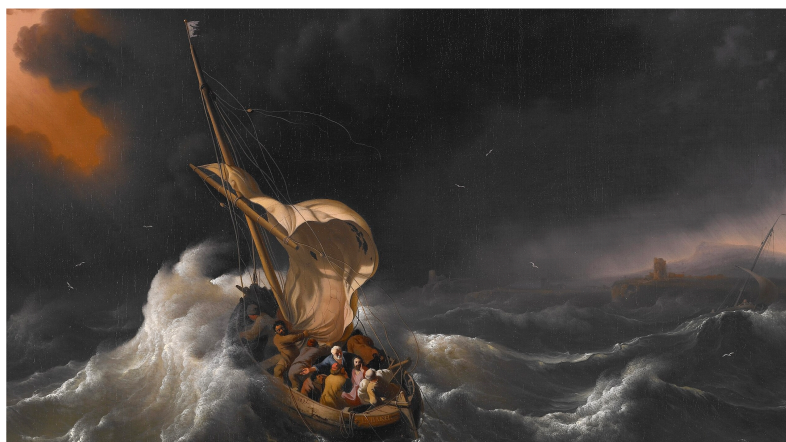


SOLLERONE

The Newsletter of Lions Gate Abbey

July 2025



BIBLE SAFARI:

Be Not Afraid

by Fr. David St. John

“Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing make you afraid. All things are passing. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Nothing is lacking to the one who has God - God alone is enough.”

These words are from a little meditation entitled, “St. Teresa’s Bookmark”, and they are a good summary of what can be read in John 14:1, in which Jesus says “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.” Later, in John 16:33, He says, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

People in today’s society tend to mistake patience for submission in much the same way that they mistake kindness and gentleness for weakness. They seem to think that it is we, as Christians, who have our priorities all backwards and they often take advantage of us.

But we can take comfort in knowing that some truly great people throughout the history of the Christian faith have been taken advantage of. They have come up against stiff opposition and yet, through their great patience and unshakable faith in God, have prevailed.

One such person is St. Teresa of Avila, that great theologian, reformer of the Carmelite Order, and spiritual advisor to St. John of the Cross.

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During my formation for Holy Orders, one of the books I read and reported on was “Fire Within”, a fascinating look at Teresa’s life and her writings on meditation and prayer.

Teresa’s ministry was not well received in her own religious community. Her sisters had grown lax in their faith and practice, and Teresa called for reform. Their response was to throw her out of the convent that she, herself, had established. On one occasion, she was turned out late at night in the middle of a rainstorm. Dressed from head to toe in her coarse woolen habit, she climbed into her donkey cart and was riding along when the wheel of her cart hit a ditch, and the cart turned over dumping Teresa into the mud. In recounting this episode, she wrote that she sat there, soaked with mud, looked up to heaven, and said, “Lord, if this is the way you treat your friends, it’s no wonder that you don’t have very many!”

But frustrated as she was, Teresa clung to God. Her writings also lead us to suspect that she got a response from God while she sat in that muddy ditch. One of her meditations on the Disciplines of the Holy Spirit talks about how we must not be deceived by the appearance that evil triumphs over good. As she wrote, sometimes, “God uses the devil as a sharpening stone for Christians.”

Teresa not only taught this lesson, she lived it. She never gave up on God, even when her sisters and others fought her every step of the way. She kept right on preaching and teaching what she knew to be the truth. She understood what the prophet Jeremiah was talking about when he said, “The Lord is with me, like a mighty champion” - and what Jesus was talking about when He said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul . . . Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Heavenly Father.”

This is what Christ came to live and to teach. He endured persecution, and embodied the triumph of God over evil. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, the disciples to whom Jesus spoke endured insults, attacks, and death. They became outcasts for serving the Lord. But God is always faithful. Even today, discipleship carries many risks. But, as we see, Jesus and Jeremiah - not to mention many others - remind us that the Lord is always with us. Our challenge is very powerful and important. It has been revealed to us what makes us strong.

