

# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH NEWS

Volume 1, Number 1 • May 1990

## The Spiritual Senses, Part III

by Father Thomas Keating

Lectio divina is the reading of scripture with utmost reverence as an encounter with Christ, the eternal Word of God. Through discursive meditation one's imagination, memory and reasoning are habituated to the mind of Christ, to his way of feeling and thinking. Our understanding of the Gospel and our response to it are simplified to a single aspiration or sacred word. This leads us to the intimacy of communing with God in prayer rather than just conversing with him.

The sacred word then becomes a way of maintaining the presence of Christ initiated at the beginning of each encounter. As time goes on, the sacred word awakens in our spirit the Christ who is asleep within us. This awakening is the birth of spiritual attentiveness. The purpose of every discipline, ritual, sacrament and text of scripture is to awaken the presence that is already there. Thus listening to the sacred word becomes attentiveness to the divine presence, as in the case of Mary of Bethany at the feet of Jesus. This is not a presence through a concept or feeling but a presence through faith. One awakens to the undifferentiated presence of God beyond concepts, feelings and particular acts, except to maintain the intention of loving, reverent waiting upon God. A cloud of unknowing is woven by many particular acts of letting go and becomes a habit by means of which one can move into the undifferentiated presence of God almost at will.

For people who are visually oriented, the simple remembrance of being under the tender and compassionate gaze of Christ or resting in his arms is also a suitable take-off point.

The breath as a symbol of the Spirit breathing life and love into our spirit is another practice from our Christian tradition. Spirit means "breath" in Greek and is a lively symbol of living in God and God in us, like the atmosphere that is all around and within us.

Each of these practices can serve as a starting point to access the presence of God in pure faith and to cultivate the level of spiritual attentiveness.

When spiritual attentiveness becomes habitual, it unfolds in three ascending (or descending, if you prefer) levels of absorption.

Jesus gave Mary of Bethany the attraction of the divine perfume. As she sat at his feet she was drawn by the attractive force of Jesus present but still separate.

Jesus gave John the greater grace of spiritual touch as he rested his head in the hollow of Jesus' breast. The touch of Jesus brought many physical healings. At the same time, he was healing the inner wounds of those whose bodily illnesses he cured by awakening their spiritual senses to the divine light, life and love.

The ultimate gift, the gift of divine union, is symbolized by the sense of taste in which food and drink are consumed and become part of us. Jesus offered his body and blood to all the disciples at the Last Supper as the sign of the transmission of divine life that he came to bestow in all its fullness on anyone who wills.

The undifferentiated presence of God, once it is awakened through the process of letting go of concepts and feelings, is sustained by spiritual attentiveness. Spiritual attentiveness is the goal and purpose of the practice of each of the three take-off points. Listening, looking or breathing—the auditory, visual or tactile take-off points—are designed to awaken the loving, reverent attentiveness to God. By not knowing in the way we usually know, the knowledge of God through love manifests itself in our prayer.

The gentle activity of consenting to be with God at this deep level of faith during the time of contemplative prayer sustains spiritual attentiveness and distinguishes it from emptiness of mind. It is rather the emptiness of self. The presence of God fills that emptiness and transforms our motivation into that of divine Spirit.

Just as there is a greater grace than the perfume of the Beloved, a greater grace than the touch of Christ and a greater grace than the taste of God, there is a greater grace than the experience of divine union. Whenever there is reflection on self, there are two. The divine presence invites us not only to union, but to unity. Notice the distinction Jesus makes between those two states in his Last Discourse. Beyond any experience, however spiritual and profound, remains the mystery of

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## Contemplative Outreach Moves Toward the Future

by Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

There has been considerable growth in Contemplative Outreach in the last couple of years. In 1987 five major areas of the country reported serving 8,329 people through 276 programs. By 1989 twenty one regional areas reported serving 23,053 people through 691 programs.

Contemplative Outreach extended its boundaries beyond the border of the USA to St. Lucia, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, parts of Canada and England.

This year we held our first presenter training program, developed and coordinated by Fr. Thomas along with the National Faculty. According to Fr. Thomas, "we want to develop skills of presenting Centering Prayer workshops in a form that is most readily accessible to participants. Time and experience has enabled us to refine the material that seems most useful in introducing people to Centering Prayer."

Fr. Thomas said an equally important aspect of the presenter training "is to provide those who are faithful to the practice of Centering Prayer an opportunity for living in Christian community."

It is our plan to train presenters in order to make our programs more accessible on regional and local levels. Fifty-eight presenters were commissioned in 1989 to give Introductory Workshops and Follow-up programs. The new presenters represent California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington, Oregon, the Hispanic Community and England.

The presenter program will be broadened in 1990 through a third national training to be held in Amarillo, Texas and three regional trainings to be held in Massachusetts in July, and in Florida and Snowmass, Colorado in December.

Plans for continued formation and growth:

*To continue the process of deepening and developing our leaderships formation process;*

*To expand the National Office as a resource for national, regional and local areas .*

*To encourage the functioning of local areas;*

*To develop resource materials in Spanish;*

*To develop effective use of the resources available as we develop new regional areas;*

*To establish effective communication patterns among the national office, regional and local areas and individual presenters;*

*To continue to expand geographically beyond the borders of the USA;*

*To develop a financial structure where the income of Contemplative Outreach will meet our annual expenses.*

As we enter the 1990's our focus is directed toward serving our developing regional areas. We are confident that Contemplative Outreach is taking seriously the Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity, Christi Fideles Laici. The document calls the laity to holiness and states that "the vocation and mission of the laity springs from baptism and leads to a personal knowledge of the Christian life which helps each person live the responsibilities that arise from their vocation received from God." The document challenges organizations that work primarily with lay persons to develop a formation capable of supporting them to live the Christian life into the twenty-first century. It is with this encouragement that Contemplative Outreach addresses the need for deeper spirituality that supports everyday life.

## The Practice of Contemplative Living

by Mary Mrazowski

"The Practice of Contemplative Living," a nine-month course held at Chrysalis House in New York, is being completed this May. For one weekend each month thirteen people gathered as a community at Chrysalis House. Building on each person's Centering Prayer practice we developed commitments to lectio divina, the "Open Mind, Open Heart" practice, journaling and spiritual reading. The deepening prayer life and community support allowed us to respond more fully to God's action in our relationships, work and lives.

The thoughts of some of those who participated. . .

*"Although my interest in contemplation and putting it into practice has a long history, I received guidance in this course clarifying my false self and my Christ self."*

*"This course has been a lived experience that month by month unfolded as I learned to put order and substance to my daily journey. Through the progressive step by step approach I am learning how to live an intentional spiritual life and how to be aware of God's presence in my life 24 hours a day."*

*"...it has given me an opportunity to see myself differently...to become more open and more aware to some of the blocks to letting go and letting God..."*

The course will be offered again from September through May. For more information write: CHRYSALIS HOUSE, 21 Ball Road, Warwick, NY 10990 (914) 986-8050

## Spiritual Senses, Part III

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pure faith. This is our capacity to enter into divine union without self-reflection. God, the divine energy, is so powerful and so intimate that no human faculty can perceive it in its purity. But faith receives it by consent. The growing conviction, born of spiritual experience and the purification of contemplative prayer, gradually awakens to the reality of faith as the narrow way that leads to God. St. John of the Cross writes that pure faith is a ray of darkness. A ray of light passing through a vacuum is imperceptible unless there is dust to reflect the energy as light. Yet the energy is totally present in that place.

The prayer of faith frees us from our expectations and from any attachment to the unfolding of the spiritual senses. Contemplation is manifested not only by the spiritual senses, the felt presence of God and the ever-deepening absorption of the faculties in the divine presence; it is equally manifested through the conviction of pure faith which believes that the divine energy is being poured into our spirit all the time, but at a level we cannot normally perceive in this life. This divine transmission is the essence of contemplation. St. John of the Cross calls it the hidden ladder to divine union.

