



# Centering Prayer Network Australia

## *JULY/AUGUST CONTEMPLATIVE NEWSLETTER 2019 - WINTER*

### **A NOTE FROM OUR TWO CO-ORDINATORS**

Much of Australia has just journeyed through the Autumn with the glorious arrays of colours delighting our senses. Winter is now upon us. Some refer to it as a time of hibernation – some a time of resting. May the seasons remind us that change is always happening – that the Life/Death/Life cycle is part of us, our world and our Cosmos.

Once again in March we gathered for the National Retreat and Meeting in Boronia. We thank again the Janssen Spirituality Centre for welcoming us all and their wonderful hospitality. We thank too Chris Morris who continues to inspire us with his insights and passion. Sadly, I couldn't access any photos for this year. Hopefully next year.

We hope you enjoy this July/August edition of our midyear newsletter. Annemarie Reiner. Adelaide .....

Annemarie has asked me to say a few words in this column. I raise them in no particular order of importance.

You may recall that we agreed at the 2019 general meeting to share with each other any new or interesting books on Centering Prayer or related areas. I find it useful to read spiritual books time and time again. It seems I read a book at 100 miles an hour the first time, but gain more each time I re-read them. I think too this is because we can only appreciate a book at our current level of progress on the spiritual journey. I will speak more of this within the newsletter.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Stewart Sharlow who has offered to update and maintain our website until we can find someone to take over the role. Stewart insisted on paying the 2019-2020 website renewal fee. He asks us to accept it as his own donation to CPNA. Thank you, Stewart.

I am glad to learn that Stewart has been back working at the Janssen Spirituality Centre at Boronia. They will benefit greatly from Stewart's experience at the Centre, and his background and studies in inter-faith affairs.

**FINALLY**, I will soon be contacting individuals in the States to be a contact on the Website. The task is not onerous or frequent, usually to respond to emails seeking details of any local Centering Prayer groups. If you are unable to accept the role, I hope you can nominate someone else for the job, and I will then contact them myself. This information is required as part of our updating information on the website. In the meantime, Peace to us all. Peter Ahern. ACT

### **CURRENT NATIONAL TEAM:**

#### **National Coordinators for 2019/2020**

*Peter Ahern (Canberra)*  
[peter.ahern@bigpond.com](mailto:peter.ahern@bigpond.com)

*Annemarie Reiner (Adelaide)*  
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#### **Consultative Team for 2019/2020**

*Judy Newland (NSW)*

*Judi Ahern (ACT)*

*Anne Schmidt (VIC)*

*Frances Cassidy (VIC)*

*Helen Duffy (VIC)*

*Helen Glasheen (VIC)*

*Nick DeGroot (NSW/NT)*

*Ria Parlevliet (VIC)*

*Sarah Marrinan (VIC)*

*Anne Weygood (SA)*

*Tom Gleeson (SA)*

*Fran Hegarty (SA)*

*Gwyneth Ottrey (SA)*

*Lynne Rokkas (SA)*

*Neil Preston (WA)*

*Bart Welton (WA)*

*For State contact details please  
email one of the coordinators.  
All these positions are valid until  
the 2020 National Retreat/Annual  
Meeting at Boronia.*

#### **Newsletter Editor**

*Annemarie Reiner*

## NEWS FROM THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING COMMUNITY - ADELAIDE

*The Contemplative Living Community has been evolving since 2009. There are a number of small groups meeting regularly around Adelaide for centering prayer, Lectio Divina and reflection. These few pages highlight some of what has been happening.*

### ALDINGA CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING COMMUNITY (BELOW) IS ONE OF THE SMALL GROUPS MEETING REGULARLY AROUND ADELAIDE



The Aldinga Contemplative Living Community has been meeting for 3 ½ years. Our numbers vary from 5-12 but generally there are about 8-9 of us each week. We gather from 6-8:30pm on Wednesday evenings and begin with a shared meal. We sit in Centering Prayer together each week and we alternate activities fortnightly. One week we share Lectio Divina using the next Sunday's gospel. The next week we share what has been happening in our lives and where we feel the Beloved is working with us. Each of us has shared the feeling of an inner urge to come to the group as if the Beloved is drawing us together. The bond between us has grown so strong we are like a family looking forward to catching up. Sharing our spiritual journey is a deep connecting experience and helps us value our own experiences and, sometimes, see our stories reflected in the stories of others in the group. One of the strengths of the group is the shared leadership. In addition to leading the night's activities, the leader brings a reading or chapter of a book to share for discussion if we have time. I am full of an inner energy on the way home.

Anne Weygood

## **COMMUNITY DAY FOR THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING COMMUNITY - S.A.**

Earlier this year we sent out a survey asking participants to reflect on our practice of Centering/Contemplative prayer. We had responses from individuals and a group. Susan Pollard (a sister of St Joseph and a Jungian Analyst) collated our responses and lead the Planning and Review Team in some reflection and the beginning of a statement as a result of these responses. The collated responses are as follows:

### **Reported Effects of Contemplative Prayer Practice:**

- Awakening more deeply to a tender kinship with God, self, others and creation - mirrored in Aboriginal spirituality
- Less stress and anxiety - growing patience, compassionate heart and trust amid life's chaos and confusion
- Healing impact of Love on my becoming e.g. decision-making, suffering, understanding forgiveness and acceptance
- Greater mental and emotional clarity from regular commitment to, and support from , personal and communal practice
- More openness to the Spirit and more energy, delight and enthusiasm for life
- Increasing capacity to perceive, to relax and to be present to the "Beloved/Christ/Love/Divine Mystery/Triune God
- A recognition and gratefulness for the cycle of life, death and transformation

At our Community Day on June 23 (see photo below), we reflected with Lewis O'Brien (a Kaurna elder) as he welcomed us to country and talked about what belonging to country means for him. His message is that we need to walk the country, in the NOW, with an alert presence to what we see and experience. Many of the responses to the survey spoke about their growth in connection to nature in many different ways. In the afternoon we shared the survey response with the group and reflected together on the developing statement. This work will continue hopefully in our groups at a later stage.

It was a day of contagious energy and connection! - Anne Weygood



## MARY

Dear Mary  
I've been thinking  
How it must  
P-ss you off  
At times  
The pedestal we've  
Put you on

In ways we have made you  
More Divine  
Than your son.

We acknowledge his  
Divinity AND Humanity  
We hear of his  
Love, tenderness, grief  
Anger, fear.

