

Abbey
Letter
no. 305

Easter
2026



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



**So be a summertime monk
for two weeks or more
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 if you 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:

Summer 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



NOTES

Br. Francis Beckham of the Order of the Holy Cross was with us October 20th -25th.

Br. Armand attended the annual convention of the Diocese of The Great Lakes October 24th-25th at The Horizon Centers in Saginaw Michigan.

Patrick Morris was clothed as a novice after vespers on November 13th and has taken the name Br. Julian. Before coming to St. Gregory's, he was the parish administrator at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Brenham, Texas.

Abbot Andrew and Fr. William were at Apple Farm (a Jungian center around the corner from us) on January 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.

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.)



THAT THING YOU DO

After vespers everyday here at St. Gregory's Abbey, we have a time set aside for quiet, personal, private meditation. Some of us stay in the church to pray, others go to their rooms, or outside, or other special places. There are no set "rules" about how our personal meditation/prayer should be conducted, other than it should not be neglected. In fact, this time is so private, that most of us do not know how the other monks spend their personal prayer time. (By the way, you notice I am using the words "prayer" and "meditation" interchangeably - you could even add the word "contemplation" into the mix. The idea and act of prayer/meditation/contemplation is too deep to explain anyway, so we should not get too caught up in the words used to describe it - it's just about being with God in an intentional way.)

I almost always stay in the church for my personal prayer time - usually in my choir stall, sometimes in one of the private chapels at the south side of the church, and at Christmas time I like to sit by the nativity scene. People sometimes ask what the monks do during their private meditation time, and I am usually hesitant to answer, because it is difficult to explain, and also because some people might think that they should pattern their own private prayer after the monks' examples, because monks "know how to pray" (we don't, not any better than anyone else.) But, just to give people an insight into what I usually do, I will try to explain:

Most of the time, I sit silently and repeat certain phrases that help me remember that I am not the center of everything; God is. Some of these phrases are: "You are God, and I am not.", "It's all about You, not about me.", "Only God has all the info, so only God can judge.", and "What You want, when You want, how You want it." ("You" is God in these cases.) I usually pair each half of these first two phrases with my breath: the first half with an inhale, second half with an exhale. There is nothing magical or mystical about the breath part; it just helps to keep me focused. Another private meditation practice that I do is to close my eyes and see people's faces while silently saying their names. I try to do this for as many people as I know, and also people I do not know personally. I see them and say their names one by one, reminding myself that I love them and am grateful for their existence in my life. I also remind myself that they are hurting in some way (we all are), and so I have compassion for them. I am careful to do this for people I like, as well as people I do not like; people who have helped me, and people who have hurt me; people with whom I

agree, and people with whom I disagree; people I admire, and people I do not admire; people I would vote for, and people I would never vote for. They are all Children of God, and they all are deserving of my love, compassion, and gratitude, even if some or most of their actions need to change for the better.

Two other things I do might be called "less active" and "more contemplative": I sit still and remember that even when I am not doing a good job at contemplating God, God is always contemplating me - holding me in a Loving Gaze. So, I just sit there and let God love me. Sometimes I don't even do that; I just sit there.

The decision about what to do during private meditation time is not made on the spot, nor is it arbitrary. I have a list in my choir stall that has all of these practices scheduled for weeks at a time. That makes sure that I am not merely following my whims and emotions, and makes private prayer truly a discipline. Discipline brings growth, while following whims and emotions can bring stagnation and childishness. I know that these disciplines have helped me to grow, because my friends tell me I am a much better person now than before I joined the monastery.

Sometimes people ask us monks how we remain focused in prayer. I tell them the truth: I do not. My mind wanders countless times during each meditation period. In fact, I am "off task" the majority of the time during prayer (public and private.) I have come to accept that is just part of me and my brain. I recognize it and accept it, but also try to be better at attending to the task. I think I have gotten better over the years; a few seconds or even minutes of focused prayer during the half hour period is a victory now, and I am grateful for it. I start out focused, go off track, realize it, bring myself back, and repeat the whole thing. The two important things are that I do not kick myself for being unable to remain focused, and that I am thankful for the time that I was focused.

Well, that's what I do. It might make sense to you; it might seem strange. That is OK. Everyone's relationship with God is unique, and so all of our prayer will be different. Don't think you need to pray a certain way just because someone else does it that way. The important thing is to do it. It is work, and it is also a joy.

