Hope Abiding
“The soul while thus living for God does not sink into indifference by becoming dead to the world. No! It rises up with an intense desire for those true objects which it contemplates. The desire is not a blank expectation, but an active anticipation. It is not a self-willed imagination, but an attentive contemplation.”

Richard Meux Benson, founder of SSJE

Cover photo:
The Monastery tower, viewed from the cloister garden through a dogwood tree about to burst into bloom.

Photo Credit: Gary-Andrew Smith

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The English word “despair” comes from the Latin desperare from de- “without” + sperare “to hope.” Without hope, life can easily be too much, and despair comes knocking at the door. Hope is not optimism. Optimism is a mere gloss on the surface. The traditional symbol for hope is an anchor. An anchor will hold you fast and keep you from drifting, and yet, pulled up and stowed, an anchor also travels with you as you sail ahead in life. Hope is a “steadfast anchor of the soul,” we read in the Letter to the Hebrews 6:19. Hope is something that rests deeper in the water than what happens on the stormy surface of life. For Saint Paul, all that we do and every step we take is underlined by hope. We live by hope, he reminds us. Most everything else in life is fleeting, and yet “faith, hope, and love abide.” (1 Cor. 13:13)

Hope is fueled by the presence of God, who gives us breath: dum spiro, spero, while I breathe, I hope. Hope is also fueled by the future of God in our lives: a small seed which perhaps we cannot even see right now, planted by God into the ground of our being. We have a sense of it long before we can see it and realize how it will blossom. How can you nurture these seeds of hope in your soul? Draw from your miracle memory what you already know about sailing in uncharted waters. How in the world have you faced what
you’ve had to face to get to be where you are? You are a walking miracle. You are also an experienced navigator. Recall Saint Paul’s formula, that we “boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Rom. 5:3-5) Hope is an anchor amidst the storms of life.

Hope lies in what is possible, not what is predictable. Hope is adventurous. Hope is open for surprise, to enable us to navigate the changes and chances of life. Emily Dickinson writes so playfully:

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without words
And never stops at all.

You do have the gift of hope already. If you feel despair and have only the desire for hope, you have hope. The desire is not an absence but rather a presence of hope, only in seedling form. Cultivate the gift, which is to co-operate with what God is already doing in your life, has done in the past, shall do in the future. Breathe in hope, remember in hope, anticipate God’s future for you in hope. Recall the comforting words of the prophet Jeremiah: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jer. 29:11)

Especially during these challenging and opportune times, we brothers seek to live, pray, and serve with a robust sense of God’s hope and God’s sustenance. We invite you to visit us, in person and online: www.SSJE.org. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace. (Rom. 15:13.)

In Jesus’ love,

Curtis G. Almquist, SSJE
Superior
The Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Men of the Moment Adjusting Our Course

SSJE’s founder, Richard Meux Benson, called the SSJE brothers to be “Men of the Moment.” Interpreting the signs of the times, we clearly see that the moment has changed. In the midst of economic turmoil, many people have lost their navigational bearings, their security, their clarity about the future. We brothers live, pray and minister to be an anchor, a beacon, a source of God’s sustenance especially in a time of stress and distress.

We are extending the timeline for our Stone & Light capital campaign. After taking counsel with one another, with advisors, and from our own prayer and pastoral work, we have decided to delay the Monastery renovations to at least June 2011. Many SSJE friends have made financial pledges, totaling $8.3 million to our first phase goal of $10 million, and some have already made financial gifts. These funds are gratefully received and are securely invested.

Adjusting our timeline will slow our course but increase our spiritual ballast. Our Monastery and Guesthouse will remain open for retreats workshops, for our daily round of corporate prayer and worship, and for those who seek a holy sanctuary for their personal prayer and meditation. See our website – www.SSJE.org – for more information about our presence and availability. This Eastertide we are offering a sermon series at our 5:15 p.m. Tuesday liturgies, “A World Turned Upside Down: The Experience of Resurrection.” The text and audio recordings of these sermons, and much more, are available from our website.

By disposition, monks are grounded in the well-honed spiritual practices of our monastic predecessors who have lived, prayed, and ministered in the best of times and in worst of times. To be viable and vibrant, we negotiate our life’s course drawing on the beacons of past, present, and future. As we say in our Rule of Life: “Faithfulness to tradition does not mean mere perpetuation or copying of ways from the past but a creative recovery of the past as a source of inspiration and guidance in our faithfulness to God’s future, the coming reign of God.”
God’s Help and Hope
From a homily preached at the Monastery

A few years ago, in an op-ed piece for The Boston Globe, retired Archbishop of Capetown, Desmond Tutu wrote:

Whenever I am asked if I am optimistic about an end to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, I say that I am not. Optimism requires clear signs that things are changing – meaningful words and unambiguous actions that point to real progress. I do not yet hear enough meaningful words, nor do I yet see enough unambiguous deeds to justify optimism.

