



COCFL News

United Day of Prayer

March 9, 2016

By Veronique Sallin, Clermont

This year's theme was: "Centering Prayer: A way of life," supported by a DVD, featuring Father Arico. Several groups throughout our chapter hosted a day of prayer.



Cocoa Beach Group

Irene Babineau reflected on the day in New Smyrna:

"From beginning to end, the experience was magnanimous... The "surprises" that Father Arico talked about on the video were abundant, far exceeding what we hoped for. I am grateful to our loving God." Inspired by the Spirit, Irene wrote this poem reflecting the love and peace received on that beautiful day.

*O Lord, how beautiful you are...
Show me more - I long to see your face.*

*Fear shrouds my inner space.
I wish to fill my space with thee.*

*I hear the bird so free...
Tweet, tweet tweet, tweet tweet.
That's all. It does its thing,
Relying all on Thee.*

*The water bubbles too - so free to be.
Water, clear, good, pure and clean...
Refreshing water bursts up from
where?*

The source - perhaps from Thee.

Irene Babineau



A Word from Nestor de Armas, COCFL Coordinator

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida exists because we believe 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. We have experienced Centering Prayer as a method that facilitates that relationship. And so, we have come together as a chapter, to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer. This year, we have been blessed by a group of dedicated volunteers from many of our Centering Prayer groups who have been responsive to the priorities you established during our Visioning Day in October of 2013:

1. Provide more "Introduction to Centering Prayer" workshops so more people can learn the practice of Centering Prayer and join our Centering Prayer groups.
2. Provide expanded communications on chapter activities, events and resources to you, the members of our Centering Prayer groups, as well as to all who are interested in developing a contemplative practice.
3. Offer a three day Centering Prayer retreat within our geographic footprint
4. Offer workshops and events that will empower you in your spiritual journey

Contemplative Outreach Of Central Florida

May 2016

COCFL website:

www.cocfl.org

5. Hold these workshops and retreats in the different geographical areas of our chapter's large geographic footprint to make it easier for you to attend.

As our chapter completes another year of service to you, the members of our Centering Prayer groups, I want to take this opportunity to give special thanks to the members of our Service Teams. Without their help, this year would not have been possible. With utmost charity, they have graced us with many hours of joyful service. Please join me in thanking them: Anne Ayoub, Gus Galloway, Kathy Kotas, Joanie Mills, Lelia, Mullis, Alice Logan, Beth Murphy, Andy Rawls, Veronique Sallin, Gwen Robertson, Dan Wagner, and Sharon Wright.

I can't wait to see what God has in store for us next year. Please join us!!

Blessings,

Nestor de Armas



Susan Komis & Service Teams Members Present

Prayer Intentions

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Oh, God, Creator and
Beloved Companion,
You are the author of
being and life. Inspire
in me a spirit of
devotion, service and
praise, that I may give
You glory in everything
that I think, feel, say,
and do, through Jesus
Christ, Amen.

Focus on the Rainbow

By Vicky Cheney

Survey the days of
Your past years.
Have there been fewer
moments of tears,
and more hours of gladness?
More joy than of sadness?

Have you come to know
the goal of living is to grow?

Not in wealth, or in possessing
much

But in awareness of God's
presence and gentle touch.

Think of the times that made
you smile.

That makes all the reverie
worthwhile.

Discover the moments you
laughed in the deepest pain.
Focus on the rainbows, instead
of the rain.

If you enjoy reading the stories,
poems and write ups in the
newsletter, think about sharing
your own stories and contact
Dan Wagner:
Dwagner119@gmail.com

Pope Francis: Prayer Is Not Simply Saying Words 'Like a Parrot'... Prayers should come from the heart.

By Elise Harris/CNA/EWTN News 10/08/2013



Lauren Cater/CNA photo

VATICAN CITY — In his daily Mass, Pope Francis touched on the importance of prayer and forgiveness in the life of a Christian, warning against common attitudes that “close the door” to God. “The Lord tells us: ‘The first task in life is this: prayer.’ But not the prayer of words, like a parrot; but the prayer of the heart: gazing on the Lord, hearing the Lord, asking the Lord,” said the Holy Father during his Oct. 8 daily homily.

Pope Francis celebrated his daily Mass in the Santa Marta guesthouse of the Vatican, where he chose to reside shortly after he was elected as Bishop of Rome.

The Pope centered his reflections on the prophet Jonah from the first reading of the day and on Martha from the Gospel narrative, stating that both characters are united by a similar problem: neither of them knew how to pray.

Recounting the story of sisters Mary and Martha in the Gospel reading, the Holy Father said that when Martha asked Jesus to have Mary get up and serve, Mary chose the “better part,” meaning “that of prayer, that of the contemplation of Jesus.” “To the eyes of the sister, this was time lost; it even seemed, perhaps, a bit of a fantasy,” he said, “But who wants that? The Lord: ‘This is the better part,’ because Mary heard the Lord and prayed with her heart.”

