Catholic Institute of Education

Roots & Wings

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The Periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third issue of *Roots & Wings* for 2021. This publication, sent electronically free of charge to members of the Professional Society, appears quarterly. It contains regular features as indicated in the Contents table alongside.

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Members are encouraged to send material for future editions. What might you send? Here are some examples:

- Lesson ideas or plans
- Reviews of useful materials such as books or websites
- News from your school's RE Department
- Short articles of interest to religious educators
- Adverts for RE posts in your school

REFLECTION

Who is Close to God's Heart?

(Ron Rolheiser – 2 August 2021)

Who has God's sympathy? For whom especially should we be praying? For whom should we be asking God's blessing?

We are in the middle of the Olympic Games. What we see there are the healthiest bodies in the world, beautifully adorned with colorful spandex and youthful smiles. The Olympic Games are a celebration of health. Whatever else might surround or lie underneath these games (commercialism, ambition, illegal drugs, whatever) our first reaction to them may only be one of blessing: "Wow! Beautiful! This says something wonderful about life and about God."

Moreover, what we see there are not just the athletes. They are surrounded by spectacular billion dollar venues, a host country showcasing its finest, television networks sending out colorful coverage around the world, and everywhere the carefully calculated display of youth, health, beauty, and affluence, as if it were these alone that made the world go round.

Sadly, health, beauty, and affluence are not born equally, distributed equally, and shared equally. Flip a channel or two on your television and you see the polar opposite: news channels replete with images of suffering, poverty, injustice, hunger, devastation, millions fleeing violence, millions living in squalor, and millions living with little hope on our borders everywhere. And, that's just what we see openly on the news. What we don't see are the millions of sick, the millions of unemployed, the millions who are victims of violence and abuse, the millions with physical and mental challenges of every kind, and the millions with terminal diseases facing imminent death. What do these lives and these bodies say matched against the lives and bodies of our Olympic athletes? A good question.

How does one assess this seemingly bitter contrast between what we see in the Olympic Games and what we see on world news? Where does this leave us in terms of our prayer and sympathy? Does the suffering of the poor so spiritually dwarf the health of the rich that our hearts and prayers are meant to embrace only the poor? If so, would this not cast negative light on the wonderful gifts of health and wholeness?

We can learn something here from the offertory prayers at a Eucharist. At a Eucharist, the priest offers two elements to God to represent bread, wine, and us asking God to bless each equally. They represent two very different aspects of our world and of our lives. To quote Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "In a sense the true substance to be consecrated each day is the world's development during that day - the bread symbolizing appropriately what creation succeeds in producing, the wine (blood) what creation causes to be lost in exhaustion and suffering in the course of that effort."

In essence, the offertory prayer asks for a double blessing, *God of all Creation, we hold up for you today all that is in this world, both of joy and of suffering. We offer you the bread of the world's achievements, even as we offer you the wine of its failure, the blood of all that's crushed as those achievements take place. We offer you the powerful of our world, our rich, our famous, our athletes, our artists, our movie stars, our entrepreneurs, our young, our healthy, and everything that's creative and bursting with life, even as we offer you those who are weak, feeble, aged, crushed, sick, dying, and victimized. We offer to you all the pagan beauties, pleasures, and joys of this life, even as we stand with you under the cross, affirming that the one who is excluded from earthily pleasure is the cornerstone of the community. We offer*

you the strong, along with the weak, asking you to bless both and then stretch our hearts so that they, like you, can hold and bless everything that is. We offer you both the wonders and the pains of this world, your world."

God has a preferential love for the poor, the suffering, the sick, and the weak, and so must we. Our faith assures us that the poor enter the Kingdom more easily than the rich and the strong. However, while that is true, this does not imply that somehow it is bad to be affluent, healthy and strong. These bring dangers, for sure. Being young, healthy, strong, physically attractive, and talented is often (though not always) a formula for a conceit that sees its own life as more special than the lives of others. Few people carry extraordinary gifts well.

Despite that, however, we must still affirm that God smiles, positively, with pride and with satisfaction, on vibrancy, on those places where life is flourishing, healthy, young, talented, and physically attractive. God smiles on our Olympic athletes. God's preferential love for the poor doesn't negate God's love for the strong. Like a good parent, God is proud of his over-talented children, even as there is a special affection for the child who is suffering.

At every Eucharist, we hold up both, our Olympic athletes and our refugees on our borders.

REFLECTION

What can we learn from Indigenous Peoples?

(Myron Pereira – La Croix)

The tribal peoples may teach us how to survive Climate Change

Photo by Sreejit Shashi/Unsplash

On August 9 we remember the Indigenous Peoples of the World. Indigenous peoples are culturally distinct ethnic groups, native to a place which has been colonised and settled by another more dominant ethnic group. They are usually powerless minorities.

Indigenous societies are found in every inhabited climate zone and continent, except Antarctica. Their numbers are estimated to range from 250 million to 600 million in some 70 countries across the world.

The term indigenous in its modern context, was first used by Europeans, to differentiate the native peoples of the Americas from those of African descent brought to the Americas as slaves.

Today we use it in preference to words like "aboriginal", "vanvasi" (forest-dweller), "redskins", earlier terms which contained more than a hint of arrogance and contempt for such peoples.

For centuries, in fact, dominant cultures looked down on the indigenous as "primitive and uncivilized", and believed it was their mission to assimilate them to the newer and more dominant life-style.

The Romans did this to the Gauls in Europe. The Hindus tried the same with the Adivasi people in India.

When this assimilation was met with resistance, the dominant culture used violence to achieve its ends. This often meant the total subjugation of a tribal culture, and sometimes its virtual extermination. So did the United States and Australia treat their own natives.

Those indigenous who survive continue to face threats to their sovereignty, economic well-being, languages, ways of knowing, and access to the resources on which their cultures depend.

The United Nations, the International Labour Organization, and the World Bank have formulated the rights of the indigenous in international law.

In 2007, the UN issued a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to guide the national policies of its member states on the collective rights of indigenous peoples.

But at the ground level the abuse of such rights continues unabated, be it from a Brazil which plans to deforest the Amazon basin, or an India which sells the mining rights in tribal lands to large corporates, even as it fights a Maoist insurgency, or a China which clamps down on an Uighur rebellion.

No ethnic group has suffered more at the hands of their fellow human beings than the indigenous peoples of the world.

But, in a manner of speaking, today the wheel has turned a full circle.

What tribal peoples teach us

For centuries the tribal peoples of the world were pressured to adapt to the dominant feudal or technocratic-industrial culture, always touted as a better way to live. In these last years, however, the planet itself has called these conventional assumptions into question.

The blanket phrase for this threat is climate change.

Today we look at the effects of global warming, acid rain, growing desertification, extremes of weather, greenhouse emissions, rampant industrial pollution, life-style diseases -- and wonder, is there something massively wrong with the way in which most of us live?

And at this very moment, we are struck by COVID-19, a viral disease which kills all and sundry, mocking at all our medical pretensions.

So the question is relevant: is there indeed something distorted with our way of life, its dependence on technology to control our diet, our environment, our very thought processes? Is there an alternative at all?

