



## VIEW FROM THE WEATHERVANE

### Lay Director's Letter

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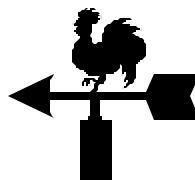
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Leadership! What does that word mean exactly? We hear it a lot. We have a rollo at our weekends dedicated to this topic. But what does it mean for you? I've been hearing this word and other variations of it coming up in my life frequently lately, so I thought I'd take the opportunity to share with you what it means to me.

Let's start with Webster's. There are several definitions for the word "lead". Those that fit for this example are: 1) To conduct along a way: guide; and 2) An example. Using these definitions then a leader would be someone who guides others or is an example for others. But how does this definition fit our idea of a Christian leader? We are called to "lead" others to Christ, that is true. But how can we be "an example" if we are looking at those we are trying to "lead"? How do we know we are "leading" others in the right direction if our focus is on them?

At a meeting I attended recently, we had a devotion time that I think really relates to this topic. As part of the devotion we were asked to focus first on an area on which a beam of light was shining. Next we were

asked to look into the source of the beam of light. In this particular exercise, the beam of light was coming through a crack in the window covering and was shining on only a few items in the room. However, when we turned our attention to the source of the light, we could see that there was a lot more to see in the source than in the beam. The leader of this devotion went on to point out to us how much we focus on the little things at church that the beam is shining on such as the music, or which rite to use, or if the acolytes doing what they are supposed to do, etc., when we would be able to see much clearer if we were to focus on the source of light, Jesus.



I think this same theory applies to the leadership struggle I mentioned above. How can we know that we are leading others down the right path if our focus is on them and not the path? Jesus said "I am the WAY..." (emphasis mine); he is the path. The best way to "lead" others to Christ is to focus on the path itself; to focus on Jesus. In order to be good leaders, we must first be good followers.

*Ultreya,*

*Missi Kern*

**Calling All Cursillistas...** The end of the year is fast approaching. The annual Diocesan convention will be held Oct. 1&2 at the Holiday Inn at I-70 and Chambers again this year. We will have a Cursillo booth at the convention where delegates can learn more about Cursillo .

If you planning to attend the convention, or even if you weren't yet, we could use your help. Our Special Projects chairperson, Neil Folks, will be setting up and manning the Cursillo booth. If you could offer him some of your time, he would be forever grateful. Neil's contact information is on page 10.

The Secretariat will also be hosting our annual meeting at the convention on Saturday. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet other Cursillistas from across the diocese. Please plan to come share your successes and struggles with one another--perhaps someone's experiences can enhance yours! We will also be holding Secretariat elections at that same meeting. There are several positions that need to be filled. Please pray about whether or not you or someone you know may be being called to Cursillo Leadership as a ministry. For more information about open Secretariat positions, please contact the Lay Director Missi Kern, whose contact information also appears on page 10.

#### Special points of interest:

- Car & Driver
- Benedictine Spirituality (1st in a Series)
- Summer To-Do List
- Piety, Study & Action, Baghdad-Style
- The Greatest Story Ever Told

# CURSILLO #113

## Come, Now is the Time

"Time for what?" you might ask.

Perhaps it is time to take a step, or to help another person take a step, into a more active Christian leadership role. The theme of Cursillo Weekend #113 is more than just a quote, or a song lyric. It is an invitation--perhaps even a bit of a challenge--to step out and move forward.

Cursillo Weekend #113 will be held at Highlands Retreat Center in Allenspark from August 26 through 29. John Humphrey from St. Timothy's and Sue Richardson from St. Martin in-the-Fields are the rector and rectora of this weekend. The leadership team is rounded out with Beth Jesmer, Jane Owens, Joe Owens, Dee Settlemeyer and Gene Troutman. Spiritual Directors include the Reverends Rex Chambers, Sarah Freeman and Gayle King. We also have a full team ready to serve the candidates!

Our invitation/challenge is now for Cursillistas to sponsor candidates. Do you know someone for whom this weekend would be a match? Are you ready and willing to help someone discover and live their Fourth Day to the fullest? Candidate applications are on the website at [www.cocursillo.org](http://www.cocursillo.org) and have a section for you (the sponsor), the candidate and the rector of your



parish. Please don't delay, since the weekend is coming up quickly. We would like to especially invite ALL of the Fourth Day community to attend our Las Mananitas and Clausura on the 29th. It is so special for the new Cursillistas to be able to see not only their sponsors, but also the community they are joining when their weekend is complete. Additionally, your palanca of prayer for the candidates and team is most valued. Any donations of food, drink, supplies, or cash are also accepted and greatly appreciated. Contact Gene at 303-503-4026 or Sue at 303-617-0057 regarding donations. There also are folks making banners for the weekend who could use your assistance as well. Call Jane Owens at 303-699-5855 if you would like to help with this project. In conjunction with Cursillo Weekend #113, we are holding a Fourth Day Workshop. Its purpose is to rein-

by Sue Richardson

force the weekend's Sunday message--the message about living the Fourth Day. It will be on Saturday, September 25 at St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Aurora from 10AM-4PM, followed by a Reunion Ultreya at 5PM. We strongly encourage all #113 candidates and their sponsors as well as the team members to attend the workshop. All Fourth Day community members are invited and certainly will gain from the experience of the workshop and the fun of the Ultreya!



