



SPIRIT RUSTLINGS

SFTS Program in Christian Spirituality
Spring Newsletter 2007

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From the Director:

A Season of Celebrations, Prayer & Service

By Sam Hamilton-Poore

The Winter-Spring Semester at SFTS has recently concluded, and summer is just beginning. These last several months have been a most active season for the Program in Christian Spirituality—filled with learning, growth, celebrations, prayer, and service. Let me list for you a few highlights...



- This past January we welcomed 21 new students into the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction from across the nation and world. These first-year students joined with their second- and third-year colleagues for three weeks of intensive study, prayer, small group training, and supervision. January also included a reunion of DASD alumni for a weekend of prayer and renewal, led by the Rev. Dan Wolpert.

- MDiv students at SFTS had two opportunities this semester to deepen their understanding and experience of spiritual formation. Beth Liebert taught students how to listen and respond to God’s movement and call in and through life’s systems and structures (social, family, political, economic, etc.) which variously bind us and/or set us free. I had the pleasure of teaching all first- and second-year MDivs a course entitled, “Christian Prayer: An Exploration for Future Pastors and Church Leaders.” The focus of the course was on personal prayer, encouraging these future leaders to pay attention everyday to the health and vitality of their own life with God. [This class, by the way, was *required* by the seminary for all MDivs.]

- In March, the Program in Christian Spirituality sponsored a mission trip to assist in the clean-up of New Orleans. [See article below.] Organized by student Alison Hendley (MDiv/DASD), the work-group included MDiv students Ryan Baum, Molly Dowell, and Talitha Phillips; our Program Manager, Deborah Arca Mooney and her husband, Tim (a regular DASD small group leader); Rebecca Langer (DASD Director of Supervision); and Prof. Beth Liebert. The group framed its hard, dirty work with morning and evening prayer—including a “daily examen”—making their trip an experience of “contemplation in action.”

- In April, as part of the SFTS Alumni Weekend, we celebrated the ministry and legacy of Howard and Nancy Rice, Andy Dreitcer, and the late Wendy Dreitcer (Howard and Nancy’s daughter)—as well as the gift of money to establish the Rice Family Chair in Christian Spirituality at SFTS in their honor. During the weekend, Howard preached at chapel



and co-
presided at
Communion
with
Elizabeth
Nordquist,
Andy and
Beth Liebert
offered
teaching
events for
students and

alumni, and everyone—Howard, Nancy, Andy, Beth, and Elizabeth—sat together as an after-dinner panel, discussing the past, present, and future of the teaching of Christian spirituality at SFTS. A glorious weekend.

- At the SFTS Commencement on May 19, fifteen students received a Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction, one student received the Diploma in Spiritual Formation Studies, four students with DASD degrees

received their Doctorate of Ministry, and one student received her Ph.D (Nancy Wiens, DASD 97). Congratulations to them all!

- I'm happy to report that contributions to the PCS Annual Fund and the PCS Endowment Fund have been generous and steady—to the point that it looks as if we will be finishing this fiscal year (ending June 30) well in the black. (Please see “Support for PCS” towards the end of the newsletter for the latest numbers.) This news is itself cause for celebration. For the last few years, we've needed to dip into our restricted fund to make ends meet. Perhaps now we can begin to look at ways to use this restricted fund to *grow* rather than simply sustain our program.

Having read the above list, I think you'll agree that the last several months have indeed been full! But the coming months promise to be every bit as eventful and rich...

- On Thursday, May 24, eleven people assembled at my request to serve as a DASD Discernment Group. Beginning now, and for the next seven months, this group will pray thoughtfully and think prayerfully about the DASD—seeking a clear and shared understanding of God's desire(s) for the future of this program. The group will submit itself and the DASD to *the very same discernment process* that we teach every other January in the DASD, the “Social Discernment Cycle.” Please keep this process and the people involved in your prayers: Maria Bowen, Diana Cheifetz, Kay Collette, Bob Fernandez, Jeff Gaines, Craig Palmer, Susan Phillips, Beth Liebert, Deborah Arca Mooney, and me—as well as Nancy Wiens, who is serving as the group's facilitator.

