

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH NEWS

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The Spiritual Senses, Part I

by *Father Thomas Keating*

The disciples of the Lord who are most clearly delineated in the Gospel as advanced in prayer and faith are Mary of Bethany and John the Evangelist. John resting in the bosom of the Lord is a lively image of the resting of contemplative prayer. The word for "bosom" signifies he was resting in the hollow of Jesus' chest; that is, in the valley between the breasts. In other words, he could not get any closer. And it was there that he was listening to the heartbeat of the Savior, which is the purpose of contemplative prayer and its mysterious resting.

Another paradigm of contemplation is Mary of Bethany sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His discourse. Some translations speak of His "words," others of His "word." If the latter is correct, we have a lively image of what takes place in *Lectio Divina*, the oldest method of Christian meditation leading to the penetrating knowledge of Christ.

Lectio Divina is not designed to learn something on the conceptual level, still less is it biblical study which is useful at another time. It is just hanging out with Christ and using the texts for conversation. The same Spirit who inspired the text is within us inspiring us to understand what the Spirit is saying to us day by day.

The conversation develops after the manner of an interview or heavy date. A heavy date is something you do not miss. Fidelity to the interview day by day proves one's sincerity and determination to grow in this deepening relationship with Christ.

As Mary of Bethany sat listening to his words, a blurring took place. Not the blurring of somnambulance, but the blurring of the superficial level of discursive meditation. This blurring was the result of her attraction to go beyond words to the Word, to the Person who was speaking, and to enter into union with that Person. In the perspective of the developing friendship of Christ, the words of scripture are take-off points.

Mary of Bethany is a model of how a developing relationship with Christ moves beyond acquaintanceship to the commitment that characterizes friendship. You cannot walk away from a friendship without breaking someone's heart. Mary at the feet of Jesus was com-

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National Presenter Training

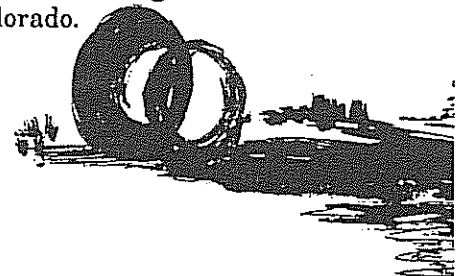
A national presenter training will occur in Indiana at the Beech Grove Benedictine Center in early August. It was decided at the 1988 Summit Meeting in Snowmass, Colorado that there was a particular need to increase the number of those qualified to present Introductory Centering Prayer workshops.

According to Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, Executive Director of Contemplative Outreach, the original vision of Father Thomas Keating when Contemplative Outreach was established was a broad one. "His idea was to empower others to do workshops."

According to Gail, "this particular training is for people who basically have been presenting or facilitating workshops and Centering Prayer groups." She said the Indiana presenters training will give them a chance to come together for more intensive study on presenting Centering Prayer in the context of the Christian tradition.

"Our culture is so complex...people expect things to be complex. When you call something teaching this implies learning, effort or work. Centering Prayer is none of these things, but rather involves consent to God's presence and action within us." Gail said the August training is an effort to keep the simplicity and integrity of Centering Prayer as a means for living the contemplative life.

The 48 people who will attend the August training will return to their respective regions and act as consultants in those local areas, and conduct in-service workshops for facilitators. They represent all regions in the U.S. as well as England and the Philippines. A long-range plan is to conduct such trainings regionally, with those who have attended this training, in concert with members of the national faculty, as regional faculty. The national faculty consists of twelve persons chosen by Fr. Thomas to make the first presenter training a reality. The first regional training will occur in December in Snowmass, Colorado.



National Contemplative Update

Centering Prayer introductory workshops, follow-up programs, weekly prayer support groups, intensive days of prayer, weekend retreats, week long and intensive retreats are occurring in many regions of this county and beyond. A partial listing of area contact people follows.

Colorado

Denver: Sr. Bernadette Teasdale, 303-422-9174; Boulder: Barbara Hayden, 303-494-2845; Snowmass: Pat Johnson, 303-963-3964.

Colorado Springs: Benet Hill, 719-473-6184.

Connecticut

Avon: Rev. Jon Widing, 203-673-9630;

Stratford: Fr. Thomas Lynch 203-375-5887.

Florida

Winter Park: San Pedro Center, Linda Beauregard, 407-671-6322. Ten-day intensive retreat at San Pedro Center by Fr. Carl Arico. Call for more information.

Miami area: Sr. Mary Claire Donnelly, 305-661-8591;

Tampa Bay Area: Monica Freeman, 813-393-7224;

Venice Area: Mimi Reilly, 813-484-9543.

Hawaii

Spiritual Life Center: Sr. Katherine, 808-988-7800.

Illinois

Geoffrey: Fr. Bill Sheehan, 618-466-2233

Indiana

Beechgrove: Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, 317-787-3287;

Ferdinand: Sr. Maria Tasto, 812-367-1295.

Iowa

Davenport: Marie Howard, 319-324-1911

Maine

Waldoboro: Adele Millette, 207-832-6263.

