

# Waterholes

2010

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANAM CARA COMMUNITY, GIPPSLAND

ISSUE ONE



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

## Making Connections

**Anne Turner, Soul Carer**

**One of the most exciting parts of the adventure into God is making connections with God's story through my own and the stories and writings of others**

One of those writers who has inspired, challenged, encouraged me on my own journey over the past 30 years has been Henri Nouwen. He is by no means the only one!! However his works can appeal to all sorts of people of any Christian denomination or persuasion, non Christian, those who struggle with the spiritual journey, those who are in spiritual leadership, those looking for ways to make the journey of prayer, those looking for connections with God's story in Jesus Christ Over the years of my ministry in the church and as a soul carer of others Henri Nouwen is one of those

writers I have consistently recommended for reading in order to make connections for the other's story. One of the marks of a soul carer/spiritual companion/spiritual director is to discern what book, writer may be helpful to another person on their own journey. The author acts as a spiritual companion too. However I



always make the proviso, if the book says nothing to a person put it away either for a later time or it may not be the right book/author for their particular journey.

I came across Henri Nouwen in the 1980's when I was very seriously making my own inner journey and looking for direction alongside my own regular receiving of spiritual direction as I knew it then. I had, since the late 70's come into a contemplative prayer community of like minded women, which balanced my attending theological college as the only woman! Through that time I had "lapped up" the mystics' writings, the Desert Fathers and Catherine De Huek Doherty, whose work "Poustinia" had a profound effect. She was a Russian writer who took the literal poustinia, a place where hermits would live and others would come for wise spiritual guidance; to finding the poustinia of our own hearts. THAT really appealed to one who up to this time had been more involved as an extrovert with all the "outer" things of life and ministry.

I was then introduced to Henri Nouwen and immediately his work connected with my own journey and



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

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helped “move” me on. His profound spirituality made connections with my soul and I clearly remember the watershed of “the Wounded Healer” addressing the issues of how to minister in a contemporary society. It was a positive and hope filled book that spoke directly to me and I know many men and women who wanted to be of service in the church but find the familiar ways crumbling; as relevant now as then 20 years ago .I remember distinctly sharing with a friend my overwhelming desire to become a wounded healer and that I believed the church, the body of Christ is called to be so. The desire of the inner journey to grow in union with God through Christ the wounded healer par excellence surely is the way? The metaphor has always remained a central part of my soul’s desire and became more and more important as I journeyed through a very “dark night of the soul” and then with the onset of sudden illness and disability. “The Wounded Healer” gave me courage, meaning, direction as I worked with the issues of grief at that time of my life. It continues to this day.

I think Henri Nouwen appeals to me because he is not afraid to “bare his soul”, share his own journey which he desires to connect with the journeys of others, teach and share profound truths and insights he has discovered on the “Way of the Heart”. This is the title of another of his books of how Christians can live in today’s world seeking answers from the 5th century Egyptian Desert Fathers and Mothers.

Over the years my own journey has taught me that God wastes nothing of our experience if we keep saying “YES” to God. Henri Nouwen’s journey took him from being one of the world’s finest spiritual writers teachers, priests, lecturer, holding prestige positions in the world of Harvard, travelling the world on speaking engagements, to letting it all go and making the journey to living in community with the intellectually disabled in L’Arche community at “Daybreak”. In his book “Road to Daybreak” he shares his spiritual journey in the format of a journal in a most personal vulnerable deep and profound way. Here he discovered the God of his heart for whom he yearned in ways he would never have imagined possible.

As I continue to live in the light of the incredible healing I have received

over the past few months I “sense” God doing a “new thing” in me. Over the past eight years in Gippsland I have befriended and spiritually companioned several “disabled” people. More and more people are coming into my life with all types of “disabilities”/limitations” My own experience has given me a deeper understanding and heart for those who live with many and varied disabilities. It seems what is so often missing in their

“By giving words to these intimate experiences I can make my life available to others”

*Henri Nouwen*

care is the opportunity for them to express their unique spirituality and have companions to help them. Again Henri Nouwen has come to mind and I have re-read his “Road to Daybreak”. Of course my journey is and will be different but I make connections with his writing in a new way as I am now.I am happy to “wait upon God” for the revealing of what all this means for my ongoing journey of soul care. The “new thing” has been conceived, I am content to remain pregnant with it as it grows towards the right time for the Holy Spirit to labour within me and give birth. I know I will be accompanied on the journey by my own soul carer and other wise people, friends and the writings and insights of others. The connections go on forever! Thanks be to God.

