

# The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

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The Newsletter for North America

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Advent ~ Christmas ~ Epiphany  
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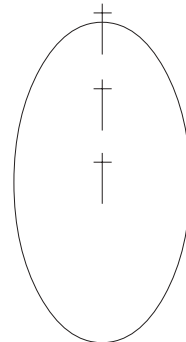


## The Coming One

We wait for Him;  
 For His arrival, His Advent.  
 We have not met Him yet, or have we?  
 someone told us about Him.  
 Was it our friend, our neighbor, all?  
 We do not really know Him yet, just know about Him.  
 Once He had come before,  
     bringing the whole abundance of His Father's kingdom  
     into the small and limited existence of Man;  
 All in One; a Seed for a New Humanity,  
     inconspicuous, pressed together and yet carrying the future.  
 After mankind had grown, sprouted and blossomed  
     this seed had ripened and fallen from the World-Tree,  
     fallen and been received into the womb of our Mother Earth.  
 From the Father to the Mother.  
 Into the Mother Earth's womb  
     His body had been laid,  
     His blood had flowed.  
 From the Earth He grew anew, the Risen One.  
 Leaving the All-in-One, the human Seed-Existence  
     gaining the One-in-All, the new Cosmic Existence;  
 The One begins to live in All.

Thus we are waiting for His new Coming,  
     from the widths of our worlds,  
     from the storms of our age,  
     from the clouds chased by the wind of destiny,  
     from the upheavals, announced by the signs of the time.  
 Everywhere we feel Him coming.  
 We wait for Him although He is here.  
 Although He is here we do not know Him yet.  
 Although we do not know Him yet, we are quite aware of Him.  
 How do we receive Him as He comes?  
 Have a room ready, a meal prepared; the gates opened?  
 While He is coming we feel His presence.  
 Thus He lives amongst us.  
 Arriving, He will make things new,  
 He will look through our eyes,  
     hear with our ears,  
     taste with our tongues.  
 He will do our deeds of mercy  
     our deeds of strength and courage  
     through us and with us.  
 He will travel with us  
     from country to country,  
     from brother to brother,  
     across seas and the Great Bridge between here and there,  
     which we continuously build.  
 He will transform with us, grow with us and eventually be there  
     as the Light within us,  
     as our Light, our Life and our Love.  
 He will be our dearest Brother,  
     always coming  
     always arriving,  
 always to be expected,  
     always with us -  
         The Coming One.

*Werner Grimm*



## ADVENT AND THE SECOND COMING

The mood of Advent doesn't just call to life a memory of the first and only coming of Christ in a physical body. It also looks forward to the "second coming", which must occur not in the flesh but on another plane: "in the clouds of heaven."

Now it should become clear that human beings are able, by virtue of the first coming in the flesh, to meet the Christ on a new and higher plane in the supersensible. This second coming does place definite demands on human beings. In the sense of the well known parable, they should go out with burning lamps to meet the bridegroom. They should show themselves at his arrival to have been conscientious servants, who have wisely cultivated what they have been entrusted with. They should have accomplished works of compassion (Matthew 25). They should be capable of "standing straight" despite their burdens, and of "lifting up their heads" (Luke 21). Thus we are called to a period of active waiting.

*Rudolf Frieling, 1962*  
(trans. Dennis Kane)

## EPIPHANY

The sixth of January, Three Kings Day, also called Epiphany, is one of those festivals which keep passing into oblivion but which we can discover anew. It concludes the Holy Nights and stands in the sign of the appearing Star of Grace. And as Christmas had its preparation in the four Sundays of Advent, so now it has its afterglow in the festival time of Epiphany, which also includes four Sundays.

January can be a very difficult month. After the ensouled warmth of the preceding weeks, the life comes back imperiously with its troubles and sorrows. Especially when one has celebrated Christmas with a merely materialistic focus, something of the same joyless sobriety which so often comes after a period of merely physical well-being can easily attach itself to the time which follows. But if Christmas has been inwardly uplifting, January

loses its dreaded desolation. Even in the midst of all its outer harshness it is then filled with the shining of the Star of Grace.

And exactly during those weeks in which outwardly, and often inwardly as well, an icy wind would chill us through and through, The Act of Consecration of Man speaks about the fact that the Star of Christ gives off not only light but also warmth. "Gold, frankincense, and myrrh" allow us, in the midst of January's soberness, to have an inkling of the fragrance and luster of a higher world. Then the priestly-royal red-violet used in the services will disappear, and the star will slowly fade into the morning sky of the new year.

