

WINTER 2013

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*Like a deer in winter
searching for a brook
so my soul longs for you,
my God.*

*When shall we behold
each other face to face?*

-Psalm 42

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VALLOMBROSACENTER

A Ministry of the Archdiocese of San Francisco

Sitting on the Opposite Side of the Screen

by Fr. Patrick, Director

As some of you know, I was ordained at the age of 50. I now have the privilege of, as I call it, "*sitting on the opposite side of the screen*" during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I've heard thousands of "confessions," and in this issue of the Newsletter I'd like to share with you two things I've learned about seeking forgiveness for our sins during this season of Lent.

First of all, I've learned that all of us struggle with something. Everybody. So most of us, when we do go to confession, often end up confessing the same-ol' same-ol'. It's just that your same-ol' is different from mine and different from the person ahead or behind you in the line outside the reconciliation room. Confessing the same thing year after year after year can get frustrating, I know, even bringing us to tears. "Father, I confess the same thing every time!"

I hear the frustration. I see it. It's palpable. So sometimes I think it's because we let images we have of the saints mess with our minds. We tend to think all saints were either perfect in living their life, or else those who were scoundrels eventually cleaned up their act, got their life together, and then they died and went to heaven.

Yet, I am convinced the saints, too, confessed the same-ol' same-ol'. It's just that the saints all had a wonderful spirituality called, in Latin, *Felix Culpa*. O, Happy Fault! The saints for the most part didn't get discouraged repeatedly asking forgiveness for their same-ol'. In fact, they learned to celebrate it! They realized that the very thing they struggled with year-in, year-out was what taught them how much they needed God and how much they needed the sacraments. It was that realization that brought them back again & again. Even St. Paul finally stopped asking God to take away that "thorn in my side" and, instead, began boasting of it! He realized that it was when he admitted his "weakness" that he became "strong."

So, there's (a) our sins, and then there is (b) our attitude towards our sins. The saints had a great attitude about their sins!

Secondly, as men and women of faith, our major labor is not to achieve our salvation. It is to entrust ourselves to it. What do I mean by that? I mean: we already have what (Who) we are seeking. Each of us is wildly & extravagantly loved by our Creator.

(Continued on back page...)



Spirituality, Simply Put...

First & foremost is the fact that we are incredibly, wildly, and unconditionally loved by God. The ways in which we respond to that Love is our spirituality.

What is Spiritual Direction?

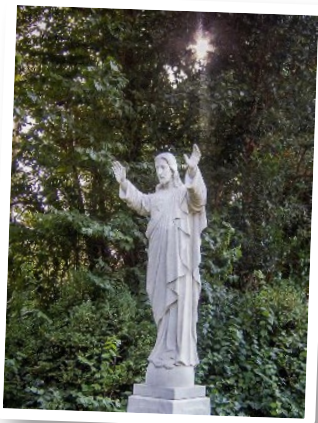


Photo taken by retreatant while on retreat.

Spiritual Direction, an ancient practice deeply rooted in Catholic tradition, is based upon the simple belief that we are loved by God. We are all complex persons, with vastly different life experiences. At the heart of the discussion between the individual and the spiritual mentor or director is one's relationship with God.

As trust develops, an

individual is able to speak all the more honestly and openly about his/her spiritual journey and intimacy with God and can explore what may be getting in the way of that growth in intimacy. Sometimes, the issue discussed involves discerning in which direction a person is being called. Or, perhaps it is something the individual is struggling with or simply wants counsel for. The director must be a good listener and, with friendly acceptance, offers encouragement, support, suggestions, challenge, and (sometimes) gentle confrontation.



Fr. Patrick, director of Vallombrosa Center, is trained in spiritual direction, has many years of experience, and has had the privilege of "walking with" many priests, deacons, sisters, and lay men & women. "Usually, I direct only those

who have been specifically referred to me. However, in my new position at Vallombrosa I have been given some additional time for others. If you are interested in exploring the possibility of seeking spiritual direction here at Vallombrosa, I would suggest that you first read about some of my background (at our website), and, if still interested, call for an appointment. Then, during the first appointment, we can explore whether what you are seeking is something that I may be of some help with. Ultimately, of course, the Holy Spirit is the real Director & I must get out of the way."

