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**United in Prayer Day
"Healing Violence"
March 17, 2018**

**Sample Schedule and Format for a Group Retreat Day
with suggested audio and video segments**

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This is a suggested format and schedule for a group day of prayer with audio or video teachings. Please adjust per the amount of scheduled time and the size of the group gathered. Download the audio or online video (or purchase DVD) and prepare and preview the segments before using it with the group.

You may want to use some of the wisdom quotes included in this document for event promotion or for participant reflection and group sharing on the day of the event.

Note: If you are using the "Human Evolution" *God is Love* video segment, it contains extended viewing of a William Congdon art image (an additional three minutes). The images may be used as a vestibule for preparing for private or group reflection. Or, you may simply turn off the video after Fr. Thomas is finished speaking.

Suggested schedule:

- 9:00 Gathering/introduction/orientation
- 9:30 20-minute period of Centering Prayer
- 10:00 View or listen to the chosen audio or video segment
- 10:30 Time for silent reflection and break
- 10:45 Small group sharing* and/or view/listen to another segment

Reflection: What word or phrase speaks to you at this time in your journey? What arises from your inmost being? How are you called to renounce violence in yourself?

- 12:00 Lunch (silence optional)
- 1:00 20-minute period of Centering Prayer
- 1:30 Lectio Divina in community with a Scripture passage of your choice, or you may use one of these:

*Jesus summoned the crowd again and said to them,
“Hear me, all of you, and understand.
Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person;
but the things that come out from within are what defile.”*

*When he got home away from the crowd
his disciples questioned him about the parable.
He said to them,
“Are even you likewise without understanding?
Do you not realize that everything
that goes into a person from outside cannot defile,
since it enters not the heart but the stomach
and passes out into the latrine?”
(Thus he declared all foods clean.)
“But what comes out of the man, that is what defiles him.
From within the man, from his heart,
come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder,
adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy,
blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All these evils come from within and they defile.”
- Mark 7: 14 - 23*

or

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you
[falsely] because of me.
- Matthew 5: 3 - 11*

2:00 Summary of the day; closing prayer; departure

* You may wish to give participants a list of wisdom quotes (below) as part of the reflection time and group sharing. Depending on total group size, it is recommended that each discussion group consist of 5 to 8 persons, who agree to follow this guideline: Allow everyone the opportunity to share once before an individual speaks a second time. In this way, everyone is heard. People are free to pass and remain in silence.

Wisdom quotes for pondering

"The Gospel calls us forth to full responsibility for our emotional life. We tend to blame other people or situations for the turmoil we experience. In actual fact, upsetting emotions prove beyond any doubt that the problem is in us. If we do not assume responsibility for our emotional programs on the unconscious level and take measures to change them, we will be influenced by them to the end of our lives."

- Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

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*"What I do, I do not understand.
For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate."*
- Romans 7: 15

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"It's physical. We really have to reprogram our minds and our bodies and remove this toxicity of the memory that's encapsulated in every cell in our tissues. It's really physical. ... Our work, our first work, our agency is to root out our affliction, so that we can see the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to what we are supposed to do externally. ... Violence has an insidious grip on us ... and through prayer and practice, we can, even in the midst of violence, experience a calmness and peace, and the gentleness of God."
- Mary Margaret Funk, in a recorded interview, February 1, 2018

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"To get out of the cycle of violence we employ a counter motion that checks aggression and replaces unconscious reaction with discerned response. In between the impulse and response is poise and endless possibilities. Renouncing is the opportunity to change and lift-up toward God for the common good. We respond with a root action deeply benefitting our domain of the humble human. How we know what to renounce is to find our vocation, our way of life. Then, we renounce what is not a good fit for our designated calling for this lifetime. ... I can report evidence from others the universal benefits of renunciation. When our way of life is renunciation then, it's natural to renounce violence. Renouncing is a poised, but an active way of living. We pause and then lean into the right and good, rather than react from our default defenses."
- Mary Margaret Funk, *Renouncing Violence*

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"My particular theory ... is that our moment in history is part of a much larger movement. We might even call it a cosmic movement, in which, having achieved the great accomplishment of reaching the rational level of consciousness, we are being challenged to move to yet another level of consciousness. This higher level is one that will generalize throughout the consciousness of the human family the intuition of the oneness of all that is. It will enable the collective suffering of the human family to find its meaning in contributing a new and in-depth understanding of life to future generations. It will also provide a more realistic and honest relationship with ourselves, God, other people, the planet Earth, and all creation.

"In Christian terms, this new moment in history is an invitation to enter into the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Although violence in the world seems to have increased in recent centuries, this violence is not meaningless or worthless. It may be the necessary preparation for a change of consciousness leading to a new level of maturity in the human family as a whole – attitudes that will led to a much greater concern for every member of the race, past, present, and to come.

"... This is the contemplative view of the situation in which we find ourselves, one drawn from the mysteries of our Christian faith. ... [It's] the sense that the human family as whole has not yet come of age. The majority of its members have yet to reach the full level of

rational consciousness that would enable them to resolve conflicts by negotiation, compromise, forgiveness and mutual respect. ... [W]e can see how deeply our human family needs to be called out of its lethargy and indifference, its acceptance of evil and violence, and its toleration of the inequalities that exist throughout the world."

- Thomas Keating, *The Transformation of Suffering: Reflections on September 11 & The Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee*

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"We can't prolong the battle of greed or domination with the weapons of destruction that we have now without serious damage to ourselves and the ecology and all the other life on earth ...

"The spiritual life as it's been called until now is the most important thing there is to do in life ... the healing of the human condition with its limitations and faults and openness to evil, as well as good. So here is where the contemplative dimension of life which is aimed at prayer and practice to further this capacity for transformation and to realize in the future somewhere the New Creation."

- Thomas Keating, "Human Evolution" video segment, *God is Love: The Heart of all Creation* series

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"Contemplative practice is not the domain of the lazy priest or the indolent monk. Living a contemplative life certainly means guarding against undue stresses and frenetic activity, but a life that is contemplative is not just a life lived at ease. Though relaxation, poise, and the quelling of free-floating anxiety can be by-products of a deep contemplative practice, these are not its goals. On the contrary, the contemplative is a soldier and her practice is preparation for, and the certainty of, a face-to-face confrontation with evil. The contemplative runs from the distractions of the world only to expose the clamor of evil and sin in the quiet of stillness and the light of an unwavering gaze — to confront there the enemy face-to-face as if in a mirror. In other words, she meets the enemy in her own heart.

"Realizing that I and my foe are one sheds a wholly different light on the command to forgive one's enemies and pray for one's persecutors, even as it brings to its logical conclusion the need to love one's neighbor as oneself. If we can face the enemy with forbearance in the crucible of contemplative practice in a safe place of prayer, we will learn to face him anywhere. Like the priests in Ukraine, we might then stand peaceably in the midst of the frenzy of hatred and strife as an articulate instance of the strength of love.

"Self-gifting love is the true goal of contemplative practice, not self-actualization, and it is this love which gives us true poise and freedom from anxiety. We become free to witness courageously to the world and to respond appropriately and unreservedly to suffering.

"If the clandestine enemies of the world are greed, hatred, envy, strife, murder, apathy, corruption, partiality, rapaciousness, and so on, then we need only sit down quietly to find them. This sitting down and facing them is the prophetic action of the true contemplative. He is not playing games; he is not running away; he is not trying to be spiritual or make a show. He is merely responding to the imperative of the world, and by doing so, taking deep social action by remaining still.

- Fr. James Krueger, excerpted from ["This Restless Sea: Contemplative Practice and Prophetic Witness Amidst Violence,"](#) an article for OnBeing.org.

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Creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things. In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. We are free to apply our intelligence towards things evolving positively, or towards adding new ills, new causes of suffering and real setbacks. This is what makes for the excitement and drama of human history, in which freedom, growth, salvation and love can blossom, or lead towards decadence and mutual destruction.

-Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

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"A creative vision releases an enormous amount of energy
and can transform society beyond our wildest dreams.

Divine empowerment is present.

... The power of the stars is nothing compared to the energy
of a person whose will has been freed from the false-self system
and who is thus enabled to co-create the cosmos together
with God. God's top priority is the creation of a world
in which the goods of the earth are equitably distributed,
where no one is forgotten or left out,

and where no one can rest until everyone has enough to eat,
the oppressed have been liberated, and justice and peace
are the norm among the nations and religions of the world.

Until then, even the joy of transforming union is incomplete.

The commitment to the spiritual journey is not a commitment to pure joy,
but to taking responsibility for the whole human family,
its needs and destiny. We are not our own; we belong to everyone else."

- Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

