



# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

SILENCE  
SOLITUDE  
SERVICE

*of Phoenix*

FALL 2011

Dear Centering Prayer Community,

Once again, your servant-core group sends you loving greetings. A pastor recently remarked that every 500 years or so, Christianity holds a giant rummage sale to get rid of all that no longer serves the living Holy Spirit. We are in the midst of such a sale right now, she asserted. As some things leave the scene, others emerge and begin to grow. We have noticed for some time now that the hunger for direct connection to God's spirit has been increasing. More people email us for information on introductory workshops and prayer groups; contemplative prayer communities crop up; silent prayer is increasingly at the heart of small faith and home-based communities in service to the world. It is a time that invites us to stay resolute in our practices, full of faith that the Holy Spirit is working to expand the vision of Contemplative Outreach.

A beautiful example of this shift occurred during the spring retreat at the Franciscan Renewal Center, which brought individuals from Contemplative Outreach, St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church and members of the Casa community together under the guidance of Fr. Carl Arico and Fr. Jim Clark. For everyone there, many faces were new. Deep in the silence, we could sense the beginnings of a truly ecumenical blend. In the words of Fr. Arico, it was a kind of "family reunion," which he urged us to perpetuate. In this spirit, we have asked for reflections on the day from members of the various communities. (page 4)

Last winter saw 3 full intensive retreats at Santa Rita Abbey in Sonoita. Please enjoy Mary

Kaplan's review of this experience, as well as the dates for retreats planned for 2012 (page 2.)

Our amazing Sr. Rachel Torrez invited Fr. William Meninger to speak at our annual fall Gathering Day, and he accepted! He will present The Theology and Practice of Contemplative Prayer at Central United Methodist Church on Saturday, November 19, 2011 from 9 am to 3 pm. To anticipate and celebrate this exciting day, please see a review of Fr. Meninger's 2010 book Julian of Norwich by Dave Murray (p.6). Be sure to register and attend this wonderful event. The flyer is included in this newsletter.

Kate Brophy has been delighting and enriching us with her reflections over the past couple of newsletters. Please find her essay on The Woman at the Well, on page.5.

Save the date: We are delighted to announce that Fr. Martin Laird will be returning to Phoenix on April 14, 2012 to speak from his new book, A Sunlit Absence: Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation (2011, Oxford University Press). There is scholarship help for all of our events. Watch for more information on this event on our website and in the next newsletter.

We welcome comments and feedback from **you**, our greater community, so please let us know your thoughts and suggestions by emailing Kathy and Rick at [kramerhowe@gmail.com](mailto:kramerhowe@gmail.com) or leaving a message at 602-955-6057. Let us know if we can share your comments in a future newsletter. And, do continue to check our website for all the latest at [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org).



## Vision

*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

## What We Do

The Phoenix chapter shares the mission of Contemplative Outreach, LTD. From time to time it is helpful to reflect on the international organizations' Vision Statement. Recently the core community has started listening to this statement utilizing the Lectio Divina method. We invite you to do the same.

You can also read the Contemplative Outreach Vision Statement and Theological Principles on the national website: [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org).

## ❁ 2012 INTENSIVE RETREATS---SILENT RETREATS ❁

Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix offers 8 day, silent intensive retreats to those who are interested in renewing and deepening their relationship with God through centering prayer. The retreats take place in Sonoita, AZ at the Trappistine Monastery, with a lovely setting on high desert terrain. There are seven single rooms; one room can accommodate two retreatants, if two people want to share. Retreat fee is \$400.00 (single room); \$325.00 each (shared room). Scholarships are available. Retreat menu is vegetarian.

### **Intensive Retreat: January 6th - 14th**

The retreat is open to all who have a 6 month centering prayer practice. We will have 3 one hour prayer sessions daily and listen to 2 Fr. Thomas Keating Spiritual Journey DVD'S. Plus we will share in Lection Divina. Also available is the opportunity to participate daily in Lauds, Liturgy (Communion Service) and Vespers with the Trappistine Sisters.

### **Post-Intensive Retreats:**

**January 27th-February 4th**  
**February 24th - March 3rd**

Pre-requisite: Must have attended an intensive retreat. This retreat consists of 4 one hour prayer sessions daily. There is time for individual quiet time: writing, sketching, walking, etc. We also share in the sisters' prayers of: Lauds, Liturgy, Vespers and Compline.

### **Registration:**

#### **Beginning September 1, 2011:**

Write, call or email Jeannie Lashinske at:  
5728 E. Orange Blossom, Phoenix, AZ 85018,  
Phone: 480.423.1645 Email: [lashinske@cox.net](mailto:lashinske@cox.net)

A non-refundable \$100.00 registration fee reserves your room. Please make out check to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix. Questions? Ask Jeannie or email Mary Leonard: [marywleonard@hotmail.com](mailto:marywleonard@hotmail.com).

## "But What Did You Go Out to the Desert to See?"

by Mary Kaplan

I arrived at Santa Rita Abbey, south of Tucson, on Friday, February 25, 2011, in time for dinner and the start of a nine day post-intensive contemplative retreat, organized by Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix.

Driving from Phoenix, I was listening to Cynthia Bourgeault's Chanting of the Psalms and found myself chanting along with, "Gently blooms the rose within." I was reminded of a saying by Rumi, "A rose opens because she is the fragrance she loves." I was beginning to enter into the silence.

Santa Rita Abbey is home to the Cistercian nuns. They have a small retreat center, separate from the abbey, which has several rooms and a lovely chapel with a wall of windows that looks out over the high desert and the Santa Rita Mountains. This is where we do our contemplative sits at various times throughout the day. We attend Mass and liturgy of the hours in the monastery chapel separate from, but with, the sisters.

There were ten of us on this retreat, seven participants and three team members. We became acquainted around the dinner table the first evening. The team prepared three delicious vegetarian meals a day and prayerfully fostered a restful, silent environment.

The first sit was at 5:30 on Saturday morning. We entered the chapel in the dark but emerged to one of the most spectacular sunrises I have ever seen. The entire sky was suffused in bright pinks, golds, purples and oranges across its entire span. I felt like I was being opened and expanded.

Nature was surely to play a deepening role in all of this retreat. That evening, as we were walking back from the monastery chapel, the setting sun held in relief the surrounding wheat colored mountains against a dark and darker sky. It was as if certain aspects of my life, its joys and struggles, were being illuminated for examination and held in beauty, light and warmth.

You can imagine the shock of waking the next morning to a howling blizzard. The whole outside was blanketed in several inches of snow and we could not see further than ten feet in front of us. We were enshrouded, occasioning a turning within and a deep silence. This was Sunday, day three of our retreat. Father opened Mass with the greeting, "God the Artist has been busy overnight transforming the landscape, so the God of Mercy can transform the landscape of our soul." The sisters chanted, "Rest in God alone, my soul."

In the short interview with the retreat master,

after we arrived, it was suggested that I do something different from what I would normally do on a retreat. I usually bring many books and read but this time I was being drawn to just resting in God and not "trying" to do anything.

During these days a new prayer word emerged quite simply. It had been "mercy," but "yes" came forth as an affirmation of all God's creation and as an intention to open to God's gaze fully. Tuesday night, the fifth day, was a very restless night. Sleep would not come. I prayed and was able to observe what was going on as it was going on. Judgmental thoughts, fears, trepidations, worries about possible outcomes and various attachments were whirling through my consciousness. Within my new prayer word, "yes," I was not judging or resisting but rather meeting them, welcoming them, allowing the experience to be, to pass by. And I became very restful in mind, body and spirit, quiet within. I am told that this is not an uncommon experience on this retreat. Unconscious material is able to surface and be dealt with on various planes, sometimes just to be abided, sometimes to be integrated or sometimes healed.

