



Thin Places

Sept./Oct./Nov. 2011
Year Thirteen, Issue One
Number 68

Taking life's messes into the Silence . . .

by Patricia Hendricks

For several days, ten years ago, I was given the gift of dwelling in non-linear time.

It was December 18th, 2001, and I hadn't bought Christmas presents or sent cards. I hadn't climbed into the garage rafters to retrieve the tree, or the crèche, or the tall drummer boy. I didn't have the energy . . . or the desire.

I hardly had the capacity to think clearly. My mind was sluggish, and my emotions raw. More than once I'd found myself standing in the middle of Target or Cub fighting the urge to cry. I would enter my daily time of prayer with my Bible and journal at my side, but all I could do was stare at the floor and experience emptiness.

The preceding months had been difficult. Anxiety over a teenage daughter who was making poor choices, a major slow down in my husband's business, a betrayal of a friend, and of course 9/11. Finally, realizing that I was worthless to everyone around me, I got out of town for four days and journeyed to ARC Retreat Center north of Minneapolis, my special place of refuge.

I'd packed two duffel bags, one with clothes and toiletries. The other with books, my Bible and my journal (which I never opened). I was greeted by the staff—good friends who had welcomed me so many times in the past. But I had no plan or focus for this time away and, after being shown to my room, found myself sitting at the desk, wondering, "now what?"

I thought I should probably enter into some centering prayer, but I couldn't summon the desire. I gazed at the bag with my Bible, but I didn't have the energy to walk across the room to get it. I just stared at the desk . . . and the floor . . . and there on the far corner of the desk was a small card with a poem by Frances Tabor, "Come Apart and Rest Awhile."

One verse clicked in my mind, "**There is no way other than to take our messes into the darkness of silence.**" Take my messes into the silence . . . somehow it felt like a promise. I sat with those words for three days. I sat, slept, ate, took long walks, and I listened to nothingness.

In a way, I **became** nothing. I was too tired and too raw to bring my roles with me: mother, wife, friend, citizen. I was just me—an empty me. But a me that began to **absorb**

"Taking life's messes" . . . continues on page 2

page 2
Ongoing Opportunities

page 5
One-Time Opportunities

page 10
Afterwords

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

the stillness and darkness of the bare trees, the patches of snow, and the sleep void of dreams. It was as though my whole being was suspended there in a place outside of time, in a realm that belonged to God—in a thin place.

And in that place, my soul was being unlocked and opened to the Presence, with waves of fresh air gently flowing through me. It wasn't a mountain top. I had no energy for angels or dazzling white robes. Instead, it was a place of utter peace . . . of a palpable and healing Silence.

I have often reflected on those days so many years ago, and I have come to realize that in my lifetime I have experienced two kinds of silence. One is active, intentional, a day-to-day resource. It is a quieting of my mind through the spiritual practices of centering prayer, meditation, and *Lectio Divina*—quiet enough to embrace God's presence and then to **be** in that Presence. The other I've named, *Silence for Basket Cases*. It is a more passive silence that has come much less often, but when I most needed it, when I could no longer function. From a place of brokenness, I had been led into God's presence.

As I was preparing to leave ARC those years ago, I knew that nothing would have changed at home. The messes would still be there. I'd gained no solutions or insights during my time away, but I had changed. I was a little less fearful, more composed, a little stronger, and I felt a trickle of hope. As the months progressed,

insights did emerge, and the snarls of my life did begin to untangle.

Thinking back now I am reminded of Sue Monk Kidd's cocoon imagery in her *Where the Heart Waits*. In the last chapter she explains what that imagery taught her, it "taught me that time isn't a straight line along which we travel, but a deep dot in which we dwell." And now I understand that those four days so many years ago gave me a gift, the experience of a deep dot, of dwelling in non-linear time.

For four days I lived in a safe place where I stopped and rested. Through no effort of my own, I experienced the veil being lifted. And, in that deep place was the healing I needed to re-enter life's messes.

Patricia Hendricks is a spiritual director, serving in that ministry since 1990. She is the executive director of Christos Center for Spiritual Formation near St. Paul, MN. Her ministry includes coordinating and teaching in the Center's long-established spiritual direction preparation program.

