



CONTEMPLATIVE COMPANIONS

The Bimonthly Centering Prayer Newsletter of Contemplative Outreach of San Diego

July-August 2008

Summer Issue

Volume 13: Issue 4

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As long as we are identified with some role or persona, we are not free to manifest the purity of God's presence. Part of life is a process of dropping whatever role, however worthy, you identify with. It is not you. Your emotions are not you. Your body is not you. If you are not those things, who are you? ... The ultimate abandonment of one's role is not to have a self as a fixed point of reference; it is the freedom to manifest God through one's own uniqueness. ... To be no one is to be everyone. To be no self is to be the true Self. To be nothing is to be everything. In a sense, it is to be God. For Christians, it is to be a kind of fifth Gospel: to become the word of God and to manifest God rather than the false self. If we have not experienced ourselves as unconditional love, we have more work to do, because that is who we really are. *Abbot Thomas Keating in The Human Condition*

Contemplative Outreach

Vision Statement

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

Our purpose is to share the method of Centering Prayer and its immediate conceptual background. We also encourage the practice of Lectio Divina (spiritual reading of Scripture) particularly its movement into Contemplative Prayer, which a regular and established practice of Centering Prayer facilitates.

We identify with the Christian Contemplative Heritage. While we are formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and the experience of the living Christ through Centering Prayer. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions, with the needs and rights of the whole human family, and with all creation. ☐

Calendar of Contemplative Events

July 2008

11..... Feast of Benedict – Founder of Western Contemplative & Monastic Life

August 2008

16..... Servant Leadership Team Meeting • All Souls Church • 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

September 2008

13..... Half Day of Prayer • Tentative Location: All Hallows Church • La Jolla Area • 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

20..... CONSD 2008-2009 • Beginning date for the CONSD Seven Session "Living Flame Program" – 1st Session: "Lectio Divina" • [Other Dates for 2008 are October 25 & November 22] • For more information phone Sue Hagen at (760) 745-8860.

27..... "Exploring Your Dreams/Uncovering God's Gifts through Journaling" • ➤ Important Update: This workshop has been rescheduled for February 2009.

October 2008

18..... 12th Annual Friends Dinner • Tentative Location: Mission San Diego de Alcalá

November 2008

8..... Half Day of Enrichment with Fr. Justin Langille – "The True Self: Who I Am in Christ" • St. Louise de Marillac Church • El Cajon Area • 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

December 2008

10..... Taizé Prayer Service • Tentative Location: Mission San Diego de Alcalá

"The condition of an enlightened mind is a surrendered heart."

☞ Alan Redpath, (1907-1989) **British Pastor/Author**

Co-Coordinators Corner

Since the last issue of the newsletter when we reported leading the April 14 Servant Leadership Meeting, we (CJ and Karen) have been working with various people to learn the job of Coordinator. We have spent time with Marlene Rogers to understand our financial status better, time with Lucille Nawy to better understand the office procedures, and a long afternoon with Marie Howard, who is Contemplative Outreach's Regional Representative. (It has been almost a year since we attended the Coordinators Workshop in St. Louis, Missouri.)

Summer is rather quiet in our chapter, which gives us time to get ourselves together for what is certain to be a busy autumn. Because of a conflict

with the 2008 Contemplative Outreach International Annual Conference, regrettably we have had to reschedule Sister Tasto's Workshop for February 2009. We are still looking forward to the Friends Dinner in October, a Day of Enrichment with Father Justin in November, a Taizé service in December, and of course, our regular Half-Days of Prayer. We look forward to all of you who are able to participate in our August 16th Servant Leadership Meeting where we will finalize some plans, and generate new ideas.

Keep watching for e-mail alerts and reading the Newsletter for schedules and formation opportunities. ☐

CJ Carlo and Karen Downs

The Revelation within Stillness

The soul that is united and transformed in God
breathes God in God with the same

Divine breathing with which God,

while in her, breathes her in Himself. ☐

≈ Juan de La Cruz, (John of the Cross ≠ 1542-1591)

Growing Together through Centering Prayer

By Marge Dean, Our Lady of Grace Prayer Group Member

For the past two years I have been actively involved with a Centering Prayer Group at Our Lady of Grace Church in El Cajon. Thanks to the perseverance of Irma Eichinger, our leader, our parish has been blessed with weekly opportunities to grow together through this simple but magnificent activity that has immensely improved our spiritual lives. The beauty of what we now have is that not only do we have a place to meet each Monday morning to pray together, but we have been given the gift of spiritual formation with Father Thomas Keating along with group discussion and support.

Through this program I have learned the significance of twice-daily prayer, I become more accountable to commit to it through our group discussions, and I have grown in countless

ways through hearing the words and inspiration of Father Keating. Although he comes to us via video presentations, we all feel as if we know him personally because we hear his voice every week helping us to understand the value of this lovely prayer time and its impact on our lives. Father Keating is leading us to grow together. Through our listening to him and from the local leaders in COSD who are promoting the growth of inner authority among us, we will all be helping to do God's work in a much more effective way.

While most of us could all read about Centering Prayer and try to do it ourselves, I don't believe it would be what it is without our work together – praying together, learning together, and consenting to God's action in our lives. What a blessing it has been to grow together in God's love! ☐

God continually showers the fullness of Divine grace on every being in the universe, but we consent to receive it to a greater or lesser extent. In purely spiritual matters, God grants all desires. Those who have less have asked for less.

Simone Weil (1909-43)

If you are interested in sharing your experience of Centering Prayer in the COSD Newsletter, please contact Rachel Cave at (619) 596-7665.

Immersed in the Great I Am of the Living Christ

Article by Fr. Bill Springer – Member of the Mission San Diego de Alcalá Centering Prayer Group

Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10) What a blessing Centering Prayer has been in my life! I have been “centering” for over 15 years. My best times seem to be early in the morning around 6:00 a.m. before I get rolling with the day’s activities, and later at 4:30 p.m. as the day winds down.

My personality is such that I tend to think a lot, searching for theological and philosophical answers. Yet the more I read, think, and live – the less I feel I know and the less I want to talk. The 14th century spiritual classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing* says something to the effect: “What the mind cannot grasp, the heart can embrace.” Centering Prayer allows me to be present to God: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening;” and to be in love with God in the present moment by just being “centered.” Some spiritual writers have talked about the “sacrament of the present moment.” What a blessing to have a way of just being present to God.

Many years ago I searched through Eastern practices of meditation. What a grace-filled surprise to realize that the Christian tradition has a means of contemplative prayer. It was like finding a lost treasure. Fr. Thomas Keating, Fr. Bill

Menger, Fr. Basil Pennington and other contemplative mentors have provided us all with a gift by making this ancient form of prayer accessible to us in our time. Of course, all is gift; all is grace from God. Thank you, Lord.

Yes, my mind acts up frequently in my sitting, jumping all around. The gift I try to make to God is to intend to just *be* during the Centering Prayer time. Several years ago I was able to travel to St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado to attend an 8 day intensive retreat in an atmosphere of silence, solitude, and community.

As a priest, I also pray the Liturgy of the Hours (formerly called the Breviary), do prayerful reading of the Scriptures, other prayers and officiating at the Mass and other Sacraments. Centering Prayer has been one of the anchors focusing my attention on just being present to the moment which spills over to more centered living throughout the day.

Centering Prayer helps me to “let go and let God.” Yet for all its personal benefits, Centering Prayer is an opportunity to let go of my plans, my agenda, my thoughts and just BE immersed in the great I Am, surrendering to the embrace of God in love. ☐

Last Night, As I Was Sleeping

A Poem by Antonio Machado submitted by Ardy Woodmansee

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt – marvelous error! – that a spring was breaking out in my heart.
I said: Along which secret aqueduct, oh water, are you coming to me,
Water of a new life that I have never drunk?

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt – marvelous error! – that I had a beehive here inside my heart.
And the golden bees were making white combs and sweet honey from my old failures.

Last night, as I lay sleeping
I dreamt – marvelous error! – that a fiery sun was giving light inside my heart.
It was fiery because I felt warmth as from a hearth,
And it was sun because it gave light and brought tears to my eyes.

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt – marvelous error! –
That it was God I had here inside my heart.

