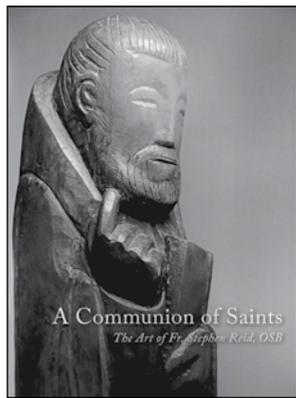


Advent 2015

Two Recent Publications: A Book and a Film

Monks have long been known for their diverse talents and interests: teachers, farmers, writers, artists. Among the last-named was Fr Stephen Reid of our community, who at the time of his death in 1989 had produced a remarkable number of sculptures and paintings. In the past few years, an art critic named Bruce Nixon has been working on a publication that offers a thoughtful, carefully researched interpretive text that considers Fr Stephen's art in the context of his life as a monk. Titled *A Communion of Saints*,



this forty-page illustrated catalog includes photographs made in accordance with the archival standards of museum documentation and so serves to preserve the legacy of Fr Stephen's significant body of work. The publication was launched at a reception held at the abbey

on the afternoon of Sunday, September 13, attended by a number of Fr Stephen's former students and other friends of the abbey. It is available in our gift shop for \$20, and can be ordered by mail for an additional four dollars to cover shipping costs.

We think our readers would also like to know of a documentary about Benedictine life that has been produced for the Catholic French television channel KTO, founded in 1999 by the late cardinal-archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger. Titled *Le Temps et la règle bénédictine*, this 52-minute film was first telecast in December, 2014. The director, Patrice Cros, has twice visited St Anselm's and hopes to produce English-language documentaries on this and similar Benedictine topics, such as work, community, authority, and poverty. If any of our readers have suggestions of sponsors who could finance such a project, please let Abbot James know. Those who would like to view the documentary on the internet can find it at the following web address: <http://www.ktotv.com/videos-chretiennes/emissions/documentaire/documentaire-la-regle-le-temps-et-la-regle-benedictine/00084980>

JAMES WISEMAN, OSB

The Chronicler's Column

After a summer that saw some members of our community away for several weeks in different parts of North America and Europe, all were back at the abbey for our annual community retreat, conducted this year by Fr James Flint, OSB, of St Procopius Abbey in Lisle, Illinois. His seven conferences consisted of reflections on various themes in C. S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces*, an ingenious approach to retreat conferences that led a number of our monks to read the novel itself, either in printed form or on Kindle readers. Two days after the retreat ended, monks on the school faculty joined lay teachers for a day of retreat that was coincidentally led by someone else from Lisle, Alicia Cordoba Tait, director of the Center for Mission and Identity at Illinois Benedictine University. She led the faculty through exercises to help us become more fully aware of the mission of our own school. After a further day of more businesslike faculty meetings and a half-day of orientation for new students, the school year began for all with an opening mass in the Devine Theatre. By the time you read this, the fall semester will be drawing to a close.

Within the school, our Prior, **Father Michael Hall**, is especially busy, not only teaching in both the religion and social studies departments but also continuing to serve as school chaplain. This position is multifaceted in its demands: scheduling regular masses, whether for individual forms, one or another of the four houses (Alban, Austin, Main, and Moore), or the entire student body and faculty; arranging retreats, including the annual Kairos Retreat for fifth formers; and coordinating the service program that has fifth and sixth form students going off campus each Tuesday morning to work

at such sites as the St Ann's Center for Children, Youth, and Families and the Bunker Hill Elementary School. Father Michael also provides regular pastoral assistance at Holy Redeemer parish in College Park, Maryland.

Our former superior, **Abbot Aidan Shea**, continues to have the sort of health issues that accompany advancing age, but he regularly has visitors coming to seek his advice in spiritual direction or simply to reminisce about the past. He is faithfully at conventual mass, midday prayer, and vespers each day and retains remarkable equanimity in facing physical limitations. In past years he would spend the month of June with his longtime friends Rob and Mary Truland in Bermuda, but this is no longer possible.

Our resident scripture scholar **Father Joseph Jensen** and his former assistant in the office of the Catholic Biblical Association, Maria Nazarczuk, were part of a group tour of Poland that had them visiting Gdańsk, the scene of Lech Wałęsa's triumphs, seeing major sights in Warsaw, worshipping at the shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa, descending into salt mines as well as ascending a high mountain at Zakopane ("the winter capital of Poland"), and grieving for the Jews and others who died at Auschwitz. That he was able to make this trip was itself remarkable, as he underwent serious spinal surgery last winter, but he has recovered so well that the beautifully carved wooden cane he brought back from Poland is more often carried than used for support and balance; indeed, from a distance it could be mistaken for a sword in its scabbard hanging diagonally from his belt. Father Joseph also visited friends in New Hampshire in July, where he reached the top of Mount Washington by cog railway and

toured Lake Winnepesaukee by boat. Although no longer teaching at Catholic University, he continues to keep his mind sharp by working on a daily crossword puzzle, at which he has become so adept that only rarely does he need ask any of the rest of us what might be a nine-letter word for a 1961 invasion locale or a five-letter word for a French gift tag.

Like Abbot Aidan, **Fathers Edmund Henkels** and **Hilary Hayden** are feeling the effects of advancing age. Father Edmund remains in residence at the nearby Carroll Manor Nursing Home, where he celebrated his 91st birthday on Halloween, while Father Hilary receives the help of 24/7 care givers in the abbey's Monmonier wing. Although profoundly deaf, and unable to walk without support after having suffered a broken hip well more than a year ago, Father Hilary is quite able to make his wishes known with a voice that is unmistakably authoritative.

As was noted in our spring newsletter, **Father Christopher Wyvill** joined Father Michael and Abbot Aidan in celebrating their fiftieth anniversary of ordination last February, but what was not noted in that issue was a subsequent celebration that Father Christopher had at his home parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. After celebrating a mass of thanksgiving with three other priests (Father Thomas LaHood, the pastor; Father William Foley, the previous pastor and an



alumnus of our school whom Father Christopher once taught; and Father Kevin Kennedy, pastor of Saint Ambrose parish in Cheverly), there was a reception in the parish hall, attended by many of his friends and relatives. Back at the abbey, he continues to serve as vocation director and also tends the kitchen garden that provides the community with



many fresh herbs and vegetables during the summer months.

Father Peter Weigand, president of the abbey school, again this summer visited alumni in many parts of the country and continues to work at various ways of raising funds and making our school better known. In September he served as curator of an exhibition of the art of Father Stephen Reid that accompanied the "book launch" of an illustrated catalog of this art that was expertly written by Bruce Nixon. Father Peter continues to teach the course in earth science that has for years introduced our younger students to the complexities of the atmosphere, climate variations, and tectonic processes.

In previous issues of our newsletter, **Father Philip Simo** has written about the challenging but personally rewarding work he does as a chaplain at nearby Providence Hospital, where he is on call for 48 hours

at a time, followed by an equal period of time off-duty that allows him to participate as far as possible in the life of the monastery itself. He is also thankfully able to look after various needs of his mother, who lives nearby at the Jeanne Jugan Residence, conducted by the Little Sisters of the Poor.

