

Abbey Letter no. 291

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Fall
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Come & See...

Find out what it's like to be
a Benedictine monk.

Worship & Pray Work & Learn
with the monks at St. Gregory's
Abbey - a monastery within the
Episcopal Church at Three Rivers,
Michigan

...if you are male, age 18 to 50, have a serious interest in monastic vocation, and can spend at least two weeks at the abbey. The only cost is \$25 for registration. For more information and an application form, write:

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

**All applicants must be fully vaccinated according to
current CDC guidelines.**

saintgregorysthreerivers.org

**Use the internet wisely -
here are some things we offer:**

website (information)-----saintgregorysthreerivers.org

You Tube channel (videos)--StGregorysAbbey (no spaces)

SoundCloud channel (music)-----Br. Abraham Newsom

When searching for us on the internet, make sure you look for the St. Gregory's Abbey in Michigan. There are two other Benedictine monasteries in the United States also named for Gregory the Great.

NOTES

Abbot Andrew and Br. Armand attended the “Big Provincial Gathering” April 29th - 30th in South Bend, Indiana. The gathering brought together people and organizations from Province V of the Episcopal Church.

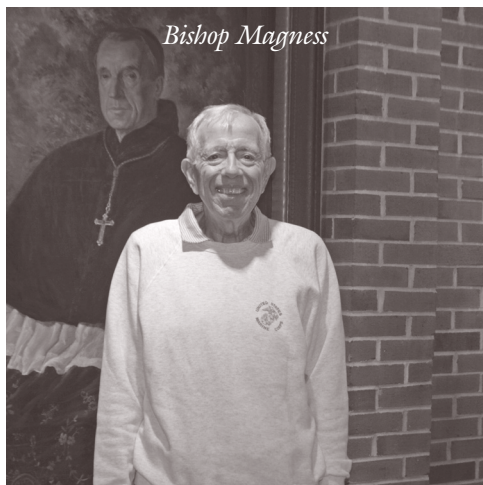
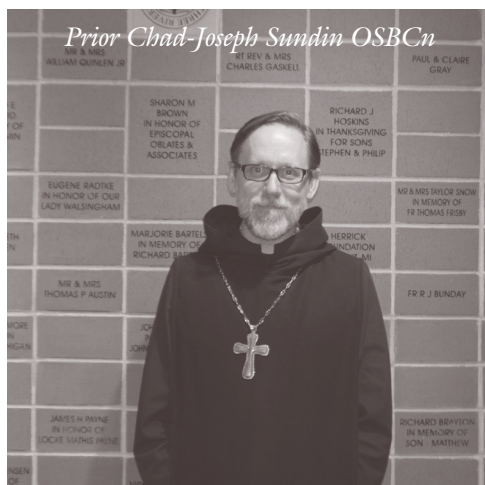
Abbot Andrew attended the annual superiors meeting of CAROA (Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas) via teleconference May 2nd - 7th. The main topic of this year’s conference was racism.

Some members of the Canons of the Order of St. Benedict were with us June 27th - 30th.

The Rt. Rev. James Magness, retired Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries, was with us June 28th - July 2nd.

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

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 telling us you are 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.)



Church Flowers

When I first started going to the Episcopal Church, one of the things I noticed was the use of flowers for the Sunday services. Later, in Inquirers' Class, the rector explained that having flowers in the church was a way of bringing nature into the church's worship, as a way of acknowledging the gift of the natural world in our worship. This idea has always stayed with me, and I love the idea of including nature in our liturgy.

When I first came to St. Gregory's Abbey, one of the monks would come up with flower arrangements for Sundays and major feast days. These ranged from stunningly simple single flower arrangements to large and lavish bouquets. When this monk decided to leave the abbey, I found myself missing the flower arrangements. I missed the beauty they brought to the liturgy, and I felt that nature was absent in our worship. (Obviously it wasn't missing; I was merely missing this way of bringing nature into our prayer.)

