



INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

BREAD OF LIFE

Issue 8 October 2012



"Sunburst" by Fr. Arthur Poulin

All will come again into its strength:
the fields undivided, the waters undammed,
the trees towering and the walls built low.
And in the valleys, people as strong and varied as the
land.

And no churches where God
is imprisoned and lamented
like a trapped and wounded animal.
The houses welcoming all who knock
and a sense of boundless offering
in all relations, and in you and me.

No yearning for an afterlife, no looking beyond,
no belittling of death,
but only longing for what belongs to us
and serving earth, lest we remain unused.

~ Rainer Maria Rilke ~

LETTER FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Oblates and Friends,

I have just been reflecting on the word “transition” and I think it is more than just a simple word; in its own way, this word expresses our whole life, a basic attitude of transition.

I looked up the word in the *American Heritage Dictionary* and it says “The process or instance of changing from one form, state, activity or place to another.”

There are many oblates and friends very much in this process of changing. For instance, changing to a new job, entering into retirement, moving to a new house or another city or state. People in the process of grieving the loss of a loved one, or the end of a relationship or getting married—all examples of human transition. When young people begin college and leave their families, there is a process of transition on both sides, by the parents or a single parent dealing with their absence, or by the young people who are leaving. Then there is the dramatic transition of young people starting a family. We could go on and on. We humans are making choices in life day by day, and any choice we make requires a process of changing or transition.

I firmly believe that all our life is a process of transition, humanly and spiritually. Our journey of faith is an invitation to move forward, to leave behind what constricts us to make space for ongoing conversion of life, as Jesus invites us and the Rule of St. Benedict exhorts. Jesus proclaims as his first message to the people: “The time is fulfilled, reform your life; the kingdom of God has come in our midst.” (Mk.1:15).

I HAVE JUST BEEN REFLECTING ON THE WORD “TRANSITION” ... IN ITS OWN WAY IT EXPRESSES OUR WHOLE LIFE, A BASIC ATTITUDE OF TRANSITION.

With the Incarnation of Jesus, God (the Divinity) is not just transcendent but within us, through the indwelling of God. Moreover, we recognize the presence of the Divine Spirit in the entire cosmos. We, together with all of creation, all living things, participate in the Spirit of God. The Book of Wisdom invites us to participate in this process of creation, until it is fulfilled and Jesus is all in all. We as fruit of the “Wisdom of God are a reflection of eternal light. A spotless mirror of the working of God...Although she is but one she can do all things and renew all things...in every generation she passes.” (Wis.7:26). And in another Wisdom passage we read: “Then the Creator of all things...chose the place for my tent...Before the ages, in the beginning, God created me, and for all ages I shall not cease to be.” (Sir. 24:8 ss).

So we as human beings and Christians are called to journey in this process of growing up, maturing, participating in the beauty and struggles of creation, ecology, climate change, etc., and also to commit ourselves to the immediacy of our daily life, whatever our calling is, to be co-creators

with God and participate in the process of the evolution of humanity, and in an extended sense of all the Universe.

In this perspective, we glimpse that life is a continuing process of transition. Our faith brings us into the life of hope. Hope is not something that we can grasp, but we want to weave it into our daily life of prayer, work, relationships. As St. Paul reminds us: “Now hope that is seen is not hope...But we hope for what we do not see, and work for it with patience.” And faith and hope are fulfilled in love, and God Is Love.

Blessings on your transitions!

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.



REFLECTIONS ON A PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

In June 2012, Fr. Robert Hale, Prior of New Camaldoli Hermitage and founder of Incarnation Monastery, led a pilgrimage to Italy to participate in the celebration of the Camaldolese 1000th year. My partner Eleanor and I participated.

Italy—I am once again climbing the broad stone staircase up to San Gregorio—the day is hot and humid, the iron gate rusted and full of locks—uninviting and yet my excitement is palpable and the pull of the sacred is strong. I know our days at San Gregorio will be bookended by lauds and vespers with the monks and our band of *pelligrini* (pilgrims).



San Gregorio Monastero

The monastery is so improbable. Across from the coliseum with its crowds, buses, bridal parties and tourists of every nationality and assaulted nightly by music from the seemingly permanent concert tents along the traffic circle—music loud to compete with the roar of engines. Directly outside the chapel is a much neglected garden that even now has ragged traces of order. Around the corner one of Rome's ubiquitous churches—this one often used for weddings. We see the guests arrive, the women in stiletto heels managing somehow on the cobbles. Our walk takes us to St. Stephen's in the Round. Our pleasure in the structure ends abruptly as we realize the frescoes being lovingly restored all graphically depict the torture of martyrs. We return to San Gregorio and go to vespers.

The next day we see the MAXXI—also a round feminine structure—this new modern art museum designed by a middle eastern woman and recently built. The exhibits are spare and perfectly attuned to the space. Dazzled by the contemporary form and more comfortable with the aesthetic, it takes me awhile to realize the commonality of the themes. Graphic in a different way than the frescoes at St. Stephen's, the art here also calls us to witness the deaths of innocents. We return to San Gregorio and go to vespers.

After the evening meal, the Prior—Peter, a Camaldolese monk and former Anglican priest who after many years in the order became a Catholic priest—talks of the monastery and its historic role in the Anglican Communion. He has brought the Pope, other Camaldolese priors including Robert, and the Archbishop of Canterbury to San Gregorio. The divisions between and within the two communions set aside as they pray together at vespers and break bread in the ancient monastic hall dating back to the undivided church.

The amalgam of things past and things present continues as we leave San Gregorio for Camaldoli and the sacred *eremo* (hermitage). We enter a bright airy conference room paneled in light wood—somehow unexpected in this mostly stone place. We hear about Shantivanum in India and the new monasteries in Tanzania. We meet the five Chinese novices preparing to bring the Camaldolese charism to China. We walk back through the forest and go to vespers.

The next day is the millennial celebration. Monks, nuns, oblates, bishops, a cardinal, mayors, uniformed military, locals all come to take part. After mass and a celebratory meal, our trip is nearly over. We go to vespers.

The following morning after lauds, we begin the long trek down the mountain and home. The experience of the sacred is strong in these “thin” places we have visited. The attainment of the millennial year of the Camaldolese is impressive—and yet, we see only a handful of younger monks—enough to inhabit and sustain these ancient structures built in and for a different era? We see new growth but not in the “old” world. We arrive home and wish we could go to vespers. ♦

Bobbe Rockoff, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.



Fr. Peter Hughes with pilgrims John Wilcox (left) and Mark Giulieri.

NEW MONASTICISM

As part of the Camaldolese 1000th year celebration, Incarnation Monastery recently sponsored a symposium that explored various aspects of urban monasticism; past, present and future. A recent series by Jamie L. Manson in National Catholic Reporter about New Monasticism seems relevant to what will become an ongoing discussion about monasticism going forward. Below are a few excerpts from Ms. Manson's articles.

“The dwindling number of vocations to priesthood, religious orders and monastic life make it clear that traditional religious life no longer speaks to newer generations the way it has for centuries...

At the heart of this latest interpretation of new monasticism is the desire to connect young adults with mentors—spiritual teachers, monks, women religious, lamas and hermits—from a variety of traditions. The hope is that out of these gatherings of young adults and spiritual elders will emerge small communities of friends who are committed to lives of contemplation and action...

This, I believe, is what the new monastic movement at its best can offer both newer and older generations of spiritual seekers. The opportunity for spiritual elders to know their wisdom will not be lost in an increasingly individualistic, secular age; a space where those doing the work of social justice can be centered and refreshed through peaceful meditation and spiritual practices; a sense of spiritual safety in a religious milieu fraught with exclusivity and fundamentalism; a community where contemplatives can find an intimate circle of spiritual friends in a culture where true communion is elusive...

Most importantly, it promises to help us hear the ways in which God is speaking to us through our work, through our presence to one another, and through what is most beautiful and true about all of our spiritual traditions...”

In May 2013, New Camaldoli will host a three-day assembly looking even more deeply at the future of the Camaldolese in America. Your thoughts and comments are most welcome (see below for how to submit). For the complete articles on New Monasticism, see <http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/two-young-adults-offer-new-take-new-monasticism>. ♦



The bell and the view at Incarnation Monastery.

IF...

you would like to submit an article, recipe, poem, prayer, painting, or photograph for the newsletter send to bobberoc@att.net.

INCARNATION MONASTERY, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2012 22ST SUNDAY, MK 7:1-23

Among the uncountable footage we are stuffed with at the theatre before we can see our eagerly awaited movie, I was struck by a funny and significant clip.

