



Community Letter

Dear Centering Prayer Community,

We come together with hope that each of you has stayed safe and healthy during these months of deadly pandemic. We pray that your loved ones have also made it through to this time of hope brought by new vaccines and treatments.

We offer gratitude for the practice of Centering Prayer, which has helped us to experience our connection to God and to each other. Never doubt that this prayer of Silence heals and nurtures the whole world. In our prayer, we hold the center.

In this newsletter, we remember a dear member of our community, Kathy Hibbets, who passed away on October 7, 2020. Bob Brooke reflects on Old Age, Creation, True Self and Zoom, and has contributed a poem about a mouse who joined a post-intensive retreat one recent winter. You will find an introduction to Fr. Vincent Pizzuto, our keynote speaker for November of 2021. And we invite you to register for a virtual gathering of our state-wide community on February 5-6 entitled Community Connection, Sharing and Reflection.

We close with Fr. Thomas Keating's final revelation. Thirteen days before his death on October 26, 2017, he emerged after days of silence to give us this inspired vision. May we keep it close to our hearts.

Fr. Thomas Keating's Last Words
(as recorded by Erik Keeney)

"Dear Friends, in the universe an extraordinary moment of civilization seems to be overtaking us. Through the great discoveries of science and

spirituality, we find ourselves in essentially a new and different place than ever before in history. It's a time of enormous expectancy and possibility. We are called to start not with the old world contracts – now that we know that they were all lies – but what we know is the truth as proved by silence and science. So I call upon the nations to consider this as a possibility, that we should begin a new world with one that actually exists. This is the moment to manifest this world by showing loving concern for poverty, loving appreciation for the needs of the world, and opportunities for accelerated development.

We need to find ways to make these really happen. I make this humble suggestion that now arms-making is of no significance in the world. It hinders its progress. This will allow and offer the world the marvelous gift of beginning, creating, of trusting each other, of forgiving each other, and of showing compassion, care for the poor, and putting all our trust in the God of heaven and earth. I leave this hope in your hands and hearts coming as a real inspiration from the heart of God. What does God care about who has this or other lands when the power to begin with the truest history is coming from religion, as an expression of the source that has been realized for centuries? Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Indigenous, and Christianity, all religions -- oneness is their nature. Amen."

Your Chapter Service Team

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The animals
and flowers
all manifest
God's
presence.



Fr. Thomas Keating

Remembering Kathy Hibbets



Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix was saddened to learn of the passing of Kathleen Shannon Hibbets on October 7, 2020. For almost twenty years Kathy was the dedicated keeper of all the CO data. It was a demanding position but Kathy had a knack for making computer projects look easy. She knew the computer inside out, and if there was a new challenge, she was more than ready to learn.

In the early years (before most members were on-line) Kathy prepared the mailing labels for our semiannual newsletter. Despite address changes and a large influx of new names, she was invariably up to date and ready for the mailing deadline. Detail was important to Kathy.

Kathy also served the CO Community giving retreat presentations on various Christian Mystics she grew to love over the years. From her high school and college years she developed an interest in the history of the Church. She graduated from Loretto Heights College in Denver, and maintained close ties with college friends. Christianity

and the development of spirituality throughout the world captured her heart. She found her way to Desert House of Prayer as often as she could, and co-wrote a history of that special place. At one point she attended a workshop at Naropa University in her home state, Colorado, to explore inter-religious dialogue. Kathy loved teaching in general. She taught reading in the Chandler Elementary Schools, and later at Mesa Community College as a reading specialist before a serious illness interrupted her career. She also wrote and compiled a body of poetry.

A great traveler, Kathy visited over 55 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America, frequently by herself. She would wander the cities and countryside on her own capturing the beautiful sites and significant cultural elements. Photographs and her traveling insights often appeared in her retreat presentations. She traveled extensively in the States as well. However, visiting a Peace Corp daughter in Africa, a grandson in Mexico, or a sacred place in India inspired great smiles and energetic conversations in this intrepid adventurer.

Lastly, but actually first in Kathy's life was Bill, her husband, along with their four children (Lee, Maria, Emily and Aimee), plus five grandchildren (Soren, Zack, Diego, Liam, and Ilse). At the end of August, Kathy delighted in celebrating her 53rd Anniversary by going out to dinner with Bill.

