



Centering Prayer Network Australia

DECEMBER CONTEMPLATIVE NEWSLETTER 2018

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

It seems like the blink of an eye since last Christmas, and here we are again – hard to believe another year has passed by.

This edition of the newsletter is going to be quite different. It was a great sadness to hear of Thomas Keating's death in October. But at the same time an overwhelming sense of gratitude prevailed for the gift he has been, and will continue to be, for our world. In my home town of Adelaide, we used his DVD series called The Spiritual Journey to help facilitate formation courses we ran over a year's duration for a number of years. Many people took part in these courses and were profoundly affected by the man, his faith, his insights, his writing and his teachings on the spiritual life. Lives were changed because of him. There would be numerous similar stories worldwide.

This newsletter then offers you Ten Days with Thomas, using quotes mainly from 'Invitation to Love' and other material, as we move into Christmas. It will be an opportunity to take time out each day from the hype that can take us over at this time of the year and focus upon our own spiritual journeys for some part of our day. It hopefully is something that we can take into our daily life as we prepare for the ongoing Birthing of Love in our world and within our own Hearts.

We invite all readers of this newsletter to consider attending our Annual Retreat in March 2019. The flyer is inserted within this newsletter with all relevant info. It is a wonderful time for many of our State communities, and those interested in the contemplative life, to touch base with each other and share our stories of what is happening around the place. For example, recently five people from South Australia plus three other Australians, journeyed to New Zealand to attend the Wisdom School facilitated by Cynthia Borgeault. This connection between New Zealand, Australia and Cynthia has been developing over a number of years now and Cynthia through her teachings and writings is a wonderful advocate of the contemplative life.

I hope this newsletter is nourishment for your Hearts and souls. As we prepare for Christmas may we be reminded that the Christ is being birthed within us and our world with every breath we take.

May we all open our Hearts to the Blessings and Peace of Christmas.
Annemarie Reiner

CURRENT NATIONAL TEAM:

National Coordinators for 2018/19

Peter Ahern (Canberra)
peter.ahern@bigpond.com

Annemarie Reiner (Adelaide)
rareiner@bigpond.com

Consultative Team for 2018/2019

Judy Newland (NSW)
Judi Ahern (ACT)
Anne Schmidt (VIC)
Frances Cassidy (VIC)
Helen Duffy (VIC)
Helen Glasheen (VIC)
Nick DeGroot (NSW/NT)
Ria Parlevliet (VIC)
Sarah Marrinan (VIC)
Anne Weygood (SA)
Tom Gleeson (SA)
Fran Hegarty (SA)
Gwyneth Ottrey (SA)
Lynne Rokkas (SA)
Neil Preston (WA)
Bart Welton (WA)

*For State contact details please
email one of the coordinators.
All these positions are valid until
the 2019 National Retreat/Annual
Meeting at Boronia.*

Newsletter Editor

Annemarie Reiner

REMEMBERING THOMAS KEATING:

In 2016 Peter and Judi Ahern travelled to Snowmass for a 10-day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat. There, they had the privilege of having a private meeting with Thomas Keating. Here Peter and Judi remember some of their conversation.

SOME THOUGHTS OF THOMAS KEATING

In October 2016 we went to Snowmass, and were lucky to speak with Father Thomas Keating. Here were a few of his thoughts:

On the proper order of Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer

Do whatever you find suits you. It doesn't matter much. Some people find the use of Centering Prayer as the 4th moment of Lectio Divina very useful for them.

Father Keating's advice about centering during times of emotional turmoil

Just feel the emotion and sink into it. Just sit with the mess, and make that your Centering Prayer session. Don't try to use your word.

My teachings on the whole of the spiritual journey are best summarised in 'The Spiritual Journey' DVD series

Thomas Keating on organisation

You need some, but not too much. Consider a Vision Statement for starters.

Thomas Keating's best books

I recommend The Mystery of Christ and The Parables of Jesus

We asked Thomas to clarify what he meant in 'The Spiritual Journey' chapter we had just watched (during the 10-day Centering Prayer Retreat) that if one can't change things in oneself then to hand it over to God:

You must conclude, in those circumstances, the person is not yet ready or able to let go of the fault.

Step 6 of the 12 Steps (originating from Bill Wilson for AA) makes a fine but important distinction:

'6. we were entirely willing to have God remove all these defects of character.'

