



# Contemplative Times

The Centering Prayer Newsletter  
of Contemplative Outreach

*Oakland - East Bay Chapter*

February 2010  
Volume 8, Issue 1

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*Contemplative Times*  
Contemplative Outreach, LTD.  
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## Letter from the Co-Coordinator

We have some nice events planned for February, March, and April—a Lenten and Easter trio. First is the Lenten Day of Prayer, hosted again by the group at Christ the King. Incidentally, we are thinking of adding another day of prayer, perhaps in June. If you have thoughts on this, please pass them on.

Next is a special workshop on Lectio Divina, taught by Sr. Maria Tasto. Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina are sometimes seen as complementary parts of a balance in spiritual practice. Sr. Maria is the principal teacher of Lectio for Contemplative Outreach. She brings knowledge, experience, and a sensitive skill at guiding people along the path of this traditional approach to contemplation.

Then, in April, there will be the second Annual Community Building Dinner. Chef Elka Gilmore fixed a wonderful meal for us last year, and will be cooking again this year. Of course, the event was so special because so many of us in this chapter of Contemplative Outreach came, brought family members, and contributed to the warmth of the group. I hope to see you again this year.

In a recent book, *Discovering the Center*, Edward Gray tells of his first meeting with Fr. Keating. Gray was relating his conversion experience, and Keating was looking out the window. Then Thomas said, "Ed, don't be too attached to your conversion experience. If you do, you won't make any progress on the spiritual journey... And remember that the Lord keeps the big bang experiences for the real bad guys." I constantly feel the tug between simple surrender to God's presence and action within--which I can believe in but not perceive--, and having something meaningful to hold to, whether it is the sacred word itself or some felt sense of God's presence. Without surrender I am stuck. Without some consolation, I lose heart. My image of the journey is hiking in the Sierra. Sometimes the trail is flat, sometimes rocky and treacherous. Sometimes one must look ahead, sometimes one must watch one's feet. The only constants are dedication to the journey and discernment. That, perhaps, is how I will see the six-week mini-journey of Lent this year.

Best wishes and God's blessings to each of you,

**John**

John Neville

**Centering Prayer Groups  
in the East Bay**

and their contact persons to call for  
meeting times, directions, etc.  
All without exception are welcome to our  
prayer groups.

**Alameda**, St. Albert Church  
Tom Lewellyn: 510-865-8341

**Albany**, St. Alban Church  
Judy Ellisen: 510-237-6961

**El Sobrante**, Hope Lutheran Church  
Rev. Deborah Butler: 510-222-6394

**Fremont**, Corpus Christi Church  
Kathy Lyons: 510-793-3672  
Ron Taylor: 510-490-1279

**Hayward**, All Saints Church  
Melanie Smith: 510-537-6563  
Francis Tanjuatco: 650-678-7739

**Lafayette**, St. Perpetua Church  
Helen McKennon: 925-977-1872  
Carol Weyer: 925-932-1845  
Joanne Elgaaen: 925-284-5608

**Oakland**, St. Andrew Kim Korean Church,  
Maria Ko: 510-553-9434

**Oakland**, St. Theresa Church  
(Day group):  
Dolores Vasquez: 510-530-4081  
(Evening group):  
Jeanne Lovi: 510-547-2505  
John Neville: 510-655-2796  
Betty Wharton: 510-531-6124

**Pleasant Hill**, Christ the King Church  
(Day group):  
Jodi Runyon: 925-939-0859  
(Evening group):  
Jeanne Pletz: 925-837-6971  
Pat Stevens: 925-945-1623

**Pleasanton**, St. Elizabeth Seton Church  
Art Crosetti: 925-462-2721

**Union City**, Our Lady of the Rosary Church  
Gene Aciniaga: 510-471-9496

**Walnut Creek**, St. John Vianney Church  
Nancy Jokerst: 925-683-2802  
Rosemary Daunenbauer: 925-939-2923

**CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH  
OAKLAND-EAST BAY**

***LENTEN DAY OF PRAYER***

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2010**

**10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.**

*We will gather in silence. First sit about 10:10 am.*

**Christ the King Church, Pleasant Hill**

Enter the side entrance of the Ministry Center  
(See directions below)

There will be several centering prayer sits.  
We will listen to presentations on a  
**Lenten Theme**,  
and there will be time for sharing and discussion.

*Lunch will be in silence, if in the room.  
Conversation outside will be optional.*

Bring a brown bag lunch      Snacks and beverages provided

**RSVP** requested (it makes planning more convenient)  
but not required  
RSVP Jeanne Pletz 925-837-6971

**Suggested donation \$20.00**  
**No one turned away for lack of funds**

Directions to the Ministry Center at Christ the King Church in Pleasant Hill.