A wearer of many different hats is **Father Boniface von Nell**, who over the years has become very skilled in iconography. He and one of our oblates, Lorraine Ramsdell, usually spend a few weeks each year training under an expert in Pennsylvania, after which he returns to the abbey with an icon that will be the cover of our Christmas card for that year. He also continues his service to the community as both sacristan and librarian, and is now in his second full year as our director of oblates. In this latter capacity, he and two of our oblates participated in a conference held at Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas this summer, where one of the speakers was the retired abbot of that monastery, Jerome Kodell, who once gave our own community retreat.

Keeping a keen eye on our finances to ensure that we stay in the black is our bursar, **Father Gabriel Myers**, who works closely with several of our lay employees to keep track of income and expenditures. He is also our music director, leading choir rehearsals about once a week during the school year, with many of these sessions currently focused on learning new hymns in the revised edition of *Hymns for Prayer and Praise*. Father Gabriel likewise regularly presides at Eucharist at a number of churches in the area, such as Seton High School convent, Holy Rosary parish, and the Cathedral of Saint Matthew. As our abbey's elected delegate, he attended an extraordinary general chapter meeting at Buckfast Abbey in Devonshire in late July.

Brother Dunstan Robidoux continues to serve as vice-director of the Lonergan Institute, headquartered here at the abbey and dedicated to elucidating

the thought of the late Jesuit philosopher-theologian Bernard Lonergan and his concern for "the human good," a term used by Lonergan as a means of retrieving and applying what traditionally was called "the common good." Brother Dunstan also serves on the board of the Phyllis Walbank Educational Trust, and while he was in Europe for this September's board meeting he also visited the relatively new monastic Community of St John in Rimont, France, about which he wrote an article appearing in this issue.

This summer **Brother Matthew Nylund** accompanied our oblate Alessandra Styles and her sister on a trip up the St Lawrence River valley, traveling far enough north to sight beluga whales and stopping at Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré and a number of lovely spots along the way. Back at St Anselm's, he continues to teach Spanish in the abbey school.

Elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter is an article by **Brother Ignacio González** about the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage that he and five other persons connected with the abbey made this past June, one of the others being his father, Raúl. In August he visited other members of his family in Austin, Texas and so was present at the baptism of his newborn niece. For the historic visit of Pope Francis to Washington in September, Brother Ignacio was privileged to be a member of the choir that sang at the mass on September 23, his excellent knowledge of Spanish having been a big help when he auditioned for the choir. In our school he teaches courses in that language as well as religion for our second formers (i.e., eighth graders).

Our three monks in three-year temporary vows, **Brothers Isaiah Lord, Samuel Springuel, and Bernard Marra**, all took part in the annual Benedictine Junior Institute, held this year at St Benedict Abbey in Atchison, Kansas during the last two weeks of June. Each also had a further week away at various sites. As you will read later in this



Brothers Samuel, Isaiah, and Bernard

issue, Brother Isaiah spent some time at Gettysburg, where he learned still more about one of his special interests, the Civil War. He also earned a bachelor's degree from Mercyhurst College in his native Erie, Pennsylvania by taking four online courses over the past couple years. He is currently enrolled in an archdiocesan program that will lead to his eventually being ordained a permanent deacon. Brother Samuel spent nearly a week visiting St Leo Abbey in Florida, which allowed him to spend a couple days with relatives who live not far from that monastery. Then in July he traveled to Buckfast Abbey in England to represent our abbey at a special forum for younger members of our English Benedictine Congregation, held a few days before the general chapter meeting that was mentioned above in the paragraph about Father Gabriel. Once the fall semester began, he enrolled as a seminarian in theology courses at nearby Catholic University, having completed most of his philosophy requirements over the previous two years. Brother Bernard continues to assist Father Peter with development work for the school and abbey. Some weeks after returning from the institute in Atchison he returned to the

central part of our country to attend the Benedictine Development Conference at St Benedict's Mission House and Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska, and in August he spent a week in retreat at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, having been invited there by a monk he had met at Atchison two months earlier.

The chronicler, **Abbot James Wiseman**, tries to be available at the abbey most of the time, but this year saw him making a number of trips to various parts of the United States, South America, and Europe. As usual, he attended the annual workshop for North American abbots, held jointly this year with Benedictine prioresses at St Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Alabama in February. Much longer trips had him joining Brother Ignacio and others to walk 180 miles of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in June, while in July he was again abroad, this time in the UK to conduct a weeklong retreat for the Benedictine nuns at Colwich Abbey in Staffordshire, followed by a further week at Buckfast Abbey for the general chapter meeting that Father Gabriel also attended. In this year commemorating the centennial of Thomas Merton's birth, he gave one of the major addresses at a conference held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in late October. He also conducted weekend retreats for our own oblates during the weekend before Holy Week and for the Hampton Secular Discalced Carmelites in Richmond, Virginia in early October, plus individual lectures or days of recollection at various parishes or retreat centers in Fairfax, Virginia and Rockville, Clarksville, and Marriottsville, Maryland. At the abbey itself he teaches a religion course each semester to seniors in our high school and continues to direct one final doctoral dissertation at Catholic University, something that he had already agreed to do before being elected abbot and retiring from CUA in 2011.

General Chapter of the English Benedictine Congregation

The general chapter of the English Benedictine Congregation is the supreme legislative authority of the congregation and ordinarily meets every four years to consider such matters as revisions of the EBC Constitutions and petitions from individual members of the various houses. However, at the regularly scheduled chapter in 2013, it was decided to hold an extraordinary session in 2015, with no agenda other than the topics that would have been raised at a preliminary forum attended by younger members from each monastery. Br Samuel's account of the forum held at Buckfast Abbey from July 21-23 (following this article) provides the best introduction to the present article about the meeting of general chapter itself.

Held at the same abbey from July 26-29 and preceded by two "sandwich days" at which the abbots, abbesses, and delegates to general chapter had the opportunity to discuss with members of the forum the various recommendations they had made, the chapter dealt in a very detailed way with each of the seven topics of the forum. Perhaps the most significant decision to emerge was that each of the thirteen abbeys would hold a series of community reflections and discussions on the papers that had been prepared. Such meetings would deal with such matters as the following: making sure that authentic on-going formation after novitiate is provided at the intellectual, human, and spiritual levels, both for those in simple vows and for those who have already made solemn profession; seeing that the liturgical books used are in a truly worthy condition, replacing those that are in poor condition and perhaps collaborating with other houses for new materials; and examining the appropriate use of social media to promote vocations.

The members of chapter also heard reports from the Monastic Theology Commission and the Constitutions Commission. The former report was given by Fr Mark Barrett of Worth Abbey. He commented on the document *To Prefer Nothing to Christ*, which had been in preparation for several



Delegates at Buckfast; abbey tower in the background

years, with input from all houses of the congregation. Its three main parts are on the themes of consecration, communion, and commission (in the sense of being sent or “commissioned” for service to others). Chapter members had already received a draft of the document and so had the opportunity to suggest some minor changes, with a view to having a final version ready for publication by November 21, the *dies memorabilis* of the EBC. (Some weeks after the chapter meeting closed, it was announced that this publication will be in the form of a small book. It is intended to serve as a framework for reflection and renewal in each house and to provide a theological foundation for the work of those involved in promoting vocations.)

