
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

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THE DIVINE INDWELLING

by Tom Ward

In the guidelines we read that what we are doing in centering prayer is consenting to God's presence and action within. From the first time I read those guidelines to my prayer this morning, no insight has been more important to me. I do not have to do anything to get God within me; God is already there—closer to me than I am to myself, as St. Augustine has it. In the same work in which those words appear, Augustine writes,

Late have I loved you, O Beauty,
ever ancient, ever new, late have
I loved you! And behold, you were
within me, and I was outside, and
there I sought for you.

Confessions, 10. 27

We are not going to find what we are looking for "out there". Most of us have been looking for love in all the wrong places for much of our lives, and we know that we are not going to find what we are looking for in all those other hungry faces. At some point we come to ourselves and know the truth of

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. THE DIVINE INDWELLING
1. THE BALANCING ACT OF LIFE
2. FROM THE EDITOR
2. THE DIVINE INDWELLING *CONTINUED*
2. RECEIVE NEWSLETTER ELECTRONICALLY!
3. CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH SUPPORT GROUPS OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE
3. THE BALANCING ACT OF LIFE *CONTINUED*
4. UPCOMING SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
4. REGISTRATION FORM

THE BALANCING ACT OF LIFE

by Laura Willis
CAC Director

I returned to work at the CAC* in mid-February after a five-week leave of absence, during which I spent much of the time in silence, contemplating the CAC's work and how God opens up grace-filled opportunities for us to serve others. I was surprised by the amount of deep rest that I both needed and found in these weeks, and how the busy-ness of my life had masked my deep exhaustion. Part of this break was designed to help me understand better my own need for balance in my life: between work and rest, family and community, private and public, silence and words.

To begin my leave, I spent a week in silence at a centering prayer retreat at St. Mary's Sewanee. It was a wonderful way to step out of my active routines, especially after Advent and Christmas, and move into a place of God-centered quiet. For the subsequent four weeks, I was in Sewanee, but I tried to stay away from my usual centers of activity and continue in the spirit of contemplation and restfulness. There were many opportunities to return to the active world: on a daily basis, with my family and close friends with their joyful, supportive voices; on a weekly basis, to worship with you all in our beloved church; and for special events, like the Diocesan Convention in Nashville and Maria Hoecker's ordination in Brevard.

Tilden Edwards wrote a wonderful book about the challenges of slowing down and finding balance in our daily lives, *Sabbath Time*. In it, he said:

Stopping work tests our trust: Will the world and I fall apart if I stop making things happen for a while? Is life really gifted and the Spirit moving through it, so that I can truly rest and taste this playful caring? Is there truly a unique

* Community Action Committee *Continued on page 3*

From the editor

This past month, our 14th Annual United in Prayer Day was held Saturday, March 18, 2006 at St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Church, 601 Bell Road, Antioch, TN. The video for the day, *Living the Contemplative Life* by Father Thomas Keating was the focal point of the day. This day of Silence and Prayer celebrated the worldwide network of Contemplative Outreach united in a single bond of Centering Prayer around the globe. We had twenty-five participants!

Please let us know if your church or group would like to host a centering prayer workshop. You may call Fr. Doug Schwert in Sewanee (931 598-5342), Carol Wray in Nashville (615 373-0613), the Rev. Margaret Marshall in Chattanooga (423- 629-1750), or Barbara Haning (865-671-0766) in Knoxville.

You may search for upcoming events and other resources and information on our national web site at: www.contemplativeoutreach.org or St. Mary's site: www.stmaryssewanee.org. Our Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee web site will be up and running soon!

A Revised Essentials Formation Training workshop will be held in Cullman, AL, May 19th-21st for new Presenters as well as those needing to be re-trained in the New Essentials. Bob Fasulo and Roseanne Havid will be giving this training. We hope to have this training later this year at St. Mary's Retreat Center.

Hoping each of you can experience silence, solitude and service during this Easter season. ⊕

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The Divine IndwellingContinued from page 1

Augustine's words: "Lord...you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (Confessions, 1.1) While God is "out there" as well as "in here", we need to enter within so that we might receive the eyes to see God in the world around us.

