



INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

BREAD OF LIFE

Issue 10 March 2013



"Celtic Cross" by Fr. Arthur Poulin

"Then every way we look, lo! rocks and trees
Pastures and hills and streams and birds and firmament.
And our own souls within us flash,
and shower us with light,
While the wild countryside, unknown, unvisited
Bears sheaves of clean, transforming fire."

*Thomas Merton
Collected Poems*

LETTER FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Oblates and Friends,

As we continue our journey of faith in this liturgical year, we are ready to enter into the season of Lent. The juxtaposition of Lent and Christmas reminds us that the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are part of the same mystery. Lent is an invitation to connect the mystery that we are celebrating with our daily life. For example, there need not be any separation between how we celebrate the Eucharist and how we relate to one another; there need not be any separation between listening to the Word of God and the way we practice it; there need not be any separation between our life of prayer and our connection to creation.

Lent is a good chance to practice the presence of God in our daily life. In the midst of this society where often our lives are fragmented and distracted, there are so many things to do, so many events to worry about, so many people to think of, so many experiences to work through, so many tasks to fulfill, so many demands to respond to, and so many needs to pay attention to. Often it seems that just keeping things together requires enormous energy as we are pulled in different directions. Our sense of unity and togetherness is constantly threatened and we can easily lose our inner peace and center. This fragmentation is probably one of the most painful experiences of modern men and women and certainly related to why depression is the disease of our time.

Students, workers, teachers, doctors, business people, and certainly religious people, all complain that life has become too busy. Underneath the running and rushing of modern life often lurks the nagging feeling of being disconnected, alienated, and bored. Life can seem like a long series of randomly scattered incidents and accidents over which we have no control. And so while we hardly know how to keep up with the many things asking for our attention, we feel disengaged.

If we practice the presence of God in our daily life, we will challenge this kind of situation and slowly be able to transform it. Indeed we will live a life of connectedness, which is the opposite of alienation and a life of unity which is the opposite of fragmentation.

When we are concerned with God, then we discover that the God of our prayers is the God of our daily lives and of our neighbor. Therefore: the closer we come to God, the closer we come to each other and to real meaning in life. Our life acquires a new significance.

**“BE STILL AND AWARE OF
GOD’S PRESENCE WITHIN
AND ALL AROUND.”**

It is not necessarily required to be Christian in order to find a certain harmony in life, in creation, in men and women, to discover the presence of God in all things. I know persons on many different paths who are able to discover God in nature, in the beauty of creation, in the goodness of persons, and in themselves, with faith in life. I know it is easy to teach or preach about it but it is not easy to live out the presence of God in our daily lives. The simplicity of faith helps us to a more profound level and to see life with greater serenity. Christian believers are especially called to use this time of Lent to go deeper and practice the presence of God in our daily life: “Be still and aware of God’s presence within and all around.” (J. Phillip Newell, Celtic Benediction). ♦

Blessings and a good Lent!

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@gmail.com

GIFTS OF COMMUNITY

I went to Saint John's School of Theology in Collegeville, Minnesota because, after graduate studies in literature, I developed a deep love for the writings of early monasticism. The sayings of the fourth-century desert fathers and mothers became entrenched in my heart with their paradoxical crystalline precision and gnomic profundity and, being a temperamentally solitary person, I was especially attracted to stories highlighting the wisdom of silence and of stability in the cell. I discovered at Saint John's, however, greater enjoyment of community: both a surprise and a gift! Monasticism had always seemed a beautiful model to me for what all of society might look like but as a married laywoman I had little idea how to incorporate its practices or spirituality into my life. But while at Saint John's I found ways I might do that, among them an understanding of how community might support one's work and how prayer in common might transform routine into an experience of real presence.

In terms of work, I found that Saint John's Abbey has many artists among its monks – sculptors, painters, potters, poets, composers – and one day a brother described the gracious freedom that he, as an artist, experienced because of community. He said he had come to understand that his membership in the community did not, and would never, depend on the success of his work; he knew that, despite his being a good or bad painter, he would always have the support and love of his brothers and that knowledge liberated his creativity in a way he had never known before.



St. John's School of Theology

Daily morning and evening prayer at Saint John's was another opportunity for me to realize how powerfully transformative life in common may be.