*Rudolf Frieling, 1958*  
(trans. Dennis Kane)

## ON OFFERING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ACT OF CONSECRATION

Sometimes people ask how "offering" is to be understood in the context of The Act of Consecration of Man. Let us first look at the pre-Christian sacrificial offering of past ages. It was regarded as something of a remedy that would cure all ills human beings had brought on themselves by their ever growing egotism.

We have been chosen to be free individuals. Each of us is intended to be an ego, an "I." As independent beings we learn more and more to shut ourselves off from the alien, the different, the "none-I." We become private, "closed" individuals. But this ability to shut off is not an end in itself. It is a preliminary step, the precondition for something higher. We now have the key to the power that enables us to consciously unlock and open up our "I." Only when I am able to define "my world" as a closed, a private world, am I in a position to invite guests into my world and make them welcome. The ability to shut off exists only for the sake of the ability to open up. If our ability to shut off becomes an end in itself we become egotists.

The same applies to taking and giving. Own-

ership of property was a necessary part in the educational process towards becoming an "I." In order to become an independent individual, a person had to experience property: A piece of the world was given into his or her keeping as "his" or "her" world. But again, to own property is not an end in itself. Where it is the case, it could be said that owning property is equal to "theft" because it has been "removed" and by belonging to one person it is being kept from the world. But this state of affairs is only misguided development of something that is justified in itself; because owning property is the prerequisite for being truly able to give. If one has nothing, one cannot give anything either. One can ever only "give" from what is one's own. Ownership provides the basis for giving. For this reason the Old Testament was not so shortsighted as to see in the ownership of property unpardonable theft only. Mosaic law protects property ("Thou shalt not steal"). But in return the old religion also demands the sacrificial offering.

The sacrificial ritual taught human beings to give of what was their own. They learned to put their property at the disposal of the Godhead. In old times material possessions were not as externalized and abstract as they are now when ownership of millions can be an 'invisible' matter of banking, detached from man or woman. Objects and assets which one owned were something like an extended corporeality. One made the offering in the spirit of: "This is a piece of myself." When the offering was consumed by the sacred altar flames, the feeling of being beholden to the Godhead with one's essential self, drifted through the soul. By giving of one's material wealth, the spiritual wealth was touched in sympathy, as it were, and hallowed by the spirit of sacrifice. That material wealth and spiritual wealth were still in close accord in those days, is shown by the three Magi. In giving gold, frankincense and myrrh, they also offered their inner wealth of thinking, feeling and willing.

Today our relationship to earthly possessions is no longer as "spiritual-physical" as it used to be. It has become externalized; but against that we have become inwardly stronger and more independent.

Putting our inner wealth at the disposal of the Godhead is for us the essence of the sacrifice.

We have the amazing power of being able to think. Is it really possible that it was given to us only for the purpose of using it in the battle for survival? We take this power for granted and make it serve our selfish interests as if it could not be any other way. We must learn to realize that we are indebted to a higher world for this ability; that the ability to think was not implanted in us only in order that we may "get on in the world"; that it has been given to us also in order that we take thoughts of divine content into our thinking and give them shelter and home in our consciousness.

The same applies to our ability to feel. We must not squander this ability on personal, often very selfish emotions. The divine world desires to be felt by human souls. The same principle applies also to willing.

This is the offering The Act of Consecration of Man speaks of. Essentially we are putting at the disposal of the Divine the inner wealth of our souls. Everything else that we are to accomplish in our dealings with other human beings, in the way of social behaviour, of "sacrifices" of one kind and another, has its roots here.

The old sacrificial rites of past ages have gone, not least because they were no longer able to cope with the growing egotism of human beings. Their time was over. But then, of course, the Christ appeared. As a most high divine being he came down to humanity and, of his own free will, identified himself with it. Once his divine powers had been transformed into human ones, it was as a human being that he made the great offering of complete self-sacrificing devotion to the Father God. The very Christ who speaks his "I am" with such authority is also the one who makes the supreme sacrifice. Because in this "I am" he is consciously in possession of himself down to the innermost depths of his being, he can make the total offering, the supreme sacrifice. He says to the Father: "All that is mine is yours."

