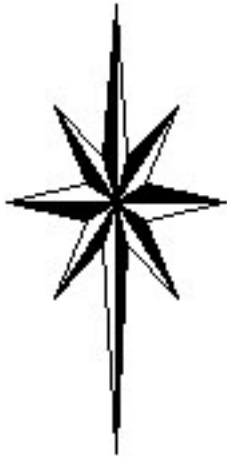
	<b>White Robed Monks of St. Benedict</b>	<i>Volume 16 Issue 1</i>
	<b>Network News</b>	<i>December 25, 2012</i>
<i>Ausculta</i>		<i>Nondual: things remain distinct while not being separate.</i>
<b>Abbot's Notes</b>		<b>Christmas Letter</b>



Peace I leave with you;  
my peace I give you.  
(John 14:27)

May the Peace  
of the Christmas Season  
be with you and yours  
now and forevermore!

**CHRISTMAS EVE MASS**  
(Perhaps our last get together at this location  
as chapel will be administered by the Presidio Trust  
come January 1, 2013)

Join with us to celebrate as Family  
**Christmas Eve 2012**

San Francisco Presidio Main Post Chapel  
Francisco CA 94129-1194

7:00 PM Christmas Carols and Meditation  
7:30 PM Christmas Eve Mass  
8:15 PM - 9:30 PM Dessert Pot Luck  
for some festive fellowship and good cheer.  
*(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 are planning on attending via  
**Easy link to Evite: [www.wrmosb.org/xmas](http://www.wrmosb.org/xmas)**  
(We'd like an approximate count  
so we have enough coffee, tea, cider, etc. Thank you.)

May many blessings of Peace and Joy  
Be to you and yours  
Now and forevermore.

**The White Robed Monks of St. Benedict**

Peace be with you and yours.  
Merry Christmas.

Christmas is typically a Family event. To uncover a current sense of what is a family, we asked our clerics to chime in. One responds that a family is composed of a people *evoking in us trust and compassion and returning such to the measure of their ability.* Another writes that a family is *a community of recognized connectedness, commitment and love by each member - one to the other.* And yet another considers a family to be of a natu-

*ral, physical origin or one that has been formed by intention. We may have multiple families as our awareness grows. They may differ in character and significance depending on our perspective. There may be a biological family, a spiritual family (church), our membership in the human family, etc.* In short, a family exists when two or more bond in some fashion. We can be members of several families. To which families to you belong?

What is the nature of the bond? All families are tied together in some fashion

## Abbot's Notes –USA FAMILY

by some internal motivation expressed in some outward form. In one extreme, we have the weak bond of the addictive personalities: the neighborhood bar/alcohol for some is their only family. In another extreme, a group of people with more of a spiritual bent: a monastic community. In yet another, the bond of wanting to generate children or the bond of wanting security and protection or the bond of wanting to defend one's country or any other bond that might come to mind. Families abound!

How do these families operate or function? One writes that a family functions *as a fluid, though often chaotic, flowing of attention for one another - sometimes drawing another along or being drawn along - over our gaps; filling or making space.* Another concludes that *in the positive sense a family functions satisfactorily when each member recognizes, accepts and loves the other members unconditionally for who they are. That is the critical starting point. A family is maintained through the practice of compassionate leaning attitudes and virtues.* And another writes succinctly that a family functions simply

*by dwelling (i.e. being) together.* These insights hold an element of truth regardless of the particular bond that holds the family together. The bar, the battle field, the monastic cloister, the "family" dinner table. How does your own family function? How does each of your families function?

Where does Family take place? *Wherever the above happens, more or less one responds.* Another responds that *a true family is non-local. It is a state of being among the membership as opposed to a particular location.* Lastly, family takes place *in the heart.* Fascinating. Generally we position family in the home, do we not? Yet, where do we say colloquially home is but in the heart? This means that we can be actually in several families at the same time, some more so than others. We can be with the family at grandmas and we can be with the sports fans at the game and we can be in the battlefield. Is not our heart everywhere we wanted it to be? Where are you in this moment? With which families are you?