**Anne Turner, Soul Carer**

**Biography of Henri Nouwen:**

The internationally renowned priest and author, respected professor and beloved pastor Henri Nouwen (pronounced Henry Now-win) wrote over 40 books on the spiritual life. He corresponded regularly in English, Dutch, German, French and Spanish with hundreds of friends and reached out to thousands through his Eucharistic celebrations, lectures and retreats. Since his death in 1996, ever-increasing numbers of readers, writers, teachers and seekers have been guided by his literary legacy. Nouwen’s books have sold over 2

million copies and been published in over 22 languages.

Born in Nijkerk, Holland, on January 24, 1932, Nouwen felt called to the priesthood at a very young age. He was ordained in 1957 as a diocesan priest and studied psychology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. In 1964 he moved to the United States to study at the Menninger Clinic. He went on to teach at the University of Notre Dame, and the Divinity Schools of Yale and Harvard. For several months during the 1970s, Nouwen lived and worked with the Trappist monks in the Abbey of the Genesee, and in the early 1980s he lived with the poor in Peru. In 1985 he was called to join L’Arche in Trosly, France, the first of over 100 communities founded by Jean Vanier where people with developmental disabilities live with assistants. A year later Nouwen came to make his home at L’Arche Daybreak near Toronto, Canada. He died suddenly on September 21st, 1996, in Holland and is buried in King City, Ontario.

Nouwen believed that what is most personal is most universal; he wrote, “By giving words to these intimate experiences I can make my life available to others.” His spirit lives on in the work of the Henri Nouwen Society, Henri Nouwen Stichting, the Henri Nouwen Trust, the Henri J. M. Nouwen Archives and Research Collection, and in all who live the spiritual values of communion, community and ministry, to which he dedicated his life.

(From the Henri Nouwen Society website - [www.henrinouwen.org](http://www.henrinouwen.org))

**Books by Henri Nouwen:**

- Behold the Beauty of the Lord: praying with icons
- In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership
- In the House of the Lord: The journey from Fear to Love.
- The Living Reminder: Making connections between ministry and spirituality
- Making All Things New. “What do you mean by the spiritual life?”
- Reaching Out: The use of the ‘Jesus Prayer’ in the search for God in contemporary society.
- The Inner Voice of Love: A journey through Anguish to Freedom

# Formation Course in Spiritual Direction

**Carolyn Raymond**

Some years ago from her base in Sale, the Rev. Anne Turner began leading Quiet Days for those who were seeking to deepen their spiritual journey with God. These Quiet Days became significant times for all who attended. The formation of the Anam Cara Community began during those Quiet Days. Some of those who joined Anam Cara were able to look for further roads to travel. We began to spend time with Anne as our Spiritual Director in exploring the inner journey. There were several members of Anam Cara who were seeking a formation course which would continue this journey. We were



hoping to find some way of walking with others to increase both our own and their awareness of God's work in our lives. We found a Spiritual Direction course that is run in Melbourne. On the recommendation of Anne our Spiritual Director, five of us applied and were accepted to begin the formation course in Spiritual Direction with the Living Well Centre. This course is run by Canon John Stewart and is based at Holy Trinity in East Melbourne and St Faith's Burwood. It is a four-year course. Each year there are four study blocks throughout the year. As the years have gone on several more members of Anam Cara have seen this as part of their journey. They have been accepted and have also begun the course.

