



The Wedding Feast at Cana

by Thomas Keating

The passing of John Paul II has become a symbol of the unity of the human family calling forth an unprecedented outpouring of respect and affection. His tireless reaching out to people of all faiths, along with his commitment to his own tradition are widely perceived to be an encouraging witness in a time of discouragement and confusion. His example constitutes a call to the Christian churches, especially the Roman Catholic communion, to find effective structures to bring into the world the new wine entrusted to the Second Vatican Council by the Spirit. The renewal of the contemplative heritage is undoubtedly one of them.

On the third day there was a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone jars of water for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2: 1-11)

On this occasion there was a wedding feast in a small town in Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. Presumably, she was acquainted with the couple. Maybe she dragged Jesus along for company or for social reasons. As the event progressed it became clear to her that the wine was running out. This was a very important occasion for the young couple. Mary knew they would be profoundly embarrassed if there was nothing but plain water to offer the guests. Because of her concern for this young couple she said to Jesus, "They have no wine," meaning, of course, that the supply of wine is in the very last stages. *Continued on page 6*

Practice, Practice, Practice Practice is what we do ... God does the 'rest'



Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

Our 'year of practice' is underway. As we celebrate our 20th anniversary we are exploring ways to carry the peace granted to us by a regular practice of Centering Prayer out of our prayer room and into the 'marketplace' of everyday life. Centering Prayer is complemented by other contemplative practices: the welcoming prayer, lectio divina, intention and attention, contemplative service, spirituality of money, and the active prayer practice are some of them. The foundation of everything, however, is our personal commitment to practice, and this commitment can transform the heart of the world.

The new Contemplative Life Program (CLP) is a means of connecting our global community through practice. Now more than a thousand members of our spiritual family, from Antarctica to Ohio, South Dakota to South Africa are subscribers to it. Since we began on Ash Wednesday we've re-dedicated ourselves to Centering Prayer, the first of nine 40 day modules. And together, through this practice we are building up the body of Christ.

I would like to share with you the impact the Contemplative Life Program has had on my personal commitment to practice. I have realized that 'prayer without ceasing' is my contemplative practice and that all of the other practices mentioned above help me to keep that focus each day. Attention, intention, and consent to practice are the heart of transformation and cooperation with the Spirit of God. Over time my daily routine of prayer has changed. I've increased the time spent in Centering Prayer gradually to one and a half to two hours each day. I've taken to heart what St. John of the Cross says: "If you don't have time for prayer then increase it". I've realized that the busier I am, the more time I need in prayer to remain balanced and to keep my heart open.

How do I find the time each day? I get up a bit earlier and spend one hour in Centering Prayer — then move into spiritual reading (lectio divina) for about 10 minutes. I find this is a wonderful way to ease into my hectic day. In our office, most days we take a Centering Prayer

break of 20-25 minutes. Most recently I've added a third period of Centering Prayer before dinner. Each time I sit during the day, I read the same page of *The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living*. Listening to the same reading three times in one day weaves the word of God throughout my day and helps me to hear more deeply the message hidden between the lines. It's my opportunity to listen again to what God is revealing and teaching me about our relationship.

The Contemplative Life Program booklet is my prayer companion and provides me with simple readings and beautiful images to ponder and carry with me into the day as my active prayer. My CLP bookmark and practice card are on my desk as a constant reminder that I am united with our global contemplative community.

Sometimes, I awaken spontaneously around 3:30 AM. Rather than fret about losing sleep and tossing and turning, I take this opportunity for 30 to 45 minutes in Centering Prayer and then return to sleep. This time when the world is asleep around me is a precious time for prayer. It reminds me of times when my children were infants; getting up to feed them in the quiet of the night was a sweet time to be alone with them.

How do I remember God in the midst of daily activity when emotions get triggered? The day to day busyness, — airport madness, deadlines, email, fax, telephone — all demanding immediate attention — are all grist for the mill of transformation.

While traveling during the last several months, I've had the good fortune of discussing 'the year of practice' with many people around the world during chapter visits, workshops, retreats, training programs and on the 20th anniversary tour (see page 7). When I've asked, "What does your commitment to 'practice' mean to you?" I've heard many stories of transformation. Centering Prayer has affected the quality of lives, marriages, relationships with children, elderly parents and illness. Centering Prayer, the prayer of consent, offers a peaceful place to return to each day, to drop below the speed of the whirl-wind world and sink into a place of rest; it provides a deep sense of being 'home'. This time apart helps to remember that God is, in fact, the source of life.

The welcoming prayer provides that seven- second pause, to focus and sink into the experience, welcome the Spirit and let go and let grace flow into the event, the situation — I am able to return to my interior disposition, as the Spirit is always present within. This simple practice helps me to get out of the way, to surrender to the Spirit in the present moment right then and there, even on the phone or in the airport!

It isn't easy to make a deeper commitment to contemplative practices. Life has a way of pulling us away from 'practice'. Sometimes we forget about them. Sometimes we *believe* we are practicing because we are reading or talking or thinking about practice, contemplative life, the mystics, or the spiritual journey. And as good as these activities may be, they aren't the same as 'practice'.

Some long time practitioners tell me that their commitment to Centering Prayer is 20 minutes a day. And they often take the weekends off and then find they have a difficult time getting back to their 'practice'. Others say they are faithful practitioners, but then admit they often have trouble really getting to that second sit each day. Many are grateful for their Centering Prayer group, which provides gentle accountability and support for them each week.

So, what is an established practice of Centering Prayer anyway? Well, Fr. Thomas tells us it is at least two 20-minute periods of Centering Prayer each

day: "one for maintenance and the other for growth in the transformation process." He adds that an intensive retreat, at least once a year, is recommended to support our on-going transformation.

Contemplative Outreach exists to help support us in our commitment to practice. We provide the tools needed to help us make more room for our relationship with God. The Contemplative Life Program, (details on page 4) is one of those tools. You can still join the program and journey with us throughout 2005.

We do the 'practice' and God does the 'rest'. We enter into the silence, we unite with God, and God does the work of the dismantling process in us. The Spirit moves into the world as the transmission of Divine love, in us, through and between us. All we have to do is stop, take ourselves to our prayer chair or cushion and wait upon God.

Our Annual Conference/Retreat this year will focus on the 'The Year of Practice'. It will be held at The Crossings, a retreat and wellness center in the Texas Hill Country. Together we will share our experiences, challenges and ways to deepen our commitment to contemplative practices. We invite you to participate — September 28 to October 2. See page 10 for details on the Annual Conference/Retreat. Reserve your place early, as space is limited.

