



# COCFL News

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**COCFL ANNUAL  
RETREAT**  
with  
**Fr. Martin Laird**

November 2—4, 2018  
Canterbury Retreat  
Center  
1601 Alafaya Trail  
Oveido, Florida

(For more information see  
the article on Page 3)

**REVISITING THE  
WISDOM JESUS**  
with

**Fr. Bill Sheehan, OMI**  
January 4, 2019 –  
January 6, 2019  
Our Lady of Florida  
Spiritual Center  
North Palm Beach  
Flyer/Registration Form  
Is Available At  
[WWW.COCFL.ORG](http://WWW.COCFL.ORG)



### **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.



## Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida July 2018

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

### A WORD FROM OUR COORDINATORS

#### A Word from Dan Wagner

I write this during the wonder-filled days of my deepening retreat in St. Louis at the Marianist Retreat Center. This morning we had a desert day and I found myself at Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Eureka, Missouri three miles from the retreat center with Father Leo Spezia. We were delighted that the Spirit led us to a church with a shining example of a priest on the altar. We had arrived a half an hour before mass to do centering prayer before mass started. I noticed the priest sitting quietly on the altar in full vestments with his altar server in what looked like a prayerful pose. I spoke to him after prayer and he said that he was doing centering prayer. It was encouraging and inspiring to observe his good example and a confirmation of our prayer.

As I reflected on the words the reader spoke at the 1<sup>st</sup> reading for the mass of St. Iraneous from Timothy 2:22-26, I realized they were words right out of the conferences that we were having at the Marianist Center. In 2 Timothy 2:22-26, it says to “pursue righteousness, faith,

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#### A Word from Jesse Fox

After attending the St. Hildegard retreat with Sr. Mary McGehee, OSB, at St. Gabriel’s this past spring I was deeply impressed with many aspects of the life of this medieval saint. Perhaps what stood out to me most was her cosmic vision. Hildegard saw deeply, not just in the sense that she saw layers of meaning in life, but her spiritual vision was truly three dimensional seeing height (transcendence), depth (immanence), and breadth (time) in not just her limited cultural location, but in the cosmos itself.

Her ability to see sacramentally reminded me of the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins who said, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” She was able to see that grandeur wherever she looked. She anticipated by nearly 1,000 years the theological and scientific insights of Pierre de Chardin, the French Jesuit, in her ecological spirituality. I immediately ordered a copy of Renate Craine’s translation of her visions and have enjoyed spending time contemplating only a handful of her massive collection of mystical visions.

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# A HISTORY of EXTENSIÓN CONTEMPLATIVA INTERNACIONAL

by Ilse Reissner



*Editorial Note: Ilse Reissner (seen above on Fr. Keating's left) is a member of our Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida community. She is a friend of Father Keating and has been instrumental in establishing Spanish language access to Centering Prayer in the U.S. and Latin America.*

I was born in Colombia, S.A. to German parents. I moved to Miami in 1962 with my five children and started working for Dow Chemical in Miami in 1966. My spiritual journey began in when 1980 I joined St. Louis Catholic Church. In the mid 1980s I was asked by my pastor to start a Bible class with a group of parishioners in my neighborhood. He later invited some of us to participate in a 3-year Lay Ministry training program. That's where I met Fr. Bill Sheehan, who was the spiritual director of the group. He had just returned from the first contemplative retreat in Lama, New Mexico with Fr. Thomas Keating. He introduced the group to Centering Prayer and convinced me to start a Centering Prayer group in my new parish, St. John Neumann. Very few people attended, but we persisted. In the silence I realized that all God wants from me is to allow God's presence & action in my life, to be a pencil in God's hands. I started attending ten-day retreats at Mary Mrozowski's "Chrysalis Center" in New York, as well as retreats lead by Fr. Keating in Snowmass, Colorado and in Amarillo, Texas.

The history of the Spanish Centering Prayer Groups in Central Florida begins in 1991, when I moved to Altamonte Springs from Miami after retiring from Dow. I wanted to join a Centering Prayer group in Orlando. Fr. Sheehan referred me to Sr. Claire Gregg who in turn referred me to Basha Perez's Centering Prayer group in Altamonte Springs. There I met Maria Teresa Torregrosa, a parishioner of Mary Magdalene Church, who invited me to join their Spanish Bible group. I did and we decided to introduce this group to Centering Prayer. I invited Dr. Adalberto Henriquez to give a talk about Father Thomas Keating's works and Centering Prayer in Spanish. There was NOTHING in Spanish except the Spiritual Journey tapes and part of "Invitation to Love." So I started translating pieces of "Invitation to Love," to have a teaching tool for the group. It didn't take long before Fr. Keating heard about it and asked me to translate the entire book. It was published in 1995

followed by *Open Mind Open Heart* and *Mystery of Christ*. I also started translating his articles in the Contemplative Outreach Newsletter. When you translate you really have to "dig" into the meaning of the content in another language, and that was my "immersion" in C.P.

