

CENTERING PRAYER NETWORK AUSTRALIA

MAY/JUNE CONTEMPLATIVE NEWSLETTER –2015



FROM THE DESK OF THE CPNA NATIONAL COORDINATOR

Here we are at the start of the month of June, half the year has nearly passed. Since the Centering Prayer National Retreat at the Janssen Spirituality Centre in Boronia Victoria, we have journeyed through Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost and most recently Trinity Sunday.

We continue to be blessed with the ongoing weekly reflections from Annemarie Reiner; we owe her our profound gratitude. In addition she is the editor of our CPNA Newsletter. What a treasure to have her many talents and gifts supporting our network. As you can imagine she is always looking for new material for the next issue. Please be generous and send her copies of your favourite poetry, quotes and reflections. Likewise, we can also use copies of your photographs of nature, animals, etc for our Newsletter and for the website.

Slowly things have been progressing. We now have a new website and you may see the fruit of the work that goes into such an effort. Visit: www.centeringprayernetworkaustralia.net Give us your feedback and let us know if there is anything we can do to provide further support to your Centering Prayer practice.

Another new initiative I would like to share with you are the support communities we have highlighted on our new website. Those of you who live in South Australia may already know about the *South Australia Contemplative Living Community*, an initiative of Fr Tom Gleeson and Annemarie Reiner.

It has been a dream of some of our members to have a virtual community, especially for people who live alone, may be isolated or not have access to a local Centering Prayer Group. *The Emmaus Community for Contemplative Living* may interest some of you. Please see the website for further details.

The new technology will enable our National Executive to hold video conferences and work co-operatively to support and learn from one another. Kindly hold these projects and intentions in your prayers.

Until next time,

“The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

Stewart Sharlow
CPNA National Co-ordinator

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CYNTHIA BORGEAULT'S AUSTRALIAN VISIT

CYNTHIA AT THE ABBEY

I am pleased to report that Cynthia Bourgeault's retreat at Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo has been an outstanding success. There were something like 200 applications to attend, but numbers had to be restricted to less than 40 including some off-site places at the nearby Jamberoo Lodge.

The retreat was held from Monday, 27 April until Thursday, 30 April. Some retreatants stayed an extra night and departed on Friday, 1 May.

I mention here two themes from Cynthia's talks. First, she emphasised the essential Christian nature of Centering Prayer and argues that **kenosis**, or self emptying, or **letting go** is at the heart of Centering Prayer. She said that Centering Prayer is really an exercise in **heartfulness** rather than an exercise of mindfulness, and quotes Simeon the New Theologian for this insight.

The genius of Cynthia Bourgeault for me is her amazing ability to cut right to the heart of an issue with great insights and illuminations and delivered in her plain, folksy American idiom. For example: she says that a practice of Centering Prayer 'produces a better ability to roll more with the punches of life'. She offers tips such as practising throughout the day a simple gesture of 'letting go' or 'dropping' a pile of [imaginary] wood which has proven too heavy for us to carry any longer. It is a great daily exercise. It may be better not to practise it on public transport, however, if you don't want to be detained overnight.

The retreat feedback has been greatly encouraging. The general comment is how impressive was the total Abbey experience with Cynthia's talks; the silence; the breathtaking surroundings of an Abbey set in a secluded rainforest with spectacular mountain views; the chanting of the hours by the Benedictine community; the **cordon bleu** meals and catering.

The retreat has introduced many people to the Abbey at Jamberoo and many have expressed the desire to return. The Abbey has raised the possibility of another Centering Prayer retreat there later this year.

For me one of the highlights of the retreat was to see the numbers of young qualified and trainee spiritual directors who now have the opportunity to guide their directees in the way of Centering Prayer. The other highlight was to hear of the current studies in the United States on the effects of meditation on the neural pathways and the increasing recognition of the close correlation between a practice of meditation such as Centering Prayer and modern depth psychology. Cynthia highly recommends a book by John Wellwood called 'Toward a Psychology of Awakening' and quoted the author's contention that: 'meditation is the royal road to the unconscious and the royal road to non-duality'.

If I could offer readers one piece of overriding advice from this retreat, it would be: go back and read again 'Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening' by Cynthia Bourgeault. I find it a curious book: it gets better with each reading. In particular, note Cynthia's numerous references in that book to Simeon the New Theologian who, she says, offers much illumination on the practice of Centering Prayer and his emphasis on a prayer and way of the heart where 'the mind becomes rooted in the heart'.

Cynthia told us about the success of the Adelaide retreat with some 89 retreatants. She properly praised the courage of Caroline Pearce in championing the extended tour by Cynthia to Australia. I fully support that praise of Caroline and thank her for her courage and foresight which resulted in Cynthia's 2015 tour of Australia as well as New Zealand.



