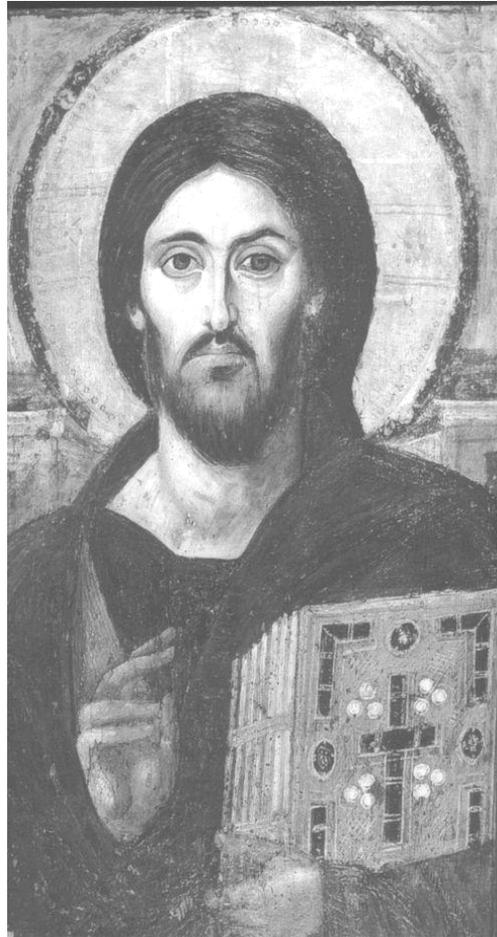


Entering the Stream of Mercy



In the Jesus Prayer

by William Ryan

Dedication

This work is dedicated in gratitude to all those throughout space and time who have transmitted the Stream of Mercy we know as Person in Jesus the Christ.

Foreword

This short work, in digital or print form, is intended for free distribution only with proper attribution. The intention of the author is to encourage the ancient practice of the Jesus Prayer in its many expressions and forms as our path of union and participation in the Christ Mystery, and to find our soul's ultimate healing in the embrace of Jesus, who eternally invites each human being. "*Abide in my love.*" (John 15:9)

I hope that you will find this work encouraging in the promise we all have to experience our heart's desire in God's Self-Revelation in Jesus the Christ, who is accessible to us as Person and universally present and healing Divine Love offered to all.

About the Author

Bill Ryan is a spiritual director, retired from a career in clinical counseling. He is the author of two books on the Prayer of the Heart practice: *The Beloved is My Refuge*, and *Breathing Yeshua*. He is co-founder of Contemplative Ministries of the Pacific Northwest. (www.prayeroftheheart.com)

Entering the Stream of Mercy in the Jesus Prayer

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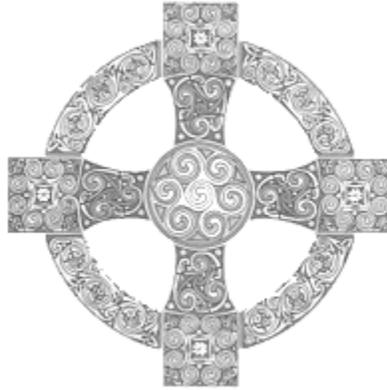
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Chapt.One- Entering the Stream of Mercy

"I have always overshadowed Jonas with My mercy, and cruelty I know not at all. Have you had sight of Me, Jonas My child? Mercy within mercy within mercy."
(Thomas Merton-The Sign of Jonas p.362)

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:9)

Christ- the Stream of Loving Mercy

My dear friends, there is a stream of Mercy that flows through us and through the entire world. Mercy is Divine Love extending into all of life, reaching and healing with its tender touch, calling us Home unto Itself. God did so love the world that He gave the gift of Himself, Divine Love, as total gift in the person of Jesus the Christ. Many of us know that hidden Stream of Mercy as Person in Jesus, the risen and universal Christ. He is, as he promised the Samaritan woman, the gift of God, the Living Water that springs up within us, if we are willing. Our journey in this life is to unite our life and the life of the world with this universal Stream of Mercy who is Christ, and to offer the soul of the world to His healing touch. Salvation is this journey of soul healing, our soul and the soul of the world. We make our souls accessible to His healing touch not by a passive credence in the historical Jesus alone but by giving ourselves in trust to Him in relationship of communion, as He is, the Light and Life of the World, present in our hearts. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son..." (John 3:16) And this Life of Christ is offered to all who seek him in calling on his Holy name. "I have come that they might have Life and have it fully." (Matt. 10:10)

The Human Condition of Suffering

As Jesus wept over Jerusalem so we also weep over the human state in our world. We weep over the wounded and broken state of our souls and the soul of humankind. Greed, fear, violence, and cruelty rule our world and too often rule our private lives as well. Yet the institutions of religion have fallen short in this mission of bringing healing to our world. Too often they have tried to substitute themselves for the Living Christ or tried to make of themselves an intermediary. Too often Christians struggle with who owns the power, the recognition, and how the institutional structure will be funded in religion. The Good News is that Jesus offers himself eternally in the fullness of his love as total gift, without intermediation. The Good News, my friends, is that Jesus is present to us in the temple of the Heart and not the temple of bricks and mortar on the hill.

We have an intuition that in our tears God weeps in us and with us. And deep within us, more clearly than ever, there is a greater faith that only the loving mercy of God will suffice. The promise of the Gospel to those on the Christian path is that we can unite our soul with this loving Mercy from the Heart of God in the person, Jesus, and therein find healing, peace, and communion. This Person is manifest in the Jesus of history, and the triune Godhead is accessible to us as Person in the Universal Risen Christ, our every-moment companion and Life of our life. *"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of people."* (John 1:3). Whether we are religious or not, whether we belong to a denomination or not, whether we attend a church or not, we can unite our soul with the Light of God, whom we know as Christ, friend, companion, beloved spouse of the soul, our beginning and our end, our Light and Salvation.

The Gift of God's Own Self

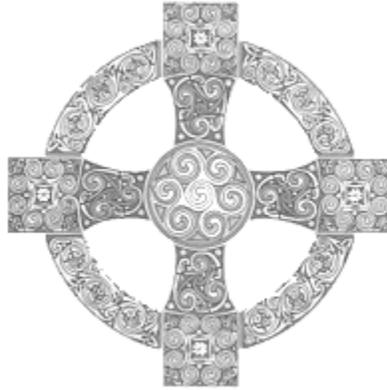
Jesus said to the woman at the well that he is the "gift of God" and that whoever asks may receive the "living water" gushing forth from within. This Stream of Mercy is Christ and we may enter and find our life in this Living Water gushing forth from God. To enter this stream Jesus says we need only ask, and we can ask by simply calling on His name. In the Judeo-Christian tradition to call or be called "by name" means intimate personal knowledge. This union with Christ transcends all divisions of belief, doctrine, denomination and history. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)

The Person of Christ- Our Sole Religion

Our mistake has been that we substitute our religious institutions for the Living Christ, our true source of Life. The person of Jesus, the universal Christ, should be our sole religion, and communion with Christ our sole religious practice. Institutions may have their place in preserving tradition. They are no substitute for the Eternal Beloved who meets us as Person in the Risen Christ. Those persons who seek healing from addiction have made Higher Power of God their sole refuge and the 12 steps their practice. They

have no churches, denominations, or institutions. Yet Recovery happens. When we come to abide in the Person of Christ at the center, not the concept or the institution, then we enter the Stream of Mercy who is Christ and are carried into the great Ocean of the Godhead whom Jesus called "Abba" or Father. The soul healing of Salvation happens.

