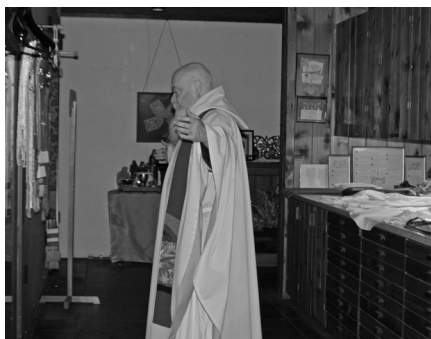


Abbey Letter  
no. 288      Christmas 2021





Abbot Andrew



Prior Aelred



Fr. William



Br. Martin

*The monks of St. Gregory's Abbey wish  
you a Merry Christmas and a Happy  
New Year, and thank you for your  
prayers and gifts.*



Br. Abraham



Br. Armand

## Daily Schedule at St. Gregory's Abbey

### Weekdays

4:00 a.m. MATINS

6:00 a.m. LAUDS

8:15 a.m. TERCE & EUCHARIST

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 & EUCHARIST

noon SEXT & NONE

5:00 p.m. VESPERS  
*followed by meditation*

7:45 p.m. COMPLINE

On August 14, 2021, Fr. Benedict Reid OSB was buried in the monastery cemetery. Immediately preceding the burial, a requiem was held in the Abbey Church, as the monks and many others who knew or knew of him gave thanks for his life and the many sacrifices he made for St. Gregory's Abbey as its first abbot.



## It's All About Compassion

Several years ago during retreat I read St. Bernard's liturgical sermons. St. Bernard wrote a lot of sermons on the nativity of our Lord. One of the earliest to survive is about the phrase "Today Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Judea." That's the entry for the Cistercian martyrology for Christmas. Apparently that's all that is (or at least was) in the martyrology. Those words are his complete text. He goes on for pages – not surprising for someone who could write so many lengthy sermons on the first few verses of the Song of Songs. He quotes St. Athanasius, "God became man that men might become gods."

My cousin was born on the 25th of December. He thought it was unfair that other kids got presents on both Christmas AND their birthdays, but they were the same for him. I could say, "Today my cousin Pete was born in South Zanesville." It would never occur to me to say, "Today my cousin Pete IS born in South Zanesville." That wouldn't make any sense.

Why does it makes sense to say, "Today Jesus Christ, the Son of God, IS born in Bethlehem of Judea."?

Because the Incarnation changes everything. In a sense, the birth of my cousin changed things, but essentially for family and friends, not for the entire human race.







Richard Rohr said, “God comes to us disguised as our life.” He says that our willingness to find God in our own struggle with life, and to let it change us, is our deepest and truest obedience to God’s eternal will. He went on to say, “We are always the ‘stable’ into which the Christ is born anew. All we really need to do is keep our stable honest and humble, and the Christ will surely be born.”

Thomas Merton’s friend, Robert Lax, wrote, “Unconditional love. That’s the bottom line. Everything is here because of love. That’s why we were created – to love. Love keeps things going, not just for now, but forever. Love gives life and makes sure what’s around today will be around tomorrow. It’s all about compassion. That’s what the cosmos best responds to.”

For those who are Christians, this is the feast when we celebrate God’s unconditional love for humanity by becoming one of us. That means that there is no part of the human experience that cannot be enfolded in Divine Love. For those of other religious faiths – Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and others – as well as those of no faith or atheist, the statement that “it’s all about compassion” rings true with the highest values of humanity. May we all find new ways to live out this holy mystery.