Can the indigenous peoples of the world offer us a pattern for a healthier, a more wholesome way to live?

What indeed, can the tribal peoples teach us?

In his epoch-making encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis had this to say: "Indigenous peoples are a cry of hope. They know how to dialogue with the earth. They know what it means to see the earth, to listen to the earth, to touch the earth. They know the art of living well in harmony with the earth."

To live in harmony, is this the key -- not just to a more fruitful way of life, but -- to our very survival on the planet?

It does not take very much to see that the inability to dialogue is at the root of all our socio-political problems, from neighbourhood squabbles and inner city gang warfare to strife between nations, and the wasteful expenditure on armaments.

We ardently desire peace on earth, but have we first made peace with the earth?

For consider the actuality. The attitude of most of our contemporaries to the planet has been exploitative and mercenary.

Most of us believe that a superior technology resolves all problems. Our ambition is to dominate nature, to use and abuse her gifts, to waste what we have no use for.

We are far away indeed from a lifestyle that re-uses and recycles, that is not wasteful but frugal, that does not live with excess -- whether we speak of our

environment at large, or of the eco-system which is our own bodies.

We have much to learn indeed from the indigenous peoples: particularly how to live with sustainable goals, how to adapt to unpredictable change, and specially how to reject a wasteful, excessive life-style.

Every year the celebration of the Day for Indigenous Peoples warns us that there may be less and less time left before climate disaster obliterates us all. For it is the indigenous people of our respective countries who can point the way to our salvation.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/environment/what-can-we-learn-from-indigenous-peoples/14757

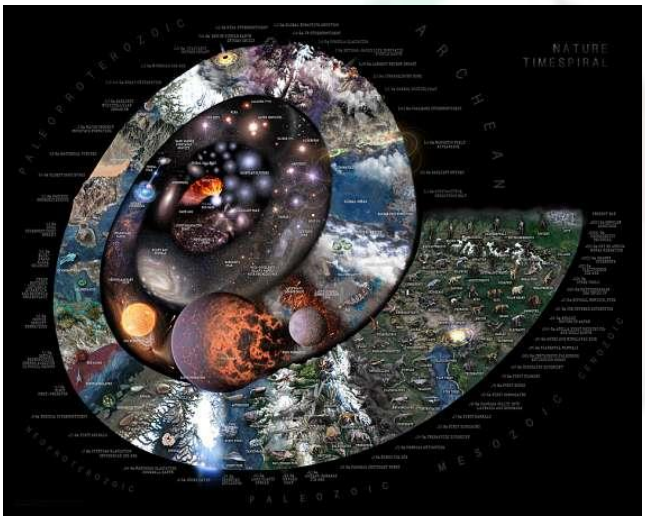
REFLECTION

Cosmos as Home: Evolution as Context

(Mary Evelyn Tucker)

https://www.humansandnature.org/Cosmos-as-Home-Evolution-as-Context

The news is still new–the concept of evolution that is. We humans are just processing what evolution is and what it means to us. The theory of biological and human evolution as first presented by Charles Darwin in his book *On the Origin of Species* is only 160 years old. Even for Darwin, the implications of human evolution were astounding and unsettling. It is one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern science.



Similarly, the idea of cosmic evolution as discovered by twentieth century scientists is slowly being understood by a broader public. The notion that we live in a changing Universe is hard to absorb. Indeed, moving from the image of a static Cosmos to a dynamic cosmogenesis is one of the greatest conceptual challenges for modern humans.

Through scientific research and discovery, we have come to know many of the factual details of cosmic, biological, and human evolution. This scientific knowledge was not available to people even 160 years ago. That the Universe is nearly 14 billion years old is very recent knowledge. That there are two trillion galaxies was not known to our grandparents or to their parents. The common understanding was there was only one, our Milky Way galaxy. But the larger implications of this new knowledge for how we view ourselves and our lives still eludes us. We are trying to grasp the significance of deep evolutionary time and expansive galactic space.

Why is this process of understanding so challenging for us? Partly because evolution has been taught within the scientific community primarily as a series of facts without larger coherence or meaning. The separation of facts and values is foundational to science and the empirical method. At the same time, some religions have not regarded evolution with the same significance as their own scriptures and traditions. They have held evolution at a distance. The gap between science and religion for some in Christianity, for example, is still great.

Moreover, modern secularism has stripped away a larger sense of meaning and purpose of our lives leaving many people lost, alienated, and adrift. Secularism has left religion behind and marginalized spirituality in favor of rationalism. Materialism stepped into the breach, replacing the search for spiritual meaning with the clamor for more goods and entertainment.

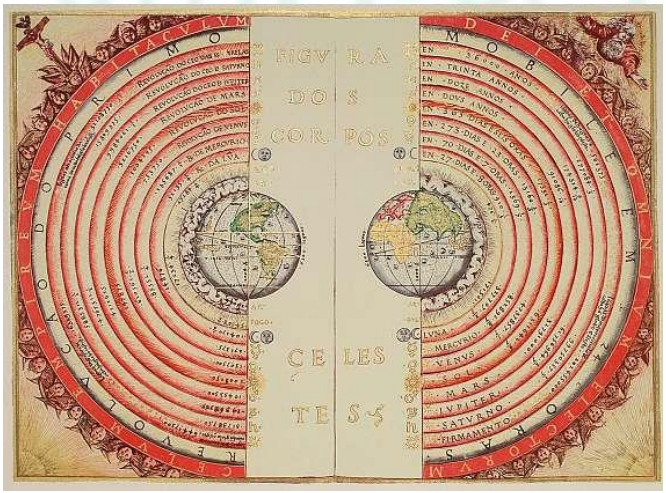
Before we can find our way back home in the universe, we need to embrace the process of evolution as an unfolding process, woven through with creativity. This is the broader context in which we might ponder the question of seeing the Cosmos as home. Evolution can be realized in the human mind, experienced in the body, and absorbed in the spirit. This will take time. But with conscious effort and careful reflection, we can see ourselves as part of a dynamic integrated whole: Cosmos, Earth, and humans.

Science and Religion

We know some of the obstacles to getting to this goal. Science and religion have been in tension for centuries. One might say this is especially true since Copernicus (1473-1543) observed and Galileo (1564-1642) proved that the Earth revolves around the sun. Poor Galileo! He was only trying to deliver the truth by reporting his observations accurately. His telescope changed the long accepted worldview inherited from Ptolemy in the 2nd century. Through Galileo's eyes and his mathematical calculations, Copernicus's thesis, published in 1542, was confirmed: We don't live in an Earth-centered astronomical system, but a Sun-centered one, a Solar System. The medieval worldview of a geocentric system was shattered. The Copernican heliocentric Universe was affirmed. The Church could not accept this, as they saw it as heresy. They felt that somehow this contradicted scripture, which should be accepted literally. Even modern humans have not fully absorbed the full implications of this discovery—namely, we are not the center of all things.

When a worldview is challenged or proven wrong there is a price to pay and the cost may be high. Galileo, for example, was subject to a trial by church authorities during the Inquisition. He was ultimately condemned for his views, which were considered heretical. Rather than jail, he was sentenced to house arrest in 1633, which lasted until he died almost a decade later. His books, along with those of Copernicus and Johannes Kepler were banned. They were not taken off the Index of Forbidden Books until 1835.

