

Minutes

Winnipeg Regional Catholic-Mennonite, Meeting No. 35

Meeting held on Wednesday, 18 January 2012
at the St. Charles Retreat Centre

Present: Tom Bailey-Robertson, Paul Doerksen, Dora Dueck, Helmut Harder, Melanie Kampen, Victor Kliewer, Richard Lebrun, John Long, Luis Melo, Ron Penner, Donna Peters-Small, Nancy Wood and Ted Wood (guest).

Regrets: Michelle Gallant, Lynda Trenholm.

1. **Nancy Wood** welcomed the group to St. Charles Retreat Centre, and indicated that her husband, **Ted Wood**, had been invited to join the evening's dialogue.
2. Opening Prayer. "Office for Christian Unity" in the chapel, led by **Nancy** and **Ted**.
3. Welcome to the evening's dialogue by **Luis Melo**, who also thanked the Woods for their hospitality in hosting the group at the Retreat Centre and leading the opening prayer.
4. **Sharing of ecumenical experiences:**

Richard reported his continuing involvement in a Catholic-Mennonite dialogue between faculty members at St. Paul's College and faculty members at Canadian Mennonite University. There was one meeting in the first term (with the Beatitudes as the topic) and two are scheduled for the second term, with the Parable of the Merciful Father (also known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son) as the topic of the first second term meeting coming up on 13 February.

Helmut reported publication of a new book edited by Paul G. Doerksen and Karl Koop, *The Church Made Strange for the Nations: Essays in Ecclesiology and Political Theology*, to which Helmut contributed an essay, on "moving the historical wall of estrangement." He also spoke at a recent meeting of a Prairie Ecumenical group on Prospects for the Future of Ecumenism in Canada from a Mennonite point of view. The basic thesis of his talk was that everything we live together is an advancement of ecumenism.

Ron reported reading Richard Rohr's book, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, which he greatly appreciated.

John reported monthly conversations with a Baptist friend, a minister, and with an Anglican friend. With the second, he had attended talks by visiting speakers at

St. Margaret's Anglican Church. He has also just started offering a course on a physical walk through the Mass, from a biblical perspective.

Donna reported she had also engaged Richard Rohr, using some of his materials, in marrying a couple in May. She also spoke about her daughter, who is studying in Savannah, Georgia, where she is a member of an Anglican church, but has also gone to other churches (such as the Catholic cathedral) reporting back to her mother on her ecumenical experiences.

Paul reported involvement in "theology and desert" discussions. The focus of the group is "Take and read," borrowed from St. Augustine's famous experience. The group, about forty people, are reading four books this year, mostly Mennonite authors, focusing on the theme, "watch your language," looking at how various theologians do their work.

Dora indicated she will be reading Richard Rohr in the near future, and that she will take in some of the services of the upcoming week of prayer for Christ unity. She also spoke about her practice of going to Sacred Space, an Internet site maintained by the Irish Jesuits, which offers a daily prayer, short short scripture passages, with an Ignatian approach.

Victor introduced us to the *Concise Encyclopedia of Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites* by Donald B. Kraybill (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2010), available from Amazon for about \$30. He also reported that he is teaching a course at the University of Winnipeg on Mennonites in Canada. He is finding that many of the students know next to nothing about Mennonites.

Melanie told us that she is on a planning committee preparing an interfaith youth conference here in February. It will involve different faith groups: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Aboriginal spirituality, and Sikhism. In May she will be off to Pauingassi, a First Nation fly-in reserve in northern Manitoba, with other young Mennonites to work there for three and half months.

Tom reported that will be on panel on "shared core values" that will be part of the interfaith youth conference that Melanie mentioned. He continues to work as a "spiritual health specialist" (new designation of a chaplain) at the Health Science Centre. He led the spiritual gathering on Christmas morning.

Nancy reported a steady stream of people from different churches coming to their retreat centre, both as individuals and as groups. In particular she mentioned David Wiebe, who brought a small group of pastors in a program called Apex.

Luis provided a handout on his recent activities in ecumenical and interreligious ministry, and spoke briefly to some of the items:

- Presentation on Blessed John XXIII and Vatican II at Windsor Park United Church
- Joint Working Group (Vatican/WCC) in Malta, a dialogue situation, with reports on things like migration, the world of youth, spiritual ecumenism, and reception (how we receive the other and from the other).
- The 40th anniversary of Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue.
- Western Diocesan Eparchial Coordinators of Ecumenism, on Jewish-Catholic relations since Vatican II.
- A Community Prayer Service at Springfield Mennonite Church. This event is one of the fruits of a dialogue between Mennonites and Catholics in NE Winnipeg, which now includes other denominations.
- Preparations for a Lenten Series at Christ the King Parish on “Finding Direction in Interreligious Dialogue: Finding God in Friend and Stranger.”

