



# COCFL News

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Now Accepting  
Registrations!!**

**COCFL ANNUAL  
RETREAT  
with  
Maru de Guevara  
December 6 – 8, 2019**

**Canterbury Retreat &  
Conference Center  
1601 Alafaya Trail  
Oviedo, Florida 32765**

**CENTERING  
PRAYER  
RETREAT  
With**

**Fr. Bill Sheehan**

**January 3 – 5, 2020  
Our Lady of Florida  
Spiritual Center  
North Palm Beach,  
Florida 33408  
Space limited!**

**More information and  
registration forms for  
both of these events  
are available at:**

**[www.COCFL.org](http://www.COCFL.org)**



## **Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida**

**November 2019**

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

### **A Word from Dan Wagner**

Not too long ago I attended the annual Contemplative Outreach conference that was held in Denver, Colorado. At the conference, a Contemplative Outreach website presentation was done by Pamela Begeman who is in communications and programs with Contemplative Outreach Ltd. Pamela talked to us about the new website designed for Contemplative Outreach, the benefits of technology and how the Spirit moves globally thru it.

She began by saying that most Centering Prayer practitioners pray by themselves or with a group that is not part of a local organization, especially those outside of the United States. So Contemplative Outreach is using technology to meet people where they are to help them to deepen their spiritual journey.

The Contemplative Outreach website had 107,000 visits from 200 different countries last year. Of those, 53% are new visitors. Our local website, Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida (COCFL) has approximately 4,000 to 6,000 visits per year.

The new website has a drop down menu. Under "PRACTICE" there is a page listed for

### **A Word from Jesse Fox**

In September, I was lucky enough to attend the Contemplative Outreach International Conference in Denver, CO. This was the first gathering since the passing of Fr. Keating last November, almost exactly one year ago. Fr. Joseph Boyle, the Abbot of Snowmass also passed away within weeks of Fr. Keating. Because of that, the gathering was a mixture of grieving, and a sense of "what next?" all wrapped into one.

Many were present who knew both of these figures personally and intimately. Because of that, stories, like those that often accompany a family gathering after one of their kin has died, were everywhere. "Do you remember when Fr. Keating said..." was a constant reminder both of this man's legacy, and of his capacity as a spiritual leader.

What stuck with people the most was his presence, and the Presence behind it. Universally, when people encountered him they felt a sense of love, gentleness, humility, and acceptance. I do not think it is too strong to say that he was a holy man. I never met Fr. Keating personally, but I would have to be blind indeed to not see him in the people he helped, counseled, taught, and guided.

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued on Page 3)



## Soul Friends in Silence by Susan McBride

*"We do not know each other; we have not yet dared to be silent together."*

--Maurice Maeterlinck



The Centering Prayer group at Santa Maria del Mar recently dared to be silent together. For three days in October, eight ladies and one gentleman in our group shared a silent retreat at the St. Joseph Renewal Center in St. Augustine, Florida. Our theme was: Experiencing God's Presence through the Five Senses.

During our retreat we explored what it means to really experience our sense of sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste, allowing the Holy Spirit to work through our senses with the intention to become as St. Iranaeus said "human persons fully alive!" Our retreat schedule allowed for multiple sessions of Centering Prayer along with personal and group times for reflection and quiet introspection.

If you have never thought about taking a time away with your Centering Prayer group, I want to encourage you to consider it. Our time apart from our daily lives, shared together in an atmosphere of silence has moved our group to a deeper level as "soul-friends" than we could ever have imagined!

***Is something happening in your Centering Prayer group that might inspire or encourage other groups?***

If you have something to share,  
we would love to hear from you!  
**Please contact Susan McBride at**  
[SusanMcBride94@gmail.com](mailto:SusanMcBride94@gmail.com)

## The Gift of Contemplative Service by Basha Perez

*"Contemplative Service is God in us, serving God in others."* This is a quote from Thomas Keating that is dear to my heart. I recently had the opportunity to see those words come to life at an Introductory Workshop in St. Cloud. Support comes with a team of presenters willing to travel and give up a Saturday in order to be of contemplative service. Liz Lefevre invited me to oversee the day and introduce the presenters. It is always a pleasure to serve our chapter in whatever capacity is needed.

The gift that I received in return was to witness the fruits of the Centering Prayer practice in the lives of each presenter.

Sharon, a presenter in training, gave the first talk: "Prayer as Relationship." She set the tone for the rest of the day with her relaxed manner and delivery. If she was nervous, it was not evident because she knew the material and was living it in her daily life.

Michael, another new presenter, did conference two, "The Method of Centering Prayer", explaining the guidelines. He brings his experience as a deacon (and giving homilies) to his new role as a presenter. Keeping to the essentials is our main task and Michael even included humor in doing so.

Barbara, the third presenter and longtime practitioner brought her peace-filled presence and soft voice to explain guideline #3: "Thoughts and Use of the Sacred Word." This talk always gets the most response with many questions.

Elmer, another presenter in training, gave the final presentation "Deepening Your Relationship with God" using some personal examples and making it a living experience from his years as co-coordinator and facilitator.

As I watched the response and interaction of the presenters with the audience, my heart swelled with gratitude to God. I felt privileged...like a grandmother watching her grandchildren graduate; knowing that ALL IS WELL and ALL WILL BE WELL. The Central Florida chapter of Contemplative Outreach is in good hands.



## A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

### A Word from Dan Wagner (Continued from Page 1)

Centering Prayer, the Welcoming Prayer, Lectio Divina, and the Active Prayer practice. Each page explains what the practice is and everything a person needs to know on how to begin each one of the different practices.

