

A black and white photograph of a building with a large tree in the foreground and a person sitting on a bench in the background. The building has a low-pitched roof and several windows. The tree in the foreground is large and leafy, with its branches extending across the top of the frame. The person is sitting on a bench in the lower right foreground, looking towards the building. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

Abbey Letter

no. 247

Fall
2011

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.



weeding the garden



in choir



at class



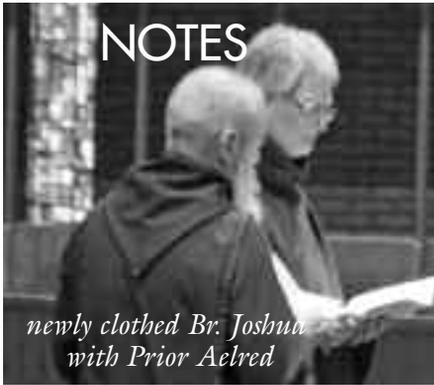
beanbag game at Sunday buffet supper



coffee and cookies before vespers



picking berries



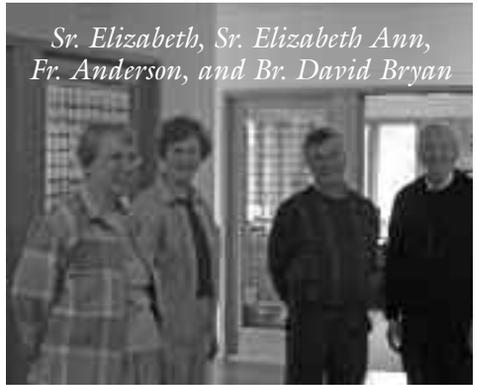
*newly clothed Br. Joshua
with Prior Aelred*

Stephen Briggs was clothed as a novice and took the name Br. Joshua during a ceremony after vespers on June 28th (first vespers of SS Peter & Paul).

Sr. Elizabeth SSJD, Sr. Elizabeth Ann SSJD, Br. David Bryan Hoopes OHC, and the Rev. Donald Anderson spent the evening of May 9th with us as they traveled to Racine, Wisconsin for a leadership meeting of the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas. Abbot Andrew also attended the meeting.

Abbot Andrew attended the Conference On Theology And Peace in Baltimore May 31st through June 2nd. Eminent theologian Brian McLaren, who has developed an interest in Girardian thought, was one of the principal speakers. Other presenters were Michael Hardin, author of *The Jesus Driven Life*, and Suzanne Ross of the Raven Foundation, who discussed the Montessori method of education.

A tornado touched down on our property the afternoon of May 29th. No one was injured, but many trees were felled, the roads to St. Benedict's guesthouse and the cemetery were blocked by fallen trees, and the porch roof of



*Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Elizabeth Ann,
Fr. Anderson, and Br. David Bryan*

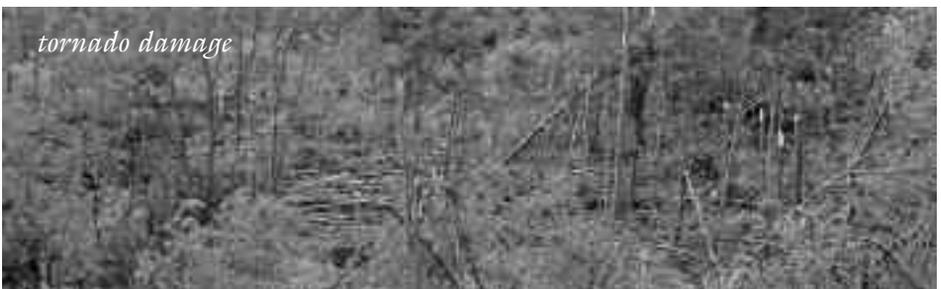
St. Benedict's guesthouse was damaged by a tree.

Fr. William will be in Montreal to preach at the church of St. John the Evangelist on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady (August 15th). St. John's Church, located in the *Quartier des Spectacles*, is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding.

Abbot Andrew has edited a new book containing a selection of *Abbey Letter* articles from 1999 to the present. *Come Let Us Adore* is a follow-up to our previous historical anthology, *Singing God's Praises*. The book can be ordered using the coupon in this newsletter or at our website.

