
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE



Summer 2013

Centering and Sacramentality

by Carolyn Goddard

As a young girl, I memorized a definition of sacrament - “an outward and visible sign of an inward and sacred grace.” I knew the words but the meaning was beyond the grasp of my newly evolving, seven year old mind.

With the help of development and experience, I began to understand something to be sacramental if it provided a pointer - something I could see, hear, touch, smell, taste - to the Mysterious beyond Mystery that I labeled God. I had to “look” into and beyond the sensual object, but that object served as a point of focus for me.

All of this sounds very abstract, doesn't it? Perhaps an example would be helpful. As I walk forward with hands cupped at every Eucharist, a person holds a small disk before me, peers over it, looks lovingly in my eyes and says, “The Body of Christ.” That wafer of bread is sacramental - I can see it, smell it, feel it, taste it. It is the focal point that allows me to take in the Mysterious beyond Mystery - the fact that I have just been named. I am the body of Christ. It is a bit much to take it so I have to chew on and inwardly digest such grace.

For years I have been nourished on this understanding of sacrament - something that brought me to awareness of God's presence and action. But Centering Prayer has changed my understandings, I hope deepened them toward wisdom.

Continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. CENTERING AND SACRAMENTALITY
1. GIFT OF GRATITUDE
2. CONTEMPLATIVE OPPORTUNITIES
2. FINDING VOICE IN THE STILL HOUSE OF MERCY
3. MIDDLE TENNESSEE SUPPORT GROUPS
3. FINDING VOICE...*continued*
3. UPCOMING EVENTS
4. CENTERING AND SACRAMENTALITY *continued*

Gift of Gratitude

by Jean Jackson

It started with a walk in the woods during an eight day Centering Prayer retreat. Now, every day, nature brings me back to gratefulness for beauty; even in the messy tangle of roots, soil, and rocks from a fallen tree that very suddenly becomes uprooted. Sudden uprooting happens in my life too. I experience both the ripping out of the old and the promise of new growth that follows.

Reflecting further back, I recall that as a teenager I loved to roam the 250 acres of woods on the farm where I grew up. There was a gift in the soft sounds and the sweet silence of the woods. There was an awful beauty in those woods burned by fire as seeds and plants slowly reached up again toward the light of day. There was a sparkling beauty in ice that clung to every surface and limb during the treacherous South Carolina ice storms. There was a fearsome beauty in the woods darkened by the setting of the sun or a sudden storm. When I moved to the city I left the woods behind, and barely noticed.

During a winter retreat at St. Mary's Sewanee a few years ago, I had the opportunity to enter the woods again. I noticed that it felt like coming home. I was quite suddenly shocked by the recognition of what I had missed for so many years while walking along sidewalks and pavement. I savored every sight and sound of the woods that day. Now I long to, and do, re-enter the woods every day, physically or mentally.

While driving along the winding back roads of Sewanee toward Nashville last fall, my car moved me slowly down the mountain. At times I was overwhelmed by the light and beauty of the turning leaves on the trees in the woods. As leaves fell and swirled around my car on the road I wondered if one might come in the window. I felt like I was inside of a “leaf globe” – every leaf was part of a powerful and amazing visual feast. The words of a retreat leader “We are so fortunate, so fortunate, so very fortunate to be here now...” echoed in my head and body.

Continued on page 4

Contemplative Opportunities

7th Annual Meeting ~ August 10, 2013

Our 7th Annual Gathering of Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee will be held at Holy Family Catholic Church, 9100 Crockett Road, Brentwood, TN 37027 on Saturday, August 10. Registration begins at 9:30 am. Program from 10 am until 3 pm.

