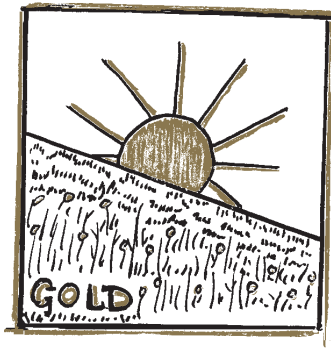


GOLD

Growing Older Living Deeper



Summer 2009

A quarterly publication
on
Spirituality in Later Life

CONTACT INFORMATION

Subscriptions of €15 (€20 abroad) for four issues, should be sent to

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Cheques should be made payable to GOLD. The Editor does not handle subscriptions nor issues to do with circulation.

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GOLD

Vol. 6

Summer 2009

No. 2

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As we settle into the summer season we just hope and pray that this year we will see a lot more sunshine than in the last two years. Some articles in this issue have either a summer theme or reference, so you will see that GOLD is actively playing its part in helping to 'roll on the summer'... we wish and we hope.

Since our last issue we have had another successful GOLD Conference. Sr. Moya Curran O.P. kept our attention with material that was particularly apt for those of us of more mature years. Moya defined the ultimate aim of the older person which is "To give love and to receive love and gradually to grow in understanding that death is the ultimate act of love, the total surrender of one's self to the Unknown."

Among many other points she touched on the coping strategies that involve self-care. First on her list was 'balance' both in terms of time and energy. She referred to a TV programme being aired at the time of the conference "Not Enough Hours", a programme familiar to many of our readers. Balance is also needed in terms of intake of food, drugs, TV etc. She recommended the establishment of routines which give a quiet rhythm to a person's life. Adequate sleep is a crucial issue which we all need to take seriously as is connecting with others so as not to become isolated or withdrawn. We all need a support system to help us out in times of emotional stress or distress. We need to be proactive about health and not to wait until health issues become acute.

These points are just a taster from Moya's excellent presentations. More will follow in later issues of GOLD. In the afternoon Hazel Ensor took us through an enjoyable Chair Yoga session which kept all of us awake in what is often referred to as the 'graveyard slot' immediately after lunch.

Finally Sr. Sheila Cronin of CORI gave a very clear presentation on what is meant by an Advance Healthcare Directive. It is important to remember that these directives are not legally binding in Ireland but

that they are expressions of a person's healthcare preferences and wishes should they be unable to express these wishes at the appropriate time due to some loss in mental capacity.

In the month of May we had another Conference, this time organised by Sonas aPc with the majority of speakers travelling from the UK to share their expertise with us. One of the afternoon sessions was entitled "Attending to the Spiritual Needs of the Older Person with Dementia". This was given by Ms Gaynor Hammond, a trained nurse who is also a Baptist Minister in Leeds. She emphasised the value of having one's own memory box containing items of special significance over the course of one's life. She saw this as a route to spirituality, and highlighted how important it is for staff to be aware of the things that matter(ed) most in the lives of each person they care for, recognising their uniqueness as persons.

We invite our readers once again to contribute articles, letters, poems etc. for future issues of GOLD. Anything to be considered for the next issue needs to reach us by 1st August 2009. Please share your thoughts with us, including your views on some book you have read, a trip you have made, a film or documentary you have enjoyed or perhaps a memorable Retreat experience.

The winner of the Spring Quiz will find her name on p15.

Best wishes for a good summer ... in every respect.

Mary Theadgold RSC
Editor

WHERE LOVE IS, THERE IS GOD.

Brian Grogan, SJ

We are made for relationships! At the heart of our religion is God's loving relationship with us and our response to him. Some schools of spirituality focus more on certain religious practices and rules rather than on the personal experience which underlies and gives meaning to the relationship between God and ourselves. It is certainly true that God is to be found in religious practices: the Mass, Holy Communion, The Sacrament of Reconciliation etc. All such practices can promote the vitality of our faith.

