

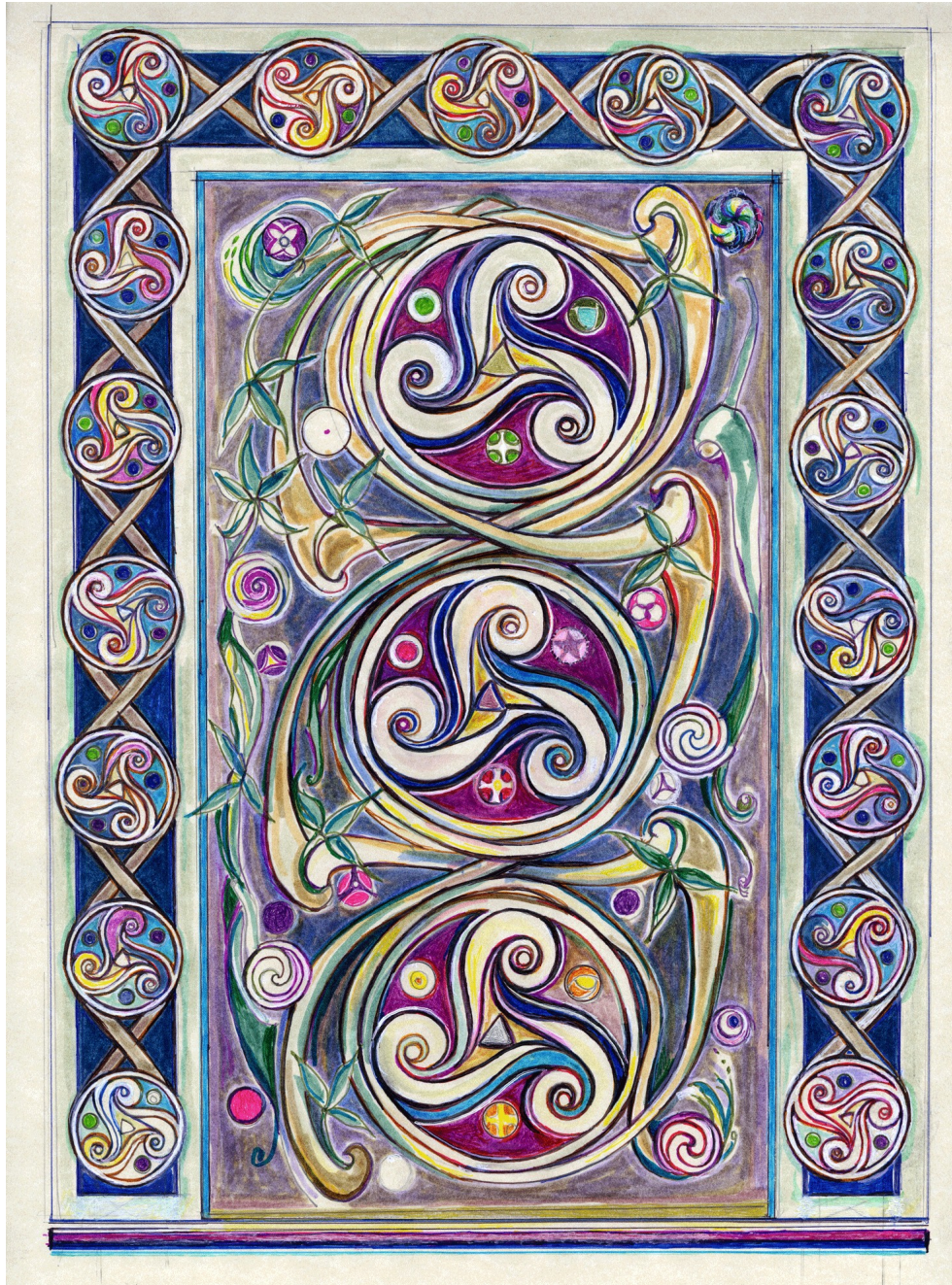
Trinitas is an Ignatian community of lay people
engaged creatively with the world

TRINITAS NEWSLETTER

Volume 2013

Spring/Summer Issue

Aging Grace-fully



The Door by Nancy Snooks

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Review of Life: We meet at 10:00 a.m. in alternate months in Ventura and Sylmar.

Art Exhibits: During June, at our Dei Gloria Studio & Gallery in Ventura, Nancy Snooks will show *Microcosm/Macrocosm: The Genesis Story in GeoArt*.

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

Friends of Trinitas meet on 4th Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Trinitas Annual Corporation & Board Meeting will be on August 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 Fall/Winter theme will be ***Gifts of Spirit***. Articles, poems, book reviews related to the theme, news & calendar items are welcome by the November 1 submission deadline.

Credits:

Cover art, *The Door*, is a Celtic Illumination by Nancy Snooks.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

the ill; Janet Darr, Jerry Dempsey, Muriel McGlynn; the souls of Richard Vega and Peter Sorenson, 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.

THE GIFT OF AGING by Carol Cowgill

For the ancients, as for modern man, time was an exigent god. For scientists, space/time is an illusion, having no reality beyond our perception. In fact, all we know of it lies in the power of change. What lay before the Big Bang is beyond our words, concepts – ineffable. When all this is applied to our experience of developing, maturing, evolving – then devolving, dissolving, degenerating–dying–everyone mourns. In this country we try to deny the process by obsessing over anti-aging products, only to feel torn apart like the universe itself, going nowhere very fast.

But is there another way of approaching the aging process? Some psychologists say that it is really a process of integration, of getting all the pieces of our souls together, of becoming who who we truly are. God adds that we are much more than we suspect and cannot be limited to what our bodies are undergoing. We are persons living, in fact, in the “end of days,” and Jesus claims to be this “End” (Rev. 22:13). Our true age, therefore, is permanently bound to that of Jesus, the Yesterday-Today-Forever, who loves us to the end. And any reflection on our aging needs to be related to this anchor of faith.

Once the AARP becomes a point of reference, it helps to consult the wisdom of St. Ignatius, who devotes one fourth of the Exercises to a transformation of our perception of aging. He invites us to look at God’s plan for the universe and our role in it, at how we have related to this plan throughout the course of our life, and to look to our death as the passage into God our true end. To imagine, project, reevaluate; and ultimately mature–age–into the mystery of Jesus and his relation to the the Father. This is the grace of our Ignatian way: that we are always in the End which is also the Beginning. That God is not Chronos but Love. The grace of aging is to embrace the ineffable: the Beginning we cannot imagine, the End that we cannot imagine, but which we live in one moment at a time and experience not as change but as Trinitarian interrelatedness, Love-Itself.

What this says to me is that I should throw away my calendar –schedules, appointments, deadlines–that has been my master all my adult life. I have sometimes defined myself by how filled this calendar has been–how many color-coded and cross-referenced events–how busy I have kept myself--how well I have used my time. Aging for me has sometimes just been the measure of change or activity and I’ve forgotten the measure of God’s love for me.

Aging gracefully means that we need not define ourselves by the physical/psychological processes of maturing and dying, nor by what we do, but that we try to remain alert to the Alpha-Omega, Beginning-End in each event and moment. *Let everyone who hears say, "Come"…Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.* There is nothing to mourn or regret. Then even dying is transformed into our definitive life-in-God, Spirit, the Uncreated Grace/Gift–the oneness of mutual loving. Now and hereafter.

AGING: A CREATIVE PROCESS by Mary Ann Wixted

And the One who sat upon the throne said: Behold, I make all things new. Revelation 21, 5.

I must be willing to give up what I am in order to become what I will be. Albert Einstein

I closed my last article with some thoughts on the choices we make around aging, that is to say that I am responsible for who I am becoming each day as I age. It is partly a matter of perception. I can view aging as a process of loss and diminishment, or I can perceive it as God's continuing creative work in bringing me to become *What eye has not seen and ear has not heard* in the life to come. When I limit my view to the very real life experiences of loss of mental acuity, diminishment of energy, mobility challenges, and pain, I can become a little hothouse that breeds the weeds of frustration, anger, anxiety, and defeatism. Because I can accomplish less and less in more and more time and with an expanding consumption of energy, I am tempted to shut down, defeated by aging. I can choose to let myself devolve into a very cranky old lady or – I can turn to God.

Acceptance of the realities of aging is the first step in reaching some spiritual insight. Trustingly turning myself and my concerns over to God's care is the next. I need to come before God daily in faith to ask for the grace to grow into the person I am called to become from all eternity. My fundamental attitude needs to be one of hope that even though outward appearances seem to confirm that I am losing who and what I am, I am at the most fundamental level, becoming who I will be for all eternity: God the Master Artist continues to create me. As long as I have consciousness and the ability to make choices, I am responsible each day for cooperating with God and growing into that person God has known and loved forever. Knowing this, I do not feel helpless in the face of aging's challenges. In fact, I find great comfort, joy and peace in this knowledge.

So what are some of these choices? One of the most fundamental, is that if I am really accepting my limitations in time and energy, that I periodically look at my commitments, my responsibilities, my gifts, and the things that I love to do, and that I discern which I can continue as my portion of work for God's Kingdom, and which can be delegated or simply fall away. It is especially important to remain engaged in those activities which I love, and which bring joy and a sense of well-being. For me, this means a commitment of precious time and energy to doing art, and making and giving prayer shawls.

Another choice involves my relationships. One of the hardest facts of aging is that we slowly lose our family members and friends. Sooner or later, we become part of a smaller group of seventy-or eighty-or ninety-year-olds. It is not for me to ask why I have survived longer than my younger brother, and so many of my friends and contemporaries. My mother used to say that *only the good die young* but I know too many truly good people who outnumber me in years to believe this old saw. What matters now is that I am grateful for my life, and that I continue to be involved with these relationships; that I make time to visit family and old friends; and just as importantly that I continue to invite new relationships into my life. Even though I am an extrovert by nature, I am tempted to withdraw from making new friends, and with involvement in the lives and projects of others. Third and fourth choices are to maintain and nurture my sense of humor and balance and to continue to open my mind to new learning. As long as I am rooted in the messy soil of this life, exposed to the elements, I am continuing to participate in this great mystery of *becoming* - more loving, more faithful, more hopeful, more the *me* envisioned by my Creator. Each of us is his unique, loved, and cherished creation.

THE SLO LANE by Carol Cowgill

We are all engaged in the usual things. Carol Cowgill completed the 19th annotation retreat with Norma Barrera and is beginning to advertise the next one, to begin in September. In the parish, she is initiating an adult Confirmation program based on the Exercises, both in Spanish and English. This is experimental, so we will keep you informed as to how it goes. Other than this, the teen catechumenate and Bible study go on. Mike Grahek is in the process of deciding whether to retire so as to be able to devote himself to the Caring Callers program, an outreach to homebound seniors. His mother has been ill for many months and her condition is getting worse so please pray for the whole family. He continues to paint and does really good watercolors –both landscapes and some religious themes. Carol's sister Nancy is progressively more homebound, so she went to visit her in May. On the way back she stopped at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale to make her retreat. So the summer hopefully will prove relatively peaceful. Norma Garcia is still working, providing day care for her grandchild. She is offering a Bible study in her home and is engaged in the catechumate for children in her parish. We have decided to have a rotating review of life in each others' homes. Since we live more than 25 miles from each other (in a kind of equilateral triangle), it saves a little driving and gives us a fresh perspective. Carol's place is the most beautiful natural setting. The Friends of Trinitas continue to meet at St. Joseph's in Nipomo. We are discussing Thomas Green's *Opening to God*: discussion, prayer, dinner, conversation. These friends, Araceli Pena, Flavio Valdex, Al Ambrosak, Tony Trujio have been coming for a long time. We have added a new friend, Connie Mercier. Our discussions are fun and helpful. We had hoped to be able to organize a retreat this year, but we could not. Next year, perhaps. We are looking toward a retreat house in San Juan Bautista. If the retreat materializes, it will cost about \$100/day. So if you are interested, please start saving your money now—a week's retreat comes to around \$800. Think of it as a really cheap vacation with God. We will try to have both an English and Spanish-language retreat at the same time. We have to have a hefty minimum number of retreatants, or the retreat house cannot afford to offer us hospitality, so please indicate your interest as soon as possible. Phone us: (805) 481-2025,

ORANGE JUICE by Carol Cowgill

We have a lot going on. Esperanza has just returned from Mexico after visiting ailing family members. Dolores Martinez reports that she continues to guide ELI (Equip Latino Ignaciano), the group of six that works with the Loyola Institute in Orange giving the Exercises in parish settings. They are preparing the orientation program for new candidates: Ignatian spirituality and leadership. This is a preparation for people to "accompany" people who are doing the Exercises; the experienced ELI group are being called "guides" to avoid the term "spiritual directors," which is a much misunderstood term. Besides all this Dolores is involved with the Diocese of Orange's Pastoral Institute, giving a course on Eastern Prayer, using the Russian tradition. Esperanza Sampablo is working with the inquirer Lucia, who is doing well. We have great hopes for her. The retreat (*en español*) has in fact been finalized. It will be held at the Pro-Sanctity Center in Fullerton, July 12-19, directed by Dolores. There will be around 12 people, some old friends and three new faces. It is nice to see our circle growing. Dolores and Esperanza hope to make their own retreats in Arroyo Grande, with Carol, but no firm plans have been made as the newsletter goes to press.

Ventura and Valley Views

by Nancy Snooks

A *Door* has always been an important symbol for me as I wait in wonder to discover what lies beyond – so too, the new year. So far this year, our Trinitas doors have remained open to others.

