

INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

Bread of Life

Issue 11 June 2013



"Sunflowers" by Fr. Arthur Poulin

“... I think of them, thousands upon thousands,
in many lands,
whenever summer came to them,
rising

out of the patience of patience,
to leaf and look up
into the blue sky
or, with thanks,

into the rain
that would feed
their thirsty roots
latched into the earth -
sandy or hard, Vermont or Arabia,
what did it matter,
the answer was simply to rise
in joyfulness, all their days.

Have I found any better teaching?
Not ever, not yet...”

Mary Oliver

Letter from the Prior

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Reflecting on the season of Eastertide which took us on an intense liturgical journey to the heart of our faith - celebrating together the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ - I am still full of wonder regarding how our God chose to communicate to us. We again had the chance to experience the love of God manifested in Jesus who emptied himself and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2) We express our profound gratitude with Mary:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant...” (Canticle of Mary).

And I still contemplate the image of God that emerges ever new, in the way that She communicated to us through this Pentecost psalm:

“Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth...”

How manifold are your works, O Lord!

The earth is full of your creatures...

When you send forth your spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth...” (Ps. 104).

Renewed by our faith, we as a community are grateful for where the spirit is leading us and for the extraordinary opportunity we have. As you know from the updates we have sent out recently, we are now able to live out our long time dream of expanding the monastery by purchasing the house next door. Our neighbors’ generosity has made this possible, allowing us to expand and yet remain in close proximity to the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California and the spiritual and cultural environment they provide.

That brings us to this moment when it is imperative to focus, develop and expand our vision as Camaldolese monks, oblates and friends. It is our intention to live out a model of monasticism for today and tomorrow that is grounded in the realities of the twenty-first century yet true to our beloved Camaldolese heritage.

“Lord, send out your Spirit,
and renew the face of the
earth.”

Our life in community realizes in an integrated way the three “goods” of the Camaldolese charism. Each monk employs times of silence and solitude to nurture his life in the Spirit. We are also a community, bonded in the fellowship of faith, prayer, and work; and we develop our personal gifts of art, teaching, ministry, spiritual direction, retreat leading and hospitality as part of both our inner work and outward community focus. Our nurturance of our community of oblates and friends is a foundational part of this contemplative community focus. We are grateful for the presence and help of the oblates and friends of Incarnation and New Camaldoli and look to their playing a significant role as we develop our expanded vision.

We ask all of you for your support with prayers, presence, time and talent, and as possible your financial gifts so that we can continue to fund this new project. (To donate now or learn more about our expansion, go to www.incarnationmonastery.org/pages/donate.html).

It has been said that the only thing certain about the future is that we cannot be certain about the shape it will take. But we believe that with the Word of God as the basis for our lives, we will be open to the surprises that the future has in store for us. ♦

Fr. Andrew Colnaghi, O.S.B. Cam.



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Divine Providence

Our journey with the Camaldolese Community was truly divine providence. We were going to attend the Acupressure Institute in Berkeley for nine weeks in 1998 and could not find a room at any inn. We had a list of people who rented rooms and we finally noticed Incarnation Monastery. The list had posted the wrong number (Father Andrew's personal phone) which turned out to be the right number. If we had called the house number, the Guestmaster at that time would not have been willing to rent two rooms for that length of time to women from the Midwest who were not oblates. But, Andrew liked us and we were in.

We tried to be very respectful of the house and not bother the monks. However, the angels had different plans and sent in the ants who loved our bagels, and we were "forced" to keep our food upstairs in the main kitchen. It was the beginning of the end because we would make our tea after Lauds and before school and got to know the monks over the morning paper. We came for another nine weeks the next year and have gone on two pilgrimages to Italy. We have met delightful and inspiring friends of the Community through our stay at Incarnation and the pilgrimages.

I was raised Catholic and Sandy Methodist. We counted ourselves as "Spiritual" but not "Religious". As we spent time with Andrew and the Incarnation Community, we found their spiritual philosophy was incredibly appealing as a way to connect with God and very much in line with what we had been looking for but not finding. The Camaldolese philosophy exemplifies what we believe Jesus' message of love and forgiveness is all about. Tolerance and acceptance of those different than us was practiced as primary to sharing God's love.

