

THE VALYERMO
Chronicle
Saint Andrew's Abbey

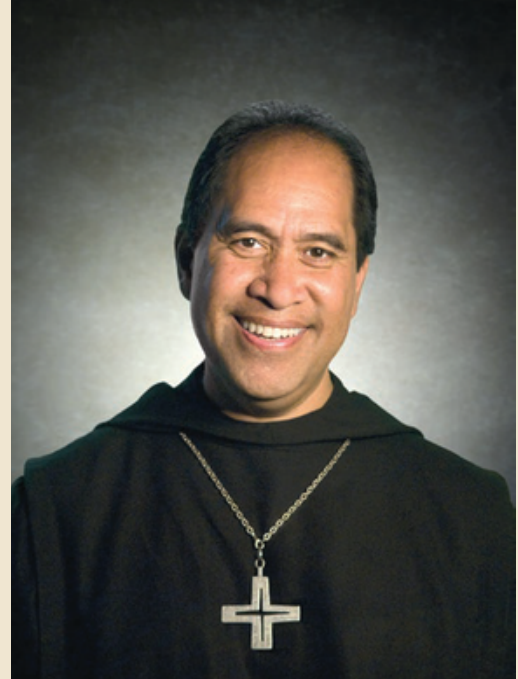


FALL/ADVENT 2025 ✠ NUMBER 272

LETTER *From the* ABBOT

The month of November when we remember All Saints and All Souls, reminds me of an experience I had years ago. I share this experience with you hoping it will encourage you to reflect on the providence of God in your life, and the spiritual inspiration and help we receive from the saints who have gone before us.

I was born in San Diego, California. Several months after my birth, I was baptized in American Samoa on August 23, the feast of St. Rose of Lima. When I was five, we moved from San Diego to Los Angeles where I grew up. I received my First Holy Communion and Confirmation at St. Rose of Lima parish. So, the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation) were all connected to St. Rose of Lima in one way or another.



In 2013, I was invited to an episcopal ordination in American Samoa. All the visiting priests and bishops who came for the celebration were housed in the local hotel. When all the festivities were over, I went to visit aunts, uncles, and cousins in the village where my parents are from. I also made it a point to stop by the village Catholic church to say “hello” to the pastor, whom I knew from seminary days. It was great catching up on all the news of the parish and the village.

In my conversation with the pastor, he asked me, “When are you going to come and celebrate Mass for the village, for your family?” When I told him that I was leaving the next day, he said, “Perfect! Mass tomorrow is at 5:45 a.m. You have plenty of time!” (Depending on the time of year, there are only one to two flights per week arriving and departing the island, and it always departs at 11:00 p.m.)

So as soon as I got to my hotel room, I looked at the readings for the next day’s Mass. To my surprise, it was the feast of St. Rose of Lima! A God moment for sure! In my homily at Mass, I shared my story with the parishioners. I told them that I was baptized in this very church on this very day 50 years ago by a French missionary priest. And God in His providence brought me back as a priest to give Him thanks with you—the very meaning of Eucharist!

Needless to say, that was the highlight of my one-week visit; a story I continue to tell today, twelve years later. At the writing of this article, the physical church where I was baptized is now being razed to build a new one. So, all the more reason for me to be grateful for that opportunity.

A footnote to this story is that St. Rose of Lima was a Dominican tertiary, and my Confirmation name is Dominic. Also, since high school, I had always wanted to be a teacher. And so it happened, before I entered the monastery, I taught for several years; a job I thoroughly enjoyed. As it happened, I was born on the feast of St. John Baptist de la Salle, the patron saint of teachers!

All of this reminds me that God not only pays attention to details, but He is also a ‘big picture’ type of God. Nothing escapes Him. When we remember that He sees all, knows all, and has designed a plan particular for each of us, then we can reflect on our life’s journey—which I hope we all do—and recognize His gentle guiding hand upon us. Then like our Blessed Mother, Queen of all Saints, we too can ponder these things in our heart and give thanks!

Abbot Damien ✠



Erratum:

In the Summer Issue, Eileen Pendergast’s article (page 21, Chronicle #271) should have been written as: “...the thinking layer concentrated in the ‘corona’ of the noosphere,” rather than ionosphere. “Noosphere” is a word used by Teilhard to describe an envelope of reflective consciousness surrounding the earth. Ionosphere refers to gaseous substances, not at all relevant for the meaning of the original sentence.

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DEIFICATION IN THE RULE OF SAINT BENEDICT, PART 2



Fr. Luke Dysinger OSB

This is the second in a series of articles on *theosis*/deification in the Rule of Saint Benedict and the Life of Benedict by Pope Saint Gregory the Great. These articles adapt an essay by the author entitled “Theosis/Deification in Benedict of Nursia and Gregory The Great: Contemplating Christ In The Other And In The Self,” chapter 13 in *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition*, ed. Jared Ortiz, (Catholic University of America Press, 2019) pp. 253-271. Detailed references to sources mentioned here will be found in the original essay.

