



Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc.

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For people engaged in godly listening

Website: <http://www.ansd.org.au>

Newsletter June 2010

Greetings to you all.

Many thanks to the Regional Group from Sydney for providing the articles for this edition of the newsletter.

Our thanks particularly go to **Sally Longley** for her article on Peacemaking and Spiritual Direction - a perfect introduction I think to our upcoming conference - and to **Ann Bergman** for her article on Dame Maria Boulding OSB. Sally has also "painted a moment in Spiritual Direction" for us to ponder.

ANSD President John Stuart provides food for thought in his report. His report also includes a report on the Spiritual Direction Conference in San Francisco.

Details of the **Annual General Meeting for ANSD** are provided below, along with details on page 7 for the **ANSD Conference** taking place at The Nunyara Conference Centre in Adelaide. Registration Closes on Monday 28th June.

Jo Windeyer (Editor)

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Network For Spiritual Direction Inc. will be held at 9.00 am on Monday 12th July 2010 at Nunyara Conference Centre

The Agenda will comprise:

1. Ordinary business which shall be:
 - confirmation of the minutes of the last AGM
 - receipt and consideration of the report of the Executive and financial report
 - election of regional representatives
 - election of the membership sub-committee
2. Specific business as indicated below
 - brief regional reports
 - Conference 2011 report

Nominations will be accepted from the floor of the meeting, but prior consent to nomination must have been obtained from anyone nominated but not present at the meeting.

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President's Letter

Let me paint a scene. It is late on Easter Sunday [the first one] and the lads are heading away from Jerusalem. They are feeling very despondent. As they walk along and talk they cannot believe that all their dreams have been dashed. They had really pinned their hopes on Jesus to get rid of the Romans or at least to help them find their own courage to deal with the very hard life under the vicious Roman rule. He had shown a lot of courage himself and did not seem out of his depth in presenting his case for the way God was present in their lives and in the lives of everyone. He certainly had a lot of fresh insight into their own ancient traditions. The way he turned the Pharisees around when asked who was a neighbour; to point to even a Samaritan actually made sense in the big scheme of things. Not that his answer pleased them too much. But he was unfazed by their hostility.

Anyway in their present frame of mind it did not matter all that much now and the need to get as far away from Jerusalem as possible was uppermost in their minds. Then out of the blue a stranger appears. They were so engrossed in their own woes they hadn't noticed anyone else on the road. All of a sudden they realized it was Jesus. They were shaken and then Jesus let fly "Who do any of you think you are? I have never met such weakness. You all abandoned me and ran away with your tails between your legs. And here you are scurrying away and even abandoning your mates. How often did I talk to you about where God was in our journey and you even seemed to realise a little that I had something fresh to say? It didn't take long for you to lose faith did it? YOU ARE WEAK!"

"And the rest of them aren't much better. I thought Peter would have had a bit more guts. But he caved in very quickly. I cannot believe he betrayed me. And Judas----- well the less said about him the better. I am so bitterly disappointed in all of you. I will get around to the others in due time and let them know what I think of them."

It doesn't sound much like a spiritual direction does it? Here is a Jesus acting out of a position of hurt and using that to assert his power over others. There is no compassion here; no sense of invitation to people, afraid and lost, to find their own courage and trust. It does sound a bit like the Church telling Galileo that he is wrong and after realizing that he actually was right, taking another 400 years to apologise. It does smack of a Church that wants to guard its good name and cover up clerical sexual abuse. It has all the hallmarks of some people, who in a fit of pique, accuse someone like Rowan Williams of destroying the church because he wants to have conversation with people over the gay issue or women's ordination rather than hide behind man made rules that exclude.

The real story of the lads who were getting out of Jerusalem, probably out of fear, was that they did meet a stranger on the road who far from berating them actually listened to them. And it was in the listening that they came to know, anew, that there was something deep within them that was of God and could equip them for the journey. They met the risen Christ and after the encounter were able to say "did our hearts not burn within us as he pointed out all we had missed in our sadness and fear."

Institutionally the Church is in deep crisis, across the denominational divide. The Church as we knew it has gone and will never come back. At the Melbourne ANSD day in March Frank O'Loughlin, parish priest of the Catholic parish of Sandringham spoke eloquently on this topic. He said that we are now in a time of transition when all we held as certain was being questioned. Rather than fazing us it is actually a chance to see the Jesus of Nazareth story with fresh eyes and an open heart. In such a time we have an ancient practice to assist us to face our fears and to approach the gospels afresh. It is the art and practice of spiritual direction. We know from the real Emmaus story and from all the Gospels that Jesus the Christ points to the reality that we are children of grace and not children of the fall. This lies at the heart of spiritual direction. It is a ministry of the Church i.e. the church that is prepared to open its heart to the invitation issued in the Emmaus story and not the church that wants to guard its good name and exclude people on the basis of ill founded rules.

