



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

WELCOMING PRAYER WORKSHOP with Mary Dwyer

April 6, 2019
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Woodlawn Presbyterian
Church
2612 12th St. North
St. Petersburg, FL 33704

Divine Therapy Workshop with Rickey Cotton

April 6, 2019
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Hope Episcopal Church
190 Interlachen Rd.
Melbourne, FL 32940

The day will examine Fr. Keating's vital insights in the purification and healing aspects involved in the spiritual journey, the journey to become whole and free, who we really are in God. In addition the day will include periods of Centering Prayer and times of meditation on key selections from Fr. Thomas's powerful writing on divine therapy and inner healing.



Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

March 2019

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

A Word from Dan Wagner

I think one of the primary struggles of the spiritual journey is renewing the resolve to do God's will daily. We wake up, jump in the shower and as the to-do list grinds into hyper-drive, we get out of the shower with a dozen things on our mind distinctly apart from our resolution to seek God today and all days.

One thing you can do is to pray first before anything. While your home is still and quiet, allow time to consent to God's action and presence in your life by praying your Centering Prayer. Because of the gift of self-knowledge that Centering Prayer imparts to us, we begin to realize and know that if we don't do it at certain times of the day, it won't get done or is pushed aside unwittingly by the demands of the day. Resolve to pray immediately upon rising because you know that prayer and openness to God's will helps order your day according to His will and therefore His priorities. Without it, the day can get a little out of whack. Pray first thing in the day.

Later in the day, you may be nudged by the Holy Spirit to pray as you pass the quiet repose of a church. It may call you in to quiet communion for a Centering Prayer break to re-enter into the day more fully under His guidance and counsel. Perhaps you can pray during a

A Word from Jesse Fox

I woke this morning to a beautiful sunrise over the lake; my thoughts were lucid, focused on God. The natural beauty of creation is a gateway to my time of contemplation. My prayer bell started and I slipped into a calm, rest-filled silence, soaking up the Divine presence through my consent to the action and presence of God within me. The time passed quickly and before I realized it, I had prayed through my allotted morning prayer time when the bell rang signaling my daily office was at an end. I walked downstairs to start my day filled with an awareness of God's presence in everything.

If only that were true! There are times when that has been true. But if I am honest with myself, these times are more the exception than the rule. I sometimes idealize contemplation, as if it were something to be emulated from stain glassed or plaster casted saints. I love these works of art, and they remind me that a saint is "someone who has the light of Christ shining through them" as my old priest would say. But they are the ideal. The real feels more like my daily life, filled with work and family obligations that constantly tug at my attention. Another priest once said, "I used

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued on Page 3)

Opportunities for Growth and Enrichment Abound in Central Florida

Forgiveness in Silence Retreat By Susan Arneson

Held in the beautiful 150-year old St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church, Titusville, on January 19, 2019, this retreat featured reflections by Fr. Robert Goodridge, Rector (St. Gabriel's), Fr. Kenneth Nolan (Priest, St. Gabriel's), and Deacon Christine Croskey (Hope Episcopal). This remarkable team guided participants to learn about and reflect deeply on forgiveness. The day also included two 30-minute sessions of Centering Prayer.

Fr. Rob encouraged us to continue the practice of listening: "It is in silence that you tap into your deepest creative power, to the Source of all Creation, to consciousness itself. Silence is healing, nourishing. It reveals who and what you fundamentally are . . . It is in the silence that God hears our hearts. In the silence, we can listen; we can still our minds; open our souls . . . and listen to the one true God."

Deacon Christine spoke about the relationship of shame and guilt to forgiveness, sharing from her experience when she was a young mom on active duty in the military. Returning home from deployment, she was met by hateful comments from another mother who refused to allow their daughters to play together. Standing in God's love, Deacon Christine was able to refute the shame attributed to her, forgive the other mother, and move forward with a feeling of personal confidence.

Fr. Ken guided a visual meditation: "The Flowers of Forgiveness." He invited us to imagine the most beautiful garden filled with glorious flowers. We were to walk among the garden paths in the presence of God and reflect on our various faults and regrets that we have over our lifetimes. We were to select a flower of forgiveness for each experience. Finally, we were invited to collect all our flowers into a beautiful bouquet and quietly receive God's love and forgiveness.

Many thanks to these devoted teachers and guides for a memorable day together.



A New Intimacy with Christ By Beth Murphy



*"Our soul was created for one purpose, to love."
~St John of the Cross*

Saturday, January 19, 2019, the Space Coast Alliance of Small Christian Communities hosted a day of reflection at Divine Mercy Catholic Church on Merritt Island with Deacon Jim Bogdan as the presenter for the day. The theme for the day was "A New Intimacy with Christ."

Deacon Jim Bogdan has been married to his wife Pat for 45 years. They have three sons, and nine grandchildren. He has a masters degree in pastoral counseling and has been a deacon for 25 years, and 22 of those years in full time parish ministry. He helps bring Christ to souls and souls to Christ for healing and intimacy through writing, homilies, retreats, missions, days of reflection, spiritual direction and pastoral counseling.

Deacon Jim's emphasis for the day was to bring us to Christ with affection in our hearts, turn to Christ with affection in prayer, be affectionate to those around us and do our work with affection. We all somewhat looked at each other and then we engaged our imaginations to begin to understand how we might do this, or how we might already be doing this. He helped us to picture how this might be through song, stories, and quotes from spiritual masters such as John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, St. Francis of Assisi, and Mother Theresa.

