



Magazine

April

2019

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 Julian Meetings Magazine April 2019

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Eastering Prayer

Merciful One,
I enter the garden of your presence
open to the mystery of your love.
The hurt I have caused and the hurt I have borne
I lay to rest in the tomb of your grace.
All resentment, shame, dread and anxiety
I wrap in the linens of your mercy.
All distrust and defiance
I lay in the ground of your patient redeeming.
See if there be any evil in me,
and in your tender mercy lay it to rest.

Dawning One,
let Christ rise in me,
free of all fear, free of the power of doubt
and the shroud of the past.
Let Christ rise to new life in me,
wounded but whole,
radiant, forgiving and alive with your love.
Create me anew: by your grace let there be light.

This is the day you are making;
let me rejoice, and be glad in it.



**Steve
Garnaas-Holmes**



Travelling Further as Pilgrims

Pilgrimage may take various forms. Following on from our last issue we offer some more aspects of being a pilgrim, whether as on an outer and physical journey or an inner experience.

So we may walk a labyrinth, or trace one on our palm (p.8).

We may look back on the surprising spiritual path along which God has led us, as Sr. Pamela does. (p. 12)

We could view Jesus' 40 days in the desert as a pilgrimage, and contemplate the desert experiences of our own lives, or our pilgrimage through Lent and Holy Week this year, following in Jesus' footsteps .(see below)

Are there places to which we might consider going as a pilgrim? Or places we have already visited as pilgrims - chapels such as St Anthony's (p.20), or a local Christian holy place - and which we would like to share with others?.

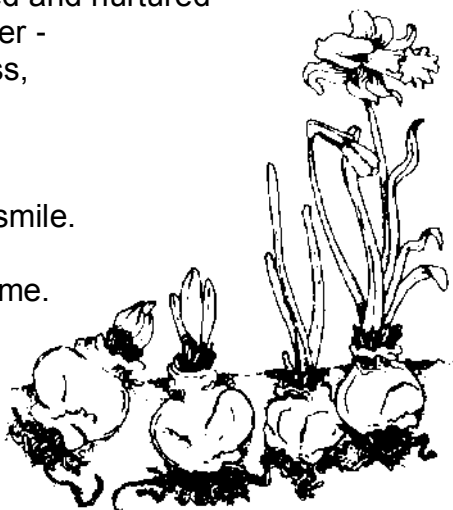
The desert is initially a negative encounter. It is the place where illusions are smashed: the place of stripping, of unmasking, of purgation. It is therefore inevitably a place of great pain and upheaval. It is also the place of discovery of that central solitude which exists at the core of each of us.

Kenneth Leech

The Power of the Spirit

That inner peace
Is strength and power.
It grows in quiet and stillness,
Like a flower
That sleeps within the womb of a bulb
For months,
Then thrusts it's fragile, tendril stalk
Above the heavy black and clogging earth,
Out into the sunshine, rain and wind.
Just so, our souls are fed and nurtured
By the Holy Spirit's power -
In quietness and stillness,
To burst forth and face
The rain of sorrow,
Wind of adversity
And sunshine of God's smile.
Dormant or active,
The power is still the same.

Dorothy Stock



*In this temple of God, in this the divine dwelling place,
God alone rejoices with the soul in the deepest silence.
There is no reason for the intellect to stir or seek
anything, for the Lord who created it wishes to give it
repose there.*

Teresa of Avila

The Christian Contemplative Tradition

Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy have a long tradition of teaching contemplation or non-dual consciousness. But its systematic teaching was primarily held in the Eastern “Greek” church; the Western “Latin” church was more extroverted and aligned with empires.

