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THOMAS KEATING

The spiritual life combines an ever-deepening practice of interior silence and service of others motivated by the love for God. Both are necessary for the spiritual journey because they cultivate a disposition of alert receptivity and openness to the guidance of the Spirit.

Contemplation and action are manifested in the practice of servant leadership. For a while, the Church of the Middle Ages nearly lost the vision of Christ as servant leader and joined forces with the political powers of the time. Maybe that was historically inevitable because there was no other kind of force to establish a safe society for people than the institutional Church. But when any group affirms its elite status or superiority over all other groups, there is a hazard that the ego will take possession of that idea and go for it, because now it has an excuse or motive for justifying all kinds of egoic forms of domination.



*The most profound truth regarding the spiritual journey
is that we are being transformed into Christ.*

Jesus emphasized servant leadership to his apostles over and over again. What we do for others is not to fix them, which presumes that we know how to fix them and presupposes that we are coming from a superior position. We are called by God to care for others as a privilege. All the members of the human family are members of what St. Paul calls the Mystical Body of Christ. He doesn't need our leadership talents. But he does appreciate and need our practical love and humble service. He manifested the divine humility by sacrificing all the honor and privileges of his nature as the Son of God. If we made that disposition our own, trying to fix situations would change into allowing God to heal the wounds that are impossible for us to deal with, let alone to fix. By making ourselves the servant of those we serve, the divine healing work of Christ can flow through us without our egos getting in the way. Servant leadership leads to gratitude for being able to serve.

The most profound truth regarding the spiritual journey is that we are being transformed into Christ. We are turning ourselves over completely to God in the full consciousness that this is a service that we are offering for the healing of the whole human family, not just for our particular intentions.

Our heart in the sense of our inmost being has to become big enough through grace to take into it everyone who has ever lived – past, present, and to come. We are loved by God to the point of his becoming one with us and our particular experience of the human condition. The cross is suffering endured out of love for all the members of the Mystical Body and their transformation into oneness with the Father. ☸



PATRICIA JOHNSON, ADMINISTRATOR

The Importance of Relationship

Beloved members of our one family,

I had a visit with Thomas a few days before I started writing this article. He wanted to see me to thank me for my work over the years. This is the man that we all owe so much gratitude for what he has untiringly and endlessly given us all his years. And yet, here he was thanking others for their contributions of service. It was mind boggling and poignant to me. He thanked me for loving people into life. He wrote a poem about the impact Sarah Johnson* had on his life. Here is this man at the end of his life, in pain, and still giving his all back into the universe. If ever I had an example of what it means to Love unconditionally, this moment in time was one huge example. The greatness of his giving, the greatness of his humility, left me with nowhere to go, nothing to do, and the recognition that doing nothing takes a long, long time.

What I want to pass on at this time is this: my debt to him is monumental; my service to you all over the years —whether in retreat form, sits and talks, or as a bridge for a new way of governing—is both an honor and a privilege. The vision of Contemplative Outreach is “We embrace the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.” The big emphasis is on the words PROCESS and PRACTICE. The process of transformation contains both joy and pain. Practice takes us through both and we land at the other side. At this writing, Thomas was experiencing pain and using practice to allow him to reach the other side. What an amazing model he is for all of us as we attempt to move through our lives with grace and strength.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you.☸

**See the December 2009 issue of Contemplative Outreach News for an article about Sarah Johnson, written by Fr. Thomas.*



Service Teams are Here to Assist You with Practice, Programs and Training

In August 2016, the Governing Board of Contemplative Outreach invited Marie Howard to serve as Coordinator of Volunteers, a new staff position to empower and support the volunteer leaders throughout the Contemplative Outreach (CO) community. Among the vast number of volunteer leaders, there are currently nine CO service teams who provide a wide variety of programs.

The coordinator of volunteers assists the leaders of these teams.

12-STEP OUTREACH

12-Step Outreach can assist with starting a 12-step Centering Prayer group in your area or connect you to existing meetings or groups; assist with starting an 11th-step meditation meeting; and assist with organizing 11th-step Centering Prayer workshops or weekend retreats. There is also formation training for those who wish to be presenters of programs offered through Contemplative Outreach.

