

# Waterholes

2010

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANAM CARA COMMUNITY, GIPPSLAND

ISSUE TWO



A Community of  
Prayer and Support  
for the Inner Journey  
into God

## Living in a connected world

**Bishop Katherine Jefferts-Schori**

### **The reality of the Gulf Coast Oil Spill Disaster may just show us how interconnected we really are...**

The original peoples of the North American continent understand that we are all connected, and that harm to one part of the sacred circle of life harms the whole. Scientists, both the ecological and physical sorts, know the same reality, expressed in different terms. The Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) also charge human beings with care for the whole of creation, because it is God's good gift to humanity. Another way of saying this is that we are all connected and there is no escape; our common future depends on how we care for the rest of the natural world, not just the square feet of soil we may call "our own." We breathe the same

air; our food comes from the same ground and seas, and the water we have to share cycles through the same airshed, watershed, and terra firma.



The still-unfolding disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is good evidence of the interconnectedness of the whole. It has its origins in this nation's addiction to oil,

uninhibited growth, and consumerism, as well as old-fashioned greed and what my tradition calls hubris and idolatry. Our collective sins are being visited on those who have had little or no part in them: birds, marine mammals, the tiny plants and animals that constitute the base of the vast food chain in the Gulf, and on which a major part of the seafood production of the United States depends. Our sins are being visited on the fishers of southern Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, who seek to feed their families with the proceeds of what they catch each day. Our sins will expose New Orleans and other coastal cities to the increased likelihood of devastating floods, as the marshes that constitute the shrinking margin of storm protection continue to disappear, fouled and killed by oil.

The oil that continues to vent from the sea floor has spread through hundreds of cubic miles of ocean, poisoning creatures of all sizes and forms,



Waterholes is the newsletter of the Anam Cara Community, a ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland.

**Visit us on the web:**  
[www.anamcara-gippsland.org](http://www.anamcara-gippsland.org)



from birds, turtles, and whales to the shrimp, fish, oysters, and crabs that human beings so value, and the plankton, whose life supports the whole biological system -- the very kind of creatures whose dead and decomposed tissues began the process of producing that oil so many millions of years ago.

We know, at least intellectually, that that oil is a limited resource, yet we continue to extract and use it at increasing rates and with apparently decreasing care. The great scandal of this disaster is the one related to all kinds of "commons," resources held by the whole community. Like tropical forests in

health of this nation. The workers in those communities, even when they have employment, are some of the poorest among us. That oil will move beyond the immediate environs of a broken wellhead, spreading around the coasts of Florida and northward along the east coast of the U.S. That oil will foul the coastal marshes that also constitute a major nursery for coastal fauna, again a vital part of the food chain. That oil will further stress and poison the coral reefs of Florida, already much endangered from warming and ocean acidification. Those reefs have historically provided significant storm protection to the coastal communities behind them.

Gulf, and we must wake up and put a stop to the kind of robber baron behavior we supposedly regulated out of existence a hundred years ago. Our lives, and the liveliness of the entire planet, depend on it.

**Bishop Katherine Jefferts-Schori is the Presiding Bishop (primate) of The Episcopal Church (United States of America). Bishop Jefferts-Schori originally trained and worked as a biologist and oceanographer.**

This article originally appeared in *The Huffington Post*.



Michael Macer / The Chronicle

Madagascar and Brazil, and the gold and silver deposits of the American West, "commons" have in human history too often been greedily exploited by a few, with the aftermath left for others to deal with, or suffer with.

Yet the reality is that this disaster just may show us as a nation how interconnected we really are. The waste of this oil -- both its unusability and the mess it is making -- will be visited on all of us, for years and even generations to come. The hydrocarbons in those coastal marshes and at the base of the food chain leading to marketable seafood resources will taint us all, eventually. That oil is already frightening away vacationers who form the economic base for countless coastal communities, whose livelihoods have something to do with the economic

The dispersants that are being so wantonly deployed will have consequences we're not yet cognizant of, and the experience of gold and silver mining in the West is instructive. The methods used in those old mining operations liberated plenty of arsenic, mercury, other heavy metals, left cyanide and acids, all of which have significant health effects on those who live in the immediate area of mines and tailings, as well as those who use water downstream and breathe downwind air.