This condemnation, while clearly mistaken, was only officially addressed by the Catholic Church more than three hundred and fifty years later. After a decade of study by a papal commission established in 1981, no definitive results were reported on the Galileo case. Instead, on October 31, 1992, Pope John Paul II delivered a speech at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. There he acknowledged, in a convoluted way, that misunderstandings had arisen but now are part of the past: "A tragic mutual incomprehension has been interpreted as the reflection of a fundamental opposition between science and faith. The clarifications furnished by recent historical studies enable us to state that this sad misunderstanding now belongs to the past."



Four years later John Paul issued a statement on evolution declaring that: "Fresh knowledge leads to recognition of the theory of evolution as more than just a hypothesis." He also affirmed that the teaching of evolution and religious faith could co-exist. Progress, one might say, after many centuries of religious doubt!

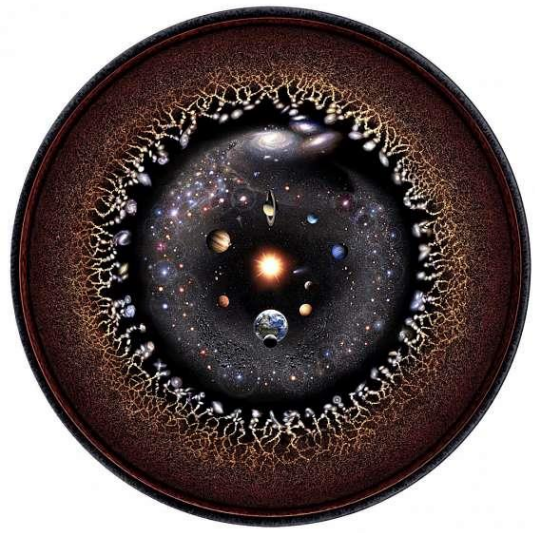
Scientific Doubt

We might also note that sometimes scientists themselves cannot accept an unexpected change of worldview. Let's look at two examples—Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and Alfred Wegener (1880-1930). From 1917 Einstein himself did not believe his own general theory of relativity equations that identified the early Universe as expanding. He held on to the notion of a steady state universe. It took him many years to accept an expanding Universe, and only because of the work of other astrophysicists in the field. In January 1931 Einstein visited Edwin Hubble and looked into the massive telescope on Mount Wilson in Southern California. Hubble had discovered two years earlier that galaxies were moving away from one another. After much consideration of both theory and observation, Einstein delivered a paper at the Prussian Academy of Sciences in April 1931 finally accepting what his older cosmology obscured. His worldview cracked open to embrace an expanding Universe. He had to change his equations back to what he first had calculated in 1917 and remove the cosmological constant, the "fudge factor." Einstein later admitted this was the greatest blunder of his life.

Then there is Alfred Wegener who proposed the theory of continental drift, which led eventually to the discovery of plate tectonics. His study *On the Origin of Continents*, published in 1912, revealed that continental plates had moved over time, even at one point forming a whole, a Pangaea. But scientists doubted this. It didn't seem plausible—these massive continents moving? How could that be? Wegener's theory was marginalized and dismissed. It took some fifty years for his ideas to be accepted in the scientific community, well after his death.

Change is difficult when it means leaving behind one worldview or cosmology and moving into another. We find this in the cases of Galileo, with opposition from the Catholic Church; Einstein, with his own self-doubt; and Wegener, with criticism from other scientists. We can see this, too, in religious communities that are afraid to step into the great current of evolution, lest they be swept away into unbelief in a Creator God. But skepticism need not lead to despair or unraveling of a worldview. It can give rise to a new more comprehensive and inclusive worldview.

Emerging New Cosmology



This is where we are now. Science is offering, from all of its various disciplines, a comprehensive evolutionary cosmology that illustrates the rich continuity of Cosmos-Earth-human. So fresh questions arise: How do we humans belong to this vast universe, and what is our role? How do we break through to a new cosmological understanding that orients us within the vast forces of the universe and grounds us in Earth processes? And how is such a new cosmology inclusive of people and planet, embracing both cultural and biological diversity? This will take time, effort, and persistence.

Our challenge, then, is to see ourselves as part of a vast evolving Universe where the Cosmos, too, is our home. Many cultures have embraced this perspective beginning with Indigenous peoples. Their cosmovisions continue to provide them with a rich sensibility of the stars as relatives and galaxies as luminous living presences. All humans are descendants of these heavenly bodies. As we say in *Journey of the Universe*, "the stars are our ancestors."

Our task then is to see cosmic and biological evolution not simply as a collection of scientific truths placed in a reductionistic framework and operating within mechanistic processes

without meaning or purpose. How can humans engage with such a framework where matter is viewed as dead—simply a collection of objects, not a communion of subjects, as Thomas Berry has noted? Rather, we need an integrated cosmology where science and story are interwoven, where facts and values are braided. As Einstein said: "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

For the Cosmos is indeed our home, our birthplace, a womb of immense creativity. Out of billions of years of cosmic evolution came Earth and life forms. The thin layer of atmosphere of our planet created the conditions for life. Geology morphed into biology as the lithosphere and hydrosphere evolved into the ecosphere. Without cosmic evolution there is no planetary evolution or emergence of life. And the conditions for this life were established in the very first three minutes of the early Universe's rate of expansion. With even a millisecond faster or slower, no life would have come forth.

Is this not sufficient reason to respond with awe and wonder at what has emerged over 14 billion years? Is this not the time to celebrate evolution as one dynamic unfolding process? With such an understanding of the continuity of all life we can develop a more robust cosmological ethics highlighting responsibility and reciprocity for our magnificent Earth community.

TALKING ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools

(The Council of the Joint Managerial Body/Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools in Ireland 2010)

The Catholic School as Inclusive Community

Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness. In an increasingly multicultural society, it is open to generous dialogue with Christians of other traditions and those of other faiths and none, while remaining true to its own distinctive ethos. Catholic schools are open to children of all denominations. The presence of children from other denominations is seen as an enrichment of the educational experience offered by the school and as a practical expression of the commitment to inclusivity. Indeed, Catholic schools are to the fore in welcoming the 'New Irish' in both primary and post-primary schools. The schools see such diversity as offering opportunities for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions. They also promote the common good of society as a whole. (Irish Catholic Bishops Conference, Vision 08, p. 8).

People of other faiths should feel welcome and at home in our schools. A genuinely Catholic ethos is based on universal values which are formative for people of all faiths and is respectful of traditions other than our own.

One way of promoting inclusivity in schools is to devise an Intercultural Week in the school on an annual basis. There is an Intercultural Week organised nationally every year, which provides an important opportunity to organise events that focus on celebrating diversity. Religious diversity can be an integral part of the elements highlighted.

The characteristic spirit of a school need not be compromised by the presence of other faiths. Indeed, it is very often enriched if we are a Community of Faith, secure in our own identity.

