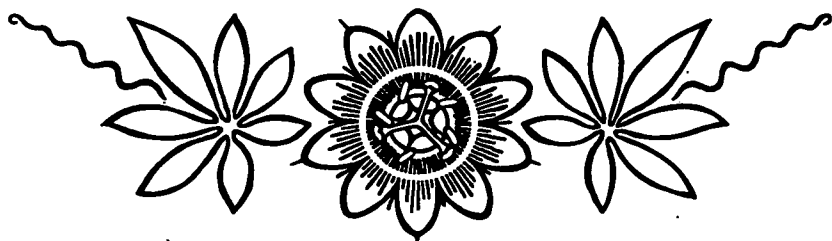


THE JULIAN MEETINGS

Magazine



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**God was in Christ
reconciling the world to
himself, no longer holding
people's misdeeds against
them, and has entrusted
us with the message of
reconciliation.**

2 Corinthians 5:19

Editorial

In this edition you will find a varied selection of articles, some of them concentrating on Stillness and Silence and also reflecting on Christmas, and the Incarnation. We hope that you will find help in finding tools to help you on your journey, and also some inspiration to encourage you as you are found by Christ stilling the waves of your life and the storms around and within you. The Julian Meetings Advisory Group pray that you may have the stillness which can come as Christ is born within us.

Francis Ballinger

Some Tools for Contemplation

Graham Johnson

I have just moved house and, in setting aside part of a small room as a "chapel", I realise that it is furnished with items that have helped me, over many years, along the contemplative path. Let me show you around.

On a coffee table stands an icon of the Transfiguration. As contemplatives we are overshadowed by "the bright cloud" (Matthew 17.5). Near the icon is a modern sculpting of the Annunciation, as Mary responds she is overshadowed by the angel. The sculptor adds the words: "who this one work has to do, let all God's glory through" (G. Manley Hopkins).

In front of the icon are a candle, a cross, and a star. I have used other Christian symbols – water, bread, wine, chalice, stone, crown, wedding ring – but return to these three. Such symbols are powerful images that focus the imagination, release the emotions and move us to action.

On the table, as well, are Christian Aid pictures of people whose courage has brought them great suffering in their work for justice for their communities. Here is the outward glory of the Lord nowadays and they need to be "listened to," (Matthew 17.5) for the Lord is justice and love. They show me that love in action is a lot messier than love in our dreams.

By now you will have gathered that it is a fairly large coffee table! Further, it contains the prayer leaflets of the Bishop and Diocese of Leicester and the Parish of Market Harborough, not because I am going to use the prayers in traditional intercession – that takes place at another time- but to remind me of what I am a part of and where the Lord has placed me. Lastly, a card from the Convent of the Holy Name in Derby, whose Sisters I know pray for me.

On the floor in front of the table is a mat and a prayer stool. The stool, which I made myself in 1965, has gone everywhere with me. It helps me both sit and kneel at the same time. I have never been able to master the art of sitting cross-legged on the floor. Nevertheless my body is one of the tools for contemplation and I find some yoga postures combined with necessary exercises for those with Parkinson 's disease, help settle me into the silence. If you look closely you will also see that as I kneel I pick up a stone. At this point I am reminded that I am linked with JM. I think Julian herself held a hazelnut when she prayed. I used to do the same but recently I have been given a pebble taken many years ago from the Sea of Galilee which had been used daily by a faithful woman in her prayers. When she died the pebble was given to me. Holding something does help in settling body and mind. I don't know why. I do know that without my realising it the pebble is very hot when the kitchen timer rings to bring my time of contemplation to an end.

Yes, on the shelf behind me there is a kitchen timer which I set when I first come into the "chapel". It does not tick out loud and it is put behind me so that I am not continually looking to see how long I still have to go! But also behind me is an icon of the Trinity. It may seem odd, and I am sure iconographers would disapprove, but I have always felt the presence of God behind me. When St John has his great vision in the Book of Revelation the voice of God comes from behind him (Revelation 1.10) and St Patrick's Breastplate Prayer surrounds us back and front with the presence of God.

Now from the visible I must reveal to you things invisible! I know that this journey in contemplation is full of distractions. It helps to have a phrase or mantra that can be repeated, first to give the mind something to occupy it and at other times to recall me to the business at hand when I have gone off following some wild distraction! Many people have their own special mantra, I have seven! Each one related to the daily prayer theme from "Celebrating Common Prayer". By now you will think that this is becoming like an obstacle course! As I write it does seem so, but in reality it is part of a pattern, and one that has been shared by Christian contemplatives down the ages. The one tool I find uniting them is an invisible sixth sense which is the imagination. Not for them the thought that contemplation was the flight of the alone to the Alone, or even that their time of contemplation was something additional to their other religious experiences or to life itself. Their imagination showed them what they were and what was happening to them - that they were baptised into the glory that was the Holy Trinity working in and through and with them, that they were never alone but always surrounded by a great

cloud of witnesses - both alive and seeking for justice nowadays and those departed from this world encouraging those of us now to both enjoy and work for the further glory of God. I can well understand Michael Ramsey, who being shown as an adult the font in the village church at Horbling where he had been baptised as a child, was moved to tears recalling the moment when he had been plunged into the death and resurrection of Jesus and been made of partaker of his glory..

