



Dear Centering Prayer Community of Arizona,

We are pleased to send you this rich and varied newsletter. By the time the events described here happen, we will be out of this Summer oven and enjoying the Fall and Winter for which Arizona is famous. If you enjoy the newsletter, please think of others to share it with like people who might just be waiting for this information. Thank you.

On October 31, 2026, we will welcome Rev. Stephen Rehrauer, C.Ss.R. for a half-day retreat at Shepherd of the Hills UCC, Phoenix, AZ. Fr. Stephen is the Director of the Picture Rock Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, AZ. He is a person of broad contemplative and international experience. He will lead us in an exploration of what it means to have “stilled and quieted my soul,” in an increasingly distracted world. Let’s give him a warm welcome!

You will also find a personal reflection on his first eight-day intensive retreat by a member of St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church. This church has a seasoned Contemplative Life program including monthly

Quiet Days and a Taizé service. The Twelve-Step Outreach program of Contemplative Outreach also shares calendar items for your consideration.

The newest book by Sr. Joyce Rupp, O.S.M. is reviewed by Sr. Rachel Torrez, “The Years of Ripening: Reflections on Aging in the Later Years.”

Contemplative wisdom is especially valuable as we age into our eighties and face many changes and losses. Enjoy the excerpts from this lovely book.

Also, we once again will be able to offer two intensive centering prayer retreats at Santa Rita Abbey in Sonoita, AZ. Generous donations have enabled us to keep the cost at about half of what similar retreats typically charge. If you have been drawn to making a retreat perhaps now is the time to seize the moment!

As always, we join you in the silence and pray for each other and for the world.

**In Silence, Solidarity and Service,
Your Chapter Service Team**

“Seeing with the Eyes of Your Heart”

Reflections on My First Intensive Retreat

By Chuck Neal, Member of
Saint Barnabas on the Desert
Episcopal Church



I frequently revisit the epilogue of *Into the Silent Land* by Martin Laird, OSA as it always brings me back to silent presence by contemplating the question “Who are you?” In the book, a certain Father Alypius is questioned by a novice about his struggles to make his profession. Through their ensuing dialog we learn that who he is, and in fact who we all are, is a ray of God’s own light. The young monk finds this silly. The Father responds: “You say you seek God, but a ray of light doesn’t seek the sun; it’s coming from the sun. You are a branch on the vine of God. A branch doesn’t seek the vine; it’s already part of the vine. A wave doesn’t look for the ocean; it’s already full of the ocean. Because you don’t know that who you are is one with God, you believe all these labels about yourself. I am this, I am that. These labels, these words, serve a purpose but they are not who you are. To the extent you believe these labels, you believe a lie, and you add anguish upon anguish. It’s what most of us do with our lives.”

I’d hoped to attend the Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix intensive retreat at Santa Rita Abbey to move past my incessant label-based thinking, immerse in my practice and deepen my sense of knowing who I really am as my reality. Just a few hours away, the trip is a relatively easy one from the Valley. As it turned out, getting there was a little more complicated—and even richer for the twists and turns along the way. Diane and I had registered for the January 2025 retreat with great anticipation. We’d discovered Centering Prayer in 2017 at an event at Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church. That March day marked the beginning of our contemplative journey. Over the years, we’ve participated in a variety of group

gatherings and three-day retreats, which deepened our practice and prepared us for something more. We were ready, we thought, for the eight-day intensive.

In December 2024, Diane fell and broke both of her ankles. Surgery and rehabilitation forced us to cancel our retreat plans, but we talked often about how much we looked forward to 2026. We signed up as soon as registration opened (advised as space is limited) and once again began planning our journey, set to begin on January 16th. On January 1, 2026, I woke up with severe pain on my upper right side. Our New Year’s Eve celebration had been more elaborate than usual, involving steak, lobster and champagne. Initially, this rich food seemed a likely explanation. But as the hours wore on and the pain increased, we headed to the ER, where I was diagnosed with multiple pulmonary embolisms in both lungs.

Armed with blood thinners after a three-day hospital stay, I was a little shaken but feeling pretty good. Every doctor we asked gave me permission to attend the retreat. Still, we wrestled with the decision ... prayed about it ... conferred with the wise and wonderful Jeannie Lashinske, whom we had yet to meet. Diane kept insisting we aren’t “high maintenance people,” but we wouldn’t have blamed anyone for thinking otherwise. At the very last minute, we decided to attend and set off for Sonoita.

