



INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

BREAD OF LIFE

Issue 9 December 2012



"Star Light" by Fr. Arthur Poulin

“...God said, ‘Let there be lights in the heavens.’
So the wind carried fire on its wings and scattered light through the skies.
There was a great light to rule the day and a gentler light to rule the night.
And there were glittering galaxies beyond number.”

Celtic Treasure, J. Philip Newell

LETTER FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Oblates and Friends,

It seems that we just began the liturgical year, and here we are already at the end and entering on the new one. This invites us to think about "time."

Entering into the Advent-Christmas season, we are called to reflect on how we use our time. If we consider how we spend our days, much of our time is spent waiting. I have been reflecting on how much we wait for appointments with doctors or friends, whomever. I remember before my open heart surgery I waited in the pre-op room for so long. My niece Ivana is expecting her first child and she and her husband are waiting for the birth. I think of other people such as a teenager who is waiting to become an adult. How many people are eagerly waiting for a new job in these tough economic times. Consider how much we wait when we travel, whether by plane, train, or boat. As a country we wait for the wars to end and for our soldiers to come home. We can go on and on, but it is good to consider how much time we spend waiting in our life.

The Advent season is an invitation to wait, waiting for the coming of Jesus the Lord, the Incarnation of God. Not only the Incarnation of Jesus that happened 2,000 years ago, but an Incarnation that comes every single day in our daily life. We have the Spirit of Christ with us and with all the Universe. That is the deep significance of Jesus Resurrection, when he said: "I will be with you until the end of time."

We can use this special or deep time - kairos - to rediscover the presence of God in our daily life. By the love of Christ for us the inaccessible God became manifest in the Crucified Jesus. This very revelation, in which glory is inseparable from kenosis, the emptying of God, is almost unthinkable!!!

Our understanding of the Incarnation needs to be put back into the whole scheme of Creation. This is the great syntheses, in Christ, of the human, the cosmic, and the Divine, "...in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible..." (Co1 1:16).

So this time of waiting is, again, our time, the time of kairos and of accepting the invitation of Council Vatican II to discern "the sign of the times." We are called to be attentive with open eyes, the eyes of faith, to the passage of God through our daily life. This passage is often so subtle; it could be here in the beauty of creation, even if we don't pay attention, or even try to disturb its process of beauty; it could be present in and through human relationships, encountering a new

person on the street, or certainly in our celebration of the Eucharist, or grieving the loss of our loved ones. Through many events that happen in our personal and communal lives, in our histories, with the pleasant and even unpleasant events. Looking back at past happenings, discovering God there, can be a positive practice.

This year we Camaldolese and oblates and friends have been reflecting on Camaldoli's 1,000 years, in which God was so merciful to us. This could be a wonderful moment of time to see things, people and events in new way - with the eyes of God. I will close with the words of Meister Eckhart: "The eye with which I see God and the eye with which God sees me are one and the same eye." Have a great new time. ♦

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



BREAD OF LIFE

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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.

<http://www.fatherarthurpoulin.org>

IF...

you would like to submit an idea, article, etc., for the newsletter send to bobberoc@att.net

PETER

Introducing Fr. Peter Hughes, O.S.B. Cam.

Recently you may have read about or heard the name Peter Hughes on more than one occasion and possibly are curious to know more. In her recent newsletter article “Reflections on a Pilgrimage” Bobbe Rockoff briefly introduced Peter as the new prior of San Gregorio in Rome.

Those of us who traveled with Fr. Robert to Rome for the Millennial Celebration were fortunate enough to spend some quality time with Peter Hughes and found him to have both a prophetic voice as well as “epliptical vision” (see Br. Ivan's homily of 10/7/12).

Peter, an Australian, was trained at Trinity College Melbourne University and was ordained an Anglican priest in 1970. He did parish work for a number of years and went on to do post-graduate studies in Theology, specializing in Ethics. Thereafter he became a lecturer and chaplain both at Oxford and later London. He eventually returned to Sydney in 1984 to take up an appointment as rector.

By 1997, Peter was called to explore monasticism and spent time at some twelve different communities. At the beginning of 1999 Peter returned to the Hermitage of Camaldoli to test his vocation. While this led to the possibility of becoming a monk in the Benedictine congregation of Camaldoli, it also raised a significant obstacle “in light of the canon law requirement that a candidate must be a member of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Peter entered the community and was received into the Roman Church in 2000. Peter describes this “not as a conversion, but as a decision to embrace and to live a fuller communion without breaking communion with the Anglican Church.” He says further “it was the ecumenical commitment of Camaldoli and its vision for the Church as unity in diversity that made it possible to celebrate reception into the Catholic Church.” Peter made his solemn monastic profession at Camaldoli in 2005.

