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The ARK

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Interchurch Families: Christian Unity Made Visible in our Households

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"Lectio Divina" in our community ⇔ the "Domestic Church also known as
"The Little Church of the Family Home," and that we form part of a greater
family of humanity; "Our relationship with "Others, classified as different"

**"Interchurch Families Learning from
Benedictine Spirituality with an emphasis on
the family, community and society"**

was the theme for the 2010 AAIF Biennial Conference held at Holy
Wisdom Monastery in July 2010

~Please join AAIF as we continue our journey, by
continuing this theme, during the next two years
between conferences



King James Bible - Deuteronomy 10:19
"Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye
were strangers in the land of Egypt."



2010

**Make plans now to attend the next
AAIF Biennial Conference
to be held in 2012**

Please see www.aifusa.org for on-going updates

Community and Hospitality

and an observation of the “Domestic Church” also known as “the Little Church of the Family Home” ~ our place in the world and how we meet others



Brown or blue eyes?

It doesn't matter what color our eyes are, but that we view the world filled with people who might be classified as “Others” filtered by the Bible verse: Hebrews 13: 1-2

Interchurch Families Share Their Lived Experiences:

My Husband, the Oblate Novice

by Kay Flowers

As an interchurch couple, we try to find ways to worship, pray, and serve in both churches. Obviously, we don't pray the rosary together, but we do use the daily missal readings in our morning prayer time after breakfast. We allow each other the freedom to worship God the way it best supports our faith.

A confirmed tree-hugger, I feel very close to God while hiking on my trails through the woods, listening to the flute-like song of the wood thrush and praising my Savior for His loving presence within me. Many times I've fallen to my knees in wonder at His creation, marveling that the God of the universe wants to be my Friend and Companion. How awesome!

This method of worship is too unstructured for my husband. He thinks I'm a bit nuts. As a

Catholic, Denny feels closest to his Lord when receiving the Eucharist, surrounded by candles and incense. He is most comfortable in a church setting, repeating familiar words during ancient rites handed down for generations.

For some time now Denny has felt a restless tug to become more involved in the deeper workings of the Church, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, and even filled out the forms for becoming a deacon. When he wasn't accepted into the training program, he was very disappointed and kept looking for another way to be more involved in Church life.

So it really didn't surprise me too much when he announced that he was interested in becoming an oblate. He had done all the research and reassured me that he wasn't planning on running off to become a monk; he just wanted something more and this was a ministry he could do at home.

Being an oblate is an opportunity for lay people to

AAIF City Chapters: Listening Project

Are you interested in meeting and talking to other interchurch families in your city between AAIF Biennial Conferences?

PLEASE SEE WWW.AIFUSA.ORG

For membership information

Please contact:
AAIF.co.chair@gmail.com or
Laura & Franz Green at
fandlgreen@cox.net
for information about how to form a City chapter in your area or how to find the AAIF City Chapter closest to you.

Please contact:
mjpglauber@gmail.com for the
ARK - AAIF Listening Project
Materials to be used by your
aaif City Chapters.

“My Husband the Oblate” continued on the next page

practice their faith on a deeper level without the additional college-level coursework required for many other ministries. Twice a year, oblates attend a conference gathering at a Benedictine monastery, joining the monks for specific times of prayer and worship. The rest of the time, oblates are required only to read a portion of the Rule every day and practice the principles St. Benedict taught.

My husband applied and was accepted as an oblate novice. As I read through the literature and St. Benedict’s book, it became very clear that this was a practical way to put scripture into action, to truly live the Word.

The Rule of St. Benedict encourages a deeper awareness of God and His workings in the hearts and lives of believers, not unlike The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence. From my Protestant point of view, the Rule makes perfect sense and underscores the importance of a balanced life dedicated to loving God and His world as well as loving others as yourself.

Denny is as peaceful when immersed in the beauty of his reading and his prayers as I am when surrounded by the beauty of my gardens. We know God is honored through either method of worship and that He is there with us.

The Rule of St. Benedict provides a place where we can both belong

**Pray!
Eat! Move! Play! Be!
Define! Model!
Teach! Provide!
Protect! Enforce!
Help! Pray! -
Our Role as Parents
in the New
Millennium**

How much more will be required of us as parents in this new millennium? Aren't we already on "overload"? -Trying to streamline and lighten the load.

Being a parent has never been easy. There is nothing to indicate that it will become any easier for parents in this new millennium now that we are already ten years into it. In fact as we look around us, we may feel rather overwhelmed and a bit discouraged by all that we face as parents and the limited number of hours in each day in which we have to accomplish what we have been given to do.

That first night at home with a new born baby was perhaps the greatest eye opener of our lives! Oh, yes! Numerous other parents had spoken about their fatigue, but somehow we never thought that we would experience that. Not until it actually sets in and we feel it for ourselves can we comprehend this experience when it is described; it is just something that parents have to experience with their children. I have convinced myself that this is how we bond with each baby and fall in love with that child. We are invested in that infant

Family Time: moving toward a simpler way of life ↓



night after night when we wake with it in such a helpless and hungry state of being; somehow their neediness translates into falling in love with them. Then their growth progress and advancements adds to this.

How do we show our love for our children in this land of abundance, but in a very busy and hectic world that can be quite distracting from family? There are many parenting styles. Often our own set of circumstances affect many of the decisions we must make. However, we may have far more choices within those circumstances than we may realize to be family, and how to make that family time holy.

How do your family rituals contribute to this holy space? This would be for you to analyze as being outstanding, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Outstanding would be as effective as you could imagine. Satisfactory

Eat! Move! Play! continued on the next page

Families finding ways to be active together that are enjoyable for all of them ↓

would be considered good, but with some room for improvement, and unsatisfactory means that this is an area you would like to work on. This is an exercise simply to help you prioritize the areas where you might like to make some change and the areas where you feel confident.

___ Our family has meals together at least three times per week.

___ Our mealtimes are generally relaxed, with healthy, tasty food and lively or pleasant conversation.

___ We have several activities we enjoy doing as a family on weekends, such as going on bike rides, exploring in the woods, or going to a favorite park.

___ We each have our favorite birthday rituals, whether it's having a certain kind of cake, going to a special place, or doing a special activity [bowling or mini-golf, anyone?]

___ My kids and I frequently enjoy going on walks, kicking or tossing a ball around, or working together in the garden when we have downtime.

___ We participate in community recreation programs such as athletic



events, charity walks, games or contests.

___ We know where all the best playgrounds and parks are near our home because we visit them regularly.

___ We like to take active vacations as a family.

___ At dinnertime, everyone pitches in to help with different responsibilities - setting the table, serving food, pouring drinks, clearing the table and cleaning up.

___ We make an effort to regularly carve out free time where we can just hang out and the kids can talk about whatever is on their minds.

Since this is a “self” test, it is just for you, and you to look over your own answers. Where you answered with satisfactory or unsatisfactory, start to think about ways you can improve those areas. Figure out which routine or ritual is most important for you to upgrade and make that a priority. Then tackle the other ones as the first ones become comfortably incorporated into your family’s life. It is worth the effort because creating pleasant rituals that you do together as a family has a powerful bonding effect between family members. They provide a sacred time to connect or reconnect with each other, enjoy that closeness, and share your hopes and dreams, your fears and worries. The benefits you reap from these

Eat! Move! Play! continued from the previous page shared activities will help each of you fill up on love and other positive feelings.

To gain entry into the Kingdom of God, we are told in the Bible to be more “like a child.” Children naturally enjoy playing, and it is through creative play that they learn. It seems only natural that as parents that we should be actively playing with our children. They are only little for such a short time. Play is what allows us as adults to be creative and to begin to “think outside of the box” while moving toward problem solving and away from being stuck in a mode that just isn’t working. It is a playful spirit within us that frees up our mind to let God’s work take over, giving us a slightly different perspective on an old problem so that we can now see a solution where we couldn’t before. How many times have we been told that

God is always with us, but we fail to notice. It is in that interaction between us where we find God perhaps the most.

As the story goes about the man on his death bed, who never ever says, “Gee, I wish I had spent more time at the office.”

Our interactions with children teach us so much about the art of being human and remind us of our own childhoods; it is, as if we are being given a second chance to be children once again. We might as well enjoy this time. We can learn so much from children.

by Mary Jane Glauber

Exercise questions from: **“Eat! Move! Play! A Parent’s Guide for raising Healthy, Happy Kids”**; Wiley and Sons 2010; ISBN 978-0-470-47420-4

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others

... ‘One day as he wound down from his usual opening monologue about himself, he flashed a bright smile, “Well,” he said, “That enough about me.”

