



Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB. CAM

Sponge or stone?

As daylight extends long into evening and temperatures rise, I find myself, even after 20 years in the Northern Hemisphere, confused. A part of me thinks it's December and the end of the year because of South African Summer memories. I'm often not sure where I am or what month it is. This "gentle" confusion or conflict keeps me second-guessing myself and alert. It's different from the conflict I sometimes experience before, during or after a retreat or Parish Mission. As regular as clockwork, some disruption occurs which attempts to derail or disturb me.

This happens so often, that I have come to expect or anticipate it, yet am always surprised at its subtlety – a sort of attack from the darkness. For example, on my way to the airport my car won't start, or my flight is canceled or delayed. I receive an upsetting email or phone message just before beginning a retreat, or the incorrect handouts are printed. Sometimes it's a misunderstanding in the midst of a retreat, or I receive some disturbing family news. The list is unending. Many of us experience the same dynamic in our lives.

St. Ignatius of Loyola has a lovely little parable – *Water dripping into a sponge is quiet, silent and gentle. Water dripping on stone is discordant and harsh.* Once I recognize this dark disruption there is relief and I'm usually able to return to center even if it takes time. I'm thrown and disturbed before the penny drops.

The art is in recognizing the

crafty, perfectly-timed attack, then re-centering oneself. Is it darkness that we're experiencing, or merely the annoyances of typical, distracting events in everyday life?

Ignatius has another little teaching based on his personal experience – Some activities or thoughts are initially stimulating and enjoyable but then drop us into emptiness and negativity, while others don't have the addictive *high* but offer a long-lasting *Soul sweetness*. Awareness and discernment is the name of the game. Often disruption, distraction, confusion and conflict are red flags inviting pause. Is it "sponge or stone," "Winter or Summer"?

Love,

Michael

In those who are making progress in the spiritual life, from good to better, the good angel touches the soul gently, tenderly, and sweetly, as a drop of water entering a sponge, but the evil spirit touches it sharply, with noise and agitation, like a drop of water hitting upon a rock.

– St. Ignatius
Spiritual Exercises

An Evening with Michael space still available

There is still space available for the special evening with Michael on August 22, 2019, at Mater Dolorosa in Sierra Madre, CA (Center Outdoor Amphitheater). A light supper with a beverage will be served at 6:30PM and Michael will speak at 7:30.

For more information and to purchase tickets (\$35) visit:

<https://materdolorosa.org/an-evening-with-fr-michael-fish/>

Retreat recordings

Michael now has 12 downloadable retreats available online, while 11 titles are also available on CD. Each is a full retreat, consisting of 5 talks, totaling over five hours. Visit: <https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/MichaelFish>

2021-22 retreat scheduling

Michael will be on sabbatical the entire of 2020. If you are an organization, group or retreat center interested in booking Michael for an event in 2021-22, please contact Laura Hipke, (818) 248-4747 or laura@hipkes.com.

Support needed for Michael

Many are not aware that Michael is entirely self-supporting, receiving no financial assistance apart from his own ministry. Your tax-deductible donation to Hermit Fish, his 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, helps to sustain Michael's ministry. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Michael's Upcoming Events

JULY

8-15 | **Camino Retreat**, Santa Sabina Center, San Rafael, CA, Info: (415) 457-7727

25-28 | **Cave of the Heart III**, Mercy Center, Burlingame, CA, Info: (650) 340-7474

AUGUST

22 | **An Evening with Fr. Michael Fish**, Mater Dolorosa, Sierra Madre, CA, Info: (626) 355-7188

23-25 | **Cave of the Heart III**, Mater Dolorosa, Sierra Madre, CA, Info: karenjudson43@gmail.com

OCTOBER

17 | **Journey into Contemplation**, Mary & Joseph Retreat Center, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, Info: (310) 377-4867 x234

18-20 | **Merton's Mirror**, Mary & Joseph Retreat Center, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, Info: (TBD)

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