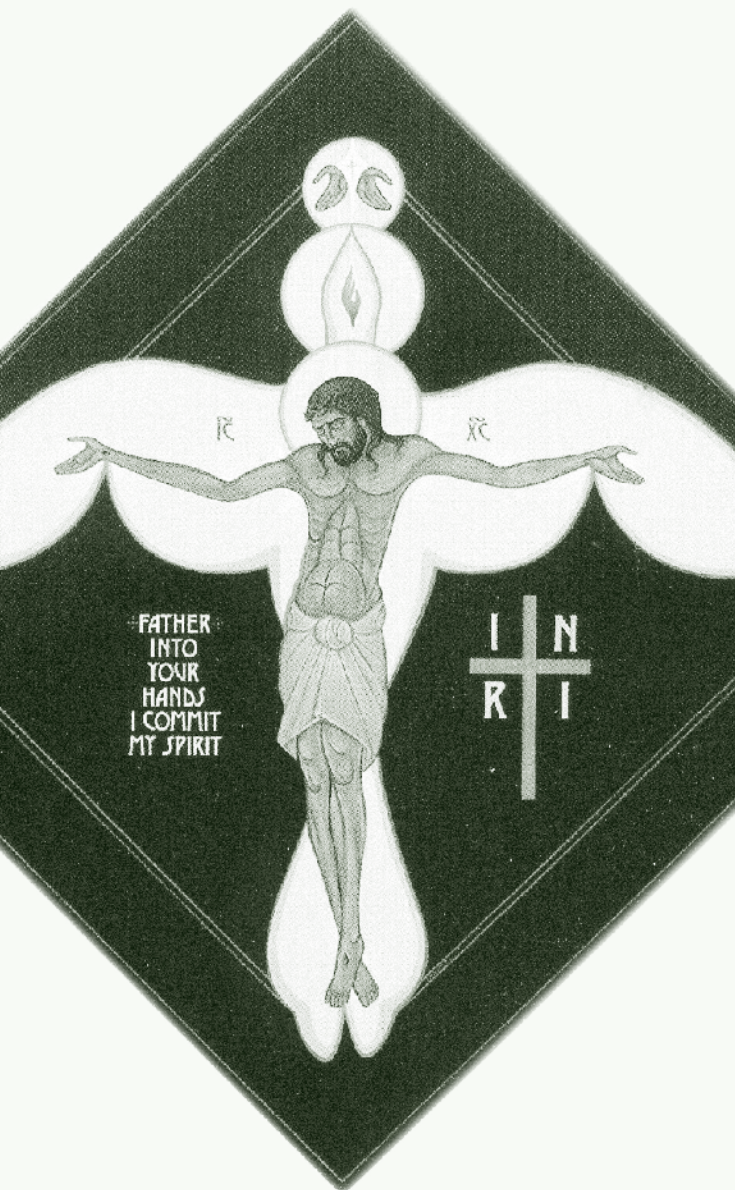




# The Gift that Keeps on Giving



Thomas Keating

God through Jesus Christ has become sin with all its negative consequences out of love for us and to manifest the complete gratuity of his gift of friendship. His identification with us must be causing God endless suffering which is manifested in Christ, the human expression of the Eternal Word, made sin for our sake (2 Cor. 5:21). Our alienation from God and others gives rise to the anguish of loneliness, discouragement, despair, self-hate, and alienation from others. Our sins and their consequences are forgiven and taken away through God's identifying with the human condition, but God continues to suffer the consequences in a divine way as long as the human race continues on earth. This infinite compassion, a love beyond all other expressions of love, reveals the humility, detachment and totally non-possessive attitude of the persons of the Trinity toward the divine essence and all its manifestations.

The passion and death of Christ and his descent into hell is the annihilation of all sin and at the same time the strongest possible invitation to us to become God too by participating in the divine nature by grace. To accept being a creature and created out of nothing is all that is required to receive this gift which is truly a gift and not just a loan.

To become who we are as creatures made in the image and likeness of God, we have to be nothing and everything at once, since this is what God is. The nothing and everything of humanity came together on the cross of Christ where the two opposites were united into one, not as something to become, but as the manifestation of what already is in virtue of creation. If we accept who we are, we are manifesting God and radiating Christ. This latter unfolding of the divine life within us does not need to go anywhere or do anything special. It teaches like the Holy Spirit, beyond the sound of words. It communicates primarily by transmitting the divine life in an endless number of ways and circumstances. Thus the divine life involves infinite possibilities. Whether it acts visibly or transmits secretly, it is the endless source of grace. It recognizes itself in creatures. It is present to everything and loves everything. It is in fact, EVERYTHING and at the same time rejoices in the ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS of the divine nature, the state of infinite possibilities.



