



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Fall 2010

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.

Dear Friends,

With the beauty of the turning of the season into autumn, I bring greetings from all of us at Redwoods Monastery. The quality of light has softened, bathing nature (and our souls) with a quiet sense of God's very life surrounding and holding us inside and out!



As we turn towards this time of Thanksgiving we find that we have so much to be grateful for. Your support given through word and gift is a remarkable and humbling reminder of your enduring care for us, and for our monastic presence here in the redwoods.

Through your support we were able to update our water system and provide additional storage to better accommodate our use during the Mattole River's low flow season. Also your support has enabled us to cover some of our rising operational expenses.

This newsletter is longer than any that we have sent before. We were blessed with two solemn professions: Sr. Ann-Marie Buss on May 31st and Sr. Karen Arce on August 20th. We would like to share some of the richness from these two professions. On September 29, we celebrated with great joy the 50th anniversary of Sr. Veronique's entry into monastic life. Also, included is a letter from Jim Purcell who heads up our Advisory Committee on our beginning efforts to raise the needed funds for a new library.

You will be remembered in our prayer during the Thanksgiving and holiday season.

In God's peace and love,
Sr. Kathy DeVico & the Redwoods Community

Sr. Kathy

Sr. Ann Marie's Solemn Profession

As I ponder my Solemn Profession, the psalmist words "Receive me O Lord, according to your Word and I shall live, do not disappoint me in my hope." (Ps. 119: 116) resonate in my heart. In the depth of my being the embodiment of Christ's life is realized more fully, although still in process. This new life of hope re-affirms my desire in the daily transformation of all I am called to become.

I am so full of joy as I express my "yes" to God in the presence of community, family and friends, remembering the words of Mary at her Visitation, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit finds joy in God my Saviour" (Lk.1:46,47). I find my happiness manifests itself in the deep communion I feel with God, humanity, and all creation.

Sr. Ann-Marie

***Sr. Ann-Marie
pronouncing
her vows***



***The two newly
solemnly professed
with Abbess
Sr. Kathy***

Abbott Peter McCarthy's Homily (excerpt) at Sr. Ann-Marie's Solemn Profession

This morning we celebrate three women who have been Visited: Mary of Nazareth, Elizabeth, and Ann Marie of Redwoods. And we pray upon you, Ann Marie, the collective Wisdom of these wise women and the wise women of your monastic community. The wisdom they embody in their flesh...that life together--life in the community--always involves suffering and demands patience. (Patientissime tolerant:RB) Such is the case even when, at least to all appearances, we lead lives that our constitutions describe as "Ordinary, Obscure, and Laborius". (C3.5) The process of learning in community always involves tension, challenge, and most important of all (as Mary and Elizabeth embody) the demand that you grow beyond a private space in order to inhabit a Larger Reality!



Sr. Kathy's words (excerpt) at the Solemn Profession of Sr. Ann-Marie Buss May 31, 2010 (The Feast of the Visitation)

I cannot skip over this feast, in my words for you Ann Marie, for this feast of the Visitation, this meeting of these two women awakens our religious imagination: Mary the sought: her 'yes' was in response to God's invitation. And so it has been for you, Ann Marie, and for all of us. We seek because we are sought...we seek because, like Mary, we are overshadowed by the Spirit, the Spirit who wants to grace us with Christ's life: a life full of compassion, wisdom, a love so immense, so giving that it transforms even death into life. Mary's 'yes' is the basis for our 'yes'...her 'yes' brings her to Elizabeth...who is also pregnant with God's promise. Here in this 'visitation' where Mary's 'yes' encounters the 'yes' of Elizabeth we have a commingling of faith. For neither Mary nor Elizabeth knew how their 'yes' would unfold, what it would ask of them, what it would mean to live their 'yes' fully, completely...and nor do we!

Your 'yes' now moves even deeper, for the vows you pronounce are 'forever', meaning 'until death', which you will say as you read your 'profession schedule'! That I know is always a bit shocking to one's being! And yet if we choose just one of the three vows, the vow of 'stability' we see just how this one vow is an anchor for the monastic journey: for stability is about persevering, not giving up, trusting, living one's 'yes' till the end. Struggles will surely come (I should say will continue to come!) and suffering: yet, as we behold Mary's journey,

as the wisdom of life tells us, there is no joy, no freedom, no fullness of life that does not encounter these moments along the way. 'Stability' is the vow that helps the monastic persevere. It comes from the Latin word, 'stare', to stand: standing in the ground of one's true self, standing in the soil of humility, which always roots one in truth **and** in love. This vow of stability roots the heart so deep that no matter what storms come it enables one to move far and wide. To use our 'poetic imagination': these redwood trees clearly manifest the vow of 'stability': they live longer than any one of us will. Notice what happens when the storms of life come forth: their branches like a dance sway as the wind blows through them, flexible as they move and bend because they are so firmly rooted in the rich earth and, then, which is also amazing, their roots seek out other roots of support from their sister / brother redwood trees!



On September 29, 2010 I came to 50 years of age in my monastic experience.

No small thing!

My life, as the life of all human beings has been ordinary and extraordinary. God has been good to me, as life has been, the Place of Redwoods Monastery and All of its Dwellers over these years.

Moses saw God in the Form of Fire. I recognize God in the Form of Beauty and Mercy.

Indeed, I have received "a hundred-fold."

To God and All who have contributed to the gift of my fullness of Life, I bring a profound bow and my heartfelt gratitude.

Sr. Veronique

Sr. Karen's Solemn Profession

God says, *"For Zion's sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her salvation shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a blazing torch"* (Is 62:1).

