

Meditation at Sychar (Hilary Fogerty)

Every Tuesday afternoon a small group meets to meditate. We follow a simple practice that is embedded in our ancient Christian tradition, as well as in other spiritual traditions.

As a guide, we use the writings of John Main OSB (who recovered this ancient form of prayer from the early Christian Monks) and Laurence Freeman OSB who continues to encourage this ancient Christian tradition all over the world.

If you would like to deepen your spiritual journey by practicing the discipline of stillness, silence and simplicity, you are welcome to come and join us in meditation.



“The truth is not only accessible to us; it is the ground on which all reality stands. To come to this reality, we have to learn to be simple, to be still, to be silent, to be attentive, attentive to what is. So we must learn to stop thinking about ourselves. We must learn to be in the presence of the One who is. We need have no fear as we set out, as we leave self behind and set out to meet the other. We need have no fear. The spirit in our heart, the spirit that we open up to in meditation, is the spirit of compassion, of gentleness, of forgiveness, of acceptance, the Spirit of love.” John Main OSB “The Fullness of Being” in *The Hunger for Depth and Meaning*, Peter Ng (Singapore: Medio Media, 2007), p28

A Sweet Nourishment (Ann McNelley)

Have you ever felt that you just need a day to take stock and “chill out” at the same time? This was how I felt when I attended a Day of Reflection at the Sychar Centre in November. I would like to share one small part of the day with you; however, it was one that spoke volumes to me.

During the course of the day we were asked to go outside and follow where we were led. Not to try to make anything happen but simply to go as we were prompted. My wandering took me to a fig tree freshly washed with rain. As I stood there contemplating this tree and its newly developing fruit, it came to me that Christ always provides me with the food I need, all I have to do is eat!

Blessings on you all.



A Visit to the Well (Carmel Cranitch)

Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”



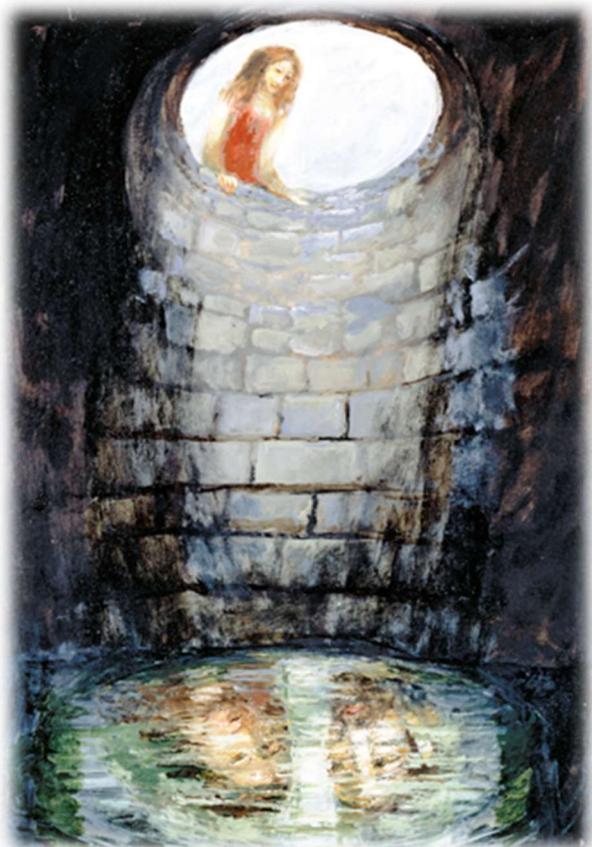
From the moment I entered the grounds of SYCHAR, I felt an enormous sense of peace and rest. I felt engulfed by the boughs of the huge trees surrounding the house – like I was being embraced in great big arms – arms of love and acceptance. I was not quite sure what to expect, this being my first visit to SYCHAR and not being a Toowoomba local.

I had always dreamed of establishing my own place of ‘Spirituality and Prayer’. When I discovered SYCHAR, it had everything that I had envisaged in my own vision: a spiritual library, quiet rooms and meeting rooms, beautiful gardens and grounds and areas to share hospitality and conversation. SYCHAR was not just a house or building - it exuded welcome and warmth.

In recent years I have been on a journey – I was a searcher, a seekerI was thirsty for inner growth and spiritual nourishment but I was not quite sure where to look.

I quickly recognised that I needed inspiration, support and companions on this journey of mine. I found this inspiration and support through different methods, people and places:... Discovering SYCHAR enabled me to be still and silent and as my recent day at SYCHAR was titled, to be able to ‘*Listen to the Heartbeat of Life*’. It was like God was inviting me and waiting for me to enjoy his presence.

Thank you Elaine, thank you SYCHAR, for allowing me to pause, and gain greater insight by diving deeper into my ‘inner well’....and spending time with God.



“Be still and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:11

Insight – Sieger Koder



In Appreciation of Sr. Pat Quinn MSS

A great drawcard to Sychar this year was Sr. Pat Quinn MSS who gave up four Saturdays to present two journal writing and two dream workshops. Participants were very appreciative of Pat's quiet and assuming manner, her sharing of self, the clarity of her presentations, and the reflective questions and process methods offered as useful tools for coming home to one's true self. Each workshop was like a mini-retreat, a time to stop, reflect and to allow God's Spirit of wisdom to be revealed in the hidden depths of one's being. Pat, thank you for sharing your wisdom with us.

Catherine McAleer shares her experience of participating in a dream workshop with Sr. Pat:

The cool, dreary day outside was not a reflection of what was happening inside the walls we gathered in nor inside the hearts and minds of those attending the dream workshop. Snippets of our night-time dreaming were brought to life as we spent time learning about the nature of dreams and how when we stopped and reflected on them they could offer brightly lit insights to our lives.

During the workshop, Sr Pat offered us a variety of tools to help us unpack our dreams in prayerful reflection, allowing us to become aware of ways in which God is present in our lives. Perhaps the most important lesson learnt that day was that only the dreamer can interpret the dream. This was both freeing and challenging.

Trish Langan considered it a privilege and joy to have participated in this workshop. She says of her experience:

As I explored my dream following guidelines presented to us by Sr. Pat, I sensed a 'breaking open of its kernel' and felt a flow of relief as insights, surprises, even perspective were revealed on many levels of my purpose, likes, dislikes, fears and more. At this stage, I realised with some discomfort that I had missed the opportunity to find Wisdom, perhaps healing, through many previous significant dreams. At last, here thankfully were 'tools' which could enable me to uncover the meaning of future dreams.

From Thomas Merton "The night has values that day has never dreamed of".



Adapted version of *Aurora Borealis*, Mary Southard

Re-Imaging Book Club (Carole Rogan)

This year SYCHAR offered two “book clubs with a difference.” Participants read two books by Richard Rohr: *The Universal Christ* and *The Divine Dance*. Unlike most book clubs, which offer opportunities for discussion, SYCHAR followed a reflective, contemplative process. This process assisted group members to move from head knowledge, and enabled them instead, to “listen with the ears of the heart.” Group, paired and solo reflection opportunities further deepened the process for group members. During covid restrictions, the group met via Zoom and there was great delight when face-to-face sessions resumed in September.

Ann McNelley shares the following reflections of her experience as a member of the group during the year:

The sessions on “The Universal Christ” gave me a more profound insight into what I believe, and affirmed with clarity, much of what I always thought was true. The interconnectedness of things and our union with the Universal Christ really came to the fore. I have never heard The Trinity explained better than it was in “The Divine Dance”. All of a sudden, a great deal made sense. It was a joy to learn that we are included in this divine relationship and everything came together in a way that reassured me about the future of our world.



Debbie Bowdler likewise comments on what was a very enriching experience for her:

The contemplative process we followed in exploring “The Universal Christ” and “The Divine Dance” is so much more fulfilling than having a book club chat. The opportunity to share my thoughts in the group, and in our pairs, allowed me to grow in confidence. The group members each brought great insight into the author’s intention, and I am very grateful to each and every one of them for that.

All group members appreciated the opportunity to share their beliefs and feelings with a group of compassionate, honest and supportive companions. We are all looking forward to attending next year’s book club.

Thank-you Elaine for creating this opportunity for reading and deep reflection.



First Spiritual Exercises (FSE) Retreat “Inner Peace in Divine Love” (Jo Cosgrove)

Sr Elaine invited Clive Hamlin and Maria Shelley at JISA Faber to offer the First Spiritual Exercises (FSE) Retreat “Inner Peace in Divine Love” at Sychar Spirituality Centre. This retreat was undertaken in daily life over 4 weeks during October 2020. Clive and Maria gave two opportunities for participants to experience the FSE – during the day and in the evening and fourteen people availed themselves of this opportunity. After giving the retreats in Toowoomba, Clive commented: “*Maria and I were struck by the authentic heartfelt sharing from the participants*”.



