

Father  
George  
Kilcourse with  
AAIF Co-  
Chairs Laura  
and Franz  
Green while  
at the 2008  
AAIF Biennial  
in Louisville,  
KY >

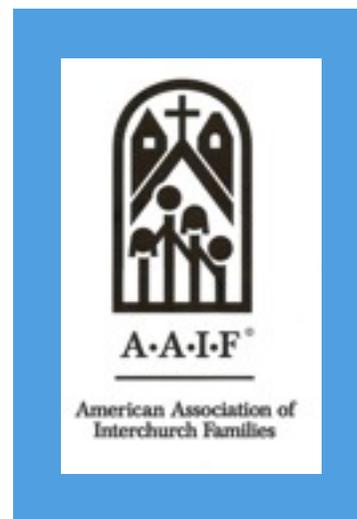


**“Interchurch Families Learning From Benedictine Spirituality  
with an emphasis on the family, community and society”**

**The American Association of Interchurch Families  
cordially invites you to register to attend their  
next Biennial Conference with them  
at The Holy Wisdom Monastery of the  
Benedictine Women of Madison, Wisconsin,  
located at Middleton, Wisconsin**

**Friday July 9 through and including Sunday, July 11, 2010**

Further information and  
Registration materials for this conference are posted at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org)



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**June 2010**

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## The Body Broken, Answering God's Call To Love One Another

By Robert Benson; New York: Doubleday, 2003.

One of Benson's friends, an admirer of baseball, stopped to ask him one day, "What is the opposite of love?" Benson did not reply right away. Benson had a "feeling that answer was not going to fly."

He responded, "Fear, Fear is the opposite of love."

Benson explains to us, as the reader, using a quote from the Bible 'This is how they will know that you love me, 'said the One Who came among us, "that you love one another."

Benson explains, "And sometimes that begins with not being afraid of one another. You cannot love those you fear. And we are called to love. Be not afraid."

In his book, Robert Benson, an Episcopal layman and spiritual writer from Nashville, Tennessee, using autobiographical musings asks, "why is the fellowship of believers broken into so many competing parties? Reed Business Information Review states that "Benson's desire to

understand, respect and honor the faith of other Christians is a powerful force here, animating that which otherwise might have seemed mundane. Reflecting on how difficult it is for even those bound by a mutual faith to seek a common scriptural understanding, Benson comments: "We are not called to explain the Christ; we are called to follow the Christ. We are not called to build walls that keep His friends apart from each other; we are called to build The Kingdom together." Alternatively tender, sad, regretful and joyous, Benson offers his tales with the honesty of a man who doesn't pretend to have all the answers. He brings to the topic a profound, if chastened, sense of God's presence in his daily life and relationships. Benson's passion will appeal to many readers seeking a well-crafted meditation on a topic that has persistently bemused Christians of all denominations"

Although this book will appeal to interchurch families in its entirety, I have selected some sections from Benson's book to share with you below:

*"Fear, Fear is the opposite of love."*

Benson asks, "Which of us would Jesus not have welcomed?" ... The people in the Gospel stories who really got grilled about whether or not they might enter the kingdom were pillars of the community, the ones who kept all the rules, the ones who claimed to know all the truth, the ones who seemed to feel entitled to be included," Benson observes.

Let's look at the following Bible Verses:

**Romans: Chapter 14;  
Verses:10 - 13:**

Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bend before me, and every tongue shall give praise

to God." So (then) each of us shall give an account of himself (to God). Then let us no

longer judge one another, but rather resolve never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Then let us therefore cease judging one another. This Bible verse is important to Benson in creating the premise

of this book. What are the bonds that holds us together? Even among the differences, since it is in our human nature to compare ourselves one to the other, so we can easily find differences, Benson notes that we can also find strong bonds to hold us together. Benson notes that, "We are bound together by our core beliefs" and they are ever present.

When discussing prayer, Benson notes that many people have known this secret for a long time, although he has only begun to learn this "that planting something in the ground with your own two hands is an act of prayer," ...Benson adds that it might be a more sacred and honest prayer than any that he has ever said although he personally struggles with planting as a form of prayer, but he recognizes the sacredness of it. I believe that he was making a comparison to "the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come," as he reflected about the act of planting something in the ground with your own two hands.

With a sense of sadness over the amount of time wasted by all that divides us in

the world, Benson urges us to use what time we have "to make room for those who are different from us, not less room." Benson adds that, "We must learn to greet each other

*... "planting something in the ground with your own two hands is an act of prayer," ... "it might be a more sacred and honest prayer than any that he has ever said although he personally struggles with planting as a form of prayer, but he recognizes the sacredness of it."*

as brothers and sisters - and not just the ones who look like us, act like us, and theologize like us. We must make peace with the others on the pew from whom we have been estranged for so long, and whom we have been so quick to judge.

Benson observes that in spite of any

*We are not in different churches; we are in the same Church on different parts of the pew*

outward appearances of differences that, "We are not of different faiths or different religions - we are all Christians, all of us. We are not in different churches; we are in the same Church on different parts of the pew.

