

Abbey Letter no. 296
Christmas 2023





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

NOTES

After a long apprenticeship starting in 2019, Br. Abraham has been appointed novicemaster. The community thanks Fr. Aelred for his service in that capacity for 41 years. The novicemaster runs the vocation program, interviews prospective community members, and helps guide them through their initial years in the monastery.

Abbot Andrew continues his role as spiritual advisor to the Community of Celebration based in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

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.)



Meet a friend of St. Gregory's Abbey: Paula Durren of New Buffalo, Michigan -

"I first encountered St. Gregory's Abbey almost 40 years ago when I attended a vestry retreat for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in St. Joseph, Michigan. I had joined the Episcopal Church 3 years prior to that so I was relatively new to its liturgies. I fell in love with the Book of Common Prayer and all of its prayers. The weekend of the retreat at St. Gregory's Abbey I was deeply moved by the Benedictine life of prayer/worship of the monks and the beauty of its surroundings. It was the beginning of a long, meaningful relationship that has sustained me through the years. Since that time, I have made many retreats at the Abbey. It was the place I sought as a healing sanctuary after the death of each of my brothers and other loved ones. It was the place I sought as I was discerning a call to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church as well as a call to become the rector of Church of the Mediator in Harbert, Michigan.

Several years ago, while on retreat, Abbot Andrew approached me and asked if I would become the monks' confessor. He said that he and the community thought with my background as a counselor, my experience as an Episcopal priest and my long relationship with the community, it would work well. My initial internal reaction was 'I am not worthy,' yet I said I would pray on it. I spoke to my spiritual director, and she reminded me that God's love in Jesus made me/all of us worthy. So, I said yes, and became, as some of the monks call me, their Mother confessor. It has been a humbling relationship that has enriched my life with the community and more importantly my relationship with God. Each time I go to hear the confessions, the monks thank me, yet it is I who thank them."

TIME IS ETERNITY LIVING DANGEROUSLY

I have lived here at St. Gregory's Abbey for over half of my life. I've lived here since 1985, and when I think of how long ago it was when I enter the monastery, it rather blows my mind! Have I really been here for 38 years? I mean, that was last century! How weird is that?

I think one of the more frustrating aspects of growing older is that Time seems to speed up more with each passing year. I saw an ad for an album that I remember buying 10 years ago, only to realize that the ad was for that album's special 30th anniversary edition!

And to make things worse, I saw this ad ten years afterwards! All of a sudden, an album I think of as fresh and exciting is in most people's mind an older classic rock album (The Cure's "Disintegration".)

This experience makes me wonder what Time feels like if one could live 1000 years. Would one experience Time as going so fast that one could not even comprehend nor adapt to all the changes taking place seemingly so quickly? (I suspect that this experience of Time getting faster or shorter is why older people always seem to be behind the times as regards the latest trends and technology, so you younger readers, do be patient with us older ones.)

All this makes me wonder what Eternity will feel like. And what does it feel like to God, who's been around for, well, forever? As Scripture says, "With God a day is like a 1000 years, and a 1000 years is like a day." God's Time is not the same as our time. God is above our time, in what theologians call "Kairos", or "God's Time". Yet God, being God, also lives in our time with us (shown by Jesus being born and living in the midst of our time).





One of the ways the church practices "Kairos" is in its worship. Here at the Abbey we celebrate the Octave of Christmas, that is, the eight days after Christmas as if each day was Christmas day itself. (The only other time we celebrate an Octave is after Easter Day). Octaves are reserved for the church's two biggest holidays, and are celebrated because they are so important and so full of meaning that there is simply no way one day is adequate to celebrate them, so we extend our worship throughout the week, using the same liturgies as on the day itself. It is as if Time stops and those days last longer in order to enter more fully the Holy Mysteries of those days. So during the Christmas Octave at Vespers we chant this antiphon before and after the Magnificat:

Today Christ has been born,
today the Savior has appeared,
today angels sing on earth and archangels rejoice,
today the just exult saying;
Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.

This is my favorite chant in all the liturgy (and is used in Britten's "Advent Lessons And Carols".)

As for now, God has not shown us what Eternity will be like, except that it is beyond our imaginings, and that it will be rather marvelous. Everything will be the fulfillment of what God intended everything to become. It is as if God wants to surprise us.

- Br. Martin

Come & See...

Find out what it's like to be a
Benedictine monk (we think
it's wonderful, by the way.)

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



The July program is highly recommended, but if you have a serious interest in monastic vocation and can not come in July, let us know and we can set up an individual vocational visit at another time.

CONTACTING THE ABBEY

Mailing address

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

Telephone

269-244-5893
9:30am - 11:15am
or 2:30pm - 4:15pm
Eastern Time Monday
through Saturday
(please do not telephone at other
times or on Sundays or holidays)

E-mail

Guest reservations and information
guestmaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Mailing list

office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Abbot Andrew

abbot@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

**Information about becoming a monk
or participating in the Vocation Program**
novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

**Books and calendars may be ordered,
prayers requested, and donations
made at our website**
www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org

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



Please send me ____ copy or copies of the

2024 Calendar

Enclosed is \$10.00 for each calendar.

Name _____

Address _____

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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

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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