



# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH *of Atlanta*

Summer-Fall 2008 Volume 8, Issue 2

*"It is a precious gift to come close to interior silence. Its beauty is so incomparable that it changes ones perception of what beauty is" - Thomas Keating*

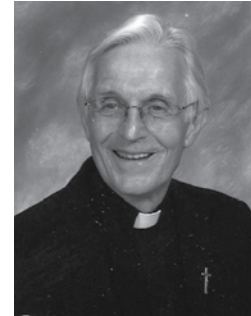
Silence, Solitude, Service

## The Welcoming Prayer Workshop and Reception

On Saturday, May 16, 2009, Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta will host a workshop on the "Welcoming Prayer Practice" presented by Father Bill Sheehan, OMI at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Atlanta. The purpose of this workshop is to introduce participants to the method of the Welcoming Prayer and to provide an opportunity to practice. The Welcoming Prayer is a method of actively letting go of thoughts and feelings that support the false-self system. Practicing the Welcoming Prayer offers one the opportunity to make choices free of the false-self system — responding instead of reacting to the present moment.

The intention of the Welcoming Prayer is to deepen one's relationship with God through consenting to God's presence and action in the ordinary activities of daily life. In this way, the Welcoming Prayer supports all forms of prayer, like Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina, which share the purpose of growing in relationship with God through consenting to His presence and action. Please join us Friday evening May 15, from 7:00 to 8:30, for a reception and pre-workshop overview of both the Centering Prayer and the Welcoming Prayer Practices presented by Father Sheehan. The all-day workshop on Saturday will begin with time for gathering and registration from 9:00 to 9:30 followed by the workshop from 9:30-3:30.

*Registration fees:* For both Friday evening and all-day workshop on Saturday - \$30.00; Friday evening only - \$15.00; Saturday workshop only - \$25.00. For more information or to register, contact Roberta Oster at 404-217-8216 or [robertaoster@bellsouth.net](mailto:robertaoster@bellsouth.net).



**Father Bill Sheehan, OMI**

Father Bill Sheehan OMI has broad experience in pastoral ministry as a pastor and in marriage counseling. He also served in the Office of Lay Ministry, Archdiocese of Miami, Florida. He has ministered to clergy as Director of Ministry to priests, Archdiocese of Miami, Florida and has served as provincial of the Oblates Eastern America Province as well as Oblate formation director and novice director. Since 1983, Fr. Sheehan has been involved with Contemplative Outreach founded by Fr. Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O. During that time, he has served as a Retreat Director and led many Centering Prayer and Welcoming Prayer workshops in different parts of the country. Recently, Fr. Bill was appointed to the Advisory Board of the quarterly magazine, "Human Development". ❖

## History of the Welcoming Prayer

The founding genius behind the Welcoming Prayer was Mary Mrozowski, one of Thomas Keating's closest associates and a prime mover in the development and popularization of his teachings. She based the Welcoming Prayer on the 17th-century French spiritual classic Abandonment to Divine Providence by Jean-Pierre de Caussade as well as Fr. Keating's teachings and

her own lived experience of transformation with its underlying attitude of surrender. The practice proved so powerful in bringing about real inner change that it was soon being offered throughout the Contemplative Outreach network.

To find out more about the Welcoming Prayer, visit our website at [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) ❖

## **2008 Events for Atlanta and North Georgia**

**Aug. 16** Annual Prayer and Discernment Brunch. Guest Speaker: Lalor Cadley. No registration fee. To register contact Cathy Hightower— 770-973-6243 or [chighatl@aol.com](mailto:chighatl@aol.com).

**March 21, 2009** 17th Annual United in Prayer Day. Holy Family Catholic Church, Marietta, GA. Contact Michael Brusnahan at [michael@commsoftware.net](mailto:michael@commsoftware.net)

**May 15-16, 2009** Welcoming Prayer Workshop. Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Atlanta. Contact Roberta Oster at [robertaoster@bellsouth.net](mailto:robertaoster@bellsouth.net)

**Oct. 30-31, 2009** Workshop: The Process of Forgiveness. Holy Family Catholic Church, Marietta GA. Contact Cathy Hightower at [chighatl@aol.com](mailto:chighatl@aol.com)

**Nov. 6-10, 2009** 5-Day Intensive/Post Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat. Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers. Contact Mary Joyce & Vernon Dixon at [vandmjdixon@alltel.net](mailto:vandmjdixon@alltel.net)

## **2009 5-Day Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat**

Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta will hold its annual 5 day Intensive and Post Intensive Centering Prayer retreat on Nov. 6-10, 2009, at The Holy Spirit Monastery in Conyers. The weather should be good that time of year, and the leaves should also be beautiful. We hope to have a good turnout from the Atlanta area this year. Attending an annual Centering Prayer retreat is one of the essentials for anyone committed to deepening their spiritual life. It is also a wonderful time to get away from all the worries of daily life and take some time to relax, let go, and let God lead us on His path for us. The peace of the monastery begins to envelop you the moment you walk onto the grounds. A deep sense of closeness develops among those who attend, even though it is mainly a silent retreat. There are different tracks available for those who are veterans of Centering Prayer retreats and for those who have not attended a Centering Prayer retreat before. A deeper closeness to God and a deeper sense of inner peace are guaranteed to all who seek it. We look forward to seeing you there.

