



Contemplative Times

The Centering Prayer Newsletter
of Contemplative Outreach

Oakland - East Bay Chapter

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Contemplative Times
Contemplative Outreach, LTD.
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Letter from the Co-Coordinator

Hi,

It's been a busy summer for me with Contemplative Outreach. I went to St. Louis in July for the Coordinator training and met 40 kindred spirits of Centering Prayer. This prayer has enabled me to connect with these folks on a new and important level of faith sharing. Because everyone came from across the US and Canada it was possible to feel the energy and power that this prayer generates. Also, it was a great way to see what different chapters were doing to spread Centering Prayer in their communities and regions. It really made me appreciate how lucky we are in the Bay Area and Northern California region with the resources we have available at Mercy Center in Burlingame and San Damiano in Walnut Creek. I encourage you take advantage of these gems as you continue on this Contemplative Prayer Path.



This seems like a good place to advertise the upcoming retreat that Eileen and Father Tommy will be conducting at San Damiano on December 10-13 on the "Human Condition." What a wonderful way to enrich your Advent Prayer.

In September John, Eileen, and I traveled to Chicago for the annual meeting with approximately 400 Centering Prayer partners. It was much harder to connect one on one with so many people, but at mealtime I was able to talk to those people sitting around me, who were eager to share their stories. And of course our Centering Prayer time was soul nourishing. The conference focused on the new materials that have been prepared looking forward to the next 25 years. We were able to get a sampling of the DVD's, CD's, and workbook that have been produced by "Sounds True" for Contemplative Outreach. They are very enriching and great teaching tools that I hope you will see soon in your prayer groups. We have one copy available and we will be using them during our Advent Day of Prayer December 5, 2009 at Our Lady of Lourdes in Oakland.

Eileen and I have been presenting an Introductory Workshop for the Catholic Community of Pleasanton for approximately 25 people and I'm hopeful we will be able to have a group formed in that community very soon. I look forward to seeing you all at our Advent Day of Prayer.

Peace,

Betty

Betty Wharton

**Centering Prayer Groups
in the East Bay**

and their contact persons to call for meeting times, directions, etc.
All without exception are welcome to our prayer groups.

- All Saints Church**, Hayward
Melanie Smith: 510-537-6563
Francis Tanjuatco: 650-678-7739
- Christ the King Church**, Pleasant Hill
(Day group):
Jodi Runyon: 925-939-0859
(Evening group):
Jeanne Pletz: 925-837-6971
Pat Stevens: 925-945-1623
- Corpus Christi Church**, Fremont
Kathy Lyons: 510-793-3672
Ron Taylor: 510-490-1279
- Hope Lutheran Church**, El Sobrante
Rev. Deborah Butler: 510-222-6394
- Our Lady of the Rosary Church**, Union City
Gene Aciniaga: 510-471-9496
- St. Alban Church**, Albany
Judy Ellisen: 510-237-6961
- St. Andrew Kim Korean Catholic Church**, Oakland
Maria Ko: 510-553-9434
- St. Elizabeth Seton Church**, Pleasanton
Art Crosetti: 925-462-2721
- St. John Vianney Church**, Walnut Creek
Nancy Jokerst 925-683-2802
Rosemary Daunenbauer: 925-939-2923
- St. Perpetua Church**, Lafayette
Helen McKennon: 925-977-1872
Carol Weyer: 925-932-1845
Joanne Elgaaen: 925-284-5608
- St. Theresa Church**, Oakland
(Day group):
Dolores Vasquez
510-530-4081
(Evening group):
Jeanne Lovi: 510-547-2505
John Neville: 510-655-2796
Betty Wharton: 510-531-6124

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH
OAKLAND-EAST BAY

ADVENT DAY OF PRAYER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2009

10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

*Doors open at 9:30. Come early for conversation, if you wish.
Program starts at 10:00. First sit about 10:10.*

Library of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Oakland
(See directions below)

Advent Renewal,

incorporating periods of Centering Prayer,
and viewing two tracks from
new DVDs of Fr. Keating and others

*Lunch will be in silence, if in the room.
Conversation outside will be optional.*

Bring a brown bag lunch Snacks and beverages
provided

Reservations suggested—it helps with planning
RSVP John Neville 510-655-2796

Suggested donation \$20.00
No one turned away for lack of funds

Directions to the Library of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Oakland,
on the east side of Lake Merritt, close to the 580 freeway:

If you are coming west on 580, take the Lakeshore exit and turn left. After one block you will see the church on your left. Turn left on Boden Way (the first street after passing the church). As you come around to the back of the church you will see the doorway marked in large, gold letters, "Lourdes Library."

If you are coming east on 580 take the Grand Avenue/Lakeshore exit, go straight one block and turn right on Lakeshore. Proceed as above.

You can either park on the street or in the parking lot on your right on Boden. If you have difficulty climbing a short, but rather steep, hill please consider carpooling and have someone drop you off at the top of the hill on Boden Way.

The Library is (so far) *not* wheelchair accessible. There are a few steps to go down.

Silent Advent Centering Prayer Retreat

December 10-13, 2009

Thursday dinner – Sunday lunch



The Human Condition

Advent is a time of waiting, also a time of healing and transformation. As Mary chose to give birth to the Savior, we also can choose to birth newness in our lives. During this retreat we will use the writings of Father Thomas Keating to discuss how grace deals with the psychological effects of our human condition to bring about healing and transformation. Through centering prayer we will explore life’s meaning, an understanding of suffering, and the awareness of the needs of the world.



Fr. Tommy Brennan, a diocesan priest from Wexford, Ireland, has practiced Centering Prayer since 1992, and has been a resident in the U.S. for the last several years, where he has been on retreats with Fr. Keating and has also directed retreats throughout the U.S. Fr. Tommy is best known and highly regarded as the director of the last eight 10-day post-intensive retreats at the Bishop DeFalco retreat Center in Amarillo, Texas with the Contemplative Outreach Team.

Eileen Halliburton is a former co-coordinator of Contemplative Outreach, Oakland-East Bay Chapter, presenter of introductory workshops on centering prayer throughout Northern California, and has been practicing centering prayer since 1993. Eileen has directed centering prayer retreats at San Damiano and Mercy Center in Burlingame for the last few years.

For **information on registration** call San Damiano Retreat Center at 925-837-9141.



Book Review

Recently, a friend gave me two books by Avery Brooke: Finding God in the World and Plain Prayers in a Complicated World. The author, a Holy Cross oblate, is a well-known teacher of meditation and healing prayer, and a mentor and spiritual director at Yale Divinity School.

In Finding God in the World, Brooke describes in a very personal way her search to know God. Raised as an agnostic, she did not even have a name for what she was seeking. Her transformations did not come in a sudden, blinding revelation, but rather in the ordinary tasks of everyday life. I often pick up a book of spiritual reading in the evening, only to find myself setting it aside because it is too theoretical, abstract, heavy. Not so for this author. She describes her belief in God’s Immanence and the practice of meditation and prayer in the routines of everyday life. Hers is a very readable book, easy to put down and pick up again.

Similarly Plain Prayers in a Complicated World is filled with short, simple, down-to-earth prayers. As a Catholic, I was taught to pray in a ritualized way and was, at first, afraid to pray in my own words, falling back on the rote formulations rather than words from my own heart. Last month, I read a prayer from this book, “Prayer for a Departure,” at a dinner given for a friend who was leaving to take a new job in Texas. Another friend who is facing a terminal illness found that one of the prayers in this book, “I May Not Get Well,” expressed her own desire for acceptance.

I have put examination copies of these two books at Sagrada Bookstore, 4926 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, for anyone interested in having a look at them.

Mary Jane Freeland, Saint Theresa’s Parish, Oakland mjrfreeland@comcast.net

The **Christmas-Epiphany Mystery** is the celebration of the transmission of divine light. The season begins with Advent, a period of intense preparation to understand and accept the three comings of Christ. The first is his historical coming in human weakness and the manifestation of his divinity to the world; the second is his spiritual coming in our inmost being through the liturgical celebration of the Christmas-Epiphany Mystery; the third is his final coming at the end of time in his glorified humanity.

The coming of Christ into our conscious lives is the ripe fruit of this Mystery. It presupposes a presence of Christ that is already within us waiting to be awakened. This might be called the fourth coming of Christ, except that it is not a coming in the strict sense since it is already here. The Christmas-Epiphany Mystery invites us to take possession of what is already ours, making us aware that he is already here as our true self—the deepest reality in us and in everyone else. As Thomas Merton put it, we are “to become what we already are.”

Once God takes up the human condition, everyone is potentially divine. Through the incarnation of the Son

the whole human family—past, present, and to come—is flooded with God’s majesty, dignity, and grace. Christ dwells in us in a mysterious but real way. The principal purpose of all liturgy, prayer, and ritual is to bring us to the awareness of his interior Presence and union with us. The potentiality for this awareness is innate in us by virtue of being human.

Christ has come, but not fully: this is the human predicament. In the light of the Christmas-Epiphany Mystery, we perceive that union with Christ is not some kind of spiritual happy hour. It is a war with the powers of evil that killed Jesus and that might kill us, too, if we get in their way. The divine light is constantly being challenged by the repressive and regressive forces within us as individuals and within society, neither of which wants to hear about love, certainly not about self-giving love.

Hence we need to deepen and nourish our faith through a liturgy that empowers us to go on showing love no matter what happens. This power is communicated to us in the Christmas-Epiphany Mystery according to our present receptive capacity.

Thomas Keating: *The Mystery of Christ*

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED