

Abbey Letter
no. 273
Easter 2018

On Ash Wednesday,

ashes are imposed on our foreheads as a sign of our mortality. Rivalry and vengefulness are traits of our mortal frailty. The shape of the cross in which the ashes are imposed reminds us that Jesus took on that very same mortality but without the rivalry and vengefulness. In his Resurrection from the dead, Jesus prepares for us the immortal body that he received from his heavenly Abba, a body filled with his forgiving love.

– Abbot Andrew



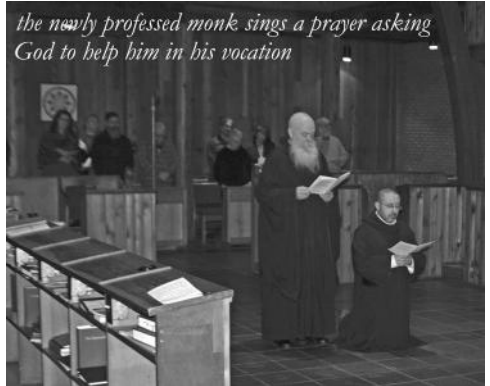
front cover: Br. Armand signs the vows

Br. Armand Koss made his first profession of monastic vows on the Feast of the Epiphany, Saturday, January 6, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Br. Armand grew up in the Chicago area, and graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in liberal arts and sciences, and a master of arts degree in Spanish linguistics. Before joining the community at St. Gregory's Abbey, Br. Armand lived in Columbus, Ohio, where he taught at The Ohio State University, and also worked as a tax advisor at a small accounting firm.

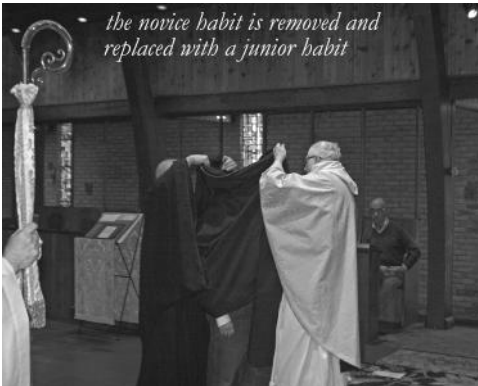
after Br. Armand signs the vows, the abbot accepts the document and signs it



the newly professed monk sings a prayer asking God to help him in his vocation



the novice habit is removed and replaced with a junior habit



Br. Armand with family and friends after the ceremony



representatives from other Michigan monasteries at the profession: Epiphany Community in Vestaburg and St. Augustine's House in Oxford



lunch in the refectory after the profession



back cover: Br. Armand reads aloud the vows before signing them

NOTES

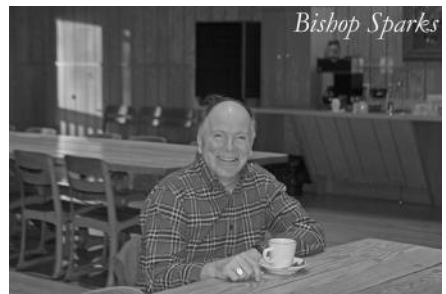
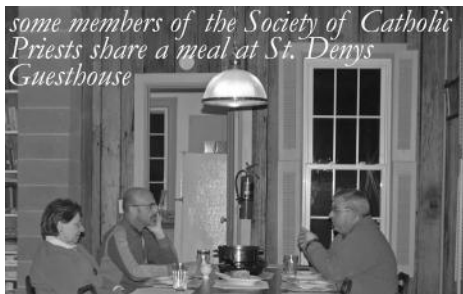
The Great Lakes Chapter of the Society of Catholic Priests was with us December 11th – 12th.

Bishop Douglas Sparks of the Diocese of Northern Indiana was with us December 19th – 21st.

Our website (saintgregorysthreerivers.org) has recently migrated to a new server. If any links are wrong or pages are missing, please let Br. Abraham know at office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

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).



Books read in the refectory during lunch and supper 2017

Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God

by Kelly Brown Douglas

“Tell Me Where It Hurts” (article from New Yorker Magazine January 23, 2017)

by Atul Gawande

Mysteries of the Mall: And Other Essays

by Witold Rybczynski

The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War

by Stephen Kinzer

Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations

by Thomas L. Friedman

The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America

by Frances FitzGerald

Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat

by Bee Wilson

Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America

by John F. Kasson

“Our Town” (article from New Yorker Magazine November 13, 2017)

by Larissa MacFarquhar

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City

by Matthew Desmond

Exploding the Phone: The Untold Story of the Teenagers and Outlaws Who Hacked Ma Bell

by Phil Lapsley

We've Only Just Begun

Most Christians want to do the right thing, both as individuals and as groups, and most Christians would define “doing the right thing” as doing what Jesus would want them to do. Individual Christians can learn what Jesus would want them to do by reading scripture, praying, and following the examples of other people who seem to be doing what Jesus wants them to do. Even so, it is often difficult to discern the right action because times and cultures change and the template for doing the right thing and following Jesus does not always work in every situation. Jesus does not change, but we do and our world does, and so it is hard to always make sure we are putting the precepts of Our Lord into action as we should.

Christian groups have the same problem that individuals do in trying to figure out how to follow Jesus in a world that is not exactly the same as it was when He and His first followers were here. Even the generation after Jesus had a lot of questions about how to work and live together as congregations and as a worldwide organization. Reading the Book of Acts and the letters of Paul shows how much strife and scandal was already plaguing the church, and in studying subsequent church history, we learn that strife and scandal were always present. However, we also learn how much good and holiness were always present in individuals as well as in the church as an organization throughout history.

Many people tend to think of church history as being either blank or irredeemably corrupted between the New Testament and: Martin Luther or John Calvin or The Council of Trent or John Wesley or the Azusa Street Revivals (etc, depending upon one's denominational affiliation or tradition). Doing so deprives us of many good examples of Christian life as individuals and as a Church. Of course, it also deprives us of

many bad examples, but we need both the good as cases to emulate and the bad as warnings to avoid. The long centuries of church history are filled with real people trying to be real Christians, and all denominations and traditions would profit by learning about and from them.

One often hears Christians saying that we should base the church solely on the example of the “early” or “First Century” or “New Testament” Church. In a way that is true — we should follow their example, but we also need to remember that they are not the only example to follow. The past has a vote, but it does not have a veto. The Holy Spirit that was active in their lives is the same Holy Spirit that has been active in the Church since then, and is the same Holy Spirit that has been encouraging good works and correcting bad ones since the day of Pentecost. The church is always learning; it is always in need of reformation, and yet it is always holy, because Jesus is its head. If the church is the Body of Christ, and if Christ is eternal, then the church is eternal and therefore we are still the early church. We are in as much need of growth as the New Testament Church, and our growth will never end.

Whatever our denomination or tradition, learning from the lives of Christians from the “forgotten” eras of the Church (those between the New Testament and the beginnings of our distinctive traditions) can help us in our own struggle to live as good Christians in good denominations and congregations. We are all growing together. All of our failures and successes affect every member of the Church — past, present, and future, throughout time and space. We just need to listen to the Holy Spirit and try to do what Jesus wants us to do now.

— Br. Abraham

Listen with the ear of your heart.



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

at St. Gregory's Abbey,
a Benedictine monastery
of the Episcopal Church
at Three Rivers, Michigan.

...if you are male, 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:

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