

**THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS**

Magazine



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Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose (1885-86)
John Singer Sargent

Labyrinth, or maze?

Deidre Morris

As I walked a labyrinth this spring – one of several I have walked in the last few years – I thought of how it differed from a maze.

In a labyrinth you walk all of the path, from the point of entry to the centre, and then back out again. There is only one path. Sometimes it may so twist, and turn back on itself, and lead you in all directions in turn, that it seems like a maze of paths.

But a maze has many dead ends, and may have more than one route to the centre. It is designed to confuse and to challenge. It can be quite scary, particularly if it has very high hedges that severely limit what you can see.

Often my life has felt like a maze. There have been dead-ends where the path stopped, or places which just led me back to where I had been a while before. It is often difficult to see anything that will give a sense of direction. Yet how often it seems that God's grace, and mercy, have transformed my maze of life into a labyrinth of life.

If you look at the plan of a maze you can see that by making only minor changes here and there it is no longer a maze but has a clear path to the centre. It can become a labyrinth. We cannot see this from the ground, where hedges are often used to block the view so that you cannot plan a route – rather like life!

Labyrinths have no hedges, but the path may not be as easy to follow as you may expect. The path can be so convoluted that, unless you really focus on what you are doing, it is easy to stray off the path, or onto another part of it. The path may have become worn, faded, indistinct: "Where is the right way just here?" So like life!

If your life feels like a maze, pray that God may transform it into a labyrinth, and keep you on the right path.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

— *Isaiah 30:21*

Giving reality to our intercessions

Alexander Ryrie

Some time ago I got a letter from someone who was concerned about her prayers of intercession. She was a very devout person who prayed regularly for a lot of people, but she was troubled because she felt that often she was just going through a list, rehearsing the names of people she had undertaken to pray for. Was this real intercession?

I imagine that many of us feel like that at times. Our personal prayers for others can become routine and mechanical. And we wonder, are they doing any good? Perhaps we sometimes also feel like that about intercessions in church. When we pray generally for "the sick" or for "the Middle East" is this achieving anything? Of course, there is no harm in just going through a list. Our intention in doing so is to help other people in some way, and no doubt God sees and accepts this intention. But perhaps there are a few things we can do to make our intercessions more real.

One thing we can do is to remind ourselves that intercession is not primarily a matter of uttering words or making requests, but of being before God for the sake of other people. So before we start thinking of people by name, or mentioning situations we want to pray for, it can be useful to take a little time simply to hold ourselves still in the presence of God. This being-before-God is the basis of our intercession.

Another thing is simply to feel. Feeling is an important element in prayer. I know that superficial and selfish feelings can be a hindrance to prayer, and that our conflicting emotions can stand in the way. But if we are truly to pray for others we need in some measure to feel for them. Naturally if people who are close to us are in trouble we will feel for them, but it is not always easy to feel for people who are distant from us and whose situations we may not know very well. Our modern society can also inure us to real feeling. When situations of human suffering are presented before us in our sitting rooms every day in the course of television news bulletins, and when scenes of violence are shown regularly in films and drama, we can become immunised or de-sensitised to human pain and suffering. An important aspect of intercession is presenting to God our feelings for other people, and if we are to do that we need to try to preserve our ability to feel.

Another thing has to do with our general attitude to other people. I remember some years ago watching a television documentary about the famous and ancient monastery of St Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai. In the course of it we were shown the cell of one of the monks and the place where he prayed. All around there were lots of icons, but on the wall right in front of the monk's prayer stool there was a large notice which contained just two words in Greek, *ME KRINETE*, "Do not judge", the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1. The primary thing he needed to remind himself of when he came to pray in silence before God was not to judge other people. To refuse to judge in this context is not to suspend our critical faculties or our awareness of right and wrong, but to refuse to condemn and censure other people, to refrain from finding fault or taking notice of other people's weaknesses or failures. It is to remember that we are no more free of faults than others are, and constantly to regard others as better than ourselves. This is the attitude out of which genuine intercession arises, and which enables us to pray for all sorts and conditions of people, good and bad alike.

And there is at least one other very fundamental thing: we can look on intercession as a prayer of offering. When we intercede we are not trying to influence the mind and plans of the Almighty in line with our own ideas, or asking God to do something He would not otherwise be doing. In the belief that God is a caring God who intends good for all people, we are aligning ourselves with God's good purposes, and offering our concerns so that God can use them in what He is doing. The prayer of intercession is a prayer in support of what God is doing, an act of cooperation with the activity and purpose of God in the world. For this our offering needs to be not just one of our requests but an offering of ourselves to be used for God's purposes. As we place ourselves before God for the sake of other people, we are holding ourselves open for God to work in us and in His world. This offering of ourselves is the heart of the prayer of intercession. It is this that gives reality to our spoken requests.

All true intercession is a deepening of awareness towards others rather than a request.

— *Bishop John V Taylor (d.2001)*

The sunset

Penelope Morrish

Chill October evening
God paints a sunset,
Creates a royal skyline
No-one can ignore –
Vapour, cloud and atmosphere,
The elements his brushstrokes,
And nature gives him colour
From her own heart's core.