However, that does not mean I am without hope. I am a Christian. I am constrained by my faith to hope against hope, placing my trust in things as yet unseen. Hope persists in the face of evidence to the contrary, undeterred by setbacks and disappointment.

Archbishop Tutu speaks with the kind of authority that is won only through hard experience, living as he did through some of the cruelest years of South Africa’s apartheid. I find myself humbled by his words, disposed as I am on most days to a kind of complacent despair for the state of the world—how many war zones are there today? Israel/Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan are only the most immediate. Or if I think of the state of the Church, especially the Anglican so-called Communion—how many variations of the via media are actually possible and plausible?

Or closer to home, my own life—how many variations on a theme are possible for making the same mistakes over and over and over again?

Hope has been described as the bastard middle child of the theological virtues—known, and perhaps even admired, but not much mentioned and only quietly practiced. Visit any theological library, and you will find a vast literature on faith. You will find an even larger body of writing on love. But you will find surprisingly little on hope. I am not sure why this is so—perhaps it is because theologians (and we) have
been disappointed so many, many times by unrealized hopes, discouraged by the frank awareness of prayers which God has apparently chosen not to answer, at least as we would like.

This intrigues me because I understand and know personally that hope is as crucial to a whole life as either faith or love. Hope, simply defined, is the capacity to imagine a future. Like memory—which we could define as the ability to recall the past—hope is an essential element of what it means to be fully human and fully alive. Without hope, we die.

Researchers in the graduate psychology department Duke University documented this a few years ago in a now famous experiment in which they were trying to identify factors of what scientists call “dynamic coping.” They filled two vats equally full of water and placed a rat of comparable age, weight, and strength in each one. The only difference was that one vat was sealed (though it did have a concealed source of oxygen), and the other was left open. Both began to swim instinctively. The rat in the apparently sealed tank quickly sensed a limited supply of air, saw no visible way of escape, and gave up. The poor creature stopped swimming, sank to the bottom, and drowned in less than four minutes.

The other rat, in contrast, seeing the opening at the top, with an apparently unlimited supply of oxygen, swam continuously for an unbelievable thirty-six hours without sleep or food, before the experiment was mercifully stopped. The conclusion was simple: where there is hope, there is life.

But we need to name a caveat: while hope imagines a possibility of life, and I would go so far to say, a better life, it is not the same thing as fantasy. We are prone to confuse fantasy with hope, I think, but hope is not fantasy. Hope
has substance. It has corporal density in a way that fantasy simply does not. Fantasy is given to wild flights of fancy, constructing worlds that have no anchor or grounding in reality.

Hope, on the other hand, is always rooted firmly in the hard and often harsh realities of the life. And by that I mean the life that we have actually been given, not the life we wanted, not the life we think we should have had, not the life we think we deserved. Hope can only be found in the life that have been given—regardless of the vat into which we find ourselves suddenly and unexpectedly dropped, forced to swim for our lives, whether that is a diagnosis of cancer, HIV, or Alzheimer’s disease; a debilitating and exhausting compulsion or addiction; the loss of a job; a failed relationship; the death of a loved one.

I’ve come to believe, however—and I say this with an amount of caution—that based on the Scriptures, a reading of history, and my own experience and the experience of my family and brothers, there is virtually no circumstance in this life that does not contain the seeds of hope. I say this with humility and some hesitation because I am aware of how many people in this world are carrying staggering burdens of suffering, most of it born in silence, most of it private and quite personal—and very painfully real.

I was with a group of musicians recently, studying the scores and texts of American folk songs—the kind of songs that people sing (or used to sing) in response to the hard realities of life. I was fascinated to learn that in some songs from Appalachia, particularly, the word hope is often used interchange-
ably with the word help. I was even more intrigued to learn that the two words derive from the same linguistic stem. Some of us still have etched in our brains the language of God having “holpen his servant Israel,” where the etymological family resemblance is still readily apparent. I find this link quite comforting—the notion that our hope is in God’s help. It’s what enables Jeremiah to have hope in the face of the overwhelming odds, war, famine, and pestilence. It’s what enables the publican to pray for God’s mercy. Without God’s help, we have no hope.

We say those “meaningful words,” as Archbishop Tutu calls them, regularly whenever we reaffirm our baptismal covenant (but I know that I for one do not live them out with “unambiguous deeds”). *Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers? Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin repent and return to the Lord? Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?* “I will, with God’s help” is the answer to every one. With God’s help. And God’s hope.

I’ll offer one more caveat: God’s hope for the world and for our own lives is likely to be different from ours. No one in first century Israel expected something so unimaginative and pedestrian as a child born in a cave just over the hill from Jerusalem, and the Scriptures tell us that even Jesus hoped for something different than crucifixion and resurrection. The better future that God dreams and imagines and hopes for is likely to be very different from the one which on we are likely to get fixated. But that’s the way God works.

