



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

SILENCE
SOLITUDE
SERVICE

of Phoenix

SPRING 2011

Welcome, friends!

Dear Centering Prayer community,

This newsletter brings wishes for health and peace to each of you. Your small but steady servant leadership group still meets on the fourth Tuesday evening of each month at Central United Methodist Church. We are still operating without a coordinator but with generous volunteer service from the 19 or so people who show up, some more regularly than others, but all with good will and open hearts. If you would like to give us news or feedback on the newsletter, calendar of offerings, small prayer groups, or anything else, you may do so via our website, **contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org**, or by calling one of us. We welcome all communication.

In this issue, you will find a review of Fr. Martin Laird's sensitive, poetic and profound workshop last November on approaching the thoughts that barrage us during our prayer times. The event was fully subscribed at around 95 individuals. Also, look for reflections on service by one of the cooks at an eight day retreat this January at Santa Rita Abbey. All three retreats are full this year, and provide an experience of God's presence through deep silence, loving community,

beautiful environment, and the sanctity of the Trappistine sisters at the Abbey.

On March 19 comes an opportunity for fellowship at our annual International United in Prayer event at Central United Methodist Church. From March 23-25 you can attend a Formation for Contemplative Service, which includes training to be a presenter at Centering Prayer Introductory Workshops. We offer several introductory workshops a year in response to requests from churches and parishes. Look for announcements of three upcoming introductory workshops.

The spring retreat at the Franciscan Renewal Center in April filled up amazingly quickly. However, Fr. Carl Arico is offering a mini-retreat for those who were unable to get in. See details within this newsletter. Also find a review of Fr. Carl Arico's wonderful book *A Taste of Silence*. For further inspiration, we have included a piece on contemplative American poet Mary Oliver. Please check our website, **contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org**, for information on prayer groups and other events.

May those around us sense and experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit that are the gifts of our prayer life, and may we rest securely at all times in the heart of Christ.



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 organization's Vision Statement. Recently the core community has started listening to this statement utilizing the Lectio Divina method. We invite you to do the same.

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, 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 denomination, 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.

Please note that an expanded and updated version of the Vision Statement can be found on our website, at www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org.

“Our purpose is to share the method of Centering Prayer and its immediate conceptual background.”

Upcoming Introductory Workshops

Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that can serve to prepare us to receive the gifts of God's presence. The method is simple, yet profound in its effects. The goal of the workshop is to provide participants with the tools for Centering Prayer and to encourage a daily practice.

Introductory Workshop

Saint Anthony of Padua Catholic Church

March 12, 9 am - 1 pm

501 East 2nd Street

Casa Grande, AZ 85122

Theresa Herrera, office@stanthonycg.org, 520.836.0601

Sister Rachel Torrez, rtorrez@cox.net, 602.771.7818

MARCH
12

Introductory Workshop

May 14, 9 am - 1 pm

St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Sedona, AZ

Rusty Swavely, mbswavely@gmail.com, 928.282.2080

MAY
14

Two more Introductory Workshops are in the planning stages. They will be scheduled in April or May at Christ Presbyterian Church in Goodyear and Saint Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix. Information concerning these two workshops can be found on the web page in early Spring or you may contact Sister Rachel Torrez, rtorrez@cox.net, 602.771.7818

Contact People

The following people 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
Tempe 480.966.7558
- Rusty Swavely
Sedona 928.282.2080

Mary Oliver - American Poet

Prayers of the Unnoticed and the Ordinary

By Kate Brophy

I think of poets as I think of monks. A monk, defined by Thomas Merton, is a "marginalized person in the modern world. The monk is no longer an established person with an established place in society. He withdraws deliberately to the margin of society, with a view to deepening fundamental human experience."

Poets are like this. They delve into the center and core of their being, and many discover the ultimate reality of God, the realm of the spirit, where nature and humanity, the whole of life, becomes a tapestry of devotion and fierce exploration.

Mary Oliver, this country's best selling poet, is not widely known in contemplative circles. When discovered, she becomes a constant companion. Once you meet her poems, you will not be the same. She quietly expresses the great gift within all life, the Love that is the essence of us all, our ground of being, and the wellspring of daily discovery.

"My work is loving the world," she proclaims..."which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished."

Her rapturous love affair with nature celebrates the seasons, the bogs and swamps of Cape Cod, her home, the geese and hummingbirds, and the trees everywhere that call us to "stay awhile...It's simple, "they say," and you too have come/into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine."

In so many ways she pleads the idea and experience of union and communion.

It could be that I am a tiny piece of God
and each of you too,
or at least of his intention and his hope.

In another poem she seems to sing:

I want to see Jesus, maybe in the clouds,
or on the shore,
just walking, beautiful man
and clearly someone else besides.
On the hard days, I ask myself if I ever will.
Also there are times my body
whispers to me that I have.

Where do we go to fuel our joy and our need for solace and comfort? Many of us have found a space within where we encourage the hope and the mercy and tenderness that dwells in that mysterious and luminous silence within. Oliver is a poet of deep silence and crucial solitude. She strives for simplicity,

no frills in her poetry. She plants her heart and mind firmly into the essence of daily experience and she explores with casual devotion the mundane and unnoticed. Her poem "Praying" expresses this clearly.

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones, just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

Thomas Merton says that the "deepest level of communication is communion." We enter a beyond words, beyond image or concept world, and we discover an "older unity" that we are all One. We, of course, imagine we are not. Poets, your favorites, my favorites, can offer this pathway into a void, the deep silence that brings us into a new intimacy, a new union, a lasting communion. Oliver writes:

Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say, "Look!" and
laugh in astonishment, and bow their heads."

So she concludes in one of her more lengthy poems,

I have become the child of the clouds, and of hope.
I have become the friend of the enemy, whoever that is...

I have become older and, cherishing what I have learned,
I have become younger. And what do I risk to tell you this
which is all I know?
Love yourself, then forget it. Then love the world.

Mary Oliver has an unquenchable mystic's heart, and will reveal to us in the quiet folds of each day that shimmers with new meaning, how joyful it can be when we surrender what we know, embrace our ignorance, and reach for the silence within that holds the gifts of mystery and disclosure.

"Pay attention," she says, "Be astonished/tell someone about it." Everything in one seamless moment is to be received and released into the next invitation to love.

Book Review: *A Taste of Silence*, by Fr. Carl Arico

A Review by Dave Murray

A must read for anyone called to a contemplative prayer practice, *A Taste of Silence* by Fr. Carl Arico is best summarized by the author himself as an “introduction to the introductions” to the method of Centering Prayer and the Contemplative Christian Tradition.

First introduced to the method of Centering Prayer in 1975 by Fr. William Meninger, a fellow diocesan priest turned Trappist Monk, Fr. Arico's involvement in Centering Prayer grew. After becoming a founding member of Contemplative Outreach in 1984, he started working full time with this spiritual network in 1987.

In his straightforward, “down to earth” manner, Fr. Arico approaches contemplative prayer in this book through a presentation of elements which, when pieced together are the “making of a spiritual quilt” that forms the Christian contemplative heritage.

The first chapters outline the patches of this “Spiritual Quilt.” Starting with an introductory description and definition of basic terms of the many types of prayer, Fr. Arico shows where Contemplative Prayer fits in this framework. Next, Fr. Arico gives a brief history of the Contemplative tradition beginning at its Gospel roots and then filtering it through the lives of Christian saints and religious starting with St. Gregory of Nyssa (330-95) and working forward to Thomas Merton (1915-68). This history provides a sense of the long and deep tradition of contemplative prayer in the Christian heritage.

Next, Fr. Arico reveals the spiritual journey as a working out of relationships through our humanity,

relation of our core selves to the indwelling of the Trinity as well as in external relationships to those around us. Through this process, the spiritual journey unfolds, a point exemplified as Fr. Arico demonstrates how the life of Thomas Merton serves as a “paradigm of the Spiritual Journey” of a modern man.