As I have shared some of my life of practice with you, I invite you to share your experience of practice with me. I would love to hear from you. How is the year of practice making a difference in your commitment to Centering Prayer and/or the other contemplative practices? Send your comments to office@coutreach.org

“ Have you noticed that our newsletter had a facelift?

We are very fortunate because our editor/designer Susan Supak is a volunteer and this face lift hasn't increased our cost, yet it makes it more attractive and read-able. We are so grateful to Susan for the time, energy and enthusiasm that she puts into creation and development of our newsletter. This is spirituality of contemplative service in action! The newsletter is supported by donations from readers like you – the cost to print and mail it is \$66,000. We receive donations of \$12,000 - \$14,000 toward our cost. ”

Editor's Note: Thanks, Gail. Truth be told, working on the newsletter affords me the opportunity to interact with incredible spirit-filled people from around the world — even if it's not always personally but through their updates and articles. I'm truly blessed. It's given me a real sense of the oneness of us all.



Contemplative Life Program

launches with over 1000 subscribers

The new Contemplative Life Program, a series of nine, in-home modules for contemplative practice and study, has attracted over 1000 subscribers from all over the world in just a few short months.

“One of the awesome things about the Contemplative Life Program is knowing that so many others are praying at the same time — with the same materials — and in such a profound way. Surely the world will be blessed and enriched by this effort.”

—current CLP subscriber

The Contemplative Life Program (CLP) is for individuals to engage within their own home, but in spiritual connection with other participants around the world. Each module consists of a booklet containing excerpts of Fr. Thomas Keating’s teachings, reflective passages, suggested practices to engage during the 40 days and a list of suggested readings. A bookmark or some sort of visual reminder of the practice will also be included. (Content and format will vary between each of the nine modules.)

The topics selected for 2005 are:

- Centering Prayer
- Welcoming Prayer
- Lectio Divina
- Spirituality of money
- Active Prayer
- Contemplative discernment
- Spirituality of contemplative service
- Attention/intention
- Forgiveness

“The purpose of every true devotional practice and method of prayer is to bring us to a person-to-person, being-to-being relationship with Christ.” Thomas Keating, *Crisis of Faith, Crisis of Love*

Questions? Visit the CLP FAQ online at www.outreach.org/clp.htm.

Email? CLP@coutreach.org

Call? 800-608-0096 US & Canada,
570-822-8899 for international callers.

Join together with others in the Contemplative Outreach network in exploring what it means to live the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life ... in deepening your commitment to your own transformation ... in participating in the transformation of the world.

You may still subscribe to the program at the website or by phone. A year-long subscription to the program is \$180 ... or 50 cents a day. The first module on Centering Prayer was mailed in February, but new subscribers may join at any time. Previous modules will be included in your first mailing.

A Sampling of Frequently Asked Questions

More information on the program, a sample excerpt of the first module and a detailed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) may be found online at www.outreach.org/clp.htm. A sampling of the FAQ's are printed below. Gift subscriptions, e-versions of the program for distant subscribers and a payment plan are available.

I am worried about how much time this will take. How will I fit this program into my busy life?

The program can take as much or as little time as you would like to give it. It is all about your commitment to your spiritual journey. Your intention and your desire for relationship with God will determine the length of time you spend with the materials each day. It could be 5 minutes or it could be an hour or more. It provides an opportunity to recapture an 'interior retreat atmosphere' and move through each day reflective and recollected.

What is the point of the program? If I'm already practicing, why do I need it?

The Contemplative Life Program has several objectives. There is a definite, pervasive hunger for something meaningful in everyday life. A personal relationship with God seems to be the only real answer. Many people do want to go deeper in their relationship with God and don't have a local faith community that supports them. Some find there is a need for more support at home or at work, in the midst of the ordinary routines of life. Over 1000 subscribers in a few short months points to the need for The Contemplative Life Program, which can satisfy some of the longing to focus, support and connect with others who have this hunger for God.

I received my first module and wasn't sure how to use it. I was confused — what should I do with it?

We have received feedback that the first module was too unstructured and needed more direction on how to use it. As a result of the subscriber comments, starting with the Lectio Divina module, the program will have a more directed, daily structure.

We recommend that you tailor the program to fit your particular spiritual needs. Some subscribers read a few pages of the booklet a day as a "doorway" into their Centering Prayer period. Others are reading the booklet over and over in its entirety throughout the 40 days, seeking to let the words penetrate them as they allow the essence of the practice to penetrate them. Experienced practitioners might pick just one or two of the suggested practices and



"The materials are beautiful and of high quality. The quotes and passages appear to be deep, prayerful "doorways" into prayer ... I've been praying with the materials for several days now and am enjoying them very much. I pray the daily readings first, reflecting on them for a few moments before settling into my centering prayer. I've found that "doing" 2 pages of the spiral bound book per day works well — and the blank spaces on most of the pages are just right for jotting down daily thoughts, reflections, etc."

focus on them, in solidarity with other newer practitioners who are just beginning the process.

Why aren't there more materials with the program — more to read and more to do?

The program is designed to meet the needs of busy people in the modern world. One of the biggest concerns for many is "will I have time for this?" The program offers a range of options to practice or read, depending on your time.

Most importantly, contemplative practices are not about 'doing' or intellectual efforts. The best 'effort' we can make in relation to any contemplative practice is to remain open to the experience of God's presence in all that surrounds us, moment by moment. We bring our receptivity and curiosity to our participation in programs and practices. We use our intellect to learn

and discern. We surrender our normal patterns, preferences and behaviors to the grace of the Indwelling Spirit.

I am a long-time practitioner and there doesn't seem to be anything new for me. Do you have any suggestions?

For long-time practitioners, the intention behind the program is to build the Body of Christ, which is the real key to the program - beyond the physical form of the materials or suggested practices. We can join in solidarity with one another in the struggle to remember and live a contemplative life in the marketplace. We join hands and hearts as a contemplative global community, with the desire to allow Divine Love to flow through us into the world.

It is also an opportunity for long-time practitioners to make fresh commitments to their practices that might have grown stale, habitual or that have been inadvertently set aside. It is a chance to deepen our relationship with God — to surrender more deeply within each practice. What does my current participation in relationship to the Body of Christ look like? Where am I out of relationship with God? What new nourishment can my existing practices reveal to me? What do I wish to know or understand by my participation in this program? How does the fruit of my contemplative commitment support my service to others? How do I apply the contemplative dimension of the Gospel to family, business and social concerns?

