



## Teachings from Reverend Antoinette Schoenmaker

# The Spiritual Seasons and our Role as Co-Workers with Christ

*in the high-priesthood of Annas and Ca'iaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath of come? Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

*And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."*

*As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his*

*granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people.*

*Luke 3:2-18*

IT IS ONCE AGAIN A JOY for me to be here in your company and to see again what has been established here through love and good will.

When we were celebrating our Centre's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was only last year, but seems ages ago now, I became really mindful of how The Centre was born and grew. It was born because of a chance meeting between two people, and it grew through chance meetings with other people. People would meet each other and something would resonate. An invisible or spiritual bond, a soul recognition, an unconscious memory of a long association - it could be described in many ways - but in these meetings and in the response to one another, a purposeful and enriching fellowship grew that we call The Centre, which is devoted to knowing Christ, manifesting Christ and preparing the way for many more human souls to realize that divine power within themselves.

In like manner this community in Swan Hill was born and grew. Something - chance, coincidence - has brought you together and you have recognized something and responded, and kept on responding. There is nothing really rational about it, but an inner response of the soul is nevertheless real.

It is an incredibly invisible, fragile, miraculous process yet it manifests in something. It is

like the power of love. Just seeing this process makes me aware of how much we owe to the spirit working in each other. Because it is through each other, through other human beings, that we come to know about Christ, the spirit, the heavens. As such we are all, in some way, co-workers, co-redeemers and co-creators with Christ.

At this time of the year we celebrate a spiritual festival known as St John's Tide. It is the least well known of the spiritual festivals. Most people know Christmas and Easter, some know about Michaelmas, but few know or celebrate St John's Tide, the feast of St John the Baptist, the one who prepares the way for Christ. Perhaps it is because this spiritual festival celebrates the role of the human being in the plan of redemption.

In The Centre we have developed a certain rhythm to our meetings together, which is in tune with the spiritual seasons and festivals. Every year we celebrate the same festivals – Advent, Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, Lent, Easter, the Mystical Interval, Pentecost, St John's Tide, Founders Day, Michaelmas and All Souls and All Saints. Each year we experience these differently and more deeply I would say. Gradually we can enter more and more into these events. They teach us something about our life in spirit.

Our life on earth follows a different pattern, the pattern of our working day and week, of holidays, of special anniversaries, of the seasons of nature. As we go through life we get more conscious of these rhythms. We learn to use them so they uphold our physical life. And the same thing occurs with the celebration of the spiritual seasons. We learn to use these celebrations so they uphold our spiritual life.

One way in which the spiritual seasons have been described is in terms of the world soul breathing in and out. At Christmas time, the soul of the world breathes in, meaning the spiritual atmosphere surrounding the world has been taken in. Advent and Christmas have a very particular feel because the heavens are in us.

At Easter the soul of the world, and our own souls with it, are starting to breathe out, to expand and enter into the spiritual worlds around us. Then, by this time of the year, which is almost the direct opposite to Christmas, the breath of the world has completely exhaled. The life of the world is out there in the cosmos. Then at Michaelmas at the end of September, we start to take that breath in again. We take in what we have experienced in the heavens and this results in new activities and actions, creation.

This is a little bit like our daily experience of waking and sleeping. When we are awake our souls are fully in our bodies and our attention is directed towards the earth. As we go to sleep we are slowly breathing out our soul into the heavens. Then when we are sound asleep we are completely out there, being renewed and refreshed. Then as the morning approaches, we slowly breathe our soul in again, bringing with it dreams and memories of the night, new feelings. When we awake we are the same but not quite. There are new impulses within us. We have been dwelling in the cosmos, alert to the will and purposes of the Gods. Mario described it once as dwelling in the River of the Future. In this way we are prepared during the night for what must soon take place and we are also reminded of our purposes and destiny.

St John's Tide, at the end of June, is like that. Our soul and spirit are expanded, out there. Through this we gain a sense of the future, of the will and purpose of evolution, and we are much more conscious of the importance of fulfilling our own purpose within it. This means there is a lot going on in us – on the finer spiritual levels.

Of course our day to day life continues, but on a spiritual level we are expanded and connected with cosmic purposes. We could say that we are experiencing what St John himself said: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord*. At this time we become aware of what must be done in order for the glory of the Lord to be revealed. We become aware of the valleys to be lifted up, the mountains to be made low, the ground to be leveled, the rough things made smooth. We become aware of what

needs to change. There is an inner urging or pressure.

Metaphysically, this is St John preaching repentance. Repent, he says, for the kingdom of God is at hand. It is all around you. Repentance indicates that we become aware of the need for change, in our thinking, lifestyle, attitudes and actions.

At Pentecost, which was the middle of May, we celebrated that we have received the spirit of Christ. This spirit enables us. It gives power. Not power in some spooky sense, but in the sense of "ability". When we look at ourselves we see that we have certain abilities and these abilities are often quite different from someone else's. We also see that over time we have been enabled to do certain things. For instance, we have all been enabled to be here together right now. If you stop to think about what has enabled that, then you will see many, many factors at work. And this also will tell you something about the way the Holy Spirit is at work in each of us and in our lives. Leading us, guiding us, protecting us ... for a purpose. When we look at that, how we have been enabled to be here, we have a great picture of the co-operative partnership between the human being and the spirit.

But the focus of St John's Tide is the future. *Prepare the way.* St John was concerned with him who was coming, the Christ. So while it is good to see how we have been enabled in the past, we have to at this time see what our role is in terms of the future and preparing the way for a greater revelation of Christ's spirit – both within ourselves and for those with whom we come in contact. That is what is being presented to us at this time.

So a true celebration of this time lies in listening and beholding new impressions of ourselves and what we can do in the great scheme of evolution. It lies in us realizing that we have a cosmic significance, and that we have entered into this incarnation with a purpose. It is a time for us to think big, to think of our eternal spiritual existence. To entertain dreams and memories and visions and to let these change, renew and refresh our physical existence.

When we think of the incarnation of Christ and how crucial it was to the ongoing life of the universe, it is also clear that it would not have been possible without St John's co-operation and involvement. This alone tells us that the human being has enormous cosmic significance for the continuation of the evolution – and not only of this world, but of all the spiritual beings in the hierarchy. It is awesome to consider this. That the Gods should place themselves in our hands.

Today it is us, not St John, who have this responsibility. Because of Pentecost we are the representatives and embodiment of Christ in this world. His spirit is in us and made known through us. We ourselves, our bodies, our souls, our thinking, our loving, our speech, our actions, our gifts, our energies – these are the means through which other souls come to know and learn about the power of Christ, and about their own significance and purpose. We who are conscious of this to some degree have a role to play in bringing a greater consciousness of the choices available to every human soul.

In order to do this we have to recognise the gifts we have. What are we able to do? We need to listen to the voice of spirit, which speaks so often through earthly events. Where do we see the need? What are we conscious of? Where are we able to give? Do we need to change our thinking or our activities so that this spirit can be revealed?

St John's Tide celebrates that evolution is not only action on the part of God, but action on our part too. So today I would ask you to ponder on these things. What will we do with the knowledge and power entrusted to us? Each one of us matters a great deal and what we do, the choices we make, affect many many others, both in spirit and in flesh. So today let us realize that each one of us is crucial to the plan of redemption. It is through our willingness and co-operation, our love and good will, individually and together, that the spirit of Christ is revealed.

So shall it be.

*An address for the Cosmic Mass, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2005*



*Published by ICA Press – the publishing division  
of  
The Centre  
The Independent Church of Australia  
The Independent Church in New Zealand  
Het Esoterisch Christelijk Centrum in The  
Netherlands*