



Pentecost II 2005

Views from

the hermitage

Creating an environment of attentiveness to God

What is Peace?

Each year as we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 6, we cannot escape the juxtaposition of that feast day with the anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. Recent terrorist activities here and elsewhere in the world pale compared to that act of violence which incinerated 125,000 inhabitants and much of the city. Even the tsunami last Christmas or the deadly hurricane season this year killed fewer than that one small bomb. The subsequent arms race and nuclear age initiated a worldwide call for disarmament and a deeper look at peace.

In order to foster our own “deeper look,” we are again holding a fast day at the Hermitage in conjunction with the UN Day of International Peace on September 21. We invite you to join us as we continue to explore the issues surrounding peace. But, even more, to find and exercise peace within yourself so that you can live in peace. It is a well accepted and wise maxim that world peace begins with one’s own peace.

We are now firmly entrenched in a world of “haves” and “have-nots” based not only on economic power but on military strength. American military supremacy has created a culture of fear; not only in other places where nations fear our seemingly ungovernable aggression, but in our own hearts. We fear for our security and are motivated by the possibility that our way of life may be tottering on the brink of destruction. Fear motivates our decisions about our daily lives rather than the deep truths that lie in us and belie this fear.

Peace lies in the deeper places within us. Living through the tough times with conviction, passion and humility puts us in touch with the truth expressed in an old Celtic prayer.

This day and this night, may I know, O God

The deep peace of the running wave

The deep peace of the flowing air

The deep peace of the quiet earth

The deep peace of the shining stars

The deep peace of the Son of Peace.

If peace lies within us, how did it get there and how do we access it? Both questions have the same answers. Peace comes first from an attitude of listening that we call prayer. Prayer connects us not only with God but with all that God enfolds; the universe of souls and created matter. Our entering into connectedness sets up in us a resonance with the rest of the universe, all humming along on the same frequency. This is not the thank-you-for-the-food prayer that we rush through. This prayer is the one that takes time to get in tune. This is peace; being at-one with God and other humans and with the universe.

Second, peace comes from faith. Faith in God’s providence—total dependence—sets us at ease in the midst of any situation. Because I believe God is in control, I do not have to try to control. Because I believe God is caring, I do not bear the care-full burden alone. Because I believe God knows what I need better than I do, I do not have to fret about not having what I need. Faith allows me to ease all of the controlling, worrying lines I think I am holding and release them to God for ultimate disposition.

Peace ultimately comes to us in Jesus. He made a direct gift of peace to the disciples (see *The Word Alone* on the back page). After the resurrection, Jesus first appeared to his disciples in the upper room with the words, “Peace be with you” (John 20:21). Paul writes about this peace that “surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Constantly, he blesses his readers with “peace.” Peace comes as a result of contact with the risen Christ.

This returns us to the original point, peace comes from, during, and through prayer, because prayer is the catalytic action in which we come to God and God in Jesus Christ comes to us.

During this season when we at the Hermitage give ourselves to focus on peace, we pray that you, too, will be filled with all the fullness of God and that in God’s depth, you will know the peace of Christ. “Not an easy peace, not an insignificant peace, not a half-hearted peace, but the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you now.” Share it with those around you.

-Naomi R. Wenger

Web Site Debut

The Hermitage Community has launched a presence on the world-wide web! The site includes a calendar of events, a pictorial tour, information about retreats, directions for travel and a general sense of our mission. Visit us online at www.hermitagecommunity.org.

We hope to have the next issue of *Views from the Hermitage* available on-line. If you would like to receive notice of an electronic posting of the newsletter rather than receiving it in the mail, send us an e-mail with the word "subscription" in the subject line. We will remove you from our mailing list for the newsletter and add you to an electronic list. You will receive an e-mail notice containing a hyperlink to the newsletter page on the web-site. In order for this to work for you, you need both an e-mail address and access to the web.

Phoenix Gallery

We are exhibiting sculptures by Chicago artist Susan Clinard during the months of September and October. The exhibit, *Pause, Peace*, draws us into those places where peace resides or asks us to identify what disrupts our peace. Made of found wood and clay, Susan's work evokes wonder and invites both playful and profound responses.

The gallery is open weekdays and Saturdays from 9–5 for retreat guests and by appointment for others. Please call before you come so we can expect your visit, 269-244-8696.

Can You Help?

We have had a new well drilled that will provide sufficient water for our heating and cooling system. We are thankful for the thirty-years of service we had from the old pump and well. We now have a water delivery system that meets current and projected needs. The total cost of the project is \$5,600. Can you help us pay for the well?

We also have ongoing needs that can be addressed by volunteer time. Do you have some time you are willing to give to The Hermitage in the areas of hospitality, maintenance or grounds keeping? Call to find out what you might do to help, 269-244-8696.

Thank You

- for the provision of a Toyota pick-up to replace the old rusty and no-longer-faithful Ford
- to those who have returned library materials
- to the many wood-cutters and -splitters who have built a long woodpile and helped to clear the woods

Advent Quiet Days Planned

Our theme for Advent Quiet Days will be "Bearing the Seed for Sowing." Each day will begin with morning prayer at 9:00 followed by input from retreat directors Naomi and David Wenger and time for solitude and silent reflection. Plan to come if you would like to take a day of personal preparation in the company of others during the Advent season. Quiet days will be held at The Hermitage on Thursday, December 1, Wednesday, December 7, and Tuesday, December 13. A donation of \$45 is requested of all participants. Call 269-244-8696 or email thehermitage@juno.com to reserve your place.

How's Your Spiritual Literacy?

Have you ever read books you wish you could discuss with friends? We are beginning a monthly book discussion group with a bent toward reading the spiritual classics. We will meet the last Monday of each month at 7:00 beginning January 30, 2006. For the January meeting read the poetry of John of the Cross and *The Impact of God* by Iain Matthew. Contact Naomi at 269-244-8696 or thehermitage@juno.com to express your interest or if you have questions.

