

SOCIETY OF HELPERS

# VOICES OF HOPE



SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

BRINGING HOPE TO THE HUMAN JOURNEY

Vol III Issue I

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We are continually looking to improve our publication as well as seeking topic/theme suggestions for future issues. We encourage you to forward any questions/comments or suggestions.  
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Each morning, as I open my blinds, I see a mosque across the street on the corner of 47th Street. It is a house of prayer, a place of worship very different from my own. When I first moved here, I missed the dome of the cathedral-like church that flooded the horizon of my last abode. I longed for the familiar images and symbols of my own tradition. However, the mosque has made me stretch my horizons.

The other morning, I found myself interiorly grumbling about Lent and how much longer it will be. As I looked at the mosque I was touched by what I have learned about Ramadan and how faithfully my Islamic brothers and sisters enter into the stringent fast from dawn to dusk. My Catholic God understands both the Muslim fast and my grumbings. Both the one who fasts and the one who grumbles has the ear and the heart of God with him and her. I have come to trust that God looks on both with great love.

What is it that develops our relationship with God, with ourselves and with all creation? How do we get to know God better? The answer varies according to the tradition and the life experiences of each person. For some it is meditation practices or a contemplative walk along the beach, while for others it is the nurturing by the liturgies and specific practices of their religious tradition or the touching smile of a small child. In this issue of *Voices of Hope* you will read how spirituality has developed in the lives of our contributors.

The challenge of any spirituality, I suspect, is not the perfection of the practice, or the degree of good feeling that derives from the practice itself, but the capacity of the prayer and practice to impact daily life. Spiritual leaders have insisted that insights, understandings and graces are not given to us just for ourselves but so that we could share them with others. In this sense, spirituality exists to stretch us. Following a spiritual path, be it Eastern or Western, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian or Benedictine, is about nurturing our capacity to seek and find God in both the gentleness and power of creation. It is the call to reverence ourselves, our desires and hopes, our dreams and yes, even our limitations. Above all it is the daily gift of our being to live as people in love with our God, one another and all creation.

Dear Readers,

In our previous issue, our contributors reflected on their experiences of going to Church and the nourishment they experience or the struggles they encounter. In this issue of *Voices of Hope*, we are pleased to have seven contributors share reflections on their spiritual journeys and experiences of prayer. It is our hope that these personal reflections might stimulate some thoughts about your own spiritual journey. Below are the questions that we posed to our contributors for their reflection as they prepared to write their articles. We hope that you will find them helpful in your own reflection.

- What is spirituality to you, and how do you live out your spirituality in your life?
- What different forms of prayer do you feel are fruitful, or do you find to be the most helpful when you are reflecting or discerning?
- How has your prayer and spirituality evolved over time? What has enriched it? What has challenged it?
- What is the best prayer/spiritual advice that you have been given (and by whom if you feel so inclined to share)?
- In talking to friends, family members, and spiritual companions, what do you find to be some of the stumbling blocks and challenges to prayer and spirituality?
- Who is God to you? What is faith? What is spirituality? What is prayer? How does religion intersect with these items?
- Describe a prayerful or spiritual experience that has impacted you and/or that you continue to reflect upon.

The members of the editorial team would like to thank all of you who responded to our survey that was included in the last issue. You provided us with valuable feedback. We will be incorporating some of your suggestions for layout and design as well as potential topics into our future issues. We welcome feedback, as your comments help us discover how to enhance this publication as well as what might need adjustment.

One of our goals is to create dialogue through our publication. It is our hope that *Voices* represents the voices of our readers and that we continue to build our faith experience together. That is why we are asking you to consider becoming a contributor by writing an article and sharing your own experience as it relates to our ongoing themes.

Our theme for our upcoming Winter 2011 issue will be "Living faith through acts of justice." If you are interested in submitting an article, please contact me at [jeankielty@yahoo.com](mailto:jeankielty@yahoo.com). Someone from our editing team will then follow-up with you with article specifications and focus questions at a later time.

## Prayer: Simple and Profound

by **Bretta Ribbing**



In my younger life, and until the end of hers, my Irish mother advised simplicity. Whether composing a thank you note, working an essay, planning a party, choosing proper attire, or decorating my first home my mother maintained, “Keep it simple.”

Is that not prayer? From early childhood I accepted its definition as the lifting of my mind and

heart to God. How basic and beautiful, easy and practical is this definition of prayer. It is neither complicated nor expensive. It is portable needing no equipment. No extensive theology degrees and no exclusive membership are required. Enough is the moment in the presence of God; words may be minimal.

My first twelve years of education were guided by Ursuline nuns in Toledo, Ohio. Making my First Communion at age six, I understood that Jesus loved me, that I loved Him, and that He was coming to me in a special way. It was that profound, that simple.

Of all the books, classes, and sisters that taught me, one episode with an aged nun who spoke from her soul touched me deeply, enduringly. Toward the end of a typing class she interrupted our fingering fury. “Girls,” she began softly as we listened, “during the night, I awakened thinking of a former student I haven’t seen or thought of in years. What do you think I did?” Hands rose with several possibilities. Answering “no” to each Sister concluded, “I prayed for her believing that at that moment she needed help. Think about it.”

I have thought of this many times through the years when I awaken mid-sleep. “God bless whoever needs your love or help or mercy or protection.” Similarly, I pray blessing the start of a new hour or when hearing neighborhood sirens sound or planes fly overhead.

After completing high school, I entered the Society of Helpers. For eleven years I lived among these exceptional women. With Ignatian spirituality, we were contemplatives in action. I believe that kind of 24/7 approach has been, and remains, my spirituality and understanding of prayer. God and I are inseparable. I arise with a stretch and sign of the cross, thank the Father for another day and ask, “What’s our agenda today?” Childlike? Doesn’t Jesus welcome the children with promise of the kingdom? It’s that profound, that simple.



*Helper Motherhouse in Paris*

Through the evolution of my prayer life which was heightened in religious life and is modified in my secular life, it all sifted out to a Triune God who was, is, and always will be. And I, a daughter, stand before Him.

Through seven decades, I have praised and petitioned God—plentifully! Father, please forgive me. Be with me in solitude, community, in my nursing care, in marriage, and in motherhood. Jesus, fill the gallons of my emptiness. Holy Spirit, spark my soul, extend my intellect, and open my heart to love. Providence of God, “from a pin to heaven” as Helpers’ foundress Blessed Mary of Providence prayed.

My thanksgiving remains abundant! Why have you been so good to me? Thank you for your daily creations, for your reflections in nature and creatures around me. Thank you for gifting me with faith, my husband, and our family. Thank you for hearing my many petitions.

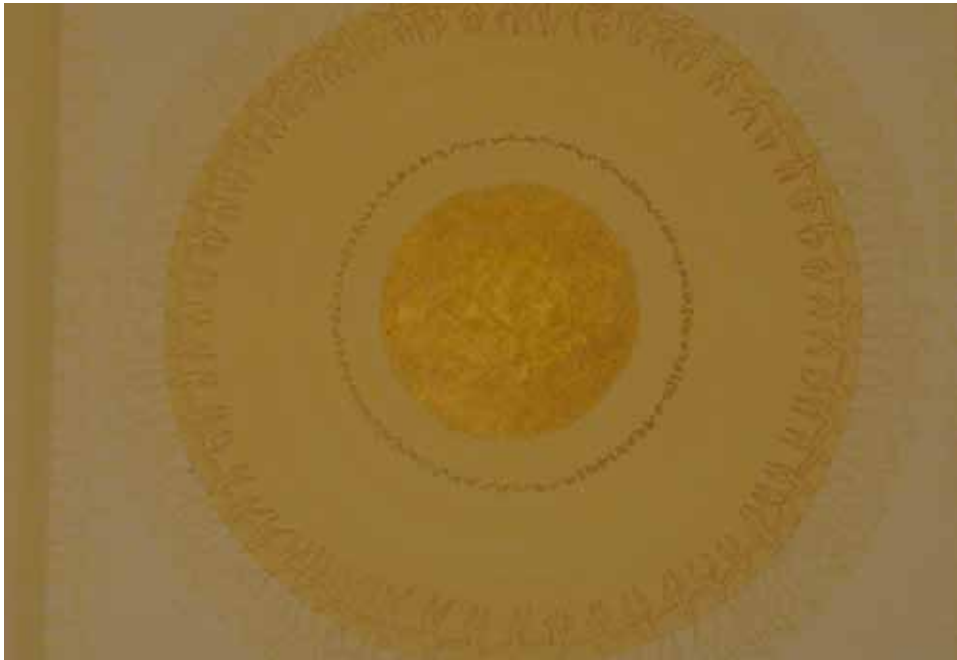
“Prayers,” except for the Mass and Rosary, are less a part of my life now. However, prayers such as the “Memorare” or “Instrumental” of St. Francis of Assisi remain meaningful. Invocations to favorite angels and saints are instinctive. And spiritual reading initiates prayerful reflection.

