

Christmas, a time of *radical amazement*.

It is the beloved St Francis of Assisi who is accredited with creating a focus at Christmas on the manger, the animals and the child. He was, more than likely, inspired by the prophet Isaiah who was challenging the people of Israel as to their relationship with their God. “ The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its masters’s crib, but Israel, my people, do not know about me. This is a message repeated throughout the scriptures both in the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes four legged creatures are closer to God than even its chosen people, and divinity arrives among the least expected, the ani’im, the poor, the powerless, the disenfranchised. The mystery of God at times may be closer to those who find themselves humbly at the bottom of the pile rather than to those who act arrogantly at the top of skyscrapers. In the Christmas story the news of Jesus’ birth goes out first to the shepherds, the people at the bottom of the stack who smell like sheep and hang out with sheep.

The season of Christmas, in spite of the fact that commercialism seeks to subvert its tidings, presents us with an intrinsically, unsettling and challenging message – that divinity is in the child and in the homeless, and that wisdom will be found among the young and the playful and those still capable of what Heschel termed “*radical amazement*”. In many ways Christmas is an affront to adulthood.

I often think of the mystic as ‘the divine child within each of us wanting to play in the universe’.

May Christmas present to you a moment of wonder in which to honour and celebrate that divine child who is the divine wisdom, and who is eager to be born in every one of us.

With love

Billy

For your 2012 diary – upcoming Retreats and Events

Total Wellness Week January 23rd – 27th

Restore your equilibrium and embrace wellbeing as you begin the New Year.

Treat yourself to fresh morning walks, body therapies, Yoga and Guided meditation, and delicious healthy food.

Tel or email for details : temenos@lando.co.za : 0236251871

Mindfulness Retreat 1st – 4th March

It seems that demands on most of us are increasing, the pace of life is accelerating and the levels of uncertainty and stress undiminished. We recognize the challenge of becoming quiet in a world addicted to movement and noise, and it is so very easy to be swept up in that movement without even recognizing it.

Dr Simon Whitesman and Linda Kantor will be holding a 3 day mindfulness retreat in the beautiful Temenos gardens with the intention of restoring ourselves through stillness, relaxation and delighting in nature, all through the lens of mindful attention. The Retreat will be open both to MBSR graduates and anyone with an interest in the practice of mindfulness.

For more details contact Viv Zaachs on vzaacks@gmail.com or visit www.mbsr.co.za

CONTEMPLATIVE EASTER RETREAT 6th – 9th April

Father Michael Fish writes 'During this Holy Week retreat you are invited to let the Master wash your feet, break bread and lead you into silence, speak to you of suffering, call you to the Sabbath, open your eyes and make your heart burn within you.'

We will use the simple beauty of the Triduum liturgy as well as silence and daily reflections to enable Christ to enter us.'

Father Michael Fish, who is a monk at the Camaldolese monastery on the Big Sur in California, will be especially visiting Temenos to lead this retreat.

For more information email or tel : temenos@lando.co.za : 0236251 871

TEMENOS SILENT RETREAT 23rd – 27th April

A time to embrace silence, simplicity and solitude. For the course of the Retreat our gardens are closed to the public creating a monastic milieu in which to gently reflect, meditate and rest. Optional early morning silent walks are available as

well as guided stillness meditation for those who are not accustomed to silent meditation. You are also invited to a daily gentle Yoga session.

Enquiries: temenos@lando.co.za : 0236251871