Pat also has special interests in ecumenism, Christianity of the 21st Century, and the spirituality of youth and young adults. She is the author of Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians, a work devoted to what today's postmodern young people are seeking. Pat and her husband are the parents of two grown daughters. She may be reached at pat@christoscenter.org.

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES

The Community of Reconciliation at Washington National Cathedral

All are welcome to become a part of this vibrant, still-evolving, ecumenical "monastery beyond walls."

Anchored in a complement of gatherings and resources at Washington National Cathedral, but reaching out to those outside the D. C. area, the Community invites you to discover a powerful, spiritually-centered, and eminently practical alternative for our often fragmented lives.

"A monk was once asked, 'What do you do there in the monastery?' He replied, 'We fall and get up, fall and get up, fall and get up again.'"

**St. Anselm of Canterbury,
late Eleventh Century**

Now beginning its fourth year, this pioneering partnership of *Washington National Cathedral* and *The Friends of St. Benedict* has helped many hundreds of folks experience the rhythms of community, the wisdom, and the transformation that can bring reconciliation and harmony to daily life. Drawing upon the great spiritual traditions, we seek to translate the ancient-yet-evergreen rhythms of a Benedictine cloistered community into our own environ-

**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 'yes' to either, please contact Kathy Fisher at:
kfisher@wpc-mpls.org or 612.332.3421.

ments: home, family, the workplace, and daily life in a complex world.

Those living in or visiting the Washington DC metro area may attend one of the Community's more than 70 upcoming weekly gatherings, pilgrimages, workshops, quiet days, and celebrations here at the Cathedral. Our Constellation Affiliates in Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland provide additional opportunities for growth and encouragement across the region.

If you will be in the area on Saturday, September 17, you may experience *An Autumn Reflection Retreat* or our popular *Creating a Rule of Life* workshop, both offered amidst the stunning beauty of the Cathedral.

Join us in October for a *Monastic Quiet Day*; or in early November for a *Weekend of Intention*, with Bishop Eugene Sutton; . . . or on November 18-19 for Learning Events and a Reception with noted author, scholar, and Christian mystic *Esther de Waal*.

And for those at distance—or who wish to connect from home—there are telephone conference gatherings, pod-casts, and online resources. Listen in on one of the gatherings at the Cathedral; download audios and videos, including those by **Joan Chittister, Tim Carrington, Margaret Guenther, Kurt Aschermann** and others; and in early September, you may register for our 2012 Lenten conference-call series, with author **Jane Tomaine**.

Wherever you are on the journey—whatever life stage, faith tradition, or perspective—you can find support and encouragement for living into radical balance.

For information about the upcoming Opportunities noted above or about our many others . . . to explore the

Keeping Equilibrium in the Middle of Polarity

"What the Benedictine life can show us is the possibility of keeping equilibrium in the middle of polarity.

[We] live constantly at the point of tension between stability and change; between tradition and the future; between the personal and the community; between obedience and initiative; between the desert and the marketplace; between action and contemplation.

Yet . . . what might have become a tearing apart, a splitting, and a fragmenting, can become a means of establishing wholeness and balance."

Esther de Waal,
Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict

online resources . . . to discover ways you can help build this monastery beyond walls (or even launch a Constellation Affiliate in your area!) . . . please visit: www.nationalcathedral.org/community.

And if you have a question or would like additional information, please call: 202.537.6217 or e-mail us at companions@cathedral.org.

Know that in the way of Benedict, someone will always be waiting to welcome you at the door!

Taizé Prayer

This Evening Prayer—a **communal meditative prayer**—is ecumenical. We join with our Protestant brothers and sisters to celebrate that which unites us—faith in Christ Jesus.

Gathered in Christ's presence, we sing uncomplicated, repetitive songs, uncluttered by too many words. As Brother Roger so often said, a few words sung over and over again enhance the meditative quality of Prayer, allowing an encounter with the mystery of God through the beauty of simplicity.

We invite you to quiet yourself and enter into the melody and text of these familiar sung prayers from Taizé: **The First Friday of each month, 7:30-8:15 p.m.**

St. Richard's Catholic Community

7540 Penn Avenue South, Richfield

For information: tsalisbury@strichards.com or 612.869.2426 or www.strichards.com.