The undifferentiated presence of God in pure faith is accessed by the discrete use of one of three sacred symbols: listening to the word of God, gazing upon God or breathing the Spirit. As you move into interior silence and feel called to rest in God, it is as if you were listening, as if you were breathing, as if you were seeing, but you do not hear any word; you do not see any image; you do not feel any breath. The spiritual senses are analogies. As spiritual experience is awakened by these sacred symbols, the symbols themselves are left behind; the Spirit invites us into union with that to which the symbols point. Beyond the spiritual senses, the consent of faith grows into the invincible conviction of God's presence and action within us.

### *Thanks For Your Outstanding Support*

*It is with gratitude that we are delighted to report our annual direct mail appeal raised \$23,000. This surpassed the \$15,000 challenge grant and resulted in raising \$38,000 toward our \$150,000 anticipated costs for 1990. We're still receiving responses and expect to receive approximately \$830 from those who pledged to support us on a monthly basis. Again, many thanks to all of you for your generosity.*

*Patricia Taylor*

## Mystery and Enigma

*by Brother John Crocker*

Emptiness/fullness, good/evil, God's immanence/transcendence, are to our ignorance or knowledge basic contradictions in our life experience. Recently I participated in giving an "opening day" presentation on contemplative prayer in Taunton, Massachusetts. I had expected to give the workshop. Instead I found myself the recipient. So I would add giving/receiving to this list of opposites.

When we consider these contradictions a question comes immediately to mind; are they opposites in fact, or do they seem like opposites to us? If we say the limitation is in our understanding, does that encourage our foray into the mystery further? Or does it hold back our discovery? What if we view God as a wholeness in the midst of antithesis?

We see the constant and continual change in God's creation. Yet God, who is the very essence of all that is, does not change. God is ever perfect and complete without need of change, or without parts that change in a time sequence. God is ever one, ever whole, ever complete in essence which is her existence. And God is change itself in view of 'pure act,' ever in act, (ever intimately related, one with the ever changing universe). God is unchanging essence, without before or after — *God is ever Now.*

The Mystery is a paradox of opposites. We approach it in the prayer relationship where we all live in discovery. We experience some mighty surprises in dealing with God. Shocking inconsistencies hoard secrets and riches beyond imagining.

I see Christ ascending the path to Jerusalem with the cross. From his lips I hear his cry, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." This is 'suffering' the mystery.

I see this Jesus, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead resides, emptying himself out to receive death, even death upon a cross. In him we know universal new life and complete salvation. Now the earth is full of the glory of God.

Consider the enigma: the cross is the fusion point of energies as compared to the splintering of atoms. It is the flash point where tremendous forces are released. Out of pain and suffering arise our full power and possibility. Our consent to the enigma brings forth the unfolding of the Mystery of our God.

## Area Contacts - Contemplative Outreach

*Centering Prayer Introductory Workshops, follow-up programs, weekly support groups, intensive days of prayer, weekend retreats, week long and and intensive retreats are going on in many regions of this country and beyond. Below are resource persons from regions throughout the U.S., the Philippines and England who are able to refer people to Centering Prayer support groups and other ongoing support programs. If you find that a key person is missing, send information to Connie Daniel, Newsletter editor, P.O. Box 1186, Amherst, MA 01004.*

**California:** Pacific Grove - Paul Colleti (408) 375-2705  
 Pacific Palisades - Gus Reininger (213) 459-7071  
 Sacramento - Helen E. Hansen (916) 383-6252  
 Stockton - Fr. Charles Murphy (209) 951-0881  
 San Diego - Sr. Mary Gregory (619) 274-1030  
 Walnut Creek - Darlene Cioffi (415) 939-6805

**Colorado:** Aspen - Cindy Curlee (303) 925-5049  
 Denver - Sr. Bernadette Teasdale (303) 422-9174  
 Rev. David Morgan (303) 831-7115  
 Colorado Springs - Carol Goebel (719) 473-6184  
 Boulder - Barbara Hayden (303) 494-2845  
 Snowmass - Pat Johnson (303) 963-3964

