

Consd News

THE NEWSLETTER OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF NORTH SAN DIEGO
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Chapter Planning and Prayerful Discernment Day

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On July 27th twenty-two CONSD prayer practitioners and current Coordinator, Linda Dollins met to share ideas for the chapter's future and to discern a Co-coordinator. Kathy Di Fede, a member of the Governing Board of Contemplative Outreach Ltd., led us for this day of visioning at St. Thomas More Catholic Church. To begin the morning, Kathy helped us prepare by leading us in our contemplative practices.

Contemplative Time in a Circle

After a period of Centering Prayer, we remained in the sacred space of the circle where Kathy guided us in a Lectio on C.O.'s *The Vision of Contemplative Outreach* and *Theological Principles* #13 and #14, as well as the #5 *Guideline* from the *Guidelines for Contemplative Service*. We also reflected on *The Vision and Mission of CONSD*.

Chapter Planning Outside the Circle

After a break participants answered the question on a note card: "What sustains your centering prayer practice?" and the cards were collected in a basket. Linda then shared from a handout the current status of the chapter including prayer groups (26), facilitators (37), past speakers and retreats, and events planned for fall and 2020. Afterward Kathy reminded us of the responsibilities of a C.O. chapter:

- ♦ To sustain and offer the Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop Program.
- ♦ To support Centering Prayer groups.
- ♦ To support facilitators

Discussion on the needs of the chapter and some of the ideas were:

- ♦ To offer more Introductory Workshops: suggestions included online workshops
- ♦ Involving people under 40: online groups were discussed
- ♦ Interfaith outreach involvement: sharing contemplative traditions of other religions and exploring the Cosmic Christ
- ♦ Supporting aging participants and facilitators: co-facilitation of groups, a separate group for long-term practitioners

(Continued on next page)

Chapter Planning and Prayerful Discernment Day



From left to right: Merrilee Melvin, Elena Andrews, Mary Williams, Kathy Di Fede (meeting leader), Linda Dollins, Parth Domke, and Kathy Mendoza.

After a lunch break we reconvened in the sacred space of the Prayer Circle. Kathy read the guidelines for the role of Co-coordinator and/or Leadership Team, and we had a time of silent reflection followed by a period of Centering Prayer. Individual discernment responses led to the recommendation and acceptance of Mary Williams as the CONSD Co-coordinator to serve with Linda Dollins. Everyone expressed gratitude for Mary's willingness to serve. Also discerned were Elena Andrews, Parth Domke, Merrilee Melvin, and Kathy Mendoza as support persons. Their responsibilities are yet to be determined.

Kathy suggested we close by saying together *The Lord's Prayer* which we did. Gratitude to God and to all who made this day of vision and new leadership possible.

~Parth Domke and Linda Dollins

SAVE THE DATES: CONSD presents a 6-Week Class Starting October 16th



The Spiritual Journey Series is a now-famous collection of lectures Fr. Thomas Keating gave over a period of time. On October 16, 23, 30 and Nov. 6, 13 and 20, from 10:00am-12:00pm, CONSD will present Part II of the series entitled:

The Human Condition. In this segment, Fr. Keating “offers an evolutionary model for human development, describes the pre-rational energy centers and introduces us to the concept of the False Self with its afflictive emotions. You will learn how, though the practice of Centering Prayer, the Divine Therapist begins the process of dismantling our False Self, thereby healing our emotional wounds.” (from the Center for Contemplative Living’s course description)

Newcomer to CONSD, Patti Smith is a skilled teacher and facilitator who has presented this course at the Center for Contemplative Living in Denver many times. There will be no charge for the course, but if you do not have Fr. Keating’s *Invitation to Love* you will need to purchase a copy. Transcripts of the talks themselves will be available for purchase.

We are firming up plans with a church in Encinitas to host this opportunity, and a flyer with all of the information will be sent out soon. If you are interested in registering now, email Linda at dollinslinda@hotmail.com.

Finally, here is some information about Patti you may enjoy. When she shared it with me, at my request, she said, “But it—the course—is really about Thomas (Keating).” As you can see, she has a rich contemplative history.