Taizé Evening Prayer

Now beginning its 13th year, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church offers its First Friday Taizé Prayer in the beautiful Chapel, overlooking Minnehaha Creek.

At this Prayer—like at the Taizé Community itself—

"God comes to you disguised as your life."

"Why didn't someone tell me that earlier—that this life is the raw material that I need to take seriously! Every day, what's right in front of me *is* the agenda.

. . . You can see how merely believing doctrines and practicing rituals is very often only a clever diversionary tactic to avoid my actual life—to avoid the agenda that is right in front of me every day—which is always messy, always muddy, always mundane, always ordinary—and all around me."

Richard Rohr
from "Emerging Church Conference" (unpublished)

people from many denominational backgrounds come together for sung prayer, Scripture, and silence in a candle-lit setting. Everyone is welcome:

Every 1st Friday, 7:30-8:15 p.m.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, in the Chapel
4439 West 50th Street, Edina

For information: 952.920.0535 or
lreynolds@sststephens.com.

Taizé Worship

Our Taizé Prayer is modeled after the daily Prayers of the Taizé Community in France, where over 100 brothers from Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions live and work . . . and come together to pray in the Church of Reconciliation three times each day.

Our hope is that our Prayer, like those offered at Taizé, may serve as a parable of community and a sign of hope to the world. All are invited to join us for sung prayer, Scripture and silence:

Second Fridays (Oct. through May), 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Minnehaha United Methodist Church
3701 East 50th Street, Minneapolis

For information: 612.721.6231. or
dianelenge5616@msn.com.

Volunteering at Taizé

At the Taizé Community in France, the presence of a group of volunteers provides a fundamental support for welcoming those who come for the international meetings. These young people who spend a longer time in Taizé are aged between 18 and 28, and they share in the various practical tasks necessary for running the youth meetings.

For them, staying at Taizé as a volunteer is primarily a

chance to consider one's next step in life through reflection, regular community prayer and sharing with others. These young men and women—who stay for several weeks, a few months or even a year—come not only from Europe but also from Africa, Asia, North and South America, and the Pacific.

For information: www.taize.fr/en_article3361.html.

A Place of Solitude and Prayer

The Subiaco Hermitage is simple, but not rustic (bed, desk, recliner, shower and toilet, kitchenette), offering all who wish to come a true place of peace.

Come for a night, a weekend, or a week. Read on the screen porch, walk in the woods, pray with the Sisters, eat in the Monastic Dining Room or on your own in the kitchenette. You design your own retreat:

Available all year around

In the Woods, at Saint Benedict's Monastery
104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN

For information or registration: 320.363.7116 or
www.smb.osb.org or dmanuel@csbsju.edu.

Ten Ways to Pray

Ten Ways to Pray: A Short Guide to a Long History of Talking with God is a website, blog, and e-book offering background information, practical advice, and encouragement for those wishing to explore ways of praying contemplatively.

Breath Prayer, Music Prayer, Action Prayer, Body Prayer, and more, written and hosted by a relative newcomer (but a clearly able one) to the Twin Cities area.

For information: www.tenwaystopray.com.

Celtic Contemplative Evening Prayer

Now in its 9th season, Pilgrim Lutheran Church continues to offer its beautiful Celtic Contemplative Worship.

Although pushed out to the fringes of Britain after Augustine of Canterbury's Roman mission in 597, Celtic Christian spirituality has always managed to survive in one form or another, usually on the edges of formal religion.

For our Celtic worship, we draw prayers and texts from the *Carmina Gadelica* ("the songs and poems of the Gaels") and from Scotland's Iona Community. These prayers and readings address the mysteries and challenges of everyday life as well as emphasizing the life of God within creation.

The theme for this year is "**Roads Everywhere & Signs in our Hearts.**" The September 11 service will

In the Busyness of This Day

"In the busyness of this day
grant me a stillness of seeing, O God.

In the conflicting voices of my heart
grant me a calmness of hearing.

Let my seeing and hearing
my words and my actions
be rooted in a silent certainty
of your presence . . .

in the depths of your peace."