- Deborah, Beth, and I have also been engaged in deep conversation and prayer about the mission of the Program in Christian Spirituality—as well as the roles that we play, as staff, in the fulfillment of its mission. By summer's end or fall's beginning, we hope to have in your hands a “mission statement” that reaffirms all that is most true, good, and beautiful from the PCS's past and present, but also leans into God's future.

As Mary Poppins says, “Enough is a feast”—and the Spirit has given us more than enough reasons these last few months to celebrate and give thanks. Please continue to pray with us and for us, and stay in touch!

Wishing you God's peace,

Sam Hamilton-Poore

Profile of a Friend: The Rev. Carol Hovis

Our profile this issue highlights the life and work of The Reverend Carol Hovis (DASD '00), who has been the Executive Director of the Marin Interfaith Council (MIC) in Marin County, California since July 2004. Prior to her position with MIC, she served for six years as the Community Advocate with the San Rafael Canal Ministry.



Born and raised in metropolitan Washington, DC, Carol attended college in Pennsylvania and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She returned to the DC area in 1988 to serve a Presbyterian congregation in Fairfax, VA. After nine years on staff at Providence Presbyterian Church, seven as associate pastor, Carol resigned in Nov. 1997 to begin an 11-month personal sabbatical, which brought her to northern CA, where she began the DASD program in January 1998. This month, Carol graciously agreed to share some reflections with us on the intersection between her work and her spiritual direction training.

What aspects of the DASD program were most life-giving for you?

The most life-giving aspects of the DASD program for me included soaking up the wisdom of the instructors, people who lived what they were teaching; listening to, reading, and savoring theology, scripture, life-experience that confirmed my own life experiences; the chapel services in Montgomery Chapel; and the camaraderie, companionships, and life-long friendships.

How has your experience as a spiritual director influenced your work?

I've changed the way I do church retreats: no more having to be the "depository" of knowledge and wisdom: instead, I introduce and lead spiritual exercises and see what unfolds. For example, I can gently lead and guide without being exhausted preparing for hours long information on a scripture text.

I've changed the way I preach: no more manuscripts (also a personal preference, not for everyone!). I trust the lectio divina process with scripture, making outlines and preaching from the outline.

During DASD, I became co-chair of the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Redwoods...we began using a lectio process at the beginning of each meeting to ground and center us. Someone would share a reading/prayer, then after some silence, we would go around the table, and each person would share what they heard or received from the reading.

Spiritual Direction influenced my six years at the San Rafael Canal Ministry. I led monthly contemplative listening gatherings with the multi-cultural,

interfaith staff; this had a huge impact on our communal life together as staff. Colleagues' ability to hear and listen to the pains and hopes of others, without trying to solve problems had a profound influence on staff members facing challenging economic, ethnic, gender, issues that no one could easily fix. This practice still affects my work and relationships with Canal residents and colleagues today. A deep level of trust was formed that still exists... I am very grateful!

It has influenced the work/leadership I share with a Latino house church/worship service once a month. Since January 1999, I have met with 20-30 Latino parents, young adults, youth and children, to celebrate communion and do a combination lectio divina/Christian-based community model of studying Scripture. It is quite unique. The youth particularly enjoy the "Sunday Mass", as they call it.

I continue to use the lectio divina/contemplative listening approach in all meetings we have with Marin Interfaith Council, and there are a lot of meetings! Someone shares a reading/prayer/poem from his or her faith tradition, followed by silence, and then individual sharing is based on the reading. I believe this way of beginning all MIC meetings creates a culture of listening and sharing that builds a more authentic community."

What other dreams do you have for your work?

As I contemplate additional possibilities for interfaith work, I dream of the idea of building an interfaith chapel and center in Marin County, where people of all faiths and no faith can come to create space for silence, prayer, song, chant, scripture, listening, sharing... also across ethnic, economic, geographic boundaries... to make this work more accessible and multi-cultural.

If you would like to be in contact with Carol, she may be reached at Marin Interfaith Council: (415) 456-6957, chovis@marinifc.org.

Validating Spiritual Direction in the Presbytery

By Kate Thoresen, D.A.S.D. '99; D.Min '07

It can be a challenging and lonely endeavor to be a spiritual director who seeks to work within the Presbyterian Church system. Most directors I know either serve on church staffs or are listed as at large. I have been ordained for over 22 years and served on church staffs as an associate pastor and interim associate pastor. At this point I wanted to concentrate on the ministry of spiritual direction and retreat leadership, so I applied to our Committee on Ministry in the Presbytery of Detroit for validation as a spiritual director.

It's time for our presbytery to acknowledge and support this field of work as important to the over-all life and mission of the church at large. This whole



area of Christian spiritual formation is crucial for our health, wholeness and integrity as a community of faith. We need to encourage people to attend to their spiritual lives as much as we encourage people to respond to mission as well as to maintain the polity system. We need spiritual formation and the availability of spiritual direction to be more visible on the radar screens of our church members.

Below is a copy of the rationale I presented to our Committee on Ministry, which was then voted on by the Presbytery of Detroit. It received unanimous approval last November and has been a positive step to raise awareness in general. I offer this procedure to others who are called to serve others and the church at large primarily as a spiritual director and coordinator of programs in spiritual formation. Since many members of our Committees on Ministry know little about spiritual direction, this is a prime opportunity to help educate the presbytery at large about this service.

To: Committee on Ministry

From: Kate Thoresen

Re: Validation of Authorized Ecclesiastical Occupational Designation of Spiritual Director #784

Explanation: Throughout the years I have experienced a strong calling into this relatively new and specialized area that our denomination recognizes as an Authorized Ecclesiastical Occupational Designation of Spiritual Director #784. I have been involved in the ministry of spiritual formation since 1985 as I coordinated and led retreats, workshops, seminars and classes on prayer and practices which focus on our relationships to God and others. I began work on the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction through San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1995 and completed my Doctor of Ministry dissertation and project that focused on a pilot program of spiritual practices for spiritual leaders. This degree is scheduled to be conferred May 19, 2007 through SFTS.

What *is* Spiritual Direction and Retreat Leadership?

A spiritual director or companion is trained to provide a safe, hospitable, sacred space that helps people recognize, receive, respond to, and reverence God's touch in everyday living. Christian spiritual direction is framed by the unconditional love of God as shown in Christ and explores together ways that Christ's life and light can more fully shine through us. An agreed upon covenant is established so that expectations are clear along with accountability. This ministry encourages and coaches an active prayer life, scripture reading, corporate worship and service to others. I am a member of Spiritual Directors International, uphold their stated Code of Ethics, meet with my own trained spiritual director, and engage in regular peer supervision.

A retreat leader organizes the themes of retreats usually based on a particular scripture or spiritual discipline. In this section I listed specifically the numbers

of retreats and my involvement in spiritual formation programs over the years. I also listed the groups with whom I work on contract.

Author's Note: When someone contacts the Committee on Ministry for this validation, it would be helpful to have prepared one's responses to the following requirements as stated in the Book of Order:

- a. "The ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, the Book of confessions, and the Book of Order of this church." (G-11.0403a)."
- b. "The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others" (G-aa.0403b)
- c. "The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0202" (G-11.0403c)

Comment: Our Presbytery Policies asks key questions concerning the validation of certain ministries such as "Does the ministry relate God's Word to life experience, to faith and service? Does the ministry gather persons for worship, support and study?"

- d. "The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to other organizations, agencies and institutions." (G-11.0403d)
- e. "The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation." (G-11.0403e)

So many good things are happening in this whole area of spiritual formation. Charlotte Sommers (DASD '99) is now chairperson of our presbytery's Spiritual Formation and Faith Development Ministry Team. She and I have recently organized a Spiritual Directors' Network. We meet together regularly, distribute a directory of available spiritual directors for our presbytery and share resources.

If anyone has additional questions or comments, they can contact me at Thoresen@aol.com.

Reflections from New Orleans

By Alison Hendley, DASD third-year student

I was honored to lead a great team of SFTS students, faculty and staff, sponsored by the PCS to New Orleans for a mission trip during spring break. We did the hard, sweaty, dirty job of gutting houses, moving out moldy, once

treasured possessions from toxic houses before taking out walls, ceilings, and floorings to bring the houses one small step closer to becoming homes once more.

