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God of Our Silent Tears . . . by Rev. Alike P. Galloway

The National Negro Anthem, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* concludes with: “God of our weary years—God of our silent tears.” I remember vividly, and achingly, sitting as a child and watching my family shed silent tears about oppression and hopelessness.

On Election Day, my husband Ralph and I were in Rome. Because of the time difference we went to bed not knowing the outcome. We woke at dawn, turned on the television and watched Rev. Jessie Jackson cry. Jessie shed tears of joy, amazement, and wonder; tears of deliverance, restoration, and regeneration. He cried as one whose hope had been restored. Without a word, we knew that Barack Obama had been elected the 44th President of the United States of America.

We quickly went to the Vatican and were engulfed by folks from every nation crying, rejoicing, laughing, praising God in tongues that we had never heard and could not understand. Like the day of Pentecost, people filed out into St. Peter’s Square reeling as if they were drunk, releasing torrents of tears of thanksgiving. Questions were asked in a common language of tender testimony. God had heard the world’s cry and, as my Grandmother would say, “pitied every groan.” Through the veil of tears, we experienced a clear moment of revelation—A Thin Place. When God’s people cry in community, a spiritual force gathers and miracles happen.

On January 20th we stood in front of our television and cried. Our faces were flooded with tears of release, relief and response; not just because of the color of the man, but because of the content of his character. We baptized ourselves with tears. We cried when Aretha sang and Yoyo Ma played, Michelle graced the platform, two little girls strutted, Grand-Ma smiled, Rev. Joseph Lowery joked, Tuskegee Airmen saluted, and young people of every nation, persuasion, color and temperament grabbed hold of the plow of democracy and dug it deeply into the soil!

On that day we stuck humble hands through the thin veil that separates heaven from earth and rejoiced until our jelly rolls shook. God’s people danced a new dance, for a new day, and a new way, because we cried and God heard: we Two-Stepped with the Holy and the great cloud of witnesses. We did The Jerk, The Electric Slide, and The Tennessee Waltz to the heavenly chorus of Malhalia’s sigh, Frank’s croon, Satchmo’s scat, Marian’s song, and Mile’s moan. . . .

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An ecumenical sampler of events and resources for spiritual growth, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey, published by the Spiritual Growth Community of Westminster Presbyterian Church



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1200 Marquette Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419
612.332.3421
www.eWestminster.org

Look for *Thin Places* at: www.thinplaces.us or www.ewestminster.org/thin_places

And the thick became thin, and love real, and hope was restored. All was well for one moment in time because . . . in words that are sunk deep into my soul . . . and into the soul of the whole community—

**The God of our weary years,
The God of our silent tears,
The God who has brought us
thus far on the way;
The God who has by Thy might—
Has Lead us into the light!**

The Rev. Alika Galloway and her husband, the Rev. Ralph Galloway, are the Founding Co-Pastors of Kwanzaa Community Church, PC(USA), in North Minneapolis. In seven years, Kwanzaa has initiated a Youth and Family Development Center, the Lydia Women’s Empowerment Ministry, HIV/AIDS Ministries, the five-week summer and After School Children’s Defense Fund Freedom School, and more. Alika is also working on her doctorate through Virginia Union Seminary. She may be reached at rgall60099@aol.com. Learn more about Kwanzaa Community Church at www.kwanzaachurch.org.

“ . . . engulfed by folks from every nation . . . ”

“The deepest level of communication
is not communication but communion . . .
It is beyond words, and beyond speech,
and it is beyond concept . . . ”

Thomas Merton

“Taste and See the Goodness of our God”

“When there is an encounter with another, when there is mutuality, when there is presence, when there is giving and receiving, and both are changed; that is the moment when you can begin to move toward transformation.

Don’t let the word transformation scare you. You just allow what you have met to change you. You look back at it with different eyes. And now you are able to look at the rest of your life with different eyes . . . ”

Richard Rohr *A New Way of Seeing/A New Way of Being*

Do you know of anyone who might like to receive *Thin Places*? It’s sent free to all who request it.

Or do you know of an up-coming Opportunity that might be of interest to others?

