



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Fall/Winter 2018

Dear Friends of Redwoods Monastery:

This newsletter is an effort on our part to stay connected with you and to share with you the spirit of Redwoods, even when you are not physically present here. I hope you enjoy these thoughts and pictures and I invite you to let us know what you think of the newsletter. With prayerful wishes for peace, Sister Kathy DeVico.



Dear Friends,

By the time you receive this newsletter we will be very close to Christmas and at the threshold of a New Year. This late autumn, early winter season calls us to gratitude and we at Redwoods express our profound thanks for the

so many ways we receive your love and support. We are more and more aware of how connected we all are, no matter where we live, what our lifestyle entails each day, or how many miles apart we may be.

Advent calls us to a very particular place in the liturgical year, an expectant, faith-filled dwelling in interior quiet, a contemplative space of hope as we wait for the 'entry of eternity into time,' of the Christ life being born in the humble stable of our personal history and the present history of our world. In this newsletter we have a reflection on the stillness invoked by Advent, including some quotes that we hope you find as inspirations for contemplation.

Prayer creates a living link between that place of our own interior quiet and the connections we all share. Our prayer has been very much with those who have suffered from the fires here in California, those who have lost so much and continue now to try and build a new life. We are all feeling the effects of climate change and so we pray, with Pope Francis, who prayed this prayer:

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!

Amen.

(Laudato Si – Praise Be To You,

On Care For Our Common Home, p.94-95)

We have a redesigned website and are updating more often and so we invite you to take a look and visit it more often. The address remains the same: www.redwoodsabbey.org

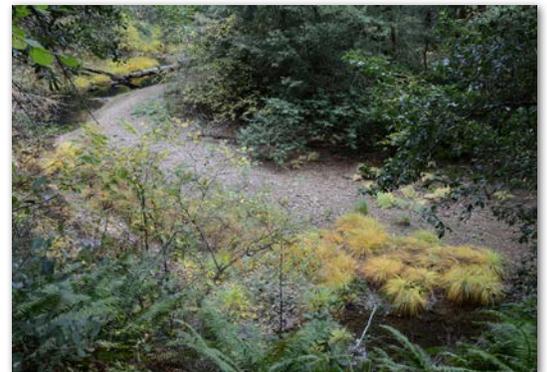
Finally, we want you to know that our 'Welcome Center' is almost complete. We look forward to sharing this new space with you when you come on retreat. Enjoy the photos of it in this newsletter.

You will be remembered in our Christmas and New Year's celebration. May God bless you for your generosity and for all you do for us. Let us join our prayer together for the many needs of our world and especially for peace.

Gratefully,

Sr. Kathy

Sister Kathy DeVico,
OCSO



Mattole River



Entrance to Welcome Center

Chapter Talk – November 11, 2018

by Sister Kathy

‘Be still and know that I am God’ (Psalm 45:11): ‘Be still...stepping away from the outer noise only to find more noise within the depths of our being...and again we hear the voice of the ‘Other’...Be still...be still and know...’

Such contemplative prayer connects us, puts us in relation to the ‘Other’, to the ‘One in whom we move and live and have our being.’ Prayer, as the Carmelite sister Ruth Burrows has written, is not what we do but what God does in us (*Essence of Prayer*). How essential today is such a practice when we are inundated and affected by the polarization and darkness in our world. What will provide the compass we all need to find direction interiorly and outwardly, both personally and collectively? What will continue to enlarge the horizons of our heart and the horizons of our perspective as we look upon the problems facing us in our Church, in our political institutions, in our families, in our communities?

There is a profound essay in the recent issue of *Spiritus* written by Jane Foulcher entitled, “Nuit de feu: Christian Chergé and Prayer with the Other” (Fall 2018, vol.18, #2). Chergé (one of the monks at the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Atlas in Tibhirine, Algeria) speaking about his experience of prayer, early on in his monastic journey, used three images, each building on the other: stammering, silence, symphony. I like to reflect

on how these three words depict a certain movement in contemplative prayer. Chergé said: “I am aware of stammering more and more in my own search for prayer” (p.221). Perhaps we all begin ‘stammering’ each time we sit quietly to pray...for the first thing that must drop is the thought that we need to be doing something, that somehow prayer is the result of our own efforts. We who are so used to doing find it so difficult not to do anything, not to think thoughts, not to find solutions to problems, or answers to questions and so on.

So we, like Chergé, begin prayer

in this ‘stammering’, stumbling mode. Then the Divine voice: ‘Be still.’ A shift is being asked: Chergé realizes what was being asked was his offering of silence... to be still, no stammering, disjointed thoughts or words! Then for him, and for us as we surrender, as we become still and offer our ‘silence,’ “something happens.” And this something that happens Chergé names ‘symphony.’ He says, “I enter a symphony” (p.221).