Strengths and weaknesses.

Surveys, however, reveal that in Ireland we are strong on the institutional level of faith, but weak on the mystical level. This means that many Irish Catholics have little sense that God is in love with them and they with God. It seems that personal experience of our relationship with God needs to be emphasised and here Ignatian spirituality can help. Because it stresses that we can experience our one-to-one relationship with God and that we can also find God in all our experiences of life. Among our experiences are our religious practices; they are at their best when they flow from and express our relationship with God. When you are in love you find all sorts of ways of showing it; some ways will be structured and others will be spontaneous. The important thing is that they should be alive rather than burdensome. God doesn't mind if you fall asleep while saying your prayers!

Experiencing relationship.

A woman said to me recently. "All my life I have been involved in doing deals with God. If I said a certain number of prayers or performed tasks in set ways, then God would give me what I had earned. I have spent a long time explaining my life to God"! When I asked her what she meant, she said. "I thought it had to be all hard work

and serious faces, a grinding slog. Now I have come to see Jesus standing in front of me, perhaps smiling a little wryly, waiting for me to stop working so hard at prayer, willing me to pause for breath, to lift my head and look at him, just to give him a chance to speak. Now he lets me know that he understands about feelings, loving and laughing, loss and sadness. Events don't have to be sanitised before sharing the pain or the smile; the eyes don't have to be dried and the smile fixed on. He might indeed shed a tear with me and for me, if I could allow it. I have also learned that he doesn't blush as easily as I thought, which is comforting".

Centre of her life.

This woman is catching on to her personal experience of God and is finding the relationship between herself and Jesus warm and real. If she lets it unfold, she will find this direct and intimate relationship with God becoming more and more the centre of her life. It is wonderful to her that an ordinary person like herself can be known and loved directly by God and that she knows and loves him directly too. But she told me she fears that if she lets the relationship develop, she herself will be changed and she may lose contact with the other people in her life. She feels it is an "either/or" situation; either God or the people in her life. However, the great richness of Ignatian spirituality is that it helps us both to cultivate our relationship with God and to recognise bit by bit that God is in all our other relationships. And not only is God in our human relationships, he is also in all our experiences of life. "Finding God in all things and all things in God" is Ignatius' summary of these awesome truths.

Is God in our relationships?

God is most certainly in our relationships. The world of grace into which we are invited is a world of relationships, and so God's work with us centres on the developing of relationships. The three divine persons, who relate so perfectly with one another, want to extend their relating love to everyone. Therefore, when we are loved and love one another, we experience that relating love and in this way we experience God as present in all our human relationships.

Quite simply, where love is, God is! In experiencing love in our lives, we are in fact experiencing God; when we experience that love is absent, we find in ourselves a yearning for it and that yearning is a desire for God. “To love another person is to see the face of God” so goes the final song in *Les Miserables*. C.S. Lewis puts the same truth as follows: “When we see the face of God we shall know that we have always known it. He has been a party to ... all our earthly experiences of innocent love”.

God in our life experiences.

Can it be true that God is to be found everywhere? In holy places and in the kitchen; in school and in the waiting room of the health clinic; in examination halls and interview rooms; in the income tax office and in the dole queue; in police stations and courtrooms; in emergency rooms and maternity wards: in traffic jams and in supermarket check-outs and in the disco. In other words, can we find God in the day to day reality of our lives? Some spiritualities doubt that God is present in our ordinary human experiences, but Ignatian spirituality holds that God is to be found and wants to be found, in the flesh and blood of everyday life, just as he wanted to be found in the flesh and blood person named Jesus. Just as Jesus met his Father in the day to day experiences of his life, so also can we. This is why Ignatian spirituality is termed incarnational, which means en-fleshed. Each of us is an en-fleshed spirit and we encapsulate a whole history and a wealth of experiences; with these we can search for God and be sure of finding him.

