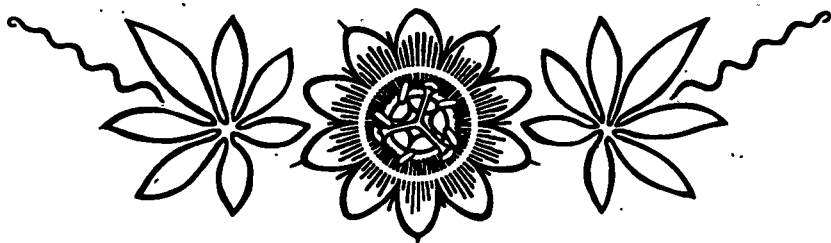


# THE JULIAN MEETINGS

**Magazine**



**April 2008**

**Would you know the Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love is his meaning.**

**Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will heed what I say; then my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him; ... the advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you....**

**'Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears.'**

**John 14: 23/26/27**

**The Lord looks on his servant with pity and not with blame.**

**It is as if God were appealing to you through us: we implore you in Christ's name, be reconciled to God! Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with human sinfulness, so that in him we might be made one with the righteousness of God.**

**2 Corinthians 5: 20 / 21**

**God wants us to know that he keeps us safe through good and ill.**

**You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed.**

**Philippians 2: 13**

*Continued on page 4 >*

## **Editorial**

Apologies to you if you have been expecting this magazine earlier: the delays have been through a mixture of personal circumstances, a discussion about the future, and the very early date of Easter.

After three years as acting magazine editor I hope to pass the editorship over, beginning with the next Issue, however as at this time I have no successor (see below)

This edition of the magazine seems to have a rather "mixed bag" of contents, from an Article on 'The Quiet Garden Movement and Contemplative Fire' to one on 'Living Simply', and an article from Taizé on 'The value of silence' It also contains a number of obituaries: please note that the length of the obituary reflects the individual writer's style, and is not any reference to the importance of that person to the Julian Meetings. What emerges to me from them is the strength of the support that the Julian Meetings have had, and a question about where such depth is for the future.

***The Julian Meetings Magazine has a circulation of approximately 1,000, and there are somewhere between 300-400 Julian Meetings.***

***To date this Magazine, with its associated Newsletter in Britain, has been the major way in which members of Julian Meetings have been in touch.***

***However due to changed family circumstances and increasing ill health the August Edition of this Magazine will be my last as editor, and there is no successor: if no one comes forward the Magazine will have to cease publication.***

***Please Can you help?***



< *Continued from page 2*

**And so I saw full surely that before ever God made us, he loved us. And this love was never quenched nor ever shall be. And in this love he has done all his works, and in this love he has made all things profitable for us, and in this love our life is everlasting. In our making we had beginning, but the love in which he made us was in him from without beginning, in which love we have our beginning**

**My dear friends, let us love one another, because the source of love is God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God, for God is love. This is how he showed his love among us: he sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him. This is what love really is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sins.**

**1 John 4: 7-10**

**All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.**

*Readings from "Enfolded in love - Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich", DLT 1980, and the Revised English Bible*

## **Dancing with the Divine in Stillness**

### ***The Quiet Garden Movement and Contemplative Fire***

#### ***Mollie Robinson : Quiet Garden Coordinator***

"If we want to be good and useful members of society it is very important that we enter the depths of ourselves, discover God in the Soul's Ground and learn to act from that centre." These words from Meister Eckhart encapsulate closely the *raison d'être* of both the Quiet Garden Trust and its sister organisation Contemplative Fire. I am privileged to be involved with both.

While the two organisations are distinct, they do share a common undergirding of a deep desire to journey in solidarity with others exploring the wisdom of the Jesus tradition, and to celebrate and practise stillness and solitude. Each organisation thrills to the beauty of nature as a context for drawing upon the essence and energy of the living God in experiential learning and prayerful encounter. Both have seen God's startling provision of beautiful settings in which to worship ranging from arboretum to cathedral.

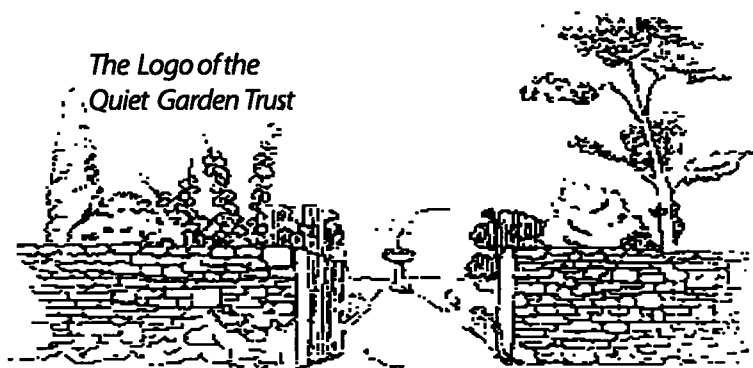
The other common factor to both organisations is their founder, the Revd Philip Roderick! Having grown up in the Celtic tradition where spiritual and sacred were not confined to church or chapel but exulted in upon the hills and sea shores, as well as beside the hearth, Philip took inspiration from Christ who, at times of transition and challenge, regularly withdrew from the hurly-burly of daily life to pray in places of rugged natural beauty. While in his twenties, Philip was moved by an elderly lady with pilgrim heart who unreservedly offered welcome to visitors in her home in St David's, Pembrokeshire.