Thinking, which is the radical gift of rational consciousness, is of its nature controlling and inventing. It is limited in its capacities and bound by the five senses and the thinking process. Putting this managing and controlling mind into the heart is a basic practice to awaken the divine presence within us. Then all actions can become receptive of the divine action, purifying us and allowing our deeper union with the divine. The divine presence can only be received. It begins with intuition and moves to more profound states, eventually becoming open and receptive to God consciousness, which is the highest participation in divine Oneness.

People with introverted and melancholic temperaments emphasize their nothingness and sinfulness of the false self and their ego, while those with extroverted and aggressive temperaments experience the positive side of the same experience. The shy and withdrawn have to risk acknowledging the good they do, or that the Spirit does in them, and not be afraid of pride and vanity. The extroverted need to cultivate silence and solitude as essential aspects of their own nature. Life is about balancing these two: acceptance of our human and personal limitations and reception of sharing the divine nature through boundless confidence in God's mercy. These dispositions seem at times to be totally contradictory, and that too has to be accepted while firmly believing in the healing of the divine therapy. Even if nobody loves us and we fail in everything all the time, God loves us. If we keep reminding ourselves of this, others, even our enemies may begin to love us too without knowing quite why. The God in us is loving them and eventually people perceive God in us in ways that we ourselves may not be aware of. ☸

*Even if nobody loves us  
and we fail in everything  
all the time, God loves us.*

*If we keep reminding ourselves  
of this, others, even our enemies,  
may begin to love us too  
without knowing why.*



Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

## Celebrating 30 Years of Grace, Grit & Gratitude

There are so many memories that could be shared and celebrated at this time in our growth. Truly, it is a miracle that Contemplative Outreach came into existence and is still going strong. Without a plan, a map or funding, we set out to offer the gift of Centering Prayer to seekers looking for a Christian contemplative practice and path. For our humble little group interested in offering Centering Prayer, it was a leap of faith into the unknown; it seems God felt our trust and our intention to serve humanity and offered us a hand, leading us the whole way.

Through grace, grit and gratitude things progressed slowly. Each of us committed ourselves to our own daily practice of Centering Prayer. Each of us consented to transformation and made a commitment to allow God's presence and actions to open our hearts and lives to God's will for us. All else seemed to grow from our joint commitment to one another and to God through practice. Whenever we gathered as a group, we always began with Centering Prayer. That practice continues to this day, where Centering Prayer is shared first and then on to the task at hand.

Present since the very first meetings of Contemplative Outreach, this journey of transformation has changed me in countless ways. It certainly showed me more of myself than I wished to see and humbled me beyond my wildest imaginings. At the same time, I received nuggets of encouragement to stay with it even in the grim times. Surrounded by like-minded, loving friends who provided the strength, endurance and impetus to keep going when there didn't seem to be any energy left to take the next steps, we plodded on.

Blessings and miracles happened on a regular basis and in fact became common place. When our funding was just about gone, a check for several thousand dollars would appear in our mailbox from someone wanting to express gratitude for the work of Contemplative Outreach. We were able to continue on because of it and were inspired to do so. More than once, particular people showed up with just the skill we needed to produce particular resource materials or give advice and technical support, especially once the internet developed as a valuable tool for reaching people worldwide. Some came and stayed, and others came and moved on once their work was completed, everyone giving from their transformed hearts.

Over the years we have been supported by hundreds of people who give their time, talent and treasure from their transformed hearts because they want others to receive the gifts of Centering Prayer and the treasures of the Christian contemplative tradition. Many of them experience the fruits of the practice and experience a different quality in their lives. Silence has offered a doorway to peace, forgiveness, compassion, kindness and love that was unknown before they committed to their daily practice. Over time it has become an everyday experience.

One of our theological principles states that we acknowledge that any good accomplished by Contemplative Outreach is the work of the Holy Spirit (#16). That action of the Spirit has sustained us. We rely on the discernment and consensus of the group and trust that the Spirit is working and manifesting among us. We are open to continue our work and trust that others will continue to join and walk this path, taking up the challenges and carrying this method and message far and wide for the peaceful healing of humankind and the greater glory of God. ☩



Fr. Carl J. Arico

## The Forgotten Guideline

The fourth guideline of Centering Prayer is rather simple. “At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with your eyes closed for a couple of minutes.”

You’re invited to stay for a while. You are allowing yourself to linger and be there. Why? To allow the reservoir of silence that you’ve built up to be sustained, so that when you go into the business of everyday life, you bring it with you, the enhanced presence and action of God into your daily life. That way you bring less of yourself and more of the Lord into the activity of your day.

