Journeys of the Heart

TOPIC 1 ♡ Collaboration for a Transformed World

Exploring the Theme

PREPARATION

Set Up

The facilitator might like to use candles, water, flowers or other symbols for the journey ahead. The hope is to create a shared Sacred Space that is open to the movement of the Spirit. Chairs could be in a circle. There could be some music playing quietly and some pens/ papers might be useful for the first night. It is anticipated that material would have been sent in advance to everyone. A few extra copies should be available. Participants may wish to volunteer for the Set Up at future sessions

Facilitator welcomes participants

The facilitator welcomes everyone to the group and in general terms outlines the purpose of coming together and a little of their hopes for the group. Mention could be made of the elements of the meetings: "Food for the Journey", "Friends for the Journey" and "Wisdom for the Journey"

"Food" could include:

Scripture reading (lectio), Prayer, Poetry, Ritual, Sharing, Pausing, Reflecting, Music, Silence. Someone might like to "bring" food for each meeting. (The sharing of refreshments at the end of each session nourishes the journey!)

"Friends" could include:

Madeleine Sophie Barat, Thomas Merton, John Main, Simone Weil, Sean McDonagh, Thomas Berry, Stephanie Dowrick, Bede Griffiths, David Tacey , Esther de Waal and other "Wisdom" seekers.

"Wisdom for the Journey":

is found in their writings and ours. Participants might suggest other "Friends" and ways we can share our Wisdom with each other.

Introductions

Facilitator asks participants to briefly introduce themselves and say something about what they hope to gain from coming to the sessions

Facilitator asks the group members ***What do we hope to gain by attending this group?***

Housekeeping

It would be helpful to outline some simple group expectations:

- The need for confidentiality
- The need for everyone to arrive on time
- The possibility of sharing the task of bringing supper (ask for volunteers)
- The general principle of not interrupting others or talking while someone else is sharing
- The importance of respecting difference
- We may share as much or as little as we desire
- The hope that someone might volunteer to take notes which form a summary as this will form part of the offering to AMASC 2006

Some thoughts on Silence

'Silence is not absence; it is opportunity. Silence is the condition and the doorway" (Thomas Merton)

♥

"Without silence words lose their meaning, without listening speaking no longer heals, without distance closeness cannot cure. (We need) careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community.
A life without a lonely place is a life without a quiet centre. In solitude we can slowly unmask the illusion of our possessiveness and discover in the centre of our own self that we are not what we can conquer but what is given to us" (J. M Nouwen)

♥

"There is nothing so much like God as silence" (Meister Eckhart)

♥

"Silence is God speaking to us" (Mother Teresa)

"St Benedict has two words we translate as silence: *quies* and *silentium*. *Quies* is quiet, physical silence, an absence of noise – not banging doors, not scraping chairs, not coughing or unwrapping sweet papers. It is the *quies* we expect good parents to train their children in, a physical self-restraint and modesty that respects the presence of other people. *Quies* makes the world habitable and civil. It is often grossly lacking in urban modern culture where muzac invades elevators and there is rarely a moment or place where we are not in range of manmade noise. There are now expensive headphones that people wear, not to listen to music but to block out noise. *Silentium*, however, is not an absence of noise but a state of mind and an attitude of consciousness turned towards others or to God. It is attention. When someone comes to see a priest or counselor to share a problem or grief, the priest knows that what he must above all give is his attention. There may not be a solution to the problem and most of our hopefully helpful words glide off the back of grief as failed platitudes. To listen deeply, to give oneself in the act of attention is in fact not to judge, or fix or condemn but to love. Seen this way there is indeed nothing so much like God as silence because God is love." (Laurence Freeman)

TOPIC 1 (cont'd) Exploring the Theme



Introduction to Meditation

It might be useful for a few minutes to be spent in silence. The facilitator suggests that this is where expectations, hopes, agendas and business and busyness of the gathering can be put aside just for a moment. In this silence we are not doing anything, we are not trying to think about anything, imagine anything or prepare for anything. We just become fully attentive to "the sacrament of the present moment". Absolute attention is prayer. We are allowing the Spirit that is in our hearts to BE. We open ourselves to the infinite love that is ours to accept and we rest in the stillness of our own being.



Facilitator reads: How to Meditate

Find a quiet place, and a comfortable upright sitting position. Close your eyes gently. Take a moment to give your attention to your posture and your body. Relax any tension in your face; soften any lines on your forehead, around your mouth and cheeks. Unclench your jaw. Allow your neck muscles and shoulders to soften and drop. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer phrase Maranatha. Say it slowly, with four equally stressed syllables **ma-ra-na-tha.** Some people say the word in conjunction with their breathing. Do what feels comfortable for you. The speed at which you say the word should be fairly slow, fairly rhythmical. Maranatha is in Aramaic, the language Jesus himself spoke. It means "come Lord Jesus". It is probably the most ancient Christian prayer. St Paul ends Corinthians with it, and St John ends the book of Revelations with it. Listen to the mantra as you say it gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything spiritual or otherwise. Meditation has nothing to do with imagining or dreaming or passive stillness, but with attentive wakefulness. If thoughts or images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation, so return simply to saying your word. Don't use any energy in trying to dispel a distraction. Simply ignore it and the way to ignore it is to say your mantra. The essence of this discipline is simplicity and fidelity to the simple repetition of the mantra **ma-ra-na-tha** and the faithful return to the practice every morning and every evening for between 20-30 minutes. We will now meditate for 5 minutes.

(A bell or gong could start the silence and end it.)

The facilitator ends the meditation with:

"The peace, the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation become the basis for all our action. All our judgments are now illumined, inspired by love, because we know that love is the very ground of our being" (John Main)



Exploration of the Heart Symbol

The original **Logo** (with the world at its heart) was designed by Oonah Ryan rscj (Province of the United States- June 2000) In her words :

A symbol eliminates the need for words. The heart of each of us sees and responds to whatever we encounter in a unique and valuable way. It is therefore essential that each of us interpret symbols for ourselves. This is what the symbol of the heart and world means to me today.

The heart represents our hearts, the Society, and the Heart of Jesus. Its openness calls us to become as vulnerable, transparent and welcoming as Jesus is. It is in the shape of a ribbon, to remind us that communication among us is an essential part of our heritage and essential to our survival. It surrounds the whole world to remind us of our internationality. We are called to be open, to embrace, to treasure each other.

At the opening of the heart is a three-dimensional cross. It reaches deep and extends wide. The cross is placed at the opening of the heart because, if we are as open as the world and Jesus call us to be, we will suffer. Without the willingness to suffer, we cannot enter the hearts of each other, cannot be open to the world, or enter the Heart of Jesus.

♥

Reflection on the use of "Heart" in English

I believe he has a heart
Pressed her to his heart
Heart to heart
After one's own heart
One's heart is not in it
Give or lose one's heart to
Win the heart
He has no heart
Pluck up or take or lose heart
Dear sweet heart
Heart of oak
Have a heart
Have the heart
Heart bleeds
To one's heart's content
One's heart goes out to
Heart is in one's boots
Heart of gold
Take heart of grace
One's heart is in one's mouth
Heart is in the right place
Wear one's heart on one's sleeve
Heart goes out to
Heart and soul
One's heart stands still

In good heart
Out of heart
Heart shaped
At heart
Have at heart
Bless his heart
Bless my heart
From or to the bottom of my heart
Break one's heart
Break a person's heart
In heart
In one's heart
In one's heart of hearts
Lay to heart
Near(est) a person's heart
Out of heart
One's heart out
Eat one's heart out
Set one's heart on
Take to heart
With all one's heart
Heartache
Heart attack
Heartbreak
Hearts and flowers

By heart
Change of heart
Close to one's heart
Find it in one's heart
Go to one's heart
Go to the heart
Find it in one's heart
From the heart
From one's heart
Do one's heart good

Heartsease
Heart searching
Heartsick
Heart sore
Heartstrings
Heart warming
Heart rending
Heartthrob
Heartburn
Heart cherry
Heart disease

"The heart is the dwelling place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or biblical expression, the heart is the place "to which I withdraw" The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as images of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant" (para 2563 Catholic Catechism)

TOPIC 1 (cont'd) Exploring the Theme

♥ Collaboration for a Transformed World

Facilitator introduces open discussion about the theme with particular reference to the single page entitled "Journeys of the Heart" - Collaboration for a Transformed World.

Facilitator asks the group:

Why use the symbol of the "open" Heart?

What does the word collaboration mean to us?

What does the word transformation mean?

Participants look at this question in pairs
And then report back to the larger group

Facilitator asks at the end of the session

How has the first session been for the group?