- Br. Abraham

BOOKS READ IN THE REFECTORY DURING LUNCH AND SUPPER 2025

**Confessions of a Former Prosecutor: Abandoning Vengeance
and Embracing True Justice**

by Preston Shipp and Eric Wilson

After 1177 BC: The Survival of Civilizations

by Eric H. Cline

**Schools for the Lord's Service: A History of the American-Cassinese Congre-
gation of Benedictine Monasteries 1855-2023**

by Jerome Oetgen

**Neon Side of Town: The Story of the B-52s (rock and roll band, not bomb-
er jets)**

by Scott Creney and Brigitte Adair Herron

**Silence: A Social History of One of the Least Understood Elements of Our
Lives**

by Jane Brox

Hoof Beats: How Horses Shaped Human History

by William T. Taylor

How We Learn To Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith

by Mariann Edgar Budde

Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light

by Jane Brox

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.*

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.

\$ _____

Born in the Darkest Time of Year (2004)

15 Christmas stories by Abbot Andrew

\$12.00 Please send _____ copies.

\$ _____

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.

\$ _____

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.

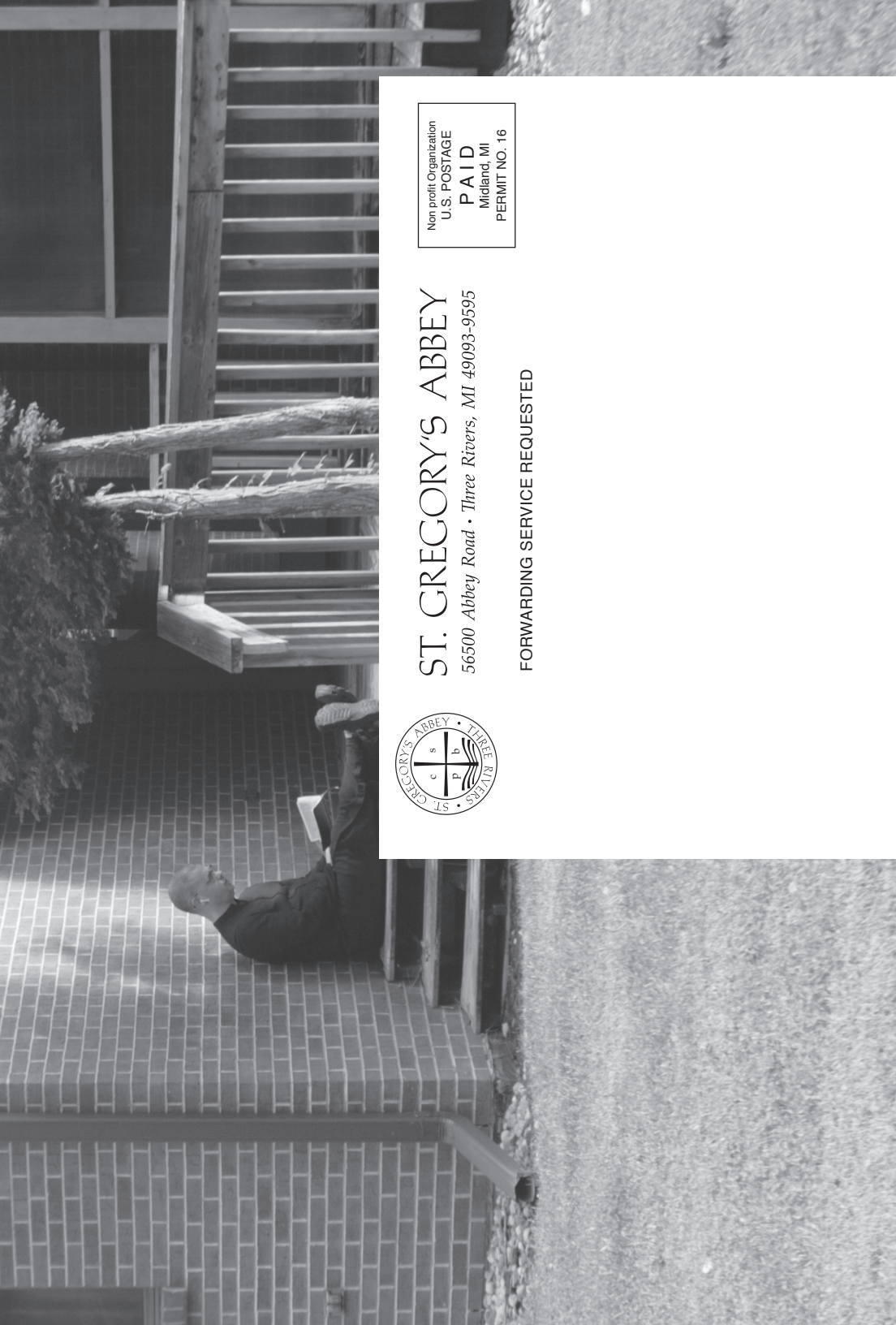
Enclosed is \$ _____ in full payment. Please allow 4 – 6 weeks for delivery.

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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