

Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc.

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For people engaged in godly listening

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

Newsletter September 2010

Peace to you all!

What an interesting conference we had this year and I am sure we have all come home with a new awareness of the meaning of peace and violence. Many thanks to the Adelaide team for the work they put into creating such a successful meeting. Missing from the conference was Glenys Wimmer, who was unable to attend due to the sad loss of her daughter. Glenys, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

This issue naturally centres around the conference and our thanks go to those people who have contributed to an interesting read. **President John Stuart** reports on ANSD over it's 20 years while **Sue Dunbar** directs our thoughts to the future of ANSD.

Jim Westphal and Colleen O'Sullivan have both treated us with their excellent reports. Those who were unable to attend will gain a great understanding of the teaching we received and those who did attend will have their memories jogged. I was reminded of how subjective our idea of violence can be. A poem of Colleen's has also been included and for those who are looking for some extra reading, Colleen has directed us to *Uncommon Gratitude* by Joan Chittister osb and Archbishop Rowan Williams in her book review. If reading isn't your thing, you may like to investigate the DVD - *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.

Information about the upcoming Inaugural National Symposium of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction in October is in this issue along with notice of a retreat on The Daily Practice of Peace being held in WA. Our next ANSD conference will be held in Melbourne 2011, July 1st - 4th, with Alexander J Shaia.

Happy Reading

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President's Letter

Twenty one years ago, in February 1989, a group of people with “nothing better to do” met in Canberra to reflect on the ministry of spiritual direction in Australia. This phrase is often viewed in a negative way. However in this context, the group literally believed they had nothing better to do for they considered this ministry to be so important that nothing else would take precedence for the time they met.

It was at a time in Australia when the ministry of spiritual direction was in its infancy. In the Reformed Tradition it certainly was in its infancy. Back then those giving and receiving spiritual direction were largely confined to clergy and religious with only a handful of lay people even knowing about this ministry. Furthermore there were only one or two formation programs in Australia, leaving most of those who were seeking formation as spiritual directors to go overseas and mainly to the United States.

Twenty-one years on and we have a completely different scene. As we now know the majority of people seeking spiritual direction and those training to be spiritual directors are lay people. Also in the last twenty-one years those seeking formation do not have to go overseas for there has been a burgeoning of formation programs in Australia. It is worth noting that in America, Spiritual Directors International was also in its infancy back in 1989. In fact SDI'S parallel meeting to look at the setting up an organization was in August 1990.

This ministry is truly ecumenical and has been so right from the start and this aspect has been integral to ANSD.

In 2010 again we have “nothing better to do” as we gather here in Adelaide where the first ANSD Conference was held. We come together for we believe that nothing is as important this weekend as gathering at this conference to nurture and support ourselves as spiritual directors, to promote the ministry of spiritual direction and to honour those who back in 1989 had a vision that conversation was needed but had no idea where it would all lead.

Looking back over twenty years ANSD has much to be proud of and so much to be grateful for. In our Mission Statement we say that;

The Network is committed to:

- *Encouraging spiritual directors in their work*
- *Offering opportunities for care and nurture through regular gatherings and communications; and*
- *Supporting national, regional and local training programs.*

The annual conference has been our base for meeting these aims. We have had sixteen conferences of our own and these have most certainly nurtured the ministry of spiritual direction and offered care to those who are spiritual directors and those who desire to support this ministry. We played a big part in the setting up of the National Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction [AECSD], both with members who were at the forefront of the initial committee and financially. We have supported the two conferences that AECSD has run.

Our regional groups have always played an important part in building the strength of our networking; and of course in ensuring the success of our conferences. It has been the strength of our regional groups that have underpinned our conferences. The regional groups have

struggled at times but presently seem to be having a strong growth. The Brisbane and Sydney groups have undergone a resurgence over the last couple of years with regular meetings and new members. Brisbane has been able to grow considerably since the 2008 Conference. Perth and Adelaide both have vibrant spiritual direction communities with ANSD members playing important leadership roles. Tasmania has a small but dedicated group who are part of a larger spiritual direction scene. Newcastle was one of the early groups to meet, is still meeting and provides a strong input into the work of ANSD. Canberra also continues to play, through it's meetings, an important part in the nurturing of the ministry in the area. Melbourne has been meeting continuously for 19 years.

