



# Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB. CAM

## Only romantics survive

When, as a Redemptorist, I took over the fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus in a Zulu village in Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa, Little Sister Bridget Sophie met me at the hand pump outside the chapel. She handed over the keys and said, “Michael, I have one bit of advice for you, ‘the only people who survive here are romantics.’” And with that, she turned and left the place she loved and had lived in for 18 years. I can still see her, a tall German nun striding courageously away hiding her tears.

Bridget Sophie was a hundred percent correct. Living with no electricity or running water, in mud huts, thatched roofs, dung floors. Never having lived in a rural area before, not knowing the language, the place alive with dangerous snakes, extreme temperatures, freezing winters and boiling summers, two months of hot trade winds, blowing for days at a time, covering everything in dust. It was a challenge to say the least, and yet, I have never been happier in my life, I learnt to be a romantic.

There are different definitions of “romantic.” The one Bridget Sophie was referring to was “a person with an idealized view of reality.” It was indeed the only way to survive in “Little Springtime” (the name we gave the place). Without that “romantic eye” seeing the beauty, the humorous, the greater picture as well as the daily tiny miracles of candlelight suppers each night, the splash room, with water heated in a petrol drum, after a scorching, dusty day, the simple Zulu neighbors sharing the little they had, the feast days, sunsets over the Drakensberg mountains, it would have been overwhelming. It was as if the physical challenges seemed to open another capacity or dimension in us, magic was in the air, it was a Camelot moment.

Bridget Sophie, who has since crossed the Jordan, has come often to me these past Covid years and is especially now at

the threshold of this New Year, perhaps reminding me of her sage advice, “only romantics survive.”

I know I’m on shaky ground theologically, but I wonder if the Holy Spirit is not a romantic – that presence and power that has enabled women and men, down through the ages, to face insurmountable odds and challenges, filling them with Her fruits and gifts; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? Who needs a New Year’s Resolution, Little Sister Bridget Sophie and the Holy Spirit have nailed it for us.

*A blessed and fruitful New Year to each of you,*

*Michael*

## New Year’s Resolution

The Redemptorists have a tradition on New Year’s Day. In the evening, at recreation, they pass around three little bags, each containing slips of paper on which are written the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the names of saints and intentions for which to pray. After a hymn to the Holy Spirit each confrère, without looking, draws a gift of the Spirit he is to concentrate on for the year, a saint to imitate and an intention to pray for. Romantic, I know, but give it a try.

The fruits of the Spirit are from St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians 5:22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

## 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>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, [enigmala.com](http://enigmala.com)

## Michael News

Michael spent Christmas at the Hermitage in Big Sur. They were simple, prayerful days and liturgies, a smaller number of monks making for celebrations of ease and warmth. On the way there and back, he visited Fr. Zaccchaeus, hospitalized in Monterey. Please include him in your prayers.

Michael and his team and are launching *Levanté 2* this month and are preparing *Levanté 3* for June.

## Free Levanté YouTube video

We’ve posted a full-length *Levanté* video on YouTube. *Persevering on the Journey* is Michael at his very best. It’s free to view, please share the link.

Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2p3dwmnk>

## New Levanté pricing

Beginning this month, we are offering the *Levanté 1* and *2* online retreats directly to home participants, allowing us to lower the cost to \$175. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/retreat-brochure>

## Audio retreat subscription

Michael’s entire audio retreat library 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>

## Levanté 2 Video Retreats

JAN 5-11 | Home Retreat • Online  
JAN 26-FEB 1 | Home Retreat • Online  
JAN 27-29 | Mary & Joseph Retreat Ctr  
On-Site • Rancho Palos Verde, CA

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

## Levanté 1 Video Retreats

FEB 9-15 | Home Retreat • Online  
**Levanté 1 information:**  
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-1-retreat-houses>

To be added to Michael’s email distribution go to <https://www.hermitfish.com> and scroll to the bottom of the page to sign up.