I speak to God and listen in my own way, often composing prayers, poems, and random thoughts that come from “somewhere,” through my pen onto paper. Many I share, but most are tucked away on scraps of paper or in sockets of my soul.

Yes, I pray by believing in God and acknowledging His universal presence. I thank Him for His creation, recognize my part in its extension, and humbly bask in His everlasting love.

It is that profound. It is that simple.

*Bretta Ribbing, a retired RN after 36 years, resides in Manchester, MO with Donald, her husband of 41 years. In addition to prayer and reading, she lives a favorite corporal work of mercy through regular contributions to her local food pantry. She enjoys communicating with friends over coffee or through correspondence. And next to visiting her two “coastal” grandchildren, she delights in writing them “simple” stories. She can be reached at dribbing@sbcglobal.net.*



*A painting in the crypt of the Motherhouse*

## Surprised by the Joy of Jesus

by Beth Knobbe



When was the last time you were completely surprised? Perhaps it was a surprise gift, a thank-you letter, the kindness of a stranger, or a friend who went out of her way to be helpful.

Not long ago, I received a surprise letter in the mail – a classic red, white, and blue airmail envelope affixed with five foreign stamps. Inside was the most beautiful handmade paper envelope with a handwritten letter from a friend of mine who is serving as a missionary in Thailand. I receive monthly email updates about her ministry, but it was such a delight to receive something so personal that had traveled so far. She signed the letter in the same way she closes each e-mail, “May you be surprised by the joy of Jesus today!”

Our God is a God of surprises! Life doesn’t always turn out the way we would like and rarely as we have planned. Certainly, when we make plans, God laughs. I often find God in the surprises of life. When things don’t turn out as planned, often in hindsight the end result is better than I could have imagined.

One summer while vacationing with friends, we got caught in a miserable traffic jam. Despite having to cancel our afternoon plans, we found ourselves enjoying lunch at a roadside restaurant, which ended up being one of the highlights of the trip. Moments like this remind me to not be so rigid about my schedule that I miss an opportunity where the Holy Spirit is truly inviting me.

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*surprises of life.*

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The pure joy that accompanies a surprise is a sure sign of God's presence. I know that I am in God's presence when there is an eruption of spontaneous laughter. I don't mean the kind of laughter that mocks another or even the laughter that accompanies a well told joke, but rather, the pure joy that occurs when our body and spirit is so overcome with delight that it spills forth from our mouths and exuberance is exhaled. I remember a cross-country drive to see my parents, rounding the hills overlooking the Mississippi River and coming upon such a breathtaking view that I literally laughed out loud.

In the book of Genesis, God promises a son to Abraham and Sarah. A surprise visitor arrives and announces that he will return in a year's time and Sarah will have a son. Overhearing this, and thinking it is too ridiculous to be true, Sarah laughs. Laughter is God's promise to us, even in times of adversity. The Gospel of Luke reminds us, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

Spirituality is the journey of falling in love with God who delights in surprising us. Admittedly, not every day is filled with such overwhelming joy. To be perfectly honest, most of my days are rather humdrum. But the more often I pause and take notice of the little moments of joy, the more obvious they become – like the laughter of a child, the excitement of my students, or encountering a scripture reading that speaks directly to my heart on a given day.



Prayer is a time to delight in God's presence. I look forward to spending some quiet time early in the morning with scripture, most days I have the advantage of being able to attend Mass, and I anticipate sharing my day with Jesus in conversational prayer as the evening draws to a close. Time spent with God in prayer is like receiving a letter from an old friend who longs to surprise us and fill our lives with joy. May you be surprised by the joy of Jesus today!

*Beth Knobbe lives in Chicago and serves as a campus minister at the Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern University. She is the author of Finding My Voice: A Young Woman's Perspective and forthcoming Party of One: Living Single with Faith, Purpose, and Passion (St. Anthony Messenger Press). She blogs at [www.onesinglelife.wordpress.com](http://www.onesinglelife.wordpress.com) and can be reached at [bethknobbe@aol.com](mailto:bethknobbe@aol.com).*

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## Engaging Spirituality

by Margaret Mulligan



When I think of spirituality, I think of all the things that combine inside of me to make me who I am, the intangibles, if you will. It is the experiences of life that have shaped and molded me. Some of that is religious in nature, but some of it is also relational. I believe that our lives are a journey and, as we travel along, we are given many gifts and blessings along the way. Sometimes these gifts and blessings are difficult, and sometimes we welcome them with open arms.

