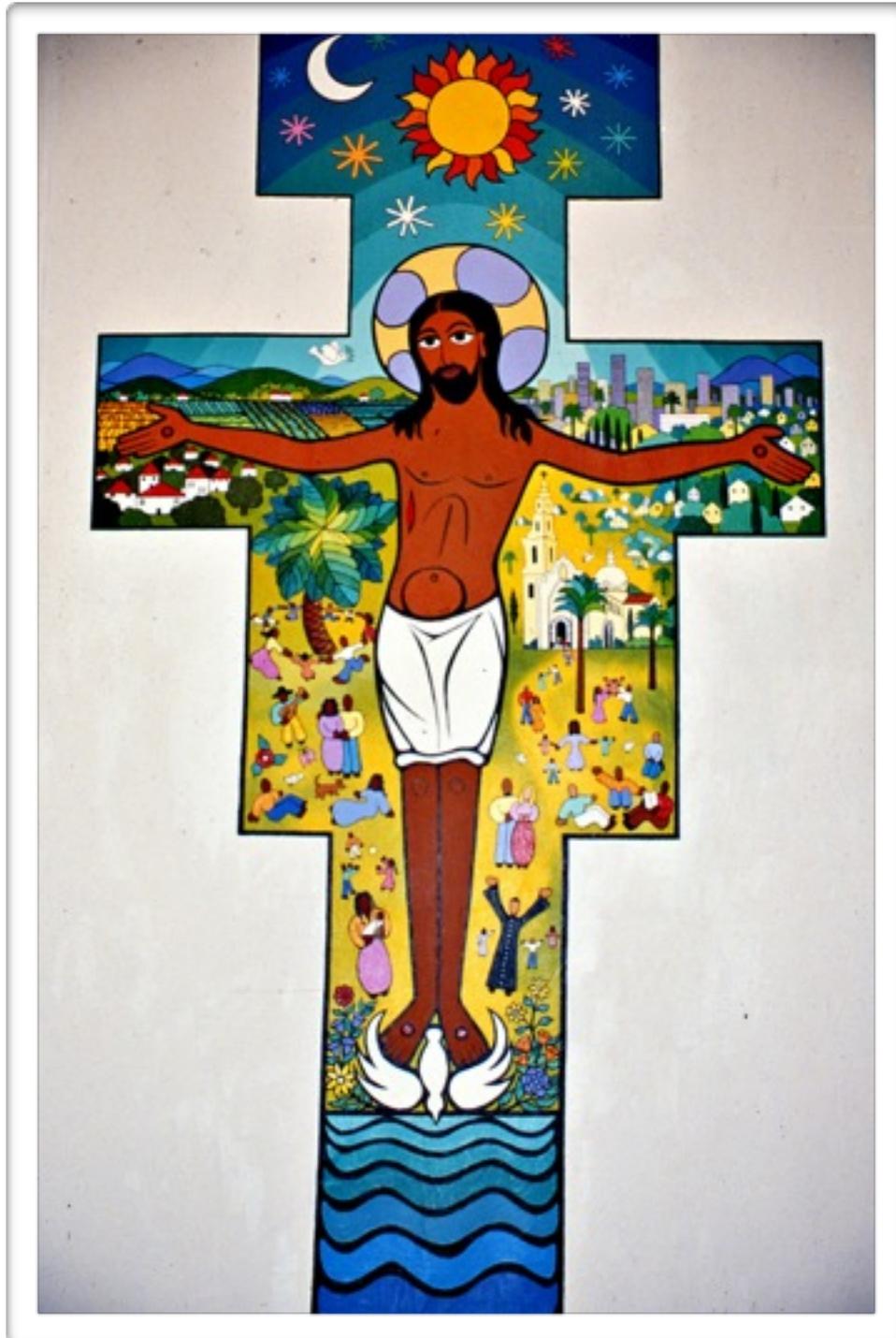


INCARNATION MONASTERY

A Quarterly Newsletter

Bread of Life

Issue 14 March 2014



"Christ of the Americas" by Fr. Arthur

Letter from the Prior ~ Turn, Turn, Turn

Dear Oblates and Friends,

Toward the middle of January, a few weeks before Pete Seeger passed away, I happened to hear his beautiful song *Turn, Turn, Turn*. It brought me back to the sixties and caused me to reflect how much I still love the lyrics from the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. I find these words are relevant to our lives as Christians and to our embrace of the liturgical seasons.

“To everything,
There is a season,
And a time for every purpose, under Heaven
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep
A time to build up, a time to break down...
A time for peace, I swear it’s not too late.”