Regardless of the wide differences in denominational affiliation, our beliefs, our loyalties, or lack of them, all of us on the Christian path can make the person Jesus, our true and only religion. We can let communion with his Heart of Mercy be our singular practice. Our souls and that of humankind are in desperate need of the Stream of Mercy emanating from His heart to find healing. The ancient spiritual tradition of the Jesus Prayer comes to us from the deserts of the Middle East in the earliest centuries of the Christian Way. This path offers us a doorway into this Stream of Mercy, no matter who we are and where we find ourselves in life. We can become the vessel of His Life of Mercy in the world. We can become the lit flame and polished lamp of his Fire of Love. *"Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you."* (Matt. 7:7)



Chapter Two- Jesus Prayer- Prayer of Union

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29)

"As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." (John 15:9)

Jesus- Healer of Our Soul

In the ever-present person of Jesus we find the Healer of our soul. This healing comes when we become one with him. He invites us to abide in his love. And in this way we share in the love of the Trinity, the communion of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. A simple conceptual "belief" in the historical Jesus as God and Savior may suffice for some people. Yet what heals the soul is to come home to an experiential union with the Christ Mystery who is the Heart of God. In union with the Person of Jesus we do come home to receive and to live in the Love of God. Jesus says, *"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love."* (John 15:9) To abide in his love is to abide in his person. This is the basis of the of Jesus Prayer. Jesus is within us and we are within him, and we may abide in his love always.

The Jesus Prayer- Ancient Prayer of Union with Christ

The Jesus prayer comes to us from earliest Christianity. Those followers of Jesus who wanted to realize his message of a simplicity of life unified in the love of God and neighbor went into the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East. Going into the "inner room" (Matt. 6:6) of the heart they sought to abide in the love of Christ as their sole and unifying motivation in life. And like all of us they realized that to be so totally given and consecrated, to totally "abide" in the love of Christ, and unite their souls to his Person, they must find a way to free themselves of the misdirected obsessions and compulsions of mind and behavior. They found a powerful and an every-moment anchor in Christ's presence by invoking his name as their prayer word in alignment with their breath.

This simple but powerful prayer has continued to the present day in the oldest continuing Christian monastery of the Middle East, St. Catherine of Sinai, on the slopes of Mt. Sinai, the very mountain where God appeared to Moses. The icon of Christ on the front page of this booklet comes from that monastery and is the oldest known rendering of the image of Christ. The ancient form of Prayer of the Heart known as the Jesus Prayer is practiced to this day in this monastery on slopes of Mt. Sinai where God appeared to Moses in the Fire of the Burning Bush. This prayer of union and of mercy continues to the present day, but is most widely known in the traditions of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. It is a path of prayer that is open to all who seek soul healing through inner union with Jesus.

First and foremost the Jesus prayer is a prayer of union. The promise of this union is made clear in the Gospel, "

" On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (John 14:20) Our union with Christ is not only possible, it is our birthright as child of God, it is the calling of grace and the purpose of our journey in this life. This union is always offered in the self-gift of Jesus. He offers himself, and union in his love ceaselessly. We are made accessible to him in the prayer of our self-offering. This joining (yoke) is what heals our soul and brings us to rest and live in Eternal Life in his Heart. In the Christian tradition we practice this prayer of union by calling on the name of Jesus within in the Jesus prayer. The power of his name opens us to receive the gift of communion. The Jesus prayer is our response to his invitation to rest our soul and abide in him.

Praying the Jesus Prayer

In silence and stillness-When we want to remind ourselves of a loved one we think of their name, and the longing and love we share with them. So it is with our friend, our companion, our home and refuge, Jesus. We remember his name.

* So to enter into conscious communion with him we say his name inwardly, sitting in a quiet place, perhaps with an icon or a cross on a home altar before us.

* With each breath we repeat his name silently and let all other thoughts arise and go on, giving them no heed. So that slowly the only consideration, the only focus of our attention, the only act of our will, is to be close to the presence of Jesus, the living Presence of God as Person.

* Again and again we simply return as we find our attention wandering or our longing and desire diverted by other things. In this way, abiding in his love, healing in his presence become our singular lifetime devotion and desire. It is this continual return that is the essential rhythm of this practice.

In the tradition of the Jesus prayer, some simply say the name of Jesus, or the Aramaic form of Jesus, "Yeshua." Breathing the first syllable on the in-breath and the second syllable on the out-breath. For others the more extended forms of the Jesus prayer are preferred. These include: "Jesus, have mercy" or "Lord Jesus, son of the Living God, have mercy." Choose the form that you are most drawn to. Sitting for 15-25 minutes of silence and interior quiet simply resting in the presence of Christ, anchored in the breathing in and out of his name, brings healing and freeing of our fears and obsessions, and brings us home to "abide in his love."

Praying the Jesus Prayer Throughout the Day

Doing this once, or twice, or three times a day, establishes us in an ongoing return to inner communion with Christ throughout the day, in the midst of activity and relationships. We enter an ongoing ceaseless joining with Jesus in the flow of his loving Mercy into the world, by returning to the power of his name and abiding in his love. We come to him, heavy burdened by our preoccupation and fear, and there find the freedom to rest our soul entirely in the freedom of his love. Therein is our peace and our completion in life.

We are the Beloved Disciple

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved." (John 13:23)

When we consider union with Christ as the center of our life we might hold the image of the apostle John, at the Last Supper, resting his head on the bosom of Jesus, listening to his heartbeat. The Greek word used for bosom refers to the area around the breastbone nearest the heart. Celtic Christian tradition holds the true source of spiritual life, not as the institutional transmission of belief, but the direct stream of Christ's own Loving Mercy when we open to His heartbeat in the practice of inner communion in prayer.

Living the Life of Christ in the Jesus Prayer

Jesus said *"I came that they should have Life and have it fully."* (Matt. 10:10) The goal of our life is unite our human life, our human soul utterly with His Life, and to receive the gift of himself that he wants to give. This is a life-long process of opening and receiving and bringing forth this union with Jesus, so that he can live fully in us. In the Jesus Prayer we open and receive this union.

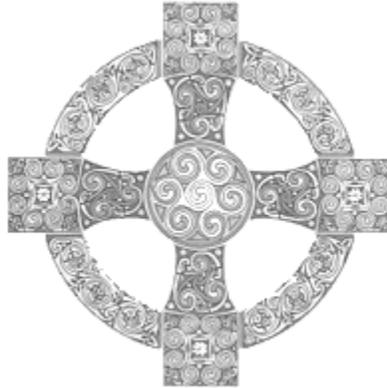
When we are in a relationship of love or close friendship, there are times when we simply abide in the presence of our human beloved one. There are other times when we express our love and givenness in words and rituals of love. My path is that of inner communion with Christ, my Beloved, the emanation of the Godhead as Person. My practice is the disciplined daily self-offering in love that I make to and with Yeshua, giving of the gift of my person and receiving the gift of His Person. My day begins and ends with the invocation in vocalized chant, "Yeshua (Jesus), Yeshua (Jesus), You in me, I in you." Everything else is the actualization of that singular desire, that singular intention. This is Theosis, Christ living in us and we living in Him, the foundation of spirituality and transformation in Eastern Christianity. We are the beloved disciple; our calling is to "abide in his love." In this way over time we can begin to say as St. Paul does, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20)

The Christian writer Brian Taylor says it this way:

"For contemplatives, the use of The Jesus Prayer may be one of the most ancient, consistently taught, simplest, most direct, and powerful ways of accessing Christ's

transformative power in prayer. It calls upon us only to be present, to open our hearts to God, and to observe those personal obstacles that arise to stand in the way of that openness. By using the name of Jesus, it encapsulates everything we know, believe, love, and hope about Him, who is both the human face of God as well as our human potential. But rather than thinking about Jesus or our relationship to him, the Jesus Prayer brings us into His very presence. And in this nearness, He lives His life through us and takes us into the glory of God."

