

In perhaps his most famous poem, Hopkins wrote, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." Mariani describes the depths at which Hopkins believed this most basic, luminous statement, believed it in his head and his heart. Hopkins saw the evidence of God's grandeur everywhere . . . in violets and running streams, in the Alps and in the faces of humans who reflected the face of God.

Then, this statement from Mariani: "All that was wanting, he [Hopkins] believed, was the beholder. And when the beheld and the beholder once met . . . the heart could not help but rise up as at a sudden unheard symphony, a dance, the heart growing 'bold and bolder' as it hurled itself after its Creator."

This is the line that has captivated me. I'm thinking about how God – and the grandeur of God – awaits a beholder, someone to see, to notice, to give attention. And I've placed myself within that question. In what ways do I live as a beholder? And in what ways have I neglected this most basic and human invitation? I'm rehearsing my own "beholding," so that even if I miss the moment, I might behold in hindsight. I'm sharing "beholding stories" with others, celebrating attentiveness and new awarenesses.

The other line comes from the late Gerald May, a psychiatrist and spiritual director who helped found the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation decades ago. May said this about contemplation: "Contemplation happens to everyone. It happens in moments when we are open, undefended, and immediately present."

You may have heard me talk about contemplation as openness, receptivity, and moment-to-moment presence, but what has my attention this week is this word, "Undefended." I've spent the week bringing that image of being "undefended" into my prayer. Without splitting open my soul in front of you, it is enough to say that I find little in my life that is "undefended." I have elaborate structures and ego-systems that require a great deal of energy and attention to defend and protect. I have sentries posted on every turret. Those structures are so ingrained within me that it's a wonder I notice them at all.

Perhaps you would like to join me in considering these two images. First, if you knew God was awaiting a "beholder," how might you live today differently? Hopkins was a beholder, but there are precious few in our world.

Second, in your prayer over the next few days, would you ask God to show you one or two ways you "defend" your life? While you're at it, you might ask God to give you an image for what it would mean to live an "undefended" life . . . or at least to have enough undefended moments that you can see the Reality that surrounds you with every breath.

Help me to see.

Peace and love to you.

Jerry

Poetry

“God’s Grandeur”

by Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs –

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

“I am not I”

by Juan Ramon Jimenez (translated by Robert Bly)

I am not I.

I am this one

Walking beside me whom I do not see,

Whom at times I manage to visit,

And whom at other times I forget;

The one who remains silent when I talk,

The one who forgives, sweet, when I hate,

The one who takes a walk where I am not,

The one who will remain standing when I die.

LENTEN Formation Study begins Feb. 25 An Everyday Spirituality for Lent and Life

This spring The Center for Christian Spirituality is sponsoring a spiritual formation study on everyday spirituality. The study, "An Everyday Spirituality for Lent and Life," will invite us to move through the season of Lent reflectively and intentionally. We will move into a deeper conversation about how our spirituality is lived out in the concrete realities of daily existence.

There are two movements to the course, both providing some fundamental ways for persons to integrate their spiritual journey with work, home, relationships, and all of life.

First, at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday night in Lent, those interested will gather for a spiritual formation study in room LC201. The class, led by Jerry Webber, will integrate pertinent scripture passages with key insights from the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, the 16th century founder of the Jesuits. The Wednesday class will be similar in format to previous spiritual formation studies on Ephesians, the parables, and John's Gospel. At each class session, Jerry will give suggestions for prayer and reflection. Participants, with specific prompts from Jerry, are encouraged to draw the scriptures and Ignatian insights into their prayer over the following week.

The second movement is optional. For those who choose to participate at a bit more deeply, small formation groups will meet weekly allowing persons to process the integration of spiritual insight into their everyday lives. These groups, similar in format to spiritual direction groups, will meet the next Tuesday, allowing persons six days to pray, reflect, and process the material from the previous Wednesday. Facilitators will guide the group process.

So the study portion of the Formation Study will take place for 5 Wednesdays, beginning on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 6:30 p.m.

The optional formation groups will meet on the 5 Tuesdays of Lent, beginning March 3. A morning group will meet on Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. An afternoon group will meet at 2:30 p.m. An evening group will meet at 6:30 p.m. All formation groups will meet in LC201.

You may sign-up for this Lenten Formation Course through Nancy Sterling in The Center for Christian Spirituality (nsterling@chapelwood.org or 713/354-4458). When registering please indicate if you would like to be in a small group and also what time of day on Tuesday you will attend a formation group.

