



INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

BREAD OF LIFE

Issue 3 December 2010



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In the spirit of St. Benedict and St. Romuald,
let us listen
with the ear of our hearts
as we wait
as we welcome
as we witness
in solitude and companionship
this new time,
this tender time,
of becoming human
with holy belonging.

LETTER FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Oblates and Friends,

As we enter into a new Liturgical year by the season of Advent, we enter also a new time. A quality time, time to wait and contemplate the Incarnation of Jesus, his coming into our human reality and history. We know that Jesus came once for all and our faith says He will come again at the end of time. But in between there are many more comings of the Incarnate Jesus in our history and our daily life.

And this is the time of the Spirit, the time of Christian personhood, and also of Christian community; and therefore our Time.

Each one of us enters personally, even individually into this great season of waiting, of welcoming. But we also wait and welcome as community, supporting one another in the journey of each. That is the beauty of our Incarnation Monastery larger community, encompassing also oblates and friends.

I was reminded of all this by a particularly striking mural on a large apartment building, over ten stories tall, which we admired in our recent trip to Italy for the Camaldolese formation conference. The giant mural depicted a tall, tall ladder, in beige colors, but becoming more distinct, more clear as it rose higher and higher to the top of the building. There was a person on the ladder, about half way up, climbing toward the top. Below him, standing around the base of the ladder, a group of people, each with a musical instrument, one with a cello, playing as if accompanying and inspiring the person climbing upward. And at the top, a dramatic luminous Figure,

a divine Figure, encouraging and drawing him/her upward, by the wonderful light emanating from the Figure.

That mural expressed graphically for us what each of us today, as Advent begins, is challenged to. To climb, each of us our own spiritual ladder of faith, but also to be musicians, encouraging each other onward to accept what life brings—good and bad—to the luminous Christ above.

The fine theologian Paul Tillich has put it eloquently:

“Our time is a time of waiting; waiting is its special destiny. And every time is a time of waiting, waiting for the breaking in of eternity. All time runs forward. All time, both history and in personal life, is expectation. Time itself is waiting, waiting not for another time, but for that which is eternal.”

Let us journey personally and communally into this Advent season!

Fr. Andrew Colnaghi



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.

CONTEMPLATION WITHIN URBAN LIFE

As Prior of Incarnation, and co-chaplain to the oblates, how do you see Incarnation reflecting the Camaldolese charism, and how is that charism shared with oblates and friends?

Fr Andrew: Our spirituality is based on the Word of God and liturgy, and expresses itself daily in prayer and work. We all try I believe—monks, oblates, and friends—to integrate more fully into our daily lives our prayer and work, as we are present in the reality of our local community. And when we talk about the “Camaldolese” monastics, we don’t have in mind only the monks, the men, but we also include the nuns. Our tradition has always included men and women communities, and whenever possible situated close together, as in Camaldoli, Rome, Brazil, India, and now Tanzania. And when we consider our “larger family” of oblates and friends, we continue in this tradition here at Incarnation and at New Camaldoli. In our urban context in Berkeley, we can see the lay movement of oblates and friends living and integrating this model of collaboration. After all, monasticism from the first has been a primarily lay movement; it only became more clerical later on. Our Camaldolese model is lay and clerical, avoiding clericalism, on the one hand, and anti-clericalism on the other. So our vision is to find a way for us all to work together in living daily our Camaldolese charism—listening to the Word of God, celebrating liturgy, and personal prayer and work. Work does not mean inner work, work at home only, but also

each one is invited to take their own occupation and witness “in the world” as a Christian work or ministry.

We are already trying to build up more and more our community working together, supporting each other through friendship, in the life of the liturgy and recreation together, to receive the best gifts that each person has—baking altar bread and after-mass refreshments, preparing flowers for the altar, tending to vessels in the sacristy, cantoring and music, lectoring, newsletter and writing, organizing community events, retreats, painting, and feast day potlucks, etc. For me all this helps us to find a concrete way to be present as a Camaldolese community of monks and oblates and friends in the urban context of Berkeley and the GTU and the larger Bay Area.

And I would like to emphasize that all this is just to offer some examples of how we can be present to our own lived realities today. And if this development continues as we wish, my vision is to eventually find a new monastery that includes a community of monks, guest facilities, and space for oblates—male or female—who really want to commit themselves deeper to the Camaldolese charism. We would want to find an appropriate building and site for a monastery in this area, to continue enjoying this wonderful “physicality of place.” And the new location would want to enable financial resources and guest ministry, conference giving, etc. And also we would want to be able to keep the quietness and silence dimension.