There is no place to go "away" from these consequences; there is no ultimate escape on this planet. The effects at a distance may seem minor or tolerable, but the cumulative effect is not. We are all connected, we will all suffer the consequences of this tragic disaster in the

As we breathe the very air which sustains us,  
We remember your love, God,  
which gives us life.

Fill us with your compassion for  
Creation.  
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear,  
of all pessimism and hesitation.

Breathe into us solidarity  
with all who suffer now  
and the future generations who will suffer  
because of our environmental  
irresponsibility.

Move us into action  
to save our earth  
and to build your sustainable Kingdom.  
Amen. (Jane Deren)

# A Prayer to Sophia

Anne Turner

From "Moving beyond self-centredness"  
Joyce Rupp.

"Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight." Proverbs 9:6

"All –Embracing, Compassionate Companion, you know me through and through. You love me completely as I am. You also know what challenges me, how I need to continue to grow, to constantly be more transformed. Some of the loving pieces of my heart stray away or hug themselves tightly in the suffocating web of self-centredness. I get so caught up in "me" and "mine" that I ignore those who are around me. I sink so deeply into the mud of my own misery that I neglect others who have great pain. I feel so fully with the beauty of life that I forget to share it with others. I become so absorbed in my endless activity that I focus only on satisfying myself. In doing this, I miss the constant opportunities to be a person whose reach is far and deep. Perceptive One, teach me how to be attentive to my own well-being, and also to recognise and respond to others in need.

Be the balancer of my inner world. Be the eyes and ears of my heart.

Do not let me wrap myself entirely around "me." Draw me out from my inward gaze.

Join my heart to the expansiveness of your love.

Take me to all who await my compassionate attention."



For further reflection.

In one column write ME, in another write OTHERS.

List words/phrases under each one that name your concerns and your activities.

Look at the two lists. What do they tell you about your approach to life?

Is there anywhere you need or want to change or re-balance?

# Soul Carer's Letter

Anne Turner

As the soul carer of the Anam Cara Community, I am increasingly being invited to minister in that capacity. As I now write, I have just returned from facilitating a three day retreat for twenty one Anglican Women in the Diocese. I love, not only the privilege of the actual retreat leading, but all the preparation beforehand, in which I find I grow in my own relationship with God and myself, thus, in a sense having a pre-retreat of my own! I found myself immersed in the theme I had prayerfully chosen, "Growing in Wisdom" for well over a month.

As a result of my formation as a Retreat leader with Barnabas Ministries ACT in the early 1990's and all the experiences in ministry since, I have developed more and more my own style of leading. At the core of my being, I realise now, has always been, and I pray always will be, the desire for wholeness and the wholeness of others.

When leading a Retreat especially, I integrate the worship, a reflection, a guided meditation as a whole "session." In this way every part of the retreat experience can reflect the theme, so that retreatants can make their journey into God through the theme as deeply as possible. As I grow closer to my three-score years and ten, I hope & pray I have grown in some wisdom over the past years of life. I often feel as church, we do not value, use, or affirm the wisdom of our elders. We are happy if they still continue to "do" their ministries in service of God and the church but often their stories, their shared "wisdoms" are neglected because we don't give enough time and space for simply "being".

A Retreat offers an opportunity to "BE" in awareness of the presence of God in community and in solitude. We had opportunities to share our collective wisdom even and perhaps especially in the group silences. The programme for the Retreat made it possible to begin immediately after arriving with an introduction of the theme and sharing of what it means to "grow" and what is "wisdom" In the style of the Anam Cara Community I entitled each time together as a "gathering time" Each gathering

time consisted of worship, a reflection a guided meditation and a "prayer to Sophia" by Joyce Rupp. All were contained in a booklet with an appropriate visual on the front cover. I always use different experiences of prayer to help enter more deeply into the theme of the Retreat; using visual as well as auditory ways as well as using silence and stillness. A few examples this time encouraged us to model with clay as a way of prayer, meditating on the image of God as the potter in Jeremiah, moulding and shaping us. We prayed using the Scriptures in an Ignatian style of putting ourselves into the gospel story of the raising of Jairus' daughter. In this way we were able to reflect on our own "sleeping" inner child. We used our imaginations in a meditative final Eucharist and worshipped at the end of the second day in the service of the light in the style of Taize. Using the medieval icon of the Trinity we learned to pray with the icon as a way to gaze upon God and listen for the voice of God through this sacred painting.

