



A new direction

I had a filial relationship with St. Alphonus, the founder of the Redemptorists. I loved the old, stooped Neapolitan and still have a place for him in my heart. I confess I have almost no relationship with St. Benedict apart from a profound respect for his Rule. However, with St. Romuald, whose feast we keep on June 19th, it was love at first sight, as if I knew him even though he lived over 1,000 years ago. Every time I discover or read something new about him, my heart jumps.



On a wall in my hermitage, I have a large blow-up picture of Romuald taken from Fra Angelico's Crucifixion Scene, painted in the Chapter Room of San Marco's Convent in Florence. In the painting, a crowd of saints stand around the Crucified looking on with contrition and awe. Fra Angelico has depicted Romuald looking intently at the cross, however, taken out of context, as my picture of him is, it appears as if he is scowling.

Romuald's gaze follows me wherever I go in my hermitage and I find myself repeatedly apologizing for my poor, feeble following and imitation of him. In spite of this, our connection runs deep.

Romuald has accompanied me on each Camino and, in fact, on my daily walks. He loved walking, crossed Europe on his wanderings a few times, sometimes on a donkey, a pilgrim through and through. On these journeys, he would found new hermitages, reform monasteries, preach and teach and then, to everyone's dismay, he would disappear into solitude for months, even years. He was four years in Croatia, three of them alone in a cave. He had his own unique rhythm, which Camaldoli, over the centuries, has struggled to capture and institutionalize.

I share this, because over the past year of my "pandemic sabbatical," and nudged by health issues, I have discerned to adopt more Romuald's rhythm and solitude and take my ministry in a new direction for the foreseeable future — online, rather than in-person.

Levanté, the retreat I'm working on, is my first step on this uncharted journey — and it is an all-consuming endeavor. Writing and filming the talks for this new type of retreat take everything I have. The effort it requires reinforces that I must make this change from the rigors of travel and in-person retreats. But the redeeming blessing of *Levanté* and what follows, is that the message of my ministry will ultimately be accessible to everyone, worldwide. I trust the Spirit and Romuald will lead. This appears to be the grace of my sabbatical.

As I embark on this next phase of solitude and ministry, I want to assure you that I have your name written in my heart and pray this new direction will bring peace and comfort to you, and, in return, I ask you please to remember me in your prayers.

Blessings,

Michael

Brief Rule of St. Romuald

Sit in your cell as in paradise;
 put the whole world behind you and forget it;
 like a skilled angler on the lookout for a catch
 keep a careful eye on your thoughts.
 The path you follow is in the psalms — don't leave it.
 If you've come with a novice's enthusiasm and can't
 accomplish what you want, take every chance you
 can find
 to sing the psalms in your heart and to understand
 them
 with your head; if your mind wanders as you read
 don't give up but hurry back and try again.
 Above all realize that you are in God's presence;
 hold your heart there in wonder as if before your
 sovereign.
 Empty yourself completely;
 sit waiting, content with God's gift,
 like a little chick tasting and eating nothing
 but what its mother brings.

Michael news

June 25th marks the 43rd anniversary of Michael's ordination in 1978. We all celebrate this blessed event.

Production has begun on Michael's *Levanté* online retreat. We have a sneak peek on the website, visit: <https://hermitfish.com>

"Cave 3" CDs shipping

At this writing, Michael's *Cave of the Heart 3* retreat CDs are on their way to us and we'll promptly ship them on arrival. Thanks to all who pre-ordered (and have been patiently waiting for their manufacture). We ordered some additional stock, so if you wish to purchase the 5-CD set, please visit: <https://hermitfish.com/retreats-cd-sets/cave-of-the-heart-5-disc-cd-set>

We have a limited number of retreat journals left. These are the perfect companions to the CD sets or downloads of Michael's retreats. Visit: <https://hermitfish.com/retreat-journals>

There are yet some retreats in stock on CD. Not every title is available and quantities are dwindling. Visit: <https://hermitfish.com/retreats-cd-sets>

All 13 of Michael's retreats (5 talks each) are available as downloads. Visit: <https://hermitfish.com/audio-retreats>

Thanks for your support

Michael wishes to extend his heartfelt thanks to 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.
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Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigmala.com