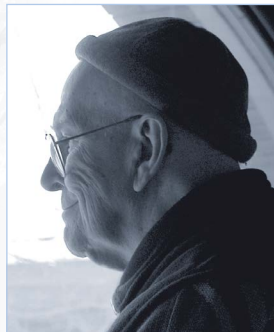




“I’m Dying the Way I lived.”

Excerpted from an oral history interview*
with Rabbi Rami Shapiro, June 5, 2025.



“I don’t know how to put this exactly. I mean, there’s Father Thomas Keating, and then there’s the Divine Presence manifesting as Father Thomas Keating. And sometimes you get Father Thomas and sometimes you get this other Presence. I love them both, and I

would feel comfortable with them both. In a sense, I could say I was in awe of them both, but I was transported and maybe transformed by the Presence that he would embody when, through grace, it manifested through him. I don’t know if that makes any sense, but that was my experience. ...

“The most powerful experience I had with Father Thomas was near the end of his life. I went to see him at Snowmass ... I just wanted to say goodbye.

“I was teaching at the chapel in Aspen, and I called and said, “Could I see him?” And they said, “You can have 15 minutes.” That’s about as much strength as he had. I said, “I’ll take five.” All I really wanted to do was go and tell him I loved him and say goodbye. So ... I got up there and it was just him and me. And we were in the library. They wheeled him in, in a wheelchair. ... He was awake, he was alert. ... I was led to believe he was on his deathbed. But he wasn’t ... [he still] had his own inner strength. ... I wanted to tell him how important he was to me. And that was it. I mean, I could have done it in 30 seconds, let alone five minutes, but they gave me 15. So we talked just a little bit. We

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*An oral history project is currently underway to interview close personal friends, colleagues, companions and family members of Thomas Keating to add to the breadth and depth of the Thomas Keating archives located at Pitts Theological Library at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

didn't reminisce. We didn't talk about people we knew. It was just me paying homage to my teacher.

“And then it dawned on me that I hadn't been with any of my teachers when they were dying. ... So, don't waste this opportunity. Here's the guy who spent his entire life since he was a teenager in this contemplative mode. He's meditated his entire life. I've known him since I was in my thirties. So, you know, if you think you're going to make a fool out of yourself by asking him questions, so what? He's going to die. What do you think? He's going to write something? Who's he going to complain to? Just do it. So I only had one question ... 'You're dying. How are you doing it? How are you dying?'”

“... It was beautiful. I can't convey this. ... I'm going to do the best I can. But he's sitting upright in his wheelchair, and his voice is soft, but he says to me, 'I'm dying the way I lived.' Well, that's sort of a non sequitur. I said, 'Okay, so what does that mean?' He's got his hands clasped ... they're in his lap and he says, 'This is how I lived.' And he says, 'Every time Thomas comes up, I let Thomas go. Every time Thomas comes up, I let Thomas go.' So he's raising his hands and dropping them into his lap. He's raising his hands. He [gestures this way] over and over and over again.

“And he says, 'One of these times, Thomas is going to come up. I'm going to let Thomas go, and Thomas isn't going to come back.' I said, 'Wow. That is so profound and so simple, so beautiful.' ... I said, 'Okay, okay, I get it. So Thomas is going to come up,' I said. 'You let Thomas go and he doesn't come back. Where does he go?' And then he does something, which I can't, I mean, I would if I could, but I can't do the face. He makes a look. He gives me a look that says something like this: 'Seriously, after all of these years, you're still asking that question. Did you learn nothing?' So he starts again and he says, 'Look,

Thomas comes up. I let Thomas go. And then Thomas goes, and Thomas doesn't come back. Where does Thomas go? There's nowhere to go.’

“So, that was the end of that moment. It was brilliant. Our time was up, and I had to let him go. But he was supposed to go back to his room, but he said to me, 'What are you doing now?' And I said, 'Well, they asked me to talk to the brothers.' And he said, 'Oh, I want to come too.' So he came and we spent another half an hour. He just sat back there and listened.

“... If someone had asked me, I wouldn't have put it that way, but I would've said something ... like this. 'Well, theoretically what happens is ...' Right? Like that. But he wasn't doing that. This was not theory. That's the difference between Thomas Keating and me. Right? I meditate and I have thoughts about it, but Thomas Keating, this is his existence. He knows, and I have thoughts.

