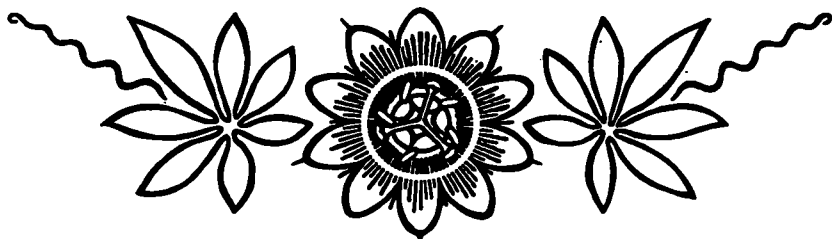


THE JULIAN MEETINGS

Magazine



December 2006

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**A Cloth of Delicate Gold,
by Dorothy Walters (1928 -)**

***You may think
that first lit flame
was the ultimate blaze,
the holy fire
entered at last.***

***What do you know of furnaces?
This is a sun that returns
again and again, refining, igniting,
pouring your spirit
through a cloth of delicate gold
until all dross is taken
and you are sweet as
clarified butter
in God's mouth.***

***From www.poetry-Chaikana.com
- Chosen by Hilary Wakeman***

Editorial

In this edition we mark the retirement of Hilary Wakeman, our founder and unfailing guide from the Advisory Group, and note that the editor of this Magazine takes on her international mantle, except that it is hoped that enquiries from countries which have already local contacts can be referred to those contacts.

Our lead article is an appreciation of the works of the Abbé de Tourville, available in the U.K. comparing some from Letters of Direction, with others from Streams of Grace, which is currently being reprinted.

We are thankful to Anne Stamper for her article and illustrations centring on the Jesus Prayer..

Changes in the UK Postal Rate mean that there can now be more material in this magazine. Please take the opportunity to forward material for inclusion.

Hilary Wakeman – Farewell appreciation

Yvonne Walker

After a life time of involvement with the Julian Meetings Hilary is stepping down from the Advisory Group at the end of the year. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work alongside Hilary over many of those years. She had a vision in 1973 of offering silent prayer to groups of people seeking God and her faithfulness to this vision for more than thirty years has been remarkable.

Hilary has remained steadfast in believing in the God-centredness of the Julian Meetings and in the work of the Holy Spirit rather than in teaching systems of prayer, the leadership of gurus or central control exerted by the Advisory Group. We thank God for Hilary's wisdom in believing passionately in J.M. being ecumenical and non prescriptive, and in allowing it to grow organically in response to a felt need. Those who have served their time with Hilary on the Advisory Group will remember with thanks that there was much laughter among the consensus decision-making and shared responsibility.

We all look back with gratitude to all that Hilary has contributed in so many ways and wish her God's blessing on the ventures she undertakes in the years ahead.

A Farewell

Hilary

When the Julian Meetings celebrated their tenth anniversary, in 1983, I wrote in our magazine that I hoped we wouldn't reach our twentieth. What I meant was that I hoped that long before that time, contemplative prayer would have become such a normal part of all our churches that there would be no need for a special organisation making it available in communal groups. But we did reach our twentieth. And then, three years ago, our thirtieth. And still there seems a need for JM.

In the early years of the movement, in 1981, we arranged a 'Liaison Day' of all the organisations that were concerned with Christian meditation or contemplative prayer. There were representatives of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer (formed in 1946), the Servants of Christ the King (1943), the Fellowship of Meditation (1930's), and the Fellowship of the Hidden Life (1910). We were the new kids on the block. I think we felt very young and fresh and free, and that the older organisations were like elderly aunts and uncles, set in their ways and slightly tired. But now JM too has become the older generation.

But age has plenty to offer. The wisdom of experience, yes, but also perhaps a serenity that can offer peacefulness and calmness in a hectic world. Availability, in and among our churches: it still seems ideal that anyone who wants a Julian Meeting would be able to find one fairly near to home. And above all, the sort of God-centredness that is rarely possible in young- and mid-life, a God-centredness that is infectious by its very presence.

These thoughts about the past and future of JM are brought on by the fact that at the end of this year I will be stepping down from my place on the Julian Meetings Advisory Group. A new contact is being found for JM-Worldwide; and instead of having a new contact for JM-Ireland, the Irish meetings will link with JM-Britain. This whole movement has been very precious to me and central in my prayers from its inception, when a merely human idea was swept up and away by the Holy Spirit. I pray that that same Spirit will continue to guide it – and all of you who read this, including all whom I have been privileged to know and in some cases to work with – in the years ahead.

On Hilary's retirement.

Graham Johnson

On hearing that Hilary Wakeman has retired from the Advisory Group I would like to add my thanks to her for the way she quietly yet purposefully founded and guided JM during her time as convenor.

Today "spirituality" is in fashion but back in 1973 there was something of a spiritual desert in the Western world. Hilary thought the Church should respond to promptings from the East. "Could it be" she wrote, "that Christianity seems to demand so little of its adherents". She thought the time was right for an order of lay people "trying to combine contemplative and secular lives" who would commend to others the ancient tradition of Christian mysticism and its fruits of love, joy and peace.

Thanks to her hard work and the time spent driving to meet those who responded to her ideas, JM was born. Its growth came not from any clearly designated monastic rule or constitution (Hilary was not a Mother Superior) but from her growing conviction that it should not be too organised, that we should aim for simplicity, avoiding a set leadership, cutting organisation down to a minimum, ensuring that it was Christ-centred and open to all denominations, and firmly rooted in the authentic Christian tradition.

Most of all we were to foster and promote contemplation, which she described as the way of prayer that revels in God's very existence, delighting that God is, wanting whatever God wants, saying Yes.

If I go on much longer this will become an obituary but JM needs to say Thank You to Hilary: for saying "Yes" in 1973, for all her work and guidance in the Advisory Group and pray that she may have more time now to enjoy the prayer that was her own and which she was able to bring to many more people.

Letters of Direction / Streams of Grace

Francis Ballinger

Do you find it easy to let things get in the way of the love God has for us? Over many years I have allowed activism, and the need to get things done, with its consequent fear of not completing a task, or of not doing something well, get in the way of resting on God's love. So it was a great relief to hear someone say 'if it is worth doing, it is worth doing badly'.

From somewhere deep within me I have regularly heard the words from John's Epistle 1 John 4:18: 'In love there is no room for fear; indeed perfect love banishes fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and anyone who is afraid has not attained to love in its perfection.' Was my fear the clearest sign of the imperfection of my love for God?

For many years I have been blessed in being able to read the works of the Abbé de Tourville, published as Letters of Direction and Streams of Grace.

These had been out of print for a number of years, so I was particularly pleased that Letters of Direction was re-published in 2004, and Streams of Grace is now again being printed

These two books have served as a constant reminder to me over many years that God loves me despite what I say or do. My task has been to accept that unconditional love and share it with others. I have always found the paragraph-length quotations, and the direct language of both books contains a wealth of advice and support

Abbé Henri de Tourville was born in 1842, ordained as a French priest in 1873, and died in 1903. His two most noteworthy pupils were Friedrich von Hügel and Charles de Foucauld. De Tourville conveyed his spiritual wisdom to others mostly through letters. There are two translations of his letters which are edited as either "Letters of Direction" or "Streams of Grace."

The French version of Letters of Directions was edited under themes by the Abbé Maubec. His anthology was translated into English by Lucy Menzies in 1939 and carries a forward by Evelyn Underhill. For over thirty years I have found it most helpful in reminding me of the love of God. Although I believe that our response to God's love requires more than a passive listening, I am sure that if we do not stand in the stillness of God's Presence our life can degenerate into a whirl of mindless activities.

De Tourville wrote "My mission in life is to smooth the path of those whom I shall encounter after my death" 1. The Editor's Note To "Streams of Grace" says that the editor of "Letters of Direction" "had exercised extraordinary editorial licence in leaving out words or phrases, tacking a sentence from one letter onto another...More important there was no indication in his version that the two letters were written to two different people"²

This first set of quotations come from "Letters of Direction" :-

Therefore leave your soul too, to pray as suits it best, in its own way, without strain. Allow it most of the time to remain quite still. Pray along the lines which show you the needs of the world and which interest you. Nothing could be better. In a word, follow your bent; your need of quiet or of doing nothing according to what seems most natural to you at the time.³

Do not attach most value to external results, but to being yourself in the Truth; to being free and at home with your-self, whatever other people may think. We have been badly brought up if we always aim at producing an effect on others! And, moreover, real influence is gained in quite a different way. True growth lies in being content with our-selves; and then, when circumstances demand it, being quite ready to share anything we may have with others. Do not therefore judge yourself by that which others can receive from you, but by what you yourself receive from yourself, from your own personality, your own inner way of being. Cultivate freedom of spirit, spaciousness of mind: live in peace, boldly and with tranquillity. Some day you will be able to pass all that on to others.⁴

This breadth to which I urge you, and for which I take all the responsibility, might lead others to slackness. But in your case it will lead to relaxation, to simplicity, to real heart-felt devotion. It will make you precisely that which you ought to be and will make you understand things precisely as you ought to understand them.⁵

If you attempt to do all that is possible, all that is desirable, all that might be edifying, you will never succeed. Such an aim would indeed lack simplicity, humility and frankness; and those three qualities are worth more than everything else to which you might aspire, however good your motives.⁶

1 *Streams of Grace* page 15

2 *Streams of Grace* page 7

3 *Letters of Direction* page 20

4 *Letters of Direction* page 27

5 *Letters of Direction* page 35

6 *Letters of Direction* page 39

Let our effort be always towards greater breadth and generosity within ourselves, and, as far as circumstances permit, without.⁷

We must return to good, straightforward interior ways and make use of them to enlarge our exterior outlook as far as we can.⁸

You will come to agree with me that we are doing good work which will be of use later on, when we give time to the renewing of our strength; when we simply stand at ease and go as it were, on leave; while still taking for our own use any ideas which may come into our minds.⁹

Believe me, a period of greater ease will be very fruitful for you just now; not only for the sake of your bodily health, but also for the health of your mind and your soul.¹⁰

Let us content ourselves with being as little evil as we can. That done, all is well.¹¹

Be bold enough always to believe that God is on your side and wholly yours, what ever you may think of yourself.¹²

The essence of the matter is that our Lord loves you dearly. The more keenly therefore, you realise that the weakness is of your own nature, even of your own will, the more you must adore him. For in spite of everything we are the weak creatures whom our Lord loves, and loves deeply, with the love worthy of that name, which to him is no idle word.

You want to compete with his affection before you have understood it; that is your mistake. You are like a child who wants to help his mother before allowing himself to be trained by her. You are like St Peter; he wanted to wash his master's feet, but refused to allow his master to wash his feet. He did not understand. Our Lord showed him his mistake with the clear and decisive sharpness of a friend: 'Peter! If I do not do this, and if you will not let me do it, you have no part in me.' And St John, who knew all the depth and tenderness of God's love, was constantly ravished by the thought 'he loved us first'.

7 Letters of Direction page 36

8 Letters of Direction page 36

9 Letters of Direction page 36

10 Letters of Direction page 36

11 Letters of Direction page 39

12 Letters of Direction page 57

Come then! Show a little deference to our Lord and allow him to go first. Let him love you a great deal, a very great deal, long before you have succeeded in loving him, even a little, as you would wish to love him. That is all I ask of you, and all that our Lord asks of you.¹³

Say to yourself very often about everything that happens 'God loves me! What joy!' and reply boldly 'and I truly love him too'. Then go quite simply about all that you have to do and do not philosophise any more. For these two phrases are beyond all thought, and do more for us than any thought could; they are all sufficing.¹⁴

Streams of Grace is in three parts, each different letters with a short introduction:-

In all things whatsoever pertaining to conscience and rule both inwardly and outwardly you must be on the side of generosity and open-mindedness, and this more and more, so that you may be completely at ease in what you think and what you do.¹⁵

You are capable now of making up your mind, so decide without delay to accept this truth and to make it the basis of your personal spiritual life... It is up to you to love our Lord in all simplicity, that is to say, in the complete conviction of your own perpetual and utter unworthiness, yet nevertheless continuing to love him just as you are.¹⁶

What you lack at the moment is the certain knowledge that our souls can be in perfectly good health while at the same time we experience a deep inner sense of helplessness and confusion. This feeling is simply a true understanding of life as it is, which is not something splendid and triumphant but obscure and confused. ¹⁷

Be infinitely gentle to your poor, tired body and let it go its own small way... you must keep to your own chosen path, my dear child, and not worry about the puddles you fall into, otherwise you will never walk at all. The journey itself will put right all the accidents it has led us into; we dry ourselves, give ourselves a shake and press on. Fussy and timid travellers are poor travellers... To follow a way truly is to love it, to know that it is good and that it holds even better things in store.¹⁸

13 Letters of Direction pages 60 / 61

14 Letters of Direction page 61

15 Streams of Grace page 23

16 Streams of Grace page 28

17 Streams of Grace page 29

18 Streams of Grace pages 44/45

We shouldn't lament the state of the world as if everything were lost. It is really quite simply a battle between the old and the new spirit... If passing doubts cloud your faith this is because the way in which we have been taught scarcely meets our present needs at all. No wonder we sometimes feel lost... Methods improve and we understand things better now and this is what has to happen to our faith.¹⁹

I have had to receive here large numbers of clergy and, amidst all their mental confusion, I do them some good by showing them the light as I see it. How good and noble is the pathway of light, but how few there are that tread it. We have to follow it in person and not be depressed by how few there are who seek it all follow it. If only others would just be themselves, how marvellous it would be, far better than that they should be compelled to be. We can only be responsible for ourselves and even that is difficult.²⁰

Say to yourself, God loves me beyond all I can imagine or put into words. Let this be at the heart of your being and become the whole of your devotion and never let go of it. You will soon find that this is the way find God.²¹

Perfect interior simplicity and innocence put us in direct touch with God without any difficulty. We are like children in the presence of some great man who takes a special pleasure in treating us as equals, becoming a child himself, happy to ignore faults and the demanding behaviour of us children. He comes down to our level and passes over all our whims, importunities and impertinences, and ends by treating us with tenderest care, in spite of our egotism and indifference... All of which is summed up in the gospel by our Lord's words "suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven."²²

Avoid the undefined, the impersonal, the vague, and all abstractions. Be precise and deal with individual and particular cases. For preference use ordinary language, as far as possible based on fact, avoid at all costs highflown and equivocal language, not simply because this will convey your message better but because it will keep you in contact with things as they are.²³

19 Streams of Grace page 55

20 Streams of Grace page 56

21 Streams of Grace page 57

22 Streams of Grace page 65

23 Streams of Grace page 86

The time is coming when those most steeped in tradition, and the most afraid of change, will turn and see that there is complete and shining accord between Christian truth and the onward march of mankind's highest ideals.

24

Mysticism today should extol this splendid human capacity in contact with all the natural order, this union of human intelligence and nature, to render complete the life of man and divinely renew his powers. It is this flowering of co-operation between man and the earth which is the poetry of nature, the epic story composed by God himself.²⁵

How many good people, worried lost and desperate, who cannot see their way through, resign themselves and ask "what are we coming to?" To give way to such pessimism is to fall into inner stagnation and outer impotence, into error in every action and contradiction in everything. We must react against all this with the utmost energy... The prime characteristic of the clear-sighted, well-balanced Christian is one of joy. His intelligence grasps the wide and life-enhancing work of God in the world, for us and through us, from age to age and in one country after another. The world map of society and religion seen from the perspective of history is a sight which should arouse our enthusiasm, showing as it does the wonderful way in which God is still creating this world and doing so through our efforts, our aspirations, and our personal influence. Unceasingly one can see, as Chateaubriand said "God rising in glory behind mankind."²⁶

First Published in English by A & C Black 1939, this edition of Letters of Direction was published by Continuum 2004 ISBN 0-8264-7676-7

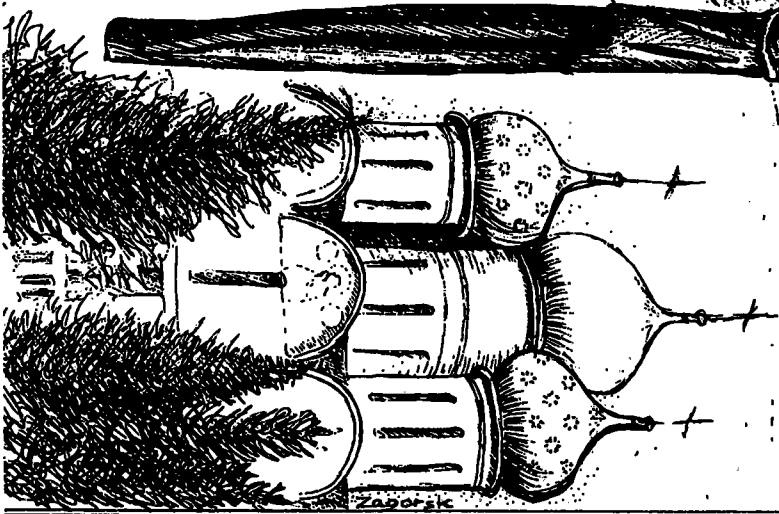
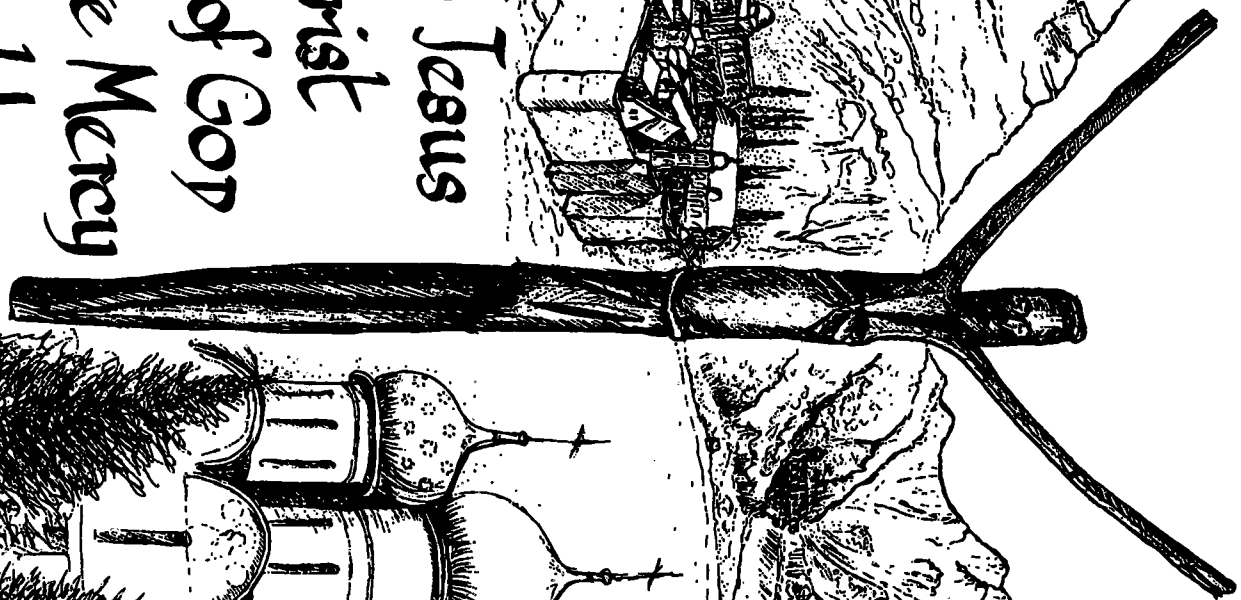
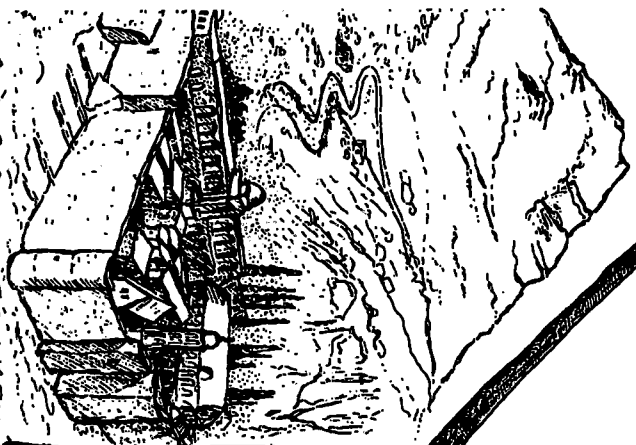
First Published in English by Fount Paperbacks, in Association with Amate press 1985, this impression of Streams of Grace is published by Continuum 2006

24 *Streams of Grace* page 89

25 *Streams of Grace* page 90

26 *Streams of Grace* pages 93/94

Lord Jesus
Christ
Son of God
Have Mercy
on Us



The Jesus Prayer

Anne Stamper

*Lord Jesus Christ
Son of God
Have Mercy on me a sinner.*

This is one of the prayers suggested in the Julian Meetings Leaflet 'Some basics of contemplative prayer', to provide an anchor and as an aid to inner silence. I have been aware of the Jesus prayer for many years, but my interest in its use was further stimulated by reading 'The way of a Pilgrim' and then a short time afterwards being asked to review for the JM Magazine Jonathan Smith's book 'The power of the Jesus Prayer – a reflection and guide.'

I started to use the prayer but was still not sure about the practice - it was not something that I encountered in my mainstream Anglican church! Then I noticed in the programme of the Penhurst Retreat Centre, just what I was looking for - a guided retreat on The Jesus Prayer being led by Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward.

Penhurst is near Battle in East Sussex and not far from where I live. I made my booking immediately, so in beautiful July weather I spent two days, in company with fourteen others, at this lovely peaceful Jacobean Manor House. It was a silent retreat during which the Bishop gave a number of talks helping us to learn more about the history of the prayer and also practice in its use.

I started to listen to the talks with note book in hand, but I soon gave up trying to take notes, all I jotted down were the phrases that spoke to me.

Prayer is stepping into a river that is already flowing

Praying with the mind in the heart

Practicing the presence of God in Christ we can only pray in the power of the spirit

Prayer is not fulfilling a duty but coming up for air

The Jesus prayer keeps one suspended between time and timelessness

The Jesus prayer is very old. The desert fathers and mothers as early as the fourth century recommended the practice of 'monologic prayer' – short frequently repeated prayers, often phrases from scripture; 'Keep your heart turned towards God' they exhorted. They saw this as a way of following Paul's instruction to 'pray without ceasing'.

From the desert Fathers and Mothers we followed the prayer in its development through the first millennium largely through the eastern orthodox church, and later through the publication in English of Philokalia and The way of a pilgrim to us today.

In the time between the talks we sat in the shade in the garden, walked the surrounding lanes and paths, visited the chapel or the ancient Penhurst church next door, we watched the ducks on the duck pond, read, slept, and I painted. My painting was a response to what I was hearing and experiencing.

As the Bishop had talked of the places where the Jesus prayer had been used and developed I was taken to some of the places I had visited: to St Catherine's monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai (the traditional site of the Burning bush) in the midst of the stark desert scenery ; to Mount Athos, where as a mere woman I had only been able to see The Holy Mountain from the sea; to Zagorsk, 40 kilometres north of Moscow where I had heard the yearning sound of chanting in the Russian orthodox church, and the drama of the opening of the 'Royal doors' as the priests came out of the sanctuary. These places appear in the picture, but central to all is the figure of Christ. In every room at Penhurst Retreat Centre there is one of these figures, each individually carved from a single twig by African Christians. To me this figure with outstretched arms illustrates another phrase of the Bishop's ' know you are welcome in the presence of God'

On our final evening we gathered in a darkening room and prayed the Jesus prayer together, a single voice repeating the prayer. The rhythm of the prayer became the 'ground bass' from which our other prayers arose. The following morning at the Eucharist my painting became part of the offering of thanksgiving.

The simplicity of the Jesus prayer is its great strength. It sums up so much of the Christian faith and places Jesus Christ at the centre of life.

The drawings accompanying this article are a pen and ink drawing similar to the painting referred to in the article and also a drawing of an orthodox prayer rope, made in accordance with the ancient tradition.

References

The way of a Pilgrim - annotated and explained, trans. Gleb Pokrovsky, DLT 2003

The power of the Jesus Prayer – a reflection and guide, Jonathan Smith, Kevin Mayhew 2005

The Jesus Prayer, Simon Barrington-Ward, Oxford, Bible Reading Fellowship 1996



AN ORTHODOX PRAYER ROPE

May Trinity's entwining patterns

Be my guide

Puzzling yet leading

My mind

My soul

My spirit:

Protecting from the evil without

And the doubt within.

The Father flying me under his wings,

The Son gospel-challenging me towards his kingdom

The Spirit fire-flaming me into new life.

May the Trinity hold, challenge and renew me

Now and ever more

May the Trinity hold, challenge and renew me

Now and ever more.

F.B.

Where only love can go

(The first of three sermons on prayer)

Graham Johnson

My first visit as a newly ordained curate – was to a woman in the congregation who was in the maternity ward. She was at the bottom of the ward. After spending time with her I got up to go and asked her if she wanted anything, a paper or a love magazine for instance. “Love” she said very loudly, “Love! This is where love got me” and I had to walk back down that very long ward.

If someone asked me how I would describe prayer now it would be – “It’s where love gets you”. And in fact an English 14C mystic said much the same. He said that prayer is “where only love can go”.

To begin to understand prayer you must have experienced falling in love. And I hope that everyone here has fallen in love, at least once, and probably many times. In religious language falling in love with God can be called conversion. But once you introduce God into the situation you find that people fall in love with many different ideas of God. Some fall in love with one who can only be described as the King of Kings seated in great majesty above the heavens, others with a suffering man on a cross who was the greatest man who ever lived, and there are many many more pictures with which we fall in love. Also, because God is God, and so to some beyond description as a person, some fall in love with an idea, an inspiration. Some fall in love with a particular church building – it is where God dwells. Some fall in love with what Christians do – like the work of Christian Aid or one of the many other charities in which God is discovered as divine work is done. Others with particular skills see God in their calling, in their job as working with God in bringing in the kingdom – nurses, politicians, police, social workers, machinists, musicians, entrepreneurs, teachers etc.

So we have fallen in love, but we know from our mere human experiences that falling in love can be an exhilarating and hazardous thing! First, on falling in love we think we are right and everyone else is wrong if they can’t see how happy we are together. In religion this produces fundamentalists or people who think they are the only true Christians.

Second, we sometimes fall in love with what psychiatrists call “the invisible you”, someone who is really just like yourself. In religion this shows itself in making pictures of a God who makes no demands and will do what I want him to do.