And step 7 follows on: 'humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings'

In my opinion we should all be living the 12 Steps every day.

A useful shortcut to use in the Welcoming Prayer [in an urgent situation] is simply to say:

'I let go of my desire to change this situation.'

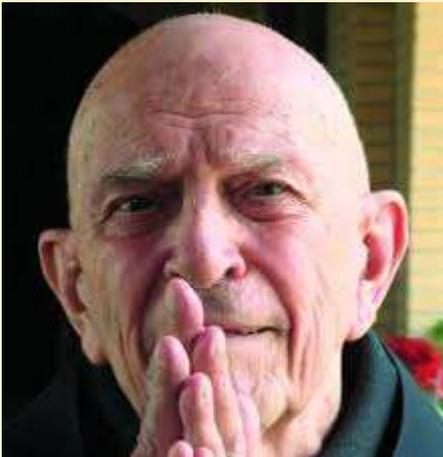
Peter and Judi Ahern

Canberra



TEN DAYS WITH AN 'INVITATION TO LOVE'

DAY 1.



“Instead of developing the capacity to relate to other persons and to all reality with honesty and compassion, we use the immensely creative energy of rational consciousness to develop more sophisticated ways of controlling people, extracting greater pleasures out of life, and heaping up more security symbols. Thus we reinforce the self-centred motivation appropriate to childhood but totally inappropriate for adults.

Our pathology is simply this: we have come to full reflective self-consciousness without the enjoyment of divine union – indeed, without any awareness of it at all. Because that crucial conviction, born of experience, is missing, our fragile egos seek every possible means to ward off the painful and at times agonising sense of alienation from God and from everyone else. “ Invitation to Love page 40-41

What a wonderful insight into our human condition. It explains our longings and yearnings to be in this Communion, that is fully present, but we have lost our awareness of it – we have forgotten. The season of Christmas helps us to re-member who we truly are.

TEXTS TO PONDER.

*“They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, **“Where are you?”** He said, *“I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”* Genesis 3:8-10*

PSALM 43 BY NAN MERRILL

Bring justice to the people, O Beloved, and strength on my behalf to stand firm against oppression; from all that is greedy and unjust deliver me! For You are the One in whom I take refuge; yet, have You abandoned me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of ignorance?

O, send out your light and your truth; let them guide me, let them lead me to your holy altar, to the inner home of integrity! Then will I know You, Heart of my heart, my exceeding joy; and I will praise You with song, O my Beloved, my Awakener.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? My hope is in the Beloved, my strength and my joy, O my soul, open the door to Love! Yes! Let us sing a song of diversity, a song of Oneness and Unity! For we are all One in Love's Heart, now and forevermore. Let us ever reflect the Peace we are!

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

- Ask for the Grace to receive a Word/s from this page and use it as a simple mantra that you keep with you throughout this day. Allow its meaning to touch the depths of your Heart and really awaken in you.
- Consider these questions:

When you hear Love's voice calling to you "Where are you?", what is your response?

Get in touch with the 'longings' within your own Heart. Are you listening to this Divine Energy calling out to you?

How do you experience God/Love? Have you tasted the experience of 'divine union'?

What is your response to Keating's quote? What words touch you within the Psalm. Prayerfully stay with them.

DAY 2.



“The (spiritual) journey has been presented in Christian tradition as an ascent. Images of ladders and upward journeys abound. But for most of us who undertake the journey today, in our age when developmental psychology and a greater understanding of the unconscious is widespread, the journey might more properly be seen as a descent. The direction, at least initially, is toward a confrontation with our motivations and unconscious emotional programs and responses. Our spiritual journey does not start with a clean slate. We carry with us a pre-packaged set of values and preconceived ideas which, unless confronted and redirected, will soon scuttle our journey, or else turn it into pharisaism, the occupational hazard of religious and spiritual people.” Invitation to Love Page 5

Thomas Keating’s challenge for us is to dare the journey into our motivations and unconscious emotional programs and responses. A commitment to contemplative prayer, or to silence awakens our consciousness and draws us into this journey where we find ourselves most wonderfully, and often darkly, accompanied by the Divine Presence.

TEXTS TO PONDER.

“When Jesus turned, and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi...where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see” John 1:38-39a

What is it that you are looking for? Are you prepared to enter into or continue the search?