“It wasn't that he told me something I didn't already know. He manifested the truth of what I'd heard him say before, or what I knew from my own practice, or what I'd heard other mystics say, and from other traditions. But he manifested it. I don't know if you can get it from watching this video [of the interview], but it was Thomas coming up. It was Thomas letting go. It was Thomas coming up, and it was Thomas going. I mean, you see it in the Star Wars movies when Yoda becomes one with everything, and then Luke becomes one with everything when he dies. I mean, it's the same Daoist trope, but it's just true. But it's true in theory until you see someone who's living it, who's then showing you it's true, and doing it in such a way that he's holding up a mirror with his own body and he's mirroring the truth for you. So [it was] one of the most powerful moments in my entire life, I think.” ☸

Rami M. Shapiro, commonly called "Rabbi Rami", is an American Reform rabbi, author, teacher, and speaker on liberal Judaism and contemporary spirituality. In 1984 Shapiro was invited to become a founding member of the Snowmass Conference, an annual gathering of contemplatives from various religions held at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, under the auspices of Father Thomas Keating. Rabbi Rami also co-founded the One River Foundation and currently writes on Substack @rabbirami.

How Thomas Keating Became Father Thomas to Me

SÁRA TÓTH
HUNGARY

For several reasons, cultural and personal, I have never been comfortable with imagining or calling God, “Father.” In my native tongue, people often use a turn of phrase in prayer which can roughly be translated as “our sweet heavenly daddy,” which always makes me cringe. I would like to share with you the story of how this attitude has changed, how God has come close to me as a tender and infinitely loving “motherly” father through Father Thomas Keating.

I’m a 58-year-old Hungarian woman, an academic with two adult sons. I’m a Protestant, a practicing member of the Hungarian Reformed Church, but my growing spiritual needs have gradually led me to open to other Christian traditions and seek the spiritual treasures of the universal church. My husband and I have learned a method of contemplative prayer from Hungarian Jesuits, which we have been practicing for several years. We’ve read a couple of Fr. Thomas’ books, and we have built his insights into our practice, but basically that was it.

Before the summer of 2025, I’ve never been seriously ill, nor have I spent time in hospital except for the two short periods when I gave birth to my two sons. In 2025 June, however, I came down with an aggressive version of Lyme disease which attacks the nervous system (it has a beautiful name: neuroborreliosis). After spending about two weeks undiagnosed, in excruciating, uncontrollable pain in the hips and back which kept me without sleep, I was hospitalized, and on the following morning when I took the first bite of my breakfast, the bits of the food slid down to the area under my mouth and got stuck there. I had to use my fingers to push them back to





where I could finish chewing the pieces. My left face had become paralyzed. (Thank God I soon realized I didn't have to do this from within, I can push the food to the right place from without.) Not being able to read, awake most of the night because of the pain, the only thing I could do was listen to podcasts and videos, and at one point, out of the blue, really, out of nowhere, came the urge: "I'm gonna listen to Thomas Keating."

I am usually quite wary of pious talk, and I am no longer so desperately after "experience" in my spiritual life, yet there is no other way to say it except that a vast peace and joy flooded me. Having read tons of theology and spiritual literature, being "churched" all my life, I don't think I have ever met anyone radiating God's unlimited, unquenchable, tender and merciful

love as powerfully and irresistibly as Fr. Thomas did. I was deeply touched, feeling embraced and enfolded by God's love. After the pain somewhat subsided, I felt totally at peace, even happy. I didn't even understand why my family and friends were so alarmed.

The previous semester I had had to finish a scholarly treatise, and I had temporarily abandoned my prayer practice. In the hospital I examined my life with all its feverish activities, fears, and ambitions, and a word of wisdom came through Fr. Thomas: *Learn to be!* And I did. I was very happy at the hospital, gazing out from the terrace on the first floor into the silver green dance of the tree boles, enjoying the love and care of friends and family, and I spent a happy summer recovering. (As I write this, after four months, my facial movement is not fully restored yet, but according to my recent neurology check-up no lasting symptoms have remained.)

In retrospect, I feel that I have been initiated into the last phase of my life, in which letting go of false-self programs, nurturing important human relationships, surrendering myself into God's hands and consenting calmly to whatever the future holds now take priority. I have doubled the time spent in contemplative prayer and I stick to it. I know that some of these insights will inevitably fade, but I am confident their influence on my life will be lasting.

