



Contemplative Outreach Manitoba's Newsletter

Volume 2, No.2

April 28, 2010

Contemplative Outreach Vision Statement

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life manifests itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

Our purpose is to share the method of Centering Prayer and its immediate conceptual background. We also encourage the practice of Lectio Divina, particularly its movement into Contemplative Prayer, which a regular and established practice of Centering Prayer facilitates.

We identify with the Christian Contemplative heritage. While we are formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and Christ through Centering Prayer. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions, with the needs and rights of the whole human family and with all creation.

Father Keating, in a Contemplative Outreach Coordinator's Conference in Leavenworth, Kansas said, "The nature of Gift is that it is a gift. And the hazard is, that we receive it without adequate preparation of the understanding of its character of Gift: its responsibility is to be shared.

So this affects our teaching about Centering Prayer. It is a great gift if you connect with it. But it isn't just meant for you. It is a great gift if you connect, then each of us has to find some way of sharing it (and that may be by prayer [alone] if that is your vocation). But it is only by passing it on that you actually continue to possess the gift. Otherwise if you bury it - you are impoverished - both you and the Christian community."

And from Keating's book, "The Better Part", (writing about Mary's gesture of breaking her alabaster jar of priceless perfume to anoint Jesus for his death and burial) Keating writes: "Contemplation is not only prayer but action as well. And not only prayer and action, but the gift of one's inmost being and all that one is. We are to allow God to be God in us." And John writes (John 12:3) "... so that the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." So perhaps when we use the gift of who we are in Christ, we might be assured that, like Mary, our "whole house" (maybe even the whole world) will know the gift and gifts of Contemplative Prayer.

May we all have a blessed, "active", but restful summer!!

In keeping with the thought of 'being active' Judith Klaverkamp attended the Formation for Presenters of Centering Prayer at St. Benedict's Retreat Center, and has kindly agreed to share her thoughts about that experience.

Here's Judy:

I was fortunate enough to take the Formation for Presenters that was offered here in Winnipeg at St. Benedict's Retreat Centre. I found it to be a very intense program. We started early in the morning with Centering prayer, followed by a "model" presentation by a staff member, of one of the 4 Introductory presentations. Then we were divided into 3 groups of "learners" for our practicum. We had a 2nd Centering Prayer after lunch and continued with our practicum. After supper we all met again to reflect on and discuss what we had learned. Our small group stayed together for the whole formation experience so we got to know and appreciate each other quite well. (What's more supportive than a group of Centering prayers???) We each did presentations of the same material - but I found it amazing how God used each individual to add a unique flavor - God is SO Creative!

As an extreme introvert, giving that 1st presentation totally blew all my circuits. Fortunately, there was a "Day of Retreat" right in the middle of the Formation Program. A wonderful day of recovery and re-energizing; with lots of Centering Prayer to give God a chance to work on my False Self. (Whew, what a relief!) The experience as a whole was very informative, practical and rewarding. I

highly recommend it if you would like to help share the gift of Centering Prayer.

Thanks Judith...

John Vanier suggests: Each community needs to be in contact with others. They stimulate and encourage, give support, call forth and affirm each other... A community that isolates itself will wither and die; a community in communion with others will receive and give life. (From Vanier's book "Community and Growth")

So perhaps you might want to be in communion with others. Here is a list of the present Centering prayer groups that are meeting in different areas of the city and rural areas. I hope you will find a time and place where you can be stimulated, encouraged and supported in your prayer, in community with others.

Altona

Contact: Andrea 324-1778,
fancie95@hotmail.com

Brandon

Contact: Sr. Sandy 779-6446
Contact: Marilyn 725-0607
marilynv@mts.net

Steinbach

Contact: Diane 326-6585
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or Sunnie 326-6464
sunamd@mts.net

Holland Area

Contact: Sandra 526-2194

Thunder Bay N.W. Ontario

Contact: Stepan 807-577-7103
bilynsks@tbh.net

and here in the city:

University of Winnipeg

Contact: Susan 786-9390
786-9320
firedance@mts.net

St. Matthew

Contact: Cathy 7741846
stmatwpg@mts.net

St. Timothy

Contact: Wendy 949-3760
wmclean@hotmail.com

St. Margaret

Contact: Elaine 663-6109
elainemarpin@mts.net

Norwood: 129 Monck Ave.

Contact: Therese 235-1057
2 groups: French and English

Health Sciences Centre

Contact: Sue 487-4845
suelainemorris@aol.com

St. Edward

Contact: Lily 774-3894

St. Benedict's Retreat
and Conference Centre

Contact: St. Catherine 338-4601
catherineosb@yahoo.com

St. Vital 43 Parkville Drive

Contact: Laure 254-7958
billaure@shaw.ca

Niakwa 704-50 Alpine Ave.

Contact: Bea 255-3942

Judith has kindly sent a personal reflection to accompany us on our journey together:

The Spiritual Journey

The practice of Centering Prayer is not our goal - it is only the first step in "The Journey." The Journey is one of learning to live the contemplative Dimension of the Gospel.

How do I do this?

How do I go deeper, closer to God so that my awareness and consent to the Presence and Action of God continues to grow?

Fr. Thomas gives the following suggestion:

A retreat once a year would deepen your daily practice, especially if the retreat is long enough, like five or preferably eight full days. If that is not possible because of your situation and responsibilities, take a retreat day once a month, preferably along with others doing the same kind of prayer practice. The support of similarly minded people helps us to persevere in prayer in difficult times." (The Better Part, p. 100)

For many of us the idea of spending that much time (and money) seems totally unrealistic - we believe it is impossible. I encourage you to "talk to God about it." After all, our God has been known to move mountains. What's a few days and dollars to a God like that?

St. Benedict's Retreat and Conference Centre offers the Intensive, Advanced and Post-Intensive Retreats. There is no way to explain the deepening of relationship that occurs during this time with God. It's like trying to explain the taste of Lobster - you simply have

to taste it for yourself. All I can say is, it allowed the pilot light of my budding Centering Prayer practice to ignite the fire of a desire for an ever-deepening relationship with God. Come, see for yourself what God can do.

Intensive, Post-Intensive & Advanced Centering prayer Retreats JULY 2-9, 2010

contact Sr. Catherine

All three Retreats are offered from July 2 - 9, 2010; 339-1705 for registration information.

Our dear and precious Sr. Catherine would like to know when would be the best time for offering Centering Prayer weekend retreats?

And what content for the retreats would be most helpful.

She would be delighted to hear from you. catherineosb@yahoo.com or 338-4601

Jack Klaverkamp has had a thought-provoking and delightful experience. He writes:

"A Taste of Ecumenism"

When I participated in Presenter's Training and Formation, facilitated by Bonnie Shimizu, in 2005, we were encouraged to review briefly the history of Centering Prayer in the First Conference, because that history can serve as a discovery of common ground for Christian Unity. Our training manual had a quote dated April 26, 1998 from Contemplative Outreach Ltd. It stated,

"We identify with the Christian Contemplative Heritage. While we are formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and the Experience of the living Christ through Centering Prayer. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions, with the needs and rights of the whole human family, and with all creation."

Over the past five weeks, I have had four opportunities to participate in the presentations of the four-conference Introductory Workshop Program. These presentations were given to four distinct Christian groups in Manitoba. They included members of a Mennonite church in southern Manitoba, as well as members belonging to Anglican and United churches, and to a group of non-denominational Christians in Lorette, Manitoba. As a Catholic, my eyes, ears and heart were opened as I witnessed first-hand the ecumenical opportunities for Centering Prayer.

It was very encouraging and enlightening to experience truly being "... united in our common search for and God and the experience of the living Christ." In some of these cases there also was a mix of Christian denominations at the denominational churches. In other words, there were Christians, but non-Anglicans, at the Anglican Church, etc. Each of the four groups consisted of men and women of a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. Some groups had young adults in their early 20's as well as more elderly retired people in addition to the in-between age groups. One couple even brought their almost one-

year old son. During the question and sharing periods throughout the four-conference workshop, comments that were gender- or age- specific were very rare. The most common comments by-far were on the method of Centering Prayer, the Spiritual Journey and the transformations that occur outside of the actual prayer times. People are truly hungry and longing for deepening their relationship with God. They also are eager to hear real, down-to-earth, everyday examples of how the Spirit of Christ can and does transform. my underline

Overall, it was enlightening to experience these opportunities to taste the spice, sweetness and distinctiveness of our ecumenical prayer. It seems that we have a lot more in common in our search for relationship with God than we have in other matters. Thanks Jack!

I'm also eager to "hear real, down-to-earth, everyday examples of how the Spirit of Christ can and does transform.". And I'd like you to be able to read about them in this newsletter!!!

How about sending in some of your own experiences with Spirit in your life? They could be anonymous, if that would be easier or more comfortable for you. You know, that is what our Scriptures are: experiences that ordinary people had in their spiritual journey. I'm inviting you to send your God-experiences for God's glory and for our encouragement. Many thanks!

From a source unknown, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, writes:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the

way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability - and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually - let them grow. Let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on as though you could be today, what time, (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new spirit, gradually forming within you, will be. Give our Lord the benefit of believing that God's hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete. (ok, I'll try!)

It might be helpful for you to have the means to contact the Leadership Team of Contemplative Outreach Manitoba (COMB) so here you are:

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Laure