The next three chapters look in depth at Lectio Divina, the Method of Centering Prayer, and the classic 14th century anonymous contemplative text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Here, Fr. Arico explains how each one is used as a tool to aid in deepening and broadening a contemplative prayer life. Of particular note, he stresses “The heart and soul of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and action within.”

In the chapter “Passive Purification: True Self, False Self,” Fr. Arico tells how the Contemplative path opens us to the action of the Spirit as it works at the four levels of Scriptural interpretation: literal, moral, allegorical and unitive. Through a Contemplative practice, we allow the Spirit to purify us of our False Self, that private self which tries to live an illusionary life independent of God. This purification results in the emergence of our True Self, the self “embraced by God.” In this manner, the fruit of Centering Prayer is to open the door to the contemplative gift of spiritual transformation “under the direction of the Holy Spirit,” including all aspects of one's life, both internal and external.

Readers will come away from this book with not only a deeper appreciation for Centering Prayer and the door it opens to Contemplation, but also feeling inspired to deepen this practice in their lives.

Memorials

Sue Carter Dahl, a member of the Glendale Prayer Group, passed away Dec. 20, 2010. Sue was born in S. Carolina in 1932, grew up in Atlanta and eventually moved to Arlington, SD. In 1995 she and her husband, Eugene, began spending winters in Phoenix where she became a member of Ss. Simon and Jude Cathedral. Sue was a gifted artist in multi mediums, was devoted to her six children, 20 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren. Devout in her faith, Sue was a blessed addition to our group with her prayerful insight and loving spirit. She will be missed.

Mary Beth Brooke died on January 1 from acute pneumonia following several years of increasing

weakness from multiple illnesses. She was 84. The memorial service at St. Dominic Catholic mission in Rio Verde was beautiful! Over two hundred of Mary Beth and Bob's friends were present, a testament to the lives touched by this gentle, loving woman. Family gathered from around the country, including Bob's three children, their spouses, and Mary Beth's sister in law and nephew representing the surviving remnants of her roots in East Texas. Friends from her new home at Sagewood were also present as were members of the contemplative community at St. Barnabas church. Readers Toni Minarich and Jackie Bergan reflected the importance of the Centering Prayer group at Rio Verde to Mary Beth and Bob's life together, and Bob' son Robert gave a short but moving remembrance. She will be remembered by many for her simple goodness, and will be greatly missed.

Received Gifts from a day with Fr. Martin Laird

by Mary Kaplan

On November 20th, 2010, at Central United Methodist Church in Phoenix, Arizona, Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A., an Augustinian priest and professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University and author of *Into the Silent Land* spoke to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix. The theme of the day was taken from a quotation from St. Augustine's *On the Trinity*: "Save me, oh God from the barrage of words which inwardly afflicts me." The lovely Pioneer Chapel with its large stained-glass image of the cross was the backdrop of Fr. Martin's talks.

Contemplatives from all over Arizona attended and comments from the day included: "Refreshment of my spiritual journey with his poetic touch and rich images, while at the same time quietly calling forth the need for commitment and discipline of the practice" and "Like going to the well of Living Water, I was drawn deeper into my prayer practice in a very practical way" and "I felt a burning within as I listened."

Truly the gift we received was wrapped in his lyrical and metaphorical language that lifted our hearts, minds and spirits as he unfolded the riches of the contemplative journey. Much of what Fr. Martin had to say concerned the relationship with thoughts during contemplative prayer practice, thoughts having to do with feelings, emotions, situations, conditions and persons. We go from experiencing thoughts as "being in a phone booth with a bee" in early stages of contemplation to noticing the pattern of our reactive commentaries as we cultivate stillness to awakening to the spaciousness and freedom that lies beyond "looking over the shoulder" of our thoughts. Thoughts are, after all, "as porous as screens." He says in *Into the Silent Land*, that "When we meet thoughts with stillness instead of commentary we allow into awareness what was previously kept out of awareness. Until we can see this, we will not see that there is something utterly vast and sacred already within us."

In His temptation in the desert, Jesus quotes scripture to Satan. He did not get caught up in conversation with Satan. Using scripture to break the cycle and momentum of chatter and thoughts is an ancient practice. St. Augustine used the term "arrow prayers" which are short prayers, or lines of psalms, or scripture to "look over the shoulder of thoughts."