Serious contemplative teaching - upfront in the desert fathers and mothers - is surely found in Celtic Christianity (outside of empire), and continued by leaders of many monasteries, for example by John Cassian (360-435 CE), Pseudo-Dionysius (5th-6th centuries), and Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141). Later mystics like Bonaventure (1221-74), Francisco de Osuna (1497- 541), the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (late 14th century), and 16th century mystics Teresa of Ávila (1515-82) and John of the Cross (1542-91) also taught non-dual consciousness. It held on much longer in the religious orders than with the ordinary local church, priest or bishop- whose ministry was an occupation more than a search for God or a ‘school for the Lord’s service’ as St. Benedict (480–547) said.

Most Western mystics *exemplified* contemplation, as did Jesus, much more than they directly taught it. Maybe this is partly why many Christians lost it, and why good theological teaching and practice is so important today. After the fights of the Reformation, and the over-rationalization of the 17th and 18th century Enlightenment, many of us Western Christians became very defensive, wanting to prove we were smart and could win arguments with the new secularism. We imitated the rationalists while using pious Christian vocabulary. It took the form of heady Scholasticism and rote formulas in Catholicism, and led to fundamentalism and memorized Scripture verses providing their own kind of “rationalism” among many Protestants.

Catholic doctrines (such as transubstantiation, papal infallibility, and hierarchical authority) came to be presented in

a largely academic and juridical way (or, for the sacraments, with an almost magical interpretation), as opposed to a contemplative or mystical way. Frankly, all of this inspired few and drove many away from Christianity. Most priests were educated this way until the much-needed reforms of Vatican II in the 1960s. Thomas Merton (1915–68) was influential in re-introducing contemplation to the West. Now it is again taught in Christian arenas all over the world under different names.

What we now call contemplation - a unique way of knowing - is a rediscovery of our earlier Christian practice. Basically, *contemplation is the way you know and think of yourself when you are sincerely praying and present - as opposed to thinking, arguing, or proving.*

As Archbishop Rowan Williams, former leader of the Anglican Church, told the Synod of Catholic Bishops in Rome: Contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom - freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

Despite centuries without systematic teaching of non-dual consciousness, many seekers have now come to contemplation as the fruit of *great suffering or great love*. These are the quickest and most universal ways that God uses to destabilize the self-referential ego. Those transformed by life and grace come to enjoy the presence of God, others, and even themselves. They have connected

with their deepest Source, an identity that goes far beyond ideas of right and wrong.

Great suffering, great love, and contemplative practice can instil in us “the same mind which is in Christ Jesus” (see Philippians 2:5-11, 4:4-7, and 1 Corinthians 2 and 3). Indeed, I believe contemplative, non-dual consciousness is the mind of Christ.

Richard Rohr

This meditation is from Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditation from the Centre for Action and Contemplation, posted on Sunday 16 Sept. 2018.

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If you would like to read Richard Rohr’s meditation each day just sign up at <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

Although spiritual writers describe the various stages of prayer in ascending order, with the silent prayer of union at the top of the list, none of them implies that as we progress to higher forms of prayer, we never return to other forms.

As we learn to play the piano, we begin with single notes and progress to chords. But once we have mastered the chords we do not, therefore, neglect the single melody notes. Once we have learnt to play the polka, we do not avoid the waltz. Our prayer is an intricate interplay of lights and shadows, words and silence, mountain and desert.

Carole Marie Kelly

Labyrinths

One form of 'Pilgrimage' is to walk a labyrinth.

Some people confuse labyrinth with maze, but a labyrinth has no dead ends or distractors. The point of a labyrinth is that you follow a single path from the entrance, inwards to the centre, and then retrace your steps. So it is a pilgrimage to the interior, whatever form that takes for you at that place, and at that time. At the centre you may spend time in rest, prayer, contemplation, and then retrace your steps to return to the world of everyday.

Take your time. Slow your pace, and your breathing. Try to just be, with God. Some people watch the path, which in some cases may be quite complex to follow with its twists and turns, as in the examples opposite. Examples mown into lawns may be less obvious to follow and need concentration. Many examples are quite simple, but no less rewarding to walk. Some people observe their surroundings - which may be indoors or out; in a church, or garden or in open country.

