

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE-SSCS¹

NEWS FROM IRC MEMBERS AROUND THE WORLD

July 2021 – No. 3

From Phil Daughtry, Australia

SSCS Conference proposal 2023: Phil and Chris Morris have begun work on a conference sponsored by their institutions and by SSCS in 2023 in Adelaide. The question to be explored is, *Christian spirituality as a pathway for the modern seeker*. In many societies, Christian spirituality is not seen as the go-to for those seeking a spiritual path in the contemporary context. The blessings, insights and liberating possibilities of a spirituality grounded in the revelation of Jesus and the phenomena of the Spirit are not easy to access or explore in meaningful ways for those not religiously enculturated. This conference is curious about an alternative way. What does it sound like when Christian spirituality becomes conversational, rather than didactic? Where is the expression of Christian spirituality being recognised as profoundly hopeful, (transformative) and relevant to everyday people from all walks of life? (Is there a Christian wisdom that can speak to spiritual seekers today?) What are the public access points to meaningful exploration of spirit and how do they function? What is already happening now in these spaces? What might we envisage for the future? How might we discern the way forward?

INSS Conference Participation: I presented with my colleague, Dr Kirsten Macaitis, on our formative research project involving students and staff of our institution in an extended series of labyrinth walks. The rich narrative data highlights the significance of the depth of formation that occurs in silence and the phenomenological agency of ancient ritual in the contemporary context. Our paper will be submitted for publication soon.

Pentecostal Ignatian Spirituality? I recently became aware of an initiative from a Pentecostal church in Perth (population approx. 2 million), the capital city of Western Australia. The Immersion Academy is an initiative of Dr Ally Cawthorn who recently completed her thesis on contemplative formation with the Fuller Seminary. A glimpse at the website reveals an integration of the language of classical formation and contemporary Pentecostal Christian vernacular. I've had the opportunity to meet with Dr Cawthorn during recent business trips to Perth and gained the impression of something new, different and much needed emerging in this space.

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From Christopher Morris, Australia

In a forthcoming article [Spiritus, Fall, 2021], Chris presents his work on Benedictine Camaldolese monk, Bruno Barnhart's writings which offer insight into 'wisdom knowing' and wholeness in Christian life. Chris aims to provide perspectives on Christian wisdom and the transformative process in Christian spirituality in a manner that responds to contemporary contexts.

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From Diana L. Villegas, Colombia

Spirituality articles in *Theologica Xaveriana*, peer reviewed journal. In vol. 71, 2021 of this journal published by the theology faculty of the Javeriana University, Bogotá, there are 4 articles related to spirituality. See, <https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/teoxaveriana/index>. The articles are: *Virtual Spiritual Direction: Possibilities and Limitations*, <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx71.aeval>. *Catechesis and Spirituality in de uirtutibus sancti Martini episcopi, by Gregory of Tours (4th Century)*, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6282-5847>. *Spirituality as "cualidad humana profunda" in the thought of Marià Corbí*, <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx71.echchp>. *Christian Life and Marian Experience: Selected Challenges in Christus vivit*, doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx71.vcem. [Translation article titles by DLV]

Spaces for the Spirit. In February 2021 the new Colombian Jesuit Provincial, Hermann Rodríguez, S.J. who has a doctorate in spirituality, started an initiative called *Espacios para el espíritu* (Spaces for the Spirit). These are 90-minute YouTube presentations that can be seen as offering formation for educated Colombians, that they might think and act in more Christian ways related to the ongoing challenges of the country. The presentations by scholars and other experts witness to central Christian values that if received, would foster the transformation of the listener. Interpreting these presentations as "formation" came to mind as a result of my recent research on Catherine of Siena's spirituality of political engagement (articles published 2021 in hts.org.za), where I argue Catherine seeks to "form" the pope and other leaders, for their own sake, but most of all because their actions have an incidence on the

¹ Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality

transformation/conversion of those affected by the policies. Similarly, the presentations in *Espacios para el espíritu* can be interpreted as seeking to foster transformed attitudes regarding public policy and behavior. For instance, *Fratelli tutti* is explained in terms of the call for human dignity among the poor and marginalized in the country—with very concrete, currently relevant examples, undoubtedly controversial to some. In June's presentation, a philosopher and a social scientist, both Jesuits, offer a discussion of truth based on the work of the truth commission that is part of the recent peace process.

Presentations available at <https://www.youtube.com/c/jesuitascol>.

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From Annie Yi Jung PAN, Hong Kong

The complicated political situation and the unstable circumstance in the pandemic made Annie have opportunities to access different faith communities by giving over 20 public lectures on Christian spirituality.