I remember when I was first introduced to "Sophia" the Greek name for Wisdom and I was keen to introduce others to her. The book of Proverbs provided much of the backdrop for this exploration of the personification of wisdom. It was helpful to be posed the question as to the difference between the feminine Sophia and the Holy Spirit also known as a feminine expression of God.

Wisdom was with God at creation ; created first by God and who is God's daily delight. Wisdom is an attribute of God and we are called to grow in the wisdom of God. Paradoxically Wisdom/ Sophia leads us deeper into God where we meet Wisdom! The Holy Spirit on the other hand IS GOD; the third person of the Trinity. Let's face it ,any language which tries to define God and all who God is will fall short and we are left with *m y s t e r y , w i t h a n e e d f o r* symbol ,metaphor and personification.

Our growth in wisdom will see us becoming comfortable with mystery, with NOT knowing and with the paradoxes of the Gospel.

Continued on page 4

## Soul Carer's Letter

(Continued from page 3)

The four “gathering times” had us explore “Growing in Wisdom through God, Creator and Life-giver”; “Growing in Wisdom through Jesus Christ ,Redeemer and Pain-bearer”; “Growing in Wisdom through the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier and Love-maker”; and “Growing in Wisdom through the Holy Trinity, One God in Three persons”. There was a gentle flowing rhythm to the whole retreat even at meal times hearing 21st century wisdom read to us from “Don't Sweat the Small Stuff” by Richard Carlson PH.D and “Kitchen Table Wisdom by Rachel Naomi Remen M.D.

Judging from the sharing towards the end of the Retreat there was ,in a very real sense ,a feeling we had grown in wisdom as a result of God's grace evident throughout the Retreat. What a blessing for me as facilitator. I am often reminded of wise words from a former retired priest that “Discipline in the class room leads to freedom in the field.” There can never be too much preparation, in whatever form that takes, because then, when the time comes, we can be free to allow the Holy Spirit to blow where she will and take us away from our script and move where God wills. I can certainly testify to this truth once again as a result of this Retreat experience. I thank God and AWA for inviting me.

I am especially blessed to have Jane Macqueen as my “hands and feet” to leave me free to “be” the soul carer and facilitator. Jane is able to unobtrusively and sensitively see to all the practical setting up of each gathering time with a central visual speaking to the theme, pre-empting my needs without words. A ministry of deep care and love without which I could not lead any Retreat in the style I believe is God-given.

With love and prayers,

**Anne Turner**

## Contacts

### West Gippsland

Gatherer: Marion White - westgippsland@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5623 3216  
Soul carer: Allan Huggins and Jan Huggins

### Latrobe Valley

Gatherer: Carolyn Raymond - latrobevalley@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5191 8343  
Soul carer: Anne Turner, Brian Turner

### Sale

Gatherer: Heather Toms - sale@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5199 2711  
Soul carers: Anne Turner, Brian Turner, Marilyn Obersby

### Raymond Island

Liaison: Jane Macqueen - raymondisland@anamcara-gippsland.org, 0411 316 346

### South Gippsland

Gatherer: Colin Thornby - southgippsland@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5658 1086  
Soul carer: Allan Huggins

### Website:

[www.anamcara-gippsland.org](http://www.anamcara-gippsland.org)

### Joining the Community:

Anne Turner - anne@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5144 1914

### Retreats, workshops, quiet days and worship events

Jane Macqueen - jane@anamcara-gippsland.org, 0411 316 346

### Communications (Website and Newsletter)

Colin Thornby - colin@anamcara-gippsland.org, 03 5658 1086

### Treasurer

Kate Campbell - treasurer@anamcara-gippsland.org

### General enquiries

[hello@anamcara-gippsland.org](mailto:hello@anamcara-gippsland.org)

## Do we have the courage to change?

The Bishop's address to Synod included these words, which have a great deal of relevance and challenge for us as a community.