- On staff at Contemplative Outreach Denver.
- Been doing a consistent daily Centering Prayer practice since 1996.
- Did workshops with Fr. Thomas and Fr. William Menninger in Snowmass in early 2000’s.
- Commissioned as an Intro Workshop Presenter and Intro 12-step presenter.
- Did spiritual director training for three years at The Sisters of St. Joseph in Orange, CA.
- 5 years of Introductory Workshops and Spiritual Journey Series in North London and Hempton in Oxfordshire.
- Studied in Oxford University Chaplaincy, England
- Completed the 30-day Ignatian Exercises at St Beuno’s in St. Asaph, North Wales.
- Studied Ignatian spirituality at Campion Renewal Center, outside Boston.
- Yearly retreats in Snowmass.

~Linda Dollins

On Prayer

St. Teresa of Avila wrote: “All difficulties in prayer can be traced to one cause: praying as if God were absent.” This is the conviction that we bring with us from early childhood and apply to everyday life and to our lives in general. It gets stronger as we grow up, unless we are touched by the Gospel and begin the spiritual journey. This journey is a process of dismantling the monumental illusion that God is distant or absent. ~Thomas Keating, *Fruits & Gifts of the Spirit*

Becoming Prayer with Fr. Vincent Pizzuto



What does it mean to be a contemplative in the world? This was the question asked by Fr. Vincent Pizzuto on Saturday June 15 at St Bartholomew's in Poway. He then spent the day sharing his answers to this question by using his recent book *Contemplating Christ* as a guide. In *Contemplating Christ* Fr. Pizzuto listed the elements of the contemplative life as including meditative prayer, asceticism and a radical fidelity to love.

Sharing the scriptural examples of the Prodigal Son and Adam and Eve, he spoke of a God who is always looking for us and always wanting to clothe us in the embrace of love. The ultimate extravagant demonstration of God's desire for union with us being God's incarnation through Christ. "Who, though he was in the form of God...emptied himself...coming in human likeness." (Philippians 2:6-7)

He used Fr. Keating's template of the false self to explain our human condition. The false self is the source of all our problems. It is created and reinforced by our ego. Fr. Vincent shared his insight, gleaned from the work of Fr. Keating, that the ego is a tool given to us by God. We use it to build up our false self because we do not know who we are in God. But the ego transformed is to be used in service of the true self for our contribution to the body of Christ.

The false self operates under the illusion that we are separate from God and each other. It is its own god and its needs are primary. At some point in our lives, maybe even to the point of the desperate need for survival as

the Prodigal Son, we realize that life under the direction of our false self is literally a dead end and causing all sorts of harm to ourselves and others. We only need to turn back toward God, and God comes rushing toward us letting us know we were never alone. Not only that but God wants us to join in divine relationship with the Trinity – the feast. To be as God is, as Christ is, as the Spirit is.

Our recognition of this begins the unfolding of our spiritual journey in earnest as we consent to spend time in this relationship through our prayer

practice. But we cannot make ourselves perfect. Temptations abound as the false self fights for its life. This is where asceticism comes in. "What do we need to turn our back to?" We must face our demons which Fr. Pizzuto labels the "renegades" and the "parasites."

The "renegades" he describes as the demons that come out of our woundedness and prey on our weaknesses. They wreak havoc in our lives through addictions, rage, greed and compulsive patterns of behavior. The "parasites," though, he paints as even more dangerous as they thrive in our comfort and complacency and disconnect us from the Body of Christ. In *Contemplating Christ* he compares parasites to "the serpent of Eden, they know how to present the perfect blend of truth and lies. They know how to put our consciences at ease with token actions that never really transform society but nevertheless exonerate us from the need to try." They prey on the illusion of our separation from God and each other allowing the "(capability) of perpetrating untold evils on the newly perceived other."

