



The Troubadour

THE NEWSLETTER of the TROUBADOURS of PEACE REGION
of the SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Volume 10, Number 6

Fall 2006

ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING

After a very large tsunami, three of God's species were left on a new place, just the three of them. Animal, Bird, Fish. Following introductions each began using these species as names. Plans were being made how they may survive in the land, on their own, away from their original dwelling places. From the very beginning Fish seemed to be the C.E.O. "My friends, my companions, let us work together as a team and assist each other, shall we shake on that? I hand you a fin, no not that kind (5 dollar bill) but My fin, okay?" All in agreement. "My buddies, I am somewhat helpless and out of the water. I need water and a pool." Animal, Modern Marvels, no God's Marvel, the Mega Machine, commenced with those powerful paws to send earth in many directions after locating a place near a stream of water. Bird, meanwhile, with intuitive behavior with the gift of making nests and other necessities of a bird's life, flew around in search of twigs, small branches, so when the pool was ready it would dam up a section of the stream and water would flow in for Fish. How delighted was Fish when submerged into its home, bubbles of joy came rising to the surface.

The next gathering centered upon nourishment for each. Fish would catch what ever landed on the water's surface. "I can feed each of you with fish eggs for breakfast." Bird said: "I can circle in the sky, looking down at earth and find trees with fruit, bushes and vines with berries and those will add to our meals." Animal, the last to speak: "I don't want you to laugh or to make fun of me when I tell you: I am a vege.....vegetable....no vegetarian. I can dig and find vegetables of all kinds, you will be happy." No one laughed about Animal's eating habits. They continued to enjoy each other's company and were so contented with their daily meals, serving freely. And always at evening time, before the sun made its final set they gathered around the pool to discuss all of each day's happiness in their lives.

One evening the discussion became a bit serious. Again it was Fish who brought up the subject, in a joyful manner. "My companions we have had our Creator's assistance in our companionship together. Up to this time we have not seen or heard of another species, the human person. Would it not be wonderful to pass on our joyful relationship to those who might be all around us. Let's give that some thought. Rest for the night and when we gather the next evening, do have some ideas in mind." "God bless you."

The following evenfall the three companions gathered around the pool. Ground rules were laid. Each to have a turn, limit three minutes or less. No interruptions. Short, concise but to the point. Each was overjoyed to have a turn. Every species had learned so much from their experiences together, their sharing, their concern for one another, the countless joys

that came into their lives. Someone needed to record their findings, their thoughts. Bird said: "My handwriting is not the best, somewhat scratchy and of course a bit flighty at times." Fish responded, "I would like to but I do not have any underwater materials for writing." Animal jumped in, "Some years back I happened to be in a place, I guess it's called a human dwelling. A very young human was there and this species had some blocks with a different letter on each. I learned the alphabet and could put them together for words. I made mistakes in spelling and still do. But I am willing to be the scribe, the secretary for our group."

"Thank you," with great joy, exclaimed C.E.O. Fish. "Animal, can we give you a name, what about Leo?" Leo began beaming with wonderful enthusiasm. His beginning: Letter to all members of the human species wherever they are. Fish commenced first. For days I have swum around my pool and the one word which bubbled up time and again is that of RESPECT. We, three definitely manifested that in our behavior toward one another. I, being somewhat helpless was assisted by the two of you in making a pool for my survival. You both RESPECTED me. And I truly RESPECT each of you. I wonder if the human species know how to RESPECT each other. How happy they would be if this lesson was learned by each." Bird said: "I have flown around a lot in this marvelous sky enjoying freedom and observing the wonders below from my heights above. However, in the evening I see the stars and every now and then, for some reason, the letter H appears. I went through my alphabet and it finally centered on the word HONESTY. Yes, w birds of a feather gather in groups on fences, lines and other places of rest. I must admit we gossip a lot. Who can fly higher, faster, with great ease and agility. We become a pecking order. We are not sincere to ourselves or to others in our species. I am going to force that word HONESTY on the minds of all humans, that will help each to live in peace and freedom." Animal, Leo was last. "God made me strong and powerful and full of DIGNITY. I can do things that others are not able to do. However, I have been given the insight to see that all others likewise have a great DIGNITY of their own. That I recognize. Each of us are gifted in specific ways that is why we can share or learn to share with each of our own God given gifts. It seems I heard that saying before, something about learning to serve each other. I do like that word DIGNITY. It is powerful and yet needs to become so humble. We, each of us are blessed with gifts and talents, none of them come from us but from a gracious and loving Creator. We must be thankful.

We must RESPECT and be HONEST about our DIGNITY." Once Leo, Animal, had ended there appeared joy and happiness around them. Leo with one mighty paw attempted to wipe the tears from his eyes. Bird circled the sky with loops above the other two. Fish spewed forth countless gulps from the water below and large bubbles were dancing around the top of the pool.

C.E.O. Fish called the other two companions together, "Let us sing, Bird will you kindly give us a note, be careful it is not too lofty.....let us sing"

ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING, LIFT UP OUR VOICES
AND LET US SING, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.....

Friar John F. dePaemelaere, OFM, Regional Spiritual Assistant

REGIONAL MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Due to the need to make some changes in our regional newsletter, this message will be more an explanation than an inspiration. As costs for "doing business" increase, even though the items of that business remain the same, we must make adjustments to keep within budget. Our newsletter is one such item. At the last annual minister's meeting it was the consensus that the following changes would be made.

The number of pages will be reduced: The ministers indicated that they wish to retain the messages from the Spiritual Assistant, Minister and Formation Director, as well as information on Commissions; but other extraneous tidbits will not be included. We will continue to pass on announcements or information from all levels of our fraternities which are important.

The distribution will be electronic or regular postal delivery as needed: All local fraternity ministers are to provide information as to the number of hard copies they need for distribution and the e-mail address to which we may send electronic distribution. That distribution will be the responsibility of the local fraternity. The newsletter will also be posted on our web-site <http://www.troubadourspeace.org> and can be downloaded from there. I do request that ministers keep a printed copy in their library. The region will send copies/e-mails directly to satellites, emerging communities, and groups (thus sponsoring fraternity ministers are relieved of that responsibility).

It is our hope that these changes will reduce the cost of both printing and distribution. I, too, will miss some of the "gentler" anecdotes, but reductions are required. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

On a different note, I should like to share with you something I read recently. "Chant teaches us something else about living in the present. From a pragmatic point of view, chant is a useless activity, it doesn't accomplish anything. We are so geared to what is useful that we forget the meaningful, what gives our life joy and depth and value. To listen to the music or to sing a chant is to do something that has no practical purpose; it is just celebration and praise, it is just tasting of the joy and beauty of life, the glory of God. Listening to it, even in the midst of a very purposeful day, reminds us to add the other dimension to our experience, the dimension of meaning, that makes it worthwhile."

(Music of Silence, by David Steindl-Rast, OSB.) I'm listening : I encourage you to do the same.

Pax et Bonum, *Elaine*



Gift from Lady Clare

I sometimes marvel and often laugh at modern mankind (generally myself). We are for the most part children of a pragmatic, problem-solving, and immediate gratification age. The American way, is the predominant mindset that generally spills over into all our endeavors, including religion and spirituality. Every year during my fraternity's Lenten exercises we talk about priorities and journey, how journeying into God requires some dedicated quality time, some solitude and contemplation. The general response to my annual challenge of just 5 minutes of solitude often elicits responses of lack of time. It's funny how willing we are to waste money, even relationships, but with all our time saving devices and gadgets we have no time to waste, with God. Wasting time means we are not out "doing" or accomplishing or achieving. We are, for these brief moments, no longer the center of the universe, but we are in the place where we can meet God. I am not talking faithful observance of Sunday liturgy or vocal prayer, these are good, but in these devotions and worship we do all the talking. I am talking about letting go, getting ourselves out of the way to

just sit and waste time in solitude with the love Incarnate.

Much of our spirituality today is rooted in and takes much of its form from Monastic spirituality (Benedictine), with its prayers and rituals to mark the passing of the day (*Lectio Divina* & Hours). *Lectio divina* (divine reading) is one of the main approaches to the spiritual life. An excellent discipline and spiritual tool, but it falls short of the goal of Franciscan Spiritual Tradition. *Lectio* begins with prayerful reading of scripture. Meditation is the next with the goal of actively imagining ourselves within the scripture events taking place. Oratio is the prayer arising from our meditation and the final hopeful stage is entering into contemplation or the silence of the divine cloud. A nice orderly methodical approach that focuses on union with God as its ultimate goal. Francis understood the urgency and need for contemplative solitude in order to embrace his divine lover, but this experience of union needs external expression via action. In this space of solitude, much like Jesus, Francis recognized his lover and knew he was the beloved. Unfortunately, save for example, Francis did not leave us with a process or guideline to follow. Enter the gift of Lady Clare. Clare in her insight gives us the path to follow if we desire a spiritually centered life, and I believe there is no true spirituality without contemplation. Jesus' own life demonstrates a constant flow between action and contemplation, for us (SFO), going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel. If you believe that Jesus in his very physical being reveals the nature and actions of God, do you think Jesus might actually show us the path that we need to walk in order to experience the fullness of life? I do not believe that another sermon, retreat, prayer, revival, workshop leads to conversion and relationship with God. I believe we are drawn into relationship through our desire and that we generally run from until life happens and/or overcomes us. We learn little from success except how to cling to the status quo, but this does not allow the God to enter a living heart. We chase all the things of the world to prove our worth. We need to be important, have lots of stuff, and be smart, pretty, pragmatic and great problem-solvers. We do it all, so we don't have to sit still and look deeply into love's true face as well as our own, and there stripped of everything learn in our littleness and nakedness that we have come to the place of the lover and the beloved. The place where we are loved completely, simply for love's sake. The place where we fall in love and also gently fall into God.