See www.cp12stepoutreach.org. Or contact Joelle M., mitchelljoelle1@gmail.com.

THE WELCOMING PRAYER

The Welcoming Prayer is a method of consenting to God's presence and action in our physical and emotional reactions to events and situations in daily life. The Welcoming Prayer Service Team serves people who want to learn or deepen their experience of the Welcoming Prayer through one day workshops, weekend retreats and five-day immersion retreats. An online course is also available for learning or deepening the Welcoming Prayer; find it on the website under Programs > Online Courses. For information, contact Therese Saulnier, lectio844@hotmail.com.

THE CENTERING PRAYER INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program Service Team assists local chapters, individuals and communities in planning their Centering Prayer introductory programs by offering The Centering Prayer Introductory Program brochure, a Hosting Guide, slides and flip-charts for presenters, and a resource guide of ideas for continuing sessions. If you would like more information, contact Carol Alevizos, carol.alevizos@gmail.com or 808.739.5288.

THE RETREAT SERVICE TEAM

Retreats are a common practice in many spiritual traditions and a valuable tool to aid one's interior transformation. Centering Prayer intensive retreats provide practitioners with the opportunity to deepen their practice and relationship with God by joining with others in community apart from ordinary life. Intensive retreats offer several periods of Centering Prayer daily, balanced with silence and solitude, and include video presentations from Fr. Thomas Keating. Post-intensive retreats offer more silence. You can search for retreats on the website under Calendar, or on the local websites listed on cochapters.com. The retreat service team is available to assist with organizing and staffing local retreats. Please contact Susan Rush, Susrush17@gmail.com, 505.930.1777.



THE FACILITATOR SUPPORT AND ENRICHMENT TEAM

The Facilitator Support and Enrichment Team can help those of you who facilitate Centering Prayer groups by providing you with formation resources and answering questions about your role, suggesting spiritual enrichment ideas, discussing group process, etc. Also, a digital facilitator formation training package is now available in the online store on our website. We also offer facilitator formation group workshops on site. Please contact Nestor de Armas, nestordearmas@msn.com.

THE PRESENTER FORMATION SERVICE TEAM

The Presenter Formation Service Team supports and assists local chapters and persons in organizing and conducting training for new Centering Prayer presenters; providing presenters with resource materials to enhance their teaching skills, the depth of their practice and their confidence and satisfaction as presenters and mentors. The team also provides guidance to those interested in becoming presenters, including assistance in locating formation opportunities. For more information, contact Jeff Renner, jeffrenner3@comcast.net.

THE LECTIO DIVINA SERVICE TEAM

Fr. Thomas stresses the final moment of contemplation in the praying of Holy Scripture, which is key to the way Contemplative Outreach teaches Lectio Divina. The Lectio Divina Service Team supports the community by offering formation training to commissioned Centering Prayer presenters to present Lectio Divina locally. They are also available to offer Introductory Lectio Divina workshops and Lectio Divina retreats in a variety of formats including The Four Senses of Scripture Immersion Retreat. Please contact Leslee Terpay at co-leslee@comcast.net for more information about training and offering Lectio Divina in your area.

THE LIVING FLAME

The Living Flame is a program designed to deepen and enrich one's practice of Centering Prayer, and teach the vital conceptual background needed to support this practice. The program can help participants heighten their awareness and understanding of the purification process as well as provide a setting to give and receive spiritual companionship. Past participants report that the program deepens one's commitment to Centering Prayer as well as building strong relationships between the participants, so that the grace of the Centering Prayer practice can flow throughout the community. For further information about the Living Flame program, check the CO website at [Programs>Living Flame](#) or contact Marilyn Webb, marilynwebb@sbcglobal.net.

THE CHAPTER SUPPORT SERVICE TEAM

Contemplative Outreach offers ongoing support for Centering Prayer practitioners in local areas via chapters, a name given to small groups in the monastic tradition. These local chapters have volunteers who serve by providing Contemplative Outreach resources and programs designed to enrich the practice of Centering Prayer. The Chapter Support Service Team includes experienced mentors who are available to assist the leaders of CO chapters. For further information, contact Ruth Hofmann, rchofmann47@msn.com

Summaries Available from the Contemplative Outreach Conference

DENVER, COLORADO • SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2017

An edited collection of comments generated during several hours of small group discussions at the conference are available on the Contemplative Outreach website.