As soon as the closing bell rings, it seems most people jump right up. I remember on a retreat mentioning the importance of resting for these additional minutes before leaving the prayer space. After that, no one moved until I did. I could feel the pressure of not staying too long.

There are days when we just want to get the prayer over with. Sometimes we just want to check it off our list – “I got it in. Got my prayers in, you know.” But there is an invitation to be gentle, to ease into the next thing, and not immediately jump into the next event. There is value in lingering.

I think a very important fruit of Centering Prayer, of what this prayer is all about, is the value of truly being present to what you are doing. It is the ability to live in the present moment. You learn to live in the present moment rather than live in the pressures of your to-do list. It is about learning a new disposition of presence, rather than “getting it done.” Is your only pleasure in finishing the task? There can be a joy in the process, in the little moments along the way. You’re living in the moment. I love watching people prepare meals, because you can see when they’re doing it attentively or when they’re just getting it done. I think the taste is different when people are present and intentional, enjoying the process, being in the moment.

If you do what you do only to get it done, then the satisfaction only happens at the end - maybe. Perhaps it is momentary; a smile of satisfaction may appear on your face and then it is off to the next task. Something is missing – the contemplative ingredient.

Where is your attention while you are about your task? Are you in the present moment? Both Brother Lawrence and DeCausade wrote about living in the present moment. If you are thinking about an event in the past you give yourself the

wonderful gift of guilt, anger or joy. Guilt at what you may have done to somebody, anger at what somebody may have done to you or joy, thinking about the good times. However God can only work in the present moment because God is the present NOW. If you are thinking about an event in the future, you give yourself a gift of fear, anxiety or expectation. Mark Twain said something like, “I’ve had a lot of worries in my life, and some of them were real.” That’s a profound statement.

Living in the present moment is so important. John of the Cross teaches about spiritual espousal, when you become engaged with God at a commitment level like a spiritual marriage, where you really give yourself to God, to the ultimate moment of *nada* and *todo*, of nothing and all. This means at the moment of death, you know how to let go. The ultimate moment is letting go entirely of one’s life, when you’re becoming *nada*, nothing. You’re winding down on a physical level. And then there’s the moment of death when God squeezes the last bit of breath out of you. Then you have, according to John of the Cross, *todo*. You have it all. And you’re empty enough to receive it.

Centering Prayer is a preparation for dying and for living.

In the process of spending a few minutes lingering after Centering Prayer, we appreciate how precious life is, moment by moment. Living in the present moment we’re more awake to how God works in our life. In the teaching of John of the Cross, there’s going to be *nada* and then *todo*. We’ll be present at our dying, and be aware of the fact that God is present with us.

In appreciating those moments of lingering after Centering Prayer, you can also sense the similarity with *Lectio Divina*, when we are simply resting in the presence of the word of God. After listening and pondering and responding, you rest, allowing the word to penetrate and to percolate. “God, do what needs to be done. Thank you for the graces of the word that I became aware of, or the thought that touched me, or the prayer that I offered to you, Lord. Add your graces to give it the taste that you want. Add your ingredients that will make it the purifying



process that I need in my life. I leave it open for you, now, to add whatever needs to be added, in the percolating of the love that’s there in my heart for you, that it may nourish me on the levels it needs to nourish me.” Every one of those moments is precious. But if you just read, reflect, and respond and as soon as you’re done, you close the book and you’re onto the next thing, you’re interrupting the conversation. You’re not allowing it to continue. You never reap the fruit of the practice.

Fr. Thomas reminds us in *Open Mind, Open Heart*, “Not contemplative prayer but the contemplative state is the purpose of our practice: not experiences, however exotic or reassuring, but the permanent and abiding awareness of God that comes through the mysterious restructuring of consciousness.” ☸



# Roots & Wings:

## A Tribute from the “Parallel Track”

by The Rev. Cynthia Bourgeault

It's hard to believe that it was indeed *a quarter of a century ago*, November 1989, when I first found myself sitting across from Thomas Keating at Chrysalis House in Warwick, NY, interviewing him for an article in *Parabola Magazine*. At the time I'd been dabbling in Centering Prayer for about a year, working my way through *Open Mind, Open Heart* with some of my parishioners at St. Brendan's Episcopal Church in Stonington, Maine. “You should come to Snowmass,” said Thomas, with that signature wink. I did—and essentially never looked back.