In many ways our newsletter is indicative of how we as a network has fared. Early on we struggled to have a viable newsletter. Now it is offering a wonderful means of keeping members in touch with what is happening, thanks to the great work of Jo Windeyer. The advent of our web page has helped to get our profile to a wider audience. Thanks to Liz Palmer for her work here. In so many areas now the web can provide a readily accessible way of building stronger networks by linking to the wider world. Our challenge is to ensure we support the work Liz is doing by sending information re spirituality programs, articles, books, other websites, etc.

One of the substantial ways ANSD, through it's members and as an organization, has offered nurture, care and support to this ministry is in the way we have promoted, sponsored, supported and conducted formation programs. Our training workshops at conferences over the years have provided sound educational and formation opportunities in exploring supervision, discernment of spirits and skills training. The two pilgrimages, to Central Australia in 2001 and to Kangaroo Island in 2005, both provided a marvellous opportunity to marry the inner journey and outer journeys by attending to the spirit of place as we journeyed into the landscape of our homeland.

A recent and most welcome development in Australia has been the introduction of training of supervisors for spiritual directors. After our 2004 conference in Melbourne we had a supervision workshop. More recently three workshops for the training of supervisors has taken place in Melbourne with ANSD members being prominent in the setting up and the provision of the training. Our on-going task, as an organization, is to support the growth of formation for supervisors and, where possible, to encourage the provision of one- to-one and peer supervision.

A measure of the maturing of ANSD and of the ministry of spiritual direction in Australia has been the realization that we do not have to get overseas presenters all the time but that we have our own home grown people who are just as skilled and knowledgeable. We are well served by our own and well led. Part of this maturing is that members of ANSD have presented workshops at overseas conferences and are invited to do so. 20 years ago it was not that common for Aussies to be at the forefront. Now we take it as a given that we can stand on the world stage.

I believe that we need to acknowledge the vibrancy of the ministry of spiritual direction in Australia not in a bragging way but in a grateful and humble way. We also need to take pride in the role of ANSD in helping develop this vibrancy. We are truly indebted to those who have led us, not just the presidents but all those who have served on the executive as State representatives or as office bearers. I recently attended the SDI conferences in Dublin [October 2009] and San Francisco [Easter this year] and it was wonderful to experience the

energy of this ministry on a large scale. 200 attended the Dublin conference and 600 attended San Francisco. The excitement was to know that we are part of an ancient, grace filled movement of the Spirit and that the sense of the PRESENCE of God pervades everything. In looking back it has been just as wonderful to know and experience the same sense of PRESENCE in our own conferences over the years and in the way we have been faithful to the original call of that first group back in 1989.

As the world becomes smaller and we become more aware of our deep inner connectedness, the ministry of spiritual direction will take on added significance. Unfortunately institutional Church is not faring too well at the moment weighed down by fundamentalism in so many areas and by the scandal of sexual abuse and the on going cover up. We need to remind ourselves that the invitation of Jesus the Christ is a call to freedom and not a burden to weigh us down. What will the next 21 years bring us and how can we help shape our world and our lives in the light of this call of Jesus the Resurrected Christ? Who knows, and as a very wise spiritual director said to me years ago “Oh and it’s none of your business”. But as he also said “if we continually open our hearts and minds as Jesus invited us to do” we will be part of a grace filled awakening that will honour the vision of those who had “nothing better to do” 21 years ago and honour their legacy of trusting that the Spirit is actually leading us even if we are not aware of it.

It is now with a spirit of gratefulness that we acknowledge the people who have gone before us and we take their legacy as a gift that will sustain us. We also know from our past that the work of ANSD and similar groups is a work in progress.

John Stuart - ANSD President.

LIGHT

*To wait for light
is sometimes perilous
is night
is always life's invitation.*

*We hover
Above canyons of fear
Strange mountains,
empty deserts
The deep blue sea
the dark silence.*

*Yet we know –
And this with gladness-
That we will blunder into light
And Light will catch and hold us.*

Colleen O'Sullivan rsj



Reflections for the future

Matthew 4: 1-11

In the desert Jesus wrestled with his call. He began to define his life task. His journey, life direction grow out of his experience as he responded to the temptations.

What does this story have to do with ANSD in 2011 and into the future?