At the recent Spiritual Directors International Conference in San Francisco the theme was based on Bro David Steindl-Rast's concept of Gratefulness, the Heart Of Prayer Gratefulness is at the heart of spiritual direction.

The keynote speakers all picked up on this and led us into a journey where the invitation issued in the Emmaus episode rang loud and clear. The conference was just after Easter and at a time when there were daily reports of Vatican cover ups it was inspiring to be immersed in a process where guarding your good name or hiding behind rules and regulations was farthest from our minds. Brian Swimme called us to view our lives as part of a 14 billion journey of dying and birthing and of being deeply graced. Jane Vennard from Denver called us to see the Bow as a spiritual practice that allows humility to be honoured for she said that humility is at the heart of gratefulness. Alexander Shaia presented his insights into the Gospels as Four Paths, Four Questions, One Journey. He invited us to see spiritual direction as seeing through the partial to the whole. On the final morning David Steindl-Rast led us to recall our own experience of gratefulness. Bro David's presentation was for me more of the poet exploring rather than the teacher lecturing.

Through the whole conference the invitation to gracefully explore and deepen our individual and collective journeys stood out in sharp contrast to institutional religions attempt to control and dominate and tell us what to do.

There were a few ANSD members at the conference. Sue Dunbar presented a workshop as she was warmly received. Bernie Miles, Anne Bailey and Kristen Hobby made up the ANSD contingent.

Let me present a scenario. Two people running away from Jerusalem, fearing for their lives and devastated by the death of Jesus have a conversation with a stranger who listens to them, honours their story and patiently invites them to see through the partial story to the whole. They are transformed by the experience where they recognize the stranger as the Risen Christ. This is surely our experience in spiritual direction. This story is a very different one to where blame and recrimination and sin dominate so much of our religious institutions who too often are living out of fear and not grace. The Art and Practice of Spiritual Direction has the power to save our religions and our world from the tyranny of fear.

Alexander Shaia's website is www.quadratos.com. There is a wonderful interview on the website of Alexander by the now retired Alan Jones of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. His book "The Hidden Power of The Gospels" has just been released. David Steindl-Rast also has a website. Brian Swimme has books and DVDs that are readily available.

John Stuart - ANSD President.

Breathing Space Spirituality Centre
The Psychological Experience of Christian Meditation
Saturday 5 June 1.00 pm - 5.00 pm
Holy Covenant Anglican Worship Centre. Dexter Street, Cook

Christian Meditation and Centering Prayer are effective ways through which to achieve healing of body, mind and Spirit. During such prayer forms, the unloading of our un-consciousness takes place. Fr Keating presents wisdom on this process as we allow God to gently dissolve blockages and evacuate baggage. He refers to this process as the Psychological Experience of such meditation.

Fr Thomas is the founder of the Centering Prayer Movement, and the Contemplative Outreach, which supports those wanting nourishment on their journey. His DVDs ensure his insights and wisdom are circulated around the world.

Sr Lorraine is a Sister of Mercy, and has been involved in Retreat Ministry and Spiritual Direction for 16 years. She now enjoys Retreat Ministry at St Mary's Douglas Park; the Hermitage Marist Centre for Spirituality, Mittagong; St Clements Retreat Centre Galong and in Canberra at the Potters House, and throughout the Roman Catholic Archdiocese.

Admission: \$20
Concession \$15

RSVP: Holy Covenant Parish Office
Glensy Wimmer

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PEACEMAKING AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

“Having resentment is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die.” Anon

*“Peace is not something you wish for; It's something you make, something you do,
something you are, and something you give away.” Robert Fulghum*

When Jesus said “Love your enemies”, “Do good to those who hate you”, “Bless those that curse you” – did he really mean it? Or was it just a reference to pie in the sky when we die? If he meant it, and if we take Jesus’ teaching as normative, then I guess we have to take note. In fact, Jesus didn’t say – I want you to follow a set of creedal beliefs, you should be able to sign a statement of faith, I want you to adhere to a series of propositional statements. Rather, he said, “Follow me”, which must mean Jesus is saying: do what I do, live as I live.