Michael Ramsey is also well know for saying that in daily spending thirty minutes in silence he might only achieve two or three minutes of true contemplation.. The great St Teresa, too, would advise her sisters that when even the seemingly simple command to "look" at the crucifix in front of them was overwhelmed by distraction that they should have a book by their side to read them back into the desire to be with their Lord.

When all is said and done it is this desire that is the main tool for contemplation – God’s desire for us and our desire to be caught up in the glory of the Trinity. No matter whether my time of contemplation has been verging on the ecstatic or a constant fight against distraction, it is the yearning of a generous heart that makes us want to return again and again, to set the kitchen timer, light the candle, sit on the prayer stool and take hold of the pebble.



A Christmas Meditation

Chrissie Rapsey

*When peaceful silence lay over all
And night was in the midst of her swift course
From your royal throne, O God,
Down from the heavens leapt your almighty word.*

*And is it true? And is it true?
This most tremendous tale of all
Seen in a stained glass window's hue
A baby in an ox's stall
The maker of the stars and sea
Become a child on earth for me?*

Every birth is truly a miracle and to cradle a new born baby is a special experience.

Birth is an incoming, for at birth we leave the world of darkness and the safety of the womb and arrive on the shore of this world. We are exposed and vulnerable, but it is the beginning of much potential for we are all made in the likeness of God. How we grow and develop will reflect that.

This 'incoming' was symbolic for women of the Hebrides. The midwife liked the child to be born if possible on an incoming tide. As soon as they were able they would go to the shore and dip the child in an incoming tide expressing the simple desire that his or her life would freely flow.

Life in fact is part of a rhythm which is flowing and changing. Throughout we will again and again be offered new experiences, new chances for change and renewal. At these times there is always the coming of the great other, not just in the birth at Bethlehem, for God is ever coming to our lives.

As the incoming tide marks the beginning of things we must try to keep an openness and freshness to these experiences of God in our lives. Sometimes we feel God's presence in a place or situation - some people call this a 'thin place'.

And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising: it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight and going into the house they saw the child - a thin place.

However change often brings challenge. It marks the end of an old order and the beginning of something new. We feel exposed and vulnerable: it is an intimate time when like a new born child we need protection.

*On God alone my soul in stillness waits.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
My stronghold so that I may never be shaken .*

The 'God with us' - the baby in the crib - was in time to experience many changes in his life. He knew loneliness and trust, struggle and hope, joy and sorrow, Gethsemane and crucifixion, but all of this was followed by resurrection. So too in our lives we encounter the leaping off points, resurrection moments when we are being made new and faith is energising.

And so let us follow the star that leads us to the Christ child;

Lead me Lord

*In the paths of peacefulness
In the roads of righteousness
In the ways of willingness.*

Lead me Lord

*Down the tracks of thoughtfulness
In the streets of sensitiveness
By the journey of joyfulness
That I too may worship the babe of Bethlehem*

Amen

As in the last edition the illustrations in this magazine, apart from the Anne Stamper's 'Incarnation', and Sarah Salisbury's Meeting come from The Pilgrim's Progress, retold in Modern English by Jean Eatson from the original story by John Bunyan, illustrated by Peter Wane, Scripture Union, used by permission of the Scripture Union.

24-7 Prayer comes to Warminster

Judith Duddy

*Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18a*

Christ Church Warminster hosted a 24-7 week of prayer in October. But what is 24-7 you might ask?

It's an international prayer movement that was started in the UK in 1999 by a group of young people who wanted to pray continually for a month, and is based on the fact that bold, persistent prayer is effective. Churches all over the world are becoming involved, whether large or small – and it takes just 24 people to pray for an hour a day for a week, to achieve 7 days of continual prayer! Take a look at www.24-7prayer.com for an idea of just how extensive this phenomenon has become.

Prayer can take many forms, and at Christ Church visitors were able to pray alone or in groups in any of 8 different prayer zones set up around the worship area. These included World Mission – with anecdotes, hands-on activities and literature from Tearfund and the persecuted church – stark facts on Justice and Politics, art and craft areas for children and youth, and a relaxing area for intimacy with God, with displays and soft furnishings to stimulate the senses - flowers, herbs, fruit, spices and musical instruments, interspersed with verses from scripture. By the end of the week, the church was filled with varied expressions of prayer, in paintings, Plasticine, poems, crafts and multi-coloured Post-its.