If you find yourself tired or discouraged or ready to give up, don’t. Keep swimming. There is plenty of oxygen. The air supply is unlimited. Help and hope are near. You are not alone. God is with you. God is with us. The outward circumstances of life may not give us much reason for optimism, Archbishop Tutu says, but because God is God, there is every reason for hope.
Building Hope
Constructing the Monastery during the Great Depression

Br. Eldridge Pendleton, SSJE

In October 1929, the stock market crashed, sending the nation into the worst economic depression in history, the Great Depression. During this time, Spence Burton, the superior of SSJE, was working with the celebrated architect Ralph Adams Cram on plans for the new monastery on Memorial Drive. The project, when finished, would not only enable the Society’s work in the spiritual formation of students, lay people, seminarians, and clergy, but would also be a living monument to the Society’s hope for the future.

The American Congregation of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist gained autonomy from the English branch of the order in 1914. When Spence Burton was elected the second superior of the American branch in 1924, he had high aspirations for its mission; aspirations that required a suitable motherhouse for the Society’s growing numbers and ministry. The project began to be realized when initial financial gifts from Isabella Stewart Gardner and the Burton family allowed land to be bought and the first building to be built. This building, known as Saint Francis House, was completed in 1926. A second unit, with more rooms and a temporary chapel in the basement, was added to it in 1928. It was used for ten years to house the members of the Society, and is now the Guesthouse of the Monastery. But much was left to be built, including the chapel and new living quarters for the Brothers, as well as a refectory, library, and common rooms.

When the Great Depression first hit and many banks and companies failed, most building projects in the nation came to an abrupt halt. But hope persisted among the members of the Society that a way forward would be found. Burton and Cram continued to work on the plans for the new monastic complex, with Cram finishing his first sketch of the proposed buildings in 1929. Then, in the early 1930’s, Burton’s parents died, leaving substantial funds to continue the project. The new chapel would be built as a memorial to Burton’s mother, Byrd Waithman Spence Burton, as indicated by the memorial stone placed below the Rose Window (now obscured by the current organ). The main unit of the new monastery would be dedicated to Burton’s father, Caspar Burton.

Work began on the new buildings in 1936, with Burton and Cram laying the cornerstone for the new chapel in
a public ceremony on the Feast of St. Mary the Virgin on August 15. Local construction companies were used, and the project provided jobs for many stone cutters, brick layers, electricians, plumbers, and artisans in a time when unemployment was still extremely high.

The chapel was designed along monastic lines in the Romanesque or Norman style, with a monastic choir, arches, and an apse containing the high altar. It was constructed of granite from a local quarry in Quincy, with Indiana limestone for the pillars and arches. For the floor of the choir and sanctuary, marble from Tennessee as well as from Belgium, France, and Italy was used. Cram, who would often reuse materials in his designs, obtained large beams that had once been part of a wooden bridge over the local Mystic River that had recently been pulled down. These beams were used in the roof of the chapel, as well as the roof of the new refectory in the monastery wing.

Cram designed a regal tower, eighty-nine feet in height, to connect the chapel to the monastery wing. It provided for storage space, an incredible view of the area from its top floor, and an organ chamber in the second floor (in which an organ has yet to be installed). The monastery wing, like St. Francis House, was built of brick and tile covered with light gray stucco.

Construction was finished within a year, but no money had been put aside for outfitting. Later in the chapel, a baldacchino was added over the high altar, as well as stained glass from the studio of Boston artisan Charles J. Connick, funded by donations from friends of the Society in New York City. Gifts from across the nation provided furnishings for the Brothers’ cells, the kitchen, and the laundry room.

Cram was aware that the great European monasteries were built gradually over time, adding buildings when the need arose and when finances made it possible. So, with money running low, the new monastery on 980 Memorial Drive was intentionally left incomplete. As the Society continued to grow over
time, two additional wings to the monastery would be added to complete the cloister. But decades went past, and no new construction was accomplished.

Our buildings are now in drastic need of repair and renovation, and added space is desired for offices, meeting rooms, and common areas. Recently the Society launched a capital campaign, STONE & Light, to address these needs. But the economic crisis of our own day has compelled us to reconsider our priorities. We Brothers have chosen to see this time as an opportunity to strengthen our communal life and refocus our ministries. We do not know what the future holds, but hope still abides, and we are confident that God will show us a way forward.
The Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Our 21-month novitiate program offers men between the ages of 21 and 45 the opportunity to explore religious life first-hand. During the novitiate, they will:

- Participate in the common life of the SSJE Brothers
- Join the brothers in praying the Daily Office and celebrating the Eucharist
- Engage in an ordered program of reading and study, with weekly novice classes
- Take on regular work assignments that support SSJE’s life and ministry
- Participate in our ministry of hospitality by extending welcome to our guests
- Receive spiritual direction and training in prayer from professed Brothers
- Be offered opportunities to preach (as they are prepared and able)
- Develop friendships with the Brothers

