

Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB, CAM

Naming the New Year

On New Year's eve, at the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, we'd hold a three-hour vigil, commencing at 9:00pm with Compline and culminating at midnight with vigils for the Feast of Theotokos, Mary, the God-bearer. During these hours of prayer, we borrowed from the Liturgy of Baptism, naming the New Year. Each person would light a taper from the Paschal candle, declare their chosen name for the year — hope, peace, reconciliation — then place the taper before the altar. By the end of the ritual, the chapel glowed with light and beauty.

The first day of the New Year is rightly dedicated to Mary, cradling not only her divine Child, but also the year ahead with its joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams. On my recent walk in the town Lecce, Italy, I found a little church near my lodgings. Inside was a Lady Chapel where people knelt in prayer and votive candles flickered. A simple 14th-century fresco depicted Mary and her Child. She was holding a flower while the Child had a bird, resembling a dove, in his hand. Called Mary of Grace, (Santa Maria della Grazia) it was an image obviously cherished by locals.

Visitors were encouraged to write requests in a worn book (see center column), to be remembered at Mass on each month's first Saturday. I penned your name, asking for prayers for all who read these words or make the retreats. The space emanated gentle peace, like a maternal embrace. May Mary accompany us into this new year and teach us to become Theotokos, bearing her son into 2024 amidst all uncertainty.

Happy New Year, may graces in abundance be yours.

Blessings,

Michael

P.S. I have named my New Year: *Listening*



Our Lady of Grace

In grace we find the fullness of ourselves, we rediscover the lost harmony, we re-compose the unity between our inner inside and the outside of us, the world, the other.

In grace we find regeneration, sanctification, joy of the soul, visited by the joy that we discover in God. Yet, sometimes life deprives us of so much good.

An invitation, therefore, to ask the Madonna della Grazia for her maternal help to obtain the grace that we need.

In the notebook presented here, you can confide in and ask anonymously, the Mother of God to obtain the grace, which you intimately seek.

Levante 3 Online Video Retreats
JANUARY 25-31 • FEBRUARY 15-21

Levante 3 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante3-schedule>

Levante 2 Online Video Retreats
JANUARY 18-24 • FEBRUARY 8-14

Levante 2 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante2-schedule>

Levante 1 Online Video Retreats
JANUARY 11-17 • FEBRUARY 1-7

Levante 1 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante1-retreat-houses>

Michael News

After spending Christmas at the New Camaldoli Hermitage, Michael will return to Big Sur early in the new year for the election and installation of the new prior which will be overseen by the Prior General from Italy.

The new year begins with Michael, Laura and Randy working on *Levante 4* which, hopefully, will be available in the coming weeks. Keep a look out for the announcement.

'Levante' for New Year's

All of the *Levante* video retreats are available this month. Even though they are numbered 1, 2 and 3, Michael has created them with the intent that they may be watched in any order. Many thanks to those who have participated so far. For information on 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>

Thanks for your support

Michael is grateful to 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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