



Monastic Musings

Living in and Practicing the Presence of God

Winter 2018

A New Year Has Arrived!

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

A new year has arrived and I wonder what have we learned from the last year! I look around me and see more strife and division now than at any other time that I can remember. It even seems



more disturbing than when there were all of the marches against the Viet Nam War. This time the strife is being cloaked by the idea of Christianity! I have to admit that the Christianity that is being thrown around these days is not the Christianity that I was taught. I was also taught that we as Americans are free to worship God as we want or to not have any religion at all. That is not what is happening today. Never have I felt as threatened as a

human being as I do now within my own country. It makes you wonder who you can trust and where you can turn to if you need some sort of help. Even in just trying to make decisions necessary for everyday life. Every day we are bombarded by what Washington wants to do and not even truly showing that they are the least bit concerned with the people of this nation. We are even causing our Allies to wonder about us. Sad to say! What happened to let's take care of those living within our country: seeing that everyone has food on the table, a roof over their head and clothes on their back. Now people are judged by what their religion is or their lack of religion. Since when is religion to be the litmus test for who gets what and how much? Jesus taught us to be loving and helpful with everyone around us. He never picked his friends by their jobs or position within the community.

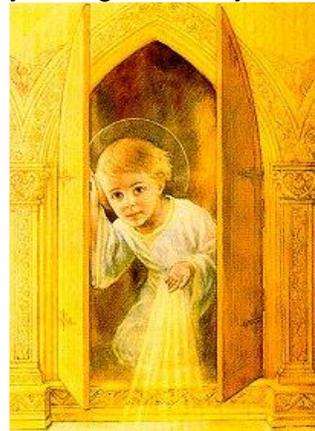
All I can ask is that people stop and think for a moment before they judge something or someone else and that they try to understand that not everyone is cut from the same mold. There are some people who will never meet all their supposed rules of life. But each person of this country and of this world has an important part to play in life. It is time we start finding a way to love again and to help those around us to have a little better life. Life is too short and really too precious to waste! Let us find a way to make 2018 a better year where everyone can be safer and happier. That is what God would want for all of us. Let's learn to practice what we preach and not just follow the crowd!

Our Calling *by Fr. Ron Lahti*

When the holy Abba Anthony lived in the desert he was beset by accidie, and attacked by many sinful thoughts. He said to God, 'Lord, I want to be saved but these thoughts do not leave me alone; what shall I do in my affliction? How can I be saved?' A short while afterwards, when he got up to go out, Anthony saw a man like himself sitting at his work, getting up from his work to pray, then sitting down and plaiting a rope, then getting up again to pray. It was an angel of the Lord sent to correct and reassure him. He heard the angel saying to him, 'Do this and you will be saved.' At these words, Anthony was filled with joy and courage. He did this, and he was saved.

-- The Sayings of Abba Anthony

This past December I marked 35 years since my ordination to the priesthood. I remember that day like it was yesterday. I was ordained in the Chapel of Boston University where I was a student at the time. I can still feel the cold stone floor beneath me as I lay during the Litany of the Saints. I was so certain of my calling, and I had a vision of serving a community as their parish priest after I would finish my Master of Divinity degree in a few years. Things didn't work out that way. I finished the degree. But I have spent the last 31 years working as a counselor serving the socially marginalized. I feel strongly that I have tried to be the best counselor I can be. But the nagging voice still sounds "But what have you done for God?", "What kind of priest are you if you have never functioned as one?"



Then I read the above story. Abba Anthony, considered the father of monasticism, had lived for years seeking God in the desert – battling demons, wild animals and, even more ferocious, ignorant men. But Anthony started to feel a depression and lethargy that he was not doing what he needed to find God – “be saved” in the parlance of that time. He was given a vision of a man who looked like himself who was working, stood up to pray, and then returned to his work. This sequence was repeated, over and over. Anthony was given to understand this was an angel who was showing him the way – do what is at hand, seasoned as it were with prayer. There was nothing more asked of him that to fulfill the work before him – God would take of the rest. And God did – Anthony was recorded as a great saint who brought God's Life to many people through his teaching, through miraculous deliverances and healings and through setting a momentum for others to follow him to their own deserts and monastic life.

When I was ordained, I promised to serve God. It is God who chooses how to use each one of us. Each of us has a special, unique way of expressing God's Life in our world. It is not to me, or any of us, to argue or question God's mission for us. Have I been a sacramental priest in the traditional sense? No. But if by “sacramental priest” one means have I brought God to others and others back to God? Yes. And I pray we will all search ourselves and be able to also answer yes, for that is what each one who follows God's path is called to do – each in our unique circumstances.

Take Time to Be
by Mother Myrella LeClair

“Breathe in the wonder. Take in the beauty. Make time to just be. Wishing you a New Year filled with peace and renewal.” (Sentiments from a Hallmark New Year’s card)

Sometimes God or His angels amongst us send messages to us in unusual ways, and sometimes we actually will recognize those messages as divinely inspired if we still our minds and pay attention, i.e. listening to our Helper, the Holy Spirit. Coincidentally, I was trying to find inspiration on what to write for this newsletter when I took another glance at the words on this card. Although I had viewed this card multiple times, I had a Light-filled instant – an epiphany - and realized that this card contained a message I needed not only to take to heart but also to put into practice. “Make time to just be” – what a concept! So what does it mean “to just be”? To me, it means to stop all physical and mental activity and retreat to a quiet space so as to still one’s mind, allowing one’s spirit “to just be” in God’s Light. Just as basking in the sunshine refreshes one’s body, basking in God’s Light refreshes one’s spirit. You are in God’s presence. Words are not necessary – all one has to do is “to just be”. God responds with His unconditional love and peace for you are His beloved child forever worthy of His Love.

When you return your mind and heart from “just being” or resting in God back to the physical world, pause for a moment and continue your awareness of living in God’s Light. Be at peace and extend that peace to all whom you encounter. Attempt to look upon all whom you encounter as God looked upon you, that is, without judgment – just as His Beloved Child. We must “see” one another through God’s eyes – with eyes of Love, Forgiveness, Acceptance, and Peace. Will we forget who we truly are and go back to allowing our hearts and minds to sink into the dark clouds of hatred and judgment? I would hope not but at the same time I know that we humans are much too prone to allowing our egos to “rule” our minds and to focus on our physical needs and desires. There are many things we need to do in our daily lives; yet, this physical life and world will pass away. Is it not important then to at some point during each day to stop “doing” whatever it is we are physically doing/thinking and take time “to just be” with our God?



This year, let us truly commit ourselves to stilling our manic minds and taking time throughout the day “to just be” with God, who loves us unconditionally and then to extend His Love and Light to all of creation.

May God’s Light shine upon you and bless you and may your spirit be renewed this new year.

“Father, we have no words except Your Name upon our lips and in our minds, as we come quietly into Your Presence now, and ask to rest with You in Peace a while.”

(From ACIM Lesson 222)

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