For more information on how to apply for the novitiate, please contact the Novice Guardian at vocations@ssje.org or call (617) 876-3037, extension 28.
The Art of Living Simply
Making more of less

Br. Robert L'Esperance, SSJE

“Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” – Jesus

“Simplify, simplify, simplify.” – Henry David Thoreau, Walden

Rules for a simpler lifestyle cannot be universal rules. We are responsible for their imagination and situation. Nor is a simpler lifestyle a panacea for what ails. But, a simpler lifestyle can be an act of faith as a matter of personal integrity and commitment to a more just distribution of the world’s scarce resources. It can be a resolution against a mindset that calls for overconsumption.

Jesus called his disciples to become simpler like a child. Withdrawal from the often neurotic pressure of our materialistic society can be a response to that call. It can be an act of solidarity with the vast majority of humanity which lacks the range of choices we enjoy.

A simpler lifestyle can be a way to share with those who have less and a way of returning to them what is usurped by unjust social and economic structures. Assuming a stance of under-consumption can be provocative invitation to others into a conversation about affluence, poverty and social justice.

Our faith is not about authority or rules. It’s about service and relationship. We are asked to bring about the kingdom here and now. Simpler can be a way of anticipating that kingdom when God’s justice will right power relationships and resource allocation.

A simpler lifestyle can be an act of advocacy for legal changes that will right corrupted patterns of production that disregard the earth and its creatures and over-consumption by a fraction of the population.

Simplifying our demands can align with our needs, redirecting production from Madison Avenue-inspired wants toward goods and services that will satisfy genuine needs.

A Kennedy rocker on the Monastery cloister.
Do I believe that if I adopt a simpler lifestyle I am going to end poverty and that my actions are going to directly benefit the dispossessed? Maybe yes, maybe no. But any demand for proof of effectiveness only plays into the myth that the poor are the problem and that the rich have the solution.

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**Ways to Simplify Your Life:**

1. Decide what’s most important to you. What do you value most?
2. List your current commitments and evaluate them in light of these values. What do you want to be doing with your precious time?
3. Simplify work tasks. Focus on the essential tasks and eliminate the rest.
4. Do one thing at a time. Multi-tasking is more complicated, more stressful, and generally less productive.
5. Sort through your stuff. Pick a room or a closet or a work area and do a thorough purging. Separate into three piles: keep, give away, and trash.
6. Simplify your wardrobe. Give away things you haven’t worn in the past year.
7. Limit your purchases. Buy less stuff. Ask yourself if you really need this and if you really need to own this before purchasing it.
8. Have a place for everything.
9. Limit your communications. Decide when and how much time you will devote to email, IM, phone calls, etc.
10. Eat slowly. Slow down to lose weight, improve digestion, and enjoy life more.
11. Exercise. It helps burn off stress and makes you feel better.
12. Spend time with the people you love.
13. Spend time alone. Learn to meditate.
15. Always ask: Will this simplify my life? If the answer is no, reconsider.
Living with the Land:  
Emery House Interns Reflect on their Experience

Kristin Hennesy. Kristin is a member of the Fellowship of Saint John and a longtime friend and regular worshipper at SSJE.

From September to December, Tara O’Neil and Rick Richards stayed in the hermitages at Emery House and worked as interns under the guidance and supervision of Brent Was and Windy Dayton, who care for the property. The interns helped bring in the harvest, build trails through the forest, prepare the house and fields for winter, and transform a fallen tree into a pile of firewood and a rustic bench. They also learned a lot about the land and themselves. We asked them to speak about their experiences and we share the highlights with you here.

**WORKING THE LAND**

**Tara:** I’d been wanting to learn more about growing food for a long time, so it was great that Rick and I could be at Emery House for the harvest season. We picked a lot of squash and a ton of raspberries that were in bloom for the first month and a half we were there. Toward the end of our time there, we started putting in coverage crops, tilling, and planting garlic.

The situation at Emery House is so ideal; I’d love to live like that all the time. When we were cooking dinner, we’d just say, “Oh, I need some cilantro or some kale,” and then we’d run up to the garden and grab it. That was awesome. I think well-cared-for organic food always tastes better, but the fact that I helped this particular food grow, well, that just made it taste even better.

Being connected to our food is so important. So many of us work all day and eat food to keep going, but the work we do isn’t directly related to the food we eat to survive. Obviously, we use the money we make by working to buy food, but to have your food be directly related to the work you do is so much better. Tasting it, you really understand what you’re working for.

**Rick:** One of the first weeks I was at Emery House, we were picking the last of the tomatoes off the vines before pulling the vines out, because we had to turn that part of the field over. You have to reach in through the vines to get the tomatoes, but you can’t really see what you’re doing. We only wanted to pick the tomatoes that were ripe. After a little while, I could tell by touch what was ripe and what wasn’t. It
more whole as a person. To use the language of the church: it makes me feel more like who I am supposed to be as one of God’s children. Learning these simple tasks and experiencing feelings connected to the Creation made me feel more realized.

