



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

-United Day of Prayer

Saturday March 9, 2016

The theme: "Centering Prayer: A way of life" will be supported by a DVD, featuring Father Arico. Plan on joining one of the participating CP groups throughout the chapter. More info on locations to come on website, COCFL.org

-Night of Sense, Night of Spirit with Susan Komis

April 22-23

Church of Our Saviour,
Cocoa Beach

RECENT EVENTS

Introductory Workshops

- St George, the Villages
January 16, 2016

-All Saints, Winter Park
February 13, 2016

Both workshops had record breaking attendance. Some of the participants were new to centering Prayer, others interested in deepening their practice.

The spirit is at work in our Chapter!

The Welcoming Prayer With Mary Dwyer

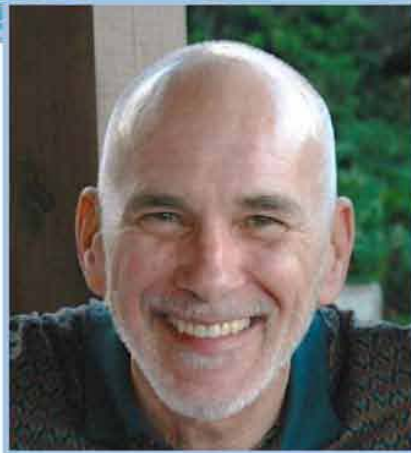
February 5-6, 2016

St George Episcopal Church,
The Villages

See Nestor de Armas' article

Interested in writing an article for the newsletter, or in coordinating, editing, or helping, please contact Veronique:

Veronique.sallin@cherrylake.com
(352) 267 2851



A Word from Nestor de Armas, COCFL Coordinator

February, 2016

The weekend of February 5 and 6 was a very special occasion for our chapter. Members of our Centering Prayer groups, from Melbourne to the Villages, packed out St. George Episcopal Church to deepen their relationship with God through the practice of Welcoming Prayer. This was a clear manifestation of our faith that it is possible to develop a relationship with Christ that will transform and enrich our lives and, through us, the lives of those we love. It was a joyful experience made possible by the generosity of the members of our Centering Prayer Group at St George's and the members of our Events Service Team.

Thank you!



Contemplative Outreach Of Central Florida

February 2016

COCFL website:

www.cocfl.org

Our chapter's Servant Leadership Team remains committed to fostering the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer by being responsive to the needs of our Centering Prayer Groups. The Team remains faithful to the priorities you outlined during Visioning Day. The Welcoming Prayer Workshop was specifically responsive to your request we hold events in different locations to make it easier for you to attend at least one event each year.

Furthermore, the generosity of many of you has resulted in a scholarship fund that makes it possible for us to keep the promise that every member will be able to afford to attend our events and retreats!



We invite you to join us in our service. If you have an interest in writing, editing, bookkeeping/finance, 12-Step spirituality, or event planning and organization, join one of our Service Teams by contacting me: nestordearmas@msn.com.

**Nurture & Support Team
Visit to Basha's CP Group
By Gwen Robertson**

In January, Dan and I visited Basha's CP group which meets at her house in Longwood. At that time, several of the regular members were away on travels or experiencing colds and could not attend. We prayed for them and shared on many topics dear to our hearts. We came away enriched and grateful for the chance to be together once again and to reminisce on the history of COCFL with Basha.

For those unfamiliar with the origins of our chapter, here is how it started. Bishop Thomas Grady invited Sr. Clare Gregg, SUSC, to teach Centering Prayer to the Orlando Diocese in the mid-1980s. After being taught by Sr. Clare Gregg for 2 years at San Pedro, a prayer group was formed. Basha Perez opened her home for a CP group under the guidance of Sr. Clare and later became chapter coordinator. ***It was the first Centering Prayer group formed in Orlando.***

A remarkable servant of God, Ilse Reissner, moved here from Miami and joined. She shared her reverence of God and her many, many talents with us, one of which was world travel. Pilgrimages were an opportunity to pray at cathedrals, Holy Land sites and monasteries in the world, stopping for 20 minutes at each site to pray in silence. She has helped translate Fr. Thomas's books. She began *Extension Contemplativa Internacional of Central Florida*.



