	White Robed Monks of St. Benedict	<i>Volume 22 Issue 1</i>
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<i>Ansculta</i>		<i>Nondual: things remain distinct while not being separate.</i>
Abbot's Notes		Merry Christmas—2018

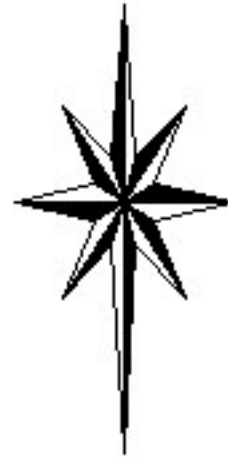
Peace be with you.

Here we are, 2018!! What a feat. Given the ever present world scene, it is certainly a wonder that we are all still here—living and breathing as we are wont.

Yet, does it not all depend upon one's perspective in the moment? Christmas from a Christian's point of view is not Christmas from a Hindu's point of view. Christmas from a secular Christian's viewpoint is not the same as Christmas from a religious viewpoint. Certainly Christmas from a spiritual viewpoint is certainly not that from a mystical point of view. Christmas from a Newtonian viewpoint of not that of Christmas from a Quantum Mechanical viewpoint. Christmas from an earthly perspective is not the same as from a cosmological perspective. It all depends ...

What does Christmas mean for you, as an individual self-identified human being being human? The "meaning of Christmas" is a relatively new idea in the 13.8 billion year history of our known universe. Some sources cite the phrase came into use in the 19th century. Forces of secularization began to emerge. Santa began to replace Baby Jesus. Exchange of gifts between peers was becoming the norm rather than given gifts to the poor without any expectation of a return..

As the pendulum of social mores and customs swings, there appeared various literary devices to counter shift. For example,



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.

1889, The American magazine stated: *to give up one's very self — to think only of others — how to bring the greatest happiness to others — that is the true meaning of Christmas.*" What an idea!

Such an idea—when lived-out in day-to-day practice brings the Peace to one's mind-heart that the alleged historical Jesus spoke about: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* (John 14:27)

To think only of others! WHAT!!! What about my issues and concerns? What about the way I think and determine things OUGHT to be? What about my

Abbot's Notes

need to control people, places, things and events? What about my frustration, angst and despair when others do not agree with me or things do not unfold the way I want them to!! What about what he or she did to or said about me? Damn it! What about me!!! Am I not that important! To think only of others – indeed!

(To think) how to bring the greatest happiness to others certainly is a very nice idea and thoroughly impractical. Hummm ...How do I bring the **greatest** happiness to others—let's ponder this for a moment. True, I cannot make another happy. True, I can bring a horse to water and cannot make it drink. How to bring the *greatest* happiness to others does not mean giving them money, safety, or security (as such are but fleeting qualities). It also does not mean giving others food, shelter and clothing (also fleeting). It does not even mean giving appreciation, understanding, affection, acceptance (fleeting). The greatest happiness?

Again, please let us return to the first word of the Rule of St. Benedict:

LISTEN!!

In order to listen, one must engender a clear mind. What is a clear mind? A mind free of incessant chatter—about one's own self, one's own situation, one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions—the whole 9 yards.

How does one engender a clear mind? Back to The America magazine's remark: *to give up one's very self*. But, how does one give up one's own self!! That so-called "self" is nothing more or less than a simple thought. One's so called self is nothing more than the thought of who, what, how, when, where, and why I think I am or am not. That is all. Just a thought—and that thought generates feelings and emotions. Just a thought.

In that one is not one's thoughts, then one can direct and change the flow of electro-chemical reactions in one's brain and respond accordingly. Change the perspective. Change the perspective from MY issue, MY this, or MY that or in another guise (I think) YOU OUGHT to, should do or not do, whatever, to a simple question: *what is the greatest happiness I can offer this person right now?* Just offer your Presence to the other.

LISTEN!!

More often than not, just listen—listen without judgment or prejudice, without generating a mental comment upon what is occurring. Just listen—not just with one's ears or—yes, eyes—but with one's whole art of being human.

In other words, get out your way.

Christmas then becomes a year around event.

One then realizes—gets—the essence of all healing—in any tradition—**one learns not to take one-self or life personally.** *Life is not a personal event.*

Life is just life: a series of thoughts, feelings and emotions; people places, things and events. That is all. Smile at the simplicity of it all and celebrate a very Merry Christmas and an extremely Happy New Year.

Many Blessings and Peace and Joy!

+Robert OSB

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

A Christmas Prayer

Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Prayer of Maimonides

Moses Ben Maimon (1135-1204)

Inspire in me a love for my art for thy crea-
tures.

Let no thirst for profit or seeking for renown
or admiration take away from my calling.

Keep within me strength of body and soul,
ever ready with cheerfulness to help and
succor rich and poor, good and bad, enemy
as well as friend.

In the sufferer let me see only the human
being.

The Prayer of St. Francis with the Bodhisattva Vow

Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

Lord,
Make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

May I be a safeguard for those who have no
protection,
A guide for those who journey along the way;
For those who wish to go across the water,
May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.

May I be a home port for those who yearn for
landfall,
And a lamp for those who long for the light;
For those who are tired, may I be a resting
place,
For all who need help, their servant.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love.

Like the great earth itself and other eternal
things,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
For the boundless multitude of living beings,
May I be the ground and vessel of their lives.

For every single thing that lives,
In number like the boundless reaches of the
sky,
May I be their sustenance and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bounds of suffering.

For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

**White Robed Monks
of St. Benedict**

PO Box 27536
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

Phone: 415-292-3228

E-mail: porter@whiterobedmonks.org

www.whiterobedmonks.org

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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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