Preparation for the next session:

1. Reading stimulus material page 6
2. Daily meditation practice

Page 6 (stimulus/background reading)

♥ Reflecting and living Sacred Heart Values

The Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart include:

17. "The spirit of the Society is essentially based upon prayer and the interior life since we cannot glorify the Heart of Jesus worthily except
inasmuch as we apply ourselves to study His interior dispositions in order to unite and conform ourselves to them"
18. Jesus calls us to a personal encounter with Him. He wants to make known to us the feelings and preferences of His heart.
19. In the Gospel through His words, His attitudes, His relationships with people, His way of relating to all created things, we discover His heart wholly given to the Father and to all people.
20. In prayer we come to Him with everything that touches our life, with the sufferings and hopes of humanity. We learn to remain in silence and poverty of heart before Him. In the free gift of ourselves we learn to adore and to abide in His love.
21. The Spirit dwelling within us gradually transforms us, enabling us through His power to remove whatever hinders His action. The Spirit unites and conforms us to Jesus and makes us sensitive to His presence within ourselves, in others and in all that happens.
22. This contemplative attitude permeates our whole being, helping us to live ever more united to Christ in our relationships, our tasks and our ministry; it becomes a powerful force of conversion and transformation for mission.
23. Prayer, the contemplative outlook on the world, union with Christ in daily living makes us grow in the interior life, so that in all circumstances we seek to glorify the Heart of Jesus.
24. The Society's call to contemplation, a compelling love written in our hearts by the Spirit, makes us seek and cherish prolonged times if prayer.

♥

From the **General Chapters of the Society of the Sacred Heart**

" We have the deep conviction that our spirituality does not belong to us. It is a gift to be shared, a treasure others help us to discover." (General Chapter of 1994)
"We are convinced… that our lives, given in love, are the strongest expression of our spirituality" (General Chapter 2000)

"We are challenged to live in an attitude of reconciliation. At the heart of all our relationships we are called to be transformed and to transform" (General Chapter 2000)

"…only by contemplating Christ's presence and action in the world would we find the strength and generosity…to respond to the needs of our world today: the thirst for God, the hunger for justice, the desire for equality, the longing for meaning and the ache to belong, the very needs we ourselves experience" (General Chapter 2000)

"We are called to radicality. To be women who speak of God's active presence in our world, women who are willing to love to the end with all the consequences of that, giving our life for our sisters and brothers (in friendship) so that they may have life. We were made for a life of giving and a giving of life" (Helen McLaughlin rscj Opening of General Chapter 1988)

♈ Transforming the self through love

TOPIC 2

♥ Reflecting and living Sacred Heart Values

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections since the previous session, including reflection on Meditation practice.



Facilitator opens the session with meditation practice

Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads to the group)

"Meditation is practised in solitude but it is the great way to learn to be in relationship. The reason for this paradox is that, having contacted our own reality, we have the existential confidence to go out to others, to meet them at their real level, and so the solitary element in meditation is mysteriously the true antidote to loneliness. Having contacted our conformity with reality, we are no longer threatened by the otherness of others. We are not always looking for affirmation of ourselves. We are making love's search, looking for the reality of the other. In the experience of encountering the reality of the other, we discover our own existence enriched and deepened" (John Main)

(Facilitator reads instruction "How to Meditate" on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic:

Exploring where we have been is a good place to start on our journey of the heart. Thinking back to our time at school…

Activity: Discuss the following question in pairs (for 10 minutes)

Then share ideas with the larger group

What were the main values and ideas you took into adulthood from your Sacred Heart education?



One participant reads aloud:

The Goals of Sacred Heart Education are to educate to:

*a faith which is relevant in today's world
*a deep respect for intellectual values
*a social awareness which impels to action
*the building of community as a Christian value
*personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom

To what extent do these goals of Sacred Heart Education reflect your own ideals and values?

Discuss in larger group (5 minutes)

Discuss the following questions in pairs for 10 minutes and report back to the larger group.

Are there ideas/practices/experiences that you gained from your Sacred Heart education that you wish to reclaim?

How would you go about reclaiming these? Think of practical activities that can be undertaken in the weeks ahead.



Preparation for the next session

1. Read stimulus material
2. Daily Meditation practice
3. Practical activities to reclaim gifts of Sacred Heart education

♥ Growing to love self (mind, body, spirit)

"It is so easy to play the world's game which is the power game, the game which depends on setting myself apart from others, distinguishing myself, seeking the limelight and looking for applause. I find that it is only too easy to become compulsive in my continual need for affirmation, for more and more affirmation, as I anxiously ask- Who am I? Am I the person who is liked, admired, praised, seen as successful. My whole attitude towards myself becomes determined by the way in which others see me. I compare myself with others, and I try to emphasize what is different and distinctive about me. Those three temptations which Christ faced in the wilderness are equally my own temptations:
to be relevant
to be spectacular
to be powerful.
Am I able, like Christ, to put them down? Am I prepared to shed all these outer shells, of false ambitions, of pride? Am I ready to admit that the mask is a disguise put on to cover up the insecure self? And the armour a shield to protect the vulnerable self? Am I ready to receive a new self, based not on what I can achieve but on what I can receive?
(Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction)

♥

'The glory of God is man fully alive' (St Ireneus of Antioch)

♥

"We must never forget that we are persons made up of body, mind and spirit, imbued with five senses, and that we must come to God with the whole of ourselves…. Am I fully alive – alive in all my senses?'
(Esther de Waal "Lost in Wonder")

♥

"The false self is the prison from which one must escape in order to reach the true self, and God. For if I find him, I will find myself, and if I find myself, I will find him." (Thomas Merton)

♥

"If I am to receive all who come as Christ, does this not then apply to my own self, made in the image of Christ?"
(Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction)

TOPIC 3

♥ Growing to love self (mind, body, spirit)

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on previous session including practical activities that could reclaim the gifts of Sacred Heart education. Facilitator also asks for reflection on Meditation practice over last weeks.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"Silence is not absence; it is opportunity…Silence is the condition and the doorway" (Thomas Merton) Meditation is not the time for words. All our words are wholly ineffective when we come to enter into this deep and mysterious communion with God whose own Word within us is before and after all words 'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says the Lord.

(Facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic:

In this section we return to the idea from our last study programme that explored reconciliation with self. This time we are taking this theme further. This idea encourages us to reach greater levels of self-acceptance and self-love in the areas of mind, body, and spirit so that we can feel at peace with ourselves and God. "Unrelenting transformation" of self is the dynamic journey of life.



A Participant reads:

1. The Cracked Pot

"A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the water bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his house.

Of course the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, prefect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After 2 years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you. I have been able to deliver only half of my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts" the pot said.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?" That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house. "Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots, but it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding." (unknown Author)

2. A tree

"A tree gives glory to God first of all by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be, it is imitating an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree. The more a tree is like itself, the more it is like Him… No two created beings are exactly alike. And their individuality is no imperfection." (Thomas Merton) (cont'd page 11)

♥ Growing to love self (mind, body, spirit)

"The mystery of the Christian life (is) to receive a new self, which depends not on what we can achieve, but on what we are willing to receive" (Esther de Waal)

♥

Self and Aging

"A growing dependence on others is a *sine qua non* of age whether one is having difficulty with memory or still alert. It can be a struggle to accept this dependence and diminution, as memory becomes less reliable and concentration more difficult to sustain. But as time goes on, the aged often come to a freedom which brings in its wake a quiet love and a kinship with all. There is a gracious awareness that perfect fulfilment lies in perfect surrender to the loss of everything." (Madeleine Simon rscj)

♥

"The second-half of life, just like the first, demands a journey. While the first-half of life, as we saw, is very much consumed with the search for identity, meaning, self-worth, intimacy, rootedness, and making peace with our sexuality, the second-half has another purpose, as expressed in the "famous epigram of Job: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I go back." Where do we go from home? To an eternal home with God. But, to do that, we have first to shed many of the things that we legitimately acquired and attached ourselves to during the first-half of life. The spiritual task of the second-half of life, so different from the first, is to let go, to move to the nakedness that Job describes. What does that entail? From what do we need to detach ourselves? First, and most importantly, from our wounds and anger. The foremost spiritual task of the second half of life is to forgive - others, ourselves, life, God. We all arrive at mid-life wounded and not having had exactly the life of which we dreamed. There's a disappointment and anger inside everyone of us and unless we find it in ourselves to forgive, we will die bitter, unready for the heavenly banquet.

Second, we need to detach ourselves from the need to possess, to achieve, and to be the centre of attention. The task of the second-half of life is to become the quiet, blessing grandparent who no longer needs to be the centre of attention but is happy simply watching the young grow and enjoy themselves.

Third, we need to learn how to say good-bye to the earth and our loved ones so that, just as in the strength of our youth we once gave our lives for those we love, we can now give our deaths to them too, as a final gift.

Fourth, we need to let go of sophistication so as to become simple "holy old fools" whose only message is that God loves us.

Finally, we need, more and more, to immerse ourselves in the language of silence, the language of heaven. Meister Eckhard once said: "Nothing so much resembles God as silence." The task of mid-life is to begin to understand silence, and enter into the language of silence.

