



Centering Prayer Network Australia

JULY CONTEMPLATIVE NEWSLETTER 2018

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In March this year, our Annual Retreat and Annual Meeting were both times of Grace. We were well nourished by the five sessions and the five different presenters, and the diversity offered from within each presentation. Wonderful! We came away renewed and refreshed from the experience. For myself, that fire was once again ignited within my Heart. I know that was so for others attending also. Many also felt our whole sense of community and connection with each other was deepened quite remarkably during our time together this year. (See some photos on the next two pages.)

Both Peter Ahern and I (as Coordinators) were not sure of the road ahead as we prepared for the Annual Meeting, or if there even was a road ahead. We discerned together as a whole community, where we wanted to go. Peter and I were overwhelmed by the unanimous response to stay together and to keep gathering each year. There was an energy and excitement present which brought forward new ideas and proposals. Peter and I offered ourselves as Coordinators until our next Annual Meeting in March 2019 (with the Annual Retreat) and the offer was unanimously accepted.

Fr. Nick DeGroot and the community at Boronia, have been a wonderful support to the Centering Prayer Network Australia over the years. We have always been made feel very much at home and welcome at Boronia by Nick and the community there. I am sure that is why we agreed as the community of Centering Prayer Network Australia to make Boronia our spiritual home. So it was with real sadness to hear Nick will be moving to Sydney this month to embark upon another area of ministry. But the good news is that he will return each year for our Annual Retreat and Monday Meeting. On behalf of us all we thank you Nick, for your beautiful welcoming presence, for your generosity, for your gentle wisdom and most of all for your Love of all of us. Thank you. We wish you every Grace and Blessing in your new ministry.

Thank you to those who have contributed to this Newsletter. We hope the readers and ponderers will be nourished by it.

Blessings on us all and our World - Annemarie Reiner

CURRENT NATIONAL TEAM:

National Coordinators for 2018/19

Peter Ahern (Canberra)
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Annemarie Reiner (Adelaide)
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Consultative Team for 2018/2019

Judy Newland (NSW)
Judi Ahern (ACT)
Anne Schmidt (VIC)
Frances Cassidy (VIC)
Helen Duffy (VIC)
Helen Glasheen (VIC)
Nick DeGroot (VIC)
Ria Parlevliet (VIC)
Sarah Marrinan (VIC)
Anne Weygood (SA)
Tom Gleeson (SA)
Fran Hegarty (SA)
Gwyneth Ottrey (SA)
Lynne Rokkas (SA)
Neil Preston (WA)
Bart Welton (WA)

For State contact details please email one of the coordinators.
All these positions are valid until the 2019 National Retreat/Annual Meeting at Boronia.

Newsletter Editor

Annemarie Reiner

BORONIA RETREAT

MARCH 2018



*Some of those
present at the
Boronia Retreat
March 2018*

*We didn't manage to get a full
group photo this year.
Apologies to anyone absent
from these photos.*



*Peter Ahern presenting Chris Morris with a gift of
our appreciation. Chris was our keynote speaker
and his input was inspiring on the topic of The
Mystic Revolution Arising. Continued next page.*

BORONIA RETREAT MARCH 2018

Liturgy in the Chapel (right)

*Closing Ceremony
(below)*



Part of Fr. Nick's presentation offered us poems from 'Love Poems from God.' Here is a sample.

PASSION by Rumi – 1207-1273

With passion pray.
With passion work.
With passion make love.
With passion eat and drink and play.
Why look like a dead fish in this ocean of God?

Chris Morris introduced us to works of Bruno Barnhart. What a beautiful gift this was. Here is another sample.

"God is no longer only the transcendent Other but has become the divine ground of one's identity.... Whose light and energies are participated in our own consciousness, our relationships and activities, so that these take on a divine quality."

News from around the States

Below is news from WA, SA and Victoria. We also heard from Judy Newland in NSW. Sadly, the group there at Windsor have disbanded for the time being. But Judy hopes that down the track things will get going again. ACT group with Peter and Judi Ahern continue meeting. Let's see what else is happening.....

NEWS FROM SR. HELEN DUFFY in MELBOURNE

We started our Centering Prayer year off with a Lenten retreat day, focused on the Gospel of Mark.

