



# Monastic Musings

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

Winter 2017

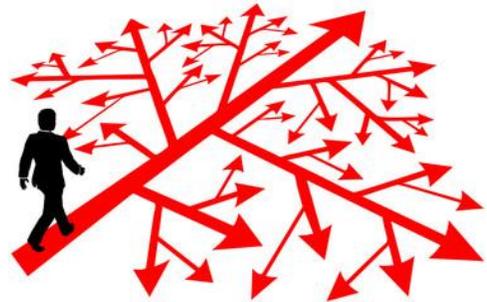
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***Welcome to a New Year!***

***by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall***

So winter has returned with its normal “let me have you feel really cold and miserable” ways and also the “let’s have a winter thaw day”. For all you who deny climate change is occurring, hang in there, as the weather will continue to be more unpredictable! One day we are 10 degrees and the next we are 50! One day it is snowing heavily and the next day is rain followed by a couple of dry days then right back into snow. For us here in the Northeast, we are used to cold and snow and sometime in January/February, we have a period of a thaw. But this year it seems the thaw wants to hit once a month, but then I know that tomorrow can really change to nothing like what normal has been in the past.

I suspect for many of our readers, especially those here in the United States, your spiritual life is going through a major shift. What is it that you believe? Does it “fit” within the world around you? Is it safe to share my spiritual life with others? Do I have to give up any or all my spiritual life? To be honest, I cannot honestly give you answers to all the above questions as everyone has different situations within their lives that can/will influence their spiritual path. What I know to be true for myself is that I am not going to make any major changes. I will continue to search and stretch my spiritual life. In the process, I will be open to all those around me no matter what their spiritual path might be. I have never been a person who pushed my spiritual path on others, but share as asked.



For me, I want to continue to see God in each person I come into contact with. Not that it is always easy. I want to continue to be the type of bishop that will not be demanding of those around me, but one who will be willing to walk with you in your spiritual search. I believe I can learn from the person I am walking with just as they can learn from me. All of us are both teacher and student depending on the need at the moment. I for one will not be standing on a “soap box” pushing any religious teachings. There are enough of those people. I will be quietly doing “my thing” and I will welcome all those who want to join with me.

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***Spiritual Buffet-ism***

***by Fr. Ron Lahti***

Buffet, smorgasbord, and feeding trough – they all describe large quantities of a variety of foods laid out to allow patrons to choose what, and how much, one wants to eat. The buffet is usually set up to allow one to eat as much as one wants for one price. Anyone who has been to a

buffet will have seen a typical patron walking with a plate heaped with food trying to maneuver her/his way through other patrons with similarly heaped plates. One also notes how patrons return again and again, with plates overflowing, for yet more and more food. It seems that “All You Can Eat” is seen as a personal challenge, perhaps even a competition, for many. In recent years buffets have become increasingly popular.



One of the main draws to a buffet is the great variety of foods offered. I have felt overwhelmed at times with the various food stations offering salads, hot meats, cold meats, vegetables, breads, desserts – and often all of the above prepared in different styles: Italian, Oriental, Middle Eastern, Mexican. And, one is tempted, perhaps even challenged, to try everything. The result? In the short term, indigestion, and perhaps some guilty feelings. In the longer term: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, food allergies and on and on. And these are the physical outcomes. Emotionally,

spiritually one can become greedy, selfish, entitled, and on and on. Basically, excess on all levels of being. But it's not the food that is the problem. The problem lies with ones who are misusing the food.

In some ways, we are living in an age of spiritual buffet. With the advent of the Internet anyone can find information on virtually any and all spiritual traditions in the world. And, like its culinary parallel, the spiritual buffet tempts one to “try” a variety of spirituality. Today, I feel like a little Judaism mixed with Christianity, perhaps adding some Buddhist meditation and a little Wicca just to spice things up. Tomorrow, maybe I won't feel so monotheistic, so I'll try a Ganesha puja followed by a Native American pipe and, again, a little Wiccan spell for spice. You get the idea. Whatever, suits my mood at the moment becomes my religious “plate du jour”. Like a food buffet, one can become spiritually overfed – having a number of “spiritual” practices but with no real nourishment (due to not following a path long enough or deep enough to mine the treasures it holds), and then left constantly searching for the next thing – the right thing – that will satisfy the spiritual hunger, dare I say, starvation. And, again, like its culinary parallel, it's not the spiritual traditions themselves that are the problem – the problem lies with the ones who are misusing the spiritual traditions.

My sisters and brothers, I confess to having become a spiritual glutton – gorging myself on the richest, most exotic and varied spirituality I could find. Always looking for the next thing that just might satisfy my spiritual hunger, or that just happens to catch my eye. But, I have found myself spiritually starving. I am committing this year to re-discovering the roots of my faith, my spirit. Putting myself on a “diet” and limiting my intake from the spiritual buffet. I invite you, my brothers and sisters, to come with me on this journey. In the next article, I will explore some of the root problems of my spiritual gluttony and how I am trying to deal with them.

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## *Bringing Back the Light* *By Rev. Myrella LeClair*

In 2016 violence and hatred erupted with abandon; some people even expressed that it was their right to inflict mental and physical pain upon those whose values and beliefs differed from their own religious beliefs and values. In 2017, violence and hatred not only continues but appears to be escalating. Sometimes, it seems to me as if we have descended into a hate-filled

chaos – an inescapable dark hole. However, no matter what is happening in this world, God is still with us.

Despite what our ego driven minds want us to think, the reality is that we remain **one** with each other as well as with all of creation. God has not abandoned us, but we have allowed our perceptions, judgments, anger and hatred to block out God's Presence and Light within us. In our desire for retribution, we also cannot see the Light in the tormentors. At one time in history, some people created this same kind of atmosphere of hatred based on their religious beliefs and values, persecuting others whose religious beliefs differed from their own. Historians have appropriately named this period as "The Dark Ages". This period was replaced by a period of history known as "The Age of Enlightenment". Light replaces darkness if we but open our minds and hearts to the fact that we are all equal before God and **act** accordingly, respecting all of creation.



Let's join together this year to bring back the Light. Whenever we allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed by the circumstances surrounding us, we will take time to pause, breathe deeply, exhale the darkness, and allow our spirits to rest in God. We are completely at peace as we rest our hearts and minds and join with all of creation in the most Holy of Holies. When we return our minds from resting in God to our ordinary lives in the world, we continue our awareness of living in God's Presence by extending God's Love and Peace to all despite our differing beliefs on political, religious or social issues. We return from our rest feeling spiritually refreshed,

enlightened, and ready to shine away the darkness. We do so by choosing the pathway of peace to challenge the haters through peaceful means, and we do **not** allow ourselves to become haters in the process. Instead, let's use the hatred and insanity to motivate ourselves, individually and collectively, to bring back Peace and Light to this world. Together, we can make a difference.

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