

Abbey Letter
no. 271
Fall
2017



on the cover: vocationers weeding beans and tomatoes

Scenes from this Year's July Vocation Program

Participants in our annual Vocation Program commit to staying at least two weeks at St. Gregory's. While here, they are given a glimpse of monastic life as they pray, work, study, and have social contact with the monks.



coffee and cookies after daily Eucharist



working in the refectory



class time



daily cleaning chores



St. Benedict's Day supper on the deck



helping in the kitchen

proofreading



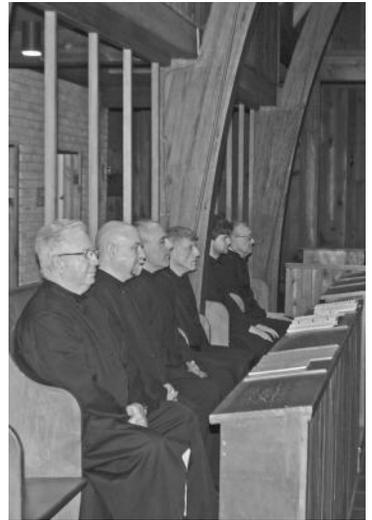
lunch in the refectory



playing cards during community recreation time



in choir



weeding cucumbers



break between afternoon work period and Vespers



NOTES

Abbot Andrew attended the annual Theology And Peace Conference in Chicago May 22nd – 25th. The topic of the conference was “Embracing We-Centricity: Practices That Nurture the Common Good.”

Fr. William attended the “Contemplative Awareness in Love and Life” meeting at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan May 9th. Fr. William Menninger spoke on the exploration of models of contemplation, especially as seen in **The Cloud Of Unknowing**. On May 20th he attended the

ordination of Sr. Diane Stier at Emmaus Monastery in Vestaburg, Michigan. Emmaus Monastery is a group of former Roman Catholic nuns who were received into the Episcopal Church in April of 2013.

St. Gregory’s Abbey was once again home to a family of sandhill cranes this summer. For the past several years, a family of mother, father, and child have stayed on the monastery grounds throughout the warm months. We do not know if any of the cranes living here have been the same from year to year.



Saint Gregory’s Abbey now has an e-mail list for those wishing to receive the ABBEY LETTER electronically (PDF). To enroll in the e-mail list, send your full name and e-mail address to

abbeyletter@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Enrolling in our e-mail list does not remove you from our hard copy mailing list. If you do want to stop receiving the hard copy once you are on the e-mail list, simply send an e-mail to

office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

telling us you are now on the e-mail list and want to be removed from the hard copy list. (If you are in the confraternity, please mention that so that we make sure you receive the confraternity letter via e-mail).

On Welcoming a Thief in the Night

A thief is not usually thought of as a good type of person and a thief in the night is worse. And yet Jesus characterizes himself as a thief when he says: “if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.” (Mt. 24: 43) The expression that God will come like “a thief in the night” also comes up in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10. Since Jesus commends the dishonest steward who defrauds the master who is firing him and the unjust judge who gives the widow a fair hearing just to stop her from pestering him, it seems that Jesus has a soft spot in his heart for rogues. Maybe he was a bit of a trickster rogue himself.

But surely it isn't good to be a thief is it? A thief is someone who takes what belongs to somebody else for personal gain at the expense of the thief's victim. That is not good. However, before we get too self-righteous about other people who are thieves, we should pause to take note that one can steal the reputations of other people through misrepresentation and downright lying. Worse, we can steal the dignity of other people by treating them with disrespect. With these considerations, we begin to see that thieves aren't just other people.

The context of this verse in Matthew strengthens this uncomfortable realization. Jesus refers to the Flood of Noah's time, noting that people were going about their business as if nothing was wrong. But Genesis says that the whole society had become a flood of violence that was sweeping everybody away. The implication is that the society of Jesus' time was likewise being swept away in a flood of violence while most people thought things were just going along normally. And what about our own time? We go about our business while reputations and human dignity are being stolen right and left by both right and left. All of us have become thieves and we will never get out of this social flood until we realize this truth.

So, is Jesus a good thief while the rest of us are bad thieves? Let's take a look at how Jesus acts like a thief in the night. Does Jesus steal our things for personal gain? Jesus does steal everything we have but he does not steal our things for his personal gain but for *our* personal gain. More important, Jesus steals everything in us and about us that destroys our

relationships with other people and God. That is, Jesus steals our thieving ways that we are so attached to. How else can we feel good about ourselves if we can't steal the reputations and dignity of other people? But while a human thief leaves nothing for the thief's victim, Jesus gives us the full richness of God, the richness bestowed on humankind at the dawn of creation.

How can we be ready for a thief like this? St. Paul tells us to "live honorably as in the day" by giving up "quarreling and jealousy." Then, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 13: 13-14) Then, as Isaiah teaches us: beat our "swords into plowshares" and our "spears into pruning hooks." (Is. 2: 4) Then we won't have so much thievery and violence for Jesus to take away from us when he sneaks into our lives.

Luke tells us of a thief on another cross who became good because he repented and, in so repenting, realized that Jesus had been unjustly swept away by society's violence. Will we choose to repent and become good thieves?

— Abbot Andrew



Available October 15

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

Order now to avoid the Christmas rush!
Allow 8 weeks for delivery.

Or download a PDF of the calendar from our website —
\$2.00 per download!
saintgregorysthreerivers.org



Please send me ____ copy or copies of the

2018 Calendar

Enclosed is \$10.00 for each calendar

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Non profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Three Rivers, MI
PERMIT NO. 140

ST. GREGORY'S ABBEY
56500 *Abbey Road • Three Rivers, MI* 49093-9595

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

