



# Monastic Musings

## *Living in and Practicing the Presence of God*

Fall 2017

### *Love Conquers All*

*by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall*

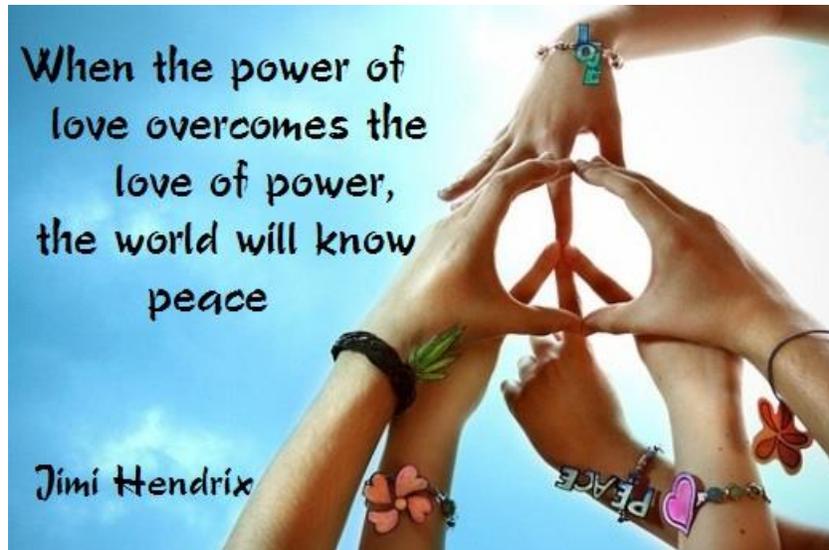
The Summer has finally closed but only after it created a real mess for many people in the continental US and also in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So sad to see all of the destruction that the hurricanes have brought. Given that hurricane season is not over until the end of November, one cannot say that there will not be any more storms. As I sit writing today, Nate is moving into the Gulf of Mexico and aiming right at Louisiana!

I read yesterday that there is now a weak La Nina present so that means that we here in the Northeast shall have a colder and possibly wetter winter. I can only hope that we get the storms as quick movers and not loaded with lots of snow. Frequent small snow storms are really easier to deal with when you are a senior citizen! But then one never really knows what Mother Nature will have in store for us until it happens!

Over the past 6 months, Mother Myrella and I have been having the pleasure of raising a newly adopted cat, Star. When we adopted her, she was basically skin and bones and very much fearful about everything around her. She did not look the least bit as though she was 1.5 years old. After about 3 months we realized that we had adopted a really wonderful and loving little purebred Norwegian Forest cat, and we decided that we would call her Star Brite, even though her legal name is Star. She quickly put on weight and grew taller and longer. Her fur was no longer short to mid length but was completely bushy, very long and so very soft. Neither one of us have raised or have even known Norwegian Forest cats before so we had a lot to learn about their personality and habits. But learn we did.

Norwegian Forest cats take up to 5 years to mature completely so we are probably still in for more surprises with her. No she is not a lap cat and probably never will be. She prefers to spend most of her time sleeping in her tower by the front window or on the back of the couch behind you so that she can touch you with one of her paws. When she has a chance, she will "steal" the chair in the living room to nap in. She is very nosey and inquisitive about the world about her. We realized early on that she had lived with an elderly person in a senior citizen high rise in the city. She did not know many of the sounds we take for granted every day – rain, traffic, birds, wind, etc. She also found windows to be so much fun to look out of to see the other wildlife we have around our home. She quickly learned what window would give her what information she was seeking about the outside world. Hence the reason we now call her Star Brite. She loves to talk to you to let you know she is next to you and loves you. She is quiet and undemanding compared to any other cat we have raised or known! She actually makes a perfect companion for us senior citizens as she refuses to let you disappear from her sight for very long. She will come looking for you and calls for you. Having one of God's loving creatures in our home is a wonderful addition. She freely lets you know just how she feels about each of us and we also let her know how we feel about her. She knows she is loved by each of us and she loves both of us.

For me personally Star Brite has been a great example of how we should truly approach life. If we meet people with preconceived ideas, we will often miss the very best in those people. Not everyone is comfortable enough to let the world really see who they are or what they think. The world has unfortunately become a very dangerous place to live. If I am not willing put aside the feelings of danger every time I step outside my home, then I will never be able to know others and what they think or how they feel. Mother Myrella and I have given Star Brite a home that allows her to be truly who she is and she in turn gives us lots of love and joy. My one hope is that someday that will be the way the world will be: open and loving to all of God's Children no matter where they live and no matter what their beliefs may be.



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## *New Beginnings*

*by: Fr. Ron Lahti*

"We must start over every day, and sometimes many times a day".

This is one of my favorite quotes from one of my spiritual heroes, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. The Rebbe emphasized the power of starting fresh – especially when we feel dejected, put down or depressed. He also said "If you believe you have the power to destroy, you must also believe you have the power to restore". When we feel we have really made a mess of things, we should remember that it is in our power, with effort, to make the mess right again – even if that effort is surrendering the situation to G-d and asking for divine assistance.

A traditional prayer recited by Jews upon opening one's eyes in the morning is the "Modeh Ani".

*Modeh anee lefanecha melech chai vekayam, she-he-chezarta bee nishmatee  
b'chemila, raba emunatecha.*

I offer thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have returned my soul  
within me in compassion, Your faithfulness is abundant.

This prayer acknowledges that G-d has allowed our souls to “re-enter” our bodies in the morning to be given another day, another chance for *tikkun*, repairing ourselves and our world. “The Lord’s mercies are not consumed, surely His compassions do not fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23). The Rebbe also said:

*At the beginning of every day, I surrender my every movement to G-d, as well as those of my children and all those who depend on me, beseeching that all of my actions be in keeping with G-d’s will; and this is very good. Thus, I have no worries as to whether or not things go right, because I am completely dependent upon G-d. If he has something else in mind, that is what I, too, desire since I have already asked that I only perform His will. (Sichos ha-Ran2)*

When we recognize the great gift we have been given each morning, we start our days in gratitude and with expectation of great things G-d will bring to us and work through us in the world.



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***Life-giving Water: An Elixir for Life’s Spiritual Challenges***  
***by Rev. Myrella LeClair***

With all that is going on in the world and particularly in our country, life has certainly been challenging. How do we handle those challenges? Do we face our own anger and fears head on? Do we respond to those challenges in kind with anger and hatred, or do we use these challenges to see things in a different light so as to eliminate the hurts and obsessions from our minds? There’s an old truism that states “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade”. In others words, don’t let the lemons rot. Instead, cut them in half and use a lemon grinder to mash the pulp and to catch the liquid and seeds. Throw away the seeds and pour the pulp and juice into a water-filled pitcher. The lemons thus become lemonade, a refreshing drink good for the body, ridding it of toxins.

However, what happens when we are faced with spiritual challenges (anger, hatred, etc.)? Do we allow those seeds of anger, hatred, prejudice, etc. to germinate within us, thus allowing them

to poison our hearts and minds? Do we attempt to resolve these challenges by ourselves – that is, without listening to the Guide who Jesus gave to us? So, just how we obtain this spiritual lemonade – that is, the living water that Jesus gives to us?

To do so, each one of us needs to recognize and acknowledge that we need the Holy Spirit's help to rid our minds and hearts of the poisons within. We do so by going to a quiet place and ask for the living water that not only quenches our spiritual thirst but also cleanses and refreshes our minds and hearts by removing the toxins within our spirits. We listen to the Holy Spirit – the Voice for God – who surrounds us with unconditional love. He then breathes upon the living water, which floods our spirits with peace and light. We are healed, whole and safe – completely at peace, and we are grateful for His gifts to us.



Just as we wash our bodies daily, we need to wash our spirits on a daily basis with “living water” so as to prevent anger and hate from re-infecting our hearts and minds. Take time to listen to the Holy Spirit and allow yourself to be bathed in his living water. Accept the gift of Peace that Jesus has given you, and thank our Creator for His unconditional love.

Rest in the presence of God often and remember to offer life-giving water to all whom you encounter.

Peace be with you!

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