A Scots pine stretching up
Black against the molten gold,
Intensifies the brilliance
Of the burning sky beyond.
Tonight this stately tree
Is his holy temple –
Between earth and heaven
Its branches are a bond...

It was cold that autumn evening
When the sunset was created,
Yet the colours in God's palette
Were of summer's blazing flowers.
Lord, is it vain to think,
Feeble creatures that we are,
You designed that sunset
For eyes like ours?

Nature is the Art of God.
— *Sir Thomas Browne (1605–82)*

Prayer at sunset

Margaret Field

Paused in wonder, rainbow-hued sky, joy-filled bright indigo clouds.
Earth draped soft in cool darkness, crimsoned ending of day.
Warm western horizon, cherishing friends – awakening in sweet morning,
To welcome new day, as I watch star-pierced night bring peace today.
Sweetness of praise ever flowing onward in joyfulness unquenchable,
Hour on hour each fresh morning by grace, prayer unending,
All creation worships the mercy of Ascensiontide salvation,
Manifest in love, evermore.

© Margaret Field



Sunset Forest

© 2003 Thomas Krahn

Awakening the spirit of love: praying through music

Margaret Rizza

From an early age music was more of a language for me than words. I studied at the Royal College of Music in London and the National School of Opera and completed my training in Siena and Rome. I had a career as a singer and then as a teacher at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

Since I was a tiny child I have always had a life of prayer – it was as natural to me as breathing. I had no knowledge, however, of belonging to a church. In what I would describe as a “head” conversion, I became a Catholic in 1967. It was not until I was in my fifties that I began the journey from head to heart.

At the time, my life seemed very fulfilling. I had a wonderful family and a thriving career. But I realised that somehow my inner life was empty and that the very core of me was dying. The ego-trappings of status, reputation and ambition were ruling me but I knew that the security they gave was illusory. Two things happened to change my life: encountering Christian meditation as taught by John Main and taking a sabbatical in 1990, with a six-week silent retreat doing the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius.

The retreat made me more fully aware of how much the power of worldly values can entrap and enslave us. As I struggled with these conflicting emotions and as my life of prayer and the call to Christian values became more insistent, there was a part of me that didn’t really know who I was. Slowly through silence, prayer and Scripture a metamorphosis began and a frail new being started to emerge – the true child God had created but who had never been able to fully grow and flourish.

As the centre of my life became more rooted in Gospel values I began to ask myself a fundamental question. How could I justify my life of music in a world which was so fractured, so torn apart and in which there was so much alienation? My way of life seemed almost a luxury; an extravagance when compared with the lives of the marginalised, the oppressed and with all the destruction of human life that was going on around me. Was not my first responsibility to be there in the midst helping out, choosing the better part by working for the poor?

As I pondered these questions it became clearer to me how we all are, and indeed must be, part of these very conflicts – conflicts which give rise to such anguish and frustration. However, I also realised that I was not being called to change vocation. Not everyone is called to minister to the sick or to give their lives to the poor and oppressed. We have to bloom where we are planted, realising the gifts which are given to us and being open and receptive to the opportunities offered to us.

I began to see more clearly that the gift of music, which speaks in so many different ways, has the power of healing; it can communicate where words fail; it can bring joy and happiness to the mentally and physically disadvantaged; it can bring love and compassion to people who are starved of emotional nourishment; it can bring us together as a community and as a church, where we can share together our worship and praise; it can reveal and release deep inner feelings which are essential for freedom and growth.

Thinking about music from this perspective, and especially in the light of a materialistically oriented society, I began to appreciate the value and the richness that music can give to so many people. Whilst these thoughts became closer to me, I was drawn to share music with communities which were outside the sphere of professional music-making. So I decided to leave full-time teaching to work with music therapists. This brought me into the community at large, taking workshops to hospitals, inner-city schools, prisons, hospices and other outreach projects. As I trod this new-found path I noticed that other opportunities began to open up, offering me the possibility of integrating my life of music with a life of spirituality and community.

In 1996 Pamela Hayes RSCJ, a great friend and mentor, asked me to write some music as a preparation for prayer for an international Sacred Heart Conference she was organising. After much agonising and difficulty, six pieces of music were birthed. The response to this music gave me the confidence to approach the publisher Kevin Mayhew, and through Pamela and Kevin a whole new chapter has exploded at a very late age into my life.

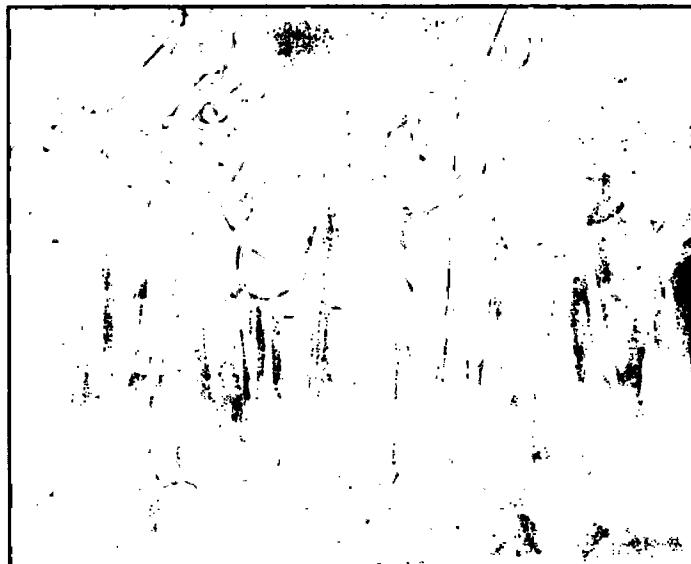
All my music is underpinned by prayer which for me is a melting-pot of doubts, dark nights of the soul, stony deserts, dryness and black holes but also of joy, light, gratitude, fleeting insights beyond time and space, and of peace and love – music birthed in silence and prayer.