Peter Ahern

The Chapel at Jamberoo Abbey

18 May 2015

Cynthia Bourgeault in Adelaide

What a privilege it was to be part of the Cynthia Bourgeault retreat held in April at Nunyara Conference Centre, a Uniting Church Venue at Belair in the Adelaide Hills and organised by The St Oswald Centre for Spirituality in Adelaide. Special thanks go to Caroline Pearce who first invited Cynthia to come to Australia and who followed through to make sure it happened.



An interesting and diverse group, we gathered on the Friday afternoon for a welcome and introduction, a glass of wine and the first of the lovely meals we were served over the three days, before settling quickly into the rhythm of the retreat.

From those first moments there was a warm sense of community as we chatted with old and new friends, a community spirit that continued to grow and deepen throughout the event without the need for words.

Silence came easily as we listened eagerly to Cynthia's message. Using her book *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* as a guide, the life giving process that is Centering Prayer began to take root more powerfully as we entered wholeheartedly into the practice. We heard anew its ancient life giving message at the core of our being, of self emptying and the need to let go of aspects of ourselves that hold us back from seeing who we truly are. On a macro level we were challenged to wake up and to move beyond the limits of who we think we are in this interdependent cosmic home of ours and to ponder the mystery of the role we play in its creation.

Cynthia as priest, mother and grandmother, author of ground breaking books, writer and extraordinary teacher shared with us her personal experience, wisdom and sense of fun while presenting a richness of prayer and practice that draws us more deeply into relationship with self, others and with the living Jesus.

Presenter, presentation, organisers, staff and participants all contributed to an occasion to be remembered and hopefully to be repeated in the not too distant future. It was truly, in what Cynthia tells us are Thomas Keating's words and gifted to us over three sacred days, a 'Divine Therapy' experience.

Eileen Marchmont

Photograph taken by Beth Chandler

EXCITING NEWS.....READ ALL ABOUT IT!!

TAKE A LOOK AT

CENTERING PRAYER NETWORK AUSTRALIA'S NEW WEB SITE

www.centeringprayernetworkaustralia.net

**MANY THANKS TO STEWART SHARLOW FOR DESIGNING AND
ADMINISTERING THIS NEW SITE AND GETTING IT UP AND RUNNING AND
LAUNCHING IT AT THE VERY FITTING TIME OF PENTECOST.**

A NEW APP is available for
your android phone:

Contemplative Outreach have
developed a free App called
Centering Prayer.

Check it out at:

**[https://play.google.com/store
/apps/details?id=org.contemp
lativeoutreach.centeringpraye
r&hl=en](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.contemplativeoutreach.centeringprayer&hl=en)**

A REFLECTION ON OUR CPNA NATIONAL RETREAT 2015

On March 7-8th the Contemplative Network of Centering Prayer Australia gathered once more at the Janssen Spirituality Centre in Boronia, Victoria, for our Annual Retreat and National Meeting.

As we gathered from each corner of the nation it was obvious that a great deal of preparation had preceded our arrival by the staff at Janssen as each participant was welcomed with warm hospitality. On our arrival registration was well organised and throughout the weekend Father Nick de Groot and Sister Elizabeth attended to our every need. The Janssen volunteers who worked silently were always available to ensure our needs were met. Again Peter excelled himself along with the kitchen staff.

Another feature of this conference was a real sense that we were no longer strangers and as we renewed acquaintances we could greet one another by name.

After a refreshing meal we gathered in the conference room eager for the retreat to commence. An air of excitement and anticipation drew us as we sensed a new maturity, and a stronger National Identity in the network as our presenters for the week-end were once more drawn from our own group.

Fr. Tom Gleeson and Annemarie Reiner, leaders of the Contemplative Living Community in South Australia had chosen the theme for our retreat: *'The Mystic Within-the Cosmic Heart Awakening.'* From their own expertise their presentations over the weekend were professional, artistic, and personal, and inspired each of us to new depths both in our daily practice and in our own living of the Contemplative journey.

Each presentation began with a period of group Centering. These prayer times formed the context of their presentations and prepared us to open to wisdom by listening with the heart.

Gathered around an Icon of 'Jesus of the Desert' Tom started the conference by articulating through images and personal storytelling a theology or rather a spirituality of the 'Mystery of Suffering'. Drawing of his own personal challenges and response to the question "What is life" and using the text of Isaiah 43: 1-5 he spoke of his experience of 'Waking up', of 'becoming Real'.

Immediately the group was drawn into their own deep thirst to live this authentic journey. But Tom took us further pointing to the Thirst of Jesus on the Cross, leading us to be awakened to God's initiative at every stage of the Spiritual journey, an initiative made real as we encounter the Word made flesh, both in the cosmic story and in our own personal stories, when through our prayer and our daily lives we trust not in ourselves but in the presence and action of God in every aspect of the human endeavour.