The “PROGRAMS” on the drop down menu has a page with a list of nine selections. In those nine selections there are 21 online courses available. Over the years, Contemplative Outreach has served over 12,000 people worldwide with these on-line courses. In 2018, at the invitation and blessing of Fr. Thomas, Contemplative Outreach put together our largest offering ever by putting his Spiritual Journey talks on-line.

During 2018, Contemplative Outreach had 460 people take the yearlong course. It was a big commitment on the part of the students and the faculty involved. The program is being offered this year as more people want to take it. After this year it will be available on-line so people can take it anytime they wish to with a small group sharing also available.

There is a new component being offered this year. It is a live on-line Zoom prayer meeting. It is called Meditation Chapel under “COMMUNITY” on the drop down menu. Contemplative Outreach is offering a free online prayer meeting for you that is available 24 hours a day. This is a place you can gather with others in the online contemplative community to pray, reflect on the content and to ask questions and be supported in that community.

Pamela shared that her first experience with the “meditation chapel” broke barriers she didn’t even know she had. She found it incredible. She felt like her consciousness expanded with one experience since the sharing was so intimate and personal. The transmission of silence and presence and being together with a common value was palpable. She had never met these people. That was it for her; she was committed to this community.

To deepen your own spiritual journey, I hope that this presentation has you interested in further study of the Contemplative Outreach web site <http://contemplativeoutreach.org> as well as our own newly designed website here in Central Florida at [www.COCFL.Org](http://www.COCFL.Org)

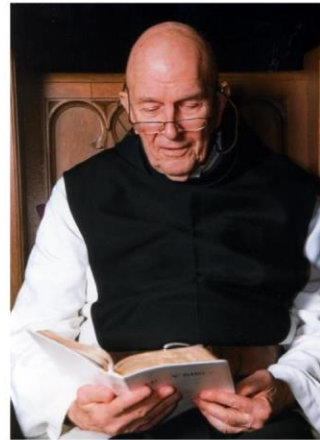
--Dan

### A Word from Jesse Fox (Continued from Page 1)

Perhaps one of the greatest evidences of his holiness was his capacity for “egolessness.” We all recognized that he never appointed a successor. He didn’t want Contemplative Outreach to be “brought to you by Fr. Keating.” Personality cults are the shadow side to all gifted spiritual teachers. Fr. Keating was always about Jesus and the Gospel, not Fr. Keating. He saw Contemplative Outreach as a way to bring a little more of God’s love into the world. And the conduit for that love is you and me, all of us, not an institution.

That was the “what next” I was impressed with and felt a sense of responsibility for. Essentially, whenever we sit in silence, in our homes, parishes, or wherever we find ourselves, we bring a little more of God’s love into the world. Where it all goes from there, be prepared because before you know it, the Spirit up and goes again, onto the next stage of creation. As Jesus said “Behold, I am making all things new!”

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Stetson University



***“Only in silence you can hear  
God speak to you.”  
Only in silence can a real prayer,  
a heart prayer be born.  
Next time you start chattering,  
stop and feel into the silence,  
feel its shape, its texture,  
and then slowly and silently say only  
what really has to be said.”***

-- Fr. Thomas Keating



### 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.

### Update on Nestor de Armas

As many of you know, our former chapter coordinator and dear friend, Nestor de Armas, was in a serious automobile accident with his wife as they traveled last July. Both Nestor and his wife, Donna sustained serious injuries in the accident. Both are recuperating from the trauma. We would like to share the following update on Nestor's condition from his daughter, Leigh de Armas DeLorenzi.

"My father wanted me to extend his love to the Centering community. He is getting better, little-by-little, and is diligent in his daily speech therapy. His speech therapist sends us score updates on his progress, and he is showing steady and significant improvements since he started in August. He has also passed his driving evaluations, so he will be thrilled to be more independent this December once his doctor officially clears him. Due to his expressive aphasia and apraxia, his words are still limited, as well as his ability to text or email his friends (although he indicates that he can understand most of what is sent to him). We think by next December 2020 we will probably see an amazing difference. Thank you for your continued prayers!"

### God's Love

**God's love is so divine.**

**Description would but make it less.**

**Tis what I feel, but can't define.**

**Tis what I know, but can't express.**

**By Vickey Cheney**

### What Can a Little Retreat Do? by Maru de Guevara



"The Liturgical year focuses on the three great theological ideas that form the heart of Christian revelation: divine light, life and love... Divine light is experienced as wisdom, divine life as empowering, and divine love as transforming." MC - Thomas Keating

Regardless of where we find ourselves in the spiritual journey, God is present with us, breathing in us his Light, Life, and the fire of his Love. Advent presents us with the opportunity to "prepare the way of the Lord," to opt for what awakens our hearts, or be swept by that which lulls us to sleep — the drugs of choice our culture offers us: technology, endless entertainment, consumerism, hyperactivity. All feeble ways we try in vain to feed our hunger for the real.

What can a little retreat do? Why do we come to retreat? We come because we have realized or are realizing that there is no true rest but in God. We come to say yes like Mary to the divine invitation, to immerse ourselves in God with our contemplative community, to open deeply to the presence and action of God within and among us. We use our power of agreement to hold sacred space together in silence. We let ourselves be drawn by the sheer gravitation of the Divine Presence. We come trusting that Spirit will feed us and deepen our hunger even more. We come to surrender.

Finally, we come hoping to return to our respective places in the dance with fresh energy and inspiration. To be awakened co-laborers with the God who is still becoming flesh, dwelling in us and among us in this beautiful, holy creation.

*Advent Retreat Design:* The structure of our retreat will include times of Centering Prayer; moments of gentle contemplative movement; interactive visual and audio presentations open to spiritual inspiration, participation and exploration. Silence as sacred container as well as the ancient practice of custody of the eyes will help us ground our intent outside the presentation times, and to honor each participant's inner space for communion.