



# Speaking of Silence

Central Illinois Contemplative Outreach

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## On the Prayer of Forgiveness

*When we forgive, we are awakened to the “image and likeness of God” in us.  
Forgiveness is a realization and an expression of our basic core of goodness.*

—Thomas Keating, *The Contemplative Life Program*  
*40-Day Practice: Forgiveness*

As we begin the season of Lent, we discern what we shall do that will draw us closer to our Lord. My thoughts go to the retreat CICO sponsored last year at which Fr. Carl Arico taught us The Prayer of Forgiveness.

After those of us who had attended Fr. Carl’s retreat shared our experience with our Friday morning centering prayer group, we decided to meet once a month to pray this special prayer of forgiveness together.

The guided meditation on The Prayer of Forgiveness narrated by Farther Carl Arico begins with a period of centering prayer. Then we are gently guided to allow the Holy Spirit to bring forth a person, living or dead, whom we need to forgive. We allow ourselves to share our hurts with this person, and then gently repeat “I forgive you.” When ready, we ask the person how we have offended or hurt them. Then we gently say “Forgive me.”

As we discussed the fruits of this practice, we all realized how transforming it is. Our Divine Therapist begins to chip away at the obstacles that block the complete flow of HIS love. In this prayer practice we feel a relief, a freedom from guilt and resentment as we not only forgive others but also forgive ourselves.

During this Lenten season, it is my prayer that “forgiveness is alive, moving and loving us all into wholeness.”

*Be kind and compassionate to one another;  
Forgiving each other;  
Just as in Christ  
God forgives us.*

—Ephesians 4:32

Today, with humility, can you admit that you cannot forgive, or even love? Christ in you forgives, and ‘he gives love itself.’

*Op. cit., p. 71*

## Book Review

### *The Wisdom Jesus,*

by Cynthia Bourgeault

*Reviewed by Marcia Jensen*

“Would it make any difference for you if the resurrection hadn’t happened, if Jesus hadn’t risen from the dead?”

Episcopal Priest Cynthia Bourgeault once asked this question of a group in a church she was serving. Like the people in that group, most of us would reply, “Yes! The Resurrection matters because it is proof that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God.” However, at the time Jesus was teaching his followers, the Resurrection hadn’t happened. Those people were taking in the teachings of Jesus without this sign that so reassures us in our own belief.

And what is that belief? Do we believe in Jesus himself, or in the teachings of Jesus, or in both? What are the teachings of Jesus?

Reverend Bourgeault’s theory is that we, unlike the original followers of Jesus, are living our Christianity with 20-20 hindsight and may assume we know Jesus and his teachings without developing our own power of inner recognition that allows us to find the path that enables us to live those teachings today.

Reverend Bourgeault uses theological studies of the Nag Hammadi documents, which include the gnostic gospels, to look at Jesus as a master teacher of the wisdom tradition. She presents a Jesus who was teaching his followers to empty themselves and be transformed rather than filling up and “climbing the ladder” to heaven.

In this book, she encourages us to use Centering Prayer as a tool that will allow us to recognize Jesus as friend and teacher as well as to connect with his transforming energy.

The book has three sections: the first two look at the mysteries of Jesus and the teachings of Jesus from the standpoint of Jesus as a Wisdom teacher. The third section is a presentation of Christian wisdom practices such as Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, chanting and psalmody, and the welcoming prayer, and their role in bringing us heart to heart with Jesus. She ends with an interesting chapter on the Eucharist and its role in connecting us to the energy of Jesus.

I found this book to be thought-provoking and full of new insights, as well as an encouragement to my spiritual practice.

### *The Land of Simple Contemplation* by Joyce Rupp

*Companion of my Solitude,  
sometimes I think that half of me  
is well-lodged in another world.*

*On rainy days,  
in times of solitude,  
my spirit pulls and tugs,  
crying for home  
in that other space.*

*All the things here  
that give my life rhyme  
and reason  
fade from view.*

*I am left with the longing  
to put down my sword  
of busyness  
and dwell in the land  
of simple contemplation.*

*Raindrops on the cottage roof,  
bird songs in the woods,  
the taste of morning air,  
the stillness of the forest,  
all these draw me beyond  
to where the other half dwells.*

*Companion of my Solitude,  
keep encouraging me to take time  
for my inward journey.  
Help me to be faithful  
to this essential element  
of my life.*

*Come to me, you who desire me . . .  
—Ecclesiasticus 10:19*

## CICO Centering Prayer Communities

*For meeting locations, please contact the facilitators.*

### **Bloomington-Normal**

*Monday, 11:25 a.m.:*

Jana Schopp, 309/662-5525,  
jana@stpatrikmerna.org

*Monday, 7:15 p.m.:*

Mary Beth Bantham, 309/662-9563,  
mebanth@ilstu.edu;  
Kathleen Kolls, 309/454-1046,  
daisys12@frontier.com

*Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.:*

Richard Dammers, 309/664-5921,  
rdammers@ilstu.edu

*Thursday, 6:30 p.m. (biweekly):*

Linda Prosser, 309/452-3204,  
prosser\_linda@hotmail.com

*Friday, 9:30 a.m.:*

Florrie Dammers, 309/664-5921,  
fadammers@gmail.com

*Saturday, 9:00 a.m.:*

Madeleine Callahan, 309/829-5469,  
mcallaha@iwu.edu

### **Blue Grass, Iowa**

*Thursday, 1:00 p.m.:*

Joan Timmens, 563/381-4558

### **Champaign-Urbana**

*Monday, 7:00 p.m.:*

Mary Lou Menches, 217/344-1125,  
mmenches@illinois.edu

### **Davenport, Iowa**

*Monday, 6:00 p.m.:*

Cheryl Kritsch, 563/386-2956,  
kritschs@msn.com

*Thursday, 6:00 p.m.:*

Dick and Marcia Jensen, 563/355-1162,  
jensenm@davenportschools.org

### **Geneseo**

*Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.:*

Susan Ford, 309/945-8504,  
msford12@geneseo.net

### **Monticello**

*Tuesday, 4:00 p.m.:*

Rosemary Hardy, 217/762-2435,  
crhardy@net66.com

### **Peoria**

*Wednesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m.:*

Cece Tedford, 309/692-6109,  
or 309/255-9168 (cell)

*Saturday, 9:00 a.m.:*

Sr. Marianne Burkhard, OSB, 309/671-1550,  
srmarianne@cdop.org

### **Peoria Heights**

*Monday, 7:00 p.m.:*

Pat Callaway, 309/691-5586,  
pcallaway9346@yahoo.com

### **Rochester**

*Thursday, 9:00 a.m.:*

Jack Swank, 217/498-7179,  
jswank@rochesterrmethodist.org

### **Rock Island**

*Wednesday, 1:00 p.m.:*

Sr. Catherine Cleary, OSB, 309/283-2100,  
ccleary@smmsisters.org

### **Springfield**

*Tuesday, 8:00 a.m.:*

John Saner, 217/528-4671

*Wednesday, 9:00 a.m.:*

Angela Schiava, 217/546-8592,  
aschiava@sbcglobal.net

*Thursday, 5:00 p.m.:*

Carole Strick, 217/498-7179,  
strick043@comcast.net

FORGIVENESS IS NOT . . . forgetting

Wounds strengthen us and transform us as the wounds of Jesus transform us. Scars remain but they make us stronger. How you forgive may serve as useful lessons in your life. You can learn and grow from your hurts and be a model for others.

Op. cit., William Menninger, p. 20

## Heartfulness: Total transformation

At an intensive retreat in Racine, Wisconsin (Nov. 4-10, 2011), Mary Ann Best and Susan Komis of Contemplative Outreach's national office presented "Heartfulness: The Contemplative Christian Journey," based on the recently released (2009) DVD series of the same name. "Heartfulness" is a word coined by Fr. Thomas Keating to indicate total transformation in Christ.

Mary Ann Best, Finance and Development Director at Contemplative Outreach, participated in the production of the DVD series. Susan Komis is Director of Chapter Resources and Communication Services and the Midwest Regional Director.

The nine sessions were presented in *Lectio Divina* format. After each subject was presented, participants were encouraged to spend a few moments reflecting on what we'd heard before moving to small groups for wisdom sharing. We were able, then, to collect our own thoughts before sharing them with others.

In the videos, Betty Sue Flowers, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Texas in Austin and a skilled interviewer, led Father Thomas through discussions on topics familiar to seasoned centering prayer practitioners. Father Thomas was at his finest as he discussed the Pursuit of Happiness, the Human Condition, Centering Prayer, Sin, Suffering, Redemption, Love and the Trinity, Divine Indwelling, and Divine Transformation. Father Thomas often suggested multiple meanings for the topics. Each of the videos has a running time of about 20 minutes, which allowed plenty of time for the discussion that followed.

Perhaps the most significant session was the one on Redemption. Father Thomas said that not only did the death of Christ demonstrate God's great love for us, but that it opened up all that is available for us. Redemption then is the whole transformation process, not just Christ on the cross.

The Heartfulness DVD set includes three DVDs, prayer cards, and a guidebook. Contemplative Outreach recently released a new Heartfulness book, beautifully illustrated, which contains edited transcripts of the interviews.

## Second Midwest Regional Meeting

On the last day of the Heartfulness retreat (Nov. 10, 2011) Susan Komis led Midwest participants in a Midwest Regional Meeting. This was the second such meeting in the last two years.

Susan reviewed Midwest leadership activity since the first such meeting in November 2010 and outlined the many retreats that had been offered and others still planned.

After chapters mentioned what had worked for them on different concerns, discussion focused on sustaining prayer groups, chapter programs, communication between the states/chapters, and plans for future Midwest meetings.

## Coming Events

### March 17

*Introduction to Centering Prayer workshop*, Hoopston United Methodist Church, Hoopston, Ill.  
*20th Annual United in Prayer Day*, St. Patrick of Merna, 9 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

### April 12-15

*Spring retreat*, "Centering Prayer and the Pursuit of Happiness," Benet House, St. Mary Monastery, Rock Island, Ill.

### June 29

Susan Komis on *Stages of Prayer in Faith Development*, followed by *Welcoming Prayer Workshop* and evening open forum, Chiara Center, Springfield

### June 30

*Visioning Day* with Susan Komis, for formation of new chapter: Contemplative Outreach of Lincoln Land, Springfield, Ill., Chiara Center, Springfield

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The next CICO Leadership Team meeting will be held at St. Patrick Church of Merna, Bloomington, on Saturday, August 11, 9:30-noon. Agenda suggestions welcome:

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Sr. Marianne Burkhard, srmarianne@cdop.org  
Anne Colloton, acolloto@gmail.com  
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Chris Kraft, nonnakraft@gmail.com  
Mary Lou Menches, mmenches@illinois.edu  
Jana Schopp, jana@stpatrickmerna.org  
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