A brief recap for those who haven’t yet had the opportunity to attend this superb retreat. Silence is kept throughout, with the exception of evening meals

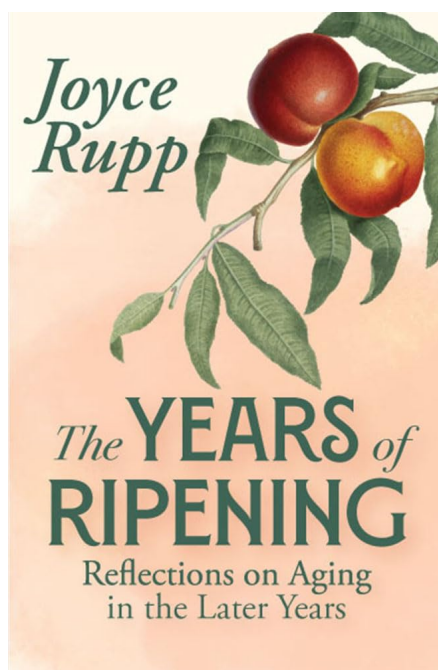
and brief personal sharing after dinner. Days comprise these main activities: three one-hour Centering Prayer periods in the Spiritual Retreat House chapel; optional morning lauds and evening vespers in the Abbey Chapel, where the Sisters sing psalms and offer a brief worship service, contributing to a deep sense of God's presence. Watching videos featuring Father Thomas Keating's teachings rounds out the day. We had seen parts of his videos in the past but hadn't watched them as a whole until the retreat. We could feel his generous spirit guiding us.

The Abbey grounds and buildings are beautiful and peaceful. In the past, I often found myself overwhelmed by thoughts and stories, trying to quietly introduce my sacred word. I did find it easier to slip into deep, silent presence at Santa Rita, and now, at home, I can often be that silent observer of thoughts—something I'd never been quite able to reach. There was a strong feeling of connection with

everyone as we bonded over the shared practice of prayer, delicious meals and cleaning up together. Everything seemed to slow down for me as the week went on. I was eating more slowly, experiencing a harmony with everything around me, and sensing more rhythm in my body movements, which is very difficult, perhaps impossible to describe with words. It has to be felt.

Early one morning, Diane and I strolled down the road to the Abbey Chapel. The sun peeked over the horizon, casting a soft pink-orange glow. Our shadows stretched long and thin, and the sound of our shoes crunching on the pebbles filled the air. I felt a deep sense of calm, of moving with gentle, untroubled ease. I remembered the name of that first event at Saint Barnabas in 2017—“Seeing with the Eyes of Your Heart.”

Perhaps for the first time, I was.



The Years of Ripening : Reflections on Aging in the Later Years **By Sister Joyce Rupp O.S.M**

*Reflections by Sr. M. Rachel Torrez, RSM
Sisters of Mercy*

*I have long admired the spiritual wisdom and writings of Sr. Joyce Rupp, as I imagine many of you have too. She and I are both in our eighties now, and her recent book (August 2025), *The Years of Ripening* speaks meaningfully to this time of life. Contrary to some common perceptions of what it means to be old, our “years of ripening” offer subtle and deeply consoling gifts, if we know where to look. Here are some of my favorite passages. I hope they will inspire you to pick up this little book:*

“Who can say when Elderhood or being old begins? Many things depend on how we age, like health of our body, mind and spirit. Being old presents an opportunity to make peace

with the part of oneself that balks at the limitations and relinquishments one must face. The final years ask us to recognize our own mortality and to accept it in a way that ensures a serene passing.”

“One of the most valuable gifts of older people is the ability to listen. To be a listening, caring presence. The gift of being less attached to material things, the ability to read for pleasure rather than a professional update. We allow ourselves to enjoy life for the sake of enjoying life. There is no longer a need to hurry, or push ourselves into activities and responsibilities of our profession.”

“As we age we experience losses some which may be painful. The loss of our independence, our freedom to go as we please, the loss of our health which prevents us from those activities we so enjoyed. Regrets in later years can involve more than feeling bad for our actions that brought harm to someone, not having developed certain talents, or having missed opportunities to follow long held dreams. What good does it do to castigate ourselves for something we cannot undo. Why not focus on the ways that we are loving, caring persons.”