Recommendations

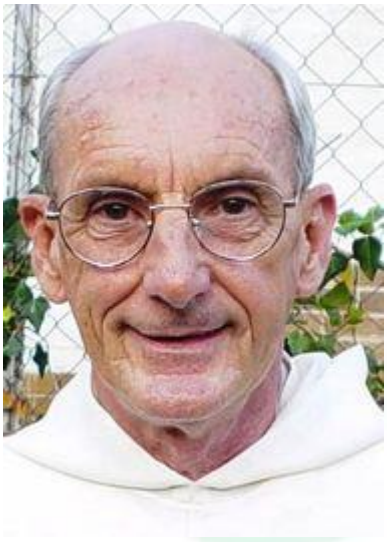
The following key recommendations are made in this document to further improve the inclusive nature of the Catholic School:

1. The Catholic ethos of the school needs to be explained to all parents prior to enrolment in the school. Any difficulty with the school uniform or Religious Education or any other subject should be discussed and resolved before the student is admitted.
2. Subjects such as music, PE (Physical Education) and RSE (Relationship and Sex Education) should also be discussed with parents from different religious backgrounds prior to enrolment.
3. It is important to allay any parental fears about proselytising in the Catholic school. Parents should be informed that the Religious Education syllabi are open to all faiths and no faith.
4. It should also be made clear that their son or daughter will be experiencing the values and ethos of the school in the day-to-day running of the school, not just in RE class.
5. All students are encouraged to grow in their own faith or spirituality, whether it is Catholic or not.
6. A student of a different denomination cannot insist that religious instruction in that denomination be provided.
7. Withdrawal from Religious Education can present a difficulty for the Catholic school, as Religious Education is at the heart of its enterprise. However, students who are withdrawn from formal Religious Education classes can be asked to use these classes to explore their own faith tradition or some philosophical text, rather than doing their homework.
8. If there is a large cohort of students of a particular faith tradition, it would be respectful and hospitable to invite ministers or leaders from that faith community into the school during RE times to meet with pupils from that faith. This would emphasise a spirit of welcome and inclusiveness but is at the discretion of the school.
9. Recognition of some of the festivals from different religions is appropriate in the Catholic school, provided that the festivals and seasons of the Christian calendar are clearly and prominently acknowledged and celebrated also.
10. Depending on the numbers of students of other faiths present in a school, it needs to be decided whether a prayer room is considered to be a specifically Catholic place of worship or a place of welcome for those of all faiths.
11. If a school has a large proportion of students of other faiths in a graduating year, the possibility of an inter-religious ceremony could be considered, as well as the Graduation Mass.
12. No pupil or staff member should be prevented from wearing a religious symbol or garment.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE (CPTD) [1]

Giving an Account of Our Hope in the Classroom (abridged)

(Albert Nolan OP)[2]



We live in an age of despair. For centuries we experienced hopefulness and optimism of one kind or another – political, economic, scientific and religious. Now suddenly almost everyone has been plunged into a state of despair. This is our new context or at least the most deeply felt mood of our times.

It is in this context that as Christians we are called upon to teach and preach the gospel, the good news, which is essentially a message of hope. In the words of the First Letter of Peter, we are challenged "to give an account of the hope that is in us".

That is not easy. In our present age of despair it is not easy to remain hopeful. And if we do remain hopeful it is not easy to give an account of our hope, to say why we are hopeful. And what I want to talk about today, namely giving an account of our hope *in the classroom* might appear to be even more difficult. Many of our learners especially the older ones will have been influenced by the present mood of hopelessness.

PLACING OUR HOPE IN GOD

For a Christian there *is* hope. There is always hope. In the words of Paul, we hope against hope, that is to say, we remain hopeful even when there appear to be no signs of hope at all.

Why? Because our hope is not based upon signs. Our hope is based upon God and God alone. We put all our hope and trust in God. Or at least we try to do so.

But what does it mean to put all one's hope and trust in God?

It is a particularly difficult question because for very many people today God is dead or irrelevant, a meaningless concept. To many, putting all one's hope and trust in God sounds like a pious cop-out.

The problem today is that it is not easy to believe in the God of the past, the God of our childhood. And yet that does not need to be a problem because as Elizabeth Johnson says in the introduction to her new book *Quest for the Living God*, "Since the middle of the twentieth century a burgeoning renaissance of insights into God has been taking place. Around the world different groups of Christian people … have been gaining glimpses of the living God in fresh and unexpected ways. We are living in a golden age of discovery … we are witnessing nothing less than a 'revolution' in the theology of God."

It is not a matter of believing in a new God. It is a matter of gaining new and deeper insights into the reality of God.

God is a mystery. We have always known that, but theologians and preachers have often spoken about God as if they understood God and could explain why God does this or that. Today we take the mystery of God more seriously. We don't know. Our human knowledge

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[1] Read this article for CPTD points. See Page 23.

[2] Though this article was written some years ago, it is clearly relevant in this time of the COVID pandemic.

is limited and we need to be humble enough to recognise that. As Augustine once said, "Anyone who thinks they understand God can be quite sure that whatever it is that they understand, it is not God."

To say that God is a mystery is not to say that God is not real or that God cannot be experienced as a present reality. For more and more people today, as for the mystics and saints of the past, the mystery of God is a powerful, ever-present reality.

In a totally unexpected way science today has brought us back to the reality of mystery. We know so much more about the universe but in the end the universe remains an unfathomable mystery. All of nature is a mystery, a countless number of small miracles.

WHAT WE ARE HOPING FOR

The object of Christian hope is the coming of God's Kingdom, God's reign on earth. In the Our Father we pray; "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth". Our hope is that God's Will be done on earth.

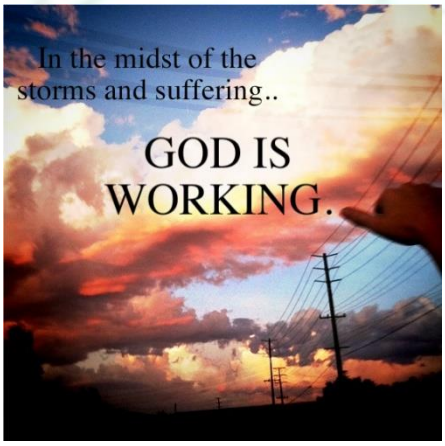
God's Will, like God, is mysterious. And yet one thing we can be sure of is that God wants whatever is best for all of us together, whatever is best for the whole of creation. We call this the *common good.*

Some people will assume that what is best for everyone will not be best for *me* as an individual, and that what is best for me will clash with the needs of others and the common good. That is not true. What is best for everyone is also best for me. We may not always appreciate that but it is part of the great mystery of God's Will. What is best for everyone is best for me too.

The problem with the hopefulness of the past is that it was too often a hope for something that would not have served the common good of all human beings and all of creation. The object of these hopes has been too often selfish and self-serving, ego-centric and narrow-minded: hopes for a better future for myself, my family and my own country at the expense of other people; hopes for economic growth and a higher standard of living for some regardless of others. That is not God's Will because those hopes were not for the good of all of us.

The object of Christian hope then is *the common good*.

