

THE VALYERMO CHRONICLE

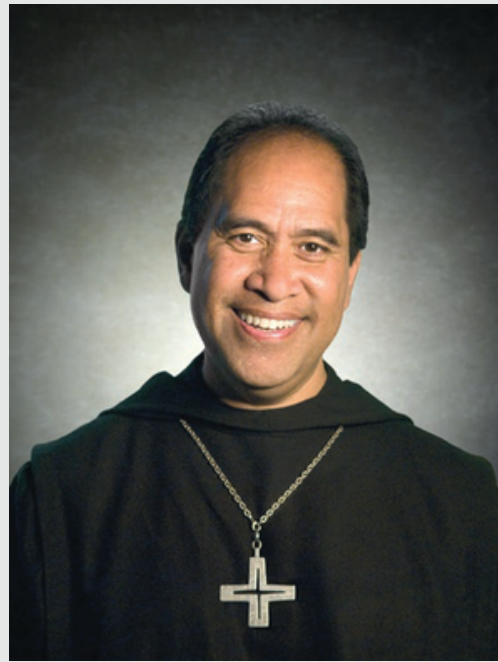
Number 270

SPRING/PENTECOST 2025

LETTER *from the* ABBOT

While the event of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and followers of Jesus, happened thousands of years ago, the same Holy Spirit is alive in the heart of each one of us. So the importance of Pentecost remains deeply relevant in our life and in the life of every Christian today, influencing our daily walk with the Lord.

I remember not long ago, I was driving in an unfamiliar area in Santa Barbara. I was trying to make my way back to the freeway, so I was using GPS, which is good to have in these situations. However, one of my frustrations with GPS is sometimes it is not quick enough for me when giving instructions. In this particular situation, I made a left turn as it said to do, which put me in the left lane. Then GPS said, “at the next light make a right turn.” The next light came too fast, so I had to make a quick lane change. When I did, I came face to face with a pedestrian jay-walking with her dog. I quickly put up my hands in an apologetic gesture. It didn’t matter. She looked angrily at me and yelled all sorts of not nice things to me, her arms flailing. You get the picture.



Well, I’m only human. My pride and frustration (with being in unfamiliar territory got the best of me). So, I laid on the horn and yelled out my window (that I had rolled down especially for the occasion) and I said, “Yeah...yeah...yeah. Use the crosswalk, lady!”

After I had made the right turn that GPS instructed me to do, I pulled over to a safe place and said to myself, or rather scolded myself, “What are you doing?!” I was angry for having yelled at the pedestrian. I said a prayer and asked forgiveness.

My point in sharing this story is simply to say that even though I may have the Holy Spirit within me, it doesn’t mean I cannot sin. It doesn’t mean I will never choose wrong. It doesn’t mean I will never get impatient.

It means I have to choose to rely on Him to direct my paths, to guide my actions and my words—always. I have to choose to follow His lead each day and each moment of the day because situations like mine can emerge instantaneously without warning. We make a turn, and bam! Suddenly, we are immediately face to face with a situation. The way we Christians live our lives can help (or not) in spreading the message of Jesus Christ. We don't have to go to a foreign land to evangelize. We can do it from our own home, from our own car!

Abbot Damien ✠

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Photo credit: <https://catholicleader.com.au/life/faith/everything-you-need-to-know-about-pentecost>; accessed June 2, 2025

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Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB

REFLECTIONS OF A MONK: JULIAN'S "ALL SHALL BE WELL"

FR. MATTHEW RIOS, OSB

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

— Julian of Norwich

As the Church journeys from the radiant joy of Easter to the blazing fire of Pentecost, Julian's words echo with quiet insistence. In a time marked by war and displacement, political polarization, ecological anxiety, and economic fragility, the assurance that "all shall be well" might sound naïve—or even offensive to those whose daily lives are marked by fear, hunger, or grief.

Yet in the light of the Resurrection and the fire of Pentecost, Julian's hope is not sentimental optimism but deep Christian realism. The Risen Christ comes not in spectacle, but in mercy. He returns with his wounds. He speaks peace into fear. He breathes forgiveness into betrayal.

This is not a victory that denies suffering—it is a victory that redeems it.

