



Mission Matters

St. Mary Magdalen Reformed catholic Mission

February 2009

Volume III Issue II



He Is With Us Always

Please forgive the late publication date of this newsletter. I was on a much needed vacation, time to rest the mind with loving family and friends before embarking on our new venture of offering services at the Lafayette-Greylock Masonic Temple in North Adams. During this past week, I experienced the goodness of mankind in ways not expected. The Holy Spirit was surely with us. Several events occurred that led me to understand even more that we, as priests, are sought out for comfort with or without our collar. One particular instance moved me so very much that I thought of sharing it with you.

I had the greatest honor of enjoying a deliciously prepared dinner with family and friends. One particular gentleman, whom I had not seen for many years, decided to share a part of his recent experience with me. We'll call him Bill. Some months ago, Bill was stricken with a coronary problem and died while undergoing medical care. He knew he was dead. Flashes of moments in his entire life flew by as memories were released in rapid succession. And then the light, powerful yet peaceful and warming beckoned him to follow. He felt rested and happy, without fear, knowing this place was meant for eternity. Bill wanted so much to stay, and yet he instinctively knew there was unfinished business left behind. At that moment he suddenly found himself breathing and a part of his body once again. Another doctor reached through, pulling him back from God's heaven to earth..

During the time of his recovery, everyone seemed to be focused on the upcoming change in national leadership. He listened intently and fervently discussed many issues with his wife, children and friends. Bill found within himself a new way of thinking about life. He now knew that the body was just a shell and that the soul had no color or apparent display of wealth or status. All souls are equal in God's eyes and therefore all people are too! This was different and foreign to Bill. Although he had been raised in Roman Catholicism, he lived his childhood in a geographical area whose residents would do anything to prevent people of color or other diversities from sharing or even entering their community.

Dates & Events

February 3rd—St. Blaise Day,
Patron of Sore Throats

February 15th—Sunday Mass 6:30pm

Eucharistic Liturgy of Inclusion

February 18th—Episcopal Feast of Martin Luther

February 22nd—Sunday Mass 6:30pm

Eucharistic Liturgy of Inclusion

February 25th—Ash Wednesday

March 1st—1st Sunday of Lent

March 8th—2nd Sunday of Lent

March 15th—3rd Sunday of Lent

March 17th—St. Patrick's Day

March 19th—St. Joseph's Day

March 22nd—4th Sunday of Lent

March 29th—5th Sunday of Lent

April 5th —Palm Sunday

Bill had become the very thing he now despised. Worse yet, he now knew that his family had developed their opinions directly from him. An epiphany took hold of Bill as he realized that he had been returned to life for the purpose changing the views of those he loved.

I asked Bill how successful he was in his life's purpose. He said it was the most difficult thing he had ever done. But, he was very successful in helping five of his friends. Bill left me with a most prophetic statement. He said, "I have to convince them that Jesus did not walk among people like us. He walked with those less fortunate, society's outcasts." I instantly knew that Christ was truly with this man and he had so much of God's love to share.

We all know so many folks that could use a second chance at life like Bill received. It's with unknown reason who God chooses to give this opportunity. Ultimately, we know the way of Christ. We will all take heed at some point, but our eternal life will be much easier if we pay attention now rather than later.

ONE GOD— Many Names / ONE SON— Many Paths / ONE TRUTH— Many Faiths

St. Mary's by the Woods

In my own search for truth I've come across many in the independent catholic/Christian community that share the same quest. As we find each other online or at events, there are always a few that we seem to gravitate towards, having so much religious philosophy in common. One such individual is Fr. Thomas Gilbert and his ministry St. Mary's by the Woods. You can visit Fr. Tom's website at www.brambleshyre.org

Recently Fr. Tom has developed a wonderful blog. He has a unique ability of expression that is quite enjoyable; easily putting to pen a host of thoughts and opinions that have also crossed my mind. Please visit Fr. Tom's blog at <http://anglo-universalist.blogspot.com>

Here's a wonderful quote from one of his articles... "Some time ago, I finally got my head wrapped around the idea that I could still function as a priest (despite going through a long period of depression after an unfortunate experience with my old church). When I reached that point, I was instinctively drawn to a Christian-Buddhist worldview which encompasses so much of what I believe and how I would like to behave in the world.

As time went by, however, I slowly began to slide away from that perspective and came knocking back on the door of Western Christianity. In the process, something shifted within me in the wrong way and I suddenly found myself becoming a person I didn't like. This has nothing to do with Western Christianity. It has everything to do with my interface with the world. I am a much better person when I live and move and have my being in the world as a Christian-Buddhist.

This does not mean I can't still hold onto my Christian traditions and beliefs. I am just expanding them to embrace another rich and fulfilling way to experience this thing we call life.

As a Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh has said, regarding having Buddha and Jesus in one's life: "It is just like cooking. If you love French cooking, it does not mean that you are forbidden to love Chinese cooking:—(from *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers*).

And so, as I've put in the header of this blog, Jesus said to them "Come and have breakfast".

St. Mary Magdalen's additionally supports mission work through their Mother Teresa Fund for the Working Poor. Any help you can give would be sincerely appreciated and put directly to God's work. All of our clergy are self-supporting, assuring that 100% of your donation goes directly to the mission for use in ministry and operating expenses.

A woman was working in her vegetable garden. It was quite a fabulous garden that had been meticulously weeded, watered and fertilized. The plants were all flourishing and beautiful. Her minister stopped by and remarked on what a beautiful garden it was, adding, "It's truly a miracle what the Lord can do in a garden." She paused and replied, "Well, maybe so, Pastor, but you should have seen the mess it was when He was taking care of it all by Himself!"

Links of Interest

Reformed catholic Church International
www.rccine.org

Church of Interfaith Christians
www.interfaithchristians.org

Married Life Ministries
www.marriedlifeministries.com

The Gospel of Inclusion and the New Dimensions Ministry of Bishop Carlton Pearson
www.newdimensions.us
www.inclusioninternational.com
www.bishoppearson.com

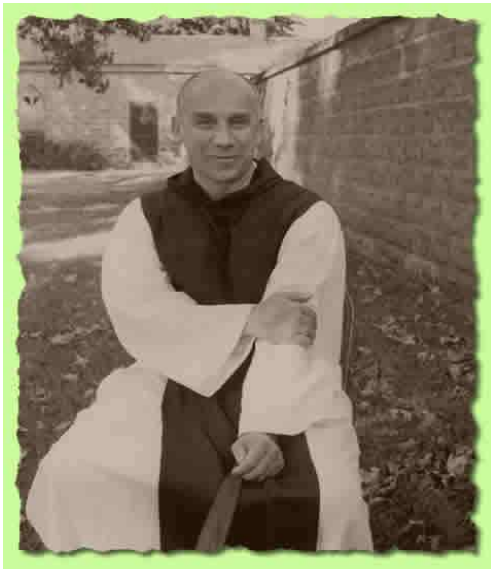
Bishop Carlos Duarte Costa
www.catholic-canc.us/costa.html

St. Mary's-by-the Woods
www.brambleshyre.org

Rev. Tom Gilbert's Blog
<http://anglo-universalism.blogspot.com>

Some Links of Interest are not necessarily the beliefs of this mission but are intended to present other points of view in man's constant search for the Truth.

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Thomas Merton, Modern Catholic Writer on Spirituality

Taken from www.mertonsmountain.com and www.merton.org

Thomas Merton was born on January 29th, 1915 and is arguably the most influential American Catholic author of the 20th century. His autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, has sold over one million copies and has been translated into over fifteen languages. He wrote over sixty other books and hundreds of poems and articles on topics ranging from monastic spirituality to civil rights, nonviolence, and the nuclear arms race.

He was born in France two years before World War I broke out. In this tumultuous time period in his early years, Merton would lose his American born mother to cancer when he was very young and his New Zealand born father when he was in his late teens. His mother always promoted in him a sense of individuality and non-conformity in nature. His artist father lived a Bohemian lifestyle of continuous travel for work, but he was very loving of young Thomas, passing on his creativity and love of nature and beauty.