Kathy's lovely funeral at Tempe's Resurrection Church (where she was one of the founding members) on November 7 quietly caught the essence of her being. She chose Chapter 31 of

Proverbs as a reading. Surely these words captured Kathy: "She is clothed with strength and dignity." And her chosen hymn "O Lord, You are the Center of My Life" succinctly states what Kathy was about. Rest in Peace, Kathy.

What I would like to leave behind
is a simple prayer
that each of you may find
what I have found -
God's special gift to us all:
the gift of peace.
When we are at peace,
we find the freedom
to be most fully who we are,
even in the worst of times.
We let go
of what is non-essential
and embrace what is essential.
We empty ourselves
so that God may more
fully work within us.
And we become instruments
in the hands
of the Lord.

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

Post-Intensive Mouse

by Bob Brooke

Night comes with infinite blackness filled with pinhead star shine. A sudden wind gust sharp as daggers scuttles leaves between the shadows.

Cold surges into washes and huddles in the hollows.
The pious faithful pray, then snuggle under blankets.
The desert awakens.

The creatures, prey and hunters, seek their food.
Gopher, shrew, field mouse, cottontail and jack scurry
fearfully from nest and burrow, seeking sustenance
and safety. Owl soars, saucer-eyed and silent.
Bobcat flows between the rocks and bushes.
Bullsnake, motionless, patient, waits.
Fox, big-eared, hears a tiny footfall.
Coyotes spread the pack, plotting future feasting.

On such a night a starving, shivering creature found a crack beneath a doorway, squeezed to warmth and comfort.

There it found a being far too big for any mouse to comprehend.

And then his journey ended, to the desert returned,
placed aside the crumbling border of a wash.
Of course at sunrise not a trace of mouse was found.



The mouse had journeyed far beyond its fear.

OLD AGE, CREATION, TRUE SELF, and ZOOM

by Bob Brooke

Some years ago, when I was still in my eighties, I began work on a memoir. I want my children and grandchildren to be exposed to the story of my spiritual journey. The first paragraph of this (unfinished) memoir ended with this sentence: "I pray that in the last few years of my life that a door will open to new levels of consciousness, along a path which does not end with death of the body."

The memoir may never be finished, but surely the prayer has been answered as I have tottered along my pre-allotted path. This story is about a door which cracked open just a few days ago, but which was made possible by almost twenty years' practice of Centering Prayer.

The summer of 2020 was the hottest on record in Arizona. I was happy when a break came in September with a beautiful day, a light breeze, and temperature below 100. Time for a walk! The full

regalia; hat, sunblock, water, sunglasses, cane...I strolled along a couple of blocks and stopped in a shady spot where I could see the line of mountains from Camelback to Piestewa Peak, and not a house in sight!

I was oblivious to the traffic noise from the freeway to the north: perhaps the breeze was blowing the sound away. I was in silence, and solitude. I have always loved outdoors. I have climbed many peaks, scaled cliffs in Yosemite, hiked many trails, caught salmon in Alaska, snook in Florida, trout in New Zealand, snorkeled with sea turtles and sharks, camped in rain and snow, watched avalanches, and run from falling rocks and grizzly bears. I am grateful for these experiences but now is different.

At this point came the awareness of the presence of God. I recognized that this scene, the buildings behind me, the saguaros, agaves, the unseen birds and animals, the sprawling city and the distant

mountains, were all part of a dynamic system. All were created by God, all were becoming one, being transformed. This was in progress everywhere, even in the little old man standing in the shade next to the multi-building retirement community!

Fr. Keating defines the true self as “The image of God in which every human being is created.” The notion of true self demands the creative thought of the divine creator. Perhaps flashes of insight such as I described are moments when the true self breaks into consciousness? For me it didn't matter whether it was awakening or dreaming, but there was total immersion in the present moment. No thinking, only Now. I have had similar flashes and have learned not to analyze, just accept. After all, this journey goes on for a lifetime, perhaps forever. How can I know if anything has changed? One clue might be to look at my behavior, which I believe has been guided by God to a different level of thinking and action.

My journey has been ongoing for years, and I have no doubt that my entire personality has been divinely modified in a manner that is best described as transformation. (Surely this still has a long way to go)! This is where Zoom comes in! It has had the effect of helping to clean up my wreckage of the past. Zoom has allowed my widely separated family to meet face to face and interact as never before. There has been sharing across three generations on a level that was not possible before all of us had undertaken a spiritual journey, each in their own way.

