

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS WITH SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS INTERNATIONAL

By Sr. Cathleen Murtha, DW

From a small gathering of spiritual directors of the Christian faith at Mercy Center in Burlingame, California in 1989, Spiritual Director's International has grown to include over 6,000 members on six continents that represent more than fifty spiritual traditions. Around 600 of us gathered in Louisville,



Kentucky in April to celebrate together our 25th Anniversary and to discern the Emerging Wisdom as we move forward in our service to the world.

Spiritual Directors International is a network that grew from the shared belief that throughout human history individuals have been inspired to accompany others seeking the mystery that many name God. SDI believes that spiritual companionship and deepening transforms individuals, communities, society and all creation. Annually we come together to support and challenge, to deepen and empower, to pray and to celebrate.

This April, I was blessed to participate in the annual Conference focused on Emerging Wisdom. Before the conference, 25 of us who have served on the Coordinating Council responded to the invitation to spend a day in discerning the emerging wisdom within the arena of spiritual

direction/companionship. What a lively and energizing coming together that empowered us to claim the blessings of the past and to look forward with hope. Our commitment to the integration of contemplation, justice and community was strengthened.

Some of the highlights for me were –

- Witnessing a group of Tibetan monks create the compassion sand mandala.
- Communal Worship that included song and dance, silence and song.
- Sharing the Wisdom of a Sufi master, Pir Zia, who held the oneness of creation and of humanity as he traced his lineage on the path to Wisdom.
- Being challenged to embrace the engaged contemplative life as experienced by Teilhard de Chardin.
- Visiting Gethsemane and the gravesite of Thomas Merton and having the opportunity to pray Compline with the monks.
- Listening to stories of transformation – A Jewish woman in the taxi on the way back to the airport who recounted her experience at the Conference. She grew up in post World War II Transylvania in a village of holocaust survivors where there was always a climate of not being safe and not being able to trust the

other. While meeting with the other Jewish Spiritual directors, she revealed that being at the conference was the first time she felt safe enough to wear a yarmulke. One of the women in the group gave her one.

- *I count my blessings for being a part of this inclusive global community*
- *where conversations are broad and deep;*
- *where relationships are open and honest;*
- *where respect for each and all is tangible;*
- *where there are so many names and images for the Holy, and*
- *where all are welcome!*

Whenever I am among the Spiritual Direction community, I am grateful for the Wisdom tradition that has opened me to experience God in all the experiences of life. I know that in every generation Wisdom enters into holy souls making them friends of God and prophets. I am privileged to be part of the community of spiritual directors that engages and supports seeking Her in all of life.

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