

Trinitas is an Ignatian community of lay people  
engaged creatively with the world

# TRINITAS NEWSLETTER

Volume 2009

Fall/Winter Issue

History of Trinitas



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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Review of Life:** We meet at 10:00 a.m. on the second Monday of each month, alternately in Ventura and Sylmar.

**Art Exhibit:** Ink drawings, *The Christmas Story*, by Nancy Snooks, can be seen at her studio & gallery from November 29, 2009 - January 10, 2010. (See page 6.)

**Trinity Sunday:** We will celebrate on May 30.

**Trinitas Annual Corporation & Board Meeting** will be held on February 4 at 10:30 a.m. in Ventura.

**Newsletter Deadline** is May 1.

**Art & Spirituality and Getting Acquainted with Trinitas** meetings are available by arrangement.

**For information on the Trinitas Communities, please contact:**

For Ventura & Santa Barbara counties and the Valley, call Mary Ann or Nancy at (805) 659-4158.

For Los Angeles, Santa Maria, and San Luis Obispo, contact Carol at (805) 481-2025.

For Spanish and the Orange Diocese, contact Dolores at (714) 836-8011.

## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The English-language edition of the Trinitas Newsletter is published twice a year in June and December. The deadline for submissions for the Spring/Summer issue is May 1. The theme will be **Review of Life**. Articles, poems, book reviews related to the theme are welcome. Community news and events will also be published.

### Credits:

The Cover Art, *The Epiphany*, is the work of Nancy Snooks, as is the work on pages 6 and 8.

## PLEASE PRAY FOR:

the soul of  
Patricia Dodwell,  
those who are ill,  
unemployed, homeless,  
and for vocations to  
the Trinitas Communities

## ABOUT TRINITAS

Trinitas is a community of lay people who live according to the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola by seeking God through a life of contemplation in action. We do this in a distinctive way by discerning how God is calling us to give our gifts in the service of bringing his kingdom to come in this world. On March 16, 1995, the Ventura Community was recognized as an Association of the Faithful in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Since then, a community has started in the Diocese of Orange. A community is being hoped, worked, and prayed for in the San Luis Obispo area. Guided by our gospel commitment to poverty, chastity, obedience, and work for the Kingdom, we live a life of daily participation in the Eucharist, prayer, examen, and service. Catholic in origin, we welcome all active Christian men and women in harmony with Catholicism, married or single, to explore membership.

**Trinitas, Inc.** is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation in California.

## REFLECTIONS ON TRINITAS' HISTORY

by Mary Ann Wixted

Trinitas history begins with a disagreement with a secular institute of which we formerly were members about admitting Spanish-speakers to membership. We in the Ventura group were pro but unfortunately the governing structure in Europe were con. We consulted with the Vicar for Religious and Secular Institutes in the LA Archdiocese and she sent us Sr. Faith Clark to facilitate a group discernment, important to our Ignatian tradition. Six of us (Carol, Chris, Mary Ann, Mollie, Nancy, and Pat) began our discernment in January, 1993 and concluded it on the eve of Pentecost of that year. Our discerned conclusion was that God was calling Carol, Mary Ann, Nancy, and Pat to begin a new community in the church. The following week on Trinity Sunday, we named this community Trinitas. The charism of this community would be to witness to the inclusiveness of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each totally given and received by the other. Trinitas would include Spanish as well as English speakers, men and women, single and married with the consent of the other spouse, and practicing Christians. We also wanted to be open about our membership and commitment, and like the rest of the post Vatican II laity, involved in active witness and service within the church, unlike the secular institute.

During our early years, Carol and Nancy became spiritual directors through the Archdiocesan program, while Mary Ann completed a graduate degree in Applied Spiritual Theology. When Nancy retired from Pierce College where she was an Art Professor, Mary Ann and Nancy began outreaches (retreats, days of prayer, workshops) related to Art & Spirituality.

Over the years, we have grown in our understanding of Trinitarian spirituality, and continued in our Ignatian tradition. After frequent meetings and trips to San Francisco to consult with a canon lawyer, we submitted our Statutes, and in 1995 we were recognized by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as an Association of the Faithful. This is the first step all new communities make in the process of becoming religious communities, secular institutes, or institutes of apostolic life. In 1993, Carol began to gather a group of Spanish-speakers in the Orange Diocese, which later formed a Trinitas community of which Carol has become a member. Their history and experience as a community has been different from ours since here in Ventura we have tried to incorporate other Christians as members. In our ecumenical zeal to be inclusive of other Christians we were a little naive. Some Christians are rejecting of Catholicism, which like any organization, is no more perfect than its flawed human members. In accepting other Christians, we have learned that those closest to communion with Catholicism are the most likely candidates. In 1999, Pat left us and like Chris and Mollie, continues to be a friend.

We have also learned a new appreciation and respect for the distinct and rich spirituality of married couples. Our history began in religious life with its emphasis on the gospel counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And so, Trinitas members make promises of poverty, chastity, obedience, and we added work for the Kingdom. Even in the secular institute, poverty was understood differently from that of religious life. Secular, gospel poverty must be suited to the way of life of the member, personal and professional. It must also be expressed differently for married couples whose first commitment is to spouse and family. This is an area of our commitment which needs further development, hopefully by married members. Chastity for married members is not celibacy: it is deepened fidelity to one's spouse.

Obedience for all members is based on prayerful discernment, both individually and as a community. Major life decisions call for group discernment with the community. The vehicle for this discernment process is our monthly review of life, when we share, support, and challenge each other in our living of our gospel commitment. Each member's work for the kingdom changes from time to time, as we grow older, accept our diminishment and discern how God is calling us to do his work in the world. We pray especially that God will increase our numbers, and we recognize our responsibility in making Trinitas better known, so beginning in the new year, we'll be launching our website, [trinitascommunity.org](http://trinitascommunity.org). Check us out in 2010..

## THE TRINITAS COMMUNITY IN ORANGE

### by Carol Cowgill

**THE FOUNDING COMMUNITY.** Carol Cowgill had been in charge of religious education in the Orange diocese from 1977-89 and was still engaged occasionally with the program *Iniciacion Cristologica*. The mover of this program was Nuria Chekouras, who perceived the spiritual value of Trinitas and promoted it among the Spanish-language catechists. At the same time Father Pedro Escobar, SJ, one of the geniuses behind the *Iniciacion* program, was providing spiritual depth and promoting it among the charismatic prayer groups. Carol met monthly with anyone interested; the nucleus of regulars became Nuria, Dolores Martinez and Esperanza Sampablo. The intent was to let the community take shape within the immigrant experience, so Trinitas invested energy and money in producing and translating formation materials into Spanish. Carol and Nuria were the people with an urgent sense of Trinitas as a call from God. Nuria and Carol were called to consecrated celibacy; Dolores and Esperanza, to marriage. By 2004 all four had made their lifetime commitments.

**THE FORMATION PROCESS.** After general information meetings and invitations, Carol began sessions on the Trinitas spiritual path, based on the Statutes. Once people applied and were accepted the review of life began. Annual retreats were in place, and the new members made the full Spiritual Exercises. Once this course of study was completed, Carol offered other spiritually-oriented courses. Both retreats and courses were open to people who wanted to grow spiritually.

**HOW THE COMMUNITY GREW IN DISCERNMENT.** The review of life helped members grow in discernment. Once they developed discernment skills through the review of life, Carol felt that they needed a theological foundation in order to understand what was going on more completely and be able to form others. The community held two year-long courses on John of the Cross, and another year on the spirituality of mission. Later Dolores, Nuria, and Esperanza enrolled in the Loyola Institute for Spirituality program to train Spanish speakers to give the Exercises and serve as spiritual directors.

**MEMBERSHIP ISSUES.** When Nuria retired and moved back to Costa Rica because of serious health issues and died not long thereafter, Dolores and Esperanza went into mourning. When Carol moved to San Luis Obispo, classes were no longer offered by Trinitas but the retreat continued. It has been a year since anyone was in the formation process. Esperanza's health is not good, so Dolores may be left alone. In SLO county, Carol is trying to promote and forge a nucleus among English speaking people. The actual people who are currently coming to the outreaches are bicultural and the regular attendees have made the Spiritual Exercises but two years later, no one has applied. Prospects are dim, as Carol has just turned 75.