Some of us are looking mostly through this window or that one, while some are on our way to have a look into a window from which the view of the Mystery that we cannot name looks a little different." Benson fills the pages with personal stories from his life experiences to help make his point.

Benson says, "The walls that have been built between us - the ones built out of fear or pride or ignorance - can be taken down. And we who sit on this pew must do exactly that. We are the ones who can stop the daily dividing up of the Body of Christ into pieces and, instead, make it more possible for the Christ to be seen in the world."

Benson adds, "We must seek out the things that we have in common and at the same time learn to honor the things that we hold dear - our sense of community, our love for the scriptures, our hunger for prayer, our capacity for worship - and work to make them wide enough and deep enough to include others rather than keep them at a distance."

Continued on the next page

Benson explains, "We must be willing to cultivate humility along with certainty, to practice tolerance along with devotion, to seek patience along with piety." Benson adds, "We must learn to seek the face of the christ in those who are different as readily as

understanding along with compassion.

This is an inspiring book. I highly recommend it for any one interested in Christian Unity.

~ Mary Jane Glauber

*"We must learn to seek the face of the christ in those who are different as readily as we do in the faces of those who are like us."*

we do in the faces of those who are like us."

Benson concludes that "We must learn to love one another."

This is the task at hand. This is the conclusion. For us, this is our beginning, "We must all learn to love one another." You may wonder where and how to begin. Look inside first and foremost. Begin there. First, ask what you can do to help toward this one goal. Expect nothing in return, not even gratitude nor understanding. Keep focused on this one goal, and try again. Again act with love. Model love. Again expect nothing in return, not even gratitude nor understanding, but show gratitude and

**Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?**  
**-Mary Oliver**

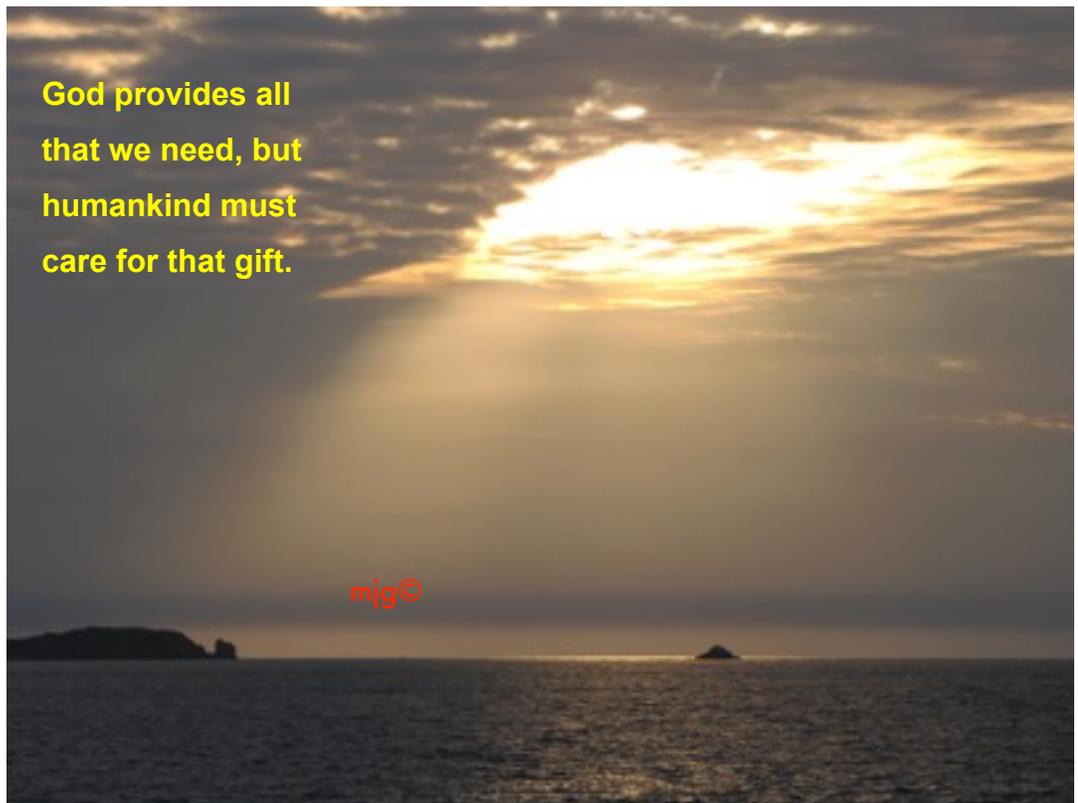
## Lectio Divina

<http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/intro2lectio.html>

I first became acquainted with the term Lectio Divina while reading the Psalms of Lamentation during this past Lent. I recognize that my mother had practiced this with us when we started out the day as children with readings from the Bible, but we had no proper name for it. My father expanded on this by taking us out into God's creation by taking us into the forests in southern Vermont near the Appalachian Trail in all seasons to see that of God around us.

Protestant Churches and Sects have listened silently for "the

Continued on the following page



**God provides all that we need, but humankind must care for that gift.**

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God creates  
beauty;  
humankind  
must sustain  
that which is  
lovely and  
noble

mjc©

journey. A journey of love, that requires a sensitivity, an honesty, an ability to leave people free, not to possess another human being. That's very hard to do. It's difficult to have loved a human being, and to actually almost have begotten that human being, and then to allow that human being to go forth and to touch and love other human beings, to give them the freedom to take your love and to give it away. That is very hard. It requires a great deal of discipline.