Though I had always had my own prayer practice, I realized at Saint John's the extent to which I had always exercised my own control over it. At Saint John's I certainly controlled whether I attended or not but other than that, once seated in the hard, black choir stalls, I had to wait out the experience, chanting the psalms at the pace of the community, tempering my haste to get on with it to listening as others read and observing periods of silence between psalms, readings, and other parts of the service. Having previously served church communities as organist and lector, it was transformative for me to be part of community worship without exercising control over how it proceeded, to learn to await the spirit every morning, every evening.

Being at Saint John's set my life rolling in a certain direction which brought me to Berkeley to study Christian Spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union. My particular interest continues to be monastic spirituality, especially that associated with life "in the cell" and how the same principles that guided monks 1600 years ago might help us better understand how to relate to the earth as our communal cell.

I am thankful to have found Incarnation a place where I can pray and grow in community. ♦

Rachel Wheeler



A BREAD OF LIFE INTERVIEW

In May, 2013, the Camaldolese Assembly will take place at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, California. The assembly will be a celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the founding of the Camaldolese Motherhouse in Italy. In addition to celebrating the past, the assembly will look forward and develop a map for the future. For additional program and registration information see <http://www.contemplation.com/about-the-camaldolese-assembly.html>

Our guest today, Brother Bede J Healey, is Vice Prior & Treasurer of New Camaldoli Hermitage and co-chair of the assembly Advisory Council.

Bread of Life: Bede, many of us are aware that monasticism is facing serious challenges in terms of both growth and sustainability. At least this seems to be the case in the Europe and the US. Yet, it seems that monasticism has gifts to offer the lay community and that in fact, oblate and third order lay participation is growing.

Br. Bede: if we look back historically, most monastic communities in the US were founded from Europe to take care of the pastoral and parochial needs of immigrants. They brought a monastic way of life but not necessarily a contemplative way of life. Many women's orders provided professional opportunities that were not available in the larger culture. In today's reality, mission driven monasticism is less compelling. What the contemplative orders bring is a move away from excessive individualism and a recognition that we need each other and that we need a common life of prayer and community. I think it is this more contemplative aspect of life that our oblates are seeking. Not everyone is called to be a monk or a religious sister and yet clearly, increasing numbers of lay people - people with what I call a "monastic heart" - are drawn to take on an ancient rule of life that includes core elements of monasticism.

Bread of Life: Tell us a bit about the history of the Camaldolese oblates.

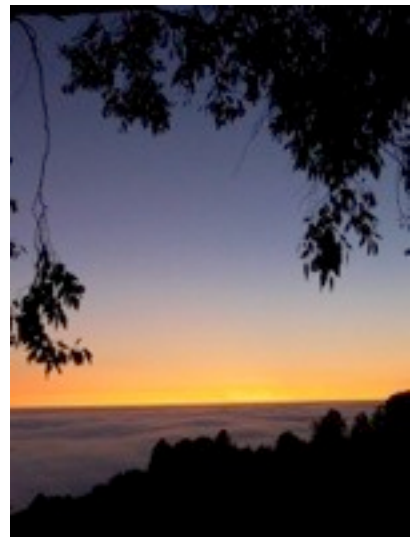
Br. Bede: Both New Camaldoli and Incarnation Monastery were founded to bring the Camaldolese charism here. Our first oblates were associated with Incarnation Monastery and their numbers grew significantly when Incarnation and New Camaldoli joined together, further developing relationships with our oblates. Today we have hundreds of oblates and there seems to be something about our mix of solitude and community that speaks to them. We talk of the three fold good: solitude, community and ministry or witness for others - but this is not a progression, it's not stepwise. Rather, at different times, people are called to more of one than the other; a fluid sort of thing guided by the Spirit. The notion of charism is the Spirit in action and the fact that this particular charism, started 1,000 years ago by Romuald, is shared today by so many, says a great deal.

Bread of Life: Do you see a significant role for oblates moving forward?

Br. Bede: Definitely, in fact as our charism is increasingly lived out by oblates. And as fewer are called to vowed monastic life, I see oblates as critical to our future survival and sustainability. I think oblates have a range of interests - for some just being prayerfully united with us is enough, others seek out a more active role. And we want to be as responsive as we can and find ways to collaborate. How all this will play out is something we will explore at the upcoming Assembly.

