



STARCROSS
community

34500 Annapolis Road
Annapolis, California 95412
(707) 886-1919 • Fax (707) 886-1921
e-mail: community@starcross.org
Website: www.starcross.org

Sharings

Spring 2013

A Reflection by Brother Toby. . .

We start the spring in our ordinary clothes ... me and the sparrow.

“Lent” is the Anglo-Saxon word for “spring” and, as Issa (1763-1827) wrote in the haiku above, spring is a time for ordinary clothes. So let us not get caught up in the brocaded pageantry in Rome, Hollywood, the halls of government, or the vulgar displays of privilege, wealth, and greed all around us. Follow the simple sparrow!

But what is spiritually uplifting about “ordinary clothes” and birds? Well, there is this event westerners term “Buddhist Lent.” In the rainy season the monks go inside for reflection and instruction. And, when the rains stop they come out with a renewed awareness and respect for ALL new life from tiny weeds to babies. It is a recognition that our hope for the future lies in all new life.

We get the same message from Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) who wrote things like, “*Praise to you, my Lord, for Sister Our-Mother-Earth, who sustains us and governs us, and produces many fruits, with colored flowers and grass.*” I once studied what Francis wore. It was way beyond “ordinary”!

Issa described his own simple clothing by saying beggars would pass him without envy. It was definitely the same with Francis! Once again, let us follow the simple sparrow.

There in the meadow, or the park, or the space in the sidewalk cracks, the sparrow with her customary drab plumage finds new life where nothing had been living. Look, when you are in your mid-80’s as I am, you blink and the world you knew is gone. It can get rather depressing. Then you blink again and there is new life where there had been none, and your faith in the human adventure is restored. Follow the ... well, you get it.

You meet interesting people out there. One is this Jewish fellow from Nazareth. He says very helpful things like, “*You must honor everyone*” and, “*Treat others as you would like them to treat you.*”

What was it the Quakers quested for? “The Peaceable Kingdom” — is there any real likelihood of that in this twisted and cynical world? Oh well, it is always worth trying, isn’t it?

Let us wear ordinary clothes and follow the sparrow, wherever she leads.



HOLLY AND DAMIEN

A large number of children have touched us over the years, and our involvement with those impacted by the AIDS virus has not ended.

Sister Julie has developed a network of “Old Girls” and “Old Boys” with the young people who have grown up in our program in Uganda. They are extended family to the children still in the program, and they communicate often with Sister Julie about their lives. All of them are productive members of society.

Holly is a different example of lasting involvement — from her birth 23 years ago to the birth of her first child in February, and into the future. We adopted Holly at the height of AIDS hysteria from an HIV+ woman who could not care for her. At that time it was not possible to know if the child was infected. 18 months later we learned that she was not.

Holly had a lot of struggles growing up, because of the effects of being born drug addicted, but she was valiant, and she has done very well. She had the good grace to fall in love with Lance Baker, who wanted nothing more in life than to tend our olive fields and farm our land.



And now, Damien is with us. So the promise of another generation begins.



Damien's Uncle David took a break from performing on the East Coast to play the violin for him. Damien nodded, blinked, got a faraway look and a little smile.

We will let you know when the first duet is scheduled.

GET BROTHER TOBY'S REFLECTIONS. . .



Each week Brother Toby sends out a reflection to our e-mail list. Many people share them with friends, and we get a lot of response. One friend e-mailed:

I just felt compelled to write you and express my love of reading Brother Toby's reflections, an honest inquiry into the times we live yet anchored in what makes us all human. I look forward to my email each week because of you, thank you so very much.

To be included, please send your e-mail address to community@starcross.org. We never share our list with anyone!

SISTER JULIE'S ORGANIC OLIVE OIL "THE BEST OF THE BEST"

We don't like to brag or get too technical but the 2012-2013 batch is truly delicious. The fruit ripened well and the pressing went beautifully.

We are very pleased with the result. Here's an unsolicited comment from the lab. "The polyphenols content of this oil is well over 800 ppm which is not just excellent, but is extremely unusual. Therefore, this oil is in the range of 'the best of the best' quality olive oils."