Contemplative prayer is like "pushing off from the

side of the pool into the deep." Deep concentration leads to expanding awareness which leads to inner solitude and solidarity with all, so that a "sweetness emerges." This sweetness is a taste of new life bringing about a new way of being in the world and is an opening into freedom or the spaciousness that lies "over the shoulder."

Fr. Martin spoke of being "like a riverbed, receiving and letting go." Imagine a point in a riverbed where the water is coming at you, passing over you and moving on from you as a way of not clinging to thoughts. "Listen to Jesus as Mary to Gabriel." Think of the word, "Behold" as "engaged receptivity," an openness to receive, an attitude of prayer. We can never make the gift of contemplation happen—"a sailor cannot make the wind blow, but a skillful sailor" sees and listens for the wind with his entire being.

Later in the day, Father spoke of being "buffeted by the headwinds of chaos" with particular reference to depression, panic and anxiety. "We are Mt. Zion, not the weather that occurs on Mt. Zion." Inner calm is cultivated by contemplative prayer. Contemplative practice helps us to shift our attention from thoughts to the stillness of simple awareness itself rather than commentary. This practice can begin to interrupt and change anxious or depressive thought patterns. "Pain has a silent center, a thin window." "Stillness allows us to notice an opening to non-pain" or "the sun rising in the heart." In his book, Fr. Martin says that "Inner struggles (such as anxiety or depression and even emotional wounds) that any person of prayer must face, are like riddles, trying to draw us out of our own inner silence." He believes these problems can become aids to spiritual progress. "Interior struggle and bedrock peace often dwell together" (St. Theresa of Avila). But we do need to want to be free, many would rather be safe.

The effect of the day of Fr. Martin's teaching was to experience the joy and vitality that he spoke of as fruits of contemplation and to be inspired to open to the silence and stillness within and grow our contemplative prayer practice.

Four books were mentioned during the course of his talks: *The Grace in Dying, How we are Transformed Spiritually as we Die*, by Kathleen Singh; *The Catholic Thing*, by Rosemary Haughton; *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* by Chogyam Trungpa and *The Praktikos* by Evagrius Ponticus. We can look forward to Fr. Martin's next book, due out in June of 2011, which will continue his work on contemplative practice.

Joyous Cooking

by Becky Weinberg

As I stepped into the kitchen of the Guest House at Santa Rita Abbey in early January, 2011, I was struck by the quiet simplicity it evoked. This was the place where I was to work along with Mary and Phil for the next week and I slowly discovered that the kitchen would become much more than a place of “quiet simplicity.” As we unloaded our cars, it began to come alive with expectation. The vegetables and fruits brought with them a rainbow of color; the bread, substance for the body and soul; and as the cupboards, refrigerator and freezers became full with God's bounty, I knew there would be excitement and nourishment to see us through the week. In the process of putting ingredients together, taking them apart, and putting them together again, Mary, Phil and I became a team embraced by the energy of the moment. God took each of us on a journey during this week of silence as we rearranged

not only our menus but ourselves and then He brought us once again toward wholeness as we celebrated the Holy Spirit working in each one of us.

Being in the kitchen became a contemplative experience...creating a meal for others an experience in *humility*, washing dishes in silence brought *oneness*, hanging the dishtowels on the clothesline *simplicity*, and on our last morning, as we cleaned the Guest House and Retreat House along with the those attending the retreat, a deep feeling of *unity*. God had truly gifted each one of us with His love.

Gunilla Norris states in her book, *Becoming Bread*, “We go to the kitchen to be nourished and revealed. It is a holy place.” Thanks be to God for giving me the opportunity to experience this “holy place” in my life...an incredible week of being at one with the Spirit.