If you can answer, “yes,” to either of these, please contact Kathy Fisher, kfisher@wpc-mpls.org or 612.332.3421.

Yin and Yang: Social Justice and Contemplative Living

It would seem that the journey in must necessarily lead to the journey out, that opening ourselves to at least some sense of God’s endless and unconditional love for us must necessarily lead us towards being more loving to others.

If this be so, it does not seem surprising that when Fr. Richard Rohr established his Center—for people interested in combining the principles of compassionate social justice and contemplative prayer within a lifestyle of simplicity and service—he chose to call it the **Center for Action and Contemplation**.

CAC is located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in offices which handle administrative and bookstore activities and in a separate facility called Stillpoint, which is the location of the simple chapel where staff, interns, volunteers and friends gather for morning and late-afternoon contemplative prayer. Stillpoint also includes gardens and a large labyrinth, and it is home to those involved in the Center’s internship programs.

CAC offers many opportunities to learn and to live into its mission:

- in addition to nine-day study internships seeking to integrate principles of social action and contemplation, there are work internships in which participants live and work with the staff for several months to a year,
- there are large two or three day conferences, such as the just concluded, **The Emerging Church: Conversations, Convergences and Action** and **Reclaiming our hearts, a world reborn: a Conference for Women** with Marianne Williamson, coming up in August,
- there is the annual, special **Year Ending/Year Beginning** conference each year,
- there are the **Men’s Rite of Passage/Men as Learners and Elders** mission programs at sites around the country and abroad,
- there is **Radical Grace**, the Center’s quarterly journal, and the Mustard Seed Resource Center, the publishing arm and bookstore, and there is more.

For additional information or to register or to sign up for Fr. Richard’s daily meditations: www.cacraddicalgrace.org.

In addition,

- for Men’s Work: www.malespirituality.org (including the **Men’s Rite of Passage** retreat in Minnesota June 24-28;
- for work/internship information: formation@radicalgrace.org or 505.242.9588, x118;

• and for Mustard Seed Resource Center/book store:
505.247.1636.
As Fr. Richard often says, “Peace and all good to you!”

Central Lutheran’s New Labyrinth

What may be the Twin Cities Area’s newest labyrinth—a neo-medieval 7-circuit model based on the famous Chartres Labyrinth—was dedicated on Sunday, February 22, and will be available daily during Lent and on many additional occasions (details still unfolding, please stay tuned).

Open every day in Lent, during normal church hours

One upcoming special occasion is **World Labyrinth Day**, which brings people from all over the planet together in celebration of the labyrinth as a symbol, a tool, a passion or a practice.

Those who have often walked and those who may have wondered about walking the labyrinth are all invited.

As a part of this celebration, you are especially invited to **“Walk as One at 1”** (1:00 p.m. in each time zone)—to affect a rolling wave of labyrinth walking as the earth turns:

Open on World Labyrinth Day, May 2 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Central Lutheran Church, in the Community Room
333 South 12th Street, Minneapolis
For information: 612.870.4416 or www.centralmpls.org
(then type “Labyrinth” in “Search/Site Map”).

Taizé Prayer, in the New Monastery

Taizé Prayer uses simple chants based on the Scriptures and periods of silence to create an environment for encountering the mystery of God. This hour of quiet, gentle communal prayer can help dispel the accumulated burdens of the week and free one for the renewal of the weekend.

Attending this Prayer would also give you an opportunity to visit and see the just-opened New Monastery. It is located just north of the old Monastery buildings, on the same Monastery grounds, but with the entrance now being off Benet Road (rather than Larpenteur as before).

Guests are also welcome to visit the New Monastery any day to make use of the Meditation Chapel or public spaces for private prayer or meditation, and/or to join the monastic community for the liturgy of the hours.

The New Monastery was long in the discerning, and creative in the planning, and carefully made. All are invited to take the opportunity of the Taizé Evening Prayer, or of another opportunity, to come and visit it for themselves.

