



## Dear Centering Prayer Community of Arizona,

**A**s you read this we will be over the summer hump and heading into more temperate weather. Advent and Christmas are in the not-too-distant future. As we endeavor to stay grounded in the present we give thanks for our desert (and North Country) homes which teach us about endurance and patience.

New variations of COVID-19 continue to cause caution about meeting in person. Many faith communities struggle to bring people back from the safety and convenience of virtual attendance. How are you doing? Has your prayer group assumed a hybrid format, in-person with safety measures or entirely on-line? Do you still feel well connected to others on this contemplative journey?

One unexpected and thrilling result of going virtual is that the global Contemplative Outreach family has never been closer. News from the national headquarters, in its several formats during the year, is full of stories and reports from all over the world. Did you know that, according to *The Voice: A Quarterly Newsletter for Volunteers*, web pages as well as YouTube videos are translated into several different languages? A treasury of YouTube videos is available on the national website. Individuals and Centering Prayer groups looking for enrichment have these resources to explore.

We are anticipating with excitement our fall Speaker Series, featuring Veronica Mary Rolf. She is in demand as an expert on Julian of Norwich, and as a scholar with a contemplative perspective on the Bible. The zoom format has allowed her to appear at a conference for the Centering Prayer communities of South Africa, as well as elsewhere. Be sure to register for this online retreat day, October 29, 2022 from 9 am to 3 pm. on our website, [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org).

We hope you find much to enjoy in this newsletter,  
sent to you with love.

In Silence, Solitude, and Service.

**Your Chapter Service Team**



# Sharing Your Story In a Small Group

by **Bob Brooke, Phoenix**

In late May of 2022, when it seemed that the pandemic actually might be winding down, a small group of veteran Arizona retreatants gathered in Tucson for three days of quiet time, mimicking the format of an intensive retreat. Those who drove from Phoenix were joined by a Tucson native for the late afternoon hour of prayer prior to the evening meal. The next morning we did two one hour periods of Centering Prayer before lunchtime.

At the midpoint of Day Two, I needed to make an announcement. "Well, folks, we had a scheduled presentation this afternoon but as you know our speaker isn't feeling well and will not be able to make it today. So we have some learning time this afternoon! One thought I had was that we might borrow a practice from our friends in another spiritual program, the Twelve Steps. A key feature of that program (often after having attended 90 meetings in 90 days, as I did) is telling the story of your spiritual journey, first one-on-one with your sponsor, and later to a room full of people! If you have never done this you might be nervous at first, but by the time you finish you will feel joyful, as I did, knowing something important had happened. I guarantee the listeners will feel it too. I have been working a 12 step program

for 40 some years now, and know that telling one's story is a vital part of the program. In fact the "Big Book", the classic manual for the program, starts with a story. The list of the steps is not introduced until Chapter 5, where the list is preceded by this quote: "Our stories disclose, in a general way, what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now." Sounds like an overview of the spiritual journey!

All in the group agreed to give it go, and for about two hours we heard the stories of childhood, adolescence, and growing up, learning to deal with fears, hardships, mental and physical illness, seeking and finding love, friendship, success and meaning as we matured. We learned about Centering Prayer as a crucial step on our spiritual journey, accepting and cultivating the presence and action of God in our lives. Each speaker was willing, honest, and open, and as the sharing spirit spread around the room the sense of community could be felt by all. When all had spoken there were smiles and hugs all around, together with peace, love and yes, joy! We returned to the silence more accepting, forgiving and loving toward ourselves and our friends on the journey.

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**12 STEP OUTREACH IS PRESENTING**  
**MONTHLY ONLINE CENTERING**  
**PRAYER INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS**  
 Saturdays 12PM - 3PM ET

August 6th, September 3rd, October 1st,  
 November 5th and December 3rd, 2022

*Exploring Centering Prayer as an 11th step  
 meditation practice*

These are free workshops open to anyone who participates in a  
 12-step program and wants to learn Centering Prayer  
 or deepen their practice. Registration is required to attend.  
[www.cp12stepoutreach.org](http://www.cp12stepoutreach.org)



## SILENT RETREATS IN 2023

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 13 through Saturday, January 21, 2023.

(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 3 through Saturday, February 11, 2023

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, 2023 to Jeannie Lashinske. Please make out checks to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix. Questions? Ask Jeannie by calling 602-619-1714 or emailing her at [jmlashinske@gmail.com](mailto:jmlashinske@gmail.com).



