

Consd News

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Reflections on St. Therese of Lisieux Half day Retreat

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The community of CONSD gathered on Nov. 21, 2015 at San Dieguito United Methodist Church for a half day retreat to prayerfully consider the message of St. Therese of Lisieux: Trust, Surrender, and Gratitude. The physical environment was quite inviting as the room held numerous pictures and icons of Therese of Lisieux. The sacred environment also included an altar rich with candles, numerous books on her life, and of course, flowers, which Therese loved. Therese thought of each flower as a "sign of Love---a wink from God!" Quotes from Therese's writings were posted around the room, where all could meditatively walk and ponder the wisdom of her words in their hearts. A slide show also ran continuously with beautiful photographs and quotes from her writings. Violin, piano, and chant sang from deep within us. One could not ask for a more prayerful environment as candlelight, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, music, and art called us to enter the silence with the Spirit of St. Therese of Lisieux, a key figure in the recovery of the contemplative dimension of the gospel in our time. The retreat began with a short biographical sketch of Therese's life. All were also given a pamphlet which contained this same basic information. Therese was the last of nine children, born in France in 1873. Her mother died when she was four years old and she was lovingly raised by her father and her sisters. She struggled for permission to enter the Carmelite Convent at age fifteen and she died of tuberculosis at age 24. The most striking note for me was to learn that Therese had an inner confidence to create a new path that the Catholic Church did not support at the time. The religious culture of her day was all about "perfection." Her willingness to remain imperfect and surrender to God's will would become the essence of her "Little Way" for ordinary people. Several of her teachings touched me deeply. "There is nothing to do but be silent and weep with gratitude and love," and "Jesus does not demand great achievements, but simple surrender and gratitude." Her message speaks of the three prisms of Love: Trust, Surrender, and Gratitude." I am inspired to refer to her short teachings for use in Lectio Divina. Our gratitude is to Elena Andrews and all who so lovingly prepared this retreat by continuing to enter the Silence. Like Therese, we can proceed in simple faith and hope that our intimacy with God will lead us to transforming love. In the words of Psalm 107 let us pray, "For without You we can do nothing. Tis your Love that loves through us." ~Diane Langworthy

St. James Parish Introductory Workshop

Last year Bea Doblado who has been our hospitality team leader, told the Servant Leadership Team she wanted her new church, St. James Parish in Solana Beach, to sponsor an Introductory Workshop. After months of planning and preparation with the aid of Gail Carr, the Intro team leader and Katie Hodsdon, the Pastoral Associate for St. James, they set January 16th as the date.

St. James Parish and Gail heavily publicized the event, and on the appointed Saturday, 32 participants new to Centering Prayer, and 12 others (refreshers, Intro Team members and presenters Chris Hagen and Mary Williams) gathered in the well-appointed Parish Hall for CONSD's first workshop in over a year.

Our workshops have been refined over the years as the Intro Team has addressed suggestions and concerns. Registration is done quickly and efficiently, hospitality is gracious and inviting, and most importantly, Chris Hagen has worked with each of our skilled presenters to develop a set of individual slides for their conferences, creating a personal presentation that also stays true to the prescribed content. Participants can be assured that they will come away from a workshop with a grounded understanding of the prayer as well as continued support through the 6 follow-up sessions.

But that is what we can plan. The Holy Spirit does the rest, and Gail Carr in a thank you email to those who served at the St. James' workshop said it best:

The purpose of the morning...and the hearts of those who have been so touched by the practice of Centering Prayer...who just naturally connect with the needs of those around them...went to work without any instruction...and did

whatever was required to make the morning a truly sacred experience. I am overflowing with gratitude for each of you who made the workshop what it was...along with those who attended, who from the very beginning were engaged with the process, expressing a desire and hunger for greater understanding. The audience seemed to hang on to every word and concept presented...with a longing and engagement that surely was "pleasing to the Lord." The two prayer periods were incredible in terms of the connectivity, and we had to cut off the questions, answers, and sharing because we were a half hour behind...I am so full of gratitude for our community, our prayer, our God, and each one of you.

Many of those in attendance have continued with one of the two follow-up sessions which Bea is leading. Bea has said the group members are deeply interested in the prayer and reflect that interest in their questions and discussions, and she is excited about the possibility of an ongoing prayer group at St. James.

Will you hold Bea and the two groups in prayer? All of you who faithfully practice Centering Prayer understand just how important this time of awakening is to experience a deeper relationship with God. Our next workshop is April 30th at the First United Church in Escondido, and you are invited to share in a time of recommitment to your practice and to meet those who are seeking.

~Linda Dollins

This much is certain, that once we make up our minds to seek God, he is already seeking us much more eagerly, and he is not going to let anything happen to prevent his purpose.

