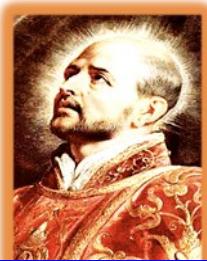




CONVERSAR NEWS

February 2016



COMPANIONS – A COMMUNITY OF CONSOLATION

A word from our Chair, Anne Wakatama ...

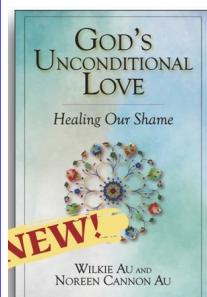
As 2016 begins I would like to give you an update on what Companions has planned for the coming year.

The most important feature of our calendar is the Conference which this year will be held at Sevenhill, our spiritual home. We are fortunate to have Michael Smith as our keynote speaker this year. His latest interest is in the dialogical self, that set of voices within us continually moulding our sense of ourselves and informing the decisions we make. In his presentations he will relate this theory to Ignatian Spirituality and specifically to Ignatius's rules for discernment. We also hope to have two of our Arrupe students present as an ongoing commitment to encouraging our own Ignatian community to contribute.

Apart from the conference we will be working towards increased linkages with the First Spiritual Exercises Givers establishing a separate category of membership for them.

Finally Lynette Toohey, your Conversar News editor will be taking time away overseas. I wish her well and look forward to her return next year.

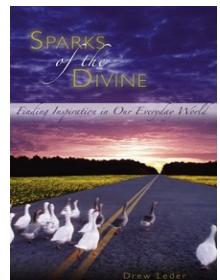
Blessings and Peace, Anne, Chairperson Companions.



In May 2015 Conversar News, Frances Tilly, *Assistant Director*, National First Spiritual Exercises Program shared the positive experience of Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au workshops in Australia. The workshop was titled Holistic Spirituality: God's Unconditional Love and the Healing of Shame & Gratitude as a Spiritual Pathway. Due to be released in March 2016 is their book, **God's Unconditional Love: Healing Our Shame**. It has been described as a psychologically and spiritually rich book, with a focus on God's love being merciful. It offers useful spiritual exercises and points for reflection at the end of each chapter. This may be a worthwhile resource for ourselves, retreatants, directees and for parish work in this Year of Mercy.

In reflecting upon gifts I received for Christmas, what I am currently reading and what reading I might want to take away overseas with me, I have been looking at the many books in my bookcase. I thought that I might share some with you. Many are not new and may perhaps already be familiar to you...or perhaps not, but even if they are not new to you perhaps a rereading may be timely....

There is much to recommend the book **Sparks of the Divine: Finding Inspiration in Our Everyday World** by Drew Leder. The title alone would speak to those of us with an Ignatian heart. There is a playful tone to the writing, including the names of chapters. One of the things I liked most is linked to making to-do lists (which I do!). Leder challenges us to include items such as: encounter mystery, be dazzled and amazed, acts of service, prayer, loving kindness, appreciation. It changes a to-do list doesn't it? Uncovering the Divine Sparks allows for cosmic restoration and healing.



Jan Johnson's **Abundant Simplicity: Discovering the Unhurried Rhythms of Grace**, is a refreshing opening of a spiritual path of authentic simplicity and the blessings to be gained from living this way. She weaves together Scripture, stories and practical suggestions. A comment I read by Paul Borthwick about the book has stayed with me. He said, "In a world where abundant has come to mean prosperity and simplicity is often equated with scarcity, Jan Johnson proposes an alternative. She introduces us to biblical fullness—full in ways that only God can fill. In our materialistic, over-scheduled, stress-filled world...we need to tame the monster called 'more.'"

