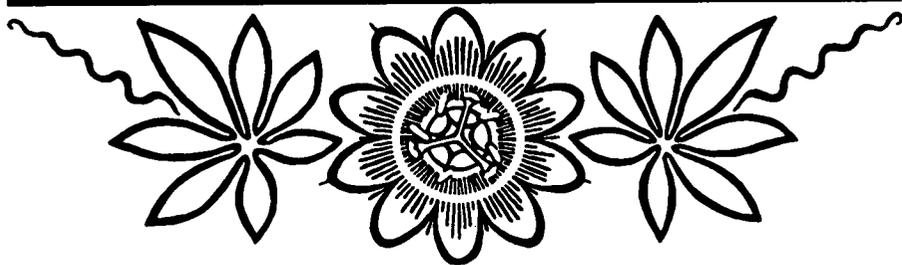


THE  
JULIAN  
MEETINGS

*Magazine*



**December 2005**

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What shall I say to you, my God?  
Shall I collect together all the words  
that praise your holy Name?  
Shall I give you all the names of this world,  
you, the Unnameable?  
Shall I call you 'God of my life,  
meaning of my existence,  
hallowing of my acts,  
my journey's end,  
bitterness of my bitter hours,  
home of my loneliness,  
you my most treasured happiness?

Shall I say :  
Creator,  
Sustainer,  
Pardoner,  
Near One,  
Distant One,  
Incomprehensible One,  
God of both flowers and stars,  
God of the gentle wind and  
of terrible battles,  
Wisdom,  
Power,  
Loyalty,  
Truthfulness,  
Eternity and  
Infinity,  
You the All-merciful,  
You the Just One,  
You love itself ?

Karl Rahner

# Editorial

*Francis Ballinger*

In this edition we have contributions from Julian Meetings in Australia and South Africa, as well as a number of other articles, illustrations and poems, including seasonal material. Thank you to all contributors.

Two people have volunteered to help with the editing, but the more we have the easier it will become. Please get in touch if you can help, and also to send any material you think might be suitable for inclusion.

We hope that all of the material included in this edition will be used as appropriate: as far as we are aware there is no copyright on anything that has been included, so feel free to copy anything you wish.

## A New Co-ordinator for Australia

*Hilary Wakeman*

Meryl Webb, who has been the Co-ordinator of the Julian Meetings in Australia for 18 years, has decided to resign so she can give more time to the ecumenical community to which she is now under life vows. Her place has been taken by Wendy Hudson.

We are enormously grateful to Meryl for the incredible energy and enthusiasm she has put into the work these past 18 years. I met her just once, in Norwich, a very long time ago, and have retained a sense of her warmth, liveliness and depth.

And we welcome Wendy, and wish her well as she undertakes this new work.

Wendy is a recently retired teacher, with a Masters in Pastoral Counselling, and is currently studying at Trinity College Theological School (University of Melbourne) for a Master of Divinity. She lives in a sea side village which, she says, "looks a little like Lindesfarne - tidal river flats with bluff" - and has a website at [www.barwonheads.net](http://www.barwonheads.net).

# Keeping a spiritual journal

**David Hawthorn**

I started writing in a journal about 15 years ago. Over the years it has become increasingly important to me. In the past couple of years in particular, when my life has been going through a period of change, it has been an enormous support.

## ***The benefits of keeping a journal:-***

1. It helps me understand myself better. I've found myself writing down thoughts and feelings I didn't know I had.
2. It helps to open up a path of prayer. When I've felt far from God or my spiritual life has seemed stale, writing in my journal has drawn me closer to God simply by bringing out the issues that are important at that time in my life, the issues I need to bring to God.
3. My journal is a place I can record God'speaking' to me. If I feel that God is saying something to me, whether directly or through something I read or someone says, I write it down and reflect upon it. I am often surprised at how often God does seem to speak.
4. It helps me work through problems. Just as talking to someone can help put a problem into better perspective, so can writing about it. Among other things, it is a safe way of expressing difficult emotions such as anger.
5. It provides a record of my spiritual journey. Looking back at what I have written reminds me where I have come from, which helps me to understand where I am heading. It also shows me recurring themes or issues that need my attention.

## ***Choosing a journal***

It's important to choose a journal that you find attractive and you want to write in. The mostly likely shops to sell journals (or blank books you can use as a journal) are bookshops (Waterstones has a good selection), stationers and New-Age type shops. Alternatively, try the following websites:

[www.brushdance.com](http://www.brushdance.com)

[www.thejournalshop.co.uk](http://www.thejournalshop.co.uk)

[www.lanternpaper.com.au](http://www.lanternpaper.com.au)

## ***What to write in your journal***

This is entirely up to you of course but the important thing is that you write about what really matters to you. No-one will see what you have written so you can be completely honest in what you write. A journal is also a useful place to record notes on books you've read, quotations, prayers etc.

### ***Some tips for getting started***

1. Finding time to keep a journal – the easiest way to get into a routine for journal-writing will be to write at regular times; the same time each day or the same days in the week. However, it may suit you to be more free and easy.
2. When to write – try experimenting with writing at various times of the day until you find the time that works best for you.
3. Where to write – try to find a quiet spot where you can write regularly. Some background music might help to put you into journal-writing mood.
4. How much to write – write as much as you need or want to. If you find you have so much to write that you feel deterred from starting, try giving yourself a maximum time limit.
5. How to start – you may feel self-conscious staring at that first blank page. One way to start is to just start writing about anything of interest that has happened to you earlier in the day. Another is to write a list of things that are bringing you joy in life or a list of things that are bothering you. Then choose one item from the list and write about it.