For most of these twenty-five years Thomas and I have had an unusual relationship. By choice and happenstance, I've been sort of an “outrider” in the Contemplative Outreach network, never serving in any official capacity (apart from a brief stint as a member of the National Faculty in the early 1990s). I've offered the occasional retreat or conference when asked, but mostly I've functioned, together with David Frenette and a few others, as his kind of unofficial R & D department, trying out new approaches and new projects a little off the beaten track. While Thomas has properly made his primary commitment to the growth of a strong infrastructure and clear curriculum within Contemplative Outreach itself, he's also been keenly interested in the interfaces—particularly where Centering Prayer presents itself to a less traditionally Catholic audience, or to the growing “spiritual but not religious” sector. It's been a pleasure to work closely with him over the years on this parallel track, with any number of fascinating and rewarding projects.

The first one came relatively early on in our work together when I was invited by a group in British Columbia to help them launch a groundbreaking initiative in Western Canada. The catch, however, was that this new organization they had in mind would not be a “straight up” Contemplative Outreach chapter. The founding group was equally comprised of Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation devotees and their intention was to pool their spiritual resources and create a single umbrella organization that would welcome Christian contemplatives of all stripes. This unusual assignment created a marvelous opportunity to explore new curriculum approaches and develop new teaching materials. Thomas carefully monitored the work, but also gave me free rein to experiment. Today the Contemplative Society, the little organization we birthed, has passed its fifteen-year milestone and is still a model of contemplative cross-pollination between these two major streams of the Christian contemplative renewal. Meanwhile, some of the approaches that first saw the light of day in these courses and workshops became the basis for my 2004 book, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*.

Another memorable adventure landed on my plate in 2008 when Thomas and I jointly decided to see whether it would be possible to teach Raimon Panikkar's monumental work *Christophany* to lay contemplatives. “It's way too difficult,” Thomas had initially worried. But the concepts Panikkar is laying out here are of such foundational importance to contemplative spirituality in an interspiritual world that we thought it would be worth a try. With the stalwart organizational support of

Cathy McCarthy, my longtime friend and colleague, we launched our pilot project in Latham, NY, in June 2009, with Thomas and I sharing the teaching slots.

There are many other such adventures that I could recount here—innumerable editing and review projects, teaching in all sorts of offbeat combinations, being the Centering Prayer delegate to a couple of memorable Buddhist gatherings, most recently in Bhutan—and of course the delicious periodic “touch base” conversations with Thomas back at the monastery, which for two decades have been a mainstay of my spiritual life. It’s been a curious vineyard I’ve labored in, for sure, out here on this parallel track, but I wouldn’t swap a minute of it and am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve.

As the old adage goes, “There are only two things you can give to your children: roots and wings.” If Thomas is indeed the spiritual father to an entire generation of Christian seekers, then the “roots” part of the equation is definitely Contemplative Outreach. It’s been his baby over all these years, and he has tended it with faithful, fastidious care because he’s known how crucially important it is. Without strong roots, the tree topples over.

As a former abbot in a monastic lineage whose roots stretch back more than a thousand years, Thomas intuitively gravitated toward a strong, well-structured governance system with clear lines of accountability and a firm grip on the curriculum. Aside from the obvious pastoral advantages here, there are strategic concerns as well. As nearly all practitioners will attest, Centering Prayer is more nuanced than it initially appears, and there are technicalities that need to be gotten right or else the whole practice can wander off course. For nearly three decades now Contemplative Outreach’s clear, consistent structure has allowed thousands of new practitioners to enter the waters gracefully and grow in a balanced, supported way. While the shadow side of control is inevitably the tendency toward rigidity (and Contemplative Outreach has struggled with this shadow for as long as I’ve known it), so far the leadership has managed to hold the tension well and steer a balanced course between faithfulness to established protocol and openness to new input.

But face it, there has always been something in Thomas Keating that is bigger and more expansive than any structure, even structures he has lovingly and painstakingly co-created. Something in him has always been breaking out of the box, spreading his wings. Even back in the early days he was already an indefatigable innovator. If you’ve watched his wonderful new video, you’ll see that even as an abbot at Spencer, barely post-Vatican II, he was already keenly interested in interreligious spirituality, working happily side by side with roshis and sannyasins to carve out a truly universal context for his fledgling Centering Prayer. You might think that a Trappist monk would be shy of the world, but not Thomas Keating! He fearlessly dove into the language of post-modernity, drawing his inputs from contemporary psychology, the recovery movement—and more recently quantum physics and neuromeditation—in order to find ways of presenting perennial spiritual truths in formats accessible to contemporary spiritual seekers. And while his teaching remains committedly Christian and christocentric, his allies and closest working partners over the years have been people like Ken Wilber, Rabbi Zalman Schachter, Andrew Cohen, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. While his roots go deep in Christian tradition, his wings keep soaring toward that vision of a greater spiritual unity embracing all humankind.