And it's a painful process. Purgatory is not some exotic, Catholic doctrine that believes that there is some place in the next life outside of heaven and hell. It's a central piece within any mature spirituality which, like Job, tells us that God's eternal embrace can only become fully ecstatic once we've learned to let go."
(Ron Rolheiser OMI Spirituality and the Second Half of Life August 24, 2003)

TOPIC 2 cont'd

♥ Growing to love self (mind, body, spirit)

Facilitator asks:

Is there anything in these readings ("The Cracked Pot" and "A Tree") that offers insights into your situation now? Discuss in pairs

Question for the group

Who are we now and who are we becoming?

Suggested activity

* This activity begins the process of exploring who we are now. It continues the story telling that we began with the last study programme.
* Each person is to spend 10 minutes writing about who am I now and who am I becoming?

Participants could begin their writing with **I am** ….

(Each writer should forget about style or how the words are put together and just write.)

* When completed participants are asked to share their writing with the person next to them and then swap
* When finished, volunteers (maybe 3) offer to read their story to the larger group. Facilitator encourages participants to listen attentively to each story.
* At the completion of these stores the group spends a minute in silence allowing the essence of what they have heard to sit and resonate.
* Then allow time for a brief response from group participants.

A Participant reads

"It is the humble and honest acceptance of my frailty that frees me from pretence, from the effort to impress, from the attempt to justify, from the determination to achieve. What I need to remind myself of, time and time again, until I am at last convinced, is that I am loved and accepted by God just as I am. Since I cannot be more demanding than God it surely follows that I must love and accept myself. Only then, loved for what I *am*, can I become myself, the unique and irreplaceable person I truly am"

(Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction)

Facilitator asks the group to discuss in pairs and then share with the larger group

1. ***What gets in the way of loving ourselves exactly as we are?***
2. ***How can we overcome these obstacles?***
3. ***What can we do on a more regular basis to come to nurture ourselves or bring joy and gladness to ourselves*** (create a plan for the weeks ahead)

Preparation for the next session

1. Write down a commitment to an activity to nurture ourselves
2. Daily Meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material on pages 12,14,16

♥ Naming and claiming our gifts

"If I could choose one, great gift that the world is neglecting
I would have to choose feminine energy.
It is what we need to save the world,
feminine energy is powerful because it is pure presence - gentle yet firm.
It is an energy that gives warmth, comfort, and spirit simply by its presence.
It receives rather than takes.
It invites rather than demands.
It unfolds rather than controls.
It empowers rather than overpowers.
It finds itself in being rather than in doing.
Feminine energy shows her best face in leisure.
She does not take time. She has time. She has time to be.
The world is starving for this energy.
It is part of the fire Christ came to cast on the earth -
A slow flame that burns from within
And gradually transfers what it touches,
Precisely because it touches rather than clutches.
(Macrina Weidenburg "A Tree full of Angels")
Quoted by Helen Mclaughlin rscj in Spirit of the Day- Daily Reflections on AMASC Congress 2002

♥

"God changes the world by working through us, with us, at times in spite of us….a colleague once told me to expect three miracles a day. She was right. All we have to do is to expect them and to open our hearts and eyes to see them. We live in a grace- changed world. Women can change the world when they truly believe the words of the Ephesians, which confidently proclaim that God's power working in us can do infinitely more than we can do or imagine. Women will change the world if we believe the life-giving words of St Ambrose of Milan, "See how beautiful God's grace has made you" (Patty Fawkner SGS)

♥

"Humility is facing the truth. It is useful to remind myself that the word itself comes from *humus*, earth and in the end simply means that I allow myself to be earthed in the truth that lets God be god, and myself be his creature. If I hold on to this it helps prevent me from putting myself at the centre and instead allows me to put God and other people at the centre" (Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction")

TOPIC 4

♥ Naming and claiming our gifts

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections since last session including activity on greater self love and reflection on Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
Meditation is an experience of stillness and silence. "Stillness is your essential nature…when you become aware of silence, immediately there is that state of inner still alertness. You are present. You have stepped out of thousands of years of collective human conditioning" (Eckhart Tolle "Stillness Speaks) Meditation is the experience of being open to the presence of God and becoming attentive to that presence. Our meditation is essentially about: *being with God* who is with us and making the journey of transformation confidently in his care. (Facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic
The area of giftedness, which we addressed prior to the last AMASC Congress in 2002, is being raised again in this study programme.
It would be interesting to know whether any participants have given much thought to this or begun to act more courageously on the basis of their gifts since we last explored this topic.
In discussing this topic many of us may feel uncomfortable about the idea of actually naming our gifts. Somehow it challenges our sense of humility. The challenge for each of us is to live with humility and act with greatness, not parading our gifts but acting with a deep knowing that God is calling us to be who we are.



A Participant reads:

1. "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."
   (Marianne Williamson "A Return to Love")
2. You are the light of the world. A town that stands on a hill cannot be hidden. When a lamp is lit, it is not put under the meal tub, but on the lamp stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. And you, like that lamp must shed light among your fellows, so that, when they see the good you do, they may give praise to your father in heaven" (Matt.5:14-16)

The facilitator asks the larger group:
What do we respond to in these readings?

♥ Naming and claiming our gifts

The Gift of Uniqueness

"We are called – by name, each personally - into the ocean of oneness that is God"
An essential part of the challenge of life facing all of us is to understand the uniqueness of our own creation. It means realising that each of us (not just my self) really has an infinite value and importance. Reflect for a moment just how radically the world, our own local society, as well as our own life, would be changed if each of us could truly appreciate our uniqueness and the wonder and dignity of the gift of our own being.
It was to awaken us to this and communicate this reality that Jesus came, taught and lived out the fullness of his uniqueness. This is the message of his love as it was proved by his death. Each of us has such importance and value that 'God sent his only Son' to offer life for us. The crucifixion is the divine plea to each of us to understand the meaning and the wonder of our creation, the dignity which love bestows.
Each of us must accept the responsibility for discovering this. The Christian experience cannot be shared second-hand. Other people's experience can be instructive and inspiring but it can never substitute for our own experience. Each person is called uniquely to open his or her heart to the supreme reality of God's love. It is the unique focusing of the love with which God loves the cosmos into a being that we call a person.
In knowing this we open our hearts to the reality of our own personal destiny, far beyond the narrow confines of the ego. The astonishing core of the Christian revelation is that the destiny of each person is full union with God, 'to share in the very being of God', as St Peter puts it. The mystery is that it is a universal calling and yet each of us shares it uniquely. It is your sharing of it that is your destiny. My sharing of it is my destiny. The deep sharing between us is the knowledge of this love of God, 'though it is beyond knowledge'. Perhaps the greatest problem afflicting our society is that so many people feel that they are not fully alive. They suffer the sense that they are not fully authentic as human beings. A major reason for this is that there are so many living their lives second-hand without a real openness to the uniqueness of the gift available them: their own life. So many lives are lived by responding to the other people's goals for us, our family's goals for us, society's goals for us, the advertising industry's goals for us. Christianity says that each of us is summoned to respond directly to the fullness of our own life in the mystery of God. (John Main "Word Made Flesh" pp37-39)

♥

"It is just because we are accepted by Christ that we can accept others and accept ourselves. Self-love is important, fundamentally important…to know myself without any complacency and without any self-justification means really loving myself, knowing myself as I really am, set free from wishful thinking. Only after that honesty, standing naked before the God who loves, accepts and does not judge, can I turn and present the same image, stripped of all false colours, to the other people in my life." (Esther de Waal)

TOPIC 4 cont'd

♥ Naming and claiming our gifts



Facilitator reads:

"Can I treat my own self with such compassion that I can lay out honestly before God my strengths and my weaknesses, seeking help and guidance in those areas where it is most needed? (Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction")



A Participant reads:

1. "Reflect for a moment just how radically the world, our own local society, as well as our own life, would be changed if each of us could truly appreciate our uniqueness and the wonder and dignity of the gift of our own being. It was to awaken us to this and communicate this reality that Jesus came, taught and lived out the fullness of his uniqueness. This is the message of his love as it was proved by his death. Each of us has such importance and value that 'God sent his only Son' to offer life for us. The crucifixion is the divine plea to each of us to understand the meaning and the wonder of our creation, the dignity which love bestows. Each of us must accept the responsibility for discovering this." (John Main "Word made Flesh")

2."I have come that you may have life, and may have it in all its fullness" (John 10:10)

What do you respond to in these writings?

Discuss in the larger group



Facilitator asks:

What are our talents, gifts and ,strengths?

Suggested activity

Write down some of our talents, gifts and strengths (inside the Heart Image on page 17)

If you have trouble, write down what others might say about you.

Share these in pairs for about 5-10 minutes.



Facilitator asks

If we were to accept " the divine plea to each of us to understand the meaning and the wonder of our creation" how might we live differently?

What could we do in the next weeks to make this a reality?

Discuss in pairs then share with the larger group



Preparation for next session

1. An activity that gives expression to these gifts and talents
2. Daily Meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material on pages 18,20

♥ Naming and claiming our gifts

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives the ability to everyone for all service. Each one is given some proof of the Spirit’s presence for the good of all. The Spirit gives one person a message of wisdom, while to another person the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. One and the same Spirit gives faith to one person, while yet another person he gives the power to heal. The Spirit gives one person the power to work miracles; to another the gift of speaking God’s message; and yet to another, the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not. To one person he gives the ability to speak with strange sounds; to another he gives the ability to explain what these sounds mean. But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; he gives a different gift to each, as he wishes.” (1 Corinthians 12: 4- 11)

♥

“I don’t count the years...I make the years count”

♥

“To be grateful is to recognize the love of God in everything God has given us- and God has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of God’s love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from God. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference”
(Thomas Merton “Thoughts in Solitude”)

TOPIC 4 (cont'd)

♥ **Naming and claiming our gifts**



♥ Growing to love God

How do you image God?
Are there names you use for God?
1.If God was a plant what plant would God be?
2.If God was a place what place would God be?
3.If God was a person who would God be?
God is the horizon of mystery, the beyond in all our experiences.
God is the empowering fertility through all creation.
God is the depth in all things, the ground of all being.
God is the source of beauty, goodness, truth and love.
God is the call to be all we can be.
The Creator Spirit pervades the world with creative power.
Wherever creative love enriches our lives the Spirit is present and active.
Whenever forgiveness is experienced the Spirit is present and active.
We encounter the Spirit in the building up and transformation of society.
The Spirit is especially active with those struggling against poverty and oppression.
It makes a difference how we understand God. Our sense of who God is shapes our sense of who we are called to be. (material from Madeleine Sophie Barat Programme 2005)

♥

"There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord."
(1 Corinthians 12:4-5)

♥

"God is the energy that drives us, the torch that leads us, the life that beckon us, the Spirit within that carries us on- past every doubt, beyond every failure, despite every difficulty. To that Energy there is no acceptable, no possible, response but energy. Those who have no flame in their hearts for justice, no unrelenting understanding of the other, no consciousness of responsibility for the reign of God, no awareness of a prodding, nagging call to stretch themselves beyond themselves, no raging commitment to human community, no vision of beauty, and no endurance for the dailyness of it all may indeed be seeking God, but make no mistake, God is still only an idea to them- precious as it may be- but not a Reality"
(Joan Chittister "Illuminated Life")

♥

"God is to be found in *all things*, even and most especially in the painful, tragic, and sinful things, exactly where we do not want to look for God. The crucifixition of the God-Man is at the same moment the worst things in human history and the best thing in human history"
(Richard Rohr "Everything Belongs")

TOPIC 5

♥ Growing to love God

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the activities that give expression to our gifts and talents. Reflection on Meditation practice.

Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
"God is the centre of our soul" (St Teresa). If we really want to pray we must first learn to listen, for in the silence of the heart God speaks.
(Facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic

Who is the God we want to love?



One participant is asked to read the passages below:

1."The God of old-style religion is remote, detached, interventionist and supernatural. The God of the new spirituality is intimate, intense and immanent…God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. God is radically present with us and closer even than our own breathe, a presence that is nearer to us than is comfortable to admit…God is an immediate experience, discovered through prayer, meditation and sacraments" (David Tacey "The Spiritual Revolution pp163-169)

2. St Augustine put it this way "If you can understand it, then it is not God. If you were able to understand then you understood something else instead of
God. If you were able to understand even partially then you deceived yourself with your own thoughts" All we can say accurately about God, according to St Thomas Aquinas, is *that* God is…. not *what* God is.

3. "To find God we must lose God- at least our primitive ideas and images of God…losing your way is the very way of seeking God"
(Laurence Freeman "Jesus the Teacher Within" p 130)

4. "The challenge of faith begins-for every person-with the invitation to know the mysterious deity we call "God." But soon we learn that no name, no affirmation about God, no set of descriptors or dogmatic formulas can fully capture the One who is Holy Mystery and so we begin, as Moses did, in every God encounter by taking our sandals off in recognition that we are on holy ground." (Barbara E. Bowe rscj, Province of the United States*)*

5. "All the images we have for God come from our understanding of ourselves"
(Meister Eckhart)



Facilitator asks

How do you respond to these readings?

Who is God to me? Consider some of the 3 questions at the top of page 18

Discuss in pairs. Those who wish may share with wider group.

♥ Growing to love God

"Before Jesus commissioned Peter to be a shepherd he asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" He asked him a again "Do you love me?" And a third time "Do you love me?"
(John 21: 15-19)

♥

"We come to know and love God because we allow him to know and love us. This is the alchemy of love. (John Main "Inner Christ")

♥

"The mystery of love is that we become what we delight to gaze upon and so when we have opened our heart to his light we become light"
(John Main "Inner Christ")

♥

"…in our world of loneliness and despair, there is an enormous need for men and women who know the heart of God, a heart that forgives, that cares, that reaches out and wants to heal…It is a heart that suffers immensely because it sees the magnitude of human pain and the great resistance to trusting the heart of God who wants to offer consolation and hope."
(Henri Nouwen "In the Name of Jesus" p24)

♥

"God already knows us and loves us in our mother's womb. Here, already, is the mystery of silence in which we all share." (John Main "Way of Unknowing")

♥

"Friendship is the experience of Divine Love manifesting itself in and between forms. We think of friendship or any relationship of love as a gift, because we feel so undeserving of love. It is, however, in this concrete experience of love –this love manifested to us through another human being – that we gradually awaken to the experience that we are loved. We don't have to earn or feel worthy of it. Divine love and true human love are the same." (Eileen O'Hea)

♥

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment and he who fears is not perfected in love… for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (John 4:18)

TOPIC 5 cont'd

♥ Growing to love God

Loving God



Participants take turns to read aloud:

1. "Not where I breathe but where I love, I live" (St. Robert Southwell SJ)

2. "There is no way to the truth or to the spirit that is not the way of love. God is love." (John Main "Word into Silence" p 27)

3. "Our first step in loving God is to allow ourselves to be loved" (John Main "The Inner Christ" p 336)

4. "When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, ho can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares." (Henri Nouwen)

Activity

Spend a few minutes discussing these readings in the larger group
Then in pairs discuss the following question:



If we were to receive totally compassionate and overflowing love from God, how would this change our experience of life?

Then invite participants to share in larger group



Preparation for next session

1. Each person to consider what they could do to live out this change of experience in their daily lives
2. Daily Meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material on page 22

♥ Praying, discerning, meditating

Jesus on Praying

His disciples once asked Jesus to teach them to pray as John the Baptist had taught his disciples. In reply Jesus gave them a short collection of phrases in a style probably typical of rabbinical teachers of the day: 'Our Father, who art in heaven. Holy is your name. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our transgressions as we forgive those who transgress against us. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil'. Jesus also recommended solitude and interiority: "When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place, and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you" Jesus emphasizes economy in prayer: "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" Another emphasis of Jesus teaching on prayer concerns radical detachment from material anxieties: "I bid you put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive and clothes to cover your body".

♥

"Sensing the eternal in the ordinary is contemplative prayer and that, and that alone, stills our restlessness"

♥

The word "Meditation" has acquired a variety of meanings in western tradition. The "Meditatio" of the desert monks meant a prayer of the heart, a "chewing" on or repetition of a piece of scripture, of the "Word". By17th Century it had come to mean almost exclusively an organised method of cerebral prayer employing intellectual analysis and visual imagination. The Ignatian tradition uses this sense of "meditation" and the practice of "examen of conscience" is one of an intellectual review, in silence, of the day and the "discernment" of where God was in that day. In the East there are also many kinds of meditation but they usually refer to a silent practice beyond thought and imagination. Meditation in this sense is roughly synonymous with "contemplation" and brings us back to the original sense of the desert fathers. This is the "Meditation" found in the writings of John Main, Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths and Laurence Freeman (amongst others).

♥

"One could say that mediation is the work we do to accept the gift of contemplation which is already given and present in the heart"
(Laurence Freeman "Jesus the Teacher Within")

♥

"Prayer and love are learned in the hour when prayer has become impossible and your heart has turned to stone" (Thomas Merton)

♥

"What I do is live - How I pray is breathe" (Thomas Merton)

♥

<u>The Daily Awareness Examen</u> is a process formed in the Ignatian tradition used at the end of the day to reflect on the presence or absence of the spirit. It is designed to help us develop greater gratitude, notice more readily the movement of the Spirit or the presence of God as well as helping us to choose to act as the instrument of God in our daily lives.

<u>Gratitude</u>

- I thank you Father for the gift of life "It is good to be alive"
- I thank you for today-another day of life and I ask you for Light to see my day as you see it.

<u>Awareness</u>

- Where today did you walk with me?
- For what moment today, am I most grateful?
- Where today did I block your presence?
- For what today am I least grateful

<u>Awareness for tomorrow</u>

Most Holy Spirit, be with me tomorrow, help me to be open to your guidance.

