



# COCFL News

## NEWSLETTER MISSION STATEMENT

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 leadership circle's prayer that this endeavor will serve as support for better understanding, and increase in spiritual desire and importance of the centering prayer goals.

## CONTACT US WITH YOUR NEWS!

Please send us information about your group history, news of interest, photos, questions, or sharing, as well as special events planned in your area. Please help find a name for our newly created newsletter. Email to Alma Garcia [ajg810@yahoo.com](mailto:ajg810@yahoo.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This newsletter is the result of a concerted effort by members who have supported it through submission of articles, ideas and technical support. We thank them and thank especially the Holy Spirit that has guided us along.



## Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

Issue 2

**January 2015**

[www.COCFL.org](http://www.COCFL.org)

## A word from Kathy Kotas, COCFL Coordinator

Dear Friends,

I recently attended the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Day of Prayer in New Smyrna Beach, which is held the second Saturday of January each year. Our afternoon Lectio Divina was the familiar text whereby the Lord reminds us through Isaiah that "my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways." Some of the attendees shared that they were very grateful indeed that their thoughts and ways were not the Lord's!

What a blessed relief, and a wonderful gift to sit in our chair and consent to the letting go of our thoughts twice a day.

Perhaps this is where God's thoughts gradually penetrate our very spirit at its deepest level, beyond our faculties to perceive such healing. If we are called to put on the mind, and **attitudes** of Christ (Philippians 2:5), and become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), then surely silence is the gateway to this gradual transformation in Christ.

May this new year increase our capacity to love, and may the attitudes and dispositions of the Christ also be ours, so that we may be a peaceful and healing presence in the world.

With gratitude,

Kathy Kotas



*Kathy Kotas followed Basha Perez's footsteps by being discerned as COCFL Co-Coordinator in 2009. Kathy lives in Daytona Beach, FL and has been involved with the Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida since 2002. As coordinator, Kathy, along with the leadership team, has helped to provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment for those seeking the contemplative path in their spiritual journey. She will be succeeded as COCFL Coordinator by Nestor de Armas in April 2015.*

# Fr. Keating on Centering Prayer

Fr. Keating tells a story of a nun who came up to him after centering prayer and said, "This prayer is not for me. I had a thousand thoughts and had to say my sacred word a thousand times." Fr. Keating replied, "How wonderful! Every time you said your sacred word, you were saying 'yes' to God."

**"The fundamental purpose of prayer, including the prayer of petition, is not to get something from God or to change God, but to change ourselves. We pray in order to give ourselves to God."**

**"The theological background of Centering Prayer, as in all methods leading to Contemplative Prayer, is the indwelling Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The focus of Centering Prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. It tends to build communities of faith and bond the members together in mutual friendship and love."**

*"When you want to pray,  
go to your inner room,  
close the door, and pray  
to your Father in secret.  
And your Father who  
sees in secret will reward  
you."*

Matthew 6:6

## St. Patrick's Centering Prayer Group



### St. Patrick's Centering Prayer in Mt. Dora Soon Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

As founding member Kay Hill shares, "A group is very important. It seems strange for such a private prayer, but it is certainly true for many." We thank God for all who agree and who have brought us through the years.

Our history begins with the first Introductory Workshop at St. Paul's in Leesburg on September 31, 1995. The presenters were Julio and Basha Perez, Helen Williamson, and Pat Maroney. Since then, five Introductory Workshops have been held. Many participants have learned about Centering Prayer. Some stayed. Some left. In the early years, groups met at the homes of Helen Williamson, Gail Larkin, Kay Hill, Mary Ann Blaubach and Mary Ricci. For a year the group met at the Baptist Church in Mt. Dora. When the new church was finished, the group began meeting in the Children's Liturgy Room, which continues to be our meeting place. We are grateful to Fr. Emile Gentile and Fr. Robert D'Aversa for being so supportive of Contemplative Prayer at St. Patrick.

Our first Facilitator, Helen Williamson, was followed by Mary Ann Blaubach. Currently we have a Wednesday morning group that meets after the 9:00 a.m. Mass, facilitated by Dan Wagner, and a Thursday group on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., facilitated by Liz Lefevre. Membership has grown to as many as seventeen; however, we find that when only two gather, the door is always open. As Fr. Menninger says, "the whole universe is a different place when you have a room where the group has prayed together."

Founded by Mary Ann and Kay Hill, St. Patrick's Centering Prayer group began the Centering Prayer Prison Ministry at Coleman Federal Prison. Kay Hill continues the outreach to the State Prison. In February 2014, we hosted Christophany by Panikkar, presented by Rickey Cotton. Over 100 people participated in that event. We are grateful to offer our support to all events at St. Patrick, joining the other parish ministries in serving the parish.

This comment by Kay Hill echoes the sentiment of us all on the power of Centering Prayer. "I have no doubt the prayer does what it is supposed to do – transform. I cannot think of a thing about which my attitude has not changed, often in a major way, and it goes on happening."



# El Camino de Santiago - Le Chemin de St Jacques - The Way of St. James

by Veronique Sallin



Last June, my husband and I, together with my brother and his wife, realized our longtime dream to walk part of the Way to Santiago. We chose to walk one of the four historical routes, the “Via Podiensis,” starting in Le Puy, near Lyon, France. With only seven days to dedicate to our walk, and walking six hours a day, we covered 200 of the 1600 km (1000 miles) leading to Santiago, Spain. The Pilgrimage starts with the traditional mass at the Le Puy Cathedral, where pilgrims from all over the world are reminded of the spirit of the Way: to show kindness and assistance to others and to travel with Christ, as the disciples did on the way to Emmaus.

The path struck us not only by its natural beauty, its safety and cleanliness, but also by the hospitality of the local population in these remote areas of France, where life is lived with simplicity, generosity and abundance of time. We soon found ourselves walking mostly in silence, in sheer contemplation. Our perception of nature deepened as we went, and marveled at the magnificent landscapes and God’s many living creatures. Along the way, quaint villages, churches, statues and crosses reminded us that the way has been travelled by God’s seekers for thousands of years.

After several days, the Way began to reveal its teachings. The Way serves as the ultimate metaphor for the life journey. We learn to accept what comes (hills, slopes, rain or shine) and simply focus on our walking. God, Nature, the Way and Relationships with other pilgrims become the center of all. There are no distractions, no stress, no news, and no expectations. We are just there living in the present moment, in the essential. What a training for contemplative life! I could see right there that this is the real thing. This is how life can and should be, free from our needs for security, affection, power, just accepting and contemplating what is, in union with God within and manifested in all.

The Way also taught me about overcoming fears. I first confronted each hill with anxiety, until I began to realize that I was being helped. All I had to do was trust and place one step at a time at my own pace. My fears were soon washed away and I became more and more aware of that benevolent presence within. It was a deeply healing experience. “Do not fear, I am with you always.” This was Christ’s message “experienced.”

Our Pilgrimage ended up at “The Abbey of Conques,” a medieval abbey totally preserved within the village around it. Monks there offer great hospitality and spiritual mentoring. We hope to start our next walk from there and continue on this extraordinary path to spiritual enlightenment.



## GRATITUDE

By Beth Murphy

At dinner with friends, who had just returned from a summer retreat at Our Lady of Florida, they commented on the wonders of the retreat. One of them emphasized that next year we would all be going. This planted a seed in me that grew over time. The next retreat’s flyer arrived, and I was disappointed because the cost was beyond my means. But the email read: “Scholarships available.” I applied and the scholarship was awarded. The retreat was amazing. It was my first encounter with the depth of spiritual solitude and the transformative power that it has. I am so grateful to my friend for “planting the seed” and to COCFL for the retreat and the scholarship. Most of all I am grateful to God for his tender loving mercy and kindness.

