

SOUTHERN IGNATIAN NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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Special points of interest:

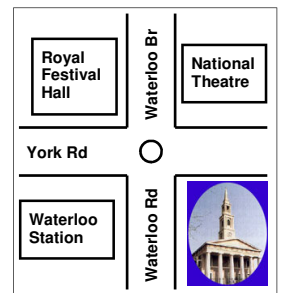
- The Spring and Autumn Gatherings
- The Annual General Meeting on 15 March
- The Orthodox Tradition of Hesychasm

Spring Gathering God—the meaning of my life

Reconnecting with the desire

Our Spring Gathering will be led by **Richard Hayes** on **Saturday 15 March** at **St John's Church, Waterloo Road London SE1**

11 am—4.30 pm (arrive at 10.30 am for informal networking). Please bring a packed lunch; coffee and tea will be provided. Donation * for the day is £10 for members and £15 for non—members (**AGM from 3.45-4.30 pm**)



At our meeting in September the core group thought it would be a good idea if we as a network engaged afresh with the materials of the Spiritual Exercises. Thus it is envisaged that over the next few years the Spring Gathering will focus firstly on the Principle and Foundation and in subsequent years on each of the Four Weeks of the Exercises in turn. The Autumn Gathering may be related to the issues explored in the Spring or to other topics that would be of interest and relevance to the network.

This pattern of meetings will be launched this year, so the **Spring Gathering** will be an opportunity for us to reconnect with the **Principle and Foundation**. The day will be facilitated and led by **Richard Hayes** whose enthusiasm and obvious connectedness with the spirit of the Exercises will be known to many of you.

Richard will not only offer us his own knowledge and insights but will lead us in a day of sharing our experiences in accompanying others. So the day will be inter-active, with plenty of discussion in small and large groups and with opportunities to share insights and resources. Richard would like us to come with plenty of questions: what, for instance, are the joys and difficulties that we experience as we present the Principle and Foundation to pilgrims whom we are accompanying? So do come with any material you may have found useful and identify issues or questions you

would like to raise.

The spirit of the Principle and Foundation undergirds and embraces all that follows in the Exercises as a whole, and during this day together the hope is that we may be able to reconnect in fresh ways with its meaning. As well as considering how to interpret the Principle and Foundation for others, we shall also spend time reflecting on how we ourselves are drawn into freedom as we reconnect with our own deepest desires and God's desires for us, finding them ultimately to be the same. So the day will end with time for prayerful reflection on this mutuality of desire. Hence the title for the day:

God - the meaning of my life Reconnecting with the desire

** The cost of the Gathering is to cover materials and expenses. It is recognised that financial situations differ and some people travel long distances. It is important that no one is prevented from coming because of financial hardship. A donation that is less (or in some*

Articles are welcome by email to :

Editor@signetwork.co.uk

Or write to:

**The Editor, SiGN
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PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

We are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for us to help us in attaining the end for which we are created.

From this it follows that are to make use of them is as far as they help us in the attainment of our end, and we must rid ourselves of them in so far as they prove a hindrance to us. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honour rather than dishonour, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

A word on 'nous' from the editor

Re-Cognition of God is the purpose of the Principle and Foundation!

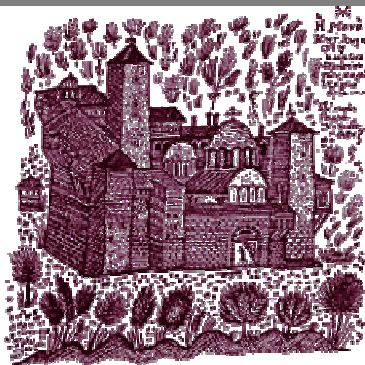
Seeing as I am at the moment on Sabbatical and that the theme of the Spring Newsletter is the *Principle and Foundation*—I thought it appropriate to introduce myself by way of talking about the focus of my fifteen weeks of Sabbath rest!

I re-visited my notes on the P&F from the Margaret Street Course of 1992/1993 and alighted on a note:— ***Re-Cognition of God is the purpose of the Principle and Foundation!***

Having been ordained for twenty years I have to be honest in saying my vision of God isn't what it used to be and that I long for that 'Re-Cognition' I wrote of 10 years ago! It is as if the Spirit is speaking to me in these words:

'I know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.' (Rev. 2:3-5 NRSV)

The key word in this passage, repentance, (μετάνοησης – metanoisis) means literally 'transformation of the nous'. The nous (pronounced—noose) was understood by the desert abbas and ammas as the energy and essence of soul and seems best understood within the living hesychast tradition of the Orthodox Church and in particular amongst the Athonite monasteries of the Holy Mountain of Athos in Helkidiki, N Greece, to which I shall be travelling on pilgrimage in February.