Another way to 'walk' the labyrinth is by using your hand. With the index finger of your other hand, slowly trace, from the arrow, the path onto and round your palm, and then around each finger in turn, before ending in the centre of your palm. Be aware of the skin contact. Then slowly trace your finger back to your starting point.





A turf labyrinth in a field overlooking the Humber estuary and the River Trent, and repeated in the porch of the local church.



*The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
took Justice as it's focus in 2019.*

*This was part of the material
provided for the Monday worship,
prepared by Christians in Indonesia..*

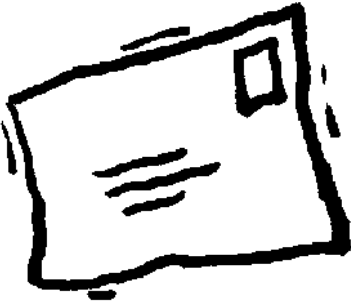
Reflection

At the table
we sit,
Empty plates, but for a few crumbs.
Everyone's had their fill again,
Satiated,
at least for now.

Turning on the taps
we fill our bowls,
in the hope that the stains will disappear.
The water cascades
over the cup
and plate,
cleansing it
of any sign of human contact,
as if there had never been a meal.

In our polite conversation
and edgy discourse,
we fool ourselves
into thinking we are making a difference.

We faithfully gather,
but are we just acting,
waiting,
for the others to speak up
as we wash our hands?



Just For You

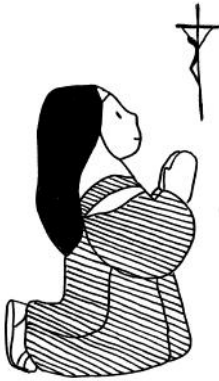
We have been saddened to find that a number of people who attend Julian Meetings do not see the magazine and newsletter, as it is never brought out for members to see / read / borrow. Since the contact person for every registered Meeting receives a magazine *for all of those who attend the Meeting*, there is no excuse for this. It is part of the contact's role to take it to their meetings and tell people about it. We also hope they will themselves read it first! We accept that not everyone is interested in reading it, but people can only choose to read it, or not, if they know it is available.

Anyone can also take out their own personal subscription to the JM Magazine. Some do this because it takes too long to see the Meeting's copy, others because they prefer having their own copy to read, and perhaps keep or pass on to a friend. Those who are unable to attend a Julian Meeting, for whatever reason, value having a copy both to keep in touch with the JM network, but also for the articles, poems, book reviews etc. that it provides. So if you are reading this and it is not your own copy, you might like to consider taking out a subscription! Details are on page 27.

Suck It and See?

Why is a Julian Meeting like a polo mint?

Because it is usually circular; the centre is empty (of noise and movement); you have to try it to see if you like it.



The Breath of God

Responding to God's call to enter the Religious Life is often very costly and then, after years, to move from one form of consecrated life to another can be even more so, especially when this involves moving to a different Church family. My experience of doing this was not something I entered into lightly and it was only made possible by the utter conviction that God

was asking this of me. The discernment process was agonising, especially as I was happily settled and well inserted into my beloved Church and Community. I knew that I had to do this, to make this second response to what I discerned as a genuine call of God to leave everything again for Him.

I think I argued more with God over this growing sense of a call to Carmel than I did over my initial call to Religious Life back in my youth! Looking back, I am so grateful to God that the awareness that this call was of God came to a head while I was in one of the most beautiful place I had ever lived, Keswick, in the Lake District. I was also with a group of sisters that I loved dearly and had a ministry that was blessed and fulfilling.

So, as I became increasingly aware of a niggle that wouldn't go away, my response was something like - 'You've got to be kidding - an enclosed Roman Catholic Nun - a Carmelite - no way! I loved the Community of the Holy Name, of which I had been part for around 30 years, I loved the Anglican Church, I loved my sisters. But somehow that 'still small voice' or, as I sometimes think of it, an idea that has the breath of God upon it, just would not go away and I knew that I couldn't, with integrity, ignore it. There is, in my experience, just a different quality, a numinous depth in words that come from God, and it

is something that we need to be attuned to.

