



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

John of the Cross: Beyond the Dark Nights

Dr. Rickey Cotton

September 23, 2017

9:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
221 S 4th St., Lake Wales, FL 33853

To Register contact the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd (863) 676-8578
\$20 including lunch

Visioning Day with Susan Komis **October 21, 2017**

Elect COCFL Coordinator Plan for next three years.

8:30AM-3:00PM

All Saints

338 East Lyman Avenue, Winter Park, FL

\$10 donation at door.

Please bring a sack lunch.

January Centering Prayer Weekend Retreat

with Fr. Bill Sheehan, OMI

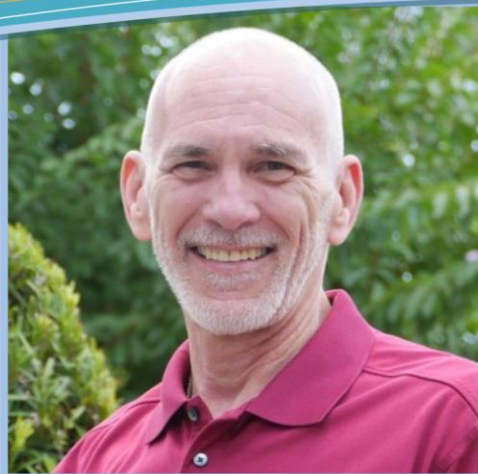
Our Lady of Florida Retreat Center, N. Palm Beach, FL (see aerial photo on p. 4)

January 5-7, 2018

The Way of the Heart (taking waiting list reservations)

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.



A Word from Nestor de Armas, COCFL Coordinator

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida exists to support us as we embrace the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer. Over the past three years, we have worked together to continue to develop an organizational structure that reflects our contemplative commitment to a “bottoms up,” egalitarian, leadership structure, a structure that is open to the Spirit’s promptings as we journey together in love. A vital step in this process is Visioning Day: a day when we meet as a Chapter to:

- celebrate our history,
- assess our needs as a contemplative community, and
- envision our Chapter’s priorities over the next three years.

We are blessed to have our dear friend and mentor, Susan Komis, facilitating this process on Saturday, October 21st. Susan has served Contemplative Outreach, LTD, since 1990 providing support to our spiritual communities. Her extensive experience serving chapters’ needs and her deep love and commitment to the practice of Centering Prayer will help us as we discern the Spirit’s promptings to journey together in love.

We strongly encourage every member of our Centering Groups to join us at All Saints Episcopal Church in Winter Park.

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

September 2017

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

Your participation is vital. We need your prayerful input in this discernment process.

It has been my joy and privilege to serve you as Chapter Coordinator for the past three years. After prayerful consideration, I believe the time is right for us to select a new Coordinator for the next three years. We have matured as a Chapter to the point where our leadership structure is broad-based. That is to say, our leadership structure is based primarily on you and on a Servant Leadership Team rather than one individual. The list on page 3 suggests the major responsibilities of the Coordinator for your consideration.

I look forward to supporting you, our new Coordinator, and our Servant Leadership Team by serving in one of our Chapter’s Service Teams in the coming years. Blessings!



Susan Komis

Awakening Without the Body You've Always Known

by Bob, a Centering Prayer Practitioner

Monday, Acts 22:30-23:11 *That night, the Lord stood near ... and said, "Keep up your courage!"*

(v.11)

Courage often comes dressed in precious rags. It sobs when facing death... feels disoriented... isolated... can't catch its breath. It smiles and jokes around while it waits to lose its breasts; then, counts in milliliters until the drains are pulled from its flat chest. It smiles through chemo orientations while its heart is filled with dread. It lays awake at night worried its husband is so stressed. It sits and chats, in chemo chairs while "red devils" roam its chest. With sweaty palms, it picks the hair chunks off its bed. It takes its nausea medicine then stares at the thermometer as it feels the fever's edge. It befriends one met in chemo knowing it will end in death. It smiles calmly into the little, anxious face. It giggles as its chemo mind acts out and then forgets. It learns what really matters. It lets go of the rest. It cherishes each sunrise... each ride to school... each dirty little face. She learns to know, and love, the Presence who is nearer than her breath.

2 Samuel 17:24-18:8; Psalm 106:1-18; Mark 11:12-26

Beyond the Fences by Vickey. Cheney

Beyond feeling: Beyond thought.
To the sacred space, I sought.

And there, in that quiet place;
rested in my God's embrace.

Beyond the mind: Beyond the senses.

Beyond the earth: Beyond its fences.

The news came as no surprise really. My wife and I had seen the signs of rebellion emerging. This gorgeous, lovely seven-year-old I've known since his birth was in trouble at school – stealing things from his classmates – then acting as if nothing was wrong – and yelling at the teacher who tried to correct him.