Our keynote speaker is Rabbi Rami Shapiro, PhD, an award winning poet and essayist who has written over a dozen works. As a congregational rabbi for 20 years, Rami is currently Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at Middle Tennessee State University, and directs One River (www.one-river.org), a not-for-profit educational foundation devoted to building community through contemplative conversation. www.rabbirami.com. In addition to the keynote speaker, other offerings include:

Two periods of Centering prayer
Introduction to Centering Prayer
(for those unfamiliar with Centering Prayer)
Lectio Divina sessions

Faith sharing about contemplative practice

Reservation information will be available in early summer. To add your name to the email distribution list, please contact Jean Jackson: JeanJackson2013@comcast.net or call 615-585-4287 for more information.

National Contemplative Outreach Retreat at St. Mary's Sewanee, Sept 6 –12, 2013

The Gift of Life: Death & Dying, Life & Living

This retreat is one of only two showings this year of this new series. Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler and Mary Ann Best are the presenters. Retreat includes: new teachings on the contemplative dimension of dying and the spiritual journey, the stages of dying, suffering, judgment and mercy after death, the Mystery of God, the cross, and Centering Prayer as a preparation for death. A new DVD will be shown that was filmed in December 2010 that is an interview with Fr. Thomas Keating and Fr. Carl Arico. To register, contact Contemplative Outreach directly at 973-838-3384 or email Maryanne@coutreach.org.

Finding Voice in the Still House of Mercy

by Stephen Miller

I have come
to make my dwelling
in the stillness of this small house

Walls composed of silence;
Windows admit a pellucid sky.
The house is tree hidden;
three maples and a sycamore
shower their leaves down every autumn.
The blessing of summer shade
becomes a blanket left to compost
now the winter sky opens its canopy to the cosmos.

I once made my home
in the house of sorrow
where grief and anger were my companions.

Now the house wren nests
in this summer's hanging flower baskets
and I must surrender the back porch
until the small blue eggs have hatched
and their inquisitive inhabitants have grown feathers.

A family of rabbits graze the glen twice each day;
At twilight an opossum circumnavigates the backyard's
perimeter.

I once made a home
in the house of turmoil
where language was composed of pride and sarcasm.

Now I listen to decipher
the language and greeting
of each of the variety of birds
who inhabit these mature hardwoods
and cry out to one another in orchestral glee
upon the first smudge of light on dawn's horizon.
Blue jay, cardinal, robin and dove all take their turn
picking through the morning's harvest of creatures of
the night;

FINDING VOICE Continued on page 3

Hosting a Workshop

If your church or group wishes to host a Centering Prayer or a Lectio Divina Workshop, contact our Workshop Coordinator, Janis Lovecchio: Janis.lovecchio@hollyfamilycc.com or 615-373-4351 (ext. 235).

