



# Catholic Spirituality Network

## CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER EDITION 11

SPRING 2021

## CSN CONFERENCE 2021

### Infinite Riches Romans 11.33

embracing Interreligious Encounter, and expanding our response to the God who awaits  
**online Mon 7 – Wed 9 June 2021**

**Michael Barnes SJ** has agreed to be our speaker for this year's Conference. Michael is a leading interfaith scholar as well as a practitioner 'on the streets'. Many CSN members have expressed the wish to explore this territory more deeply and we are grateful to Michael for agreeing to be our guide. He has recently published *Ignatian Spirituality and interreligious Dialogue: Reading Love's Mystery*, and will be exploring some of the themes which arise in the book with us.



<https://www.messenger.ie/product/ignatian-spirituality-and-interreligious-dialogue-reading-loves-mystery/>



**Bernadette Farrell**, liturgist and composer, is widely known by CSN. A liturgist and composer with international acclaim, Bernadette's work continues to be published and recorded, enriching the Church with her unique giftedness. Her inspirational

leadership will enable our Conference to access the infinite Riches that await.

**Bookings are open now!**

CSN members £70/ non-members £75. Please contact Margaret in the office to book your place.  
[catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:catholicspiritualitynetwork@gmail.com)

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



It seems a long time since last autumn and basking in the glow of our first and successful online conference with Christopher Chapman and Julie McCann. CSN has been blessed throughout the on-going phases of lockdown, not least because of the generous response of members to engage remotely with us during this time and the opportunity to welcome new members and guests to events hosted by CSN online. Particular thanks go to Tom McGuinness SJ and Magdalen Lawler SND for their generosity in leading our Advent and Candlemas Days, enabling us to open up to God's Light in these challenging times.

Our thanks go out to all who continue the work of keeping spirituality accessible to others at this time, especially the many retreat and spirituality centres, including the newly organised London Jesuit Centre.

Just recently we were able to renegotiate again with the Conference Centre at Swanwick to defer our outstanding booking until spring 2023. We remain indebted to them for their flexibility in enabling us to adapt to the times.

We have been fortunate in securing both our speaker, Professor Michael Barnes SJ, and liturgist, Bernadette Farrell, for our upcoming online conference 7 - 9 June 2021. We look forward to welcoming many of you to join us in exploring 'Infinite Riches' this summer.

Meanwhile a sub-group of the Executive is exploring ideas arising from our conversation with members held during the November 2020 conference about who we are and where we are heading as a membership group.

One of the vital aspects of CSN is our identity along with our vision going forward. At present, with so much of life changing shape, we are hoping to consolidate and celebrate our sense of heritage as we discern the way ahead.

On this point I would welcome contributions from anyone who can provide us details on the threads of our story since its origin, to collectively contribute to a brief document to affirm who we are, to shape who we become and to enhance both our publicity and profile.

I would ask that you mail those contributions to me directly using this email: [csnchair@btinternet.com](mailto:csnchair@btinternet.com)  
I look forward to hearing from you.

*I wish you well as the Lenten journey continues and, as we move further into Lent and towards Easter, I pray that we will experience joy in God's immeasurable love for us.*

Shirley Taylor  
CSN Chair



# Catholic Spirituality Network

## Interfaith Reflection A LITTLE SPACE WITHIN OUR HEARTS



In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus-flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there, and we should want to know him.

And if anyone asks, "Who is he who dwells in a small shrine in the form of a lotus flower in the centre of the castle of Brahman? Whom should we want to find and to know?" we can answer:

"The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars; fire and lightning and winds are there; and all that now is and all that is not: for the whole universe is in Him and He dwells within our heart."

The above words are from the *Upanishads*, an ancient sacred text from India written likely 3000 years ago. This amazing text is a pointer to the vivid and colourful landscape of our hearts. All major religious faiths affirm the deeply rooted presence of the divine in our hearts and invite us to realize that divine presence in our everyday lives.

Jesus used the image of the reign of God within us: it is like a treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field. This Gospel passage reminds us that it is there in the inner depth of our being that we meet God. St Teresa of Avila, one of the greatest spiritual writers in the history of the church, describes this inner experience as going into a castle in which God dwells.

The symbol from the *Upanishads* of the lotus flower within our hearts, with its glossy leaves and gleaming rose and white blossoms, is indeed very unique. In his book, *Original Goodness*, spiritual teacher, Eknath Easwaran, describes the symbol of the lotus flower beautifully:

"One of the Sanskrit names for lotus flower is '*pankaja*', meaning 'born from the mud'. In the murky depths of the pond a seed takes root. Then a long, wavering strand reaches upward, groping through the water toward the glimmer of light above. From the water a bud emerges. Warmed by the sun's rays, it slowly opens out and forms a perfect chalice to catch and hold the dazzling light of the sun. The lotus makes a beautiful symbol for the core of goodness in every human being. Though we are born of human clay, it reminds us that each of us has the latent capacity to reach and grow toward heaven until we shine with the reflected glory of our Maker."