In October of 2011 Peter was appointed Prior of the Camaldolese Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome. At the same time, given the requirements of his new role, he accepted the invitation for re-ordination in the Catholic Church. Once again, Peter's ecumenical vision is evident in the way he holds his new ministry which he describes as being in “full communion with Peter” but in no way “negates the validity of the holy orders already conferred on him in the Anglican Church.”



Fr. Peter Hughes, Archbishop Rowan Williams, Pope Benedict, Prior General Alessandro Barban

It seemed abundantly clear to we pilgrims that Father Peter Hughes embodies the essence of ecumenical spirit and ministry. This was evidenced by bringing His Holiness, Pope Benedict and Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to San Gregorio earlier this spring for vespers and a meal, as a gesture of ecumenism as well as celebration, and a blessing for the next 1,000 years!

Before departing Rome it occurred to some of us that Fr. Peter would be a wonderful addition to the Camaldolese Assembly planned for next spring in Asilomar. We consulted with both Fr. Robert and Peter about this idea and both were enthusiastic. Simultaneously we launched a fund raising effort to offset Peter's expenses for the trip to California. One of Peter's several ideas is to develop San Gregorio into a retreat house/guest center that would include and welcome the Anglican community. To this end we hope to assist him in making some connections with the Episcopal Church and leadership at Grace Cathedral next spring.

So stay tuned and you will undoubtedly get to meet Peter in early May of 2013 when he will be at Incarnation for several days. ♦

Eleanor Errante, Oblate, O.S.B. Cam.

TIME OF CHANGE

An unusual movie appeared in California theaters on October 26, 2012: "Cloud Atlas." Based on a novel by the British author David Mitchell, it tells six interwoven stories in very different circumstances of place and time. Time is a central theme, and the stories range from the early nineteenth century, through dates between 1931 and 2012, to the twenty-second century. Without spoiling the plot for those who have not seen the movie, I can mention the multiple roles of the main actresses and actors, in which their respective characters struggle in obeying their conscience and doing the right thing.

"Time is the measure of movement according to before and after." This is a classical definition of time, which the medieval Scholastics based on Plato and Aristotle. You could also say it like: "Time is the measure of change." But when we go back to the Greek philosophers, we find an understanding of movement and change (which for the Greeks were the same thing) that we see as pessimistic. The understanding is this: Whatever is immutable, that is, whatever does not change, preserves the being it has by nature. So, when something moves and changes, it loses being. It may gain some transient benefit by changing, but the end sum is loss.

Maybe this philosophy was born of the strong myth of Mediterranean peoples, that of the Golden Age. This age was long, long ago and far, far away. Everything went downhill from there, and now we are in the Iron Age, subject to rust and every other sign of corruption. When Judaism and Christianity tried to come to terms with Greek intellectual culture (this was our first "inculturation"), some believers projected this myth on the story of Genesis, so that Eden was understood as the Golden Age, and the "Fall of Man" made us lose it. Now the only hope is that, after living a short time in this "vale of tears," and provided we obey the law of God, we will leave here and go to a heavenly Paradise (a Persian word that means "walled garden," like an oasis in the desert).

Jesus did not preach Paradise, but the kingdom (or "reign") of God, which is planted here and now, in this age, like a tiny seed in the ground or a pinch of yeast in the dough. We are involved, like a woman who kneads the dough or plants the mustard seed in her garden. But God gives the growth.

The Genesis myth is a message of hope. The Bible sees the ancestral sin in Adam and Eve's choice to "eat the fruit," that is, to seek the dualistic knowledge of good and evil. But this choice does not lead to a curse upon the first couple. The earth, the universe, will produce thorns and thistles, but humans must go out of Eden to work in it. The Spirit of God goes with them.

The great metaphor in the Bible, which culminates in Paul's letter to the Romans (8:18-25), sees time and the changes it brings as a cosmic pregnancy, where what is unseen grows and then emerges into full being, in "the fullness of time." Whatever "futility" we humans may see in the passage of time and the changes in our own lives as we grow older, we are called to live in the hope of "the revelation of God's children," which the entire universe will experience. The end sum will be total gain.

Other myths share the positive view of time with the biblical message of Israel's prophets and St. Paul. We have all heard about the Mayan calendar, which marks an end date on December 21, 2012 as the conclusion of its major, five-thousand-year-plus cycle, the 13th Baktun.

Mayan mythology does not tell us that this will mark the "end of the world," a cosmic destruction. The end date is simply the day before the beginning date of a new cycle and a new calendar, like December 31 in our secular calendar.

An American philosopher, the late Terrence McKenna (1946-2000), had something to say about this year, 2012. Here are a few words from the Wikipedia page on McKenna: "According to McKenna the universe has a teleological attractor at the end of time that increases interconnectedness, eventually reaching a singularity of infinite complexity in 2012 at which point anything and everything imaginable will occur simultaneously, what he referred to as the Eschaton."



Fr. Thomas Matus, O.S.B. Cam.

Let me simplify this language. Basic to his thought is the conviction that the future attracts the present, and that humans can know this future. The future is the motor of change, and the change is in the direction of greater interconnectedness. An example came recently with the news that, in this world of 6.8 billion persons, there are 6 billion cell phones registered. This doesn't exactly mean that every human individual has an iPhone (I don't), but it does mean that we are now interconnected in a way that even ten years ago was unforeseeable. So the year 2012 has been a time of growing complexity, even if not quite infinite. (continued next page)

TIME OF CHANGE (CONTINUED)

Not everything imaginable has occurred simultaneously. And yet change has generated hope, even in the midst of disastrous loss, such as in the “perfect storm” that hit the American Northeast in October. What ended tragically for many individuals, families, and communities also reawakened discussion about Earth Ethics and how we humans must live on this planet, interconnected not only with one another but also with the other creatures among whom we live.

“Hope and change,” powerful themes in Barack Obama’s first presidential campaign, re-echoed in the days between the storm and election day. We all have reason to hope that those who voted to confirm him in office will reach out to those who did not, and that crucial, universal human issues, not mentioned during the campaign season, will be faced with a common purpose. This will be a change we can indeed believe in. ♦

Fr. Thomas Matus, O.S.B. Cam.



Della Robbia ~ Camaldoli Eremitage

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.

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS

Saturday, December 8

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

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

Lauds, 7 a.m.
First Mass of Christmas, 8 p.m.

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

Mass of the Incarnation, 11 a.m.
Second Vespers of Christmas, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

Mass of the Maternity of Mary, 11 a.m.
Vespers 5 p.m.

Saturday, February 9, 2013

Silent Day facilitated by Marty Badgett
9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Location TBD

Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Lauds, 7 a.m.
Blessing of ashes and Eucharist, 5 p.m.

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.

OPENING SPACE

My first seizure happened in the middle of the night, a week before my eighth birthday. I woke up the next morning in a hospital with the cold hands of a nurse on me, touching my spine. I did not find out until later what happened, and the idea of my body doing something I wasn't aware of—something that seemed dangerous and deadly—was frightening to me. After much testing, I was diagnosed with childhood absence epilepsy, which meant I would have moments of “blacking out” that could easily be controlled by medication.

I received EEGs on a regular basis to monitor my brain activity. The sequence of the EEG is always the same. I lie flat on the padded table and wait as the technician glues about twenty electrodes to my scalp. She sits down at the station and turns on the machine. About fifteen minutes into the procedure, the technician asks me to breathe slowly and breathe quickly. This is the part of the EEG I dread the most—breathing quickly. The technician encourages me on, saying I am doing a good job, we're almost done. She says I can stop and breathe normally now; the tasks are over now and all I have to do is sleep. But I can't sleep. I worry that if I move at all, I will mess up the test somehow, skew the results. So I try to keep as still as possible, monitoring the rise and fall of my chest, being careful not to cough.

When I was almost nine years old—about a year after I was diagnosed with epilepsy—I auditioned to be a marshmallow child in *The Nutcracker*. For the audition we had to do a waltz step, and I executed this step successfully and received a part in the ballet.

One night after the audition, before going to sleep I decide to get out of my bed and walk over to the full-length mirror in my room. My room is dark, but my door is slightly open, so the light of the hallway can come through. In my pajamas, I stand in front of the mirror and do the brief waltz step. I watch myself in the mirror as I hold my breath and move my bare feet to the timing of the waltz in my mind—one two three, one two three, one two three. In the darkness it is finished and I am protected. One last look in the mirror, then I release my breath and return to bed.

I continued this bedtime ritual for nine years, until I was about seventeen years old. Two years later I moved to Berkeley to go to college, where some things in my life changed, and others stayed the same. One change happened at the beginning of junior year. I was born and raised Catholic, and for the first time in my life I stopped going to church. Two weeks later I scheduled an appointment with Al Moser, a retired priest at Newman Hall Holy Spirit Parish in Berkeley. Sitting in his office, I shared with him about growing up with epilepsy. How frightened I was that there was something evil in me, an evil part in me that I did not know, and that I feared could come out of me without my knowing. I shared with him that dancing helped, that I needed to protect myself and try to control what might happen in the night when I was asleep and vulnerable. As I spoke I started to cry. I asked him what I should do, what could I do now. He suggested something I had never heard of before, a sacrament called the anointing of the sick. As soon as he spoke about it something felt right.

