



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

**St. Hildegard of Bingen:
A Woman for Our Times**
with
Sr. Mary McGehee, OSB
Saturday, April 21, 2018
St. Gabriel's Episcopal
Church
414 Pine Street
Titusville, FL 32796
8:30 AM – 3:00 PM
Cost: \$35
Bring your own lunch
Registration Deadline:
April 14, 2018

SAVE THE DATE

COCFL Annual Retreat
with
Fr. Martin Laird
Author of
Into the Silent Land
November 2 – 4, 2018
Canterbury Retreat Center
1601 Alafaya Trail
Oviedo, Florida



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



**Contemplative
Outreach
of Central Florida**

April 2018

COCFL website: cocfl.org

A Word from Nestor de Armas: What Serving as Coordinator Has Meant to Me

Saturday, October 11, 2014, I got up early and drove up to Daytona Beach. I was looking forward to a time of contemplative fellowship in my first ever Visioning Day. Kathy Kotas, our Coordinator at that time, had asked each member of the Servant Leadership Team to enter into prayerful discernment about serving as Coordinator for the next three years. I did as she asked. I arrived at Visioning Day relaxed in the conviction my call was to serve with Susan Komis in Contemplative Outreach's National Facilitator Support and Enrichment Service Team.

Imagine how I must have felt when someone in the assembly nominated me. I did not immediately decline because I felt that after all the nominations were in, I would simply express my discernment not to serve as Chapter Coordinator. Well, to my shock no one else was nominated! I was deeply disturbed. I felt particularly inadequate since I had worked with COCFL for less than a year. Besides, what was I going to do about working with the national Service Team? I wanted to decline but I kept asking myself, "Who am I to tell these people I won't serve?" It felt arrogant for me to do so. So, I mumbled a very awkward acceptance. I begged anyone who spoke to me, "Please pray for me!"

What have these three years meant for me? They have been FUN ... JOYFUL! I have learned six lessons I would like to share with you.

1. I have learned that joyful contemplative service can only spring from a deep commitment to Centering Prayer.
2. I have learned the "means" are more important than the "ends." That is to say, how we treat each other as we serve is WAY MORE IMPORTANT than whatever we think we may be accomplishing through our service.
3. I have learned to do what I promised to do and leave the outcome to God.
4. I have learned that if a person feels I owe them an apology, I should, without hesitation, offer a sincere apology and ask for their forgiveness.

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A Look Back: An Introduction to Centering Prayer

If you have yet to attend “An Introduction to Centering Prayer” workshop, you might wonder, “What is the attraction?”

Here’s a look back at the March, 3, 2018 “Introduction to Centering Prayer” workshop at St. Gabriel’s Church in Titusville. About thirty people learned about and shared Centering Prayer in a relaxed, welcoming, “come as you are” setting that day.

The presenters, Nestor de Armas, Sheryl Hirshey and Liz Lefevre were genuine, engaging and well prepared. Participants had three opportunities throughout the day to practice CP together as a group.

The four main topics for the day were:

Prayer as Relationship – Opening our hearts and minds to God

Centering Prayer – Both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

Discovering Inner Silence – Letting go of normal pre-occupations of the mind; giving our consent to be still and allow God to reveal his presence.

Deepening our Relationship with God – Staying with the CP process purifies our motivations, and obstacles to our relationship with God are gradually reduced.

Sound interesting? Hope to see you there next time!

-- Susan Arneson,

An Introduction: COCFL New Co-coordinators Dan Wagner & Jesse Fox



A Word from Dan Wagner

The seed of my growth into Centering Prayer started with the 1988 birth of my son that led me to begin the return to my faith. In 1991, I began to practice Centering Prayer as I went with great interest to St. Benedict’s school where they began offering daily Christian Centering Prayer sessions and retreats with facilitator Sr. Jean Lavin, O.S.B.