MIDDLE TENNESSEE PRAYER GROUPS

Antioch	St. Ignatius	Carnie Harmon	615-471-1077	Fri 9:00 am
Brentwood	Holy Family Catholic Church	Janis Lovecchio	615-373-4351	Mon 10:00 am
		Janis Lovecchio	615-373-4351	Thur 7:00 pm
Chattanooga	Church of the Good Shepherd	Rev. Margaret Marshall	423-290-1640	Wed 4:30 pm
Chattanooga	Church of the Good Shepherd	Beth Chamberlain	423-821-2755	Tue 11:15 am
Chattanooga	Grace Church	Rebecca Williams	423-843-0657	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
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 pm
Knoxville	St. John's Cathedral	Rev. Canon Tom Rasnick	865-525-7347	Wed/Fri 8:30 am
		Rev. Canon Tom Rasnick	865-525-7347	Thur 5:30 pm
Knoxville	John XXIII Student Center	Barbara Froning	865-607-3627	Fri 11:00 am
Mount Juliet	Providence United Methodist	Kasey Hitt	615-598-5350	Tue 1:15 pm
Murfreesboro	St. Paul's	Sandra Clemmons	615-867-6318	Tue 6:00 pm
Nashville	Cathedral of the Incarnation	Church Office	615-327-2330	Sat 9:30 am
Nashville	Christ Church	Peter Saana	615-618-4687	Sun 9:45 am
		Mimi Shimmin	615-298-2483	Tue 5:30 pm
		Laura Copeland	615-500-4683	Thurs 12:15 pm
Nashville	Christ the King	Martha O'Brien	615-484-0934	Fri 8:00 am
Nashville	Christ the King-Lectio Divina	Carolyn Goddard	615-438-3216	Mon 8:30 am
Nashville	South Minster Presbyterian	Helen Blakely	615-819-0515	Wed 11:30 am
Nashville	St. George's	Bets Ramsey	615-463-2583	Mon 4:00 pm
Nashville	The Cloisters	Martha Likins	615-352-0025	Wed 1:15 pm
Nashville	VU Center/Integrative Health	Jean Jackson	615-585-4287	Mon 7:00 am
Nashville	West End United Methodist	Martha Likins	615-352-0025	Sun 9:45 am
Nashville	Westminster Presbyterian	Rev. Guy Griffith	615-292-5526	Thur 11:30 am
Oak Ridge	Home Residence	Janice Watkins	865-335-9921	Tue 7:15 pm
Sewanee	Otey Parish	Jennifer Michael	931-598-5094	Mon 7:00 pm
Sewanee	St. Mary's Sewanee	Janet Graham	931-598-0822	Tue 3:30 pm
Winchester	Trinity Episcopal	Marsha Carnahan	931-626-7565	Tue 11:30 am

FINDING VOICE *Continued from page 2*

The owl gives out a
final hoot before its evening is over.

I once found a home in yearning
and thought I would never reach my destination.
Now I desire only to dwell
in this small portion of the Garden
and pray that I am permitted by grace
to persist in a life of obscure dignity,
finding voice in the still house of mercy.

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For further information on retreats:

www.centeringprayermidtn.com
www.StMarysSewanee.org
www.contemplativeoutreach.org
St. Mary's Sewanee: 931 598-5342

"Centering Prayer is ecclesial in its effects; that is, it bonds us with everyone else in the Mystical Body of Christ and indeed with the whole human family. There is really no such thing as private prayer. We cannot pray at this deep level without including everyone in the human family, especially those in great need. We also feel the need to express this sense of bonding and unity with others in some form of community."

-Thomas Keating, "The Theological Basis of Centering Prayer," Intimacy with God

**2013 Summer/Fall Retreats
at St. Mary's Sewanee**

May 25	Introduction to Centering Prayer
May 26-June 2	8 Day Centering Prayer Retreat
July 27	Introduction to Centering Prayer
July 28-Aug 4	8 Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Sept 6-12	The Gift Of Life: Death & Dying, Life and Living
Sept 13-15	3 Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 13-15	3 Day Centering Prayer Retreat

Resting in God’s presence on a daily basis added an entire dimension to sacramentality by allowing me to sense grace flowing in me. Unlike Jesus, I do not feel the power flowing out of me when someone touches my clothing. But there are moments when I have sensed grace flowing from me, moments of reflection when I have looked back and caught a glimpse of myself being used as a conduit. There are moments when I become a host of God’s presence.

I like to think of it this way - when I sit down to centering, it is somewhat like sitting in one of those big, brown chairs at a medical facility. I have come in for a blood transfusion. I sign the consent form that allows the Blood of Christ to be infused into my body, to transfigure my mind, to transform my spirit. After this twenty to thirty minute procedure, I am sent out to love and to serve, to be an outward and visible sign of the sacred grace I have just been given, ever-so-gently.

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Those words have come to me so many times recently. Time away on retreat allows restoration and gratefulness to rise up in me, in the woods or in the city.

I am grateful for teachers, writers, elders, children, and trees that point us again and again and again toward wonder and gratefulness and light.

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Contemplative Outreach
aims to transmit
the experience of
Divine Love
to the
"global community."
- Fr. Thomas Keating



Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee
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