God will open doors for us to His presence and action in our lives. This story tells of an old man's encounter with the unity of God's creation, the recognition that God's image is truly within us, and God's love expressed in our opportunity to grow our relationships. Through technology?? It must be a miracle!

Keynote Speaker Series Resumes November 2021 Welcoming Fr. Vincent Pizzuto

For many years, it has been our delight to welcome a keynote speaker for a Saturday of enrichment together. Our tentative date in 2021 is Saturday, November 6 and we are hoping it can be an in-person event. If not, Fr. Vincent Pizzuto will join us virtually. He is Professor of New Testament and Christian Mysticism at the University of San Francisco. His workshop will address the theme of "Becoming Prayer."

Workshop Description

The incarnation has made mystics of us all. What if we read the gospels as if that were true? In this workshop, Fr. Pizzuto will explore the theme of “becoming prayer” from his book: Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life. Through anecdotal presentations, shared reflection, and Centering Prayer Fr. Pizzuto will gradually unfold the mystery to which the whole of biblical revelation and the Christian contemplative life are ordered: that through the incarnation, we have all become ‘other Christs’ in the world.

Biography

Fr. Vincent Pizzuto, Ph.D. is a Professor of New Testament and Christian Mysticism in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Francisco. He has presented internationally on a wide range of theological issues facing the world today and works for the advancement of contemplative

Christianity through his many workshops, lectures, sermons, and retreats given annually. As an Episcopal priest he serves as Vicar of St. Columba's Episcopal Church and Retreat House in Inverness, California where he has established a vibrant contemplative community. Fr. Pizzuto's unique combination of scholarship and pastoral charisma has since gathered a global audience on the ‘Thomas Keating Peace Chapel’ in which he leads weekly teachings and meditation on his most recent book, *Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life* (Liturgical Press, 2018). A Spanish translation is slated for release in Fall 2021 by Desclée De Brouwer (Madrid, Spain). In its pages, Fr. Pizzuto seeks to bring his readers into a lived realization of their “deification”– that the Incarnation has made mystics of us all. In his latest initiative, Fr. Pizzuto has recently launched his online community, “Shadow Wings.” Ecumenical in scope, its vision is to ground contemplative practice in the scriptural, theological, and spiritual foundations of the Christian mystical tradition – giving fresh interpretations for the modern world.

Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life by Vincent Pizzuto

Links

[St. Columba's Episcopal Church and Retreat House Peace Chapel with Fr. Vincent Pizzuto](#)

Community Connection, Sharing & Reflection

Virtual event

The Contemplative Community of Arizona invites each of you to join us on February 5 – 6, 2021 for a virtual gathering (ZOOM) of our Arizona Centering Prayer groups. Each of us is part of a living organism that is interconnected, interdependent and dynamic. We come together during this unprecedented pandemic to reflect, share and rest in God through shared intention, allowing for the mystery of God to heal.

The gathering will begin on Friday, February 5 at 3 p.m. and end at 6:15 p.m.
On Saturday, February 6 the gathering will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 2 p.m.



The time together will include:

- Centering Prayer sessions
- Roundtable dialogue with our fellow Centering Prayer practitioners from all over the state
- Regular break times
- Guest speakers

Father Bill Sheehan
Lowell, Massachusetts



Since 1983, Fr. Sheehan has been involved with Contemplative Outreach founded by Fr. Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O. During that time, he has led many Centering Prayer workshops and retreats in different parts of the country.

Mary Leonard
Mount Holly, Vermont

A founding member of CO of Phoenix, Mary delighted in teaching Centering Prayer and leading Intensive Retreats for over 25 years.



Margaret (Rusty)
Swavely
Sedona, Arizona



Rusty has been a member of the CO Presenter Formation Service team since 2013. Sharing Centering Prayer with others has been a source of great joy.

Registration and information: www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org
The link to join will be emailed to you the week before the gathering.
There is no cost to attend.



Save the Date

Contemplative Outreach
United in Prayer Day
Saturday, March 6, 2021

The United in Prayer Day will be a worldwide Zoom event on the Saturday before Fr. Thomas Keating's birthday, Saturday, March 6, 2021.

Anyone is free to join this global virtual offering. Chapters may also join-in or organize their own events. More details to come.



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