The report on the constitutions was made by Fr Luke Beckett of Ampleforth Abbey. Perhaps the most significant part of his report was that the revised constitutions, which will be up for approval at the ordinary meeting of general chapter in 2017,

will very likely return to the format of the 1931 edition, with the various declarations set within the context of the Rule of St Benedict instead of being issued as a separate document; this would better emphasize their nature as declarations on the Rule.

Although much detailed discussion went on during the four days of the chapter, it might appear from the summary given above that no monumental decisions were made, but that would not be a proper conclusion. One of the main points made at chapter was that many of the challenges faced by our houses, including a lack of new members in most of them, will most effectively be met by fostering the ability for all members to listen, hear, and talk with each other on any and all matters of mutual concern. Such “speaking the truth in love” was judged to be absolutely essential for making each of our houses a genuine “school of the Lord’s service.”

JAMES WISEMAN, OSB

The English Benedictine Congregation Forum

The reason that we have said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger. (Rule of St Benedict 3.3)

It is no secret that the Catholic Church has had several difficulties in recent times, and the English Benedictine Congregation has not been spared these difficulties. A lack of new vocations combined with the legacies of much larger communities has left many of the houses of the EBC in precarious positions. Indeed, our own motherhouse, Fort Augustus, was forced to close back in 1998 because its own situation had deteriorated so much. Faced with this reality, the general chapter of the EBC decided to solicit feedback from the younger members of each house on the issues facing the congregation, with “younger” being defined as those under 55. This feedback would be generated at a forum where elected representatives from each house would meet to discuss the issues. After this forum, the results of the discussion would be presented to the members of general chapter, which would then meet in extraordinary session so that the process of facing the challenges and moving forward could be started.

The forum took place this past July, and Br Ignacio and myself (the only two members of our community who met the definition for “younger”) decided that I would attend as our representative. Taking place over the course of five days, the forum was divided into two parts. For the first three days the members (some thirty monks and nuns) met as a body and held discussions with Sr Josephine Mary Miller of Hynning Abbey and Abbot Stuart Burns of Mucknell Abbey acting as moderators. Prior to the forum, the moderators proposed dividing the discussion up



Buckfast Abbey

into six areas: community, work, liturgy, formation, governance, and vocations. That proposal having been accepted by the members, six members with some experience in each area were selected to present a brief summary of the issues facing the EBC on that topic. These presentations were not a chance for the selected members to present their own point of view, but rather served as a list of topics that the discussion might focus on. Having heard the presentation, the members of the forum were then free to discuss the issue as the Spirit inspired them. Given the limited time available, these discussions were necessarily time-constrained. Once the discussion in a particular area was concluded, two other forum members were selected to help the presenting member write up a summary of the discussion on that issue. After creating a draft, the small group then presented it to the entire forum, with everyone being given the opportunity to make revisions

before giving the document their final approval. These summaries formed the basis for what was presented to general chapter during the following two days (which were called "sandwich days" inasmuch as they fell between the forum and general chapter).

In addition to the six areas already named, the members of the forum, during the course of their deliberations, added one more, re-foundation, which was felt important enough to merit its own discussion instead of being lumped in under one of the existing topics. It was also felt that a prologue document describing the circumstances and spirit in which the documents were prepared should be prefaced to the final report. As a result, the written report presented to general chapter consisted of eight documents, titled Prologue, Community, Work, Liturgy, Formation, Governance, Re-foundation, and Vocations. All eight papers received the unanimous approval of the forum before they were presented to general chapter. These papers, as well as the answers to questions raised by the members of general chapter in response to these documents, constituted the report of the forum.

As a member of the forum, I found the discussions to be both serious and collegial. Indeed, as I recall, there were no heated conversations during the course of the whole proceeding, neither in the formal discussions nor in the informal ones which took place during breaks and at meals. At the same time, this was not due to members tip-toeing around each other's sensitive issues. No topic was "off-limits," and members were willing to engage with each other even when their initial positions would have suggested that they were going to butt heads over a particular issue. Instead, the members were able to listen to each other and get past surface differences to explore the sources of each of their positions. This led to the discovery of commonalities which

pointed to positions on which we could agree and which could form the basis for a productive dialogue with general chapter and the rest of the EBC.

During the course of the forum, I volunteered to work on the document dealing with community, which was actually the first topic to be discussed, so Br Alex Echeandía Loro of Belmont, the topic presenter, Br Cuthbert Elliot of St Louis, and I had the least amount of time available in preparing our document. As the first to present, we also had the dubious privilege of setting the example for all to follow (at least by avoiding our pitfalls, if nothing else). Working with Br Alex and Br Cuthbert made this easy, though. We were able to talk back and forth about what had been discussed and to combine our memories and notes so as to come up with a draft which Br Cuthbert volunteered to type up on a laptop he had brought along. After proofing the typed draft (and making some minor changes), we presented it to the entire forum, and I am pleased to say that it went rather well. Naturally, other members of the forum wanted to make some changes, but they largely approved of the work we had done, and I must admit that the changes did make for a better document. The best part, of course, was that once we had made those changes and the forum had approved the final draft, we were able to relax a bit more on the final day before meeting with general chapter, whereas many of the other working groups spent that final day frantically working on preparing, presenting, and revising their text. I felt especially sorry for the working groups preparing the papers on governance, vocations, and re-foundation, as we went from the initial discussion of those topics to the final texts in the space of about 24 hours (and they did have to sleep at some point during that period).

Despite these huge time pressures, I was pleasantly surprised with how well the draft texts came

out. While each working group had to make some changes, none had to scrap even a significant portion of their draft to get to the final version. Indeed, the suggestions for revision were at times even able to focus on fairly minor points, such as the punctuation needed to get across the exact nuance we were seeking. Even if the texts never reached the level of polish one would normally associate with a finished document, I think they will form a fruitful basis for future discussion within the EBC as we face our challenges going forward.

Additionally, I found encouraging the reception the forum report received when it was presented to general chapter. While there were a couple of occasions of hobby-horse defense, by and large the members of general chapter seemed receptive to what the forum was saying, asked questions which showed that they were really engaging with the reports, and were appreciative of the work the forum had done. Should the rest of the congregation act in the same way, there is no doubt in my mind that we will meet the challenges which face us in union with the Spirit and, through God's grace, will overcome them.

Finally, I would be remiss in talking about the forum if I failed to mention what a good job Buckfast Abbey did at playing host. The facilities placed at our disposal were top notch and the staff were very responsive to our needs (and even to some of our idiosyncratic wants). Further, the monastic community, whom I got additional chances to interact with because I stayed on an extra day after the conclusion of the forum, were also warmly welcoming, despite the rather huge upset we had made in their routine. The forum alone was twice the size of the Buckfast community. Add in the members of general chapter on the sandwich days, and there were easily four or five times as many monks (and nuns) in choir as would normally be at morning and evening office and mass (both the forum and general chapter prayed the midday office as part of their daily proceedings rather than with the Buckfast community). This meant that the Buckfast community was regularly being displaced from their accustomed seats in choir, and we all know how attached monks can get to their accustomed seats.