In the first article of this series, the Eastern Christian concept of “theosis”, deification or sanctification, was described. In both the Christian East and West theosis or sanctification is intimately linked with the practice of “theoria”, the contemplation of divine purposes and realities beneath the superficial appearance of events, persons, and words. This is an important theme in the writings of the Greek theologian St. Gregory Palamas, who explained that those who diligently practice the Jesus Prayer sometimes behold within their “*nous*,” their innermost selves, the “Taboric light” seen by the disciples at the Transfiguration. For Palamas this contemplation of divine light is both evidence of theosis and one of the sources of divinization. (Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* 1.3,5; 1.3,23; 1.3,27; 2.3,9; 3.1,34; 3.3,13).

St. Benedict represents the western Christian tradition; and although he does not use the technical term “contemplatio” in his Rule, the link between mystical vision and spiritual transformation is clearly suggested in the one instance where he employs a Latin term associated with the doctrine of deification. In the ninth verse of the Prologue Benedict quotes a poetic couplet taken directly from the *Rule of the Master*. He invites his readers to arise from spiritual sloth and:

Open our eyes to the deifying light (*apertis oculis nostris ad deificum lumen*)
and attune our ears to hear the divine voice
(*attonitis auribus audiamus, divina ... uox*)
that admonishes us, daily crying out:
Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Ps 95:7-8);
And again, *You who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:7).*

For Benedict this exhortation to “open our eyes to the deifying light” is an invitation to experience the transforming presence of God especially in the Sacred Scriptures, but also in the brothers and sisters with whom we have the privilege of living in community. This invitation initiates a spiritual explanation of Psalms 33 and 14, as well as a series or “catena” (chain) of biblical citations.



Benedict cites two biblical verses as examples of the divinizing light and divine voice. First is Ps. 95(94):7-8, “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” In chapters 9 and 10 of his Rule Benedict makes it clear that this encouragement of an open, welcoming heart that hears and receives the divine voice is a verse the monks are expected to recite daily at the beginning of Vigils/Matins, the first hour of the Divine Office. The second verse is Rev. 2:7, the magisterial voice of Christ commanding the hearer to “listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches.” Benedict’s citation of these verses emphasizes the importance of listening to the scriptural voice of God chanted and proclaimed during liturgical worship.

These verses, with their emphasis on listening attentively to Sacred Scripture remind us that in the Rule of Benedict the experience of contemplation, the ability to perceive God’s presence and hidden purposes beneath surface appearance, is very often invoked using the analogy of hearing, rather than the traditional and more frequent metaphor of seeing. The first word of Benedict’s Rule is “*obsculta*,” “listen.” Unlike the author of the Rule of the Master from whom he borrows much of his own rule, Benedict believes that the principal voice we must hear and contemplate is the voice of Christ in the Scriptures, rather than that of the abbot or “master.”



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

From the beginnings of Christianity, but especially since the time of Origen in the third century, the Christian spiritual tradition has increasingly emphasized the practice of meditating on Sacred Scripture and chanting or reciting the psalms as a pathway to contemplation, that is, to the personal experience of God’s loving presence. Benedict’s eastern contemporary Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite described in detail the deifying power of scripture, especially when read or chanted in the liturgical assembly (Eccl. Hier.3,4-5). In the Christian West a similar emphasis on sacred scripture as divinizing is found in Ambrose and especially in Cassian, whose Conferences Benedict particular recommends in Chapter 73, the concluding chapter of his Rule.

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For Benedict it is not only in the Sacred Scriptures, but also in the lived experience of monastic community, that a kind of divinizing/sanctifying contemplation takes place. This is clear in his recurring emphasis on communal (cenobitic) monasticism rather than the hermit’s vocation to solitude. Benedict inherited, but does not seem to have agreed with, a tradition he received from Jerome and Cassian that regarded the life of the hermit as spiritually superior to that of the cenobite. Although he alludes to this conventional trope with his own modifications in chapter 1 (RB 1.3-5), it is significant

that nowhere in his Rule does Benedict explain how a monk can become a hermit: indeed, he recommends that his monks read the Rule of Basil where the common life is praised above that of the solitary (Basil, Longer Rule, q.3). In chapter 2 of his own Rule, Benedict mentions the hermitage as a possible theoretical goal, but he offers no practical steps by which it may be attained. Indeed, he explicitly intends his Rule for those who “persevere in [Christ’s] teaching in the monastery until death” (Prol. 50). And in chapter 72, “On Good Zeal,” it is within the community, serving one another, that the monks learn the contemplative art of beholding Christ in each other and of rendering fitting honor to one another as bearers of Christ, “He who brings us all to everlasting life” (RB 72.12).

In Benedict’s model of spiritual growth, the monks first learn to “behold” Christ in the Abbot, “who is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery,” (RB 2.24). But Christ must also be contemplated aurally, and perhaps paradoxically, in the voice of the youngest newcomers to the monastery, through whose counsel God often indicates what is best for the community to do (RB 3.3). Guests, too, are to be contemplated as Christ-bearers: on arrival and departure they “are to be received as Christ” and venerated with a bow or prostration, “because Christ is to be adored in them just as he is received in them” (RB 53.1,7). Similarly, monks visiting from another monastery may be the unexpected bearers of a prophetic message from Christ (RB 61.4). Finally, the sick are “truly to be served as Christ Himself ... out of honor for God” (RB 36.1,4)

For Benedict, the monastic community is not only a setting where monks learn the contemplative art of seeing Christ in one another and in guests: it is also a school where the innermost self, the heart, is changed (RB Prol. 45-49). That the community affords training in contemplative transformation is particularly clear at the end of the Prologue where Benedict modifies the Master’s definition of the monastery as a “school of the Lord’s service.” Unlike the Master, Benedict’s “schola” includes “nothing harsh, nothing burdensome” (RB Prol. 45-49), but only the strictness necessary to amend vice and safeguard love (RB Prol. 47). The word “schola” can be understood here as a place intended for both communal instruction and learning a skill or trade; but it also suggests a community that runs with a common purpose, towards a common goal (RB Prol. 49).