People signed up for hour-long slots during the week, and individuals and families came to pray at all hours of the day and night. Many prayed, and then signed up to come back later. Prayer was silent, vocalized, expressed in music, movement or art, and there were also times of led prayer for small groups. There was even a youth sleepover, with an intensity of prayer and worship that set a bench-mark for others!

The local Julian Meeting gathered one afternoon during the week or an hour of contemplation, readings and music, followed by a time of fellowship with tea and biscuits. The Warminster Julian Meeting has been active for about 3 years, and is a small group with representation from a number of different churches and denominations in the locality. And what was the result? For many, an enlivening and rediscovery of the centrality of prayer for life, as well as a new passion to pray and act in God's mission to the world.

Sacramental Living

Whether we think of or speak to, God, whether we act or suffer for him, all is prayer, when we have no other object than his love and the desire of pleasing him. All that a Christian does, even in eating and sleeping, is prayer when it is done in simplicity, according to the order of God...In souls filled with love, the desire to please God is a continual prayer. (John Wesley – a Plain Account of Christian Living)

What does it mean to pray 24-7? It means living our whole lives, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, in the grateful awareness of God's presence and with a desire to please him always. Prayer is not just about the contemplative moments or the moments when I'm consciously firing words at God. The call to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) is a call to remember Christ's presence continually in the subconscious as well as the conscious realms of my life. But how am I to do this? How am I to keep Christ in my subconscious, in my reflex actions, even when I'm sleeping or working or watching a movie? How am I to be Christian by default as well as determination?

The key is to maintain a rhythm, a heartbeat of disciplined prayer, in which I encounter Christ regularly, deliberately and consciously. The spin-off of these times, as you will see in the character of any older person who has spent a great deal of their life contemplating Jesus, is that his presence thereby moves by a process of osmosis from the conscious into the subconscious mind. As we open the door again and again to Christ, he comes in day by day and eats with us, laughs with us and shares with us until we acquire his mannerisms and know his very thoughts. A season of 24-7 prayer can be useful tool for bringing Christ consciously back into the midst of our ongoing lives as individuals and as communities. And prayer rooms are an interesting expression of God's intention, which has always been to walk in continual communion with his people.

But just as no person could or should spend every waking moment in a 24-7 prayer room, so we must understand that the prayer room is an expression of the continual communion between God and his people, but it is not the same thing. The ultimate 24-7 prayer room is the human heart fully surrendered to God and not a room full of coffee mugs and hand drawn pictures.

What we want to do, in Wesley's words, is live lives of prayer' as 'souls filled with love and the desire to please God'. So the prayer room or the place of prayer creates the moment of conscious disciplined prayer that then allows me to live prayerfully in front of my VDU screen, or while teaching an 18-year-old to drive or working on a checkout or whatever job I do. We don't want to withdraw people from society to lives in spiritual bubbles of perpetual prayer; rather we want to immerse ourselves in society, having immersed ourselves in the Spirit – in the world and yet full of God and overflowing.

From: Red Moon Rising, by Pete Greig and Dave Roberts, Kingsway Communications (Survivor), 2004. (pp 228-9)

Red Moon Rising is the story of 24-7 Prayer



The fruits of Julian Meetings

Angela Fisher

I have recently had the unfortunate experience of falling and breaking my hip and spending two weeks in hospital where I received exemplary care and attention. The difficult part was being in a six bedded ward where three of the other patients had mental disorders, -- dementia, Alzheimer's, and mental handicap.

This resulted in constant calling out, repetition and a running commentary on all proceedings throughout the day and sometimes the night. At first I found it hard to bear until I recalled my quiet centre, where God is, acquired after years of attending a Julian meetings and meditating daily, and the prayers of my friends. I am sure that helped me through.

Sometimes we may query what we are doing when we meditate, but its fruits are there in times of difficulty and stress...

It is not a nice experience breaking one's hip, but it seems there is gold to be found in the darkest places!

The Celtic Wheel of the Year by Tess Ward

Opening Out

O Divine One, whose sole purpose is love,
tune my attention to a simple mindfulness
and let the distractions fall away,
that I might walk this day with thankfulness for every step.
Be with each of us when we become overwhelmed
by our own making or because of our situation
or we cannot tell the difference.
Give us faith that the unfolding of your love each day is the goal of the
journey.

Thanksgiving

As I end this day in your safe-keeping
I count three blessings before my sleeping . . .

Night Shielding

O Sacred Mystery,
let me surrender my need to know this night.
Gratitude when I trust you enough to have no answers.
Gratitude when I allow the work to teach the work
and not seek the end before I have started.
Be with all who are on my mind as I take my rest this night.
Give us the grace to feel that however far-off our dreams,
today it was good to be alive.
Sacred Mystery enfold me in this present moment
as I close my eyes to sleep this night.

Blessing

May the blessing of God be upon my head
with warm "well-done. I delight in you".
As I continue on my quest,
may I not be haunted by my unlived life
but blessed by you, the goodness of other people
and your world, that takes my breath away,
and shows me my place in the universe.

