



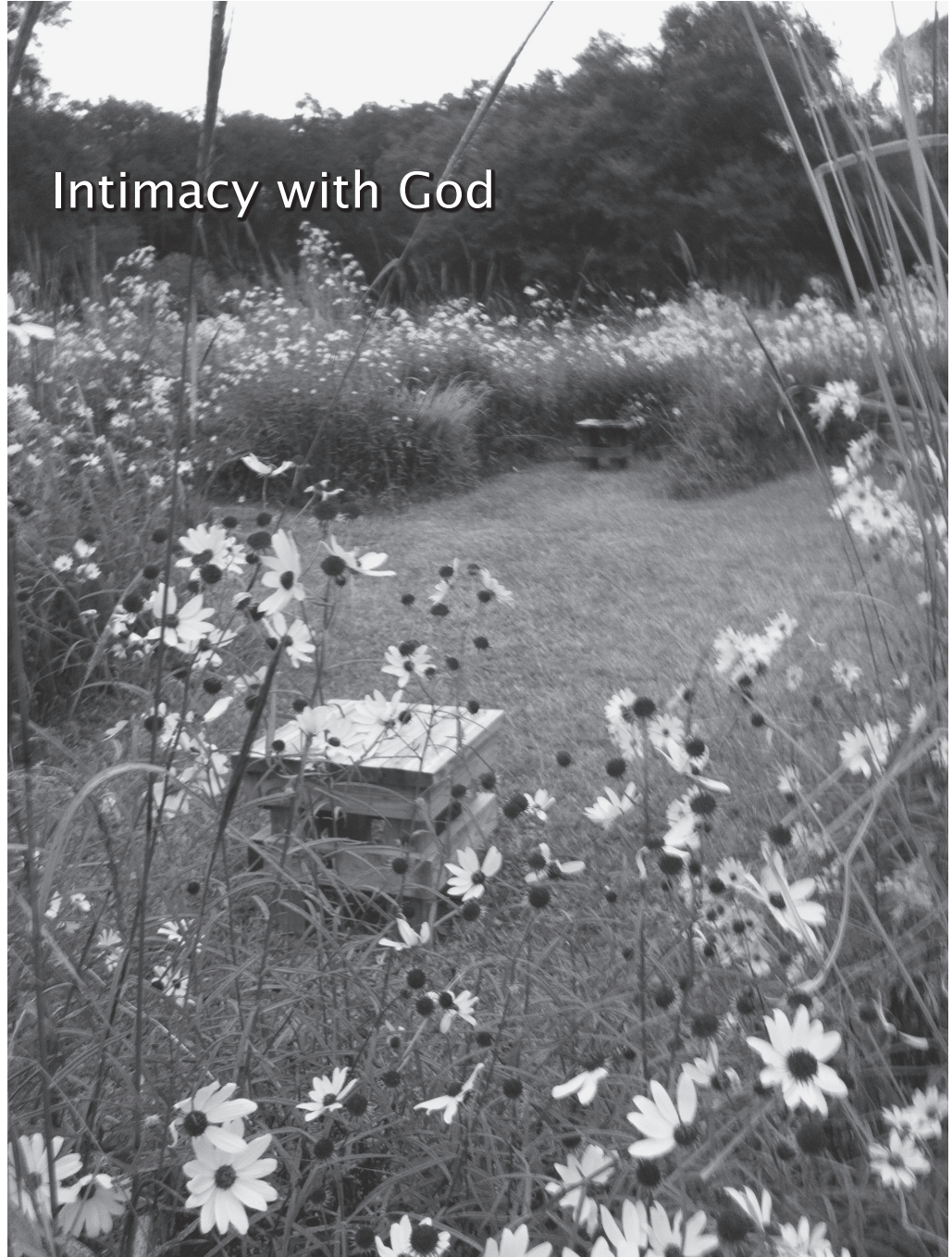
The Anchorage
A Contemplative Ministry
Come away...