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# Soul Carer's Letter

**Anne Turner**

As I witness the gentle growth of the Community and its taking on a life of its own, I am daily thankful to God for my role as soul carer of the Community. This past year has seen many and varied opportunities right around the Diocese for more people to access ways of making the inward journey. Sometimes these occasions have been educational whilst others giving times for withdrawing to a quiet place with God in the company of others. Each day always has components of worship and reflection whatever the focus of the day. The vision of meeting places around the diocese with "gatherers and soul carers" has proved so beneficial and spread the giftedness of leadership and increased the store of "tools" for the journey. It has also given depth to the leadership team always discerning in prayer directions into which the Holy Spirit seems to be guiding us. The leadership team meets Bi-monthly in the homes of members; We always begin with worship, meditation and silence so that our deliberations may truly be in awareness of the presence of God. My passion as soul carer of the community is to encourage us all especially myself to grow more and more into the awareness of God in every part of life. "Practicing the presence of God - " The Community will continue providing as many and varied opportunities for Associates and others to do just that. Our web servant Colin Thornby has joined the leadership team and his gifts of electronic communication always fulfilled prayerfully have been hugely beneficial. We are discerning who God may be calling to join us for the coming year. The three year time for being part of the leadership team will come to an end at the conclusion of 2010 when present members may choose to leave or change roles within the Community.

My role is essentially one of "being" because of my physical limitations. My "doing" grows out of this and having such a wonderful Community of Associates makes everything grace-filled. Praying the Community Prayer daily is a central part of my role and bringing into mind's eye and heart's care associates at different times. The chiefest prayer for many of us and I would ask for all of us is

for our West Gippsland soul carer John White in his journey with cancer and Marion the gatherer for West Gippsland as she makes her own journey with John as well as being his love and support. I cannot write these words without acknowledging their ongoing contribution to the life of the Community just in who they are, and send our love and prayers to them both via this newsletter.

When a new Associate contacts the Community I send them a personal letter of welcome with all our literature to date. It is always a joy to put faces to names at the various "events" of the community. One of the growing edges of the Community is that we have a number of interstate associates who find spiritual encouragement and feeding from our communications. There has been the offer of a gatherer in the ACT to begin next year. This is exciting for me (and others, I hope) as I spend quite a lot of time in the ACT where our 6 children and families live! It will be good to meet with others of our community in a different place. The leadership team will need to explore what this growing edge means for the community and how best to integrate it.

It is a great thrill to see how our now established community can play a role in furthering the vision for Raymond Island. We have made 3 journeys to the Island this year the last one being in October to the now Abbey of St. Barnabas led by the Abbot. This seemed a significant way to finalise the "days" for the year. We look forward with anticipation to how God will use us in the furthering of the Community at the Abbey.

Of course our final occasion of the year is our annual thanksgiving service and luncheon on Nov 28th at 11am in St. Paul's Cathedral Sale. This is always a wonderful time for new Associates to be welcomed and prayed for, for any new leaders and roles to be commissioned and for us to worship together as a Community. Over lunch there is opportunity to "sign up" for membership for another year and over a meal share our stories.

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## Soul Carer's Letter

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One of my roles is encouraging others to seek out a spiritual director/companion, or soul carer as I prefer to be known. We have a number of Associates who practise the art of this important ministry in different parts of the Diocese. Last year saw four Associates finishing their formation course in Melbourne and now encouraged to practise SD in the Diocese., Bishop John & I are working on formalising the position of lay spiritual directors within the Diocese. Congratulations to Jane Macqueen; Patricia McCann; Carolyn Raymond and Heather Toms. Also to Alison Young who took part in the course through the four years, but chose not to proceed to final accreditation. We plan to have under the auspices of the Community two or three days annually specifically for those involved in this ministry for reflection, support and encouragement.

Finally I thank Jeanette Severs for making the community more widely known through TGA. I am certain I would not be in the state of "wellness" I am today were it not for the prayers of the Community especially at the time of my hip surgery. May we continue our individual and community journeys into God in whom all wholeness of being is found.

With love and prayers,

**Anne Turner**

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*Lost in Wonder: Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of Attentiveness.* Esther de Waal. John Garratt (2003). (RRP \$25)

## Lost in Wonder

### A book review by Carolyn Raymond

This book is sub-titled *Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of Attentiveness* and this is what it aims to do for those who read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it. The book is designed to give the reader the outer structure (or as Esther herself calls it a form of gentle support) for a personal retreat. The book is set out in the form of a number of days. No matter where we are in life, busy working, caring for children, caught up by the demands of life or maybe at home forced there by illness, this book is useful. Its purpose is to awake us into a deeper sense of

attentiveness to God's presence in the world around us.