Of course, any call has to be tested, advice taken, weighed and sifted, and I was deeply grateful that my spiritual director, Bishop Jack Nicholls, was so wise and helpful. One certainly needs friends at such a time and I don't think I would have survived the trauma without the love and understanding of friends in CHN.

Although some people may question whether it is ever right to leave a community where one has made a life commitment, there has always been a tradition of people moving from one expression of the consecrated life to a different one. For instance, if Mother Teresa of Calcutta had not left the Loreto sisters to found the Missionaries of Charity, the Church and the world would be the poorer for it. Having said that, it isn't something that one does lightly.

In my case it took several years of agonising in prayer and weeping copious tears before I became absolutely sure that it was something I just had to do.

Looking back after 16 years in Carmel, I know I am where I am meant to be, I love life in Carmel and I wouldn't change places with anyone in the world. I am deeply grateful to God for calling me here. Do I wish I had come years ago? No, I don't, because I believe the time I came was the time God called me to come, and I wouldn't have missed the 30 years I spent in CHN for anything. It still has a special place in my heart, and always will have.

The scripture reading from Colossians 3 that CHN has at first Vespers of the Holy Name of Jesus, is as relevant in Carmel as it is in CHN, so let the word of God have the last word - 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ... and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'

Sister Pamela of the Divine Presence OCD

*Extract from p.62 of the book Meditation with Children,
reviewed on page 20*

“The task in meditation is not to have no thoughts, but to return faithfully to the mantra every time you have become caught up in thought. If you do thirty push-ups in a gym, you know the repetition is doing you good, strengthening the muscles in your upper arms. Likewise in meditation, the repetition is good for you. It strengthens your ‘attention muscle’, and helps you to avoid becoming caught up in, captivated by, your thoughts.

You might imagine you are taking a holiday from your thoughts, you are getting out of your own way so your true self can be awakened”.

A Blessing on our Departures

Without them, we cannot walk the way.

A blessing on our companions:

Bread of friendship, bread for the soul.

A blessing on all travellers:

Border-crossers, wanderers in strange lands.

A blessing on all the stages on the way:

And those who give us guidance.

A blessing on those we leave behind -

and on their journeys.

A blessing on our lostness and delays -

these too are life.

A blessing on our arrivals

Homecomings, new beginnings, bright horizons.

A blessing on the Trinity of journeys.

Giver of the Way,

Jesus of the Way,

Spirit of the Way.

from Talking to the Bones - Kathy Galloway, 1996

Virtual Julian Meetings

In the past people have used both the telephone and the post to have virtual Julian Meetings. These have been useful for those who do not live near a Meeting or whose mobility is restricted. Now there are some online possibilities as well, for example Skype, live chat and no doubt others.



We have had a request to look at this aspect of being part of the Julian Meetings from a member who has had to stop attending her local group. If you would be interested in discussing this or have any ideas and suggestions as to how we might set up such groups please e-mail Ann Moran on it@thejulianmeetings.net

Help Needed with IT Skills

Do you have IT skills such as web design / graphic design; YouTube / Podcast creation; SEO; Google Analytics? Could you offer us any help us with this? E-mail Ann Moran on it@thejulianmeetings.net

Help Spread the Word

If you are on Facebook or Twitter - please 'like', follow and share our pages. It is a great help in spreading the word about The Julian Meetings, and making us more visible on social media.

