




CONTEMPLATIVE
OUTREACH

SILENCE
SOLITUDE
SOLIDARITY
SERVICE



*Resource
Information
for
Presenters-in-Training*

Resource Information for Presenters-in-Training

Part 1: Additional Readings – Fr. Thomas Keating & Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler	2
The Spiritual Network of Contemplative Outreach Limited	2
The Christian Contemplative Tradition	8
Clarifications regarding Centering Prayer	12
The Centering Prayer Method.....	14
Contemplative Outreach Vision.....	16
Part 2: Glossary, Bibliography, Anthologies, Scriptures	24
Glossary of Terms.	24
Bibliography & Anthologies	26
Scriptures Which Allude to Contemplative Prayer	27

Part 1: Additional Readings – Fr. Thomas Keating & Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

THE SPIRITUAL NETWORK OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH LIMITED

By Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, MPS

President

This history and evolution of the Contemplative Outreach organization demonstrate to me the remarkable ways in which God orchestrates our lives if we let go and put ourselves in God's hands. My life has been transformed through my experience and commitment to live a contemplative life in the marketplace with the support of this wonderful community without walls. I have seen Contemplative Outreach grow and expand from 1983 to the present in amazing ways. Many people have shaped this network – some of them have been with us from the beginning, other have recently joined us, and still others have made their contributions and moved on. Each has been essential to the ongoing process of growth and transformation. The image of a group sculpting clay lends itself to the organic way in which Contemplative Outreach was formed. Often, while one area was being defined and refined, another was being shaped.

Father Thomas Keating has been the spiritual animator and wisdom figure of this project from the beginning. His guidance and formation, along with his published works and videotape series, provide the main content for our workshops, retreats, and ongoing programs. Our experience has not followed a recipe or a prescribed set of how-to's; rather, we have tried to listen, to wait upon the movements of the Holy Spirit, and to consent. In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton mentions a way of waiting on God that seems to fit the way Contemplative Outreach approached its growth.

“... the best way to prepare ourselves for the possible vocation of sharing contemplation with others is not to study how to talk and reason about contemplation, but withdraw ourselves as much as we can from talk and argument and retire into the silence and humility of heart in which God will purify our love of all its human imperfections. Then in His own time He will set our hand to the work He wants us to do, and we will find ourselves doing it without being quite able to realize how we got there, or how it all started.” (p. 273)

An image that comes to mind when I think of the many faces of Contemplative Outreach is that of a mosaic picturing the face of Christ, a mosaic made up of hundreds of pieces of stones. Some stones are ordinary and others precious. Some are smooth and others rough. They are various colors-bright blue, red, yellow, dull green, warm purple, shiny black, and gold. As individual stones we can do little with them. Together, however, each is indispensable and makes a unique contribution to portray the face of Christ.

Members of Contemplative Outreach come from every walk of life. We are women and men interested in living a contemplative life in contemporary society. We touch people of all faiths and all denominations, and we recognize that there is unity in prayer. We are united in our goal to renew the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in daily life through the practice of Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina*. In the words of our vision statement,

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

Our purpose is to share the method of Centering Prayer and its immediate conceptual background. We also encourage the practice of *Lectio Divina*, particularly its movement into Contemplative Prayer, which a regular and established practice of Centering Prayer facilitates.

We identify with the Christian Contemplative Heritage. While we are formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and the experience of the living Christ through Centering Prayer. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions, with the needs and rights of the whole human family, and with all creation. [April 26, 1998]

How did this movement of the Holy Spirit come about? Why did it happen at this particular time? Two important events happened in the second half of the twentieth century, each seeming to move monastic life out of the cloister and into the world: Vatican II in the West, and the exile of the Dalai Lama in the East. The doors of inter-religious dialogue opened for the first time, and the contemplative values of silence, simplicity, and solitude were shared with ordinary people who were seeking a deeper relationship with themselves, with other persons, and, most importantly with God. Like a weaving, Contemplative Outreach came together with different textures, threads, fabric, and yarn in various colors. Three, however, are basic.

The first thread was a hidden treasure buried at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, in the early 1970s, where Fathers Basil Pennington, William Meninger, and Abbot Thomas Keating lived as contemplative monks. Vatican II opened doors for them that initiated a dialogue with other contemplative monks from the East and West. Through the dialogue they became interested in sharing the monastic treasures of contemplative prayer with individuals seeking silence and the fruit of silence. The monks did not have much experience in teaching contemplative prayer. Their way of life was total immersion in prayer in the words of Saint Paul, "To pray without ceasing." It was not easy for them to translate their lived experience into a model for lay use outside the cloister.

Father William Meninger was guest master at St. Joseph's Abbey and had studied the fourteenth-century classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, describing a lifestyle for deepening one's relationship with God through contemplation. He extracted from *The Cloud* a method of silent prayer that could be taught in a couple of hours. The method, called "The Prayer of the Cloud," had four simple guidelines. Meninger began to experiment at first by teaching priests who came to the monastery for retreats. It was understood that this prayer could not be learned from reading or studying; rather, it needed to be practiced in a methodical way. Meninger encouraged the retreatants to practice at least twice a day for twenty minutes each time. This was not to take the place of other kinds of prayer; it simply offered a method by which to practice silent prayer, a way of listening to God beyond words, thoughts, images, or perceptions. As more people heard of this method, they wanted to try it.

At the same time, Father Basil Pennington was being invited to give retreats to priests and sisters in their home monasteries and convents, and he also taught "The Prayer of the Cloud." While Pennington was giving a retreat at the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and Women, someone suggested to him that the name of the prayer should be changed from "The Prayer of the Cloud" to "Centering Prayer" because it put into a simple method something to which Thomas Merton had made allusions in a letter to Adul Aziz, a Sufi Scholar, when he asked Merton how he prayed.

Merton responded: "Now you ask about my method of meditation. Simply speaking, I have a very simple way of prayer. It is centered entirely on the presence of God and to His will and to His love. That is to say, it is centered on Faith by which alone we can know the presence of God. One might say that this gives my meditation the character described by the Prophet (Mohammad) as being before God as if you saw him. But it does not mean imagining anything or conceiving a precise image of God. To my mind, this would be a form of idolatry. On the contrary it is a manner of adoring Him as all. There is in my heart this great thirst to recognize the nothingness and silence. If I am still present myself, I recognize this as an obstacle. If He wills, He can then make the nothingness into total clarity. If He does not will, then the nothingness seems to itself to be an object and remains an obstacle. Such is my ordinary way of prayer. It is not thinking about anything but the direct seeking of the face of the invisible which cannot be found unless we are lost in Him who is invisible." (*Thomas Merton, Brother Monk*, Basil Pennington, Harper & Row, 1987).

This method facilitates going into the center of one's being in order to be present to the presence of God within. From then on "The Prayer of the Cloud" was known as Centering Prayer.

Thomas Keating, as Spencer's Abbot, encouraged the work. In 1977, he helped to develop a workshop for training teachers of Centering Prayer. Several people were trained at St. Joseph's Abbey and began to teach Centering Prayer to others. When Fr. Keating retired as Abbot in 1981, the retreats were discontinued. The people who were trained at St. Joseph's kept on teaching Centering Prayer. Fr. Keating moved to St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, to enjoy retirement as a monk. Shortly after his arrival in Snowmass, he was invited to give a Centering Prayer workshop in the neighboring town of Basalt, eighty people showed up on a cold winter night to learn Centering Prayer. This was a confirmation for Fr. Keating that the Spirit had something in mind.

The second thread started back in August 1983 when Fr. Keating gave the first "intensive" Centering Prayer retreat at the Lama Foundation in San Cristobal, New Mexico. This retreat emphasized extended periods of Centering Prayer. Fr. Keating also offered two presentations each day on the conceptual background in the Christian contemplative tradition, in concert with contemporary psychology and the spiritual disciplines of other world religions. I was one of twelve who were invited to attend this retreat. Among other retreatants at the Lama Foundation retreat who continued to work with us were Father Carl Arico, Father William Sheehan, David Frenette, Carl Shelton, and Mary Mrozowski (who died in 1993). Patricia Johnson and Mary Ann Matheson, both members of the Lama Foundation community at that time, served the retreat and are currently serving Centering Prayer retreats at St. Benedict Monastery.

This retreat was a heart-opening experience, and several of us made personal commitments to a daily practice of Centering Prayer; others began to teach Centering Prayer. The Lama Foundation offered another intensive Centering Prayer retreat the following year. Among its participants was Gustave Reininger, who had met Fr. Keating and his friend Edward Bednar previously in New York where they had talked about the possibility of a contemplative network. While back in New York, Bednar wrote a grant proposal and received funds to start up parish-based programs in New York City that offered introductions to Centering Prayer. Bednar called his proposal "Contemplative Outreach," and thus the name was born. Bednar's image of this network was of a group of seekers united in their common search for a deep relationship with God through Centering Prayer in dialogue with world religions. Fr. Keating, Reininger, and Bednar organized several in-city Centering Prayer retreats. This activity marked the beginning of the Contemplative Outreach Centering Prayer Program. At the same time Bednar was serving Contemplative Outreach as its first executive director. Early in 1985 Bednar left this position, and Mary Mrozowski succeeded him.

Meanwhile, efforts were made in Colorado to establish a live-in community. The experiment disbanded early in 1985, but two of the members, David Frenette and Bob Bartel moved east, joined Mary Mrozowski, and began again. During those early years the live-in community took a prominent role in the growth of Contemplative Outreach because it provided a consistent and established place to hold ongoing workshops and retreats of various lengths. Mrozowski, Frenette, and Bartel staffed weekend retreats, weekend introductions to Centering Prayer, and ten-day intensive retreats. The community at first lived in West Cornwall, Connecticut, and eventually settled in Warwick, New York, where it existed for ten years as Chrysalis House. Cathy McCarthy joined the community in 1988. Chrysalis House closed in 1996, but McCarthy carried on the work of Contemplative Outreach at St. Andrew's Retreat House in Walden, New York, where she hosted people from our worldwide Contemplative Outreach Network.