The song’s refrain is a call for conversion and repentance:

“To everything ... turn, turn, turn
There is a season ... turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose, under heaven.”

In the sixties the message was social and political - it was time to change, to work toward peace, justice, and equality for all. The lyrics remain relevant today and especially so for Lent and Easter.

The invitation that is so connected with the Scripture and the Easter season is “turn, turn, turn...”
It is time to change, time for conversion. Jesus is proclaiming: “...the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is near; repent and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk. 1:14). St. Benedict says to the monks “...life is a process of conversion...” (R. of St. Benedict).

And so on Ash Wednesday when we receive the ashes we are invited to turn from our past life and believe in the gospel. "A time to be born, a time to die." In between birth and death there is the extended period of our lifetime; and we are called to use this precious time in the best way we can. To integrate ourselves and

enter into communion with our fellow human beings, laboring for equality, justice and peace. All this has to be connected with the environmental condition of earth and all creation. What does our culture say about all this? And we as Christians - where do we stand?

Jesus lived his life very fully and intensely, proclaiming the Good News and revealing God’s love, thus working toward justice and peace with humans beings and all of creation.

So celebrating this season we are invited to this powerful way to be present in this beautiful creation and to enter the light of the resurrected Jesus. Time to be born anew - to have this wonderful encounter that Mary Magdalene had of the resurrected Jesus the Christ and so to participate in this new way of being.

As always, in communion. ♦



Fr. Andrew Colnaghi, OSB Cam.

Bread of Life

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

An Epiphany Sojourn

This is a story about an epiphany. It was an unexpected gift. It is part of the continuing pilgrimage of my life as it has intertwined with the life of the Camaldolese community.

Last summer I saw a new card at Incarnation Monastery with an image of a big old frame house surrounded by autumnal trees and the resurrected Christ above all (see back cover). I was drawn to it, having spent the first half of my life in northeastern climates where gold, orange, scarlet, and crimson leaves adorned each October. Fr. Arthur Poulin, the artist, told me that it pictured Epiphany Monastery in New Boston, New Hampshire where several monks lived for several years. It had been sold to St. Anselm's Abbey in Manchester not too many years ago.

Perhaps the image worked on me to inspire an October



visit to my cousin in New Hampshire whose farm, it turns out, is not far from New Boston.

There was no question that I would go to

see Epiphany. On the day I chose to drive there, I started later than intended, so there was only an hour of daylight left when I got to the end of the paved road and spotted the house that so closely matched the image on the card. There was nobody present, and I wasn't certain I would be welcome; but across the road was a woman working in her garden, so I walked over and asked if she remembered the Camaldolese monks; she smiled broadly as she told me how much she missed them! She said that St. Anselm's used the house infrequently for retreats, and assured me that it would be fine for me to go and look around.

Trees ringed the spacious yard. The main house with its steeply gabled, moss-covered roof was simple. A small room at the side of the house with mullioned windows looked out onto a fiery tree. The room had plain

wooden furniture that evoked an economical artistry; it was obviously a chapel. I could see into a living room painted a New England shade of green; there was a large fireplace that I knew would be needed during the winters. Several out-buildings sat on the margins: a screened sitting area; what seemed like a bunk room nestled up to a tree; a tool shed; a garage; and one so ramshackle that it was hard to imagine what it had been.

As the shadows lengthened on my short stay, I felt strongly connected to those who had lived in this house through long, bitter winters and biting fly-infested summers. I imagined the changing seasons and the parade of wildlife they watched through these windows. I gave thanks for the faithful practice of prayer and reading and listening that had sustained us from this house without our even being aware. I wondered at the difficult decision to come here so far from brothers and sisters, and again to leave. Just as so much of life seems fleeting and ephemeral, Epiphany Monastery was a brief chapter in the 1000 years of Camaldolese history. But the image of Christ alive above this house, the same image above Big Sur in another of Arthur's works, stays with me. It is a timeless image attached to no one place. It is an image that has accompanied my spiritual pilgrimage. It connects then and now, there and here, them and me. I can imagine our timeless God smiling and saying, "It is good." ♦



*Kathryn Garcia-Rivera
Oblate OSB Cam.*

The Cross's of Father Arthur Poulin

Recently, the Guest House at Incarnation Monastery has been refurbished. Each room is now home to a replica of one of Fr. Arthur Poulin's three major crosses. Those of us who worship here are familiar with the Incarnation Cross or "Land, Sea and Sky" (page 5), but many of us have not seen the other two. These three crosses were the impetus for a recent interview with Fr. Arthur which I have tried to capture below.

Fr. Arthur Poulin's "Christ Of The Americas" (front cover) arose from the tumult and suffering in El Salvador during the years marked by the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero and then a few months later by the rape and murder of four women of faith working with the poor in El Salvador at Romero's invitation. The painting was commissioned by St. Vincent's Church in Los Angeles to reach across the cultural divide to Latin America and to show solidarity with the many refugees seeking better lives in Southern California.

The style of painting is based on the colorful primitive or naive style that typified art coming out of El Salvador at that time. The shape of the cross and the Christ figure are adapted from the Italian San Damiano Crucifix - that is the one St. Francis prayed to when he received his commission to go and repair the church. This style of cross is considered an *icon cross* because it contains images of the people who have a part in its meaning.

Thus, we see farmlands and rural villages as well as the Los Angeles skyline. We see both St. Vincent's Church and St. Vincent himself. We see figures representing the mothers of the 'disappeared' in Latin America, peoples of all colors and couples of mixed colors. We see people dancing around a palm tree: *'The righteous flourish like the palm tree...They are planted in the house of the Lord'* (Ps. 92). We see the sun, the moon and the stars, the holy spirit, the baptismal waters, and the earthen colored Christ.

What typifies Fr. Arthur's major crosses - regardless of style - is their depiction not just of the death of Christ but of his life and resurrection as well. They show Christ, eyes wide open, in communion with our struggles, darkness, death and rebirth. The crucifix contains all the elements of the paschal mystery.

Fr. Arthur felt he had accomplished his desire to express solidarity with the suffering peoples of El Salvador - and all those traveling through death and darkness to new life - when he went to St. Vincent's in Los Angeles to see the cross in its new home and found a Salvadoran family kneeling in prayer in front of it. This particular cross has been a bridge to many peoples and cultures as it has been used as a CD cover, published in many liturgical magazines and honored at an international meeting of religious superiors where each country's delegate was gifted with a replica of the cross to bring back to their country.

The next major cross, "Land, Sea and Sky" was commissioned in the late nineties by Incarnation Monastery, long before Fr. Arthur ever considered living in Berkeley. Fr. Arthur's art is always about the journey into creative darkness, and the life abundant to be found through the struggle of death and rebirth. Here he is inspired by the 96th psalm: *'Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy...'*

One sees, within the fundamental harmony of the painting, the interplay of opposites. The urban skyline across the baptismal vortex from the rural setting of the Hermitage. The Camaldolese chalice with two doves drinking from a single cup representing the eremitic life and the communal life; the contemplative and the active; rural and urban, the monastic way and the way of life in the world; the yin and yang of spiritual life. The Christ figure, colored



“Land, Sea and Sky” by Fr. Arthur Poulin

like the sun, eyes wide open, embracing land, sea and sky and seeing the pervasive underlying unity of all.

About a year later, Fr. Arthur was again commissioned by Camaldolese monks, this time from the short-lived Epiphany Monastery in New Hampshire, (see article on page 3) sometimes called the ‘lost’ monastery.

In “Earth Epiphany” (back cover) we see anew the Christ figure with eyes wide open, here integrated into, and in fact, at one with the autumnal landscape he seems to embrace above the Epiphany Monastery. The ripeness of autumn brings us full circle back to the paschal mystery with its transformative energy. In this cross Fr. Arthur moves away from the primitive style used in the earlier crosses and employs instead the impressionistic, pointillist style he has been working in for many years. It may be that “Earth Epiphany” will point the way to a new ecologically oriented work about Christ's reconciliation with the earth we have so damaged.

In the early eighties, before “Christ Of The Americas”, Fr. Arthur did another crucifixion. That one showed Christ crucified against a cross shaped nuclear cloud. Unbeknownst to Fr. Arthur, but to his

great satisfaction, this image - originally black and white - was picked up by peace activists in Italy who colored the nuclear cloud red and created a political poster carrying the words of then Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen: ‘Our nuclear war preparations are the global crucifixion of Jesus’. The European protest movement which appropriated Fr. Arthur’s nuclear crucifixion focused on shutting down its only military base with nuclear power - and it was closed. I have no doubt that the new greening of the cross which Fr. Arthur is only beginning to imagine will have similar transformative power and ability to speak to the eco-spiritual sensibility arising today.

