

Spirit Journal - May 2021

Preview

Our May issue features:

- A reflection written by Alan Krema, inspired by the *Gospel of Thomas* and Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*
- News about half a dozen contemplative events and resources for your journey
- *Insights* from Sen T'sen, William Penn, St. John of the Cross, and Meister Eckhart

Please share your ideas! Give us your thoughts on *Spirit Journal* by emailing the editor at the address provided at the end of the newsletter.

Who Are You? The Gift of Silence and Letting Go



by Alan Krema

Here is a saying from the *Gospel of Thomas*, which a prayer group I attend engaged with in a recent session:

Blessed are you who, in the midst of persecution, when they hate you and pursue you even to the core of your being cannot find "you" anywhere. - TG Logion 68, L. Baumann translation.

It prompted me to recall this, from Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*:

(Jesus) recognized with authentic realism that anyone who permits another to determine the quality of his inner life gives into the hands of the other the keys to his destiny. If a man knows precisely what he can do to you or what epithet he can hurl against you to make you lose your temper, then he can always keep you under subjection. It is a man's reaction to things that determines their ability to exercise power over him.

To most of us raised in the American culture, self-independence, self-development, and even self-promotion are traits we are encouraged to develop. Humility might best be seen as a trait of "the good sport." When you lose or fail, you are called on to congratulate the winner. But you are also called to try ever harder to win at the game of self-superiority. We are certainly not taught to give up the instinctual needs for success and achievement. The majority of us have become accustomed to "making something of ourselves," even if that something is the divine reward of a spiritual journey, or eternal life.

When we reach some level of maturity as adults, we come into contact with the paradox of never being able to be good enough, successful enough, and happy enough, we are frustrated by our own efforts to become what our inner sense can hold as deeply meaningful. We encounter much pain and suffering because we are not aware of, and do not wake up to, the difficulties that result from our drives for satisfaction.

If you are reading this, you have almost certainly been blessed to discover Centering Prayer and the teachings of Fr. Thomas Keating. Somewhere along the path of our lives we have tasted stillness and silence as its own blessing. Pursuing this we come to the long history of Christian practice of silence and meditation, which we most likely had not been taught even if church was part of our upbringing. Thomas and his brother monks formalized for us a method of prayer that was rarely known in the mid-20th century and yet was developed at the time of the split between theology and spirituality within the church, the headwaters of modernity, some 700 years ago. The gift of silence and stillness has indeed been a Christian path of prayer practiced for many hundreds of years, which completes our other forms of prayer and heals our many fractures into intimate wholeness with our ultimate destiny in God.

Thomas added to this gift of silent prayer a lifelong work of teaching how the spiritual journey evolves within each of us, explained in familiar terms and language drawn from modern psychology. It is a great gift for each of us to know that we share in a deep interior being. We also share an ancestry that is manifest in symbol, imagery, and archetypal forms of being. Even individual personality is built from inherited forms -- we are given the grace of a life and some freedom to choose how to live it, and somehow within the container of our living we discover or try to create meaning.

Meaning and purpose. There are many "I's" within each of us. We identify with each one as if our life depends on it, based on the circumstances we find ourselves in. We are this and we are that. We are parent, child, teacher, student, dedicated member of a group, etc. We allow each "I" to grip us with the gift of purpose and meaning. Until it doesn't. Nothing satisfies us as much as we feel we need. There is always a deep longing and yearning which we continually pursue.

When Thomas Keating came to Chicago in 2003, he began our day with one simple question and then proceeded to spend the entire day exploring that question: "Who are you?" When you identify with any one of your many roles, you are given over to the controlling power of the need for its meaning. You have given up control. If someone insults you ever so subtly, or marginalizes you, you are offended. You are hurt, upset, perhaps enraged. You may feel put out, exhausted, or depressed in the longer term. What if the "person" who offends you is the industry of social media, pursuing huge profits by gripping you to a screen?

Who are you? When you welcome your circumstances as felt sensations, explore them, even engage them, and then let go of your instinctual drives for satisfaction, you have possessed the moment of decision-making power, not letting the offense find "you" there (or any one of the multiple you's).

Centering Prayer is where we learn the "muscle memory" of letting go. Return and remember who you are. Who you are truly. When you stand up from your Centering Prayer session, turn your attention to your embodied sensations and welcome what your being will come to today. Keep attention in your body. This will help you remember and with the grace of the Spirit, you may be able to let go.

Events and Resources

You may wish to participate in some of these local, regional, and online events:

Shalem Institute's Annual Gerald May Seminar July 16-17

The Shalem Institute's Gerald May Seminar will be held on Zoom this year, live and interactive with the Rev. Michael Battle. The intention is to offer a spacious, open, experiential, and interactive day, with presentations, prayer, art, and music, including sharing in pairs and/or small groups, as well.

Drawing upon the three-fold stages of Christian mysticism, the Friday evening talk will explore the first mystical stage of purgation, connecting it to both contemplative prayer and restorative justice. Desmond Tutu's life, Ubuntu theology, and spiritual practices ground this talk, showing how justice and prayer fit together. The Saturday morning retreat session will explore illumination, the second stage of Christian mysticism, focusing on the connection between contemplative prayer and social activism, using the examples of St. Antony of Egypt, St. Hildegard of Bingen and Desmond Tutu. This morning retreat time also includes centering prayer, music, and art. Saturday afternoon will focus on the last mystical stage of union with God, exploring vestiges of union with God through restorative justice, pilgrimage and forgiveness. Caution is urged in recognizing this last mystical stage, especially for Christians who live in the global north. This concluding afternoon retreat time also includes space for discernment about what God might be inviting you and your community into with regard to reconciliation.

Michael Battle, PhD is the Herbert Thompson Professor of Church and Society and Director of the Desmond Tutu Center at General Theological Seminary in New York. He received an undergraduate degree from Duke University, a Master's of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, a Master's of Sacred Theology from



Yale University and a Ph.D. in theology and ethics, also from Duke University. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1993.

For more complete information and a chance to register, please visit the [Shalem Institute website](#).

Coming Soon: Bob Mischke on the "Guard of the Heart" Practice

This Zoom workshop will teach the practice of "Guard of the Heart" (Also referred to as "Watchfulness" or "Presence Practice") and how it complements Centering Prayer, and the practices of the Welcoming Prayer and the Active Prayer Phrase. Participants will learn the three ways any afflictive thought or emotional disturbance can be instantly released as it arises.

According to Thomas Keating: "One practice to bring the effects of contemplative prayer into daily life is traditionally known as "Guard of the Heart." This consists of letting go of every emotional disturbance as it arises and before we start thinking about it. This method is more sophisticated than dismantling the emotional programs for happiness because it deals with the whole of life. It expresses our ongoing intention to be with God in the present moment and sustains it."

Bob Mischke, who has worked with Contemplative Outreach of Colorado for more than 25 years, learned this practice directly from Father Thomas. The date and time for the workshop are TBD - for updates, please visit the [Contemplative Outreach of Colorado website](#).

Silence, Contemplation and an Enneagram Workshop at Healing Gardens in June



Healing Gardens, the lovely, park-like contemplative center in St. Charles offers two special activities in June:

- Silent Saturday Morning, Saturday, June 19, 9:00am-noon - Carve out sacred time for yourself to pray and reflect in a group setting. Morning will consist of two, 20 minute meditation periods; a guided meditation walk in nature; silent reflection time; journaling and optional sharing.
- Enneagram Workshop, Level 1: Saturday June 26, 8:45 to 11:30am and 12:30-2:30pm outdoors (or via Zoom if inclement weather).

Please visit the [Healing Gardens website](#) for more information or to register. There are several other events on the calendar and, in addition, the gardens are open now for anyone who needs a Nature “fix.” To make arrangements, text 630-740-2597.

Spots on Waitlist Are Available for the 2021 Intensive and Post Intensive Retreats June 13-19 at the Siena Retreat Center

Please act immediately if you want a chance to participate in this annual extended retreat this year. While the event is fully booked, as of today there is only one person on the waitlist in

case of cancellations. An Intensive or Post-Intensive Retreat is an opportunity to deepen the practice of Centering Prayer in an atmosphere of profound silence and community support.