Vernon and Mary Joyce Dixon  
[vandmjdixon@alltel.net](mailto:vandmjdixon@alltel.net)

## **Father Carl Arico Is Coming to Atlanta!**

Reserve the weekend date October 30 and 31 and spend time with one of Contemplative Outreach's most highly recognized and esteemed presenters, Father Carl Arico, author of *A Taste of Silence*. His input and leadership in the Centering Prayer arena have been crucial to its development as well as its longevity. Father Carl will be giving a workshop on Forgiveness at Holy Family Catholic Church (3401 Lower Roswell Rd., Marietta 30068) on November 27 and 28, Friday evening from 7:30-9:00 PM (with a reception from 7:00-7:30PM) and Saturday from 9:30AM- 2:30PM. Please come for all or part of the workshop.

Friday's registration fee is \$15 and Saturday's is \$25 or both for a flat fee of \$30. Email Cathy Hightower at [Chighatl@aol.com](mailto:Chighatl@aol.com) or phone at 770-973-6243 to register. ❖



### **The Process of Forgiveness**

*by Father Carl Arico*

Forgiving is one of the most difficult and complex gestures and yet, like love, it is one of the things which defines the essence of our humanity. Forgiveness at its core is a divine gift of love, a movement of love so profound that it reveals the truth of our nature. And yet, the very fact that we do not forgive, or find forgiveness so difficult, reveals another essential quality of our humanness – free will. Forgiveness cannot just be a one-time act or decision, but a process that unfolds and reveals itself the more we consent and open to God's presence and action in our lives.

Might it be possible to see our difficult relationships as some of our greatest gifts? Forgiveness is not so much about feelings as it is about freedom—an essential quality of the spiritual life. Forgiveness is not so much about the other as it is about ourselves.

What might be the effects experience by faithfully practicing the Forgiveness Prayer?

- *Release from the burden of anger and bitterness that upsets our peace.*
- *Removal of any hidden or overt effects of resentment in relation to others.*
- *Release of the power of the Spirit beyond our comprehension which frees our bodies, releases frustration and disappointment.* ❖

## **Join Us for the 17th Annual United in Prayer Day, Saturday, March 21, 2009**

Uniting the worldwide network of Contemplative Outreach in a single bond of Centering Prayer, The Day of Prayer will include time for fellowship, Centering Prayer, silence, and a never before seen DVD with Fr. Thomas Keating followed by a group sharing and discussion of Father Keating's remarks. ❖

### **Service Is a Gift of the Spirit, Not a Burden...**

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; There are different forms of service but the same Lord; There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. I Corinthians 12:4-7*

Please contact Cathy Hightower at [chighatl@aol.com](mailto:chighatl@aol.com) if you would like to be of service from time to time, for example: helping to seal and label newsletters, set up and/or handle registration for workshops and special programs, and assisting with editing the data base.

## OLA Centering Prayer Group Celebrates Eight Years

The OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION CENTERING PRAYER GROUP celebrated its 8th birthday the first Wednesday night of January 2009. Mathew Sikorski started this Centering Prayer Group (CPG) on the first Wednesday night in January 2001. Prior to this, Mat attended a number of CP workshops and he also attended the Presenters Course on CP in SnowMass, CO. to become an official presenter of CP Introductory workshops. Mat and Roseanne Havird teamed up in 2000 and began offering introductory workshops in the Atlanta area.

Eight members attended this special celebration. Former regulars Jose, Sherry, and Carolyn were with us. The meeting was led by Mat and the food and decorations were organized by Barbara Sikorski. Our hearts were filled with love and joy and so were our tummies.

In 2003 OLA CPG started thinking about what the group could do if we had a little money. Barbara Sikorski brought a jar with Father Keating's picture on it and asked if we would like to contribute please do so. Since then The OLA CPG has contributed to Contemplative Outreach, LTD, Contemplative Outreach Atlanta, Our Lady of The Assumption Catholic Church and In 2006 and 2008 we contributed to the Contemplative Outreach Prison Program here in Atlanta. We contributed Father Keating's book The Human Condition and also



buy newly produced CD's for group viewing and to share with other groups..

The OLA CPG has had many members who have contributed by sharing their spiritual journey with others such as Linda who moved to Sewanee, TN to attend school to become an Episcopal minister.

Roberta Oster, attended our CPG for a short time and she went on to become a servant leader in Contemplative Outreach as Coordinator for Georgia. Mark Dennefeler, director of Adult Education, at OLA, Barbara Moseley, and Debra Noble attended the Presenters Workshop at Ignais House in August 2007. They are in training in that program.

