



CONTEMPLATIVE COMPANIONS

The Bimonthly Centering Prayer Newsletter of Contemplative Outreach of San Diego

March-April 2009

Lent-Easter Issue

Volume 14: Issue 2

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Christ is the way to the Father. His human nature and personality is the door to his divinity. By identification with him as a human being, we find our true self – the divine life within us – and begin the process of integration into the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ... The ultimate state to which we are called is beyond any fixed point of reference such as a self. ... The death of Jesus on the cross was the death of his personal self, which in his case was his deified self. Christ's resurrection and ascension is his passage into the Ultimate Reality: the sacrifice and loss of his deified self to become one with the Godhead. ... Union with Christ on the cross – our entrance into his experience – leads to the death of our separate-self sense. Abbot Thomas Keating in *The Mystery of Christ*

The Vision of Contemplative Outreach

*"Be still and know
that I am God."*

Psalm 46:10

The intent of
Contemplative Outreach
is to foster the process
of transformation
in Christ
in one another
through the practice of
Centering Prayer.

*"Love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your strength,
and with all your mind;
and your neighbor as
yourself."*

Luke 10:27

2009 Calendar of Contemplative Events

March 2009

21..... **United in Prayer Day** • Uniting the Worldwide Contemplative Network • CONSD-Hosted Event • Lutheran Church of the Incarnation • Poway • 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. • (For information on CONSD events call 760-745-8860.)

April 2009

18..... **Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop Program** • CONSD-Hosted Event • Hope United Methodist Church • 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. • Rancho Bernardo • (For information on CONSD events call 760-745-8860.)

24-30 **Centering Prayer Intensive Retreat** with Marie Howard & Fr. Carl Arico in Orange, CA. For registration, please phone Marie Howard at 310-823-5863.

May 2009

16..... **Regional Event: "Contemplation: The Heart of the World"** • Fr. Thomas Keating • Registration: 1:30 p.m. Talk to follow: 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. • St. John the Evangelist Church • 1003 Encinitas Blvd. • Encinitas • \$35 Suggested Donation • Walk-ins are welcome if seating is available. • Please register by May 1st • Phone 760-745-8860.

October 2009

10..... **Tentative Event: A Day of Enrichment with Martin Laird**, Author of *"Into the Silent Land"* • Location and donation amount remain to be announced • Tentative schedule: 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

December 2009

2..... **Tentative Event: Advent Taizé Prayer Service for World Peace** • Mission San Diego de Alcalá • St. Francis Chapel • Tentative schedule: 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. • [A love offering for the poor of the area will be collected.]

Article by Thomas Merton (Trappist monk and contemplative; 1916-1968); an excerpt from Merton's book, *The New Man*

A Mystical Identity in Christ

“A New Life, a New Identity, and a New Mode of Action.”

Christ living in me is at one and the same time himself and myself. From the moment that I am united to him “in one spirit” there is no longer any contradiction implied by the fact that we are different persons. He remains naturally and physically, the Son of God who was born of the blessed Virgin in Nazareth, who went about doing good, and who died on the cross, two thousand years ago. I remain the singular person that I am. But mystically and spiritually Christ lives in me from the moment that I am united to him in his death and Resurrection. ...

This union is not merely a moral union, or an agreement of wills, nor merely a psychological union that flows from the fact that I keep him in

my thoughts. Christ mystically identifies his members with himself by giving them His Holy Spirit. ...

“I came,” said Jesus, “that they may have life” (John 10:10). The life that he came to bring us is his own life as Son of God. And because of his Resurrection he received the power to communicate to us all his Spirit as the principle of our own life and the life of our own spirit.

The uncreated Image, buried and concealed by sin in the depths of our souls, rises from death when, sending forth his Spirit into our spirit, he manifests his presence within us and becomes for us the source of a new life, a new identity and a new mode of action. ♦

Christ Jesus, Our Mother

From Julian of Norwich, in her reflection, *Christ the Mother*, in *Revelations of Divine Love*

I say that he is everything to us that is good and comfortable for our help. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us. ...

And in this he showed me something small, no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would have suddenly fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God. ...

Our Mother in nature, or Mother in grace, because he wanted altogether to become our mother in all things, made the foundation of his work most humbly and most mildly in the maiden's womb. ... The mother's service is nearest, readiest, and surest: Nearest because it is most natural; readiest because

it is most living; and surest because it is truest. No one ever might or could perform this office fully, except only for him. We know that all our mothers bear us for pain and for death. O, what is that? But our true Mother Jesus, he alone bears us for joy and for endless life, blessed may he be. So he carries us within him in love and travail, until the full time when he wanted to suffer the sharpest thorns and cruelest pains that ever were or will be, and at last he died. ...

The mother can lay her child tenderly to her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us easily into his blessed breast through his sweet open side, and show us there a part of the godhead and of the joys of heaven, with inner certainty of endless bliss. ...

This fair, lovely word, *mother*, is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot truly be said of anyone or to anyone except of him and to him who is the true Mother of life and of all things. ♦

Extensión Contemplativa de San Diego

Santa Teresa Benedicta de la Cruz ❖ Modelo de Oración

Prima Parte - Artículo por Cristina G. Romero

Edith Stein (1891-1942) conocida como Santa Teresa Benedicta de la Cruz, nació en Alemania de familia judía. Estudia filosofía y a los 21 años se confiesa atea. Su vida cambia totalmente al ver la profunda paz y esperanza que tiene la viuda de un amigo convertida al cristianismo y se interesa por conocerlo. Cuando ella termina de leer el libro de la vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús dice: ¡“Esto es la verdad”! En 1933 entra al monasterio Carmelita de la ciudad de Colonia.

Santa Teresa Benedicta de la Cruz decía vivir constantemente en relación con Cristo a través del apostolado, la liturgia y la oración. Todos los que la conocieron quedaron impresionados por su constante entrega a la oración. Santa Teresa descubre que la oración auténtica es la que nos ayuda a conocer el sentido genuino de la verdad: “Verdad de Dios y verdad de uno mismo, pues sólo en la verdad es posible una auténtica relación de amor, una unión de amor con Dios, camino y objetivo último de la oración”.

En la oración lo importante es que ésta sea fruto de una participación consciente y que, además de ser un acto de culto y alabanza, surja como un encuentro de amor. Toda oración vocal para que sea una oración viva ha de transformarse en oración mental, es decir, tiene que ser pronunciada con la boca y el corazón al mismo tiempo. La oración en cuanto a “relación” de encuentro y amor, centra su mirada en la persona de Cristo, Maestro, Camino, Verdad

y Vida. Sólo con Cristo tiene sentido y razón de ser, porque es Cristo quien nos conduce hasta Dios Padre.

Refiriéndose a la oración Santa Teresa Benedicta la describe como “un abrirse el alma a Dios”. Lo que verdaderamente define la oración para ella es que se trata de una relación de amor. “La oración es el trato del alma con Dios; es la hazaña más sublime de la cual es capaz el espíritu humano”.

El centro de toda persona es el lugar en donde habita Dios y en donde podemos unirnos con El. Santa Teresa Benedicta de la Cruz estaba convencida de que la oración es la senda que puede llevarnos hacia lo más profundo de nuestro ser y se dio cuenta de la importancia que tenía la oración en su vida.

Sólo el amor divino es capaz de sanar de raíz el egoísmo del corazón, y hacer que la voluntad del hombre se una con la voluntad de Dios. Por eso, la oración se transforma en intercesión por el bien de la humanidad. Cada vez que nos sentamos a practicar la Oración Centrante aunque no hagamos oración de petición, estamos intercediendo por la humanidad entera. Hay un doble beneficio, Dios nos va transformando y cuando ve que la humanidad sufre se apiada de ella. La oración es medio de salvación para el que ora y para la humanidad. ❖

[Bibliografía: Francisco Javier Sancho Fermín, *OCD. Escuela de grandes orantes. Magnificat, 2008.*]

The Gift of Giving

“We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

~ Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, 1874-1965

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The Inner Peace Discovered in Centering Prayer

| Article by Minnie Miller, Prayer Group Member, Santa Sophia Church, Spring Valley

The most recent Half Day of Prayer was hosted by Our Lady of Grace Prayer Group, Saturday January 31st. The Prayer Group Leader, Irma Eichinger, and other gracious volunteers did an outstanding job. Over 120 people attended this event.

Msgr. Mark Campbell, Pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church in Old Town gave a talk on the Welcoming Prayer Practice of "Letting Go." He said that letting go is very necessary, especially at this time with the worldwide economic crisis. Fr. Mark also gave a talk on The Centering Prayer Practice for Daily Life. He affirmed that one cannot make one's own transformation happen by one's power, but that it is done in God's time, not ours. Through Centering Prayer one can accomplish total surrender to God.

I thank Fr. Justin Langille, now Pastor of St. Louise de Marillac Church located in Crest, California, for getting me involved in Centering Prayer over 15 years ago. After practicing

Centering Prayer for three months, I noticed a change that had taken place. Things that bothered me so very much, were not as important any longer. I cannot describe the inner peace that I now feel.

