

FALL 2012

250 Oak Grove Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025-3218
(650) 325-5614

www.vallombrosa.org

*To trust that what cannot be
seen with the physical eye
is more real
than what can be seen
is to move into the domain
of spiritual awareness.*

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VALLOMBROSACENTER

A Ministry of the Archdiocese of San Francisco

Introducing Father Patrick O'Neil, OP



Hello! As a Dominican priest, I have long wanted to be assigned at a retreat center however my availability for such an assignment never seemed to coincide when the right situation became open. Until now! I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve the Archdiocese in the capacity of Director of Vallombrosa Center. I am trained and experienced in spiritual direction, in leading retreats and conferences, in medical ethics, in hospice ministry, and in parish and Newman center ministries. Before being ordained, I was in the trial courtroom almost daily for 13 years where I worked as a public defender and was subsequently appointed to a judicial position in Superior Court. Then, I returned to religious life—that's right, *returned*. You can learn more about my personal journey on our website, vallombrosa.org.

I look forward to adding my own efforts and talents to those of the truly splendid and gifted folks here at Vallombrosa who have been hosting and sponsoring retreats and conferences—some for as long as 27 years. In addition to leading my own group retreat and conference offerings, I look forward to meeting

individually with other priests, with religious, with lay ministers, with veterans (because I am one), with professionals, especially those laboring in the fields of law and healthcare (because I've been one) and just plain seekers. I welcome meeting with anyone who is seeking his or her God, who wants to pray and grow in intimacy with God and to know God's embrace, who is discerning (at whatever age) who God created them to be or are perhaps discerning God's call, who is sorting out how to live in a counter-cultural world, and/or who is simply trying to make sense of things. I think of Vallombrosa as a clearing in the thicket—a peaceful and sacred ground for you to come to for reflection, for prayer and for contemplation, to walk or simply to sit quietly...and to breathe freely, again.

I truly believe that God wants each of us to be free, responsible, loving, and—yes, even—happy. At Vallombrosa our retreats, workshops, and conferences are designed to help us to be fully alive Christians. I invite you every so often to look over our list of offerings and consider attending at least one of them. Until we meet . . .

Blessings!

Fr. Patrick



Our Very Own Vegetable/Herb Garden

When asked to describe Vallombrosa Center to a friend what comes to mind? Is it a special retreat experience you had, or maybe the beautiful grounds and gardens, or is it the quiet, peaceful meditation spaces? Usually our guests remember the delicious, nutritious food they had while they stayed with us. As one guest commented: *"The food was fantastic and fresh. It was varied and nourishing, well prepared and tasty."*



As we strive for a healthier lifestyle, Vallombrosa makes every effort to serve heart-healthy, low sodium but tasty, delicious meals. We purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables, our soups and entrees are prepared fresh each day. This summer **Francisco Garcia**, our gardener extraordinaire, cleared a section of the grounds outside the Vallombrosa Kitchen and planted some herbs and fresh vegetables. On August 24, Fr. Patrick with the entire Vallombrosa staff held a blessing over the vegetable and herb garden. Daily our chefs pick and use these fresh herbs and vegetables; parsley, oregano, thyme, tomatoes, jalapeno peppers and squash to name a few, in preparing the meals. On your next visit to Vallombrosa we invite you to visit the Vallombrosa Garden.

"A Clearing in the Thicket"

In addition to the many retreat offerings and workshops sponsored by Vallombrosa Center, each year we also welcome several thousand individuals who want to use our conference facilities (with numerous break-out rooms conducive for smaller discussions), enjoy great meals, and walk through our relaxing grounds. They come to us as members of professional committees, high school, or college faculties; charismatic, evangelical, or meditative prayer groups; parish staffs on retreat; high school juniors, or seniors on Kairos retreats; RCIA or Confirmation groups; Mindfulness or Centering Prayer practicums; Enneagram symposia; interfaith groups; bilingual groups; non-profit leadership boards here for planning sessions; groups of new pastors, or seniors or men and/or women on retreat; lay religious auxiliaries; and religious orders and clergy from several dioceses.

I believe that everyone who comes to Vallombrosa has a desire deep in their heart to be close to God. We want to enflame and to nurture that desire. Regardless which retreat, workshop or conference attended, our goal is to invite persons to become more aware of the spiritual realm (whether they were conscious of that possibility or not)—that realm in which each of us moves, and breathes, and has our true being. Then, we can see through the

surface appearances and illusions of this world and learn to trust our inner vision of soul. That is why I call these acres "a clearing in the thicket." Here, we can awaken to our most authentic self, becoming more fully the person whom God created us to be.