DEPTH SOUNDINGS

Encouragement, Inspiration and News from The Anchorage

May 2015

Intimacy with God



*anchor
deep*

Center of mile long labyrinth at Mepkin Abbey

“Is It OK to Be Mystical?”

by Catherine Powell

Welcome to our new Depth Soundings readers! You might not know that we often stay with the same theme for all four quarterly issues and this is the fourth issue of this year's theme, "Intimacy with God."

The main reason this theme was chosen was in order to bring into the light an essential part of the Christian life that is rarely named. I've heard speakers, even ministers, use the word "mystical" by saying, "Now I'm not saying it was anything mystical, but..." as if they were afraid someone might think they were levitating when they prayed, or going into trances. Then they go on to describe an encounter with God that was holy, so full of the numinous, and they have rejected the word "mystical."

What I claim as the meaning of the word is "an encounter with God." Most people I know would say they have encountered God – thereby I would include their experience as mystical. Webster's says: "Having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence." "Involving or having the nature of an individual's direct subjective communion with God or ultimate reality."

Is that inviting? Now is the time to reclaim this word. When I told someone I wanted to use the phrase "Union with God" as the theme for the year, he said, "That sounds too mystical." When I told someone else (who would claim the word mystical for himself, along with the word ordinary) that I wanted to use "Union with God" but had settled for "Intimacy with God" to avoid turning people off, he said, "It's the same thing." Maybe "Ordinary Mystics" would have worked and made the point? Anyone who has had an encounter with God can claim the name "ordinary mystic." Each day there are mystical events, burning bushes everywhere, if only we could see them.

Take a moment and reflect on your encounters with God, from the birth of a child, to sunsets, to the death of a loved one, to an "aha" on a retreat, or in Scripture, to a new awakening to this One who knows you and loves you! I invite you to open your heart to claim the truth of these words for yourself and for others! Such Easter joy!

“That Which Cannot Be Expressed”

For Thomas Merton and James Finley

There is something in the silence
something silver in the silence
something raw and pure and precious
just beyond the flying dark.

There is humming in the silence
a persistent, light refrain
reminiscent of the rising
skyward music of the lark.

There is sadness in the silence
like a blanket knit of sorrows
that will never keep the anguish
of its marrow from your bones.

There's a seeing within silence
of a distant glowing truth
that shimmers like a single jewel
hidden under desert stones.

There is a rising up in stillness
of a swift uncanny joy
that can sweep you all unknowing
to the edge of what you know.

It is luminous, this silence,
it's an opalescent siren-pearl
that lures you unresisting
To the place you cannot go.

~jo ann steger hoffman

This poem was published in the Fall 2014 issue of *The Merton Seasonal*, the Quarterly Journal of the International Thomas Merton Society.

(Thanks to Jo Ann for this poem and for her support of The Anchorage over many years. Her deep love for God is the foundation of her life. She is a writer, editor, teacher and former communications director whose publications include a children's book, a variety of short stories and poems in literary journals and a non-fiction book, Angels Wear Black. A native of Toledo, Ohio, she and her husband now live in Cary, North Carolina.)



The Anchorage

Vision

For all people everywhere to see God more clearly, love God more dearly and follow God more nearly. For when just one person moves toward living out of that graced space, where we know we are loved, there is a ripple effect which is our best hope for the healing of our world. The Anchorage wants to contribute to that hope.

Mission

The Anchorage provides a setting in which women and men may come away to be with God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ; and to come to love more deeply, through contemplative retreats, book studies, and spiritual direction this God who loves us beyond measure.

Metaphor

A safe harbor in which to anchor deep in still waters as a respite from the wind and waves; where pilgrims may enjoy prayerful grace, honor the rhythm of Sabbath and open more fully to the mystery of God's love.

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“An Intimate Experience of the Spiritual Exercises”

by Mary Pollini

When I was asked if I would write about *Intimacy with God*, what immediately surfaced was my experience of the 30-Day Retreat of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. The Exercises provided a unique experience which greatly deepened my relationship with God.

