

The Chicago Seminary News

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

SPRING SEMESTER 2008

Dear Readers and Friends of the Seminary!

The early part of our winter/spring semester saw lots of lively conversations at breakfast about Super Tuesday, Super Delegates, the Super Bowl and yet another super snowfall on the way with weeks of super sunlight deprivation. In the first eight days of February we had all but eleven minutes of sunshine with a sunburst of five minutes on the ninth day. But our Hibiscus in the classroom brought forth one glorious blossom after the other.



In February the ordinations in Stuttgart brought a super crop of newly ordained North American priests, Liza

Marcato and Ben Black, two in one ordination, a first ever, only to see Ben in the near future heading for the Ukraine. So it goes (sometimes) if your wife is also a priest and happens to be from the Ukraine. But we should not begrudge them their good luck. The Christian Community in North America has had its good share of imported priests.

LL'IBISCO

A volte, quando la potenza delle parole riempie gli spazi della stanza,
Alla gloria dei tuoi rossi fiori rivolgo lo sguardo
O ibisco, sei una forza della natura e non della mente...
Ti sono riconoscente.

By Domenica Nieddu

During the semester our students spent two weeks on the East Coast. After a weekend with the congregation in Hillside, they had a course with Erk Ludwig on the "Sermon on the Mount". In the second week they worked in the afternoons at the Fellowship Community and helped out at the Synod held in Spring Valley. It gave them the much-appreciated opportunity of meeting the circle of North American priests.

Our weeklong Open courses continue to draw participants from across the continent. You will see in the enclosed Open Course Brochure the rich program for the fall and in addition there will be two conferences in the summer.

When Oliver Steinrueck moved from Chicago to the congregation in San Francisco last summer, Daniel Hafner came to Chicago with responsibilities for the congregation and to help teach at the seminary. His full time teaching this past year was much appreciated.

Chicago is a city of trees. As an observation exercise Domenica and Fernando were each assigned a tree next to and across from the seminary at the beginning of the second semester, in the deep of winter. Throughout late winter and the beginning of spring, they have closely watched their tree's changing with the seasons.

In the first year of study for priest training the student can have the feeling that not much is happening, not much to show for a year of study, only to be surprised, when all of a sudden shoots of a new life appear. Now they move on for their "greening" perhaps into an internship in Switzerland/Italy and South America.

We thank you all for your continued support in words, donations and good thoughts.



With warm regards, Richard Dancey, Gisela Wielki, Seminary directors

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME. Please make check payable to the Seminary of the Christian Community, and mail to: P.O. Box Curriculum Fall 2009

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The Little Tree That Could

By Domenica Nieddu



Through the snowstorms and tempests of the winter, my little tree resisted. I have admired it for several months from the seminary's classroom, and sometimes I stepped out of the building and stood in front of its trunk.

All other trees are completely naked and stripped of everything: only bare bones are left of what in the summer was a big, green, creature. They couldn't wait to get rid of the old leaves to grow new green ones!

But not my tree. My tree remained loyal to its foliage and kept the dry and hardened leaves on its branches, like a protective mother. And the arid leaves themselves did not let go of the big mother plant. They held on against the winter fury of the windy city.

I observed some of the leaves that I picked up from the ground. They have two sides: One silvery one and one of a more brownish color. They are actually very fragile and crumble easily: Something so effortlessly destroyed by a human being's hand can survive on a dry, bare, winter tree!

The trunk of my tree appears quite small compared to that of other trees. I touch it with my fingers and it gives me a feeling of hardness and softness at the same time. It has been able to weather Chicago's climate!

A very resilient tree is my tree. It is an oak, a word synonymous with strength in all languages.

Your Tree, Behold It

By Fernando Chevallier Boutell

Last year, at the beginning of autumn, when I arrived in Chicago, I liked a lot the big trees in our neighborhood, their different shapes, the colors of their leaves: Half green, half red, and gold-yellow. Then winter came. The trees lost their leaves. Only the stoic pines endured under the snow.

One day Gisela told me: "Look, that's your tree, behold it!" When I heard that, I realized that I didn't like that tree, which was my least favorite. But, on the other hand, I thought that it was a good opportunity to work on my capacities, and I began to watch...

My tree was one of five similar trees in front of the seminary. The first thing I saw were the tree's pods: Long beans hanging in the branches. The top was open to the cosmos, but the fruits fell into the earth in a vertical position. In the windy days, I could hear the special sounds of these fruits. Slowly I began to be a friend of the tree. At that time, I took some of the long pods and put them in my room: The warmth opened the pods, and I could see a lot of seeds with little "wings" on my desk or flying to the floor.

