

Christian Spirituality A to Z

TSSF STUDY WEEK
Alnmouth Friary
23-27 October 2006.

Each one (9, of whom 6 were men and 3 women) attending this study week were invited, but not pressurized, to come prepared to present a paper on some aspect of Franciscan Spirituality which might be helpful to tertiaries, and for a basis for discussion in the group.

I was shortly coming up to my 84th birthday, and quite the eldest participant, being well into my 2nd childhood, with all the normal behaviour of the young who often are difficult, unco-operative and unwilling to tow the line. On reflection, and trying to be positive, I felt the subject for me would be Spiritual Direction, as for 40 years plus I have been a tertiary, and therefore having my own director. Added to this, I have been on the other side of fence, and for the last 20 years or more as a trained spiritual director been privileged to walk alongside a sizeable number of directees.

To focus the contribution which remained in my head, not a clearly presented typewritten script for each to have a copy, I preferred to take a different approach, and invite the other participants to join me in a sort of child-like game emerging from my Spiritual Alphabet, which I am in the process of writing. I find this a helpful tool in coming to terms with this age-ing stage of 'casting off', 'letting go', simplifying my life by concentrating on **being**, rather than doing, to help me to grow into the whole person God created me to be.

I picked out some of the letters particularly relevant to this study week, and leave the reader to detect what the reasons might be for my choice – and even encouraged them to play the same child-like game, and write their own alphabet as life is for them here and now. I started with the letter 'A'. I believe it not a coincidence but only a God incidence that the first letter 'A' is the most important of them all. There need not be a limit to the number of subjects for each letter. It is quite a good exercise to do this little game every so often on a fresh alphabet sheet, without looking at previous efforts, and notice differences.

* Using starred words from this list provided the basis for my talk on Spiritual Direction.

A* – Awareness. Acceptance. Affirmation.

B – Balance.

C* – Compassion.

D* – Discernment. Drive.

E – Enfolding. Energy

F – Friendship.

G – Gift. Grace. Guilt.

H - Humility. Hospitality. Healing.

I - Intuition. Immanence.

J – Judgement. Joy. Journeying.

K - Knowing/knowing about.

L - Love. Listening.

M - Mystery.

N - Need. Negative

O - Obedience.

P - Pride. Presence. Peace.

Q - Quality/Quantity. Questioning.

R - Relationship. Reality.

S - Silence. Stillness. Suffering.

T - Trust. Truth. Tears.

U - Unconditional love. Unity.

V - Value. Vocation.

W - Wisdom. Worth.

X - Christ on the Cross

Y - You

Z - Zeal.

I was surprised and encouraged by the reaction, which led to a lively interesting discussion, illustrating how unique and different we all are, and yet so closely drawn to each other in the Third Order, and indeed the Body of Christ.

Barbara Frith.