Please prayerfully consider if "... Now is the time" to be a sponsor, to do palanca, to be a donor, and/or to attend the workshop... ULTREYA!!



### HITCH YOUR TRAILER TO A STAR!

The Front Range 3-Day Weekend Team is looking for a way to store and transfer weekend supplies.

If you have a trailer you aren't using, or if you would be willing to donate toward the purchase of a trailer, PLEASE CALL US! We have tons of stuff to store, from glass candlesticks to a 5-foot tall plywood rooster.

Another option is to purchase a

new trailer for approximately \$2500, and we already have an offer from an individual to pay half the cost. Can you help with the rest?

Donated space in a commercial storage facility would also be appreciated. If you can help, please contact Sue Richardson at 303-617-0057 or [suerich9@aol.com](mailto:suerich9@aol.com) or Dee Settlemeyer, 303-695-0746, or [pakadee@msn.com](mailto:pakadee@msn.com).



#### COME PLAY WITH US!

Calling all Musicians and Singers!  
WANTED: Musicians and singers to play/sing on music teams for Cursillo weekends, Ultreyas, and/or possibly Kairos weekends. If interested, please contact Linda Brown, 303-432-2178, or email her

at

[LindaJBrown@worldnet.att.net](mailto:LindaJBrown@worldnet.att.net).

# NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

## Our NECC Rep Reports

### De Colores!

RE: Report of the National Episcopal Cursillo Committee Quarterly Meeting, April 21-25, Diocesan Center, Diocese of Southern Virginia

The Rt. Rev. David Bane, the NECC's Bishop Liaison to the House of Bishops, hosted our April meeting in a beautiful setting, a river front meeting center in Norfolk, Virginia. The diocesan Secretariat did a wonderful job of getting us to and from the airport, feeding us (excessively), and arranging for a Saturday afternoon of sight-seeing. On Friday the NECC hosted a wonderful ultreya gathering at St. Paul's, Williamsburg, where the reps from the North Central District provided not just a witness and responses but a model of what those ought to be. The community videotaped the presentations, and we hope to have that available in the future for dioceses to obtain and use in training for witness talks in their own ultreyas. The beauty of the setting inspired hard work. The NECC has made great headway toward our work goals for this year. Highlights of our actions follow.

**Executive Committee:** The NECC has received new computer equipment, donated by AMTRAK, that will enable us to modernize our production of materials and streamline our sales effort. We have received a draft Employee Manual from former President Stu Simpson, and we received it with thanks for further consideration. Secretary Trudy Smith reported on the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> Day Movements held annually in Orlando, Florida along with former NECC Presidents Hap Lewis and Dede Lewis. Our theme for the July meeting will be *Leadership*, and at that meeting we will be electing officers and appointing subcommittee chairs for 2004-2005. Vice President Sharon Neukam is considering sites for quarterly meetings through next year and into 2006. The NECC has turned down a request, received with our thanks, to have a booth at the Michigan "A Place to Start" gathering.

**Cursillo Leaders Development:** The subcommittee met with Publications Subcommittee and Barbara Eastwood, webpage manager, to discuss plans for electronic publications and sales and to coordinate their activities. CLD is preparing a database of former NECC members, they are revising the Library book "Exporting Cursillo", and they continue to study using District Servant Communities.

**Publications:** The NECC approved two revisions of

outlines for lay talks—"Christian Community in Action" and "Evangelizing Environments." The new Lay Talk Book will be available at the NEC Seminar at Camp Allen in October. Along with CLD they are working with Barbara Eastwood to complete and implement electronic publication of selected Cursillo materials by October.

**Seminar:** The subcommittee proposed and the NECC approved Norfolk as the site of NEC 2005. The NEC will extend an invitation to the dioceses of Kansas and West Missouri to host NEC 2006 in Kansas City. They proposed and the NECC approved a list of potential NEC speakers.

**ECLW:** For those of you considering holding an ECLW in your diocese, there is a new contact person for our district. The Rev. Dennis Lietz, 935 Knollwood Dr., Deerfield, IL, 60015. email – delietz@aol.com . Phone: 847-940-8751.

**Clergy Informational Presentation Team:** Please take a look at your diocese and identify any laypersons whom you believe would make good team members for a Clergy Information Day presentation. We would really like to make an effort to present the "case" for Cursillo to clergy.

**NECC Meeting:** Finally, I hope all of you are preparing for the NEC Seminary at Camp Allen in October. I encourage you to set aside this

time for networking with other Cursillistas, learning more about the movement, worshipping, and celebrating. If there is any information you need to help you make your plans, please let me know.

The July quarterly meeting will be held in the Diocese of Western Michigan from July 21-25. I will be contacting you for any news, updates, successes, and challenges in your dioceses. As always I am ready and willing to assist you in any way possible. Please keep us in your prayers as we select new servant leaders for the NECC at this meeting.

### *Ultreya!*

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2589 S. Eagle Circle  
Aurora, CO 80014  
303-695-5603  
Mlibby4444@comcast.net



# Car and Driver

by Pam Rice

I drive an Episcopal car. On this journey that is my life, I have driven several different makes and models. As a child I was mostly a passenger in cars varying from Roman Catholic and Methodist to Baptist and Foursquare. As a college student I found this Episcopal car, and over the long haul, it is best for me. It is comfortable, gets great mileage and seems to have all the equipment both standard and optional that I need.

On the open highway it travels long distances well, but when I want to explore the side roads, it takes me there, too. Sometimes I think I am lost, but my Episcopal car knows the way home and always brings me back.

I guess that it is not a coincidence that many of my dearest friends drive this make as well. At the same time I know and love many others that drive different makes of cars. Congregational, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian – these are good cars, too. The important thing is that they fit and are correctly designed for each individual owner.

Once a week I attend a rally of oth-

ers who share my love of the Episcopal car and its Maker. We sing and pray and praise and share a meal. It's also a good time for both gassing up and tuning up to meet the challenges of the road ahead. Regular maintenance seems to be a crucial factor. We are not guaranteed by the



Maker that break-downs will never occur. It does seem, however, that a car that has been kept in good condition will get back to top running efficiency more quickly than one that has been neglected.

Recently it has come to me that all these cars are one-person vehicles.

Many folks have cars that travel closely together – almost in tandem. Some travel in small groups and never leave that group. Sometimes one car will even tow another, but each journey is an individual journey.

My Episcopal car has the same standard equipment as other Episcopal cars. That seven-sacrament fuel-injected engine is powerful. To the casual observer all styles of this make of car may look alike on the outside. But on the inside it is styled just for me and optional equipment is of my own choosing.

The journey is long and sometimes the hills are steep and scary, or I can't find the map. Other times the sun is shining and the road is wide and well-known. But whatever the condition of the road I trust the Maker to know the way. For me the manufacturer has no finer vehicle than my Episcopal car.

What do you call  
cheese that isn't yours?

*Nacho Cheese!*

## 2004 Cursillo Weekends

*Team, Candidate & Sponsor Applications  
available at [cocursillo.org](http://cocursillo.org)*

**August 26-29, 2004**

Highlands Presbyterian Camp  
Allenspark, CO

RECTORS  
Sue Richardson  
303-617-0057  
[suerich9@comcast.net](mailto:suerich9@comcast.net)  
John Humprey  
[hump1@pobox.com](mailto:hump1@pobox.com)

**October 21-24, 2004**

Easter Seals Camp  
Georgetown, CO

RECTORA  
Sharon Conrad  
970-256-0155  
[cursillo114CO@bresnan.net](mailto:cursillo114CO@bresnan.net)

# WAKE-UP CALL

## The Power of the Written Word

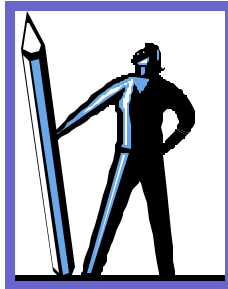
by the Editor

Becoming editor of the *Crowing Times* has gotten me musing about the power of the written word. While writing has its humble beginnings in the need to keep track of taxes and trade goods, it quickly evolved into a powerful way for people to communicate and to more easily recall that which should be remembered. For historians and archeologists, writing is the key that unlocks the mysteries of ancient civilizations, regardless of whether the writer was creating a love poem or a shopping list.

Of course, the written word can be tricky, and can sometimes not mean what we think it ought to mean. Therein lies its beauty, and its danger. The written word has an allure and power beyond the meaning of what is written.

The sheer act of writing is powerful—think of Jesus writing in the sand before dismissing the prostitute he saved from being stoned (although scripture doesn't say, I like to think that like hers, our sins

are written in the sand, to be blown away through God's forgiveness). In those early times, the mere fact that something was written down gave it a power and credibility that carried meaning in and of itself. Remember the written history of the Hebrew people contained the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus—although not at all as expected (those tricky meanings again!).