John Philip Newell from "A Celtic Benediction"

celebrate "Mine is the Morning":

Second Sundays at 6:51 p.m., Sept. through March

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

For information on this and also on their Fourth Sunday

Nordic Contemplative Evening Prayer: 651.699.6886

or www.pilgrimstpaul.org or pilgrim@pilgrimstpaul.org.

Centering Prayer

For eighteen years St. Olaf's Centering Prayer group has gathered **every** Saturday morning (except for those few times when Christmas Day fell on a Saturday).

The group is open—people are invited to join and participate as they are able. Some have been there almost every week. Others come for a while and then move on.

All who come will begin to learn that Silence is the language of the spirit, that Centering Prayer is a way of coming to our own center and of finding the deep stillness that is there, within each of us:

Every Saturday morning, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

A satellite group also meets at St. Olaf each week-day morning. Many who work downtown come to begin their (busy) day with this time to be still:

Every Monday through Friday, 7:30-7:50 a.m.

St. Olaf Catholic Church, in Crowley Hall

215 South 8th Street, Minneapolis

For information: 612.332.7474 or

sr.joan.tuberty@juno.com.

Quiet Worship

Quiet Worship, offered by *Thin Places*, is a time set aside each month to gather in a calm and intimate setting around the lighted Christ Candle, the open Bible, and the Cross. It is a time for quiet music, for Scripture, for prayer and for silence. It is a time to be together, resting quietly in God's presence and love.

Quiet Worship is offered (normally) on the fourth Saturday of every month. The service on September 24th, "**A Peace-Filled Silence**," will be led by our Senior Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Tim Hart-Andersen:

September 24 / Oct. 22 / November 19, 9:00-9:45 a.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, in the Chapel

1200 Marquette Avenue Minneapolis

Westminster's Celtic Evening Prayer is offered on

second Thursdays at 7:00 p. m. in the Chapel.

Information: www.ewestminster.org/quiet_worship or

612.322.3421 or kfisher@wpc-mpls.org.

Minnesotans Standing Together

September 11 marks the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. In observance of that day, a coalition of faith organizations is presenting a Community Observance which will honor the ideals of freedom and democracy, lament loss, offer healing, and create hope and inspiration for great cooperation in our diverse state and nation.

The public ceremony will take place on:

**Sunday, September 11, 2011
from 2:00 - 4:00 in the afternoon
on the Capitol Mall in St. Paul**

The ceremony—organized by the Minnesota Council of Churches—will feature fourteen Jewish, Islamic, Christian and Interfaith organizations, civic and public officials, and musicians and artists from across Minnesota.

All are invited to an anniversary time for Remembering . . . for Healing . . . and for Hope. For information: www.minnesotansstandingtogether.com or 612.870.3600 or mcc@mnchurches.org.

Examen: Meeting God in Your Day

One of the easiest spiritual practices—both to learn and to make a daily practice—is Examen, the practice of stopping near the end of the day, of sitting quietly, and of thinking back, "For what moment today am I most grateful? for what am I least grateful?" or "What has been most life-giving this day? what most life-draining?" or "When did I feel most loved? when did I feel least loving" or whatever paired way of asking works best for you.

And—as is true of every spiritual practice—the purpose is not to produce answers, or to set out to make changes. Instead, it is a time to bring gently back into our hearts and minds moments when God's presence may have been more strongly felt, or when we may have felt most distant. . . . At this daylong retreat we will be learning and experiencing the practice of examen. Bring a Bible, a journal and a willingness to enter into some

To Lie Fallow

"To lie fallow is a gift. But we don't really know how to do it. Rather we are done by it—or undone by it. The moments we are allowed to be in that condition are times of gratitude. And it is from these that our freedom comes. It is where authentic being exists.

Any fruitfulness arises from that surrendered openness. For it is there that God makes each of us a fertile ground, a bearing soil."

Gunilla Norris
from *A Mystic Garden*

significant periods of quiet as we pray together and look for God's presence in our ordinary lives:

Saturday, September 17, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Christos Center for Spiritual Formation
1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes

For information or registration for this or for **The Cloud of Unknowing and the Second Half of Life** or other up-coming Opportunities: www.christoscenter.org or 651.653.8207 or janet@christoscenter.org.