In order to give herself to full-time community work, Mrozowski resigned the position of executive director in July 1986, and I held that position until 1999 when I was elected President. My coworkers and I shared an office space and held our board meetings at the Merton Center at Columbia University in New York from 1985 to 1986. Some of Thomas Merton's original handwritten journals lined the shelves of our meeting space. It was interesting to occasionally read a few pages; it gave us a sense of Merton's presence among us.

The board supported Fr. Keating's work and helped to develop materials and a basic delivery system for the introductory workshops. We offered Centering Prayer workshops when invited to do so. Once, we were invited to give a seven-week course at St. Francis of Assisi Church on 31st Street in New York. Our

format was simple: a twenty-minute lecture on one of the aspects of Centering Prayer, a twenty-minute period of Centering Prayer, and group sharing. Invitations to present more workshops were extended to us by word of mouth. Our little board of directors was the nucleus of the movement, which meant we did all the work. We did not advertise what we were doing, and we were constantly busy giving free workshops. *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating was published early in 1986 by Amity House, and we used this book as our main resource from which we developed lecture outlines and the basic essentials for the introductory workshops and follow-up sessions for ongoing Centering Prayer groups. We still use the outlines today, although in a somewhat refined version.

The third thread of our weaving began in April 1986 when Contemplative Outreach became a New York corporation, and the name "Contemplative Outreach Limited" was born. This corporation was founded to serve as an information and resource center for the spiritual network of Contemplative Outreach. At the end of 1986 we moved to the Shalom Center in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, the Mother House of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace. In 1987, however, we moved again because the sisters needed space to expand their programs. I took my file box, telephone answering machine, and portable typewriter and I set up the office on a dining room table in my home in Butler, New Jersey. In February 1988 the office outgrew its table, and we moved into my one-hundred-year old one-car garage (277 sq. ft.). In 1997 we moved into a professional space in a renovated mill building in the downtown area of Butler. We now have 2000 square feet of space, six good-sized rooms and ten workstations. We have seven full-time employees, two part-time employees, five volunteers. Today our office is the international headquarters for the network.

Although we held regular meetings since 1984, the first official board of directors was named in 1986 when the organization was incorporated. Our board included Thomas Keating, President; Carl Arico, Vice President; and Gustave Reininger, Treasurer. Mary Mrozowski and I served as Directors. This network has been a grassroots movement from the beginning and continues to grow from the bottom up.

Patricia Johnson and Mary Ann Matheson staffed intensive retreats at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, beginning in 1987. At first the retreats were offered annually, at this point, in some months, two retreats are offered. These retreats draw seekers from all over the world. Perhaps we are offering a silent space for many caught up in the busyness of the modern world. Merton says it well....

"We are more alienated and estranged from the inner ground of meaning and of love than we have ever been. The result is evident. This crisis is centered precisely in a world that has made a fetish out of action and has lost (or perhaps never had) the sense of contemplation." (*Contemplation in a World of Action*, Image, 1973, pp. 178-179).

Interest in Centering Prayer appeared in many areas of the United States. For example, Father William Sheehan taught Centering Prayer in the Florida area from 1983 onward. He worked with volunteers interested in supporting the Centering Prayer movement and offered workshops and retreats. Many Centering Prayer groups were established in Florida, and they became one of the first Contemplative Outreach chapters. Similarly, other chapters appeared from grassroots movements, generally through the inspiration of one individual with an open heart and a willingness to share the experience with others.

Francis Stafford, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Denver, Colorado, invited Fr. Keating to offer parish programs on Centering Prayer as a follow-up to their renewal program to all the parishes in the Denver Archdiocese in 1987. Sister Bernadette Teasdale was hired by the Archdiocese to coordinate the programs. This was the first diocesan-wide systematic approach to teaching Centering Prayer. For a period of time "The Center for Contemplative Living" shared space with "Christ-Centered Ministries," an Episcopal contemplative community founded by Canon David Morgan. Sister Bernadette served as a coordinator and faculty member for Contemplative Outreach. She directs the Center for Contemplative Living in Denver in a building renovated by volunteers, where many of the Contemplative Outreach programs, workshops, and retreats are offered. The Center has a volunteer staff of over sixty persons committed to Centering Prayer who run the center. The center is self-sustaining and is located in Denver.

It became apparent that we had to train individuals to offer the introductory workshop to Centering Prayer, and Fr. Keating appointed a faculty made up of people who had been teaching Centering Prayer

since the early years. Over the years the faculty trained and commissioned some 850 individuals to give introductory workshops and follow-up sessions on Centering Prayer. Many programs have been designed and developed, such as the "Post-Intensive Retreat," "Presenters Formation for Centering Prayer," "Advanced Retreat," "The Contemplative Outreach Study Program in the Christian Contemplative Tradition," "The Living Flame" (a seven-month course), and "Contemplative Living" (a nine-month course). We also offer practices that bring the fruit of Centering Prayer into daily life: "The Practice of Contemplative Service: Intention and Attention." One recent development has been the design of introductory workshops and retreats that feature *Lectio Divina*. Longer retreats for persons with ten or more years of experience in the Centering Prayer, such as the "21 Day Retreat" and the "40 Day Retreat" have also been available.

Interest in the method of Centering Prayer has spread beyond the boundaries of the United States to the Australia, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, England, France, Guam, Ireland, Italy, Northern Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain and Switzerland. Specialized outreach has bloomed: the Hispanic Outreach, Extension Contemplativa Internacionale, a Prison Outreach, and a course in the contemplative dimensions of the Twelve-Step Program has been flourishing for several years. In 1996 Contemplative Outreach received a grant from Trinity Episcopal Church in New York to offer nationwide programs for the Episcopal Church. Our programs were well-received and continue to grow within the Anglican community.

In July of 2002, Contemplative Outreach and the Center for Action and Contemplation, co-sponsored a conference: "Healing Our Violence through the Journey of Centering Prayer" featuring Frs. Thomas Keating and Richard Rohr along with several workshop presenters. There were 1,100 people in attendance. We have also ventured into cyberspace, creating a website on the Internet at www.contemplativeoutreach.org. Our newsletter has reached a circulation of over 50,000 copies. We have over 100 chapters throughout the world. The weaving together of the Contemplative Outreach network is an ever growing work-in-progress in the artistic hands of the Spirit of God.

The volunteer nature of our network relies on the gift of time, talent and treasure of many people starting with the leadership groups and filtering down to the individuals that offer service in various capacities. The generosity is overwhelming and most inspiring. I believe it is the fruit of their commitment to the Centering Prayer practice.

Thomas Merton said it well in his book *Contemplative Prayer*,

"If we pray 'in the Spirit' we are certainly not running away from life, negating visible reality in order to 'see God.' For 'the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole earth.' Prayer doesn't not blind us to the world, it transforms our vision of the world, makes us see it and all men in the light of God." (*Image*, 1990, p. 112)

We are living up to our purpose to renew the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life. The emphasis is on everyday life. A commitment to live a contemplative life in contemporary society is a way of listening to the spirit in silent prayer as a means to discover how to live ordinary life with extraordinary love.

In my role as President, I have had the pleasure of working closely with Fr. Thomas Keating. He has been my teacher, my mentor, and my dear friend. We have had the opportunity to pray and work together over this labor of love called Contemplative Outreach. Through Fr. Keating's example, I believe that I have begun to learn how to follow the inspiration of the Spirit waiting, listening, and watching for our next movement. As we continue to grow and share our vision with people seeking the values of silence, solitude, and simplicity, I wonder what the 21st century will have in store for Contemplative Outreach. In any case, I trust we will continue to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and, day by day, to move gently into the mystery of the cloud of unknowing.

This article was published in the following journals:

The Merton Annual, Studies in Culture, Spirituality & Social Concerns. Volume 16, 2003.
Sewanee Theological Review. Volume 43 Number 3, Pentecost 2000.

THE CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION

By Thomas Keating

One of the enduring legacies of The Second Vatican Council was its call to return to the Gospels and to biblical theology as the primary sources of Catholic Spirituality. The Word of God in scripture and incarnate in Jesus Christ is the source of Christian contemplation. The Incarnation of the Word is the insertion of God into the human family and the insertion of the human family into God in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are together, in one nature, both the Ultimate Mystery and the Ultimate Reality. Their interior relationship of total giving and receiving is the divine life that Christ was sent to share with us.

The Fathers of the Church in their homilies frequently explained the scriptures from a contemplative perspective, or as it was called in those days, in the spiritual sense. The spiritual sense was understood to contain much more than an allegorical interpretation of a particular text. It was rather an insight into the inherent nature of the divinely inspired texts to reveal levels of meaning which the Spirit, by strengthening one's faith through the Gifts of Wisdom and Understanding, enabled the Christian gradually to perceive. The manifold Gifts of the Spirit were believed to come into full exercise through the regular practice of prayer and the growth of faith into contemplation with its progressive stages of development.

Meaning of the Term "Contemplation" in Christian Antiquity

For the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era, contemplation enjoyed a specific meaning. In recent centuries the word has acquired other meanings and connotations.

To grasp the full import of this key word in Christian spirituality, it is necessary to know that it evolved out of two distinct sources, the Bible and Greek philosophy. To emphasize the experiential knowledge of God, the Greek Bible used the word *gnosis* to translate the Hebrew word *da'ath*, which implies a kind of knowledge involving the whole person, not just the intellect (e.g. Psalm 139:1-6).

St. Paul also used the word *gnosis* to refer to the knowledge of God proper to those who love Him. He constantly prayed for this intimate knowledge for his disciples as if it were an indispensable element for the complete development of Christian life (cf. Eph 3, 14-21; Col 1, 9).