And in terms of spiritual growth—we certainly would want to

continue to offer regular quiet days, lectio divina during Lent, fellowship and sharing after mass. Those potlucks help us develop friendship, sharing with one another in the context of Christian meal—very important in Scripture and in monastic tradition. And of course we want always to be able to offer a place to come for retreat. Hospitality is very important to us. The Holy Rule of St. Benedict teaches us that the guest is to be received as Christ. And of course we want to continue to offer opportunities for individual spiritual direction and reconciliation. In the future we hope to offer communal liturgies of reconciliation.

As St. Romuald invites us to grow in our Camaldolese charism, and proposes the archetypical image of the ladder, let us journey on in this season of Advent, ascending higher in our vision as oblates and friends and monks of Incarnation. ♦



Stairway leading to chapel and retreat rooms at Incarnation Monastery, Berkeley.

EXPECTATIONS

I consider the day; it's possibilities opening to me.
Always the question: is this the day I find God?
Is *this* the day?

I collect the water—a small bucket will do.
I harvest a solitary and brilliantly white magnolia
And taking the Keepo trail, make my way to the Trailside Sanctuary.
Arriving out of breath I commune with a brave and very curious lizard;
Doubtless, one of God's tiny messengers.
I refresh the sanctuary's vessel, and
Pouring in water to its brim, I carefully
Place the delicate blossom.
Stepping back I reverence the unspeakable beauty and simplicity of place.
Taking refuge in its shade, I pause to read John McQuiston.

Much later I amble over the parched and rolling expanse of hills
Praying the Angelus as I make my way.
Then the woods, with its endlessly dry and multicolored leaves, brings me
Home to the ranch house, arriving in time to wash and iron the curtains.
I knit a row, I purl a row,
Always returning to McQuiston.
I consider fasting
But instead, dine on fruit and cheese.

I bake the bread for the Eucharist.
I say these words:
 That which the earth has given
 And human hands have made
 Let it become for us...

Weary now, I seek the gift of water: to drink, to bathe, to swim.
Turning toward the ranch house and obeying an impulse,
I run through the labyrinth sprinkler,
Refreshing myself in its chill and icy bounty.
I gaze at a honey suckle
And suck the sweet holiness of this place.

Before Desert Day I carried water and baked bread.
On Desert Day I carried water and baked bread.
After Desert Day, with God's embrace, I will do these things once more
for "Always We Begin Again," and always we find God in the Ordinary.

In humble praise and great thanksgiving for this Benedictine Experience,
this place of sacred refuge. ♦

Eleanor Errante, Oblate O.S.B. Cam.
The Benedictine Experience
El Rancho Obispo
Healdsburg, California
July 15, 2010



Interior of St. George's Chapel at Bishop's Ranch.

The Benedictine Experience

Esther de Waal—wife, professor, historian, and mother—started the program called *The Benedictine Experience* in the early 80's in England.

The eight-day community experience held annually at The Bishop's Ranch in Healdsburg is modeled after that balanced way of life set out by St. Benedict in his Rule, giving due attention to body, mind, and spirit.

At Bishop's Ranch, the framework of each day is the *Opus Dei*, the daily corporate worship of God, including prayer offices that begin with Morning Prayer, continue with Eucharist, Evensong, and Compline to complete the day. Lectures and discussion are offered in the mornings, with afternoons devoted to rest, study, and work projects. Evenings are devoted to quiet and guided meditations in the chapel.

This Desert Day reflection (*left*) represents a particular day in the week when the usual order is largely suspended and participants are free to create their own schedule for much of the day. It's kind of a freelance and personal approach to finding God without the customary structure. It's a day that beckons us to very intentionally invite the sacred into our lives.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Amber Sumrail and Michael Fish co-led a silent Merton retreat September 24–27 at the Los Gatos Presentation Retreat Center. Throughout the three and half days, Michael reviewed Thomas Merton's life from birth to death. We "rode on the back of Merton" in order to go on our own journey. We learned about Merton the Man and Merton the Monk. Merton was presented as a Monastic Everyman. His personal journey embodied the struggles that we in our own life face as we try to get in touch with our inner "I." After each of Michael's presentations on Merton, Amber guided us through a writing exercise.

I am in my novice year in preparation for oblateness at Incarnation Monastery in Berkeley. I am also a very sociable extravert. Because of these characteristics my first silent retreat was both challenging and exciting. During the meals I was anxious to hear people's stories, to meet the likes of Jane who went to sing with the Threshold Singers group at a local hospice or to hear about a Holy Names sister's work with children with AIDS in Ethiopia. But these and other stories could wait as I tried hard to still the chatter within.

