



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Spring 2012

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,

As we move towards the end of the Easter season we would like to share this newsletter with you. First of all, a heartfelt thank you for the support you have given us. With your assistance we have been able to

construct a new greenhouse (picture right), which will enable us to extend our growing season. Also with your help we have been able to finally put new doors on the sisters' cabins and make much needed infrastructure repairs on the main building.

In this newsletter we are featuring Sister Suzanne's work writing icons. Sister Suzanne has written a short article describing some of the history and philosophy of icons and we have included two images of her icons. Last year we were fortunate to have Mother Trees of our sister monastery in Belgium with us for a six month sabbatical. Mother Trees resigned as Superior of her community of Klaarland and was gifted with this time before returning to her community. She kindly gave us several Chapter Talks and here we have included one of them on the topic of Poverty. You may be interested to know that our mother house of Nazareth in Belgium founded Redwoods in 1962 and then Klaarland in 1970.

Finally, we look back to Holy Week and a brief excerpt from my Chapter Talk on Holy Thursday. We are very grateful for all of your love and support and please know we hold you in our prayer.

Gratefully,

Sr. Kathy

Sister Kathy



Holy Thursday Talk

by Sister Kathy

I have been very moved by a Jewish philosopher named Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas was born in Lithuania but spent most of his life in France. His philosophical thought had a profound influence on the monks of Atlas, especially Father Christian, the superior. Levinas spoke of the 'Other', responsibility for the 'Other', the 'Other' who is my sister and brother. At a meal, Jesus gets up and begins to wash the feet of his disciples, all of them, including Judas...just what is he doing? What is he communicating by this ritual action? What an expression of Love that Jesus embodies, of going beyond all that comes up in the heart that can prevent us from doing such a similar act of love because we are too hurt, too angry, too jealous, too revengeful, too pre-occupied with ourselves. As Jesus is always there for us, we, his disciples, are to be there for the 'Other', for our sister and brother, for in doing so we are living the paschal pattern of salvation, which is about bringing forth God's healing, forgiving, redeeming love.

Sister Suzanne on Iconography

Most people know icons through computers. They are the little pictograms that populate your desktop. When you click them they open a program in a new window and you immediately launch the application you want to work with.

Actually, the word "icon" comes from the Greek, meaning image. For the early Christians, Christ was the first icon of God. He was the image of the invisible God. Judaism had forbidden the construction of any image of God out of stone or in paint. But since Christ had come as an incarnate image of God, Old Testament prescriptions against images had been put aside. We could fashion a representative image of God - an icon - on the model of Christ who is the ultimate icon of God.

Apocryphal stories also supported this new belief in the icon. In the Western Church, Veronica appeared as one of the women who encountered Jesus on the Via Dolorosa (way of the Cross) to Calvary. According to this tradition, she wiped the sweat from the face of Christ with her veil and his image was imprinted on the cloth. Veronica's name means "true image" in Latin (*verus icon*).

In the Eastern Church there is the legend of Abgar, King of Edessa, who sought out Jesus in order to be cured of his leprosy. He sent a court artist to find Christ and paint his image. When Jesus met the artist he took a towel, wiped his face and gave it to the artist in order that the King might be healed. The imprint on the towel is said to be the first icon and was called "The Image Not Made by Human Hands" or "The Holy Face."

Since these accounts from the early Church the icon has gone through many ups and downs in the history of Christianity, East and West. One of the real miracles of the icon is that, though persecuted and literally destroyed during the years of iconoclasm in Byzantium (730-787 and 813-843), under Communism in Russia (1917 - 1991), and in the modern art critique of the 20th century, icons continue to attract Christians and non-Christians alike. There are now hundreds of schools of iconography

throughout the world. They have become a vehicle of both evangelization and ecumenism in the world today.

Iconographers are not "artists" in the usual sense. When one writes an icon, the icon already exists. All we do is bring a new representation of it. In this way all icons are copies. I have been told by an artist that iconographers were copyists. In truth, that is a great compliment.

Iconographers believe that they cannot improve on the True Icon, which is Christ. All we can do is to let the energy of Christ move us to communicate or reincarnate his image in the world. This is done through images of Saints, events in scripture or images of Christ himself. Therefore, iconographers often describe their activity as writing instead of painting to illustrate that everything is really based on sacred scripture and the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ.

What makes the icon so enduring and attractive? There are many technical elements in an icon that render them beautiful and provocative - use of pigment and light, geometry, inverse perspective and precious metals explain some of their attractiveness. Yet even beyond these, they express a certain

vitality and potentiality. In this way, they are not unlike our computer desktop icons. They make it easy to enter another space and application - a spiritual one. The viewer is never a passive critic, but an engaged participant in the icon. Some icons will challenge us - most console us. They bring us into the realm of the Kingdom of God where we know and love as we are known and loved. There are no prerequisite creeds or beliefs. All we have to do is click and let a new window open.

Sr Suzanne Mattiuzzo is a sister of Redwoods Monastery. Her icon training comes from workshops with the Prosoyon School of Iconology and the Iconographic Arts Institute. At the Iconographic Arts Institute her primary teacher and guide is Mary Katsilometes, a well-known iconographer in the Portland area. Mary is currently writing icons for the interior of the Church at Resurrection Catholic Parish.