What I ask you to see more clearly is this: faithfulness to an unchanging vision of church demands change in every generation in the expression of that vision. The call to be church today requires us to let go of what we may sometimes hold as precious in form and structure, in order for us better to be able to offer to the world what is precious in substance. The world has no regard for what the church may happen to hold as precious in form and structure, but I believe it yearns to hear what is precious in the substance of the gospel we proclaim. To offer that Gospel to the world, then, there is some dying that need to happen in the church so that resurrection can come, to the church and to the world...

Jesus called for a radical change, a death to the form and structure of the religious expression of his day in order that the resurrection life of God's way might be set free to reign in the lives of those excluded by that religious expression.

The challenge for us is to translate this challenge of Jesus into what it means for the church today. Are there things about form and structure of our religious institutions that work against the substance of God's Good News, as we have now heard it in and through Jesus? Tragically, those things may be what we hold onto most passionately. Remember, however, that in refusing to change what needs to be changed, we are in danger of changing what should never be changed, which is that we be constantly faithful to the call of God on our lives to be church for the sake of the world, no matter the cost.

## The Ancient Practices Series

This series of books has been released over the last three years. It contains practical and very sound advice on the fundamentals of building a spiritual practice that will support an every changing, growing and deepening relationship with God.

Each author focuses on one practice, except for the first book in the series, *Finding Our Way Again - The Return of the Ancient Practices*, by Brian McLaren, which is an introduction to the series (see Jane's review, opposite).

*The Liturgical Year* by Joan Chittister is an excellent introduction to the seasons of the Christian year, providing valuable advice on ways of observing them.

*In Constant Prayer* by Robert Benson gives an overview of the ancient practice of praying regularly, at fixed hours of the day. Both liturgical and non-liturgical forms of prayer are considered.

Nora Gallagher's *The Sacred Meal* considers the central place of the Eucharist in the individual life of the Christian, and in the corporate life of the church.

*Fasting* by Scot McKnight encourages the reader to recover the ancient Christian discipline of fasting in a helpful, responsible manner.

*Sabbath*, by Dan Allender, suggests that a life of balance and devotion to God requires a recovery of the observance of a Sabbath, to support our relaxation, prayer and reflection.

Doug LeBlanc's *Tithing* encourages responsible use of our time, money and possessions, by reminding us they belong to God, and are lent to us.

*Sacred Journey*, by Diana Butler Bass, is a valuable short book on pilgrimage.

All of the books are short, well written, very practical, inexpensive and available in Australia. They're published by Thomas Nelson, and are available through many booksellers, including Koorong ([www.koorong.com](http://www.koorong.com)) and Word ([www.word.com.au](http://www.word.com.au)).

# Finding Our Way Again - The Return of the Ancient Practices

Book Review by Jane Macqueen

I rarely find myself picking up a pencil to underline significant words in the acknowledgements that begin a new book. And yet this is what I found myself doing as I began 'Finding our Way Again - The Return of the Ancient Practices' by Brian McLaren. McLaren acknowledged writers who had introduced him to the contemplative life and the idea of spiritual practices. Also those whose works had introduced him to the integration of the contemplative life and a life of social action and finally those friends with whom he experienced the communal life, which integrates the contemplative and active ways. This beginning touched me and inspired me to read on because his words mirror my own experience. I have been inspired by authors who inform and challenge me and put into words things I recognise in my soul and then by those who walk alongside me in community, encouraging me in my living out of the contemplative life.

McLaren's book is an introduction to a series of books that will examine in further detail seven ancient practices that have aided people on their faith journeys for hundreds of years. He details a little of the history of the practices that are common to the major Abrahamic traditions of faith, fixed hour prayer, fasting, Sabbath, the sacred meal, pilgrimage, observance of sacred seasons and giving. He goes on to speak about the value of contemplative practices and indeed the gift he sees they are to people who are searching for real meaning in their lives.

Are these practices still relevant today? McLaren clearly believes so and he writes with an ease and naturalness that reflects a man of faith living in the 21st century facing the same issues we are, the financial crisis, environmental

issues, the diagnosis of cancer in his son. Day to day issues and challenges that lead us to be 'bitter or better' people.

He believes spiritual practices matter because they do for our souls what exercise does for our bodies and study for our minds. He tells us that whatever life dishes up to us spiritual practices are actions within our power that help us to become, "someone who makes survival worthwhile by turning life's manure into fertilizer."