GOD IS AT WORK IN THE WORLD



When we work for the common good (and many people are doing that all over the world), our work becomes a participation in God's Work. We have seen that as Christians the basis of our hope is God and the object of our hope is God's Will. But perhaps it would be more helpful to say that what we rely upon is God's Work.

God is at work in the whole universe and always has been. It is God who has brought everything into existence and keeps everything moving forward in the immense unfolding of the universe.

God has been at work in all of human history and continues to be involved in the world of politics, economics and religion – not to mention what we call "nature". And last but not least, God is at work in you and me. There is no area of life from which God can be excluded.

That does not mean that everything is good and that we are not responsible for what happens in our lives. There is obviously much that is wrong and we might even say evil. But God remains involved in ways that are extremely mysterious.

Ultimately the cause of all that is wrong or sinful or evil is human selfishness. We cannot go into that now, but we can take heart from the belief that God is at work nevertheless and in a way that will change all that, eventually, when God's Will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Christian hope then, the hope that Jesus taught us, means relying completely on God's Work in all things, that is to say, it means relying upon the goodness of the great unfolding of the universe of which we are a part.

God's Work cannot fail. It is totally reliable.

DISCERNING THE FINGER OF GOD

As I said earlier, we hope against hope. We continue to hope even when there are no visible signs of hope. We recognise the darkness and apparent hopelessness of the present situation and put all our trust in God. *Then*, gradually, as our eyes adjust to the darkness of a despairing world, we begin to see the emerging shapes or outlines of God's great and mysterious work - the finger of God, as Jesus called it. These are the paradoxical signs of the times that only become visible once we believe that God is at work in our world, once we learn to look at life with an attitude of hopefulness.

HOPE IN THE CLASSROOM

How do we give an account of it in the classroom? I have but a few brief suggestions.

1) I am convinced that what we have to communicate in the classroom today to learners of all ages is *spirituality* rather than doctrine. In other words what we need to be talking about is the mystery of God and how to be hopeful and loving and patient and trustworthy, and how to pray. We cannot confine our teaching to doctrines and dogmas like the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Sacraments, the Church and so forth. These are part of the syllabus but our learners need more than that – much more. They need Christian spirituality.

2) What we try to communicate will probably not be understood or appreciated there and then in the classroom. If it is remembered, it will be understood and appreciated later in life. What we do in the classroom, as you know better than me, is to *plant seeds*.

3) To give an account of the hope that is in us we have to begin by giving an account of *the reality of God today*. Learners need to know that our images of God have developed and deepened over the ages. This is especially true of the Bible. The early images of God were crude and primitive. God was seen as a warrior, a conqueror, a harsh judge and punisher of sin. Through the centuries the people of Israel developed a more subtle, more caring God who didn't care only about Israel. Then came Jesus with his insight into God as a God of love. Christians didn't always appreciate that but today they are learning to do so more and more. God loves everyone unconditionally. That was not always appreciated in the past.

4) We also have to try to communicate the very important truth that *God is a mystery.* Here I suggest we begin with an appreciation of the mysteries of nature including our human nature. What we have to nurture in the learners is *a sense of wonder and awe* at all that is mysterious in life, to marvel at all the miracles of nature around us. This we can do not only in the Religious Education classes but also in scientific subjects, especially Botany and Biology.

Children are full of wonder and awe. Unfortunately they tend to loose that in the classroom. If they are going to appreciate the reality of God they must treasure their ability to marvel

and wonder. We cannot understand God, but we can marvel and be enthralled by the mystery of God which we can see in all the mysteries of God's creation.

5) To enable our learners to put all their hope and trust in God one day in the future we will also need to talk about the meaning of *God's Will* and the reality of *God's Work* in the world. We can give an account of this when we talk about evolution and about history.

6) And finally we will need to teach our learners something of what it means to *trust* and to be *trustworthy.* We cannot trust everyone and anyone. It is not good to trust strangers on the street for example. Many will know what it means to be betrayed by people they have trusted.

But, a world in which no one can trust anyone else would be a world full of fear and suspicion. Life in such a world would become impossible. Our world today is becoming like that. This is why we have to build high walls and security gates and be careful about trusting even those who are close to us and those who make promises they will never keep.

We need to build a society in which people can trust one another. How wonderful it would be to live in a world where everybody, or almost everybody, was able to trust everybody else blindly.

We can begin to build a world like that by having small groups: family, friends, church groups, in which we learn to trust other people and to prove that we ourselves can be trusted. And in the process we can also begin to appreciate what it means to trust God. God is of course completely trustworthy.

In the meantime, do the learners see their teachers as trustworthy? And can we challenge learners to become trustworthy themselves? And do their teachers appear to be people who put their trust in God?

The challenges for teachers today, and especially Christian teachers, are daunting, to say the least. Hopefully some of the suggestions in this paper will be helpful.

ARTISTS' CORNER

The Monastic Mystery

Celebrating the poetry of Paul Quenon, Trappist monk of Gethsemani Abbey

(Chris McDonnell)

There are numerous ways of living the Christian life and each of us is called to do so in a particular way. For many, the route is not clear at the outset. We test and try a number of options, seeking a road map for our journey and encountering choices that often end in cul-de-sacs. So, we are forced to start again. In the early days of the Church a problem that faced every disciple of the Risen Nazarene was how to follow in his footsteps, how to be faithful to his teaching. Gradually, over time, paths became familiar and traditions were established. Communities of Christians became settled in towns and cities, sharing with one another what they had and coming together in the Eucharistic gift. But still there was work to be done, a wage to be earned and families to care for in a busy and, at times, harsh world. A few chose an alternate path. They chose the solitude of the desert where they lived in very small communities or as hermits, devoting their time to a single-minded pursuit of faith in the Lord. We now know them as the Desert Fathers and recognize the lives they lived as the birth of Christian monasticism.

More than a building of stones

Over a period of a few hundred years these communities flourished and grew as their pattern of life became established. They lived a simple life centered on prayer. It was an ordered life, lived according to a code of practices or rules. The most significant of these rules we owe to Benedict of Nursia whose name is associated with one of the great monastic orders of the Church, the Benedictines. For many of us, the monastery is an historic pile of stones, the leftover ruins from the European Reformation. Yet even these edifices have their own majesty. However, a monastery is not just a building. It is the life that is lived within it, the people who walk its passageways and live in its rooms, whose work on a farm or in a workshop enables them to live a life of prayer, day in, day out. People give the stones and mortar their vitality and purpose. The era of the great abbeys of Europe may be over, but the monastic life remains. Communities of monks and nuns are smaller now. Their homes are not in the style of bygone years. They support themselves in different ways, through writing or iconography, cheese making or brewing beer. But still they are centered on prayer offered in an ordered and regular manner. One monastery in the United States has become famous through the life and writings of one of its mid-20thcentury monks, Thomas Merton. He entered the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani (Kentucky) in December 1941 and died 27 years later, in December 1968, in Asia. During his years as a monk he taught in the novitiate, exploring with young men the essence of a monastic vocation in the Cistercian tradition. One of those men who arrived in 1958 was Paul Quenon; he still lives there, 63 years later.