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Still Small Voice" of God so this is not a concept that is exclusively Roman Catholic. Episcopalians and Presbyterians refer to this practice as Lectio Divina as well. The early Reformed Churches also continued this practice of singing the Psalms in an effort to read, to absorb, or to study the Psalms or scripture. Learning before books were easily accessible for all was often done by repetition.

In the following, we learn how a young monk became aware of how to pray and the nature of prayer in our lives.

I am including it for interchurch families since it applies equally for us, and it can be used so easily in our homes as my own

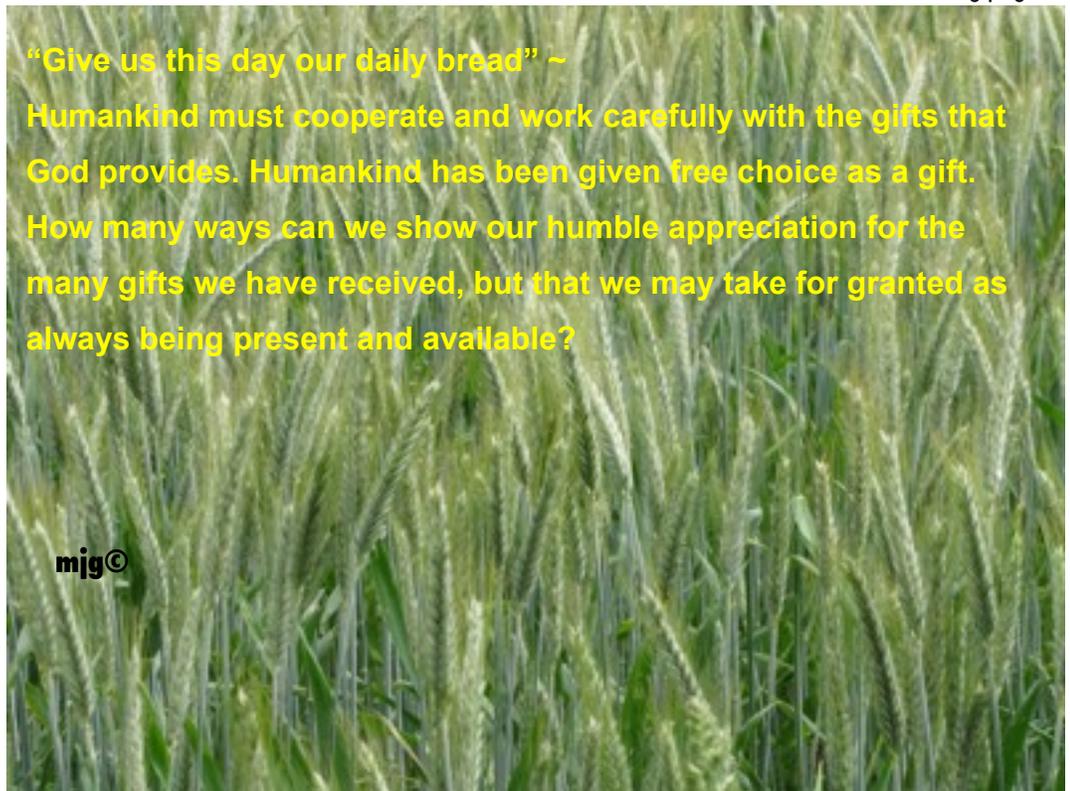
parents demonstrated.

**Lectio Divina** from  
"MANY PATHS TO PRAYER"  
by Vincent Dwyer

What I try to describe here is really a journey. It's a spiritual

It also means that in the process one must have encountered Jesus Christ. One must have been led to understand and to touch and to feel the person of God within oneself. He is real. Private prayer becomes

Continued on the following page



"Give us this day our daily bread" ~

Humankind must cooperate and work carefully with the gifts that God provides. Humankind has been given free choice as a gift. How many ways can we show our humble appreciation for the many gifts we have received, but that we may take for granted as always being present and available?

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critical. You begin to realize that prayer is spontaneous, a beautiful response to God. Just as you can't program your dialogue with someone you love – it has to come out of your heart, so too with prayer.

And yet if you have never experienced in a human dimension the ability to deal in signs, to know through your whole being that you are communicating love and that you are receiving love, then there is no way that you can step into the relationship with God and all of a sudden begin to think that you can deal with God in signs. It won't work. You can get caught in a world of illusions which all the the mystics warn

us against. The test of your intimacy with God is in the intimacy you've achieved with your sisters and brothers.

I remember one time in the monastery – as a young monk, my reasoning went something like this. It was said that if you meditate a half-hour a day then you were sure of salvation; contemplation is a pure gift of God, but if you put more time into it, you're probably better disposed to receiving the gift. Being pretty practical, and

with my Irish background saying, "Well, God, if I got into this outfit I ought to at least arrive at contemplation or something," I began to invest a great deal of time in "prayer".

