



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Epiphany 2017

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,

Pope Francis declared 2016 the year of mercy, which he closed with the last day of the liturgical cycle before Advent. While a year was dedicated to mercy, this door of mercy remains open within our hearts

and in our lives. There is such a need for God's mercy today. This mercy transcends and heals divisions, different points of views, conflicts, and whatever divides people rather than unites them. It serves the common good and the Divine Life that breathes in humanity and all of creation. Together let us join our prayer and efforts to keep this 'door of mercy' open in our families, communities, Church, and the world.

It is with sadness that I want you to know our community has suffered the loss of our architect and Master Planner, David Richen. To express our deep gratitude, we are dedicating this end of the year newsletter to him. As you read the various entries I am sure you will be moved by his dedicated life. David orchestrated many projects at Redwoods from 2005 to the present. His last project for us was the architectural drawings for the new 'welcome center.'

David had a capacity to listen in community meetings as well as to receive and include all voices. Whether one's ideas were accepted or not, each person felt they were heard. David was passionate about everything he did, giving his all no matter what the project or how

small the detail. His heart sought the beautiful, and like an artist, whatever he touched had an element of beauty. With his passing, his light is even stronger and remains a hope for all of us. It will continue to shine at Redwoods in the various places where he took the brush stroke of his inner sensitivity to create beauty along with functionality. His long time assistant, and one time student, Dennis Thompson, will continue working with us and other monasteries where David was a consultant.

Finally, we owe much of what David did at Redwoods to your generosity and on behalf of my sisters I offer our deep gratitude to each of you.

While just celebrating the Christmas mystery, we have the gift of Christ's incarnation to lead and guide us in the New Year with hope and the grace to make choices for life and for love.

Gratefully,

Sr. Kathy

Sister Kathy DeVico, OCSO

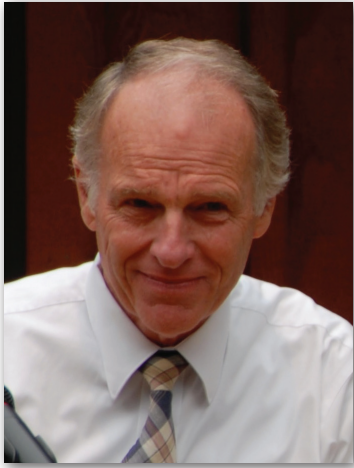


Redwoods Senior Wing
designed by David Richen

David Richen's Memorial Mass

November 7, 2016

Homily by Abbot Peter McCarthy, OCSO
at Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey



David Richen
Feb. 6, 1940 - Oct. 25, 2016

My brothers and sisters, you and I are brought together here this morning through the immense dark and painful mystery of the death of a soul brother, a friend, a father, a mentor, a beloved spouse. It is wrenching – human death – it is soul numbing – it stretches the mind out into cavernous darkness – and it breaks the human heart.

There is a book on my desk at present – gift from a friend – entitled *Vincent Van Gogh and the Colors of Night*. It makes me ask, what is it about great artists and their fascination with darkness? To feel our way into this question I would suggest we simply: Look to this church; study this place where we are (at present) sitting. There is not a single ‘extra,’ not a self-conscious line in its design. But there is a ‘signature’ – the architect’s signature – like the classical Sacred Icon writers – David has structured this church on the ‘Darkness (the Radiant Mystery) of God.’

Just notice, you cannot follow a single solid flat surface in this worship space without coming to a dark black recess (David calls them “reveals”). Like a truly mature artist, he is basically and structurally always challenging our fear of the dark. In David’s own words recorded by Mary Sue at his bedside at Hopewell House.

“In a sense this striving toward simplicity means that the ego is cast aside so one can touch the soul of or the essence of the project. This is hard to do. Simplicity invites one to let go of the ego in order to create a vessel whereby the essence of spirituality can be realized. This simplicity is at the core of my personal belief system.”

This is David speaking like a traditional Desert Father. Where the self-conscious ego ends...there the Divine

(Creative) Darkness begins... My friends, in this physical place RIGHT HERE – in wood and glass and color and tile – David has exquisitely articulated this Truth, this core of his personal belief system. Again in his own words:

“This church is the greatest expression of my soul and reaches the depth of my creativity. My spirituality has found expression here & it has affected my spiritual journey and served my passionate seeking of beauty.”

I am reminded of Paul in our second reading from Corinthians:

“We look not to what is seen but to what is unseen

For what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal...

An eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

And so in John’s gospel this morning, Jesus himself is speaking from a reveal and, yes, it is in this painful creative darkness – under the ‘shadow’ of Jesus’ own death – that we hear these words of Light & Hope:

“Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.

You have faith in God; have faith also in me.”

The New Testament Greek word used here for “troubled” is “TARASSO” and it carries the sense of a deep, real-life experience of being thrown off your balance. It’s a powerful and haunting word... like a personal intimate experience of dark mystery around the edges of your life. This same word is used in Chapter 12 of John’s Gospel when Jesus is deeply shaken by fear-anxiety around his own death.

