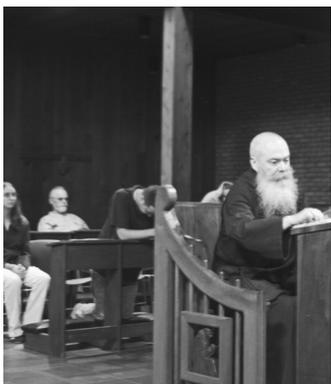




Abbey Letter
no. 276
Christmas 2018



Abbot Andrew



Prior Aelred



Fr. Jude

The monks of St. Gregory's Abbey wish you a Merry Christmas and a joyful 2019.

Fr. William



Br. Martin



Br. Abraham



Br. Armand

NOTES

The Rt. Rev. Douglas Sparks, bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana, was with us August 13th - 15th.

Bishop Sparks



Fr. William was at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Montreal to preach on the Feast of the Virgin Mary August 15th.

Many of our large appliances had to be repaired or replaced this past summer (refrigerator, lawn mower, refectory furnace, dishwasher, water heater, washing machine, church air conditioner, fire alarm system). Any gifts to help with the cost of the repairs and replacements will be helpful.



old refrigerator in the frontloader, new refrigerator on the flatbed

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

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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).

Visions of Sugar-Plums

As Christmas approaches and finally arrives, we find ourselves surrounded with holiday art and artifacts. There are quite a range of these, from the decidedly secular to the explicitly religious. At the former end of the spectrum of Christmas music we have “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch,” “Grandma Got Run over by a Reindeer” and “Santa Baby” (I loved that song as a kid, and had no idea at all about the situation it was describing.) At the devotional and inspirational end there are traditional Christmas hymns and “The Little Drummer Boy.” In between there are lots and lots of numbers celebrating the spirit of the season, without explicitly bringing in the birth of Jesus. There’s a similar range of variation in decorations, indoors and out; shows; and holiday clothing.

It’s the religious items that tend to set me thinking more than the others. Those songs and decorations and such can often be aids to devotion and to fixing my mind on the birth of my Savior. They also have a special quality that interests me: they’re a collection of commentaries on the Bible story of Jesus’ birth. But they’re different from the commentaries of professional Bible scholars.

Academic Bible commentaries are funny things. Those of us who have access to them and who want to understand the Bible tend to use them fairly often, or use information from those who write or summarize them. And if you use commentaries very much, you’ll learn some of the ways in which they are useful, opinionated, and sometimes really boring. I once translated the name of a Hindu monk as meaning “having the bliss of scripture commentary.” One of my senior brethren replied, “That’s not very much bliss, is it?” I’m afraid he was right, about the scholarly sort of commentaries, anyway.

Things are a bit more reliably interesting when the artists and storytellers and song writers weigh in. They can take the Bible stories, and the things the preachers and scholars have said through the ages, and add the imagery and stories their imaginations suggest to them, and lo and behold, we have another view of the great things God has done for us. And those songs and pictures and shows have a way of planting themselves in our minds and memories and taking root there.

Of course not all of the Christmas art and music and shows out there are the work of Christ’s followers. That interests me, as well. I sometimes wonder if, when they hear Christians talk about something like Whitsunday, people outside the church ask themselves, “Is that the one

with the rabbit, or the one with the clover leaf?” That wouldn’t be an issue with the professionals we’re thinking about now. Those folks know the basic Christmas imagery. Still, the question intrigues me.

But all this is about hearing, or seeing, or singing the story of the Lord’s birth in forms that come through many, many interpreters. We are blessed in living in a time of inexpensive Bibles, and widespread literacy. The best way to show our appreciation for those blessings is to make use of them. We can read the stories themselves, in our favorite translation, or even several translations.

Here in the Abbey we read the second chapter of Luke, the first through the twentieth verses, as the gospel reading at Midnight Mass. The passage for the celebration on Christmas morning is from the prologue to John’s gospel, chapter one, verses one through fourteen. Hearing those words in the liturgy is good. But it’s also good to read them on your own. Luke has the shepherds and the angels and the manger. John gives us his theological expression of the cosmic significance of Jesus’s birth as one of us. If you want the Wise Men, you’ll find them in the second chapter of Matthew.

Even with all the mediated images we carry in our heads and our histories, there’s a freshness to reading those passages in the Scriptures ourselves, like drinking well water from a gourd dipper. It doesn’t take a lot of time or a lot of work, but it allows the Holy Spirit to speak to us anew. That’s always a good thing.

— Fr. William



Scholastica and Benedict visit the nativity scene in the Abbey Church

CONTACTING THE ABBEY

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Abbot Andrew –

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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



St. Gregory's Abbey July Vocation Program

Spend two weeks (or more) in July with the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery of the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.

Worship & Pray Work & Learn

For males 18 to 50 who can stay for at least two weeks. The only cost is \$25 for registration.

For more information, use the envelope bound in this issue of the Abbey Letter or write:

July Program Director
St. Gregory's Abbey
56500 Abbey Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093

novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org
Applications will be accepted after January 1, 2019.
saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Please send me ____ copy or copies of the
2019 Calendar

Enclosed is \$10.00 for each calendar

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Any payment in excess of the calendar price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.
St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595

thirteen months, 15 photos, with the Abbey's liturgical calendar

Allow 8 weeks for delivery.

Or download a PDF of the calendar from our website – \$2.00 per download!

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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



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