The School of the Resurrection

The Easter season is a school of hope. It teaches the Church to live in the "in-between": already redeemed, not yet fully renewed. It is a time of waiting—but not of passivity. The Holy Spirit is not simply a comforter; He is a consuming fire who sends us out into the world as peacemakers and heralds of the Kingdom.

In the monastery, this paschal waiting takes a particular shape. The Prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict exhorts us:

"Listen carefully, my child, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart."

This kind of deep listening is central to Benedictine life. It opens us not only to the voice of Scripture and the rhythm of the liturgy, but also to the sounds of creation and the longings of the human family. This listening is how we prepare for Pentecost: with minds awake and hearts alert.

Benedictine Anchors in an Age of Drift

The vows of stability, conversion of life, and obedience shape a distinctive response to the world's instability:

- **Stability** roots us in place and people. It resists the temptations of escape, distraction, and despair.
- **Conversion of life** (*conversatio morum*) makes the resurrection a daily pattern, a habit of transformation.
- **Obedience** attunes us to the voice of God in unexpected places— Scripture, the Rule, our Abbot, and our wounded world.

These vows do not remove us from the chaos—they allow us to respond with deep presence and resilient hope. In our monastic communities, we witness this daily: in the praying of the Hours, the hospitality extended to guests, and the quiet fidelity of brothers who continue to offer their lives for the Church and the world. In these small but faithful acts, we share in the Church's Easter mission: to announce that Christ is risen, and that love is stronger than death.

A New Shepherd for the People of God

Now, we rejoice in the election of a new pope, Pope Leo XIV—a visible sign that the Spirit continues to guide the Church through all seasons of history. As one Oblate, Dr. Paul Ford noted, the Holy Father was elected on the very day of Julian of Norwich's significant day. Every papal election is a moment of grace, not merely for the Church's hierarchy but for the whole Body of Christ. The world may read this event through different lenses, but we see it as a moment of profound spiritual renewal.



Leo PP. XIV

Photo credit: www.vatican.va/content/dam/vatican/leone-xiv/Foto-Ufficiale-Papa-Leone-XIV_Copyright-VATICAN-MEDIA; accessed June 1, 2025.

The Lord has once again chosen a successor to Peter—not because he is perfect, but because he has said yes to the Spirit’s call. In this new pontificate, we look with hope for leadership that is:

- **Grounded in prayer and simplicity**
- **Courageous in proclaiming truth**
- **Merciful in extending the Gospel to every corner of humanity**

Like Peter at the lakeside fire, our new Holy Father has been asked: *“Do you love me?”* And he has said yes—not in words alone, but with his whole life. Let us support Pope Leo XIV not with opinions, but with prayers. Let us resist the temptation to divide ourselves by ideology and instead unite around the call to be witnesses to the Resurrection.

As monks, our life of prayer must remain open to the Spirit’s surprises. Our cloisters must not become museums of past certainties, but schools of discernment, where Christ is loved above all and where guests are welcomed as Christ himself.

Julian’s Confidence

We return to the gentle clarity of Julian:

“All shall be well.”

Not because the world is already healed— but because the Risen One bears the wounds of the world in glory.

Not because we see the future clearly—but because we trust the One who holds it.

Not because we are strong—but because the Spirit still breathes, still speaks, still sends.

So with Mary and Peter, with Benedict and Scholastica, with Julian and all the saints, we say again:

Come, Holy Spirit.
Christ is Risen.
All shall be well.



TRIDUUM AT VALYERMO, 2025 RISINGS: A MEDITATION

MARY KAUFFMAN, OBL OSB

Holy Thursday afternoon and evening

Psalm 91, a psalm for Holy Week, 3-4 : "God will rescue you from the fowler's snare, from the destroying plague/ Will shelter you with pinions, spread wings that you may take refuge..."

I arrive Holy Thursday afternoon while the monks are busy planning and providing for both the beauty and solemnity of the evening's liturgical service as well as for the comfort and care of their guests. The ubiquitous ravens, as a group of a "conspiracy" or "unkindness", are also busy, calling each other and whooshing heavy wings as they move from roof to trees, alert to the activity below. In evening comes the celebration of Eucharistic gift followed by stripping of the altar. Now it is time for me to go into the Gethsemane of grief and betrayal. I follow Peter into the courtyard where, in his fear of the conspiracy of Jewish leaders, he denies Christ. I reflect on my own fears in the face of challenges, my own betrayals, my own unkindnesses;

they are burdens I could not bear without the comfort of Psalm 91. My soul feels the weight of my own cowardice and weaknesses as I listen in the late-night silence for the sound of eagle's wings, for the whoosh of those gigantic, strong pinions capable of sheltering and bearing much, carrying God's promise to lift my burdens as I lie down and wait in the desert quiet.