“Now is my soul deeply troubled” Tarasso.



David Richen's rendering

St. John repeats this word – very consciously – throughout his Gospel because it wraps itself around each of our lives. This “fear of the dark mystery.”

And it is precisely by letting our hearts be afraid (by avoiding the reveals in our lives) that we end up, as they say - Just barely breathing & calling that life. This fear, this running away from the Truth, fragments us – separates us from the most creative and gracious parts of ourselves and leaves us living pre-occupied lives – anxious lives, ‘hunters & gatherers’ after security and therefore unable to really love, to really give ourselves away.

Notice our entire Gospel this morning is directed toward disciples. The whole text begins with the phrase:

“Jesus said to his disciples”

The earliest monks, taught that there were three levels of discipleship:

- 1) To gather together one’s life, to hold one’s life in reflective awareness.
- 2) To give one’s life away to others, for others.
- 3) The most mature level of discipleship: To give one’s death away.

What am I saying here? I’m saying David Richen lived and therefore died a mature Disciple of Jesus... and that’s what made him a Master Architect! Again, in his own words, just days before his death:

“My evolution in spirituality has assisted me to develop a vocabulary that guides my seeing as I design in order to integrate love of beauty into a physical manifestation.



of the Welcome Center

“Mercy is the concrete action of love that, by forgiving, transforms and changes our lives. In this way the divine mystery of mercy is made manifest. God is merciful (cf. Ex 34:6); his mercy lasts forever (cf. Ps 136). From generation to generation, it embraces all who trust in God and it changes them by bestowing a share in God’s very life” (Misericordia et Misera, Apostolic Letter, November 20, 2016, p. 2, #2).

~ Pope Francis

I am very fortunate in that my life’s work is also my means of working through my own search for bringing about more beauty in this needy world.”

So, that receptive vessel which the courageous authenticity of his own Life formed, that receptive vessel became – in his death - a vessel of Offering. This, my Sisters and Brothers, is the “reveal” at the Heart of our Eucharist and it is the beating Heart of David’s church.

Reflections

by Amy Richen

What would be a life fulfilled? What would be the way that each of us would want to make use of this life, this short time that we have here? How do we leave something here for those who remain after we are gone that represents our gratitude of that life...and the discovery and understanding of our uniqueness as individuals?

These are some of the questions and wonderments that Dad had. These are the passions that he kept so close to his heart and that he called upon with each day that he had...with each sketch, moment and person that he spent time with.

Amy Richen, daughter of David & Mary Sue Richen, excerpt from thoughts shared by Amy at the funeral Mass, November 7, 2016

Reflections

by Jim Schlight

Member of Redwoods Monastery Advisory Committee

All of us in the extended Redwoods Community have been incredibly blessed by knowing David Richen. He came to the community with immeasurable skill, boundless energy, and untold passion to improve the lives of those who live the monastic way of silence, manual work, and continual prayer.

David's first project at Redwoods was the Master Plan, which I learned involved considerable listening as he came to know the community, its history, its life, and its needs. With David, it was always foremost about the members of the community. And from there, along with countless hours on the place itself, came what he needed to take pencil to paper.

David's most visible project at Redwoods is the Senior Wing which was dedicated in June 2008. The building is exquisite, livable, functional, comfortable, and beautiful beyond expectation. It abounds with little details that delight the spirit. The structure is a manifestation of David's love for both his craft and the people for whom he builds.

"Mercy renews and redeems because it is an encounter between two hearts: the heart of God who comes to meet us and a human heart. The latter is warmed and healed by the former. Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh capable of love despite our sinfulness. I come to realize that I am truly a new creation: I am loved, therefore I exist; I am forgiven, therefore I am reborn; I have been shown mercy, therefore I have become a vessel of mercy."

(Misericordia et Misera, Apostolic Letter, November 20, 2016, p. 2, #16).

~ Pope Francis

Yet, David's most lasting legacy at Redwoods will be all the countless hidden projects. Under his careful eye the main electrical service of the monastery underwent a major renovation including a new electrical shed and generator. David oversaw the replacement of the main monastery roofs and main heating system. He managed upgrades to the guesthouses, designed renovations to the House on the Hill, and finished plans for what will become the guest center at Redwoods. There is not a single aspect of the built environment at Redwoods that has not benefited from David's loving, critical attention, and masterful skill.

If over the years you've contributed in any way to the capital projects at Redwoods, it was David who made sure that the community received the best value. I am particularly grateful for the architects, engineers, contractors, builders, and crafts-people David introduced to the monastery and who continue to be part of the life of the community.

David is already sorely missed by our monastic family. Still, those generations yet to come to Redwoods will be touched by his work – seen and unseen. They'll know David's work even if they were not blessed, as we have been, to have loved and worked with him.



David Richen and Jim Purcell (Redwoods Advisory Committee leader) at the senior wing dedication.



Redwoods Abbey

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