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News from Ed Thompson

Some of you may know about – or may have even ordered from - Abbey Press. They market religious and inspirational products for a wide variety of holidays and other special occasions. If you ever ordered anything from them it seemed like you would get their catalogs in the mail at least twice a week. Now it seems like they have abandoned their print catalogs and do their marketing mostly online. Or maybe they just lost my mailing address after a series of moves.

Many of their products reflect a Roman Catholic religious perspective which is not surprising and completely understandable since they are owned and operated by Saint Meinrad Archabbey, a Benedictine monastic community. When my wife Jackie and I were moving from Kansas to West Virginia earlier this year our route took us through southern Indiana on I-64. We were surprised to see a billboard advertising Abbey Press and the Gift Shop at Saint Meinrad Archabbey. That was so completely unexpected that we passed the exit before we decided that we should take the time to turn around and go back. We didn't think we'd have that many occasions to drive through southern Indiana again any time soon.

The place was delightful. What I really appreciated though was a brochure I picked up about the app that has been developed by the monks there: "Honor Your Inner Monk". (<http://www.honoryourinnermonk.org/>) I've been using it since February.

Although the monks at Saint Meinrad pray five times a day, the app gives you two daily reminders, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. You also get a short portion of a monastic chant and a screen shot that shows incense rising each time you open it. Maybe once a month you get the Lord's Prayer or a "Hail Mary". (Not that I'm complaining. I don't have to write 60 short prayers every month.) Some prayers of course are better or more meaningful than others. Today's was a keeper. "Lord, you call us to be charitable. Help me today to keep my mouth shut when I want to say something unkind." That could be the prayer of the week, the prayer of the month, maybe even the prayer of the year. I thought that if I could convince my wife to take up needlepoint again, she could put that prayer on a piece of fabric and I could frame it and hang it on my office wall. Some may suggest that I could learn to needlepoint. While that is true, it would be easier and quicker to simply write that prayer on a post-it note and put it next to my phone or next to my computer or maybe in both places.

Just in the past two weeks I ran across another prayer app "Ceaseless." (<http://www.ceaselessprayer.com/>) This one connects with the contacts in your phone or on your computer. Then each day it gives you a brief scripture reading and takes three names at random out of your contacts so that you can pray for them. Since the contacts in my phone combine lists of people from two different presbyteries, lists which I myself did not develop, I'm sometimes encouraged to pray for people I don't know. More often than not though I get to pray for friends and people I haven't seen for a while.

Jan Edmiston, one of the co-moderators of the 222nd General Assembly, mentioned the "Ceaseless" prayer app in her blog, "A Church for Starving Artists"

<https://achurchforstarvingartists.wordpress.com/> She posts two, maybe three, times a week often writing about what she thinks the church needs to be or how the church needs to change

to connect with people that we're not reaching. I find her posts on racism to be particularly helpful and challenging.

I encourage you to check out those two apps as well as Jan's blog. What apps have you found helpful? What blogs do you read?