

The Christian Community

North American Newsletter

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www.thechristiancommunity.org

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The Great Battle

J. Michael Brewer

Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand before the tactics of the adversary. For our struggling is not against flesh and blood, but against initiators of world evolution, against beings who can form world substance, against the rulers of the world in this age of darkness, against the spiritual source of evil in the world of the heavens. Ephesians 6:10-12

There was a time, not so long ago, when men going to war wore bright-colored uniforms—red, blue, gold, any color of the rainbow. There was a good reason for this: it made it possible for the leaders on either side to assess the progress of a battle. The soldiers of a kingdom wore their colors proudly, letting all the world know to whom they owed their allegiance. And as for the leaders, the higher up in the ranks they were, the more clearly the markings of their uniform, or if we go far enough back, of their armor, indicated just who they were. It was an honor to give battle to a great warrior, and that warrior was glad to let the enemies know who he was. Proper courtesy mattered, as we can read in the great epics from the middle ages or earlier.



Double Eagle's Crest Breastplate

When we read or hear those epics, we may have the feeling that the wars in those epics were not merely of human concern. This is especially clear if we turn to epics such as the Iliad or the Mahabharata and hear how the gods were assisting now one side, now the other. Even in such a tale as Parzival, we may have the feeling of knights in battle fulfilling not just an outer but also an inner quest. The separation of inner and outer battles becomes apparent only as we come closer to our own time, finally to an age in which uniforms are more and more alike, and in which armor conceals rather than revealing the person wearing it.

But those spiritual beings who joined in the battles of the Iliad are still with us. Some are our helpers; others want to enforce our submission. And for battling against those latter forces, an inner armor is necessary like that of the medieval knights—an armor which reveals to the world our deepest inner striving, reveals our true selves as we may hope one day we will truly be.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground in the day of the evil, and to be standing at the end, when all has been accomplished. So stand, having fastened truthfulness to yourself, as a belt around your waist; and having taken upon yourself as breastplate the attitude that is justified from the spirit; and having let the peace of the angels' mes-

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sage stream into your path through life so that it remains pressed into the earth as the print of your shoes; and surround all these with the certainty of a heart that can behold the truth of the spirit, which as shield will extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and let the deed of salvation so permeate your thinking that it may protect you as a helmet; and take up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God that you speak. Ephesians 6:13-17

The Beginning of the True Michaelic Age

Jim Hindes

Although Michaelmas is still weeks away, we can perhaps already now begin to feel the energy of autumn, the increased desire to work and face the challenges of the future months. On the earthly plane, those challenges include the rapidly increasing cost of energy. This last summer has seen the beginning of the crisis sometimes referred to as "peak oil." Our comfortable way of life, our modern civilization, is based on the use of cheap electricity and gasoline, freely available and at a relatively low cost.

However, the earth has only a limited amount of oil. It is true that technology will improve the efficiency of all our machines; we will increasingly harness sun, wind and water for our energy needs. But the future will be very, very different from the past seventy years. For nothing can replace the wealth made available to us by oil. Mankind is a bit like the prodigal son who had to use up his inheritance before he could wake up.

The time during which mankind discovered and developed the globe, the age that stood under the guidance of the archangel Gabriel, has ended. Like a great stone that keeps on rolling because of its momentum, the Gabrielic age, however, with its embrace of the physical, material world, has continued to roll into the age of Michael. The earthly power provided by the energy of oil has made this possible. But now the true age of Michael must begin.

The greatest form of Michaelic courage is the strength to look at oneself and one's own selfishness; it is the courage to limit oneself for the sake of others. Now that the age of shortages and limitations has begun, we are all called upon to look at ourselves in this Michaelic way. Reports from the concentration camps of World War II have taught us that an individual's true moral condition is revealed especially during times when the community experiences extreme deprivation. During such times, opportunities are given to us morally to develop and to evolve in our humanity to a degree undreamt of in everyday life.