(Taylor, *Becoming Christ: Transformation Through Contemplation*) p. 75-76)



Chapter 3- Jesus Prayer- Prayer of Intercession

*"Listen, listen, Listen in silence, listenening
to the One from whom all Mercy comes." (paraphrase from psalm 130)*

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,
Have mercy, Have Mercy, Upon us.*

*Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy.)
Christe Eleison (Christ have mercy.)
Kyrie Eleison(Lord have mercy)*

Prayer of Intercession

The Jesus Prayer is a prayer of union with Christ as we offer our soul to abide in the Heart of Christ. The Jesus Prayer is also a prayer of intercession as we offer the soul of the world to the healing of Christ.

The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus is the Living Word in Whom all things came into being. In Eastern Christianity he is called the Pantokrator, the ruler and sovereign of the universe. Just as our soul is healed when it comes to rest in the bosom of Christ, so is the soul of humankind healed, indeed the whole universe as it comes to the embrace of its true Source and Ruler, the Christ Pantokrator. In our invocation to the name of Jesus in the Jesus prayer we also intercede for the world, offering all people, all beings, all creation to the mercy and healing touch of the Risen Yeshua. In Him all Creation is reconciled and unified with its Creator. The wound of separateness is healed. This is the redemptive work and meaning of the cross of Christ, his life, death, and resurrection, and we are invited to participate in his redeeming Risen Life in our own life. He is the Stream of Mercy emanating from the Father.

The Redeeming Mercy of Christ- Alive in Us

The more our soul becomes accessible to union with Christ the greater our growing experience that we are in Christ, and He in us. This union is confirmed in the growth of a compassion, a loving tenderness, towards our brothers and sisters in all humanity and

towards all of God's Creatures and Creation. This is the Mercy of Christ coming alive in us. We may experience this as a painfully exquisite warmth and sensitivity to the suffering and need of the world, welling up from a deep source at the center of our being and extending outward. We may not entirely welcome this development, as we may feel exposed to the pain of the world in a way not previously felt. This is the double-edged sword that Jesus brings in healing our soul. We are quickened to the presence of His Life within us. We feel joyfully alive, and at the same time the Life of Christ that brings this aliveness also brings an awareness and empathy for the suffering in the world. We are participating and moving with the Stream of Mercy that is Jesus. Nothing is outside of it, nothing beyond His concern.

Our Response

Sometimes in life the Mercy of Christ leads us to do a deed, or render a service, be present to another. We never know when that will happen. Sometimes the Mercy of Christ brings us to a calling we never anticipated. At other times, in other events in life, the painful circumstances with our loved ones, or on the other side of the world, call forth in us the response of intercession, of offering this pain and this dilemma to Greater Mercy that alone encompasses all things. This is the faith and the practice of intercession. Every day, many times a day I raise my hands in offering, offering the circle of loved ones and friends, offering the suffering of humankind, and the needs of all Creation to the healing touch of Jesus. I place them all on my home altar, in trust, and in the release of peace that I am not in control. I do not possess what is needed personally to bring healing, but Jesus, the Risen One, does. I do this not by necessarily listing or insisting my agenda for an outcome, but by gathering them together and invoking his name.

"Yeshua, my beloved, in your mercy, I offer all these who are your own."

The wounds of the world are placed in his hands:

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wounds of our soul.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wounds of the world.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of human greed.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of lust for power.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of violence and war.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of poverty.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of abandonment.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wounds of mental illness and addiction.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the wound of child neglect and abuse.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer our human frailty and weakness.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer all our human failings and sins.

Jesus/Yeshua in your mercy, we offer the soul of the world.

Serenity Prayer

We humans are filled with anxiety about the outcomes of life. We worry about the future. Jesus admonished us, 'Do not worry about this and that! God knows our needs.' As humans we need to focus our energies on what we can do in this moment and not worry

about what we can't do. We are not in control of the world. What we can do, in this moment, is to love the best we can and to lift up our family, our loved ones, and the whole of humankind as offering to the limitless mercy of Yeshua. The Serenity Prayer of the Recovery movement speaks this simple surrender:

" God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

In this way the Jesus prayer is not only an intercessory prayer but also a prayer which leads me to the peace of surrender, surrender of myself, and of the suffering and needs of the world. The Jesus prayer is my form of the ***serenity prayer***.

" Be not afraid .. I am with you always " (Matt. 28:10,20)



Chapter 4- Jesus Prayer- Prayer of Transformation and Healing

"I am the vine, you are the branches; who abides in Me and I in them, bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

The Life-Long Walk with Jesus- The Soul's Journey of Healing-

Quadratos- the four transformative movements of the Gospels:

Alexander Shaia, (*Beyond the Biography of Jesus: The Journey of Quadratos*) speaks of the soul's journey being told in the four canonical Gospels as the map of our transformative walk with Jesus. The Gospel of Mathew, the First Path, is "Climbing the Great Mountain." This Gospel was written at a time of great despair and challenge, when the Temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed. Our soul's awakening begins with the awareness that the egoic self and its patterns and structures we have built our life around are crumbling. We feel lost, alone, and in need. We must give our life over to our life's companion, Yeshua, if we are to break out of our self-made prison and find resurrection.

The Second Path, "Crossing the Stormy Sea," is the Gospel of Mark. Historically this was written at the time of the terrible persecutions and martyrdom of Christians. Here we encounter the great life challenges and trials of change and loss in our journey with Christ. We are invited to take refuge in faithfulness and Yeshua's enduring love as our soul's salvation. Our companion, Yeshua, sustains us through the difficult journey, as we learn to rely ever more fully in trust on him alone.

In the Third Path, the Gospel of John, we come to "Rest in the Glorious Garden" in our deepening experience of union with him. Having left behind the ego-self and its patterns, we come to rest in his companionship in relational union. We are the beloved disciple, and like the apostle John, in Yeshua's embrace alone our soul finds its rest. Our head rests upon the breast of Christ and we are attuned to the beating of his heart as the guide of our life. This is the illumination phase of our journey of transformation. The healing of our wound of separateness brings us from death to Resurrection and to the consolations of peace and joy.

In the Gospel of Luke, in the Fourth Path we are "Walking the Remembered Road," returning to the world of human community, living the risen and apostolic life. Like the friends of Jesus on the road to Emmaus and in the Upper Room, we re-enter the world offering the gifts of the Spirit that arise from our ongoing union with Christ our constant companion. Through the soul's healing from the wound of separateness, we are forever "oned" to Christ and become the lit flame of his Light in the world. In the ceaseless practice of the Jesus Prayer we perpetually return to Yeshua's companioning and give ourselves and our need for healing over to him in every moment of life.

Ann's Story- "Soaking in Jesus"

Ann was a woman in her 70s. She came to see me for professional counseling referred by her doctor for treatment of clinical depression. She had a marginal response to medication alone so the physician believed there might be psychotherapeutic concerns to be addressed in her treatment. Her husband had died a couple of years prior and she appeared to be having a complicated grief reaction. I found Ann to be a person of great depth and compassion for others.