*The music is not in the notes
but in the silence between*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Write about prayer
they said -
and silence

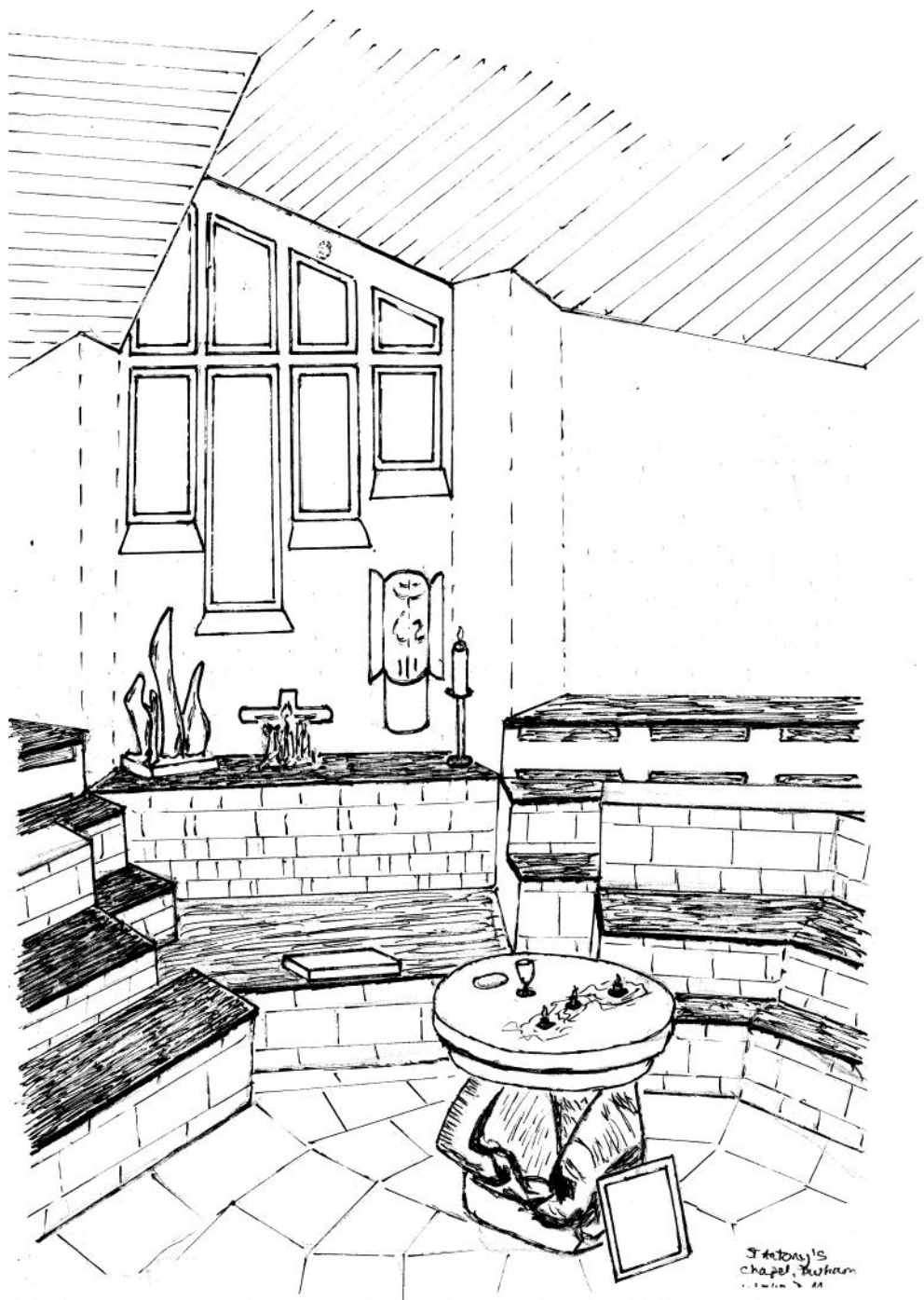
I looked at the blank page
and I realised
that there was no need
to write anything at all.
The page itself was silence,
as empty of words
as a dry well
is empty of water.