Luis also distributed a flyer listing the events in this year’s Festival of Prayer (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity), noting, for the first time, an event at a Greek Orthodox Church, a “Maturing Adults Service” (i.e., for seniors at seniors’ residence), and an event at Jubilee Mennonite Church (Dora’s congregation, which is affiliated with both Mennonite Church Canada and the Evangelical Mennonite group).

Luis noted as well that Bridgefolk will meet this year at St. Benedict’s Monastery, in St. Joseph, MN (next door to St. John’s Abbey/University), on July 26–29. He hopes to attend. He also told us that he now has, as a gift, his personal copy of *Martyr’s Mirror*.

5. Focus on Catholic Spirituality

Luis began by noting that there will be a focus on Mennonite spirituality at our next meeting (in June). He then spoke to and about the material in a handout reproduced here.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY

INTRODUCTION:

Defining Spirituality: (early 15th C)

Vision at the Second Vatican Council (1962–5):

The “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* [LG] “Light of Nations:”

Chapter 1: The Mystery of the Church (#1–8)

Chapter 2: The People of God (#9–17)

Chapter 3: The Hierarchic Structure of the Church with Special Reference to the Episcopate (#18–29)

Chapter 4: The Laity (#30–38)

Chapter 5: The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness (#39–42)

Chapter 6: The Religious (#43–47)

Chapter 7: The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and her Union with the Heavenly Church (#48–51)

Chapter 8: The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church (#52–69)

“It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love . . .” [# 40]

1. A SPIRITUALITY ROOTED IN BIBLICAL REVELATION: THE LIFE OF THE TRINITY

Two General Approaches:

- *apophatic (via negativa)*: affirming mystery (keeping in mind that knowledge of God is always limited): eastern
- *kataphatic (via positiva)*: affirming revelation (keeping in mind that knowledge of God is by analogy): western

“It is right and just to sing of You, to bless You, to praise You, to thank You, to worship You everywhere in Your domain; for You are God—ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, always existing and ever the same—You and only Your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. You brought us from nothingness into being and, after we fell, You raised us up again. You did not cease doing everything until You led us to heaven and granted us Your future kingdom. For all this we give thanks to You, to Your only-begotten Son, and Your Holy Spirit; for all things which we know and do not know, the benefits bestowed upon us both manifest and hidden. We give You thanks also for this liturgy which You have deigned to accept from our hands, even though there stand before You thousands of archangels, and tens of thousands of angels, the cherubim and seraphim, six-winged and many-eyed, hovering aloft on their wings.” (Preface to Anaphora in Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

2. THE CENTRALITY OF THE INCARNATION

Jesus as God’s Yes and Our Amen to Jesus:

- God’s love for humanity revealed in Jesus Christ (image of God)
- Human response to God: participation in the life of Jesus Christ—discipleship and the reordering of creation (matter matters—world, bodies, sacraments)

3. THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT: AN EMBODIED SPIRITUALITY

Principles Shaping Spirituality: Personal, Communitarian-Ecclesial, Social-Ethical Dimensions (Past-Present-Future)

- prayer as the way of blessing: *benedire*—to say “good things” (various styles and methods)
- all of life as an act of worship/praise: personal (and never private), communitarian-ecclesial (liturgical—past/present/future) with social/ethical implications (*lex orandi-lex credenda-lex vivendi*)
 - trinitarian-christological-pneumatological-eschatological
 - biblical, patristic, liturgical, ecumenical

- hierarchical: *worship* of God (primary) versus *veneration* of Mary and the Saints (secondary)
 - degrees of veneration: memory-imitation-intercession
 - role of devotions: extra-liturgical (hence liturgy is primary) personal yet never private, an ecclesial reality
 - difference between a sacrament and a sacramental
- the emergence of various “schools of spirituality” emphasizing and living different aspects of the mystery of the life (and virtues) of Jesus Christ: Desert (eremitical), Benedictine (communitarian), Franciscan and Dominican (mendicant), Ignatian, Marian, French)

CONCLUSION:

**CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION
NEW ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

1. ACCOUNTABILITY
2. IMPLANTATION
3. AUTHENTIC DOCTRINE
4. COMPLEMENTARITY
5. SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT
6. HOLINESS

Source: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops—Commission for Theology (September 2002)

SELECTED RESOURCES:

James J. Black, *Catholic Spirituality, Its History and Challenge*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 33–60.

Charles André Bernard, “The Nature of Spiritual Theology,” *Compendium of Spirituality, Vol. I*, ed. Emeterio De Cea (New York: Alba House, 1992), 61–76.

Alfred Wilder, “Christian and Non-Christian Spiritualities,” *Compendium of Spirituality, Vol. II*, ed. Emeterio De Cea (New York: Alba House, 1996), 1–19.