“What do you think about me?”

Barbara Brown Taylor notes in her book, An Altar in the World, A Geography of Faith in the sixth chapter, The Practice of Encountering Others: Community that the great wisdom traditions of the world all recognize that the main impediment to living a life of meaning is being self-absorbed. Barbara Brown Taylor sets out to explain how to encounter the sacred everywhere in the world. In this chapter about community, she delves into the practice of encountering others, which is not so easy for us as humans it turns out.

“We may think we are seeking the company of others to get something for ourselves that we need in our social relationships. It is true that most of us do need a community of some sort to whom we can tell our stories. Our real needs are far greater than we may realize; we have a need to be drawn out of ourselves,” Barbara Brown Taylor notes.

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued on the next page

North America - fishing from a public pier, encountering “Others” through a mutual pass-time, hobby or livelihood - There are many ways to meet “Others” in our everyday lives.



Sometimes, in order to be able to encounter “Others” we must step outside of our daily routine. See John 21: 1-17 - We may not have to make great changes. We may simply have to shift from one side of the boat to the other to be able to find more fish to catch, but some kind of a change is required of us.



exists, exists in this wholeness. Everything that lives, lives in this light. This is the one community that matters, the one toward which all others reach.”

In this chapter dedicated to “Community and Encountering Others,” Barbara Brown Taylor indicates that “if you always do what you have always done, then you will always get what you have always got. Extreme measures are sometimes called for, and these measures sometimes even produce results.”

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued from the previous page

“We have all had those moments when the time has flown by where we may feel tired but refreshed by whatever or whomever it was that has completely engrossed us so that we feel more lifted up than we could have gotten by a day at the beach.”

Barbara Brown Taylor points out that “artists and athletes often speak of something they refer to as “flow” when they are so deeply involved in what they are doing that time ceases to exist and so does their sense of themselves as separate from what they are doing. Their body moves by instinct instead of thoughts while they are in this “flow.” Awareness blooms and creativity flourishes as the individual self escapes its confines to become part of something bigger than self.”

Barbara Brown Taylor explains that in “the Christian mystical tradition that one name for this phenomenon is “divine union.” She adds that it can happen all alone with God, but it can happen between groups of people and sometimes with nature. It is not achieved as much as it is given, the often fleeting, but fully memorable gift of escaping the small self long enough to glimpse a wholeness that is far more real than the most real brokenness.”

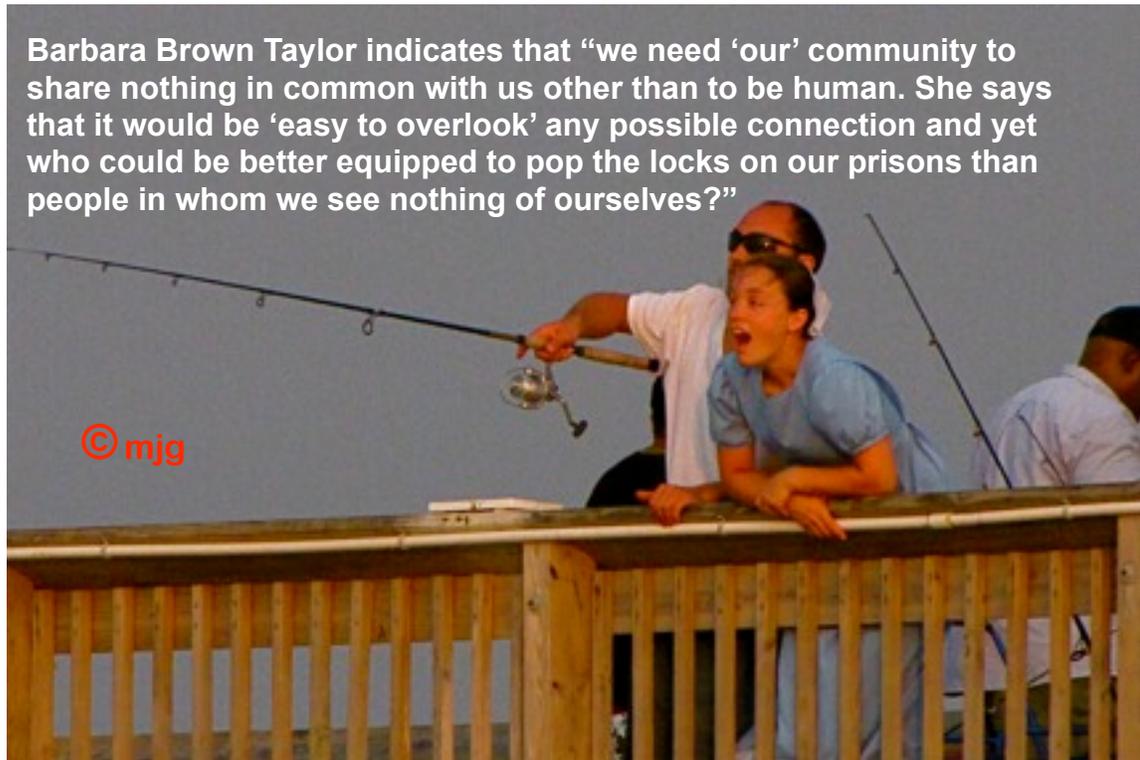
Barbara Brown Taylor says that “In the light of this wholeness, it can become impossible to make meaningful distinctions between God and other people, trees or anything else in creation. Everything that