~Fr. Thomas Keating

Discerning a Rule of Life

On April 9, 2016, Rev. Carolyn Metzler, will present a half day retreat on “Discerning a Rule of Life.” Rev. Carolyn is an Episcopal priest who was a hospice chaplain for 30 years. She now serves as the Spiritual Life Coordinator for Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation and for his Living School. As poet, writer, weaver, and spiritual director, Carolyn brings creativity and kindness to all she does.

I had the privilege of taking a condensed version of her “Discerning a Rule of Life” workshop last September at the Living School where Carolyn is one of the teachers. The image that occurred to me after her class is that the Rule of Life is like a well-defined, concrete path in the middle of the sometimes dark forest of life, which leads to the light of the immanent and transcendent God.

At her workshop Carolyn characterized the Rule of Life as a number of things, including a trellis that supports a vine, which made me think of an infrastructure that supports our spiritual life and growth. James Finley, who is one of the Master teachers in the Living School, might characterize it as that which puts us in the stance to be overtaken by grace. Carolyn also said that the Rule of Life becomes the foundation for our engagement with the world and a friend who keeps us honest.

Some of the traditional spiritual disciplines that we might include in our Rule of Life are: fasting (from compulsions), prayer, silence, solitude, study, lectio divina, meditation, spiritual direction, hospitality, almsgiving, and more. And there are nontraditional ones that we might choose to include as we go through our discerning process, like working on the issue of global warming.

How we discern or flesh out our Rule of Life begins with defining our Overarching Vision and a Personal Mission Statement. The latter is a short, concise sentence that describes our yearning for the world, such as: “I am a conduit for God’s love to enter the world.” Discerning also includes answering questions like “How might a Rule relate to my passions, my roles, my compulsions? How does a Rule speak to my Enneagram type, my contemplative practice, my interaction with community?”

Discerning a Rule of Life is an opportunity for creativity and uniqueness, i.e. we should not copy anyone else’s! A Rule of Life needs to be simple and flexible, doable and authentic. It needs to include the well-being of others, but not at the expense of our own. It needs to be passionate. Near the end of the workshop, Carolyn mentioned that there are times when we will fail to follow our Rule of Life – and that’s OK!

Finally, this is what Henri Nouwen said about a Rule of Life: “A Rule of Life offers ‘creative boundaries within which God’s loving presence can be recognized and celebrated.’ It does not prescribe but invite, it does not force but guide, it does not threaten but warn, it does not instill fear but points to love. In this it is a call to freedom, freedom to love.”

To learn how to discern your own Rule of Life, you are invited to come and be a part of this rich workshop. See the flyer in this newsletter for workshop details.

~Merrilee Melvin

St. John the Evangelist Centering Prayer Group

The Centering Prayer Group at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church was formed in February 2000. The establishment of our group followed an Introductory Workshop that was directed by Fr. Mark Campbell (now Msgr. Campbell) in the parish hall. The founding members of our prayer group consisted of eleven workshop attendees, who also took part in six subsequent orientation meetings.

From the start, and continuing for several years thereafter, our weekly centering meetings were held in the parish office. Then, due to scheduling conflicts, we began gathering in members' homes. Our group has continually met on a weekly basis, however, we eventually changed from evening sessions to morning sessions. We are currently evaluating a change back to evening sessions.

Throughout the years, for various reasons, the group size has fluctuated from eleven to as low as three. Even still, a core nucleus has continued to meet regularly since 2000. We consider centering prayer a life commitment, not an obligation. We have always encouraged individu-

als to attend as their schedule allowed, even though they may not have participated for several weeks or months. We welcome new members!

The groups' spiritual enrichment meeting segments have included books, television viewing, CD's, and DVD's from a host of authors such as, Fr. Thomas Keating, Fr. Richard Rohr, Fr. William Meninger, Cynthia Bourgeault, James Finley and others. We have viewed current, relevant presentations like documentaries on The Bible and the Beatitudes, as well as other faith-building media. All of our reading, listening and viewing listed above is interspersed with sharing and open discussion. The group frequently attends retreats and seminars together some of which have been locally sponsored (SD and LA) and occasionally out of State (New Mexico.)

Our Monday gathering concludes with personal sharing, prayer, and announcements.

~Shirley Shetula

What is Faith?

Christian faith is a leap into the unknown. Experience confirms the wisdom of every act of trust. The alternation of the darkness of faith leading to understanding, and understanding illuminating the darkness of faith is the normal way that leads to the growth of faith. Like everyone else, God wants to be accepted as he is—and he happens to be infinite, incomprehensible, inexpressible.

We have to accept him, then, in the darkness of faith. It is only when we can accept God as he is that we can give up the desire for spiritual

experiences that we can feel. Faith is mature when we are at ease without particular experiences of God, when his presence is obvious without our having to reflect on it. One who has this faith simply opens his eyes and, wherever he looks, finds God.

