



Abbey Letter no. 281
Easter 2020



St. Benedict tells us that Lent is a time for looking forward to Easter and preparing for it. The greatest mystery of Easter is the profound forgiveness of the risen Jesus after what we had just done to him. Lent, then, is a time of preparation for forgiveness, a longing for forgiveness in our hearts.

– Abbot Andrew

NOTES

Br. William White of the Community of the Mother of Jesus was with us September 19th – 22nd.

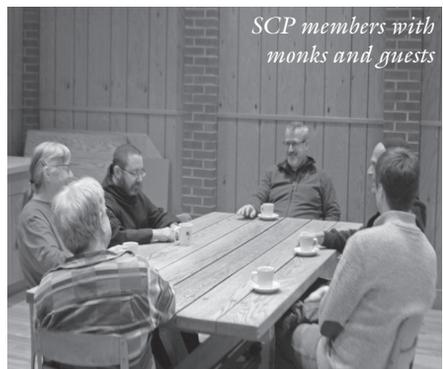
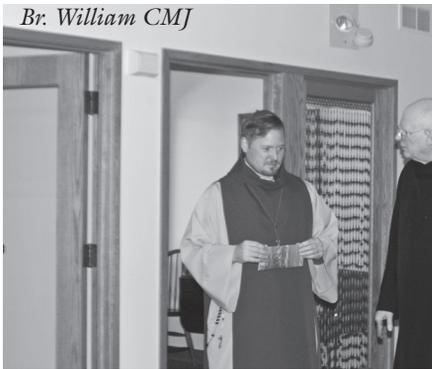
The Rt. Rev. Susan Haynes, recently elected bishop of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, was with us September 25th - 27th. Bishop Haynes was a frequent guest at St. Gregory's during her tenure at St. Paul's Church in Mishawaka, Indiana.

Representatives from various retreat and prayer centers in our neighborhood met at the monastery October 8th for discussion about how we can be of mutual support for each other. The discussions are held every few months

on a rotating basis at the various centers. Participants in the discussions usually include representatives from: St. Gregory's Abbey, GilChrist, The Hermitage, Apple Farm, and Culture Is Not Optional.

The Great Lakes Chapter of the Society of Catholic Priests were with us December 16th – 17th.

Abbot Andrew is scheduled to be at Truman State University's Episcopal Campus Ministry in Kirksville, Missouri March 26th for a presentation based on his book MOVING AND RESTING IN GOD'S DESIRE.



Feeding Body and Mind: Reading at Meals

Most religious communities in the western church are governed by a rule. The rule is usually written by, or attributed to, the founder of the religious order. Benedictine monasteries follow the Rule of St. Benedict, which was written in the sixth century. Many would say that the Rule of St. Benedict is the second most important text for Benedictine monks. Modern scholarship has raised doubts about whether St. Benedict himself actually wrote the text of the Rule. There is little doubt, however, that the Rule reflects a set of core principles, developed by St. Benedict, about how to live in community.

Over the course of fourteen centuries, the interpretation and application of some parts of the Rule have been adapted to meet the needs of religious communities in the modern world. (For example, we no longer use corporal punishment.) St. Benedict himself anticipated that his guidelines would be modified to fit the circumstances of each community. In Chapter 18, for example, regarding the order in which the psalms are to be said, the author advises that “if anyone finds this distribution of the psalms unsatisfactory, he should arrange whatever he judges better.”





But in many areas of life, monks and nuns still follow the Rule as it was written in about 516. At St. Gregory’s Abbey, our meals are still accompanied by reading, without any talking, as recommended in Chapter 38. Reading is a weekly assignment, and each Sunday, the new reader receives a blessing, after reading a verse from the Psalms: “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise.”

We usually alternate between books of a spiritual nature and books with more secular topics. History, biography and the sciences are common choices. On average, we hear approximately five pages at each meal.

Books slated for refectory reading in 2020 include *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*, by Robert Macfarlane (Penguin, 2012) and *The Trouble with Gravity: Solving the Mystery Beneath Our Feet*, by Richard Panek (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019).

— Br. Armand

Books read in the refectory during lunch and supper 2019

A History of the Athonite Commonwealth: The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos

by Graham Speake

Shared Sorrows: A Gypsy Family Remembers the Holocaust

by Toby Sonneman

Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter

by Ben Goldfarb

Fatal Discord: Erasmus, Luther, and the Fight for the Western Mind

by Michael Massing

The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World

by Steven Johnson

Mystical Journey: An Autobiography

by William Johnston

The 21: A Journey into the Land of Coptic Martyrs

by Martin Mosebach

These Truths: A History of the United States

by Jill Lepore

Music compositions from St. Gregory's Abbey

Missa Brevis *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham – *Latin text from the ordinary of the mass*

Rumi *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham – *English translation of the poems of Rumi*

A Symphony of Psalms *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham – *Latin text of four psalms*

The Kiss *baritone voice and string quartet* by Br. Abraham – *texts from office readings for Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary*

Tuesday Afternoon *chorus and wind octet* by Br. Abraham – *psalms from Tuesday vespers*

Symphony in c minor *orchestral symphony* by Br. Abraham *in romantic minimalist style*

Symphony in g minor *orchestral symphony* by Br. Abraham *in expansive classical style*

Visible Dream *piano and baritone voice* by Br. Abraham- *poems of Cyrus Cassells*

Week In Review *piano and baritone voice* by Br. Abraham – *poems of Robert Fruehwirth*

The Hours *tenor, baritone, and bass voices* by Br. Abraham – *texts from psalms for lauds and vespers*

Life of Benedict *orchestral setting of Gregory the Great's Life of Benedict* by John Webber
scores and synthesized performances available at webbermusic.com

For everything but *Life of Benedict*, search for 'Newsom, A'; for *Life of Benedict*, search for 'Webber, J'. Donations of \$1.00 per look and listen are requested and can be made at the website or sent to St. Gregory's Abbey designated for "music compositions". Hard copies of scores and orchestral parts are for sale at list price from webbermusic.com

*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
of the Episcopal Church
of 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, write:

Summer Program Director

St. Gregory's Abbey

56500 Abbey Road

Three Rivers, Michigan 49093-9595

novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

The summer Program is highly recommended, but if you are interested in possibly becoming a monk but can't come in July or stay for two weeks, contact the novicemaster for other options.

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