The second section of Tom's presentation commenced with an image of a child at its mother's breast. Tom used this image to speak of the gift of Presence and Comfort in our lives and continued by reflecting with us on the pain and trauma experienced by both mother and child during the birth process. Pondering these two images we were invited to awaken to our own search for continual bliss, our clinging to comfort and our resistance to surrender and letting go in all womb-like and birth-like experiences. These images highlighted the essence of surrender and letting go into God's presence and action within, central to our practice sessions each day.

The invitation was expressed in many quotes:

*"Will you Dare,
Come into the dance,
Come Child at the Mothers Breast
Learn to be Present
To the thirst of God awakening
our hearts"*

*May your joy be complete
In Your Joy
In Your Mystical Heart
In You!*

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Participants in our National Retreat:



I come that you may have Life and have it to the full.

With an image of Bread in abundance we contemplated John's text 'I am the Bread of life'

*But now thus says the Lord,
He who created you O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel: do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by your name and you are mine.
When I passed through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers they will not overwhelm you;.....
Because you are precious in my sight and honoured, and I love You. (Is43:1-2, 4).*

After a lunch in silence we regrouped for the next part of our weekend with Annemarie Reiner. Annemarie's session started with asking us to ponder an image of our expanding universe and asking the transformative question. What is the Dream of the Cosmic Heart?

Annemarie honoured our group by sharing a myth with us, a myth which allowed her to trust us with a transformative experience she had journeyed through in her life; a journey from excitement, to extreme fear, a crippling silence, through much hurt and pain, to a transformative telling of her story to a group of people who did not judge her but who embraced her with acceptance, compassion and love into a journey of wholeness, healing and freedom.

Annemarie's trust of our group, her vulnerability, and her courage, opened our weekend to another level. The darkness of our universe and its potential for light took root in a very personal way in my own heart as Annemarie shared her story. A friend on the course shared with me her personal response to Annemarie's talk, which allowed her to sense her oneness with the Trinity, source of all Love and with the most vulnerable people in our universe.

Tom's session on day two started with an image of the cross.
The vertical arm representing "All creation searching for the light"
The horizontal arm representing "All creation joined in love"
This icon took our retreat to another level that of the Cosmic Heart Awakening. This was enhanced by Tom alerting us to the text of Wisdom 11: 21-12.

Since the retreat I have found Wisdom a very sustaining text. I can awake each day with the text "*Wisdom is a kindly Spirit*".(Wisdom1:6).

And as I contemplate the universe I am reminded that "*The Spirit of wisdom fills the World*" (Wisdom 1:7). Such texts awaken me to the contemplative dimension of my daily life.

Annemarie's second talk developed this theme so beautifully. Starting with the text from Matthew 28: 20 "*I am with you always*" and coupling it with Genesis: "*God saw everything he has made and indeed it was very good*".(Genesis1:31) Our presenters reminded us that the Cosmic heart is through, with and in everything and that together we are the Cosmic Heart Awakening!!!

The challenge offered to us was 'Will you allow God's grace to move within you'.

Our last session presented us with a set of images to contemplate -Images of suffering throughout the world, - an image of Christ carrying the Cross and looking back (to each of us) asking "*Will you allow me to look at you in Love and Mercy*",
-an image of a bridge entering a thick Fog.

Our retreat fittingly closed with a healing ceremony in the chapel through the grace of anointing and commissioning all in joy to embrace God's call to the Mystic within each one as we departed to awaken evermore to the Cosmic Heart of our world.

Thank you Tom and Annemarie for your presence amongst us this weekend and the gifts you brought to our contemplative community.

Sr. Helen Duffy rsm

REMAIN IN MY LOVE John 15:9

As we see the final remnants of Autumn around us and those last few leaves clinging to their life source before they fall onto the earth, it reminds me of what it is we may be clinging on to or holding on to in our own lives. When the leaves finally *let go* they are free and they then become part of the nourishment for the very tree from which they came. A wholeness is emerging.

That phrase to *let go* seems to have become such a cliché line in many aspects that I wonder if we have lost something of the significance of its meaning particularly within the spiritual life. We seem to use it for so many things these days. We may find ourselves in a painful, difficult or uncomfortable situation and we might say to ourselves *I'm just going to let go of that* – when in fact we can be a smouldering or seething mess inside. So we walk away or run away from the situation only to discover months down the track we are afflicted by the same emotional impulses again. Often it is not so much that we are *letting go* but it may be more likely we are running away from something. There is a big difference between running away and *letting go*.