The Greek Fathers, especially Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, borrowed from the Neoplatonists the term *theoria*. This originally meant the intellectual vision of truth which the Greek philosophers regarded as the supreme activity of the human person. While using this technical Greek term, the Fathers added the meaning of the Hebrew word *da'ath*, that is, the experiential knowledge that comes through love. The first writer to do this was the author of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 17:24). It was with this expanded understanding that *theoria* was later translated into the Latin word *contemplatio* and handed down to us by Christian tradition.

This tradition was summed up by St. Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century. He described contemplation as the knowledge of God that is impregnated with love. For Gregory, contemplation was both the fruit of reflecting on the word of God in Scripture and a precious gift of God. He called it "resting in God." In this "resting" the mind and heart are not so much seeking God, as beginning to experience, "to taste", what they have been seeking. This state is not the suspension of all activity, but the reduction of many acts and reflections to a single act or thought to sustain one's consent to God's presence and action.

Preparation for Contemplative Prayer

Lectio Divina is the most traditional way of cultivating contemplative prayer. It consists in listening to the texts of the Bible as if one were in conversation with God and he were suggesting the topics for discussion. Those who follow the method of *Lectio Divina* are cultivating the capacity to listen to the word

of God at ever deepening levels of attention. Spontaneous prayer is the normal response to their growing relationship with Christ, and the gift of contemplation is God's normal response to them.

The reflective part, the pondering upon the words of the sacred text in *Lectio Divina*, is called *meditatio*, discursive meditation. The spontaneous movement of the will in response to these reflections is called *oratio*, affective prayer. As these reflections and particular acts of the will simplify, one tends to resting in God or *contemplatio*, contemplation.

These three acts – discursive meditation, affective prayer, and contemplation – might all take place during the same period of prayer. They are interwoven one into the other. One may listen to the Lord as if sharing a privileged interview and respond with one's reflections, with acts of will, or with silence – with the rapt attention of contemplation. The practice of contemplative prayer is not an effort to make the mind a blank, but to move beyond discursive thinking and the multiplication of particular acts to the level of communing with God, which is a more intimate kind of exchange.

In human relationships, as mutual love deepens, there comes a time when the two friends convey their sentiments without words. They can sit in silence sharing an experience or simply enjoying each other's presence without saying anything. Holding hands or a single word from time to time can maintain this deep communication.

This loving relationship points to the kind of interior silence that is being developed in contemplative prayer. The goal of contemplative prayer is not so much the emptiness of thoughts or conversation as the emptiness of self. In contemplative prayer, one ceases to multiply reflections and acts of the will. A different kind of knowledge rooted in love emerges in which the awareness of God's presence supplants the awareness of one's own presence and the inveterate tendency to reflect on oneself. The experience of God's presence frees one from making oneself or one's relationship with God the center of the universe. The language of mystics must not be taken literally when they speak of emptiness or the void. Jesus practiced emptiness in becoming a human being, emptying himself of his prerogatives and the natural consequences of his divine dignity. The void does not mean void in the sense of nothing at all, but void in the sense of attachment to one's own activity. One's own reflections and acts of will are necessary preliminaries to getting acquainted with Christ, but have to be transcended if Christ is to share his most personal prayer to the Father, which is characterized by total self surrender.

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer, rightly understood, is the normal development of the grace of baptism and the regular practice of *Lectio Divina*. It is the opening of mind and heart – our whole being – to God beyond thoughts, words and emotions. Moved by God's prevenient grace, we open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing – closer than consciousness itself. Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation, a relationship initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to divine union.

Contemplation is distinguished by some authors into kataphatic and apophatic. This distinction insofar as it suggests opposition between the two, is misleading. "Kataphatic contemplation" is rather the preparation for contemplation. It is the affective response to sacred symbols and a disciplined use of reason, imagination, memory, and emotion in order to assimilate the truths of faith and to develop a personal relationship with Christ.

"Apophatic contemplation" is a further stage in that relationship. It is resting in God beyond the exercise of particular acts, except to maintain a general loving attention to the Divine Persons. It can take different forms according to the different persons who receive this gift. It would be helpful to reserve the term "contemplation" to this type of prayer.

The "unknowing" of the rational intellect in apophatic contemplation is sometimes called Negative Theology because it emphasizes the incomprehensibility of God. It is an important bridge in East/West dialogue without which dialogue about the higher states of consciousness is virtually unthinkable. It is also a way home for many Christians who have gone to the East in search of spiritual wisdom and who,

upon hearing that there is a Christian contemplative tradition, have been able to return to the religion of their youth.

An Ancient Controversy

The development of the personal love of Christ, which for a Christian is the heart of the spiritual journey, has given rise to some misunderstandings in the history of contemplative prayer. There is a venerable controversy about the place of the sacred humanity in the transition from discursive meditation to contemplative prayer. St. Teresa of Avila is quoted as saying that we should never omit the thought of the sacred humanity no matter what state of contemplative prayer one may have received. This counsel has to be understood in the context of her whole teaching because it could be a serious obstacle in following the call of the Spirit to interior silence if taken too literally. St. John of the Cross in "The Living Flame of Love," stanza III, verses 26 to 59, describes the great harm that spiritual directors can inflict if they dissuade those who are called by the Spirit to the state of waiting upon God with loving attentiveness from following this attraction.

St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross are both doctors of the Church. Hence it is easy to understand how this controversy could arise among people sincerely seeking the truth. St. Teresa may have been reacting to certain exaggerations in her time. In any case, methods of prayer that are not inspired by the gospel should not be confused with the normal development of one's relationship with Christ and the more intimate dimension that contemplative prayer initiates: resting in the divine presence beyond thoughts and feelings.

"The Spirit," as Paul says, "prays within us with unspeakable groanings." Groanings are not words or images. The Spirit transcends the interpretations of reason and emotion. St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that everything we can say about God is only an analogy since God infinitely surpasses anything we can say or think of him and that the act of a believer does not have a proposition about God as a term, but the reality of God himself (II-II, 1,2). Commenting on the prophetic words of Isaiah to the Israelites, "to what have you likened me?" St. John of the Cross warns that if we have excessive reliance on concepts to go to God, we are likely to fall into human projections and the kind of image-making that God condemned with such force in the Old Testament.

In contemplative prayer, the humanity of Christ is not ignored but affirmed in the most positive and profound manner. Contemplation pre-supposes a living faith that the sacred humanity of Jesus contains the fullness of the Godhead. Christ leads us to the Father, but to the Father as he knows Him. In virtue of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, we participate by grace in Christ's divinity. We are invited to worship the Father in spirit and truth. This is to follow Christ into the bosom of the Father where, as the Eternal Son of God, he surrenders to the divine Source from whom he eternally emerges - and returns - in the love of the Holy Spirit.

Since "the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit," as Paul says, we too, as contemplative prayer grows, participate more fully in this movement of grace. The divine presence becomes a fullness that no longer requires the stepping stones of particular acts, at least not habitually. Once faith has revealed the mystery of Christ's humanity, one enters by a growing interaction of faith, hope, and love, into union with the divine Person who possesses it. Without in any way rejecting the details of Christ's humanity, one's attention during prayer is absorbed by transformed consciousness, manifesting the fruits of the Spirit and the beatitudes. This point needs to be emphasized; contemplative prayer is the best preparation for action; its goal is to develop and stabilize the contemplative dimension of the gospel, which is to be guided by the manifold Gifts of the Spirit, especially the theological virtues, both in prayer and in action.

Witnesses of the Christian Contemplative Tradition

This form of prayer was first practiced and taught by the Desert Fathers of Egypt, Palestine and Syria including Evagrius, John Cassian and St. John Climacus, and has representatives in every age. In the Patristic age, St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great in the West, and Pseudo-Dionysius and the Hesychasts in the East. In the Middle Ages, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, and Guido the Carthusian; the Rhineland mystics including St. Hildegarde, St. Mechtilde, Meister Eckhart,

Ruysbroek and Tauler; later the author of the *Imitation of Christ* and the English mystics of the fourteenth century such as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, and Julian of Norwich. After the Reformation, the Carmelites St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Therese of Lisieux; among the French school of spiritual writers, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal and Cardinal Berulle; among the Jesuits, fathers De Caussade, Lallemon and Surin; among the Benedictines, Dom Augustine Baker and Dom John Chapman; among modern Cistercians, Dom Vital Lehodey and Thomas Merton.

Over the centuries ways of cultivating contemplative prayer have been called by various names corresponding to the different forms they have taken. Thus we have Pure Prayer (Cassian), Prayer of Faith, Prayer of the Heart, Prayer of Simplicity, and Prayer of Simple Regard. In our time a number of initiatives have been taken by various religious orders notably by the Jesuits and Discalced Carmelites, to renew the contemplative orientation of their founders and to share their spirituality with lay persons. The Benedictine Dom John Main revived a method of Centering Prayer, based on the fourteenth century *Cloud of Unknowing* and the teaching of St. John of the Cross, is a further attempt to present the teaching of earlier times in an updated format and to put a certain order and regularity into it.

Spiritual Guidance

A qualified spiritual guide is one who has a thorough conceptual background of the Christian contemplative tradition, good judgment, and experience of contemplative prayer. Spiritual direction should address itself to where each person is. Beginners need concrete advice on how to get started in prayer, as well as instruction in the basic truths of faith in order to clarify their interpretation of their spiritual experiences.

Those who are advancing in contemplative prayer need a guide who has personal experience of passive purification. One who does not have experience of the trials of contemplation cannot communicate the kind of reassurance that such people need. That can only come from one who has been over the same path and can testify to its benefits.

Those who are approaching the transforming union where the difficulties are the most searching would be greatly helped by a spiritual friend and companion,

The Stages of Contemplation

There are stages in the development of contemplation. St. Teresa describes them in *The Interior Castle* beginning with the Fourth Mansion. St. John of the Cross also describes the development of contemplation and distinguished two paths: the exuberant mysticism of St. Teresa and what he calls "the hidden ladder of faith." To him we owe a much clearer understanding of the important role of contemplative prayer in the development of faith, hope and love. In his presentation of the spiritual journey, the faith that works through reasoning gradually grows in such a way that the usefulness of concepts and symbols disappears. Faith becomes purer and forms a stronger foundation for total trust in God and for the works of unconditional love. All of this is more the work of the Spirit than that of the human person. In fact, growth in divine union carries with it the need to diminish our human activity and to learn to wait upon the Lord. It pre-supposes the gradual purification of the sense faculties in the night of sense and the spiritual faculties in the night of Spirit. Thus, the essence of the contemplative path is not to be identified with psychological experiences of God, though these may occasionally occur. The essence of contemplation is the trusting and loving faith by which God both elevates the human person and purifies the conscious and unconscious obstacles in us that oppose the values of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit. Contemplative prayer in the classic sense used in this article is "the narrow way that leads to life."

CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING CENTERING PRAYER

By Fr. Thomas Keating

Revised August 16, 2005

Cardinal Ratzinger's "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation" was not directed to Centering Prayer, which is the traditional form of Christian prayer, but rather at those forms of meditative practices that actually incorporate the methods of Eastern meditations such as Zen and the use of the Hindu mantras. The letter is chiefly concerned with the integration of such techniques into the Christian faith. It does not forbid their use and indeed, states, "that does not mean that genuine practices of meditation which come from the Christian East and from the great non-Christian religions... cannot constitute a suitable means of helping the person who prays to come before God with an interior peace even in the midst of external pressures" (#28).

Having noted this affirmation of the value of the Eastern practices when rightly integrated into Christian faith, may I point out that Centering Prayer is the one contemporary form of contemplative practice that does not make use of any of these techniques. The quotation from the Letter that the gift of contemplative prayer can only be granted through the Holy Spirit is precisely what we teach. Nor does Centering Prayer encourage a privatized spiritual journey or the seeking of spiritual experiences, but rather fosters the complete surrender of self in faith and love that leads to divine union. There is much greater danger in concentrating on oneself in discursive meditation and in intercessory and affective prayer, especially if one is preoccupied with one's self feeling and reflections. In Centering Prayer one is not reflecting on one's self or one's psychological states at all.

It is important to situate Centering Prayer in the context of the monastic tradition of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* is the most traditional way of cultivating contemplative prayer. It consists in listening to the text of the Bible as if one were in conversation with God and God were suggesting topics for discussion. Those who follow the method of *Lectio Divina* are cultivating the capacity to listen to the word of God at ever deepening levels of attention. Spontaneous prayer is the normal response to their growing relationship with Christ, and the gift of contemplation is God's normal response to them.

The reflective part, the pondering upon the words of the sacred text in *Lectio Divina*, is called *meditatio*, discursive meditation. The spontaneous movement of the will in response to these reflections is called *oratio*, affective prayer. As these reflections and particular acts of will simplify, one tends to resting in God or *contemplatio*, contemplation.

These three acts –discursive meditation, affective prayer, and contemplation– might all take place during the same period of prayer. They are interwoven one into the other. One may listen to the Lord as if sharing a privileged interview and respond with one's reflections, with acts of will, or with silence –with the rapt attention of contemplation. The practice of contemplative prayer is not an effort to make the mind blank, but to move beyond discursive thinking and the multiplication of particular acts to the level of communing with God, which is a more intimate kind of exchange, a matter of the heart.

In human relationships, as mutual love deepens there comes a time when the two friends convey their sentiments without words. They can sit in silence sharing an experience or simply enjoying each other's presence without saying anything. Holding hands or a single word from time to time can maintain this deep communication.

This loving relationship points to the kind of interior silence that is being developed in contemplative prayer. The goal of contemplative prayer is not so much the emptiness of the thoughts or the conversations as the emptiness of self. In contemplative prayer, one ceases to multiply reflections and acts of the will. A different kind of knowledge rooted in love emerges in which the awareness of God's presence supplants the awareness of one's own presence and the inveterate tendency to reflect on oneself. The experience of God's presence frees one from making oneself or one's relationship with God the center of the universe. The language of mystics must not be taken literally when they speak of emptiness or the void. Jesus practiced emptiness in becoming a human being, emptying himself of his prerogatives and the natural consequences of his divine dignity (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). The void does not mean void in the sense of

nothing at all, but void in the sense of attachment to one's activity. One's own reflections and acts of will are necessary preliminaries to getting acquainted with Christ, but have to be transcended if Christ is to share his most personal prayer with the Father which is characterized by total self surrender.

Centering Prayer is only one method of developing contemplation and preparing oneself for this great gift of the Spirit. I would think it would have strong appeal for the people in the charismatic renewal movement, especially for those who enjoy the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues is already a form of contemplative prayer since one is fully aware of the presence and action of the Spirit without thinking about what one is saying.

The practice of Centering Prayer is basically a waiting upon God with loving attentiveness, fulfilling the Gospel injunction, "Watch and Pray." If one can accept the notion of prayer as primarily relationship with God, it becomes obvious that one's relationship with God can be expressed without words, simply by a gesture or even by one's silent intention to consent to God's presence. This is not to deny the value of other forms of prayer which are normally necessary to prepare one for this level of relating to God. It simply moves one to a deeper dimension of intimacy with God. Thus, it is a more personal kind of prayer than discursive meditation and affective prayer. As a result, it enables one to penetrate to a greater degree the meaning of scripture and liturgical texts and symbols.

The term "pantheistic," often used in connection with Eastern practices, is ambiguous and misleading. A distinction needs to be made between "pantheism" and "panentheism," as is done in inter-religious dialogue. Eastern practices are not necessarily pantheistic. Many forms of Buddhism and Hinduism are just as devotional as similar practices in the Christian faith, though directed, of course to their particular deities. *Pantheism* is usually defined as the identification of God with creation in such a way that the two are indistinguishable. *Panentheism* means that God is present in all creation by virtue of his omnipresence and omnipotence, sustaining every creature in being without being identified with any creature. The latter understanding is what Jesus seems to have been describing when he prays "that all might be one, Father, as we are one" and "that they may be one in us." Again and again, in the Last Supper discourse, he speaks of this oneness and his intentions to send his Spirit to dwell within us. If we understand the writings of the great mystics rightly, they experience God living within them all the time. Thus the affirmation of God's transcendence must always be balanced by the affirmation of his imminence both on the natural plane and on the plane of grace.

The practice of Centering Prayer is simply offered to those who feel called to a deeper life of prayer and who are looking for a method that will help them to do so in the context of a very active life in the world. These people should not be deprived of such an opportunity on the basis of false fears raised by superficial understanding of Centering Prayer and a failure to recognize the significant distinction between traditional methods of preparing for the gift of contemplation, such as Centering Prayer, and the techniques of the Eastern spiritual traditions.

THE CENTERING PRAYER METHOD

By Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O.

The following clarifications are in order concerning the Centering Prayer Method.

1. Centering Prayer is a traditional form of Christian prayer rooted in Scripture and based on the monastic heritage of "Lectio Divina." It is not to be confused with Transcendental Meditation or Hindu or Buddhist methods of meditation. It is not a New Age technique.

Centering Prayer is rooted in the word of God, both in scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ. It is an effort to renew the Christian contemplative tradition handed down to us in an uninterrupted manner from St. Paul, who writes of the intimate knowledge of Christ that comes through love.

Centering Prayer is designed to prepare sincere followers of Christ for contemplative prayer in the traditional sense in which spiritual writers understood that term for the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era. This tradition is summed up by St. Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century. He describes contemplation as the knowledge of God impregnated with love. For Gregory, contemplation was the fruit of reflection on the word of God in Scripture as well as the precious gift of God. He calls it, "resting in God." In this "resting", the mind and heart are not so much seeking God as beginning to experience, "to taste", what they have been seeking. This state is not the suspension of all activity, but the reduction of many acts and reflections into a single act or thought to sustain one's consent to God's presence and action.

2. Centering Prayer does not "empty the mind" or "exclude other forms of prayer." It is not a "technique" that automatically creates "mysticism" or a means "to reach an altered state of consciousness."

It is important not to confuse Centering Prayer with certain Eastern techniques of meditation such as Transcendental Meditation. The use of the Sacred Word in Centering Prayer does not have the particular calming effect attributed to the TM mantra. Nor is the Sacred Word a vehicle leading to the spiritual level of one's being as it is in TM. There is no cause-and-effect relationship between using the Sacred Word and arriving at some altered state of consciousness. The Sacred Word is merely the symbol of the consent of one's will to God's presence and action within based on faith in the doctrine of the Divine Indwelling. The Sacred Word is simply a means of reaffirming our original intention at the beginning of our period of prayer to be in God's presence and to surrender to the divine action when we are attracted to some other thought, feeling or impression.

Throughout the period of Centering Prayer, our intention predominates: the movement of our will to consent to God's intention, which according to our faith, is to communicate the divine life to us. Hence, unlike TM, Centering Prayer is a personal relationship with God, not a technique.

3. Centering Prayer is designed to deepen the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and to develop the most ancient of all Christian methods, the practice of Lectio Divina leading to contemplation.

Centering Prayer is fundamentally two things at the same time: first, the deepening of our personal relationship with Christ developed through reflection on scripture; and second, a method of freeing ourselves from attachments that prevent the development of this relationship and the unfolding of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. It reduces the tendency to over activity in prayer and to depending excessively on concepts in order to go to God. In short it reduces the obstacles in us, especially selfishness, so that we become sensitive to the delicate inspirations of the Holy Spirit that lead to divine union.