**OUR MISSION RE THE KINGDOM.** When Nuria left for Costa Rica, Dolores was asked to coordinate the *Iniciacion Cristologica*. At that time she was very active with the Loyola Institute team that gave the Exercises in Spanish. When Fr. Rivera left the Loyola Institute program she was asked to coordinate the Spanish-language team. At the moment she is transitioning from the diocese to the L.I. Esperanza's field has been the family and the parish, where she works with couples and parents. She has been active with the L. I. until this year, when health issues limited her involvements. This year she was named Catholic Woman of the Year by the Orange Diocese, in recognition of her many years of volunteer service - an honor she is reluctant to talk about. She is a people person and has been the heart of Trinitas in Orange. Carol has moved around most. From ministries in Santa Paula, Ojai, Los Angeles, and to Arroyo Grande in 2007. Although she is retired she has continued to work with the Lay Mission Helpers in L.A. and the local RCIA, give retreats, and write. So our short history in Orange has been fruitful. The next five years will be crucial. If a nucleus of new members does not form, our history will have been brief!

## VENTURA VIEWS by Nancy Snooks

Until I gathered the data for these news notes, I hadn't realized how blessed we have been these past months. First among these blessings is that the Hubbards, Cal and Mary, have been joining us for our monthly Review of Life. Mary Ann and I are greatly blessed by their presence and sharing.

On Trinity Sunday, we invited several of our friends and Carol and the Orange community to join us for a celebration. Unfortunately, the Orange members were unavailable but Carol brought several associates from up north who may be interested in Trinitas. It was very special to meet such lovely people.

In June, I moved my presses into my new art studio and will have a first exhibit, my *Christmas Story* ink drawings there during the Advent and Christmas season. (See lower page 6.) Hopefully, other artist friends of Trinitas will also show their work in this gallery space. In October, I showed my *Revelations* print series at Holy Spirit retreat Center in Encino where they remain on exhibit in the Fireside Room, along with my *Christmas Story* ink drawings.

Thanks to help from Lynn Dempsy, I have been spending much of the year archiving (preserving) my art. To my surprise, much of the work has discolored, and the etching plates are corroding. Next year, I will prepare text to accompany the pieces, and we'll also have a link to an online gallery on our website.

Another great blessing is that a group of interdenominational spiritual directors have begun meeting with Mary Ann and me at our house each month for peer supervision. It continues to be a rich learning experience for all of us.

Carol sent *Maria of Guadalupe*, by Paul Badde, which she translated. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and recommend it to you. It can be purchased on Amazon.

Following our August retreats, Mary Ann went to Chicago to celebrate her brother Mike's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday with the rest of her family. Since then, she has surprised me with a birthday party at which many of our friends joined us. A happy time.

Cal and Mary have been very active, among other things, with providing programs at HSRC. Cal has been teaching watercolor painting, and Mary has been doing retreat work. She is planning a *Crones Gathering* there for April 18-20, which Mary Ann and I are planning on attending.

Lastly, we are continuing our support of the *Kateri Tekakwitha Education Fund*, P. O. Box 906, Pacifica, CA 94044), specifically the education of Monica Fabiola Patzan Tubac. Recently we received an update from Maria Delfina Sotz Catu, whom we assisted in her computer education until her 2007 graduation. She relates that unfortunately, she has been unable to find work. I suppose that I should not have been surprised to learn that jobs are hard to find in Guatemala, as in the rest of the world right now. It may be necessary for her to retrain, perhaps in nursing. Prayers and donations in her name would be helpful.

Our friend, Pat Dodwell, whom we met at our outreach on Celtic Art and Spirituality several years ago, died recently. Pat was very active in prison ministry at the nearby California Youth Authority facility in Camarillo.