Running from pain or situations we find difficult is not necessarily *letting go*, it is more likely we are trying to bury it or hide from it. When we run away like this there will come a time when the festering mess inside us will erupt and manifest itself in some way – for example in mental or physical health issues among other things. Our temptation can be to project our pain onto others by judging them without ever looking within ourselves. We are running from the invitation of Love. There may well come a time after grounded discernment that we may need to walk away from a particular situation or person/s for our own wellbeing or safety or other reasons. But when we walk away without any discernment of what's going on in our own hearts then we are rejecting Love's invitation. What we must learn to *let go* of are our emotional compulsions to run from the inner pain and discomfort, along with our attitude of blaming, judging, seeking revenge or pay back or condemning those we judge responsible for what we are experiencing. The conscious beginning of the spiritual journey is perhaps found within those initial urges to *let go* of what is enslaving us, or what we have become slaves to, and open into a mystery that is calling us out of this emotional merry-go-round and into freedom.

Those beautiful words of Jesus: *remain in my Love* give us a powerful insight into all of this. When we are hurting for whatever reason it is always an invitation to come inside to that place within us where the Spirit of Love dwells and longs to teach us what it is to Love. The Spirit longs for us to be free. It is an invitation to *remain in my Love*, and to then explore in the company of the Spirit of Love what is really happening within us. But first we must learn to *let go* of the temptation to run from this inner call. As long as we keep projecting our pain onto others and judging/condemning them (or ourselves) we cannot know what it is to *remain in my Love*.

To *remain in my Love* is the invitation of the Spirit. We will discover through grace that we are never alone in this place of waiting – we are in the company of the Spirit of Jesus. We must have some experience of this ourselves for us to come to trust and believe this grace. And the only way we can come to have some experience of this is bit by bit to open into *letting go* of what is enslaving us by *remaining in Jesus' Love*. This desire of *letting go* will remain with us always once we know and experience it. We hunger for freedom and we can only be free once we learn to *let go* time and time again and to trust that Spirit of Love within us to teach and guide us.

