

# The Chicago Seminary News

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THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

FALL SEMESTER 2008

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## *Dear Readers and Friends of the Seminary!*

This fall we have witnessed momentous turning points in the world, from market crashes and election excitement, to our own less obvious personal turning points. Although the world events appear to be of far greater consequence, it is truly our own individual little turning points and acts which permeate all aspects of the earth and world, and which can, in turn, form a web of spiritual security. This is indeed, far more substantial and meaningful for world evolution. Every time we consciously listen or observe or speak, we allow the spiritual a new and secure bit of home, and ourselves a more promising world.

Through our intensive and varied coursework here at the Seminary, we have been guided ever more deeply toward these turning points and awakenings. Each of us shares observations from different viewpoints, and as you, dear friends, may enjoy in the following articles, frequently with humor. We thank you all for your continued support, and heartily invite you to join us for a shorter or longer stay here at the Seminary.

The Editors

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## *Student Life*

### **Wiet Wildeman**

In his novel "The Anteater" Cortes describes visible buttons on invisible people, going up and down the elevators.

If you would imagine the seminary building invisible, but the students therein visible, you would get an impression of how we live both together and apart.

Picture us sitting alone in our rooms, sometimes at the same time, sometimes at different times, bent over books and bibles, writing our "homework" about Words and Things or trying to grasp the infinite wisdom of Anthroposophy.

Then, at other times, you see us coming together in ever changing small groups from two to four or five or as a whole, discussing the events of the day, just cooking a meal, or singing in the morning in the library to start off the day or sitting relaxed in the social room, watching the news on TV or a movie.

Saturdays are especially funny to look at the students in this invisible house: They are running around with dust cloths and brooms, with arms full of laundry, leaving the house and coming back with bags full of food. The

mood has for the most part been of earnest but joyous character, open to each other and to guests.

So we learn the art of living alone together and together alone.

If we materialize our house again, it is a normal building on Sunnyside Avenue with laundry on the washing line in the garden - but what a richness of experiences are gathered inside!



**The Students: Wiet Wildeman - Norway; Darryl Coonan - Australia; Kathy Clark - USA; Ann Burfeind - USA; Angela Katschke - Germany; Marta Ibenez - Peru (standing on the right)**

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P.O. Box 25603, Chicago, IL 60625.**

## *Living the Curriculum* - Darryl Coonan

Take a look at what we are covering in the first semester at the seminary.

Some of these subjects are ongoing classes and the others are covered as week-long main lessons: Building the Foundations of a Religious Life; The Sacraments; Threefold Patterns in Human Anatomy & Physiology; Color; Christology; Befriending Death; The Angel and Christ Working in the Biography; The lectures given to the priests by Rudolf Steiner; Temptation, the Fall and Redemption; Individual Student projects; The Threefold Social Order; The Intervals of the Musical Scale; The Gospels; Living Disciplines; Speech; Eurythmy; Goethean Observation; The World of Words; Understanding Prayer; Mystery and Wonder; Projective Geometry; Theosophy; German.

I am sure one can imagine how at the start of the semester it seemed like an ambitious undertaking to get through so much content, though so rich and broad in content it was hard to know if one should feel daunted or excited.

Surprisingly there does seem to be some wisdom and balance in the whole (almost as if some thought had gone into the planning!). As students we are challenged and enriched on multiple levels of our being. The whole human is met by the lectures, the discussions, the project work, the reading and assignments; while singing, speech and eurythmy balance the intellectual aspects.

The social realm is another opportunity for growth, nourishment and challenge. Six diverse personalities need to be negotiated within the everyday ordinary meetings, decisions and adjustments that go with communal living.

The typical stages of group process appeared to unfold as we formed, stormed, normed, performed and will one day mourn. Not so much storming as one might expect of such an intensive group experience. Then there are the shared meals, and occasional social outings or more individual pursuits such as a trip to the lake to walk or to fish (for Wiet anyway!), or to visit a museum, gallery or concert. Being back in a classroom had the effect of triggering some regression into more adolescent behaviors (not in my case as I was already quite regressed on arrival!), though it was good natured and there was a lot of fun as well.

It was hard sometimes to find time to maintain contact with one's life before the seminary. As a student it is easy to feel like you should be doing something all the time and to feel guilty when having some fun. Finding

the balance in all this was discussed at the beginning of the journey and was also one of the themes of "Living Disciplines".