Alice, Basha, Carol, Dan

Travel Opportunity

By Ilse Reissner - Altamonte Springs

**We Invite You To Join Us
on this**

**15 Day Tour To
Germany, Czech Republic,
Poland, Hungary & Austria**

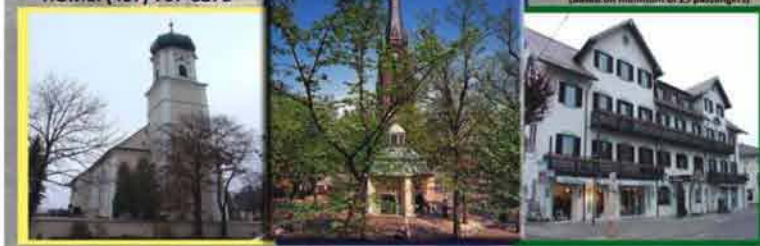
**TOUR HOST:
Ilse Reissner**

HOME: (407) 767-8271

September 4 - 18, 2016

\$4,988 from ORLANDO

All Tips and Taxes Included!
(Based on minimum of 25 passengers)



monasteries of France, another to Italy where we visited Padua, Siena, Padre Pio's town and church and the church in Lanciano where the Eucharistic Miracle happened.

This year we are combining a pilgrimage with a regular tour, and contacted Maranatha Tours, the Christian Travel Agency that we have used before with excellent results. We have agreed on a trip that would start on Sept. 4, 2016, in Munchen (Germany) and visit the places related to Pope Benedict and other sightseeing, then continue to Rothenburg, Prague (Mass at the church where the Infant Jesus is venerated), Krakow in Poland (Pope John Paul II home), St. Faustina's shrine in Lagiewniki (Apostle of the Divine Mercy), Budapest, Vienna, the Monastery of Melk, Salzburg, Munchen, and back to the U.S. on the 18th.

On prior pilgrimages, every time we went, we were accompanied by a priest from Contemplative Outreach, among them, Fr. Meninger, Fr. Joseph Boyle, Fr. Bill Sheehan, and Fr. Bill Fickel. This year, I have invited Fr. Tito Nel Rojas, a priest of the Diocese of Orlando, having served many different parishes in the Orlando area, including Mary Magdalene in Altamonte Springs. He is originally from Colombia and is also an experienced traveler; he lived in Rome as a young priest, and made several trips to the Holy Land and all over Europe. He is fluent in Spanish and English and is very excited to be coming along on this trip as spiritual advisor of the group. During the trip, we plan on having daily mass and time for Centering Prayer for those that want to participate.

Airline ticket from the Orlando Int'l Airport, daily buffet breakfast and dinner are included, all tips and most taxes are included, and the total cost will be just under \$5,000.

For Further Information, contact Ilse Reissner
284 Curlew Circle, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701
ireissner@juno.com - (407) 767-8271
Or download brochure at

<http://www.maranathatours.com/Reissner-Sep-2016-Germany-Poland-Austria>

For many years Basha and I have organized pilgrimages to different parts of the world, first only to the Holy Land and surrounding countries, and afterwards all over Europe. We did two of them to Spain and Portugal, the most recent three years ago, visiting Avila, Salamanca, Burgos, Santiago de Compostela, and Fatima on the way to other cities. Others were to visit all the

Contemplative and Wild!

By Kathy Kotas – Port Orange



Kathy Kotas

*"Tell me, what is it you
plan to do with your one
wild and precious life?"*

- Mary Oliver

2016 is six days old as I sit here writing this article. I was reminded that it was January 6 by my Google calendar. It's not as much fun to start a new year on a Google calendar as it was when I would purchase a handsome desk calendar with a ribbon marker. But regardless of a calendar's physical properties, it always fills quickly with appointments, meetings, and hopefully, a vacation or two. But I don't think anyone ever makes a calendar entry that sums up what one is planning to do with their remaining wild and precious life.

The poet Mary Oliver's question seems too important to even formulate a New Year's resolution in response. That life is precious, we would all agree. That belief is reflected in the very posture and reverence we assume when holding a newborn or as we approach the bedside of a dying loved one.

But wild? Can a contemplative lead a wild life? At first glance, the definitions of wild don't seem to support it. But after scanning many of the synonyms offered for that word, I am attracted to three: free, undomesticated, and natural.