On a Thursday in October, after the daily mass, I received the Anointing of the Sick healing sacrament. People gathered in the church and laid hands on my head and my shoulders, a silent blessing of touch that lasted about five minutes. Father Al lifted my right hand and my left hand. With holy oil on his right thumb, he marked both my palms with the sign of the cross. I watched him as he lifted his thumb to my forehead and again pressed the oil into my skin, blessing me with protection and healing: “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and may the Lord who frees you from sin heal you and raise you up.” I had no expectations of how I should feel, or how the sacrament might help or change my situation. Even after all the prayers and healing gestures, when I left the chapel my mind was blank. I didn't feel or think anything, and I went on with the rest of my day, as usual.

The next morning I wake up. It is a Friday morning. After I awake I sit up in bed, preparing myself for the day of classes ahead of me. But this time I stop. Something is different. Sitting in bed, I feel myself breathing. I am *actually* breathing. I feel a space open in my chest, a large space. This space is new; it was not there before. My chest does not feel heavy and full but feels empty and light. As I sit in bed, I think to myself, I exist. Not only do I exist but I exist *on my own*. No one else is breathing for me.

Today I remember that morning. I remember how the breath in me called attention to itself at the same time it demanded nothing from me. Passing through me, my breath did not overwhelm me or overcome me, but instead revealed a quiet power, an inviting humility, a lasting trust. ♦

Kristin Burke, Oblate O.S.B. Cam.

BENEDICTINE HOSPITALITY

The Rule of St. Benedict 53:1-2, 15

Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for he is going to say: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me* (Matt. 25:35). And to all let due honor be shown ...*In the reception of the poor and pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown, because it is especially in them that Christ is received.*

You'd think that a recipe that has flour, sugar, leavening, butter and a couple of other things like spices and dried fruit would be as easy as pie, right? Not so fast. Scones look like they're a cinch, but they can be tricky. This breakfast favorite can be light and moist, or dry and dense as a doorstep.

Here are tips on making good-as-gold scones.

Bring on the butter and fat: The secret to a scone is fat content, and lots of it. Make sure whatever recipe you use has lots of butter, cream and, maybe, buttermilk.

Good ingredients: Plump dried fruit, ripe fresh fruit, spices that haven't outlived their usefulness, top-drawer chocolate are the type of building blocks for a good scone. Use the best of everything.

Light hand: Don't pummel, overmix or otherwise maul the scone dough. If you mix and pound too much, you will end up with dense, tough little rounds of baked dough. Yuk. So, when you've mixed the butter into the flour mix, lightly, I mean, LIGHTLY mix the liquid into the mixture until it is BARELY moistened. Use a light hand to shape the scones before you put them on the baking sheet.

Current Scones: (From "The Cheese Board Collective Works" Makes 10 to 12 scones (preparation time including baking: 45 minutes)

Ingredients:

3½ cups unbleached, all-purpose flour
 ½ tsp. baking soda
 1 TB. baking powder
 ½ tsp. kosher salt
 ¾ cup sugar
 1 cup (2 sticks) cold, unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch cubes
 1 cup dried currants
 ¾ cup heavy cream
 ¾ cup buttermilk

Toppings: ¼ cup sugar, ⅛ tsp. ground cinnamon



Current Scones

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a baking mat. Sift the flour, baking soda, and baking powder together into the bowl of a stand mixer or a large bowl.

If using a stand mixer, add the salt and sugar to the bowl and mix with the paddle attachment on low speed until combined. Add the butter and cut it in on low speed for about 4 minutes, or until it is the size of small peas. Mix in the currants. Make a well in the center and add the cream and buttermilk. Mix briefly, just until the ingredients come together; some loose flour should remain at the bottom of the bowl.

If making by hand, add the salt and sugar to the bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Add the butter and cut it in with a pastry cutter or 2 dinner knives until it is the size of small peas. Using the spoon, mix in the currants. Make a well in the center and add the cream and buttermilk. Mix briefly, just until the ingredients come together; some loose flour should remain at the bottom of the bowl.

Gently shape the dough into balls about 2-1/2 inches in diameter (they should have a rough, rocky exterior) and place them on the prepared pan about 2 inches apart. For the topping, mix the sugar and cinnamon together in a small bowl. Sprinkle the mixture on the top of the scones. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Transfer the scones to a wire rack to cool. ♦

MARY

The night when she first gave birth
Had been cold. But in later years
She quite forgot
The frost in the dingy beams and the smoking stove
And the spasms of the afterbirth towards morning.
But above all she forgot the bitter shame
Common among the poor
Of having no privacy.
That was the main reason
Why in later years it became a holiday for all
To take part in.
The shepherds' coarse chatter fell silent.
Later they turned into the Kings of the story.
The wind, which was very cold
Turned into the singing of angels.
Of the hole in the roof that let in the frost nothing remained
But the star that peeped through it.
All this was due to the vision of her son, who was easy
Fond of singing
Surrounded himself with poor folk
And was in the habit of mixing with kings
And of seeing a star above his head at night-time.

Bertolt Brecht