Lenten Devotional Books

Article by Jerry Webber

Sometimes an Unknown Path: 40 Psalm-Prayers in Contemplative Voice

Each spring during Lent many of us look for fresh ways to move through the season of penitence and self-examination in preparation for Good Friday and the celebration of Resurrection on Easter. This year Chapelwood is making available a Lenten devotional book for personal, family, and group use in the days leading up to Holy Week.

The book has grown out of my personal experience of praying the Hebrew Psalms over the years. I learned to pray by praying the Old Testament Psalms. I found – and still find – that psalms speak a unique language with God, a language I continue to learn. With psalms I praise and lament, rejoice and confess, pray for healing and intercede for others. The psalms have taught me to be honest in my praying. Some of them are raw and nervy, some calm and pacifying. I've learned with these psalms to be gut-level honest with God. It is the real *me* that God loves, not some cleaned-up version I bring when I feel “holy.” Especially in my darkest moments, the psalms have given voice to my prayer.

A few years ago, as a kind of spiritual practice, I began putting some of the individual psalms in my own words, rewriting them as psalm-prayers. I found the practice to be a wonderful tool for entering into prayer. In a sense, I followed the spirit of the Hebrew Psalms, but created psalm-prayers of my own.

The devotional book is called *Sometimes an Unknown Path: 40 Psalm-Prayers in Contemplative Voice*. I have gathered 40 psalm-prayers from my prayer journals, written some points for reflection for each one, and put them together in the hope that you will find them helpful in your own Lenten praying. Chapelwood's Communication Ministry helped put them together. Bobby Wooley from Mercy Street gave creative expertise to the cover, design, and layout.

We are making *Sometimes an Unknown Path* available to the Chapelwood communities as an encouragement to prayer and reflection through Lent. The books will be available the weekend of Feb. 21 – 22, Ash Wednesday, Feb. 25, and the weekend of Feb. 28 – March 1. On those Sunday mornings you may pick up a copy at the Soul Food table or in the Fountain Hallway. On Ash Wednesday, they will be available outside the Chapel.

We invite you to take one copy of the book per family. If you are able, you may leave a donation to help cover the cost of printing the books. Additional copies of *Sometimes an Unknown Path* may be purchased.

Lenten class to explore themes through art and creative expression

For the five Sundays of Lent, Peter Johns will lead an experiential Sunday School class in LC201 at 9:45 a.m. each morning. He will lead those participating to explore the Lenten themes from that morning's Contemplative Worship using art and creative expression. Very basic art supplies will be provided in LC201 for the class. The class will be offered each of the five Sundays in Lent, so you are not obligated to attend each session.

Sacred Space 2009 Resource for *Lectio Divina* Available

We have a few copies left of *Sacred Space 2009*. The book, produced by Irish Jesuits, is a wonderful resource for daily *lectio divina*. Copies are available through The Center for Christian Spirituality for **\$11 (regular price \$14.95)**.

Contact Nancy Sterling at (713)354-4458 or nsterling@chapelwood.org if you are interested in *Sacred Space 2009*.

Chapelwood's Prayer Shawl Ministry

Prayer Scarves On Saturday, January 31st, members of this Ministry joined Landon Schott, Mercy Street's Director of Youth, and his youth group during their monthly ministry downtown to the city's homeless near St. John's UMC. We delivered hand knit or crocheted prayer scarves & hats and homemade blankets - all tactile symbols of God's love to those living on downtown Houston streets. The Mercy Street youth served food, gave out first aid items (mostly band aids), distributed clothing & sleeping bags, and visited with those who came by.

If you are interested in joining us, we meet in LC201:

First and Third Tuesday of each month, 10:30 a.m.

Next meetings are February 17

March 3 & 17

Second Monday of each month, 4:00 p.m.

Next meetings are February 9

March 9

Also, Mercy Street's Prayer Shawl Ministry meets the Third Thursday evening of each month at 7:00p.m., upstairs in the Conference Room.

Faith in Action Last year this ministry participated in Chapelwood's annual Faith in Action, and will do so again on Saturday, February 28. We will share about the ministry, knit or crochet together and even give instructions for rank beginners. That same evening we will join Landon Schott and the Mercy Street Youth when they take food, clothing, socks, and blankets to the folks who live on the street. For several months we have enjoyed sharing this outreach with the Youth, and we have added our knit hats and scarves to the other objects given away with love and prayer. To register for Faith in Action, please visit the Chapelwood web site: www.chapelwood.org.