These influences inspired him some twenty years later to articulate a comparatively simple vision of hospitality and prayer using a garden, for those who want to follow the example of Christ and 'come away to a quiet place and get some rest' (Mark 6:31). Thus in 1992, the Quiet Garden Movement was born with the generous provision of the first private home and garden being made available to welcome others. This ministry is both low cost and locally accessible. Yet, it contains enormous treasure as individuals dig deeper into the Christian contemplative tradition in silence, listen to a led meditation, or engage in creative reflection.

Gradually more individuals began to make their homes and gardens available to others to come and enjoy sanctuary and stillness for a half or full day. In this way, the local context becomes for a few hours, a place of peace and welcome, able as Philip says to 'articulate, embody and share the radiant presence of God pouring through the sacrament of nature'.

Today the concept has taken root in churches, hospitals, schools and other places able to provide a space, large or small, for contemplation and stillness. There is endless variety within the Quiet Garden Movement. Each garden space expresses the vision uniquely according to availability and local needs. So in Uganda there is a place of respite for AIDS patients and carers, in London a church offers green space for the homeless and wanderers, a church in Sheffield reclaimed derelict land with the help of prisoners, while another has created a garden with sensory devices for the blind. Such restorative spaces could be available for harassed housewives, the elderly, counselling clients.... the possibilities are many!

We are currently fostering the idea of provisional space for sanctuary and stillness in the prison environment. Silence and green space contribute deeply to well-being, and with our first intentional Quiet Garden space attached to a Health unit in a Buckinghamshire prison, this has been proved to be the case.



All these examples evidence the love of God in manifold ways, from the care shown to visitors by the Quiet Garden host to the experience of the participants as they engage with nature as context and vehicle for the revelation of God. In 2007, we were able to celebrate, with gratefulness to God, our fifteenth anniversary and this coincided with our reaching our 300th affiliated Quiet Garden world-wide!

This ministry fuels faith-based action that emerges from contemplation – looking within in order to reach out. The second organisation about which I am writing is Contemplative Fire, which similarly, as its name suggests, holds in creative tension a deep resting in the presence of God in the here and now, with the apostolic fire of prophetic action and imagination.

Contemplative Fire is a fresh expression of church, authorised by the Oxford Diocese Cutting Edge Ministries, and is an intentional and dispersed community of those who want to engage deeply and radically with the Way of Christ. There are many who are on the edge of church, or un-churched, who nevertheless are deeply interested in spiritual matters, and are ready to explore further in an appropriate context. Our challenge is to provide such a setting in which we lose nothing of the richness of the Christian tradition and yet find ways to speak to the heart of the twenty-first century seeker. We seek to create a space where questions are held, honest reflection encouraged and stories are shared.

In Contemplative Fire we aim to deconstruct familiar language, symbol and sacrament in order to re-construct them in an enlivening manner that resonates with contemporary ways of thought. This means using accessible vocabulary and creative liturgy, so for example confession and absolution, becomes 'letting go and being set free'.

Our worship is woven around a simple Eucharist, with evocative use of music (often chant), the creative arts, lighting and the re-ordering of furniture and liturgical space. In a variety of contexts ranging from small group to large Gathering, we honour the auditory, physical, and visual as tools to communicate effectively. So we engage in simple movements as body prayers, and try to use imaginatively whatever space we have available indoors or outdoors (be it barn, abbey or school!). Inspiration for each Gathering emerges from prayerful reflection, by the planning group, on the liturgical readings for the time of year. A generous use of candles will often encourage a meditative atmosphere and reflect the Gospel message of light in darkness. Occasional surprises delight us like the use of a didgeridoo and more recently a clown in very evocative mode!

As with the Quiet Garden Movement, there is a deep appreciation of the natural world, and regular activities include pilgrimage walks where we can breathe in beauty and soak ourselves in nature's own sacred story.

Those who wish to be part of the dispersed community of Contemplative Fire, as pilgrims on the way of Christ, adhere to a three-fold rhythm of life, in essence being, learning and doing. We are committed to both a contemplative practice and a bold reaching out to a wounded and fragmented world.

Having begun in The Oxford Diocese, Contemplative Fire is now reaching out to other areas, with new ventures in London, East Anglia and on the South Coast. Should either of these organisations be of interest to you, I warmly invite you to contact us. In both the Quiet Garden Movement and Contemplative Fire, we are open to the leading of the Spirit on this journey that combines the playful and the profound, and invites us into the adventure of exploring both deep silence and prophetic action – may we travel on in the same pilgrim spirit that marked their beginnings!

*The Quiet Garden Trust,  
Stoke Park Farm,  
Park Road,  
Stoke Poges  
SL2 4PG*

*Contemplative Fire,  
The Old Smithy,  
Hawridge Common,  
Chesham,  
HP5 2UQ*

<http://www.quietgarden.co.uk>  
Phone: +44 (0)1753 643050

<http://www.contemplativefire.org>  
Phone: +44 (0)1494 758878





## Lost and found

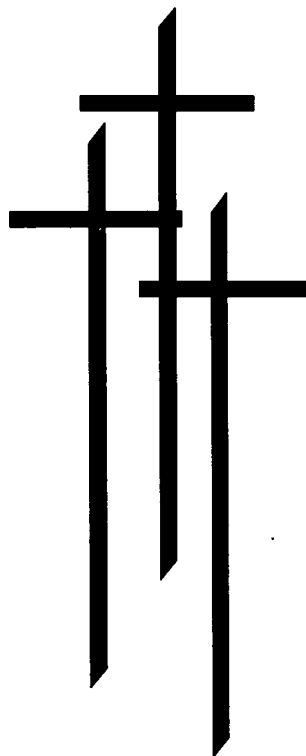
**Marjorie Wheeler**

Have I lost you, Christ my Saviour?  
'midst the stress of pain and woe:  
vainly grasping earthly comforts,  
ashamed, my Lord, for doing so.

Guiltily, I try to pray Lord --  
like a child, with inner fear:  
reaching out for hands to comfort;  
simply -- hoping, you may hear.

Could this be your way of healing --  
first, the dragon: then, the dove?  
Your spirit guiding me to find -- Lord,  
words of cleansing, words of love!

You will have found me, Christ my Saviour!  
Foolishly I went astray:  
now, those nail-pierced hands can comfort --  
as I praise you -- as I pray!



*It is not easy to try to say what I know I cannot say. I do really have the feeling that you have seen something most precious – and most available too. The reality that is present to us and in us: call it Being, call it Atman, call it Pneuma... or Silence.*

*And the simple fact that by being attentive, by learning to listen...we can find ourself engulfed in such happiness that it cannot be explained: the happiness of being at one with everything in that hidden ground of Love for which here can be no explanations.*

from *Thomas Merton; A Book of Hours*: see page 27/28 for a review of this book

## **The Value of Silence**

Three times a day, everything on the hill of Taizé stops: the work, the Bible studies, the discussions. The bells call everyone to church for prayer. Hundreds or even thousands of mainly young people from all over the world pray and sing together with the brothers of the community. Scripture is read in several languages. In the middle of each common prayer, there is a long period of silence, a unique moment for meeting with God.

### ***Silence and prayer***

If we take as our guide the oldest prayer book, the biblical Psalms, we note two main forms of prayer. One is a lament and cry for help. The other is thanksgiving and praise to God. On a more hidden level, there is a third kind of prayer, without demands or explicit expression of praise. In Psalm 131 for instance, there is nothing but quietness and confidence: "I have calmed and quieted my soul ... hope in the Lord from this time on and forevermore."

At times prayer becomes silent. Peaceful communion with God can do without words. "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." Like the satisfied child who has stopped crying and is in its mother's arms, so can "my soul be with me" in the presence of God. Prayer then needs no words, maybe not even thoughts.

How is it possible to reach inner silence? Sometimes we are apparently silent, and yet we have great discussions within, struggling with imaginary partners or with ourselves. Calming our souls requires a kind of simplicity: "I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me." Silence means recognizing that my worries can't do much. Silence means leaving to God what is beyond my reach and capacity. A moment of silence, even very short, is like a holy stop, a sabbatical rest, a truce of worries.

The turmoil of our thoughts can be compared to the storm that struck the disciples' boat on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus was sleeping. Like them, we may be helpless, full of anxiety, and incapable of calming ourselves. But Christ is able to come to our help as well. As he rebuked the wind and the sea and "there was a great calm", he can also quiet our heart when it is agitated by fears and worries (Mark 4). Remaining silent, we trust and hope in God. One psalm suggests that silence is even a form of praise. We are used to reading at the beginning of Psalm 65: "Praise is due to you, O God". This translation follows the Greek text, but actually the Hebrew text printed in most Bibles reads: "Silence is praise to you, O God". When words and thoughts come to an end, God is praised in silent wonder and admiration.

## ***The Word of God: thunder and silence***

At Sinai, God spoke to Moses and the Israelites. Thunder and lightning and an ever-louder sound of a trumpet preceded and accompanied the Word of God (Exodus 19). Centuries later, the prophet Elijah returned to the same mountain of God. There he experienced storm and earthquake and fire as his ancestors did, and he was ready to listen to God speaking in the thunder. But the Lord was not in any of the familiar mighty phenomena. When all the noise was over, Elijah heard "a sound of sheer silence", and God spoke to him (1 Kings 19).

Does God speak with a loud voice or in a breath of silence? Should we take as example the people gathered at Sinai or the prophet Elijah? This might be a wrong alternative. The terrifying phenomena related to the gift of the Ten Commandments emphasize how serious these are. Keeping or rejecting them is a question of life or death. Seeing a child running straight under a car, one is right to shout as loud as possible. In analogous situations prophets speak the word of God so that it makes our ears ring.

Loud words certainly make themselves heard; they are impressive. But we also know that they hardly touch the hearts. They are resisted rather than welcomed. Elijah's experience shows that God does not want to impress, but to be understood and accepted. God chose "a sound of sheer silence" in order to speak. This is a paradox:

### ***God is silent and yet speaking***

When God's word becomes "a sound of sheer silence", it is more efficient than ever to change our hearts. The heavy storm on Mount Sinai was splitting rocks, but God's silent word is able to break open human hearts of stone. For Elijah himself the sudden silence was probably more fearsome than the storm and thunder. The loud and mighty manifestations of God were somehow familiar to him. God's silence is disconcerting, so very different from all Elijah knew before.

Silence makes us ready for a new meeting with God. In silence, God's word can reach the hidden corners of our hearts. In silence, it proves to be "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit" (Hebrews 4:12). In silence, we stop hiding before God, and the light of Christ can reach and heal and transform even what we are ashamed of.

## ***Silence and love***

Christ says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). We need silence in order to welcome these words and put them into practice. When we are agitated and restless, we have so many arguments and reasons not to forgive and not to love too easily. But when we "have calmed and quieted our soul", these reasons turn out to be quite insignificant. Maybe we sometimes avoid silence, preferring whatever noise, words or distraction, because inner peace is a risky thing: it makes us empty and poor, disintegrates bitterness and leads us to the gift of ourselves. Silent and poor, our hearts are overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, filled with an unconditional love. Silence is a humble yet secure path to loving.

© Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé Community, France.

## **Prayer**

### ***Joyce Rupp***

Confusing good feelings with good prayer is another obstacle that keeps us from accepting the natural flow of prayer's ups and downs. Some message persists in filling our mind with the false belief that if we could only "pray right", then we would always feel an easy, overwhelming peace. The goal of prayer is not to pray right, nor is it to have constant noble and inspiring thoughts, nor to have a pleasant sameness where we never have any distractions.

When emotions such as emptiness, confusion, restlessness, irritability, disappointment, and sadness are present, the ego becomes alarmed. When this happens, the ego often urges self recrimination, fault-finding, questioning and blaming. We then try to figure out what "went wrong" with the way we prayed and how we can pray in such a way that we regain the mental and emotional responses we consider worthy.

Prayer is meant to sustain our faith, hold us steadily in our relationship to the Beloved, but good feelings are not always present to do that for us. Faith holds us close to God. Love keeps that link secure.

Without some quiet reflection, some solitude and stillness, our inner eyes will eventually be too blurred and weary to discover God in the rushing of our demanding days.

## **"The Kingdom of Heaven is within ....."**

### **Elizabeth Mills**

Begin each day with a period of quiet – a time to align yourself and your whole being with that which you can neither see nor hear, but that which nevertheless, is an unseen reality.

This reality is the reality of Love and this Love waits tenderly and with infinite patience to touch your heart.

It waits to enfold, to caress and to hold you in its Love, but unless you come, the arms remain empty, the Love unrequited.

So, in the midst of the storms and trials of life, know that there is a safe haven, a place of refuge and this "Place" exists within your very being, but, like watching for a very shy and gentle bird, one must quieten down all the normal faculties and realise that beyond and beneath all that normally helps us to function, there is an unseen essence of Love which upholds, strengthens and brings comfort.

Turn within and find the Kingdom of Heaven that lies in your very being, simply waiting for you to discover its riches and plumb its depths.

The Love you will find there is never-ending: never-ending and true and the comfort It will give you, will be beyond the things of this world, for this is where, as our Lord, tells us. The Kingdom of Heaven abides. And there, He waits.....

### **Editor's Note**

*I am aware that many members already start the day with a period of silence and reflection, but am I alone in needing to be reminded to constantly bring my day before the ground of our being?*

---

***Only save me from myself. Save me from my own, private, poisonous urge to change everything, to act without reason, to move for movement's sake, to unsettle everything You have ordained. Let me rest in Your will and be silent. Then the light of Your joy will warm my life. Its fire will burn in my heart and shine for Your glory. This is what I live for.***

from *Thomas Merton; A Book of Hours*: see page 27/28 for a review of this book



## **"Lost" Meetings**

**Janet Robinson**

Last autumn Anne Stamper and I embarked on a quest to contact Julian meetings which no longer subscribed to the magazine and consequently had no contact with the wider network. We did not know if they were still active. This contact is important because when we have enquiries from people wishing to join a meeting we want to be sure that those we suggest *are* there to welcome them.

Anne found 160 "lost" meetings on her database and I wrote to each one. We found, in fact, that some of the meetings did take a magazine and were in contact but it is difficult to produce a totally accurate list, so apologies to those who were contacted unnecessarily. However, it was a pleasure to be in touch with them personally and to hear about the work of their meetings.

I received 86 replies and of these 58 meetings were active. Some had changed their Contact member which was how we had lost touch. Some had just forgotten to pay their subscription.

We have to consider, since 28 of the replies indicated that the meeting had closed and 74 did not reply, that we probably have a network of around 300 meetings rather than the 400 we thought we had. Reasons for closure were mainly old age, illness and death. Some felt that two or three was too small a number to continue. For myself "when two or three are gathered together..." seems fine but I realise that sometimes through valid reasons this might be reduced to one. Two respondents, though, said that though there were only two of them they would be interested to be regarded as meetings and would welcome anyone wishing to join them.

There were some who said that people seemed to have lost the taste for meditation. One or two mentioned the activity of other such meetings in the area like John Main groups. That there is any meeting in a locality that practices silent prayer and contemplation seems good and I believe that people should go where they feel at home.

One person was very pleased to be contacted since she had taken over leadership of a meeting but knew nothing about the magazine or the wider network of JM. This gave the Julian Advisory Group a wake-up call and we will try to provide more information and support. There were others who did not know if they were "doing it right" but when they described their practice it seemed wholly acceptable!

In my replies I suggested to a few respondents that we might like to use extracts from their letters in the Newsletter or Magazine

Incidentally it was interesting that while I wrote a letter to each meeting, 47 of the replies came by email. Now I am not suggesting any disenfranchisement for those who do not use a computer, it is just interesting that more than 50% replied in that way – and it is, of course, cheaper.

### ***Lost meetings' (continued by Anne Stamper)***

When Janet sent me her list I did a bit more research on the meetings from whom she had no reply.

I checked to find out if the meeting had any other members on the database, and many did not. I also checked if the contact had ever had the magazine. If the contact had never had the magazine and there were no others listed then we agreed to remove this meeting from the network.

If there were others from that meeting on the database I checked if any took the magazine and if any were on e-mail. If so I contacted them, this produced some replies and we were able to confirm that they still existed and get a name of a new contact.

This takes quite a time and is still underway. I will keep a record.

