



A LEAF FROM

THE SYCAMORE TREE

“So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree,
in order to see Jesus who was about to pass that way.” Luke 19:4

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD ~ 2016

Dear Friends and Family of The Sycamore Tree,

Praised be Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary!

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the Wise Men will be well on their journey home from their divine encounter in Bethlehem, and you will have taken down the Christmas tree. Some of us will keep our Christmas crèche up until February 2, the Presentation of the Lord, and all of us should “*celebrate Christmas every day...*”¹ all the year long.

As we begin the New Year of Grace 2016 – the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy – we thank God and thank each one of you for the multitude of graces and mercies shown to us in the past year. God bless you, each and every one, for your many expressions of love, help and encouragement throughout the past year and especially during the magnanimous season of Christmas.

We repeat our annual Epiphany message that you are remembered with gratitude and love in our prayers, Holy Hours, and Masses at The Sycamore Tree every day of the year. “*He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them...*” (Heb 6:10 NIV)

The feast of these holy men is a good time for each of us to resolve to follow in their footsteps, to make a noble effort to follow the true signs that will lead us to the Child-God at any cost. St. Bonaventure has observed that the star which will guide us is composed of three parts: *Holy Scripture, our Blessed Mother, and the graces which we receive from the Holy Spirit.*²

If we follow these lights, we won’t lose the trail that leads to Bethlehem and to the Child Jesus. Happy and holy trails in the New Year!



**“O, little Jesus, King of heaven and earth;
grant that I may adore You
with the faith and love of the Magi.”**

¹ St. Paul of the Cross

² St. Bonaventure, *On the Epiphany of the Lord*

WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO...

Anno Domini 2015 was a good year and a year of a few significant milestones for The Sycamore Tree.

35 YEARS AGO

In August we marked the 35th anniversary of the founding of our apostolate.

25 YEARS AGO

On the Solemnity of Our Lady's Assumption, we celebrated Michelle Jenkins' 25th anniversary of consecration and service at The Sycamore Tree and Our Lady of Swan Valley Mission.

ALMOST A YEAR AGO

At long last, in June we launched a website www.sycamoretreeretreat.org, had brochures printed, had signs made for the cabins, and planted the Paul Brueggeman Memorial Garden outside the chapel. We made several landscaping improvements, repainted the picnic tables, got the kitchen painted and even put an electronic doorbell at the gate and at the front door!

OTHER NEW INITIATIVES

We launched some other new initiatives in 2015, including:

- a monthly First Saturday Day of Divine Praises and Silent Recollection (Fr. Steve Tallman, Celebrant)
- our first annual St. Helena celebration on August 18 and all-night adoration vigil for the Diocese of Helena
- in December, we began a monthly Thursday/Friday all-night Adoration Vigil for Priests, Seminarians and Vocations (Fr. David Severson, Celebrant)

AND OTHER HAPPENINGS.....

In July, Fr. Bart Tolleson presented his second popular summer series, *Growing in Holiness*. In August, Fr. Elias Mary Mills, FI presented a Day of Recollection, *The Five Marian Stones*.

Keeping our 30-year tradition, we put on our annual Labor Day gathering as well as several small group retreats and welcomed a full-house for a *Thanksgiving Day of Thanks*.



**“FOR EVERYTHING
THERE IS A SEASON...”**

Last summer we said farewell to our resident hermit cowboy priest, Fr. John O. Brown.

For more than four years (March, 2011-June, 2015), Father John offered daily Mass and the Sacraments, prayed night and day in his hermitage, baked bread for us, and taught frequent conferences at The Sycamore Tree. All that, in addition to daily rodeoing his two Szhitzu sidekicks, Phil and Fred!

On July 1st, Fr. John left Montana to return to his native Dallas, Texas to a new ministry with the National Queen of Light Divine Will Center.

He continues to support us with his prayers and good humor and will be happy to hear from anyone who may want to contact him through the website: www.queenoflight.org

WHAT ABOUT MASS?

