



March/April/May 2021  
Year Twenty-Two Issue 4  
Number 106

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*Thin Places*, an ecumenical sampler of events and resources for spiritual growth, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey, is published by the Spiritual Life Community of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Look for *Thin Places* at:  
[thinplaces.us](http://thinplaces.us) or  
[westminstermpls.org/publications](http://westminstermpls.org/publications)



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## A blessing on my spiritual journey . . .

*by the Rev. Dean J. Seal*

I grew up with a brother who had significant cognitive challenges. He could tell jokes, he could read, but he could not remember what he read. He had balance problems and walked with crutches most of his life, then a walker, then a wheelchair. He was a vulnerable adult; he liked everyone, he could remember names, and he could not tell if anyone was lying to him. He could, however, tell if someone was disrespecting him. He was also keenly attuned to the mood you were in, good or bad, I think more than anyone I've ever met. Very much Zen, very much In The Moment.

Gary was four years older than me and the middle child of five boys. When we went on camping vacations together, someone would always have to keep an eye on him. We usually took it in stride. As a three-year-old, I had to be told why Gary could not walk, and could not learn like I could, and was not smart enough for my school. It made me cry. It's the most vivid memory I have of being three, second only to when I had my stomach pumped for drinking ant poison (I thought it was orange pop; it was strychnine—but that's another story).

I understood this short-changing of his luck as being "because he was born that way—he can't help it." When I was learning things in third grade, like "the" is included in "they" or the names of birds—goldfinch, blue jays, stuff we'd see around the yard—I would be conflicted, automatically, because I would think, "Gary can't learn that. It's not his fault and it's not because I'm So Good that I'm Smart enough to remember that. Maybe it's not such a great thing that I have this when Gary does not." I was conflicted about learning and having some intelligence until I started to work on it in therapy in my 50s.

As we got older, and older brothers migrated to college, I became more and more resentful of having to have more of his care fall to me. And then it was no big deal. And then it was fun sometimes. And then it was How Can I Get Out of Here? Teen stuff.

Then Gary went to a group home, I went to college, and we were relieved of actual care—we were just supposed to visit him on occasion. Through college, I left it mostly to Mom and Dad. When I moved to Manhattan for seven years—my wife was in the theater there—I would see him at Christmas, and the vividness of the encounter seemed to be more intense as we grew fond of each other in absence. We moved back to Minneapolis, and I got more in the habit of seeing him regularly. Gary was now a ward of the state, but he was still the guy who was keenly aware of the mood you were in, good or bad. He was still a practicing empath. He was a blessing, to us

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and to those he encountered. “He’s always so polite!”  
people would say.

Then I suffered a work injury; I fell fourteen feet onto  
my head, shooting a commercial for Treasure Island  
Casino. I was a “Cash Tornado.” I had raging migraines  
four out of six days, was incapacitated to work for  
eighteen months, and ended up with a permanent  
partial disability to my memory. This makes it hard for  
me to remember names—not just in the day-to-day  
sense that many experience, but in the sense of  
forgetting the names of good friends when they are  
right in front of you, or someone’s name you said  
thirty seconds ago. Or phone numbers, appointments,  
the names of books or politicians—short term stuff  
you would normally know. And I began to really take  
to heart what Gary’s life was about.

*Thin Places* invited me to think back and identify some  
key aspects of my spiritual journey and share it with  
this community. The timing was good; putting it into  
words clarified a thought I had been mulling over the  
past few years. My spiritual journey grew out of my  
life journey; they are deeply intertwined, and they  
feed each other. The spiritual life is nothing if it is  
segregated from how we live and what we learn from  
the reality of lived experience. My awareness of the  
needs of others—reflecting on *Matthew 25*—is that  
feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the  
homeless, is not just about us being a blessing to  
others, but also the blessing that only they can give to  
us. “Personal Salvation” is nothing if it is a kind of self-

**“There is a time in every life**  
when the very act  
of looking back and taking stock  
becomes essential  
to going forward.

Without the light  
that shines out of the darkness  
of the past,  
we cannot chart  
a new path  
into the future.”

Joan Chittister, *Monasteries of the Heart*

help effort, if it does not reach out and transform our  
relationship to others.

Gary needed people to care for him, at a higher level  
than what a family can do. This is a public role for  
government, to protect people from a life of misery.  
And how many others? Hurt at birth, by work  
accidents, by war, by criminal activity, by centuries of  
abuse? And how can we provide care for the most  
vulnerable when the ultra-rich pay little or nothing in  
taxes used to the betterment of the common good? A  
Dine (Navaho) saying is, “No one can become rich if  
they don’t take care of their family,” Who is my  
family? Everyone. Everything.

When Gary was dying, the last words he said to me  
were “When I don’t see you, I miss you.” And that  
haunts me now. We always think we wish we could  
have done more when someone passes. But I am one  
who knows I could have.

So now, I am just trying to do God’s will as best I can,  
to try to bring justice into the world, to speak for those  
who cannot speak for themselves, without leaving  
anyone behind. And it started with my brother, Gary.

*Dean Seal’s first career was in theater and the arts,  
culminating (while also attending seminary) in four  
years as Director of the Minnesota Fringe Festival and  
the founding of Spirit in the House, a non-profit that  
explores spiritual diversity through the arts. He was  
ordained to a ministry of Interfaith Dialogue in 2008  
and since 2014 has been the Pastor of Shepherd of the  
Hills Presbyterian Church in Chaska.*

*Dean has had a deep interest in racial justice issues,  
and his ongoing ministry has been particularly  
influenced by the work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr.. Dean can be reached at:  
seal13dean@gmail.com.*

## Ongoing Opportunities

### Wood & Water Retreats: A Spiritual Start-Up

Wearied by the political discord, ongoing pandemic  
and persistent injustice in our communities, many who  
want to be more contemplative are describing a  
persistent sense of spiritual fatigue, disconnection, and  
fragmentation. The classic spiritual remedy would  
ordinarily be renewed practice within the context of  
physically gathered community, but these times are  
leading us online to make such new beginnings.

Enter **Wood & Water Retreats**, an experiment exploring time-tested spiritual practices in online formats. The offerings honor the best of traditional retreat ministry – restorative hospitality, respect for the unique personal journey, and the support of a genuine community. Last fall, for example, Wood & Water Retreats hosted a series of six online gatherings leading up to the election called, *Real Lament & Gritty Hope: Engaging the Headlines Prayerfully*. Other timely examples include the upcoming *Unlearning Racism as a Spiritual Practice*, *Living with the Word: A Month of Praying Scripture*, and *Writing of Godly Things*.

The anchoring image of Wood & Water comes from Psalm 1, “trees planted by streams” and reflects the hearted journeys of the two lead facilitators, Samuel Rahberg and Kiely Todd Roska. Sam is working to restore a family woodland in Southeast Minnesota and Kiely holds water to be a sacred symbol for how she experiences prayerfulness and discernment. Together, they are bringing together a cadre of talented retreat leaders with seekers who want to sink deep their spiritual roots or dive into holy waters . . . online. Visit <https://wood-water-retreats.square.site>.

### **Living with the Word: A Month Praying with Scripture**

During the month, Sam Rahberg and Kiely Todd from *Wood & Water Retreats* will help you practice ways to identify and honor how you pray, renew habits of prayerfulness, engage guides and companions, and integrate prayer and everyday life.

Come for free. Then pay-it-forward.

The experience includes:

- Cohort of up to 12 participants exploring lectio divina (or “sacred reading”)
- Opening retreat to settle into the practice and nurture your commitment
- Structured reflections with a small group
- Two one-on-one conversations with a spiritual companion
- Closing retreat to bless, integrate, and sustain your intention:

**The Opening Retreat, Friday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m.**

**-Saturday, April 24 at 3:00 p.m.**

**The Closing Retreat, Friday, May 21 at 7:00 p.m.**

**-Saturday, May 22 at 3:00 p.m.**

For additional information or to register: <https://wood-water-retreats.square.site>.