***Request from the JM Co-ordinator: Will readers who live in Britain or Ireland please check the list of Meetings in their Newsletter. If your Meeting, or any other that you know of, is missing from the list please contact Anne Stamper. If a Meeting is listed which you know is closed, please also tell Anne.***



# Obituaries

The Rev Robert Llewellyn Robert died in hospital, on 6 February 2008 aged 98.

Mathematics was his first love.. He came under the influence of the Cowley Fathers and felt himself drawn more and more to prayer. He gradually realised he had a vocation to the priesthood, and was ordained. For many years he worked for SPG, a missionary society (now USPG) in India and the Bahamas. In 1972 he was invited to be the warden of Bede house at Staplehurst, a branch of the Anglican sisters of the love of God. While there Robert published his first book, *Prayer and Contemplation*. He was increasingly called upon to conduct quiet day's, preach sermons, give retreats, and for spiritual direction. In 1976 he was asked by the vicar of the parish to be a praying presence at Dame Julian's cell. He remained in Norwich in a little flat very near St Julian's for the rest of his life. He became very interested in Dame Julian, resulting in his book *With Pity not with Blame* on the spirituality of Julian and the Cloud of Unknowing. He edited *Enfolded in Love* and *In Love Enclosed*, daily readings from Julian's writing, and was general editor of the subsequent series of readings from other Christian classics. In 1994 Robert was awarded the individual Templeton Prize.

Robert joined the Julian Meeting in Julian's Cell, contributed articles to this magazine and later edited *Circles of Silence*, a selection from 21 years of the magazine. He visited Medjugorje. where apparitions of the Virgin Mary are believed to appear to six visionaries, giving messages to the world urging conversion of heart and prayer. Robert was convinced that the visions are genuine. He writes at length about them in his autobiography, *Memories and Reflections*.

He was always available. He had a constant stream of people coming to see him, for prayer, for advice, counselling, for confession, for spiritual direction -or just to be with him. He accepted each person as they were, giving them his full attention and his love. He was steeped in prayer and he saw Christ in everyone, whether it was the man he caught trying to steal the candlesticks from St Julian's altar (he talked with him and set him on his way with £10) with two prostitutes he found distressed and crying near his flat (tea, biscuits and a listening ear) or a bishop.

He would have described himself as a high Church Anglican. He appreciated beautiful liturgy but hated fussy rituals. He recognized holiness where ever it was found; in a charismatic evangelical church, in a Hindu ashram or a Zen retreat.

Robert Llewellyn was a holy priest, a man of prayer, of humour, of humility, and a dear friend to many. He will be sorely missed. May he rest in peace - but also go on praying us all into heaven.

*by Sheila Waller*

## **Eddie Askew,**

*General Director of the Leprosy Mission, author, artist and retreat giver.*

Eddie Askew, who passed away in September 2007 will be known to many readers for his beautifully illustrated books of meditations and "Edge of Daylight", memoirs of his life-long ministry with the Leprosy Mission. Those who attended the Julian Meetings retreat he led at Wydale Hall, Scarborough in 1999, with a theme of Unexpected Journeys, will remember the creative, gentle wisdom of a deeply spiritual man. Details of his books are available from website [www.tlmtrading.com](http://www.tlmtrading.com)

*by Yvonne Walker*

## **Rev. Dr. Martin Israel**

Martin Israel practiced as a pathologist before becoming an Anglican priest. Well known as an author, mystic and healer, he was also much in demand as a lecturer and retreat giver. His books on prayer will be familiar to many. He was a great supporter of the Julian Meetings and one of the London groups grew out of a prayer course he ran at Margaret Street Church. Although afflicted by Parkinson's disease he continued writing almost to the end of his life. He will be sadly missed by J.M. and the many people who sought his wise counsel as a spiritual director.

Details of his books are available from [www.martinisrael.u-net.com/](http://www.martinisrael.u-net.com/)

*by Yvonne Walker*

## **John O'Donohue**

The sudden death of John O'Donohue at the age of 53 in January 2008 came as a shock. He was a much admired Irish poet, scholar, retreat giver and Celtic mystic. His book "Anam Cara" was a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic. His answer to the post-modern world's hunger for truth was drawn from the profound wisdom of Ireland's rich Celtic spirituality and will live on in his books which you will find listed on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

*by Yvonne Walker*

# Living Simply

## Gail Ballinger

Pray ...so that we can be quietly about our business of living simply in humble contemplation. (1 Timothy 2: 2-3 *The Message*)

Recently, on a church bookstall I came across a book by Fiona Castle called *Living Simply*. The title caught my attention as it is something which has challenged me for much of my adult life – certainly since being given a copy of *Enough is Enough* (John V Taylor) soon after its publication in 1976. After the church bookstall encounter, I tried searching for 'living simply' on the internet. This is what I found:

Simple living (or voluntary simplicity) is a lifestyle in which individuals consciously choose to minimize the 'more-is-better' pursuit of wealth and consumption. Adherents choose simple living for a variety of reasons, including spirituality, health, increase in 'quality time' for family and friends, stress reduction, conservation, social justice or anti consumerism while others choose to live more simply for reasons of personal taste or personal economy.

Simple living as a concept is distinguished from those living in forced poverty, as it is a voluntary lifestyle choice. Although asceticism may resemble voluntary simplicity, proponents of simple living are not all ascetics. The term "downshifting" is often used to describe the act of moving from a lifestyle of greater consumption towards a lifestyle based on voluntary simplicity. *From Wikipedia,*

Simplicity is a recurrent theme in Christian life and teaching. We find challenges to simplicity in the Gospels e.g. in the story of the rich young ruler, in the sheep and goats. We find challenges in the monastic tradition, with its roots in the lives of the desert fathers, and their rejection of worldly values, which has simply spending time with God as one of its cornerstones. The Franciscan lifestyle, with its call to poverty is exemplified in the simplicity seen in the life of St. Francis. We are challenged by Quaker simplicity and for the last thirty-six years by the Lifestyle Movement to 'Live more simply that others may simply live' (now revised to 'Live simply that all of us may simply live.') We find challenges in CAFOD's *livesimply* campaign –to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor. We find challenges in Gandhi's statement that there is 'Enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed' More is better is challenged by 'less is

more'. 'A devout life does bring wealth but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God' (1 Timothy 6: 6 *The Message*)

Fiona Castle wrote her book after spending some time staying with her daughter who lived for eleven years in a shanty town in Peru. Its sub-title is 'decluttering your heart and your home.' For some time now television programmes, newspapers and magazine articles on 'decluttering' have gained in popularity. 'Stuff' is sometimes a new word for excess. There is a suggestion that all this 'stuff' is oppressive, a burden and destructive of people's ability to be happy. It needs more organising and looking after than people can reasonably manage. Yet for many shopping is a leisure activity in its own right and 'retail therapy' is high on the list of leisure occupations. I can't help thinking that this, added to the long work hours culture, is putting a lot of strain on many people as is the massive amount of debt that accompanies it. 'Why pay money for that which is not bread?' (Isaiah 55: 2-3). What kind of messages are we giving out?

Richard Rohr speaks of our society as addictive and that as well as the more obvious addictions of alcohol, nicotine, coffee and food there are 'process addictions' in which he includes accumulation of money, work and shopping. Fiona Castle adds addiction to urgency. At the same time there is increasing awareness of environmental questions, climate change and the impact of our excess on the world and it's poor. Moving towards a voluntary simplicity came into the public eye when two journalists were challenged (separately) to 'live ethically for a year': Justin Rowlatt - 'Ethical Man' from the BBC and Leo Hickman of the Guardian - one resulting in a television programme and the other in a book (*A Life Stripped Bare*). Both attempted to live more simply, more aware of the world's needs and reducing their use of resources and their 'carbon footprint'. These days simplicity goes hand in hand with sustainability. The Observer for 8th April 2007 quotes Jonathon Porritt as saying 'Stop shopping or the planet will go pop' During Lent the Methodist Church encouraged us daily to Buy Less Live More.

The Testimony of Simplicity is the Quaker belief that a person ought to live his or her life simply in order to focus on what is most important and ignore or play down what is least important. The Quaker Advice and Queries asks us to: 'Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of great strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effect your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?'

'We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.' (Advice and Queries 41& 42 Religious Society of Friends in Britain)

If we are to be 'living simply in humble contemplation', as Timothy said, then living simply is not just about outward expression, but also about inner freedom, inner simplicity of heart. It is about letting go, or trusting God (faith): letting go of anxiety and surrendering ourselves to God. Living simply can lead us to contemplation and contemplation can lead us to living simply. Both are gift but also discipline; both need interior space and at the same time create space in our lives; both bring balance into our lives; both need generosity – to others but also to ourselves – as well as frugality. Simplicity does not deny the complexity of things but finds the unity and connectedness beneath all things. Silence simplifies.

*Close to you, Christ Jesus, it becomes possible to know the realities of God, by letting the little that we understand of the realities of the Gospel pass into our daily life. And this little proves to be just enough for us to advance day by day, moment by moment. You never turn us into a people who have made it, but humble people of God who, in all simplicity, are seeking to place their trust in you.*  
Taizé

The following may be helpful:

*Freedom of Simplicity*, by Richard Foster. Hodder, first published 1981, revised ed 2005 (I'd recommend the revised edition as it is considerably updated)

*Lifestyle: a parable of sharing*, by A H Dammers. Jon Carpenter publishing 2001

*Living Simply*, by Fiona Castle. Kingsway 2006

*Simplicity*, by Richard Rohr OFM. Crossroad Publishing 1991 rev ed 2003

[www.livesimply.org.uk](http://www.livesimply.org.uk) livesimply - a CAFOD website

[www.lifestyle-movement.org.uk](http://www.lifestyle-movement.org.uk) (new website – may not be complete yet)

[www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org) Center for Action and Contemplation

## **The Life Style Commitment**

*Recognising that the peaceful development and perhaps survival of the human race are threatened by:*

the injustice of extremes of poverty and wealth

the profligate use of natural resources and the pollution of the environment

the denial of useful and creative work to so many people.

*I therefore seek to:*

live simply that all may simply live

give freely that all may be free to give

avoid wasteful use of resources and show care for the environment

work with others for social justice through appropriate action

enjoy such good things as are compatible with this commitment

share my commitment with others.

For further information contact: **Keith Taplin, The General Secretary,  
The Lifestyle Movement, 78 Filton Grove, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0AL**

## **Prayer**

***Joyce Rupp***

***Orbis Books New York, 2007, \$10***

***ISBN 978-1-57075-712-9***

This is a basic book on prayer designed to go beyond information to transformation. In her introduction Joyce Rupp ponders why books about prayer continue to claim our attention and she recognises that our yearning for God is never fully satisfied "The longer we pray, the more we realize prayer is bigger than we are, more expansive and deeper."

Each chapter of this handbook on prayer starts with one of the author's poems and ends with questions and a prayer. It covers subjects such as entering into a relationship with God, images of God, letting go, distractions, awareness, ways of praying and prayer and life.

This is a sound, straight-forward book which I would not hesitate to offer someone starting out on the journey of prayer or whose prayer has become stale. The format makes it ideal for group discussion and it provides resources on which to base a quiet day or workshop on prayer and material for leading in to prayer.

***Yvonne Walker***

## **Seeking Faith, Finding God**

**John Rackley**

**BRF, 2007, £6.99**

**ISBN 978-1-84101-543-9**

Seeking Faith, Finding God grew out of John Rackley's weekly column Rackley's Reflections in the Baptist Times. His aim in both the column and the book is to 'write something that will encourage the readers to look at the Bible with fresh eyes'. In his introduction he says 'The gospel, however, expects us to communicate what we believe with a view to convincing others of its authenticity. I believe this begins to happen when Christian people are ready to have seeking and searching faith themselves. If we are to communicate what we believe it must be as fellow travellers in these difficult and demanding times'.

The book is arranged in five sections on themes of 'A yearning faith; A Gospel place; Gospel encounters; Faith companions and Praying the Gospel'. Each reflection is about two pages long and ends with suggestions for reflection, prayer and discussion. A number of the reflections are 'imagination led'.

Here we find new light, new ways of coming at what is familiar in the Bible, new ways of looking and seeing. Some of it is startling. Not only do we look at things differently; to read the book is to be changed as there is so much here not just for reflection, but also for growth. It is a book I am grateful for. I particularly liked Paddington Station in Advent and Unfinished Symphonies.

*Gail Ballinger*

## **Dreams: the path to wholeness**

**Lisa Cornwell**

**SPCK, 2006, £14.99**

**ISBN 0281257966**

To ignore our dreams is to delude ourselves that they don't matter. It is also to deprive ourselves of an intimate relationship with ourselves, with our very essence and hence with God.

For some Christians this presents a problem. Cornwell addresses this issue and reminds us that up until the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, dreams were welcomed by Christians as a way of discovering God in their lives – in line with the Old and New Testament traditions. She sights a deliberate mistranslation in Jerome's Latin Vulgate as the beginning of a false condemnation of dreamwork. His attempt to deal with superstitions of the day led the Western church – not the Eastern tradition church – away from their heritage.

Cornwell takes us through a process of acquiring self-knowledge by using primarily the work of Carl Gustav Jung. His belief was that we should be aiming towards wholeness – to become that which we were destined to become. Dreaming is both a biological necessity and a fact of life. We are taken briefly through the types of sleep we have and she introduces us to the language of dreams. In this place we are 'confronted with the very reality of ourselves' and I would recommend her approach to understanding ourselves better.

Lisa Cornwell is a priest in the Church of England and prior to this was Head of Religious Education at a school.

*Patricia Hughes*

## **Sister Wendy on Prayer**

***Sister Wendy Beckett, with a biographical introduction by David Willcock***

***Continuum, 2007, £8.99***

***ISBN 978-0-8264-8389-8***

Sister Wendy is familiar to many of us from her television programmes and books about art; in this book however she is writing about prayer. She acknowledges that this has been, for her, a much more difficult book to write. As each of us is different, so our relationship with God will be different, and as 'No one would dare to write a book on how husband and wife talk to each other.....' she finds it difficult to write a book about how each of us relates to God. She writes: 'There is not some secret about prayer that can be taught, it is essentially simple – it is not we who pray, it is God. Prayer is His business.'



The biographical introduction was written by David Willcock, the TV producer who collaborated with Sister Wendy in making eighteen television films on art. He sheds an interesting light on Sister Wendy the person, and explains, amongst other things, her name, which has always seemed to me to be an unexpected name for a nun. On first entering the convent she took the much more serious name of Sister Michael of St Peter. After the second Vatican Council, which allowed her to revert to her own name, she did so 'as a penance'. She actually preferred to be known as two male saints but believed herself to be 'a real Wendy: essentially silly' she thought it better to use that name.

The book is divided into three sections: The Practice of Prayer, Prayer and Belief, and Prayer and Personality. It is a calm and reassuring book to read. I felt as though I was walking in a quiet convent garden with Sister Wendy by my side talking to me. Even the way that the book is presented is calm, with lines widely spaced. Interspersed in the text are a dozen colour reproductions of paintings which Sister Wendy uses to illustrate some of her themes. She chooses some unexpected paintings, and in her commentary helps you to see them in a different way, and to understand why she has chosen to include them.

She has some sections about silence and prayer that will resonate well with 'Julians':

'In silent prayer there are no words and hence no thoughts. We are still. This silence is nothing to be afraid of. Five or ten minutes, whatever can be spared: you are just there to stand in His presence and let Him take possession of you.'

*Anne Stamper*

## **A Book of Hours**

***Thomas Merton; edited by Kathleen Deignan***

***Sorin Books/Alban Books 2007, £9.99 ISBN 1-933495-05-7***

This book is beautifully fashioned and would make an admirable gift book. It draws on the many insightful and contemplative writings of Thomas Merton (1915-1968), acclaimed as one of the most influential spiritual masters of the twentieth century.

It is arranged like a medieval Book of Hours providing contemplative material for a week. Each day is divided into four sections: dawn, day, dusk and dark. It would be an excellent volume to take on retreat when one could use it as it is designed. Alternatively one could dip into each section and find many meaningful passages of beauty and reflection which would take many weeks to absorb and make one's own.