*O Compassionate Teacher,
You are our merciful Counsellor;
in the Silence You make yourself known
to all who take time to listen.*

How do you LISTEN to this *Compassionate Teacher*?

Are you open to have your pre-packaged values and preconceived ideas transformed?

Psalm 82 (first verse) from Nan Merrill *Psalms for Praying*

HOW DID THE ROSE? BY HAFIZ

*How
did the rose
ever open its heart
and give to this world all of its beauty?*

*It felt the encouragement of light
against its being,
otherwise we all remain too
frightened.*



SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Ponder words or phrases that resonate with your heart. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU ARE FEELING/EXPERIENCING.

Write a poem or haiku that expresses what you are experiencing.

Or just ponder what’s happening in the silence and stillness.

DAY 3.

*“We come now to the heart of the problem of the human condition. Jesus addressed this problem head-on in the gospel. What was his first word when beginning his ministry? “Repent.” To repent is not to take on afflictive penances like fasting, vigils, flagellation, or whatever else appeals to our generosity. It means **to change the direction in which you are looking for happiness.** That challenge goes to the root of the problem. It is not just a bandage for one or another of the emotional programs..... Such insight is the beginning of the real spiritual journey. We realise with a heavy heart, that it is going to be a long journey.”*

Invitation to Love Page 9-10



How we resist this invitation to ‘repent’. Isn’t it true that we want life to go along without too much disturbance, or preferably no disturbance at all? We tend to want things easy. We all know, or will come to know that this is not what it is to truly live. Thomas Keating helps plunge us head on into this truth. He encourages us to read Paul’s words from Romans, that may help us see our own lives a little more clearly and open us up into possibilities we never dreamed of. See below.

TEXTS TO PONDER.

“I don’t understand myself at all. I really want to do what is right, but I can’t. I do what I don’t want to do – what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws that I am breaking.... No matter which way I turn, I can’t make myself do right. I want to, but I can’t. When I want to do good, I don’t; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway...”

I love to do God’s will, so far as my new nature is concerned. But there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind, and wins the fight, and makes me a slave to sin that is still within me.... Oh, what a terrible predicament I am in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? (Romans 7:15-24, The Living Gospel - From Invitation to Love page 10)

“We need to recognise that the incompleteness within us, our personal insufficiency, does not make us unacceptable in God’s eyes. Far from it; our incompleteness is the empty side of our longing for God and for love. It is what draws us toward God and one another. If we do not fill our minds with guilt and self-recriminations, we will recognise our incompleteness as a kind of spaciousness into which we can welcome the flow of grace. We can think of our inadequacies as terrible defects, if we want, and hate ourselves. But we can also think of them affirmatively, as doorways through which the power of grace can enter our lives. Then we may begin to appreciate our inherent, God-given loveliness.”

ADDICTION AND GRACE by Gerald G May - Page 31

Underline any word or phrase that speaks to you on this page. *Carry this Word/s in your heart throughout the day. As you ponder further ask: What is it You (Spirit of Love) want me to receive here?*

DAY 4.



“To decide consciously to follow the values of the gospel is only the first step in our commitment to Christ. The values in the unconscious must then be confronted. When the springtime of the spiritual journey subsides, the old temptations surface once again with the same or more force than before our conversion.

The spiritual journey is characterized by the every-increasing knowledge of our mixed motivations, the dark sides of our personalities, and the emotional traumas of early childhood. Nothing is more helpful to reduce pride than the actual experience of self-knowledge. If we are discouraged by it, we have misunderstood its meaning.” Invitation to Love Page 67

St. Peter knew this experience well. In the spring time of the disciple’s journey with Jesus everything was wonderful. But the moment trouble appeared Peter reverted to his motivation to protect himself at any cost – he denied Love. The cock crowing was where Grace broke into his blindness and awakened his consciousness and revealed these mixed motivations. He knew what he had done, and this was a turning point in his life. He opened into the Mystery - he opened into the birthing of Love

TEXTS TO PONDER.

“Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.” John 18:25-27

Psalm 107 (excerpt by Nan Merrill)

*Has no one ever told you that truth
is written on the scrolls of your heart,
that the Beloved dwells therein?*

*O peoples of the Light, Awaken to
the knowledge that lives within you!
Come out of the darkness and gloom;
break through the fears that
hold you prisoner.*

*Do you not know your destiny is
to be a light unto the world,
a bearer of peace and harmony?
O let your light shine as a very ray
of the Radiant One’s own Light!*

*And know yourself! Let your aim be
to recognise who you are.
Aspire to live as sons and daughters
of Divine Love,
To enshrine the earth with divinity,
Continued over*

*To honour all relationships as sacred,
and to live in peace and in balance with
all living things.*

*Acknowledge the sacredness of every path,
albeit different from your own;
in this way you honour the Great Mystery
and the wonder of all life!*

“All things are possible for God”

Mt 19:26

We can grow in the hardest and harshest of
places when our Hearts are open.

Is my Heart open to the Mystery before me and
within me?

DAY 5.

“Happy are the merciful, mercy will be shown to them’... This beatitude fulfils Christ’s new commandment, “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12)

The new commandment is much more demanding than the commandment to love one’s neighbour as oneself. To love one’s neighbour as oneself is to respect the image of God in our neighbour with all the rights which that dignity confers. To love one another as Jesus loves us is to love one another in our humanness – in our individuality and opinionatedness, in personality conflicts and in unbearable situations. It is to continue to show love, no matter what the provocation may be to act otherwise.” Invitation to Love Page 109



How we need to hear this truth today, especially in a world that is being torn apart by our non-love for each other, and then trying to justifying it. Once we know how completely we are loved, regardless of what we have done or not done, this is the fertile ground for us in turn to Love as Jesus the Christ Loves us.

PSALM 143 by Nan Merrill

O Bringer of Joy, Awaken my heart;
pour your love and blessings
through all my being!

Free me from attachments and desire;
that I may become a clear mirror,
reflecting your love to the world.

For fear has pursued me, it has
crushed my spirit to the ground;
it has veiled your Light so
that I dwell in darkness.

Therefore, I cry out to You,
O Great Awakener;

Help me to rise once again
like the phoenix of old!

I recall days gone by; I meditate
on all that You have done;

I muse on the Covenant of your Love.

I open my heart to You;
my soul thirsts for You like a parched land.

Strength comes with pureness of heart.
Cleanse me anew, O Gentle Healer.

This yearning within my soul is
naught but the inner birthright
to know and live in You.

Let me hear your Voice within the Silence,
for in You I put my trust.

Teach me ways of loving service,
that I might co-create with You,
O my Beloved.

Help me to face my fears,
O Divine Nurturer!

I call on You for healing!

Instruct me in your Divine Precepts,
cultivate my soul!

Lead me into deep silence and
solitude,

let peace become my mantle.

Divine Light shines in those
whose lives reflect love.

As the river, makes its way to the ocean,
may I surrender to the flow of new life!

Then will I trust that all is
working together toward the
wholeness of humanity.

Then will I help to rebuild the
soul of the world with Love!

Taken from *God’s Ecstasy* by Beatrice Bruteau.

***“God’s ecstasy creates the world,
And the world’s ecstasy realises God.
And you are right in the midst of it.”***

DAY 6.

"In our time an important aspect of the beatitude of the merciful is to practice compassion toward ourselves. Many people come to self-consciousness with a low self-image and suffer from varying degrees of self-hatred. This disposition is pride in reverse. Instead of reaching out for self-aggrandizement, these people demean themselves because they do not measure up to the idealised image of perfection that their self-image demands. When they fail to meet this impossible standard, pride, not God, says, "You're no good!" They then feel shame for failing to measure up to the grandiose expectations of themselves that their upbringing, culture, or drive to overachieve created."

Invitation to Love Page 109-110



WHO AM I TO BE BRILLIANT....

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."*

Taken from *A Return to Love* by Marianne Williamson

Creative Activity

Take some quiet minutes and imagine you are sitting with that Spirit of Love and feel these eyes of Love gazing into you and penetrating every part of your Being. As you endeavour to receive this deep Love, draw a mandala, or simply draw an image, or write a poem, or journal, or find an image within nature that tells something of the STORY OF YOU through this sacred gaze. Become aware that this extraordinary gaze of Love is being poured into you continuously.

Are you open to receive it?

Psalm 80 excerpt by Nan Merrill in *Psalms for the Praying*

Truly, in You,
we become like a tiny acorn,
Holding the secret
of a mighty oak

DAY 7.