Our real needs are far greater than we may realize; we have a need to be drawn out of ourselves

She notes that “The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers includes the wisdom that ‘the hardest spiritual work in the world is to love the neighbor as the self - to encounter another human being not as someone you can use, change, fix, help, save, enroll, convince or control, but simply as someone who can spring you from the prison of yourself, if you will allow it. All you have to do is recognize another you ‘out there’ - your other self in the world - for whom you may care as instinctively as you care for your self. To become that other person, even for a moment, is to understand what it means ‘to die to yourself.’” Barbara Brown Taylor says, “This can be as frightening as it is liberating. It may be the only real spiritual discipline there is.”

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued on the next page

Barbara Brown Taylor notes that “the World’s Great Religions have always required communities of people to make them work; they are where the teachings of the religion are tested. However, all groups tend to attract like minded people the same way most churches do. Each group shares central convictions, commitments, values or disciplines that keep them together, and others out.”



Barbara Brown Taylor indicates that “we need ‘our’ community to share nothing in common with us other than to be human. She says that it would be ‘easy to overlook’ any possible connection and yet who could be better equipped to pop the locks on our prisons than people in whom we see nothing of ourselves?”

Then Barbara Brown Taylor points out that “we need ‘our’ community to share nothing in common with us other than to be human. She says that it would be ‘easy to overlook’ any possible connection and yet who could be better equipped to pop the locks on our prisons than people in whom we see nothing of ourselves?” She points out that “at the most basic level, the everyday practice of being with other people is the practice of loving the neighbor as self. More intricately, it is the practice of coming face to face with another human being,

if you always do what you have always done, then you will always get what you have always got. Extreme measures are sometimes called for, and these measures sometimes even produce results.

preferably someone different enough to qualify as a capital “O” for Other while entertaining the concept that this “is one of the faces of God.”

How should we begin? You might ask. Barbara Brown Taylor next suggests an entry point for us into this practice. In her earlier chapters where she had explained the “practices of paying attention, wearing skin, walking on earth (like Christ) and the value of getting lost in Christian terminology, she notes that this too “does not require a special setting, no personal trainer and no expensive equipment. It can be done anywhere by anyone who resolves to do it.”

She suggests that we “start by focusing in on one of the human beings who are

performing mundane tasks around us, like a cashier. Recognizing that we are busy and that the cashier has a job to perform, she is not suggesting a long encounter. She is suggesting that we simply acknowledge the person eye to eye, out of respect as a person who exists behind that position. Barbara Brown Taylor says, “You noticed and because you did, neither of you will ever be quite the same again.” Barbara Brown Taylor notices that most of us tend to resist this kind of an encounter. She points out that Jesus taught the practice of encounter, by what he said and

All you have to do is recognize another you ‘out there’ - your other self in the world - for whom you may care as instinctively as you care for your self.

"If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history, but make new history. We must add to the inheritance left by our ancestors."
 ~ Mahatma Ghandi "Peace"

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued from the previous page

what he did. Matthew 25: 34-37 is given as an example. This passage tells us exactly what we are to do if we are to be like Christ. This is the practice of encounter that Jesus practiced on all people from all walks of life. The practice of encounter in Biblical tradition shows up most often as the practice of hospitality or PHILOXENIA in Greek. Philo means Love and Xenia means stranger. Xenophobia comes to us more naturally.