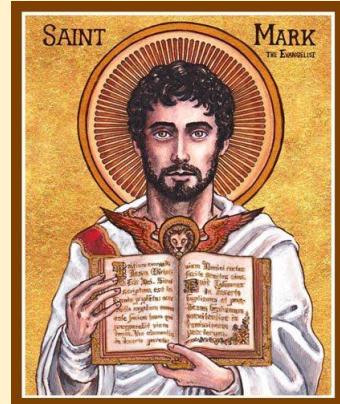
Each week in May we used two different titles from the Litany of Our Lady. This led us to reflect on the contemplative heart of Mary, and invited us into our contemplative time together.

About every third week we commenced our gathering time with a period of Lectio Divina. I believe that this prayer has become a real gift for the members of our groups.

The personal growth and appreciation that has come from the Lectio Divina sessions has been transformative.

The numbers are a little smaller this term- with a group of three on a Friday morning (and two more showing interest for the new term).

And a group of seven on the Tuesday evenings. But these numbers are consistent and the members very committed.



NEWS FROM AROUND ADELAIDE:

Rev. Caroline Pearce is stepping back from her role in the Consultative Team (see page one). We thank Caroline for her commitment and dedication over the years. Caroline is delighted to report she suggested to Lynne Rokkas that she might kick off a new CP group at St. John's in Halifax Street. This group has been going very well for a couple of months now with between six and twelve attending every Thursday afternoon.

Gwyneth Ottrey has a thriving CP group with positive support from the parish priest, who did not know CP before he came to the parish. He visited the group and has kept coming. This community continues to grow.

LISTENING HEART CONTEMPLATIVE CENTRE (LH) which commenced in Adelaide at the beginning of this year and is facilitated and coordinated by Annemarie Reiner, provides a beautiful contemplative space where people can come for meditation, various one day retreats, quiet days, spiritual direction and also for a live in retreat. The retreat days are being well received and word is spreading. Our next retreat day(s) is 19th July (and repeated on 21st July) entitled: *Our Allurement and Aversion to Silence: What's it all about?*

Meditation is building slowly and held Monday mornings. The people that have stayed for a few days' retreat have valued the peace filled space and have left feeling enriched. The LH provides a sanctuary where the Spirit can breathe a renewed Life into us. It is a delight to watch people's reactions and responses as they enter this sacred space. The common experience is a profound sense of peace and grateful release.



ADELAIDE continued:

CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING COMMUNITY - July 2018

The Contemplative Living Community have 9 groups meeting in different areas. Some meet each week, others fortnightly. Most groups will include Lectio Divina using the following Sunday's Gospel and then Centering Prayer. Some groups also include a reflection/discussion time on a book or cd that inspires spiritual focussed discussion. Others partake of one another's cooking skills by sharing a meal together. We invariably come away from our gatherings; more enlightened, informed and enriched. We have a real sense of growing both within ourselves, as a community and more alive to the world around us.

This year, our Planning and Review Team prepared a Community day at Willunga in preparation for Holy Week. This statement was the core of our reflections: *The pressures of everyday life often alienate us from the Oneness we have with the Divine within us and those around us and within earth and the universe. Jesus calls us back into this communion.* We visited this creek in Willunga, this is a rich aboriginal site where people have gathered for ceremonies and recreation for thousands of years. Here we entered into the silence of the dreaming.



Recently the Team met with Susan Pollard, a Josephite Sister, who is a Jungian Analyst and Spiritual Director. She helped us with a process, first to reflect in preparation on a quote from Albert Camus: "In the Midst of winter I finally found there was within me an invincible summer." We each then shared our reflections to begin then we reviewed what is happening in our CLC community. The Team spent three days together in reflection and prayer to lead a community day at Largs Bay extending the review to the community. During the day we used these headings to reflect together as a community:

Principles in which the Holy Spirit of Love inspires the new to evolve:

All creation, everything and everyone is sacred -

Our Universe and individual lives are in the process of evolving -

The Divine plan for creation depends on our conscious and creative activity to keep Love's plan evolving -

We, human beings, need to recognise our freedom and ability to know, love and serve the Universe with passion, to love the invisible and the not yet -

In our choices, we reflect and seek truth and meaning in an evolutionary spirituality, a collective spirituality, that is focussed on grace (not sin).

From this day and within the Team, we are looking at developing two projects:

1. To gather a small group to meet with some of the local Kaurna people and see how we could grow together as Australians. Inspired by the Uluru: "Statement from the Heart", and Richard Flanagan's National Press Club presentation on April 18th. Coming to know something more of our ancient culture and see how we can move forward together.
2. To look at supporting the Frederick Ozenam Housing Association (St Vincent de Paul Society) in developing affordable Housing south of Adelaide for homeless people.