Music now is my way to share my prayer life with others. It allows me to open my heart to those who are suffering and to give comfort, beauty and love to those who are starved of human affection – to say to them that they are infinitely loveable and precious. Music can also give strength to work for peace and justice; it can give a new understanding of compassion, forgiveness and simplicity; it can lead us to an awakening to the eternal spirit of love deep within our being.

And so as the Psalmist invites us (adapted from Psalm 108):

“Our hearts are ready O God,
We will play and sing your praise.
Let our souls awake; awake lyre and harp.
We will awaken the dawn.
O Lord, we will thank you among the peoples;
We will make music for you among the nations.”

© Margaret Rizza. This article previously appeared in the “Lent Extra” magazine published by the Redemptorists in February 2004.



Job and his family restored to prosperity (1825)

William Blake

Quaker spiritual reading

John Tittley

“...You will say, Christ saith this, and the Apostles saith this: but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?”

George Fox, 1652

When I was a young boy, my parents had on their bedside table two anthologies of religious and secular writings which I presume they read before sleeping. I copied the idea, and now on my bedside table there are several books, mostly secular, into which I dip in the quarter hour or so before turning off the light. Being a Quaker, I keep a copy of “Quaker Faith and Practice” by the bedside and usually another volume of spiritual reading which travels with me round the house and can be found lying in odd corners. Currently this peripatetic volume is the paperback edition of “Quaker Spirituality”, edited by Douglas Steere, from the Classics of Western Spirituality series. This is a collection of the original writing and experience of individuals from different belief traditions.

Quakerism, as Douglas Steere explains in his introduction, is a multi-faceted faith and requires for its presentation the writings of more than one of its interpreters over the three hundred years of its existence. “Quaker Spirituality” contains the spiritual insights of six Quakers over a period of three hundred years. Their insights have a penetrating individuality which communicates to 21st century readers with the authenticity of personal revelation, at the same time giving an account of day-to-day events in the lives of three early, interesting Quakers in Britain and the United States. As with all mystical experience there are tones and shades which take us from the mundane and seemingly humdrum to the saturated colours of the sublime heights. Although primarily a book about the Quaker experience, that experience is universal as non-Quaker readers will recognise.

If we are not full grown men and Christians, the fault is not in Quakerism, but in ourselves.

— *John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)*

Celebrate you

Carolyn Butler

When asked to speak these days I have one favourite theme, and it was a pleasant surprise, browsing through Julian's Showings again, to find that she spoke frequently on the same subject. The subject of knowing and loving our own self.

"And I saw very certainly that we must necessarily be in longing and in penance until the time when we are led so deeply into God that we verily and truly know our own soul; and I saw certainly that our good Lord himself leads us into this high depth, in the same love with which he created us and in the same love with which he redeemed us, by mercy and grace, through the power of his blessed Passion.

And all this notwithstanding, we can never come to the full knowledge of God until we first clearly know our own soul."

It is interesting but not surprising that a person who lived so many years ago had such insight into what so many modern believers miss. We have, unfortunately, been indoctrinated out of this all-important cornerstone to Christianity. Somehow we have been taught through the church to put ourselves down, to think of ourselves last. When I was growing up I belonged to the JOY Club – Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last – and sang about how my Saviour did die "for such a worm as I." This concept was a natural interpretation, I suppose, of some of Paul's writings. We have taken very seriously his admonition "not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement."

What a contrast to Julian's counsel: "We must necessarily be in longing and penance until the time we are led so deeply into God that we verily and truly know our own soul; and I saw certainly that our good Lord himself leads us into this high depth."

Being led so deeply by God into the high depth of knowing our own soul gives us some practical, valuable gifts.

1. We can celebrate who we are

Psalm 139 should be a daily part of our life. When we look into the bathroom mirror in the morning, instead of grimacing, heaving a resigned sigh, we not only can but should smile into our own eyes and say: "God

formed my inward parts, God knitted all my parts together in my mother's womb, and I am wonderful, because God made me." God has no unwanted children! We are children of a divine parent.

In most societies people are discriminated against for one reason or another. Because of gender, race, tribe, age, nationality, education or lack of education, few of us escape the insidious labels that encourage us to devalue ourselves. And if we escape the social standards, religion often attacks us with persistent reminders of our unworthiness.

Somehow we must discover the beauty of our own self, this human frame in which God chooses to dwell.

2. We find meaning in what happens to us

Further down in the Psalm there is this problematic verse: "All the days of my life were written in God's book before one of them came to be." Putting aside all the possible theological ramifications, the one gift this verse gives us is the awareness that nothing "just happens." Everything has meaning.

