Buen Camino
Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB. CAM

Focusing on the new sprouts

Sometime back, I shared with you how, during a raging Winter storm, the top of the towering redwood next to my hermitage broke off and, thank God, fell away from my chapel and dwelling.

I called Camilo, the local tree guy, and he suggested we take the remaining part of the tree down as rot had set in that had, in fact, caused the snap. I asked Camilo and his crew if they could leave the stump about three-feet high, which I hoped to use as an outside altar. However, there was a language miscommunication and they provided me with a huge round section separately. The crew had cut it with precision, which meant the remaining stump was perfectly level. About the same time I was gifted with a beautiful ceramic Madonna and Child which begged to be placed on the stump with its emanating concentric growth rings. Beauty on beauty. A perfect match. A few months later the statue almost disappeared behind a luxuriant, prolific growth of sucker shoots all around the stump. I apologized profusely to the redwood and cut them out and back to liberate my Madonna. And so it goes, each month or so I have a "sucker cut" followed by confession.

Such a powerful symbol, the tenacity and determination of the redwood to perpetuate itself. I know, eventually, according to good tree husbandry, I'll have to allow four or five suckers to remain and partner with Mother Nature in creating a redwood "family or fairy" ring, which I'll never witness personally. We have three redwood rings on the property and they are indeed magic and sacred.

This reminds me of that beautiful text from the Jewish Scriptures echoing in the New Testament and finally becoming one of the Advent "O Antiphons," (Is. 11:10, Rom. 15:8-13, Rev. 22:16) the shoot from the stump of Jesse. I see the Spirit and, by extension, the Church (not necessarily the institution) as well as our own inner Being exhibiting the same redwood perseverance and doggedness to keep sprouting anew. So, instead of lamenting at all that has and is collapsing, dying and disappearing, let's instead focus on the new sprouts of the Spirit (within and around us) that will never stop emerging and become midwives and husbands to rings of mystery which will far outlive us.

Blessings,

michael

Instead of a poem this month, I thought I'd share this image of Madonna and Child hiding amongst the suckers.

Michael news

Departing in mid-June, Michael is hoping to attempt to walk part of the Via Francigena, that he had planned to trek in 2020, before the Covid Pandemic hit. Beginning at the French/Swiss border, Michael hopes to cross the Alps at St. Bernard's Pass, continuing onto Rome. There is a time constraint, as the pass only opens once the snow melts in late June or early July. That means walking in Italy in midsummer, so nothing is set in stone.

Michael will be away for a few months, so instead of the usual newsletter, we plan an occasional update from his walk. He asks for your prayers for his safety and protection.

Thanks for your support

Michael is grateful to everyone for your continued prayers, good wishes and support. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael's 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475
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