	<i>White Robed Monks of St. Benedict</i>	<i>Volume 23 Issue 1</i>
	<h1>Network News</h1>	<i>December 25, 2019</i>
<i>Ausculta</i>	<i>Nondual: things remain distinct while not being separate.</i>	
Abbot's Notes		Merry Christmas—2019

Peace be with you.

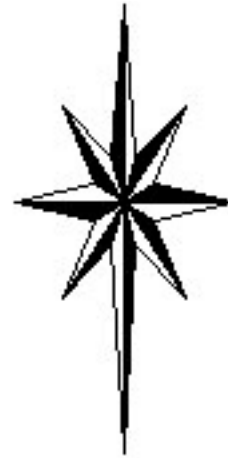
Humility. The story of Christmas is about the Son of God being born in a stable. We are all children of God.

First off, who is God? "God" is a metaphor for The (alleged) Source of all that is and is not. How we conceive of God—omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, all-loving, etc.—does not grasp God or "God". Perhaps there is no source as such, "what is" being The Source itself. Regardless. The metaphor holds: Are we not children of God, however considered or not?

Imagine a stable housing the cast of characters: Mary, Joseph, Jesus, perhaps a donkey and a lamb or two. An infant has just been born. Now imagine you are one of the characters. Imagine the air, the smell, your breathing. What do you see? What sounds do you hear? How are you feeling? What thoughts are you creating?

Be with this Presence for a few silent moments as you witness whatever is taking place.

Our daily lives reflect this miracle of Christmas, thought made real—or theologically phrased, the word made flesh. We are each but one of the mass of humanity. We each have our own thoughts, feelings, and emotions. We each have people, places, and things in our environment. Where do these elements exist but in our own perception of the matters at-hand. Our perceptions are in our own heads, a



Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give you.
(John 14:27)

May the Peace
of the Christmas Season
be with you and yours.

fantasy. Yes, the elements may exist in their own right and certainly how we take them to be is our own creation. How we fantasize about people and things make them to be what they are for us.

How Mary, Joseph and Jesus perceived what was taking place was their own creation. Humility is recognizing that we are the creators of our own experience. We humble ourselves in our realizing the fact that things are and they are not and that we make them to be as we perceive them to be.

What we perceive a situation to be may have everything to do with that situation

Abbot's Notes

and then again nothing at all. We do not comprehend the whole picture within which this particular scene is taking place. Did Mary, Joseph, and Jesus comprehend that some 2000 years later the planet would, in some way or other, be recounting the event then at-hand?

In our daily lives, things take place, we make decisions based upon the information we may have or think we have at-hand and move forward—sometimes without intention or with the best intention (or not). Humility is recognizing that we are subject to our own selves and to no one else.

Implicit in humility is the recognition that every personal act effects the whole. Remember the principle of Six Degrees of Separation: *the idea that all people are six, or fewer, social connections away from each other.* (Wikipedia) As a character in the stable scene, now enhance your imagination to include the many centuries following the present moment—and how your creation has led you to this moment now of recreating your original creation.

In the Spirit of Christmas humility may we remember that each moment is our

creation as we let go of our depressions, our attachments to our past—what we termed injustices or the like. May we let go of our attachments to our worries—present concerns. May we let go of our attachments to our anxieties—future events. May we let go of our attachments to our fears—but a symptom of the belief we grow when we errantly perceived we cannot handle a situation.

In regard to depression, worry, anxiety, & fear, may we humbly trust the Divine or Life. May we ask sincerely (*i.e.*, without wanting a mental response, yet being open to a kinesthetic response) ***Who am I if I can trust life or The Divine more when I am depressed, worried, anxious—or—just afraid.**** Return to the stable & behold the scene in all humility.

With whom are you connected? We are all of the same stock.

Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad before the face of the Lord for he cometh. Offertory (Ps 95, 11)

Many Blessings and Peace and Joy!