Merton: On Silence

It is not speaking that breaks our silence, but, the anxiety to be heard. Those who love their own noise are impatient of everything else. They constantly defile the silence of forests and mountains and the sea. Vocation to Solitude—to deliver oneself up, to hand oneself over, entrust oneself completely to the silence of a wide landscape of woods and hills; to sit still while the sun comes up over that land and fills its silence with light. This is a true and special vocation.

We had plenty of time between our sessions to walk the beautiful grounds, contemplate on a bench in the woods, walk the grassy labyrinth and swim in the refreshing pool. I spend my days multi-tasking and am constantly on the move. This retreat opportunity allowed me time to pray, walk, swim, write, and open my heart and mind to God.



Grounds at Los Gatos Presentation Retreat Center.

Adyashanti: On Retreating

When we go on retreat we are not retreating from life; we are retreating from our almost constant avoidance of life. If our spiritual life is to be something authentic we must find a way into the very heart of our own existence. Let us confess that with all our studied learning and information gathering, with all our spiritual knowledge and beliefs, with all our certainty and opinions, we are completely lost in a maze of confusion. If only we would heed the call to stop our anxious searching for something beyond the here and now, we may begin to fall back into the imperishable ground of our being. The call to retreat is a call from the heart of existence.

A very special part of this retreat was having the time and space to write. Journaling has always been on my to-do wish list. Amber did a great job of setting a tone, of guiding us with a line, encouraging us to open our hearts and minds. She gave us each one line from one of Merton's poems and we were instructed to write our own poem using this line. My line was "in the middle of nothing." Most of my concentrated prayer time is between 5:30–7:30 a.m. while I'm rowing with my team. So the following is my poem using Merton's line.

THE PASSIONATE HEART

I'm sitting with eight women
The moon is shining bright
Jupiter shines below as a beacon.
The water is flat and we glide silently along.
In the middle of nothing
My heart opens up and gushes Love.
I'm at peace, my inner chatter has been stilled
Praise God that I'm alive!
Thank you oh Holy Mother for your embrace.
I am alone with my thoughts, the Moon, Jupiter and my prayers.
But, alas, I am one of eight
I follow the stroke
Match every line
In rhythm we glide together through the dark morning.
We are one
We are Strong
We are courageous women
We have our guiding light
In the middle of nothing
We have Love.

We watched an hour long movie on Merton and received lots of reading material to review in our quiet time. Amber and Michael teamed up to lead a very inspirational and spiritual retreat. My spiritual journey has just begun. ♦

"Whatever I may have written, I think it all can be reduced in the end to this one root truth: that God call human persons to union with Himself and with one another in Christ...May God bless us all, and give us all the grace to finish the work that He is asking of us." Thomas Merton

Mary Alice Miller

BECOMING HUMAN

My experience before entering the monastery started of course when I was born into a lovely family in a little town, Bellusco, in Northern Italy near Milan. My father died early so I had to leave school to work and help support my mother and two sisters. I was, for twelve years, a metal mechanic and active in a union in a huge factory with over nine thousand workers. Our parish was committed to justice and peace and had a group, largely of Christian workers, that discussed these values in the context of prayer and reading Scriptures. That was after Vatican II, and we, along with millions of other Catholics, rediscovered Scriptures, coming out of just devotionism and piety. A fresh way forward with the Word of God, and combining our communal reflections with prayer. Several of my friends were all involved in this justice, peace, and prayer group, and active in the big factories.

It was easy for workers to just feel like a machine, called by number, not by name. At a certain point in my life I was questioning if social commitment and more responsibility in the factory was enough for my spiritual needs and witness. I needed more space for prayer and other dimensions of faith, but which also embraced the social justice dimension. So with my spiritual director, I started to discern what God might be calling me to. So when I was 27 years old, on October 24th, 1970, I decided to try to enter the Camaldolese life in the Mother House of Camaldoli, Italy as a postulant. I am very grateful and thank God that I met Fr. Benedetto Calati in the time he was general prior; he immediately became my new spiritual director and after that became my best friend. So he helped me to develop more and more my humanity and spirituality. He introduced me to the saying: you cannot be a spiritual person if you are not human first. So my formation in the Camaldolese life has been shaped by him. And after my simple profession he suggested to me that I study theology in Rome, at the Benedictine College. I had never thought about that and didn't want to. But he encouraged me to go to Rome to study theology and go deeper into my journey of faith; eventually he proposed that I be ordained priest, which I was not much in favor of it because I was suspicious of a certain clerical mentality. But he introduced me to see the sacramentality of priestly ministry, the dialoguing with the people, being friends with the people. Whatever I do in my life is sacrament already. It is not the abbot that makes you a priest but more the service, and what is inside of your heart.

