

Abbey Letter
no. 264
Christmas
2015



on the cover: Scholastica and Benedict visit the nativity scene in the monastery church



Abbot Andrew



Prior Aelred



Fr. Jude

The monks of St. Gregory's Abbey thank you for your prayers and gifts, and we pray that you and the entire world may have a joyful Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous 2016.

Fr. William



Br. Martin



Br. Abraham



Burton

What Can I Give Him?

One of the things that can make Christmas a lot of extra work is the presents. We have to figure out who is on our list to receive gifts this year, what they really want, what is suitable for our relationship with each person, and then, what we can actually manage to give. After a while this becomes such a project, it's easy to forget the connection between the fancy wrapped boxes or the Internet orders, and Baby Jesus.

So we probably should sit down in front of the manger scene, and remind ourselves of that connection. Look at the figures of the Wise Men, each bringing his present for the Christ child. Then say to your Lord, "This is to celebrate your birth as one of us, your coming to save us. Whether it's fun, or tedious, or daunting, it's to celebrate you." Say it to him, but hear it as a reminder to yourself.

And remember that along with presents to our kith and kin, we ought to offer our gifts to the child himself. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells us that what we give to those in need, we give to him. So those sometimes annoying letters we receive from various charities at this time of year are really opportunities to give our present to the Baby Jesus the way the Magi did.

One reason we hear from so many needy folks is that there are so many folks in need. There are national and international organizations trying to aid the needy, and local ones as well. There are probably services near you for feeding the hungry, sheltering abused women and children, or otherwise aiding neighbors in need, folks in your own town or county. These organizations are there to use our gifts for the needy, just as Mary and Joseph used the wise men's gifts to serve their son. Maybe you're tapped out for the season, and don't have money or volunteer time to spare. That can happen. But still it's good to make a token gift now, in anticipation of a more generous one when you're able later on. If you've already given your Christmas contributions, say to the Bambino, "I hope you like the present I sent you." If you haven't gotten to it yet, say, "Keep your eyes open, I've got something coming for you."

Before you get up and walk away from the crèche, take a few minutes to recall the first time you gave a Christmas present all on your own, without adult assistance. Maybe it was something you bought with your own money, maybe something you made. I remember mine: they were ballpoint pens from a coin-operated dispenser in my elementary school. I bought them for my parents. It was an exciting, grown-up thing to do, a very special moment for me. That was a little boy's excitement, but even in our adulthood, giving can be fun, an adventure. It's a blessing for us to remember that, and it's important to pass that lesson to the next generation.

St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that "the Lord loves a cheerful giver." Too often that sounds like a warning not to be surly, resentful givers. Instead we can hear it as an invitation to experience giving as a delight, as part of what makes a holiday a holiday, and what makes us Christians Christian, us humans human.

— Fr. William

NOTES

Sr. Veronica Mary of the Anamchara Fellowship was with us August 1st – 6th.

Swami Sankarananda Saraswati was with us August 17th – 19th. St. Gregory's was one of the stops in Michigan on his Pilgrimage for Peace.

Abbot Andrew travelled to St. Thomas Church in Berea, Ohio October 17th to lead a quiet day co-sponsored by the ECW and Daughters of the King of the Diocese of Ohio. The next day he travelled to St. Paul's Church in Cleveland Heights to participate in a Forum on Religious Life in the Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Visitor of St. Gregory's, the Rt. Rev. Arthur Williams, moderated the forum. Also participating and representing women's communities was Sr. Nadine CT of the Community of the Transfiguration in Glendale, Ohio.

Fr. William continues his ministry to the Formation Group of the Diocese of Northern Indiana. This group of people preparing locally for ordination meets every few months for mutual exchange, discussion, and presentations concerning practical issues pertaining to ordained ministry. Fr. William is in charge of the spiritual life part of the program.

Sr. Veronica Mary



Fr. William and Swami Sankarananda



St. Gregory's Abbey July Vocation Program

Spend two weeks (or more) in July with the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery of the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.

Worship & Pray Work & Learn

For males 18 to 50 who can stay for at least two weeks. The only cost is \$25 for registration.

For more information, use the envelope bound in this issue of the Abbey Letter or write:

*July Program Director
St. Gregory's Abbey
56500 Abbey Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093*

*novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org
Applications will be accepted after January 1, 2016.*

saintgregorysthreerivers.org

On normal weekdays, community members and guests eating lunch and supper in the monastery refectory do not converse with each other. Instead of mealtime conversation, a book is read aloud by a monk assigned that task for the week. On Sundays at lunch, the reader is given a rest from that task and instead of reading, recorded music is played in the refectory (Sunday suppers and lunch and supper on major holidays are “talking meals” – reading and music are both dispensed with and monks and guests converse with each other.) Here is a list of some of the things we have heard the last few years during Sunday lunch:

W. A. Mozart: Works for Wind Ensemble (performed by various musicians)

Hampton String Quartet (arr.): Rock and Roll Hits (Hendrix, Clapton, Led Zeppelin, etc.)

Terry Riley: In C (Ensemble Percussion Ricerca)

Antonio Vivaldi: The Four Seasons (performances on string orchestra, koto, piano, and guitar)

Boccherini: Cello Sonatas

Simeon Ten Holt: Palimpsest 1 – 4, Canto Ostinato

John Adams: Common Tones

J. S. Bach: Lute Suites

Dave Brubeck Quartet: Time Out

Robert Fripp: orchestrated arrangements of Pie Jesu, Midnight Blue, and Black Light

Claude Debussy: Images Series 1 & 2

Gavin Bryars: The Archangel Trip

Gordon Withers (arr.): Dark Side of the Moon (Pink Floyd) for cello



Daily Schedule at St. Gregory's Abbey

Weekdays

4:00 a.m. MATINS
6:00 a.m. LAUDS
8:15 a.m. TERCE
EUCHARIST
11:30 a.m. SEXT
2:00 p.m. NONE
5:00 p.m. VESPERS
followed by meditation
7:45 p.m. COMPLINE
(on Tuesdays and Thursdays,
COMPLINE is prayed privately)

Sundays and Major Holidays

5:30 a.m. MATINS & LAUDS
8:30 a.m. TERCE
EUCHARIST
noon SEXT & NONE
5:00 p.m. VESPERS
followed by meditation
7:45 p.m. COMPLINE



CONTACTING THE ABBEY

Mailing address –

St. Gregory's Abbey
56500 Abbey Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093

Telephone –

269-244-5893

9:30am - 11:15am or 2:30pm - 4:15pm Eastern Time Monday through Saturday
(please do not telephone at other times or on Sundays or holidays)

E-mail –

Guest reservations and information –
guestmaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Mailing list –

office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Abbot Andrew –

abbot@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

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

St. Gregory's Abbey 2016 Calendar

thirteen months, 15 photos, with the Abbey's liturgical calendar

Allow 8 weeks for delivery.

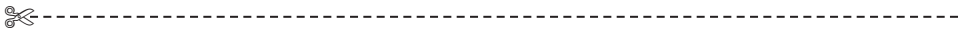
Or download a PDF of the calendar from our website — \$2.00 per download! On the "Publications" tab, go to "Order Publications (Print)." Download the PDF and then click the PayPal button to make your payment.



January							1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
31	2016							

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Please send me ___ copy or copies of the

2016 Calendar

Enclosed is \$10.00 for each calendar

Name _____

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Any payment in excess of the calendar price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.
St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595



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