

Summer Retreat Reflection

Anna M. Donnelly, Southeastern Region Board of Directors

"You can't get away from your first twenty years." So said a college teacher of writing when suggesting topics to a class I took before having lived twenty years. Fair warned, I now better understand the statement and accept its consequences, aided by a hindsight enhanced with more decades, and the insights of many retreats, not to mention life itself.

The focus of the Southeastern Region's July 2009 retreat on the latter part of our life's journey harmonized well with a recent reading of a book by Robert Wilkens on the early Christian church for a group study on ecclesiology^[1]. The author quotes from Augustine's *The Trinity* (1.3.5), "Let us set out on the street of love together making for Him of whom it is said, 'Seek his face always' (Ps. 105:4)", which readily summarized the retreat days. Wilkens notes

that psalmist David wasn't just referring to God in the way we know things ordinarily, "but to intimacy with God, delight in God, loving God, knowing even as one is known", and discovering "that finding leads to further seeking" (p. 108). Indeed what a journey it is, with thresholds of encounter to be crossed 24/7—the *always* of the seeking.

We are deeply grateful to retreat leader Paula D'Arcy (and musicians Chris and Gloria Hughes) for so generously sharing extraordinary gifts that help make the invisible visible, the seemingly impossible possible, and the coming home to a finding within the seeking.

1. Wilkens, Robert Louis. *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. Chapter 4, "Seek His Face Always."

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PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

Dr. Robert R. Moore, DOC President

Revelation 8:3-5 reads: "Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar: he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth: and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake."

The larger context of these three verses is the second of four major visions John experienced on the island of Patmos. In chapter five John, in the vision, had seen a seven-sealed scroll given to the Lamb, the only person capable of breaking the seals and revealing its contents. The immediate context of our three verses is the breaking of the seventh seal. The verses obviously are about prayer. John sees an angel with a golden censer who stands before the golden altar. Then the angel "was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of the saints."

Now at this point try to see the picture John was seeing. You may picture

angels differently than I do, but it doesn't matter. Each of us can picture in our minds an angel standing before the heavenly altar with a censor filled with incense. The way I picture the censor is to visualize the type of censor used by Roman Catholic priests when they swing a censor of incense during a Mass.

The important thing for our purpose, as we view our pictures, is to see the mingling of the incense with the prayers of the saints. It is important to remember that in the New Testament a "saint" is simply a Christian believer. The fact that this mingling of the incense and prayers was done over the altar symbolizes the sacrificial death of Christ. It is the death of Jesus that gives power to our prayers. After his resurrection and ascension, he became the great high priest of heaven who constantly intercedes for us (Heb 8:1-2). And our prayers go directly to him.

Moreover the mingling of incense and prayers over the altar symbolizes the sacrificial nature of our prayers. I believe this is particularly true for intercessory prayers, prayers for others. There is a sacrificial element involved when we pray

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for others.

Next John saw the smoke and prayers rising before God. That symbolizes the mysterious way that our prayers affect the spiritual realm. Many Christians never think about the struggle between good and evil in the spirit realm, but that struggle is ongoing. As the apostle Paul says in Eph. 6:11-12, "Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh; but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." A powerful symbolic account of the heavenly struggle is seen in Revelation 12, which I suggest you read.

There is no explanation in John's vision about how this mingling of the incense and prayers over the altar works in the spirit realm. There is just this picture of the prayers reaching God. And somehow those prayers have a positive effect on the struggle between good and evil in that realm.

As we see from other parts of the New Testament, our prayers just as mysteriously, affect what happens here on the earth. God's Spirit moves in mysterious ways in response to our prayers. I do not profess to understand this. There was a day when I thought I did; but as the years have passed, I have come to realize that I don't really understand how prayer works.

Nevertheless a passage like this is very encouraging. It gives me confidence that our prayers do indeed reach God. And by faith I believe that they make a difference in both the spirit and earthly realms. They help in the battle against evil in the spirit

realm, and in this realm they help God to help us and those for whom we pray.

