

Abbey Letter no. 285  
Easter 2021



With Easter coming in the spring time, we associate it with the cycle of nature where the death of winter is overcome by the life of growing things. But Easter is not part of a cycle at all – it is an earthquake, as Matthew tells us – a new beginning where more life than we can possibly imagine has become possible.

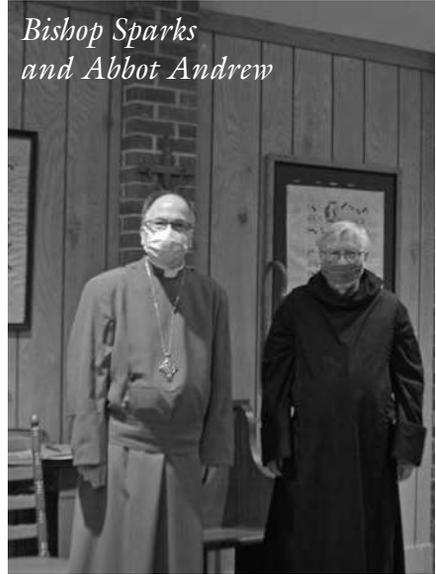
– Abbot Andrew

# NOTES

On Tuesday, January 12th, the chapter of life professed monks of St. Gregory's Abbey reelected Andrew Marr as abbot. The election was conducted by our episcopal visitor, The Rt. Rev. Douglas Sparks, bishop of the Diocese of Northern Indiana.

Our guesthouses remain closed because of the pandemic. When it is safe to accept guests again, we will announce the reopening on our website.

Fr. William continues his work with the Formation Group of the Diocese of Northern Indiana (currently meeting via teleconference.) This group of people preparing locally for ordination meets every few months for mutual exchange, discussion, and presentations concerning practical issues pertaining to ordained ministry. Fr. William is in charge of the spiritual life part of the program.



Because of the ongoing pandemic and uncertainty of when gatherings will again be permitted, we will not be conducting a summer vocation program in 2021.

If anyone is interested in scheduling an individual vocational visit, please contact the novicemaster. At this time, we are asking that only people who have an interest in monastic vocation contact us about a vocational visit.



**[novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)**

## Into the Groove

For most Americans in the early twenty-first century, the word “groovy” is associated with white, middle class kids in the late 1960s, who used it as a term of excitement, approval, and enjoyment. However, the word has had at least two other meanings in American English. In the late nineteenth century, the word was used as a noun. A “groovy” was a person who was opposed to change, no matter how good or inevitable the change may be; the person was stuck in a groove and unwilling to get out of it (the term was used pejoratively and did not last long in popular speech). In the 1930s, jazz musicians started using the word as an adjective for music that was played by someone who was able to produce musical thoughts that could be followed by other musicians as they improvised together; the musician could lay a groove for others to follow, so the music was “groovy” (the term was used approvingly, and began to be used as an expression of approval for other things besides music, as it is still used today). Monastic life can be groovy in both of the above mentioned ways.

The rhythms, schedules, rights, and responsibilities that form the structure of a nun’s or monk’s daily routine are meant to set out a groove into which one’s life can be inserted. Sometimes, we allow the groove to stupefy us, rather than allowing it to stimulate us. We can become resistant to change, no matter how much the change would be helpful, or we can uselessly fight against changes that we have no way of controlling. It is true that not all change is good, but to always resist it simply because it is change can be harmful to ourselves and those around us. Being that type of “groovy” in a monastic setting happens when we value the traditions of the monastery above God. We have forgotten the goal, and are worshipping the means of achieving that goal. We have fallen into a rut that is smothering us.

If we choose rather to allow the monastic groove to stimulate us into deeper growth in Christian life, then we experience the other type of “groovy.” We allow the traditions of the monastery to be a framework upon which our lives can flourish (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually), rather than a mold to strangle us. We find the monastic groove to be a good rut to be in, rather than a bad one. We can be open to change if needed, and help bring it about, while affirming the truth that not all change is good or helpful. We are deeply grateful for our monastic traditions and for the people who formed them, making a groove for us to thrive in. Mostly we are grateful for God and