When coming from the heart, “we know that prayer works miracles,” he emphasized, reflecting on how the Lord delivered the people of Nineveh after Jonah had preached to them about the imminent destruction of the city. The inhabitants were saved, he noted, because they believed the words of the prophet and were converted, “and from the greatest to the least called upon the Divine forgiveness with all their strength.”

Although the people of Nineveh were redeemed, Pope Francis highlighted the erroneous attitude of Jonah, who desired a harsh judgment for the people, rather than a merciful one. “There are others like this stubborn Jonah” who mirror this attitude, he said. “He went, he prophesied, but in his heart, he said: ‘But they deserve it. They deserve it. They were asking for it.’” “He prophesied, but he didn’t pray! He didn’t ask the Lord to forgive ... only to beat them. They are executioners, those who believe themselves to be just!”

The Pope concluded his remarks by warning against prayer that is redundant, pessimistic and unforgiving, saying that Christians must always be careful to guard against the temptation to fall into these attitudes, and they must always choose “the better part.” He challenged those in attendance, stating that “we ourselves, when we don’t pray, what we’re doing is closing the door to the Lord. And not praying is this: Closing the door to the Lord, so that he can do nothing.” “On the other hand, prayer, in the face of a problem, a difficult situation, a calamity, is opening the door to the Lord, so that he will come.”

“This is what praying is,” he stressed, “opening the door to the Lord, so that he can do something. If we close the door, God can do nothing! Let us think on this Mary, who has chosen the better part and makes us see the way, as the door is opened to the Lord.”

From National Catholic Register, Dec 27, 2015

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-francis-prayer-is-not-simply-saying-words-like-a-parrot/#ixzz3wEbs5mnP>

"If you patiently accept what comes, you will always pray with joy"

By Josh Witherington - Minneola



He invented the idea of the seven deadly sins. He was the first person to begin writing down and systematizing the sayings of the Desert Fathers, later becoming one himself. His original writings were the single biggest influence on and heavily cited by St. John Cassian and his Conferences, which itself monumentally shaped the Rule of St. Benedict and formed the basis for the Liturgy of

the Hours. Richard Rohr and Helen Palmer credit him with inventing the Enneagram. He created and wrote down the first manual for Christian Contemplation. Who was this spiritual master?

Evagrius Ponticus was a highly educated scholar, Christian monk and contemplative who lived from 345-399 AD. He was a lector under St. Basil the Great, and a deacon under St. Gregory of Nazianzus, two of the three Cappadocian Fathers. In his later years he lived in the Egyptian desert as an ascetic and teacher and studied under St. Macarius of Alexandria and St. Macarius the Great. In the Desert Father and Mother tradition he often wrote profound and concise words contained within short proverb-like statements. Small samplings of these include:



"Happy is the spirit that attains to the perfect formlessness at the time of prayer."

"Happy is the monk who considers all men as god — after God."

"If you patiently accept what comes, you will always pray with joy."

"Blessed is the one who has arrived at infinite ignorance."

"When you pray, do not shape an image of the divine in yourself, do not allow any form to be imprinted on your mind; approach the Immaterial immaterially and then you will understand."

After his death he was condemned as a heretic by not one, but two ecumenical councils. Large parts of his work have been translated into English and some is contained within the Eastern Orthodox hesychast contemplation compilation, the *Philokalia*, the Desert Abba and Amma sayings, as well as books dedicated solely to him and his work. If one is interested in further reading, these are all wonderful. However a rather novel place to start may be the recent book by Father Francis Tiso (a disciple of Brother David Steindl-Rast), called *Rainbow Body and Resurrection: Spiritual Attainment, the Dissolution of the Material Body, and the Case of Khenpo A Chö*. It not only gives an excellent history and sampling of Evagrius and his works, but also posits that he helped shape the concept of the rainbow body in the Dzogchen tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

September 2016 **European Tour Update** By Ilse Reisner, Altamonte Spring



Maranatha Tours has updated our September tour splitting the itinerary into two parts to make it more accessible to those that may be unable to go because of the length of the tour. Now the departure date will be on September 2nd, which is the beginning of the Labor Day weekend, from Orlando directly to Prague, on Lufthansa Airlines, thus allowing travelers on the basic tour to be away only 5 workdays -September 6,7,8,9, and 12.

Maranatha Tours has added a day in Prague and a day in Vienna to replace the first two days of the bus ride from Munchen to Prague originally planned.

After a couple of days in Prague that include mass at the church where the statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague is, we will continue to Poland and visit Pope John Paul II and St. Faustina's homeland and follow the same itinerary of the original tour all the way to Budapest and Vienna, visiting all the interesting places along the way.

After two days in Vienna the basic tour travelers return to U.S.A. (day 11). Those who sign up for the extension will continue as originally planned, traveling through the beautiful Austrian Alps to Salzburg, and then spend two days in Munich before returning to U.S.A. (day 14).

