

NOV/DEC

FCM Newsletter

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MEMBERSHIP

FCM Dues can now be
paid Online at:

federationofchristianministries.org/paypal.html



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FCM MEMBERS

Renaming 'Certification' to 'Commissioning'



by Joe Ruane, Chair, Standing Committee on Certification/Commissioning

Dear FCM Members,

In order to bring the formal recognition of ministry in line with the language of the majority of other religious groups, denominations and associations, FCM is changing the term “certification” to “commissioning.” Commissioned members of FCM are authorized to minister in the name of FCM in a process that may be renewed annually.

The term certification more often is confused with the term referring to a skill recognition, e.g. teach secondary studies, operate a chromatography machine, etc. Commissioning is seen as a sending out - a recognition of a status of ministry earned over time through experience and/or formal education and ministerial experience.

This change will be rolled out or effected over the next year or so, and this is a formal notice to the membership. The change was voted on at the Certification Committee and approved by the Circle of Directors at the June Assembly in Dallas, TX. During the “roll out” period which began with the Circle meeting, efforts are being made to inform the membership during this latter half of 2010. The announcement was made at the business meeting at the Assembly, will be announced in the next FCM Newsletter, and the renewal materials will also identify the change. FCM will officially begin to use the term January 1, 2011, but during the roll out period and for the coming year, FCM will use the phrase “certified/commissioned” to acquaint members and the public with the change. Constant Contact and the wallet card will reflect the change.

This will in no way change the status of anyone previously certified. The change is specifically a word change that will be used to bring conformity with language used in the multi-denominational accrediting agencies with whom FCM is engaged, especially in the Endorsement process to work in Specialized Ministries such as hospitals, as well as in the efforts to have certified/commissioned ministers acceptable as chaplains to the Veteran’s Administration and the U.S. military. This change will be reflected in the updated application and renewal forms of FCM. ¶

NORTHEAST REGION

by Paul and Patricia Stubenbort

A COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

On Sunday, September 19, **Tom and Ginny Cusack** hosted the Northeast's



first commissioning ceremony in Monmouth Junction, NJ. Thirteen FCM members attended, including **Tom and Michaelita Quinn** and **Joe Ruane**, who participated in the ceremony to commission **Richard Nelson**.



Nelson (left) is from New York City and comes to us from the Paulist Fathers. He is an assistant pastor with the St. Sebastian's Parish prayer community and a professional counselor who works with troubled teens and their families. "I have been led by the Spirit to the alienated and marginalized," Richard said.

FCM's commissioning is really an affirmation of your life's work, Richard, and we are proud and grateful to have you with us.

The Commissioning Ceremony we used is taken almost entirely from the FCM constitution.



The FCM Circle of Directors meeting in Dallas last June commissioned two other NE members, **Patricia LaRosa** and **Caryl Johnson** (left). We were unable to get together for a ceremony with them,

but we hope in the future to make other arrangements. **Caryl** hails from Springfield, PA. She has degrees in religious studies and spiritual direction and has a leadership role in a small faith-community. Along with many others from the Northeast, we attended



her ordination to the Diaconate, in Rochester, NY in May of this year. **Patricia** (left) has several degrees in Theology and is associated with Spiritus Christi in Rochester, NY. Her current initiative is to help found a Spiritus Christi, Buffalo, NY. Patti was also ordained to the Diaconate in May, at the aforementioned ceremony in Rochester, NY. Congratulations to both of you, and our prayer is that your ministries flourish.

The final get-together for Northeast members will be in Philadelphia when Carl Yusavitz and his wife Mary host a brunch and Eucharist at their home at 2148 Crittenden Ave., Philadelphia, on Sunday, November 21, beginning 11:30 a.m. Please RSVP to Carl at cyusavitz@pennfoundation or call him at 215-248-2140. At our six previous gatherings in the Northeast we've had generally good attendance, so we're looking forward to breaking bread with many of you in November.

A special thanks to these Northeast members who donated their time and in some cases their homes for the FCM gatherings this year:

To **Bill Manseau** and **Stu O'Brien**, who put together two joint FCM-Corpus gatherings in MA.

To **Joyce McFadden**, who opened her home to a small group of us in Hull, MA on 9/11. Our Eucharist there explored the spiritual and emotional ramifications of 9/11 and Joyce's friend on the Hull city council who shared

some of our thoughts with the Hull community.

To **John Gallagher**, who organized two joint FCM-Corpus luncheons in South Jersey.

To **Tom and Ginny Cusack** for their gracious hospitality in NJ.

Finally to **Carl Yusavitz and Mary Tanney** for their upcoming get-together in Philadelphia.

We apologize for not being in contact for the last issue of the FCM Newsletter. And the worst part is we can't even think of a good excuse.

See you all at **Carl's** in November and then in D.C. in June for the Assembly!

GREAT LAKES REGION

Friends, I invited John Polanski to be the guest columnist for the Great Lakes Region for this issue. He has wanted/intended to join FCM for the past three years but has not done so. I invited him to attend the Great Lakes Region retreat at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein, in Ohio in September. John is becoming a certified member this year, and he wants to be active in FCM. The retreat/gathering was the final step for him to jump on board. -Tom Stricker

by John Polanski, guest columnist

As I arrived at the Maria Stein Retreat Center, I had at least an inkling of what to expect at my first FCM event. In line with his typical understated, low-key approach, Tom Stricker had provided me with some notion of the other participants so I felt I would be welcome from the start. This was of course the case and the camaraderie was clearly built on a sincere appreciation of what we shared as well as what made us each unique. Before long I had struck up several conversations and began to enjoy the warm embrace of the Spirit.

continued on next page

Fueled by pizza and wine the group launched into introductions where I continued to be awed by this supremely diverse, talented and deeply spiritual assembly. Boundaries became virtually non-existent as we shared ministries, training, backgrounds and experiences that had brought us to this moment. The formal session concluded with a commissioning of **Bea Broder** and **Ron Davis** in the health care ministries for which they had recently completed preparations, followed by more enjoyment in being with so many like minds and hearts.

Saturday began with a celebration of our unity with one another and the divine led by **Dagmar Celeste**.

FCM business included:

- a highlight of mission and goals and the vales of mutual support and inclusivity along with the importance of personal involvement both for the individual and the group
- an invitation to the 2011 national conference July 22-24: “Ministering in a Wondrous and Shrinking Biosphere” in Washington, D.C.

We discussed membership in FCM and noted the numbers over the past five years: ('05: 475; '06: 412; '07: 410; '08: 369; '09: 384; '10: 379). Even as we recognize we are primarily an older group (with all the implications!) and a “niche organization,” the question of how to invite other (younger) members is a matter for consideration. (The WOC for example calls for 50 percent of its board to be under 30 years of age.) Taking advantage of Facebook and Twitter are possibilities for addressing the issue; we discussed the worth of a needs assessment as well. The concern is also driven by issues such as endorsement for health care chaplains and inclusion of non-denominational colleagues.

A further reality is what has transpired over the 40-year history of the organization through its earlier incarnations and along with similar national

groups, i.e. whether our role ought to be one of *reformation* or *reconciliation* regarding the hierarchical church. Questions of ontology and grace aside (significant though they may be) it seems clear there is the opportunity to “be the new church” particularly through being a resource for emerging communities.

This provided a good segue into the panel discussion on small faith communities, initiated by **Norma and Mike Tynan**. Whether identified as intentional Eucharistic communities, base Christian communities or in other ways, such assemblies have provided a conscious, deliberate alternative Catholic experience throughout the world for decades. Some examples are Simply Catholic (*featured in this newsletter previously—ed.*), located at the OSU Newman Center in Columbus, OH, and Living Beatitudes Community in Dayton, (*featured previously—ed.*) Living Beatitudes was described by **Patty Stricker**. Beginning with their personal search for a group with whom to celebrate their faith, she and Tom became connected with a group that met in one another’s homes for Eucharist. As their numbers increased they accepted the invitation from a downtown Episcopal congregation to use a space that they have made their own. The group has developed its own administration centered on an inclusive vision of the Kingdom.

Beginning with his experience with the church in Latin America, **Dick Korn** described some of the features that distinguish base communities in Brazil as well as those they share with similar gatherings in San Antonio and Chicago. One hallmark is the deep connection with issues of the moment, with the needs of the people involved.

The breakout groups for the afternoon included opportunities to share in a discussion of “Gospel Values for Kingdom Living in an Imperial World” presented by Gloria Leigh, who provided a ten-step plan to remain faithful to our call: recognizing the divine source of all that

is; awareness of the divine in self and others; celebrating the sacred nature of life; honoring the priority of service; pursuing intimate communion with the eternal; practicing grateful stewardship of the planet; treasuring spiritual teachers; recognizing the proper place of material goods; commitment to personal responsibility; and appreciation of what events reveal of the divine.