His mother was getting on a flight to L.A. for an important conference. His dad, a stressed-out school teacher, was not dealing with this well. Nor was he able to handle the constant "No I won't!" at home whether it was pick up toys, brush teeth, or use his napkin at dinner.

Enter the grandparents. My wife, Carolyn, and I had agreed to pick him up from school, stay the night in order to get him fed, dressed and back to school while Mommy was gone. Little Calyb was in danger of being expelled from school. I guess you can rebel at any age.

That evening as Carolyn and I helped him with his chore list – reading him a story and getting him to bed, it became obvious that his dad needed more TLC than Calyb did. We talked late – my wife and I mostly listening and trying to be supportive.

As I kissed Calyb goodnight, he had confided in me: "Granddad, I've been stealing things at school." I said, "I know."

"How did you know?" he asked, surprised. "Your mom told us."

"Oh." "Why do you think you're doing that?"

"I just really like those things."

"Ok.... Goodnight... I love you." I said tenderly.

I went home and Carolyn stayed. I didn't sleep well that night. I awoke with an inspiration.

I put on my surgical scrub greens, blue examination gloves, my long white doctor coat, and hung my black stethoscope around my neck. And that is how I greeted him the next morning.

His eyes were wide with surprise! I invited him to sit beside me on the couch – his mouth still open – speechless and said, "I have four things to tell you:

1. I love you.
2. Your thoughts come and go – they are not who you are. Think of a toy you wanted. Now think of something in this room. (He noticed a ceiling light.) Notice how those thoughts come and go, even disappear. You are still here. Those thoughts are not who you are.
3. You have a good heart. Listen to your own heart through this stethoscope. (His eyes were again wide with amazement as he heard his own heartbeat.) Listen to your heart and it will guide you. You have a good heart.
4. I love you."

I took him to school and dropped him off.

The previous evening his dad had marveled at our patience and centeredness. "You guys are saints!" he gushed. *(continued on page 3)*

Retreat Report: June 16-22, 2017

AWAKENING WITHOUT THE BODY continued from p.2

“Not even close,” I said.

He continued, “I don’t have time to meditate like you guys do.”

“No worries.” I replied. “This is your daily practice. No one truly grows up until they have children. I know I didn’t!”

“You eventually learn that: Truth without compassion is brutality. Compassion without truth is hypocrisy. But Truth *with* compassion is love. This is your practice.”

I remember Eckhart Tolle has wondered why they don’t teach this in school. Your emotions and thoughts come and go so they are not who you are. This is easily verifiable. Be in touch with your Beingness, your Presence, the “I Am.” It can be readily taught and experienced.

As of this writing, dear Calyb has had two “successful” days at school and Mommy is back home. I know for me letting go of thoughts and emotions is a type of death, yet very freeing – kind of like awakening without the body you’ve always known.

Chapter Coordinator Responsibilities

Fidelity to the Prayer – reminds us who we are and why we meet –
CO Vision

Charism of Utmost Charity – models the conviction that how we treat one another as we serve is the most important manifestation of our fidelity to the prayer - *Theological Principles*

Consensus Builder – promotes bottoms up consensus decision making:

- Encourages us to wait for consensus before we move forward on initiatives
- This assumes, at some point, each member will need to say, “This decision is not my preferred option; however, in the interest of consensus, I agree to support it.”

Convener - calls us together on a timely basis to pursue our Chapter’s initiatives

Communicator – promotes clear and timely understanding of our Chapter’s direction and initiatives.

Coordinator – coordinates our Chapter’s administrative needs –
Administrative Principles

Continuity – encourages consistent invitation, orientation and meaningful involvement of all members and the development of new leadership.

Fifty people (staff included) gathered at Our Lady of Florida Retreat Center in North Palm Beach to attend a six-day Centering Prayer intensive/post intensive retreat. During orientation, the retreatants were asked “why they came” and most answered “to deepen their relationship with God.”

It was then recommended to refrain from any reading (other than scripture) in order to empty themselves, go inward, and cooperate with the work of the Spirit in the healing process.

The immersion of 50 people into the depths of silence, grand silence, no eye contact, and extended periods of Centering Prayer created fertile ground for God’s love to manifest itself.

The monastic atmosphere, lovely grounds, holistic facilities and delicious, healthy meals prepared by a professional chef was the ideal atmosphere for everyone to be free to do their inner work.

Everyone was reminded that it is important to listen to the body (the body doesn’t lie) and to take care of themselves. If the long prayer sits became too demanding on the body, they were free to stay in their room to pray in private and rest.

Exercise/walking was encouraged to help move the energy that gets stored in the body and needs to be released.