A poet of Gethsemani

Brother Paul is a creative man, a published poet and an accomplished photographer. One of his collections, *Monkswear*, first published in 2008, offers a perceptive insight to the monastic life. Its theme is centered on the aspects of the simple clothing or habit that is worn by the monks. I would like to share with you some of Paul's poems, for they tell us much about the life of a monk, rooted in the past, yet alive in our own time. The collection is illustrated with Paul's own photography with the startling image below providing the cover to his book. One item of clothing is the scapular, a long piece of black cloth, worn over the shoulders and hanging down back and front. He describes it in a few succinct words.

Scapulars

White robe
Black stripe:
Monks

White fur
Black stripe:
Skunks

From both
Best to keep
Your distance.

A play on words that is both factual yet full of humor. There is indeed here the expression of good-natured banter within the serious intent of a monk's vocation.

Habits of the monk

In the poem "Possessed by a Habit" he describes his monastic life. It gives the title to his collection.

Possessed by a habit

Sorry, but I can't seem to shed
this habit I'm so given over to,
this monkswear, this second skin
I'm so habituated to.

I've worn it till the habit has
worn me quite down
to a shadow of the man
I once was. You would
hardly recognize the boy
who at least had some promise
and risked talents, life and
opportunities for the sake
of a possessive, chronic
habit which he won't shake off,
that holds him so hide-bound
he has all but lost
everything
which seems to be
the way he wants it
given the merry way
he carries on with
no thought of past,
future, or of what
might become of him
once he wakes up
and finds himself without
means or ability
so sustain so religiously
his mystifying
habit!

Just you see-unless
he quits this habit it will eventually
carry him to the grave.
Amen, Alleluia!

This is a beautiful, well-crafted statement of the simplicity of his vocational life. The collection concludes with a few lines on the cowl

The cowl

-solemn as chant
one sweep of fabric
from head to foot.

cowls hanging
on a row of pegs
-tall disembodied spirits
holding shadows
deep in the folds
waiting for light
for light to shift
waiting for a bell
for the reach of my hand
to spread out the slow
wings, release the
shadows and envelope my
prayer-hungry body
with light.

Sprinkled through these pages are many aspects of monastic life, some trivial, others significant.

Something about numbers

One, a brief seven lines, is entitled "Weird Arithmetic".

Weird Arithmetic

The middle cipher
in the word God is zero.
In the word good
stands zero x zero
naught times naught
equals all nothings lodged
in God's open heart.

In a piece entitled "The Laundry Number" he describes the numbered identity of each monk.

The Laundry Number

-patched inside the black collar
of each cowl and scapular is
a designated number
to sort out in the wash
whose is which and
what goes where.

Above each patch is
a loop that hangs on a peg-
a hanging cipher
for an unnamed person
who wears thin, wears
habitually the same habit
over and over
and owns not a stitch, not
a loop, not a number, owns not
his very own body
even

even as he is
a God-owned body
in a God-owned garb
which hangs on a loop
in a row of pegs
a voiceless choir
answering each
to that high Ledger
where after the great
wash and agitation
the heat and pressure
that Searching Hand
will then sort out
who is who
and who belongs where
and will lift up and carefully
place each one
onto his own
designated
peg.

Paul's work is a deep mine of thoughtful reflection, the fruit of many years spent living his monastic life. In this collection of fifty poems and a number of photographic images, he offers us an opportunity of insight to a different place beyond our immediate experience. It is a privilege to share it with him. Paul Quenon's collection Monkswear is published by Fons Vitae Louisville KY. ISBN 1-891785-15-X.It is well worth reading.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/the-monastic-mystery/14491

WEBSITE

Sharing the Word

Sharing the Word

Sharing the Word catalogue

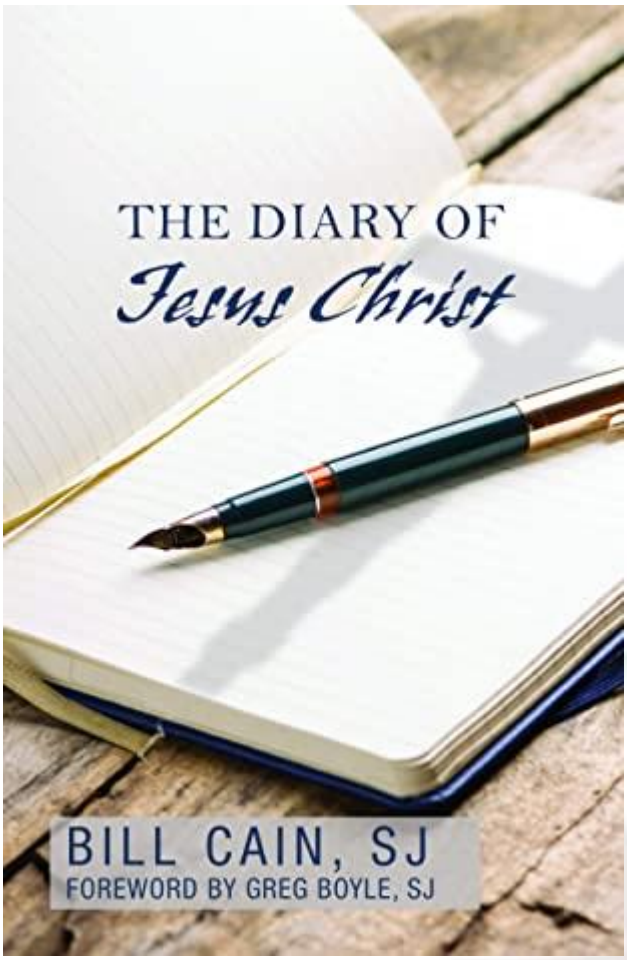
The Sharing the Word ELibrary provides full text and free online access to a wide array of English language resources in the areas of Catholic faith, living and spirituality, history and culture.

While set up as an information and self-education resource for all, it specifically addresses the information needs of theological students, seminarians, clergy and pastoral workers by providing an integrated access point to the spiritual and intellectual riches of the Christian heritage.

The material can be read on screen, downloaded to your e-devices, often in various formats, or be printed. This growing elibrary, started in 2014, provides direct links to the full text of over 13,000 open source (i.e. freely available) ebooks, periodical titles, periodical articles and essays, Church documents, theses, podcasts, etc. as well as major relevant websites.

BOOK REVIEW

The Diary of Jesus Christ



Bill Cain's The Diary of Jesus Christ is a first-person recounting of the life of Jesus, a new lens through which to see the familiar stories of the gospel—including the Passion.

The story begins with the healing of the leper, heralding the remarkable spirit that flows through the diary accounts—a spirit of discovery, surprise, learning, doubt, failure, and new life.

Bill Cain, SJ, is a Jesuit and an American playwright, whose work wrestles with the great themes of Catholic faith. He is a Peabody Award-winning screenwriter and the creator of the TV show Nothing Sacred, and lives with his Jesuit Community in Brooklyn, NY.