At the start of Week One of The Exercises, my spiritual director asked me to pray for “a more *intimate* knowledge of the love God has for me.” God did not waste any time gifting me with that grace! I had arrived at the Jesuit Center with terrible sciatica pain. On the first day of the retreat, I attempted to take a walk. I didn’t get very far when the pain grew worse, and I decided to return to the house, not knowing how I would make it back. It was then that I spotted a plastic chair among the trees! I knew that chair was there for me! When I sat down, tears of gratitude rolled down my face. Ignatius’ reminds us: love is shown more in deeds than in words, and I certainly experienced God’s intimate love for me from the get-go!

Week Two provided an opportunity to reflect on and become a part of Jesus’ life and ministry in a very personal way. Each day I prayed for the grace “to know God more *intimately*, love God more intensely, and follow God more closely.” By using my imagination and placing myself in various gospel scenes, my relationship with Jesus deepened. During that time, I participated in Jesus’ birth (I supported Mary’s back as she pushed) and became a member of the household of the Holy Family. I handed Jesus his cloak after he was baptized by John and sat with him as he struggled in the desert. He slept with his head in my lap when the waves began to pound the boat, and after calming the storm, spoke gently to me about my faith during the storms in my life. I became Jesus’ servant, disciple, friend and confidant.

The grace of knowing, loving, and following more intimately continued to grow during Week Three as I accompanied Jesus in his final days and his crucifixion. I can only describe that week as heart-wrenching. I anointed Jesus’ feet with perfume and Jesus tenderly washed my feet. We shared his last meal. Jesus and I shed tears together in the garden. When Jesus fell, I picked up one side of the crossbeam, and we shouldered his cross together. I actually found myself hammering the nails into his flesh! After Jesus’ death, I helped prepare his body for burial. I was not a spectator, but an intimate participant. As intensely painful as that week was, it truly was a gift.

My prayerful encounters with the resurrected Jesus during Week Four were filled with peace and promise. But it was on the last day that God gave me something to remind me of this most intimate experience. I took a walk (no need for a strategically placed chair - my back was better!), and as I stepped out of the retreat house, my foot kicked a small metal S hook. I unconsciously picked it up and stuck it in my pocket. When I got back to my room, I began to pray with the assigned reading. When I realized the passage was about Jesus’ invitation to the disciples to cast their net again, I remembered the hook and pulled it out of my pocket. In that instant, the hook became the net in the gospel story. Jesus spoke to my heart, reminding me that I have the qualities of the disciples on that boat. He then added: “but, I am the Hook!”

God ended my retreat as it began: with God’s love for me being shown in a tangible way. God indeed has caught me and has never let me go! It has been eight years since my 30-Day retreat, and the intimacy between us continues to deepen.

(Thanks to Mary for this article and for her friendship. She is A Native New Yorker who is grateful to have met Catherine at the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, PA in 2000. Mary has been making directed retreats there since 1991 and made the 30-day Spiritual Exercises in 2007. She serves as Chair of the Math Dept. at Holy Cross HS, Flushing, NY and runs a faith sharing group with the students. She enjoys ministering in her parish. She completed a two-year spiritual direction training program at the Upper Room, Neptune, NJ in 2012. Mary looks forward to retiring in a few years so that she can spend more time doing spiritual direction and retreats)



Upcoming Events

2015

Sun. – Wed., June 28 - July 1
3-day Ignatian Directed Retreat
using the Ignatian method of entering into scripture with your imagination, companioned by a spiritual director in daily meetings, and walking the lovely grounds of the **Avila Retreat Center Durham, NC.**

Fee: \$320 \$10 deposit (May 31)
Led by Catherine Powell
Space for 5 (4 openings now)

