of the Creator, celebrating His glory and the glory of His works, while highlighting beauty. This *beauty* is likewise a creation of God. In Sacred Scripture, whenever we read of ‘glory,’ there is a reference to the greatness, power and *beauty of God* in His creation.

Beauty here is clearly seen as an essential quality in the creation of, and reason for iconography.

The basis of all Christian religious art is Sacred Scripture, which reveals divine truths to us. Today, Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican Churches all share in their respect for all types of religious art: icons, paintings, and/or statues. Even stained-glass windows may serve the same purpose as icons, and while perhaps they receive little outward reverence these days, at least in the West,

they remind us very literally how works of art, including icons, can be viewed as symbolic *portals* to the divine realm.

There are three specific teachings of the Bible which are the foundation of all iconography:

(a) the *divine activity* of God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, who together with the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, “created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27).

(b) the *person of the Son of God*, our Savior, who is the image (eternal, divine, “icon”) of God the Father (Col 1:15), our model and agent of our redemption (Col 1:20).

(c) the *omnipresent God*, the Holy Spirit, who from the beginning hovers over the waters and over all that is (Gen 1:2), who searches the heart (Rom 8:27), and who is the guardian of the teaching of the Church (Jn 16:13-15). These three elements become more and more apparent as we study icons, as both the source and final aim of iconography.

Icons are windows to the divine, to the spiritual world. Just as Christ repeatedly oriented the eyes and ears of His hearers toward the spiritual values of God, or as the windows of a house permit light to enter, so too does the icon permit the supernatural light of God to penetrate the mind and heart of the one viewing it, if he or she is so predisposed by God’s grace to receive it, and to then, not only be able to sense the Kingdom “beyond,” through the icon, but also the one already in our midst.

Central to iconography is Jesus Christ, who is the *image of God* in the highest sense of the word, because He is God’s eternal Son and Word (or “self-communication”) with humankind. Jesus is the perfect, consubstantial image (“icon”) of God the Father, the Word of God which became man. The reality of the Incarnation is therefore foundational to iconography.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit, the One who “hovered over the waters,” is Co-creator of all, and a life-giving, personal, divine Power (Lk 24:49, Rom 15:13). It is He who continually gives life

to creation. The Holy Spirit was first imparted by Christ to His disciples by His breath (Jn 20:22). The Holy Spirit, in His mysterious and invisible guiding role as Comforter, Advocate, and Spirit of Truth, intervenes in the lives of the people and in the Church with countless spiritual gifts and divine graces, which demonstrate that God is not distant from the world which He created and loves.

Christians should therefore not despise matter (icons) unless they wish to distort Christianity. Icons are expressions of love and adoration of the Lord God and all that relates to Him. They are creative activities *inspired* by the Holy Spirit, who, as Christ Himself promised, reminds us of and reawakens in us all that the Savior taught and did (Jn 14:26). Like Jesus’ parables, their meaning and content are to a certain extent hidden, yet they are able to instruct, to reveal the Kingdom, and shed light on what is necessary for humankind’s salvation: in a word, Christ.

SPIRITUALITY OF ICONS

The spirituality of icons can be described as “*faith in color*.” The iconographer accepts this faith into his/her soul and then transmits it through artistic media. Before painting icons, the iconographer should fast and pray, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they may enter into the treasure house of Christ’s teachings, entrusted to the Church.

“Gazing” is probably the best word to describe the core of Eastern spirituality. While St. Benedict in the West calls upon the pray-er to “listen” first of all, the Byzantine Fathers’ prime focus is on gazing, as both a physical and a spiritual act, which means an icon is not simply a “visual aid”: it fulfills a sacramental function, establishing a channel of divine grace.

Iconography is therefore a liturgical art, and not just painting in a religious context. For the Orthodox particularly, icon veneration is a sacramental act. For these reasons and more it is of the highest importance that a psychological and spiritual setting be established for

their contemplation. Because prayer is so very personal, we cannot simply say that there are obligatory steps to take before praying in the presence of an icon; however, I can suggest a few: seek a quiet environment, gently gaze upon the icon and who or what it represents, and possess an attitude of non-expectation. When two people who love each other stare at each other, there are no expectations, just gratitude for their presence . . . this could be a beginning for prayer with icons.