(maryknollsociety.org)

While obviously not really the diary of Jesus Christ, here is a first-person account of the life of Jesus by noted Jesuit playwright Bill Cain. The diary places us inside Jesus's consciousness, where the spirit of discovery, surprise, learning, doubt, failure and growth is in sharp contrast to the canonical gospels where Jesus seems, from the start, self-assured and even predestined to fulfill his role. It is a bold attempt to understand the person whom more than two billion people claim as their savior. (amazon.com)

LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IPCC report on climate change

Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying – IPCC

GENEVA, Aug 9 – Scientists are observing changes in the Earth's climate in every region and across the whole climate system, according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, released today. Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion—such as continued sea level rise—are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years.

However, strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change. While benefits for air quality would come quickly, it could take 20-30 years to see global temperatures stabilize, according to the IPCC Working Group I report, Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis, approved on Friday by 195 member governments of the IPCC, through a virtual approval session that was held over two weeks starting on July 26.

The Working Group I report is the first instalment of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which will be completed in 2022.

"This report reflects extraordinary efforts under exceptional circumstances," said Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC. "The innovations in this report, and advances in climate science that it reflects, provide an invaluable input into climate negotiations and decision-making."

Faster warming

The report provides new estimates of the chances of crossing the global warming level of 1.5°C in the next decades, and finds that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.

The report shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for approximately 1.1°C of warming since 1850-1900, and finds that averaged over the next 20 years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C of warming. This assessment is based on improved observational datasets to assess historical warming, as well progress in scientific understanding of the response of the climate system to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

"This report is a reality check," said IPCC Working Group I Co-Chair Valérie Masson-Delmotte. "We now have a much clearer picture of the past, present and future climate, which is essential for understanding where we are headed, what can be done, and how we can prepare."

Every region facing increasing changes

Many characteristics of climate change directly depend on the level of global warming, but what people experience is often very different to the global average. For example, warming over land is larger than the global average, and it is more than twice as high in the Arctic.

"Climate change is already affecting every region on Earth, in multiple ways. The changes we experience will increase with additional warming," said IPCC Working Group I Co-Chair Panmao Zhai.

The report projects that in the coming decades climate changes will increase in all regions. For 1.5°C of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons. At 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health, the report shows.

But it is not just about temperature. Climate change is bringing multiple different changes in different regions – which will all increase with further warming. These include changes to wetness and dryness, to winds, snow and ice, coastal areas and oceans. For example:

- Climate change is intensifying the water cycle. This brings more intense rainfall and associated flooding, as well as more intense drought in many regions.
- Climate change is affecting rainfall patterns. In high latitudes, precipitation is likely to increase, while it is projected to decrease over large parts of the subtropics. Changes to monsoon precipitation are expected, which will vary by region.
- Coastal areas will see continued sea level rise throughout the 21st century, contributing to more frequent and severe coastal flooding in low-lying areas and coastal erosion. Extreme sea level events that previously occurred once in 100 years could happen every year by the end of this century.
- Further warming will amplify permafrost thawing, and the loss of seasonal snow cover, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, and loss of summer Arctic sea ice.
- Changes to the ocean, including warming, more frequent marine heatwaves, ocean acidification, and reduced oxygen levels have been clearly linked to human influence. These changes affect both ocean ecosystems and the people that rely on them, and they will continue throughout at least the rest of this century.
- For cities, some aspects of climate change may be amplified, including heat (since urban areas are usually warmer than their surroundings), flooding from heavy precipitation events and sea level rise in coastal cities.

For the first time, the Sixth Assessment Report provides a more detailed regional assessment of climate change, including a focus on useful information that can inform risk assessment, adaptation, and other decision-making, and a new framework that helps translate physical changes in the climate – heat, cold, rain, drought, snow, wind, coastal flooding and more – into what they mean for society and ecosystems.

This regional information can be explored in detail in the newly developed Interactive Atlas IPCC WGI Interactive Atlas as well as regional fact sheets, the technical summary, and underlying report.

Human influence on the past and future climate

"It has been clear for decades that the Earth's climate is changing, and the role of human influence on the climate system is undisputed," said Masson-Delmotte. Yet the new report also reflects major advances in the science of attribution – understanding the role of climate change in intensifying specific weather and climate events such as extreme heat waves and heavy rainfall events.

The report also shows that human actions still have the potential to determine the future course of climate. The evidence is clear that carbon dioxide (CO2) is the main driver of climate change, even as other greenhouse gases and air pollutants also affect the climate.

Stabilizing the climate will require strong, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and reaching net zero CO2 emissions. Limiting other greenhouse gases and air pollutants, especially methane, could have benefits both for health and the climate," said Zhai.

Brother Roger of Taizé

It is 16 years since Brother Roger, founder of the Taizé community, was murdered at evening prayer on August 16, 2005.His sudden death shocked not only his immediate community but a far wider circle of people who had come to faith and an appreciation of prayer through his influence.

Born in Switzerland in the early months of the first world war, his father was a protestant minister and so that was the Christian culture that nurtured his early years.

In 1940, now 25 years of age, he left Switzerland and cycled to Taizé in the Macon district of a divided France.

Taizé was in Vichy France, that southern area of the country not directly occupied by Germany.

There, with his sister, they purchased a house and began caring for both Jews and Christians seeking refuge from the occupier to the North.

They were forced to leave when it was realised that the Gestapo had become aware of their activities. After the liberation, he returned to Taizé and established a community, the seed-bed of what Taizé is today.

What a jewel Taizé has become in the midst of secular Europe, a place of ecumenical life lived in a simple manner

(Chris McDonnell | United States)

What a jewel Taizé has become in the midst of secular Europe, a place of ecumenical life lived in a simple manner.

It has attracted, and continues to attract, thousands each year who come to understand the Christian faith, not through books, but through the lived experience of sharing the prayer and meditation of the monks who have gathered there.

And so many of those visitors are young men and women whose spiritual hunger is being satisfied.

A report in the New York Times, published two days after his death noted that:

> 'Part of his appeal may have been his dislike of formal preaching, while encouraging a spiritual quest as a common endeavor. During a Taizé gathering in Paris in 1995, he spoke to more than 100,000 young people who were sitting or lying on the floor of an exhibition hall, amid backpacks and a sea of candles. "We have come here to search," he said, "or to go on searching through silence and prayer, to get in touch with our inner life. Christ always said, Do not worry, give yourself."'

'Beyond Taizé, through words and music, we have been able to share in an understanding of the Lord that has

touched many in a profound and meaningful way.

Light has long been a symbol used at Taizé, with large numbers of candles giving banks of radiant light to those sharing in the meditation.

Brother Roger devoted his life to ecumenism in a lived way. He was a man formed by his early protestant upbringing.

In 1980, during a European Meeting in Rome, speaking in St Peter's Basilica in Rome, in the presence of John Paul II he said: "I have found my own identity as a Christian by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone.

"His reception of the Eucharistic Christ is well documented. It was a natural continuation of his personal search for a Christian unity where the intention and understanding over-rides rules, seeking a deeper faith that is life-giving.

According to Cardinal Walter Kasper, this was accomplished as though there was a tacit understanding between Brother Roger and the Catholic Church "crossing certain confessional" and canonical barriers through what Brother Roger called a gradual enrichment of his faith with the foundations of the Catholic Church, including "the ministry of unity exercised by the bishop of Rome."

