



pursuing justice, we  
seek god's gift of peace.

spring 2012

# Living peace

congregation of the sisters of st. joseph of peace

Dancing with the Divine

The Art of Liturgy

Blueprints for Peace

the art  
of peace

*J. Steans*

# in this issue



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The painting on the cover, "Resurrection Piece," was done by Sister Joan Steans, CSJP. Sr. Joan is a retired artist and teacher who continues to paint and meditate regularly.

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- 3 Message from Congregation Leadership  
by Coralie Muzzy, CSJP
- 3 Looking for Peace? Find Art.  
by Jan Linley
- 4 Dancing With The Divine:  
The Art of Living Seamlessly  
by Lisa Dennison and Alexandra Kovats, CSJP
- 5 Poems: Reflection by Pat Conte  
Prayer Is by Amalia Camacho, CSJP
- 6 Meditation: Just Do It!  
Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP, Kathleen Pruitt, CSJP,  
Janet Davis Richardson, CSJP, Ann Wagner, CSJP-A,  
Angela Zapka, CSJP-A
- 8 The Art of Liturgy  
by Beth Taylor, CSJP
- 10 Blueprints for Peace  
by Terrence J. Moran, CSJP-A
- 11 Capturing the Wild Yeast: Poetry Starters  
by Susan Dewitt, CSJP
- 12 Finding Peace a Stitch at a Time  
by Rosemary Reilly, CSJP
- 13 Resting into a Place Where Beauty  
and Peace Abide  
by Jane Franz
- 14 Poems: A Celtic Blessing by Noreen Twomey, CSJP  
The Cook Vanishes by Susan Dewitt, CSJP
- 16 History and Roots  
by Janet Davis Richardson, CSJP and Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP





# Message from Congregation Leadership: Peace—*The Dynamic Work of Art Not Yet Fully Realized*

by Coralie Muzzy, CSJP

In this issue of *Living Peace* we explore *The Art of Peace*—how the medium of art inspires the desire for peace and also how the practice of peace inspires art. The theme brings to mind the very first paragraph of our Constitutions: *Peace is God's gift to us, given in Christ, a gift we experience and enjoy now, though not in its completeness. We believe that peace points beyond itself in hope to the fullness of time.* Peace, like an unfinished work of art, is incomplete. Art is one medium employed by thousands to help bring peace more fully into our world.

If you search “The Art of Peace” on the internet, you will need hours to read through the multiple listings that appear. Your eyes will blur as you surf through dozens of websites, items and events that use that exact phrase: book titles, music CDs, blogs, and spiritual practices, to name a few. Clearly, all those listings indicate that many different art forms are used to inform or inspire peace—the desire for it, the urgency for it, the creative expression of it, the how to of it, etc.

The reverse is also true—the practice of peace inspires creativity. Sr. Julie Codd, CSJP speaks of how inner peace must be the starting place for her creativity. *“My awareness and practice of peace brings me wholly into*

*the creative process before I can even begin. When I take the time to be quiet, letting go of thoughts that quell the Spirit, breathing in and welcoming the Spirit's Presence, giving it full rein—that is when creativity happens.”*

Photographer Susan Francois, CSJP believes she is most creative when on retreat. *“When I am in that reflective space, I am able to see the world through the lens of peace. This shifts my perspective...Through my camera lens, I see the world through the lens of peace and it is a beautiful place!”*

Artist and photographer Jo-Anne Miller, CSJP says, *“I come to a place of peace and share peace with others when I can create or photograph something that is pleasing to me.”*

The gift of peace—that dynamic work of art not yet fully realized—manifests itself as both a noun and a verb; something to be experienced but also practiced. The option we have to seek and express it, to practice it more earnestly, is always available. In this issue of *Living Peace* we invite you to join us and others throughout the world to help complete the work of art, to engage in the *Art of Peace* toward the full realization, beauty and splendor of God's gift of peace.

## Looking for Peace? Find Art.

by Jan Linley

**A friend of mine recently told me** that he had reached an age where he no longer wants drama in his life. What he wants, he said, is peace, and in order to sustain that peace he chooses to surround himself with beauty and art. I think he's on to something. Beauty and art have been soothing our souls since we came into being.

Art is evocative, speaking to us at a visceral level where our souls live, in a secret language that is hard to translate into words. Because it is subjective what soothes or delights one may agitate another. Fortunately, artistic expression is as unique and varied as individual tastes, so there truly is art to quell every soul.

For our Art of Peace issue we were interested in how art—in its many forms—can be an instrument of peace and how practicing peace is an art itself. We tried to capture this in a number of ways, which was a bit like catching the sun's rays in a butterfly net. We hope we have managed to spread some of the light onto these pages. We found the art of peace in art, photography and poetry from a number of sources, and in looking at life and death and the space in between.

