

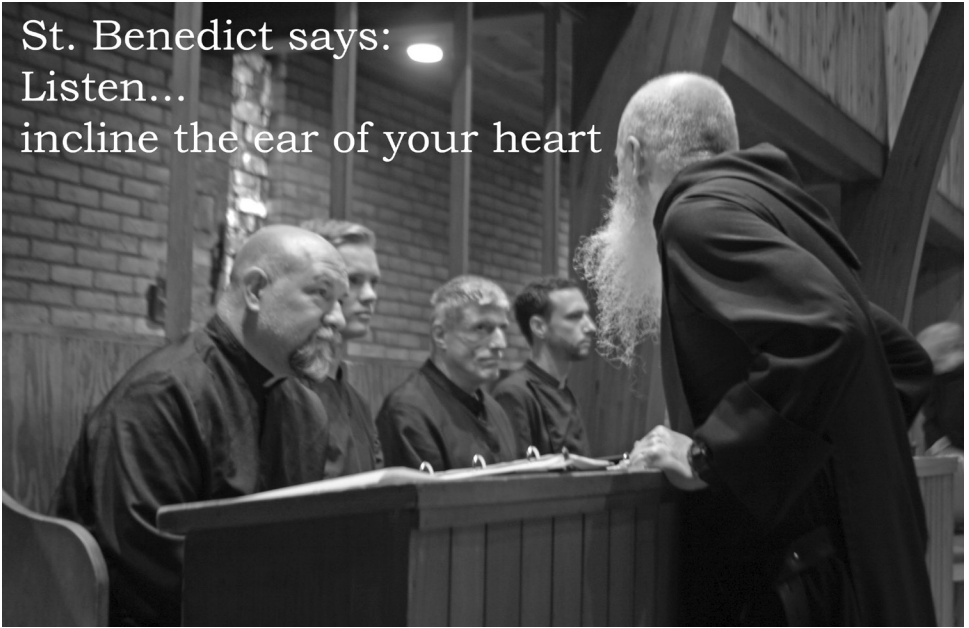
Abbey Letter

Easter
2025



no. 301

St. Benedict says:
Listen...
incline the ear of your heart



**Find out what it's like to be a
monk at St. Gregory's Abbey, a
Benedictine monastery in the Episcopal
Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.**

...if you are male, age 18 to 50, and 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:

Vocation 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, contact the novicemaster for other options.

saintgregorysthreerivers.org

**DON'T DISMISS IT
DON'T PUT IT OFF
FIND YOUR LIFE NOW**

NOTES

Br. Armand attended the first convention of the Diocese of The Great Lakes October 18th - 19th in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. The new diocese was formed from a merger of the Diocese of Western Michigan and the Diocese of Eastern Michigan.

Abbot Andrew and Fr. William were at GilChrist Retreat Center (our next door neighbors - two miles away) October 28th to meet with representatives from various retreat and prayer centers in our neighborhood. The group meets a few times each year for discussion about how we can be of mutual support for each other. Participants in the discussions usually include representatives from: St. Gregory's Abbey, GilChrist, The Hermitage, Apple Farm, and Culture Is Not Optional.

In gratitude for Abbot Andrew's many years of service as abbot, the monks have named the tower bell "Andrew" in his honor.

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.)



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

WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Christ is risen, we say, but what do we mean?

The resurrection is the true heart of the Christian faith. A Christian is someone who believes Jesus of Nazareth is Christ, Messiah, because that person believes that God raised Jesus from the dead, and therefore vindicated the cause for which Jesus died. What it means to believe this is of course disputable—some Christians believe it as myth but not as history, while the majority of Christians have traditionally maintained it as a historical event—but this is the basic Christian confession, from which all the rest is derived.

There is no evidence that Jews in Jesus's day were expecting a dying and rising messiah. And if all Jesus had done was die and rise again, there were other ways for Jews of that time to understand who Jesus was. Jesus, for instance, would hardly be the first prophet to suffer and be vindicated by God with glorification to heavenly status: It happened to Moses and to Elijah.

What is resurrection? Early Jews and Early Christians had no singular understanding of resurrection or its mechanics and so the New Testament doesn't have a single doctrine of the matter either. While Ancient Israel and Judah knew of a positive afterlife gathered to one's ancestors, the Hebrew Bible says little to nothing about an afterlife and only its very late texts describe resurrection.