While Fr. Brown's departure left us without a resident priest and without daily Mass, we were blessed with priestly ministry by Fr. Kevin Christofferson, who came in early July for a 6-week sabbatical before beginning his new assignment at Immaculate Conception in Polson. And, while we aren't able to have daily Mass, with an increasing number of priests making retreats at The Sycamore Tree, we are able to have Mass many days of the month. Please pray that God will send us a permanent priest.

HERMITS' MIGRATION

Since the fall of 2009, The Sycamore Tree has been home to three discerning hermits.

We have gone from one hermit in residence to three hermits in residence and are presently hermitless. However, we are frequently asked what's become of Sycamore Tree hermits #1 and #3, aka Brother Timothy Pida and Suzanne Schwarz (Fr. Brown, being hermit #2).

Brother Timothy was solemnly consecrated as a diocesan hermit on May 31, 2013 and soon after moved from The Sycamore Tree to a temporary hermitage in Eureka, MT, where he lives and prays as he works to complete his permanent hermitage in the Eureka area.

Suzanne Schwarz, has been working and praying in Kalispell, since November, 2013 under the direction of Bishop Thomas and is preparing to make her temporary vows soon as the second consecrated hermit for the Diocese of Helena.

FROM COOKING AND CLEANING TO COPIOUS CORRESPONDING...THANK YOU, CEELEE!



After 13 years of generous volunteer service as chief cook and housekeeper, CeeLee Wiley retired in December, 2014. We sure do miss her cookin' and are ever grateful for her years of service and works of kindness at The Sycamore Tree. She is not idle in her retirement but is actively engaged as the correspondence secretary of The Sycamore Tree.



IN MEMORIUM

Pat Lipetzy, long-time disciple, benefactor, and iconographer, died from cancer at her home in Boise, ID on July 12, 2015. May she enjoy her new "window" to Heaven as we continue to enjoy the icons she wrote for Our Lady of Swan Valley Mission



Fr. D. A. Okorn, entered eternal life on January 10, 2010, the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord. May he dwell in complete plenitude in the eternal vision of God and pray for us.

... AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED

Upon the death of our founder in January, 2010, the Diocese of Helena inherited The Sycamore Tree property. Since its founding in 1980, the apostolate has served and been supported entirely by the generosity of benefactors and volunteers, without subsidy from the Diocese or any other institution.

Bishop Thomas wholeheartedly supports the continuation of the retreat ministry here but is concerned that the Diocese, with its present financial constraints, cannot staff and administer the retreat center into the future.

For that reason, Bishop Thomas desires to find a new ownership model for The Sycamore Tree, with the hope that it can continue its apostolate as an independently-owned Catholic center functioning within the Diocese of Helena. With the help of our advisory board, we are forming a new 501(c)3 with the intention of purchasing The Sycamore Tree from the Diocese. We are presently working with the Diocese, and others, on the means and manner of acquisition. In the coming months, we will be sending a detailed letter with our proposal and a fundraising appeal.

Meantime, once again and always, we ask for your prayers in this discernment process and for the help we will need to meet this challenge. We ask you to beg God, in His mercy, to send us a holy priest to provide leadership for the apostolate, for the Sacraments, and for spiritual guidance for the many souls who come to us seeking Truth and seeking holiness. And, by all means, if you feel nudged by the Holy Spirit to help in any way – with prayers, financially, or as volunteer help – please contact Michelle Jenkins, who will be most happy to hear from you!



EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY

DECEMBER 8, 2015

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NOVEMBER 20, 2016

Father Steve Tallman blessing the chapel door at The Sycamore Tree on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2015 to launch the Year of Mercy.

Sponsor a Priest, a Seminarian... or even a weary mom



"The Father spoke one Word, who was His Son,
and this word He is always speaking in eternal silence.
It is in silence that the soul must hear it."

Saint John of the Cross

We hear it so often from so many of our committed and generous priests: "I need to make a retreat..." But with all the demands of their priestly ministry, they often postpone scheduling that time for their own personal spiritual renewal. Would you like to help them?

