



Fall 2017

Dear Friend of Vallombrosa,

Although I have enjoyed many pleasant visits to Vallombrosa over the years, I never imagined I would find myself Director of this graced ministry. When health issues forced my Dominican brother, Patrick O'Neil, to relinquish the leadership at Vallombrosa, I was taken by surprise when my religious superior asked whether I would try to fill Fr. Patrick's shoes.

A haven of peace...

.... **welcoming everyone** to come and be nourished through spiritual, educational and professional experiences in a peaceful, natural setting.

The Vallombrosa staff has offered great support as I embrace this daunting task. We have taken steps to guarantee the Center's more popular programs, and we look forward to exploring some new offerings, including a music series. We have just completed a retreat with noted spiritual writer, Alice Camille, and we have engaged her to return next summer. Fr. Gladstone ("Bud") Stevens, former rector of St. Patrick's Seminary, will offer next summer's major retreat, a reflection on "The Revelation of Beauty," an exploration of God's hand at work in creation. Meanwhile, we look forward to hosting an autumn workshop, "Art and Soul," an Epiphany retreat led by EWTN's "poster boy," Fr. Brian Mullady, and the ever-popular Archdiocesan marriage preparation program, "Engaging the Heart."

Quick Links

[Visit our website](#)

[Engaging the Heart Pre-Cana Retreats](#)

In the month I've enjoyed this new apostolate, I've been approached by a number of individuals who have asked, "How can I help you?" A motto in our theology warns us that we cannot give what we do not have, so the most important thing our friends can do is pray for the success of the Vallombrosa ministry. Without your prayerful support, Vallombrosa would have nothing to offer. But with you beside us, what can we not accomplish?

Consider Vallombrosa

for your next meeting, workshop, retreat or conference.

Our state-of-the-art meeting rooms and lovely grounds make us the ideal choice for all-day, weekend and week-long events.

You will not be surprised to learn we also depend on your financial assistance. As you know, Vallombrosa is located in an historic landscape, surrounded by magnificent old trees. Many of these suffered during the recent drought, and we were forced to remove them - at a cost considerably higher than we budgeted for maintenance. Your assistance will help restore our diminished maintenance reserves.

Stay Connected



And as we look toward the future, we also hope to enlist your aid in establishing a Scholarship Fund, which will allow us to offer assistance to individuals who would like to avail themselves of Vallombrosa's spiritual riches, but cannot afford to pay the full cost of a retreat. You are an essential part of the Vallombrosa ministry. Please visit us at PayPal (and use david@vallombrosa.org) to guarantee our continued success.

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[Forward To A Friend](#)

We remember you each day in our prayers. May God bless you for your generosity and love!

Sincere fond regards,
In Christ,

Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P.



NEW Events

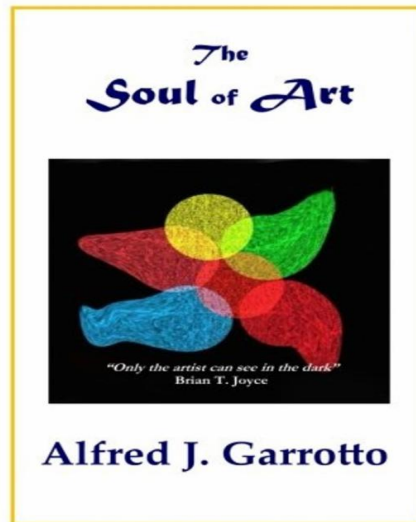
We are happy to announce returning favorites and some new additions to our public events!

Thanksgiving Prayer Service - November 12, 2017



A time for reflection, a time for coming to terms, a time for gratitude. Our beloved annual Thanksgiving Choir Performance will take place November 12th. Suggested Donation of \$20. Registration required.

Art & Soul with Al Garrotto - December 2, 2017



Based on Al's acclaimed book, *The Soul of Art*, this workshop/retreat focuses on the creative gifts of both professional and aspiring actors, composers, dancers, fine artists, musicians, playwrights, writers, et al. The God-given talents of artists of all genres uplift humankind and lead audiences to deeper awareness of life's higher meaning. Participants will explore the divine source of their own gifts and inspirations and take away with them even greater joy in sharing them. Attendees of all faiths are invited.

Lunch is included. The author's book will be for sale during the event.