- Fr. Patrick



Vallombrosa Staff

Rev. Patrick O'Neil, OP
Director

Kathryn Gray
Associate Director

Jaynie Fedele
Conference Coordinator

Rachel Alvelais
Operations Assistant

"Sacred Music for the Holidays" A Festive Christmas Concert at Vallombrosa



Mark your calendars now for **Sunday, December 2, at 4:00 p.m.**, as we are delighted that renowned Irish singer and songwriter **Mary Mc Laughlin**, and her **Cór Ainglí Singers** will again present their exciting holiday concert at Vallombrosa Center. Also featured this year will be the highly regarded women's vocal ensemble **Zambra, a Celebration of Women's Voices**.

Accompanied by traditional musicians, including **Celtic harper Steven Coulter**, Mary and her **Cór Ainglí** ("Angelic Choir") **Singers** will perform songs from her forthcoming album *Sacred Days, Mythic Ways*, a celebration of Gregorian chant and ancient Gaelic sacred and mythic song. Mary's thrilling interpretations of Gregorian chant and Gaelic traditional song is further augmented by her knack for story-telling and entertaining an audience.



photo: John Hopkins

Zambra, a nine-voice ensemble takes an eclectic approach to vocal harmonies from around the planet, both *a capella* and with traditional accompaniment. Their portion of the program weaves together seasonal and sacred music ranging from Renaissance polyphony, early American shape-note hymns, Sephardic laments, Hebrew folkdance tunes, and traditional British carols.

Each group will perform a set; then they will come together to sing Christmas songs in Irish Gaelic, including favorites from Mary's *A Gaelic Christmas concert series*, which delighted a capacity audience in Vallombrosa's chapel last year. You won't want to miss this stunning and dynamic Christmas performance!

For information on Mary Mc Laughlin, please visit www.marymclaughlin.com or www.coraingli.com. For more information on Zambra, please visit www.zambra.org. For information about the Vallombrosa concert, visit www.vallombrosa.org or call 650-325-5614.

Season for Music with Vallombrosa Choir

Thanksgiving Prayer Service

A wonderful afternoon of music, prayer, and reflection in celebration of the great gift of God's love. The Vallombrosa Choir under the direction of Patrick Feehan will perform at a special Thanksgiving Prayer Service, **Sunday, November 18 at 2:00 pm** in the Chapel at Vallombrosa Center and is open to the public.

Christmas Lessons and Carols Concert

Celebrate this Advent season with us through music, prayer, and reflection as we anticipate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

On **Sunday, December 16, at 2:00 pm**, the Vallombrosa Choir, under the direction of Patrick Feehan will perform a Christmas Lessons and Carols concert. Mr. Feehan is a local composer, teacher, and conductor who has assembled a choir of more than 50 for liturgical celebrations throughout the year.



Holidays Alone?

A Workshop led by Carol Kaplan, MFT

Despite the cultural pressure and the media promotions, for many people the holidays can be difficult. If you are experiencing grief, estrangement from family, financial loss, single by some circumstance, or other sorrow and wondering how to survive the holiday season, this one day workshop is a chance to re-consider how and why and what to celebrate, or not.

Come for a time to “*reframe the holidays,*” share with others, and spiritually reflect.

The grounds and gardens of Vallombrosa, famous for their peace and serenity, will also be available to you throughout the day for a quiet walk and reflection.

Carol Kaplan, MFT is a widow with children and grandchildren. She was a consultant for Hospice for 3 years, is an avid traveler and enthusiastic gardener. She has been giving retreats for over 20 years.

Saturday, December 8, 2012
9:30am - 4:00pm



Quick Look Calendar

November 3, 2012

“Engaging the Heart” Catholic Marriage Preparation

Saturday, November 10, 2012

Exploring Mind-Body Skills for Stress Reduction
A Workshop led by Cynthia McDonald, Ph.D.

November 18, 2012

Thanksgiving Prayer Service with the Vallombrosa Choir

December 2, 2012

“Sacred Music for the Holidays”
A Christmas Concert featuring Mary McLaughlin’s
Cór Ainglí Singers and Zambra

December 7–9, 2012

Advent Silent Private Retreat Weekend

December 8, 2012

Holidays Alone? A Workshop led by Carol Kaplan, MFT

December 16, 2012

Christmas Lessons and Carols Concert
with the Vallombrosa Choir



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VALLOMBROSACENTER

All events are open to the public.

To register for any of our events
visit our website, www.vallombrosa.org
or phone Rachel Alvelais at 650-325-5614.