We believe that some of the upcoming modules may have greater interest to you. We have started with Centering Prayer, the Welcoming Prayer and Lectio Divina this year because they are the fundamental practices of Contemplative Outreach. As we begin to explore other areas, we are confident you will find new, interesting and perhaps challenging 'spiritual food' coming to you through The Contemplative Life Program.

"I am enjoying the first segment of the Program a lot. I have been a centering prayer practitioner for many years, but my practice lately has been sketchy and this has helped me to become more faithful again — and even to increase the length and frequency of my sits. Thank you very much for this program!"

from NYC

THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA

continued from page 1

But notice that she doesn't actually ask for anything. She simply presents the problem to him. She lays out the facts and gives him credit for being able to anticipate the consequences for the young couple. Of course, there is an implied request in the words that express her concern.

Jesus' response to her observation indicates that he perceived that she would like him to do something about the situation, although she did not specifically ask for anything. Her words suggest that she is asking him to look into the problem, as if to say, "Can you do something?"

Her concern apparently placed Jesus on the spot. He was not ready to work a miracle that would launch him into his predestined ministry. The latter is exactly what happened when he acted upon Mary's concern, for at the conclusion of the narrative we read: "This was the first of Jesus' miracles and *his disciples believed in him*".

Jesus' response to Mary is a question: "What does this concern of yours have to do with me?" A more down to earth translation might be: "Why anticipate the purpose for which I have come into the world just because this couple have not provided enough wine for their guests?" In other words, "Why, Mother, are you concerned?"

This exchange casts a light upon the way divine inspiration sometimes works. Jesus may be thinking: "What is the motive for your request?" Mary has expressed the facts and her concern, but has left the solution of the problem in his hands. She waits to see what he will decide while admonishing the waiters, "Do whatever he tells you." This is Jesus' cue that she is not attached to her concern. It may be this disposition of detachment from her own will that Jesus is seeking to verify by his question. To be more specific, Jesus may be wondering whether her remark about the wine running out is an expression of the Spirit speaking through her, or whether it is simply a gesture coming from the impulse of her motherly goodness. Good people are always concerned for the needs of others, but how they express that concern is not always a movement of the Spirit.

If Jesus was to take Mary's statement seriously, he needed to know whether her request was reflecting not just her motherly concern, but the divine will using her human goodness to express an immense movement of love in the heart of God. Her concern and her expression of it did in fact initiate the whole redemptive process. When Mary whispered to the waiters, "Do whatever he tells you," Jesus recognized that she was manifesting not just her own will, but a movement of the Father's love requesting him to perform a miracle that would transform the admiration of the apostles into faith in him as God's Son.

Jesus said to the waiters: "Fill the jugs with water." They did so. Then he said: "Present some of it to the head waiter." The waiters took the water, now made wine to the head waiter. He was not aware of where the wine came from. After tasting it, he called the groom over and quipped, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus not only had changed the water into wine, but changed it into the very best of wine.

In Scripture, water often represents human nature and the revelation of God in creation. The new wine suggests a new perspective. The miracle is not just the change of water into better water. It is the change of water into something brand new. The miracle thus points to a new creation. It reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit as exhilarating, heady — even intoxicating, an expansion of love that stirs people up and leads to a convivial atmosphere that spreads delight among the guests.

The new wine signifies the Gospel as a movement of divine love in which the Spirit at the heart of God's Trinitarian life is made available. Notice there were six jugs of water, an immense quantity, enough wine to supply a small army. This detail suggests the limitless kind of gift that the Spirit represents and is about to bestow on the human family. That

incomparable gift is Christ's redeeming activity and its transformational effects.

Thus the seemingly insignificant concern of Mary, precisely because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, becomes the point of departure for a world-changing cosmic event. Mary's entire being, saturated as it was with prayer, was vibrating to the intensity and subtlety of that love and hence could transmit it even in her smallest actions. To live ordinary life with extraordinary love is to allow the Spirit to transform the details of everyday, including one's concerns and even one's jokes, into manifestations of the infinite compassion of God.

It is as if the Father inspired her to reveal her concern to Jesus because he couldn't wait any longer or hold back his eagerness to effect the redemption of the world and to pour out his infinite love upon humanity. Little things when inspired by God can result in enormous consequences. The simple expression of Mary's concern set off the redemption of the world. Our salvation actually began at the wedding feast of Cana when the seed of faith was sown in the minds and hearts of the apostles through the changing of the water into wine. For they were to carry Jesus' message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

This same love continues in the Christian community. It might be called the contemplative dimension of the Gospel.

"Little things
when inspired by God can result in
enormous consequences."

20TH ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISING TOUR: TRANSFORMING THE HEART OF THE WORLD

We are nearing the end of our 5-year campaign for \$2,500,000. We have reached \$2,067,135 thus far and we expect to surpass our projected goal. We are grateful for the support and commitment of so many of you. It is certainly a miracle of God's grace that so many women and men are being drawn to Centering Prayer. It is the power of this prayer that continues to spread our message around the world.

The Team

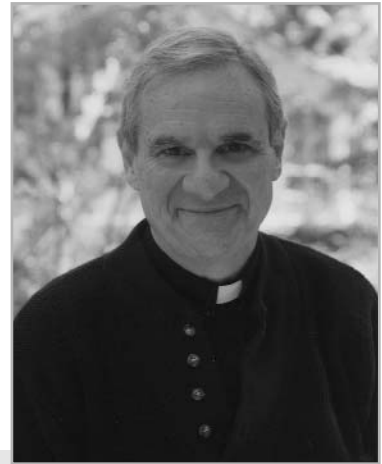
As part of our 20th anniversary celebration Fr. Thomas Keating and members of the staff; Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, Fr. Carl Arico and Marie Howard, our special events coordinator, are spending weekends with Chapters that have accepted our invitation to host an event.

The Weekend

On Saturday we have a morning and afternoon session with the Chapter leadership; that evening, a special dinner with major donors; on Sunday, a fundraising event, inviting all the members of Contemplative Outreach and their guests to listen to an inspiring talk by Fr. Thomas, preceded by a presentation of our needs with an appeal for financial support; and then an open reception where we can meet and greet one another, along with a book signing by Fr. Thomas.

Thus far, we have visited 22 chapters and plan on visiting seven more before the end of the year.

We would like to help you plan an event in your Chapter in 2006. I invite coordinators, leadership teams, and contact persons to call Marie (310-823-5863) to discuss the possibility.