SAMUEL SPRINGUEL, OSB

A Message from the Vocation Director

In late June I had the opportunity to attend a symposium on the 2014 study *Cultural Diversity in Religious Life*, jointly produced by the National Religious Vocation Conference and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The symposium was conveniently held at the headquarters of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, located only a mile and a half from the abbey. Mary L. Gautier, who headed the study, presented the results of the in-depth survey of the policies, practices, and experiences of religious institutes in attracting and retaining persons from different cultural backgrounds.

Of the 835 institutes that received the original questionnaire, 350 responded, and since many of the responding institutes were among the largest, the data obtained represents about one-half of the men and women in religious life in the United States. The statistics make it very clear that significant changes are taking place in the cultural diversity of institutes of both men and women. I will indicate just a few of the statistics that illustrate the challenges that impact our own community.

One of the most significant findings was that while the *current* membership of most institutes is, on average, 90% Caucasian/White/Anglo, the statistics for persons *entering* religious life in the past ten years give a very different picture, with only 57% White/Anglo. Of the other ethnic groups now entering religious institutes, 17% are Hispanic/Latino, 16% Asian or Pacific Islanders, 8% African American or African, and 2% Native American or other ethnicity. And while more than two-thirds of religious superiors, vocation directors, and formation personnel are “very open” to candidates from

cultures different from the one that is dominant in their institute, fewer than half of other members are that open to such recruitment.

As would be expected, for recruiting persons from other cultures those institutes that are international and so have members in many countries around the globe have an advantage over those based only in the United States, but even the latter institutes have been taking initiatives to recruit persons from other cultures by reaching out to minority and immigrant communities and participating in ethnic celebrations held in their vicinity. To make it easier for new members to adjust, some institutes have houses of formation with a bilingual or multilingual staff. Many also use music, dance, visual art, and prayers from other cultures, and they schedule occasions for the shared celebration of national holidays and cuisine. Language tutoring or courses in English as a second language are regularly provided to help candidates grow in their speaking proficiency, and vocations personnel themselves make an effort to be knowledgeable about the regulations of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services for candidates coming from outside our country.

There are many other findings of the survey that are important for any community to be aware of and so be able to make appropriate changes. Since our own monastic community is small and has very little cultural diversity, we are challenged to help make diversity happen. We know that our community is not reflective of the cultural changes taking place in religious institutes and in the multicultural city and country we live in. We would be pleased to welcome men discerning a monastic vocation coming from any ethnic or racial background, and we

know that we have to be attentive to the best practices that other communities have already established. Only in this way will we be prepared to

welcome into formation and membership all the good men whom the Lord wants to send us.

CHRISTOPHER WYVILL, OSB



*This year may, as previous years have done,
leave the monastery covered with a winter snowfall.*

El Camino de Santiago

Many readers of this newsletter will be familiar already with a trip Abbot James and I were able to make along with four others at the start of our summer break. According to the official office of pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela, we were among the 35,924¹ pilgrims in the month of June who arrived at the Cathedral of St James in northwest Spain. Much can be written about the *Camino de Santiago*, and there is no shortage of books, blogs, and YouTube videos to educate someone interested in making a pilgrimage to the tomb of the saint. For this article, I will limit my focus to the history of the *Camino*, and how it came about that we began the trip in the city of Burgos.

The history of the *Camino* begins with Jesus, who called the eldest son of Zebedee and Salome and his brother John the Evangelist to be apostles. James was part of Jesus' "inner circle" of "Peter, James and John" who witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter and the Transfiguration. The three are also recorded as those closest to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane the night he was arrested. St Mark's Gospel identifies James and John as "Boanerges" or "Sons of Thunder," for they wanted to call fire and brimstone on a Samaritan town that rejected Jesus and the apostles. James of Compostela is also known as "the Great" to distinguish him from "James, son of Alphaeus," who is also listed among the original twelve apostles.

Tradition holds that James of Compostela took literally Jesus' mandate to take the gospel "to the ends of the world." After the Ascension, James set out with a few others to evangelize those living in the farthest reaches of the known world and ended up preaching in what is now northwest Spain. It is not recorded exactly how long he was in Galicia, but clearly he did not have much success and so returned to Jerusalem, where King Herod had him beheaded. The Acts of the Apostles records this, and James is the only apostle whose martyrdom is recorded in the New Testament. After his execution, James' friends are said to have taken his body back to Galicia and had it buried in what is now Santiago de Compostela. The name "Santiago" is the local Galician version of the Latin *Sanctus Jacobus*, that is, "Saint James."

Fast-forward to the ninth century when, according to tradition, a hermit saw strange lights in a forest and went to the local bishop for help to investigate. Guided by these lights and an immense array of stars above (what some identify as the Milky Way galaxy), they discovered the remains of St James that had been buried centuries before. The name "Compostela" comes from the Latin *campus stellae*, literally, "field of stars." The bishop decided to have a church built in honor of the saint, and as word spread through Christendom, pilgrims from all over Europe began the now thousand-year-old tradition of walking the *Camino de Santiago*. During the Middle Ages, it was one of the three main pilgrimages Christians would make, the other two being to Rome and to Jerusalem. The pilgrims would have been aided by the oldest anthology for the cult of St James that dates from the twelfth century. It is an

¹ [www.http://peregrinosantiago.es/esp/oficina-del-peregrino/estadisticas](http://peregrinosantiago.es/esp/oficina-del-peregrino/estadisticas), accessed July 29, 2015. We were among the 2,997 pilgrims from the United States in June. Last year more than 250,000 pilgrims were issued the "Compostela"—the official document stating one has made the journey.



On arrival at Santiago de Compostela, Br Ignacio, his father (left) and Abbot James (to Ignacio's left) join other pilgrims for a meal.

illuminated manuscript called the *Codex Calixtinus* and attributed to Pope Calixtus II. This work is part history, part travel-log, and part general guidebook.

An interesting but little-known fact is that one year before he became president of the United States, John Adams and his two sons actually walked the *Camino*, but in reverse. During the American War of Independence, Congress ordered John Adams to go to Paris to secure funds for the cause. In 1779, when the ship began leaking, the three men disembarked in Finisterre (literally, "the end of the world") on the

west coast of Spain and went on the *Camino Francés*, or “French Way,” which was an ancient Roman trade route. This is the route that Abbot James and I walked this summer. One can read of Adams’ account of the journey in his autobiography.

For those wanting to know what the *Camino de Santiago* is like in our day, a good general introduction might be the remarkable movie *The Way*, which was released in the fall of 2011. The father and son team of Martin Sheen and Emilio Estévez wrote, produced and starred in the movie, in which the father of the story decides to walk the *Camino* for his son, whose death propels his decision to walk the *Camino*.

