

Abbey Letter no. 263

Fall 2015



on the cover: participants in the vocation program eating lunch in the refectory

Scenes from this Year's July Vocation Program

Participants in our annual Vocation Program commit to staying at least two weeks at St. Gregory's. While here, they are given a glimpse of monastic life as they pray, work, study, and have social contact with the monks.



class time



weeding the garden



working in the refectory



proofreading



study in the library



helping in the kitchen



hot dogs, homemade ice cream, and fireworks on the 4th of July

Saint Gregory's Abbey now has an e-mail list for those wishing to receive the ABBEY LETTER electronically. To sign up, simply go to our website:

saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Click on the "Publications" link on the home page to get a drop-down menu, and then click on either "The Abbey Letter" or "Order Publications (Digital)". A registration form can be found on those pages. Once you fill out the necessary information and submit it, you should receive a welcome letter via e-mail.

Enrolling in our e-mail list does not remove you from our hard copy mailing list. If you do want to stop receiving the hard copy once you are on the e-mail list, simply send an e-mail to **office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org** telling us you are now 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).

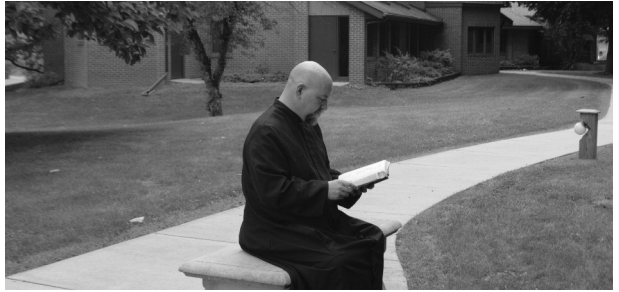
Thank you for keeping in touch with us through our ABBEY LETTER in whichever format you decide.

more scenes from this year's July Vocation Program

in choir



scripture reading



playing cards during community recreation time



daily chapter meeting



coffee and cookies after daily Eucharist



daily cleaning chores

NOTES

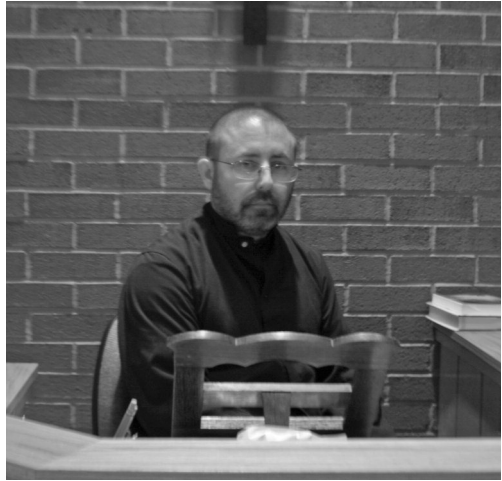
Burton Koss

Burton Koss from Columbus, Ohio has entered the monastery as a postulant. He is a native of Chicago.

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, bishop of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, was with us April 22nd – 24th.

Br. Cassian Russell OCSO from Holy Spirit Monastery in Conyers, Georgia was with us May 13th – 21st.

The Rt. Rev. Whayne Houghland, bishop of the Diocese of Western Michigan, and his wife Dana were with us June 3rd – 5th.



Bishop Gunter



Bishop and Dana Houghland

"And Who Are My Brothers and Sisters?"

In chapters 10 and 11 of the Book of Acts is a remarkable story that deals with a question that seems never to go away in both church and society. It is the question of who is in and who is out, who is one of us and who is one of them, who is included and who is excluded. This is the issue raised in the story of Cornelius the centurion, and of how the early church struggled to find an answer. Can gentiles be accepted into the Church, and should the requirements of the Jewish law be applied to them? After much debate, it was decided that yes, gentiles can indeed be accepted as members of the Church; and no, the Jewish law cannot be required of them. Do not place burdens on others that one cannot carry oneself, is the reasoning.

This story is crucial in the development of Christian faith and practice, and it continues to offer us a scenario as to how to deal with similar questions of inclusion and exclusion in our own day. This is not the first time the issue is raised in Scripture, for there is an over-arching tendency in the Bible to show God pushing the boundaries of our borders (real and imagined) to include more and more of those outside our boundaries.

The revelation that God is God of the Jews eventually leads to the realization that God is also the God of everyone else. This idea of expanding our borders to include those outside affects not only the groups we belong to, but us as individuals as well. One of the effects of the command to love God with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves is to enlarge not only our personal and private worlds, but the world of the collective culture and society in which we find ourselves.

Let's put it like this: Throughout our lives we have built walls (literally and figuratively) that we hid behind, both as individuals and as societies. While these walls can be beneficial and inevitable (after all, we all need to take a refuge from life's travails from time to time), it is not healthy to remain within our private sanctuaries, living in constant fear of what lies outside. Fear can conquer love, just as love conquers fear. It is the latter that God wants us to do.

So God will search for weak spots in our walls and will eventually tear them down, so that fresh air can come into our worlds and the boundaries enlarged to include others. This is something that usually takes time to accomplish, for it is as if when one wall is torn down, we build another wall, yet one that enlarges our world. With each demolishing of our walls, our worlds enlarge over time.

Admittedly this process can be scary. We build walls for protection, after all. It must be remembered that the reason for this tearing down of walls that separate one from another is to enlarge our capacity for love and compassion. As this capacity increases, our fear decreases. Love casts out fear. For most of us, this will take all our lives. Human life is a spiritual journey, and in the end, it is the journey that matters. Our willingness to become more and more inclusive of others (and thus more inclusive of God) in our lives is what is important.

The above description is the lens through which I see the issue of inclusion and exclusion within the church, society, and my own little world. There are always those who are excluded. And it seems to me that this is the issue that will not go away. Women's rights, minority rights, gay and lesbian rights, transgender rights, immigrant

rights: these are all examples of the continuing challenge of who can be accepted as one of us and of what requirements can be demanded of those we include. I think the solution to such a challenge is what the early church found when debating whether or not to include gentiles, that is, do not burden others with what one cannot do oneself. I pray that my eyes may become open enough to see how I exclude others, and that I may also have the grace to become more and more inclusive, not only of others but of God as well. For when we reject others we reject God: “What you have done to the least of these, you have done to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

— Br. Martin



Music compositions from St. Gregory' s Abbey

Missa Brevis *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham - *Latin text from the ordinary of the mass*

Rumi *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham - *English translation of the poems of Rumi*

A Symphony of Psalms *choral symphony* by Br. Abraham - *Latin text of four psalms*

The Kiss *baritone voice and string quartet* by Br. Abraham - *texts from office readings for Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary*

Tuesday Afternoon *chorus and wind octet* by Br. Abraham - *psalms from Tuesday vespers*

Symphony in c minor *orchestral symphony* by Br. Abraham *in romantic minimalist style*

Symphony in g minor *orchestral symphony* by Br. Abraham *in expansive classical style*

Visible Dream *piano and baritone voice* by Br. Abraham- *poems of Cyrus Cassells*

Week In Review *piano and baritone voice* by Br. Abraham - *poems of Robert Fruchwirth*

The Hours *tenor, baritone, and bass voices* by Br. Abraham - *texts from psalms for lauds and vespers*

Life of Benedict *orchestral setting of Gregory the Great's Life of Benedict* by John Webber

*scores and synthesized performances available at **webbermusic.com***

For everything but *Life of Benedict*, search for ‘Newsom, A’; for *Life of Benedict*, search for ‘Webber, J’. Donations of \$1.00 per look and listen are requested and can be made at the website or sent to St. Gregory’s Abbey designated for “music compositions”. Hard copies of scores and orchestral parts are for sale at list price from **webbermusic.com**

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

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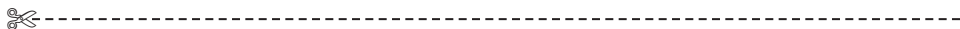
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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| January | | | | | | 1 THE BIBLE ALONE FOR ADVENT | 2 St. Gregory of Nazianzen |
| 3 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 4 | 5 | 6 THE LITURGY OF THE WORD | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
| 10 THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD | 11 St. Martin | 12 St. John | 13 St. John | 14 St. John | 15 St. John | 16 | |
| 17 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 18 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 19 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 20 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 21 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 22 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 23 | |
| 24 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 25 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 26 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 27 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 28 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 29 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 30 | |
| 31 St. Ignace and St. Francis | 2016 | | | | | | |



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