

THE SEMINARY OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**NORTH AMERICAN SEMINARY NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2018**



Left to right: Seminary Administrator Janice Morgante, Jeana Lee, Diana Haynes, Sarah Ammon, Director Patrick Kennedy, Director Bastiaan Baan, Flora Ingenhouz, Gail Ritscher, Victoria Capon, Cheryl Prigg, Future Director Jonah Evans, Jong-Won Choi

Held in Our Vulnerability

— BASTIAAN BAAN, SEMINARY DIRECTOR

This is the free translation of the title of a book published by one of our priests in the Netherlands (*Geborgen in ongeborgenheid* by Ellen Huidekoper, 1994). It is also a perfect motto for the near future of our seminary. Most of our readers already know that in all cases there will be several big changes in the coming months. A letter to members and friends of the Christian Community that was written in December, by our Lenker Oliver Steinrueck, informed us about the possibility of the seminary relocating in the future, when Patrick Kennedy has taken over my tasks. Although the letter clearly indicated that “absolutely no decision has been made about this,” it evoked many rumors and suggestions. Of course: As soon as something is uncertain, we try hard to find solid ground under our feet! And if there is no ground, then this might become a reason to speculate.

Dear readers, be patient: At the moment that I am writing this article, none of us knows exactly what will happen in the future. We live with uncertainties – and we feel “held in our vulnerability.” In all cases, living with these uncertainties implies that we all, students, faculty, directors and friends of the seminary have to develop resilience. That is what we practice daily at our priest training.

Thinking about this transformation, I realize that we enter a new stage of our biography. The seminary began in 2003 in Chicago. In 2010 we moved to Spring Valley. After our birth and early childhood, we had a period of relatively calm development. But now, more than 14 years old, “real life” begins. In terms of the human biography - puberty. Once in a while, this stage shows a sign at the door: “closed due to reconstruction.” Don’t worry - the seminary is not closed. But we need a quiet time and lots of conversations, prayer and moments of inspiration before the butterfly is ready to leave the cocoon!

Patrick Kennedy can unveil a little bit more about the future. See his article at the end of this newsletter. ✧

Serving the Heart of the Altar

— GAIL RITSCHER, SECOND YEAR

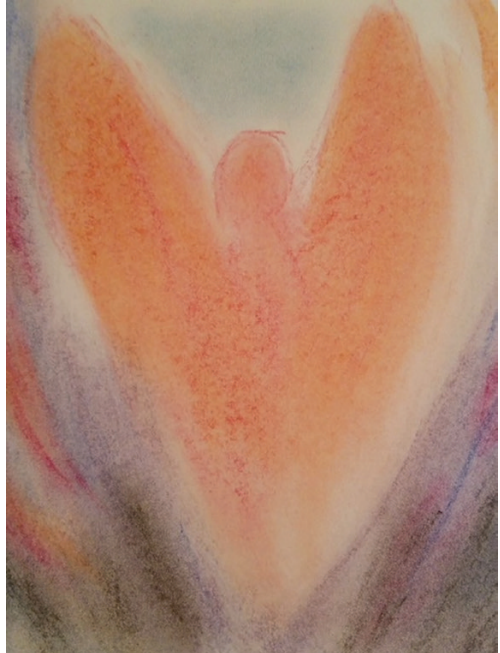
Having written in the fall newsletter about how my role of ministries coordinator for the Christian Community in Spring Valley came about, I can now write what the role means to me. Alongside all the practical Martha* aspects of the job, which come naturally to me, I was driven from the very beginning to develop my less-frequented Mary side by reaching out to individual congregation members as a kind of heart ambassador from the church. Perhaps I could facilitate the flow of heart blood from the core, from the altar, out into the hearts of the congregation, and then back to the core with renewed vitality. Perhaps I could help the hearts of the members and the heart of the altar beat together, so that the body of the church would thrive in the ensuing warmth and oneness of purpose.

You might think that my meetings with individual members of the congregation would only change my relationship with that one person, that something would be flowing just between two hearts, but somehow it always seems bigger than that. It seems like someone else is working there and expanding the circle. I cannot really explain it, but the individual meetings seem to be creating something new that is affecting the congregation as a whole. Is that what creating Christ Community is all about? What if the heart connections I am forming with individual people are being felt more widely? Is that even possible? There is still so much I do not understand, but what I do know is that my own heart is developing new capacities.

