

# Abbey Letter

no. 270



Summer 2017

St. Benedict says: **Listen...**  
**incline the ear of your heart**

So be a summertime monk for two weeks or more at St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.

**Worship & Pray, Work & Learn  
with the monks**



...if you are male, age 18 to 50, and if you can spend at least two weeks at the abbey during July. The only charge is \$25 for registration.

*For more information and an application form, write:*

Summer Program Director  
St. Gregory's Abbey  
56500 Abbey Road  
Three Rivers, Michigan 49093-9595  
novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

# NOTES

*Bishop Magness*

The Rt. Rev. James Magness, Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries, was with us January 24th – 27th.

Br. Cullin Schooley OSB of the Companions of St. Luke was with us March 13th – 17th.

Abbot Andrew presented a quiet day on the topics of forgiveness and reconciliation at St. Luke's Church in Kalamazoo April 1st. The Rev. Paul Neuchterlein, a local Lutheran pastor, was co-presenter.



*Br. Cullin Schooley OSB*

## Daily Schedule at St. Gregory's Abbey

### Weekdays

4:00 a.m. MATINS  
6:00 a.m. LAUDS  
8:15 a.m. TERCE  
EUCCHARIST  
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  
EUCCHARIST  
noon SEXT & NONE  
5:00 p.m. VESPERS  
followed by meditation  
7:45 p.m. COMPLINE

## Summer Lace

When I came to St. Gregory's from the North Carolina Piedmont in 1973, I found some wildflowers that were the same as the ones I'd known at home, and some that were different and new to me. There were also a few in-between surprises. The honeysuckles I saw here were shrubs, not the vines I'd grown up with. And there were daylilies growing wild by the roadside. They were a garden flower I'd known from my childhood, but I had never seen them popping up on their own as "escapes" before I arrived at the Abbey.

One familiar and unmistakable bloom was Queen Anne's lace. It grew in the same sorts of places it would choose in the south, and was a bit of the landscape that made instant sense to me. I arrived in August, and there it was, scattered through fields and in what the wildflower handbooks call "disturbed land."

All of those were plants I saw on the monastery's extensive grounds, and on the bit of county road we would walk up and down, alone or chatting with each other. After a year or so, I found myself assigned to some driving jobs, and so got to see a bit more of the countryside. One discovery this involved was a strange plant on the roadsides. Its flowers and leaves were very like Queen Anne's lace, but it turned up much earlier in the year. There were physical differences, too. It was much taller than Queen Anne's lace, sometimes up to about eight feet tall. As that would suggest, the stems were much thicker as well. For years I thought of it as "the wildflower that isn't Queen Anne's lace." Finally, I don't recall how, I discovered that the mystery plant was poison hemlock.

That's what they used to kill Socrates. And, although we don't have much at all on the Abbey grounds, it's quite common in this area. There may be enough hemlock in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana to wipe out the world's entire supply of philosophers. It grows in patches, which may become quite imposing through the years. When I go to Kalamazoo, I can pass a stand of hemlock beside the road that is about a quarter mile long and several yards deep. It's quite pretty when it's in bloom, a great natural hedge full of lacy white flowers and lacy green leaves.

Once I'd learned the true identity of "the wildflower that isn't Queen Anne's Lace," nature threw me yet another curve. There was another plant about the same height as hemlock, with the same sort of blossoms, and also growing in large patches beside the roads. There were differences, though. Its lacy white flowers started showing up a bit after the hemlock blooms. The leaves were different from the other two plants, and it seemed to have woody stems.

To reassure the reader: I really do look at the road and the vehicles thereon when I drive. But around here the landscape tends to come close to the pavement, and drivers have to be aware of the roadsides as well, to make sure there are no children or deer emerging from the woods. Or, near that big stand of hemlock, wild turkeys. I've seen a large flock of turkeys stop rush hour

commuters for almost ten minutes as they moseyed across that bit of pavement. But I digress.

Of course I thought of the new mystery plant as “the wildflower that isn’t poison hemlock.” As things turned out, those were elderberry plants. I almost never see the actual berries, though. The birds are most fond of them and tend to gobble them up promptly. It’s as the elderberry flowers disappear and become the berries for the birds, that my old friend, Queen Anne’s lace finally starts turning up.

St. Benedict tells us in Chapter Four of the Rule that we should keep death before our eyes every day. For some people the time of year that most promotes that is autumn, with its dying and falling leaves. Others find the dormant winter, with stark trees against a gray sky a more powerful reminder of our own mortality. For me though, the summer, with its succession of seasonal plants, each in bloom for a few days to a few weeks, is the *memento mori*.

The remembrance of death isn’t just recalling that one day will be our last. It’s understanding that as each day of our life passes by, it’s a day gone forever, one that we can have used well or badly, to grow closer to the Lord, or farther away. We use our daily self-examination to review the day past, to form our resolutions and re-dedication for the coming day, should the Lord grant us one. Doing this, we trust in, and cooperate with, the grace, mercy and loving-kindness of our God.

Quoting Isaiah, chapter 40, and recalling Psalm 103, the First Epistle of St. Peter tells us, “‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ That word is the good news that was announced to you.” Let us rejoice and stand firm in that good news all the days of our life, so that when our final day does come, we may inherit a glory that will never fade away.