This form of prayer was first practiced and taught by the Desert Fathers of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, including Evagrius, John Cassian and St. John Climacus. It has representatives in every age, e.g. in the Patristic age, St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great in the West, and Pseudo-Dionysius and the Hesychasts in the East: in the Middle Ages, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, and Guido the Carthusian; the Rhineland mystics including St. Hildegard, St. Mechtilde, Meister Eckhart, Ruysbroek,

and Tauler; later the author of the *Imitation of Christ* and the English mystics of the 14th Century such as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, and Julian of Norwich; after the Reformation, the Carmelites St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Therese of Lisieux; among the French school of spiritual writers, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal and Cardinal Berulle; among the Jesuits, Fathers De Caussade, Lallemond and Surin; among the Benedictines, Dom Augustine Baker and Dom John Chapman; among modern Cistercians, Dom Vital Lehodey and Thomas Merton.

Over the centuries ways of cultivating contemplative prayer have been called by various names corresponding to the different forms they have taken. Thus we have Prayer of Faith, Prayer of the Heart, Pure Prayer, Prayer of Simplicity, Prayer of Simple Regard, Active Recollection, Active Quiet, and Acquired Contemplation. In our time a number of initiatives have been taken by various religious orders, notably by the Jesuits and Discalced Carmelites, to renew the contemplative orientation of their founders and to share their spirituality with lay persons. The method of Centering Prayer is a further attempt to present the teaching of earlier times in an updated format and to make it available to ordinary people who are experiencing a hunger for a deeper life of prayer and for a support system to sustain it.

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH VISION

By Father Thomas Keating

June 6, 1993

In view of my illness a number of events took place without me for which I used to be present. Hence there arose a certain confusion as to authoritative interpretations of questions that were raised by workshop participants as well as in the interaction of the staff among themselves. Perhaps the greatest contribution that my illness has made is to create a situation in which members of the Contemplative Outreach staff have to look at functioning without me and how that is to be done. I think it can be done very easily. At the same time I want to be completely open in regard to questions and doubts that the staff may be having and try to clarify what our common vision is.

I envisage Contemplative Outreach as an experiment to see if the fruit of the contemplative experience that I received in the monastery can be made available to people who are leading an ordinary life outside the monastery. It was not with a view to forming a community that we started. Rather we began in the usual way that retreats have been given for centuries. A preacher is selected, gives a few excellent lectures, and then nobody ever sees him again. Next year the community chooses another retreat master.

My conviction grew that we could not introduce the contemplative life for people without some kind of on-going formation or support system. Actually that was the original purpose of primitive monastic life whether it was conscious or not. The idea of the first monastics was "let's get out of this parish, this noisy world, and this corrupt Roman civilization and find the best possible milieu in which we can be quiet with the Lord and develop both our prayer and the ascetic life. So with the inspiration of the great St. Anthony of Egypt (you only need one person to do it I guess) thousands of other people followed him into the deserts of Egypt and Palestine. They figured if he did it, they could do it too. Thus, monastic life as a lifestyle began. As a lifestyle it was directed entirely toward the developing of the contemplative dimension of the Gospel. The first monastics understood it as the following of Christ in a most comprehensive way that involved both prayer and action. The two were embraced together, with different emphases at different times and in different places.

Observing the great influx of Eastern masters and the great attraction they had for young people in the 60's and 70's, a few of us at St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, MA, who were exposed to their wisdom, started asking ourselves whether it would be possible to put the contemplative monastic tradition into a form that ordinary people could understand and practice. Encouraged by the Second Vatican Council which urged the Church to try to express theology and Christian doctrine in modern terms and in contemporary language, it seemed to me that something similar should be done for spiritual theology and the contemplative tradition of the Church. It was then that Father William Meninger worked on a "how-to" method which was aimed at expressing the richness of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, by the unknown 14th Century author, in a form that would make it available to people in our day. Without some how-to of contemplatively oriented prayer, people were being attracted in great numbers to the well thought out and well presented methods of Eastern masters who were arriving in increasing numbers in this country. This was no passing fancy. It was estimated that ten thousand young people went to India every summer in search of spirituality and a guru, none of whom ever thought of inquiring at a Benedictine or Cistercian monastery about whether they could find a form of spirituality there.

The contemplative tradition was believed to be locked up in cloisters. Even there, it existed in various truncated forms with an over-emphasis on monastic observances rather than on interior transformation. I felt that it was an acute situation that cried out for some response from contemplative monks. Although we started off in the early 70's imagining that it would be of interest to priests in the active ministry and religious women, we did not envisage that it would be of much interest to lay people. They had been thoroughly convinced by their Catholic education that any aspiration for contemplative prayer could only be realized in a cloister. Thus we saw the original movement toward contemplative prayer that had come from lay people looking for a structure that would be most helpful to support their spiritual aspirations, winding up over the centuries as the preserve of an institution with the unquestioned assumption that it could not be found anywhere except in a cloister, if indeed it could be found there.

This has left us in our time without a sense of the immense possibility that the Gospel opens out to lay persons and indeed almost commands them to pursue. Evelyn Underhill is one of the outstanding mystics and writers on mysticism of our era. She offers a parable of the spiritual journey that might be apropos to repeat here. She wrote that the spiritual journey is like the migration of English sparrows, each weighing about an ounce and a quarter, who twice each year take off into the unknown, committing themselves to the air and flying over the ocean where there are no landmarks to give them any guidance. And yet without any hesitation, every Fall thousands of them take off and in the Spring return to England undergoing the same hazards. This journey she claims is a good example of what the spiritual journey is all about. We have no idea where we are going. There are all kinds of difficulties that we cannot foresee. The birds commit themselves to the elements by way of blind trust in their inner inspiration. The spiritual journey is basically a surrender to the inner conviction that what we hope to find in the journey we either already have or will certainly find. But there is no guarantee that we will get there on the basis of the evidence or our circumstances. We must let go and let the wind (the Holy Spirit) take us where we hope to go.

One of the reasons why contemplatives have always been in the minority in this world is because contemplation involves a surrender of one's whole self, not just a period of time each day devoted to some form of prayer or meditation. It is a commitment of immense proportions and hence it requires trust of an eminent character, faith that God will bring us where we hope to go if we submit to this inner conviction or urging that we have to start. It does not matter how many difficulties there are, we have to go. There is no turning back once we have started because the atmosphere is a big place, and we had better stay with the flock. It is a movement of the Spirit rather than a movement of instinct as in the case of the English sparrows. The evidence of these little birds fighting storms and winds to get to their destination, is virtually zero. The obstacles are so great. Our taking to the air is not based on certitude or instinct, but rather on the theological virtue of hope. The movement, call, or attraction that God has given us is a promise that is just as reliable as the instinct of the birds as they surrender to their migratory instinct. Instead of surrendering to a migratory instinct, we surrender to our transformation.

In the early days of teaching Centering Prayer, I perceived that people had to have some kind of adequate support system if they were going to persevere in the practice. One of the great supports of migration, I suppose, is flying in flocks. A dangerous and long journey to nowhere needs company.

Naturally a lot of ordinary lay people stop when they get the message that Centering Prayer is not just a method of prayer that may provide a few months of peace before the real trials and difficulties begin. It requires dedication, hence some people are going to back out. It involves a commitment of the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. Centering Prayer is totally in the service of sustaining us in a transforming process which is anything but secure, easy, or certain. The theological virtue of hope is the anticipation of the end, here and now. According to Jesus, we already have eternal life if we believe in him. We just have not realized it yet because we have not completed the flight.

The vision of Centering Prayer is "How can we serve the Church and the broader Christian community, by making this rich contemplative tradition available in our day with the kind of language, inspiration, and support system that will enable not medieval people, but contemporary people to pursue the journey to the end?"

I turned for a conceptual background to certain psychological paradigms because I think that very few seekers are going to start the spiritual journey today by reading the spiritual classics. I wonder if anyone would have started Centering Prayer if I had not put it into a psychological frame of reference that he or she could identify with. I don't think the old classics are the way to start unless you are in a monastery where you have easy access to books. How many people can extrapolate a practical method of prayer from reading two or three hundred spiritual classics? The Christian tradition has always been somewhat limited in methodology. There is a lot of excellent material on original sin and the Fall, the terrible state we are in as a result of the seven capital sins. There is also quite a bit of exuberant literature on the transforming union and the joys of divine union, but there is not much that says how you get from one place to the other.

Here is where I received some inspiration from the East. The Eastern masters began arriving in America in great numbers after World War II saying, "Here is our method of contemplative prayer (they called it meditation). Where is yours?" To which we had virtually nothing to reply. We did not have any kind of method comparable to their concrete and detailed instructions. Even the Exercises of St. Ignatius were in a pretty sorry state in those days, offering various useful visualizations, good in themselves, but in no way capable of moving one to the more refined levels of faith or to the contemplative state.

When I resigned from St. Joseph's Abbey in 1981 and moved to St. Benedict's Monastery, Snowmass, Colorado, I never intended to teach Centering Prayer. I got back into teaching Centering Prayer by being invited by the local pastor to give a course in something during the month of May, 1982. Later an opportunity opened up to give a lengthy Intensive Retreat. I had always wanted to see what would happen to Christians if they meditated five or six hours a day. The retreat was a watershed event. That experience convinced me that the same dynamics were available if Christians could be persuaded to do a form of non-conceptual prayer over a period of two weeks.

Anyone who does any kind of serious prayer practice has to have a conceptual background to explain it to themselves if not to other people. I knew that this need would be in great demand rather soon if people kept doing Centering Prayer. I tried to bring the Christian contemplative tradition in dialogue with contemporary science especially developmental psychology, anthropology, and physics. I did not expect at first that anybody would be interested in it—certainly not lay persons. But I soon found out that lay persons were much more interested than the average priest or religious. I also became aware that people of other Christian denominations were interested too because they never had a contemplative tradition in their denomination (or at least not one for very long) and they were beginning to feel the need of something. Many priests and bishops were beginning to question whether the way to reconvert people was to start with the Eucharist or with Christian doctrine. Some kind of prayer experience looked like a more promising way to begin. The term, "meditation" means for people exposed to Eastern methods what we Christians mean by contemplation, that is, a way of disregarding the usual flow of thoughts for a certain period of time. From a physiological/psychological point of view, that is really the essence of any form of Eastern meditation. As Carlos Castenada put it in a classic phrase, "Stop the interior dialogue." That is the principal discipline in contemplative prayer. The process of committing oneself to the divine guidance is not a "hands-on" feeling; quite the contrary, it is the courage to proceed without any divine "hands-on," that is, into the dark nights where the real journey takes place and without which one does not normally reach the Promised Land.