I love this image: a symphony, a consonance of color, a variety of different elements creating harmony. Behind



“Contemplation makes us God’s new paradise, sacraments of hope and signs of contradiction, who do not succumb to the world-weariness of our race, but are ever revitalized by joining the cosmic dance in rhythm with the heartbeat of life itself.”

~Thomas Merton, Book of Hours



Inside Gift Shop

these three images that describe Chergé's experience is a deeper pattern I think of what happens when we sit for contemplative prayer. First there is the need to settle down, our stammering falls away, then to be, to be silent and present...and then something indeed does happen:

we find our selves enveloped by silence which is the silence of God. Then, God can work in us, the small still voice of the Spirit can breathe new life, new hope...can lead and guide our choices, our very lives.

Another important dimension to Chergé's prayer is that it is 'prayer with the Other': contemplative prayer connects us to 'God,' the eternal 'Other,' immanent

and transcendent, and this relation opens us up, extends our inner boundaries, to include our 'neighbor,' the 'other': for Chergé this 'other' is his Muslim brother. Chergé's Christian monastic community of Tibhirine was living in a Muslim world where the Muslim call to prayer echoed side by side with their daily chant and prayer. He realizes at some very deep level that his personal prayer, anchored in the Eucharist and the Divine Office of psalmody, and the prayer of his brother Muslims converge...they are not separate they are one...For him, they are one in Christ, one in the love, one in the mercy, the compassion that is the foundation and the full reality of a life lived in and for God. His prayer became an opening to the 'prayer of the other' and brought him the

inner knowing that God's house of prayer was a house for all people. Chergé says "I am built by and for God" (p.221)...and he is aware that this is true for each human person, realized or not... He adds to this: "I am built for LOVE" (p.223). In the words of Foulcher, "and he sees, through the Spirit of Jesus, that the vocation to pray and the vocation to love are one" (p.223). Chergé then says that God works "from the INTERIOR" (p.223), and he knows this from his prayer practice!

My sisters, our vocation personally and as a community is laid out here: it is the vocation to pray and the vocation to love; they are not separate. We pray privately and we pray together...and this prayer is a prayer that stretches outward to the so many others who

pray. We are each built by and for God and we are each built for love. This little ecclesia of Redwoods is a house of prayer for all people...it becomes this living reality as we live our personal and communal vocation together.

I began this talk quoting Psalm 45: 'Be still and know that I am God'. Be still and know: God works from the interior; be still and know: every human being (my 'enemy' included) is built by and for God and is built for love.



Enclosed Garden (to be)

Rapt in Smoke

In silent prayer this morning, with the inhalation and exhalation of my breath, I notice how heavy the air is with smoke. Even my eyes sting and water. How physical this is! The thick air expands my heart to bring the suffering of Californians, just over the mountains in the Central Valley, into the core of my being. Their suffering, sadness and loss are in the very air we breathe. We are connected on a very visceral level. Our hearts are rapt in petition to God for the many missing and their loved ones who search through the devastation to find answers. These prayers, these whispers, like the charred rumble, are also in the smoke.

~Sr. Suzanne Mattiuzzo

Beatification

On December 8, on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, we celebrated the beatification in Oran, Algeria of the 19 religious killed between 1994 and 1996 by the Islamist radicals during the dark years of the civil war in Algeria. They have given their lives for the love of God and of their Muslim brothers and sisters. They were witnesses of loving to the end and respecting each person created in the image of God. Among them were our Cistercian brothers of Our Lady of Tibhirine, best known through the 2010 movie of "Of Gods and Men".

Our online store has our honey for sale, along with cards, icons and apparel. Here is the link to the store on our new website:

redwoodsabbey.org



"How we hunger is who we are. We are each one part pain and one part desire, and we should not be ashamed that our ache to be filled is so great, so overwhelming. God gave us this hunger, and we should not squander it on lighter fare."

~ Fred Bahnsen, Soil and Sacrament

"A quarter of an hour after Compline, return to the chapel ... silence of the evening, this beach at the shore of the Word where all words and sounds of the day come to break like waves. Prayer of abandonment, prostrate between the altar and the tabernacle: 'Seek the Lord while He may be found, call Him while He is near.'"

~ Translated by Jane Foulcher, from her essay, "Nuit de feu: Christian de Cherché and Prayer with the Other"

**If you can remember us in your year-end giving
we would be deeply appreciative.**



Redwoods Abbey

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