Original Artwork by Br. Columba Corrie, O.S.B.

*I listen in the late-night
silence for the sound of
eagle's wings, for the whoosh
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pinions capable of sheltering
and bearing much, carrying
God's promise...*

Good Friday morning

Genesis 8:11: "In the evening the dove came back to (Noah), and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf." Luke 3: 22 "and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove..."

Mourning doves welcome the daylight with their soft, plaintive cooing on Good Friday. It is indeed a day for mourning and somber quiet, and my spirit joins the women who share Christ's grief and suffering as they follow him on the harsh journey to Calvary.

Woodpeckers noisily at work on the trees by the path to the chapel echo the sound of nails being pounded into the wood of the cross. It is a day of darkness, relieved only by the light of the Holy Spirit, who guides me on the path of mourning for my own part in Christ's crucifixion, a necessary mourning

I strive for light and peace, but my efforts are fruitless without the counsel and comfort of the Holy Spirit.



as I accept responsibility for my own sins. The darkness and turmoil of the world are reflected in my inner being. I strive for light and peace, but my efforts are fruitless without the counsel and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Saturday afternoon

"The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; ...Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/ World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."
From "God's Grandeur," by Gerard Manley Hopkins

The sun has come out after days of grey gloom. I am sitting in the lounge when I see a sudden shining flash, dazzling and bright outside the upper windows, something touched and caught by the re-emerged sun. I rise from my chair to behold a great white heron landing on the green area just outside, standing still and stately, alone and gleaming in the light. I watch as it turns and walks with high-stepping elegance across the ground. It has made its home at the monastic lake, along with many ducks. It is not a duck but shares life with the ducks, occasionally separating itself to be alone...

is this not a sign of the Christ, who came to live among us, as one like us but not like us? Did Christ not live among us, eat, talk, walk with us, yet at times withdraw to be alone with His Father? Did he not live as one having likeness with us but also differences that inspired wonder and awe? ... As I watch the magnificent bird move so deliberately up the slope, my spirit rises out of the darkness of the sorrows of yesterday into the radiance and promise of life, joy, and beauty to come.

Easter Sunday morning

Daniel 3: 80: "All you birds of the air, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever."

The cloudless sky is bathed in illuminating sunlight; bird song fills the air; we who have celebrated the Lord's resurrection rejoice together. I feel a presence of the Trinity fulfilled, the wings of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lifting up the human spirit in all its phases, its sense of sorrow in sin and loss, its sense of joy and gratitude for gifts and goodness. It is a day of hope and fulfillment. The Resurrection, Christ's rising from the tomb, brings the promises of our bodily resurrection in the future and a rising in our present life from the tomb of spiritual death.

I am filled with the blessing of reexperiencing this rising every year through the graces of community, liturgy, and place. I walk by a field of white wildflowers blooming by the monastery road, their eager faces turned upwards. I share their eagerness for light today, a day for soaring praise of God and thanksgiving for all gathered here in Paschal community. Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Let us praise and exalt him above forever.

Post-Script: Home, and towards Pentecost

As I return to the routines and demands of non-monastic life, I find I have carried from my experience of Triduum two sharpened senses: one of listening, and the other of time. I have a new realization of how much I depend on vision for awareness; my experience at St Andrew's planted in my soul a greater realization of how much is revealed by sheer listening.



The bird chatter and song affected my soul and imagination significantly during the days of Triduum, and I find I am now listening more intently to the sounds of nature around my own home, open to what those sounds may reveal.

The first word of Benedict's holy rule is Listen, be aware, take in, use more than your eyes. I am listening more carefully to both the silences and the voices of those around me in the course of mundane daily life; I am listening for the presence of Trinity in those quiet times of either calm or worry, and to both the charm of finches and the unkindness of ravens in comments and conversations of people around me. I will be listening at Pentecost for what the wings of the Holy Spirit will bring this year to my spirit, listening in both the silences and the sounds of my inner and outer worlds.

The Chronos and Kairos dimensions of time became both more distinct and more intertwined for me. I was acutely aware of both while at the Triduum, of carefully following the Chronos chronological, linear schedule of hours of prayer and times for meals; of experiencing the subjective, inner time of Kairos as I was with the Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit in the present in Christ's passion, death, and resurrection.

Now at home, the daily intertwining of both is growing in me as I follow clock and calendar while feeling more open to the meaning of small experiences and silences, more aware in daily prayer of the Father in the psalms, Christ in the Word, the Spirit in the Light and Sounds of life.

About 55 years ago, I was at a swan sanctuary in England, standing near a narrow creek where a bevy of swans had gathered. There was a sudden intense stillness as two swans, a pair, poised themselves to take off in flight together. Their wings began a slow beat in unison, gradually increasing in volume and intensity as they gracefully rose, in perfect time together, up into the air over the creek. It was a moment when earth held its breath, full of alternating rhythmic sound and silence, a Kairos moment in Chronos time, full of transcendence that lives in my soul to this day.

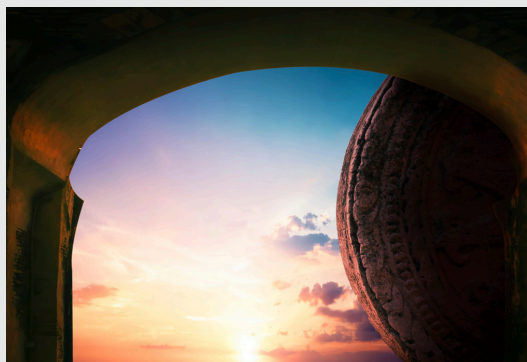


Photo Credit: Canva photo's: "Empty Tomb"

HEARTFELT LISTENING

MARY SCHULTE, OBL. OSB

I made my profession as an oblate of Saint Andrew's Abbey fifteen years ago on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2010. I first visited the Abbey in the Fall of 2006, and I quickly fell in love with the rhythms of prayer, silence, and community. As my visits became more frequent, I found there was a growing longing in my heart to learn to live the Benedictine way.

As a then busy trial judge in a court system being impacted more each year by severe budget cuts, and reductions in personnel, with no corresponding reduction in workloads, I did not take the vow of oblate lightly. Did I need "one more commitment" to add to my already full plate? Managing a heavy caseload of my own,



Photo credit: Mary Schulte

"Listen is such a little, ordinary word, that it is easily passed over. Yet we all know the pain of not being listened to, not being heard..." Margaret Guenther,

Holy Listening:

The Art of Spiritual Direction

I was also the supervising judge of our court's probate/mental health panel, which meant I was not just supervising other judges, but interfacing with numerous county agencies and court personnel. Nevertheless, the still quiet voice of God required a response and I said yes.

As a new oblate, I made, and now continue to make, a commitment to the reordering of my life and my priorities. It has been a journey, not a destination, of becoming aware of and responsive to God in my daily life. Words like presence, hospitality, simplicity, gratitude, silence, balance, and acceptance have taken on new and richer meaning. I have come to appreciate the sacredness of everyday moments, the holiness of the ordinary. I have looked for and found God in all things and in the faces of the people I encounter.

St. Benedict begins the Rule with the word “listen”. To listen well, either to God, or to another person, I must cultivate silence. I cannot listen well if I am doing all the talking, or if I am waiting to speak instead of focusing on what is being said.

The beauty of the Rule is its simplicity and applicability to my daily life out in “the world” with all its demands, attractions, and distractions, encouraging the uniting of my prayer with my work, my ‘ora et labora.’ Listening is what I have done for a living, in a world filled with words, spoken and written. Listening requires me to wait and be patient. It requires silence on the part of me, the listener. Listening is a ministry of presence to the other. In listening with the “ear of my heart,” with attentiveness to the other, I hear and am open to the quiet voice of God.

My chosen profession has required an extra dose of listening, and oh so much prayer. My daily diet at the time of my profession as an oblate, and for the ensuing 7 years, included hearing details of domestic violence and elder abuse, bitter fights over inheritances

(“Oh Lord”, I often thought, “why didn’t the parents just leave it all to charity?”), involuntary conservatorships over the mentally ill, and deciding which family member would sometimes have significant powers over an elderly parent. Some days I had to make very difficult decisions as to who would have custody of children when the parents were not the appropriate guardians (parents in prison or deceased a father who committed mass murder in a local hair salon, or drug addicted parents). I reviewed heartbreaking petitions by minors fleeing their native countries in the face of unspeakable horrors, pleading for a grant of asylum in our country. Each day brought an unrelenting, steady stream of hurt, disappointment, fear, anger, ego, entitlement, and desire for revenge.



Original Artwork by Br. Columba Corrie

The Rule of Benedict, particularly the admonition to listen with the ear of my heart, became my daily anchor. Listen, listen, listen. I have always hungered for and felt nourished by silence and stillness (the topic of a retreat I will be giving at the Abbey in September). Silence and stillness are not the hallmark of a trial courtroom. The legal world is a world of much talking, and too little waiting, unless the “waiting” is to jump right in with a reply. When I took time for morning prayer, or mid-day prayer, or time just to be inwardly still before donning the robe and going into the courtroom, I was better able to listen, to be patient, to show compassion. When I read night prayer, the day’s burdens lifted. I was replenished by the words “Oh God, unwearied is your love for us.” Quieter contemplative and meditative prayer practices, along with the rhythms of the Hours, frequent visits to the Abbey, and connection with my local group of oblates, kept it all from sucking the life out of me.



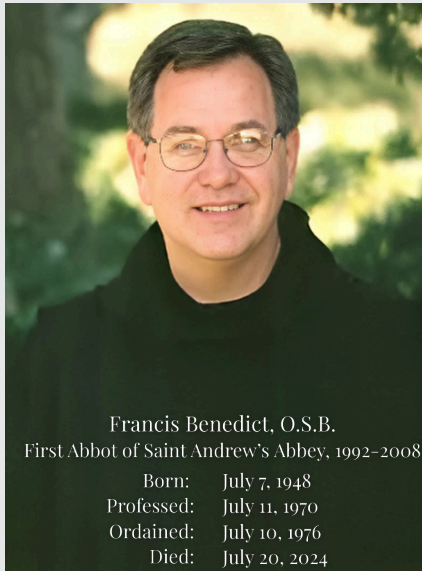
sites.google.com/view/benedictinejourney/st-benedict-at-monte-cassino;
accessed May 30, 2025

Some days I went back to my chambers and simply sat in silence and prayed, or wept. Lawyers thanked me for listening, for caring, even when the result wasn’t what they hoped for. I couldn’t have done any of this without the strength of my faith and my faith community, formed in the Benedictine way of living.

FR. FRANCIS BENEDICT, OSB

EULOGY DELIVERED BY

FR. ISAAC KALINA, OSB



About three weeks before he passed away, Fr. Francis took me for a ride in his golfcart which became his usual mode of getting around the grounds at the monastery for the last few years. He said to me, “I just filled out my end of life Directive, and I put you down as my Trust and Power of Attorney.” He made it very clear to me that if anything ever happened to him, he wanted us/me to please just let him go! So a week ago on Friday night, when his doctors informed us of the very sad shape he was in, we told them to pull him off of everything, ventilator and hoses and tubes. Fr. Francis lasted another twelve hours breathing on his own till the Lord called him to Himself.

I was reminded of another ride he took me on forty-plus years ago, my very first night here in the monastery. After Compline that night, he came running up to me asking if I wanted to help him feed some poor people. I said Sure, why not! Five hours later, we had crossed at least four county lines to help feed two destitute families. This was my introduction to monastic life. It was better than an E-Ticket ride at Disneyland! Since then, he took me with him on dozens of such adventures, but none quite as dramatic! That was exactly forty years ago last week.

But back in the golf cart, I remember saying to myself, ‘I wonder if he knows something; if his guardian angel hadn’t let him in on a little secret so he could get ready ahead of time!’ Fr. Francis knew; he knew! How could it have been any other way? Anyone who knew Fr. Francis also knew how much he loved his identical twin brother, Tim! It was just seven months ago when Tom buried Tim, and although Tim was born all of two and a half minutes before Fr Francis, Tim would always say to him, Just wait till you get to be my age, Francis! They were truly inseparable; they loved each other more than any two brothers I know!

As in birth, so also in life and almost in death. They went to Alemany High School together; they entered Queen of Angels minor seminary together right behind the San Fernando Mission; they almost got into trouble together and that's the reason they didn't enter the Novitiate together here at St. Andrew's.

When Tim passed away last November after a long line of dearest friends had predeceased him, Fr. Francis just did not bounce back, even though he really tried to. Fr. Francis' heart was broken when he lost Tim and he was never the same again. He could not wait till he was reunited with Tim and the Communion of Saints. He dreamed of the day his parents, Betty and Al, and Tim would meet him at the gates of paradise. Sometimes he could think of nothing else! So big was his heart, that if you were ever fortunate enough to be his friend, it would be hard not to consider yourself blessed beyond words or given a tremendous gift.

Fr. Francis had a soft spot for our Belgian Founders. He had such a palpable respect and tenderness for the old boys, the Senior monks of Valyermo with whom he had a special bond.

He even cried when Fr. Vincent left for Jerusalem indefinitely. Fr. Francis' love was a very big love. He was bigger, sometimes even better, than life. Everything about Fr. Francis was big, so it shouldn't come as a surprise, that for his grand exit even his heart attack was massive! Because of his big love, he was often misunderstood! Some even looked on him in disdain. Because a love like his is so rare on this earth. Once when Fr. Francis was a young monk in first vows, he almost left the monastery to help a young married couple stay together! He went as far as packing up his bags and reserving a bus ticket for his mission. I think it was Fr. Vincent or Fr. Eleutherius who talked him out of it!

Another time, on a bitterly cold winter night during the Grand Silence, he and Fr. Gregory took pity on a retreatant in the guesthouse who had no heat in her room. In those days, a monk never did anything alone, so two by two Fr. Francis and Gregory went together to relight the pilot on her furnace.

I dare say with some boldness, that the Word indeed became flesh a second time in history when God knitted our Francis together in his own mother's womb. It was like the Incarnation all over again. For many people, for many, many people Fr. Francis was like God, so filled was he with Godly compassion, the purest love and humility and heroic mercy and forgiveness, my brother-monks and I will vouch for this.

There was absolutely nothing Fr. Francis would not do to relieve someone's need or pain! He truly saw Jesus and His Blessed Mother in the faces of those he loved and served: the poor and the hungry, the depressed, the unemployed, the bereft, the undocumented and the unattractive! He even drove a friend who was a drywall hanger in Lancaster down to Torreon, in Coahuila, Mexico, and that man later became my friend and the subsequent father to my four godchildren. Because this young husband and wife had not seen each other in almost a year, Fr. Francis decided to sleep that night in his car because there was only a curtain separating where they made his bed and theirs!

I don't believe this is the end nor will it be the last we hear of our brother, Francis; in the coming weeks and months after the dust settles, when people call or come looking for him, we'll understand better just how much Francis embodied the Love we call God and how much he deserves to hear those words, "Well done good and faithful servant." This was Fr Francis brand of love.



"Eternal Rest grant unto him O Lord"

CHANTING THE PSALMS: AN ANCIENT REMEDY FOR OVERCOMING TRAUMA

BR. JOHN BAPTIST SANTA ANA, OSB

(Editor's Note: Celebrating the 1700th Anniversary of the Council of Nicea where St. Athanasius played a key role, this article written by Br. John Baptist is to honor the great saint.)

Trauma is part of the human condition. Sadly, it is something many individuals have to live with in varying degrees on account of traumatic experiences that oftentimes happen at an early age. What is worse is that religious and ecclesial environments are no less exempt from inflicting trauma upon innocent people. Thankfully, there are many forms of trauma therapy offered today that help people to overcome their mental and emotional obstacles. Since trauma is nothing new, it is worth exploring remedies that people of antiquity sought for dealing with their trauma. In so doing, we might discover how the practical wisdom of an ancient approach can be just as effective now as it was then.

St. Athanasius suffered from religious trauma. The Church in his time was a hostile environment, where differences in theological perspective often resulted in persecution and even death.

The source of contention was due to the Arian controversy, which called into question the divine and immutable status of the Son of God. After being elected bishop of Alexandria in 328, Athanasius swiftly became known as the arch-opponent of Arianism. This public stance resulted in five different periods of exile under the reigns of three successive Constantinian emperors. During these exiles, Athanasius sought refuge living in monasteries in the Egyptian desert. There, he learned to turn to the Psalms for healing and consolation.

St. Athanasius points out that the Psalms encompass every array of human emotion.



en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_of_Alexandria#/media/File:Ikone_Athanasius_von_Alexandria.jpg

Accessed on June 2, 2025

Whether it be fear, anger, or betrayal, Athanasius suggests there is a corresponding Psalm that validates and heals that emotional state. For this reason, he recommends not only reading, but singing specific Psalms that are reflective of present circumstances and emotions. Unlike other books of Scripture, the Psalms possess a unique ability to resonate with each person due to their poetic structure. Singing the Psalms provides vocabulary for emotions already present within the human soul that facilitates these interior emotions in finding their proper expression through hymn and chant.

By providing an outlet for pent up emotion, the Psalms have a cathartic function that promotes healing.

A quick look at one example shows how Athanasius found validation and healing in the Psalms himself. He says, “If you are being persecuted by your own people, and you have many who rise up against you, say the third psalm.” One cannot help but imagine Athanasius speaking from personal experience during one of his five exiles as bishop of Alexandria. Just as this psalm consoled

Athanasius during his own traumatic experiences, the Psalms offer healing for anyone who is willing to recognize their own emotions reflected in them, chanting them in such a way that the poetic verses become their own. Writing a century after St. Athanasius, St. Benedict organized various strains of monastic practice into a single Rule. This standardized chanting the Psalms into a daily ritual called the “Divine Office.” Rather than picking and choosing whatever psalm a monk wished to chant on his own, the monks in Benedict’s monasteries gathered at selected hours to chant selected psalms until the whole Psalter had been completed, after which they would start over again. The goal was never to chant as many Psalms as possible. Rather, the layout of the divine office throughout the day sought to establish a prayerful rhythm, wherein the monk found himself constantly turning and returning to the act of prayer.

The rhythm of the Divine Office, combined with the lyrical content of the Psalms, discourages emotional suppression by regularly invoking emotions to surface through prayer and chant. This provides an ongoing space for processing through personal histories, experiences, and trauma.



www.cwatershed.org/2015/05/16/ascension-gorgeous-illumination-14th-century/; accessed 30 May 2025

The ultimate goal of the Divine Office is genuine contemplation, which is reached through habitual prayer and meditation on Scripture.

In the act of contemplation, one experiences intimacy with God, who is the ultimate source of reparation within the soul. Therefore, the Divine Office is a ritual that is mystical yet practical; that is to say, aimed toward a supernatural end while yielding emotional and psychological benefits.

The structure and communal dimension of the Divine Office inevitably results in chanting psalms that are not always reflective of an individual monk's emotional state. A monk might have to chant a melancholic psalm when he feels quite chipper; or worse, he might have to chant a psalm of thanksgiving when he is downright grumpy!

The diversity of the Psalms chanted in a communal setting forces a monk to think outside of himself and be sensitive to the various emotions that others around him might be feeling at that time. This heightened emotional awareness counteracts temptations toward self-centeredness and promotes reparative healing within the community. A monk need not always seek self-consolation through participation in the Divine Office but may seek the consolation of another by chanting a psalm of lament beside his fellow brother who is grieving over the loss of a loved one.

Although Benedict composed his Rule specifically for monks living in monasteries, the practice of chanting the Psalms from the Divine Office may be adopted by anyone, as shown by Athanasius who likely received his knowledge on the Psalms from Egyptian monks during his times in exile. The poetic nature of the Psalms makes them universally accessible, rendering them like a mirror through which people may find validation and healing by recognizing their own emotions and expressing them through hymn and chant. While Benedictine monasticism is a way of life that is not intended for all, it nonetheless offers an ancient remedy for trauma that can be reparative for every person.



Monks Left to Right: (Front Row) Fr. Angelus, Fr. Patrick, Fr. Isaac, Fr. Matthew, Fr. Martin, Br. Ignacio, Br. Dominic, Br. Benedict (Second Row) Fr. Stephanos, 2 Guest Deacons, Abbot Damien, Br. Paul, Archbishop Jose Gomez, Guest Deacon, Br. Joseph and Br. John Mark, Fr. Carlos (Third Row) Guest Deacon, Br. Columba, Guest Priest, Fr. Luke, Fr. Joseph, Br. John Baptist, Fr. Francois.

MONKS' UPDATES

We have been blessed with the ordination of **Br. Paul** to the Order of Deacons on May 24th. He continues to be assigned as our Manager at the Business Office. His MDiv was received from St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. Speaking of academic studies, **Br. John Baptist** has also received his Masters Degree in Theology at University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and been accepted at University of Oxford in England for a possible doctoral degree.

We have also been blessed with four brothers in various levels of their formation and discernment. Our Novice,

Br. Ignacio has been approved for triennial vows. **Br. Columba** has also been approved for triennial vows. He has contributed copies of his paintings in this Chronicle issue. We also have **Br. Joseph**, discerning his transfer with the monastic community of Valyermo from Mount Savior Monastery in New York. He is a registered nurse with years of professional experience, and doing various labora for the community. **Fr. Stephanos** is also in discernment for a possible transfer to Valyermo. He has been a professed monk for many years, and is gifted in music. He was a former monastic music director and he possesses other talents.

Fr. Carlos, continues to be our Prior, managing the Gift Shop and Ceramics Departments. Our Sub-prior, **Fr. Joseph** remains faithful to his ministry of spiritual direction to various priests and oblates. While monks wear different hats in the monastery, some of us are assigned various tasks, but not always according to our innate gifts, talents, or professional backgrounds. **Br. Benedict** continues to be our automobile and IT man, taking care of our vehicles and telephones, and internet. **Fr. Luke** continues his teaching ministry at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo. He continues to serve as our community librarian, archivist, and musician, and is involved in giving retreats, talks, and conferences not only at the Abbey but also internationally. **Fr. Martin** is in charge of our Used Books (Rookery) Store. **Fr. Isaac** serves as one of the chaplains for our guests and retreatants. He also holds the very indispensable job of picking up and delivering our postal mail.



Fr. Matthew gives classes to our brothers in formation and helps Br. Paul in the Business Office. He is also the Junior Master of our simple professed monks. **Fr. Patrick** is the new Director of Oblates, also undertaking various tasks for the monastery, including hospitality for our guests, liturgical assignments, and serving as foster father to our beloved Labrador, "Buster." **Fr. Francois**, in his gentle and quiet ways, cares for the sick brothers as infirmarian together with Fr. Isaac and Br. Joseph. **Fr. Angelus**, has been busy composing music for our Divine Office, and remains faithful to his various ministries. He is also our Choirmaster and Novice Master. **Br. Dominic** remains our first-hand source of history, and shares his vivid stories and recollections of our brothers of the past during our Community Recreation time. He resides at the Seniors' Building under the care of loving caregivers. **Br. John Mark** continues to live his monastic vocation and attends to his healing processes in various ways. All of the Monks live and work under the guidance and inspiration of the father of the community, **Abbot Damien**, who does many works that are too lengthy to cover in a few sentences. Of note, he gives spiritual direction to our seminarians. Please pray for our beloved Abbot and the monks.

ABBEY'S FORTHCOMING RETREATS

JUNE

25-27

Discovering C.S. Lewis Library

27-29

Who am I?

30-July 6

Iconography



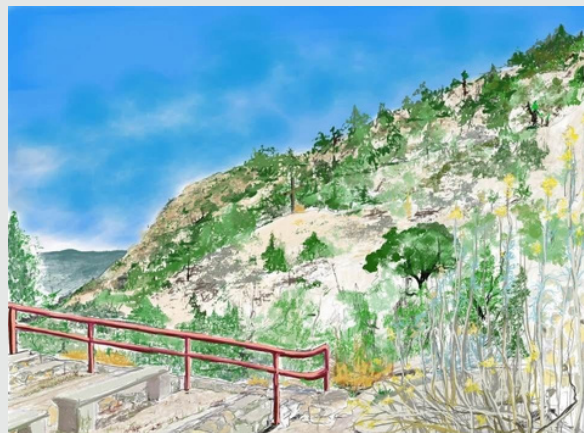
JULY

7-11

Benedictine Spirituality

18-20

St. Clare of Assisi



Art by Vicky Chacon Artist Retreat

AUGUST

8-10

Cinema Divina Retreat

15-17

Celtic Spirituality

21-24

**The Transformative Power of
Story**

25-29

Healing Our Wounds

29-31

**Spiritual Journey of The Desert
Fathers and Mothers**

SEPTEMBER

2-5

Practicing Silence in a Noisy World

12-14

Dealing With Death



Saint Benedict, Icon written by Br. Columba Corrie during Iconography Retreat 2024

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