As I got to know her better Ann talked about a painful, early life with a childhood and adolescence of great suffering but had found stability as an adult. She made a happy marriage to a good man and raised two sons who remained close to her. The central wound in her early life was abandonment by her mother and an extensive history of sexual abuse by a stepfather. Her mother left her with her grandmother at an early age who raised her for a period of time. Her grandmother was not a warm person but did give her stability and discipline, and a grounding in Christian life and religious practice. When her mother returned and took back custody, Ann experienced a traumatic and tragic period of sexual abuse over a period of years at the hands of her stepfather, extending into adolescence. As might be imagined this deeply scarred her self-esteem and self-confidence and she was prone to despair and depressive moods, intrusive flashbacks and memories, sometimes with suicidal thoughts. Ann began to recover as a young adult and rediscovered her Christian Faith and a growing experience of relationship with Christ. She married a good man and found a good life and enduring friendships through her experiences of faith community. She continued, however, to be plagued by bouts of depressive mood and doubts about her own worth.

Upon the death of her husband Ann was revisited with self-doubt and feelings of unworthiness from her childhood and adolescence. In the course of the therapeutic work we did together it became clear to me that her experience of trust, love, and communion with the person of Jesus was her most valuable healing resource. I also discovered that through the years she discovered through grace her own method of Prayer of the Heart. Ann reported that in times of crisis when she had been beset with despair and intrusive memories of abuse, taking her cue from the Bible verse of Matt 6:6, she literally went into her prayer "closet," that is, her clothes closet. She hung a picture of Jesus on the wall of her closet and held it in her mind while she emptied herself of afflictive thoughts and feelings and, in her own words, "soaked in Jesus." This, she reported, was the only way she could find peace, safety, and well-being. She has continued this way of silent inner communion with Jesus through the years and it has brought her much healing and

peace. I encouraged her to continue in this practice and allow the afflictive thoughts to arise and to be released, and to offer the wounded places in her soul to the healing touch of Jesus.

One day Ann arrived to our session, radiant and smiling. She reported that she had a vision of her own true spirit. In the vision she saw her true self "as Jesus sees me." "I was so beautiful and lovely and cherished in his sight, and I have never been apart from him." Ann had one more session after that. About a year and a half later Ann's son called me. He said she was in the hospital and was terminally ill with pancreatic cancer and wanted to see me. I went to see her and talked with her briefly. Though she was groggy from medication she smiled and grasped my hand. A short time later I saw her again at her son's home, the night before she died. She couldn't speak but had a serene smile on her face and squeezed my hand. She was utterly at peace, knowing she was going to her true home in the Heart of Christ and wanted me to know she was just fine. The wounds of her soul had been healed and she was ready.

In her "soaking in Jesus" Ann was able to be healed and recover the image of God, her true identity as child of God, branch of the Vine of Christ. In healing from the wound of separateness she discovered her dignity and her worth as a lit flame of the Light of Christ in the world, brought forth in her own humanity.

Healing Our Soul

"The soul, transformed and infused with the love of Christ, is the gift we make to God in the life's spiritual journey. Our spiritual work in this life is to bring forth a soul that is transparent, shining, and aflame with the Light of Christ, in harmony with the true spirit.

In the inner work of Prayer of the Heart (Jesus Prayer) we bring the wounds and dark spaces of our soul to the healing touch of Christ. We open every dark corner of the soul to the Light and Love of Christ to be offered to His limitless Love. ... ***But the central wound of our soul and source of every spiritual ill is the wound of separateness. For Christians Christ is the healing balm for this injury, freeing us to live our human life fully united with His Life in every moment of life.***" (from *Breathing Yeshua*- by William Ryan)

Our life of Companionship and Devotional Love with Jesus-

In the Garden- (hymn)
"And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known." Charles Miles

This traditional hymn is cherished in many Christian communities because it speaks of a simple reality that is the heart of the Christian Revelation. A healing union with Christ is the essence of what we call religion. This union can be experienced as an every day,

every moment companionship that we receive and surrender our life to. When we surrender fully to Yeshua, and leave all else behind, we find our true Life.

The four Rs of companionship with Christ through praying with Scripture-

Prayer of the Heart- It is not with the mind, or the intellect we hear the Living Word, but it is with the Heart we open to experience the Living Word of Christ's Presence within us. In the Prayer of the Heart, or the Jesus Prayer, we come to experience the Living Word of Christ, Jesus the Christ, the Word of God. The transformation of one's life may be seen as the transition from living life from the mind, the thoughts, the emotions and the instincts to living life fully from the Heart Christ. In this way he can come fully alive in us, so that "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:19-20)

Lectio Divina or Divine Reading is the formalized movement from the mind and conceptual reflection on scripture to listening and experiencing the Presence of Christ in the Heart. One way to remember the four movements of Lectio Divina or Divine Reading is the four Rs:

1. **Reading**-(Lectio)- At this level we listen deeply to the written word of God, listening to those words or phrases in the reading which seem to speak to us, to touch our heart in a special way. This is a receptive way of reading and listening, open to receive, as the parable of the seed falling on fertile ground.

2. **Reflecting** (meditatio)- In this movement we are listening receptively rather than analyzing or interpreting. We ask the question, in what way Jesus is directing us, speaking to us about our own life? It is important to remember that this is not Bible study or objective interpretation, or a theological study, but a personal reflection to the Living Word of God speaking to us through the written word. It is a deeper movement toward listening and pondering in the heart as Christ is speaking individually to us through the text.

3. **Responding** (oratio)- The third movement of Lectio is that of allowing spontaneous prayer in response to the listening and reflecting. How do we open in our desire in response God's word? How do we open in our longing for the Living Word of God, Christ, to flame up within us? In what way do we respond to the call to be transformed in God's Love? With praise, gratitude, contrition, new commitment? We express this response in words and in human emotion.

4. **Resting in God** (contemplatio) This is the movement into intimacy beyond words and concepts. This is the movement into pure faith or trust. It is enough to rest in the Presence of Jesus alone within. We move beyond the mediation of words and thoughts, into Yeshua's pure Presence, pure Love. This longing, this desire, this commitment to take refuge, to rest in him alone, rather than our own thoughts, emotions, agendas, and inclinations is the movement into pure Prayer of the Heart or Jesus Prayer.

The life of prayer is a circle with rhythms which extend from experiencing the Living Word of God in our own Hearts within, to expressing and living the Word of God in all of life through compassion and service. It is a process of consecrating self and the world to the love of God, it is the life of transformation and every-moment companionship in Christ.

The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Made Real in our Life:

Our Daily Cross

"How do we take up our cross daily, when do we do this? In our practice of Prayer of the Heart both in stillness and in the middle of life we cultivate the interior movements of presence and adoration. In our adoration we bow in self-offering love to Christ who is our Life. In the ceaseless invocation of the name of Yeshua we unite our human life to the Life of the Risen One and we enter the life of Resurrection.

Our cross of human vulnerability and impermanence, our cross of separateness, are the raw material of our daily bowing in adoration and self-offering in love. All of us, without exception, come through life wounded, especially in the earlier years when we are most vulnerable and least defended. Our wounds, the wounds we often deny and run away from, can be seen as the sacred wounds of Christ. We may have hidden them in shame, or in fear. The way we defend our wounds and protect ourselves from further harm may keep us from loving more deeply. Yet it is these very wounds that are the way of our salvation. *If we look closely in our journey, it is the way that we have been hurt or injured in life and our search for healing and strength that become our Way into Christ.* For me the early injuries of insecurity and isolation, became the fuel for my finding true sanctuary and true belonging in the Heart of Christ.