Prayer Shawl Retreat, Workshop & Book Signing Ten years after co-founding the Prayer Shawl Ministry, Janet Bristow & Victoria Cole-Galo, have authored their first book, Prayer Shawl Companion. On Saturday April 18, they will lead a retreat and workshop (co-sponsored with St. Luke's UMC, Houston) from 10 am - 3 pm, at Chapelwood. To learn more about them and their ministry, you can visit their website www.shawlministry.com. The \$60 registration fee for the Retreat/Workshop includes lunch and a copy of Prayer Shawl Companion; child care is available for \$35/child (deadline for both is April 4, 2009). A limited number of partial scholarships will be available. For information, contact Nancy Sterling (713) 354-4458 or nsterling@chapelwood.org. Register online at www.chapelwood.org.

Opportunities for Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina*

Group centering prayer and *lectio divina* is now offered four times each week. The prayer times are offered for anyone interested in these prayer practices in the Bride's Room (behind the Sanctuary). Nancy Sterling facilitates these gatherings. You may come to any or all of the prayer times offered.

Mondays - 9 a.m.
Tuesdays - 9:30 a.m.
Wednesdays - 9:00 a.m.
Thursdays - 9:30 a.m.

Spiritual Formation Retreat at Laity Lodge, May 1 - 3, 2009

Chapelwood's BOLDER Adult Ministry is sponsoring a spring spiritual formation retreat at Laity Lodge in the Texas Hill Country again this spring. The retreat will be offered May 1 - 3 at this beautiful retreat setting, located between Kerrville and Leakey. The retreat is open to adult men and women of various ages and stages in life who desire to be enriched spiritually.

The speaker for the retreat will be Jerry Webber. Music and worship leaders will be Tom and Andi Jaber from Chapelwood. Our time on retreat will follow a rhythm of prayer, worship, teaching, personal time for reflection, and recreational opportunities.

Laity Lodge is on the Frio River in a canyon that is awe-inspiring. The river is cold, the towering cliffs are sheer, and the setting is perfect for prayer, reflection, art, and hiking. In fact, there are a number of activities available while on retreat, including biking, hiking, hammock-sleeping, fishing, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, or spending time in the beautiful art center.

Registration is limited and there are only a few more spaces available (there will be a waiting list). For more information you may contact Mopsy Andrews at mandrews@chapelwood.org or 713/354-4408. To register, contact Judy Jones (jjones@chapelwood.org). The deposit is \$50 and the total fee is \$260.

RENOVARÉ International Conference: *“The Jesus Way”*

San Antonio, Texas

June 21 – 24, 2009

Municipal Auditorium & Hyatt Regency River Walk Hotel

www.renovare.org

The RENOVARÉ International Conference will be held in San Antonio this summer, June 21 – 24. The conference will feature national and local speakers who unpack Eugene Peterson’s ideas from his recent book, *The Jesus Way*. A number of workshops on various aspects of spiritual formation will be offered. Also, Jerry Webber and Peter Johns will lead a daily experience of contemplative worship each morning at the conference.

You can find details on the conference and registration at the RENOVARÉ website. The early registration deadline has been extended to March 1, with a \$40 savings over regular registration rates. You can register online at the website.

Speakers include: Eugene Peterson, Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, John Ortberg, Chris Webb, Emilie Griffin, James Bryan Smith, Juanita Rasmus, Max Lucado, and others.

Spiritual formation workshops include: the arts, church leadership, children, business, discipleship, and spiritual direction.

Library Resources

The Center has a modest lending library of books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs to lend. The selection is continually growing. Most topics and authors are complementary with the classes and retreats offered by The Center for Christian Spirituality. You can take a look in LC201. A sampling of tapes, CDs, and DVDs includes:

- *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World* by Richard J. Foster
- *The Secret Message of Jesus* by Brian D. McLaren
- *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross
- *Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila
- *The Contemplative Journey* and *The Spiritual Journey* by Fr. Thomas Keating
- *A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Paula D'Arcy and Richard Rohr
- *The Power of Forgiveness* by Martin Dobelmeier w/ Elie Wiesel & Thich Nhat Hanh

Contact Nancy Sterling at (713) 354-4458 or nsterling@chapelwood.org if you are interested in checking out any materials.

Check out the website . . .

www.centerforchristianspirituality.org

Have you checked out our website at www.centerforchristianspirituality.org? We try to keep the website current with classes, retreats, and other opportunities offered through The Center for Christian Spirituality, as well as offer some helps for spiritual formation and contemplative practice.