



Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB. CAM

Small beginnings, greater ends

I am back after 44 days walking the Via Francigena, south of Rome. The route is both ancient, going back to the Roman and Crusader times, and recently opened, in 2019, to modern pilgrims. Each walk has its own lessons and message. This one was particularly challenging, stretching and demanding, because of the terrain, the lack of signage, the weather and long distances. Yet, it had a unique depth and grace to it.

I encountered many angels along the way, people who welcomed me into their homes – a friendly smile, strangers providing assistance with accommodation and directions, the offer of a cup of coffee or a glass of water – all these angels leading me to Bethlehem, not in Palestine, but in my heart.

Just like the angels who appeared and directed the shepherds in Luke's Christmas Gospel, these angels directed me to the tiny spark of hope and love that is there, like the holy Child, poor and vulnerable, at the core of humanity. Of course, there were Herods too, unhappy people who could only pass on their hurt and pain, people who took advantage of me as a foreigner. However, the angels outnumbered the Herods by far. As well as heavenly hosts, there was also the Italian country side, beautiful architecture, art, ancient churches and frescoes that pointed to the inner Bethlehem, the mystery within.

At a number of Masses, I attended on the walk, the Donovan song, "The Little Church," from the movie "Brother Sun, Sister Moon," was sung at the Offertory. This song became my theme, my Gospel and invitation, on the pilgrimage – "Go slowly, do few things and do them well, stone by stone, day by day, live life free and purely."

As we begin the Camino of Advent, in preparation of the feast of Bethlehem, I encourage you to look out for angels in your daily life, they are definitely there. Be attentive to the signs pointing to the Child of hope and light, sidestep the Herods, and, instead, become instruments of kindness, angels, doing fewer things well, stone by stone, building slowly the secret of Bethlehem in yourself, in others and in the poor, devastated Holy Land.

Small beginnings, greater ends.

A blessed Advent and holy Nativity,

Michael

The Little Church

(excerpt)

If you want your dream to be
Take your time, go slowly
Do few things but do them well
Heartfelt work grows purely

If you want to live life free
Take your time, go slowly
Do few things but do them well
Heartfelt work grows purely

Day by day, stone by stone

Build your secret slowly

Day by day, you'll grow too

You'll know heaven's glory

DONOVAN LEITCH

I encourage you to look for this song on the internet and listen to Donovan singing the original soundtrack version. It could well be a new Advent/Christmas carol for you this year.

– Michael

Michael News

Michael shared how this walk was quite solitary, having met only 9 or 10 pilgrims during 7 weeks walking. He had to use much more creativity negotiating and navigating some sections of the path than in previous Caminos. However, the experience was a grace-filled retreat for him.

While walking, the General Chapter was on the go in Camaldoli, Italy. Early on, in the meetings, a new Prior General was elected, Fr. Matteo Ferrari. Hopefully we'll meet him when he comes to install the new prior in New Camaldoli in January 2024.

Christmas with 'Levanté'

In addition to their regular monthly schedules, all three *Levanté* video retreats (available separately) are being offered over the Christmas-New Year's (Dec 22-Jan 4) holidays. Christmas-New Year's *Levanté* retreats will feature double, 14-day access. Many thanks to those who have participated so far. For all upcoming retreat dates visit:

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

Audio Subscriptions

Michael's entire audio retreat library is available online 24/7, via subscription – over 70 hours of inspiration. If you need assistance subscribing, managing your subscription, or accessing the recordings, please contact laura@hermitfish.com. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/about-the-audio-library>

Grateful for your support

Michael wishes to thank everyone for your continued prayers, good wishes and support this past year. 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>

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Levanté 3 Online Video Retreats
DECEMBER 16-22 and DECEMBER 22-JAN 4*

JANUARY 25-31, 2024

Levanté 3 information:

<https://hermitfish.com/levant3-schedule>

Levanté 2 Online Video Retreats

DECEMBER 14-20 and DECEMBER 22-JAN 4*

JANUARY 18-24, 2024

Levanté 2 information:

<https://hermitfish.com/levant2-schedule>

Levanté 1 Online Video Retreats

DECEMBER 7-13 and DECEMBER 22-JAN 4*

JANUARY 11-17, 2024

Levanté 1 information:

<https://hermitfish.com/levant1-retreat-houses>

*Special Christmas 14-day access

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