While a voice tells the audience that our history is woven of events, heroes, adventures, dramas and comedies that flavor our lives, we taste in wide screen some of these breathtaking and engrossing scenes of love, war, and freedom.

We moviegoers are then taken by surprise to see the same events happening on smaller and smaller screens—from the giant movie screen to the micro screen of an iPhone—until it is hardly possible to see what is going on. And while the narrative voice complains about this intolerable *reduction* of the riches of life, a sudden *explosion* of the smallest screen occurs, sort of act of rebellion from life itself that refuses to be sacrificed and almost buried in a technological grave that cannot contain her.

Meditating on the readings of this Sunday I feel this same complaint burst forth, affirming the irreducibility of all manifestations of life to fixed, narrow, imposed containers. Maybe these rules, patterns, and laws were constructed in the past for good purposes, but are they still serving and enhancing the life that they want to spread?

From the beginning, and at every moment of her unpredictable adventure, the creative and loving Energy has experienced herself flaring forth through innumerable inventions and upheavals in the universe—as planets, sentient and human beings, cultures and religions, our consciousness, emotions, relationships, interactions.

The God of Life is permanently generating this immeasurable and challenging novelty, transmutation, and experimentation. How can we stop the process? How can we confine the overflowing Fountain into the boxes of our concepts, definitions, rules, or laws?

In his journey, Jesus also experiences and confronts the religious constraints of his time, manifesting the compassionate God that inspires and nourishes him.

He suffers the hostility of specific groups of people who try to deny or avoid the change and upheaval of life.

Without dominion and imposition he offers a gratuitous, welcoming space that embraces vulnerability, uncertainty, suffering, and possible resurrections.

He shows a revolutionary way to trust and to surrender to Someone deeper and larger than us, in whom we can fall in Love. He witnesses this powerful appeal to the Source of compassion in his pining embrace from the cross.

Pulling down every wall of separation that we continually build, Jesus purifies all things. Nothing defiles outside of us, but all dualisms and separations, marginalization and contempt come from within our personal hearts and minds, or within the heart of our cultures, religions, and societies.

Today we experience the crisis and demise of a world that resists and opposes the birth of something fresh with its paralyzing set of structures, behaviors, and rules that are attributed to tradition, or to God—and are identified with the truth.

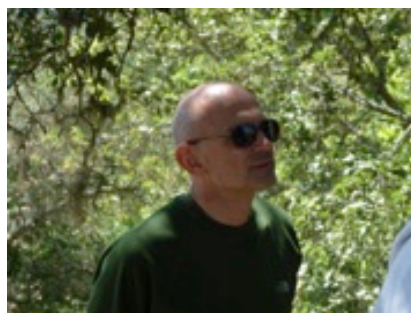
We question old understandings because a transformation is breaking through, dismantling our previous conditioning.

Isn't our individual and collective response to offer our bodies to this new life, with responsibility, care, and faith?

With our bodies we expose ourselves to the subtle and creative breeze of God, aware of a Mystery, open and receptive to others, cultivating a language of interiority, experience, and empathy.

We live at the threshold of our time without a fixed, guaranteed abode. We are co-operative with the Spirit in opening the cages and the tombs of the world. We feel reverence for the earth as conscious parts of her body. We welcome discontinuities, weakness, crises, and even death, with the hope of resurrection, of God's transforming love. ♦

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



TRANSITIONS

The topic of transition is a timely one for me as I recently experienced one of the typical life events, a transition, called “changing jobs.” Many in our community have also recently been undergoing this life event as well, so I know I’m in good company. If a transition is a passage from one state or stage to another, I wonder if we are not always in transition?

First and foremost, humans in their very nature are in transition on several levels of existence if you will. One a purely organic level, many of our organs and tissues completely replace themselves on a cyclic basis including skin, hair, lungs, stomach, taste buds, just to name a few. There is the notion that the body completely replaces all of its cells within seven to ten years (which research suggests is not quite accurate, but you get the idea). On a personal level, we experience change throughout our lives. Each of us will lose family members, find our circle of friends changing, find new living arrangements, move to different cities or countries, and of course change our jobs or careers. On the spiritual level, we can use the cross as a symbol of transition. The vertical dimension representing the divine or inner nature of a human. On its horizontal dimension, the cross can represent the outer nature of a human. Alternatively it can be viewed as where the eternal enters time or the divine embracing the world. Neither are mutually exclusive and I believe we must nurture both sides of ourselves to be fully human.