Concerns regarding the celebration of weddings and funerals provided the second breakout option offered by **John Schultz** and **Arnie Messing**.

The evening brought an opportunity led by **Del Smolinski** to consider our interaction and relationship with the institutional church. With the Spirit undeniably present in so many ways perhaps we are invited neither to renew nor to reinvent, to name the barriers – hierarchy, misogyny, insularity – and to find our voice. We may mourn and grieve and at the same time we are called to be with people where they are, to see a new birth, a resurrection and to trust in the grace that uplifts us.

Such grace was truly evident in the Eucharist with which we concluded as it was throughout our meals and walks through the grounds, our sharing in groups large and small. How did I spend my FCM weekend? In the midst of sisters and brothers that helped me to name who I am and who invite me wholeheartedly to continue my walk in their company. And the Holy One saw that it was very good.

MTS & PLAINS REGION

by *Michael Keefe*

I’m happy to present the committee for the 2012 FCM Assembly: **Dennis Condon, Clem de Wall, James Hayes, Carolyn Horvath, Christy Howard-Steele, Rose Hudson** and yours truly with help from **Antoinette Marold**.



We've been spending a lot of time and energy trying to decide on a location and hotel. After canvassing the members, Chicago seemed like the best spot due to the response and availability of the FCM members of the various areas. However, getting a good priced hotel is easier said than done. We've had fifteen weekly communications to date without settling on one hotel. We still are awaiting word on a couple of possibilities. While there are a lot of hotels, the price is difficult to get. So, pay attention to the FCM website, hopefully soon there will be good news. If you're interested in helping out, let us know!

Various groups continue to meet. The Chicagoland FCM group is planning on meeting Oct. 15 in Hyde Park. I get regular correspondence from Jesus Our Shepherd in Hartford, WI and the Reaching Out community of St. Louis. If you know of any other upcoming prayer meetings, let me know and I'll get the word out.

CTA is sponsoring their annual assembly Nov. 5-7 in Milwaukee. FCM is planning on meeting Nov. 6 at 1 p.m. Hope to see you there!

PACIFIC REGION

by Mary and Nick De Los Reyes

Sacramento

For the past 28 years a group of married Catholic priest in Sacramento has been meeting to offer each other support,



companionship and inspiration. The co-founders are Jim Mulligan and Lou Persano. When the group started, there were over 100 members. With time many have passed into eternal life, including Jim Mulligan, and now there are about 30 left. The group calls itself NOVA, standing for Now Other Vineyards Adjoining, indicating that

these men consider themselves to be still working in God's vineyard, but not exactly where they previously ministered. Some have volunteered at Loaves and Fishes, a multifaceted outreach program to the poor and homeless that includes a daily kitchen for lunch and dinner, housing for unwed mothers, and a school for street kids. Some have created other ministries responding to needs as they have found them. Some, as certified members of FCM, have been engaged in the ministry of weddings, funerals, and Eucharist in small communities of faith. NOVA continues to hold meetings about every two months, but perhaps the most memorable meeting is held yearly on St. Patrick's Day, at an Irish restaurant. I have enjoyed being at this gathering, hearing the update on the activities of each member, and hearing Lou Persano sing *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling in Italian*. If anyone is in the Sacramento area on St. Patrick's Day, please feel free to join NOVA's festivities.

Santa Barbara

John and Roberta Hydar were with us at the FCM/CORPUS Joint Conference in June. An article in the Santa Barbara Independent on October 7, 2010, announced that John, along with Keith

Forster, both married Catholic priests, have been called by the St. Anthony Community to liturgical leadership. Until recently St. Anthony was pastored by a Franciscan priest. When he was no longer able to celebrate Sunday Mass due to his health, and when no other Franciscan or diocesan priest was available, the community decided to call on John and Keith who had been regular worshippers in the community. John, who has served as a mentor to Roman Catholic Women Priests, several of whom are FCM members, in the Santa Barbara area, and Keith, who is particularly interested in Scriptural studies, responded positively. The community held a "Laying on of Hands" ceremony to officially commission John and Keith as its liturgical ministers. Congratulations to St. Anthony for selecting two outstanding men, and to John and Keith for once again responding to their calling, and to their beloved wives, Roberta and Nancy.