### **Are there still possibilities, despite the pandemic?**

the answer is **“Yes!”**

Are you looking to learn something new, engage with

others, or express your creativity during these difficult times? The Spirituality Center•Studium has some wonderful opportunities for winter/spring 2021:

- Find up-coming opportunities on our website, [www.sbm.osb.org](http://www.sbm.osb.org), like **The Sacred Triduum** (Maundy Thursday-Holy Saturday, April 1-3, 10:00-11:00 a.m.) or **Bread for the Journey: Prayer as Nourishment for the Soul** (4 Wednesdays, April 7-28, 9:30-11:00 a.m.)
- For **Studium—A Resident Scholars Program** that places special emphasis on the love of learning and honoring scholarship—contact Sister Ann Marie Biermaier at (320) 363-7172 or [abiermaier@csbsju.edu](mailto:abiermaier@csbsju.edu)
- For inquiries regarding **Spiritual Direction**, contact Sister Josue Behnen at (320) 363-7179 or [jbehen@csbsju.edu](mailto:jbehen@csbsju.edu)
- To sign up to receive our monthly **E-newsletter**: website + “Ministries” + “Spirituality Center” + scroll down and sign up:

**Spirituality Center, Saint Benedict's Monastery**

**104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN**

For additional information or registration for these and other opportunities: 320-363-7112 or [www.sbm.osb.org](http://www.sbm.osb.org) or [eamtony@csbsju.edu](mailto:eamtony@csbsju.edu).

### **“Silence and Song,” Weekly Contemplative Worship**

Scripture, prayer, silence, and song. Theme changes every month or so. Currently, “Artistic Offerings,” Spoken Words, Dance, and Music by Westminster’s Artist in Residence and friends:

**Wednesdays, 6:00-6:30 p.m.**, via Live-Streaming  
**Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**1200 Marquette Avenue Minneapolis**

For information: 612.322.3421 or [www.westminstermpls.org](http://www.westminstermpls.org) or [jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org).

### **“The only thing that really converts people,**

the ultimate moral imperative, is ‘the face of the other’ . . .

When we receive and empathize with the face of the other (especially the suffering face), it leads to transformation of our whole being. It creates a moral demand on our heart that is far more compelling than the Ten Commandments.

Just giving people commandments on tablets of stone doesn’t change the heart. It may steel the will, but it doesn’t soften the heart like a personal encounter can [and often does] . . .”

Richard Rohr, *Daily Meditation*, 31 Oct. 2018

### **Living Water: Contemplation by the Water**

Our contemplative practice by the water—a celebration of God’s presence—began last Fall, offering us an opportunity to sing, sprinkle ourselves lightly with water, sit in silence, and offer our prayers through flowers. It is so wonderfully alive—informed by the breeze, birds, trees, and the (physically distant) presence of each other.

All are welcome to come together (responsibly) for silent meditation, song, and more, connecting us with Living Water:

**Fourth Sundays, 9:00-10:00 a.m.**

Hosted by **Plymouth Contemplatives**

Sponsored by **Plymouth Congregational Church**  
**1900 Nicollet Avenue (at Franklin), Minneapolis**

Held at **Lake of the Isles (Wita Tomna)**

**North side, near Newton Ave. South**

(Please wear a mask, practice distancing, bring a chair)

Learn much more at:

[www.plymouth.org/connect/contemplatives](http://www.plymouth.org/connect/contemplatives)

Sign up for updates from: [emily@wisdomdances.com](mailto:emily@wisdomdances.com).

### **At Saint Paul’s Monastery**

The Benedictine Center will be taking the opportunity offered by our pandemic program pause to simplify and focus on the Center’s original founding purpose: Spiritual Direction.

