

## WINTER 2011

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### Generosity

Having already received so much from God and hoping for so much more, we should surely be ashamed to refuse God the one thing asked of us, which is to show generosity to others. When our Lord and God is not ashamed to be called our Father, can we repudiate our own kith and kin?

*-Gregory of Nazianzus  
Fourth Century*

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## VALLOMBROSACENTER

### Using My Catholic Imagination: *Sesame Street*

I am not a child of the Sesame Street era; but, I must confess, I have learned much from those little ones with my occasional meanderings through public television. When visiting my sister's daycare, I would from time-to-time watch a segment with the tots. So, when I was asked to write this article on Catholic stewardship, my Catholic imagination brought me to Sesame Street. I remember being told that today's program was being sponsored "by the letter S." And then there followed a list of words beginning with that letter, such as, stewardship, service, self-supporting, seven, etc. (Well, they didn't actually use big words like that, but you get the idea.)

We've been thinking that perhaps there are some friends of Vallombrosa, who would like to share their stewardship with the retreat center, but don't know how. It's as easy as Sesame Street! For instance, we would love to print your name, or your company's name, at the bottom of our quarterly newsletter, letting people know that this quarter's newsletter

is "brought to you by (insert your name)." Rather remain anonymous? Then, "this quarter's newsletter is brought to you by the letter A, for anonymous."

That leads me to our wish list, a seemingly endless list of "things" that are needed to maintain the intergity and beauty of the facilities which we have all become accustomed to.

For example, at Christmas and Easter time we like to change out the flowers in the fountain as you enter the retreat center, with poinsettias or lilies. Your donation could be made in memory of a family member or a friend. It

would be wonderful if we could provide more scholarships for high school students and others who can't afford the full cost of a retreat. I'm sure you can come up with some ideas of your own. Just start with "this is brought to you by the letter F for flowers, or the letter S for scholarship, or the letter N for newsletter."





# The Catholic Church in the World: "Faith in the Arts"

In the fall of 2009, Vallombrosa Center launched a Sunday afternoon speaker series entitled **The Catholic Church in the World**. It is our hope that the series will continue from year to year, focussing on different ways in which Catholics engage with the world. The first phase of the series addressed contemporary issues in politics, business, healthcare, and the environment. We heard from distinguished writers, scholars, and public servants who drew on our rich Catholic intellectual tradition to help us develop thoughtful, effective responses to the challenges we face. Our audience grew with each event, as did the interest and energy evident in the lively discussions that followed each presentation.

As pressing an obligation as our responsible engagement in contemporary society is, we nevertheless interact with the world in many different ways, through our study, our work, the causes we espouse, through our family and friends. Our every endeavor can be informed by our Catholic faith and sensibility. The Catholic Church in the World aims to explore these varied dimensions of faithful engagement.

The series will resume this winter 2011, this time with an emphasis on the



artistic expression of faith. On **January 23** we will host writer and Stanford professor **Tobias Wolff** for "**Man's Argument with God.**" Wolff will read from his work and lead the audience in a discussion of the ways that faith and doubt can inform literature.

On **February 20**, the Vallombrosa Choir, under the direction of Patrick Feehan, will join with the composer for "**An Afternoon with Bob Hurd.**" Together they will present a concert of song and reflection, including Hurd's well-known songs as well as newer works. And on **March 20**, **Al Gelpi**, scholar of American poetry and Stanford professor emeritus, will address the question "**Is There a Catholic Imagination?**"

The series will continue with the **Vallombrosa Choir's Lenten Prayer Service on April 10**, and a **Mother's Day Concert on May 8**.

Plans are being made for more presentations this fall 2011, beginning with a lecture on **September 25** by **San Francisco Archbishop Niederauer** on the stories of **Flannery O'Connor**. We hope you will join us in exploring and celebrating the artistic expression of the faith during this new phase of The Catholic Church in the World.

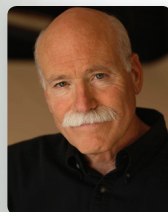
## Vallombrosa Staff

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**Tobias Wolff**  
"Man's Argument  
with God."  
January 23, 2011



**Bob Hurd**  
"An Afternoon with Bob Hurd"  
and the Vallombrosa Choir.  
February 20, 2011



**Albert Gelpi**  
"Is There a Catholic  
Imagination?"  
March 20, 2011

# Training Marriage Preparation Ministers: FOCCUS Training for Priests, Deacons, Laity

How do we prepare engaged couples for marriage in the Catholic Church today? Most parishes require some kind of pre-marriage inventory, plus a weekend or weeknight retreat experience, such as Pre-Cana, Evenings for the Engaged, or Engaged Encounter. The most widely-used inventory in this country is called FOCCUS, short for Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study. This instrument, first issued in 1985, is now in its third edition, called FOCCUS 2000. On-going research led to the addition of a section on co-habitation in 1996, and revisions in the categories of Religion/Spirituality, Covenant/Commitment and Interfaith marriages in the 2000 edition.

These changes were based on national research done during the previous five years.

