



Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB. CAM

Creating a "Camino space"

In the midst of the lightning storm that caused the fires in Northern California, there was a powerful wind blast that snapped the redwood growing next to my deck in half. Thank God, it fell away from my hermitage and chapel, but it took down five trees with it, a mass of broken branches and trunks.

I didn't realize it had happened, as it was 3:00AM and there was so much noise with the thunder, wind and hail. It was only the next morning, when I stepped outside, I immediately knew something was different because of the light. With half the redwood gone there was so much light and with five trees down, so much space, in spite of the debris. It reminded me of Wendell Berry's poem *The Slip*, which we read during the *Camino of Shadows* conference (*Camino III* retreat).

So, I have this broken redwood looking at me, speaking too, almost a symbol of this year where all my plans, hopes and dreams, (yours too and millions of others), have been dashed, snapped and interrupted. The more I observe the broken tree, the more I realize I have the choice to either focus on the devastation, or the new space and light its absence has opened up.

The Covid-19 crisis, my Yosemite hike, the fires and evacuation, have opened something unexpected in me. Leaving my hermitage to the mercy of the fire and the protection of the Angels, letting go of books, journals pictures and personal possessions, has created a "Camino space" in me, a freedom and lightness.

I wonder, could this be the grace of this present time, the "Jesus in the storm, and as storm," to bring us to our own inner space and light and to the realization that what really matters are the simple basics and in the brokenness and clearing to give

thanks. As Wendell Berry says, "Seed will sprout in the scar. Though death is in the healing, it will heal."

My landlady wanted to know if we should cut down the remaining redwood trunk, "No," I said, "She may continue to grow again and surprise us."

Blessings,

Michael

The Slip

The river takes the land, and leaves nothing.
Where the great slip gave way in the bank
and an acre disappeared, all human plans
dissolve. An awful clarification occurs
where a place was. Its memory breaks
from what is known now, begins to drift.
Where cattle grazed and trees stood, emptiness
widens the air for birdflight, wind, and rain.
As before the beginning, nothing is there.
Human wrong is in the cause, human
ruin in the effect – but no matter;
all will be lost, no matter the reason.

Nothing, having arrived, will stay.
The earth, even, is like a flower, so soon
passeth it away. And yet this nothing
is the seed of all – the clear eye
of Heaven, where all the worlds appear.
Where the imperfect has departed, the perfect
begins its struggle to return. The good gift
begins again its descent. The maker moves
in the unmade, stirring the water until
it clouds, dark beneath the surface,
stirring and darkening the soul until pain
perceives new possibility. There is nothing
to do but learn and wait, return to work
on what remains. Seed will sprout in the scar.
Though death is in the healing, it will heal.

Wendell Berry

THE SELECTED POEMS OF WENDELL BERRY

Michael news

Michael has safely evacuated his Santa Cruz hermitage. As of this writing the CZU Lightning Complex fire is not an immediate threat and in the past few days smoke in the area has abated. Michael wants you to know that he remembers you daily in his prayers and intentions, and sends his love.

New Camaldoli evacuated

Big Sur is under mandatory evacuation orders and the Hermitage is temporarily closed. Most of the monks have evacuated, with Fr. Zachaeus, Br. David, Prior Cyprian and some staff staying behind to monitor the situation. While the Dolan Fire is still a potential threat, firefighters are on-site and have been protecting the structures as needed. The Hermitage is expected to reopen after September 10th. Meanwhile, the monks are saying their prayers, uniting with all those suffering the loss of homes throughout California. Please visit:

<https://contemplation.com>

Michael grateful for your generous support

Michael is grateful for your kind support. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael's 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>
and <https://hermitfish.com/audio-retreats>

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