Our organization is definitely not a form of lay monastic life. I deliberately rejected that paradigm because I knew as soon as we used the word "monastic," the average citizen would be back in the institutionalized view of contemplation which is for cloistered people only. Even most secular priests have the same concept. I remember a priest saying that in the seminary he attended, when the professor of spirituality came to the place where the text referred to contemplation, he said, "We won't go into that stuff here. That is for the boys up in Spencer." As if contemplation had nothing to do with persons in the active ministry. That was the mindset that we were dealing with until 1975. One could not talk about contemplation even to cloistered people without some getting up and leaving or with most becoming very nervous. The rank and file were taught that this is only for mystics and saints. In actual fact, contemplation is not the reward of virtuous life; it is a necessity for a virtuous life. We will be waiting a long time for the priest and for the lay people who are now assuming many of the duties of priests, to be capable of spiritual guidance. They have to be touched or enlightened by the fact that we do not make ourselves spiritual directors but commit, submit, and surrender ourselves to the journey without the props that we would like to have to feel secure. In fact the letting go of security is something we have to agree to. Without having accepted the trip into the unknown, one is really not a candidate for contemplation because that is what is presupposed: to let God lead us into a place that involves a complete reversal of our prepackaged values, a complete undoing of all our plans, and a lot of letting go of our preconceived ideas.

That raises the problem of what is the self? What "self" are we talking about? This has given rise to the background material on the false self and the true self, which are basically the same ideas as the terms "old man" and the "new man" in St. Paul.

The charism insofar as it is truly willed by the Spirit is only ten years old. I don't think any organization can be proved in that short a time. But at least we have had some encouragement.

Motivation is everything in the spiritual journey. God, I think, cares less about a change of lifestyle, monasteries, deserts, or perfect circumstances, than about our attitude towards what we are doing. As we know, our motivation can be inspired by the false self system dressed up in religious or spiritual garb. This letting go into the unknown, or other images for submitting to the unloading process, such as the idea of the divine therapy, is an essential step into the mystery of our own unconscious. Hidden there is not only our whole life's history, especially the emotional wounds of early childhood buried in the warehouse of our bodies, but also the positive elements of our potential for growth in faith, hope, and love, and where the greatest repression of all, namely the Divine Indwelling, is also present. We must gradually recover the conviction, not just the feeling, of the Divine Indwelling, the realization that God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is living in us and that we are incorporated into the Trinitarian life and love. This is the heart of the spiritual journey and in the service of which, Centering Prayer is a renewal, a way of making available the traditional teaching of the centuries in a form that is accessible to people today. This cannot be done, it seems to me, without some psychological relating since that knowledge is such a prominent part of Western culture.

The question arises, "Is Centering Prayer a part of Lectio Divina?" It isn't. It is related to Lectio Divina very closely but not so much to the method as to the developing relationship with Christ that Lectio Divina involves. It is emerging out of the same tradition. My experience in the monastery where Lectio Divina is the chief discipline of prayer is that, for years people would be reading the scripture and other books with a certain prayerful intention, but they did not know how to do Lectio in a way to foster its purpose as a relationship.

The primary purpose of the Centering Prayer practice is to rescue Lectio Divina from its failure in our time because people are enculturated to oppose its spontaneous movement toward contemplative prayer. There is little instruction in how to read a spiritual book and the obstacles to it may be increasing with the information explosion. I observed this often in monks and nuns and other people. Some people have a bright mind and are intellectually geared to endless reflection. This is not to say that some reflection on the truths of faith is not necessary. The great problem with Lectio in our time (maybe it was always this way, I don't know), is how do you get from simplified affective prayer to contemplation? I did not see too many monks and nuns making that passage through the practice of Lectio. That is why I could see that Centering Prayer or some such method was essential even to do Lectio in the right way. In our time there is a predominant enculturation, especially in theological circles, in the two things that are most inimical to proceeding from discursive meditation to interior silence, and these are: hyperactivity-thinking that we have to do something in prayer to please God. People think if their minds are empty of reflections or particular acts that they are doing nothing or dozing. The other problem is the tendency to over-conceptualize, a special hazard for those who are highly educated and even more so, for those who are highly trained theologically. They have gradually absorbed the idea that thinking about God is praying. It isn't. Centering Prayer is a way of enabling people of our time to get over those two major cultural obstacles to their development in prayer. In Lectio we have reading, reflecting, responding, and then in some mysterious fashion, resting in God. I did not see many monks and nuns doing the latter. For centuries in Jesuit communities for fear of false mysticism, one had to stick to discursive meditation. There is no common teaching in our time, as to how one moves from discursive meditation to resting in God. The historical result of this mentality is not surprising: contemplation became institutionalized and hence available only in certain highly structured circumstances, which were not remotely accessible to lay persons or even to those in the active ministry, not to mention busy monks and nuns in cloisters. Without the experience of resting in God, all the capital sins can flourish without one actually being aware of the fact. One may think one is doing great things for God if one gets into parochial work or teaching, but the seven capital sins, the results of the emotional programs for happiness, are there in concrete form.

I openly confess that there are certain innovative elements here but I claim that these elements are implied or available in the tradition.

Centering Prayer is a distinct method of prayer. It is not Lectio in any sense of the term. But it is designed to rescue Lectio from stagnation and from its tendency to get stuck in interior ego trips of one kind or another. At some point, people once they have thought over the truths of faith adequately, will not be satisfied with continuing to ruminate forever.

This is the reason why I say one can't do the spiritual life nowadays without some knowledge of psychology. This is not to say that psychology will get you there. It won't. It will only clear the stage and enable one to get some degree of egoic self-identity, which still implies the false self in some degree. But without developing the ego or self-identity, the psychological resources for the journey are lacking. People who have been injured in early childhood and do not really have a strong ego because they were oppressed or abused, do not have a self to give to God. They do not have a self either to relate to God or to anybody else. When they hear advice like "humble yourself," or "keep your eyes always cast down," or "never question authority," this is like peaches and cream to them because that is what they really like to do. They don't want to take responsibility for themselves and the damage that was done to them in early life. Without personal responsibility for our emotional life, however bad it is, the journey is not going to be comprehensive or adequate. It is not our conscious life that is the biggest problem; it is our unconscious motivation that has to be changed.

Centering Prayer creates the atmosphere in which that change can begin to take place. Some people will perceive that this is going to cause changes in them and back off. I don't think there is much danger in teaching Centering Prayer to anyone except possibly sociopaths, and it might even help them. Centering Prayer makes one vulnerable to the unconscious. The longer one does it, the more it happens. One needs to have a sufficiently strong ego or self-identity to be able to deal with painful emotional material when it comes up. This is a crucial problem for us at the moment. How we can communicate sufficient information to support group leaders and leaders of the various forms of workshops to enable them to give necessary encouragement to people to whom this process is happening and to help them understand that their painful experience is the direct way to healing, freedom, and joy.

On a trip across the ocean you are going to run into some storms. A trip into the unconscious is a trip into the great unknown. One of the purposes of limiting Centering Prayer to two periods a day is that it is such a gentle exposure to the unconscious that it will take several years to get there unless some previous form of deep meditation has loosened up some stuff that might surface fairly soon. People normally have plenty of time to grasp the conceptual background of the practice so that when the unconscious begins to unload and they get in touch with childhood problems and instinctual drives, they will have the capacity to handle them. The experience will still be painful but it will not blow them away. There is a certain wisdom in the way that we have graded the various intensives. We see the fruit of that in people who are sufficiently numerous now to make me fairly convinced that those who take up this practice and pursue it regularly will experience positive changes in their lives. We have many testimonials to that effect.

To clarify one point: Centering Prayer is both a relationship and a method to foster that relationship at the same time. It is tucked into the relational dynamic of Lectio Divina. It is also a method designed to reduce the obstacles to contemplation, especially over-activity, over-dependence on one's thought to go to God, and, excessive preoccupation with oneself and one's acts. We can't exactly affirm that it is a part of Lectio or that it emerges from Lectio. The method itself is a discipline to enable the developing relationship with Jesus to reach its term in union with God. You only have to talk to people whose prayer is basically visualization or discursive meditation to realize you are on a different plane. No one understands contemplative prayer without some experience of it.

Centering Prayer relates to Lectio Divina as a discipline designed to correct what hinders or prevents us from moving from simplified affective prayer into contemplation. This does not mean that if we practice Centering Prayer, we never do anything else. We simply do Lectio and other forms of prayer at another time.

Now the delicate question arises, can we begin a life of prayer with Centering Prayer? Tradition says that we should normally begin with discursive meditation and that we should not move beyond affective prayer unless we know God is calling us to contemplation. But nobody explains what that really means,

or how we are to know when God is calling us. We may go to a spiritual director who is supposed to help us to discern, but he or she really does not know either. My question is, why do we need to know?

Let us imagine a continuum with the action of the Holy Spirit directed toward us from one end and our efforts to pray directed to the Spirit at the other end. According to the Roman Catholic faith, we cannot even desire to pray without the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, every prayer is inspired by the Spirit. We say that the Spirit gradually takes over our prayer and that Centering Prayer is in the service of that project. My question is, which is harder for the Holy Spirit, to prompt some hard-hearted soul to say, "Help" and go to AA, or to be completely under the contemplative gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge when you are praying and under the other gifts when you are acting. It is not that hard for God!