On August 20th I made my Solemn Profession and it is for me a sign of God's faithfulness to His covenant of love that will not rest until our salvation blazes like a torch. Our life in the monastery is a way to show God's people that He is indeed not resting and working His way into the human heart in the midst of all.

As I entered more deeply into my commitment to this way of life, let's pray for one another and trust that we are indeed in God's hand.

Sr. Karen



Abbott Peter McCarthy's Homily (excerpt) at Sr. Karen's Solemn Profession

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The wondrous, frightening, challenging, and always creative tension of monastic Profession is at the center of our Gospel text.

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off in his joy, sells everything he owns and buys the field".

For Saint Bernard it is much better to feel the tension in your life than to sit peacefully outside your life in complacent blindness. Sister Karen, this morning you are the person of this Gospel! You are the one who has discovered the hidden treasure. You are the one who is willing to give everything away to own that field – which is your own heart.

"Find your heart, says Abba Pombo (first generation Desert Father) "and you will be saved".

Sister Karen, we – your loving family, your sisters in community, and all your friends stand with you here this morning in deepest gratitude and respect.

Thank you for being our sister. Thank you for the vastness that your heart longs for. Thank you for opening your life to this Immense Life within you. Thank you for the Pearl of Great Price you bring to your sisters of Redwoods and to each one of us this Profession Day.

Sr. Kathy's words (excerpt) at the Solemn Profession of Sr. Karen Arce August 20, 2010 (The Feast of St. Bernard)

"Nightlong in my little bed I sought him whom my soul loves. It is a great good to seek God; in my opinion the soul knows no greater blessing" (sermon #84, p.188). These words of St. Bernard, Karen, are the backdrop for why we are all here today, for you have found 'no greater blessing' than this seeking of the treasure within your heart.

Bernard goes on to say that 'the soul will never cease to seek even after it has found God' for this finding of God brings not only joy to the heart 'it kindles desire even more.'

What follows next in Bernard's discourse is the key dynamic to this divine pattern of 'seeking and finding': "Let her (the soul) seek provided she remembers that she was first sought, as she was first loved and it is because of this that she herself both seeks and loves" (p.191). This is what impels us on the journey, whether it is a monastic one or another life's vocation. We seek because we are sought; we love because we have first been loved. And it is this Love-force, this Christ Presence in the soul that calls us forth, that draws us along moment within moment.

This exhortation of St. Bernard: 'Let the soul seek provided she remembers that she was first sought' affects the whole landscape of our lives inside and out. Indeed, whether we are aware of it or not, God's love seeks us out in all that we are and in all that we do. God's love for us seeks to be fully embodied in our lives, in the events and relationships that we engage in each day. And perhaps we find this love most longing in us in those relationships that are difficult and cause the most suffering. Perhaps these moments of facing our stuff and the stuff of another are there because love is needing more, wants to expand more, deepen more within us and in our midst, in the midst of community.



Dear Friends of the Monastery:

On behalf of the Fund Raising Advisory Committee members, I want to express my gratitude to all of you who have been able to make a gift over the past year to support the sisters and their work. During these challenging economic times, your generosity is really appreciated.

The advisory committee continues to work with Sister Kathy to generate the resources needed to insure the vitality of the Monastery going forward. At our April 2010 meeting, Sister Kathy shared with us that the water system had been improved to be much friendlier to the environment (and especially for the fish, of course).

The bulk of our meeting was a discussion about how to launch a major fund raising effort to support the renovation of the monastery's library. A preliminary estimate puts the cost of this project at \$1,200,000.00. The goal of this project is to provide a reading room and space for over 15,000 volumes along with a Founders' Room and Archive Room. These two rooms will allow the monastery to display and preserve documents, photographs, and other records of the monastery's history. The library will also house a workroom, two offices and a music room.

The library contains many surprising treasures:

- the John Howard Griffin photograph of Thomas Merton
- drawings by Bob Usher (he donated the property for the monastery)
- the original negatives for a collection of photos by a student of Ansel Adams, Gerry Sharpe
- American Indian artifacts from the property

There are also hard copy editions of many important academic sources in monastic studies and difficult to locate periodicals on medieval spirituality and medieval monasticism. Several eighteenth and seventeenth

century Psalters, breviaries, Cistercian ritual orders, martyrologies, and scriptural commentaries have been moved to the senior wing to prevent further damage from the damp.

The new library will house all of this, along with historical photos and archives of the community and the papers of the former Abbess, Myriam Dardenne. The outstanding scholarly collection of Father Roger de Ganck, OCSO, the community's first chaplain and an internationally recognized scholar, will also be safeguarded and available. The new facility will allow the sisters to share this wealth of seminal monastic texts with their guests and with visiting scholars who will have access to the library at designated times for browsing, study or meditative reading.

The new library will be designed to conserve resources and promote sustainability, using as much of the recycled redwood as possible from the current structure. The library's green design, site development, and construction plan ensure that the new building will:

- consume less energy and water than a traditional facility
- use recycled materials
- promote health and productivity with abundant natural light and ventilation
- limit the use of toxic chemicals in paints and adhesives

We are currently researching a few foundations with the hope of obtaining a major lead gift to start this campaign. If you happen to know of any foundations (or individuals of wealthy means) that might have an interest in this critical project, please let Sister Kathy know. Meanwhile, we count on your prayers and your continued generosity to help the sisters meet their daily needs.

Jim Purcell, Chair
Redwoods Monastery Advisory Committee



Redwoods Abbey

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