What we also found through this community was a grounded and practical approach to finding a spiritual path leading us closer to God. Father's Andrew and Arthur especially have been there for both of us as we have gone through difficult situations as well as joyous life celebrations. They have been rocks upon which we could lean. Their friendship, guidance, and grace have been true gifts in our lives. We are both oblates now as well as Sandy's husband, Stephen.

Incarnation Monastery itself has been a refuge for us. It has been a place where epiphanies occurred and soul messages were received. With the expansion of Incarnation Monastery, the showers of blessings and transformation will

be available to so many others. It will give the community their own space as well as providing a "mother lodge" for souls thirsting for a closer relationship to God.

We have been blessed in our lives and are excited about contributing to the expansion monetarily. This is a huge commitment for the Community and we are so thankful that we can be a part of making this dream a reality that can be sustained. We encourage you to share your financial blessings because you love the members of the Community, the peace and beauty of Incarnation and are appreciative of the extraordinary gifts we receive from our relationship to the Camaldolese Community.

We thank our Camaldolese family for enriching our lives in incredible and unexpected ways. We pray for only the best as they start in this new chapter of their journey. ♦

Lynn Deen, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.

Sandy Pecinovsky, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.



Front Cover

Father Arthur Poulin, monk and artist, lives and works at Incarnation Monastery. In his contemplative process, he begins by covering the canvas with many layers of black gesso. He then adds minute brush strokes and tiny dots of color that grow into a whole through a sacred journey from darkness to light.

www.fatherarthurpoulin.org

St. Andrew's Abbey, Valyermo, California

"I will lure you into the desert, and there speak to your heart." (Hosea)

For me travel has always been more than just the destination . . . it's the journey, the highways and byways less-traveled, and the out-of-the way places, that offer the deepest experiences as one goes from here to there and back again.

And so for me, this often means making a retreat as part of my journey home.

Last winter I traveled to Arizona to visit my Dad in Yuma and spent a long weekend at the Benedictine Abbey Prince of Peace in Oceanside, California, high on a hilltop where one can actually watch the sun setting into the ocean while chanting Vespers with the monks in their beautiful glass-walled chapel.

This winter, taking my Dad's ashes back to Arizona so that friends there might also say their goodbyes, I had the magical experience of spending a week at another Benedictine Abbey on the way home: St. Andrew's in the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains at Valyermo, California. Considered "high desert" at an elevation of 3600 feet, it is home to Joshua trees, pines, cottonwoods, willows, sage, and blooming desert grasses. There's a small man-made lake with ducks, koi and turtles, pathways and hiking trails, stone bridges, a Chinese pagoda-like lake house, and stations-of-the-cross winding up the desert hillside along little mountain-goat-width trails.

The abbey was originally a farm turned into a priory to host Benedictine monks exiled from China in the early 1950s, the church a barn, and the monks quarters, the stables. The main building and retreat house were the first buildings constructed so that the community would have income. Since then more buildings have been added including a welcome/conference center and expansive bookstore/gift shop, as well as an arts & crafts center where they handcraft delightful folk art ceramic plaques of saints and angels (using molds designed by the late Fr. Maur van Doorslaert, O.S.B.) to help support themselves. Now, this many years later, the monks still pray in the barn and live in the stables (the latter the only cloistered area on the property).



Cemetery Grave Markers, St. Andrew's Abbey

I have always loved the quote from Hosea, "I will lure you into the desert, and there speak to your heart." And indeed this sacred space not only spoke to my heart (as I continued to grieve my father's passing), but each day presented me with a heart, literally. I would be hiking through the hillside stations-of-the-cross, or up at the cemetery on the plateau, and there as I was photographing, praying, or just pondering the unique landscape, I would discover a heart-shaped stone on the ground, as though waiting to offer healing to my own heart. I kept three: a small one to carry in my pocket, a medium-size one to place with the Our Lady of Montserrat plaque I purchased at the Arts & Crafts shop, and a large one for my desk, each to remind me to always keep an open heart.