1. Turning Stones into bread. This speaks to me of not only feeding the body but also feeding the soul and the spirit – feeding the hunger of the soul. How are we, ANSD, feeding the hunger in the Australian soul?
2. Don't put God to the test. For me, this temptation and Jesus' response is about staying true to your call, living it faithfully. As Jill Manton exhorted us in our 2005 conference – "Mind your call, that's all in all." We are called to risk living in the mystery. We don't have to try to prove it.
3. Worship God. Jesus' response here is clear – there are no shortcuts. We must make the journey – the way of transformation – life/death/life – is the only way.

As we look into the future, let's ponder these questions.

- How are we living this today?
- What is ANSD's future?
- Where is the Spirit taking us?
- How can we listen to the Soul of Australia?

Sue Dunbar

Inaugural National Symposium of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction

Exploring contemporary spirituality and its
impact on the practice of spiritual direction

Friday 29th and Saturday 30th October 2010

Centre for Theology and Ministry, 29 College Crescent, Parkville, Victoria, 3052



For more details see their website: <http://www.spiritualdirection.org.au>

Spiritual Direction: The Art and Heart of Peacemaking

The ANSD Conference for 2010 took place at Nunyah Conference Centre situated in the lovely hills district of Adelaide. The Conference title, "Spiritual Direction: Touching the Art and Heart of Peacemaking" was led by Brendan McKeague. Brendan was born in Northern Ireland and personally experienced the culture of non-violence and the resulting polarisation of groups who lived in fear of each other and of each other's religious, cultural and social beliefs.

The Process used by Brendan introduced the group to diverse ways of exploring their own beliefs around violence and the strength of their convictions about peace and peace-making. The whole week-end was participative and encouraged openness, vulnerability and insight. These are three qualities which can only enhance the process of spiritual direction for all involved.

The readings and personal reflections also opened doors to further understandings around peace and violence. The storm on Saturday night was violent enough to be a teaching technique in itself around what violence can do to a world caught up in it. Trees were uprooted and electricity went out. The wind whirled around. Brendan could not have supplied a better metaphor for what could happen if peace-making is ignored if he had planned it. John O'Donohue's articles in particular were challenging. There is nothing simple about the art of peacemaking and the journey to the heart of it can take many routes. In particular he wrote of the disparate village we have within and of our need to understand this concept and find reconciliation in our hearts:

We cannot embody in action the multiplicity of selves we encounter in our most inward meditations. But without knowledge of these numberless selves our existence is severely diminished and our access to mystery is blocked. We are talking here of the imagination and its riches: too often we degrade imagination to a problem-solving technique (O'Donohue Anam Cara: 146-148)

Brendan's process took the participants far beyond problem-solving. They entered into a time of revelation; of seeking to understand what constitutes violence, of recognising the violence within, of hungering for peace and seeking the insights needed to come to walk peacefully at all times.

Brendan's own presence was an invitation to walk the journey - one he had obviously been on for a long time. His experience in Northern Ireland and in Australia revealed to him the need to bring polarised divisions into conversation wherever they exist. It is with gratitude the group recognised the doors he opened for them and the way forward he led them into the art and heart of peace-making.

Colleen O'Sullivan rsj



Pray the Devil Back to Hell is a DVD which was made available at the conference. It tells the story of the Women of Liberia who rise up to peacefully put a stop to corruption and greed in their country resulting in democratic government and the election of the first female Head of State in Liberia. This true story reveals the art of peacemaking in action. See the trailer on

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi3nvH_Po5E

“Touching the Art and Heart of Peacemaking” – A Reflection on Brendan McKeague’s gift to the 2010 ANSD Conference through the Lens of Spiritual Direction

Brendan McKeague, a son of the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland but now a husband and father resident in Perth, is passionate about genuine (non-violent) peace making. Our 20th Anniversary Conference was much blessed as Brendan shared something of his own journey while engaging us to discover (or recall) and appropriate for ourselves some of the truths and practices central to the restoration of peaceful and hopefully beneficial relationships.

I share just three of these truths or practices that have special relevance for our calling to journey with others as they seek, sometimes in the midst of their ‘troubles’, to discern the presence and desires of God.

First, Brendan introduced us to John O’Donohue’s concept of the ‘inner family’ (or ‘inner village’) within each of us. While we were already aware of the multiplicity of persona or voices within ourselves, the image of the ‘inner family’ is helpful as it invites an awareness that there is a community within – and one that sees us more fulfilled and relationally able when it is in a place of peace with itself.