It would appear that the angels have decided that the time has come now and increasingly into the future, for us to be given such opportunities. And it is the archangel Michael whose own strength is made available to us in this age. We will need his help to face the future with courage and the confidence that we will be able to love others enough to overcome ourselves

Fall 2008 Open Courses at the Chicago Seminary

These courses make great retreats.

Sept. 29 to Oct. 3, 2008

Threefold Patterns in Human Anatomy and Physiology

Dr. Ronald Milito

We will explore to what extent Rudolf Steiner's concept of the threefold human body is applicable to human anatomy and physiology. Ronald Milito holds a D. Ed. in Biophysics, studied human anatomy at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School, and has taught this subject in college.



Oct. 6-10

Color Week at the Seminary

Carolyn Arnett, Daniel Hafner

How color comes about: Observation of phenomena (prismatic effects, colored shadows, etc.). Watercolor painting out of the dynamic qualities of the different colors, striving for balance.

Oct. 13 - 17

Christology

Rev. Erk Ludwig, New York

Saturday, Oct. 18 – Monday, Oct. 20

Befriending Death in Life

P. Skaller, Hillsdale, NY, R. Dancey, G. Wielki

A three-day Conference on the Practical-Life-Soul-Spiritual Dimensions of Death

Friday, Oct. 24 – Wednesday, Oct. 29

**In Conversation with the Angel –
Christ's Working in the Biography**

Rev. Reinhard Rumpf, Germany

Rhythms in our biography. Life as teacher. Pre-earthly resolves. Impulses for the shaping of our individual destinies in relationship with humanity. The journey after death and before birth. The role of Karma.

Nov. 3 – 7

Temptation - The Fall - Redemption

A Journey of Human Evolution

Rev. Gisela Wielki

Nov. 17-21

**The Threefold Social Order, the History, the
Idea, the Opponents, the Future Reality**

Dr. Stephen Usher

The remarkable history of Steiner's attempt to threefold the social order of Central Europe at the end of the First World War. Why it failed, and the nature of the opposition. The Fundamental Social Law. The Law of True Price. And how all these concepts apply to current events.

Dec. 1-5

The Intervals of the Musical Scale

Presentations: Daniel Hafner

Eurythmy: Alla Bikchurina

Through listening, singing, and eurythmy, we shall immerse in the logos that generates the organism of the musical scale. Brief excerpts from the great composers will be performed!

Dec. 8-12

The Mystery and Mission of Wonder

Rev. Richard Dancey

Costs and Contact Information

The cost for the week-long retreats (including tuition, room, kitchen use, and breakfast, 5 days) is \$350. If you are interested, please go to www.seminary-chicago.org, fill out the signup form and send it to the address below.

For more information, please contact:

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Christ and the Earth

A 2nd Christian Community Conference

Friday October 10, 7 p.m. – Sunday noon
Oct. 12, 2008
Viroqua, Wisconsin

Many people experience the sacredness of the earth. To identify the essence of this experience is a further step. It lets us connect consciously, and thus more deeply, with the being of the earth.

Many earth-centered individuals feel - and often not without reason - that Christianity is problematic. But Christ's incarnation and sacrifice on Golgotha was a deed to reinvigorate and heal the earth (as well as humanity). Here in the heartlands of the Midwest, in an area rich in organic and biodynamic farming initiatives, many individuals are committed to creating a new and deeper relationship to the earth, feeling a reverence for the natural world and sensing that the earth is, indeed, a living being.

The Christian Community (Viroqua) is very pleased to welcome back Daniel Hafner, a priest of The Christian Community, for a second conference on this theme: When we began this work a year ago, we found that the earth is evolving as the body of a highest creative divine being. Gradually we ventured to name this being, in a new understanding, the Christ. This year we shall continue, with special attention to how the sun-earth-being works in processes that play out over time.

Artistic work (eurythmy, singing) and a nature walk on a local biodynamic farm will help to deepen our experience of this theme.

We wish to make this conference accessible to all who wish to attend. We are suggesting a donation of \$60 for those attending the full conference. We plan a simple catered meal on the Saturday evening at a cost of \$6. We have a number of local families that are opening their homes to conference participants. We also have a list of local motels/B&Bs.

Viroqua is situated in SW Wisconsin, one hour south of La Crosse and about four hours west of Chicago.

For more information and registration forms, please see our web site: www.ccviroqua.org, or contact Paul Newton, (608) 637-8031; paulnewton@frontiernet.net

Conference Registrar: Sarah Kamin, (608) 637-6826
To contact Daniel Hafner: dhafner1964@hotmail.com



stirring biodynamic preparations

60 Years in New York City

In December 1948, the congregation in New York City was founded. This was the first congregation of The Christian Community in North America, marking the beginning of the work of our Movement for Religious Renewal. On December 13-14, 2008, the New York congregation will celebrate the 60th anniversary of this important beginning. For more information, contact Erk Ludwig, 212-877-3577, erkludwig@earthlink.net.



Delegates Meeting

Stephanie Georgieff

Greetings to you all from the Regional Board! The Delegates for The Christian Community of North America will gather in Chicago from Thursday, November 6 to Saturday November 8. The 2008 theme will be "Living and Working With the Christ Impulse in the Real World." Kelly Hook and Mary Ann Vaca of Chicago, Scott Johnston of Boston and Susan Shurtleff of Spring Valley are crafting this year's conference. They have been tirelessly fine tuning speakers and activities for our gathering.

Last year in Sacramento, upon prompting from our members, Bob Heberton from Denver led the first ever Treasurers' meeting during a special one day pre-conference. This was an opportunity to listen to and share ideas for all the communities financial issues. The resounding response was to continue the special session for Treasurers, which will happen after Sunday Services in Chicago, on Sunday, November 9, until 6:00 p.m.

We anticipate another wonderful gathering in Chicago and thank the Chicago congregation in advance for all the work and logistical planning that goes into creating a space for our upcoming meeting. We also wish to extend warm gratitude to the Sacramento congregation, especially Phil and Sharon Bond and Martha Nanez for all the efforts they put forth to create a lively and successful 2007 Delegates Meeting and Synod.

Jump!

Jump!

International Youth Conference of The Christian Community
in Mullimbimby Australia

July 5 - 17th, 2009

Ages 14 - 26 contact Rev. Patrick Kennedy in the Washington D.C. area:
301-625-4804 or cckennedy06@msn.com

(See the article on page 14 for further information on youth work.)

Lazuring the Chapel –

Report from the Baltimore-Washington Congregation

By Bettina C. Proctor

The invitation seemed innocent enough. "Come to a Lazure workshop this weekend; we're going to lazure the new chapel with the guidance of Master Lazurer Chuck Andrade. It'll be fun!" said Lark Bergwin-Anderson, organizer extraordinaire of this lofty project. Little did I know I was to be taking part in truly artistic and intense exercise in community building in the congregation of the Baltimore-Washington area.

The weekend started with a Friday night demonstration and lecture

by Chuck on the properties of color and the meaning, purpose and nature of lazure painting. Lazure, he explained, is a method of painting involving numerous washes of diluted paint over a white wall. This method has the ability to bring in light and, depending on the color chosen and amount of movement applied to the wash, lazure can enhance the purpose of a room. For example, a bedroom, which should be calming and relaxing, could be painted with colors that support this mood; a workspace could become motivating and inspiring through color. Chuck gave us merely an overview of what is a true art and skill – knowing color and how to complement our daily lives with appropriate colors.



Saturday morning, bright and early, we gathered eagerly in the church to begin our apprenticeship. Our group was a diverse and motley crew of about 15-20 people. Some came from as far away as California, Wisconsin and Arizona, though the majority of the volunteers were women from the D.C. area. We also came from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of familiarity with things like paint, brushes, ladders, scaffolding and other precarious construction accoutrements. Special brushes from Italy were available for purchase, and eventually everyone's brushes were utilized in some capacity in lazuring the chapel. Michael Anderson, a builder/contractor by trade, had kindly prepped the chapel for us, covering the edges with tape, so everything was ready to go.