**Connecticut:** Hartford/Avon - Rev. Jon Widing (203) 673-9630  
 Stratford - Fr. Thomas Lynch (203) 375-5887

**Florida:** Miami - Gail McGuire (305) 221-8490  
 Ziola Diaz (305) 757-6241  
 Tampa Bay - Monica Freeman (813) 393-7224  
 Venice/Sarasota - Mimi Reilly (813) 484-9543  
 Winter Park/Orlando - Sr. Claire Gregg (407) 671-6322

**Hawaii:** Honolulu - Sr. Katherine Theiler (808) 988-7800

**Illinois:** Chicago - Tom Botheroyd (312) 281-0371  
 Geoffrey - Fr. Bill Sheehan (618) 466-2233

**Indiana:** Indianapolis Area - Sr. Mary Margaret Funk (317) 787-3287  
 Ferdinand - Sr. Maria Tasto (812) 367-1295

**Iowa:** Davenport - Marie Howard (319) 324-1911  
 Fairfield - Larry Rail (515) 472-7579

**Kansas:** Kansas City - Sr. Pat Orlawski (913) 682-5151

**Maine:** Adele Millette (207) 832-6263

**Massachusetts:** Amherst - Connie Daniel (413) 253-9451  
 North Shore - Br. John Crocker (508) 546-3066

**Michigan:** Bad Axe - Msgr. Olin Murdick (517) 269-7729

**Minnesota:** Crookston - Jacqueline Bergen (218) 281-1899  
 Duluth - Meredith Schifsky (218) 728-3848  
 Frontenac - Sr. Mary Andrew (612) 345-345

**Missouri:** St. Louis - Fr. Bob Aten (314) 644-2144

**Nebraska:** Gering - Joe Masek (308) 436-5536  
 Omaha - Tom Hall (402) 391-1766

**New Hampshire:** Sr. Mary Anne Laughlin (603) 627-9493

**New Jersey:** Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler (201) 838-3384

**New York:** Brooklyn - Sr. Mary Anna (718) 996-338  
 Metropolitan New York - Doris Curley (212) 674-3484  
 Long Island - Anne Mazza (516) 599-0957  
 Port Chester - Sr. Kathleen Curtin (914) 937-2440  
 Syracuse area - Frances Plude (315) 446-6217

**Ohio:** Cleveland - Bill Singelis (216) 731-6651

**Oklahoma:** Tulsa area - Fr. Patrick Eastman (918) 298-4181

**Oregon:** Portland - Sr. Carolyn Singoski (503) 636-1590

**Pennsylvania:** Philadelphia - Frank Banecker (215) 365-3932

**South Carolina:** Rock Hill - Rose Vernetta (803) 327-5742

**Texas:** Houston - Fred Eckhart (713) 660-5580

**Washington:** Seattle - Kaye Kukowski (206) 364-1545  
 Rev. Jack Gorsuch (206) 329-6700  
 Spokane - Sr. Dominique Long (509) 483-9206

**Wisconsin:** Greenbay - Ann Egan (414) 336-5286

**Hispanic Community Information:** Mercedes Scopetta is in the process of contacting and gathering information about already existing groups and people interested in forming bi-lingual Centering Prayer Groups (305) 643-6550.

**England:** Cheshire - George Mockler 0925-821-399  
 Lancashire - Elizabeth Smith 0282-865-458  
 Whales - Colleen Fleischmann 0633-873018

**Philippines:** Manila - Lita Salinas - 810-8827  
 Grace Padilla - 810-9573

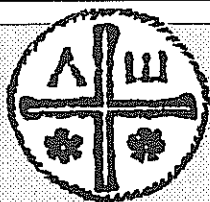
### Centering Prayer Retreats Centers

**Colorado:** St. Benedict's Monastery - 10 day intensive retreats given by Fr. Thomas Keating; Contact Pat Johnson, Registrar, 689 Colorado Ave., Carbondale, CO 81623 (303) 963-3964

**Maine:** Stillpoint, P.O. Box 782, Waldoboro, ME 04572  
 (207) 832-6263

**New York:** Chrysalis House, 21 Ball Road, Warwick, NY 10990  
 (914) 986-8050

**New Hampshire:** Joseph House, 279 Cartier St.,  
 Manchester, NH 03102  
 (603) 627-9493



### Contemplative Outreach National Office

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

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

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