

*We embrace the process of transformation in Christ both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.*

*Contemplative Outreach is a network of communities and individuals seeking the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit and to contribute to the renewal of the Christian contemplative tradition through the practice of Centering Prayer. Vision Theological Principal 1*

Dear Fellow Mystics,

Happy new year greetings from my hermitage, now day 328. Beginning a new year still wrapped by pandemic concerns, our Centering Prayer practice is keeping us centered on God's love for us and guiding us through. Some have been concerned that we are not meeting in-person in our Centering Prayer groups, but actually membership in these groups have increased and grown beyond previous parish and location boundaries. You are welcome to join by Zoom one of our groups [listed here](#) on our website. Additionally our Meditation Chapel groups [listed here](#) have members from around the globe. While we miss the ability to gather physically with our Centering Prayer friends, Zoom is connecting and growing us more than we could have imagined a year ago.

One way our membership has grown is from our Zoom **Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop** we started on December 5<sup>th</sup>, completing our Follow Up Sessions on January 30<sup>th</sup>. They are [posted here](#) on our YouTube channel. We are excited that our new members are now joining our Centering Prayer groups.

Everyone is invited to our first chapter-wide **"We Gather Together on Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>."** We want our large community of 1200 members to be able to experience God's radical love praying Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer together in silence as a "Big Sit" event. Join us on Zoom at 10 am. A flyer with details is at the end of this newsletter. You can [register here](#).

Join us on **March 6<sup>th</sup> for our worldwide United in Prayer Day**, a 24-hour global day of prayer, hosted on a single Zoom chapel by Contemplative Outreach International Ltd., will include many different countries, languages, groups, and chapters to unite and participate. Each one-hour segment will begin at the top of the hour with 20 minutes or more of Centering Prayer. Then the hosting group will present the content for the rest of the hour such as Lectio Divina, a video segment, or readings. All are invited and welcome to come to any of the prayer hours. Our Atlanta chapter will be hosting one of the hours. More information to come. Hope you can join us.

If you have not received our international Contemplative Outreach Ltd.'s January 2021 email newsletter, you can [find it here](#). I recommend subscribing to it if you haven't already. There is a wealth of information and wonderful answers to questions in it. You can [subscribe here](#).

On page two you will find answers to often-asked questions about Centering Prayer. If you have any other questions we can answer, [please submit them here](#).

Hope to see you soon on February 13<sup>th</sup> for our We Gather Together event.

Peace, love, and prayer,



## Questions and Answers about Centering Prayer

Our Carl McColman tells a reader of his blog what to do when the “**flood of emotional intensity**” arises during Centering Prayer: “**I thought that in contemplation you were supposed to mistrust an emotional reaction and move away from it by returning to your prayer word as you’re supposed to move away from everything. No? Yes? Both?**” Find Carl’s answer [here](#) .

**Can you experience Centering Prayer while walking?** While not true Centering Prayer, many people find that the rhythm of walking while consenting to God’s presence and action can lead to a deeper awareness. God speaks to us in many ways.

**Can you play soft music during Centering Prayer?** While music can be soothing, it is something that involves the senses: hearing, that will not help us go deeper. Centering Prayer goes to an inner space below our sense awareness. When we consent to God’s love within us in silence, we grow closer to love God in a much more profound relationship than surface awareness.

There are two kinds of prayer: 1) Cataphatic prayer is on our surface level of awareness of thinking, speaking, reflecting, and using our senses like music. 2) Apophatic prayer is on our inner level of awareness and is wordless consent in silence to enter into silence with God. Fr. Thomas often said, “Silence is God’s first language. Everything else is a poor translation.” Centering Prayer is apophatic.

**Please help me make the connection with the Holy Trinity at our center while we do Centering Prayer.** The primary purpose of Centering Prayer is going deep within, consenting to God as Trinity in our center who is loving us unconditionally.

Our baptism confirms that the Holy Trinity is within us. Philippians 2:6 reveals how the Trinity is essentially a flow of love. “Though he was God, he did not think equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he emptied himself; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.” In this image of the Trinity, the Father pours all of his love into the Son, and the Son pours all of his love into the Father, creating a flow of love that is the Holy Spirit. When we consent to God’s presence and action within us in Centering Prayer, we consent to this same Love that is flowing within us, creating us and loving us unconditionally in our center. When we center, we continue the flow by pouring our love in return to our Beloved.

It is essential that we believe we are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) We are each precious children of God who is loving us unconditionally, flowing from our center. Br. Elias Marechal in *Tears of an Innocent God* (p.147) describes how Henri Nouwen struggled with this concept and found the answer “We are each the glory of God” from William of St. Thierry who said: “O image of God, recognize your dignity; let the effigy of your creator shine forth in you... To yourself you seem of little worth, but in reality you are precious.” Most of our culture is designed to deny that we are each “shining like the sun” (Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*), but we discover these truths as we continue consenting to God’s loving presence and action within us in Centering Prayer.