Each of these voices has its own origins in our story. Some are sourced in our very nature – our genes. Some are voices we have adopted from others or are voices that have emerged in response to our needs to survive or cope or be loved or to move on to better places. There are the protective voices and ones that call for justice, the engaging and friendly voices, the curious and questioning ones, the compassionate and caring voices, to name but a few of those we generally value. But there are also the voices that are born out of neediness and failings, hurts suffered and relationships broken or even betrayed – persona which, we might say, dwell in those places where we long for real love and understanding or healing.

As we journey with others in this ministry of spiritual direction, we are invited to be attentive to the ‘inner family’ within both ourselves and our directees. Is an insight to be gained from Walter Wink’s “Myth of Redemptive Violence” that some voices in our ‘inner family’ would lord over and, perhaps, devalue or even demonize some of the other voices within? But is not the invitation to understand and, indeed, honour each of these voices, working towards an ‘inner family’ that is integrated rather than divided? Is not the invitation to discern where each voice is coming from and its place in our ‘inner family’, so that we might know how we are to respond to it (and, perhaps, love it with the love it longs for)?

While the cultures we live in would generally convince us that the enemy/problem/obstacle/threat is ‘out there’ (and sometimes it is!), we know that often the so-called enemy/problem... troubles us because it resonates with or arises from something lurking deep within our own shadows. To engage and bring to light and offer an attentive (loving?) ear to these voices from the darkness within ourselves or our directees has potential to be life-enhancing and peace-making.

Brendan’s image of the ‘two hands’ gives rise to the second and third truths or practices that are important for the ministry of Direction. (These two hands are the 3rd and 4th fingers on

Brendan's 5-fingered non-violent response to violence.¹) The first hand is an inviting hand – the hand extended to convey the desire to hear and try to understand the truth of the other – the one who I sense is likely to do me harm. The second hand is a hand held up, a “now, please, wait and listen to my truth” hand that invites the other to hear and receive some sense of the truth within me that seems so at odds with his or her truth.

One of our roles as we sit with others in direction is to help them hear and, hopefully, come to understand that persona or voice in their ‘inner family’ who seems to be troublesome or disruptive or depressed or whatever else... but which, if followed, could be draining of life and relationships. A directee may declare her desire to be rid of this troublesome member of her ‘inner family’. But is not our role to help the directee to hear and receive the truth of this voice within? Essential to this hearing is a desire to respect and honour this voice and its story. Rather than judging the voice, or running from it, we invite our directee to consider experiencing the voice in order to discover its longings and needs. As we provide our directee with a safe and caring space for this exploration, our unspoken desire may be for the one before us to befriend this voice and, even, ‘love your enemy’. The reality, however, is that it may be only God who can love this voice and all we can do is ask him to work within us his gift of that love. But whether or not our directee (or ourselves) comes to know love for these troublesome persona within, the very process of hearing truth increases understanding and, thus, this ‘inner family’ better knows itself.

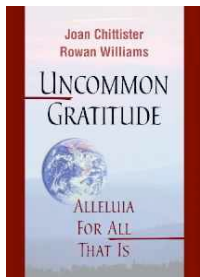
The second hand, the “now, please, wait and listen to my truth” hand, informs the third truth drawn from Brendan's presentations.

Who is this member of the “inner family” who has perceived being confronted or affronted or otherwise threatened by this other voice from within the shadows? The invitation to both ourselves and our directees is that we also understand and give appropriate recognition to the voices that most commonly inform in a constructive way our thoughts and emotions and therefore our responses. What is this voice's truth – its reality – and how has this come to be? The voices that always seem to mean well but now are saying conflict and possible loss are at the door need also to be heard so that their needs and limitations can be understood and their potential to either serve or to diminish the whole of the ‘inner family’ can be appreciated.

Brendan brought us much more over the two + days he shared with us. But his ‘two hands’ is a valuable image that challenges us to listen to, seek to understand, and, if possible, value the voices or persona within us which otherwise might trouble our ‘inner families’. The person who is open to receiving and experiencing within her/his self the God-worked peace of Christ, is more free and better resourced to engage in the art and heart of peace-making with others.

Jim Westphal

¹ Step 1. Observe, when confronted by what is or could be a peace-breaking situation, what is happening in my own ‘inner family’. Step 2. If the threat is immediate or immanent, ‘centre’ or get in touch and be grounded with the centre of peace within myself. Step 3. (The ‘first hand’) Work to hear and understand the truth of the other who is at risk of doing me harm. Step 4. (The ‘second hand’) Identify and speak my own truth without violating the truth of the other. Step 5. Seek to create a bigger truth.



