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## **From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries**

### **November Message**

One Monday afternoon in mid-October, I picked up our daughters at school with a hoarse voice and brain bursting with many thoughts all jumbled up. And as the day waned, I realized how much I needed a rest. So I took it! I canceled the trip I was planning to take the next day, and instead spent that Tuesday with the phones off, resting my voice, refreshing my soul, letting all those jumbled up thoughts sift through the silence, and thoroughly enjoyed a retreat in place.

I made beds and prayed for their occupants. I re-shelved children's books and smiled at the messages of love and time spent pouring over the pages with eager little girls; I ran laundry and recollected the scattered bits of me that have been trying to catch up with the bustle of jumping back into life at home after a full six days away at a clergy conference in Mississippi.

Intentional living was the topic of the conference—how to live with integrity to the vows we have made and the life we have chosen. Intentional living takes work, as does stopping to step out of the frenzy on a regular basis and examine the practices that make the living intentional. So it came naturally to me to clear the decks as I did that Tuesday in light of the awareness I had gained from the time away.

Central to our lives as Christians is the capacity to listen and look for, behold, participate in, and celebrate God's glory manifest in all things. For me, cultivating gratitude, encountering God's presence in nature, laughing, singing, and spending time in mentoring relationships (receiving and giving) are all integral elements of life in Christian community.

When our living aligns with our core purpose to give God grateful thanks and glory, we become embodied extensions of the offertory sentences: "All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee."

When I am at my most connected to God, the various responsibilities I enjoy work in harmony with one another. Thomas Merton wrote: “The deepest level of communication is not communication but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words...we are already one. But we imagine we are not. And what we have to recover is our own original unity. What we have to be is what we are.”<sup>1</sup> It is easy to forget that taking care of ourselves does not have to be a selfish or self-centered undertaking. On the contrary, caring for ourselves as embodied vessels of God’s love is an ultimate act of stewardship which serves to God’s glory. When we begin to see all that we engage in life as part of a whole, we can begin to view those things we “need to do” as vehicles for drawing closer to God.

Taking this time helped me reframe my approach to managing our home and the daily activities and schedules of our family in terms of tending to the abundant God-given blessings we enjoy. Things that need to be done become things I get to do and look forward to doing when I embrace them as communion with God or as spiritual practices. God is present with us and speaking to us in all the activities of our day. It is for us to tune in and listen. What a blessing to spend time alone and retune the inner ear to the divine harmony all around.

Nourishing my sense of communion with God means paying attention to how I spend my time: less television, less Facebook, less email; more reading, more exercise, more fresh air and time in nature with our family. More attention to our spiritual practices in all things, seeing the entirety of our living as an active prayer—conversation—with God. I will keep working to maintain my focus, and I look forward to conversations with all of you about practical spiritual practices together.

Faithfully,  
The Rev. Cathy Quinn  
*Clergy Associate for Family Ministries*

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<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Merton Reader*, page 73