“If we get hooked on spiritual pride, progress on the journey comes to a screeching halt. The wisdom of taking the express elevator – the way of pure faith – to the top floor is that it avoids all mystical phenomena that might occur as by-products of the unloading of the unconscious. The way of pure faith is to persevere in contemplative practice without worrying about where we are on the journey, and without comparing ourselves with others or judging other’s gifts as better than ours. We can be spared all this nonsense if we surrender ourselves to the divine action, whatever the psychological content of our prayer may be. In pure faith, the results are often hidden even from those who are growing the most..... The divine light of faith is totally available in the degree that we consent and surrender ourselves to its presence and action within us.”

Invitation to Love Page 118-119

It is very common initially to be caught in wanting to know what ‘stage’ we are at on the spiritual journey. Also we think it is up to us to make all these ‘stages’ happen and we can work very hard at it and exhaust ourselves in the process. Keating advises us so wisely to let go of all that ‘nonsense’ and persevere and surrender into our contemplative practice.

What ‘nonsense’ do I need to let go of?

PSALM TO PONDER - Psalm 114 by Nan Merrill

Come, all you who have wandered
far from the path,
who have separated yourselves
from Love;
A banquet is prepared for you in the
heart’s Secret Room.

There you will find the way Home;
a welcome ever awaits you!

Even as you acknowledge the times
you have erred,
the forgiveness of the Beloved
will envelop you.

Call upon the Beloved when fear
arises,
when you feel overwhelmed;
The Eternal Listener will heed
your cry;
you will find strength to face
the shadows.

Befriend all that is within you,
discover the Sacred Altar within
your heart.
Then will abundant blessings enter
your home; and, you
will welcome the Divine Guest
who is ever with you.
You are never alone!

A question to ponder:

Are you prepared to ‘befriend all that is
within you, and discover the Sacred Altar
within your heart?

A FURTHER THOUGHT

“..... It will help, above all, to shift our self-image as fallen creatures, complicit somehow in the death of Jesus, to an awareness of our role as vital co-creators with God of a steadily developing, ever-evolving universe. We are not guilty exiles on a fallen earth – we are the beloved bearers of her divine dream.”

Taken from *An Astonishing Secret* by Daniel O’Leary P 122

DAY 8.

“As the night of sense gradually turns to dust all our previous sources of strength and consolation, the temptation to give up is enormous. “This journey can’t be for me. I have a family to raise, a professional life to lead. I can’t deal with all this painful negativity that keeps rising with me.” When dryness and temptation are prolonged, everything in us wants to call a halt to the spiritual journey and hopes we never have to start again. If we walk away from our commitment to the journey, the false self goes with us. Wherever we go, we will have to face it again under other circumstance. Commitment opposes this regressive instinct, saying, “I won’t give up. I resolve for the love of Christ to go through the desert of purification no matter what happens.” This is the determination that enables the night of sense to complete its work.” Invitation to Love Page 89



The night of sense according to Keating’s explanation, is a spiritual growing up process. John of the Cross spoke deeply of this process in his poetry. It can be a confusing time because often the ‘felt’ experiences we have been used to begin to leave us. We can feel like we can’t pray anymore or that God is absent. It is a most sacred time as we are being drawn into faith and this is the beginning of that ‘growing up’ process. Here we discover the ‘pearl of great price.’

TEXTS TO PONDER.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

“Again, Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Matthew 13: 45-46

What is it that you are searching for?

Are you prepared to let go (‘sell’) of your ego-self with its desires, impulses and addictions and various untruthful story lines, so as to discover your contemplative Heart (‘the pearl of great price’)?

POETIC WORD TO PONDER:

And God said:
May you delight in your body;
it is my body too.
Please see the world anew each day;
how else can I behold my beauty?
Fill the earth with the sounds of life;
how else can I hear my song?
May your skin rejoice in the passion of the sun;
And your tongue tingle with the joy of new wine,
Don’t you know you are my senses?
Without your
body I cannot be here.

Daniel O’Leary from *An Astonishing Secret*

DAY 9.

“Peace is the great gift of Jesus on the day of his resurrection. The peace that Jesus offers is not sentimental. This peace transcends joy and sorrow, hope and despair. This peace is rooted in the way of being that transcends the emotions. We are no longer blown away by the winds of persecution, nor washed away by the floods of tribulation. Our house is built on rock, and the rock is Christ. That rock is strength against every storm. Divine union has become an invincible conviction, a way of being, a fourth dimension to all reality.”

