

## Chapter 5

### How does learning happen?:

#### My Spiritual learning story

For the Anthropos,  
that mysterious composite of flesh and spirit,  
reflects a latent spirituality in [her] gestes and in [her] behaviours.  
*Marcel Jousse*

#### Introduction

In this chapter I provide an account of my evidence of the biochemical nature of learning from the perspective of spiritual learning and through a spiritual lens. From my lived experience as an ordained priest and teacher in society, I share what matters to me, what I care passionately about and the difference I want to make in the world as a follower of the teachings of Jesus. I provide evidence of not living out my values through telling my emotion-filled story which leads to an identification of my concern of lack of *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality. I use multimedia narratives to share how activities that I undertook to address my concern have influenced my own and the spiritual *whole-being-learning* of others. From the evidence of my influence I experienced as well as my influence on the Christian Spirituality of others, I am able to generate my spiritual living theory.

#### **What really matters to me? What do I care passionately about? What kind of difference do I want to make in the world?**

I have been ordained priest in the Anglican Church within the Diocese of Natal, Durban since November 2011. My faith journey to the ordained priesthood has been one of active growth in my Christian Spirituality. It matters to me that I am aware of my spirituality, and as such, I am passionate about my development of my spirituality. It follows then that the good hearth and development of the spirituality of others is also my concern.

I believe that spirituality is “vital and non-negotiable lying at the heart of our lives” (Rolheiser 1998:6). It is vital and non-negotiable because I believe we are each born into this world with a spirit that cries out and is either life-giving or destructive. Hence, I believe our spirituality shapes our actions in life.

There are many definitions of spirituality but I regard

...spirituality [as] not about serenely picking or rationally choosing certain spiritual activities like going to church, praying or meditating, reading spiritual books, or setting off on some explicit spiritual quest...[spirituality is] what [I] do with [the fire that burns within me], how [I] channel it, is [my] spirituality...it is about being integrated... within community ... in harmony with mother earth... (Rolheiser 1998:6) .

In Christian Spirituality, I believe that the 'fire that burns within me' is the energy of the Holy Spirit that is like a fire within me that moves me to act. This fire within me is the warmth I experience as I believe I am in the presence of God. My link to this fire burning within that moves me to action reminds me of two biblical callings. The first is the calling of Moses in the book of Exodus Chapter 3 and the second is the day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts chapter 2. (RSV 1975).

Moses was called by God as "the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised Land (RSV 1975:Exodus 3:2). The Israelites were not living in harmony with the Egyptians and they were suffering under oppression. Moses was called to approach Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites. Through the power of the Spirit of God within him, Moses was able to work together with Aaron and others to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses was able to act based on his spirituality, with success.

On the day of Pentecost in AD 33, the disciples who had followed Jesus teachings were gathered in one room all full of fear. They were fear-filled in that Jesus, their teacher and King, whom they believed to be the Messiah, had left them and gone up to heaven. They felt alone and bewildered. As they gathered, they experienced "tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (RSV 1975:Acts 2:3-4). All those gathered there were moved to act, to "integrate within the community" and go out to be witness of Jesus. They experienced a growth in their spirituality.

As a spiritual leader in the church and teacher in society, I am also passionate about the spirituality of others. As a teacher, I believe in, and am inspired by, the greatest teacher who ever lived, the person, Jesus (Goodier 1943; Riley 1997; Jousse 2000; Stanton 2002).

I have observed how the *11 Methods of Jesus the Teacher* (Goodier, 1943) have been used by many teachers whom I consider to be good teachers. The methods used by Jesus according to Goodier (1943:497) are:

1. Jesus introduces the lesson with a question or problem.
2. Jesus capitalised on the present situation.
3. Jesus taught from the known to the related unknown.
4. Jesus recognised the importance of individual differences and adapted his instruction to the needs of the individual.
5. Jesus saw the latent possibilities in the individual and sought to arouse a desire to develop those possibilities.
6. Jesus' teaching was marked by its naturalness.
7. Jesus as a pedagogue made things easily comprehensible
8. Jesus teachings were graphic and vivid - using nearly forty parables
9. Jesus used figurative language such as the proverb, the epigram, the paradox and the hyperbole.
10. Jesus used humor in his instruction
11. Jesus had courage in presenting his message in a face of opposition.

I remind myself that Jesus challenged the hegemony of the day and seized teachable moments as a teacher, and look for ways to do the same.

Jesus was accompanied by his twelve "Galilean artisan-paysans" disciples (Jousse, 2000:51) Thus the disciples learnt as they interacted with him face-to-face and heart-to-heart on a daily basis and as he showed care and interest in the difficulties being experienced by the peasant population "in the traditional agrarian society of first century Palestine" (Botha 1998:34). These difficulties included poverty, poor health, and corruption, and discrimination, prejudice and injustice of every possible kind (Jousse, 2010:234ff; Matthew, V, 3-9, 10-12; Luke, VI, 20-26). Jesus' aim was to win "a pedagogical Civilising war" (Jousse, 2000:51) against these inequities and injustices.

Jousse identified Rabbi Ieshoua, the Galilean - for me Jesus, The Teacher, - as "A teacher-by-imitation, a mimo-teacher, a rhythming-teacher" (Jousse 2004:109). His disciples learnt by 'imitating' him through listening to, and watching, him as he taught. Jesus' disciples, or as Jousse prefers to call them, "Apprehenders" (Jousse, 2000:173 inter alia), learnt "by heart" (Jousse, 2000:18 inter alia) from observing him,

and recorded their learning and understanding in memory, being orally traditioned in the use of the mnemonic oral-style (Sienaert 1990; Jousse 2000; Conolly 2001; Jousse 2001b; Jousse 2010), and not schooled in the literate mode. Jousse calls the disciples “Apprehenders” as they accessed the learning with their whole bodies and souls as they listened, watched and then recited and repeated the gestes of Jesus using the mnemonic oral-style (ibid).

Jesus’ method of teaching was to speak to the many who followed him and gathered where he stopped, using the mnemonic oral-style (ibid) with which both he and his listeners were familiar, given their common peasant origins. Jousse identified the origin, nature and operation of the mnemonic oral-style, through his anthropological and gestural study of numerous communities all over the planet, and with special reference to the peasant communities into which he had himself been born and by whom he was raised (Sienaert 1990; Jousse 2000; Conolly 2001; 2001a; 2001b; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2010).

### **What are my values and why?**

Loving, kind, respectful, considerate, impartial and sincere treatment of others are strong spiritual values to me. As a Christian, I have learnt from the Bible that I am to do good to all (Gal 6:10), have love for both my neighbours and my enemies (Matthew 5:43), show respect to everyone (1 Peter 2:17), demonstrate [sisterly] kindness (2 Peter 1: 5 – 7) and be considerate, impartial and sincere (James 3:17).

I believe that there is a need for more love in the world. All of us, not only Christians, should all be following Jesus’ commandment to love God and love our neighbours as ourselves. As a leader in the Christian church, I value loving relationships where each person is allowed to be authentic in that relationship. My love is based on the commandment of Jesus to love each other just as He loved us (RSV 1975: Matthew 13:34). God loved us so much that He sent Jesus, Son of God, in flesh, to live amongst us in the sinful world (RSV 1975: John 3:16). Jesus loved us so much that he gave His life for us on the cross. After his death and resurrection, God the Holy Spirit was sent to comfort, counsel and lead us to all truth (RSV 1975: John 14:15-17). I know and experience that love and comfort of God in my life especially in my

pain and suffering. As a disciple of Christ and an ordained priest in the church I believe that it is important to share the love of God amongst all creation who are groaning (RSV 1975: Romans 8: 22). It is not easy to do so especially in a world where there is a feeling of so much brokenness, hurt, mistrust, anger and hatred. I believe though that I can make a difference in peoples' lives through sharing that love. I believe that love can be shared through prayer, and through action. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (RSV 1975: 1 Corinthians 13:7). I believe love is the emotion that Jesus Christ commanded us to share with each other.