At one point during the morning Deacon Jim taught us about the sacred word as taught by Father Thomas Keating. He invited us to sit in silence and listen for our sacred word and then open our eyes when it had come to us. When all 160 people in attendance opened their eyes, he asked us to call out our word. It was heaven for me to hear my small Christian community and Bible study friends gently, sweetly, say their new-found sacred word.

A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

A Word from Dan Wagner (Continued from Page 1)

lunch hour, or a time in the day when you can take a break and just be with God. What about that time in the middle of the afternoon you reserved for coffee? Instead, make an appointment with God for a little quiet communion. It takes a little creativity, but where there is a will, there is a way.

This helps set a godly tone for the day to help you stay more in tune to His will, His presence in your life and makes all things good. As it says in Romans 8:38:

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In between times, Fr. Thomas’ teaching would remind us that there is your prayer word, or phrase such as “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner,” or “Thank you, Lord” to renew that intention when the occasion requires it while on the go.

Peace and blessings,
Dan

**You are an important part of Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida!
We would like to hear from you!**

- Is something happening in your Centering Prayer group that might inspire or encourage other groups?
- Is your Centering Prayer group reading a book, viewing a video or series or finding enrichment in some other way that might benefit other groups?
- Has your Centering Prayer group done something special like a retreat, a day of reflection or a visit to someplace inspirational?
- Are you a writer, a poet or a photographer who is willing to share your gift with us?
 - If you have something to share, we would love to hear from you!

Please contact Susan McBride at
SusanMcBride94@gmail.com

A Word from Jesse Fox (Continued from Page 1)

to think the distractions in my life kept me from my work, till I realized the distractions are my real work.” How true, and how often I forget. In some way I am set up to fail at contemplation, it isn’t something I “succeed” at. Rather, according to Richard Rohr, whatever invites me to love and suffering is a practice of contemplation. Failure is a wonderful teacher, if only it has taught me that all that matters really is the return to trusting in the benevolent presence that is always ready to receive me.

I wish everyone a rich and blessed season of Lent, and that new spaces of interior freedom are opened to you, especially in the midst of love, suffering, and endless distraction.

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Stetson University

“Only when we can accept God as he is can we give up the desire for spiritual experiences that we can feel.”

~Thomas Keating

Julian of Norwich Workshop Moments



All Shall Be Well: Julian of Norwich, A Mystic for Our Times, By Susan McBride

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

“When my spirit is faint, you know my way.”

(Psalm 142:3)

It's early. The last remnant of the cool night air scampers away from the early morning light as I slip through the chapel door to practice Centering Prayer. Soft chants are gently dancing on the chapel's vaults. Votive flames flicker on icon faces and altar cloths. Golden lights shimmer on the dark brown pew.

I settle into its soft cushion and feel its smooth hard wood. Gently, I fill my lungs ... exhale ... relax. After a while, the music diminishes into silence. Like a rolling ocean wave, a deep and gentle gong crescendos out, then settles back into the silence. I accept its invitation and follow it into physical ... emotional ... mental silence. Ever so slowly, the chatter in my mind becomes irrelevant then subsides. Flashes of deep and quiet intimacy spring into my consciousness like heat lightning on a moonless night.

I am Known.

Time stops ...

the gong signals the end of this very special time.

The chants resume their vaulted dance. I rise into the ordinariness of life renewed ... refreshed ... alive.

** 2 Samuel 19:24-43; Psalm 140; Acts 24:24-25:12; Mark 12:35-44



If you were to ask any contemplative gathering, “Who is your favorite mystic?” probably 4 out of 5 of those folks would answer, “Julian of Norwich.” So it is no wonder that the workshop presented by Patty Merlo at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on February 9, 2019, in Mt. Dora attracted sixty-nine participants!

Julian of Norwich lived during the 14th century from approximately 1342 to 1420. She lived during a time of great calamity and upheaval. The climate was changing, causing the Baltic Sea to freeze and resulting in great famine. There was great civil chaos. This was the time of the 100-Year War and the assassination of the King of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Church was atrociously immoral at this time with multiple popes. Reformers were considered heretics and were burned at the stake. Women were forbidden to teach or hold positions of authority. Julian was truly putting her life on the line by sharing her writings. The bubonic plague or Black Death ran rampant throughout England killing one half of the population. It is assumed that Julian probably had a family that succumbed to the plague.

When Julian was 30 years old, she became gravely ill, almost to the point of death. Shortly after that time she received the divine revelations. In 1393 she wrote the 86 chapters describing her sixteen revelations (shewings).

The day was punctuated with five periods of Centering Prayer interspersed with six teaching sessions. Early in the day, Patty shared with us the three graces for which Julian prayed. She then invited all of us to pray for a grace that we would like to receive during our time together. Patty described “grace” as the result of Centering Prayer whereby we empty ourselves of ourselves in order to allow the Spirit to fill us. During the course of the day there were many opportunities for interaction and small group activity. Patty presented many of Julian's writings. We were invited to work together to find the deeper meaning in two of Julian's more well known stories: the story of the hazelnut and the allegorical story of the master and the servant.

The overarching theme of the day was God's great love for us. In great humility, Julian of Norwich was the vessel through which God makes known to us that we are created in love, sustained in love and love is our destiny.

Videos of the workshop will soon be available online at COCFL.org.