

North American Newsletter

Early Summer, 2021

Eight Newly Ordained Priests are on their Way

Shannon Young, Seminary Student

In May, the students of the North American Christian Community Seminary witnessed the ordinations of eight new priests – all women – in Hillsdale, NY. The Hillsdale congregation, along with its priest, Rev. Carol Kelly, graciously opened the chapel doors and the grounds to host this momentous ten-day experience attended by hundreds of people, including 23 priests from around the nation, as well as from Canada, Germany, and Brazil.

The Seminarians (the Knowing Christ students and the Walking with Christ students) worked carefully preparing for the experience. Two of the three Walking with Christ students from Toronto, Erica McClennan and Robert Bower, managed to cross the border for the first time in months to be a part of this experience. Seminary director, Rev. Jonah Evans, also managed to travel from Toronto. It was very joyful for the eight students to finally meet in person with both of the Seminary directors for the first time since the full time Seminary experience, after many Covid related delays, finally commenced in January of 2021 in the two separate locations of Hillsdale, NY and Toronto, Canada.



Back Row, left to right: Vicke von Behr, from the Leadership in Berlin; Anna Silber; Jong Won Choi; Patrick Kennedy, Seminary Director; Jeana Lee. Front Row, left to right: Kate Kennedy; Elizabeth Majoros; Leslie Waite; Mimi Coleman; Victoria Capon.

The first days of the ten-day gathering were devoted to a priest Synod. The outgoing Erzoberlenker, Rev. Vicke Von Behr, from Germany, and the incoming Erzoberlenker, Rev. Joao Torunsky, from Brazil, along with his wife, Claudia, faithfully undertook the very uncertain journey to arrive at Hillsdale, NY for the event. Oberlenker, Rev Oliver Steinruck, also arrived from Berlin.

The Seminary students were thrilled to be involved in the exhaustive planning and implementation of the experience of the Synod, surrounded by so many inspiring priests. We cooked, cleaned and assisted in any small and large way we could. A frequent image was of the Seminarians clustered around a table in the living room of the meeting house diligently sewing by hand the separate brightly colored vestments for the ordinands (stoles and belts).

After the Synod concluded, we joyfully welcomed the eight ordinands. Over the next three days we experienced their ordinations, with many people attending from the surrounding area, though strict Covid-related seating guidelines in the chapel had to be observed.



The ordination of priests is inserted into the Act of Consecration as the ordinands are each called by the Erzoberlenker, who gestures towards the altar, to “serve [the] Christ at the table where he sits.” The eight ordinands all sat in a row in their new brightly white robes, facing the altar. Behind the ordinands sat the gathered body of the priests. As Rudolf Frieling observes in the section “Ordination of Priests” in his treatise, *The Seven Sacraments*, by this “encircling of the gathered priesthood . . . the newly ordained know themselves to be within a golden ring. They now stand within the area where the gift of the new priesthood is preserved.” This is powerfully observed when, within the Ordination Sacrament, after the transubstantiation, the Erzoberlenker takes the transformed and consecrated substances on the paten and in the chalice, covers them, and solemnly walks in a circle with them around the gathered body of priests.

At specific places in the Act of Consecration each ordinand arose to receive from the Erzoberlenker, as Celebrant, their stole, the chasuble (representing the Community of Christians), a sacred anointing, and to accept their calling to continually “become” as they serve to lead souls to Christ. Rudolf Frieling observes in *The Seven Sacraments*, “nothing can more effectively call us to ‘become who you are!’ than the priest’s future-revealing work at the altar. Whoever grasps the archetypal, apocalyptic character of the work at the altar will clearly recognize that the *Ordination at the high altar serves the developing future universal priesthood*. In its strictly ordered form, Ordination carries Christ’s eternal priesthood through cycles of time and sinks it into human souls so that it may arise anew in them.”

Following the ordinations the Seminarians toasted the new priests through a festive celebration involving songs, skits, poetry, speeches and some fun gifts: like communion bread recipes, throat lozenges, black socks, and a Sermonizer – for when the priests have difficulty thinking of a sermon topic, all they need to do is spin the dial.

The final momentous stage of the ten-day process was witnessing each of the new priests prayerfully fulfilling the responsibility of celebrating the Act of Consecration of Man for the first time. This concluded the eventful series of solemn and joyful days. Eight new priests are now on their way. All the Seminarians feel deeply honored that we could play a role in assisting them, celebrating them, and sending them off with our deeply felt gratitude and many good blessings as they travel the separate roads that lie ahead for them.



Camp Harmony Lake is On!

Rev. Carol Kelly

The Christian Community Camp on the east coast will take place in Hillsdale, NY on the church property this year. We have 16 acres and a swimming pond and lots of hiking trails nearby. It will be the same great program on a smaller scale: singing, stories, games, swimming, hiking and a new equestrian program this year! July 29th - August 14th for children 8 - 14 yrs. old. If you have an oldest boy or girl who missed last year, they are welcome to come join us this year (rising 9th graders).

Registration is limited! Please see our website campharmonylake.org or email Rev. Carol Kelly at carolkelly.cc@gmail.com.

For more information about children’s camps and youth conferences offered by The Christian Community, please go to the “Children and Youth” tab on our regional website www.thechristiancommunity.org.

A Letter from our Regional Coordinator (Lenker)

Rev. Craig Wiggins

Dear Christian Communities in North America,

The main event of this year was without doubt the ordination of eight people to the priesthood. The Taconic-Berkshire (northern New York) community, the seminary leadership and the senior leadership worked together with great dedication to put on an event under Corona conditions that I believe everyone could safely and also joyfully participate in. After the festival days the newly ordained begin to organize the transition into their congregations. In the meantime, several of them have been inducted and have begun their work. It will be an enormous task to help shape the transition of seven new priests into their completely new professional and life situations. Fortunately, a 'Transition Team' consisting of Ann Burfeind, Emma Heirman and undersigned has been formed to accompany all the processes.

The newly ordained and their congregations:

Lesley Waite	Wellington/New Zealand
Victoria Capon	Chicago
Mimi Coleman	Taconic-Berkshire
Elizabeth Majoros	Denver
Jong Won Choi	Devon
Anna Silber	Spring Valley
Kate Kennedy	Toronto
Jeana Lee	Chicago

This year, all confirmations in the USA could take place within the Easter season. As the USA/Canada border was closed, Jonah Evans confirmed his group in Toronto himself. In Atlanta, an affiliate congregation of Washington DC, an amusing situation arose. Since the Waldorf School, which usually hosts us, holds all classes outside, the confirmation also took place in a tent open on three sides. With great joy, a hardworking group of helpers under the guidance of Emma Heirman transformed the outdoor classroom into a worthy place for the sacrament. And lo and behold, it worked!

In other news: With the sending of Elizabeth (Lisa) Majoros to Denver, Jim Hindes can now retire. Luis Gonzalez Sabater will move to Lima/Peru in October after two and a half years in Sacramento. Nora Minassian is moving to Sacramento and will begin her work in Advent. Sanford Miller will slowly approach retirement. In Detroit, Michael Brewer is slowly approaching emeritus status; we will continue to work regularly in Detroit from Chicago to prepare the congregation for a new, as yet unknown future. Julia Polter continues her training and work in hospital chaplaincy in Bellingham, Washington. She will also serve Vancouver and its Seattle branch as time permits.

Ann Burfeind, working with a team of young adults, has planned five children's and youth camps in different parts of the USA: There will be kite flying, hiking, and canoeing, among other activities. Carol Kelly, with the help of a student from the seminary, is making her own plans for a children's camp at the Taconic-Berkshire church site. After some uncertainty, the camp in California with Rafal Nowak and Michael Latham will take place.