Furthermore, I value having fun or experiencing the joy of my Lord, Jesus, in my life. I believe that life is not all about seriousness. In the book of Psalms the writer expresses " [God] has put more joy in my heart" (RSV 1975: Psalm 4:7) and in Psalm 16 David talks about how by being with the Lord, his soul rejoices and he has fullness of joy. Jesus himself in the Gospel of John says to us " these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (RSV 1975: John 15 :11).

I value loving other people and being in their presence, feeling their dynamic energy as they interact. I value not only being in their presence but also challenging them to develop and grow in all the dimensions of their being – spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally. I value supporting and encouraging people as they experience difficulties and challenges in their lives. I value being impartial and not being judgemental of people and their ideas as they interact with others and as they seek meaning for their own lives. In my own life and work, I value loving what I do, having a passion for what I do and having fun and pleasure in all I do. Having fun and pleasure in what I do makes me feel good. I experience a joy-filled love and a love-filled joy.

### **What is my concern? Why am I concerned?**

I am concerned that people are experiencing a lack of joy, passion and awareness of God in their lives.

They are not spiritually active in the life of the church and society. I am concerned that their spirituality is not fully active and not fully biochemically (in)formed.

Spirituality is biochemically (in)formed and I believe that, I as a human being, experienced the reality of the Law of Interaction (Jousse 2000), viz.

‘The Acting One – acting on – The Acted upon’

in the form of

‘The Loving one – loving – the loved one’,

ex-pressed in the algebrised form, as

‘God loves me’.

I would like to see a community and society in which we live out our spirituality and all “*feel good*” and “*feel God*” (Pert 2006). I want to provide a space and opportunity for people to share love, show humility and be of service to each other as they each learn, move, change, develop, understand and grow to be who they were created to become, with all their potential fully realised.

### **What evidence do I have for my concern?**

My evidence for my concern about the lack of joy-filled love and love-filled joy in the lives of others stems from my own experience. I see that others are experiencing the same kind of a lack of joy-filled love and love-filled joy that I used to experience. As I critically reflect on my journey of faith, I realise that I have had a significant incident in my life when I experienced personal spiritual growth, learning, movement, change, development and understanding. I became aware of my own spirituality.

### **How did I discover that God loves me?**

In July 1993, I woke up one winter’s morning and discovered to my greatest despair, that my face was paralysed on the left side, my left eye was unable to blink, my mouth was drooping to the left and I could not hold anything in my mouth: food and drink dribbled down my chin. My eyesight was affected. My speech was slurred. My eye could no longer blink involuntarily and hence lubricate my eyeball. I had to wear an eye-patch over my left eye to prevent it from drying out.

I was diagnosed with Bell’s Palsy. The ear, nose and throat specialist informed me that there was no medical cure for Bell’s Palsy and that he was not sure whether my face would ever return to normal.

I experienced extreme emotional discomfort as people stared at me particularly when I was in the classroom as a Chemistry lecturer. I went into a state of depression and questioning of God. I did not feel the love of God. I believed that I was just not good enough to be a lecturer any longer. I feared that I was going to lose my job. I grappled with the same spiritual questions that Parker Palmer says we all have as we yearn to connect with 'the largeness of life' who for me I believe is God: He alludes to the questions in *Let Your life Speak- Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (Palmer 2000) and presents them as follows in Educational Leadership:

Does my life have meaning and purpose? Do I have gifts that the world wants and needs? Whom and what can I trust? How can I rise above my fears? How do I deal with suffering, my own and that of my family and friends? How [do I] maintain hope? (Palmer 1999: 6-8)

I prayed. I tried to connect with God in my prayers for over three months. I cried out to God seeking answers. Did he really love me? How could this happen to me?

Even though I attended church services of worshipping and praising God, I prayed and I meditated on the Bible as the Word of God I had not experienced God's love in my situation with Bell's Palsy. I came to doubt that my faith was strong enough.

The structure of my Christian faith resonates with the fourfold structure of faith that John Macquarrie presents as firstly, a commitment to the values of Jesus Christ; secondly a confession that Christ is the Son of God; thirdly a belief that Jesus Christ is a real and significant person; and fourthly that faith is experienced as a response to or an awakening to "a reality outside of ourselves claiming the allegiance of that which is most deeply within ourselves" – it is not something we create ourselves, it is grace (Macquarrie 1973). My lack of faith meant that I was in need of committing to the value of Jesus Christ as loving God his Father. I was in need of believing that as a real person he was concerned about my health and my desire to be healed, made whole. I was in need of responding to the grace of God through Jesus Christ, upon my life.

I exercised the value of loving God through His son Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. I used prayer and meditation as a form of communicating with God whom I loved, seeking answers to my situation. We as the Christian community believe that our Lord Jesus brings health, life, joy and peace and that he "came that [we] may have life , and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 RSV 1975). I believe that just as Christ healed over two thousand years ago - according to the Gospels in the Bible (RSV 1975), he can still heal today through priests, the laity as well as doctors,

nurses and other medical staff. I believe that God works through prayer and the rites of Laying on of hands and Anointing as well as through the medical fraternity. In this case, of my Bell's Palsy, I started off seeking healing through the medical fraternity.

During September 1993, about three weeks after the medical specialist had pronounced that there was no medical cure for my condition, the local Anglican church of which I was a member held a healing service on a Wednesday evening. It is normal for the church to have healing services for the sick in the community. By this stage of my illness, I felt more comfortable attending the Wednesday evening regular worship services at the church than Sundays. Fewer people attended the Wednesday services and I did not have to endure so many people staring at me because of the eye-patch and my drooping face.

Trusting in God's unfailing love, that he would use this sickness for my own spiritual growth and to his glory, I prayed before going to the healing service and I said "Lord, according to your will, may I be healed".

When my husband and I arrived at the church, it was very full with many more people than those that usually attended. Many of them came seeking healing. The priest who conducted the healing service was a gentle giant of a priest in whom I detected a deep peace and serenity. I believed that Christ was truly living in him. The atmosphere in the church was also very calm, like the calm felt before a storm is experienced. I felt the mystical presence of God in that place. I felt filled with a deep sense awe and wonder of God, a sense of humble submission to his power. I felt a sense of expectation deep within me as the service reached the point when the priest called all those in need of healing to the altar rail. The priest held a bottle of holy oil in his hands to anoint each one of us as we knelt at the altar rail.

As I stood up from the pew that I was sitting in, I felt a trembling throughout my physical body: I was shaking involuntarily, and markedly so. I was nervous and excited at the same time. I am not sure why I was nervous and excited. Maybe I was nervous about the healing and how I would response to the infilling of the Holy Spirit during the laying on of hands and the anointing. Maybe I was excited about the anticipated healing that I was going to receive. My heart was beating very fast in my chest. I became oblivious of the people in the church. My focus was on getting to the altar rail. As I walked into the centre aisle of the church, I felt tears rolling down my right cheek. I used my hand to wipe away the tears on that cheek. I could not feel anything on my left side of my face. There were no tears on my left cheek. My left eye could not tear. I felt strange crying with one eye only. As I came up to the altar

rail, I experienced an overwhelming uncontrollable desire to cry out loud. I cried. I sobbed. My whole body shook uncontrollably all the time. The gates of my deep-seated emotions were released in floods of tears as I knelt at the rail. I did not understand at that time what was happening to me.

I cannot remember exactly how many other people were at the altar rail. I was the last person along the altar rail I kept sobbing all the time even up to the point when it was my turn for the priest to stand in front of me and pray. I could barely utter the responses to the priest as he asked me to affirm my belief in the power of God to help me. At that point I closed my eyes to experience the spiritual moment and not be distracted by anything. I desired spiritual wholeness, a spiritual connection with God. I felt the priest placing his thumb with holy oil on my forehead. He signed my forehead with the sign of the cross whilst praying:

Delysia, I anoint you with oil in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May our heavenly Father make you whole in body and mind, and grant you inward anointing of his Holy Spirit of strength and joy and peace. Amen (Church of the Province of South Africa 1989: 506).

I recollect that I felt the pressure of the priest's thumb on my forehead for a long time after the congregation had said "Amen". By then my crying had stopped and I felt at peace, but the pressure of the thumb was still on my forehead and my eyes were closed. When I opened my eyes, I expected to see the priest still standing in front of me as I still felt the pressure of his thumb on my forehead. However, the priest was not standing in front of me. He had returned to the altar and I was looking at his back. So whose thumb did I feel on my forehead still applying pressure? It was not a physical thumb of anybody. There was no physical being standing near me. Then I became aware that I had a feeling of such joy, peace and serenity within me. There was definitely a sense for me that it was God through the power of the Holy Spirit that was touching me and making me whole. I am reminded of the words of a song that we sing in church that has the following lines:

He touched me,  
Oh He touched me,  
And oh the Joy that filled my soul  
Something happened,  
And now I know,  
He touched me and  
made me whole.

I felt that I could also identify with the blind man, the bleeding woman and many others that Jesus healed. When I sat down in the pew next to my husband, he asked me “How do you feel? What happened up there? Why were you crying?” I did not know what had happened so I replied “I do not know and do not really understand why I was crying”. I wondered what was the cause of my tears? What had triggered that physiological process in my being? Was it the release of pent-up emotions of fear of possibly losing my job, fear of the possible social isolation? Was it the emotion of joy and excitement of possible physical healing? I did not know.

As I was seated there, I stroked my left cheek with my fingers. My face still had no sense of feeling on the left side. I did not have a mirror and was unable to see whether my face and my mouth were still drooping. “Oh my!” I thought. So I asked my husband if my face and mouth were still drooping. He said that it looked like my mouth was not drooping that much but my face was still looking different on each side. I started to feel excited and wanted to get home, to a mirror, to make sure for myself that there was a change, a healing. I felt the fears of the possibility of losing my job and the social isolation lifted off my shoulders. I was no longer fearful. I felt that I had the strength to carry on. I was no longer felt depressed. But the question of whether both sides of my face were healed and whether I would need to wear an eye-patch still remained. I could not wait to get home.

When I returned home after the service and looked in the mirror, what I saw confirmed for me that my mouth was no longer drooping. I drank a cup of coffee and I noticed a difference in my mouth: I was able to sip from the cup without it being messy. I was able to use my lips fully, not just suck on the straw through the right side of my lips. My words were much clearer. In my opinion, I was healed. But I still needed to go to the medical specialist for his assessment as my left eyelid that was unable to blink started drooping and I still felt very little sensation on the left side of my face.

The earliest appointment that I could get with the medical specialist was on the Monday of the following week. I continued to monitor myself each day after the healing service. I noticed my speech improving a bit and my eye still looked like a lazy eye with the eyelid still drooping half closed. I continued to massage my face.

I could not wait for Monday’s appointment.

The appointment was in the morning so I went straight from home to the specialist’s rooms. I went alone. As I walked from the car park to the surgery, I was constantly

touching and massaging my left cheek, trying to activate some more feelings in my face. I was pulling my mouth from side to side checking that both sides of my mouth were able to move together. I had removed the eye-patch. I was excited to hear what the medical specialist would find and say to me.

The receptionist greeted me in her cheerful manner as I entered the door. "Good morning, Mrs Timm. You are looking rather cheerful this morning. You are not wearing your eye patch." She had noticed how happy I was feeling and that I was no longer wearing the eye-patch. She did not say anything about my droopy eye. I replied "Good morning to you to. Indeed, I am feeling good. I am actually feeling blessed in that I believe that this Bell's Palsy is on its way out, no longer going to bother me". I hesitated a bit though after that and said, "But my eye seems to be doing its own thing now". I was hesitant because I was not actually sure how long it would still take for the effects of the Bell's Palsy to be completely gone, for my eye to be back to normal. I took a seat in the waiting area all the while still touching and massaging my face. There were no other patients in the waiting area. I was the next patient to see the doctor.

It was not long when the specialist's consulting room door opened and he was available to see me. I took a seat in my usual chair. "So how are you feeling this morning, Mrs Timm?" the specialist asked. "I was feeling very happy and better until I walked in here" I said to him. "I am not sure now how I am feeling as I will wait first for you to assess me. My face is still without much sensation and my left eyelid has now started drooping." "Oh," he replied, "but something definitely has improved in your condition. You are speaking much more clearly and your mouth is no longer drooping."

He came closer to examine me as I remained seated. In silence, he touched my face and examined my eye. He asked me to open and close my mouth a few times. I noticed a confused look on his face. As he turned to walk back to his desk, he asked "When was the last time I saw you?" I replied "Well doctor, it was about a month ago when you told me that it would take anything up to eighteen months for my face and eye to come right, if at all".

He looked at my file open on his desk, still with a confused expression on his face. "Now what?" I thought to myself. "I am absolutely astounded"! the doctor said after a long pause, "I cannot believe that you have improved so much since the last time you were right here in this chair! You have healed so quickly". To which I responded, "Doctor, do you believe in miracle healings?" I had noticed a rosary of prayer beads

of the people following a Roman Catholic faith on the shelf behind his desk. I proceeded to tell him what I had experienced the previous Wednesday evening. From my account and what he saw in front of him, the doctor's response was " Well, I cannot deny the physical evidence of this healing in your body. It is indeed for me a miracle healing. I did not expect to see this at all from my previous experiences with similar patients!"

I was completely healed. There was no evidence of Bell's Palsy, and I have never had a relapse and believe I never will. I was healed by the power of my loving Lord, Jesus Christ, my Saviour.

I believe that my pain and suffering was a necessary part of my listening to and hearing God shouting in my pain and thus necessary for my spiritual growth. After my physical healing experience, I was led to discover my "sense of meaning, purpose, values and religious practices" which are all spiritual factors in life (Dossey 2009:38). Books, over and above the Bible, that I read, which helped me towards finding a sense of meaning and purpose in my life were *Mans search for Meaning* (Frankl 2004), *The Purpose Driven life – What on earth am I here for* (Warren 2002), *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality* (Ryan 2004) and *Your Life in Rhythm* (Miller, B 2009). I believe something else happened during my healing, I felt drawn to be a channel of God's redemptive love.

My personal story of my experience of spiritual energy is linked to deep feelings of emotion that I could never explain. Why did I cry uncontrollably in the church during the healing ceremony and process? Was the emotion part of the "fire burning within me" (Rolheiser 1998:6) Was I experiencing that urgent longing, *eros* for God in my life? Was there a biochemical change happening within my body (Pert 1999) due to these emotions? Or were the emotions a result of the biochemical change? Why had I doubted God's love? Was it so that I could go through this loving experience to enter a new level of spirituality in my life? Through my own story of growth and healing, I experienced the coming together of God, or Holy Spirit and the emotional reality of my physical body or of being glued together.

As I reflect on these questions with my colleague, Joan, she prompts me to find out what could have been the possible causes of Bell's Palsy? I was told by a medical specialist – in layman's terms- it was a 'cold in the nervous system that had caused

the paralysis'. There are possible viral infections that also result in Bell's Palsy- there is however no definite physical cause for the condition. I believe that Bell's Palsy is one of the emotion driven conditions in humans. During the time that I got Bell's Palsy, I was trying to deal with a family crisis that I perceived to be huge in my life. As I reflect on the family crisis, I realise that it was about a lack of love in relationships, a deep-seated, paralysing coldness.

I had experienced intense emotions of personal fear and depression during the Bells' Palsy which changed to feelings of love, joy, peace and serenity within me after the healing. My emotions "within [became] more valuable than the [appearance] without" (de Chardin 1959:62) as I experienced the physical healing. I "felt good and felt God" (Pert 2006) I believed that I was healed. I was physically healed as the paralysis on my left side disappeared. My mouth could close as I ate food and drank liquids. My left eye was blinking involuntarily again. My physical body had learnt to function optimally again. My gestures had changed from inactivity to their automatic reflex action. My spiritual energy was increased. In retrospect I changed from believing that I was 'Just Not Good Enough' to being 'Absolutely Good Enough' through that connection of my body, my mind, my spirit and my heart. I was able to "do things which [kept me] energised and integrated, on fire and yet glued together" (Rolheiser 1998:17).