Third Friday of each month, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Saint Paul’s Monastery, in the Chapel
2675 Benet Road, St. Paul
For information or directions: 651.777.8181 or
651.777.7251

A Recurring Meditation Opportunity

This group has been meeting weekly for several years and is an ongoing group of 20 to 50 people which welcomes newcomers. It is an open meeting of AA and Alanon and is an 11th step meeting. AA’s 11th step states, “We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, asking only for knowledge of his will and the power to carry it out.”

After a short opening, the group has five minutes of silence. Then someone speaks on the 11th step for 5-10 minutes. Following that, the group breaks into three sub-groups. One is “ambient” meditation—silent meditation with soft music. A second is guided meditation with a CD on meditation. The third is meditation in complete silence. After 20 minutes, group members talk about the step or something in their lives related to spirituality or meditation. Speaking up is voluntary.

“. . . to sing the joy of forgiveness”

“Lent first directs our thoughts to the image of the desert, the one in which Jesus spent forty days of solitude, or the one that God’s people crossed by walking for forty years.

Yet when these weeks before Easter returned each year, Brother Roger liked to recall that Lent is not a time for austerity or sorrow, or a period to cultivate guilt, but rather a season to sing the joy of forgiveness . . .

He saw Lent as forty days to prepare to rediscover the springtimes in our lives.

When John the Baptist proclaims ‘Repent!’ at the beginning of Matthew, he means simply ‘Turn to God!’ And during Lent we wish to look towards God in order to receive forgiveness. Christ has conquered evil, and his constant forgiveness allows us to renew our inner life.

We are invited to a conversion: not to turn towards ourselves in introspection or individual perfectionism, but to seek communion with God . . . and, also, communion with others.”

Brother Alois, [www.taize.fr/taizenews.php]

If you are already familiar with AA/Alanon, or if you have never come before, you will be quietly welcomed:

Every Sunday, 10:30 a.m. to Noon

Uptown AA/Alanon House, 1344 Summit Avenue
(at Hamline Avenue) in Saint Paul

Information: 651.329.9155 or housegecko@comcast.net

Stadium Village Church's Lectio Divina Groups

Especially for those close to the University of Minnesota, two groups practicing lectio divina weekly. One group especially welcomes men and women:

Wednesdays, 11:00 to Noon

Stadium Village Church, in the house behind the Church,
808 Essex Street SE, Minneapolis

Parking is sometimes limited

Call the Church Office at 612.331.1632 to confirm.

and

A group especially for graduate students and professors:

Tuesdays, 11:15 to Noon 126 Amundson Hall

421 Washington Avenue SE, Minneapolis

For additional information: kmacosko@hotmail.com.

The Music

"I was deeply inspired by the haunting spirit of the Celtic world, and the power of music to reach and express the indefinable. When invited to set the text to music, the challenge was to express deep longing and reverence for both the Creation and the Christ of Celtic experience. The melodies should be chant-like, easily sung and repeated, meditative but also expressive of the profound and sometimes complex written texts. . . ."

Sam Guarnaccia

"Upon hearing the music for the first time . . .

. . . there was deep delight. But it was more than that. It was as if many of us were hearing something that we have been longing for without necessarily knowing what it is we have been longing for. Certainly it expressed the yearnings for peace that are within us. But in *Songs for the Earth, A Celtic Mass for Peace* these longings seemed as vast as the universe and as personal as the most intimate of relationships. . . ."

J. Philip Newell

Sixth Annual Thin Places Ecumenical Worship Service, including J. Philip Newell's "Songs for the Earth: A Celtic Mass for Peace"

The evening will follow the basic pattern of these annual services. We will gather around the altar in the Sanctuary for sung prayers from Taizé and the music of ancient Celtic instruments and a **homily by Philip**, leading into:

the World Premier of
"Songs for the Earth: A Celtic Mass for Peace."

Following worship we shall move in procession to The Agape Table. All are invited to **bring a gift of food for the Food Shelf** to place on the Table, there to be Blessed.

We'll then gather in the Heller Commons for Scottish Scones and Tea and fellowship. And the evening will end as we are **sent back out into the world** to serve as each of us is called.