Publications. Among her four published articles in the last year, we highlight an essay published in Hong Kong introducing the integration between spiritual direction and Christian counseling: "Companionship in Church," (〈教會中的靈程同行者〉) in *Logos in Counselling—Integration of Counselling and Christian Faith* (《輔中有道：心理輔導與基督教信仰的整合》) pp. 214-233 (Hong Kong, Enlighten & Fish, 2020).

Paper Presentations: Hong Kong and Belgium. Annie was invited to present two papers on Christian spirituality and practical theology: 1) "The Paradox of Female Spirituality: the Contemporary Inspiration from Teresa of Avila's and Mother Teresa's Vulnerability," presented at the 2021 *International Conference on Spiritual Leadership & Social Transformation*, Co-organized by the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, the Asia Academy of Practical Theology, and the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Annie was also invited to present at the meeting of the International Academy of Practical Theology in Leuven, Belgium.

Teaching Courses in the pandemic chaos. In addition to teaching at her own institution, Annie was invited to teach D.Min intensive courses on spirituality at two seminaries, one in Malaysia (Seminari Theologi) and one in China (at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary).

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From Michael O'Sullivan, Ireland

First Research Group in Spirituality in an Irish Third Level Institution. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the MA in Applied Spirituality, of which Michael has been the Programme Director for 16 years, Bernadette and Michael

were involved in launching the first Research Group in Spirituality in a third level institution in Ireland in May. The initiative is called SpirSoP, Spirituality in Society and the Professions (<https://www.wit.ie/news/news/wit-joins-global-leaders-in-spirituality-studies>; https://www.wit.ie/research/centres_and_groups/wit_research_groups/humanities-research-groups/spirsop; <https://www.jesuit.ie/news/launch-of-spirituality-research-group-spirsop/>)

Conference of the International Network for the Study of Spirituality, INSS. Held on June 7 and 8 on 'Spirituality in Research, Professional Practice, and Education', the conference was organised by INSS in association with York St John University in England. Michael, who is a founding Board member and trustee of INSS was a lead organiser, chair and speaker at this conference. The conference attracted presentations from five continents among them that of IRC member, Phil Daughtry and several graduates of the MA in Applied Spirituality that Michael and Bernadette run in Dublin. See the INSS website: (<https://spiritualitystudiesnetwork.org/Conference-2021>).

The Ireland delegation was the largest single country delegation at the conference testifying to the strength of spirituality studies and practice in the Republic of Ireland. Bernadette Flanagan, a past president of SSCS, gave one of the four keynote addresses.

Publication. Michael O'Sullivan's article, "Jesus' Spirituality of Authentic Subjectivity and COVID 19's Shadow Pandemic" was published in the Spring 2021 issue of *Spiritus*. In his article Michael employs the framework of authentic spirituality which he has developed for the study of spirituality, applying it to reading biblical accounts of Jesus in the context of the situation of women in his time and relating the reading to the shadow pandemic of violence against women during COVID.

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From Rossano Zas Friz, S.J. Rome, Italy

Group research project on methodology in spirituality. Between 2017 and 2019 a group of eight doctoral students at the Gregorian University met two or three times a semester to work on methodology for the study of spiritual experience, starting with a method Rossano had presented in prior research, and basing their inquiry on Therese of Lisieux's autobiography. The group project resulted in the development of a phenomenological method they named, metodo teologico-decisionale (decision-making theological method). This name highlights that the process of Christian transformation or spiritual growth can be described and studied by examining how persons in their freedom recognize and appropriate the input of grace, internalize it and from this internalization of grace make choices in their lives. Over the course of time, this dynamic of recognition of grace and response/decision making results

in a process of transformation. This study has just been published by Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2021, R. Zas Friz de Col, ed, A. Andrade, P. Galluccio, L. Pereira de Oliveira, E. Sánchez, et al, *Il vissuto di Santa Teresa di Lisieux alla luce del metodo teologico-decisionale. [The Lived Experience of St. Therese of Lisieux in the Light of the Decision-making Theological Method]*

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From André Brouillette, SJ, North America
Pilgrimage as a Spiritual Practice, Online International Conference. From April 29 to May 1, 2021, André Brouillette and Jeffrey Bloechl co-organized an International Conference on online, sponsored by Boston College. Fourteen scholars from all over the world presented the draft of their essays for an upcoming volume titled *Pilgrimage as Spiritual Practice : A Handbook for Teachers and Guides* (Fortress Press, planned for 2022). Within the emerging field of pilgrimage studies, the focus of the book is the embodied practice of pilgrimage as experienced especially in a pedagogical setting (e.g., for groups of students). In addition, André's own monograph on pilgrimage from a theological perspective will be published in a few months as: *The Pilgrim Paradigm: Faith in Motion*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press (2022).