TOPIC 6

♥ Praying, discerning, meditating

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections since last session including activity on the new belief of being loved by God and reflection on meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"Meditation is practised in solitude but it is the great way to learn to be in relationship. The reason for this paradox is that, having contacted our own reality, we have the existential confidence to go out to others, to meet them at their real level, and so the solitary element in meditation is mysteriously the true antidote to loneliness. Having contacted our conformity with reality, we are no longer threatened by the otherness of others. We are not always looking for affirmation of ourselves. We are making love's search, looking for the reality of the other. In the experience of encountering the reality of the other, we discover our own existence enriched and deepened." (John Main "The Heart of Creation") (The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)



Facilitator introduces the Topic

"Prayer and life cannot be separated one from the other; both are rooted and grounded in love…if prayer and love mean anything at all they mean entering into a dialogue with God…Unless I am silent I cannot hear God and until I hear him I shall not come to know him …The heart of (prayer) is my total attentiveness to God…ultimately praying is living, working, loving, accepting, the refusal to take anything or anyone for granted but rather to try to find Christ in and through them all" (Esther de Waal)

A participant reads

1. "If we really want to pray we must first learn to listen, for in the silence of the heart, God speaks"
2. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10)
3. "We make progress by stopping." (Meister Eckhart)
4. "Prayer is nothing but inhaling and exhaling the spirit of the Universe" (Hildegard Von Bingen)
5. "Prayer is the practice of the presence of God" (Bede Griffiths)
6. "Prayer is to see God in any man, or in any creature with which we come in contact". (Abhishiktananda -Henri Le Saux)



The facilitator asks the group

How do we respond to these readings?

Then discuss in pairs

What is prayer to us and what is its purpose?

What is discernment to us and what is its purpose?

(Refer to Daily Awareness Examen on page 22)

How have we experienced our regular practice of Meditation?



Preparation for next session

1. Participants undertake a Daily Awareness Examen in the weeks ahead
2. Daily Meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material on page 24

Transforming family and community through love

♥ Growing to love others (family/friends)

"Peace making begins…in welcoming with compassion others with whom we live and work, those who threaten us, because they are different, those who hurt us, our enemies, because they tread on our toes…peace making begins at home as we carry the wounds of others and allow them to carry ours" (Jean Varnier)

♥

Try a little kindness

To create a happier world, we need to develop empathy for those around us and express it in thoughtful acts. For the second time in less than two years, I've been on retreat in India. I'm aware that taking time out like this is a privilege. Getting up in the chilly dark for 4 am meditation was, in those circumstances, easy and a joy.

But the privilege that struck me most forcibly was spending a week with people who were to a person unfailingly kind.

Of course, it's easy to be kind when relatively little is being asked of you and a great deal is being done for you. But this was true only for the people like me actually on the retreat.

Many of the people making life delightful for us were in fact, working very hard.

Their day also began with pre-dawn meditation and didn't end until 15 or 16 hours later.

Yet their kindness and good humour never waivered. It is almost indescribably wonderful to experience such an atmosphere. But this is not the world most of us live in.

And it may not be a world we know how to create. Coming home, it was impossible to avoid some degree of shock at how many every day interactions between people are anything but kind. People hurt one another recklessly. They spit out their aggressions and frustrations. They ignore the small courtesies. They fail to keep promises. They ignore what's important to others because it isn't important to them. And if they stop to think about this at all, I suspect that they tell themselves it doesn't matter. Or that they don't care. Or that the object of their unkindness somehow deserves it. There are a number of reasons why people behave unkindly. They may be careless and unable to perceive the effect of their behavior on other people. They may be so self-absorbed that they can't take seriously anyone's feelings except their own. When things get really nasty, they may be projecting their own feelings of worthlessness and self-dislike onto other people, or shoring up a weak ego by thinking of other people as wrong, bad or contemptible. Those impulses are familiar to us all, but to go beyond them is crucial to psychological maturity. It's also crucial to genuine feelings of happiness. We are social beings. To get along well in this world we have no choice but to take other people's reality seriously and to recognize and understand the power we have to hurt and to encourage other people. It was that level of happiness that shone through my time of retreat; and it was wonderfully contagious. It is fascinating to consider why some people learn these lessons and others do not. Conventional intelligence is not a factor here. Some brilliant people are devoid of empathy and brutally unkind. The rule of thumb used to be that a capacity for kindness-and the empathy that drives it-is established in infancy through the quality of the parents' interactions with their baby.

Yet we all know people who were deeply loved but grew up selfish, shallow and sometimes nasty. We may also know saints whose early years were bleak. Some fortunate individuals have high levels of emotional intelligence and what seems like a genuine talent for kindness.

You can see this with children, how some are concerned and friendly without much fuss, while another child even in the same family may find thoughtfulness a constant struggle.

But the story doesn't end here. (Stephanie Dowrick)

♥

"Growth in compassion is the sign of growth in the life of the Spirit… When we understand God's being as love then it is possible to talk about God's suffering as an act freely entered into as a consequence of love, which overflows in compassion" (Elizabeth Johnson)

Transforming family and community through love

TOPIC 7

♥ Growing to love others (family/friends)

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on Daily Awareness Examen exercise and daily Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"To be silent with another person is truly to be with that other person. Nothing is so powerful in building confidence than an easeful, creative silence. Nothing reveals inauthenticity more dramatically than silence that is not creative but fearful"(John Main "Moment of Christ")

(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic

"It is only as I learn to accept, to love and to forgive myself as I really am- the person without the mask, the person who lets go of appearances- that I can accept, love and forgive others with the same reality… we must love (the other) as they are and not as they are not…Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that God is unknowable and inexhaustible, and that if we are made in the image of God then we too are ultimately unknowable as well." (Esther de Waal) Some tools for loving our most immediate circle of family and friends are reverence, respect, tolerance, compassion and kindness.



Facilitator reads

1"To create a happier world, we need to develop empathy for those around us and express it through thoughtful acts". (Stephanie Dowrick)

2. "Do not seek perfection in a changing world. Instead perfect your love" (7th century Zen Master Sengstan)



Facilitator asks larger group

1. What is compassion?

2. How do we cultivate compassion towards others in everyday life? Then explore in pairs:

3. Under what conditions are we able to offer our most compassionate and loving self to others?

4.***What happens to us and others when we are able to offer a more completely compassionate self?***

5.What would we have to do to create more of these experiences?

Activity

Discuss in pairs

In what ways do we want to commit to being more compassionate and loving in the weeks ahead?



Preparation for next session

1. Commit to practising specific attitudes of compassion and love
2. Daily meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material page 26

♥ Journeys of the heart (life stories)

"Go into yourself and see how deep the place is from which your life flows"

♥

"It is important that we know how to read our own history, to see the turning points, the moments of change, the unfolding of God's plan for us at each new step of the way…the theme of death and new life is recurrent…The dying of the grain of wheat and the growth of the new has to happen to all of us, and the ways in which it will happen will be secret, hidden certainly, and quite different for each of us" (Esther de Waal)

♥

My story

- Where does it begin?
- How does it unfold?
- Where does it belong?

♥

The symbolic touching of heart - "Me".

"The heart is the dwelling place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or biblical expression, the heart is the place "to which I withdraw" The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as images of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant" (para 2563 Catholic Catechism)

♥

<u>The Importance of Story</u>

My story is the carrier of my identity, my very self.

- It grows out of the stories of my ancestors.
- My story (and theirs) needs acknowledgement, honouring, remembering, conserving.
- If I tell you my story, I will give you something unique and sacred.
- When I am telling you my story, I am vulnerable.
- My story is the record of my journey in life.
- My story describes my search for meaning, my discovery of insight and purpose.
- My story reveals my way of being alive, of making my unique contribution to the world.
- I have a strong need to know my story (the stolen generation; adopted children wanting to know their beginnings; migrants 'going back' to visit homeland.)
- To tell my story to a 'good listener' is clarifying and liberating for me.
- Everyone needs to tell his or her story and to have it heard.
- In a just and humane society, there needs to be a space for everyone's story to be told.
- My story is not isolated, individual. It affects and is affected by many others.
- When older people reminisce and repeat, they are carrying out a vital task of setting their story in order; they are making 'meaning' of their lives.
- Listening to each other's real life stories can be an exchange of real value and sustenance
- The (life) story is the most enduring and powerful form of human communication
- Most of the traditional wisdom of the world is told in story form.
- My story may need to find a spiritual home in one of these wisdom traditions.

(with acknowledgement to Caroline Jones)

TOPIC 8

♥ Journeys of the heart (life stories)

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on Compassion practice and daily Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"The essential message of Christianity is that God is present in the depths of each human being. That is why we must learn humility. That is why we must learn silence; because we must enter those depths of our self to encounter the otherness of God and in that encounter, to discover our essential self in union with God" (John Main "The Heart of Creation")

(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic

In Topic 3 we asked "Who are we now?". We now spend some time exploring this question in more detail taking us out of the isolation of self to self in community. The preciousness of our stories is in their depth including joy, pain, and suffering. When we explore "Journeys of the Heart" we are looking at the total experience of the heart and in that totality we see joy, hope, love and darkness. There is pain at times when we have walked through "the dark night of the soul". In embracing the fullness of our experience we allow others to more fully enter into the fullness of their experience, including their suffering. This extends our capacity to convey love and compassion to others.