A Benedictine Experience

This is a six-day experience of the *Rule of St. Benedict* offered at special retreat centers across the land (and at Canterbury Cathedral in England).

It is a carefully planned, unique attempt to bring together in community men and women, lay and clerical, to study and experience the balanced way of life as envisaged in the *Rule*. Participants will take part in an ordered day of prayer, learning and leisure. We will join the monks at St. John's Abbey Church for morning and evening prayer as well as the sisters of Saint Benedict's Monastery for evening prayer. Leaders include members from both monastic communities:

Tues., Sept. 20, at 5:45 p.m.-Sun., Sept. 25, after lunch

Offered by The Friends of St. Benedict and hosted by The Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville, MN.
For information or registration: 202.363.8064 or saintbenedict@verizon.net.

also:

Images and Icons

We've all heard the famous words in *Genesis* that we are created in God's image. But what do they mean?

We are here for a significant reason, and it is God's work. Images & Icons are the language Jesus used to help us see more clearly into our own purpose and goal. Images and Icons carry deep meaning and are meant to be seen and read, revealing the secret within.

Come join us as we explore this central spiritual work, looking deeply into the images and icons God offers to us

God is Silence

"God is Silence. There is a silence of the tongue, and a silence of the whole body. There is a silence of the soul and of the whole body. The silence of the spirit is when all its movements are stirred solely by Being—in this state, it is truly silent . . . aware that the silence which is upon it is itself Silent."

Abraham of Nathpar, Sixth Century

for our spiritual benefit:

Saturday, September 24, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

The House of Prayer in the City
825 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis
For information or registration for these or other up-coming Opportunities: 320.363.3293 or houseprayer@csbsju.edu or www.ehouseofprayer.org or www.ehouseofprayer.org/hopcacity.html.

Let the Stones Shout Out

Stone and rock have played large roles in religious traditions since ancient times. Egyptians built pyramids, Jews still gather stones to place on graves in memory, the ancient Celts built great megaliths and stone circles, Native Americans still quarry catamite (pipestone) for their sacred pipes. In addition to being decorative, stone continues to serve as support, protection, healing, and ritual.

Using passages from many sacred traditions—as well as their imaginations—class members will reflect on what grounds them to this earth, and in their lives. Using their hands—and their imaginations—they will learn to carve and create personal sculptures, whether of healing, remembrance, seeking, protection, or whimsy.

Led by Stone-Carver Robin Keck and Mayflower Church's (Minneapolis) own Diane Gardner:

Sunday to Saturday, September 25 to October 1

Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, NM

For information or registration for this, or for "**Journey Toward an Undivided Life: An Introductory Circle of Trust Retreat**," or "**Earth-Speak: Listening to Land & Scripture**," or for the many other upcoming Opportunities at Ghost Ranch: www.ghostranch.org or 505.685.4333, ext. 4152 or registrar@ghostranch.org.

Spiritual Listeners Training

The very special ministry of City House is to connect those on the margins of society, who might be homeless, in prison, or in recovery, with those in the mainstream of our society, for mutual listening, learning and transformation.

Spiritual Listeners Training is an opportunity for people interested in learning how to be spiritual listeners with people on the margins and also encounter God in a new way, deepening their own spiritual lives. Come and interact with others who feel called to this population. Begin to learn the skills and to understand the mutual transformation that can take place.

This training is appropriate for either people interested in becoming City House volunteers or for those interested in practicing spiritual listening in other places. These sessions have proven rewarding to many, and the sessions do

fill. But the waiting list for this or for the next offering is faithfully honored:

Friday, September 30, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Offered by City House

Held at Christos Center, 1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes

For information or registration: jennifer@city-house.org or 612.234.1136 or www.city-house.org.

Exploring Your Spiritual Path

Who is God for me? Who am I for God? What prayer feeds my soul? This is an experiential class for those wanting to explore questions like these.

This first six-week segment (the second begins in January) focuses on images of God, exploration of one's inner self, and meditation practices from different traditions. Each class will be framed in prayer and include presentations of material and opportunities from group processing and inter-action:

Six Mondays, Oct. 10-Nov. 14, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality

Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph, St. Paul

For information or registration for this or other upcoming Opportunities: www.sacredgroundspirit.org or 651.6396.2798 or

sacredground@sacredgroundspirit.org.