**LEARNING FROM THE LAND**

**Rick:** My time at Emery House made me realize how much I value physical work and how much that work is part of my prayer life. Because Emery House is a monastic house, you sense that this is a place for silence and introspection, even when the Brothers are away. It was the perfect place for me to close my eyes and reflect on the experiences I’d had over the last year. It really helped me to find the language to speak about them.

The central word that keeps coming back to me about that time is “communion.” That’s what we called the

seemed to me a wonderful, rich thing to have that knowledge, just by touch. We didn’t want to bring the tomatoes that were slightly too ripe into the house, because they would go bad in a day, so I started putting them in my shirt pocket. I remember walking back to the house to get changed for lunch, eating these perfectly ripened tomatoes out of my shirt pocket. It was an amazing experience.

Food is so different to me now because I’ve had the experience of growing it and picking it myself. Later in the season, once the greens were gone, Tara and I decided to make a salad, so we went down to the grocery store and bought some salad greens. The salad was fine, but we both thought it felt empty, because we hadn’t walked out to the garden and picked greens ourselves.

I’ve also become aware of how much I don’t know about the land and crops. People used to know about growing food; it wasn’t special knowledge. For my generation, that kind of knowledge is mythic, special. We have to take workshops to know when a tomato is ripe. It changed everything for me to know that by touch. It makes me feel
Eucharist when I was growing up. I like the term Eucharist, which is what we say now, but for me it will always be “Communion,” because we come together over this common ritual. My time at Emery was like that, because our daily work was communion. There would be times when all five of us were out in the fields picking raspberries—even Brent and Windy’s daughter, Hannah Maeve—then we’d come in and eat them together. It was such a completely human experience, and felt so important. It’s urgent for people today to have that kind of community and first-hand knowledge of creation.

**Tara:** This internship wasn’t like a normal job, where you’re working for a boss who doesn’t care about your well being. Brent and Windy and the Broth- ers were really concerned with how Rick and I were doing. They wanted to be sure that we were getting something out of our time with them, as opposed to other jobs where the boss just wants to see what they can get out of you. It was really the most peaceful job I’ve ever had. We took time every day to go to the chapel, at lunchtime, to just sit and reflect. Not many jobs let you do that. Imagine if there were more jobs like that.

This time gave me a chance to get in touch with my own spirituality. It allowed me to get closer to God. It was a really hopeful experience for me. Brent and Windy’s desire to help us to connect with the land and to understand things globally, while still putting it all within a Christian perspective, was really beautiful. In the past, environmentalists had a radical stigma attached to them. But we’re slowly starting to realize that what we do in our life
every day, even the small things, really add up. People think they have to do something big to make a difference. But if you just use your own grocery bag instead of getting a new one, that adds up. It makes a difference.

**LOVING THE LAND**

*Tara:* I’m someone who connects with God mostly through nature. A lot of other people feel the same, so it’s wonderful to have places where people like us can go and be in nature and feel that connection. There’s an energy around those places that people pick up on. Emery House is just so peaceful; you can really feel that when you’re there. Life gets so busy and hectic and bright; it’s so rare to have a place where people can go and have quiet time, time to reflect. I’m happy as long as I’m doing physical work and connecting with the land. That’s what I was able to do every day during my time at Emery House. I loved it there.

*Rick:* I hope Emery House can be a place where people can go and remember their connection to Creation, which many of us have forgotten. Emery House is a perfectly idyllic New England landscape. You can walk down that main road along the stone wall and feel like you’re taking a walk three hundred years ago. It’s wonderful. It’s a place that needs a lot of work and a lot of love, but it rewards you for that work and for that love with breathtaking walks and breathtaking views. It’s one of the best places I’ve ever been in, and living here is one of the best experiences I’ve ever had. The Brothers are a very giving community and Emery House is a very giving place. My experiences there echoed my experience of the SSJE community as a whole: thoroughly accepting of what you have to give, and only more beautiful because of that.
Has God ever spoken to you? Antony, Abbot in Egypt, a founder of monasticism who died in the year 356, would have answered that question with a resounding, “Yes!” And he found hope in the desert based on what God spoke to him.

Raised by his parents as a Christian, Antony was dramatically affected when, as a young man, he heard the passage from the Gospel of Mark where Jesus says, “…Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” His response led him to the margins – he went to live in the Egyptian desert, and led a life of solitude, fasting and prayer. Antony was known personally by Athanasius, the great Bishop of Alexandria, who wrote his Life of Antony shortly after Antony’s death. In it, we find this short paragraph:

“Having learned that we should always be praying, even when we are by ourselves, he prayed without ceasing. Indeed, he was so attentive when Scripture was read that nothing escaped him.”