Cultivating asceticism allows us to let go of the obstacles in ourselves that separate us from the beauty of unity with God and the Body of Christ. It allows us to freely give our gifts, our beauty, to the world. We are being transformed into love itself through solitude into solidarity. We stand not only in solidarity with beauty but in unity with the brokenness in ourselves and others and in service to it. Our wounds are joined with the wounds of Christ crucified and resurrected.

Becoming Prayer with Fr. Vincent Pizzuto



Yet, we cannot just stand. Fr. Vincent reminded us that there is no such thing as private Christianity, and where there is no action there is no hope. The humility of the spiritual journey reveals our limitations to us, but it also reveals our gifts—gifts that are to be shared with the Body of Christ. With our foundation in love we are asked to risk offering our gifts. We all have fears and anxieties, but each of us is called to be “other Christs” in the world. Fr. Pizzuto encourages us in saying, “The gospel doesn’t get spread if we don’t screw up,” and “It is beneath our dignity to do other than love.” It is easy to minimize what we have to give and judge that others are more capable and gifted. We are asked to do our part, though, to give of ourselves in love because we are love. And as Fr. Pizzuto said, “We don’t need gurus we need each other!”

POSTSCRIPT

When I was a child my mom had a friend who had a large garden with a wonderful strawberry patch. One summer afternoon we were visiting, and she offered us bowls of her homegrown strawberries. I ate mine with relish, they were delicious, better than candy. When we had finished our fruit feast her young daughter asked for more. We had eaten them all, but the mother gave her daughter her bowl of strawberries. I was overcome by the mother’s generosity. In my child’s mind I could not even imagine giving my bowl of strawberries away. It seemed like an impossible sacrifice. How could she do that? The question stayed with me and, of course, I eventually learned the answer was love. Now I ponder how such a seemingly “insignificant” act of love could resonate so deeply. “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”

~St. Teresa of Calcutta

Centering Prayer is Not for Sissies

My journey towards centering prayer, or CP, has been a long and winding path. And it has taught me many things. I have recently gained insights that for decades eluded my understanding. I could see the pieces but lacked the skills or inspiration to put them together in any unified way. And I have learned much regarding the biases, most of them gender-based, that I carried with me into this transformative practice. I hope that my words will give you insights into the path of one male, and possibly others that you may personally know.

The first prejudices were drilled into me early on and encompassed many of the commonly held stereotypes. They mainly revolved around being the provider, working hard, taking pride in accomplishments, and not showing weakness. These predilections were the cause of many achievements and setbacks in my “first-half-of-life”, as Richard Rohr and Thomas Keating have so aptly mentioned in their works. These I carried with me well into my 60’s.

My first introduction to centering prayer was at a garage sale in 1996. I picked up a copy of Pennington's book *“Centered Living: The Way of Centering Prayer.”* I thoughtfully looked over the front and back cover of the book and the description made me curious since I was totally unfamiliar with its precepts. I reasoned that if it didn't work, I was only out 25 cents. As a high school youth minister living in southern California, I prided myself on being current with all of the latest spiritual practices (little did I know that it wasn't so new). And I wanted to see if could improve the quality of my life and possibly those whom I mentored.

I would love to tell you that this was the turning point in my life that I was looking for, but it wasn't. I was anticipating something com-

plex that could be measured and would produce effective results fairly quickly. I was so disappointed in what I read that ultimately I didn't finish the book. I knew it couldn't work because all it asked of me was to do nothing. There was no sense of spiritual or personal growth that could be concretely gleaned from the practice itself. As a result, I deemed it impractical and set it aside to donate to the local library.

Fast forward to 2008. I was working in a remote office in Tennessee. This was a tumultuous time for many with the housing market crash and the loss of countless jobs due to the across-the-board downsizing by many companies. In the fall of that year, I was laid off and could not find gainful employment in the ensuing three years. While I tried to keep an upbeat attitude through the first year, I saw my self-worth start to erode. By the second year, I started to question the stereotypes because they weren't working for me. If anything, they were causing me to become more withdrawn and depressed. While the unemployment checks barely held my life together financially, my identity as a provider, as a husband, as a man crashed and burned at the end of the third year when my unemployment benefits completed. My identity based on my previously held beliefs was in shambles. My marriage ended, my friends scattered, and I retreated to my faith tradition, which at least kept me somewhat grounded. I felt very much in a dark place, except that God was there with me – a dark night of my soul you could call it.