And Benedetto introduced me also to the Primacy of Love, which he very much stressed in his conversations with me, and in all the articles he gave me to read and study. After his service as general prior they published one of his conferences, entitled "The Primacy of Love," in which he summed up his life commitment. And he told me about the primacy of the person, above all rules. We go to the chapel not because the bell rings but because we really want to go. We serve because we freely decide to, not because the rule says so. This year is the tenth anniversary of Benedetto's death.



Fr. Andrew Colnaghi with Fr. Benedetto Calati, 1993.

One year after my ordination (1979), I asked Fr. Benedetto permission to go to America and study English. I had already known Fr. Robert in our houses in Italy, and we had become good friends. Then he was sent here to help found Incarnation, and he was enthused about my coming. Benedetto gave me permission to come for one year. And I did come and stay for one year. But I missed the Italian community and culture, so I decided to go back to Italy. But after a period of time I felt the desire to come back to the United States, because America and the community of Berkeley offered the possibility of the adventure of the new world, the future, with more interior freedom, together with all the monastic values that Fr. Benedetto introduced me to. The first years with the Episcopal Holy Cross monks in the old apartment building at the corner of Cedar and Oxford were an exciting ecumenical venture. And then this our present lovely house became available, and we needed more space, so we moved up here.

Again, Fr. Benedetto was very important for me and so many others. He helped me in my human growth and my spiritual growth; as a friend, I believe I did help him in understanding further the experiences of so many in the workplace, and involved in justice in unions, etc. So it was reciprocal growth. Fr. Benedetto helped me to find spiritual unity, and I helped him regarding the whole world of working people and unions.

We are all interconnected like a chain that continues and doesn't break. There are many different ways to be present for humanity in this time—with the poor and the excluded—and I chose a simple life of prayer and work in the monastery. Before I had been on the "front line," now in a supporting position. My mom couldn't understand this choice that I was making. She urged: "If you want to be a good person you don't have to go to the monastery. Why give up the family and house and go to the monastery?" But I felt called to be present and supportive of the poor in this other way. There are many Christian paths, and I believe that I am as active as anyone else in this life, and I appreciate and respect the so many other ways. As St. Paul teaches, we are one Body in Christ, yet many diverse members. May we all grow in the primacy of love. ♦

In union in that love, in our prayer and in our work.

Fr. Andrew Colnaghi

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Silent Prayer Retreat on Saturday, December 18, 2010

On December 18, I invite you to attend a silent contemplative day of prayer. For over twelve years, I was involved in hosting silent days of prayer at my previous community in Austin, Texas. It has been my desire to share this format of silent prayer with my newfound community. Silence in community is a wonderful experience of shared intention and surrender to the Divine. We will be

participating in formal silent prayer, Lectio Divina, and shared Grand Silence. My wish is to enrich this Advent season for each of us by our collective participation in something much greater than ourselves by letting go of our busy lives, our shopping, our worries, our planning, and our doing. Come let us drink deeply of the still waters. Psalm 46: Be still, and know that I am God.

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

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS

Saturday, December 4

Quiet Day at Incarnation Monastery

“Living Advent by Persevering Prayer: The Jesus Prayer”
with Robert Hale, O.S.B. Cam.

9 a.m. to 12 noon

Saturday, December 18

Silent Day in preparation for Christmas
facilitated by Marty Badgett, Oblate O.S.B. Cam.
Mass at the Monastery, 8 a.m.

At Eaton Hall, C.D.S.P., 9:30 a.m to 4:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24

Lauds, 7 a.m.

First Mass of Christmas, 8 p.m.

Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25

Mass of the Incarnation, 11 a.m.

Second Vespers of Christmas, 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 26

Lauds and Mass of the Holy Family, 8 a.m.

Vespers, 5 p.m.

Saturday, January 1, 2011

Mass of the Maternity of Mary, 11 a.m.

Vespers, 5 p.m.



Interior of chapel at Incarnation Monastery, First Sunday of Advent.

EARLY MORNING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA

Where can I
go but here.

Everything is
before me.

The mountains
stand witness

to an everlasting
life,

empty of words
wind doesn't
move
them.

A protective presence
A frozen pause
to violence.

Judith Brown, Oblate O.S.B. Cam.