

Abbey Letter Fall 2010 no. 243

May Peace Be in Our Homes and Communities
May Peace Prevail on Earth

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.



picking berries



housecleaning



working in the refectory



Independence Day fireworks and homemade ice cream



in choir



in class

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St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595

NOTES



James B. "Jay" Magness was with us June 8th through 11th, on retreat before his consecration as Bishop Suffragan for Federal Ministries.

Sr. Laura of the Order of Julian of Norwich was with us July 13th - 19th.

Abbot Andrew attended the 2010 meeting of Theology and Peace May 25th - 27th at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. The group is dedicated to discussing the thought of René Girard in the context of theology, church practice, and spirituality. The presentations featured stimulating thoughts on biblical exegesis (especially the difficult book of *Revelation*), liturgy, and renewal of spirituality. On June 30th - July 3rd, at Notre Dame University



in Indiana, he attended the 2010 meeting of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion. The conference topic was "Transforming Violence: Cult, Culture, and Acculturation."

Br. Abraham's music publisher, John Webber, has written a three-movement orchestral setting of Gregory the Great's *Life of Benedict*. A pdf of the full score, Br. Abraham's thoughts on the music, an essay by the composer, and mp3 files of each movement are available at webbermusic.com (type in "Benedict" in the search box). All files are free, but donations in appreciation of the composition can be made at the website or sent to St. Gregory's (all donations are shared equally with the monastery and the composer).

This is a follow-up to Br. Martin's last **Abbey Letter** article, *Seven Times A Day I Praise You*, that appeared in issue no. 237 Easter 2009. It can be found in the **Abbey Letter** archives at our website saintgregorysthreerivers.org

"...To God Our Praise Is Due..."

In an Abbey Letter article I wrote last year, I reviewed several office books I thought might be of interest to some of our readers. There were several other prayer books I did not review in that article (mainly due to space considerations), and I wish to touch on them here.

The Roman Catholic *Liturgy Of The Hours* is a rich source of material for daily prayer, whether one uses the complete four volume set, or the condensed version called *Christian Prayer*, or the appropriately titled *Shorter Christian Prayer*. These are the result of Vatican II's revision of the liturgy, and are an attempt to make the daily office available and useful to more people.

The *Hours* are arranged as a five-fold office consisting of the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer. These five offices can be increased to the traditional seven by adding Midmorning Prayer and Midafternoon Prayer. The psalmody is set up on a monthly cycle and the structure of the *Hours* is an adaptation of the traditional divine office designed to be more user-friendly for more people. The volume *Christian Prayer* contains only the so-called day hours, that is, it leaves out the Office of Readings. *Shorter Christian Prayer* has only Morning and Evening Prayer, plus Night Prayer.

There is much to appreciate in the *Hours*. The arrangement of the Psalms is well done. I especially like the way the Psalms and Canticles seem to comment on or answer each other in Morning Prayer, and the use of New Testament canticles in Evening Prayer's psalmody is a nice touch. What comes through in the *Hours* is a more positive attitude towards contemporary society, a stronger sense of wanting to heal human culture, rather than condemn or reject it.

Yet there is much that can be frustrating about the *Hours* as well. Unavoidably, the revision is a product of its time. Being the Roman Catholic Church's first official attempt to put the liturgy in the vernacular, the English is clumsy and awkward, especially in the prayers. And there is a total lack of inclusive language that many will find jarring and distracting. In all fairness, this lack is the result of timing, the revision having been done before inclusive language became an issue. And sadly, the current Roman Catholic authorities have taken several steps backward from the issue of inclusive language in English.

Having said that, I do think that for those so inclined, the *Liturgy Of The Hours* can be used in deepening one's relationship with God if one is faithful in praying them. All it takes is good will.

