

Abbey  
Letter  
no. 272

Christmas  
2017

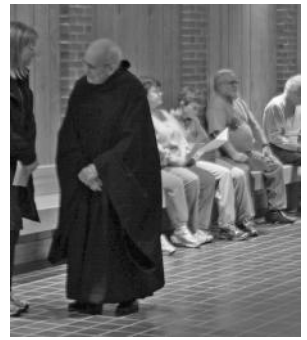
*on the cover: magi making their way to the Nativity scene in the monastery church – they arrive January 6th*



*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 2018.*

*Fr. William*



*Br. Martin*



*Br. Abraham*



*Br. Armand*

## What the Incarnation Means

One of our Advent Compline readings from the Church Fathers last year bothered me. I won't say who it was from because it is someone I like and I am sure I misheard what he intended, but it certainly sounded like a very anthropomorphic Second Person of the Holy Trinity was sitting around in eternity until the right time and then created a fetus in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary so he could pretend to be born and pretend to be a baby and pretend to grow up and then pretend not to be omniscient when he preached and then pretended to die so he could pretend to come back to life. The sad thing is that this is pretty much what a lot of Christians seem to believe.

What I understand the Incarnation to mean is that there is no pretense in God. God really became a human being. He didn't pretend anything about being human. He needed his mother to feed him and change his swaddling clothes and he really went through the adolescent angst of the human condition (an experience which makes me hope that those who believe in reincarnation are mistaken).

I have studied the arguments from the various contenders of the early Church Councils that argued about these things and the various definitions and particular terminologies that were eventually determined to be sound and orthodox. In spite of all that, I don't have a clue how it is possible for God to become a human being. It is beyond my ability to comprehend.

That doesn't mean it isn't true. I was very good at Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics. I could follow the logic and the mathematics because I could comprehend them. I don't understand subatomic physics and the significance of the hunt for the Higgs boson. I can't comprehend things that function so far outside my own experience. That doesn't mean that they are not true. It just means that I can't comprehend them.

The traditional teaching of the Church about the Incarnation is something that I don't understand, but I believe passionately. We do not worship a God who is merely all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving. Our God is all those things and more: The Almighty has experienced human joy, human pain, human suffering and human victory. Incomprehensible as it seems, God not only possesses divinity; God possesses humanity.

— Prior Aelred

## NOTES

Members of the Order of Jesus Christ Reconciler in Chicago and Detroit were with us September 1st – 3rd.

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.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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).



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## 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](mailto:novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)  
Applications will be accepted after January 1, 2018.  
[saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

## 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



## 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

## 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.

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### From Beyond to Here (2012)

*more stories by Abbot Andrew*

\$15.00 Please send \_\_\_\_ copies.

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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).

**All books may be purchased as hard copies from our website or by using this order form.**

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in full payment. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

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.  
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Allow 8 weeks for delivery.

Or download a PDF of the calendar from our website – \$2.00 per download!  
[saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)



## Music compositions from St. Gregory's Abbey

**Missa Brevis** *choral symphony by Br. Abraham – Latin text from the ordinary of the mass*

**Rumi** *choral symphony by Br. Abraham – English translation of the poems of Rumi*

**A Symphony of Psalms** *choral symphony by Br. Abraham – Latin text of four psalms*

**The Kiss** *baritone voice and string quartet by Br. Abraham – texts from office readings for Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary*

**Tuesday Afternoon** *chorus and wind octet by Br. Abraham – psalms from Tuesday vespers*

**Symphony in c minor** *orchestral symphony by Br. Abraham in romantic minimalist style*

**Symphony in g minor** *orchestral symphony by Br. Abraham in expansive classical style*

**Visible Dream** *piano and baritone voice by Br. Abraham – poems of Cyrus Cassells*

**Week In Review** *piano and baritone voice by Br. Abraham – poems of Robert Fruehwirth*

**The Hours** *tenor, baritone, and bass voices by Br. Abraham – texts from psalms for lauds & vespers*

**Life of Benedict** *orchestral setting of Gregory the Great's Life of Benedict by John Webber*  
*scores and synthesized performances available at [webbermusic.com](http://webbermusic.com)*

For everything but *Life of Benedict*, search for “Newsom, A”; for *Life of Benedict*, search for “Webber, J”. Donations of \$1.00 per look and listen are requested and can be made at the website or sent to St. Gregory's Abbey designated for “music compositions.” Hard copies of scores and orchestral parts are for sale at list price from [webbermusic.com](http://webbermusic.com)

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