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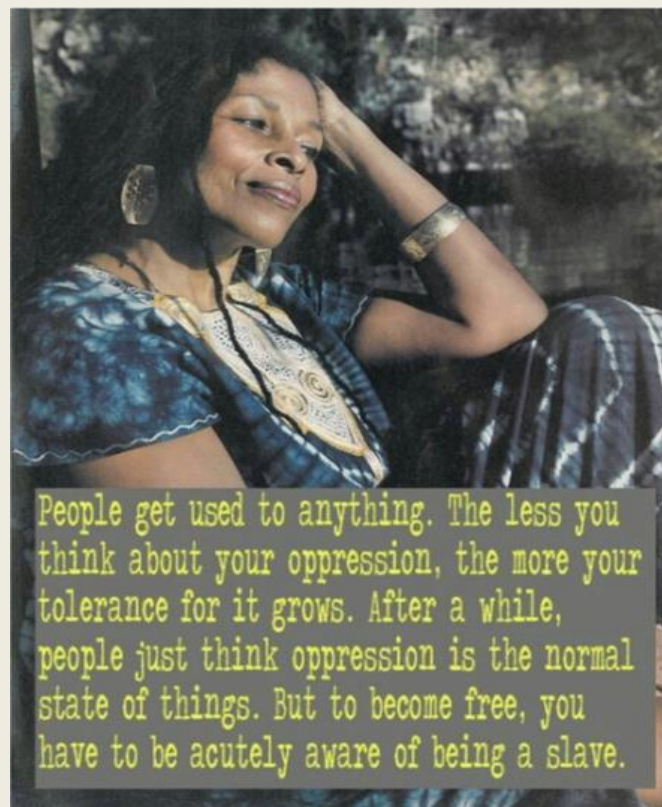
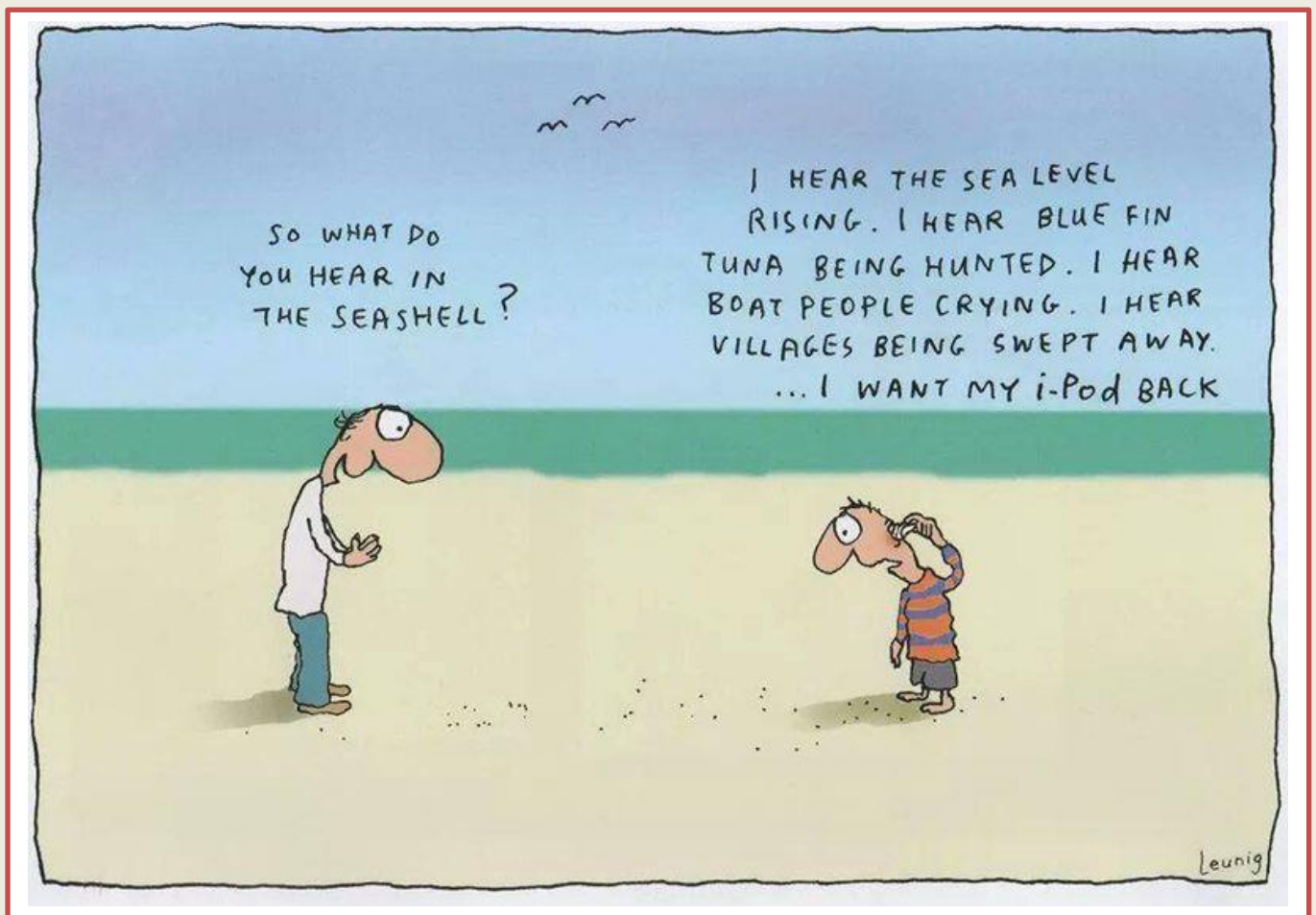
A contemplative practice such as meditation makes the space within us to listen to this longing to *let go* of what is enslaving us. Every time we give our consent to enter into the silence we are giving our *yes* to Jesus' invitation to *remain in my Love* – we are opening into the Mystery we discover we are already immersed in. Our thoughts and emotions can enslave us but if we faithfully return to a *contemplative practice* over and over again whether it is with a word or the breath or some other method, our thoughts and emotions will slowly lose their blinding power over us. We will be opened into the very world we kept running from. We will discover another way – a way that leads us to freedom and wholeness. Silence is our greatest teacher in *letting go* and it is here where we learn who we all truly are. As long as we continue to be slaves to our thoughts and emotions we will not know the freedom of *remaining in my Love*. John of the Cross tells us: *.....freedom has nothing to do with slavery. And freedom cannot abide in a heart dominated by desires, in a slave's heart.*

As we taste what it is to *let go* we will have a great sense that the Spirit is teaching and guiding us in everything we do. We will never be given anything that keeps us enslaved – whatever is given will always bring us to a deeper freedom, a deeper trust and a deeper Love. Love is a persistent teacher and until we come to know something of Love's ways we will be like cats chasing our tails – going round and round in circles chasing something that can never be caught and becoming slaves to a perpetual motion that cannot give life – it becomes one big distraction.

To *remain in Jesus' Love* means to *let go* of the running, to *let go* of chasing our own tails. While there will be some pain in this place we will come to know ourselves as greatly loved as we walk into this mystery – here we will experience great Joy and surprise. It will be here where we long to *remain* – in the pain and the Joy, a paradox we must learn to embrace in the spiritual journey. We will come to know Love as our greatest teacher and our deepest desire. But we won't know this until we begin to learn how to *let go* bit by bit of what is enslaving us. Our journey into Silence will help reveal this to us. Like the autumn leaf we too must first *let go* to know real freedom and enter into the fullness of life.

Annemarie Reiner
Pentecost 2015



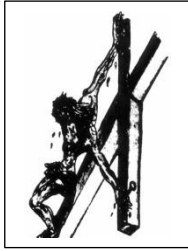


People get used to anything. The less you think about your oppression, the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to become free, you have to be acutely aware of being a slave.

POETS CORNER

THE DARK NIGHT

One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
-ah, the sheer grace! -
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.



In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
-ah, the sheer grace!-
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.

On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.

This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
-him I knew so well-
there in a place where no one appeared.

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.

Upon my flowering breast
which I kept wholly for him alone,
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing him
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted his hair,
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.

I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my Beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.

Poem and image by St. John of the Cross

A THOUSAND MORNINGS

*All night my heart makes its way
however it can over the rough ground
of uncertainties, but only until night
meets and then is overwhelmed by
morning, the light deepening, the
wind easing and just waiting, as I
too wait (and when have I ever been
disappointed?) for redbird to sing.*



Poem by Mary Oliver

JAPANESE MAPLE



*Your death, near now, is of an easy sort.
So slow a fading out brings no real pain.
Breath growing short
Is just uncomfortable. You feel the drain
Of energy, but thought and sight remain:*

*Enhanced, in fact. When did you ever see
So much sweet beauty as when fine rain falls
On that small tree
And saturates your brick back garden walls,
So many Amber Rooms and mirror halls?*

*Ever more lavish as the dusk descends
This glistening illuminates the air.
It never ends.
Whenever the rain comes it will be there,
Beyond my time, but now I take my share.*

*My daughter's choice, the maple tree is new.
Come autumn and its leaves will turn to flame.
What I must do
Is live to see that. That will end the game
For me, though life continues all the same:*

*Filling the double doors to bathe my eyes,
A final flood of colors will live on
As my mind dies,
Burned by my vision of a world that shone
So brightly at the last, and then was gone.*

Poem by Clive James in his own journey towards letting go.

If—

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all *people* doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all *people* count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling 1865 - 1936



THE FULLNESS OF EMPTINESS

*Surrounded by Love,
yet falling into emptiness;
not with and not without.
The Cosmic Dance persistently wooing our
broken hearts.*

*Why do You hide in the darkest of places?
Or, is it I who hide in the light of my own
making?
Hiding and seeking in the midst of Unknowable
Presence,
Yet I know You in the simplest and most
complex Realities.*

*I see You, but then I don't see you.
You beckon me to wait in this darkness.
How could I bear it for one moment if You were
not already there with me?
Your Living Breath lures me to keep company
with You,
to rest in the abyss that promises everything yet
so often feels like nothing.*

*Let yourself fall so deeply into My Love that you
are dizzy in this Mysterious Presence.
Let My Love hold you steady, let Me teach you,
let Me Love you, let Me be your guiding
companion.
Your aloneness will Breathe fullness into your
whole being,
And you will weep with tears of Joy as you are
held in this
Incomprehensible Communion of Love.*

Annemarie Reiner
May 2015



BOOK REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"A FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN" by ALAN CLEMENTS

We keep being reminded that to have an insight is good but the challenge comes to then live it. As our contemplative hearts awaken we know that what draws us *inward* then drives us *outward* into the community of the world. As freedom grows within, we then long for the world to also know and meet this freedom. With this in mind the book *A Future To Believe In* by Alan Clements consists of 108 powerful reflections on the *art and activism of freedom*. Some reflections are two or three pages long and others shorter. It is an inspiring, confronting and challenging book. Every page holds the wisdom of various people Clements quotes from such as Aung San Suu Kyi, Dalia Lama, Mandela, Kahlil Gibran, and Martin Luther King Jr among numerous others. The headline on the front cover reads: *A guide to empowerment, revolution, and the universal right to be free*. I offer you a taste of one reflection called:

FREEDOM-IN-ACTION.

"Most humans have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted."

-Aldous Huxley-

To practice the art of freedom requires the resolve to take risks and expand into new areas of being. "In a world of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act," George Orwell famously declared. He was a cultural outlaw who refused to be embedded in the concrete of conformity.

Salman Rushdie tells us, "A poet's work is to name the unnameable, to point to frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world, and stop it going to sleep."

But being true to her conscience, Rosa Parks snapped a lot of white people out of the trance of racial prejudice. The prodemocracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square who courageously confronted the coma of authoritarian communism were heroes and heroines of freedom. As were those in Tibet and Burma and Syria, gunned down for marching for the human right to be free, grounded in equality, dignity, and peace.

We have many exceptional examples of *freedom-in-action*.

Aung San Suu Kyi points us to the meaning of everyday revolution, daily acts that serve the greater good: "Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day," she states. "Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. The most insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant, or futile the small daily acts or courage which help to preserve a person's self-respect and inherent human dignity."

Martin Luther King, Jr. gave us all a reason to dream.

What will it be?

