



Dear Centering Prayer Community of Arizona,

We can sense autumn ahead with just hints of cooler air on the breeze and the magnificent greenery of a well-watered desert around us. Yes, there are still many cautions and risks to be considered, but one thing has not changed and that is the limitless love with which God sustains all of Creation. That, of course, includes each of us. Alone and together, we consider what roles we can play as the voice, hands, feet and heart of our Beloved in healing the world.

We look back at the creative ways in which our community has come together over these months of pandemic. Has your group continued to meet virtually? Have you reached out in new ways to stay connected to our world-wide network, such as through many new offerings from the national office? Has your love of Silence deepened during these strange months? In this newsletter, we reflect on our own Community Connection, Sharing & Reflection Gathering last February 5 and 6. Also, we remember Merl Parker who

was present at the very beginnings of our local Contemplative Outreach chapter and well before was a beloved woman deep in God's Heart.

We look ahead to our keynote speaker this fall, Fr. Vincent Pizzuto, who will present on Saturday, November 6, 2021 from 9 am to 3 pm. In the interest of caution, the event will be virtual with Fr. Pizzuto speaking to us from California. His theme is "Becoming Prayer," a beautiful challenge to live deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation. You will find him to be eloquent, encouraging and inspiring with a profound grasp of the mystical dimensions of the Gospel. Please register to attend on our website, [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org).

At this point it looks as if in-person silent retreats can resume next January and February at Santa Rita Abbey, Sonoita. You will find registration information within.

Truly, our world is a balancing act right now, confronting a tenacious and dangerous virus along with disruptions in our climate that afflict regions differently but that affect us all as the Body of Christ. There is suffering all around us. Let us stay true to our intention to rest in God's in-dwelling silence every day, consenting to be changed into the people God intends us to be and pouring the Mind of Christ into our hurting world.

In Silence, Solidarity, Solitude, and Service,

Your Chapter Service Team

## *Community Connection, Sharing & Reflection Gathering A Look Back*

The contemplative community of Arizona came together via Zoom on February 5-6, 2021, for a community gathering with the hope of providing a forum for connecting with each other. We initially began to plan an in-person event but COVID-19 led us to change to a virtual event.

A small group from the Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix Service Team started the planning process. Our team immediately reached out to prayer group leaders from all over the state to invite them to join our planning and implementation team. We had 5 individuals join and participate on our team: Robert Johnson, Cindy Ortega, Mary Smoak, Margaret 'Rusty' Swavelly and Mary Welch. They added significant value to the planning and implementation team. We were so grateful for their wisdom, input and participation in the Gathering. We enjoyed the added benefit of connecting through our shared efforts, reflections and laughter throughout the journey!

As we met and planned for the gathering of community it was important to remember that we are each part of a living organism that is interconnected, interdependent and dynamic. It was our hope that we would come together with collective intention to be receptive, aware and present in the silence and the healing of divine therapy. Thomas Keating taught that Centering Prayer helps us open our hearts to love and respect one another. This change or disposition of our hearts can help us collectively reduce the toxicity and violence in our nation and assist us with becoming present to the gentleness and goodness within each of us.

The 2-day event was packed with information, time to share and sitting in silence. Friday began with our welcoming and opening remarks which reflected much of the prior year: the COVID-19 pandemic which led to a significant loss of life, economic insecurity and social isolation from family and friends for many Americans; our nation's witnessing the death of George Floyd and other African Americans by the police; massive protests, civil unrest and violence in search of social justice; and the political polarization and the spread of disinformation that culminated in violence on our nation's capital.

With the events of the last year in mind, we started the Gathering with a Centering Prayer session and then moved into breakout rooms for some roundtable dialogue, for an opportunity to share our own story about 2020, with a focus on some hardships and some blessings over the past year. This was one way to connect, reflect and share our experiences.

We also used story-telling to share the history of Contemplative Outreach and Centering Prayer in Arizona. Reaching back to a prior generation to learn about some of our Contemplative Outreach pioneers helped us to reflect on our early days and where we are now as a community. Mary Leonard gave a 45-minute talk on the history of Thomas Keating's many visits to Arizona and reflected on the evolution of Contemplative Outreach here. We ended the day with another roundtable discussion and closing remarks.

We heard more reflections about our local Arizona history on Saturday morning from Fran Mick about Prescott, Janet Shreve about

Sedona and Francine Reinstra about Tucson's history. Another relevant topic concerned the many online resources available locally and nationally. In the absence of in-person gatherings, we are invited to search out spiritual nourishment and groups virtually. Margaret Swavely demonstrated how to navigate the Contemplative Outreach International Ltd. website ([www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)), Contemplative Outreach YouTube, the Meditation Chapel, Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix website ([www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)) and the 12 Step Outreach website ([www.cp12stepoutreach.org](http://www.cp12stepoutreach.org)). This demonstration was extremely helpful and well received. The use of technology has exponentially expanded access to Contemplative Outreach. We must continue

educating and supporting individuals in our community to develop the skills to access technology.

Father Bill Sheehan was the headliner for our Saturday session. His theme was drawn from the book, *God is All in All* by Thomas Keating. Father Bill talked about the vastness of God as a marvelous and infinite mystery, about God's gentleness and described God as "being in every fiber of our being." At the end of the session, it could be summed up by a quote from Thomas Keating, "Think of God in a very big way. And if you do, that's too small!"

There was time for a Q & A session with Bill Sheehan, Mary Leonard and Margaret Swavely. We had brief closing remarks and we ended the Gathering with the following prayer:

***Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.  
All things break, and all things can be mended.  
Not with time, as they say, but with intention.  
So go.  
Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.  
The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.***



November Speaker Series  
Sponsored by Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix

## Becoming Prayer

Presenter: Fr. Vincent Pizzuto

Saturday, November 6, 2021  
A Virtual Event  
9 am to 3 pm



### Workshop Description

The incarnation has made mystics of us all. What if we read the gospels as if that were true? In this workshop, Fr. Pizzuto will explore the theme of “becoming prayer” from his book: *Contemplating Christ, The Gospels and the Interior Life*. Through anecdotal presentations, shared reflection, and Centering Prayer Fr. Pizzuto will gradually unfold the mystery to which the whole of biblical revelation and the Christian contemplative life are ordered: that through the incarnation, we have all become ‘other Christs’ in the world.

Fr. Vincent Pizzuto, Ph.D. is a Professor of New Testament and Christian Mysticism at the University of San Francisco.

As an Episcopal priest he serves as Vicar of St. Columba’s Episcopal Church and Retreat House in Inverness, California where he has established a vibrant contemplative community.

Fr. Pizzuto leads a weekly teaching and meditation on the ‘Thomas Keating Peace Chapel’ on his most recent book, *Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life* (Liturgical Press, 2018).

Registration and information: [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)  
The link to join will be emailed to you the week before the gathering.  
There is no cost to attend. Donations are welcome.



Contemplative  
Outreach





Merl Parker  
Aug. 1, 1924-Jan.  
17, 2021

Merl Parker of Sun  
City, AZ passed

away on Jan. 17, 2021 at her daughter's home in Sun City, AZ. Merl is remembered as a remarkable person who cared deeply for others and was energized by the love of Christ. She was a great organizer of Christian groups beginning at St. Jerome's in Phoenix, AZ, then at St. Thomas More, Glendale, AZ and finally throughout the southwest.

Merl served as the Phoenix regional link of the Co-workers of Mother Teresa starting in

the 1980's offering support to the Missionary Sisters of Charity at their mission in Gallup, New Mexico and then at their Phoenix location, Our Lady of Fatima Parish Mission.