SOUTHERN REGION

Ginny and Bob Graf will be in touch for the January issue. They are busy with Ginny's campaign for election to the U.S House of Representatives this November. Please keep them in your prayers. We wish her well! -ed. ¶

HAVE YOU GIVEN THOUGHT TO THIS?

Why not include FCM in bereavement donations and bequests? Why not remember FCM in obituary notices? In your will?

It's a simple process that will have a far reaching impact.

- Revise your Will to include a donation to FCM
- Remember friends and loved ones with a tax deductible donation to the Federation of Christian Ministries.
- Mention that a loved one was an FCM member in obituary notices: "Name was a member of the Federation of Christian Ministries."

And, why not add this to an obituary notice:

- In lieu of flowers, a tax deductible donation can be made to the Federation of Christian Ministries, Central Office, 1709 West 69th St., #3, Cleveland, OH 44102-2957.

We've supported each other and our ministries in life. We're all in this together—for the long run. ¶



FCM – Active on an International Level

by Tom and Michaelita Quinn

You might remember reading about FCM's **international connection** in the Jan-Feb 2009 issue of this newsletter. In that article, we shared with you our attendance at an international Congress in Austria during which we made a presentation.

The host group is the **International Federation for a Renewed Catholic Ministry (IFRCM)**, an international organization promoting reform in the Catholic Church. Their focus is the development of all forms of ministry where collegiality characterizes ministries, governance, and structures.

FCM's Roman Catholic Faith Community Council is a member of this International Federation. The Executive Board of the International Federation meets annually with the next meeting scheduled for October 15 just as this issue is preparing to go to press. So we thought you would like to know about our plans to attend.

This year the Executive Board of the IFRCM will be meeting in Utrecht, a small town near Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Since **Michaelita Quinn** is the Vice President on this Executive Board, she will participate in the Board meeting. She is also the official representative of the FCM Roman Catholic Faith Community Council. **Tom Quinn**, co-president of FCM with Michaelita, accompanies her as an observer for FCM.

Bill Manseau, director-at-large on FCM's Circle of Directors, is an officer-at-large on the IFRCM Executive Board. Bill also represents CORPUS and the International Society of the Apostles Saints Peter, Thomas, and Mary Madgalene, two organizational members of the International Federation.

In addition to these two groups, other members of the International Federation for a Renewed Catholic Ministry include: **Australia:** Catholics for Ministry; **Austria:** Arbeitsgemeinschaft Priester, ihre Frauen und Kinder; **England:** Catholics for a Changing Church; **Ireland:** Leaven; **Canada:** Corpus - National Capitol Region; **The Netherlands:** GOP (Married-Unmarried Priesthood), and Magdala; **United States:** CORPUS, and Women's

Ordination Conference (WOC). The International Federation is also affiliated with the European Network Church on the Move.

We are all looking forward to the Executive Board meeting on Saturday, October 16. This day was organized by the Dutch to coincide with their national Congress; the focus is "*Handing on the Torch of Renewal.*" Keynote speakers are Hermann Haring, theologian and assistant to Hans Kung, and Angela Berlis, a Swiss theology professor and an "Old Catholic" priest. Reform groups throughout Europe are invited to attend this Congress at St. John's Church in Utrecht.

Since we have never been to the Netherlands, we are arriving three days early to tour the **Amsterdam** area, including the house where Anne Frank and her family spent two years hiding from the Nazi regime.

We plan to share our experiences with you upon our return. So watch for an update on FCM's activities on the international level in the Jan-Feb issue of the FCM Newsletter. ¶

WANTED

The newsletter needs:

Articles on Ministry
Photos of Members Ministering
Letters to the Editor
Book Reviews
Member Interviews

Email: diaspora@fcmmail.org
or call: 216.228.8800



10/10/10: A Special Day for Me! Time to Renew Your Membership!

by Antoinette Marold

10/10/10 is said to be the luckiest day of the year. Thousands of couples chose it for their wedding day. In fact, double the amount of couples usually married on a Sunday were married that day.