### ***Some useful books on journal-writing***

- How to keep a spiritual journal by Ron Klug (ISBN 0 8066 4357 9) – the only Christian journal-writing guide I've come across; full of practical tips and journal-writing exercises.
- Turning inward by Cheryl Richardson (ISBN 1 4019 0114 X) – an A4 paperback journal with 60 journal-writing questions and two blank pages for each question for you to write in your reflections.
- Journal to the self by Kathleen Adams (0 446 39038 0) – covers different techniques for working through problems, healing relationships, recovering from grief, overcoming childhood wounds etc.
- A year in the life by Sheila Bender (0 89879 971 6) – journal-writing exercises for a whole year.

All of the above books are American. You may find it hard to track them down in a bookshop (any journal-writing guides that are stocked will most likely be found in the Self-help/self-development section or, failing that, the Popular psychology section) but any bookshop should be able to order a book for you if you give them the title and ISBN. Alternatively, an Internet search on the Amazon website ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) for journal-writing books will produce a long list of books you can buy online.

### ***Some journal-writing exercises to try***

I've found it helpful to occasionally try out some exercises I've come across in books. Here are three you might like to try. I found them all helpful.

1. If your life were a film, what would the overall message be? Write the storyline. (From *Turning inward* by Cheryl Richardson, ISBN 1 4019 0114 X.)
2. Think of an account of a healing in the Gospels or elsewhere in the Bible that draws you, that is meaningful to you in some way. When you have chosen one, try to work out why it appeals to you. What does it say to you about your life or about God? (From *How to discover your personal mission* by John Monbourquette, ISBN 0 232 52452 1.)
3. Imagine how, in your wildest dreams, you would love the remainder of your life to turn out. Now write your own obituary notice as though your life had in fact followed that path. Do not analyse it but allow your fancy to run free. This can be a very useful exercise in getting more in touch with your inner life and with your desires. (From *God of surprises* by Gerard Hughes, ISBN 0 232 52153 0.)

*Isaiah 55:3*

*Come to me and listen to my words, hear me and you will have life: I shall make an everlasting covenant with you to love you faithfully.*

# Contemplative Prayer.

*Brenda Lofthouse*

*Silence*

*In the depth of heart  
At the centre of being.*

*Silence*

*Making space  
For God's indwelling*

*Silence*

*When mind and heart  
Are at one —  
In the present moment.*

*The present moment  
When time and the eternal connect  
In this eternal NOW  
Let there be — Silence.*

*John 10:10*

*I have come that they may have life, and  
may have it in all its fullness.*

# Flower Arranging

## *Phyll Grayling*

In the art of flower arranging one of the rules is to have a focal point.

This focal point must be the very best flower available, the most beautiful in colour, size and without a single blemish. Without spot or wrinkle.

And the position of the flower in the arrangement is central, perhaps a little toward the base.

This flower focuses our attention and draws us into an awareness of the whole arrangement, its balance, its beauty and meaning.

An arrangement gives a message and really does express the arranger's personality.

For me, in similar fashion, Jesus is the point of focus, or the focal point of the Kingdom of God.

As we look to Jesus and study his nature and life, just as the focal flower drew our attention to the whole arrangement, so we are drawn more and more to seek God and the Kingdom.

Jesus said "if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me" .

Just as the focal flower in an arrangement draws us to be aware of and appreciate even fall in love with the whole arrangement so does Jesus, of God and the kingdom.

Of course he is much more to us than any focal point of a flower arrangement.

Jesus came to defeat Satan on our behalf. He came to show us the Father and to be the Door into the kingdom.

He is our : Redeemer, our Saviour, our Peace, our Healer, our Righteousness, our Great High Priest, our King.

He is our Lord who is to come again, our Jehovah Jireh, our Provider, our Victory.....

I am a sure you all can give Him the other names - the Door, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Shepherd.

Truly each one of us can say he is our El-Shaddai - the All Sufficient One.

We could go on and on until our hearts cry out "our Saviour and our God "who is altogether lovely."

He surely is all we need

In the Song of Solomon the maiden felt she had lost contact with her lover. He was not in her focus.

And do we not at times to feel the same? The heavens seem as brass. The lover of our souls seems far away. Concerns and troubles overwhelm us and not least the struggle of self becomes our focus.

As well the enemy will do all he can shift our focus. And we cry "Lord where are you? Where are you?"

This happened to the maiden and in her distress she began to inquire of others where he might be and they wanted to know something about him - what he was like and why was she so upset?

Through this she was led to extol his person and to tell of his beauty, true worth and amazing love. And unknowingly by this exercise of praise to his peerless worth, she was led out of herself and her concerns, and her worries and delivered from the subtle forum of self life with that crept back in and had unawares become the focus again.

Looking at Him, and extolling Him brought her the knowledge of his whereabouts - He was within her affections and central to all her hopes. And so is our Lord ever present within by the Holy Spirit..