The church is at the corner of Gregory Lane and Brandon Road.  
On **680 northbound**, take the Contra Costa Blvd. exit. After crossing over the freeway, continue about a third of a mile to a left turn onto Gregory Lane.  
On **680 southbound**, take the Gregory Lane exit and continue straight on Gregory Lane.  
**Once on Gregory Lane**, go one mile to a left turn onto Brandon Road. Then after the church take the first driveway to the right. The ministry center will be on your left. There is parking there and also further along the driveway.

**Used Books for Prisoners**

Do you have any used books you would like to donate to prisoners at the facilities where our Centering Prayer outreach goes? Study and prayer are powerful tools in helping prisoners make their time of incarceration a time of renewal and rehabilitation. We all find entertaining reading helpful to reduce stress and fill hours.

*Bring the books you wish to donate to the  
Lenten Day of Prayer on February 27.*

# Lectio Divina Workshop

Presented by Sr. Maria Tasto,

**Lectio Divina** is a way of praying with Scripture. It is a means of listening to the word of God in Scripture and a traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ.

In **Lectio Divina**, one listens to the texts of Scripture as if in conversation with Christ, with Christ suggesting the topics of conversation. A daily encounter with Christ and reflection on his word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to friendship, trust, and love. Conversation simplifies and gives way to communing, or “resting” in God.

Friday Evening, March 19, 2010      7:30-9:00 pm  
*and*  
 Saturday, March 20, 2010      8:15-3:00 pm

St. Theresa’s Church,                      30 Mandalay Rd., Oakland, CA

**Sister Maria Tasto** is a member of the Srs. of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, IN. Maria is an experienced counselor and spiritual director. She gives retreats and growth workshops. She received her training in spiritual direction at the Institute of Religious Formation at St. Louis University. She has an advanced degree in theology and scripture at St. John’s University, Collegeville, MN. She also has an advanced degree in English from the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio and a counseling certificate from the University of Evansville, Evansville, IN.

Send your name, address, and phone number to:

Helen McKennon

408 Timeberline Ct., Pleasant Hill, CA 94523-3191

Please include a check for \$35 payable to *Contemplative Outreach of the East Bay*.

**Please Register by March 10, 2010**

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## Additional Training for Presenters

Following the general workshop, there will be a separate training for those who have been trained as presenters of Centering Prayer, and who would like to be trained specifically to present lectio divina. Sr. Maria will give this training from 3:00 to 5:00 pm.

Lectio, it seems to me, is a concept whose time has come. It is a reality, an experience that is vitalizing the lives of many today....Lectio is meeting with a friend, a very special Friend who is God; listening to him, really listening; and responding, in intimate prayer and in the way we take that Word with us and let it shape our lives.

Fr. Basil Pennington, *Lectio Divina Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures*

**Beginning Again**

"If I could stop talking, completely cease talking for a year, I might begin to get well," he muttered. Off alone again performing brain surgery on himself in a small badly lit room with no mirror. A room whose floor, ceiling and walls are all mirrors, what a mess oh my God--

And still it stands, the question not how begin again, but rather

Why?

So we sit there together the mountain and me, Li Po said, until only the mountain remains.

by Franz Wright



**Some 2010 Centering Prayer Retreats in California**

**7-day Intensive**

April 23-29, in Orange, CA with Fr. Carl Arico and Marie Howard

Contact Marie Howard at 310-823-5863 or at MRHfamlife@aol.com

**8-day Post-Intensive**

(requires having previously done an Intensive retreat) Holy Spirit Retreat Center, in Encino, CA June 27-July 4

See their website HSRCenter.com or contact Sr. Linda Snow at 818-784-4515 or at HSRCenter@earthlink.net



**5-day Intensive**

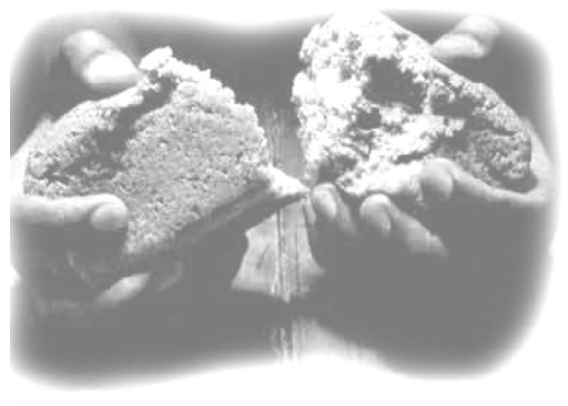
with Fr. Tommy Brennan and Eileen Halliburton August 11-15, at Mercy Center, Burlingame