After a rambunctious youth and adolescence, Merton converted to Roman Catholicism while at Columbia University and on December 10th, 1941 he entered the Abbey of Gethsemani, a community of monks belonging to the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists), the most ascetic Roman Catholic monastic order. His new given name would be "Father Louis." The community of monks lived in simplicity living off the land they farmed. The vows they took helped Merton tame his tormented thoughts of his past, while the solitude of his lodgings allowed him time to reflect on his faith. Despite traveling the world, Merton admitted that the simple beauty of living off the land in an ideal

setting of the monastery was enough for him. He began to see God's beauty in everything, even the simplest of things. This was the start of his interest in the Zen practice of mindfulness. Having seen the ravages of war, including the untimely death of his brother John Paul during World War II, he became a staunch supporter for peace and opposed conflict. Likewise during the 1960's, he was a supporter of the non-violent civil rights movement. These were controversial stances for the time, but ever the non-conformist, Merton stood up for what he believed. An avid writer, he wrote continuously throughout his life, including many books, lectures, and private journals of his inner thoughts. In his later years, Thomas Merton took a great interest in Asian religions, particularly Zen Buddhism, which he compared to the practices of some of the early Christian mystics. He promoted talks between different faiths and traveled to the Far East to help bridge differences in the religions. While there, he met with the Dalai Lama, who said that Merton had a more profound understanding of Buddhism than any other Christian he had met.

Unfortunately, while on this trip to Asia, Merton died unexpectedly in a tragic accident. He was electrocuted by touching a poorly grounded electric fan while stepping out of a bath on December 10, 1968, on the 27th anniversary of entering his monastery. In an ironic and symbolic twist of fate, his body was shipped back to America along with many fallen American soldiers killed during the Vietnam War. He was just 53 years old and is buried at the Abbey of Gethsemani.

Merton's influence has grown since his death and he is considered by many to be an important 20th century Catholic mystic and thinker. Merton's letters and diaries barred from publication by Merton until 25 years after his death, reveal the intensity with which their author focused on social justice issues, including the civil rights movement and proliferation of nuclear arms.

Keep Ourselves Spiritually Alive

***By Thomas Merton
From Thoughts in Solitude***

"To keep ourselves spiritually alive we must continually renew our faith. We are like pilots of fog-bound steamers, peering into the gloom in front of us, listening for the sounds of other ships, and we can only reach our harbor if we keep alert. The spiritual life is, then, first of all a matter of keeping awake...always able to respond to the slightest warnings that speak, as though by a hidden instinct, in the depths of the soul that is spiritually alive."

Weekly Sunday Mass Returns

Beginning Sunday, February 15th, 2008, Fr. John Midura and Sr. Joan Lord will celebrate Mass (Holy Eucharist) at 6:30pm in the Masonic Temple, 172 Church Street, North Adams, MA. During the service a special healing blessing with laying on of hands will be performed by request. Please also offer any special intentions for immediate prayer and thanksgiving. Afterwards, coffee and light pastries will be served during which time Fr. John can further explain what Reformed Catholicism is and its relationship with Interfaith Christianity.

St. Mary Magdalen's offers the grace of God's sacraments to anyone who requests it. We believe that a person has personally reconciled himself with God in order to receive His infinite love. "Do not judge lest ye be judged." During each Mass we share the sacrament of Holy Communion at Christ's table with anyone who is baptized in Christ or believes in his message of love for the Creator and our brothers and sisters.

In your Prayers please remem-

- *Gerald Bush*, who passed into God's hands,
December 2008
Hai (Emi) Wong, who left her loving family for God's kingdom, January 2009
Francis Roch, called home to Christ,
January 2009
- *Nina L.*, recovering at home.
- *Robin*, recovering from brain surgery
- *Mary F.*, searching for new employment
- *Bishop Andy G.*, celebrating the birth of his new granddaughter
- *Fr. Robert J.*, completing chemotherapy

Please notify Fr. John or Sr. Joan by phone or e-mail if you would like someone placed on our Prayer list. Mass cards are available for the repose of a soul, or any other purpose as a "Spiritual Bouquet".

A Very Special Hail Mary/Magnificat

By Brother Norman, BSR CF

Hail Mary

*Your soul magnifies the greatness of the
Lord;*

**You are full of grace,
And your spirit rejoices in God your Savior.**

**The Lord is with Thee,
For He looks on His servant in her lowliness.**

**Blessed are Thou amongst women
And from this day all nations shall call Thee
"Blessed",**

**And Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Je-
sus,
For He that is mighty hath done great things
to Thee.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
And Holy is His name.**

**Pray for us, sinners,
For His mercy from age to age is on those
who fear Him,**

**Now and at the hour of our death,
As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and
his sons forever.**

Amen.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals

Fr. John is a registered priest with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is available to help with your wedding. Visit the website for more information. Fr. John & Sister Joan are also available for baptisms, memorials & funerals.