Freedom is what we've been told by Fr. Thomas can be one of the fruits of our Centering Prayer practice. Over time, we become freer from the pull of those energy centers of power and control; safety and security; affection and esteem. Each time we sit in our chair and consent to God's presence and action, we become more and more free. That freedom is needed to become undomesticated, or free from our cultural conditioning.

Fr. Thomas has said that we can't escape our culture, nor should we make that our aim, because there are many wonderful aspects to a peoples' culture. But our growing awareness through our contemplative practice is key in helping us to see more clearly where the world tries to manipulate, or in essence, domesticate and tame us. Our culture assumes we will buy into (literally) more and more consumerism. News and social media's reason for being is to influence us as they present their perception of reality. We are offered iconic hero figures to emulate (and follow on their Twitter feeds) in the form of athletes and celebrities.

Politics has become a toxic vortex that wants to draw us into fear and even hatred. Since none of this leads to domestic tranquility, I would like to suggest becoming counter cultural as we become more aware of another reality – the Ultimate Reality. So just like creatures in the woods – be alert and watchful and do not allow the world to deprive you of courage, ardor and zest for living the real life. Finally, to be wild is to be natural or in/of/around nature. Our natural world is God's first creation made for our enjoyment and well-being. Go take a walk, look at the trees, and plant a flower or a tomato plant. Studies show that just being outdoors reduces blood pressure, relieves depression and anxiety, and just makes us happier people. And we don't have to buy anything or post it on Facebook! Wishing you a wonderful and wild 2016!

Pilgrimage to Snowmass

By Liz LeFevre – Mount Dora



The longing to visit Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, has been in my heart since I began practicing Centering Prayer twenty years ago. From the reports of those who had been there it seemed to be the place everyone must experience. I realize now that this longing is prompted by one of Contemplative Outreach's Theological Principles # 15. "We recognize and maintain a spiritual relationship with Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado." The home of Fr. Thomas Keating was calling to me.

In September of 2015 my dream was realized in a pilgrimage to Snowmass. My husband and I were making a trip out west and Colorado could easily be added to our trip. How exciting this prospect was and a letter from Fr. Keating promised a visit if he was well enough that day. Unfortunately our travel brought us to Snowmass Village too late in the day to contact him but we decided to visit the next morning and hope for the best.

What did I find at Snowmass? **The manifestation of God's presence.** In the early morning darkness we set out from Snowmass Village to make the 45 minute trip to the monastery. We entered the building and all the pictures I had seen over the years came to life. As we began our worship in the chapel I was struck by the simplicity of the architecture. The stained glass window of the blessed Mother and child, the cloister windows highlighting the sky and trees and most of all *the silence* created a space for God to be glorified. The brothers entered and the musical chanting began. God touched the hearts of each of the worshippers.

We went outside and we were overcome by the beauty of the setting. The fields dotted with cows, the view of the mountains created a space apart - holy ground. Knowing that I was joining the footsteps of other pilgrims searching for God and treading the path where Fr. Keating wrote his lasting works on Contemplative Prayer brought me connection to what had gone before and what was to come. Fr. Keating was not present to me that morning physically but his message spoke to me louder than words and resonated in my heart. The day was magical and it was going to get better. Several hours later at our hotel the phone rang and it was Fr. Thomas. "I have your number, and I'm not sure what I was to do today. I'm not a very good secretary to myself." I told him to look for the letter I had left for him and we chatted as old friends for several minutes. At the conclusion of our chat, he assured me that he remembers those who practice Centering Prayer in his prayers and would pray for our group especially. No greater gift could come from a Pilgrimage to Snowmass.

Our chapter's Ocala CP group which is held in Christ the King Church welcomed Dan Wagner and me for a visit, 5:30 Monday night. Facilitator, Gus Galloway, lead the diverse group with a discussion of Fr. Keating's article from Contemplative Outreach News of June 2015 entitled, "Notes from a Deep Conversation." The theme that came up most often was acceptance: Acceptance of ourselves and others just as we are with all our faults and strong points. The sharing was deep and heartfelt. Next, with Gus's deep and sincere voice, he began the prayer with a body scan that included letting go of all the tension in your stomach, relaxing the muscles of your jaw, releasing the tension surrounding our eyes and then proceeded into our Centering Prayer.