Bread of Life: Before moving on to a discussion of the Assembly, I would like to shift the lens a bit and ask what you are doing to ensure the continuity of the Hermitage and its monastic community. After all, oblates depend upon there being a viable and continuing monastic presence.

Br. Bede: Yes, one of the more exciting things we are doing is significantly increasing our long-range outreach. For example, I am co-teaching a university class on action and contemplation that includes bringing fourteen students to



Sunset at New Camaldoli

New Camaldoli to introduce our way of life and what it offers to younger people. With more assistance, perhaps from our oblates, some of us monks would be more available to shift our way of life a bit outward to actively work to both increase new vocations and equally important, provide new opportunities to our new novices and postulants. There may be a direct role for oblates in this outreach as well. We currently have three new men - our novice Ignatius, and out two postulants, Jason and James.

Bread of Life: So you see a new way of life for monastics?

Br. Bede: We want New Camaldoli to be a vibrant, alive place. After all, life is a process of growth and renewal. We see powerful new life forms emerging among our own monks, like Cyprian and Michael Fish; and movements such as the “new monasticism” * seeking creative ways of integrating the ancient practices. The old essential elements have something to offer new novices, postulants, monks, and oblates as well as our retreatants and friends - all those with a “monastic heart” really - and we need to discover our path forward.



Camaldolese symbol

Bread of Life: Very exciting! Tell us about where the Assembly fits in.

Br. Bede: The idea of the Assembly began as a way of doing something for the oblates and something to commemorate our one thousandth anniversary. Since then the vision has grown to include initiating a process to explore what our future might be. On Tuesday, opening day, we will gather to celebrate, share and discuss. Over the next three days we will have three main speakers and concurrent sessions which will explore the larger reach of the Camaldolese and the history of New Camaldoli and Incarnation. On Thursday we will talk about the present and what the current situation is. The day will be process oriented with small group work about various themes; what ideas are there, what should we be looking at, what are the issues, how should we address them. On Friday, we are inviting to the Assembly those unable to attend the whole event but who wish to be a part of the experience. Friday begins with a presentation by Pico Iyer, a long time retreatant and writer who speaks eloquently about the need for the experiences of places like Incarnation and New Camaldoli. We will then have liturgy and lunch. We see the Assembly as the beginning of a process for charting our future.

We are exploring various ways of making the conference available to those unable to attend. These ways may include video and blogging to keep people in the loop. Stay tuned. ♦

Br. Bede Healey, O. S. B. Cam.



* For a discussion of the “new monasticism” see Bread of Life, Issue 8, October, 2012
<http://www.incarnationmonastery.com/pages/newsletter.html>

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS

LENT & HOLY WEEK

**Lectio Divina in preparation
for Easter
Tuesdays in Lent**
Feb. 19, 26, Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26
7 p.m.

Palm Sunday, March 24
Blessing of Palms, Procession,
Mass 8 a.m.
Vespers, 5 p.m.

Thursday of Holy Week, March 28
Mass of the Lord's Supper
Washing of feet, 7 p.m.
Followed by Silent Adoration

The Paschal Triduum

Good Friday, March 29
Lauds 7 a.m.
Proclamation of the Passion,
Universal Prayer,
Adoration of the Cross, 7 p.m.

Holy Saturday, March 30
Lauds, with Anointing, 8 a.m.

The Easter Vigil, March 30
Blessing of the Fire, Procession,
Proclamation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ,
Liturgy of Readings, and Eucharist, 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday, March 31
Mass of the Day of Resurrection, 11 a.m. Followed
by a pot-luck dinner.
(We ask our oblates and friends to sign up well in
advance.)
Vespers of Easter, 5 p.m.

AND MORE

**Quiet Day at Incarnation Monastery
"Breath, Fire, Spirit"**
Fr. Thomas Matus O.S.B. Cam.
Saturday, May 11, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Pentecost Sunday, May 19
Lauds with Mass, 8 a.m.
Vespers 5 p.m.