Worship Leaders will include:

- The Rev. Ward Bauman, Episcopal House of Prayer
- The Rev. Bill Davnie, member, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area
- Diane Gardner, Mayflower Community Church
- The Rev. Sally Johnson, Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church
- Michele Krakowski, Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality
- The Rev. Barbara Lund, Wisdom Ways
- The Rev. Dr. Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, Wesley Center for Spirituality
- The Rev. Dr. J. Philip Newell, Church of Scotland
- The Rev. Dr. Tim Hart-Andersen, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Thursday, May 21, 7:00-9:30 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1200 Marquette,
Minneapolis

For details of Philip's entire visit: **see Page 5 opposite**

For additional information: www.ewestminster.org or kfisher@wpc-mpls.org.

Welcoming and Hospitality by ARC Ecumenical Retreat Center and Christos Center for Spiritual Formation.



Spirit with You: A Celtic Way of Peace with Philip Newell

May 19-21, 2009

“One of the Top 10 Spiritual Sages to Watch in 2009”

David Crumm, editor www.readthespirit.com

“It is when we begin to remember who we are, and who all people truly are, that we will begin to remember also what we should be doing and how we should be relating to one another as individuals and as nations and as an entire earth community.” - Philip Newell

Internationally acclaimed for his work in the field of Celtic spirituality, Philip Newell has a passion for peace in the world and a fresh vision for harmony between the great spiritual traditions of humanity. This poet, Church of Scotland minister, scholar and teacher is perhaps best-known as the author of *Listening for the Heartbeat of God* and *Christ of the Celts*.

Philip Newell will be in the Twin Cities for three days of worship and exploration. Join us for one or more powerful gatherings, described below.

Songs for the Earth: A Celtic Mass for Peace

In the midst of terrible brokenness between nations and religious traditions, the ecumenical Celtic Mass for Peace is an expression of the deep longing for peace that is stirring in the human soul today. Featuring poetry of J. Philip Newell and music of Sam Guarnaccia.



Thursday, May 21, 7:00pm
Westminster Presbyterian Church
12th Street and Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
612.332.3421

For parking at Westminster,
visit www.ewestminster.org/directions_parking

Tuesday, May 19

A Morning with J. Philip Newell

Philip Newell will lead us through his latest book, *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation*, emphasizing what it means to be creations of the Holy, as he offers us the gift of Celtic spirituality for our time.

9:00am-1:00pm

Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church
511 Groveland Avenue, Minneapolis
Register in advance by emailing
newell@haumc.org; \$30; lunch available
for an additional \$10.

Evening Concert

Philip Newell joins Marty Haugen, nationally known composer and lyricist, for an evening of spoken word and music dedicated to peace and eco-theology. Tickets \$10 at the door. More information available at www.mayflowermpls.org

7:30pm

Mayflower United Church of Christ
135W & Diamond Lake Rd.
Minneapolis

Wednesday, May 20

Sacred Conversations—Longing for Healing and Wholeness: A Professional Development Event

Central to Newell's writing is that love is at the heart of our transformation and healing of the world. What do we do when our heart is captured by love, and how does this impact our relationship with others and all of creation? Come for a rich experience of Celtic Spirituality.

9:00am-1:00pm

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality and
Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality
1890 Randolph Ave., St. Paul
Register in advance, 651-696-2788 or
online at www.wisdomwayscenter.org.
\$40 includes lunch

Celtic Contemplative Communion Service

Readings and reflections with J. Philip Newell and musicians. Free will offering.

6:51pm

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
1935 St. Clair Ave., St. Paul

Thursday, May 21

Episcopal House of Prayer Retreat Co-sponsored by the Wesley Center for Spirituality Service and Social Justice, Hamline University.

A contemplative experience focused on that scriptural injunction to “Let Christ's peace reign in your hearts...” Col. 3:15. Philip Newell offers reflections from the Celtic spiritual treasury, along with guided “heart meditations” led by House of Prayer Director Ward Bauman.