Verse five also is important. The angel filled his censor with fire from the altar and flung it down upon the earth. And the result is expressed in apocalyptic imagery: "peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightening, and an earthquake." In the Revelation, apocalyptic imagery of this type symbolizes the end time. As this vision that John was seeing continues, he sees a series of seven trumpets and one of seven bowls that symbolically describe the wrath of God that will be poured out in the end time on evil ones who refuse to repent. Therefore, this little apocalyptic verse five is a sign that a larger description of the end time is coming.

In summary, we conclude from this mediation that our prayers, "the prayers of the saints," are powerful. They are powerful, because of the sacrifice of Christ. We also conclude that our prayers of intercession are sacrificial in nature. Thus our prayers are important. They are important, because they are effective in both the spirit and earthly realms. They help to defeat the powers of evil in the spirit realm, and they help the Holy Spirit to help us in this earthly realm.



collective psycho-therapy. Prayer and worship literally open our minds to give and receive communication from God, the Mind of the universe. Mind-mind communication can change the "mental wiring" that influences the way we interact with our world. God's real action upon us opens up the reality of Mind-to-mind miracles.

MIRACLES OF MIND-TO-MIND COMMUNICATION

Paul's letters, our earliest Christian writings, show examples of Mind-to-mind miracles. Paul describes his experience of the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. Note that most gifts of the Spirit involve divine-human or Mind-mind communication of thoughts, feelings and a new Christ-centered self-consciousness that changes one's experience of the world. Paul's Mind-to-mind miracles include the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, inspired preaching/teaching, discernment of spirits, speaking and interpreting tongues. (See 1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

MIND-TO-MIND MIRACLES: HOW JESUS CHANGES OUR WORLD

In the Old Testament, God's communication was limited to an elite group called the prophets and of course rulers like David and Solomon. (See Psalms 1-72, 1 Kings 3:1-15) Yet, Joel's prophecy, cited at Pentecost by Peter in Acts 2:17-21 describes a new age when God 'will is now communicating with men and women, young and old, citizen and slave □ everybody. Paul's letters are exhibit A for the case that Jesus introduced to the world a new sense of God's regular and even miraculous communication with humankind. Jesus' sayings, acknowledged even by the Jesus Seminar skeptics, articulate the beginning of a new era of God's wider

communication with us -- Mind-to-mind. Philip Clayton, our scout on the science-religion frontier, gives new reasons for the hope that is within us -- to transform the world as we practice the disciplines of prayer and worship both alone and in Christian community.

Eucharist Prayer

Sybil Austin Skakle, Southeastern Region Board member

Lord, I am yours. You are mine.
You bless me by your presence.

I have known the role of impaired,
Betrayed, grieved and guilty sinner.
You have dealt with my pride,
Yet convinced me of your love.
I am a wounded healer,
Broken that you might use
My pain to heal others.

You promise blessing for affront.
You promise hope for every doubt.
You promise Eternal life □
Understanding beyond death.

You taught me love beyond rejection.
To forgive in spite of hostility.
Thank you for my life, God.
Thank you for claiming me for your
own.
Teach me to truly worship You.

10-22-09

*Dispatches From the Frontier of Science and Christian Theology: How
Jesus (Literally) Changes the World or the New Credibility of Mind-to-Mind
Miracles*

John Lurvey, DOC National Vice President and Western Region President

When asked how Jesus changes the world we might think of Jesus' life that modeled an unprecedented moral excellence. Others might say that Jesus emphasizes the mercy and love of God. Still others might frame Jesus' life and death as a unique atoning sacrifice that pardons all sin and guilt. Another might say that Jesus' resurrection gave humanity a concrete hope of life-after-death in a heavenly paradise as opposed to hell or Sheol's "world of forgetfulness." Jesus himself said that he was the beginning of God's sovereign rule or kingdom of God on earth (Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20, Luke 17:20-21) In light of the delay of the world-ending apocalypse expected by early Christians like Paul and John, how did Jesus literally begin God's sovereign rule that changes the world?

A SCOUT REPORTS FROM THE
SCIENCE-THEOLOGY FRONTIER

The answer to this question comes from the crags and mists of that volatile frontier between natural science and Christian theology. One of our best frontier scouts is Philip Clayton, an up-and-coming Christian philosopher and theologian at Claremont's University. Clayton possesses a familiarity with the language and lore of both science and religion.