Comments were gathered from 15 posters prepared during the conference. These are the prayerful thoughts and hopes of our contemplative community.

We have compiled and published them because we believe they capture the direction the Holy Spirit is leading Contemplative Outreach – and each of us is a part of that organism! We welcome your response. We encourage you to notice in which of these areas the Spirit is stirring up your desire to take action!

You can read these summaries by following the link in the February e-bulletin or by going to the website under Resources > Articles.

The Governing Board of
Contemplative Outreach



The Work of Contemplative Service: Love in Action International

The only things we keep are those things we give away.

RAE ENGLAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
www.loveinactionintl.org

Love in Action International is people helping people according to their need in their own communities and in the larger world community. There is no shortage of resources but there is a tremendous gap between the resource and the need. We strive to fill that gap.

We work in a variety of ways in order to be available to others. We are a resource for refugee agencies, hospitals—especially in assisting chronic or terminal patients—and we ship aid abroad.

Each person who is involved with Love in Action International has their own story of awakening to the needs of others. For me, it began in the late 1970's while raising small children. I began to wrestle with a recurring question: "What is this life about and what is my life to be about?" During this time, probably because I was open to seeing differently, I began to see needs. Those needs had been there all along, I simply had not seen them. The next question I set out to answer was, "How is it that there continues to be so much need when we have so many helping organizations and churches?" The answer to that question has been painfully life-changing.

In search of the answer to that question, I took a clipboard and pen and began visiting churches, food pantries and helping organizations. This is when I learned what I now understand to be the differences between service and contemplative service. Most of those churches and organizations were simply not in touch with the suffering of those they were serving.

We opened a pantry in the church I was attending at the time, deciding on a different approach – that of delivering the food directly, so most of our questions were answered simply by being in their homes. But when someone dropped in, we had to depend on the secretary to prepare their food. One day, a woman called me and I sent her to the church to pick up a couple of bags of food. She was in her late 50's, had lost her job and had finally come to the end of her resources. She said, "I'm so embarrassed but if you help me with food this one time, I will never come back." I was very interested in her state of mind when she arrived at the church. When I asked the secretary about her, she was rather complacent. So, I asked specific questions. Her response was, "Well I guess she was hungry because as she walked across the parking lot to her car she was eating the frozen cooked meat." All these years later I remember the callousness of those words. I wanted to reach out to this woman but there was no way to find her.

It was these kinds of stories that caused me to promise God and myself that I would always give too much rather than risk not giving enough. And that I would never allow this work to be mundane. We would always work to serve his children with fire in our belly. Years later, I would understand this fire to be the contemplative heart that gives oneself along with one's gifts.

The poet said it this way:

*Not what we give but what we share
For the gift without the giver is bare,
He who gives himself with his alms feed three
Himself, the hungry beggar ~ and Me.*

That search has taken me and others to hospitals, prisons, homeless shelters, schools, and into homes where domestic violence and addictions are the norm. During this time, we began to see how all these areas of need were part of the same problem. The abused child without help often becomes drug addicted and sometimes homeless. They are our prisoners. The child who experiences violence in the home goes on to repeat the cycle. I also learned during those early years that if I wanted to change the world, I first must change myself.

To choose to see is to feel the pain of a world suffering. In 1992, we began taking 40-foot containers of aid into former Yugoslavia and working with arriving refugees. Grieving for a world gone crazy was taken to new levels with every visit to Bosnia. It was the closest I have ever been to hell. Imagine a place where an army murdered civilians and called it war – a place where women and children were not casualties of the war but the target. After being in Bosnia and seeing incredible suffering and devastation, I went to a place that was beautiful and peaceful in Herzegovina. People lived as if there was no war though they were close enough to hear the shells. Their religious leaders blessed the soldiers before they went just up the road to kill their neighbor. God had spared their beautiful village, we were told. I saw with new clarity a blindness that defies understanding.