Tom Gleeson and Anne Weygood - SA

NEWS FROM AROUND PERTH – WA

The Subiaco Centering Prayer Group has been meeting at St Joseph Subiaco's Tribune Chapel for the past ten years. It is an ecumenical group with members from the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Church congregations as well as those who are not affiliated with any church. We meet every Wednesday with group Lectio Divina practiced on the first Wednesday of the month. Our liturgy of silence is very simple. At 5.30pm we meet in the tribune chapel and a leader, leads us into Centering Prayer through Mathew 6:6 for about 20-25 minutes. The wonderful Angelus bells from the church ring out at 6.00pm to bring us out of our centering silence. After this, there is a brief time of silent petitionary prayer to God and then we conclude with the Our Father (we use the Doxology for the Lectio Divina sessions).



Finally, we engage in a brief discussion and reflection around contemplative prayer that is facilitated by the session leader. These reflections draw on many resources including Thomas Keating's work and other mystics and writers of the Christian Contemplative Tradition. The group holds a regular attendance of between 15 and 20 members with even larger numbers attending in the summer months. The group is essentially self organised with no roster or formal leadership. Every year we hold a day retreat with the other "sister groups" in Western Australia usually in the spring months.

Neil Preston - WA

PALMYRA CENTERING PRAYER GROUP – WA

The Palmyra Centering Prayer Group was born out of an Advent program in 2015, followed by a Lenten program in 2016, which introduced the history of mysticism and contemplative practice. As a result of the interest shown in these programs, a Centering Prayer group started in Palmyra Parish in May 2016.

We meet for an hour each Tuesday evening at 7.30pm in the parish hall and, in May this year, celebrated our 2nd anniversary with an evening Mass and social gathering afterwards, at which we were joined by a number of additional parishioners.

Continued next page.....

PALMYRA CENTERING PRAYER GROUP - WA *continued.....*



Each evening begins with 20 minutes of Centering Prayer. However, on the first Tuesday of each month this is replaced by "Lectio Divina". During the remaining time we discuss the scripture excerpt used in the Lectio Divina or a piece of reflective writing which we had read in preparation.

While young in years, the group's growth in self-reflection and spiritual awareness has been profound. We have been introduced to the writings of great mystics including the likes of Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila, through to

modern spiritual writers including Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Cynthia Bourgeault, Karl Rahner, Richard Rohr and Ilia Delio. Reflecting on their thoughts and discussing them during our weekly sessions, has broadened our perspectives on the place of God, Christ and the Trinity in our everyday lives.

We have been given a new lens through which to view our faith as followers of Christ and our membership of the Catholic Church, complete with its rich traditions. Invariably, each member has found that their attendance at Mass has taken on a lot more meaning, in particular listening to the scripture readings with "new ears". Our faith has taken on a greater, heart-centered experiential aspect rather than being something having an intellectual focus.

Patrick O'Connell - WA

A Tribute to Br. Ben McCabe - Adelaide community

Br. Ben, a beloved gift to the Contemplative Living Community, died in hospital on Saturday 30th June. Ben has been described as *presence, compassion and liberation* by a fellow Christian Brother. Ben was all of this to our community, and to many others in his well over eighty years of life. Ben has also been described as a mystic, and that he was. He will be greatly missed and beautifully remembered. One of Ben's favourite people was Einstein. This was a quote that deeply touched him. May it do the same for all of us:

"A human being is part of the whole called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He (she) experiences himself (herself), their thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of their consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

As a close friend of Ben's said: *his ministry is only just beginning.* Rest now Ben, in the arms of Love.

BOOK REVIEWS AND READING SUGGESTIONS

Helen Duffy recommends two books that she has found very valuable:

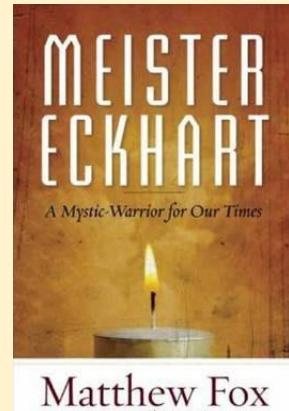
One:

Meister Eckhart – A Mystic Warrior For Our Times

by Matthew Fox - 2014.

Fox emphasises the ecumenical gifts of this 13th century mystic and shows his relevance to the concerns and issues facing today's Christians.

Fox has Eckhart's dialogue throughout the book with other contemporary thinkers and offers helpful insights for contemporary Christians who are yearning to hear a relevant response and guide to their own issues and questions.



Two:

***An Astonishing Secret* by Daniel O'Leary - 2018**



By far one of the best books of this Irish writer. O'Leary has given us a profound insight into Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si. Throughout he focuses on the theological shift underpinning this document; one that invites the reader from a past emphasis on a redemptive/ salvation theology to an incarnational/creation theology.

With 172 notes at the end of this book citing science, poetry, feminine writers and mystics, we are touched by the author's comprehensive study of this papal document.

This is, as one reviewer suggests, a transformative and nourishing book which one wants to read and reread.

Peter Ahern suggests the following books: *THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING [WITH THE BOOK OF PRIVY COUNSEL] A NEW TRANSLATION* BY CARMEN ACEVEDO BUTCHER - 2009

I have been wanting to re-read *The Cloud of Unknowing* for some time. However, the thought of reading again my well-thumbed William Johnston version did not inspire me: I needed to read it again in a fresh translation.

After reading rave reviews from Cynthia Bourgeault and online, I bought *The Cloud of Unknowing* by Carmen Acevedo Butcher [Shambala Publications 2009]. I can say that this version lives up to all my expectations. I did not realize that William Johnston did not go back to the original manuscript for his 1973 version. Instead he used a translation of the original by Professor Phyllis Hodgson [1944]. Professor Butcher, on the other hand, whose expertise is in linguistics, medieval literature and the Christian mystics, returned to the original for her new version. As a result, we have a 14th century classic in fresh, modern language. We are assured her version is also very faithful to the language and the spirit of the original.

Continued next page

Reading this wonderful new translation gave me a real spiritual boost. It was like having the anonymous 14th century author in the room talking to me. The grime and varnish over the 6 centuries seemed to be cleaned away, leaving the freshness and encouragement of the original. The comparisons with William Johnston are too numerous to cite here. However, although I will now use the Butcher translation from now on, I still regard William Johnston's 1973 introduction as the most wonderful and insightful 27 pages of spiritual literature, and should be read and read again.

The Butcher version also encouraged me to return to *The Heart of Centering Prayer* by Cynthia Bourgeault [2016]. I had already read it twice, but was still having trouble following some of Cynthia's arguments about The Cloud and which take up nearly half her book. I started by watching her 4-part series of talks about *The Heart of Centering Prayer* on YouTube and then by reading her book for a third time. It now makes sense to me - at last. All I can say is: thank you Carmen Acevedo Butcher and thank you Cynthia. Do yourself a favour and read both books, preferably in the order I have just suggested.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE AWAKENING SELF: THE SACRED JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

BY DAVID BENNER - 2012

A group of Centering Prayer people are reading this book as a book club. The 13 chapters will be read and discussed at monthly meetings over 2018.

David Benner is a depth psychologist and spiritual guide. He practises Centering Prayer himself and recommends the practice to his patients and spiritual directees. Benner belongs to an emerging group of psychologists/psychotherapists/psychoanalysts in the United States who are coming to believe that the practice of psychology is also a spiritual process.

At first the book is daunting, but Benner, like a good teacher, sets out what he intends to say; he then says it; and then he reviews what he has just said. Each chapter is subdivided, making for easier reading in digestible chunks.

For our group of some 12 people this book has been a revelation: full of insights and excitement. One of our group considered doing psychology at university as a mature student. She was told by a faculty counsellor, however, that there was no place in the course for the consideration of any spiritual element. So she has been particularly fascinated by this book.

Our facilitator suggested we pencil mark those sections which have particularly appealed to us in anticipation of each monthly discussion, and I find I have marked extensively most of the chapters we have read so far. I will give you one example of Benner's insights below. He is here making the point that the mystics have a great deal to give to us, and particularly to practising psychologists. He makes the following observation at pages 77-78:

The mystics have many gifts to offer us. Let me comment briefly on four that I think are the most important:

Trust in the darkness

The alignment of head and heart

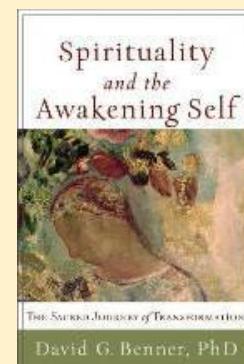
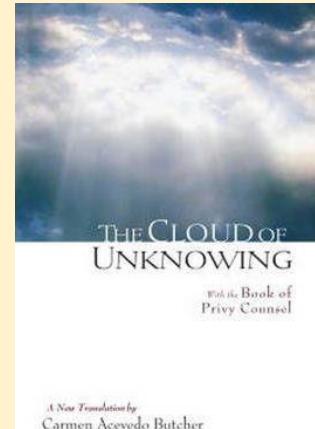
Healing the wounded self

Unifying a divided or fragmented consciousness

Benner then proceeds to deal with each topic in turn.

Benner constantly warns the reader that the ultimate goal of transformation is not easy and we may not make it, at least in this life. However, the constant insights and illuminations make each of our group stimulated for the next monthly discussion.

Continued next page...



The book is probably best read the way we are doing it: as a discussion group. I find that others in the group will seize upon some point which is important but which I have somehow missed in the reading.

We are only a bit more than half way through our group reading, but I can nevertheless highly recommend this book to anyone who is serious about the contemplative journey and who wants to read a masterly treatise on the emerging interaction between modern depth psychology, spirituality, awakening and transformation.

[I get all my books online from The Book Depository. I have found over the years they provide the best price and the quickest and most reliable deliveries.]

Peter Ahern – ACT

Bruno Barnhart on Teilhard de Chardin

"Teilhard de Chardin offers us a comprehensive and dynamic vision: Christ-Omega as the gravitational centre that draws everything in the universe forward and also inward, into orbit around itself.

Teilhard sees the fullness of the body of the risen Christ consisting not only of the mystical body of human persons, but also of a cosmic body, which is identical with the universe. As immanent "Omega," Christ unifies the universe in Christ's self.

'This is the point we must bear in mind: in no case could the Cosmos be conceived and realised, without a supreme centre of spiritual consistence.... What gives the World its "gratuitous" character is precisely that the position of universal Centre has not been given to any supreme intermediary between God and the Universe, but has been occupied by the Divinity itself..... Since the Pauline Christ (the great Christ of the mystics) coincides with the universal term, omega, adumbrated by our philosophy – the grandest and most necessary attribute we can ascribe to him (Christ) is that of exercising a supreme physical influence on every cosmic reality without exception.'

For Teilhard, the Christ-Omega is the centre of cosmic convergence, "attainable and inevitably present in all things."

"It was in order that He (Christ) might become omega that it was necessary for Him, (the Christ), through the travail of the Incarnation, to conquer and animate the Universe."

Taken from: "*Second Simplicity*" by Bruno Barnhart page 163-164



THE MYSTIC WE ARE

The word ‘mystic’ has many layers. From a catholic Christian perspective, I must begin with the person of Jesus the Christ. Jesus reveals to us who we truly are, and the true nature of what it is to be a mystic. Meet Jesus the Christ in the Gospels and we meet the mystic longing to come to birth within ourselves and within our world. At the Heart of all creation dwells the mystic. That means that at the Heart of all of us, we are mystics, regardless of religion, beliefs, or no belief at all. The mystic is one who begins to awaken beyond our inherent selfishness and self centredness and into a sense of authentic Love and connectedness with everything. The mystic is one who grows in consciousness of our blindness and the Love we are living within, and that is always emerging. The mystic is one who begins to recognise the mixed motivations within our own Hearts and meets the self-made self or the ego self, but also meets the mystic within where our Heart begins to expand in Love. The mystic is one who will not be constrained by the fears of the ego and who trusts Love to lead them. The mystic is one who notices this God of Love not as a distant judge or authoritarian guardian of the sacred, but a great Lover who can only Love and that dwells within everything. The mystic is not the ‘religious’ person, but the person who Loves much, regardless of any religion. The mystic is one who sees through all our pretences to the beauty at the very Heart of everything. The mystic is one who sees what is not Love in our world and names it for what it is.

The mystic is a great Welcomer of everyone, without judgement, prejudice or division.

The mystic is one who exercises Compassion.

The mystic is one who weeps over the world and cries out ‘if you only knew what was being offered you this day’. The mystic is the person who confronts us and challenges us beyond our comfort zones, but never judges us or rejects us. The mystic is one who knows they/we are immersed in Mystery. The mystic knows awe. The mystic knows suffering.

