

Divine Message in a Spider Web
By Vicky Cheney

In nature, there is a balance you can't see. Your eyes can glimpse a snapshot of exquisite beauty and order. I see a motion picture. Have you ever seen a spider seemingly suspended in air? If you change your vantage point and walk around the spider, a ray of sunshine can reveal the spider is posed in the middle of a majestic web of ever-expanding circles. The spider had attached a thread emitted from its body, weaved its web and anchored it to another plant. The spider in all its glory expressed its design and purpose. The spider, like an aerialist balancing on a high wire, holds its grip even as the wind blows.



How long will your creative energy sleep, hiding in the darkness, unseen, unread? Express your master design; spin the threads of uniqueness that are inside of you, outward and into the world. Expect your expression to be visible only to those people who view life from the vantage point of My light. Most people focus on themselves and on the destination of their own preconceived journeys. If they fail to pause, look up from their footsteps, walk around their present circumstances, they can miss seeing a panoramic movie of My creation.

Remember you are made resilient like the spider. The spider knows its mission and trusts its innate ability to carry out its mission to completion. It knows instinctively its fibers can withstand a down pour of rain. It knows it contains within itself a copious supply of provisions. When you, like the spider express your unique design, I shine through you. And those who choose to see get a glimpse of Me.

When you feel alone, and think you are suspended in mid-air over the path of life, remember the spider. Nothing can harm the spider, even a break in the web. I hold you and your loved ones, in the invisible palms of My hands, secure like the spider, cradled in the center of its web.

Father Bill Sheehan talks of "Electrifying Moments"
At North Palm Beach POST INTENSIVE RETREAT
By Donna Davis



The reading from II Kings told of King Josiah, who had the newly recovered Torah read aloud to all the people of Jerusalem, and renewed the covenant between God and his people. Fr. Bill called this recovery of the lost Torah an "electrifying moment." He went on to say that we are living our spirituality currently in an "electrifying moment." We are witnessing the retrieval of the ancient sources of our spirituality – the Scripture.

Fifty-one years ago, the Vatican II Council, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, restored the Word of God to its rightful place, a position of centrality in the Church, identifying the two-fold source of our spiritual growth as the Eucharist and the Word. Through the Holy Spirit, we have experienced unanimously throughout the world a resurgence of the willingness of people to study the Word of God. There was a Synod of Bishops in Rome whose theme was, "The Word of God is the Mission of the Church." It lasted 3-4 weeks, and various Fathers were given 2-3 minutes each to address the synod. There was a world-wide enthusiasm for the promotion of Lectio Divina. Benedict XVI stated that "it will be the retrieval of Lectio Divina embraced by the People of God which will become a new springtime of the Church."

This was an "electrifying moment." We are The People of God! We are The Renewal. It springs forth from each of us. **Renewal has always been from the grassroots up, never from the top down.**

The source through which this retrieval comes is our personal and communal commitment to Lectio Divina. We personally begin to put on the mind and the heart of Christ. We're not primarily a political or sociological body. **We are a transformative community that seeks to bring the love of God into the heart of the world.** The only way we are sustained and inspired in that experience is our willingness to listen and absorb, and to manifest that Word.

Another transformative moment, perhaps a bit less exuberant – occurred in 1972-73, when Abbot Thomas Keating and all the other Cistercian monk abbots throughout the world gathered at chapter in Rome, as they do every 6 years, to discuss their quality of life and exchange ideas. Blessed Paul VI addressed them, and made this request: "Will you help the Church to recover the contemplative dimension of the Gospel?"

Fr. Thomas Keating returned to St. Joseph monastery in Spencer, Mass, and gathered the monks together, expressing Pope Paul VI's appeal to the enclosed men and women through the Church to help in this endeavor. This is how the Holy Spirit works.

Fr. William Meninger was among the monks at that gathering, and he raised his hand and shared, "I have a practice." He explained that he shared this practice with many people who came to him for advice and spiritual direction. He had discovered it in the *Cloud of Unknowing*.

