



Dear Contemplative Outreach Community Members,

“Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile...” Mark 6:31

These evocative words speak to the soul, don't they? In a world with ever more temptations to be distracted by the important but nonessential, we must keep choosing what is truly life-giving. Fr. Thomas Keating once said that God gave us free-will, but it is good for only one thing: seeking God over everything else. He would joke, “How is free-will working for your diet, your plan to go back to the gym, your resolutions to be kinder?”

Many of us have had the experience of losing sight of our contemplative path all too easily. An inspiring book, webinar, or conversation with a spiritually mature friend can be so compelling, yet within a day or two we forget the details. It's not hard to see why the monastic life was structured to call its members back to God throughout the day, during work, rest, chanting and silence. Unless our hours are continually centered in God's love, they tend to get stolen by the demands of everyday life.



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This newsletter contains several articles about the contemplative retreat experience. Every time we sit in Centering Prayer, we give ourselves a mini-retreat, to be sure. When we pray in a group, the sense of resting in God grows stronger. But there is no substitute for longer, more intentional times of prayer in community. We hope you enjoy these reflections from members of our community.

Another deep experience offers itself on Saturday, October 14, 2023 at Shepherd of the Hills UCC in Phoenix when Fr. John Auther, SJ, will visit us to talk about “Christian Mindfulness – Meditation Lived Daily.” For help in our planning, we urge you to register for this event soon, at www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org.

We continue to receive invitations to present the Introduction to Centering Prayer program. This is a Saturday presentation from 9 am to 1 pm. It is followed by six sessions scheduled at convenient times for the community. People new to the prayer as well as seasoned communities benefit from going back to the basics: the simple, profound method developed by Fr. Thomas Keating and others in the 1980's. Contact us if you are interested in an Intro program. This can be done from the website or by using contact information within.

May our hearts stay centered in our beloved Creator so that we may radiate the gifts of the Spirit into our needy world. And...Happy Fall at last!

In Silence, Solitude, and Service,
Your Chapter Service Team



**News from Saint Barnabas on the Desert
Contemplative Life Ministry**

**[https://saintbarnabas.org/ministries/
contemplative-life/](https://saintbarnabas.org/ministries/contemplative-life/)**

With its beautiful, serene campus and large contemplative community, Saint Barnabas is a treasure in the Valley. Do check its website for opportunities to join many others in spiritual enrichment, retreats, Quiet Days, and Centering Prayer, as well as videos of recent speakers like James Finley.

Fr. Jim Clark, who has been the Rector at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church for 20 years, is retiring in February, 2024. Fr. Jim has been an enthusiastic leader of St. Barnabas contemplative programs and will be greatly missed.

Liza Bell is stepping down as coordinator of Centering Prayer programs on September 1 and Debbie Moore will be assuming Liza's responsibilities. She can be reached at deb.j.moore@gmail.com.

Registration for the fall retreat, from Thursday, November 2 to Sunday, November 5, will open in mid-September. For information and registration contact Debbie Moore at deb.j.moore@gmail.com.

A new in-person Centering Prayer group has been added to our calendar on Mondays from 3-4:30 pm in the Chapel. It starts September 11 and will be led by Debbie Moore.

Two White-Tailed Deer Near an Abbey

On the pitted, rock-strewn road from the monastery, I walk late in the day. Ahead, two white-tailed deer nibble wintry straw, a mother and yearling.

The doe sees me, freezes. I stop on the heels of my companion shadow. We wait, motionless long enough for Vespers bells to ring on the hill.

Then she moves. The air ripples; out of stillness steps a glorious deer, as if emerging from a cleft between being and oblivion.

So many living things will never more appear through that portal, outlines erased, voices stilled. But what these deer know today

is that this is sanctuary ground; I come to them from silence; at the edge of this dormant field there is still some green grass.

Kathy Kramer-Howe



Intensive Retreats: "When can I do this again?!"

by Mary Leonard

Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix offers to those in the Centering Prayer community a deepening experience of the prayer practice during an eight-day silent retreat each winter. For over twenty years, through the gracious generosity of the Trappistine Sisters at Santa Rita Abbey in Sonoita, AZ, a small group from all over the state has gathered for an eight-day silent retreat, known as an "Intensive."

The Intensive Retreat was part of Fr. Thomas Keating's continuing outreach to those practicing Centering Prayer. It is traditional throughout the world for those pursuing a contemplative life centered in God to go on annual retreats. In fact, over the years some of the cloistered sisters at Santa Rita Abbey, who also practice Centering Prayer, have joined Contemplative Outreach's community for their annual retreat.