Harry Hagan, Christian Raab, and Thomas Goricoski, “Ordinary Life and Contemplation: Prayer in the Modern Period,” *The Tradition of Catholic Prayer*, ed. The Monks of Saint Meinrad (Collegeville, Mn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 107–127.

Stephen Bonian, “Gateways to Prayer: The Enduring Spiritual Power of Icons,” *America* (December 8, 2008), 15–17.

James Martin, ed., “Contemporary Catholics on Traditional Devotions,” *America* (March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 and April 7, 14, 21, 2003), 8–14; 14–16; 9–12; 16–19; 18–20; and, 22–25; 15–17; 8–18 respectively.

Thomas Ryan, “Christ and/or Aquarius,” *America* (March 24, 2003), 12–15.

Patrick Reyntiens, “No Place for God: the Denial of the Transcendent in Modern Church Architecture,” *The Tablet* (January 26, 2008), 29.

Speaking about “schools of spirituality” Luis noted how they emphasized and lived different ways of discipleship, such as the eremitical, communitarian, and mendicant ways. He noted how the Ignatian approach focuses on Jesus who was obedient, while Marian spirituality (drawing on the French school of spirituality, drawn to the humanity of Jesus), features Marian devotion. The Dominicans focus on Jesus as preacher. The Church recognizes these schools as ongoing experiences of the Holy Spirit. Communities die and are reborn. New groups, like Chemin Neuf, respond to the needs of the world today.

Church blesses new movements, but also evaluates them. Luis drew attention to the criteria used evaluate new movements: accountability, implantation, authentic doctrine, complementary, social involvement, and holiness, and described one Canadian group, the Armée de Marie, as an example of a group that departed from orthodoxy in its teaching, and consequently was excommunicated.

Discussion. Luis began by noting how all this leaves room for personal devotions. In response to a question about how one might figure out what school of spirituality might suit you best, he said this could be related to personality, information readily available, and experience of Christian life. People are drawn to different things, and to God in different ways. Most parishes offer generic forms of spirituality, but parishes served by particular orders, such as the Jesuits (example St. Ignatius parish in Winnipeg) might be more likely to offer opportunities to explore a particular school of spirituality. Generally, something like this is “caught,” and shared naturally.

Dinner break (at about 6 pm)

Benedictine Spirituality

Richard offered the following presentation on Benedictine Spirituality:

I’m delighted by the opportunity to speak about Benedictine spirituality.

I spent four years (1949–1953) as an undergraduate student at St. John’s University, Collegeville, MN. SJU owned and operated by the monks of St. John’s Abbey, at that time the largest Benedictine Abbey in the world (number of monks who belonged to the abbey – not all resident there or involved in the University; many serving as parish priests in MN, and as missionaries (especially in the Bahamas); others away studying at various universities in the U.S. and Europe). At that time most, but not all, the profs were Benedictine monks; there were also monks who lived in the dormitories with the students – so I came to

know many very well, both as profs and as friends. Before I left St. John's I became a Benedictine Oblate – I'll say more about the Oblates later.

St. Benedict of Nursia and Benedictine monasticism

Let me begin with a word about the origins of Christian monasticism. Although many today may think of monks (and nuns) as part of the “clergy,” in its origins Christian monasticism was a lay movement. The early monk who withdrew from the world to live alone in the desert or a monastic community was seeking a more perfect way of living the Christian life. He was concerned primarily with his own salvation, not with ministering to the wider Christian community. The official Church, the bishops and priests, were at first very suspicious of these “super Christians.” The early monks were almost all “laymen” – not ordained priests. At most, there might be one priest to serve an entire monastic community. Christian monasticism arose, at least in part, as a reaction against the growing “respectability” of Christianity following the conversion of Constantine. With Christians no longer threatened by persecution, there were those who felt that the life of the ordinary Christian in the world was becoming too easy, that the Church was being swamped by too many opportunistic converts, that the true Christian must flee the world and lead a life of absolute dedication to Christ. As a movement Christian monasticism began in the East, in the deserts of what is now Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, only gradually spreading to the West (to what became Italy and France).

St. Benedict of Nursia (480–547) in his own lifetime was no more than the abbot of his monastery of Monte Cassino (which still exists). It was his Rule that was of lasting importance. Benedict borrowed from earlier rules, but he displayed a peculiar Roman genius for government, producing a rule characterized by brevity, flexibility, and moderation. His monks, in addition to the usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, took a vow of “stability” (i.e., an obligation to remain in the abbey where they took their vows). This was a reaction to the phenomena of the “wondering monk” – an abuse of the time. Benedict's rule gave great authority to the abbot (who was elected for life), but also advised the abbot to take counsel with his monks, and to try “to be loved rather than feared.” Benedict's Rule was not imposed by authority, but made its way slowly by virtue of its excellence. From about the 7th century, the Rule was also adopted by communities of women. Charlemagne prescribed the Rule for all the monasteries in his empire. The Rule was written as a guide for individual, autonomous communities, and to this day, all Benedictine Houses remain self-governing (though they now associate themselves into Congregations).

Economic implications. A “revolutionary” feature of Benedictine monasticism was its attitude towards work (manual labour). Benedict felt that “idleness was the enemy of the soul” and prescribed time for manual labour as well as prayer (*ora et labora* – work and prayer, with work regarded as prayer – “To pray is to work, to work is to pray”). In a world where manual labour had been associated with

slavery, Benedictine monks spread the idea of the dignity of labour. The monks were hard-working and their monasteries self-supporting. For centuries, monasteries would be centres of land-clearing, settlement, and agricultural development. Good “savers” in a desperately poor society, the monks make an important contribution to “capital accumulation” – and thus to the long-term growth of the European economy.

Monasticism and culture. With the disintegration of Roman urban centres (following the “barbarian” invasions), monasteries also became islands of culture and learning. Monks had to read to pray the divine office. Consequently, monasteries had schools, book, and libraries. Although this was not part of Benedict’s vision, from an early date, the copying of manuscripts (the only method of reproducing books before the invention of printing) was regarded as an acceptable form of “manual labour.” In addition to prayer books, Bibles, and the Church Fathers, the monks copied the secular literature of antiquity. It seems likely that few works of Latin literature (as opposed to classical Greek literature, which was preserved in the Byzantine East) would survive today if they had not been copied in the early Middle Ages by the monks.

Monks as missionaries. Between the 5th and 9th centuries, most of the peoples of Western Europe accepted Christianity – that is, had been baptized. Especially with the Germanic tribes, if a chief (such as Clovis) accepted Christian baptism, his people did too. But the work of Christianization had only begun. Getting masses of pagan and illiterate people to understand and live by Christian teaching was the labour of generations. It was the monks who were especially successful in reaching the peasants and remolding their culture.

The Spirituality of Benedictine monasticism

St. Benedict’s Rule organizes the monastic day into regular periods of communal and private prayer, sleep, spiritual reading, and manual labour – “that in all things God may be glorified.”

Regular communal prayer – in the form of the Liturgy of the Hours (also known as the Divine Office).

Origins. The early Christians continued the Jewish practice of reciting prayers at certain hours of the day and night. In the Psalms are found expressions like "in the morning I offer you my prayer"; "At midnight I will rise and thank you"; "Evening, morning and at noon I will cry and lament"; "Seven times a day I praise you". The Apostles observed the Jewish custom of praying at the third, sixth and ninth hour and at midnight. The Christian prayer of that time consisted of almost the same elements as the Jewish: recital or chanting of psalms, reading of the Old Testament, to which were soon added readings of the Gospels, Acts, and epistles, and canticles.

By the end of the fifth century, the Liturgy of the Hours was composed of seven

offices, of which Compline seems to be the last to appear. An eighth hour, Prime, was added by St. Benedict in the sixth century. These eight hours are known by the following names:

- Matins (during the night, at midnight with some), also referred to as Vigils or Nocturns, or in monastic usage the Night Office.
- Lauds or Dawn Prayer (at Dawn, or 3 a.m.)
- Prime or Early Morning Prayer (First Hour = approximately 6 a.m.)
- Terce or Mid-Morning Prayer (Third Hour = approximately 9 a.m.)
- Sext or Midday Prayer (Sixth Hour = approximately 12 noon)
- None or Mid-Afternoon Prayer (Ninth Hour = approximately 3 p.m.)
- Vespers or Evening Prayer ("at the lighting of the lamps", generally at 6 p.m.)
- Compline or Night Prayer (before retiring, generally at 9 p.m.)

As envisaged in Benedict's Rule, all the psalms (the entire Psalter) would be recited each week. In a time when candles were expensive, monks were expected to memorize all the psalms. The Liturgy of the Hours was the *Opus Dei* (the work of God). For the continuing tradition of Benedictine spirituality, whether in monasteries or as practiced by pious lay people (in particular by Benedictine Oblates), the main point is regularity of prayer. From an early date and especially as codified by the time of the Council of Trent, in a form known as the Divine Office (or Breviary), this liturgy of the hours became an obligation for all those in Holy Orders. Over the centuries, various editions and versions have been produced and used. Busy people (lay people in particular) are encouraged to pray at least Lauds and Vespers.

A second major feature of Benedictine spirituality is a method of studying and praying the Scriptures called *lectio divina* (Latin for *divine reading*). This is a traditional practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.

Traditionally *Lectio Divina* has four separate steps: *read, meditate, pray* and *contemplate*. First a passage of Scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God.