“How often we moan and groan about something that has been taken away from us, failing to notice that we are surrounded with gifts given. We can grow in the habit of focusing on the positives rather than the negatives of old age. Finding the good in the not so good is something we can achieve as we continue to age. Gratitude moves us toward being generative. The more we acknowledge how much has been bestowed to us, the better motivated we are to share from the chalice of our fullness. To help others when they are in need is so natural we rarely stop to think about the full scope of its benefits. Helping others brings out the best in us at any age, but as we grow

older we come to feel that this life is a gift that we yearn to repay.”

“Look at all the good you have done, little by little, person by person, over all these years with every helping act, with every kind word you spoke. You have acted from a deep sense of compassion. You have sacrificed for the sake of others. If every bit of good you have done were a grain of sand, you would be standing on a beach. “

“Pope Francis looks on aging and the gift of old age as waiting to live. Using our time to sow seeds of goodness, kindness, tenderness, and wisdom wherever and however we can. The last decades of life ought to not be a stifling waiting room where we just sit and wait for our name to be called. We need to keep adapting to new circumstances. Enjoy what we can while we can. Be at peace while choosing to immerse ourselves in the beauty, wonder, and happy surprises coming our way while we are still able to enjoy them. Do not put off what you hope to say or to do with one another; give yourself fully to what you want to enjoy in the remaining years that you have left.”

“Surrendering in old age becomes increasingly frequent until the moment arrives when there is nothing left to release except the last exhalation. We will be ready for this final yielding because we will have become a pro at surrendering.”

AZ Contacts

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- Robert Johnson.....Prescott
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EIGHT DAY SILENT RETREATS in 2027

Intensive Retreat:

Friday evening January 15 through Saturday noon
January 23, 2027

(Optional dual track Post Intensive Retreat)

The retreat is open to all who have a 6-month centering prayer practice. There are about six 30-minute Centering Prayer periods daily. The prayer is supported by the viewing of Fr. Thomas Keating's Spiritual Journey DVDs, plus selections from his life's teachings. We will also share in Lectio Divina and soul-friending with staff. Also available is the opportunity to participate daily in Lauds, Liturgy (Communion Service) and Vespers with the Trappistine Sisters in their nearby sanctuary. There will be talking at the evening meal.

Retreat fee: \$650 per person.

Registration:

Partial scholarships are available. If you have a need, please let Jeannie Lashinske know when you register. A non-refundable deposit of \$100 will reserve your place, while space is available. Please mail a check, made out to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix, to

Jeannie Lashinske, 5728 East Orange Blossom Lane, Phoenix, AZ 85018.

We expect the remaining balance will be paid in full by January 3, 2027. Questions? Ask Jeannie by calling (480) 423-1645 or emailing her at jmlashinske@gmail.com. If you prefer to pay using Zelle, email Jeannie for the cell phone number.

Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix offers silent intensive retreats to those who are interested in renewing and deepening their relationship with God through Centering Prayer in a community setting and wrapped in an atmosphere of profound silence. The retreats take place in Sonoita, AZ at the Santa Rita Abbey Retreat Center (santaritaabbey.org), about an hour south of Tucson. This is a natural setting on high desert terrain. There are seven private rooms, and one queen bed apartment that can accommodate two retreatants. Each room has its own bath. The retreat menu is vegetarian.

Post-Intensive Retreat:

Friday evening February 5 through Saturday noon
February 13, 2027.

Pre-requisite: Must have attended an intensive retreat. This retreat consists of eight 30-minute Centering Prayer periods daily. There is time for individual quiet time: writing, sketching, walking, etc. We are invited also to share in the sisters' prayers of: Lauds, Liturgy, Vespers and Compline. This is a totally silent retreat. Soul-friending with staff can be scheduled.

Retreat fee: \$650 per person.

A generous grant from the national office of Divine Economy, plus other donations from our community, have enabled us to offer this retreat at a discount of \$150 per person. Retreat costs have risen everywhere but it is our intention that our retreats be available to anyone who feels called. Please contact Jeannie Lashinske to explore options. We are here for you.

MAY WE ASK FOR YOUR HELP?

Check your Centering Prayer Group Listing

It is time to check that our state-wide prayer groups are accurate on our local website. If you lead or head up a group, please go to the Group section at www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org and check on it for current information. It would help us greatly. Please email any corrections to Jeannie Lashinske at jmlashinske@gmail.com and thank you so much.

Format our Next Newsletter

If you have experience designing newsletters like this one, we are looking for someone to take over from Rusty Swavely, who has devoted her time and care for many years to our two annual newsletters. She is ready to hand over the baton.