We hear little of your  
Womanly humanity Mary

We put you on  
This pedestal  
Of the Immaculate Virgin Mary  
And  
All your womanly humanity  
Was dismissed  
All the messiness and joy of birthing  
Mothering, Motherhood through the years

All the letting go's of your son, the  
Birthing of him into the  
Next phase of his life.  
The fear of a Mother for her son  
The helplessness of a Mother  
As she stands by and watches.....

No! ...None of this messiness  
Of life, of Mothering  
Is allowed on the pedestal  
Of the Immaculate Virgin .....

How distant and cold  
It makes you seem

How unfair!

What do those (probably mostly men)  
Who put you there

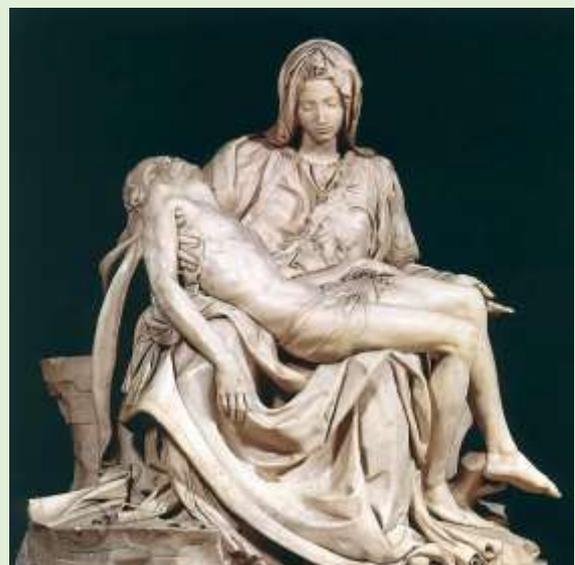
Know of these things??  
What do they know  
Of the final letting go  
Birthing  
Of your son  
So  
That he could  
Truly become  
The Cosmic Christ ....

What do they know of this  
Those who put you on that  
Lonely pedestal  
You who knows how it felt  
To have him grow in your womb

What do they know of this Mary??

.....

I found myself sitting with Mary over Holy  
week.  
Knowing what it is to have a son die.....  
found myself going back through all the  
letting go's/birthings of Eoin.... All the ones  
Mary went through with Jesus.... And this  
letting go/birthing continues after death.... A  
final letting go ...  
Pondering this and poor Mary so lonely -  
resulted in the above...



*Submitted and written (as is) by Eileen Galvin from  
the Planning and Review Team with The  
Contemplative Living Community, Adelaide.*

## LISTENING HEART CONTEMPLATIVE CENTRE UPDATE - ADELAIDE

The Listening Heart Contemplative Centre welcoming people into Sunset Cottage, opened its 'doors' sixteen months ago and has welcomed many since then. Some of what is on offer: weekly meditation, Book Reflection Group fortnightly, Quiet Retreat Days held monthly, Seasonal Retreat Days – four a year, spiritual direction is offered, some groups come and use the facilities for a day's reflection and others have asked me to lead their particular group in a day's reflection and prayer, and we have had various people come and stay for a personal retreat for a few days. There are a few more projects being considered on the horizon that will unfold in their own time.

There is always a slow but steady flow of new people coming to experience what is on offer which is wonderful. People often comment on the peace of the place and the space it offers is greatly appreciated by those who walk through her doors. It really is a surprise oasis and a welcome one in the midst of our often hectic world. This whole process has deeply confirmed and affirmed the need for such places within our hungry and often confused world.

Another group which runs for two years, which means it doesn't take on new people once it has started, is the Wild Women groups (there are two of them now) that meet monthly for three hours and reflect upon the book: *Women Who Run with the Wolves*. We begin with meditation, have silent time, creative time, lots of laughter, lots of courage, tears, and dialogue, sharing our stories..... The first group which began over two years ago and finished the book in December 2018 continue to meet with the same format but with another book. The current group began this year. The diversity of each group is a great gift as we journey through the books and endeavour to unpack their wisdom and insights. We all learn so much from each other and it opens us up in a whole new way. It has been a great Grace for those who have participated and fosters the spiritual journey most profoundly. There is also something very freeing about women meeting together and having the courage to share their stories and life experiences. The photo below is of the group that commenced this year and taken a couple of months ago, and we are very quickly catching on to what it is to engage the WILD WOMAN! One of the group is taking the photo. *Annemarie Reiner*



## The Touch of the Masters Hand

Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought  
it scarcely worth his while to waste much time  
on the old violin,  
but held it up with a smile;  
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"  
"A dollar, a dollar"; then two!  
"Only two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three?  
Three dollars, once; three dollars twice; going for three..  
" But no, from the room, far back,  
A grey-haired man came forward and picked up the bow;  
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,  
and tightening the loose strings, he played a melody  
pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.



The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said;  
"What am I bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.  
A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three?  
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone," said he.  
The people cheered, but some of them cried,  
"We do not quite understand what changed its worth."  
Swift came the reply:  
"The touch of a master's hand."  
And many a man (woman) with life out of tune,  
and battered and scarred with sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,  
much like the old violin,  
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine; a game - and he travels on.  
"He is going" once, and "going twice,  
He's going and almost gone."  
But the Master comes,  
and the foolish crowd never can quite understand the worth of a soul  
and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

*Myra Brooks' Welch*

Thanks to Frances Cassidy for submitting this poem.

## A FURTHER WORD FROM PETER AHERN RE BOOKS AND SOME CANBERRA NEWS

I have been re-reading of late some of my old favourites which I want to share with you here:

***The Meaning of Life*** by Willigis Jager is always a renewing and refreshing read. Willigis Jager is a German Benedictine monk who is also a Zen Master. His hero is Meister Eckhart. Father Jager gives a wonderful overview of the spiritual journey. I also highly recommend his book called ***Contemplation***.

***A Taste of Silence*** by Father Carl Arico is another older book [ 1999] well worth reading again. Although a friend and colleague of the late Thomas Keating, Carl Arico offers his own fresh insights and background to the practice of Centering Prayer.