Rev. Craig Wiggins

About the New Priests

In their own words...

Victoria Capon —

I was raised, until I was 12, by my father, who was a devout Christian and lay leader in the Episcopal church, and by my mother who was an atheist. I loved going to church with my father. He prayed the Lord's Prayer with us every night as his father did with him. Spending time with my dad was precious. He treated people with the utmost respect, no matter who they were. When we met someone who needed spare change he would give them what he had in his pocket and taught us not to be concerned with how they may spend it. He had faith in their humanity, and their dignity was of great importance to him. He has been my role model and inspiration, and is now accompanying me on this journey from the other side of the veil.

My first call to ministry came in my 20's, when I was not identifying as a Christian and had not yet found Anthroposophy. I was waiting for a friend outside Bangor Theological school, when I experienced an overwhelming feeling of recognition and a deep call to be there. I did not understand it. I was a single mom, working on my BA in Art at the University of Southern Maine, so I ignored it and carried on. The call continued to come periodically in different ways, once as an overwhelming impulse to celebrate at an altar, but what altar?

When I found Anthroposophy at 33 I knew that what I was studying was the truth, because somehow it described what I had always known. I was aware that Christ was at the center of Anthroposophy, but I was not ready to explore returning to church. I became a Waldorf Early Childhood teacher and also worked with children with special needs in several institutions and in their homes.

When I accepted a position at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod, I finally let myself go to a weekend introductory course in Chicago, on *Investigating the Priesthood of The Christian Community*. I had been drawn to these workshops when I read about them but didn't let myself even dream of attending. So I flew to Chicago and met Reverends Bastiaan Baan, Richard Dancey, Ann Burfeind and their spouses, along with a few others who were interested. We attended the Act of Consecration every day, ate Margaret Dancey's delicious food and gathered for introductory presentations. Without knowing it I had opened a door. Within nine months, a car accident in which I broke my hip and ribs woke me to the fact that it was time for me to listen to my angel.

The sacrament of The Act of Consecration of Man has become my home and the work of serving Christ and Christ Community, not only at the altar of my heart, but at an altar in a congregation is my one true calling. My sending is to Chicago — to the very place where the impulse to serve as a priest in The Christian Community came so strongly! I am very much looking forward to getting to know the Chicago congregation and celebrating the sacraments that guide us through our lives and lift up the presence of Christ in all who walk the earth.



Jong Won Choi —

I was born in South Korea in 1967. My father was a high school history teacher and my mother stayed at home raising five children with great care and devotion. Peace, harmony, and abundance of love are the words that come to my mind when I think of my childhood. I would not be who I am if I didn't have my mother who was exceptionally compassionate, selfless, patient, and loving, and my father who lived his life based on his belief in virtues. I believe that the love I received from them still works at the core of my being, wondrously.

I studied education at Seoul National University, and taught social studies in Seoul before I came to the U.S. with my two daughters for Waldorf teacher training. Having discovered the beauty and power of the art of eurythmy during my teacher training, I decided to study eurythmy. Upon graduation from the eurythmy school at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, CA, I moved to NY to teach eurythmy at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School. My time at Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School with wonderful students, parents, and colleagues turned out to be a golden chapter of my life that I cherish in my heart precious. During those seven years, I immersed myself, happily, into all three areas of eurythmy work — artistic, pedagogical, and therapeutic eurythmy.



This fulfilling and enjoyable time needed to come to an end when I, to my surprise, felt called to devote my life to religious service. Without knowing much about what was coming, yet with springing joy in my heart that I could not explain, I said, “Yes” to this calling, and I am glad I did. I am full of joy, enthusiasm, and gratitude as I begin my work in The Christian Community in Devon.

Mimi Coleman —

My name is Mimi Coleman, and after three years of study and preparation I was able to join the ordination preparation group. This final semester was so beautiful, with Revs. Patrick Kennedy and Paul Newton and other visiting teachers: looking at the founding moments of our church and the original people who were ordained in Dornach, Switzerland.

