



“You” became you

In order to facilitate the videoing of the *Levanté* Retreat we purchased the necessary equipment which turned out, when assembled, to look rather like a Martian robot. It is over 6 feet tall and 5 feet wide, the “arms” are the lights and the central section is for the video and sound. Our initial hopes for a videoing venue did not work as it was too bright, so we had to settle for the contraption being assembled in my room. My hermitage is comprised of one room so this was an unanticipated addition and imposition.

At first I tried to disassemble and reassemble the equipment for each videoing session, but it became so tedious and caused the calibrations to shift which, in turn, effected the quality of the videoing. So I resolved to bite the bullet, and live with the apparatus, navigating my way around it and ducking beneath the outstretched limbs, going to bed with it looming over me and opening my eyes in the morning to its hovering presence.

After a week of irritated resentment I decided to relent and accept it and even find a name for it. Without a second thought I decided to call it, “You.”

Standing and looking into the eye of the camera looking at me, I thought of those words of Meister Eckhart Tolle:

“The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God’s eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.”

So the “You” became God before whom I was standing during each recording session, regarding and been regarded, talking to and sharing, telling my story.

The videoing has also been an experience of standing before myself, a sort of naked vulnerability facing my “you” as I share my journey, fears, challenges and joys. Making each video has become a spiritual practice, demanding transparency and authenticity and great patience, as sometimes, stumbling on a word or forgetting the next thought, I’d have to stop and start all over again.

The “You” also became *you*. To help me

overcome the awkwardness of looking into the camera, I thought of you who have attended and listened to my retreats in the past. I looked beyond the gawky presence of the robot and saw your smiling faces and eyes. My anxiety faded and I became aware of you who would, please God, be watching and listening to these talks in the future.

So the videoing has become a time of encounter and prayer. The videoing is my prayer, talking to God, you and myself. The contraption has become a symbol of this threefold presence (the you) which has taken up residence in my hermitage. I am reminded of the lovely little poem by Rainer Maria Rilke:

*I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.*

*I may not complete this last one
but I give myself to it.*

*I circle around God, around the primordial
tower.*

*I’ve been circling for thousands of years
and I still don’t know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song?*

So when I say I have you in my prayers and heart, it’s absolutely true and I wonder if it wouldn’t be of help for you to discern how the Beloved as elbowed her way into your hermitage-heart.

One as we live our lives in widening circles,

Michael

A poem/hymn based on the words of Martin Buber fits our theme perfectly.

*Where I walk – you!
Where I stand – you!
Only you, you again, always you!
You, you, you!
When I feel good – you!
When it hurts me – you!
Only you, you again, always you!
You, you, you!
Heaven – you,
Earth – you,
above – you,
below – you,
Wherever I turn, at each end
Only you, again you, always you!
You, you, you!*

Michael news

Michael recently spent time at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, for the feast of the Dedication of the Church of New Camaldoli, the Solemnity of St. Romuald, community meetings and to celebrate the birthday of the Prior, Cyprian. It was the first time all the brothers from the different houses have been able to meet since the pandemic, a time of celebration and gratitude.

Condolences to Michael and the Community at the death of Thérèse Gagnon, 96, who, for the past 38 years, resided at the Hermitage and crossed the Jordan in Santa Cruz on 24 June after a difficult hospice Camino.

More journals available

We have some “new” titles on the website – limited quantities of *Cave of the Heart 2 and 3*, *Contemplative Ways of Being 2 and 3*, *Camino II and III* and *Celtic I and II*. These are great companions to the CDs or downloads. Visit:

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

Some retreat CDs are still available, but quantities are waning. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/retreats-cd-sets>

All 13 of Michael’s retreats (5 talks each) are available as downloads. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/audio-retreats>

Your support appreciated

Michael thanks everyone who has offered their continued prayers, good wishes and support. Donations to Hermit Fish, his 501(c)(3) non-profit organization 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