God's foremost laws were written for the Hebrews in the form of the ten commandments—on tablets of stone, meant to endure for the ages. David's songs, filled with beauty and despair, love and fear, reflect the same emotions that humankind even now feels, despite the passing of millennia. Moses and Daniel, among others, were given written

instructions by God, and many prophets and leaders of scripture were told by God to write down his messages. Job asked the Almighty to put his indictment in writing. In how many stories and parables did Jesus begin, "As it is written..." for him, of course, there was only one reference worth quoting! How much of what we understand about Jesus and his message is from the apostolic letters that crossed many miles between distant lands to encourage and instruct his followers—the early Christians—and continue to encourage and instruct us today?

Don't get me wrong.....I'm not claiming that anything contained in these pages carries the weight of scripture, or the wisdom of the apostles, or the prescience of the prophets. But as you read this issue, the thoughtful columns and informative articles, I challenge you to detect even a hint of a message directly to you from God in **these** written words.

Jane

## CURSILLO #114

### Following in His Footsteps

by Sharon Conrad

"*Following in His Footsteps*" is our theme for Cursillo Weekend #114. (Following the example of Christ to serve others (John 13:5-8, 12-15)). My name is Sharon Conrad (St. Matthew's, Grand Junction) and I have been called to be the lay leader for this wonderful weekend. I say wonderful, because I know that Christ will not only be the real leader, but present with each and every person throughout the weekend.

The weekend will begin Thursday, October 21 and close on Sunday, October 24 at Rocky Mountain Village, near Georgetown. The facilities are set in a beautiful area with views of the mountains, and convenient to I-70.

We ask for your prayers for Cursillo #114, for the team, candidates and sponsors that the Lord will lead to this weekend. We already have a wonderful, spirit-filled team formed, and enthusiastically look forward to serving. Candidate and sponsor applications are available at [www.cocursillo.org](http://www.cocursillo.org). If you would like more information, please feel free to call me at (970) 256-0155 or email at [cursillo114co@bresnan.net](mailto:cursillo114co@bresnan.net).

### How do crazy people get through the forest?

*They take the Psycho Path!*

#### SUMMER TO-DO LIST

- PIETY - Eucharist**
- STUDY - "The Case for Christ"**
- ACTION - Volunteer at homeless shelter**

# BARNYARD SPIRIT

## The Face of Christ

By Fr. Rex Chambers

Some of you know that I have a soft spot in my heart for children...and for lovers of Christ. I want to relate to you a story I read recently. Two parents were at their work one day when their little daughter came into the room. She wanted to help father and mother who were at opposite ends of the room, and she asked for something to do. She went happily about her little "work," which was, of course, not important, but the mere handling of scraps of paper. She was happy, however, because she was "helping."

Then, as children do, she tired of her occupation and went about her play, returning from time to time to the room where the quiet work was going on. Finally, she came with a piece of paper and said, "Please write a letter on this paper." The father smiled, took the paper and wrote on it and said, "Now please take this note to Mother." The child carried it across the room and, at first, the mother did not want to be disturbed, but finally took the paper and read it. It said, "Mother: look closely at the face of the bearer of this note and tell me just what you think of it! " The mother smiled, swept the child into her arms tightly, and said, "What do I think of this? I think this is precious." The child returned the mother's kiss and went on again to play.



What is it that causes the heart to surge with joy at the sight of a child? It is a feeling, an instinct, all a part of which God has given the human race. Such things have been called "the vestigial remains of the image of God." Then we think of the Father's love for His Son. The Bible is full of it. It is our guarantee in Heaven at the present moment. We are saved to the uttermost because the Son is there pleading in our behalf.

Remember "whose" you are today and always.

Pax Verbiscum,

Fr. Rex

## IN THE WIND

### Wanted: Reunion Groups!

by the Editor

I have big plans for the Crowing Times!

I would like to publish a list of Colorado 4<sup>th</sup> Day Reunion Groups so Cursillistas can find one another, but unfortunately, we currently don't have that information. In addition, I would like to profile each group so we can share how our various groups do things (beyond the usual piety, study, and action, of course!). For example, MY reunion group has a mascot, and you might enjoy knowing why and who/what!

So PLEASE, at the minimum, send me information about YOUR reunion group, including when, where, what parish, and contact information. I would LOVE to hear more about your group, so I'd really appreciate it if you'd send me information about it—or, better yet, write a short article for the Crowing Times and become a published author! Digital pictures would be great, too.

Please send your information to me at [www.the\\_five\\_js@comcast.net](http://www.the_five_js@comcast.net).

## PALANCA PASSION

### The Latest Statistics

by Bonnie Bentson

#### PALANCA SENT

Month	#
Dec	17
Jan	11
Feb	97
Mar	57
Apr	95
May	66
Jun	55
Jul	46

We supplied approximately 40 pieces of palanca to Cursillo Team #112. We have a goodly supply of Palanca for both of the upcoming weekends as well.