In her article about music-thanatology, Jane Franz explains how harp music becomes medicine for the spirit of the dying. In a conversation with Alexandra Kovats, CSJP, Lisa Dennison learns that Alexandra's life itself is a conscious work of art. Likewise Sisters Janet Richardson and Rosalie McQuaide, in *History and Roots*, write of the “magnificent tapestry” that was the life of Margaret Anna Cusack, the founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. In a slice of art history, Associate Terrence Moran reflects on Rublev's Icon of the Trinity. Susan Dewitt, CSJP has written a playful article that inspires creativity. A handful of the Congregation's long-time meditators share their thoughts on the power of being still. Beth Taylor, CSJP praises liturgy as art and Rosemary Reilly, CSJP reflects on finding peace and community through needlework.

What we know is that our lives are abundant with beauty and that we are born with a divine desire to create, which drives us to foster positive change in ourselves. Each one of us is a work of art in progress. If we can learn to look at ourselves with the appreciative eyes with which we look at art, we will begin to live peace.

# DANCING WITH THE DIVINE: The Art of Living Seamlessly

A conversation with Alexandra Kovats, CSJP

by Lisa Dennison



The first thing you notice about Alexandra Kovats, CSJP (*left*) is her radiant smile. Her whole being seems to exude a warmth and joy that invites you to join her in a spirit of peace. And, in fact, the longer that you are in her presence, that is exactly what she does. She gently offers you the gift of peace and then invites you to discover how you can bring that peace into our wonderful, wounded world. Alexandra is one of those rare individuals who the late artist Frederick Franck would call, “an artist whose medium is life itself.” Her words of wisdom challenge us to see how we, too, can live our lives more seamlessly.

## How would you describe your life/work as art?

The term ‘artist’ frightens most people in our culture because they see it referring to an individual who either does art professionally, or someone who does arts and crafts as a hobby. I like to use the term co-creator because it connects more fully with my belief that I am called to co-create with God. Not just specific projects or events, but the whole of my life, my relationship with nature, and how I interact with people in authentic ways.

As a peacemaker, the energy of my co-creativity with God must be infused with the notion of shalom which means far more than peace. When I live shalom, I enjoy harmonious relationship and a sense of wholeness with God, others, myself and the rest of creation. Like our Universe, my co-creativity is always evolving and continually unfolding. Thus, I must make shalom a daily intentional commitment. If I do not spend time tending to inner stillness, there is no solid grounding in my actions as peacemaker. In light of this approach, I am not just called to do acts of peace, but I am called to become peace. I like to refer to this co-creative energy as Dancing with the Divine.

## Many of us find it difficult to imagine a seamless way of being. How can we walk this path?

I hold the image that each of us is a blessing seed, from the beginning of our existence. I am called to tend and nurture my blessing seed so it can grow. I am also called to support others in their own growth to bring their blessing seed to

flower and fruition. This idea of cosmic creativity teaches that we all participate in God’s creative energy and that each of us has a part to play. For those who are committed to the path of being a co-creator with God, I say to you, “Trust your own blessing seed—get to know it, tend it and nourish it. It is important to accept the whole of who you are—both your gifts and limitations. When you do that you will live in greater peace. Also, when you are gentler with yourself, you bring that into your relationships with others.”

## What are some ways to honor my blessing seed?

Living prayerfully invites us to explore many ways of connecting with the Divine to nourish that sacred relationship. My prayer changes with the seasons of the year and the seasons of my life. Currently, I spend about 20 minutes daily in centering prayer and ask for alignment, blessing and healing. Much of the rest of my day is spent praying for people before I meet with them or sending a blessing to someone who comes to my mind. I also use scripture readings and reflections with my community. An attitude of playfulness is also essential, for without it growth cannot happen. It is important to point out that my prayer life is not over there while the rest of my life is over here. All the teaching, companioning (as a spiritual director), and ‘pray’-shops that I facilitate are grounded in a realization that they flow naturally from, and into, my prayer life.

## How do you honor yourself and not feel overwhelmed by the many demands of life?

I imagine God and me in a graceful dance. Dance invites a graceful, intentional movement with a sense of mutuality without resistance. However, we must be careful not to live in an oppressive or unjust way towards ourselves and others. There are times that we must establish boundaries, say ‘no’ to honor balance in our lives, and speak our truth. I have a blessed existence because my ministry and my life flow together. I strive to live as described in the poem, “I believe in all that has never yet been spoken” by Rainer Maria Rilke. *“May what I do flow from me like a river, no forcing and no holding back, the way it is with children. Then in these swelling and ebbing currents, these deepening tides moving out, returning, I will sing to you as no one ever has.”*

**Lisa Dennison** is the Training Coordinator for Cabrini Ministry Training (a pastoral care formation program for the laity in Seattle) and a Director in the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL), a nine month retreat in the Ignatian tradition.

# Reflection

by Pat Conte

The sky was a fury of colors  
 as the sun, hidden by the clouds,  
 pushed through its rays  
 in a frenzy of unruly fire,  
 giving a feeling that an earth was being  
 created and hurled from the sun  
 on its way through eternity,  
 cooling its furious glow ever so gently  
 while stretching through the sky,  
 leaving untamed fields of red,  
 orange, green, rose, taupe,  
 and colors which cannot be named.