To do this we must begin by creating that space of quiet and stillness. This is fundamental and Esther feels we cheat ourselves if we do not take time to be still. In other words we must give ourselves a break. In doing this we follow Christ's command "Come and see". Esther proposes the structure of a retreat as a way of going within to be more

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## Formation Course in Spiritual Direction

*(Continued from page 3)*

We have all learnt more about Spiritual Direction. This term can be confusing. The director is there to walk in love with those seeking to deepen their spiritual lives. The director must listen and seek to articulate and clarify for their spiritual companion. Travelling with their spiritual companions, Spiritual Directors seek to hear the Divine invitation. Walking with another, sharing their spiritual journey is an overwhelming privilege. Both are enriched by the sharing and inner growth. It is difficult to find the right word to describe the relationship. Some people are more comfortable with soul friend or spiritual counsellor rather than the term Spiritual Director.

Our first session was unsettling. We arrived not really knowing what to expect. We found that there were lectures, reflections and practice of “real play” Spiritual Direction sessions. Over the years we have been excited to learn more from the giants of our Christian tradition. We have explored our own understanding of God and been challenged to know how our beliefs are unfolding. The reading we have been given has introduced us to new expressions of our faith and has encouraged us to ponder new understandings. This has been a course to deepen our understanding, challenge us to know what we really grasp and seek to listen and share with others.

The original group are now coming to the end of the four-year course. We are in the process of completing a very long essay on a self-chosen topic linked with Spiritual Direction. We await our final assessment. The course has opened inner doors for us. We hope to be able to share this with others who are seeking to walk more closely with God.

### **Carolyn Raymond**

This reflection was written prior to the completion of the formation course. All of the participants from Gippsland completed the formation program.

Further information about this program can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/yzwyub6>

## Lost in Wonder

*(Continued from page 4)*

aware of our whole selves and God's presence in our lives. A retreat is a chance to move into a more balanced life, a life in greater harmony with itself, to become more fully alive.

The book encourages a sense of awe in the midst of daily life, a way to recover the art of seeing. One of Esther's suggestions is to spend a few moments every day with a magnifying glass, to check out our surroundings. The detail and intricacy that will be revealed to us as we look at a flower, an onion skin or a piece of grass will awake a sense of the involvement of God in both the small and great things of life. This awe will deepen the realisation that everything is centred on God.

By taking our own retreat we will be connecting our inner and our outer lives. Esther gives us some material to encourage our reflections. She includes scriptural quotes, (many from the psalms) poetry and quotes from many writers such as Merton and Rowan Williams. The ancient monastic practice of *Lectio Divina* is encouraged when reading all these. Above all the time in silence and prayer is fundamental. Esther describes this as the unflagging, unsentimental, heart-felt contemplative gaze and conversation with God.

The first section is devoted to setting time aside for silence. This is time to concentrate on God who is close at hand, not far off. This is a time for opening ourselves to God, of waiting patiently, expectantly, lovingly, longingly.

The retreat evolves into seeing with the inner eye. Esther develops and encourages us to use visual images as well as poetry and prose. We must never put our imagination aside but use it, dialogue with it and go with it deeper and deeper, layer by layer. I found images came to mind unbidden. I could stay with these and without thought these evolved and developed. Rowan Williams is quoted as calling this an unveiling, something which can be startling. This is a way of being less “thought focused”. The Eastern Church has long known that the intellect can distort God's presence. The truth and grace of God can enter into our souls by

the “eye of the heart”. Here Esther encourages us to gaze at an icon allowing time to be taken beyond words to the depths where the life of God is growing.

Esther gives us support to learn the discipline of silence. To do this she suggests we practise sitting still. This is not as simple as it sounds! Then

we concentrate on our breathing. This will give us space, not to attempt to use the silence but to allow the time of silence to enfold us.