We've already noted another characteristic of Benedictine monastic spirituality – Stability, or commitment to a particular community, that is to a particular monastery: to the place, to the people, to its tradition and culture. A person identifies with the particular community by participating in its common life: its common prayer, its common table, its community work, and its common recreation. Other characteristics, often spoken of, would include humility, obedience, and hospitality (with every guest received as Christ).

As for the implications of the Benedictine way of life and approach to prayer for contemporary spirituality, the article on Benedictine Spirituality by an Anglican, Patrick Comerford, summarizes the matter nicely.

1. Prayer must be scriptural, not simply personal.
2. I need to set aside and keep time for prayer.
3. Reflection on the Scriptures is basic to growth in prayer and to personal growth.
4. Understanding is essential to the act of prayer. Formulas are not enough.
5. Changes in attitudes and behaviours are a direct outcome of prayer.
6. A sense of community is both foundational for and the culmination of prayer.

With respect to the last point about community, it is possible to practice a Benedictine kind of spirituality alone. I refer you to Sr Joan Chittister's book *The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life*. However, the more traditional way for lay people is to become an Oblate of St. Benedict – so I want to close with a few words about what is involved in being an Oblate.

Oblates of St. Benedict. From the Website of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville:

“Oblates of St. Benedict are Christian individuals or families who have associated themselves with a Benedictine community in order to enrich their Christian way of life. Oblates shape their lives by living the wisdom of Christ as interpreted by St. Benedict. Oblates seek God by striving to become holy in their chosen way of life. By integrating their prayer and work, they manifest Christ's presence in society.”

“Oblates concern themselves with striving to be what they are, people of God and temples of the Holy Spirit. Their prayer life will flow from this awareness, as will their willingness to offer themselves (this is the meaning of the word oblate) for the service of God and neighbor to the best of their ability. Oblates do **not** take on a new set of religious practices and are **not** required to say a certain number of prayers or engage in special devotions. They do **not** live in a religious community or take vows.”

From early days, Benedictine monasteries accepted boys, and convents received girls, “offered” to them by their parents for religious training and education. These children shared in the life of the community and became known as Oblates. In the course of time, lay people asked to be associated with the work of the monks and nuns without leaving their homes. They too were received, offered themselves to God, and became Oblates of a particular monastery or convent. They applied the teachings of the Rule to their lives in the world, in their family, their places of work, and their civic and social activities. Today, throughout the world, there are thousands of Oblates praying and working in spiritual union with Benedictine men and women.

Oblates promise to lead an enriched Christian life according to the Gospel as reflected in the Rule of St. Benedict. After a time of preparation, which culminates in an act of Oblation, the candidates become Oblates of St. Benedict. This promise affiliates them with a particular Benedictine community. Note –

Christians who are not Catholic can become Oblates – in fact there are many Mennonites who are Oblates. At a Bridgefolk meeting at St. John’s, I attended a ceremony in which a number of Mennonites became Oblates.

What do Oblates do?

They practice moderation. This manifests itself in the use of the goods of this world, an increasing concern for their neighbor, and in the way they temper and direct their desires.

In the spirit of the Gospel, Oblates commit themselves to a continual conversion to Christ.

In a spirit of obedience, Oblates strive to discover and maintain their proper relationship toward God, their family, and the civil and religious society in which they live.

In loving obedience to God’s plan, Oblates develop a deep reference for life. Seeking harmony and integrity of life, they perpetuate and enhance the traditional Benedictine motto: Peace

With the rule as their Guide, Oblates adopt values that are part of the very fabric of Christian spirituality, such as spending time daily reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures, cultivating an awareness of the presence of God in silence; devoting time to the praise of God, and performing acts of mortification.

Each Benedictine monastery that has Oblates has a Director of Oblates who provides direction and instruction through letters and meetings. Conferences, group discussions, common prayers, and participation in the community’s liturgical life afford Oblates the opportunity for spiritual growth.

The one big disadvantage of this pattern is that you almost have to live near a Benedictine monastery to participate fully in all this. Although I became an Oblate of the Benedictine’s of St. John’s Abbey before I graduated from St. John’s University, in my subsequent life I’ve never lived in close enough proximity to a Benedictine institution to live that full participation. Nevertheless, after almost sixty years, I still treasure the spiritual formation and habits that I learned from the Benedictine monks.

Handout: by Sr Joan Chittister: “Prayer: the heartbeat of Benedictine spirituality.”

Anecdote about John Chittister. Discussing prayer with a group of young people, Joan was asked “Why do you pray?” She asked the young people why she might pray – and they offered all sorts of reasons why she might pray. Finally, Joan said, “It’s none of those things, it’s because the bell rings.” This, of course, is

Benedict's point about the regularity of prayer.

Franciscan spirituality

John, referred to, but did not repeat the "Brief Statement on Franciscan Spirituality" that was included in the "Resources" document that was distributed as an attachment prior to our meeting. For sake of the completeness of these minutes, here is that material.