CONCLUSION

The icon is closer to the soul than to the body. It should be viewed more with the spiritual eyes of faith than with the physical eyes. It calls the viewer to a spiritual contemplation of the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, to the extent that it is possible for artistic media, it is an image of a world being mystically transfigured by God, just as Christ was transfigured on Tabor (Mk 9:2-8). The icon attempts to portray human beings as they are and will be in the Kingdom of Heaven. In this way, icons, even though they are material objects, become messengers of the supernatural world, mediated by the content of their images.

Icons are mirrors that reflect the life and faith of the Church. They are an invitation to prayer, and a form of contemplative prayer. They show examples of holy lives and encourage us to live sanctified lives ourselves.

Moreover, iconography “echoes” the beauty of the world, of God’s creation, by symbolizing divine beauty. It is vital that we beautify our churches, both inside and out (and in our liturgical music as well), because beauty has an innate evangelizing power, which draws us into the contemplation of divine things.

Icons present a theology, a teaching about creation, about the events in the life of the God-Man, that together constitute the Christian economy of salvation. Their ultimate aim is the transfiguration of the person who approaches them, so that they may no longer see any opposition between the worlds of eternity

and of time, between spirit and matter, between divine and human, but see them all as united in one reality.

In the end, icons affirm the essential goodness of the created world.

Of immense significance are the cosmological implications of the *transfiguration of the body* in iconography, as a mode of “salvific impetus,” in light of how Christian theology understands the human body. Christian theology refers to man as an image and as a sacrament. Iconography is about humankind’s restoration in Christ, which presupposes the sanctification of both the body and the soul. This is the complete concern of deification, and it is how icons lead us toward salvation. As Tertullian aptly noted, “the flesh is the hinge of salvation.”

Finally, it is not in its artistry that an icon is beautiful, but rather in its resemblance to the Truth, which it makes present by its inherent beauty. It is beauty which reveals the divine glory. *Art* is what *activates* the transfiguration of the world and renders it conformable to its true image. It is in this way, and in the way the icon makes present God’s Reality, here and now, as well as *then* in glory, that the Christian soul may draw nearer to its own salvation: by gazing intently with a devoted heart at an image, an icon manifesting truth, beauty, and divine love.

To me, an icon is like a beautiful musical work which we can hear time and again, never wearying of it, and always hearing *in* it new things. We return to the icon, to lovingly and patiently gaze, to see it and experience it anew, to see God as God is, ever new, in the moment, and in eternity, experiencing Him as the Singular Reality of Eternal Love. ✠

Brother Angelus is in his last year of theological studies at St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo, California. This article is excerpted from a longer work on icons and theology.

SCRIPTIO DIVINA—THAT’S PROBABLY not good Latin, but you get the idea. If *lectio divina* is prayerful reading of Scripture to help us grow closer to God, then *scriptio divina* would be reflective writing in order to deepen our relationship with God. Fr. Aelred asked me if I’d like to do an article on writing as a spiritual discipline. Well, I’d quibble with the word “discipline,” which to an inveterate rebel like me smacks of technique and coercion. Let’s say writing as a spiritual practice, or better, as an aid in the spiritual life.

From my youth I liked to read, and I went through our bookshelves at home, churning through the college literary classics of my older siblings as well as books on philosophy, psychology and other themes that I found either at home or in the public library. I was trying to make sense of the scary and unpredictable process of growing to manhood in a world full of sickness, death, injustice, wars, racial conflict, disasters and the bomb. In those years I read voraciously, and occasionally I would find a sentence or a paragraph that impacted me enough to write it down. I copied out a few poems, including some from *Archy and Mehitabel* and memorized Chapter 23 of *Moby Dick*.

As I engaged with the real world as a college student and then as a draftee in the Army, then later still as a wandering hippie, I started noting down a few of my own insights and aphorisms, points of reference to help me navigate all the uncertainties I faced. These jottings were occasional but momentous, and I would treasure them for a few years. Then I would be seized with an urge to purge, and disencumber myself of all accumulated clutter, launching out again (as in Chapter 23 of *Moby Dick*) into that landlessness where “alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God.”

As my personal faith evolved from a nature-based pantheism through various mystical approaches like Zen toward a return at a deeper level to the Christianity of my



Scriptio Divina

—
WRITING AS A
HELP TO PRAYER

Br. Ben Harrison, MC

childhood, I found myself more often writing longer reflections, struggling to codify and order my search for deep truth.

But it was only when I became a Roman Catholic at age thirty-one that I started to keep a journal. I suppose making that move represented a decisive step toward the possibility of some sort of commitment to a real spiritual journey. I felt that I was at risk of going off on various tangents, and keeping the journal was a way of staying focused and remembering that I was no longer just wandering randomly through life but following a path, a way, the Way.

And so I developed a habit of writing down happenings, encounters, insights and inspirations that seemed significant. Every few months I would go back and read over the journey notes thus far. This helped me not only to stay on course, but also to see God’s providence helping me, and to find some evidence of growth and deepening in my relationship with God. That was forty years ago, and the following pattern has evolved and remained fairly constant.

The actual *scriptio divina* happens like this. Before or after I begin my time of personal prayer, I may take time to update my journal notebook with what’s been happening or what I’ve been thinking. But the journal is always still close at hand, even during the prayer time. I sit somewhere peaceful, either my own little prayer corner with candle and icon, or in a chapel or some quiet out-door bower. My notebook, Bible and Breviary are usually within reach. I will not talk about my actual prayer, which is between me and my God, but I have taken my spiritual directors’ advice to “pray as you can, not as you can’t.”

As I said before, I tend to rebel against methods, systems and techniques, whether they are prescribed or merely suggested. Maybe that’s because I have never managed to domesticate my mind, which goes on like a treeful of starlings. I have given up trying to silence it, but I try not to pay much attention to the noise

and to lower my attention to the trunk of the tree, or its roots.

I do different things to help feel that I am somehow in God’s presence. Sometimes I use a word or phrase from Scripture but often I prefer an image — a cat in the sunlight, a fire on the hearth, a quiet spring, or even, to return to *Moby Dick*, a raging storm.

Whatever I do I am trying to “be all here before You now” — to have that sense of now-here and that sense of I-You. And if some significant insight, perception or image surfaces, I get my pen and write it down briefly. If I am worried or grateful, I may want to list a few points. My spiritual director once advised me not to write during my time of prayer, but he also said that you judge any action by its fruit. And the fact is, writing a bit often helps me to remain in the presence of God. However, I do try to keep that writing minimal. I don’t compose then. I just make the occasional note. And sometimes my notation morphs into prayer and I find myself writing “You”, lifted for a moment into the presence of mystery.

In the longer term, let me summarize the process as follows:

✦ At some convenient time I note in my journal events and insights, worries and blessings as they arise, not necessarily daily, but frequently.

✦ I also note significant insights, thoughts or prayers that arise during the prayer-time itself.

✦ When I am preparing for my monthly chat with my spiritual director, father confessor or sponsor, I review the past weeks to remind myself of what’s been happening.

✦ Before or during my annual retreat, I read through the past year’s entries, both to express my gratitude for the blessings received and to see if there is unfinished business.

✦ Occasionally I go through journal entries that were made five or more years ago and note major events briefly into a separate outline chronology, so that I can track down, say, when I visited the community in Guatemala, or when I started a particular project.

✱ And then, even less frequently, I go through journal entries made twelve or more years ago, usually six months at a time, and transpose, summarize and excerpt important moments, insights and passages (and sometimes whole sections of retreat notes) and then destroy the original journals.

Why? I recently came across a quote from Thomas Merton that seems relevant:

“If you write for God you will reach many men and bring them joy. If you write for men — you may make some money and you may give someone a little joy and you may make a noise in the world, for a little while. If you write only for yourself you can read what you yourself have written and after ten minutes you will be so disgusted you will wish that you were dead.”

The question is, for whom am I writing? I’ve made it clear that I’m writing for my own benefit. But it’s also for God, in the sense that its purpose is to deepen my relationship with God. Further, as during *lectio divina* sometimes reflective reading morphs into actual prayer and even into a contemplative resting in the presence of God, in a similar way, occasionally my writing “lifts off,” and I find myself praying, speaking not about him and me, but as an I to a You. Sometimes writing even leads me to the doors of an abashed and grateful silence where the only way to continue is “...”

In the early years of my journaling I often imagined that others might discover my scribbles, even posthumously, and I fancied myself a new Merton or a Foucauld or some other spiritual diarist. But my present arrangement works for me, because when I look back on what I wrote twelve years ago, a lot of it is repetitious, obsessive, neurotic and boring. Some of it is positively embarrassing. Let’s get rid of all that and save what seems to be God-given and what may still be useful to me on my continuing journey.

But here’s where something else kicks in, and I realize that some of what I have

glimpsed, understood and written down seems to be a real gift from God, not meant for me alone. And then, when I have time to actually compose, I can take that kernel of ore scratched down in my journal, clean it, refine it, process it and hammer it into something that I hope will not only help others, but bring glory to God.

For a long time I was worried that sharing such insights might lead to ego-inflation (vainglory, I think they used to call it), especially since I am rather insecure and snatch at anything that makes me feel special. But my spiritual director assured me that that’s inevitable and not to pay much attention to such superficial concerns. I can trust that God will humble me when necessary.

The fact is, writing sometimes helps me pray, and reading what I have written while praying helps me pray better and more deeply. I try never to go into prayer in order to get some nugget to jot down. I try never to use my dedicated prayer time either to seek inspirations for writing or to actually compose stuff. But as a singer might occasionally find himself breaking into song while praying, I sometimes find myself writing while in the company of the Beloved. Does that mean I am less present to him? Or perhaps that he makes himself present to me through the beauty of language? He is, after all, the Incarnate Word.

As, when I am writing I find great joy when I feel that occasional moment of lift-off, that moment when the image or the insight or the intuition takes wings and flies off into the mystery, so I hope that sometimes what I write helps lift another soul into the presence of the Ineffable, helps another soul hear the Word whose silence sings through all creation.

Thus, the written record of my own experiences on the journey of faith becomes a seam to be mined, a field to be harvested, so that what I have discovered or received can be offered and shared and become light and sustenance for others to the praise of God.

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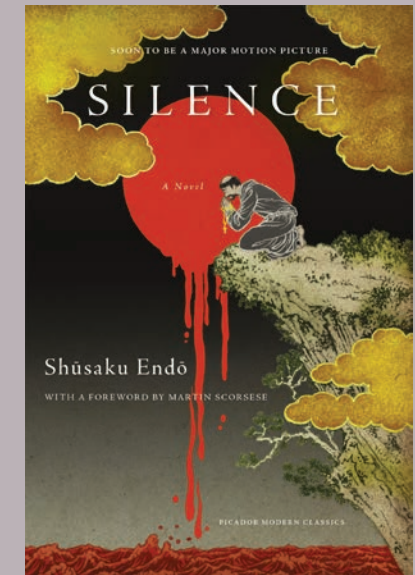
QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW

by fr. philip edwards, osb

FOR WESTERN CHRISTENDOM, THE xvth Century, bleeding into the xviiith, was a violent time of fractious and exploitive exploration, both at home in Europe, with its bloodletting wars of religion (undergirded by a burgeoning sense of nationhood and the intoxicating ferment of the “new learning’s” rebirth of pre/un-churched humanism), and across the seas (dominated by the Iberian Empires of Portugal and Spain, persistently dogged and nipped at by the ultimately triumphant Protestant Mercantile States of England and Holland) in uncharted lands ripe for plunder and possession.

Within the Roman Communion, the insurgent forces of Reformation and (what came to be called) Enlightenment (an ancient and legitimate term for the rite of Baptism) brought forth a resurgence of evangelizing zeal for conversion of both the “inner man” and the “outer” persons not yet converted to or ignorant of faith in Christ. Once again Iberia was in the forefront, with its Carmelite mystic-reformers and the great Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat, which, by encouraging the *Devotio Moderna* that Ignatius de Loyola encountered during his stay in their house at Manresa, assisted in the creation of the Society of Jesus. It was Ignatius’ fellow Basque St. Francis Xavier who with his compassion for souls (who were surely headed for damnation — or at best Limbo — without Baptism) and passionate zeal for the propagation of the True Faith, exemplified the classic missionary and established the Catholic community which somehow survived the suffocating persecution portrayed in this book.

Shūsaku Endō, an acclaimed Japanese writer baptized as a boy when his (Japanese) mother converted with her sister to the Catholic faith, wrestled throughout his life (he died in 1996) with problems of identity as both Japanese and



SILENCE

SHŪSAKU ENDŌ

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Catholic. He is often compared with Graham Greene (although, considering his French education and “connections,” perhaps Bernanos or Mauriac would be more apropos). As the admirable translator William Johnston points out in his preface to this edition of *Silence*:

“... If this means that he is a Catholic novelist, that his books are problematic and controversial, that his writing is deeply psychological, that he depicts anguish of faith and the mercy of God — then it is certainly true. For Mr. Endō has now come to the forefront of the Japanese literary world writing about problems which at one time seemed remote from this country: problems of faith and God, of sin and betrayal, of martyrdom and apostasy. Yet the central problem which has preoccupied Mr. Endō even from his early days is the conflict between East and West, especially in its relationship to Christianity. Assuredly this is no new problem but one which he has inherited from a long line of Japanese writers and intellectuals from the time of the Meiji; but Mr. Endō is the first Catholic to

put it forward with such force and to draw the clear-cut conclusion that Christianity must adapt itself radically if it is to take root in the 'swamp' that is Japan ..." (p. 1).

Johnston's preface is an indispensable preparation for an intelligent reading of this novel, and indeed occupies the opening pages of our library copy as if it were the author's own Prologue. We need to remember that for all its roots in "facticity," this is a flower of the author's own imagination and interpretation; his Prologue diverges directly from Johnston's cited source, C.R. Boxer's *The Christian Century in Japan* (U.C. Press, 1951, which, unfortunately, Father Luke was unable to find in our own library's catalogue) in providing a fictitious Portuguese name and identity for his protagonist, Sebastian Rodrigues, based on Giuseppe Chiara, one of a group of ten in an abortive attempt to enter Japan in 1643.

Quickly captured, they all apostatized after long and terrible tortures; though most; perhaps all, later revoked their apostasy ... though they had apostatized from the Faith, yet declared publicly to the interpreters that they did not freely apostatize, but the torments which had been inflicted upon them forced them to do it. Chiara died some forty years after his apostasy, stating that he was still a Christian (p. 10).

Endō is thus free to "psychologize" his protagonist, developing a personal dimension of his own in working out and dealing with betrayal, torture, doubt and disillusion.

In Part II of his preface, Johnston notes that the interest this novel evoked in Japan was less historical than contemporary. The two foreign apostates were immediately taken as symbols of a Christianity which has failed in Japan because it is so stubbornly Western.... Graham Greene has well pointed out that to interpret novels in this way can lead to dangerous error; and Mr. Endō, too, in the course of discussions on his book, often protested that he was writing literature, not theology. Yet on these occasions many of his remarks showed that he was not indifferent to the theological implications of what he wrote

and one is left with the impression that the novel is in some way the expression of a conflict between his Japanese sensibility and the Hellenistic Christianity that has been given to him (p. 12).

Citing another translator (F. Mathy), Johnston tells us that

Mr. Endō speaks poignantly of this very struggle in his own heart ... : "this problem of the reconciliation of my Catholicism with my Japanese blood ... has taught me one thing: that is, that the Japanese must absorb Christianity without the support of a Christian tradition or history or legacy or sensibility. Even this attempt is the occasion of much resistance and anguish and pain, still it is impossible to counter by closing one's eyes to the difficulties. No doubt this is the peculiar cross that God has given to the Japanese.... But after all it seems to me that Catholicism is not a solo, but a symphony. If I have trust in Catholicism, it is because I find in it much more possibility than in any other religion for presenting the full symphony of humanity. The other religions have almost no fullness; they have but solo parts. Only Catholicism can present the full symphony. And unless there is in that symphony a part that corresponds to Japan's mud swamp, it cannot be a true religion. What exactly this part is — that is what I want to find out" (p. 12–13).

Part III concludes the Preface by acknowledging "in all fairness to existing Japanese Christianity, ... Mr. Endō's book and his thesis have been extremely controversial in this country, and one can scarcely take his voice as that of Christian Japan (p. 16)," whether of the old Christians of Nagasaki or of the modern Protestant University Professor Yanabaira, who "protested vigorously that these two priests had no faith from the beginning." It was not the swamp of Japan that

evaporated beneath the impact of a pagan culture. "The martyrs heard the voice of Christ," he wrote in the *Asahi Journal*, "but for Ferreira and Rodrigues God was silent. Does this not mean that from the beginning those priests had no faith? And for this reason Rodrigues' struggle with God is not depicted.... Obviously the belief of Ferreira

and Inoue that Japan is a swamp which cannot absorb Christianity is not a reason for apostasy. It was because he lost his faith that Ferreira began to think this way.... In that Christian era there were many Japanese who sincerely believed in Christ, and there are many who do so today. No Christian will believe that Christianity cannot take root in Japan. If the Japanese cannot understand Christianity, how has it been possible for Mr. Endō to write such a novel?" Indeed, the very popularity of Mr. Endō's novel would seem to proclaim a Japan not indifferent to Christianity but looking for that form of Christianity that will suit its national character (pp. 16–17).

Father Luke, coming home for the Christmas holiday, brought with him a copy of a recent article in the December 14, 2016, issue



of *Catholic World Report* by Amy Welborn, "Reading *Silence* for the First Time." No slipshod slogging through the swamp with Amy; she is sure and lightfooted — spot-on! If the Editor can get the rights to reproduce it here, I gladly shuffle aside! As she tells us,

Silence is not lengthy, but it is intense, sometimes disturbing, and coursing with painful mysteries, powerful questions, and paradox. I've taught this

novel in high school theology classes and led adult education sessions on it, so I know both how fruitful the book is as a source for discussion but also how challenging it is not to interpret it in a reductionist way, in one direction or the other.... I'm only scratching the surface. There is plenty of interpretive and critical material out there for those intent on going deeper. This is also a discussion of the novel, not the film, which I have not seen as of this writing....

She marshals her suggestions under five headings:

1. Get to know the author. Shūsaku Endō (1922–1996), Japanese, Catholic, and deeply influenced by the mid-twentieth century Catholic literary revival ... much of his fiction, both his novels and short stories, has clear autobiographical resonance, reflecting his years in France, his ill health, his experiences during World War II, his Catholic faith, and his sense of being an outsider no matter where he was....

2. The events in *Silence* are based on historical events. Francis Xavier, 1549 ... the shōgun who had reunited Japan after years of civil war, suspicious of Portuguese imperial domination, expelled missionaries in 1614 and presented Japanese Christians with a choice: either apostasize or be brutally killed ... thousands of martyrs, a fascinating underground hybrid church called Kakuro which survived hundreds of years in secret, and an enduringly ambiguous relationship between Japanese culture and Catholicism. Cristóvão Ferreira (1580–1650), the former teacher whom Rodrigues was seeking, was a historical figure who did, indeed, apostasize. The character of Rodrigues was based on an Italian priest Giuseppe Chiara (1610–1685). Endō was inspired to write *Silence* not only by his own life experience of living as a Japanese Catholic but specifically by visiting the shrine to the Twenty-Six Martyrs in Nagasaki ... commemorating men, women, and children killed in 1597 and including an exhibit of *fumi-e* — the images of Christ, and sometimes of Mary, upon which Japanese Catholics were ordered to trample and spit, not only

once, but annually, an obligation that persisted until the mid-nineteenth century.

3. It's a novel, not a manual of moral theology. Fiction writers are not infallible interpreters of faith. A good fiction writer sets out to create a world and powerfully rendered "felt life," as Henry James put it, that draws us into understanding of some aspect of the human condition. *Silence* is the exploration of the experiences and decisions of a few fictional characters in a historically-inspired landscape; we are free to agree or disagree with their decisions and are under no obligation to view any of their actions as "the right thing to do." It is very likely that a group of readers will have divergent views on the decisions characters make in *Silence*, just as critics have over the decades since its release....