Excerpt from a Saturday in March - Living the Questions

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See page 27 for a review of this book

Silent night ?

Francis Ballinger

One of my favourite carols is "*Silent Night*", and I'm aware quite a number of the words which we sing at Christmas reflect more of a writer's devotion than of the scenes on that night, as well as having meanings affected by translation. I have difficulty recognising the silence that many popular hymns and carols referred to... "*O little town of Bethlehem house still we see thee lie*" ...

The Christmas scene as we know it is first recorded in the life of St Francis by Bonaventure: "*It happened in the third year before his death, (1223) that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis ... Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King...*"

While some carols seemed to emphasise items such as social control (*Christian children all should be mild, obedient, good as he*), others point to the call to recognize some of the extraordinariness of the Christmas event (*We three Kings*). In a season where the emphasis is on the nearness of God some carols bring home our distance from and difference to God (*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand. Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.*)

So we come back to the idea of a still and silent Christmas, filled with awe, but at the same time hear of the ordinariness of the birth .. (*Away in a manger no crib for a bed*) yet even in such a scene comes the extraordinary (*the cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes,*)

In most of our carols we find highlighted the two aspects of God, God's nearness (immanence) and God's difference (transcendence) often overlaid by social perspectives reflecting the surroundings of the carols authors. If we were to try to write a Carol for today, I wonder what aspects of our society and thinking we might put into the scene: how we can show that around us is the birth of Christ -- Emmanuel, "God with us."

A few years ago I tried unsuccessfully to think about how I would paint a picture of the scene of Jesus's birth: would it need blue to show Mary?: after a birth wouldn't she be lying down? What, if any, animals would be there? How to portray Jesus -- would it be with light coming from him, or where he was lying -- should reference be made to many traditional paintings by painting a halo? Who would be there, presumably Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Shepherd's, Magi (again how to portray them). Presumably I should also try to include something that portrays a very busy inn, and stable, a hive of activity?

So again I try to think about where are my images of Christmas come from. Certainly not from the Gospels of John or Mark, but from Matthew (1:18 - 2:12) and Luke (2:1 - 20), and from our creeds and liturgy

The Nicene Creed says:

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.*

While the Apostles Creed says:

*And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary*

And in the (almost incomprehensible) Athanasian Creed:

*Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also
believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess,
that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;
and Man of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;
Perfect God and perfect Man,
of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.*

Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; Who, although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ;

Suddenly I find myself at the Eucharist, responding to "The Lord is Here" with "His presence is with us", then sharing the Peace where I recognise the Presence of Christ amongst the people I am with, and with all I can not physically be with. So I am drawn to giving thanks as I realise that worshipers everywhere, and indeed in our whole world, see, hear, taste, touch, smell that the Word is made flesh and dwells (puts up his human tent) amongst us. So I am in awe, and forced to stillness and silence as I contemplate the Love of God, God with us.

In 'Feast for Advent' Delia Smith writes about how the busyness of Advent detracted from a full understanding of and participation in the preparations for the birth of Christ. Can we find ways of taking the stillness and silence that we hopefully find in Julian Meetings into not only our times set aside for meeting with God but also our times of activity? Is our faith about carrying an inner stillness into all our activities, or is that simply a Buddhist concept? Is it like the Bible, full of stories where faith, hope and love overcome chaos and despair?

p.s. In our services and hymns should we be using a past tense about the Presence of Christ or a present tense, reflecting how we see Christ born now?

Epilogue to the article "press the pause button".

Joan Wilton

I have a friend whose little boy said to her one day "Mummy will you play with me?"

"No darling," she said "I'm too tired at the moment, I must have a pause".

He looked at her and said, "Timmy has paws too!"

Silence without stillness

Deidre Morris

JM emphasises waiting on God in silence and stillness. But there are times when stillness can be a problem – we need something to occupy our hands and free us to focus our prayers and be open to God.

This year I went to a short workshop on 'Weaving Prayers'. I had no idea what this would be, but enjoy handicrafts so was interested to find out. Weaving prayers, I found, can be done in a variety of ways. The facilitator provided embroidery hoops; square wooden frames; heavy soft cotton 'string'; wools of different weights and colours; ribbons in varying widths and colours; bodkins and needles; scissors; brief instructions and three prayers – two for use like a rhythmic mantra while weaving, the other an inspirational piece.

The square frames could be used as any weaving frame. Set up the vertical warp threads – perhaps in colours, thickness, spacing that represent elements of our own life and / or spiritual journey. The horizontal weft threads which are woven through the warp can represent God / Christ / Spirit / light as they interweave into our life. As the weaving grows we may see, in the patterns of colours and threads we choose, how God is at work in our lives, and how the threads are stronger as they intertwine and support each other.