Merl formed a number of groups over the years to offer support to variety of causes from AIDS patients and the homeless to the elderly and those drawn to contemplative prayer. Foundational to many of these groups was the practice of Centering Prayer. Merl became very familiar with the teachings and writings of Thomas Keating O.C.S.O. and encouraged her friends by giving them Thomas Keating books, recommending the Spiritual Journey video series and forming Centering Prayer groups. Merl was widely loved and admired by all who served with her. Merl had a radiance about her that was grounded in the assurance of Christ's great love for each person and all of creation.

Ruth Hoffman

Father Keating - Reflections on the Unknowable

"We share Centering Prayer when done in a common reservoir of silence that is enhanced by each one's contribution."

The energy of our collective intention and our common reservoir of silence can bring healing and renewed hope for those who have experienced the loss of loved ones, the loss of employment, social isolation, the loss of faith, or any other kind of loss experienced during this past year.



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## *Silent Retreats in 2022*

Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix offers silent intensive retreats to those who are interested in renewing and deepening their relationship with God through Centering Prayer in a community setting and wrapped in an atmosphere of profound silence. The retreats take place in Sonoita, AZ at the Santa Rita Abbey Retreat Center ([santaritaabbey.org](http://santaritaabbey.org)), about an hour south of Tucson. This is a natural setting on high desert terrain. There are seven private rooms; one queen bed room can accommodate two retreatants. Each room has its own bath. The retreat menu is vegetarian.

### **Intensive Retreat:**

Friday evening January 14 through Saturday, January 22, 2022.

(Optional dual track Post Intensive Retreat)

The retreat is open to all who have a 6 month centering prayer practice. There are about six 30 minute Centering Prayer periods daily. The prayer is supported by the viewing of Fr. Thomas Keating's Spiritual Journey DVDs. Plus we will share in Lectio Divina and soul-friending with staff. Also available is the opportunity to participate daily in Lauds, Liturgy (Communion Service) and Vespers with the Trappistine Sisters in their nearby sanctuary. There will be talking at the evening meal.

### **Post-Intensive Retreat:**

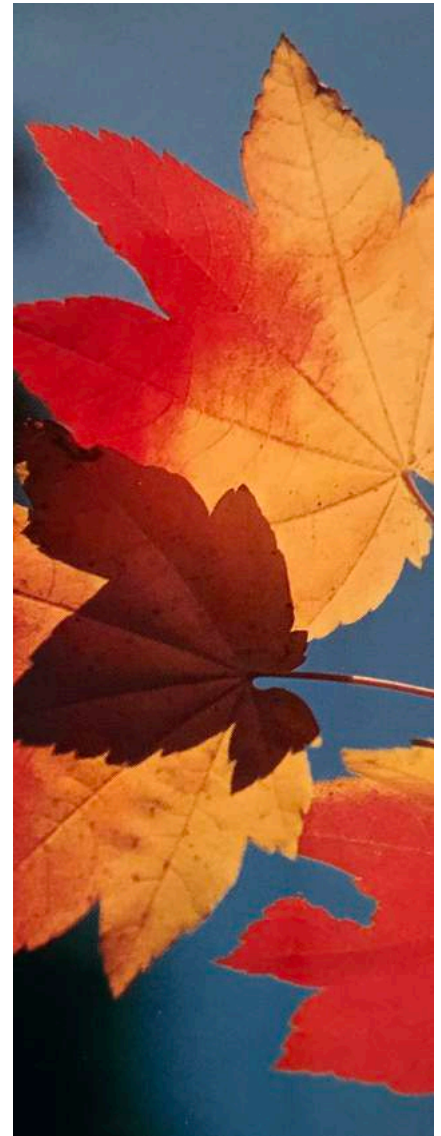
Friday evening February 4 through Saturday, February 12, 2022

Pre-requisite: Must have attended an intensive retreat. This retreat consists of eight 30 minute Centering Prayer periods daily. There is time for individual quiet time: writing, sketching, walking, etc. We are invited also to share in the sisters' prayers of: Lauds, Liturgy, Vespers and Compline. This is a totally silent retreat. Soul-friending with staff can be scheduled.