# **“Wise Choices: A Spiritual Guide to Making Life’s Decisions”**

Fall 2022

## **Book Review by Sister Rachel Torrez RSM**

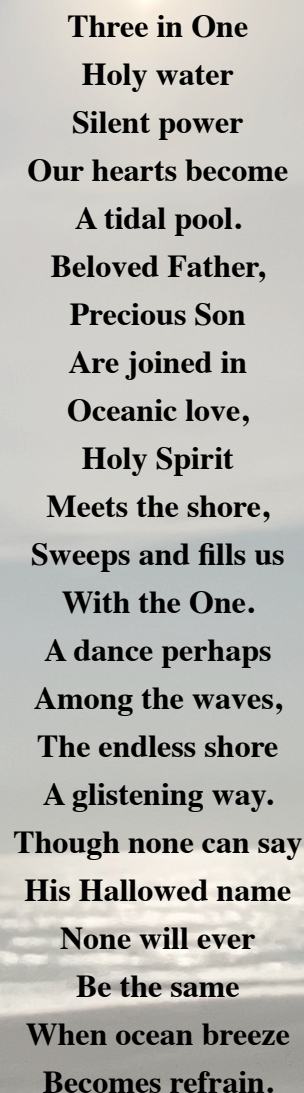
Many of us have been faced with having to make life changing decisions in our lives at one time or another. It is not always easy, nor is it always clear that the choices we make are the right ones. It may be helpful to use this slender book by British author Margaret Silf to help us. This is a book of suggestions, not a rule book. The solutions that work in life are the ones we discover for ourselves, not the ones we find in books. The book provides practical approaches you may want to use in the “discernment” process.

The following are a few excerpts from the book which suggest some thoughts for making the wise choice.

- You can only make choices when you begin from a place where you feel you are being true to yourself and true to how you really are.
- Take a look at any choices you are dealing with right now: Are they long term, or even life-changing? Or are they “instants”? Just to name them to yourself is a good way of beginning to prepare the ground work.
- To seek guidance and advice from each other is simply a part of what it means to be human, and part of an interrelated interdependent web of life. The only kind of guidance or advice that is truly objective is that which is offered in genuine freedom of heart.
- Favorable opportunities are not always simply good news. Sometimes they are merely the least harmful of several options, and we have to choose “the lesser of two evils.” To choose well is to choose the best we can.
- Ask yourself how you would advise someone you love, if they were facing the choice that lies before you. What might you want to say to this person, and why?
- If doubts are causing you to hold back and waver on the threshold of decisive action, remember that you have already been through a process of serious discernment on the matter. You have weighed the pros and cons, and listened to the voice of your own intuition and the voices of wise guides and mentors.

## **Three in One**

**By Alexandra Piacenza, Prescott**



**Three in One  
Holy water  
Silent power  
Our hearts become  
A tidal pool.  
Beloved Father,  
Precious Son  
Are joined in  
Oceanic love,  
Holy Spirit  
Meets the shore,  
Sweeps and fills us  
With the One.  
A dance perhaps  
Among the waves,  
The endless shore  
A glistening way.  
Though none can say  
His Hallowed name  
None will ever  
Be the same  
When ocean breeze  
Becomes refrain.**



Contemplative  
Outreach

Fall Speaker Series  
Sponsored by Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix

## **Suddenly There is God: Finding Christ in the Crisis**

Presenter: Veronica Mary Rolf

Saturday, October 29, 2022 -  
A Virtual Event. 9 am to 3 pm



**Veronica Mary Rolf** is an independent scholar, retreat leader, and author.

Her award winning books include:

*Suddenly There is God: The Story of Our Lives in Sacred Scripture* (Cascade Books, 2019) and its companion volume,

*Living Resurrected Lives* (Cascade Books, 2020), co-authored with Eva Natanya, PhD. Both books won Catholic Media Association Book Awards.

*An Explorer's Guide to Julian of Norwich* (IVP Academic Press, 2018)

*Julian's Gospel: Illuminating the Life & Revelations of Julian of Norwich* (Orbis Books, 2013)

Veronica's blogs and podcasts are available at: <https://www.veronicamaryrolf.com/>

### **Workshop Description**

**Veronica Mary Rolf**, award-winning author, popular podcaster, and meditation teacher, will present a series of reflections on men and women of sacred Scripture who experienced great crises and discovered the presence of God within these crises.

We will delve into the lives of Abraham and Moses; Mary and Joseph; Martha, Mary, and Lazarus of Bethany; Mary Magdalene and the Apostle Paul—people like us who hoped, feared, struggled, faced major crises, and endured great suffering. But because they listened to the divine voice within and responded to it generously, they each received abundant blessings on the mystical path.

These scriptural guides can be deeply relevant to us right now, in our own difficult life situations, amidst the ongoing pandemic. The stories of these men and women reveal how Christ may become truly present to us—suddenly and surprisingly—within the crises and the graces of our daily lives. Moreover, reflecting on the wisdom of biblical mystics is a powerful way to re-inspire our own contemplative practice.

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.

A voluntary contribution of \$20 to cover expenses is appreciated but not required.



It is commitment to the journey and fidelity to the practice that leads to transforming union, not spiritual experiences. Such experiences, of course, may help to bring us to this commitment. Sometimes we need them in order to heal the wounds and the emotional pain of childhood. But once our emotions have been healed, God gets down to business and begins to treat us like adults. Then we are initiated into the narrow path that leads to life, which is the way of pure faith.

Invitation to Love  
Thomas Keating



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\*Return Receipt Requested\*