I have found in my life that embracing both sides simultaneously has been most difficult. I tend towards identifying with the extremes. I either feel like I’m a saint or a devil (we are likely a delightful mixture of both!). I think in taking this black or white stance, I miss simply being in the juiciness of life. Perhaps another way of putting it is simply being present to the center of my life and thus to both the inner and the outer man. On a very practical level, I have experienced that having a regular spiritual practice, such as chanting the psalms, a daily disciplined meditation or prayer practice like Centering Prayer, the liturgy etc., helps to hold me in this state or place within.

After quite a struggle in 2011 with a busy work-travel schedule, I decided to re-commit myself to a twice daily Centering Prayer practice in 2012. I had been rather irregular about my morning prayer time and completely ignored the evening prayer. I was taught by my minister in Austin, Texas that these two prayer periods were a way of putting a parenthesis around the day. A way, if you will, of putting God in the center of our lives. As I look back on this difficult year, I can see that there has been an invisible thread of prayer, a balance just underneath some of the chaos I experienced. Perhaps it is in the tension of the transition periods both small and large on a daily and yearly basis that we grow and mature into the fullness of Christ. ♦

Marty Badgett, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.



THANK YOU!

We appreciate and welcome any donations toward our Incarnation Monastery newsletter.

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

BENEDICTINE HOSPITALITY

From the Rule of St. Benedict: “After the guests have been received, they should be invited to pray; then the superior or an appointed brother will sit with them. The divine law is read to the guest for his instruction, and after that every kindness is shown to him. The superior may break his fast for the sake of the guest...”

Rosemary Polenta Pound Cake (from the SF Chronicle's Best Recipes)

1 1/2 cups of buttermilk
 1 cup polenta
 3 1/4 cups flour
 1 tablespoon baking powder
 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 3 tablespoons finely chopped
 fresh rosemary leaves
 12 ozs unsalted butter, at
 room temperature
 1 1/2 cups sugar
 3 eggs



Garden Rosemary

Mix together buttermilk and polenta and let soak for 45 minutes.
 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter and flour two 8-inch tube or Bundt cake pans.

Sift together flour, baking powder, soda, and salt. Stir in rosemary. Cream together butter and sugar until white and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time beating well after each addition. Fold polenta and dry ingredients alternately into the creamed mixture, in three additions. Divide batter between pans. Bake about 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into cake comes out clean. Let cakes cool 5 minutes before turning out on a wire rack to cool.

Cook's notes:

I use more rosemary than is called for and always fresh, not dried.

I substitute 1 stick butter and 1 cup olive oil for the 12 ozs butter.

I use one Bundt pan and one loaf pan.

I use a very large bowl for the creamed mixture since you have to incorporate so much flour.

Buon Appetito! *Eleanor Errante, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.*

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS

Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 22
 Mass, 11 a.m.

Saturday, December 1
 Silent Day facilitated by Marty Badgett
 Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology
 9:30 to 4:00

Saturday, December 8
 Quiet Day at Incarnation Monastery on
 “Ruth, Naomi, Mary: Intersections”
 with Barbara Green, OP.
 9 a.m. to 12 noon

A NECESSARY AUTUMN INSIDE EACH

You and I have spoken all these words, but as for the way
we have to go, words
are no preparation. There is no getting ready, other than
grace. My faults
have stayed hidden. One might call that a preparation!
I have one small drop
of knowing in my soul. Let it dissolve in your ocean.
There are so many threats to it.
Inside each of us, there's continual autumn. Our leaves
fall and are blown out
over the water. A crow sits in the blackened limbs and talks
about what's gone. Then
your generosity returns: spring, moisture, intelligence, the
scents of hyacinth and rose
and cypress. Joseph is back! And if you don't feel in
yourself the freshness of
Joseph, be Jacob! Weep and then smile. Don't pretend to know
something you haven't experienced.
There's a necessary dying, and then Jesus is breathing again.
Very little grows on jagged
rock. Be ground. Be crumbled, so wildflowers will come up
where you are. You've been
stony for too many years. Try something different. Surrender.

Translated by Coleman Barks. The Soul of Rumi: A New Collection of Ecstatic Poems.