4. "Silence" was not Endō's original or preferred title. Endō wanted to title the book *The Scent of a Sunny Place*, and it was his publisher who insisted on *Silence*. His original title was intended to emphasize the loneliness of a defeated man such as Ferreira, who stands beneath the harsh rays of the sun, arms folded, and reflects back on all that he has lost. By changing the title to *Silence*, however, Endō felt that he had thrown open the door for readers to interpret the author's intent as the portrayal of the silence of God — not merely the silence that haunts Rodrigues as he passes through his trials.

5. Read the appendix closely. Very closely. We might assume that this section is simply about tying up loose plot points. It is that, but it is much more. Most of *Silence* is about the struggle between doubt and faith, about religious ideals violently colliding with worldly reality. There is a point in the novel in which a decision is made, in which a course is taken, and it is natural for us to think that this point of decision is the climax, after which all else is merely denouement. Perhaps it is, technically speaking, but in terms of the characters' journeys, it is much more, for what Endō is about is not only the struggle to come to an

understanding of faith and ourselves, but what happens after that. How do we live? That is what the appendix is about.

It is now twenty years since Mr. Endō's death, and fifty since *Silence* was published. My mind is a muddle of fragmented memories and bits of information about him and his books, some of which are on the shelves of the monastery library, where I found this copy at hand. It was printed in Japan and published by Sophia University there, a sturdy but well-worn paperback of uncertain age: the ISBN sort of information on the reverse side of the title page indicates a Japanese copyright date of 1969, with several printings — the last, the fifth, in 1972. Between the cover and the title page is bound in a folded page of stiffer stock bearing a boldly handwritten note: "From Olivia de H, — 1968." (Olivia is the daughter of Rose de Haulleville, whom old-time friends of St. Andrew's will remember.) I do remember having a copy in my early years following ordination (in 1967) for many years cubby-holed in the sacristy. I would dip into it from time to time, probably to help overcome queasiness about having to hear confessions, but also to hold my own with the Graham Greene-obsessed friend who had probably urged me to read it! I remember a different "feel" — something more like a hardback binding, but considering the date it might well have been Olivia's gift. Rereading it again is not as psychologically overwhelming as at first encounter, but the ever tightening entrapment and unrelenting, suffocating bondage, epitomized in the dark, latrine pit from which the only escape is death or apostasy still taunts and terrorizes the claustrophobe in me. And yet while it might have been the pit itself that broke Ferreira, it was not so simple for Rodrigues, who, learning of the suffering his own personal faithfulness is causing others, hears the voice of Christ in the image telling him to trample the *fumi-e* at his feet — the "real" tension is in grappling with the angel of truth and engaging with the Spirit to discern where blessing lies. It is here that

Amy concludes her comments (and so do I):

"The dilemma of trampling on the *fumi-e* can be brought home in more universal terms, as Endō himself noted, and perhaps this is one reason why this novel about Catholic missionaries who lived and died centuries ago plants a persistent pebble in the shoe of so many readers' consciences. As Fujimoro beautifully puts it,

Endō saw *fumi-e* as emblems of a greater, universal impact. When in lectures he spoke of "having a personal *fumi-e*," he was not speaking of a literal religious icon, but was acknowledging that each of us steps on and betrays the "face of ones that [we] love, even the ideals [we] cherish." To step on one's *fumi-e*, in that sense, is to betray oneself out of desperation due to public or cultural pressure.... *Silence* is not a triumphant pilgrimage with clear outcomes, but a meandering pilgrimage of one wounded by life and confounded by faith, whose experience of faith has been punctuated by betrayals, his own and those of others. Endō notes repeatedly in his memoirs and through his own struggles of faith God never let him go. Endō himself is like the *fumi-e*, a historical marker birthed of a traumatic time, finally worn smooth through many disappointments, failures, and betrayals, but whose surface reveals the indelible visage of a Savior." ❖



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.

