

INCARNATION MONASTERY

An Occasional Newsletter

Bread of Life

Issue 16 January 2015



"Embraces" by Fr. Arthur Poulin

“...When does night
fold its arms over our hearts
to cherish them?...”

Denise Levertov

A Camaldolese Pilgrimage

My wife and I were blessed to be able to join Fathers Andrew & Arthur and a wonderful group of Camaldolese oblates & friends on the 2014 pilgrimage to Italy. We stayed at the monasteries of San Gregorio, Fonte Avellana and Camaldoli, as well as enjoying day trips to Orvieto, Assisi, Ravenna, Arrezo, Frontone and La Verna. A highlight of the pilgrimage was the Papal audience with Pope Francis in St Peter's Square, witnessing this Pope's great love of people and human interaction. During the course of the pilgrimage I reflected frequently on the Camaldolese three goods (Solitude, Community and Evangelization) and their relationship with pilgrimage. I share some of these reflections now.

Solitude – Each of us is a pilgrim through our journey of life. Ultimately every pilgrim must travel alone on his/her own path. We start our pilgrimage at a given point in life and our spiritual journey. The pilgrimage experience is unique to each pilgrim.

Images and experiences which may mean little for one pilgrim may speak deeply to another.

One of the remarkable things I felt over the course of the pilgrimage was the unique quality of silence and space in different pilgrimage sites. All space is sacred, but some spaces and their silence resonate more closely with a person than others. Each monastery has a distinctive setting, history, architecture and community. Each bears the imprint of generations of monks whose silence, chanting and prayers resonate through to the present moment. The quality of the silence and solitude varies place to place. How each pilgrim connects to this solitude is unique as well, for example, some preferring that of Camaldoli; others, that of Fonte Avellana.



Frs. Andrew Colnaghi & Arthur Poulin

Community – A pilgrimage is a community and analogy of life itself – a group of people drawn together for a limited period of time, sharing a common destination. The community aspect makes the pilgrimage a special experience – communal prayer, meals and travel builds a sense of bonding and fellowship. The sharing of our individual stories, both in what we have experienced on the pilgrimage, but also in our lives prior to the pilgrimage, helps each person understand their own journey in relation to others. It is a sharing which

gives rise to collective insights and perspectives, much greater than those of any individual pilgrim. Traveling in a community also promotes a levelling. The pilgrims can only travel as fast as its slowest members. The pilgrims can only experience silence in relation to its least quiet member. The pilgrims can only experience sharing in relation to its least open member. The variances are not a sign of weakness, but rather a communal strengthening. They reflect the paradox of the Christian message, that the least shall be first and the first, least. All is brought to a common

convergence which is antithetical to the modern life in which most of us live our daily routines – focused on faster, more, supposedly better. We learn to accept the variances and seek a common chord in terms of tempo, silence and sharing.

Evangelization – The pilgrim group itself is a statement of evangelization. Its mere existence opens opportunities for dialogue. Prior to the pilgrimage, many of my co-workers and friends asked about the trip, why I was visiting monasteries, what these places were like, what was their history, who was the group and why were we

going to these places. These conversations allow for sharing without proselytizing, a pointing to something beyond the daily confines of our work life.

Likewise, as we travelled through Italy, the existence of a group of American pilgrims visiting monasteries gave rise to surprised looks and comments. (One of the surprises was when our bus driver realized that Arthur was a monk, not the American lawyer he had thought.) The cliché ‘actions speak louder than words’ applies to pilgrims and pilgrimages. The sense that this journey is important enough for people to travel great distances to experience something almost undefinable speaks in and of itself. Pilgrimage is an evangelizing event. However, pilgrimage also evangelizes the pilgrims. A few examples will illustrate:

