

**A Message from the Executive Director
Guest House Institute**



***The Meditative Poem:
A Reflection for Lent and Recovery***
Michael Morton

Recently, while waiting for a flight, I came across a used bookstore in the Milwaukee airport. In the poetry section there was an old text entitled *The Meditative Poem, An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, edited by Louis Martz and published in 1963.

The very first entry is ***The Practical Method of Meditation*** by the Jesuit priest Edward Dawson, S.J. Dawson wrote the guide in 1614 in an attempt to provide the Ignatian methods for “everyman.” According to Martz, “Meditation points toward poetry, in its use of images, in its technique of arousing the passionate affections of the will, in its suggestion that the ultimate reach of meditation is found in the advice of Paul to the Ephesians: *Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*”

Martz continues, “A meditative poem, then, represents the convergence of two arts upon a single object... to express its highest reaches, the art of meditation drew upon all the poetical resources available in the culture of the day.” The meditative art integrates the three powers of mind – imagination, understanding and will – in the formal practice or discipline of attempting to experience the presence of God here and now in each person’s particular place in this world.

I was reminded by these materials of the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the realization of the great treasures of our Catholic tradition so frequently lost in the business of everyday Church life. As the 11th Step informs us of the need to maintain our conscious contact with God and offers specific suggestions, meditation is that practice without which we begin to wither and lose our intimacy with God and hence his will for us. I frequently find the word of God in his poetic troubadours, the mystic poets who have tread our path, the eternal path, and offer us a taste of that joy that comes from the union of the soul with the Transcendent One and the freedom of love.