

*White Robed Monks
of St. Benedict*

Network News

Abbot's Notes

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Peace be with you.

Ever notice that when stress mounts, we seem to be in a *life-death* crisis on some level?

From whom did we learn this habit, this way of making some events life-and-death situations and get all riled up, excited, short tempered, or otherwise involved in yet another life drama—perhaps this time of epic proportions? Some cite Western Culture itself as the primary teacher. Western culture has a way of sharply delineating right/wrong, good/bad, life/death—not that other cultures do the same, almost.

Eastern culture tends not to freak out as much as Western culture in response to life events. “Why so?” you may ask. Simply, Eastern culture tends not to make life the opposite of death. And soundly so.

We know that energy cannot be created or destroyed. All that energy seems to do is individuate itself into matter, remaining energy, during a process of individuation.

Life is energy. It individuates into many forms, human life for one. What do we call this specific process of individuation? **Birth**. We all get to do it once, as we all get to experience death, only once.

So, the opposite of death is not life, but birth. When we examine carefully life events we soon realize that each discrete event has a definite beginning and either has had or will have a definite end. When we die, we complete our birth, our act of being human. We do not return to anywhere because there is nowhere to return to. Life is. We transform. We are one, as God is one, with the kingdom of God at hand (Matthew 3:2), the Eternal Now.

Human cultures and religious traditions offer meta-

phors to what happens in an alleged after death. These metaphors serve to assuage the natural human fear of death in response to our natural propensity to maintain life — at all costs sometimes even when human nature itself is asking for something else—release.

These metaphors of *Heaven, Cloud 9, Nirvana, Elysian Fields* all serve the same purpose—a hook to hang our hats of wonderment upon because we just don’t know what happens after death. We don’t realize that Life-God is constant, ever present, eternally Now. And so we stress.

A family asked me to say a few words at a gathering in memory of someone who had recently died. Also present was someone else who just found out that his physical condition is *eminently* terminal (and in another sense is not each of our own physical existences *possibly* eminently terminal?)—he will die very soon. His immediate family is taken aback. He is not for the most part.

His family, let’s say, was making the event a life/death situation. Worried, concerned, anxious, angry, upset that this person was to die. I decided not to speak of the deceased, but to speak about life—many of these thoughts here now I am sharing with you.

When we change the focus of our perception from life-death to *birth-death*, the situation changes. The frame around the picture changes. We can settle into a more honest approach to death, our own eventual death as well as the death of others close to us, as a death is just but another blip on the screen of Life.

Here birth, there death, ah! There death, here birth, here birth, and so on within

God’s own Eternity, Now. Life situations are not life and death situations. They are just occurrences with a beginning and end in the natural order of things. The more we more readily accept and surrender to the givens of Life itself, rather than being caught up in trying to control the uncontrollable, the more we can celebrate Life as it is, Now.

How can we consciously relieve our own psychologically created stress in the moment? Just breathe—and notice each breath has a beginning and end, an inspiration and expiration. As we consciously give Life to the moment in our breath, we render more oxygen to our systems and reduce the nitrogen build up in our brains. The stressful event we soon discover is but our creation, we ourselves have made it the life-death situation it is—when in reality it is not.

What about emotions, feelings and the like? We, too, can modulate our feeling-emotional life through our breathing. Want to learn how? Just look at an infant-child when laughing, and recognize how that child is belly-breathing in the moment. When the infant-child is angry, notice that the child is breathing in his or her upper chest, almost holding back in the breath. We do the same and release neurotransmitters into our Central Nervous Systems accordingly.

One more note about death. Human grief is a natural phenomenon. Some cultures surrender to that grief, experience the grief, and let it go. Others, dramatize the grief, (selfishly) hold onto the grief, and never really let it go.

Birth and death situations. Only that. Nothing more. Nothing less. St. Bonaventure teaches that *we must enter into our mind,*

which is the eternal spiritual image of God within us, and this is to enter into the truth of the Lord.

Then as Clement of Alexandria writes that we can experience that we are a *beautiful, breathing instrument of music the Lord made ..., whereupon the spirit of Life makes melody to God.*

And hence awoken to Reality as St. Ambrose describes: *The real paradise is not an earthly and visible one, it is not in any place, but in ourself, and it is quickened and vivified by the powers of the Soul and the inpouring of the Spirit.*

Peace and joy!
+Robert OSB

Special point of insight:
www.6seconds.org

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Humor and Stress
"The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter."
--Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)
"The most wasted of all days is one without laughter."
-- e e cummings

Humor can be a powerful tool for creativity and learning. As students become stressed their ability to learn is impaired (Vincent 1990). Students often use avoidance strategies, like hiding their eyes in class, or not asking for help, to avoid stressful academic situations. Yet, humor can help relieve that stress.