In the early 1980's, Fr. Thomas invited people to Snowmass Monastery in Colorado for silent retreats. Retreatants were housed in various settings. Some lived at the Ranch House where the Prayer Room was located; others slept in the Barn, and still others in a little house down the road. In keeping with the Trappist tradition, the retreat cooks (Centering Prayer practitioners as well as prayer leaders) served a tasty vegetarian menu. Fr. Thomas designed the retreat: three one-hour CP sessions with meditative walk; two 45-60 minute presentations by Fr. Thomas, along with evening gatherings for Lectio Divina and group sharings. The retreatants were also invited to walk to the monastery up the road for daily Eucharist with the Trappist monks. During the afternoon, there was free time for individual quiet, exercise, journaling, or resting. For



8-10 days, retreatants lived in silence, prayed and ate together in silence, and in silence experienced the creation of community.

In the late 1980's generous benefactors supplied the financial assistance for the taping of Fr. Thomas' conferences, which became known throughout the world as "The Spiritual Journey Tapes" (now in DVD form and available on the Contemplative Outreach You Tube channel. The Intensive Retreat offers a unique opportunity to listen with a quiet spirit to these teachings on the Spiritual Journey, grounded in Christian contemplative history, psychology, and the history and development of Centering Prayer.

Anyone who has a Centering Prayer practice of six months is eligible to attend an Intensive Retreat. Often the question is: "Why would I do that?" After attending a retreat, one is more likely to ask, "When can I do this again?" A retreat is a deepening experience in one's relationship with God, with neighbor, and with self. Although there is little overt personal interaction, by retreat's end new relationships have formed. Retreatants return home knowing that God's healing love has spoken silently in new ways, and they have opened up and received God in ways they didn't know could be possible. They carry home deep within themselves the gifts and fruits of the Spirit to share with their relationships, families, workplaces and church communities. Transformed lives forged in deep prayer little by little manifest God's love in everyday life!

Retreatants return home as well with a firmer commitment to daily Centering Prayer, as well as service in their local Contemplative Outreach prayer

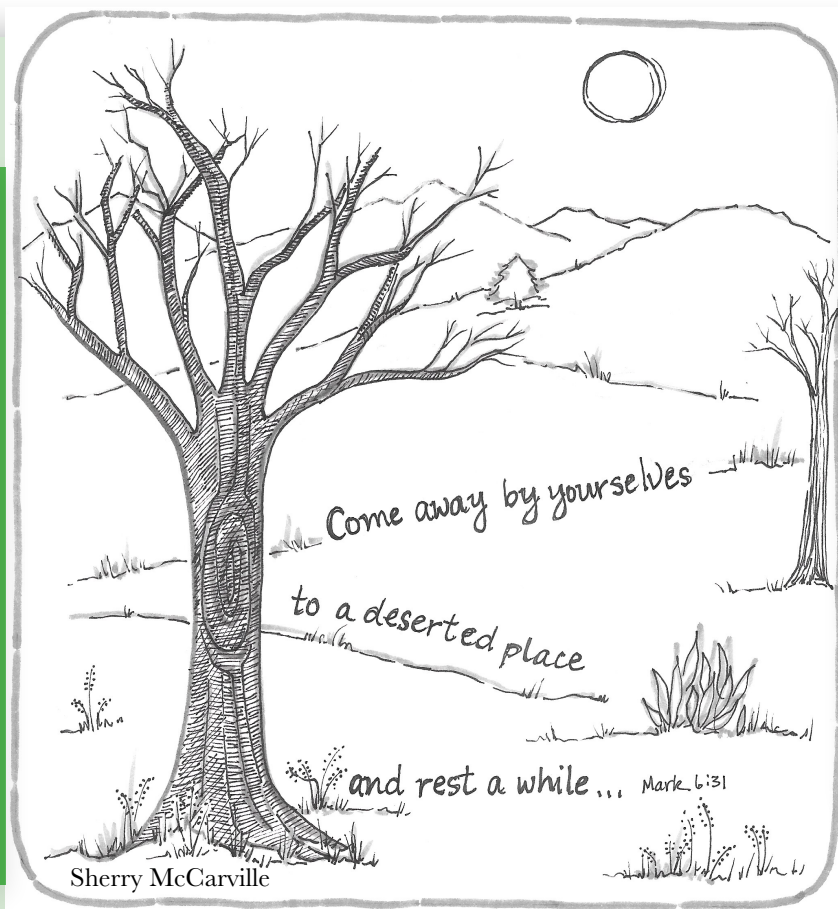
community. Retreat friends often become lifetime relationships.

If you sense a desire to know God more intimately and to deepen your Centering Prayer practice, an Intensive Retreat is available to you. Experienced volunteer retreat leaders from Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix are ready to put into motion the Intensive Retreat Fr. Thomas initiated forty years ago. Listen to God's invitation within and respond to the Contemplative Outreach registration.

Like the first intensives at Snowmass, CO, retreatants at Santa Rita Abbey will pray together 3 hours a day in the Retreat House chapel, listen

to Fr. Thomas' Spiritual Journey teachings, enjoy quiet time in the serenity of the Santa Rita mountain highlands, and be treated to nutritious, tasty vegetarian meals. Daily Eucharist/Communion service and Vespers participation with the Sisters add another blessing to the retreat experience. Seven comfortable private rooms with bath, a library and retreatants' kitchen are ready to welcome retreatants.