I built it up to a point where I was spending probably six hours a day before the blessed sacrament, maybe even more. When I'd come in from work or maybe it was class, whatever it was, I would head immediately to the



God provides diversity and variety in the beauty that surrounds us

church to pray.

And I had a special spot in that church. It was the second pillar behind the brothers' choir stall. So if I was coming in from the cloistered walk I'd make my profound bow in the centre, go to the left hand side and then down behind the second pillar, and that's where I'd rendezvous.

At the beginning I used to spend most of my time kneeling there, but then as I spent more and more time I had more and more trouble with my knees. Then I took a stool out of the brothers' chapter house and used to carry it with me. Then I decided, "Well, I really don't have to go back and forth for the stool since I'm here most of the time. I'll just leave it here," and so I had it hid there.

Lectio Divina continued on the following page  
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God is present ~ in the air we breathe, in the sun that bathes the fields with light, in all that we see and do, God is there



Everything was unbelievable. As soon as I'd arrive at that spot, I'd be in passive prayer. Sometimes I'd wonder if I was going to ascend or what was going to happen to me. But then I would arrive sometimes and one of my brother monks would be there, in my spot. Then I'd have to back up and in the centre of the main hall I would kneel in the infirmary choir and begin my prayer. I would place myself in the presence of God. If I had been behind the second pillar I would immediately go into passive prayer and prayer of quiet, contemplative prayer, but in this spot it didn't seem to happen.

I would then find myself with distractions. My navy language would come back and I'd say, "What the hell's he doing over there?" and then I'd check myself: "No, I shouldn't have said that. I'm back in your presence, Lord; speak to me." Then I'd look again and say, "Gosh, you know, look at this damn church is empty.

What the hell. And now he's sitting on my stool! No, it's not my stool. It's our stool."

I'd have all these distractions. And then finally he'd leave. I'd make my bow, I'd go over there and, pfft, I'm fine.

Beautiful.

Well, I went to see the old abbot one day who was one of the great men in my life, a spiritual genius in my estimation. Much of what I share with you came from sitting at his feet. He had this loveable way about him. He said, "How's everything going?" I said, "Reverend Father, just tremendous." He said, "How is your life of prayer?" I said, "Oh, boy. It must be six or seven hours a

day I'm spending before the blessed sacrament." He said, "Your prayer is fine?" I said, "Just unbelievable." He said, "No problems?" I said, "Well, I have one little problem."

So I described this distraction. He looked at me and he said, "Fili mei, would you like some advice?" In my little soul I was saying he's about to tell me I'm on the maybe the seventh or eighth mansion of St. Teresa and I'm going through some particular trial, and "Oh, yes, Reverend Father. Speak to me." He said, "Well, the Holy Spirit doesn't seem to get locked into one spot all the time. He's very capable of meeting you even out in the fields. You don't really have to be there."

He said, "It sounds kind of strange to me that you have no problem and then somebody comes along...."

Lectio Divina continued on the following page



Would you really like some advice?"

I said, "Oh, yes, Reverend Father."

He said, "I think you'd better spend more time out working in the fields."

What I'd really like to try to share with you this morning is to take you back and to look at the theology of prayer and to show you that for a long time prayer was really unified, really one, then we began to foul it up. We began to compartmentalize it.

As we compartmentalized it people lost the unity of the spiritual life, this unity that comes out of a life of prayer. All of sudden I began to value those moments where I'd be in the chapel as being greater than the moments I would spend maybe in work or greater than the moments I

would spend on a tennis court or swimming or something like that.

So all of a sudden we started having all these hierarchical values, on the top being the moments that I spend in prayer or the moments that I spend in spiritual exercises as being the most important elements. We were failing to say that really the spiritual life is one. I think most people would agree or feel comfortable when we describe prayer basically as union with God.

Prayer is really my response. As the Holy Father has said, it is a dialogical process. It's basically God revealing God's Self and my response to that. Or we could say that it is union, it is lifting of one's heart, etc. Do you feel comfortable with that as a definition or description of prayer? Do you?

Now, let's go back to four pillars of a life of prayer and watch what happens. I'll use the Latin to show you what a poor job we did at translation. They were Lectio Divina,



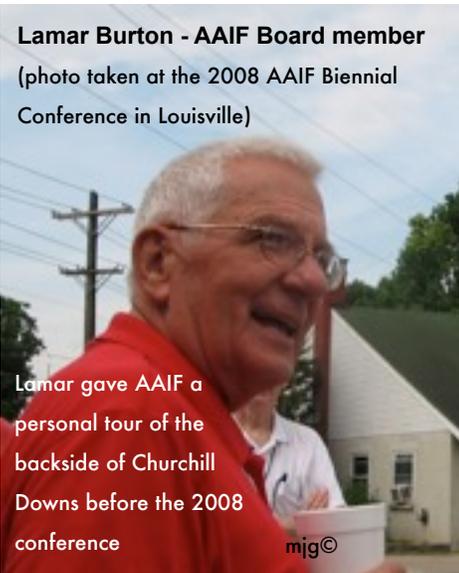
Father George Kilcourse, Laura and Franz Green at "My Old Kentucky State Park" in Bardstown, Kentucky, just before the start of the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference in Louisville, Kentucky

Meditatio, Oratio, and Contemplatio. I'm sure that the priests and religious here would recognize that immediately because it's in all of the classic textbooks.