When I think of the Christ being creating entire worlds, I find it hard to truly fathom that any part of something of that magnitude can actually be in me, working in and through me. Then I get a tiny inkling of it when I see how one small meeting with a congregation member yields something much bigger than I could possibly have brought about on my own. During that meeting, it is not just my heart that is beating there, it is the heart of the altar, and it is all I can do to keep it inside my chest. Serving that heart, and the hearts of the congregation, is my privilege and my joy. ❖

* Luke 11:38-42

"Angel" by Gail Ritscher



Dorothy Day: She Walked with Christ

— FLORA INGENHOUSZ, FIRST YEAR

As a first-year student I have the wonderful assignment to give a twenty minute talk about an American woman who made a major contribution to Christianity. Out of a short list of names, I picked Dorothy Day about whom I knew next to nothing. A lucky and inspiring choice.

Steiner said that to know Christ one has to go through the school of unselfishness. In my eyes Dorothy Day graduated that school with highest honors. Instead of living a comfortable life as a writer/journalist, mother and wife, she followed her deepest longing to help the downtrodden.

At the height of the Great Depression Dorothy Day joined forces with Peter Maurin. They published a newspaper, titled “The Catholic Worker”. Articles addressing Peter’s ideas of a new Catholic philosophy and Dorothy’s stories about labor, strikes, poverty and unemployment in NYC. With her personal style of writing she reached the hearts of readers.

The paper was the first step in what became known as the Catholic Worker movement. “Houses of Hospitality” came next. They not only fed the unemployed, but Dorothy and Peter chose to live with them in “voluntary poverty.” Theirs was an austere life, living in crowded, noisy, rat-infested, buildings. They served not only the poor— those with mental illness were also given room at the inn. Dorothy worked tirelessly to see Christ in everyone.

She also was fiercely dedicated to the cause of social justice and non-violence, which landed her in jail many a time. The first time she was imprisoned was when she was twenty, the last time when she was seventy-five.



Hands in Clay by Flora Ingenhouz

Almost forty years after her death, her “Catholic Worker Movement” continues. Currently there are 130 Houses of Hospitality throughout the world. I had the good fortune to visit a house of hospitality in Amsterdam where twelve to eighteen illegal refugees live in community with a Dutch core group who choose to live with very little.

Dorothy was often called a saint—the Vatican is, in fact, considering her for sainthood. But Dorothy did not want to be put in a separate category. As she saw it, we are all called to be saints. The fact that she did not hide her human struggles with anger, sadness, judgment, loneliness or despair, makes her all the more real.

To learn more, read the beautiful biography by Kate Hennessy: “The World Will Be Saved by Beauty.” ❖

The Garden

— LUIS GONZALES, THIRD YEAR

Growing as a Christian in the Seminary was like growing inside a nursery. We were constantly nourished by the sacraments, held by the rhythm of the studies, and surrounded by mentors and colleagues. Of course, growing always takes striving, and there were many personal, social and spiritual challenges, but the environment was quite sheltered.

After two years studying in the seminary came the moment for the internship. I spent the first months in Toronto. It was a step further. Now the teachers were the community itself, the priest in his day-to-day work, and these teachers were in a congregation, not in a classroom. The knowledge and experience I had accumulated needed to be put in relation to the community life. It was like being moved into a bigger pot for the plant to keep growing.

Now, six months later, I have been transplanted into a real garden: Los Angeles. I have only been here two months and I am still trying to make sense of it.

Los Angeles is a huge garden that was once a desert. Now the streets are full of green lawns, palm trees and fruit trees next to tropical and succulent plants. A myriad of hues of diverse cultural backgrounds interact in this garden. In it two extremes stand out. On one side stands the glitter of the cinema industry, and, on the other, the large number of people living in the streets.

Here the social dynamics are marked by long distances. The impersonal freeways become an anonymously shared experience for millions everyday. Each one with their particular daily rituals in the space of their own cars: praying, listening to books or the news, singing, organizing life on the phone...

If the United States is still new to me, to understand all the repercussions of these layers in the souls that live here and, at the same time, to accommodate to them...this must take its time.