Where to begin our Camino this summer was something that I puzzled over and took to God in prayer. Many pilgrims begin the *Camino Francés* at St-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the French Pyrenees on the border with Spain. Starting in St-Jean means walking a minimum of thirty-three days, which was much too long for the time we had available in Spain. A Spanish priest making a retreat at our abbey had suggested that the Gothic cathedral in Burgos was a “must see” for anyone hoping to walk the *Camino Francés*. He suggested that our first night be in Burgos, and that on the following day we cut one week’s worth of walking by taking a bus to the city of León. Little did I know then, that one of the founding monks of St Anselm’s Abbey in Washington who later became a Carthusian monk did so at the Carthusian monastery outside of Burgos! Three weeks before we left for Spain, I contacted the monastery with a request that Abbot James and I might be able to pray at Fr Thomas Verner Moore’s grave, and that the abbot then offer mass for us at the charterhouse church, which dates back to the fourteenth century. Just a couple of days before we left, I heard back from the porter at the charterhouse, who said that we were most welcome to visit the monastery, and that Abbot James and I



The Carthusian monastery at Miraflores

would be able to pray at the tomb of “Dom Pablo María,” the name Fr Thomas took when he entered the Carthusians. Thus, we were able to begin our journey to the tomb of St James by celebrating with our monastery’s Spanish connection in Burgos.

Much more could be written about the trip, but I will let Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI sum up our journey with the words of his homily when he himself visited Santiago de Compostela five years ago. I will modify his words slightly to be read in the first person:

The fatigue of [our] journey, the variety of landscapes, [our] encounter with people of other nationalities—all this open[ed] [our] heart[s] to what is the deepest and most common bond that unites us as human beings: we are [all] in a quest, we need truth and beauty, we need an experience of grace, charity, peace, forgiveness and redemption. And in the depth of each of us there resounds the presence of God and the working of the Holy Spirit.... Deep down, [we and] all those who [went] on pilgrimage to Santiago [did] so in order to encounter God, who, reflected in the majesty of Christ, welcome[d] and bless[ed] [us] as [we] reach[ed] the Pórtico de la Gloria.

Walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death

Some of you already know that I am an amateur history buff, with a special interest in one of the bloodiest and saddest times in American history, the Civil War. This past summer I spent a week in Gettysburg, where I learned a lot not only about the battle that took place there but also about Catholic priests who served as chaplains during the war, ninety-three of them for the Union Army and thirty for the Confederates. It seems that the first Catholic chaplain to die in battle was a Benedictine, Fr Emmeran Bliemel. Even though his monastery was located in the Union state of Pennsylvania, he actually served and died as a Confederate chaplain. After giving an account of his life and of the way he died, I will conclude with brief mention of another notable Civil War chaplain.



Fr Emmeran Bliemel

Emmeran Bliemel was nineteen when he left Bavaria to finish his studies and be ordained to the priesthood at the newly founded St Vincent monastery and seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. His first assignments were in that state, but in 1860 the founding abbot, Boniface Wimmer, sent Fr Bliemel to serve as pastor of the German parish of the Assumption in Nashville, Tennessee, at the request of Bishop James Whalen. Many of his parishioners were from Europe, so it was perhaps empathy for them more than any political leanings of his own that

led him to sympathize with the cause of the South. When the Union Army occupied Nashville and the church was pillaged, most of the male parishioners enlisted in the Confederate Army. Fr Bliemel repeatedly asked his bishop for permission to join the 10th Tennessee Infantry—"The Bloody Tenth"—as a chaplain, but permission was denied even though Catholic troops were begging for priests.

Fr Bliemel was, however, able to move about freely in occupied Nashville, ministering to soldiers on both sides. At one point he was arrested on charges of smuggling morphine to Confederate soldiers and of writing treasonous tracts. The charges were dropped, but the Union commander still wanted him out of the area and wrote to Abbot Wimmer, asking him to call his monk back to Pennsylvania. Receiving no response from the abbot, the commander next tried to persuade the diocese to get Fr Bliemel to leave Nashville. In the words of historian Peter Bonner, "The officer's sister was a nun, and he was worried that eventually he was going to have to shoot this priest who was giving aid to the enemy. He feared that if he did that, he would never be able to go home again."

In the fall of 1863, the way was finally clear for Fr Bliemel to join the Bloody Tenth. Armed with questionable credentials, he headed for Georgia on a mule, traveling around and through Union lines until he met up with Confederate troops in Savannah. There he ministered to all who wished his services, regardless of their religion or regiment. He would follow the litter-bearers and fall to his knees in prayer next to the dead or dying, and then

go back onto the battlefield to tend to the wounded lying on the ground.

At the Battle of Jonesboro, which began on August 31, 1864, and turned out to be the final battle in the Atlanta Campaign, some 1,500 Confederates died. As their comrades were retreating under heavy fire, Colonel William Grace went down. Fr Bliemel and the stretcher-bearers found him and helped him to the rear. While the chaplain was hearing the colonel's confession and had just raised his hand in blessing, he was struck by a cannonball and fell on the dying man. Soldiers of the 10th Tennessee Infantry later carried both bodies off the field and buried them near the home of a prominent Catholic businessman, Robert Kennedy Holliday.

For years the graves of Fr Bliemel and Colonel Grace were tended by the Holliday family, and that connection is a story itself. Holliday's daughter Nellie was in love with her Protestant first cousin, John Henry Holliday. Heartbroken because marriage was impossible, she became a Sister of Mercy at a convent in Savannah and was given the name Mary Melanie. Her beloved cousin went to dental school, dropped out after contracting tuberculosis, and finally headed west to live his remaining years as the gunslinger and gambler Doc Holliday. The Hollidays were also cousins of Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone with the Wind*.

Sister Mary Melanie returned to Jonesboro some years later and had the bodies moved to the Patrick Cleburne Confederate Cemetery in town to ensure that Fr Bliemel received a proper Catholic burial. But it was not until 1889 that the Benedictines in Pennsylvania finally learned what had happened to their confrere. The mystery was solved when another Benedictine, Fr Otto Kopf, who had been Fr Bliemel's close friend in Bavaria and at St Vincent, was assigned to St Mary's Church in Tuscumbia, Alabama. There he heard about a priest who had

been killed in the Civil War and after some investigation found that it was his longtime friend and fellow Bavarian. He arranged to have Fr Bliemel's remains moved to the parish cemetery in Tuscumbia, where his grave is now marked by a large stone cross.

Fr Bliemel's legacy as a Catholic chaplain was honored last year when the Knights of Columbus Father Emmeran Bliemel OSB Assembly at St Philip Benizi Catholic Church in Jonesboro held a memorial service. Fr Brian Boosel, OSB represented St Vincent Archabbey and was one of the speakers. "He saw Jesus in those who were wounded and dying," he said about the fallen chaplain. "No one would be abandoned."

I will conclude this article by referring to another notable Civil War chaplain, Fr William Corby, CSC, who was attached to the Union Army's Irish Brigade. Shortly before fighting broke out at Gettysburg, he stood atop a boulder and gave general absolution to the men, who then launched themselves into the battle. Unlike Fr Bliemel, Fr Corby survived the war and later served twice as president of the University of Notre Dame. On July 2, 1888 a monument to him was dedicated at Gettysburg. It was sculpted by



The monument to Fr Corby at Gettysburg

a former Confederate soldier, William R. O'Donovan, who had fought there. It has an ornate bronze front, ornamented by a 2nd Corps trefoil, the numbers of the three New York regiments, the seal of the State of New York, and a harp flanked by American flags. At its foot lies an Irish wolfhound, a symbol of honor and fidelity. Fr Corby himself attended the dedication, offering mass for the veterans and blessing the monument.

Encountering the Community of St John in the United States and France

Visitors to historic churches in Paris and other cities in Europe may have noticed the presence of monastically garbed men and women chanting the divine office at certain times of the day. The following report may help to clarify the nature of the most prominent of these communities.

At the request of Fr Abbot, I have been asked to write a little account about my meetings and visits with members of the Community of St John, a religious order which was founded in France and which now has about 500 monks, scattered in different houses (pories) throughout the world, along with two branches of women religious: over 200 contemplative sisters and almost 200 apostolic sisters. The order was founded by a French Dominican, Fr Marie-Dominique Philippe, OP, who had been a philosophy professor in Fribourg in Switzerland. He died in 2006 and is buried in Rimont in Burgundy, where the religious order which he founded has its house of theological studies, serving the education of both the sisters and brothers.

To give a word of explanation about how I came in contact with this new religious order, it all began with my desire to have translated into English a fine study of Aristotelian philosophy written by a French Jesuit. I was convinced that this work deserved wider circulation, and we all know

that, however excellent the thought of a given thinker might be, if it is not available in English, it will not be known internationally. Not long after coming upon that study, I happened to meet a Br Andrew James DeSilva at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC; this was a bit over a year ago, at one of that house's theology seminars. Andrew James was walking around in an unfamiliar religious habit and I happened to find out about his interest in Aristotle and that he does all his studies in French, in houses of study that are operated by the Community of St John, to which he belongs. At that time, Br Andrew was working and living in a house of his order based in an inner-city parish in Orange, New Jersey (not far from Seton Hall University). At our first meeting, Andrew expressed interest in taking up this work of translation, and not too long afterwards, I was able to make an overnight visit, staying in the priory of his community in Orange. Since then, I have made two visits to the house of theological studies that is operated by Andrew's



Monastery exterior (right) and church (left) at Rimont

religious order in the French town of Rimont while I was in Europe on other business. I visited him for two days in September, 2014 and most recently for five full days in September, 2015, accompanied this last time by Roland Krismer of Innsbruck, Austria. With that background, I will now give an impressionistic sense of the Community of St John.

If I may be somewhat direct, although I did want to see Br Andrew in Orange, New Jersey in order to further our translation work, my primary reason was to find out if his community was to be regarded as a "bunch of kooks." One hears stories, receives reports about new religious orders that have emerged in recent years in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, and one wonders about the legitimacy of many of these new developments. How to judge them, how to evaluate them. Do they represent a way forward in the life of the Church or a species of reaction with regard to the work and achievements of the Second Vatican Council? For any of us who feel that we can move toward an informed judgment, our own understanding about the things of faith and the life of the Church would have to function as a kind of first principle, determining the kind of interpretation and the conclusions that we would reach.

In terms of impressions, then, I would say the following. First, the monks and sisters of the order all wear a light grey habit which could pass as a Benedictine habit if its color were black. Somewhat embarrassingly, I happened to see a monk among them wearing a distinctive black Benedictine habit, and when I asked him from what abbey he came, he told me that he was a member of the Community of St John. They formerly had worn black habits and he had yet to get the new, grey habit. The habits are worn un-ironed or, in other words, full of wrinkles. The material appears to be cotton, not something "perma-press." The brothers and sisters wear their

habits all the time, regardless of where they are or the kind of work they are doing.

Second, they are largely young people, most of them being in their twenties and thirties. I remember speaking to a young monk and asking how long he had been in the order, and he said thirteen years, yet he appeared to be in his mid-twenties. Some must have entered as teenagers. On my first visit to them in France in 2014, I saw only one elderly monk and one elderly nun. On my second visit there a year later, I saw only one elderly monk but was told that he was a claustral oblate (not technically a brother in the fullest sense).

Third, all their liturgies and offices are celebrated in the vernacular, in English in the US and French in France. Less Latin than I am accustomed to. More singing and chanting is done in the celebration of the liturgies, although all the melodies seem to be rather simple and not too complicated. The monks in Rimont have a schola of about five voices, and the nuns, four voices. Mass is always celebrated in a rather solemn manner (i.e., "high church"), and after each mass and office everyone turns to a prominent statue of the Blessed Virgin and prays to her. Moreover, throughout the day she is frequently invoked. For instance, after a given meal and after all the dishes are washed and dried, the monks form a kind of semi-circle and turn to an icon of Mary on the wall to express thanks and give praise. Almost daily, in conjunction with office and mass, an hour of devotion is given to the veneration of the blessed sacrament. This veneration occurs immediately after vespers, usually from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Fourth, all meals are taken in silence, with lunch and supper accompanied by monastic reading (although at times the superior may give a signal that persons may speak with each other in a convivial way). At table, the monks face each other and silently communicate despite the rule of silence that

is in force during meals.

Fifth, as regards the physical setting, the refectory itself is dominated by a huge crucifix, with Our Lady beneath the cross on one side and on the other side, St John. When walking through the house of studies in Rimont, one notices that no comfortable pieces of furniture are to be found—no couches or easy chairs. Everything is very simple, with wooden chairs and tables. If one encounters any carpeting, it is made of a kind of hemp rope that retains its natural color. The house of studies had been built as a seminary in the 1870s and was turned over to the Community of St John in the 1990s.

Sixth, there is an information center in a newly constructed building near the house of studies. Here internet access is available and books and religious items of different kinds can be purchased. Among the books that are offered for sale are many copies of works by Aquinas, with Latin on one side and French on the other. Other works address philosophical and theological questions that can be found within the corpus of Aquinas's works. For the Community of St John, it would seem that Aristotle is the philosopher and Aquinas, the theologian. The monks with whom I spoke would verify the truth of this assertion. Although the monks and nuns come from all over the world, the emphasis on Aristotle and Aquinas points to a common conceptuality (the same kind of "language game" that all participate in), and from this common conceptuality, all seem to share in the same species of thinking, reasoning, and understanding. As a word of caution, as one attends to the history of the tradition, it would be wrong to think that a common conceptuality will necessarily lead to a common understanding. Nevertheless, the presence of a common form of philosophical and theological discourse suggests that this kind of unity does make it easier for persons of differing cultures to live and work with each other in a manner which

tends to be harmonious. In the formation of community members, philosophical training begins in the early years, in the novitiate, when neophytes are introduced to the fruitfulness of philosophical inquiry through reflecting on their own experiences. These experiences of art, ethics, and politics allow the discovery of principles in the very lives of the young brothers, as opposed to conclusions simply learned in a book. These practical philosophical principles, discovered in a vital way, allow an entry into metaphysics and later into theology, to which philosophy is the handmaid.

Seventh, the monks do all their own work. As few lay persons as possible are engaged to do any of the work that must be done in the running of a large monastic community (although plenty of friends provide help!). After the midday meal, all the monks work together to help prepare the evening meal, although a group of them functions as the regular kitchen staff. At the time of my first visit, I was encouraged to help in this work, so one day I was cutting up tomatoes with a group of the monks. Unexpectedly, one of them, a man from India, asked me if "you do these things in your community," and on realizing that I could not deny the fact that we employ lay cooks, I mischievously replied: "No. [pause] We have servants."