As they have during these past months, our spiritual directors will continue to companion all those seeking guidance on the path, virtually rather than face-to-face. Each month in 2021, our *eNewsletter* will offer a profile of one of our spiritual directors and will also provide links to resources available elsewhere to spiritually nourish long-time guests of the Center.

We’ll monitor developments closely and will make announcements about additional opportunities. our future plans as the year progresses. There seems to be a whiff of hope in the air of this New Year, a whiff that helps to look forward to again being able to offer in-person Benedictine hospitality:

### **The Benedictine Center, St. Paul’s Monastery**

**2675 Benet Road, Maplewood**

For information about spiritual direction or to sign up for the *eNewsletter*: [info@benedictinecenter.org](mailto:info@benedictinecenter.org) or [www.benedictinecenter.org](http://www.benedictinecenter.org).

### **“Thomas Merton’s Monastic Wisdom for These Times,” Ninth Annual Symposium of The Friends of St. Benedict**

Like most others, The Friends of St. Benedict—best known for their Benedictine Experience Retreats (held

for many years at St John’s Abbey and elsewhere across the land)—have halted in-person gatherings. But their Annual Symposium goes on, via Zoom.

This year’s Presenter, Bonnie Thurston, has delved deeply into the work and life example of Thomas Merton, writing her doctoral dissertation on him, and being a founding member of the International Thomas Merton Society. She will explore his understanding of wisdom as the quality that helps us resolve "the apparent opposition" of action and contemplation, of involvement and detachment. And much more:

**It happened,**

Saturday, February 20, 10:00 a.m.-Noon

**But it’s available** on their website:

[www.benedictinefriend.org](http://www.benedictinefriend.org)

Sponsored by **The Friends of St. Benedict**

**5150 Macomb Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016**

For additional information: [info@benedictfriend.org](mailto:info@benedictfriend.org) or 202.3638061 or [www.benedictinefriend.org](http://www.benedictinefriend.org).

**Space Runneth Out . . . but there are many, many more possibilities, just a click or call away:**

### **ARC Retreat Community:**

763.689.3540 or [www.ARCretreat.org](http://www.ARCretreat.org) or [ARCretreat@hotmail.com](mailto:ARCretreat@hotmail.com).

**City House:** [www.city-house.org](http://www.city-house.org) or [info@cityhouse.org](mailto:info@cityhouse.org).

### **The Episcopal House of Prayer and The House of Prayer in the City:**

320.363.3293 or [houseprayer@csbsju.edu](mailto:houseprayer@csbsju.edu) or [www.ehouseofprayer.org](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org) or [www.ehouseofprayer.org/hopc](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org/hopc).

### **Loyola Spirituality Center:**

651.641.0008 or [loyolassr@comcast.net](mailto:loyolassr@comcast.net) or [www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org).

### **“The more unpropitious the situation . . .**

in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper the hope is: [hope is] not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense *regardless* of how it turns out.

It is this hope that gives us the strength to live and continually try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do . . .”

Words frequently seen quoted in recent times: Václav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia during its dissolution the formation of the Czech Republic, in *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation*

**Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality:**

651.696.2798 or [www.sacredgroundspirit.org](http://www.sacredgroundspirit.org) or [info@sacredgroundspirit.org](mailto:info@sacredgroundspirit.org).

**In Memoriam**

Father William Meninger, OCSO, died Sunday morning, February 14th, at age eighty-eight in his infirmary room at St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. The day before his death, he led an international Zoom talk on the *Gospel of Mark*.

Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating, and William Meninger were the three principal architects of the modern Centering Prayer method and movement. The movement began as a response to Vatican II; Fr. Meninger was the last of the three. Thanks be to God.

## One-Time Opportunities

**Training the Heart: What Ignatius and Benedict offer in support of Centering Prayer**

St. Benedict (d. 547) and St. Ignatius (d. 1556) are often contrasted for their distinct schools of spirituality and very different perspectives on discipleship. The underpinnings of their prayer forms, however, have more in common than meets the eye, beginning with the fact that both saints spoke spiritual guidance into supremely difficult times. Hundreds of years later, as Centering Prayer practitioners face crises of historic proportion—pandemic, injustice, political discord—the threads binding the teachings of Benedict and Ignatius still offer encouragement and practical wisdom.

