

THE VIEW

TRANSFIGURATION HERMITAGE, MAINE



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- 1-3 Sr. Elizabeth's essay
- 3 In kind gifts
- 3 Heaven sent!
- 4-5 Benefactors
- 5 Voice of Vocation
- 5 Retreats
- 6 *Oh spring, where art thou?*

THE WINTER FROM HELL

by Sr. Elizabeth Wagner

It's dusk on this February day, and from my window I can see a glorious sunset is happening out in the sky to the west. The color softly changes from pink to deep and glowing red, fading to pinkish purple near the edges of the clouds to the southwest. It's almost gorgeous enough to make me forget how cold it is out there.

Almost— but not quite. I'm not sure how cold it is right now, but tonight the temp is predicted to drop to a degree or so above zero. Above zero—that's the first time in over a week that the night will be above zero. Days aren't much better; I don't know if we've had many days in January that went above 20. Today was relatively mild: all of 22F.

This past week was perhaps the worst. I woke up early Monday morning to find that the temperature in my room was 60. It's set for 69, and it shouldn't drop more than 2 degrees below that. I checked the furnace; it read 'E.' Presumably for emergency?



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I called the local heating company, and got through on their emergency line. Kevin, the guy on call last week, came right out, diagnosed that the **engine had died**, and found a new one and replaced it. “Well,” he said, “that might last for another year.” Oh great, I thought, ‘that furnace needs replacing within the next year anyway.’ That was Monday. Tuesday our handyman snow-blown out to the propane tank and came back to tell me he smelled propane at the tank. **A propane leak!** Another service call: a part needed replacing, and after that, the tank needed refilling. Wednesday we woke up to the smell of propane in the kitchen. Another service call: the oven on our old stove was failing and causing a leak. Not worth fixing, we need **a new stove**. Thankfully, the commercial stove still works. We got through Thursday OK, until evening, when the temp in the main part of the building kept dropping. Another call, another fix. For some reason, this furnace (a different one) wasn’t sending hot water through the system to the various rooms. An easy fix, but nonetheless, a service call. A week later, after a ‘routine’ service of the gift shop furnace, we learned that furnace needs replacing as well.



Sr. E shoveling the snow with our snow white dog, Lina

Along with all that, we’ve had lots of snow. Over a foot last weekend, followed by a week of bitter cold.

Oh, and did I mention that we’ve had an infestation of **rodents** in our garage? They got into the **Toyota Rav4**, under the hood, and made a huge mess. Our mechanic down the road told us that it was a miracle the engine did not catch on fire with

the amount of damage the rodents had done. We tried traps and bait, to no avail, and finally called an **exterminator**—who got rid of the rodents, but at a price. And we needed to replace some parts under the hood: in all, three jaunts to the repair service.

And so I say with a long deep sigh, ‘this is the winter from hell.’

But what to do when everything is challenging, everything seems bleak. What to do?

”

IF I WANTED TO GROW TOWARDS
GOD, I NEED TO ACCEPT
RESPONSIBILITY.

“

I remember my first winter in Maine, back in the 80s. It was a super challenging winter also—the most challenging one I can remember until this one. We had storm after storm, and finally, when I thought it was surely over, we had yet another storm that dropped two feet of snow on April 6.

But back then, I was just renting an apartment from the sisters at a little Carmelite Monastery. If there was a problem, I called them, and they got someone to take care of it. Now I’m the one who has to call somebody. Or else take care of it myself. And it’s not just a little apartment. It’s a monastery. Plus a retreat house. And a garage and a little gift shop. Four furnaces in all, plus a propane fireplace. Three propane tanks. Over 600 feet of driveway—which needed four snowplows in quick succession in January, and three times it needed sanding.

During my prayer time this morning I found myself reflecting on responsibility. For a year or so in my early 30s, I was a hermit on the grounds of the Camaldolese monks in Big Sur, CA. It was glorious: 1300 feet overlooking the Pacific Ocean, free room and board, no responsibilities.

