

Spirit Journal - May 2023

Preview

This issue invites you to deepen your contemplative practice this summer with:

- An invitation to take part in our our Seven-Day Summer Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat at the Siena Retreat Center, July 23-29 (please register by June 15, if possible)
- A prayer request from the *Extensión Contemplativa Internacional*
- A listing of additional workshops and events of potential interest to you, from multiple Contemplative Outreach chapters and other groups
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from Howard Thurman, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Keating

Please help us create the next edition of *Spirit Journal*. Your suggestions 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.

***Seven-Day Advanced Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat
July 23-29, Siena Retreat Center, Racine***



NOTE: If you plan to attend this retreat, please register with a deposit by June 15, if possible.

Join us at the beautiful Siena Retreat Center in Racine on the shores of Lake Michigan (90 minutes north of Chicago). Presented by Contemplative Outreach Chicago, this extended retreat will immerse participants in the practice of Centering Prayer. This two-track retreat will allow the participants to come together for Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and meal times. The retreat will provide an atmosphere of silence, solitude and community.

A note from Father Carl Arico on the power of an extended retreat:

Coming Home: Reflections on the Practice of Annual Retreats
by Fr. Carl J. Arico

There is something very powerful that takes place when you enter into the embrace of a prayerful community. You get into a rhythm that moves you out of your external attractions into an inner space of awareness. When you do not have to worry about being in charge and all your needs are being taken care of, you find yourself surrendering to an inner grace that makes

you aware of the subtle movements of the body and the spirit. It is like a gentle spiritual massage, or like naturally relaxing into a dance when the music carries you along. This is all aided by the rhythm of the schedule, the Scripture readings, Centering Prayer, soul friending, and the silent meals. You are ever-so-gently being formed by the silence. All these experiences are a manifestation of the two-armed embrace of God, who is affirming on the one hand and purifying on the other. It is an experience of 'coming home'.

The **Intensive Retreat** provides an opportunity to deepen the practice of Centering Prayer in an atmosphere of profound silence and community support. There are up to six 30-minute Centering Prayer periods daily. This prayer is supported with viewing a selection of the Spiritual Journey video series by Fr. Thomas Keating. Soul friending with the retreat guides can be scheduled. Prior attendance at a weekend retreat is required. An established practice of Centering Prayer for at least six months is highly recommended.

The **Post-Intensive Retreat** provides an opportunity to deepen the practice of Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina in an atmosphere of profound silence and community support. There are up to seven 30-minute periods of Centering Prayer daily. Previous participation in an Intensive Retreat is a prerequisite for the Post-Intensive.

[More information and registration.](#)

***The Monastery of Saint Benedict at
Snowmass: A Prayer Request from the
Extensión Contemplativa Internacional***



(The Extensión Contemplativa Internacional is a Contemplative Outreach program that offers Centering Prayer and other services to the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities.)

The Extensión Contemplativa Internacional invites everyone to form part of our community network of prayer on behalf of the [monastery of Saint Benedict in Snowmass, Colorado](#).

Due to the fragility and advanced age of the monks, the monastery is destined to close as a Trappist institution. According to the Contemplative Outreach Vision document, St. Benedict's is our spiritual home and a place of refuge, prayer and spiritual transformation. It is also the place where the remains of our beloved Father Thomas Keating and other beloved monks rest.

Although we do not know all the details, the ECI Circle of Service has joined efforts to try to preserve this sacred site and, above all, to have access, preserve and be able to take care of the tombs of our beloved Father Thomas and his life and service companions.

We can all contribute to this initiative through prayer. We invite you, therefore, to place this intention in your heart and remember it consciously and silently at the end of each of our daily periods of Centering Prayer. At the same time, we consent in advance to whatever the will of God may be for the future of the grounds of the Monastery. We will keep you informed and thank you very much for your participation in this prayer space.

- The ECI Circle of Service

Contemplative Workshops, Retreats and Events of Interest

From Metanoia Journey

Ongoing Sunday Morning "Centering Prayer/Lectio Divina" Service - Online

Each Sunday morning, we gather online as a community to practice Centering Prayer together, "resting in the presence of our Creator," beyond words, images and concepts. We practice this for 20 minutes at the beginning of the service, and then transition to Lectio Divina (Latin for "divine reading"), where the facilitator will read a scripture passage multiple times to us in our resting posture, allowing the Spirit to bring new meaning and understanding to our lives through these ancient words.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta

We Gather Together: Just Mercy Big Sit - June 10 via Zoom

Join us for a meaningful morning exploring the theme "Just Mercy." This Big Sit incorporates two 20-minute silent Centering Prayer sessions with Lectio Divina (sacred reading four times), Taizé chant, and stories about Just Mercy for our reflection. We will be inspired by Amos: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos 5:24

[More information and registration.](#)

From the International Thomas Merton Society

Tuesdays with Merton Webinar Series, plus an In-Person Conference in June in Notre Dame Indiana

ITMS's ongoing *Tuesdays with Merton* webinar series continues. For information on upcoming Tuesday evening presentations, [click here](#).