Finally, Fr. Arthur spoke of a critical contemporary issue and that is the degree to which the cross has been, if not suppressed, perhaps side stepped by the thinking of our new age culture that struggles to acknowledge the darkness, suffering and death that are part of life, growth and transformation. Perhaps these extraordinary crosses will bring the crucifix back to the foreground, eyes wide open, and create a renewed solidarity with the animals, the earth and all its peoples. ♦

Bobbe Rockoff, Oblate OSB Cam.

LECTIO DIVINA, IN OTHER WORDS...

We know the Latin expression, *lectio divina*, and we understand it as “spiritual reading” or “meditative reading.” We also know how important this practice is in our monastic tradition.

Spiritual reading is often identified with reading the Bible and seeking fuller dimensions in the inspired text. But monastic tradition, witnessed in the last chapter of the Rule of Benedict, does not divide the Bible as word of God from other writings that speak with the voice of God.

The Rule encourages us to seek our Creator through the words of both Testaments and of “holy catholic fathers,” such as St. Basil. A doctrine Basil shared with many early church writers, is that God has given us, alongside biblical wisdom, the “universal wisdom” of many thinkers and writers outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. Basil was thinking of Plato and other Greek philosophers, but he seems to imply other voices of universal wisdom, yet to be heard in the church.

In our own lifetime, the theme of universal wisdom was developed by Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda), and Bede Griffiths, the prophetic founders of Shantivanam, our ashram in South India. They nourished their spirit by drinking deep of the wisdom contained in two great writings of India, the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Hindu) and the *Dhammapada* (Buddhist). They recommended these texts for their brevity and their accessibility in good translations, the first of which (into English) dates from 1785.

May a Christian read the *Bhagavad-Gita* as a form of lectio divina? I believe so, even though we have no answer from St. Basil, since he could not have known the *Gita*. It was still unknown, when Cristoforo Landino, a 15th-century Christian humanist, was a guest at our mother-house of Camaldoli. Landino translated a Greek text called *Corpus Hermeticum*, then believed to be a work of Egyptian wisdom dating from the time of Moses.

The work was not so ancient, but Landino’s translation encouraged a spirit of openness among his colleagues in Florence and among the monks at Camaldoli.

The Bible, for us, is the word of God, but not the only word. God speaks through Nature; God also speaks directly to each human soul. The Bible itself grows with the one who reads it, so that we begin to hear echoes of God’s voice in other realities and other words.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we hear an echo of the voice of Jesus himself, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is

light: “The Blessed One said..., ‘Leave behind all works of law and come to me for your salvation; I will free you from the burden of sins — Fear no more!’” (Bh-G 18:66).

The *Gita* speaks about yoga as a way of “realizing God” (in Nature, in our soul). What are some of the realizations in the *Gita*? One of them is this: “The greatest yogi experiences the pleasure and pain of others as his own pleasure and pain” (Bh-G 6:32). The Second Vatican Council spoke for all of us, when it said, “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of people of our

time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well” (*Gaudium et Spes* 1:1). In both these texts, universal wisdom leads to universal love, by identification with all sentient beings. ♦

Percy (one)
Our new dog, named for the beloved poet,
Ate a book which unfortunately we had
Left unguarded.
Fortunately it was the Bhagavad Gita,
Of which many copies are available.
Every day now, as Percy grows
Into the beauty of his life, we touch
His wild, curly head and say,
“Oh, wisest of little dogs.”

Mary Oliver



Fr. Thomas Matus, OSB Cam.

Days of Prayer and Reflection

Saturday, April 12

Quiet Day, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
 “Praying and Living Holy Week”
 with Robert Hale, OSB Cam.

Saturday, May 17

Quiet Day, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
 “Wind Ascending and Fire Descending”
 with Thomas Matus, OSB Cam.

Saturday, June 14

Silent Day, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 Contemplative Prayer with Marty Badgett
 Oblate, OSB Cam.

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 Week and Easter

For information about our Liturgies and Days of Prayer and
 Reflection see our website:

www.incarnationmonastery.com

Gethsemane

The grass never sleeps.
 Or the rose.

Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.

Jesus said, wait with me. But the disciples slept.

The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet,
 and it sings, have you noticed, with its whole body,
 and heaven knows if it even sleeps.

Jesus said, wait with me. And maybe the stars did, maybe
 the wind wound itself into a silver tree, and didn't move,
 maybe

the lake far away, where once he walked as on a
 blue pavement,
 lay still and waited, wild awake.

Oh the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut, that could not
 keep that vigil, how they must have wept,
 so utterly human, knowing this too
 must be a part of the story.

Mary Oliver



"Earth Epiphany" by Fr. Arthur Poulin