*"Love, compassion, and tolerance are necessities, not luxuries.
Without them humanity will not survive."*

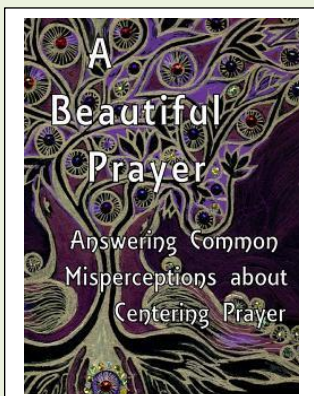
-The 14th Dalai Lama-

BOOK REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS *continued from previous page.....*

***A Beautiful Prayer:
Answering Common Misperceptions about Centering Prayer***

by Peter Traben Haas.

Published by ContemplativeChristians.com, 2014



Peter Traben Haas is currently from Austin, Texas, and he has written a most extraordinary little book, only 119 pages. The fact that a Presbyterian Pastor could describe Centering Prayer as a 'Centering Toward Love' caught my attention. His personal journey is a testament to the power of grace. Increasingly, more and more mainline Protestant Christians are discovering the contemplative roots of Christianity. As they do so, many are questioning the traditional suspicion(s) towards the contemplative and mystical roots and practices of their Catholic cousins.

Rev. Dr Haas identifies five misperceptions. I found it fascinating that he speaks of misperceptions and not misconceptions.

Firstly, he addresses the common complaint that 'Centering Prayer is "not Christian"'. Second that Centering Prayer is "not Biblical"; third, that Centering Prayer is "Dangerous". Fourth, Centering Prayer is about "Finding the Divine within you". Fifth, Centering Prayer is "Eastern Meditation".

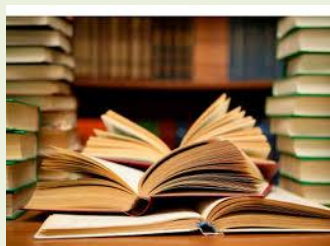
Gently he guides the reader beyond these misperceptions into the fertile valleys of "Contemplative, Unitive, and Centering Prayer"

I would ruin the story if I shared too much about what he says about each of these misperceptions and the three reasons to practice Centering Prayer. This is gold to be discovered for oneself.

If you wish to follow the story of his Journey into Love, you may want to read it in his own words, by visiting <http://www.centeringprayernetworkaustralia.net/#!/witnesses/clox1>

A Beautiful Prayer is available from www.bookdepository.com in the UK (postage free).

Stewart Sharlow
CPNA National Co-ordinator



MERTON REVISITED.....quotes

"Contemplation does not simply "find" a clear idea of God and confine God within the limits of that idea, and hold God there as a prisoner to whom it can always return. On the contrary, contemplation is carried away by God into God's own realm, God's own mystery and God's own freedom. It is a pure and virginal knowledge, poor in concepts, poorer still in reasoning, but able, by its very poverty and purity, to follow the Word "wherever He may go." *New Seeds of Contemplation* Page 5

"Let no one hope to find in contemplation an escape from conflict, from anguish, or from doubt. On the contrary, the deep inexpressible certitude of the contemplative experience awakens a tragic anguish and opens many questions in the depth of the heart like wounds that cannot stop bleeding." *Thomas Merton Reader* Page 213

"The inner self is as secret as God and, like God, it evades every concept that tries to seize hold of it with full possession. It is a life that cannot be held and studied as object, because it's not "a thing." It is not reached and coaxed forth from hiding by any process under the sun, including meditation. All that we can do with any spiritual discipline is produce within ourselves something of the silence, the humility, the detachment, the purity of heart and the indifference which are required if the inner self is to make some shy, unpredictable manifestation of his presence." *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (unpublished). P6

"Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self.

This is the man (person) I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about them. And to be unknown of God is altogether too much privacy.

My false and private self is the one who wants to exist outside the reach of God's will and God's love – outside of reality and outside of life. And such a self cannot help but be an illusion.

We are not very good at recognizing illusions, least of all the ones we cherish about ourselves – the ones we are born with and which feed the roots of sin. For most people in the world, there is no greater subjective reality than this false self of theirs, which cannot exist. A life devoted to the cult of this shadow is what is called a life of sin." *New Seeds of Contemplation* Page 34

Continued on next column.....

"God is asking me, the unworthy, to forget my unworthiness and that of my brothers (and sisters), and dare to advance in the love which has redeemed and renewed us all in God's likeness. And to laugh, after all, at the preposterous idea of "worthiness." *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* Page 157

"Only when we are able to "let go" of everything within us, all desire to see, to know, to taste, and to experience the presence of God, do we truly become able to experience that presence with the overwhelming conviction and reality that revolutionize our entire inner life." *Contemplative Prayer* Page 89

"The shallow "I" of individualism can be possessed, developed, cultivated, pandered to, satisfied: it is the centre of all our strivings for gain and for satisfaction, whether material or spiritual. But the deep "I" of the spirit, of solitude and of love, cannot be "had," possessed, developed, perfected. It can only be, and act according to the inner laws which are not of our contriving, but which come from God. They are the Laws of the Spirit, who, like the wind, blows where it wills. This inner "I," who is always alone, is always universal; for in this inmost "I" my own solitude meets the solitude of every other person and the solitude of God. Hence it is beyond division, beyond limitation, beyond selfish affirmation. It is only this inmost and solitary "I" that truly loves with the love and the spirit of Christ. This "I" is Christ, living in us: and we, in Christ living in the Father." *Disputed Questions* Page 160

"As long as there is an "I" that is the definite subject of the contemplative experience, an "I" that is aware of itself and its contemplation, an "I" that can possess a certain "degree of spirituality," then we have not yet passed over the Red Sea, we have not yet "gone out of Egypt." We remain in the realm of multiplicity, activity, incompleteness, striving and desire." *New Seeds of Contemplation* Page 279

"Contemplation is the highest and most paradoxical form of self-realization, attained by apparent self-annihilation." *The New Man* P 19

"The gate of heaven is everywhere." *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* Page 142

Please note: All quotes were taken from Merton's *Palace of Nowhere* by James Finley

WORDS OF WISDOM TO PONDER *all taken from A Future To Believe In (see book review above)*

"The first principal of nonviolent action is that of non-cooperation with everything humiliating."

By Cesar Chavez

"We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal."

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963

"The ideas that have lighted my way have been kindness, beauty, and truth."

Albert Einstein

"Inner freedom comes from following a course in harmony with one's conscience."

Aung San Suu Kyi

"I wish that every human life might be pure transparent freedom."

Simone de Beauvoir

"We have to live today by what truth we can get today and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood."

William James

"While nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer, nothing is more difficult than to understand him/her."

Dostoevsky

"The human is a space, an opening, where the universe celebrates its experience."

Brian Swimme

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

Mahatma Gandhi

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. I felt fear more times than I can remember, but I hid it behind a mask of boldness. The brave *person* is not *one* who does not feel afraid, but *one* who conquers fear."

Nelson Mandela

"Peace is not the absence of conflict; it's the absence of violence within conflict."

Claude Anshin Thomas

"None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."

Goethe

"Believe nothing merely because you have been told it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you simply out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after critical analysis, and intuitive reflection, you find to be kind, conducive to the good of all beings – believe that doctrine, actualize it and take it as your guide."

The Buddha

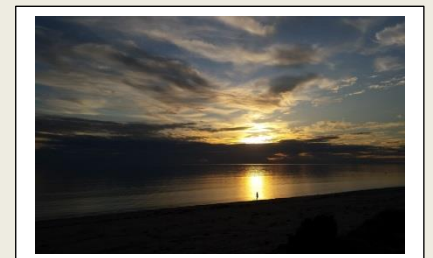
"The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie."

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

"I am determined to practice deep listening.

I am determined to practice loving speech."

Thich Nhat Hanh



Looking for a Retreat?

Have a look at:

St. Mary's Towers – Douglas Park

Run by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

<http://towersretreat.abundance.org.au>

Situated on a working farm just south of Sydney and set amongst large natural bushland.

Jamberoo Abbey – New South Wales

Run by Benedictine Monastic Community

<http://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/html/home.htm>

A beautiful setting near Wollongong

Bethel Community – Gold Coast

This community specialise in a six day live in retreat called *Healing Life's Hurts*.

<http://bethelhealing.org.au>

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Mary MacKillop Centre – Largs Bay Retreats – Adelaide.

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For further information and brochures email:

infosa@sosj.org.au

Ignatian Spirituality Centres Australia wide.

Email: www.cis.jesuit.org.au

Roy's Retreat – Adelaide.

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If there are any retreats you wish to advertise here please advise the Editor at rareiner@bigpond.com



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2016 DIARY DATE REMINDER:

Annual Centering Prayer Silent Retreat – At Boronia

2016 Retreat Facilitators: Dr Neil Preston and Mr Bart Welten from Perth.

When: Friday, 11 March 2016 to Sunday 13 March 2016

Venue: Janssen Spirituality Centre, 22 Woodvale Road, Boronia Victoria 3155

National Meeting of Centering Prayer Network Australia will be held on Monday, 14 March 2016

Enquiries should be sent

to Email: centeringprayeraustralia@gmail.com



*"To welcome and
to let go
is one of the most
radically loving,
faith-filled
gestures
we can make
in each moment
of each day.
It is an
open-hearted
embrace
of all that is in
ourselves
and in the world."*

*— Mary Mrozowski,
Creator of the Welcoming
Prayer*