+Robert OSB

**(Thank you Paul Wong.
www.heartwisdomprocess.com)*

Book Review

Benedictine Promises for Everyday People: Staying Put, Listening well, Being Changed by God

By Rachel M. Srubas. New London, CT: 23rd Publications, 2019

Reviewed by Kathryn Madden

When I knocked at the “monastery door” of this book, these words beckoned to me: “Now is the time to notice the door in front of you because there always in one. It may simply be the boundary between tonight and tomorrow morning, but what a difference those dark hours can make. Dawn is a door that opens to a day yet unlived (4). (This book) opens a door of inquiry into what Benedict of Nursia ... and those who follow him as monastics could teach those of us living outside of monastery walls about a life grounded in God, attuned to the Gospel, and open to change.

After years of person turmoil in a family destabilized by parental alcohol-

Listen and attend with the ear of your heart
-St. Benedict

Book Review Con't

ism, Srubas's life became stable when she fell in love at 22 and went to church. It was truly a homing instinct playing out in her that subsequently led her to a worshipping community of people with whom to abide in God. She discovered how the blessings of the Benedict vow of stability — of staying put—often outshine the thrill of moving on, even as this entails saying *no* many times for the sake of a few enduring *yes* responses. As baptism and marriage now root Srubas in a life of love and service to others as a Presbyterian pastor, she seeks stability for migrants, refugees, and others in our world for whom staying put would mean certain destruction.

Spiritual guides and those seeking guidance will find timeless wisdom in Srubas's section on "Benedictine Listening and Spiritual Direction." As a spiritual director to others, she models what she finds in her own director: attentive listening, nonjudgmental acceptance, reverent acuity of mind, and the ability to ask significant questions, notice of significant themes. And make meaningful connections. At a key juncture in Srubas's life, the experience of being listened to by a skilled and caring confidant led her to shocking clarity around a risk she needed to take.

For Srubas, the Benedictine notion of "confession" as "unvarnished self-revelation for the sake of putting on the mind of Christ (72) [ed. *C.f. Humility*] aptly speaks to the intrinsic vulnerability of spiritual direction, which calls for utmost compassion and confidentiality on the part of the director. Srubas artfully draws from Benedict to highlight how spiritual directions need to cultivate self-knowledge, self-

care, and discretion in order to delicately offer an experience of the nature of spiritual healing, with knowledge of the source of wellness and gratitude is the Holy.

Srubas asserts that a rule of life is the most valuable Benedictine treasure to nurture the growth of one's spirituality in a clear, orderly way. In a nutshell, staying put frees us to give ourselves completely to God where we are. Once we have become stable, we can listen well enough to attend to the voice of God. It is this attunement to God, cultivated through as pattern of prayerful living, that allows us to be changed over time into healed people who do more good than harm. May it be so for us!

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Chapter 7. Humility.

Accordingly, brothers and sisters, if we want to reach the highest summit of humility, if we desire to attain speedily the Compassionate Presence of Christ to which we climb by the humility of the present life, then by our ascending actions we must set up that ladder on which Jacob in a dream saw *angels descending and ascending* (Gen 28:12). Without doubt, this descent and ascent can signify only that we descend to exaltation and ascend by humility. Now the ladder erected is our life on earth. If we humble our hearts the Lord will raise them to Christ's compassion being present in our actions for the benefit of all sentient beings. We may call our body and soul the sides of this ladder, into which our divine vocation has fitted the various steps of humility and discipline as we ascend.

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Thank you.

(New e-mail address, too.)




Peace and Joy!

How to Detach from a Belief—Why?

How to detach from a belief and experience freedom and peace of mind? Use a centering meditation taught by Tarthang Tulku in his *Hidden Mind of Freedom*:

"Working with thoughts (beliefs) by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which—without attachment—also become our meditation. We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense

core of the experience, the meditator unites with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . "

And why?

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed. (Thank you Michael Butler)

May all beings be happy.
Amen.

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And thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours now and forevermore. Peace and joy!

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