I keep watching Fr. Thomas' videos, with gratefulness to Contemplative Outreach for making them available. I value his books highly, but to hear him talk, hear his voice, see his face and gestures, is entirely different. I've read testimonies by people who knew him closely, and I've been reassured that this was not self-deception, as I am not alone with the experience of an unusually intensive loving power in his presence. I've learned that in his last years it was enough to enter his room to feel the beams of the divine love radiating from him. But who would have thought that the power of his presence would come through videos and podcasts as well? I'm still in his power field, even inspired from time to time to quietly say to him: "Father Thomas, pray for me and my sons." I wonder what my Protestant friends would say, but this is the communion of the saints just as he taught it. I wish I had known him personally. Thanks be to God for him and for all of you who share this amazing heritage. ☩

Exploring the Divine Economy

TOM SMITH
APOPKA, FLORIDA, USA

In 2009, Thomas Keating gave a talk called “The Divine Economy,” which you can find on the Contemplative Outreach website. The world was painfully working through the Great Recession, and Fr. Thomas used the moment to remind us of God’s unfailing presence amid all the myriad struggles we face in daily life.

“Divine economy” is a wonderful metaphor that points us to the essence of how God manages the creation, or the Divine Household, of which we are all members. Christ is the administrator, and by dwelling within us, empowers each of us to fill that role. The main resource of the Divine Indwelling is unlimited Love, the force of the Divine which works to bring all the diverse elements of creation into unity. Our invitation is to give it all away, moment by moment. Fr. Thomas called this “living ordinary life with extraordinary love.”

In the divine economy, there is no concept of ownership (or lack of ownership), and therefore, there is no *desire* to own. The movement of Love is the primary force, and it calls for *giving*. It invites us to allow our selfish desires to be transformed by Divine Love. This upgrade in consciousness replaces competition with a spirit of collaboration.

Here are a few qualities of the divine economy:

- Fearlessness. There is nothing to fear, as unlimited love is the animating energy.
- Humility. There are no egoic demands for safety/security, power/control, or affection/esteem.
- Oneness. As we come to know our neighbors as ourselves, we have no need to compete; giving and receiving are part of the natural flow of Love.

- Return on investment is all about receiving the gifts of transformation, not accumulating financial wealth.
- Letting go of clinging and accumulating
- Discovering and celebrating the abundance we already have
- Forgiveness as a main gesture of giving
- In essence, all the fruits of the Spirit are working in service of God.

Our world economy, briefly:

One can easily see why our world calls out for us to open our minds and hearts to the divine economy that Fr. Thomas says “is barely noticeable in the ordinary course of events.” A.C. Conrad, in his book, *The Divine Economy* (1954), wrote, “The economic world has little, if any, of God in it. Yet, it is this godless economics that has dominated the modern mind.”

For a glance at the world economy, I asked my artificial intelligence friend, ChatGPT, “How’s the economy doing?”

The answer was immediate and long. It involved production, inflation, employment, interest rates, consumer spending, and “how we feel.” Maybe “how we feel” is the real bottom line to judging the world economy at any point in time.

The way we feel is often conditioned on expectations, which are formed by experience. Our perceptions of the past and the future are the driving forces in the world economy.

Classical economic theory holds that the pursuit of self-interest promotes social well-being. Based on that, one might rename the world economy the “egonomy.”



This self-centered economy obscures the underlying divine economy. Materialism feeds it. Living as separate beings in the pursuit of self-interest, we fight for and defend our own kingdoms, totally obscuring any awareness of our inner state of Love. Each time we act in response to our demands, we add another blot over the window of awareness.

A major aspect of the world economy is the desire to add and accumulate wealth. In the divine economy, we already have eternal life and unbounded Love. As Jesus asked, “What are you looking for?” The divine economy manages life at the level of truth that recognizes the superficial needs and wants of worldly life but holds those needs in the deep embrace of the kingdom of God.

A contemplative response:

Because the illusion of separation is the basis of duality, our first step toward bringing love and unity into the active world is to become aware of the unyielding Love that is our essence. This intentional opening to awareness of Love is the essence of Centering Prayer. It is also our commitment to being active participants in the divine economy.

The divine economy, eternally creating in Love, is “administered” by the Divine Indwelling, the Christ in us. By consent, and through the practice of Centering Prayer, and ultimately in contemplative awareness of the Divine, our own motivations increasingly become instruments of the divine economy, as we share God’s gift of Love through the fruits of the Spirit.

Centering Prayer and the divine economy are natural partners. Centering Prayer leads us away from structured, control-based managerial systems, allowing the unifying, love-based movements of the divine economy to take over. Chapters and volunteer groups discover greater clarity in discernment and decision-making when meetings are balanced in favor of prayer over business. By yielding to silence, groups invite the Holy Spirit to take the primary role in their consensus building.

