

Spirit Journal - November 2023

Preview

This Thanksgiving, may we all remember to be grateful for God's presence and action within. Our November edition includes:

- An invitation to Alan Krema's November 18 workshop - *Centering Prayer: A Path to Spiritual Connectedness* - available in person and online
- A reflection on last month's annular solar eclipse and its spiritual resonance, by Johanna Ash
- An invitation for you to apply for the new Alan Krema Scholarship
- A listing of contemplative workshops and events of potential interest to you, in-person and online, from several Contemplative Outreach chapters
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from Meister Eckhart, Maya Angelou, W.T. Purkiser, and John F. Kennedy

Please get involved and help create the next edition of *Spirit Journal*. 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. Your participation is always welcome!

Centering Prayer: A Path to Spiritual Connectedness ***Saturday November 18 - In-Person in Wheaton or Online via YouTube***

Join us for a practice-based prayer experience, presented in collaboration with the Theosophical Society in America. Participants will be invited to deeply listen to the divine presence and action within as we explore Centering Prayer as a way to sense our relationship with God.

Alan Crema will share Jesus' practice of contemplative prayer and engage His invocation to "Love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as your Self." We will also discover Cynthia Bourgeault's teachings on three-centered awareness, and Fr. Thomas Keating's teachings on opening to the presence and action of God within us, both as individuals and as a community.



Finally, we will explore Centering Prayer as a communal prayer and source of compassionate embrace of societal issues, local and beyond. We will conclude by sharing a guided Centering Prayer meditation.

Date, time, and location: Saturday November 18, 1:00 - 3:00 PM Central, 1926 N. Main Street in Wheaton, IL or online via private YouTube link.

Read Alan's reflection on communal presence: [*Embracing Non-Dual Consciousness in Our Lives and Our Communities*](#)

[More information and registration](#)

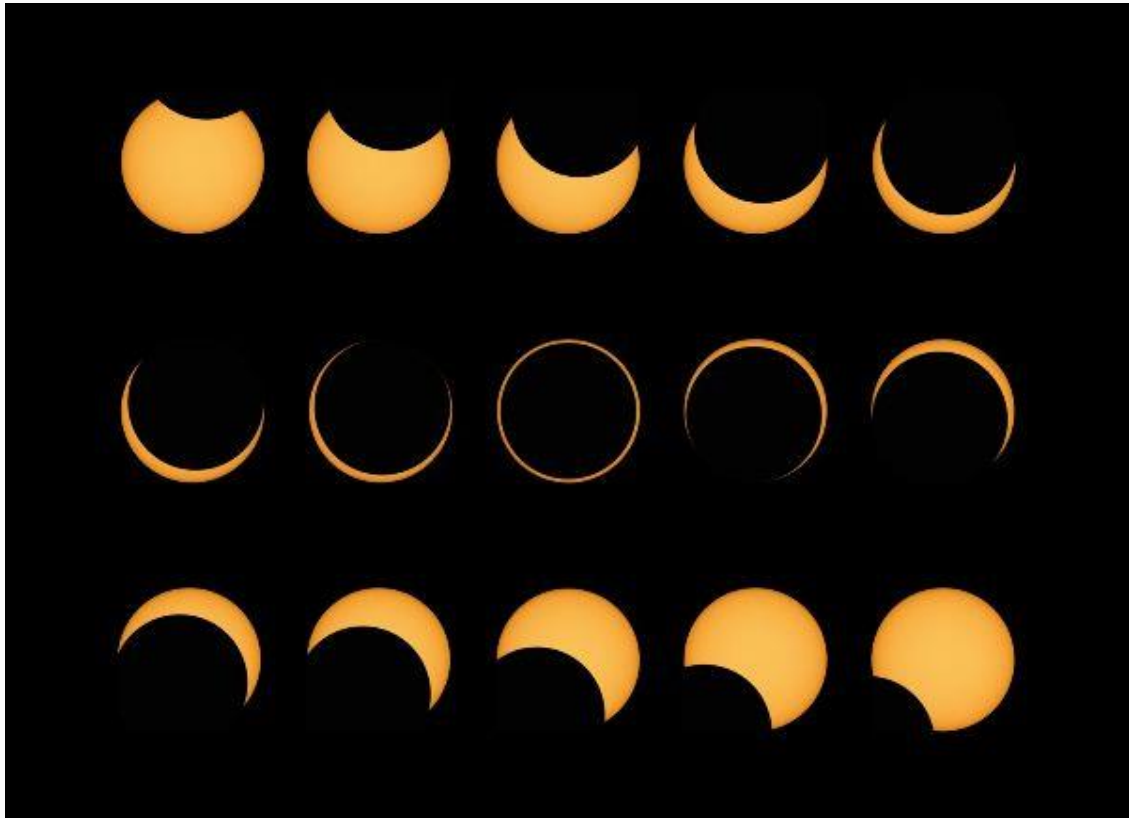


Photo: Michael Zeiler, GreatAmericanEclipse.com

Ring of Fire

by Johanna Ash

(Remember last month's annular solar eclipse? Perhaps not - here in the Midwest, the day was cloudy and the eclipse wasn't visible. But our friend Johanna Ash had a great view at her home in New Mexico. In this article, she brings the experience to life and lets it inspire some very interesting reflections.)

October 14, 2023 - Albuquerque, New Mexico. The moon isn't even over the mountain yet. It is still dark with wispy clouds illuminated by the rising sun. The Dawn Patrol of seven balloonists checking for wind strength and direction, is up and gliding above the Rio Grande. The flag is green and the mass ascension of the

hot air balloons will happen. Something else will also occur today: the Annular Solar Eclipse.

The state is breathless this week with these two events happening simultaneously. New Mexico is very, very big on science. We have Los Alamos just north, Kirkland Air Force base by the airport, Sandia Labs, and then White Sands just south. The balloons fly all up and down the river valley depending on the winds.

This is the final weekend of the balloon fiesta and the city is packed with people from all over. Each day the skies fill with colorful bubbles. Daily reports in the weather forecast predict the winds and whether it will be a good flying day. Everyone talks about it.

There is plenty of time before the eclipse. It is early. Shortly, I will Zoom meet with my Texas Centering Prayer group. Over the courtyard wall I notice traffic along the interstate stalling as people are distracted by the balloons inflating and seen across the river valley.

The lights from the Balloon Field are bright enough at night to travel five miles and shine in our bedroom window. Sometimes the wind carries the sound of the amplifiers, and we hear the excitement of the announcers. In the evening, we stand in the street to watch the fireworks. The balloons will pretty much have landed by the time of the eclipse this morning. The winds will pick up and flying will become dangerous. We are expecting a twilight darkness. We don't remember the last annular eclipse.

The moon will travel across the sun today. Our Indigenous neighbors will cease all activity. Even the competitive sports at the high schools are accommodating this spiritual recognition of this event. Father Sun is destroyed in one myth. Natives will stop, sit and reflect. They are not to look in the sky or talk. Prayer is on the agenda.

My husband, Bill and I have just returned from a trip to Canyon de Chelly in Navajo land in Arizona and I am in a meditative mood. Some of the ruins there are the oldest I have ever seen. These Anasazi or pre-Navajo cliff dwellings are now part way up the canyon walls and the river bed is dry, but at the time of habitation, there was water flowing in the rivers. There were orchards of peaches and other fruit. There were trees for firewood. Gardens were plentiful. The homes would not

have been that high on the side of the cliffs. Footpaths are carved into the cliff sides. Worship places known as kivas are nearby each settlement.

Traveling in Navajo land, I have seen prayer feathers and I know there is still a strong worship similar to the earliest days. Many people still believe and utilize medicine men in their healing and hospitals honor that. The drum beats of the dances are prayer. The chapter houses delineate different clans and dot the desert. They are also places of worship and prayer. Petroglyphs are still obvious and mark the history of the place, mark the origin stories. In the bookstore today I saw several books that address early Native spirituality. They will be on my list for library and thrift store searches.



Photo: Johanna Ash

I wonder about the time before spirituality was realized. As has been said, the idea of God is a human one. What were cultures in any area of the world like in the days before there was a need for an entity to be worshiped? What was living with others like before theology? How were moral codes enforced? How was awe expressed? How was gratitude given? Was it only in the study and awe of the night

sky that we realized a higher power than ourselves? Did that morph into an appreciation of nature on the ground and the goodness of our hearts? At what point in time did we know what love was?

We are in our lawn chairs now, with our special eclipse glasses on our laps. Bill has called to me that the eclipse is starting. I had been sitting inside with the morning paper. There is a slight breeze and sitting against the wall feels good. We put on our glasses and remember not to take photographs so our cameras are not damaged. We catch the beginning just in time. No balloons are up any more.

I had shared the Navajo story of the sun's destruction with my prayer group earlier and we agreed the ring of fire is a hopeful sign. It reminds us of the resurrection and hope of Easter. I see it as a perennial tradition as well. In the darkness, it is easy to think doom and gloom. The promise of light reassures us. The sun is almost half covered. The jovial jack o' lantern smile is closer to being the Cheshire cat. Shadows of the tree leaves form peacock tail feathers on the wall. I go in for a jacket and a blanket . It is chilly in the moon's shadow.

I find it most interesting to realize that while the moon visible last night was showing her fourth quarter, it is the complete sphere of the moon that covers the sun right now in the middle of day. Each night I observe the moon superstitiously comparing my observation of the moon's phases with the report in the paper. Yet, I did not expect the moon to appear full crossing the sun.

Now the sun is covered. There is a band of intense light all around the full moon. It is a ring of brilliant light. Where we had somehow expected a semidarkness, there is still enough sunlight for shadows. The moon after all is smaller than the sun and closer. Our midday twilight isn't going to happen. Our pet cats and horses next door are restless and confused.

I check the skies a final time and see the smallest section of the darkness of the moon slowly receding and the bright sun is with us again.

The entire eclipse has me thinking of Aaron Copeland's choral piece, "In the Beginning". You can find it on YouTube. It is the first seven verses of Genesis put to song. Aaron Copeland isn't known for his choral work, but you will remember

this. With each acknowledgment that God approves of his work the chorus sings the agreement that yes, it was good.