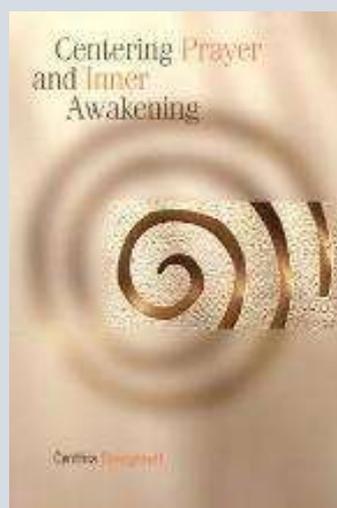
I have recently finished reading ***The Brothers Karamazov*** by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. It has been called **THE** great spiritual novel. After 893 pages, it seems to me that the author concludes that an individual must gain some personal belief and faith in God or remain dysfunctional. It is his skill that makes the message and novel the masterpiece it is.

All of these 4 books I have found to be encouraging and spiritually uplifting.

### CENTERING PRAYER BOOK GROUP - ACT

Group members and individual practitioners from all over Canberra gather once a month to discuss a book. This year we are reading ***Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*** by Cynthia Bourgeault. All the members of the group seem to agree that Cynthia brings a certain fresh directness and illuminations to the practice and background of Centering Prayer.

We select a book which is a bit harder to read individually, but is rewarded by group reading and discussion. I can recommend a book club as a great way to bring together members from different groups and sole practitioners. Our format is: morning tea followed by 20 minutes of Centering Prayer and then discussion. The whole session takes about 2 hours usually.



## A TRIBUTE TO DANIEL O'LEARY

Daniel O'Leary, 'a catholic priest, teacher, bestselling author and retreat facilitator' died on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 after a diagnosis of cancer in 2018. He had just finished his final book before he died called 'DANCING TO MY DEATH – with the Love Called Cancer'.

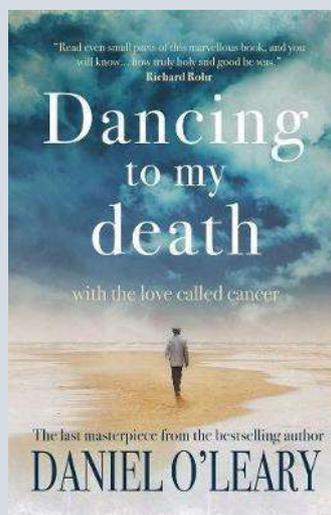
O'Leary gives us these wisdom words before the 'Introduction' of his book beginning with a poem by William Stafford:

### THE WAY IT IS

There is a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

"The thread in this poem by William Stafford is your True Self. It is who you have always been, created in the image and likeness of Love. All you are called to do is nurture the love you are into a greater love so that it radiates visibly from you, like a sacrament called 'you'. Against this backdrop, death is no longer seen as a fearful enemy, but as part of our evolving world of love. It is a wild moment of growth and transformation into an unimaginable depth of being."

*Daniel O'Leary*



## JOAN CHITTISTER - FROM WHERE I STAND.

Sr. Joan Chittister, a Benedictine sister, has been writing on the Twelve Steps of Humility by St. Benedict in her regular column 'From Where I Stand'. See below her reflections from 3<sup>rd</sup> July 19.

*"The twelfth step of humility is that we always manifest humility in our bearing no less than in our hearts, so that it is evident ... whether sitting walking or standing."*

The 12th degree of humility goes directly to the core of the matter. It reads straight and clear, without equivocation, with certainty: "We always manifest humility in our bearing no less than in our hearts so that it is evident ..."

The operational word here is "evident." Evident.

At this point, comes the test. At this point all theorizing ends. It's not a matter anymore of talking about humility. Now is the moment of fulfilment.

This time, we're not just considering the almighty presence of God in our lives, or even our degree of spiritual consciousness. Now, it's no longer about simply accepting the vagaries of life without moaning or demanding more. It's even beyond the ideas of learning to listen and honouring the insights of others.

No, here at the top of the ladder of the steps to humility is the challenge to be humble, to become humility itself. No words, no prayers, no public penitential disciplines required. Just the power of humble presence itself.

Now, having accepted all the other degrees of humility, we're expected to become what we've been talking about: humble. Humble even in bearing. Humble even in the way we present ourselves to the world physically, as well as in our intention to climb down off our personal thrones and so quietly re-join the human race.

It's hard not to smile when you read the 12th degree of humility. A modern translation of the idea might just make the issue clearer than does the elegant language of the past. In more modern parlance, we might be closer to the original idea if we said, "All right, enough already. No more posturing. No more 'dressing for success.' No more grand entrances at the meeting, or loud jokes to get the attention of the crowd. No more need for special places at the table. No more expectation of my right to control any other human being. No more rolling my eyes rather than listening when someone else is talking."

No, by this time, we are meant to be able to blend into the world around us — serene, contented, open — too grounded interiorly to crave public approval, to assume the right to lord it over other people in a nation that calls itself democratic.

This is the moment we have been waiting for. This is the moment of integrity, of community, of wholeness.

There is a saying: "Happiness is when what you think, what you say, what you do are in harmony." The 12th step of humility is about living an integrated life, a happy life in which each part of it is in harmony with its every other dimension.

The truth is that we are meant to be transparent. People, hearing what we say, should know what we think. Seeing what we do with our lives, people can infer what we care about and how we think about things.

If we say one thing but think another, somewhere, somehow, it all begins to seep out. Worst of all, the burden of hiding exhausts a person in every way, in every dimension, from the soul on out.

Benedict, in his chapter on "Humility," is quite direct about the intertwined life of soul, body and emotions as the life of integrity, strength, serenity and freedom. In the twelfth step of humility, his clarity is so simple it is stunning. He writes: Our humility "must be evident at the Opus Dei [at prayer], in the oratory, the monastery, or the garden, on a journey or in the field, or anywhere else."

The directions are achingly pure: Be what you say you are. Do not lie, even to yourself. Don't live two lives — loving parent/missing parent, honest employee/cheating employee, devoted public servant/self-absorbed public celebrity.

The truth is that egotism is the bane of community-building. It presents itself as what it is not, lives only for itself, and presumes it is heir to its universe. It is a false and baseless claim to superiority. No one can build anything that lasts when the materials are bogus.

Benedict brings the steps of humility to an acme in the 12th of them. Physical appearance, he warns us, betrays the quality of our souls. People know by looking into our eyes whether we are really intent on being with them or not. They can tell if we are interiorly what we purport to be exteriorly. Even in a culture whose penchant for casual long ago broke the boundaries of propriety, excess in any direction says more than we want to admit about our respect for others.

Most of all, what we wear and how we carry ourselves defines us. Our clothes, our gait, our accessories — the big signs of religion or the heavy makeup, the overdressing or underdressing, the self-serving boasting or the simple truth-telling — all expose us. They add up to what's most on our mind, how honest is our speech, how caring is our presence.

Certainly, another word for humility is authenticity, the grace of being who we say we are.

From where I stand, the way we carry ourselves and talk and look and speak and walk with those around us is the only real proof of our humility. Where insult and expectation, disdain and dismissal of others, arrogance and authoritarianism are evident, they exude indifference to the needs and values, intelligence and insight of others. Then the size of our own soul shrinks under the light of day.

We have never needed more the humility that brings the world together as pride threatens to wrench us apart. In the end, Benedict is right: Stifling arrogance, embarrassing self-aggrandizement, and the insufferable pomposity that pathological pride spawns expose all the empty spots in the soul. And they are gaping. Or as St. Vincent de Paul put it centuries ago, "Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying."

And, remember, evident.

[Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister of Erie, Pennsylvania.]



It seemed fitting in the light of Daniel O’Leary’s recent death, that we might embark on seven-days of reflective and contemplative pondering and listening with Daniel O’Leary, using sections of his beautiful book ‘An Astonishing Secret – The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You’ to guide us. We might even call it a retreat of sorts. While it is set out over seven days, you could use one day over a whole week and continue this way. O’Leary reflects beautifully upon Pope Francis’ Encyclical, Laudato Si, (LS) and I will use some of these quotes from within the book. In this Winter season we are invited to ponder our relationship with ourselves, the world around us and the Cosmos from which we all emerge. You may wish to participate on your own or get together with a small group and share this experience of these seven days.

**‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves, and rest a while...’** Mark 6:31

## **DAY ONE:**

### **LOVING THE EARTH – GOD’S LIVING BODY – Chapter One**

#### **SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 1 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:**

‘St. Francis (Assisi) reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. (LS 1)’

‘Because we are born with God’s own longing safely incarnate within us, we will forever seek that harmony and hope for which we were born. As a river flows and the bird flies, the human heart will always long for completion in love. P33’

‘He (Pope Francis) knows that something invariably stirs in us when we stop to look around us with eyes of wonder, with what he often calls ‘the contemplative gaze’... We see daily happenings and events – mornings, tears, hills, water, seasons, births, bodies, babies, death, growing – with a new light around them, a forgotten vision now being recovered, some kind of promise of heaven restored.’ P33

‘And now we know, that hunch, that stirring, that lifting of the human spirit is another name for God’s presence, for the deepest reason for our reaching, for the joy we never tire of seeking. The heaven we live for, is not a place waiting in the future; it lies at our feet, at our fingertips, in what our eyes see and our tongue tastes.’ P34

‘Only when we begin behaving as though the Earth is our true home does it begin to really feel like one. We may each have a different religion, language, culture or skin colour, but under the one sky we all belong to one human race, one planet in one universe of immense beauty. And, as Pope Francis has taught, all are equally the people of God.’ P 34

‘Until we see the world we live in, beautiful and broken though it may be, with a tender care, and love it as we would our own family, we will never experience the abundant life promised to all God’s beloved creatures – that is everyone and everything. And every morning we are born again to that possibility.’ P34

‘As Pope Francis keeps reminding us, through Christ, God is present in the entire cosmos, from the tiniest particle of matter to the infinity of space. The whole world is incarnational.’ P35

‘...’In this cosmos of gigantic dimensions, a size not even able to be imagined, human beings can feel themselves to be little more than an accidental marginal phenomenon.... The eternal Logos of God who drives forward these billions of galaxies has become a human being on this small planet which is but a speck of dust in the universe.’ (quote by Karl Rahner)’ P35/36

***‘You have been our refuge in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
before You had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting,  
You are the Alpha and the Omega.  
Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill***

## **DAY ONE *continued* .....**

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart.

Then CHOOSE one word or phrase to carry with you during the day. Use it like a mantra and invite it to keep rising into your consciousness.

Give yourself five or ten minutes of a 'contemplative gaze' upon one aspect of nature during the day. It could be a flower, cloud formations, feeling the breeze upon your face, sitting in a particular place observing what is happening around you, being present as the morning light comes into being or the evening darkness arrives. Take particular notice of what you are feeling or what arises within you.

You might like to journal a few notes of your experience.

At the end of the day, bring to mind:

Two things you were grateful for today?

Two things you consciously noticed about 'God's Living Body' today?

Two conscious decisions you made with regard to 'Loving the Earth'?



### **YOU TUBE CLIPS WORTH WATCHING:**

**CYNTHIA BORGEAULT ON THE 'WELCOMING PRACTICE'** (35 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bClyhR2ZPc>

**RICHARD ROHR – ENNEAGRAM – THE 9 TYPES – ALL INDIVIDUALLY PRESENTED**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hadiA8NB8MI> BEGINNING WITH TYPE ONE etc.....

## DAY TWO:

### THE WORLD, GOD'S HOME, IS THE FIRST SACRAMENT – Chapter Four

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 4 of Daniel O'Leary's book:

'As Christians we are called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the least speck of dust of our planet. (LS 9)' Page 47

'These papal words are so exciting. Do you believe them? Does the institutional Church believe them? They fling wide the doors of our imagination. They reveal the beautiful, interlocked, beating hearts of Creation and Incarnation. They banish the darkness of the flawed doctrines around Adam and Eve and their 'original sin', and introduce the hidden story of a Mother God who created us out of love, and who forever loves us to bits, no matter what. This world is the divine body of God in space and time. So are we all. At birth we are born as pure and shining as we will ever be, as innocent and as close to God as any saint. There is no original sin that needs to be washed away from the baby's soul.' Page 47

'It was when God became human flesh in Jesus that all these delightful truths were fully revealed to us. For some strange reason most of us were never told about them. At that unique moment our lives were radically changed for ever. We became aware that we are now called to recognise God in everything that happens, in the circumstances of our daily existence, in all that exists. God is revealed in the midst, the mess and the mystery all around us. The Pope's astonishing 'humble conviction' means there is a huge shift and surge in our perception of creation, in our way of looking at things, in our own inner self-awareness.' P 47

'But humanity,' the Pope reflects, 'refuses to see Creation as an icon of the Word of God through whom it was made and holds together' (Col 1:16-17. Humans, greedy and reckless, denied that Creation was an ever-present sacrament of thanksgiving by which they might be in constant communion with God.' P48

'Laudato Si emphasises that humanity needs a huge change of mind, a metanoia, a paradigm shift so as to believe in our own uniqueness, in our wider responsibility, and to live in humble and glad harmony with Creation. Page 49

'Are we saying that all Creation from the very beginning, all matter, nature itself are to be seen as truly spiritual, God's own incarnate essence? Is this the vital question that lies at the heart of our understanding of Incarnation? Page 49

'Elizabeth Johnson tells us 'Seen in the light (of Incarnation) the natural world, instead of being divorced from what is sacred, takes on a sacramental character. Sacramental theology has always taught that simple material things – water, oil, bread and wine – can be bearers of divine grace. This is so, it now becomes clear, only because to begin with, the whole physical world itself is the matrix of God's gracious indwelling. Matter bears the mark of the sacred and has itself a spiritual radiance.....' Page 49-50

Ilia Delio: '.....From the Big Bang to the present moment the universe is God-filled, divine-love-engendered matter; the evolution of the universe is the coming to be of Christ. Evolution is not opposed to religion; it does not contradict the God of Jesus Christ. Rather it opens up a new window to the divine mystery.' P 50

***For our days on Earth are a mystery, a searching for You,  
a yearning for the great Mystery to make itself known.  
The years pass and soon the Harvest is at hand,  
a time to reap the fruit of one's life.***  
Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill

## DAY TWO *continued....*

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them.

Journal briefly your reactions and ponderings. Search for any questions that may be rising within your own heart. Try not to automatically dismiss anything, but stay with it, however uncomfortable it may be.

Are you OPEN to a 'huge change of mind' or a 'paradigm shift'?

What questions arise for you about Faith, God, Creation, Religion.....?

Carry this/these questions around in your Heart for the day. Ponder them and Listen to what is unfolding within you? Do you have a sense of being OPEN, or a sense of your own RIGIDITY?

If we can accept 'the world as a sacrament of communion', what are the implications for the way in which I currently choose to live my own life?

At the end of the day, bring to mind:

Your own experience of the 'world as a sacrament of communion' TODAY.

Where have you experienced or noticed the 'sacred' TODAY?

Where did you 'recognise God' present in your life TODAY?

Write a short prayer or poem that gives expression to your EXPERIENCE today?



## DAY THREE:

### THE HOLINESS OF FALLING IN LOVE – Chapter Five

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 5 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:

‘Love inspires us and impels us to take action. Guilt is a poor motivator for improving our behaviour. In his universally acclaimed *THE UNIVERSE IS A GREEN DRAGON* physicist Brian Swimme reminds us that it is by attraction, not by fear, that the human heart is unlocked. It is by allurements, that all-pervasive unconscious desire for oneness, that the whole of creation is drawn, driven and sustained.’ Page 52

‘Traditionally, western Christian theology has been predominately concerned with the understanding of God through conceptual and rational terms. These are, of course, vital in our attempts to grasp the mystery better intellectually, but a purely prose-based theology is an impoverished one....Theology is about the human heart as well as the human mind.’ Page 52-53

‘Deep within us, we humans have an intuitive sense of the Creator God, and this sense is usually expressed more clearly and experienced more fully through the arts and other non-verbal modes of creative imagination. All true artists strive to capture that which is at the core of humanity, be it called truth, goodness, beauty or life’s meaning. A genuine work of art – poem, film, dance, music – has the power to evoke in people feelings of awareness of the Holy that are innate in everyone. At this precise moment we are lifted out of ourselves, time seems to stand still and we seem to be at one with everything. In this non-rational instant of knowing, our normal intellectual efforts, essential as they are, are transcended.’ Page 53

‘Art and ‘being in love’ have the ability to expose the truth behind and within ‘the ordinary’; they create the doorway to a religious experience, a heightened awareness of God’s incarnate presence in the world.’ P 53

‘The world we live in needs such beauty to keep despair at bay.... It is beauty, like truth, which makes the invisible world palpable, and brings joy to the human heart.’ (Pope John Paul II quote). It takes us beyond who and where we are. Without stimulating our faith-imagination this healing breakthrough will be a bridge too far. Page 53

‘Whether it be a cycle of nature, the breathless moment of a sudden wonder, the extraordinary creations of artists in every medium and from any religion, he (Pope Francis) sees them as sacraments of disclosure, as precious vessels of grace. We are called to become aware of our normal and often shallow process of ‘looking at’ something rather than ‘seeing into’ it; of framing and pre-judging things as ‘merely’ secular or ‘merely’ human rather than allowing the surprise of our catching the deep unframed glimpse. Thus does the invisible become visible as we try daily to make the limitless Incarnation the measure of our understanding, our seeing and our very being.’ Page 54

‘If Christianity is not only to survive but to flourish,’ Delio says powerfully, ‘it needs a new imagination for the earth community, a new dream for the cosmos, a new understanding of Christ in evolution as the mystery of the whole, which includes other religions, cultures, and the whole of the whole, and yes, other planets and forms of life. In short, Christianity needs a new direction, one pointing not upward but forward, not toward “heaven above” but to a new future of healthy relationships in the cosmos, a new heaven on earth, which is what Jesus prayed for.... Christianity must speak to the world of something new emerging from within, a new life, a new future, transcending the present world toward a deepened, more fruitful way of living.... As we evolve toward a new level of religious consciousness, we must let go of the past and engage the future, because the future is upon us. Without engagement toward new reality, Christ cannot come to be.’ P 54-55

‘By trusting life, by fully participating in and cooperating with it, we contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. This is a deeply sacramental and incarnational vision of the entire universe and of the significance

## DAY THREE *continued*

of the human beings with it. It is also a deeply embodied spirituality with a profound reverence for all matter and life in their myriad forms. (This quote from Teilhard de Chardin) Page 55

.....

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them or judging them.

What do you agree with or disagree with in these quotes? Explore your responses and converse with them.

Where and how do you experience your own creativity?

Where have 'art and being in love' impacted upon your own life or grown you or changed you or transformed you?

Where and how do you 'trust and fully participate' in life?

Find twenty minutes somewhere in your day and sit in SILENCE and STILLNESS with your eyes closed. As thoughts come into your mind either use your breath or a single word to bring you back into the Silence.

After the Silence take a few moments to consider:

The deep 'attractions' and 'allurements' you are conscious of in your own life?

How consciously do you LISTEN to your own EXPERIENCE?

