



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

United Day of Prayer
Saturday March 18
+ **Cocoa Beach:** Our Savior's Catholic Church, Contact: Beth Murphy, BAMurphy101@gmail.com, 321-986-7193

+ **Indialantic:** Holy Name of Jesus, Contact: Maddy Cote, maddy1@cfl.rr.com, 321-773-6018

+ **New Smyrna Beach:** Sacred Heart Church, (Knights Hall), Contact: Irene Babineau, ibabineau@cfl.rr.com, 386-402-4630

+ **Lady Lake/The Villages:** St. George's Church, Lady Lake--either the Parish Hall or the Prayer Room, until 2 PM Rosemarie Kuchera, roer1058@gmail.com 352-638-6286 (cell)

Fr Meninger

The Loving Search for God
Santa Maria del Mar Church
Flagler Beach,
March 18-22, 2017

Intro to Centering Prayer.

Santa Maria del Mar Church
Flagler Beach
March 25, 2017

COCFL Spring Event

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

Fr. Bill Sheehan

7 day Intensive Retreat
June 16-22 See cocfl.org



A Word from Nestor de Armas, COCFL Coordinator

What is Contemplative Outreach, LTD? Why does it exist? How does it relate to Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida? Why is it the subject of this column? What is going on in Contemplative Outreach, LTD that is important for us here in Central Florida?

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida exists 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. We do so by providing you, the members of our thirty-one Centering Prayer Groups, with Centering Prayer resources you would not otherwise enjoy. Some examples of the resources we offer you throughout each year are: this Newsletter, our website (cocfl.org), events and retreats. All of these resources have only one purpose: to support our Centering Prayer Groups, as they support you in your journey of transformation in Christ through the practice of Centering Prayer.

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida is part (a Chapter) of Contemplative Outreach, LTD. a worldwide organization of over 150 Chapters. Fr. Thomas Keating founded Contemplative Outreach, LTD. in 1986. For the past three decades, it has served the needs of its Chapters as we seek to support our Centering Prayer Groups

Together, we have embraced the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

March 2017

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

Like our Chapter, the support provided by Contemplative Outreach includes a website, a newsletter, retreats and literature on the practice of Centering Prayer.

Fr. Keating is now in his nineties. Over the past two years, Contemplative Outreach has been going through a major, fundamental change in its leadership structure. A new Governing Board has been instituted. A new Leadership Team is responsible for the day-to-day coordination of its many service activities. The intent is to discern an organizational structure that reflects our contemplative commitment to a "bottoms up," egalitarian, leadership structure that is open to the Spirit's promptings as we journey together in love.

The Board articulated its **Intentions** for the coming year which are included in this Newsletter on page 2. I encourage you to read them carefully, discuss them in your Centering Prayer Groups and reach out to me with your questions, and ideas. The Board is planning to host a conference in Denver in September of 2017. The conference's purpose is to invite the membership of Contemplative Outreach to participate in this discernment process. All members are welcome to attend.

This is a very special time in the life of contemplative spirituality. We joyfully and confidently look forward to participating in this transformation as Contemplative Outreach becomes all that God has in mind for it to be.

Contemplative Outreach, LTD

2017 Intentions for the Organization

REFLECTIONS

Nestor deArmas

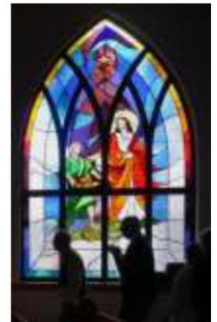
Tuesday, Psalm 78:1-39 *"they were... a wind that passes and does not come again."* (v. 39b)
He sits in the airport shuttle across the aisle from me. He is about my age. Thick, grey hair and beard frame a handsome face. A monogrammed, fine leather briefcase lies tucked between his feet. The fine cut of his business suit, the power tie, the French cuff shirt and the Rolex nestled underneath the gold cufflinks pretend to tell me who he is. I wonder, what's the narrative that lies beneath all this? He wears a wedding ring. Is she his soul mate or a stranger he just happens to live with? What were his dreams: the broken ones and the ones fulfilled? What regrets still make him groan inwardly and bite his lower lip? Do little children crawl on his lap and safely fall asleep? When his life is threatened by death or fate, when his existence seems meaningless and empty, when he is guilty, full of self-rejection and condemned, when his life feels like a wind that passes and does not come again, where does he, and where do you and me, find the courage to be?