The snow from the blizzard melted quickly and the weather from then on was beautiful, the perfect setting for walks along the roads or venturing onto paths into the hills and arroyos. On one such walk on the last full day of the retreat, I was thinking of how to "bear" a particular "cross" I knew to be coming my way when I got back from the retreat. When I looked up from my reverie, I saw on the side of the road a stalk that had recently been cut from an agave plant and the fronds were still attached. It was very light, about four feet tall, the perfect height for a walking stick. The fit could not have been better. If I showed it to you, you would think it was a piece of art in its natural weathered beauty. I picked it up and my first thought was that it was a walking stick. I was stopped in my tracks as I came to know deep in my heart that Jesus was not giving me a "cross to bear." He is walking through all of this with me, very present, very sturdy, in every aspect of my life, as He opens me to meet His gaze.

Being together in contemplative prayer practice, participating in liturgy, sharing meals and cleaning up after meals, while silent, deepened our sense of community and only strengthened the retreat experience. That being said, we were perfectly happy to break silence on the last evening to share what had been spiritually awakened in each of us during this time of "going out to the desert."

As I write this article, four months later, I am filled with gratitude at having had this retreat experience, the fruits of which remain very present.

## Reflections on the April, 2011, Spring Retreat at the Franciscan Renewal Center

### Reflections by a member of Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix

Silence on the inside! As we gathered that bright spring morning, our contemplative invitation was to find interior silence. And in that silence: what needs to be healed, what needs to be forgiven and what needs to be celebrated. Be present always so that we may truly taste this journey on the inside.

Fr. Carl Arico and Fr. Jim Clark led us into discovering the experience of contemplation supported by Biblical contemplative reference, The Cloud of Unknowing and the writings of St. Theresa of Avila, Thomas Merton and John of the Cross.

With this groundwork, we learn to stand guard over our spirit, while being reminded that contemplation is truly a gift of that spirit. We learn we are always moving into what we do not understand which is the ultimate mystery of God. And, of course, we learn the necessity of discipline in order to create a prayer time for our spiritual growth.

I pray that I hear you, God; I pray that I follow you, Jesus; I pray to accept your will, Lord.

Blessed are we to have shared prayer in communion with one another, absorbed thoughts and words of wisdom received from our presenters and experienced the blending of both to go forth into the greater world bringing a renewed spirit of God's grace.

### Reflections by a member of St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church:

My car swooshed along the quiet pavement... the street wet from a recent rain... smoky tendrils of mist undulating, dissolving, reforming as I passed. Darkness had fallen... and with it the simple silence that often cloaks the passage from light to dark. This was one of many such small journeyings, as I was a 'commuter' to the silent retreat hosted by the Casa.

I traveled back and forth two to three times daily, caring for pets, keeping the home humming along. Since the Casa facilities could accommodate only a portion of those attending this retreat, I anticipated that my daily physical separations from the retreat site would be duplicated spiritually, creating a sense of inner disconnect in tandem with the scattered rhythm of my comings and goings.

I knew the teaching would be wonderful, and it was, of course. I knew the Renewal Center would be lush and beautiful, and it was. I knew the dedicated people serving the needs of the body in myriad ways to bring this event together and make it all work would be

gifted and giving, and they were. And so on an intellectual level I knew that I would benefit from this retreat despite the necessarily fragmented time. And, I did.

The gathering of God's people, in His Name, to seek His Presence absolutely transcends the suppositions and limitations of our own perceptions. Our corporate meditation was profound in its depth and healing; our gathering together was supportive and joyous and enfolding... we learned and laughed and leaned. And we loved.... God, each other, our faiths.

And the time 'there', at the Casa... melded into the time 'here', at home... and by the end of the weekend the seeking depth of the experience had encompassed every aspect of my inner and outer being. It was a powerful sense of taking in and taking 'with'... into all the nooks and crannies of the daily-ness of living. It was a profound lesson in the power of the contemplative practice and community.

All those small daily journeys became intangibly infused with the constant and compassionate and very real sense of God's Presence. Back and forth.. to and fro... here and SO there... it was a marvelous retreat.

### Contact People

The people listed here are available to provide information about Contemplative Outreach programs and meetings in their area..

- Rick & Kathy Kramer-Howe  
Phoenix 602. 955.6057
- Robert Johnson  
Prescott 928.717.2441

- Phil and Mary Leonard  
Phoenix 480.966.7558
- Rusty Swavely  
Sedona 928.300.2949

## Meditation on The Woman at the Well

by Kate Brophy

"Give me a drink." says Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the well. She answers, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan. How, would you dare to ask a drink from me?" Jesus answers quickly, "If you knew the Gift of God, and who it is that says to you, 'give me a drink', you would ask me and I would give you Living Water." Later, He says, "Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst." This invitation is a call to receive and surrender. There is no need to figure out what to do, what is the plan, what do you want of me? No, just open wide and it is given, living water, living faith, living hope, living love.

A woman oppressed, carrying her water jug of great loneliness - she is isolated, tired to the roots of her spirit, argumentative, and passionate. She appears to be searching for a break in her life of repetition. She is stymied by the dull sameness of her life (five husbands could be a rather stagnant pattern). She is open to possibility, to an essential encounter with new meaning that might push her forward toward new love, new hope, always more hope.

When Jesus finally says, "Whoever drinks of the water I shall give, will become a fountain springing up into everlasting life." That is the turning point, the linch pin of discovery, and she answers, "Sir, give me this water." "Go call your husband." Jesus says, and the curtain is pulled aside to reveal her life of delusion and lies that have betrayed her all her life. She says emphatically, "I have no husband."

What an opening to truth. Her tapestry of dishonesty, anger and fear is parted, like the Red Sea, and she walks into a new freedom to become disciple, visionary, one who has seen the Messiah and never again will be silent about that wonder.

Isn't this our story, or could be our story, as we receive the gift of Living Water, which is our silence in surrender to the presence of Messiah, our yielding each day, our lies, our fears, our desperations and struggles as we await the awakening truth. It doesn't seem to come in a storm of chaos and battle, not in the righteous patterns of law keepers and lawgivers, not in rules and ceremonies, so necessary to life. Truth so often comes in the stillness, the quiet that emerges from an inner freedom - a freedom without boundaries. Freedom is a love like the Living Water offered to all of us. It has no deadlines, no dead ends, no fears of measuring up to a goal or standard,

because it is about becoming, not achieving, discovery, not knowledge. It is about the path of wandering love, not the clear linear line of accomplishment. Freedom is a path of essential poverty which becomes comfortable with soul-tending and becoming.

While hiking one day in Walnut Canyon, I came upon a deep recess on the trail with a thick rock slab forming a natural roof. Within was a young man sitting and carving a Katsina from a small Cottonwood branch. I was sure he was Hopi, so first, I questioned him about the Katsina, and then I said to him, "You are Hopi, aren't you?" He looked straight into my eyes and said, "No, I am not Hopi. I am becoming Hopi. One day when I am reaching the end of the path, the Elders will say to me, 'Now, you are Hopi.' They alone will know."

I have carried this young man with me for quite some time. A persistent thought is entwined in our meeting. Maybe this is what Jesus would say in that freedom moment when the Living Water would flow unobstructed. We are becoming and we are letting go the rigid path, for the open way that leads to the void of love, where we will know without regret or adulation or judgment, that we become one in the becoming, with Trinity, with creation and creator and one with every soul, and every incident and experience. Every word and breath in our lives will make it clear that everything in our lives is disguised and then revealed as the eternal Living Water, the Living God, creator of fire, water and sky.

Is this not a gift of hope that does not leave us, it BECOMES us; WE BECOME the hope, the love and the freedom we seek moment-to-moment only now.

