



REDWOODS MONASTERY

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2008

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, Sr. Kathy DeVico



Kathy's Letter

“When a blessing is invoked, it changes the atmosphere. Some of the plenitude flows into our hearts from the invisible neighborhood of loving kindness”
(To Bless the Space Between Us, p.xv).

These words of the writer and poet John O'Donohue express well what was

experienced during the blessing of our new senior wing on June 28th, 2008. One felt God's plenitude flowing from the 'loving kindness' given freely by guests and neighbors, sisters and brothers of our Cistercian Order, and of our diocese and beyond.

This day of dedicating the senior wing centered on one word, one gesture, one posture: gratitude. In preparation for this day, a thought came to me: that within gratitude is the golden thread of 'love'. St. Bernard, the great Abbot of the Cistercian Order and spiritual writer of the 12th century, describes love as a 'glue', something that bonds, unites and connects us. This 'glue of love' is what creates community; it reaches to the 'ends of the earth' uniting us, no matter the physical distance. We have been blessed by God and by each of you in this renewal that Redwoods Monastery is engaged in. Your support affirms our mission as a monastic community; it affirms equally and most importantly the bond, the living community we form because in some manner we are all trying to serve the same values of love, compassion, care for the earth, care for the poor and needy, care for one another, care for God's life within and among us.

The building of our senior wing has been one concrete example of the 'loving kindness' that has been showered upon us. To behold the new senior wing, to have witnessed all the stages of its coming into being, to have been part of the relationships it has formed has been a gift. We have not only been about a building, for this new senior wing has been the occasion for new relationships to unfold among us.

It happened because there was devotion and integrity in what the architects, the engineers, the contractor and workers were doing day by day. There was silent recognition among us at Redwoods of the wonder of creating something out of natural materials, delight in watching it take shape and form. There were also struggles: finances, time frames, building permits, things to figure out in both design and construction, and even minor injuries that occurred! But all of it, the whole process, expressed the inexpressible, of this 'something', this 'glue of love' that unfolded.

The gratitude that we feel is immense. Mother Teresa said: “It is not what we do, it is how much love we put out in the doing” (as quoted in *The Temple In the House*, Anthony Lawlor, p.126). The simplest, smallest acts give so much more because of what is put into it of our selves, of our love. This grace we have experienced 'a hundred-fold'; it lingers in our hearts and in our prayer. Thank you.



Fr. Peter's Homily

(following Gospel reading Lk 1: 39-55, Mary's visitation to Elizabeth)

Senior Wing Blessing – June 28, 2008

Reading the gospel this morning reminded me of those haunting words of the great and aged philosopher Martin Heidegger who reflected that of all the sufferings he had witnessed in his long and painful life, there was truly only one real tragedy:

“the number of women and men who never really touched the Life within their lives”.

This Gospel is literally surging with vibrant/ deep/ and even joyful life! Actually, it doesn't go any deeper than this in human experience.

Two Ecstatically pregnant women
- infants limping for joy within the womb.

And this life-force won't be contained
It washes out over our world.

- the proud are scattered
- the lowly are lifted up
- the mighty-ones are cast down
- the hungry are filled
- mercy-forgiveness is promised to all

How utterly - unself -consciously – powerfully hopeful!

The question: How does this happen?

How do these 2 women release such surging
- uncontrollable - uncontainable
- creative life into this hard-packed, parched & cynical world?

The answer lies in the story right before this one:

The Annunciation Gospel.

This time/ rather than the evangelist

I will let another very creative & insightful woman tell the story, the senior American Poet Denise Levertov:

*We know the scene: the room, variously furnished,
Almost always a lectern, a book: always
The tall lily.*

*Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings,
The angelic ambassador, standing or hovering,
Whom she acknowledges, a guest.*

*But we are told of meek obedience.
No one mentions
Courage.*

*The engendering Spirit
Did not enter her without consent.
God waited.*

*She was free
To accept or to refuse, choice
Integral to humanness.*

Our beloved Sr. Kathy has a favorite word from the Rule of St. Benedict that she first mentioned to me some 20 years ago. It speaks to the soul of this community of creative and insightful women.