I believe my upbringing and growing up going to Church has formed me into who I am. I also believe that traveling to Mexico for a semester, going on a mission trip as an adult with a youth group and answering hard questions for teens, giving birth to my three children, experiences of love and marriage, watching my children grow up, witnessing my parents' and my in-laws' love for each other, journeying through life with good friends and being witness to several people who have lost the battle in this life for a better life have all shaped me. All of these pieces of me make up my spirituality. I also think that I have come to a deeper understanding of life, and that it is okay to not know the answers and to be able to question life, the

*Experiences such as these often bring us questions in life that we do not have the answers to. I think that is part of spirituality – the searching for those answers and the grace God gives us during that time to see with different eyes.*

Church, myself, and my beliefs. Experiences such as these often bring us questions in life that we do not have the answers to. I think that is part of spirituality – the searching for those answers and the grace God gives us during that time to see with different eyes.

A friend and I recently visited and reminisced about our college years. Someone told us we have “rose colored” glasses – basically, we don’t understand or live in the real world. I think that may have some merit. But I also believe we can choose to become cynical about the world around us, or we can take what we have learned and apply it to who we are and how we are in the world around us. Having taken part in a Just Faith class titled “Engaging Spirituality,” I have come to look for and recognize the parts of me that perhaps God is inviting me to look at, so I can become free of the “things” and “beliefs” that hold me back from truly loving others in this world. I have been challenged by several authors and books that have helped me move beyond myself. *The Shack* challenged me to look at who I think God is....what God looks like and is God male or female? But the question that ultimately came forth was, “Does it matter if God is male or female, and it is okay if God is both?”

I think spirituality is what God asks me to do with the information I receive into my mind, soul, and heart every day. What is my personal response going to be to those who have less than I do, those who are affected by natural disasters, or those who don’t have as many opportunities as I? How do I take care of the earth, and how do I pass that along to

my children and others? I think spirituality is about taking many things and making them my own, either through using that concept in my life or learning more about it. A good example of this is learning about faith traditions other than mine. What can they give me? How can I look beyond myself and see the “gift” in others who might not see the same as I do, while embracing that we are all on the journey?

*Margaret Mulligan is a wife and the mother of three young adults, Kevin, Brian and Erin. She has worked in youth ministry both professionally and as a volunteer. She is active in her parish and values those who are companions on the journey. She has been a homemaker and professional volunteer for several years. She is currently pursuing becoming a spiritual director through Sacred Ground Spirituality Center in St. Paul, MN. She is connected with the Helpers through her aunt, friend and mentor, Jean Kieilty. Margaret can be reached at [mugsmulli@gmail.com](mailto:mugsmulli@gmail.com).*



*Statue of the Visitation in the chapel at the Motherhouse*



We bring ourselves to God through four categories of prayer according to the well-known Indian composition,

The Bhagavad Gītā: karma, jñāna, bhakti, and rāja yoga<sup>1</sup>. Our natural inclination will fit into one of these forms, and this is how we most naturally interact with God.

If we are action (karma) oriented, we may perform prescribed daily religious rituals, or as the hands of God we do selfless service such as build houses or feed the poor. Those who are naturally inclined toward study may study scriptures, write commentaries and participate in discussions on God and spirituality, thus it is an intellectual (jñāna) communion with God. If we are born with a more devotional nature we may sing, play music, paint, or make offerings to express our love to God and discuss with God our needs. There is also the method of knowing God through silence and meditation (rāja yoga), which is beyond action, speech, and intellectualizing.

Regardless of which of the four forms describe our prayer lives, we are still communing with God; the difference is in the language we use. However, over time, a different form of prayer may call us and change how we speak to God or how God speaks through us.

How we pray as children will likely differ from how we pray as adults, and over those years our form will vary as well. Throughout our lifetimes, we will certainly use all four aspects to varying degrees, thus developing our own prayer lives and relationships with God to the fullest. If we pray only one way, we miss the opportunity for personal growth and a deeper relationship with God. If we only ask God for interventions, we miss out on praising God. If we only do prescribed prayers, we miss out on personal communication. If we are always intellectualizing, we

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miss out on the emotional relationship. If we are endlessly speaking at God, we never experience the beauty of His presence through deep silence and we do not learn how to hear Him. The four forms of prayer are equally important.

I naturally tend to be more heady and always trying to ‘figure things out.’ Over time I had to unlearn this and make room for my heart. But my way to the heart was through my head when I met Brother Wayne Teasdale at a talk he gave in 2003 at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago. Every single thing he said resonated so deeply within me that my life soon took a drastic change in course (albeit I had been praying for one for a few years). After reading his book, *A Monk in the World*, I felt a strong need to go to India and left within a year.

I spent a year and a half in Camaldolese and Trappist monasteries, Hindu ashrams, and Buddhist meditation centers. I learned not only about the contemplative side of my own Catholic religion, but also about religions I wasn’t born into. In India I began practicing many of the techniques to see firsthand what they were all about. I knew just reading about other religions wasn’t going to satisfy me. That would be merely more intellectual gymnastics or worse -- religious tourism. Instead,

I needed to delve deep and see what truth was available to me that I couldn’t see through my own religious lens, my own standard ways of praying, and my own preconceived notions. Much of who I thought I was and the public persona I wore had to come off, and I had to reexamine what I thought I knew as fact and change many of my opinions.

The cadence of my daily existence was rigidly set by Divine Office or a similar schedule in the Hindu ashrams & Buddhist meditation cen-



ters, yet I never felt freer. I studied and read but also chanted the names of Mary and Jesus in Sanskrit, prayed Mass in Tamil, sang my heart out and got to know sides of God that I had never seen. I saw God in everything around me and nature became very central to my



day. Life was stripped to its simplest and while sometimes my ego would say, "But certainly we aren't going to do that! After all, I'm an x-y-z!" another part of me thrived in simplicity.

India can be quite boisterous, especially during religious holy days, but it is also very aware of the sacred. My time alone in silence or in communal prayer and chanting broke my heart open, and I found a deep reservoir of light, love and joy. Spending vast amounts of time in meditation also cleared away much of my negative thinking and muted the harsh critic inside relentlessly ready to jab at me. I could also see the motives behind everything I did – the veil came down. As I whittled away all the inessentials, I later began to rebuild through my time communing with God. Now there is more balance in my life of study, work, service and prayer.

After returning home from that long sabbatical, I began graduate school in religion and found it to be rather dry as the monks had forewarned me it would be. I also integrated some Eastern practices into my daily sadhana (practice). Most significantly is the time spent in devotional chanting of the names of God, Jesus, or Mother Mary in Sanskrit. This form of prayer doesn't allow me to intellectualize as I would

in English. The English translation of these chants misses the point entirely and is not the same experience.

So by repeating "Christa Jaya Jaya" over and over, I reach a silence in my mind and overwhelming joy in my heart, which I hope pours out into all that I do after I finish my morning prayers, meditation and hatha yoga practice and go out to interact with the world. I also felt the need to change my work upon my return and moved from special events to working as a case manager with a more vulnerable demographic, predominantly brain injury patients. Of course I have not given up my studies, but they only serve my devotion to God and the works done through these hands.

My prayer life now incorporates karma yoga through prescribed rituals of daily Mass and divine office. It also includes service to religious organizations and to the poor through the Catholic church or other religious groups. Jñāna yoga is expressed through my continued study of the sacred texts of world religions, as well as their sacred languages to be better able to read those texts in their original versions; I also teach. Bhakti yoga is articulated through personal conversations with God, but also through chanting prayers of praise. The trio

of prayer, fasting and almsgiving falls here. I have a daily rāja yoga practice as well, where I sit to meditate anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour practicing metta, insight or visualizations to transform negative emotions. I find this to be the spacious component I was missing prior to living in India.

I lead a more contemplative lifestyle day to day. Indeed, I try to make everything I do and say a prayer in service to God; at least that is my intent. And now that Lent is here, as I am writing this reflection, I am able to recommit myself to practice ever more fully again. It is the perfect time to try a new way of praying for a set amount of time.

In God's service.