Scripture may seem unnatural. Barbara Brown Taylor consulted with Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. Rabbi Sacks pointed out that "in 36

places in the Hebrew Bible, we are commanded to "Love the Stranger." Why? Because we have been strangers ourselves, the Bible says."

Barbara Brown Taylor explains that Rabbi Sacks indicates there are "two reasons for us to love the stranger: First, You shall love the stranger because you know what it is to be a stranger yourself. Second of all, you shall love the stranger because the stranger shows you God."

Not convinced yet? Barbara Brown Taylor adds that Rabbi Sacks says, "Why should we love the stranger? Because God does."

Barbara Brown Taylor tells us that "in the early church, the church was not a place, but a people, also known as the household of God, who met in one another's homes and ate at one another's tables, often breaking the rules they had grown up with by eating with people who were above or below them on the human food chain."

It is the practice of coming face to face with another human being, preferably someone different enough to qualify as a capital "O" for Other while entertaining the concept that this "is one of the faces of God.

"But Jesus did not have a home into which he could welcome people. Jesus could not cook for people nor offer them a bed, which may be what gave him such a hospitable heart."

"Jesus' own PHILOXENIA was much more likely to take place in a field or a boat, on a road or a mountain - wherever people who felt like strangers happened to meet the person who made them feel like kin. It was just a gift he had, this divine practice of encounter, so valuable to him that he did his best to teach his followers how to do it too."

Barbara Brown Taylor notes, "We live in a world made up of

'Differences' where one side versus the other even in religious conflicts." She adds, "Nothing strengthens community like a common enemy. When people are feeling overwhelmed by a world with little use for their ancient truths, they can find new meanings by identifying a great evil to oppose. The degree to which we believe our faith is what makes us human is the same degree to which we will question the humanity of those who do not share our faith. We have just enough religion to make us hate one another, Jonathan Swift once observed, but not enough to make us love one another."

"Because we are human, which is to say essentially self-interested we are always looking for ways to add a little more authority to 'our' causes, to come up with better reasons to fight for what we want than, "Because I want it, that's why." If we can convince ourselves that God wants it too - even if that means making God in our own image so we can deny the image of God in our enemies - then we are free to engage in combative piety. We are free to harm others, not for our own reasons, but in the name of God, which allows us to feel holy about doing it instead of just bad," Barbara Brown Taylor points out.

"In his award winning book, Exclusion and Embrace, Bosnian born theologian

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Miroslav Volf says, “it may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference.” Barbara Brown Taylor notes that “citizens of the United States, which is presently the most religiously diverse nation on the face of the earth, would do well to pay attention that claim.”

At this point in her discussion for interchurch families in the United States, if we haven’t taken notice of her thesis on community yet, most likely she has our full attention at this point.

Barbara Brown Taylor points out that “Where articles of belief threaten to set people in opposition to one another, we may embody articles of peace. Where difference is demonized, we may host suppers with surprising guest lists.”

At Piedmont College, a Congregationalist College, where Barbara Brown Taylor teaches theology, it was decided that Theology 101 should be the “Religions of the World,” a basic introduction to the major wisdom traditions of humankind. This pleased Barbara Brown Taylor since it addresses the principle of their commandment to “Love their neighbor as

themselves.

“First, they would learn what their neighbors’ hold most sacred, and while they are at it, what better way to learn more about what they hold most sacred themselves,” Barbara Brown Taylor reasons.

During this course, Theology 101, Barbara Brown Taylor had the opportunity to worship along with her students in many different places of worship. After attending worship at a Jewish synagogue, they were invited back to the home for a Kosher Shabbat meal. Barbara Brown Taylor, who is an ordained

minister, noticed some cotton balls on the table. The mother of the family explained that since there were so many people gathered that night that there would only be a ceremonial hand washing, using the cotton balls. The mother explained that it is really more than about cleaning their hands; it is a reminder to come before God with a clean heart. Barbara Brown Taylor was reminded of Matthew 15:

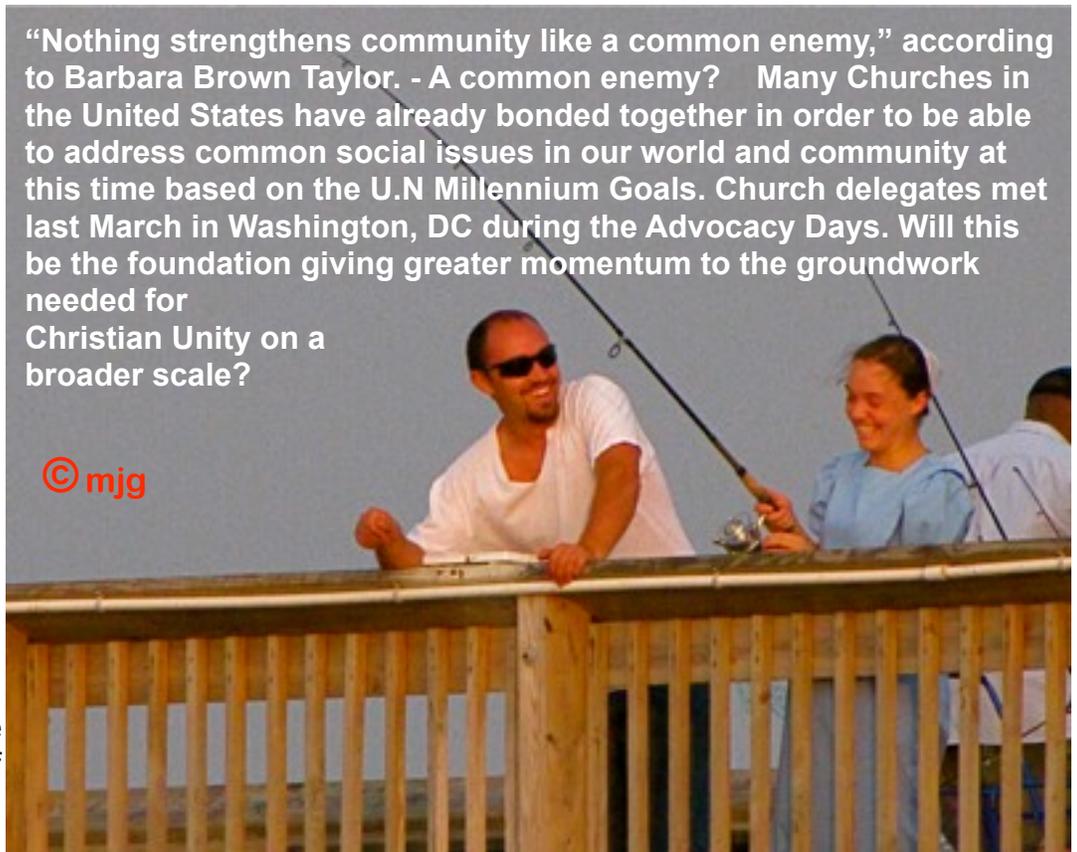
1-2 and other occasions where Christ was questioned by the

Pharisees about breaking with traditional Jewish customs and practices. Although Barbara Brown Taylor was very familiar with the Bible verses, it was the experience,

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued on the next page

“Nothing strengthens community like a common enemy,” according to Barbara Brown Taylor. - A common enemy? Many Churches in the United States have already bonded together in order to be able to address common social issues in our world and community at this time based on the U.N Millennium Goals. Church delegates met last March in Washington, DC during the Advocacy Days. Will this be the foundation giving greater momentum to the groundwork needed for Christian Unity on a broader scale?

© mjg



“We who seek justice will have to do justice to others.” ~ Mahatma Ghandi “Peace”



Barbara Brown Taylor.

She explains, “The nature of the encounter is apparently not important. What is important is that at least one person is willing to treat

it as holy, capitalizing the ‘You’ as well as the ‘I.’ The encounter changes you. It is what life is all about.”
“First, they would learn what their neighbors’ hold most sacred, and while they are at it, what better way to learn more about what they hold most sacred themselves.”

Barbara Brown Taylor adds, “The

practice is not designed to place you or those you love in danger, although it may help you discover how dangerous your own fear can be. The assignment is ‘to get over yourself.’ The assignment is to love the God you did not make up with all your heart, soul strength and mind; and the second is like unto it: to love your neighbor you also did not make up as if that person were your own strange and particular self. Do this and the doing will teach you everything

you need to know. Do this and you will live.”