As a result of this discussion, Fathers Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington and William Meninger began to draw the simple stages which we have come to accept as the practice of Centering Prayer. That is how this "electrifying moment" began to unfold - through a simple request of a shepherd leader to a group of simple monks throughout the world. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. Sheehan emphasized the importance of BOTH of these two practices, Centering Prayer, and Lectio Divina, being embraced. "It's BOTH/AND, not EITHER/OR. This is how we become a part of the Renewal and servants of the Spirit. It is only through the desire to serve that we're going to make any difference. It is not a power play." Pope Francis' image of the Church is that it's a field hospital, which goes out to find the wounded, seeking to heal, through mercy, love and compassion. The two transformative practices we are invited to integrate into our lives are Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. It is an electrifying moment. WORK THE PROGRAM. The Holy Spirit wants our willingness to consent to being a part of the process, to be an agent of healing, to be an agent of forgiveness, humbly accepting one another as God's beloved children. No one is excluded. This electrifies my heart, as I hope it electrifies yours. It is not a burden. It's living the Life and the Energy that comes forth from the generosity of God.



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

COCFL Pre-Advent
Silent Retreat
Fr. Carl Arico
Canterbury Retreat Center
Oviedo, Nov. 4-6, 2016

Fr Bill Sheehan Workshop
On Kathleen Dowling, the
Grace of Aging
St Catherine Sienna,
Clearwater, Oct. 1, 2016

Three Day Retreat
with Father Bill Sheehan
North Palm Beach,
Jan. 6-8, 2017

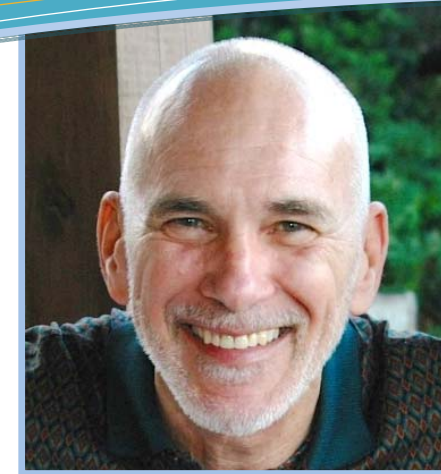
COCFL Pre-Lent Event
Katherine Dowling Singh
The Grace of Aging
St George Episcopal Church
The Villages, Feb. 11, 2017

Father Meninger
Santa Maria Del Mar
Flagler Beach,
March 18-22, 2017

COCFL Spring Event
Maru Ladron Guevara
CP and Contemplation
Brevard County
April 29, 2017

Check the COCFL website
for more information to
come at www.cocfl.org

COCFL Mission:
Support Central Florida
Centering Prayer Groups
and their members to
foster the process of
transformation in Christ
in one another through the
practice of Centering
Prayer.



A Word from Nestor de Armas,
COCFL Coordinator

I can't wait to see what God has in store for us next year," was the closing sentence of our Newsletter's *Words from the Coordinator* last May. Today, I am delighted to share with you some of what God has in store for us this coming year.

June 27th, our Servant Leadership Team and our Event/Retreat Service Team met at the Villages to discern next year's programs. After a time of Centering Prayer, we reaffirmed the purpose of our Event/Retreat programs: to facilitate transformation in Christ, intensify our Centering Prayer practice, develop a sense of community, and increase our knowledge of the practice of Centering Prayer

After a thorough discussion, we arrived at a consensus on the following programs:

Contemplative Outreach
of Central Florida

August 2016

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

- **Pre-Advent Silent Retreat:** Fr. Carl Arico, November 4-6, at Canterbury Retreat Center in Oviedo. Fr. Carl is one of the founding members of Contemplative Outreach. The topic will be the application of Centering Prayer in our ordinary, daily life.
- **Pre-Lent Event:** Katherine Dowling Singh, Saturday, February 11th in The Villages. Katherine is a nationally recognized author and spiritual growth mentor. Her books are some of the favorite titles purchased by many of you through our book ministry. The topic will be "The Grace in Aging: Awaken As You Grow Older."
- **Spring Event:** Maru Ladron de Guevara. Saturday, April 29th in Brevard County. Maru, well known and loved by many in our Chapter, is a Contemplative Outreach commissioned presenter. This will be a day of emphasis on Centering Prayer and contemplation.

Mark your calendars and register early to enjoy these spiritual banquets!
Blessings

Santa Maria Del Mar

By Gwen Robertson

Nurturing and Support Service Team



From left to right standing: Marilou Mallada, Joan Harris, Sharon Corso, Honor O'Reilly, Joan Hanvey, Ruth Wallace, and Don Gregg
Sitting, left to right: Pam Gregg, Beth Tatto, Linda Kelly, Susan McBride

The church of St Maria del Mar in Flagler Beach was my visit last month and what a visit it was! Their CP group is the further most northern area of our COCFL area. They welcomed me and made me feel at home for prayer, information and the teaching of the day. As the group is large, they combine for prayer and break into two groups for the topics of the day's teaching and newcomers to CP, taking care of each member's needs for furthering development on the contemplative journey. All of the joy in their group is evident in their faces in the picture! Thank you so much for your friendship and hospitality! As this is a final visit for me, I would like to thank Dan for all his support and insights for our Nurturing and Service Team. Denise Hall was an inspiration in the founding and organizing of this Service Team. There were many others who contributed support and help along the way. Our chapter's mission is to foster transformation in Christ through Centering Prayer. I hope we contributed in that effort.

Author Nan C. Merrill's words in Psalm 109.... "O, Giver of the journey, Companion me along the way; then I will recognize Your face in each one I meet."

Blessings to all from Gwen

Sharing and Inspiring:

If you have books or DVDs on Centering Prayer you would like to share, please contact Maryann Blaubach at maryann501@aol.com or Dan Wagner at dwagner119@gmail.com

The Ember

By Susan McBride, Flagler Beach

Deep within me burns an ember.
Precious beyond measure,
a pearl beyond price.

And yet, for much of my life
it has remained
silently hidden,
unnoticed and unknown.

But all the while
the ember's glow
has created in me a thirst
for a God I longed to know.
I thought – if only I could
find God,
the thirst would be
quenched.

So I worked
and I prayed
and I tried
very hard
to connect with a God
who I thought was out
there,
just out of reach.
I searched –
for answers,
for "right" beliefs,
for experiences,
for proof!
I went to church.
I followed teachers
and preachers.
I joined groups
and studies.
I read books,
attended seminars and
retreats.
I did everything I could
to satisfy my thirst for God.

Meanwhile,
through it all
deep within me
the ember glowed,
patiently entombed –
and waiting.

Finally my journey brought
me
to a dark and dry
and lonely place,

my busy search dissolved
into tears of frustration and
discouragement,
disappointment and sadness,
confusion and anger –
Where was God?
Why couldn't I find Him?
Where should I go?

It was then that
the invitation came.
I am really not sure from
where.
A quiet and gentle whisper I
heard only in my heart
said,
"Come – sit with me."
I ignored the invitation.
But the loneliness only grew.

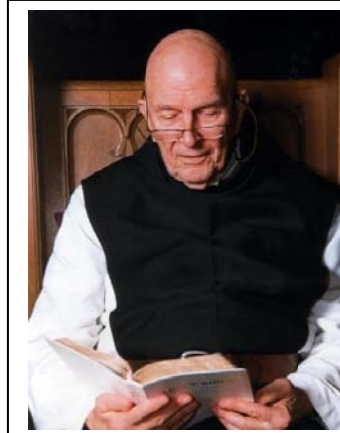
Finally,
I went to the chair
and I sat.
I brought with me all my
sadness and my
disappointment,
all my longings and my
frustration,
my hurt and my anger
and my loneliness.
I brought all that I thought
about me
and all that I thought about
God.
And I laid it all down – at the
chair –
and I sat.

I sat as my thoughts
bombarded me.
I sat when I really wanted to
get up and leave.
I sat when my mind told me
this was stupid.
I sat in spite of my "self."

And something began to
happen.
Not in the chair –
but in me.
No longer am I driven by thirst.
Instead, I am being drawn by
love.
A LOVE that is alive.
A LOVE whose breath fans the
ember
of divine life that glows within

me.
A LOVE whose presence is
birthing
compassion,
understanding,
acceptance,
forgiveness,
love for my neighbor,
a yearning for unity,
a reverence for beauty,
a respect for
and responsibility for
all of creation
and
a growing awareness that all
ground
is sacred ground.