In a world where many are lost with no one to guide them he suggests that rediscovering the ancient spiritual practices will form our character, allowing us to be the very best we can be. Intentionally following these practices will allow us to wake up and discover life and to become awake and stay awake to God.

McLaren emphasises that the Christian faith is a journey not an institution. He encourages us to embrace our faith journey as a way of life and not a system of belief. In his words, "Much of what we'll explore in this series of books will involve restoring a kind of sacred normalcy to the rhythms of life - making prayer ordinary in our daily schedule or annual calendar; making generosity normal, normative and habitual so that it is done automatically; making regular time for rest every single week whether we feel we need it or not, as a matter of routine; practicing simplicity instead of consumption; countering violence with peace making."

McLaren encourages his readers to take a serious look at the choices they make everyday. He, like Paul, uses sporting imagery. If we desire to move

Practice makes possible  
some things that would  
otherwise have been  
impossible.

Continued on page 6

## Finding Our Way Again

*(Continued from page 5)*

forward on our spiritual journey. If we desire to grow into greater union with God. We need to train. And he suggests that in these ancient spiritual practices we have the means. Means that along with a mentor and community support can help us to be more Christ like in our thoughts and our actions. "Practice make possible some things that would other wise have been impossible."

He shares with humour and vulnerability simple stories of his own sometimes stumbling attempts at practice. His few attempts to fast that have strengthened his impulse control over bigger things than taking a bite of a forbidden doughnut.

As I noted in the introduction McLaren believes that spiritual practices lead to an integration of the ways of



contemplation and action through community. The silence of contemplation naturally leads the individual to become the person who seeks to do justice and to love kindness. It also leads them to journey in community.

In a world where many are searching for a 'new spirituality' McLaren's book is a reminder to us that in the ancient disciplines of spiritual practices we have the means to find our way again. It has encouraged me to seek out the rest of the books in this series.

*Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*, Brian McLaren, Thomas Nelson, 2008.

# Climate Change

**Bishop John McIntyre**

As Christians there is for us the essentially Christian imperative for action on the matter of global warming. And we need go no further than the first two chapters of the Bible to discover just what that is. That human beings are created "in the image of God" to have "dominion over ... every living thing that moves upon the earth", in terms of the first creation story (Genesis 1.27,28), and "to till and keep" the garden, in terms of the second creation story (Genesis 2.15), is enough for us to know all we need to know about our responsibility to God for God's creation.

In the first creation story, to be created in God's image is to be created as God's representative or agent in the life of God's world; to ensure God's concerns are met in God's creation. It implies an awesome responsibility given to humankind by God: God's ways will be fulfilled in God's creation through human agency. This is an incredible responsibility given to us as people. From the very beginning, it foreshadows the truth of the incarnation we come to know in its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. To have dominion has certainly been misunderstood when taken in isolation from the answerability to God implicit in being created in God's image, and from this we must repent. But taken as a whole, the first creation story makes explicit and clear the human responsibility rightly to manage the earth on God's behalf.

In the second creation story, the Hebrew word for "till" is rightly translated "serve" in other contexts, for it is the same Hebrew word. Our keeping of the garden, then, is seen as our service of God in God's world. Both stories combine to make clear that we answer to God for what happens in God's world: we answer to God for what happens to the environment. All of this implies we can and do have an impact on the environment by how we live: that's the way God planned it. But more importantly right now, it implies we must answer for the state of the environment; we above all people, for we claim to have been renewed in the image of God in

Christ. How the earth is right now is our responsibility.

These truths are incorporated into Anglican tradition through the fifth of the so-called "Marks of Mission" of the Anglican Communion, which is to "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth".

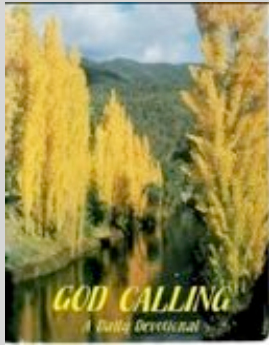
When it is further acknowledged it is the poor who stand to suffer most when the impact of global warming strikes access to the basic necessities of life, God's demand that we do justice and show compassion comes to the fore as well. The ancient prophets are abundantly clear: the sure sign that we "walk humbly before God" is found in our commitment "to do justice and love mercy". (Micah 6.8) This truth is again incorporated into Anglican tradition through the third and fourth marks of mission, which are "to respond to human need by loving service" and "to seek to transform unjust structures of society."