Suggested exercise.

Sometimes you have only a short space of time in your day for prayer; you could spend it in vocal prayer or in meditating on a passage of Scripture. This is good, but Ignatius, because he was so convinced that God is right beside us in the events of our day, suggests that you give the time over to reflecting on what is going on for you in your life right now. God is to be found in all your experiences and if you stand back with him, he will help you to notice how he is present in them.

MORE THAN JUST FLOWERS.

Ellen Galvin RSC

Just flowers - there they were, two bunches of white chrysanthemums just plonked into two vases on either side of the small altar on which the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. On seeing how the flowers were presented to the Lord, Mary's conversation with him evoked something akin to St. Peter's words when he asked the Lord to rain down fire from heaven on those with whom he did not see, eye to eye.

However, Mary did not plead for fire from heaven to strike the person who had arranged the flowers. No, she only said to the Lord, "if I were giving you those flowers, I would arrange them, so that they would be beautiful for you". At that moment Mary remembered how Jesus praised the generosity of the poor widow for putting her only two coins on the collection plate. He said that "she put in all that she had....her whole living." It was not just her coins that she gave, but "it was her whole living".

As Mary pondered these words, she wondered how the woman got these coins. Good question! The answer is surely that she earned them by the work of her hands, by the sweat of her brow and by using her gifts of mind and heart to accomplish the work that earned her the coins. This is what Jesus saw had been placed on the collection place.

Mary now realised that the person who placed the badly arranged flowers on the altar had also been inspired to do so and that Jesus had seen not only flowers but the beauty of the whole person; a person with gifts and skills, but above all with a heart full of love and kindness. The lesson Mary learned that day from the story of the widow's coins was that an arrangement produced by artistic fingers would be like the large sums of money placed in the treasury by the rich without personal cost or loss.

At this point, Mary wondered what she could offer to Jesus that would earn from him the praise that he gave to the poor widow. St. Paul gives us the answer. “If I give my body to be burned and have not love it is nothing”. So love is the answer; “To give and not to count the cost”. Mary’s pondering that day opened a window revealing to her the depth of love and beauty hidden behind the obvious.

It was the last day before the summer holidays and the children brought presents for their teacher whom they wouldn’t see again. As it was the last day, the teacher decided to make a game of guessing what the presents were.

First the shop owner’s daughter came with a box. It was heavy. “Is this a box of sweets?” “Yes” replied the little girl. Next the flower shop owner’s son came up with a box. It was light. So the teacher shakes it and says, “Are these flowers?” “Yes” said the little boy.

Next came the wine merchant’s daughter with a box. It’s very heavy. The teacher shakes it and it leaks. The teacher touches the liquid with her finger and tastes it and says, “Is this box full of wine?” “No Miss”, came the reply. The teacher tastes another drop and says “Is it a bottle of champagne?” “No Miss” comes the reply again. “I give up” the teacher says. “Tell me what’s in the box?”

“A puppy” the little girl says!

Thanks to www.todayismygifttoyou and Fr. James McSweeney

CULTIVATING MINDFUL PRESENCE.

Joe Lucey. SDB

One of the central themes in Don Bosco's spirituality is the theme of Presence. This Presence has three dimensions, all of which are interconnected; being present to oneself, being present to other people, being present to God. The hinge which enables us to inhabit these dimensions of presence is the hinge of Mindfulness or Awareness.

We are challenged to be aware first of all of ourselves. How am I today? What is going on for me? What is my mood like? What is pre-occupying my mind? What is making it difficult for me to be attentive to the here and now.

We are also challenged to be really present to whomever I happen to be with at any given moment, to be attentive to them, really listening to them. Often we can be present to someone in body but our mind can be a hundred miles away. We might find the person boring, maybe we heard their stories several times before. We may consider that we have more important things to think about, things to worry us, things to plan, things to occupy our minds.

And presence also involves being aware that right now, I am immersed in God.

