
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE



April 2010

“We’ll Have To Give It Time”

by Tom Ward

The “it” referred to above is prayer. The quotation comes from notes of Thomas Merton’s last conference in the West before he took his only trip to the East where he died, December 10th, 1968. He says, “If we really want prayer, we have to give it time. We must slow down to a human tempo and we’ll begin to have time to listen. And as soon as we listen to what’s going on, things will begin to take shape by themselves.”

I use this writing in teaching centering prayer. When I do, groups will inevitably focus on the phrase “a human tempo”. With very little prodding they will discern that there is a God-given rhythm to human life and that we are not in accord with it. They will also affirm that if we really want prayer, we will have to give it a significant amount of our best time.

Prayer is our relationship with God. The best analogy for this relationship is our closest human relationship. If I say to my wife that I love her but don’t spend any intentional time with her, I will soon find that there is little intimacy between us. The same is true in our relationship with God. If we do not make time for God and God alone, we will soon find that we experience God as absent. But as one writer puts it, God does not know how to be absent. As Augustine of Hippo put it, God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. It is we who distance ourselves from God; not God, from us.

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“Don’t Hold On To Me”

by Geoffrey Butcher

Jesus’ comment to Mary Magdalene, “Do not hold on to me,” is curious in so far as we, like Mary, would want to hold on to Jesus if we saw him, or hold on to the Spirit when we feel God’s presence in our lives. Who would want to give up such encounters? If we are meant to be drawn closer to Jesus, it seems strange that Jesus’ response is, “Do not hold on to me.” Jesus explains that he has not yet ascended to the Father. He tells Mary to go to his brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

The context for this encounter is a resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene, and she becomes the first evangelist of the Church. Jesus’ words, “Do not hold on to me,” can have a modern meaning for us as well as we seek a deeper relationship with Christ. How do we come closer to God without trying to possess God? How do we live in the present moment without attempting to capture that moment as if it were a thing to be hoarded?

I remember being at the Grand Canyon when a car drove up close to the rim, and the driver got out with his camera and went to a place where he could see the vast beauty of the canyon. Rather than looking at it first with his eyes, he immediately began clicking pictures. When he finished, he turned around, went back to his car, and drove away. He never looked at the canyon except through the lens of his camera. He didn’t experience the beauty of the canyon in itself. He captured it as a possession.

This can happen to us in our prayer lives as well. We look forward to those times when God blesses us with God’s presence. Those moments of consolation are so precious that we want to hold on to them -- to intensify the moment and to make it last for our enduring satisfaction. In human relationships this is the same as holding on to others, not only for the good we see in them but to satisfy our own needs. But our need may restrict the other person’s freedom. In some cases the other person

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Contemplative Opportunities

Since 2008 we have been offering retreats directed by **National Contemplative Outreach Faculty Members**. This year **Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler** and **Mary Anne Best** are presenters for **Heartfulness: The Christian Contemplative Journey** on May 14-20 at St. Mary's Sewanee in Sewanee, TN.

An **Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop** will be held on May 29 at St. Mary's Sewanee. An **Intensive Retreat** begins on May 30. See the Registration Form on the back page for more information.

Facilitators will gather at **Christ the King Catholic Church** in Nashville on June 5 from 10 am - 2 pm for enrichment and support. For more information, contact Jean Hastings: jeanhastings@comcast.net or Carolyn Goddard: carolyndgoddard@gmail.com.

Our 4rd Annual Gathering of Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee will be held at **Holy Family Catholic Church** on August 14, 2010. The topic for the day will be "**A Desire for Contemplative Living**." Mini-sessions on Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, the Welcoming Prayer, and Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice will be offered to support our practice of contemplative living. Reservation information will be distributed electronically in June. If you are not on our e-mail distribution list or if you do not have an e-mail address, contact Janis Lovecchio: janis.lovecchio@holyfamilycc.com or 615-373-4351 (ext. 235) for more information.

Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta is hosting the **2010 Annual Contemplative Outreach Conference** on September 23-26 at the Sheraton Gateway at the Airport in Atlanta, GA. Mark your calendar now. Registration information will be sent out early in the summer.

If your church or group wishes to host a **Centering Prayer** or a **Lectio Divina Workshop**, contact our Workshop Coordinator, Janis Lovecchio: janis.lovecchio@holyfamilycc.com or 615-373-4351.

"DON'T HOLD ON TO ME".....*Cont. from page 1*
can feel that the clinging is not worship but a clutching to satisfy the agenda of the needy person.

When one applies this to the centering prayer practice, there are blissful moments of consolation when we are tempted to hold on to God as if to possess God for our own satisfaction. This is understandable, but it is a distraction appealing to our false selves rather than giving ourselves to God with thanksgiving for being blessed. The consolation may be only for a moment, but it is a moment lived. Warmth and beauty are experienced; yet, one moves to the next moment where God is also present.

Fortunately, God gives us memories. We don't have to prove spiritual experiences as if to display a picture; but recalling these blessings can continue to nurture us and remind us that in dark periods God's love still surrounds us even when the Spirit seems to be absent.

In centering prayer we practice the art of letting go. We release in this prayer the dark and troublesome thoughts that may arise in our consciousness during a sit. We even let go of those insightful moments when God seems to be especially near. The willingness to release all thought and emotion helps us to entrust our lives fully to God.

In our spiritual journey we need to be content with the inability to give expression to all that God is doing within us. Words, thoughts, emotions, music and art, all strive to give expression to this inner activity. But these endeavors, pursued intentionally or unintentionally, attempt to capture the ineffable – that which cannot be expressed. Sometimes we simply need to rest in God... in the silence... without holding on... even if our release means a descent to nothingness. God may dwell in purist form for us in the nothingness.

Our lives are in a process of transition into unity with Divine Love. This process includes giving up everything that we possess – even our bodies. But this is a transition into a sea of love where all our expectations are exceeded by God's generous gift of new life for us. Somehow, we have to trust the process, just as Mary Magdalene had to let go and let Jesus ascend to the Father, to his God and our God. + + +

For further information:
www.centeringprayermidtn.com
www.StMarysSewanee.org
www.contemplativeoutreach.org

MIDDLE TENNESSEE PRAYER GROUPS

Antioch	St. Ignatius	Carnnie Harmon	615-834-1259	Fri 9:00 am
Brentwood	Holy Family Catholic Church	Janis Lovecchio	615-373-4351	Mon 7:00 pm
Chattanooga	Church of the Good Shepherd	Rev. Margaret Marshall	423-757-9580	Wed 4:30 pm
Chattanooga	Grace Church	Kathy Russell	423-517-0645	Fri 1:00 pm
Chattanooga	St. Paul's Episcopal Church	Barbara Ray	423-490-0735	Wed 12:30 pm
Chattanooga	St. Peter's Episcopal Church	Joani Koch	423-877-3140	Wed 5:15 pm
Clarksville	Immaculate Conception	Dr. Ron Oakland & Judy Whelan	931-217-1292 931-216-3863	Wed 5:00 pm Wed 5:00 pm
Gallatin	Our Saviour Episcopal Church	Church Office	615-452-7146	Sun 4:00 pm
Johnson City	St. John's Episcopal Church	Frances Jackson	423-434-0560	Tue 6:00 pm
Knoxville	Church of the Ascension	Fr. Rob Travis	865-588-0589	Thur 4:30
pKnoxville	Lakeview Center	Barbara Haning	865-671-0766	Thur 6:30 pm
Knoxville	St. John's Cathedral	Rev. Canon Tom Rasnik	865-525-7347	Tue 5:30 pm
Knoxville	John XXIII Student Center	Beverly Froning	865-426-4411	Mon 7:00 pm
Kodak	Home Residence	Ed Coleman	865-932-4431	Wed 6:00 pm
Murfreesboro	St. Paul's	Ronald Clemmons	615-867-6318	Tue 6:00 pm
Murfreesboro	St. Rose of Lima	Kay Curtis & Patricia Darrell	615-848-3081 615-896-2742	Mon 7:30 pm Mon 7:30 pm
Nashville	Cathedral of the Incarnation	Diane Gregory	615-327-2330	Sat 9:00 am
Nashville	Christ Church	Jean Hastings	615-356-0030	Sun 10:00 am
Nashville	Christ Church	Mimi Shimmin	615-298-2483	Tue 5:30 pm
Nashville	Christ Church	Laura Copeland	615-500-4683	Thurs 12:15 pm
Nashville	Christ the King	Carolyn Goddard	615-438-3216	Fri 8:00 am
Nashville	Christ the King-Lectio Divina	Carolyn Goddard	615-438-3216	Mon 8:00 am
Nashville	South Minister Presbyterian	Helen Blakely	615-331-3652	Wed 11:30 am
Nashville	St. George's	Bets Ramsey	615-385-2150	Mon 4:00 pm
Nashville	St. Henry's	Sr. Eileen Pistor	615-385-7686	Wed 1:00 pm
Oak Ridge	Home Residence	Janice Watkins	865-481-3326	Mon 7:15 pm
Sewanee	Otey Parish	Beth Chamberlain	931-598-9110	Mon 7:00 pm
Sewanee	St. Mary's Sewanee	Rev. Tom Ward	931-598-5342	Tue 4:00 pm

"WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE IT TIME".....*Cont. from page 1*

When we slow down to a human tempo, we have time to listen. Listening to God is one dimension of prayer. And as Thomas Keating puts it, "silence is God's first language; everything else is a poor translation." Listening to God's silence entails our own silence—inner as well as outer. And that takes time, a significant amount of our best time.

And so we are called to practice centering prayer twenty minutes, twice a day. At one level, that does not seem like much time. But for many of us, working this practice into our lives is one of the most difficult things we have ever tried to do. When we do, we find that we did not do it so much as Another did it in us. Still, our own intention and effort were necessary.

When we do give it time, things begin to take shape by themselves.

+ + +

The Essential You

by Carolyn Goddard

Living outside the garden
there is shame,
desire, dominance.
The curse of thorns and thistles –
seeking security in
relationships and work-
leaves a dry taste of dust.

Ah, but there is a secret!
The cherubim are not posted
to keep you out - only
to keep I out.

The essential you,
the you under the I,
is protected forever,
undefiled and undefilable.

You can return
for you never left.

2010-11 CENTERING PRAYER EVENTS AT ST. MARY'S SEWANEE

www.centeringprayermidtn.com or www.StMarysSewanee.org

DATE	RETREATS	COST/DEPOSIT	PRESENTER(S)
May 14-20	Heartfulness Retreat	\$690	Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler/Mary Ann Best
May 29	Introductory Workshop	\$35	Rev. Tom Ward
May 30-Jun 8	Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat	\$750/\$50	Rev. Tom Ward & Staff
Sept 26-28	3 Day Retreat	\$275/\$50	Rev. Geoffrey Butcher
Oct 17-19	Centering as an 11th Step Practice	\$275/\$50	Roberta Oster/Becky Hannah
Dec 10-12	Advent Retreat	\$275/\$50	Rev. Tom Ward

Events in Spring/Summer of 2011

Jan 2-9, 2011	Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat	\$595/\$50	Rev. Tom Ward & Staff
Mar 13-17	National Retreat TBA		
May 28	Introductory Workshop	\$35	Rev. Tom Ward
May 29-Jun 7	Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat	\$750/\$50	Rev. Tom Ward & Staff

Events in Fall/Winter of 2011 to be announced later

To Register, please Circle Desired Retreat(s) and please Print Carefully

Name: _____ Phone(s): _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____ Special Needs: _____

Included is Deposit \$ _____ Donation \$ _____ Total Payment \$ _____

Mail to: ***Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee, 1103 Tyne Blvd., Nashville, TN 37220***

Additional information: Carol Wray (615) 373-0613 or email: carolwray@aol.com or

St. Mary's Sewanee (931) 598-5342 or email: StMarysSewanee@bellsouth.net

For information about retreats in Alabama, Georgia and Kentucky: www.contemplativeoutreach.org

- Fr. Thomas Keating

"global community."

to the

Divine Love

the experience of

aims to transmit

Outreach

"Contemplative



Sewanee, TN 37375

P.O. Box 188

St. Mary's Sewanee

Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee

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