[www.aisquared.com/blog/2010/11/blind-yoga](http://www.aisquared.com/blog/2010/11/blind-yoga)

*<sup>1</sup>yoga from the Sanskrit root ūyuj to control, yolk, unite, join together; a method/technique; 1 of 6 philosophical schools. (Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary)(Here, I am using yoga in the sense of method/technique.)*

*Dianna Oles (a former resident of Hyde Park in Chicago) is an Oblate and Brahmacharinī with the community of Shantivanam, an interreligious ashram in South India where she lived in 2004-2005. She began her formal study of yoga and Ayurveda in 2001 and has taught in ashrams & meditation centers in India & Sri Lanka as well as in the United States. Having completed her MA in Eastern Classics in 2009, she reads Literary Chinese, Sanskrit and Tamil texts and is currently working on a comparison of the Tamil Kamban and Sanskrit Vālmīki Rāmāyaṅa. Dianna teaches workshops on spiritual practice, yoga and Sanskrit. She can be reached at [diannamoles@gmail.com](mailto:diannamoles@gmail.com).*

Dianna's Recommended Readings:

*A Monk in the World* – Wayne Teasdale

*Strangers to the City: Reflections on the Beliefs and Values of the Rule of St. Benedict* – Michael Casey

*The Gift: Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master*  
– Translated by Daniel Ladinsky

*Tales of a Magic Monastery* – Theophane the Monk

*The Cloud of Unknowing* – Unknown

## Prayer Experiences Remembered

by Margaret Nimbley



Over many years, some teachings on Christian spirituality have fostered perfectionism, false idealism, and attempts to assure our worth -- all to earn God's approval and to earn heaven. Fear of God's judgment and others' judgments about who we are or who we should be, what we do or what we should not do have generated some unhealthy spirituality. The Good News is that such elements of distorted spirituality can be healed and transformed by listening to and pondering the gospel message of Jesus Christ in graced times of prayer, however that prayer may unfold for each person.

Most often, this happens over time. One can have an experience in prayer that heals deeply and gifts with deep inner freedom. Often enough those moments of grace soften our distorted spirituality gradually and take us

deeper into the Spirit of Jesus, releasing our capacity to love God, ourselves and others.

In writing my reflections on prayer here, I do so from my lived reality of being 76 years old, having lived in religious life for 54 years and having been a spiritual director for a long time. Rather than speaking of others' prayer experiences at this time, I'll speak of my own.

Two prayer experiences at different times of my life remain significant to me. A prayer experience about 20 years ago marked me deeply at the time and continues to deepen in me repeatedly. In John's gospel, chapter 8, there is a story of a woman the Pharisees brought to Jesus who they said was "caught in adultery," and the law commanded them to stone her. The story unfolds in such a way that Jesus says to the accusers, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." The accusers leave one by one. There is no stoning and the woman is left with Jesus not condemning her but simply saying, "Go and sin no more."

As I prayed this gospel scene and entered into it, I was the one "caught," not in adultery but in another way. I was caught in the center of the circle of accusers. Each accuser held his or her arm high with a stone ready to throw at me. Who were my accusers and what was I being accused of?

Alone in the center, I experienced the accusers as negative judgments, some from myself and some from others which had accumulated over the years. Suddenly in my

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prayer, Jesus walked through the circle of accusers and stood next to me. He looked at me with tenderness and then went around the circle to each accuser one by one, gently lowering each arm and releasing the stones. Completing the circle, Jesus stood again next to me, took my hand and walked me out of the circle with the beginnings of an interior freedom that God alone could give.

I say “beginning” because the interior freedom and trusting in God’s love grew slowly over the years. It was not a straight walk. It is humbling to realize the illusions we can internalize about ourselves, about ourselves in relation to others, and most significantly in our relationships to God. These illusions develop over the years and can come from distorted spirituality, life experiences, education, homilies and tendencies within our own selves. And yet God and Jesus can and do break through these illusions, tending to them with compassion, and inviting and enabling us to interior freedom, which impacts our lives, our relationships with God and with others.

A number of years later, about two years ago, I was on a retreat. Upon finishing a prayer time, I was overcome by an awareness that spoke to me: “Whose voice are you listening to?” What?! I had to grab it by the tail to grasp it. It harkened back to my prayer experience of twenty years earlier with the accusers. Among all the voices I hear, to whose voice do I truly listen? Again, it was an invitation to listen to the voice of the gospels and of Jesus for my life journey. Again, this is not easy, but it is an invitation to live in the truth Jesus reveals, a journey of faith and hope.



*A painting in the crypt of the Motherhouse*

I pray in the mornings for an extended time, then again in the evenings for a shorter time. This evening prayer gets simpler as I age. It’s enough for me now to pray with the words from Psalm 46, “Be still and know that I am God.”