The Hermitage Calendar

Sep 21	Observation of the International Day of Peace
Oct 9	Taizé Evensong, 7:00
Nov 13	Taizé Evensong, 7:00
Dec 1	Advent Quiet Day, 9–2:30
Dec 7	Advent Quiet Day, 9–2:30
Dec 11	Taizé Evensong, 7:00
Dec 13	Advent Quiet Day, 9–2:30
Jan 8	Taizé Evensong, 7:00
Jan 30	Spiritual Classics: Book Discussion, 7:00
Feb 12	Taizé Evensong, 7:00

Transfiguration Reflections

Our Hermitage Homecoming celebration on the Feast of the Transfiguration was a blessed time again this year. We asked two participants in the Transfiguration Day retreat to share their reflections with you.

For twenty-four hours God smiled upon us with warmth, with Spirit, and with companionship. It was a blessing to reconnect with El Salvador, her struggle, her amazing Archbishop, her dedicated priests, and her dilemma with using violence to achieve revolution, peace, and justice.

It was also a blessing to reconnect with The Hermitage, a place of joy, of life, and of spirituality. For me, there was not enough time to quiet within; I was too bent upon renewing friendships and sharing stories. I love the Wenger family—each one individually and in relationship with other members of this family. So, whenever the opportunity arose, I found myself in joyous conversation or shared activity with one or more of those rascals.

And therein lies my renewal, if not transfiguration. Being buffeted about in this world of human blustering is tiring and sometimes discouraging. To relax, to share worship, meals, hikes, and stories, to feel nature's bounty, brings balance and rededication to returning and embracing that buffeting.

Thank you for maintaining and enhancing this special island of solace among the rapids of existence. As the mountain of transfiguration was a place apart from time, so The Hermitage is a place apart. And at both places we can quiet ourselves, open ourselves, and ingest the words and life of Jesus.

-Stephen Small

On August 5th and 6th, the Hermitage community celebrated the miracle of transfiguration in the lives of Jesus; his early disciples; a 20th century martyr, Archbishop Romero of San Salvador; and those 21st century followers gathered for the annual Feast of the Transfiguration. This celebration began with a viewing of the film, "Romero" and evening prayer on Friday.

After morning prayer on Saturday, Margaret Pfeil shared "A Torch of Eternity: Romero's Theology of the Transfiguration" and a spirit-filled discussion followed on the various faces of violence experienced in life and how these can be the fuel for transformation to an ever-deepening refinement of our faith; lighting the

path to which we are individually and corporately called.

Jesus did not invite his friends to the mountain so that they could witness his glorious assumption into heaven but to prepare them for the road to Jerusalem, Calvary, and beyond. This mountaintop moment was not the final pinnacle after an arduous ascent but the beginning of a descent to death. So it was with Oscar Romero, a bookish priest, who was chosen to be archbishop, a position of high and honor and privilege. Romero soon realized the cost of following the cross. In the film we witnessed his transformation from archbishop with access to the elite to a priest of the people. The violence in the lives of Jesus, his early disciples, and Romero were transformational and therein lies the Paschal Mystery (the violence of redemption) for us 21st century followers as well.

The feast of transfiguration continued with communion at an earthly table of summer delights in the picnic grove and conversations in many corners of the Hermitage and concluded with communion at the eucharistic table in the Chapel of the Transfiguration.

Leaving the Hermitage one encounters the sign which reads "return slowly". This wise counsel reminds one of the last verse of the hymn "How Good, Lord, to Be Here!".

How good, Lord, to be here!

Yet we may not remain;

But since you bid us leave the mount,

Come with us to the plain.

-Joseph A. Robinson (1858-1933)

Upon returning to the "plain", a word for a flat place but also a word describing the ordinary, may we be blessed to experience the extraordinary that is the ordinary transformed.

-Peg Deames

"I am moved by the idea that the peacemaker never judges anybody—neither his neighbor close by, nor his neighbor far away; neither her friend nor her enemy. It helps me to think of peacemakers as persons whose hearts are so anchored in God that they do not need to evaluate, criticize, or weigh the importance of others. They can see their neighbors...as fellow human beings, fellow sinners, fellow saints, men and women who need to be listened to, looked at, and cared for with the love of God and who need to be given the space to recognize that they belong to the same human family as we do."

-Henri Nouwen in The Road to Peace



the hermitage

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Join us on the web!
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www.hermitagecommunity.org

Taizé Services: Second Sundays at Seven, Chapel of the Transfiguration

The Word Alone

**“[JESUS SAID,] ‘PEACE I
LEAVE WITH YOU; MY PEACE
I GIVE TO YOU. I DO NOT
GIVE TO YOU AS THE WORLD
GIVES. DO NOT LET YOUR
HEARTS BE TROUBLED, AND
DO NOT LET THEM BE
AFRAID.’”**

JOHN 14:27

the hermitage Mission

As Jesus was revitalized for being about his Father’s business by periodic withdrawal to retreat and prayer, so The Hermitage seeks in its mission:

- *To be a prayer community, available as a place of spiritual formation where scripture, silence, nature, group experiences, and personal companioning are cultivated elements of retreat.*
- *To provide a guesthouse away from daily tasks where pastors and other pilgrims can deepen their call and relationship with God, be refreshed in their whole person and be revitalized by the presence and promise of Christ.*

(from The Hermitage Rule)

Resident Community: David & Naomi Wenger, co-directors, Nancy Joy

Board of Directors: Robert Charles, Lynne Dukes, Elaine Jarvis, Larry Terlouw (chair), David Wenger, Naomi Wenger