Without wasting a minute, we jumped in the deep end under Chuck's tutelage - starting with the ceiling. And the ceiling was merciless. The heavenly art of lazuring requires much earthly preparation and legwork. To cover the ceiling (indeed any wall) we learned the best method was to employ two teams of painters, moving at breakneck speed down the length of the ceiling. The first person applied the wet coat, the next painter spread the paint in lemniscate form over the wall, and then more teams of "dryers" followed with dry brushes and rags to move the paint around the surface, creating the classic lazure look - all this before the paint dried. As you can imagine, teamwork was not to be underestimated. Meanwhile, like a chef, Chuck was busily mixing up quantities of paint washes - different colors that he would hand to us with instructions on which part of the wall that color was to be applied to. The first wash of the entire room was of a mild lilac, the base color, and then we continued using different color washes blending into each other, taking breaks between washes for them to dry. As I was busy trying not to smash into other painters or let too many drips dry onto the walls, it was pure mystery to me how Chuck orchestrated the movement of colors on the walls of our chapel.

Once we got the hang of it, the lazuring seemed to take on a life of its own, with us as mere members in the body of the project – all working together to complete the task. On both days our labor was punctuated by fabulous potluck lunches and stimulating conversation. By the end of the weekend, the chapel had evolved into a whirl of colors – subtle in ways, bold in others, but an altogether transformed space. The convergence of energies merging from all over the country to make something happen on the first weekend of February was exciting – and exhausting. Though some finishing touches remained for the following week, the chapel was ready for the Act of Consecration of Man the following weekend.

On Sunday I came to church, with a few lingering aches from our lazuring workout, and I sat in the chapel to experience the real fruits of our labor. As the sun came up during that first service, the rays of light made the walls come alive with layers of moving color. Most amazingly, the small windows in the back

door created a reflection of crosses of light, changing in color from the lazure, which moved steadily across the wall behind the altar during the service. There was a feeling that something had indeed happened in that room, another step in the building our community.

On Wings of Song

Carol Kelly

"Turn as the earth and moon turn, circling what they love. Whatever circles comes from the center." This was one of our first counselor rounds this summer and it wove through our work along with "Bright Mornin' Star", "Shenandoah," and countless other songs which we have learned and loved



happens that during a hike or a campfire that child will burst out in the most amazing song, singing at the top of his lungs!

We sing from early morning until late at night. It doesn't have to be much but just coming together in song for a brief moment brings a reminder that we can always lift our souls to a higher plane. It is taken for granted on the one hand, and on the other, no one would ever think about the existence of camp without singing!

This year our theme of "earth" brought with it many exciting projects, from building tree houses, to making bird houses! The oldest girls painted a beautiful wall hanging of the earth and worked on "Waldorf" dolls for children in Rwanda. There was Fair day with its many challenges involving mud in the face, water, and more mud. Then there was an adventure course involving carrying others down an obstacle course in a kayak, balancing eggs on a see-saw and searching for and eating (ugh!) raw onions!



Camp is a lifetime within a lifetime. A dream life out of our normal routine where we live and work in community without pressure and with a great deal of JOY! You just have to be there.

How Christ is Made Real in Every Act of Genuine Listening

Marjorie Spock

"Listening perceptively has social consequences beyond estimating.

First there is what it does to the soul of the listener.

A miracle of self-overcoming takes place within him whenever he lends an ear to others. If he is to understand the person speaking, he must withdraw his attention from his own concerns and make a present of it to the speaker; he clears his inner scene like one who for a time gives up his home for others' use while himself remaining in the role of servant. Listeners quite literally entertain a speaker's thought. 'Not I, but Christ in me' is made real in every such act of genuine listening.



Marjorie Spock, 1904 - 2008

Second there is what happens to the speaker when he is fortunate enough to be listened to perceptively.

