



Part Four Being Real With Others

1 | [2 Next>](#)

If we see humility as self-knowledge, that's a very attractive virtue for modern people. Everyone wants to know themselves, and I think in coming to know yourself you need community, you need relationship, because you can't know yourself in isolation. You don't exist in isolation.

--*Laurence Freeman*

Printable
Portable
Meditation

Holy realism is ... really the opposite of narcissism. It welcomes the presence of others, not as intruders on our own personal stage play but as gifts from God. The great Easter story about St. Benedict comes to mind. He says to someone who has come to his hermitage to tell him it is Easter--he may have interrupted St. Benedict at an inconvenient time--but Benedict looked at him and said, "I know that it is Easter for I have been granted the grace of seeing you." That's Holy Realism, which seeks the balance, the true proportion in all things.

--*Kathleen Norris*

Featured
Speakers
& Writers

The denial of emotion is a terrible thing. But what takes time is learning that the positive path is the education of emotion not its uncritical indulgence, which actually locks us far more firmly into our mutual isolation. Likewise, the denial of rights is a terrible thing. And what takes time to learn is that the opposite of oppression is not a wilderness of litigation and reparation and recrimination, but the nurture of concrete shared respect. ...

What is
Benedictine
spirituality?

The community that freely promises to live together before God is one in which both truthfulness and respect are enshrined. I promise that I will not hide from you and that I will also at times help you not to hide from me or from yourself. I promise that your growth towards the good God wants for you will be a wholly natural and obvious priority for me, and I trust that you have made the same promise. And we have a lifetime for this. Without the promise, the temptation is always for the ego's agenda to surface again, out of fear that I shall be

"When you focus just on yourself, your universe becomes small and smaller. Eventually it becomes so tiny as the head of a pin."

Jakusho
Kwong Roshi
Shambhala Sun
May 2003

abandoned once the truth is known, fear that I have no time or resource to change as it seems I must. But no one is going to run away, and the resources of the community are there on my behalf.

--*Rowan Williams*

Holy Realism...rejects polarization. And of course, we're so comfortable with polarization in our lives, in our churches, and in the world. It's so easy to think in terms of "us" and "them," and you can put any label you want: liberal/conservative, gay or straight, secular or theocratic. But for the Christian, Christ blazes through our comfort zones and asks us to embrace something radically different.

Just one example of what I mean. I have been living in Hawaii for a time, and there's a huge military presence there. Every armed service has at least one base on the island of Oahu alone. When troops were beginning to be deployed to the Persian Gulf, some women of our church who had been making Anglican prayer beads were asked to make some for the troops. They got, like, fifty volunteers. Whole families would come. They ended up making and distributing over 1200. Some of them were literally given to troops as they boarded the plane. They were given out by the military chaplains. With each set of beads was a little note from St. Clement's Church with information on how to pray the beads, but also saying one could simply touch them and remember someone back home is praying for you.

"All are needed by each one: Nothing is fair or good alone."

Ralph Waldo
Emerson

Well, this little project made the newspapers and of course we got a few calls from people accusing us of aiding and abetting murderers. But I found it interesting in a church that some of the same people who were marching on every peace march in town were also making beads. One man told me that in the process of stringing the beads and making the knots and thinking of the young men and women who would carry them made him meditate on what it means to be one in Christ. It's not necessarily comfortable and it's beyond what we're capable for ourselves, but it is a truth that Christ does make us one against all polarities.

--*Kathleen Norris*

We live in community, even when we go off by ourselves. Remember the old song: "I see the moon and the moon sees me, the moon sees somebody I want to see; God bless the moon and God bless me and God bless somebody I want to see." To be in relationship with God is to be in relationship with every person who is also in relationship with God. And we do not need to speak the same language or have the same accent to be in true community; we have only to realize that we are all part of God, and to keep that uppermost in our mind and spirit as we live and relate to each other.

--*William A. Kolb, "[Community: Where the Holy Spirit Hangs Out](#)"*

"Compassion is the antitoxin of the soul: where there is compassion even the most poisonous impulses remain relatively harmless."

John O'Donohue
Eternal Echoes

1 | [2 Next](#)>



Part Four Being Real With Others

[<Prev 1](#) | 2

We exist to be miracle workers for one another, and it is in community that we are called to grow. It's in community that we come to see God in the other. It's in community that we see our own emptiness filled up by the other. It's community that calls me beyond the pinched horizons of my own life, my own country, my own race, and gives me the gifts I do not of myself have within me. ...