1. What is a "Spirituality"? This is probably everyone's first question. In their book *To Live As Francis Lived*, Foley, Weigel, and Normile (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000) suggest that "[a] spirituality is a particular way, or emphasis, in following Christ. Obviously, many things are common to all Christians, and these are more important than the interests of any group of Christians: love and forgiveness,... personal and communal prayer, celebration of the sacramental life of the Church, obedience to legitimate authority, love of Scripture and concern for justice and peace, to name a few. There is no difference in our goals and many of our ways and means. But there is a difference in what can only be called emphasis." Further, they contend that such differences in spiritualities depend on the personalities of their originators or founders, their life experiences, and the times in which they and their associates lived. They also remind us of Pope Pius XII's contention that "[t]he spirituality of any saint is his particular way of picturing God to himself, of speaking to him, of approaching him. Every saint sees the attributes of God in the light of what he ponders most, of what penetrates him most deeply, of what attracts and conquers him."

2. Is there a Franciscan spirituality? Is it distinctive? Perhaps, and as members of the dialogue review the biographical details of Francis' life in the sources that follow, they might agree because we can recognize the impact of formative events or circumstances on the transformed life Francis chose to live in 13th century Italy. Or is Francis' exemplary Christian life, simply a mystery of love, an expression of God's abundant grace? Consider what Francis himself said:

"After the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (from *The Testament of Francis*). And from clause 4 of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (1978), we read the following:

"The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give

abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.”

This means that for Francis, his followers at the time, and for any of us today who wish to be Franciscan in our Christian orientation, the fundamental thrust must be the gospel way of life. A way of life is a set of values, an inspiration that colors our whole life, an attitude of mind and heart that affects what we think, say, feel, and do. Virtually every detail of life has been modeled in the earthly life of Jesus; Christianity is the way of life that God himself has given us. Francis was thrilled to discover the simplicity of the good news: God is our Father who loves us. We are brothers and sisters of Christ and each other. Our lives are secure and holy in Christ. For this we must be thankful and must live our lives in the world imbued with the mind and heart, indeed, the model of Christ. Francis did this as a human being with thrilling literalness; he was an outstanding exemplar of Christian discipleship. In short, to be Franciscan is to attempt to be authentically Christian, to try to be a disciple of Jesus Christ—in brother/sisterhood with all people and creation, in continual conversion of the heart, in a life of prayer and humility, as an instrument of peace and reconciliation.

“Praise and bless my Lord and give him thanks and serve him with great humility.” –St. Francis, The Testament

John summarized this depiction of a distinctive Franciscan spirituality as being challenged to live according to the pattern of the Gospel. The challenge for Secular Franciscans, following an especially careful reading of the Gospel, is to try to live out the dictates of Gospel where you are. Not set apart, living and working as a Christian – in your family and your work.

John said that he came to this some time ago, on the basis of a Ph.D. student, who said – you should think about this. John is now with this person in a group of 5 (which at times as been up to 8 or 9) here in Winnipeg. The founding group was made up of three people in the parish he now attends. The group meets monthly, dealing with business: what can we do with our resources to express concern for marginalized and the poor? – e.g., collections for Agape table, sponsor a meal at one of core area churches, animating donations from the parish; supporting a family through a missionary exercise “save a family” in India – purchasing a goat, a sewing machine, etc., on-going activity. \$250 a year. This is a concrete effort by a small group, expressing concern. The group meets to pray, and to assess the success of projects. There is another fraternity in downtown Winnipeg.

There are different points of view within the group, with somewhat different spiritualities. John said he was sometime chided by his colleagues as being too concerned with reading and studying. Francis was not a scholar!

John concluded by saying that he finds Francis the exemplary Christian disciple. He (and Claire) were outstanding examples of the Christian life. The Church at first skeptical about Francis and his group, thought he was extreme, a nut case. To live on alms! Ultimately, Pope Innocent III, saw the merit and approved the order; saw in Francis a way of renewing the Church, which was in need of reform by 1200s. Francis not a reformer, but a direct preacher, advocate of living the life of the Gospel as he understood it with thrilling literalness.