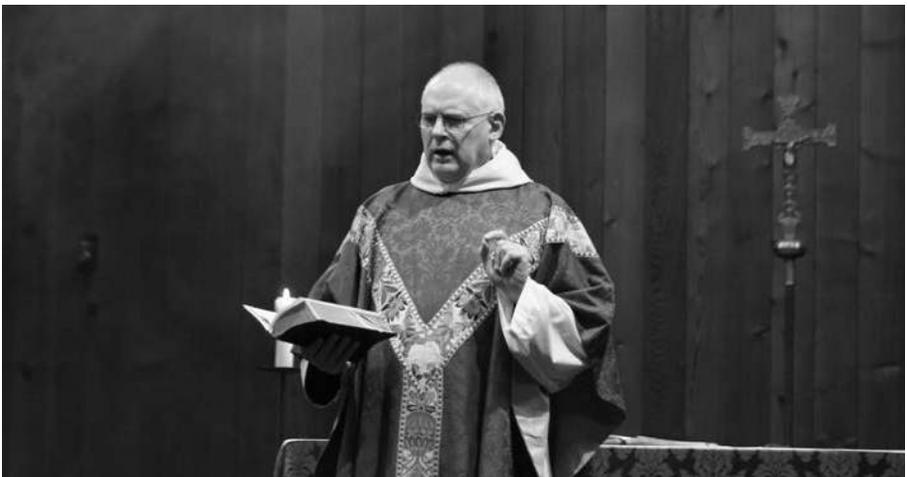


for the fact that we (and everyone else) are deeply loved children of God. Of course, the choice of what type of “groovy” we will be is one that comes to everyone, whether or not they are living a monastic life; we can choose to let the traditions of our political parties, religious denominations, and ethnic heritages confine us in rigid ways of life, or we can let them be time-honored patterns which help us as we grow in our relationship with God (remembering that whenever our traditions contradict the Gospel, the Gospel should always win).

The type of “groovy” that we are is a choice we make every day and every moment. We want to become more like Jesus. Many people in the past, beginning with the apostles, have shown us different ways to do that. We just have to get into the groove and trust in God.

– Br. Abraham

Author’s note: I would like to thank the NPR program “A Way With Words” for bringing this subject to my attention. Monks don’t have a lot of time for entertainment, so when we do, we try to choose wisely and it becomes very meaningful. My favorite source of entertainment is radio. In addition to “A Way With Words”, there are two other NPR programs that I listen to when I get the chance: “Wait, Wait...Don’t Tell Me”, and “Big Picture Science”. I also love listening to sports on the radio (especially IndyCar races). Sometimes when I have driving chores in the morning, I even get the rare chance to tune the car radio to catch a bit of “The Bob and Tom Show”.



Books read in the refectory during lunch and supper 2020

**The Trouble With Gravity: Solving the Mystery Beneath Our Feet**  
by Richard Panek

**Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World**  
by Tom Holland

**Got a Revolution: The Turbulent Flight of Jefferson Airplane**  
by Jeff Tamarkin

**The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot**  
by Robert Macfarlane

**Radical Innovators: The Blessings of Adversity in Science and Art,  
1500 – 2000**  
by Anton Blok

**Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present**  
by Frank M. Snowden



## Books from St. Gregory's Abbey

### **Singing God's Praises** (1998)

*history of the community, select Abbey Letter articles, photographs*

\$20.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Come Let Us Adore** (2011)

*select Abbey Letter Articles from 1999 to 2011 (companion book to Singing God's Praises)*

\$12.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

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### **Tools For Peace** (2007)

*Abbot Andrew's reflections on St. Benedict and René Girard*

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### **Born in the Darkest Time of Year** (2004)

*15 Christmas stories by Abbot Andrew*

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### **Creatures We Dream of Knowing** (2011)

*fantasy stories by Abbot Andrew*

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### **From Beyond to Here** (2012)

*more stories by Abbot Andrew*

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### **The Forest of Windellynn** (2015)

*fantasy novel by Abbot Andrew*

\$10.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

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### **Moving and Resting in God's Desire: A Spirituality of Peace** (2016)

*Abbot Andrew's thoughts on cultivating peace using Christian practices and the ideas of René Girard*

\$20.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

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### **Seven Times A Day I Praise You**

*Br. Martin's review of personal daily prayer books*

\$3.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

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### **St. Gregory's Abbey and Benedictine Monasticism**

*A survey of Benedictine monasticism and how it is lived at St. Gregory's*

\$3.00 Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies.

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All of the above except for **Singing God's Praises**, **Born in the Darkest Time of Year**, **Seven Times A Day I Praise You**, and **St. Gregory's Abbey and Benedictine Monasticism** are available in ebook formats. To download, go to our website:

[saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org) and look for publications (digital).

**All books may be purchased as hard copies from our website or by using this order form.**

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Any payment in excess of the book price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.  
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