That day, I was officiating a Christian wedding for a bride who was of Nigerian descent and a groom who was African-American at a local hotel. I arrived early for the ceremony as we were going to have a rehearsal prior to the ceremony. As happens many times, there were several events scheduled in the hotel. I was directed to the room where the ceremony was to be held. When I arrived at the doorway of the ceremony site, I noticed that the ceremony embellishments were arriving and they were elephants made of beautiful fabric and Hindu statuary. I panicked... the couple had selected a VERY CHRISTIAN ceremony.

As good fortune would have it my ceremony was in the next room. As I entered, there they were the familiar candles and aisle ceremony set up.

The parents of the bride arrived dressed in their native attire. Her mother with a scarf of yards of material wrapped in a most artistic way and pinned in a flying design called a gele. Her father was wearing a matching kaftan with a matching kufi (hat). Several other couples were dressed in Nigerian attire. The bride and groom were dressed like the traditional American bride and groom: white bridal dress and white tuxedo.

After the ceremony the guests proceeded to the room where the reception was to be held. I was asked to provide the prayer at the meal. Immediately after the prayer, kola nuts were cracked by the father and a prayer in the Nigerian/African language was given to honor the newlyweds. I was told that kola nuts are distributed to guests who visit their homes (as a welcoming) and at all of life's celebrations including births, baptisms, naming ceremonies, weddings, etc. (Doesn't this sound familiar?)

One of the guests sang a Christian hymn as her toast to the bride and groom, and everyone joined in the singing of the hymn. There were many toasts of good wishes.

Before the close of the reception, there was time for visiting in the hotel atrium. As the guests mingled, out came the guests from the Hindu service and into the atrium. The women were dressed in beautiful jewel-embellished sarees.

Looking around, I saw different cultures, different attire,

different races, different religions, and all of them were getting along as they greeted each other with smiles and kind words. And I thought, *this* is what God intended.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

All FCM members should have received their renewal packets by November 1, 2010.

Renewing and paying your 2011 dues is available ONLINE again this year under the membership drop down menu. Go to **For Members Only**, then **Annual Report and Renewal** drop down. You can also renew your ICCC membership ONLINE.

MINISTRY LISTING

Once you renew your membership go to the FCM website: www.federationofchristianministries.org go to the Membership drop down... For Members Only... to Ministry Listings and take advantage of your 3 free listings on the FCM website.

The listing opportunity will be available until the end of December and will be posted on the site February 2011. The listing will remain on the site for one year and has to be resubmitted with your membership renewal each year.

Wishing you Many Blessing and a Happy Thanksgiving! ¶

RENEWAL TIME IS HERE

Membership renewal packets are in the mail. You probably already received yours. Renewing and paying your 2011 dues is easy and available ONLINE.

- Go to www.federationofchristianministries.org
- Under "Membership" click on "For Members Only"
- Click on Annual Report/Renewal

You can also renew your ICCC membership ONLINE by clicking "ICCC" under "For Members Only." Don't forget your three free Ministry Listings! You only have until the end of December. It's easy! Don't wait!



CALL TO SERVICE

It is time for the membership of FCM to nominate a member(s) to fill the position of President(s). This position is critical to the direction and vitality of FCM. In this edition of The FCM Newsletter we are calling for nominations for this national office on the Executive Committee of the Circle of Directors.

Any member in good standing can be nominated for this office. A couple may be nominated for the position. Any member may place himself or herself on the slate of nominations. Both talent and time are required by those who will fill this position. Service on the Executive Committee requires a substantial investment of time. The term of office for this position is three years. The term will begin after the 2011 Assembly through the 2014 Assembly.

Members holding an office can be re-elected to that office for a second term. After two terms a director must take a one year break before holding office again.

Presidents Thomas & Michaelita Quinn, are ending an appointed term and are eligible to serve in the position of presidents in this election if nominated.

The President(s) is responsible for:
Serving as chief executive(s) of FCM, for overseeing existing programs and committees, initiating new programs in response to suggestions and needs of the members, serving on the Executive Committee, for chairing the membership meeting at the national assembly, chairing the Vice Presidents meeting and overseeing the Vice Presidents election process, and for filling vacancies in Circle offices between elections, and engaging in public relation and outreach to make the Federation visible and known.

