



Winter Newsletter 2018

NANCY'S MUSINGS



Carrie Newcomer has a song, "Lean in Toward the Light," which I felt could frame this Advent-Christmas musing. I suspect that for you as for me this

year has been filled with sorrow and joy. Every day something happens within the Trump Administration that makes my stomach churn or my eyes fill up as I grieve over the implications of decisions for the least among us.

On a personal level, the age many of us are brings with it illness and death of family, friends and congregational members. Some of you know that my sister was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor this past May and made her transition into new life at the end of June.

Quickly following this was the celebration of my 50th Jubilee. Sorrow and joy. Grief and Gratitude. I find Carrie's words helpful as I enter this season. It is a time when Christians remember that the hope that Jesus brought us for a world marked by love, forgiveness, unity, peace and equality is being fulfilled and is not yet. Let me share with you her words and offer a few reflections.

Giving ourselves the time and space to enter contemplation unburdens us from that which is undone and invites us to see things anew. It frees us from judgment so that when we can't quite seem to be loving or forgiving, we can be kind.

*Winter is the oldest season
But quietly beneath the snow,
Seeds are stretching out and reaching,
Faithful as the morning glow.*

*Carry nothing but what you must.
Lean in toward the light.*

*Let it go shake off the dust.
Lean in toward the light.*

*Today is now, tomorrow beckons.
Lean in toward the light.*

*Keep practicing
resurrection.
Lean in toward the
light.*

Only carry what we must; let it go; shake off the dust. To free ourselves of those worries which are not ours to worry about. To become laser sharp as to what we need to challenge and address. What

is ours to hone in on and transform. Let the other things go. See the hope of new life every day and we will be practicing resurrection.

*The shadows of this world will say,
There's no hope - why try anyway?*

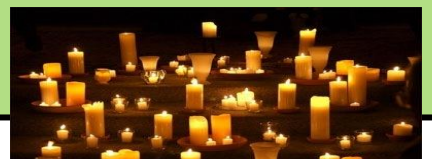
*Every kindness large or slight,
Shifts the balance toward the light.
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ICCD WISHES ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND BLESSED NEW YEAR!



If you were to imagine the great world religions like the colors of a rainbow, each one witnessing in a particular way to some essential aspect of the divine fullness, Christianity would unquestionably hold down the corner of incarnation-by which I mean the vision of God in full solidarity with the created world, fully at home within the conditions of finitude, so that form itself poses no impediment to divinity....At its mystical best, Christianity reverberates with the warmth of this assurance: with the conviction that creation is good, that God is for us, and that what ultimately gets worked out in the sacred mystery of Jesus's passage through the human realm is a profound testament to love.

**Cynthia Bourgeault,
The Wisdom Jesus**



Exploring Exercising Contemplative Power... Transforming Consciousness

- Do you find yourself changing as you deepen your contemplative practice?
- Are you trying to live out of a consciousness that is more cosmic, global, ecological and communal even in the midst of prevailing worldviews that hold very different values?
- Do you wonder what kind of a transformative change agent you want to be as you live out of a contemplative way of being?

If so, then Margaret Galiardi, OP and Nancy Sylvester, IHM invite you to participate in

Exploring Exercising Contemplative Power.... Transforming Consciousness

Come and join them together with others who through their contemplative practice know they are changing and need to act differently in their lives. Share and learn from each other how to contribute to the breakthrough in consciousness so needed today. Become part of a growing community of contemplative activists.

2018 SCHEDULE

Feb. 19-20, 2018 Concordia, KS
Manna House

April 22-23, 2018 Los Angeles
Carondelet Center

For Registration and Information:

www.iccdinstitute.org or
email iccdinstitute@aol.com and
add "EECP" in the subject line
2018 EECP Programs

Musings, continued

After my sister died two of her friends in the small town of Antonito, CO offered their help.

They proceeded to find a home for her dog; to sell her car; to wash and give to the shelters her clothes, bedding, towels, etc.; to have sidewalk sales to help with her expenses; to dispose of all of her books, furniture, knick knacks, etc.; to have her house cleaned spotlessly; and to find a buyer for her home. At a time of great grief every one of their kindnesses revealed to me the power of the small town, neighbors who get to know you and are willing to step in and help. The light to which we are drawn grew brighter shifting the balance in our world.

*Waters wind and open wide.
Lean in toward the light.*

*Don't just walk when you can fly.
Lean in toward the light.*

*When justice seems in short supply,
Lean in toward the light.
Let beauty be your truest guide.
Lean in toward the light.*

Let us believe, as Teilhard de Chardin, that there is a directionality in how we are evolving. We are moving toward greater wholeness, unity, and love. Beauty and love are our guides. At a time of increasing chaos and uncertainty, where there seems to be no justice, we need to fly into those spaces and shine forth.

*The shadows of this world will say,
There is no hope - why try anyway?*

*Every kindness large or slight,
Shifts the balance toward the light.*

*The prayer I pray at eventide,
Lean in toward the light.*

*All left undone be put aside.
Lean in toward the light.*

*When forgiveness is hard to find,
Lean in toward the light.*

*Help me at least to be kind.
Lean in toward the light.*

*Lean in toward the light.
Lean in
Lean in toward the light....*

Giving ourselves the time and space to enter contemplation unburdens us from that which is undone and invites us to see things anew. It frees us from judgment so that when we can't quite seem to be loving or forgiving, we can be kind.

During this season let our lights burn brightly inviting all who come into contact with us to lean toward that light, toward the love and compassion that fills the world and which we help manifest.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas.....

Nancy

PS: To listen to Carrie Newcomer sing this song, [click here](#). Or go to <https://youtu.be/fxAUmNjWals>



Would you help promote the work of ICCD by sharing this e-mail with friends and family? By bringing ICCD programs to your area? By contacting retreat centers with our offerings? By using ICCD resources in your educational efforts around contemplation, dialogue and the transformation of consciousness?