Invitation to Love Page 111



Until we taste what Keating is offering us here, we will tend to equate peace with a felt experience. But when we experience true ‘peace’ it will enable us to walk into our fears, just as Jesus walked to his crucifixion. It will enable us to give birth to Love in our world regardless of what turmoil we might be surrounded by. This Peace enables us to wait patiently and ride out whatever storms might surround us.

WORDS TO PONDER:

Earth cannot be changed for the better
Unless the consciousness of individuals
Is changed first.

Declaration Toward a Global Ethic

Love is enfleshed everywhere.

Everywhere the Holy One is

Shouting and whispering,

“Let me Love you.”

And all that is asked of us is to receive.

In reality, that is our life’s work.

Judy Cannato in
Field of Compassion Page 171

REFLECTIONS ON WAITING:

“We can wait empty or we can wait full. It all depends on what we do with the time. Those who wait empty get irritated or dissipated. Those who wait full get richer as the time goes by.” From Listen with the Heart by Joan Chittister

“Waiting is what saves us from becoming slaves to the future. It enables us to think of options in case what we wait for fails to come. It requires that we fill the time in ways that swell the spirit. It gives us a sense of the present.” From Listen with the Heart by Joan Chittister

“The capacity to wait is the ability to endure, to grow, to enjoy and to hope.”
From Listen with the Heart by Joan Chittister

Have you had experience of the Peace Jesus offers us as Keating describes?

Are you awake to the longing in your own Heart for the Peace Jesus is offering us?

Can you ask for this Peace and patiently wait for it?

DAY 10.

A STORY.....

A Sufi master had lost the key to his house and was looking for it in the grass outside. He got down on his hands and knees and started running his fingers through every blade of grass. Along came eight or ten of his disciples. They said, "Master, what is wrong?"

He said, "I have lost the key to my house."

They said, "Can we help you find it!"

He said, "I'd be delighted."

So they all got down on their hands and knees and started running their fingers through the grass.

As the sun grew hotter, one of the more intelligent disciples said, "Master, have you any idea where you might have lost the key?"

The master replied, "Of course. I lost it in the house."

To which they all exclaimed, "Then why are we looking for it out here!"

He said, "Isn't it obvious? There is more light here."

We have all lost the key to our house. We don't live there anymore. We don't experience the divine indwelling. We don't live with the kind of intimacy with God that Adam and Eve reportedly enjoyed in the Garden of Eden and the Sufi master seems to have enjoyed before he lost his key.

The house in the parable represents happiness, and happiness is intimacy with God, the experience of God's loving presence. Without that experience, nothing else quite works; with it, almost anything works.

This is the human condition – to be without the true source of happiness, which is the experience of the presence of God, and to have lost the key to happiness, which is the contemplative dimension of life, the path to the increasing assimilation and enjoyment of God's presence. What we experience is our desperate search for happiness where it cannot possibly be found. The key is not in the grass; it was not lost outside ourselves. It was lost inside ourselves. That is where we need to look for it.....

From *The Human Condition* by Thomas Keating

It is from this 'inside' place where Love is preparing to be birthed.

Can we ask for the courage to keep 'coming inside' and resume our search there?

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEMPLATIVE DEVELOPMENT.....

Three principles are important here, as well as throughout the course of contemplative development, it seems to me;

1. **Understand** what is going on and how our own system operates, in this case how our bodily states and emotional states are related and how habits are formed and can be changed.

2. **Have a wholehearted determination** to move into the new state, not a half-hearted or tentative attitude in this case, really decide to give up tension attitudes and commit yourself without reservation to doing whatever you have selected as the means to learn the new way.

3. **Practice.** Practice every day, every hour, no exceptions, no excuses.

From *RADICAL OPTIMISM* by Beatrice Bruteau Page 29



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

I am constantly amazed how our ordinary life experiences teach us and awaken us. This came home to me recently. I walk early most mornings along our local beach and will do almost anything to avoid walking in soft deep sand for prolonged periods. If the tide is high I will choose to walk along the promenade and not the beach, just to avoid the hard work of walking in the soft sand. I decided recently I was going to make some Christmas decorations that required pieces of driftwood. Then being on the lookout, I saw a few pieces of driftwood at the foot of the sand dunes and went and collected them. The next day I thought I would do my whole walk along the foot of the sand dunes to see what I might find, and of course the sand was soft and deep. But my desire to find more driftwood had greater importance than my dislike of walking in soft sand. I thought it would be a pretty awful walk but was prepared to 'suffer' it up to a point!!

