



*"I feel an almost constant longing and desire for silence so that I might serve God undisturbed."*

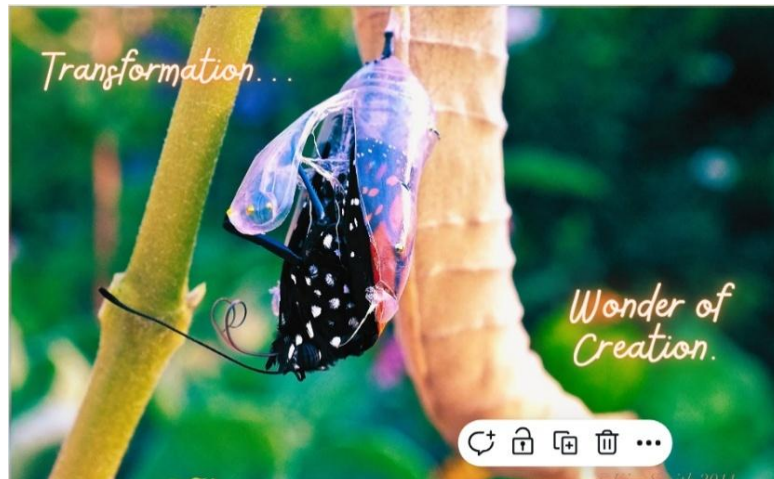
*(Blessed Elena Stollenwerk)*

## **UNCOVERING THE INNER SELF IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY LIVING: A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**

**SHORT RENEWAL PROGRAM – 15<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026:**

**6-day in-person Workshop followed by a 7-day Contemplative Retreat**

**(For Members of Religious Orders)**



### **6-DAY WORKSHOP**

**Theme:**

#### **Uncovering the Inner Self in Intercultural Community Living: A Path to Transformation**

This workshop offers a psycho-spiritual exploration of the inner self within the context of intercultural community life. Drawing on themes such as identity, the influence of culture on core values and perceptions, vulnerability, transformation, and the search for meaning, participants are invited into a deeper journey toward discovering the “immortal diamond” of the true self.

Guided by the example of Jesus, this process fosters love-filled connections—with oneself, with God, with others, with creation, and with the natural world as a sacred space for reflection and renewal.

Workshop elements include:

- Input sessions using varied dynamics and approaches
- Time for reflective silence, including moments in nature when possible
- Spiritual conversation and small group sharing
- Group contemplative prayer practice (20 minutes, twice daily)

**Work on inner transformation is sought through the following objectives:**

- Discover the “immortal diamond” within – a deeper awareness of the Trinity’s presence at the heart of your being.



- Explore your true and false self to gain fresh insight into how you see yourself and the world around you.
- Build emotional awareness by learning to recognize how your feelings, thoughts, and actions connect in the present moment.
- Understand the role of culture in shaping values and perceptions—and how this influences relationships across communities and cultures.
- Practice contemplative listening and responding, guided by a spirit of ongoing discernment and openness.
- Experience silence and guided contemplative prayer, both during the workshop and retreat, as a way to hold strong emotions before God and become a more life-giving presence in community and mission.

## 7-DAY CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT

### Theme:

### JESUS: CONTEMPLATIVE AND COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE OF THE TRINITY

*“Contemplation is the highest expression of a person’s intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being.”*

— Thomas Merton

This retreat invites participants into a deep encounter with Jesus as the contemplative and compassionate presence of the Trinity. Through the sustained practice of contemplative prayer, we open ourselves to transformation—within and around us. As this practice deepens, new ways of seeing and acting emerge, a greater capacity to listen to the Spirit is cultivated, and the soul’s natural sense of awe and wonder is renewed.

### Retreat elements include:

- Daily input sessions (twice a day, 20 minutes each) reflecting on passages from Jesus’ life and mission, and teachings on Centering Prayer, enriched by themes from Trinitarian Spirituality.
- Intense contemplative prayer practice (Centering Prayer) throughout each day.
- Opportunities for spiritual companionship and sharing the inner journey (optional).
- Celebration of the Eucharist.
- Guidance on journaling as a tool for spiritual growth.
- Time for personal reflection and contact with nature.

This retreat fosters growth in the contemplative path, with Jesus as the model, inviting participants to experience this journey at the heart level.

## MEET THE TEAM:

### Sr. Maria José Rebelo, SSps (Steyl - Netherlands)



**Maria José**, a Missionary Sister Servant of the Holy Spirit from Portugal, has lived and ministered in several countries, gaining broad intercultural experience. She holds academic qualifications in clinical psychology and a PhD in migration and mental health from the Institute of Studies on Migration at Comillas University (Madrid). For many years, she worked as a psychologist in Portugal, supporting migrants and refugees.

She also served in leadership roles at both Provincial and European levels for six years. Currently, she works part-time as a researcher in mental health and migration with Comillas University. She facilitates workshops on psycho-spirituality and the inner self—offered both in person and online—and guides contemplative retreats in person, creating spaces for deep reflection and spiritual renewal.

### Bishop Tim Norton, SVD (Bishop of Broome - Australia)



**Tim**, a Divine Word Missionary from Australia, began his professional life as a physiotherapist before discerning his vocation with the Society of the Divine Word. His missionary journey led him to Mexico, followed by specialized training in spiritual direction and leadership roles in formation and provincial governance. He later spent seven years in Rome (Nemi), working with consecrated women and men in holistic formation, interculturality, and community building.

After serving as Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane, he was appointed to lead the Diocese of Broome, one of Australia's most remote and socioeconomically challenged dioceses. Spanning over 773,000 square kilometres, Broome includes many isolated Indigenous communities and faces significant pastoral and logistical difficulties due to limited clergy, religious, and other resources.

Due to the demanding nature of his ministry in the Diocese of Broome, Bishop Tim is unable to participate in our short renewal program in person. However, we are grateful that he will be sharing online, where his depth of insight and rich experience will undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to the program.

### Sr. Maria Cristina Ávalos, SSps (Steyl - Netherlands)



**Maria Cristina**, a Missionary Sister Servant of the Holy Spirit from Argentina, has held significant leadership roles within her congregation. She first served at the Provincial level and then, from 2008 to 2022, was a member of the General Council for 14 years, contributing to the global direction and mission of the congregation.

Her formation includes education, spiritual direction, safeguarding standards, interculturality, and community building. She is

currently part of the international spiritual animation network of the SSpS and SVD, and actively supports ongoing formation for religious, both in person and online. In addition, she leads in-person workshops on interculturality and spirituality with consecrated women and men from various religious institutes, fostering collaboration and deeper understanding across cultures.



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**OTHER PRACTICAL INFORMATION:**

**Website:**

<https://www.steyler-missionsschwestern.de/standorte/steyl/silence-contemplation>

**Address:**

Mission Cong. Servants of the Holy Spirit  
Sacred Heart Monastery  
5935 BX Steyl Netherlands  
(Closer airports: Dusseldorf or Eindhoven)

[Place](#)

**Contact:**

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**Full cost of the Program:** 1300 € (board and lodging + registration fee)

**Deadline for registration:** 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026

**OBS:** The number of participants is limited.