Thus, in the Prologue, Benedict depicts the purpose of attending to the divinizing light and divine voice as a transformed heart, that in the words of Psalm 119:32 is widened, expanded by running the path of Christian obedience, an ascetical “way of salvation” that necessarily seems narrow at the beginning. The narrow restrictiveness of the school of the Lord’s service, however, exists only to preserve fairness, heal from vice, and preserve love (RB Prol. 46-47). In his commentary on Psalm 119, Ambrose had stressed that the Christian’s heart must be widened to allow the indwelling of the Triune God”. Benedict echoes this sentiment, noting that the widened heart becomes the habitation of “inexpressibly sweet love”: “Truly as we advance in this way of life and faith, our hearts open wide, and we run with unspeakable sweetness of love on the path of God’s commandments” (RB Prol. 47).

In the next article of this series, we will move from the Prologue to a closer study of chapter 72 of Benedict’s Rule, where contemplative transformation is energized by “good zeal.”

A MONK'S REFLECTION: THE POOR IN THE PROPHETIC VOICES



Fr. Matthew Rios, OSB



Love for the poor is the evangelical hallmark of a Church faithful to the heart of God, Pope Leo IV wrote in *"Dilexi Te"* ("I Have Loved You"), an apostolic exhortation to all Christians on love for the poor." I understood this very first teaching from the Holy Father as a critique of Global Indifference, among other themes. It denounces a "throwaway culture", "a dictatorship of an economy that kills," and ideologies that diminishes or ignores human dignity especially the poor.

I would like to share this reflection while reading some of our Prophets in the Sacred Scriptures. God and the voices of the poor are common threads in the prophetic traditions. Many of the prophets had always spoken on behalf of the poor.

They were attentive to the voice of God In behalf of the poor. They listened to the news of the day with senses attuned to the special frequency or channel reserved for the poor. They listened to that channel, which broadcast mostly the voices of the poor. From Amos to Micah and from Isaiah to Jeremiah, the voices of the poor are always there! The poor have always had a special claim on God and vice versa. Zeal for the God of the covenant moved the prophets to side with those who are marginalized, widowed, orphaned, and those whose rights are being ignored or stepped upon.



This reflection is about the prophetic voices uttered on behalf of the poor. It will analyze selected passages and note how they relate to the prophets' own time and to our contemporary times. Israel's prophets were known as persons actively securing the rights of the poor in the face of royal authority or wealthy leaders who would deny those rights. Anyone claiming the title or task of God's prophet must be wide-eyed and attentive to the needs of the poor. Even the most zealous and scrupulous servant of God who neglects the just cause of the needy is dismissed as spurious and self-serving. In the eyes of the prophetic tradition, no one who does not care for the poor (Mic 7:2) can be acclaimed a saint or faithful to God.

Justice and Righteousness

But if you would offer me holocausts,
then let justice surge like water,
and goodness like an unfailing stream. (Am 5:23-24)

Justice is one of the categories that the prophets used to judge the rightness of things. An object or person is 'just' when its relationships are proper and in alignment with God's word and will. To be just is to have moral integrity and to be in proper

relation with others, their needs, and purposes. A weight or measure is just when it actually corresponds to a label it bears (Am 8:5, Ez 45:10). Human judges are just when they act according to the true nature of things and not become shortsighted by reason of mere external circumstances or bribes (Is 11:3-4). The words used in Hebrew are *tsadaq* and *mishpat*. *Tsadaq* connotes interdependence and profound respect for the needs of others; it means to be righteous, to be in the right, to be justified, or to be just.² *Mishpat* connotes an institutionalized way of doing things and suggests social structures that support and enhance human relationships.³ In the passage above from Amos, justice and righteousness are compared to cold and refreshing water offered to one who is thirsty, and it is given generously. It is best to see how justice and righteousness are applied in a particular prophet's usage. We now take a closer look at particular prophets.



<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2013/06/15/101724-prophet-amos>, accessed 11/14/25

Amos

Amos, a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees, is a strong voice for the poor. He is placed among the ranks of the poor. Amos listed the major covenantal crimes of Israel as “selling the just man for silver, and the poor man for a pair of sandals, they trample the heads of the weak into the dust of the earth and force the lowly out of the way” (2:6-7). The world into which Amos came was relatively prosperous.⁴ But just like our present time, there was neglect towards the poor. One can see the comforts and advantages of the lives of the wealthy citizens of Bethel and neighboring towns. Ignorant or indifferent to the oppression of the poor outside their homes, the matrons simply signaled for a drink, never knowing that in the eyes of Amos they were nothing but “cows of Bashan” (4:1). Behind