I had experienced spiritual growth. I had understood. I believe that 'to understand is to love' - I had learnt to love again. As I love God and love others with whom I come into contact, I am able to understand them more. I had experienced a joy-filled love and a love-filled joy in my healing encounter. Jousse provides me with an explanation for the intense embodied experiences:

...man will nonetheless strive to Mime the actions and interactions of the invisible world through the intermediary of his corporeal-manual being. Man senses, moreover, that this is more or less how the beings of the invisible world proceed then they, in turn, try to reveal themselves to him. It is logical indeed that they can only do this by making the normal, ordinary 'actions' of the visible world 'act' in an unusual and astonishing fashion. For it is in no way illogical to believe that invisible beings are more 'powerful' than visible beings (Jousse 2000:77).

I believe that, I as a human being, experienced the reality of the Law of Interaction (Jousse 2000), viz.

‘The Acting One – acting on – The Acted upon’

in the form of

‘The Loving one – loving – the loved one’,

ex-pressed in the algebrised form, as

‘God loves me’.

How does God love me? The characteristic geste of God or his Essential action is loving and there are an indefinite number of Transitory actions that spring forth from ‘The Acting One, God. These Transitory Actions of loving are intussuscepted within the fibres of ‘The Acted Upon’. I, as ‘The Acted Upon’, then express this loving through the gestes of kindness, patience, forgiveness, courtesy, humility, generosity and honesty (Chapman 2008). Gary Chapman, who has written on *Love as a Way of Life* (Chapman 2008) has expanded on the expressions of each of these characteristics in the following way:

Kindness – discovering the joy of helping others

Patience – accepting the imperfections of others

Forgiveness – finding freedom from the grip of anger

Courtesy – treating others as friends

Humility – stepping down so someone else can step up

Generosity – giving yourself to others

Honesty – revealing who you really are .

### **What have I done about my concern?**

In order to move towards a more active spirituality as a form of *whole-being-learning* - movement, change, growth, development, understanding - in the life of the church and society, I have engaged, and continue to engage, in activities for my own personal spiritual growth: I have become a learner of Christian Spirituality. I serve others, as part of my teaching ministry, by providing and sharing in opportunities for them to grow spiritually. As a teacher, I have a passion to connect, I feel what Parker Palmer describes as a teacher who feels a

deep kinship with [Christianity]; [I wanted] to bring [others] into that relationship, to link them with the knowledge that is so life-giving to me ...to share [my] values and [my] vocation (Palmer 1993: x).

I have undertaken and participated in a number of initiatives to actively learn my own spirituality and help others to actively learn their spirituality. These initiatives include the following which are not in a chronological order:

I am studying for a Bachelor of Theology degree

I have become an ordained member of the clergy

I participate in a liturgical dancing group

I teach floral arrangement and participate in floral arrangements within the church

I host and facilitate a group bible study every week

I facilitate and participate in Quiet Mornings for Women

I identified people with whom I had interacted in these initiatives to give me written feedback on three questions (see Appendix C: written responses of participants)

1. To what extent and how did I influence your learning during our time as.....?
2. To what extent and how did you influence my learning during our time as....?
3. Can you describe the emotions you experienced during these learning moments giving instances or examples as appropriate

I reference the audio/video interactions with the participants using the following format: (SOP<sup>12</sup> number, name, date, exact time of utterance in minutes). I omit the time for the written responses as they were a maximum length of a short paragraph. I had a conversation about the questions with Faith and Fr Terry which I audio recorded. The people who responded to my three questions in writing are tabulated below.

Initiative	Name of Person who responded	SOP number <sup>13</sup>
Theological Studies & Bible Study	Anton	2

<sup>12</sup> SOP – Schedule of Participant in Appendix B

<sup>13</sup> This number corresponds to the schedule in Appendix B

Liturgical Dance	Charys	6
	Heidi	7
	Lola	8
Floral Arranging	Dawn	9
	Hylton	10
	Charys	6
Bible Study	Charys	6
	Fiona	11
	Des	12
Quiet Morning	Judy	13
	Joy	14
	Alice	15
	Cheryl	16
	Lorraine	17
	Des	18
	Linda	19
	Joan	20
	Marge	21

I extracted phrases/parts of the responses to the questions that showed me the emotions and feelings experienced and learning, movement, change, growth, development, and understanding of spirituality.

**How did studying theology influence my *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality? What evidence can I present of this influence? What evidence can I present of my influence on the Christian spirituality of others?**

I registered as a part-time student in January 2004 for a Bachelors degree in Theology with a correspondence college. I enrolled for these studies as part of my Fellowship of Vocation process in the local church on the advice of my local parish priest, Fr Terry. My understanding and knowledge of Christian Spirituality before I registered was limited to what I had learnt about twenty-eight years earlier, as part of my Confirmation course.

Fr Terry and one of my fellow students, Anton, encouraged and supported me during my studies. Anton and I formed a study group in the parish as a support to each other. We meet at least once a week to discuss the questions and tasks for the assignments. My formal education up until this point was focussed on Chemistry or Chemical Education, so the world of theological education was very new to me and different to what I had studied before. I was very excited about the course since it provided me with an opportunity to register for courses that were relevant to my practical ministry in the church and for my spiritual growth (See the curriculum outline in Appendix E).

I found that all the modules that I chose contributed to my spiritual growth especially doing the modules *7003- Growing spiritually, thinking theologically*, *7377- Teaching the faith*, *7372- Proclaiming our Faith* and *7401- Integrating Theology and Ministry*. These modules were very practical in nature. The written tasks in the assignments required me to reflect and report on projects/workshops/discussions in my local church and to interact with different types of people. I experienced a course that was not 'bookish.' I was able to focus on the "explicit gestes of what was real" (Jousse, 2000:129). Jousse describes a "bookish" course as one that :

keeps [me] focused on the mechanisms of writing and not on the explicit gestes of what is Real. To pose our greatest human problems in the medium of writing only is to distort them from the very start (Jousse 2000:129).

I was able to be face-to-face and heart-to-heart with the reality of spirituality and theology as it informed, besieged and constrained me. My brain, hands and whole body were mimers and re-players of interactions I had with my priest, fellow students and members of the Parish. The studies influenced my sermons that I taught in the church.

One of the first subjects that I registered for was module *7372- Proclaiming our Christian Faith*. I registered for this course since I believed that as a teacher I had the spiritual gift of teaching and the course would equip me with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to share sermons in the church. I was able to share my knowledge as a result of my studies during sermons. In my sermons, I aimed to raise people's awareness of their own spirituality by relating to their lives and experiences, by challenging them directly and by surprising them with creative

innovations. I responded to my own spirituality during my sermon preparation and delivery. The more I responded, the more readily my spirituality informed what I had to say.

My process of sermon composition has emerged along the following lines. On Monday, I start by praying and reading the Bible verses that have been set for the day according to the lectionary (Anglican Church of Southern Africa 2011). I pray and do these readings numerous times for a few days before I actually start writing the sermon. As I do these readings, I try to understand what the reading is about by using commentaries and various versions of the Bible. In my prayer time I listen for what God is saying to me is relevant for me in these readings. I become more aware of my own life experiences, past and present, that may relate in some way to what I have read. I reflect on the experiences of the parish, the parishioners and the community in relation to the readings.

I normally have many conversations with myself about the possibilities for the sermon. Some of the thoughts I feel good about and some of them just do not seem to make me feel like I get the point of the readings. I always feel that there is a direct message from God, firstly for me, then for the congregation in all my sermons.

By Saturday afternoon, I am ready to compile a mind-map with all my ideas for the sermon. The ideas that finally get included in the sermon are those that make me “feel Go(o)d” (Pert 2006) deep in my stomach, and address issues tugging at my heart. Normally I end up with about three main thoughts to explore or expand upon. I jot down a few paragraphs around these thoughts and read over them quite a few times to get the gestic of the message. I need to feel the words in every fibre of my being before I am comfortable with standing up and delivering the sermon. At times I go to sleep on a Saturday evening with what I believe to be the completed sermon only to awaken at day-break with a strong message from deep within my being to change the sermon. And until I sit down and make the changes, I do not feel at peace within myself. I have found over the years that I have been teaching from the pulpit without counting words or timing myself beforehand, when the sermon is right, the duration during the service is no more than 20 minutes.

Before I stand in front of the congregation to deliver the sermon, I pray first for guidance, wisdom and inspiration. I never read my sermon from the words I have

written down. I use the notes as a guide to remind me of the main points. Instead I speak freely, expressing myself as I feel is the best expression in response to the energy I sense from the congregation. I respond to their presence which is life-giving. Quite often I find that I am unable to stand still. I need to move my arms, my body, and make eye contact with the congregation. I also need to use different objects as far as possible in my sermons so that people can relate to tangible things and remember what was said. I include some relevant humour to make the people feel relaxed if it is appropriate. I also use different tones and inflections, in my voice, and pause, and vary the volume and pitch to keep their attention. I realise that there were times when I say things during my sermon that I have not planned to say at all, and some people tell me afterwards that they felt that they were very meaningfully directed to them. I recently started audio- and video-recording my sermons so that I could listen to what I have said, or rather what God has said through me. Perhaps there was a relevant word there for me which I had spoken but that I had not written down.



**Figure 27: Delysia delivering her first sermon as ordained priest in Church**

In the attached video-clip of the first sermon that I taught at St Augustine's Church, Queensburgh, on Sunday 27 November 2011, as a newly ordained priest, I am surprised to notice the spontaneous "corporeal-manual ex-pression" (Jousse 2000) in my style. Figure 27 is a photograph of the video which can be viewed on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/GRHo0Lh8NuU> or on the enclosed DVD.

The church has imposed a lectern with a microphone from which I am to teach my sermon as accepted practice and as such I am restricted to be fairly stationery and

unable to walk about as Jesus teaching in the mountains and from the boats on the lake of Galilee. Instead I make frequent eye contact with the congregation and occasionally look down to read the points that I have made. As I move within the space, I notice that I create a strong physical presence through my eye contact and spontaneous gestures. In this video, I see that there is evidence of the “dynamic vitality of [my] performance as an indivisible whole” (Conolly 2002:162). My movements are spontaneous expressions of my inner energy and intussuscepted Mimemes - my microscopic geste. I see that I spontaneously raise and lower my hands, I extend them forward and backwards and as I extend them outwards, I see that I also move my fingers to emphasise what I am saying. I see that my whole body moves from side to side and back to front, as I scan the audience, making eye-contact with them across the room. I see that I am able to engage with them during the sermon.

While the corporeal-manual ex-pression is evident in my style, I hear on the video that my speech patterns are also engaging. I hear that the volume of my voice increases and decreases, and the pitch of my voice rises and falls as I make significant certain points in my sermon and as I pose questions and challenges. I hear that my tone is very vibrant as I speak. I realise that there are times when I speak very fast with an upward inflection and am able to switch to a slower pace for greater emphasis. I note that I use times of silence after making a significant point or posing a question to engage the congregation. I hear the responses of the congregation during the sermon as I make a statement that prompts action from them. In order to ‘listen’ to the congregation, I have long moments of silence which are not pauses, but silences filled with meaning. I feel the energy of the congregation as I am talking.

I see and hear that my gestural and vocal movements are indivisibly part of the actual content of my sermon, and that this content is enhanced by the extra-linguistic corporeal-manual gestures and laryngo-buccal modulations, of pitch, pace, pause, volume, and inflection (Jousse 2000).

On reflection, I realise that I have included my written notes of the sermon preparation as well as the outline of the sermon, but I also realise that I have

included more information and aspects in my actual sermon than in the written text as I have felt led by the Spirit. I have included a copy of my written text I prepared for the sermon as appendix.....

I realise that I have experienced this 'led by the Spirit' as a force within me that rises up in my being from deep within me. I feel it deep within my gut and if I do not express it then I feel a loss in the rhythm of my sermon – at times there are no words to express what I am feeling and thinking.

I believe I capture everyone not only by what I say, but also by my actions or rather my corporeal gestures. I feel encouraged during my sermons from the responses of intense energy of love that I feel from the people whilst I am speaking and from their loving questions, comments and after the service. I am able to express my love of and for God in my sermons.

In the video-clip there is evidence of me challenging the congregation to think about what is happening in society and in their lives. Anton who has completed his theological studies and is a Lay Minister and a member of Fellowship of Vocation, believes that my sermons

“... are always informative, challenging, encouraging, and unquestionably messages from God as we as God’s people are brought to a better understanding on who God is, what His will for us is, bringing us to an understanding how we are to live our lives, as loving servants of God and loving neighbours to all of creation.” (SOP 2, Anton, March 2011).

Anton tells me that my sermons have influenced his spiritual growth in a positive manner. I am encouraged by Anton’s comment as he is very knowledgeable of scriptures and has a loving relationship with God.

Both Fr Terry and Anton, believe that I have challenged them. Anton says that “Delysia questions or interjections” that challenge his “mental boundaries” and get people thinking (SOP 2, Anton, March 2011). Fr Terry said that I “challenged people’s boundaries” (SOP 3, Fr Terry, March 2011, 9:24-9:37 mins). I am reminded as I listened to him that I felt the need to ensure that I truly understood what he was talking about whenever he was introducing something new or different in the church.

I was not happy just to do things without fully understanding what or why I was doing what was requested by Fr Terry. Only when I felt good about an answer did I stop asking questions. Conversely, I believe that is why I was able to entertain people that voiced their own opinions and asked questions about things that I had said. If they were unhappy, I felt that I needed to listen to them carefully and help them to be content and happy with what they were doing.

Faith confirmed the positive impact on her spiritual life of my sermons as she believed they were “inspirational (...) I hung on every word (...) I loved your sermons (...) you captured everyone (...) I was very, very moved and interested (...) (SOP 4, Faith, March 2011, 2:01 mins)... [they helped me] follow the way I should be living” (SOP 4, Faith, March 2011, 2:01 - 2:43mins). As Faith shared her feelings about my sermons, she spoke in clear distinct manner saying each word very deliberately and slowly and increased the tempo towards the end.

Faith is over 70 years old and did not believe her memory was too good, however she did remember how she was “startled” by the fact that I threw beans at them during a sermon. She recalled the action of me throwing the beans during a sermon about the parable of “the Sower” even though she could not actually remember the words I spoke at that time. The emotion of feeling “startled” that she experienced at that time of the throwing action ensured the intussusception of that action into her fibres of her whole being. That action was embedded into her and she was able to express her knowledge of what she had learnt. Her learning of spirituality was active and even when she prayed, she felt a “whole lot better (...) God has his arms around me” (SOP 4, Faith, March 2011, 6:26 – 31) which she expressed in a very loving and caring tone of voice. She experienced spiritual growth and “felt good” and “felt God” (Pert 2006).

I audio-recorded a conversation I had with Fr Terry on SKYPE<sup>14</sup> about my influence on him and his influence on me during my studies and time in the parish. The full recording with Fr Terry and his wife Rita can be listened to on the enclosed DVD. Fr Terry and Rita, his wife, encouraged me and supported me by sharing their love for

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<sup>14</sup> Sadly, Fr Terry retired from the priesthood in October 2010 and emigrated to New Zealand.

God and people. At the time when I joined the parish in 1994, my family was the only 'coloured family' in a 'white parish' with very few Blacks and Indians. Generally, there was still a strong feeling of inequality amongst the racial groups and people were not very accepting of each other. I did not feel any racial tension towards me in the church, and felt loved by the people. I found Fr Terry and Rita to be very loving. Fr Terry was not afraid to speak his mind especially on matters where people were marginalised. He was the Rector of the parish and had an authority and responsibility in the church which many people felt they could not challenge and accepted everything he said and did. I believed that he was intelligent and well-versed in scripture and church doctrine. He made me think critically about things and was always open to a good discussion and debate about issues, I think partly because of his training as a lawyer.

Fr Terry recognised that my "relationship with Jesus was so strong" (SOP 3, Fr Terry, March 2011,1:07mins), emphasising the word "strong" by saying it louder and more forcefully than the other words, giving a sense of the strength of my relationship with Jesus. He believed that my relationship was so strong that I was able to be a peace-maker amongst the different race-groups in the church. I believe that I can only be a peace-maker, when I am sharing God's love with all.

Rita, his wife, believed that I was able to "make things clear" (SOP 3, Rita, March 2011,2:48). She was able to say that slowly and deliberately with a pause at the end before adding "for me" as she felt it very strongly within her being. When there was a problem, she would come to me about looking for help.

When Fr Terry commented on my discernment process to the ministry, he thought long and hard before responding. He spoke very slowly, choosing each word very deliberately and carefully. He saw the love I had "for Jesus (...) for the church (...) for things sacramental" (SOP 3, Fr Terry, March 2011,7:38mins). His expression of these words reiterated each time the love I had for the various things which is indicative of the Law of Interaction (Jousse 2000). I believe that as I experienced God's love, I was able to love others and as I loved them, they were able to love others and me in return as well.

**How did participating in liturgical dance influence my *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality? What evidence can I present of this influence? What evidence can I present of my influence on the Christian spirituality of others?**

I accepted an invitation in April 1996 to become a member of the 'Dance for Joy' liturgical dance group at St Augustine's Church. The formation of the liturgical dance group was initiated by one of the ladies in the Parish who had a passion for dance and had observed liturgical dancing in another church. I am not gifted to sing but I believe that I have rhythm in my body to offer as worship. None of us in the group had any formal dance training: we only had a passion and desire to express our love for God through dance. At the age of 35, with no training or experience in dances for an audience, I felt anxious about being able to dance 'correctly', but I was also excited about being able to use my whole body in worship.

In the Hebrew tradition, dance functioned as a medium of prayer and praise, as an expression of joy and reverence, and as a mediator between God and humanity. (Taylor, MF 1976: 81). This tradition from the Israelites is found in the Bible especially in the case of David who danced before the Ark of the Lord ( 2 Samuel 6:14) and in the case of Miriam and all the women who danced after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20) (RSV 1975). Liturgical dance was forced out of the church during the Reformation (Coleman 1995). I am delighted that with the liturgical renewal of the twentieth century, dance has begun to be accepted in the worship life of the church and been researched by dancers through Queensland University of Technology (Coleman 1995).

The 'Dance for Joy' group decided on the name as we believed that our aim was to bring joy to people's lives through dance ministry. The group size varied from four to eight persons. Our ages varied as well from teenagers through to those of us above 30 years old. We gathered weekly for about two hours each time to learn the dances and to gain a Christian spiritual understanding of dance. We danced to Christian music. We spent many hours listening to the music. Listening to the words and feeling the rhythm of the music. Once we had decided on the moves, we repeated them many times to commit the dance moves to memory through physical practice. We rehearsed the dances to ensure that we worked together as a team and that we were able to move our bodies in response to the music. We danced at major

festivals and seasons in the church. Many of our dances were video-recorded so that we could reflect on them for improvement.

As I watch the videorecording of one of our liturgical dances to the song, *Father of Life* that we performed in the church for a Women's Day service in December 2009 I observe that I am truly enjoying myself during the dance. I remember that I felt so close to God in the dance. I felt then and always that I am able to draw energy for the dance from the divine. I realise that I experience in the Law of Interaction,

'The Acting One – acting on - The Acted upon'  
as, '  
*The Energising one - moving - the dancing one*',  
then  
'the *dancing one - energising – the receiving one*'  
*and recorded in the algebrised form as* '  
God moves the dancer'  
and  
'Dancer energises the congregation'

so that during this action, the congregation in turn also experiences the spiritual energy from the dance. At the end of each dance, the congregation are always moved to applaud as they experience joy.

I shared the video of the dance with Joan, my supervisor and she observed “in your dance, I see the ex-pression of humility, celebration and appeal to God. I sense that you are communicating with the divine, God, through the dance”. In Figures 28 and 29 which are photographs taken from the dance video, I show how I am using my body in worship.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 28: Delysia raising hands in dance worship**

<sup>15</sup> The dance video can be accessed on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7schvtPNOk&feature=youtu.be>



**Figure 29: Delysia using her whole body in dance**

When I reflect on my liturgical dance experience, I realise that I feel the connection with God during the movements. I enjoy the beauty of the dance. It makes me feel so humble when I am able to connect and communicate with the awesome power of God.

Charys, Heidi and Lola responded to my three questions as ‘Dance for Joy’ members via email and Facebook. Charys was one of the oldest members in the group at age 55. She loved dancing and did not let her age get her down. Heidi and Lola were both leaders of the group at different times. Their leadership style was very participative and open. They gave leadership from the perspective of organising the group together but not from a spiritual leadership perspective.

Charys said I influenced her by being “cheerful”, Heidi said I “shared joy”, and Lola said I was “encouraging and inspiring”. They all said that my commitment and faithfulness to the Dance group was also what influenced them. I never missed a Monday evening practice session unless I was out of town on business. I was always available to dance. Even if I was the Lay Minister on duty, I performed both ministries. I know that my inspiration and commitment was driven by my love of the Lord and the desire to worship Him in dance.

When I watch the video, our joy is evident as well as the awareness of our own spirituality. Through dance we have been able to use our bodies fully in the expression of our love for God. As I mentioned previously, none of us were trained dancers yet we learnt from each other. This learning was definitely triggered by the joy that we felt for what we were doing, thus making the learning of the dance easier and quicker to achieve. I believe that our myelin sheaths (Fields 2005; Fields 2008b) for the dance movements thickened as we practiced so that we were able to dance without hesitation and stumbling.

To be able to dance effectively, I am convinced that both my physical being and my mental being were definitely involved. I was very aware that I was having to count the steps and get the timing of the movements correct whilst still smiling and enjoying the dance. It is interesting that on those occasions which marked the heartrending chapters in the liturgical calendar, such as Passion Week, particularly Good Friday, and other days of repentance, I still found a deep joy and spiritual satisfaction in dancing the ex-pression of my love for God. The spiritual aspect of my being played a large role since it was that communicating with God which was what the dance achieved, and, I believe stirred up in those watching.

**How did participating in floral arranging influence my *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality? What evidence can I present of this influence? What evidence can I present of my influence on the Christian spirituality of others?**

Each week, I admired the beautiful floral arrangements in the church, and had a desire to be able to create such arrangements. In 1994, I attended a six week course on floral arranging that was offered at one of the local parishes. I discovered that flowers have a lot of symbolism and representation in Christianity just as in some of the other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Chinese religions (Kandeler and Ullrich 2009)<sup>16</sup>. Whenever I see a passion flower growing on a vine, I am reminded of the passion of Jesus, his scourging, and crowning with thorns and crucifixion. Each part and colour of the flower is meaningful for me as they provide visual meaning of the Gospel story. I find myself admiring each flower as I place it into an arrangement guided by my inner instinct as to where the flower should go. Each one has a different colour, texture, size and form. I feel a connection with the flowers as I arrange them.

The six week floral arranging course which I attended was very practical with us doing a different arrangement each week and learning about the types of flowers, the preparation needed for a successful arrangement and the various design elements. Attending the course made me excited about floral arranging and I used every opportunity to put into practise what I had learnt. I am able to relate to created nature through flowers and am able to see the “thou-ness” of God’s creation around which

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<sup>16</sup> [http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/m\\_garden/research.html](http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/m_garden/research.html)

Buber (1958:6) presents as one of the three spheres of life in which the world of relation arises (Ackermann 1991).

In 1996, I joined the flower panel at St Augustine's Church. There were four of us in the group who arranged flowers regularly for the Sunday services. The group was mixed in terms of gender and age. I was the youngest in the group with the oldest being approximately 60 years old. Most of the group had been arranging flowers for years with no formal training: they simply had a passion for working with flowers.