In 1997, I received a request to include a gentleman in our work who was very troubled. During my search for ways to help him, I discovered Thomas Keating's videos on Centering Prayer. I had read *The Cloud of Unknowing* and many old writings

on silence. When I arrived at Snowmass with my friend, I felt that I had finally found what for years I had been seeking. Since that time, I have missed only two years of attending ten-day intensive or post-intensive retreats.

Phillip Hallie, author and poet, spoke very specifically of the battle within during a symposium on evil. He had come to a place in the wake of his experience in World War II of deciding he simply didn't want to live anymore. He insisted on facing the killer within himself and that experience had left him without hope. The world was simply unbearable. Then he read about the little village of Le Chambon. He said, "Their gray little church ... was perched on a plateau on a high mountain in southeastern France [and] was like a battery charged with love, charged with such a power of love that the Germans were disarmed in the literal sense." Their arms weren't relevant. It was like a disarmingly innocent child.

The question became, "How can we be a Le Chambon?" In the midst of such confusion and division how can we be a light in the world (Matt 5:14)? The confusion and division isn't out there. It is here – in us, in you and in me. Part of the painful process for each of us is recognizing our part in suffering. Then we find ourselves wanting only to take what we must and to give where we can. We want to love God and put love for our neighbor into action so that we, too, can be like a "battery charged with love" that is disarming.

During these painful times, Centering Prayer became a way for me to find peace in the midst of confusion and stories of unspeakable pain and suffering. Perhaps more importantly, it has given me a way to help others find peace as they walk through loss. In the beginning, it may be simply to encourage them to shut out noise and learn to be still or to walk quietly.

I once took a dying young man who had lived a pretty wild life to a little chapel in a quiet place. We just sat for a while. Then he said, "I feel that if I could just stay here, nothing bad would ever happen to me." ☸

Excerpts of an Interview with Sita Lozoff of The Human Kindness Foundation



Sita Lozoff is the spiritual director of Human Kindness Foundation, whose primary work is the Prison-Ashram Project. The project encourages incarcerated men and women to use their time in prison for spiritual growth, as if they were living in an ashram. Sita and her late husband, Bo, began the Prison-Ashram Project in 1973. Read the full article at <https://humankindness.org/moon-magazine-interview/>

LOZOFF: ... [A]t this point in my life, fifty years after beginning the Eastern practices Ram Dass introduced to us, I feel as connected to Christianity as I do to Eastern religions. I love Christ. I believe in the resurrection. I also love St. Francis. I just finished reading Kazantzakis' *St. Francis*, which I'd recommend to anyone, of any faith. It is deeply moving; I've read it three or four times now. Kazantzakis says, "God is an abyss. Jump!" I love that. To me it's a reminder to have the courage to take that leap of faith when appropriate.

Q: What draws you to Christianity at this point in your life?

LOZOFF: When my guru, the Indian saint, Neem Karoli Baba, was asked how Christ meditated, with tears rolling down his face he replied: "He lost himself in love." When I was leading a workshop at San Quentin a couple of years ago, and an inmate there asked me what I thought was Bo's favorite saying of Christ's, I could easily reply, "Love one another as I have loved you." I experience Christ as love, and I think that about sums up the heart of our work and my life's calling which is to share that divine love with people who feel unlovable.

Q: What is it about your own spiritual path that made you want to recommend it to others?

LOZOFF: What has worked for me are three core principles for a happy and fulfilled life. Not necessarily an easy life; but a happy and fulfilled one. The first is simple living: taking only what you need; not being caught up in the drama of never-ending wants and "must haves." The second is a commitment to some kind of spiritual practice—whether that be prayer, meditation, yoga, reading spiritual books, whatever inspires you. And the third is a commitment to service—finding some way that you can help ease the suffering of this world. I personally have found that this formula works, which is why I'm comfortable recommending it to others.

Q: Even though it puts you in contact with people who may be dangerous, or angry, or whose suffering you share because you care for them, or who are in horrible circumstances you're not able to change?