The Contemplative Outreach vision, theological principles and guidelines for service are all in partnership with the divine economy.

In a sense, every time Contemplative Outreach (CO) gives support to a Centering Prayer group, or gives an introductory workshop, or sponsors a retreat, CO is working to serve the further emergence of the divine economy. At the micro level, every time you sit in a prayer circle or in your prayer room you are doing the same. Every action that involves consent to the Divine Indwelling opens our world just that much more to the loving action of the divine economy.

The CO global community has a Divine Economy Fund, which subsidizes retreats and other regional efforts to support the CO vision. In its stewardship, we are reminded that these funds, and our ability to use them, are gifts of the Divine working in us and through us. The fund’s naming reminds us to yield to the work of God in discerning our use of the funds. And the true return on our investment as a community comes in the fulfillment of the vision inspired by the Divine Indwelling. The entire work of CO is in service of the divine economy.

Pure receptivity, a practice within the practice of Centering Prayer, allows the presence of God (God consciousness) to be clearly received without distortion. The divine economy’s productivity is at full capacity when our collective hearts and minds are open to receive the grace of the Divine Indwelling.

In *Open Mind, Open Heart*, Fr. Thomas says this about contemplation: “For those who have attained this consciousness, daily life is a continual and increasing revelation of God. The more one lets go, the stronger the presence of the Spirit becomes.” ☩

How My Long-Time Contemplative Practice is Serving Me in My Later Years

SR. LINDA SNOW
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

My Centering Prayer journey began in 1986 when I was missioned to our community House of Prayer, Villa Maria, in La Habra, California. I was 46 years old. There were four Sisters living there and guests were welcome to come for a day or for a retreat.

At that time, I became acquainted with Basil Pennington's book, *Centering Prayer: Renewing An Ancient Christian Prayer Form*, which I had found in the library at Villa Maria. I started reading it. Around that time, another Sister and I decided to meet in the chapel at Villa Maria and to do a half-hour of Centering Prayer each afternoon. Others were invited to join us whenever they wished.

Then in 1989, I was missioned to Tucson, Arizona as a Regional Superior for six years. A local priest who was acquainted with Centering Prayer suggested we start a weekly group in the parish rectory. During this time I was also certified as a presenter in Centering Prayer.

Seven years later in 1996, I was missioned back to Los Angeles and interviewed for a position at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in Encino. I got the position and began developing the Centering Prayer program there. I was certified to teach the Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop. A group of us also met weekly for Centering Prayer. We developed Centering Prayer weekend retreats as well as the intensive and post-intensive retreats. Bonnie Shumizu generously helped us lead and develop these retreats. Around this time, I also received my spiritual direction certification.

When COVID forced us to close Holy Spirit Retreat Center in March 2020, I decided it was time for me to retire from the center. However, we continue our weekly Centering Prayer group online to this day.

So how has Centering Prayer served me all these years and continues to serve me at 85 years of age? I continue my practice of Centering Prayer twice daily. I have also made several Centering Prayer retreats,

three of them at St. Benedict's Monastery retreat house at Snowmass, Colorado.

As I reflect back, especially on longer, eight-day retreats, I have experienced through the years a sense of deep quiet within, and that I am loved and held in God's loving presence. I know it is GIFT.

My advice to those newer to the practice of Centering Prayer: Be faithful to your practice – two periods a day and, if possible, join a weekly Centering Prayer group where you have the support of others. I would also encourage you to read Thomas Keating's books especially *Open Mind*, *Open Heart* and *Invitation to Love*. In time you may wish to make an intensive Centering Prayer retreat and then attend a post-intensive retreat.

Now, I am retired at St. John of God Retirement Center in Los Angeles. I still faithfully practice two periods of Centering Prayer each day. In my everyday life, I am working on being more present in the moment – surrendering to the moment both during Centering Prayer and in my everyday life. I realize what God asks of me is faith in God who is present in each moment. Over time, a grace I have received is the deeper realization that God is here, within me and around me. I can say "God loves me – all of me, my light and darkness." I am deeply grateful. ☩





Centering Prayer and the “Tablet Wave”

JON ANDREAS, PH.D
CERRITOS, CALIFORNIA USA

In 2018, sitting on my bunk in a California prison, I was both fascinated and frustrated by the little tablet I was using for my college class. Having been locked up for some time, I had never used a device with a touchscreen, with something you could swipe. I had seen them on TV, so I knew the basic idea, but this thing was clunky; it often didn't respond to my fingers and, frankly, just a plain old textbook would've been much easier to read and navigate than that thing. I had to return it to the educational department the next day, only able to check it out for 24 hours, but there were rumors that soon we might be allowed to have our own tablet as part of our personal property. That they would put wi-fi in the housing units. That we would get email. “Yeah right,” I thought. “That'll be the day.”