Mary gave two retreats at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in January and March. Cal is always a support to Mary in planning for these retreats, preparing materials for various projects.

Although we finished our group Spiritual Exercises, we are continuing to meet monthly with Bob, Leatrice, and Lowaine starting with May's Friends of Trinitas gathering for a discussion of Karen Armstrong's, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. This group meets in our home in Ventura. Mary Ann and Nancy continue hosting the monthly Artists' Workshops at Dei Gloria Studio and Gallery, also in Ventura. We are currently working on Celtic Illuminations. In addition to Leatrice and ourselves, we are blessed with the presence of Sarah and Bev. This is an opportunity for artists to work together and share their skills in a contemplative setting.

We held our annual corporation and board of directors' meeting near the end of February. The news is that Lynn Dempsey, our longtime friend and assistant director on the Trinitas Board graduated from St. John's College at the LA seminary in May with her graduate degree in theology. Congratulations, Lynn. Wanting to balance all of this study with something less heady, she asked Mary Ann to teach her to crochet prayer shawls in April. The day following Lynn's graduation, Karen Moran,, Mary Ann and I met Lynn for a celebratory lunch.

Mary Ann's brother Joe and wife Sondra made an early St. Patrick's day visit to Ventura. Together, they gave Nancy a grand send-off to her trip to Eastern Europe with her brother Michael and his wife and son, Liz and Ryan. The focus of the trip was to visit the home of the Snooks (really Yuodsnukis) grandparents in Lithuania. In many ways the trip was a pilgrimage for me. A special joy was a visit with an old friend, Ann Elizabeth Mader in Vienna. We returned a month later during Holy Week on March 26.

Shortly thereafter, Mary Ann flew to Michigan to visit her old friend, Janet, and her niece, Michelle. She was surprised to find snow and 20 and 30 degree temps, and delighted that she can still weather the cold winds off of Lake Michigan. She reports that it is beautiful country up there in the Traverse City to Cheyboygan area, surrounded by the Great Lakes, inland lakes, rivers (mostly frozen), fir, birch, and maple trees. On the Leelanau and Mission peninsulas, vineyards and cherry orchards are cultivated.

On June 9, I will be opening my new show, *Microcosm/Macrocosm: The Genesis Story in GeoArt* at our Dei Gloria Studio and Gallery. The show will continue through the month of June, on Sundays from 2:00 - 4:00 and by appointment. You may have already received an invitation, and we hope you will join us. We'll be watching for you to come through our door.

**Discernment
by Mary Hubbard**

At a retreat five years ago, a chosen "soul card"
hinted at a changed life
A new birth was predicted; innovative programs
Predictably, meaningful activities burst into being.

Again this year an innocent card challenged:
"Choose me!"

And again, I sat with the card –
I saw a woman with elongated fingers,
aged, bluish skin,
A loving hand placed firmly on her shoulder.
She is quite naked.

What message here? This year's '13:
my 79th year.

Shall I discard the lovely earrings
Cal so enjoys giving me?
{And so much preferred by me to kitchen utensils)

Shall I put the Mothers' Day sweater,
the Christmas perfume, the birthday books
and journals in a box, in the closet?
(But won't the generous children be hurt?)

Maybe cancel the nail lady...
(But who will tip her heavily,
help to pay her rent?)

Deplete the nest egg??

"Oh, no," the Spirit says dismissively:
"Keep those things, pass like all the rest.

Let this be our secret...
That for me, you stand naked.

Strip yourself of ego stuff,
Of praise hunger, of credit due accounts;
throw off resentments,

Let go – control
let go – your sacred image of your sacred self.

Then come to me, bare,
in all your wrinkled glory

That I may see you, my old–young one,
my Mary
and grasp you unencumbered to keep you in My
passionate embrace."

**Passing-Over
by Mary Ann Wixted**

He's passed on –
she's passed away...
cancer, dementia,
crippled limbs and worn-out hearts

Easter, Pasch, Passover
exuberant wafts of incense,
dimming vision and blurred memories
floating in and out of aging minds...

Great splashes of baptismal water
sprinkled about the church --
a time for gladness, not for tears

Drums and guitars, piano and organ,
horns and voices joined in singing
alleluias to the Lord

Arthritic limbs longing to dance in joy
content to toe-tap, hand-clap

It is pass-over time.

Alleluia!

Recommended Reading on Aging Gracefully

The Gift of Years by Joan Chittester

Letters to A Loving God, by Andrew M. Greeley

Growing Upward, by Richard Rohr

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