Check out retreat dates in this newsletter or at www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org. If you have any questions, please contact Jeannie Lashinske: email: jmlashinske@gmail.com, or call 480-423 1645.



On Serving, Sitting and Burning Bread

By Sherry McCarville

Any anxiety I may have had about my first opportunity to serve on a retreat at Saint Rita was quashed before we even arrived. Having been there many times before, I knew I would feel at home...but the true keys to my easy adaptation were the beautiful women who have organized and served on many previous retreats. They put my heart and mind at ease and gave me a clear schedule of my duties. But mostly, they just loved me so fully that I felt no fear of doing something wrong. However, this lack of fear did not prevent me from burning the goat cheese muffins one night, just as the retreatants were heading back from prayer to dinner. The loving response to quickly create a different bread, and to hide the evidence on the back patio was a blessing.

We got settled in the day before the retreatants arrived, so I 'sort of' felt ready. The first morning of retreat, I knew that all would be well. We went up to join the sisters for morning prayer and Mass. It seems no accident that the gospel from Mark included Jesus' words, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place, and rest a while." This became the theme of my time at Santa Rita. Even though I was very busy and, in reality a bit wiped out by the schedule, it was a deep time of resting in God. Saint Teresa of Avila, says that "love turns work into rest." This was certainly true for me as I got up early to lead the prayer sits with some fear about not waking up, or stressed out about my responsibilities at the food prep times. Sitting

at table to share a silent meal and seeing the beautiful souls of the people who surrounded me, I was overwhelmed by God's creativity and presence. In fairness I must say this sense of Presence was tempered by my mental "to do list" every time I began a sit. So there is gratitude for God's loving action even when I am distracted.

My role on the team was to lead some of the prayer sits and to assist in the cooking duties. I was reminded in that kitchen to never take for granted the importance of beauty in the food that we prepare for others. Many of the meals did look like works of art and we were all nourished, body and soul.

One of the highlights of being on retreat at Santa Rita is, of course, the sisters, such beautiful women, so obviously welcoming us, even in silence. Praying with them is always a gift. During Vespers one evening, they sang from Psalm 136, "His love endures forever." That line, repeated over and over, in their angelic voices, took me to another place. It was a moment, a deep connection to our beautiful God who finds so many ways to remind us of His loving presence. The sisters' singing, their sweet smiles and waves, the silence, the daily Eucharist, the sunrises, the sunsets, the giant marble moon that walked us home to dinner one night...even the burned goat cheese bread and my fellow teammates response...the list of special moments goes on and on...as does my gratitude for the time spent "working" yet resting a while.



Silent Retreats in 2024

Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix offers silent intensive retreats to those who are interested in renewing and deepening their relationship with God through Centering Prayer. It is done 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) about an hour south of Tucson. This is a natural setting on high desert terrain. There are seven private rooms with one queen bed room and can accommodate two retreatants. Each room has its own bathroom. The retreat menu is vegetarian.



Intensive Retreat: Friday evening January 12th through Saturday, January 20th, 2024

(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. There is the opportunity to participate daily in Lauds, Communion Service and Vespers with the Trappistine Sisters in their nearby chapel. There is talking at the evening meal.

Post-Intensive Retreat: Friday evening February 2nd through Saturday, February 10th, 2024

Prerequisite: Must have attended a CP 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 \$600.00 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 \$525.00 each, if shared.

A non-refundable \$100 registration fee and proof of vaccination against Covid-19 reserves your room. We expect the remaining \$500 will be paid in full by January 3, 2024 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.

In-Person Fall Enrichment Day With Fr John Auther S.J. Christian Mindfulness - Meditation Lived Daily

Fr. John is a member of the pastoral staff of the Jesuit Retreat Center of Los Altos. A priest for over 30 years, Fr. John has worked as a high school campus minister, an associate pastor and pastor. In his pastoral ministry he has devoted a good deal of time to Spanish-speaking work, detention facilities and retreats. Believing that powerful things from God happen on retreats that don't happen at other times, he has always viewed retreat ministry as a wonderful way to serve the Lord.



Come join us for a day of spiritual enrichment and contemplation as Fr John, a practitioner of Contemplative Prayer since the late 70's, shares with us on integrating mindfulness and meditation into our daily Christian lives.

**October 14, 2023, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Shepherd of the Hills United Church of Christ
5524 E. Lafayette Blvd. Phoenix, AZ 85018**

The fee of \$35 includes lunch (vegetarian option available)

Register on-line at:

www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org

Or mail registration to:

Fall Enrichment Day
6140 E Joshua Tree Lane
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **important:** check for vegetarian lunch _____

Make check out to *Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix*

For additional information, contact: David Murray
at 602-999-2736 or email dmurray1_98@yahoo.com

For information regarding scholarships, contact: Sister Rachel Torrez
at 602-944-2728 or email rtorrez@cox.net





*The
Wilderness
will lead you
to your heart
where I will speak.*



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