Companions

Who am I? What are my deepest desires? What gives meaning to my life? What is my place in the world? How can I live my life more fully? How can I make a difference? Who are my companions?

Le Point Vierge

By Thomas Merton

At the center of our being
Is a point of emptiness which is untouched
By sin and illusion,
A point of pure truth
Which is inaccessible
To the fantasies of our mind
Or the brutalities of our will.
This little point of emptiness
And of absolute poverty
Is the pure glory of God in us.
It is, so to speak,
His name written in us.
It is like a pure diamond blazing
With the invisible light of heaven.
It is in everybody
And if we could only see it,
We would face the blaze of a sun
That would make all the darkness and cruelty vanish forever.

From “Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander”

For information on the practice of centering prayer:
www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Contemplation

The word contemplation conjures up a variety of images. For many of us, it brings to mind settings of austerity, silence, and discipline—Buddhist monks wrapped into physical poses ideal for meditation or robed Catholic monks walking in long lines and chanting. I would like to offer a few definitions of contemplation. Some say that contemplation is a loving, simple, permanent attention toward God and others. (1) Others describe contemplation simply as the state of being absorbed in something outside of one’s self. (2) Another definition is radical self-giving. (3) Yet another is that of being open to and receptive of God and others. (4) According to these definitions, contemplation is not that far removed from the ordinary person’s realm. I like to think of contemplation as a stance of openness and receptivity. When considered this way, contemplation becomes a way of being that I can engage in whether I am sitting alone quietly or actively interacting with others. A contemplative stance has little to do with actual activity or rest; rather the distinction seems to lie in how we hold ourselves—with openness and receptivity or with closedness and rushing.

For example, I might best prepare for a full day ahead of me by taking the time to reflect in the morning on how to be open and receptive to others throughout the day (act of reflection), and as the day progresses I remember the resolve that I made from the morning and interact with others in an open and receptive manner (reflective action). Reflection contains activity and action contains reflection. Contemplation marks both the reflection and the action, and it reveals itself in a stance of openness and receptivity. Furthermore, because we have established both that contemplation is accessible to the ordinary person and also that contemplation is a part of our reflection and our action, we can make a final conclusion: all of us are called to contemplative living. That is to say, we are called to openness and receptivity to God, others, and ourselves.

Living contemplatively does not mean separating ourselves from the world. Openness and receptivity implies engaging others, interacting in everyday life. It asks that we intentionally choose our way of being with God and others. Living contemplatively invites us into a pace of life that allows a bit of space between what happens to us and how we react. To be open to and receptive of others also implies slowing down, choosing at times to rest and reflect. Harried activity, one thing after another, rushing, frustration and shortness can cause us to feel closed off and isolated from others. Living contemplatively invites us to choose a balance among the tensions of activity and leisure. Many of us make resolutions when the New Year arrives. Consider how contemplative living might be (come) part of your life this year.

1 Francis de Sales
2 William Barry and William Connolly
3 Gustavo Gutierrez
4 Maureen Conroy

"As the contemplative dimension becomes more present, our mental health improves and physical illness rooted in psychological stress subsides"
—Fr. Thomas Keating
Event Updates

Companions on a Journey
College of Saint Benedict
St. Joseph, MN  56374
320-363-5939
www.csbsju.edu/journey
Companions newsletters written and compiled by Christine Munger

We invite you to engage in the daily experiences of life’s journey through a spiritually dynamic exchange of listening and responding to God, self, and others via accompanied vocational reflection of the whole person in specific contexts.

Updates for alums:

- For those who have been actively meeting: please keep your eyes open in late January for an alumnae group survey designed to help us get a sense of how your group experiences are going, as well as to scope your interest in further workshops or retreats.

- For those waiting to be placed in groups: we expect to send group updates with contact information through e-mail by January 31.

- For those who have been placed in groups: please initiate conversation with your group members about when to begin meeting.

Questions? Contact Christine: cmunger@csbsju.edu or 320-363-5940
RSVP to Jodie: jpeschl@csbsju.edu or 320-363-5939

Training Updates:
Companions on a Journey will offer two Introduction to Group Spiritual Companioning trainings in the spring of 2008. The trainings are a good way to learn more about the process. They also prepare you to join or start a group. Trainings are not required for all members, but are highly encouraged. If you cannot attend one of the full-day trainings, we will work with your group to plan a mini-training.

Saturday, March 15, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
Introduction to GSC, Carondelet Center, College of Saint Catherine, St. Paul, MN,

Saturday, March 1, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
Introduction to GSC, Spirituality Center, College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, MN,

Monday, April 21, 2008
Closing Banquet, Gorecki Conference and Dining Center, CSB. Time TBA.

Mark your calendars!

March 27-28, 2008
Women’s Spirituality Conference and Workshop, with keynote speaker, Anne E. Patrick, Going After a Life: The Myth and Mystery of Vocation.

April 10-12, 2008
Changing Faces Conference and Workshop Diversity Series, with keynote speaker Shaun Copeland from Boston College.