He writes that one of the cherished dogmas of the scientific establishment limits real causes to physical entities pushing and pulling one another. Non-physical causes draw out a cranky, dogmatic scientific skepticism that, like some medieval popes, ignores contrary evidence.

SCIENCE DOGMA CHALLENGED

If it is true that only physical entities cause action in the world, then our experience of mental freedom of choice and moral decision-making are delusions. If our human mind is only our physical brain then science has good evidence to support its dogma: Clayton cites three decades of neural-biological research that show how the mind alters the "wiring" or neural functioning of the brain. A growing body of scientists and philosophers acknowledge that the mind is a non-physical cause that uses the brain to act upon and change the brain, the body and the world.

Common sense experience tells us that our minds can cause changes of location, hair color and (sometimes) body weight. Each of us has a long list of examples where our mind changes us and the world around us.

DOES GOD RELATE TO THE WORLD
LIKE OUR MIND RELATES TO OUR
BODY?

Professor Clayton not only distinguishes the human, self-conscious mind from the brain. He says God literally acts in our world like our self-conscious mind acts upon the brain, body and world. God actually communicates with our minds and through that communication acts upon us, society and nature itself. We might call this divine-human action Mind-mind communication. It allows contemporary divine action without violating natural law. When we pray and worship we are not simply engaging in auto-suggestion or

Western Region Report 2008-09

John Lurvey, DOC National Vice President and Western Region President

The western region continues to focus on Christ-centered spiritual growth and peacekeeping in the second half of life. Forty-five to ninety represents the age range of our 80 plus mailing list of constituents and members.

We continue to hold spring retreats at Loch Leven Conference Center in Mentone, California and in the fall at Old Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center in Oceanside, California.

During 2008-09 we drew 22-25 retreatants at each site. Dr. Robert Moore was our retreat leader in October of 2008, accompanied by his wife, Tillie. He spoke on the topic "The Bible: Balm or Bomb." Retreatants reflected upon the use of the Bible for peace-making as well as its influence in motivating violence. Debra Matthews Shrader (Bill/Norma Matthews) was our music leader.

In May, 2009, 22 retreatants gathered for presentations by Rev. Cavalain Hawkins on "Peace Through Prayer." This was one of our most racially-inclusive retreats. Rev. Hawkins used both power-point and video media to supplement his oral presentations. Very positive responses emerged from the evaluations.

Rev. Lloyd Saatjian, one of our members who spoke at the national retreat in 1995 died in July of 2009. Rev. Dan Genung's death was memorialized in the New Life News.

We now use conference calling to hold our board meetings through Copper Conferencing which saves time, money and is environmentally friendly since we do not drive. The western region now has three chapters and is building a fourth.

Our first chapter in San Diego is now matched by an active chapter in Orange

County. Our newest Northwest chapter draws members from Oregon. We meet once per month on a conference call hosted by the western region president. Bea Turner, formerly of the Florida region, is the coordinator of the Northwest chapter. Rick Pearce is now organizing a chapter for the Los Angeles area south of the Santa Monica Mountains. Active chapters provide our best method to maintain and grow our active membership. Each chapter draws from five to nine attendees to their monthly meetings.

Dr. James Wagner will lead our October 16-18, 2009 retreat. His theme will be "Forgiveness: The Jesus Way." We are limited to about 25 retreatants at Old Mission San Luis Rey as other groups now use the facility.

In 2010, we will hold one retreat in October at Loch Leven, our lowest cost site. Hopefully, as many as seven to ten of us will travel to the national retreat. We will hold a Day-Apart led by Rev. Judith Favor at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, California on Monday, March 29, during Holy Week. Another Day Apart may be held.

Focusing on Jesus

Richard Foster

Nothing is more important in Christian spiritual formation than our need to continue ever focused upon Jesus. This is not formation-in-general. This is formation into Christ-likeness. Everything hangs on this. Everything. He is alive. He teaches, rules, guides, instructs, comforts. Stay close to him in all things and in all ways.

(From *RENOVARE* Pastoral Letter, May 2003)



North Central Region Report

Sylvia Gerkin, North Central Region President

A retreat was held May 29-31, 2009 at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein with 20 retreatants. The retreat was led by Dr. C. Reginald (Reggie) Johnson, Dean of the School of Theology and Formation of Asbury Theological Seminary with music by Martha & Irwin Wason. The theme was "Learning to Pray Again." The only active chapter in the North Central Region that I am aware of is at Copeland

Oaks, a retirement community where a number of our active members live.