Victor Frankl wrote from his concentration camp wisdom, "The greatest motivation in life is not to gain pleasure or avoid pain, but rather to see a meaning in the happenings of life."

We are all living out a pre-written story, with heroes and heroines, scoundrels and evil villains, pain, trauma. At times we may live out a tragedy, at times a farce, but it is all written, directed and choreographed by a divine author.

We need, *need*, to understand and ascribe meaning to these things. Someone described it as "squeezing out the trauma like a sponge." It is only when we discover meaning as our centring place, that we can journey through whatever chaos our story holds for us and make sense of it, incorporate it and move on.

3. We can celebrate others

Accepting our own status leads us to an important conclusion: every other person is worth celebrating because he or she is also the child of a divine parent. Every other person's life has meaning because he or she is also living out a story.

We become aware of the individual, the other, others. There are no teeming millions, no hordes, no statistical masses. There are only unique individuals, just like me, created by a divine parent, living out a pre-written story by a divine author. We can say when confronted with the other, no

matter what disguise he or she wears: "Here is my co-actor in God's drama."

4. The story of the stones

In the Cape Town area we are blessed with a unique terrain. We walk on beaches or mountain paths, and everywhere we are confronted with stones. For most of us they are just rocks, but a trained eye sees and recognises the potential beauty of the pieces. This person gathers up ordinary rocks of unrecognised value and processes them into polished stones, which we are privileged to buy. As we hold one of these beautiful stones in our hand we are often unaware of the polishing process that has turned this pebble or piece of boulder from a dull, rough rock to a thing of beauty. For months on end it has been rotated in a harsh emulsion inside a huge canister, grinding against rough sides and thousands of other stones, all a necessary part of the process of being made into a thing of beauty.

These are semi-precious stones. Examined closely one finds the tiny cracks and flaws, rough places that add to rather than detract from their beauty. So it is with us. The harsh processes of life have shaped us into who and what and how we are. As Julian saw meeting in an acorn, we can see meaning in a stone. We can contemplate in a stone the wonder of being formed, as we are, by the hand of God, seeing our "flaws" as part of the beauty. We can contemplate the meaning of the people, events, traumas, pain, victories of our life story. We can contemplate the wonder of others.

Celebrate you:

You are worth celebrating,

You are worth everything,

You are unique.

In all the whole world

There is only one you.

There is only one person

With your talents, your

Experience, your gift.

No-one can take your place.

God created only one you,

Precious in God's sight.

You have immense potential

To love, to care, to grow, create;

To give without having to count the cost,
If you believe in yourself,
If you love yourself.
It doesn't matter your age,
Your race, your culture,
Your sex or whether your
Parents loved you or not.
Let that go.
It all belongs to the past.
You belong to the present.
It doesn't matter
What you have been,
The wrong you have done,
Mistakes you have made,
Hurts you have given.
You are forgiven.
You are loved just as you are.
So love yourself as God loves you
And nourish the seeds within you.
Celebrate you.
Begin now. Start anew.
Give yourself a new birth.
Today. You are you
And that is all you need to be.
You cannot deserve this new life.
It is given freely, gift
From the miracle called God
Who loves you.
So celebrate the miracle
And celebrate you!

This address was given to the annual gathering of the Julian Meetings in South Africa, held at the Gardens Presbyterian Church in Cape Town in May 2004. A total of 27 members attended.

Carolyn Butler is an author. Her most recent book, co-authored with Isabel de Gruchy, is "Road to the Cross." It was published just before Lent.