And when does Family take place? One response reads *where and when are the same.* Another offers that *Family*

*can take s place at any time - past, present or future. In any given moment, depending on our degree of consciousness, it can come into being.* The third response reads *when and wherever (the Family is) gathered.* As with Family being in the Heart, so too does non-locality subsume into no time. Whether or not we have family or are in a family, is totally a conscious choice — other-wise we are creating something that is non-family and we take the illusion to be the reality. When we do this, then The Great Trinity becomes operable = that *ME, MYSELF, and I* that takes whatever is happening as a personal event.

Now that we have sensed Family from what it is, how it is, where it is, when it is, we now can ask the question: Why is the family?

The answer is so obvious that one response reads: *don't be cute.* The second response finds family as *the basic social unit, regardless of type, that enables us to discover and develop our identity. (Ubuntu! c.f. So Africa)* Perhaps underlying this whole discussion is the third response as to why the family. *Communion. In the beginning is the Conversation.* The Human

Family, the Monastic Family, the Athletic Family, the Fashion Family, The Bar Family, The Drug Family, Whatever Family is just a conversation that leads to some type of communion.

You may have noticed that not mentioned thus far are such hypothetical considerations as Love, Compassion, and the like. Why not? What is Love? People go to war for love of country. People go to a sporting event for the love of the game. People drink for the alleged love of bar room conviviality where as in the main it is for the love of the high. People marry because they love one another. What do we mean when we say *I love you, this, that or the other thing?* And compassion? Well, this is easier—to recognize that another is suffering and to do something to alleviate that suffering which may mean doing nothing as the person may only learn the lesson by suffering, the individual being too stubborn to learn by instruction or a gentle hint or nudge in a healthier direction. We will save these topics for another day. Today, just Family.

This Christmas season may serve as a space to reflect on the bonds that you have created with and

between various people to form Family. What is the nature of those bonds? Are you sincere and honest with yourself in relation to the other or others in your Family—whichever family you may be considering? How authentic are you? What is the level of trust and confidence you render yourself in conversation with another or with many?

What do you believe about your Family under consideration? Do you bring peace to your family or do you bring acrimony and turmoil? Either is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong in themselves. Remember in your belief about your Family there is a lie: in every belief there is a lie. What is the lie? That your belief is absolutely true and correct when in actuality it is neither true nor false—it is only electrochemical activity cascading over synapses in the brain where you store them for your own use and pleasure. The historical Jesus allegedly said: *My Peace I bring you, my peace I give you—not as the world gives, but as I give. Be Peace.*

Many blessings to you and yours. Peace and Joy!

+Robert OSB  
Abbot-Bishop

### 1) What is a Family?

A group of people into which one is born or becomes part of through a loving and accepting relationship into that 'family or home space' (eg. Through marriage or adoption). Traditional "African" family is much wider than the immediate family of a couple and their children; it includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins etc. All take responsibility for the raising of the children, the caring of the elderly members. Uncles and aunts referred to as my 'second father' or 'second mother', cousins referred to as my brother or sister.

### 2) How does a Family function?

All members of the family feel part of the wider family, taking responsibility for the well being of all. In South Africa we use the word **Ubuntu**: "**I am because of others**" it is within and through the family that the person comes to be.

### 3) Where does Family take place?

Family happens wherever the family happens to be; but more especially in the parental home. If the parents are no longer alive then family happens in the home of the eldest sibling.

### 4) When does Family take place?

Family takes place on any occasion where the family is gathered. In South Africa any occasion is an occasion to celebrate family, whether it be the birth of a child or the death of a family member. After the funeral of a family member we have what is called the "after-tears" celebration which sometimes turns out to be a big party like celebration of the family who has mourned together now celebrating the life of the one who has died. I suppose it would have similar tones as the Irish wake, except that it happens after the funeral, therefore the name "after-tears".

### 5) Why is The Family?

*Ubuntu!*

+Oliver—Vicar Apostolic So Africa

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**Moving or recently moved?**

**Please visit**

<http://www.wrmosb.org/update>

**Thank you.**

**(New e-mail address, too.)**



  
**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.

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

**White Robed Monks of St. Benedict**