She then encourages the reader to develop the focus of attention. She names this as being close to mystery to the “sense of beyondness which is at the heart of things.” The process of being totally in the present is not easy to describe. Esther uses imagery which is a help. I appreciated having time to rest with her descriptions. It helped me to see

I guess that, in the end, the giving of proper attention to what lies all about us and within us, and to whoever or what ever is before our eyes, is much more than the beginning of wonder. For it's also a pretty good definition of love. And therefore it is also the surest, swiftest way to God, who is both our journey and our journey's end.

*Michael Mayne*

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## Lost in Wonder

*(Continued from page 5)*

with the inner eye and “with eyes washed clean with contemplation.” Again the activity of going for a walk, looking at a painting or concentrating on what is touching us and what we are touching are ways which can help us focus our attention.

This focus on attention can lead us on to an appreciation of change. There is change in the world around us. There is change within ourselves. Our spiritual lives are lives of journey and therefore change. The most powerful factor in this process of change or transformation is the word of God. If we admit God’s word into our lives it will work its way in bringing an altered perspective and a change of view. Esther also sites many contemplatives who were or are always open to new territories of the mind, learning and appreciating from many



visions. There is appreciation of the light and dark of life. The suffering and loss which are part of all our lives can also be gifts and contribute to our transformation.

Esther spoke to me and also gave me a form with which to make the journey myself. This is a book which I have read slowly, I took many more days than were suggested, then I returned to many times. I will finish with a quote which Esther has used from Michael Mayne.

“I guess that, in the end, the giving of proper attention to what lies all about us and within us, and to whoever or what ever is before our eyes, is much more than the beginning of wonder. For it’s also a pretty good definition of love. And therefore it is also the surest, swiftest way to God, who is both our journey and our journey’s end.”

**Carolyn Raymond**

## Poetry

### **And so we live**

Up, up we soar, and scale the sky, and see the sun

So near we’re nearly blinded. Then down we drop –

Down, down to almost drown in oceans deep and dark.

How can we who are human sense the Deity,

Or know that somehow the Divine dwells in us, and

All things? And why do some believe, while others

Add the same sums but arrive at a different answer?

Mysteries abound – confusing some, delighting others.

But if life’s a puzzle, difficult and often painful, it is yet

To be embraced, enjoyed and made much of. And so we live.

### **Wounded and wounding**

Wounded and wounding, we wend our way through life –

Unless, perhaps, we find some place of healing by the road,

Some space to stay awhile and rest, some grace to be renewed.

Then, as the hurting hurt, the healed become the healers

And life and light that has been newly known is shared with

Others. So hearts of stone can freshly feel and reach beyond

Themselves in love. This seems one of life’s many mysteries,

That we who stand in need are often led by winding paths

To find some nourishment to feed upon. And such resources

Must be shared, or they will surely wither up and die.

As Galilee receives and gives fresh water, and teems with fish,

While the Dead Sea (Salt Sea in Jesus’ day) receives but cannot give,

And dies and deals in death. Yet even here there is a paradox,

A therapy that’s sought in briny waters where tired bodies float

In hope of healing. So we conclude that healing’s often found

With serendipity, and the God we thought we knew surprises

Us again (and again, I say).

**Christopher Venning**

### **God goes to school**

God goes to school with the first student  
And leaves with the last teacher,

But does that mean God was not here before?

No, God was here before the school was built –

Before a brick was laid or lesson taught,  
And will remain when all returns to dust.

God goes to school with the RE teacher  
And does not leave, but stays to grow

The seed that has been sown.

Yet God leaves too with students

As the school-day ends; with teachers also.

For God is present and at work within all  
Creation, human and inanimate.

Yes, God creates and re-creates, recycles, resurrects.

Even if it is true that God is always

Here, and everywhere, it remains true too  
God goes to school.

### **Not alone**

It sometimes seems to me these days

That life is hanging by a slender thread.

While young and healthy we feel immortal,

But vulnerability grows with age or illness.

When cancer threatens it breeds uncertainty

But also brings insight. We learn to value

Every day, for every day possesses magic

Of its own – fresh air and warm sunshine,

Birdsong, artistic clouds, green trees, bright

Spring and summer flowers like the daffodil

(Familiar golden symbol of hope to so many).

Each day, too, friendship is a welcome badge

Of our membership of the human family  
And a reminder that, for all our frailty and

Sometimes loneliness, we do not live alone.