Silent Day
Marty Badgett, Oblate, O.S. B. Cam.
Mass at Incarnation Monastery, 8 a.m.
Day at Dominican School of Theology
Saturday, June 8th
9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Doors open at 9 a.m.

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.

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.

BIRTHING THE BREAD OF LIFE

We are honored to be able to provide Eucharistic bread every other month for our community. There is a context for baking the bread that takes it beyond just a chore or a matter of throwing together a cup of this and a teaspoon of that. This is special bread that needs to be worthy of its role in the saving mystery of the Eucharist. But first, some background.

Years ago when Mary Alice and I were first married, we were in search of a way to make Sunday mornings special. The local parish didn't satisfy, and we had yet to discover Incarnation Monastery. We began baking our bread for the week on Sunday mornings; this was before the days of bread machines. We surprised ourselves at how "spiritual" an exercise this came to be. Quietly working together to knead the dough and pamper it to get the loaves just right became a regular Sunday morning event. This bread made by our own hands provided substance for our lunches throughout the work week.

Nowadays our Sunday morning worship has become more formalized since entering the Incarnation community. We welcomed the opportunity to partner with Eleanor in baking Eucharistic bread. The actual baking is a sacramental process that begins the night before. On Saturday evenings we initiate the sacrament by assembling the various utensils needed—sifter, rolling pin, bread board, measuring cups, and spatula. Whole wheat flour is carefully measured and mixed with a bit of baking powder. Honey, oil and water are whisked together. Everything is then veiled to guard from dust, and set aside to wait for final assembly the next morning.

I'm reminded of my days as a young monk when I served as sacristan and was charged with laying out items for the next morning's Conventual Mass: vestments in their order of attire, sacred vessels, altar breads, wine, all organized just so. The seriousness of this undertaking was prescribed by the charge of Benedict in his Rule to treat the items of the altar with greatest reverence.

Now on Sunday mornings we arise at 5:50. I hasten to the kitchen to preheat the oven. We each go about our morning chores silently. Wet ingredients are mixed with dry ingredients that were measured the night before, and carefully shaped into a six-inch round to be baked. Over time, with much experimentation, we've slightly adjusted the recipe amounts, along with oven temperature and length of cooking time to produce just the right loaf. Still, there is a certain art to turning out a perfect product.

Each loaf has a unique personality. This is particularly evident when noting the subtle differences between our bread and that of Eleanor's. We all use the same ingredients, yet the end result of each is different. Perhaps it's related to the way the dough is handled, kneaded and shaped, and to getting the liquid-to-flour ratio just right. There have been times when the dough seems to have a mind of its own and refuses to come together; I have been known to discard a sodden sticky mass and start all over if it looks like it won't be perfect.

Once the dough is at the right consistency, it is rolled into a six-inch round and scored with breaking lines. Transferred to a buttered bread pan, it goes into the oven. And we watch and wait with anticipation, not unlike those who stood by the Tomb. We want to make sure it will rise—just a little, not too much, and remain within its six-inch diameter. If all goes well, out it comes, to rest for a few minutes.

By 7:00 we are ready to set out for the drive to Berkeley. The bread is wrapped in a special cloth napkin to be delivered still warm to the plate that awaits it on the altar of our chapel, ready to perform its sacred duty. ♦

Thomas Nolan and Mary Alice Miller, Oblates, O.S.B. Cam.



Eucharist bread in Fr. Andrew's hands

THE SERVANT-GIRL AT EMMAUS (A PAINTING BY VALAZQUEZ)

She listens, listens, holding
her breath. Surely that voice
is his - the one
who had looked at her once across the crowd,
as no one ever had looked?
Had seen her? Had spoken as if to her?

Surely those hands were his,
taking the platter of bread from hers just now?
Hands he'd laid on the dying and made them well?

Surely that face - ?

The man they'd crucified for sedition and blasphemy.
The man whose body disappeared from its tomb.
The man it was rumored now some women had seen this morning, alive?

Those who had brought this stranger home to their table
don't recognize yet with whom they sit.
But she in the kitchen, absently touching
the winejug she's to take in,
a young Black servant intently listening.

swings round and sees
the light around him
and is sure.

Denise Levertov



"The Servant-Girl at Emmaus" by Diego Valazquez