What takes the place of the old sacrificial rites is the desire of human beings to look for the inner

connection to this unique "I am" of the Christ, to this unique, all-sacrificing being. The Letter to the Hebrews says it: The place of the manifold ancient sacrifices has now been taken by the unique, incomparable sacrifice of the Christ, offered up once and for all and sufficient for all times.

However, this uniqueness and exclusiveness does not mean that he would now have to remain in historical isolation and stand aloof from human beings. He wants to make his home in us with all his strength. The Christ can only bring us redemption if we make him welcome. But then "Christ in us" will mean that, with the Christ, his sacrifice will also enter. The Act of Consecration of Man says it: May the Christ's sacrifice "come to life in us, through us." The Christ's sacrifice is a supersensible living force that desires to grow into our innermost self.

From the first centuries onward, the Christian deed of the altar has had a sacrificial character. Protestantism rejected the Sacrifice of the Mass, believing that here was another sacrifice wanting to squat presumptuously next to the unique sacrifice of the Christ, thereby detracting from its significance. This is why Luther called the Sacrifice of the Mass idolatry. He was serious about the "once and for all" in the Letter to the Hebrews. What he could not see was that this once-only sacrifice continues to work in the supersensible world and desires to take on new life in us. And his opponents who clung to the old faith and did no longer understand deeply enough their own Mass-Sacrifice, obscured now by superficial trappings, failed to defend it successfully with convincing arguments born of insight.

The Act of Consecration of Man is Christian sacrifice carried by new consciousness. It is not, however, promoting the tenet of "justification by works." It states clearly that all our offerings are only made possible by the one great sacrificial offering of the Christ coming alive in our souls. But precisely by coming to live in us with his offering, and allowing it to continue working "in us" and "through us", the Christ, as the Revelation to St. John says, is making us kings and priests. The Christ's kingly strength in us allows us to say: I am.

His priestly work in us allows us to put this "I" at the disposal of the Divine.

*Rudolf Frieling*

(trans. Hilde Stossel)

From: *Vom Kultus-Erleben*, Verlag Urachhaus, Stuttgart 1964

## **FORTY YEARS PRESENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN CANADA**

On the first Advent Sunday, November 29, 1953, the work of The Christian Community began in Toronto in a small flat on College Street. Dr. Rudolf Koehler, one of the founders and his son Andreas (who years later also became a priest) had arrived in Montreal and, with contacts there and in Ottawa, these two cities became right from the beginning places which were regularly visited and, with little interruptions, served all those forty years. Only much later other Canadian centers were founded, Vancouver with a resident priest in 1971, and with regular visits to Edmonton beginning in 1980. At several places The Act of Consecration of Man is now celebrated in the Toronto area, last not least in London, Ontario which is visited from Detroit. As forty years are a very significant time - we may think of the three forty year periods in the life of Moses - we may all in North America stop for a moment and send our best wishes for a "new beginning."

[And here is a report sent to us in verse.]

## **CANADIAN FAMILY CAMP-RETREAT**

### **Christian Community Family Camp 1993**

Golden rods in meadows all round  
Help to brighten our day.  
The pools with turtles and frogs abound  
So pollution must be far away.

Each morning we ponder the signs of St. John  
And a circle of love we form.  
We gathered again when the night sky shone  
Dispersing with feeling warm.

Our days brim over with pleasure  
Swimming, bonfires and such.  
And Peter help creative endeavors  
Class paintings owe much to his touch.

Our fearless canoeists make portage  
As they paddle the Skootamatta route  
It seems there is never a shortage  
Of rapids to walk round or shoot.

At mealtimes nobody is tardy  
We rise to the notes of a song  
Tables laden for appetities hearty  
At each one we feel we belong.

We'll think of fair Bridgewater Retreat  
When home sights anew meet our glance.  
Fun and fellowship has been such a treat  
May we change the retreat to...advance!

*Bernice Ashton*

## **YOUTH CONFERENCE:**

*Light and Dark/After and Before*

The summer Youth Conference of The Christian Community on the eastern coast at the Kittatinny Scout Reservation in northwestern New Jersey from August 22 - 28, found 114 teenagers participating. Our theme was "Here I Stand - Courage and Conviction." After The Act of Consecration of Man and breakfast came choral singing, morning presentations on the theme, and artistic activities. Nine activities were offered twice a day - in the late morning and after a good break for free time after lunch. Small discussion groups in late afternoon, supper, full plenum discussions, a close-of-day, and then time to be together in the evening filled out an intense schedule. It was a good conference up to the last night when the use of alcohol and drugs darkened the whole experience and called the future of such conferences into question.