You can give the gift of one or more days of silence and prayer with a gift certificate to The Sycamore Tree. The sponsorship can be a gift from one person or from a group of people. It can be offered as an ordination anniversary gift, a birthday gift, or just a simple "thank you." The suggested offering for one night with three meals provided is \$60. The gift certificate can be sent to the sponsor or directly from The Sycamore Tree to the retreatant.

If you would like to provide this gift of prayer for a priest, seminarian - or even a weary mom or anyone in need of some spiritual renewal - please email or call at the address at the close of this newsletter. For more information about The Sycamore Tree accommodations, please see our website: www.sycamoretreeretreat.org.



"...but he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed."

Luke 5:15-16 (RSV)

*We invite you to join us in the new year for a time of
personal retreat and prayer or for a scheduled day of teaching.*

2016 Winter Calendar of Events

Thursday/Friday

January 14/15

7:00 p.m. Mass

MONTHLY THURSDAY ADORATION VIGIL FOR PRIESTS

Fr. David Severson, Celebrant

Saturday

February 6

5 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MONTHLY FIRST SATURDAYS

12:15 p.m. Mass

SEVEN TIMES A DAY I WILL PRAISE YOU

Fr. Stephen Tallman, Celebrant

Dates TBA

Feb./March

7:00 p.m. Mass

MONTHLY THURSDAY ADORATION VIGIL FOR PRIESTS

Fr. David Severson, Celebrant

Saturday

March 5

5 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MONTHLY FIRST SATURDAYS

12:15 p.m. Mass

SEVEN TIMES A DAY I WILL PRAISE YOU

Fr. Stephen Tallman, Celebrant

Saturday

March 12

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

RECOGNIZING OUR PURPOSE & OUR IDENTIFY IN GOD

10 a.m. Mass

Fr. Jeremiah Myriam Shryock, CFR, Guest Speaker
[to be held at Our Lady of Swan Valley Mission Church]

Saturday

March 19

Noon Mass

SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH -ANNUAL ST. JOSEPH ALTAR

Potluck Brunch

Fr. Stephen Tallman, Celebrant

**Please see our website for more information
and for future scheduled events**

www.sycamoretreeretreat.org



The Sycamore Tree is self-supporting through the generosity of those who come here and who believe in our apostolate. Freewill offerings are gratefully accepted. Private retreats can be scheduled mid-week on weekends between group retreats, and cabins may be reserved on the weekends of group retreats for those desiring to stay over. Suggested donation is \$50/night single occupancy (if retreatant provides meals).

Blessed Epiphany!
May the God of love and peace
set your hearts at rest
and speed you on your journey!

St. Raymond de Penyafort

We have sent this newsletter by email to friends for whom we have an email address.
If you would like a print copy, or would like us to send an email or print copy to someone else,
please contact Michelle Jenkins at the address below.

THE SYCAMORE TREE CATHOLIC RETREAT CENTER • 21592 SYCAMORE TREE LANE • SWAN LAKE, MT 59911

Ph/FAX: 406-754-2429 • email@sycamoretreeretreat.org • www.sycamoretreeretreat.org

LENTEN DAY OF RECOLLECTION

REALIZING OUR IDENTITY AND OUR PURPOSE IN GOD



PRESENTED BY
FR. JEREMIAH MYRIAM SHRYOCK, CFR

SATURDAY ~ MARCH 12, 2016

10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

AT OUR LADY OF SWAN VALLEY MISSION

201 E. BECK ROAD – CONDON,, MT
(Between MM 47-48 on Highway 83)

When Christ asks, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15), Peter responds, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt. 16:16). This answer is inspired, and it should be a model for us, since we have been baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27). If you were asked, “But who do you say that *you* are...,” how would you answer?



Father Jeremiah Myriam Shryock entered into Community of the Franciscan Friars of Renewal in 2002 and was ordained a priest in 2011. He has served in various roles of formation and is currently a Spiritual Director residing at the House of Prayer in Monticello, New York. His recently published book, *Letters of Hope and Consolation*, is available on amazon.com and will be available at the conference.

For details, see the flyer at our website or email: email@sycamoretreeretreat.org or call (406) 754.2429

The Sycamore Tree ~ 2015