Contact Mercy Center at 650-340-7474 or see their website mercy-center.org

*Last year we had a Community Building Dinner, and it was a great success—good food, good conversation, good entertainment, good community. So, we are planning such a dinner again this year. Same chef, but a new location. Come and join the fun.*

## East Bay Contemplative Outreach Annual Community Building Dinner

**Date:** Sunday, April 11, 2010  
**Time:** 5:00 – 8:00 pm  
**Place:** St. Theresa's Church, Oakland  
**Cost:** \$30 in advance/\$35 at the door, per person  
**Parking:** Free, in the church lot  
 The social hour will begin at 5:00pm, with a no-host bar.  
 Dinner will be served at 6:00pm.



The meal will again be a multicourse, fresh, seasonal, vegetarian dinner, with wine, served family style. Chef Elka Gilmore has long experience cooking professionally, including her own restaurant in San Francisco. She has also cooked for a Centering Prayer retreat at St. Benedict's monastery, Snowmass, Colorado. Last year's dinner was delicious. Don't miss this year's.

St. Theresa Church is at 30 Mandalay Road, in Oakland, though it is simpler to enter from Clarewood Drive.

To reserve your place, RSVP through our website at [www.contemplativeoutreach-norcal.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-norcal.org)

or

Send your name, address phone number, and a check for \$30 per person to:

Helen McKennon  
 408 Timberline Ct., Pleasant Hill CA 94523

### ***THE BEGUINES***

#### *Women Mystics Come of Age*

With the dawn of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, mystical writing was no longer dominated by monks and male theologians who wrote mainly in Latin. Women began to write for the laity in the vernacular. They wrote about their experiences of God and what they felt was important for a person to develop in the spiritual journey from feelings about God to Transformation into Divine Union with God. In part one, we looked at Hedewijch of Antwerp or Brabant. We now move to Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite of Porete.

With **FR. TERRY RYAN, CSP**  
 SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 2010  
 9:00 AM TO NOON

*Old St. Mary's Paulist Center*  
 660 California Street (corner of California and Grant), San Francisco, CA

Coffee and treats begin at 9:00 AM. The workshop is free, but a free will offering is welcome.

Sponsored by Contemplative Outreach and The Paulist Center.

Contact person is Mary Wyman: [mary.wyman@yahoo.com](mailto:mary.wyman@yahoo.com)

## How to “Read” without “Reading”

The moment you started to read this a powerful set of preconditioned dynamics went into operation. You are the “victim” of a lifelong, educationally enhanced learning mode that establishes *you* as the controlling power (reader) who seeks to master a body of information (text). This mode of reading is detrimental to the role of scripture in spiritual formation. In fact, it is but one facet of a whole mode of being that militates against all genuine spiritual formation. This is why the *how* of the role of scripture in spiritual formation is not so much a body of information, a technique, a method, a model, as it is a mode of being in relationship with God that we bring to the scripture.

I would like to suggest an alternative mode of learning, specifically an alternative mode of reading. First, I suggest that your top priority be to listen for God. Seek to allow your attention and focus to be on listening for what God is saying to you. Listen for God to speak to you in and through, around and within, over and behind and out front of everything that you read. You will begin to open yourself to the possibility of God’s setting the agenda for your life through the text.

Second, I suggest that you respond to what you read with your heart and spirit rather than with your rational, cognitive,

intellectual faculties. I am sure that you are in no danger of neglecting those dynamics of your being. The problem is that we are overbalanced in the cognitive direction, and we tend to think that this is proper. However, in Jesus’ list loving God with all of our heart and all of our soul precedes loving God with all of our mind.

A third point I would like to suggest is that you let your response take place down in the deeper levels of your being. Ask yourself questions such as: How do I feel about what is being said? How do I react? What is stirring in the depths of my spirit? How is the spirit of God touching my spirit? Let this exercise be an opportunity to get in touch with the deeper realities of your being. Thomas à Kempis said, “A humble knowledge of ourselves is a surer way to God than is the search for depth of learning.”

This mode of response will also help you begin to open up your “rational filter” by which we filter out so much of God’s voice. You will begin to hear at the heart and soul level. Jesus frequently reminded “those who had ears” to “hear.” I suspect that Jesus was talking about the operation of the rational filter by which the false self protects itself from God.

From *Shaped by the Word*  
By M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.  
(one of many books about Lectio Divina)

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED