

III Pentecost, Year A  
Fr Joshua D Nelson  
Matthew 10:24-33  
25 June 2017

I AM a Confrater at Saint Gregory's Abbey in Three Rivers, and seven years ago I spent my first summer with them. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but I checked into the Abbey in late July for two weeks of the Summer Vocationer's program. Well, I learned rather quickly that my vocation was not to be a monk, but that summer did start me on the journey toward this newly minted priestly vocation, and in a way, St Gregory's has lead me to you.

Although I am certain that I am not called to be a monk, I am still drawn to the stillness, the practice, and the teachings of monasticism and Benedictine spirituality. The regularity of prayer, the incorporation of scripture into everyday life. The balance found in separation and the interweaving of the spirit of God into every single aspect of our life, whether that be the Eucharist, gardening, praying the office, or even doing the dishes. (Those were in descending order of popularity by the way). But I think the principal of Benedictine spirituality with the most gravitas is *HOSPITALITY*.

This principle and practice is laid out plainly in *The Rule* and I have witnessed it being lived out, first hand. It begins at the door, when even a stranger is always greeted with the Peace of Christ, a prayer, and an embrace. Those seeking shelter are given it without charge; those seeking comfort are cared for without question. The naked are clothed, the homeless are housed, and the hungry are fed. No status is necessary,

no payment is needed, no questions are asked. All who come to this place on their journey are welcomed, all are loved. But why?

There is an old story from the desert that may clarify the point.

A young refugee was making his way across the wilderness when he got lost. He spent many days alone, without shelter, without food, without water, being stung by the sands and scorched by the sun. After days of this, he was weary, hungry and parched. He was caked in dust and stank to the high heaven. He had lost all he had along the way, giving up the extra weight as his strength failed him.

Finally, one day, he came upon an ancient monastery. A rural outpost in the middle of nowhere, a welcomed oasis in the midsts of despair. He made his way to the great door, wooden, sand blasted, bleached in the sun. As he knocked upon the beams the dust billowed from his clothes. - Silence - He knocked again and still no answer. Finally, he mustered up just enough strength to try one more time, after which he fell against the post, giving up all hope. After a few moments of anguish, the door began to creak open, and a tiny, wrinkled, balding, bearded, ancient monk appeared across the threshold. The old man's dark, piercing eyes looked up at the collapsing body and whispered, "we've been expecting you." Though the greeting seemed strange the traveler

thought not much of it and followed the old monk as he motioned him into the courtyard.

“Come Jesus, come! Come! Here is water for you to wash and a pitcher and cup for you to drink.” Confused by the name, the man thanked the monk and began washing as he disappeared beyond the courtyard. He soon reappeared carrying a clean robe. “Here Jesus, here here, you may have my new robe, it may be a bit short but it will do.”

Still confused, he thanked the monk for the robe, and before he could correct him on his name, the monk had disappeared again.

A few moments later, he entered, motioned to the table and said “Jesus, Jesus, I have brought you some bread and some soup, take, eat.” Very thankful but feeling frustrated by this point, the man turned, kept the old monk from leaving again, and said, “*My Name Is Amer*. Why do you keep calling me Jesus?” The old monk just smiled, showing a mouth lacking in teeth, and through his grin he explained, “we greet you in the name of Jesus, just in case.”

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” Yet - Jesus - the Son of God, humbled himself, emptied himself, and lived a life of servitude and hospitality. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, touched the outcast, forgave the sinners. He stripped off his garments and washed the feet of his disciples, his

students, his servants. He gave us the example so we might go and do likewise. It is in this witness that we acknowledge that we know who Jesus is. It is in our thoughts and actions, it is in our compassion, it is in our forgiving, accepting, and loving that we express to the world that we belong to him. AND it is in the opposite, when we hate, when we fear, when we ignore, slander, gossip, hurt and disdain, that we deny we even know him because the example we give the world looks nothing like him.

Every day on your journey, be expectant. Expect to see him, to love him, to serve him. Expect to clothe, clean, feed, house, heal, and honor - JESUS.

When we look upon the faces of every person we meet along the journey, expecting to see the face of Jesus, our attitude begins to change. We are careful of our actions. We are liberated from our fear and anxiety. We become deliberate about our thoughts. And when we greet every person in the name of Jesus, we will rejoice to sometimes get the acknowledgement, “Well done my child. Well done my friend. Well done, my good and faithful servant! Come, that I might serve you, and you may know me!”

What an opportunity! What an opportunity we have been given to show the world that we know Jesus. So each day on your journey, seek and serve everyone in the name of Jesus, just in case.