SCRIPTIO DIVINA from page 12

If the word *scriptio* is not good Latin, the other option would be *scriptura*. I would hesitate to dignify my personal journals as any kind of scripture, but there is this point to be made. Whatever else the Sacred Scriptures, the Holy Bible, is for Christians, for me it is above all a story, the story of a journey, a process, a slow and progressive drawing back of the veil (re-vel-ation) which hides God, the Absolute, He Who Is, the Mysterium Tremendum. The Bible is a love story, the adventure of how God has encountered, wooed, fascinated, conquered and transformed the hearts and souls of people through a hundred generations; how he has led them slowly, painfully, toward freedom, toward a deeper knowledge of his pure but enigmatic goodness. And my own little chronicle of my personal journey of faith is for me a treasured collection of memories, moments and meetings that have marked my path of discovery. It is my own little scriptures, and the writing of it has served me well as an aid on this journey with Jesus that leads, I hope, one day, into the very heart of the one who is the source, meaning and end of all words. ❖



Ben Harrison is a Missionary of Charity brother currently based in Manchester, England. He has been in brothers' communities for 35 years, and has been visiting St. Andrew's since 1972.



AROUND & ABOUT THE ABBEY

REFLECTIONS ON GRATITUDE

by **Thomas M. Gieser**

First I have to tell you something about my memories of Saint Andrew's Abbey. In the late 1950s, my mom and dad began driving me and my brothers and sisters all the way from Orange County to Valyermo. This once-a-year journey, usually in late September, was long, and, yes, a bit exotic for me, due to the other-worldly Joshua trees along the highway. After almost two hours, we turned onto a dirt road, and suddenly, there was the Abbey and its community of monks, below a wide blue sky, and nestled against towering mountains in the high desert. I was only nine years old and felt, too, this was another world, one I didn't really appreciate at the time.

I need to add that we, the Gieser clan, all-in Catholics, sold baked goods at the Abbey's fall festivals during those long-ago hot September days for many years. I worked in the Roast Beef Restaurant, to my never-ending delight, right up until I graduated from Servite High School in Anaheim. These golden days, it seemed to me, were due to the opportunity for our family to do something fun together, but they were also due to a spirit of altruism towards the Abbey's monks.

My real understanding about the Abbey and its spiritual mission came later, and it was mostly through parishes where I attended Mass such as St. Boniface and St. Justin Martyr in Anaheim, and St. Philip Benizi, in Fullerton. I also heard talks about the Abbey by Sr. Mary Henrietta, CSJ, who raised money for the monks, and by the Catholic Daughters of America Court of St. Benedict, a lay group which did the same. My mother, Margaret Gieser, was one of the first Grant Regents of the Catholic Daughters. She and my dad worked in the annual "Fall Festival" for over 20 years.

I come now to the principal question, which is: What does the Abbey mean to me? I'm devoted to my Catholic faith, and the Abbey, yes, because of its mission and monks, is part of that faith. But in another sense, the Abbey, for me, recalls family, joy, love, prayers—and place. This place, this holy desert monastery, makes me remember and reflect on my faith, and puts me in debt.

All that I need to do now, in a practical sense, is to consider how to repay that debt, show some gratitude towards Saint Andrew's Abbey. As an attorney, who's practiced law for more than 40 years, specializing in estate planning, trusts, and wills, I have decided to include the Abbey in my own estate planning. I think, too, that I will always pray the Abbey fulfills its grace-filled purpose. ✂



Thomas M. Gieser was admitted to the California Bar in 1975. His areas of practice are Estate Planning; Probate and Trust Administration; Conservatorships; Probate and Trust Litigation; Real Estate and Business Transactional Law. Tom and his wife, Colette, have three children. They are parishioners at La Purissima Catholic Church in Orange.

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Hospitality: a virtue becomes a way of life,
Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB

FEBRUARY 19

Taller Cuaresmal en Espanol, *Carlos Oblando*

FEBRUARY 20-24

Priest's Retreat: "God is always on time," *Fr. Joseph Brennan, OSB*

FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 3

Lenten Silent Retreat, *Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB*

MARCH 6-10

Priest's Retreat: "Healer in Christ," *Fr. Francis Benedict, OSB*

APRIL 13-16

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