A Participant reads

"Each one of us has a unique precious story to tell. It is through the telling of our story and the listening to it that we begin to find the place in our world where we can "come home". Our story is one part of the fabric of our human condition which gives expression of our uniqueness and the connection to each other. Our story empowers us and the sharing of it extends our potential and connection beyond self to each other. It is in the other that we hear the echo of our worthiness and our resources and resourcefulness are fulfilled. Beyond self is the other. Outreach to that other asks "Who is my neighbour? What am I to him or her?"(Caroline Jones)

Activity

Spend 15 minutes quietly writing responses to these questions



1. Where and how does my story begin?

2. How does my story unfold?

3. If I were to think of several themes in my life what might they be?

4. If I were to see in my life a search for meaning or a searching for the spirit what might that be?

Share these stories in pairs then ask for 2-3 volunteers and anyone who wishes to share some of their writing in the larger group.



Preparation for next session

1. Find opportunities to hear another's life story or part of their story
2. Daily meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material page 28

♥ Collaborating with RSCJ and others

RSCJs- Who we are

"The Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ) are an international congregation of Catholic women, serving in 45 countries. We celebrate our vocation today in a wide spectrum of ministries and settings. We live in small communities and share prayer, which supports us and challenges us to make choices for Justice and Peace in response to the Gospel. We share a spirit with all those who desire to make known God's love. It is this spirit that shapes our lives. We acknowledge that the action of the Spirit goes far beyond what we can see or even know, and we are continually enriched and challenged by it." (www.rscjinternational.org)

♥

The Society of the Sacred Heart flourishes in 44 countries

New Zealand - Australia - Egypt - Indonesia - Paraguay - Wales - Ireland
Poland - Germany - Canada - Japan - Chile - Uganda - Belgium Brazil -
Malta - Uruguay - Argentina - United States - India - Congo Philippines -
Chad - Cuba - Peru - Sweden- Venezuela - Taiwan Italy - Nicaragua -
Colombia - Hungary - Kenya - England - China- Russia - France -
Netherlands- Spain - Puerto Rico - Mexico

♥

"This life must remain rooted in prayer; in the heart of the world we must build communities centred on Jesus Christ. "Only such communities can hope to meet the challenges of a world where so many suffer, where so many have no hope of a human life." (General Chapter 1970)

♥

"If I do not involve myself in concrete issues of my time, and if I do not open my house to all the winds of the world, then anything I may produce from my ivory tower will be barren and cursed. Yet if I do not shut doors and windows in order to concentrate on the work, then I will not be able to offer anything of value to my neighbours"
(Raimundo Pannikar)

♥

"We change the world by finding our mission in life. How do we do that? A wonderful book with the unlikely title What Colour is Your Parachute? says that our mission in life is the intersection between the world's deep need and my own sense of deep gladness…..Our world is aching for love. Just make sure it's in line with your own deep gladness. Sometimes it's easier to recognize the deep need of the world, rather than our own deep gladness…find good mentors to help you discern you own deepest heart's desire, for this is God's desire for you as well.
I won't change anything; I won't be adult, if I believe that changing the world is dependent on me…God changes the world by working through us, with us, at times in spite of us…We wear a belief that "Grace happens" and that miracles occur. A colleague once told me to expect three miracles a day. She was right. All we have to do is expect them and to open our hearts and eyes to see them. Women change the world when they truly believe the words of the Ephesians, which confidently proclaim that God's power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Women can change the world if we but believed the life-giving words of St Ambrose of Milan, "See how beautiful God's grace has made you" If we but believed, truly believed this we couldn't but help change the world"
(Patty Fawkner "How Women Change the World" 2004)

TOPIC 9

♥ Collaborating with RSCJ and others

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the past weeks including our sharing of other's life stories and meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"To understand what it means to meditate we have to begin to appreciate the fact that the essence of meditation is not thinking but *presence.* Each of us has to learn to be wholly present in the moment we have. So much of our time is spent thinking about what we will do in the future or about what we have done in the past…our minds can easily become distracted with memories and plans. In meditation we have to learn to become fully inserted into the *now* of the present moment." (John Main "The Door to Silence")

(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic inviting discussion around how we see collaboration with the RSCJ

Facilitator reads



1. "Can we see in our efforts to become an international community a parable of what it could mean if the human community were to make of our world an international society?"(Helen McLaughlin rscj)
2. "We are called to radicality. To be women who speak of God's active presence in our world, women who are willing to love to the end with all the consequences of that, giving our life for our sisters and brothers so that they may have life. We were made for a life of giving and a giving of life" (Helen McLaughlin rscj Opening of General Chapter 1988 p iv)



Facilitator asks

What are the RSCJ doing in your country and elsewhere in the world?
How does their vision of themselves affect us? (Refer to General Chapters)
How do we see ourselves in this relationship with RSCJ?
What do we know about the activities of the RSCJ?
How do we find out more?
In what ways could we as alumnae collaborate with the RSCJ to assist and extend their work?
At what level should we focus our attention and why?
(your country/overseas)
What are participants interested in contributing to?
What could we commit to?

Group members who have been working with RSCJ are asked to contribute.



Preparation for next session

1. Activities for commitment
4. Daily meditation practice
5. Read stimulus material page 30

♥ Collaborating with international alumnae/alumni to be a voice for women

DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS -XII AMASC World Congress 2002
Matters of the Heart: Reconciling ourselves with our World

1. PERSONAL COMMITMENTS

Believing that everyone has a right to a life of dignity and that everyone has an eternal destiny, we place ourselves at the service of our sisters and brothers, in order to create a more just and cohesive world community. We affirm that women are the natural artisans of peace, having an instinct for choosing life.

We offer this service:

- as ordinary people who can change the world, remembering that the longest journey begins with the first step
- by listening to the expression of differing viewpoints, searching for the truth and structuring creative responses
- by seeking for reconciliation that challenges us to acknowledge our own prejudices, and to reach out to those who are different from us in a spirit of bridge-building
- by living out our values at all levels of business and professional life, balancing the claims of work and family commitments

2. COLLABORATION

We will strive to strengthen collaboration within and among local Associations, national Associations and AMASC, and with the Society of the Sacred Heart.

We will strengthen collaboration also with other organisations having similar objectives (eg WUCWO and OMAEC)

- through the mutuality of friendships
-through common projects
-through support for the United Nations Convention on Human Rights. We ask the AMASC Board to encourage national Associations to work towards ensuring that their governments apply these Conventions in all national and international corporate operations and affairs, and to alert its national constituents to human rights violations and unjust practices
-through the AMASC Board putting in place formal structures to communicate directly with the Sophia Commission and disseminating information regarding the work of this Commission to all its national constituents
-by encouraging our membership to take a proactive stand in working towards a greater participation for women in the Church and in representing this concern for the promotion of women's role in the Church through appropriate Church structures

3. COMMUNICATION

We will strive to maintain and develop communication among the memberships

- through an up-to-date website
-through the contribution of individuals and local and national groups to the website
-through the sharing of stories through the website
-through the strengthening continued participation by our young alumnae
-through inviting our alumni to be part of our international alumnae/i community
-through AMASC encouraging national constituencies to establish a formal local networking/mentoring programme amongst its alumnae/i with the possibility that this may lead to an international mentoring network

4. SPIRITUALITY

To strive to live a spirituality of the heart

-through contemplating the loving and compassionate Heart of Jesus in the Gospels
-by nourishing our faith through participating in adult faith formation programmes, studying the Scriptures, reading books on contemporary spirituality
-by allowing ourselves to be touched by the misery and suffering of our sisters and brothers
-by responding to this suffering as appropriate through listening, showing empathy, reaching out, and taking steps towards reconciling ourselves with our world

♥

How do we address differences in a spirit of openness and trust? Rather than beginning from theory let us begin from our own experience: significant moments, doubts, difficulties, shifts in our understanding, spiritual practice, “where we are now”.

TOPIC 10

♥ Collaborating with international alumnae/alumni to be a voice for women

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the past weeks including our commitment to collaboration with RSCJ and Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)

"Meditation is our way to be fully human, fully alive. We are all called to this. To meditate is to be in the centre of ourselves and of all of reality and to be conscious that the centre is not ourselves but God. This is why meditation changes people and the world in which they live." (John Main OSB)

(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)



Facilitator introduces the Topic

A Participant reads

1. "Let us share other stories, parables, poems, artistic creations that will help us to allow the whole of our lives to become Eucharist: "breaking the bread of the Word" as we listen and respond to that Word spoken through Scripture, events, one another: taking on Jesus' attitude of hospitality in sharing meals with friends, sinners and even enemies; allowing ourselves to BE Body of Christ for others – washing feet, healing wounds, listening…believing that where two or more are gathered in the name of Jesus, He is present" (Clare Pratt rscj Feast of the Sacred Heart 2005)

2."Spiritual community is not easy, but it is essential for the spiritual journey that is life. We all need friends for the journey" (Laurence Freeman)

3. "We are one human family. By simply being born into this world, we are of one inheritance and one stock with every other human being. This oneness expresses itself in all the richness and diversity of the human family: in different races, cultures, languages and histories. And we are called to recognize the basic solidarity of the human family as the fundamental condition of our life together on this earth."