~Fr. Thomas Keating,
Heart of the World pp. 40-41

Mission San Luis Rey Contemplative Prayer Group

Each week is time to gather for prayer of the heart. When we arrive we walk through the beautiful Franciscan gardens of the Mission Retreat Center. First there is the Rose Garden and then past the succulent garden and on the right, the ancient Pepper Tree that came from Peru in 1860. The walk takes us through the door and we follow the sound of voices greeting one another, checking in on families, describing travel plans and sharing our latest aches and pains. We are in the right place.

Our meeting time is on Fridays, 3:00-4:30pm. Today there are 9 of us gathered around the prayer table. In anticipation of Lent, the table holds a tall purple candle, purple cloth, and fresh lavender and rosemary in a vase. Approximately two years ago we began our journey together at an Introductory Workshop held here at the Mission. Since then, birthdays have come and gone, loved ones have died and sickness strikes someone dear to us and through it all belief in the power of God in our lives, in particular the power of Centering Prayer, has guided us.

At 3:15pm, we begin our prayer with intentional breathing and checking our posture. Then a line from scripture brings us into the quiet space where we intentionally consent to God's presence for the next 20 minutes. The meditation bowl sounds and there is quiet. When the meditation bowl sounds again, we gradually bring our consciousness back to the room, stretch, and gently open our eyes. For the next 25 minutes we read to each other—just like we did in school. The books this time are from our Contemplative Prayer library. We finished Fr. Carl Arrico's *The Taste of Silence* before Christmas and now we are reading *Invitation to Love* by Fr. Thomas Keating. Reading and talking together is a rich experience, very different from reading a book to yourself. Read-

ing aloud lets each of us hear the words in another's voice. That listening may prompt us to ask ourselves questions. Maybe something about our distractions or some other habit that we struggle to release. In Fr. Thomas' writing in *Invitation to Love*, he describes the evolutionary model for the human condition. Wow! That is a topic we can listen and listen to as long as we want to stay with it. Reading out loud and then discussing what we heard seems to expand our notions about why we do what we do. He names the root of our issues as our emotional programming. He skillfully brings together Spirituality and Science. He shows us an integrative model that ultimately heals our human condition. The greater the healing, the greater possibilities for God's love to flourish in our lives. We end thanking God for his invitation to love.

Then it is 4:05pm, time to close our eyes and consent to have God's presence envelope us once again. Someone reads a line or two from scripture and the meditation bowl chimes us into the silence. The second sound of the meditation bowl brings us back to the present moment. After a long pause, together we pray the Our Father. Our Contemplative Prayer time together is over for the day. Praise be to God.

~Pat Julian

Interior silence is the perfect seed bed for divine love to take root. In the Gospel the Lord speaks about a mustard seed as a symbol of divine love. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it has an enormous capacity for growth. Divine love has the power to grow and transform us. The purpose of the contemplative prayer is to facilitate the process of inner transformation.

~Fr. Thomas Keating,

Retreat with Fr. Stephen Coffey

Father Stephen Coffey's talk on February 6 illustrated the chronological development of the concept of the Cosmic Christ. Successfully condensing an immense theological history into one day, Fr. Stephen used scripture and story, spiraling all explanation around the virtue of Wisdom. I have divided this synopsis of his talk into four segments, hopefully helping the reader to gain better understanding.

FIRST SEGMENT: Fr. Stephen illustrated how three of the wisdom books - Proverbs, The Wisdom of Sirach, and The Book of Wisdom - provide scriptural and foundational sources of this virtue.

Proverbs was written about **400 years before Christ lived**. Proverbs is the third creation story. In this creation myth, God has a helper and she is feminine, Sophia; a master artisan who possesses all the blueprints of creation that God is using as He creates. In Chapter 8, we find Wisdom talking about herself; of how she existed before and was present during all of creation, and is now at play everywhere in the earth and among humanity. The act of creation transpires as a thing of play and delight wherein both God and Sophia delight in each other; a relationship of intimacy. They are one mind and one heart as they bring creation into being. Sophia continues to be at play everywhere and she especially delights in humankind, whom she refers to as **“children of earth”**.

In Proverbs, Sophia, whom Fr. Stephen calls Lady Wisdom, has competition from Dame Folly. Together, they each call people to come to them. Even while Dame Folly knows how to attract people to her, Lady Wisdom holds her own banquet from which she invites humanity to partake. She knows that what she can give to humanity is authentic and enduring, and she

says: **“Happy are those who keep my ways...one who finds me, finds life...but one who does injury to me, does injury to one's soul”**.

The Wisdom of Sirach, now found in the Catholic Apocrypha, was written 200 years later, **around 180 BC**, by another Jesus, Jesus ben Sirach (son of Sirach). Derived from his inspiration on Sophia in Chapters 8 & 9 of Proverbs, Sirach wants to 'up-grade' Sophia, and writes of her:

“Wisdom speaks her own praises, in the midst of her people she glories in herself.