A Benedictine spirituality of community calls for more than togetherness. Togetherness is very cheap community. Benedictine community calls for the open mind and the open heart. Benedict called always for minds opened to the shattering implications of the Scriptures. The fact is that Jesus was an assault on every closed mind in Israel. To those who thought that illness was a punishment for sin, Jesus called for openness. To those who considered tax collectors incapable of salvation, Jesus called for openness. To those who believed that the Messiah to be real had to be a military figure, Jesus was the nonviolent call to openness. And so Benedict also calls us to open-heartedness. The Benedictine heart, the heart that saved Europe before us, is a place without boundaries. [It is] a place where the truth of the oneness of the human community shatters all barriers, opens all doors, refuses all prejudices, welcomes all strangers, listens to all voices, black and white, Arab and Jew, male and female. The data are in. The world is an electronic, commercial, political village. We cannot, you and I, go on much longer simply nodding to the neighbors in the parking lot after church, in the name of hospitality and community. We must begin to see the immorality of being socially, globally, unconscious. Socially, globally, narcissistic, and calling it the free market, democracy, and unipolarism. Individualism has not saved us. We need the wisdom of community now.

--Joan Chittister

Simone Weil in 1943, looking into the darkness of that time, said this: "Today it is not nearly enough to be a saint, but we must have a saintliness demanded by the present moment, a new saintliness, itself without precedent. A new type of

Questions to Ponder Alone

Who are the people in my life who make me feel resurrected?

When have I felt abandoned and how has that shaped my understanding of the truth?

Who comprises my 'community' and how is it a mirror of the divine life?

How can my understanding of community be stretched to expand my capacity to draw others in?

How does a refusal

How does a refusal to live in the present keep me from deeper understanding and experience of community?

Questions to Ponder with Others

How do I encourage, support, and promote the growth of others in God?

How has 'labeling' others limited our ability to serve them authentically? How could this pattern be broken?

How has the temptation to retreat into individualism kept us from becoming fully human, fully alive?

How can we create a community that honors vulnerability?

What, other than death, is part of our shared and common humanity?

sanctity is indeed a fresh spring for invention. If all is kept in proportion and if the order of each thing is preserved, it is almost equivalent to a new revelation of the universe and of human destiny. It is the exposure of a large portion of truth and beauty hitherto concealed under a thick layer of dust, the new holiness." This amazing statement, this spiritual vision, is just what we need when we look into the black hole of our present predicament. It's the hope we need for our own dark age. ...

So what about this new holiness? What is it? What's new about it? Surely holiness is holiness, saints are saints. Not quite. For Simone Weil the specific characteristic of this new holiness is an explicit sense of universality. In the saints of the past, there was a sense of universality. It's almost part of holiness to have this sense of interconnection, interdependence. But it was largely implicit. Even St. Francis, one of the most universally minded of saints, was bound by his culture, his time, his politics, his religion. Modern holiness, however, according to Simone Weil knows that the universe is a country, and that for the truly spiritual man or woman it is our only country here below. And it's this vision of holiness with the explicit universality of the global consciousness that surely is our way towards peace, our way to a love of country that is not nationalistic, patriotism without nationalism, local identity without aggressive behavior towards your neighbor, and religious belief without intolerance or prejudice.

--*Laurence Freeman*

Mortality not only connects but unites us, and I can't help but think, of course, of the World Trade Center as I say that. I lived in New York until 1974, and I watched the Towers go up. One of the few pieces of gratitude I can muster for that day is before they were coming down, all of the messages that came out from these people who knew they were going to die: "I love you, take care of yourself, take care of the children." I think one of my favorites was "You've been a good friend." These wonderful messages coming out from people who suddenly were faced with their common mortality in a way that none of them had expected. It seemed an ordinary day and it was anything but that.

Remember, every day that you're going to die.

--*Kathleen Norris*

In the Buddhist view, wisdom and compassion are intrinsically linked together. One cannot be truly compassionate without wisdom. Wisdom--seeing the world as it really is--reveals the deep interrelatedness and impermanency of all things. When we genuinely recognize this, compassion is our natural response. When we have wisdom, we cannot help but feel compassion. By the same token, practicing compassion helps us to realize our fundamentally wise natures. Living compassionately means to think and act without putting ourselves at the center of the universe, without believing that "It's all about me." To recognize that the whole of existence does not revolve around these little entities we call our selves is the beginning of wisdom. Thus wisdom and compassion arise together. As we become more compassionate, we gain wisdom; as we become wiser, our compassionate natures are more fully revealed.