The church of the Christian Community here lives in transition. Having had the same priest for 20 years, they are now awaiting the event of a new one to come. The congregation, which has long been engaged with the church, has managed to adapt and grow in these circumstances. The church and different aspects of the community life are well kept and other priests of California lend support by visiting regularly to carry on the sacramental life.

In the middle of all these changes a new image is starting to unfold: A garden where the roots stretch towards the spirit, where the hearts turn slowly seeking the light of Jesus Christ, where the branches reach out to sense the needs of the environment. And I wonder: Aren't the particular gardens in which we live out our own constellation of circumstances the instrument, the opportunity, to reach out to the spiritual garden? ❖



A Garden in Los Angeles by David Hockney

There . . .

— JONG-WON CHOI, FIRST YEAR

I

i have always loved to watch
the place
where branches meet the sky.
exactly there, where each branch ends,
there...
do i see a gesture of longing?
a delicate point made by a twig and the air
opens a door to
a mystery and infinity

II

eurythmy
expansion and contraction
again, again and again
simple and surprisingly satisfying

i often wondered,
what is at the end of each end?
what happens in that mysterious turning point?
expansion ... contraction ...
anything else in-between?
after all, what is this?

III

now, inside my lungs,
more precisely,
where the finest ends of artery branches
meet
the finest ends of vein branches
around the finest ends of alveoli branches,
there...
little cosmos meets and intermingles with the big cosmos
tiny version of dying and rebirth
fine dispersion of heavenly warmth and life
into the blood

IV

expansion and contraction
and in-between
there...
it goes beyond
into the infinity
receiving heavenly touch
delicate and divine ❖



“Blood in the heart striving towards the breath of the lungs is the striving of the human being for the cosmos. Air in the lungs striving towards the blood of the heart is the grace bestowing blessing of the cosmos on the human being. ... Blood that is striving towards the heart is a refined dying -process. Blood as the carrier of carbon dioxide out of the body represents a refined death-process.”

— Rudolf Steiner, from a document published in Peter Selg’s book,
The Mystery of the Heart

Cultivating Devotion

— DIANA HAYNES, FIRST YEAR

Being in the seminary is all about tilling the soil of the soul. Most of the time we find it unyielding, full of rocks of preconceptions and hardened habits, rife with weeds of egotism and error and paved over by past hurts and lingering fears. How do we open this soil to the living word, to the transformative power of Christ? In contemplating the parable of the Sower and the Seed, I realized that I'd joined the seminary, not to become a priest, but to become good earth.

Here the seed is given to me daily in the Gospels and the Act of Consecration of Man, but does it take root, sprout and grow? Is my soil healthy? Do I regularly tend the seedling? Too often we assume that we are good earth, but with careful moral examination, we discover a thousand ways where we succumb to our ego or cultivate worldly concerns instead of the Truth.

Our teachers support this inner work but it's up to us to do it. Despite living in a near monastic setting, there are still countless excuses to not do the work. Much of it is done alone, in meditation, study and prayer. But much work needs to be done in the social sphere where we learn to uproot intolerance, cultivate patience and genuine interest in the other.

The Act of Consecration of Man acts like Biodynamic preparations for the farmer, helping us align our cosmic and earthly selves. Our errors are transformed into fertile compost with the help of awareness, heart-felt contrition and a willingness to change. The Holy Spirit has something to do with all this, but most of the time, it just feels like a miracle...

I am learning that the seed needs the soil of our soul to unfold its precious gift. By itself, the living word of God cannot heal the sickness of sin that corrupts the world. It needs to find a home in human hearts, human thinking and human willing. Each of these spheres needs a good gardener.

When the seed is planted in good soil and tended devotedly, then the sun's light can draw it heavenward and produce more seeds. It is a joyful work we do, as He Creates in and through us. As we cultivate devotion, God grows Grace and Love in our lives. ❖



Seed Meditation I, from Rudolf Steiner's Knowledge of Higher Worlds, by Sarah Ammon

Experiences in Sermon Writing

— SARAH AMMON, SECOND YEAR



Sarah and Jong-Won observing amethyst geode at American Museum of Natural History

One of the things we learn at the seminary is how to write a sermon. To do this requires us to become skilled in a kind of intimacy where we learn to speak from the heart about the moral foundations of the world; where we learn to share something that sheds light upon the struggles of daily life and brings comfort and solace to the heart.

Needless to say, this is an enormous challenge, but luckily there is a way - a way that requires us to work at the very foundations of how we see the world. Through this process we do battle with our own blindness; our materialistic world-views and our personal prejudices. In fact we become good friends with what keeps us humble, so that we will never forget that we share as human beings in the same inner struggles as those of our future congregation members.

In this growing inner humility we try to create an inner space where we can cultivate a sense of wonder and lively interest towards creation. We began by observing 'the ground.' Going outside and even taking off our shoes, we walked on different 'grounds' (grass, stones, concrete), all the while gathering observations on the qualities of our experience. We wrote down and shared those qualities; soft or hard, yielding or not, sharp, etc. until we began a conversation with the ground. Living into its being with our feelings - opening ourselves to how it might speak of itself. In this way deeper layers revealed themselves, such as - 'you spread yourself out beneath me,' 'you bear me up,' 'you endure all silently,' or 'you hold within you the manifold potential for life.'

Out of this simple exercise, even something so seemingly mundane as 'ground', which we generally take for granted in our busy lives, begins to unfold a world of qualities that belong to the heart's experiencing (bearing, enduring, holding potential for life): a world of qualities at the same time both warm and full of light. Suddenly we enter a world that speaks of soul qualities and has its source in the religious/spiritual 'ground' of the world, all through precise observation.

For me this experience was incredibly profound: to one day simply walk over what appears as the rainbow bridge in Goethe's fairytale of the 'Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily,' from this world into the world of the spirit, where God speaks from everything! ✧

Wagner's Parsifal - Impressions from an Open Course

— KARL FREDRICKSON & RENATE KURTH, AFFILIATE CONGREGATION MEMBERS

The February Open Course at the Seminary of the Christian Community was devoted to Wagner's Parsifal. For five days, two dozen of us from as far away as Calgary, Los Angeles, and South Carolina joined seven seminarians to live into this inspired piece of music, truly a sacred drama.

Bastiaan began with a question, "Who is the Grail?" It is asked by Parsifal, the Pure Fool, in the first act of the opera as he follows Gurnemanz to the Grail Castle. It is a question that at first seems to be a simple misunderstanding on his part, but the wording became ever more relevant as we explored what it might mean, as a modern human being, to become a vessel for that holy substance that transforms the whole earth. Through Bastiaan's thoughtful descriptions of the opera itself and the way it took form in Wagner's life, our thoughts and imaginations were allowed to become vessels for insight and understanding. Brigida inspired us in Eurythmy, allowing the tones of the overture to fill our arms, move our feet, and create forms that breathed and metamorphosed one into another. Bonnie gave us the complementary colors of purple and yellow, challenging us to enter into their dynamic relationship as they took shape on our pages. And then there was the music. Elaine was ever present at the piano, to let us hear the melodies and harmonies that filled the text with feeling. Bastiaan, supported by Elaine, sang some of the themes for us, letting them speak directly to our souls. Each day we sang with him, working on three excerpts from the opera. Singing together in this way profoundly called on each of us to contribute his/her individual voice so that the sound could become wholly one.

Throughout the week Bastiaan unfolded for us the story of Parsifal – the Pure Fool, destined to redeem the suffering Amfortas and restore the true celebration of the Grail. Of course, on his first visit to the Grail castle he fails, but seeds are planted in his soul that will come to life in him when he faces the critical challenge at Klingsor's castle. And what are these seeds? In his innocence he



"Emmaus," by Manfred Welzel

shoots a swan in the forest of Monsalvat. Gurnemanz challenges him to look into its eyes, into the gaze of the dead swan. Soon afterward the Pure Fool stands before the Grail, powerfully moved but unable to act. But from above descend the words sung by the chorus: "Through Compassion, Knowing." Later, faced with all the forces of temptation placed in front of him by Klingsor and Kundry, he sees before his inner eye all that his folly has led to. And thereby the passion that is aroused in him is transformed into compassion: a direct experience of the suffering not only of Amfortas, but of the Savior Himself.

