



REDWOODS MONASTERY NEWSLETTER Summer 2011

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.



Here at Redwoods we have welcomed the renewal of life of Easter and the coming of spring. Now, as Pentecost leads into summer, we look forward to welcoming guests and retreatants who visit in these warm months.

Through all the seasons we remain in gratitude for all the communal support you offer to us. In this newsletter we would like to share with you an excerpt from my Holy Thursday talk, some haiku poetry, a reflection by Sister Veronique on the loss of our Mother Madrone tree along with an image of her, and a small list of the many ways in which we receive your generous help. We are moving forward with our campaign to replace our aging library and are pleased to have a reflection by the Cistercian scholar Brian McGuire on the riches contained in the library.

In love and prayer,
Sister Kathy

Sr. Kathy



Holy Thursday 2011

When something knocks strongly at the door of one's heart, it is evident that we have to listen to it. This happened to me during Lent. With the film *Of Gods And Men*, I experienced something powerful not only in seeing the film, but also through the response of so many guests of this monastery who contacted us saying how moved they were by this film. One friend said to me of the film: "It was like a two hour prayer". The presence of these seven monks of Atlas, if only through the timing of the film about them, is asking, I believe, a place in our prayer together during this Holy Tridium. The lives of these seven brothers are so humanly close to our own, which give us a source of hope and companionship on our journey. With all their individual brokenness they 'walked as Jesus walked', they gave their lives over in faith for Love's sake, for God's sake, for our sake. And the light of their lives now burns in our hearts.

To give a glimpse of one of the brothers – Luc: it is said of him "that his detachment was extraordinary". "That his quest for God came from a place of poverty", a place of self-emptying. Luc, the medical doctor, left behind a well-respected profession and all the status and money that goes with it for a deeper love. With this deeper love pulling at his heart, he chose the way of self-

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emptying and his life became a self-gift, each day a little more. At the monastery of Tibhirine in Algeria he found an utterly simple and poor monastic life that matched his spirit. Luc's medical skills became known to the neighbors of the area around Medea. So Luc finds himself at first seeing around 50 people a day, and when the strife in the region and the country increased he was seeing as many as 100 women, men, children, even the 'terrorists', the 'brothers of the mountains' would come. He would spend long hours tending their needs, including those of the soul! In his 82nd year, sometime close to his kidnapping and death, he said to Christian, his superior: "Let the free man pass". How did this doctor become simple lay brother monk become this "free man"? Free for God to be in and through his life, free, not held bondage by any of the usual ego stuff, not held bondage by fears and anxieties, free, because of his love and his utterly simple faith in God.

There is a hymn that we have been singing during Lent. The English words are a translation from the French. I have wondered if this small community of brothers sang this song because the words so aptly describe the ground of their faith and what they lived. The words with a little paraphrasing go like this: There is "no lost child unforgiven who seeks God". "No wound too deep for God's healing hand". "No darkness devoid of hope for new light". For my sisters and brothers: "None has strayed too far for God". "Nothing is lost for our God". "Nothing is finished for God". "So: let tears come, grace come, dawn come, bringing new birth, new life, new love arising". Is this not our song of faith as well? It is the Easter song that these holy days are leading us into. As I already said, our lives are commingled with Jesus' life. We are to do as he did – washing the feet of our sisters and brothers, raising the whole body of our lives with his body and blood.

Haiku Snapshots

*Stone altar and tree
Emerge from earth's deep story;
Come, be still, and know...*

*We walk, pray, and eat;
Life brings the punctuation
At the kitchen dance.*

*Just turkeys and toads,
Puffed up with noise and pride;
The deer simply graze.*

by Br. George van Grieken, FSC

THE LIBRARY OF OUR LADY OF THE REDWOODS

On visits to the monastery since 1986, I have inevitably ended up in the confines of the library, a unique collection of monastic spirituality and history. Last spring I was shown the special collection amassed by Father Roger DeGanck, and I was amazed by how he succeeded in acquiring many nineteenth century volumes that would have been considered rare finds in an European university library. Obviously the monastery library reflects the tastes and interests of its community, but the Redwoods collections are special in that they both provide a solid foundation in the history of the Cistercian Order and in the growth of monastic spirituality, both of which were concerns for Father Roger.

It is my hope that coming generations of nuns, monks and visitors will be able to have access to the library, for in terms of Cistercian life and spirituality it is matched in California only by the library of New Clairvaux at Vina. Father Thomas Davis, as abbot

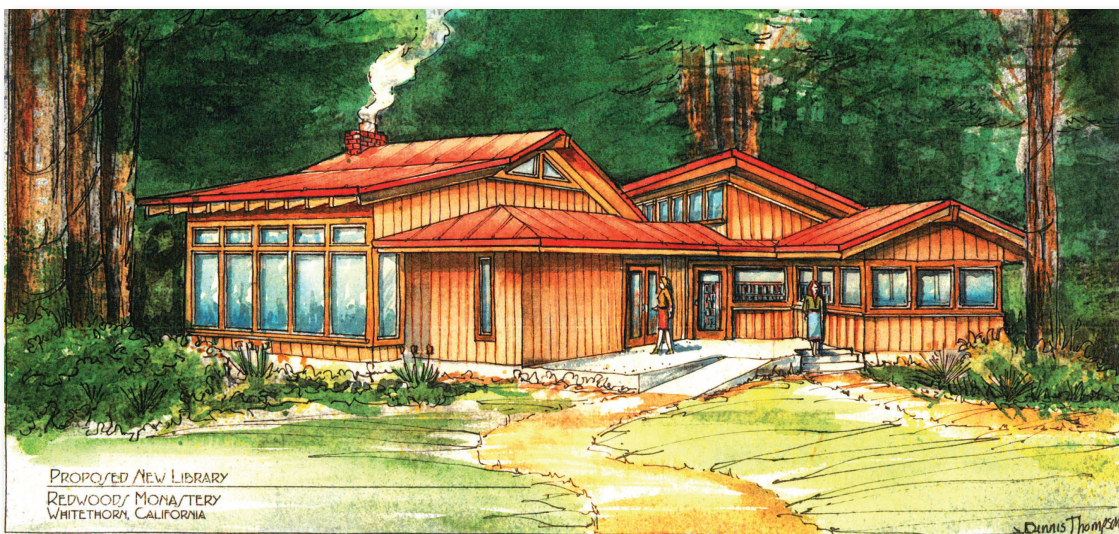
at Vina, however, invested mainly in patristic and medieval theological works, while the Redwoods library is oriented more towards the history of monastic communities and the spirituality of monks and nuns as manifested in their writings from the Middle Ages to today.