In the last week before ordination, I felt well prepared by Rev. Vicke von Behr who walked us through the sacrament, first in words and stories, and finally in the church in Hillsdale, NY. Then the next day with vestments, we practiced again.

When it came time on Friday, I was with the first group of three to be ordained. The flowers caught my attention, also the light through the windows. Three priests from the leadership (Joao Torunsky, Oliver Steinrueck, and Craig Wiggins) looked on intently from the side, witnessing all of us. More priests sat directly behind us.

I noticed that the two priests serving, Lisa Hildreth and Matthias Giles, were both so competent and graceful. Vicke also noticed things as the celebrant, which he told us later, about what we did or how we were. I remember being so touched that he memorized everything and could look at us as we went through each part of the ordination. We really could stand eye-to-eye, or I-to-I.

The day felt a little like my wedding day — I was center of attention (not alone in that) and it was so festive; I kept telling myself: “pay attention, go slowly, take it all in.” What a festival



mood! I was very surprised by my friends from the Devon community who did a skit and song for me and gave me wonderful gifts, even after they had showered me with gifts on my farewell a few weeks before.

I met, and re-met many familiar people. I know so many people from the Hillsdale area, which is great since now I am being sent there! I know people from art classes, Waldorf education, Camphill, over the last 20 plus years. So this is going to be a perfect place to land, also for my husband, John Tower, who has family in upstate New York. I am excited to start, to get acquainted more with people and with the area. I will need to be back in Kimberton, PA for some time to pack and move but the summer will have me traveling back and forth a few times before we settle at last in the Hillsdale area.

Now I am starting to celebrate at the altar, and I experience that it is difficult to see myself clearly. But when I have been able to experience my sisters from the ordination preparation group celebrating, I have so much confidence in them and their celebrating that it gives me confidence in my own work. I have watched them transform from students to priests as the years went by and so I know that if they could do it then I can do it as well! I feel like I will be a work in progress for the remainder of my life and beyond! And I feel comfortable in growing and becoming as a priest.

I want to thank everyone who made all this possible — all the teachers; my family and friends who have provided generous support along the way when I reached out to them; and a special thank you to Our Lord who accompanied me through it all, right by my side.

Kate Kennedy —

Growing up, I had the good fortune of getting to know vastly different parts of North America. I spent the first seven years of my life in Wisconsin, near lakes and ponds, among fireflies and weeping willow trees. For the next seven years I lived on the east coast, mostly in a suburb of Washington D.C. My dawning awareness of cultural life in those years was richly fed by the cosmopolitan nature of the D.C. area. Then at 14 I moved just north of San Diego, and my adolescence played itself out amid the sun and surf of the Pacific Ocean.

Nominally Christian, I was not raised religious in any sense. While studying Philosophy and Anthropology at UC Santa Cruz, however, I developed the longing to find a home in church. It was a great stroke of fortune that during this time I met Patrick Kennedy, who introduced me to The Christian Community. Ever since my first service in 1998, The Christian Community has been that spiritual home that I was seeking.

My twenties, or “wander years,” brought intensive studying and working out of Anthroposophy: creative writing with Paul Matthews, a Foundation year at Emerson College, a Waldorf high school teacher training with Betty Staley, teaching English at the Chicago Waldorf school, and studying as a guest at the Priest Seminary in Stuttgart, Germany. It was in Stuttgart that the calling to priesthood began dimly stirring in me, but it would take another ten years – after both my daughters were born and



while back in Stuttgart for Emma Heirman's ordination – for that calling to become fully conscious and alive in me.

That my priesthood was born during this world historic moment feels important and weighty. It was born in the midst of a global situation that has posed unprecedented challenges to who we are as communities. At the same time, it was born leading up to the 100th anniversary of the birth of our movement. This anniversary is not just an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate all that we have been given in the name of religious renewal. It is also a chance to take stock, to roll up sleeves and to further develop the work of building Christ community together in our time, in the age of the free individual. I look forward with great anticipation to many years of this endeavoring.