From my unique viewing platform over these past three decades, I watched him growing gradually—and then extremely rapidly—into a new kind of presence: a second axial person, no longer bound by primary institutional loyalties, but an ombudsman for the entire human family. His luminous heart just keeps getting vaster and vaster.

Thomas Keating’s truly unique genius, I believe, has been to know how to hold that critical balance of roots and wings. He has intuitively grasped how to plant and tend while at the same time casting his seeds widely to the wind; how to nurture and support a strong institutional infrastructure while at the same time encouraging these parallel tracks through which new inputs and innovation arise. As Contemplative Outreach looks ahead to the next leg of its journey, my deepest wish is that we will all find the vision, forbearance, trust, and compassion to continue to walk the difficult balance. ☸

Dear Fr. Thomas and Associates,

How can the world—or I—properly thank you enough for all you have given God's people and to the message of the Gospel?! We surely cannot!

Nor do you ask for it or need it!

But we still want to thank and praise the Great Lover of Life for giving us your holiness and the holiness of international Contemplative Outreach. And we want to thank you personally!

Everywhere I have traveled I have seen and myself grown from the fruits of your teaching and the organization of that teaching through books, staff, recordings, and conferences. What a joy it has been to work personally with you and Contemplative Outreach on several occasions.

May God continue to protect, guard, and spread wide the wisdom you have offered and so generously given to our suffering world. Thank you in the ways that only God can thank you!

Peace and every good,

**Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M.**

Center for Action and Contemplation  
Albuquerque, New Mexico







A homily by Fr. William Meninger

I would like to share with you a brief story from *Tales of a Magic Monastery* by Theophane the Monk. This is the very first story in his little book and it relates to this morning's gospel, as it is called, "The Pearl of Great Price."

On my first visit to the magic monastery a monk asked me what I was looking for. "Frankly," I said, "I'm looking for the pearl of great price."

He slipped his hand into his pocket, drew it out AND GAVE IT TO ME! It was just like that. I was dumbfounded. Then I began to protest, "You don't want to give it to me? Don't you want to keep it for yourself?"

When I kept this up, he said finally, "Look, is it better to have the pearl of great price or to give it away?"

Well, now I have it, I don't tell anyone. From some there would be disbelief and ridicule. "You have the pearl of great price? Hah!"

Others would be jealous, or someone might steal it. Yes, I do have it. But there is that question: "Is it better to have it, or to give it away?" How long will that question rob me of my joy?

"Is it better to have it, or to give it away?" Somehow this little story is yet another confusing parable about the kingdom of God. Jesus said the parables were given in order that "Hearing they may not understand." What he means by that is that the parables, like Theophane the Monk's little story, are intended to make us think. And by making us think, it does not allow us to take something for granted. To have the Pearl of great price and keep it to yourself is to take it for granted. The Pearl of great price, like the kingdom of God, must be appreciated, lived concretely and shared.

We have with us on retreat this weekend a group of people who have the Pearl of great price. They are people who have received, appreciated and supported Centering Prayer as taught by Contemplative Outreach. They are called the Circle of Friends. Just about every one of them has his or her own special story of how the practice of contemplative prayer called Centering Prayer has been for them a Pearl of great price. And so they have committed themselves not to be robbed of their joy by keeping it to themselves but to increase their joy by letting go of it and sharing it with others, by giving it away through their teaching, supportive practice, and financial aid.



Letting go: not holding something selfishly or addictively to oneself for fear of losing it. Letting go is at the heart of the Christian commitment. Letting go is foundational to the spirituality of the 12 step program. Letting go and letting God is an essential part of the beginning, the middle, and the end of the spiritual journey. It was expressed beautifully in the Prayer of St Francis:

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

I was told the following story by a friend. She had invited another couple to dinner one Sunday afternoon together with their three-year-old son. She also had a three-year-old son and the two children seem to have been playing nicely together during the afternoon. Her own son seemed quite generous in sharing his toys with the young visitor. However as they were leaving, the visiting little boy grabbed hold of a little stuffed dog which was a favorite of her son, wanting to take it with him. Her son, crying copiously, grabbed hold of the dog and tried to pull it away from the resisting young visitor. Seeing this as a teachable moment, my friend persuaded her child that he had many stuffed toys and would not even notice or miss this little dog if he let his visitor take it with him. Tearfully the boy consented. That night my friend went in to tuck her little boy into bed and as she pulled the blankets up to his tear stained face she noticed that he had something in his hand, tightly clasped even in sleep. When she opened his little fist to see what it was, out fell the tail of the little stuffed dog. He had refused to let go. But all he got for his struggles was the tail of a little stuffed dog.