Thanks to Myriam Dardenne, as abbess of the Redwoods for many years, there are also books about contemporary theological concerns and about mental health. In considering the totality of what Mother Myriam and Father Roger created, we have a collection that spans the development of Trappist-Cistercian life from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. The result is a small miracle that deserves preservation and use.

Brian Patrick McGuire, Cistercian scholar and professor of medieval history, Roskilde University Denmark



The transformation of the library we hope to accomplish with your help.



Mother Madrone

Who do you think she is?

For our neighbor, the late Ann Groth, she was like all madrone trees – "the harlequin of the woods".

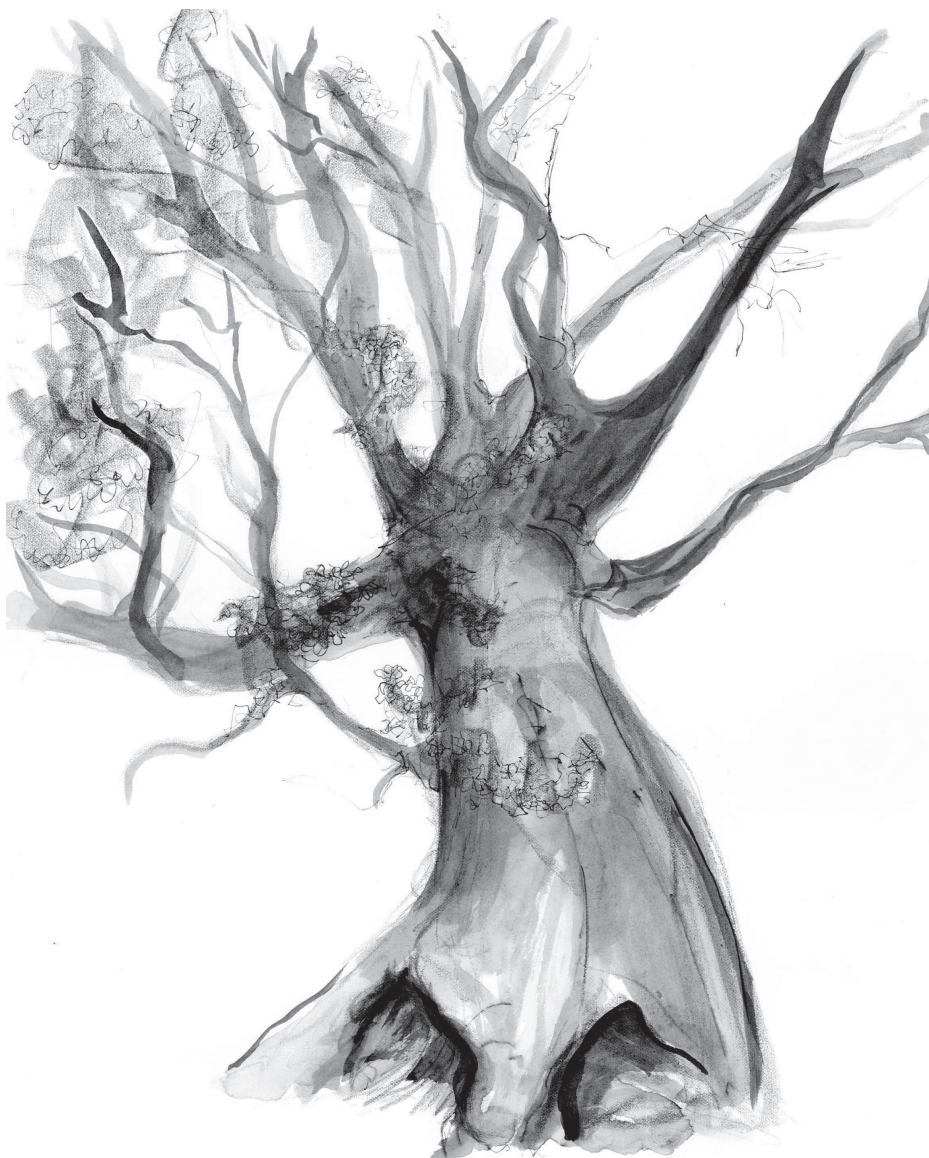
At Redwoods, she was admired and liked by all of us as well by anyone who walked to her dwelling.

She must have been known with great respect by the Native American people.

We all knew these past years that she was dying but never imagined that her top trunk with five enormous branches would break off. The force and strength she had is still visible when you stand before her stump and what is spread of her on the ground.

She went her way naturally.

Sr. Veronique Geeroms



Some of the many ways in which we ask and receive your generous support:

Pray with us • Come visit

If you know of someone with a possible vocation have them contact:
vocationdirector@redwoodsabbey.org

Give a gift of honey (www.redwoodsabbey.org/Store/Honey)

Make a donation to the monastery

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