Various meetings have taken place at some of the centers since then and on October 29 and 30, seventeen teenagers met with the four priests involved in the conferences in New York City. Our purpose was to look at the past and toward the future and ask how we can continue working together to

give the conferences more of the spiritual substance and form we all are seeking. It was a frank and wonderful meeting.

We resolved to go forward, preparing for the Christmas Youth Conference to be held December 27 - 30 at Chimney Corners YWCA Camp in the Berkshires in Massachusetts. The theme chosen comes from a statement of Mephistopheles in Faust: "I am part of that power which always intends evil and always is creating good." - the question of evil and sin of freedom and becoming. We left New York looking forward to Christmas and the challenge of creating youth conferences that are true to our time and strong in Spirit.

*Richard Dancey*

## **BACKPACKING IN THE HIGH SIERRA**

Veteran camp counselors William Edelglas, Carrie Ashby and Betina (Beets) Eiper, wished to provide a camping experience for young people who have passed the age for the children's camp. They, along with Rev. Moraine, led 11 young people into the John Muir Wilderness July 13. Eight 14 years olds, one 15 year old, and two 16 years olds experienced a week of roughing it in the spectacular scenery of the High Sierras. Depending on each other in such an isolated area was a community building process. As with all members of The Christian Community, our days began with the Creed and ended with the Lord's Prayer. The basics of survival; getting to camp, setting up shelter and cooking our dehydrated delicacies were our daily necessities, not luxuries.

Everyone worked together to make this a wonderful trip. Although carrying a backpack uphill at 8,000 feet is hard work, the hardest part of the trip was saying goodbye after becoming such good friends. In August a wonderful reunion of the campers took place at the Sacramento Christian Community.

*Everett Moraine*

## **MORE MEMORIES OF ROSEMARIE BERGMANN**

Reading the article written by Rev. Gregg Brewer, I learned a lot about the early beginnings of The Christian Community in Chicago and Rosemarie's roll in them. In my heart I feel that a great deal can be added about those ten years that Rosemarie faithfully and untiringly took care of the small, but steadily growing community in Detroit. Every month she took the ten hour trip on the Greyhound bus to be with us for three precious days. I was the one who usually picked her up from the bus station, and often she was tired and cold, but always her great and positive spirit shown through. She conducted study evenings, children's instruction and services and, of course, The Act of Consecration of Man. We all loved her, and quite a few received personal consultation and guidance from her. She had a great positive influence on the children. My daughter, now in her thirties confessed to me once that Rosemarie Bergmann was the woman who inspired her most while she was growing up. I know I am speaking for the whole community in Detroit when I say that we will always be grateful for what she did for us, and she will always be in our heart. We wish her well in her new life in Germany and hope that she has been warmly received there.

Magdalene Bjaeckel, Nevada City, CA

## **MICHAEL AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF POWER**

The Christian Community of Devon was the host for a Michaelmas Conference this past October 8th through the 10th. The onset of nature's Autumn change kept us mindful of Michael and the Dragon as we, in this corner of Pennsylvania, eagerly sought homes in which to tuck our out-of-town visitors and thought of what we would do about meals and the space for accommodating them. The weather forecasts added drama to our preparations during the entire preceding week, promising rain for Saturday.

At last on Friday evening friends gathered in the chapel, from traveling, from work, from last minute chores, to begin to consider where it is we really confront the forces of evil. Led by Sanford Miller

of Boston, we pictured the strife in the world, especially among the youth in our streets, acknowledging as contributing factors the easy accessibility of arms, the influence of TV and videos, the breakdown of family, the failure to transmit values, the abject poverty. But then the thought deepened. These and other contributing factors only feed into more profound problems in current human nature: an absence of feeling, an inability to empathize, a dying or dead heart. Missing is the Idea of Human Being. Lacking is a sense of the preciousness of human life.

Because the willingness to do hurtful things to others lies in this voided sense for humanity, the evil with which one is to do battle is where "I" am. Individuals will have to make increasingly difficult choices in the face of the most powerfully hardening and differentiating technological advances. For help in choosing there is the need to turn one's attention to Michael and follow his gesture toward higher insights into the deed of Golgotha. He stands ready to insure that human intelligence keeps its tie with spiritual intelligence. When in the presence of Michael, "guardian of the hallowed offering", we co-celebrate The Act of Consecration of Man, we insert into the void a real Michaelic deed connected with living truths.