Clive and Maria did a wonderful job, and when they shared something of their own lives, this encouraged others to share deeply. Some of the retreatants have since continued to meet for spiritual conversation sessions intended to help them discern whether they would like to commit to the Christian Life Community movement established by the Jesuits.

Participants from the First Spiritual Exercises (FSE) Retreat had this to say of their experience:

I appreciated the opportunity the Retreat gave me to Stop, Reflect and Grow in my relationship with God. The retreat also reminded me of the love from various sources, and gifts from God, which are all around me when and I stop and reflect and become fully aware of everything around me. (Clare Smith)

It was a blessing to be reacquainted with Ignatian prayer, which is both reflective and personal. During the First Spiritual Exercises Retreat, I was reminded of the power of reflecting on the Gospel and seeing how the words of Jesus can help me personally in my daily life – in both the joys and sorrows. During the four weeks of the retreat I was given many grace-filled moments where I was aware of the face of God in my life. (Jo Cosgrove).

Clive and Maria introduced us to the Awareness Examen which I found to be much more helpful than the Gratitude Journal I have been keeping as it allowed me to reflect on what has been occurring during my day and how the Trinity is always present in my life. Commitment during the retreat to follow daily Spiritual Exercises at home enabled me to focus more on the presence of God not just in me, but in everyone. During the retreat I experienced some graced moments from the actions of strangers. The fellowship enjoyed with the other participants who were willing to share their own stories, was also a very special and important part of the retreat. The retreat opened me up to a deeper understanding of my relationship with the “three-in-one”, and I look forward to growing in that relationship. (Deb Bowdler)



Trinity (Andrei Rublev)

Tuesday Trio

(Clare, for Clare Smith, Deb Bowden, Sheila Sarquis)



As 2020 draws to a near, it is interesting to reflect on the year as it has been for Sychar on Tuesday mornings.

Since before Sychar had a name, Deb and I started covering books which had been donated to Sr Elaine, and we started to get to know each other. Then Sheila came on board and the cataloguing commenced in earnest and our work and friendship circle was enriched further. We encroached on Elaine's home (before Elaine moved into her new home) and have been part of the evolvement of Sychar as a very special place.

Clare, Deb, Sheila

We have enjoyed our time together doing some 'work'. The shelves are nearly full so we must have achieved some things among the chatter, laughter and morning teas! We have also welcomed other people who pop in and who add another dimension to our mornings. During the period we were away from Sychar I missed the company of these ladies in particular and others who have become part of the Sychar community. We have also taken the opportunity to participate in some of the sessions at Sychar which are greatly appreciated.

It seems we have had a bird's-eye view of the evolvement of Sychar and, despite the challenges of the year when the centre was just beginning, under Elaine's leadership, we have witnessed Sychar as a welcoming place for all who are seekers on life's journey.

You are welcome to join us for a cuppa on Tuesday mornings. While you are here you could explore the library and find the hidden gems. Alternatively you can access the library remotely via <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/SYCHARLIBRARY> .



Lyn Lee with Krys Kerrick, our gardener extraordinaire!



Hilary Fogerty (Meditation facilitator), Bill and Mary Allen (Volunteers ready for any task)



Clare Smith



Sheila Sarquis



Sr. Elaine, Deb Bowdler, Krys Keryk enjoying a cuppa at the thankyou morning tea for volunteers.

Nativity by Joy Cowley

Look now! It is happening again!
Love like a high spring tide is swelling to fulness and overflowing
the banks of our small concerns.

And here again is the star,
that white flame of truth blazing the way for us
through a desert of tired ways.

Once more comes the music, angel song,
that lifts our hearts and tunes our ears to the harmony of the universe,
making us wonder how we ever could have forgotten.

And now the magi within us, gathers us gifts of gold and myrrh,
while that other part of ourselves, the impulsive, reckless shepherd,
runs helter skelter with arms outstretched to embrace the wonder of it all.

We have no words to contain our praise.
We ache with awe, we tremble with miracle,
As once again, in the small rough stable of our lives,
Christ is born.



Lobby entrance to Sychar House

*May the God of SIMPLICITY be with you,
opening you to a clear vision of what is real and true,
leading you deeply into the mystery of childhood;
and may your dealings with others be marked
by the honesty which is simplicity:
MAY THE BLESSING OF SIMPLICITY BE ON YOU.*