

Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB, CAM

The challenge is to keep saying “Yes”

On the 29 April 1973, five young men took first vows in the Redemptorist Monastery Church in Pretoria, South Africa. Four years later, two of us, Larry Kaufmann and I, made final vows in the same church, (two of the original group had left and one was completing his studies in Canterbury).

The following year, I made priestly promises and then, in 2002, I made solemn monastic vows at New Camaldoli Hermitage. All were certainly important liturgical and graced moments, way markers, indicating progress and the surprising twists and turns on the journey.

Taking time this month and year to reflect on 50 years of vowed life, I realize it has actually been the “little Yeses” that have been far more influential in my life than the major moments. Yeses responding to insights and clarity emerging from disappointments, failures, mistakes, hurts, as well as those arising from prayer, spiritual direction, ministry and the surprises of the Spirit.

For instance, I remember making a promise to myself after the untimely death of my mother, just as she appeared to be arriving at a new place in herself, I vowed, “to live before I died.” This “vow” has empowered me, more than once over the years, to take risks, to change, to let go and embrace the new and daunting. I love the text in St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians where he said, “with Christ it is not ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ it is always ‘Yes.’” – 2 Corinthians 1:19

The challenge, I believe, is to keep saying “Yes” to what the Spirit seems to be asking of us even if it doesn’t fit the expectations of others or the ways of the world around us. As this docility doesn’t necessarily become easier with age, it’s important to keep exercising that “Yes” muscle.

Walking the Camino and the Francigena does this for me, it keeps me a pilgrim, (derived from two latin words “per” and “ager,” meaning “one who steps beyond their field”). All those invitations and calls to “step beyond,” prepare us ultimately for the great and final “Yes” to cross the Jordan into the Divine embrace.

This reminds me of the card I had printed for my solemn monastic profession, it was a quote from Dom. Pedro Casaldaliga, a Spanish bishop in Brazil, who lived an exemplary “Yes” life...

*At the end of the road they will ask me;
Have you lived?
Have you loved?
And not saying a word,
I will open my heart full of names.*

Easter blessings of peace and joy,

Michael

[Ed. Note]: To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Michael’s first vows, we have created a bookmark that features Dom. Pedro Casaldaliga’s poem. If you you’d like one or more of these bookmarks, with Michael’s compliments, please email randy@hermitfish.com with your name, postal mailing address and how many you’d like.

Everyday Miracles (excerpt)

The power which I cannot explain or know or name I call God. God is not God’s name. God is my name for the mystery that looms within and arches beyond the limits of my being. When I pray to God, God’s answer comes to me from within, not beyond. God’s answer is yes, not to the specifics of my prayer but in response to my hunger for meaning and peace. “Choose life and trust life. Grow in service and love. Take nothing for granted. Be thankful for the gift. Suffer well. Dare to risk much. Consecrate your world with laughter and tears. And know not what I am or who I am or how I am, know only I am with you.” This is God’s answer to my prayer... When I open myself to God, incrementally my wholeness is restored. Perhaps that which I call the mystery of God is no more than the mystery of life itself. This mystery is redemptive. It is divine. By opening myself to it I find peace. The mystery of God always remains a mystery. Anything less would fail to do justice to the everyday miracles of consciousness, of love and pain, of life and death. Responding to these miracles, responding to God’s yes, I can do no other than to answer yes in return.

F. FORRESTER CHURCH

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigmala.com

Michael News

Due to Hwy 1 collapsing just South of the Hermitage and a huge landslide further North, the monks from Italy were not able visit the Hermitage. Michael was eventually able to meet the two monks en route to San Luis Obispo, CA. The remainder of the meetings were conducted via Zoom. A different yet relaxed visitation.

With one atmospheric river following another, life in the Santa Cruz Mountains has been challenging with downed trees and power outages, but nothing compared to those living in low lying areas of the county. Please do remember them in your prayer as well as the brothers in Big Sur.

Holy Week audio retreat

Compassion, Michael’s Holy Week retreat, is available in his Audio Retreat Library. Michael’s entire library of audio retreats is available online 24/7, via a \$15/month subscription – 13 retreats, 65 talks, over 70 hours of pure Michael wisdom and inspiration. Visit: <https://hermitfish.com/about-the-audio-library>

Grateful for your support

Michael wishes to thank everyone for your continued prayers, good wishes and support. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael’s 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Levante 2 Video Retreats

APR 20-26 | Home Retreat • Online
MAY 18-24 | Home Retreat • Online

Levante 2 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-2-schedule>

Levante 1 Video Retreats

APR 20-26 | Home Retreat • Online
MAY 11-17 | Home Retreat • Online

Levante 1 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-1-retreat-houses>

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