Those are the four pillars. For a long time in the Church they were not four distinct parts, they were one.

Lectio Divina became translated in our framework into "spiritual reading", which became a particular exercise.

Meditatio was translated into "meditation", which became a procedure, a methodology of prayer, and by that I mean that you would, for instance, place Jesus before you, or you'd read something in



Lamar Burton - AAIF Board member (photo taken at the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference in Louisville)

Lamar gave AAIF a personal tour of the backside of Churchill Downs before the 2008 conference

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Carol and Dave Natella,

AAIF Board Members,

(photo taken at Bernheim Forest just after the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference in Louisville, Kentucky)

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## Lectio Divina

continued from the previous page

scripture, and then you would create an image of it, and then you would walk with him and chat with him and then you would move down towards movement of the affection,

of the heart, and after that dried up you then made a resolution and you

went on to kind of look at that later on in the day. Does that ring a bell? That is what we call a methodology; it's a procedure.

Oratio became translated into all kinds of prayers and devotions, divine office, and so forth.

Contemplatio was translated as "contemplation" and then you were told, "But contemplation is only for chosen souls like myself and others who are called to

contemplative monasteries. The rest of you poor people are called only to meditate and that is the way it is. Too bad. Some are chosen, some aren't."

It's a heresy. I'll never forget Eugene Boylan who was the first one that I heard publicly say that it was a heresy. We are all called to contemplation. You know one of the tragic things is

that many of you have been led to believe that you are called only to meditate, you are called only to a very simple form of prayer, and that contemplation was like looking at somebody on the mountain, and saying, "Not me."

It actually was a cop-out for many people like yourselves. You read something about the mystics.

You read something about the purifications that you must undergo in

order to really be able to receive the gift of contemplation, and so you'd say, "Well, thank God I'm not called to that. I don't have to go through that. It's okay for those special people called to contemplative monasteries, but I'm not called. Therefore I don't have to face the reality of such purifications. I will be a good boy or a good girl and I will meditate." That was



Elaine Hall

- AAIF Board Member

(Photo taken at the 2008 AAIF Biennial Conference in Louisville, KY;

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a tragedy in the history of the Church.

The whole thing was kind of foolish in terms of our translation or our misunderstanding of it.

Lectio Divina being translated into "spiritual reading" – how in ... [the world] did we ever get to that, particularly when in the early Church most people couldn't read anyway?

It's true. There weren't that many books around.

So it was never meant to be what we made it

What was it? Lectio Divina was the art of listening.

That's why I said the pope was opening us to the key of all prayer when he started to emphasize in the encyclical the need to relearn and to develop the art of listening. Meditatio was not a

Lectio Divina continued on the following page

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# Lectio Divina

continued from the previous page  
procedural method. It was merely a presence, a presence which from listening brought about reflection, to the point that when you listen, infallibly you reflect. It just flows.

Oratio wasn't meant to be all these things that we made it be.

Oratio was really when you reflected you then found yourself

moving towards prayer of petition, prayer of thanksgiving, silence, awe, anything that would move you. It was ability to allow oneself to move from reflection. And infallibly the Spirit would move you. And Contemplatio was a direct and natural sequential development of having listened. And it was receiving the gifts of the Spirit and being able to taste and to know what it is to operate under the Spirit's influence, which in the old days we called the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This really had a unity.

It was a oneness, but as with so many things, in trying to understand it – and there's nothing wrong with trying to understand – we analyze, we abstract it.

What happened here was when we abstracted it, we

forgot to put it back together into this beautiful unity.

What did we do?

We put it back into a bunch of boxes. And we lost the rhythm of it.

If prayer is union with God, if it's a response to God or a dialogical process, the dialogue between ourselves and

God, then the question is, how can God reveal God's Self to me.

How can God reveal God's Self to me so that I can respond?

Well, God certainly can reveal God's Self through revelation, the scriptures. God can reveal God's Self through the Church, through the sacraments.

How else? Through people. Nature. Music. Art. Literature.

In recreation. In events. In sin. Is there any way God can't reveal God's Self?

No. It's too good to be true! What have we done? If this is true then these are possible forms of prayer.

What makes them prayer?

-Listening.

Is it necessary to know that you're praying in order to pray?

No. Most people really don't believe it. It's a head trip, it's too good to be true.

But as the old abbot used to say to us, quoting the desert fathers,

"You pray best when you don't know you're praying." What were they really trying to say to us?

They were saying prayer is a way of life.

Sometimes when it's very sweet and we're kind of feeling wonderful, the Lord is touching us and everything. Boy, I'm praying.

Then along comes the Lord and says, "Well, you've had enough of this sweet stuff, now you're supposed to walk." God comes along and takes away the sweet stuff and we say, "Oh, my God,

something terrible has happened. I no longer pray. I no longer feel, and therefore I'm no longer praying.