# Falling into the Arms of God

Book review by Jo Inglis

Falling into the Arms of God - Meditations with Teresa of Avila. Megan Don (New World Library, 2005).

I would love to have known St Teresa of Avila; however Megan Don has made me feel as if I have journeyed with St Teresa herself as my companion.

Megan Don, the author of Falling into the Arms of God – Meditations with Teresa of Avila, has studied the works of St Teresa of Avila, and travelled to Spain to visit Monasteries and to research St Teresa's life and works.



Teresa was born in Avila, Spain in 1515, and entered the Carmelite Monastery in Avila, in 1535. Meditation became essential to Teresa in establishing a clear and firm foundation with God, with an understanding that this external God also “rests within”.

Megan's book provides a reflective interpretation of one of St Teresa's books, 'The Interior Castle', in which St Teresa likened the soul to a crystal palace. With each of her seven chapters, Megan brings a quote from St Teresa's writing, some reflective words, and then a meditation.

To me, each topic in each chapter encourages an individual journey, and no matter what thoughts and feelings may have been disturbed during this journey, there is always the place of love and peaceful being to return home to; the experience of 'Falling into the Arms of God'.

# Contemplative services in Maffra

Jo Inglis



*Leo vitae diam est luctus, ornare massa mauris urna, vitae sodales et ut facilis dignissim, imperdiet in diam, quisque adipiscing.*

**'In our busy lives it is good to take some time out just to 'be' in God's presence – no experience necessary!'**

This was the heartfelt invitation to gather together for a series of four evening Contemplative Services at St John's Anglican Church, Maffra.

These services commenced on Sunday 9th August, 2009, and continued on the second Sunday of each month, with the last service for 2009, taking place on Sunday 8th November. Another series is planned to commence on the second Sunday in February, 2010

They were introduced as simple services, with quiet music, readings, blessings, words to ponder and silent reflection. Candles were lit to offer thoughts and prayers to God. As the services finished, those gathered were encouraged to leave the church in their own time, so they each had the opportunity to take the silence and the presence of God with them.

The services were guided by the lectionary of the day, and complimented with Blessings from the book 'Benedictus' by John O'Donohue, author of Anam Cara. The words to ponder and the reflections were based on the book 'Falling into the Arms of God – Meditations with Teresa of Avila' by Megan Don. Music was chosen to correspond with the lectionary, blessings, and reflections.

Those who gathered shared in the silence and the stillness of the evenings, and reflected, on their own experiences, thoughts and feelings. The invitation was given to simply 'be' and 'flow' in the love emanating from God.



# Your Journey is Not for You

## Sermon from the Community's End of Year Service

Colin Thornby

I speak in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Well, we come to the end of another year. The Church's year really does end today. A new year begins tomorrow with the first Sunday of Advent, as we begin to look forward to the commemoration of Jesus' coming into our world as one of us. The Church's year is a reflection of our own lives, which are a constant series of endings and new beginnings, of deaths and rebirths, of continual change and growth. For the Christian, the centre of all of this change and renewal is Jesus, who stands as a figure of paradox, challenge and consolation at the same time. It is Jesus we've placed our trust in, Jesus we rely upon and Jesus who gives us the key to our existence and purpose. It is Jesus who calls us to give up everything and follow him, even at the cost of our lives.

The Anam Cara Community's year comes to an end here, too. We have journeyed together in large and small ways, through opportunities to meet together and encounter God in new ways. Some will have found that the old ways no longer fit, like clothes we've grown out of, and bid a fond farewell. Some will have become reacquainted with the old. We have continued to build this community, which has known both growth and loss. We have celebrated the new life that has developed through the ministry of one to another, as well as the new life that has come through tension and problems - as even problems present an opportunity in which God can work, and often chooses to work.

So we've done lots of things. Hopefully in our doing we've kept sight of the call of God to focus on being.

But why have we, as a community, done this? We are a community of prayer and support for the inner journey, in all of its many forms. That's a fine mission statement, as far as it goes. But let me ask you - why do you do this? Why are you

on this journey? Take a moment to sit and ask yourself that question - why am I on this journey? Because we're not frightened of silence we'll allow a minute or two for you to ask yourself that question - because it is key to the reason for our very being.

