

July Monday Evening Speaker Series

Suggested donation for Speaker Series \$60

Includes all speakers' presentations.

SESSION 1 - July 6, 2020

7:00 – 8:30 PM

Transpersonal Hope

with Br. Don Bisson, FMS

Don Bisson, a Marist Brother, focuses his main ministry on the formation of spiritual directors. His passion is in the Dialogue between Jung and Christian Spirituality.

During our corporate experience of the pandemic, we're interchangeably using optimism and hope. In living through these times, the ego wishes to reassert itself in optimism to return to previous times. Yet, hope is born from the darkness of the soul to a more mystical reality of a transpersonal nature.

There will be both a presentation and a question/answer session.

SESSION 2 - July 13, 2020

7:00 – 8:30 PM

"Toward a Contemplative Reformation of Parish Life: Discerning the Movement of the Spirit and Embodying the Movement of Prayer"

with the Reverend Stuart Higginbotham

Rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Gainesville, GA and Editor of *Contemplation and Community: A Gathering of Fresh Voices for a Living Tradition*

These past three months of a heightened awareness of our mortality and our interconnectedness with one another have given us an extraordinary opportunity to delve more deeply into a reflection of what being a Christian community means. When we moved out of our buildings, we moved into a space where the Spirit remained very much alive and at work. These weeks of concern, anxiety, and even fear continue to be a concentrated season of

transformation, and they are highlighting what many have long known: The Spirit is inviting us into a deeper practice of faith as a community who follows Jesus as Lord. We are being challenged to look beyond a "club membership mentality" and a "program maintenance model" of ministry toward a lived reality that trusts more fully in the Spirit's dynamic presence that seeks nothing less than the transformation of our hearts and entire world. We are being invited to take part in a contemplative reformation.

This discussion will focus on two directions, or movements, of prayer that describe vital elements of such a contemplative reformation in congregational life. By paying close attention to both our orientation toward God and toward each other, we can more fully understand the truth of how our practice of prayer truly does shape the way we believe and live in the world today.

SESSION 3 - July 20, 2020

7:00 – 8:30 PM

What is Spiritual Direction?

with The Rev. Jennie C. Olbrych

Jennie C. Olbrych, D. Min., is persuaded that the ancient practices of Spiritual Direction and contemplative prayer are continuing paths to lively relationship with God. She is a retired Episcopal priest who has served the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina for thirty plus years. - She also has a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. Jennie currently serves as Priest Associate at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Charleston SC.

"What is Spiritual Direction?" is a brief introduction to the art and practice of Spiritual Direction. It is for anyone - lay or ordained, practicing Christian or not - who would like to explore whether or not Spiritual Direction might be helpful to you.

Spiritual Direction, or Spiritual Companionship as it is sometimes called, is about listening together to the sacred story of your life and discerning the ways in which you may be being invited to a deeper relationship with God

SESSION 4 - July 27, 2020

7:00-8:30 PM

Dedicated Suffering: A Way to Respond to Covid-19

with Jane M. Thibault, MA, MSSW, PhD

Jane Thibault is clinical professor emerita of geriatrics and gerontology in the Department of Family and Geriatric Medicine, School of Medicine, University of Louisville, KY, where she taught for 35 years. She also has served as an adjunct faculty member for the UofL School of Social Work and the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is currently a consultant for aging issues, specializing in the psychological and spiritual dimensions of later life. A writer and trained spiritual director, she provides spiritual mentoring, workshops, and short retreats for adults and their caregivers and for religious communities.

Author of: *A Deeper Love Affair: The Gift of God in Later Life, 10 Gospel Promises for Later Life, Pilgrimage into The Last Third of Life*

We are living in a time of global, overwhelming suffering. Most often the questions we ask are “Why is this happening?” and “What can we do about it to eradicate it?” But there is another way of acknowledging suffering – our own personal pain and the pain of the entire planet. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin understood suffering as usable human energy, not to be wasted. In his book, *Human Energy* (1962) he wrote:

What a vast ocean of human suffering spreads over the entire earth at every moment! Of what is this mass formed? Of blackness, gaps and rejections? No, let me repeat, of potential energy. In suffering the ascending force of the world is concealed in a very intense form. The whole question is how to liberate it and give it a consciousness of its significance and potentialities. The world would leap high towards God if all the sick together were to turn their pain into a common desire that the kingdom of God should come to rapid fruition through the conquest and organization of the earth. All the sufferers of the earth joining their sufferings so that the world's pain might become a great and unique act of consciousness, elevation and union. Would not this be one of the highest forms that the mysterious work of creation could take in our sight?

How can we liberate our pain to make it useful, as Teilhard suggests? The process of intentionally dedicating our pain - “Dedicated Suffering” - is one way each one of us – alone or in groups- can transform even the slightest annoyance, ache, or pain into energy that will benefit the entire world. This workshop will explore how we can participate in this transformation – pouring loving energy into the world.