*“The heart and soul of Contemplative Outreach is the network of Centering Prayer Groups.” ~
Thomas Keating*

Contemplative Outreach of San Diego: 21 Prayer Groups

	Area	Leader(s)	Telephone	Location	Group Meets-Day & Time
1	Chula Vista	Tonia Gentry	619-425-9059	Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church 293 H Street, Chula Vista	Mondays: 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. School Library
2	Del Cerro	Sue Gossman Rosemary McGeary	619-466-3150 619-582-9508	St. Therese Catholic Church-Adult Ministry Office 6016 Camino Rico, San Diego	Saturdays: 10:00 a.m.
3	El Cajon (1)	Anne Clark Lisa Davis	619-444-9700 619-444-9700	1st Presbyterian Church of El Cajon 500 Farragut Circle, El Cajon	Saturdays: 9:00 a.m.
4	El Cajon (2)	Anne Clark Lisa Davis	619-444-9700 619-444-9700	1st Presbyterian Church of El Cajon 500 Farragut Circle, El Cajon	Tuesdays: 3:00 p.m.
5	El Cajon (3)	Irma Eichinger Crissa Campbell	619-449-8400 619-589-8583	Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church 2766 Navajo Road, El Cajon	Mondays: 9:00 a.m. Knights of Columbus Hall
6	La Jolla (1)	Karen Downs	858-488-1014	All Hallows Catholic Church 6601 La Jolla Scenic Drive South, La Jolla	Wednesdays: 5:00 p.m.
7	La Jolla (2) (Spanish Speaking)	Cristina Romero Antonia Villalpando	858-457-4120 858-454-8342	Mary, Star of the Sea Catholic Church 7669 Girard Avenue, La Jolla	Saturdays in the Library: 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.
8	La Mesa (1)	Susan Jarboe	scj123@cox.net	Home of Veryl Snowhill 6335 Southern Road, La Mesa	Thursdays: 7:00 p.m.
9	La Mesa (2)	Jennifer Fenner	619-248-9313	Shepherd of the Valley Church 10842 Fury Lane, La Mesa	Wednesdays: 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Meets in the Sanctuary
10	Lemon Grove	Mary Kay Sieckman	619-588-4107	St. John of the Cross Church 8086 Broadway Avenue, Lemon Grove	Saturdays: 8:45 to 10:15
11	Mission Valley	Ardy Woodmansee	858-279-7278	Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá 10818 San Diego Mission Road, Mission Valley	Mondays: 7:00 p.m. In the California Room
12	Old Town	Fr. Mark Campbell	619-295-4148 X32	Immaculate Conception Church 2540 San Diego Avenue, Old Town	Thursdays: 7:00 p.m. Fr. Junipero Serra Hall
13	Point Loma	C. J. Carlo Ginger Ramos-Dunn	619-226-4486 619-823-5075	All Souls' Episcopal Church 1475 Catalina Boulevard, Point Loma	Wednesdays: Library Annex: 5:15 to 6:00 p.m.
14	San Diego City (1)	Lucinda Parsons	619-282-1462	Saint Paul's Senior Homes & Services 328 Maple Street, San Diego	Thursdays: 5:30 p.m. Meets: St. Paul's CCC Chapel
15	San Diego City (2)	Bryan McNutt	619-540-6560	Saint Paul's Senior Homes & Services 328 Maple Street, San Diego	Mondays: 7:00 p.m. Meets: St. Paul's CCC Chapel
16	San Diego City (3)	Steve Wardlow	619-220-5108	First Lutheran Church 1420 3 rd Avenue, Downtown San Diego	Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m. Meets in the First Floor Foyer
17	Spring Valley (1)	Mary Jane Weismann	619-463-9743	Santa Sophia Catholic Church 9800 San Juan Street, Spring Valley	Mondays: 8:30 a.m. Bell Tower, Upper Room
18	Spring Valley (2)	Rom and Kay Smith	619-460-4723	Santa Sophia Catholic Church 9800 San Juan Street, Spring Valley	Mondays: 6:30 p.m. Bell Tower, Upper Room
19	University City (1)	Elaine Warner	858-453-4006	Home of Elaine Warner 3272 Mercer Lane, University City	Fridays: 7:00 p.m.
20	University City (2)	Michele Lambotte	858-558-9386	Our Mother of Confidence Catholic Church 3131 Governor Drive, San Diego 92122	Mondays: 4:00 p.m.
21	Outreach to Africa Mpika, Zambia	Fr. Prior Willibord Nzota, OSB Audrey Spindler, Oblate	(International)	Katibunga Benedictine Monastery P.O. Box 112 – Nipika, Zambia, AFRICA	Mondays: 6:30 p.m. In the Library

Not the Center for Activism and Introspection

~ Article by Fr. Richard Rohr in *Radical Grace: Daily Meditations* by Richard Rohr

People have liked and affirmed our long name since the beginning (“The Center for Action and Contemplation” – (in Albuquerque, New Mexico). It was cumbersome, but also descriptive and up-front. We hoped it would keep us honest and force us toward balance and ongoing integration. No one could meaningfully disagree with the stated goal. It was classic and rather universal spirituality.