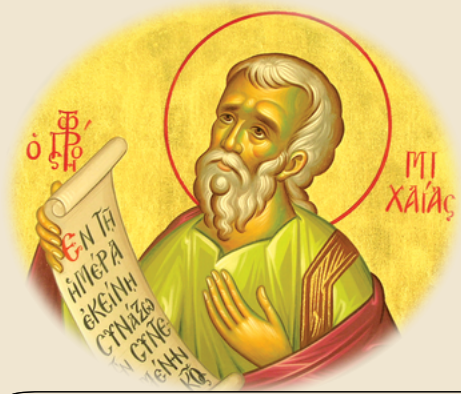
this luxury, Amos pointed to their practice of dishonest profit and the deliberate cheating of scales to amass a fortune to have the good life (8: 5). Amos saw the homes and the palaces filled with violence and robbery, not items of art (3:10). He saw the cheating done at the city gate (5:12). He denounced in strong terms those who would sell the poor and the needy for a pair of sandals (2: 6, 8: 6).

Amos was passionate about the injustice of the society in which he lived. He saw not the sweet wine, but the difficult lives of those who produce it. He saw an entire social structure built upon injustice and exploitation.

Today, Amos would point to the injustice done in the production of the Nike shoes that many of us might be comfortably wearing. He would go beyond the beauty and technology of that particular shoe and point to the unjust wages paid to the Guatemalan or Filipino laborer who operated the machines to produce such a shoe. He would point to the sub-human standards of living of those who work on the Dole pineapple plantations in the Philippines that produce those sweet and tasty pineapples in our salad bars. He would point to the plight of the poor, who are always catered to by the luxury of the rich. He would point to the kind of injustice that God would definitely abhor.

Micah

Micah is a prophet from the south who witnessed the unacceptable use of the property of widows by more powerful families and the eager accumulation of the fields by land owners (Mic 2:1-9). He respected the dignity of the powerless and their lasting role in taking care of their ancestors' properties. He condemned the practice of taking over the land of the needy of his day. He compared leaders who do such things as cannibals, greedily eating the flesh of their own people and making stew of the poor (3:1-3). Profit as a primary motive for business and turning away from the obligation to care for others was unacceptable for Micah.



<https://johnsquires.com/2022/07/26/justice-and-kindness-and-walking-humbly-the-prophet-micah/>, accessed on 11/14/25

Today, the exploration of natural resources has made rich nations richer, and the poor nations where these resources are located have become poorer. Also, in many countries, there is an ecological imbalance as a result of forest denudation created by logging concessions and land erosion left by massive mining operations. There is the alarming global climate change with blatant overuse of fossilized fuels, and disregard for responsible waste management in a global phenomenon. To these sins that have penetrated humanity, these imbalances brought massive droughts and flash floods, famine, and hunger, and perhaps irreversible damage to our planet and all of God's creation. In addition, and needless to belabor the obvious, the repercussions of global "tariff wars" have nothing of benefit to the poor countries, small businesses, and individuals. Micah's words ring true today, and perhaps even in greater proportions.

Isaiah



Isaiah saw and spoke of the injustice on the streets of Jerusalem and within the inner circles of the rich and powerful. He deplores the conduct of wealthy women (3:18-23) and deplores the drinking sprees of the rich and powerful. He detested particularly their acceptance of bribes and depriving the just of their rights (5:22-23). He condemns leaders for devouring vineyards and keeping the spoil of the poor, in their houses (3:14). He denounced the wealth gathered at the expense of the poor especially the widows and orphans (10:1-2, 1:23). In a society of close family ties with strong emphasis upon a person's relationship to a patriarchal figure of responsibility, those most abandoned were widows and orphans. Without resources for sustenance, they were reduced to slavery, begging, or prostitution for survival.

Today, we can enumerate a modern version of the list of those we have abandoned and victimized: the homeless, the psychologically imbalanced as a result of society's cruelty and neglect of families; abused men, women, and children, malnourished children, victims of domestic violence, victims of war, and victims of unjust laws and governmental policies. The list goes on and on, and much of it

<https://orthodoxmonasteryicons.com/products/isaiah-the-prophet-icon-1>, accessed on 11/14/25

arises because of government and society's neglect or blatant exploitation of their perceived weakness and poverty. It arises from the hands of those who are in power, whether it is in the family, small community, or the international community.

Jeremiah

Like his predecessors, Jeremiah complains about those who refuse to judge the causes of orphans justly (5:28). He calls the temple of Jerusalem a "den of thieves" (7:11) he cries out against the absence of justice towards aliens, widows and orphans (7:16). For Jeremiah, God is someone who practices covenantal love (*hesed*), justice (*mishpat*) and integrity (*tsedeq*) on earth" (9:23). In his concern for justice, Jeremiah criticizes King Jehoiakim, son of the good King Josiah, for his neglect of the poor. Unlike his father, who was a good-hearted king, Jehoiakim expanded his palace without righteousness (*tsedeq*) and his terraces without justice (*mishpat*), refusing just wages to those who worked to construct his structures (22:13-17).