Clare shows us how to enter the spiritual journey and to waste time with God. Clare's fourfold approach which provides a firm foundation for Franciscan spirituality, is a shift from centering on various stories from Scripture like the *Lectio* and refocusing and centering on the person Jesus. Clare's spiritual guidance leads us as follows:

1. Gaze at Him – Clare counseled her sisters to waste time by gazing on and into the mirror perfection. Jesus on the Cross!
2. Next consider Him – look into His life, his words and actions and come to realize how much Jesus is truly your love and you are His beloved. Yes you, you are his most precious beloved, with all the faults, failures, insecurities, troubles, just the way you are is the you that is loved. Find your own face there in the face of Christ
3. Contemplate-Learn to gladly waste time in solitude with Him, a place without words, prayers, saying anything, because here the act of time is the very essence of prayer, and here you learn to be caressed by God's love. Let go of your own agenda, including your spiritual agenda, just sit in stillness and allow God to embrace
4. Lastly and most importantly is imitation. Clare goes beyond other spiritual disciplines to the heart of spirituality, to become/transform ourselves into what we love. We are asked to realize that we are "little words" spoken by God, invited to join into the dance of the Trinity, the dance of life. We are to become fullness of the body of Christ so we too reveal God's love and to extend His Blessing on every generation. Becoming Jesus is how we take up our cross, and follow Jesus. Imitation, being Jesus is the foundation of our Franciscan Life.

Monastic spirituality, *Lectio Divina*, calls us to union with God and to leave the world. Clare's wisdom calls us to union with God, only to ask us to allow ourselves to be transformed and then to actively embrace and love the world, to be the blessing for all Creation.

May you receive many blessings along the way that allow you to let go and let God.

Pace, e bene, Bob Fitzsimmon - Regional Formation Director



That which kills innocent life is so unjust. The largest crime against peace and justice is abortion. It follows that we Secular Franciscans should wage a peaceful war to save and protect pre-born human life. This fighting can be done in many ways, both small and large-scale. It is our duty and privilege to fight peacefully against this great evil abortion. There is no room for hate in this fight for the unborn. St. Francis said: “Where there is hatred, let me sow love.” We can reach out in love by doing simple acts of charity. And the best thing we can do is pray for all the pre-born babies. Pray for their mothers that they will choose life and justice for the babies they carry.

Simple acts of charity can really help in this battle. Every time a person from a local sewing guild makes a hand-done layette for the local pregnancy help center, he or she sends a message to the mother and baby: “I want your baby to live.” When someone makes a meal for a sick pregnant woman on bedrest they are sending a message: “You and your baby matter to us.” These types of good works are done to create peace and justice for the unborn children.

If we Secular Franciscans can keep up the peacemaking fight against abortion, we must remember to do as St. Francis asked: “When we hear or see people speaking or doing evil or blaspheming God, we must say and do good, praising God, who is blessed forever.” It’s never good to be disrespectful of others when waging war against the injustice of abortion. Remember that each SFO member is an instrument of God’s peace. It’s not right to tuck your Secular Franciscan ideals when nobody can see them, and get into a nasty, unfruitful argument with a pro-abortionist. Better to show that you can stand your ground while keeping the dialog open respectfully and humbly.

The great evil of abortion can be fought by reaching out in compassion to help mothers and pre-born children by doing simple loving acts. By keeping our prayers with them, providing necessary baby items and food, and keeping our Franciscan ideals displayed out in front when talking against pro-abortionists, we can keep up the good fight. As St. Francis of De Sales said: “We can never love our neighbor too much: There is nothing small in the service of God.”

Peace & Justice Chair, Sue K. Ballinger, SFO



Last summer, about this time of August, I stood passively in our Catholic, pro-life booth at the Kitsap County Fair greeting those who wandered in and responding to those with particular challenges or questions. What I was not expecting were the remarks of a young woman who approached me smiling and asking me directly if I had fostered any children? Had I adopted any children lately? Was I caring for the children of a single parent so the parent could work, etc? I smiled and tried to answer her rapidly fired questions, but all that stumbled out of my mouth was the first “no” and that was all she wanted to hear—then she was satisfied, “see you people, you want us to --- have these---kids but you are not willing to adopt them or even care for them!!!The last few words stated over her shoulder as she walked away. She did not hang around for a discussion. I think she got the answer she was looking for and I was left to wonder? Sure I was pro-life, but was I willing to go out of my out of my comfort zone?

The Gospel reading today is from Matthew 22:34-40. The two greatest commandments, one is love of God