Each day I observed my tree, my naked tree. Its still branches covered with snow showed me the buds, and three or more were at the same level (in other trees I observed alternation). Regarding its trunk and "spreading" branches, my friend told me a secret: "The shape of the leaves reveals the shape of the tree." The leaves of my tree are heart shaped.

I was trying to work, too, with its "after-image", and it grew very quickly in my mind. I began to imagine the branches covered with green and fresh leaves in a heart shape. I tried to imagine its hidden roots, its salt process in the ground. I dreamed of the flowers showing the effects of the rhythmic contraction and expansion. Finally spring came, but only in the calendar; my tree seemed the same, no leaves, no flowers, only its trunk. R. Steiner gave us a very important indication regarding trees. He spoke of their trunks as protuberances of the soil, and said: "That which grows in the trunk can be compared to the herbaceous plants which grow directly out of the soil."

Yes, the trunk and the branches are working hard to prepare the fertile "soil", where the leaves will sprout and the flowers will give us their colors. The trunk of my tree is waiting patiently for the light and warmth of the spring sun. As at Easter time, the earth awaits and receives the body of Christ to renew its vital forces.



cont. p. 3

My first observation exercise was the sky and now this; and it is amazing to notice how many things one can see when one begins to watch something with love. When I walk through the city, I discover a lot of 'relatives', some older, some bigger, similar and different. And you can see not only the sky, you need to see the wind, the clouds, the buildings, the planes, the sun, the stars, the moon. And the same with the tree, the ground, the air, the birds ... At the end it is only a part of the great mystery of life and light. I need the eyes of my heart too.

Yesterday I went to see, for the last time, my tree, and one man saw me watching, and, in a high voice, he said: "Hey, that is the Catalpa tree!" At last I know its name, my lovely Hardy-Catalpa. If you, dear friend, some day come to the seminary, behold him!

Eurythmy And Speech Formation – A True Gift

By Domenica Nieddu

I enjoy enormously the two artistic classes, taught weekly by Christa Macbeth and Susanne Zipperlen. I have experienced it as a true gift. In the past, I rarely had the opportunity to work with a Eurythmist or to enroll in a Speech Formation course.

My only exposure to Eurythmy and Speech Formation comes from my experience in Camphill, many years ago. But at that time, the focus was mostly on our residents and we, the co-workers, were solely the accompanying parties.

The artistic classes have helped me a great deal to step out of my predominant sanguinity and Intellectual Soul. I experience that Speech Formation and Eurythmy really work on my etheric and promote the changes in me that I would like to see happening toward the end of this incarnation (and the next ones). In other words, Eurythmy and Speech Formation forced me to think, live, and perceive outside the box, and acted as a kind of "ko-an", where the answer I was invited to provide, in order to develop and grow, was out of the ordinary and prevented me from relying on my old tricks (if I can think it through or read about it, I will get it).

What Are The Japanese Cherry Trees Doing In Essen, Germany?

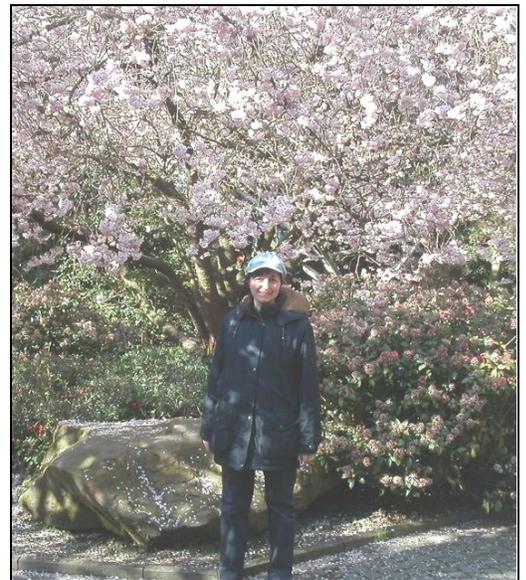
By Nora Minassian

It was around the middle of March when we had windy days, rainy days, days of hail and snow. There stood the Japanese cherry trees on the sidewalks of Rütenscheider Strasse blooming with light rosy white flowers blushing on them. The flowers had very light and delicate petals which at times joined the snow flakes and danced to the music of the wind of the day till they found rest together on the earth. In spite of the days of hail and snow, and their occasional dance, the flowers covered the trees for several weeks.

How do such delicate flowers survive for weeks without even being in their homeland?

Year after year, they have blossomed, died and blossomed again. When they blossom, these flowers stay connected. They gather together and fasten themselves on their twig. Then, each one throws its gaze in a certain direction. Some look to the sky, some to the earth and some to the sun. Others look to those of us looking at them.

In the seminary training, we also go through such a process of blossoming, dying, and blossoming again. We come together with fellow students and learn to ground ourselves, fasten ourselves on Christ through all the courses, through all the activities, through all the interactions and especially through the daily sacrament of the Act of Consecration of Man. Each one of us experiences this process from his or her personal perspective and biographical moment. Then, we take this experience into the world in the direction that life leads us. Going through such an intensive process of dying and living again, we become, in a certain way, earth-proof. No matter to which part of the world we go to, no matter which air we breathe, which water we drink and which language we speak, we are better prepared for windy days, rainy days, days of hail and snow. In a way, like the Japanese cherry trees, we become not just waterproof or land-proof but earth-proof.



What are the Japanese cherry trees doing in Essen? I still have to find out. In any case, I know that they happen to be here at this time when I am here in order to meet me, to reveal themselves to me and to allow me to find myself in them. (Ed. After a break Nora will return to her studies after Christmas and enter the preparation semester, moving towards ordination)

First Fruits

Dear Friends in North America!

I send many greetings to you from my first congregation in Erlangen, Germany (just north of Nuremberg). Erlangen is a worldly town for its size (100,000 residents) with its university and home to technical firm Siemens, and is a bike-friendly, green little city. The highlight is of course the active community here and my new priest work; carried by about 110 members and friends—with between 20 and 40 people on a regular Sunday—actually a very 'American-sized' community. All have welcomed me with great generosity and openness, helping me get settled, as I take up my new life of celebrating, getting to know the community, giving religious instruction in the Waldorf School (4th, 6th, and 8th grade to start), preparing sermons, and figuring out what it means to be a becoming priest, lifelong! I am learning much that I will bring to my future work in North America, which is never far from my thoughts, but I am also happy making the most of my time here.



Ben Black and Liza Marcato close to the finish line

It is hard to believe I was ordained just a month and half ago. The ordinations in Stuttgart were held over four days, and will shine for many years to come for all of us who took part. Fourteen new priests were ordained from students of all three seminaries and the pre-seminary in Cologne, and intended for work in all three directions: East, Middle and West! The first Chicago Seminary student to go through the ordination, I am only the *first* fruit of what must become a grove of nourishment for the Christian Community in the world--keep the faith, good thoughts and support pouring into Chicago, more fruits are already ripening on the tree...send more seedlings!

Yours in cultivating!
Liza Joy Marcato

(ed. Liza started with her priest training in Chicago in the fall of 2004, continued in Stuttgart in the fall of 2005 and was ordained in February 2008)



Rev. Ben Black



Jonah Evans climbing steadily and enjoying it



Rev. Liza Marcato

Perseverance, Practice, and Sacrament



Naturally, as a young gardener, there's not too much work for me to do in the winter months. Each year, in and around this time, the question, "What am I going to do with my time?" is voiced. One may imagine that the amount of free time afforded to a gardener in the winter season must be wonderful. In a way this is true. However, unless prepared in the appropriate ways, such a change in or loss of daily routine is quite a shock to the organism. In fact, over the years, it's clear that a routine or a body of habits has been lacking from my daily life, especially in winter time, which has often made life seem, as winter outwardly can, cold, dry, and lifeless.

Deciding to visit the seminary in February, to attend two of the Open Courses, was such a fruitful way to spend my time. Above all, these courses were most enlightening and moving in the sense that they all expressed the importance of perseverance, practice, and sacrament in everyday life. Heartfelt striving towards connecting physical with spiritual was made manifest through many different examples of how we are strengthened by creating new habit forms and vivifying our existing practices. Such routines were often explored and lived, whether it be the persistent devotion to form and color that is so evident in artists' work discussed in courses on the first Goetheanum or the full-time

seminary students' ongoing contemplations concerning the gospels, epistles, and sacraments on their path to becoming Christian Community priests.