**On Cultivating Compassion in Troubled Times**

Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in his/her life.

Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life.

Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair.

Just like me, this person is seeking to fill his/her needs.

Just like me, this person is learning about life.

A Buddhist Mantra  
Shared by Elizabeth Lewis in  
the Franciscan Spirituality Center, La Crosse  
*newsletter*, 6 July 2020

During our time together, we will explore and experience how time-tested practices, especially Praying with Imagination and Examen, can complement and support the practice of Centering Prayer:

**Saturday, February 27, 1:00-4:00 p.m.**, via Zoom  
**Minnesota Contemplative Outreach**

For information or registration:

[info@minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](mailto:info@minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org) or  
[www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org).

**Contemplative Outreach’s United in Prayer Day**

This year's United in Prayer day will be a 24-hour, worldwide day of prayer, on a single Zoom chapel. Different countries, languages, and prayer groups will be hosting each of the 24-hourly segments. Each segment will begin at the top of the hour with 20 minutes or more of Centering Prayer and then the hosting group will determine the content (*Lectio Divina*, a video segment, readings, etc.) for the rest of the hour.

Please note that the **Minnesota Chapter** of Contemplative Outreach has been selected to host **the 9:00 a.m. meeting** (Central Time).

Everyone is invited and welcome to attend any prayer time, regardless of location or language, knowing that we are united in God's first language, silence:

Saturday, March 6, All Day (hourly for 24 hours)

To participate, go to:

[www.contemplativeoutreach.org/2021-united-in-prayer-day](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/2021-united-in-prayer-day).

For additional information: [pamela@coutreach.org](mailto:pamela@coutreach.org).

**The Tide May Be Turning . . .**

After halting in-person gatherings due to the pandemic early last Fall, the Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center **began holding retreats** in mid-February—with the same **elaborate pandemic safety protocols** in place that worked so well last summer. Our theme for 2021 will be *“Fear Not; I Am with You Always,”* a continuation of last summer’s theme, which was so well received.

A full schedule is being developed, containing long-time favorites like the **Women’s Palm Sunday Silent Retreat** (March 26-28), and more:

**Franciscan Retreats and Spirituality Center**  
**16385 St Francis Lane, Prior Lake, MN**

For information or registration for this or other up-coming opportunities: 952-447-2182 or [www.franciscanretreats.net](http://www.franciscanretreats.net).

**A Quiet Reflection Retreat: Seasons of the Soul,  
Resurrection Rhythms in Life Today**

*"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies  
it remains a single seed, but if it dies,  
it yields a rich harvest!"*

Jesus, *John 12*

Changes . . . transitions . . . release of the old to make way for God's new thing. In our lives we experience lots of unexpected "deaths"--or dreams, assumptions, relationships, even precious ministries. While painful, the passing away of the old releases the seeds of abundant new life.

The *Seasons of the Soul* retreat explores the pattern of six "seasons" in Jesus' life that correspond with seasons of our soul. They are doorways to joyfully embracing the many transitions of life that invite a new and fruitful future. We'll listen together for God in our seeds of change and to the invitation to new power and meaning in next things:

**Saturday, March 20, 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**, via Zoom  
also:

**Expressive Arts as a Spiritual Practice:**

**An Experiential Workshop**

God created our minds and our bodies to work together to process our stories . . . to live out our relationship with Him . . . and to internalize His Truths.

In this experiential workshop, we will explore ways we can bring our whole person into our time of solitude with the Lord. We will begin with *Lectio Divina*, then we will engage in several expressive art modalities

**Fruit that grows in vulnerability**

"There is a difference between successfulness and fruitfulness.

Success comes from strength, control, and respectability. A successful person has the energy to create something, to keep control over its development, and to make it available in large quantities. Success brings many rewards and often fame.

