
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Volume 5, Issue 7



Winter & Spring, 2005

FUNCTION FOLLOWED BY FUNCTION

by Fr. Doug Schwert
Executive Director St. Mary's Sewanee

My engagement with Contemplative Outreach allows me two extraordinary opportunities. As Executive Director of a Center which hosts Centering Prayer retreats, I have the chance to work with an exceptional team involved in the practical jobs that put into expression this unique and wonderful ministry. Such tasks may range from organizing the staff to preparing the Center for a retreat, to such things as helping to carry in the books for the sales table or scraping and washing the dinner dishes. Whatever it is, or becomes, such work is part of the loving, caring hospitality of what I like to call "setting the table." By doing these things, I participate in the functions of : *welcoming* (the guests), *offering* (hospitality), *giving* (services), and *letting go* so that God's grace may take hold.

On the other hand, (in my other role, that of being a Centering Prayer practitioner), I have discovered that the work of "setting the table" also occurs. Only in this particular case, the principle activity isn't one of being engaged in the performance of any number of tasks, but that of viewing

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WORDS, WORDS, EVERYWHERE...

by Carolyn Goddard
Centering Prayer Faciliator

This afternoon, I attended a benefit for a medical center that specializes in the treatment of cancer. After a luncheon of salmon and rice and extremely rich chocolate cheesecake, cancer survivors paraded down a catwalk constructed in the middle of the ballroom, modeling fashions from a national clothing store. Behind a lectern on the platform stood a woman reading brief statements that each of the survivors had written: "I am the mother of four children and I thank God for each day...God has blessed me with new health...By the grace of God, I am here today." Each statement alluded to God, quoted Scripture or ended with a prayer.

One of the survivor's statements concluded with "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." I happened to be sitting with two women who are also in recovery and all three of us smiled. Is this survivor, I wondered, also a member of a twelve step group?

Tonight I am to attend another benefit—this one for a group that fights indentured servitude and child prostitution. According to their website, it is a "Christ-centered organization." At last year's dinner, Micah was quoted: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"

I don't know exactly what to make of all this God-talk. Perhaps I have been a bit too bombarded by language traditionally heard in churches. A line from Samuel Taylor Coleridge surfaces in my mind (not perfectly quoted, that is how my mind works): "Water, water, everywhere, /Yet not a drop to drink." Talk of

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From the editor

This past October, the International Conference of Contemplative Outreach met in Toronto, Canada and celebrated our twentieth anniversary. It was a joyful occasion with many accomplishments commemorated. New goals and programs were presented as well, by the leadership teams.

Our 13th Annual United in Prayer Day will be Saturday, March 19, 2005 at St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Church, 601 Bell Road, Antioch, TN. The video for the day will be *Living An Ordinary Life With Extraordinary Love* by Father Thomas Keating. This is a day of Silence and Prayer celebrating the worldwide network of Contemplative Outreach united in a single bond of Centering around the globe. Please contact me to register for the day.

Also, mark your calendars for *Wednesday evening, October 10, 2005*. Father Thomas Keating will be in Sewanee to receive an honorary degree from the University of the South. He has graciously offered to be available for a public event at All Saints Chapel in Sewanee on October 12. You will receive more details later.

Please let us know if your church or group would like to host a centering prayer workshop. You may call me, Fr. Doug Schwert in Sewanee (931 598-5342), Carol Wray in Nashville (615 373-0613) or the Rev. Margaret Marshall in Chattanooga (423 757-9580). We are blessed with many fine presenters who have been trained by Contemplative Outreach and are eager to share this prayer with those desiring a closer relationship with God in this way.

You may search for upcoming events and other resources and information in our national web site at: www.contemplativeoutreach.org or St. Mary's site: www.stmaryssewanee.org.

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FUNCTION FOLLOWED BYContinued from page 1

myself as the table which is set for *the Guest*, and becoming still (what I call, and I am sure others do as well, the "harder work."). Yet, even in this labor, the functions are the same: to *welcome* (God), to *offer* (myself to the hospitality that awaits), to *give* (the service of my devotion), and to *let go* (of preconceived notions, thoughts, visions, dreams).

I ask... which setting is *more* vital in order for the functions to produce the greater result? A quick and easy answer comes from common sense, which tells us that without doing the work of organizing and providing the necessary care, any Centering Prayer retreat just wouldn't be a success. The guests would become upset, their prayer time disturbed, if not ruined. And yet, without taking time for prayer, what do I, or anyone, bring to a retreat setting, or for that matter, to any of our daily responsibilities and to life itself?

As a member of the clergy, I've witnessed too many occasions where people in the church functioned on the basis of tradition, well hewed organizational skills, scholarly or interpreted biblical insight, and even political acuity. But, what about functioning on the basis of being prophetic? What about...out of the leading of the Holy Spirit? What about...because God wants to empower us with redemption and grace so that the world can be transformed?

