

From the Heights: Monastic Musings from the Mountains

Septuagesimatide, 2016

Volume III, Issue 1

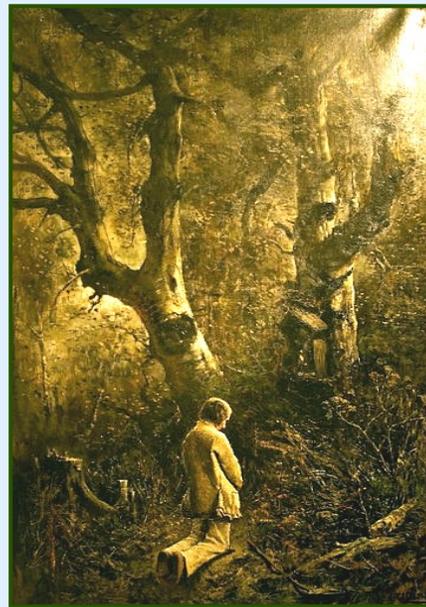
Neither in the World, nor of the World

One of the traditional phrases used to describe a person's entrance into monastic life is, "to leave the world." Of course, this means neither a literal departure from earth, nor a utopian escape from the basic struggles of human life. When, in this context, we speak of the "world," we mean a way of living characterized by focusing so intently on pleasure, power, or riches that there is no room for the just claims of the Creator upon his creatures and, therefore, an inability to recognize and receive the Spirit of truth (cf Jn 14:17).

St. Paul calls such a mindset the "spirit of the world" (1 Cor. 2:12), and warns Christians — *all* Christians, not just monks and nuns — against letting it shape their lives.

For most Christians, the challenge is how to live in the midst of "the world," without being overwhelmed by its hedonism, exaggerated sense of individuality, or greed, while still working for a living, raising a family, serving one's fellow citizens, and being faithful members

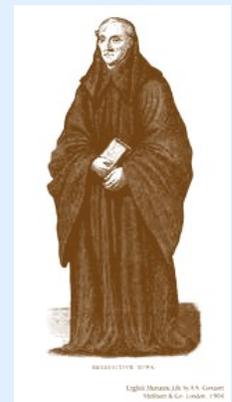
of Christ's Body, the Church. These are they of whom we say that they are "in the world, but not of the world" (cf Jn 17:14-19). Theirs is clearly an ascetic path, one filled with trials and blessings for those who are striving to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).



But the ascetic path of monastics differs in that, while they are also working out their salvation with fear and trembling, they do so by withdrawing, to one or another extent, from the pursuit of career, family, and status in society. Like St.

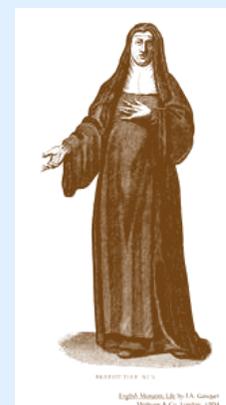
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Neither in the world, nor of it. con't.

From the Holy Rule, Chapter 4.

Tools of Good Works:

- *Not to render evil for evil.*
- *To do no wrong to anyone, and to bear patiently wrongs done to oneself.*
- *To love one's enemies.*
- *Not to render cursing for cursing, but rather blessing.*
- *To bear persecution for justice' sake.*

Mary of Bethany, they choose to sit at the Lord's feet and concentrate on his teaching (cf Lk 10:39) through daily worship, meditation on the Scriptures, and prayer, all in the context of ongoing repentance and self denial in matters both small and great. By embracing what are known as the "Evangelical counsels" of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the monastic seeks to "lose his/her life" in order that, by the Grace of God, he or she may "find it" (cf Matt. 10:39). This quest is shaped by the disciplines and duties of monastic life, through which faithful persons strive to "prefer nothing to Christ," as St. Benedict says in his *Rule*.

A monastery is designed and structured to encourage and support such total dedication of daily life to God: the arrangement and structure of the buildings; the atmosphere of silence; the primacy of the "work of God" (which is what St. Benedict calls the daily round of worship) over "my/our work;" the immersion of the mind in the words of Scripture and of the Saints; the intention to remain in the monastery of one's profession for life (one could say, "for better or for worse") unless called elsewhere by the Church.

Of course, life in a monastery is still human life, and monastics

share in the Christian duties of love, work, and service of others. In St. Benedict's form of monasticism, there is a clear emphasis on learning charity, forbearance, industriousness, hospitality, and witness to the love of God. How these are expressed may vary from monastery to monastery, with greater or lesser emphasis on, perhaps, manual labor, crafts, solitude, ministries of hospitality or of education, or some other way of supporting themselves and having the means to help the needy.

Like marriage, it is a demanding life; and like marriage it is a life with many blessings for those who pursue it in faith, hope, and charity.



You may have heard various persons in our society recommending what they call the "Benedict Option," a way for Christians to go apart from mainstream society to live in remote areas and withdraw from the mainstream of American society. Whatever one may think of this idea, it is important to remember that St. Benedict, like

The Eve of
Septuagesima Sunday:

Preparing for the
"Farewell to Alleluia."