Chapter Talk given to the community by Mother Trees of our sister community Klarland

September 11, 2011

During my first months here, I have read the book *The Wound of Love: A Carthusian Miscellany*. Some of the excerpts about poverty claimed my attention. I'll try to share a few of my thoughts, or rather of my desires and my aspirations.

My talk will not treat poverty in the first signification of the word: a material poverty, because I'm not able to speak about something that I never really experienced. But I will talk a little about spiritual or essential poverty or, if I may dare, existential poverty.

I quote:

We should be bearers of the poverty of mankind, not by spelling it out, but by experiencing it... in the vivid awareness that we are in the presence of God with empty hands and that we must count totally on Him.

In fact, poverty at this level is an experience that is an inestimable gift that guides us throughout the most decisive moments of our spiritual journey. I'm sure each of us will recognize this, in one way or another.

These experiences stipulate our image of God and thus our relationship with Him, our answer to his Love, and they stipulate also our relationship with others.

I quote:

Poverty is the first condition of a mutual gift, of a love in which we stake

our very selves and not all those goods which are exterior to ourselves.

To be poor means to have acquired complete freedom to give oneself and receive.

Isn't it this that matters in our relationship with God and with others: to give oneself and to receive? Seemingly so evident, but how difficult!

We all are afraid of poverty, even after having experienced the graces flowing from it. It is our very deepest instinct to feel safe, not to be in need.

But the Gospel and the testimony of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and return to the Father, initiate us, little by little, into another reality, where human instincts are transformed into an unexpected freedom.

In the depths of our poverty, in our nakedness, Jesus wants to clothe us by his robe of freedom (cf. Ez. 16), so that we are able to continue our pilgrimage to the

realm of the Father. We just have to allow ourselves to be clothed by his robe of freedom, every time again – whenever we feel overtaken by anger, by fear or anxiety, by defense, by greed, by grief, by envy, by addicting desires, or what else more.

The more we are poor and reconciled with our poverty, the less we can be threatened. There is only to receive, in peace, in trust, in wonder!

And when we arrive at this point, we are surprised, amazed, and delighted to see how freedom has entered and penetrated our being. We then recognize the Beloved One who always and everywhere

accompanies us with his grace, his light, his freedom.

This deliverance has to happen so many times...until we are ready to give our ultimate answer to the Father who invites us to be his sons and daughters: each one in a most personal and intimate way and also all together, as a community, as a communion of beloved ones!

This is so typical in the view of St. Benedict (cf. the end of his Rule: 72, 12).

Once we read, with our Chaplain Fr. Edmund Mikkers, on the feast of All Saints a text of a Cistercian Father whose name I now cannot recall. I had been very touched to hear how the author, in a most convinced and convincing way, spelled out that the souls of the deceased are waiting for the very fullness of joy and light, until all souls of mankind will be gathered to it!

The experience of poverty also stipulates our view on



spiritual life and on spiritual growth.

I quote:

*The face of poverty bears the features of love,
and not those of the cross.*

And we are recalled not to confound the means and the aim. The cross was, and is, a means, a passage to the aim: to be liberated and redeemed for Love!

Surely the cross is an unavoidable means but we never had to look for the cross. The real cross, the great one as well as the little ones, are crossing our normal human journey, our ordinary and humble spiritual paths. No need to look for or to create some crosses!

Sometimes we flee into a self-made, a self-chosen asceticism, to avoid a humble and honest answer to God's request.

I quote:

Are we not victims of a too negative, almost destructive idea of asceticism?

Are we not unconsciously cloaking ourselves in a ludicrous counterfeit asceticism, instead of giving what the Lord asks of us?

We can trust that He knows what He is asking, what we need to grow. He also knows what we are able to bear, and He grants us the strength, the grace to answer!

And again: if we are lead into one or another difficult path, let us not loose sight of His aim, proposed to receive as our aim.

I quote:

The prophets think of the desert first and foremost of tenderness and intimacy. The wilderness is the privileged setting into which God, in his boundless love, draws the one He cherishes, in order to give himself to him. He seeks to free his friend from all shackles, so that they might meet in a secluded place, far from misleading distractions, in intimacy of heart.

We must realize that, in the midst of the desert, we are almost never able to be aware of intimacy and tenderness. But Psalm 43 learns us: "here, deep calls to deep."

God's depth calls to our depth. His desert calls to our desert. His deepest intimacy meets our deepest intimacy...so deep that it scarcely can be grasped.

Desert is desert, without desertion, there is no desert! But here, the school of the cross is at work: desertion often digs out our capacity of desire, of love, and thus prepares us to meet Him who was waiting for us.

Although, it remains true: He dwells in our struggle as in our surrender; in our frailty and poverty as in our desire; in our rebellion as in our loyalty; in our despair as in our faith!

Therefore, I think it is important, after the event, when we look back and recognize...that we confess the Lord's faithfulness and that we thank him with all our heart, each time again!

For it will help us to find our awareness and our faith! And above all: it is right to offer Him our thanks and praise. AMEN.

Please consider Redwoods Monastery in your estate planning. A bequest from your will or living trust allows you to gift any amount you wish after your lifetime to the monastery free of estate tax. You can give a specific amount or percentage of your estate, with or without restrictions. You may also make a gift of a specific asset, such as real estate or stock. You can tell your attorney or tax advisor that the legal name of the monastery is Redwoods Abbey Inc. If you would like more information about an estate gift, please contact Sister Kathy by email: kdevico@redwoodsabbey.org or phone: (707) 986-7419.



Redwoods Abbey

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