St Beuno's, Clynnog Fawr

James Toon

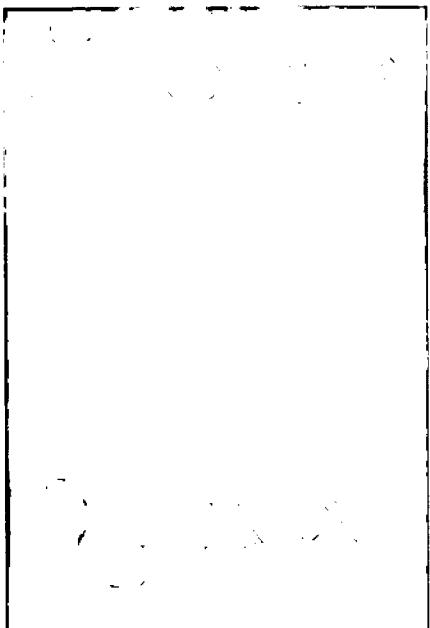
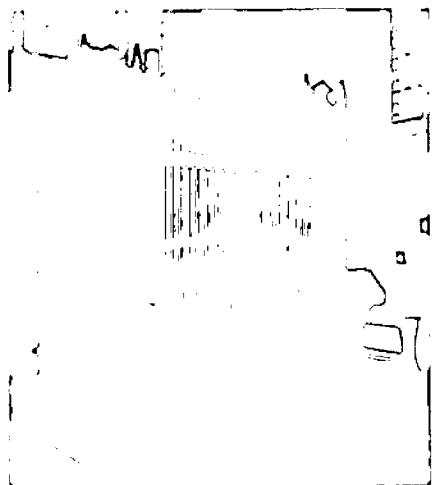
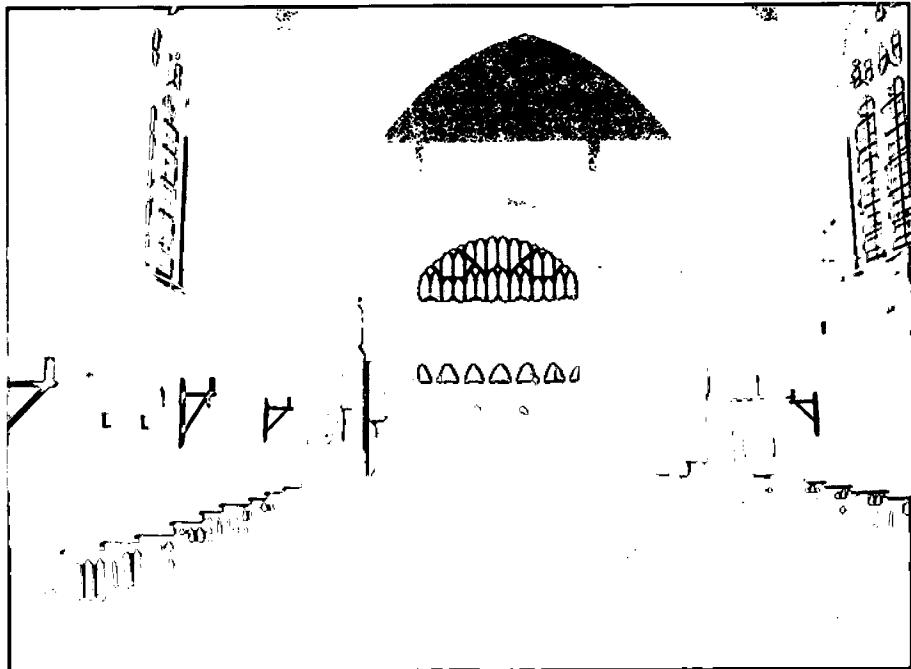
St Beuno's church stands near the sea in a quiet village in north Wales. This site has been a place of worship since the 7th century, when St Beuno arrived and built a cell for prayer.

The current building dates from the Tudor period and is a fine example of the late Perpendicular style. Inside it feels incredibly spacious. It is much bigger than it needs to be for its two columns of chairs, small organ, pulpit and exhibition stands. It is also full of light: the huge pointed windows invite the sun to come in.

There is a strong sense of history here. Most of the fixtures are labelled, from the 16th century parish chest carved from a single piece of wood, to the dog tongs used to capture and expel unruly animals during services.

It may have been in recognition of the historic nature of this church, that it was chosen as the starting-place for a pilgrimage along the Lleyn peninsula towards Bardsey Island in 1992, led by the Bishop of Bangor.





This page: The nave, organ, and banner of St Beuno's church

Opposite: from the outside

The first thought

Yvonne Edwards

The Lord created me for the first of his works
Long ago, before all else that he made.
I was formed in earliest times,
At the beginning before Earth itself.
I was born when there were no springs
Brimming with water.
Before the mountains were settled in their place.
Before the hills I was born,
When as yet he had made neither land nor streams
Nor the mass of Earth's soil.
When he set the heavens in place I was there,
When he girded the ocean with the horizon,
When he fixed the canopy of clouds overhead
And confined the springs of the deep,
When he prescribed limits to the sea
So that the waters do not transgress his command,
When he made the Earth's foundations firm.
Then I was at his side each day,
His darling and delight
Playing in his presence continually.
Playing over his whole world,
While my delight was in humanity.

— *Proverbs 8:22–31*

© Yvonne Edwards. Taken from “Nowhere Everywhere” by Yvonne Edwards, which was reviewed in the April 2004 issue of the magazine.

Rock of ages

Jennifer Jocelyn Steen

I received a letter a few days ago from a friend in England whom I met at several Buddhist retreats. The retreatants were always told to stay within their own religious tradition and perhaps bring mindfulness and awareness with them.

Val has just moved to a different village. She has a husband ill with cancer and doesn't have much money but she does go to the local Anglican church café which is run by volunteers. She saw a notice advertising a course being held in the church and decided she would like to try it.

It was a small group of 12. An elderly man asked her during the course how she always seemed so relaxed. She said she knelt in front of him as he was sitting, took both his hands in hers which he gave her willingly, and suggested he find a small stone in his garden, take it and wash it slowly and carefully, and keep it with him or place it on a window ledge so that it was in the warmth of the sun, and when things were a bit tough to pick it up and hold it and pray for help and strength, just as the stone had been in the earth for millions of years and had the strength of the earth which God created. She said he seemed to like that.

Early this morning I was reading "Circles of Stillness." I began at Sarah Salisbury's story of their group's day in Winchester Cathedral, and how they had used a rock with small stones to illustrate Psalm 40 and had asked the congregation to collect one each to hold during the silence to help focus their prayer on the strength and confidence that comes from God. I am sending this to Val because I know it will help her immensely.

Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength.
— *St Francis de Sales (1567-1622)*

The parts of meditation

Philip Tyers

A meditation has a beginning, a middle and an end. The most important part is the middle section; the silent prayer. However the first, the preparation, can affect it deeply. It is worth preparing well. You might like to read some teaching on prayer; a section from Angela Ashwin's book of short articles on prayer, or "They speak by silences", or a passage from John Main, Lawrence Freeman, or another writer. Compilations laid out for a year of readings might provide a suitable section.

Having fed the mind, pay attention to the body. It is worth working through it in a systematic way, relaxing each part in turn. Some people find it helpful to tighten each area of muscles up, then let them relax. I have heard leaders say "let your jaw drop; nobody's looking at you", and concentrate on relaxing the forehead, or the tummy, that seat of tension and emotion. When dealing with children, I do what my old choirmaster did, and get them to roll their head around the neck. Then something I learned from a stress management class; breathe in deeply, let the breath go, and let your shoulders fall. Do this three times. After a Julian meeting last month, one of the meditators expressed surprise at how effective this had been. The body relaxed completely and did not disturb for the rest of the session; "it was like sliding into a warm pool."

Some leaders spend time bringing the attention in to the heart, letting go of memories, emotions, listening to noises outside the room, then inside the room, then to one's own breathing. Too much preparation can be counter-productive, but use anything which helps.

Then one has entered the silence and can pray, presenting one's body and whole being as a living sacrifice, or a vacant chalice, or a lump or clay, to the ultimate reality, the living God.

Bishop Jack, then of Lancaster, now of Sheffield, once said that a good Julian meeting consisted of "a short verse of scripture at the beginning, and the Lord's prayer at the end." He said that too many words could be distracting and unhelpful. I enjoy the variety of styles and methods possible in Julian meetings. Our group learned its style from Barton, where they have a brief input in the middle of the meeting as well, to help keep

everyone on track. This can either repeat or develop the beginning verse, and can be picked up again in closing. The danger is always to over-talk. One aims at finding a style that provides sufficient preparation and material, so that newcomers know what they are doing, and experienced members are encouraged but not patronised.

Offering accepted

Wanda Nash

Many readers will know the old love-song that comes in the form of a riddle, about giving my love an apple. Recently I came across this adaptation. It means a lot to me; I wonder if it will to you.

I would give my Love an apple,
but it hasn't got a core;
I would give my Love a house
but it hasn't got a door;
I would give my Love a palace, wherein He may be –
and He could unlock it if there was a key.

My head is the apple, without any core.
My mind is the house, without any door.
My heart is the palace, wherein He may be,
And He could unlock it, without any key.

My Lord took the apple,
and He is the Core;
My Lord took the house,
and He is the Door;
My Lord took the palace, wherein He may be –
and He can unlock it, for He is the Key.

JM Finances and Administration

Deidre Morris

During the 1990s our finances were healthy, helped by access to some very economical printing services, and some Advisory Group members whose claimed expenses were minimal.

Since 2000 several things have happened to change this position:

- Our last two retreats ran at a loss, the last one a significant loss, due in part to emergency circumstances outside our control.
- Printing costs for our publications and the magazine have risen significantly, not least because the Magazine has more pages than before. For nearly a year they failed to cover their costs, let alone bring in any spare income, which is why prices had to be increased.
- Postal costs have also risen steadily. This has mostly hit the magazine revenue, as the magazine has been larger than before, and often fallen into the second postage band and so cost 34p rather than 20p to send (now 35p and 21p).
- Our new database has proved invaluable in simplifying administration, but it cost quite a lot to put in place. Doing this involved giving subscribers a free year, but we were grateful that so many people sent in a donation instead.
- Advisory Group costs have risen. We keep these to a minimum, but the members live in East Sussex, Herefordshire, Berkshire, Gloucester, Surrey, Somerset and London, and the Republic of Ireland, and until recently we had members in Yorkshire, Leicestershire, and West Wales. This dispersion means that phone calls are essential, and travel costs to meetings can mount up. We used to have a weekend residential meeting in May; a meeting at the Retreat in September; and a meeting for a day in London in November. We have discontinued the May weekend for the present, due to the cost. We currently hold three one-day meetings in September, January and May and are very grateful to have the free use of an office suite in Newbury for these meetings. It is a very convenient location for most members and minimizes travel costs.
- Royalties from the sales of "Circles of Silence" and "Circles of Stillness"

have always been used to fund our publicity material, particularly our free "Waiting on God" leaflets. However, these now cost 6.2p each, and we use several thousand in a year. Royalties no longer cover their cost. This must be found from other revenue, or we may have to charge for the leaflets.

- Our 30th Anniversary. This was well celebrated, and we were thankful that the £600 surplus we made on the event in Oxford helped to offset the greatly-increased cost of producing and mailing the special magazines in August and December 2003.

We do not want to make a profit, but we do need to ensure that we have enough income to cover essential costs. In 2003 we had an income of £9,692.84, expenditure of £10,879.35 and reserves, in December, of £1,153.60. We used to have the accounts for the year available at the Retreat, which we do not currently hold. If anyone wishes to have a copy of the accounts, please send an s.a.e. to [REDACTED]

Ten members of the Advisory Group may seem a lot, but half are still in paid employment and there is a limit to the time any one person can give to the various tasks. These are: UK National Co-ordinator; Contact for JMs worldwide; Magazine Editor; Newsletter Editor; Treasurer; Database Manager; Publications Manager; Subscription Renewals; Booklist; Music List; Book Reviews; Liaison with other silent prayer groups; and National event organizer.

