



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

CENTERING PRAYER INTENSIVE RETREAT

Our Lady of Florida
Spiritual Center,
1300 US Highway #1, North
Palm Beach, FL 33408

June 24-30, 2022

For more information, see
the article on Page 3

LOOKING FORWARD!

SAVE THE DATE!

**COCFL Fall Retreat
October 28-30, 2022
Canterbury Conference
Center**

**1601 Alafaya Trail
Oviedo, FL 32765**

**Featured Speaker:
Julie Saad**

**For more information
about the above events,
visit
www.COCFL.org**

**Contemplative Outreach,
Ltd. continues to offer
virtual opportunities all over
the U.S. and the world
To find out about more
opportunities,
visit [http://www.contemplative
outreach.org/](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/)**



Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

March 2022

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

A Word from Our Coordinators

From Dan Wagner

United in Prayer Day gives us annual visiting privileges to a worldwide experience of Centering Prayer groups, their cultures, presentations, practices, and formats. I'm fascinated by this event where people who live around the world practice Centering Prayer at the same time. "E pluribus Unum," meaning "out of many, one." We are many speaking with the one voice of silence.

What a gift to see videos and pictures of God's creative beauty from places as far away as the Philipians!

I would like to share with you some comments from members of our Central Florida prayer community who took part in this year's United in Prayer Day.

Tony Ippolito, facilitator from Merritt Island:
"I was particularly inspired by Contemplative Outreach Czechia

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From Jesse Fox

An Episcopal Bishop once told me that Centering Prayer can never be used by our ego to prop up our sense of separate, superior, special, self-ness; the Holy Spirit steps in and frustrates any attempt on our behalf to somehow be a success at it. This may sound strange, God himself getting in the way of our attempts to achieve intimacy with Him. But it is too good, too ingenious, to come from anywhere else. Each time I step into a contemplative space, ego quickly surfaces, and hospice care begins! Seeing Contemplative Prayer as the last space before death is both shocking *and* comforting. There is good reason why the saints are often depicted next to a skull, or why monks were instructed to keep one in their cell.

Centering Prayer is not something my ego is sustained by, my ego fails every time. In fact, it is something I perpetually fail at! For that reason, it is the best

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Centering Prayer Intensive Retreats June 24-30, 2022

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
COCFL FALL RETREAT
OCTOBER 28 – 30, 2022

What is a Centering Prayer Intensive Retreat?

If you have been practicing Centering Prayer for a while and now find that you would like to dive deeper, please consider these two opportunities to deepen your understanding of the spiritual and psychological foundations of Centering Prayer.

**** 7-Day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat**

This retreat provides an opportunity to immerse participants in the practice of Centering Prayer. The daily schedule includes three hours of Centering Prayer, viewing parts of the “Spiritual Journey” videotape series by Fr. Thomas Keating and celebration of the Eucharist. Silence is an integral part of this retreat.

Prerequisite: A practice of Centering Prayer for three to six months.

**** 7-Day Post Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat**

This retreat provides an opportunity for the participants to totally focus on prayer, silence and solitude. The daily schedule includes additional Centering Prayer sessions (in place of videotape viewing), group and private Lectio Divina, silence and solitude in community and celebration of the Eucharist.

Prerequisite: Previous attendance at a 7-day, 8-day or 10-day Intensive Retreat.

The presenters for these week-long retreats are:

Fr. Bill Sheehan, OMI, a priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, is an experienced retreat master and a much-loved presenter of Contemplative Outreach programs. He participated in the original Lama Retreat from which the Centering Prayer movement arose and is claimed by South Florida as being the father of our local Centering Prayer movement.

Basha Perez, former Coordinator for Contemplative Outreach Central Florida, is a Certified Presenter of the Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina Introductory Workshops, has served on the 9-Month Contemplative Living Course Team, Presenter Formation, and numerous Intensive Retreat Teams.

Ann Thomas, is Co-coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Florida, facilitator of Centering Prayer group in Broward County, and awaiting formation as a Presenter.

For more information and to register for this opportunity, visit www.COCFL.org



Retreat Presenter Julie Saad

It is with great pleasure that we announce and invite you to join us on October 28–30, 2022 for our annual fall retreat at Canterbury Conference Center in Oviedo, Florida.

Julie Saad has been a part of Contemplative Outreach in Denver and a student of Thomas Keating since 1994. She is a commissioned presenter in Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and the Welcoming Prayer. She is the coordinator of the Contemplative Living Experience Program in Denver, co-facilitates some of the Contemplative Outreach online courses, is a speaker at retreats and conferences, and serves on the Contemplative Outreach governing board. She is the author of a book based on Thomas Keating’s teaching called *Contemplative Life: Discovering Our Path into the Heart of God*.

By Their Fruits You Will Know Them (Mt. 7:16)

“How do you know you are being transformed? Usually, either you or someone else in your life starts to notice that something has changed, something is different in your daily life, how you approach relationships, conflict, work, chores, loss, emotional turmoil. Transformation is about becoming who you are—not your idea of who you are, but God’s idea of who you are. Consenting to be transformed does not mean that life is somehow all of a sudden easy, but we start to realize that we are not alone in this project and may even start to experience the peace that comes from interior silence.”

-Julie Saad, *Contemplative Life: Discovering Our Path into the Heart of God*

In this retreat we will be taking a deeper dive into Thomas Keating’s teaching about the transformation we experience with a regular practice of Centering Prayer, in other words, the fruits of Centering Prayer. Topics will include the unloading of the unconscious, our basic core of goodness, dismantling the emotional programs for happiness, restructuring of consciousness, the transforming union, and interior silence. In addition to our time together in Centering Prayer, we will experience some practical contemplative prayer practices that will help us to recognize and consent to God’s transforming action in our lives.

