

Spirit Journal - April 2022

Preview

Happy Spring - hope you had a wonderful Easter! Here's what you'll find in our April issue:

- A video introduction to *Notes of Rest*, the innovative "musical-textual retreat," coming up May 14 via Zoom
- A reflection by Julian Davis Reid - "Three Vessels: On the Origins of *Notes of Rest*"
- Invitations to other upcoming events from our good friends at Contemplative Outreach Ltd. and CO chapters in Atlanta, Colorado, and St. Louis
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from Hildegard of Bingen, Thomas Keating, Mother Teresa, and Edwin Arrison.

We hope you will share your reactions and reflections with us to help make *Spirit Journal* a two-way conversation. Submissions are very welcome! If you would like to send us something you've written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org.

***Notes of Rest: A Musical-Textual Retreat -
Saturday May 14 via Zoom***



In this five-minute video, Julian Davis Reid introduces us to *Notes of Rest*.

[Click here for more information about this workshop and a chance to register.](#)

The *Notes of Rest* workshop is presented jointly by Contemplative Outreach chapters in Chicago, Atlanta, and Colorado. We are delighted to introduce you to this unique form of contemplative experience.

Three Vessels: On the Origins of Notes of Rest



by Julian Davis Reid

My life in the Christian contemplative tradition emerges from engagement with three boats: Noah's Ark in Genesis 6-9, the boat Jesus slept in according to the Gospels (Matthew 8), and the slave ships of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Swimming between these boats has led to my contemplative retreat *Notes of Rest*, which I'm excited to share with you in just a few short weeks (May 14 at 10am Central).

From Noah's ark I draw the charge to create a space for flourishing of creation even as I see creation being undone around me. In Genesis, Noah built his ark to preserve the abundance of life God had created even though there was so much waywardness and wickedness in creation that God wanted to undo. Noah's obedience to God presupposed a robust inward sense of the Presence, the Presence that would possess him to devote the time to build an ark for himself, his family, and the creatures of the earth around him long before the waters came.

In that sense, *Notes of Rest* is an ark that I am building now. God has shown me through my own contemplative practices of prayer, silent retreats, and journaling

how much violence there is in our constant movement in modernity. Ever since the pandemic, I have sensed a deep restlessness in the US and know that our current practices of violence and incessant activity will not last. (For one, the earth will not be able to sustain our patterns of consumption.) Thus, *Notes of Rest* serves as an “ark” of stillness, introspection, and creativity to help sustain a different kind of life, one that can lead to more flourishing for all who wish to board this boat for a moment before returning to the world we’re called to serve. (That is, *Notes of Rest* is not an escapist ministry, but rather a means of strengthening our engagement with the world.) The retreat allows us to cultivate practices of communal rest by drawing on the power of Scripture, performed piano music, and open-ended questions to steer us towards an awareness of the Presence within, the central virtue and aim of Contemplative Outreach.

As the West moves deeper into post-Christendom, I swim to the boat of a sleeping Jesus and the panicking disciples and witness the power of Jesus’ cultivated centering practices. The disciples, for fear of death, cry out to their master: “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (Matthew 8:25). Awoken by their plea, Jesus calms the storm and chides them for their small faith. Why did he perceive their faith as small? Surely it was not because they were crying for salvation - throughout Matthew, plenty had been asking for salvation and were never reprimanded for it. The problem in this episode was not the call for salvation, but rather their fear of dying. Jesus had cultivated a peace in him that allowed him to trust in God to the tune of sleeping on the boat, whereas their lack of peace cultivated led to their fear of dying when they called out for salvation. Scripture often portrays sleep as a sign of deep trust in God (Job 11:18, Psalm 3:5-6). Such trust is what I think contemplative practices offer us while we live amidst the stormy seas of transitioning into a post-Christian West.

I started *Notes of Rest* in 2021 in part because of the panic I was witnessing in the contemporary boat of Jesus followers. Many American Christians feel swamped by the waters literal and figurative that are besieging our congregations. As such, many are crying out to the Lord in prayer asking to be saved. Indeed, we might engage in contemplative practices of centering prayer because of that desire! That desire to call out should be applauded. But Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples reminds

us that our prayers can be animated by fear more so than by love or faith. Thus, my hope for *Notes of Rest* is to cultivate practices of meditative reading and listening so that our prayers for salvation emerge from love and faith grounded in the awareness of God's presence always with us.