A recent study from University of Notre Dame found that teachers that include math-related humor in their lessons have fewer students using avoidance strategies (Turner, et al 2002).

Try this. . .
Next time you are stressed, tell a joke. If your child becomes frustrated, encourage them to laugh.

Can you answer this . . .
What is math related humor?

Kubler-Ross 78 – (RIP) by Elaine Woo

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2002015816_kublerrosso-bit26.html

Thursday, August 26, 2004

Kubler-Ross, 78, explained death and dying by Elaine Woo Los Angeles Times

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross helped inspire hospice care.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the Swiss-born psychiatrist whose groundbreaking study of the end stages of life humanized the treatment of the terminally ill and helped to inspire the hospice movement, died Tuesday in a Scottsdale, Ariz., assisted-living center. She was 78.

Ms. Kubler-Ross had been in declining health since 1995, when she suffered a series of debilitating strokes that left her partially paralyzed. She expressed bitterness at the time and made headlines about how the guru of the "good death" could not achieve one. In the end, though, she "died with acceptance on her face," said David Kessler, a hospice expert and close friend.

Ms. Kubler-Ross was the author of "On Death and Dying," a 1969 best seller that illuminated the emotional life of dying patients by identifying five stages the dying experience: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The book, translated into more than 25 languages and still a widely used text, spurred a revolution within the medical community to lift the taboo on discussions of the dying and infuse their treatment with dignity and affection.

"Elisabeth Kubler-Ross opened up the discussion about death and dying and end of life. There can be a good death. There is a quality to the end of life," said Anne Koepsell, of the Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. "It was a fundamental societal change in our outlook."

In later years, she directed her attention to AIDS patients, particularly infected babies, trying to improve their care at a time when the disease was little understood.

In the 1980s, she took a new direction: exploring "out-of-body" experiences and other phe-

nomena reported by people who had come close to dying. She began to speak of contacts she said she had with spirits.

Such reports caused some colleagues to doubt her sanity. But the feisty "death and dying lady," as Ms. Kubler-Ross came to be known, did not attempt to foist her unconventional views on others, arguing that skeptics would experience the truth for themselves someday.

Death impinged early on Ms. Kubler-Ross' world. She was born in Zurich on July 8, 1926, the smallest of triplets ("a two-pound nothing," she called herself) who was not expected to live.

She had a difficult childhood. One of her earliest memories was of her domineering father forcing her to take her pet rabbit to the butcher, then watching her family "eat my bunny." That incident taught her to be "tougher than anyone," she recalled in her 1997 memoir, "The Wheel of Life."

In 1957, she earned her medical degree at the University of Zurich, where she met Emanuel Ross, a Jewish-American doctor. They married and moved in 1958 to New York, where she completed her psychiatric residency. After becoming a naturalized citizen in 1961, she and Ross accepted teaching positions at the University of Colorado medical school.

Her work with the dying began there, when she was asked to take over the lecture course of a respected professor. Life magazine in 1969 published an article on her sessions with the dying that made her famous overnight.

Although she did not found the hospice movement, her work spurred its development. There now are more than 3,100 programs in the United States.

"She was a lightening rod in helping create an atmosphere of understanding, compassion and care," said Jan Mueller, executive director of Swedish Home Care Services in Seattle.

As a speaker, Ms. Kubler-Ross was dynamic and upbeat, especially considering the topic, Mueller said.

She always encouraged the audience "to go home and write your own obituary."

Her philosophy was "don't start thinking about this when you get the terminal diagnosis. Think about it now and really live your life fully," Mueller said.

www.MyDeath.net

is the website where you are encouraged to think of your funeral as the last and possibly greatest gift you will ever give to your bereaved.

It is here that you can plan, in as much detail as you care, returning to your page time and time again to update and refine.

There is no fee and no hidden cost.

An invitation.....?

Unfortunately, in our society we keep death hidden. Few people have or seek the opportunity to witness the death of others. They would feel out of place as idle spectators.

But this is perhaps because we do not have a Christian understanding of death in which the spectator is not idle at all but represents the active support and encouragement of the community. To witness death, however, places the same sort of demands on a person as the receiving of a confession of sin.