The authors of *Uncommon Gratitude* with its subtitle, *Aleluia for all that is* have their spirituality earthed in two different religious and cultural traditions. Joan Chittister is a religious Benedictine Sister in the Roman Catholic tradition from the Great Lakes area of the United States and Rowan Williams is the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. The Welsh landscape has nourished his family for five hundred years and England has been long his place of ministry. Yet these two people share the same public

moment, albeit on different continents, that is the late 20th and early 21st century and the events which shaped that time frame. Their collaboration on this text is itself a word of hope for all that separates religions and countries in our divisive times.

While this book does not deal directly with peace-making it has been said that the only person who can change the world is one with a grateful heart. Peace-making is about changing our own world as much as it is about bringing reconciliation to polarised groups and to groups who find violence an answer when the way forward is blocked by powerful forces.

A reading of the text suggests that each author has been responsible for different chapters and has put their own mark on the subject matter of that particular section of the text. For anyone familiar with the writing of the authors it would seem both have tempered their style somewhat. Chittister has slowed her pace and Williams has allowed his theological style to become more personal. It is this personal approach from both writers which gives depth and integrity to the insights arising from their analysis of what in fact is traditional religious material for classical spiritual texts.

Chittister says of the work: Archbishop Rowan Williams deals with scenes from everyday life with the eye of a realist who believes in God. I, . . . look at some of the defining moments those scenes imply and peel them back to discover what is under them of spiritual value and what is in them to take us to even greater spiritual heights. (Intro.xi)

Chapter headings include *faith, doubt, sinners, saints, poverty, wealth, unity* and so on. It is the authors' personal struggle to come to a new understanding of the aspects of religion under discussion which makes the text valuable.

The sub-title of the text *Alleluia for all that is* underpins the authors' analysis. The text defines alleluia as *All hail to the One who is. (ix)* It is the great song of praise and thanksgiving that, through the ages has acknowledged the goodness of God. It is the cry that unifies all believers no matter to what faith they belong.

Each chapter offers its own challenge to the reader. Perhaps just to examine one chapter will give the reader an insight into the new perspectives the work offers. The chapter on unity is particularly appropriate. The author begins with the focus on the Cuban crisis and his understanding of the human failure within that event can be applied to so many other power plays and reprisals of our times. He points out that conformity and not unity brought about a false action, which denigrated another country. The refusal to be self-critical by the Kennedy faction which threatened Cuba led to a loss of soul and faith on an international level. Unity is never simply togetherness. It is "ironically a commitment to becoming one people who

speak in a thousand voices. Rather than one message repeated by a thousand voices, unity is one message shaped by a thousand minds.”(103). This is a challenging statement in itself. So what does such unity offer? “The kind of unity that is born out of differences and becomes the glue of the group has four characteristics: it frees, it enables, it supports and it listens. “(105)

With this new realisation, which, in fact, is a quantum leap in thinking around the subject of unity, there is an associated moment of gratitude, an alleluia moment: for the freedom to ask questions without reprisal in the face of contrary concepts, sing alleluia. (105). The words may seem innocuous on paper but they are challenging at so many levels given today’s climate of intolerance towards diversity and in light of the fact that since the neoconservative nineties of the last century violence has often been the personal and public response to difference.

The final paragraph of the book challenges us to realise that we are co-creators of this world with God and that this God allows, no requires, “us to become marble out of clay, to bring everything we can be out of the breath of Nothingness.”(193)

If you read this book, and I suggest you do, read it with a self-critical eye and heart. It is replete with the spirituality of challenge, with the knowledge of Jerome’s vision that the love of God shines over both Jerusalem and Baghdad, and that life demands of us constant renewal and a constant re-envisioning of all that we have been taught and know.

©Colleen O’Sullivan rsj

Adapted from a book review written for *Terra Spiritus Web magazine: Pauline Press.*

Nonviolence in the mainstream:

The Daily Practice of Peace



Retreat November 28th – December 3rd

At Nathanael’s Rest, 800 Gill St, Mundaring. WA (45 minutes East of Perth CBD)

Early Bird Rates (up to November 1st):

Corporate \$800

Individual \$700

Regular Rates (from November 1st onwards):

Corporate \$850

Individual \$750

(Cost includes program fees, resources, accommodation, all meals and GST.)

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