## On-Line Opportunities and Virtual Resources

Fr. Carl Arico's talk on the "Fruits of the Holy Spirit": [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

Contemplative Outreach Ltd April 30<sup>th</sup> - May 2<sup>nd</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault: "Oneness: The Secret Embrace, Fr. Thomas Keating's Final Gift to the World" public video recordings [Session 1:](#) [Session 2:](#) [Session 3:](#)

Hear our own **Claudia Campbell**, Centering Prayer group leader in Jasper, GA, guest speaking on podcast for **Cloud Walk Ministry** on "ThinSpace," episode 10. [Listen here](#)

**Center for Action and Contemplation** presents **Learning How to See: Podcast Series**-Brian McLaren, Jacqui Lewis and Richard Rohr- six-episode podcast series [Learning How to See](#). Brian McLaren, Barbara Holmes, Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, James Finley speaking [here](#).

**Center for Christogenesis** presents Thursday Feb 25, 4-5:30 pm ET "How Does Our Sacred Story Affect Our Call to Justice?" with Patrick Carolan \$25 [Register here](#).

**Contemplative Outreach Chicago** presents **Centering Prayer: Weekend Immersion Retreat Feb 12-14, 2021**, beginning Friday 6 pm CT, ending Sunday late morning Online Zoom Meeting Retreat Guide: Alan Krema [Register online here](#). Retreat is free with donations gratefully accepted.

[Encountering Silence](#) Podcast by Carl McColman, Cassidy Hall, and Kevin Johnson

**Ignatius House** is open for socially-distanced retreats – [info here](#).

**Br. Elias Marechal OCSO** is on YouTube. [Find him here](#).

Fr. William Meninger is on YouTube! [click here](#) to find his many videos.

**May 21-23, 2021 - Merton and Women - Bonnie Thurston**, Merton Scholar, will explore women and the feminine in the life and teaching of Thomas Merton. Benedictine Sisters Retreat Center, 916 Convent Rd NE, Cullman, AL 35055 [Register here](#).

**Monastery of the Holy Spirit Virtual Zoom Retreats**  
[Website here](#), [To register, call](#) 770-760-0959 Mon-Fri 8 am – 1 pm ET

### Group Meetings and Coordinating Team Gatherings

***We will continue to suspend physical gatherings indefinitely. Details will be developed as we receive more information.***

Centering Prayer groups will be only meeting virtually. Find a group [here](#).

Monthly Coordinating Team Gatherings for 2021 will be on Zoom. A Doodle Poll will help us find our next best meeting day and time.

“It is our hearts that we are offering to God in Centering Prayer, hearts that are pleading for the Holy Spirit and, at the same time, putting up with the weakness of human nature and our own personal melodrama, for the love of God. As we return to the sacred symbol again and again, we gradually become aware that we are cultivating the spiritual level of our awareness. In this sense, every time we move from a thought into the place of interior silence we are renewing our love for God. We do not judge our prayer by how many thoughts we have, however much we are bombarded by them. Rather, we judge it by how promptly we go back ever so gently to our sacred symbol. Thus we may have made hundreds of acts of the love of God in the course of a single period of Centering Prayer! The Gifts of the Holy Spirit grow in direct proportion to the depth and sincerity of our love.” Thomas Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit*, page 35

Be still and know that I am God. Ps 46:10

Silence Solitude Solidarity Service

Join the online Meditation Chapel at Contemplative Outreach Ltd. [here](#).

**We are accepting contributions to our newsletter answering the question: *How has Centering Prayer changed my life?* 50 words or less, subject to editing. [Send entries here](#).**



Contemplative Outreach

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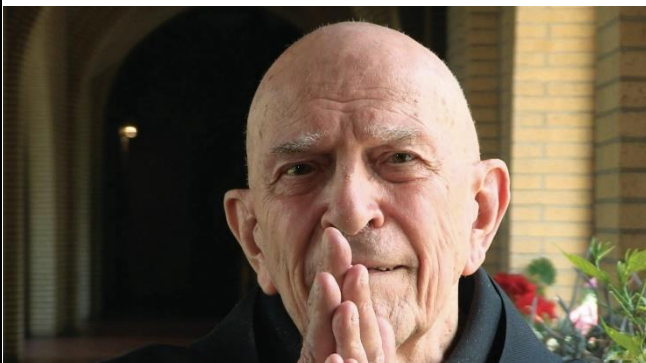
Contemplative Outreach *Atlanta*

Contact us at

<https://www.contemplativeoutreachatlanta.com>

Coordinator Maggie Winfrey

[Subscribe to our newsletter here](#).



“You don’t have to create the beauty—you’ve got the beauty. You don’t have to create the freedom—you got it. You don’t have to create the image of God in you—you have it. You don’t have to win over God’s love—you have more than you know what to do with. You don’t have to become more beautiful—because nothing could be more beautiful than your own particular uniqueness.” Thomas Keating



*is excited to offer*

## **We Gather Together**

***A Zoom “Big Sit” event uniting all of our  
Contemplative Outreach Atlanta Members  
in Centering Prayer***

**10 – 11:30 am ET Saturday, February 13, 2021**

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness. Jn8:12*

Join us for a wonderful opportunity to experience  
God’s radical love as a whole community praying Lectio Divina  
and Centering Prayer together in silence.



Free of charge

Donations to  
Contemplative Outreach Atlanta  
may be mailed to  
Marion Kaple,  
4101 Whitehall Way  
Alpharetta, Georgia 30004

**[Register here.](#)**