We stood and held hands for the Our Father and with a sincere affirmation to continue the work of the prayer in our lives. The prayer ended when the bell rang. We thanked them for letting us attend and bring news of our chapter's website and upcoming programs. It was a delightful evening of fellowship and prayer!

EVER PRESENT PRESENCE
By: Vickey Cheney, Mount Dora

*DOES THE JOURNEY MAKE YOU BLEAT IN PAIN?
LIKE A LAMB ABANDONED ON A PLAIN?*

*LOOK BEYOND THE BLEAK IMAGINED FATE
SEE YOUR SHEPHERD STANDING AT THE GATE.*

*CAN YOU HEAR THE SOUND OF HIS REFRAIN?
CAN YOU SURRENDER TO LET HIM REIGN?*

*WILL YOU LISTEN TO HIM CALL YOUR NAME?
LET HIM CARRY YOU WHEN YOU FEEL LAME?*

*IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS SAVING GRACE
HELD IN PEACE AND HEALED IN HIS EMBRACE*

2002 interview of Father Keating by Beliefnet producer Anne A. Simpkinson

How can we make Lent a more contemplative time? And, if people are already practicing contemplative prayer, how can they deepen their practice?

Lent is meant to be a communal retreat for all Christians--at least those who observe Lent. The liturgy is an instruction in the mystical meaning of Lent as preparation for the Holy Week celebration of the mystery of redemption. Redemption basically is about holistic health, if you want to translate it into modern parlance. What I suggest--based on the Christian tradition but not often preached--is that you can't enter into the fullness of the Pascal mystery of the redemption unless there is a radical transformation of motivation within you. So, on the first Sunday of Lent, you have Christ going into the desert and experiencing basic human instincts--security needs, power-control needs, and affection-esteem needs. The three temptations that [Christ faced in the desert] address each one of those issues.

If you accept the belief that baptism incorporates us in the mystical body of Christ, into the divine DNA, then you might say that the Holy Spirit is present in each of us, and thus we have the capacity for the fullness of redemption, of transformation.

Lent is a time to renew wherever we are in that process that I call the divine therapy. It's a time to look at what our instinctual needs are, look at what the dynamics of our unconscious are. The church is hinting in the first Sunday of Lent that Lent is about temptation, or what we think is temptation. It's about the raw experience of human instincts, and how they unconsciously influence our conduct and decisions all our life long unless we keep working with them.

Lent is the time to expect temptation and [experience] afflictive emotions such as shame, humiliation, anger, greed, the time to look at how those instincts, which are developed in early childhood are frustrated--or gratified. See there's a hazard in self-exaltation if we get what we want, or depression if we don't get what we want. To work on those [emotions] during Lent, I think, is more effective than fasting or rituals.

With regard to prayers, I would suggest doing a little more meditation, add another half-hour period [of prayer], if that's possible. If it's not possible, be more alert to the false self and its [emotional] programs as they manifest in everyday life. This is a form of practicing the presence of God.

Do you think that giving up chocolate or meat or whatever is only a scratching of the surface of Lent?

Yes, but if you scratch the surface and find out there's something underneath, it's helpful that way. (Laughter) It seems to me that scratching the surface of the unconscious, allowing a few cracks to show, hastens the evacuation [of emotions tied to the false self], and is a good thing.

I imagine giving up chocolate would make us understand how powerless we are because of how hard it is to do. I think that's one of the benefits of something like that. If we can't give up chocolate for 40 days, how can we give up other things?

It's a good start. But the liturgy, or the church, whoever put that together in their mystical wisdom wasn't thinking about your taste buds. (Laughter) Lent is about more serious matters. The Church was thinking about how it feels to confront the emotional damage of a lifetime that is sitting unnoticed in your unconscious. Unless one does an extraordinary kind of deep psychotherapy, it might take five years on the couch [to uncover and work with such things]. But the practice of a non-conceptual meditation [centering prayer] initiates a process that may go on for a lifetime. Every Lent is an invitation to go deeper into that process.

It would be a real challenge to take on Lent this year because our lives are so pushed and pulled by so many external demands.

Perhaps more than ever today, [I think of] the intrusion of mass media. I don't know what that's going to do to people, what it's going to do to a generation without some balancing factor like Lent. Lent could become more and more crucial to spiritual practice.