## MEMBERS SHARE

*“...it is a constant seeping in of the Good News into the crevices of my life. Christ, through the Spirit, wants a home in me. From that small home, the reign of God transforms the world like the seed quietly pushing up the earth to light.”*



**SPECIAL EVENT:**  
**February 28th**  
**Merritt Island, FL**

**THOMAS MERTON:**  
**The Commotion and**  
**the Long Art of**  
**Contemplation**  
**Presented by**  
**Gray Matthews, Ph.D.**



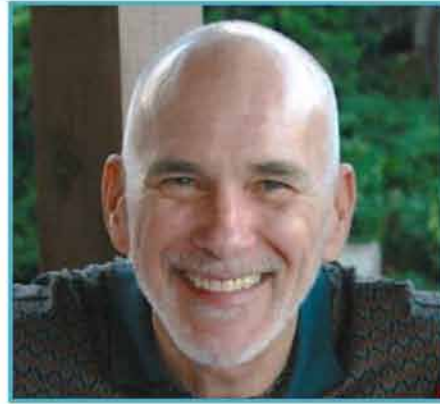
Gray Matthews describes himself as a mystic who likes poetry, rides a bike, and has been reading Thomas Merton for more than 30 years. He is married, with two daughters and two dogs. A native of Tennessee, he grew up in Nashville and majored in English in college. Later he earned a Ph.D. from Penn State. He teaches communication at the University of Memphis with a contemplative perspective. Matthews is a leader in the International Thomas Merton Society which in 2015 is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Merton's birth.

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, Matthews will lead a day-long conversation on Thomas Merton, contemplation and what Merton taught about "healing silence" for a world diverted from its true life. It will be held at Divine Mercy Catholic Church in Merritt Island. To register for this event, contact Alice Logan at [alicevl@aol.com](mailto:alicevl@aol.com), and send your \$40 donation payable to COCFL, 505 Green Briar Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32714, by February 21<sup>st</sup>. Lunch is included.

Further information is available on our website at: [www.cocfl.org](http://www.cocfl.org).

## AN INVITATION TO JOIN OUR SERVICE TEAMS

By Nestor de Armas



The intent of Contemplative Outreach is to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer. This is carried out primarily through chapters whose purpose is to support the needs of their Centering Prayer groups.

Last fall, our chapter issued an open invitation to all members of our groups to participate in a Visioning Day. Many of the members attended and prayerfully discerned our chapter's service priorities for the next 2-3 years. This is consistent with two organizational principles that have guided Contemplative Outreach: (1) a "bottoms up" rather than "top down" approach to setting direction, and (2) a consensus building method for making decisions.

We have formed the following Service Teams to support our priorities:

**Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshops** - This Service Team will develop two-person teams who will present introductions to Centering Prayer within our chapter. It will also offer Presenter Formation and Training Workshops for those desiring to become commissioned presenters of Centering Prayer.

**Communication** – This service team will provide information on chapter activities, events and resources to Centering Prayer practitioners in Central Florida, bringing us closer together as one community of prayer, through a variety of media such as website, newsletter, flyers, videos, social media and emails.

**Facilitator Formation** – This service team will support our CP group facilitators, offer Facilitator Formation Workshops (Levels One and Two), and prepare additional commissioned presenters of Facilitator Formation Workshops.

**Nurture and Support** – This service team will nurture and support our CP groups by visiting them once a each year. It will also make itself available for questions from each group, which will be taken to the Chapter Servant Leadership Service Team. Groups visited will also feel more involved with the chapter.

**Finance** – This Service Team records financial transactions, reconciles the monthly bank statements, and provides transparency regarding the Chapter's finances with monthly reports to the Chapter Leadership Team for review.

Each Service Team will have a member serve in the Chapter's Servant Leadership Team that will work with our Chapter's coordinator to implement the priorities set by our members during Visioning Day.

**Please join one of our Service Teams!**

Contact Nestor de Armas at [nestordearmas@msn.com](mailto:nestordearmas@msn.com) with questions or to discuss joining a Service Team.