Jeana Lee —

I was born and raised in the Monterey Bay area of California in a university beach town that prided itself on being artistic and environmentally conscious. Like many children in my elementary school, I wanted to be a marine biologist when I grew up. I attended a small liberal arts college in western Massachusetts where I rowed on the crew team and studied chemistry. During that time I attended religious services in a variety of denominations searching for a home, but did not quite find it.



I lived in the Boston area for a few years working in academic administration, and it was there I connected with a community of people who were all searching for a spiritual life, in some way or another. I had not found a home, but at least I had companions in the seeking process. Later I moved to Colorado for graduate school, but instead I met Waldorf education and began a high school teacher training.

I visited Spring Valley to interview for a chemistry teaching position at the Waldorf school. In the guest house I met a seminary student. At that time I had no idea I would ever attend the Christian Community church, let alone the seminary. I got the job and came to Spring Valley. It took a few years before I experienced the Act of Consecration for the first time, but I quickly recognized that in it I had found the home I was looking for.

I left my teaching job and joined the seminary in Spring Valley in 2017, then spent my internship in Toronto before continuing at the newly relocated seminary in Toronto, then returning to Spring Valley for the ordination preparation this year.

I look forward to finding another home in Chicago.

Elizabeth (Lisa) Majoros —

I discovered the Christian Community through Anthroposophy, which I found as I pondered where my newborn son might go to school. Hearing of Waldorf education, my husband Nelson and I read Robert McDermott's *Essential Steiner*, and when our son started three-day kindergarten, I joined a study group. This was the same year I was ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian church, and I studied everything I could to understand how Anthroposophy might inform and shape my church ministry and the children's educational ministries I was directing. Through my study group I learned there were clergy who worked directly out of Anthroposophy, though none anywhere close to my Georgia home, and I bought

and read Rev. Jim Hinds' book *Renewing Christianity*, which was a great help. A trip to Boston and conversation with the late Rev. Susan Lowdnes a couple of years later was my first exposure to the Act of Consecration of Man.

A family move to Cape Town, South Africa introduced me both to mature, experienced Anthroposophists and to The Christian Community. While I continued to preach, teach children, and celebrate sacraments in the Presbyterian church there, I was also able to attend The Christian Community and learn from the South African priests. Under an academic advisor who was a Waldorf parent and trustee, I completed a Master of Science degree in Social Anthropology on the subject of how a group of Waldorf teachers worked through divergent perspectives in a pluralistic setting to plan and enact their school festivals. Because of my interest in festival life, the priests graciously answered questions, included me in the church's processes, and otherwise taught and mentored me.

Returning to the US, I brought what I had learned back into the church, seeing that there were people in each church who were looking for something more. After founding the Atlanta Christian Community Affiliate with a couple of friends and serving two more churches and directing a non-profit, my family and I were eventually at a place in life where attending the Christian Community seminary became possible.

Nelson and I are excited to be joining the Denver Community, and are looking forward to a shared life with them.



Anna Silber —

I am two weeks into my life as a priest in the Spring Valley congregation, along with Rev. Paul Newton. As you may know, I was the last one to join the ordination preparation group in December and the first one out, having been inducted into the community the week after Pentecost. So, needless to say it has been a joyous whirlwind and I am still catching my breath. I have been sent to my home congregation for the time being, where I have lived for 20 years. I have many relationships in this area that are born out of the various roles I have assumed throughout the decades, including student, teacher, mother, wife, mentor, director, intern and more. It is an indescribable experience for me to now stand in these relationship as priest and pastor.