*This text was extracted from Bishop John's synod charge from 2009.*



# God Calling: A Daily Devotional

Book review by Jo Inglis



During a time of low spirit, I met a dear lady who carried a small book with her. We worked in the same building, and spent quite some time listening to each other's stories of family and friends. Then, a special thing happened; she shared her small book with me.

The words in the book came from messages given to two women in England. The women believe they were being taught, trained, and encouraged day by day by Him personally. The two women believed Our Lord daily insisted they should be channels of love, joy and laughter in His broken world.

This book, 'God Calling', was first written in 1935. The editor, A.J. Russell advises the women have sought no praise. They elected to remain anonymous and to be called, 'Two Listeners'.

I found reading this book, *God Calling - A Daily Devotional*, inspirational. Particular verses seemed to speak personally to me.

In 2002, I wrote to the publishers to obtain permission to reproduce verses out of the book, paired with photos I had taken. When pairing a selected photo with a chosen verse, the words became even more moving, resulting in an encompassing feeling of wholeness. The publishers replied, giving permission and wishing a blessing on the work. I now share these verses with you.

# Quiet Strength

Contributed by Jo Inglis



**Rest in Me.**

**Be quiet, be still,**

**and in that very stillness**

**your strength will come and will be maintained.**

**In My Kingdom**

**it is known**

**that strength lies in quiet.**

**“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”**

**The strength of Peace**

**and the Peace of strength.**

**Rest in Me.**

**Joy in Me**

From *God Calling - A Daily Devotional*, Published by W.A. Buchanan & Co., p.207.  
Photograph by Jo Inglis.

# The Hidden Power of the Gospels

***The Hidden Power of the Gospels: Four Questions, Four Paths, One Journey, Alexander Shaia with Michelle Gaugy, HarperOne, 2010. (In hardcover).***

Hundreds of popular books about Jesus, and about the gospels, come out each year, hundreds more aimed at a more scholarly audience. This book, by Alexander Shaia, is a new entrant into this already crowded market place. One of the problems that the discerning reader faces is sifting the gold from the dross - difficult indeed.

Shaia's book, I'd suggest, should be in your 'gold' category. Shaia is an American Maronite (Lebanese) Catholic, who has spent a great deal of his life working within the Roman Catholic Church, and as a psychologist.

*The Hidden Power of the Gospels* is a consideration of the four canonical gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Shaia builds on some earlier work by Robin Griffith-Jones (*The Four Witnesses*, Harper San Francisco) to construct an understanding of the four gospels which will speak to many.

His thesis is that each of the four gospels is written to a particular community, in a particular circumstance, and each addresses a particular question of relevance to each person on the Inner

Journey. The gospels are not just a biography of Jesus, he suggests, though they provide important biographical information. He suggests that each is concerned with a fundamental question, or understanding:

- The Gospel of Matthew: Climbing the Great Mountain, How do we face change? The First Path
- The Gospel of Mark: Crossing the Stormy Sea, How do we move through suffering? The Second Path
- The Gospel of John: Resting in the Glorious Garden, How do we recover joy? The Third Path
- The Gospel of Luke: Walking the Road of Riches, How do we mature in service? The Fourth Path

Shaia suggests that we each negotiate this cycle constantly through our lives, and each gospel has much to say to each of us as we work through our lives. Shaia provides a short commentary on each of the gospels, and finished the book with a consideration of practices which support the spiritual journey.

This isn't a perfect book, it must be said. It does, however, represent a fresh approach to the gospels which will provide many with food for thinking, praying, preaching and teaching.



## God's Energy

**Energetic Aspects of Spirituality - a quiet day**

Presented by Ann Miller  
21 September 2010  
10am to 3.30pm  
1067 Yarragon South Road, Trafalgar  
BYO lunch, note paper, Bible, waterproof shoes and coat  
Cost - \$5

Contact Marion White:  
westgippsland@anamcara-gippsland.org  
or 0427130 847. Please RSVP by  
6/9/2010.



## Praying the Gospels - 2010 Gippsland Diocesan Mixed Lay Retreat

Come and join us at the 2010 Gippsland Diocesan Mixed Lay Retreat, from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2010.