A few years later, I graduated and paroled before any of that happened, but have watched with interest, and not a little horror, as tablets have swept across the US in jails and prisons alike. This “tablet wave,” as I call it, has brought with it a host of benefits such as more equitable access to learning materials and, in some facilities, real connections to loved ones. But in too many places, it also means the days of hanging your child's artwork or your lover's perfumed card next to your bunk are over. The digitally scanned versions may be better than nothing, but they're sterile.

Unfortunately, this sterility, this lack of flesh-and-blood (or crayon-and-paper) connection, is not only found behind bars but also in the outside world as people everywhere are glued to their screens. One of the ways I maintained my sanity and “kept it real” (not digitized) in prison—and continue to do so on parole—is through Centering Prayer. Oh, I'm no saint, and my practice is sporadic at best, but I will never forget discovering the peace of meditation in a Buddhist group in one of the prisons. It was the only time I could find 20 minutes of silence (and, slowly, hesitantly, lower my defenses) anywhere.

It may be easier to find moments of silence now that I'm on parole, but the stress of such a frustratingly restricted life is still real. I feel ready to fly but my wings are still bound in so many ways. Periodically taking time out to sit quietly and “let it all go” is a great way to return to what's most important. This is why I feel so fortunate to work with people who are doing everything they can to share this practice of meditative,

contemplative prayer with those impacted by our nation's overextended carceral system.

Which brings us back to the digital world and tablets behind bars. Blessing or curse? Maybe a bit of both. Over the past couple of months, I worked with a small team to select some of the best materials we could find about Centering Prayer to put them on the Edovo tablet platform. Our hope is that, because this platform is so widely available in jails and prisons across the country, men and women "in chains" will have access to the things they need to develop their own practice of regularly sitting quietly and finding some peace in the midst of the chaos. And perhaps even form a small group to practice together.

May I share a final thought about Centering Prayer with you? I came to prison a Christian, but the experience shattered my faith in God (and so much else). Desperate for meaning in my turned-upside-down life, I explored different religions and philosophies only to discover that they all had aspects I could relate to. There is a direct parallel to this in the development of the Centering Prayer movement itself. Thanks to leaders like Thomas Keating, Cynthia Bourgeault and others, this kind of contemplative prayer is a branching out from its Christian roots to dialogue with and learn from similar practices in Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and other traditions—and to link arms as we walk this precarious life journey together. Centering Prayer also draws from modern psychology and can lead to a profound inner healing. And in this hyper-divided world (which is just as ugly on a prison yard as it is in today's politics) it can't hurt to sit down together in silence. ☸

Note: If you are locked up and have access to the Edovo platform on a tablet, try searching for "Centering Prayer" to find out more. If you are interested in working with the Contemplative Outreach Prison Outreach Service Team on making available the practice of Centering Prayer in locked facilities, contact centering@cpprisonoutreach.org

Jon Andreas is a 20-year survivor of the California prison system and currently works for Prison Contemplative Fellowship/Praestolari as a data analyst and graphic designer. He never takes for granted the freedom to ride his bike on the paths along the beach.

We invite and encourage those who are incarcerated to participate in the world-wide Contemplative Outreach United in Prayer Day on March 6 & 7, 2026.

We suggest that those in locked facilities select one or both of the times listed below to practice Centering Prayer on Saturday, March 7, 2026:

7 AM local time

10 AM local time

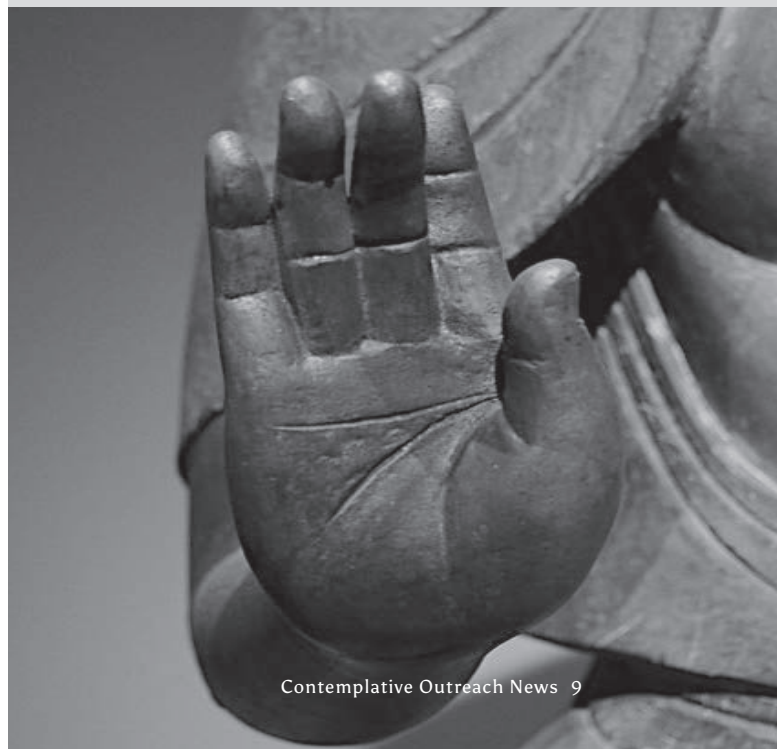
We will let those participating over the internet know that you are praying with them during those hours, and you will know that you are praying with others, even though you don't have access to a computer. You're always welcome to write letting us know when you will be praying (whether during these suggested hours or at other times) but it is not necessary. We will do our best to pass on names of any who do write.

As an example, last year we received this letter from Adrian: "Dear Contemplative Outreach family:

I just wanted you to know that from my cell, I'm joining the global community ... for the 33rd annual United in Prayer Day. I don't have Zoom, but I'll be joining silently from my bunk. Peace."

In addition, the Outside the Walls Centering Prayer group will be hosting an hour of the vigil at 1pm Eastern/ noon Central/ 11am Mountain/10am Pacific.

Please feel free to join us in prayer at that time!



When I Grow Up I Want to Be Kind

LEON L.
HEREFORD, UNITED KINGDOM

Our sits in contemplation ask us to seek through prayer and quiet reflection to find a deeper connection with something greater than ourselves. It's an invitation to slow down, breathe and find stillness beneath the noise of life. It's not about grand gestures or perfect words; it's about connection -- connection to ourselves, to something greater and to the quiet pulse of love that never leaves us even when we drift away from it.

In the book by Charles Mackesy, *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse*, the boy is asked what he wants to be when he grows up. He pauses and says softly, "I want to be kind." There's such simple truth in that answer because kindness is the deepest form of prayer. When we choose to be kind, we choose to let love move through us. We become part of something sacred, something that heals without needing to speak.

Prayer in its truest form is not about asking for more but about noticing what's already here. It's standing in the rain and realising the rain itself is grace washing away the dust of fear and shame. Meditation is the still pond after a storm, the place where the ripples finally settle and we can see our reflection clearly. Not the reflection of who we were in chaos but the quiet beauty of who we are becoming.

The mole once said, "Most of the old moles I know wish they had listened less to their fears and more to their dreams." Our sits in contemplation are where we learn to listen differently, to stop letting fear have the loudest voice and to tune in to the gentle whisper of love that says "you're enough; keep going!" It's in that whisper that our conscious contact begins not in noise or ritual but in stillness and truth.

Kindness is the bridge that carries us across our fears. It's the candle that stays lit even when the wind howls. Each act of kindness no matter how small is a spark that helps light someone else's darkness – and sometimes our own. The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse remind us that love doesn't always shout; it often just shows up. It's the soft word, the gentle glance, the quiet decision not to give up.

The horse says, "Sometimes just getting up and carrying on is brave and magnificent." And maybe that's all our sits in contemplation really ask of us – to keep showing up to open our hearts a little wider and to trust that love, not fear, will lead the way.

*Prayer becomes a way of breathing
Meditation becomes a way of listening
And kindness becomes the way we live
It is love made visible one small act at a time*

When we pause to pray or sit in silence we are like the boy standing beside the horse learning again that strength and gentleness can live in the same breath. We learn that love is not far away; it's here right now in the space between one heartbeat and the next.

So today as we walk through this moment together may we remember the boy's words, "When I grow up I want to be kind." And may we grow not just older but softer. May we grow into kindness, into forgiveness, into peace. May our prayers be less about asking and more about listening. May our meditation be less about escaping and more about coming home – home to love, home to stillness, home to the quiet voice within that always says, "You are loved, you are enough, and love is still the way." ☸





Take the Holy Mountain with You

MARU LADRÓN DE GUEVARA
FLORIDA, USA

When I wrote this, we had just found out our Monastery, our spiritual home, and the sacred valley that hosted and nurtured our contemplative heart and call had been sold. The following is an edited response to a dear friend at the time.

I wish my fingers or pen could channel the energy I am feeling, what I see ...

I believe the manifestation of the now legendary Monastery of St Benedict in Snowmass took centuries of gestation. It called for courageous monks and regular people co-laboring and being led against all odds to incarnate and embody a vision of the kingdom of God that would ultimately bring together lay seekers as well as dedicated religious, clergy, folks from every culture, tradition, religion, and no religion. Without losing rootedness in Tradition, their vision ventured far beyond the sight of *traditions*, and dared to gather those with eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand. The spiritually hungry, lost, or seeking to find their way anew in the desert and in the cloud.

It is said that the ruling powers in Jesus time thought they were crucifying him for the benefit of the many. Persecution, loss and exile took

PHOTO OF SNOWMASS HERMITAGE
BY MICHAEL BEGEMAN



The Best Place to Pray

I asked an old monk,
"How do I get over the habit of judging people?"
He answered, "When I was your age,
I was wondering where would be the best place
to go to pray.

Well, I asked Jesus that question.

His answer was,
'Why don't you go into the heart of my Father?'
So I did.

I went into the heart of the Father,
and all these years that's where I've prayed.
Now I see everyone as my own child.
How can I judge anyone?"

Br. Theophane the Monk,
Tales of a Magic Monastery



his followers by surprise despite being warned ahead of time by Jesus. Perhaps we also were warned and we just couldn't hear it, or we hoped it would never come to what has now taken place. Yet, we have been well prepared to both abound and to be without, to cherish and to let go, and therein to be content.

How then do we relate now to guideline #10 of the Vision of Contemplative Outreach?

10. We maintain a spiritual relationship with St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. *Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado is our spiritual home and a place of retreat and renewal where new insights for our spiritual journey may be revealed.*

How do we maintain a spiritual relationship with a monastery that is no more?

Well, how do we maintain a relationship with Jesus? Or with the communion of saints?

Even the wording "spiritual relationship" may give us a clue. Perhaps Theophane the Monk's *Tales of a Magic Monastery* was an invitation before its time to prepare us to move beyond into the dimension in which the Holy Mountain cannot be moved, sold, or taken away from anyone.

The first time I went on retreat to Snowmass over 36 years ago, Theophane said to me, "You know, anywhere else on earth this would be considered a Holy Mountain." And he added, "Why don't you take the Holy Mountain with you?" I pondered his words and at the closing of the retreat, I remember sharing our conversation, and stating, "I believe I will." And so, I have.

I, for one, will be maintaining my spiritual relationship with Saint Benedict's Monastery, that REAL and extraordinary magical place that for almost 70 years managed to manifest a slice of the Kingdom of God on earth in Snowmass, Colorado.



Barring a surprising turn of events, I may not be able to go back there and go on hermitage or retreat in the sacred valley that was. But I can enter into the eternal realm where it is still receiving and nourishing visitors, and anyone daring to trust this is possible.

But what about the folks that never went there? How can they relate, understand, or connect to something they never experienced? Well, for all mythical seekers (mythical in the deeper sense of the word) the Monastery is still there to be found. We have film, recordings, YouTube videos, books, and the tales from those who partook of graces that forever changed them.

I still believe that:

Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado is our spiritual home and a place of retreat and renewal where new insights for our spiritual journey may be revealed.

Our Monastery is no longer in the physical Snowmass. But it is still a living cornerstone and a gateway, a spiritual spring bearing the energy, faithfulness, daring and courage of those who founded it. This is the reality I know, taste and touch. This is what I can say to you.

The monastery is now wherever and whenever it is summoned. In ways we never imagined its legacy burns now in our hearts, and the fire of the Mystery they sought to live and transmit will endure.

What is the Spirit asking of me? Of you? Of us? Not endless *debate* about the vision, guideline 10, or even our future. The pressing question that rattles my bones like an earthquake (and perhaps is shaking yours too) is: how shall you and I now consent to the Word becoming flesh in us?

They, the monks, have fulfilled their mission to the uttermost.

Have we? ☩



No Distance

I asked each of the monks I met this question:

“What great blunder have you made?”

One answered, “There was a stone in my room, and I did not love it.”

Another said, “They called me a Christian, but I did not become Christ.”

I asked the first, “What do you mean? I don't understand. You didn't love that stone. ...”
“I just didn't love it. I was so close to redeeming the whole world, but I looked down on that stone.”

