
TRANSFIGURATION
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The View

NEWSLETTER



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www.transfigurationhermitage.org

Where Jesus Walked

In early October, thanks to a blessed gift from Scott Dow and Fr. Frank, I was able to join a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. What a tremendous gift! Once landed and through customs, we were met by our guide Nasr, whisked aboard a comfortable bus, and driven from Tel Aviv up through Israel to Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, some 200 feet below sea level. It was dark when we arrived, but next morning I opened the curtains in my hotel room to see sunrise over the sea of Galilee! What a blessed way to begin the day—and the pilgrimage.

We spent 9 days in the Holy Land, four days in Galilee, then a day's drive south into the West Bank, where the group toured Masada, Qumran, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan River at the site of Jesus' baptism. Amazing to see how small the Jordan River is, and the country of Jordan just yards away on the far bank. After Mass in the lovely church of the Good Shepherd in Jericho, we spent four days in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Someone asked me what struck me most during that trip. My immediate response was, 'How strong and physically fit Jesus must have been.' Why? Because of the hot, arid climate,

especially around the Dead Sea, but also at the Sea of Galilee, where he lived at Capharnum and conducted much of his ministry. And he walked *everywhere*—from Galilee to Jerusalem and back. He walked through the barren, arid desert from Jericho to Jerusalem, where in many areas there is absolutely nothing but sand and rock. He walked *everywhere*. He had to be strong and fit just to keep walking.

Walking: up the Mount of the Beatitudes. Up the much higher and steeper Mt. Tabor, site of the Transfiguration. On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, up through the 'Valley of the Shadow of Death' where the sun never penetrates the shadows of the overhanging mountains—and where today there is the remote and mostly inaccessible Orthodox Monastery of St. George.

Walking: what a metaphor for life! We speak of walking through our days, of walking into the future. We remember our children's first steps, and when they began to walk. Brides walk down the aisle, and a family walks behind a coffin on its last journey. I remember Jackie Kennedy walking behind the coffin of JFK, and the young princes William and

Harry walking behind that of their mother Diana.

So much of life is spent walking, and for so many centuries, before wheelchairs and the ADA, those who could not walk—or who had other disabilities—were often relegated to the shadows, rendered useless, impotent, invisible.

The way a person walks can be revealing. Some walk timidly, uncertainly. Some walk confidently, even arrogantly. Some reveal their discomfort with their bodies, some seem natural and at home in them. I remember someone we knew when in Thorndike: he walked so openly, so trustingly.

I think of Jesus and wonder how he might have walked. I can't imagine him striding along arrogantly—or cautiously creeping either. I think he would have walked without any self-consciousness, comfortable with himself and with his place on the earth. He surely walked with calm, and strength, and compassion; rooted in himself like a tree, his arms like sturdy branches reaching out to all others. He certainly walked into the future with infinite trust in his Father, even when he knew the future led to a garden and a night and a cross.

How do I walk, I wonder?
And how do I walk into my future?
Cautiously, I think, and sometimes
fearfully. I hope I don't walk with
bluster and arrogance, though I
know that at times in the past I
have. I would like to walk as Jesus
walked: grounded, calm, in self
possession. But all too often I fail.
I need his spirit, the spirit of Jesus,
the Holy Spirit, in order to do so.
That spirit is available to me at all
times, if only I'd remember to be
open to it.

As Advent and Christmas
approach, I pray that I, and all
people, might learn to walk with
Jesus, and might learn to walk as
he walked: grounded, centered, not
rushing, not dragging my feet. Just
walking. Walking. Walking with
the Lord.

Sr Elizabeth



SR. B'S DOGGIES

**God gave: a time to love, cherish,
laugh and care.**

**God took back: Katy, 11 years ago;
and my sweet Daisy Mae, a few
weeks ago.**

**"If we take happiness from God's
hand, must we not take sorrow
too?"**

I surely took sorrow when Daisy
suddenly collapsed and then died
later that same day.

During the very last
minutes, in the vet's emergency
room, I hugged my precious girl
and uttered my last words to her, "I
love you, I love you, I love you,"
and broke into tears. Esther (now
Sr. Scholastica) was with me, and
she also burst into tears, for she
and Daisy had bonded very close
to each other.