- Retreat leader: The Rev'd Anne Turner
- Venue: Pallotti College, Millgrove
- Cost: \$300 (double), \$170 (single)
- Send your registration and deposit (by 30/09/2010) to Sandy Johnson, Unit 20/31 Maryvale Crescent, Morwell, 3840. Cheques payable to 'Gippsland Diocesan Retreat Account'.

# Palestine

**Carolyn Raymond**

When you are travelling in a country, which you have not visited before, it is easy to become overwhelmed with new information, new concepts and new understandings. It is quite impossible to write even a fraction of these in one article. I will try to share with you some of the lasting impressions, which are now engraved on my heart and mind.

These are some of the events that taught us more of our faith. On our first day we were in Jerusalem, we met our guide who would be with us throughout our tour. He introduced himself as Ibrahim. His name is the name of the father of all three faiths who see Israel as the Holy Land. His name reminded me of the many beliefs and the history that we share. Then he said "I am a Palestinian by nationality, an Arab, by race, a Christian by faith and Greek Orthodox by denomination." Palestinians have lived in Israel for centuries, they are a people who gained their living from the land and have a deeply spiritual connection with the land which has fed them. To be an Arab means that your ancestors were part of the wave of conquerors which came from Byzantium only a century or so after Christ walked the land. To be Christian, is to be part of a small minority of Palestinians, only 2%, the remainder are Moslem. To be Greek Orthodox is to worship in a denomination as old as the church itself. Ibrahim's own history embodied the history of the country and of the church. Ibrahim also had a way of calling everyone on the tour to attention. He would call "Habebeeby" (probably not spelt correctly) He told us this Arabic word meant, "Come closer my beloved." I heard women using the word to call their children. We would all come close and he would tell us the history and the significance of the place we had come to see. I now say to you "habebeeby".

We visited many holy sites. We prayed in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. We visited the site of the Wedding at Cana. We toured Galilee, bathing in the warm water. We saw the remains of Capernaum. On the Mt of Beatitudes we celebrated Eucharist in the gardens. This was a deeply spiritual time of prayer. We walked the Via Dolorosa

# Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures. Time set aside in a special way for lectio divina enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm, we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his son, Jesus Christ.

Very often our concerns, our relationships, our hopes and aspirations, naturally intertwine with our meditations on the Scriptures. We can attend "with the ear of our hearts" to our own memories, listening for God's presence in the events of our lives. We experience Christ reaching out to us through our own memories. Our own personal story becomes salvation history.

## How to Practice Lectio Divina

Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily lectio divina one of the readings from the eucharistic liturgy for the day (find the readings here); others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God's hands, not yours.

Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a beloved "prayer word" or "prayer phrase" they gently recite.. For some, the practice known as "centering prayer" makes a good, brief introduction to lectio divina. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.

Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In lectio divina, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, he gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Speak to God. Whether you use words, ideas, or images--or all three--is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to him what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Experience God by using the word or phrase he has given you as a means of blessing and of transforming the ideas and memories that your reflection on his word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

Rest in God's embrace. And when he invites you to return to your contemplation of his word or to your inner dialogue with him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Sometimes in lectio divina, you may return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times, only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for lectio divina. It is not necessary to assess anxiously the quality of your lectio divina, as if you were "performing" or seeking some goal. Lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

**Luke Dysinger OSB**

For more information, visit Luke's website:  
<http://tinyurl.com/38l7gw>

and saw the possible site of the Crucifixion and the Garden Tomb. The sites themselves have been over-laid by a turbulent history. It was moving to be in the area where Jesus had walked, talked, taught and died. However there are churches everywhere and this imposes later history on the site. I found the sites, which were more "natural", were the times when I felt the presence of Jesus. It was possible to visualise Jesus and his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane with its ancient gnarled olive trees. At the garden tomb there were a group of Christians from Africa. They were all in their bright flowing clothes. Outside the tomb they spontaneously broke into singing, a hauntingly beautiful hymn. Although we could not understand the words, we stood there and worshipped with them before the tomb.