The following summary attempts to describe the interrelation between the nous and hesychasm using psychological terms we are familiar with in the West

'Practitioners of hesychasm, known as **hesychasts**, use Christian terminology to describe their experiences. If we permit ourselves the latitude of translating those descriptions into contemporary psychological terminology, we can glimpse the hesychast's inner world.

Hesychasts describe two types of consciousness: ego-centered and ego-transcendent. The former is a state dominated by attachments to the senses, emotions, intellect, and imagination. The latter involves detachment from those faculties.

The shift from ego-centered to ego-transcendent consciousness is called *metanoia* in Greek. The literal translation of this term is "transformation of the nous," but the English language contains no exact synonym for the word *nous*.

Misleading translations are "intellect," "mind," or "reason." The nous bears no resemblance to the rational intellect (*dianoia*

in Greek). Whereas the rational intellect uses deductive reasoning, the nous relies upon "immediate experience" or intuition. Therefore, the term *metanoia* is correctly understood as a shift from ego-centered to nous-centered, ego-transcendent, or, in hesychastic terminology, God-centered consciousness.

The ultimate goal for hesychasts is union with God (Greek *theosis*). Three steps are required to achieve this goal. The first is *dispassion* (Greek *apatheia*), which involves detachment from the senses and the emotions. The second is *stillness* (Greek *hesychia*), which requires detachment from the discursive intellect and the imagination. The final step is an abiding state of illumination called *deification* or *perfect union with God* (Greek *theosis*).^{1*}

This last paragraph reveals quite a departure from Ignatian prayer for hesychasm is apophatic prayer (that is, without image) and their ministry of spiritual direction is also much different.. There is a lot for me to explore in this tradition and whether some synthesis is at all possible waits to be seen. However, my prayer is that we may all 'Re-Cognise' the Lord afresh whatever road we may travel.

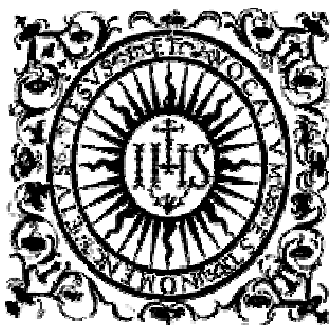
Hesychasm: A Christian Path of Transcendence Mitchell B. Liester, in the Quest, Journal of Transpersonal Psychology

2003 SigN Network Gatherings

At St John's Church, Waterloo.
(see page 1 for directions).

Spring 15 March 2003: Richard Hayes leading a day on 'Reconnecting with the desire'

Autumn 11 October 2003: Gero McLoughlin SJ leading a day on 'The Directories'



This is an early version of the seal of the Society of Jesus, recently uncovered on a wall in Rome in what was St. Ignatius's office by Fr. Tom Lucas, S.J. In the centre are the three letters "IHS" which are the first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek. Around the perimeter is the Latin phrase taken from the vulgate: "... and His name was called Jesus." (Luke 2:21) This is the last line of the gospel reading used on January 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and the Giving of the Name of Jesus, which is the titular feast of the Society of Jesus, formerly the Feast of the Circumcision.

Open Door retreat workshop

A Training Workshop for those who wish to lead Open Door Retreats

4 – 6 April 2003

St Mary's Convent, Wantage

Led by **Sister Winifred Morley**
(The Cenacle Community)

Hosted by the Wantage Spiritual Direction Supervision Group, West Berkshire

Application forms are available from:
Tony Kemp
18 Blagrove Lane
WOKINGHAM
Berks RG41 4BA
Email: a.e.kemp@blagrovelane.freeserve.co.uk
Tel: 0118 978 2586

Accommodation:

Single rooms (One double room available and one room for a disabled person)

Course fees

Residents: £75 including accommodation and meals*
Non residents: £50 including lunch and supper*

* also includes Open Door Retreat materials, morning coffee and afternoon tea.

The SigN Core Group

A Core Group has existed since the beginning of SIGN in one form or another. At present the Core Group has 8 members (but can have up to 11). It meets twice a year, in February and September. In between times, members serve on small sub-groups to prepare Gatherings, produce the newsletter, consider matters relating to the membership, and to monitor financial matters. In all there are about 4 meetings in the year in addition to attendance at Gatherings. It has never been easy to find people to serve on the Core Group because of the commitment and busy lifestyle of members but you can see the Group is vital for the future of SIGN. We hope that you may have considered serving SIGN on the Core Group this year, or that you will in the future.

The Southern Ignatian Network (SIGN) is constituted by Deed of Trust and is a registered Charity No. 1055559. Its address is: The Secretary of SIGN, 136B Chestnut Avenue South, London E17 9EL. The Charity's objects are the advancement of the Christian Religion in particular by the promotion and encouragement of the Ignatian tradition.