Carl Arico, Fundraising Co-Chair

UPCOMING 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR EVENTS

2005	9/16-18	St. Louis
	10/14-16	Atlanta
	10/21-23	New Jersey
	11/4-6	Northern KY- OH - ID
		Tri State Chapter
	11/19	Los Angeles
	11/20	San Diego
	12/2-4	Phoenix

Supporting the Message

In closing I'd like to share the following: Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said. *"It is not important how much you give, but how much love you put into what you give."* I know there is a correlation between how well we love and how much of our resources we are willing to give in creating and sharing what we love. It is my prayer that we feel the honor that comes from supporting the contemplative message that comes to those desiring a deeper relationship with God. Thank you for your continued support and may God bless you always.

Some of the comments from people who attended the weekend events.

"Centering Prayer is the healthiest program I have participated in."

"A greater appreciation of what the Contemplative Outreach spiritual network was all about."

"I realized we are not part of a fly-by night group."

"There is a practical financial aspect to our spiritual experience."

"It was not easy to hear but I appreciated the upfront request for money and the need for on-going financial support."

"I came away with a sense of urgency — our experience is valuable — we need to share it effectively."

Options for Giving: Bequests/Wills; Individual Charitable Trusts; Long-term Appreciated Securities; all offer tax benefits.

Please contact us if you would like information about these options. Contemplative Outreach is designated as a public charity under 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all contributions are tax deductible.

Readers' Reflections

A Conspiracy of Grace

by Andrea Horner, Santa Fe, NM

“... Go down Capital Creek Road for about 3 miles, staying to the left of any “Y” intersections... turn left at the sign onto Monastery Road,” the directions read. And there I was.

It had been a long journey to this place, not so much the drive from Santa Fe as the spiritual distance I had traveled to get here. After all, how *does* a good Baptist girl from Texas get to a retreat at a Catholic monastery in Colorado by way of 15 years of agnosticism in California? My mother wants to know.

I had wanted to do an Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat at St. Benedict's for over a year, but the timing had never worked out. Then, just a few days before the 10-Day retreat was to begin in January, I got an email saying that there was an opening. Did I want to come? Three days later, I was headed for Snowmass.

I drove onto the monastery grounds and was stunned by the physical beauty. The valley, birthed from Mt. Sopris to the south, was spectacular, a bowl of pristine, sparkling snow rimmed by rocky ridges and a cloudless sky. I immediately slowed my car to a crawl. This was sacred ground. I could feel it.

I reached the Retreat Center and walked inside to register. The sitting area and dining room were bathed in sunshine with magnificent views. I felt I should whisper. I was welcomed, given a brief orientation, and directed to my hermitage, St. Joseph's, on the hill behind the Retreat Center. I thought they'd made a mistake. I had signed up at the very last minute and was told I'd be staying in the old barn rooms down by the gate.

After all, how *does* a Baptist girl from Texas get to a retreat at a Catholic monastery in Colorado . . . My mother wants to know.”

“There's been a change,” the retreat master said, “But I think you'll be pleased. St. Joseph's is high up on the hill. There's nothing between you and God.”

And he was right. I had an unencumbered view of the entire valley. It was as if it had all been placed there just

for me — the beauty and the peace and the grandeur. I was deeply moved and profoundly grateful. I didn't know what the next ten days would hold, but I knew that there was a conspiracy of grace afoot.

The first evening, during and after supper, I met my fellow retreatants. We were from fourteen different states and six different denominations, a mix of men and women, lay and clergy, from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, all here hoping to deepen our practice of Centering Prayer.

I returned to my hermitage determined to get some sleep before our early start the next morning. Being a night person, I didn't know how I'd adjust to waking up by 4:30 am each day. I had images of falling over dead asleep during the first morning sit and humiliating myself. But as I lay fretting in the dark, I was given an incredible gift — the night sky. With the shades up, my large window was filled with pure blackness that was crowded, jam-packed, overflowing with stars of all sizes and brightness. They were moving and falling, dancing around the moon, streaking across the sky. It made me laugh and it made me cry. And I could feel myself sinking into the loving embrace of this sacred valley.

The next day the retreat began in earnest. The daily schedule involved extended periods of Centering Prayer and silence, interspersed with meals and video teaching by Fr. Keating, walks and talks with staff, and services at the monastery. I had not anticipated how deeply moving these times at the monastery would be. Sitting amidst the simple beauty of the chapel, with the exquisite sounds of unison chants reverberating all around me, the words of Scripture penetrated my heart in ways they never had before. And with Vigils and Compline coming just before bedtime, I was lovingly sung to sleep every night. One more unexpected gift.

But then my entire ten days were filled with unexpected gifts. Feeling held in the safety of the group as we shared hours of Centering Prayer, feeling cared for by those who prepared and served delicious meals with such love, feeling nourished by the beauty of the sights and sounds and words that surrounded me, feeling transformed by the silence. There were so many gifts of grace I lost count.

Utterly Apophatic

I am nothing, no thing whatsoever

My bones bared are not me.

My flesh felled neither is me.

Nor any emotion flesh feels

Nor thought mind makes

Nor are my thoughts you, You,

Though spawning honest prayer

But from a self tainting Self

That self still not me.

For I am nothing, nothing at all,

As You are Nothing, nothing at all.

You have no name, nor do I

Except the names I give myself.

I am a nameless nothing

But so, gloriously, are You.

How then live my nothing

In this world that says I'm something

And not one but many somethings.

How penetrate these perceptions?

Down, down to nothing

where nothing is one with Nothing

and finally be who I am:

Nothing birthing somethings

Out of union with my God.

written by Bob Hope
Contemplative Outreach of New England

Are You Well Seasoned

Are You, or is Anyone You Know, Well-Seasoned?

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE NEW COURSE

being offered in the network of Contemplative Outreach: The Contemplative Spiritual Companionship Course? In introducing it at the Annual Meeting in Toronto last October, Fr. Thomas Keating described it as being "the tomorrow of Contemplative Outreach". Why tomorrow? Because it is designed to meet the emerging needs of those who are "well-seasoned" with eight or more years experience in Centering Prayer. Fr. Thomas said that what Contemplative Outreach now offers is especially good for someone in the first years of their spiritual journey. But, what happens after that, once your Centering Prayer has seasoned your life with God for eight years or so?

This target population are those who may have gone through the existing formation, resources and supports of Contemplative Outreach and are needing or looking (even inarticulately) for something more. With the inspiration for this course, Fr. Thomas and Gail Fitzpatrick Hopler want to continue providing for the needs of all the members of the network. This course is a chapter-sponsored event. The quiet spiritual health of a chapter is nurtured by the presence of Christ in those who have been committed to contemplative prayer for some years, especially as they let its fruits affect their relationships. Being well-seasoned has subtle effects.