## NEWS FROM ORANGE

**Spanish Language Retreat, 2010.** The Spanish-language Exercises will be held July 30- August 7, at the Mission House in Los Angeles. We will be able to hold the cost to \$450 per person or \$750 per couple (double bed). A \$100 deposit must be made by mid-January. Call Dolores at (714) 836-8011 (1207 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Santa Ana, CA 92701). **Dolores elected coordinator of ELI.** ELI is the Spanish-language team offering the Exercises and spiritual direction within the Loyola Institute for Spirituality. After the transfer of Fr. Tacho Rivera, SJ, Dolores was asked to coordinate the team. She is working with Tere Cossios, a friend of the group. **Esperanza Sampablo, Catholic Woman of the Year.** Named by the Diocese of Orange, Esperanza was cited for her years of volunteer service to her parish. **Trinitas offers Spiritual Direction Workshop to the Loyola Institute for Sprirituality.** Carol has been offering on the job training in spiritual direction to the Spanish-language team of directors. The program began in September and will end in January. **Annual Meeting of the Corporation** will be held at 6:30 P.M., January 8, 2010.

## NEWS FROM SAN LUIS OBISPO

**Our Lady of Guadalupe.** Carol's translation of Paul Badde's book, *Maria of Guadalupe*, has been published by Ignatius Press. It is well worth reading, and is also available in Spanish under the title of *La Morenita*. **Outreaches.** Beginning in the summer we spent 4-months on a self-knowledge project about personality types. In November, we began a 3-month series on *Mary in Trinitas*: Nov. 21, the biblical foundation; Dec. 19, the Visitation and Ignatian spirituality; Jan. 16, the Guadalupe experience in Trinitas. Sessions are held 3-5 p.m. at St. Joseph's in Nipomo. For reservations, call Carol at (805) 481-2025. After this, there will be a series on *Chastity in Trinitas - Sex and the Soul*. We will use Carol's book, *Happy the Single-Hearted*, as the basis for discussion. **Spiritual Exercises in Nipomo.** Carol began the 19<sup>th</sup> annotation Exercises with three people in September. They are projected to finish late in April. Mark your calendar: The Exercises will be offered again on Wednesday evenings, beginning September 15, 2010. Cost is \$250. They can be offered in Spanish also. Please set up an interview with Carol before the end of June (805) 481-2025

## THE COMMITTEE by Mary Hubbard

For many years The Committee was at capacity. Every action, interaction, indeed thought was analyzed, weighed, judged and categorized. Of course this was a horrendous task for just a small committee so the group had to be constantly expanded, the room changed and new leaves added to the circular table. No one could see this group or question its veracity. For The Committee existed, disguised as intelligence, in my querulous mind.

Only in recent years as wisdom began to replace indecision was the group even recognized by me, its landlord. The assumption was that everyone had a Committee which regulated their stream of thoughts and actions. It was implicit that behavior was always meticulously analyzed and later questioned when its results became apparent. Second guessing would follow, the "what-ifs," the blame, apportioned generously to both self and others. Energy not only leaked out; it often gushed with the force of water from a broken pipe.

The gifts of aging are unexpected and numerous. Popular culture leads one to believe that experiences roll furiously downhill and somehow gather bits of uncomfortable refuse along the way. But I have found the opposite, striding uphill with a vigor and certitude unknown in my younger years. And now, with the departing of neuroses that I had assumed were qualities of reasonable thought, I have begun to cheerfully excuse members of The Committee from the table.

The first to leave was Anxiety, a member since was I taught to be scrupulous as a young child. Daily distorted lessons in misunderstood religious beliefs seemed to imbue a sense of impending doom. Luckily it was countermanded by a strong love of Reality which would not be overpowered.

Next to go was Control, exerted over everyone who came under the umbrella of my supposed responsibility. My hand had stirred every available pot. The government, the Church, my husband and my adult children were not immune. Control sat next to Anxiety at my table and they created a vortex of circular thought which dominated my life experiences.

Stirring now, like a child who has been in church too long, is Judgementalism. It is hard to imagine the lighthearted freedom that will ensue when my critical voice is turned off like a computer preference. Imagine meeting people as they are, glowing like the sun, and not making an internal remark that would mar that beauty. What an invitation for my spirit to fly! As I mentally remove the first leaf from this circular table I skip with it to my imaginary garden where beautifully flowered vines will decorate this outgrown piece. Perhaps as I continue this vaporization, a treasured, sacred, mental monument will be created to maturity, grace and wisdom.