

The Study Fellowship 2006 – 2007

A Roman Catholic/Orthodox Christian Fellowship

(Meeting 7-9PM on the 4th Tuesday of the month)

Intimacy with God: the Inner Life of Prayer

September 26th – a potluck celebration at St. John Neumann (6:30PM)

Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust
by Immaculee Ilibagiza

Immaculee Ilibagiza grew up in Rwanda, a country she loved, surrounded by a loving Roman Catholic family that she cherished. In 1994, when she was only 22 years old, Rwanda descended into genocidal civil war, when the death of Rwanda's Hutu president sparked a three month slaughter of nearly one million ethnic Tutsis. She and seven other women survived by hiding in the tiny bathroom of a Hutu Protestant pastor for 91 terrifying days. It was during those endless hours of unspeakable terror that she discovered the power of prayer, forging a profound relationship with God and emerging from her bathroom hideaway with a love so strong that she was able to seek out and ultimately forgive her family's brutal murderers.

October 24th

Beginning to Pray by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom

Written by the Russian Orthodox Archbishop of Great Britain, this book has been described by most reviewers as "a modern spiritual classic." Of Russian parentage, Metropolitan Anthony was educated in Paris as a medical doctor at the Sorbonne and during WWII worked with the French Resistance. Following the war he became a monk, priest and ultimately a bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church in London, where he served until his death in 2003. "To meet God face to face in prayer is always a critical moment in our lives and thanks be to Him that He does not always present Himself to us when we wish to meet Him, because we may not be able to endure such a meeting."

November 28th

Caryll Houselander: Essential Writings selected and introduced by Wendy M. Wright

Caryll Houselander (1901-1954), an English Catholic laywoman, visionary and prolific author, was driven by a strong identification with the poor that enabled her, in fresh and insightful ways, to proclaim “the Christing of the world” even as Nazi bombs convulsed her London neighborhood. A wartime mystic known as a gifted reader of souls, her popularity in healing the hurts and hearts of many became a formal work when Dr. Strauss, later to become the president of the British Psychological Society, began sending patients to her for healing. Her gift? “She loved them back to life,” he said.

December – No meeting: Christmas/New Year break.

January 23rd

The Illumined Heart: The Ancient Christian Path of Transformation
by Frederica Mathewes-Green

Frederica Mathewes-Green, the wife of an Orthodox priest, has written a number of books on Orthodoxy that have popularized ancient Christian practice for a modern audience, urging her readers to seek out their historic Christian roots. Arguing that too much of contemporary American Christianity has become increasingly culture bound and culture dependent, she believes that for contemporary believers to truly live in Christ, they must travel the often arduous mystical path of the ancient Church embodied in repentance and the disciplines of prayer, fasting and communal worship. In fact, so insistent is she on this return to the spiritual practice of the early Church that she makes a very Orthodox disclaimer at the outset: “I hope not to say anything original. If I do, ignore it!”

February 27th

Charles de Foucauld: Writings selected and introduced by Robert Ellsberg

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916) was a soldier, explorer, monk and ultimately, a desert hermit who, in his prophetic re-discovery of the wisdom of the ancient desert fathers of the 4th century, pioneered a new model of religious life in the Roman Catholic Church patterned after the life of the Lord Jesus Himself, whose only cloister was the world of the poor. A modern mystic and martyr, seeking to proclaim the Gospel not simply by words but by the content and quality of his life, he came to live among the Muslim poor of Algeria, hoping to be a witness to the love of God for all people. Murdered by Tuareg tribesmen, his story later inspired the foundation of the Little Brothers and Little Sisters of Jesus.

March 27th

The Ladder of the Beatitudes by Jim Forest

The eight beatitudes, just ten verses of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew, are all aspects of living one's life in communion with the living God. The beatitudes provide a short summary of the entire Gospel and are the heart of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. They are, in some ways, like rungs on a ladder. Each one leads to the next. Remove any one of them and you fall off the ladder. But what does the word *blessed* really mean? Forest, no stranger to St. Paul's, writes: "How would you translate *blessing*?" I once asked the Biblical scholar Rabbi Steven Schwarzchild. "There is no one word that will do," he replied. "It's something like *on the right path* or *on the way the Creator wants us to go*. It is the opposite of the word *sin*, which means *losing one's way*."

April 24th

John Main: Essential Writings selected and introduced by Laurence Freeman

Father John Main (1926-1982) was an English Benedictine monk who lived in Montreal, Canada and re-discovered the ancient practice of Christian meditation, introducing it anew to Christians in our age as a simple yet

deeply contemplative form of prayer by which the practitioner can remain constantly aware of the presence of God. Main believed and taught that the use of a “mantra” such as the Aramaic word *Maranatha*, found in the Book of Revelation, prayed in silence and with openness of heart, opens us in a way that allows the Spirit of Jesus to flood our hearts. Theologians have called Main “a Trinitarian mystic” and his work inspired the foundation of the World Community for Christian Meditation and a network of hundreds of meditation groups around the world.

May 22nd – a potluck celebration at St. John Neumann (6:30PM)

Jesus: A Dialogue with the Savior by a Monk of the Eastern Church

Father Lev Gillet (1893-1980) was a French Orthodox monk who often wrote under the pseudonym “A Monk of the Eastern Church” to preserve his anonymity. His work as a priest and scholar would take him across Europe and the Middle East. During WWII he was the chaplain of St. Maria Skobtsova’s hostel in Paris for the poor and often homeless Russian émigrés and where she hid Jews during the Nazi occupation. After the war became the rector of the first French-speaking Russian Orthodox parish in France. His last years were spent as the chaplain of St. Basil’s House in Oxford. This book is a collection of very personal meditations on the Gospels and the portrait of Jesus contained in them.