So I took it upon myself to learn how to do flower arranging. There were a small number of flower arranging books in the sacristy, some of which dealt with *ikebana*, that is, Japanese flower arranging. These ikebana books opened up a new way of seeing and approaching flower arranging that emphasized their natural setting, rather than arranging a mass of flowers in a vase. Ikebana focuses on the beauty of the foliage, the gracefulness of a stem, and the importance of using negative space. It also helped me to appreciate nature more deeply, which also brought a sense of joy towards nature that was absent in my life.





Of course, my first attempts at ikebana were awful, and I cringe whenever I think about them. But study and practice takes time, and the more I learned, the easier it has become to come up with an arrangement that may add to someone's worship and love of God, or at least not distract from the liturgy itself. (It is tempting to try to make a given arrangement the focus of the liturgy rather than to serve the liturgy.)

I prefer to describe my arrangements as "ikebana inspired", rather than pass them off as true ikebana. I try to follow the general precepts of ikebana rather than follow the specific rules. There are many schools of ikebana, each with their own rules and emphases. I prefer the Ohara school, especially their style known as *moribana*, which involves the use of low bowls and a sense of restraint. I also gain inspiration from the more traditional schools of ikebana rather than the more modern schools. These latter tend to be more abstract sculpture than flower arrangements.

I hope I have moved on from my being an "ikebana snob" to having a better appreciation of more western ways of flower arranging. There are times when a given celebration requires a more exuberant mass flower arrangement instead of a more studied example of ikebana. I am blessed to be apart of a community whose church can accommodate ikebana styles of floral arrangements as well as more western styles. I suspect that most churches are not really conducive to ikebana, due to their more traditional architectural style. Ikebana needs a more simple or modern setting, otherwise it'll look out of place or disappear totally. Even so, I do encourage using flowers in the church. They don't have to be exotic or showy to effectively add to the worship environment.

– Br. Martin

Available October 15

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

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 THE ONLY NAME OF JESUS	2 St. Gregory Nazianzen	3	4	5	6 THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD	7
8 THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD	9 Martinus Bishop	10 St. Paul, 1st Letter	11	12 St. Andrew	13 St. Peter	14
15 THE AFFLIX THE EPIPHANY	16 St. Anthony of Egypt	17 Annunciation of St. Mary	18 St. John	19 St. John	20 St. John	21 St. John
22 THE AFFLIX THE EPIPHANY	23 St. Francis de Sales	24 Annunciation of St. Paul	25 St. Thomas & St. James	26 St. John	27 St. John	28 St. John
29 THE AFFLIX THE EPIPHANY	30	31	January 2023			

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2023 Calendar

Enclosed is \$10.00 for each calendar.

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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

St. Gregory's Abbey is deeply rooted in our geographical location near Three Rivers, but we also touch the lives of many people around the world. 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). 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

*St. Gregory's Abbey is a profound gift to me, to my home community, and to the world. The brothers' commitment to prayer, work, and study, rooted in a particular place and on behalf of the life of the world, is truly an anchoring presence in my life, calling me back to the wholeness of my inner and outer life. Whether on retreat, visiting for a service, or even just calling to mind the multi-sensory space of the abbey church, I give thanks for the brothers and the space held at St. Gregory's for storytelling, ritual, and connection that are the foundation of our common work for shalom. - Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma, Head Caretaker at GilChrist Retreat Center and Core Community Member at *culture is not optional, Three Rivers, Michigan*

I first came to St. Gregory's for retreat shortly after I was ordained a deacon. Returning as often as I can has been a vital support for my life of faith. It is such a gift to enter the Abbey Church and be immersed in the daily round of prayer. Whether reading in the library or the guest house, walking the trails of the woods, or simply sitting and watching (the cranes, or the cats, or the wild turkeys...), I am so grateful for the re-creation I experience in the refreshment of the hospitality of the community of St. Gregory's. The other gift in returning has been getting to know other guests, some of whom have become mentors and friends; it is a joy to see others fall in love with the community and its life, and to know that we are truly welcomed for a time. - The Reverend Canon Matthew Griffin, rector of Church of the Nativity, Hamilton, Ontario.





ST. GREGORY'S ABBEY
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