### **Registration**

The retreat fee is \$550.00 and proof of vaccination against Covid-19 is required with no exceptions. Partial scholarships are available. If you have a need, please talk to Jeannie Lashinske when you register. The shared room will be \$475.00 each, if shared.

A non-refundable \$100 registration fee and proof of vaccination against Covid-19 reserves your room. We expect the remaining \$450 will be paid in full by January 3, 2022 to Jeannie Lashinske. Please make out checks to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix. Questions? Ask Jeannie by calling 480-423-1645 or emailing her at [jmlashinske@gmail.com](mailto:jmlashinske@gmail.com).



## ***The Weekly Centering Prayer Support Group***

While Centering Prayer is done privately most of the time, a weekly or bi-weekly sharing of the experience in a small group (up to fifteen) has proven to be very supportive, as well as a means of continuing education. The weekly meeting also serves as a means of accountability. Just knowing that one's support group is meeting together each week is an enormous encouragement to keep praying, and an invitation to return to the practice of Centering Prayer if circumstances such as illness, business, family problems, or urgent duties have prevented one from carrying out one's commitment to daily practice for a time.

By sharing the experience of Centering Prayer with others, one's own discernment of the ups

and downs of the practice is sharpened. The group not only serves as a source of encouragement but also can normally solve problems that might arise regarding the method. The collective discernment of the group tends to be well balanced. . . .

The purpose of the meeting is spiritual refreshment and mutual encouragement in the practice.

**Open Mind, Open Heart**, 20th Anniversary Ed., pp. 173-174.

To find information on  
Centering Prayer Support Groups in Arizona  
go to the website  
[contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)  
and look under the heading **Groups**.

## ***News from St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Scottsdale***

### **Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop**

Saturday October 2, 2021

9:30 am - 1:00 pm in the Chapel

### **Five Tuesday follow up sessions**

#### **beginning:**

Tuesday October 5, 2021

6:30-8:00 pm - in the Chapel.

**To register** contact Liza Bell

602-527-6161 [lizabell@cox.net](mailto:lizabell@cox.net)

### **Exploring Poetry as a Spiritual Practice**

A poetry reading group meeting monthly on the 3rd Thursday from 10:00-11:30 a.m. The Fall meeting dates are September 16, October 21, November 18 and December 16. The poems are read following a *lectio divina* format. After a period of silence the participants share the significance of the poem in their lives. Facilitated by Kathy Kramer-Howe and Mary Stone. For more information contact Mary Stone at [maryspeckerstone@gmail.com](mailto:maryspeckerstone@gmail.com)

## ***An Invitation from Contemplative Outreach of Colorado***

The Center for Contemplative Living in Denver, CO, has gone online this past year with many of their classes. They are inviting you to check out the Fall programs on their website [centeringprayer.net](http://centeringprayer.net)

Their program offerings include one day events on the Guard of the Heart and a presentation by Rami Shapiro. Some of the Course offerings with weekly meetings are the Introduction to Centering Prayer, the Human Condition, Spirituality in Everyday Live, and Divine Therapy.

## Northwest Autumn

Sister Miriam Pollard, O.C.S.O.

Our year is harvested in granaries of wisdom,  
and redwood needles drift like copper snow.  
Quiet the time, this womb of our tomorrows,  
this gray and silver world through which we go.

Diminished is the sun and pale the morning,  
and walls of rain build houses for the heart  
that stands in conversation with a season  
whose dignity makes meaning of the dark.

To this we bear the wounds of all creation,  
its blood that runs like raindrops down the glass.  
Our winter world is instinct with redemption  
and hope for all that will be and has passed.



from *Neither Be Afraid and other poems*  
2000 Ignatius Press, San Francisco



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