



**STARCROSS
MONASTIC COMMUNITY**

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Sharings

Summer 2015



SACRED SPACE – A COMING NECESSITY

It's been almost 40 years since we established Starcross Monastic Community in this beautiful corner of Sonoma County. Those years have been filled with many activities which we never expected. Most noticeable would have been our deep involvement in the AIDS pandemic both locally and internationally. It was something we had not planned on, and to be frank it came close to overwhelming us at times. What saved us and has always been here as the anchor in our life has been the land itself. 40 years ago none of us would have considered that this was something that needed

protecting. But looking ahead and planning for the next half-century we are beginning to realize how essential it is to have sanctuaries for people and for nature in the rapidly changing world around us.

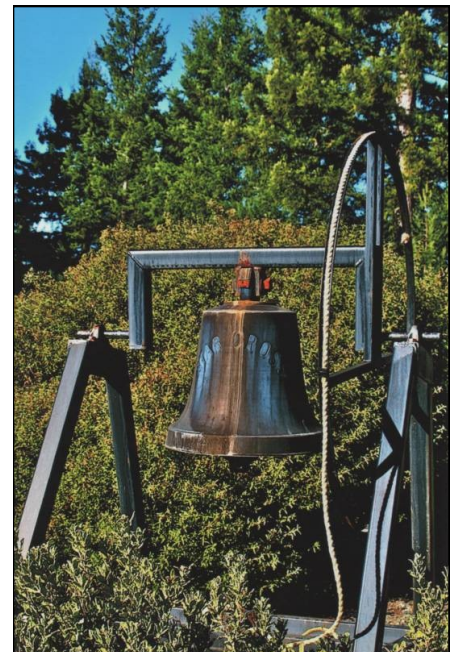
This little patch of earth that we call home has truly been sacred space for us as it was centuries ago for the First Peoples, and as it has always been for the trees and animals with which we share this planet. Every morning walking up the hill to our chapel I hear the calls of birds who also call this home. Some live here all the time others travel 7000 miles to get here each summer. Other visitors are young people lending a hand and learning from our experience with sustainable living. In the process they are helping feed some people struggling to make it in a tough world. Most of these young people also find their spirits refreshed here as they prepare to make a better world, starting with their own dreams.

An increasing number of friends simply want to spend a little time walking through the olive groves and finding some perspective and hope in the gentle waving branches of this ancient species as they face some of life's most challenging issues. Are the places where we can do this increasing or decreasing? From what I hear they are decreasing.

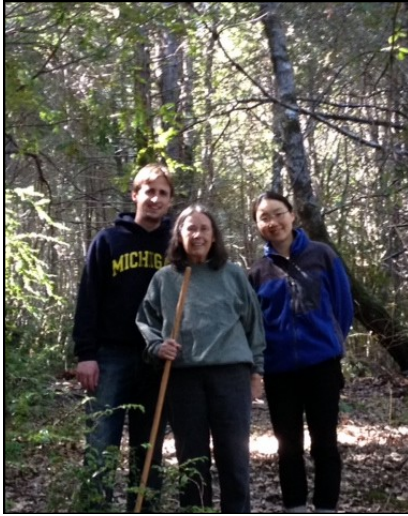
So what has slowly become clear to us is the necessity of safeguarding this healing space on which we have relied for so many years. We want to make it more accessible and protect it forever. It's a little island in an immense and rapidly changing landscape. But islands of peace will become increasingly needed. As one well-traveled young person put it simply a few days ago: *This is a very special place!*

She is right and we are going to try every way we can to make sure it is available for her and her children and grandchildren.

— Sister Marti



IT IS SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING IS EXCITING



Spending time among the tall redwoods, being protected as “Forever Wild”, brings peace and a fresh perspective to friends. This rich wildlife corridor provides habitat for woodland creatures and birds. This summer we will be

engaged in a forest improvement project with our volunteers and a non-profit youth organization.

Like all Starcross land, this will be legally protected by a perpetual conservation plan.

The garden will provide health-giving produce for our neighbors in need, including many children, at our Food Pantry. Fruits and vegetables are sustainably grown using drip irrigation and organic compost. It is also an educational environment for young people trying to make their world a better place.



A DEFERRED GIFT FOR THE FUTURE

We are asking for your help to protect this sacred space into the future. Starcross is unique – combining traditional monastic living with raising children while welcoming people on all paths regardless of ideology and running a sustainable farm and a certified organic olive grove on a nature preserve..

We are supporting programs initiated by young people in Africa who grew up in our “House of Hope”. They are educating people in remote areas about how to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS. Many orphans raised and educated in Starcross programs are now helping others as they were helped.

As much as we love our olive trees, they do not yet generate enough income. Likewise the wreath business and sale of books help, but do not cover expenses. We must also depend on your generosity to keep Starcross going into the future. A legacy gift makes a huge difference in our ability to continue. Will you consider remembering us in your will?

Through Brother Toby’s writings, you, like many others may consider Starcross a spiritual home, whether or not you have actually traveled here. Thank you for sustaining the story of Starcross!

Some sample language you might find helpful:

I give, to Starcross Monastic Community, a non-profit corporation of the State of California, located at 34500 Annapolis Road, Annapolis, CA 95412, the sum of \$ _____ (OR _____ % of my estate.)