*Where could I flee from your presence?
If I climb the heavens you are there,
There too if I lie in the depths of the earth.
If I flew to the point of sunrise
Or westward across the sea
Your hand would still be guiding me
Your right hand holding me. (Psalm 139)*

Being present to God is really being aware of God's abiding and loving presence to us. Being thus aware of the beauty of the here and now,

the present becomes filled with the awareness of Presence, the presence of the Source, the healing power of Emmanuel, God with us.

In his time, to help people maintain this sense of the awareness of God's presence in the present moment, Don Bosco encouraged his young people and his followers to pray short prayers at frequent intervals in the day. He also encouraged frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, going to the well of presence to be refreshed and renewed by the confidence of God with us. St. Mary Mazzarello was also keenly aware of cultivating the awareness of God's loving presence. When teaching dress-making to young women she would remind them: "Every stitch we make in God's love". These teachings are not unlike the teachings of the Gathas, which we find in the Eastern tradition.

A Gatha is a little poem or prayer or song, which is repeated at certain times during the day. In some Buddhist monastic traditions, the novitiate year is spent learning various gathas by heart, which can be used at various happenings in the day. For example, the young novice in the Zen tradition of Plum Village Monastery, learns to start his day with the following gatha,

*Waking this morning I smile. Twenty four brand new hours are before me
I vow to live fully in each moment and to look at all beings with eyes of
compassion.*

When brushing my teeth, I may allow myself to be aware of the various uses of my mouth, I give thanks this day for the gift of speech.

*May the words I speak today be uplifting and supporting to all. And may my
lips offer the other; a smile of welcome and understanding.*

In the monastic tradition there is also a gatha to accompany the sounding of the bell at the beginning of the monks' meditation.

*Listening to the bell, I feel the afflictions in me begin to dissolve.
My mind becomes calm, my body relaxed. A smile is born on my lips.
Following the sound of the bell, my breath guides me back*

to the safe islands of mindfulness. in the garden of my heart, the flower of peace blooms beautifully.

We might try to create, to write our own gathas, our own personal prayers or poems which are appropriate to our needs and lifestyle. They offer us a little window of awareness, a chance to refresh our trust in the providence of God whose breath I share, whose heartbeat is the blood which invigorates my life.

I just carry hope in my heart. You either have it or you don't regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you. Life without hope is empty, boring and useless. I cannot imagine that I could strive for something if I did not carry hope with me. I am thankful to God for it. It is as big as life itself.' ~Vaclav Havel (1st president of the Czech Republic)

There are so many definitions of hope out there. It's not blind optimism but it does give us something to hold onto and push when it might be easier to quit. If we depend only on ourselves to get through life we're in for many disappointments. We need others to support and encourage us. If we can be confident enough to use all that God has given to us, then hope will flourish in the depths of our being. We need to pray for the gift of hope in our lives. Hope draws its power from a deep trust in God. We put our trust and hope in our God today.

Fr. James McSweeney www.2u.ie

DAISIES BY THE DOZEN.

**Sparrows are going cheap, said Jesus
two for just a penny.**

**Daisies are not, priceless indeed are they,
for who would ever buy a daisy?**

**Sitting targets for lawn mower and weed killer
stuff for daisy chains and little bare feet
to play with.**

**Daisies, daily beheaded, yet never making it
to the endangered species list.**

**Daisies, golden hearted, open to God's wind
and sun and rain.**

Daisies white petalled like monstrance rays.

**Daisies saluting the little ones of earth.
they too sitting targets for
precision bombs and fighter planes.**

**Daisies, every bright flags of hope
on the battle fire of cosmic pain.**

**Daisies, more splendid than Solomon
bright carpet for the feet of God
crying out that he has passed by once
and will surely come again some day.**

Sr. Nora Keaney. R.G.S

THE EUCHARIST – A GIFT TO FRIENDS.