When we begin to awaken into the mystic within us, it is a life long journey into Love itself. It is a constant birthing of Love, and sometimes in the unfolding of the mystic we also fail, time and time again. But the mystic knows what it is to be held by Love, and picked up, and forgiven unconditionally. In fact, the mystic knows that there is ‘absolutely nothing that cannot be forgiven’. It is this that enables the mystic within us to rise time and time again and take those next vital steps in the journey – steps that are often conflicted by the dualism of our natures, but nevertheless keeps moving us forward into the Heart of Love.

Put it simply a mystic is one who constantly consents to the birthing of ‘Love’ regardless of how many times we fail to Love. The mystic is one who is in relationship with Love, not as an entity outside of us, but that rises from within the whole of creation. The mystic is the great Lover coming into greater and greater Being and knows itself to be part of the unfolding of the whole Cosmos. The mystic knows that every part of creation is a part of them and they a part of it. As we continue to awaken into the mystic we are, all these and many more aspects of the mystic, will continue to be grown in us and will make way for the continuing unfolding of Love.

The mystic is the birther of Love and is always BECOMING. If we ‘have faith in Love that is the size of a mustard seed’ then that is all that is needed for the mystic to continue to grow and emerge from within us and into the Heart of the world.

Annemarie Reiner



Excerpts from *Laudato Si* by Pope Francis

202. Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and form of life. A great spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of RENEWAL.

204..... Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction.

205. No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to God's grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us.

206..... Today, in a word, the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle.

207. Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life.



"Earlier today, (Feb 12th) a girl with Downs syndrome, got up during a regular papal service and went toward Pope Francis. The Pope's security men quickly moved in to assist her back to her mum. The Pope stopped them and said to her "come sit next to me." She then sat down near him and he continued his homily, holding her hands."

Picture and story sourced from:

alicecorrine.com

THE BEFRIENDING OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

"In the modern period, we are without a comprehensive story of the universe. The historians, even when articulating world history, deal not with the whole world but just with the human, as if the human were something separate from or an addendum to the story of the Earth and the universe. The scientists have arrived at detailed accounts of the cosmos, but have focused exclusively on the physical dimensions and have ignored the human dimension of the universe. In this context we have fractured our educational system into its scientific and its humanistic aspects, as though these were somehow independent of each other." **The Universe Story** by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. Page 1

"Originating power brought forth the universe. All the energy that would ever exist in the entire course of time erupted as a single quantum – a singular gift – existence. If in the future, stars would blaze and lizards would blink in their light, these actions would be powered by the same numinous energy that flared forth at the dawn of time....There was no place in the universe that was separate from the originating power of the universe. Each thing of the universe had its very roots in this realm. Even space-time itself was a tossing, churning, foaming out of the originating reality, instant by instant. Each of the sextillion particles that foamed into existence had its root in this quantum vacuum, this originating reality..." **The Universe Story** by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. Page 17

"Although we today are just beginning to realise what it means to say that the universe acts in an integral manner, future humans will take this for granted. They will begin with an understanding that there are not four fundamental interactions, nor five, nor six, nor any higher number, but that all interactions are different manifestations of primordial universe activity." **The Universe Story** by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. Page 26

"Some years ago, in 1975, in the cathedral of John the Divine in New York, there was a public discussion on technology and the natural world by Edgar Mitchell, the astronaut; Eido Roshi, the Zen master; and Lame Deer, the Sioux Indian. When Lame Deer spoke, he stood with the sacred pipe in his hands and bowed in turn to the four directions. Then, after lifting his eyes to survey the vast cathedral, he turned to the audience and remarked on how overpowering a setting it was for communication with divine reality. Then he added that his own people had a different setting for communion with the Great Spirit, a setting out under the open sky, with the mountains in the distance and the winds blowing through the trees, with the earth under their feet, surrounded by the living sounds of the birds and insects. It is a different setting, he said, a different experience, but one so profound that he doubted that his people would ever feel entirely themselves or would ever be able to experience the divine adequately in any other setting." From **The Dream of the Earth** by Thomas Berry. Page 8

Scientists suddenly have become aware of the magic quality of the earth and of the universe entire....The physicist Brian Swimme tells us, "The universe shivers with wonder in the depth of the human." As above. Page 16

"One of the finest moments in our new sensitivity to the natural world is our discovery of the earth as a living organism." As above. Page 18