The facilitator had a large square frame on which she had created a wonderful cross, weaving ribbons of differing widths and colours. It was an inspiration for many of us. The circular frames could be used in various ways: plain warp thread could be worked all round the frame, crossing it continually to create a 'spokes of a wheel' effect. Colours could then be woven into this, with the threads nearest the centre being for more personal areas of prayer, widening out to community and world concerns. Again, the colour and type of thread, and the spacing of the woven threads, could reveal hidden patterns in our journey.

One person had tied a narrow strip of warp threads across the frame and was weaving through these to create a prayer 'ribbon'.

Another person created a trinity effect by making three of these 'ribbons' which were together at the top of the frame but splayed out as they crossed it.

I put warp threads covering over a third of the frame on one side, and less than a quarter of the frame opposite these. The warps were woven together in the centre with gold. It felt as though my small prayers were joined to the wider prayers of the world, but all centred on and passing through God.

While weaving, which is a rhythmic activity, you can use some weaving prayers (there are some in David Adam's books) out loud, or in your head. Or you can focus on those you wish to pray for. Or you can just be open to God's presence with you, and what he might reveal in the weaving.

Warp and Weft

Kate Compston.

Peace is like gossamer -
vulnerable, yet indestructible:
tear it, and it will be rewoven.

Peace does not despair.

Begin to weave a web of peace:
start in the centre
and make peace with yourself
and your God.

Take the threads outwards
and build peace within your family,
your community
- and in the circle of those you find it hard to like.

Then stretch your concern
into all the world.

Weave a web of peace
and do not despair.

Love is the warp in the fabric of life:
truth is the weft:
care and integrity together -
vulnerable,
but ultimately indestructible.

Together,
they spell
peace ...

The work of The Prison Phoenix Trust

Thank you for inviting us to talk about our work in your inspiring magazine. Over the past 19 years, since The Prison Phoenix Trust was founded as a national Oxford-based charity, many members of Julian Meetings all over the country have sent us financial support. Their kindness is appreciated, especially since it originates from a source we too hold dear – that of silent prayer.

If you have never heard of the Trust, may I explain a little of how we work – mostly in two ways to encourage prisoners in their spiritual lives? The PPT encourages inmates to practise the disciplines of meditation and yoga, silence and the breath, each day in their cells. It is always the inmates who make the initial contact, having heard about the Trust through word of mouth, or an advertisement in the prisoners' newspaper. They usually write asking for help in dealing with stress, anger, sleeplessness or depression in the hope of gaining some relief.

Our team of specially-trained volunteers answers these letters with warmth and friendliness, offering regular support in the disciplines the PPT suggests. They enclose resource books which are written to help inmates practise on their own, some of which are specially for people with basic literacy levels.

The second part of the PPT's work is to establish and maintain prison yoga and meditation classes all over the UK and Eire. We find and train qualified yoga teachers for prison work and support them in their challenging work. Currently there are 154 prison classes each week for young offenders, women and men; 30 of these classes are for prison staff and officers.

Recently, a Catholic prisoner sent us an article printed in The Universe which warns readers against yoga "as it is Hindu pagan worship". Although yoga is taught these days in hospitals, surgeries, health centres, gyms and adult education classes, there is still a lot of misunderstanding about it. It is not Hindu pagan worship!

Most qualified teachers regard yoga and meditation as a practice to heal mental and physical tension, lessen anger and foster a greater appreciation for life. When people pause to focus each day on silence and the breath, they become calmer, sleep better and act more responsibly.

In prison, we work with people from all religions and of none. There is no doubt that the practise of silence deepens a person's faith, and often leads those who feel wounded by their religion in some way, to reconnect with it in a more open way.

A misconception about our work is that we only recommend an Eastern form of meditation. Meditating in silence is universal and springs from the heart of our Christianity. My heart waits in silence for God (Ps 62.1,5) and Be silent before the Lord (Zeph. 1.7). Desert fathers like Saints Anthony and Benedict sat as hermits in silence for many years and both founded monasticism in their different ways.

A former PPT director was also a Catholic nun who when she was on mission in Japan, spent 20 years learning the meditation of silence. In the Philippines, she was invited by the Catholic Church to open a hall for the prayer of silent meditation by the Cardinal in Manila.

As a Christian yoga teacher in the morning I sit in silence, allowing the mind to settle and receive the deep quiet at our eternal core for half an hour. Then I read a Christian daily text and spend another period contemplating that. Both forms of meditation are deeply nourishing in their different ways.

We recognise something fundamental about silent meditation and its gift to imprisoned people whether they are behind bars or not. First, it is therapeutic. The practitioner doesn't try to attain anything, or be "better". He, or she, simply lets go and receives, in full surrender to God. In this way with regular practice, meditators are able to shed the things which imprison them and prevent them from being and acting as the person they truly are.

Secondly, silent prayer is a safe practice. In a prison arena, which is full of people with bizarre fantasies, fundamentalist ideas, and mental health problems, this is important. It is a kind and respectful form of meditation which, as a prisoner once told us, is "hard but it's simple."

The regular practice of silence helps people find something in themselves that they can like. At the same time while they are focussing on breathing in and breathing out, they forget themselves and wake up to the world around them. It seems at first like a paradox, but they are both the same thing. It is this awakening into the world of no separation which is at the heart of our being, where there is no north and south, no prisons and no lack of prisons and definitely, no east and west!

When visiting Autun in Burgundy this summer I saw a lovely little fifteenth century statue, "Vierge Bulliot", so tender and homely. It is carved in wood and painted and is in stark contrast to some of the statues of the Virgin and child when the child looks about 6 months old!

This is my drawing of it . It was this figure that spoke to me of something of the incarnation

Incarnation

God in the ordinary

God in the small and vulnerable

God in the caring and nurturing

God in the simple tasks of life

God in our midst

God in the quiet

of the baby sleeping

Anne Stamper



Julian Meeting on ITV

Sarah Salisbury

On 9th September 2007 the Julian Meeting, which usually takes place at my home in Lymington on the south coast in Hampshire, was featured in the ITV in the series 'Vicars' Wives'. My name is Sarah Salisbury, and I was one of the three wives of clergy in the Diocese of Winchester who was filmed over a four month period for the series. The series showed various aspects of my life from events I was involved in at church, our family and my paid job, to my spirituality studies at Sarum College in Salisbury, spiritual direction and mostly importantly of course my enthusiasm for Julian Meetings.

Cameraman Joe Payne joined our group one afternoon to film the meeting. Everyone was of course pre-warned that the cameras would be there and we even had a new couple that evening as well who coped extremely well. By this stage several of the members of the group had been involved in the filming around the parish already and I was certainly more comfortable with it by then. We were all keen to share this wonderful form of prayer with the wider TV audience.

Members were filmed arriving at my home, together with my explanation of the nature of a Julian Meeting. The welcome and entry into silence were filmed along with a few minutes of silent prayer. At that point Joe put down his camera, and he joined us as I led the introduction once more so that members could relax more deeply into the silence, without the thought of the camera whirring.

As I found with all the filming, hours of camera work had to be edited down to just a few minutes, but we were pleased with the end result and felt it did catch the atmosphere well. Sadly the ITV religious broadcasting slot was quite late on that Sunday evening, so the audience would have been limited. I did not know the details of when it would be televised in time to let you know in the previous magazine, but I was asked to write this article. If anyone did catch the programme, I would be interested to know what you thought.

Please send comments to Sarah Salisbury [sarah@salisburys.net]



The drawing above comes from a photo taken at the time, turned into a line drawing

H.V.Coleman

"Come now, little man, turn aside for a while from your daily employment, escape for a moment from the weight of your thoughts. Put aside your weighty cares, let your burdensome distractions wait, free yourself awhile for God and rest awhile in him. Enter the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything except God and that which can help you in seeking him, and when you have shut the door, seek him. Now my whole heart, say to God, 'I seek your face'."

This is the opening of St. Anselm's Proslogion (ed. M. J. Charlesworth, Oxford. 1965) and is quoted in Eamon Duffy's 'Marking the Hours' Yale. 2006.

Seeking the Sabbath

David Shepherd

brf 2007 £6.99.

ISBN 1 84101 536 9

This book is a personal attempt to seek the Sabbath in a contemporary setting. David Shepherd is trying to recapture the Sabbaths of his childhood which he feels he has lost. We may not have known childhood Sabbaths and therefore we are unaware of the sense of loss.

But perhaps we can identify with the author in the problems surrounding the Sabbath as we try to keep it in a hectic, action-packed life.

This book takes us through some of the problems faced by David Shepherd as together with a young baby and wife, as well as a responsible career and a commitment to Sunday worship and teaching, he tries to recapture his childhood Sabbaths.

The stresses of modern living can make it difficult to find the Sabbath but for our mental, physical and spiritual development it is an important area of our journey.

David Shepherd is a Biblical scholar and knows the background of this important commandment. As he tries to re-introduce it into his life he finds it difficult yet not impossible. It is possible to understand this commandment as a real beatitude – a blessing from God. His gift to us in our busy contemporary society.

David Shepherd discovers that Sabbath is not a morbid negative commandment but an opportunity to share time with friends and family. To offer hospitality and to make time for visiting the sick or to walk through the beauty of God's creation. The author realises he receives many gifts as he keeps his Sabbath rest. It becomes time for re-creation.

This is a personal journey and although the author is a biblical scholar there is little reflection on the history or theological reasons for the Sabbath. This book is easy to read, each chapter is complete in itself, it is the kind of book to take on holiday. Perhaps by reading about the Sabbath we may be helped to discover it for ourselves.

Caroline Wareham

Strangely Orthodox: R.S.Thomas and his poetry of faith.

Barry Morgan:

Gomer £7.99 2006

ISBN 1-84323-682-6

I came upon this book in a Welsh Tourist office when on holiday on Anglesey in September. Not as strange as one might think for the Welsh are a poetic nation.