I am the mother of two girls, now ages 10 and 13, who have been homeschooled for the past two years. In the fall, my older daughter, Evelyn, heads back to Green Meadow for 7th grade and Greta will remain in a homeschool setting for her upcoming 4th grade year. My husband, Eric, is the Executive Director of the Threefold Educational Foundation and we are very fortunate to be living in a Threefold house up on the top of the hill with a view of the Pfeiffer fields and within a short walk to the church. I spend plenty of time working out my sermons as I walk my dog on the wooded paths that weave around the Fellowship Community and Threefold land. There are days when we look out at our backyard to see the Pfeiffer Center farmers plowing the field with a team of two horses; it is in such moments when I can hardly believe we live within an hour's drive of New York City.

I grew up in Los Angeles, CA and my parents and two siblings along with their families still live there. This gives us cause to travel at least once a year to visit sunny Southern California. For a number of years now it has been a joy to attend the Act of Consecration of Man in LA when we visit. It seems my past and my future find each other there, and that is a wonderful gift. In 1998, I encountered the work of Rudolf Steiner and I spent the following 20 years deeply engaged with anthroposophical study and eventually Waldorf Education. Now, at 49, my destiny has led me to the priesthood of The Christian Community. I spent my 20's traveling, working, and adventuring around the world, and I spent my 30's and 40's in one small neighborhood here in Spring Valley. So now I, along with my husband and children, am setting out to discover what the signature of my next two plus decades will be!

I am looking forward with enthusiasm for what is to come as we work together to build Christ community.

Lesley Waite —

My journey towards priesthood has covered just over two decades. I had tried attendance at the Stuttgart Seminary during 2003-2004, but had not managed to become fluent enough with the German language. I then veered towards another path — in areas of education in New Zealand.

When I was finally ready to step more firmly on the path of a 'becoming priest', the borders of many countries in the world had closed to foreigners due to Covid-19 restrictions.

As the directors and Board of the Toronto Seminary made the decision to move its preparatory semester work to Spring Valley in New York state, I was able to obtain a visa to enter the United States of America, arriving here early in January.

Leaving a New Zealand summer for the winter snows of New York and joining seven women all focused on the same learning, has been exhilarating in many ways. With Patrick Kennedy as our on-site director, and Paul Newton priest for Spring Valley in support, I have been blessed to meet with a number of other priests invited to share their experiences and expertise over the weeks of our preparation semester. Getting to know all these people broadens and deepens my relationship to our church and its priests and members, which is so wonderfully international. Now ordained, I carry this global picture of the Act of Consecration of Man, especially, livingly reflecting its spiritual origins and spreading its healing qualities over all our earth.

My 'Sending' is to New Zealand. Initially, I will work with Hartmut Borries and Cheryl Prigg in Auckland (the largest metropolitan area and where we have a church) until early September. There is a scheduled priest visit to the small Wellington community in September where I have my home (presently tenanted), and after my return there I will prepare for that visit. Other communities in New Zealand are in Hastings, Hawkes Bay (4.5 hour drive from Wellington; 6 hour drive from Auckland) and Christchurch in the South Island (2 hour flight from Auckland; 1 hour from Wellington). I am looking forward to working with my colleagues in this region; perhaps even in Australia (where a daughter and grandchildren live), as there are quarantine-free flights now possible between the two countries.



How Can I Give Back?

Faith DiVecchio, Legacy Giving Coordinator

For many of us, The Christian Community sacraments are at the center of our spiritual and community lives, an ongoing source of beauty, transformation and connectedness with higher realms. The sacraments have accompanied and fructified the milestones of our lives. It is a gift to us to be able to give back, with our material resources, for all that flows towards us from the sacraments and the communal life surrounding them. We can support these into the future with planned giving.

Margaret Shipman, a member of our congregation in Los Angeles, expresses in her own words why she has chosen to write a legacy gift to The Christian Community into her will:

I grew up in western Colorado and had a real childhood. My parents took their six children camping, canoeing, fishing and hiking and we attended a protestant church regularly. I liked the people, the music and the feeling of being Christian. But there were things about the Bible that really bothered me and I was full of questions which went unanswered. I always believed that God, and therefore Christ, was a loving Being, and when Christ cursed a fig tree for not bearing fruit even though it was not its season to bear fruit, I was really angry!