But after four years I [had] reason to believe that some might agree with the title for the wrong reasons. Activists can see it as an affirmation of their agenda and introverts can use it to affirm quiet time, not working, and leisure-class navel-gazing. Neither is the delicate balance and art that we are hoping for.

Action, as we are using the word does not mean activism, busyness, or do-goodism. *Action* does mean a decisive commitment toward involvement and

engagement in the social order. Issues will not be resolved by mere reflection, discussion, or even prayer. God “works together with all those who love” (Romans 8:28).

By *contemplation* we mean the deliberate seeking of God through a willingness to detach from the passing self, the tyranny of the emotions, the addiction to self-image and the false promises of the world. Contemplation is the “Divine therapy” and the perennial clearinghouse for the soul.

It is important that we continue to clarify and hold these two pivots of our lives. Rightly sought, action and contemplation will always regulate, balance and convert one another. Separately, they are dead-ended and trapped in personality. The clear goal of our center is to meet people where-they-are and help them trust where-they-are-not. For all of us it is an endless rhythmic dance. The

Exposing the Thief of Awareness

A rabbi known for his exceptional wisdom and holiness was summoned in the middle of the night to the local inn. When he arrived the innkeeper pleaded, “Rabbi, I need your help, all of my money has just been stolen. Since the time of the robbery, no one has been allowed to leave this lobby. Rabbi, please find out which one of these people is the thief.”

As the five suspects watched anxiously, the rabbi thought for a moment. Then he said to the innkeeper, “Bring over that big, old kettle from the fireplace ... and ... a rooster.” Mystified, the innkeeper brought over the big, soot-covered pot while his son retrieved the rooster from outside.

“Turn the kettle upside down over the rooster,” the rabbi instructed. Turning to the five suspects, the rabbi said, “Now each of you place both hands on the bottom of the kettle. When the guilty person touches it, the rooster will crow three times.”

Each one reluctantly touched the kettle, but the rooster never crowed. There was an eruption of nervous laughter, but the rabbi remained calm. “Now, each of you, hold up your hands.”

When the five held up their palms, the rabbi saw that all hands were covered with black smudges of soot from the kettle — all, except one man’s hands. The rabbi pointed to the man with the clean hands, “Sir, return the money. **You** are the thief!”

How did the rabbi know? Because the thief thought he could fool the rabbi by pretending to touch the kettle.

We fool *ourselves* when we don’t touch the truth. We can easily miss the truth that fear too often drives our lives, that fear smothers our awareness. Every contemplative knows the price to be paid to face the truth: the renunciation of the separate-self sense, our precious self-image.

Fear is a normal human emotion, but for many it can be an insidious force that leads to the paralysis of confidence in God, being stuck in depression, or worse yet, harboring self-hatred. Giving into fear is usually a very slow and *subtle* process, but we need to *see* how it *frustrates* the healing that we long for in our contemplative practice. We dread many things about life without checking out what our ‘fear’ really is. Ironically, most fear is just energy, energy arising in the body-mind. Such energy often arises in the form of afflictive thoughts and emotions (really, they are inseparable). Unfortunately, we quickly *objectify* this energy creating the illusion that it is something solid or real. On the other hand, our awareness remains fresh and alive when we simply *witness* the energy of fear arising, rather than fixating on the fear and inflating it.

Any *reaction*, a habitual pattern arising from memory or imagination (two sides of the same coin), leads to the invention of a story that convinces us that we need to dread this “thing.” We tell ourselves myriad falsehoods – we’re not as good as someone else, we’re not secure enough, affirmed enough, or powerful enough. Then, we begin to believe the lies. Eventually the truth catches up with us, sometimes quite late in life.

We fear putting our hands on the kettle of truth (awareness) and our deception exposes us. The deception reveals that *we ourselves* have been robbed because we have ignored the truth of who we are in Christ and preferred an illusion. Indulging in fear only magnifies it. To tell ourselves a story about something that isn’t real and then to begin acting out this self-concocted story is madness.

Learning that there is far more to who ‘I am’ than fear, or any afflictive emotion, is transforming. Who I am in Christ is untouched by any such phantoms. The art of *exposing* the thief, such as fear, is potent work. Indeed, the capacity to courageously face *any* afflictive emotion is both liberating and energizing. For example, in regard to fear, we need to be able to distinguish between the *objects* of our fear and the *fear* itself. We can see that the *objects* of our fear are myriad: a cruel co-worker or neighbor, a dreadful situation, a debilitating accident, etc. However, the *deepest* wisdom exposes the very *fear itself*.

A major transformation takes place when we discover how to shift from being a *victim* of fear to being a *witness* of fear. In fact, we learn a form of this by faithfully returning to the sacred word in our contemplative practice. As we learn how to *distinguish* between the object of our fear and the *fear* itself, we let go of any attachment to fear without denying, expressing, or repressing it. To know the true nature of fear, we need the courage to stare down this phantom, to look it straight in the eye.

In truth, no afflictive thought-emotion can withstand such a direct gaze. To our surprise, what we discover is that ‘the fear’ is simply a bundle of energy, just a mass of thoughts and feelings coupled with stressful bodily tension. That’s 99.99% of what most fear is! It isn’t real in the way we think it is. Furthermore, it is a very subtle form of energy that withers when ignored. What gives it power is the story created in the head about the fear, *and* the belief that ‘my identity’ is part of that story.

The vigilance to meet fear head on and let it go is the time-honored spiritual practice of “watchfulness.” Watchfulness is a daily contemplative practice that awakens and sharpens the silent witness within. The inner witness, that which is aware of all uplifting *and* distressing emotions, including fear, is *itself* free from every thought-emotion. Every ‘thing’ passes in time; we learn to wait it out and give it no power. The less attention one gives to fear, the less energy it has. With vigilance, fear no longer steals away our awareness. Moreover, what was once an affliction quite amazingly points us to something beyond thought and emotion: the vast stillness of God, the heart of awareness.

This ‘ever-present awareness’ is the truth of our being. It is the ‘Kingdom of God,’ the ‘Light of Christ.’ Watchfulness becomes the very conduit for a deeper communion with Christ. One discovers how to abide in, rest in, and remain in Christ *even* in the midst of anxiety, turmoil, and fear. ☐

Fr. Justin Langille, Spiritual Director & Editor

The Four Guidelines of Centering

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God’s presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Please make registration checks payable to: *Contemplative Outreach of San Diego (or "COSD")* and send to:
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One: Essential Writings on Nonduality, edited by Jerry Katz, (Sentient Publications, 2007, 213 pages). This book is for those who have traveled the contemplative path for a few years and wish to take a glimpse at other contemplative forms of meditation that are helping advance the consciousness of the world. In addition to expressions of Christian Mysticism, there are reflections from the other world religious pathways of nondual wisdom, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sufism, Taoism and Native American spirituality. The truth the reader encounters is that God is One. Inspiring!

The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism, edited by Bernard McGinn, (Modern Library, 2006, 592 pages). McGinn's impressive anthology of Christian Mysticism is a dynamic collection of topics including biblical interpretation, asceticism and purgation, inner and outer practices, Trinity, Christ, vision, deification, and love & knowledge. Selections are from ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary mystics, as well as from western and orthodox traditions; there's even a section on the social/moral relevance of Christian mysticism. A rare find! ☐

**"I'm an old man now and have had a great many problems.
Most of them never happened."**

☞ Mark Twain (1835-1910), American Author

For the latest schedule of COSD Centering Prayer Introductory Programs, Special Events, Current and Past Newsletters:

<http://www.contemplativeoutreachsd.org>

] COSD's Telephone: 619-226-6000 • COSD's FAX (c/o All Soul's Episcopal Church) 619-223-5285 • COSD's E-mail address: COSDNOW@worldnet.att.net.

] Contemplative Outreach International Websites: www.contemplativeoutreach.org or www.centeringprayer.com.

Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. International Office Telephone Number (Butler, New Jersey): 973-838-3384. Their e-mail address is office@coutreach.org.

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