In remembering his life we too should follow his practice of meditative prayer.

https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/brother-roger-of-taiz/14787?utm_source=NewsLetter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=20210821_mailjet

COP26 and the Climate Crisis

The city of Glasgow is preparing to host the vital COP26 Climate Conference from the 1st to the 12th of November. Postponed from last year because of the pandemic, and with the window of opportunity already very tight to make the essential changes, it is now even more urgent that the international delegates negotiate with their focus on the needs of the whole world, and take fully into account those communities already suffering from the warming of the planet.

What consciousness has created the climate crisis? One that sees human beings as the centre of everything and justified in using the non-human creation to satisfy our unlimited demands. In centuries past we didn't understand what we were doing. Now we need a new vision, one which sees that we are not separate from our earthly home, but part of it; our flourishing and the flourishing of the planet are one and the same concern.

At the same time we need a way for new thinking to become a new way to live.

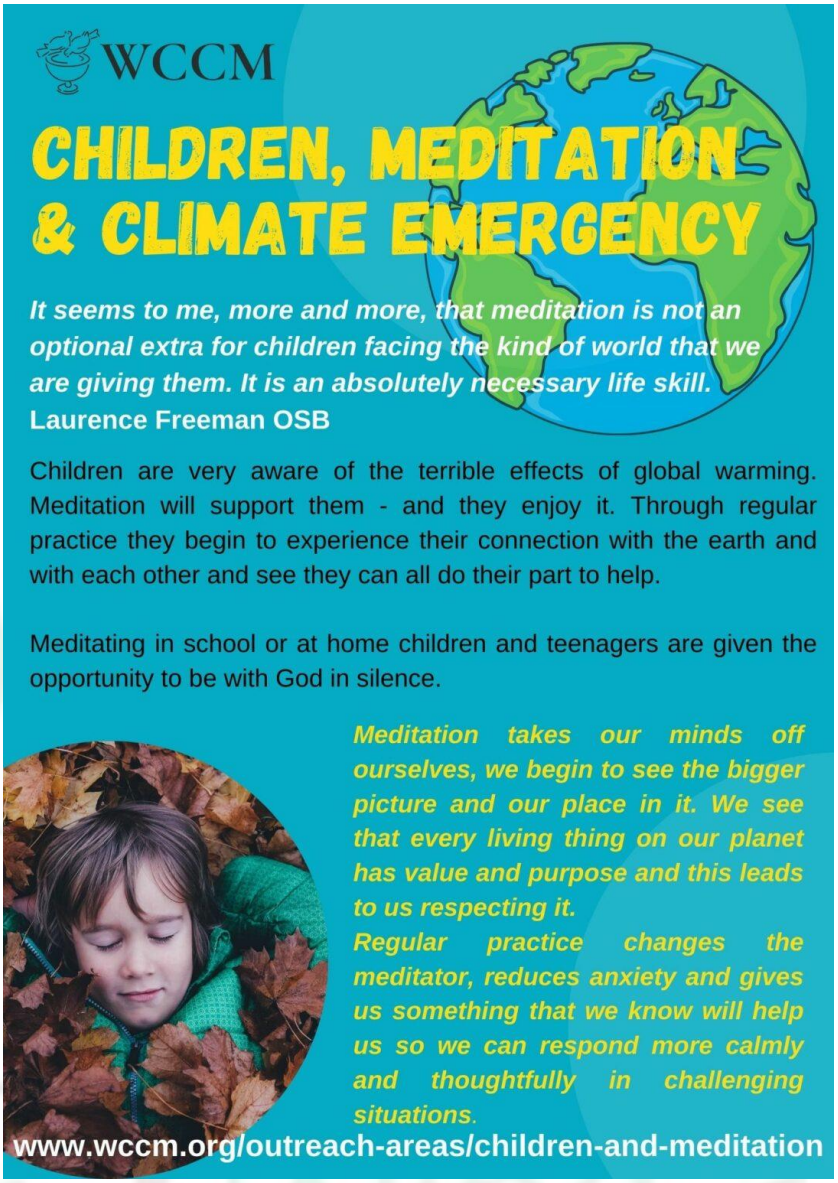
Meditation is just such a way. It gives us a daily practice where we leave behind our self-centred concerns in order to participate in a level of consciousness which is beyond division. Christianity refers to this as 'the mind of Christ', but meditation is a universal practice which can unite us all. The practice of meditation gradually changes the way we see, and transforms the way we act.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MEDITATION AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS, GO TO WWW.WCCM.ORG/OUTREACH

HOW TO MEDITATE

- Sit down. Sit still and upright.
- Close your eyes lightly.
- Sit relaxed but alert.
- Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word.
- We recommend the word 'Maranatha'.
- Recite it as four equally-stressed syllables.
- Say it from beginning to end.
- Listen to it as you say it.
- Let go of your thoughts.
- Whenever a thought arises, return your attention to your word.
- Meditate for between 20 and 30 minutes.
-
- Meditate twice a day, every day, and once a week meditate with other people.

Nature and the Environment | WCCM



Roots & Wings

There was hope in the air

(Abigail Dawson)

IHS JESUIT INSTITUTE SOUTH AFRICA

I have been troubled by the bareness of winter and the harshness of reality for women in this month. The feeling is as if the sun has been struggling to harness itself onto the earth and let new things grow. I arrived at work on Tuesday and there was hope in the air.

On Tuesday, the Jesuit Refugee Service, South Africa, celebrated the graduation of 152 women from its skills training program. Refugee and South African women came adorned in their best outfits and their faces glowing with pride. The class of 2020 graduated in a year stalled and disrupted by COVID-19 and ongoing changes to their training schedules. It involved attempting to stay on top of their training while facing the harsh realities of COVID-19 and being a woman and a refugee in South Africa.

Many refugee women in the skills program have come to South Africa to seek safety and a more hopeful life for themselves. Their expectations usually outweigh the brutal reality they are faced with. The skills training equips women in nails, hair, beauty therapy and massage. They are also put into savings groups so that they can start small enterprises during and at the end of the training.

Two of the women shared with me:

“Personally, this is a big achievement. As a woman, I can stand by myself now. For me, this has given me wings to fly. I am going somewhere today. I am celebrating myself.”

“COVID-19 could go on for five years, and you realise you haven’t done anything in this time. But we have got something. We are here doing something for ourselves.”

For a moment on Tuesday, there was a sense of excitement and achievement as women celebrated this milestone. Despite the uncertainty and unending nature of despair in this time, I stood amongst the cheers of celebration. I realised that there had been hope here this whole time. I just wasn’t looking.

I encourage you to look for the hope under your foot, hiding. Look up. Look around and notice. Is there something that has happened or you have witnessed that gives you a sense of continued hope.

Take a moment to be quiet, to glimpse hope in the day that has passed or that which dawns.

CPTD

The purpose of education

Read the article for CPTD points and record you response to the following questions:

- What is the writer’s main argument?
- What significance does the argument have in my context?
- What practical action does the argument’s conclusion suggest?

Professional Development Points Schedule

https://www.sace.gov.za/Documentation/PROFESSIONAL%20DEVELOPMENT%20POINTS%20SCHEDULE.pdf

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