Our website also has many other features, including slideshows, sermon archives, articles from back issues of the *Abbey Letter*, 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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tornado damage

More Than A Feeling

Emotions and feelings are good, as are all things God has given us. Emotions are senses through which we can experience the world around us. We are blessed with a large range of emotions, from bliss to despair, and they are a wonderful part of a full, healthy life. Unfortunately, we often mistake our emotions for reality, rather than allowing them to be one of the many channels through which we sense reality. When this happens, feelings can skew our vision of truth, instead of helping us to actually see the truth. We become tools of our feelings, rather than using our feelings as the tools they are meant to be.

Just as too much or too little light can cause us to see things incorrectly, too much or too little emotion can cause us to perceive situations incorrectly. Sometimes it is best to hold our judgments and reactions to some situations until our feelings settle. Then we can more objectively discern the situation and act in a helpful manner, rather than simply reacting or overreacting, as we often do when our emotions are aroused. We can then also examine our emotional reaction to see if it really was too strong or too weak, and thus gain some insight into our own motivations. As with our other senses, we might need special help in correcting emotional problems, and when that happens, we need have no shame (just as there should be no shame in wearing eyeglasses or hearing aids). However, we also need to realize that constantly obsessing about our feelings or always talking about them is not helpful to us or others. In the end, it is what we do that matters, not how we feel.

One of our strongest emotions is love, and we are certainly blessed to have been given it. But however good the feeling of love is, we must never think that Our Lord's command to love ourselves, our neighbors, and our God involves only our emotions. True love is seen in actions and habits of behavior that encourage others to grow into the unique, beautiful selves they were created to be. Love means allowing others to be different from us, and celebrating that difference, rather than fearing it. Even if the paths that others take make us uncomfortable or cause us to question our own choices, we can be happy for those others and help them on their paths. (Of course, this does not mean we should allow others to follow paths that are destructive either to themselves or to others.) To truly follow Our Lord's command to love means that we must love people, not just the way some people sometimes make us feel.

When we fall into the trap of merely loving the way some people sometimes make us feel, we are always in danger of falling in love for the wrong reasons, and then falling out of love when the feeling ends. Nothing is wrong with falling in love — most of our art, music, and literature would not exist if we never did that. However, if we want to stay in love after being smitten by a person, we must grow from merely feeling love to doing and acting love, even if the feeling leaves us. Our beloved will eventually disappoint and annoy us,

and we will disappoint and annoy them. Pretending that this does not happen will not help real love grow, because real love is not blind, real love sees all and loves anyway. True love does not excuse bad behavior; it compassionately lets people know when they need to change and gives them the time, help, and encouragement to do so. This is true not only for people with whom we have an amorous attachment, but for all people to whom we are to show Christian love.

Love is not easy to do, and maybe that is why Jesus told us that it was a commandment, rather than a suggestion. I know I need all the help I can get to love others, and sometimes even to love myself. May God help us to be objective and active in our love as God brings us into conformity with his will, which includes growing ever more mature in all of our emotions. May we be grateful for ourselves and our feelings, and may we use them for our enjoyment, for the benefit of others, and to the glory of God.

— Br. Abraham

more scenes from this year's July Vocation Program

supper in the refectory



Independence Day fireworks



cards at recreation time

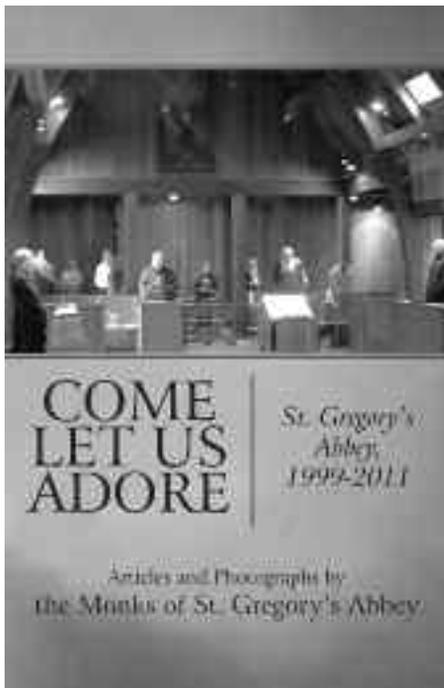


daily chapter meeting

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Edited by Abbot Andrew Marr



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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.

The monks ask your prayers and will be grateful for your offerings.

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