YOUR NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND THEIR ROLES

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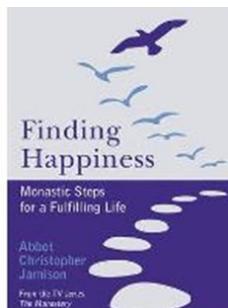
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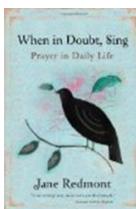
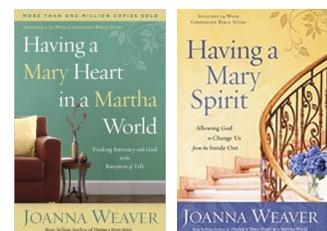
(Robyn Fitzgerald in Lynette's absence)



Finding Happiness by Abbot Christopher Jamison examines the modern attitude to the Seven Deadly Sins and re-introduces us to the sin that never made the list. He asks how has our neglect of *acedia*, or spiritual apathy, affected our culture.

When asked in a BBC poll of 1000 Brits what was Britain's deadliest sin, respondents ignored the traditional seven and went for cruelty and lust. And most enjoyed were lust and gluttony. It appears that there was no connection between anger as the source for cruelty or lust as the source of adultery. People today see wrong doing solely in terms of outcomes, as avoiding doing harm to others. The Seven Deadly Sins were never intended as guide to harmful actions but as a guide to the roots of harmful actions. While the word, *acedia* or the loss of enthusiasm for the spiritual life itself, has disappeared, the reality of spiritual carelessness is strongly present in our world. An interesting contemporary look at sin.

Joanna Weaver is the author of **Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life** and **Having a Mary Spirit: Allowing God to Change Us from the Inside Out**. Perhaps the titles speak for themselves but the non-jargon language, practical wisdom and fresh insights make these books a refreshing read. We are invited to go beyond our own shortcomings to God who make all persons and things new. These books can touch into our longing for hope, healing, wholeness and joy. While targeting female readers, the message is by no means just for women.



When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life by Janet Redmont draws on her own prayer life and the experiences of prayer of other communities and individuals. She offers a rich practical resource ... use of icons; liturgical dance; linking ritual to social justice; difficulties and challenges such as doubt, self consciousness; sexist language. It is a wide ranging and substantive book that needs time to ponder the treasures within it. Redmont is obviously a woman of prayer who knows about prayer in all its patterns, depths and turns.

Ten Evenings with God by Ilia Delio OSF offers an opportunity to come to a new appreciation that the will of God should set us free. Delio suggests that to seek God's will means we must get to know God. She offers "Ten Evenings" ...or chapters with guiding questions to reflect on our relationship with God. Stating that happiness and freedom are the two main desires of the human heart Delio offers us Ten Evenings as a "path from prayer to surrender to freedom is the path of life. To seek the will of God is to seek life, to be a human person" She asks Do our lives give God glory? Are we growing in the freedom to love?" She refers to St Ignatius on Evening Four in relation to "Choices". I found that an Evening took more than an evening to digest!



Another book I hesitate to mention because I have not read it (and I don't want to be seen as promoting my own congregation!) and it is therefore in another section of the newsletter is called **Seeking the One Whom We Love: How RSCJs pray** edited by Kathleen Hughes RSCJ. Our foundress, St Madeline Sophie Barat said "What difference does it make how you pray provided your heart is seeking the One whom you love?" Hence the title. In this recently released book, 55 RSCJ share their reflections with glimpses of the way each one has nurtured and sustained her relationship with God. "But in reading these honest, straight-forward accounts from some veteran pray-ers, you might find the encouragement and reassurance to recognize that you, too, are already on the right path. After all, the desire to be in communion with God is itself a perfect prayer." People I trust say that this book is worth a read.

As Anne has mentioned in her Word from the Chair, I am away for much of this year. I am going on sabbatical in the USA and later in the year will be in Italy as a delegate to the General Chapter of my congregation. So I have many things to look forward to and I do feel blessed. In my absence Robyn Fitzgerald has very kindly agreed to work on Conversar News so you will continue to receive it. I am grateful to Robyn and **urge you to contribute an item to Conversar News so that Robyn's generosity is supported by us as Companions**. Robyn's email address is robfitz65@gmail.com Thank you Robyn!

So until I return, keep up the wonderful ministry we are involved in, say a little pray for me and may God bless each one. Lynette