And many other falling in love experiences can relate to our relationship with God. Just three other things that come to mind:

First, you fall in love with a person but you also have to take on that person's family and family history, their friends and their background, which are very much part of the one you love. Some add to the love you have together, some you have to bite your tongue.

Second, people do not stay the same as when you first fell in love with them, you both change as a result of the love you give to one another, or the lack of love you give one another.

Lastly, there are times when you know that this relationship has enhanced your life with a richness too deep for words.

Let's apply some of this to our understanding of prayer- "where only love can go".

You have fallen in love with God in some way. Many people who never come to church would say that they believed in God, but they do not have the passion of love – "you don't have to go to church to be a Christian" they say, and we know what they mean, what they really mean is that you don't have to go to church to be a good person – they do not realise that in falling in love with God it's not just you and God. It's the in-laws as well! Some of these are a delight to be with, they are going where only love can go, some have already lived their earthly life and now live with "the love which moves the sun and stars," in heaven yet encouraging us and praying with us. Some things however are difficult to live with – the strange stories of the Old Testament when people first set out to go where only love can go, the different interpretations of God's will throughout Christian history which have led sometimes to killing people in the name of Christ.

The letters that are read out from the Bible sometimes inspiring, sometimes alien, conditioned by life in the past. And all surrounding the person who was both God and man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ who died, Christ who rose, Christ who is working his purpose out as he comes again letting us discover that in him we live and move and have our being.

Therefore, part of this over view of prayer is to realise that we are "in Christ". And as we gather at least Sunday by Sunday we pass the font, the sign to us that at our baptism we have died to our old selves and been born again into Christ. We are new people sustained by the love who died for us, rose again for us and shares himself with us in bread and wine. St Paul says that he

writes his letters "To those that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8.1). Those who come together to worship, to confess sins, to discover more about the one who has drawn us into his service, but most of all, to be caught up in the worship of heaven – for those "in Christ" worship not only here but beyond the earth, and all cry "glory". So if someone should ask you at the end of the service, "How was it for you?" You can reply "I felt heaven move me!"

But Paul not only speaks of us being in Christ, but also of Christ being in you. He tells the Galatians, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2.20). He tells the Ephesians "Christ may dwell in your heart" and the Corinthians that "Christ is in you". And a greater than Paul, Jesus himself says, "If anyone loves me, my Father will love him and we shall make our home with him" (Jn 14.23). So not only do we express our prayer "in Christ" but we express it as a personal relationship with Christ in us at the very core of our being.

To develop this personal relationship we need first to make the effort to believe that Christ is with you. He has always been with you, from the time you were born. He came to you in a special way when you were christened. He will be with you through death. He will never leave you no matter what you do, however much you sin. He may not be able to live his life in you as he longs to, but he will be there waiting, as it were, he does not come into your soul; he is already there. This is grace, the free Gift, the Holy thing given to us at our baptism. It is nothing we have ever deserved. It is grace – gratis – free.

Since he is with you, just think of something you know about him, or something he did during his time on earth. Do not reason about him; just let your mind rest on him. What you are trying to do is to be always together with Him. What you are thinking about should more or less have the same use as a photograph of your beloved. It is something for you to focus your love on.

When you do for a moment find that you are really turned towards God in your heart, and are filled with the certainty of God's presence within you, and you are in the real and silent centre, do not reason, just try to love, do not force the moment to stay; if you do you will only drive it away. Try to enjoy it to the full – this little experience of reality, and try to take it along with you in whatever you have to do during the day.

Sadly we spend so much of our time away from our home with Christ, that we find it a difficult and trying place to be in, even to be with our God; but as we get accustomed to staying in, little by little we will begin to enjoy it.

There is nothing so wonderful as the experience of the presence of God with you.

An Act of Grace

Jenny Tann

Early summer morning; glancing light; slight mist;

Trees taking shape with the dawn;

A sense of expectation of the new day ahead.

Motorway curiously busy; streaming cars in all three lanes. Fast.

A driver in the middle lane singing.

*The deer – who knows what its instinct was – no sense at all
of its imminent danger appeared on the bank. Stood uncertainly.*

And leapt.

*Time stood still for the middle lane driver. The only way
Out of a multiple crash was to hold hard and kill this sleek beauty.*

*Anticipating avoiding action, the driver on the outside swerved
And this gentle voice said to the driver in the middle 'Its all right, I'm here'.
Waves of energy flowed through both arms as she held the wheel hard.*

And didn't veer to either side.

Dreadful impact killed the deer.

And humans went their way.

Grace and peace flowed through the driver in the middle lane.

Thanks be to God.



PS. I was the driver in the middle lane. I was going to the NEC to chair for 2 days at the Primary Care Conference. My car had bodywork damage. But I took it in on the Saturday to be checked. All seemed well. It had already booked in for a full routine service for the following Wednesday. That was when they discovered the damage to (and leak in) the brake fluid pipe. Life twice saved.

The Restful Heart

Liz Babbs

Lion Hudson 2006 £7.99 includes CD

ISBN 13978-0-7459-5223-2

This little hard back book is a gem, the sort of thing Lion publishing do so well. It positively invites the reader to pause and meditate over beautiful colour photos interspersed with text about all too familiar subjects: Overload, letting go, chilling out and the gift of time. The CD of gentle flute music is an aid to reflection. I love the one-liners such as "Without silence, words lose their meaning". There is material here for lead-ins at Julian Meetings and the music would make an ideal lead-out of silence. With Christmas on the horizon, this would make an excellent gift.