I also try to walk three to four times a week when possible, for at least 45 minutes. I live uphill, three blocks from a street where there is little or no traffic at the time I walk. There are no houses located close to the street which makes it even nicer. I start out my walk by thanking God for all the beautiful trees and greenery along the way he has blessed us with. At times, tears fill my eyes when I think about how many of these gifts we have destroyed.

Next I do my rosary as I walk along. I always save time to give thanks back to God for all the blessings he has given me. At the end of my walk, I cannot describe the joy and inner peace I feel God has blessed me with. I am truly blessed by so many wonderful gifts. ♦

Bound to Christ in Inner Union

During World War II, Franz Jägerstätter was a devoted family man with such rare faith that he defied Hitler and faced martyrdom rather than to submit to Germany's depraved regime. Franz spent the majority of his six months in prison praying the Scriptures and the rosary. On the day of his execution, Fr. Jochmann, a prison chaplain, offered Franz the scripture readings of the day, and Franz replied with unforgettable joy in his eyes: "I am completely bound in inner union with the Lord and any reading would only interrupt my communication with my God."

[Adapted from *Liguorian*, December 2008 issue, submitted by Mary Jane Weismann.]

At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. ♦

∞ Thomas Merton (1916-1968), Trappist Monk and Contemplative Companion

"The heart and soul of Contemplative Outreach are the Centering Prayer Circles."

Prayer Groups of Contemplative Outreach of San Diego

	Area	Leader(s)	Telephone	Location	Meetings Day & Time
1	Chula Vista	Adela Detrinidad	619-216-2538	Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church 293 H Street, Chula Vista	Mondays: 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Business Office-Chapel
2	Del Cerro	Sue Gossman Rosemary McGearry	619-466-3150 619-582-9508	St. Therese Catholic Church 6016 Camino Rico, San Diego	Saturdays: 10:00 a.m. Adult Ministry Office
3	El Cajon (1)	Anne Clark Lisa Davis	619-444-9700 619-444-9700	1 st 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	1 st 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	Susan Jarboe	scj123@cox.net	Home of Veryl Snowhill 6335 Southern Road, La Mesa	Thursdays: 7:00 p.m.
9	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 a.m.
10	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
11	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
12	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.
13	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
14	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
15	San Diego City (3)	Rev. Wilbert Miller	619-234-6149	First Lutheran Church 1420 3 rd Avenue, Downtown San Diego	Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m. Meets in the Church Sanctuary
16	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
17	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
18	University City	Michele Lambotte	858-558-9386	Our Mother of Confidence Church 3131 Governor Drive, San Diego 92122	Mondays: 4:00 p.m.

**“I understand that prayer (and those lives given to it)
is the energy by which God unites the World to Himself.”**

≈ Marilyn Bendzwell

How Circus Attractions Can Become a Prison

Not long ago in Russia, a trained bear escaped from a large circus. For no apparent reason, the bear had grown increasingly depressed, and the trainers tried everything they could to cheer up the bear: special toys, treats, extra attention, and even more affection. But nothing worked. The bear became more and more listless, hardly able to hold up its head, even for its favorite meal of fresh fish.

Then one day, the bear just mysteriously escaped! The circus was thrown into a panic. A large bear on the loose meant that the local villagers would be terrified, the police would be called in, and the valuable and much loved animal could easily end up badly injured or dead.

Fortunately, they soon found the bear. The bear would have made a clean getaway, never to be seen again, except for the fact that the bear stuck to the roadways. The trainers had no problem finding the bear. Why? Because the bear tried to make its grand escape on the **bicycle** it had been trained to ride!

This contemporary parable is a marvelous illustration of the inability to **let go**. Most people have difficulty letting go. The heart of the Lenten season is all about **letting go**. While we can easily chuckle about the bear's conditioning, it is crucial to recognize and drop **our own conditioning**.

We seem to be much like this bear. If the bear had simply acted like a bear, it would have followed its natural instincts and made its getaway into the forest where it would have enjoyed its freedom for the **rest of its life**. With its heavy conditioning, the bear failed to trust its own instincts and instead, clung on to the familiar bicycle it had been trained to ride.

We live most of our lives conditioned not to trust our own **natural, Christ-centered awareness**. The whole problem is based on a conceptual error of believing ourselves to be something we are not. The bottom line is that we are not the body, senses, and mind, and they are not the proper tools for "knowing God." Our true identity is Christ. Without keeping this proper focus, we inadvertently remain imprisoned in the thinking-mind, clinging to our conditioning. Like the bear, we get **caught** spinning our (mental) wheels, losing the opportunity to experience the freedom that is right within our reach.