Contrary to week-long worry, Saturday was unexpectedly sunny and warm. Whenever the program breaks permitted, people spilled out of the social room, the house, the chapel, to enjoy nature's timely gift of comfortable space. A buffet lunch, beautifully set up beneath the trees, served about 66 people who spent a leisurely early afternoon visiting or enjoying local sights. During the many moments outside we found the time to greet friends and make new acquaintances of visitors from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Wisconsin, western Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina. Occasionally, one would approach another with, "Do you remember me? I'm..." followed by a laughed, "Of course, how are you? Where are you living these days? Remember when...?"

Somehow during this festival of Michaelmas, in the presence of people contending with the huge

pictures of Michael and the adversary, the Sacrament of Baptism, following The Act of Consecration of Man, seemed apropos. It inserted a deed of hope for the future centered around a child old enough to cooperate with and take in the special moment.

After the sacraments we followed Jim Hines, of Great Barrington, into the idea of how to connect human thought with spiritual intelligence. The human being at present knows the power of thinking as it applies to the physical world. Demonstrated in the person of Jacob, this earth bound thinking could not then, cannot now, penetrate all the way into the spiritual. After wrestling with Michael, Jacob came away limping, and with a need to be alert and conscious. Related to cosmic intelligence as the moon is to the sun, human thinking, not fully seeing, eventually comes to an impasse. It is just at this point of acknowledging, "I know that I don't know", that impulses from the higher world penetrate. Michael, the countenance of Christ, helps us face the impasse. As impulses come and we move from the realm of meaning into language, we encounter Christ, the Logos. Facing the impasse and struggling to find the right word are just two of the "little deaths" human beings face everyday. How we face them may be Michaelic, or not.

Concrete examples of impasse in the face of a hollowed out soul and of courage in the face of death offered by Richard Dancy, of Devon, led us into the afternoon discussion. We heard of a youth who so injured a teacher as to totally alter both their lives. When confronted with the consequences to the teacher, the imprisoned youth remained expressionless. We heard, too, of a dying man ending his life within the daily flow of his loving and accepting family. He wanted to know about the effects of the Last Anointing, what he should be doing or looking for. He asked, "Do you think it worked?" Then for himself he answered, "Yes." And so we continued with the idea of where in life one finds the conflicts and the opportunities to embrace them. Nor did we come up with definitive answers. But perhaps a spiritual healing becomes possible when, like the teacher who told the youth about the changed quality of life, we can rightly confront our lives and

move on, or, like the dying man, we are not merely resigned to but accepting of what life brings.

Endeavors to find just the right word found an expression Saturday evening in an offering of crafted speech. How may one better demonstrate the power of the word than in poetry's balance of form, content, and beauty. Framed by glorious music composed for C.S. Lewis's "The Birth of Language", readings both of resident community poets and of more broadly known poets moved those assembled to laughter, seriousness, and wonder. The varieties of moods in the poetry were as rich as the play of intervals of piano, flute, and baritone bringing the evening to conclusion.

The last gathering of the weekend followed Sunday's Act of Consecration. With the assistance of Erk Ludwig of New York, we imagined the Kalevala's red horse (thinking driven by passions) and how a shower of iron tamed it. There is a relationship between iron and thinking. Human beings ingest iron or breathe it. The iron process in the blood, combining iron and oxygen, is a fire process (condensed light). It strengthens the presence of the ego; human thinking becomes clearer, and wills are infused with enthusiasm. In mythology the sword (iron) is a symbol for the magic power of the word, a spiritual power which cuts into the lower nature to free the eternal self. When, with clarity of mind and a god-filled will, the "I" receives God's working through the Word, becomes enlightened, human beings can fulfill their mission to transform the earth.

All at once we found ourselves saying goodbyes. The conference would really end only later after each of us had thought about it or talked about it on the journey home. Not surprising, a number of us noticed yet another gift of nature. Although Sunday had dawned overcast, a sudden and deep overnight chill forced a new surge of Autumn color which in the morning radiated a captured sunlight out into surrounding grayness. It seemed to cap the Michaelmas conference with the notion that the Light can be found where and when one might not expect it.

*Patricia Sankewitsch*  
Devon