

THE VIEW

TRANSFIGURATION HERMITAGE, MAINE



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197 WINDSOR NECK RD
WINDSOR, MAINE 04363
PHONE: (207) 445-8031
transfigurationhermitage.org

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THE FOOL ON THE HILL

by Sr. Elizabeth Wagner

I'm sure I'm dating myself, but recently I was remembering a Beatles song from the late 60s or early 70s: 'The Fool on the Hill.' I'm not sure why it suddenly came to mind today, but I know the setting that prompted it, for I have a small bench that I use for prayer, sitting on a little hill behind our hermitage, overlooking our field, the woods below, and the hills in the distance. We had just held our monthly Oblate meeting, a small group with some wonderful, faith filled people, and afterwards I went out to sit on my bench at sunset and watch the sunlight fade on the distant hills.

We'd been discussing a book called "Prayer: the Breath of the Soul," by Joan Chittester. A little gem of a book, with very brief chapters. We'd been discussing chapters called Attention, Responsibility, Enthusiasm. It's a small group, and those who attend have been very faithful for years.

Perhaps I was mentally contrasting the very different realities of the faith-filled people in this group with what so often seems to be the goals and ideals of many people today. Goals and ideals that to me sometimes seem diametrically opposed to the values of the Gospel. And also realizing that to many people who don't believe, we who do believe can seem like fools.





DAILY RHYTHM OF PRAYER,
CONNECTED WITH OTHERS,
SACRED READING.



After all, look at the craziness and horror of the world today: war in the middle East, war in Ukraine, unrest and upheaval in many countries, including our own. Rampant poverty everywhere, while a few make billions of dollars every year. Hurricanes, droughts, unbearable heat waves—all of which fall heaviest on the poor.

So it can seem as though we who are believers, whether Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or whatever—are foolish indeed to believe. Foolish indeed to try to give instead of take. Foolish to think the best of people, instead of the worst. Foolish to believe in goodness on this earth and another life after death. Just plain foolish.

If I recall correctly, the song has lines like, “the fool on the hill sees the sun going down, and the eyes in his head see the world turning round.” All of us perhaps have the ‘eyes in our head,’ if by this we mean the thoughts, the imaginations, the interior pictures—we all have these going on continually. Sometimes inescapably. Sometimes we wish we were free of them.

Sometimes our own thoughts try to tell us that we are foolish. Worse, that we are fools. We live in a world in which so much is diametrically opposed to the values of the Gospels, and we can’t help but be infected to some degree with the world’s values. When that happens, we can’t help but wonder if we are foolish. When this happens, how do we counteract it? I can think of three or four remedies.

First, maintaining a daily rhythm of prayer, in which we open ourselves to God. In whatever way or form works best for us. It needn’t be a ‘correct’ form; it only needs to be what works for us.

Second, we need to maintain connectedness with others who believe. Best way to do this is through our church. Our faith community, our worshipping community. If we are Catholic, through the sacraments. And with other believers, as in our Oblate group.

Third, I suggest what has been called ‘sacred reading.’ That is, the prayerful reading and pondering of the Scriptures, most prominently, but also other books that in some way nourish our faith and prayer life. As does this little book “Prayer: the Breath of the Soul.” There are many other books, we need only choose one that speaks to us.

Perhaps it is also helpful at times to remember that it’s okay to be the fool on the hill. While at times it can make us feel like an outcast, or at least an outsider; yet we need to remember that God is the one who grounds and sustains us.

God is the ultimate fool on the hill: the fool who sent his Son as a baby, a human, who became the fool incarnate. This is he who we await in Advent. This is he who we celebrate at Christmas. In solidarity with this divine Fool, let us rejoice in our foolhardiness.



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needs your generosity and
support for continued growth.*

*Please use the enclosed
envelope or visit
TransfigurationHermitage.org
We are also building an
endowment fund for future
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THE BEECH TREE SAGA

Many of you might not be aware that our native beech trees are under attack from an invasive disease. It is called Beech Leaf Disease, it is originally from Japan, and it no doubt arrived in this country on shipments of some import. But how and when it came is beside the point, for unfortunately it has spread rapidly here in Maine, and I am sure throughout New England, and perhaps the entire U.S. I first noticed some slight unusually raised bands on the leaves of the lovely beech tree that grows outside the southeast corner of the Hermitage. That was last year, and I wasn't sure at the time, though it looked somewhat like the online photos of the disease. But this year there was no doubt, the bands were very pronounced, and they were on all the leaves.