"Prayer often will start out with very sensible consolations

Lectio Divina continued on the following page

*prayer is a way of life.*

*But as the old abbot used to say to us, quoting the desert fathers, "You pray best when you don't know you're praying."*

and a feeling, but you can be sure, you can be positive, you can be absolutely certain that if you are faithful you will find yourself moving through a development in prayer which will bring you to a point where you will not feel his presence, and you will walk in faith.

The ultimate test for the Christian life is whether we keep going. When the chips are down, do we quit, or do we keep moving?

There are times in your life when Christ will lead you along a path where you won't feel God.

You will actually think God has deserted you, and you will really experience in some degree what Jesus experienced when he cried out to his father, "**Why have you abandoned me?**" You will feel the same agony, and you will think that all is lost, only to discover when you turn the corner that it was a very important part of your life.

Prayer is really a way of life, a living out of the commitment to Jesus Christ.

This paper is a transcription of the text of a filmed lecture, Many Paths To Prayer by Vincent Dwyer. It was the fifth presentation in the Genesis II series frequently used as an adult religious education program in the late 1970's. Genesis II was a program for spiritual growth. Its purpose was to

appreciate, develop and deepen spirituality and human relationships. The program sought to bridge the gap between a pre-Vatican individualistic spirituality and a post-Vatican more inclusive spirituality by rooting itself in the a more basic spirituality communicated through the ages. The program was devised by Trappist priest, Fr. Vincent Dwyer, of the Center for Human Development at Notre Dame University and produced by Intermedia Foundation, Santa Monica, CA. I have taken the liberty to make the language of **this presentation more inclusive.** ----- John Veltri

<http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/intro2lectio.html>

<http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/dwyer.html>



Trillium, blooms in spring, It is a native plant in Kentucky.

# Consider Spring

continued on the next page



Lilies of the Valley bloom in spring



Azaleas beginning to bloom in spring

*What was it? Lectio Divina was the art of listening.*

Please contact Franz and Laura Green if you would like to form an AAIF City Chapter in your area

[AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com](mailto:AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com)

AAIF Membership applications are located at [www.aifusa.org](http://www.aifusa.org)

Please contact [mjglauber@gmail.com](mailto:mjglauber@gmail.com) for materials, if you would like to participate in the **AAIF City Chapter Listening Project this year with your AAIF City Chapter.** On the subject line of your email, please write **ARK Listening Project.**

Take some time to enjoy spring, either directly or by quiet thought about spring, creation and God. Enjoy some time with these quiet thoughts so that you can take in that entire experience and fully enjoy it.



Continued from the previous page

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Early blooming Crocus blossoms announce that spring will arrive soon.



Early blooming Crocus blossoms announce that spring will arrive soon.

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Consider writing a prayer about spring after having spent time reflecting about spring in relationship to

### Consider Spring

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Common yellow daffodil in bloom in spring

**Ah, Spring, when all of creation is reborn!**

*"What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."*

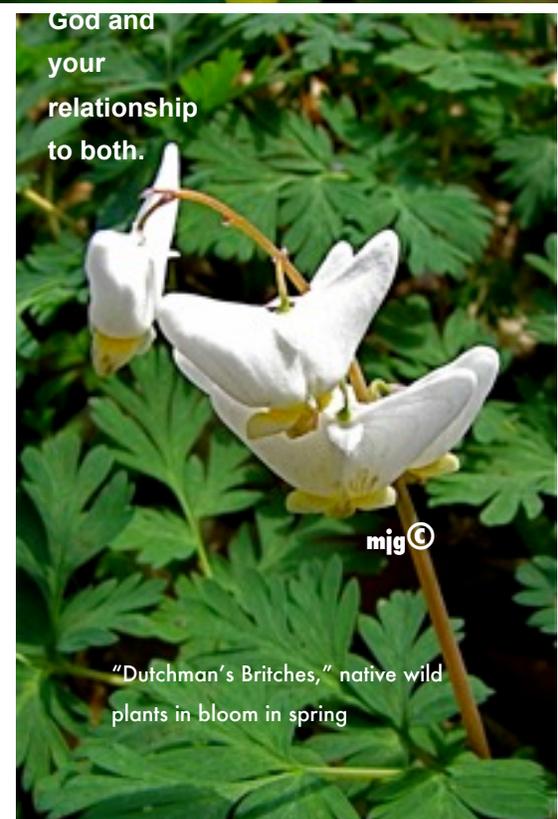
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nature reminds us of God's presence all around us.

*"Every day, farmland seems to disappear around me and as it does, I mourn a little inside."*

Marion Blackburn,  
2006 Essay Collection,  
"The Real Dirt"

**What are your meditations on Spring?  
On God and Spring?  
On God's presence in your life?  
On the gifts of being Interchurch?**



God and your relationship to both.

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"Dutchman's Britches," native wild plants in bloom in spring

Nature is God's gift to us. The flowers are beautiful. Some plants give us food to eat. How do we care for those gifts?