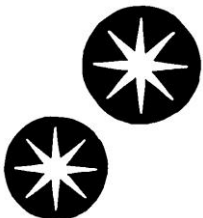
Let me tell you how my
glamorous angel came to me. I had
always told Katy that I would
never have another dog, for she
was also a loving dog, and gave
me unconditional love, as all pets
do. Katy dies, and a few months
later I longed for another four-
footed companion. I went to
Katy's grave and told her that her
human mommy would like another
dog. And in the next few weeks
beside her grave was a lovely
spread of tiny daisies! I gave a
thanks of joy to God and kissed
Katy's gravestone because I knew
she had given me permission for
another dog.

And lo and behold! Daisy
Mae a dazzling white dog jumped
out of this couple's car and came
prancing up to the Hermitage. My
Katy I know did not want me to
have another dog like her (black),
so she sent me a white dog instead!

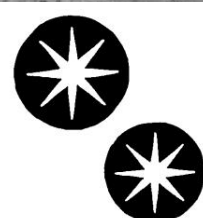
Daisy was an angel of a
dog, so very gentle, and a
wonderful guard dog. Her stature,
her clear, dark eyes and beautiful
white eyelashes made her a very
unique presence. She was surely
my soul companion. But the time
came and God took her back to the
animal kingdom to be at rest with
Katy and the Hermitage cats. Good
bye my girl!

Sr. Bernadette

Sr E adds this: Daisy was the
gentlest, most loving, most calm of
dogs—the perfect monastic dog.
We all miss her very, very much!



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Our thanks to the following people for their generous contributions to the chapel fund:

Angela Gilladoga, MD
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mem Gail Parker
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mem Larry Mellyn
Irene Siket



Book Review

Listening Below the Noise - the Transformative Power of Silence by Anne D. LeClaire. Harper Perennial, New York, NY: 2010, 228 pp.

I picked up this book off a shelf of donated used books supporting a local animal shelter. Wedged in among the plethora of romances, mysteries, and self-help paperbacks, was a little blue book with this intriguing title. Of course I couldn't resist, and after all it was only a dollar! In retrospect, I'm so glad I found it—and I'm amazed that I never heard of it before.

Perhaps because it's not a precociously 'spiritual' book, perhaps because LeClaire writes with a simple yet profound lucidity, perhaps because it was just the right time for me to be reading it, having learned this past year to sit with an hour or more each morning in silence, regardless of where my thoughts take me—whatever the reason, I can only agree with

VOLUNTEERS

Our thanks go out to our dedicated volunteers, especially **Al Parker** who kept the lawns mowed and the edges trimmed all summer. To **Bob Lamothe** for numerous handyman jobs; to **Mary Fernandes** who keeps the books balanced; and to **Gunner & Deb**, who helped us move furniture, carry furniture and garden utensils, and to **Gunner** who dug those giant peonies! Special thanks also to **Peggy Powis** for laying out this newsletter so attractively! Thanks to you one and all, we'd be lost without you!

the blurb on the back cover "this is a book that heals the soul, a classic....It left me spellbound and stunned by its power."

LeClaire describes how during a solitary walk in a salt marsh, one January afternoon, grieving for the approaching death of a friend, she somehow, miraculously (I believe), connected with something larger than herself, and she was swept with gratitude for the gift of life, with a sense of blessing.

And then: "As I stood there beneath the azure sky gazing at the eiders, I actually heard three words, heard them so clearly that I turned my head to search the sands for a sign of someone else. But I was alone on the winter beach. Then I heard them again. "Sit in silence."

And so she does. She remains silent for the first and third Mondays of each month. This discipline of silence brings profound depth and

RETREATS AVAILABLE

Yes, even in winter! Though we do ask for a two-night stay, as we need to turn up the heat! Winter in the retreat house brings its own delights: sun or moon on snow, snowshoeing down the prayer trail, the quiet of new snowfall. Treat yourself to some quiet time, in tune with the quiet rhythms of the earth, and enjoy the still beauty of the retreat house. What better time to refresh and replenish your soul? Our nominal fee is still only \$50/overnight, and that includes Sr B's wonderful home-cooked meals.

For more information or to register, please call
207.445.8031
or email

retreats@transfigurationhermitage.org

St. Moira Retreat House is available year round for private and small group retreats.
FMI call or email us as above

transformation into her life. Silence becomes both a refuge, and a challenge: leading her to realize how it both saves her from impulsive, unconsidered speech, and also a beckoning onward into greater depth, as she put it "confronting the messy space within."

Such simple writing!

Only one who has truly sat, time after time after time, can write so simply, yet with such depth. Here is a sample:

"Alone, with my thoughts for company, I befriended my private self, all of me, my weaknesses and my fundamental worthiness. That was the challenge and the reward of alone time. In my garden plot of stillness and solitude, I reflected on matters of critical introspection that the pace and demands of modern life seldom allow time for. What do I believe? How do I want to spend the capital that is the

BENEFACTORS

AUGUST - OCTOBER

time I am given on earth? What kind of partner am I to my husband; what kind of mother to my children? What is selfishness and what is self-care?

What do I fear? What are my prejudices? How can I overcome them? What are my intentions? Like the lone oak tested by storms, I found that solitude was strengthening the roots of my personality and fertilizing the place where wisdom resides. And, like its sister, silence, solitude slowed me down.

I felt as if layers and layers of skin had been sloughed. I was moved to tears by things as simple as the sight of a hawk soaring overhead. Or the kindness of a stranger."

A wonderful book. If you ever felt the need of times in solitude or silence, you will surely be enchanted—and deeply benefit—by this book.

S. Elizabeth

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Our thanks and prayers are with all of our generous benefactors, especially those who have given several times. Please, if we left your name off this list, or if we misspelled it, let us know!

FOCUS ON FORMATION

Our postulant Esther became a novice on November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints! Rejoice with us as she takes this new step forward, and enjoy her prayerful reflections on this important event:

ON BEING A NOVICE

“For truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” (Mt 17:20)

As you can imagine, it was no smooth road for me to reach this point. Hurdle upon hurdle came one after the other, each one a deterrent. The temptation was high to turn tail and run, to succumb to a safer, mainstream road and to remain ‘good old Esther’ with her old ignorant way of life, having closed my eyes and ears to His calling.

Yet his gift upon gift provided great aid in difficult times. Especially through you, the Hermitage circle of friends and families, some whom I know and some I have never met. You prayed for my journey to continue pursuing this vocation. Those prayers and cares have become profound comfort in times of distress. And for that I am utterly grateful to everyone who has supported my journey so far.

Going against all odds, “we went through fire and through water” (Ps 55:12). He held my hands with His right hand to save and “brought me out to a place of abundance.” (Ps 66:12) If God could do such marvelous deeds for me who is still of such microscopic faith, who is still often more skeptical than believing; how much more is He capable of doing!

Especially when we put a little bit more faith in his divine providence.

Indeed I am still ‘doubting Thomas,’ a part of me still doubting his power—the road ahead is still a long way to go. And all I have is today, *this* day, *right now*, to start learning. Today is a new day, today I start learning. “If you hear God’s voice today, do not harden your hearts.” (Ps 95:8)



ON BEING SCHOLASTICA

“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” (Mt 12:31-32) “How about taking the name of Scholastica?” Out of the blue, Sr E suddenly spoke when we drove home one evening after a bake sale. I was stunned. I thought St. Scholastica was such a great saint, especially in the monastic tradition. She was the mother of

the monastic tradition, and who am I? I am just ‘simple little Esther!’

But I tried to be open to the suggestion, and as I pondered more on the name, the more I felt that St. Scholastica had been praying for me and interceding for me, most especially during great difficulties when I was struggling so much to continue onwards with this vocation. The more I pondered over the name, the more fiery joy kindled within my heart. Prayer, which is the center and foundation of our daily mundane life, became more alive than ever, and new joy sparked even when I was beset with difficulties.

And I wouldn’t lie that it would be a giant overoptimistic stride to try to live up to such a great name, to follow her footsteps, to try to imitate her ardent love of God and her extraordinary compassion towards other beings. But I have a lifetime to learn, and most important, I have the Lord who once said, “for with God, nothing is impossible.” So as St. Benedict always taught: today we start. Yes, today we start with little steps, one at a time, even though it seems so miniscule as to be meaningless. As Sr. E often quoted the AA slogan: ‘inch by inch, life’s a cinch; yard by yard, life is hard.’

Sr. Scholastica

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Barbara Gawle
ice cream, tee shirts, etc

Helena Lehane
sunshades

Gunner Wood
book and stamps