Finally in 2011, I moved back to California, where my extended family could help me transition to the next chapter of my life. I didn't blame God for my circumstances. But all of the tried-and-true underpinnings of who or

Centering Prayer is Not for Sissies

what I was had been dashed on the rocks of life and I needed to regroup by finding a new set of principles that could replace the ones that I had shelved as "unworkable." I continued my search for employment, but now I carried an openness to reassess and value the things in life that were truly valuable – relationships, faith, serving others – not achievements, possessions, or accolades.

The following year brought me to San Diego with a great job opportunity. I attended weekly Bible studies at my local church to see if this would help me find where I needed to be. In 2015, I was enrolled in a Bible study on *Spiritual Practices Through the Ages*. Towards the end of the series, centering prayer was presented by an experienced practitioner who did a masterful job of giving the history behind the practice as well as doing a sit that night with our group. I was dumbfounded. Something moved within me at my deepest level. This was what I was looking for. It was like love at first sight, but instead of a beautiful woman, it was a simple and powerful movement of soul and silence.

Afterwards, I reflected back to my earlier dismissal of centering prayer practice in the 1990s and understood that my first half-of-life biases had blinded my capacity to see CP as it truly was and can be. It took me awhile to begin to let go of these limiting beliefs and finally let God be God.

I currently belong to two contemplative communities, of which I am the only male. And I now know why. The road to acceptance of CP by men is fraught with countless hurdles. It demands a discipline of quieting the mind and ego, which is no easy task for a guy, let me tell you. Where most women seem to have an innate understanding or need to nurture, the

practice has a sense of quiet nurturing at its center. So it seems to me it is an easier transition for females to connect with this practice than their male counterparts.

The male psyche, on the other hand, is attracted toward ego-drenched philosophies and results; it prefers the black-and-white existence that brings stability and supports the need to find validation in the mundane; it struggles with deep insights of paradoxical thought and the gray areas of life; and it ultimately perceives surrender as weakness and judgment as strength.

If it were easy for men to remove their blinders regarding the major failings and limitations of the first-half-of-life impediments, we would be seeing many more of them entering into contemplative communities today. But this is the hidden cross that they bear through either ignorance or misunderstanding of the contemplative way.

It seems to me that men who become involved in centering prayer by and large come to the practice almost involuntarily because of their failed past lessons. Without exception, every male CP practitioner that I know has shared at least one story of trauma-leading-to-transformation that allowed [or forced] them to break out of the first-half-of-life into the second half. Invariably the old stereotypes are trashed, and new, empowering ones take their place. It presents a diametrically opposed paradigm where beliefs that once seemed to be weakness, like detachment from ego-driven activities that gain nothing, become a strength. For me, centering prayer was a place of last resort. But within CP I have discovered a spiritual oasis where it is possible to experience a greater peace and connectedness to all that matters – God, others, creation. (continued)

Centering Prayer is Not for Sissies

Regardless of gender, we can all agree that the world needs the transformation that comes with regular centering prayer sits. God will work with, and through, those who choose to cooperate in union with Him to bring light to a darkened world. But more than ever, we need

to lovingly give the gentlemen that still don't "get it" the room to break through to their second-half-of-life journey. In the end, "all will be well".

~ Randy Singh

Still Small Voice

Little by little we are able to hear the still small voice in the hurricane, the earthquake, or the fire. God is hidden in difficulties. If we can find him there, we will never lose him. Without difficulties, we do not know the power of God's mercy and the incredible destiny he has for each of us. We must be patient with our failures. There is always another opportunity unless we go ashore and stay there. A No-risk situation is the biggest danger there is. To encounter the winds and the waves is not a sign of defeat. It is training in the art of living, which is the art of yielding to God's action and believing in his love no matter what happens.

~Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*

Faith

If we limit our contemplation to the good and uplifting, to the sublime and transcendent, our faith will become dishonest and inauthentic. We cannot be people of the resurrection while still denying the cross. We cannot be Easter people if we have not witnessed Good Friday (134).

~Fr. Vincent Pizzuto, *Contemplating Christ*

Q & A with Fr. Carl Arico

Q: Throughout the year we have opportunities to attend days of prayer. What do extended retreats add to the spiritual journey that reading books, attending Centering Prayer groups and workshops don't? How often do you recommend going on retreat? .

A: Picture a piccolo player faithfully practicing his craft each day and then joining the symphony orchestra for its yearly concert. While the time spent practicing alone is an important time of preparation, it is in playing with others that the music is enhanced and that together the musicians celebrate something greater than themselves, each sharing their unique gift with one another. Afterwards, they return to their daily routine and individual practices with a renewed enthusiasm and a deepened understanding for the music.

This is the gift of a Centering Prayer multi-day retreat; when one joins others over an extended period of time after having practiced the prayer on their own, there is something very powerful that takes place when you enter into the embrace of a prayerful community. You get into a rhythm that moves you out of your external distractions into an inner space of awareness. When you do not have to worry about being in charge and all your needs are being taken care of, you find yourself surrendering to an inner grace that makes you aware of the subtle movements of the body and the spirit. You are ever-so-gently being formed by the silence.

Making time to go on a retreat can be challenging but remember how difficult practicing Centering Prayer for 20 minutes twice a day seemed when you first started. Once you made that commitment a miracle happened, and you were able to make that practice your regular spiritual lifeline. Making a commitment to attend an extended retreat follows the same path of trust and hope

Q: I am sometimes discouraged with the ups and downs of the spiritual journey. Does this ever go away?

A: It is not unusual on the spiritual journey to go through periods of consolation and desolation. There will always be an ongoing experience of both as time goes on. When we are in a period of consolation, it is important to celebrate the joy and peace but be prepared for these feelings to change. When we are in desolation, with feelings of sadness or disappointment, for example, it is important to remain faithful to our spiritual practices and not let them go. In fact the wisdom is to increase times of prayer and meditation - to be strong with God's help knowing that this too will pass. Remember that God is always present no matter what you are experiencing - there is nothing that can separate us from the Love of God. Feelings come and go but our intention and fidelity to our prayer disciplines should remain constant. .

- Fr. Carl Arico

Trials

God has not promised to take away our trials, but to help us to change our attitudes toward them. That is what holiness really is. In this life, happiness is rooted in our basic attitude toward reality.

~Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition*

CONSD & COSD Events 2019-2020

CONSD EVENTS 2019

Course

Spiritual Journey Series "The Human Condition:"

Presenter: Patti Smith

Dates: October 16—November 20.

Time: 10:00am—12:00pm

Location: TBA (a coastal church)

Registration: Linda Dollins (760-743-8297)
or dollinslinda@hotmail.com

Free will offering

Half Day Retreat

Presenter: Elena Andrews

Date: November 9, 2019

Location: TBA

Free will offering

Prince of Peace Weekend Retreat

Date: October 18—20, 2019

Location: Prince of Peace Abbey, 650 Benet Hill Road., Oceanside
(Waiting List only)

CONSD EVENTS

*For information on all CONSD events
call Linda Dollins at (760) 743-829*

COSD EVENTS 2019

Full Day Retreat

"At the Heart of the World with Thomas Keating"

Presenter: Fr. Stephen Coffey

Date: November 16, 2019

Location: St. David's Episcopal Church, 5050 Milton St, San Diego, CA 92110

Suggested donation: \$20.00

Please bring your lunch

RSVP: kathystone0904@gmail.com or
COSD: 619-955-0962

COSD EVENTS

*For information on all COSD events,
see the COSD website,
www.contemplativeoutreachsd.org/workshops-
and-retreats/*

Video by Chris Hagen

There is a video from the workshop,
"Putting On The Mind Of Christ. How
Centering Prayer Changes the Brain"
by Chris Hagen. For the link: click [here](#).
For instructions on how to use the You-
Tube controls: click [here](#).