Wisdom and compassion are also innate. Our fundamental nature as persons is to be wise and compassionate, but years of social and self conditioning have obscured those qualities. We have learned to act and think in self-centered ways for so long that selfishness now seems natural. We need, think Buddhists, a practice, a discipline for reversing the effects of years of conditioning to return us to our true selves. Yet because our habits of self-centeredness are so deep

and ingrained, the discipline needs to be gradual and gentle. We cannot expect radical transformation to happen overnight, nor can we expect to be the persons we wish to be simply by willing. Willing must be accompanied by acting. By acting compassionately and wisely, it becomes easier to will to be compassionate and wise. Buddhist spiritual practice, therefore, is a matter of training: learning and acting to be the persons we truly are.

--Mark Muesse,

"What Does It Mean to Lead a Spiritual Life? A Buddhist Perspective"

Process for Meditation and Psalm

Process for Meditation

1. Take a few moments to be silent and center yourself in the presence of God.
2. Read the Psalm completely through once.
3. Read the Psalm again very slowly verse by verse, leaving at least one minute of silence between verses.
4. After going through the entire Psalm, sit in silence for 3- 5 minutes, asking God to feed your soul with the truths of the Psalm.
5. End the time with a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Psalm 122

1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

2 Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together.

4 To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

5 For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

7 Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."

8 For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you."

9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

This Section
in printable
format.

For
Deeper Study

You will need the
free adobe acrobat
reader to view the
pdf files.

What is Benedictine Spirituality?

Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to Him from whom by the sloth of disobedience thou hast gone away.

Thus begins the prologue of The Rule of Saint Benedict, an ancient writing instructing Benedictine monks in the ways in which they should govern their bodies and minds while performing the Will of the Lord. Also called St. Benedict of Nursia, the Italian monk founded a community of monks in the sixth century after living three years outside of Rome as a hermit. Made up of cells of 13 monks each, the Benedictine community attracted many followers. Benedict eventually left his community, and at Montecassino, between Rome and Naples, in an old pagan holy place, he started the first truly Benedictine monastery--although the Benedictine order did not come into being until Carolingian times (Seventh Century a.d.).

The fruits of Benedict's experience appear in the Rule of St. Benedict (in Latin), which became the chief rule in Western monasticism under the Carolingians. The Rule's 73 chapters are full of a spirit of moderation and common sense. They set forth the central ideas of Benedictine monasticism; ideas ranging from the ideal characteristics of a monastery's Abbot, to the manner in which the monks should sleep. Benedict's rules speak of common cause, yet also allow for the distinctiveness of the individual and each individual's unique path to God; a singular approach to innovation and laboring to achieve fulfillment.

Benedictine Catholicism is still alive and well today with monasteries all over the world carrying out the Will of God in the manner set forth by St. Benedict. For more information regarding Benedictine monastic life, visit [Andechs Monastery](#) in Upper Bavaria's Five-Lakes Region. Or visit St. Benedict's Abbey in Kansas to read a recent translation of [The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict](#).

Bibliography

"Benedict, Saint," *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2003 ed., Oct. 20, 2003
<<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/B/BenedictSt.asp>>.

"Benedict, St. of Nursia," *The Holy Rule of St. Benedict*. 1949 ed. Trans. Rev. Verheyen, Boniface. St. Benedict's Abbey. May 25, 2003. Oct. 20, 2003
<<http://www.kansasmonks.org/RuleOfStBenedict.html>>.

Andechs Monastery, 2003. Munich, Germany. Oct. 20, 2003
<http://www.andechs.de/englisch/index_main.asp>.

Being Real FEatured Speakers & Writers

Joan Chittister

A widely published author, columnist and noted international lecturer, Joan D. Chittister, OSB, is executive director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality located in Erie, Pennsylvania. A member and past prioress of the Benedictine sisters of Erie, she is past president of the conference of American Benedictine Prioresses. The most recent of her 26 books are *New Designs: An Anthology of Spiritual Vision* and *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*. She has been a leading voice on Benedictine spirituality and practice for over 25 years.

David Dark

David Dark has published articles and reviews in Prism magazine and Books & Culture. His book *Everyday Apocalypse: The Sacred Revealed in Radiohead, the Simpsons and other Pop Culture Icons* was published in 2002 by Brazos Press. Dark teaches English at Christ Presbyterian Academy in Nashville.