Questions and discussion: Little flowers, stories, anecdotes, etc. – what role did they play in Franciscan spirituality? Answer: inspiring, but how do you sort our historiography and legend? **John** said this sort of thing is not important for him and his group. Question: Can non-Catholics become Secular Franciscans? Answer: No, non-Catholics do not become Third Order Franciscans because of certain affirmations that are required after a period of formation. But there are Anglican Franciscans. **John** said he would like to see this exclusion changed. **Luis** observed that Secular Franciscans were very formal about their rules; the Oblates are looser. Seculars are their own order, with a rule of Secular Franciscans. This rule was last formalized 1978. In response to another question, **John** indicated that his group does meet with other Franciscans. Holy Redeemer, St. Gerard's, and St. Alphonsus are Franciscan parishes here in Winnipeg. Question: Is there not a tension in having to follow Francis to follow Christ? Answer: It is matter of an imitating kind of commitment, of being inspired by Francis. Question: **Helmut** wondered if the fundamental thrust is the Gospel, that's every Christian's fundamental thrust. So why do you need a human face? Answer: No necessity, but a matter of how one is moved or inspired. **Luis** suggested, perhaps "called." **John** referred to the importance of the support of the community. **Donna** wondered, is it a question of our personality, and of how we are drawn? About our way of expressing who we are. **John** spoke of formation to the community. **Luis** wondered if there is such a thing as a generic Christian? Do we need Luther, or Menno Simons? **Paul** did not see the same sort of relationship for Mennonites because of Menno; Mennonites do not see themselves following Christ as Menno followed him. They do not follow Christ in the pattern of Menno. **John** asked, does Menno not inspire you? **Dora** said she thought of Menno as an organizer, and noted that his Dutch disciples do not call themselves Mennonites. **Helmut** referred to Fr. James Puglisi, a Franciscan, Luis' prof in Rome, who Helmut came to know in the international dialogue. Helmut much admired Puglisi, but he can't become a Franciscan. Dora had a question about what was meant by a "careful reading of the Gospel? **John** said it involved study as a group, with a *lectio divina* type of approach.

The Spirituality of Chemin Neuf

Ted and Nancy said they had learned about Chemin Neuf from someone from France. They felt called to it for various reasons: its spirituality, its ecumenism, and its charismatic aspect. Chemin Neuf was one of many new movements in Europe after Vatican II. They had to go to Europe to learn about it. Eventually they were invited back to the city by the Archbishop of St. Boniface to begin the movement here. They given this retreat house by the Missionary Oblate sisters.

Founded by a French Jesuit, Ignatian spirituality has been a characteristic of the group since its beginning. Single people, married couples, and non-Catholics have been attracted to it, as by waves of Holy Spirit. Today there are some 1,700 members, some in houses, others working as individuals; they all work together, sharing the same spirituality. The Charismatic spirituality of the group finds expression in a passion for unity (of nationalities, of families, and in healing, with retreats for inner healing, for example). From Ignatius comes the commitment to daily prayer, silence, praying with scripture, regular retreats (one week per year), fraternal obedience, and living by rule and consultation. Members commit to a simple life-style. They are charismatic in that they believe in baptism by the Holy Spirit. Weekly prayer groups and praying in tongues are other features of the movement. The community puts out a movie every month. There is a community manifesto, which calls for a prayer for Christian unity. Together, members follow a humble path of a shared life. Its actions are ecumenical.

Nancy spoke about a Mennonite sister from Strasbourg, the leader of Chemin Neuf's house of formation (theological studies), who working on a Ph.D. on Mary in the Anabaptist tradition. We were showed a video made right after Pope John Paul II's death, of an event in Strasbourg during which this woman, Ann Kathy Greber, became an elder in her Mennonite congregation (with some opposition within her Church because she is also a member of Chemin Neuf).

A brochure about the movement was passed around.

Questions and discussion. **Dora** wondered if the members take communion in common? **Ted** said members live unity together, but try to respect all the traditions of each member; this can be painful. Sometimes bishops give permission to share communion. Ted said members try to share the pain of the issue. It can be a question of obedience to the Church. Most members would not have a problem, but there is a range of views among Catholics on this. It's a challenge to find unity and respect. Some days, people go off to their own churches. Basically, it's a Catholic community with an ecumenical emphasis. In England, about half the members are non-Catholic. Sometimes an Anglican Eucharist is celebrated, and some Catholics participate. **Luis** asked what allows the group to embrace non-Catholics as full members of the community. Answer. Chemin Neuf was founded in Lyon in France, where

permission was asked of the local archbishop. At each stage of the game (addition of married couples, non-Catholics, different associations were created (e.g., of priests). But lay members all have the same status. Chemin Neuf now exists in 27 different countries; so at the moment is trying to get approval from Rome. (The association of priests has an OK from Rome). The key issue for the group as whole is, what about non-Catholic members? This is a pioneering venture in the Catholic world, and it is going through growing pains that all new groups tend to experience. **Ron** had a question about the charismatic aspect, about speaking in tongues in particular. Do all have to do this? Answer: No, the group prays for the person, who opens himself/herself to the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Singing in tongues would only occur later, if people feel inspired do it. Charismatic dimension looks different here, where it's tempered by Ignatian spirituality.

Young People in the Catholic Church: selected spiritualities

Tom said he would try to point out recent developments among young people in the Church, drawing on what he observed in Campus ministry, at a Catholic University (University of Notre Dame), focusing on spiritual practice (devotions), the so-called New Evangelization, and Sexuality.

