

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

# TRINITAS NEWSLETTER

Volume 2010

Spring/Summer Issue

Review of Life



**Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which *binds everything together in perfect harmony*. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.**

Colossians 3: 12-15.

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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:** Mary Ann Wixted will show her *Cloud Series* paintings at Nancy's Studio in November.

### Visual Journaling

**Workshop:** Mary Ann will give a workshop facilitating visual journaling from prayer at Nancy's studio on November 13.

**Trinitas Annual Corporation & Board Meeting** will be held on July 29 in Ventura.

**Newsletter Deadline** is November 1.

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

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

**Our website:**  
[trinitascommunities.org](http://trinitascommunities.org)

**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 Fall/Winter issue is November 1. The theme will be **Celebration**. Articles, poems, book reviews related to the theme are welcome. Community news and events will also be published.

### Credits:

The Cover Photo is by Lynn Dempsey.

## PLEASE PRAY FOR:

the soul of  
Cathy Imai;  
those who are ill or  
recovering, especially  
Nicole Sanko, Sue Martin,  
Virginia Clancy, Mary Rose  
Betten, and Mary Valiquette;  
the 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.

## REVIEW OF LIFE

**In this issue, several of us are sharing around the topic of *Review of Life* : all are members or friends of Trinitas who have participated in this practice with us for several years. The format of a review of life includes reading aloud from Scripture, and a time of individual silent reflection on God's message for us both in Scripture and in the context of our daily living over the past month. Then we gather again to share, support and inspire each other. There is no expectation that anyone reveal sins or matters of conscience, or that RoL replaces spiritual direction. Members are encouraged to seek spiritual direction outside the community. We hope you enjoy these articles, and are inspired to begin a similar spiritual group with your own soul-friends.**

We are artists: an internationally exhibited printmaker, an exceptionally perceptive, talented painter; a self-taught, prize-winning watercolorist; and an amateur who dabbles in metaphorical images. Two have life commitments as members of an association of the faithful; two are vowed to each other and family. We are multi-degreed.

All are dedicated to the co-creation of the world and all that implies.

Once a month we meet and examine our lives. We place before God and each other our struggles, achievements, conflicts and joys. One at a time, we share the intimacies of experiences, thoughts, neglects and accomplishments. It is a humbling experience that holds no hint of humiliation. We are random in our order and pause after sharing to await a thought-through response from the others. Gently, members offer encouragement, suggestions, observations and reminders. There is humor and an element of fun as we examine our life patterns.

Sometimes we just sit in awe when a beam of holiness breaks through the words. Always we are grateful for the insights.

Do we "hang out" together? Not really. We lead very different surface lives. But a tough, spiritual bond exists that is not of our making, "not made with human hands." It resists any attempt to sever it. Love is its hemp.

Each of us believes in the power of prayer, the gifts of vocation and that money is God's money.

So how do we measure the success of this practice? The result is not linear but the path of the spiral embedded in our lives. We are awake; we show up; we are honest but ultimately we release the results of our work...like money, results are God's not ours.

We have a packed lunch, socialize, and catch up on family. Then we return to our homes, our work, our art, and begin again.

**By Mary Hubbard**

**Review of Life: Obedience to the Spirit:** Why a review of life? We in Trinitas promise to follow Jesus in obedience. We lead an autonomous apostolic life "out there" and come together monthly to account for our faithfulness in following him. However, the review of life is supposed to be more than an accounting; at its best, it is a co-discerning of the spirit's action in the individual member, impelling her or him into the world and unfolding new perspectives and new paths.

Why is discernment important? One of the temptations of people maturing spiritually is that we can become comfortable in our accomplishments and closed off to new directions. We all know from experience how hard it is to keep growing. We enjoy our personalities, including their limitations. We feel at home with our blind spots and habits of the heart, even the sinful ones. As prayer becomes darker and drier, we may settle for a life of good-enough service. As the physical limitations of aging impinge, we may decide that we are done, unplug our connection to God's evolutionary Spirit and begin to wait out the years we have left. At the heart of all this is the central temptation: to allow our egos to become rigid (I am what I am) and let the springing Spirit of God thicken into a kind of spiritual sludge. We may then approach the review of life inauthentically, in a kind of report. My prayer life has been faithful; I'm working well; my family relations are peaceful (or not) – and so down the checklist. Everything is OK, sisters and brothers. So the sisters and brothers are left with nothing to feel or to say. We leave the review unchallenged and unaffirmed, and everyone's time has been wasted.