I am a great admirer of the poetry of R.S.Thomas. For me it has a stark, austere beauty that always provokes both thought and a new awareness of words and of natural beauty. Some may find his work disturbing and full of doubt. But I guess I am one who has to have a God that I can doubt. It is a feature of my spiritual journey.

This short book by the Archbishop of Wales arose out of a quiet day spent among clergy of the Llandaff diocese at Ty Mawr Convent, Monmouth. The preface accurately explains its intention:

"The strength of his poetry for me was his sheer honesty in facing some of the difficulties that believing in God entails... I have turned to his poetry for both illumination and sustenance... This book is meant merely to give a sketch of the main religious themes of his poetry as I see them."

I have found the explanations, discussion and insights most helpful in understanding the poetry but also value the book as a rich vein for meditation.

Janet Robinson



Praying with Paul

Tom Smail

BRF 2007 £6.99.

ISBN 1-84101-495-8

In his introduction to this book, Tom Smail quotes Bishop Lightfoot of Durham, a 19th. century scholar who revelled in the writings of St.Paul, who felt he returned home every time he came back to study him. Tom Smail suggests this is something to do with the Northern Sharp air and the jagged peaks and rugged landscapes of Northern Britain. As a Northern lass I have never felt an affinity with Paul but that is about my gender rather than about my home landscape!

I agree that Paul is often daunting and there is always hidden treasure waiting to be discovered. Tom Smail has certainly discovered a great deal of treasure as he is Praying with Paul.

He finds Paul's relationship with God is rooted in the Trinity; beginning with Abba Father to the Person of Christ, Crucified and Risen; and through to the Holy Spirit who prays with and through us. We are shown clearly from scripture why the Church believes in a Triune God and Paul is praying at the heart of that belief.

This is an amazing book; profound yet pastoral, prayerful yet practical. The author has shown us a development of Paul at prayer which we can so easily overlook. For we are all so hung up on the dynamic once- and-for all conversion of the man. But the way of prayer is often slow, it is a deepening of a relationship and in this book we are taken through that relationship.

This book is a clear exposition of scripture and Tom Smail uses the Gospels to bring to life familiar passages of Paul's letters. This book reveals the gentleness of a man who is often depicted as harsh.

Overlooking all of the letters is the communities to whom they are written so the author shows us Paul's understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ and even gives us practical help for leading intercessions during the liturgy. Anyone who takes their prayer life seriously should read this book. Even my prejudices of the misogyny within Paul's letters have faded into the background.

Praise be to God.

(and thank you, Tom Smail)

Caroline Wareham

The Selfless Way of Christ

Henri Nouwen

D.L.T. 2007 £8.95

ISBN 10-232-52 707-5

Subtitled '*Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life*' this is a series of short reflections on how we become more Christ-like, and deal with the things that tempt us away from it, the lure of success, power, of being needed and important. In the conclusion, on page 91, Nouwen writes : '*vocation temptation and formation have been that free call words in these reflections on the intimate relationship between ministry and the spiritual life... challenged to subject ourselves spiritual disciplines in order to gradually conform is one to the image of our lord Jesus Christ*'.

Originally serialised in the Sojourners magazine, and with masterful illustrations by Vincent van Gogh, the foreword truly summarises the content of this book: "*more than a decade after Nouwen's death, his words continue to challenge and enlighten. They still serve to shake us from the values of a world obsessed with image, power, and prestige -- not for the sake of grim "self-denial", so that we might discover, as Nouwen increasingly did, the Geordie and freedom of true life in Christ.*"

As with all Nouwen's works, it could be either a lead-in to the corporate silence of a Julian Meeting, or the subject of personal reflection or a retreat: however used it should only be missed if you are happy with life as it is, unchallenged by Christ.

Francis Ballinger

Into God's Presence: listening to God through prayer and meditation

Liz Babbs

Zondervan, 2005, Hardback £7.99 ISBN 0310252407

This is a practical and straightforward book. I picked it up with interest, having read the author's *Out of the Depths* and *The Restful Heart* (reviewed December 2006). The opening chapters deal with various reasons for meditating, then having paved the way there is an introduction to meditation itself. Some of the suggestions for stilling, breathing, a good physical setting will be familiar, but Liz also tackles 'If you can worry, you can meditate' and openly shares

much of her own experience of burnout and stress and how she learned to let go of being 'Miss Multi-Capable- Independent Person'. Her emphasis is on incorporating meditation into your life throughout the day, rather than a 'once a month marathon' and she shows many and varied ways to approach this e.g. a workplace meditation, or if you can't sleep. There are plenty of scripture suggestions. Later chapters cover 'How does meditation or contemplative prayer in a group work', and 'Leading a meditation for the first time' as well as suggestions for keeping spiritually fit.