Westminster Presbyterian Church
12th St and Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
9:00am-2:00pm

Register in advance at www.ehouseof-prayer.org or email houseprayer@csbsju.edu
\$40, includes lunch

Songs for the Earth: A Celtic Mass for Peace

7:00pm (see above for details)
Westminster Presbyterian Church
12th Street and Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Episcopal
House of
Prayer



SACRED
GROUND
Center for
Spirituality



The Wesley
Center for
Spirituality,
Service and
Social Justice

More information on all events can be found at www.ewestminster.org

Triduum/Easter Retreat

Celebrate the mystery of God's redemption through Jesus Christ during these sacred days of Triduum, joining the monastic community in observing the liturgies of Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday. There will be presentations on the liturgies of each day, with group sharing, as well as time for personal reflection and prayer:

Thursday, April 9, at 4:00 p.m. to Sunday, April 12, at 1:00 p.m.

also

Martha and Mary Retreat

Based on the gospel story of *Luke 10: 38-42* and Joanna Weaver's book, *Having a Mary Heart In a Martha World*, participants will wrestle with the question: "What is the better part?"

This retreat day is for women desiring to have a day for prayer, input and dialogue with other women as we celebrate both Kitchen and Living Room intimacy with God. Come for a day to "sit at Jesus' feet" and allow the Spirituality Center to do the serving!

Wednesday, April 22, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

The Spirituality Center

Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph

For information or registration: 320.363.7116 or dmanuel@csbsju.edu.

Holy Saturday Quiet Worship

Holy Saturday is a quiet day, a day of waiting. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are past. It is not a dark day for

"A friend once told me . . .

. . . about the 'home' he and his family had as refugees in Europe during World War II. He, his mother and father, and his younger brother moved constantly from place to place. . . .

Each time they arrived in a new place, his mother would open the small suitcase that held all their belongings and bring out the lace tablecloth she had used for their Friday night meals in Poland, before they were forced to leave and begin their flight.

In each place the ritual was exactly the same. She would place the suitcase on a table, carefully drape the tablecloth over the suitcase, light a candle, and in that moment, wherever it was became home. Their ritual was their prayer."

Sue Bender in "The Power of Prayer"
(with thanks to Nan Merrill)

us—as it must have been on that first Saturday—for we know the rest of the story, that Easter morning will come. For us it can be a day of quiet but joyful anticipation.

This Prayer is an addition to the regular monthly (**fourth Saturday**) series at which all are invited to begin their weekend by taking an hour to be quiet and to be present to God's love, taking some time for prayer, for Scripture, for silence, and for sung prayers from Taizé and Iona.

Let us now come together in the quiet and beauty of this place, as we wait in anticipation:

Saturday, April 11, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, in the Chapel

1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

For information: 612.332.3421 or kfisher@wpc-mpls.org.

The Freeing Power of Forgiveness: Within Ourselves and in the Global Community

Forgiveness is a bold choice for nurturing a peaceful heart, a courageous act of freeing one's self from wounds of the past. It may help the person at the receiving end, but forgiveness is ultimately one of the most precious spiritual gifts we can give ourselves.

Walking the path of authentic forgiveness requires a journey of the heart, grounded in a spirit of compassion and humility. This experiential retreat will provide insight and practical tools for the journey through contemplative practice, mindfulness, and deep compassionate listening:

Friday, April 17, at supper to

Sunday, April 19, after lunch

The Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville

For information or registration: 320.363.3293

or houseprayer@csbsju.edu or www.ehouseofprayer.org.

Deepening Truth: the Practice of Living in the Spirit

Are you aware of a desire to more deeply experience God's gift of joy, peace, love and belonging?

"Deepening Truth" is an opportunity for intentional listening, exploring prayer practices, and focusing on God's presence in our lives. Each gathering will include a time for an opening presentation plus time for prayer and group discussion:

Tuesdays, April 20 & 27, May 4 & 11, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church

1509 27th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, also

From Belief to Faith: The Dark Night and Maturing Faith

This one day retreat will focus on paying attention to the Spirit's call to love, life and ministry in the Third Age of

Life. Many are unprepared for the questions and doubts that arise, the seeming loss of passion and yet deepening sense of Presence and Joy. Others are surprised at the ongoing call to maturity and ministry that happen at this stage of life.