Our conditioning traps us into returning to the circus of the thinking-mind with its alluring hall of mirrors. Ironically, it is the **mental mirror of self-reflection** that creates the **illusion** of separation from God, and becomes the source of all our distress. All human suffering comes from this illusion of separation. We create our own suffering by thinking, feeling, and acting as though we exist separate from God.

We only miss the Truth, which is so stunningly obvious, because we **overlook** it. God is closer to us than we think, indeed closer than we **can think!** We are already free, already one with God, but don't know it, and don't live with the awareness of such

Truth. The conditioning of our 'search for God' **imprisons** us in the **mind**. The gift of contemplative prayer invites us to relax our focus on the mind, and get acquainted with our natural state of direct knowing (pure awareness), which is non-conceptual, entirely beyond the thinking mind. When we mentally look at ourselves as something outside of God, we miss Truth. Direct knowing 'sees' the Truth that God is **One**, and because we are **aware** that we live and exist, we live in **oneness** with God!

Freedom happens when we surrender our over-dependence on the thinking mind. Paradoxically, we can **do** nothing to **make** freedom happen, because all of our **doing** is effortful and only **reinforces** the separate sense of self, the "me." Simply drop the attachment to this false center and suffering drops away as well. What arises is **Christ consciousness**, the flowering of **human** consciousness that leads to union with the Father. As we put on this Mind of Christ (1Cor 2:16), our 'natural, presence-awareness' that **knows** God begins to blossom. Christ **IS** our "**knowing**," our "**seeing**," our direct knowledge of God.

Our true identity in Christ is **prior to** the mind, **prior to** thinking. Notice how such direct awareness knows thinking, but thinking can never know pure awareness. We **overlook** the fact that 'what we are looking for' is **what is doing the looking!** Because all seeking is in the mind, it makes God a distant goal. Looking for God with the **mind** is looking in the wrong direction.

Contemplation **heals** the conditioning that causes us to **endlessly default** to the thinking-mind. When we learn to **pause the mind** more frequently, suffering diminishes. The healing dimension of Lent is the capacity to **rise** out of the ashes of the separate self, and behold the Beloved, the Christ. Contemplative prayer assists us in awakening to the essential, **pure knowing** that is our truest, deepest self ... and **That** is the Risen Christ.

Our faithful commitment to contemplative prayer teaches us the primacy of "silent, direct knowing" over "obsessive, fragmented thinking." Traditionally, contemplation is called the way of "unknowing," which is really a way to **unlearn** our **dependence on thinking** so that we live from **direct knowing**, what our Christian contemplative elders call "the deep knowledge of God."

We continue to suffer until we have had **enough** of suffering. But even suffering can be a 'wake-up call' to make the crucial shift from thinking to awareness. Contemplative prayer teaches us how to **stop** trying to **confirm with the mind** the **deeper knowing** that we **are**.

Lent is a healing journey into freedom in which we learn how to stop returning to the prison of the mental circus, refusing even to settle for making our prisons a tad bit more comfortable. The Resurrection is an explosion of the Beloved's Love that invites us to **trust** our "**natural, contemplative knowing**." ♦

≈ Fr. Justin Langille, Editor & Spiritual Director

The Four
Guidelines of
Centering
Prayer

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.

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The Deeper Journey: *The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self*, by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., (InterVarsity Press 2006, 168 pages). Mulholland begins his book with the end, the goal of spiritual journey: a deep unity with God. Using scripture and quotations from many sources, the book's strength lies in its description of the "false self," the felt sense of separation from God. Using his personal experience as a professor of religion, Mulholland unmasks the religious version of the false self. He addresses how to 'put on the new self,' emphasizing that this transformation is and must remain God's work in our lives. A key theme of this book is that change absolutely must be lived out in relationships. This book embodies a very personal invitation into the "deeper journey."

The Contented Soul: *The Art of Savoring Life*, by Lisa Graham McMinn, (InterVarsity Press 2006, 184 pages). McMinn explores the nature and practice of contentment in terms of contemporary spiritual practice. She first addresses what constitutes contentment, and then thematically offers ways we can cultivate it in our busy, sometimes unfulfilled lives. There is much to ponder about slowing down in order to be more aware, living within our physical limits, resisting separateness while supporting strong communal ties. With each of her themes, McMinn offers discussion and reflection questions at the end of each chapter. Her unique gift as a sociologist is to place spiritual practice in the context of the great web of life with natural ease and beauty. Encouraging and provocative!

**“Attachment to spiritual things is just as much
an attachment as inordinate love of anything else.”**

∞ Thomas Merton (1916-1968), Trappist Monk and Contemplative

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

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