Power of Communal Contemplation

ICCD programs begin with contemplative sitting and there is a significant shift in how the group gathered engages in the conversations, the dialogue that follows. The atmosphere is charged with energy that invites trust and vulnerability in ways that surprise. Over and over participants say things like, "We've never had such deep conversations;" "I really felt listened to;" "People who are usually the naysayers were

so different;" and "We have really changed."

Such comments testify to the power of communal contemplation to transform who you are and how you want to be in the world. It invites you into new ways of being and acting. When you set the intention to access the Divine dwelling within you and acknowledge that desire in every person it readies you to listen and speak to each other in new ways. It opens up a space where you begin to imagine new responses

to people, issues and problems. Over time you begin to see the Godself in the other. You realize that we have all come from the same star dust. You begin to understand that we all breathe the same air and receive nourishment from the same water. You know deep in your bones that we are all connected. And when you do, you can't demonize the other anymore.

What happens when you try to act on behalf of justice from a contemplative stance?



NEW OFFERINGS

Although many ICCD programs and retreats are individually designed here are a few new ones that can easily be adapted to a variety of groups.

Transforming Energy: Grief and Loss

A week-end rooted in ritual and contemplative processes which allow you to be with the griefs and sorrows facing us today. It is an invitation to go deep enough to find the sources of new life. This is especially helpful for congregations of women religious who are needing to address the losses being experienced so as to be alert to the new that is emerging.

Contemplative Exploration into Evolutionary Christianity

This five-day retreat explores our experience of being evolutionary Christians and the theology that is taking shape within us.

Transformation in a Time of Uncertainty

This one-day process explores our chaotic times in light of its challenge to those of us living out of a consciousness rooted in faith and shaped by the realities of our evolving world.

Finding Our Balance in the Political Landscape

A one-day program which explores our response as people of faith to the challenges facing our democracy at this time and how contemplative practice assists us in exercising a new type of power.

All Contributions are Gratefully Accepted

As a non-profit tax-deductible organization, we are very grateful for any donation you can offer to support us.

Your generosity is what enables us able to continue this work. Many thanks.

Click Here:



ICCD Programs can be individually designed for a variety of congregational Assemblies and Chapters; and congregational Pre-Chapter Retreats. Contact us for further information at iccdinstitute@aol.com.

Contemplative Sitting Network

Members of our **Contemplative Sitting Network (CSN)**, commit to a daily contemplative practice, usually between the hours of 6:00 - 7:30 AM in your time zone, knowing they are part of this large network - a contemplative community open to the Divine seeking personal, ecclesial and societal transformation. Every month members receive a brief reflection on contemplation. Information on how to join CSN can be found on the web site



Exercising our Religious Imagination this Christmas

The Nativity scene is what comes to mind for many of us when we think about Christmas. There is the manger with Mary kneeling by the infant Jesus with Joseph by her side. Often there are shepherds and a few sheep as well as some angels hovering in the sky. When St. Francis of Assisi created this image in the 1200s, he did it to remind people that this holy day is about worshiping God rather than gift giving. But this visual image did far more than that. For the people of his time it spoke to the felt sense of what this mystery was about, and it became a permanent part of our religious imagination. Certainly this purpose is still relevant today but I'm afraid for many this Nativity scene is what the Incarnation is all about. Such a depiction of Incarnation may be helpful to teach young children about this mystery; however, the power of this mystery is so much more.



The toxic atmosphere [in which we are currently living] belies our belief in the Incarnation, which reveals that we are all one. Our faith will fail us if we do not allow this mystery to penetrate our hearts in ways that call forth from us a more mature faith.

The world needs us to witness to this profound mystery more than ever.

The Incarnation witnesses to the reality that God so loved the world that God became human. Human and Divine were one. Jesus' early followers had

experienced in him qualities and a consciousness that reflected God to them.

This Christmas you might want to play with reimagining this mystery. When you think about the shepherds looking at the sky, reflect for a moment on how the universe began. Gaze at the stars, the galaxies, and the immensity of it all. The shepherds knew something great was happening. What do you sense? Can you imagine

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God's presence in a radically new way? You may just find yourself breaking out into songs of praise like the angels or becoming awe struck. Think about the family we call holy. Imagine how important every individual is and how each of us needs the other to discover our true self. Imagine how they must have lived sensing the presence of God in their lives and being open to see it in new ways so as to make choices that furthered the evolutionary process toward fullness.

We contemplate that in Jesus Divinity and Humanity are one. For some it is incomprehensible that this could happen with a simple carpenter's son. For some it is even a scandal. Yet it is the profound gift of Incarnation-the realization that we are all children of God invited to share in the Divine Consciousness. Our planet is in need of us to accept that gift and live it.

*(Edited reprint from Christmas 2015)
Full reflection on www.iccdinstitute.org under "Contemplate This."*



ICCD is now eligible for AmazonSmile, a program where you can designate a non-profit to receive .5% of the purchase price of Amazon eligible products.

- Go to www.smile.amazon.com.
- Charity: Type in **Institute for Contemplation and Dialogue** (omit **Communal**)
- Make sure **Detroit, MI** appears
- Click it and then every time you purchase through AmazonSmile.com, ICCD will receive a percentage.
- This donation does not increase your purchase price.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Web site www.iccdinstitute.org

If you haven't visited the web site in a while take a "click" and meander through the many reflections that are there. Some of you are using them for classes, talks, etc. Most of them are brief and can be shared easily. In addition, *Contemplate This*, a monthly reflection from Global Sister's Report, can be found there.

Facebook Page

On Facebook search for Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue and get acquainted with our Facebook page. Please feel free to add your comments.