Another kind of miracle takes place in him, perhaps described as a springtime burgeoning. Before his idea was expressed to a listener, it lived in his souls as potential only; it resembled a seed force lying fallow in the winter earth. To be listened to with real interest acts upon this seed like sun and warmth and rain and other cosmic elements that provide growth-impetus: the soul-ground in which the idea is embedded comes magically alive.

Under such benign influences thoughts grow full cycle and fulfill their promise. Moreover, they confer fertility upon the ground through the simple fact of having lived there. Further ideas will be more readily received into such a soil and spring the more vigorously for its life-attunement.

And the soul that harbors them begins to be the creative force for which it was intended by the gods.

One understands how grave sins of omission can be when one considers the potential fruitfulness that is lost to man and the universe through every failure to let the sunlight of our interest shine on the souls of our fellow earthlings.

Neglect of such gardens of the spirit means for all of us greater scarcity of nutriment and beauty than there need be, and at the same time and encouraging of weeds, which spring up rankly in all empty ground.

Not only do ideas burgeon in response to listening: when groups reflect and entertain them, they take on the many-sided, cosmic fullness that belongs to thoughts as universals.

And there is at least one further miracle attendant on listening, one akin to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, in that the proliferating seed of living thoughts falls on the soul ground of the hearers, as many as are truly listening, and begins in each a fresh evolutionary cycle.

Finally, groups that foster the fundamental social art of listening create a common higher consciousness, able like a grail cup to receive and dispense the magically quickening lifeblood of the spiritual world. Nor will those who harken perceptively to living men fail to sensitize their listening also to the unseen dead and those other hosts of heaven who may be seeking to inspire them."

(Text from Marjorie Spock's Pamphlet about "Group Moral Artistry I (Reflections on Community Building)", St. George Publications, Spring Valley, New York 10977, pp 18-19)

In Memory of Marjorie Spock (1904-2008)

Rev. Julia Polter

The author of the text on the previous page, Marjorie Spock, had been a member of The Christian Community since 1971. She died this year on her farm in Sullivan Maine, on January 23rd, at the age of 103, after having received the Last Anointing.

Marjorie had met and worked with Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy, as a young girl when she went to Dornach/ Switzerland. She immersed herself deeply into the study of Eurythmy and later worked as a teacher in public and Waldorf Schools for many years. She had a profound understanding of nature and worked as an avid biodynamic gardener.

Her work took an added dimension when she became part of a group who took legal action against DDT pesticide sprayings. Although the case was lost, it was the beginning of an organized environmental protest in the US, which culminated in the publishing of Rachel Carson's famous book *Silent Spring* in the early 60's, to which Marjorie contributed crucial material.

Marjorie spent the last four decades of her life on her little farm in Maine, active until the end as an inspiring teacher, eurythmist, author, translator, biodynamic farmer and mentor.

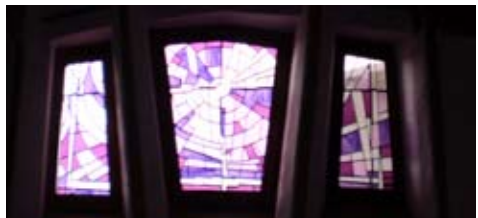
The existence of a divine eternal higher self in each of us was a living reality for her. And those who have met her were inspired by her powerful belief in the potential of every human being she encountered. She had the strong conviction that through our interactions with others we could practice a moral artistry that creates a vessel for the presence of Christ. With this concept in mind she had a deep understanding for what is the essence of our congregational life in The Christian Community.

New Church in Cali, Columbia

On January 13, 2008, The Christian Community's congregation in Cali, Columbia consecrated its new church. Members, friends and priests from South America and beyond joined in a celebration that included two weekends. Talks were presented by Reverends Paul Corman from Lima Peru, Craig

Wiggins from Holland, and Martin de Gans from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Music was composed for

the event by Enrique José Castro Díaz. Our admiration goes out to our fellow congregants in Columbia for their enormous efforts and congratulations on their wonderful results.



Michaelic Prayer

Patrick Kennedy

In our time, it has become very hard for many of us to pray.

