

Walking the Mystical Path



Contemporary Sages show us the way...

*Union and perfection are two different journeys with very different strategies.
Religion seeks private perfection; the mystics seek and enjoy the foundation itself –
divine union, totally given. - Richard Rohr -*

Walking the Mystical Path programme is for those wishing to integrate a contemplative dimension into their lives. Many of us have walked the way of perfection as it has a certitude about it that is very attractive in this age of great unease and discord.

Many of us too have looked east, west, north and south to discover what might lie behind the veils of illusion, Merton's 'false self' and the promise of heaven after death. Fortunately now is one of



the best times to be alive because we are a century into a growing community of contemplative sages who have the dual gifts of being both mystics and grand story tellers of their experiences.

While the stories they tell stem from twenty centuries ago, they are imbued with not only a contemplative understanding of the deeper wisdom teachings of Jesus, but are positively influenced by the developing understanding of psychology and neurophysiology.

What these sages have to teach us is learning to see as the mystics see and learning to experience what the mystics' experience: *Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?* Mark 8:18.

Who Might Be Interested in This Program?

This program is for anyone who feels drawn to contemplative spirituality and who:

- Desires a deepening relationship with Life and to live out of that relationship
- Acknowledges that it is not so much *what* we do, but *how* we do it
- Wishes to develop or deepen a consistent spiritual practice
- Is keen to explore and learn within a broad ecumenical Christian framework, enhanced by the wisdom of all traditions, creativity and their life so far
- Longs to be a transforming and supportive presence in the 'community'
- Wants to share this 'journey' within the collective wisdom of a group and with the guidance of a spiritual companion

Program Components

The programme will be five days:

- A weekend non-residential two days on the 24th & 25th March, then the 26th May, 18th August and the 3rd November
- Three individual sessions of spiritual companionship
- For up to 15 people

The content will be developed around: five paths towards mystical union, examples of sages who embody them (naturally they overlap into other paths too and the list below is an example rather than exhaustive list) and ways and practices to follow their examples.

The five paths for the purposes of this programme are:

- **Meditation/Contemplation:** Keating, Bourgeault, Finley, Main, Freeman
- **Compassion:** Dorothy Day, Catherine Doherty, Mother Theresa
- **Theology:** Underhill, Panikkar, Spink, Fox, Rohr, Newell
- **Creative arts:** Mary Oliver, John O'Donohue, Michael Leunig, Anne Lamott
- **Justice:** Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bishop Tutu, Merton

Understanding and practicing a more contemplative and simple lifestyle can require guidance and support of a kind easily read about but not easily available. *Walking the Mystical Path* offers an



accessible and flexible program of personal exploring, learning and practice to develop a contemplative perspective, and taking steps to imbed that perspective in your life.

The programme is comprised of experiential learning, reflection, spiritual practices, exploration of contemporary sages and mystics, readings, community and finally - individual spiritual companionship sessions. It is hoped that participants integrate these components in a way that will best serve their spiritual deepening.

There are no prerequisites for this program. However if you are interested you can get an Interest Form from Pip. **To reserve a place on the programme I would indicate to Pip as soon as possible that you are interested.**

Programme Leader

Pip Nicholls has had many influences in her life with not the least being cradled in the beauty of Wellington and the whole of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Other formative places, people and events have been the Erskine College chapel in Island Bay, being a member of the Aubert, Baxter, Merton, Kirk community in Featherston since 1975, a year in a Thai Buddhist monastery in the late '70's, meeting Thinly Norbu Rimpoche and Mother Theresa, returning to Catholic roots through the teachings of Tessa Bielecki (now a hermit in Colorado) and being involved in contemplative practices and studies from her early 20s. In addition, she has worked 25 years in senior positions within the disability sector and became a Spiritual Companion in 2006. She is a member of the Contemplative Network, Aotearoa and the NZ Association of Spiritual Directors.

Fee: \$750 (plus gst). A \$100 deposit needs to be paid with the Interest Form no later than the 15th February 2012.

The fee can be either paid in full or in three, six or nine month instalments beginning in February 2012 – contact Pip to discuss which method you would prefer. If for any reason the fee is prohibiting you joining, please contact Pip to discuss some arrangement.

Start Date: The programme runs over nine months and the times are 10am to 4pm at:

Pa Maria, 78 Hobson Street, Thorndon, Wellington

Information: If you want to find out more about the programme or to get an Interest Form please contact Pip: on (04) 562 6364 or: pip.nicholls@xtra.co.nz