She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, she glories in herself in the presence of the Mighty One:

'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and I covered the earth like mist.

I had my tent in the heights, and my throne was a pillar of cloud.

Alone, I have made the circuit of the heavens and walked through the depths of the abyss.

Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.

Among all these I searched for rest, and looked to see in whose territory I might pitch camp.

Then the Creator of all things instructed me and he who created me fixed a place for my tent. He said, "Pitch your tent in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance.

From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall remain."

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Taking Proverbs' depiction of Sophia as an artisan with God at creation, Sirach goes one step further and says, ***"I came forth from the mouth of the Most High."*** As occurs in Genesis during each day of creation, we read ***"And God said, it is good"***. For Sirach, Sophia is this foundation of goodness, coming out of the mouth of God as he creates.

The Book of Wisdom was written **200 years later, around 50 BC** by an anonymous writer who had carefully read Proverbs and Sirach. While Proverbs and The Wisdom of Sirach were written in Hebrew, the Book of Wisdom was designated for Greek-speaking Jews living outside of Palestine, being written in Greek in a style patterned after Hebrew verse. The 'upgrade' that Sophia receives in the Book of Wisdom is that she is seen as coming forth from the mouth of God as the Word. The primal numbers 3 and 7 held special sacred meaning for the Hebrews, and in the Book of Wisdom we see Sophia listed with 3x7, or 21, attributes:

"For within her is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, incisive, unsullied, lucid, invulnerable, benevolent, shrewd, irresistible, beneficent, friendly to human beings, steadfast, dependable, unperturbed, almighty, all-surveying, penetrating all intelligent, pure and most subtle spirits."

The author continues to illustrate her nature: ***"She is a breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; so nothing impure can find its way into her. For she is a reflection of the eternal light, untarnished mirror of God's active power, and image of his goodness."***

As an artisan in creation, as God's creative agent, she is identified with God. ***"She makes all things new in each generation as she***

passes into holy souls and make them friends of God".

SECOND SEGMENT: We moved into the time **after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, around 28 AD**, and observe the Christian communities as they began to spring into being. Fr. Stephen noted that as the early Christians gathered together to worship, they would always sing hymns. In preparation for this part of his presentation, we stood and sang Hymn 488 in the Episcopal hymnal, "Be Thou My Vision". What imagery did the early Christian hymn writers use? They borrowed from inspiration which they received from the Old Testament. As in Hymn 488, ***"the victory won"*** refers to the Resurrection. ***"Be thou my wisdom and thou my true word"*** came directly from the wisdom literature; the 'word' being that which "came out of the mouth of the Most High" (Sirach).

In turn, the writers of the early books of the New Testament drew inspiration from the lyrics of the hymns they sang. We looked at two such New Testament writings.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians:

Trying to encourage the Philippians to reconcile their differences, Paul told them that they needed to become new, like Jesus. ***"Though Jesus was in the form of God, he didn't deem himself to be worthy, but 'emptied himself'"***. Chapter 2 of Philippians further echoes the words of the hymns: ***"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature as God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"***.

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The Gospel of John:

Written later than Paul's letters, the Gospel of John begins with the poetry of hymns which were sung long before this gospel had been written:

“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 that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Again, we ask, where did the hymn writer get his imagery? It came from the three aforementioned wisdom books:

Proverbs 8 & 9: ***“The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.”***

Sirach, Ch. 24: ***“I came out of the mouth of the most High,...He created me from the beginning before the world, and I shall never fail”.***

Book of Wisdom, Ch. 6: (Speaking to the kings, the rulers) ***“Unto you therefore, O kings, do I speak, that ye may learn wisdom, and not fall away”.***

Reflecting further on Sophia and her influence in the formation of the New Testament, we see how everything now became applied to Christ. This is the main emphasis of Fr. Stephen's talk about the Cosmic Christ. Both Sophia and Christ were seen as the Word and Wisdom of God. In this respect, Fr. Stephen states we are able to exchange “Word” (masculine) for “Sophia” (feminine): ***“In the beginning was Sophia, and Sophia was with God”.***

Looking again at the New Testament – specifically, the Gospel of John, Paul's letters to the Philippians and the Colossians, and also the Gospel of Matthew – Fr. Stephen showed how the concept of the Cosmic Christ was illustrated in early Christian times.

Gospel of John, written around 95 AD:

Remembering how Sirach shows Sophia (Wisdom) setting up camp and dwelling among us as the incarnate Word, as ***“coming out of the mouth of God”***, we see that in John she is also made incarnate in the person of Jesus. ***“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not”.*** The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the Word, the incarnation of God's glory (Wisdom). Concurrently, Fr. Stephen reminded us that we have the same flesh as Jesus. What do we call this? The Good News, the Gospel!