I write this on the day before Ash Wednesday. Tomorrow we will hear these words in the gospel: "...go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." The reward is an abiding relation with the God who is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Nothing is more important for us than our consenting to the Trinitarian God who is present and active within. We do this as we practice centering prayer twenty minutes twice a day. Participating in a support group is a necessary means to the end of our being faithful to this discipline for most of us. And at some point in our journey we may be called to make a retreat to deepen our practice and to grow in fidelity to the God who is present and active within.

The way most of us will come to believe in the doctrine of the Divine Indwelling is through our experience of the Holy One within us. And it is through this experience in faith that we will find a place to stand so that we might serve others in God's Name. For God is out there as well as in here, and we are called to live an ordinary life with extraordinary love. ⊕

Receive Our Newsletter Electronically!

We hope you like receiving our newsletter and we'd like to get news to you more often. Thus, we are designing ways in which you can receive newsletters either in your e-mail or through our website. Not only will you receive our newsletter more promptly but we will save paper and postage which can be used for scholarships and programming. If you would like to receive the Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee newsletter electronically, please send your name and e-mail address to: COMidTN@aol.com. We will let you know when the e-news is ready. Of course, if you would like to continue receiving by regular mail, we will be happy to send our newsletter to your mail box.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE PRAYER SUPPORT GROUPS

Nashville	Christ Church	Stephen Miller	615-298-3381	Sun10:00am
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	Helen Blakely	615-331-3652	Wed 11:30am
Nashville	Christ the King	Carolyn Goddard	615-665-1197	Fri 8:00am
Nashville	Home Residence	Sister Eileen Pistor, RSM	615-385-7686	Thurs 6:00pm
Nashville	St. Augustine's Chapel	Kay Barry	615-322-7747	Wed 8:00am
Antioch	St. Ignatius	Carnie Harmon	615-834-1259	Fri 9:00am
Antioch	St. Mark	Gretchen Miller	615-794-6720	Sat8:00am, Wed 6:30pm
Brentwood	Holy Family Catholic Church	Janis Lovecchio	615-373-4351x235	Thurs. 7:00 pm
Clarksville	Immaculate Conception	Dr. Ron Oakland	931-358-9471	Wed. 5:30pm
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. Mary's Retreat Center	Rev. Tom Ward	931-598-5342	Tue. 4:00pm
Chattanooga	St. Peter's	Joani Kock	423-877-2428	Sun 10:00am
Chattanooga	Grace Church	Kathy Russell	423-517-0645	Thur 5:00pm
Chattanooga	Our Lady of the Mount	Brit Oehmig	423-756-4118	Tue8:00am,beforeMass
Chattanooga	Good Shepherd	Rev. Margaret Marshall	423-821-1583	Sun 9am & Wed 4:30pm
Chattanooga	St. Timothy Episcopal Church	Rev. Lou Parsons	423-886-2281	Wed. 5:30pm
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
Clinton	St. Therese Catholic Church	Sandy Berger	865-457-3170	Thur 7:00pm
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

THE BALANCING ACT..... *continued from page 1*
image of God in me that is simply given and rises to obscure awareness in such spacious times, an image that is my deepest identity? Or is there really no such deep self in God, and does everything really depend on my producing, asserting, and protecting a conscious, managing ego-self?

These are hard questions, that cut to the core of our very being. By taking a break from my work at CAC, I considered these questions on a deep personal level. Maybe they are questions you have considered too. The work of the CAC is not so different from the ministries that many of you have: it is caring for others with love and respect, seeking and serving Christ in all persons, opening ourselves up to be more open to God. Working in the church is not the only

way to accomplish this: we do this as parents, neighbors, and friends, as healers, mentors, and teachers. In each of these cases, there is always more that could be done, and there are opportunities to be critical of what we have left undone. Learning to rest in God, through Sabbath and prayer, helps us to recognize God's grace-filled invitation to deeper transformation and love. My absence from the CAC helped me recognize this in new ways.

Significant spiritual events take time to process and understand, but in these first days after returning to work, I am thinking a great deal about how contemplative prayer and a genuine Sabbath intersect with my busy life. As Richard Rohr wrote, "Prayer is not the avoiding of distractions, but precisely how you deal with distractions. Contemplation is not the avoidance of the problem, but a daily merging with the problem and finding its full resolution." ⊕