Mon. – Fri., July 13 – 17,
4-day Ignatian Directed Retreat
using the Ignatian method of entering into scripture with the imagination, companioned by a spiritual director in daily meetings, and joining the Trappist monks for prayer. The grounds and famous Luce Gardens are beautiful along the Cooper River at **Mepkin Abbey in Moncks Corner, SC.**

Fee: \$350 \$10 deposit (June 28th)
Led by Catherine Powell
Space for 5 (4 openings now)

Fri. – Mon., July 17-20
3-day Ignatian Directed Retreat
(same as above only a day shorter and over the weekend for those who have a Mon – Fri. job.)
Mepkin Abbey (Trappist) Moncks Corner, SC

Fee: \$300 \$10 deposit (June 28th)
Led by Catherine Powell
Space for 5

Mon. – Mon., July 13-20,
7-day Ignatian Directed Retreat
(same as above except it is 7 days – definitely the most fruitful of these listed. Well worth the time.)
Mepkin Abbey (Trappist) Moncks Corner, SC

Fee: \$650 \$10 deposit (June 28th)
Led by Catherine Powell
Space for 5 (4 openings now)

Sept. 14 – 18, 4-day Ignatian Directed Retreat. (See above)
Mepkin Abbey, (Trappist) Moncks Corner, SC

Fee: \$350 \$10 deposit (Aug. 20th)
Led by Catherine Powell
Space for 5 (4 openings now)

**If \$10 is all you can pay,
then that’s all you pay!**



The Anchorage

A Contemplative Ministry

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*“Make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.”
Isaiah 40:3b*

“Something NEW: Desert Days”

by Catherine Powell

If you are open to, even thirsty for, some “Intimacy with God” may I introduce a new twist to an ongoing event with The Anchorage. For years we have offered Quiet Days, at least spring and fall, sometimes more often. The basic idea coincides with the reason we exist: to encourage and provide space for men and women to be alone with God in silence, to listen for whatever God might have for you.

Beginning with our new fiscal year, July 1, we are offering a series of Desert Days for YOU – wherever you are! Every first Friday in even months, we will support Desert Days all over the country!

The first Desert Day will be on Friday, August 7.

The format will be simple, so that anyone can do it. If you want to join in a Desert Day with a group, or by yourself, or host a group, let us know as soon as you know and your name and location will be added to our list.

Participants are invited to arrive between 9 and 9:30, for coffee/hot tea. At 9:30 the host will provide a brief introduction to the space, such as where restrooms are, where guests may roam, sit or walk for time alone with God. An indication of how lunch will be announced, (ring a bell?) and where to come. Then brief introductions to each other, with name and hometown, and a sense of what nudged you to be there that day.

Guests may brown bag, or bring \$10 to pay for lunch.

Hosts may use a schedule provided by The Anchorage, including times for an opening prayer, music for settling in, Scripture or another reading for pondering, then time with God in solitude, lunch, more settling in with music, prayer and another reading for the afternoon, and more time with God. The closing, around 2:15, would be a time for instrumental music while guests discern what to share, and then anyone may share what they have received, thus creating a ripple effect



View from center of labyrinth at Mepkin Abbey

Financial Status as of March 31, 2015 (Fiscal Year is July 14 – June 15)

Total gifts budgeted	\$ 16,620
Total received	\$ 8,718
Amount needed	\$ 7,902
Total income budgeted	\$ 33,480
Total received	\$ 18,053
Amount needed	\$ 15,427

Praising God for you, our awesome donors and participants!

Gifts for Printing

Thanks for your fantastic response last year to our request for funds to print “Depth Soundings” for those who prefer/require a printed copy. Thank you for your generosity!

All gifts are fully tax-deductible.

Something New Continued...

to know what others have received. A prayer/benediction to end the day no later than 2:30 or 3 depending on the group.

Consider this! If you are on vacation in Anaheim on a Desert Day, and you look on the website to see if anyone is hosting a group, you could ask the host if you might join the group for the day! I love the image of the whole country full of dots representing people who are taking time for solitude with God.