"Through Compassion, Knowing." For Parsifal to achieve this required a long, arduous and often painful journey. What is required of us today? Patrick worked with us to consider how the human soul, through a living thinking, can become an altar to Michael, allowing him to become our teacher. This, we might say, is a modern Grail path, and it leads us to a loving awareness of our fellow human beings as brothers and sisters in Christ.

By the end of the week we all grew aware of the powerful life stream that pours through the Seminary. The Act of Consecration of Man that begins each day, the shared breakfast, the rhythm of the daily activities – all this resounded on into the night, to be resurrected again in the morning, and then to be broadened and deepened day after day. What a gift it was for us to be able to share in this rhythm for five full days and to draw from the well of so much rich content. ❖



"Annunciation" (detail of Mary),
Fra Angelico

Mary and an Untroubled Heart

— CHERYL PRIGG, SECOND YEAR

Every year, every Christian festival is an opportunity to experience spiritual realities in a new way. This year my focus has been chapter 14 in the Gospel of John.

In this chapter as the Passover Festival approaches, Christ is preparing His disciples for the most momentous deed the cosmos will ever experience. He confirms how deep their connection is with Him and the Father. He then promises a comforter – the Holy Spirit – and blesses them with his Peace. Twice in this intensely intimate and heart felt chapter, Christ implores them to ‘let not your heart be troubled.’

As inspired and moved as I am by this chapter and entreaty, except for the most fleeting of moments, I am constantly confronted with how far from an untroubled heart my inner experience is. We live in an age when untroubled hearts and His Peace do not reign. It is a signature of our time as we continue to develop our individuality, to experience intense isolation and loneliness. We live in a world where we are constantly confronted by a greater and greater chasm between those with wealth and power and those without, where our world leaders are influenced by mega corporations and personal power. Where our oceans are choking on plastic, the polar caps are melting at unprecedented speeds.

So my question is this: ‘How can I possibly live in today’s world and not have a troubled heart?’

Mary, the mother of Jesus has been a great inspiration for me whilst I have been contemplating this theme. Mary’s life unfolded with sublime and shattering events, illuminating for us the way to strive. Mary takes all the things that she experiences and witnesses deep into her soul, holding and pondering them in her heart. Mary’s experience of these immense events – from the birth to the crucifixion of her son – the pain and trouble she felt did not sever her heart from her spiritual heritage. Her suffering served only to increase and deepen her devotion and surrender to what was coming from the future.

As Christ promised, the Holy Spirit was sent from the future for the future.

The heart of this new impulse for the future is wrought from the fruits of the kind of intense inner work and devotion that Mary models for us, a pondering and composure that brings forth the future from a troubled heart. ✧

“Oh the Agony, the Ecstasy” - A Contemplation of Passiontide

— JEANA LEE, FIRST YEAR

I arrived late the first time I attended the Act of Consecration of Man in the Christian Community. Having no idea about the format of the service, I entered the sanctuary during the sermon, and slid into a seat at the back. It was the last Sunday before Easter, and the altar dressing, servers' robes, and priest's chasuble were all black. Because I had missed the beginning of the service, it was not until the final portion that I heard the words of the Holy Week epistle, with phrases like “a grave of hope” and “a ray of grief penetrates your gaze.”

Grief is something with which I am familiar. My mother with whom I was deeply connected, died when I was 13 years old, and much of my teens and 20s were colored by depression and loneliness. Hearing the words of the epistle felt like a validation of the intensity of my experience, and my heart resonated with it. But afterwards I thought, “I don't know if I can hear those words every Sunday.” Luckily my friend who had strongly encouraged me to attend the service, said, “You need to come back next week. The color will be red!” So I did.

Where the soul's grave had been, an altar appeared in the liturgy, and “Christ offers at the soul altar.” The very air is jubilating in the Easter liturgy. “Christ is risen as the meaning of the Earth.” Having felt the grief of the previous week, my heart soared with the joy of rebirth, life, and divine light pulsing in my veins.

Indeed, this seems to be a pattern: after the depths of agony, the heights of joy. It is only through feeling the pain and grief that I am able to feel the transcendent beauty that is also part of the world.