So then, what does it mean to follow Jesus into the uncomfortable territory of loving our enemies? Much has been written about the enemy within, and spiritual direction can take us into that arena where we can first look at who we are on the inside, and then help us in the movement towards greater authenticity and integrity in daily living, including that of loving those who get right under our skin.

The “Historic Peace Churches”¹ advocate non-violent resistance, and look toward peace making or peace building (as opposed to peace keeping²) being central to following Jesus. Some have misunderstood the stance of non-violence as a passive orientation – “I will stand by and do nothing while others use violence to protect my life style”. However, the call is to give up our lives for others, and that includes our enemies! “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”; if someone dies for their friend, we can perhaps take that for granted... but if someone dies for their enemies... !!!!!

So the challenge for those advocating non-violence is to be prepared to risk their lives in the quest for peace worldwide and in our immediate contexts just as much as those in the armed forces. Christian Peacemaker Teams³ are an example of folk who have done just that, going into Iraq and elsewhere and working amongst all sides of the conflict in an attempt to make peace (with some losing their lives in the process).

The question that arises for us is, how do we move toward that total freedom of being able to give up our lives in the quest for peace? How do we actually get to the place of being able to pray for those that curse us, to love the person that constantly belittles us and undermines our every move; that person who ridicules our abilities, makes us feel so stupid and useless, and that person who simply gets up our nose? And what about conflict – how **do** I deal with it?

As spiritual directors, are we working at our own enemies within and without, or are we being swept along with the dominant culture around us that says “You have a right to keep your resentment toward that person after all they have done to you”. We often stroke and nurture our wounds keeping them open and raw, ready to be shown to yet another person who will again reinforce our own position. That is much easier (or so we kid ourselves) than choosing to work with the pain, examine how we feed on it, and with ruthless honesty begin to move toward making peace first with our own interior responses, and then with that of the other. This is indeed uncomfortable territory. But it is the road toward integrity and authenticity in becoming peace makers in our own contexts, wherever that might be.

¹Historic Peace churches are Christian churches, groups or communities advocating non violence. The term historic peace churches refers specifically to three church groups: Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, (including the Amish and Hutterites), and Quakers.

² Peace keeping can refer to the decision to put one's head in the sand, and thus 'avoid conflict', through to a type of peace which is coercive, and maintained at the end of a gun.

³ Christian Peacemaker Teams were founded by Gene Stoltzfus in 1988, a Mennonite Christian committed to nonviolence as a way of life.

Spiritual directors are not immune to the temptation to opt for the road of peace keeping. But all that lies at the end of this road of trying to “keep the peace” is only a mirage of peace. In our attempt to push the issues underground, to pretend that “things aren’t so bad”, “I don’t (can’t) really have an enemy” and “it doesn’t really bother me ... much”, we forfeit truth for a quick fix, and trade integrity and depth for superficial niceties.

Inner work needs to be done in order to walk the path of peace building. Matthew 5 has a few clues for us that provide very practical signposts that are useful to keep in mind both as we negotiate our own inner journeys and as we walk as spiritual directors alongside others in their journeys.

“You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Creator in heaven. God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing more than others?

Matt 5:38-48

Many have understood this passage to give us only two options: fight or flight! And many have seen this passage as a recipe for being a coward and a doormat, letting injustice reign supreme. However, Jesus certainly cannot be described as either doormat or coward – so what is he getting at here?

What does Jesus mean when he says not to resist? Does that mean we take anything? The word that has been translated as resist is *anthistemi*, a military term meaning to respond in like, with violation or force, or “to set against especially in battle”⁴. So the meaning here is, if someone does evil toward you, don’t respond with like, with evil. Don’t let them set your agenda for you, thus becoming like them. Rather respond from **your own** place of conviction.

What *is* our own conviction? Do we know what this is? Are we as Spiritual Directors intentionally nourishing our sense of who we are, and allowing our interior furniture to be rearranged by the work of the Holy Spirit?