Share your reflections!
dwagner119@gmail.com
814-566-2288



Susan Komis, The Villages

- **Share the Prayer:** Focus on sharing prayer practices of Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, Welcoming Prayer and Forgiveness Prayer.
- **Communication:** Recognizing the high priority of communication in the vital functioning of CO, commit to using all available communication channels.
- **Transparency:** Commit to transparency and openness on all levels, respecting all insights and information as vital and available to the entire organism.
- **Contemplative Community:** Support the transformation from a corporate structure to a contemplative community.
- **International Conference:** Hold an International Conference to bring together the CO community, encouraging open communication, discussion of ideas and sharing of the CO vision.
- **Simplicity:** In supporting the needs of the CO community, avoid complex structures. Strive for simplicity in communication, programs and resources.
- **Volunteer Organism:** Promote the involvement of volunteers (and minimize the hiring of paid staff as much as possible and reasonable). Recognizing that Contemplative Outreach is essentially an organism served by and for volunteers, ensure consultation, support and appreciation of volunteers.
- **Financial Openness and Self-Sustaining Activities:** Ensure financial transparency to the CO organization. Encourage chapters and local programs/activities to be self-sustaining.
- **Resources:** Support the CO community with resources, activities and programs that are *accessible, affordable and available*.
- **Stability:** Stabilize the support system for CO.
- **Listen and Respond:** Ensure that leadership is designed to listen deeply and respond to the emerging needs of the CO community, including providing financial support.
- **Chapter Support:** Ensure that CPS service teams and chapter volunteers receive the resources needed (financial and personal support) to share the practices and support the needs of chapters.
- **International:** Support international growth and development in a real and concrete way, including financial investment, recognizing that growth in Centering Prayer and contemplative practices in new locations is a genuine fruit of the divine economy.
- **Investment:** Seek ways to invest financially in CO growth, partnering and support.
- **Dialogue and Partnering:** Energetically reach out to other contemplative groups for dialogue and potential partnering.
- **Interspiritual Dialogue:** Similarly, become aware of ways to participate in interspiritual dialogue. Seek out opportunities to sponsor or partner with interspiritual contemplative groups.



Transformative Listening

with Susan Komis

Written by Susan McBride



“IT’S HEART PIERCING AND LIFE CHANGING”

Who would not want to be able to listen at that depth? Yet I never much thought about or understood the deeply contemplative dimension of listening until I attended **The Four Levels of Listening and Soul Friending Workshop** on February 11, 2017 sponsored by COCFL at St. George Episcopal Church in The Villages.

After a time of Centering Prayer, our presenter, Susan Komis read us a story. I love a good story! And since this was a listening workshop I did my best to listen intently. After the story, Susan asked us ten questions about what she had read. Stunned is the only word to describe my surprise when I answered only five questions correctly!

According to Susan, generally speaking we only hear 50% of what other people say to us. She cited a comment by Fr. Carl Arico in which he says that we have to say something seven times before people really hear it. In our culture much of our dialogue is either debate or discussion. People do not listen to understand the other person but rather to convince them of their position.

Honest communication requires that we become good listeners. Like Centering Prayer, it requires both attention and intention. If we want others to feel heard, we must make a decision to listen carefully (full of care). Listening is hard work!

So what exactly are the qualities of a good listener? Susan shared with us the four levels of listening and the qualities we might expect at each level.

At the **literal** level, what you see is what you get, or don’t get. This is surface listening that we do as we go about our daily business that offers little or no engagement.

On the second level, **active** listeners are more engaged. They ask questions and mirror facial expressions back to the speaker. Active listeners express interest and desire to hear what is being said.

On the third level, **affective** listeners empty themselves to receive what the speaker is saying at a more intuitive level. They seek to hear what the speaker is trying to convey beneath the words. At this level listening is a momentary death to self.

Transformative Listening Continued

At the deepest level, **transformative** listening perceives the presence of the Spirit in the midst of the conversation and can see Christ in the speaker.

In the contemplative dimension, listening is a prayerful experience where God is present as the Third Person in our conversation. In contemplative listening, we approach listening as a spiritual practice and listen to the other with holy expectation and surrender to God.