For those of a more progressive, feminist, or liberal inclination, there is the two volume set of the *People's Companion To The Breviary*, originally put out by the Carmelites of Indianapolis. These daily office books are an all-inclusive revision of the offices of Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer, and Evening Prayer of the *Liturgy Of The*

Hours. The Psalms and Canticles are an inclusive language adaptation of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (not the NRSV). Rather than providing scripture readings in the offices, readings from non-scriptural sources, both historical and contemporary, are provided for Morning and Evening Prayer. Interestingly, no readings at all are given for Midday Prayer. This allows one to choose readings if one desires, scriptural or non-scriptural. The intercessions are not adaptations from the *Liturgy Of The Hours*, but are original to these books. These are quite good, and the concluding prayers, while perhaps a bit too wordy, are thought provoking and worthy of reflection. The use of all-inclusive language is quite wonderfully done and is rarely clumsy or jarring. Again, this set of offices will appeal to those of a more progressive inclination.

From the Community of St. Mary, Eastern Province, comes *The Monastic Diurnal Revised*. This is a contemporary revision of Canon Winfred Douglas' 1932 *Monastic Diurnal*, using the resources of the current Book Of Common Prayer. It is a daily office made up of Matins, two Little Hours for the weekdays (one for weekends), Vespers, and Compline.

The office of Matins is made up of elements from the two monastic offices of Matins and Lauds, with its psalmody on a monthly cycle. Vespers and the Little Hours follow the traditional structure of the monastic office, and their psalmody is based on a weekly cycle. The psalms are from the Prayer Book, and are pointed for singing at Vespers and the Little Hours. The scripture readings are from the Revised Standard Version, adapted with modern pronouns, rather than "Thee" and "Thou." (The NRSV was not yet available at the time of this revision).

The Monastic Diurnal Revised is a two volume set, with the second volume containing the offices for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. For a more traditional set of daily offices, this set is quite user-friendly, and I highly recommend it for traditionalists and progressives alike.

A relatively new set of offices called *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle has become popular in recent years. This is a three volume set that follows the liturgical year by following the natural seasons (volume 1 is Summertime, volume 2 is Autumn and Winter, volume 3 is Springtime). This set of offices is designed to be used by busy people, and is set up so as to rarely require flipping around within each book.

Four offices are provided: Morning Office, Midday Office, Vespers Office, and Compline. Compared to more traditional offices, these are relatively short in duration. Part of what makes them short is that the complete Psalter is not used, but instead only a judicious and appropriate selection of verses from a given Psalm is used for the office in which it is appointed. Short scripture readings are also provided. The psalms are the Prayer Book psalms, and the lessons are usually from the New Jerusalem Bible.

These are very good books for anyone who is busy but desires to enrich one's spiritual life by using a daily office. These books would also be a very good place to begin for those who may be interested in starting some form of structured daily prayer. They are user-friendly and nicely printed. Phyllis Tickle has done the Church a great service by making these books available and introducing the custom of praying a daily office to many individuals.

—Br. Martin

Sources for prayer books:

The Liturgy Of The Hours
(around \$78.00 - \$198.00)
catholiccompany.com

Christian Prayer
(around \$20.00 - \$30.00)
amazon.com

Shorter Christian Prayer
(around \$10.00 - \$15.00)
amazon.com

The People's Companion to the Breviary
(around \$32.00)
Carmel of Reno
1950 La Fond Dr.
Reno, NV 89509-3099
psalter@carmelofreno.com

The Monastic Diurnal Revised
(around \$42.00 for the complete set, plus shipping)
Community of St. Mary, Eastern Province
242 Cloister Way
Greenwich, NY 12834

The Divine Hours
(around \$10.00 - \$50.00 per volume)
amazon.com



Q: What's On Our Website?

A: slideshows showing various aspects of the abbey grounds and monastic life, articles from back issues of the *Abbey Letter*, sermons preached by the monks, information about monastic life, the Summer Vocation Program and monastic vocations, and contact links for the abbot, novice master, guest department, and publications office. Prayer requests and donations can also be made online, as well as calendar and book purchases.

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Saint Gregory's Abbey is the home of a community of men living under the Rule of Saint Benedict within the Episcopal Church. The center of the monastery's life is the Abbey Church, where God is worshiped in the daily round of Eucharist, Divine Office, and private prayer. Also offered to God are the monks' daily manual work, study and correspondence, ministry to guests, and occasional outside engagements.

The continuing existence of Saint Gregory's is made possible by the support of those who believe that the contemplative vocation within the Church finds valid expression there.

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