I especially want to remind all Cursillistas that they are asked to pray at their Reunion groups and Ultreyas for the Cursillo weekends in general because there are always a large number taking place around the world every weekend, also in several languages besides English. They include those for teen boys and girls, men and women prisoners and their families, as well as men and women candidates of all ages and faiths.

## Highlights of April 24th Cursillo Servant Community Meeting

by Sue Richardson

In attendance were: Linda Brown (facilitator) Pam Blome, Bill Kindel, Bernie Maly, Pam Rice, Jane Owens, Sue Richardson, and Gene Troutman.

The meeting opened with prayer and songs, then we got down to work! We reviewed the agenda and then reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Organizational Structure of CSC. We decided to add a 'technique talk' to each meeting. The facilitator for the meeting will be responsible for giving the talk or making arrangements for it. We also decided we would like to have our 'own' CSC spiritual director, perhaps a deacon. Bernie Maly offered to ask Fr. Rex Chambers if he has any suggestions, and a few possibilities were discussed.

Secretariat News. The Secretariat is low on money (not really big news!) Biggest expenses are usually the Crowing Times and sending a representative to National. Maybe we need a fund-raising group? Some ideas included Cursillo clothing (t-shirts, etc.) or a non-dinner dinner. The question came up—is this a CSC function or a Secretariat function? Bernie and Pam B. will address this with the Secretariat before our next meeting.

Coordinator Reports. **Communications:** Pam R has 1506 names, but only 405 with e-mail addresses. She is

OUR NEXT MEETING IS  
Saturday, September 18, 2004  
9 to Noon @ St. Martin-in-  
the-Fields, Aurora  
PLEASE JOIN US!

still struggling to get Parish Reps to respond with e-mail addresses for their folks. The Crowing Times has been approved for mailing and Jane and Pam will proceed. **Training:** Sue will ask Martha Libby about the sponsorship training she did for the #113 core team, and maybe she can do it for us. **Palanca:** Sue has been helping Bonnie Bentson, which is working well. Sue has asked a parishioner to translate some into Spanish for the Spanish-speaking weekends. **3-Day Weekend:** Until the process is completely defined, copies of the applications should go to rector/rectoras 'just in case.' Gene and Roberta will be organizing weekend supplies. **Music:** Linda has a list of musicians and singers for Cursillo weekends and Ultreyas. She continues to solicit members.

**Fourth Day:** Bill is trying to get a list of folks who would be willing to do witness talks and is trying to get more Ultreyas going. The #113 leaders are attempting to make the Fourth Day Workshop. (alias DoDU) mandatory for team, candidates and sponsors of #113.

Closing. The meeting ended with a Leaders Group Reunion, closing prayer and songs, and thanks for Linda for facilitating. The next meeting will be with the Secretariat at St. Joseph's in Lakewood on Saturday, July 10. Sue Richardson will facilitate. We will meet at 9:00 as usual, and hopefully meet up with the Secretariat at 11:30 to do some business with them during a working lunch until about 12:30.

## Highlights of July 10th Cursillo Servant Community Meeting

by Jane Owens

In attendance were: Sue Richardson (facilitator) Pam Blome, Fr. Rex Chambers, Bill Kindel, Martha Libby, Bernie Maly, Jane Owens, and Dee Settlemeyer.

After opening with prayer and music, Dee Settlemeyer presented a fun and informative presentation about sponsorship based on the game of Clue.

Coordinator Reports. **Communications:** Pam Rice received less than a dozen responses for Crowing Times addresses, making the total distribution about 500. The Crowing Times should be out by the end of July after some final articles are submitted to Jane. Several ideas for articles were suggested. **Training:** Dee will be visiting St. John Chrysostom in Golden on Au-

gust 1 to answer questions about Cursillo during their coffee hour. **Palanca:** Sue continues to help Bonnie Bentson, and lots of palanca is being sent. **Music:** Linda is still compiling a list of musicians and singers for Cursillo weekends and Ultreyas. She received no response to a Crowing Times request for a sound system. **Fourth Day:** Bill will be leaving Colorado to attend seminary in Texas. The list of Ultreya speakers he is compiling will be turned over to Pam Blome. Vaya con Dios, Bill!

Closing. The meeting ended with a brief Group Reunion, closing prayer and music. The CSC then met with the Secretariat over a potluck lunch.

# BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY: A Tool for the Fourth Day

1st in a Series

by Lynn Huber

In 1998 my husband Frank and I made a ten week pilgrimage to ten Benedictine monasteries in the United States. It was life changing for us, and led to my becoming an oblate (a non-resident, associate member of a monastic community) at Benet Hill Monastery in Colorado Springs.