Because of the pictures of the saints from the Middle Ages that we carry in our souls, or perhaps because of a devout person or priest we may have known, we have a preconception of what a fulfilled life of prayer is supposed to look and feel like. We think to ourselves: a genuine prayer must be full of feelings of devotion and union with the Divine. But if we try to produce such feelings, we find out relatively quickly that this just won't work. If the words of the prayer seem to come out empty and lacking in inner substance, we feel disappointed at best and guilty at worst because we have somehow proven unworthy or incapable of fulfilled prayer.

But what if we have the approach all wrong?

In the time of the archangel Michael - the time we are living in now - a whole different relationship to prayer becomes possible. Michael is always asking us if what we are doing is true service. Rather than promising feelings of religious fulfillment in prayer, Michael asks us what we are doing through our prayer. Are we concerned with how we feel during our prayers? Or are our prayers themselves a service?

When we begin to feel these questions in our hearts, we feel how Michael changes our whole orientation to prayer. Prayer in him becomes founded in the gifts we bring to our life of prayer, not in the gifts we might get from it. But what are these gifts?

A first gift is to make prayer an act of faith - to become faithful in prayer. This means not worrying at first about the quality of one's prayers but simply making the commitment to the higher powers of the universe to pray every night. (One can try it at first with a short block of time, like for a month). In so doing, one begins to become aware of the strength, effort and energy necessary to devote five minutes of one's life to God! And this energy is the key. This faithful gift of our thoughts and feelings turned towards the spiritual world begins to exercise a power within us that has as its archetype in the mighty power of the sun.

Every day the sun rises. Every day. Every day its light and warmth are gifted to us that we may live. There is never a morning where the sun doesn't get up because it is tired and it just doesn't feel like rising. This is the very substance and power of faithfulness. So when we begin to turn our attention faithfully to the spiritual world - every night - the powers in the heavens witness our committed gift and recognize in it the same power that is the spiritual core of the sun: the angels perceive radiant hearts. Shaping our relationship to the divine world in this way, we stop asking whether we have been fulfilled by our prayer, and start feeling the certainty that our prayer is a deed of will, or act of faith, whose reality is independent of our feelings. And this is what Michael is interested in; as an angel of the harvest he is interested in the fruits of our labor. A second step is to spend time increasing our understanding of what we are praying. This means simply spending a few moments thinking about what we are about to pray.

For example, if we pray the Lord's prayer, we can ask ourselves: Who all do we include in this word "Our" in the "Our Father"? How big is this "Our"? Do we include our family, our God-children, our friends? What about the rest of humanity? Did not Christ Himself say these words? Has He not granted and gifted us with this prayer? Do we not say it with Him and all of the angels?... Each of the seven requests in this mighty prayer contain worlds of wisdom, and we will find unending ways to discover the riches of this prayer if we only begin to ask questions. This 'taking an interest' in the words we pray, in the spiritual texts we have been gifted, constitutes the second gift we give the Divine in prayer. This second gift follows Michael's call, not just to blindly accept the grace of Calvary,

but to understand the meaning of Christ's deed on Golgotha. Through Michael, prayer is not just something one feels or does but something that can be understood. When we more deeply understand a prayer, we are no longer praying something because someone said it might be good for us; we are praying something we ourselves have come to recognize as true. We begin to feel how understanding what we are praying allows us to be free in relationship to the prayer. This becomes central to the building up of Michaelic prayer, for he is the great archangelic being most interested in our freedom.

The surprising result of such thoughtful attention towards prayer is that feelings of reverence and gratitude begin to arise naturally. This is because we begin to realize the unending depths of such a prayer and to feel the amazing gift of destiny it is, that we may pray with our hearts and lip the same words as the Lord Himself prayed with His disciples. If these feelings of devotion and reverence arrive as a result of a faithful and thoughtful life of prayer, we realize that we ought not to expect them at all, but to receive them gratefully as a gift. In this approach, the right relationship to religious fulfillment in prayer is created: religious fulfillment is recognized as a gift of grace, something that we cannot produce. What we can do is build up these two pillars of our prayer life: faithfulness to the divine and thoughtful interest in the nature of our prayers. In this way, the full spiritual goal of Michaelic prayer becomes visible: it is the inner spiritual gifts we offer that build up the temple in which Christ may grace us with His presence.