- Sitting in St. Peter’s Square just immediately prior to the start of the Papal Audience and listening to the recitation of other pilgrim groups from literally all over the world made real, in a way I’d never before experienced, the universal Church. Perhaps not by coincidence, Pope Francis’ talk that day spoke about the apostolic and catholic Church – this was made more real by the global gathering in the square.
- Visiting Assisi and reflecting on the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare in the places where they lived, prayed and died fosters a unique connection to them and their spirituality. You can see this in the faces of all who visit Assisi - even the most jaded visitors come to understand something of the joy and simplicity of these saints’ lives.
- Contemplating the mosaicked Roman churches of early Christianity - whose tiled Pantocrators led a young pilgrim named Thomas Merton to ‘come to know something of this person whom men call Christ’ - reawakens a connection with the earliest Church.
- Viewing art in its original setting - and for much of medieval and early Renaissance art this means in churches - imprints powerful images and archetypes which lie at the core of the Christian experience. Viewing such art impacts the viewer in a way which the spoken word cannot. Deep truths are conveyed without the intermediation of words.

Thus, the pilgrimage both evangelizes those who encounter the pilgrims as well as the pilgrims themselves.

One need not travel around the world to experience the blessings of pilgrimage. Before leaving for Italy, my local church held a ‘Pilgrimage in my backyard’. Lay persons researched the history of our local church, its neighborhood, its artwork, its pastors and key personalities. We walked mindfully around the church. Pilgrimage leaders through their commentary helped bring new insights and understanding about the building and community which we call home here.

A pilgrimage is simply an analogy for our life and spiritual journey. The three goods applied in this context can bring about new insights and understandings which enhance and exceed our own individual capacities and insights.

‘The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey. The inner journey is the interpolation of the meanings and signs of the outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other. It is best to have both.’ Thomas Merton. ♦



Mark Hansen, Oblate OSB Cam

(Mark Hansen is an Incarnation oblate living and working in Singapore)

Sette Cento!

One of the fascinating aspects of religious life today is that as the institutional church loses its hold on the population, there seems to be a corresponding increase in lay people incorporating ancient spiritual practices into their lives either on their own; or through a wide variety of intentional communities; or, and of special interest to us, through affiliation with monastic orders.

*In the words of Judith Suter, in *The Oblate Life*: 'In a world where commitment is often devalued or even avoided, oblates choose to make public their desire for a life of witness. They promise their stability to a group of like-minded people who will be there for them but will also challenge them to greater holiness. They are united to the prayers and works of the monastery to which they are oblates, even as they continue to carry on their lives in their own locale and lifestyle. Just as the word 'oblate' comes from a root word denoting the offering of a gift, each oblate's life is an offering to God...'*

In the article below, Jacqueline Chew explores some aspects of Camaldolese oblature. Jacqueline, through her world-wide participation in the Camaldolese community and her on-going service co-moderating our oblate yahoo group, is one of the people providing the 'glue' which holds together our far-flung community.

'Sette cento!
Sette cento!'
were the emphatic words of Dom Alessandro Barban, Prior General of the Camaldolese Congregation of the Benedictine Order (whose monks live in Italy, the US, Brazil, India and Tanzania).

I knew he was talking about 'us'. Although there were only thirteen of 'us' there (along with our oblate chaplain, Fr. Robert Hale), sharing a meal with the monks of the Sacred Hermitage in Camaldoli, Italy, the Prior General was referring to the seven hundred ('sette cento') oblates of New Camaldoli Hermitage and Incarnation Monastery in California.

How is it that we are seven hundred? That I cannot explain, except to recall how ten years ago I was drawn to the contemplative liturgy, chant and silence



Oblates and friends of New Camaldoli & Incarnation visit Camaldoli, Italy

of the Camaldolese. Since then, I continually observe others coming, one by one, for the same reasons.

Not all oblates of New Camaldoli and Incarnation Monastery live locally or are even American. The

seven hundred oblates live throughout California and the United States, plus Canada,

Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Austria, Germany, United Kingdom and Hungary (and more!). Geography does not unite us, but rather the personal relationships between monks and oblates through prayer, chanting the liturgy of the hours and digital communication. The richness of our community is enhanced by oblates of other Camaldolese monasteries including Monastero di Camaldoli (Camaldoli, Italy),



Jackie Chew with Sonia and Joao Antonio Bruno, oblates of Mosteiro da Transfiguracao, Mogi das Cruzes, Brazil



New Camaldoli and Incarnation oblates receive this medal.

