

## *Stay Awake!*

Urgency—do you feel it? Life working full throttle—do you experience it? What makes the difference between mediocrity and sanctity? One says, “tomorrow” or “a little bit later”; the other says, “RIGHT NOW!” The skeptic invited to wake up from the numbing hum-drum of life may say, “life lived with that kind of intensity will combust sooner or later...and most likely sooner than later...it’s impossible.” And so he or she settles back into the comfortable and ordinary...flowing once again with the masses. But the saint knows of a source beyond this normal flow and chances it—life is fire or it’s a fraud—only a semblance of what it’s meant to be.

What makes the Carthusian monk get up in the middle of the night each and every night and spend two to three hours chanting psalms as he keeps vigil for his Lord? What makes the Carmelite nun leave everything behind, including family and friends, to plant herself in one place for the rest of her life so that she can fix her gaze undistractedly upon God? What makes the seminarian actually believe that all he is being asked to give up will actually be worth it?

It’s the belief that...

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed.....

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manly Hopkins got it—here was a saint who knew the secret to living fully awake. In the memorable words of St. Benedict, “The presence of God is everywhere.” Perhaps the greatest gift a monastery has to give is the manifestation of the grandeur of this Presence. And the one who lives in a monastery has chanced it—the *only* way for him or her to live is to be likewise charged with the grandeur of this Presence. So, all who find yourselves here in this sacred place, feel the flaming out of this grandeur, do everything you can to live in the freshness deep down things and you too chance it—and let us together become saints.