

## *Spirit Journal - April 2024*



Photo: Silvia Lobo

### ***Preview***

This post-eclipse, Eastertide issue includes:

- Information about our April 27 workshop, in collaboration with the Theosophical Society, on Teresa of Avila's *The Interior Castle* - live or online with Juliana Cesano
- Your invitation to a Zoom workshop we are co-sponsoring with Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta on May 11, with Dr. Carmen Acevedo Butcher
- A link to the 2024 Contemplative Events Calendar, which lists online and in-person events through December.

- A "help-wanted" notice: Can you help us build an effective social media presence?
- The announcement of our first member survey in four years - please participate!
- A listing of in-person and online prayer groups you may wish to join
- Spring *Insights* from Rainer Maria Rilke, Oscar Wilde, John Galsworthy and Charlotte Brontë

We encourage you to get more involved with Contemplative Outreach Chicago by helping to make *Spirit Journal* a lively interactive forum. 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](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).



## ***The Interior Castle: Exploring the Depths of the Soul***

***With Juliana Cesano***

***In-person in Wheaton or online, April 27***

***A special practice-based spiritual experience from Contemplative Outreach Chicago and the Theosophical Society in America.***

In 1577, St. Teresa of Avila wrote *The Interior Castle* after she received a vision picturing “the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of a very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms.” This castle has seven mansions or dwellings. Each one of them represents a different stage on the spiritual

path. In the center of this castle is the Sun, or the King, who gives all the splendor and beauty to the rest of the castle. The closer we approach the center, the greater the light.

*Believe the incredible truth that the Beloved has chosen for his dwelling place the core of your own being because that is the single most beautiful place in all creation. Waste no time. Enter the center of your soul.*

– Miribai Starr (Introduction to *The Interior Castle*)

This workshop will explore and experience:

- The spiritual path as described in this great classic of Christian mystical literature
- The nature of each mansion and the conditions for progression
- How to discern where we are and our next step toward the Divine Center
- The stages of prayer and the practices and virtues that aid us in each stage
- A contemplative practice based on St Teresa's teachings

**Note:** All registered participants will have the option of attending in person or watching online through a private YouTube link that will be shared via email.

**Presenter:** Juliana Cesano is an international speaker, and her main focus over the past 15 years has been the transformational power of contemplative practices. She is a third-generation Theosophist who has been actively involved in the Society's work for more than 25 years. She became a staff member at the National Center of the Theosophical Society in America in 2007, where she currently serves as the Member Education Director and the National Secretary.



[More information and registration](#)

**From Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta and Chicago  
*Coloring Outside the Lines by  
Returning to Elementary Questioning:  
How Should I Contemplate?***

**With Dr. Carmen Acevedo Butcher  
May 11 via Zoom**

Join us for a morning with Dr. Carmen Acevedo Butcher as she guides us in this session with the purpose of deepening and personalizing our own practice, both individually and collectively, with a heart for becoming more self- and others- compassionate.

What do historical and contemporary contemplative experts say about how contemplation should be done? How can we take their teachings to reimagine and reinvigorate our own spiritual practices and paths? Carmen will explore works by well-known contemplatives such as the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes, Brother Lawrence, the Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman, and more.

**Presenter:** Carmen Acevedo Butcher is an internationally acclaimed speaker, author, educator, and poet. An award-winning translator, she has made accessible works of Early Modern French, German, Latin, Middle English, and Old English, by writers including the seventeenth-century friar Brother Lawrence, Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, the *Cloud's* Anonymous, Julian of Norwich, and tenth-century Benedictine monk Ælfric of Eynsham. Carmen's translation of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (2018) won an Author of the Year award from the Georgia Writers Association. Her tenth book, *Practice of the Presence*, is a revolutionary translation of the wisdom of Brother Lawrence, released in 2022.



[More information and registration](#)

## ***The 2024 Contemplative Events Calendar***

To learn about more upcoming workshops and retreats, download and peruse this recently updated [annual calendar](#). It provides a comprehensive listing of in-person and online programs we're currently aware of - now through December, including 18 events coming up in the next month alone.

## ***Volunteer Opportunity: Social Media Maven Needed!***

As you may know, volunteers do 100 percent of the work that keeps Contemplative Outreach Chicago going. Our dedicated volunteers have many talents, but there's one gap that's pretty glaring: We don't have anyone to take on the role of creating and growing our social media presence. This diminishes

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our ability to share our message with the broadest possible cross-section of folks who might be interested in Centering Prayer and other contemplative practices, and might benefit greatly.

If you have some social media talent and skill and can devote a few hours a month to getting the word out about our programs, please contact the editor at [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org) to discuss this opportunity. Thank you for considering helping out in this way!

## ***Please Participate in Our 2024 Member Survey to Help Shape Future Programs***

Watch your inbox later this month for the 2024 member survey - this will be your chance to help shape the future of Contemplative Outreach Chicago. Our last survey in 2020 provided a wealth of information and, ever since, we've tried to follow your advice on how we can best serve the needs of Chicago-area contemplatives. But our community and our world have changed quite a bit in four years, and it's time for an update.

We promise to keep the survey as brief and easy to respond to as possible, and would greatly value your input.

## ***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

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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](mailto: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:

- *New* - Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina every Thursday, 9:30-10:15am. Contact Bob Gorman at [rbrtgorman@protonmail.com](mailto:rbrtgorman@protonmail.com)
- Centering Prayer Group every Saturday 9:30-10:30am. Contact Bill Epperly at [bill@integralawakenings.com](mailto:bill@integralawakenings.com)
- St. Katharine Drexel Church every Tuesday 8:30-9:30am. Contact Lori Dressel at [lorijdressel@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:rmmagiera@gmail.com)
- North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, [yoopergirl37@gmail.com](mailto:yoopergirl37@gmail.com)
- Contemplative Worship, every Wednesday, 5:00pm. Contact Jenny Russel at – [jir8546@yahoo.com](mailto:jir8546@yahoo.com)
- St. Michael's Catholic Church, Schererville, Indiana, Monday, 6:00 PM. Contact Peggy Kolarik, [peggy.kolarik@att.net](mailto: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, [Katiairel@aol.com](mailto:Katiairel@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](mailto: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](mailto:marylapham2@gmail.com).

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

## *Insights*

*It is spring again.  
The earth is like a child that knows poems by heart.*

- Rainer Maria Rilke

*A flower blossoms for its own joy.*

- Oscar Wilde

*It was such a spring day as breathes into a man  
an ineffable yearning, a painful sweetness,  
a longing that makes him stand motionless,  
looking at the leaves or grass,  
and fling out his arms to embrace  
he knows not what.*

- John Galsworthy

*Spring drew on...  
and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening  
daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and  
left each morning brighter traces of her steps.*

- Charlotte Brontë

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## ***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](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).