Massachusetts

Western Mass: Connie Daniel, 413-253-9451;

Boston Area: Ed Gray, 617-740-1154;

North Shore: Brother John Crocker, 508-546-3066.

Minnesota

Frontenac: Villa Maria Center, Sr. Mary Andrew Ashmann, 612-345-3455.

Missouri

St. Louis: Fr. Bob Aten, 314-644-2144

New Jersey

Butler: Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, 201-838-3384; North Plainfield, Mt. St. Mary's House of Prayer, Sr. Eileen Smith, 201-753-2091; Lincroft, St. Leo the Great, Sr. Celeste Crine, 201-747-5466; Peaquannock: Leonard Kruck, 201-839-7586; Union County: Ann Gessner, 201-276-6108; Newark: Sr. Judy Mertz, 201-596-4247; Franklin Lakes: Fr. John Healey, 201-891-4200.

New York

Brooklyn: Sr. Mary Anna, 718-996-3386; New York City: Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, 201-838-3384;

Long Island: Anne Mazza, 516-599-0957, George Gerardi, 516-627-8650;

Jamesville: Frances Plude, 315-446-6217; Port Chester: Sr. Kathleen Kurtain, 914-937-2440.

Ohio

Cleveland: Bill Singelis, 216-731-6651

Oklahoma

Tulsa: Fr. Patrick Eastman, 918-298-4181.

Texas

Houston: Ruah Center, Sr. Adeline O'Donahue, 713-928-6053; Fred Eckhart & Joe Eisenberg, 713-847-3513.

Washington

Seattle: Paul Peterhans, 206-329-6182;

Spokane: Sr. Carmen Echiavaria.

Hispanic Community Information

Mercedes Scopetta is contacting and gathering information about existing groups and people interested in bilingual Centering Prayer Groups. 305-643-6550.

(Additions to National Update should be sent to Connie Daniel, P.O. Box 1186, Amherst, MA 01104)

Intensive Centering Prayer Retreats

Ten Day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreats are offered at St. Benedict's Monastery, Snowmass, Colorado, by Fr. Thomas Keating and staff of Contemplative Outreach. Contact Pat Johnson, Registrar, 689 Colorado Ave., Carbondale, CO 81623. Phone: (303) 963-3964.

Spiritual Journey Tapes Rental

"*THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY*," Father Thomas Keating's series in 24 sessions: audio or video (VHS) format. Write to: Contemplative Outreach Media, 1591 Gateway Road, Snowmass, CO, 81654 or call Bill or Barbara Howell at (303) 927-3656 to order or for more information.

Questions About Centering Prayer

Question: I find myself using the sacred word less than I have in the past. Is that okay?

Fr. Thomas: Its use will normally vary from one period of prayer to the next. The principle is always, use it to go towards greater peace, silence, and beyond. Pick it up or lay it down according to its usefulness. It is not a vehicle to go from the surface of your faculties to the depths. It is a condition that one sets up in order to go there. Suppose I have a ball in my hand and stretch out my arm. If I open my hand, the ball will fall. Opening my hand is not the means by which the ball falls to the floor. It is rather the condition of the ball falling to the floor. The sacred word is a condition, a direction that one takes, and then lets go. The attraction of grace takes over after that.

Question: During Centering Prayer, is it all right to think about what is happening, or is it better to forget what is happening?

Fr. Thomas: It is good to suspend judgment during the time of Centering Prayer. Afterwards, it can be helpful to reflect on your experience, so that you can gradually develop a conceptual background to sustain your motivation. As you gain new insights, you have to integrate them into the rest of your life of faith. That requires some form of conceptualization. But during prayer you do not have to analyze it to enjoy its benefits.

Question: What is the relationship between the time of Centering Prayer and the rest of one's life?

Fr. Thomas: The inward silence that one experiences in Centering Prayer will not be reserved to that time. Moments of silence will overtake you in the course of daily life. When the process of purification does its work, the awareness of the presence of God will become more frequent because there will be fewer interior obstacles to interfere with it. When the obstacles inside are emptied out, the light of God's presence will illumine your spirit even when you are immersed in activity. Our spirit is the dwelling place of the Spirit of Christ. That fact will gradually become part of every other reality and will not be overshadowed by circumstances, external objects, thoughts and emotions, even in the midst of a lot of activity. As the unconscious is emptied out, the awareness of your center leads to the awareness of the center in everyone else. Instead of seeing characteristics you like or do not like, you see what is most real in everyone—Christ dwelling within them.

(We look forward to hearing your response to Fr. Thomas' answers)

Prison Ministry

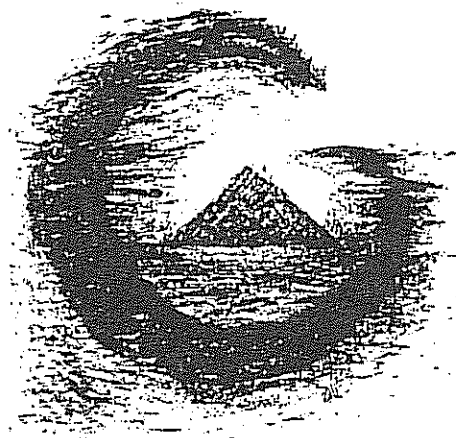
by Fr. Carl Arico

Security is tight. There is no rushing. It is an exercise in waiting. I wait to move to the next area when it is considered safe. Finally I arrive at the conference room. There are 26 prisoners waiting to attend the workshop on Centering Prayer. A guard watches. I have been invited by Fr. 'Chip' O'Toole, the prison chaplain. It cannot be the usual one day introductory workshop. The prison schedule will not allow for this. Two sessions are scheduled, from 8 to 10:30 in the morning and from 12:30 to 3:30 in the afternoon.