It demands that one have come to terms rather radically with one's own approaching death as a dimension of life in the present.

by Monika Hellwig
in *Meaning of the Sacraments*
excerpted from *Death,*
ed Virginia Sloyan

Religious Traditions and Beliefs: Death

http://www.ifishoulddie.co.uk/religious_traditions.htm (Edited)

Religious Traditions and Beliefs

The six recognized world religions all mark the important events in a person's life such as birth, marriage and death in different ways, but there are often similar concepts. Death sees the close of a human life on earth, and the ritual and beliefs linked to death and the funeral, are an important way for the family and friends of the deceased to express their grief and acknowledge the passing. It is often seen as an opportunity to celebrate somebody's life and mark their transition to another life or stage, whatever that may be.

There are also alternative ceremonies available that are not associated with traditional religious, one of the most well-known is the humanist movement.

Christian Funerals

* The name Christian actually covers a broad variety of cultures, crossing all continents. In the UK it is estimated that there are up to 220 different Christian denominations, and funeral rituals may differ from church to church.

* Essentially, the Christian belief is one of resurrection and the continuation of the human soul, which is usually dependent on how life on earth has been lived.

* Many people call themselves 'Christian' but may not be actively linked with a church, and some churches may decline to hold a funeral service for someone who has not been an active member.

* Many churches have specially written funeral services, as well as special readings, prayers and hymns (songs). These will include readings from the holy book, the Bible.

* Some funerals may include a special service called, Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass which recalls the last supper that Jesus Christ shared with his disciples before his death.

* At the end of the service, special prayers are said either when the

mourners are standing around the grave or if it is a cremation, when the coffin disappears from view.

* It is traditional to wear dark clothes to funerals and black ties with suits, but sometimes, people prefer to wear bright clothes as a celebration of life and resurrection.

* Some funeral services may be followed later by a memorial, particularly if the family prefer a simple, private funeral. The memorial service provides the opportunity to celebrate the life of the deceased with a wider group of friends and colleagues.

Jewish Funerals

* Jewish funerals are governed by a set of rituals and traditions which particularly apply to the seven immediate family members; the spouse, mother, father, son, daughter, brother or sister.

* Some of the rituals may differ according to the different Jewish communities. Sephardi Jews originate from Spain and the Middle East and Ashkenazi Jews originate from Eastern Europe and Russia. Whilst Sephardi Jews have a strong communal bond, Ashkenazi may be divided into Orthodox, Conservative and Reform communities

* Every Jewish community has a burial society called a Chevra Kadi-sha who prepare the body for burial and help make the funeral arrangements.

* Jewish burials are usually held within 24 hours of death, but may be delayed if immediate family members have to travel long distances.

* Most Jews are buried in a cemetery and some communities consider cremation a desecration of the body.

* At the cemetery, the family and friends congregate in a small chapel with the coffin.

* A symbolic small tear (Keriah) may be made in the mourner's clothes which represents a broken heart

* A eulogy (hesped) is given by the rabbi or close family friend.

* The Kaddish, an ancient prayer is recited in Hebrew and again after the coffin has been interred.

* The coffin is taken to the gravesite and it is considered an honor to help shovel in the earth.

* There is a symbolic washing of hands by everyone and everyone returns home.

* In the evening, the first shiva will take place. This is the time when the mourners stay at home and will be visited by friends and acquaintances. A year of official mourning follows and certain communities will have specific customs associated with the year

Hindu Funerals

* For Hindus, death represents the transition of the soul from one embodiment to the next and is the means by which the spirit can ascend its journey towards Heaven or Nirvana.

* Hindus believe in reincarnation and a Hindu funeral should be as much a celebration as a remembrance service.

* Hindus cremate their dead and the burning of the dead body signifies the release of the spirit. The flames themselves are important as they represent the presence of the god Brahma, the creator.

* The vast majority of Hindus come from the Indian continent and it is often an area of regret that a loved one has died far away from their homeland and its traditions.

* As with all religions, ritual plays an important part. Ideally a Hindu should die while lying on the floor, in contact with the earth. Family members will perform prayers and although touching the corpse is considered polluting, many mourners will need to do so to say farewell.

* White is the traditional color and mourners will usually wear traditional Indian garments. If you are attending the funeral of a Hindu friend, it may be as well to ask what is appropriate to wear.

