



The perfect time for “self-tuning”

The late Thérèse Gagnon was an oblate of the community who lived at New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur for 38 years. I recently had the privilege of accompanying her to the banks of the Jordan at the venerable age of 96. It was a graced but demanding experience for Thérèse as well as those who supported her on the final leg of her life journey.

Over the weeks, Thérèse shared, among many things, her love for a film she watched 54 times, the final viewing just before she died. The movie, *As it is in Heaven*, a Swedish production directed by Kay Pollak, won the Foreign Film Award in 2004. The film tells the story of Daniel, a world renowned symphony conductor, who, after suffering a heart attack, is forced to retire at the peak of his career and decides to return to the rural village where he grew up. The church choir immediately solicits his assistance. Instead of listening to their singing and repertoire, he explains how each person is like a musical instrument with its own unique sound or note. Further, how vital it was that each member of the choir discover their personal sound so that the choir would become a musical instrument in perfect harmony.

As the members find their notes, joy, laughter and exuberance are released, but also their discord and disharmony become obvious, personal and communal. The choir members embark on a journey through dissonance to harmony, each eventually finding their voice and new freedom.

I won't share any more, in case you decide to watch the movie. However, the message has remained with me – the call to push through my own disharmony, again and again, so as to be able to “sound myself.” Daniel, who is one of the Christ figures in the film, encourages the choir members to cling to their notes that they may not be overwhelmed by disaccord. Surely a message for today.

With awe I watched Thérèse claim her chord in the face of pain, suffering and dying

– a note, I'm sure, she sang with gusto as she crossed the Jordan into the Divine embrace.

This seems the perfect time for “self-tuning” so we may discover, not only our note, but inner harmony and be an instrument of peace and hope, making our little corner of the world “as it is in heaven.”

Coraggio,

Michael

In *As it is in Heaven* Daniel composes a song for Gabriella, a choir member who is paralyzed in an abusive marriage. In singing the song she finds the courage to become free.

Gabriella's Song

It is now that my life is mine
I've got this short time on earth
And my longing has brought me here
All I lacked and all I gained
And yet it's the way that I chose
My trust was far beyond words
That has shown me a little bit
Of the heaven I've never found
I want to feel I'm alive
All my living days
I will live as I desire
I want to feel I'm alive
Knowing I was good enough
I have never lost who I was
I have only left it sleeping
Maybe I never had a choice
Just the will to stay alive
All I want is to be happy being who I am
To be strong and to be free
To see day arise from night
I am here and my life is only mine
And the heaven I thought was there
I'll discover it there somewhere
I want to feel that I've lived my life

The lyrics, translated from Swedish, are not the best. You may prefer to listen to the song, it's on YouTube:

<https://tinyurl.com/2ubhmj7x>

As far as I know the movie is also on YouTube.

Michael news

Post production is complete on *Levanté 1*, the first of Michael's upcoming online retreat packages.

While production of the series is ongoing, we have been navigating the complexities of online distribution. We are now close to finalizing a video hosting source that ensures the highest viewer ease-of-use.

The *Levanté* retreats will initially be offered through retreat houses and parishes. We will keep you posted as *Levanté* becomes available.

Another way to help

Your purchases of Michael's retreat CDs, downloads and journals provide valuable support for his ministry – truly a win-win for everyone.

Journals are in ever shorter supply and will not be reprinted once gone. Available titles include *Cave of the Heart 2 and 3*, *Contemplative Ways of Being 2 and 3*, *Camino III* and *Celtic I*. These are valuable companions to the CDs or downloads. Visit:

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

We still have sundry CD titles in stock, some of which have only a handful left. Visit:

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

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

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

Grateful for your support

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

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