St Augustine and I would probably not get along terribly well if we met. But one thing that we could agree on is his sentiment, which is expressed very well in the collect I asked Brian and Anne to include in today's liturgy:



*Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I want to suggest to you that this is the reason we make the inner journey - because God has made us for union with him, and because until we rest in that union with God we are absolutely restless. That restlessness is the human condition, in many ways, and finds expression in many outlets. We all know people who are terribly good shoppers. They buy things to distract themselves from the restlessness they feel in their lives. Perhaps you're one of those. There are people who seek to assuage the restlessness in themselves with relationships, sport, drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, television, knowledge, the Internet, politics, property

development, stock market speculation and religion (yes, even religion). Perhaps one of those is the way you seek to meet the ache in your heart - an ache only God can fill. Don't misunderstand me - there are things in those lists that are good when used for good purpose.

As Christians we know in our heads that it is only God who can meet the emptiness in us - what we are sometimes not good at is letting this penetrate down to our guts. Because we still find ourselves running after a new kitchen, or a new house, a new Bible with a calfskin cover, the newest car, new clothes, new books. And do you know what - running after those things is a way that the world has of controlling us - turning us into good consumers and clients. It is only God who really meets us and gives us what we need. The reading from the Gospel is all about that. God does actually know what we need, and God provides it for us. As modern people we tend to want to read passages like that and interpret them symbolically. As Anglo-Saxon people, practical to the end and raised to ensure we've provided for ourselves, we are sickened at the thought of not knowing that we have enough money in the bank, enough superannuation, a reliable car and so on. The tension is, of course, that some of this is good and necessary stuff. But too much focus on it leads to us neglecting to trust in God, who meets us where we are and gives us what we need.

So, we embark on this journey because we're restless, because we often realise, gradually or suddenly, that the things of the world no longer have the allure they did, and we need more. God offers to meet our restlessness and we begin to walk on the path of the inner journey. I think this is a journey that, sooner or later, everyone makes, in their own way. I have a friend who is an experienced spiritual director and, really,

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# Your Journey is Not for You

*(Continued from page 8)*

a mystic. He tends to think that only a few are called to this path. I'm not sure about that - I think everyone walks along this path in some way.

But why the inner journey? Is it just for us? Just to turn us into holier people in union with God? I don't think so.

Your inner journey is not for you.

Your inner journey is a gift to God, a gift to the Church, and a gift to your neighbour. Because the inner journey leads us into deeper love for our neighbour, and if there is any truth to it at all, it leads to more love - more love for God, and more love for those around us. If on our walk we find ourselves becoming bitter, or closed, judgemental or superior, then we can be sure we are straying from the path.

Thomas Merton, one of the 20th century's greatest writers about the inner journey, wrote this close to his death:

*My responsibility is to be in all reality a peacemaker in the world, an apostle, to bring people to truth, to make my whole life a true and effective witness to God's truth.*

Merton really echoes and contracts the thoughts of Paul, which we heard in the reading from the letter to the church at Colossae. I think it bears re-reading:

*Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

*Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with*

*thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. (NLT)*

Some things fall naturally from this tremendously beautiful reading. God chose us - it is God who makes the first move. We're called to be holy people, bound to him in love. The characteristics of being holy people are that we are tenderhearted, merciful, kind, humble, gentle, thankful and patient. We are forgiving because God forgives us, We accept that we're all broken, and all in need of one another's love. We are to live in harmony, and peace. The peace which comes from Jesus is to be the ruler of our hearts - it is this which is to govern our desires, responses and our interaction with others and the world.

What we notice about this reading is that in it Paul reminds us that all of this



happens in community. Sometimes in our walking along the journey we feel that we're all alone. I've experienced that recently. I felt as though I was isolated, in a hole and estranged from all of those around me - even those who wished to be with me, love me, care for me and support me. While there is a truth in saying that we do make this journey alone, just with God, there is also a great truth in Paul's observation that we do this in community - teaching and counselling one another with the wisdom of God. Celebrating with one another, as we do today. Remembering that when we love and care for one another we do it as a representative, an icon, of Jesus. Jesus, who always points to God the Father.