"Psalm 46" Retreat:

Be still & know that I am God!

Often called a private silent retreat, this is a time to withdraw from your usual demands & schedule. Let Vallombrosa be for you a "Clearing in the Thicket," where you can enter into a calm atmosphere and spend time with your God. Even in this short period of time, attendees say they are able to relax, refresh, and rejuvenate. Some short conferences and ample opportunities to meet with the Director (always optional) and plenty of time to "Be Still" or simply to "Be!" Our weekend retreats begin with check in on Friday after 4pm and end after lunch on Sunday. For those who prefer a longer stay, we've arranged the option of a Thursday check in for select dates (see the asterisked dates).

April 26 – 28

May 31 – June 2 **

August 16 – 18 **

November 8 – 10 **

December 6 – 8 (Advent theme)

*** If desired, on these weekends retreatants may begin a day earlier (on Thursday at 4pm)*

Anytime Retreat

Another form of a silent retreat and a time to be alone in prayer, do you feel you need a break from where you are at? At any time during the year, you can arrange to come to Vallombrosa for two or three (or whatever number) days. You can pick your time to Retreat and, on a space-available basis, we can make it happen for you. You may be thinking "I need a few days to spend with God." Or, quite possibly, it is God saying, "I want to spend some time with you!" Act on those urgings!

You can pray, read, write, sleep, walk the grounds, reflect, meditate, contemplate, or even do some planning. Oftentimes, little advance notice is needed, and our Director is usually available for you as well.

Contact Rachel at (650) 325-5614 to make arrangements that fit your schedule.

Getting the Most Out of Holy Week



Set aside the day before Palm Sunday for a Retreat designed to focus hearts & minds upon the Passion of Christ and the many events of Holy Week. This year, rather than letting time pass and suddenly finding yourself in the midst of the final week of Lent, decide to be purposeful about your spirituality and commit to making Holy Week an especially rewarding one. Between conference talks on topics including the Last Supper, Gethsemane, and the Cross, presented by Fr. Patrick, you will have time to write or to reflect deeply while in our Chapel, to walk the Stations of the Cross, or to simply bask or sit in meditation on our beautiful grounds... and, of course, enjoy a delicious midday meal prepared for the occasion.

Saturday, March 23, 2013 • 9:00am until 4:00pm
Cost is \$50 per person, includes lunch.

Tools for the Urban Mystic

A workshop with Cynthia McDonald, PhD

The word “mystic” is often associated with seclusion and separation from worldly affairs in order to cultivate inner communion or unity with God, divinity, or any other name we may use in an attempt to describe the ineffable. The Urban Mystic seeks this same communion but within the context of city living with all of its challenges and demands. How can the Urban Mystic bridge the seeming paradox of the inner and outer, the sacred and secular worlds? How can s/he be in the world, yet not of the world on a daily basis? In this hands-on workshop you will work on ways to connect, or reconnect with your inner mystic. No previous experience necessary. All are welcome.



Saturday, April 6, 2013 • 8:30am until 4:30pm
Cost is \$50 per person, includes lunch.

“ABIDE” –Keeping Vigil with the Word of God

A Silent Retreat facilitated by Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB



Abide is a very rich and sacred word. It is an invitation to dwell in Christ, to be immersed in the Divine, to be absorbed in God. This retreat will be a sacred-space for soul-work. Sister Macrina will encourage you to spend time keeping vigil with the Word of God in all its many forms. Throughout the retreat you will be encouraged to search out ways to restore some of the blessings you’ve missed because of the busyness of your lives. Teachings will be drawn from Sister Macrina’s latest book, *Abide: Keeping Vigil with the Word of God*, as well as *Seven Sacred Pauses*. Special emphasis will be given on the practice of living mindfully in the midst of the beautiful busyness of daily life. We will explore the sacredness of both BEING and DOING. Moderation is the key. Give yourself the gift of sacred space to keep vigil with the Word of God and with the Hours of the Day.

Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB is well known for her creative writing and retreat ministry. She is the author of eight popular books on prayer and spirituality and a regular contributor to the Catholic devotional, *Living Faith*. Her tri-monthly scripture column titled, *Romancing the Word* forms the core of her latest book. She is a member of St. Scholastica Monastery in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The week long retreat begins with check-in at 4pm on Thursday, August 1 and concludes after lunch on Wednesday, August 7. The cost is \$550.00 per person for a private room, \$485 per person for a shared room, includes all meals. We also offer a commuter rate of \$320 per person which includes lunch and dinner.



Sitting on the Opposite Side of the Screen (continued)

Lent is a season during which we are called to notice our attitude and

to face the things we cling to—and hopefully why—that tend to separate us from God’s unconditional love.

Some years ago, my spiritual director at the time told me: *A single, uncritical glimpse of ourselves as God sees us would transform us.* In the beatific vision, we have been promised, we will see God face-to-face for the first time. We will also be seeing ourselves face-to-face for the first time. We needn’t wait until then, really to see God; we needn’t wait until then to see ourselves.

Or, as I like to say, experiencing Heaven will happen when we see ourselves as God sees us! The saints all had one thing in common: They let God love them! This year we can transform our Lenten season to be about Love. Let us all resolve: This Lent all I want to know is how loved I am by God!

Mother’s Day Mass & Brunch

Sunday May 12, 2013 • 10:30am until 2:00pm

Join us for a celebration on Mother’s Day! We will have a Mass at 10:30 am in the Chapel, Fr. Patrick O’Neil, OP will be our celebrant and music will be provided by members of the Vallombrosa Choir.

Following Mass a delicious Champagne Brunch will be served in the Dining Room.



Mother’s Day Brunch Buffet

- Rosemary Horseradish Crusted Roast Beef*
- Herb Roasted Fresh Pacific Salmon with a Lemon Mint Aioli*
- Made To Order Omelet Bar with Spring Vegetable Selections*
- Scrambled Eggs with Swiss Cheese and CA Haas Avocados*
- Maple Roasted Pork Sausage & Crisp Bacon Slices*
- Seasonal Fruit Salad with Local Honey and Diced Mint*
- Warm Berry Compote Baked Cheese Blintz*
- Baked Assorted Scones and Danishes*
- Assorted Mini Cheesecakes*

Adults (12 and up): \$35.00 per person • **Table of 8:** \$250.00

Children (5-11): \$10.00 per person • **Under 5:** Free

Calendar of Events

Getting the Most Out of Holy Week

March 23, 2013 at 9:00am

Lenten Prayer Service with the Vallombrosa Choir

March 24, 2013 at 2:00pm

Tools for the Urban Mystic, led by Cynthia McDonald, Ph.D.

April 6, 2013 at 8:30am

“Engaging the Heart” Vallombrosa Catholic Marriage Prep

April 20, 2013 at 9:00am

“Psalm 46” Retreat: *Be still & know that I am God!*

April 26 – 28, 2013, check-in at 4:00pm

Mother’s Day Mass with the Vallombrosa Choir and Brunch

May 12, 2013, Mass begins at 10:30am

“Engaging the Heart” Vallombrosa Catholic Marriage Prep

May 18, 2013 at 9:00am

“Psalm 46” Retreat: *Be still & know that I am God!*

May 31 – June 2, 2013, optional check-in May 30

“Engaging the Heart” Vallombrosa Catholic Marriage Prep

July 27, 2013 at 9:00am

“Abide” – Keeping Vigil with the Word of God

August 1 – 7, 2013, check-in at 4:00pm

“Psalm 46” Retreat: *Be still & know that I am God!*

August 16 – 18, 2013, optional check-in August 15

Exploring Mind-Body Skills for Stress Reduction

led by Cynthia McDonald, Ph.D.

September 14, 2013 at 9:00am

All events are open to the public. To register for an event call (650) 325-5614 or visit www.vallombrosa.org



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