Eighth, in conjunction with an emphasis on the value of traditional Catholic theology and on the obedience that is to be shown to the Church's magisterium, poverty and obedience to one's religious superiors come across as high values. The monks must constantly ask for permission to purchase a given book or to keep any kind of gift that might be offered to them. I remember one evening when Br Andrew produced a chocolate bar. He had asked special permission from his superior if he could share it with me as a kind of celebration, and so we indulged. The emphasis on poverty points to

a kind of amalgamation between a Carmelite and Franciscan kind of spirit with respect to living a life of poverty.

In a conversation one evening, the monks with whom I was speaking referred to small embodiments of monastic life as perhaps the best means of engaging in the work of re-evangelization today. In certain situations it might not be enough to put a priest in the middle of an urban community. Given the decline in communal expressions of Catholic life that had been lived previously at a parish level, if the faith is to be communicated today, perhaps the best means is by way of inserting a small Catholic community into a given urban context. Through friendships made with local people, persons can be drawn together and the life of a pre-existing parish be brought back to life, increased and revived to some extent. Reports currently circulate about a parish in the diocese of Portsmouth in England. The new bishop, Msgr Philip Egan, recently invited a new order of Franciscan friars originating from Italy into a parish that had been failing in recent decades, and the presence of this new form of religious life has been revivifying the life of this parish, drawing new persons to it.

By way of conclusion, when I told Br Andrew that I had decided that the members of his religious order were not to be regarded as a "bunch of kooks," he demurred. A devilish expression came over him, and he registered surprise that I should have come to such a conclusion. This led me to

conclude that a real distinction can be made between two kinds of kooks: one, mean and insensitive; the other, gentle and loving. Hence, it could be quite right to conclude that a given religious order is to be regarded, in the most positive sense of the term, as consisting of a "bunch of kooks," a group from whom great good can result. Our Lord can bring into being a higher, greater order of things than could have been brought into being through any other means. Indeed, the Church teaches that even moral and spiritual failure exists within a providential order of things which is administered and governed by God alone (admittedly often working through some questionable secondary causes!). And so, if we think about this order and really ponder it (attempting to determine its intelligibility), we will likely be consoled by what we find. We can move into new experiences of being. Aquinas, in the context of his own day and time, argued that certain good things cannot emerge at all without the prior experience of certain evils (deprivations). Hence, if we can find a way to cooperate with the mysteriousness and strangeness of God's providential government we can, perhaps unexpectedly, begin to assist in bringing about greater realizations of good than would be thought possible. This is so both within the context of our current world and of the world that is to come and that exists within an order of things entirely transcending our current conditions and circumstances.

DUNSTAN ROBIDOUX, OSB

Armageddon, Rapture, and Left Behind

It is incredible to see how so many people have made so much over a word which occurs only once in Scripture (Armageddon), and another which doesn't appear at all (Rapture). In this article I will attempt to outline the picture they draw of the end times, to point out errors in their interpretation, and to present an alternative vision of the end time.

Those who hold belief in the Rapture are, for the most part, "dispensationalists," that is, people who hold that God deals with the human race in different phases or "dispensations." They count anywhere from three to seven of these. Those which most concern us are the last two: the dispensations of Grace (i.e., from the New Testament to the Rapture), and of the Millennial Kingdom.

The action begins when all "born again" Christians are "raptured out" to meet Christ in the air and are taken to heaven. Before and after the



Rapture takes place, a complicated scenario unfolds. It can be found in multiple sources, but the basic pattern remains the same, whether in a forty-six

page picture booklet entitled "The Beast" (Chick Publication, 1966); Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); or the more recent series of sixteen novels of the "Left Behind" series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (Tyndale House, 1995-2007). Dispensationalists understand the prophecies of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity (which actually took place in waves beginning in 538 with Cyrus's decree of liberation—Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23) to foretell the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948. "Israel is God's timepiece," is their claim, and the events which are to follow are datable from 1948. Thus some dated the Rapture to 1988, counting one generation of 40 years from that event, on the basis of Matthew 24:34, "Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have come to pass." Before the Rapture, the Roman Empire revives in the guise of the European Union (in the "Left Behind" series, it is the UN); the ten horns of the Beast means there will be ten member nations. The individual who heads it (Antichrist) acquires great acclaim and dictatorial powers. Along with a Jewish false prophet, he acquires the Temple Mount, rebuilds the Temple, and places in it an image of himself to be adored as god. This is the signal for the Rapture. All true believers (the church) are "raptured out," leaving all the others behind to undergo the Tribulation. Russia now invades Israel from the north, allied with Egypt, the African nations, and the Arab league, who invade from the south. Russia double crosses its allies and occupies Africa. Russia then is destroyed by a rain of fire (probably a nuclear bombardment, according to Lindsey). The ecumenical movement succeeds in uniting all religions into one apostate church, which is Babylon, the Scarlet

Whore. The Euphrates is dried up, allowing two hundred million Chinese to invade Israel. Antichrist now mobilizes his ten-nation confederation against them, setting up the battle of Armageddon. The conflagration destroys every city, island, and almost all human life. But now Jesus returns to save humankind from extinction (we would ask, "What's left to save?") by unleashing destruction on the armies gathered there. Then Jesus will reign on earth for (literally) one thousand years. That's not quite the end, but enough has been said.

A saner picture emerges for the Bible properly interpreted. Dispensationalists claim to interpret the Bible literally, but clearly they do not. Past events in the Bible they see not as past but as relating to the present or to the soon-to-be future. As noted above, the prophetic promises of restoration of Israel were, in fact, fulfilled by the return of Israel (Judah, really) to their land after the Babylonian exile.

They use a hodge-podge of texts from Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Revelation, and other books, without reference to context, genre, or historical background; historical references they replace with contemporary events; the Bible does not speak about Russia, the EU, the UN, or atom bombs. The Book of Revelation is an apocalypse, and it is important to be aware of the characteristics of this genre. Basically, it is crisis literature, intended to offer hope; the crisis in this case was the persecution of the Christians by the Roman Empire. Apocalyptic is highly symbolic and its symbolism becomes stereotyped: 7 stands for perfection, 12 is the number of Israel, 1,000 for a large number, a horn stands for power or a king, a beast for a pagan empire.

Apocalyptic resembles prophecy, but the resemblance is superficial. The prophets tried to convert sinners, but the apocalypticist sees people divided between the good and bad, depending on whether or not they have held to the faith. To the faithful he

urges perseverance, offering hope and a speedy end of the trial; there is no hope for the wicked. The time of the present distress will be short: in the Book of Daniel, three and a half years, expressed in different ways: "a time, two times, and half a time" (Daniel 7:25), or half a week of seven years (Daniel 9:27). In Revelation: a time, two times, and half a time (Revelation 12:14, translated "years" in NABRE), forty-two months (Revelation 11:2; 13:50—divide by 12 to get three and a half years); 1260 days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6—divide by 360).

Revelation normally refers to events at the time it was written or shortly thereafter. The persecution is by the Roman Empire and its adherents, symbolized by the Beast (Revelation 13:1 and elsewhere). The "kings of the east" (16:12) are the Parthians (not the Chinese), who gave Rome so much trouble for centuries.