It was easy to stand back  
 and be consumed with  
 feelings of pleasure,  
 and then to think that, if only the world  
 could see through the marvel of colors,  
 all hearts would be one.

*Poet note: Pat Conte is the Construction Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. He has worked with the Sisters for over 30 years.*

# Prayer Is

by Amalia Camacho, CSJP

Prayer is  
 the night that blankets the earth  
 with silence of sleep as God's  
 wrapped arms are around  
 all creation that  
 invites peace.

Prayer is  
 the day that breaks the night  
 into light as God's  
 gentle embrace slowly unfolds  
 to allow us to know  
 and be peace.

Prayer is  
 to allow ourselves to enter  
 into dark silence and  
 allow God into  
 the center  
 to embrace peace.

Sunset Glow by Julie Codd, CSJP





# meditation: JUST do it!

*“No one knows what the soul gains in stability of purpose and in help for daily needs, until they have tried giving ten minutes a day regularly to meditation.”*

*(Meditations for Advent and Easter by Margaret Anna Cusack, 1866)*

One of the sublime gifts of the creative process is that it puts you firmly in the now. The present is also where we experience our strongest connection to God. A regular meditation practice can make the stillness where inspiration and Spirit dwell more accessible. We wrote to Sisters Rosalie McQuaide, Kathleen Pruitt and Janet Davis Richardson and Associates Ann Wagner and Angela Zapka with questions about their meditation practices. Collectively these five women have over 220 years of practice.

## What led you to a meditation practice?

**Rosalie:** Novitiate training.

**Kathleen:** A deep desire for deeper self-awareness and thus deeper Awareness of the Mystery of God’s active presence in all things, always and everywhere.

**Janet:** Instruction in the postulancy led me to discursive meditation. I began zazen when I was teaching at Caldwell College; Sister Maura Campbell, OP chair of the religion department, was looking for a companion to go with her to a Zen sesshin/retreat. I knew nothing of Zen but I knew Maura was a rock of common sense and agreed to go with her. Father Robert Kennedy, SJ from St. Peter’s College, Jersey City was the leader. He began with a conference on Karl Rahner, SJ whose work I admired greatly, and then began instruction in zazen. I was immediately attracted to this type of meditation, feeling that it corresponded to a long-felt need of mine.

**Ann:** Spiritual search, dissatisfied with the teaching I received. I wanted something without dogma. I stopped believing in original sin in my 30’s. Then later on in life I knew Jesus came to teach us a new way of seeing, consciousness, conscience and community.

**Angela:** I was lead to meditation/silence/sitting by a deep longing to be in communion with my Beloved Creator. My experience of the out-there-God became transformed the more time I spent in silence. In our divine embrace, I came to know the Indwelling God most intimately.

## How often do you meditate?

**Rosalie:** Daily.

**Kathleen:** Regularly . . .with longer periods weekly, monthly and retreat times.

**Janet:** Daily for 25 minutes; monthly for a day of recollection; yearly for a week sesshin/retreat.



Charcoal by Angela Zapka, CSJP-A

**Ann:** Forty minutes every day in the early morning, 5:00 a.m. I lead weekend and week-long silent contemplative retreats.

**Angela:** I meditate every day for some period of time. One of the gifts of being faithful to the discipline is that I can now come to silent stillness quite quickly and deeply in the most unlikely of places and situations. Of course being human means that I can go through long periods of struggle with a mind that will not settle no matter how earnest my intentions. When I am faithful to the practice, I find that in time, I am blessed with a quiet mind once more.

## Have you noticed, since you began your practice, a significant difference in the art of peace in your daily life?

**Kathleen:** Definitely. I find that meditation and the practice of interior silence lead to self-awareness. As things arise in the daily routine of living life ‘on the fast track,’ that even in the midst of chaos, confusion, or disagreement, the use of breath as a way to center in the moment is habitual and tends to lend a different perspective to the way in which I am able to respond to myself, others and to the situations at hand. I know an inner peace that usually prevails in difficulties as well as in daily life.

**Rosalie and Janet:** Yes.

**Ann:** Not the first five years; however, somehow I knew there was truth in this practice for me, so I persevered. It takes time to quiet the mind.

**Angela:** My body remembers the stillness, and it is always there for me to access. Sometimes there doesn't even need to be a conscious intention to access the stillness, it just naturally informs a word or action. It is at these times that I realize that the God Within has been made manifest in that moment.

### Do you think a meditation practice enhances one's creative life? If so, how?

**Rosalie:** In my experience, practice of zazen (sitting meditation) is "paying attention." It is being awake, aware of "just this." This practice concentrates my energy for the moment-by-moment activity of life and strengthens mind and heart in creative living.

**Kathleen:** I like to think of myself as an amateur poet, and I do believe that meditation opens one to the creative impulses that lie within.

**Janet:** Yes. I can speak only for zazen. You can gain an ability to check the usual scattered state of mind and so create spiritual balance and inner peace. You can gain peace of mind and inner freedom. You can learn to control your feelings instead of the other way around. You can gain an increased ability to concentrate so crucial in any activity. Increased self-control and inner freedom make it easier to be of service to others. You can grow in intuitive knowing. All this fosters the creative life.