This course provides practical material on the ongoing depths and challenges of the contemplative journey, how to respond to God in the dark nights and identify in your own Centering Prayer the resources Christ has given you to continue on the journey into union and unity with God. There is the opportunity to deepen and explore other contemplative practices, according to the participant's interests and needs. And there is a process of "spiritual companionship" that extends the effects of prayer more directly and intentionally into relationships — the real testing ground of our life with God.

There is a retreat in the cluster about every 6 months for a group of 18 or more, journaling, exercises, practices, spiritual reading, along with a monthly small group community meeting of the participants that provides support from others who are at a similar place on the journey. If you are interested, talk to your coordinator and other people in your area. If your cluster would like to sponsor this two-year course, please contact David Frenette for more information: 303-774-8123 or 720-232-9777.

Dear Unknown Friends:

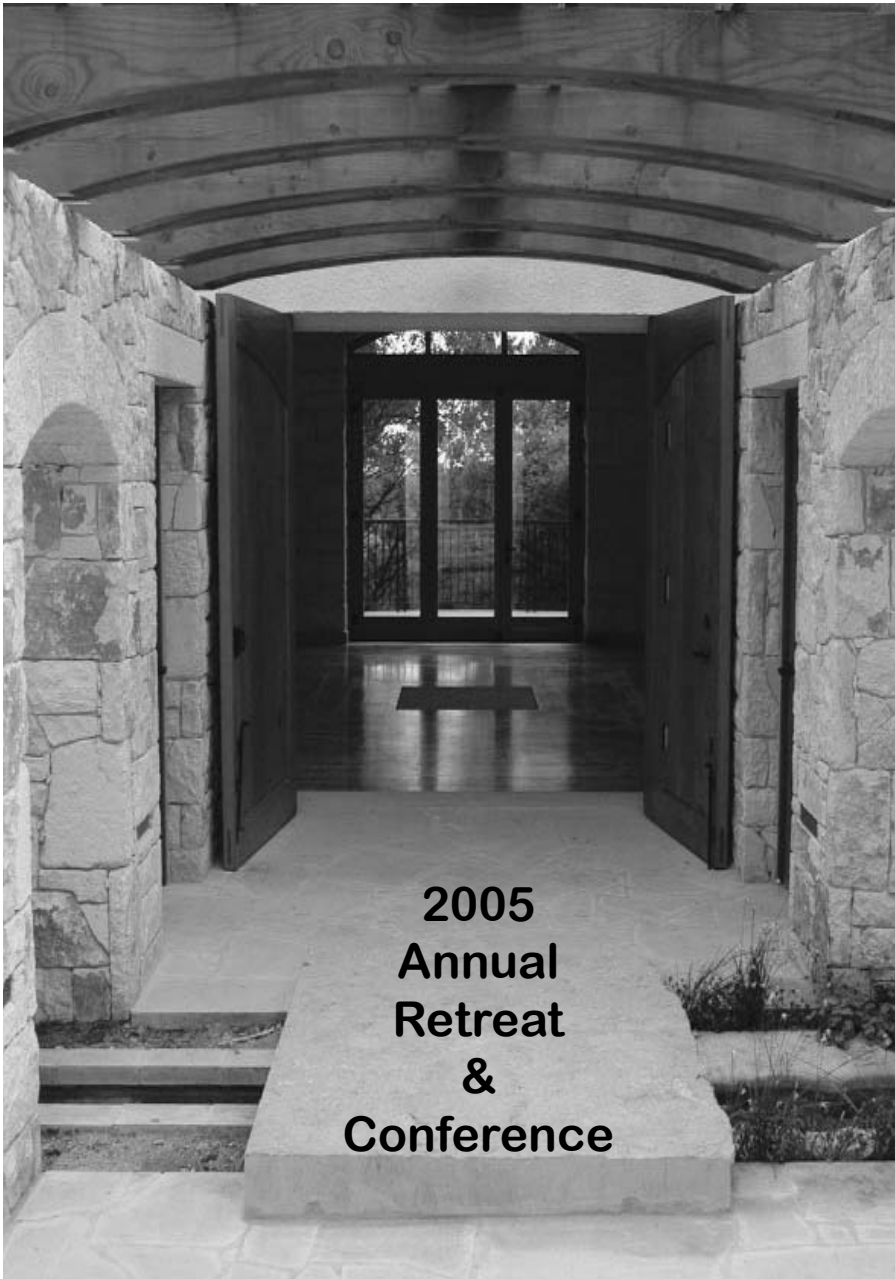
This past Advent while sharing a meal and some of my concerns with Fr. Carl Arico, I was invited by him to address those of us who are members-at-large of Contemplative Outreach, but without benefit of belonging to a prayer group or a contemplative community, for any number of reasons.

Fr. Carl thought that the newsletter might be a place to connect with those among us undergoing the Divine process alone. In many ways we resemble hermits who live hidden lives amidst busy family lives and struggle interiorly to listen to Christ without ceasing ... that through Him and by the power of the Holy Spirit, every obstacle to His life in us be removed and our ever-deepening commitment to Our Lord be sustained as we journey home.

All of us know from experience how very difficult it is to maintain a level of dedication for any extended length of time, regardless of what stage our spiritual development is in... even with the benefit of support groups. This is a place to share the adventure of following Christ and join in the songs we can sing at this watering hole ... where Christ, I pray, is recognized in all. I hope others among you will want to connect this way too, through the Newsletter, in support of our common journey.

Yours in never giving up and persevering in prayer....
anonymous

Responses can be emailed to the editor, office@coutreach.org



**2005
Annual
Retreat
&
Conference**

The Crossings near Austin, Texas
in the Texas Hill Country

"This year, the schedule will be more 'contemplative' in pace and in content. You will have time to explore the grounds and partake in the offerings of this beautiful Retreat/Wellness Center."

Annual Conference 2005- Plans Underway
The Annual Conference this year will be held at *The Crossings* near Austin, Texas beginning Wednesday afternoon, September 28th and concluding Sunday, October 2nd, after lunch. Mark your calendars as you won't want to miss this exciting conference, which will be held in a very beautiful, prayerful and healthy surrounding.

The Theme, **"Celebrating the Year of Practice"** based on the materials from the Contemplative Life Program (CLP), will include a special retreat from Wednesday evening until noon Friday. Friday afternoon through Saturday evening will be a time to share with one another our experiences of participation in the CLP, having been connected through prayer and study of the designated practices during the year.