There are many pearls of great price in our lives, as there are many little stuffed dogs. When we hold onto them, that's all we have. When we let go, we have infinitely more because it is in giving that we receive. This is not only in regard to material things.

I have another story of a friend whose young daughter was severely injured in an automobile crash. When I visited them recently in the hospital her mother told me, "Father, I never knew what abandonment was (by abandonment she meant letting go) until I placed the broken body of my little girl at the feet of Christ. At that moment he filled my heart with joy, a joy so great I could feel it even physically. I still cannot understand it and I cannot explain it, but it is carrying me through these weeks of suffering, surgery, and rehabilitation."

What is your Pearl or pearls of great price? What do you have that you are called to abandon? To let go? To lay at the feet of Christ? How do you carry the kingdom of God within you and how do you share it? ☩



### Centering Prayer in the Pearl of the Caribbean | Fr. Gilberto Walker, Cuba

Although I had come to know Centering Prayer through reading Fr. Basil Pennington's book during my junior year of college in 1980, my first Centering Prayer retreat was in 2000, some 20 years later, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The Lord led me to a community of faithful lay women and men who were deeply committed to the practice of the prayer and to helping others come to the transformation in God that is the fruit of the prayer. At the end of that three-day retreat, when we were invited to share, I responded that I was leaving the retreat with a deep sense of gratitude, and with the commitment to share with others what I had received as a gift.

After this retreat, what had been a rather spotty practice of Centering Prayer became a daily part of my life. I knew there were others who were also struggling to be faithful to their daily times of silence with the Lord, and the support of a community was key in helping me grow in the prayer.

In the petition that I wrote to my superior, asking for ordination to the priesthood, I stated that my principle motivation in ministry was to help people come to believe in the love that God has for them, and to experience that love. I had been given a gift in Centering Prayer that responded to my desire to help others experience God's love and to open to that love on ever deeper levels. And so I prepared for sharing the gift of Centering through the formation for contemplative service for presenters, and by being mentored in the introductory workshops and teaming with a more experienced presenter.

My religious congregation, the Vincentians, assigned me to Cuba in the summer of 2003. I went to my new mission in Havana with a sense of excitement, and the support of the community in the Dominican Republic.

It seems that Centering Prayer first entered Cuba through the Ecumenical Seminary in Matanzas, though no stable prayer groups were formed. A Centering Prayer experience was most likely shared by a visiting professor or seminarian, possibly from the United States, but Extensión Contemplativa Internacional (Contemplative Outreach's Spanish and Portuguese speaking branch) has no details of the experience.

Extensión Contemplativa sponsored the first Centering Prayer introductory workshop in November of 2003 at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Brigid in Old Havana. Some 40 people participated in the workshop and the follow-up, and the first prayer group was formed at the Convent. Our first weekend retreat was offered in the Fall 2004 and another weekend retreat was held in January 2005 with the help of three team members from Extensión Contemplativa's Advisory Council. More introductory workshops were offered throughout 2005, and we continued to offer weekend retreats twice a year, thanks to the generosity of benefactors.

We spent the first months of 2006 planning for the visit of Father Thomas Keating in March. Posters were printed and distributed, hospitality was arranged, and an interview was planned with a reporter for the monthly magazine of the Archdiocese of Havana, *Palabra Nueva*. On the evenings of March 9th and 10th in the Chapel of La Inmaculada, Father Thomas shared with an overflow crowd his conferences on the contemplative dimension of the Gospel. All present participated in a small miracle. Over 300 Cubans, with hearts and minds opened to the Lord, maintained absolute silence as Father Thomas led us in Centering Prayer for 15 minutes each evening. Cubans are perhaps the most communicative people on the face of the planet. And anyone familiar with Cuban culture will grasp the depth of this miracle of silence!

Father Thomas' visit was a watershed experience for us. When his interview was published in the archdiocesan magazine, we began to receive invitations from parishes and groups to offer introductory workshops. We realized the need for commissioned presenters who would be able to communicate the gift of Centering Prayer. In February of 2008 Extensión Contemplativa offered the formation for presenters to 12 men and women who accepted the invitation to share Centering Prayer with others. Here in Cuba we use the verb "resolver," much like the word *charity* in the New Testament, to cover a multitude of sins. It most often means to solve problems and to find solutions, usually in unorthodox or unconventional ways. Because of flight schedules and work commitments, we had to "resolver" what is usually a weeklong formation for presenters in four full days. A wonderful spirit of collaboration and a deep level of sharing emerged in the group who participated in the formation. And the growth of Centering Prayer in Cuba can only be attributed to the action of the Spirit working in the hearts of these faithful presenters.