The retreat guides are Ann Koerner, CSA and Sandra Janowski. Ann is a Sister of St. Agnes and holds a Masters in Christian Spirituality from Creighton University in Omaha NE. Since 1986 she has been a spiritual companion and retreat director. Sandra is a retired Social Worker, Addiction Counselor and Community College Adjunct Instructor. In 2009 she was commissioned by the Institute of Spiritual Companionship and has been a practitioner of Centering Prayer since 2001.

[Click here](#) to download more complete information about the retreats and a [chance](#) to join the waitlist.

Centering Prayer Groups via Zoom

Here are four invitations to gather with Chicago-area Centering Prayer groups via Zoom. Listed below are the groups, times, and contact information.

- St. Clement's Centering Prayer Group every Saturday 9:30-10:30am. Contact Bill Epperly at bill@integralawakenings.com
- St. Katharine Drexel Church every Tuesday 8:30-9:30am. Contact Lori Dressel at lorijdressel@gmail.com
- The Healing Gardens second Friday of each month, 10:30am-12:30pm. Also, Centering Prayer with Lectio Divina, last Friday of each month, 10:30am-11:30pm. Contact Deb Marqui at deb@dmarqui.com or text/call 630-740-259.
- Permanent Zoom group (not associated with an in-person group) Tuesday 6:00 - 7:00pm. Contact Rose Magiera for link and phone number – rmmagiera@gmail.com

Bill Epperly has also invited everyone to Interspiritual Sundays which gathers Sunday from 9:00-10:00am. n 2018. You may contact Bill at bill@integralawakenings.com and he'll be happy to share more information with you.

(Other Centering Prayer groups may also wish to consider meeting online for now. If you need help in setting up, please contact Sandy Janowski: sandyandkali@sbcglobal.net)

Offerings in the Contemplative Outreach Meditation Chapel

The national website of our parent organization features an Online Meditation Chapel that is very easy to use and provides the opportunity to see, hear and join in silent prayer with others from all over the world. You must first register to attend the meetings in the Chapel. You can do that by using the [calendar](#) link. Once you know what chapel your desired meeting is in, use the [chapel](#) link.

Meditation Groups – Groups meet via Zoom at all hours of the day and night and are open to anyone. *There is no cost/fee to attend, charging is prohibited.* A friend writes: “I have been attending meditation in the virtual Keating Chapel and had a lovely experience. The facilitator was very good!” For further information, visit the [calendar](#) or [chapel listing](#).

Healing Together: A Gathering of Consciousness – In silence we focus on an intention for peace and healing in 2020. The format is an opening prayer, a short reading, two 25-minute sessions of silent prayer with a short break in-between and closing prayer. These sessions are scheduled every Thursday from 11:00am to 12:00pm Central Time (US & Ca) in the Thomas Keating Chapel with Mary Lapham. You can contact Mary at marylapham2@gmail.com.

Please let us know about any additional events and resources you're aware of. Write to: news@centeringprayerchicago.org

Insights

When the ten thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been.

- Sen T'sen

There is something nearer to us than Scriptures, to wit, the Word in the heart from which all Scriptures come.

- William Penn

They who know Him most perfectly perceive most clearly that He is infinitely incomprehensible; for those who have the less clear vision do not perceive so clearly as do these others how greatly He transcends their vision.

- St. John of the Cross

There is a spirit in the soul, untouched by time and flesh, flowing from the Spirit, remaining in the Spirit, itself wholly spiritual. In this principle is God, ever verdant, ever flowering in all the joy and glory of His actual Self... It is one and simple, as God is one and simple, and no man can in any wise behold it.

- Meister Eckhart

Your Turn

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. Let us know if you are aware of an upcoming event you think others should know about, or send us an inspirational quote you'd like to share, or information about a book, website, podcast, or video you recommend. You can contribute by emailing the newsletter editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org.

SILENCE • SOLITUDE



SOLIDARITY • SERVICE

Contemplative Outreach