He began by referencing an article by Lawrence S. Cunningham (a Notre Dame prof), which attributed the dying off of traditional devotions, personal, not necessarily private, rosary, Eucharist adoration, station of the cross, meal prayers, etc., to post-Vatican II changes in the official liturgy of the Church (from Latin to vernacular languages). When the Liturgy was in Latin, these older devotions were important in people's lives. With a more accessible vernacular liturgy, there now appears to be a hunger for spiritual practices that are different and "other worldly." Young people, with an anti-modernist bent, are finding "devotions" counter-cultural. They claim that the Extraordinary Form Mass (Latin) is more conducive to prayer, adoration, and worship. The same with respect to Eucharistic Adoration. When Richard McBrien labeled all this "backward," he was accused of being backward himself. It is interesting that these young people are anti-authority in calling out local priests who do not back these things, but pro-authority in turning to papal authority in support of what they want.

Characteristics of the New Evangelization. The phrase comes from Paul VI's encyclical on Evangelization in the Modern World; it was then picked up by John Paul II. It's not clear how this New Evangelization differs from regular evangelization. But it appears directed against modern culture, to be offered as an answer, a response, to secularism and modernity. It is focused on continuing conversion, a missionary spirituality, on sacrifice (doing something hard for Jesus publically, e.g., 40 days for life protesting abortion).

Tom described the Catholic Christian Outreach, which explicitly takes up John Paul II's challenge for a new evangelization, to create youth who are geared to evangelization in practice, and the similar approach of National Evangelization Teams, aiming to kick start youth. In contrast he referred to the approach of Canadian Catholic Campus Ministry/Canadian Catholic Students Association (CCCM/CCSA), which deliberately avoids using the term "evangelization" in its missions statement, opting for "bearing witness to the Gospel."

With respect to sex, Tom mentioned the Edith Stein Project, which began in response to the prospect of the Vagina Monologues coming to Notre Dame. This project addresses gender and human dignity, based on a "new feminism," that stresses the notion of the complementarity of the sexes. It draws on John Paul II's talks about the dignity of femininity and on his understanding of womanhood and manhood. Although not officially Church teaching, these views have been repackaged as "the theology of the Body." Christopher West has edited a whole book of John Paul II's talks and statements on this issue, which the pope saw as a problem arising out of Catholic rejection of Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*.

In summary **Tom** highlighted the trends: an emphasis on tradition, anti-modernism, the stress on papal authority vs local authority, and an emphasis on a particular interpretation of evangelization. He also noted the lack of emphasis on social justice.

Questions and discussion: **Richard** wondered about the apparent anti-intellectualism and lack of historical consciousness. **Dora**, with reference to the Edith Stein Project, wondered about the character of this so-called "new feminism," which didn't look much like feminism to her. **Tom** agreed that this was not what most of us would understand by feminism. In response to a question about Eucharist Adoration, **Luis** noted that Catholic understanding of the Eucharist includes three aspects: for immediate consumption (communion at Mass), the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle (for the sick), and for adoration, as in Benediction and the practice of Eucharistic (or Perpetual) Adoration. **Nancy** observed that young people were attracted to silence (in Eucharistic Adoration); she observed this at Taizé and in Chemin Neuf. Silence is an escape from the noise of secular culture. In a sense, these youth trends, while offering an alternative to pop culture, do not offer a careful critique of secularism. **Helmut** said of his grandson, who lives with them, that he would eventually tire of the go, go, go. **Ted** referred to the writings of Richard Rohr, describing his own experience as a young man eager to break free from what was felt tight and oppressive, and contrasting the experience of young people today who, finding everything relative, have a hunger to find something solid on which to build a life. So today it is a radical thing to go back to tradition. **Luis** contrasted the experience of the Dutch Blessed Sacrament Fathers, who after Vatican II, dropped their traditional

devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and are today a dying congregation, with the new Monastic Community of Jerusalem, which is very traditional, and is flourishing.

7. **Next meeting:** June 13 (Wednesday) was suggested as an appropriate date. Participants are to let Helmut or Luis know if there's a problem with that date. The meeting will be at a Mennonite venue (yet to be decided) and focus on Mennonite spirituality.
8. **Pulse of the meeting?** In response to a question from **Luis, Dora** said she really enjoyed the meeting, though perhaps there could have been more discussion. **John** informed us that he had videos about Francis that can be borrowed. **Helmut** voiced his appreciation for the organization of the meeting, and the overwhelming amount of material the presenters had offered. He found it all very satisfying. **Luis** again thanked **Nancy** and **Ted** for hosting the meeting.
9. **Closing Prayer.** **Nancy** presented a video from the Chemin Neuf community that featured a prayer of St. Ignatius in song with beautiful background images.