Marriage preparation ministers (priests, deacons, laity) who might still be using the 1985 or 1996 versions are using out-dated materials. Also, with

the new 2000 version, FOCCUS is no longer supporting self-scoring versions. A fast and inexpensive scoring service is available on-line. This provides the couple with a convenient and time-saving way to complete the inventory. The marriage prep facilitator can quickly and easily set-up a session on the website for the couple, and after they have completed the inventory, re-print the results for use with the engaged couple. This is a popular option for today's computer savvy couples.

Fr George Matanic, OP, Director of Vallombrosa Center, is one of only three certified FOCCUS Trainer of trainers in California. He will

be offering three training sessions for marriage prep ministers during 2011. The two-day, eight-hour training program will be offered January 14-15 and April 8-9, with a third program offered in the Fall. Registration is limited to the first fifty (50) to register. Those who attend the entire program are then certified as facilitators with FOCCUS, and given access

to on-line scoring and other FOCCUS resources. The Friday evening session is from 7:00 to 9:00pm, and the Saturday session from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Overnight accommodations include breakfast and lunch; lunch only is included for commuters. All participants will need a copy of the FOCCUS 2000 Facilitator's Manual which can be purchased on site.

Those who have been using FOCCUS without any prior training may discover that they are not using the instrument appropriately. The most common mistake by marriage preparation ministers is to do most of the talking, telling couples how wonderful their profile looks, or simply pointing out areas that may be problematic in their relationship. If you, as a marriage preparation minister, are doing most of the talking, then you are frustrating the purpose of FOCCUS. The point of this inventory is to get the couple talking to each other, as the title suggests, "facilitating couple communication". This training session is to show marriage preparation ministers how to use the inventory correctly and successfully.



## REFOCCUS: Marriage Preparation and Enrichment

Are you ready to receive the Sacraments with your family and parish community? Would you like to have your marriage blessed by the Catholic Church? Do you know a married couple unable to receive the Sacraments and participate fully in the spiritual life of the church? Then, consider Vallombrosa's newest program: REFOCCUS.

REFOCCUS can be used as a marriage preparation tool for couples civilly

married more than two years and who are seeking a Catholic wedding. It affirms and promotes growth in strong marriages, and is written to give direction and to help any couple struggling with the daily questions of marriage.

Couples who complete the REFOCCUS inventory, and the necessary paper work before convalidation, are usually ready to present themselves

for marriage in the Catholic Church. This program leads couples to joy and satisfaction in being able to participate in the Church's sacraments.

Couples interested in participating in our first program on **Saturday, February 12** (9:00am to 4:00pm) should call Fr. George Matanic, OP at 650.325.5614 for an interview to see if they qualify for the program.



# The Scrutinies

Scrutinies are rites of “self-searching and repentance” for people from another spiritual background seeking baptism in the Catholic Church. This is done in stages, celebrated on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. The scrutinies are “meant to uncover, and then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good” (RCIA 141).

Although scrutinies have returned only fairly recently to Catholic parishes, they originated early in church history. Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine celebrated them in the fourth and fifth centuries to mark the spiritual progress of their catechumens. Their purpose is to examine the candidates’ spiritual readiness for baptism.

The scrutinies, with their readings, prayers and rituals, examine a theology of prayer for healing and deliverance from evil that is rooted in our ancient baptismal tradition. They “are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ...” (RCIA 141).

As the preacher or a member of the parish RCIA team, how do you make the most of these scrutinies?

Why are we encouraged to use Cycle A readings of the lectionary, even during Years B and C? What’s so special about these readings – the woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus? How can the homilist address the needs of the congregation, as well as the elect?



Since the scrutinies are very much about the Church’s efficacious prayer for deliverance from evil, the homilist will want to address how our world would seduce not only those

preparing for initiation, but all of us, with vain desires, moral blindness, and deadly sin. The fact that the scrutinies are public rituals, presents an excellent opportunity for the homilist to help the community move away from a private and individualistic perspective and better understand better the public and communal dimension of faith.

Join us on Tuesday, **February 15** from 7:00 to 10:00pm to explore The Scrutinies, presented by Fr George Matanic, OP, Director of Vallombrosa Center. To register or for more information visit our website [vallombrosa.org](http://vallombrosa.org), or phone Fr. George at 650.325.5614.

## Quick Look Calendar

FOCCUS Training  
January 14 – 15, 2011

The Catholic Church in the World:  
“Faith in the Arts” with Tobias Wolff  
January 23, 2011

REFOCCUS Workshop  
February 12, 2011

Lenten Scrutiny Readings:  
A Workshop for RCIA Teams and Preachers  
February 15, 2011

The Catholic Church in the World:  
“Faith in the Arts” with Bob Hurd  
February 20, 2011

Lenten Private Silent Retreat  
March 18 – 20, 2011

The Catholic Church in the World:  
“Faith in the Arts” with Albert Gelpi  
March 20, 2011

FOCCUS Training for Priests, Deacons and Laity  
April 8 – 9, 2011

Lenten Prayer Service with the Vallombrosa Choir  
April 10, 2011

Mother’s Day Mass with the Vallombrosa Choir  
May 8, 2011



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