A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

A Word from Dan Wagner (Continued from Page 1)

Slovakia who showed the border their country shares with the Ukraine and preparing for Centering Prayer said to “plant our feet firmly on the ground and think of the earth crying out for healing and the people crying out for peace (amidst the earth being bombed there and the refugees fleeing).”

Gwen Robertson of New Smyrna said: “I was so moved, personally, by attendee’s dedication to the Prayer. It was an example to all to acknowledge the Holy source within each of us and share it with others.”

Veronique Sallin, facilitator of a group in Clermont, wrote of the day: “The love, the sense of community, unity and support and the depth of prayer were immense. The Spirit was lodged in my heart all day long and it was a transforming experience. God was blessing us with a gift of light in the darkness of the current times.”

I thank Contemplative Outreach for coming up with this format. So powerful!

A Word from Jesse Fox (Continued from Page 1)

medicine for my soul. As Chogyam Trungpa said “Enlightenment is the ego’s greatest disappointment.” Intimacy or union with God is never something I can achieve, the false self is an illusion, and can of course never be the carrier of Grace. But this is no cause for concern. Instead of falling *from* Grace, I fall *into* Grace. Every time.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
[Executive Director of the Episcopal Counseling Center](#)
[Director of the Counseling Research Lab](#)
Stetson University



We are already one.
But we imagine we
are not. And what
we have to recover
is our original unity.
What we have to be
is what we are.

—Thomas Merton
Writer

 Guideposts

Opportunities Abound! Maintaining Connections during the Pandemic and Beyond

None of us has escaped the effects of the Coronavirus and the assault on our way of living for the last two years. It has changed the way we relate to one another and the way that we communicate. However, one of the positive results of this challenging time has been the creativity of those determined to keep the lines of communication open.

During the last two years we at Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida have been blessed to discover multitudes of new ways to connect with others who are seeking to live the contemplative lifestyle. Even as the world seemed to have closed due to the virus, new avenues of technology have opened up world-wide opportunities to share Centering Prayer and the teachings of Fr. Keating and others with people we may never have known in any other way.

We here at COCFL would like to share with you some of the websites and opportunities that we have discovered out there so that you may benefit from the wisdom of this expansive Centering Prayer community for yourself.
<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org> (Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, national organization)

<https://www.centeringprayertampabay.com> (Centering Prayer, Tampa Bay)

https://www.centeringprayer.net/?r_done=1 (Contemplative Outreach of Colorado)

<https://closerthanbreath.com> (Closer Than Breath organization)

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.

Good News Daily

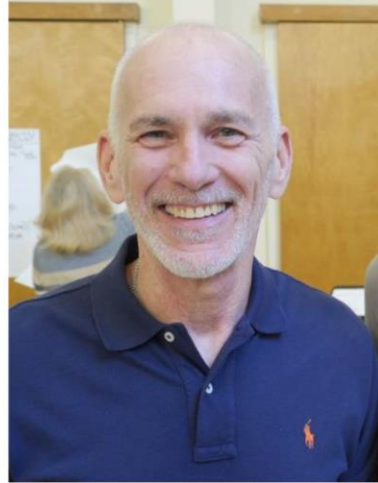
The following is a devotional article written by Nestor de Armas and first published on August 16, 2015. It was read at his Memorial Service on Friday, January 21, 2022 at All Saints Episcopal Church in Winter Park, Florida.

Psalm 118: I shall not die but live, and recount the deeds of the Lord (v. 17, NRSV)

Nothing feels as cuddly as my grandchild on my lap. Like a sparrow settling into her nest, she rubs her shoulders back and forth across my chest. Her soft hair is fragrant under my chin. She takes a deep sigh. In complete trust, her tiny body relaxes into mine. I breathe her in. Ever so gently, with my left hand, I stroke her shoulder. Absentmindedly, she plays with my right thumb. I hold the future in my arms. I wonder, when her grandchild crawls onto her lap, will she remember what it was like to lie in mine? Then, it occurs to me I will be gone by then ... eventually forgotten ... "like vapor in the wind." It is my mortality, not the future, I hold in my arms. Can I embrace that too, that final gift from God, that ultimate release? Yes, and like my precious grandchild sleeping on my lap, I will relax into God's loving arms.

2 Samuel 17:1-23; Galatians 3:6-14; John

In Memoriam Nestor de Armas Former Coordinator of COCFL



It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Nestor de Armas on Monday, January 3, 2022. Nestor was a vital part of the Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida community. He became chapter coordinator in 2014 and even after turning over his role to his successors, Dan Wagner and Jesse Fox, Nestor continued to play an important support roll for the Chapter.

Nestor earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Stetson University and enjoyed a career as a senior executive with a leading banking software company. He was an active supporter of Stetson, serving as president of the Alumni Association and on the Stetson Board of Trustees from 2001 to 2011. He was named Trustee Emeritus in 2011 and inducted into Stetson's Accounting Hall of Fame in 2016. Nestor received an honorary doctorate from Stetson in the summer of 2020.

Nestor and his wife, Donna were the parents of four daughters. His daughter, Blythe de Armas, passed away in early November 2021.

Nestor modeled living with utmost charity with his open heart of service. He approached everyone with genuine interest and concern. He practiced "talk less, listen more", inviting and empowering participation from all those with whom he served. Nestor went the extra mile to serve, to inspire and to be a friend.

In July of 2019, Nestor and his wife were seriously injured in an automobile accident. Nestor's injuries left him unable to communicate in words. But for this man of extraordinary faith, his family reported that rather than feeling frustrated or down, he seemed more cheerful and full of life than ever. He approached his recovery with steely determination and patience, a sense of humor and lots of laughing. Nestor truly has been and always will be an example of what it means to "follow Christ." He is and always will be missed!