Intercessory Prayer
Adam Bittleston

*Thou angel who keepest watch
Over the destiny of . . .
Through waking and sleeping ,
And the long ages of time:
May my thoughts, filled with
hope,
Reach to him/her through thee.
May s/he be strengthened
From the founts of will
Which bear us towards freedom.
May s/he be illumined
From the founts of wisdom
Which warm the inmost heart.
May s/he feel peace
From the founts of love
Which bless human work.*

In **Meditative Prayers for Today**, by Adam Bittleston, available at congregational book tables, from Steinerbooks.com or Amazon.com.

The Threefold Altar

Cynthia Hinds

All work and all of the various contributions in The Christian Community are in the end centered around the work we do together at the altar. The altar itself is a representation of three things.

First of all, the altar is a table, a place for the celebration of the Eucharistic meal. But in addition it is also an archetypal worktable. In co-celebrating, we all gather together at the altar table to do the work of transformation. We bring substances of bread and wine, natural substances that have already been subjected to a series of transformations by human hands. We also bring to the task ourselves—along with the best of our energies: our noblest thoughts, the love of our hearts, our will's devotion. And through the power of the spoken word we join the two, human energies and substance, pouring spiritual love, energy and intention into earthly substances in such a way that we place them at the disposal of the highest spiritual beings for them to complete the work of transformation. At the worktable, matter is spiritualized, and spirit is



Michael Sophia Chapel in Denver

given body and substance in which to work. It becomes the bread of angels and of earthly beings.

The altar also embodies a second archetype: it is the sarcophagus. Our altars are empty containers. Early Christians celebrated their Eucharistic meal in the catacombs over the graves of the martyrs. Their religious and spiritual activity at the grave allowed the altar to become a portal, where the living and those who had died could remain connected. At the altar those who have crossed can continue to work together with us, and with Christ, who describes Himself in the Book of Revelation as the first born from the realm of the dead. On the altar, Christ is born again and again, resurrected anew from out of the realm of the dead.

The altar also embodies a third archetype. It is the symbol for the human being. It is our corpus, our center, our heart. The altar is the community's heart, the focus of the energies of all of our hearts. It is the place where the community's heart becomes the Grail, holding the wine of Christ's blood, the substance of His body.

As heart, as grave, as work and celebratory table, the altar is the site of the Great Alchemical Work, the work of transforming base substances into radiant spirit gold. It is the place where dying matter is given new life. It is the place where we ourselves are transformed.

Reflections on the Altar Picture Conference

Dory Rindge

A group of painters and priests gathered in Hillsdale, New York, to explore the theme "Gestures of Blessing." On Wednesday evening, August 20th, the group shared a meal and much warm laughter before opening the conference with questions we had brought with us to share: Is it even possible to paint the countenance of God? Can one create an altar painting for a specific congregation that will suit every one of its members and friends? Might a repository of altar paintings be made available for priests and congregations to choose from? How does the altar picture affect children during their special service?

Rev. Lisa Marcato then held a close-of-day service that set the tone for our continued work. Each morning began with the Act of Consecration of Man; we were blessed with services celebrated by Rev. Michael Brewer of Fern-

dale, Rev. Marcato (from Germany), and Rev. Peter Skaller from Hillsdale. The group shared social time after the services and then gathered for the morning exercise and daily painting explorations. On Thursday, Rev. Julia Polter from Boston led us, each with a partner, in contemplating gestures of blessing from selected art prints, followed by a group discussion. Observations included awareness of specific shapes, colors, light radiation, and gazes of blessed and blessing figures. This provided



left to right: Dory Rindge, Liza Marcato, Julia Polter, Laura Summer, Michael Brewer, Franziska Steinrueck. Below: Sophie Takada, and Jason Healy

the content for our next phase of painting.