Just as the lotus flower makes its journey of flowering from the muddy waters to the shining rays of the sun, so Jesus' public ministry begins after his baptism in the waters of Jordan as he makes his journey to Calvary, carrying the cross. Jesus' cross is the perfect lotus flower calling us to get up and walk daily from our human clay to grow toward heaven, until we shine with the reflected glory of our Maker.

*Fr Tomy Rockey, CP*

*We are grateful to Fr Tomy, Passionist Spirituality Representative on the CSN Executive Committee, for this reflection on an ancient text and its interrelationship with Christianity - especially in light of our upcoming Conference focusing on the riches of God's gifts to us through other faiths.*



# Catholic Spirituality Network

## CSN adapts to changing times

*How have members managed our move online?*

**CSN member, Diana Pinchin, a Zoom novice, writes in about her steep learning curve and how she sees the benefits and downsides of the move to Zoom:**

At the beginning of 2020 I had not heard about Zoom, so when lockdown arrived it was a fast learning curve. To start with, I did not have the right equipment and it was only after the first lockdown was eased that I was able to sort out the right equipment. My first experiences of using Zoom were that I was able to hear and see others but was not able to respond as they could not see me or hear me. After a while I was able to connect via my landline which was better.

Once I had sorted out my camera, after the first lockdown was lifted, I was able to get myself set up with Zoom thanks to a local IT shop. At first I was not sure how it all worked and it took me a while to find my way around getting the hang of it. Once I had, things improved and I was able to connect to others. It has helped a lot to see people's faces.

Zoom has some good points as one is able to attend events from home, which has lessened travel and also made events more accessible. This has been a bonus and has allowed me to join events which I would have been unable to do in 'real life'.

It has also allowed the Network to have more events and make contact with others of a similar mind, which has boosted my spiritual life and growth. I also like the way the events have been run with space to share and screen sharing of the talks and handouts sent ahead of the events. There has been a sense of feeling the connection with others and also the Holy Spirit at work during these retreat/ prayer days.

This has only been possible as others have learned the necessary skills to allow these events to happen and many thanks to them.

On the downside, there is the loss of seeing people socially in the flesh, getting Zoom fatigue and the technical problems of the internet being weak and a few frozen screens which has affected the presentations from time to time. But these are only minor problems – overall I feel that Zoom could play an important role in making events more accessible to members of the Network.

**CSN Membership Secretary, Margaret Palladino, shares her thoughts about the new ways of doing things:**

I remember a number of years ago working at the Retreat Association and hearing that we were to move into helping those enquiring about Spiritual Direction using email and feeling very anxious as to how one could engage personally without



actually hearing the other's voice – this last year my anxiety level has increased a hundredfold, challenging me beyond my comfort zone at least three times a day within the first few hours of waking as I have struggled with almost all communication by technology!!! However, it has led to engaging in wonderful events in far-flung places I would never have thought possible:

- a 3-day conference in South Africa
- an 8-week course on Mary Magdalen with Cynthia Bourgeault on the other side of the Atlantic
- a 5-week course in Liberation Theology at the London Jesuit Centre

- and all at the touch of a button or two on my laptop!

When our own Conference was postponed in March 2020 and we discussed an alternative online, it was a privilege to share with those who had booked their anxieties - ranging from absolute resistance, through a reluctant 'if that is the only way', to making the best of a difficult situation, optimism and, most importantly, generosity on the part of all 'to give it our best go'!

Thanks to the openness and hard work of the Executive, the brilliance of Jo Alstott in her management of the ZOOM technological aspects, and the creativity of Chris Chapman and Julie McCann, the evaluations were almost universally overwhelmingly positive. The experience was so impressive that two members who had been very apprehensive to engage in the Conference were the first to book for our online Advent Day.

Challenges will still persist – I do not think I will forget the AGM online last September when we encountered the worst of ZOOM! But there are certainly advantages to holding events in this way as we move forward out of lockdown – they certainly will not replace but will add greatly to our contact with one another.



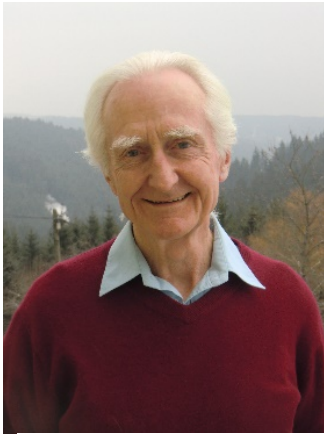
# Catholic Spirituality Network

## Franz Jalics SJ

16.11.1927 –13.02.2021

*CSN member, Paddy Rylands, has sent us news of the recent death of Jesuit priest, Franz Jalics SJ – widely reported due to his significant influence on the contemplative retreat movement.*

*See Independent Catholic News for an obituary of Franz <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41548>*



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News of Franz's death on Feb 13<sup>th</sup> was greeted with sadness and yet at the same time with prayers of thanksgiving for his inspiring life. In the UK, many have come to know Franz through his *Contemplative Retreat: An Introduction to the Contemplative Way of Life and to the Jesus*

*Prayer*. Now known as the *Gries Path of Prayer*, it is a way rooted in Franz's own life experience – his childhood upbringing, his time as a young soldier during the second World War (in particular his experience of the bombing of Nuremberg), his Jesuit vocation with its rootedness in Ignatian spirituality.