A Retreat for Men and Women: Finding God

We are all on a journey to God. Everyone is at a different pace and that must be respected because every person has a unique journey. In reflecting upon "Finding God" we will look at prayer. And we will look at our own lives and what might be blocking us from seeing the beauty of God.

This is a special retreat for men and women, to be led by **The Most Rev. Harry Flynn**, Archbishop Emeritus of St. Paul-Minneapolis:

Fri., Oct. 14, at 7:00 p.m.-Sun., Oct. 16, at 12:45 p.m.
also:

Personality and Prayer

How we perceive and make judgments about the world around us affects our prayer life and—as a result—some devotional forms will work better than others. Join us as we explore a variety of prayer forms and discover the best forms for you. (You will be asked to complete a short, confidential personality profile quiz prior to the retreat.):

Saturday, November 12, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN

For information or registration for this or other upcoming Opportunities: 763.682.1394 or

www.kingshouse.com or JPilarski@kingshouse.com.

A Journey through Shalem's Coming Year

Now beginning its 32nd year, the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation has announced its rich array of one-day and week-end programs, and it is now offering its four bed-rock, Long-Term Programs in alternate locations.

Shalem's Short Programs include the *School of Prayer: Holy Vibrations*, which offers an experience of contemplative prayer through sound, silence and movement, on five Tuesday evenings (Oct. 15-Nov. 15). The *School of Prayerful Action: Participating in God's Dream for Peace & Justice* explores the connection between prayerful relationship with God and action in the world, beginning February 16.

The *Julian & Rumi Quiet Day* on November 12 will include reflections on two people from very different worlds and times who echo each other in their awareness of the depth and breadth of God's love for all of creation. The *Advent Quiet Day* on December 3 leads us into the season when "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (*John 1:14*). And there is more.

also:

Personal Spiritual Deepening Program:

Living in God

This—one of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation's most attended Long-Term Programs—is for anyone, anywhere, who feels drawn to contemplative spirituality and who:

- Desires a deepened relationship with God and to live out that relationship;
 - Wishes to develop or deepen a consistent spiritual practice;
 - Wants the regular guidance of a spiritual companion for daily contemplative living;
 - Seeks authentic spiritual community and support;
 - Is eager to learn within a broad ecumenical Christian framework, enhanced by the wisdom of the other traditions;
 - Longs to be a transforming presence in the world:
- ~ **now offered in locations outside the D.C. area** ~

"Silence is a privileged entry into the realm of God and into eternal life.

There is a huge silence inside each of us that beckons us into itself, and the recovery of our own silence can begin to teach us the language of heaven.

For silence is a language that is infinitely deeper, more far-reaching, more understanding, more compassionate, and more eternal than any other language. . . . There is nothing in the world that resembles God as much as silence."

Meister Eckhardt, Thirteenth Century

For information or registration for the Opportunities noted above and for Shalem's other 2011-12 Short and Long-Term Programs: www.shalem.org or 301.897.7334 or chris@shalem.org.

Living in the Tragic Gap

In his text *The Undivided Life*, Parker Palmer describes "the tragic gap" as the difference between who we are and who God is calling us to be.

Join us for an evening of honest conversation about the pains of living in the gap and practical guidance about the possibilities of becoming one's whole self:

Thursday, October 27, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

The Benedictine Center, St. Paul's Monastery
2675 Benet Road, St. Paul

Information or registration for this, or for the second 2011 "*School of Lectio Divina*," or the "Men's

Contemplative Spirituality Group," or other up-coming Opportunities: www.stpaulsmonastery.org or benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org or 651.777.7251.

Fall Soul Conference:

Religion and a New Environmental Ethic

Our annual two-day Fall Conference will be led by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim and will include a premiere viewing of the film, *Journey of the Universe: An Epic Story of Cosmic, Earth, and Human Transformation*.

Thank You

As many will remember, *Thin Places* takes its name from the Celtic Christian metaphor for those times or places where the boundary between the sacred and the everyday feels "thin," when our hearts are opened, and God's presence is more strongly felt.