*Margaret Nimbley is a member of the Society of Helpers, and her ministry is spiritual direction. She can be reached at [mnimbley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mnimbley@sbcglobal.net).*

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## **Finding God: “Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything”**

**by Jenéne Francis**



Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius has transformed not only my prayer life, but also the direction of my life path, progressively shaping the way I relate to the world and those around me. If I had to put my finger on a beginning, it might be encountering the simple yet profound prayer attributed to Father Pedro Arrupe, SJ: “Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.” In the late 1990s, Belarmine Chapel, a Jesuit parish on Xavier University’s campus in Cincinnati, provided this prayer to all parishioners as a number of small faith sharing groups embarked on a nine-month 19th Annotation “Retreat in Daily Life.”

Work and graduate school commitments prevented me from participating in the parish retreat that year. I was attracted to the idea of “finding God,” but not sure what I was really in love with. I framed the prayer, hung it in my kitchen, and pondered it nearly every day as I chopped vegetables, washed dishes or waited for the microwave to complete its task. I completed a master’s degree in pastoral ministry in 2000, volunteered as a team member with Charis Ministries’ retreats for those in their 20s and 30s, and in 2003 left my career with The Procter and Gamble Company in Cincinnati to work for Charis in Chicago.

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*Among the many graces I received during  
the course of the retreat,  
one of the most profound was  
the insight that what I was in love with was not a  
“what,” but a “who.”*

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As the saying goes, we often find that we teach what we need to learn. I spent five years helping introduce others to Ignatian Spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises through retreats, service immersion experiences in the rural South and other spiritual programs and activities. My own prayer life deepened as I participated in a 19th Annotation retreat my first year with Charis, continued in regular spiritual direction and made annual 8-day silent directed retreats.

Responding to an interior invitation to deeper integration of my life experiences, I left Charis in 2008 for a sabbatical and to make the full Spiritual Exercises during a 30-day silent retreat. Among the many graces I received during the course of the retreat, one of the most profound was the insight that what I was in love with was not a “what,” but a “who.” I suppose I should not have been surprised to discover that somewhere along the line I had fallen in love with Jesus, and during the retreat finally accepted and believed that he was in love with me, too. That mutual love continues to “decide everything” including saying yes when offered an opportunity to work for the Society of Jesus (commonly known as the Jesuits) in 2009.

A sense of living into and out of Jesus’ call to love and serve the people of God gets me out of bed in the morning, even when I am sometimes on the road before dawn or wake up wondering what city I’m in. Outside of work, I look forward to evenings and weekends with family and a wide diversity of friends. From the Lyric Opera to storefront theater, from home cooking

to haute cuisine, from game night to “tele-prayer,” from martinis to Mass, we draw strength from one another as we share hopes and dreams, and support each other through difficult times with generous love and hearty laughter. I have also come to know many good and faithful people through my work supporting Jesuit pastoral ministries around the Midwest. They inspire and challenge me to deepen my conversion to Gospel values. Instead of turning away from the world’s deep needs, their witness gives me the courage to read and listen to the daily news, allowing it to break my heart as I know it must break Jesus’ heart. I am amazed and filled with joy and deep gratitude that I have received the grace to trust and follow Jesus. “Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.”

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*The Cross in the chapel of the Motherhouse*

*Silence is spoken here* were the signs posted on all the tables in the dining room at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Silence is spoken here.

Three men from (the) parish attended a silent retreat down in Kentucky... Two other men, relatives of mine, from other parishes joined us. Prior to the retreat I received several emails and questions about the schedule and preparation.

The best thing about a “silent” retreat at a Cistercian monastery is that there is no preparation. There is only the beautiful and wondrous gift of silence.

Silence can be a difficult task for us. We live in a very noisy world. In fact, attendees from some other groups just could not be silent. Signs posted everywhere in the monastery about where to speak and where not to speak, an inspiring talk at the beginning of the retreat from a seventy-seven year old monk, and (still) some attendees just could not be silent.

Silence can be a scary thing. How do we not do something and just sit quietly? The old monk who spoke to us at the beginning of the retreat told us that he knew we all came down (to Gethsemani) with books and a short list of items to think about. He invited us to not do any of it. “Put it all away,” he said. “Do nothing. Just sit in the silence and see what comes up. For God is no-thing, and we experience God in the nothing.”

Silence is spoken here. I invite you to...(go to Eucharistic) adoration and sit silently and quietly in the presence of the Eucharist. I invite you to turn your radio off in the morning or take one day a week and not turn on your television. Carve out some time to do nothing and to be with no-thing. You may be pleasantly surprised who shows up.