CUSTODIRE

– to hold in reverent attentiveness and gentleness whatever life places before you in each present moment.

You see – in the ebb and flow of our daily lives each of us are visited with ANNUNCIATIONS – INVITATIONS to stop more deeply – more reverently – into this vibrant- creative – hopeful – ocean of life itself. – within us!

Custodire is to say yes
Custodire is practicing the courage to believe in life.

As the Oregon poet William Stafford puts it
“The trick is like this.
Just being ourselves
And allowing what comes
To have whatever we are.”

My Dear Friends

It is so right that Sr. Kathy and the community would choose this gospel for the blessing of their Senior Wing today.

One of life's most persistent

ANNUNCIATIONS – invitations - that visit each of us – is AGING – and our hard-packed – parched - and cynical world

– cannot believe – cannot trust enough to honor and reverently receive this vibrant and lovely gift!

And our sisters of Redwoods?

– they build a beautiful sanctuary to receive and tenderly care for this gift of grace!

Today is not ultimately about blessing a lovely new senior wing – today is about life within our lives – today is about you and I standing there with our 2 courageous gospel women, Mary and Elizabeth and all of us saying together.

Thank your beloved sisters of Redwoods!

And blessed are you among women and men;

blessed are you who believed that was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Blessed are you who were courageous enough to once again remind us that

“The trick [in life] is like this.

Just being ourselves

And allowing what comes

To have whatever we are.”



Update on Master Plan and Fundraising

The blessing ceremony on June 28th, so beautifully described by Sister Kathy and by the pictures in this newsletter, was the culmination of the first two phases of the Monastery's Master Plan effort. It also marks the beginning of our next and most challenging phase: the renovation of the library.

If you have ever been in the library at Redwoods, you know that the collection of books and other resources is housed in one of the property's original structures, built in the 1940's. Time and weather have taken a serious toll on the building and its contents are now in jeopardy.

Monastery libraries have always played an important role for the monastic community and the community at large. "It was the monastic library and the scriptorium, the room set aside for the copying of texts, to which much of ancient Latin literature owes its transmission to us today" (Professor Thomas E. Woods, Jr., *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*).

So it is and must continue to be with the library at Redwoods Monastery. The sisters need this important set of resources to further their intellectual and spiritual development. They and we also need a safe and secure environment to preserve such treasures as historical photos, the writings of Sister Myriam Dardenne, OCSO, and the scholarly collection of Father Roger de Ganck, OCSO. Sister Myriam was the founding abbess and Father Roger was the community's first chaplain.

Today a library must be much more than a place to store printed materials. It is a place that fosters the desire to read

and contemplate. Dampness and very chilly temperatures do neither. And with today's technology, a library is also a place that provides web-based resources for study and learning.

So this is our dream: an architecturally pleasing and ecologically friendly facility that facilitates spiritual growth through reading and contemplation with space for 10,000 volumes, a Founders' and Archives room, a workroom, two offices and a music room.

What will it take to achieve this dream? We think it will take about \$1,200,000, including the reuse of much of the redwood timbers that comprise the current structure.

The Fund Raising Advisory Committee has identified a few foundations who might consider significant gifts to support this project. But our "case" for support will be enhanced significantly if we can demonstrate that the friends of the monastery are also supporting this effort. Our first challenge is to raise \$50,000 to have an architect design the renovated and expanded facility. These conceptual plans will provide the framework we need to estimate more accurately the actual cost of construction and will allow us to approach foundations with a specific proposal.

We hope we can count on your help for this important project and we thank you for your past support. For more information about the library project, please contact Sister Kathy at the monastery.

Jim Purcell, Chairman
Fund Raising Advisory Committee



*Cistercian
Simple and modest
Authentic
Practical
Suffused with Light*

*A symbol of optimism for the future: An investment in Hope
A sign of Fidelity for those beginning their monastic journey and
An Honoring of those who are completing theirs*

— David Richen, architect



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