I like what Charles Spurgeon had to say: “Since we shall not suffer harm at the hand of men by their arbitrary conduct, apart from the will and permission of our Father, let us be ready to bear with holy courage whatever the wrath of man may bring upon us. God will not waste the life of one of his soldiers, nor a hair of his head.”

Or, as Matthew Henry puts it so succinctly, “He that feeds the sparrows will not starve the saints.” ♦

Books, Coffee, and Dee-Lites: Thinking About Enchantment

by Abbess Aurore Barrett

Since 2020 and the COVID Pandemic I, and many others, have been trying to come back from the closing down of our lives. My own church closed for months, grocery store shelves were empty, friends stopped visiting each other and family get togethers were widely discouraged, if not banned. Now, five years later, most of us are trying to rebuild our lives but not doing a very good job of it.

For some time I have been trying to find something that would make my life what it once was, enchanting, exciting, meaningful. After much searching I finally found a book that speaks to the depths of my soul.

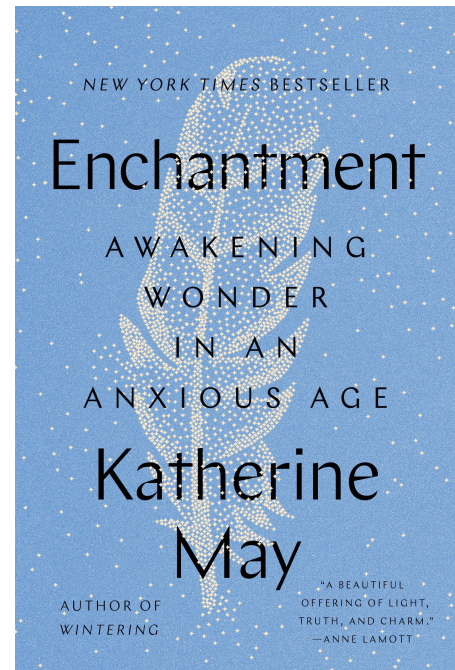
“Enchantment” by Katherine May is helping me to reawaken my wonder of life in this exhausted age. Published in 2023, May takes us on a journey to renew our enchantment of living. In today’s world we have information at our fingertips at all times and too many news channels from which to choose. We rarely take the time to form our own opinions but rather allow the opinions of others to seep into our subconscious. Each day we are being told what to like or dislike, never taking the time to see the enchantment of just living.

With cell phones, computers, and the internet we never lack for communication, information, or direction. We are constantly being inundated with information, “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” (T. S. Eliot) ~ but where is this information coming from? Our lives and our souls are being directed away from the wonder and enchantment of living and into the world of busyness.

In her book “Enchantment” May invites the reader to come with her on a journey to reawaken our innate sense of wonder and awe.

With humor, candor, and warmth, she shares stories of her own struggles with work, family, and the aftereffects of pandemic, particularly feelings of being overwhelmed as the world rushed to reopen.

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“Burnout comes when you spend too long ignoring your own needs. It is an incremental sickening that builds from exhaustion upon exhaustion, overwhelm upon overwhelm.”
— from *Enchantment* by Katherine May

When I tell you that I have underlined many quotes in the book and pasted page markers on my favorite pages, I am telling you about my love for this book. May, in her writings, validated what I was going through. The sense that I had lost my curiosity, my imagination, my ability to make meaning out of my everyday experiences.

“I don’t want to sit like a brooding hen on the nest of my past achievements. I want to keep on going deep into the uncertain act of making, to see the unknown world stretch out before me and to devote myself to exploring it.”
— from *Enchantment* by Katherine May

One of my very favorite passages in the book is in the chapter titled “Hierophany”:

“Just after lunchtime, when I was a child, my grandmother would sit down to eat an orange, and peace would fall over the house.

“In a life without ritual, this was the closest we had: She would settle into her green Chesterfield armchair, its seat cushion long ago re-covered with fraying brocade, and lay a square of kitchen paper across her lap. Then she would start to massage the orange, working it between her bunched knuckles until the skin was lifted from the fruit, before piercing it with her thumbnail and pulling it methodically away. It was nearest I ever saw her get to prayer, sitting reverent in the afternoon light while she eased off the yellow silks of pith and ate, spitting out the occasional pit. Sometimes she would offer me a segment, but not always: this was her time, her pleasure, and anyway I never really understood.”