On our afternoon off from gutting houses about half of us went to the New Orleans Art Museum to visit the “Femme, Femme, Femme”, an exhibition of over eighty paintings on loan from the Louvre in France to help raise money for the art community in New Orleans. One of the paintings, by Jean-Baptiste Corot, has stayed with me since I first saw it. A simple painting of several women collecting water from a well. The land is dusty and dry, the women are peasants, poor women going about their daily task, the well is some distance from the simple town, and the water jugs heavy earthenware pots. Yet it was not this domestic scene that caught my eye. It was the pentimento, the painting beneath the painting that was ‘bleeding through’. In dramatic contrast to the fully visible, almost humdrum scene, the forgotten painting beneath was one of a castle, which in its pentimento form looked other-worldly, a mystical illusion rising out of the clouds above the women’s heads. As I stood with this painting, caught by the Spirit as time and the bustle of the crowds were suspended, I was led to think of the in-breaking ‘Basilea’, often translated as the Kingdom of God, but what I think of as the pervasive presence of the Divine.

As I reflected on the effect this pentimento was having on me I realized it was a metaphor for what I was experiencing in New Orleans. Nineteen months earlier the people who we were working with today had their lives turned upside-down. Nothing was the way it had been before Katrina ripped through the levees. People had lost everything; possessions, houses, pets, and even family members. The help they had been promised by the government had not materialized. Now ordinary life was living in an area that looked and felt like ghost towns where one of the common sights was to see a Humvee driving down the street driven by armed guards, surrounded by moldy walls and piles of debris ripped out of houses that once rang with the sound of voices, driving on roads scattered with sink holes caused by leaking pipes, staying in cramped trailers and trying to make them feel like home, scared to dream of a new life in case the winds pick up again, or the copper pipe that you have saved hard to buy is stolen before it even gets welded into place. But this is the reality, the gritty, ordinary, everyday life of many of the poverty-trapped residents in New Orleans.

Yet through this picture, another reality was bleeding through. One which allows the presence of the Divine to be glimpsed. This other reality was evident to us when we met the owner of one of the houses we were working on, Miss Patty. Miss Patty has not had an easy life. She has diabetes, is registered legally blind, and is one who has been affected by the many deep and systemic issues of poverty most of her life. She had managed to move most of her possessions out of her house, and had begun to do some gutting herself when we arrived for work that Monday morning. Patty had been up many hours trying

to get as much done as she could before we arrived, but was exhausted and overwhelmed by the task. During our time spent with her we could sense a shift in her perceptions of us and of the world around her. On that first day she eyed us with some suspicion... we were we going to throw out all she had left, were we safe to be around, and who were these white praying folk anyways? In addition to the physical labor we did, all of us spent some time just talking to Patty, listening to her confusing story, helping her sort through the possessions she had left, hearing about the losses she had suffered since the storm, and the fear in which she lived, and praying with her, for her, for her friends, and having her pray for us. It was in these moments of relationship building that the Spirit was made visible for us all. Fragile and mystical, yet visible to the naked eye. The Divine was coming to work with us and through us and in spite of us, to bring the in breaking of the Basilea to that little shot gun house in a corner of New Orleans.

This trip to New Orleans took me up to my 107th day of being in the Gulf Region since Katrina hit (I'm not counting, but the Volunteer in Mission coordinator told me the other day!). Each time I return home again my heart is broken at how much there still is to do, how great the needs of the people are, and how attention is turning from their problems. Yet at the same time, my heart sings and rejoices over the people I have met, the home owners I have had the privilege of learning from and working with, and the pentimento, the bleeding through of the Divine presence which shows itself in tangible and not so tangible ways. And I thank you God, for allowing me to experience this in the place that is learning to sing once more.

Editor's note: We invite you to visit our New Orleans "blog" at <http://tonola-lovesfts.livejournal.com/> for more reflections and photos from our trip.



PCS News

Congratulations 2007 Graduates!

Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction (DASD): Althera Bergren, Robert Bevier (*both shown left*), Susan Kemper Bryant, Rebecca Cole-Turner, Tom Eisenman, Laura Niles Finch, Cecile Lyons, Kathy McKay, Heather Monkmeyer, Geoff Nelson, Tara Ross, Cindy Schwartz, Ted Scott, Kimberly Smith-Nilsson and Sue Ann Yarbrough

Diploma in Spiritual Formation Studies (DSFS): Diane Colborn

Doctor of Ministry (DMin) with Spirituality Focus: Terry Chapman, Sam Hamilton-Poore, Kate Thoresen and David Vanderlinde-Abernathy (*shown right, with Nancy Wiens*)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) with Spirituality focus: Nancy Wiens (*shown right*)



Upcoming Events

2nd Annual DASD Alumni Weekend – January 18-20, 2008

Mark your calendars now for another joyous weekend of reunion, re-connecting, retreat and prayer this January 18-20, 2008! Dr. Andrew Dreitcer, founder of the DASD program, will be our guest speaker and retreat leader. Friday evening will be a social time of re-connecting, followed by a retreat day with Andy on Saturday. Sunday we'll offer several workshops/forums led by DASD grads on topics of interest to spiritual directors. Last year's gathering was a great success ... so come and join us for another wonderful weekend of reunion & retreat! More information and registration forms will be mailed out this fall.

Companions on the Inner Way Retreat:

"Be Not Afraid: Hope and Trust in Trying Times"

A guided retreat with Mark Yaconelli will be offered this August 5-10 at Zephyr Point, Nevada on Lake Tahoe. The format will include lecture and dialogue with Mark, spiritual reading in small group community, times of individual and corporate silence and contemplation, worship and communing with God through movement, art and nature. \$360 per person; work scholarships available. Contact Joan Currey at (415) 235-1027 for more information, or visit www.companionsontheinnerway.org.

PCS Announcements

Article Solicitation: How do you use your spiritual direction skills/training in your church congregation?

In future issues of *Spirit Rustlings*, we'd like to include stories and testimonies of how your spiritual direction training is manifested, practiced, integrated in, or impacting a congregational setting. If you have a story to share with us, please e-mail us at pcsfriends@sfts.edu.

Class S twards

Interested in helping keep your class connected to each other and SFTS? We're looking to recruit Class Stewards to help us communicate with individual classes and think of ways to help you stay in relationship with each other post-graduation. If you're interested in being a Class Steward, please let Deborah Arca Mooney know at pcsfriends@sfts.edu!

" Divine Voices" Spirituality Group for Women: Mid-Life E xploration

Join other women who are navigating mid-life transitions and discernment in their work, family, plans and dreams. Learn spiritual practices that will uplift and sustain you in your daily life. Share stories and create a community of support. Led by Jan Reynolds (DASD '03), this group will meet in June and July on Fridays, 11:30-1:00, in Tiburon, CA and may begin again in the fall. This program is offered through SFTS' Lloyd Center. Call Jan at (415) 925-9989.

S pread the Word

We are proactively spreading the word about the SFTS Program in Christian Spirituality throughout the US and internationally. Please help us promote the great benefits of the SFTS DASD program in your communities of faith!

- Forward this e-newsletter to those who may be interested.
- Print our ads in your church newsletters (we can e-mail camera-ready art to you upon request).
- Order bulletin inserts and our new brochures for use at your churches at pcsfriends@sfts.edu.

Resources

S piritual Formation Focus in S FT S Chimes Magazine

The latest issue of "Chimes", a magazine for SFTS Alumni, focuses on the topic of spirituality in the Christian reformed tradition and in ministry. You'll notice many familiar names and faces of DASD faculty in the special issue, including a shining cover photo of The Rev. Dr. Sam Hamilton-Poore, Professor Beth Liebert, Assoc. Professor Elizabeth Nordquist and the Rev. Dr. Howard Rice. We're pleased to provide a link to a digital version of the entire issue: <http://www.sfts.edu/docs/ChimesSpring07.pdf> We also have some extra copies available in the office, if you'd like one for your library.