So the early Christians were singing about Jesus with imagery from the wisdom literature for at least forty years before the New Testament was written (the first gospel being written around 68 AD). From the early beginnings of Christianity, we note that there existed this profound notion of the Cosmic Christ.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians:

“He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. He is before all things, and in him holds all things in unity.” Paul's words came out of the Old Testament, from Proverbs, ***“all things in heaven and on earth were created through Sophia”*** and from the Book of Wisdom: Sophia as the ***“wisdom of the unseen God”***.

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Gospel of Matthew:

Jesus answer to John the Baptist's query of whether he was really the Messiah: ***“Go and report to John what you hear and see; the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them”***. Here, Wisdom is proved right by her actions.

Furthermore, Jesus prays and rejoices greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ***“I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants....”*** ***“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”***.

As Jesus prays with intimate delight to his Father, one can reflect upon Sophia delighting in the Creator. Regarding Dame Folly, Sophia said, ***“Come to me”*** and she promised rest to those who came and ate at her table, just as Jesus promised rest to those who followed him.

Returning to John's Gospel:

In Fr. Stephen's words, this Gospel has “Sophia's fingerprints all over it”.

* In the prologue to the gospel of John: ***“In the beginning was the Word (Sophia)”*** Reflecting back to Sirach, we see that Sophia is encamped among us; thus linking a direct connection between creation and incarnation. Incarnation is the completion of creation; the Cosmic Christ.

* As Sophia sets her table to call us away from Dame Folly, so we see the story of the miracle of the loaves and fishes where Jesus is setting his table.

* We see Jesus as the Cosmic Christ as he walks on the water (treading and trampling underfoot chaos, evil, and death). As we see in the Book of Genesis that the world newly formed was creation brought into being from chaos, so Jesus brings about a new creation from chaos.

* As we think of Moses talking to God in the burning bush and being answered that God's name is 'I am', so we hear Jesus, as he walks on the water towards the fearful disciples, saying ***“It is I*** (the 'I am'). Jesus as Wisdom, Jesus as Divine - a shift from chaos to cosmos

THIRD SEGMENT: Fr. Stephen spoke of how, **during the growth of Christianity as represented in the Western church**, the idea of the Cosmic Christ and of Sophia got lost. The Eastern church, with Maximus the Confessor, held onto the concept of the Cosmic Christ as the Word who is connected to all of creation.

The Western church seemed to go to sleep in this regard up until the **13th century**

with the influence of the Franciscan Friars, St. Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus, and the Dominicans, especially Thomas Aquinas. All three were instrumental in furthering the development of the idea of the Cosmic Christ during the Scholastic period of the **High Middle Ages**.

The theological stance of this medieval period was influenced initially by **Anselm of Canterbury**, considered the father of the Scholastic period. Anselm wrote the book, Cur Deus Homo (Why was God human?) in which he posited that God became human in order to save the world from its sin.

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He reasoned that Christ atoned for human sin through his crucifixion and it was Christ's infinite merit that thus satisfied God.

Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas were both teaching at the University of Paris at the same time and they had profound disagreements with each other, especially over Anselm's theory of atonement.

Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274, agreed with Anselm and spent his life teaching the theory that God became man because of human sin. He added depth to this theory by stating that even if there were no sin, the Word would still become flesh and dwell among us. Aquinas wanted to “give God more credit” than what he saw as a more simplistic doctrine of atonement.

Bonaventure, 1221–1274, differed with Anselm and Aquinas, the main reason being that he was a Franciscan. To understand Bonaventure, we must thus understand St. Francis. Towards the end of his life, Francis had a profound experience in which he had a vision of a seraph (high angel) on fire with divine love and onto whom was tacked an image of Jesus crucified. The rays of light from the vision hit Francis in his hands, feet, and side, exactly where Jesus had been wounded. Francis returned from this vision, weak, ill, and nearly blind. Seeking comfort from his close friend, Clare, he lay on the ground near her monastery and sang what has come to be known as “The Canticle of the Creatures.” Influenced by the phrase, “Praised be You” as used in the book of Psalms, he sang:

“Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun...Sister Moon and the stars...Brother Wind...Sister Water...Brother Fire...and our Sister Mother Earth.”

St. Francis praised all things in creation – sun, moon, wind, water, fire, and earth – which symbolized the Cosmic Christ and the One who created all. His canticle was an ode to the Cosmic Christ.

Bonaventure was marked by the influence of St. Francis through and through. Sickly as a child, his mother prayed for his health to St. Francis. His teacher, Alexander of Hales, who had a great influence on him, was a Franciscan friar. Remembering that Sophia (as in Book of Sirach) delighted in the human race, Bonaventure posited that this delight was the reason that Wisdom as the Word came in human form because she *delighted* to be among the human race.