About Al Garrotto:

Alfred J. Garrotto is the author of twelve books (both fiction and non-fiction). Born into a theatrical family, he began working in films (crowd scenes) at the age of seven. The arts in all forms are his lifelong passion.

Registration [Here](#).

Following the Star of Faith - Fr. Brian Mullady January 12-14, 2018



We are called to Follow, We are called to have Faith. How are we to go about this great journey? Fr. Brian Mullady, <http://fatherbtm.com/>, will help us discern this. We hope to see you January 12-14, 2018. Early Bird Registration at a discount until December 1.

Register Early and Save [HERE](#)



Notes from the Shady Glens of Vallombrosa

Vallombrosa's fiscal year closed on June 30, and in many ways, this was a banner year. We provided 34,923 meals and 11,083 overnight beds to guests from 165 highly-divergent groups. In addition, we hosted 35 Private Retreatants, and 112 couples at 7 Marriage Preparation Conferences.

Sadly, California's 7-year drought took its toll on our urban forest, and although we welcomed the rain that fell in February, we lost 6 large oak trees. One fell into a neighbor's yard, and another fell across Oak Grove Avenue, just after the Saturday evening Mass at Nativity Parish, where worshipers heard a big 'whooosh' as the tree toppled over our front wall.

We had just engaged a professional arborist to oversee some long-overdue tree maintenance, so we had most of the necessary equipment on hand to clean up the damage, but the effort cost more than four times my budget for landscaping and tree maintenance. Such unanticipated costs are hard to absorb, but we have nevertheless been able to remodel, repaint and refresh a few rooms in the mansion, and plan to continue that

effort in the meeting rooms.

In May, our telephone lines were "fried" by a power surge, when a squirrel fell onto the power transformer and cut all the Center's power. With no phone service for more than a week, we offered many prayers to St. Jude, while our resourceful and dedicated staff worked with contractors to remedy the situation.

Although we must turn to outsiders for some of the work at Vallombrosa, the day-to-day success of the Center is guaranteed by our permanent staff, individuals devoted to making the Vallombrosa experience welcoming and restful for our guests. What few guests realize is the challenge to prepare eighty rooms on a Friday, between one group's 11 am check-out and the 4 p.m. arrival of individuals making a weekend retreat. In addition, tables and chairs must magically appear in conference rooms, aligned as our guests wish - and ready for any last-minute change or addition.

Some of the best ideas for our guests' comfort come from our staff. When we needed to reorder linens, the housekeeping staff insisted on larger towels, with a much higher thread count. These made a very positive impression on our guests, as did higher quality individual soaps and toiletries - at a very small increase in cost. We never imagined animal husbandry would be part of our mission, but we harbor two cats and a cadre of bunnies. Both delight our guests, and one cat is a great mouser, roaming the wooded area for prey.

We were blessed to have a Summer Intern join us this year, Javier, a Criminal Justice major at Sacramento State. Javier proved to be a very hard worker, and proved invaluable as our grounds crew cut back underbrush and developed two fenced areas as "cutting gardens." As our outsides were being transformed, the inside facilities staff were able to replace a large, emergency hot water heater in the kitchen, as well as a much-needed "booster" that keeps water for the dishwasher consistently above 185 degrees.

As we look back on what we have accomplished - and contemplate the many tasks we have yet to address - the generous assistance of our benefactors continues to be a source of encouragement and hope. In addition, we are blessed with a very supportive Advisory Board. We also enjoy the company of many individuals who simply stop by and enjoy the grounds.

I am frequently asked, "how can I help?" and I am overwhelmed when someone offers to divide their prized dahlias, drops off some day lilies, or asks us to give a home to a beloved hydrangea. If some among our readers are master rose gardeners, we are looking for volunteers to help prune and feed our roses, which add so much to our bouquets. Needless to say, gifts to the landscape and tree maintenance fund also provide immense assistance.

Thank you for being a part of our ministry at Vallombrosa Center!

David FencI
Director of Operations

Save the Date - Upcoming Events 2018

(All times, registration details to be announced next newsletter)

Valentine's Day Mass for Couples - February 11, 2018

Easter Egg Hunt - March 25 (times to be announced)

Marian Retreat - May 11-13, Fr. Brian Mullady

Mother's Day Brunch - May 13

The Revelation of Beauty - July 5 - 11, Fr. Bud Stevens

American Saints - July 20-22, Alice Camille

**Vallombrosa Center
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