

REPORT ON JUBILEE PROMISE AND PERIL SYMPOSIUM

KELOWNA, BC
MAY 26-28, 2000

By all accounts the symposium answered the concerns and expectations of the 180 or more participants. Truly ecumenical in scope, the people of God were present from all of the major Christian groups along with Buddhists from the Kelowna community. Michael Crosby, OFM and Joe Gunn of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops were two of the major speakers. The setting of the Okanagan University College was ideal for such a gathering, with its flora and fauna contributing much to the overall environment.

We were concerned with social justice issues. We do not question that we have an option for the poor, but when we allow sixteen thousand tons of topsoil to blow away in the wind (desertification) each year, do we really have an option for the poor? It is this magical rich soil that produces the crops that feed the poor.

My presentations dealt with Wonder, and how we foster Wonder. We all have a specific work in life: teacher, logger, fisherman, etc. But our Great Work, as outlined by Thomas Berry, is that our technological civilization make a transition from having a disruptive influence on the earth to that of having a benign influence. This is the Transition that we must make. We make this transition primarily through experiencing creation as a source of wonder rather than a commodity for our personal use. To make this transition will require a transformation of consciousness wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the earth; and secondly a transformation that permits us to enter into the present moment, time freedom over clocktime. Hence the utter importance of meditation. Meditation (contemplation) is awakening to the presence of God in the human heart and in the world about us. It is knowledge through love.

To foster wonder: we need to experience that we actually live on the planet earth and so enter into the earth and into the universe; we need a deeper understanding of the Universe Story as told by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, and by every blade of grass; we need to know something about quantum physics, because today to have any sort of a spiritual life we have to know a bit about the quantum vacuum; we have to be involved in some environmental issue in our bioregion such as the Catholic Bishops in their upcoming pastoral stating that the Columbia River and its watershed is a Sacred Commons; and finally and most importantly we need to meditate. Such a contemplative practice becomes an absolute ethical imperative. Through the incarnation we have been given the mind of Christ. We open our human consciousness to the resurrected, ascended, infinitely expanded human consciousness of Christ and enter into that stream of love that flows between Jesus and the

Father, and in so doing we fall back in wonder.

It was gratifying to see over 80 participants come to the morning meditation. They just kept coming so that we had to delay its beginning by five minutes. To begin, there was a simple explanation of how to meditate following John Main's teaching, then a bit of music, 25 minutes of silent meditation, some more music and then a very brief period of comments and questions. At the end we distributed a small meditation brochure, one that had been prepared by Paul Harris, modified slightly and approved by the Canadian Council of Christian Meditation.

Frater M. Charles Brandt, erm.
Black Creek, BC

Sabbatical Experience - Sr. Hilda Frost, OSB

I have recently returned from a three-month sabbatical, which was spent with two Benedictine communities of women – Richardton ND and Lacey, WA, USA. This was a much appreciated time for solitude, prayer, meditation and reading, and also to relax with other Benedictines and have fun! It helped me to become even more aware of the importance of meditation in my life and prompted me to want to share this gift with others in as many ways as possible. I especially value the support of other meditators, not only in the groups here in Winnipeg, but throughout the world; and I feel united with all meditators everywhere in the World Community. As Fr. Laurence says when we meditate we are 'one with the One who is One' and we are also one with one another!

(Sr. Hilda will be in **Toronto April 26-28** speaking at Croft House and conducting a one-day workshop "*On Being an Oblate*". See Calendar of Events.)

John Main Seminar 2001: Archbishop Rowan Williams

More than 200 meditators attended the UK Conference in April to hear Rowan Williams address the theme of "New Communities in the Church Today." Dr. Williams is the Archbishop of Wales and one of the leading theologians and writers of the contemporary Anglican church. His three addresses and dialogues with Fr. Laurence were, by common consent, outstanding in their breadth, clarity and compassion. We are delighted that he has agreed to lead the John Main Seminar 2001 which will be held in **Sydney, Australia from 12-19 July** next year. Further details in our next issue.

Suggested Reading

Arise, My Love: Mysticism for a New Era by William Johnston SJ (Orbis Books 2000). A powerful reflection and anticipation of the movement of inter-religious dialogue and the rediscovery of Christianity's own mystical origins.