Gregorio al Celio (Roma, Italy) as well as Mosteiro da Transfiguracao/Mosteiro da Encarnacao (Mogi das Cruzes, Brasil).

How do people find us? Many oblates have told me they were introduced to the Camaldolese through monks who travel to give talks. Indeed, during his lifetime Fr. Bede Griffiths traveled to Australia and his presence there has continued to influence a sizeable community of Camaldolese oblates now affiliated with

was so generous and allowed me this spiritual bond with the New Camaldoli Hermitage when he accepted me as an oblate. February 7, 2011 (day of the death of Sr. Nazarena and the ancient feast day of St. Romuald) was the day of my oblation. I live my daily routine by the Oblate Rule. I am very grateful for his generosity for me to become a member of this community despite the huge physical distance.'

Other oblates live near enough to New Camaldoli or Incarnation to experience their oblate bond through the dailiness of on-going participation in a praying community. Incarnation oblate Eleanor Errante says:



Emma Nagypal

'When asked what being an oblate means to me I replied: you mean besides prayer, Eucharist, the hours, lectio, discipline, work, solitude, silence? For me it's all about deep commitment - the daily invitation to do small things with great love, to stay the course in service and solidarity with the community.'

New Camaldoli Hermitage. Other oblates have neither heard a speaker nor even been to a Camaldolese monastery, but initially discover us through the web. From oblate Emma Nagypal in Budapest, Hungary:

Just as the Camaldolese charism is wide enough and deep enough to include both eremitic and communal vocations, so Camaldolese oblature accommodates a wide variety of participatory possibilities and styles.

'In 2007...God called me to be a Camaldolese oblate. I love the Orthodox spirituality and the eastern religious traditions which are connected to the western Christianity by St. Romuald. But I was confused: there is no Camaldolese monastery in Hungary, just Benedictine monasteries and oblates. (After various obstacles) my final hope was Fr. Robert Hale and he

For me, being an oblate draws me both closer to God and closer to our Camaldolese community. It is with joy that I am one of the 'sette cento'! ♦

Jacqueline Chew, Oblate OSB Cam

More information about becoming an oblate?

Go to www.camaldolese.com

Letter from the Prior - Epiphany

Dear Oblates and Friends,

During the Advent season, we finished the project of enlarging the Chapel. This will help us accommodate more people and better celebrate the Mysteries of Christ. I am always amazed by this astounding event of the love of God becoming incarnate in a human and cosmic way. Yet the Advent and Christmas seasons are always so short.

I grew up in a small town outside Milan called Bellusco. In the whole area of Milan we had a very special Ambrosian rite, in which Advent starts earlier, the Sunday after the feast of St. Martin, whom we celebrate on the 11th of November. The Advent season concludes with the great celebration of Epiphany.

When I think about my experience of Epiphany while growing up, I remember that the major celebration was not on Christmas day but on the Solemnity of Epiphany, January the 6th, which is still even in these days, a national holiday. At that time we didn't have the tradition of Christmas trees, but each family used to have a creche in the corner of the living room. My father used to build it in a lovely way, with special wood and paper. And my family would gather every evening around the creche and sing Christmas carols. My father had a wonderful voice, as did my older sister Rina.

We never exchanged gifts at Christmas time, except some dry fruit, but the real gifts were exchanged on the night of Epiphany. One can imagine the night before Epiphany. With great joy, the children and family awaited the arrival of the Magi bringing their gifts. We even prepared some food for the Magi and the camels! A very exciting night! This celebration now takes the form of parties all over the Milan area. And in my town of Bellusco they organize a living creche - with Mary and the little baby and Joseph - and the Magi coming from different corners of the town. Often there is snow, and real cold!