NOVEMBER

November 3, 2012

"Engaging the Heart"

Catholic Marriage Preparation

Catholic marriage preparation involves several steps, one of which is the Pre-Cana Program. This program takes several forms, and each parish decides what is required: an Engaged Encounter Weekend, or a one-day session which meets the diocesan requirements. Vallombrosa staff have worked with the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Diocese of San Jose to create a one-day Pre-Cana Program which will include presentations/workshops by Catholic professionals on various aspects of married life, such as Intimacy, Communication, Spirituality, Role Expectations, and Sexuality. In each workshop there will be time for a couple to work together on issues they wish to discuss. This one day Pre-Cana Session will meet on a Saturday every other month from 9am until 4pm.

The "Engaging the Heart" Workshop dates for 2013 are: Feb. 2, Mar. 16, Apr. 20, May 18, July 27 and Oct. 26.

Saturday, November 10, 2012

**Exploring Mind-Body Skills for Stress Reduction
A Workshop led by Cynthia McDonald, Ph.D.**



Explore the power of the mind-body connection. In this half-day, 8:30 am – noon, hands-on workshop, Dr. McDonald will discuss some of the research around simple and proven techniques that activate the relaxation response such as guided imagery, breathing techniques, mindful awareness, and simple forms of meditation. Dr. McDonald will also offer practical suggestions and teach you how to integrate these tools into your daily routines so you can truly "take a break" anytime, anywhere.

Cynthia McDonald, Ph.D., holds a doctorate in Transpersonal Psychology and has over 18 years of

combined experience in teaching, mind-body skills coaching, counseling, guided imagery, hypnosis, group facilitation, and spiritual coaching.

November 18, 2012

**Thanksgiving Prayer Service
with the Vallombrosa Choir**

A wonderful afternoon of music, prayer and reflection in celebration of the great gift of God's love. The Vallombrosa Choir under the direction of **Patrick Feehan** will perform at the Thanksgiving Prayer Service. Mr. Feehan is a local composer, teacher, and conductor who has assembled a choir of more than 50 for liturgical celebrations throughout the year. The Thanksgiving Prayer Service with the Vallombrosa Choir will begin at 2:00 pm, the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day, in the Chapel at Vallombrosa Center and is open to the public.

DECEMBER

December 2, 2012

"Sacred Music for the Holidays"

**A Christmas Concert featuring Mary
McLaughlin's Cór Ainglí Singers and Zambra**

Mark your calendars now for Sunday, December 2, at 4:00 p.m., when renowned Irish singer and songwriter Mary Mc Laughlin, her *Cór Ainglí Singers*, and the highly regarded women's vocal ensemble *Zambra, a Celebration of Women's Voices* will present their exciting Christmas concert. Accompanied by traditional musicians, including Celtic harper Steven Coulter, Mary and her *Cór Ainglí* ("Angelic Choir") *Singers* will perform songs from her forthcoming album *Sacred Days, Mythic Ways*, a celebration of Gregorian chant and ancient Gaelic sacred and mythic song. Each group will perform a set; then they will come together to sing Christmas songs in Irish Gaelic, including favorites from Mary's A Gaelic Christmas concert series, which delighted a capacity audience in Vallombrosa's chapel last year. You won't want to miss this stunning and dynamic Christmas performance!

December 7-9, 2012

Advent Silent Private Retreat Weekend

Vallombrosa opens its doors several weekends throughout the year to people to make a silent retreat beginning Friday afternoon and concluding mid-day Sunday. We offer opportunities for spiritual direction and morning and evening prayer each day. Private and shared rooms are available and all meals are included.

December 8, 2012

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LOOKING AHEAD



Vallombrosa is especially delighted to announce that famed author & retreat director **Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB**, a Benedictine Sister at St. Scholastic Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas, will be here **August 1-7, 2013** to offer a Retreat for Women, both religious & lay.

Space is limited, so it's best to make your reservation for this special opportunity as early as possible!

More Marriage Prep!

The Archdiocese offers **Engaged Encounter weekends** (2 nights), held here at Vallombrosa. The dates for Winter/Spring 2013 are **Jan 25-27, March 22-24, April 26-28, May 3-5 & June 21-23.**

Vallombrosa Center – Registration Form

To register for a retreat or workshop visit www.valombrosa.org, or complete this form and mail it to Vallombrosa Center. For weekend events, a \$50 deposit is required; confirmation notices will be sent. Deposits are non-refundable. For day events, your cancelled check is your receipt.

Name of Retreat: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (day) _____ (evening) _____ E-mail: _____

If the event is a weekend event, please complete the following:

Single room _____ Shared room, shared with _____