Through routine work, it becomes evident just how we can, with the help of spiritual beings, transform and elevate the ways in which we experience the physical world. In fact, through observation exercises in the World of Things course, we did just that - breathed new life into and en-souled many winter remains from the plant kingdom that were found outdoors and brought to class. Furthermore, in a course called The World as Word, we practiced, and discussed making a practice of, transforming the inherently mineralistic nouns that we use in our language into expressive and vibrant verbs. It is through such practices that one can begin to spiritualize the mineral, physical, and corporeal as well as experience what essentially lies beyond and informs what we outwardly sense. In a mysteriously real manner, we can work to develop new organs of perception. By creating such a living body of habits, or a habit of creating living bodies, we are able to lift ourselves up from the purely physical and into the supersensible.

We have the power to consciously create space and affect how we move through it. A time, a space, and a routine must be devoted to those aspects of life that we wish to elevate in order to do away with all of the fruitless chatter that can often permeate our thinking, feeling, and willing. This ascension, through routinely and habitually re-enlivening our existing concepts, can be considered a sacramental approach to life. It is such an approach that lies at the core of religious renewal and enables us to perceive and be fulfilled by modern day Christian impulses.

As a result of my visit to Chicago, I know that I shall consistently (not only in winter) strive to thoughtfully create nourishing practices and habit forms akin to those experienced while at the seminary. Such striving begins with focusing on the very small and particular details of life that we wish to re-enliven our concepts of through balanced thinking, feeling, and willing. I've realized that it's not a matter of merely adopting "good" habits and routines in our everyday activity, but ones that aim to feed, strengthen, and elevate us on our path to and from the spiritual.

*Overheard at our common breakfast:
"Last night I saw Richard Wagner's
Tannhauser on DVD. It was amazing! There
were all these penguins going back and
forth."
"Penguins?"
"Yes, going back and forth on the stage."
"Oh, pilgrims!"
Ah, the charming, humorous pitfalls,
muddles, of the foreign tongue!*

Winter/Spring Semester 2008

Jan. 21 – 25, 2008

Building a Living Relationship with the Christ

-Richard Dancey

Jan. 28 – Feb. 1

The Evolution of Man and Animal

-Daniel Hafner

Feb. 4 – Feb. 8

The Evolution of Man and the Angels

-Gisela Wielki

Feb. 11 – Feb. 15

The First Goetheanum - The Metamorphosis World of Form

-Daniel Hafner

Feb. 18 - 22

The First Goetheanum – The Language of Color and Image

-Daniel Hafner

Feb. 25 – Feb. 29, New York City

The Sermon on the Mount

- Erk Ludwig, New York

March 10 -15

The Countenance of Creation – Vertical and Horizontal

-Gisela Wielki

March 17- March 22

Holy Week

Lazarus – Mary Magdalene – Judas and the Mystery of Golgotha

Blessed by Darkness and Light

By Faith Lerner, Wisconsin

Attending the Open Course, 'Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, Judas and the Mystery of Golgotha' during Holy Week at the seminary was something I'd long anticipated. Although I am relatively new to The Christian Community, I had hoped for years to make a retreat during Holy Week to explore this time leading up to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. When I saw this course listed in the seminary brochure I jumped at the chance!

The days of the course unfolded as we entered again and again into the Mystery of Golgotha through the lives of Lazarus-John, Mary Magdalene and Judas, and their relationship to Christ Jesus. Sustained and strengthened by the daily Act of Consecration of Man, and stretched by the task of creatively joining our voices and wills, it seemed that each of us attending the course stepped into our own Mystery of Golgotha as it lives in us today, as well as our relationship to the Son of Man/Son of God as it continues to reveal itself to us.

As we worked with the Gospels, the guidance and teaching of Gisela and Richard, speech formation with Christa and many invigorating and unsettling discussions, our ideas and preconceptions were challenged and new possibilities of understanding opened to mysteries within mysteries within mysteries. It became evident that the course was a mere glimpse into discoveries that would continue to unfold over lifetimes.

Easter brought inner relief from my encounters with the darkness of Golgotha as the weather delivered a sunny respite from Good Friday's blizzard. Blessed by both darkness and light, both coldness and warmth, I left the seminary and headed for home; smaller in contrast to this Awe-some Mystery yet larger in heart and mind for having wrestled with it.

MaF ONLY I KNEW

At- Tom McGuire

People often speak of the regret over lost opportunities: "If only I bought that \$300.00 stock when it was first offered for \$1.00! If only I knew!"