*An excerpt of a reflection which was printed in a parish bulletin.*

### Books/Magazines

*America Magazine*: <http://www.americamagazine.org/>

*Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self from Thomas Merton and Other Saints* by James Martin, SJ

*The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* by James Martin, SJ

*The Rhythm of Life: Living Every Day with Passion and Purpose* by Matthew Kelly

*The Shack* by William P. Young

### Websites

Creighton University Daily Reflections:  
<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html>

Ignatian Spirituality.com: <http://ignatianspirituality.com/>

Loyola Press, Prayers for different occasions:  
<http://www.loyolapress.com>

Sacred Space: <http://sacredspace.ie/>

The Spirit Today: <http://thespirittoday.com>

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## Helper Ministry: The Circle by Alicia Gutierrez

Over a year ago, our Province began a journey with the desire to respond to the call specified in our last General Chapter: To pay special attention to the most vulnerable of our world including women, children, and migrants among others.

The road we have traveled has lead us to plan, organize and establish a Women’s Community Center. It has been a true learning experience for us all, but especially for Anna Maria Baldauf, Jean Kielty, Margaret Nimbley and Alicia Gutierrez, who form the committee to advance our project.

We have made some progress during these last months. We have a mission statement: “To accompany women on their journey by offering a welcoming and nurturing space with opportunities that support, encourage, and empower.” And we have also the name for the center, The Circle of the Society of Helpers. We chose this name because of the significance of women being part of a circle. An inspiration that came from a prayer written by Marilyn Dam-Rabolt in 2009, “What transforms a meeting into a Circle is the willingness of women to shift from informal socializing or opinioned discussion into a receptive attitude and deep lis-

tening.” We desire to offer and to deepen in us and in others this attitude as we accompany women in their daily lives. In the Circle, we Helpers would like to offer what we have to women wishing to become part of a circle of holistic growth.

It is our experience that women in this country are still vulnerable, overburdened with responsibilities and marginalized by institutionalized discrimination and abuse. At the same time, women carry the responsibility of raising children and tending to their families. Many times women do not find the help they need because of scarce resources. We know that many of them do not have the space or the time to even take an hour for their own care.

When women are not aware of what is happening in their lives, they may feel their lives are out of control. We would like to offer women a place where they can find support, encouragement and resources to make the life changes they need to make in a healthy manner to make their lives a little more manageable. We hope to offer sessions about: parenting, stress management, women’s holistic health, domestic violence prevention, self-esteem, counseling and movement therapy among others. While the women are in their circle, we would care for their children so they can focus on themselves, and this we believe will positively affect their families and their whole lives.

We have encountered road blocks along our journey, especially in the last five months when we started looking for a building that will meet our needs. In addition, we face the requirements from the City of Chicago regarding where we can establish our center due to zoning restrictions. This means that they do not easily give permission to open a place like we envision in a residential area. Although commercial buildings are very expensive and do not necessarily have the space we need, this has not stopped us from convening in a nearby parish in order to start offering some sessions and listening to women. Around 50 women came and enthusiastically embraced the idea of the Circle. We have planned a four-session circle period, which we will offer this fall as we continue to search for the place where we can call a home for our Circle.



*Members of the advisory board of the Circle*

## Helper History: The Helpers Arrive in New York

**May 1892**

All were rather young and arrived in New York at 7 a.m. on the 21st May 1892.

Home was N° 25—7th Avenue. Friends had prepared for their arrival with flowers, holy water and a pink lamp at the feet of the statue of Our Lady of Providence.



Mère St Bernard

It was a small house with a little back yard with some plants. There was a basement with a kitchen and laundry and as they were small clothes were put to dry in the kitchen. The dining room was also in the basement.

Upstairs there was the chapel with a door enabling it to be closed off to become a parlour when necessary, leaving only one row of pews. The sacristy was not big enough for the priest and the sacristan at the same time.

On the second floor was the room of M St Bernard and M de la Redemption and a bathroom. Sometimes for recreation a board was put across the bathtub to sit upon. The next two floors each had two bedrooms.



Mère de la Rédemption

The first group numbered 7 sisters and in October a further three arrived.

The house was quite poor, there were only a few chairs and these had to be carried from room to room as needed.

Everybody made great efforts to learn to speak English correctly.

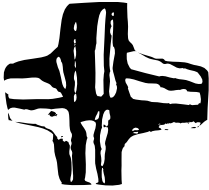
*Compiled by Clare Wilson*



Mère St Hilda



Mère St Donatien



Sister Jean Kielty

Society of Helpers

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