Yvonne Walker

Prayer: a Christian companion, edited by Susan Hibbins

Inspire 2006 £8.99

ISBN 1-85852-317-6

This new anthology offers a wide range of traditional and modern reflections on the subject of prayer. Each chapter includes articles, shorter extracts, poems and prayers which is designed to be a companion of spiritual reading and meditation throughout the year. Whilst it is difficult to add further to much that has already been written on this subject, one of its values lies in offering alternative approaches to those who need to revitalise their prayer life.

For those drawn to silent prayer John Pritchard and Yvonne Walker contribute what this form of prayer means to them. I particularly liked the metaphor of 'sunbathing' with its allusion to warmth and relaxation which John Pritchard uses to describe being still in God's presence.

In a world of instant communication, Liz Babbs and Lorna Lackenby take the example of mobile phone technology to show how we can keep in touch with God.

For any-one wishing to grow in prayer, this book offers a treasury of thoughts and approaches. It would make an ideal Christmas present or simply as a treat for yourself.

Christine Rapsey

Beyond The Candle Flame: thirty reflective Bible stories for quiet moments with 5-7s

Brian Ogden and Jo Dobbs

Bible Reading Fellowship 2006 £7.99

ISBN 1-84101-431-1

Here is an imaginative and practical book written by two experienced RE teachers which aims to provide busy primary school teachers with some valuable starting points for 'Circle Time' to meet the need for 'quiet moments' from a Christian perspective based on 30 New Testament Bible stories. The stories are written in a style which encourages children in Key Stage One to use their imagination, to explore their feelings and to respond when they hear the stories being read to them. Teachers in non-denominational primary schools with significant numbers of children from other faiths will need to use their judgement about using this book in their classes.

The introduction provides a useful list of simple instructions to help the teacher to enable the children to make a 'quiet space' for 'Circle Time' as regular part of their classroom activities. Many parts of the list will sound familiar to members of Julian Meetings with its invitation to sit in a circle, to relax and close the eyes (or to keep them open and focussed on a relevant object such as a lighted candle in a safe holder in the centre of the circle) and to pay attention to one's breathing ! However unlike our meetings the children will probably have to sit cross-legged on the floor or on small chairs with a much shorter period of silence after the reading when they will be invited to think about the main themes of the story and to raise any relevant questions that occur to them afterwards before a concluding prayer.

Each story is provided with a theme, a Bible reference, suggested relevant objects for the children to focus on, a short introduction, suggested follow-up questions and a final prayer. There are some illustrations/templates and a map with permission to copy statements below and a list of suggested pieces of music to accompany the stories in the appendices. The stories are grouped under themes such as 'Senses' e.g. the gifts of sight and taste, 'Seasons' e.g. Christmas, Epiphany, Palm Sunday, and 'Feelings' e.g. forgiveness, lost & found and caring.

If only our teachers had given us the benefit of 'Circle Time' with such a book, when we were at primary school, so that we could have enjoyed the benefit of shared silence at a tender age!

Letizia and Michael Tiley

Growing in Love: through Lent with Julian of Norwich
Ann Lewin

Inspire (MPH) 2006 £4.99

ISBN1- 85852 -320- 6

Homely Love: prayer and reflections using the words of
Julian of Norwich

Penny Roker RSM

Canterbury Press 2006 £8.99

ISBN 1-85311-733-1

In a new Lent book for group study and individual reflection, Ann Lewin invites her readers to explore what it means to be loved by God and to love others. In five chapters – Coping with troubled times; the Nature of God; Prayer; Sin; All shall be well – in prose and poetry she reflects on themes in Julian's Showings of Love and Bible passages which resonate with them. The book includes a good presentation of contemplative prayer and of Julian Meetings and ends with suggested words for a Eucharist reflecting Mother Julian's teaching. Ann's aim is to help her readers fulfil Julian's hope that as a result of thinking about her experience their love for God will grow. Here is my choice for next Lent though the book would be equally helpful at other times; I'm rather hoping our local Julian Meeting will join me in it.

Homely Love is a daily retreat companion for use at home and using the 'homely' things around us - a series of meditations, each with a format of: a passage From Julian's Writings, an exercise Sharing Julian's Experience, a Bible passage, a prayer and 'endings'. Themes include The Hazelnut: resting in God; the Needle's Point: at one with God; The Seabed: safe in God. As it stands it is an excellent retreat companion. If the exercise were replaced with the time of silence it would be a good resource for Julian Meeting 'lead-ins'.

Two thoroughly recommended books. Together they would be an excellent resource for anyone leading a retreat or quiet day.

Gail Ballinger

The Creativity of Listening: being there, reaching out

Bill Kirkpatrick

Darton, Longman and Todd 2005 £10.95

ISBN 0-232-52579-X

Bill Kirkpatrick explores and celebrates what 'the sacred act of hearing through listening' means to him. A more fitting title might be the 'co-creativity' of listening, as he stresses the mutual therapeutic potential of this activity for both listener and 'seeker.'

Listening has been the author's passion and call over a lifelong ministry of caring for body, mind and spirit. He first worked in a nursing home, subsequently becoming an SRN and then a qualified psychiatric nurse, before ordination.

His book interweaves this personal story with reflections on different aspects of listening, as well as some practical guidelines – including helpful advice for those whose physical hearing is impaired.

For the author, listening is about 'being there' for the other, in the integrity of our whole selves, with all our wounds and imperfections. His particular sensitivity about offering unconditional acceptance derives from his faith and personal experience as a foster child, a gay man and Anglican priest.