Then I saw
the faint watermark
showing me
the quality of the paper.

One day
when I go to the secret
hidden-most room in my soul
will it be silent
and empty enough
for me to know
that Love has left his mark?

Sister Michaela OSC





The Chapel at St Anthony's Priory, Durham

It is such a calm space.

Slate floor; slate seat platforms on concrete risers.

Honey coloured stone walls forming an octagon.

Polished wooden ceiling and circular altar.

Colour from the blue of the sky, and the foliage of trees,
glimpsed through the windows behind the sanctuary

and triangular lunettes below the angled roof sections.

The seats tiered and facing each other across the axis
between the door and the sanctuary window.

A 'thin' but warm place,

gathering people into a near-circle around the altar.

A place to be alone with God,

and also to share that relationship with others.

A place where silent contemplation seems natural.

A place set apart, yet welcoming.

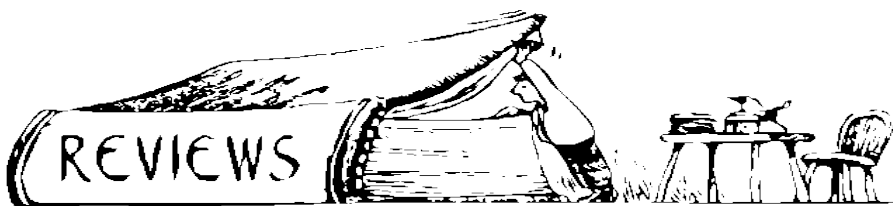
A place to fully BE.

A place of blessing.

Deidre Morris

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.*

Psalm 84 v.5-7



MEDITATION WITH CHILDREN: A Resource for Teachers and Parents

Noel Keating

Veritas Ireland
ISBN 9781 84730 800

This book was a little more complex than I expected, in an academic style, directed mostly towards teachers in the classroom. Dr Noel Keating has spent 40 years as teacher, principal and education officer. He set up, and now voluntarily coordinates, the Meditation and Children Project, operating in 150 primary schools throughout Ireland. This has resulted in 32,000 children who meditate several times each week on a whole school basis.

Noel gives an in-depth exploration of what the religions and wisdom traditions of the world say about meditation. He then identifies the practical rewards and spiritual fruits that arise from regular meditation.

There are 5 detailed lesson plans for teachers. The first he describes as universal practice, with lesson 2 teaching the benefits of meditation. The third introduces meditation as a spiritual practice. Lessons 4 and 5 encourage conversation with the children about meditation as a spiritual practice and explore the spiritual fruits of meditation.

The meditation taught to the children uses a settling down process, available to download. A meditation bell / gong is used to commence the timed period of silence, one minute for each year of age. During the silence children use a word or mantra to focus away from intrusive thoughts. The gong closes the silence and the children are encouraged to listen to the reverberations and when they can hear it no longer, to open their eyes.

This project is a detailed and lengthy research project, the

results of which Noel shares as direct conversations and comments made by the children. The children, in their own words, give four basic fruits of meditation: You can be yourself, You feel the Goodness Deep Inside, You come Closer to God and You Become a Kinder Person. These are described so beautifully, which is heart-warming. It has certainly encouraged me to help children find peace in this busy world.

Michael Cayley

DANCING STANDING STILL

Richard Rohr

Paulist Press 2014 £7.19

ISBN 978-0-8091-4867-7

Fr Richard Rohr is a Franciscan Priest, best selling author and well-known retreat leader. This slim book (100 pages) is the revised edition of an earlier book entitled 'A Lever and a Place to Stand.'

Initially it seems a relatively quick read but, once under way, each page is read and re-read. Like delving for treasure, it takes time and dedication.

But it is worth the effort. When I was growing up in the church there was a catch phrase that went something like: "he's so heavenly minded that he's no earthly good." In this book that thought is dispelled, as so much of the book is practical and rooted in radical compassion. True contemplation, as Rohr states, is "quite down to earth and practical, and does not require life in a monastery."