Here is where Centering Prayer is in the Christian contemplative tradition. All through the tradition we are reminded of the invitation in the Gospel, "Go into your closet and close the door!" Be quiet and silent. "We need to be especially careful," says Abba Isaac in John Cassian's 9th Conference: "The Gospel precept instructs us to go into our room and to shut the door so that we may pray to our Father." Liturgists may have a hard time with that text, but it might be a consolation to them to reflect that in light of the doctrine of the communion of Saints and the Mystical Body, whether one is alone or with others, every genuine prayer is liturgy.

"We pray in our room," continues the Abba, "when we withdraw our hearts completely from the tumult and noise of our thoughts and worries, and secretly and intimately offer our prayer to the Lord. We pray with the door shut when, without opening our mouths and in perfect silence, we offer our petitions to the one who pays no attention to words but who looks hard at our hearts." This Fourth Century Desert Father teaching is the magna carta of the apophatic tradition.

Throughout the centuries that insight has been treated with more or less discretion, sometimes going too far one way, sometimes too far in the other. We cannot completely trust any of the spiritual masters. Everyone is conditioned by his or her times and culture in some degree. Looking at the tradition, we have to know how to read the Fathers and to bring them into critical relationship with later writers and with modern psychology, exercising some caution in regard to the recommendations of writers who did not have that knowledge. All I am saying is that now that we have the knowledge, it has to be used. It is knowledge that most people in our day understand, but it must be taught in such a way as not to offer merely a self-help program.

Recently someone did a thesis on Centering Prayer along with other forms of Eastern meditation, recommending them as means to lessen anxiety. It was found (but based on too few a selection of people to be convincing) that meditation in general, including Centering Prayer, reduces anxiety. I wrote to this man, "Centering Prayer will reduce anxiety perhaps for the first three months. But once the unconscious starts to unload, it will give you more anxiety than you ever had in your life." Doctoral theses may occur more frequently as Centering Prayer gets more visible. I shake in my boots because some people are writing about it as if it were an empirical program that they could evaluate with statistics.

To return to the continuum we spoke of above, I quote St. Augustine who wrote, "We move spiritually not by our feet, but by our desires." As the desire for union with God manifests itself both in daily life and in prayer, at some point we have reduced our activity to what used to be called simplified affective prayer, that is, to a word, a couple of words, or a gesture. The latter may be breathing (referring the process to the inflowing of the Holy Spirit) or a generalized image (not a visualization) that involves the interior sense of sight. The sacred word as well as other sacred symbols does not initiate any cause and effect relationship. It is distinct from Hindu techniques which if one does the practice correctly, one can expect to get a specific result. In Centering Prayer we do the practice and do not get any result. It is a relationship and has nothing to do with a cause/effect nexus. It depends on what God's response is going to be to us today, and his responses are unpredictable. We may come to a point in the use of the sacred word (which is simply a gesture of our intention, hence an expression of love) where the sacred word drops out of consciousness, and we are more or less aware of a general sense of peace, or of being grasped by God, or of just being restful and quiet. What has happened is that the intentionality renewed again and again by returning to the sacred word has become a habit and repeats itself. When the sacred word

drops away, we enter into a no-man's/no-woman's land in which the action of the Spirit meets the very simplified activity of renewing our intention by means of the sacred symbol. Then we have contemplation in the strict sense of the word. Until then, the Centering Prayer practice is really acquired contemplation, a discipline of not dialoging with the mind, or if the mind keeps thinking, of paying no attention to it. If the attraction of the dialogue becomes absorbing, we return to the sacred word to renew the purity of our original intention, which was to spend this time of prayer with God and to open and surrender to him.

In the Centering Prayer then, purity of intention is the whole focus of the practice. It is a matter of love. That is why it moves us away from our former dependence (conscious or unconscious) on thinking to go to God and making acts to feel that we are doing something to pray. The Spirit now has taken over our activity and prays in us. Our will is mingled with God's will in some mysterious way so that we have a sense of well-being or a conviction of being with God or in God. Sometimes sensible consolation overflows into the body, but it is not required for the fruits of this prayer. Centering Prayer becomes contemplation when the work of the Spirit absorbs our work and takes over. This can eventually be our habitual state of prayer, which is resting in God. We did not get to that state, of course, by our own efforts.

To return to the original objection based on the tradition which says, "Well, you folks may have a good method of contemplation, but we say that the tradition has consistently warned readers that they should not start out at that point." What do you say to that?

That is a significant objection. We are being accused of starting the cure for bad Lectio before we have incurred the disease. I am convinced that one can begin Lectio at any one of the four stages. In fact, some are better off beginning with resting in God precisely because of our cultural conditioning. Lectio is a dynamic process and that's why we emphasize its nature as relationship. The relationship quality of Centering Prayer implies all four levels. If one does not have the first three stages of Lectio worked into one's psyche, Centering Prayer will gently attract the practitioner to fill in the space. Centering Prayer will lead one back to the earlier stages of Lectio because they are an integral part of the whole organic process. We will want to know how we got where we are.

Centering Prayer fits well into the tradition of Lectio. But it fits in at a special place and serves a special purpose. One bishop told me that all his other devotional practices were enhanced when he began to practice Centering Prayer everyday. For the first time he understood why he was doing them and how they fit into the organic development of his spiritual life. In actual fact, Centering Prayer is Lectio in the broad sense of the word. We are just beginning at a place that has not normally been recommended up until now, but we are doing so for good reasons and are getting good results. The tradition of Lectio Divina has always taught that we can go from one level to another even in the same period of mental prayer. Every one of the stages is enhanced if we have accessed the final one. If you could get people to start Centering Prayer, especially intellectuals who will never get to contemplation without disciplining their inclination to reflect, all of the things that they do will become better. Their daily prayer will be more conversational, their reflections will have the unction of the Holy Spirit, and their preaching will touch other people's hearts much more than before. We are talking here about love. This is also what distinguishes Centering Prayer from Eastern methods. Eastern methods are primarily concerned with awareness. Centering Prayer is concerned with divine love.

Centering Prayer is inserted into Lectio to facilitate the developing relationship with Christ from simplified affective prayer to resting in God. It facilitates resting in God which will then send us back to the earlier stages of Lectio, which are important to prepare the faculties and imagination. I am happy to see that I am not the only one who thinks this.

An article by Father Dan O'Hanlon, a distinguished Jesuit who died recently writes, "I made two new discoveries through contact with Asian practice. First, I found that one can move toward the goal of prayer beyond words and concepts without necessarily beginning with words and concepts." That I think is a challenge and an insight from the East that we should seriously take to heart.

The Eastern traditions put greater emphasis on what the self can do and hence contain the innate hazard of identifying the true self with God. The Christian, on the other hand, recognizes God present but

distinct in the true self. In other words, our uniqueness remains and becomes the vehicle for the divine expression which was why we were created: to be one as the Father and the Son are one.

Thus Centering Prayer is not the same as Lectio. The main point of the first lecture in the Introductory workshop is to make sure that people understand, however you go about this, that Centering Prayer comes out of the Christian tradition and supports all the traditional devotions by illuminating their source. Thus it becomes the foundation for a much more fruitful apostolate and of relationships that are truly unselfish with other people, the cosmos, the earth, ourselves, and the Trinity. In other words, Centering Prayer is the Trinity living the divine life within us. It is eminently a Trinitarian prayer and implies the Incarnation, the Divine Indwelling, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Gifts of the Spirit—the great dogmatic teachings that are generally regarded by theologians as the most important principles relating to the spiritual journey. Without denying the others, we do not normally say much about them because the introductory workshops and initial follow-ups are not a theological course. Later on, however, we need to show how the Centering Prayer, under other names and forms, has been expressed in the tradition. “How-to” methods have been clearly delineated in earlier ages. Centering Prayer is a re-expression, in a form best adapted to our time, of the apophatic tradition that begins with Cassian. It is already adumbrated in St. Paul. What the Desert Fathers did was to practice continuous prayer long enough to realize that to persevere required a method. The method that they followed to get to the inner chamber was the repetition of a particular verse like, “O God, come to my assistance.” The original monks intuited the need that a structured life style was not enough for growth in prayer. There had to be added an interior practice.

Centering Prayer is heir to that school of thought. It is not based only on *The Cloud of Unknowing*. I have deliberately added other elements to it. I have drawn from St. Francis DeSales and St. Jane de Chantal the idea of the gentleness with which to return to the sacred word. This is missing in the *Cloud*. St. John of the Cross describes the transition from discursive meditation to contemplation in “The Living Flame of Love” with much valuable advice. Fenelon and DeCaussade also give teaching that is very valuable. Having studied the tradition in much depth over the years, there are elements in our presentation of Centering Prayer that resonate with many of the Christian spiritual classics.

The reason why Centering Prayer is so nuanced is because it is combining what seemed to me to be the thought from the best authors as I understood them, not following too closely one author who is very good in some areas, but a little vague in others. We all start our prayer on the level of dualism, trying to relate to God as Father, lover, bride, etc. All those images are very valuable. My question is in our time whether this is the best way to start out, at least for a number of people. If they have that background that is wonderful. If they do not have it, they still have to put one in. The Centering Prayer proceeds in tandem with Lectio and seeks to assist the process of Lectio in developing one’s relationship with God. Given the organic unity of the whole relational process, our experience is, that once one begins the Centering Prayer, one will be inspired by the Spirit to fill in the earlier stages that will be needed to support it. Touching the place of silence and experiencing the presence of God will prevent us from getting stuck on one of those preparatory levels. It will also move us along more quickly because, having tasted something of the blessed end of the process, one sees the whole process in proper perspective and is aware both of its values and of its disvalues.

My feeling is that if people go to the trouble of coming to an Introductory workshop, they must have been inspired by something. It seems to me that it is the Spirit who is at work. If people are not prepared for the practice, they will just give it up when they go home. These people will not be subject to the unloading of the unconscious and some may wake up to the fact that they may need psychological help.