I tell that story because The Christian Community brought answers! The old way of initiation (done for you) was finished; now we must seek knowledge of the spirit through our own efforts. Wow, OK, goodbye fig tree, and thank goodness for the work of the Seminary, which enables priests to bring amazing insights into the teachings of the Bible.

Everyone has their own path and I encountered Anthroposophy first. I had gladly embraced the concept of repeated earth lives because this answered half of my burning childhood questions. Still, the terminology was disturbing — the etheric body, Old Moon...

After I rolled my car on the Hollywood Freeway in 1980 and walked away without a scratch, I knew something major had shifted in my life. I had met my guardian angel and felt there was something important that I needed to do — some unknown “mission”. Shortly after that my mentor in the violin shop, Hans Weisshaar, suggested I might like to go to The Christian Community. The Act of Consecration of Man, brought to earth by Rudolf Steiner, was powerful and instant proof for me that Anthroposophy was a Christian path. One can enter it from any religion or lack thereof, or outright atheism, but if sincerely studied it will — in a right time and way for each individual — lead one to the Being we stand with in freedom at the altar of The Christian Community. Most people do not wear these ‘two hats’ with equal dedication. I do, but recognize that nothing can replace the personal sense of responsibility for community which lives even in the name, *The Christian Community*.

By sharing part of our lives and finances we carry the present work of this movement for religious renewal. By thinking ahead we can put in place, in writing, a promise — a pledge so-to-speak — toward future work. Someone built and carried this in Los Angeles so that it was there for me to find. My legacy is there so that it will still be there for others to find when I cannot support it physically any longer. I am grateful to live in a country which makes this freedom of choice possible.

Margaret Shipman

For information or support with planned giving, please contact the Legacy Giving Coordinator, Faith DiVecchio: giving@thechristiancommunity.org 413-717-5249.

Who is The Christian Community?

Rev. Bastiaan Baan

One evening long ago – my children were little – I was saying the bed-time prayer with one of them. Suddenly, he was beaming, as if he recognized something or someone. “What’s the matter?” I asked. “There was an angel sitting on your shoulder,” was the answer. I have never forgotten that answer. As I am writing this article, I am seeing the moment before me again.

When people are unselfishly connected with each other, an angel may come and visit them. That happens already in the smallest form of community, when two people share an intention that is oriented towards the spiritual world. When larger communities unselfishly cooperate there is more than that – even more than the genius of each individual – a being of a higher hierarchy becomes the genius of that community.

Without considering these concepts, something similar was once observed by a staff member of a children’s camp of The Christian Community. At a silent moment of shared attention, a moment of perfect harmony, she experienced the “wingbeat of an angel” who swept over the camp. It raises the interesting question of where the angel goes after the end of the camp?

Johannine Christianity

Perhaps it is different again in a spiritual community that through the years, day in, day out, remains true to its mission. The fact that The Christian Community has a spirit, a genius, literally sounds in the Sacrament of Ordination, when the celebrant turns to the congregation with the words: “The spirit of your community has acknowledged this soul as a shepherd of souls. Follow him in this acknowledgement.”

Who is this spirit of our community? This question has lived among the priests from the time of the founding about a hundred years ago. It was also a question that Friedrich Rittelmeyer in a small circle of leaders asked Rudolf Steiner. Rittelmeyer himself was living with the thought that this being was perhaps connected with the individuality of John the Evangelist. The enigmatic answer of Rudolf Steiner was: “The Evangelist is indeed interested in your movement. But you have to prove yourself.” The answer tells us that it depends on us whether this interest leads to a lasting connection. With this Rudolf Steiner gave the circle of priests a task for the coming centuries.