On Sunday morning the Annual Business Meeting of the voting membership and a closing Liturgy, *with Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina and Homily by Fr. Thomas*, will conclude the Conference.

This year, the schedule will be more "contemplative" in pace and in content. You will have time to explore the grounds and partake in the offerings of this beautiful retreat/wellness center.

Complete information regarding schedule, cost, registration information and directions to The Crossings is available on our website www.contemplativeoutreach.org. If you do not have Internet access please contact the International Office by emailing office@coutreach.org and ask for the Annual Conference information.

Timothy Koock is the Board Chair for this conference. Feel free to contact Tim or me if you have any questions. We are very excited about the new "design" for this year's Conference and we know you will enjoy time for Centering Prayer, renewing friendships, meeting new friends on the Journey, and integrating the CLP. You will have an opportunity to provide input for the continuation of this wonderful program.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Texas in the fall.

Marie Howard, Special Events Coordinator.

MRHfamlife@aol.com Marie Howard
woolsacks@beecreek.net Timothy Koock

Invitation to give Contemplative Service

The International Office in Butler, NJ invites you to join their volunteer group. This is a great way to experience how the office connects and interacts with the entire network of Contemplative Outreach. We are looking for help with general office projects such as mailings, photocopying, filing and computer data entry (training is provided). If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Judy O'Toole by email, at Judy@coutreach.org or by phone 973.838.3384 We have local and out of state volunteers if you are going to be in the NJ area you may be interested in spending some time volunteering with us. We welcome your service and look forward to hearing from you!

12 Step Outreach

**Dedicated teams
from a variety of fellowships
are willing to bring this
precious contemplative practice
to those you love.**

In January a Formation Retreat and Workshop was held at St. Benedict's Retreat Center, in Snowmass, to refine the Introductory Workshop for "*Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice*". Fifteen women and men from all over the US and UK came and shared their commitment to using Centering Prayer as a tool in their recovery and how it could be offered to the 12 Step communities. All were Commissioned Presenters with an established prayer practice in addition to long-term adherence to their respective 12 Step Programs.

If you are a member of a 12 Step Group or are part of a faith community that would like to host an Introductory Workshop or a Weekend Retreat for 12 Step groups, there is a dedicated team from a variety of fellowships that are willing to bring this precious contemplative practice to those you love. For information, or to set up a workshop or retreat, please contact :

Beth Berkeley, bethsanders2000@yahoo.com
or Jay Stinnett jaays@earthlink.net or call
310-874-2341 (PST)

View from The Crossings, Austin, Texas, site of the 2005 Retreat & Conference

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Step 11 of the 12 Step Programs

Upcoming "Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice" Workshops

One-day Workshops

Long Beach ,CA	June 4	contact: Barbara B.	St. Bartholomew's Catholic Church	(562) 433-7901
Boerne, TX	August 6	contact: Myrna T.	Contemplative Outreach Center	(210) 710 5602
Atlanta, GA	August 13	contact: Roberta O.	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church	(404) 299-2670
New Westminster, BC	September 10	contact: Kathleen S.	Holy Trinity Cathedral	(604) 254-9969
Encino, CA	October 29	contact: Sally F.	Holy Spirit Retreat Center	(310) 390-9722

Weekend Workshop/Retreat

Omaha, NE	September 23-25	contact: Deb Fortina	St. Benedict Center	(402) 280-4774
Eureka, MO	November 4-6	contact: Jim M.	Marionist Retreat Center	(314) 725-7944
Sinsinwa, WI	November 18-20	contact: Jenny A.	Sinsinwa Mound Center	(319) 266 8225

by Ilse Reissner

We recently received several significant donations that have made a tremendous impact on Contemplativa Extensión. Thank you J.R., Maria T., John, and Elizabeth. Thanks also to the members of our board, who have always been our main supporters. Our blessings continue as Mexico and Nicaragua were recently recognized by their local cardinals, a big step forward.

Mexico: Many activities and events were held these last months, following Fr. Thomas's visit in August. Our coordinator couple, Judith and Julio, offered Introductory workshops and retreats in many cities. Fr. John Martin and his local group have been busy in the Yucatan Peninsula.

The cardinal in Mexico requested workshops and retreats for the Mexican clergy and seminarians. This is a BIG change from this same cardinal's opposition to the teaching of Centering Prayer when Judith first tried to introduce it there five years ago.

Nicaragua: Something very similar happened here, the cardinal asked the local coordinator, Aida Maria Herdocia to direct their annual clergy retreat,

to include the cardinal himself. Fr. Gilberto Walker, who is building a contemplative community in Cuba, accepted our invitation and obtained permission from his Provincial to go to Nicaragua in November, accompanied by Adalberto Henriquez. This is a significant event. We ask for your prayers in support of this five-day retreat.

Puerto Rico and Venezuela: Our coordinator in Puerto Rico, Marilú Asón, is now overseeing our work in Venezuela. Please see the letter from Venezuela below.

Our blessings continue as Mexico and Nicaragua were recently recognized by their local cardinals, a big step forward.

Formation for Presenters Workshops: In El Salvador, the team will be Leila Membreño and myself, along with two locals who attended our 2002 Formation Workshop in Orlando. Following the Annual Meeting of Contemplative Outreach in

Austin, in October, there will be a presenter's workshop on the "Refined Essentials". We ask all our presenters to try to attend the Annual Meeting and then stay for this. Last, but not least, we have another Formation in Mexico, November 16 to the 23rd. The cost for the workshops in El Salvador and Mexico are very reasonable.

Extensión Contemplativa de Venezuela by Fr. Beda Hornung OSB

V
E
N
E
Z
U
E
L
A

It is a pleasure for me to present to you the new branch on the tree of Contemplative Outreach: Extensión Contemplativa de Venezuela. This year, from February 4 to 8, the first retreat on Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina was given in Venezuela. It was held at the Benedictine Abbey of San José, Güigüe (pronounce: "Weewe"), just south of the Lake of Valencia. The long weekend of carnival gave us enough time to become familiar with this discipline. The time table and the choir office of the monastery were of great help in our efforts to remain centered.

Since the middle of last year, Mrs. Belkina Gamboa, Caracas, and Fr. Beda Hornung OSB, Güigüe, began to organize this retreat. Including Fr. Beda, monk of the Benedictine community, there were 20 participants. Besides a majority of women, participants came from very different walks of life, and different professional and pastoral activities. Most of them had read the book, *Open mind, Open Heart*; and everyone showed great interest in the presentations and the practical exercises. Because of the limited number of rooms available, quite a few people could not participate and will have to wait for another opportunity, hopefully in the near future. In our country there is much hunger for serious and deep spirituality combined with practical help to put it to work.