Centering Prayer has sometimes been called the "higher prayer." The thought behind the term *higher* has to do with this form of prayer being incredibly personal, you, me, with God. However, it is higher only if, through this prayer, God can reach into our inner depths, transform what Thomas Keating calls the "false selves," and instill upon us God's spiritual gifts so that we are Christ's disciples. Our function in the use of this prayer is that of being silent and still, so that God may gently enter. Our function, beyond this prayer is to serve, not just in name of Christ, but, more importantly, out of having an intimate relationship with our Lord. I believe the real reason that Centering Prayer is sometimes viewed as the "higher" prayer is because it is to be the highest priority out of all of the other things we do with our lives. The function of prayer followed by functions *inspired because we pray*. God sees so many *possibilities* for each one of us and for this world. Can you? "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) ⊕

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH PRAYER SUPPORT GROUPS

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Nashville	Christ Church	Stephen Miller	615-298-3381	Sun 10:00am
Nashville	Christ Church	Rev. Geoffrey Butcher	615-255-7729	Tue 5:30pm
Nashville	Christ Church	Marion Arnold	615-352-7660	Thurs. 12:15pm
Nashville	St. George	Dr. Carroll Young	615-385-2150	Mon 4:45 to 6:15pm
Nashville	St. Edward	Patricia Flandell	615-832-0873	Wed 11:30am
Nashville	Christ the King	Carolyn Goddard	615-665-1197	Fri 8:00am
Nashville	Home Residence	Sister Eileen Pistor, RSM	615-463-2776	Thurs 6:00pm
Nashville	St. Augustine's Chapel	Kay Barry	615-322-7747	Wed 8:00am
Nashville	West End Methodist Church	E. Dan Smith	615-383-8940	Wed 5:00pm
Antioch	St. Ignatius	Carnie Harmon	615-834-1259	Fri 9:00am
Antioch	St. Mark	Gretchen Miller	615-794-6720	Sat 8:00am, Wed 6:30pm
Clarksville	Immaculate Conception	Dr. Ron Oakland	931-358-9471	Sat 9:00am
Columbia	St. Catherine of Siena	Candice Barton	931-380-0729	Sat. 9:00am
Dickson	St. Christopher	Corena Harris LSCW	615-446-2134	Mon 4:15pm
Fayetteville	First Presbyterian	Farris Raulston	931-433-0652	Tue 7:00pm
Franklin	St. Matthew's Catholic Church	Lauren Cole, RSM	615-646-0378	Mon 8:30am
Franklin	St. Paul Episcopal Church	Lyle McLevain	615-582-5379	Wed 5:30p
Murfreesboro	St. Rose	Kay Curtis	615-848-3081	Mon 7:30pm
Murfreesboro	St. Rose	Patricia Darrell	615-896-2742	Mon 7:30pm
Sewanee	Otey Parish	Jennifer Michael	931-598-5094	Mon 7:00pm
Sewanee	Otey Parish	Beth Chamberlain	931-598-5428	Fri 12:00 noon
Sewanee	St. Augustine	Rev. Tom Ward	931-598-1274	Thur 2:30pm
Chattanooga	St. Peter's	Lynne Lockie	423-842-3663	Tue 5:30 - 7:00pm
Chattanooga	Grace Church	Kathy Russell	423-517-0645	Thur 5:00pm
Chattanooga	First Christian Church	Rev. Lanny C. Lawler	423-267-4506	Fri. 10:00am
Knoxville	St. John's Cathedral	Rev. Canon Tom Rasnik	865-525-7374	Wed. 6:00pm
Knoxville	St. James	Rev. Lou Tucker Parsons	865-523-5687	Mon 5:30pm
Knoxville	John XXIII Student Center	Beverly Froning	865-426-4411	Mon 7:00pm
Knoxville	Lakeview Center	Barbara Haning	865-671-0766	Thur 6:30pm
Knoxville	St. Andrew's Episcopal Church	The Rev. Bradford Smith	865-983-3512	Wed. 3:30 - 5:00pm
Clinton	St. Therese Catholic Church	Sandy Berger	865-457-3170	Thur 7:00pm
Lookout Mt.	Our Lady of the Mount	Brit Oehmig	423-756-4118	Tue 8:00am, before Mass
Lookout Mt.	Good Shepherd	Rev. John Talbird	423-821-1583	Sun 9am & Wed 4:30pm

Saturday "Mornings of Silence"

Antioch	1st Saturday at St. Mark's	Gretchen Miller	615-794-6720	Sat 9:00am
Chattanooga	2nd Saturday at St. Paul's	Rev. Margaret Marshall	423-757-9580	Sat 9:00am

Words, words, everywhere... *....Continued from Page 1*

God is everywhere, yet at this moment I desire something more life-giving than talk. So I think I will go to my "inner room, close the door and pray" – in silence. ⊕

C.D. Goddard

*** **New This Fall at St. Mary's Sewanee** ***

St. Mary's Sewanee will begin offering 1 Day Centering Prayer retreats in October. Many have expressed a desire to set aside a full day each month to pray in community. Participants may choose to arrive on Sunday evening or on Monday morning. Instruction will be available on Sunday evening .