Contemplative Outreach as a network is a process. This process has to listen to the needs of the people as we continue our pilgrimage into the unknown.

Part 2: Glossary, Bibliography, Anthologies, Scriptures

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Apophatic/kataphatic contemplation – A misleading distinction suggesting opposition between the two; in fact, a proper preparation of the faculties (kataphatic practice) leads to apophatic contemplation, which in turn is sustained through appropriate kataphatic practices.

Apophatic – The exercise of pure faith; resting in God beyond concepts and particular acts, except to maintain a general loving attention to the divine presence.

Kataphatic – The exercise of the rational faculties enlightened by faith: the affective response to symbols, reflection and the use of reason, imagination and memory in order to assimilate the truths of faith.

Attention – The focusing on a particular object such as the breath, an image or a concept.

Awareness – The act of being aware of a particular or general perception; another term for consciousness.

Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-10) – A further development of the Fruits of the Spirit.

Centering Prayer – A contemporary form of Prayer of the Heart, Prayer of Simplicity, Prayer of faith, Prayer of Simple Regard; a method of reducing the obstacles to the gift of contemplative prayer and of facilitating the development of habits conducive to responding to the inspirations of the Spirit.

Consent – An act of the will expressing acceptance of someone, something or some course of action; the manifestation of one's intention.

Contemplation – A synonym for contemplative prayer.

Contemplative living – Activity in daily life prompted by the Gifts of the Spirit; the fruit of a contemplative attitude.

Contemplative prayer – The development of one's relationship with Christ to the point of communing beyond words, thoughts, feelings and the multiplication of particular acts; a process moving from the simplified activity of waiting upon God to the ever-increasing predominance of the Gifts of the Spirit as the source of one's prayer.

Contemplative walk – A slow meditative walk of five to seven minutes recommended when two or more periods of Centering Prayer are held back-to-back. Its purpose is to dissipate the restlessness that may build up as a result of remaining in one position for a longer time than one is used to, and to provide an opportunity to bring the interior peace of contemplative prayer into a simple form of activity.

Divine Union – A term describing a single experience of the union of all the faculties in God or the permanent state of union called transforming union.

Ecstasy – The temporary suspension by the divine action of the thinking and feeling faculties, including at times the external senses, which facilitates the experience of divine union.

Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-24) – nine aspects of the "mind of Christ" manifesting the growth of the divine life in us.

False self – The self developed in our own likeness rather than in the likeness of God; the self image developed to cope with the emotional trauma of early childhood, which seeks happiness in satisfying the instinctual needs of survival/security, affection/esteem and power/control, and which bases its self worth on cultural or group identification.

Gifts of the Spirit

Charismatic Gifts of the Spirit (Corinthians 12:1-13)—Given primarily to encourage the Christian community.

Seven Gifts of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:2)—Habitual dispositions empowering us to perceive and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit both in prayer and action.

Intention—The choice of the will in regard to some goal or purpose.

Interior silence—The quieting of the imagination, feelings, and rational faculties in the process of recollection; the general, loving attentiveness to God in pure faith.

Lectio Divina—Reading or more exactly, listening to the book we believe to be divinely inspired; the most ancient method of developing the friendship of Christ, using scripture texts as topics of conversation with Christ.

Method of contemplative prayer—Any prayer practice that spontaneously evolves or is deliberately designed to free the mind of excessive dependence on thinking to go to God.

Practices spontaneously evolving toward contemplation—Lectio Divina, the Jesus Prayer, veneration of icons, the rosary, and most traditional devotions of the Church rightly used.

Practices deliberately designed to facilitate contemplation:

- **Concentrative**—The Jesus Prayer, mantric practice (constant repetition of a word or phrase); Dom John Main's method of Centering Prayer.
- **Receptive**—Centering Prayer, Prayer of Faith, Prayer of the Heart, Prayer of Simplicity, Prayer of Silence, Prayer of Simple Regard, Active Recollection, Acquired Contemplation.
- On scale of 1 to 10 some practices are more concentrative, others more receptive.

Mystical prayer - A synonym for contemplative prayer.

Mysticism—A synonym for contemplation.

Purification—An essential part of the process of contemplation through which the dark side of one's personality, mixed motivation and the emotional pain of a lifetime stored in the unconscious are gradually evacuated; necessary preparation for transforming union.

Spiritual attentiveness—The general loving attention to the undifferentiated presence of God in pure faith.

Theological virtues—Faith, hope, and love: the three dimensions of the human response to God's self-revelation in Christ.

Thoughts—In the context of the specific method of Centering Prayer, an umbrella term for any perception at all, including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, commentaries, and particular spiritual perceptions.

Transformation (transforming union)—The stable conviction of the abiding presence of God rather than a particular experience or set of experiences; a restructuring of consciousness in which the divine reality is perceived to be present in oneself and in all that is.

True self—The image of God in which every human being is created; our participation in the divine life manifested in our uniqueness.

Ultimate Mystery/Ultimate Reality—The ground of infinite potentiality and actualization; a term emphasizing the divine transcendence.

Unloading the unconscious—The coming to awareness of previously unconscious emotional material from early childhood in the form of primitive feelings or a barrage of images, especially during the time of prayer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & ANTHOLOGIES

Some Classic Sources

Cassian, John. Conferences. In Western asceticism, selected, translated, and introduced by Owen Chadwick. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958. *See especially the first conference, in which this fifth-century monk develops his understanding of contemplation, and the ninth and tenth conferences, in which he deals explicitly with ways of praying.*

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works. Translated into modern English by Clifton Wolters. Hammondsport and New York: Penguin Books, 1978.

St. John of the Cross. The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. Washington, D.C: ICS Publications. 1979. *On the signs for discerning the beginnings of contemplative prayer, see especially The Ascent of Mount Carmel, book 2 chapter 13-14, and The Dark Night, book 1, chapter 9-10.*

St. Teresa of Avila. The Interior Castle. In The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, vol. 2. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 1980.

Some Modern Authors

Hall, Thelma. Too Deep for Words. New York: Paulist, 1989.

Johnston, William. The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing. Trabuco Canyon, Calif.: Source Books, 1987.

Keating, Thomas. Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel. Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1991.

– The Mystery of Christ, *ibid*, 1991.

Main, John. The Way of Unknowing. New York: Crossroad, 1990.

Maloney, George A. Prayer of the Heart, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1981.

May, Gerald. Will and Spirit, New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

McGinn, Bernard. The Foundation of Mysticism: A History of Western Christian Mysticism, vol. I, New York: Crossroads, 1991.

Merton, Thomas. Contemplative Prayer, New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1971.

– New Seeds of Contemplation, Rev. ed. New York: New Directions, 1972.

Anthologies

Ware, Timothy. The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology, Salem, NH: Faber & Faber, 1966.

Wiseman, James A. and Dupre, Louis. Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism, New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Bibliography compiled June 17, 1992.

SCRIPTURES WHICH ALLUDE TO CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

NOTE TO PRESENTERS: NAB—New American Bible, 1986; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version, 1991

Psalm 46:10	“Be still and know that I am God.” (NRSV)
Isaiah 30:15	“...In quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” (NRSV)
Romans 8:26	“...The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.” (NAB)
Galatians 4:9	“Now, however, that you know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back...” (NRSV)
Psalm 37:7	“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him... (NRSV)
Psalm 42:7	“Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts (waterfalls); all your waves and billows have gone over me.” (NRSV)
Psalm 62:1	“For God Alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation.” (NRSV)
Psalm 63:1	“Oh God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” (NRSV)
Psalm 131:2	“But I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child. Like a weaned child on its mother’s lap, (so is my soul within& me.)” (NAB)
1 Corinthians 2:9	“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (NRSV)
1 Corinthians 3:16	“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (NAB)
Matthew 12:38-40	“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.’ But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.” (NRSV)
2 Corinthians 3:6	“...The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (NRSV)
Ephesians 3:8	“To me,...this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ.” (NAB)
Ephesians 3:16-20	“In accord with the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self (the true self) and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you... may have strength to comprehend...what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge, (experiencing Christ beyond concepts) so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (mystical union)...To Him Who is able to accomplish far more than we ask or imagine, by the power working in us...” (NAB)
Philippians 3:13	“I...do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: Forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit...” (NAB)
Philippians 4:7	“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (NRSV)

Colossians 1:27	"...God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, in the hope of glory." (NRSV)
Colossians 2:2-3	"...their hearts may be encouraged as they are brought together in love, to have all the richness of fully assured understanding for the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (NAB)
Colossians 3:2-4	"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory." (NRSV)
Colossians 3:9-11	"...seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator...Christ is all and is in all." (NRSV)
Hebrews 4:10-11	"For those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest..." (NRSV)
Hebrews 11:1	"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (NRSV)
2 Corinthians 3:18	"All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the spirit." (NAB)
Hosea 2:16	"So I am going to lure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart." (NAB)
Isaiah 65:24	"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." (NRSV)
Wisdom 6:13-16	"Wisdom...hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate. To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care, because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought." (NRSV)
Wisdom 7:24	"For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; because of her pureness she pervades and penetrates all things." (NRSV)
Wisdom 18:14-15	"For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was not half gone, your all-powerful Word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land..." (NRSV)
Psalms 27:14	"Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord." (NAB)
Psalms 33:20	"Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and shield." (NRSV)
Psalms 62:1, 5	"For God alone my soul waits in silence; from Him comes my salvation. For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from Him." (NRSV)
Ecclesiastes 3:11	"He has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timelessness into our hearts, without men discovering...the work which God has done." (NAB)
Ecclesiastes 4:6	"Better is a handful of quiet than two handfuls with toil and a chasing after wind." (NRSV)
Isaiah 30:15	"...In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength." (NRSV)

Isaiah 40:31	"But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (NRSV)
Isaiah 55:6	"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." (NRSV)
Matthew 6:6	"Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (NRSV)