12. The practice of Centering Prayer deepens our awareness of the oneness of all creation and our compassion for the whole human family.

Centering Prayer inspires ever-increasing regard for others, especially for the poor and those abandoned or exploited in the various throw-away cultures of our time. We are invited to make available the gift of Centering Prayer to everyone, particularly to the needy and the marginalized. Centering Prayer also enables us to respond to the Divine presence in the whole human family, and in all of creation.

+ Thomas: Legacy and Vision. Communities of practice and belonging.
+ Oneness:
  - Progressive Deepening: is there an “other”?
  - Sustaining Source in which everyone and everything belongs
  - Deep Identification and Paschal Participation
  - Being and Action that emerge from deep ground of belonging

  Who are the marginalized?
  Who are the poor?
  Who are the abandoned?
  Who are the exploited?
  Which voices are excluded from the conversation?
  From education? From opportunities?
  What is my experience of oneness?
  What would reverence for God in others and in creation look like?

We as community and individuals are being invited to deeper consent, further transformation, to be willing to let God be God in us. What does that mean? How do we translate it into concrete changes/actions in our lives? In our society?

“Caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar…” - Antonio Machado
“Wayfarer, there is no path. You make the path as you walk.”
International Conference 2019
12th Principle of the Vision

“Fear is useless, what is needed is trust”

1. Trusting God as Divine Ground and Source

What would we dare to be, or do, if we believed God was in-spiring, sustaining, energizing us?

“The love of God is so powerful that no one can just sit on it. It is bound to express itself. We have to think not just of praying together but how we can reach out and support each other in helping those in prison, the homeless, the hungry, the oppressed, everyone in need. Above all, direct attention to the most unbearable problem in the world today, which is the destitution of the poor…”

Thomas Keating - The Better Part

Fuel for contemplative service:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”

“It’s no longer I who lives, but Christ that lives in me.”

Consent and surrender of the “I” is primary, yet it is in the “we,” functioning together, where the supplying to every part of the body for the benefit of the whole happens. How can we synergize with others? How do we bring who we are and what we have to offer to the mix? As Ken Wilbur concisely describes, the process implies: +Waking up +Growing up +Cleaning up and +Showing up.

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

-Frederick Buechner, Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC

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Paschal Mystery: bearing the suffering of the world

“\[I have choices to make about how my heart breaks. Will it break apart into a thousand shards or will it break open into a greater capacity to hold my own and the world's suffering and joy.\]” – Parker Palmer

2. **Solidarity.**

Before we can find our what is ours to be or give, we need to first let love teach us to listen with our heart, our body, from our deep common ground. To get in the same heartbeat with the “other” (who is not “other”) and be willing simply to bear the suffering of the Christ around us.

Henry Nouwen in his book Compassion says:

“What really counts in moments of pain and suffering is that someone stays with us. More important than any particular action or word of advice is the simple presence of someone who cares.”

“God came to share our lives in solidarity. It does not mean that God solves our problems, shows us the way out of our confusion, or offers answers for our many questions. God might do all of that, but the solidarity of God consists in the fact that God is willing to enter with us into our problems, confusions, and questions.

…‘The Virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel,’ a name which means ‘God-is-with-us’ (Mt 1:22-23).

As soon as we call God, ‘God-with-us,’ we enter into a new relationship of intimacy. By calling God Immanuel, we recognize God’s commitment to live in solidarity with us, to share our joys and pains, to defend and protect us, and to suffer all of life with us. The God-with-us is a close God, a God whom we call our refuge, our stronghold, our wisdom, and even, more intimately, our helper, our shepherd, our love. We will never really know God as a compassionate God if we do not understand with our heart and mind that "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14) NRSV.
The Living School on Solidarity and Service:

Contemplative solidarity is a commitment to engage in the ongoing work of growing your awareness of the systems you participate in and cultivating relationships that put you in proximity with others whose experience is different from yours and which you likely don’t understand, particularly those at the margins, and approaching those relationships from a stance of listening and curiosity.

We call this voluntary displacement; such engagement holds the possibility of waking us up to the ways we are already connected but could not see and then helps us to see the further work that is ours to do.

“Voluntary displacement leads us to the existential recognition of our inner brokenness and thus brings us to a deeper solidarity with the brokenness of our fellow human beings.” Compassion by Henry Nouwen

Richard Rohr:

I am thinking we could achieve the lasting transformation of consciousness that we seek much better, if we would ask of ourselves some kind of journey/pilgrimage of voluntary displacement. Here the service might well happen organically, not in a top down way but in a friendship way, a solidarity way.

Not “I am helping you” but “Let’s walk together for a while” (months or even years) before I can even know what service is really needed, or if I am the one who can offer it, and whose needs I am meeting. We all need to look out at the world from a different pair of glasses than our own but this best happens naturally instead of prescriptively. Some kind of heartfelt solidarity is much more likely, I think, to produce the paradigm shift we are seeking.

• Do you currently relate to others outside your comfort zone and sphere of influence? In what ways are you choosing voluntarily displacement? (LS)

• What steps can you take to elevate the voices and dignity of those who suffer and are oppressed in ways that you are not? (LS)
• What can we do to become more aware of systems of exclusion, injustice and privilege so that we can embody more skillfully the values of the gospel?*

• How can we nourish and support in our prayer communities a culture of contemplative solidarity and contemplative engagement?*

• What is Christ asking of me? (* not LS)

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Close your eyes and place your hands over your physical heart. Now lean your mind back into your receptive spiritual heart, however you can best do that. Bring to God your openness to be a vessel of divine social compassion.

See if anything is given you about how you are called to be such a vessel at this point in your life. What comes to you may be some kind of compassionate action that you are already involved in and that is being confirmed, or something new may appear. As some such call may show itself, see if it is accompanied by any kind of resistance, e.g., a sense of doubt, or fear of getting involved, or wobbly willingness, or lack of energy.

If any such weakening reaction shows up, bring your hands down to your tan tien center below your navel. Take in a long, slow breath, and as you slowly exhale your breath into that center, push out your stomach with a sense of confidence in God. Repeat that concentrated breathing a few times until you feel an energetic strength cutting through your resistance to the calling—until you feel a sense of God’s loving strength filling you.

Offer your own prayer to be guided and sustained in any calling that appeared to you.

- Tilden Edwards-Founder of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

Food for thought and inspiration:
https://shalem.org/category/contemplative-leadership/

On Oneness and TK’s Vision/Inter-spiritual Dimension:

ICCD - Programs rooted in communal contemplation and dialogue. Understandings of how to be and act in responding to this moment in our evolutionary journey. https://iccdinstitute.org

Deep Ecology https://www.joannamacy.net/main

Sacred Activism https://www.andrewharvey.net

For Race, Equity, and Belonging resources, scroll to the bottom of the Universal Christ Resource webpage. https://cac.org/another-name-for-everything-the-universal-christ/resources-another-name-for-everything/
https://www.genderreconciliationinternational.org
http://wccm.org/content/meditatio-meditation-those-margins

“Let us never lose our living conviction that it is not necessary to wait until we are splendid people before we can do splendid things - that would probably mean waiting a long time, too long in fact! We only need to understand one splendid thing and then try to base our whole life on it: and that is that the first person we must help in all things is the person who is suffering the most.” - Abbé Pierre