Remember moments of WONDER AND AWE within your own life and what you have experienced this day?

Give some expression to your own gratitude today: a prayer, a poem, a mandala or journal (other).



***Teach us, O Beloved, to honour each day  
that we may have a heart  
of wisdom.***

**Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill**

## DAY FOUR:

### THE LOVE THAT MOVES THE SUN AND STARS – Chapter 11

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 11 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:

‘The mystery of the universe is love. Creation is of the order of love....’ (LS 77) Page 76

‘Isn’t this breathtakingly attractive language? How can we read and believe it, and yet remain the same? It is too beautiful, too deep, too tender to take in all at once. What does Pope Francis mean by the ‘order of love’? What he means is extraordinary! Love is the vital, connecting, sustaining, empowering force of all beings and all creatures and all things, for every second of their existence – whether the mayfly during its 30 minutes with us or the dinosaur during its 200 years of living. Try to remember this every time you look around you; every time you use your senses; especially when times are hard, and you do not actually feel much love where you happen to be. Try also to explore this statement – that energy itself is the movement of love.’ Page 76

‘Love is the very nature and shape of being,’ writes Rohr. ‘It is the essential energy of the entire universe from orbiting protons and neutrons to the orbiting of planets and stars.’ Page 77

‘Teilhard de Chardin believed that love is the one, essential and constant influence in this unfolding. It is the energy that empowers the process. It permeates the whole universe. ‘Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being... the love of Christ is an energy into which all the chosen elements of creation are fused without losing their identity.’ Page 77

Ilia Delio quotes de Chardin: “God evolves the universe and brings it to its completion through the instrumentality of human beings... to love God we must also love what God loves.’ Page 77

‘... Brian Swimme writes ‘This primal dynamism awakes communities of atoms, galaxies, stars, families, nations, persons, ecosystems, oceans and stellar systems. Love ignites being and, without it, all interest, enchantment, fascination, mystery and wonder would fall away, and with their absence all human groups would lose their binding energy’. ‘And what is our fullest destiny?’ Swimme asks Berry. ‘To become love in human form.’ He replies. ‘ Page 77

‘..... James Finley writes, ‘ ... what is truest is that we are all called to recognise, surrender to, and ultimately be identified with the mystery of God utterly beyond all concepts, all words, all designations whatsoever ... What’s more, we are to realise that this boundless, birth-less, deathless mystery of God is manifesting itself, and giving itself to us completely in every breath and heartbeat ... If we could really experience all of that, as we sit here right now, just the way we are, we would experience God loving us into our chair, loving us into the present moment, breath by breath, heartbeat by heartbeat. And we would then bear witness to that realisation by the way we treat ourselves, the way we treat others, the way we treat all living things. This is the way; this is the great way....’ Page 78

‘Once we see Love itself as the power and energy that drives the universe on its way, and once we identify the source of life and growth and evolution as the creative work and play of the Holy Spirit, then the meaning of our faith and our deepest spirituality and worship cannot but be radically transformed....’ Page 78

‘Our faith must develop in tune with the rapidly evolving wisdom of science and theology. To freeze everything according to past doctrines and their fixed definitions is to watch our faith grow stagnant and die.’ Page 78

‘Beyond any personal failures and weaknesses, salvation is about a healing wholeness for all creation. ‘Sin,’ Delio said in an interview in 2016, ‘is living in unrelatedness, disconnected from the whole.’ Christ does not save us from the world; Christ is the reason FOR the world, Christ IS the beating heart of the world. ‘ P 79

## DAY FOUR *continued*

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them or judging them.

When you ponder the word 'Love', what arises within you – what does it mean for you? Is it selective?

Do you sense your understanding of Love being deepened?

Do you have a sense of 'loving what God loves.'? How is this manifest in your life? Or where is it not manifest?

Do you have a sense of God being 'beyond all concepts, all words, all designations whatsoever'?

Do you have a sense of 'being radically transformed' in faith, spirituality and worship?

Is your faith evolving? Or is it 'frozen in past doctrines....'?

What is your understanding of 'salvation' and 'sin'? Do you live in a sense of relatedness and connection with the Whole?

During the day:

Explore your own sense of CURIOSITY? Are you open to curiosity or afraid of it? What are you curious about in your daily life– your faith, mystery, Love, evolution, Energy, science, religions.....?

When you first awaken each morning, be still for a couple of minutes, and quietly say to yourself repeatedly: TODAY I AM DRIVEN BY THE FORCES OF LOVE.

Take SEVERAL one minute intervals/stops during your day and either go outside or just stand/sit/lay down where you are and become aware, of every sound, everything you see and notice and feel, and then WHISPER the words: Thank you!



***Awaken us, O Holy One! Too long have we been asleep!***

Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill

## DAY FIVE:

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE MIDWIFE OF OUR INNER BEAUTY – Chapter 13

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 13 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:

‘In 2014 Pope Francis offered clarification at the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. ‘When we read in Genesis the account of Creation,’ he said, ‘we risk imagining God as a magus (wizard), with a magic wand able to make everything. But it is not so. God created beings and allowed them to develop according to the internal laws that God gave to each one, so that they were able to develop and arrive at their own fullness of being....God is not a demiurge of a conjurer, but the Creator who gives being to all things. Page 85/86

‘It is important that we grapple with these issues if we hope to be caught up in delight and wonder at the unfolding mysteries of science and spirituality. We need to develop a profound interest, familiarity and fascination with these revelations. Opportunities for study and sharing, for both young and old must swiftly be made available. A central source of wisdom and understanding is priest, prophet and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who helps us to grasp central aspects of the mystery. He saw the evolutionary process of Creation in the light of faith. It is a challenge facing all of us.’ Page 86

‘... In the guiding words of another safe teacher, Ilia Delio, ‘to live from the centre of the heart and to reach out to the world with faith, hope and trust in God’s incarnate presence....The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the living word of God that continues to be spoken as the word of evolution...’ Page 86

‘It is important that we understand that the Incarnation is not a one-off event in history: it holds the key to the true reality of all time and space, of all life and its religions, as it evolves and grows towards final fulfilment in the heart of God. It is, in fact, a long love story drawing us to cherish and transform our true earthly and cosmic home. In WAITING FOR GOD French philosopher Simone Weil wrote that ‘the beauty of the world is Christ’s tender smile for us coming through matter... It is like a sacrament.’ Page 87