Currently there are six Centering Prayer groups in Havana with between 30 to 40 people meeting on a weekly basis. A second Sunday monthly gathering in one community brings together some 30 persons for Centering Prayer, formation and fellowship. And a year and half ago, a service team was formed to coordinate the activities of Extensión Contemplativa in Cuba.

One of my greatest joys as a priest, and as a member of Extensión Contemplativa, has been the opportunity to accompany people in the process of transformation which contemplative prayer brings about. Lives changed and faith renewed, as well as peace in the midst of turmoil, are some of the fruits of the prayer which people experience. May the Lord who has begun this good work in Cuba, the "Pearl of the Caribbean," see it through to completion.



International Outreach | Sr. Fionnuala Quinn O.P., Ireland

I am truly honoured to have been invited by Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, President of Contemplative Outreach, to be the next International Coordinator. I am a Cabra Dominican Sister from Dublin, Ireland. I was first introduced to Centering Prayer in 1988 by the late Basil Pennington O.C.S.O. through an organization called the Mastery Foundation. Shortly after that I came across Contemplation Outreach and had the privilege of participating in five retreats with Thomas Keating O.C.S.O. over the years. At that time I was living in New Orleans, Louisiana with our Sisters. In 1997, Mr. Dan De Mere and I opened Contemplative Outreach of New Orleans. In 2007, having returned to live in Dublin, my dream was to see Ireland discover again its contemplative roots and so I began offering introductions to Centering Prayer, silent retreats and Servant Leader trainings.

Contemplative Outreach describes itself as “an evolving community with an expanding vision and deepening practice, serving the changing needs of Christian contemplatives.” In our world today, these changing needs include a return to what Gregory the Great in the 6th century, called “resting in God.” Centering Prayer “tends to build communities of faith and bonds the members together in mutual friendship and love.” Today Centering Prayer is practised by people all around the world, creating local and global networks of Christians in communion with Christ and each other and contributing to the renewal of the contemplative dimension of Christianity.

The mission of the International Team is “the support of emerging English-speaking chapters outside the United States.” My role in serving this International Community will be through listening, responding to requests for services, linking people together through networking, and providing direction as to the many helpful resources provided by Contemplative Outreach. I am also willing to travel if necessary! You may email me at [fmquinn48@gmail.com](mailto:fmquinn48@gmail.com).



Photo courtesy of Ron Barnett

**Sauvie Island Sanctuary**

Karla Kruggel Powell, Portland, Oregon

*“I am like a bird, sitting in this aviary.  
The day is coming when I fly off.”*

-Rumi

Autumn leaves drift, light as feathers  
weightless as a transmigrating soul

overhead, departing cranes navigate celestial poles  
descend with selfsame grace as they took flight

where our own inner bearings all too often oscillate  
we tinker with our fates, toy with destiny  
unmindful that an unseen pole affixes us as well  
an axis mundi anchors every heart.

*Please send your comments, suggestions and content submissions to Pamela Begeman at [clp@coutreach.org](mailto:clp@coutreach.org).*



**The Gift of Receiving** | Betty T. Giardini, Huntsville, Alabama

With the coming of fall, I always look forward to the kickoff of the many wonderful programs we have at the Church of Nativity in Huntsville, followed very quickly by talk of stewardship and the giving of tithes and talents. I believe that we have a deep need to give, and that the urge to give is itself a gift from God. Sometimes the act of giving brings unexpected blessings to the giver, blessings that far outweigh the importance of the gift. Recently, I impulsively gave and the blessing returned a hundred-fold to me.

One Sunday our guest preacher was a young female seminarian from Namibia. She has given me permission to tell this story. She had spent most of her summer in this area and at our church camp, Camp McDowell, on break from her seminary studies in Texas. She was here with almost no funding, but she sent half of everything she received back to Namibia to her mother, who is raising six children and often goes hungry herself in order to feed them.

This regal and elegant young woman, who has lived a life surrounded by poverty and suffering, preached a moving sermon that Sunday, and I stopped to speak to her after church, waiting until she was standing at the door alone. I asked her about lunch and she replied that our Rector and his wife had already invited her. As I stood there, she touched the cross I was wearing on a chain around my neck, looked at it and put it back down. I hugged her and turned away. This is a cross I had worn for a good many years, not particularly fine, but of solid brass on a good chain, a nice weight and length. I loved wearing it. On an impulse, I took off the cross, turned back to her and said, "Would you like to have this?" I don't think I have ever before seen such a look of unabashed delight as she accepted the cross and said, "Oh, yes!" She was like a child who has just received her heart's desire. There was no polite, "Oh, you shouldn't," or "Are you sure?" It was just "YES!" She danced a little jig right there in the doorway. What a gift her open acceptance was for me. I wanted to dance with her, and I wish now that I had.

The rest of the story comes from my daughter Lisa who had made great friends with this remarkable young woman when she visited her church nearby. The following Sunday, she was scheduled to preach again, this time at a church in Athens, AL. Things had not gone well over the weekend and she was feeling unsettled and homesick. But she was wearing the cross, and when she held it close and sat quietly for a few minutes, there came a great peace and confidence, and she knew that she could do what she needed to do. When I heard this story, my heart filled with joy and gratitude. A few days later when the young deacon's photograph appeared with a nice article in our local newspaper, she was wearing the cross.

A few months later, she was ordained in Namibia. It pleases me to think that perhaps a bit of my own love and spirit will go with her as she ministers to her people. My prayer for myself is that I will receive God's many blessings to me as freely as she received that cross. This is not really a story about giving and receiving a bit of jewelry, it is a story about giving and receiving God's love. Both giving and receiving are necessary for balance, and we are called to receive as joyfully and freely as we are to give. I pray that I can remember to embrace both the giving and the receiving of God's love and blessings during the coming days, and I will think of her wearing my cross, and I will smile, and perhaps even dance a little jig.

**The Arrival** | Elizabeth Faidley, Sacramento, California

The jagged outline of the light through the clouds rises up above the tree line at the mountain's slope and once again I am reminded of the majesty, magic, and mystery of the Colorado Rockies. I am also drawn to the mystery of the One who created such breathtaking land and mountain scapes, the Creator, the One who is also my Creator.

Would that I too could be like this mountain and this light breaking surely through the cumulous clouds that drift along unburdened by the day, unafraid of the inevitable and prolonged night. The natural world is so un-busy and so kept by the Divine Caretaker. Could I not also be like this?

Each moment in time, each breath pressed onward by a living thing, each time a leaf twists or a snowflake falls through the new autumn-winter air, is a divine moment in time. Blessed. Whole. Consecrated to a higher call and cause, that being of praise to a mighty, yet gentle God.

I do not know how to be like nature, so I simply pause and watch. My pause becomes my prayer and all I hope to become in this sacred moment with God's creation. There is nothing left for me to do, but look quietly and wait, like a cat, curious and sleepy at the same time, watching and waiting for nothing in particular.

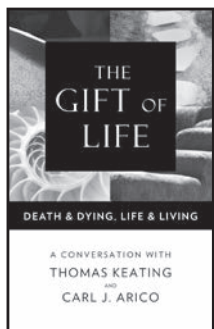
Here I wait for the God of my fathers and mothers. I wait expectantly in a kind of drowsy trust. It is still, but for the rush of the cold mountain creek below. Somehow I know my Beloved Mystery has always been here and it is I who has finally arrived.

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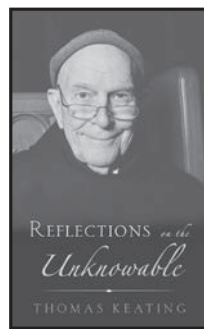
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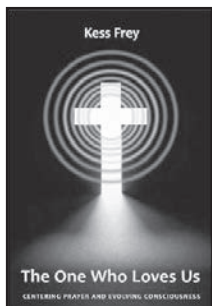
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In the USA contact  
**Susan Komis**  
ph# 973-846-6925  
**email:** [susankomis@coutreach.org](mailto:susankomis@coutreach.org)  
or  
**Marie Howard**  
ph# 973-846-6907  
**email:** [marie@coutreach.org](mailto:marie@coutreach.org)

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## INTERNATIONAL

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### **SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SPEAKING COUNTRIES**

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### **OTHER INTERNATIONAL COUNTRIES**

Please contact  
**Sr. Fionnuala Quinn**  
ph# 011-353-1 8299710  
**email:** [fmquinn48@gmail.com](mailto:fmquinn48@gmail.com)

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## UNITED IN PRAYER DAY

SATURDAY,  
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Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.  
10 Park Place, 2nd Floor, Suite B  
Butler, NJ 07405

Tel: 973-838-3384 • Fax: 973-492-5795  
email: [office@coutreach.org](mailto:office@coutreach.org)  
[www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)

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Contemplative Outreach Theological Principle #11