



Abbey Letter  
no. 253

Easter

2013

On Wednesday, January 16th, the senior chapter of St. Gregory's Abbey reelected Andrew Marr for his 4th term as abbot. The election process was facilitated by our episcopal visitor, The Rt. Rev. Arthur Williams, retired suffragan bishop of the Diocese of Ohio.

*Bishop Williams and Abbot Andrew after the election*



**May the Life of the risen forgiving  
victim fill our hearts with forgiveness  
for ourselves and all other people.**

**– Abbot Andrew**

## NOTES

Abbot Jerome Kodell of Subiaco Abbey in Subiaco, Arkansas led our community retreat December 4th – 7th.

Br. Abraham traveled to Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan to speak to a class on the topic of “Monastic Responses to Modernism.”

Recipes for our altar bread and refectory bread are now on our website [saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)



*Abbot Jerome*



Saint Gregory’s Abbey now has an e-mail list for those wishing to receive the ABBEY LETTER electronically. We currently offer the ABBEY LETTER in three formats: PDF, Nook, and Kindle.

If you would like to receive the ABBEY LETTER in one of these formats, simply go to our website: [saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

Click on the “Publications” link on the home page to get a drop-down menu, and then click on either “The Abbey Letter” or “Order Publications (Digital)”. A registration form can be found on those pages. Once you fill out the necessary information and submit it, you should receive a welcome letter via e-mail.

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).

**To avoid being overwhelmed, we ask that only those readers whose last names begin with the letters A - G switch to the electronic version at this time. We will open the enrollment to other readers in future issues of the ABBEY LETTER.**

Thank you for keeping in touch with us through our ABBEY LETTER in whichever format you decide.

Saint Gregory's Abbey hosts many groups from area colleges and universities each year. The groups vary in the reasons they come and the activities pursued while here: classes coming for lectures and tours, campus ministries coming for retreats, groups of students or professors coming on their own for times of reflection and prayer. The following colleges and universities were represented at the monastery during 2012 (many of these schools had more than one group come here.)

Wheaton College

Calvin College

University of Michigan

Bethel College

Grand Valley State University

Western Michigan University

Geneva College

Purdue University

Glen Oaks Community College

Kalamazoo Valley Community College

Goshen College

Aquinas College

Spring Arbor University



## Books read in the refectory during lunch and supper 2012

**“Now That the Factories Are Closed, It’s Tee Time in Benton Harbor, Mich.”** article from the December 8, 2011 New York Times Magazine

by Jonathan Mahler

**Peace Be With You: Monastic Wisdom for a Terror-Filled World**

by David Carlson

**Vanished Kingdoms; The Rise and Fall of States and Nations**

by Norman Davies

**Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl**

by Craig Harline

**The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish**

**Rebels, & Indian Allies**

by Alan Taylor

**Turing’s Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe**

by George Dyson

**My Life In Orange: Growing Up With the Guru**

by Tim Guest

**“Forever And Ever: Can a Delicate Little Creature of the Sea Unlock the Secret of Immortality?”** article from the December 2, 2012 New York Times Magazine

by Nathaniel Rich

**The Silk Road: A New History**

by Valerie Hansen

# The Bible: What's Up With That?

We need to acknowledge that when it comes to violence and depravity in religious writings, precious few can hold a candle to the violence and depravity that is condoned throughout the Bible. (It is important to say, given the situation throughout the world, that the Quran doesn't even come close to the Bible. Christians who claim otherwise clearly have not read the Bible, much less the Quran). The Book of Joshua, a text that sanctions genocide and ethnic cleansing, justifying it as commanded by God, is a quick example. All through the Bible, the so-called "good guys" commit the same atrocities as the so-called "bad guys."

So what's up with that? And how is it that we can call these stories divinely inspired, and encourage even children to read such horror stories as the Exodus and the conquest of "the promised land?" After all, I have read and know of Christians who use these stories to argue in favor of torture, and criticize President Obama for stopping it.

I would argue that these stories are incredibly valuable precisely as sacred writings because the Bible is painfully honest in depicting the genuinely horrible things we do to each other. These stories are a mirror that reflects back to us our real failings as human beings, both of the so-called "good guys'



and the so-called “bad guys.” And they show how we rationalize such bad behavior by calling it God’s will. To read the Bible in such a way as to justify inflicting suffering on others is to misuse it.

In reading the Bible we should keep in mind that it’s not all violence and depravity, and even then acts of horror are done within a context. There are overarching themes that one should keep in mind as one reads the Bible. One theme is that of the journey (Abraham’s call to leave his homeland to go elsewhere, the Israelites wandering in the desert, their exile and return, and so on). The other important theme is that of liberation, of God choosing an oppressed people to be his special people, of delivering them from slavery (and of God being faithful despite his people’s faithlessness).

I believe the Bible also shows us how our understanding of God has evolved and matured as time goes on. In some of the older stories we find God as one among many gods (the God of the tribes of Israel and no one else.) From this we see God as more powerful than the other gods and more just (think of the plagues of Egypt and the Exodus). This in turn leads us to see God as the only God, and as God of all peoples in Isaiah (and therefore God’s plan is that salvation comes from the Jews, who throughout history are consistently oppressed and despised).

For Christians, God’s revelation of what kind of God he really is culminates in Jesus. And it becomes clear that as time moves on God is showing us he is bigger than we first imagined, that what God wants is to expand the borders of our tribes to include everyone, to stop seeing others as our enemy, but as our brothers and sisters. God is constantly trying to break down the walls we build (both as individuals and as peoples) to allow more and more people in. In the Gospels this is shown in Jesus commending the faith of the Canaanite woman and Roman centurion and answering their requests, and in the Book of Acts with the original Jewish disciples coming to understand that God wants even the gentiles to be his followers.

Indeed, the history of the Church is basically a story of her struggle of trying to understand who’s in and who’s out, whether it be of race, culture, sexuality, or whatever. The increasing of inclusivity is the ever ongoing struggle of the Church.

We are slow learners. It takes us a long time to get it. And even when we do, it takes a while to come to accept what God is prodding us to do. But God never stops, never gives up on us, and is always leading us deeper into the mystery of his love and faithfulness for humanity.

— Br. Martin

St. Benedict says:

# Listen...

**incline the ear  
of your heart**



So be a **summertime monk** for two weeks or more at St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.

...if you are male, age 18 to 50, and if you can spend at least two weeks at the abbey during July. The only cost is \$25 for registration.

*For more information and an application form, use the envelope bound in this issue of the Abbey Letter or write:*

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



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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.

<http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org/donate.html> to donate online

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