‘How can evolution be self-determining without challenging God’s role as ultimate Creator or everything?’ It is a question that will reverberate in Catholic Christian circles for many a day. The Pope quotes St. Thomas Aquinas’s attempt to explain the matter. How could the shipbuilder’s timbers sense their future role in a fine ship? Could they somehow ‘feel’ the allure of the sea? How do you understand it? It’s an intriguing matter. It is at the heart of the Christian’s grasp of evolution. Maybe writer and philosopher Antoine de St. Exupery, author of THE LITTLE PRINCE, unintentionally gives us a hint when he writes: ‘If you want to build a ship, don’t first drum up people to collect wood, and don’t assign them tasks and duties; rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.’ Page 87

Reading these words of the Pope, many will continue to ask, ‘Is evolution, then, self-directed or God-directed?’ We need all the help we can get with this question. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson faces the question in this way: ‘Nature, it appears, bears a raw openness to the future. More than a sacrament of continuous divine presence, more than a locus of divine compassion, it is also the bearer of a divine promise. The living, ever-dawning God abides in the world most intimately in the mode of promise: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5)..... an ecological theology (of creation) proposes that the Creator Spirit dwells at the heart of the natural world, graciously energising its evolution from within, compassionately holding all creatures in their finitude and death, and drawing the world forward toward an unimaginable future... God made the world, in other words, by empowering the world to make itself.’ Page 87/88

## DAY FIVE *continued*

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them or judging them.

When you deeply consider your own belief systems, what is your image of God: the 'wizard', the 'conjurer', the one who is separated from us? Does your image of God ground God within the whole of Creation or do you image God as OUTSIDE OF Creation? How do you feel as you consider your answers?

Do you make time to 'grapple' with the 'unfolding mysteries of science and spirituality'? How?

Where and how do you see 'faith' and 'evolution' connected?

Do you experience the 'Gospel of Jesus Christ' as a 'living word'? How is this made manifest in your own life and beliefs?

What is your understanding and experience of 'incarnation'?

Do you experience the whole of life as a 'sacrament', or understand sacraments only as prescribed rituals?

Do you tend to run away from the word 'evolution' or do you embrace it with curiosity and openness?

Take some time today to open into the following practices:

Choose one thing to ponder: a tree, the ocean, a person, a hand, the moon..... Engage your imagination and ask yourself to reflect upon all that has gone before it to make it what it is today? Be aware that it is NOT just there as a one off event - it has a history that goes back over 13.7 billion years. What do you experience/feel when you ponder this extraordinary mystery?

As you ponder your own life, bring to mind those people and events that have enabled you to grow/evolve in Love – that have moved you into something deeper. Find a way to express your gratitude. It might be a short poem, a haiku, a mandala. Express it creatively.

Allow yourself to enter into the evolutionary CONSCIOUSNESS that is Loving you into greater Being NOW. Sense the intimacy and the Hope. What do you hunger for? Keep that hunger before you today.

***Help us to wait in Silence listening for your gentle Voice;  
strengthen us with courage to face the fears within.***

Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill



## DAY SIX:

### THE WONDER OF YOU..... – Chapter 17

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 17 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:

‘The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God. St. Thomas Aquinas noted that multiplicity and variety ‘come from the Creator who willed that what was wanting in one, in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another, in as much as God’s goodness could not be represented fittingly by any one creature.’ Hence we need to grasp the meaning and variety of things in their multiple relationships.’ (LS 86) Page 101

‘Read the first sentence in this extract again (above). Pope Francis sees the universe as a whole, with all its relationships, as a revelation of the beauty and richness of God. He does this because of the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. He sees the astonishing revolution brought about by the Christmas baby. Most Catholics have not been helped to deeply understand this shocking good news. A new consciousness of the bigger picture is called for, a clearer insight into the intrinsic connection between Creation and Incarnation, into the developing conversation between the scientists and the theologians.’ Page 101

‘According to a 2016 World Wildlife Fund/Zoological Society of London report, global vertebrate populations are likely to have declined by over 50 per cent on their 1970 levels before 2020. These are seen as extraordinary figures, suggesting that a mass extinction in the near future has become a serious danger. The report warns of a threat of multiple extinctions on a scale not seen since the dinosaurs left us. The report also explains that we are entering a new era in Earth’s history, which is described as the Anthropocene era, when humans rather than natural forces will be the primary drivers of planetary change.’ Page 102/103

‘In his encyclical Pope Francis warns about the devastating effects of the deteriorating state of nature, not just in the destruction of the delicate balance and beauty of our global wildlife, but in the victimising of humans, particularly the poor, who are the last to contribute to this inhuman greed, and the first to suffer from the consequences.’ Page 103

‘Most amazing is the realisation that every thing that exists in the universe came from a common origin. And we are the first generation to live with an empirical view of the origin of the universe. We are the first humans to look into the night sky and see the birth of stars, the birth of galaxies, the birth of the cosmos as a whole. Our future as a species will be forged within this new story of the universe...’ Page 104

‘A star could not, by itself, become aware of its own beauty or sacrifice. But the star can, through us, reflect back on itself. In a sense, you are the star. Every element was forged in temperatures a million times hotter than molten rock, each atom fashioned in the blazing heat of the star. Your eyes, your brain, your bones – all of you is composed of the star’s creations. You are that star, brought into a form of life that enables life to reflect back on itself. So, yes: the star does know of its great work, of its surrender to allurements, of its stupendous contribution to life, but only through its further articulation – YOU.... When we deepen our awareness of the simple truth that we are through the creativity of stars, we begin to feel fresh gratitude. When we reflect on the labour required for our life, reverence naturally wells up within us. Then, in the deepest regions of our hearts we begin to embrace our own creativity. What we bestow on the world allows others to live in joy. Such a stupendous mystery!’ Quote from Brian Swimme. Page 105

***O, that we might be converted in our hearts  
and walk together in peace and harmony!***

Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill

## DAY SIX continued....

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them or judging them.

When you consider 'the universe as a whole', how does it challenge your world and religious view? How?

Are you open to a 'new consciousness' – to a 'Christmas baby' that reveals our evolutionary story of Unfolding Love?

When you read about 'the mass extinction in the near future'... what do you experience? Are you open to explore it, to consider it, to speak of your concern about it, to do something about it?

How do you feel when Pope Francis speaks about 'a victimising of humans, particularly the poor'? How do you feel when he speaks of 'inhuman greed'? Am I challenged by these statements? Where and how does 'greed' make its way into my own life? In what way do I reach out to the poor?