It may help you discover how dangerous your own fear can be

This was not light reading. Oh, it was easy to read, but it was intensely thought provoking. I had to reflect on what this

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others continued from the previous page

the doing and doing it with a Jewish family at their Shabbat meal where its real significance became apparent to Barbara Brown Taylor.

“The issue was not the ritual, but the relationships created by washing her hands with Jews at their Shabbat meal,” Taylor notes. “This did not make her a Jew nor the Jews Christian,” she explains.

“At that moment, it was simply a way of heading toward the edge of my own tradition in order to meet people who were reaching out to me from the edge of their own.” Taylor adds, “What we have most in common is not religion but humanity. I learned this from

my religion, which also teaches me that encountering another as being as close to God as I may ever get in the eye to eye thing, the person to person thing, which is where God’s Beloved has promised to show up.”

“It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference.” Paradoxically, the point is not to see him. The point is to see the person standing right in front of me, who has no substitute, who can never be replaced, whose heart holds things for which there is no language,

whose life is an unsolved mystery. The moment I turn that person into a character in my own story, the encounter is over. I have stopped being a human being and have become a fiction writer instead,” says

“Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of Humility”

~ Mahatma Ghandi “Peace”

Community: The Practice of Encountering Others
continued from the previous page

would mean for our world as we know it. I did. This is the world that Christ hoped for us based on love. I liked what it had to say.

The other chapters in this book deal with a practice of waking up to God, Reverence as paying attention, incarnation as the practice of wearing skin, wilderness as the practice of getting lost, vocation as the practice of living with purpose, sabbath as the practice of saying no, physical labor as the practice of carrying water, breaking through as the practice of feeling pain, prayer as the practice of being present to God, and benediction as the practice of pronouncing blessings.

This is a book that I would highly recommend to everyone as we are figuring out how to live in this new millennium. Booklist’s review for this book says, “Years ago, a priest invited her to speak at his church and asked her, What is saving your life right now? This book replies, Becoming more fully human. Taylor focuses on various physical activities, simple yet profound, such as walking meditation, fasting, eating, singing, bathing, and giving birth, and discusses how they affect one’s place in the world. Her

chapter on the activity of getting lost considers gaining insight by a means many try to avoid, that of getting lost, consciously endeavoring to allow oneself to get lost or off the beaten path. However, Barbara Brown Taylor encourages it as a spiritual practice. What makes Taylor so refreshing is her honesty.” And, I agree. This was a delightfully spiritual book to read. When our safety net is gone and the way ahead is not clear so that we are lost, the sudden exposure can be both frightening and revealing.

This book may affirm the practices you are already doing at home right now especially if you are in an interchurch

marriage. That would be a very good thing. For others it may bring a new awareness; that would be a very good thing too. This Chapter of this book comes the closest to showing us how “we may be one” as Christ has wished for us.

An altar in the world : a geography of faith

by Barbara Brown Taylor.
1st edition: New York : HarperOne, c2009.
Spiritual life -- Christianity.
LCCN:2008018303
ISBN:9780061370465

Book review by
Mary Jane Glauber

“walk joyfully on the earth and respond to that of God in every human being.” ~ George Fox



Community Building involves bringing in many people and engaging them in “the process” in a mindful and compassionate way.

Numbers 6: 24-26

24 The LORD
bless you and
keep you!

25 ¹The LORD
let his face
shine upon you,
and be gracious
to you!

26 ²The LORD
look upon you
kindly and give
you peace

Spend some quiet time reading over and thinking about the lines that sparkle for you. Practice using "Lectio Divina" with Numbers 6:24-26 and/or Hebrews 13: 1-2. Any prayers that you create from this exercise, please consider sharing them.

**Let mutual love continue.
Do not neglect to show
hospitality to strangers, for by
doing that some have entertained
angels without knowing it."
~Hebrews 13: 1-2**



1 [25] Let his
face shine: a
Hebrew
idiom for
"smile."

2 [26] Peace:
the Hebrew
word includes
the idea of
"prosperity,
happiness."

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*Looking forward to the 2012 AAIF Biennial Conference - Please save the date,
details to follow at www.aifusa.org*

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To:

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Swamp Hibiscus Seed Pods - a native
plant in Kentucky - autumn



The ARK