Today, Jeremiah's words would sting us like a bee. They would refer to bishops and priests' luxurious residences (especially in third-world countries) at the expense of the poor. They would address government officials in the Philippines, China, and India, who live in flashy and elegant houses paid for by graft and corruption, bribery, and misappropriation of government funds. Jeremiah's words ring out against the expansion of giant shopping malls, expanded multi-national fast food restaurants without attendant structures built for the benefit of the needy and the poor, granting generous tax breaks for the rich and increasing taxes for the ordinary people. Jeremiah would speak loudly against all forms of dishonesty of those who exploit others by proposing motives that were in fact untrue in order to serve their own purposes.

Conclusions



The call to a preferential option for the poor has long been part of the prophetic tradition. Isaiah spoke of God's wish for us to share bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked (58:6-7). Jeremiah urged us to "do no wrong or oppress the resident alien, the orphan or the widow" (22:3-4). In the church's current social teachings, we are reminded of our role to promote the common good and to protect the rights of individuals. *Rerum Novarum* states that: "The first duty, therefore, of the rulers of State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as to produce of themselves public well-being and private prosperity . . . to promote in the highest degree the interest of the poor.)"⁵

In *Gaudium et Spes*, we are obliged to give relief to the poor, and we are taught to regard one's possessions as a common property for the good of all.⁶ In *Quadragesimo Anno*, The United States Catholic bishops took up the call in their document, *Economic Justice for All*, when they said, "As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental option for the poor to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess lifestyles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor."⁷

The prophetic call of Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah still resounds in all parts of our world. If we truly claim ourselves as one belonging to the one Body of Christ, there is much work to be done. There is a massive and alarming gap between the rich and the poor. The rich, who comprise a very small percentage of the world's population, are becoming richer, while the poor are becoming poorer. It is alarming, and a social volcano is waiting to erupt as a result of this widening disparity. Recalling the prophetic tradition, we must be roused from sleep, indifference, and neglect. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are at the same time called to hope for all that seems hopeless. As in the prophetic traditions, God will have the final say. As always, he will save the poor, which includes us all with our own various forms of poverty. The call of the hour then is prayer with accompanying action to serve God in one another in the poor, the needy, and the marginalized.⁸



¹ All passages are taken from the New American Bible Revised Edition.

² James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001) 235

³ *Ibid.*, 176

⁴ Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998) 25

⁵ David O'Brien, Thomas Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003) 26

⁶ *Ibid.*, 212-213

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58

⁸ *Ibid.*, 574

Dusk, St. Andrew's Abbey Retreat



Mary Pal Brown, Obl. OSB

On the grounds outside my room,
a clump of Joshua trees, gnarled
by heat and wind,
their trunks bearded with dead spines
the color of Mojave Desert dust,
spikes pointed
into a deep lavender sky.

Swaths of cloud turn a smeared red,
then ashen, as the sun dips
behind the gold-cruled cupolas
of the San Gabriel Mountains.

On the Mission-style desk,
a frosted-glass Madonna—
she holds the Child.
Her robe, face, the Child's, too,
glow incandescent – made holy
by light from an ordinary lamp.



FINDING GRACE ON THE CAMINO



Curtis Kauffman, Obl, O.S.B

Of course, Josh knew he was dying. It is painfully obvious to me now, all these years later. Though he remained stoic and confident with family and friends, the signs of what he knew was happening to his young body are evident in hindsight. He was as gracious as he was brave. And his faith left no room for self-pity or a sense of defeat that would make others lose their courage. *Be present for the other.*

Josh was more than our son-in-law, husband to our daughter, and father to their three beautiful young children. He was, by his own designation, my son as well, and a brother in every sense to our five sons. His mother raised him, and together they fought a courageous battle with his childhood lymphoma, diagnosed at age nine. Having won that battle, it nevertheless left a ticking time bomb, the devastating consequence of massive radiation doses that severely damaged his cardiovascular system. This was in the 70s, long before the medical breakthroughs that would allow for highly precise and targeted minimal radiation doses to beat back such cancers without damaging otherwise healthy tissue. *The price of victory would be revealed in due season.*

He called me dad, and not only did he ask me for our daughter's hand in marriage, but he honored me a few years later by inviting me to be his shepherd into the Catholic Church. He took the confirmation name Joseph, a fitting tribute to this Patron Saint and an apt role model he would emulate by his work ethic and tender care for his family. The Biblical Joshua was courageous and undaunted, prodded directly by God to go forward. Our Joshua was cut from the same cloth. *Joseph and Joshua, two sides of the ideal man.*

Son. Husband. Father. Brother. Friend. Child of God. Icon of humility. Our Joshua.

Perhaps it is true that only the good die young. Christ, after all, was only 33.

Josh faced a second open heart surgery in under six months, since the first surgery to replace his damaged valve resulted in a long, slow decline into heart failure, rather than a cure. While we all expected the second surgery to finally fix his failing heart valve, the outcome was even worse. After an all-day surgery, he was med-evacuated barely alive to USC for a possible emergency heart transplant. His heart tissue had been so badly damaged by radiation that the surgeons were unable to work with it. Consequently, he was not a candidate for a transplant, and so we accompanied him--sadly, tragically, painfully--on his three-month slide into death at age 38 in 2013. A decline without complaint or hint of bitterness to be heard from him throughout. *Gentle. Servant's spirit. Quiet strength. True faith.*

“

We lament with the Psalmist:

“My God, My God, why have
you abandoned me.”