Then there was the world around us. It could have been easy to lose touch with the world at large if not for the momentous happenings in the world that would insist on intruding despite our self absorbed endeavors. We were in the U.S. during a Presidential election; the world financial markets descended into a state of collapse, and so inevitably our lives were impacted on from the world around us. We also maintained engagement in the world through our close contact with the Chicago Christian Community who welcomed us into their lives generously and warmly.

The multicultural seminarians and the frequent guests in the seminary open up the possibility of destiny meetings and the formation of new friendships on a worldwide scale. Life at the seminary is good, though I imagine that having a housekeeper/cook would make my experience even better!



### Ordinations

Two former Chicago seminary students, will be ordained in Germany on December 6/7th, 2008.

Marianne de Nooij, The Netherlands and Jonah Evans, USA, entered the training in the fall of 2005



and then continued at the Stuttgart seminary. We send them our best wishes and congratulations on this special day. We are looking forward to the return of Jonah to the United States.

## *The Glowing Bar of Newton is forged into a ring by Goethe*

Ann Burfeind

This image was presented by Daniel Hafner during Color Week at the seminary. Daniel discussed with us the source of color through natural science and art. Carolyn Arnett worked with us during the afternoons with painting. We were asked the question, "What is light?" The component question that arose was "What is darkness?" We attempted to come to the experience of

the colors through the deeds and sufferings of light itself as it interacts with darkness.

We compared the Source Phenomenon as described by Goethe with Newton's theory of light.

Through observation we saw how light shining through a darkening haze generated yellow and the warm colors of the sunrise and sunset and that darkness shining through a brightening haze generated the cool blue colors of the sky. Newton's theory states that all the colors are contained in the light that appears white. The colors can be seen when the light is refracted by a prism or water. What is the difference between these two theories? What effect does Newton's view of light verses Goethe's have on how I orientate myself in the sense perceptible world?

Ten years ago I worked at the South Pole. During the three months that I worked there the sun did not set once. I lived a three month day. The sunlight was blindingly brilliant and with the help of falling ice crystals, dynamic sun halos were created. Double rainbow haloes around the sun, parabolas arcing out in the four directions as well as a translucent mirror image 180 degrees across from the sun filled the sky. The wonder and majesty of this solar display presented itself on the celestial canvas. I remember these images and seek to connect them with the question, "What is light?" As I continue to live with this question a sense of order develops and balance is created between what otherwise may appear to be a polarity. What I am able to observe and what is being revealed to me becomes the light within.



### *Looking for our "I"* Darryl Coonan

In the course on the "Threefold Patterns In Human Anatomy and Physiology " Ron Milito explained how the chest cavity has anatomical barriers that push back the forces of Ahriman and Lucifer - the base of the skull/ the atlas or first vertebrae, the other vertebrae of the spine, the sternum, collar bones and the diaphragm.

These barriers create a space in our chest where Lucifer and Ahriman cannot enter - an essential realm

unfettered by the adversarial beings. This region contains our heart and lungs - the rhythmical organs. When we are settled securely in this place our breath is deep and regular and in balance with our heart beats.

In reflecting on what Ron offered regarding the organization of our being it occurred to me that when we lose this balance in the center, our connection to our "I", we leave our chest and either go upwards into our heads into cold, logical thoughts and concepts or to the other side of our brain to escape into grandiose fantasies. Alternatively, when we lose our centre we can go south into our abdomen. In our heart region our "I" generates love, courage, compassion, understanding and a capacity for selflessness. When we descend into our abdomen our I/Ego is left behind and our lower ego takes charge. Our courage turns to fear, love to hatred, compassion turns to anger and selflessness into selfishness.

A change in the rate and rhythm of our breathing and pulse always accompanies the descent into the abdomen where fear resides. We often collapse our chest area at the same time.

These physiological changes in our chest area can alert us to a loss of balance, and the need to reconnect with our true self, our higher Ego or "I". To stand tall and to breath in fully again.

The middle realm of the chest is the place of Christ; going up into the head we can easily meet the adversaries in our cold thinking or fantasies. While in the abdomen we can be swept away by egotistical emotions, cravings and aversions, sympathies and antipathies.