But I slowly began to see that if I wanted to grow towards God, I needed to accept responsibility. Responsibility for my life, first and foremost, and for all the responsibilities that a normal adult life entails.

Reflecting on that today, I can see that I was right about responsibility. When Jesus told his disciples to go without sandals or a second cloak, or anything else; he wasn't telling them to be irresponsible. Rather he was telling them to **rely on God**. And he didn't tell them, 'oh, it'll be easy.' Because it isn't always easy, and he was well aware of that.

”

WE NEED TO UNITE OUR
SUFFERINGS WITH THE CROSS AND
THE CRIES OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

“

Life isn't always easy. Responsibility isn't always easy. But in its own way, it leads us to depend on God, to lean on God, to deepen our trust in God. It seems like a paradox: it might seem that learning to take responsibility would draw us away from leaning on God, trusting God, drawing close to God. But perhaps I've come to see, just slightly, that accepting legitimate responsibilities can actually make us acutely aware of our own limitations—and that in turn leads us to ever deepening trust and reliance on God. And we need also to be reminded that we're not alone in our difficulties and challenges: we have a **'great cloud of witnesses;'** those who have gone before us, and those who are now on this earth; all standing with us, encouraging us, leading us on.

In our challenging moments and days, as in the 'winter from hell,' we are called to deepen our trust in the ever-present, ever-loving God.

IN KIND GIFTS & VOLUNTEERS

Once again, we are so grateful to many people who help us continue to live our vocation of prayer and solitude. We thank those who came to help us decorate fruitcakes, both friends like **Martha** and friends who wish to remain **anonymous**. We thank the **Appel family** for taking our dog Lina for long walks down our prayer trail, for computer help, for plants and flowers, as well as maple syrup from their trees. We are grateful for friends **Gunner & Deb** for numerous gifts of stamps, and for **Quality Printing**, without whom we would not be sending you this newsletter! Thank you, one and all!

... AND HEAVEN SENT!

On the off chance that they might have a 30 inch kitchen range, I called **Carl Caprara** of **C. Caprara Food Service Equipment**, Winthrop ME. They don't sell household stoves, but he promptly called Dave's Appliance, ordered a stove, and paid for the stove and the installation! Not only that, but the propane dealer who came to install it, when he heard of our propane woes, checked every single appliance in our building, and then went and checked the propane tank and the propane entrance to our building. He found another leak at the tank, and yet another at the propane entrance—and fixed them both! And so we owe a huge helping of gratitude to both **Carl** and to **Poulin Propane**, Augusta ME!



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Our heartfelt thanks to all of our benefactors, and our daily prayers for you and your loved ones. And please, if we've left out your name, or misspelled it, let us know!

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VOICE OF VOCATION

By Sr. Anastasia Esther Wibowo

I've had about four colds this winter! That makes me feel worn out and drained. Yet it is also time for baking this year's fruitcakes, as well as the class that I'm currently taking. Plus many other responsibilities around the hermitage.

I have so many activities that I wanted to do this winter: spinning, painting, volunteering at the local food pantry. Yet everything needs to be postponed, when I'm literally 'under the weather.'

Through prayer and work, I try my best to live out my role and vocation in this community. Through this I find the meaning of my life. Thus, when I cannot fully engage in these activities, I feel frustrated, anxious, and useless.

So how do I put these feelings in perspective? Sometimes I remember St Therese said something like: it doesn't matter if I cannot do great things, what matters is that **whatever I do, I do it with great love.**

And so I realize that there is more to me than all these negative feelings and weaknesses.

As St Paul related what the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12:9)

RETREATS AVAILABLE

Our cozy, comfortable, handicap accessible **St. Moira's Retreat House** is once again open for retreats. Call us at **207.445.8031** or email **th.retreats@gmail.com**. Our normal offering is only \$75 per person per night for a minimum of 2 nights, or \$85 for an overnight stay. It includes Sr Bernadette's and Sr Anastasia's wonderful home cooked meals. Treat yourself to some time away. This Lent or Easter season, make some extra time **to be still and be with the Lord.**