”



Basket inside chapel of the cathedral in which pilgrims leave items carried on the Camino that they leave there as an act of completion of the journey. Original picture by: Curtis Kauffman

I was with Josh in the ICU as he passed away, a final, tragic honor. And the image of Christ on the cross, head bowed, turned slightly to one side, face set in its death mask, burned intensely within me as the familiar portrait was revealed in the stark reality of its excruciating detail as Josh lay still and silent. Yet, it was also quite mystical. *Josh as Christ. Christ as Josh. Yeshua. Mystery upon mystery. The Suffering Servant at rest.*

Before his final surgery, Josh told me that when he got better, what he really wanted was to take a road trip. He loved to travel, and the idea of an exciting trip kept his hopes alive. How could I honor this dream now that he was gone? What could I do to bring it to life in some way? His enthusiasm and anticipation were so vivid. I couldn't get it out of my mind. Such a simple request. One final tour on the open road. *Camino: Pilgrimage. The Way. Journey. Passage.*

Encounter with the Risen Christ, the surety that all will be well.

In early 2014, my wife Mary and I had the opportunity to walk the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, and the Lord gave me an idea that would bring a deep significance to our pilgrimage along this ancient route in Spain. I would get a medal of St. Joshua and take it along on the Camino, praying and meditating on the bravery of Josh and his saintly namesake while photographing the medal at key points along the way. Throughout our 12-day, 130-mile walk, Joshua accompanied us on this blessed excursion, ending in a side chapel in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela that provides a basket repository for those personal objects that accompany many of the Pilgrims (Peregrinos) on their journey. Seeking consolation and understanding, we found grace, comfort, and solace. *Josh's road trip.*

The Camino (*The Way*) is a series of ancient pilgrimage routes of varying lengths throughout France, Portugal, and Spain. All of the routes lead to the Cathedral, which has been the resting place of the relics of St. James the Great since the discovery of his bones there in the late 10th century. We started our journey in Leon with a beautiful pilgrim's Mass and blessing, then followed in the footsteps of our ancient brothers and sisters in Christ. Walking the Camino is a life-changing experience. We encountered the transcendent each day as God's beauty and presence were revealed in ways great and small. Walking in solidarity with pilgrims from centuries past, knowing that they sought the same grace, was transformational. "*Behold, I make all things new again.*"



Pilgrim shell along with the St. Joshua medal in front of one of the many small churches along the way. Original picture by: Curtis Kauffman

Completion. Catharsis. Consolation. Blessing.

Reverencing the sacred relics of Zebedee's son, the Apostle James, whose bones remain above the main altar and are the final stop on the pilgrimage.

Letting Go

The final act of our pilgrimage was placing the Joshua medal into the basket in the chapel. We were drained, exhausted, and reluctant to let go of this precious symbol. But it was finished, and it was time. Time to move forward. Time to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in His Eucharist at the Pilgrim's Mass. Time to say goodbye to our traveling companion. Time to elevate our prayers with the incense and ask God to look after another son, one in whom we were all well pleased. *The end of one journey.*

It is said that we Christians are an Easter people. The truth of this is revealed along The Way, and the comfort of the Risen Christ can be found in every encounter on the Camino. Josh was with us each step, and we felt his presence in the many grace-filled experiences that were part of our catharsis.

We poured out our grief and filled ourselves with the spiritual cleansing and gift that our Lord provided, like Manna each day. God's glory and majesty unfolded before us. We were never in doubt about the Truth of His Good News, a Truth that would sustain us as we continued to ask the hard questions and face the difficult void. *"Death, where is thy sting?" A new journey begins.*

Mary had the most comforting revelation--that God seems to take those who are complete in some way. Perfected, if not perfect, ready, unafraid, fully developed into the person that God intended them to be, those prepared to show us The Way on our ultimate road trip. *Justified. Righteous. Complete. Our Joshua.*



“

“The Lord said to Joshua.....I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and steadfast.” Joshua 1:5-6

”



Standard markers along the Camino that guide pilgrims on their journey.

Original picture by: Curtis Kauffman

Advent as a Season of Hope, Devotion, and Finding Time to Look Within: Some Inspiring Thoughts

✱
Fr. Patrick Sheridan, OSB

Many saints and spiritual writers have given us advice on how to experience the season of Advent in a way that will help us to prepare for the celebration of the Lord's birth. I have listed some that I find particularly helpful.

(Editor's note: The following two saints' reflections have been published and accessible at: <https://spicathedral.org/blog/3-saints-preach-about-advent-and-hope/>)

St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei

"On this first Sunday of Advent, when we begin to count the days separating us from the birth of the Savior ... we have considered the reality of our Christian vocation: how our Lord has entrusted us with the mission of attracting other souls to sanctity, encouraging them to get close to him, to feel united to the Church, to extend the kingdom of God to all hearts. Jesus wants to see us dedicated, faithful, and responsive. He wants us to love him. He desires that we be holy, very much his own."

"This time of Advent is a time for hope. These great horizons of our Christian vocation, this unity of life built on the presence of God our Father, can and ought to be a daily reality. Ask our Lady, along with me, to make it come true. Try to imagine how she spent these months, waiting for her Son to be born. And our Lady, Holy Mary, will make of you *alter Christus, ipse Christus: another Christ, Christ himself!*"

"Here we have the perfect example, and single boast of our human race, in the blessed Mother. Her life was certainly built on the presence of God, and we can experience that as well when we are oriented toward heavenly matters as opposed to the worldly matters of "the holiday season". This time of Advent will afford us a great opportunity to be "another Christ" to the world. But before we can be another Christ to the world, we must first let our Lord transform our very beings."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Living during the twelfth century, the great Doctor of the Church, St. Bernard, wrote a series of sermons for Advent. Often called the last "Father of the Church" in the Christian West, his words are still relevant even as we experience the Advent season in the twenty-first century. He reminds us that we are in actuality preparing for "two Advents":



<https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/august-20-saint-bernard-of-clairvaux-abbot-and-doctor-of-the-church/>, accessed 11/14/25

“It is fitting, my brethren, that we should celebrate this season of Advent with all possible devotion, rejoicing in so great a consolation, marveling at so great a condescension, inflamed with love by so great a manifestation of charity. But let us not think of that Advent only whereby the Son of man has ‘come to seek and to save that which was lost,’ but also of that other by which He will come again and will take us to Himself. Would to God you kept these two advents constantly in your thoughts, revolving them in assiduous meditation, pondering in your hearts how much we have received by the first, how much we are promised at the second!”

Deacon Greg Kandra

(Editor’s Note: Deacon Greg Kandra’s Homily was published and accessible at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2013/11/cherpumpkin-homily-for-1st-sunday-of-advent/>)

Deacon Greg Kandra is an author, speaker, blogger, and award-winning journalist who may be best known as the creator of the popular blog “The Deacon’s Bench.” He and his wife live in Forest Hills, NY, where he serves at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs parish.

“If you’ve been looking for interesting holiday recipes, you may have stumbled on a new word that entered the American lexicon around 2010: ‘Cherpumpkin.’ It’s a desert, created by Los Angeles writer Charles Phoenix – a diet-destroying, gut-busting feat of cooking that seems guaranteed to induce sugar shock.

“It’s three different pies, stacked one on top of the other, and baked into one gargantuan “monster pie” with three layers – cherry, pumpkin, and apple, hence the name “cherpumpkin.” The recipe swept the internet and has become a sensation on YouTube.

“To put it bluntly-it’s disgusting. Some things just aren’t meant to be mashed together like that.



“But I have to wonder if we haven’t done something similar with Advent and Christmas. For all intents and purposes, we have managed to create one massive season – “Chradvent” – that conflates two distinct seasons into one. And it’s starting earlier and earlier.

“On the Friday after Thanksgiving Xmas songs began to play on the radio. And we’ve all seen stores decorating for Xmas earlier and earlier each year. Even before Thanksgiving, it seems, we’ve started to celebrate “Chradvent.”

“Before everyone hops on that “Chradvent” bandwagon, I’d just like to take a moment to celebrate this season that so many have forgotten about – the season of Advent. We need to remember the reason for this season, and to hold on to Advent just a little while before surrendering to the craziness of “Chradvent.”

<https://www.ncregister.com/blog/the-joy-and-hope-of-waiting-in-advent>, accessed 11/12/25

“The readings on the First Sunday of Advent alert us to something great about to begin. The language is emphatic.” The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. And the Gospel warns us to not become drowsy so we won’t be taken by surprise. “There is a sense of anticipation – the kind we celebrate at every Eucharist, when we pray that we “wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.” Advent is that waiting, that moment of joyful hope, lived out across four weeks.

“We symbolize that, and ritualize it, with the Advent wreath. But we don’t light all four candles at once. We go one at a time, so the light gathers and grows. If you have an Advent calendar, you don’t fold open every window at once, but you go one small window at a time. Later in the season, we will sing the haunting refrain, “O come, O come, Emanuel, and ransom captive Israel...” We are captives awaiting freedom, prisoners held in dungeons of despair. But light is coming. Freedom is coming. Jesus is coming.

“This year resist the urge. Wait a while to get the tree and hang the wreath. Turn down the Christmas music.

“Find time to look within — to pray more deeply, and converse more intimately with the One who is coming. Ask Him: How can I prepare for you? What can I do to welcome you into my life?

“Cherpumple” is over the top, and unhealthy. And so, I think, is “Chradvent.” So, pull the two seasons apart, and live each of them as fully as possible.

“Let’s look forward to a Merry Christmas. But let’s also use this opportunity, as well, to enjoy a blessed and holy Advent.”



Annunciation Icon by Ohrid, 14th Century

<https://americanassociationoficonographers.com/2018/11/30/advent-3/>,
accessed 11/24/25

Around & About The Monastery

The monastic community has been dedicating the whole month of November to pray for all souls whose names we receive from various petitions from friends, oblates, benefactors, and everyone who sent their requests. We have lost several close family members and friends of the community this past year. May they all rest in peace... Monks keep performing their *Ora et Labora*: studies, manual work, artworks, and faithfulness to the *Divine Office*



Monks at a burial of an Oblate.



Abbey Cemetery: Departed Oblates.
Original picture from Kaweah Bulham Ferraro



Timothy Doyle joined us as an observer on November 9 at the community's Vespers. Please pray for Tim and others discerning their vocations to the monastic life, especially to St. Andrew's.



Br. John Baptist Santa Ana, OSB

is now in Oxford University pursuing his next academic endeavors.