The founders of The Christian Community recognized in the sacraments the spirit of Johannine Christianity. The philosopher Schelling, who distinguished three phases in the development of Christianity, described in his book *Philosophy of Revelation* the mission of the three primary apostles: Peter as the inspiring spirit of Catholicism, Paul as the genius of Protestantism, and John as the inspirer of a future form of Christianity. Eberhard Kurras gave an extensive description of these phases in his book *Encounters with Christ*.

New Questions

Apart from all the theologies that have been thought and described about these three streams in Christianity, it is worth the effort to work with these thoughts while allowing them to remain open questions. Where in the seven sacraments of The Christian Community do we recognize something of the spirit of Peter? Of Paul? Of John? A simple, unambiguous answer to these questions is in my opinion not possible.

The theme becomes even more complicated and differentiated when we ask ourselves who the inspirers of these great apostles were. Of the four evangelists it was known of old that they

were inspired by four mighty angel beings. These are usually pictured in the form of four symbols: for Matthew the human being, for Mark the lion, for Luke the bull, and for John the eagle. What in this later symbolism was compressed into four attributes, was represented in early Christianity in the figures of four cherubim, who dictated the content of the *eu-angelion*. The prophet Ezekiel gave a description of these beings. And thus it also sounds in the words of John, who writes at the beginning of his Apocalypse: "This is the revelation of the Being of Jesus Christ [...] sent it to His servant John through His angel." Strictly speaking we can't call it the Revelation of John. Not John, but Jesus Christ reveals Himself, and makes use of "His angel" to make this message known.

Have you ever realized that not only each human being but also the man Jesus Christ has an angel? Who is this genius? Several times this being is mentioned in the gospels. In Gethsemane, where no human being helps Him, it is an angel that gives Him strength. And what to think of the "angel who goes before Him," as Christ Himself spoke of John the Baptist (Mt.11:10)? Is John the Baptist, who after his death became the genius of the circle of the twelve disciples, the same as "my angel," of whom John writes in the Apocalypse?

When we think about it, the question "Who is the spirit of The Christian Community?" does not have an unambiguous answer. It opens the door to many new questions, which can be the beginning of a lifelong search. With every answer – this is my experience after forty years as a priest – the riddle deepens: WHO is The Christian Community?

Union means the possibility that a higher being expresses itself by the united constituents. This is a general principle of life. Five human beings who are together and think and feel harmoniously, are more than $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$, they are not only the sum of five, just as little as our body is the sum of five senses. However, the living together and living in each other of the human beings signifies something quite similar as the living in each other of the cells of the human body. A new, higher being is among the five, already among two or three. "For where two or three gather together in my name, I am there among them" (Mt.18:20). It is not the one, the other and the third, but something quite new originates from the union. However, it originates only if the single human being lives in the other, if the single human being not only gets his strength from himself, but also from the other. This can happen only if he lives unselfishly in the other. Thus, human unions are the mysterious sites which higher spiritual beings join to work through the single human beings, as the soul works through the parts of the body.

In our materialistic age, one hardly believes that, but in the spiritual-scientific worldview, it is not only something pictorial, but also something real to the highest degree. Hence, the spiritual scientist does not only speak of abstract things speaking of the folk soul or of the folk spirit, of the family spirit or of the spirit of another community. One cannot see this spirit that works in a union, but it exists because of the brotherly love of the human beings working in this union. As the body has a soul, a guild, a fraternity also has a soul, and I repeat once again, I do not speak of anything figurative but of something real.

The human beings who cooperate in a brotherhood are magicians because they draw higher beings into their circle. One no longer needs to refer to the machinations of spiritism if one cooperates with brotherly love in a community. Higher beings manifest themselves there. If we are merged in the fraternity, we harden and strengthen our organs. If we act or speak then as a member of such a community, the single soul does not act or speak in us, but the spirit of the community. This is the secret of future human progress – to work out of communities.

(Rudolf Steiner: *Riddles of the World and Anthroposophy*, lecture of November 23, 1905.)