To nominate a member for the office of President(s)
complete the nomination form and mail it to: Antoinette Marold, FCM Nominations
165 Henry Street
Bedford, Ohio 44146

or email: chairperson@FCMmail.org **NO PHONE NOMINATIONS.**

All nominations must be received by **January 31, 2011**. The balloting for the National Election will be in March and the results will be published before the 2011 Assembly

NOMINATION FORM

FOR PRESIDENT(S):

I nominate: _____

Why I am nominating this member(s):

My Name: _____

GROUNDED IN PERSONAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

by Tom Leonhardt, co-Membership Coordinator, Central Office

This is Part 2 of a three-part article. The next installment will appear in the January 2011 issue.—Ed.

I was a Jesuit for 37 years, so Ignatian Contemplation as a spiritual practice is not new. It profoundly affected my commitment, devotion, and attachment to Jesus. It changed my life. But it did not substantially help me to address my ego.

Addressing ego is the principal challenge to authentic spiritual growth. The ego challenge finally began to stare me down when, after several years of daily centering prayer practice, I was introduced to Buddhist breathing meditation through books by Pema Chödrön, Ezra Bayda, and Thich Nhat Hanh. But the critical series of insights came for me with Eckhart Tolle's book, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*. Tolle's book is the best thing I have ever read about ego. It is clear, concise, and thorough. It helped me to realize that my own ego issue is everywhere in my life. Addressing the ego successfully is the key to consciousness and hence to compassionate living in the midst of a mostly unconscious socio-religious culture.

It is this ego-addressing daily spiritual practice that can lead us to taking our ideas and our religious doctrines less seriously, to see doctrines as possibly dangerous examples of collective ego. As Tolle observes, "Many 'religious' people equate truth with thought, and are completely identified with thought (their mind). ...The West (is) the most mind dominated of all cultures. ...Those unable to look beyond form become even more deeply entrenched in their beliefs, that is to say, in their mind." (Tolle, 17-19, *passim*)

Such arrogant and self-righteous ego (I'm right, you're wrong! ...and I'll get rid of you!) has spawned torture, murder, excommunications, interdicts. The fruit? The fruit is fear and deeper rigidity that suppresses authentic spiritual freedom—all, of course, in the name of God. The same results occur whether the fundamentalism is scriptural or doctrinal/dogmatic. Committed, personal, daily ego-addressing spiritual practice, on the other hand, leads to a lighter grasp, a letting go of rigidity, so trust, growth, and acceptance take root and flourish. This is genuine spiritual freedom.

Also, seriously addressing our egos has a good chance of waking us up to the realization that our own passionate efforts at institutional reform may well be the equivalent of rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic. In fact, being the change we want to see in religious institutions will probably get us thrown out by the institution we would like to change.

So for members of FCM, who respond by worshiping God and supporting the growth in faith and ministry of individuals and the collective members, committed, daily, personal, ego-addressing spiritual practice is essential. It is all a response to Jesus' and others' call to consciousness, to be awake.

What follows below is what I have found most helpful. I recommend it.

1. Focus on the breath. Consciously bring attention to the breath. Follow the breath. Do not try to change the breathing pattern, just notice it. Is it fast or slow?...even or uneven? ...deep or shallow? Just keep following the breath. After you have become proficient in this practice of following the breath, notice whether the in-breath is equal to the out-breath. Notice whether the pause after the out-breath is longer than the pause after the in-breath. If this is the case, gently even the breaths so that the pause after the out-breath is the same as the pause after the in-breath. Keeping an even rhythm of in and out with the very briefest pause after in-breath and out-breath. [Caponigro, 31-33, 104-105]

2. When thoughts occur, and they will, one is no longer following the breath. One is thinking. On becoming aware of thoughts, simply return to following the breath. In following the breath, one will notice that changes will take place. Perhaps one will notice that one is breathing more slowly and deeply.

3. When thoughts are interlaced with emotions, fear, anxiety, anger, it is essential to separate the thoughts from the feelings because as long as the thoughts and feelings are interlaced, they will never go away. The topic of the thoughts may change but the same feelings will remain locked. Example: anxiety attacks. The fact is, the thoughts are merely thoughts. They may be concerned with the past or they may be concerned with the future. But, unfortunately we believe our thoughts. A technique suggested by Ezra Bayda in *Being Zen*, (29) is to make what is happening conscious by saying to yourself, "Having a believed thought that...." We treat thoughts as though they were reality, but they are merely thoughts. Eventually, with persistence, we can own the thoughts for what they are, merely thoughts, thus separating them from the feelings. Then we can bring our attention to the feelings, notice where we are carrying them in our body and then bring the breath to that part of our body, leaning into the feeling with the breath. Feel the feeling and breathe into it. Do not run away from the feeling. Stay with it. This will eventually resolve the feeling of distress. When this happens, simply return to following the breath.