The authentic review of life is built on the regular examination of consciousness, the daily getting intouch with how God has been active in and with me in every aspect of my day. Where have I felt God affirming my activity? Where have I sensed the loss of God's presence – and why? How is the world calling to me: my normal day-to-day world and the larger world? What dreams and desires are taking shape in me? Are these from God or just from need in myself? Am I being faithful to what I know God has asked of me up 'til now? Is the new thing in continuity with God's call? What do I think/feel I need to do about it? Wait and discern? Begin strategic planning? Pray for clarity?

The review of life is a placing of my daily examination before the community, so that they can share in the Spirit's life in me. Or be able to discern that there is something missing in my response to God's Spirit. The word "obedience" comes from the Latin for "listening, hearing." The community tries to help one another hear and respond well. But all of this begs the question of why involve the community at all. And the answer is clear and counter-cultural: because Christ has called us into community. We are not isolated; we are committed to respond together for the creation of the kingdom. No one of us has a handle on all truth; no one of us is totally transparent to God's Spirit in our lives; no one of us has totally open ears. We might wish we did, but we don't. Together we might. To the degree that we approach the review of life in the Spirit, we will be transformed.

The examination of consciousness and the review of life, then, form the linchpin of our commitment to follow the way of Christ's obedience. They open us to awareness of God's will in the concrete and through the light shining from others, keep us honest.

**by Carol Cowgill**

For the last ten years, the review of life has been the structure of my journey as a human being and a Catholic Christian. When I first heard the term "review of life" I thought it referred to some way of rating or scrutinizing myself in order to come to a verdict – good or bad. How wrong I was.

The review of life has become so necessary and important a part of my journey that I look forward eagerly to our meeting. Ignatian spirituality recommends making the examination of consciousness daily, and this has helped me discover God's presence in my day and deepen my prayer and my following of Jesus. It helps me not only discover my relationship with Jesus, but also gives me certainty about the path I must follow in all my relationships: family, friends, church groups, etc.

The discernment and comments of my companions give me the opportunity to become aware of which actions or attitudes are not the best. Their comments and observations have always been affectionate and loving and have given me the opportunity to pause in my life and examine more objectively things that are not clear or good. This is why I have very much valued the point of view of the others. Since no one possesses all reason or all truth, I trust the others' opinions a great deal. Belonging to the Trinitas community has been a great blessing for me personally, since, thanks to the review of life, I have been able to discover my attachments, vices, and weaknesses. I have come to appreciate people I formerly overlooked. I have come to discover an interior woman that I had not known. Thanks to the review of life, I discovered not only my defects, faults and sins, and with the help of my sisters, also the gifts that God has given me but which I had not begun to put at the service of God and people, since I was unaware of them.

Today, my life is changed. My sense of family has extended to my Trinitas community. I feel the support of my sisters.

During the review of life I can speak clearly about my doubts, my projects and even my anxieties, knowing that I will not be judged, but rather helped and supported to search for the right path. The review of life is the necessary focus for me to be able to travel more securely the path that God is leading me on.

The review of life recharges my battery, so that I can keep moving. It is a communal reflection that strengthens me and gives me courage. It is the fraternal bond that gives rise to the embrace of love, union and solidarity so lacking in this materialistic and individualistic world.

The review of life is an oasis, where open and truthful communication flow out to each other.

I thank god for the Trinitas community, but even more because our meetings are not like any other. They open me up to a different re-view of life.

**by Dolores Martinez**

My favorite metaphor for review of life is that of a colorful weaving in progress: each person brings his or her own color, weight, and texture, and as our lives and years unfold, the weaving changes and grows. Each time a new person comes into the review, the weaving is enriched and becomes more complex. It becomes a beautiful record of our spiritual growth together.

Color: What is my "color"? Maybe I lean somewhere in the blue to green range, and so there is room for some flexibility to move in the direction of either blue or green. Another may be more true, primary in color - a definite red, or yellow perhaps. What matters is that our colors, our personalities are God-given, and we work with what we've got. If for example, a red tries to be a green, the result is somewhere in between; an indefinite, sometimes muddy brown. So it matters that each member of a community is faithful to the truth of who he/she is; it's called personal integrity. But it doesn't mean that my blue-greenness cannot be more brilliant, or more lovely as it complements the color of another. Or that a little less of me, and a little more of the other may make for a more lovely and balanced weaving.

Weight: Some of us may be of more spiritual weight or gravitas than others, while others of us may be more spiritually "dense." I count myself among the latter. Being woven together in community over the years, I have not always gotten the message, or responded to it. But having the monthly review with the other "colors" keeps me on track, listening daily to God, looking out for him in the myriad designs life creates around me every day. The stronger fibers support the rest of us lightweights.