Benedictus

Helen Turney

In some ways like a most exquisite, other-worldly musical setting, and conclusion to the prayerful silence of a Julian Meeting, the "Benedictus" by Karl Jenkins moved me to tears. I was not alone in appreciating its beauty, and we all listened to an extended encore later with our tea and our "Julian biscuits." A friend remarked how relaxing, and how like a prayer, the music would be last thing at night. It is the orchestral introduction from "The Armed Man: a Mass for Peace."

Music reviews

Be Still my Soul

Colin Mawby (piano)

Kevin Mayhew, 2004, £9.99

This is just over an hour of gentle, improvised piano music, played by Colin Mawby. It could be used to start and end a time of silence, though there are no obvious break points. I don't use it like this myself, but it is one of the few pieces of music that I can listen to first thing in the morning – starting the day is not my strong point!

James Toon

Be Still Before the Lord

The Deutz Trio

Kevin Mayhew, 2004, £9.99

For groups which like to use music as a way into the silence, this recording may be useful. The Deutz Trio are members of the London Symphony Orchestra, playing flute, oboe and piano. They play over 70 minutes of chamber music by J S Bach, Handel, Mozart, Telemann and Albinoni.

Pamela Fawcett

The Word of All Life: Lectio Divina through Words and Music

Margaret Rizza

Kevin Mayhew, 2004, £13.99

A guide to the ancient tradition of praying the Scriptures: consisting of an introduction, eight talks and eight music tracts. You can dip in and out of the various tracks using those which you find most helpful. Margaret explains the roots of Lectio Divina, and how we can use it for our prayer time – bringing richness to our everyday lives.

A good teaching aid for any Julian Meeting or to enjoy individually.

Brenda Smith

See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it.

— *Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881)*

Book reviews

The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation

Thomas Merton (ed. William Shannon)

SPCK, 2003, £9.99

Thomas Merton first drew many people to contemplation in 1948 with his book "What is Contemplation." However, by 1959 he was writing, "How mistaken I was to make contemplation part of a man's life. For a contemplative his whole life is contemplation." "The Inner Experience" therefore offers a wider, deeper view of contemplation showing that it is not a compartment of life but rather the way it integrates one's life into a single whole. Merton adds references to Oriental ideas and deals with the difference between true and false paths of contemplation.

I found it most interesting that he suggests: "groups of lay people interested in the spiritual life should be formed in order to protect and foster something of contemplative spirituality...but as soon as you start thinking in terms of organisation, the issue becomes extremely confused. Such groups do not need to be organised. They simply need to form themselves under the guidance and encouragement of priests who are already interested in contemplation. These groups could provide their members with books, conferences, direction, and perhaps a quiet place in the country where they could go for a few days of meditation and prayer" (page 136). He might well have been prophesying (minus the priests) the birth of the Julian Meetings.

Graham Johnson

Seek the Silences with Thomas Merton

Charles R Ringma

SPCK, 2003, £9.99

In this series of reflections, based around the thoughts of Thomas Merton, we find gathered Charles Ringma's own reflections on Being (The search for self-identity), Being and Transcendence (The search for ultimate meaning), Being With (The search for friendship and community), Being Against (The search for a prophetic voice), Being For (The search for transformative action) and Being and Hope (The search for an eschatological vision).

This book can be used as a "Day Book", reading a section each day. It

provides a lot of food for thought, and seeks a response in the reader, as it challenges some of our individualised modern Western views of ourselves, of the church, of worship, and our relation to the world. It is neither easy nor comfortable, but provocative, and it suggests that in meeting God we meet the uncomfortable in ourselves and in others. So this may not be an easy read, but it will repay those who spend time reading and reflecting on its themes.

Francis Ballinger

Abishiktanada: a Memoir of Dom Henri Le Saux

Murray Rogers & David Barton

SLG Press, 2003, £2.50

Available from orders@slgpress.co.uk or by telephoning 01865 721301

This short booklet recalls the life of the French Benedictine monk, Henri Le Saux, who went to India and founded the Indian Benedictine Ashram at Shantivanam in Tamil Nadu, South India. He later passed it over to Bede Griffiths. He met and came under the influence of the Indian Hindu saint Sri Ramana Maharshi at his ashram below the holy mountain of Arunachala and he was subsequently able to combine the best of the Hindu and spiritual traditions as a Hindu Sannyasi/Benedictine monk. This is reflected in his writings. The core of his writings have been skilfully recorded in 13 one-page extracts by the authors. They can be used as "lead-ins" for meditation groups and provide insights into the deeper levels of contemplative prayer from both the Christian and Hindu traditions. David Rogers was a close friend of Abhishiktanada and is an Anglican Priest and former evangelical missionary.

Michael Tiley

People Need Stillness

Wanda Nash

The Furzey Trust, 2004 (new edition), £5.99

Available from SPCK Bookshop, 24 The Square, Winchester SO22

I like this book. It is indeed, as the author suggests, a "how-to-do-it" manual so that our need and longing for stillness can be met in practical ways. It is attractively-produced and has a wealth of suggestions for further exploration and reading.

