



[Committee on](#)
[Contemplative Spiritual Formation](#)

Online Meeting Program

Theme: "A Sacramental Universe"

Saturday, October 23, 2021

8 am Vancouver, San Francisco / 11 am New York, Toronto / 12 noon Sao Paulo /

4 pm London / 5 pm Hamburg / 11 pm Manila

Gaia Room, Meditation Chapel

[If you have registered with the Meditation Chapel, but can't find the email with the link that was sent to you, please send an email to dignitytoronto@gmail.com. For new Meditation Chapel users, register ahead of time [here](#).]

Checking In:

As a ground rule for our gathering today - for the check-in and for the rest of our gathering today - only share what you are comfortable to do so. In addition, I ask everyone to remember that this is a spiritual space of confidentiality and trust.

God is present in all parts of our lives - not just the easy or serene moments. Acknowledge how you are feeling in this moment. This could be up or could be down. If being calm is hard, acknowledge it. If you find yourself frustrated or stressed, acknowledge it.

As our check-in, I invite you to share:

- your name,
- what county you live in,
- how you are feeling now, and
- what you are most grateful for today.

Opening Prayer

Please turn to page 3.

+ Christian Meditation - Silent Prayer +

We'll now move from spoken prayer to 20 min. of silent prayer. It will be an opportunity to stop our repetitive thinking and become more aware of the present moment and the Divine indwelling in us.

I have some suggestions for what to do during the silence, as most persons are not accustomed to this state. Please note that this is not the only way.

First, when your eyes are closed, pay attention to your breathing. It's something we do from birth to death, normally without any awareness. To become grounded in the present, notice your breathing during the 20 min. of silence.

Second, select a sacred word or phrase, such as "Yahweh" the Hebrew word for God, saying "Yah" as you inhale and "Weh" as you exhale. Another mantra word is "Maranatha" meaning "Come Lord Jesus." Recite it as four syllables of equal length: "Ma-ra" as you inhale and "Na-tha" as you exhale. Whatever word you select, gently repeat it over and over during the silence. **Do not try to think or image anything - spiritual or otherwise.**

Third, during the silence, addictive thought patterns and obsessive ways of feeling will circle by, again and again, saying "Think me! Think me! Feel me! Feel me!" as they try harder to be noticed. In 90% of our thinking, our monkey brain rehashes the past and worries about the future. However, God is only to be found and experienced in the present. Use the imagery of some small boats lining the shoreline of a stream or river that is nearby. When one of these repetitive thoughts arises, gently name the thought or feeling, put it in one of the waiting boats and push it gently into the moving water, letting it flow downstream away from your present consciousness. If you choose, you can deal with it after our session today.

So, we'll start our 20 min. of silence. Please turn off your microphone and your video camera too. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Take two or three deep breaths. [pause] Feel yourself supported in whatever position you're in. Sink into that space where silence awaits you. Rest in the Divine who is resting in you. You are consenting to God's presence and action in your life. So, I invite you to be silent, still and aware. Listen and learn, being open to heart wisdom and grace.

Reading and Sharing

"Francis [of Assisi] refused to be a "user" of reality – buying and selling it to personal advantage (the I-it relationship). In fact, that is what he vigorously reacted against, and why he granted personal subjectivity to sun, moon, wind, animals, and even death, by addressing them as brother, sister, friend, and mother. Maybe his seeing, which was both personal and contemplative, is what forced him out and beyond the production-consumption economy where most people find themselves trapped today. Francis grants all of reality, even elements and animals, an intimate I-Thou relationship. This could be a definition of what it means to be a contemplative, which is to look at reality with much wider eyes than mere usability, functionality, or self-interest – *with inherent enjoyment for a thing in itself as itself*. Remember, as soon as any giving wants or needs a reward in return, we have backed away from love, which is why even our common notion of "heaven" can keep us from the pure love of God or neighbor! A pure act of love is its own reward and needs nothing in return.

Scholars say that the Franciscan movement following St. Francis himself was not really known for any deep connection with the sacramentality of nature, except for some of the stories and sayings surrounding Anthony of Padua (1195–1231) and Giles of Assisi (1190–1262). The first, short-lived generation of Franciscans dwelt in caves (*carceri*) and hermitages apart from the city, in nature, but we soon became gentrified and proper. I can remember my novice master telling us we should not waste or

consume or kill unnecessarily; but such teachings were about private virtue and not presented as a social value or a necessity for the good of others and the planet. This was still 1961. I never heard any direct teaching on sustainability or the sacramentality of nature itself in any of my thirteen years in formation. We were trying to be Franciscans in the most developed, capitalized, and industrialized country in the world. "Sacraments" happened in church buildings, but not in the garden or the woods. Once we lost regular contact with primal creation, I believe the Franciscan enterprise largely started to reflect whatever ethnic culture it inhabited, and that was no longer nature or the universe.

With the exception of Indigenous peoples, the sacramental meaning of the world was largely lost until its more recent rediscovery by seers and seekers like Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Wendell Berry, Sallie McFague, Ilia Delio, Bill Plotkin, Mary Oliver, and Brian Swimme, to name a few luminaries. We Catholics ended up limiting "sacramentals" to things like religious medals, blessed candles, and holy water, instead of honoring the inherent holiness of the earth's ores, beeswax, and H2O that actually formed them."

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations, October 6, 2021.

Possible Sharing Questions:

*What am I hearing? What word, phrase or idea from the reading **resonates** or challenges me? As an LGBTI person?*

*How is it **touching** my life now?*

*How will I respond? Is there an **invitation** for me to be or to do in the next few days?*

LGBTI / GNRC News

An update, news, or a pressing issue in the community locally or globally that affects or concerns us as LGBTI and as Catholics. How am I / are we responding?

Spoken Prayers

<p>A Prayer for Our Earth [Opening Prayer]</p> <p>All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. [next page]</p> <p>O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.</p>	<p>Evolving Spirituality: Mysticism [Closing Prayer]</p> <p>We celebrate our common origin with everything that exists. We celebrate the Divine Presence, the Ground and Sustainer of everything that exists, in whom we live and move and have our being.</p> <p>We acknowledge this awesome mystery embodied in every human person, aware that each gives the Divine Presence unique and personal expression.</p>
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Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

[Pope Francis. *Laudato Si* (Encyclical Letter: Praise be to You – On
Care for Our Common Home), 2015, para. 246]

Here,
now,
the Divine Energizing Presence is everywhere present,
visible in every human person
who loves.

Here,
now,
this Presence comes to visible expression
in each of us.
We give thanks for men and women
throughout human history
who sought to articulate
human connectedness with the Divine
and with all of creation.

We give thanks especially for Jesus of Nazareth.
He inspires us to name ourselves
as “temples” of the Divine Spirit
and challenges us to live and act accordingly.

Jesus challenges us
to look into our hearts,
to examine the way we are neighbor,
to overcome our prejudices,
to put an end to divisions,
to stretch our generosity,
to overcome our fear of the mystery,
to see the Divine present in our everyday loving,
to make the “reign” of love visible
throughout our world.

We believe
the same Spirit of Divinity
that came to visibility in Jesus
yearns for visible expression in us.

This is our common dignity
whatever our race or creed,
whatever our place or time.

We long to see our common dignity
proclaimed
honored
and celebrated by all religions.

We pray that the one Spirit all people share
may be given free and generous expression
for the betterment of humanity
and our world.

Amen.

[Adapted from: Morwood, Michael. *Praying a New Story*. Orbis
Books.]