The tour I had joined was a study tour. We learnt a great deal of the position of the Palestinians and the response of the Israelis. The Palestinians on the West Bank are restricted to a limited area behind the huge 15 metre concrete wall that divides them from the Israelis and also from each other. It is only possible to leave the area if you have a permit. Permits are very difficult to get. This has resulted in many Palestinians not being able to go to work; there is 40% unemployment in the West Bank. We spent a night with a Palestinian family. They were so welcoming and shared their home and their family with us. We had just come down the coast. We remarked what beautiful beaches Israel has. "I don't know" the Mother replied, "We are not allowed to see them. We cannot get a permit to go to the coast." Palestinians are charged more for basic services. Water for the Israelis is 0.5 shekels. For the Palestinians it is 5 shekels for the same quantity of water. Yet the water comes from aquifers beneath the West Bank. It is almost impossible to get building permits. When Palestinians build on land that has remained in their families for generations, the Israelis will destroy the house, saying there is no permit. 27,000 houses have been destroyed since 1967. If a Palestinian has a travel permit he or she must leave the West Bank via the checkpoints. These are manned by young Israelis doing army service. All young people do a compulsory three-year army service after they leave school. They are draped with guns and wear flap jackets. The most frightening thing is how bored

they look. At a whim they can, and do, delay or refuse access through the checkpoint. We also saw many of the settlements built to house Jews from other countries. These are in actual fact substantial towns with all modern facilities. Many of these are built on Palestinian land and have access to services of water and electricity which the Palestinians are deprived.

As well as seeing the Holy Sites we spent part of every day learning more of the political and social situation in Israel. We had lectures from many Christian groups all of whom are working to bring peace and reconciliation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. It was a humbling experience to see Christians seeking to bring God's peace to those with whom they live. We visited several groups who are seeking to bring the people together so they understand each other at greater depth. There was an organisation called Mushaala who run camps in the desert for Jewish, Christian and Moslem children and women. They can come to know each other and see how much they have in common. We visited a huge High School in which both the students and teachers are Jewish, Christian and Moslem. We visited the Bethlehem Bible College that trains priest for churches in Palestine. They also have a substantial social welfare organisation which will help anyone, of any faith, who has financial, health or social needs. We spent half a day with a Jewish group (ICAHN) who are struggling to prevent the house demolitions. We saw a house recently demolished and met a family who are living in the street opposite their house, which had been taken over by Ultra-orthodox Jews. The Mother had two small children, one 2 years old, Sarah and one 4 years old, Adam. We were part of a confrontation between Jews and Palestinians because a Palestinian had planted a tree in their own front yard. The Jews said the house was not theirs and the Palestinian family who had lived there for many years, had no right to make "improvements". There were guns, police, cameras, shouts, and threats. The young International Observer from Belgium was taken into custody.

There are several groups of Christians who come from countries overseas and are seeking to work non-violently to support the Palestinians and give them a voice outside Israel. One of these groups is the Ecumenical

Accompany Program, which is organised by the World Council of Churches. People come and spend three months living and working with the Palestinians. They accompany children to school making it possible for them to walk past the settlements; otherwise they would be threatened by settlers. They accompany farmers to make it possible for them to go to work on their farms. These people are reporting the position of the Palestinians to the press in their own countries when they return.

I could not but feel very sad for the Israelis who are very divided. There are the extreme Ultra-orthodox, the secular Jews and the extreme Zionists and all shades of belief in between. They seemed to me to be intentionally encouraging a climate of fear. All Israeli groups move around the streets with an armed guard complete with large gun. We and all other international visitors moved around freely without protection. All Year 12 students are sent back to Germany to see the concentration camps. The wall and the checkpoints are damaging the Israelis by breeding hate and fear. They are separating themselves from their neighbours.

I was saddened but also humbled, as I saw the small percentage who are Christian working so hard and with such sacrifice for peace and understanding, seeking always to bring people together. I felt close to Jesus who had known the land torn by the occupation of the Romans and divided by the differences among the Jews. Christ's message of love is alive in their hearts, their work and in everything they do. Since coming back I have sent a few emails to the Holy Land Trust who organised our tour. Each email has been signed "In peace". You know they mean it. I quote Archbishop Elias Chacour, "My life's work is first and foremost Jesus Christ himself. I see him in every Muslim, in every Palestinian Christian, in every Israeli Jew whom I meet. My life's work is to win their hearts."

**Carolyn Raymond**