Bonaventure wrote many dense books, among them The Soul's Journey into God. In it, he used his great imagination to write a sequel to “The Canticle of Creatures” and used the image of a six-winged seraph to delineate the steps on humanity's journey to God. Each set of wings represented one tier on the path.

The 1st set of wings were God's footprints: which are found all over creation - in the earth, sun, moon, wind, fire, water. Therefore, the first place to look for God is in creation.

The 2nd set of wings express God's image: which is best found in Jesus, “the image of the unseen God”. The rest of humanity are images of the Image.

The 3rd set of wings illustrate the likeness of God: those attributes that make us in the image of God – memory, intellect, and will. Memory connects us to God the Father/Mother; Intellect connects us to the Son, who is Word (word appeals to the intellect); and Will connects us to Spirit which is Love.

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In this last level, we are like God. And what is God like? Jesus says that God is goodness, for in Genesis, each 'day' that God was creating, God said, "it was good". Bonaventure wrote that "*God is the fountain fullness of overflowing goodness*". He therefore reasoned that the Word did not become flesh because of our sin. The Word became flesh as a direct result of God's overflowing goodness. Fr. Stephen further extrapolates that since the Word that became flesh was the Image of goodness, then this goodness is in you and me and all humanity. From this, we can now understand Bonaventure's theology of the Cosmic Christ as radiating from his Franciscan roots.

Another Franciscan, John Duns Scotus, 1265-1308, was a brilliant theologian who was accused of sophistry (using fallacious arguments) by later philosophers in the 16th century. The word "dunce", as in dunce cap, came from the word "Dunse" which was derogatorily given to Scotus' followers (who wore pointy hats) in the 1500's.

Duns Scotus meditated on the hymn in Paul's letter to the Colossians. From this contemplation, he wrote that God's intention is to always love with the greatest love and impact. He reasoned that God becoming one of us demonstrated the Incarnation as an act of the greatest love. His theory, called The Primacy of Love, is that Christ is not simply above all creation; Christ also shares with us the kind of love that comes from God's great love. It is not the death on the cross that is the primacy of his love. It is the integral connection between Christ, as the incarnation, to and within all of God's creation. To illustrate this connection, Fr. Stephen speaks of the elements that exist in our flesh and all creation: the chemicals and elements which we now know shows that "we are all

stardust." Therefore, Incarnation cannot be separate from created reality.

While many priests of Duns Scotus' time, and continuing into our time, taught Aquinas' reasoning of God becoming human in order to be sacrificed for our sins, Duns Scotus and the Franciscans emphasized the Cosmic Christ: that Creation and Incarnation can never be separated and are signs of God's overflowing goodness and love and delight.

FOURTH AND FINAL SEGMENT: Fr. Stephen lastly took us into the **20th century**. For the modern development of the concept of the Cosmic Christ, we looked at the teachings of Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Merton.

Teilhard de Chardin, 1881-1955, was a French philosopher and Jesuit priest who trained as a paleontologist and geologist. Teilhard did for our day what Bonaventure did for his times in regard to the concept of the Cosmic Christ. To begin, we looked at three major influences on Teilhard's life. First, he had a close personal connection to the Religious Order of the Sacred Heart through his mother. In this relationship, he saw the Cosmic Christ as linked to the heart of Jesus. Second, as a Jesuit priest, he often took part in retreats which would end with a prayer called passed on his love of the environment and was thus instrumental in Teilhard studying geology and paleontology. As an old man, Teilhard wrote his spiritual autobiography entitled *The Heart of Matter*. For him, the heart of matter is Jesus Christ who, at the end of all time, has his heart ablaze with love and beckons to the whole universe to come to him. The Cosmic Christ is the heart that resides in the human heart.

Retreat with Fr. Stephen Coffey

He later wrote *The Divine Milieu* (for religious readers) in which he posits that the whole of the universe is a divine milieu composed of all the elements of the original creation. As goes on, the prayer that “we may all be one” refers to all the world - the entire human race - being beckoned to unity by the heart of Christ. He also wrote *The Human Phenomenon* (for non-religious readers) in which he states that as evolution continues, the human race needs to continue to evolve in consciousness as we move towards an “omega point” of unity and peace. The Omega Point was his image of the Heart of Christ.

Thomas Merton, 1915-1968, rather wild as a young man, was led to Christianity by personal events which were meaningful and inspirational in nature. While thinking of joining the Franciscan order, he instead ended up becoming a Trappist monk. Sent to Louisville, Kentucky on an errand, he had a spiritual experience of seeing Christ in all the people with whom he was sharing a particular street corner. As he perceived them all shining like the sun, he felt an immense love towards them and experienced a profound realization that humanity is the same, being loved immensely and equally by God. At this juncture in his life, he went from talking/writing about loving God to talking/writing about loving one's neighbor. His writings on such issues as the Vietnam War and racism expressed a newfound political activism tied to his religious experience.