Texture: Some of the fibers in this community weaving project may be fine but strong, silken strands: some everyday, serviceable cotton; others coarse or soft wool but all are natural, and all are necessary to create the patterns and textures that God, the master-weaver is working in our lives. If one person's life is becoming worn and frayed with illness or family problems, it is reflected in the fabric of the community. Or if another's life is in knots of anxiety, the fabric reflects that too. The beauty of the fabric is not compromised by these weaknesses and knots, however: it is made more interesting, more compassionate..

The strength of the weaving relies on the connection of each individual person to God. Without that primary bond, the fabric isn't strong enough to hold a community together. So, yes, we account to each other for our fidelity to an active relationship with God; daily prayer and examination of consciousness. Where do I experience God in my life, and where not? And to what or whom is God calling me?.

Trinitas life is more like a weaving than a patchwork quilt. A patchwork quilt is also a thing of beauty and craft and the patches create a discernible pattern. Yet, each piece is an isolated unit within its sewn boundaries in the complex pattern of the quilt. In a weaving, each strand meshes with the other, gathering strength from and strengthening the others. Care must be taken not to weave the strands together too tightly, or the fabric become misshapen, warped and rigid, whereas if the strands are in looser relationship with each other, they can give and adjust, and take weight and pressure. A community that is too inward- focussed on itself is like a too tightly woven fabric, whereas one that respects and allows for the uniqueness and individuality of each member is supple as well as strong. This is the community that can look outward and empowers its members to put their gifts at the service of God and God's people. From time to time, we get glimpses of the weaver at work in our monthly reviews of life, and we are very glad and grateful indeed.

**by Mary Ann Wixted**

## VENTURA VIEWS

by Nancy Snooks

Although time seems to be passing quickly, it has been a good time. We (Mary Ann, Mary and Cal Hubbard and I ) meet regularly for RoL, alternating between Ventura and Sylmar. Afterward in Sylmar, we often enjoy seeing and discussing Mary's and Cal's latest paintings.

Since the early part of the year, Trinitas has had a website with a link to our newsletters, and Nancy's Christmas cards. Designed by Mary Ann's nephew, Greg Wixted, a freelance web designer, it's trinitascommunity.org.

The last Newsletter included an invitation to the my art studio for a Christmas show. Much to my surprise and delight, I had a chance to see and visit with many old friends, and some more recent ones. We still have Christmas cards available if you would like to order some now for this year. (See enclosed info.)

Cal, Mary and I attended the Holy Week retreat at HSRC given by Michael Crosby at Holy Spirit Retreat Center. Mary Ann joined us there for RoL and a silent lunch.

In April, we participated in a *Crones' Gathering* led by Mary Hubbard at HSRC. It was a joy to share time and ideas with so many wonderful women (some in their 90's!) of varied religious backgrounds. It felt like an extended family get together in the best sense of the word.

Fr. Crosby took one of my prints, *Famine and Plague*, from my *Revelation Series* with him to Ireland where he was scheduled to speak to the Bishops there concerning the problems Ireland is experiencing. The print served as a metaphor as he spoke about the famine in vocations to the priesthood in the Church, and the plague of child abuse by the clergy.

If you would like to see the *Revelation Series*, it remains on exhibit in the Gardenside Room at HSRC in Encino. Call ahead (818) 784-4515.

During Lent, Mary Ann then began a series of paintings based on cloud images from Scripture which she intends to exhibit at my studio in conjunction with a workshop on *Visual Journaling*. (See Calendar.) The work is colorful, profound and dynamic - a joy to behold.

We celebrated Trinity Sunday together in Ventura with Mass and Brunch.

## NEWS FROM THE SLO LANE

by Carol Cowgill

The **outreaches** continue. During the Spring we reflected on Trinitarian spirituality, which we completed by Trinity Sunday. The group of six continues to meet, so I take this as a sign that they are getting something out of our meetings. I think that the next step should be a review of Ignatian spirituality. I like Martin's book, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*. We had our first **renewal ceremony**, at St. Joseph's in Nipomo, and we went out to dinner with our local friends. The three people who began in September finished the **19<sup>th</sup> annotation retreat**; it was a great blessing. I'm interviewing possible candidates for the **Exercises** beginning in September. Anyone who is interested needs to contact me before the end of June at (805) 481-2025. I continue working the **RCIA**. We had a very large group for this parish (18). I'm still in shock as the new group begins their inquiry. I'm also beginning a training program on the spiritual-formation dimensions of the initiation process; it meets monthly beginning in June. Frankly, I'm trying to train my successors in the RCIA process. The **Lay Mission Helpers** are still in my life. I gave them a class on missionary spirituality and a couple of retreats, and they are launched to Cameroon. Our **retreat** will begin July 30, at the Mission House in L. A. Other than this, I vegetate at home in the mountains. Come visit as you travel up the coast.

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