The main purpose of God's redemptive work is that we may be restored to a life of participation in His Life in Christ. *Hence true redemption, true salvation, is the healing of the soul's capacity to receive and manifest the love of Christ, present within us from the beginning.*

Our Sacred Wounds

Our Wounds in the Paschal Mystery are the means of our redemption and opening to the Risen Life of Christ. Think of those times in your life when you are brought closest to your wounds, to your vulnerability as a human being. They are times of crisis, when the habitual patterns don't work, when the usual supports aren't present. They are a time of trial when the temptation is to dig a hole and climb into it, or lash out in anger or self-defense and fear. This is the moment when the cross of Christ is our redemptive path. In this moment when we allow Christ to choose, and say "yes"- that we are given in love, given in trust to love more deeply, more fully, more completely. That is a Resurrection moment. The beatitudes teach us that Resurrection happens only in our vulnerability when we really exercise Faith to take refuge in Christ. When things are going well, when the mind and psyche feel secure, we are comfortable in our habitual patterns and old husks. When things fall apart, through grace, the self of separateness can fall apart into the life of communion with Christ. *Holding it together isn't always a good thing. When*

we fall apart into the arms of Christ, that is a good thing indeed and we break free from our husks into butterfly glory and flight.

Jesus said, " I am the Resurrection and the Life, those who believe in me, though they die, will live."(John 11:25) The way we come to that realization is through our humanity. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (I CO 1:23) said that he came to proclaim neither the law of the Jews nor the wisdom of the Greeks but Christ crucified. No high minded philosophy nor exacting moral laws will bring us to oneness with Christ, but only the cross of our life experience, if we let grace happen. He was talking to people about what is real, that life is tough, and you can't realize goodness by making rules or expounding lofty ideals; rather you come to love's completion through the hard things in life. M. Scott Peck said that life is a school for loving. And so it is in our relationships, they are a dimension of the cross, the school of our life, where we learn to love, fully and deeply

Resurrection Life in Ordinary Life

As we deepen our practice in the Way of the Heart we come to live Resurrection in ordinary daily life. We experience not just crucifixion but the glory and joy of the Risen Life of Christ. Our Resurrection becomes our journey of singular refuge in Christ alone.

We find extraordinary joy in the ordinary life of walking with others, it is the road to Emmaus, eating, drinking, cooking the fish for others. We find joy in breaking bread; we sail on the sea of Galilee with Yeshua in the everyday lives of service. Resurrection life is sailing with Yeshua in this way, in the ordinary life of ours. True enlightenment and mystic union leads to this state, of living ordinary life with exquisite and extraordinary joy and love. Resurrection leads not to separation but joining fully the unitive life of humanity and all Creation. In us Christ can love and serve our loved ones, our community, and the created world of all things around us. It is a life of consecrated love and concern for all things. The true measure of a life then is agape, unitive love, and its measure is the tender concern we bring to all we do.

The transforming union is the birthing of Agape, self-offering love, the journey that began in exile and alienation takes us back into community. The Way of the Cross takes us to the Golgotha of our lives, and from there to the empty tomb. Resurrection takes us on the road to Emmaus where we walk with others. Resurrection takes us on to the sea of Galilee and sailing with Jesus and our brothers and sisters, back into community, back into service and finding the Christ at the center of our own heart, equally in the world and in others. It is the work of the Risen Christ, His Resurrection and Life in us, coming to fruition in our life." (from *Breathing Yeshua*- by Bill Ryan)

Healing the Soul of the World- Prayer of Mercy-Our soul's healing does not take place in isolation. In becoming a vessel of Christ's mercy, we enter the stream of his healing love and we offer and bring the soul of the world with us. Hence we pray daily and without ceasing - Lifting up the soul wounds of the world to Christ's Self-Offering Love

and Healing Touch. In this way the Jesus prayer is the prayer of our soul's healing and the healing of the soul of the world. They are not separate. All are one in the body of Christ.

Prayer of Healing and Transformation from St. Symeon - 10th cent.

With my friend, Ann, may we all pray this prayer of refuge in the healing love of Jesus. May all of us, like Ann, find our peace and joy in arms of Jesus, when he says, "Come to me, all you who are heavy burdened, ...and I will give you a place to rest your soul." (Matt. 11:28)

*"We awaken in Christ's body,
As Christ awakens in our bodies,
and my poor hand is Christ.
He enters my foot and is infinitely me.*

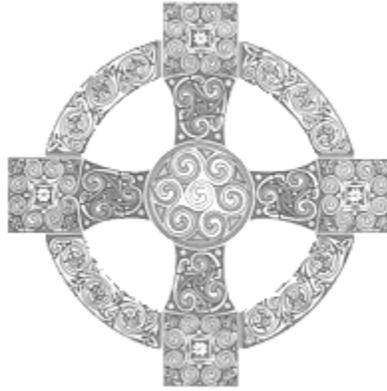
*I move my hand, and wonderfully
my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him
(for God is indivisibly whole seamless in God's Nature)*

*I move my foot and at once he appears like a flash of
lightning.
Do my words seems blasphemous?-- Then open your
heart to Him.*

*and let yourself receive the One who is opening so
deeply. For if we genuinely love Him,
we wake up inside Christ's body.*

*Where all our body, all over, every hidden part of it,
is realized in joy as Him,
and He makes us , utterly real.*

*and everything that is hurt, everything that seemed to us dark,
harsh, shameful, maimed, ugly, irreparably damaged, is in Him
transformed.
and recognized as whole, as lovely;
and radiant in His light.
We awaken as the Beloved
in every last part of our body."*



Chapter 5- Living the Jesus Prayer-

"Repent, for the kingdom of God is very near." Mark 1:15).

Our Daily Life of Soul Healing- The "Good News" is that the Kingdom of God, union with Jesus, is accessible for everyone. We become accessible to this union by repentance, that is, changing the direction we seek for happiness by finding in the Heart of Christ our only fulfillment in life. Hence our ceaseless abiding in his love in the middle of life is the essence of this conversion. To surrender our soul to his love rather than to all the false idols and illusions we create is the life of ongoing conversion.

The Life of Ongoing Conversion- (Adaptation of 12 Steps of Recovery)

The 12 Step Recovery Movement has been described as God's gift to the 20th and now 21st century. It is a way for all people, church and unchurch to live a spiritual life of surrender to the Higher Power we call God, and that Christians know as Person in Jesus the Christ. The 12 Steps are a map to transformational living. *"I have come to seek and to save the lost."* (Luke 19:10) In the Jesus Prayer we receive the gift of conversion that is offered to us each moment of life.

Spiritual Life- All Life becomes Prayer-

The people in the 12 step Recovery Movement are right. We all need Higher Power to find freedom and healing in our soul. Having a spiritual life is simple but not easy. We need only begin by invoking the name of Jesus (Yeshua). Again and again, throughout each day, throughout your life, with each breath. And we will begin to realize that every kind thought, deed, or action, every desire to extend love and healing into the world, every goodness that is within our heart, is Him, is this Stream of Mercy emanating from the Father into humankind. And we can unite our soul utterly with Yeshua and realize we are Home at last! He is our Higher Power. We can begin with this very breath. I have adapted the 12 Steps here so they can be understood and lived by one who is on the path of Mercy in the Jesus Prayer.

12 Steps of Conversion and Soul Healing in the Heart of Christ-

1. Admit we are powerless to heal our souls of our own effort alone.
2. Trust that relational union with Christ can spiritually redeem and transform us.