You may not know that the Anglican church, which was formed in England at a time when a huge proportion of the leaders in the church were Benedictine, has been heavily influenced by Benedictine spirituality.

In each community we visited, we prayed the daily office, attended daily Eucharist, ate in community, and spent time with community members to learn about the Rule of Benedict and how it is lived. We read lots and lots of books, and did reflective journaling, often sharing it with each other. This was an experience of immeasurable grace to us individually and as a couple.

This series is about applying Benedictine spirituality to life for non-monastics, and is a way to continue your Cursillo journey into your fourth day.

## ***Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality***

The Rule of Benedict, as understood by twentieth century Christians, provides a balanced, stable, wholistic, God-centered and practical way of life for non-monastics as well as those living in community. In this first column I will share an overview of this, and add a short description of *Lectio Divina*, a Benedictine way to pray. In future issues of the *Crowing Times* we will have more details on aspects of Benedictine life.

First some background. After the acceptance of Christianity by the Roman Empire in the 4th century, the church lost much of its vitality. In

response to what we today sometimes call "the hypocrites in the church" some folks took off into the desert in North Africa to attempt to live the gospel in a radical way. They are known today as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Around them formed early monastic communities.

In the 6th Century, Benedict, a wealthy young Italian nobleman, went to Rome to further his formal education. He rapidly became disgusted with the dissolute lifestyle of his contemporaries, went off to the hills near Rome, became a hermit, collected a following (just like the Desert hermits), and eventually formed the first Benedictine monastery.

Over the years, Benedict collected much of the wisdom derived from communal living in both his own and other monastic groups into the document which has come down to us as the Rule of Benedict (RB). It forms the cornerstone of Benedictine community life today for thousands of men and women monastics, and for many persons like myself who are associated with their communities, all over the world.

While most Benedictines today are Roman Catholic, there are Anglican and Episcopal Benedictines as well, and many other communities which

follow the RB.

Benedictine spirituality consists of a number of elements, which blend together into a whole that must be lived to be fully understood. I will try to give you a taste; you may decide to explore more on your own through reading (I'll give some suggestions to get you started) or by visiting a Benedictine community.

The major elements of Benedictine spirituality as I understand them are:

- 1) The three vows: Stability, Obedience and Conversion of Life
- 2) Humility
- 3) Hospitality
- 4) The daily office
- 5) A balance of work, prayer, study, sleep and recreation; of solitude and communal solidarity; and of discipline and individualized freedom.
- 6) Sanctification of all of life, not just the "spiritual."

## ***Lectio Divina: a Benedictine tool for praying without ceasing***

*Lectio Divina* (or sacred reading) is a core part of Benedictine life. At the time of Benedict, members of communities spent about four hours a day in *lectio*, a tool to hear and live the word of God. The Book of Common Prayer suggests we "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" the word. *Lectio* is a practical, flexible tool for doing this. The four steps to traditional *lectio* are:

Lectio: Reading. Read not for information but for transformation. Read slowly, out loud so that you read with eyes, mind, voice, vocal chords, and ears. Read not to cover a certain amount of material,



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## BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY

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but expectantly, trusting that in the reading is a gift from God if you simply pay attention. When you find something that grabs you (attracts you, repels you, raises doubts or questions), that is the material for your lectio that day. Reread it and savor it a bit.

**Meditatio:** Discursive meditation. Think about it. What does it mean? What does it remind you of in your life, in your readings, in your memories, in other places in scripture. The word meditation comes from the same root as a cow chewing its cud. Get all the juice out of it! Eat it slowly and in a relaxed way. Take your time. Use your imagination. Enter it with all your heart and mind and soul. Stay with it until you are moved to the next step.

**Oratio:** Prayer. If you work seriously with the material you are likely to discover a need, a thing occasioning thanksgiving, a hope for yourself or someone else, a place where you have fallen short, a sense of awe and wonder at God, etc. These lead you to the prayer-- of adoration, petition, confession, intercession, praise, thanksgiving, or self-offering. (See the Book of Common Prayer p. 856 for helpful definitions of these types of prayer).

**Contemplatio:** Contemplation. When you are through with your prayer, just sit in silence with God, open to the Presence, without pushing for anything. Just being together. When your time feels finished, you might offer the Lord's Prayer or some other prayer in conclusion. Carry one idea with you from your Lectio throughout the day.

### Variations on the Theme

Lectio is not restricted to scripture. You may use other readings. You may use the daily newspaper. (I often stop to pray for folks who are hurting, peacemakers, etc. The "thinking" step may be short or long, but somewhere between the

article and the prayer is thought. Then I sit a moment and let it be.)