The day will include short presentations, time for silence, reflection and sharing:

Saturday, April 25, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Colonial Church of Edina, 6200 Colonial Way, Edina

Both retreats are offered by Christos Center for Spiritual Formation

For information or registration: 651.653.8207 or www.christoscenter.org or joycechristoscenter@msn.com.

***Christ of the Celts* by J. Philip Newell: a Book Study**

In preparation for Philip's coming visit to the Twin Cities, attend this book study focusing on his newest book. The Celtic Christ offers new hope for achieving harmony, healing, and renewal for human beings and for all of creation. Weaving together the wisdom of writers ancient and contemporary, Philip demonstrates how the Celtic Christ and Creation share the same center, the same heartbeat:

Wednesday, May 6, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

or Thursday, May 7, 10:00 a.m.-Noon, also:

Pilgrimage of Peace: a Tour of Local Labyrinths

This is a day to visit some of our local labyrinths with intention, guided by Lisa Gidlow Moriarty, President of the International Labyrinth Society and owner of Paths of Peace in Stillwater, Minnesota. Bus leaves the Carondelet Center promptly at 9:00 a.m.:

Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality

1884 Randolph Avenue South, Saint Paul

For information or to register for either: 651.696.2788 or www.wisdomwayscenter.org

Council of All Beings—Thinking Like a Tree

Based on the work of Joanna Macy and John Seed, this environmentally focused retreat is composed of meditation, movement, mask-making and the final council where participants speak for creation's diverse beings.

Thinking like a tree, among the trees at ARC, in their fresh green of springtime. Made welcome by the members of the resident community:

Friday evening through Saturday evening, May 9-10

ARC Ecumenical Retreat Community

1680 373rd Avenue NE, Stanchfield, MN

For information or registration: 763.689.3540 or office@arcretreat.org or www.arcretreat.org.

**“Ways of Faith,” with Laurence Freeman,
The Fourth Gerald May Seminar**

The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation has invited Fr. Laurence Freeman, the Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, to present a contemporary understanding of faith's power to integrate the personality as well as to lead to transcendence—and on to holiness.

By understanding the different ways of faith, we are also better equipped to see how the contemporary divorce between religion and spirituality can be healed and how unity among all traditions can be achieved without losing the precious uniqueness of our human diversity:

Friday, May 15, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Evening Lecture

Saturday, May 16, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Workshop

North Bethesda United Methodist Church

10100 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, MD

For information or registration: 301.897.7334 or info@shalem.org or www.shalem.org

Contemplative Nature Retreat

Offered by the Loyola Spirituality Center, this retreat includes outdoor contemplative exercises to attune your-

The Rev. Dr. Donald Meisel . . .

. . . Westminster's beloved Pastor Emeritus died suddenly and peacefully in his home on February 23rd.

One of his favorite stories in the Bible, as told in *Luke 2* in the King James Version, is that of Simeon beholding the infant Jesus brought to the Temple, holding Him up, and blessing Him.

The last worship service Dr. Meisel led, a few weeks before his death, after nearly sixty years of ordained ministry, was the Candlemas Quiet Worship. And in his deep, rich, resonant voice, he read again the familiar words of Simeon's concluding prayer,

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
according to thy word:
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
which thou hast prepared
before the face of all people . . .”

self to the natural world and to enhance your relationship with God through nature. Participants will receive a Nature Retreat Workbook, will come together for morning and evening prayer services, and will have time (and instruction) for light yoga and breathing exercises and for personal spiritual direction:

Friday, May 22, after supper to

Sunday, May 24, after brunch,

Villa Maria Center (www.villamariaretreats.org),
Frontenac, MN

For information or registration: 651.641.0008 or
davidroth64@yahoo.com

**Casa del Sol at Ghost Ranch:
A Contemplative Space in the High Desert of
Northern New Mexico**

The Rev. Dr. J. Philip Newell will again this summer be the Resident Companion at Casa del Sol, directing the Center's programs, and leading a special retreat:

**"A New Harmony: the Spirit, the Earth and the
Human Soul," July 13-16**

Wellness is found not in separation but in relationship, whether as nations and wisdom traditions, or as individuals and as a whole earth community. How can our spirituality today be part of serving this new consciousness?