The third vessel of the triangle is the colonial slave ship, which I engage constantly, given I am a descendant of enslaved Africans in the US and Jamaica. This boat is still at the core of the West. Despite all of the so-called progress that has been made, I see my people still living beneath the deck, humming along their songs of freedom as we move "in the wake" of slavery (Christina Sharpe). The way Black life continues to be snuffed out in the West and around the world gives me urgent reason to sustain the centering practices that have kept us alive all of these many years. *Notes of Rest* draws on some of those practices for the sake of encouraging encounter for us all with the God who continually sustains Black life in a world so hostile to it. Reading Scripture, playing Black music, and asking open-ended questions can help ground us in a life of prayer that opens us onto the Spirit who has survived the Middle Passage with us and continues to call those driving the ship to lay down their weapons and study war no more. (Barbara Holmes explains these practices in the seminal text *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*.) *Notes of Rest* is for everyone on the ship, those above and below the deck. After all, the beneficiaries of slavery atop the deck can hear the hum emerging from the hull.

I look forward to swimming between these three boats with you at the *Notes of Rest* retreat. Our time will show us that the Holy Spirit is at work in our centering practices, drawing us towards God with the wisdom of Noah, the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the commitment of the enslaved Africans to live amidst the tyranny of Whiteness that looms over us all. Lord Jesus, save us.

[Click here for more information about Julian Davis Reid and Notes of Rest, and for an opportunity to Register](#)

Other Events of Interest

Here are some other events and workshops you might like to attend.

From Contemplative Outreach Atlanta

We Gather Together - We Are One, April 30 via Zoom

Join Contemplative Outreach Atlanta for an inspiring morning of Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, Taize' chant and reflections of our Unity with God. This event is free and is being held on Zoom. Donations are welcome.



[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

Grounding the Prayer of the Cloud with the Prayer of the Heart - Online Course with David Frenette, May 2-22

Our national parent organization offers this e-introduction to Heart Intention for Centering Prayer practitioners. The world is rapidly changing. Heart Intention is a contemplative practice that, with Centering Prayer, helps us respond to the new challenges we are facing. In Centering Prayer and Heart Intention, two great streams of Christian contemplation – the Prayer of the Cloud and the Prayer of the Heart – meet, in service of an integrative approach to meditation.



[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado

**Thomas Merton: Guide Through the Dark Night of Earth -
Online May 7, with Kathleen Noone Deignan, CND, PhD**

Among the great luminaries of the Christian spiritual tradition, the modern master, Thomas Merton, shines a penetrating light upon our challenging lives and times. More than half a century after his death, Merton grows in stature and relevance as a pattern of integral ecological consciousness becomes evident throughout his written corpus as its complexity and unity become more transparent with time.



As the contemporary ecological crisis deepens, we urgently require more than instrumental remedies to stem the life-loss of our ecosphere suffered at human hands. We need a penetrating understanding of the more troubling and mysterious pathology underlying it: why, indeed, have we plundered our planetary paradise?

This was the difficult “koan” Merton carried to fruition as he explored the congenital disorientation of spirit that exiles us from our common home in the community of creation. Having suffered such exile, he recovered from it, and taught a holistic therapy of contemplative living that can restore **our ecological consciousness, conscience, and practice**. This program will explore Merton’s wisdom for the Dark Night of Earth.

[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis

**Six-Day Intensive-Post-Intensive Retreat - August 21-26, Belleville
Illinois**

Join Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis for this retreat on Sunday, August 21st to Friday, August 26th at King's House Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois.



An Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat is an opportunity for practitioners of Centering Prayer to deepen their contemplative journey in the contemporary world. It is a six-day experience of integrating contemplation and action through silence, solitude and community. The retreat director will be Rev. Matthew Flatley.

[Click here for full information and registration.](#)

Centering Prayer Groups In-Person and Online

Participants who attend a Centering Prayer introductory workshop often decide to join an existing prayer group or form one of their own. The groups generally meet weekly or every other week to share their experience of Centering Prayer and growing relationship with God.

Many groups decide to view videos or read and discuss books by Fr. Thomas and others to deepen their individual understanding of their spiritual practices. Formats usually include a session of Centering Prayer and discussion and sharing. These small faith communities build trust and unity while encouraging and supporting members on their spiritual journey.

More than 40 Chicago-area prayer groups are listed on our [website](#). If you would like help finding a prayer group, please contact the facilitators' team leader at: groups@centeringprayerchicago.org.

While more and more prayer groups are returning to meeting in-person, here are

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

- North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, yoopergirl37@gmail.com
- 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 loridressel@gmail.com
- The Healing Gardens - 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

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 2022. 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 & Canada) 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

All living creatures are sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance, emerging from God like the rays of the sun.

- Hildegard of Bingen

We rarely think of the air we breathe, yet it is in us and around us all the time. In similar fashion, the presence of God penetrates us, is all around us, is always embracing us.

- Thomas Keating

I used to believe that prayer changes things; but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things.

- Mother Teresa

So, what would Desmond Tutu say to us today? Probably these three things: Say your daily prayers faithfully; be servants; make life beautiful, especially for the poor.

- Edwin Arrison

Your Turn

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. For example, you are invited to submit something you've written on a spiritual topic, or to let us know about an upcoming event, or send 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.



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