In the good old days, if you wanted to attend a Christian Community seminary class you just had to learn German, get permission from the Stuttgart seminary leadership, raid your savings, abandon your penniless family, travel all night by plane, all day by train, and there you were.

Now there is an alternative, a seminary in Chicago, where the best minds in the national and international Movement for Religious Renewal come to us. They conveniently provide world-class courses, some of which are open to the wider community at a minimal cost. Their brochure calls it "a wonderful opportunity".

Or Now you know.

World as Parable, Eurythmy (Zipperlen), Speech Formation (Macbeth), Greek, Living Disciplines, Autumn Course, Secret Science in Outline, German

On Finally Joining an Open Course

Holy Week, 2008: Lazarus - Mary Magdalene - Judas and the Mystery of Golgotha
By Kathleen Clark, Connecticut

The Invitation: Self invited from one who wanted to know (all about) the Mystery, who had heard of Gisela Wielki and Richard Dancey, but only vaguely of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and the dark side of mankind called Judas. Only later did I discover that the invitation came from all of these folks.

Footsteps: I land in the darkened seminary Sunday night. Bare bones and quiet. I arrange and rearrange my few belongings quietly for fear I should disturb that quiet, sit gingerly on the bed and pretend to read. Then - footsteps in the hallway - they fade, a door closes. Would I be bold enough to meet someone in that private space of quiet footsteps - Not tonight, perhaps tomorrow. I sleep surrounded by unknown friends.

The Act of Consecration of Man: We are first called to waken within, and to the world by the quickening tones from Monica's flute. To begin each day with the Act of Consecration is a treat. I secretly revel and receive confirmation every time I hear Christ In You. I feel invited into the Mystery. One is already filled, and hardly feels the need for the breakfast which follows the service, but the lovely informal gathering brings cheerful exchanges and occasional delightful teasing.

The Course: A true journey experienced through wonderful images, pictures and questions - always Questions - I don't remember any answers, or even that they would have been relevant. Rather, we are led to meet Judas or Lazarus or Mary Magdalene - all new friends now. The Mystery of Judas or of Christ lives in all of us as does the Mystery of Richard or Faith or You.

Speech: We read together "The Seven Words From the Cross" (by Cristina Martinez) - each voice wanting to say Here I am in these Seven Words. Christa Macbeth, our teacher, feigns hopelessness, but she shares gentle patience. We learn to listen for each other and are invited to participate in a music/poetry event on Maundy Thursday.

Sharing Histories - Deep Friendships: We meet, sharing laughter and little bits of stories. Every now and then we sneak in a bit of pain - to test the waters - how might I be received - only to find that the waters go oh so deep, the connections ever so much stronger and the friendships to be treasured forever.

Departure: I am a little closer to being free - and I know it. It is in the preparation that one may begin to experience and live into a Mystery - one becomes a part of that Mystery, and comes to know it as part of oneself. Is it too bold to say my soul wakens to truths which have before only been felt? It is with deep gratitude to everyone at the seminary, that I have begun this journey, which I hope will bring me back again to the seminary in Chicago.

*Greetings from Maine and Happy Easter!
The snow is deep, but spring is here. Sandy, my new puppy came home with us on Good Friday and is wondering if he could receive a puppy blessing from the Christian Community. Here is a donation to get the ball rolling or perhaps just help out the seminary. I will be teaching Sandy to serve the "left" side soon as he is great at fetching things already!
In jest and love, Steve B.*



A CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE SEMINARY

Life: Workplace or Playground?

The Fulfillment of Humanness

Saturday, June 14 - Thursday, June 19, 2008

(Participants are welcome to stay on for the weekend after the conference)

Cost: \$100

Includes room and board
register before June 1st

A DIFFERENT KIND OF VACATION! TWO SUMMER CONFERENCES AT THE SEMINARY

Walking with Christ

July 19 – 24, 2008

Working from Christ

August 23 - 28, 2008

(Participants are welcome to stay on for the weekend after the conference)

Cost \$250 per conference, pay on arrival (Includes fee, room, breakfast, light supper)
register before July 1st or August 1st

For more information and to register please call or e-mail
Gisela Wielki 773-472-7041 or Richard Dancey 773-506-0963

info@seminary-chicago.org

We will then send you further details.

Both airports, Midway or O'Hare, have convenient public transportation to the seminary



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We understand that some of you may be receiving more than one copy of this newsletter. At this time we do not have the resources to cross check the mailing lists we receive from individual congregations which may have your name on more than one list. Please help us by sharing this letter with others!