As Oliver says in “*Oliver’s Travels*” ~ If you don’t understand that passage, just think about it, the meaning will come to you!

And in the same vein there are two movies which speak to living a life full of Enchantment:

First, “*Enchanted April*” is a 1991 British historical drama film, adapted from Elizabeth von Arnim’s 1922 novel. It stars

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Miranda Richardson, Josie Lawrence, Polly Walker, and Joan Plowright, with Alfred Molina, Michael Kitchen, and Jim Broadbent in supporting roles. The story is about four very different women, strangers to each other, who together rent a house in Italy to get away from their dreary lives and rainy England. The acting is superb, the scenery enchanting and the story wonderful. No violence, no sex, no swearing, just a romantic and enchanting time in a country known for its beauty.

The second movie is “Dear Heart” a 1964 American romantic-comedy film starring Glenn Ford and Geraldine Page as lonely middle-aged people who fall in love at a hotel convention. Its theme song “Dear Heart” was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song. Again it is a movie of Enchantment, no sex, no swearing, no violence. Just a lovely story of a



middle aged man and woman finding love in the most unexpected place. I will be watching, once again, this movie when I finish my writing for today.

Both movies are available on Prime, on a DVD or you may be able to download them.

Read the book, watch the movies. Your life will be all the better for it! ♦

Art Safari:

“A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” (and “Bathers at Asnières”) by Georges Seurat

by Fr. David St. John

This is Georges Seurat’s masterpiece. A gigantic canvas, measuring approximately seven feet high by ten feet wide, it shows some of the more well-to-do citizens of Paris enjoying a day of leisure on La Grand Jatte, a slender island in the middle of the River Seine, outside the city.

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While it is a scene of idyllic pleasures, with families and others posed along the river on a warm day, many people see in it a sense of desolation. The people appear to be frozen in time and isolated from one another. No one is interacting with other people. They stand or sit like mannequins in a department store window.

The painting was premiered in the 1886 Impressionist Exhibition in Paris, but Seurat continued for several years to rework it. The artist called his style “Divisionism”, but it has come to be known by its more common term as “Pointillism”, in which he painted small dots of color side by side. The dots are very visible when viewed up close, but at a distance, they merge into vibrant, cohesive colors.

Seurat's painting of “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte” was a mirror impression of his own painting, “Bathers at Asnières”, completed shortly before, in 1884. Whereas the bathers in that earlier painting are doused in light, and appear to be truly enjoying themselves, almost every figure on La Grande Jatte appears to be cast in shadow, either under trees or an umbrella, or from another person.

Sundays were a day of rest in 19th-century French society. Regardless of their position in society, people would escape the hustle and bustle of city life by whatever means they could.



Those with means headed to La Grande Jatte. Those with few means went to Asnières.

Geographically, Asnières lies on the left bank of the Seine, directly across from the island of the Grande Jatte. The people in these two paintings would be looking at each other across the river. In *Bathers at Asnières*, Seurat depicts slightly larger-than-life working-class figures in repose along the riverbank.

Their dress hints at their social standing as does the industrial landscape visible in the background, which tells us they are working class. That same industrial complex would have been equally visible from La Grande Jatte, but Seurat leaves it out of the picture.

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In La Grande Jatte, Seurat's figures appear stiff and almost robotic, whereas here the less-clothed bodies at Asnières are fully at ease in the environment, swimming and lounging. And, as mentioned, while the men, women, and children of La Grande Jatte are shrouded almost uniformly in shadow, here, light bathes the subjects' faces. Although La Grande Jatte is beautiful and coldly elegant, I'd much rather spend the day with the people at Asnières.

In the 1950s, Ernest Bloch commented on "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte". His remarks spurred a renewed interest and appreciation for the piece:

"This picture is one single mosaic of boredom, a masterful rendering of the disappointed longing and the incongruities of a dolce far niente [idleness]" he wrote, "The painting depicts a middle-class Sunday morning on an island in the Seine near Paris ... despite the recreation going on there, it seems to belong more to Hades than to a Sunday ... The result is endless boredom, the little man's hellish utopia of skirting the Sabbath and holding onto it too; his Sunday succeeds only as a bothersome must, not as a brief taste of the Promised Land."