It is only the consideration of his Divine Person: his Grace and truth; his faithfulness and love are by which unknowingly we find discovery of the light we seem to have lost for a time. The sharing of Him in this way kindles the interests of listeners to seek Him for themselves.

And so we learn to rest in Him and keep Him as our focal point. Has he not promised to never leave us nor forsake us and where two or three are gathered in His name He is in the midst .

I experience as we gather together each month, putting away all our cares and in the silence consider, worship and adore our Lord as we focus on Him I sense and believe he draws near to us He is pleased and we are refreshed. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

He is never far from any of us.

*Dear Heavenly Father grant us now the grace to put away all worldly cares and focus our attention on Jesus the altogether lovely one. We ask this in his all-powerful name Jesus. Amen.*

# Dark Time

Elisabeth Dugmore

*Deep winter has the woods by the throat -  
Dying leaves lying, brown on brown,  
russet on cinnamon, oak on beech,  
wet dark'ning tones that the long rains leech.  
Browsing ponies lurk in the bracken  
nosing the rusty turf for feed.  
Black bunching ash-keys droop and weep -  
the oak hulks drip in winter sleep.*

*Only a glow in the dark sky's frown -  
a pearly streak through the grey cloud-bar.  
How can our sun have sunk so far?  
Life is ebbd to the barest yearning,  
thinking reduced to brood and gloat -  
torpid feelings maunder and slacken -  
the will to be doing, striving, earning -  
all dormant now at year's dark turning.*

*Too dim to see, too numb to bleed,  
we yet, while dumb to pray or plead,  
know (planted cold with the trusting seed)  
our God will meet our deepest need.*

10th January 2002

# Silence

*Elisabeth Dugmore*

*Ploughmen and shepherds must have known you well,  
Arab and Inuit lived with you for mate,  
Have dwelt you as an oyster does his shell —  
Silence, unprized quintessence of their state.  
We've made our noisy home in traffic roar,  
With hoover washer mower our ears are numb —  
Perceiving motorway as waves on distant shore,  
Some finding mindlessness in ecstasy of drum.  
Pursuing stillness — surely paradox!  
Clambering mountains, hiking woods — all nought.  
We think to put on quiet like a change of socks,  
Yet even garden evenings harbour busy thought.  
Silence — a grace rare as a precious stone,  
The peace of God, our Lover's gift alone.*

*23rd February 2002*

*I remember once I was praying in my room  
in the most heightened spiritual state and my  
grandmother opened the door and said, 'The  
carrots need peeling!' I jumped up and said,  
'Granny, can't you see that I am praying?'  
And she replied, 'I thought that praying was  
being in touch with God and learning to love.  
Here are the carrots and the knife.'*

*Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh*

# Christmas Eve

*Elisabeth Dugmore*

*Out in the woods this Christmas Eve  
under cold skies heavy as lead.*

*Branches reach bare – as good as dead  
and boots tramp mud and soaking leaves.*

*In this dark North we hold Christ born  
midnight, midwinter – rags and shed,*

*Shamed birth, tramp's life, shamed death – he bled  
and died for love, new life, the curtain torn –*

*Killed death and rose with hope of peace  
and joy to... even the Middle East –*

*to starving kids who crouch and groan  
fly-eyed in sub-Saharan sun.*

*He knows the worst, the poorest, least:*

*Knows, loves and calls us one by one.*

*24th December 2004*



**picture by Anne Stamper**

# Turning

Elisabeth Dugmore

*Like courteous guest, arriving promptly,  
the buds appear on the gnarled and withered  
twigs of winter.*

*We looked expectantly – examined with care –  
and yet they surprised us –  
responding to the rising sap,  
Though weather barely warmed.  
Slim, upcurved on the beech branches,  
as if by appointment,  
candelabra light up with the astonishing  
wonder of green flames.*

*There are times of heart and soul, too,  
winter weather sets in,  
dry, cold and empty – cuts off from the sap-  
source,  
clamps us with frost and death.  
Hopelessly we wait it out, preoccupied –  
even possessed – by numb humdrum.  
What turns us? Surely He himself,  
Creator and sustainer, renewer of all,  
holds the bare twig, hard heart,  
near His heart.  
And as we turn a mere glance –  
one whispered word –  
He bursts in upon us again  
with smiling springtime grace.  
Our host – yet standing at the door  
Like courteous guest.*

29th April 2005

# We are Included

*Phyll Grayling*

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight O Lord. Amen

The longer I live the more amazing I see creation, life, God. The greater the mystery of it all the greater the wonder of God. His power, His Majesty, His love, not to mention His knowledge and wisdom. When I think of the sun, moon and stars, sunsets, see pictures of the orbits of planets, I stand in awe. With the Psalmist "I extol him that rideth upon the heaven's by his name JAH and rejoice before him"(Psalm 68:4.)

Every now and then he comes to us to take us a little deeper into some aspect of his kingdom, himself or perhaps his way.

On several occasions recently the word "included" seemed to be projected or highlighted to my mind -- we are included. We are included. I want to shout it loudly, so that it reverberates in every ear and mind: included in the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus -- because we are included in him at baptism -- baptized into Jesus.

This, as I tried to fully grasp it, is so amazing. I am filled with joy, love, praise, adoration -- rejoicing. This is absolutely amazing -- amazing Grace, amazing mercy, amazing love -- not to forget wisdom and power. He has done all, for us. Truly we can let go and let God -- no striving, no working for, just knowing absolutely that we are included.