When I joined the group, I offered six basic lessons on flower arranging to the group to affirm their knowledge on flowers and floral arranging which already existed and to share the knowledge with those who were unsure. I covered the following aspects with respect to floral arranging - the mechanics, the importance of colour, care and use of flowers and the various basic shapes and designs that are commonly used. I encouraged the participants to be very interactive and hands-on, which came easily to them as they followed their passion.

Each person created their own floral arrangement every week as part of the session. I created a safe space for each person to commit themselves physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually to floral arranging. Once the basics of flower arranging had been covered, I encouraged people to be creative and innovative in their floral arrangements especially during festivals like Easter, Christmas and Pentecost. During these festivals, we all worked together to interpret various Biblical themes that were appropriate for the season using flowers, cloths or any other materials. We each shared our ideas and created a final design for the arrangement from the various contributions. We took photographs of our arrangements so that we could have a record of the various designs that we had created.

The figures 30 to 32 below show how we worked together as a team to get the arrangements together for one of the Easter Sunday services. We had worked for a few weeks before the day to plan the design, get the frame made and purchase all the flowers and other materials needed.

This was a very big arrangement that depicted the purity of The Risen Christ in the centre using white flowers, and the different colours and shapes all around

represented the many nations that worship The Risen Lord. The arrangement was very big and different from the normal types of arrangements that were made for the church. I recall how we had to work together with 'all hands on deck'- see fig 30- to get the oasis well secured onto the metal frame. The metal frame had been designed by us and made up by one of the gentlemen in the church. The frame had to be covered in plastic. We used plastic bags which had to be secured with plastic ties in a manner that was tight enough, yet not so tight that they tore through the plastic. The teamwork and collaboration that was required is evident from the pictures.

Figure 30 shows the physical strength and dexterity that was required to bind the oasis - polystyrene foam that is wet and used to hold the flowers in place - onto the steel frame. Looking at figure 31, I recall how we worked step-by-step and kept stopping to reflect whether it was going according to plan or whether we had to change something as the arrangement and the flowers we had on the table 'interacted' with us. I found the flowers 'interacting with me' because as I looked at all the flowers, suddenly one would 'jump out at me', and I would know that it was the correct size bloom to fit in the gap on the oasis. We needed to ensure that the number of flowers were correct and would fit into the desired space with the desired effect.

This arrangement took us more than two hours to complete with many tense moments in between as to whether we had sufficient flowers and whether they would actually not fall off the oasis.

Oh, what joy we felt when the plan came together in the end (Figure 32). We felt joy from the sense of achievement, and also joy as a sense of relief. All our "molecules of emotion" (Pert 1999) that are hard-wired for pleasure were interacting and vibrating synchronously. We were able to express our immediate knowledge of the Easter Story that was deep within our hearts, soul and mind, within our whole beings. We were able to express through speech what our desire and thoughts were about the Easter story. We were able to express through the mediation of the flowers, the Easter story from the Bible. With each other in a group, we had made a connection with God, using the flowers to bring it all together. The ex-pression of our spirituality had been achieved by realising our connections and relationships with each other, and the connection between God and His creation.

As a whole-being person, I, and each one of us arranging the flowers, was able to “embed the countless actions and interactions of the universe in my [our] entire acting, sensing and knowing being” (Jousse 2000:73). In terms of the Law of Interaction,

‘The Acting One- acting on- The Acted Upon’,  
the Propositional Geste in floral arranging is:  
The Showing one - attracting – the arranging one’,  
and then  
‘the arranging one – placing – the showing one’  
and then  
‘the containing one – holding – the showing one’,  
and then  
‘the showing one – speaking – the observing ones’  
which can be ex-pressed in an algebrised modern style as  
‘The flower attracts the florist’, ‘The florist places the flower’  
and  
‘The frame (vase) holds the flower’, ‘The flower speaks to the congregation’

At times we would start out following our original plan for the design of the arrangement but as we continued, the plan would change spontaneously. This change is influenced by the balance and rhythm that would feel very different as we proceeded: the flowers would just not look right in a certain place: the shape or colour or size of the flower would determine that it be moved to a different place in the whole arrangement. A completed floral arrangement is a Mimographic expression that we as floral arrangers compose.



**Figure 30: Team approach to floral arranging**



**Figure 31 thinking and planning the floral arrangement**



**Figure 32 joy expressed by all on completion of the floral arrangement**

This joy and feeling of confidence to express themselves and their spirituality more whilst arranging the flowers was evident in the written responses I received from the group members when I asked them about my educational and spiritual influence on them. Dawn and Charys who are in the photographs above together with Hylton responded to my questions. The main themes from their responses was that they all regarded the relationships between us as being mutually reciprocal and full of fun.

Dawn and Charys found “friendship” and sharing of ideas through “listening” and Hylton appreciated “taking constructive criticism”.

Our love for each other was also evident in the energy of our relationships when Dawn and Charys experienced “lots of joy and laughter” and Hylton felt “co-operation” when working with me on the flower panel team. Hylton felt that “church comes alive with the bright floral arrangements”, and Dawn experienced the “Holy Spirit [guiding] our hands” and Charys felt “closer to God”, all of which provided evidence of the emotion-filled experience of arranging flowers together for love and in praise of, God.

We frequently encouraged each other and critiqued floral arrangements in an open and honest manner, providing advice and comments to improve the arrangement. This was always done in a loving manner towards each other. In addition, the more frequently we arranged flowers, the more confident we became and were able to arrange flowers in shorter times, more spontaneously. I believe that this is evidence of the process of automaticity where the more the neural pathways were enhanced and the myelin sheaths around the neurons were thickened by the repetition the more proficient we became (Fields 2005; Fields 2008a; Stewart and Williamson 2008).

As I felt loved by God, I was able to love what we were doing and connect deeply with God and with nature through the flowers. My spirituality thus grew each time we arranged flowers and contemplated their beauty as I “find God in all things and all things in God” (Ignacimuthu 2010: 80). Ignacimuthu further reminds me that:

To see a flower as witness to the gentleness of God’s mind and to smell its fragrance as the sweetness of his (sic) touch...are attempts to sense God’s presence (Ignacimuthu 2010:84).

**How did I use Bible Studies to influence the *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality of others? What evidence can I present of this influence? What evidence can I present of my influence on the Christian spirituality of others?**

I was approached by Fr Terry of the parish to lead a bible-study group with the parishioners in 1997. I had been attending a bible-study prior to that and the then leader had moved out of the area and then left the church. Apart from deciding as a

group that we would meet on a Wednesday evening, there were no hard and fast rules and prescriptions about the format or content of the sessions. There was a great mix of people in the group. The group of about eight to ten persons met for two hour sessions in various homes on Wednesday evenings. The people's ages in the group ranged from about 23 years old to over 60. Each person brought his or her own wisdom and level of spirituality. I was guided by either the Rector, by group members or even by my theological studies as to the topics we discussed. The topics ranged from issues of personal spiritual development to the impact and significance of Christianity in our local community, as part of Creation as well as in the wider Diocese. They included Diocesan Lenten topics such as *Here am I Lord...Send me*, (West, G 2012) the *Hospitality of God* (Nicolson 2010) and from other sources – *Beyond Ourselves* (Morgan 2010); *Towards a Transformed Society* (Diakonia Council of Churches 2011).

I used a variety of approaches inclusive of a Contextual Bible Study (West, Gerald 1993), Quaker Approach, *Havrutah* and *Lectio Divina* as ways of reading the Bible (TEEC 2005b). The sessions included sharing knowledge of various aspects of the Bible, theology, church doctrine and personal life experiences. I encouraged group members to co-facilitate or facilitate sessions of the Bible-study. Each person was allowed to be creative in their facilitation of the session. To prepare for the sessions that I facilitated, I prayed and read through any material that I had been given or that I found in relevant books or on reliable internet sites.