Effects

So what are the effects of this practice?

1. You cannot think while you are meditating on, following, your breath.
2. Ego is silenced, therefore diminished.
3. One is by the very nature of this practice, being non-violent. Violence is born of thoughts, of identifying with

thought, born of ego. (Jesus refers to this: Mark 7:20 “Wicked designs come from the deep recesses.... All these evils come from within...”)

4. One is present in the moment, which is the very best place from which to address whatever is happening in the moment. One is able to act most appropriately if action is called for.

There are many spiritual practices that can be fruitful to various extents: reciting a mantra, chanting, centering prayer, yoga, tai chi, chi kung, Dances of Universal Peace, walking meditation, sitting meditation. These practices quiet the mind, hushing the ego. I use some of these practices. However, what I look for in a daily spiritual practice is whether the practice addresses ego, as can happen with the practice of meditation on the breath as explained above. One might try it with the other practices as well.

To Begin

If one has not been doing such a practice, how does one begin practicing without setting oneself up for discouragement and failure?

1 - Decide on an amount of time which is doable for you. If one minute is really doable, then do one minute. Do it once a day. If a longer period is realistically doable, then do that amount of time once a day.

2 - Do the practice for four weeks, then increase the amount of time once a day.

3 - Do the practice at the increased amount of time for four weeks. Then increase the amount of time again—keeping it doable.

4 - If your get to 30 minutes, decide whether you will continue at 30 or some lesser or greater amount.

5 - Do the practice every day at least once. Somewhere along the line, you may begin practicing also a second time, beginning with a short amount of time. It is important, however to practice every day.

This breathing meditation (or another practice that addresses the ego) may require one to lessen or even omit some other devotional practice. But the criterion is addressing the ego. If ego is not addressed, the practice, however dear and familiar, needs at least to be lessened in favor of addressing ego. If you do not have time to do a practice which affords the opportunity of addressing ego, you are too busy. We are all so very vulnerable to self delusion that it is critical for us to be attentive to the machinations of ego. We can be so head-long into our agenda that we even become dangerous to ourselves and others.

Tolle recounts that someone showed him the prospectus of a large spiritual organization, and asked him to recom-

mend one or two courses. Tolle said, “They all look so interesting. But I do know this. Be aware of your breathing as often as you are able, whenever you remember. Do that for one year, and it will be more powerfully transformative than attending all of these courses. And it’s free.” (Tolle, 244)

So you may simply choose to start with what Tolle suggests. Yet, I would highly recommend having a longer amount of time each day as well. A longer time each day will, in my opinion, quicken the awakening process. You may choose to select five short periods each day scattered throughout the day as Muslims do with their prayer times and as Christian monks/nuns do with the prayer of the hours. You may choose to draw and release three focused breaths several times each day. But start somewhere! Be intentional about it. The stakes are too high for us personally and for the planet and the species. Let us also be very aware of the insidious illusion that spiritual practice is not necessary for everyone, only certain people like monks and nuns, while the rest of us need to be practical doing ministry and making a living so that there is no time left.

It may be useful to point out, from the perspective of Jesus’ language, Aramaic, that the first three Beatitudes are about breathing. The first Beatitude might be translated, “Ripe and attuned to the Source are those who find their home in the breath, theirs is the I Can of the universe.” (Douglas-Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos*) The second Beatitude might be rendered, “Aligned with the One are those who mourn, whose life is in emotional turmoil, they will find the arms of love embrace them from within.” (NDK) The third Beatitude could mean, “Resisting corruption, possessing integrity are those who have softened what is rigid within, they shall receive physical vigor from nature.”(NDK) So when we breathe deeply and intentionally, stuff comes up, and there is plenty around all of us every day, violence everywhere. When we mourn we soften and are open to receive the energy that is all around us.

Having been raised Catholic, I appreciate that guilt is a common (though useless) experience. Hence, in doing a practice which provides the opportunity of addressing ego, it is important to be non-judgmental toward yourself about failing to be perfect or even being mediocre, or abysmal at the practice. Just notice what is happening and go back to the practice.

Thinking. . . and Thinking

A reflection about *thinking*. There is thinking and there is thinking.