As the monastery is in a valley, one has to go up to their cemetery on the plateau to get a real sense of horizon. There you are surrounded by snow-capped mountains and gaze out to the Mojave desert. From this vantage point there is a true sense of wilderness and wildness and that mysterious lure of the desert. Tracks from small black bear, coyote, and mountain lion can be seen as one walks through the sagebrush. And it was there, on the plateau, that I most felt the magic of the landscape . . . an indescribable oneness with all those buried there, as well as a sense of eternity. Both monks and oblates are buried there, each grave marked with a concrete cross embedded with five large, diverse stones. Some graves also have stones marking the edges of their plots, while others have natural or hand-painted stones placed

on the grave markers by visitors over the years.

For the first time in that clear, early morning light, I was suddenly overwhelmed with this insatiable desire to one day have my own ashes “planted” in holy ground. It was an experience beyond words, a longing that welled up from the deepest recesses of my wandering heart . . . a heart that had indeed been “lured” into the desert.

Afterwards one of the monks teased me and said perhaps I could place half my ashes in Big Sur and the other half there at Valyermo! Of course one must be an oblate of St. Andrew’s to be buried there. But no matter where or what I decide to do with my ashes, I know a piece of my heart will forever remain on that breathtaking plateau. ♦

Yvonne Rose, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.

St. Andrew’s Abbey, Valyermo, California

www.saintandrewsabbey.com



Sunset at Valyermo

Daily Schedule

Monday and Friday

Lauds, 7 a.m.

Short Vespers with sitting meditation, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

Lauds, 7 a.m.

Vespers and Eucharist, 5 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday

Lauds and Eucharist, 8 a.m.

Vespers, 5 p.m.

Retreat Days

For information about quiet days and retreats please visit

Incarnation (www.incarnationmonastery.com) and New Camaldoli (www.contemplation.com) websites.

Thank You!

We appreciate and welcome any donations toward our newsletter.

Your contributions help us provide print copies to send to our motherhouse in Italy and to New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur.

Back Cover

Meath D. Conlan, PhD

Dr. Conlan has been a counselor and spiritual director for the past 30 years. Australian-born, he has wide experience of diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicities and spiritual traditions. Meath was a long-time student and friend of the late Bede Griffiths and is a Camaldolese Oblate.

www.meathconlan.com

If...

you would like to submit an idea, article, etc., for the newsletter send to

news@incarnationmonastery.org

Being Yeast In the Dough of Our Time

Our Camaldolese, monastic Galaxy is celebrating in many ways and places her venerable age of one thousand years, a millennial experience whose story elicits in me the image of the yeast as enlivening element of transformation and renewal.

From a cosmic perspective, one of the most astounding discoveries that is deeply changing our contemporary consciousness is the awareness of living in an unfolding multiverse that began as a dot of immense energy some 13.7 billion years ago, and became over time galaxies and stars, planets and oceans, hedgehogs and poppies, the voice of Beyonce, and the ecstatic tears of the monk Romuald in the 10th century C.E., inspirer of our monastic journey, and embodiment of a much larger spiritual adventure that has embraced East and West since time immemorial.

How do each of us, separately and together, open our hearts and practices to this life-giving Energy? What kind of transformations are we urged to enact, moving from a dissipative and violent model of existence to a connective, nurturing, and hopeful attitude of life?

In the gospel of Matthew the mysterious growth of God's kingdom is compared to an expansive impetus, to the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through (Mt 13:33). The startling, evangelical paradox consists in the extreme smallness and yet powerful potential of yeast, able to affect, infuse, and expand a much bigger mass.

In the emergence of Jesus, in his Resurrection and gift of the Spirit, we contemplate the divine yeast of self-giving Love that is stronger than violence and death, or any egoistic drive. We believe that the yeast of divine love is the cosmic Christ, attracting all of creation forward, toward a deep communion with the wholeness of Love: "On that day you will know that you are in me and I am in you" (Jn 14:20).

The good news of the gospel and other religious traditions, paths, and wisdom; is that the transforming yeast is inside of us, and involves us in a participative movement of co-creation. This exposure to the divine yeast includes the disruption through surprise, disorientation, or even the demise of the well defended walls of our personal and collective constructions -

allowing the leavening and breathing Spirit to be active in new and unpredictable ways.