What is the struggle of this "little day" of each life? Is our lord Jesus Christ we have for ever to rejoice, to trust, to love.

We can know something of God intellectually we believe; but every now and then the spirit bring something alive in a fresh way, and we know that we know, that we know.

We believe on the Lord Jesus.

We trust in his experience for us -- his precious shed blood -- we say he has gone before. But to know I am included in his death, burial, resurrection and ascension means so much more -- included as they come from me so definite so complete so safe. It is done, it is finished -- I nestle in the inclusion and to God be all the glory and all the praise.

I want to give a little demonstration:

I'm going to place a small, crumpled, unclean piece of paper in a book

-- THE BOOK.

When I close the book the paper is quite unseen.

It is included, hidden in the book.

Wherever the book is the piece of paper is.

It is included in the book, and every experience of the book.

No one sees the paper, only the book is viewed.

If the book is on the table, the paper is there too; if the book is on the floor so is the paper: if the book is out in all weather the paper is included -- safe in the book.

I believe this is how God sees us, and how we should see each other -- we see Jesus -- we are included in him -- all he is, and all he has done for us -- dead, buried, resurrected, and ascended. Amazing Grace, amazing love.

He tells us we are complete in him.

This is almost too marvellous for our finite minds to grasp. Of course at the same time we are being changed from Glory to Glory, as we gaze at Jesus, surrendered and appropriating the word and the spirit.

Colossians 3 : 1- 4

Were you not raised to life with Christ? Then aspire to the realm above, where Christ is, seated at God's right hand, and fix your thoughts on that higher realm, not on this earthly life. You died; and now your life lies hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you too will be revealed with him in glory.

*Most loving God -- we give you all our praise. Help us now in the quiet of this half hour to focus on the wonder of each life being included: hidden in your beloved son Jesus*

*Help our unbelief and pour out your holy spirit in us and upon us that we might let go and be free to worship you in spirit and in truth to give you all the praise and the glory.*

*I ask this in and through the name of your son Jesus, the Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.*



# Into the silence

Anne Stamper

*Silence is the moment in which we not only stop the discussion with others but also the inner discussion with ourselves, in which we breathe freely and accept our identity as a gift. "Not I live, but He lives in me". It is in this silence that the Spirit of God can pray in us and continue its creative work in us:..... without silence we will lose our centre and become victims of the many who constantly demand our attention.*

*This picture is trying to express similar thoughts to these words of Henri Nouwen*

*I sometimes use this 'prayer stone' as a personal lead in to silence, the feel of it in the palm of my hand reminds me of Mother Julian's hazelnut. As the silence deepens so it becomes possible to leave the clamour of outside thoughts and reach deeper into the inner peace of the Spirit.*

**God does not see our non-existent good works or our non-existent successes: He sees in the depth of our being, often hidden among trumpery and dirt and darkness, His own image, glowing like light in darkness. And that is what we have to learn. We have to look at our adversary, at our enemy, and forget he is an enemy and see the image of God in him, an icon: a damaged icon, a icon which at times one is barely able to recognise – and because it is so damaged... one must pity it more than if it was in glory.**

**Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh**

On first experiencing a Carmelite Community  
for Women with their brown habits, and  
listening to parts of their Rule.

OR

Thy will be dun

*Graham Johnson*

So many shades of brown,  
Are they won like judo belts?  
From stone-washed novice  
To dark Belgian chocolates?

Or are all in the cell wardrobe?  
"What shall I wear today?  
My material needs, plus love,  
and emotional support : I pray?"

"What shall I wear today?  
The mud colour of the Slough?  
Are dependency, insecurity,  
my anxiety, enough?"

"What shall I wear today?  
A scapula to match?  
Shouldering the office:  
the Sisters, the building,  
the cash."

"What shall I wear today?  
The colour of a saint?  
Teresan terracotta?  
I'll be someone I 'ain't."

"Get thee behind me Satan."  
"I know. It looks lovely  
from the back."  
"I should have gone to Wantage.  
I look so much better in black."

"I am now completely helpless.  
But the silence makes all things  
well.  
What shall I wear today?  
I'll wear the CARAMEL."

# Loving My Neighbour with Silence

*Graham Johnson*

At some stage, all who "Wait on God in the silence", must ask themselves: "Do I love God or do I just love the silence?"

There are no simple answers to this question. One answer is given by St John - that those who say they love God must love their neighbour (1 John 4:21). This seems to solve one question by posing another - "Am I really loving my neighbour or just enjoying the good feeling I get by being charitable?"

In one of his novels, P. G. Wodehouse describes the efforts of an upper-class heroine to mend her broken heart. Having been shipped off to Blandings Castle by a gang of unsympathetic aunts to "forget" the unsuitable man with whom she was in love, she devoted herself to loving her neighbour - especially the deserving poor in Blandings Parva. She took soup and blankets to the elderly cottagers, and read improving books to the bed-ridden. She organised a Bible class for tiny tots, dragooned the Church Lads Brigade and arranged jumble sales for working mothers. Having made life an unmitigated hell for all who lived there she eventually married her fiancé and the villagers lived happily ever after.