Our guides into Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina were Mrs. Marilú Asón and Sister María Milagros Carbonell, both from Puerto Rico. Marilú, with her fine humor, came across very well. And Sister María Milagros touched us with her simplicity and depth. With the help of both, we really got the best out of this retreat. On Monday evening, they told us how to organize the prayer groups. There will probably be two groups: one in Caracas, from where nine of the retreatants came, and another one in Valencia, about 150 km (100 miles) west of Caracas, from where eight other people had come. The other three have no one nearby in their areas. Marilú will be the Coordinator for Venezuela, and Belkina Gamboa will be the local contact person. Everything related to Extensión Contemplativa de Venezuela will be her responsibility.

The group wanted to invite a number of people for another retreat in the future. But, being new in this and with little experience, we decided to wait until the end of the year, practicing faithfully twice a day our Centering Prayer, and allowing the Lord to transform us. By the middle of October, all of us will meet again for a weekend at the Abbey, to share our experiences of Centering Prayer and Lectio, and to deepen some aspects, if necessary. From then on, we will see what happens.

Our thanks go to Extensión Contemplativa who sent us two very qualified persons and who, to a large extent, provided for their travel expenses. Our thanks, with a special greeting, go also to Fr. Thomas Keating who has dedicated several decades of his life to rediscovering the great gift of contemplation and to making it accessible to modern people like us. All of us have the privilege of harvesting the fruits of what he has sown. Thanks, Father, and God bless you!

Visit our website

www.contemplativeoutreach.org
for a complete listing of resources
offered by Contemplative Outreach

Fax order form to 570-822-8226

Phone 800-608-0096 to place an order

Online order from the webstore where
you can see a list of all the resources and
order from the online bookstore

Mail your order to

Contemplative Outreach Orders
375 Stewart Rd., P.O. Box 1211
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18773-1211

Upcoming . . .

Manifesting God

a new book by Fr. Thomas Keating

available Summer/Fall 2005

look for an announcement on our website this summer

Sewanee Theological Review is an Anglican journal



of theological reflection. Published quarterly, STR focuses on questions that are a present and continuing concern for the church. Intended for both lay and academic audiences. The March 2005 issue is titled "*Contemplative Prayer*" and features articles by Thomas Keating, David Frenette, Thomas

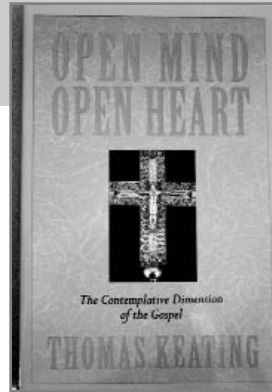
Ward, Paul Lawson, and other contemplative authors. Single-copy orders for this issue are \$8 each. A one-year subscription is \$24. To order, send your payment to:

Sewanee Theological Review,
SOT Box 46-C,
Sewanee, TN 37383-0001 USA.

Sorry, no credit cards accepted. Foreign orders add \$3 for single-copy order and \$8 for a subscription. Payment in U.S. dollars, please.

Resources

Current Best Sellers



Open Mind, Open Heart *by Fr. Thomas Keating*

The contemplative dimension of the gospel Centering Prayer resource. Many questions regarding the Centering Prayer method are answered here.

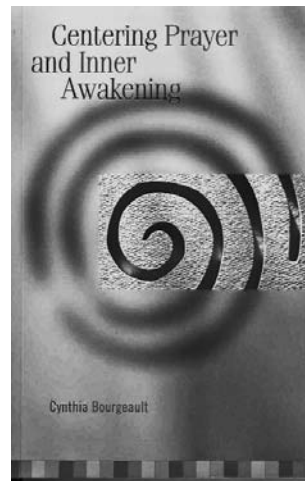
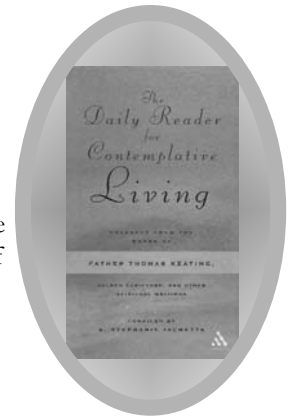
Paperback #B-01
\$13.95

The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living

compiled by Stephanie Iachetta

This work brings together for each day of the year three prayer practices for contemplative living: first, a brief "active prayer"; second, excerpts from eleven of Fr. Thomas Keating's books and an audiotape; and, third, Lectio Divina.

#B-43 \$21.95



Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening

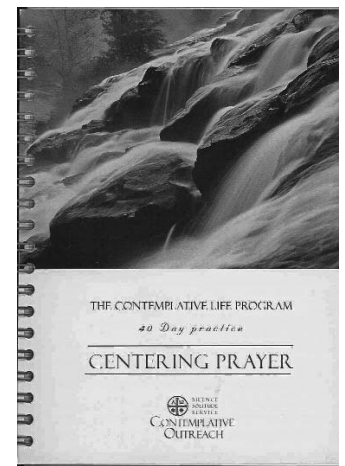
by Cynthia Bourgeault

A look at the distinct nuances of the Centering Prayer Method and an explanation of its potential for transformation.

#B-50 \$13.95

The Contemplative Life Program

See page 4 for details.



NEW RESOURCES AND ORDER FORM

Videos

Living Ordinary Life with Extraordinary Love - Part 1

Session 1 Fr. Thomas Keating offers contemporary answers to contemporary challenges of ordinary life. 47 minutes

Session 2 Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler explains the Contemplative Outreach "Year of Practice" and the Contemplative Life Program. 20 minutes

VHS **Audio Cassette** **Compact Disk**
 V-108 - \$24.99 A-108 - \$10.00 CD-108 - \$12.00

Living Ordinary Life with Extraordinary Love - Part II

Session 1 Sr. Mary Margaret Funk speaks about "the Little Way" of St. Therese of Lisieux as a means of living out ordinary life with extraordinary love. 52 minutes

Session 2 - Dialogue Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, Fr. Thomas Keating, Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler 40 minutes

VHS **Audio Cassette** **Compact Disk**
 V-109 - \$24.99 A-109 - \$10.00 CD-109 - \$12.00

CDs (Never before offered)

Spiritual Journey Part V

VHS - KV-07 \$124.95 5-Audio Set KA-207 \$50.00
 DVD - KDVD-07 \$150.00 3-CD Set KCD-207 \$60.00

See DVD announcement on this page

Six Continuing Sessions of the Introduction to the Centering Prayer Practice

formerly the "Six Session Follow-up to the Introductory Workshop Series"

VHS - KV-08 \$64.99 3-Audio Set KA-208 \$30.00
 DVD - KDVD-08 \$90.00 3-CD Set KCD-208 \$36.00

Method of C.P. Brochures & The Lectio Divina Brochures BRO-1a The Method of Centering Prayer (50) \$5.00 BRO-3 Lectio Divina (50) \$5.00	in packets of 50 shrink wrapped

NEW NEW NEW
Now Available in DVD

The Spiritual Journey Part V: The Heart of the Christian

Spiritual Journey Fr. Thomas Keating

5 DVD set

Item # KDVD-07
 \$150.00

- The Most Excellent Path
- The Divine Banquet and Dance
- Prayer in Secret: Matthew 6:6
- What is Divine Therapy?