Time was available every afternoon with a staff member for personal soul friending, and the day ended with liturgy of the Eucharist.

The opening of the mind and heart at a deeper level was their gift to God. God’s healing love and the transformation process was God’s gift to them.

What are you waiting for? Scholarships are available through your chapter and Contemplative Outreach.

The next weekend retreat with Fr. Bill Sheehan is January 5-7, 2018. The next six day intensive/post intensive retreat with Fr. Bill is June 17-23, 2018. We are now taking registrations for the waiting list for the January retreat.

Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, N. Palm Beach, FL



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

Tuesday, Mark 11: 27-12:12 ... “By what authority are you doing these things?” (v. 28)

It seems to me this is a fair question to ask, “Why try to pattern my life after Jesus’ teachings?” In other words, what difference does it make in my life? I mean *really*. Especially on days like today when I don’t feel particularly friendly or peaceful; days when I feel selfish and angry. I know I have a lot for which to be grateful. Frankly, I am not. Where is all this “transformation” I am seeking? In this state of mind, I feel like a fraud. So, I sit in my miserable funk and fester. I ask that question over and over again for days. Slowly some answers begin to emerge. Grace: where I am accepted for what I can become rather than for what I am. Community: where I experience compassion. Liturgy: sacred time and space where thin places appear. Sacred silence: where I find the freedom that comes in emptiness. Service: where I experience that it is in dying to myself that I find Life. All true, *really*. Jesus got it right. 2 Samuel 18:9-18; Psalms 120, 121,122,123; Acts 23: 12-24

Inspire us with your reflections/articles, send to:
Dan Wagner
dwagner119@gmail.com

Visio Divina from the “God is Love” Video Series

By Dan Wagner

Curiosity grabbed me with the Visio Divina term in the “God is Love” video series from Contemplative Outreach. What was this practice? How was it done? Would it help us in our journey to Christ?

Visio Divina: Seeing with the Eye of the Heart

Visio Divina facilitates a relationship with an image or subject, patiently being with it, receptive in mind and heart, perhaps even in dialogue with it. In stillness, we allow the image to reach beyond the intellect and into the unconscious level of our being, a place that can’t be accessed directly. In wonder, we are invited to look at every aspect of an image and ponder it as an encounter with God. It is a way of seeing an aspect of ourselves in God, at the non-verbal, heart level. The image then becomes alive with personal meaning, meant just for us. This is the same movement of the Spirit we can experience with Lectio Divina and Scripture – gazing, reflecting, responding, and resting. (From “God is Love” “The Heart of all Creation” Guidebook p. 13- 14. Contemplative Outreach video series with Fr Thomas Keating and Fr. Carl Arico).

We have used the following as a guide for Visio Divina using paintings from the “God is Love” video series painted by William Congdon. C.O. is giving a 6 day retreat on this in Sewanee, TN, September 15-21. Go to <http://www.stmaryssewanee.org/about/events> for details.

Visio Divina Format

We will now gaze upon the image. We will gaze at the picture four times. Each time I will offer a very brief instruction. The first three times, we gaze; it will be followed by a minute of silence. Then after the fourth viewing, we will spend five minutes in silence.

1. **Videntes (Gazing** at the image)

As we gaze for the first time, I invite you to become aware of any word or phrase that describes what you see... just a word or phrase that resonates within you as you view this image. (View the image. Allow one minute of silence for reflection) **If you would like and with no discussion, I invite you to share aloud the word or phrase that came to you as you viewed the image.**

2. **Meditatio (Reflecting** on the Divine you find in the image)

As you gaze upon the picture this second time, I invite you to become aware of any reflection or thought as you gaze... simply a reflection or thought as you carefully view the image. (View the image and allow one minute of silence for reflection) **If you would like and again with no discussion, I invite you to share the reflection or thought that came to you as you viewed the image.**

3. **Oratio (Responding** to the Divine you find in the image)

As we look upon the image this third time, I invite you to become aware of any prayer that rises up within you that expresses what you are experiencing as you gaze at the image. (View the image, and allow one minute of silence for reflection) **If you like, I invite you to share aloud, the prayer that arose within your heart.**

4. **Contemplatio (Resting** with the Divine you find in the image)

As you look upon the image this fourth and final time, I invite you to just sit with the image and allow God to speak to you in the **silence** of your heart, remembering that God’s first language is silence. (View the image, and allow about five minutes for silent reflection)

Closing Prayer: God of Love, we thank you for the gift of the Divine you created in this image. May we take the word or phrase that spoke to us, the thought we became aware of, and the prayer that arose in our hearts as a reminder of our genuine desire to consent to your presence and action in our lives. We pray through Jesus the Christ.

(Adapted from Lectio Divina handout from CO training Oct 26, 2013 p. 14)