

Abbey Letter

Easter 2008

no. 233



One of the curious things about the Gospel accounts of the risen Jesus is that when people who knew him before his crucifixion see him after his Resurrection, they do not recognize him. They don't seem to be afraid; they don't react as so many people in Jewish Scriptures do when they encounter an angel of the Lord, expecting to drop dead. They recognize Jesus as a human being, they just don't recognize him as Jesus.

We could come up with all kinds of theories as to why Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize Jesus as he stands before her in the garden as told in John's Gospel. She is obviously deeply upset, her eyes full of tears, and her imagination full of fears of death and grave-robbers. She is so single-minded in her search for the dead body of her Lord, that even a meeting with a pair of angels becomes uninteresting unless they can give her the one piece of information she wants.

But none of these seem convincing explanations of why she doesn't recognize Jesus. This is a woman whose whole mind is full of the man who is standing right in front of her, and yet she does not know him. The simple explanation must be the true one—that real life is something we don't understand very well without divine aid. In this case, Jesus gives Mary Magdalene the ability to see by using a word. He says her name, and allows her to see who he is, and to connect the old life she used to know with the new life that now stands before her.

Let me suggest something that will sound odd—life is not “natural”. Life is God's free gift. God loves us into existence. We would not continue to exist without the ongoing and continuous love that God wants to share with us.

We have always before us the reminder of the risen Lord. We need this to help us to recognize God's life when it appears in our own lives. The Lord's voice calls us by name, so that, like the Magdalene, we suddenly look up and recognize the Lord of life standing in front of us.

But our lives don't stop. Like Mary Magdalene, we have to return to our former life, but somehow seeing that while it is still the same, it is also



profoundly changed by the new resurrected life of our Lord that he wants to share with us.

We are told not to cling to Jesus, as much as we might want to do precisely that. Instead, we are told to go to others to tell them what we have experienced, continuing to seek him in the unexpected places or among the unexpected people in a mystery, as Colossians puts it, “...hidden with Christ in God,” to tell everyone about the transforming love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

–Prior Aelred’s Easter Day Homily 2007

NOTES

On January 23rd, the Shaman Drum bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan hosted a book party for Abbot Andrew's **Tools for Peace**. The abbot autographed copies and gave a presentation about the book. Located a couple of blocks from the campus of the University of Michigan, this bookstore serves the university and emphasizes religious studies.

On February 22nd, Abbot Andrew visited St. Gregory Episcopal School in Chicago (a choir school for inner city boys), meeting with the students in grades five through eight and speaking to them about the monastery. While in the Chicago area, he led a workshop at St. Paul's Episcopal Church February 23rd in Riverside, Illinois on the applications of Benedictine spirituality for those who do not live a monastic life. The parish of St. Paul's has a community in formation, led by the

rector, Thomas Frazier, dedicated to living by principles inspired by the Rule of St. Benedict. Abbot Andrew also preached at the Sunday Eucharist at St. Paul's the next day. The abbot then traveled to Aliquippa, Pennsylvania to be with the Community of Celebration from February 25th - 28th, acting as the community's spiritual director.

Prior Aelred plans to attend the annual Benedictine Formation Workshop, held this year from March 25th - 29th at Christ the King Priory in Schuyler, Nebraska. The topic is Early Monastic Sources and the scheduled speaker is Sr. Mary Forman O.S.B., Ph.D. from the Monastery of Saint Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho. Sr. Mary is assistant professor of theology at the School of Theology Seminary and the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.





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Guest reservations and information -

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Mailing list -

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Abbot Andrew -

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Information about becoming a monk or participating in the July Program -

novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Books and calendars may be ordered, prayers requested, and donations made at our website -

www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org





Books and articles read in the monastic refectory during lunch and supper 2007

What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat

by Louise Richardson

Holy Fire: The Battle For Christ's Tomb

by Victoria Clark

The Root of Wild Madder: Chasing the History, Mystery, and Lore of the Persian Carpet

by Brian Murphy

Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century

by Mark Sedgwick

Crash Course: The World's Largest Particle Accelerator (The New Yorker: May 14, 2007)

by Elizabeth Kolbert

Stabbed in the Back: The Past and Future of a Right Wing Myth (Harper's Magazine: June 2006)

by Kevin Baker

Anglican Communion in Crisis: How Episcopal Dissidents and Their African Allies Are Reshaping Anglicanism

by Miranda K. Hassett

The Courtier and the Heretic: Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World

by Matthew Stewart

Rabble-Rouser For Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu

by John Allen

The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court

by Jeffrey Toobin

The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible

by A. J. Jacobs

St. Gregory's Abbey July Vocation Program

Find out what it's like to be
a Benedictine monk.

Worship & Pray Work & Learn

with the monks at St. Gregory's Abbey - a monastery within the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan - if you are male, 18 to 45, and can stay for at least two weeks in July. The only charge is \$25 for registration.

For more information and an application form, write:

July Program Director

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