Fruits, however, come from weakness and vulnerability. And fruits are unique. A child is the fruit conceived in vulnerability, community is the fruit born through shared brokenness, and intimacy is the fruit that grows through touching one another's wounds.

Let's remind one another that what brings us true joy is not successfulness but fruitfulness."

Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*

- poetry, art-making, and movement - to experience on a deeper level what arose during our time of prayer. No previous art experience needed. All are welcome:  
**Saturday, March 27, 9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.**, via Zoom  
**Christos Center for Spiritual Formation**

**1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes, MN**

For information about these and other up-coming online opportunities: 651.653.8207 or [ladonna@christoscenter.org](mailto:ladonna@christoscenter.org) or [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org).

For information (applications are now be accepted) for the next **Tending the Holy: Preparation for the Ministry of Spiritual Direction:**

[www.christoscenter.org/spiritual-direction-training](http://www.christoscenter.org/spiritual-direction-training).

**Two Leadership Opportunities**

**Both Christos Center and Wisdom Ways** are searching for new Directors.

For information about Christos Center (whose search is just beginning): [info@christoscenter.org](mailto:info@christoscenter.org) For information about Wisdom Ways: [www.csjstpaul.org/employment-opportunities](http://www.csjstpaul.org/employment-opportunities).

**Tending our Sorrows: Passion Week Consolation,  
Daily Online Meditations with J. S. Bach's Passion**

Bach's *Passion* is a musical masterpiece which has moved our hearts countless times. But it also—studies have shown--holds the potential to console us in times of trouble, to strengthen our self-healing potential and resilience.

This online retreat invites you to both a time to tend to your sorrows and to be consoled by the Divine power of Bach's *Passion*. We invite you to walk with us from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, through the valley of your tears or loneliness or despair or sorrows, towards new life and the blossoming of spring:

**Sunday, March 28, at 7:00 p.m.-**

**Sunday, April 4, at 11:00 a.m.,**

**Sponsored by Almut & Chuck at Cloister Seminars**

For details on "How It Works" and registration: [www.cloisterseminars.org](http://www.cloisterseminars.org) or [furcherthuff@gmail.com](mailto:furcherthuff@gmail.com).

**Compassion in Challenging Times: Etty Hillesum and Us,  
Three Conversations about Sacred Wisdom,  
Divine Mysteries and Human Questions**

Realizing that the struggle for inner peace is one with the struggle for justice and the end of war, Etty Hillesum demonstrated—through how she lived and what she wrote—another way, a way of love that she consciously cultivated and equally consciously passed on to others.

How do we shoulder the common challenges of our times, not only with all of humanity, but with the Earth

itself and all life upon it? Come explore and discover how her story, how her philosophical and theological reflections, can be a source of healing for all of us:

**Three Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**, via Zoom

- **April 27: Ety Hillesum as Witness to Healing and Wholeness**
- **May 4: She Did Not Speak**
- **May 11: Can Religion Help Heal a World Broken by Trauma? Ety Hillesum as our Ancestor in the “Qahat goyim” (sacred assembly)**

#### **Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality**

**Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul**

For information about these and other up-coming opportunities: [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org) or 651.696.2788 or [sausen@wisdomwayscenter.org](mailto:sausen@wisdomwayscenter.org).

#### **All Shall Be Well: Joyful Prayer with Julian of Norwich**

Julian of Norwich, even in her own lifetime was renowned as a visionary and spiritual director. She was the first woman to write a book in the English language, and her reflections on the Motherhood of God continue to inspire us today. In this retreat we will weave together Julian's joyful, optimistic spirituality with contemplative prayer practices inspired by her teachings and by the wisdom of The Cloud of Unknowing:

**Friday, May 14, 7:00-9:00 p.m.--Saturday, May 15, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**, via Zoom

#### **Franciscan Spirituality Center**

**920 Market Street, La Crosse WI**

For information or registration for this and other up-coming opportunities: [www.fscenter.org](http://www.fscenter.org) or 608.791.5295 or [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org).