— Fr. William





## CONTACTING THE ABBEY

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**Telephone –**

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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)

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**Guest reservations and information –**  
[guestmaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:guestmaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

**Mailing list –**

[office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

**Abbot Andrew –**

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**Information about becoming a monk or participating in the July Program –**  
[novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

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

[www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

## Books from St. Gregory's Abbey

### **Singing God's Praises (1998)**

*history of the community, select Abbey Letter articles, photographs*

\$20.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Come Let Us Adore (2011)**

*select Abbey Letter Articles from 1999 to 2011 (companion book to Singing God's Praises)*

\$12.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Tools For Peace (2007)**

*Abbot Andrew's reflections on St. Benedict and René Girard*

\$24.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Born in the Darkest Time of Year (2004)**

*15 Christmas stories by Abbot Andrew*

\$12.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Creatures We Dream of Knowing (2011)**

*fantasy stories by Abbot Andrew*

\$12.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **From Beyond to Here (2012)**

*more stories by Abbot Andrew*

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### **The Forest of Windellynn (2015)**

*fantasy novel by Abbot Andrew*

\$10.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Moving and Resting in God's Desire: A Spirituality of Peace (2016)**

*Abbot Andrew's thoughts on cultivating peace using Christian practices and the ideas of René Girard*

\$20.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Seven Times A Day I Praise You**

*Br. Martin's review of personal daily prayer books*

\$3.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **St. Gregory's Abbey and Benedictine Monasticism**

*A survey of Benedictine monasticism and how it is lived at St. Gregory's*

\$3.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

All of the above except for **Singing God's Praises**, **Born in the Darkest Time of Year**, **Seven Times A Day I Praise You**, and **St. Gregory's Abbey and Benedictine Monasticism** are available in ebook formats. To download, go to our website:

**[saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)** and look for publications (digital).

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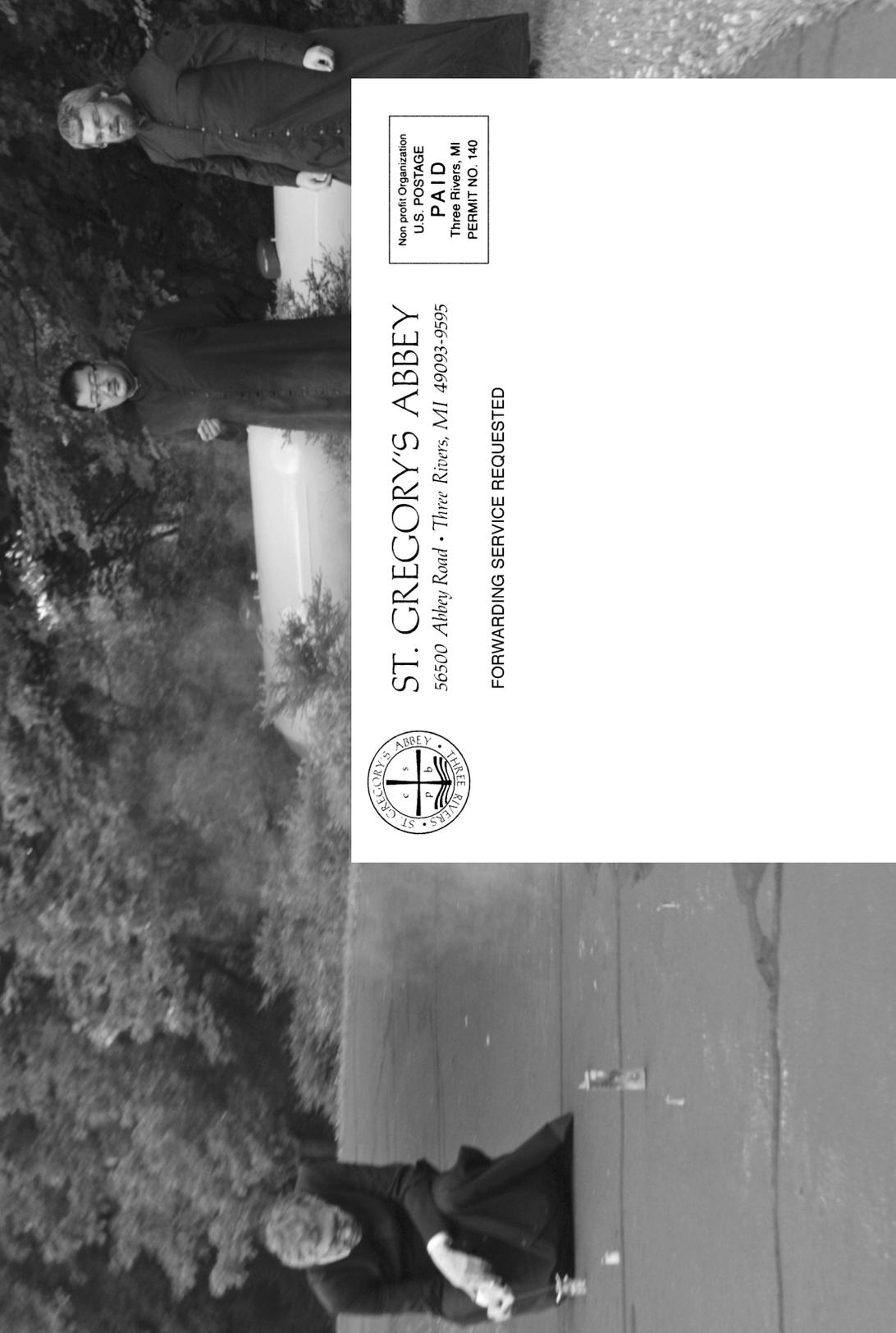
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Any payment in excess of the book price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.  
St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595



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