LOZOFF: First, I've never felt in danger in all these years [visiting prisons]; not even once. As for the suffering, yes. Particularly in the beginning, it was difficult not to become caught up in the others' suffering. Ram Dass recommended a practice that has been helpful. That is, to consider the snow on the mountaintops, representing the perfection of God's world, and the blood at our feet, representing the suffering all around us. He said that our job was to maintain connection with both. If I stay too much in the perfection, I'm being too aloof, and yet if I stay too much in the blood at my feet, I have nothing to offer the inmate who has written me for spiritual help. So it's a practice to maintain the balance, to keep our eyes on both. In fact, it's been my main spiritual practice for 40-something years. It's a pretty amazing practice. ☸



Volunteer to do Centering Prayer With Prisoners: It's Not What You Think

RAY LEONARDINI

I thought I had a decent grip on my Centering Prayer practice when I said yes to a request to join a prayer group at Folsom Prison. My concern was more personal: would I inadvertently reveal my own inadequacies as a man? Would I overplay my own personal need for “affection and esteem” such that I would make a fool of myself?

What I actually experienced that first night ten years ago, and what I continue to experience nearly each time I go to Folsom and other prisons, was beyond my imagination. I needed to have the prison experience to understand how much I did not understand about contemplative prayer and its astonishing transformative power. I needed to sit and meditate with the incarcerated to discover new depth in this prayer practice. These experiences opened my awareness to the great gift of living a contemplative lifestyle in the world. I'm a different person because of it. You can be as well. Let me try to explain.

1. **The hidden value of presence.** My first mistaken assumption was that I needed to know more than the incarcerated about the way to change their life. I needed to be able to say something meaningful to help them in their suffering. As well-intended as this may be, it completely misunderstands their situation and where true healing comes from. In our presence, our actual silent, judgement-free, not-waiting-to-say-something presence to another person, comes the visceral moment of being seen and heard for the prisoner. This is a profound healing moment. It sometimes comes during a group discussion after meditation. Sometimes it comes in a one-to-one encounter. It always, and I mean always, leaves me with a feeling of privilege that I can be a part of another's healing. One volunteer at a prison in Ione, California put it this way:

"The most satisfying thing about volunteering is just being present with them as we try and grow in contemplative consciousness."

- Patti Stalder

2. The mutuality of jointly pursuing the unmediated experience of God. Many of us believe that if we're going to facilitate a Centering Prayer group in a prison, we must be able to address, if not fully explain, the intricacies of the spiritual journey. This is another serious misperception. It's our own attempts at Divine intimacy that is important, not our level of theological understanding. Our openness to the Ultimate Mystery is all that matters. We have common turf. Our mutual and collective stories are compelling. I'm personally impacted when I hear a prisoner's story. They are when they hear mine. A bond emerges where one can palpably feel that we are, indeed, all children of God.

"Centering with the men eliminates the assumed difference between us and creates a place where we are together seeking to be transformed."

- Nana Wilson

Allegheny County Jail, Pittsburgh, PA

3. From a ministry of message to one of collective transformation. Somewhere during my volunteering years, I came to realize that the incarcerated, marginalized in every way by society, have their own well-springs of grace. I was less a channel of ministerial grace and more a convener. They draw topics out of me. They trigger me, I prompt them. As they respond, our deeper selves are allowed out of hiding in a relatively safe environment. We are ministering to each other. It gives me a much more comfortable notion of grace and how grace works in all of us, regardless of race, denominational commitments, and psychological development. Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28), forcing him to re-evaluate his exclusive commitment to the "children of the lost house of Israel," opens for me the universal invitation to grace from the most marginalized of our time, a source I hardly expected as I walked into that first Centering Prayer meeting at Folsom prison those many years ago. ☸

Prison Contemplative Fellowship sends contemplative books and related materials to prisoners in nearly 700 prisons.

Although a majority of prisoners are enthusiastic about joining a Centering Prayer group, most of these prisons do not offer Centering Prayer because there is not the required volunteer to go into the prison and convene a group. Prisoners cannot meet as a group without a sponsor.

If you want to energize your contemplative practice, and venture into the world many have repudiated, I urge you to consider beginning or joining a Centering Prayer group at your nearest prison.

We can help you.

Those who do volunteer tell us that they can determine the extent of their volunteer commitment. They seem not to burn out.

Most go into a prison once a week and meet with relatively small groups of a dozen inmates. Many of the volunteers have a long commitment to prison work, nearly six years on average. We have specific materials for volunteers and are available to help you get into a prison, and once there, how to start a Centering Prayer group.