As monks, oblates and friends, what are we challenged to risk in the urban context of Incarnation Monastery, Berkeley? Maybe our first call is to evoke and make sensible that inexhaustible source of grace and mercy that breathes in each of our sacred depths; burning bush of heart; gratuitous space of openness and creativity. We express it with the quiet pace of our liturgical prayer, word, song, awe, listening silence, warm humanity, and beauty.

I leave the concluding words to an Italian poet, Margherita Guidacci:

It is not Love that inhabits us,
but we that inhabit Love.

How could we contain it?

It is It, on the contrary, that contains us,
in Its wide kingdom.

As kids we wander in the halls of Its wonderful palaces.
Discovering new treasures at every step.

.....

Even further we push forward, till the shores
caressed by the sea:

Its borders, and yet not really borders,
because we listen in every wave a Voice
carrying a message of other shores,
which also are all kingdoms of Love. ♦

Br. Ivan Nicoletto, O.S.B. Cam.



IVAN

will offer a meditation on Sept. 4th at Santa Sabina, and a weekend retreat Sept. 27th - 29th at New Camaldoli Hermitage

Said the Rabbi to the Abbot “The Messiah is among you.”

*Camaldolese Assembly
Asilomar, California
May 2013*

In the darkened night, grasping each other with outstretched arms, the Rabbi imparts his wisdom to the old Abbot. “The Messiah is among you.” Slowly, slowly the Abbot makes his way back through the woods to his monastery, to tell his community, “One of us is the Messiah!”

Where is the Messiah among us?
Who is the Messiah among us?

Listening to Fr Michael Fish’s vivid story at the beginning of the Camaldolese Assembly opened my eyes to the possibilities of our Camaldolese community. Arriving with my “old” paradigm, eagerly awaiting the wisdom of the monks, I slowly began to see the gifts, skill and passion possessed by the wider community of oblates, friends and volunteers.

Yes, we did hear from our monastic community, including opening remarks from Fr Mario Zanotti (Fonte Avellana, Italy) and a letter from Prior General Alessandro Barban (Camaldoli, Italy). Guiding us in our journey over four days were monks Michael Fish, Bede Healey and Cyprian Consiglio. Lively panel discussions involved monks of Incarnation Monastery and New Camaldoli Hermitage, with special guest Fr Peter Hughes, prior of our monastery in Rome.

But also emerging with thoughtful and powerful “keynote” messages were oblates Paula Huston and Deborah Smith Douglas, and retreatant Pico Iyer.

With increasing energy generated each day, the gathered 150 participants were not shy voicing their opinions. Focusing this energy, we were asked to put into writing “one” idea which we could contribute to our wider Camaldolese community.

By this time, our fourth and final day together, I was beginning to shift my awareness from “what wisdom can I glean from the monks?” to “how can I be Messiah among us?”

We were encouraged to make a commitment in one of three areas - noting the Camaldolese Three Goods: Solitude, Community and Martyrdom (giving of oneself). I made my commitment, eager to collaborate with others who are “Messiah among us.”

Celebrating our Millennum, 1012 – 2012, we look back with gratitude to Romuald and those before us. With our present Camaldolese community of monastics, oblates, friends and volunteers mutually supporting each other and guided by the Camaldolese Three Goods – Solitude, Community and Martyrdom, we move forward in faith, preparing the way for those ahead of us. 2012 – 3012!

“The Messiah is among us.” ♦

Jacqueline Chew, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.



*Participants at Camaldolese Assembly
Photo from Hermit Blog*

Volunteers needed!

We have immediate needs for the following volunteers: fund development/volunteer coordinator; writers to create monthly fund raising updates and related materials; event coordinators; people to host fund raising dinners; and a web designer. If interested, contact fundraising@incarnationmonastery.org



"Monks wait in anticipation..." by Meath D. Conlan, Oblate O.S.B. Cam.

"I was glad when they said unto me...
I was glad when they said

Let us go into the house of the Lord...
Let us go into the house of the Lord

I came runnin' when they said unto me...
I came runnin' when they said

Let us go into the house of the Lord...
Let us go into the house of the Lord

Soul got happy when they said unto me...
Soul got happy when they said...

Let us go into the house of the Lord...
Let us go into the house of the Lord...

Come on go with me..."

Adapted from Joe Pace