This isn't mere romanticism, looking back to the past, but an expression of the communal and cosmic celebration of the Incarnation. Epiphany is the theophany, that is of Christ who has come on earth, embracing each one of us and the whole universe.

Now more than ever this is important because there are many immigrants seeking safe haven not only in Bellusco, which has been particularly welcoming, but world wide. And we realize that Christ is still very much alive in these various peoples, bringing a rich diversity of traditions and cultures.

I wish you all a happy Epiphany, that is, the manifestation of all this, this gift of love. ♦

As always, in communion.



Fr. Andrew Colnaghi, OSB Cam

Bread of Life

is published by
Incarnation Monastery
1369 La Loma, Berkeley CA 94708
(510) 845-0601
www.incarnationmonastery.org

Days of Prayer and Reflection

Saturday, January 24th

9 am to 12 noon
'God, Grace of the World'
Ivan Nicoletto, OSB Cam

Saturday, February 14th

9 am to 3 pm
Silent Contemplative Retreat
Marty Badgett, Oblate OSB Cam

Saturday, February 21

9 am to 12 noon
'The Gospel of John'
Sandra Schneiders, IHM

Saturday, March 14th

9 am to 12 noon
Silent Contemplative Retreat
Marty Badgett, Oblate OSB Cam

Saturday, March 28th

9am to 12 noon
'Faithful Fasting in an Age of Ecological Fragility'
Mary McGann, RSCJ

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.

Holy Days

For information about Holy Day liturgies
please visit our website
www.incarnationmonastery.com

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.

If

you would like to submit an idea, article, etc., for
the newsletter send to news@incarnationmonastery.org

Front Cover

Father Arthur Poulin, OSB Cam; 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

Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,
 Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes --
 Some have got broken -- and carrying them up to the attic.
 The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,
 And the children got ready for school. There are enough
 Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of the week --
 Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,
 Stayed up so late, attempted -- quite unsuccessfully --
 To love all of our relatives, and in general
 Grossly overestimated our powers. Once again
 As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed
 To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
 Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,
 Begging though to remain His disobedient servant,
 The promising child who cannot keep His word for long.
 The Christmas Feast is already a fading memory,
 And already the mind begins to be vaguely aware
 Of an unpleasant whiff of apprehension at the thought
 Of Lent and Good Friday which cannot, after all, now
 Be very far off. But, for the time being, here we all are,
 Back in the moderate Aristotelian city
 Of darning and the Eight-Fifteen, where Euclid's geometry
 And Newton's mechanics would account for our experience,
 And the kitchen table exists because I scrub it.
 It seems to have shrunk during the holidays. The streets
 Are much narrower than we remembered; we had forgotten
 The office was as depressing as this. To those who have seen
 The Child, however dimly, however incredulously,
 The Time Being is, in a sense, the most trying time of all.
 For the innocent children who whispered so excitedly
 Outside the locked door where they knew the presents to be
 Grew up when it opened. Now, recollecting that moment
 We can repress the joy, but the guilt remains conscious;
 Remembering the stable where for once in our lives
 Everything became a You and nothing was an It.
 And craving the sensation but ignoring the cause,
 We look round for something, no matter what, to inhibit
 Our self-reflection, and the obvious thing for that purpose
 Would be some great suffering. So, once we have met the Son,
 We are tempted ever after to pray to the Father;
 "Lead us into temptation and evil for our sake."
 They will come, all right, don't worry; probably in a form
 That we do not expect, and certainly with a force
 More dreadful than we can imagine. In the meantime
 There are bills to be paid, machines to keep in repair,
 Irregular verbs to learn, the Time Being to redeem
 From insignificance. The happy morning is over,
 The night of agony still to come; the time is noon:
 When the Spirit must practice his scales of rejoicing
 Without even a hostile audience, and the Soul endure
 A silence that is neither for nor against her faith
 That God's Will will be done, That, in spite of her prayers,
 God will cheat no one, not even the world of its triumph.

From 'For the Time Being' by W.H. Auden