To turn the other cheek, is to give an example of how to respond with profound dignity! Walter Wink⁵ points out that to be struck on the right cheek in a society where the left hand is not used for anything except “unclean tasks”, requires that the perpetrator gives a back hand slap with the right hand. This shows clearly that the intention here is not so much to injure the person physically, but to injure their sense of personhood. A backhand was a way to demean those of lesser status. So to respond by saying, “If you are going to hit me, then let me turn my other cheek to you so that you hit me as an equal”, would have been an unheard of response with a great sense of dignity, and refusal to accept the humiliation of being treated as a lesser being. Or as Wink puts it, one is saying “Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me”⁶. This is powerful! If the striker obliged, and hit the left cheek, he would be accepting that this person IS an equal! Remember that the audience to which Jesus was speaking belonged to a culture where there was institutionalised structural evil and inequality, and where shame and honour were central to their world. This act by the one who has been hit, robs the striker of his weapon.

⁴ Liddell-Scott, Greek-English lexicon, in Wink

⁵ Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus' Nonviolent Way" www.cres.org/star/_wink.htm

⁶ Wink, p4

The two other examples Jesus uses of the under garment and the extra mile are in a similar vein. This article does not allow the space to explain them in detail, but instead if you are interested to pursue this aspect, Wink's writings are highly recommended. What is pertinent for this article, is how such a passage as Matthew 5, informs us as Spiritual Directors, and our ministry as Spiritual Directors.

If movement toward inner peace and peace with those we live amongst is a priority, then peacemaking becomes a central characteristic of our ministry. How well do we understand peacemaking, and do we have a strong commitment to it in the smallest of things in our daily lives? What does happen to the resentment that we harbour?

Just wishing for peace isn't enough. It is something we need to have a great hunger for. Spiritual direction can be seen as a ministry of peacemaking, in the midst of a culture and a world where war is justified as the solution to conflict. Overcoming evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love, demands our life, our soul, our all. Herein lies the gift of spiritual direction. We cannot do it alone.

Sally Longley

DAME MARIA BOULDING OSB - WOMAN OF PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE

Dame Maria Boulding OSB, Benedictine nun of the Coventus of Our Lady of Consolation, Stanbrook Abbey, Wass, North Yorkshire and revered woman of prayer, passed away on the 11th of November last year at the age of 80. Much sort after as a spiritual director, she came from the distinguished community of Stanbrook Abbey which was founded in exile in Flanders almost 400 years ago during the troubled reign of King James 1, and re-established in England following the French Revolution. It is celebrated for its rich tradition of Gregorian chant, devotional literature and fine printing.

But for many of us, our youthful imaginations were stirred by the portrayals of life at Stanbrook in Rumer Godden's 1969 novel, *'In This House of Brede'*, and by the books published by Dame Felicitas Corrigan, *'In The Great Tradition'* (1956); later expanded into *'The Nun, The Infidel and The Superman'* (1985), which subsequently became the West End play, *'Best of Friends'* starring John Gielgud, and later a film of the same name. Iris Murdoch's novel, *'The Bell'*, is said to have been partly inspired by Stanbrook and the Irish folk singer and Celtic harpist, Mary O'Hara, spent twelve years there as a nun. The wonderfully medieval form of address "Dame", still used by the solemnly professed Benedictine nuns, and equivalent to the monks' use of "Dom", continues to evoke a sense of awe.

Dame Maria Boulding; novice mistress, teacher, hermit and renowned for the brilliance of her scholarship, continues the tradition of such famous Stanbrook nuns as Dame Laurentia McLachlan, described by her close friend, George Bernard Shaw as "an enclosed nun with an unenclosed mind" and of Dame Felicitas Corrigan, spiritual guide to such luminaries as Siegfried Sassoon and Alec Guinness.

As the author of numerous books on prayer, Scripture, monastic spirituality and a translator of St Augustine's *Commentary on the Psalms*, Dame Maria became the only woman on the prestigious team of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. She enjoyed the company of intelligent men but according to her Sister from Stanbrook, Philippa Edwards OSB, being a woman of strong character, Maria found relationships with others of an equally strong disposition, to be a challenge!

Described in the Times Obituary as 'single-minded and uncompromising' in her search for truth, she never the less shared that capacity for great friendship that has flourished at Stanbrook in the tradition of St Aelred of Rivaulx (elucidated in his 12th-century monastic treatise, *'On Spiritual Friendship'*). This charism of friendship passed from St Thomas More to his great-great-granddaughter, Dame Gertrude More, the founder of Stanbrook.

That spiritual friendships should flourish in, and beyond, the confined world of the cloister, where conversation with visitors is only possible through a metal grill, often surprises those outside the enclosure. But Stanbrook nuns are famous for their volumes of correspondence with directees seeking guidance far beyond the abbey walls.