French writer and poet, Charles Peguy writes: "I am says God, the Lord of virtues. Faith is the sanctuary lamp that burns forever. Love is that big beautiful log fire that my children, the poor, may come and warm themselves, but my hope, is she who rises every morning...and wishes us good day. My hope is the fruit and the leaf, the twig and the shoot and the seed, the bud and the bloom of eternity itself."

continued on page 6 MEDITATION



## Book Review: *Julian of Norwich, a Mystic for Today*, by Fr. William Meninger

A Review by Dave Murray

Fr Meninger's devotional work on the revelations of Julian of Norwich, one of the most prominent of English mystics and earliest of English female writers of the Middle Ages, reaches across the centuries to draw today's reader into deep reflection on the mystical aspects of the Christian faith. Fr Meninger, a Cistercian Monk who entered the Monastery in 1963 and helped to develop the modern day practice of Centering Prayer based on his study of the 14th century text "The Cloud of Unknowing", provides a distinct perspective for this deeply insightful interpretation of the Lady Julian's revelations.

Born in 1342 in Norwich England, little is known of Julian's personal life. Neither her birth name nor the precise date of her death, believed to be around 1416, is certain. What is certain is that Julian lived in a time of great strife and unrest including the great schism of the Church, Inquisitions, the plague that wiped out half of Norwich, and civil unrest throughout Europe, including the 100 year war between England and France.

Julian's name was taken from the Church of St Julian where she lived for many years as an anchoress, a reclusive and ascetic lifestyle prevalent during the high middle ages where female anchoresses (or male anchorites), once sanctioned by the Bishop, were allowed to live in seclusion in small cells "anchored" to a church or other religious house through a common wall.

At the age of 30 and a half, Julian was stricken with a

mysterious mortal illness, one that she had prayed for so that she might better know the sufferings and passion of Jesus. It was during this illness, at the point of her near death on May 13, 1373, there began a series of what was later called "Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love" or "shewings", that lasted nearly a full day. Once recovered, Julian chronicled these revelations in a "short text" of 25 chapters. Following a 20 year period of meditation and contemplation, Julian, self described as a "simple creature unlettered", reflected on these revelations with an added maturity and wisdom in a "long text" version of 86 chapters. It is this version of Julian's writings that Fr Meninger's own work is devoted to.

This short review can not begin to cover the full breadth of Julian's revelations however; a prominent theme is the reoccurring message of God's love. For Julian, God, the "I am who is", is all forgiving, capable only of bestowing radiant and eternal love. Through the Trinity, God yearns to touch and heal our hearts with a love that may, can and will make all well. When we become ensnared by our selfish desires, we fall away from the light of our faith. Now spiritually blind, we retreat to the hateful, fearful and miserable smallness of our sinful selves, leading ultimately to despairing pain and suffering. This is not God's punishment, but can instead be likened to the distress of an infant child separated from the soothing safety and warmth of its mother's bosom. Paradoxically, the very pain of this hellish existence is what provides the necessary humility that opens our hearts and compels us to call out to God's tender mercy and redemptive grace. In this way we are reunited to his patient and companionate love in eternal bliss where "All is well."

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### MEDITATION continued from page 5

The woman at the well is for our time, a vigilant woman who listens to Jesus' first request, "Give me a drink." and carefully listens, with some good resistance, to his promise of never thirsting again, never feeling empty and useless and unacceptable, shamed or guilty. What an offer, and she accepts. Her gender, her behavior, her religion no longer are obstacles. She is freed by that small bud of hope that was ignited that hot afternoon, by the intimate presence of the gentle man who offered her the path to freedom by becoming the full and truthful and loving woman she always was and is and will ever be.

Jesus allowed her to see that what she longed for, a Truthful, loving and hope-filled life, was living deep within her; it was her true self, her very soul; it was and is the essence of Divine Life for her and for us. We simply need to listen and Awaken.

Our souls speak the language of silence, and form the receptive heart for the contemplative way. We become the hope and the love and the faith as stillness and the gentle quiet moment-by-moment invitation brings us to that place we desired all our lives, the place we recognize as home, our true home.



# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

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*of Phoenix*

## THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

***PRESENTED BY FATHER WILLIAM MENINGER***

NOVEMBER 19TH, 2011

9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Central United Methodist Church  
1875 N. Central Avenue, Phoenix 85004

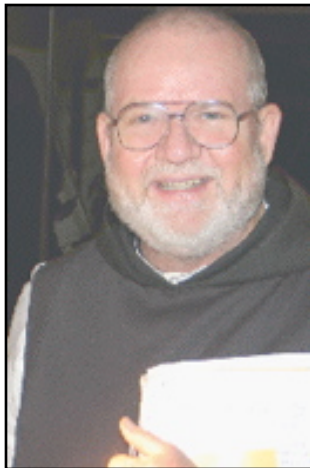
Suggested Donation \$30.00

Registration Deadline: Nov. 15th

Seating is limited-Lunch provided

***Parking in church lot AND North corner of Phoenix Museum lot***

**Scholarships available - register at [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)**



**Father William Meninger**, a Trappist monk, is the author of In Loving Search of God which is an effort to bring the message of The Cloud of Unknowing to men and women of the 21st Century. Father Meninger presents retreats and workshops on Centering Prayer, Cloud of the Unknowing, Process of Forgiveness, Sacred Scriptures, and Prayer, among others throughout the world. His presentation will review the principles behind the practice of Centering Prayer, and using the Cloud of Unknowing explain its theology and background. You won't want to miss this inspiring presentation by one of the great "masters."

Deadline for Registration is Nov. 15th (*firm*) -*Space is limited.*

Suggested Donation \$30.00. Make check to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix.

Register at [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org) or mail registration to:

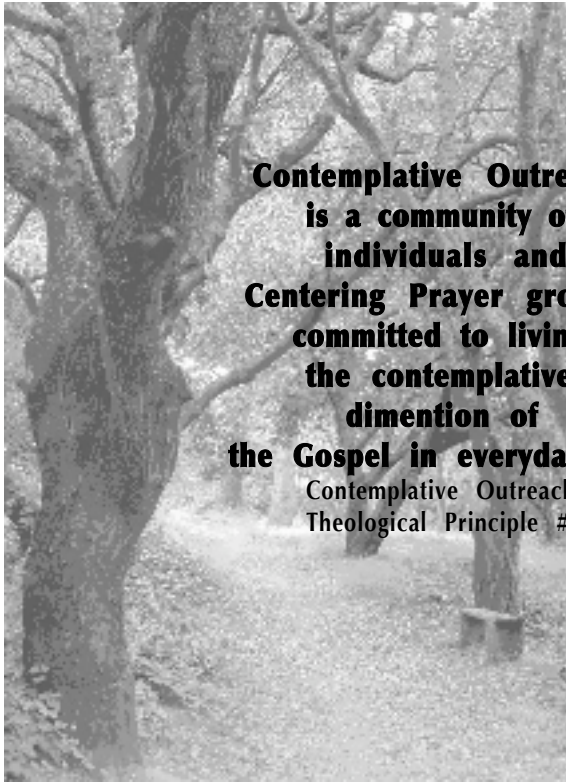
Sister Rachel Torrez 8141 N. 16th Street #5 Phoenix, AZ 85020.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ check for vegetarian lunch \_\_\_\_\_

For more information or questions regarding scholarships call Sister M. Rachel at:  
(602) 771-7818 or (602) 944 2728



**Contemplative Outreach  
is a community of  
individuals and  
Centering Prayer groups  
committed to living  
the contemplative  
dimension of  
the Gospel in everyday life.**  
Contemplative Outreach  
Theological Principle #1

## Centering Prayer Small Groups

The practice of Centering Prayer by individuals is the main goal of Contemplative Outreach. Most people find the support of a small Centering Prayer Group a great support for their practice. There are several such groups available for your participation. Please see the website [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org) for locations, meeting dates and times, and contact people for each small group. You may also call one of the contact people listed on page 2 of this newsletter for information..

To report any changes to the information for a Centering Prayer Small Group listed on the website please contact Kathy Kramer-Howe, [kramerhowe@gmail.com](mailto:kramerhowe@gmail.com), 602.955.6057



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