Hugh O’Donnell SDB

Sometimes I wish we would refer to the Eucharist again as the “breaking of bread”. In the early church a person would have said, “are you coming to the breaking of bread”. (It does sound a lot more promising than the expression, “are you going to Mass”?)

The Christian life begins (and ends) with Jesus blessing, breaking and offering bread as a personal gift to his friends. His action sums up everything he wanted to tell them about himself and his love for them; everything about the Father who gives us our daily bread; and everything about breaking the bread of our life with others, not just in the Eucharist, but in the joy and pain of every relationship

Jesus is our bread of life. He brings the fire of his passionate Spirit to our lives. When we break bread with him we are anticipating a time when all of us can sit down together as one family and welcome all those who feel abandoned, rejected or unloved.

But the “breaking of the bread” is for the whole of creation. It is also hope for the flowers, hope for species on the brink of extinction, hope for the airways clogged with fumes, hope for chemical-saturated soils, hope for the hungry ones, and for the thirsty dying for a sup of clean water.

The “breaking of bread” is our Christian way of taking responsibility for one another. It is not about some ancient ritual, but a thanksgiving for the abundance of life we find in Jesus who hands over his very life to us as our daily bread. It is always a matter of life and death. It is that important

ANSWERS TO THE SPRING QUIZ.

1. Which team won the Sam Maguire cup in September 2008?
Tyrone
2. What is the largest county in Leinster? **Wexford**
3. How many furlongs are there in a mile? **Eight**
4. The TV series “Coronation Street” is set in which fictional town?
Weatherfield
5. In predecimal Irish money, how many farthings were there in a half crown? **120**
6. Who is the Manager of the Irish Soccer Team? **Trapattoni**
7. Which Munster town is known as “The home of the Tinkers”?
Rathkeale
8. All work and no play makes Jack.....what are the next three words?
A dull boy
9. What English word is an anagram of one of the days of the week?
Dynamo - Monday
10. According to the Bible, how old was Noah when he died?
950 years
11. What are the first names of Harry Potter’s parents?
James and Lily
12. K2, the second highest mountain in the world, is in which country?
Pakistan
13. A Palindrome is a word which can be spelt backwards, such as Navan. What is the word for two or more words which have the same spelling but different pronunciation or meaning. Such as “bow”.
Homonym/heteronym
14. By which nickname was Edith Giovanna Gassion known?
Little sparrow
15. Is there anything in common with three four words. Looter. Drawer. Desserts. Lamina? **All can be spelt backwards to make another word.**
16. “Presbyterians” is an anagram of which pop stars name?
Britney Spears

17. Who was squashed and killed by Dorothy's house in the Wizard of Oz?
Wicked witch of the East
18. Which country has a flag which is the same as Ireland's, only in reverse? **Ivory Coast**
19. From which animal do we get a type of meat called venison?
Deer
20. What is Ireland's smallest bird? **Goldcrest**
21. THORN. SEAT. SHOUT? These are anagrams. What is the fourth word? **West/stew**
22. Which Welsh town gave its name to a type of sleeve? **Raglan**
23. What is the capital of Latvia? **Riga**
24. "I am a weakish speller" is an anagram for a very famous writer. Who is he? **William Shakespeare**
25. In music, if a piece is written in three flats, which notes will be flat?
B.E.A
26. There are seven Roman numerals all letters. What would you get if you added them all together. **1666**
27. What nationality was Dracula's creator, Bram Stoker? **Irish**
28. Which two of Santa's reindeer's begin with "c"?
Comet and cupid
29. What name is given to a cow that has not had a calf? **Heifer**
30. In a film, a cowboy was defenestrated. What happened to him?
Thrown out the window.

The outright winner of the spring Quiz – all answers correct - is

Sr. Margaret Pepper
Kilkee Road
Kilrush,
Co. Clare

Congratulations Sr. Margaret, your €50 prize is on the way.

SUMMER QUIZ.