He expresses a love of the mystics, including Julian's vision of God's all-inclusive love, and trust that 'all manner of things shall be well.' He is very much attuned to hearing the silence beyond words in listening to self, others, and God. He quotes Howard Cooper's assertion that, 'There can be no spiritual growth without silence.'

At times I found his language a little abstract, but it contained some thought-provoking material. I was challenged by his observation that our Christian call is not just to love, but to be loved, something I'm sure Julian of Norwich would have affirmed.

Julia McGuinness

Exploring Contemplative Prayer: a practical handbook

Peter Dodson and Martin Tunnicliffe

Kevin Mayhew 2005 £7.99

ISBN 1-84417-494-8

"We now move from the broad picture of contemplation.....towards its practical implications from the 'what?' to the 'how?' of contemplative prayer."

This quote describes in a nutshell how this book, by two very experienced leaders of the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer (FCP), proceeds, after a helpful foreword by Joyce Huggett, to define and to describe contemplation in the first six chapters, before proceeding in chapter 7 'Get Stuck in!' and the subsequent chapters to describe how to follow the FCP method of contemplative prayer. The introductory first six chapters provide invaluable basic advice on useful topics such as 'Becoming Still and Attentive' and 'Distractions Positive and Negative' which could be used by anyone intending to undertake a period of contemplative prayer in a Christian context with examples drawn from a number of different traditions as well as FCP. Readers familiar with Julian Meetings and other non-FCP traditions of contemplative prayer will notice from reading chapter 7 and the subsequent six chapters of six FCP 'Exercises' that two main features of the 'FCP method' of contemplative prayer are: 1. their exclusive use of the 'dominical words' or sayings as spoken by God in the Old Testament (e.g. 'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight' Isaiah 45.2) or by Jesus in the New Testament (e.g. 'I am the resurrection and the life' John 9.5) as the main focuses or themes for periods of contemplative prayer or meditation and 2. the short periods of time allowed for silent contemplation in a meeting which are usually an initial period of two minutes after the introduction of the 'dominical words', and two periods of up to ten minutes which have been gently 'interrupted' by periods of comment or 'patter' by the 'witness' who has been chosen to lead the group as a witness of God's word. Some will find this pattern helpful and to others it will seem distracting.

It is important to find a method of contemplation or contemplative prayer which best suits our needs and this as an excellent guide to one such method.

Michael Tiley

Creative Ideas for Quiet Days: resources and liturgies for retreats and days of reflection

Sue Pickering

Canterbury Press 2006 £14.99

ISBN 1-85311-742-0

Here is a veritable feast of resource material for those who may think of offering a quiet day but aren't quite sure how to begin. This very practical book takes you through the basics of getting started and provides encouragement and reassurance for those stepping out for the first time. Busy retreat leaders will also find some practical ideas which can be used. Pages which can be photocopied without seeking copyright permission are clearly marked and themes covered include "Retreat and advance", "Rolling back the Stone", "Choose life!" and "The waiting place of God " resources for an Advent quiet day. The appendix includes a sample programme handout. This really is a very comprehensive work-book for all who seek to provide a time of spiritual refreshment for themselves or for others.

Yvonne Walker

Contemplation in Action

Richard Rohr and Friends

Crossroad Publishing Company 2006 £9.99

ISBN 0-8245-2388-6

Richard Rohr has put together a stimulating collection of essays which challenge us to reflect on our lives and priorities. Using the well known text from Micah 6 "to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God", there are over twenty reflections on these three themes with the author contributing five of them himself. Other authors include Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington and Edwina Gately with subjects as varied as Nonviolence, Restorative Justice, Prophetic Action, Sustainability, Simplicity and Art and Meditation. The contributions are in bite-size pieces three or four pages long and need time to ponder and reflect before moving on to the next one. There is also an invitation to visit the website of the Center for Action and Contemplation www.cacradicalgrace.org which was founded by Richard Rohr.

Yvonne Walker

A Spiritual Odyssey: diary of an ordinary Catholic

Brian O'Hare

The Columba, 2005, £10.50

ISBN 1-85607-512-5

The author refers to himself in the title as 'ordinary' but his story is extraordinary. It chronicles the deterioration of his health through to needing and receiving a liver transplant. He shares with us his spiritual journey along side the account of his physical journey, and it is truly humbling.

I found in his own story, and that of his two sisters who are nuns, insight into the worship of a different tradition to mine, and this was enlightening. He gives an honest account of his own searching and prayer life. For Julians his discovery of silent prayer and his difficulty with it reminds us that this is method is not for everyone.

It is a rare privilege to be allowed to read something as private as this book, few of us would have the honesty or bravery to share our inmost thoughts and feelings so publicly. I would probably not have picked up this book from a shelf to read, but I have been enriched by reading it.

Anne Stamper

Mind the Light: learning to see with spiritual eyes

J. Brent Bill

Paraclete Press, 2006, \$14.95, £9.99

ISBN 1-55725-489-3

Mind the Light is an old Quaker saying. In this book the author shares his experience of 'minding the light' and encourages us to look at life with renewed spiritual sight. He considers light in its many aspects – spiritual and physical, inner and outer, drawing on his experience of photography, dark light, negative space. The chapter Light for the journey: our path to God includes the most helpful account of the dark night of the soul and via negativa I have come across.

Gail 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 by email are particularly welcome.

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by
10 February 2007

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