Some books on meditation and silent prayer imply gnosis – a special knowledge for those who are already initiates. This book is the opposite, providing something for everyone. We can bring our inarticulate needs, our fumbling approaches and find starting points, guidelines and methods to bring us to a sense of that stillness where words are redundant.

The first part discusses the different activities of stillness: when? where? should we practise alone or with others? – and the benefits and tensions that can arise. Then the tools of silence are laid out: lead-ins, symbols and mantras, with many apt, thoughtful and inspirational examples. Finally, and I feel this is important, we are reminded that the purpose of stillness and silence is not only to bring balance, centredness and depth to our own lives but to enable us to draw upon that well in our interaction with a thirsty world.

“The active practice of silence is not a cop-out;
It is not even an opting-out;
It is a knowing, a being, a be-withing;
a One-ing and a joining.”

Janet Robinson

Out of the Depths: Hope for the Broken

Liz Babbs

Book: Kevin Mayhew, 2004, £5.99

CD: Kevin Mayhew, 2004, £13.99

This book and CD are a series of short meditations (with music in the background on the CD), formed in part from Liz Babbs's own experiences of pain and desperation leading to acceptance and hope. The format of both the book and recording is that of a plea to God with a response heard from God.

It is easy to identify oneself with many of Liz's pleas and to gain strength from the knowledge that it is not only acceptable to question God but also that God gives us hope if we trust and love.

The section headings, “Where are you Lord?”, “Letting go”, “Come and rest”, “Such love”, and “Beauty from ashes” well describe the contents and feelings of this short work and repay time spent on them listening or reading either individually or in a group.

Francis Ballinger

The Lord is my Shepherd: the Healing Wisdom of the Twenty-Third Psalm

Harold S Kushner

Hodder & Stoughton, 2003, £8.99

Harold Kushner is a rabbi. His book “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” was of enormous support to me and to many bereaved people when it was published 20 years ago. This book is more general in its approach, being a quiet meditation on this universally-known psalm. Each chapter is devoted to one of its phrases.

The book is easy to read and contains valuable insights. It is exemplary in that it shows the reader how to approach and draw the most out of a biblical passage. The author pays much attention to individual words, squeezing out the meaning. This process is aided by his knowledge of Hebrew and makes the text particularly interesting. For example: “the paths of righteousness” or “the straight path” depending on the translation is literally in Hebrew “the roundabout path that ends up in the right direction.” On looking back over one’s life, this rings very true.

The text is seasoned with apposite human stories, and the whole book is a gentle, supportive meditation which reinforces and highlights the words of the psalm.

Janet Robinson

Friendship in God: The Encounter of Evelyn Underhill and Sorella

Marie Campello

A M Allchin

SLG press, 2003, £3.00

This attractively-produced little book will certainly appeal to those who are conversant with the writings of Evelyn Underhill, but its appeal should not be limited to them. It uncovers the story of a fruitful friendship between Evelyn Underhill and an Italian Franciscan sister called Maria.

Readers of Evelyn Underhill’s letters may have noticed a few references to the rather shadowy figure of “my Italian Saint.” A M Allchin’s booklet will tell you more about this “saint”, his adventure in discovering her, her remarkable ministry, and the foundation of an ecumenical community. Even more remarkable was her gift for spiritual companionship and supportive prayer, which reached across denominational and cultural divides.

Little Sister Maria is shown to be a woman who was close to God and to all humanity. Her generosity of spirit led beyond her own church and into sympathy with Gandhi and all who, like him, worked and prayed for peace and reconciliation.

Evelyn Underhill is best known for her retreat work. She led the way in the pre-war years when the climate was not as receptive as it later became. Her letters show how she was supported in this work by the prayers of a network of friends, among whom was Sorella Maria.

Pamela Fawcett

A gentle way of intercession for Julian meetings

Sue Halliwell

I understand that some Julian meetings like to include some intercession after their quiet prayer time, and yet I know that some people feel this can be an intrusion. During Lent this year we looked at a book called "Celebrating the Christian centuries" by Andrew D. Mayes, and it fell to me to lead the session on Julian of Norwich. After a short introduction to her life there were readings from the "Showings" including chapter 5, with the quotation "Our good Lord showed (me) a spiritual sight of his familiar love. I saw that he is to us everything which is good and comforting for our help. He is our clothing who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us."

At the end there were prayer exercises, one of which I used: "Reflect on and celebrate ways in which God's love surrounds and sustains us. Write intercessions on pieces of paper and place them at the centre of a cloth (I used a large tissue for each person). Slowly and gently enfold these prayers in the cloth, and place before a cross, while meditating on the paragraph above. Conclude with thanksgivings, using Psalm 30."

This proved to be a gentle and moving way of making intercessions real while maintaining an atmosphere of quiet and meditation.

The Julian Meetings

Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition

Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them

Support the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings – groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together.

The views expressed in this magazine are those of each writer, and are not necessarily held by the Editor or the Advisory Group.

The Editor is always pleased to receive original articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for use in the magazine. Book reviews for publication should include date, publisher and price.

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by **1 October 2004**. Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by email are welcome.



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