You can reach us at office@uspcf.org to address the possibilities and answer the question: What is the next step for me?



Praying with the Eyes of the Heart

CAROL QUEST

In January, Minnesota Contemplative Outreach sponsored an event called “Praying with the Eyes of the Heart.” We gathered at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and began with Centering Prayer and then went in groups of four into the museum, each group guided by a “museum sage.”

The idea for this event was presented to our servant leadership team by one of our members, Adam Gordon. Adam had personal experience with the Museum Sage program and suggested combining it with Centering Prayer because of the simplicity of both practices. In presenting his idea, he explained that opening to God’s love and action within during Centering Prayer could help us open to insights, and meaningful connections both with art and with those around us. This activity could extend the power of community we feel during Centering Prayer gatherings into another activity, offering a tangible experience of the fruits of our practice.

Adam shared this with us about his experience: “Just as it doesn’t matter what word we choose for our sacred word, the piece of art we land on really doesn’t matter: it is a symbol of our intention to open to deeper insights. In addition, Centering Prayer tends to happen in special, private places — in the sanctuary or parlor of a church for example. Though our centering in the museum took place in a private room, we then moved out into a public space, which was novel and thrilling. Finishing a Centering Prayer session, then moving out carrying that intention, holding that intention, is unusually powerful. Finally, I was looking for something completely experiential, something that wasn’t ‘about’ the practice of Centering Prayer, wasn’t analytical, but was about taking part in an activity where we could experience the fruits of the practice.”

There were 50 of us—10 guides and 40 participants. I loved the experience for several reasons. First, it was exciting to see who chose to come to this event. As soon as I heard about it, I knew I would go and would invite two artist friends who also practiced Centering Prayer. Some of the people who came were Minnesota Contemplative Outreach “regulars,” but others were people with a Centering Prayer practice and a curiosity about how it could connect with art.

As we gathered there was a certain light heartedness in the group, perhaps a playful expectation to be surprised. We began our session of Centering Prayer in a large oval in the community room. Adam briefly explained the four guidelines for those among the Museum Sage guides who were not familiar with Centering Prayer. Then together we held the stillness for 20 minutes.

At the end of our Centering Prayer session, we broke into groups of four, each assigned to a guide. The guides, all members of the Museum Sage program, had been trained to lead an individual to a work of art and then to ask questions to help the individual look closely at the piece of art in a way that lead to personal insight.



To begin, our guide instructed each of us to think of a question we had been grappling with—something we had been thinking about and seeking an answer for. Once we each had a question, our group went out into the museum to take turns considering our question with a work of art. The first to volunteer was told to close her eyes and take the guide's arm as he led her through the various galleries. He instructed her to tune into her senses of hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting until he brought her to a particular work of art. Then we gathered around her as the guide helped her observe the piece of art in terms of her question. The rest of us watched and listened. Eventually, the person was asked if she was willing to share her question. In our group, everyone chose to do so. After the question was shared, the guide asked if comments from the others would be welcomed. Again, everyone in my group chose to hear comments from the others. Even before any comments were offered, however, there was a palpable feeling of support in the group. For me it was a grace-filled experience, both when I was a supporter and when I was standing before "my" work of art with my question.

That was the process, but the experience was so much more. As we each took our turn bringing our own question to a work of art, the others listened deeply, exploring with us, looking for insight to the question we had posed. In the end, the experience felt like stepping out of the usual, taking a chance on something new with four other people, and a felt-sense of being guided by their love.

After each person in our group had a turn, we quietly walked back to the community room. There we gathered with the other groups to share our experience. We had all been on an adventure, exploring with a team of friends. Now we each had a new friend—a specific work of art that finds its home at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. And my old friends? We share the memory of this time together to pray and to open ourselves to each other in a unique way. ☸

Carol is a member of the facilitators team of the St. Olaf Centering Prayer group in downtown Minneapolis; a member of the servant leadership team and past co-coordinator of the Minneapolis/St. Paul (Minnesota) chapter of Contemplative Outreach; a commissioned presenter of Centering Prayer; a member of the Centering Prayer Introductory Program service team; and a member of the Chapter Support Service Team.

