

Abbey Letter no. 274

Summer 2018



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:

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

NOTES

A pair of cranes appeared on the monastery grounds in March (much earlier than usual). We do not know if they are part of the family that stayed here much longer than usual last year.

The Rt. Rev. Francis Gray, retired bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana, was with us April 3rd – 6th. He is the grandson of the Rt. Rev. Campbell Gray, who was the bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana when our founders moved from Nashdom Abbey in the United Kingdom to Valparaiso, Indiana in 1939 upon his invitation. Campbell Gray also served as episcopal visitor to the community in its early years.

Abbot Andrew preached at the ordination of Charles Carter to the priesthood at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Tomah, Wisconsin February 24th.

We were recently made aware that voicemail had been added to our telephone service without our knowledge. We have disabled the voicemail, and apologize for not answering any messages. We do not have an answering machine. If you need to telephone the monastery, please do so between 9:30am – 11:00am and 2:30pm – 4:15pm Eastern Time. Please do not call at other times or on Sundays or holidays.

the cranes in a March snowfall



Bishop Gray



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).

Vocational Discernment in the Fourth Century

The service of Compline is the last service of the day. At St. Gregory's Abbey, it begins at 7:45 PM, and lasts about 20 minutes. It always begins with a reading.

The reading is not from the Bible, but from other texts. At various times throughout the year, we read from the *Conferences* and *Institutes* of John Cassian. Cassian lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, and his works are important to both the eastern and western monastic traditions. In the *Rule of St. Benedict*, these texts are specifically recommended for reading at Compline. In the *Conferences*, Cassian reports on the contact and dialogue that he had with many other monks.

Conference III contains the insights of Abbot Paphnutius, another fourth-century monk. Paphnutius enumerates three different types of vocations: the call that comes directly from God, the call that comes through human agency, and the call that comes through necessity. Paphnutius is talking about a call to monastic life, but his observations are useful for examining other vocations as well.

As an example of the first type of vocation, Paphnutius cites God's call to Abraham, in which Abraham clearly hears God's order to leave his native land and the house of his father (Genesis 12:1). Paphnutius tells us that St. Anthony was called in the same way. He entered a church, and he heard God speaking directly to him.

In the second type of vocation, the call comes not directly from God, but rather through another person. Here Paphnutius cites the example of the Israelites being moved to return to God by Moses. He also says that it was in this way that he, Paphnutius, was called to be a monk, having been profoundly influenced by St. Anthony.

The third type of calling is perhaps the most interesting. It is the call that comes from necessity, or from compulsion. Here, Paphnutius talks of those who hear God's call only at a time of significant distress: upon the death of someone they love, or after the loss or seizure of their property, or while they are imprisoned. He offers the example of Paul, who, he observes, was "dragged unwillingly along the route to salvation" only after he was struck blind (Acts 9).

He also offers the example of a monk named Moses (not to be confused with the Moses of Exodus) who "came to the monastery as a refugee because he was afraid he would be put to death on a charge of murder."

Paphnutius then notes that of the three types of vocations, “the first two seem to have the better beginnings.” In other words, isn’t it rather obvious that someone who hears a call directly from God, or from God through another person, is likely to be a better monk than someone who suddenly feels “called” to enter a monastery only after he is charged with murder?

Paphnutius, however, explains that this is not always the case. He has, he says, “found that some who started from the third level, which seems to be the lowliest and the least committed, have turned out to be perfect men, most fervent in spirit.” And he has “known many who began with this higher calling and who often grew lukewarm and fell down to a most lamentable end.”

For Paphnutius, then, the “beginning” of one’s vocation is relatively unimportant. Rather, he says, “It is the conclusion that counts. Someone committed by the beginnings of a glorious conversion can prove to be a lesser man because of carelessness, and someone constrained by some necessity to become a monk can, out of fear of God and out of diligence, reach up to perfection.”

Becoming a monk is not a singular event; it is an ongoing process that continues, even after one has taken vows. Paphnutius is addressing a very profound question that most monks struggle with at some point: *Why do you want to be a monk?*

Paphnutius’ answer is equally profound: *It doesn’t matter why you came here. The only thing that matters is what you do while you are here.*

— Br. Armand



CONTACTING THE ABBEY

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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
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

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

\$15.00 Please send _____ copies. \$ _____

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 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.

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Any payment in excess of the book price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.

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