Additionally, ITMS has announced its 18th annual General Meeting: *Sophia Comes Forth, Reaching*, in-person, June 22-25 at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame Indiana (about two hours from Chicago). This event features multiple speakers and workshops on a range of Merton-related topics. [Complete information here](#).

From Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis
Eight Day Centering Prayer Retreat, August 4-11 in Eureka Missouri

This retreat offers an in-depth experience of silent prayer for those who already have an established practice of Centering Prayer of six months or more. It is an opportunity for deeper union with God through communal sharing of silence and stillness. For those making their first week-long silent retreat, the “Intensive” track will offer periods of silent prayer as well as presentation and discussion of videos by Fr. Thomas Keating. The simultaneous “Post-Intensive” track, for those who have already completed an Intensive retreat, includes more periods of silent prayer instead of the videos.

The retreat leader is Fr. Bill Sheehan, who has been an integral voice for Centering Prayer even since the earliest days of the movement. Over the past four decades, he has continually provided his wisdom and presence to the Centering Prayer community.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach Ltd.
Online Living Flame Program

The national Living Flame Service Team (LFST) is offering a one-time only event to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the Living Flame program!

This foundational program has been implemented in chapters across the United States and abroad (Iceland). As host of Living Flame I this fall, the LFST is offering the program on Zoom to individuals and to small chapters or groups of five or less, globally.

The Living Flame Program is a seven-day offering of in-depth spiritual study and enrichment presented over seven months by commissioned presenters of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. It is designed to heighten the awareness of the dynamics of Centering Prayer in the context of the spiritual journey. Participation in this program is for the entire series that will include presentations on seven topics supporting the practice of Centering Prayer. The online program begins this September and will end in April 2024.

A brochure describing the Living Flame program is available [here](#). The number of participants will be limited to 40 "screens," so please act now if you're interested participating. [To register, click here.](#)

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

- 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, Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina, last Friday of each month, 10:30am-11:30pm. Contact Deb Marqui at 630-740-2597 or deb@dmarqui.com
- St. Mary of Emig Centering Prayer Group Tuesday 6:30 – 7:30pm. Contact Rose Magiera for link and phone number – rmmagiera@gmail.com
- North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, yoopergirl37@gmail.com
- Contemplative Worship, every Wednesday, 5:00pm. Contact Jenny Russel at – jir8546@yahoo.com
- St. Michael's Catholic Church, Schererville, Indiana, Monday, 6:00 PM. Contact Peggy Kolarik, peggy.kolarik@att.net, 219-322-1886
- Northern Illinois Zoom Centering Prayer Group, every Saturday 9:30 – 10:15am. Contact Anne Smith 815-245-4088 or Kathy Putnam 815-568-7641, Katiarel@aol.com
- Contemplative Outreach of NYC & Beyond - Brief prayers, 20 minutes of silent meditation, followed by lectio divina. The full program lasts about 45 minutes. Contact: Jane Coakley at coakley53@gmail.com

Offerings in the Meditation Chapel

Meditation Chapel is an independent, nonprofit global platform with which Contemplative Outreach Ltd. partners to encourage groups and individuals in a life of contemplative practice. Therefore, the global website of our parent organization features this Online Meditation Chapel, which is very easy to use and provides the opportunity to see, hear and join in silent prayer with others from all over the world.

Registering for Meditation Chapel – You must first register to attend the meetings in the Chapel. You can do so at this link: <https://meditationchapel.org/getting-started/>. Once registered, you will receive the chapel links and can then check the [calendar](#) to pick one or more groups convenient for your schedule..

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.* A friend writes: “I have been attending meditation in the virtual Keating Chapel and had a lovely experience. The facilitator was very good!”

Centering Down: Meditations with Howard Thurman for the BIPOC Community – Join Colleen Thomas and Leslie Greer in the virtual Meditation Chapel for a contemplative meeting place for those identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). We will reflect on the various writings and teachings of Howard Thurman. Our time together will include a 20-minute Centering Prayer sit, Lectio Divina, and faith-sharing. Every Monday, 9:30am Central: <https://meditationchapel.org/mary-of-magdala-chapel/>

Healing Together: A Gathering of Consciousness – In silence we focus on an intention for peace and healing. 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 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 -

As the sea gull lays in the wind current, so I lay myself into the spirit of God.

- Howard Thurman

God is everything that is good. All life's pleasures and comforts are sacramental; they are God's hands touching us.

- Julian of Norwich

For prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God.

- Teresa of Avila

As St. Thomas Aquinas taught, whatever we say about God is more unlike God than saying nothing. If we do say something, it can only be a pointer toward the Mystery that can never be articulated in words. All that words can do is point in the direction of the Mystery.

- Thomas Keating

Your Turn

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. For example, you are most welcome 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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