Br. Columba Corrie
Left: with his recent sold artwork
Right: given a portrait of himself by an
artist from Autumn Artists Retreat



Right: Volunteers' appreciation Day:
November 13, 2025



Fr. Carlos Lopez
Usually leads the monks in preparing for
decorating for the upcoming
Thanksgiving and Advent season.



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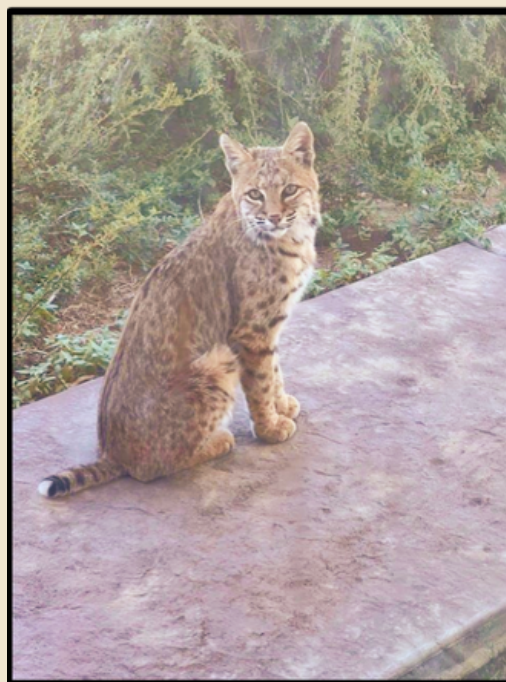
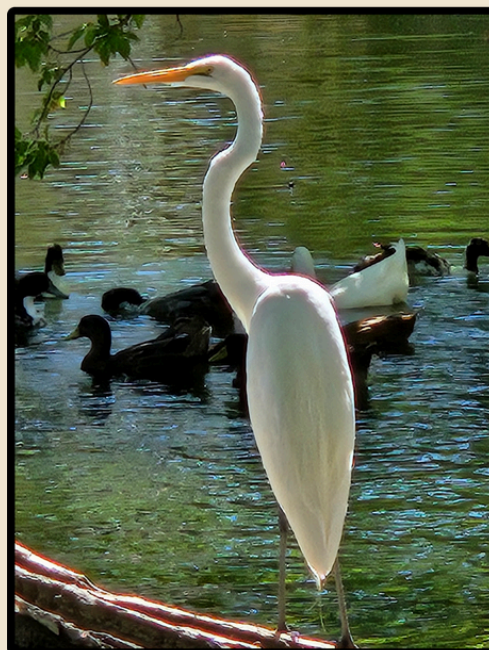
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Please call the Development Office at 661-944-8959 or email development@valyermo.com.

BEQUESTS AND WILLS

Please remember St. Andrew's Abbey if you are writing and updating your will. A bequest to the Abbey, a non-profit California Corporation located in Valyermo, CA, will help us to continue the ministry of the Benedictine monks here. It is a great investment in the future.

Thank you. ✕



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RETREATS

November

Exploring Teilhard's Human Phenomenon

Monday, November 17-Friday, November 21
 Presenter: Fr. Stephen Coffey, OSB Cam
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$532 Single; \$465 each shared

Benedictine Mystics and Contemplatives (Available via Zoom)

Friday, November 21-Sunday, November 23
 Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB, MD, DPhil
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$333 single, \$266 each shared, \$150 Zoom

Thanksgiving at Valyermo

Wednesday, November 26-Friday, November 28
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$266 single, \$233 each shared

Advent Retreat

Friday, November 28-Sunday, November 30
 Presenters: Monks of Valyermo
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$333 single, \$266 each shared



**For complete descriptions of our
 overnight and day Retreats,
 please visit our website:
Saintandrewsabbey.com
 or Call the Retreat Office:
 661-944-2178.**

December

The Way of Beauty

Monday, December 8-Friday, December 12
 Presenter: Dr. Nancy Wallis
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$532 Single; \$465 each shared

One Flesh: "I Get to Love You", A Weekend of Renewal for Christian Marriages

Friday, December 12-Sunday, December 14
 Presenters: Deacon Charlie & Jess Echeverry
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$266 each

Christmas at Valyermo

Tuesday, December 23-Friday, December 26
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$400 single, \$348 each shared

New Year Retreat: "Benedictine Chant as Contemplative Prayer"

Tuesday, December 30-Friday, January 2
 Presenter: Fr. Luke Dysinger, OSB, MD, DPhil
 Room, board, & Meals:
 \$400 single, \$348 each shared

Day Retreats

RETIRO DE ADVIENTO: "Una Morada Interior para el Señor" (Spanish Day Retreat)

Saturday, November 29, 9:00 a.m. -3:00 p.m.
 Presentadores: HNO. Ignacio, OSB y Antonio Diaz
 Donación: \$55 por persona, incluye desayuno ligero y el almuerzo.

The Soul After Death

Saturday, December 13 9:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m.
 Presenter: Fr. Angelus Echeverry, OSB
 Donation: \$ 55 per person, including light breakfast and lunch.

Day of Rest and Renewal at the Abbey

Saturday, November 22 9:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m.
 Presenter: John D'Isacco, Obl., OSB
 Donation: \$ 55 per person, including light breakfast and lunch.