I juxtapose the Genesis verses with those in the Gospel of John..."In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him and without him was not anything made..." God created the earth, the heavens and all therein. Jesus is His son, sun... and all is good.

Blessings and peace,

Johanna

An Invitation to Apply for the Inaugural Alan Krema Scholarship

Contemplative Outreach Chicago invites you to apply for the Alan Krema Scholarship. This new scholarship program is named in honor of Alan Krema, who stepped aside about a year ago after six extraordinary years as coordinator. Alan remains a very active member of our core volunteer group, and will be leading a new workshop on November 18 (see above).

The Scholarship is designed to support the development of wisdom leaders who will work to enhance the modern contemplative movement. If you feel a calling to develop your abilities to contribute in this way, we may be able to help you defray some of the costs of retreats, workshops, or courses of study you feel will help you continue to grow spiritually. If you feel you could benefit from financial support to help with the cost of undertaking a program of study and reflection, we urge you to [click here for detailed information](#) and a chance to apply for the inaugural Alan Krema Scholarship. Good luck!

Additional Contemplative Events of Interest

From Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta

We Gather Together - Peace Big Sit November 11, 9-11 AM Central via Zoom, FREE

Join CO Atlanta for a morning of prayer including Lectio Divina, two Centering Prayer sessions, Taizé chanting, song, and inspiration from luminaries on the theme of Peace. This Big Sit will lead us into an exploration of Peace in scripture, song and prayer. The event is free and open to everyone.

[More information and registration](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado The Contemplative Adventure - Spirituality Encounters Science November 11, 11 AM - 2 PM Central via Zoom

This will be a hybrid presentation being conducted both in person at The Center for Contemplative Living in Denver and online via Zoom videoconference.

It seems that our contemporary world is obsessed with certainty and results. Who won the game? Who won the election? When will I get there? When will the project be completed? Am I cured? What is the correct answer? Is there a heaven and will I get there?

What might be an unintended consequence of our obsession with certainty and endings? Might it be that we are not fully present to what is happening in the now. As Anthony de Mello insightfully says, “We go through life asleep!” Might this sleepwalking towards certainty and results creep into our practices of contemplation and meditation?

Contemplation and meditation are intended to foster mindfulness – a fuller awareness of all that arises in the present moment. However, it seems our transactional cultural and religious worldviews often lead us in the opposite direction – away from mindfulness towards mindless sleepwalking. Building on Teilhard de Chardin’s teachings on evolution and Thomas Keating’s teachings on contemplation, the workshop will explore a rarely traveled terrain, the synthesis of science and spirituality.

Presenter: Rick Klein believes that science offers insights to help us awaken from mindless sleepwalking. Rick gives talks and workshops on contemplative spirituality. He is a teacher of Centering Prayer and has presented workshops on science and spirituality, compassion, and mysticism at the Center for Contemplative Living and other locations throughout Colorado.

[More information and registration](#)

***From Contemplative Outreach of Maryland and Washington DC
Centering Prayer and Interspirituality
November 18, 8-11 AM Central via Zoom***

This retreat Netanel will explore the roots of Centering Prayer as a receptive meditation practice in Christianity, and explore its applicability to the interspiritual milieu in which we live today.

Presenter: Miles-Yeppez, professor of Religious Studies at Naropa University and co-founder of Charis Foundation for New Monasticism and Interspirituality, which is dedicated to the emergence of a newly conceived contemplative life in dialogue with all of the world's great wisdom traditions. He is an artist, philosopher, religion scholar, and spiritual teacher. Currently, Netanel lives in Boulder, Colorado, where he is Chair of Religious Studies and Director of the Keating-Schachter Center for Interspirituality at Naropa University.

[More information and registration.](#)

***From Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin
The Spiritual Journey via the Enneagram
December 7-10, Siena Retreat Center, Racine Wisconsin***



The Enneagram is an ancient holistic system that identifies nine personality types. It helps us learn what our strengths are as well as where we go when under stress. The Enneagram helps us understand and have compassion for ourselves and others. It is a powerful tool for Transformation. This retreat will:

- Introduce the Nine personality types
- Explore the Directions of Integration and Stress and the Levels of Development
- Understand the role of presence

Presenter: Carol Schindler has been practicing Centering Prayer for 30 years. In 2001 she became a Contemplative Outreach presenter and she has been co-leading a Centering Prayer Group since 2000. Carol was part of the New Jersey Chapter team and led yearly retreats at the Maris Stella Retreat House in Long Beach Island NJ. Carol studied Enneagram at the Enneagram Institute where she completed the course work required to be an instructor in 2009. Since then, she has taught many Enneagram programs with an emphasis on using the Enneagram

for spiritual development.

[More 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 ten invitations to gather with 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
- 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
- Metanoia Journey (Austin, Texas) - Sunday morning "Centering Prayer/Lectio Divina" online service. Sundays, 8:30-9:30am Central. [Register here.](#)

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 Geer 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

If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough.

- Meister Eckhardt

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.

- Maya Angelou

Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.

- W.T. Purkiser

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

- John F. Kennedy

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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Contemplative Outreach