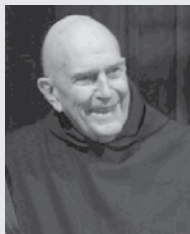
Our Lady of the Assumption Church has been generous to Contemplative Outreach Atlanta over the years with their facility. Mat coordinated many meetings at the church for Contemplative Outreach Atlanta such as introductory workshops, regional meetings, servant leadership meetings, and newsletter production meetings. In October 2005, OLA was privileged to host a weekend with Father Thomas Keating. We hosted 250 people serving goodies and drinks and Father Keating spoke about Centering Prayer, autographed books and talked with individuals. ❖

## Prayer Groups

After the Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop, participants usually wish to continue to meet weekly. We recommend the formation of Centering Prayer groups to support growth in this prayer practice. A typical weekly meeting consists of experience, education and sharing. For example, a group meeting might begin with a 20-minute period of Centering Prayer followed by a time for educational enrichment in the conceptual background to Centering Prayer and the Christian contemplative heritage, and end with experience-based sharing on the prayer and its effects in daily life. Some groups may also practice a form of Lectio Divina.

Centering Prayer groups generally remain open to new members, as participants often bring interested friends. If the group has a trained facilitator, the newcomers can be taught the method of Centering Prayer outside of the group meeting, or newcomers can attend the Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop. Contact Roberta Oster at [robertaoster@bellsouth.net](mailto:robertaoster@bellsouth.net) for a list of prayer groups or visit our website at [www.centeringprayeratlanta.org](http://www.centeringprayeratlanta.org) ❖

## Letter from Father Thomas Keating



*At our Board of Trustees meeting that followed our Annual Meeting in Chicago, October 1st, Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler was elected President of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. and I was elected Chair of the Board. These actions were the fruit of a process that the Board of Trustees, with my full support and encouragement, worked on for the past 2 1/2 years. Since the beginning of Contemplative Outreach, I served as both President and Chair of the Board. With the growth of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., the time to separate these two functions was overdue. Now that I am free of the administrative responsibilities of President of the Corporation, I can focus my energies on serving the spiritual goals and needs of our expanding network. At the same time, I will continue to oversee the overall activities and the on-going structural evolution of our Contemplative Outreach network. As Executive Director, Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler has gradually taken on most of the administrative functions of the Corporation over the years. She has the administrative skills and experience to oversee the immense job that the International Office entails. She also has a thorough understanding of and commitment to the vision of Contemplative Outreach and its foundations. We have worked closely together for the last 17 years and I am confident in her capacity to serve as President. I take this opportunity to express my immense gratitude for your participation in the Contemplative Outreach Community and above all, your response to the charism that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to all of us.*

*In Christ's love,  
Thomas Keating, Chair of the Board*

## 2009 Southern Region Events

### Contemplative Outreach Birmingham

**January 16-18, 2009** Introduction to Centering Prayer Retreat at Benedictine Retreat Center, Cullman, AL. Contact Sr. Therese Haydel 256/734-8302

**March 14-15, 2009** Annual Conference in Birmingham, The Seven Mansions of Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle. Contact Diana Tschache 205/991-6964 or [tschached@bellsouth.net](mailto:tschached@bellsouth.net)

**March 27-29, 2009** Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat at Benedictine Retreat Center, Cullman, AL. Contact Sr. Therese Haydel 256/734-8302

**June 22-June 29, 2009** 8 Day Intensive / Post Intensive Retreat at Benedictine Retreat Center, Cullman, AL. Contact Diana Tschache 205/991-6964 or [tschached@bellsouth.net](mailto:tschached@bellsouth.net)

**September 4-6, 2009** Introduction to Centering Prayer Retreat at Benedictine Retreat Center, Cullman, AL. Contact Sr. Therese Haydel 256/734-8302

**October 23-25, 2009** Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat at Benedictine Retreat Center, Cullman. Contact Sr. Therese Haydel 256/734-8302

### Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee

Contact Carol Wray at [carolwray@aol.com](mailto:carolwray@aol.com)

**Mar 27-29, 2009** Lenten Retreat: The Process of Forgiveness

**Apr 26-30, 2009** Welcoming Prayer Immersion

**May 31-Jun 9, 2009** 10 Day Centering Prayer Intensive/Post-Intensive

**Sept 27-29, 2009** 3 Day Centering Prayer Retreat

**Oct 18-20, 2009** Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice

### Contemplative Outreach North Florida

**Dec 11-13, 2009** Advent Centering Prayer Retreat

**March 5-8** 3-Day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat, St. John Neumann Renewal Center, Tallahassee. Contact Sr. Christine Kelly. [SSJChris731@aol.com](mailto:SSJChris731@aol.com)



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH-ATLANTA

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[www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)

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Marietta, GA 30068

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