There is a useful overview of Huxley's 'Brave New World' and Orwell's '1984'. Books whose two visions have very different outcomes. Rohr suggests that Orwell's vision is of people being overcome by an externally imposed oppression, while Huxley sees people coming to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their very capacity to think. Rohr suggests that Orwell feared that truth would be concealed from us, but Huxley that truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.

Rohr reflects on the fickleness of the crowd, which in scripture is almost always wrong; on post-modernism's emphasis on 'my experiences' over and against tradition and explanation; on God's Grace "in the economy of grace, nothing is wasted." It's not about achievement or worthiness but about God's graciousness. Unconditional, undeserved and unmerited but offered freely.

Rohr reflects on the legacy of Dualistic thinking and of the transformation of the church from a minority group into an imperial church (313 AD) having to defend power and privilege. He would like to see a move back from maintaining structures to healing peoples and institutions. This is a book calling for radical discipleship.

I give Rohr the last word, which I think shows the paradox of his thinking " So now we hope to keep one foot in our historic denomination and tradition, grateful for all it gave us, and we put the other foot in prayer groups, service groups, support groups, mission groups and meditation groups. That is a rather creative, positive and hopeful way of renewing the church: no longer seeking to be right, but getting down to the practical work of our own transformation and the transformation of our suffering world." "To be in the world and not of it, and of the world and not in it."

Mike Elliott

JUST THIS

Richard Rohr

SPCK 2018 £9.99

ISBN 978-0-281-07991-9

In this book Richard Rohr focuses on contemplation and draws on insights from both Christianity and Buddhism. The emphasis is very much on what a book by de Caussade termed "the sacrament of the present moment". This is appreciating fully the here and now and the manifestation of the divine in the world as we encounter it day by day; and

putting aside our frequent inclination to judge what is before us, either rejecting or relishing it, instead just being wholly attentive to it.

Most of the book is short reflections, grouped in four sections: feeling of awe, which take us beyond our ordinary perceptions;

waking up to reality and shedding compulsive behaviours and attitudes – a major part of what Buddhists term enlightenment;

the acceptance that suffering is part of life and can be transformative;

practices which help achieve a more contemplative state.

There are many memorable sentences. One of my favourites is “God is a riverbed of mercy that underlies all the ephemeral flotsam and jetsam of your life. This riverbed is vast, silent, restful and resourceful.”

If you have found Richard Rohr’s other books helpful, do get this book. If you have not yet come across him, this is a good entry into some of the gentle, wise thinking of a major spiritual writer of our time.

Michael Cayley

LIVING DIFFERENTLY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Will Donaldson

ISBN 978-0-85746-6716

BRF 2018 £8.99

In his foreword Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, writes that “There are signs that the beatitudes are coming back into focus in the life of the church as a text for the 21st century”.

Will Donaldson suggests that all our social, political and technological problems connect to the same root cause – chronic lifestyle dysfunction – and then explores a solution based on Jesus’ teaching in the beatitudes.

Each chapter sets one of the beatitudes in its Biblical context, particularly as it relates to Isaiah 61, the Old Testament passage that Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth to

announce the arrival of the Messiah. In each chapter one beatitude is put alongside a current or historical character or context, before leading the reader into considering how that beatitude might apply in their own lives, to the benefit of the world. Chapters 8 & 9 lead us to reflect on Jesus' words of encouragement to his followers to be salt and light in the world. Each chapter ends with thoughtful, helpful questions, and suggestions for reflection alone, or within a small group. This would work well for a Lent group, taking two chapters each week.

Donaldson's writing is both informative and challenging: an opportunity for serious study and reflection. He provides a pithy guide to Christians who wish their faith in Jesus to make a difference, becoming the salt of the earth and the light of the world, a step at a time. It's not always a comfortable read, but practicing our faith in line with the beatitudes is always an uncomfortable, but hopefully creative, challenge towards building the church of the future.