After attending Dr. Henriquez' workshop in Mary Magdalene Church, Carmen and Pedro Delorbe founded a second Centering Prayer group at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Orlando. Eventually in 2000 I was contacted by some ladies from Annunciation Catholic Church in Altamonte Springs who became interested in learning about Centering Prayer in Spanish. After our Introductory Workshop this third group started meeting on Tuesday mornings and continues to this day. Meanwhile we were invited by Mercedes and Enrique Fernandez to offer an Introductory Workshop at their house, and they now meet once a month with Adal Henriquez, his wife Margarita and others. In 2013 Paulina Nichols was invited by one of our practitioners to attend an Introductory workshop, and started a fourth group in South Orlando at St. Luke's Church.

In the years that followed I found myself accompanying Fr. Thomas to the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America. I was his translator and we became very good friends.

At a faculty meeting of Contemplative Outreach in Miami we were asked to break into small groups to come up with new ideas for the future. I sat with other Spanish-speaking members and we discussed our future in Latin America. Many ideas came up and we saw the need to meet again in the near future. At that first meeting in Boynton Beach we founded the corporation *Extensión Contemplativa Internacional, Spanish for Contemplative Outreach*, and elected a "Board" which lasted a decade. The Lord, with God's excellent sense of humor, inspired them to elect me President and Treasurer. A few days before I had commented to the group in Orlando that I was getting bored with nothing to do. I have never been able to say that again. At the end of 2009 we decided to change that corporate image that existed until then and replaced the "board" for "Circle of Friends," an organism, something alive, where all decisions would be made based on discernment and unanimous agreement.

Extensión Contemplativa Internacional now has translations of every book and other writings by Fr. Keating and others, offers workshops and retreats in Spanish in Latin America and the U.S. and has its own website. We have coordinators in almost every Latin American country with Marilu Ason as the head coordinator, as well as group facilitators and a great number of certified presenters, thanks to everybody's great effort and cooperation, in obedience of the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I'm now retired and devote my time to the formation and guidance of our four contemplative groups in Orlando.

**That is how the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we offer our effort, which may be very small, and the spirit in us does the rest!!!**

## A WORD FROM OUR COORDINATORS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

### A Word from Dan Wagner

love and peace.” In the spirit of that passage from Timothy, I saw a parallel to Disposition 2 from our retreat materials. It says to foster a friendly, respectful, trusting, and humble attentiveness to the group discernment process. The similarity in how the Gospels direct us to live, and how we serve as a servant leader was apparent to me.

In Disposition #3 of our retreat materials it says: To maintain a safe environment in the group and allow the Spirit the maximum opportunity to work. The first reading of our mass at Sacred Heart from 2 Timothy 2:22 continues with “A slave of the Lord should not quarrel, but should be gentle with everyone, able to teach, tolerant, correcting opponents with kindness.” I can’t imagine a better way to maintain a safe environment for others to speak which allows hearts to hear the Holy Spirit. God’s holy word was coming to us from two completely different sources that magnify and confirm its content. Praise God for Fr. Keating and St. Timothy.

When the Gospel was read yet another affirmation occurred for me. It was John 17:20-25 that speaks of the Divine Indwelling that we talked about at the retreat: “As you Father are in me, and I in you, that they may be in us.” The Spirit was teaching thru this mass to confirm our retreat materials.

The priest said that we go to daily mass for grace and the spiritual strength to do the things God wants us to do, not to be a saint.

I thank God for the retreat and many thanks to our former coordinator Nestor de Armas for recommending it to me.

Peace and blessings,  
Dan

### A Word from Jesse Fox

As Sr. McGehee wrapped up our retreat at St. Gabriel’s she left us with a challenge befitting of Hildegard’s prophet voice. It is a call to practice non-violence for one year, which Sr. McGehee and the sisters at Sacred Heart Monastery will share with visitors and retreatants. Grounded in Jesus’ teaching and example of non-violence throughout his life, especially in the sermon on the mount (Blessed are the peacemakers...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you) and on the cross of our liberation, I invite you to consider what this vow could mean for us as we continue to pursue God in the gift of contemplation.

“Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

- by striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;
- by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;
- by refusing to retaliate through social media in the face of provocation and violence;
- by acknowledging my own anger, non-forgiveness, and resentment, and how this might lead to violence of thought, speech and action;
- by living conscientiously and simply, with increasing awareness of the influence of materialism and consumerism.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.” (Taken from “A Vow of Non-Violence” published by the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery.)

Jesse Fox, Ph.D., NCC  
Stetson University

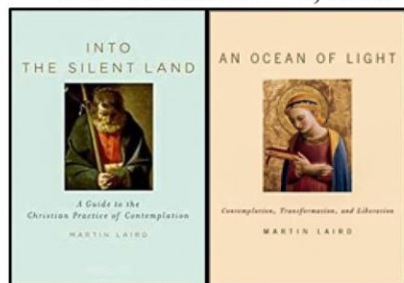
### A WORD ABOUT FATHER KEATING

Many of you have been asking about Fr. Keating. Fr. Thomas is at the abbey. He has not gone anywhere. He is in hospice care but is still being taken care of in the infirmary. Fr. Thomas is basically the same health wise as he has been for the past many weeks, not good, but not critical either. Prayers are greatly appreciated and he sends love and gratitude to all.

## 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.

## COCFL ANNUAL RETREAT WITH FR. MARTIN LAIRD NOVEMBER 2 - 4, 2018



Martin Laird is a member of the Order of St Augustine and Professor of Early Christian Studies at Villanova University, USA. He has extensive training in contemplative disciplines and gives retreats and lectures throughout the United States, Great Britain and Ireland. Among his books are *Into the Silent Land* and *A Sunlit Absence*, compelling works for those interested in contemplative prayer. He draws on the ancient wisdom of both the Christian East and West as well as on contemporary literature. His most recent book, *An Ocean of Light*, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press in December 2018.

Cost:

Double Room: \$275

Single Room: \$325

Commuter Fee: \$150

**The non-refundable registration fee is \$65.  
Registration Deadline: October 19, 2018**

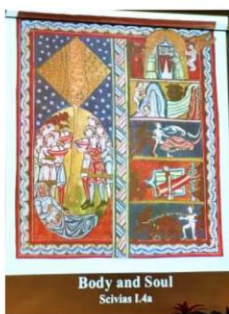
Registration for this event will open soon.  
Scholarships are available.  
Registration forms and information will be available at [www.COCFL.ORG](http://www.COCFL.ORG)

## WHAT DOES THE LIFE AND WORK OF ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN TEACH US TODAY?

By Susan Arneson



Our learned presenter, Sr. Mary Megehee, OSB provided answers to that question of relevance in abundance, uplifting and inspiring our group of 55 soul-hungry contemplatives.



For her particular importance and wide scope of contributions revealed anew in our times, Pope Benedict XVI named St. Hildegard (1098 – 1179) a Doctor of the Church in 2012. (There are 34 Doctors of the Church, and four are women: Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Ávila, Thérèse of Lisieux and now, Hildegard von Bingen). Across the centuries, her rich and saintly legacy has awaited discovery.

In fields such as ecology, math, architecture, plant-based medicine, horticulture, visual arts, philosophy, spirituality, cosmology, theology, noetics (the study of thinking and perceiving), music composition/theory, writing and the art of rhetoric, St. Hildegard made towering contributions. Even so, what has this to do with us today?

She had an immense respect for the wholeness and harmony of humanity's interconnectedness with all of creation. She encouraged thinking of the universe as one body with one breath, the Breath of the Spirit. Originating the term "veriditas" (green power), she taught that creativity and greening power are intimately connected, that *veriditas* is given to us through the Holy Spirit, and that each one of us (along with everything in creation) has something "green" – lively, lush and fruitful – to bring to the world.

We are to bear fruit that is nourished by the "Purest Spring" flowing from God. Following her example, we are to pray silently in solitude, to be open to receiving the Divine images and visions waiting for us and to persist in sharing what we perceive with others in love. Experience taught her that by marrying our own unique gifts with love for the entire cosmos, a deep psychological healing transpires.

Hildegard's life and works embody freshness, directness and boldness; a generative creative voice; a feminine wisdom and a spirituality that is like an in-rush of crisp, clean mountain air. She encourages us to pay attention both to our inward gifts and the cosmic gifts and to be tireless in celebrating and sharing them with our own unique voices.