* Prayers are usually said at the entrance to the crematorium and may be offered en-route. Offerings such as flowers or sweetmeats may also be passed around and noise is also part of Hindu rituals, which may include horns and bells.

(Continued on page 4)

Death Rituals (con't)

(Continued from page 3)

* The chief mourner, usually the eldest son or eldest male in the family represents the whole family in saying goodbye to the deceased. They and sometimes all the male members may shave their heads as a mark of respect.

* Scriptures are read and then the chief mourner will push the button to make the coffin disappear, as well as going below to ignite the cremator

* After the cremation, the family may come together for a meal and prayers and begin a period 13 days mourning, when friends will visit and offer condolence

Sikh Funerals

* Founded in the 15th century, the Sikh religion has its origins in traditional Hindu beliefs but has its own teachings and central scriptures which lay down many of the traditions associated with death and funeral rites.

* While rejecting the theory of rebirth, Sikhs believe in an afterlife, when the soul meets with the supreme soul, God (*Akal Purakh*).

* Cremation is the traditional method of disposal of the body, although other methods may be acceptable.

* It is usual to go to the house of the family before departing for the crematorium and the body may be on display

* Death is seen as an act of the Almighty and it is written in the scriptures that emotions should be kept under control, so family members may appear detached.

* On the way to the crematorium, hymns may be sung and once there prayers may be recited and more hymns sung

* The next of kin usually will press the button for the coffin to disappear.

* The ashes are normally scattered in the sea or running water

* After the cremation, guests usually return to the family home where there will be more readings and hymns

* The mourning period usually lasts between two and five weeks during which time other ceremonies

may also be held

Islamic Funerals

* There are two major groups of Muslims - Shi'ite Muslims and Sunni Muslims

* Funeral traditions tend to have developed over the centuries, rather than being set out in the religion's holy book - The Koran

* Muslims try to bury the body within 24 hours of death if possible. They believe that the soul departs at the moment of death

* The deceased is placed with their head facing the Muslim holy city of Makkah

* Ritual washing is performed usually by family members or close friends, usually according to the sex of the deceased.

* The body is wrapped in a shroud of usually simple, white material

* Afterwards, *salat* (prayers) will be said for the deceased.

* Funerals should be kept simple and respectful and it is forbidden to cremate the body of a Muslim.

* Muslims are buried with their face turned to the right, facing Makkah and it is customary not to use a coffin.

* Mourners may throw earth onto the coffin in the grave, The grave may be raised above ground level and any gravestone should be simple.

* There is an official mourning period of three days, (longer for a remaining spouse) and this may include a special meal to remember the deceased.

Buddhist Funerals

* It is estimated that there are up to 570 different varieties of Buddhism. There are few formal traditions relating to funerals and they are essentially seen as non-religious events.

* The simple approach and emphasis on the person's state of mind leading up to death have led to a marked increase and interest in Buddhist funerals in the West.

* Most Buddhist schools of thought concentrate on the spirit or mind of the deceased and agree that the physical body is just a shell. Many also share the Tibetan belief

that the spirit of the deceased will undergo rebirth, usually after a period of 49 days.

* Cremation is the generally accepted practice in Asia - the Buddha himself was cremated.

* A simple service may be held at the crematorium chapel at which Buddhist readings may be recited.

Humanist Funerals

* Humanists are non-religious people who live by moral principles based on reason and respect for others, not obedience to dogmatic rules. They promote happiness and fulfillment in this life because they believe it is the only one we have.

* Humanist non-religious funeral ceremonies acknowledge loss and celebrate a life without employing religious rituals. They offer a dignified alternative to the traditional funeral service and are made memorable by being personally tailored to each individual situation, with the wishes of the family taken fully into account. A typical ceremony will usually include:

* Favorite or appropriate music (of any kind)

* A welcome and a brief explanation of the ceremony

* Poetry or prose readings

* A 'tribute' to the deceased, mainly biographical, often with short contributions from family, friends and colleagues

* A time of reflection for silent meditation or private prayer

* The Committal or words of farewell

* A brief close, which can include thanks and announcements

* Prior to the funeral, a Humanist officiant will normally visit a family to map-out the ceremony and to form a rounded picture of the subject. At this stage it may also be important for families to freely discuss various options in relation to procedure during the ceremony. ...

* Humanist funeral ceremonies may be conducted at crematoria, cemeteries, woodland burial grounds, and other burial grounds (subject to restriction).