As the people gathered together at the beginning of the evening, I tried to get a sense of 'where they were' and how their day had been. I listened to their conversations amongst each other – 'Were they happy to be there?' 'Had they dragged themselves out?' 'Were they excited about the course we were doing?' 'Did they have family support to attend?' I watched their body language very closely as to their actual movement. 'Did they walk slowly and lethargically?' 'Were they feeling vibrant and full of energy?' 'Were they looking irritable and frustrated?'

I always started with a quiet meditation, just a short prayer or some music to focus them in the present moment. At times, I used relevant music for the session that was based on the bible reading or I introduced some meditative and contemplative sessions. I encouraged people to ask questions and to provide answers to questions

during the sessions. Each person in the group was given an opportunity to have their voice heard during the sessions. Whether it was a voice of consent/dissent or a voice of disagreement/agreement, all views were entertained in the safe space I created for the group.

We shared moments of sadness and moments of joy in the safe space. We developed relationships of trust amongst each other providing a listening ear and a soft heart of compassion to feel each other's pains and joys in life. We were able to share at a very deep spiritual level.

I observed how as each evening progressed, people were able to engage and become vibrant during the discussions. We were able to bring forth that knowledge and life experience within us and to blossom in our confidence and knowledge. I saw how each week people would grow in their level of spirituality. Each session ended with a sharing of cake and tea during which time discussions were continued. This fellowship, love and care became a hallmark of our sessions.

We started and ended each year with a family meal gathering. Group members invited their family members to these meals so that we interacted across ages and with people who were not able to attend the regular sessions. There were lots of hugs shared as we greeted each other.

During the Bible study sessions, I was able to affirm the knowledge I have of the scriptures and the skills such as the ability to make knowledge easily accessible, including people and making their voices heard in the sessions – Charys said “...you made me feel valuable...wasn't afraid to voice my opinion”. Rita said, in a very caring tone, that I gave her space “to voice her opinion” (SOP 3, Rita, March 2011,3:17 mins).

I also enjoyed helping people to grow in their understanding of the Bible and God, and their own self-esteem. I remember how Faith battled to read her bible regularly “I am not religious about reading my bible” (SOP 4, Faith, March 2011,4:29mins) and hence she found I encouraged her to connect with God through her reading of the 'Faith for Daily Living' texts, and through her increased prayerlife. Others felt that I had increased their knowledge of the scriptures and used terms: Charys said I had “increased [her] depth of knowledge and faith”. Des said that I had helped him to

“learn with a deep and meaningful understanding”. Fiona said that I had helped her to “explain spiritual issues in a down to earth and easy to understand way”.

I believe that I influenced not only their spiritual life but also their educational life by my method of teaching which was to ask questions and challenge peoples thinking and understandings of the bible and Christianity. Charys believed that she “learnt what good teaching is all about” from me during the Bible studies. I believe that I was able to relate to ‘where they were at’ in their Spiritual journeys, and to treat them with respect through listening to them and allowing them to participate fully in the sessions.

The people who attended the Bible Study evenings felt that they influenced my learning by them being present as their natural selves in the space together with me. Thus our presence was mutually influential. I was provided with opportunities to grow in my own spirituality and in my teaching from interacting with them. I definitely had to learn to listen very carefully and well when each person spoke so that I was able to draw on my intuition and knowledge that I had within me to attempt to address their needs. Each one of the people in the Bible Study helped to strengthen within me my deep connection with God and the awareness of his guiding Holy Spirit present in the sessions. I was able to grow in wisdom. The energy that they brought to the group was collectively, positively enhanced through the group interactions.

I believe that I provided opportunities for people to connect with each other as well as with their spirituality during the Bible study sessions. We taught each other and grew in wisdom and understanding just as Jesus set an example for us to follow (Mark 1:22; Matthew 4:23; Luke 3:52)

**How did I use Quiet Days to influence the *whole-being-learning* of Christian Spirituality of others? What evidence can I present of this influence? What evidence can I present of my influence on the Christian spirituality of others?**

I facilitated two Quiet Days - or to be more specific - Quiet Mornings - one on 1 April 2010 and the other on 25 February 2012, for women from local Anglican Parishes

who found it difficult to get away from their busy lives for long periods of time with their multiple roles as daughters, sisters, mothers, career-women and homemakers.

A Quiet Day/Morning is a mini-retreat that is purposely a time of sharing of faith and learning (TEEC 2004c). In the design of the Quiet Morning, I was influenced by Christian Feminist Spirituality, Ignatian spirituality (Rakoczy 2000; TEEC 2004a; TEEC 2004b; TEEC 2005a) and by the subject *Teaching the Faith* (TEEC 2005c). My Quiet Mornings were planned to have evidence of Rakoczy quoting Schneider's five distinct characteristics of feminist spirituality:

it is rooted in women's *experience* of empowerment (...) focuses on *bodiliness* (...) encompasses *care and concern for all that has been created* (...) *embraces forms of ritual and prayer* that are inclusive, participative, incarnate and life enhancing (...) committed to the *intrinsic relationship between personal and social transformation* (Rakoczy 2000:71).

I was very interested to use music, colour, or artefacts from nature as part of the Quiet Day/Morning. I had experienced how music, colour and movement helped me, during liturgical dancing, to have a "felt and a lived experience of God" (Lescher and Liebert 2006:20). When preparing the venue for the Quiet Morning, I set up a focal point in the hall using cloths draped over a cross and candles, flowers, shells and seed pods on a table. I arranged the chairs in a semi-circle around the focal point See figures 33 – 36 to view the layout and setup of the venue. I played soothing and calming music from a CD as "a bridge after prayer" (TEEC 2004c:65). The content of the Quiet Day/Morning was influenced by spiritual exercises from Ignatian spirituality. I focussed on reflecting on the actions and presence of women in the different stages of the life of Jesus from His birth through to His resurrection. The individual meditations and the stages were closely connected and coherent, which I hoped and intended would lead to a deeper relationship with Jesus. (See the detail in the attached programme in Appendix G.)



**Figure 33: women draping the cross**



**Figure 34: women seated around the cross in meditation**



**Figure 35 I am seated on left under the painting**



**Figure 36: women in quiet reflection**

From the pictures taken at the Quiet Morning held in April 2010, you can see how the women had the opportunity to participate fully in the session by draping the cross with the cloths. The circular seating arrangement allowed for the women to be able to see each other and feel a sense of unity as they interacted. The influence of Quiet Mornings on the women's spirituality was to draw them closer to God.

I was aware that the women were ordinarily unable to focus on God because their busy daily lives. Most of them were working as well as running their homes and caring for families. Through connecting and sharing with other women, they all benefited in some way or another. Judy said that the Quiet Morning was instrumental in her "focussing on God", and Joy said that it helped her to "meditate". Some said the Quiet Morning helped enable a connection with their inner being. Alice said that she experienced the Quiet Morning "whole heartedly", and Cheryl said that she was able to "listen with ...heart and soul". Lorraine said that she could "share what is in your heart", and Judy said that she was able to "share [what] God ...laid on my heart", and Des experienced a "sense of warmth".

Their learning was emotion-filled. Linda used the words "spiritually uplifting". Joan (not my supervisor) said it was "spirit filled". Marge experienced "calmness, peace, love and humility".

They were able to share love through kindness, patience, forgiveness, courtesy, humility and generosity.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided an account of my spiritual *whole-being-learning* and the spiritual *whole-being-learning* of my parishioners. Our *whole-being-learning* is evident in the written and audio responses of the participants as well as the videos and photographs. I have provided evidence of strong loving, joy-filled relationships we have developed with God and amongst each other. I believe that as I experienced God's love, I was able to love others and as I loved them, they were able to love others through Jousse's Law of interaction (Jousse 2000; Jousse 2004; Jousse 2006).

We all grew spiritually in the safe spaces created for the liturgical dance, floral arranging, Bible Study and Quiet Days. The energy that we brought to the group was collectively, positively enhanced through the group interactions. I believe that I influenced not only their spiritual life but also their educational life by my method of teaching which was to ask questions and challenge people's thinking and understandings of the Bible and Christianity.

We recognised each other's gifts and talents as we learnt from each other and grew in wisdom and understanding just as Jesus set an example for us to follow.