The workshop begins with a wait and see attitude on the part of the men. Even though it is a beautiful afternoon and outdoor recreation is an option, all but two men return for the afternoon session. By the end of the afternoon there is a free sharing of questions and experiences.

New Jersey State Prison is for men who are serving a minimum sentence of 25 years. As I leave I can only think of the title of the book on prison prayer groups, *"We're All Doing Time."* I will be returning to do an intensive day of prayer with them.

(Contemplative Outreach would like to hear from you if you have had any experiences with prison inmates and Centering Prayer).



Appeal For Funds

A direct mail appeal will soon be underway to raise the funds necessary to continue the work of **Contemplative Outreach**. There are ever increasing demands for workshops and intensive retreats. In order to meet these requests several projects are underway, including development and creation of materials, facilitator workshops and presenter training programs. It is also our hope to produce the newsletter more frequently. Your continued help will be much appreciated.

The Spiritual Senses, continued from page one

muning with the Person who was speaking. To commune is to rest in each other's presence and to enjoy the mutual gift of each other's presence without saying or doing anything, except perhaps to hold hands. The personal gift of oneself to God and of God to us is exactly what contemplation, understood in its traditional meaning, is.

Suppose in our daily encounter with the Lord, as we listen to the text and reflect upon various aspects of it responding with gratitude, humility, love, petition, sorrow, joy, we feel this blurring of the conceptual level because we are beginning to interiorize the content or the substance of the message. Jesus becomes not just a concept but a Person; not a picture or statue, but a living presence speaking to our heart through his Spirit.

To maintain that attentiveness, one may find it helpful to use a short phrase or word to sustain the general, loving awareness of the presence of Christ. For those who come out of the Christian tradition, listening is a good starting point because we are used to hearing the word of God in the liturgy and in private scripture reading. However, one who is visually orientated may prefer as the take-off point a visual image such as an icon. The significance of an icon as opposed to a picture is that the presence of the Mystery is believed to be communicated by the icon. Moreover, it is not so much we who are looking at the icon as God looking at us. If we are already enveloped by the loving gaze of God, we do not have to do anything to obtain His attention. This is what might be called the awakening of spiritual attentiveness. All prayer, ritual and the sacraments are designed to awaken spiritual attentiveness. They are designed to awaken not more thoughts or more particular acts, but the total surrender of self to the Presence that is giving itself to us.

A third take-off point, hallowed by tradition, is the sacred breath. This practice consists of identifying one's normal breathing with inhaling the divine Spirit and exhaling the divine love into the universe. Whichever take-off point one feels most comfortable with, one does not remain on that level. The take-off point is just the occasion that institutes the process of interiorization to the spiritual level of hearing the word of God, gazing upon God or breathing God.

Once these starting points have awakened spiritual attentiveness, you forget the take-off point and rest in the presence of the Mystery, beyond words and particular acts except, ever so gently, to maintain the general loving awareness of the Presence.

(This is Part I of a 4 part series on the Spiritual Senses)

Residency at Chrysalis House

Short term residents make a commitment of 2 weeks, 1 month or longer to immerse themselves in the process of contemplative formation by participating in our life-style and daily schedule:

5:00 A.M.	Bell, Wake-up
5:30	MORNING PRAYER (Morning readings, Centering Prayer)
6:45	DAILY MASS (Local Parish) SOLITUDE (Spiritual Reading, Prayer, bkfst)
12:00 PM	MID-DAY PRAYER (Psalm, Centering Prayer)
1:00	DINNER (in common with conversation)
2:00	Work Duties, Recreation
5:30	EVENING PRAYER (Evening Readings, Centering Prayer)
6:45	SOLITUDE (Spiritual Reading, Prayer, Pick-up supper)

Silence is kept from 5:30 in the evening until 9 A.M. the next morning.

- Tuesday night and all day Wednesday are recreation times.
- Periodic retreats according to retreat schedule
- Weekly formation meetings
- Spiritual guidance.
- Offering — \$20/day, which includes all scheduled retreats.

CHRYSALIS HOUSE, 21 Ball Road, Warwick, NY 10990
(914) 986-8050



Contemplative Outreach National Office

Networking, resources, and workshop presenters are available. Contact: Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, *Executive Director*, P.O. Box 737, Butler, NJ 07405. (201) 838-3384.

Articles or updates for *Contemplative Outreach News* can be sent to Connie Daniel, *Editor*, Contemplative Outreach News, P.O. Box 1186, Amherst, MA 01004.

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