As I researched this, I realized that by next year the tree might not be able to produce leaves. In dismay, I called the Maine Department of Forestry, and received a call back from a tree pathologist. To my amazement, he then offered to bring a crew to inject this tree with a new treatment - only one month on the market - that shows some promise of stopping the disease. They came, they injected it one lovely September afternoon. Now we wait and see. Hopefully the tree will be able to produce leaves next year. Hopefully! He also recommended, and helped me find a soil drench that may also slow the advance of the disease.

But this disease is only symptomatic of many plant and animal diseases that once were localized elsewhere, and now with the advent of trade and tourism, are everywhere. In their country of origin, species may have developed resistance. Here, unfortunately, there is no resistance, and pests and diseases spread unchecked. No doubt this happens throughout the world, as we also export to other nations and inadvertently spread our own insects and pathogens.

EVERY GIFT HAS ITS DEFICIENCIES

We have become a very small, global world, and that has brought many, many benefits. Just today at lunch I enjoyed a delicious biryani, an Asian cuisine brought to the Hermitage by Sr. Bernadette, who is originally from Singapore. And Sr Anastasia, from Indonesia, has also brought her own wonderful native dishes. I rejoice in the amazing diversity and richness that other cultures and nations have brought.

But every gift has its deficiencies and we are seeing this right here in Maine. Beech leaf disease is merely one example. There is an elm tree nearer to the road that still manages to survive: perhaps it has developed a resistance to Dutch Elm disease.

I do not regret the many gifts of other lands and cultures. But we must also learn how to manage the difficulties that tag along. Meanwhile, I mourn the death of so many beautiful beech trees.





BENEFACTORS AUGUST - OCTOBER 2024

*Our heartfelt thanks and prayers to all of you who have so generously supported us, and especially to those who have given more than once! We are so very grateful to all! **You** are the reason we are here, not simply because of your generosity, but in thanksgiving for upholding us in prayer, even as we uphold you, each and every day.*

Anonymous (3)

Louise Allen, mem Priscilla

Lagivier & Mona Allen

John Arrison

Helen King Atallah, mem Rose

Atallah

Marian Barker, mem Leslie &

Anne Springer

Beverly Bartosiak

Martha Block

Ruth Calderwood, mem Mary &

Alice Hansen

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Nancy Charette, honor Marie

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RETREAT HOUSE

St. Moira's retreat house is closed from Advent through late January. We apologize if this is an inconvenience, but in order to maintain our life of prayer and solitude during our very busy season of shipping fruitcakes, stollens, and cookies, we regretfully must decline to accept people on retreat. We extend this closure through January as it gives us time to recuperate and enjoy the added solitude of the winter season. We hope to welcome any and all back on retreat once we reopen in early February.



We have a **NEW STREET NUMBER!!!**

In order to align with the enhanced 911 system, we have been given a new street number by the town. We are now officially at **197 WINDSOR NECK ROAD, WINDSOR, ME 04363**. No, we haven't moved!!! We're still here! But please note, for any and all purposes, our new street number is **197 Windsor Neck Road, Windsor, ME 04363**.



IT'S FRUITCAKE SEASON !

Yes, it's that time of year...time to order those yummy hand made, brandy soaked fruitcakes! And other goodies that the sisters produce. You can order online transfigurationhermitage.org or call us at **207.445.8031**, or even write us at Transfiguration Hermitage, **197 Windsor Neck Road, Windsor, ME 04363**.

IN KIND GIFTS & VOLUNTEERS

We are so grateful for continuing gifts of stamps from **Gunner & Debbie**, for trash pickup and cleaning help from **Kelly McGlothlin**, for discounted high quality printing from **Quality Copy**, for apples, honey, and all-around amazing neighbors **The Appels**, for warm blankets from **Br. Rex**, and **the anonymous** kind soul with the heart of gold who helped to decorate hundreds of fruitcakes
Thank you all so much!

FOCUS ON VOCATION

By **Sr. Anastasia Scholastica Esther Wibowo**

A retreatant is going to come today! I have to get the retreat house ready! But when I walk into the retreat house, there are dead flies and larch needles strewn all over the floor. And the stove needs cleaning!

I get really upset and overwhelmed, not expecting all the mess at the start of an already busy day. I ask Sr. Elizabeth for help with cleaning the retreat house and she comes to the rescue.

The incident above is long gone, but that made me realize the meaning of love, the meaning of "bear each other's burden." The world we live in might not be a 'happily-ever-after' fairytale, but we can face and stand tall against adversity with the help of others.

No person is an island. We need each other, to share both the good and the bad times, to laugh and cry together, to "bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2).



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