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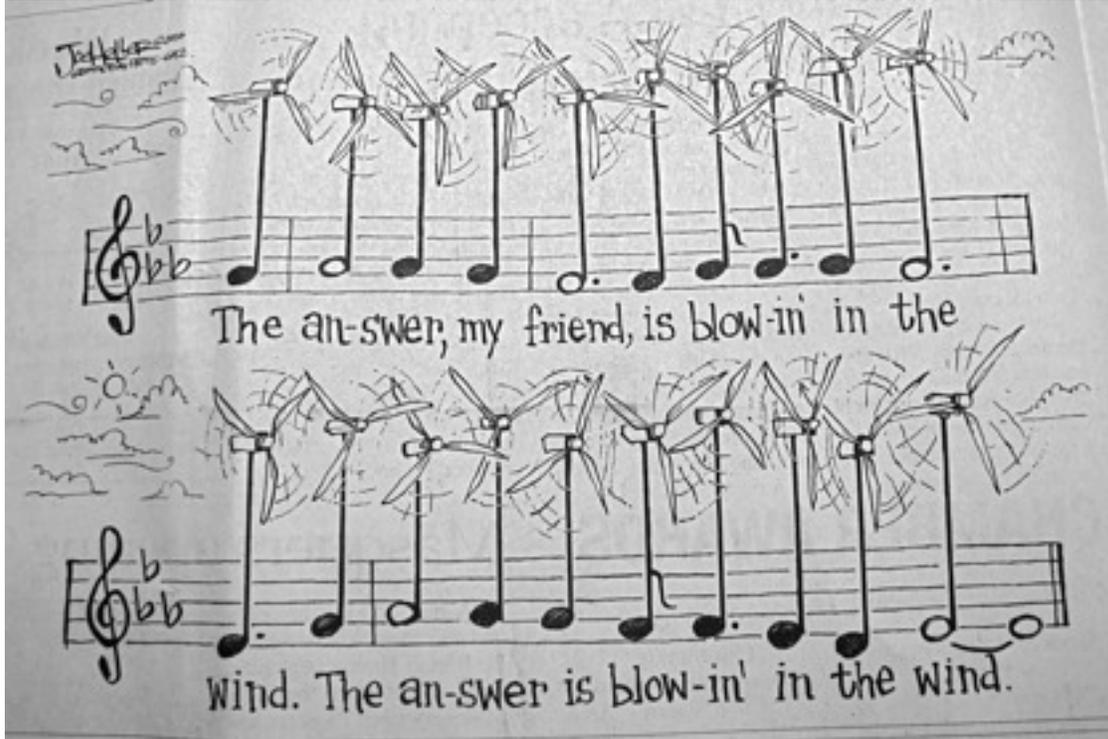
Purple Lilacs against a blue sky in spring



White and orange daffodil in bloom in spring

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Joe Heller of Green Bay, Wisconsin, recognizes a solution to a power and energy problem in the words of an old folk song. In Christian terminology, we often refer to God with images of breath or wind. This idea has been around for a long time. The cartoonist puts a clever image with his important message.



was comfortably retired.

It has given him a tremendous opportunity to continue teaching and to do research on how religions of the world can collaborate effectively in addressing the critical issues of our time.

### **Fully Engaged:**

Dr. Knitter is part of annual meetings on religion and politics at the Council on Foreign

Relations, the experts

who advise Washington. Last summer, he participated in a major conference organized by the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. It's the oldest Muslim university in the world.

### **Being Heard:**

Dr. Knitter was one of 20 scholars and activists chosen to address the United Nations General Assembly on October 4, 2008. Together, they spoke on the challenges of inter-religious and intercultural cooperation today.

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Xavier, Winter 2010, p.24

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*"Children, if nurtured according to their nature, will surpass our expectations."*

Martha McDermott,  
Montessori Education  
Specialist, retired, Xavier U.

## **Paul F. Knitter**

### **Theology**

#### **Lesson Learned:**

*"You have to be as strongly committed to your own truth, as you understand it, as you are open to the truth of others. That's the only way you can find peace in your own life and promote the well-being of the world."*

### **Spare Time:**

Dr. Knitter just completed his 10th book, Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian. He wrote the book to sort out for himself, as well as others, about how much Buddhism has influenced the way he practices and understands his Christian faith.

### **Travel:**

Dr. Knitter is going to Australia for a Meeting of the Parliament of World Religions this winter. Then he is going to lecture at the Myanmar Institute of Theology in the Union of Myanmar. It is a Baptist School and they need help carrying on a dialogue with Buddhism.

Dr. Knitter is a retired professor of theology from Xavier University of Ohio. He retired in 2002 after 27 years of teaching Theology there. He is currently the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Dr. Knitter said that it was an incredible shift to be offered the position at Union Theological Seminary after he

An International Conference regarding:  
**“The Household of God and  
Local Households:  
Revisiting the  
Domestic Church”**

took place at Catholic University of Leuven,  
from 10 – 13 March 2010

More details to follow later

## Book Review: “Mama, Do You Love Me?”

**Book Recommendation for  
children and  
their  
parents:  
“Mama, Do  
You Love  
Me?” by  
Barbara M.**

**Josse; Illustrated by Barbara  
Lavallee, Chronicle Books 1991**

On the back cover of this book, it states, “In this universal and timeless story of a child testing the limits of her independence, a mother reassuringly proves that a parent’s love is forever.” The editor, author and the illustrator inside the front cover give thanks to “C.E.W. Graham of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal for his patient and gracious assistance in checking this manuscript for its accuracy in its portrayal of the Inuit culture.