**Please return answers to Lucy Bruton 206 Gracepark Road,
Drumcondra, Dublin. 9. by August 1st, 2009.**

1. Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt,.....what/who comes next and why?(7. 5,8)
2. What is the name of the latest James Bond film? (7,2,6)
3. What is the most southerly state of the United States of America. (6)
4. What two words were used for payments to help former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern? (3,3)
5. What time is when Wee Willie Winkie appears? (time)
6. What runs through the mouth of the Amazon river and Lake Victoria besides water?(7)
7. What word can go before "hem" and after "gall" to make another word? (3)
8. What do British stamps NOT have on them that most other stamps do? (4,2,7)
9. According to Beatrix Potter, what type of creature was Mr. Jeremy Fisher? (4)
10. In what year was the Dublin Millennium Spire completed? (date)
11. What links a Dublin cinema with cabbage and Gilbert and Sullivan? (5)
12. Which of Disney's seven dwarfs comes last alphabetically? (6)
13. What type of tree is mentioned in the song "Waltzing Matilda"(8)
14. In Irish names like O'Brien, O'Gara, what does the "O" mean? (8 or 10)
15. The following combinations are quite unusual but each one is part of a word, exactly as it appears in that word. What are the words? XYG. XOP. WKW. (7. 9. 7)
16. Can you solve this "dingbat" JOANB
17. Who is the Swiss inventor of Dynamite? (6.5)
18. What is the name of a poetic drama by Goethe, or an opera by Gounod? (5)
19. What is a blocking vote? (4)
20. What is the capital city of Lithuania. (7)
21. What article is a musical event? (7)
22. What is the name of the town in the Netherlands, made famous for its cheese. (4)
23. What is the Japanese unity of currency? (3)

24. What is the post-war capital of Germany? (4)
25. What is the name of the London street, home to the British Prime Minister? (7)
26. What is the name of the ship used by Ernest Shackleton during his 1908 expedition to the Antarctic?(6)
27. Came to the highest point of achievement. (4)
28. What was the name of the Olympic Gold Medallist in 1936, who made Hitler so angry. (5.5.)
29. What state calls its parliament “Knesset”? (6)
30. Or surround the alternative. (5)

A PRAYER IN TIMES OF TRANSITION.

Guide of weary travellers, take my hand as I wander
through the unnamed wilderness in search of my true home.

Companion of those who journey, assure me of your presence
while I search aimlessly in the foggy land of “don’t know”

Source of wisdom and guidance be the star that leads me
shine truth onto my path and bless me with direction.

Wings of shelter, embrace me with your comfort
when the road is lonely and life feels desolate.

Wellspring of hope, be my source of courage,
my fountain of faith when I teeter toward despair.

Wind of spiritual liberation, enter and unleash any shackles
that bind and restrict me on the path of true freedom.

Heart of compassion, taste my tears, heal my old wounds, rest my pain
in your love.

Author Unknown

STILL LIFE.

Angela Macnamara.

On summer holiday I came across the recent work of a young artist. In her studio her walls were covered with her vibrant, colourful works in oil, depicting still-life images.

I was charmed by all the life there was in the stillness of these works of art. A sunflower projected warmth from the blue sky into the studio. A bowl of pink roses, some of their petals fallen on the table carried the perfume of summer into the air. A tea-tray set with amber and brown ware on an apple-green check table cloth made me think of putting on the kettle.

Butterflies and Birds...!

Even in works of art, life is never still. Sitting in the little sheltered garden above the cove I might have said that all was still. Yet there was so much life there living out the order patterns of the Creator. Butterflies flitted from blossom to blossom. A chaffinch fed her two fluffy chicks, endlessly industrious. I heard a hammering sound as though from an elfin hammer and peering about me I discovered a blackbird trying to break the shell of a snail against a rock edging the pathway. In the lupins, bees buzzed. A boat out in the bay since morning, was sentinel over lobster pots which operated under the surface of the calm waters. Still Life.

