



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

Online Meeting Program

**Theme: “We Do Not Know What We Are Doing”**

**Saturday, April 20, 2024**

**7 a.m.** San Francisco/Vancouver; **8 a.m.** Denver/Calgary/Mexico City;

**9 a.m.** Chicago/Winnipeg/Lima;

**10 a.m.** Toronto/New York **11 a.m.** Sao Paulo/Buenos Aires/Santiago/Halifax;

**3 p.m.** London; **4 p.m.** Hamburg/Zurich; **7:30 p.m.** New Delhi;

**10 p.m.** Manila/Singapore/Perth

[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](mailto: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
- one thing you are 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. Breathing is 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. You may wish to 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. Take two or three deep breaths. 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.

## Readings

See the attached on pp. 4 - 6.

### Possible Sharing Questions:

*What am I hearing? What phrase or idea from the video **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?*

### Spoken Prayers

#### [Opening Prayer] - Embedded Wisdom

We gather,  
mindful of the longings, the hopes  
and the bond we share  
with people throughout human history  
who longed for a better world  
and who were prepared to work for it.

We gather,  
aware that each of us  
has been anointed in baptism  
to bring good news to the poor,  
to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to comfort those who mourn,  
to replace discouragement with hope,  
to see possibility in ruined and deserted places.

We gather  
as bearers of good news,  
each in our own way  
capable of bringing hope  
to the world around us.

We open ourselves  
to be receptive, to be productive,  
to bear fruit that will endure  
and will benefit all whose lives we touch.

We give thanks for persons of all gender identities  
throughout the centuries  
who took a stand for justice  
who refused to be cowered by powerful people  
who remained hopeful in times of darkness,  
who inspire us to work for a better humanity.

We gather around the story of Jesus  
a human faithful to the voices of Jewish prophets  
who called people  
to listen to and respond to  
the urgings deep within them,  
to work together  
for a more compassionate, just  
and peaceful society.  
We hear Jesus' words today challenging us:  
"Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!"

We are mindful of how he listened,  
how he responded  
to the desire embedded within him,  
how he set himself to help persons of all gender identities  
to believe in themselves and to establish a better world.

#### *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.

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.

<p>We listen today...</p> <p>[Adapted from Michael Morwood. <i>Prayers for Progressive Christians: A New Template</i>. 2018, pp.90-92.]</p>	<p>We believe the same Spirit of Divinity that came to visibility in Jesus years for visible expression in us.</p> <p>This is our common dignity whatever our race or creed, whatever our place or time.</p> <p>We long to see our common dignity proclaimed honored and celebrated by all religions.</p> <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.</p> <p>[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/>

## Readings

### A Universal Pattern



*Richard Rohr identifies death and resurrection as the universal pattern of Reality:*

Christianity—as well as Buddhism, other religions, and nature-based systems—suggests that *the* pattern of transformation, *the* pattern that connects, *the* life that Reality offers us is not death avoided, but always *death transformed*. In other words, the only trustworthy pattern of spiritual transformation is death *and* resurrection. Christians learn to submit to trials because Jesus told us that we must “carry the cross” with him (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27). Buddhists do it because the Buddha very directly said that “life is suffering.” Buddhism teaches us how to skillfully discern the source of suffering, detach from our expectations and resentments, and let go of illusion.

Death and life are two sides of the same coin; we cannot have one without the other. Each time we choose to surrender, each time we trust the dying, our faith is led to a deeper level, and we discover a Larger Self underneath. We decide not to push to the front of the line, and something much better happens in the back of the line. We let go of narcissistic anger, and we find that we start feeling much happier. We surrender our need to control our partner, and finally the relationship blossoms. Yet each

time it is a choice—and each time it is a kind of dying. It seems we only know what life is when we know what death is.

The mystics and great saints were those who had learned to trust and allow this pattern, and often said in effect, “What did I ever lose by dying?” Or try Paul’s famous one-liner: “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Now even scientific studies reveal the same universal pattern. Things change and grow by dying to their present state, but each time it is a risk. We always wonder, “Will it work this time?” So many academic disciplines are coming together, each in its own way, to say there’s a constant movement of loss and renewal at work in this world at every level. It seems to be the pattern of all growth and evolution. To be alive means to surrender to this inevitable flow. It’s the same pattern in every atom, every human relationship, and in every galaxy. Indigenous peoples, Hindu gurus, Buddha, Moses, Muhammad, and Jesus all saw it clearly in human history and named it as a kind of “necessary dying.”

If this pattern is true, it has been true all the time and everywhere. Such seeing did not just start two thousand years ago. All of us have to learn to let go of something smaller so something bigger can happen. But that’s not a religion—it’s highly visible truth. It is the Way Reality Works.

*Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditation, April 1, 2024*

## We Do Not Know What We Are Doing

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*Brian McLaren invites us to an imaginative experience of the painful reality of scapegoating that occurred on Good Friday:*

Let’s imagine ourselves with the disciples just before three o’clock on this Friday afternoon. A few of us have come together to talk about what has happened over the last twenty-four hours....

Why was there no other way? Why did this good man—the best we have ever known, the best we have ever imagined—have to face torture and execution as if he were some evil monster?

As the hours drag on from noon to nearly three o’clock, we imagine many reasons....

Jesus has told us again and again that God is different from our assumptions. We’ve assumed that God was righteous and pure in a way that makes God hate the unrighteous and impure. But Jesus has told us that God is pure love, so overflowing in goodness that God pours out compassion on the pure and impure alike. He not only has told us of God’s unbounded compassion—he has embodied it every day as we have walked this road with him. In the way he has sat at table with everyone, in the way he has never been afraid to be called a “friend of sinners,” in the way he has touched untouchables and refused to condemn even the most notorious of sinners, he has embodied for us a very different vision of what God is like....

If Jesus is showing us something so radical about God, what is he telling us about ourselves—about human beings and our social and religious institutions? What does it mean when our political leaders and our religious leaders come together to mock and torture and kill God’s messenger?... Is this the only way religions and governments maintain order—by threatening us with pain, shame, and death if we don’t comply? And is this how they unify us—by turning us into a mob that comes together in its shared hatred of the latest failure, loser, rebel, criminal, outcast ... or prophet?... What kind of world have we made? What kind of people have we become?...

In the middle of the afternoon ... even from this distance, we can hear Jesus, “Father, forgive them!” he shouts. “For they don’t know what they are doing.”

Forgive them? Forgive us?

Our thoughts bring us again to the garden last night, when Jesus asked if there could be any other way. And now it seems clear. There could be no other way to show us what God is truly like. God is not revealed in killing and conquest ... in violence and hate. God is revealed in this crucified man—giving of himself to the very last breath, giving and forgiving.

And there could be no other way to show us what we are truly like. We do not know what we are doing, indeed.

If God is like this, and if we are like this ... everything must change.

*Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditation, March 29, 2024*