As the health benefits and culinary delights of extra virgin olive oil are becoming better known, our only problem is that we wish the crop had been larger. Sister Julie's Organic Olive Oil is available on our website www.starcross.org or by calling 1-800-960-1500. It will most certainly sell out so don't wait to order!



FRIENDS WORKING TOGETHER



We have occasional volunteer days for people to come and help us with the olive harvest, bottling olive oil, harvesting in the garden, canning, and such. The next one will be on Saturday, April 27 from 10:00 to 4:00, when we will begin bottling the olive oil. If you would like to join us, please call and let us know you are coming (1-800-960-1500).

Also, there are some new projects happening that individuals can do on their own schedule. We are remodeling the farm house in order to have space for guests and volunteers. Each room needs to be furnished and decorated, so we can use help with furnishings and ideas. It would be wonderful to have someone take over a room, or any part of the project.

Much planning and work goes into the Christmas Faire. If we had more energy we could expand our products. And, of course, there is preparation and setting up. We have a committee for the Faire, which will meet to make plans.

The library could use a lot of work, going through and categorizing all the books.

There are several possible landscaping projects, including a memorial and meditation area by the chapel, and beautifying the front of the house.

Of course, in November and December we need help everywhere — the olive fields, the office, the barn, even the house! So keep in mind the possibility of spending some time with us when we are at our most frantic!

“I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD.”

Matthew 25:35



Many people in our rich, developed country cannot afford to eat properly. This is especially true in undeserved rural areas. We've been increasingly concerned about the effect this has on nearby children living in poverty.

With the assistance of friends and neighbors, we are attempting to start up the Starcross Food Pantry, which will distribute free food from our barn two days per month. Food will come from the county food bank, USDA, local grocery stores, and donations from friends as well as produce from our own gardens and orchards.

A committee will be formed to help with record keeping, staffing, finding sources of food, pickup and delivery and other tasks. There are still a few legal and insurance issues to be resolved but the Starcross Food Pantry will be up and running soon.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Better than last year. You don't need me to tell you times are still tough. We hope that some day the olive trees will produce enough oil to support us, but we are not there yet. In the meantime, the sale of books, Christmas wreaths, dried fruit and other gifts continues to be an important part of our income. We would not, however, be able to continue the work that we do, both here and abroad, without the financial support of our friends. Knowing that many are struggling these days, we are very grateful for your donations.

Sister Marti

STARCROSS

STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY
34500 Annapolis Road
Annapolis, Ca. 95412

U.S. Postage
PAID
Non-profit Org.
Permit #20
Santa Rosa, CA



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2013

EVERY CHILD HAS A LIFE WORTH SAVING!

How can the memory of a little girl in Northern California help save a little girl in Eastern Uganda? Tina Caring Association (TCA) named for our Tina who died of AIDS in 1991 offers an answer. Here's a story Sister Julie likes to tell.

"During my September 2012 visit to Uganda I sat in on many education sessions conducted under shade trees. Although I could not understand the local dialect, I could follow Milly's (the midwife) gestures and demonstrations with a baby doll with attached placenta. I was rather amused by one elderly woman's awkward attempts to unroll a sample condom. Afterward I commented to our social worker Alex who had lead the AIDS prevention discussion that it was a shame to waste their supplies on someone who would not likely need it. He gently corrected me.



'No, it is extremely important for the old people to be educated and comfortable talking about these things because they are the ones who will teach the children.' A few days later, the same old woman showed up at our testing site with her 5-year-old granddaughter. She explained that the child was often sick and she had never heard about AIDS before. The test was positive. Now the little girl is on medications and doing well. A child's life was saved for sure."

TCA is an independent nonprofit corporation, created and staffed by three hardworking young adults who grew up at the Starcross Kin Worldwide House of Hope for AIDS orphans. Friends of Starcross provided startup funding.

In the first year they have already brought AIDS education, testing and maternal services to over 2,000 impoverished villagers who do not have transportation or access to medical clinics in the rural Muslim district of Iganga.