In essence, Seurat's "Bathers at Asnières" and "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte" offer a nuanced and thought-provoking commentary on the social fabric of his time, prompting viewers to consider the lives and social dynamics of different classes in late 19th-century Paris. ♦

Travel Safari: The Flying Armchair

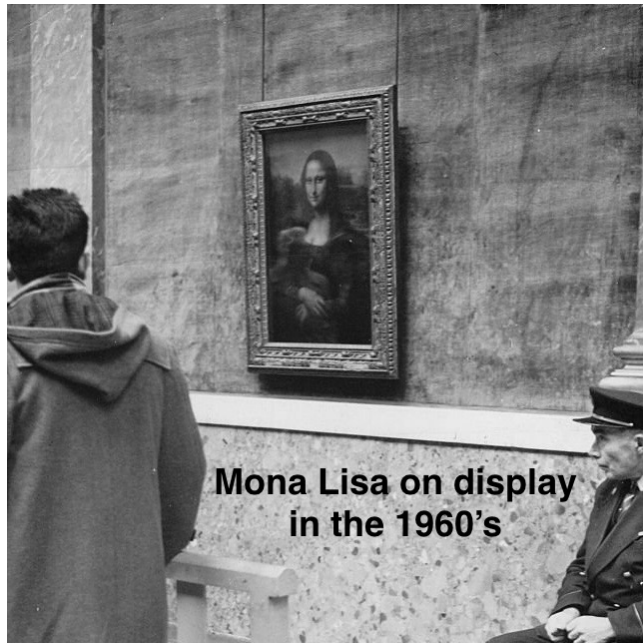
by Abbess Aurore Barrett



Before our marriage, my husband, David, and I did quite a bit of traveling. In his late teens and early 20's, David travelled extensively throughout Europe, spending a great deal of time in Paris where he studied Mime with Marcel Marceau and French at the Alliance Francaise, and bicycled across the length of Mallorca. Before the introduction of cruise ships, he was able to see sights easily and freely (such as the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, the Coliseum in Rome,

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and The Louvre Museum in Paris, without fighting crowds or waiting in long lines to get in. I, on the other hand, spent my most of my vacation time mainly in London, visiting all the locations where, as my guidebook said, great writers once lived.



When we were married we took our honeymoon in England, traveling by rented car, and Switzerland, traveling by train. We visited various parts of England, including Wales, where we had tea with a friend in Leamington Spa and stayed several nights with a friend in Nottingham. We had the opportunity to see the home of the Brontes in Haworth, and the home of Jane Austen in Chawton, the Tower of London, and so much more. Since then we have been back to England and France several times, including taking our youngest son to Normandy where we

walked the beaches, saw the German Bunkers, and were greeted with kindness and joy by the villagers in Sainte-Mere-Eglise when they found out we were Americans.

One summer, years ago, we took our two youngest children on an automobile trip through the United States, visiting Old Faithful, Mt Rushmore, Devil's Tower, The Liberty Bell, the museums in Washington DC (where we saw President Reagan as his limousine entered the parking garage.) All in all David and I have visited most of the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.



We have seen Shakespeare Plays in Stratford Upon Avon, England; Stratford, Connecticut; Stratford, Ontario, Canada; Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the Utah Shakespeare Festival, plus stage plays and operas from

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wherever we wanted to go. We were very fortunate to see the world famous opera star, Beverly Sills, (and meet her backstage after the opera where she signed our souvenir poster) in her farewell performance in Houston Texas.

Those were beautiful and wonderful years which helped to build memories we will never forget. But these days, mainly because of my severe spinal stenosis, our traveling has been limited to that which can be done by car or, my now favorite way to travel, from our armchairs.