-End-

Telling kids about pending death is right thing to do

<http://www.theadvertiser.com/accnt/html/13085DE8-3105-4033-8EA0-CA5F7D84D8C9.shtml>

Gannett News Service 8/26/04

Martha Payne wasn't exactly sure what she was going to say. She looked over at her two sons, Josh, 9, and Jeremy, 5, playing in the family room and fought the urge to weep.

It had already been such a long day and she was running on little sleep. But there was no going back. She and her husband, Don, had agonized for three days about how to break the news to their sons. They sought advice from their doctor, from their pastor, from friends. It was time.

Don, 45, turned off the television and had the boys join him on the sofa. They huddled close, one on either side. Martha, 43, took a seat on the ottoman, facing them.

"Your dad doesn't have to take chemotherapy anymore," she said, quietly.

Josh excitedly gasped.

Martha's heart sank, realizing he misunderstood. "No, honey, the chemo's not working anymore."

Josh's smile vanished as the words hung in the air. He leaned forward. "Then, Dad's going to die?"

"Yes, Dad's going to die."

As Don's tears began to spill down his face, he pulled both boys close, and they buried their faces against him.

Everyone was crying, now.

As hard as it was, as much as Don knew that he was tearing their lives apart, the father wanted his sons to know the truth. When he and Martha shared their news that February evening, Don probably had a few months, maybe a year, to live.

The boys needed to know.

His instinct was right, bereavement experts say.

Children are extremely perceptive, says Barbara Volk-Craft, a nurse and director of the Health Care Decisions program for a Phoenix hospice.

Hiding news of a terminal illness may be impossible. Children might wonder why Mom and Dad are starting to whisper, why phone calls are suddenly cut short when the kids enter the room. The children watch and listen and try to guess, trying to piece it together. And sometimes they think the sadness that has settled into the house is all their fault.

"The child is waiting for you to talk," Volk-Craft said. "There is anxiety for the parent. They are afraid to tell their children what's going on. But children are very adaptable, as long as they feel support."

Giving Josh and Jeremy as routine a life as possible has been Don and Martha's goal since they first learned in fall 2002 that Don had pancreatic cancer. But it's been tough. Don needed surgery to cut out a tumor, and he worked hard to keep up his energy to play with the boys as he endured radiation and rounds of chemo. But other tumors appeared.

The family had been through so much already. Josh was just 10 months old when Martha discovered she had thyroid cancer. Three years later, Jeremy was born with a cyst in his brain, so a shunt was surgically implanted to control the spinal fluid in his head. Without it, he could have suffered brain damage. The shunt was removed last year, but Jeremy is closely monitored. It wasn't until February that it was time to tell the

boys just what was ahead.

About 1.9 million of the 40 million children living in the United States today have gone through what Josh and Jeremy soon will experience. The 1.9 million have lost at least one parent and are receiving survivor benefits.

"The death of a parent for a young child is a little more frequent than we would like to think," says Jon Radulovic, vice president of communications for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. "One out of 20 children will lose at least one parent by the time they are 20."

Steve Averill, coordinator of bereavement services at Hospice of the Valley, said the surviving parent needs to provide continued support years after a death.

Children react differently, depending on their age and maturity, he says. With teenagers, grief can get all mixed up with stress. They can get behind in their schoolwork, maybe get into arguments. By ensuring that they know what is happening, what has happened, they feel less alone, Averill says.

One of the biggest concerns for young children, especially, is needing a sense of security. "They're afraid that someone else in the family may die," he says. "They worry about 'who'll take care of me?'"

He often suggests parents find books about grief to share with their children. One of his favorites is "Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children," by Bryan Mellonie (Bantam, \$12.95). The book explains that everyone, every animal has a beginning and an end.

"It's an education about life," Averill says.

Talking To Children About Death <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>

True Joy of Life

This is the true joy of life.
The being used for a purpose
Recognized by yourself as a
mighty one.
The being a force of nature
Instead of a feverish, selfish
Little clod of ailments
and grievances
Complaining that the world
will not
Devote itself to making
you happy.
I am of the opinion that my
life
Belongs to the whole commu-
nity
And as long as I live,
It is my privilege to do for it
Whatever I can.
I want to be thoroughly
Used up when I die,
For the harder I work
the more I live.
I rejoice in life for its own
sake.
Life is no brief candle to me.
It is a sort of splendid torch
Which I've got hold of
For the moment
And I want to make it burn
As brightly as possible before
Handling it on
to future generations
George Bernard Shaw

Real Joy

Real joy comes not from ease or
riches or from the praise of
men, but from doing something
worthwhile.

--- Wilfred T. Grenfell

Joy from the Surprises of Life

Into all our lives, in many
simple, familiar homely ways,
God infuses this element of
joy from the surprises of life,
which unexpectedly brighten
our days, and fill our eyes
with light. He drops this
added sweetness into his
children's cup, and makes it
to run over. The success we
are not counting on, the
blessing we were not trying
after, the strain of music in
the midst of drudgery, the
beautiful morning picture or
sunset glory thrown in as we
pass to or from our daily
business, the unsought word
of encouragement or expres-
sion of sympathy, the sen-
tence that meant for us more
than a writer or speaker
thought--these and a hun-
dred others that everyone's
experience can supply are in-
stances of what I mean.

--- Samuel Longfellow

I'm glad to be living: Aren't You?

The south wind is driving
His splendid cloud-horses
Through vest fields of blue.
The bare woods are singing,
The brooks in their courses
Are bubbling and springing,
And dancing and leaping,
The violets peeping,
I'm glad to be living:
Aren't you?

--- Gamaliel Bradford

Today is the Best Day of My Life

Today, when I awoke, I sud-
denly realized that this is the
best day of my life, ever!

There were times when I won-
dered if I would make it to to-
day; but I did!

And because I did I'm going
to celebrate!

Today, I'm going to celebrate
what an unbelievable life I
have had so far: the accom-
plishments, the many bless-
ings, and, yes, even the hard-
ships because they have
served to make me stronger.

I will go through this day with
my head held high, and a
happy heart.

I will marvel at nature's
seemingly simple gifts: the
morning dew, the sun, the
clouds, the trees, the flowers,
the birds.

Today, none of these miracu-
lous creations will escape my
notice.

Today, I will share my excite-
ment for life with other peo-
ple. I'll make someone smile.

I'll go out of my way to per-
form an unexpected act of
kindness for someone I don't
even know.

Today, I'll give a sincere com-
pliment to someone who
seems down.

I'll tell a child how special he

(Continued on page 7)

Today is the Best Day of My Life (con't)

(Continued from page 6)

is, and I'll tell someone I love just how deeply I care for them and how much they mean to me.

Today is the day I quit worrying about what I don't have and start being grateful for all the wonderful things God has already given me.

I'll remember that to worry is just a waste of time because my faith in God and his Divine Plan ensures everything will be just fine.

And tonight, before I go to bed, I'll go outside and raise my

eyes to the heavens.

I will stand in awe at the beauty of the stars and the moon, and I will praise nature for these magnificent treasures.