I asked the second, “You did not *become* Christ? Is one supposed to *become* Christ?”
“I kept putting distance between myself and him – by seeking, by praying, by reading.

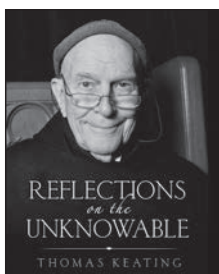
I kept deploring the distance, but I never realized that I was creating it.”

“But,” I insisted,
“is one supposed to become Christ?”

His answer: “No distance.”

Br. Theophane the Monk,
Tales of a Magic Monastery

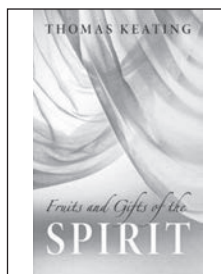
PHOTO BY RON BARNETT



Reflections on the Unknowable, by Thomas Keating.

A distillation of over seventy years as a monastic and more than three decades of writing on Centering Prayer, this later volume focuses on how we might develop intimacy with God and our participation in the Christian contemplative tradition. The first part of the book is a lengthy interview with Fr. Thomas where he examines concepts of the Divine available to individuals willing to open the door to God. The second section consists of 31 brief reflections with a wide range of diverse topics including the Trinity, the message of the Epiphany, cultivating interior silence, spiritual poverty and the beauty of chaos. \$15 USD

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/product/reflections-on-the-unknowable/>

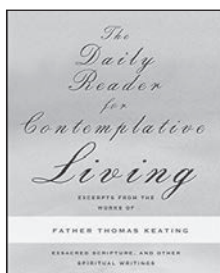


Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit, by Thomas Keating.

The spiritual journey is a gradual process of enlarging our emotional, mental, and physical relationship with the divine reality that is present in us, but one not ordinarily accessible to our emotions or concepts. The spiritual journey teaches us, first, to believe in the Divine Indwelling within us, fully present and energizing every level of our being; second, to recognize that this energy is benign, healing, and transforming; and third, to enjoy its gradual unfolding step-by-step both in prayer and action.

The contents include: The Divine Indwelling; The Fruits of the Spirit; The Gifts of the Spirit; The Gift of Reverence; The Gift of Fortitude; The Gift of Piety; The Gift of Counsel; The Gift of Knowledge; The Gift of Understanding – Parts One and Two; The Gift of Wisdom. \$14 USD

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/product/fruits-and-gifts-of-the-spirit/>



The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living, compiled by Stephanie Lachetta.

365 excerpts from the works of Thomas Keating paired with Scripture and other spiritual writings. These short excerpts are perfect for daily meditation. \$25 USD

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/product/the-daily-reader-for-contemplative-living-paperback/>

OTHER RESOURCES

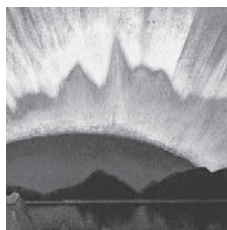


Opening Minds, Opening Hearts Podcast

Episodes from podcast seasons 1, 2, 3 are available on your favorite podcast platforms or on our YouTube channel here. More information is also on our website here: <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/podcast>. Season 4 is on its way.



[Our YouTube channel](#) is now 15 years old, with over 900 free resources. New videos are posted each month. Search under the Playlists tab for more video series.



Self-guided, on-demand, e-courses are available anytime, anywhere you have internet access.

You may choose from a variety of options including e-courses to learn practices such as Centering Prayer, Welcoming Prayer, Lectio Divina, The Prayer of Forgiveness, Utmost Charity and the Process of Discernment. Or choose e-courses for spiritual enrichment and practice support including *Practicing the Presence of God*, *The Transformation of Suffering*, *Wisdom for Living: The Parables of Jesus* and more. Read more on the website at [Program>Online Courses](#). Scholarships are available.

ART BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

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Join in the 34th annual United in Prayer Day Zoom vigil March 6-7, 2026

In the global unity of silence as God's first language, we hold vigil for the suffering of all creation; we honor Thomas Keating's birthday (March 7); and we celebrate the growing presence of Christ among us.

Join in silence and community at any time, as many times as you are able. Each hour will include at least 20 minutes of Centering Prayer and an offering from the hosting group.

No registration necessary. The event begins on Friday March 6 at 9pm Eastern Time (UTC-5). The schedule and Zoom link will be posted on the Contemplative Outreach website a few days before the vigil.

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Those who serve in leadership ordinarily do so in a voluntary capacity.
We employ staff and contractors as needed.