Linda Douty

Linda Douty currently serves as a book reviewer, teacher, retreat leader and individual spiritual director, sharing her personal experiences as well as knowledge gained at the The Academy for Spiritual Formation, *Bethel Bible Series*, SMU's Perkins School of Theology and the Shalom Institute of Spiritual Guidance. Douty is a regular presenter at the Center for Spiritual Growth in Memphis, Tennessee.

Laurence Freeman

Father Freeman is a monk of the Monastery of Christ the King, Cockfosters, London. From the International Centre of the Christian Meditation Community in London, he now serves a worldwide network of 27 meditation centres and more than a thousand weekly meditation groups in 50 countries. He travels regularly in North and South America, Europe, Australia and Asia. He is involved in contemplative inter-religious dialogue and led The Way of Peace dialogue with the Dalai Lama. His six books include *Light Within*, *Selfless Self*, and *Jesus: The Teacher Within*.

Micah D. Greenstein

Named by *Memphis Magazine* as one of the city's most significant leaders, Rabbi Greenstein became Temple Israel's eighth Senior Rabbi on September 1, 2000, after serving Temple as Assistant and Associate Rabbi since 1991. Former President of Memphis Ministers Association, he is a board member of the National Civil Rights Museum and faculty member of Memphis Theological Seminary.

William Kolb

The Reverend Canon Kolb first came to Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, TN, in 1992, after 14 years as Rector of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck,

New York. He returned in 2002 to head the Pastoral Care Program.

Renée Miller

Renée Miller is an Episcopal priest who splits her time between her home in the Arizona desert and her condo in downtown Memphis. She currently serves as an associate rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, TN, contributes regularly to explorefaith.org, and serves as a team leader for [CREDO](#) (Clergy Reflection, Education, Discernment, Opportunity).

Mark W. Muesse

Mark W. Muesse is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. A native of Waco, Texas, Muesse received his B.A. summa cum laude in English from Baylor University. He completed his graduate work at Harvard University, where he received a Masters of Theological Studies from the Divinity School and the A.M. and Ph.D. in The Study of Religion from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Kathleen Norris

Kathleen Norris is a recipient of grants from the Guggenheim and Bush Foundations. Her personal narratives, essays, and poetry have been published in a wide range of anthologies, magazines and journals, including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine*. She has published five books of poetry, including *Little Girls in Church*, *How I Came to Drink My Grandmother's Piano*, and *The Year of Common Things*, and is author of the New York Times bestsellers *The Cloister Walk*, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, and *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*.

Parker J. Palmer

Parker Palmer is known for his work in education, spirituality and social change in institutions including schools, community organizations, primary, secondary and higher education, and business and corporations. He is author of six books, including *Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation* (2000) , and *The Active Life: Wisdom for Work Creativity and Caring* (1990).

Lee Ramsey

Lee Ramsey is an ordained United Methodist pastor and is currently an associate professor of pastoral care and pastoral theology at Memphis Theological Seminary. He holds advanced degrees from Candler School of Theology and Vanderbilt University and is the author of *Care-full Preaching: From Sermon to Caring Community*.

Phyllis Tickle

As Contributing Editor in Religion for *Publishers Weekly*, the international journal of the book industry, Phyllis Tickle is frequently quoted in sources like *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *CNN*, *C-SPAN*, *PBS*, *BBC*, *VOA*, etc., Tickle is an authority on religion in America and a much sought-after lecturer on the subject. She is also author of some two dozen books, most of them about religion and spirituality, including *The Divine Hours*, a three-volume contemporary manual of prayer, *God-Talk in America*, and *The Shaping of a Life - A Spiritual Landscape*, a memoir of a life of prayer.

Rowan Williams

The Most Reverend Rowan Douglas Williams was selected to be the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury after serving as Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop of Wales. Archbishop Williams has also served as a Dean of Clare College and Lecturer in Divinity at Cambridge University and as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. He has published collections of articles, sermons and

poetry and written or edited more than twenty books on the history of theology and spirituality, most recently *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Co-edited with Geoffrey Rowell and Kenneth Stevenson), *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* and a volume of reflections called *Writing in the Dust*, about his personal experience of September 11, 2001.

[\(Return to Top\)](#)

**SEND THIS ARTICLE
TO A FRIEND**

[Home](#) | [Explore God's Love](#) | [Explore Your Faith](#) | [Explore the Church](#) | [Who We Are Reflections](#) | [Stepping Stones](#) | [Oasis](#) | [Lifelines](#) | [Bulletin Board](#) | [Search](#) | [Contact Us](#)



**MORE
EXPLORING
QUESTIONS**

Copyright © 1999-2003 explorefaith.org