This retreat, focused on the ancient but ever-new desire for harmony between spirit and matter, between the divine and the human, will consist of prayer at the rising of the sun in Ghost Ranch's Agape Center courtyard, teaching and sharing in the mornings and evenings, and rest and silence in the afternoons.

also

Two of the many other retreat opportunities offered this summer include:

- **"Grief and Forgiveness: The Desert Landscape of the Soul," June 8-14,** and
- **"Wisdom of the Desert," June 22-28**

Ghost Ranch Retreat Center, Abiquiu, NM

For more complete details or to request a catalog:
505.685.4333 or www.ghost ranch.org.

Annual Conference of Contemplative Outreach:

**"Consenting to Divine Love: 25 Years of
Contemplative Outreach"**

Featuring Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, founder of
Contemplative Outreach:

September 24-27, 2009

Wyndham O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, Illinois.

Details to follow on: www.contemplativeoutreach.org

The morning began with coming upon a photo of Thomas Merton and a very youthful-looking Dalai Lama, taken when they met in India in November of 1968. And it continued with remembering how powerful and how closely-in-touch both Merton and the Dalai Lama found their time together to be—feelings that seem evident in their faces in the photo.

And then remembering Merton's meetings with Thich Nhat Hanh, which both also found powerful and affective. And then, there on the shelf (there, but unread), were:

**The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the
Teachings of Jesus,**

by **His Holiness the Dalai Lama,**
with an extensive Introduction by
Laurence Freeman, OSB

Living Buddha, Living Christ,
by **Thich Nhat Hanh**

And then a "bright" idea: if we want to know the real story, if we (in a favorite as-his-eyes-lighted-up phrase of Merton's) want to know "what the scoop is," we often turn to insiders, to those who have been on our journey before us, to the Christian classics, and to modern Christian writers. But—to help us to see more deeply into The Good Heart and into the Living Christ—might we also not turn to intelligent and informed and sensitive "outsiders" like these?

Like many bright ideas, it turned out not to seem so bright. But only because these books had been approached with the wrong question in mind. For what seemed lifted up and most helpful in these two books was not primarily new insights into the nature of Jesus but what both books and all three men said, and demonstrated, about the true nature—and the high value—of open and caring and sharing Interfaith Dialogue.

And what all three find most life-giving in Interfaith Dialogue—in what to them is clearly a deep and spiritually rich experience—centers around the absolute necessity of being Present to one another; . . . of speaking from our Experience, much more than from our beliefs or belief systems; . . . and of Deep Listening, not only to be fully attentive to what the other is saying but to be equally attentive to the non-verbal and the non-conceptual.

Here is some of what they say:

- "It is only through friendships with Christian men

and women who truly embody the spirit of understanding and compassion of Jesus, that I have been able to touch the depths of Christianity. . . . On the altar in my hermitage in France are images of Buddha and Jesus, and every time I light incense, **I touch both of them** as my spiritual ancestors. I can do this because of contact with these real Christians.” Thich Nhat Hanh

- “When you touch someone who authentically represents a tradition, you not only touch his or her tradition, you also touch your own. This quality is essential for dialogue. When people are willing to learn from each other, dialogue takes place just by being together. When those who represent a spiritual tradition embody the essence of their tradition, **just the way they walk, sit, and smile** speaks volumes about the tradition. . . .” Thich Nhat Hanh

- “Presence is central. As this presence in dialogue is **non-verbal and non-conceptual**, it might sound vague or platitudinous; but it is nonetheless a hard fact. It is difficult to describe, but it is the first thing we experience in dialogue. How are we perceived by each other. The success of the verbal dialogue depends upon and builds directly from this foundation of mutual presence. Words cannot achieve a successful dialogue if presence is not there. And without this insight, words can go wildly wrong.” Laurence Freeman

- “[Speak from experience.] You cannot talk about apple juice to someone who has not tasted it. No matter what you say, the other person will not have the true experience of apple juice. The only way is **to drink it.**” Thich Nhat Hanh

The Twin Cities Interfaith Forum . . .

. . . is taking a break this year—after many years—to think about how it might be most helpful. Many believe that Interfaith dialogue is especially essential now. But how might it best be encouraged? more speakers? with food and music? or film, storytelling and theater? youth stuff? or (your ideas) ?

The Downtown Congregations of Minneapolis are looking for people to discuss what activities and programming they would like to see. **To help this important interfaith ministry:**

Contact Rev. Dean Seal at: sealtotal@aol.com or 612.823.6005.

- “It is in **seeking** truth that we find enlightenment, not in declaring it.” The Dalai Lama

- “At this level of authentic religion, it is **personal experience** and holiness that count rather than objective systems of belief and philosophical or theological niceties.” Laurence Freeman

- “For dialogue to be fruitful, we need to live deeply our own tradition and, at the same time, listen deeply to others. Through the practice of **deep looking and deep listening**, we become free, able to see the beauty and values of our own and others’ traditions.” Thich Nhat Hanh

- “There is a deeper experience beyond language and thought. In that experience—which is **silence**—uniqueness and difference, along with all other dualities, coincide. They meet in a unity that respects and fulfills difference, and at the same time transcends division. This is love.” Fr. Laurence, summarizing The Dalai Lama

All three agree that Inter-faith Dialogue is more important today than it ever has been, and with more potential for spiritual growth for all those who enter into it with openness and caring.

What a gift this can be. And perhaps not only for Inter-faith Dialogue, but also for Intra-faith discussions, and—at their best—for the conversations we have with one another day by day.

“. . . by feeling how he lives in us”

“What we are asked to do is, not so much to speak about Christ, as to let him live in us . . . so that people may find him, by feeling how he lives in us.”

[It is believed that these are the last words spoken by Thomas Merton, soon after his Key-Note address at a Buddhist/Christian conference in Bangkok.

Merton was responding to the charge that he had not talked enough about Christ and, perhaps, that he had been too open and welcoming of Buddhist thought. These words were spoken as he stood in the hallway outside his bedroom, shortly before his accidental electrocution as he was stepping out of the shower.]

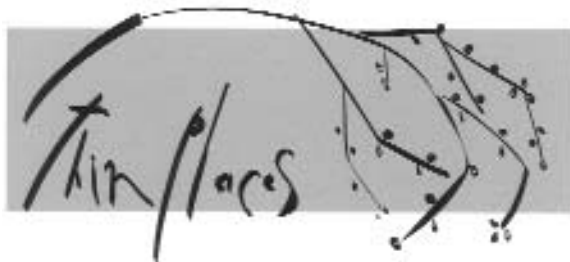


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“God of Our Silent Tears . . .”
“simple happiness . . . a deep feeling of Being”



AFTERWORDS: “simple happiness . . . a deep feeling of Being”

2nd January 1880

“Here there is a sense of rest and quietness.

Silence in the house and outside.

A tranquil fire gives a feeling of comfort.

The portrait of my mother seems to smile upon me.”

This peaceful morning makes me happy. Whatever pleasure we may get from our ordinary experience, I do not think it can equal these moments of silent peace which are glimpses of the joys of Paradise. Desire and fear, grief and anxiety are no more. One feels an inner harmony free from the slightest agitation or tension. In these moments the state of the soul is solemn, perhaps akin to its condition beyond the grave.

There is no thinking. Only a deep feeling of Being. It is happiness as the Orientals understand it, the happiness of the hermit who is free from desire and struggle and who simply *adores*, in the fullness of joy.

We cannot find words to express this experience, because our languages can only describe particular and definite conditions of life: they have no words to express this silent contemplation, this heavenly quietness, this ocean of peace. The soul no longer feels its separation from the whole. It is conscious of the universal life . . . of God in all things, and of all things in God.

Perhaps Yogis and Sufis have known in its depth this condition of simple happiness, which is neither reflection nor will, which is beyond the moral and the intellectual life, a return to oneness, to the fullness of things. . . .”

[Journaling . . . a spiritual practice . . . a diary entry: recorded by a nineteenth-century European scholar, who was then very deeply engrossed in translating *The Bhagavad Gita*, the revered, 500-200 BCE, spiritual poem from India.]