And it gets its being from the talents and labors-of-love of many. As its 13th year begins, *Thin Places* wishes to recognize and thank: Kathy Fisher (who manages the many and varied practical details that allow it to happen), Kristin Kieft (who takes texts and artwork and turns them into a final form), and Sandy Wilson (who—along with "the team"—sends it out to you each time).

And an added "thank you" to those who give it a reason for being, its more than 2,000 readers . . . a veritable and comforting cloud of witnesses surrounding, supporting, exploring the contemplative spiritual journey.

The film and the conference will explore and connect such big picture issues as the birth of the cosmos 14 billion years ago, the invisible frontiers of the human genome, and our human impact on Earth's evolutionary dynamics:

Friday and Saturday, November 4-5

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality

Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul

For information about this film, and to learn more about their work: www.journeyoftheuniverse.org and www.emergingearthcommunity.org.

For additional information about the Fall Soul Conference or about Wisdom Ways' many other upcoming Program Offerings: wisdomways@csjstpaul.org or 651.696.2788 or www.wisdomwayscenter.org.

Developing a Relationship with God through Centering Prayer and Forgiveness

Fr. Carl Arico, who many know as a founding member of Contemplative Outreach, is coming to Minnesota to lead a workshop based on the theme, "Developing a Relationship with God through Centering Prayer and Forgiveness."

Fr. Carl, as fewer may remember, considers himself the "middle linebacker" of the organization, ready to plug the gap, ready as needed to perform various functions. He is known for his deep knowledge of Centering Prayer and for his humor. This daylong event will include two presentations by Fr. Carl, two Centering Prayer sessions, and opportunities for discussion and questions.

You are invited to register now, but walk-ins are also welcome—bring a bag lunch, or eat nearby:

Saturday, November 5, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Offered by Minnesota Contemplative Outreach and St. Olaf Catholic Church

Held at St. Olaf, 215 South 8th Street, Minneapolis

For information or registration: diane.boruff3@gmail.com or 952.890.9633 or centeringprayermn@gmail.com or www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org.

For Everything There Is a Season Retreat

The landscape of our being experiences a rhythm of renewal, of dying and birthing. Tears of penetrating sorrow and tears of profound joy wash over us as waters baptizing us in the mystery of God-with-us.

For Everything There Is a Season: a season to teach us a bit more about our deep longings, about tending to the now, and about resting in the beauty and holiness of our being.

Come, explore, rest, claim, and pray the landscape of your being. Let awe and wonder fill you as you reverence

the journey of renewal:

Friday, Nov. 11, at 7:00 p.m.–Sat., Nov. 12, at 4:00

Spirituality Center, Saint Benedict's Monastery
104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN

For information or registration for this, or for "**Exploring Dreams Step by Step**," or "**Spiritual R & R**," or other upcoming Opportunities: 320.363.7116 or www.smb.osb.org or dmanuel@csbsju.edu.

A New Ancient Harmony

Featuring John Philip Newell and Brian N. Prior, Minnesota's Episcopal Bishop, this special Advent Retreat offers teaching through the lens of Celtic Christianity; time for chants and meditation practices; plus woven-together periods for poetry and prayer, story and song:

Sunday, December 4, to Thursday, December 8

Lutheridge Conference Center, Ashville, NC

For information or registration:

www.awakeningsoulpresents.org/AdventConference.

Nature and the Human Soul

Join psychologist and wilderness guide Bill Plotkin, PhD, and Richard Rohr, OFM, as they offer an engaging map to the lifelong journey of wholeness through nature-based rituals.

Through teaching and through experiencing these rituals, they will show how fully and creatively we can mature when we allow the soul and wild nature to guide us. They will look at a model for a human life-span rooted in the patterns and rhythms of nature, a template for individual growth that ultimately yields a strategy for cultural transformation.

The retreat will be held at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya, owned by the Santa Ana Pueblo, just north of Albuquerque, NM, which was chosen for its spectacular natural environment. (The Tamaya is offering an extremely reduced room rate for this conference—\$99/night—rate available until December 19 or until the rooms sell out.)