New CD from Curran Reichert

The Rev. Curran Reichert (DASD 2001) has recently released a new CD release called, "Draw The Circle Wide." CD's are \$20 and proceeds help support the work of "That All May Freely Serve." For more information or to place an order, e-mail Curran at vivoudou@aol.com or you may order online at <http://www.tamfs.org/>.

Thomas Merton: "Bridges to Contemplative Living" ~ Small Group Resource

Last fall, the Program in Christian Spirituality hosted an evening presentation on Thomas Merton, including a documentary on Merton's life called "Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton." In addition to enjoying the beautiful and moving film, we were introduced to a small group resource called "Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton." Each eight-series booklet offers an introduction to Merton and contemplative living through prayers, readings from Merton and other spiritual masters and questions for small group dialogue. A free series Leader's Guide is available at www.avemariapress.com or at 1-800-282-1865.

Spiritual Directors International: <http://www.sdiworld.org>. SDI will soon publish a printed version of their "Seek and Find" directory of spiritual directors. If you are a member, be sure to update your contact information.

Alumni Rustlings

Congratulations to Nancy S. Wiens, Ph.D

(Shown here with fellow DASD'ers Alison Hendley & Carol Hovis, and daughter Erin)

Nancy Wiens, who taught Christian Discernment in the DASD program with Beth Liebert, has completed her Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. The title of her dissertation is Discernment and Nature: Exploring Their Relationship through Christian

Spirituality and the Natural Sciences: "Christian spiritual discernment notices the movements of the Holy Spirit in, with, and through Nature from moment to moment. To discern with a spiritual anthropology and an understanding of divine action that are grounded in the most recent scholarship from the natural sciences and philosophy embraces intelligible, cognitive claims that aid in noticing such patterns of God's presence and action in Nature."

Nancy writes, "It was a long journey and such a powerful experience of God's sustaining, guiding love. I am deeply grateful to the SFTS, PCS, DASD, YMSP communities for being like a greenhouse for this project. The DASD students were recognized in my dissertation acknowledgments as those who helped me learn about discernment and nature. Thank you!" You may contact Nancy at Nswsj@aol.com.



Please submit your own or others' "rustlings" to us at pcsfriends@sfts.edu!

Support for PCS

Thank you for your on-going support of our PCS Endowment and Annual Funds! We are extremely pleased to report that this year's appeals raised \$14,000 for the Annual Fund and another \$8,790 for the Endowment Fund, bringing the Endowment total to \$52,000. If you haven't contributed yet, we invite you consider a financial gift of any size by the end of the fiscal year (June 30) to help sustain and grow the work of our programs. Please send your gift to: Program Manager, PCS, 105 Seminary Rd., San Anselmo, CA 94960. The checks can be made out to SFTS. Please specify which fund you're contributing to in the memo line.

Do you or someone you know desire to give to the Program in Christian Spirituality in the form of a bequest? Simply use the following wording in your will: "I give, devise, and bequeath to San Francisco Theological Seminary's Program in Christian Spirituality, San Anselmo, California, (the sum of \$_____) (_____ percent of my estate) (the following property) (the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate). The property comprising this gift may be used to further the charitable purposes of San Francisco *Theological Seminary, at the discretion of its trustees.*" For more information, please call the Rev. Peter Crouch, SFTS Vice President for Seminary and Church Relations, at (415) 451-8822 with your questions.

A Final Poem

by Kenton W. Smith, D A S D '98

Most mornings I rise before the sun,
find my easy chair and sit down.
I sit down and do nothing.
I do nothing because I am slowly learning
that something does come from nothing.

I'm learning that originality, inspiration, and
direction comes from sitting still and doing
nothing. Like a bit of Zen wisdom,
"Sitting still, doing nothing,
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself."*

The world is infused with free grace
but my ego is afraid it isn't free
and isn't grace. So my ego mind whirls like
a one armed sign post in a hurricane.
My ego never rests. I can't tame it.

But this is what I notice. It doesn't matter.
Because some time that day or the next
or the day after that what I most deeply want,
when I most deeply need it comes,
it comes to me like new born fruit on a tree.

I can't explain this, but opposites attract.
When I let go into the unknown, the unknown
knows me.

*from Thelma Hall's book, *Too Deep for Words*,
page 47, Paulist Press.

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