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CONSD CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS

	Area	Facilitators	Telephone	Location	Day & Time
1	Carlsbad (1)	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)	Barbara Hamilton	480-236-7319	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 th St.	Thursdays 4:30-5:45pm
3	Del Mar (2)	Kathy Agnew, Nichola Riggie	858 481-8754 760-448-5224	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 th St.	Tuesdays 8:55-10:00am
4	Encinitas (1)	Shirley Shetula	760-525-6721	(Call for location)	Mondays 10:00am
5	Encinitas (2)	Virginia Erickson	760-846-5749	Beth Lutheran, 925 Balour Dr., Multipurpose Rm., Encinitas	Mondays 4:30-6:00pm
6	Encinitas (3)	Lynne McKiernan	619-665-6344	San Dieguito United Methodist Church, Encinitas	Mondays 1:30pm
7	Escondido	Linda Dollins	760-745-5100	First United Methodist Church, 341 S. Kalmia	Mondays 4:30pm
8	Fallbrook	Barbara Hudson	760-645-0726	(Call for location)	Saturdays 8:30am
9	Murietta	DeeDee Warden	951-265-8557	42753 Settlers Ridge, Murietta	Wednesday 4:00pm
10	Oceanside (1)	Ed Clifford	760-630-1897	Mission San Luis Rey, McKeon Center, Room 12	Wednesdays 7:00pm
11	Oceanside (2)	Mary Williams	760-510-9337	St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 1450 S. Melrose Dr.	Tuesdays 7:00pm
12	Oceanside (3)	Pat Julian	760 757-3659 x123	Mission San Luis Rey, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 10:00am
13	Poway (1)	Elena Andrews	858-451-2098	St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 3734 Twin Peaks Rd.	Fridays 8:30-10:00am
14	Poway (2)	Colleen Clementson & Rebecca Crowley	858-748-8548 858-748-3801 88 748-3542	Community Church of Poway, 13501 Community Rd.	Tuesdays 6:30-8:00pm
15	Poway (3)	Parth Domke	858-829-2664	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16375 Pomerado Dr.	Tuesdays 5:00-6:30pm
16	Poway (4)	Audrey Spindler	760-215-0782	Order of St. Luke* (call for directions)	Sunday 10:45am
17	Ramona	Deborah Lewallen & Cindy Dodson	760-519-1811 602-549-9839	St. Mary's in the Valley Episcopal Church, 1010 12th St., Ramona	Mondays 4:30-5:45pm
18	Rancho Bernardo	Audrey Spindler	858 208-8609	San Rafael Parish, Center. Rooms A & B	Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm
19	Solana Beach	Ann Deakers	858-775-1738	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Tuesdays 9:15-10:30am
20	San Marcos (1)	Karla Halvorson & Jim Ullman	760 727-1509 760 598-8943	San Marcos Lutheran Church, 3419 Grand Ave., Sanctuary	Wednesdays 9:30-11:00am
21	San Marcos (2)	Jim Ullman & Marjo Gray	760-598-8943	St. Mark's Catholic Church	Tuesday 1:30-3:00
22	Serra Mesa	Diane Langworthy	619-697-3558	Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community/ Gethsemane Lutheran, 2696 Melbourne Dr.	Tuesdays 1:00-2:30pm
23	Temecula (1)	Pam Bowen, Joan Neidig, & Marigold Velasco	909-938-9932 951-676-2928	Home of Joan Neidig, 42149 Camino Romo, Temecula	Thursdays 6:30pm
24	Temecula (2)	Robin Orner & Pastor Sandy Benz	951-669-3998 951-676-6262 X205	Hope Lutheran, 29043 Vallejo Ave. Classroom 6, Temecula	Tuesdays 6:30pm
25	Vista	Martha Treutle	760-809-2529	United Methodist Church of Vista, 490 S. Melrose Dr. Vista	Mondays 9:30-10:30am