At a lunch with the artist, Victor Hammer, he was captivated by a wooden figure Hammer was painting. Later, he dreamt about a girl named Proverb and was moved to study Proverbs, specifically, Chapters 8 and 9. He returned to his friend, telling him that he knew the name of the girl in the painting. He names

her “Hagia Sophia” (Holy Wisdom) and is thus crowning Christ with his divine humanity as the Cosmic Christ, as *“the Word (who) became flesh and dwelt among us”*. I would like to end this summary of Fr. Stephen's marvelous presentation with a beautiful poem, called “Hagia Sophia” which Merton wrote. It is an exquisite tribute, a sonnet of love to this feminine aspect of God, the Wisdom residing in all creation, the Omega Point of the Heart that is all, undivided, an integral Creation: the Cosmic Christ.

The Cosmic Christ

“There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness.

This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all.

There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and joy.

It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being, welcoming me tenderly, saluting me with indescribable humility.

This is at once my own being, my own nature, and the Gift of my Creator's Thought and Art within me, speaking as Hagia Sophia, speaking as my sister, Wisdom.

~Parth Domke



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF NORTH SAN DIEGO

The **VISION** of Contemplative Outreach of North San Diego is to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer.

The **MISSION** of Contemplative Outreach of North San Diego is to: **present** the method of Centering Prayer. **Build** a Christ centered community, and **support** the contemplative life

Value – Christ Centered

We will know we are living by this value when we: Commit ourselves to be faithful to the practice of Centering Prayer twice a day. Embrace the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit in accomplishing our Vision and Mission. Share the method of Centering Prayer with utmost charity and humility.

Value – Humility

We will know we are living by this value when we: Acknowledge that any good accomplished by CONSD is the work of the Holy Spirit. Are transparent in our actions. Treat everyone we meet, within and outside of CONSD, in a non-judgmental manner. Respond to every issue that comes to us in a non-judgmental manner.

Value – Utmost Charity

We will know we are living by this value when we: Reach out with compassion, understanding, and joy in the pursuit of our Vision and Mission Statements. Accept and value each person wherever she/he may be on their spiritual journey. Treat every person and issue with utmost patience.

Value – Community

We will know that we are living by this value when we: Cultivate and foster a spirit of unity and utmost charity throughout the spiritual network. Honor and respect people within and outside of our Christian tradition regardless of differences in outlook, theology or practice. Hear, share, learn, and grow in union with one another with God as our center. Reach out with utmost hospitality in all that we say and do.

Value – Encourage and Support

We will know we are living by this value when we: Offer the Centering Prayer Introductory Program regularly. Present programs/events that encourage spiritual illumination, growth and transformation regularly. Hear and respond to the needs of the CONSD membership. Affirm each members' desire to develop a closer relationship with God.

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF NORTH SAN DIEGO PRESENTS

A Workshop with Rev. Carolyn Metzler “Discerning a Rule of Life”

A Rule of Life offers creative boundaries within which God’s loving presence is recognized and celebrated.



Under Rev. Carolyn Metzler’s guidance, we will explore the historical context of the Rule of Life and then learn the steps to discern our own. Rev. Carolyn is an Episcopal priest who was a hospice chaplain for 30 years. She now serves as the Spiritual Life Coordinator for Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation and for his Living School. As poet, writer, weaver, and spiritual director, Carolyn brings creativity and kindness to all she does.

Date: April 9, 2016

Time: Registration & hospitality 8:30 am Workshop: 9-12:30

Place: First United Methodist Church, 341 S. Kalmia, Escondido, 92025

Suggested donation: \$20.00

For more information, contact: Linda Dollins 760-743-8297 dollinslinda@hotmail.com or Merrilee Melvin 760-480-2287 mtmelvin@cox.net

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Discerning a Rule of Life with Rev. Carolyn Metzler

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____ City/

State: _____

Please make check out to: CONSD (Contemplative Outreach of North San Diego)

Mail pre-registration form and check to: CONSD, 644 Hibiscus Glen, Escondido, CA 92025

While pre-registration helps us plan the hospitality needs, walk-ins are always welcome.