**Ann:** Tremendously. It deals with ego (edging God out). You are freer of personal clutter, like past hurts; Eckhart Tolle calls this the pain body. You are allowing space to form for true creativity to come through, not from the head but the heart. I love the beautiful line from the poem, "The Christ's Breath" by Sufi Master Hafiz, "I am a hole in a flute that the Christ's breath moves through, listen to this music."

**Angela:** I believe every creative act is the free flow of the Divine Creator through the pen, the brush, clay... every medium. My painting practice begins with meditation and setting an intention. I am out of my head and the Creator and I are one. Every one of my paintings, charcoals and sculptures are a product of this collaboration as long as I stay out of my head and set up the conditions to be "Inspired."



Cherry Blossoms at Branch Brook Park in Newark, NJ  
by Susan Whitsell, CSJP

### Do you have a suggestion or favorite resource you would recommend for those new to meditation?

**Kathleen:** I believe that practice is the best 'teacher' of a meditative life. It is good to find a guide who is able to give assurance, guidance and suggestions but in the end one learns to meditate by meditating.

**Rosalie:** Silence and Eucharist are two favorite resources of mine.

### Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Kathleen:** Only to encourage everyone to make meditation a regular part of every day, so that prayer of the heart permeates every action, encounter, aspect of daily life.

**Angela:** I like to think of it this way: prayer is us talking to God; meditation is being present to the experience of the Divine Stillness.

**Janet:** "Just do it!" It is a great grace for me.

## Recommended Reading

from Janet Davis Richardson, CSJP and Ann Wagner CSJP-A

*Everyday Zen: Love & Work* by Charlotte Joko Beck

*Awakening* by Anthony DeMello

Any of Thich Nhat Hanh's books

*Zen Gifts to Christians* by Robert Kennedy, SJ, Sensei

*Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit: The Place of Zen in Christian Life* by Robert Kennedy, SJ, Sensei

*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki

*Stillness Speaks* by Eckhart Tolle

*The Cloud of Unknowing* by unknown 14th century author



# The A

Liturgy takes many forms and expressions. Down through the ages, the community of believers has come together to remember, to celebrate and to continue the saving action of God in our midst through personal and communal prayer, with song and dance, stillness and quietness of body-mind-spirit.

God is the great liturgist: creative, life-giving, engaging all in the story of life and saving graciousness. Creation is God's first "word" ... Spirit moving over the void, calling forth light and darkness, sea and sky, stars above and earth below; Life-giving Spirit birthing fishes and fowl, birds and beast, woman and man.

Nature's liturgical year makes visible and present to us the amazing diversity and interconnectedness of everything! Seasoned by spring, summer, autumn, winter, we are drawn into the mystery of the cycles of growth, fruitfulness, harvest and death. The dawning of each day invites us to open our eyes and ears to the wonders of God's presence made visible if we but pay attention.

The church's Liturgical Year engages us in seasons of grace: Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent and Easter. Day by day, week by week, hearing again and hopefully more deeply, the ministry of Jesus, we are tutored in our call to discipleship as the people of God.

Responding to the movement of the Spirit, we celebrate the holiness of each day, marking the hours with songs of praise and prayers of petition, readings that inspire and silence that centers the heart's attention on God-with-us.

Set within the history of salvation, the Eucharistic liturgy is the primary prayer of the church, the source and summit of our life as the Body of Christ. Every liturgical celebration is the work of Christ and his mystical body, calling us to active, conscious and full participation. Sunday, on which the resurrection is especially commemorated, is at the heart of the church's liturgical life.

When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist we are invited into the saving action of Christ as community. The very action of gathering—a process of "me" becoming "we"—hopefully deepens our awareness that as members of the Body of Christ we are a sign and instrument of the unity of the whole human race.

Where we gather—the church—is meant to foster full, conscious, and active participation of the assembly. Environment serves to awaken all our senses—sight, sound, touch and smell—to the holiness of God present among us.



# Art of Liturgy

by Beth Taylor, CSJP

There is an art to liturgy that engages us body, mind and spirit. In coming together, we are drawn into the ongoing action of God's saving grace, tutored in the ways of discipleship, nourished with the Bread of Life and sent forth to share the good news.

## The Art of Being Present

Liturgy calls forth in us an intentionality of hospitality—making eye contact with those around us, making room in our pew for others, preparing ourselves fully, consciously and actively to participate in the sacred. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes:

*"You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone...in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*  
Eph 2: 19-20, 22

Paul's words remind us that our coming together is the work of the Spirit who draws us beyond the artificial boundaries and barriers of us and them, reminding us that God's saving action is long lasting and ever present, and that Christ, risen and present, is our source of unity, our way to peace.

Paul also reminds us that our coming together calls us to a deeper hospitality, that of making a "dwelling place of God in the spirit." This place is silence. The journey to silence is an art, a spiritual practice of centering. The Practice of Presence begins with silence and the intentional slowing of our breath. Focusing then on taking three, slow breaths, we move slowly and gently to a place of inner peace. Continuing to breathe slowly and deeply, we rest in the silence with open hearts.

