



A New Christmas

The town of Zamora in Spain is famous for, among other things, its ten beautifully preserved Romanesque churches from the 12th Century. One I visited at the end of the Camino was San Cipriano. The church had been totally emptied except for a beautiful statue of Cipriano in the apse, and the nave contained the largest crèche I have ever seen. It was comprised of over a hundred little porcelain, pottery figurines all handcrafted and dressed in elaborate period dress. A masterpiece of attention to detail.

Upon entering, you first encounter the Magi, still a long way off, and then the shepherds in shock at the angel, and as you circumvent the large exposition, all of the villagers are at work with their daily chores and engaged with the local crafts. Yet, from the expressions on their faces, all are aware of the center, the manger and the child.

I spent over an hour walking round and round the display gazing at the figures, their faces and costumes, their knowing and not knowing. Something had happened in their town and in their hearts.

There was a Liturgy there in that ancient church – people, children, families, like me – walking around and around telling each other the story, recognizing characters, marveling, smiling and yet there was also a silence and a joy.

Perhaps this year we too need to be emptied out. What about deciding to give less to family and friends and instead

give to the victims of the horrific California wildfires – the Camp Fire in and around Paradise, and the Woolsey Fire in Southern California? What about more liturgy this Advent, walking round and round the mystery and telling the story, even if it is just to ourselves, looking, marveling? Then perhaps with less hecticness and busyness, less shopping for gifts, we too may come to that simple awareness of the manger, the Child and the Center and become like the church of San Cipriano a moment of wonder and joy, a Liturgy.

Blessings, •

Michael

Photos from Michael's Camino can be found at hermitfish.com under the Camino 2018 tab, along with a selection of photos of San Cipriano and the crèche. Under the Lectio>Blessings tab, Michael has provided blessings for the Advent Wreath, Christmas tree, Crèche, and Christmas Day meal – all taken from Edward Hays' Prayers for the Domestic Church, to assist you becoming liturgy. He will offer Mass at Midnight for you and your intentions.

Michael's Upcoming Events

JANUARY 2019

4-5 | **Reno Diocesan Conference**, Reno, NV
Info: MoniqueJ@Catholicreno.org

19-23 | **St. Margaret Mary Parish Mission**, Naperville, IL
Info: Sr. Madelyn Gould, (630) 369-0777

FEBRUARY

2 | **Retreat Morning**
Most Holy Redeemer Church,
San Francisco, CA
Info: (415) 863-6259

MARCH

9-14 | **Holy Family Parish Mission**, South Pasadena, CA
Info: fponnet@holyfamily.org

Camino photos online

Michael's near-daily missives from his recent trek of the Camino – photos and brief reports – can be found on the hermitfish website under the *Camino 2018* tab.

News from the Hermitage



The Hermitage has revived its GoFundMe page to raise the funds needed to replace its fast decaying entrance road. For more information please visit

<https://contemplation.com/>

Michael's retreats are available online

Many of Michael's retreats are available on CD and as digital downloads at CDBaby.com and more are on the way once audio editing has been completed.

<https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/MichaelFish>

Retreat scheduling

If you are an organization, group or retreat center who is interested in booking Michael for an event, please contact Laura Hipke, (818) 248-4747 or laura@hipkes.com.

Supporting Michael

Michael is entirely self-supporting, receiving no financial assistance apart from his own ministry. Your tax-deductible donation to Hermit Fish, his 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, helps to sustain Michael's ministry. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated.
FID: 82-2489475

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