"This reenchantment with the earth as a living reality is the condition for our rescue of the earth from the impending destruction that we are imposing upon it. To carry this out effectively, we must now, in a sense, reinvent the human as species within the community of life species. Our sense of reality and of value must consciously shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric norm of reference...This anthropocentrism is largely PTO



consequent on our failure to think of ourselves as species. We talk about ourselves as nations. We think of ourselves as ethnic, cultural, language, or economic groups. We seldom consider ourselves as species among species. This might be referred to in biology, but it has never meant that much in real life. We must now do this deep reflection on ourselves. What earlier peoples did immediately and intuitively in establishing their human identity, we must do deliberately.... Although we are integral with the complex of life communities, we have never been willing to recognise this in law, economics, morality, education, or in other areas of human endeavour. We must do this now in the context of an emergent universe. What earlier peoples were doing, they were doing in a limited human world and in a spatial mode of consciousness. We have our experience in a dominant time-developmental mode of consciousness and with our empirical instruments of understanding. Within this context we can recognise ourselves not simply as a human community, but as genetically related to the entire community of living beings, since all species are descended from a single origin..." ." From **The Dream of the Earth** by Thomas Berry. Page 21

"What is needed on our part is the capacity for listening to what the earth is telling us. As a unique organism the earth is self –directed. Our sense of the earth must be sufficiently sound so that it can support the dangerous future that is calling us. It is a decisive moment. Yet we should not feel that we alone are determining the future course of events. The future shaping of the community depends on the entire earth in the unity of its organic functioning, on its geological and biological as well as its human members." As above. Page 23



Raimon Panikkar on the

Purification of the Heart

"The spiritual masters of every age agree that only when the waters of our spirit are tranquil can they reflect reality without deforming it.....

This implies, of course, that thinking is much more than just concocting thoughts. Thinking discovers the real, and by this uncovering we shape reality, by participating in its rhythm, by "listening" to it, and by being obedient to it. Creative thinking is a genuine creation, a contribution to cosmogony, but in order that our contemplation have this resonance and power, we need to be free from both preconceived ideas (inertia of the mind) and egoistic will. A traditional name for this is sanctity; a more academic name, wisdom. The strongest formulation is perhaps that of the Beatitudes: the pure in heart shall see God, that is, the entire reality.

From **The Rhythm of Being** by Raimon Panikkar. Page 35-36

LOVE POEMS FROM GOD

(Fr) Nick led one of the sessions at our Annual Retreat in March. He gave us a list of poems to ponder, taken from the book *Love Poems from God*. Here we revisit a few more of them.

HEY

The grass beneath the tree is content and silent
A squirrel holds an acorn in its praying hands
offering thanks, it looks like.
The nut tastes sweet;
I bet the prayer spiced it up somehow.
The broken shells fall on the grass
and the grass looks up and says
HEY!
The squirrel looks down
and says,
HEY!
I have been saying "Hey" lately too,
to God.
Formalities just weren't working.

Rumi 1207 - 1273

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GOD'S NATURE

Sometimes we think that what we are saying about God
is true when in fact
it is not.
It would seem of value to differentiate between what is
God's nature and what is false about Love.
I have come to learn that the truth never harms or
frightens.
I have come to learn that
God's compassion and light can never be limited.
Thus any God who would condemn
is not a god at all
but some disturbing image
in the mind of a child
we best ignore, until we
can cure the
dark.

St. Thomas Aquinas 1225 -1274

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CERTAINTY

Certainty undermines one's power, and
turns happiness into a long shot.
Certainty confines.
Dears, there is nothing in your life that will
not change – especially all your ideas of God.
Look what the insanity of righteous
knowledge can do:
crusade and maim thousands
in wanting to convert that which
is already gold
into gold.
Certainty can become an illness
that creates hate and
greed.

God once said to Tuka,
"Even I am ever changing –
I am ever beyond
Myself,
what I may have once put my seal upon
may no longer be
the greatest
Truth."

Tukaram 1608 -1649

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A SPIRITUALITY OF STRUGGLE

"But like most people I was raised on absolutes and categories, on rules and certainties. I was told that my destiny was in my hands. If I worked hard, I would succeed. If I lived a good life, I would be rewarded. If I prayed hard enough, worked long enough, lived a regulated enough life, God would help me and guide me and work life in my favour. But the absolutes faded, the rules change, even my image of God became bigger than a little, tribal, national, male idol who cared only for white

North Americans. Now, I have come to see, little if anything is expected to last....