## The Art of Listening

The Liturgy of the Word is a dialogue with God reminding us of God's fidelity and everlasting love, a school of discipleship and community. There's an art to listening that goes beyond hearing with our ears. Paying attention to what resonates—be it a word, phrase, image or story—often leads to a deeper, richer engagement with Spirit. And like the disciples who met Jesus on the way to Emmaus who listened and heard again the good news of God's saving love, we are sent to share the good news with others.

## The Art of Going Forth

Called together as the People of God, nourished by words of everlasting life, we are blessed and sent forth to live what we have celebrated. We are missioned to love one another, welcome the stranger, care for those in need, forgive seventy times seven, be unafraid, count our blessings, share our joys, have faith and trust in God. Go in the peace of Christ. Be the peace of Christ.



### LEFT

top: Opening procession, Western Region Jubilee Mass, 2010

middle: Lectionary in chapel at St. Mary-on-the-Lake, Bellevue, Washington by Patti Moore

bottom: Sunrise at Stella Maris Retreat Center by Regina O'Connell, CSJP

### RIGHT

top: Koi at Stella Maris Retreat Center by Elizabeth Ann Galvin, CSJP

bottom: Frosty Morning by Joan Steans, CSJP

# Blueprints for Peace

by Terrence J. Moran, CSJP-A



TOP:  
Rublev's Icon of the Trinity

BOTTOM:  
© Come to the Table, by Lewis Williams,  
Courtesy of Trinity Stores, [www.trinitystores.com](http://www.trinitystores.com), 800.699.4482

**Economic instability...** discontent about the comfort of the 1% and the misery of the 99%... sporadic and unexpected outbreaks of violence... widespread distrust in civic and religious institutions. Sound like today's headlines? It's actually a description of 15th century Russia. A remarkable Russian monk and artist, Andrei Rublev, struggled to come up with an image of God that would breathe peace to his violent culture. In an amazing burst of contemplative depth and genius, this famous icon is the image that Rublev gave as a blueprint for peace to his chaotic world... and to ours.

Rublev takes his inspiration from the story in Genesis 18 where Abraham and Sarah offer hospitality to three mysterious strangers and discover that they have entertained angels unaware. Rublev goes farther and says that these three hungry strangers in the Icon of the Trinity are a manifestation of the Holy Three, of the Triune God. He makes a remarkable contention—that the Divine is manifested not in coercive power and the ability to control but rather in need, in vulnerability, in hunger and thirst, in the stranger.

The figure on the left is the Father. The Father is the invisible and ineffable source of divinity; no one has even seen the Father so this figure is painted in muted earth tones that almost blend into the background of the image. The Father looks with a gaze of incredible tenderness and mutuality toward the central figure—the Word. This figure is dressed in red and blue—blue the color of the sky, of the heavens, of divinity; red, the color of earth, of clay, of blood, of humanity. This figure returns the gaze of the Father, the gaze of tender mutuality. The fingers of the Word are extended in a gesture of blessing. How richly blessed is the created universe through the reality of an Incarnate, flesh-taking God, in whom heaven and earth are wed. The third figure is the Spirit. The Spirit is depicted in green—the color of springtime, of growth, of vitality. The Spirit is the greening energy of God. The Spirit, while deeply present to the companions at the table, directs a gaze outward and downward. In the Spirit's gaze, the divine energy searches the cosmos for people and places that are in need of greening power, of the flourishing of life where it is threatened or diminished.

There is no coercive violence or domineering power in the Trinity. God is mutuality, conversation, interdependence. In our childhood catechism, we were told that humans were in the image and likeness of God because we shared with God the powers of intellect and will. Thus to discover our resemblance to the divine, we were to look inward, to the powers of our soul. Rublev shows that we image God in our capacity for relationship. Each of the persons of the Trinity is in complete and full openness to the others and to creation. The more we are in conscious relationships of mutual interdependence with all creation, the more the image of God shines resplendent in us.

The outward energy of God is the greening power of the Spirit. God is experienced in the flourishing of life. When we amplify life's hum we are engaged in a most profoundly spiritual action.

The subject of the divine conversation is the cup at the center of the table. God's incessant conversation, God's eternal concern is nourishment, giving food to the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, the abundant flourishing of life; a creation which is at heart Eucharistic; where every being says to every other being—my body, my blood, take and eat. Recall some of the most famous words of Mother Francis Clare Cusack, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace: "They accused me of being involved in politics. God help me, the only politics I cared about were feeding the hungry." Feeding the hungry—the politics of the Trinity.

continued on page 15



# Capturing the Wild Yeast: poetry starters

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

As writers we long to capture a vivid insight, a memorable image, a strong feeling in some lines of poetry (or prose), but all too often as we sit at our keyboards the words that come are sterilized, overused, trite. In writing, as in any art, overthinking is like sterilizing the water and flour before trying to capture wild yeast: what comes out is dead paste, when we hoped for living bread. Writing workshops and groups often use prose/poetry starters to distract the busy mind, to encourage the wild yeast that bubbles below the surface of our thinking to grow.