Antony was attentive to Scripture, and it was integral to his prayer. Today we might refer to him as a “biblical literalist.” We might even call him
“extreme,” and we would not be far off if we dubbed him “eccentric.” But Antony was spoken to by God through the Holy Scripture – the Word spoke to him. The story that St. Mark recounts in his Gospel is about Jesus speaking to an unnamed rich man. But Antony heard it as if the words had been spoken directly to him.

While we might not be biblical literalists – hearing and responding to the Word in the same way that Antony did – God still speaks to us through the Scriptures.

Has Scripture spoken to you? Convicted you? Confirmed you? Assured you? Has your encounter with God through Scripture changed your life? Given you hope in the desert? Would you allow it to?

We might not be as hasty or extreme in action as Antony was, but we can respond when the Word touches our hearts. It might be an enlivened response to the Gospel imperatives to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned – a renewed commitment to love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with God. It might be to follow Jesus more nearly, striving for Antony’s singleness of heart. Or it might simply be to hear again that God loves us, and to abide in our Christian hope – “to live with confidence in newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of Christ in glory, and the completion of God’s purpose for the world.” (BCP, p. 861)

Like Antony, we can cultivate the virtue of attentiveness to the Scriptures, and make it a part of the praying of our lives. I would go so far as to say that our life in Christ depends on it.

In the words of 1 Peter, and in honor of Antony, “discipline yourselves, keep alert.”

God is speaking to you.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Br. James Koester traveled to his native Canada and led a retreat for seminarians at Queen’s College, St. John’s, in Newfoundland, January 5-9; and for the Diocese of Edmonton, February 9-13. Br. James also led a retreat for the bishops of Toronto in Washington, D.C. at the College of Preachers from January 12-16.

Br. Bruce Neal led a retreat for Christ Church, Norway, ME, at the Monastery, January 6-9.

Br. Curtis Almquist led a retreat for the clergy of St. Mary’s Church, Richmond, VA at the Monastery, January 13-16.

Br. Geoffrey Tristram traveled to Richmond, VA, to serve as chaplain to the New Bishops’ and their Spouses’ Conference, January 19-23.

Br. Eldridge Pendleton led a weekend retreat for St. Stephen’s Church, Richmond, VA, at the Monastery, January 30 – February 1.

Brs. Curtis Almquist and Bruce Neal served as chaplains for the Palestine of Jesus course at Saint George’s College in East Jerusalem, January 17 – February 6.

Members of the Fellowship of Saint John were on pilgrimage to the Holy to the Holy Land with Brs. Bruce Neal and Curtis Almquist: (left to right) Fred Rose (Atlanta, GA); Sarah Buxton-Smith (Buffalo, NY); and Paul McLain (Lawrence, KS).

Br. Timothy Solverson led a retreat for the Province I college students at the Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center in Greenfield, New Hampshire, February 20-22.

Br. Timothy Solverson at the Monastery with Amy McCreath, Episcopal Chaplain at MIT; Mary Beth DiGenova, a current student at MIT; and Melva James and William Doss Suter, recent alumni from MIT.
Brs. James Koester and Jonathan Maury traveled to the Kanuga Conference Center in North Carolina to participate in the St. George’s College, Jerusalem Reunion, February 18 – 22.

Brs. Curtis Almquist, Mark Brown, and Eldridge Pendleton, along with FSJ member and consultant Phillip Petree, traveled to Richmond, VA, February 26 – March 1. Curtis led a retreat for St. James’ parish; Mark and Eldridge led a retreat for St. Stephen’s parish; and Phillip did presentations about our development needs.

Brs. Eldridge Pendleton and Mark Brown.

Br. David Allen represented the Society at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Consecration of Barbara Harris as Bishop Suffragan of Massachusetts. David also helped welcome Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori to the Boston Chinese Congregation’s Sunday Eucharist at the Cathedral of St. Paul on March 1.

Br. Jonathan Maury led a retreat for a group of men from Toronto and Niagara in Canada, and from the Diocese of Massachusetts, at the Monastery, March 10-14.

Br. Geoffreay Tristram, with Phillip Petree, traveled to Dallas, TX, March 4 – 7. Geoffrey led a program for Saint Michael and All Angel’s parish; and Phillip met with several individual parishioners.

Br. Geoffrey Tristram with FSJ member and development consultant Phillip Petree.

Br. Jonathan Maury.

Brs. Tom Shaw and Geoffrey Tristram attended the meeting of the Episcopal House of Bishops at the Kanuga Conference Center in North Carolina, March 12-18. Br. Tom is the Bishop of Massachusetts, and Br. Geoffrey serves as Chaplain to the House.

Br. Curtis Almquist led a retreat for a group from Saint Michael and All Angel’s parish, Dallas, TX, at the monastery, March 5-8.
From March 13 – 15, many friends of the Society gathered at Emery House for Pruning Weekend. Numerous trees and shrubs were pruned, and the gardens prepared for spring.

Friends at Emery House: (left to right) Antony Pretti; Todd McKee; Monica Liberman; Br. Robert L’Esperance; Peter Liberman; Richard Kimball; Tom Peltz; and Br. Andrew Gary.

Br. Bruce Neal led a retreat for St. James’ Church, Richmond, VA, at the Monastery, March 19-22.

Br. Bruce with members of St. James’ Church, Richmond, VA. (with our dog Duke)

Br. Timothy Solverson led a Lenten Quiet Day at the Church of Our Savior in Brookline, MA on March 21.

During Lent, the Brothers launched what has become an extremely popular feature on our website, the SSJE Audio Rule. For the second year in a row, highlights from Holy Week and Easter at the Monastery have been made available in audio form on the web. Visit www.SSJE.org, and see and hear for yourself!

In February James Farrell and Keith Nelson elected to withdraw from the novitiate. We wish each of them well in their individual endeavors.
I have a great debt of gratitude to the Brothers. They have freely offered me sanctuary in my distress, guidance in my perplexities, friendship in my loneliness, wisdom in my ignorance and, perhaps most importantly, they have helped me in innumerable ways to focus freshly on the mind and life of Jesus Christ. They have also taught me about a constant “attitude of gratitude.”

The Rev. Dr. Mark Anschutz is former rector of Saint Michael and All Angels, Dallas, TX and serves on the Board of Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation.

Of all the gifts one receives in this life of changes and chances surely friendship is most highly to be valued. The Community has a charism for friendship, as is appropriate given their dedication to the disciple Jesus loved. They meet us as friends do – where we are – and encourage us as we move along, struggling to become our truest selves and to flourish as God so desires. As they love us, so we are called to love them and to offer our gifts to them for their full flourishing.

Barbara Braver is a writer and editor who served for nine years as Assistant for Communication to the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

In the Gospel of John, we hear Jesus give an invitation to join in an enduring friendship, to abide in him as he abides in us. As you know, the Monastery in Cambridge has been the home for SSJE brothers since the 1920s. For just as long a period, the Monastery has been a spiritual home for countless souls along the way. We could not do what we are called to do without your continued support. Especially during these challenging and opportune times, we brothers seek to live, pray, and serve with a robust sense of God’s hope and God’s sustenance. Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel.

Curtis G. Almquist, SSJE Superior

A gale arose on the lake of finance this year. Your gifts have rebuked the winds and the sea and there is calm at SSJE to be had. Thank you.

Jamie Coats, Director, Friends of SSJE

Please let us know if you would like a copy of the Ways of Giving brochure to learn how you can include SSJE in your estate planning.

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In 2008 the Annual Fund was down 7% from 2007. The Brothers have held their budget level for three years in a row. A report on the SSJE’s finances will be available in the summer. In 2009, with the endowment down, the Brothers are ever more reliant on the Annual Fund to meet operating expenses.

The Brothers need our help this year and in the years ahead and, may I be so bold as to suggest, we need to be that generation who by our collective stewardship helps them weather these times and go forward from “strength to strength” in this new century. Thank you for your gifts and please, weigh carefully if you can step up your level of giving in 2009 and join with me and others in continuing to give.

– Mark Anschutz

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The Annual Fund of SSJE is made up of gifts given by the Friends of SSJE and it includes collections in the Chapel, the spring and fall appeal gifts, gifts from members the Fellowship of Saint John, Annual Fund pledge payments, and donations given at other times. It does not include restricted gifts or bequests.

This report is based on records of gifts from Friends going back to 2002. Please let us know if our records do not match yours. Many thanks.

**Welcome New Friends of SSJE**

Friends of different ages, cultures and walks of life will enrich our humanity. – SSJE Rule

The Brothers welcome new donors who joined the Friends of SSJE in 2008.

It’s important to know that places like the monastery are there. Even if we cannot come as often as we would like, to know that this community of men is there, every day, praying, makes such a difference. We want to support them because it’s such an important thing for the world to have that community of prayer there, lifting up to God every day. It is a safe haven for us when we come.

—The Rev. Casey Shobe and the Rev. Melanie Shobe
I came away from my retreat experience feeling that this community of Brothers has such a powerful way of proclaiming the Gospel. I really feel a sense of duty to help this community continue. Hopefully enough people like me will be touched by their experiences to do what they can do to help.

— Marcia Dodge
Thank You to Abiding Friends of SSJE

Christ has promised that if we abide in him … we shall bear fruit that abides. – SSJE Rule

The Brothers are grateful for Friends who abide with them, giving year after year.

Giving-wise, the monastery has not been a community that sits off on the periphery for me—“I ought to give a little bit to their good work,” that kind of thing. My connection to the Brothers is as foundational to my life as my parish is, so I give to them in the same way I give to my parish. That attitude changes the type of contribution that I make. You stay on your foundation, you abide on your foundation. I give to help them to abide.

