



# Buen Camino

Newsletter of Fr. Michael Fish, OSB, CAM

## A calling out in the night

For about a week, around one o'clock in the morning, an owl, very close to my hermitage, has been calling out. I think it's a "he" as it has a deep baritone call. He wakes me and I lie there listening intently with him to the responding silence. I feel sorry for him and yet admire his perseverance and tenacity.

Then, two nights ago, same time, after about three or four calls, there was a reply, lighter, more lyrical, also nearby. My owl and I were so shocked we both held our breath, disbelieving our ears – I know I did and he did as well because he didn't respond and in the silence came the sweet, gentle call again. So she was there and real. And then my guy got his act together and tripped over himself with calls, one after the other not even waiting for the reply. After awhile, we all quieted down and a rhythm of call and counter-call began and I was privy to the most intimate Vigils of these two, singing "owl psalms," in the dark of night. I leaned into their prayer and praise smiling. Call and antiphon for an hour or two and then silence, as they, perhaps, flew into the early dawn.

I love it when synchronicity occurs, it always smells to me of the Spirit. Later that day, I read a few lines from a Trappist in England, now a bishop, Erik Varden, "The owl has for centuries been a symbol of the monk. Why? Because it watches in the night, when most people sleep; because it is able to see in the dark, discerning movements and patterns, foundations of meaning, where the human eye perceives only vaguely."

A lovely idea, new to me, I confess. However, we're all potential monks, monks at heart, so this is our symbol too and a reminder of qualities we need to cultivate and nurture – perseverance in prayer, tenacity of faith, profound listening, discerning movements, patterns and meaning, penetrating the darkness, all so

relevant for these times.

Lying in bed, listening with my owl after each call, waiting, hoping, believing is another symbol of prayer, calling out in the night for ourselves and the world. And, oh, the joy when the rejoin is heard. Could it also be a metaphor for God calling us in our dark or from deep within, persistently, until, relenting, we tentatively reply? Either way, I'm woken now by the silence of the early hours and, lying there, I wait, hope, listen and long for the call of the owl.

Blessings,

*Michael*

P.S. With what is unfolding in Ukraine, please join me in lighting a candle to Our Lady of Kyiv for peace and protection.

## What You Sometimes Feel on Your Face at Night

Out of mist, God's  
Blind hand gropes to find  
Your face. The fingers  
Want to memorize your face. The fingers  
Will be wet with the tears of your eyes.  
God wants only to love you, perhaps.

~ Robert Penn Warren  
*Or Else*

## Levante 1 Retreat Schedule

*Levante 1* is an online, virtual retreat and may be viewed remotely from anywhere in the world during the May 13-15 and 27-29 dates.

**MAY 13-15** | Mary & Joseph Retreat Center  
5300 Crest Road, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

**MAY 27-29** | Santa Sabina Retreat Center  
25 Magnolia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901

**JULY 19-26** | Villa Maria del Mar Retreat Center  
21918 East Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95062

For information about *Levante 1*, visit:  
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-1-retreat-houses>

## From Michael

The 2nd March is Ash Wednesday, which once again kicks off the period of Lent. Keeping in mind the owl, whose call was a sort of question left echoing in the dark, how about, for Lent this year, we take a question of Jesus from the Gospel for each of the 40 days and ponder it? I have asked Laura to place a question on HermitFish.com each day for you. Buen Lenten Camino.

## 'Levante 1' is finally a "GO"

The *Levante 1* retreat is now a reality, with the first retreat centers having booked it. Check them out at:

<https://tinyurl.com/3j5yky9m>

## Savings on CD Bundles

We've bundled CD sets of Michael's most popular retreat series. Bundles of the *Contemplative Ways of Being 1, 2 & 3* series; and *Cave of the Heart 1, 2 & 3* series are now each available for \$125 (normally \$150 if purchased separately). The bundle of *Celtic Spirituality I & II* is \$85 (normally \$100).

CD sets of several of Michael's retreats are available. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/retreats-cd-sets>

Journals are companion keepsakes to the retreat recordings. Visit:

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

Downloads of all 13 of Michael's retreats (5 talks ea) are available. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/audio-retreats>

## Grateful for your support

Michael sincerely thanks 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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