(John Paul II's 1987 Message for the World Day of Peace)



Discuss in large group

1. What could collaboration with international Alumnae ask of us?

2. How will the richness of our many cultures and spiritual traditions enrich/challenge and change us?

3. How could we enrich and extend our relationship with alumnae in our own country?

Discuss in pairs

3. How could we explore and dialogue about our different experiences and ways of life, beliefs and religious traditions?

4. What are the many ways we could reach a deeper understanding of each other's stories?



Preparation for next session

1. Invitation to a "deeper dialogue of stories" with local and international alumnae
2. Daily meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material page 32

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Social Justice

The **MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS** (MDGs) address the most critical problems that plague our world today – poverty, HIV/AIDS, primary school education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, environmental and economic sustainability. The Millennium Development Goals, eight in total, are designed to give people everywhere the tools to care for themselves in healthy sustainable environments. All 191 UN Nations have committed to meet these goals by 2015, a deadline which is still attainable but all the constituencies must act now!

GOALS

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

2. **Achieve universal primary education**

Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

3. **Promote gender equality and empower women**

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

4. **Reduce child mortality**

Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five

5. **Improve maternal health**

Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

6. **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

7. **Ensure environmental sustainability**

Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

8. **Develop a global partnership for development**

Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally
Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies
See www.un.org/milleniumgoals/

♥

"Our chances of success depend in great part on the degree to which you, the individuals and groups that make up civil society, mobilize around this [MDG] mission."
(UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan)

♥

"Think globally- act locally"- "If not here- Where? If not now- When?"

TOPIC 11

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the past weeks including our ideas about our dialogue with the international alumnae and those in our own country as well as our Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
"Meditation is a time of profound joy. It is the peace beyond all understanding, beyond all words, concepts or analysis- our way to be fully human, fully alive. We are all called to this." (John Main "Moment of Christ")
(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic - Social Justice



A Participant reads

1. "Our Christian faith is a faith in the rising of Jesus Christ from the tomb in his glorified body; and so it is about leading lives that take the life of the body seriously. The words for 'salvation' and 'health' cannot be distinguished in most languages, and this should remind us that faith in Christ has to be bound up with care for suffering bodies as well as suffering souls." (Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury Easter Message 2005)
2. "God wants to be known and loved through justice and compassion"
(Julian of Norwich)
3. Mother Teresa's Prayer

Make us worthy, Lord
To serve our fellow-men
Throughout the world who live and die
In poverty or hunger
Give them, through our hands this daily bread,
And by our understanding love,
Give peace and joy.

4. "If you want peace, work for justice"



Facilitator asks the group to review the Millennium Development Goals

1. How do we respond to these readings?

2. Given the overwhelming nature of what is asked by these goals, are there any areas where we could make a small difference either in collaboration with the RSCJ and/or alumnae here or overseas?



Preparation for next session

1. Consider what can "restoke" our own commitment to social justice
2. Daily meditation practice
4. Read stimulus material page 34

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Peace

Cultivate a Culture of Peace. A culture of peace begins within our own hearts

1. Becoming informed "The Christian is called to see all reality with the eyes of Christ "(John Main)
2. Working for peace. Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace requires our constructive efforts to overcome violence and to build a culture of peace through our courage and commitment to living justly and with compassion, becoming peacemakers rather then peacekeepers. Working for peace challenges us to overcome the spirit and logic of violence by addressing the practice of violence, both direct and structural, in our homes and communities, nationally and internationally.
3. Starting the journey towards inner peace. Peace is a challenging journey. It will not happen because we decide to have peace, but requires our conscious action. The journey towards peace begins within our own hearts and lives. Inner peace is not an end in itself. Our actions come from our being "The peace the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation become the basis for all our action" (John Main)
4. Rediscover the value of silence
   - There is nothing so much like God as silence" (Meister Eckart)
   - "Silentium" is not an absence of noise but a state of mind and an attitude of consciousness turned towards others or to God. It is attention. To listen deeply, to give oneself in the act of attention is in fact not to judge, or fix or condemn but to love. Seen this way there is indeed nothing so much like God as silence because God is love"(Laurence Freeman "The Eucharist and Silence")
5. Cultivating active non-violence as a way of life We can promote and practise non-violence as a way of life, being mindful of the consequences of our actions, fostering cooperation and collaboration rather than competition, allowing conflict and its resolution, following up the expression of anger with forgiveness and reconciliation.
6. Participating in family and community peacemaking. It is in the home where most violence occurs in society- assault, rape, incest. Within the family, one learns to resolve conflict either by violence or by seeking resolution.
7. Building relationships of peace. To develop peaceful communities we need to develop relationships which affirm and respect the dignity of others. We are challenged by the many differences between us. Our individual differences can be seen as gift, fruit of peace rather than seeds of discrimination and mistrust.
8. Being peaceful caretakers of our planet Earth. How can we protect and care for our planet? Are we at war with the earth through human excesses and waste or are we fostering a "green peace"? There are consequences of pollution and limits to available resources.
9. Falling in love …"is so important because it sweeps us out of ourselves, beyond our limitations, into the reality of the other" (John Main)
10. Finding our mission in life "our mission in life is the intersection between the world's deep need and my own deep gladness" (Patty Fawkner SGS)

TOPIC 11 cont'd

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the past weeks including our awareness of and commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
"The peace the stillness, the harmony that we experience in meditation become the basis for all our action" (John Main)
Meditation and action are not mutually exclusive. "The work we should be doing is stillness. It is the work that confronts and challenges nearly all the dysfunctional patterns of our cultures and personalities. And so it is never a very popular or easy work. It is the work of religion in the future to teach it more widely and make it more do-able as possible by ordinary people. It is a human duty and a most productive one, despite initial appearance, for those who persevere with it. 'Let your mind be always on the kingdom of heaven,' said an abba of the Christian desert 1500 years ago, 'and you will soon inherit it.' Like a newly wed couple embracing the work of marriage, of loving union, a meditator in any tradition follows the spiritual path of union with an ever clearer awareness that the work that we all should be always doing, at every level, is love." (Laurence Freeman OSB CM Newsletter Sept 2004)
(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)



Facilitator reads:
"Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest and banish your fear." (Gospel of John)
"How can I hope to contribute to the peace of the world when I cannot resolve my own inner conflict? …The chain of violence must end in me; this is the start of peace and where world peace must begin" (Esther de Waal)



Facilitator introduces the Topic- Peace
A Participant reads
1. "In the end peace is not essentially about structures but about people…Gestures of peace spring from the lives of people who foster peace first of all in their own hearts…Gestures of peace are possible when people appreciate fully the community dimension of their lives, so that they grasp the meaning and the consequences of events in their own communities and in the world. Gestures of peace create a tradition and a culture of peace." (John Paul II World Day of Peace Message 2003 par 9)



Facilitator asks
In pairs review material on page 34 "Cultivating a Culture of Peace"
How can we commit to cultivating peace in our lives?



Preparation for next session
1. Think about ways of cultivating peace in our daily life
2. Daily meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material page 36

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Integrity of Creation

"The most dramatic transformation of world view took place when John Glenn took from outer space the only picture of the planet ever taken. The image of a bright blue globe in black space is in our minds even now. Up to that moment the human view of earth and our place in universe had never been more than theory and calculation and speculation. Now all of humanity could see itself in all of our grandeur and in all of our smallness" (Joan Chittister)

♥

" We must always remember that the earth is not so much inherited from our parents as borrowed from our children. We owe a debt to the next generation" (American Benedictine Prioresses)

♥

" To live we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully and reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily and destructively it is a desecration. In such a desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual moral loneliness and others to want"
(Wendell Berry "The Gift of Good Land")

♥

"It is such a very simple thing to walk through life with my hands open, my eyes open, listening, alive in all of my five senses to God breaking in again and again on my daily life. If the incarnation means anything at all it means this, that God is reaching me through the material things in the world of his creating. Christianity, after all, is the most materialistic of religions. In the Eucharist I am given bread and wine. The whole world is potentially a sacrament. For it is through the material things of his world that God chooses to reveal himself. If this is so then I should handle those things with reverence and respect, with joy, with gratitude. And when I do, I find that I am constantly aware as God the giver, the creator who makes himself accessible through the things of his creating, a God who asks us neither to despise nor to neglect the temporal order"
(Esther de Waal "Living with Contradiction")

♥

"There is s new story emerging in consciousness, one that evokes awe, wonder and reverence as it expands our notion of God. We are beginning to understand that God is not a person limited to a place and only vaguely present in the universe. We are beginning to appreciate a god alive in every particle in the billions of galaxies beyond us and in the grass or pavement beneath our feet. God is here, everywhere, and with us always." (Michael Morewood "Praying a New Story")

♥

"If I do not involve myself in concrete issues of my time, and if I do not open my house to all the winds of the world, then anything I may produce from my ivory tower will be barren and cursed. Yet if I do not shut doors and windows in order to concentrate on the work, then I will not be able to offer anything of value to my neighbours"
(Raimundo Pannikar)

♥

"The earth is mandating that the human community assume a responsibility never assigned to any previous generation. We have to move into an emerging 'Ecozoic' era"
(Thomas Berry)

TOPIC 11 cont'd

♥ Collaborating with countries of the world for social justice, peace and the integrity of creation

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections on the past weeks including our practice of peace and Meditation practice.