You can use a sunset, a river, the ocean, a mountain, a bird, a fall leaf. "Sermons in stones" someone once wrote--moving from noticing to thinking. Then take it to prayer and silence.

If you remain alert to the possibilities, all you need do is note anything that happens, think about it in the context of where God and you are in relation to it, pray about it, and be with it. You are a living lectio, and you are praying without ceasing.

There will be more on Benedictine spirituality in future columns. Meanwhile, I invite you to get in touch with me if you have responses, questions, or experiences of your own with Benedictine spirituality that you would be willing to share. God bless!

### CAN'T WAIT?



*For those of you who can't wait for more on this, start your own reading. Two of the most well loved authors today writing on Benedictine spirituality are Anglican lay women, Esther de Waal and Norveen Vest. I recommend by the former Living with Contradiction (Morehouse, 1997), and by the latter, Preferring Christ (Source Books, 1996). Another superb interpreter of Benedictine spirituality for today's world is Sr. Joan Chittister, a Benedictine from my home town of Erie, PA, who has written several worthwhile books. Check out Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living of the Rule of St. Benedict Today (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). There is a leader's guide available for the latter if you want to try this as a group study. Finally consider the best-selling second book by Kathleen Norris, Cloister Walk, (Riverhead Books, 1996).*

## Needed!

**DOES YOUR  
CHURCH HAVE AN  
EXTRA AVAILABLE  
SOUND SYSTEM?**

**WANTED:** We are looking for sound systems that could be made available for Cursillo weekends to amplify music and rollistas. If you know of one, please contact Linda Brown, 303-432-2178, or email her at [Linda](mailto:Linda)

[JBrown@worldnet.att.net](mailto:JBrown@worldnet.att.net)

# The Greatest Story Ever Told

Continued from Page 12

men searching the Holy Word for references to support their interpretations. I can see the ebb and flow of the discussions, the contested points and the challenges to the arguments. Within our Christian communities today, we could undoubtedly use this ancient practice if only to challenge us to study the Word more thoroughly, to accept our Spirit given gifts of discernment and wisdom, and to take responsibility for our religious decisions.

One of the first lessons I learned

about the bible had to do with the larger perspective of the scriptures. It involves the character of God in the Old Testament and the New. It describes in the simplest of terms the big picture of what those ancient books come down to. The Old Testament is about the "giving of the law" and the constant failure of God's chosen to gain salvation because of human weakness and pride; they could not (and we cannot) abide in that Law alone. The New Testament provides forgiveness for our inevitable sins, one of the two final ingredients for our salvation. The God of the Old Testament is an often angry, capricious

and vengeful one. Think about this: With a promised but indefinite salvation far off, only the fear of God existed to encourage obedience to the law, and guarantee salvation. With the coming of Christ, we are presented with a compassionate, loving and forgiving God. Did God change? Don't we simply see the introduction to the second aspect of our Trinity? Aren't we then promised and given the third almost immediately after Christ's death? It seems these grand themes should encourage just a little more familiarity with "The Greatest Story Ever Told". It's a good place to start. Let us begin!

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### Just For Fun

*The following statements were written by children in a Catholic elementary school.*

In the first book of the Bible, Guinness, God got tired of creating the world, so he took the Sabbath off.

Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was called Joan of Ark. Noah built an ark, which the animals come onto in pears.

Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day, but a ball of fire by night.

The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.

The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.

Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the apostles.

The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten ammendments.

## Piety, Study and Action, Baghdad-Style

By Frank E. Wismer III, CH (COL), USAR Coalition Provisional Authority

Reprinted From *The 4<sup>th</sup> Day Magazine*, June 2004

I recently discovered that there are a number of people here in Baghdad, Iraq, who are members of 4<sup>th</sup> Day communities. So, I thought it would be a good idea if we began grouping. This week two of us got together for the first time. We followed the group reunion card that I always carry with me in my wallet. Nothing on the card had changed since I last used it almost a year ago, but as we shared with each other our piety, study and action, it dawned on me that everything was different.

Piety, in my opinion, has to do with our conscious contact with God. My conscious contact with God is much different here than anywhere else I have ever lived my life. My piety in Iraq is directly tied to the land. I am on "holy" ground. I am living where God was revealed to Abram and Jonah and Daniel. My "hooch" is less than fifty yards away from the Tigris River on the delta known as "fertile crescent". This is the Garden of Eden. It is here that God walked in the garden in the cool of the day. This is the place where the "tree of life" and the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" stood. It was here that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together for clothing and hid themselves from God.

My piety is not so much in the doing as it is in the being. I am in the place where the scriptures tell us God has always revealed God's self to God's people. I don't have to do a lot of pietistic rituals or rites; I am simply living here in this place, the God place. Just by being here, I daily recall the salvific plan of God in history and in my own life. "Moses take off the shoes from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy ground." I just stand here with my feet on the ground and I am connected to God. There is nothing in the way of our relationship, not even shoes separating the soles of my feet from this holy land.