For all my trying and
working and praying –
it is out of my surrender
that God is revealing His life –
not out there,
but in here –
an ember ignited,
burning forth from
where it has been all the time.



St. Teresa of Avila wrote: "All difficulties in prayer can be traced to one cause: praying as if God were absent." This is the conviction that we bring with us from early childhood and apply to everyday life and to our lives in general. It gets stronger as we grow up, unless we are touched by the Gospel and begin the spiritual journey. This journey is a process of dismantling the monumental illusion that God is distant or absent.

---THOMAS KEATING

RETREAT AT OUR LADY OF FLORIDA

by Donna Davis, Beverly Hills Florida



Fr. Bill Sheehan, Basha Perez, and Dr. Rickey Cotton, who joined the team on short notice because Barbara Reitburg became ill, led about 30 participants in a week of profound rest and spiritual renewal at Our Lady of Florida monastery in North Palm Beach from June 18th to 23rd. Fr. Bill compelled us through his irresistible persuasion, to value "being" above "doing" during this retreat experience, specifically asking that we refrain from reading, use of electronic devices such as our cell phones, and even journaling, thus providing space for God's transformative work to be maximized.

The week was characterized by remarkable respect for each other's solitude as we sat in 4 hour-long prayer sessions per day, enjoyed plentiful and tasty cuisine, and strolled through the peaceful grounds, all in silence.

Fr. Bill, who will celebrate his 80th birthday this month, shared the wealth of his knowledge and experience with us each day as we gathered to be nourished and united by the Eucharist in the grace-filled contemplative style Mass. I found one homily to be particularly memorable, as he described the origins of Contemplative Outreach, dating back to the Trappist Monks being commissioned by Pope Paul VI to renew the contemplative dimension of the Gospel for the laity. He enjoined us to recognize this as one of two "electrifying moments" in our recent history, the other being Vatican II. [This comparison was made in the context of the Old Testament account of King Josiah having the newly-discovered Law of Moses read to his entire nation, and reestablishing their covenant with God as his people.]

This was a dual-track retreat. Those with previous experience of long retreats were "post-intensive," and enjoyed a bit more silence, with a monastic Lectio Divina exercise led by Rickey Cotton each morning, while first-timers, whose retreat is dubbed "intensive," were treated to a daily conference by Fr. Bill. Many of us on the post-intensive track slipped in to soak up some of Fr. Bill's wisdom after our Lectio Divina experience.

It is truly a privilege to be able to avail ourselves of a retreat in Florida, which is more affordable and doesn't require air transportation for the most part. Whatever the expense of retreat, which always seems to be such a significant consideration beforehand, once I arrive and sit for the first communal experience of centering prayer, I say to myself, "Each of these people has consented to pray with me and the financial cost is small compared to the spiritual benefit!" In bringing together our cumulative years of immersion in silence, we not only gain greater access to God's transformative action, but transmit it to the world. The image comes to mind of a fiery arrow being launched into the tinder of humanity. And the challenge is to remain faithful to the practice upon returning home, to preserve the space for God that has been hewn out in our lives, to increase the likelihood that "being" is the source of our "doing."



Explore and Learn

By Dan Wagner
Mount Dora

Our cocfl.org web site is filled with information you can use to advance your spiritual life while you are in the car, waiting in line or on a walk or run. New or exploring what the guidelines to centering prayer are? Click on the web site at "Centering Prayer" and there is information on Centering and Contemplative Prayer as well as an 8 minute video of Father Thomas Keating giving the guidelines for Centering Prayer that you can listen to anytime. A page includes information on [Contemplative Outreach.org](http://ContemplativeOutreach.org), and a link to their web site about the Theological Principles of Contemplative Outreach.

So how can you listen on the go? Go to the web site audio/video archive and click on Welcoming Prayer and it has 5 separate recordings of 50 minutes each of Mary Dwyer presenting that is over 4 hours long in total.

So plug in your headphones or plug in to your car speakers, push play and go for a treadmill walk, or a peaceful drive in the country while you are being inspired.

I was particularly surprised by the fifteen page book on the practice by Cherry Haisten on the page and the link to ContemplativeOutreach.org on Welcoming, and a link to CO's pamphlet on Welcoming.

Stay connected:

Website:
www.cocfl.org

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/cocfl.org/>