Some questions:

- Does the thinking in which you are engaging go anywhere?
- Is it really fruitful, or is it an ego exercise in futility?

Sometimes thinking is useful. Other times it is not useful. So asking such questions about the value of thinking is not anti-intellectual. Thich Nhat Hanh has a book titled

Transformation at the Base. It is deeply intellectual—and he is clearly a great scholar—but the practice of breathing and smiling that he so highly recommends does not engage the mind. (Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step*, 9) Breathing and smiling engage our full body awareness, which is something desperately needed in our culture, a culture profoundly addicted to denial and avoidance of life as it is.

We all need support for our practice. Couples are fortunate because they enjoy in-house possibility. I encourage couples to choose some doable amount of time to practice together. You will support each other's energy. Do it every day together. Or gather a small group to practice once a week in addition to your own daily practice. Again for a doable amount of time. Buddhists call this a "sangha" or "community of practitioners." In Matthew 18:20, Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The root "shem" in Jesus' language, Aramaic, can mean light, word, sound vibration, reputation, name, experience, and atmosphere. So "the use of Jesus' name in Christian prayers conveys to the devotee a vibrational sense of Jesus' being." (Douglas-Klotz, *Hidden Gospel* 69-71.) So gathering together does make an energetic difference. There is also a resonance of this in *The Global Brain*. It recounts that when two groups, separated by hundreds of miles, meditated at the same time, the larger group of meditators affected the brain waves of the smaller group. [Russell, 189-190]

The energy and empowerment for effective ministry, like effective living, comes from within. So let us embrace this **lynch-pin** of rich, fruitful, effective living, effective ministry, the lynch-pin of personal, daily, ego-addressing

spiritual practice.

At Hope House there is a poster which reads in eighteen languages, "There will be peace on earth when there is peace among the world religions." There will be no peace among the world religions unless spiritual leaders themselves commit to and tirelessly teach personal, daily, ego-addressing spiritual practice. ¶

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REMEMBERING: WITNESS TO VATICAN II

Recently, an FCM Member sat down with long-time member John Schultz to recapture some of the excitement of Vatican II, since John was in Rome and able to attend some of the sessions.--ed

FCM member John Schultz has a unique perspective, being, as he was, a witness to the unfolding of the Vatican II Council as it happened in Rome from 1963 to 1965.

Now 70, John is *officially* retired from years of teaching theology at the high school and adult levels. Let's say "*formally retired*" as he still remains

active in teaching ecclesiology and church history to lay ecclesial ministers for a university located in southeastern Michigan.

But back then, John was a student at the Gregorian in Rome while he prepared for the diocesan priesthood of Saginaw, Michigan. He shared some fascinating, behind the scenes, events of what he experienced and witnessed as this important piece of Catholicism evolved. He speaks of Vatican II as an "*event*" in history, a type of event and moment in history that happens every couple hundred years or more, and yet shapes the rest of history for future generations.

"Early on, you could sense that it was *exciting times*," John said, "and more than anything, it gave you a sense

of the movement of the Spirit's invitations and promptings at work."

John shared numerous stories and little known facts. Here are some of them:

With great glee, John shared with me the day he was "kicked out" of the Vatican II proceedings. The council was in session and the bishops began with daily mass. The bishops used seminarians from the North American College as masters of ceremonies.

"There were four of us there that day, two 3rd year and two 4th year students," John said. "The four of us were serving at the papal altar with one of the council cardinals. After the mass, we decided that two of us would try to blend into the surroundings as

continued on next page

to witness the events of the council's debate for that day, while the other two would act as distractions for the Gendarme (security police in black suits). Another junior MC and myself were walking along the small space behind the bleacher-like seating that the bishops occupied, when we sneakily turned the corner, ready to hide under the bleacher-seating where we could enter into the section for the theological advisors. Suddenly, one of the Gendarme saw the back of our cassocks... next thing we heard was them shouting: 'Padre'...'Tessera' meaning

Documents" With nothing to show him, he and his partner lead us to one of huge bronze doors, and with an effort from both Gendarmes, they opened the door a few inches, gestured us out with the word 'Prego...Please.' As we passed through the small crack in the door and stepped into the bright sunlight outside, we heard a great chug of the bronze door behind us."

John remembers saying to his classmate, "Wherever we go from here in the future, we can at least say we were thrown out of a better place!" ¶

more to come in the next Newsletter

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