

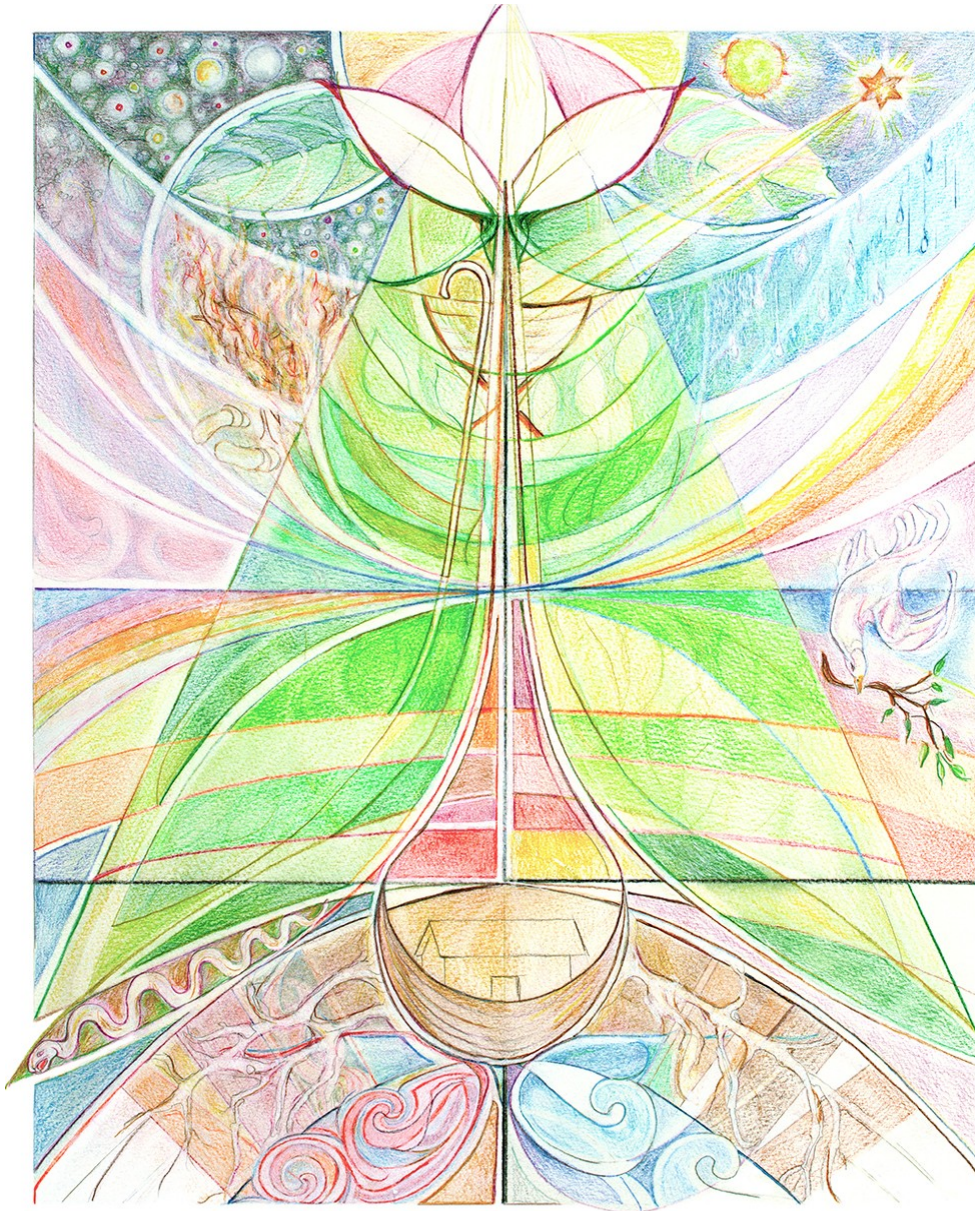
Trinitas is an Ignatian community of lay people
engaged creatively with the world

TRINITAS NEWSLETTER

Volume 2012

Fall/Winter Issue

Contemplation in Action



O Root of Jesse, by Nancy Snooks

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

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

Art Exhibits: At our Dei Gloria Studio & Gallery in Ventura, an *O Antiphon* Group Show December 9-30; and in May, 2013, Nancy Snooks will have her *Micro/Macro* Show.

Artists' Workshops will continue at *Dei Gloria* monthly on 4th Fridays from 9:30-3:00. These are free opportunities for artists to share their skills in various media.

Trinitas Annual Corporation & Board Meeting will be on February 15, 2013 in Ventura.

FOR INFORMATION ON TRINITAS:

trinitascommunity.org

For Ventura & S. Santa Barbara Counties, call Mary Ann or Nancy at (805) 659-4158.

For Los Angeles County, call Mary or Cal at (818) 367-2513.

For San Obispo & N. Santa Barbara Counties, call Carol at (805) 481-2025.

For Spanish, and Orange County call Dolores at (714) 836-8011.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The Trinitas Newsletter is published twice a year in June and December. The Spring/Summer theme will be ***Aging Grace-fully***. Articles, poems, book reviews related to the theme, news & calendar items are welcome by the May 1 submission deadline.

Credits:

Cover art, *O Root of Jesse*, is by Nancy Snooks. See page 5 for her comments.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

the sick, especially Jerry Dempsey, Don Dudley, and Muriel McGlynn; the souls of Ann Marie Wennink and Tom Babinski and the consolation of their families, all those in need, and for Trinitas vocations.

ABOUT TRINITAS

We are a community of lay people who endeavor to live our Gospel commitment of poverty, chastity, obedience, and work for the kingdom by following the way of St. Ignatius of Loyola as contemplatives 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. Monthly reviews of life are at the heart of our Trinitas living. At these reviews, we pray, share, and discern together and spiritually support each other. We do not share a common ministry, but put our individual gifts at the service of the kingdom.

On March 16, 1995, the Ventura Community was recognized as an Association of the Faithful in the Los Angeles Archdiocese. Since then, we have grown to include members in Los Angeles, Orange, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties.

Catholic in origin, we welcome all active Christian men and women, married or single, to explore membership.

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

CONTEMPLATION DURING ACTIVITY: A Mutual Finding

by Carol Cowgill

For those of us who periodically feel guilty about the quality of our prayer, Ignatius' exhortation to be contemplative in the midst of activity is a puzzle. If I can't pray when I intend to pray, how is it conceivable that I would pray when I don't? The answer, I think, is in how we phrase the question. Is prayer something that I do with God or something that God is doing with me? It seems to me that Ignatius' experience of contemplation lay somewhere in the world of the second question. Thomas Green, S.J. has pointed out that contemplation is not so much an opening of myself to God as it is a personal encounter with God in love: not something I do, but someone I meet. It is finding myself face to face with the God whose name is I-AM-HERE. Thus contemplation lies in my knowing this and responding with my own new name: I'M-HERE-TOO.

Contemplation begins, then, with an act of faith that God wants me to know him intimately. This is why we set aside time every day to make ourselves available to God. In *The Little Prince*, we find advice on how to and tame a fox (or is it a wolf?): show up silently every day and every day move just a little closer. The contemplation of our time of prayer is such a mutual taming; God tames us we "tame" God by allowing him to realize himself in our minds and hearts. Ignatius hopes that this taming process will go on at every moment. Since God is present in everything, all our activity is or can be such an inching close. Since in Trinitas we commit ourselves to do everything for the sake of God's reign ("Your will be done on earth"), we engage the jobs, interactions and dreams of our world from this perspective. God is not only taming us, but is inching closer to every human being in every human situation. Our call to contemplation is to be aware of this dynamic.

This is all well and good, but how can our distracted souls begin to do this?

The Spiritual Exercises lay the foundation of knowing Jesus more intimately, loving him more really, and following his lead more completely. This becomes our world view. Then we are launched into living it. In order to make all this actual, Ignatius instructs us to use the *examen*, to go over the recent events of our morning or afternoon or evening in order to see how God has been inching toward us and toward the people we serve. This is the vision we ask God to give us, for we can't respond unaware. Awareness of how God is moving toward us and, in us, toward others; how he is inching toward others and, in them, toward us and toward the world. If we are aware, then we encounter God. If we are aware, then we can give others the words that will help them encounter God. This is contemplation after activity.

But Ignatius hopes we would go further. These reviews of the immediate past are building the habit, reshaping our brains so that they allow us to be receptive and aware of God's movement even while we are engaged in the activity of daily life. Not contemplation after, but contemplation during. We see this dynamic in loving, long-married couples. No matter what is going on, there is some part of their souls that always knows where the other person is and what s/he is feeling, desiring. And so with ourselves and God. Contemplation in activity is the fruit of the love that makes God central to our lives. And it is the fruit of long searching for the God-who-is acting in me and in everything. The older we get, the less we remember and the more we live in the moment. The fruit of the examen is that, no matter how forgetful we become, we are always experiencing the I-AM-Here-ness of God, the God of the present moment.

BEING A CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION: A Response and A Choice

by Mary Ann Wixted

When Ignatius speaks of "finding God in all things," he is talking, not merely about finding God's presence, and quietly resting in it during prayer time. That famous expression means much more. It also means being with God all day long in our routine duties and activities, doing each thing with God and in God. You are called to be with God and to act in God, as God is acting, creating, and giving life in you and all around you. The same is true for each other person. After all, at every moment God is keeping everything in being, from the smallest microbe to the farthest galaxy. God and we are acting and working side by side and as one. We are building the Christ together - God in me and I in God. In this way, each of us humans, individually and together, learns to become a "contemplative in action."

When I read the above words of Louis M. Savary, author of The New Spiritual Exercises in the Spirit of Teilhard de Chardin, I concluded that they expressed more clearly than I could, my understanding of the meaning of *contemplation in action*. It is, I believe, a matter of *being*. I recall being amazed at and deeply grateful to learn this Ignatius teaching: that it is possible (no one says easy) to live a life of contemplative prayer and union with God in the world, rather than behind cloister walls. I came to this revelation the long-way-around, spending eleven years in an active religious community which almost destroyed me, and three years in a cloistered religious order which I loved but for which I was unsuited. Finally I met the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola and found my spiritual home. I am called to *be a Contemplative-in-Action*. If my life is grounded in, with, and through Christ in my daily spiritual practice, then my actions originate in that place of being-with-God, and are energized by him. In his mysterious economy, my actions work to bring the kingdom of God to come in this world. This is our fourth Trinitas commitment, to work for the Kingdom.

So, for me, contemplation-in-action is a matter of beingness. It is about being-with-God, and not drawing boundaries between prayer time and the rest of the day. It is about being alert and present to God's presence in all of creation. And it is an integrating way to live one's life. But how, you may rightly ask, do I know if my actions are truly the way God is calling me to be and to act for his kingdom? Isn't it possible to be deluded? We know from recent events, that this is unfortunately true. Religious beliefs can be twisted to justify terrible destruction. But good people, even saintly people can be tempted to choose an apparent good, which is really not the particular good action God wants them to take in the world. While these may be unquestionably good, God is calling others (not me) to these works for the kingdom. Simple, every-day choices don't require me to spend long hours of scrutiny. Since most of these flow from previously discerned choices. However, important, possibly life-altering decisions upon which I intend to act require me to be a discernor: taking the matter to God's presence, reflecting on it, consulting my inner self, collecting both supporting and contradicting data on whether to proceed, conferring with my community in review of life, and/or my spiritual director.

The *who* and *how* of my being in this world are responses to God's particular gifts – the being I uniquely am, but God leaves me freedom in my choices in regard to who I am being and becoming. At the beginning of The New Spiritual Exercises, I asked for the grace to understand just who and how God was calling me to be and become as I age. Over these past months, I have come to understand the freedom God gives me to choose, one day, one moment, at a time. I am capable of being the cranky old lady in the grocery store line (if I so choose) and I can also choose to be the woman who crochets prayer shawls to comfort the sick and grieving, does a little art, and even finds joy and fruitfulness in aging.