#### **Hope Day: Dealing with Loss, Finding a Reason to Hope**

Change is the essence of life, and I am the learner. Loss interrupts the flow of my life . . . the death of a loved one, illness, life-changing disappointment such as

#### **Contact Us**

Do you know of anyone—it's free to all who ask—who would like to receive this ecumenical newsletter?

If you do, please contact Kristin Kieft at [news@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:news@wpc-mpls.org) or 612.332.3421.

If you know of an up-coming *Opportunity* that would be of interest to other readers, or

if you have any other questions or comments, please contact us at: [thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com).

economic change or job loss, rejection by a person or institution that means a great deal to me. How do I hope in the midst of life's changes? What is God asking of me?

Our day includes conferences, time for quiet reflection, optional sharing, the sacrament of Reconciliation, and celebration of the Eucharist:

**Friday, May 20, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

**Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN**

For information or registration about this or other up-coming opportunities—like **Men & Women's Holy**

**Week Retreat** (March 31-April 3) and **Women's**

**Weekend Retreat** (April 16-18) or **Virtual Spiritual**

**Direction:** 763.682.1394 or [anita@kingshouse.com](mailto:anita@kingshouse.com) or [www.kingshouse.com](http://www.kingshouse.com).

**Afterwords:** continued from back page.

is surely old news, has already been much better said.

In his Meditation, **Dean Seal** tells how he came to understand that **“every one is my neighbor”** . . . (an understanding that can happen—as it did for the Good Samaritan—more easily if we can put our groupthink aside) . . .

In the quotation included above, **Richard Rohr** observes that “when we receive and empathize with **the face of the other** (especially the suffering face), it leads to transformation . . . it creates a moral demand upon our heart that is far more compelling than the Ten Commandments” . . . (a transformation that seems much more likely to take place when we see through the eyes of the heart, rather than the labels of the mind) . . .

And when we look at and listen to others, when we listen with the ears of our common humanity—as the **Buddhist Mantra** noted above puts it—we seem much more likely to see that,

“Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in his/her life.

Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life. . . .

Just like me, this person is seeking to fill his/her needs.

Just like me, this person is learning about life . . .”



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“A non-reactive heart . . .”



## Afterwords: “A non-reactive heart . . . (Part 1)”

We’ve frequently heard it said in recent years that “you are entitled to your own opinions, but not to your own facts.” Heard again and again, almost always connected to current political events, this seemed clear enough. Facts are facts, facts are “things that are known or proven to be true,” facts are not private property, cannot be owned. And the other half of it—you get to have your opinions, and I get to have mine—seemed equally clear.

Heard over and over again, *lectio*-like, it seemed clear enough, until the word “entitled” was lifted up. And then the assertion seemed to become more nuanced . . . for the extent to which my opinions are my own, are mine to do with as I want, began to seem to be less certain. Less certain because—for most of us—opinions seem to affect our behavior, consciously or unconsciously, much more directly and more strongly than do facts.

And less certain because fiercely held opinions—frequently encountered these days—so often seem to have led to conflict and to schism. Even within the history of the Church, matters of opinion have mattered (even mattering when the matter itself might not seem to have mattered that much!). It is said that one of the issues that led to the Great Schism of 1054, between the Eastern and Western Churches, was differing opinions about whether Eucharist bread had to be unleavened . . . and the 1666 break between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Believers—which also still exists—was over differing opinions about certain church rituals, including Baptismal [clockwise vs. counter-clockwise] Perambulation.

And if this be so for me—and for many—I must never forget that too intense ownership of my own opinions can, consciously or unconsciously, lead me into feeling that those with other opinions are the other . . . to equating the opinion and the opinion holder. I need to not listen with the ears of my opinions or of my group’s opinions. And perhaps I also need to take advantage of the deep listening practice that is offered by City House and others in the area.

But hold on, this is too much talk: suggesting that it’s a mistake to label and judge people according to what they think

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