Baby crying.

I thought of the baby in the womb, its terror as the abortionist probes to end its days. If the infant's sobbing could be heard perhaps pity could be born. Even when it is forced from its mother it struggles to live. Then, still life.

In the village an old woman, badly crippled, sits outside her house enjoying the sunshine, greeting neighbours, listening to the chatter of tourists and the laughter of children. Twinkling eyes in a face brown and wrinkled as a walnut, proclaim that there is still life.

I thought of how much we can achieve, against all odds when there is still life. Christ in His last hours gave faith, hope, love and forgiveness and later let us know that after death there is still life. Even in the darkness the human spirit can dance.

Sometimes, when we appear to be sitting still doing nothing, we are, in reality, most busy. Quietness nourishes thoughtfulness and rich reflections can be born of relaxation. Still life.

Be Still and Know....!

Perhaps we should, more often, seek to be quiet to surrender to the rhythm of redeeming grace. Sit by the sea or in a garden, by a lake or in the woods when sunlight dapples the carpet of pine needles and the breeze rustles the tops of the trees. Feel the sheltering wings of God enfold us. Allow the stillness to penetrate the cacophony of sound that impinges so rudely on life today. Let's try to be simply at peace in the 'Now'. Women particularly tend to be burdened with 'shoulds' and 'oughts' and 'musts'. Just as those immobile pictures gave forth energy, we too, can enrich our own lives and the lives of others by quietly 'being'.

People need the presence of those who are quietly listening, encouraging, welcoming. In the frenzied world of today it is the restful, relaxed person who helps us keep our balance. Still life.

I have yet to choose the painting I want to take home. Yet all those works of art done in the stillness of that shore-side studio, evoked in me the thoughts I share with you. I would wish to have whichever painting most helps me to "Be still and know that I am God". Still life.

“We experience the sacred in the same place
as we experience music only more so”

Thomas Merton

SETTING PRIORITIES.

Author Unknown

When things in our lives seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar and the 2 cups of coffee.

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, he wordlessly picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "yes."

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things--your family, your children, your health, your friends and your favourite passions---and if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house and your car.

The sand is everything else---the small stuff. "If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

"Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your spouse out to dinner. Play another 18 holes of golf. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first---the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand"

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked.

It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend."

"The image of God as light of the world and our lives is comforting. God never abandons any of us even in the midst of our deepest darkness. Every bit of light needs to be harnessed. We do so with a kind word of support, a word of encouragement, a smile, gentle reassurance, a word of thanks, a word of appreciation, a prayer or a smile. All of these and much more remind us of God's gentle presence among us".

Fr. James MacSweeney (www.2u.ie)

GOLD

GOLD began in 1998 as a voluntary intercongregational group with a special interest in helping to meet the spiritual needs of older people.

The Group comprises:-

A CHAIRPERSON who is elected from among the group for one year, renewable for three years.

A COMMITTEE: A group of voluntary people who commit themselves for two years at a time.

The average number of meetings is four in any year.

At present the main work of the group is the production of "GOLD" Magazine, which has a readership of approximately 500. For this we have an editorial committee of three. Whereas this is adequate for the time being it is necessary to consider the future and "succession" for the future. Further expertise in this field is needed immediately, particularly in the area of promotion and marketing. There is an openness here for someone who may not be a member of a religious order. We have also begun again to hold our annual conferences on spirituality and related topics.

We are actively seeking new members as it is the opinion of the present committee that with a new energetic thrust, perhaps other services could be provided. We believe that new members, religious or lay, could bring a new vision, energy and enthusiasm to the group as well as new ideas as regards how to meet the spiritual needs of older people.

We appreciate your support and we welcome all enquiries to:

GOLD, c/o Sheila Cronin, CORI, Avila, Bloomfield Avenue,
Donnybrook, Dublin 4. Email: healthcare@cori.ie