Over the last several years, a similar practice of Visio Divina has been offered as part of some of the online courses offered by Contemplative Outreach, particularly those during Lent and Advent. Images are included along with Scripture passages, the teachings of Thomas Keating and other contemplative voices. Participants are invited to prayerfully receive these teachings, along with an image for the day.

Visio Divina facilitates a relationship with an image or subject, patiently being with it, receptive in mind and heart, perhaps even in dialogue with it. In stillness, we allow the image to reach beyond the intellect and into the unconscious level of our being, a place that can't be accessed directly. In wonder, we are invited to look at every aspect of an image and ponder it as an encounter with God. It is a way of seeing an aspect of ourselves in God, at the non-verbal, heart level. The image then becomes alive with personal meaning, meant just for us. This is the same movement of the Spirit we can experience with Lectio Divina and Scripture – gazing, reflecting, responding and resting.

This practice does not require any special knowledge or appreciation of art, just a willingness to interact with the colors, textures, forms and overall impressions.

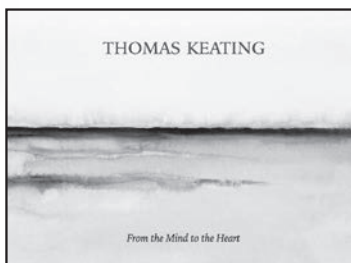
We start by simply gazing at the image, taking in the entire composition and registering what it depicts. As we continue to gaze, we begin to reflect on the deeper meanings that present themselves. Then we gaze at each of the component parts and see beyond seeing how each part contributes to the whole. As we ponder the image and observe every detail we may place ourselves in the scene and see and feel from this perspective. We observe our responses. A prayer or an inspiration may arise. The possible messages are endless and very individual – there is no right or wrong way of seeing.

This practice, along with Musica Divina, acknowledges and invites the presence and action of the Spirit within us and around us as we move through life and the beauty that presents itself. The possible extensions of the practice are endless.

RESOURCES IN OUR ONLINE STORE

Thomas Keating: From the Mind to the Heart

NEW



This beautifully illustrated book with the paintings of Charlotte M. Frieze, comes from the conversations Fr. Keating had with his friend John Osborne in 2010 for the film, *The Rising Tide of Silence* and three years later for the new film, *From the Mind To The Heart*. Fr. Keating's thoughts about silence and contemplation, power and the false self, and humankind's shifting relationship with God have emerged in the film and this companion book. \$25 USD

SELF-GUIDED ONLINE COURSES

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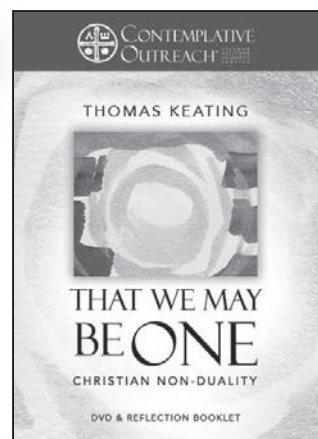
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- ◇ The Transformation of Suffering

And more. Visit the complete listing on our website at [Programs>Online Courses](#)

THAT WE MAY BE ONE: CHRISTIAN NON-DUALITY

NEW



Though this term has not generally been associated with the Christian Tradition, in fact, its essence runs throughout the New Testament, most prominently in the Gospel of John and the Letters of Paul. Opening to the Divine Indwelling through practicing Centering Prayer is the consent to God's presence and action within us. This separate-self sense gradually evolves into the conviction of self in God.

Six topics are included:

- The Western and Scriptural Models of Spirituality (15 min.);
- The Invitation of the Christian Contemplative Tradition Beyond Rational Consciousness (19 min);
- The Self and Evolving Consciousness (16 min);
- Christian Non-Duality and Unity Consciousness (18 min.);
- The Present Moment and All That Is (13 min.);
- Fallen, Beloved and Surrendered (17 min.)

Formats:

- DVD package and reflection booklet: \$25 USD
- MP3 (audio only) and reflection booklet PDF : \$10 USD
- MP4 (video) and reflection booklet PDF: \$15 USD



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The theological foundation of Centering Prayer is the Divine Presence in every member of the human family.

Contemplative Outreach Theological Principle #3