There is a difference between sick despair and those shocks of life that sour our laughter and grey our days, that turn the excitement of life into the burden of survival but which, if we understand them, do not, in the end, destroy us.The great secret of life is how to survive struggle without succumbing to it, how to bear struggle without being defeated by it, how to come out of great

struggle better than when we found ourselves in the midst of it.

A spirituality of struggle exposes the secret to the world."

Taken from: **SCARRED BY STRUGGLE, TRANSFORMED BY HOPE** by Joan Chittister Page 8 & 13

Questions to ponder as you reflect upon the above text: What has suffering (struggle) taught you? Do you sense your own growth in Love as you reflect upon the suffering in your own life?



A SPIRITUALITY OF WAITING

"All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it is not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within.

We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. The Spirit does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. The Spirit of God knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good."

Romans 8:22-28 (The Message Bible)

Questions to ponder as you reflect upon the above text: Am I tender hearted and patient with that part of me that does not yet know or understand and loses patience? What is this God of Love asking of me here?

MATTERS REGARDING CENTERING PRAYER PRACTICE

EMBODY, EMBODY, EMBODY!

"In my opinion, the first priority facing a new generation of practitioners is the need for a deeper embodiment of the practice. There are still too many doing Centering Prayer in the heads, preoccupied with the correct application of "their" sacred word or struggling to achieve a thought-free inner state, which they equate with "consenting to the presence and action of God." Once the kenotic nature of the prayer is grasped and trusted – *really* grasped and trusted – all this falls away. As "letting go" becomes an embodied gesture rather than a spiritual attitude to be striven for during the meditation period, Centering Prayer immediately drops out of the head and into a resonant centre in the middle chest region (heart to solar plexus). The mind quiets down since it is no longer burdened with worry. Performance anxiety also drops away, as the focus is no longer on creating inner stillness or any other spiritual desideratum, but simply on offering the release, in solidarity with Jesus's own kenotic heart. "Ten thousand opportunities to return to God!" The practice shifts from something you *perform* to something you *give*."

Taken from: *The Heart of Centering Prayer*

By Cynthia Bourgeault Page 202



Healing comes to us as we gradually submit to the divine action – including the time of weaning from the breasts of consolation – and accept in place of "felt" consolation the stable sense of God's presence on the level of pure faith. Pure faith does not seek rewards of any kind, especially sensible consolation, which might be called "spiritual junk food." The solid food of the spiritual journey is pure faith. It is the "narrow way that leads to life" and is exercised by waiting upon God in loving attentiveness without any specific psychological content.

Thus, intentionality is the star rising in the dark nights. It is the "focus" of contemplative prayer. As long as our intention remains pure – to serve God, to listen to God, to wait upon God, to surrender to God – then thoughts of whatever kind do not make any difference. They do not affect the purity of our prayer. In a sense we are what our will is doing. If our intention is firm to wait God out, submitting to the Divine Therapy, then the Divine Therapy is working.

Taken from: *Intimacy with God*

By Thomas Keating Page 71-72

LOOKING FOR A RETREAT?

WA New Norcia – Benedictine Monastery

132ks North of Perth

<https://www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au>

SA Seven Hills – Ignatian retreat house

134ks North of Adelaide

<https://sevenhillretreat.com.au>

Vic Tarrawarra Abbey – Cistercian Monks

61ks North East of Melbourne

www.cistercian.org.au

**NSW St. Mary's Towers – Douglas Park. –
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart**

78ks South of Sydney

www.towersretreat.org.au

Jamberoo Abbey – Benedictine Sisters

130ks South of Sydney

<https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/retreats>



IMPORTANT DIARY DATE – 2019

Centering Prayer Network Australia

Annual Retreat

Friday 8th March – Sunday 10th March

at the

Janssen Spirituality Centre

Boronia – Victoria

All are welcome to join us.

Followed by

Our Annual Meeting

Monday 11th March

**More information will be available for
these two events in the December
Newsletter.**



"Stillness is the canvas against which movement can become beautiful. We can only appreciate movement against the background of stillness. Were everything kinetic, we could not know what movement is. As sound is sistered to silence, movement is sistered to stillness."

From: *Divine Beauty* by John O'Donohue



THE GREAT PILGRIMAGE

*I felt in need of a great pilgrimage
so I sat still for three
days
and God came
to me.*

By Kabir (1440 – 1518)