Study has always been linked to

opening up the books for me. Yet here my study takes on a different form. I have had the fortune of visiting the ancient ruins of Babylon about twenty times. I have seen the place where Daniel was fed to the lions and where three young men were placed in the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. I have seen the mound that was once the Tower of Babel, but which God destroyed. I have been in the room where the handwriting appeared on the wall as a curse against the King. I have seen the place where the psalmist writes: "By the waters of Babylon". I have walked the streets where the Children of Israel were taken into captivity. And, I have seen the walls that Cyrus of Persia overcame to enter Babylon and put an end to the captivity of the Jews. I am not far from the tomb of Ezekiel and the home of father Abraham. Weekly I worship with members of our Episcopal congregation at the palace and also at St. George's in Baghdad who still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus. Just yesterday I was speaking with some of them and inquired what they thought of the movie "The Passion" (it is out here in Baghdad on black-market DVDs). They informed me that they understood most of it, but that there were portions of it that are ancient Aramaic and foreign even to them. I have other members at the Anglican Church I serve in Baghdad who are converts from Mandeism. The Mandaeans are the descendents of the disciples of John the Baptist. My bible study is not in the reading of age-old stories, but living in the biblical times. I often feel as if I have been transported back into the first century and am part of the bible story.

Action has taken on an entirely new perspective from me since Christmas. On Christmas Day, following the service at St. George's Anglican Church in Baghdad, twenty Muslim women came into the church escorted by two Muslim men. They were attending a wedding reception across the street

and had seen the lights on at the church (we worship there into the evening). They had come to the church seeking the blessing of Jesus for the couple whose reception they were attending. It was an eye-opening experience for me. Here were Muslims looking for blessings at a church. A week ago Sunday, we were again sitting and chatting in the church following the service. Five Muslim women came in dressed in their black garb. They too were looking for a blessing from Jesus and from the Virgin Mary. Through Maher, our linguist, I asked them if they would like me to pray for them.

We gathered in a circle in the nave and I inquired of them their prayer requests. They asked me to pray for their family and some difficulties they were experiencing at home. So, I did. Then one of them asked me if I would pray for her. She had been ill and wanted healing. I asked if it would be all right if I laid hands on her. She said that would be fine, so I laid hands on her head and prayed in the name of Jesus that her illness would be put to flight. When I had finished praying for her, another woman in the group told me that she'd been having headaches and wanted to know if I'd be willing to pray for her. For a third time, I prayed with those who had come to Jesus seeking his blessing while laying hands on her head.

It is fascinating to be part of a Christian minority in a Muslim land. Daily I am struck by the people that God places in my path and how I am given the opportunity to witness to them. My action truly is among the "unchurched."

I live on "holy" land. I have been transported to the first century and worship with those who speak the language of Jesus. I am a member of a small minority called Christians, but daily find that God is placing people in my path to whom I can reveal the majesty of Jesus Christ. This is my Piety, Study and Action, Baghdad-style.



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## THE CROWING TIMES

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## THE LAST WORD

### The Greatest Story Ever Told

By Jon Rhodes

I'm one of those many Christians who feel a little uncomfortable when some one starts quoting Scripture. When I stop to think about it, I find it both ironic and humorous. Ironic because my discomfort stems from my own inadequate knowledge of the documents on which my religious faith is based. A major part of this inadequacy is based upon a lack of context for Bible quotes. I cannot escape the suspicion that a passage may mean exactly *and* only what it says, but then again, it may mean something else entirely, or it may even have several different levels of meaning, some of which may be subtle and easily missed, but important for providing the insight that deepens faith.

Without context, and without knowledge of how a particular passage refers to related passages in other parts of scripture, I find it difficult to comfortably discern a full measure of meaning and therefore I am at a disadvantage in a scriptural discussion. The humor comes when, without rancor, I realize that my counterpart in the discussion may simply be more comfortable displaying his or her ignorance! And perhaps that person is willing to gamble

that there will be no challenge to their expertise from a large percentage of Christians.

The prospect of meaningful scriptural study is a daunting one. It means not only reading scripture, but also study of the cultural influences and the customs of both New and Old Testament times. It means countless hours of study and hours of discussion with mentors and other students. It means quiet times for reflection and contemplation. Of course, these are precisely the reasons why we have Christian *religions*: someone has done the study we cannot, and has distilled their conclusions into something we can digest, complete with footnotes. So it happens that we may understand less of our "*Christian faith*" than of our "*religious convictions*".

I have read that in Christ's time Jewish men gathered in the synagogue to discuss the Talmud. Presumably these discussions were more than social gatherings. I can imagine these

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