3. Surrender our life in loving trust to the care of the Redeemer Christ.
4. Commit ourselves to ongoing contrition and conversion away from harmful thoughts and actions towards loving and healing ways.
5. Accept responsibility before Jesus and those we have wronged for those injuries we have committed in life.
6. Open our souls, mind, and emotions, and all injuries of life, to the healing touch of Jesus.
7. Humbly ask him for the grace of conversion and transformation of our wrongful and hurtful ways.
8. Ongoing review our life and those occasions when we have caused or received harm from others, and to receive and bestow Yeshua's gift of mutual forgiveness.
9. Make amends for any harm we have caused whenever possible.
10. Daily to renew our souls healing in Yeshua's love and abiding presence, and to renew our commitment and conversion to abide only in the heart of Christ and find no other refuge.
11. Commit to ceaseless return to the name of Jesus in interior silent prayer and in daily life. We practice this as our inner consecration to abiding conscious union with him.
12. Having found spiritual healing and peace as a result of these steps, we share with others this Way of ceaseless abiding in Christ that is life-giving.

The actualization of the Mercy of Christ- the Great Commandment

"Jesus answered, *"The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 29-31)

In the similar version of this quote in the Gospel of Mathew Jesus says, *"In this is the whole law and the prophets."* In other words everything we need to know about the essence of the spiritual and moral life is here in these words. Yet so often we make of religion something complicated. We make our life complicated. Human life is never easy, but at its essence it is simple. And we are inclined as humans to focus on what we can't do, not what we can do. And what we can do, every moment of life, is to give our best effort as an offering of love to our God and our neighbor, and as a follower of Jesus, we make this offering in Christ. In him we love and serve as best we can. Because our best effort, our love offering is Christ in us, loving and serving God and all beings. In the Jesus prayer we are brought back to uniting our life of love and service to His Life in us.

Our Daily Life of Love-Offering

"So if I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)

In this passage in the Gospel story, Jesus is showing us in himself who God is. God is Love who continually offers and gives of God's Own Self. In the washing of the feet of his disciples, who he names his friends, Jesus shows us the utter humility and simplicity of God's Love pouring out into the world. In this act Jesus shows us also, that his live and presence in us is the source of our dignity and worth. In the Jesus Prayer we are brought home, again and again to this dignity he bestows on us, and that we honor in our service to each other. As a father trying to love and care for my dying son, I learned I could not

control the outcome of his disease, but I could walk with him and comfort him, my wife, daughter, and myself through the agony of his passing. As a counselor I learned I could not control or take away the suffering in the lives of my clients. I could make of my professional service to them, my companionship through difficult times, a love offering of compassion. This we can all do. This is how we enter in our service of incarnation and symbolically washing one another's feet in the journey of life.

"Whatever you have done to the least of these, you have done to me."(Matt. 25:40)

My father came from a difficult family background. At the time of his entering adult life he was in the most violent combat of World War Two. As his life unfolded he suffered from the ravages of alcohol and post-traumatic stress disorder. As he grew in faith and communion with Christ the healing touch of Yeshua entered these wounds of his soul and he became through those very same wounds, a healer to others. He understood that every alcoholic who came to him was Christ, and his call was to make of his own service and ministry a love offering to this brother or sister bearing the face of Christ in a broken humanity. In the final months and weeks before his death he waged a public battle with local government authorities who were threatening to close down a detoxification unit and treatment program for adult alcoholics from the street. His testimony of faith was cited in an interview that appeared on the front page of the local newspaper. Chiding the local authorities he cited the words of Jesus in Matthew 25, "Whatever you have done to the least of these, you have done to me." And he knew those words to be true from a lifetime of experience of "washing the feet" of his alcoholic brothers and sisters in Christ. In his death his own story of witness helped that funding to be restored and the alcohol detoxification and treatment center was saved. As we enter the stream of mercy in the Jesus prayer we are brought home again and again to the simple truth, that we are all "the least of these," and we are all the body of Christ on this earth, wounded and broken. And in this state we care for the wounds of Christ in each other.

The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy-

I grew up in the pre-Vatican II era of the Roman Catholic Church. My religious education included the teaching of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. They are one descriptive map to living the life of the Mercy that is Christ. We live the life of washing the feet of the Lord of Mercy in the body and in the spirit.

Spiritual works of Mercy

1. Admonish the sinner- Indeed it is loving mercy to hold up a mirror and, whether as individuals, groups, or in institutional forms, show a brother or sister that their acts or attitudes bring unneeded suffering to themselves and others into the world.

2. Instruct the ignorant- Bringing the light of education to those who lack, is an act of love that lasts a lifetime.

3. Counsel the doubtful- Being present in faith is a gift of comfort and healing to the person suffering in doubt.

4. Comfort the sorrowful- The ministry of loving presence is beyond measure, and we all can do it.

5. Bear wrongs patiently- To not retaliate when wronged, not denying the wrong but giving witness to both the injustice and the healing that is needed is a gift of mercy.

6. Forgive all injuries- In our world forgiveness is life-long growth. We do it, not as an ideal to be lived up to, but as a practice of trust in the Source of Forgiveness, Jesus, the Lord of Mercy.

7. Pray for the living and the dead- As stated in a previous chapter, the Jesus prayer is a prayer of intercession. As we realize our connection to all beings in the Body of Christ, the response of prayer is natural and full.

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. Feed the hungry- What is it to know hunger? To feel the vulnerability, the humiliation and despair of not being able to feed your children, and the fatigue from lack of food- may we recognize and respond to others need.

2. Give drink to the thirsty- Water is the essence of biological life. So many in the world today die, are sickened, and lack this essential. The water of human kindness is too often lacking.

3. Clothe the naked- to be without adequate or appropriate dress is a great humiliation in our world and may be the difference between being employed and accepted. More so, to be cold in the winter is a great suffering indeed.

4. Shelter the homeless- Even in an affluent world, women and children are sleeping in cars and tents, without safety or security. The wandering, the refugee, those without the refuge of home and family- they are Christ calling to us for shelter.

5. Visit the imprisoned- Those in prison possess both shame and opportunity. The crisis of being in jail may often be the time of reflection and limits that make conversion of life possible. An affirmation of dignity and hope in the middle of that crisis may prepare the opening for the grace of contrition, conversion, and new life to happen.

6. Visit the sick- We must all know we are not abandoned when we are most weakened and alone.

7. Bury the dead- The last duty of mercy of a caring community, to acknowledge that one of our own has gone to their death, and not unmourned.

Our Daily Life of Living the Blessing of Jesus in us-Living the Beatitudes:

The path of surrender to the Mercy of Christ leads to true happiness. Our guide and daily reflection on this path was given to us by Jesus when he spoke about living the blessedness of mercy in daily life

Nightly Reflection on the Beatitudes- Yeshua's Guide to Self-Offering Love

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It is enough that I am loved into being. I need not justify, deserve, or aggrandize my existence. "In this nakedness of spirit the soul finds its rest." (John of the Cross- *Prologue- Ascent of Mt. Carmel*) Help me to seek my home and refuge in You alone.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Help me to let go always into You. Help me to grieve into healing and peace.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matt. 11:28) Help me to find my true security in your gentle Heart.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, they shall have their fill.