Join us and find an engaging map to the paths and pitfalls of the life-long journey into wholeness:

Pre-Conference Contemplative Workshop with Fr. Richard, Thursday, January 19, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

"Nature and the Human Soul," Fri.–Sun., Jan 20–22

Offered by the Center for Action and Contemplation

For information or registration: www.cacradicalgrace.org or 505.242.9588 or info@cacradicalgrace.org.

Afterwords, continued from pg. 10

Certainly, that's not the only way (or perhaps the scholarly way) to approach the *Psalms*. But thinking of them in that way made them feel even more immediate. Real people in real places, getting out in the open before God both the messes and the joys of their own lives.

And if the Hebrew psalmists could do it, why couldn't we? Why couldn't we take a *Psalms* that resonates strongly, borrowing from its poetry (or the poetry of Nan Merrill or Eugene Peterson or Lynn Bauman) as an impetus to bring into our minds and hearts more fully something we are experiencing immediately, or an experience or feeling we've had in the past? . . . then sit with their poetry and with our feeling and our memory for a while? . . . and then open our journal and let the words flow unchecked?

Perhaps from *Psalms* 8:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him, the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor." [NRSV]

"What is woman that you rejoice in her, and men that you delight in him? You have made us in your image. You fill us with your love." [Nan Merrill]

_____ [yours]

or from *Psalms* 34:

"Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it." [NRSV]

"Then guard your tongue from speaking what is wrong, your life from lies. Turn quick from any path that leads to evil ways, be swift to accomplish only good. And on your life-long journey seek for peace; make it alone your only goal." [Lynn Bauman]

_____ [yours]

or

_____ [yours]

The *Psalms*, the "prayer book of the Bible," and perhaps also our oldest examples of spiritual journaling.



Westminster Presbyterian Church
1200 Marquette Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 3280
Minneapolis, MN

Address Service Requested

“Taking life's messes into the Silence . . . “
“Our oldest examples of journaling . . .”



AFTERWORDS: “Our oldest examples of journaling . . .”

It has been noted that the *Psalms*—the “prayer book of the Bible”—seem to get better as life's journey goes on. They've been the most turned-to book in the Bible since the earliest days, often quoted from by Jesus. And the broad and deep range of human feelings and experiences they capture—from the deep joys, to moments of awakening, to the “**messes**” in our lives—help to explain why these ancient songs often resonate so strongly.

And the *Psalms* are also the portion of the Bible that has most often been “translated.” Sometimes by professional scholars (seeking to capture with exact precision the words of the ancient texts), but much more often by people seeking to capture what was resonating within themselves, as they read them and prayed them.

Recently, revisiting three of these—Nan Merrill's *Psalms for Praying*, Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, and Lynn Bauman's *Ancient Songs Sung Anew*—brought an “ah-ha” moment, perhaps a felt moment of insight and appreciation, and maybe even a possible practice. It may have begun with Eugene Peterson's challenging questions:

“Did you think the *Psalms* would be the prayers of *nice* people? Did you think their language would be polished and polite? . . .

Prayer is elemental—not advanced—language. It is the means by which our language becomes honest, true, and personal in response to God. It is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God.”

Then, soon afterward, when Lynn Bauman—on an actual and a spiritual journey of his own—found himself asking:

- “What would this *Psalms* sound like if it had been prayed out of the circumstances [of my life], using words from contemporary life, and my own angle of vision?” Going on to explain:
- “In their own travels throughout the Middle East (in Egypt and in Babylon as exiles and as pilgrims), the Hebrew people had borrowed heavily from the hymns and prayers of the Egyptians and Babylonians. They had done exactly what I was doing, reinterpreting the borrowed prayers, translating them into fresh language.” And then concluding:
- “The *Psalms* are the direct expression of the inner spiritual experience of pilgrims upon a sacred path. They give real reports of men and women little interested in concepts and theories, but in the inner experiences—expressed so personally and directly—which bring the heart into the divine Presence as the beloved One. . . . They are a kind of sacred inner mapping of the heart's journey.”

“Ah-ha!” That sounds like journaling. . . . That sounds like “the spiritual practice of giving voice to one's own inner experiences by writing them out as they flow, without editing or polishing or seeking to control the text.” . . . That sounds like the *Psalms* might be **our oldest examples of spiritual journaling**.

Afterwords, continues on pg. 9