Four large group paintings, along with smaller individual works, took form over the course of our time together, punctuated by conversations about new and developing altar pictures and artistic works created since the last conference. At the close of the conference we reviewed our work and tried to formulate the significant challenges of a painter on such a path. Our investigations brought questions that we will carry through the coming year: Are we working toward an archetypal altar painting? Do painters' consistent and devoted efforts help to form such an image? How are we supporting each other's work as painters, and do such conferences enliven this process?

The active and growing participation of priests and the commitment witnessed in the painters formed, I think, a vessel to carry forward this challenge to create new and inspired paintings for the sacred space of the altar.

Special thanks go to Laura Summer, Jason Healy, and Rev. Julia Polter for their adept organization of the program, provision of the space, and furnishing of the wonderful food, along with all the additional details needed to host this rewarding event.

First Fruits

Liza Joy Marcato

I send many greetings to you from my first congregation in Erlangen, Germany (just north of Nuremberg). Erlangen is a worldly town for its size (100,000 residents) with its university and home to technical firm Siemens, and is a bike-friendly, green little city. The highlight is of course the active community here and my new priest work; carried by about 110 members and friends—with between 20 and 40 people on a regular Sunday—actually a very 'American-sized' community. All have welcomed me with great generosity and openness, helping me get settled, as I take up my new life of celebrating, getting to know the community, giving religious instruction in the Waldorf School (4th, 6th, and 8th grade to start), preparing sermons, and figuring out what it means to be a becoming priest, lifelong! I am learning much that I will bring to my future work in North America, which is never far from my thoughts, but I am also happy making the most of my time here.



It is hard to believe I was ordained just a month and half ago. The ordinations in Stuttgart were held over four days, and will shine for many years to come for all of us who took part. Fourteen new priests were ordained from students of all three seminaries and the preseminary in Cologne, and intended for work in all three directions: East, Middle and West! As the first Chicago Seminary student to go through the ordination, I am only the first fruit of what must become a grove of nourishment for The Christian Community in the world--keep the faith, good thoughts and support pouring into Chicago, more fruits are already ripening on the tree...send more seedlings!

Yours in cultivating!

(ed. Liza Marcato started with her priest training in Chicago in the fall of 2004, continued in Stuttgart in the fall of 2005 and was ordained in February 2008. This article appeared in the spring 2008 newsletter of our Chicago Seminary.)

Youth Camp 2008

Patrick Kennedy

We had a wonderful youth conference at Camp Glen Spey this year with a whole new emphasis: projects. With the theme, "Our Time, Our World" acting as the umbrella for all our work, the teenagers chose between print-making, theater and *Journal*, the youth conference newsletter and artistic publication. Each group had the task of creating something that could then be carried out into the world and shared with other congregations, and potentially the world.



The print-making group created a large mural together, with each person carving their own linoleum block. They created a Great Tree in the midst of the cities and the countryside with the human heart as its fruit.

The theater group was charged with creating its own play and they came up with a fairy tale of sorts, called *Something Lost, Something Found*, which followed the exploits of a little girl who loses her friend the caterpillar and must - with the help of a fairy, a gnome, and a wood sprite - brave the underground realm of the Troll-Queen to find her friend again. Sadly, we didn't have a video camera to catch this wonderfully funny and poignant short play that the kids created, but it was well received and they worked very hard!

Equally industrious was the *Journal* team which was separated into an artistic/layout and writing departments. The fruits of their labor will soon be visible on a **new youth work web site** and can be seen in the meantime at the website of the Washington/Baltimore community: **www.ccgwb.org**.

All are looking forward to the coming winter conference and next year's trip to Australia! Those interested in **donating to the youth work** - especially in support of the travel to Australia - should contact rev. Patrick Kennedy at: 301-625-4804, cckennedy2006@gmail.com or 4221 Metzert Rd., College Park, MD, 20740.



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