Publication. July 2021 is the date of the publication of André Brouillette's *Teresa of Avila, the Holy Spirit, and the Place of Salvation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2021) a translation from the French original: *Le lieu du salut: Une pneumatologie d'incarnation chez Thérèse d'Avila* (Paris: Cerf, 2014).

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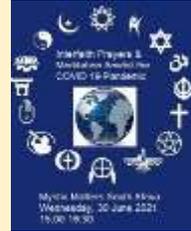
From Celia Kourie, South Africa

Spirasa conference 2022. Spirasa (*Spirituality Association of South Africa*) will hold its next conference in May or June, 2022. It will be a hybrid gathering: in-person and via Zoom. The theme: '*Spiritual Practices*' will include ecumenical and inter-faith contributions. The aim of Spirasa is twofold: the academic study of Spirituality, and also praxis. Thus, this conference will be particularly relevant at this present time, where we are dealing with the role of Spirituality during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We will also celebrate the **80th birthday of Prof Kees Waaijman, O.C.D**, from the *Titus Brandsma Institute (TBI)*, University of Nijmegen. Prof Waaijman has been associated with Spirasa, as Honorary President, since its inception in 2000, where he joined us at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, for the inauguration of this new Society. He was also involved in teaching Spiritual Direction, at St Augustine College, SA, (the only Catholic University in SA), founded in 1999; Prof Waaijman, and his colleague, Dr Jos Huls, contributed to the M.Phil degree in Spirituality for a

number of years, where they taught a course in Spiritual Direction. They have continued academic links with Spirasa. Colleagues from SA have also attended conferences at the TBI over several years, and have contributed to its journal, *Studies in Spirituality*.

Inter-spiritual and inter-faith group. *Mystic matters: South Africa* is dedicated to the study of spirituality and mysticism, both academic and popular. It will be hosting an ecumenical and inter-faith prayer and meditation Zoom gathering, June 30, 2021. This will focus on prayer in this time of Covid-19 and will bring together representatives from a number of churches and religious traditions.



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From Christo Lombaard, South Africa

Joint spirituality project University of Latvia- Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria. A new joint project that focuses on Spirituality is being developed by the Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia (in Riga) and the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria (in South Africa). Based on long-standing informal cooperation between academic colleagues from Riga and Pretoria, such links are now being formalised. Included will be conferences and guest lectures, as before, but the cooperation is now also extended to include joint doctoral supervision and a research/publication project regarding including Spirituality in the curriculum of theological training and ministerial formation. The project leaders are Dace Balode, Dean of Theology at the University of Latvia, and Christo Lombaard, Head of Department: Practical Theology & Mission Studies, University of Pretoria.

A Conference on "South African Spiritualities: Experiencing God in Nothingness and in Everything" will be held 24-26 November 2021 in Wellington. The organizer, Anette Potgieter, Huguenot College, Wellington describes the conference as follows: Corona has changed the way in which we view the world and more importantly, also the way in which we experience God. Being locked in has brought the need to rethink God in nothingness and in everything. Nothingness in the face of corruption, poverty and systemic problems that cripples South Africa, but everything in light of the possibilities and opportunities

South Africa offers. The impact of Covid-19 remains unclear, also on our spiritualities. In South Africa, what is meant by “spirituality” comes all the more to the fore in the light of nothingness and everything as the population predominantly, and increasingly, identifies as Christian. The question as to how spirituality helps us to rethink or confront difficult realities becomes vital. Is there a link between spirituality and poverty? Why is it that prosperity preaching seems to be so popular? Is there hope to be found in nothingness and if so, what does it contribute to society? Could spirituality contribute to our ideas of sustainability? This conference aims to investigate new avenues of thinking about God in difficult circumstances as ideologies of hope and prosperity are reshaped. For further information contact Dr Potgieter at stb1@hugenote.com.

New: Spirituality Studies at the University of Pretoria.

Dr Tanya van Wyk writes: From 2021, the Faculty of Theology & Religion, University of Pretoria, offers semester courses in Spirituality Studies for undergraduate students as electives. The first 2 courses are being phased in this year, and 4 more will be phased in over the next 2 years. The first 2 courses this year cover: an introduction to studying Spirituality as an academic discipline and an introduction to spiritual practices and mysticism. Subsequent modules will delve deeper into these matters and will include Biblical Spirituality, different types of Spirituality and also spiritual formation. An interdisciplinary approach is followed, which will include different lecturers. Several postgraduate students are currently pursuing research in Spirituality Studies. For more information on current courses see: <https://www.up.ac.za/yearbooks/2021/modules/view/SRY%20110>

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