In 2006 I began going to prayer at the House of Prayer in Erie, Pennsylvania and to retreats sponsored by the Erie branch of Contemplative Outreach. There I met Fr. Keating and was the recipient of a personal interview with him that I will always cherish.

On the horizon in June I will attend a retreat in St. Louis presented by Susan Rush and Susan Komis entitled: Deepening the Contemplative Dimension of Servant Leadership. I look to learn more about Centering Prayer with a focus on how to advance in our collective and individual transformation in Christ.

In our COCFL November retreat with Fr. Martin Laird, author of “Into the Silent Land,” we have an opportunity to learn about the Desert Fathers and Mothers and the contemplative vision that spans hundreds of years.

I look forward to serving as a co-coordinator for Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida for the next three years and to this wonder-filled opportunity. Peace and blessings to us all!

A Word from Jesse Fox



It is an honor to be serving the Central Florida Chapter of Contemplative Outreach over the next three years. My journey to this place began many years ago as a child of a pastor and missionaries. Though I never had the word “contemplation” in my vocabulary, with the perspective of my adult years I now realize that much of my energy was trying to be in that sacred space or return to it! It wasn’t until later after working through the writings of St. John of the Cross and Fr. Thomas Keating that I found a clearer vision and method to what that is. I have been able to blend the personal and professional over the years, as a counselor and professor. I am able to teach and incorporate the principles of Centering Prayer into my work. But the greatest fulfillment I have is learning to grow closer to the Divine life within us; working through the mystery of the Trinity in my life and in everyone I meet.

My hope for this Chapter of Contemplative Outreach would be to continue growing in our intimacy with the infinite love of God, through the practice of Centering Prayer, and that we would honor the legacy of many great leaders who have taken the chapter to where it is today. I truly hope that we will be able to expand our connection to more diverse groups, especially with young adults, who would benefit as I have from connecting with God through gift of contemplation.

United In Prayer Day
March 17, 2018
Dedicated to Healing Our Violence

*Blessed are the peacemakers
for they will be recognized as children of God.*
- Matthew 5: 9



"The commitment to the spiritual journey is not a commitment to pure joy, but to taking responsibility for the whole human family. We are not our own; we belong to everyone else."

These were just a few of Fr. Thomas Keating's words of wisdom that we pondered as we came together to observe the 26th annual United in Prayer Day dedicated to Healing our Violence.

The Centering Prayer group that meets at Epiphany Church welcomed several prayer group members from the Volusia and Flagler areas to spend time in prayer, lectio, and sharing thoughts, questions and views on the subject of violence.

We viewed the *"Frustrations Caused by the Emotional Programs"* video by Fr. Thomas where he reminds us that motivation to change is everything in the Christian faith, and that even though the human condition programs us for human misery and is the cause of every problem, we are meant for Divine union and this union is human health.

Fr. Keating states in his book *The Mystery of Christ* that *"...the power of the stars is nothing compared to the energy of a person whose will has been freed from the false-self system and...is thus enabled to co-create the cosmos together with God."* These were wonderful and encouraging words to end our day of prayer and to renew our commitment to return again and again to our chairs.
-- Kathy Kotas

Our sincere thanks goes to Elmer and Sharon Seifert for hosting the United in Prayer Day at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Apopka. The warm hospitality and generous sharing of a lovely breakfast was so kind in addition to their service as facilitators.

My thanks goes to Contemplative Outreach for encouraging all prayer groups to join together in prayer for this occasion. We are all participating in changing the world by our commitment to Centering Prayer.

-Liz Lefevre

A Word from Nestor de Armas
(Continued from Page 1)

5. I have learned that the forgiveness I offer a person I feel owes me an apology liberates me from the obsessive tyranny of my self-esteem.
6. I have learned that prayer transforms relationships. If I pray for you daily, it fundamentally changes the way I relate to you. And if you know I am praying for you daily, it changes the way you relate to me.