A nasty little story you might think. Yet he was only echoing the words of the great 17th Century saint - Vincent de Paul, who said, "If you would truly love others, if you would serve the poor, you must first learn to be loved by them, for it is only if you are loved by them that they will forgive you for giving them bread."

Mindful of these examples can we find a way of using our call to silence as one guide to loving our neighbour?

I have recently re-read "Celebration of Awareness" by Ivan Illich\*. As Vice-Rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico he used to prepare people for work in the Spanish ghettos. They had to learn the Spanish language but in doing so they also learned the ways in which meanings are transmitted - showing that much more is relayed from one to another through and in silence than in words. It is not so much other people's words as their silences which we have to learn to understand them.

There is an analogy between our silence with our neighbour and with God. To learn the full meaning of one, we must practice and deepen the other.

Illich classifies some silences for us.

**1) The silence of the pure listener**

This he describes as the silence of womanly passivity, the silence of deep interest, the silence through which the message of the other becomes "he/she in us".

This silence is threatened by another silence - the silence of indifference, of disinterest which assumes there is nothing I want or can receive from the other person. It is the silence of the Christian who reads the gospel with the attitude that he knows it all. It is the silence of the missionary who never understood the miracle of a foreigner whose listening is a greater testimony of love than that of another who speaks.

In the prayer of silent listening the Christian can acquire the habit of this first silence from which the Word can be born in another culture. The Word conceived in silence is grown in silence.

**2) The silence of Mary after she conceived the Word**

This is the silence from which the Magnificat was born. The silence in which we prepare ourselves, awaiting the proper moment for the Word to be born into the world.

This silence is threatened by hurry and busyness. It is threatened by the silence of cheapness which means that one word is as good as another and that words need no nursing.

The silence of Mary is a silence before words, or, between them: the silence within which words live or die. It is the silence of the slow prayer of hesitation; of prayer in which words have the courage to swim in a sea of silence.

**3) The silence beyond words**

The more we examine this grammar of silence the further apart grow good and bad silence. The silence beyond words does not prepare any further talk. It is the silence that has said everything because there is nothing more to say. This is the silence of love beyond words. It is the definite attitude of one who faces the Word which is Silence, or the silence of one who has obstinately turned away from Him in despair.

At the pole opposed to despair there is the silence of love, the holding of hands of the lovers. The form of communication which opens the simple depths of the soul. It comes in flashes and it can become a life time in prayer just as much as with my neighbour. Perhaps it is the only means of communication not touched by the curse of Babel (Genesis 11, 1-9).

#### **4) The silence of the Pieta**

This is not the silence of death but the silence of the mystery of death. It is the silence beyond bewilderment and questions; it is the silence beyond the possibility of an answer. It is the mysterious silence through which the Lord could descend into the silence of hell, the acceptance without frustration of a life, useless and wasted on Judas, a silence of freely willed powerlessness through which the world was saved.

It is in opening ourselves to this ultimate silence of the Pieta that is the culmination of the slow maturing of the other three ways of loving our neighbour with silence.

***Do not be afraid of your doubts...Do not think they cast doubt on God, or the sky, or earth, or man, or knowledge. They are only telling you that your baby clothes have grown tight, that the view of the world which you held yesterday is beginning to squeeze you, that the image you had formed of God and the world, has become too small for the experience of God and the world which has developed in you. Rejoice, and build a view of the world which is wider, deeper, wiser and more spiritual.***

***Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh***

## When did Bach find time to pray?

I'm sure you, like me, have heard numerous baroque fugues. To those who aren't musicians, and maybe to many who are, it would appear that most of these compositions are more about higher mathematics than music

J.S. Bach, whose contrapuntal music continues to awe and intimidate performers, composers, scholars and listeners seems to compose fugues that are melodic and interesting with consummate ease. But Bach doesn't offer complexity for the sake of complexity. As Patrick Kavanaugh says in his book 'The Spiritual lives of the Great Composers', "It sounds almost ridiculous to have to say it, but Bach didn't just write complex, difficult music. He wrote gloriously beautiful music, some of the most beautiful music ever composed by anyone... His music is cerebral, its spiritual and its gorgeous."

From all indications, Bach was a devout Lutheran and frequently annotated his manuscripts with initials such as "J.J.", for "Jesu Juva (Help me, Jesus)," and ended them with "S.D.G.", for "Soli Deo Gloria (To God alone, the glory)." Many of his masterworks were based on scripture, hymns and classic Christian poetry.

He also used an ancient technique called "gematria," in which letters of the alphabet are assigned numerical values. This allows the composer to use intervals and the number of notes in a melody to make symbolic references to specific, in Bach's case, biblical words and doctrines.

Bach also used numerology in his works. Some examples are obvious, such as the 10 repetitions of the melody in "These are the holy 10 commandments." [Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot', BWV 678]. The hymn or choral tune in this piece is also presented as a canon at the octave, symbolizing man following God's will. Other examples that Bach used are centring on the number three either melodically, harmonically or in the number part to indicate the Trinity, and number four, for the New Testament Gospels. Patterns of five represent the five wounds Jesus suffered on the cross. This pattern occurs frequently in the Matthew and John Passions. The number 12 represented the apostles. And so the list goes on and on. Kavanaugh tells us, "Some of these patterns are so subtle that you have to be a Sherlock Holmes to find them."

Think of Bach not only composing, as it seems, his beautiful and melodic fugues with great ease, but also accepting the additional (for me almost inconceivable) challenge to make it fit into a preconceived mathematical scheme and not tell anyone about the pride he must have felt, when he accomplished his task. It just boggles my mind as I'm sure it does any musician's mind!

Or did Bach compose in this way? Well, that is for you to decide, not for me to tell you. Some scholars believe Bach was driven to do this by his sheer talent and the sense of order in his imagination. His mind, in other words, was just wired that way. Others say this was a mental game, used to escape the boredom of his crushing workload -- such as the task of writing one 30-minute church cantata a week.

Many scholars have asked: "When did Bach find time to compose?" But as a lover of Bach's music who sees a great spirituality in his compositions I'm fascinated by another question: When did Bach find time to pray? I think both questions may have the same answer.

Kavanaugh in his book suggest that perhaps all of the symbolic numbers and patterns were something Bach did as a kind of meditation. Kavanaugh writes, "This may have been his own personal way of worshipping God. ... And in the end, it didn't matter if anyone else figured it all out. He was writing his music for a different audience. This was between him and the Lord."

On the internet I found many articles approving and disapproving of all the number symbolism in Bach's music. Those disapproving tended to say, "Who cares about these numbers? Certainly not Bach because his music is fine and beautiful without them." And perhaps that is where I must agree with Kavanaugh, Johann Sebastian Bach was writing his music really for two audiences: for the human audience who can get from these works what they will, and the divine audience, to whom Bach wrote not only SDG on his works but also wrote the hidden numbers within the music as his prayer to God who created him and gave him his brilliance.

I don't want to be prescriptive in your meditation time. But I ask you to at least spend a few minutes thinking of a musical performance, live or recorded that lifted you out of your hum-drum worldliness and lifted you to another plain. For example I know someone who is not a classical musical fan but when she heard Mahler's Resurrection Symphony she felt that the gates of heaven had been opened for her to peek in.

Think of such moments in music for you. Recall them and try to search out why they lifted you spiritually. What was it? Perhaps you won't ever be able to discover the reason. Perhaps it was some encoded numbers that the composer incorporated that speak to your deep unconsciousness. So go and remember the great music you have heard.

*This version of the address given by Revd Derek Pratt the speaker at the Julian A-G-M held in Cape Town on the 7th May 2005 has kindly been edited by Shirley Ratcliffe*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Hear My Cry: a daily prayer book for Advent**

**Ruth Burgess**

**Wild Goose Publications, 2005, £7.99**

**ISBN 1 90557 95 2**

This daily prayer book which can also be used as a prayer journal takes its inspiration from the Advent antiphons, a group of prayers that reflect on the character and activities of God. The format for each day includes a Bible verse, an Advent cry and suggestions for prayer. The pages can be added to and personalised, with line drawings that can be coloured in and space to add your own pictures, reflections and prayers. Instructions for three workshops are also included to enable Advent themes to be explored in a group setting.

*From a review on the Iona Community website [www.iona-org.uk](http://www.iona-org.uk)*

### **Searching for Peace: a Christian Companion**

**Susan Hibbins, editor**

**Inspire (Methodist Publishing House), 2005, £7.99**

**ISBN 1 85852 292 7**

This is an attractively produced hardback anthology in which fifteen contributors explore the search for peace: each of fifteen chapters of articles complemented by poetry, prose and prayers which consider such themes as the need and means for inner peace, inner and outer peace, peacemaking policies, the range of meaning of peace in Isaiah, a peaceable economy, the Alexandria Peace Process and finding serenity in change. I found this breadth of coverage and the way peace of heart and mind are interwoven with reflections on current world politics very appealing.

This is a book to dip into, savour and reflect on and return to often. It is the eleventh of a series of annual companions which makes me wish I'd seen the earlier ones. It would make a good Christmas gift. Available from bookshops or [sales@mph.org.uk](mailto:sales@mph.org.uk)

*Gail Ballinger*

### **Daily Readings with Margaret Silf**

**Margaret Silf**

**Darton Longman & Todd, 2005, £9.95**

**ISBN 0 232 52631 1**

Selections from her earlier book *Daysprings*, arranged for daily reading. Each has a scripture verse followed by a brief reflection which aims to help us be transformed in our daily living by being 'dipped in God'. A good travelling companion.

*Gail Ballinger*

**With You is the Well of Life:  
prayers from the depths of the heart.**

**Patrick Woodhouse**

**Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2005, £9.99**

**ISBN 1 84417 380 1**

Patrick Woodhouse, Precentor of Wells Cathedral has compiled this collection of prayers from his experience of daily worship in the cathedral. The symbol of the well for the title grew from the presence of ancient wells close to the cathedral which gush forth clear water from the depths and the idea that prayer is drawing refreshment from a great depth too.

Written with an economy of words and a lightness of touch the prayers follow various themes which try to address spiritual values which run counter to the prevailing culture of today. The resume on the back cover describes how this book aims to resonate with our questioning and longing and take us deeper towards the source of that longing. Designed for public use and private meditation, with a sensitivity towards stillness and silence, the book contains much rich material for those seeking to develop their prayer life.

*Christine Rapsey*

**Practising the Sacred Art of Listening**

**Kay Lindahl**

**Wild Goose Publications, 2005, £10.99**

**ISBN 1 90155 790 1**

It is somewhat perverse that in a time when communication is so instant, when our messages can go across the world in the blink of an eye, that the art of listening is becoming lost in the clamour of communication.

In her book *Practising the Sacred Art of Listening*, Kay Lindahl believes listening is an art; it is more than technique; it is developing 'something special' that elevates the experience to an art.

Being truly listened to can bring healing and nurturing – for some simply peace.

Kay Lindahl guards us against thinking that being able to listen is only a matter of paying attention to someone. As in all forms of art excellence requires practice, and her book artfully goes through the stages of learning how to listen. It is a book about practising listening and at the end of each chapter offers guidelines to help us in our understanding and practice of listening.

Kay takes us through

- § contemplative listening
- § reflective listening
- § heart listening
- § listening in groups
- § listening in conversations.

We are reminded that the letters that spell LISTEN also spell SILENT. In order to listen effectively to others it is important to listen to ourselves – reflecting on what is going on in our own hearts.

The power of our ability to listen is rooted in listening to God (contemplative listening), to self (reflective listening), and to others (heart listening). By following these steps we become for each other God's instruments.

A valuable book that encourages us to listen to ourselves, and value the opportunity of being there for someone else without imposing our own 'stuff' on them.

*Pat Hughes*

**Christian Meditation: experiencing the presence of God**

**James Finlay**

**SPCK, 2004, £14.99**

**ISBN 0 2810 5690 0**

Finlay intends this book to serve as a "hands on" user's manual for those who feel drawn to practice meditation in the Christian tradition. For this task he is perhaps uniquely qualified. Abused in childhood by his father, he "escaped" from his trauma to the monastery in Gethsemane, becoming a "teenage mystic with acne" under the direction of Thomas Merton. Leaving the monastic life, he experienced breakdown and psychotherapy, became a clinical psychologist and married. This book began as the answer to the question "how am I, living out here in the midst of a hectic complex world, to continue living a contemplative way of life?"

Finley sees meditation as a "path granting experiential access to God", and in this of course he is at one with perennial tradition. Many experts in spirituality have noted today what they criticise as "the colonisation of spirituality by psychology" and Finley's description of meditation as a "self transforming journey" (p.130) is perhaps a case in point. The tradition (St John of the Cross for example) would be more likely to think of meditation in terms of a discipline which allows the Spirit to do his transforming work in a person's inner world. But on the whole Finley's treatment is a fresh and positive example of the cross-fertilisation of spirituality and psychology that is developing today.

The most helpful parts of the book will probably be chapter 2 "Learning to meditate" and its expansion in chapters 8-13. With disarming gentleness and encouragement, Finley leads the reader through the techniques of learning to sit still and straight, close one's eyes and breathe slowly and naturally. "Present open and awake" (p210) are the watchwords to experiencing a more interior, meditative states of awareness" (p45). The rest of the book offers an exploration of some outstanding texts and guides of the tradition. The book ends with a chapter on compassion

This gentle, wise encouraging book will surely help the reader to (re)discover meditation as "that secret passageway into the interior landscape of oneness with God" (p.103) and so "to be a truly awake, compassionate Christ-like human being"(p .277).

*Paul Rea*

### **Encounter**

**Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh  
Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005, £9.95**

**ISBN 0 2325 2600 1**

Read slowly and prayerfully, any text by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) is an 'encounter'. Compared with those of his books which are specifically on prayer (books which feature in the JM book list) this one might be less applicable to those seeking guidance in that field. However, it is intensely interesting. It is a collection of articles and lectures given to Russian audiences, dating from the 1960s until the end of the century, which have now been translated into English for the first time. They are set in context by his successor in the Russian Orthodox Diocese in Britain.

The texts are varied and cover the human vocation, faith in our lives, church and society, spirituality and pastoral care. Naturally I liked some sections better than others, particularly valuing a humble, personal account of Metropolitan Anthony's life, and also his thoughts on How to Live with Oneself. His original and wise slant on faith and man's vocation resonate in the mind and I have a long list of page numbers whose content I want to read again, extracting key sentences to ponder in prayer. I wanted to find examples which give a flavour of the book but it is difficult to lift sentences out of context and easy to misrepresent the depth and variety of this work. Consequently I have chosen three longer passages which our editor has inserted into other parts of the magazine.

*Janet Robinson*

### **Befriending the Stranger**

**Jean Vanier**

**Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005, £8.95**

**ISBN 0 232 52598 6**

It is with eagerness that I look forward to reading any book written by Jean Vanier. The best writing on modern spirituality speaks directly out of the experience of the author into the heart and mind of the reader. It is so in the writings of Henri Nouwen or the late brother Roger of Taizé, and also with those of Jean Vanier, the founder of the L'Arche and Faith and Light communities.

Reflecting both on personal and communal growth in the light of God's call, 'Befriending the stranger' is written as a companion for a six-day retreat and would be an ideal companion both for a retreat or as a Lent book, however small sections from it could also be used as a personal reflection or as the lead in to a Julian Meeting. It asks whether we can be compassionate to others without being compassionate to ourselves: 'discovering the presence of God in the very places of our own weakness.'