News and Events

countless other monastic fathers and mothers before and after him, did not set out to create a separate, but purer replica of secular society, but to “leave the world” in order to take up the Cross and follow Christ through poverty, chastity, and obedience. He sought not a better life, but rather to “die” with Christ to the ways of the world, in order to participate, to the fullest extent possible, in the freedom for which Christ has set us free: a freedom from the fears and anxieties that lure us into sin.

As it has been since the early days of the Church, the real Benedict Option is to leave behind the ideals, hopes, and goals of secular society and embrace the monastic life in one or another of its forms.

To do so is to accept a call to radical Christianity, to ongoing conversion, to the realization, in our own lives and those of our companions, of what are called the “hard sayings” of Jesus.

Our deteriorating society (like that from which St. Benedict withdrew) needs this powerful witness to the ability of the Gospel to change our priorities, to transform our lives, to turn the world upside down. Pray that courageous men and women will hear and respond in faith to St. Benedict’s challenge that they “prefer nothing whatever to Christ” (*Rule*, Ch. 72).

November, 2015: The monastery received six high altar candlesticks and a large rack of votive lights from the former Holy Incarnation Parish, Lincoln Heights, MI. While we are saddened to see a parish church close, we are grateful for this gift.

Jan. **: Sr. Lynette Stephanica Goldy of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Pueblo, made her Oblation in the Oratory at the Monastery. Sister was formerly a Domestic Member of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, a Christian Community of the Roman Church.

Feb. 3-17: Prior Theodore visited family in Washington State, then drove to San Francisco to help Br. Huw Raphael, Obl.SB, move to the monastery. While in San Francisco, prayers for our monastery were offered at the Shrine of St. John the Wonderworker.

Feb. 20: Oblate Br. Huw Raphael Richardson was formally welcomed to the Monastery as a postulant.

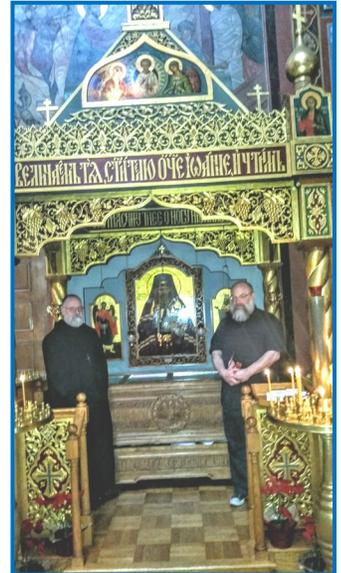
March 6: Prior Theodore will be serving at St. Columba Parish, Lafayette, CO, in the absence of their priest, Fr. Lester Bundy, Obl.SB.

March 12: Confirmation retreat for St. Joseph Church, Pueblo.

April 2-3: Confirmation retreat for Christ the King Church, Pueblo.

April 7-11: Prior Theodore will travel to Whittier, CA, to lead a Lenten Quiet Day for the Society of St. Benedict, St. Michael’s Orthodox Church.

April 23: Special event for the Catholic Diocese of Pueblo.



Father Prior and
Oblate Huw Raphael
at the Shrine of
St. John
the Wonderworker

*When your
heart does not
have Christ, it
will contain
either money,
property or
people instead.*

—Elder Amphilochios

How You can help!

- Pray for the Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence's well being, growth in holiness, and vocations.
- Consider affiliation with us as an Oblate of St. Benedict
- Encourage your church or Christian organization to schedule retreats or conferences at St. Laurence Center or to invite Prior Theodore as a speaker or guest preacher.
- Give Lancelot Andrewes Press icons or books as gifts.
- Volunteer time at the St. Laurence Center for various projects.
- Donate towards the support of the St. Laurence Center and/or the Monastery.
- Consider purchasing a plot in the St. Laurence Cemetery or St. Seraphim Pet Cemetery.

Contact: priory@saintlaurenceosb.org

The **Benedictine Fellowship of Saint Laurence** is an independent, non-profit corporation established for religious and charitable purposes. All donations are tax deductible.

The Fellowship was founded to promote monastic life and spiritual renewal and worship according to the traditions of Orthodox Catholic Christianity, under the inspiration of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. In order to further this ministry, the Fellowship operates a retreat center where people can seek renewal through combining worship, contemplation, and work.

The **Monastery of Our Lady and Saint Laurence** is a canonical monastery of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. The monks and nuns live according to the ancient *Rule of St. Benedict*. They live and work at the Benedictine Fellowship's 600-acre campus in the Colorado Rocky Mountains and are under the oversight of the Vicar Bishop for the Antiochian Orthodox Western Rite Vicariate. They endeavor to support themselves with regard to food, medical care, transportation, and personal needs through their service for the Fellowship and through other crafts or services; however, donations are gratefully received since their efforts do not currently bring in enough to sustain the mo-

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Seeking and Serving God in the Way of St. Benedict