ON EMBODIMENT

by Mary Hubbard

"After the ecstasy, laundry"

(On a Corita Kent serigraph)

The painting was emerging. I had entitled it "Tools of Contemplation"; then perceiving the incongruity, just "Contemplation." It was a large piece: 24 x 24 and multilayered. There had been a quickening sense of excitement as I remembered the vibrant colors I experienced while making love. They were transposed to the painting as vivid lines that began to have a life of their own. The under layers were platinum, symbolic of our relationship; the lines, a rare combination of the ethereal and the reality. I showed it to Cal who immediately said: "It's done."

But the professor or our art class expected more so I went back to my original drawing. I began the four quadrants as planned - metaphorical representations of heart (a burning fire); mind (a bell, book, and candle); body (a yoga mat with joy bowl and gong) ... and the results of their interaction, a table heaped with fruits of all varieties, the "fruits of the spirit." The colors glowed; the message was ethereal, lovely.

Living our "the fruits" was more challenging. As I became aware that the holidays would soon be upon us, they kept running through my head: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, awe, etc. How could these magnificent virtues be lived out in our current culture? The conversation at the hairdressers was about the convenience of gift cards; the ads touted the efficiency of online shopping; Santa lists were texted. Phone calls and holiday cards were replaced by e-mail. Had the virtues too gone the way of the magical, big box, wrapped and tied with a red satin ribbon? Or the very intriguing tiny bag of gold foil? Dad's socks hung? Was the original gospel message to be minimized? Or is this perhaps the one area that refuses to be digitalized? The Norwegian proverb reads: "Heroism consists of hanging on one minute longer."

Carrying joy, loving, forgiving, being there, discarding resentments, hope, trying again ... and again ... then again, are not outmoded this holiday season. They just need modeling, real human beings, in their "laundered" work clothes, transposing them from ecstatic verbiage into the colorful acts of daily living...the platinum under painters.

O Root of Jesse

by Nancy Snooks

This piece traces the importance of tree imagery in the Old Testament. At the bottom, on one of the root branches is a serpent recalling the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Moving up the trunk and off to the right is a dove bringing a tree branch to Noah, symbolizing the rebirth of creation following the flood. Still higher on the tree is a reference to the burning bush of Moses, and at the very top is a reference to the birth of Jesus in the manger and the flowering of the tree.

NEWS FROM THE SLO LANE

by Carol Cowgill

The most exciting event of the fall was the welcoming of Norma Garcia into initiation on September 22. Norma was one of the first persons to make the Spiritual Exercises here and has been a Friend of Trinitas since the beginning about six years ago! Lack of transportation made it impossible for Dolores and Esperanza to be present for the little ceremony, so Norma, Mike, and I met at a local restaurant, welcomed her over lunch and closed the celebration with Mass. She is now studying the statutes, and will begin the formal review of life in January.

The Friends who have made the Spiritual Exercises, Norma Garcia, Mike Grahek, Araceli Pena, Tony Trujillo, and Flavio Valdes) have been practicing the review of life this fall. In January we will begin a study of Thomas Green's, S.J. Opening to God and Experiencing God. Two women, Miriam Gilles and Demi Kouns, have been reflecting on these books as a follow-up to the Exercises they completed in the Spring. In addition, we started the Lunch with St. Ignatius program, using James Martin's, S.J. book on Jesuit spirituality. In addition to Demi, Miriam, and Norma, two new friends are engaged; Hortencia Lewis and Bonnie Thompson. One woman, Nora Barrera, is presently making the Exercises (to be completed next Spring).

Carol's work at St. Joseph's in Nipomo continues. She will retire from coordinating the overall catechumenate and concentrate on the teen catechumenate. Mike Grahek will take over the coordination. Mike is retiring and is highly engaged in a variety of projects. Besides his painting and church work, he is engaged in outreach programs to homebound seniors – senior counseling, caring callers, good neighbors – works he loves. We are trying to organize an English-language retreat. We projected a week in July, but the location fell through. We are still trying to find a place we can afford. If you are interested, contact Mike at (805) 931-0928, or at slo_artist@yahoo.com. He will keep you informed.