– Prior Aelred

## NOTES

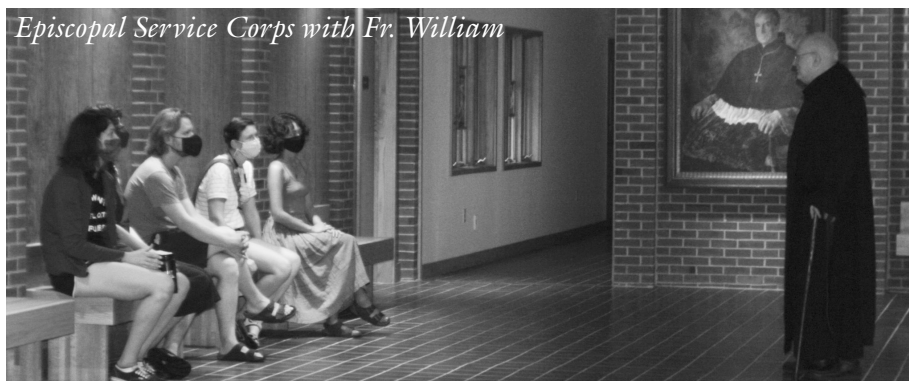
Some members of the Episcopal Service Corps were with us August 25th – 29th. The Episcopal Service Corps is made up of young adults (21-32 years old) who commit to volunteering for a period of one year. During their year in the corps, they engage in service to others while living together in community and exploring ways to strengthen their prayer life. The corps is coordinated by the Faith Formation Department of the Episcopal Church. The group visiting in August are spending their year of service at Plainsong Farm in Rockford, Michigan. Plainsong Farm is a Community Supported Agriculture Farm, using sustainable methods to grow food for people in need, while fostering spiritual growth in the workers at the farm as well as others throughout western Michigan by partnering with local churches in educational programs.

Br. Abraham has started attending video teleconferences with members of other Episcopal religious orders involved in

monastic formation. The group meets every other month and is sponsored by The Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas. Br. Abraham is part of the group in his capacity as director of our summer vocation program (in non-pandemic times) and individual vocational visits (in pandemic times.)

St. Gregory's Abbey 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](mailto:abbeyletter@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)  
Enrolling in our e-mail list does not remove you from our hard copy list. If you do want to stop receiving the hard copy once you are on the e-mail list, send an e-mail to [office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org) telling us you are on the e-mail list and want to be removed from the head copy list. (If you are in the Confraternity, please mention that so that we make sure you receive the confraternity letter via e-mail.)



*Episcopal Service Corps with Fr. William*

**Q:** What's on our website?

**A:** Slideshows of life at the monastery, back issues of the ABBEY LETTER, a sermon archive, information about monastic life and monastic vocations, as well as contact links for the abbot, novice master, guest department, and publications department. Prayer requests and donations can also be made online, as well as calendar and book orders.

**[saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)**

**The monks of St. Gregory's Abbey** are grateful to be faithful members of the Episcopal Church. However, many of our guests and others who associate with us are members of other denominations and traditions. We are happy to have been given such a large ecumenical ministry as witnesses to the unity of the Church, yet we receive no regular funding from any denominational sources. You are an important part of our ministry to the world. Your prayers for us are the most important way to help us, but we also need your financial support. As with most faith-based organizations, our income has decreased significantly over the past few years. If you feel called and are able to do so, please make a donation by using either the envelope in this newsletter or by using the "donate" button on our website ([saintgregorysthreerivers.org](http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org)). To prolong your support, please consider us in your estate planning and use the name "St. Gregory's Abbey of Three Rivers, Michigan." Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

St. Gregory's Abbey  
56500 Abbey Road  
Three Rivers, MI 49093  
269-244-5893  
[abbot@saintgregorysthreerivers.org](mailto:abbot@saintgregorysthreerivers.org)

*Saint Gregory's Abbey is a spiritual home for me. As a pastor, this community has become a source of spiritual strength and consistency in my life. They have given me the gift to worship, pray, reflect, give thanks, and even grieve. I am very thankful for the Abbey and this community of faith. — Matt Landry, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church of South Bend, Indiana*

*The pandemic reminded me of lessons I learned from my visits to the abbey over the last 25 years: savoring silence, stability of place, enjoying simple pleasures, living within the current of time and not fighting against it. I thank the monks of St. Gregory's for making my pandemic experience more bearable. — Lawrence Lee, pastor of Bayfield Presbyterian Church, Bayfield, Wisconsin*

Please send me \_\_\_\_ copy or copies of the

## 2022 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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