Hope is seen in the apocalyptic pattern: all the enemy forces attack God's people, but they fall by the hand of God, after which comes the restoration (see Ezekiel 39:21-29 and Ezekiel 40-48). Revelation sees a period of earthly peace, as the "Bride of Christ" comes down from heaven. This is not yet the end, which comes at the end of the book as Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Belief in the Rapture (which originated only in the 19th century) is based on misinterpretations of two Scripture passages. One is found in Matthew and (virtually verbatim) in Luke (Matthew 24:39-41; Luke 17:34-35). In Matthew: "So it will be at the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left; two women grinding at the mill; one will be taken, the other left." Scholarly commentators take this to mean "taken into the kingdom" or "from destruction" and "left to reprobation" or "to one's fate." The term *parousia* regularly refers to the coming of Jesus at the end of the world, not to something

happening earlier.

The other passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The early Christians, expecting the second coming in the near future, were concerned about those who had already died: how would they share in the resurrection? Paul assures them that at the *parousia*, the Lord "will come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). The scenario envisioned is Christ returning to earth and the faithful going to welcome and bring Him here. It is as when Paul was traveling toward Rome, "the brothers from there [Rome] heard about us and came...to meet us." The Greek verb, *apantesin*, is the same in both texts.

Armageddon, which appears only at Revelation 16:16, means "mountain of Megiddo." There is, in fact, no "mountain of Megiddo." There is a city of Megiddo and a Plain of Megiddo on which several historic battles, going back to the fifteenth century (and as recently as the British against the Ottoman Empire in 1918), have been fought. Thus it came to be pictured as the scene of a great final battle. The Book of Revelation echoes some Old Testament passages. The prophet Joel pictures the "day of the Lord," wherein the sickle harvests, and the winepress is filled (as in Revelation 14:14,18,19), the judgment, "on behalf of my people...Israel," takes place in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (4:12), a symbolic name for the place of judgment ("Jehoshaphat" means "Yahweh judges"). Ezekiel 38-39 carries the picture farther and is closer to Revelation's scenario. The Lord leads "Gog of the land of Magog" (again, cf. Revelation 20:8) at the head of a vast army (Persia, Cush, and Put and others are named) to invade Israel (38:1-8); but then the Lord "will strike the bow from your left hand and make the arrows

drop from your right. Upon the mountains of Israel you shall fall" (39:3-5).

This scenario of Israel, beset by the troops from many lands only to be delivered by the Lord, is the same pattern as we find in Revelation. Revelation 14:14-20 refers to sickle and wine press, as in Joel. Revelation calls the place Armageddon (16:16), the attackers are the Beast and all the kings of the earth (16:16; 19:19), but Jesus, "the King of Kings and Lord of Lords," with the heavenly army (19:11, 14, 16), destroys the Beast and all the rest "by the sword that came out of his mouth" (19:21; cf. Isaiah 11:4b). The thousand year reign stands for the duration of the church till the end of time.

The Bible speaks of a battle of Armageddon, so it is certain to happen. Right? Not necessarily. We know the Bible is inspired and therefore inerrant, so what the Bible teaches is true. But do we postulate this inerrancy for each individual verse, for each book, or for the Bible as a whole? If we say each verse or each book, do we hate our enemies (Psalm 65:10; 101:13; Ecclesiastes 3:8), or do we love all, even our enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Is all ended at death (Job 14:7-12), or is there a resurrection (Wisdom 3:1-8; and the entire New Testament)? Did Jesus appear to His disciples after His resurrection only in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5), or also in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20; John 21:1-14)? The only tenable answer to our question is that inspiration and inerrancy can be held only of the Bible as a whole, where one part can modify and correct another.

In addition to Armageddon, we can also speak of the end time as depicted in Isaiah 2:2-4 and so set Mt Zion, "the Lord's mountain," in opposition to Armageddon:

*In days to come,
The mountain of the Lord's house shall
be established as the highest mountain
and raised above the hills.*

*All nations shall stream toward it,
Many peoples shall come and say:
'Come, let us go up to the Lord's mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
That he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths.'
For from Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and set terms for many peoples.
They shall beat their swords into
plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
One nation shall not raise the sword
against another,
nor shall they train for war again.*

This certainly represents the end of the present world order and the introduction of a new order. No Armageddon is possible after this picture, in which all weapons have been destroyed and no one trains for war.

So we have two competing visions of the end

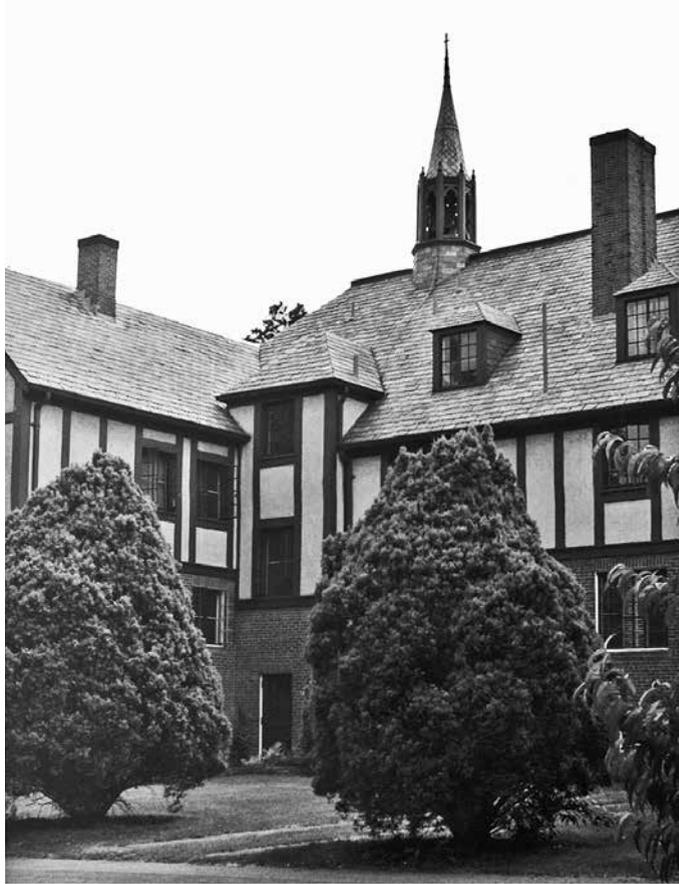
times. Which one shall it be? No human power can bring the end time, but God may send us the one we deserve. The dispensationalists, who have a penchant for demonizing the EU, the UN, the ecumenical movement, and everything that brings us together, expect that Armageddon WILL happen and the huge stockpiles of atomic weapons certify that



Sculpture at the United Nations headquarters in New York depicting swords beaten into plowshares

we could, indeed, bring to pass something like Armageddon. But if the UN should actually succeed in mediating peace between nations, if “beating swords into plowshares” should become a reality rather than simply a statue symbolizing a beautiful ideal, we would have a world in which no punishing fire from heaven could ever be sent down upon us.

JOSEPH JENSEN, OSB



We ask the friends of St Anselm's to join us in prayer for vocations to our community. We also ask you to recommend St Anselm's to young men who may be open to considering a religious life such as ours, and/or to pass on to us the names of such young men.

Christopher Wyöill, Director of Vocations

ST ANSELM'S ABBEY

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