Try these starters, for fun please, on your own or in a group. The group starters are great for prayer groups, book groups, classes, groups of friends. And as to whether the result is prose or poetry: it's whatever you'd like to call it!



## Sensing

Start with some abstract words that point to important concepts: Peace, Justice, Freedom, Power, Violence, Joy, for example. Choose one of these words (or in a group, give a different abstract word to each person) and allow five concrete sensory images that this word invokes to rise into your heart. What does this word **look** like (a cedar? a fish?) What does it **taste** like (a lollipop? lake water?) What does it **smell** like? What does it **sound** like? If you touch it, what does it **feel** like?

Write down the images, making them as concrete and specific as possible. They may surprise you and take your reflection on familiar concepts to deeper and stranger places.

## Dreamstories

Dreams are wild yeast; all our histories and dramas and worries transform themselves through our dreams into powerful metaphors and stories bound only by their own internal logic. Write down a dream just as you remember it, with all its leaps and twists and oddities – and then see where that might take you. But don't interpret the dream, even if your mind is busy doing that: just let it speak for itself.

## Haiku

It's impossible to capture the many layers of a Japanese haiku in English, but this poetry form continues to be popular for its demanding simplicity. The rules: write a poem of no more than 17 syllables (traditionally five in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third). Haiku usually includes a reference to the season and links two concrete images. Here's an example:

*Whitecaps on the bay;  
A broken signboard banging  
In the April wind.*  
Richard Wright



TOP:  
Pears by Julie Codd, CSJP

BOTTOM:  
Tulips by Jo-Anne Miller, CSJP

continued on bottom of page 12

# Finding Peace a Stitch at a Time

by Rosemary Reilly, CSJP

**You may well be thinking**, “What on earth has needlework to do with peace?” Well this is one person’s experience of finding and understanding a way of contemplating peace while using a needle!

My interest in and enjoyment of needlework is mainly in two areas, cross stitch and patchwork/quilting. When following a chart to sew a design on to blank canvas I can relax and thoughts constantly come to me of how the threads, stitches and design, blend and combine in a way that mirrors life. There are strong colours and delicate ones, more stitches of one colour than another, yet as the picture grows they all blend to form something beautiful, without any particular one dominating. Each little stitch and colour is part of something much bigger. If only governments and world leaders could meet in a way that respects each contribution to the whole without wishing to dominate, surely the road to peace could be less rocky and dangerous! The time spent in cross stitching is usually solitary, which gives time for quiet reflection and this in turn is calming, bringing peace within.

Quilting/patchwork is often more of a social affair. There are many groups who gather to learn, to share and enjoy the company of other quilters and to appreciate the contribution of each person. Those who attended the group to which I belonged were as varied and unique as the patterns and quilts produced. Some opted for packs of ready cut designs, some started from scratch choosing the materials and design, and some used up odd bits and pieces and put them together. There was much sharing



Quilt by Mary Linley Baswell

in the group – sometimes it was worries or difficulties in daily life, sometimes it was bits of material or equipment which one person had and another person needed. In all of it, even in exhibitions of the finished quilts, there wasn’t competition; rather there was pride in personal achievement and appreciation of what others had also produced. For me, the time I spent with my quilting group was a time of sharing, appreciation of the creativity of others in the group, an exchange of ideas and experiences, all of which gave me a sense of fulfilment and inner peace.

I find my spirituality of peace through using my hands and heart in the creative things that I enjoy. I have shared two of these things, though there are more.

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Poetry Starters, continued from page 11

## Fives

Give yourself no more than ten minutes to use all of the five words in one of the sets below in a poem or paragraph. (In groups, it’s great fun to ask each participant to write down words in five different categories—a color, an animal, weather, food, a country, for example—and then to distribute the results so each has a mixture of words from different participants.)

- salmon, newsprint, jump, silk, forge
- Calcutta, lampshade, slither, teal, hobby
- tailor, orange, alphabet, cellar, Orion
- granite, sweater, leopard, sleep, feather
- bay, startle, sandwich, rose, chair

## Living memory

Think of a time you remember from your childhood—not necessarily an important time, just an everyday memory—and write down every detail of that memory. Where were you standing? What were you wearing? What furniture was in the room? Wallpaper? Floor covering? What can you smell?

Who else is present? What words are said? These details may lead you into a story—write it down as story or poem.

## Who/What/Where/When/Why

This is a great exercise for a group. Give each person five very small pieces of paper— in different colors if possible. On the first, describe (briefly) a character (a 45 year-old Javanese opera singer, for example); on the next, an action (killed a mountain lion); on the third, a location (in the mall); on the fourth a time (14 years ago in April); and on the last a motive (for revenge). Mix up the responses within each category and give each participant a who/ what/ where/ when/ why. Each has 15 minutes to construct a story using all five elements. Hilarity follows!

These are all great starters. Sometimes the results will just be fun, sometimes they’ll be downright silly, but sometimes —ah, that sometimes—the wild yeast will creep in and create wonderful surprises and living poetry.



# Resting into a Place Where Peace and Beauty Abide

by Jane Franz

**One profound rediscovery** of our time is that death is a part of life, and sometimes we have the opportunity to make choices about our dying. Death can be a sacred time for each of us to rest into a place where peace and beauty abide. This spirituality of peace is often augmented by the presence of a music-thanatologist.

Music-thanatology is a professional field within the sub-specialty of palliative care. It is a therapeutic modality that unites music, medicine and spirituality in end of life care. The music-thanatologist uses harp and voice to lovingly serve the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the dying and their loved ones with music.

Much of the music is Gregorian chant—Hymns, Antiphons and Kyrie's that have been used for centuries. This music can help ease physical symptoms such as pain, restlessness, agitation, sleeplessness and labored breathing. It creates an atmosphere of serenity and comfort that can be profoundly soothing for all present. Anxiety, fear, sadness and anger can be relieved as listeners rest into a musical presence of beauty, intimacy and compassion. Music-thanatology, like deep prayer or meditation, opens a sacred space for peace.

It is not entertainment or distraction therapy. Instead, it allows the patient to enter into the unbinding and letting go process in his or her own very personal way and affords families a chance to be with their loved one in a very intimate yet safe atmosphere. Here words are not necessary, yet words that are spoken can come from a deep place aided by the music.<sup>1</sup>

**The following is from actual music-thanatology vigils.**<sup>2</sup> Jim is in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit. He has severe heart disease and has suffered several major heart attacks. He will not recover and can hardly move or breathe without highly saturated levels of oxygen. With the support of his family and his faith, he has made the decision to discontinue the medications that keep his blood pressure up, forcing his heart to function. His wife says: "He's had enough. He's ready to go home to God." Very soon the medications will be discontinued. Jim is expected to die shortly thereafter.

Knowing this, it is surprising to find a lively, talkative family surrounding a middle-aged man, eyes open, conscious and fairly alert. His shallow breathing is very labored, yet with great effort he makes short verbal responses to his family and chooses to use some of his precious breath to say that he would like to hear the harp music.



Following Jim's respirations, the music ebbs and flows with his breathing, offering connection and support. The music finds a place alongside the machine sounds and softly resonates through the room. The family calms as several go to the bedside, speaking quietly to Jim whose eyes gradually close. Soon it is still except for the ever-present machine sounds and the beauty of the music. Shortly, the family begins to stir. As they begin to talk and make plans for a meal the music drifts into silence. I say my goodbyes and leave.

Later that day the ICU nurse calls to request another music-thanatology vigil. I arrive to a very different scene. Jim is no longer conscious. The oxygen mask and intravenous tubes have been removed. The monitors are turned off. Jim takes a few short, very shallow breaths each minute. Some family members have gone home to rest. Those that remain are quiet. They welcome the music again saying that they need something to hold them up for the final leg of this journey with their beloved Jim.

There are tears as Jim's wife and daughters go to his bedside and whisper their goodbyes. As Jim releases his hold on this life they surround the bed. Taking one another's hands they say a prayer, and Jim's wish to die a calm and peaceful death is fulfilled; his faith that God

continued on page 15

## A Celtic Blessing

by Noreen Twomey, CSJP

May joy and peace surround you,  
 May contentment latch your door;  
 May happiness be with you daily  
 And bless you evermore.

May your house be filled with laughter  
 And keep out winter's cold;  
 May you experience all the peace  
 That your heart and soul can hold.

May the brightness of the sun  
 Shine on your path each day;  
 May the words of a poem and the lilt of a song  
 Lighten your heart along the way.

May brooks and trees and singing hills  
 Join in the chorus, too;  
 May every gentle wind that blows  
 Bring peace of mind to you.

May you taste the sweetest pleasures  
 That life's fortunes have bestowed;  
 May all your friends remember  
 The favors you are owed!

May your pockets with coins be heavy  
 And your heart be always light;  
 May goodness e're pursue you  
 And shelter you each night.

May God be your protector  
 And keep you from all ill;  
 May love be the balm to soothe life's hurts  
 As God's plan you fulfill.



Reaching toward the Light by Susan Francois, CSJP



Beach Path by Regina O'Connell, CSJP

## The Cook Vanishes

by Susan Dewitt, CSJP

*Simone de Beauvoir disapproved of woman's work. It must always be done again, never accomplished, unlike an essay or a painting.*

A woman cooks who at other times  
 has read theology and studied  
 disorders of the mind.

She is completely absorbed.  
 She chops mushrooms  
 with a newly sharpened knife.

No thought lurks among  
 the stems of green onions  
 the curled mushroom caps.

No one holds the knife, no one  
 among the yellow peppers, the cilantro leaves,  
 the tight wrapped onion bulbs.

With nowhere to be but here  
 the cook vanishes  
 among the mushrooms.