The price of the basic tour of 11 days (Prague-Vienna) will be \$4,135 and of the extension (Vienna-Munich) of four days \$1,195. This price includes double occupancy room at first class hotels, buffet breakfast and dinner daily, taxes, tips, all transportation on air-conditioned buses, including transportation to/from airports, and entrance fees to places mentioned in the brochure. You only pay for optional travel insurance.

Anybody interested can contact me and I will be glad to send them a brochure. My e-mail address is ireissner@juno.com. My phone number is 407-767-8271. You can also get information from the web site at: <https://maranathatours.com/product/germany-czech-republic-poland-hungary-austria-tour-host-illse-reissner/>. Hope you like this change as much as I have.

Many blessings to all of you. -- Ilse Reissner

Dark Night Of The Soul
Workshop
with Susan Komis
By Dan Wagner, Mount Dora

On April 22-23, 2016, in Cocoa Beach, we had the opportunity, to hear Susan Komis talk about St John of the Cross. She explained that "the Dark Night" simply means that the human mind is unable to grasp God's transformative work in the deepest recesses of the soul. This quote from one of Susan's handouts impressed me most particularly.

"The Night of Sense reveals the full extent of the selfishness of which we are capable. Humility is the first fruit of the bittersweet experience of this intimate kind of self knowledge. It is the peaceful acknowledgement of our faults without the reactions of blame, shame, anger or discouragement. Violence to self is neurotic. Humility is the balance between the truth about weakness and confidence in the infinite mercy of God."



At our next Centering Prayer meeting at St Patrick's we watched a short video in which Fr. Keating addressed "the Dark Night." This video from the Heartfulness Series can be found at contemplativeoutreach.org under the resources tab, in the free video archives section. In it Keating says that *"The spiritual journey is a process that parallels the process of life. If you have to let go of lower forms or ideas of reality that are proper to infants and children in order to get to mature views of reality, then why be surprised if you have to do the same in the spiritual plane?"*

Centering Prayer in Prison...Inner Freedom
By Donna Davis, Beverly Hills, Florida



Imagine reading a book review in *America Magazine* and coming across the phrase, "...Soering has kept himself alive and has clung to his humanity through a disciplined practice of centering prayer..." The article was a book review of *One Day in the Life of 170212* by Jens Soering, and was described as an "unblinking and harrowing critique of the American prison system." It resonated deep within me and set me on a new course.

I learned that many inmates came to a realization that their involvement in an abortion had actually been responsible for the downward spiral in their lives. They have experienced reconciliation through a "Rachel's Vineyard" experience adapted for the prison setting, and are being set free, exhibiting a greatly reduced likelihood of recidivism.

Armed with an appreciation of these two sources of rehabilitation and survival for prisoners, I expressed an interest to my local pastor. I was invited to Lowell prison in Ocala to assist with a retreat for women who were mourning the loss of a child, through abortion, miscarriage, death, or simply separation from their children due to incarceration.

My involvement from that first experience has now expanded to several visits a week, both to Lowell in Ocala, and to the Hernando Correctional Institution in Brooksville, "a faith and character based" prison which is in my own Diocese of St. Petersburg. The latter started as a course entitled, "Contemplative Fellowship, Finding God Within," based on a book by Ray Leonardini, a Centering Prayer practitioner with a ministry at Folsom Prison. During a 12-week series, I introduced a group of young women to three practices promoted by Contemplative Outreach: "Centering Prayer," "The Welcoming Prayer," and "Lectio Divina."

I have also shared this material in the Lowell Prison setting under the subject of "Overcoming Depression: Making Room for God." In presenting these practices to the women, I came to realize that we are, "making room for God" in our prayer life (Centering Prayer); in our daily life, (the Welcoming Prayer) and in our reading Scripture (Lectio Divina). I introduced the practices to a young woman who had requested a mentor. Although she wasn't initially very receptive to sitting still, she eventually recognized the benefit of implementing the Welcoming Prayer when she was about to express hostility toward a guard or staff member at the prison. She creatively amended the phrases, "I let go of the desire for esteem and affection, power and control, security and survival; I let go of the desire to change the situation..." to the profoundly simple: "I'm stepping back, God, so You can step in." She also modified the guidelines to Centering Prayer, from suggesting "20 minutes twice a day," and began 3 "three-minute periods of silence" per day, and increased them by one minute intervals. The last time we met, she had reached 7-minute intervals, and we often share 7 minutes of silence during our two-hour mentoring sessions. I now mention her alternative suggestions to other inmates.

Before my first visit I had no idea that the women behind bars were so intelligent or so grateful for every volunteer who comes into their lives. I've taken other members of our Centering Prayer group to the classes at HCI and they have found even one or two visits to be life-altering. One friend was reduced to tears as she expressed what a blessing it had been to share time with these women.

Jens Soering, who has written several books on Centering Prayer in prison, says what we need is **prison reform** more than prison ministry. Meanwhile, please keep in prayer the profound spirituality of the women I have met who are seeking to amend their lives, submit to the transforming power of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and who fervently desire to reenter society as productive citizens and as members of the Body of Christ.