—Sam Tallman

I can’t even explain the sense of connection to the community that giving back has created for me. You know, it’s “the price above rubies.” Whenever we reflect back the generosity and graciousness that God has shown us, it does amazing things to us. Giving is a privilege, and you feel that keenly when you can’t. It's an overflow of gratitude, an expression of gratitude for all that’s been gifted to us, like a circle, a feedback loop. It’s transforming.

—The Rev. Anne Ritchings

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ABIDING DONORS ~ FIVE & MORE YEARS

continued

Geraldine Herbst
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Sam Herrig
Frances H. McNut
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Joan Daniel Hodges
Martha Holden
Megan Carr Holding
Tom & Virginia Holleman
Mary Hope
Michael W. Hopkins
Joan & James Hornsby
Sarah Horton & Gunnar Urang
Priscilla & Amory Houghton
William C. Houghton
Estella & George Hovanian
Donna Hryb

Francis A. Hubbard
Douglas & Sallie Craig Huber
Ginny Huggins
Barbara Hughes
David & Janet Hughes
Sam & Isabel Hulse
Robert F. Hunt
William G. Hurst
Derek & Celia Hybels

Joel & Florrie Ives
Philip C. Jacobs
Philip & Nancy Jerauld
Frederick Jodry
Agnes B. Johnson
Bruce & Emily Johnson
Curts & Carolyn Johnson
Katherine Breadley Johnson
Richard Lawler
Jeanne & Thomas Leaman
Yoojin Janice Lee
Peter J. Lee
Mary & Thomas Lehman
R. Barry Levis
Peter & Monica Liberman
Art Lillicropp
Dora Anne Little
James H. Litton
Neal E. Logue
Anne W. Long
Charles C. LoRe
Richard T. Loring
Janet Lovejoy
Ira Lowe

Ann S. Lowell & Mary Steigner
Richard E. Lundberg
Patsy R. Lyle
Barbara P. MacDougall
Robert & Maria MacFarlane
Duncan & Eleanor MacQueen
John & Olive Malcolm
Kerry Ann Maloney
Louise Mann
Patricia A. Mann-Sherman
Daniel Marshall
Catherine F. Martensen
Donald P. Martin
Bruce & Sandra Mason
Pam & Stuart Mathews
Karen Mathiasen
Barbara P. Mathues
Joseph E. Mazza
Ruth Brensahan McAlee
Jeff McNam
Marcia P. Campbell
John & Anne McCausland
Amy & Brian McCreath
Anne S. McGhee
Betty Jo McGread
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J. Frank & Laura Turnage McNair
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Donald S. McPhail
Michael Paul Melendez
Cecily Merrell
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Marilyn & David Miller
Nanci & Richard Miller
Roberta & Alan Miller
Thomas Paul Miller
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Marilyn D. Mitchell
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William & Dianne Moss
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Catherine A. Munz

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Mark & Abigail Nestlehuft
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Roy & Evelyn Nolen
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Daphne B. Noyes
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Philip Olander
Arvid E. Olson
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Robert & Theresa O’Neill
Elizabeth & John Orens
Charles Orme-Rogers
Robert Orr
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Lynn C. Paff
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Jeanne & Scott Paradise
D. Palmer Pandington
Floyd H. Parkman
Sam & Mary Parkman
Bobbi Patterson
Nathan A. Paxton
Edward & Susannah Parkinson
K. Jeanne Person & Ramal Abdullah
Louise Phelan
Jennifer Phillips
Lynne R. Pike
Bruce Pingree
Louis W. Pitt
Karl A. Plank
William & LuAnn Polk
Patricia Jean Porter
Dorothy S. Post
Neff & Dorothy Powell
Fairbairn Powers
John C. Powers
James T. Prevatt
Thomas W. Pritchard
Patricia Progin
Eleanor B. Pyle
James C. Ramsom
George C. Rapp
Donald A. Reade
Henry & Mary Reath
Anne Rector
Ruth Redington
Marta-Regina Retamal-Farias
Anna Louise Reynolds
Joe & Elizabeth Reynolds
Edward Rich
Robert & Virginia Riggins
Jennifer Cole Ripman &
Richard Munro
Anne Ritchings & Kay Hankinson
Robert Rizer
Marta L. Roberts
Burton A. Robie
Suzanne Robinson
Cristine V. Rockwell
Dorothy & William Rodrick
Cathy Rodgers & Steve Kimbel
Yvonne D. Rogers
Renate S. Rose
ABIDING DONORS ~ FIVE & MORE YEARS

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<td>Adrienne Wootters</td>
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<td>Susan Zorn</td>
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Questions or comments?

Please contact Friends of SSJE, 980 Memorial Drive Cambridge, MA 02138 friends@ssje.org or 617.844.2255