The support of others in this journey is terribly important. Without it we run the risk of becoming cold, losing the way, spinning off on our own, or

simply wandering in the wrong direction. So God calls us to be in community with one another, in our church, in the Anam Cara Community, with those God gives us as friends and encouragers on the way. Some will find the help of their parish priest, a spiritual director, soul friend or spiritual companion helpful - I know many who are here will be used to that. Such a guide can be a valuable way of ensuring that we stay on the path. And we should never forget that the process of being in such a relationship is often a two-way one. Paul, again, notes this - we're to teach and counsel each other with God's wisdom. Of course, that last point is very important too - God's wisdom. Much that runs around the world today wearing the clothes of spirituality or mysticism is not really God's wisdom, or if it is, it is dressed up in some unhelpful clothes. I would urge you to pray, talk to your wise friends, and

investigate thoroughly before you become caught up in the newest and most vogue way of meditating, or the most cutting edge critique of traditional theology - some of this is vanity, well-meaning, but unhelpful. Some will help you on the journey, some will not.

So - we make this journey because we respond to God's original creation of us, as being made for relationship with him. We make this journey for love of God, for love of our neighbour. We make this journey authentically, knowing that some of what seems to meet the needs of our restless hearts actually captures them. We make this journey in community, to keep us balanced and to allow us to serve others.

As we come to Advent tomorrow I challenge you to rededicate yourself to the journey. Advent is a good time to do things like that, to make new beginnings, or to begin anew. Or simply to pull out the map and make sure you're going in the direction you think you are.

The Lord be with you!

This sermon was delivered at St Paul's Cathedral in Sale on 28 November 2009.

# Quiet Days for 2010

## The Community will once again host a range of quiet days during 2010.

**February 2010:** The first Quiet Day for 2010 was held in Sale. The theme was 'The Fruits of Summer'.

**March 2010:** The South Gippsland Meeting Place will host the second Quiet Day for the Year, to be held at Dumbalk Valley Garden Centre, 825 Farmers Road, Dumbalk North on 20 March 2010 from 10am to 3.30pm. The theme is "How to Become a Saint". Contact Colin for further information (colin@anamcara-gippsland.org or 03 5658 1086). The cost for the day is \$5 per person. Participants are asked to bring their own lunch.

**April 2010:** Provisionally at Raymond Island. Date to be confirmed.

**May 2010:** Provisionally in West Gippsland. Date to be confirmed.

**June 2010:** Provisionally in South Gippsland. Date to be confirmed.

b Provisionally in the Latrobe Valley, to coincide with NAIDOC week. The focus will be Indigenous spiritualities.

**August 2010:** Provisionally to be held in Sale. Date to be confirmed. The theme will be use of the labyrinth.

**September 2010:** Provisionally to be held in West Gippsland. Date to be confirmed.

**October 2010:** Provisionally to be held in the Latrobe Valley. Date to be confirmed.

**November 2010:** Annual Thanksgiving and Commissioning for Ministry, St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

**The best way to keep in touch with the Community's activities is to subscribe to our electronic mailing list:**

Visit: <http://tinyurl.com/joinanamcara>

and follow the easy instructions to add yourself to our lists.



## How to Become a Saint

*Using the ancient way of St Benedict in the modern world.*

20 March 2010  
10am to 3.30pm  
Dumbalk Valley Garden Centre, 825  
Farmers Road, Dumbalk North  
BYO lunch

Contact: colin@anamcara-gippsland.org  
or 03 5658 1086.

## On missed deadlines...

### Editors are plagued with deadlines.

And I really should know better, because whenever I have a deadline something seems to get in the way! A large number of things have interposed themselves between this newsletter and my keyboard - but now it is here, and I hope it is worth the wait!

You'll notice, perhaps, that the newsletter has been given a name - *Waterholes*. This name was chosen intentionally - we hope that the newsletter will provide you with a waterhole, a place for refreshment and encountering God.

If you have anything you'd like to contribute (book reviews, poetry, reflections, articles), please email them to me at [colin@anamcara-gippsland.org](mailto:colin@anamcara-gippsland.org)

Enjoy.

Colin