This is a book not to be missed if you take your own spiritual growth seriously,

*Francis Ballinger*

## **Labyrinths and Prayer Stations**

**Ian Tarrant and Sally Dakin**

**Grove Books W180, 2005, £2.75**

**ISSN 0144 1728**

This useful booklet explains how prayer stations and labyrinths, which enable people to join in a communal spiritual activity at their own pace, could enrich our spiritual journeys. These different ideas of prayer invite both active participation and a subjective response. There are clear examples of various prayer stations, and many ways to use them, either singly or in associated groups. The material has something to suit any denomination; any situation from small group to large church or conference; or different occasions within a single group.

Theology and practicality blend well. The authors give helpful hints for every stage from initial planning, to organising, advertising and running an event involving prayer stations. They give four detailed examples of prayer journeys, based on Elijah, The Lord's Prayer, Your Kingdom Come, and Mission. I hope the ideas in this booklet inspire you — they certainly inspired to me. The descriptions of specific prayer stations might also inspire some inventive new focuses for Julian Meetings!

*Deidre Morris*

## **The Power of the Jesus Prayer – a reflection and guide**

**Jonathan Smith**

**Kevin Mayhew 2005, £6.99**

**ISBN 184417 4409**

Ever since reading *The Way of the Pilgrim* – an anonymous account of a pilgrim wandering through Siberia seeking to use the Jesus prayer, I have been drawn to this way of praying and yet puzzled about it at the same time.

In this book the author shares his own experience of the prayer in a very accessible and reassuring way. After an introduction to its long tradition dating back to the sixth century, and its links with the ascetic lives of monks and hermits, the author brings us to a very practical description of its modern day use.

The Jesus prayer is not a mantra, it is a prayer addressed to Lord Jesus Christ. It can be used in regular prayer time and also during any natural pauses in the day – waiting for the bus, doing the washing up, walking to the office...

The author writes of the power of the prayer as the practice develops and becomes a part of life:

In our prayer, the name of Jesus dwells with us, and dedicates our lives to him. As we remember the prayer throughout the day, our ordinary actions take on a new significance, as we find Christ within them.

The second part of the book reflects on the meaning of the words themselves linking them helpfully to scriptural references.

Each section ends with points for consideration or discussion which seem to sit rather uncomfortably, as though they had been added because the publisher thought they should be there. The reflection and the prayer however did seem to complete each chapter.

This is a helpful book for those who would like to enrich their prayer life and learn more about this ancient prayer.

*Anne Stamper*

### **The Gift of a Cross**

**Pat Marsh**

**Inspire (Methodist Publishing House) 2005 £5.99**

**ISBN 1 85852 297 8**

The latest collection of poems by Pat Marsh is in the form of a Lent Book, tracing the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, through betrayal and crucifixion to resurrection.

Each poem is based on a gospel story with the reference given so that the reader can also meditate on the bible passage as well as the poem. The stories may be familiar but the poems encourage the reader not just to travel through Lent with Jesus but to connect with their own spiritual journey and ponder and absorb the inner wisdom of poetry which touches the soul.

*Yvonne Walker*

**The Circle of Life – The Heart's Journey Through the Seasons**  
**Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr**  
**Sorin Books, Indiana, USA, 2005, \$19.95**  
**ISBN 1 893732 82 7**

As a fan of Joyce Rupp I was curious to see what the results of her collaboration with Macrina Wiederkehr would be like. I was not disappointed. Here is an accessible, colourful and beautifully illustrated book. Each section explores a season in prayers, poems and reflections which invite a deeper appreciation of the connection between the inner life and the world around us. This book is a treasure house of wisdom for all who value the inner life. It is also a practical and creative resource and study guide both for personal devotion and for worship.

There is material which could be used as a lead in to quiet as well as themes for a whole Quiet Day.

*Yvonne Walker*

***Audiobook***  
**Celebration of Discipline**  
**Richard Foster**  
**Hodder and Stoughton, 2005, 3 CD set £13.99**  
**ISBN 1 84456 001 5**

Celebration of Discipline was first published in 1980. Since then it has become a modern spiritual classic translated into many languages and has just been reissued in book form in its 4th edition. It is about the classical spiritual disciplines and includes a useful chapter on meditation. Other disciplines include prayer, study, fasting, simplicity. The author is an American Quaker and a patron of The Quiet Gardens Trust.

This audio version is well read by the author. I listened to this first without, then with, the text. I found it easy to listen to. The text has been skilfully and seamlessly abridged. The chapters are separated by a few phrases of music. This recording could have many uses: it could provide access to valuable insights for someone who has difficulty reading; it could be 'spiritual reading' for when the hands are busy but the mind free; it could be 'bedtime reading' or it could be used by a group which wanted to discuss the subjects covered.

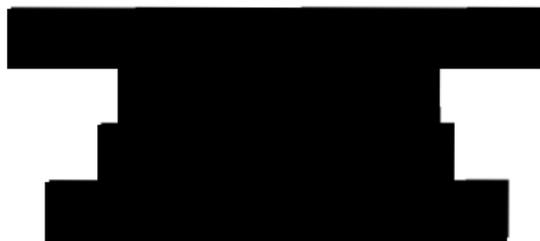
*Gail Ballinger*

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# The Julian Meetings

**FOSTER** the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition

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

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

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

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

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by 10 February 2006 Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by email are welcome.



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