Chapters include Silence and words, Silence beyond words, Silence of the quieted soul, Silence and becoming present, Silence and waiting, Silence and prophecy, Silence and God. Each chapter concludes with questions to ponder.

Felicity Bayne

A FRANCISCAN WAY OF LIFE: Brother Ramon's Quest for Holiness

Arthur Howells

Bible Reading Fellowship 2018 £8.99

ISBN 978-0-857-466-624

This tribute to Howells' great friend is in three parts: biography drawing on both his own memories and those of other close friends; a selection from letters; an anthology of key writings from Brother Ramon's books. All seek to answer: Why would a gregarious person, a gifted preacher and evangelist, embrace a hermit's solitary life? How could this exuberant, joyful personality set self aside to listen attentively to others?

A series of short chapters charts Ramon's outer journey, and show how the seeds of the future were sown, germinated and blossomed. He shares how key stages of Ramon's life - as student, conscience objector, Baptist minister - are significant in his decision to become an Anglican. The Eucharist became central to his relationship with Christ and he was finally called to join the Franciscan community, and become a hermit.

Howells describes the challenges and joys of Ramon's last illness and his belief in the great mystery of the life beyond.

Embracing a breadth of spiritual traditions, he softened bigotry and prejudice with tolerance and understanding.

Abstracts from Ramon's letters share insights with friends. We can observe his inner journey of discovery, transformation and transfiguration in which he sets his eyes firmly on Christ. The letters capture both the big picture and the tiny details of daily life. God infused his life, whether in the ministry of hitch hiking, or in his departing: "The last few months yielded a spiritual journey unknown before... the dimension of love and prayer is deepening still."

The anthology has four themes, with questions for personal reflection or group discussion: calling, prayer, solitude and living in the world. This book deepens our knowledge of this man, prompting us to reflect on the universal possibility of his experience of living and dying in the love of God. "Life stories may vary greatly, but all God's people are called to incarnate Christ in the world."

Ann Morris

SAY IT TO GOD: In Search of Prayer

Luigi Gioia;

Bloomsbury 2017 £5.96

ISBN 13-9781472941756

Described as "*a welcome and engrossing guide to any person wishing to enrich their spiritual reflection, both during the period of Lent and beyond*", this book amply fulfils its aim.

The books many short chapters lend themselves to Lenten or

Advent reading, but its reflections are not seasonal, so could be used at any time. It is not a book to be read in big chunks. While the language is accessible and concepts are presented clearly, the way thoughts and ideas are drawn out, developed and inter-woven creates a very rich texture. I needed time to reflect on each chapter before taking up the next thread and relating it to my own search for prayer.

The first chapters deal with the why, how and when of prayer. They give context for the heart of the book, an extended exploration of the *Our Father*, the Lord's Prayer. Gioia says:

"We might think that, through the Our Father, Jesus is simply teaching us what we should ask of God and how to ask it, so that we can be sure of being listened to. This is true but there is much more to it. Or rather it is true because there is more to it. All hinges on the relation between Jesus' own prayer and our prayer. What Jesus teaches us is how he himself prays."

This exploration of the Our Father is extensive and thought-provoking. Ranging widely across Jesus' teaching, it always links back to Gioia's core theme: our prayer fundamentally consists in being introduced into Jesus' own prayer.

The moves on to St Mark's Gospel, in which the text of the Our Father doesn't appear. Gioia explores this and traces how its themes are nevertheless expressed in this early gospel text. Again, he draws out and links ideas that develop further the main reflections on the Our Father.

The book's other striking feature is how it is threaded through with myriad Bible texts, and some from other sources. Most are short but are often linked together in ways that prompt a new train of thought or fresh insight.

Whatever the current stage of our prayer life, I am sure this book has something to offer us all.

Margaret Sheather

Prayer is 'the raising of the mind and heart to God'.

Laurence Freeman

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