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Blueprints for Peace, continued from page 10

The second icon by iconographer Lewis Williams is inspired by Rublev's and is called *Come to the Table*. In the seats of the Trinity, Williams places three contemporary figures who laid down their lives for peace. The figure to the left is Margaret Hassan, a 59-year-old Catholic Dubliner who married an Iraqi Muslim and moved to Iraq. For 30 years, she served in war-torn Iraq. She was kidnapped in 2004 and her body never recovered. In the center is Tom Fox, a 54-year-old, ex-Marine musician, father of two who served three missions in Iraq with the Christian Peacemaker Teams. Months of kidnapping ended with Tom's murder on March 9, 2006. The figure to the right is 65-year-old Italian Consolata Sister Leonella Sgorbati who spent 36 years loving the poor in Kenya and Somalia. Joyful and humorous, she too was beloved by her co-workers and the people of her ministry. Leaving her hospital employment in Mogadishu on Sept. 17, 2006, she and her Muslim bodyguard, a father of four, were ambushed and shot to death. Dying on the curb, she whispered, "I forgive, I forgive!"

These two works of art compel us to contemplation. Spend some quiet moments in reflection before them. How do they speak peace to you? How do they call you to be peace? How will you take your place at the table?

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Resting into a Place, continued from page 13

will guide him reflected in the glowing, tear-stained faces of those who love him. All the while the music weaves a comforting blanket of sound, offering the simple melody of an ancient chant. The unsung text speaks of the welcome of angels and of rest.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you..." (John 14:27) Such words echo within and are at the heart of our deepest longing, especially as we confront death. The charism of peace through justice that defines the essence of the ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace is alive and well in the work of music-thanatology where it is currently practiced at Sacred Heart Medical Centers and Hospices in Eugene, Springfield, Cottage Grove and Florence, Oregon.

- 1 Music-Thanatology Association International (MTAI), [www.mtai.org](http://www.mtai.org). Music-thanatology vigil's are offered free of charge to patients and their families. To find out about becoming a music-thanatologist go to: [www.lanecollege.edu/ce/careertraining/musicthanatology](http://www.lanecollege.edu/ce/careertraining/musicthanatology)
- 2 Jane Franz, Vigil narrative archives. Names and details have been changed to ensure confidentiality

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we invite you to  
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Contact Sister Jo-Anne Miller, CSJP, Vocations Director  
[jmiller@csjp-olp.org](mailto:jmiller@csjp-olp.org)

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Women or men who share our concerns and charism  
Contact Sister Sheila Lemieux, CSJP, Formation Director  
[slemieux@csjp-olp.org](mailto:slemieux@csjp-olp.org)

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**request prayer support**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

—Philippians 4:6

Our Sisters and Associates pray daily for friends, supporters, all who ask our prayers and those linked with us through the Pious Union of Prayer. The original purpose of this Union was to form a network of prayer for peace in homes and in families. You may write your request on the inside flap of the return envelope insert.

**feedback**

We invite our readers to send us feedback. You may email us at [livingpeace@csjp.org](mailto:livingpeace@csjp.org) or write to us c/o Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Attention: Jan Linley 399 Hudson Terrace, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

learn more about us at  
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A small sampling of the published works of Margaret Anna Cusack

# History and Roots

by Janet Davis Richardson, CSJP and Rosalie McQuaide, CSJP

**Margaret Anna Cusack**, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, embroidered her life and work into a magnificent tapestry rich in patterns and design, shaped by a gold thread that was her love of God and God's poor. A quote from the New Testament writer James, spoken by a preacher at her cousin's home, attracted her youthful heart: "Pure, unspoiled religion, in the eyes of our Abba God, is this: coming to the aid of widows and orphans when they are in need, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by this world." (James 1: 27) Her vision of working for the poor would be fulfilled in her intention to marry a student for the Anglican priesthood. His untimely death darkened her vision. Then her father, her mentor since childhood in care for the poor and love of literature, died. Deeply affected she transcended these painful losses allowing them to transform her design for her life. She entered an Anglican religious community.

The beauty of the tapestry glowed radiant and complete. Yet a new design invited her. Roman Catholicism outlined for her a pattern in which she felt she could more truly continue that strong thread in her life. "---it did matter to me a great deal in view of our common humanity and in view of my love for the poor, that I should do all I could for those whom He had

loved so well, and from special circumstances I had the power to do a great deal." (Nun of Kenmare, page 76)

Some of these circumstances giving her "the power to do a great deal" were her membership in a prominent Anglo-Irish doctor's family, her exceptional education for a girl in her time and place, her literary talent and her persona which attracted others to join in her pursuits. Her famine fund flourished and her writing and publishing triumphed. She published over 90 books, several articles and pamphlets, poetry and music, as well as a novel, short stories and plays in her lifetime.

As her plans for a training school in Knock disappointed, the colors in her life's tapestry faded. They brightened again as women gathered with her to found the St. Joseph's Sisters of Peace. The tapestry reflected the challenges of a male clergy. The design lumbered haltingly as Archbishop Corrigan threatened the life of the Congregation, and expanded in broad strokes as the Sisters of Peace flourished in England, New Jersey and Washington. Her gold thread never dulled even as she was forced to choose to leave the Sisters so that their work might prosper.

Read more about Margaret Anna Cusack on our website at [www.csjp.org](http://www.csjp.org).