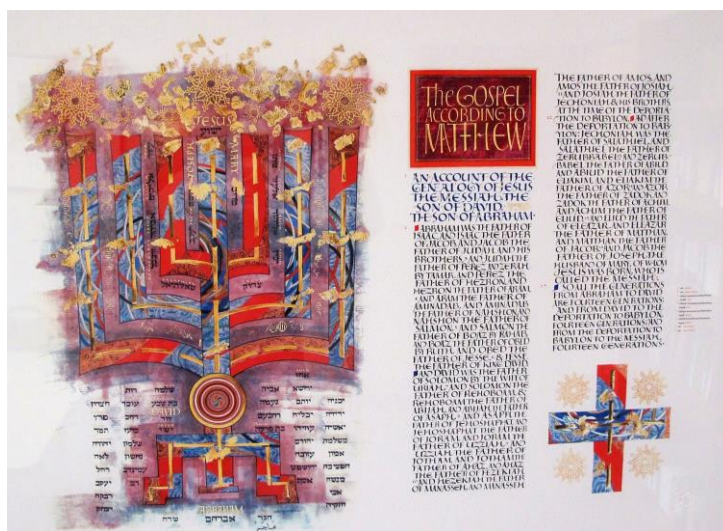




SIEBENQUELL

To imagine God's dream for us in a new way



In 1998, St. John's Abbey and University commissioned Donald Johnson to produce a hand written and hand illuminated bible. It was the first time in 500 years that a Benedictine community had commissioned such a work and it was the first time that such Bible was produced in English. It was the first such bible since the invention of the printing press. It took Donald Johnson and his team of 23 artists nearly 15 years to complete the St. John's Bible. They used same materials as in the 14th and 15th centuries such as calfskin vellum, inks made with Chinese paint sticks and gold leaf, all chosen so that the manuscript would last between 1500-2000 years. When it was finished, it consisted of 1127 pages in 7 volumes. 6 people worked seven years just to write the words in calligraphy.

Most impressive was the dialogue that ensued between the theologians and the artists. On the one hand, the Benedictines insisted on never telling Mr. Jackson and his team what they should draw and illustrate. Mr. Jackson, on the other hand, insisted on long, detailed conversations with the monks and theologians, in order to understand what they wanted to say. He then looked for a way to express it in a way they could not.

Barbara Sutton, a theologian who has written about this manuscript, then describes the result: »People who are able to go deeply into the art, are able to imagine in a new way God's dream for them«. The entire work is meant to ignite the spiritual imagination of the reader.

When we relaunch the website today, it is hardly a work as sweeping or as magnificent as the creation of the St. John's Bible. But it is born of the same spirit. The website was originally intended to inform the world about the founding, mission and work of Siebenquell. But the blossoming work of the last four years has lead us to places where we need to do more.

1. **We need to ignite the spiritual imagination of our readers.** The beloved columns that we publish every two weeks in English and German enjoy an ever widening and loyal readership. But people who cannot travel to Vallendar have enjoyed seeing what we do on Wellspring Days and Shea Courses and have felt their imaginations inspired and fired up with the pictures and reports we have posted on Facebook. Now, our readers will be able to follow our work in greater detail on the website. Projects, like the reflections for the forty days of Lent, originally posted on Facebook in 2016, will now be available on the website under the new heading »News«. New projects, such as Spark Sprayers, will be introduced to a broader audience. The experience of »The Hearth« will be accessible to those who cannot travel with us to the Ritten. The hunger for the latest CD or publication will be met more swiftly now that we can inform people sooner and more directly that they have arrived. With these changes to the website, we hope to ignite the spiritual imagination of our readers even further.
2. **Take the stories of God seriously:** In Siebenquell we strive to bring the ever ancient into contact with the ever new. Thus, we illuminate the Stories of God and the Stories of the Tradition with stories born of our contemporary experiences. The use of modern means of social communication, and the excellent, high professional graphic design and layout prepared for us by Patrizia Monnerjahn, serve the ancient drive, so beautifully expressed in a Gospel song, to »tell the world about this«.
3. **Rekindle an encounter with beauty:** We wish to foster a language and speech that sears the soul with beauty. The L'Chaim Project, with its search for a language of dignity, beauty and kindness in a world of hideous, ugly and debilitating tirades, now has its own place on the website. They serve like the Illustrations of the text in the St. John's Bible. Our ongoing dialogue with Patrizia Monnerjahn (our visual storyteller), the selection of photographs Rosemarie Monnerjahn painstakingly selects to illustrate the words we write, and the annual labour of choosing the themes we develop in Wellspring Days, the theology we develop and unfold in the Shea Courses, and the stories we will tell into the night in »Let the Guest be welcome«, represent our commitment to let art and the biblical stories beautify one another in a living encounter.

»The continuous process of remaining open and accepting of what may reveal itself through hand and heart on a crafted page is the closest I have ever come to God.« Donald Jackson, the Artistic Director of the St. John's Bible Project, wrote these words. May something similar be said of us all, who love, respect, cherish and revere the Stories of God.

Erik Riechers SAC

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