The Gospels were not written until thirty or more years after our Lord's lifetime. Their highly stylized, and dramatic stories of the empty tomb and, in Matthew, Luke, and John, of post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, are missing from Paul and maybe they represent a development in the telling in oral, liturgical, and perhaps earlier literary settings, but in all four of them, it is women who first receive the message that Jesus is raised. In Mark 16:8, believed to be the original ending of the Gospel, they say nothing to anyone, "for they were afraid"; in Matthew, the risen Jesus tells the disciples to meet him in Galilee, where they worship him and he commissions them to go and make disciples of the nations. In neither of these Gospels is the risen body of Jesus itself available for direct consideration. In Luke, the story is quite different, where Jesus seeks to demonstrate that he is not just a vision, but a man of flesh and blood. In John, Jesus presents the very wounds of the crucifixion to Thomas and later joins his disciples for breakfast.

Did the resurrection happen? This is not a question that can be answered historically. Traditional Christianity has a God who is sovereign over space, time and matter and capable of operating within them in ways we don't ordinarily experience. Believing in God and the possibility of the miraculous is not itself sufficient to prove that the resurrection happened. Plenty of Jews and Muslims believe in God and that God can do miracles without believing that Jesus rose from the dead. Historically the most that can be said is that the disciples experienced Jesus alive again, whatever the real content of their experience was. The evidence can be read in various ways, but one of those is the traditional Christian belief that Jesus rose from the dead.

In the early Christian understanding it seems that Jesus's resurrection meant that the end was near; God was about to intervene to bring his Kingdom as Jesus had preached. The parts of the New Testament that came after the seven undisputed Pauline epistles are already trying to apologize to greater and lesser degrees for the fact that the Kingdom had not come—especially in the wake of the Temple's destruction. It is there that we get our earliest Christian strategies for the delay of Jesus's second coming: In place of apocalypse now, we have his resurrection, ascension, and giving the Holy Spirit as the beginning of a not yet completed process.

For most of Christian history, Jesus's resurrection and ascension have been enough for most Christians: the Kingdom of God has arrived in heaven, and on earth it's the church, so no need to be anxious for any forthcoming apocalypse. But on the other hand, this has often encouraged Christians to act in ways that contradict the resurrection's logic and they simply take for granted the acceptability of a fallen world. And so each time Christianity has grown stale with power and stability, the apocalyptic vision of the risen Jesus, come back from the dead to restore the Kingdom of God here and now, has returned.

But a more personal reflection:

If Jesus is alive, then death is vanquished.

If Jesus is alive, then God sees and vindicates the suffering, and does not abandon us to the grave.

If Jesus is alive then his proclamation of the Kingdom is alive as well, and as he has not yet returned to do it himself, it means that Jesus has entrusted us to realize in our own lives the compassionate love, concern and commitment for our social and political circles, our focus on the common good, and our world of shared life with the rest of the world.

The responsibilities of stewarding creation and working within existing political realities for a more just society are less epic, less inspiring perhaps than the dramatic imagery of the final battle. But the risen Jesus calls us not only to die his death, but also to live his life. That is the message of Resurrection, to a world that still, perhaps ever more wearily, longs for God to make life from death.

— Prior Aelred

BOOKS READ IN THE REFECTORY DURING LUNCH AND SUPPER 2024

The Vanishing: Faith, Loss, and the Twilight of Christianity in the Land of the Prophets

by Janine di Giovanni

Ways of Eating: Exploring Food Through History and Culture

by Benjamin A. Wurgaft and Merry I. White

Mission, Race, and Empire: The Episcopal Church in Global Context

by Jennifer C. Snow

War, Love, and Redemption: A Memoir

by Katrina Cakste Wilson

Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle

by Shannen Dee Williams

Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded: August 17, 1883

by Simon Winchester

The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts

by Karen Armstrong

On The Edge: The Art of Risking Everything

by Nate Silver



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.

\$ _____

Tools For Peace (2007)

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

\$24.00 Please send _____ copies.

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Born in the Darkest Time of Year (2004)

15 Christmas stories by Abbot Andrew

\$12.00 Please send _____ copies.

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Creatures We Dream of Knowing (2011)

fantasy stories by Abbot Andrew

\$12.00 Please send _____ copies.

\$ _____

From Beyond to Here (2012)

more stories by Abbot Andrew

\$15.00 Please send _____ copies.

\$ _____

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.

\$ _____

Seven Times A Day I Praise You

Br. Martin's review of personal daily prayer books

\$3.00 Please send _____ copies.

\$ _____

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.

\$ _____

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 and look for publications (digital).

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

Enclosed is \$ _____ in full payment. Please allow 4 – 6 weeks for delivery.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Any payment in excess of the book price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.
St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595



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