Gail Ballinger

Brokenness and Blessing: towards a Biblical spirituality

Frances M. Young

D.L.T. 2007 £10.95

ISBN 0-232-52656-7

This is a scholarly book which first appeared as the 2004 Theological Lectures at Sarum College where Frances Young is Honorary Fellow. She seeks a renewal of biblical spirituality through the teaching of the earliest theologians of Christianity dating from the 2nd century to the early medieval period, exploring how, by examining the spiritual meaning of the text. they might enable us to follow a similar approach and also reflect on contemporary applications to current global issues.

Each chapter begins with a hymn related to a theme such as the Desert Experience, Wrestling Jacob, and the Way of Jesus and invites the reader to re-engage with a reading of the bible which recovers a sense of the spiritual meaning of the text just as much as the literal or historic meaning. She states that "A Biblical spirituality necessitates openness, receptivity and mutuality, not patronising "do-gooding" backed up by the reassurance that we are right."

Well known in the field of patristics and biblical studies, Frances Young combines scholarship with a spirituality which offers a realistic view of the human condition. The author shares her own spiritual journey and the experience of caring for her son with profound learning disabilities.

In sharing her own life experience she is not seeking simple answers from bible study but rather a way of interpreting God's interaction with us in the world, accepting "the utter transcendence and incomprehensibility of God". Somehow bible study will never be quite the same.

Yvonne Walker

Bread of Heaven: a Christian companion

Edited by Susan Hibbins

Inspire, 2007, £9.99

ISBN 978-905958-16-0

The 2008 edition of a Christian Companion considers the ways we pray for our daily bread and are fed and sustained by God –both physically and spiritually. Following the pattern of earlier years, contributors share both their own thoughts and a series of quotations which have inspired them and link to their theme. They include thoughts on the Eucharist as ‘a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all mankind’ as well as a memorial, on spiritual hunger, global hunger, bread in the Exodus story. Contributors come from different denominations and traditions though as we might expect there is a significant Methodist input.

There is much here to inspire and reflect on and sustain us throughout the coming year.

Gail Ballinger

The Celtic Wheel of the Year – Celtic and Christian Seasonal Prayers

Tess Ward

O Books (John Hunt Publishing) 2007 £11.99 ISBN 978-1-905047-95-6

This book offers a pattern for daily prayer drawing on the two strands of Christian and Celtic tradition, taking us through the rhythm of the seasons in a refreshing and deeply spiritual way.

Divided into monthly sections, it combines the Christian seasons with the seasons of the Solstices and Equinoxes. A week of daily prayer is offered for each month with well researched introductions to each section covering the historic and current way we celebrate the festivals of each season with relevant biblical and spiritual references. These themes are taken up in the prayers for the week which are meditational in style.

There is a daily invitation to silent prayer with the words “Be still in the silence and aware of the Love with and within...” This book offers an original and inspiring pattern for daily prayer which reconnects with the awareness of God in all things. Although intended for personal devotions, this book offers some refreshing lead-ins to silent prayer and provides a valuable resource for those leading Quiet days or retreats on a Celtic theme.

Yvonne Walker

DVD

A Journey into Prayer : Prayerful meditations :

*Images by Sr Mary Stephen CRSS, Text by Sr Petra Boex OSB
McCrimmons 2006 £16.98 ISBN 5 039126 100396*

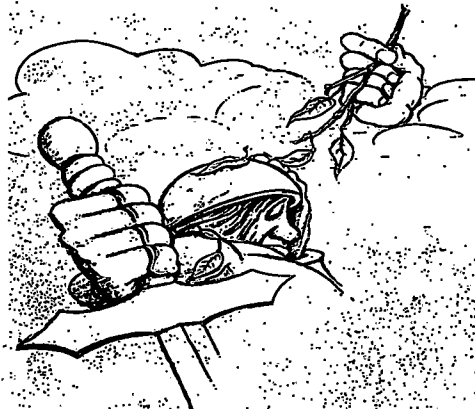
A Journey to the Cross : Prayerful meditations

*Images by the Benedictine Sisters of Turvey Abbey,
Meditations by Maureen Pamphilon, Oblate
McCrimmons 2006 £16.98 ISBN 5 039126 100313*

Many of us will be familiar with the posters that McCrimmons produce. Two series are now available with text in these DVD's, and could be used either as a sequence of meditations, or individually selected meditations from any of the 16 on A Journey into prayer, or 18 in A Journey to the Cross. While one DVD would be excellent as an introduction to meditative prayer to either a congregation, or small group or for personal prayer and reflection, while the other has the 16 Stations of the Cross, with readings and reflections, that would be the basis of a Good Friday service/meditation or for individual reflection.

Each of these two DVDs can be used as spoken text and accompanying music, displayed text with image and accompanying music, or spoken and displayed text and accompanying music.

Francis Ballinger



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 ISBN and price.

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by

10 February 2008

Contributions by email are particularly welcome.



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