Your prayers and encouragement over the last three years have blessed me. I am deeply grateful for the dedication and love of our Servant Leadership Team and that God has provided Dan and Jesse to lead us into the future. I confidently and joyfully look forward to watching our Chapter become everything that God has in mind for us to be.

NEWSLETTER MISSION:

Our mission is to increase communication between COCFL Centering Prayer Groups through news, direction to resources, Q&A, personal sharing, in an informal way, creating in the process a stronger connection between all our members. It is the prayer of the Servant Leadership Group that this endeavor will serve as support for better understanding, and an increase in spiritual desire and importance of the Centering Prayer goals.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE GOOD NEWS DAILY

By Nestor De Armas

Friday, Psalm 142

When my spirit is faint, you know my way. (v.3)

It's early. The last remnant of the cool night air scampers away from the early morning light as I slip through the chapel door to practice Centering Prayer. Soft chants are gently dancing on the chapel's vaults. Votive flames flicker on icon faces and altar cloths. Golden lights shimmer on the dark brown pew. I settle into its soft cushion and feel its smooth hard wood. Gently, I fill my lungs ... exhale ... relax. After a while, the music diminishes into silence. Like a rolling ocean wave, a deep and gentle gong crescendos out, then settles back into the silence. I accept its invitation and follow it into physical ... emotional ... mental Silence. Ever so slowly, the chatter in my mind becomes irrelevant then subsides. Flashes of deep and quiet intimacy spring into my consciousness like heat lightning on a moonless night. I am Known. Time stops ... the gong signals the end of this very special time. The chants resume their vaulted dance. I rise into the ordinariness of life renewed ... refreshed ... alive. 2 Samuel 19:24-43; Psalm 140; Acts 24:24-25:12; Mark 12:35-44

A Day of Practice: Perspective on February 10, 2018 A Prayer for Living ~ A Prayer for Dying Centering Prayer Retreat Day



My first thought when I read the schedule for our day at Central Baptist Church in Daytona Beach on February 10, 2018 was that this was going to be an “experiential” retreat. After two back-to-back 20-minute Centering Prayer sessions separated by a Contemplative Awareness Walk, Susan Rush began her presentation. Her gentle charm and lively wit made it apparent at the onset that although we would be talking about a weighty topic, the connection between Centering Prayer and the process of dying, what she had to share with us was very much focused on transformed living.

Susan shared with us how the surrender that we practice in Centering Prayer is a prelude to the surrender that we face in death. She said, “Every spiritual tradition tells us to make dying our teacher.” We viewed a portion of a video by Fr. Thomas Keating titled “The Gift of Life: Death & Dying, Life & Living, Judgment & Mercy.”

We closed the morning session with a prayer walk to the sanctuary and another 20-minute session of Centering Prayer. Susan invited us to enter into a “Silent Hermit’s Lunch” where there would be no conversation during the meal, an opportunity to practice solitude in community. It was a very different experience to be completely present to the food I was eating without the distraction of conversation.

We began the afternoon session with a time of chanting followed by some movements to get us more in touch with our bodies. After another back-to-back pair of 20-minute Centering Prayer sessions and a Contemplative Awareness Walk we settled in for Susan’s closing comments. Susan shared that there are five regrets that seem to be fairly common among those she has encountered in hospice and facing death. They are:

1. I was not true to myself.
2. I worked too hard.
3. I did not express my real feelings.
4. I wish I had stayed in touch.
5. I wish I had let myself be happier.

She suggested that we make a “Contemplative Bucket List” and ask ourselves, “Am I current with all my loved ones?” “Is there anything I need to say?” “Is there anything I need to hear?”

Susan left us with the thought that both Centering Prayer and ultimately the dying process lead us toward an “ego-ectomy” so that our real self, hidden with Christ in God, might be revealed. Her parting words were: “Do your practice as if your life depended on it – because it does”! Amen! -- Susan McBride