When you consciously pause and consider we all come 'from a common origin', how does that speak to you and who you are in the world today?

Do you embrace your own 'creativity'? Does the way in which I choose to live my life 'allow others to live in joy'?

During the course of your day ponder the following:

It is your eyes and heart that have the capacity to see the BEAUTY and CONNECTEDNESS in EVERYTHING. From the first moment you open your eyes in the morning, tell the first thing you see how BEAUTIFUL it is. See everything as part of yourself. EVERYTHING IS BEAUTIFUL (Including YOU.....) Notice it all around you, express your gratitude for this SEEING and KNOWING.

Practice seeing the Beauty in those you have difficulty relating to or difficulty in seeing the Beauty. Practice it repeatedly – counter your negative thoughts with Beauty itself. What do you experience as you practice this?

Also practice seeing and acknowledging the Beauty within yourself. Not with a sense of ego pride, but with a sense of absolute Trust in the Creative Energies of Love that are as present in you as they are in everything else.



## DAY SEVEN:

### A NEW WAY OF THINKING, OF BEING, OF SEEING – Chapter 26

#### SOME WORDS TO PONDER from Chapter 26 of Daniel O’Leary’s book:

‘Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and highly effective workings of the market. (LS 215)’ Page 142

‘... Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life’ (LS 209). It is a remedy and a challenge. The kernel of the work is the awakening of the person’s heart and soul, of their innate imagination, of the affirming of their creativity, of their capacity for discerning the love and meaning at the heart of all creatures.’ Page 142

‘A teacher awakens more than she informs. She brings to consciousness what is already within and waiting. She draws out rather than crams in. She brings to birth what is already gestating; brings to bloom what is already invisibly growing. ‘Speak to us of God’ the cherry tree was asked, ‘and the cherry tree blossomed’. Writer Leo Tolstoy refers to this insight, ‘I cannot imagine what else a teacher would do except to remind people of the capacity for the infinite’. ‘ Page 142-143

‘Tolstoy wrote; ‘An idea becomes truly comprehensible only when we are aware of it in our souls; when it gives us the feeling that we know it already, and were simply recalling it. This was how I felt when I read the Gospels. It all seemed so familiar; it seemed that I had known it all long ago; that I had only forgotten it.’ Page 143

‘Soul teaching is not about external religious rites and devotions – but the conversion of the heart; it is about enabling the student to recognise fully what she already half knows, half senses, is listening out for. Why do we say that? Because it was for this moment that soul was created... And then finally, comes the midwife, YOU, to complete the divine purpose. By the divine presence in you, you open and release the divine presence in those you serve. Page 143

‘A few of us wrote a prayer for the mystic-teacher we all carry within us:

Like the artist who looks at the marble and sees the hidden angel,  
Like the farmer who looks at his winter fields and sees the waving harvest,  
Like the mystic who looks at the caterpillar and sees the butterfly,  
Like the midwife who looks at the distressed body and sees a beautiful wee baby,  
Like Jesus who looked into the hearts of sinners and saw their grace,  
So too do you, the teacher; you look at your students and see the face of God.  
You are, thus, the revealers, the midwives of the presence of God already hidden in your listeners.’

Page 143-144

‘What is required, where ‘deep learning’ is concerned, is a new way of being, a new way of seeing. ‘If someone has not learned to stop and admire something beautiful,’ the Pope says, ‘we should not be surprised if they treat everything as an object to be used and abused without scruple’. If we miss the light in the things that surround us, we will miss the light in people too. ‘Create a new way of thinking about human beings and their relationship with nature,’ he keeps insisting. ‘...If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realise that certain mind-sets really do influence our behaviour...(we must) promote a new way of thinking...’ (LS 215).’ Page 144

‘Too many of our religious teachers and leaders still cling to medieval images of a fixed universe, a historical fall from original state of innocence and an earthly life of relentless atonement. It is surely time for a systematic reform of theology and spirituality, with profound implications for our teaching, preaching and the role of Church and the meaning and celebration of the sacraments.’ Page 144-145

## DAY SEVEN *continued....*

‘(Delio says) ‘Through the eyes of Teilhard de Chardin we see that the old wine-skins of Christianity can no longer hold the new wine of our time. Most of the construction and understanding of Christian doctrine happened in ages past, based on a cosmology that is no longer true. This does not mean that our theology is irrelevant; the core principles are still held to be revelatory of divine mystery. Our understanding of these core principles, however, principles of a living God, evokes new insights and dimensions consonant with our place in this expanding, radically unfinished universe... (So) our theology must think in new ways about the doctrines of God, creation, incarnation, sin, evil and redemption, grace and freedom, and the virtues of faith, hope and love. ‘ Page 145

.....

As you ponder these words underline those words or phrases that resonate within your own Heart or that challenge you in some way. Notice what you are feeling: delight, expansion, contraction, disturbance, anger, affirmation, joy..... Dare to stay with your feelings without dismissing them or judging them.

Are you open to rethink or imagine a church that could be different? What do you imagine? What might it look like in your wildest dreams?

When you consider your own life, do you recognise where you have ‘planted seeds’? What has been their fruit?

Who have been your ‘teachers’ in life? What would you like to say to them?

Are you open to a ‘new way of being’ or a ‘new way of seeing’?

As you ponder your own life, your growth, the changes from when you were born, and ponder your own unfolding evolutionary story, can you see that our churches, our teachings, our cosmos also go through this same unfolding evolutionary story? As you ponder this, what do you experience?

Take some time to either journal or write a poem of your own evolutionary Love Story?

Get in touch with your own resistances and fears as you ponder what you are being invited into?

With your eyes wide open, dare to see ALL that ‘speaks to you of God’ this day. With each awakening express your gratitude.



***Let the grace and gentleness of the Holy Spirit be upon us,  
Guiding our feet upon paths of Love Consciousness  
Increase the Light within us – O Beloved, hear our prayer!  
Amen.***

Excerpt from Psalm 90 – Nan Merrill

## The Messenger

My work is loving the world.  
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird  
equal seekers of sweetness.  
Here the quickening yeast, there the blue plums.  
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?  
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me  
keep my mind on what matters,  
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be  
astonished.

The phoebe, the delphinium.  
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.  
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be give a mind and a heart  
and these body-clothes,  
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy  
to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,  
telling them all, over and over, how it is  
that we live forever.

By Mary Oliver