Franz's experience in Argentina in 1976 of being abducted, imprisoned for many months, blindfolded and shackled changed his life forever. There, fearing for his life on a daily basis, Franz was reduced to the utter minimum: his breathing, his hands and the Name of Jesus. He realised at depth what discipleship meant: a willingness to suffer whatever he had to endure. The only pathway to that was complete orientation on Jesus Christ as his only hope and saviour, as well as a willingness to forgive, however incompletely, all those who had perpetrated this. In this experience, we see the main elements of his retreat.

In 1978 Franz returned to Germany and began giving retreats, teaching the *Gries Path* – his method of contemplative prayer that leads to contemplative living.



PHOTOS COPYRIGHT HAUS GRIES

He established *Haus Gries* <https://www.haus-gries.de/english/> which has become a centre for the retreats. As the yearning 'to pray more contemplatively' has grown, trained teams now share the retreat across the world. Deep love of Jesus Christ, so evident in Franz's own life, remains its core.

In Franz's words: *'There are many paths to contemplation. I show you just one of them. I'm conscious of the fact that God leads many people to contemplation without any external help. Frequently God uses natural circumstances. A simple life of love, some years on a sickbed, a brush with death, the leaving of one's homeland in order to live among the poor, and other events can lead to contemplation. I also deeply respect the non-Christian ways of contemplation. And there are, in the Catholic Church itself, many other introductions into contemplation. I do not want to exalt my way above others. On the contrary, I am very happy that they exist and I appreciate them. I myself have walked the way I describe: should it help someone else to find his or her way I am satisfied.'* Franz Jalics, **Contemplative Retreat**.

May Franz be resting in eternal peace, enfolded in God's love, 'just gazing at him as he is'.

The first retreat in the UK took place at St Augustine's House of Prayer, Old Colwyn in North Wales <https://houseofprayer.org.uk>

A trained team now offers the retreat in different parts of the UK in various forms – residential, on-line, as an 8-week *School of Meditation*. To support those journeying in this way, there are monthly contemplative prayer group 'meetings' which currently take place through Zoom. 'Taster' days or introductory sessions can be arranged as requested.

Contact: Paddy Rylands [paddyrylands@gmail.com](mailto:paddyrylands@gmail.com)  
Sr Mary Dargie [enquiries@houseofprayer.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@houseofprayer.org.uk) or  
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## EVENTS

### CSN 2021 CONFERENCE

**Infinite Riches** Romans 11.33

Mon 7 – Wed 9 June 2021

Speaker: Professor Michael Barnes SJ

Liturgist: Bernadette Farrell

**Online Conference**

£70 members/ £75 non-members/  
concessions available

<http://csn.retreats.org.uk/conference.php>

## PAST EVENTS

Many thanks are due to two former Chairs of CSN, Magdalen Lawler and Tom McGuinness, who gave freely of their time and gifts to offer both an Advent Day retreat (*The Well at the Gate to Bethlehem*) and a Day of Prayer for Candlemas (*Rembrandt & Rumi*) as recent online events for the Network – to build our community, replenish our resources and offer a time of hope and sharing online. The days were very well received with their combination of music, art, poetry, prayer and times of sharing.

Elsewhere in this newsletter CSN members, Diana Pinchin and Margaret Palladino, share their experiences of online events and how we can be enriched by them – not least, as someone else said, by seeing everyone’s faces rather than the backs of chairs!

During the Day of Prayer for Candlemas, participants spoke movingly about an image of snowdrops, and the ability of these plants to survive and grow towards the light in tough conditions. Here is the photo (thanks to Tom) with extracts from a poem sent in by Diana after the day.

## LIGHT OF HOPE

The days get longer bringing new light to us all.

The light is already present in the dark days of winter.

The light God gives is of welcome, hope and peace, and available to all if we are open to receive...



## Catholic Spirituality Network

**Executive Committee:** Shirley Taylor (Chair), Eamonn Hamilton (Treasurer) Mary Groom, Mary Nono, Fr Chris Thomas, Fr David Tobin, Sr Magdalen Lawler SND (COR rep), Fr Tomy Rockey CP (Passionist Spirituality rep), Jo Alstott (Youth rep).

**Membership Secretary:** Margaret Palladino.

**Newsletter:** Jill Keegan. *Please send newsletter contributions to the email below.*

Contact: Margaret Palladino

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