We voted to hold our spring retreat in 2010 at the end of April even though the national retreat will be held in the summer. The board felt that many of our faithful retreat attendees would not be physically able to make the longer trip to North Carolina.

Southeastern Region Report

John Bankson, Southeast Region President

The Southeastern Region met for its annual summer retreat at Caraway Baptist Retreat Center in Asheboro, NC from July 15-19. We were led by Paula D'Arcy of Austin, TX. The music and worship was led by Gloria and Mike Hughes. Michael Mulloy led the morning watch times. We had 37 in attendance. June Chidlaw from Raleigh, NC came alone to hear Paula speak and joined the Order. The officer slate carried over from the prior year with the one change of long-time member, Cindy Booth, assuming the VP position.

The retreat provided wonderful sharing in small groups (maybe one of our

best group times ever), special opportunities including our second year for a book review (Perelandra by CS Lewis led by Betsey Mulloy), and at mealtimes. A babysitter kept the children, and a youth leader provided lessons on identity for the young people. Retreatants were blessed by a closing session which included communion and a healing service.

The SE Region Board met October 17-18 at High Pastures Retreat Center in Burnsville, NC for its annual fall board meeting and retreat.

North Central Region Fall Retreat

Marybelle H. Landrum, National DOC Board

The North Central Region of the DOC met November 13-15, 2009, at St. Therese's Retreat Center in Columbus, Ohio, to hear national DOC president, Robert Moore, speak on "The DOC Way of Life". Dr. Moore based his presentation on Dr. Albert Day's book, *Discipline and Discovery*. Small group discussions followed the presentations. Elise and Dick Eslinger led

the group in worship and song. Morning and evening watch leaders were Pat Jacobs, Marybelle Landrum and Fay Botten. Dick Eslinger presided at the traditional communion and healing service Saturday evening in the beautiful St. Therese's chapel. The 19 registrants included one first-time attendee.

A Note on Financials....

John D. Bankson, National Finance Development Chair

It has been a year of challenge for the DOC. As many of you know, even before all the turmoil of the past year with market crashes and high unemployment, the National Board took steps to reduce administrative overhead going into 2008 and 2009. We reduced the annual expense budget and anticipated that while contributions might decline, we would be better prepared to support the order going forward. This year, contributions have been down rather dramatically. We do need your prayerful consideration of financial support more than ever. If we are not able to sustain the minimal operating budget, we will jeopardize the mission to keep DOC as vibrant as possible. Please remember the Order in your 2009 year-end contributions, and please include the Order in your 2010 planning.

The 2009 budget is \$15,170. Of this total, 52% (\$8,000) is for administration, 14% (\$2,100) is for printing of the *New Life News*, 14% (\$2,100) is for office costs, and 20% (\$3,000) is for the national board meeting. We had planned on personal contributions covering over two thirds of the budgets with contributions from regional boards making up the difference. Unless contributions increase significantly, we will run a large deficit.

There are additional ways that you can position the Order for solid financial footing in the years to come. These include setting up gift annuities, planned giving, or naming the Order in your will. I strongly suggest you consult with your financial advisor and attorney to make sure your plans are consistent with your overall situation and that you follow through with documenting and implementing what you plan. All too often we have good intentions, but we fail to follow through fully. That has happened to the Order in recent years, when faithful members intended to provide for the Order, but never completed the steps necessary to make certain those wishes were accomplished.

As a final note, thank you so much for your support. Remember that even though the Board is doing all it can to be accountable for efficient operations, we need everyone's support to keep the vision alive. Remember that the Order asks a minimum of \$50 per member annually to help offset operating expenses. Even if each of you receiving this issue of *New Life News* had given \$50 per person, we would still need love gifts to close the gap. Please find an envelope enclosed in this newsletter for your convenience.

I wish you a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Contact Information

The Disciplined Order of Christ, founded in 1945 by Albert Edward Day, is an ecumenical spiritual movement of persons who are serious about their commitment to Christ and growth in the mind and spirit of Christ.

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