Help me to seek your justice in all things. " "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24)

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Let me join my soul to your healing Stream of Mercy in all things.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Heal my soul of all division. Let my avoidance and my fear be opened to your touch, seen by your gaze, and receive the light and Fire of your given Life. Let my discipline be aflame with love alone, and not shaken. Let me not offer my soul to shallow substitutes. You are my home and sole refuge. Help me to know my lapses and find my way Home in You.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

Your Shalom is the well of health. Help me invite your healing to those wounds of conflict this day I have inflicted or received and find Peace.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

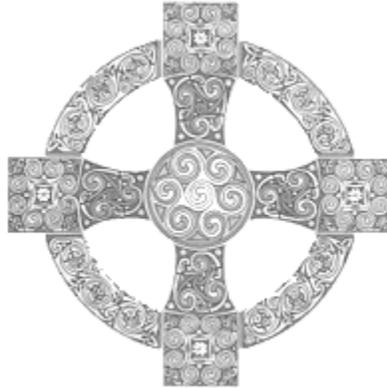
Help me to accept and live the truth of your freedom, and to be the witness of your merciful justice in the world. Yeshua, the Christ, my love, my encirler, each day, each night, each light, each dark. Be near me, uphold me, my treasure, my Truth."

Our Daily Life of Devotional Love

Just as in daily life we show our loved ones we love them in the way we wash their feet, how we serve their needs, so also we tell them we love them, and embrace them in loving expressions and daily rituals of devotion. So it is also in our daily walk with Jesus. We express our love for him in our service to him in others. We also speak, sing, and pray our love to him in the act of daily devotional prayer. This feeds our soul and fires our love throughout the day. In this way we come home to his ever present companionship of us, our refuge in his embrace, and our receptive response to his invitation- "*abide in my love.*"

St. Patrick's Prayer

*Christ as a light, illumine and guide me
Christ as a shield overshadow me
Christ under me
Christ over me
Christ beside me
On my left and my right
This day be within and without me
Lowly and meek, yet all powerful
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak
And the mouth of each who speaks unto me
This day be within and without me
Lowly and meek, yet all powerful
Christ as a light
Christ as a shield
Christ beside me
On my left and on my right.*



Chapter 6- Jesus Prayer in Community- the Sacred Prayer Circle

" Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." (Matt 18:20)

"There is One Body and One Spirit..." (Eph 4:4)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)

When I go to church, usually I am sitting in a pew arranged in lines and rows. I understand there is a reason for this design for seating and worship, an economy of space and seating. Nevertheless the natural expression of our life of devotional love in the Body of Christ is a Circle. The natural shape of essential unity in the love of Christ is the sacred Circle. The Celtic Christians arranged their cross to represent our life of union in the Body of Christ, a cross in a circle. The vertical line of the cross is a symbol of our intimate interior life of communion with God in solitude. The horizontal axis of the cross is our life in communion with the Body of Christ in community, in prayer community and in all creation.

The Sacred Prayer Circle

My deepest experiences of community in the spirit have been in circles of prayer. And so I hold the sacred prayer circle as the ideal to seek for in spiritual community. Too often Christians feel disconnected, isolated in their life of prayer with others. In the sacred prayer circle trust and communion are what we seek and what we can come to experience. I have found this in silent retreats, in ongoing prayer communities of faith sharing, and in devotional and liturgical worship. In the very middle of the circle is placed an altar with the Christ candle in the center. Christ at the center of the sacred prayer circle expresses the source of authority, the source of healing, and the source of our union in him and in one another.

Prayer Circle- Sanctuary Space

Julian of Norwich describes our journey of soul healing in this life as that of "oneing" the soul to Christ. This "oneing" that is the nature of soul healing requires a profound sense

of safety to our inner life in the prayer circle. Without this safety the prayer circle cannot be a place of refuge for its members. For this reason a clear sense of boundaries, respect, and reverence for one another is essential and must be clearly adhered to by the members of the prayer circle. We live in a culture that is alien to such values of Christian love and respect, so faithfulness to this discipline is utterly essential.

Growth in Love and Faith in the Prayer Circle

Shared leadership by the spiritual elders in the prayer circle is usually a good way to proceed. Establishing a covenant of disciplined prayer practice for the group, led by competent leaders is the best way to stay faithful to a pattern of growth in love and wisdom in the sacred prayer circle. Such a pattern should include a period of silent Prayer of the Heart or Jesus Prayer, and a period of praying with a short scriptural passage. This group prayer with a scriptural passage is also called lectio divina (divine reading). When properly facilitated by the leadership it can present a way for members to share reflections in Christ's love and leading, as well as current challenges or discernments in their journey. Such reverent sharing is best without cross talk or discussion. In addition a brief time of additional spiritual teaching in the form of a shared reading, or listening to an audio teaching can nurture and encourage each member in their daily practice of Prayer of the Heart and deeper growth in Christ.

The Eucharistic Circle of Prayer

The greatest community devotional prayer in the Christian tradition is the Eucharistic Prayer. The apostles who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus recognized his presence in the "breaking of the bread." The Eucharist is the meal of the Great Thanksgiving, of God's Self-giving to us and our self-gift to God through in the love of Christ. Divinity and humanity are reconciled and joined in that Stream of Divine Healing Mercy that we know as person in Jesus the Christ. In Judeo-Christian tradition the great feast of Thanksgiving is the representation of the end and culmination of all human life brought to the banquet table of the Divine Love sharing its very life and essence with humanity. In the sacred prayer circle this joining of human and divine in Christ can be liturgically and devotionally expressed as our community prayer.

Prayer Circle as Expression of the Stream of Mercy

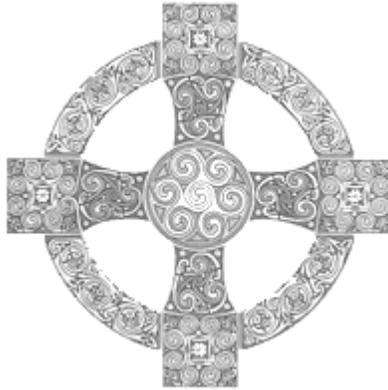
As we mature and grow as friends of one another in Christ and share the very life of Christ, the "bread of Life," relationships of trust grow. And we find we are not alone. There are pilgrim friends and companions who walk with us, who help and encourage us when we stumble or are discouraged. We come to find in this circle of prayer that the One we seek is the One who walks with us. More than that, the prayer circle itself has become a vessel of his mercy and love, flowing through us and into each of our lives and relationships. In this way the Circle of Prayer becomes the truth expressed in these ancient Celtic Christian prayers from the Iona community.

**Circle me, Lord.
Keep peace within, keep harm without.
Circle me, Lord.
Keep love within, keep hate without.**

**You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor
You are my Lord and with me from ill
You are the light, the truth, the way
You are my Savior this very day.**

**I awake this morning in the presence
of the holy angels of God.
May heaven open wide before me.
Above me and around me.
That I may see the Christ of my love.
And His sunlit company
in all the things of earth this day.**

**Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.**



Chapter Seven- Jesus Prayer- Our Ultimate Surrender into Christ

*"Yeshua, my Beloved,
Heart of the Living God, in Your Mercy,
We Abide"*
- Jesus Prayer

*"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus!
Steal away, steal away home,
I ain't got long to stay here."*
-African American Spiritual

*"On my heart and on my house, the blessing of God.
In my coming and in my going, the peace of God.
In my life and in my seeking, the love of God.
At my end and new beginning, the arms of God
to welcome me and bring me home. Amen"*
-Celtic Blessing

Beholding the Face of Jesus- Beheld in the Radiance of His Love

The African American spiritual above says it all, plainly and simply. Our home is Jesus, our passage in this life is brief. Our ultimate fulfillment comes when we see Jesus face to face and find our fullest union in him.