- *Contemplative Outreach*: A Response to the Divine Invitation

The Six Continuing Sessions of the Introduction to the Centering Prayer Practice Fr. Thomas Keating

Session 1

- Prayer in Secret
- Discipline of Centering Prayer
- What is Divine Therapy?

Session 2

- What Centering Prayer is Not and What It is
- The Basic Principles of Centering Prayer

Session 3

- The Method of Centering Prayer I
- The Method of Centering Prayer II

We are in the process of transferring our videos to DVD and are grateful to those who have supported this effort. As funding becomes available we will continue with this project. Also, please note that the Six Session Follow-Up to the Introductory Workshop Series has a new title.

Same content, Different name

Order Information: *Prices subject to change. Check the website for updates

Order Online, Fax, Phone or Mail in Your Order Form

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
 Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Information: Check # _____ or Master Card/Visa (Circle One)

Signature: _____ Expiration Date: ____/____/____

Standard Shipping and Handling

If order totals	Add	If order totals	Add
Up to \$15	\$5.50	200.01 to 400	13.50
15.01 to 50	7.50	400.01 to 600	16.50
50.01 to 100	8.50	600 +	22.50
100.01 to 200	11.50		

for Canada, Hawaii, or Alaska add \$10 to Standard Shipping Fee above

International Shipments:

Air: (4-10 days) add \$20 to Standard Shipping above
Surface: (6-8 Weeks) Add \$10 to Standard Shipping

Quantity	Item#	Name of Item	Price	Total

Sub Total \$ _____

Standard Shipping \$ _____

International Shipping
 Additional Air/Surface Shipping Charge \$ _____

Grand Total \$ _____

The Cuba Retreat

by Isabel Castellanos

"Welcome and God bless you." Those were the first words I heard from an immigration officer at the airport in Havana. The message was simple yet stunning, especially when one brings to mind Cuba's long standing history of attempting to suppress religious expression. I was returning to my native land after an absence of 44 years, and I was coming back to share my Centering Prayer practice. At that initial moment I sensed that both God and Cuba were extending their welcome.

Together with Adalberto and Margarita Henriquez, I had been invited by Father Gilberto Walker, Contemplative Outreach Coordinator in Cuba, to give a Centering Prayer retreat from January 13 to the 16th. Frank Maruri, of Contemplative Outreach in Miami Beach, traveled with us and participated as a retreatant. The Havana CP group has a membership of approximately 35 people. They have been meeting weekly — despite transportation problems and other hardships — for a year and a half.

The retreat was held in Madruga, a rural town southeast of Havana. The house, run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, offers simple accommodations and excellent food. The lack of running water on a few occasions gave rise to creative washing solutions. Cubans, of course, take all this in their stride. The pampered U.S. team members felt blessed by the privilege of sharing, in a very small way, their everyday experience. Frank expressed it best at the end when he said: "I felt better here than in a five-star hotel."

Adal gave a presentation on the human condition and I on the welcoming prayer. We also scheduled three and a half hours of Centering Prayer per day and a daily contemplative mass. A rather heavy program for such a young group. To our delight, many of the participants had already "discovered," through the help of the Spirit, practices akin to the welcoming prayer, as they tried to cope with the difficulties of their daily lives. In the evaluations, most retreatants named silence and the extended periods of Centering Prayer as most helpful. They also requested a monthly contemplative mass.



Father Gilberto is blessed to have such a group and the group is blessed to have Father Gilberto, a true servant-leader if there ever was one.

One of the many challenges that the Cuban church faces is a sense of being isolated from the rest of the world. Participants in the retreat celebrated joyfully being part of a spiritual network such as Contemplative Outreach. They spoke in familiar terms of Father Thomas and of Carmen Sanchez, whom they never met in this life but whose presence they sensed throughout the retreat. Adal said it best when he wrote in an email: "We came to give a retreat and we were the ones receiving it."

Afterwards, Frank, another friend and I spent a total of 17 days visiting various communities throughout the island. In most places we found a simple, basic, committed faith; a faith unencumbered by the trappings of prosperity, bureaucracy, and privilege; a faith that is growing and vital. At one point, Bishop Carlos Baladron, of the Guantanamo-Baracoa diocese, asked us: "Please tell others that despite everything we are alive!" Indeed they are ... and we will all be enriched if we listen to their quiet testimony of faith.

For information in Spanish

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| San Francisco, CA | Cristóbal Padrón 415-759-0943 |
| San Diego, CA | Cherie Herrera 858-453-8662 cherieherrera@SoftHome.net |
| San Diego, CA | Cristina Romero 858 457-4120 cgr@san.rr.com |
| San Dimas | Acelia Ledesma 909-592-2428 |
| Merritt Island, FL | Adalberto Henriquez 321-453-8040 adahenri@msn.com |
| Altamonte Springs | Ilse Reissner 407-767-8271 ireissner@juno.com |
| Miami | Ricardo Lopez 305-223-7329 ricardol@camilo.com |
| Miami | Isabel Castellanos 305-673-6206 castella@fiu.edu |
| Atlanta, GA | Teri Gagnier 404-321-7385 t@mindspring.com |
| Portland, OR | Hilda Smith 503-639-6664 |
| San Antonio, TX | Homer A. Bain 210-492-1306 hbain@satx.rr.com |
| Milwaukee, WI | Fr. D. Shields 414-224-7565 dshieldssj@hotmail.com |

**Para Informes en Español
...Resources Translated in Spanish**

Extensión Contemplativa, the branch of Contemplative Outreach serving our Spanish-speaking members, handles the sale of books translated in Spanish. Contact Maria Lopez at (305) 223-7329 for a complete listing or to place an order.