The gentle art of cultivating true friendship, this embracing of Christ in the other, is a powerful incentive to prayer and a means of binding together those drawn to the contemplative life. Shortly before her death, on being questioned about the severity of monastic life, Dame Maria said, ‘nothing is hard if you are in love’.

Love and prayer are the ways she leads us to God. In *‘Marked For Life, Prayer in the Easter Christ’*, she reminds us of the prophet Micah’s gentle encouragement to abide by the Lord’s request: ‘to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God’. (Mic 6.8 JB).

She likens the prayerful journey into God’s love to that of human love. There is a ‘hiddenness’ about both relationships. Of human lovers she says, there is always the mystery of the ‘other’. They may know that there are no barriers, that they can be totally open and trusting with each other ... but there is always the ‘irreducible otherness’ which results in a strange reluctance to speak directly about the love itself, about this ‘wonder and glory’ that is between them. Perhaps it is just too big and too holy and there is the fear of spoiling or diminishing it. Perhaps they are wise enough to know that they should not analyse their joy.

And prayer is a journey to meet the absolute mysteriousness of God, the mysteriousness of his love for us and his action in us. Like human lovers, as long as thoughts and words help us to meet in a communion of love, we should use them, but a point may be reached where we sense that we can get closer without them. Then real prayer goes on ‘like an undercurrent, like something a person sees out of the corner of ... (their) eye, without fully turning to look at it.’

Beneath her words lies a very Benedictine understanding: we pray because we are attracted to God ... and enticed by love.

In 1980, Dame Maria was invited by the Good Samaritan Sisters to lecture in Australia and Japan in honour of the sesqui-millennium of St Benedict’s birth and she is still fondly remembered for her ‘grace and aplomb’ (The Tablet, 28 November 2009). In 1985, a call to greater silence led her to spend 19 years living the eremitical life of a hermit.

After being diagnosed with cancer in 2009, she refused surgery, and calmly faced the inevitable. She continued with her community duties and joyfully received friends from abroad. Four days before she died, though in great pain, she presented her Abbess with the postscript to her last book, *‘Easter Journey’*, begun four months previously. It is a series of meditations on her experience of the Resurrection through pain and suffering, (soon to be published by Continuum). On the preceding day she had sung, with a monk friend, the *Suscipe* and the *Regina Coeli* with all the Paschal alleluias. Shortly afterwards, she sank into her final sleep on the Feast of St Martin.

Ann Bergman,

Benedictine Oblate of World Community for Christian Meditation

AUSTRALIAN NETWORK FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2010

ADELAIDE

9TH July - 12TH July

Spiritual Directors – Touching the Art and Heart of Peacemaking

Presenter Brendan McKeague

A PAINTED MOMENT IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION- by Sally Longley

She came in
Full of busy-ness that spilt out all over the floor.
In no time ("No time!")
The carpet, the chairs, the walls,
Were covered in cluttered coloured paintings
of word-circles and spirals that went on and on.

And then, in no time it seemed, without stopping, she had taken to flight, and in a flurry of busy words and arms and legs she flapped - huge paintbrush in hand - spattering out an ascending spiral of wordy painted events; she went higher and higher as if circling the ceiling...

I didn't want to lose her, and so my wings too, started flapping vigorously and my feet began to lift from the deep piled-in-silence carpet, my mind reaching out... Wait for me...! But where was my balance? My feet? My ground? - Indeed, my self?

I drew back against easy temptation, and gently folded up my wings. I took a deep breath, and found myself, centred within God, within me, within her, within God. Feet firmly on the carpet.
I opened my eyes – really opened them, and began to listen with my eyes, and see with my ears, and open space with my heart,

And the Holy Spirit was there, at our finger tips... Just there -

A tender waiting later, a quiet question cruised the room, and landed on her outstretched hand.

Her paint brush clattered to the floor. And as she descended slowly back to her chair, it was as if her hands found her feet, like a child exploring the connections of hands and toes, of tip to toe; top to bottom, surface to depth. Holding the surprise of discovery and a sensing of body touching soul, deep crying to deep, spirit to Spirit.

In her hands she held a moment of God, a miracle of dense soul-time, where the very air around her seemed to spangle and shimmer with shook-foil glory.

Thick, soft, silence, like that of a luxurious carpet.

In that soft, thick, comforting and holding silence, she spoke slowly of a courageous choice to be made.

Soft, strong silence. And the only sound to be heard was paint dripping
slowly
into
the carpet.

And my self? I sat within God within me, watching God's glory gentling a bared soul into life.