In 2021 we found out about a company that challenges people to walk, run, bicycle or any other activity that gets a person moving. Designated vacation spots throughout the world are offered with specified miles to complete for each location. Each day we would do one activity, such as walking outside or on a treadmill, bicycling on a stationary bicycle, getting up off a chair and just walking a mile or so throughout our house. Each day we entered the mile or miles we completed into the computer program and we most often received back postcards from the locations our mileage covered. Once we completed all the miles required, we received a beautiful medal to reward our efforts of completion. David and I did many of the challenges and have quite a few medals between us, but too soon even that became difficult for me.



Today our travel is done by sitting in our cozy armchairs. How can this be? By using our experiences, memories, and imaginations. One of the first things we did when deciding on this method of travel, was to sign up for the MHz Subscription Channel which plays foreign movies and TV shows. If we decide that we want to visit France, we set out to find good french

restaurants and bakeries in our town or

make a French meal at home. We watch French language movies and television shows all week long and enter them in our Travel Journals. The next week we might be interested in Italy, so a week is set for great Italian Movies and food, entering again our armchair experience in our Travel Journals. In this way we have visited Australia, New Zealand, India, Greece, Sweden, and so much more, and just this past Sunday, Singapore.

Travel is a physical experience yes, but it is also an emotional experience. If you can't travel one may find a way in which you can do it. You'll be thrilled, excited, and experience so much that will enhance and enrich your life. ♦

Music Safari:

Music for the Royal Fireworks by Georg Frederic Handel

by Fr. David St. John



Georg Frederic Handel was born in Germany in 1685 and lived his early life in Hamburg and then Italy before settling in London in 1712. This is where he was to spend the bulk of his career, and he became a naturalized British subject in 1727. Handel is best known for his oratorio, *Messiah* (1742). And his orchestral *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* remain steadfastly popular to this day. One of his

four coronation anthems, *Zadok the Priest*, has been performed at every British coronation since 1727. He died a highly respected and very wealthy man in 1759, at the age of 74, and was given a state funeral at Westminster Abbey.

The subject of this essay is Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. It was composed in 1749, under commission from King George II, to be the musical prelude to the celebration of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which brought an end to the global war in which England battled France, Prussia, and a few other belligerent countries. And, it was a grand celebration of British nationalism. The festivities were held in Green Park, London in April, 1749, with thousands in attendance.

The music was a big success. The same cannot be said for the fireworks.

Rainclouds threatened to soak the entire celebration. Many fireworks failed or went amiss, with one falling firework setting a woman's dress ablaze and another errant rocket setting part of the stage on fire.

The entire celebration, of course, had a military theme. Much to Handel's chagrin, the King said absolutely "no fiddles, or violeens" - meaning no string instruments. Ultimately, it was presented as "A Grand Overture of Warlike Instruments". For the performance, Handel used 24 oboes, 12 bassoons, 9 horns, 9 trumpets, and 3 drums. Later, Handel rewrote the score to include string instruments for use at a charity concert for the Foundling Hospital, later that same year.

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Music for the Royal Fireworks is in five movements: 1. The Overture, 2. Boureé, 3. La Paix, 4. La Réjouissance, and 5. Minuets 1 and 2.

Many of you would immediately recognize the tune of movement #4, La Réjouissance.

Although Handel was German born and not naturalized British until the age of 42, his *Music for the Royal Fireworks* secured for him a revered place in Britain's renewed national identity. Handel and his music were more publicly adored than ever. His position as the country's premier public composer was unrivaled.

Today, we know him best for his *Messiah* which we often hear at Christmastime. But during his lifetime, it was the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* that put him on the British map. ♦

Poetry Corner: Beady Eyes

Two beady eyes,
peering at me
through the window pane.

I look carefully to see
what I can see
but all I see are the beady eyes
looking back at me.

I try to peer closer
at those beady eyes
staring blankly at me
as I stare back.

Deep, into those
small beady eyes
it is almost as if those eyes
can see through me.

There is a quick blink
there is a bright glint
there is a flutter of the wings.

The neck moves
left and then right
the beady eyes follow
the movements of the neck

and then, without a word or sound
the wings flap and
the little bird flies away.

-Aurore Leigh Barrett

(from my book, "*The Touch: Poems and Prose*",
copyright 2013)