Well, I was like an eagle looking for its prey as I walked along and I found piece after piece of driftwood and was thrilled to bits with each little find. And then I noticed something as I completed my beach walk embracing a pile of driftwood in my arms. Because my focus was on what I was looking for, I hardly noticed the soft sand I was walking in. I was quite amazed at this little revelation and couldn't really believe it, taking into account my loathsome attitude to soft sand.

What is the lesson here? I am reminded of that question in scripture where Jesus asks: 'What are you looking for?' When we know what we are looking for, what we are passionate about, what we truly desire or long for from the depths of our being, this added focus seems to enable us to endure any discomfort or difficulty along the way. Not only endure it, but to not focus on it because our focus is elsewhere, on something greater than the present difficulty.

Too often we don't know what we are looking for, or what our passion is and we can get caught in the chaos and narrow externals of life. Life like this becomes one dimensional. We can become fixated on the difficulty and it can consume us, disturb us and even affect our mental and physical health. But when we are in touch with our deep desires or deepest inner longings, spiritual/vocational etc, it shifts our narrow minded focus onto something greater than what is immediately present or unpleasant. It broadens our horizon if you like, another dimension is added.

So the lesson learned here is to be in touch with our deepest longings (whatever it/they be) and they will help us wade through almost anything. But we must know first what it is we are longing for – what we are looking for. The Christmas Season is about the birthing of that longing and from there The Christ keeps coming to birth as we give our 'yes' to the longings of Love.

Annemarie





CENTERING
PRAYER
NETWORK
AUSTRALIA

ANNUAL RETREAT

AND

NATIONAL MEETING

8th – 11th MARCH, 2019

AT

Janssen Spirituality Centre
22 Woodvale Road – BORONIA, Victoria

Theme: “**CONSENTING TO GOD’S
PRESENCE AND ACTION WITHIN**”

A quote by Thomas Keating

We are delighted Chris Morris will join us again this year as our key-note speaker for the Saturday morning. Chris’s Ph.D. studies have been on the writings of Bruno Barnhart. He is Associate Lecturer at the Catholic Theological College and Head of Department, Dept. of Pastoral and General Studies. Chris is committed to the contemplative life and has a young family. Those who were present last year would remember the gift he was to the week-end retreat. It will be wonderful to welcome Chris back with us and reflecting upon this year’s theme: *Consenting to God’s Presence and Action Within*

Sr. Helen Duffy (Melb), Frances Cassidy (Melb) and Sarah Marrinan (Melb) will facilitate the remaining input sessions speaking to their own experiences relating to the theme of the retreat. Each bring a wealth of experience and gifts to share with us.

The retreat will foster a contemplative atmosphere in an ecumenical and inter-faith setting. There will be ample opportunities for personal reflection, times of silence and communal meditation practice.

ALL ARE WELCOME - COME AND JOIN US

RETREAT commences with the evening meal at 6pm Friday 8th March 2019 until 8pm on Sunday 10th March, followed by

NATIONAL MEETING
on Monday 11th March,
9.30am – 2pm

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BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL:
To request booking forms contact:
enquiries@janssencentre.org

[\(03\) 9762 6625](tel:(03)97626625)

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RECOMMENDED DONATION:
Retreat & National Meeting
8 - 11 March 2019
Live-in - \$280;
Live-out - \$200

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**RECOMMENDED DONATION
FOR RETREAT ONLY (8 - 10)**
Live-in - \$205
Live-out - \$150

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**RECOMMENDED DONATION
FOR NATIONAL MEETING ONLY**

–
11th March
\$50

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PLEASE NOTE:

Residential places are limited. Registration of Expressions of Interest due before 15th February 2019. Confirmation of places to be advised by 18th February 2019.

www.janssencentre.org





Painting by Richard Campbell

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS AND PEACE BE UPON OUR WORLD
OUR COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES.
WITH 'OPEN MINDS AND HEARTS 'MAY WE KEEP RESPONDING
TO THE 'INVITATION OF LOVE'
TO KEEP BIRTHING LOVE IN OUR WORLD