I had become adept at avoiding my feelings, and have only slowly come to accept and appreciate them. Now I am a lover of Passiontide, the period of grief preceding the joy of Easter. This is the time of year when we are invited to feel with intensity the whole range of human emotions. “My self lies lamenting on the ground.” Passiontide allows me to be a puddle of emotion, to feel and feel, and feel some more. After being cleansed by the tears, Easter comes again and my heart is lifted to the heights of exaltation. ❖



"Well Armed with God-begotten Forces," an impression
from the Calendar of the Soul Week 47, by Jeana Lee

*Heart broken open,
Made receptive to Christ-love.
Selflessly itself.*

– Haiku by Jeana Lee

Bearing Witness: John the Baptist and Us

— VICTORIA CAPON, SECOND YEAR



"To Listen" by Victoria Capon

When we think of being a witness, we might think of someone who speaks the truth after "witnessing" an event. In this sense, the word "witness" has been used since the times of the Hebrew Bible. Bearing witness also has a meaning that reaches out to the Spirit in us all.

John the Baptist, an initiate of the old mystery wisdom, one of the first to receive the consciousness of his "I," was sent from the highest Spirit, to be the one who made it possible for Christ to incarnate into human form. Through the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River, Christ descended into Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit. With his "I," John saw the Dove, descend to Jesus and

stay with him. With his "I" he heard the voice of the Father God through the Holy Spirit, speak these words, (Luke 3:22) "You are my beloved Son, in you I will reveal myself." Those human beings who had also been baptized by John who had "ears to hear and eyes to see" and who could bear witness to Jesus Christ and follow him, spread his teachings and baptized in his name.

Through the mystery of Golgotha and Christ's gift of our "I" consciousness to us all, we can now bear witness to Christ in us and in all of humanity, but we must develop the "ears to hear" and the "eyes to see." The material world around us threatens to keep our attention bound to it, keeping our hearts closed most of the time to the overwhelming troubles of the world. But through the grace and truth of Christ we can gain the strength and will to bear witness to not only the joy and wonder around us, but also to bear witness to the boundless pain, uniting in our humanity.

Bearing witness is a gesture of turning toward the other with an open heart and mind, restraining judgmental thoughts that threaten to close us off from perceiving the truth. When we bear witness we approach the other with wonder. When bearing witness we can turn to the other from our higher "I" consciousness and we can hear with ears that can perceive more than the words that are spoken, we can see into and beyond the physical presentation, and witness Christ in each other. ❖

Where the Mountains Meet the Plains

— MATTHIAS GILES, THIRD YEAR

As I look ahead with excitement toward my second internship in Kassel, Germany, I am filled with the rich nourishment of these six months as an intern in Denver, Colorado. It has been an invaluable and humbling experience to get to know both the people and the place more deeply.

Long ago, a great swath of the earthly, mineral foundation was thrust toward the heights, forming this great spine that spans the continent- the Rocky Mountains. Situated in this unusual position where the plains meet the mountains, Denver is in many ways a place of extremes. The erratic weather and temperature fluctuations attest to the fact that the air itself is caught in the struggle for balance between heaven and earth. The hail and snow storms that descend without warning give voice to the challenge of this struggle, the great distance between the depths and the heights, and the delicacy of the balance.

As a place of extremes, this region demands an incredible flexibility (did I bring a t-shirt, umbrella, and snow-pants?). In this way, it lends itself to the struggle of becoming Christian, indeed, of becoming human. It is easy to get caught up in the outer activity, of preparing talks or studies, and lose sight of the inner counterpart. But, as is always the case with the eloquence of nature, we can also look to the outer, the visible, to learn the pitfalls and possibilities of the inner, the invisible. Just as the air currents from the mountains and the plains must meet and circulate, so too must the breath of the spirit meet and come into communion with earthly matter.

What is our task as human beings if not to be this meeting place? Though the meeting of the heights and the depths may bring stormy weather into our soul life as we struggle, like the air, to find the balance, in the midst of this struggle I remember to look again to one who has gone before us as our Helping Guide. Christ descended from the heavens into the heart of the earth. Each time we come before the altar to take His substances into ourselves, I am given strength to begin to right this balance and carry His Spirit into my work in the world. ✧



Matthias with Rev. Emma Heirman
and Rev. Jim Hinds

Building the Community of Christ in Word and Deed

— CHRISTINE WUERSCHER, OPEN COURSE PARTICIPANT

Something very special was in the air when we gathered in late November to learn about creating Christ Communities, and it wasn't just the leaves. All open courses are wonderful opportunities to explore the Christian experience, but this course was exceptional.