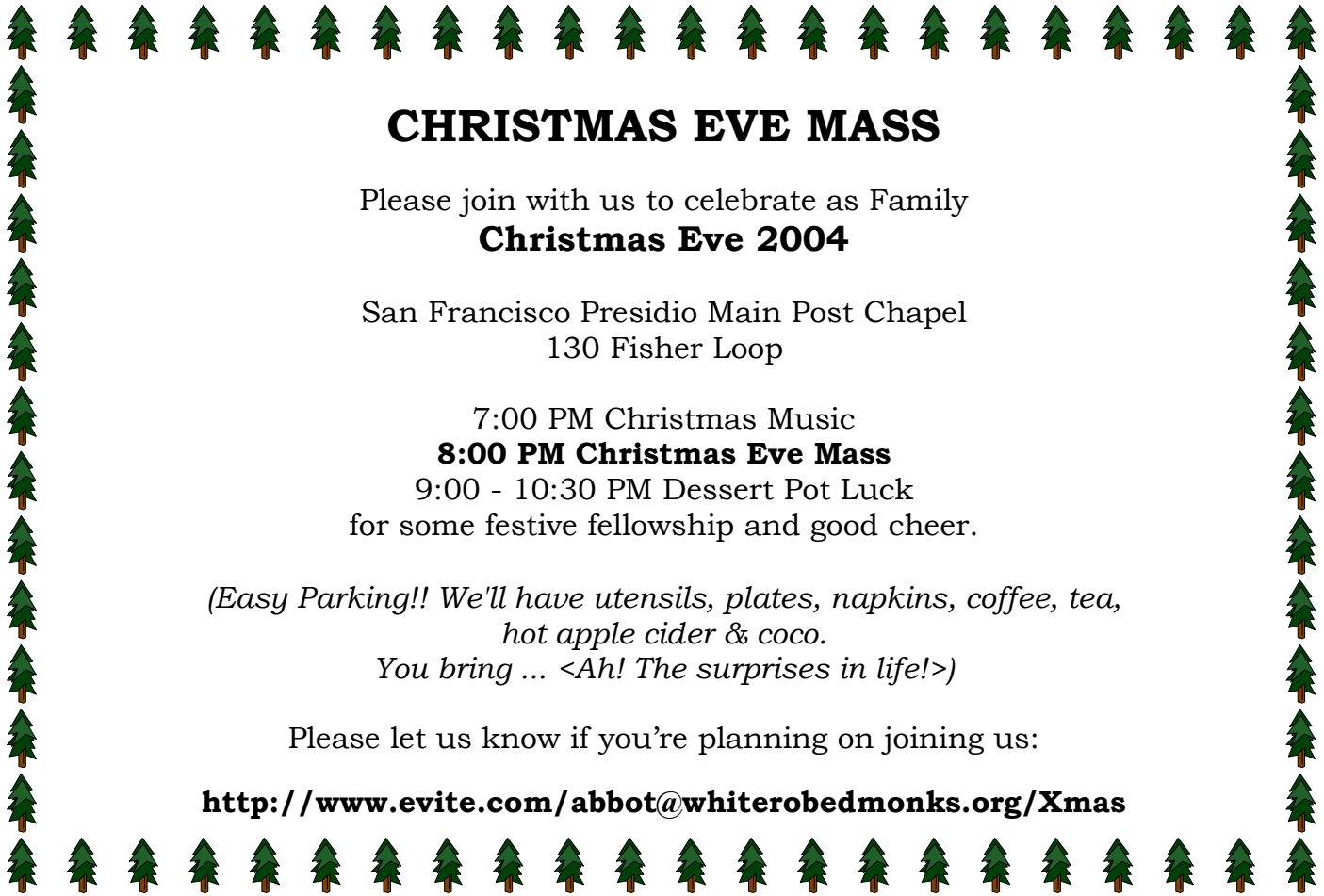
As the day ends and I lay my head down on my pillow, I will thank the Almighty for the best day of my life.

And I will sleep the sleep of a contented child, excited with expectation because I know tomorrow is going to be the best day of my life, ever!

--- Unknown

***A Good Life: Benedict's Guide to Everyday Joy* by Robert Benson**

What makes a "good life" in today's fast-paced, competitive world? In this book, beloved author and spiritual guide Robert Benson turns to the wisdom of Benedict, a 6th century monk. Compassionate and practical, Benedict created a rule of life—balancing prayer, rest, community, and work—that has helped centuries of people to lead more fulfilling lives. With trademark humor and elegant prose, Benson shares his own struggle to balance a spiritual life with the demanding roles of father, husband and writer. Anyone who feels pulled in too many directions will find in *A Good Life* thoughtful, ancient wisdom for creating a life of deep meaning and joy. *(www.Amazon.com)*



CHRISTMAS EVE MASS

Please join with us to celebrate as Family
Christmas Eve 2004

San Francisco Presidio Main Post Chapel
130 Fisher Loop

7:00 PM Christmas Music

8:00 PM Christmas Eve Mass

9:00 - 10:30 PM Dessert Pot Luck

for some festive fellowship and good cheer.

(Easy Parking!! We'll have utensils, plates, napkins, coffee, tea, hot apple cider & coco.

You bring ... <Ah! The surprises in life!>)

Please let us know if you're planning on joining us:

<http://www.evite.com/abbot@whiterobedmonks.org/Xmas>

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of St. Benedict**

PO Box 27536
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

Phone: 415-292-3228
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your new mailing address. Thank you.**




Peace and Joy!

How to Detach from a Belief—Why?

How to detach from a belief and experience freedom and peace of mind? Use a centering meditation taught by Tarthang Tulku in his *Hidden Mind of Freedom*:

"Working with thoughts (beliefs) by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which—without attachment—also become our meditation. We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense

core of the experience, the meditator unites with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . . "

And why?

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed. (Thank you Michael Butler)

May all beings be happy.
Amen.

Peace. **Please!** offer support for our activities and/or help us cover costs for this newsletter by making at least a yearly \$5.00 donation:



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And thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours now and forevermore. Peace and joy!
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