ORANGE JUICE

by Carol Cowgill

Dolores and Esperanza are well and still very active with the Loyola Institute for Spirituality. Dolores has been coordinating EL (the Latino team for giving the Exercises). They are presently involved in directing the *Desafio* process (an adaptation of the Exercises to a group) with 16 people. In addition Dolores is directing three people in the 19th Annotation Exercises. For purposes of accreditation, Dolores has been named the Loyola Institute's representative to the Orange Pastoral Institute, the diocesan organ for ministry formation. The Loyola Institute is now exploring a Spanish-language program for the training of spiritual directors. The need is growing, so the current bilingual program is no longer sufficient. This program will qualify for continuing education credit from Loyola Marymount University and certification credit from the Orange Pastoral Institute. This is very important for the credibility of the ministry preparation of the Latino community which does not have the prerequisites necessary for the general English-language programs.

A heads up. The Orange community will be sponsoring a Spanish-language retreat during July. If you are interested in this retreat, call Dolores at (714) 836-8011, before the end of January.

Ventura and LA Views

by Nancy Snooks

"Whether you know it or not, secretly all nature seeks God and works toward God." Master Eckhart

"Pushed down (packed) and flowing over" aptly describes the last few months. Take, for example, July. On the 9th, Mike Grahek packed the back of his his truck with his watercolor paintings from his recent show at our gallery and drove back north to Nipomo. The following day, July 10, Mary Ann and I attended the funeral and reception for Ann Marie Wennink. Ann Marie was an important person in our lives. She was a regular participant in our our artists workshops, and was one of the participants in our New Spiritual Exercises Group until she became ill. On July 11, we met for sharing of the New Spiritual Exercises in the spirit of Teilhard de Chardin. We have been meeting twice monthly at our house since January and will finish on December 5th. It has been a great blessing for most of us.

Travel has been part of lives as well. Mary and Cal took their annual desert trip and made a weekend retreat at La Casa de Maria, while I caught the train in July to attend a party for my nephew's daughter, Casey, who was preparing to leave for college in Colorado. That same week, a very good friend, Tom Babinski, died unexpectedly. The following week we had our artists' workshop on Friday followed by review of life on Monday. And so the months have passed for us, for the most part repeating the pattern, fortunately without more funerals. Mary and Cal started a much-needed and well-received outreach to the seniors at their parish in Sylmar, St. Didacus. Mary Ann has continued to crochet prayer shawls, a ministry I help support financially and recently we delivered four of them, all to people we know personally and care very much about, who are seriously ill, caring for others who are ill, grieving or otherwise in need of prayers.

Mary and Cal took their annual trip to the desert and made a weekend retreat at La Casa de Maria. In late September Mary Ann traveled to meet with some old friends in Indiana (Amish country) and then to the Chicago area to welcome the visit of cousins from Ireland for a family get-together and vacation. Mary Ann was able to enjoy the family get-together but had to return home sooner than planned because she hurt her back. The family, of course, entertained the cousins royally, and Mary Ann is doing well, exercising at the nearby Easter Seals therapy pool, and getting out for walks.

Mary Ann and I were unable to participate in the annual Art festival at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in October. However, Trinitas was well-represented by Cal and Mary, and Cal sold seven watercolor paintings to benefit HSRC. For some time now, Mary and Cal have enjoyed taking painting classes together at Cal State Northridge. (See Mary's article on page 5.) They are also participants in our upcoming "O Antiphon Show" at our gallery, along with Leatrice Cardone, Mike Grahek, Mary Ann and me. The show, dedicated to the memory of Ann Marie who suggested the theme, will run from December 9 - 30, on Sunday afternoons from 2:00-4:00 (and by appointment) at our Dei Gloria Studio and Gallery, 4882 McGrath Street in Ventura. Also see page 5 for my commentary on one of my pieces from the show, "O Root of Jesse," which is the cover art.

I continue to correspond with Sandra Cecelia Lopez Cojti, the student whose education Trinitas is helping to support in Guatemala. Sandra is in the 8th grade and she especially likes sports and natural sciences and hope to become a lawyer eventually. If you wish to include the education of indigenous women in Guatemala in your Christmas giving, contact the Kateri Tekakwith Fund, P. O. Box 906, Pacifica, CA 94044.

Peace and joy at Christmas
and a blessed 2013!

From the Trinitas Communities:

Cal and Mary, Mary Ann, and Nancy
Carol, Dolores, Esperanza,
Mike and Norma

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