Meditation Practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
"Do not waste as much as five minutes a day on reading books about meditation. Enter into the experience yourself… the essential thing is the practice." (John Main)
(The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator introduces the Topic- The Integrity of Creation
Consider "Material things (should) be handled with as much love and reverence as if they were sacred vessels of the altar" (Esther de Waal)
A Participant reads:



1. "Try to live out your daily lives tenderly and competently" (Jean Varnier)
2. "Trudge not through life, leaving ugly gashes,
Tiptoe not through life, leaving half-formed impressions.
Tread gently, lovingly, leave graceful heartprints.
Love the Earth, for she loves you so."
(Unity Dow, the first female High Court Judge in Botswana.)
3. When the 10,000 things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the origin and remain where we have always been" (Master Sangsten)
4. "We cannot make a blade of grass. In the future there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless we accept it, protect it and foster it" (Thomas Berry)



Facilitator asks larger group

1. What are the issues of environmental concern that most worry us?

2. Why is the idea of 'integrity of creation" important to our faith?

3. If we take seriously Thomas Merton's sense of the 'unspeakable reverence for the holiness of created things' how might we see the world and how will we respond to this responsibility for life?

4. What can we do that gives greatest reverence and respect for the integrity of creation?

Participants discuss in pairs what we might do to live this "unspeakable reverence"



Preparation for next session

1. Practice reverence, respect and seeing with wonder all aspects of life
2. Daily meditation practice
3. Read stimulus material page 38



Review and reflect

Closing ritual of Blessing and Empowerment (from Ritual More than Words)
(Standing in circle facing centre where candle, bowl of water and lavender oil are placed on table)
(The sign of the cross on the forehead is the mark of this blessing)
In blessing our foreheads, we claim the power of reason,
to know that path that leads to the fulfillment
of our hopes for a liberated humankind.

(Hands warmed over a candle and then cupped over the eyes)
In blessing our eyes, we claim the power of vision,
to see clearly the forces of life and death in our midst.

(Fingers dipped in water then held to the ears)
In blessing our ears, we claim the power to hear the Spirit of God
as she speaks to us within.

(Hands anointed with oil and rubbed together)
In blessing our hands, we claim our powers as creators of a new humanity
Liberated from fear, ignorance and oppression.

(Crossing arms and joining hands with each other)
In blessing each other, we claim the power that rests collectively
in our shared struggle as women and men.

We choose to extend this power in service to a world in need.
May our lives be blessings to each other. Amen

♥

Symbolic "sending out"

Each person is given a card with their name on it.
The card is passed around the room with an opportunity for everyone to write a note of appreciation to everyone else.
The note could include any comment about the person designed to uplift them and celebrate their presence in the group

♥

TOPIC 12

Review and Reflect

Facilitator asks for thoughts and reflections from the previous session.
Also asks for feedback on the Meditation practice.

Meditation practice (Facilitator reads aloud to the group)
"People often ask, 'I don't seem to be making any progress in my meditation. What should I do about it?' Perhaps the most important progress we have to make in our meditation is to abandon the idea of making progress. We have to understand that we are always beginning. Every meditation is a setting out, a re- setting out and because it is a re-setting out it always remains fresh, always a further entry into the mystery which is infinite, inexhaustible. It is important to understand that although we do speak of meditation as a journey, it is an unusual journey. It is a journey to where we *are*. It is a return to our roots, to our rootedness. It is a pilgrimage to the only place where we can really be, that is where we are. Meditation…is a focusing of our attention into the *now*. It is becoming wholly present to the *now*, to the now of what is."(John Main "Being on the Way") (The facilitator follows "How to Meditate" instructions on page 3)

Facilitator explains that the last session provides an opportunity to reflect on the journey over the last weeks of meeting as a group.

Participants are asked to write down their responses to the first 2 questions (10 mins) These comments might be used to let other groups know what the benefits have been in coming together. The comments can remain confidential.

1. What have we gained from coming to this group?

2. What will we take with us that we have learnt or practised while attending this group?

Discuss your written response in pairs (5-10 mins)
(This may include what we have learnt about ourselves, others, our spiritual understanding or spiritual practice.)
Discuss these questions in the larger group

3. What might we commit to in terms of our collaboration with the RSCJ and alumnae?

4. What might we commit to in the areas of social justice, peace and the integrity of creation?

Symbolic blessing and sending out (see page 38)
Farewell to the group and invitations to follow-up events (see page 41)
"Journey of the Heart" ASCA National Retreat Kerever Park, Burradoo
Friday 10 February 2006 – Sunday 12 February 2006
(inquiries Penny 0409 309 344 Alex 0415 768 330)

Registration For <u>ASCA NATIONAL RETREAT</u>
<u>"Journeys of the Heart"</u>

Come and continue the "Journey" with us at Kerever Park, Burradoo NSW February 10-12 2006

A weekend residential retreat "Journeys of the Heart" will be held at Kerever Park, Burradoo from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 February 2006 for **ALL** alumnae, associates, rscj, parents, past parents ,staff and friends who would like to slow down ,spend some time in silence, reflect on where you are on your spiritual journey and listen to the "voice" of Creation in the tranquil setting of the Southern Highlands. It will be a weekend of spiritual companionship, shared wisdom and the fun and laughter of friendship. Places are limited so please register your interest early with me.

Penny Sturrock Tel: 02 9953 1856 mob: 0409 309 344 email: sturrock@ign.com.au

Send completed registration form and cheque payable to:

Kerever Park Spirituality Centre
c/- 26 Murdoch St Cremorne NSW 2090

"JOURNEYS OF THE HEART"

NAME …….

ADDRESS …….

…….

TEL……FAX……MOBILE……..

EMAIL …….

Registration from 4.30pm Friday 10 February 2006

Each day will offer time for Meditation practice, group discussions, reflection and relaxation, music and laughter

The retreat concludes after lunch on Sunday 12 February 2006

Weekend with all meals, linen, (shared bathrooms) $185.00 □

Saturday 11 February day only (10am-5pm) (lunch included) $50.00 □

Vegetarian diet yes □ **no** □

Other special needs ……

Reference Page

Suggested reading:

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Chittister, Joan *Illuminated Life-Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of the Light* New York, Orbis Books, 2001
De Waal, Esther *Lost in Wonder- Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of Attentiveness* Melbourne, John Garrett Publishing , 2003
De Waal, Esther *Living with Contradiction- Benedictine Wisdom for Everyday Living* Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2003
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Dowrick, Stephanie *Forgiveness and other Acts of Love* Penguin Books, Australia 1997
Freeman, Laurence *Jesus the Teacher Within* Continuum, NY 2000
Griffiths, Bede *The New Creation in Christ* 1997
Johnson, Elizabeth A *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* New York: Crossroad, 1992
Main, John (Titles include) *Word into Silence; Word Made Flesh; The Inner Christ* Darton,Longman & Todd, London
Merton, Thomas (Titles include) *Bread in the Wilderness; Seven Story Mountain; Seeds of Contemplation; Contemplative Prayer*
Nouwen, Henri. *Heart Speaks To Heart* Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1988.
Rohr, Richard *Everything Belongs- The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* New York, Crossroad, 2003
Thich Nhat Hanh (Titles include) *Living Buddha, Living Christ; Love in Action; Peace is Every Step; Teachings on Love*; Parallax Press Harper Collins
Toll, Eckhart *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* Namaste Publishing,1997
Williams, Rowan *Silence and Honeycakes* Lion Books, 2004
Williamson, Marianne *Return to Love-Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles* HarperCollins, New York, 1992

Helpful websites:

ASCA www.asca-sacrecoeur.org
AMASC www.amasc-sacrecoeur.org
RSCJ in Australia and New Zealand www.rscj-anz.org
RSCJ in the world www.rscjinternational.org

Millennium Development Goals http://www.campaignforeducation.org
Thomas Merton www.merton.org and www.mertonfoundation.org
John Main, **Laurence Freeman** www.wccm.org and www.christianmeditationaustralia.org
Bede Grifftiths www.bedegriffiths.com
Ishpriya rscj www.international-satsang.org
The Ignatian tradition see www.jesuit.org.au