The images are lovely. In the story, the child presents many challenges to the parent, but at each challenge, the parent says how they would continue to love the child.

Publishers Weekly says, “This striking volume...uses a timeless culture to convey a timeless message.”

Parents magazine says that it is one of the “Best Kids’ Books.” American Bookseller has placed it on their “Pick of the Lists.”

This is the kind of book that parents will enjoy reading over and over again to their children. A child will want to snuggle up on their parents’ laps to have this book read to them repeatedly. No age is suggested on the book, but the pages are all hard cardboard pages. I would suggest that parents start reading it to children when they are young, but old enough to enjoy looking at the images of the Inuit people and culture.

Everyone wants to be loved. Even when they are at their most unlovable>

> moments and may seem impossible to be loved, that is when people need love the most. This persistent child



questions their mother to see how far her love extends and to what limits her love will go for her child. The mother finds ways to continue to love her child no matter what form or shape the child may be or change into; she is consistently present with her love for the child.

This book would work well for an interchurch family. The underlying message is that of a parent’s love for a child. This is like God’s love for us which can be introduced later on in a child’s life; this book lays the foundation for introducing a more complex concept. The drawings are lovely. The story is timeless and beautiful.

Book review by

Mary Jane Glauber

**“When you rise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your strength. Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living.”**

**~ Tecumseh**

Being ecumenical allows us to be nurtured by what is good and noble from many traditions - the divine is limitless in creation.

# Greetings from the AAIF National Co-Chairs

Summer is upon us once again. Another school year is over and vacation season has arrived. During this busy and exciting time of the year people are planning trips to various destinations throughout our great nation. Fun, relaxation and scenic new places to visit is the order of the day. The state of Wisconsin has all the ingredients of a perfect vacation. It is not only scenic and tranquil, but offers all the amenities and activities vacationers require. From amusement and water parks to zoos, spas, tours, shopping, fairs and festivals, science and nature centers, and, yes, even drive-in movies, Wisconsin has it all!

And while planning your Wisconsin vacation, why not include three days of relaxation and inspiration with us at the Holy Wisdom Monastery of the Benedictine Women of Madison. Spend July 9th through the 11th getting to know some of the folks who strive to bridge the divide between various Christian traditions. Become enlightened by wonderful speakers who are highly knowledgeable in the

domain of ecumenism and interchurch affairs.

Listen to the stories of Interchurch couples revealing their hardships and their joys as they live their lives in two Christian traditions. And, find out how you might overcome some of your ecumenical frustrations while making a difference in your Church and community.

Please join our ecumenical family! Relax, have fun, be inspired and share with us your pains and joys.

See you there!!  
**Laura & Franz Green**  
Co-Chairs, AAIF



# Firstlight

 by Sue Monk Kidd, published by Penguin Books USA

Organized around thirteen motifs, such as Awareness, Simplicity of Spirit, Compassion, Severe Grace and Letting Go, the book is interwoven with thoughtful essays on the spiritual life, reflections on a stream of ordinary, sacred moments, and compelling, personal stories about the author's quest for meaning, her years as a young mother and a nurse, her marriage, travels and childhood.

In every life there are moments of "first light," when one's heart begins to open and new awareness dawns. Firstlight draws readers to embrace their own moments of awakening and renews the mystery of being alive in a vividly sacred world.

"Most readers know Kidd for her blockbuster novels, *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Mermaid Chair*. Yet this nurse-turned-writer was known in traditional Christian circles for years for her inspirational essays and nonfiction spiritual memoirs.... In the Introduction (to *Firstlight*), Kidd admits it was difficult to go back and reread her earlier work with an eye to publication. But "... A significant portion of my life can be

understood as spiritual quest and the articulation of that experience." Gleaned from *Guideposts* (for which she wrote for a dozen years), *Weavings*, and other publications, these essays point to Kidd's desire to pay attention to her soul, a "repository of the inner Divine, the truest part of us," from which so much of her writing sprang.

The subjects have universal appeal: a child sharing a red scarf with a homeless man; the need for solitude; fishing with her grandfather; the joy and pain of sending a child to college. Most of the essays have a point, which is neatly explained.

Kidd's lovely prose, passion for the spiritual life, and early instincts for telling a compelling story should help this book attract a wide readership."

--Publishers Weekly

***I thoroughly enjoyed this book and I am highly recommending it to anyone who is looking for some spiritual insight into ordinary living. ~M.J. Glauber***

Many thanks to Libbye Montgomery, and to Father Kilcourse for their work in making arrangements for the upcoming AAIF Conference, and to Fathers Kilcourse and Fatlardeau for their continued support of Interchurch Families; many thanks to Carol and Dave Natella. Many thanks to Franz & Laura Green, our AAIF National Co-Chairs. Please send written contributions for up-coming editions of the ARK to [mjglauber@gmail.com](mailto:mjglauber@gmail.com)

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The ARK



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American Association of  
Interchurch Families