CONSD & COSD Events—2016

CONSD EVENTS

Workshop with Carolyn Metzler

Event: “Discerning a Rule of Life”

Date: April 9, 2016

Time: 8:30am—12:30pm

Location: First United Methodist Church, 314 S. Kalmia, Escondido 92025

Suggested donation: \$20.00

Introductory Workshop

Date: April 30, 2016

Time: 8:30am—12:30pm

Location: First United Methodist Church, 314 S. Kalmia, Escondido 92025

Suggested donation: \$25.00

Retreat with Fr. Mark McKone-Sweet

Date: June 18, 2016

Time: TBA

Location: St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, 16275 Pomerado Road, Poway

Suggested donation: TBA

COSD EVENTS

United in Prayer Day (COSD & CONSD)

Date: March 19, 2016

Time: 9:00am—12:30pm

Location: Our Mother of Confidence Catholic Church, 3131 Governor Dr. San Diego 92122

Free will offering for COSD and CONSD

CONSD EVENTS

For information on all CONSD events

call Sue Hagen at (760) 745-8860 or

Linda Dollins at (760) 743-8297

COSD EVENTS

For information on COSD events

call Kathy at (619) 749-4141

Have you recently changed your home address, email address, and/or phone number? If you have, please send us the changes so we can keep our database up-to-date. This will help us to continue to inform you about the CONSD newsletters and of upcoming special events. Please call Sue Hagen at 760-745-8860 or email her at consd@cox.net

Contemplative Outreach of North San Diego is a non-profit ecumenical spiritual organization. The Newsletter is published online quarterly.

Website: www.consd.com.

Editors: Sue Hagen (consd@cox.net) and Linda Dollins (dollinslinda@hotmail.com).

Telephones: (760)-745-8860 for Sue Hagen. And (760)-743-8297 for Linda Dollins.

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CONSD CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS

	Area	Facilitators	Telephone	Location	Day & Time
1	Carlsbad	Rev. Madison Shockley	760-729-6311 ext.207	Pilgrim United Church of Christ, 2020 Chestnut Ave. Carlsbad	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30pm
2	Del Mar (1)	Kathy Agnew	858 481-8754	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 th St.	Thursdays 4:30-6:00pm
3	Del Mar (2)	Kathy Agnew	858 481-8754	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 th St.	Tuesdays 8:55-10:00am
4	Encinitas (1)	Shirley Shetula	760-525-6721	984 Carmen Ct., San Marcos.	Mondays 10:00am
5	Encinitas (2)	Mike and Ann King	760-753-1575	Home of Ann and Mike (Call for directions)	Thursdays 7:00pm
6	Encinitas (3)	Susan Elmore	760-518-8387	Call for location	First & third Mondays 6:30pm
7	Escondido	Linda Dollins	760-745-5100	First United Methodist Church, 341 S. Kalmia	Mondays 4:30pm
9	Fallbrook (1)	Barbara Hudson and Susan Gross	760-645-0726 760-451-0514	St. Peter the Apostle, in the Upper Room 450 S. Stagecoach Lane	Wednesdays 9:15-10:00am
10	Fallbrook (2)	Ann Keegan	760-723-0855	(Call for location)	Saturdays 8:30am
11	Oceanside (1)	Ed Clifford	760-630-1897	Mission San Luis Rey, McKeon Center, Room 12	Wednesdays 7:00pm
12	Oceanside (2)	Mary Williams	760-510-9337	St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 1450 S. Melrose Dr.	Thursdays 1:00pm
13	Oceanside (3)	Pat Julian	760 757-3659 x123	Mission San Luis Rey, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 10:00am
14	Oceanside (4)	Kelly Jo Farnum	760 529-2350	Retreat Center, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 3:00-4:30pm
15	Poway (1)	Elena Andrews	858-451-2098	St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 3734 Twin Peaks Rd.	Fridays 9:30-11:00am
16	Poway (2)	Colleen Clement- son and Rebecca Crowley	858-748-8548 858-748-3801 88 748-3542	Community Church of Poway, 13501 Community Rd.	Tuesdays 6:30-8:00pm
17	Poway (3)	Sue and Chris Hagen	760-745-8860	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16375 Pomerado Dr.	Tuesdays 5:00-6:30pm
18	Poway (4)	Sherlene Moller- stuen	858-451-6825	Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, 16889 Espola Rd.	Mondays 5:00-6:30pm
19	Rancho Bernardo	Audrey Spindler	858 208-8609	San Rafael Parish, Cntr. Rooms A & B	Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm
20	Solana Beach	Bea Doblado	858-925-7882	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Tuesdays 9:15-10:30am
21	Solana Beach	Bea Doblado	858-925-7882	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Thursdays 7:00-8:30pm
22	San Marcos	Pastor Karla Halvorson and Jim Ullman	760 727-1509 760 598-8943	San Marcos Lutheran Church, 3419 Grand Ave., Sanctuary	Wednesdays 9:30-11:00am
23	Serra Mesa	Diane Langworthy	619-697-3558	Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Commu- nity/Gethsemane Lutheran, 2696 Mel- bourne Dr., San Diego	Tuesdays 7:00-8:30pm
24	Temecula	Jenny Alcazar	951-696-5657	42758 Settlers Ridge, Murrieta	Thursdays 3:45-5:00pm