Maybe our parents and teachers intuitively recognized these phenomena when they encouraged us to stand tall! Don't slouch! Shoulders back! Take a deep breath! Chin up! Step forward and look the person in the eye, in other words -find your "I" and meet the world.



Ron Milito teaching the course "Threefold Patterns in Human Anatomy & Physiology"



## *The Angel Line*

Angela Katschke

In the class called 'The World of Things' which is lead by Gisela Wielki we thought, wondered and talked about the "line". In our conversation we recognized how many times we use the word "line" in the English language. There are so many lines: Lifelines, deadlines, shorelines, railway lines, airlines, washing lines, telephone lines, plenty of lines.....!!!!!! We can draw a line in the sand, we cross lines; we make Bee lines for hot cookies out of the oven!

The Swiss-German artist Paul Klee (associated with the art group known as Der Blaue Reiter(The Blue Horseman)) used lines in his paintings and drawings in a very specific way. In 1939 he did a beautiful humorous series of 44 angel drawings by using a few lines to illustrate the essential image. He titled them "Thoughtful angel", "The forgetful angel", "Angel in Kindergarten" and "Angel full of hope".

His work and the class inspired me to work with the line in an artistic way: I closed my eyes and tried to imagine faces while drawing just one line with a black ink pen. Many, figures appeared and this little drawing happened. I call it the "Grateful angel" or "Farewell angel".



## *The class of Fall 2008*



### **Wiet Wildeman**

If we would sit beside each other, you reader of this piece and me, and we had a globe in front of us, I would point to Groningen in Holland, ( where I was born soon after the war started), then we would look higher up: Stavanger and Bergen in Norway (where I emigrated to). After that we would "travel" to Germany, the south but more the north, between Baltic- and North Sea. We would turn the globe and look at Vancouver in Canada's British Columbia; from there we would go to Costa Rica and up again in the same time zone to...what else starts with a "C" ah! Chicago!

### **Marta Ibanez**

At the end of last year I had been working as a dental technician for 25 years. My daughter had just finished high school and I was free to do something completely different for myself.

I decided to come to the seminary in Chicago and take part as a full time student in the fall semester. I arrived after one night of flying from Lima, Peru. I had to hear and speak a new language and begin to think of myself as a seminary student. I am proud that people call me a seminarian. Long ago I studied English, but now I have to be silent, to listen and not only with my ears. I have to receive with my whole being all that comes to me and try to understand. If I don't do this I would become very lost.

This semester is like harvesting gold that I will take with me back to Lima, where my name is just Marta Ibanez, mother, dental technician, but not seminarian.





**Kathleen Clark**

My hats are many: physical therapist, technical rock climber, sea kayaker and on rare occasion a budding Lance Armstrong. How different and exciting that I now have added yet another hat: that of Seminary student!

With the climbing and the kayaking, one comes into intimate and sometimes desperate contact with the earth - and also with oneself. Safety nets, both physical and mental become a part of one's ability to challenge. And now, the challenge changes to a new kind of inner challenge which demands of me new awareness and creativity in order to meet the far less tangible.

**Angela Katschke**

As an art therapist from Germany I have witnessed turning points for many people.

In my coming to America this September I am witnessing for myself a true turning point of time. Each Act of Consecration of Man, each course and human interaction with my classmates reveals to me a place within myself to grow, change and learn. I look forward to continuing life with this new experience.



**Ann Burfeind**

The road from Waldorf teacher to student at the seminary is a short one. I came to Chicago from nearby Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the East Troy Community. I arrived to share the sacraments and a living space with people from around the world. Although this experience is quite a switch from teaching a class of fourteen year-old-eighth-graders there are many similarities. Our living and learning together required love and patience as we all strive to understand and experience the life of the world around us.

**Darryl Coonan**

I came from south to north, from west to east, from spring to fall (autumn), from left to right (traffic), from down to up (light switches), from English to American (don't ask), from psychotherapist to Seminarian. In Australia I worked for an Addiction Treatment centre called Turning Point and have gone half way around the world to another centre which is also a Turning Point in my biography. Not only am I adapting to a reversal in the natural order of things in the external world but also in my inner orientation, and it is proving to be a wonderful experience.



## *The Altar*

In front a sunray crossed  
A strip of golden light  
Which lit the path  
And made the hour bright  
It slowly faded then away  
However something came to stay:  
Seven candles on the altar burned  
And into other gold their light did turn:  
The knowledge that the path is right.