In the final fifteen years of my father's life we had an annual retreat together and from this a deep friendship grew. On one occasion he spoke plainly of death and remarked without reservation he was looking forward to the moment when he would see the face of Jesus and be united with him. My father was a man whose soul and psyche were deeply

wounded from war and the ravages of alcoholism. As he experienced recovery from addiction and the wounds of violence, he understood rightly that the ultimate healing of soul can only be completed at the moment of death when we come home to Jesus, our true Life. My father died two days after Easter, Resurrection Day, in 2004. I drove four hours to be at his bedside as he slipped into a coma from kidney failure. He died just fifteen minutes after my arrival. I have to think he was waiting for me to witness his moment of spiritual fulfillment and home-coming. I spoke to him in a quiet voice and recalled with him his wish to see the face of Jesus. And I said, "Now is the time when you can let go of this life and find your heart's desire." I prayed out loud his favorite prayer. On the third recitation he drew his last breath and I felt instantly within me the freedom and exultation of his soul. My tears were of gladness for him, and of my own human release of the father I had come to love and befriend.

My father loved the Eucharist. And since the day of his departure from this life, I have come to appreciate this joyful proclamation during the Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving: "***Dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life, he will come again in Glory.***" The day of Glory awaits each of us, when we behold the face of Yeshua, and we are beheld in the fullness of his radiant Love in eternal union with him

Christ the Pantocrator

The meaning and nature of true salvation is the re-ordering of all things to their appointed purpose, to be an expression of Divine Love. The purpose for which we were loved into being is to express and incarnate in our own lives the Love of God poured forth into existence and time. Life becomes disordered when it is separated from that purpose. So Christ is our true Savior and our Salvation in that he is the personification of the power and authority of God's love, who reorders our soul in alignment with Love's purpose. Hence he is called in the tradition of Eastern Christianity, the Pantokrator, the Ruler of the incarnate Universe. In our life-long offering of self in the Jesus Prayer we enter his stream of Mercy that encompasses the universe and therein find our true refuge and home.

Christ our True Refuge and Safety

Yeshua, In Your Mercy, We Abide

Prayer of St. Gregory of Nyssa-

Who is the One

In whom all things are called into being

And in whom all things exist?

In whom we live and move and have our being?

Who holds within himself all that is of the Father?

Do we not yet know

That the One who is God above all things as

St. Paul says- is our Lord Jesus Christ?

He holds in his hand all that belongs to the Father,

As he himself tells us;

*He holds all things in the broadness of his hands
And he guides and holds all he holds.
Who then is this One who embraces all,
Holding and keeping all that is,
Who but Christ the Pantokrator, the Lord of the universe!*
-(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomius*, p. 45)

Jesus- The Circular Stream of Mercy and Trinitarian Life

Divine Love issues forth from the Heart of God. Divine Love redeems and heals all, drawing created beings unto Itself. We know this flow of Divine Love as the Stream of Mercy in the person who is Jesus the Christ. Jesus the Christ is the self-giving Love of the Father, the Source, poured out into Creation. In himself humankind and all Creation are lifted up and offered in return to the Father in the unitive Love of the Holy Spirit. In Christ the Divine out-flowing and in-flowing is fulfilled and made one. "*..his secret purpose... that the universe, everything in heaven and on earth might be brought to unity in Christ.*" (Eph. 1:22)

In uniting our life with the life of Christ we are *oned* with his out-flowing love to the world and his inflowing love and self-offering to the Father. We are *oned* to Christ through our life-long Jesus prayer of mercy, joined to his life, death, and resurrection. In him we are given the gift of human life; in him we die and offer our selves to the Father, the Source; and in him we rise to share Divine Life eternally with him. This is theosis, the foundation of all Christian spiritual life.

"Yeshua, Yeshua, You in me, I in You."

Our purpose in living is to be a vessel of the fire of Christ's love in our human life:

"I have come to cast fire upon the earth...." Luke 12:49

Our purpose in living is to be a lit flame of his Light in the world:

"I am the Light of the World." (Jn. 8:12)

Our purpose in living is to become the consecrated broken bread of the body of Christ:

" I am the Bread of Life." (Jn. 6:35)

Jesus the Christ-Our Beginning and End

"..through him all things were made. In Him was Life and that Life was the Light of humanity." (John 1:2-4)

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John 12:31)

" I am the Resurrection and the Life." (John 11:25)

The Consummation of the Cosmos

The Jesuit philosopher, theologian, and anthropologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, saw the universe infused with the spirit of Christ, the incarnate Word. Rather than random change, Teilhard de Chardin taught that the universe was moving toward an evolutionary point of development, a consummation of divine purpose. He called this the *Omega Point*. The Omega Point marks the final unity and reconciliation of heaven and earth, the culmination of the fullness of Christ in humankind and all creation. This theological idea parallels scripture, which teaches that all things were brought into being in Christ, the Word of God, and all things find their completion in him. That is true both universally and personally for each one of us.

St. Paul in speaks of the spiritually awakened state as being one in which we understand that *"God is All in All."* (1 Cor 15:28). And in Ephesians (1:9-10, 22) Paul speaks of this understanding of the universe unified in God through Christ: *".. his secret purpose.. .that the universe, everything in heaven and on earth might be brought to unity in Christ. .. the fullness of him who is filling the universe in all its parts."* In his letter to the Romans Paul tells us again that Jesus the Christ is our origin and our completion. *"For from him, and through him, and to him are all things."* (Rm. 8:36)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the End." (Rev. 22:13)

Christ- The Fulfillment of the Universe

"And He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities —all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together... For in him God in all his fullness chose to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to himself."
(Colossians 1:15-19)

The Parousia of Jesus

The early Christians, including Paul, believed that the Parousia, the second coming of Jesus in history, would take place in their lifetime. The prayer of the early Christians was *"Come, Lord Jesus."* The Parousia, may be properly understood as both the personal and cosmic second coming. Until the end of time we humans will experience Christ's second coming in the personal sense at the end of life. We can come to our personal Omega Point in Jesus, our personal consummation in him after a life-time of ceaseless self-offering to the Mercy of Christ, leading to a final surrender and full union with Christ at the end of life. Like my father we shall behold his face and be beheld in the fullness of his loving gaze for eternity. This hymn, sung to a Celtic melody, expresses this final communion with Jesus, inspired by the book of Revelation.

"Come Lord Jesus, Come."

(Paul Neely- from Rev. 22:12-17)-

*"Come, Lord Jesus, come even now
You are the beginning and the end
wash our robes and show us the new tree of Life.
open all gates with your wind
Spirit and Bride say, "Come"
And all who hear say, "Come."
Even now, First and Last are you.
Root and offspring of David's love, come
You are the bright and morning Star."*

Christ the Bridegroom of the Soul- Love's Personal Consummation

Within and beyond all time and eternity Yeshua calls us into being, he calls us to share his life (Matt. 10:10) and to be united with him, our eternal companion and the Light of our soul.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[a] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39)

In this hymn Jesus, our Lord and Savior, invites us to the intimate consummation of our life in him unto all eternity.

Come Near-

*Cast all your cares on Me,
for I care for you,
Bring all your burdens to Me,
your soul will find rest.
There's a peace beyond understanding I give to you.
My burden is light, My yoke is easy, so come.
Come near, my love,
and go running on hills,
Leaping with great joy through the heather of heaven at last.
We'll go walking on top of the water with your hand in Mine.
We will dance with the light forever of dawn.
Come near, my love,
and we will go swimming through the stars.
Our laughter will make the heavens ring loud as a bell.
Through My Father's right hand,
all things have been made new.
Now we live within the great holy gladness of God.
(Melody- Traditional Irish Celtic Nos Song- Lyrics - Paul Neely)*