Our legal name is “Starcross Monastic Community” and our tax ID number is 94-1687876. We are a 501(c)3 Tax Exempt Organization.

BROTHER TOBY’S FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

started appearing 3 years ago at the request of friends. From our e-list they seem to be spreading into many households as people forward them to others.

If you or someone you know would like to receive them, just send the email address (which is never given out to anyone else!) to community@starcross.org. They are also posted on our website at www.starcross.org.

RUNNING INTO THE DEVIL AT THE CENTRAL TERMINAL

According to many cultural traditions, it takes a very courageous person to call the devil by name because if you do he will appear. As the Italians put it, *"Mention him and he is at your elbow."*

But what is the devil's name? For centuries there have been attempts to discover it. My old friend Brother Stan has at last uncovered it. Stan is not a student of occult matters. He is a retired university president, a member of the De La Salle Brothers, and best known by young people in the San Francisco Bay Area for his remarkably helpful prayer,

Hail Mary full of grace, help me find a parking place.

"The devil's name," Stan recently wrote to me, *"is Cancer."* I thought about that quite a bit — and I think Stan's right! Like Stan, every place I turn cancer is at my elbow. It takes me back to those dark years when the AIDS pandemic seemed to define my existence. This is not simply because Stan and I are both octogenarians. Some of the people we know who are living with cancer are quite young. Almost every day I receive an email mentioning that someone is battling with cancer or helping someone close to them in that struggle.

Frequently the adjective "terminal" is put before the dreaded "C" word. Another friend, Gordon, a Jungian psychologist, was quite fascinated by the fact that he had received a diagnosis of a terminal illness. To him it brought images of railway terminals in Europe that had been a part of his earlier life. He did not see a terminal as the end of the journey but a connecting link within it. It's the place where you change from a train on tracks going in one direction to one on tracks going in another direction.

I began fantasizing on these ideas from Stan and Gordon. Suppose we were having a wonderful quiet life and we didn't want to change. But then we get the message it has to change! Reluctantly we accept that our life will not be the same as it has been. So we take a commuter train for a short ride into a big city and there we're going to connect to a major line. There is time between our connection so we sit down to have a cup of coffee. Then we look up and there he is staring us in the face — L. Cancer Diablo. We have seen him many times in the past but never this close. *"Is this seat taken?"* he says. We want to say "yes" but we don't think we could get away with it. As soon as he sits down we ask, *"Which one is your train?"* It's very clear to us we do not want to be traveling with this man. *"The one coming in on Track Two,"* he says *"I'm going to the end of the line."* And he smiles.

The loudspeaker booms out that some train is now leaving on Track Eight. We jump up. *"That's my train,"* we exclaim and run off. We don't know where that train is going. We don't know if it will be a short or long journey. But it doesn't matter we just know that we are not leaving on Track Two with old L. Cancer!



And somehow we are confident that despite everything we're going to be listening to birds, we're going to see children laughing, we're going to pick ripe tomatoes, we're going to sing, and we're going to be part of life right up to the moment when a kindly conductor smiles and says, *"Time to get off now."*

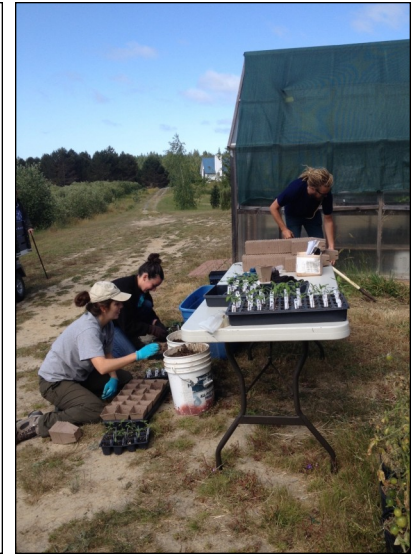
I suppose that might be God. It doesn't really matter does it? No, it doesn't!

ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY!

Take a break from your office, classroom or home to experience the outdoors again, help make the world a bit better, and gain some new skills in the new **FARM INTERN PROGRAM** at Starcross. Get your hands dirty in a sustainable garden! Breathe fresh air in a beautiful, peaceful setting! Harvest, can and preserve pesticide-free fruits and vegetables!

FOR MORE INFO OR TO APPLY email Sister Julie at sj@starcross.org with a brief description of yourself, why you are interested in doing this and your available dates. Also see (www.facebook.com/StarcrossCommunity)

THE PROGRAM is open to people on all paths — spiritual, political, cultural; vegans to carnivores. The busiest times are late summer and the olive harvest and olive oil pressing season in November. But we and nature welcome you here at any time!



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SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2015



In This Issue of *SHARINGS* You Will Find Out About:

- The Need to Protect Sacred Space — and How We Try.
- Outwitting the Devil at Life's Train Terminal!
- A Garden and a Forest for People and for Nature.
- An Invitation to Escape to the Country!

STARCROSS MONASTIC COMMUNITY

is a small independent and autonomous community of lay-people trying to live peaceful lives in the monastic tradition and offering encouragement and affirmation to gentle folk on all spiritual paths. Our home is in Sonoma County's coastal hills. We adopted and have been caregivers and advocates for children who have unique gifts and needs, most of whom were born HIV positive. We also support individual children around the world, and established HOUSES OF HOPE for children impacted by the AIDS pandemic in Romania and East Africa.