Wiet Wildeman

One of our regular lessons in the seminary is called “The World of Things”, in this class we attempt to develop an increased awareness and appreciation of the sense world. One of our tasks was to convey in a few words an impression of a hand or a foot, here is what was created:

The feet in thin, white, canvas shoes were poised for movement across the wooden floor. Lift carry place, lift carry place, lift carry place are steps in slow motion broken into their threefold elements. The conscious movement of the feet brings our awareness out of our thinking into hands free to act in the moment: take carry give; take carry give.

Darryl Coonan

The old woman's hand  
Arched over the game-piece  
Bent fingertips talk.

Kathleen Clark

The sun was setting. The cold of the night came closer to my skin. Piece by piece my hands took my clothing from the washing line. Then again - fresh and neatly folded. Ready for the coming week to be worn again. What, if one day my hands can't follow the sunsets calling anymore? Will somebody else bring in my dried laundry?

Angela Katschke

The left foot moves alone, yet in tandem with the right. It stretches forward, places itself on the earth and waits for the other to join. At this very moment it lifts off the earth again. The feet share the responsibility of movement, uprightness and balance. We have a left

and a right hemisphere throughout our bodies. What does this symmetry reveal to us? Where are we truly a whole?

Ann Burfeind

Mother and daughter held hands walking on their way to school. At the gate of the school they looked at each other and waved goodbye, and in the classroom the little girl learns a song where each finger has a name. This is the beginning of using hands.

Marta Ibanez

Two gestures show themselves when thinking of the feet:

The feet of a newborn, which have never touched the earth, and the feet of a dead body.

One is not yet, the other no longer in alignment with the centre of the earth.

In between those two gestures our feet carry us where our will directs them in order to fulfill our destiny.

Wiet Wildeman

## *Come to an Open Course!*

Margit Gratzl, North Carolina

Every fall and every spring I take the time to come to Chicago to attend one or two Open Courses at the Seminary. By now I have slept in almost every room, met all the seminary students who were here over the years and have experienced almost every kind of weather Chicago has to offer.

Well, that's not exactly the reason why I come back over and over again. I have been privileged to sit in on some of the most amazing courses. Every time I walk away with food for thought and new knowledge that keeps me nourished for weeks and months. Just look at the titles of the Open Courses that are offered every semester. It is impossible not to find a subject that “talks to you”. I cannot encourage you enough to do something about it - come to Chicago for one or two weeks and experience the Seminary and those wonderful courses.

I know, there is always the fear of the unknown. So let me tell you a little bit about being here. First of all: No, you are not too old!. You will not feel strange among the students. There are students of all ages here. And: Yes, you will have your own room, a bed with a wonderful down comforter. Even towels are provided. Every apartment at the seminary has two to four bedrooms, and there is a kitchen in every apartment. You can prepare your meals there, or you can go out

and explore all the various little restaurants on Lincoln Avenue, about 7 minutes from the Seminary.

There is an Act of Consecration of Man every morning at the nearby church, followed by a common breakfast (included in the course fee). The Open Course is either in the morning or in the evening, and all visiting students are encouraged to participate in the regular class work if they are interested. You do have enough free time to go sight seeing or just relax and digest what you heard.

I hope our paths will cross here at the Seminary some day!

### *Connecting Chicago - Wiet Wildeman*

“Rich people have therapies, the others have fishing”, is an expression. I belong to the latter species.

With the beautiful beach and all that blue water and sky I could not stay away from it.

Soon I was equipped with a fishing rod even with a knife as a present. So very friendly are the people here. In Norway it is quiet normal for a woman to fish, but here you are alone amongst men and kind of strange in their eyes. I got advice from all sides but when I told them that I have been fishing for forty years they let me do it my way.

Two Jehovah’s Witnesses passed by and asked if I had caught a fish. I said “You are fishing as well, aren’t you? Did you get anything?” “Not yet”, one laughed and with nostalgia in his voice he told me how nice it was to go fishing with his dad, at just the same spot.

That was my way of connecting Chicago.

### *An open letter to the communities*

Margaret Shipman, Los Angeles

Dear Friend,

“Why would I want to go to the Seminary of The Christian Community?” you ask. “I don’t want to become a priest”. “Ah”, says the seminary, “but I hear your longing to deepen your spiritual life.” So it invites you to spend a week doing just that.

Each day starts with the Act of Consecration of Man, followed by a most cordial breakfast time. Yea, to Marta’s Peruvian porridge.

Then follows a main lesson, this week led by Gisela Wielki on “Temptation - The Fall - Redemption”, (A Journey of Human Evolution). Yes, it begins in the book of Genesis, but not through literal eyes: through spiritual archetypes. After a break Richard Dancy plunges with us into Theosophy. Yes, it starts with the intellectual soul, but not through our brain: through observing our right hand as an objective entity: through

deepening our observation, concentration and sensation of the every day world. In the afternoon, a session of “The World of Things” (just after Halloween) brought the grave stone to mind and a discussion of what a modern treatment of death and dying might best be - and a funny moment when ‘seminary’ became ‘cemetery’!

Monday ended with the weekly eurythmy hour. Susanne Zipperlen encouraged our some times awkward attempts, and through her instruction I noticed within that one hour a definite increase in concentration and bodily balance.

And so went the week. Are you getting the picture, dear friend, that not all deepening of one’s spiritual life has to lead to an ivory tower of knowledge? We can simply make our lives more livable, more enjoyable, more observant, by laying aside the laundry list and enlist for a week at the seminary. There we can make new personal connections and enrich the lives of other like-minded-people as well as taking away something personal. Now it is your turn!



On the Stairs to Redemption (the Seminary) Students and guests who have come through Temptation - The Fall - Redemption and lived to tell about it.



This is one of the bedrooms in the seminary - with ample evidence of it being occupied.





Participants of the Conference - "Walking with Christ" held in July 08 - enjoying some lunch on the rear porch.

## *A Response to Friends and Family*

Kathleen Clark

You're going to do what??

At a Seminary?!!

Are you going to be a monk? In a commune?

So, if it's not Catholic, then it must be Protestant, Right??

Ok, if it's not a church then what is it??

And so I ask myself too: just what is it? Why am I here in Chicago - what's different about this Seminary -No catechism courses, No restrictions - But, we do have the opportunity to live into a word, a paragraph or Gospel chapter - in a life changing way - perhaps we could call it "Living Perceptions"..

A Monk?? Nooo Just a person who may become evermore alive and able to listen, through a beginning of an understanding of the Spiritual World. A Commune?? Nooo - we wouldn't be able to contain ourselves... Catholic-Protestant?? No again - Oh my, here comes the tricky part - perhaps we could just say that the Christian Community a Movement for Religious Renewal is a kind of church in which the Act of Consecration of Man becomes the real dwelling place for us. Every time one hears or participates in the Act of Consecration, one finds or recognizes something new in it- it always brings the possibility for new awakenings. As such, we bring to it an unfolding of our past in a true and welcome meeting with the future. It is through our activity that the spiritual world may descend, and that we may come to know the spiritual world with greater clarity.

This is but the beginning of an explanation gained through my experience here at the Seminary. I welcome the opportunity to revisit this topic in my continued studies with what will likely be a new vision with a deeper understanding and with greater clarity.

## *Thank You*

Priest training is not about graduating a class. It is always about individuals being prepared for the sacrament of priest ordination, a vocation intended to be life-long.

Few people in today's world can afford to study full time, but priest training can only be full time, because the whole person needs to enter into a process of significant change. This does not happen when the training is part time. As a result our groups are small and probably will remain small for the foreseeable future. But in this smallness good work is being done, which reaches far beyond the walls of the seminary building, and through Chicago, one or two students have since 2006 been ordained annually. No matter how small the group of students or the number of participants for one of the Open Courses or for the Summer Conferences, we strive to give each individual a full and rich program and the attention each deserves.

We are always striving towards offering a full training. This is our intention and hope and we thank all of you, who have put your trust in the seminary, who have supported us financially and with words of encouragement. The short notes that accompany a donation mean much to us.

Light filled Advent greetings,

Gisela Wielki      Richard Dancey

**Apology** - we apologize if you receive more than one copy of this newsletter. We rely on the mailing lists provided by each congregation and it may happen that some people appear on more than one list. We do not currently have a way of cross referencing these lists. If you receive more than one copy you may be able to pass one on to an interested person.

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