I think it was because, despite diverse and varied backgrounds, we had come together with a common sense of purpose. As members of fledgling and "wannabe" affiliates, we were all deeply motivated to really listen, learn and contribute so that we would be able to build strong Christ filled communities in our hometowns.

Each day we began with the Act of Consecration of Man, which set the tone for the week. Our communion with Christ, and with one another through him, placed the course on holy ground. In no time at all we were sharing our joys, hopes, fears, struggles and emerging ideas. We became a loving, Christ-filled community! No doubt, the kind and respectful atmosphere helped those who bravely led the two devotional services. Those of us who had never experienced a worship service led by a non-priest before, were very grateful for their courageous vulnerability.

I think some of us came expecting that we would be told what a devotional service should look like. Instead, in our reflections about the services, we discovered how different we all are with regard to our desire for or avoidance of silence, particular words, crossings and signs, types of readings, level of participation, and so on. It became clear that there is no one form that would fit all. In the end, we were encouraged to craft a service that suits our specific needs.

This freedom to work out of love for the people involved, rather than adhering to a set pattern, allowed new ideas to flourish and created a sense of excitement and hopefulness. We realized that affiliates can be incredibly vibrant communities even in between the times when a priest serves at the altar. We may be small but we are flexible, unencumbered by bureaucracy and property, and at the growing edge of the Movement for Religious Renewal. We are not just a stepping-stone on the way to becoming a 'real' church with a building and altar. As Rev. Oliver Steinrueck said, affiliates may be the future of the Christian Community. ✧



The Future

— PATRICK KENNEDY, SEMINARY DIRECTOR

Some fifteen years ago I arrived in Chicago to work with Richard Dancy in a short-term internship right before the founding of the brand new North American Seminary. I remember how lucky my wife Kate and I felt just to be nearby as this endeavor was born, living just around the corner in a studio apartment. It felt like such a bold new chapter in our young movement. Even as it was very humble, with only three students in that very first semester, there was a kind of ‘glow’ around that newborn. Of course, we never imagined it would ever move...

Then it came to Spring Valley through Gisela Wielki’s guidance. It even spent a year much more ‘on the road’, visiting congregations for weeks at a time with the students in tow. And now a time has come again when our seminary is exploring where best to sink its roots.

“Foxes have holes and the birds have their nests but the Son of Man has no place to rest his head.” (Matt 8:20)

There is an essential element to the Christ-path that has to do with being homeless. Being up-rooted and having no ‘outer’ home forces one to find a new element to sink those roots into. This ‘homelessness’ can be truly unsettling, even frightening. But it also opens a new possibility, a possibility to find the element in the world that allows us to be ‘at home’ anywhere.

Here at this ‘place’, this seminary, we try to lead our students to this element. They enter a training full of uncertainties. They don’t know through the first three years whether all this training will lead to life as a priest or not. They have to let go of any attachment to outer expectations and ‘build [their] house on the rock’ (Matt 7:24-25). This ‘rock’ element, the truly solid foundation that

cannot be shaken, is the very experience of the being of Christ himself.

If this 'ground' can be found, if our seminary is able to help lead fellow human beings to this ground, then deep healing will emanate from their presence, from their work in the world. For, everyone in our time is living in these uncertainties. Despite unprecedented wealth and wellbeing, we are suffering from tremendous levels of anxiety and depression; while the outer ground may settle the inner ground is shaking. Cultivating servants of humanity whose whole identity is no longer bound up with outer homes but grounded in the unshakable 'rock' of Christ's living presence: this is the present – and future – work of our seminary.

No matter what outer ground the seminary may find itself on, this ground is the one that we build on.

With warm and grateful greetings,

Patrick Kennedy

P.S. Due to still being in deliberations around the coming Semester, no schedule of courses could be shared in this newsletter. We will communicate this to our circle of friends as soon as it is ready.

P.P.S. Just before going to print we heard word that the seminary will indeed still be here in Spring Valley, NY for the academic year 2018-19. We hope to hear further decisions on the long term future from the international leadership this summer. ✧



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