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 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, 602.955.6057



*God doesn't intend merely
to look at people...
Life, once one has said 'yes' to God,
is what God wants it to be.
It is full of surprises.
And you can be sure
that whatever you expect to happen
will not happen!*

Thomas Keating



SPRING RETREAT
FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER
Father Carl Arico and Father Jim Clark
April 6-10, 2011

“Centering Prayer and the Gospel of John”

“There is no room at the inn.” We are sorry to say that this retreat has been filled to capacity - 60 retreatants - since December. At the same time we are happy for those who will be attending! And for sure it has made us aware of the deep hunger for contemplative prayer as many disappointed contemplatives were turned away. However, here is another invitation:

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH
MINI-RETREAT
Sunday, April 10th
from 2:00-6:00 PM
with FATHER CARL ARICO
At the Casa

Fr. Carl has generously offered to augment the previously planned Contemplative Outreach Reunion with a MINI-RETREAT from 2:00 - 6:00 PM on Sunday April 10th. Fr. Carl will present his basic reflections from the earlier retreat. There will be centering prayer together and time for community connecting.

We will ask those in attendance to give a generous donation in gratitude for Fr. Carl's graciousness in making this experience available to those who could not be accommodated on the earlier retreat.

To register call the Franciscan Renewal Center --- The Casa ---
 480.948.7460
 Registration will be limited

PRESENTER'S TRAINING
FORMATION

On March 23 to 25, 2011, Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix is providing an opportunity for anyone interested in obtaining a deeper grasp of the essentials of Centering Prayer and to be able to share it effectively with others. We are planning a **Formation for Contemplative Service including Presenter's Training** in Phoenix from March 23 to 25, meeting from 9 AM until 5 PM each day. The training will be held in the relaxed and comfortable setting of a private home and will be limited to 6 participants.

The theory is “good practitioners make good presenters, facilitators, and administrative helpers.” Because the group spends 3 days focusing on the Centering Prayer practice itself, they are better able to understand the essentials of Centering Prayer and the many nuances of the practice. This deeper understanding helps them to better recognize that contemplative service is service freely offered without expectation of return.

Contemplative Service is not tied to roles or only those willing to function in a specific way. Rather one sees a need and fills it. Contemplative Service is God in us serving God in others.

The schedule includes:

- Two periods of Centering Prayer each day
- Daily workshops on presenting *An Introduction to Centering Prayer*
- Participants present portions of the same material to a small group
- Presentation by the staff of sessions 2-7 and small group discussion
- Discussion of issues
- Viewing of a new DVD presentation by Thomas Keating

For more information or to register, contact

Margaret “Rusty” Swavely, 928.282.2080,
mbswavely@gmail.com;

or Mary Leonard, 480.966.5955,
marywleonard@hotmail.com.

Please act quickly because space is limited. The cost is \$65.

UNITED IN PRAYER DAY

Saturday, March 19, 2011, 9:00am-1:00pm

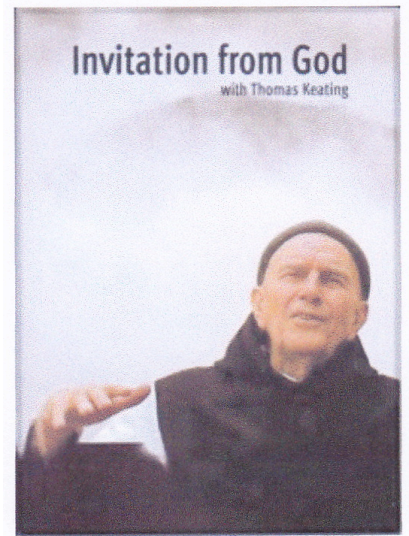
Central United Methodist Church

1875 N. Central Ave

Phoenix

MARCH

19



“INVITATION from GOD”

A dvd made by a Danish film maker, Marie Louise Lefevre and filmed on site at St. Benedict's Monastery.

Around the world, members of Contemplative Outreach will be gathering at different times of the day to center, to listen to Thomas Keating and to share the spiritual journey with brothers and sisters. Since the inception of this prayer day in 1992, over 20,000 participants have experienced this day together. It promises to be a rich day. All are welcome!

Registration: Jeannie Lashinke

480.423.1645

Email: lashinske@cox.net

or register on line at

contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org

Suggested Donation: \$15.00



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Return Receipt Requested