



Contemplative Spiritual Formation Gathering

Online Meeting Program

Theme: "Can We Speak of What Truly Matters"

Saturday, September 24, 2022

8 a.m. San Francisco/Vancouver; **10 a.m.** Chicago/Winnipeg/Mexico City/Lima;
11 a.m. Toronto/New York City; **12 noon** Sao Paulo/Santiago/Buenos Aires/Halifax
4 p.m. London; **5 p.m.** Hamburg/Zurich/Cairo/Cape Town;
8:30 p.m. New Delhi; **11 p.m.** Manila/Singapore

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.](https://meditationchapel.org/gaia-chapel/)]<https://meditationchapel.org/gaia-chapel/>

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 grateful for today.

Opening Reflection

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.

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Reading: "Can We Speak of What Truly Matters?"

German scholar Heinrich Zimmer (1890–1943) studied sacred images and their relationship to spirituality. He said, "The best things can't be told: the second-best are misunderstood." So, we settle for talking about the "third-best things," which, in my culture, I suppose are things like sports, television, the weather, and other safe topics.

The best things can't be talked about—they can only be experienced. And then if we try to talk about them, we know that we see "through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Our best attempts will still be merely stammering, grasping for good enough words. But one of the great difficulties of theology and spirituality is that its subject matter is precisely those "best things" that cannot be talked about. If religion does not have humility about knowing, it ends up being smug, silly, and superstitious.

The second-best things which, according to Zimmer, “are misunderstood,” are those things that merely point to the first-best things. These belong to philosophy, theology, psychology, art, and poetry, all of which – like sacred Scripture – are so easily misunderstood. Yet what I have tried to do in my work is to use those second-best things that point to and clarify the first-best things. What else can we do? All our words, beliefs, and rituals are merely “fingers pointing to the moon.”

I believe Jesus follows the same risky path, which has allowed him to be interpreted in so many different ways. Apparently, he was willing to take that risk, or he would have written down his teachings himself. Why do we think we have a right to certainty or complete clarity? This is the necessary and good poverty of all spiritual language. After all, Jesus never said, “You must be right!” or even that it was important to be right. That’s the genius of the biblical tradition. Jesus offers himself instead as “way, truth, and life” (John 14:6), and suddenly it all becomes about the sharing of our person instead of any fighting over ideas. Some people will meet that statement with resistance and criticism because we feel so much more in control when we are right than when we are in right relationship.

Such admitted poverty in words should keep us humble, curious, and searching for God, although the history of religion has been quite the contrary. In fact, what we have largely done, even in church, is talk about the third-best things. Focusing on things like finances, clothing, edifices, roles, offices, and who has the authority gives us a sense of certitude, order, and control. In my experience, the people who find God are usually people who are very serious about their quest and their questions, more so than being absolutely certain about their answers. I offer that as hard-won wisdom.

Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditations. “*Speaking of What Truly Matters*” May 16, 2022

Possible Sharing Questions:

*What am I hearing? What phrase or idea **resonates** or challenges me? As an LGBTQ 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

Any 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?

Song: “Born This Way”

Spoken Prayers

Opening Reflection

“When you say God, you don’t really mean God, you mean your idea of God...All the words do is point in the direction of the mystery of the super-meaning God. We must prepare to expand our idea of God...It challenges our whole perception of reality. And let’s face it, the reality we see is for the birds...The way we see life is the tissue of our generic, educational, cultural, religious, and whatever other conditioning.”

Evolving Spirituality: Mysticism [Closing Prayer]

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.

- Thomas Keating

We acknowledge
this awesome mystery
embodied
in every human person,
aware that
each gives the Divine Presence
unique and personal expression.

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 persons of all gender identities
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.

	<p>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. <i>Praying a New Story</i>. Orbis Books.]</p>
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For further information on the GNRC Contemplative Spiritual Formation Committee, see
<https://rainbowcatholics.org/contemplative-spiritual-formation-gathering/>