I found the introductory chapters somewhat pretentious and repetitive but having read them once one can enjoy often the timelessness and deep insights of Merton's work.

*Janet Robinson*

## **Things Hidden: scripture as spirituality**

**Richard Rohr**

*St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, 2007, £10.99, ISBN 0-86716-659-2*

There is a necessary light that is only available through darkness, the darkness that comes in those liminal spaces of birth, death and suffering. You can't learn it in books alone. There are certain truths that can be known only if we are sufficiently emptied, sufficiently ready, sufficiently confused or sufficiently destabilised. That's the genius of the Bible. It doesn't let you resolve all these questions in theology classrooms. In fact, none of the Bible appears to be written out of or for academic settings.

It is very clear that Jesus was able to heal, touch, teach and transform people, and there was no prerequisite for any formal education. It was not based on any scholastic philosophy or theology. Jesus, as a teacher, largely talked about what was real and what was unreal and how therefore we should live inside of that reality. In a thousand ways he was saying that God comes to you disguised as your life!

Jesus teaches in the temple area several times but most of his teaching is walking with people on the streets, out into the desert and often into nature. His examples come from the things he sees around him: birds, flower, animals, clouds, little children, women baking and sweeping. It's amazing that WE made his teaching into something other than that.

Jesus teaches with anecdote, parable and concrete example much more than creating a systematic theology; it was more the way of "darkness" than the way of light. Yet it was the concrete examples of Jesus that broke people through to the universal light. Particulars seem to open us up most to universals, which is what poets have always understood.

*Yvonne Walker*

# **The Monastic Way: ancient wisdom for contemporary living: a book of daily readings**

*edited by Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild*

Canterbury Press, 2007, £16.99

ISBN 1-85311-757-9

The cover of this is beautifully produced hardback book shows a colour photograph of the monastery of St Anthony in Egypt, founded around 365 AD. It was the first monastery. This is an appropriate jacket for a book of extracts from writings of monks and nuns from down the centuries.

The book is presented as a chapter for every month, each with its own subject: 'seeking guidance', 'living with others', 'learning to listen'..... Within each chapter, one for each day of the month, are short paragraphs from the writings of men and women from a wide range of different monastic orders. One day you read from the sayings of the desert mothers or fathers and the next piece is written by a member of an order in modern day America. The writers vary from John Main to Basil the Great, Teresa of Avila to Brother Roger. Some are very short, like this from John of the Cross

'Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation'.

The compilers, both of whom have spent part of their lives as members of Anglican religious orders, write in the introduction: 'rather than trying to present monastic wisdom as snippets of good advice from them to us, we have aimed, as far as possible, to overhear monastics talking to each other – often, indeed, instructing or advising each other, but also often simply comparing notes.'

And this is indeed how it seemed to me. I did not choose to read just one piece a day, but to take a longer section and enjoy the juxtaposition of the different voices.

There is ample material here for many suitable 'lead ins' for a Julian Meeting. It is also a book to open at random and find some gem. I have just opened and found this:

It helps if we switch from the notion of our searching for God and instead think about God coming to find us, for after all that is the way it is. It is we who are lost. It is God who is looking for us. (Basil Hume OSB)

*Anne Stamper*

## **Beloved: Henri Nouwen in conversation with Philip Roderick**

*Canterbury Press, 2007, £9.99*

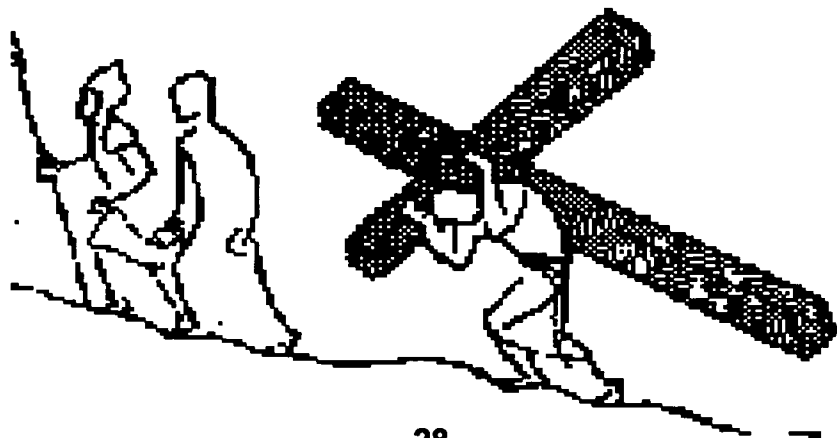
*ISBN 1-85311-810-4*

The clarity with which Henri Nouwen saw our relationship with God is reflected in the popularity of his thoughts and writings now, 12 years after his death. This short book is a transcription of a conversation where Henri responds to questions from Philip Roderick, founder of the Quiet Gardens Trust (see elsewhere in this magazine.) The conversation also comes alive in the C.D. which comes with the book.

In 14 short sections some of the themes are solitude and aloneness, silence, vocation for different Christians, especially the housebound, knowing ourselves beloved, spending time with God, and accepting ourselves. While very profound, Henri's words speak to situations we all know with directness and understanding. He suggests "that is the order of things-at night to pray, in the morning to form community and then with community to minister.... (but) it's not a question of strategies or techniques or methods. God loves us and somehow we have to be very trusting... God is among us." We are each of us Beloved of God.

The last 3 pages of the book contain questions and invitations for reflection. If we all responded honestly to them we might not only know more of ourselves, but also become more receptive and aware of our journey with God.

*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 June 2008**

Contributions by email are particularly welcome.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