After time for lunch and fellowship, the afternoon session on Soul Friending began with a reminder of what it means to be a servant leader. Susan shared this quote from Fr. Thomas Keating: “Service in the contemplative dimension is not ‘rescue’ theology but the realization of both servant and those being served as those being created anew.” As a facilitator of a Centering Prayer group I was anxious to hear about how Soul Friending creates an environment for those who share the experience of “being created anew.”

The essence of soul friends is listening with God from a place of trust, equality and utmost charity. Within the context of the Centering Prayer group, soul friend’s fundamental purpose is to share the prayer, encourage one another to persevere and offer support and reassurance through dry periods. Soul Friending is not spiritual direction per se. However, as the Centering Prayer group matures to the level of Soul Friending, the group can act as a source of spiritual direction and become a channel of God’s truth and love for each member. The awareness of Divine Presence increases and the role of the facilitator actually diminishes although remains important only as a support and gentle guide. The underlying attitude always present is that of utmost charity and contemplative listening is vital!

Our day was packed with information, role-playing, and small groups and of course, it ended as it began with Centering Prayer. I want to thank Susan Komis and Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida for once again providing a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth. It is a living reminder to me that whether it is Centering Prayer or a workshop on listening, the purpose of all my practice and learning is to pierce my heart and transform my life into a conduit for God’s love in the world.

Free recordings of the event are at:

http://cocfl.org/?risen_multimedia=four-levels-of-listening-soulfriending-with-susan-komis



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.

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

Sunday, Psalm 118 *I shall not die but live, and recount the deeds of the Lord* (v. 17, NRSV)

Nothing feels as cuddly as my grandchild on my lap. Like a sparrow settling into her nest, she rubs her shoulders back and forth across my chest. Her soft hair is fragrant under my chin. She takes a deep sigh. In complete trust, her tiny body relaxes into mine. I breathe her in. Ever so gently, with my left hand, I stroke her shoulder. Absentmindedly, she plays with my right thumb. I hold the future in my arms. I wonder, when her grandchild crawls unto her lap, will she remember what it was like to lie in mine? Then, it occurs to me I will be gone by then ... eventually forgotten ... "like vapor in the wind." It is my mortality, not the future, I hold in my arms. Can I embrace that too, that final gift from God, that ultimate release? Yes, and like my precious grandchild sleeping on my lap, I will relax into God's loving arms. *2 Samuel 17:1-23; Galatians 3:6-14; John 5:30-47*

CENTERING PRAYER? WHY?

By Susan Arneson



"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

– Matthew 6:6 New International Version

The *Message Bible* puts it this way: "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace."

This Scripture, Mathew 6:6, is one of the basic verses that grounds the Centering Prayer process. Somehow, being human, we want to know what we will get out of entering this prayer discipline. The Contemplative Prayer leaders make it clear, this is not a quid pro quo type of prayer, where we make a request and wait for an answer. Yes, of course, intercessory prayers are also part of our tradition. Yes, of course, we are encouraged to pray boldly, with confidence, that even faith the size of a mustard seed shall be rewarded.

Why, then, would we choose to enter still another form of prayer where we seek to be completely still, to surrender control of our actions and our words, to simply say "welcome" and to be aware of God's Holy presence? I will not answer that question for you. I encourage you to discover your own answer, and I am confident that your discovery will be awesome.

Here is my attempt to share my own personal answer to "Why Centering Prayer?"

The *Message Bible* puts it perfectly for me: **"The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace."**

My life, like many others, has parts that hold deep regret, shame, and sadness. Coming into a closer awareness of God's grace has provided a sense of complete, transformative forgiveness. And beyond that, it has provided me with glimpses of God's glorious nature revealed within me, within my Soul. One effect is a great sense of freedom and peace that underlies daily life.

I'm not a CP expert, and my CP attempts are as frail as anyone's. A while ago, I had a session where I absolutely could not let go of a problem I was struggling with. I could not stop pondering the problem. I couldn't turn it over to God and lay it down, even for 30 seconds. So I decided to enter the problem fully, to turn to my more familiar type of prayer, which I call "begging." "Please, please God, help me figure this out!" Later that day, I returned to CP and was able to become more still, to set my intention: "Welcome God. Welcome. Welcome. Welcome. I want to simply sit with you in the silence and turn my awareness to You."

I hope you have felt drawn to give Centering Prayer a try at home this week. Thank you to those who have shared your CP experiences with me!

"Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control"

- Susan Arneson