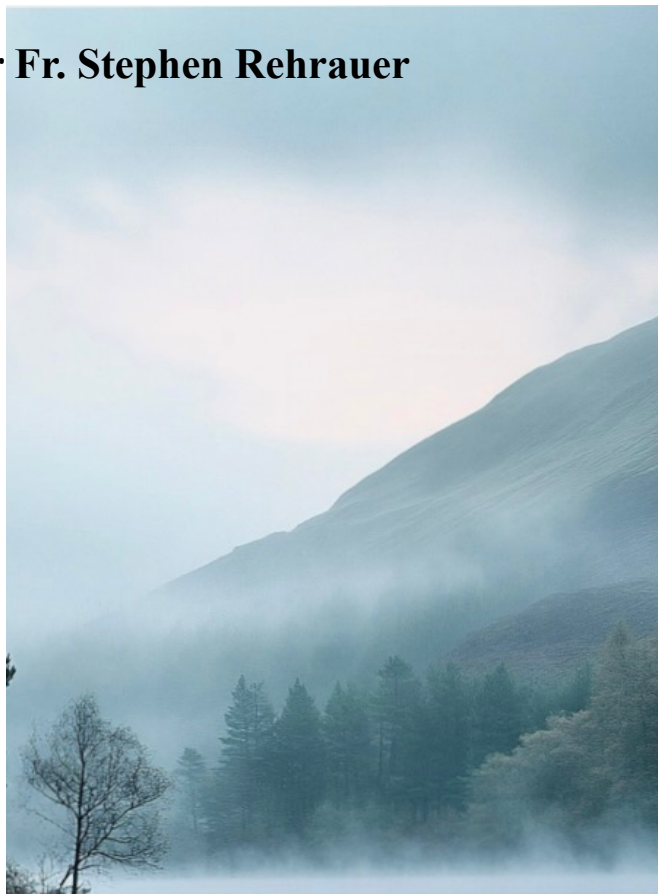
We would be happy to compensate someone. Please contact Kathy Kramer-Howe at kramerhowe@gmail.com. Thank you.

A Big Community Welcome for Fr. Stephen Rehrauer

How long has it been since you've sat in the presence of a mature and realized contemplative teacher? Perhaps just a year, since October 2025 when we invited Fr. Bill Sheehan, OMI to speak? Perhaps more recently or a lot longer than that.

On October 31, 2026 we will welcome Fr. Stephen Rehrauer, C.Ss.R for a renewal and retreat day at Shepherd of the Hills UCC Church in Phoenix, AZ. Fr. Stephen is the Director of the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, also known as Picture Rocks, where he regularly conducts contemplative retreats during the year. His path to get there has been fascinating and varied.

Fr. Stephen became a Redemptorist priest in 1980. He has academic degrees in Philosophy and Religious Education, as well as a Doctorate in Moral Theology from the Comillas Pontifical University in Madrid, Spain. In addition to teaching anthropology and moral theology for many years in Rome and Madrid, he has traveled extensively directing workshops in Asia, the Americas and Africa.





I Have Stilled and Quieted My Soul

Oct 31, 2026 • 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM •

Shepherd of the Hills UCC, 5524 E. Lafayette Blvd., Phoenix, AZ



God constantly is speaking to us from deep within our souls. But our ability to hear and love that voice is impeded by the constant frantic noise of the world around us. We become so used to noise we even in moments of silence we usually will create internal noise in our minds. Actively stilling and quieting our souls enables us to hear that voice of our creator who speaks to us in a language without words.

Rev. Stephen T. Rehrauer is Director of the Redemptorist Renewal Center Tucson, where he regularly conducts intensive contemplative retreats throughout the year.

Rev. Rehrauer was ordained a Redemptorist Priest in 1980. He holds several academic degrees and has taught moral theology and anthropology in Madrid and Rome and directed workshops in Asia, the Americas and Africa. He has extensive pastoral experience.

He has been practicing Christian Contemplation, Centering Prayer, Zen Meditation, and Tai Chi Chuan for more than 40 years.

Fee of \$25 (scholarships available). Register: www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org

Or mail registration to: Sister Rachel Torrez

909 E Northern Ave #427
Phoenix AZ 85020

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Make check out to **Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix**

For questions or additional information contact: Sister Rachel at (602) 663-1851



My heart is not proud, O LORD,
my eyes are not haughty.
I do not aspire to great things
or matters too lofty for me.

Surely

I have stilled and quieted my soul:

like a weaned child with his mother,
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
both now and forevermore

A song of ascents

Psalm 131



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