



The Centering Prayer logo has been seen in several ancient locations — on an ancient church in the land of Uz where Job resided, in old Jerusalem near the original stairs to the Temple; on the Southern Wall of the Old City near the Huldah Gates; and at a church in Galilee. The logo is taken from the monogram of Job's Redeemer, a symbol of patient waiting.

Centering Prayer Network Australia exists to promote the contemplative practice of Centering Prayer as taught by Fr Thomas Keating, an American Trappist monk at St Benedict's Abbey in Snowmass, Colorado, USA.

We are part of a worldwide spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to renewing the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer.

The contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests itself in an ever deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

Centering Prayer Network Australia Newsletter

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Rev, Cynthia Bourgeault PhD to return to NZ in October 2009



NEWS from New Zealand

Rev. Cynthia Bourgeault PhD is returning to NZ in October, after being here in March, and will offer a 4 day residential **Centering Prayer Teacher Training** retreat in contemplative leadership skills that will include:

- How to give a Centering Prayer Introductory workshop
- Facilitate a follow up contemplative group
- Conduct contemplative rituals/worship
- Facilitate a silent retreat

There are 24 places available for the four day retreat and there may be more people who want to attend (there was for Cynthia's last retreat). So we want to take registrations for it and if need be, then see that we have a geographical spread. So registrations for this retreat are due by the 10th August and the form is attached to this email or can be obtained by contacting Pip Nicholls at pip@thegentleartofknowing.co.nz or phone (04) 562 6364. Confirmation of a place on the retreat will be made by 20th August and then deposit/payment will follow.

Included as part of the 4 day retreat will be a stand alone 1 day **Introduction to Centering Prayer Meditation** open to an

additional 30 participants. This retreat day will be of interest to people involved or interested in contemplative spirituality.

Cynthia is a hermit, Episcopalian priest, writer, and internationally known and greatly respected retreat and conference leader. She is passionately committed to the recovery of the Christian contemplative path and has worked closely with Thomas Keating, Bruno Barnhart, Richard Rohr, other Christian contemplative teachers and the leaders of other religious traditions. As an author Cynthia has published six books including - *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*; *The Wisdom Jesus* and *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*.

Teacher Training: 9-12 October. \$500 - includes \$200 for venue, catering & accommodation. Enquiries and Registrations. by the 10th August to: pip@thegentleartofknowing.co.nz or (04) 562 6364

Intro to Centering Prayer : 10 October from 10am to 4.30pm. \$100 which includes lunch. Enquiries and registrations to: tony.s-c@clear.net.nz or (09) 833-9853

The spiritual radiation of a community depends on the commitment of its members to the transformational journey and to each other. To offer one another space in which to grow as persons is an integral part of this commitment.

THOMAS KEATING
Open Mind, Open Heart, Guidelines For Christian Life, Growth and Transformation, #25

Our freedom lies not in changing the person or situation to meet our needs, but in letting go and trusting God.

"Be effortlessly aware of the Ground of Being from which all things arise at each nanosecond of time and which might be described as ever-present Awareness. Keeping silent watch."

In describing the functioning of the Mystical Body of Christ, Saint Paul writes that everyone has a special role to play in that body: some are teachers, some preachers, some wonderworkers, some have the charismatic gifts (cf. 1Cor.12:4-31). To sum up our conference about Unity in Contemplation, let me paraphrase the description of the transformational process revealed by Father Bede Griffiths, OSB., the founder of Shantivanam Ashram, South India, to someone in a dream.

The first stage of the spiritual journey he reportedly affirmed, is to recognize that **there is an Other**. It is the realization that there is a Higher Power, some Source from which we come: in Christian terms, the eternal, creative Word of God vibrating in our inmost being. We are resonating to the fullness of the Eternal Word as he actualizes the infinite possibilities contained within the Father.

The second stage is to **become the Other**. This is to awaken to the Divine Indwelling within us through faith, hope, and pure love. In the Christian tradition, it is called the imitation of Christ.

The third stage is **there is no Other**. Since these words were spoken in a dream, we have no way of knowing whether "other" is to be written in the lower or the higher case. Perhaps in fact there is no other--whether capital "O" or small "o"-- in the sense that the Ultimate Reality is beyond both "Other" and "other". Neither presupposes that our uniqueness disappears into the abyss of God's divine nature.

"There is no other" implies that you and I are not really who we think we are, not even our true selves created as the Book of Genesis affirms, in the image and likeness of God. Saint Paul describes his union with Christ through grace in these terms: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2: 18-20), to which

the contemporary theologian, Raimon Panikkar adds the gloss: "Christ lives in me *as my deepest self*" (Italics mine)

Thus the Son of God made flesh is manifesting in our uniqueness and returning to the Father through us and in us. Just as the Son empties himself into the Father, so we are invited to let go of our idea of ourselves--our self-identity--into the unfolding mystery of God manifesting in our ordinary everyday lives. Then Christ is not only living in us but as us.

Thus we might conceive of ourselves as a localized expression of the wave or vibration of the limitless created reality that is the Eternal Word made flesh. In that perspective, we can boldly surrender to the presence of God in us, because we know God sees the beauty, goodness, and truth of his Son in our spiritual destitution and nothingness. We are in the process of becoming one with Christ in his identification with the human condition: weakness, sin, and everything in us that is un-evolved and distorted. The grace of the Ascension is to return with and in Christ to the bosom of the Father, from whom the human family has come and to whom it is returning in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

Thomas Keating ocsa

...Christ is not only living in us but as us.

Raimon Panikkar

Reflection:

God's first language is Silence. Everything else is a translation.

--Thomas Keating

Centering Prayer Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

* Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, concepts and reflections.



Contemplative Prayer is normal

WHAT CENTERING PRAYER IS NOT:

- It is not a technique.
- It is not a form of self-hypnosis.
- It is not a relaxation exercise.
- It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God.
- It is not a charismatic gift.
- It is not discursive meditation or affective prayer.

CENTERING PRAYER IS:

- a way of praying contemplatively.
- opening of mind and heart - our whole being - to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words and emotions.
- opening our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing - closer than consciousness itself.