



# Speaking of Silence

Central Illinois Contemplative Outreach

Winter 2015

Vol. 17, No. 1

## God's Love and Our Focus



by Florrie Dammers,  
CICO Coordinator

Our twin five year old granddaughters live several states away and so we are very grateful to be able to keep in touch with them through Face Time. They show us art work and we catch up and we often read to them.

At the end of the conversation it has become our tradition to blow each other kisses and point to the spot where we've "caught" them. As you might guess, with two five year olds there is often some overlapping of conversation and sometimes a bit of confusion. During our last Face Time visit Abby was a bit distracted. She played with her toys and tuned in and out of the general conversation. When kisses had been blown and we were saying good-bye at last her little face scrunched up and she half wailed, "I didn't get any kisses!" She had been distracted and missed the kisses we had sent her way. Of course showers of kisses were soon brightening her face into smiles.

This seemed to me a good metaphor for why we all need these weeks of lent. God is always loving us in powerful ways but so often we are distracted and pay little or no attention to what is happening. Lent is the perfect time to refocus our attention and intention, to re-commit to or to increase our centering practice, and to pay attention to the way the Spirit is moving in our lives. May these Lenten days be fruitful and transformative for you and may you be radiant with joy on Easter morning!

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in powerful ways but so  
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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Information about these events will be shared by email and on our website. Meanwhile, mark your calendars!

### United in Prayer Day

**March 21, 2015**

St. Patrick of Merna, Bloomington  
10 am - 12 pm

### Introduction and Review of Centering Prayer

**April 25, 2015**

St. Thomas Church, Peoria

### Spring Retreat

*Deepening the Silence...Falling Into the Hands of God*

**April 9-12, 2015**

Benet House, St. Mary Monastery,  
Rock Island, IL

### Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop

**Fall 2015 — date to be determined**

St. Patrick of Merna, Bloomington  
9:30 am-1pm

### A Day Apart

**Fall 2015 — date to be determined**

St. Patrick of Merna, Bloomington  
9 am - 1 pm

### CICO Leadership Meeting

**August 22, 2015**

St. Patrick of Merna, Bloomington

# Passing on the Tradition of Centering Prayer

Introductory Workshops are the official Contemplative Outreach way of introducing and coaching those new to Centering Prayer. You may notice in each newsletter and online that workshops are presented regularly in Central Illinois. Here's a brief look at the workshops and the presenters who carefully learn the Fr. Keating method and pass it on to a new generation of contemplatives in the making.

## Centering Prayer Introductory Workshops

The next introductory workshop in our central Illinois region is April 25 at St. Thomas in Peoria. This workshop is also for those wanting a review of the centering prayer method.

Workshops are presented on a regular basis and in fact are strongly recommended for those new to centering. It is a three or four hour session that includes discussion and practice in four general areas:

1. **Prayer as Relationship** — prayer with the intention to consent to the intimacy of God.
2. **The Centering Prayer Method** — description and participation in Centering Prayer periods.
3. **Thoughts and the Use of the Sacred Word**
4. **Deepening Our Relationship with God** — description of how to extend the prayer into daily life.

Participants also have the opportunity to ask questions and to check their personal Centering Prayer practice in view of what they are learning.

## About the Presenters...

The introductory workshops are conducted by presenters, those who have been commissioned by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., to passing along the tradition of centering prayer. Coordinator Florrie Dammers has presented many workshops in the past years.

CICO now has 3 new presenters: Toni Petersen, John Petersen, and Anne Colloton are now presenting the method of centering prayer workshops in our region. They all have many years of centering prayer experience and have answered the question, "How is God calling me into contemplative service at this time in my life?" They were trained by certified instructors from Contemplative Outreach International and received guidance from a mentor during their training period. They also fulfilled prerequisites such as reading the Fr. Keating books, attending an intensive retreat and a formation training workshop.



John Petersen



Toni Petersen



Anne Colloton

**Are you interested?** If you have at least three years of being faithful to centering prayer and would like to learn more about the training, please contact our coordinator, Florrie Dammers.

**Contemplative Outreach** is a spiritual community made up of individuals and small prayer groups committed to the practice of Centering Prayer. Over the years we have assisted in establishing Centering Prayer groups and chapters in the United States and many other countries. Our purpose is to renew the contemplative dimension of the gospel in everyday life through the method of Centering Prayer; a prayer form that opens us to the gift of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer moves beyond all our words, thoughts, and feelings in relating to God.

For more information, visit [ContemplativeOutreach.org](http://ContemplativeOutreach.org).



## Review:

### Thomas Keating ... Reflections on the Unknowable (Book)

by *Spencer Gillespie,*  
*Bloomington*

This most recent book by Thomas Keating, published in 2014 by Lantern Books, defies simple classification. The first half is an edited transcript of a 2013 web interview of Fr. Keating conducted by Rick Archer, host and webmaster of "Buddha at the Gas Pump," a web forum the stated purpose of which is to dispel skepticism and misconceptions about "claims of higher states of consciousness." The book's cover describes its second half as "thirty-one brief homilies." In fact, only two selections in the collection genuinely could be classified as homilies. The remainder appear to be a mix of notes from journals, extracts from talks, and miscellaneous musings touching on multifarious topics, most likely written over a number of years.

Unfortunately no context for any of the material is shared with the reader. The interview touches upon wide variety of topics ranging from contemporary cosmology to human spiritual evolution to the basics of centering prayer, much of which will be familiar to those acquainted with Fr. Keating's previous writings. Many complicated conceptual notions are lightly addressed quite rapidly. The fast flow and the paucity of elaboration could be quite frustrating to those more at home with orderly, logical presentations. In spite of the frequent lack of clarity, the breadth and grace



of Fr. Keating's theology, spirituality, and personality shine through splendidly.

The second half is perhaps best experienced as a gracious glimpse into Fr. Keating's journal that allows one a fleeting glance into some of the thoughts, experiences, conflicts, and discoveries of his encounter with divine

mystery. A Summa Theologica it is not, nor does it pretend to be. The contents are published as nothing more than reflections and should be received as such. As in the interview, there are frustrating moments when the thrust of Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary theology or some insight from process theology is quickly posited with little explanation and the reader is left wondering what exactly is intended to be communicated. Additionally there is the perennial difficulty of attempting to communicate clearly about that mystery which ultimately lies beyond communicating. In spite of the challenges the pages are still filled with deep insights that move both mind and spirit.

Those new to centering prayer or to Fr. Keating's writing would do well to begin with his earlier works. This volume seems to have been published primarily for those who already have come to love and appreciate Fr. Keating through their own experience of his guidance in centering prayer. They will find much in this collection to inspire, to affirm, to question, and to challenge.

## Retreat Possibilities

[Contemplative Outreach](#)

[Chicago](#)

[St. Louis](#)

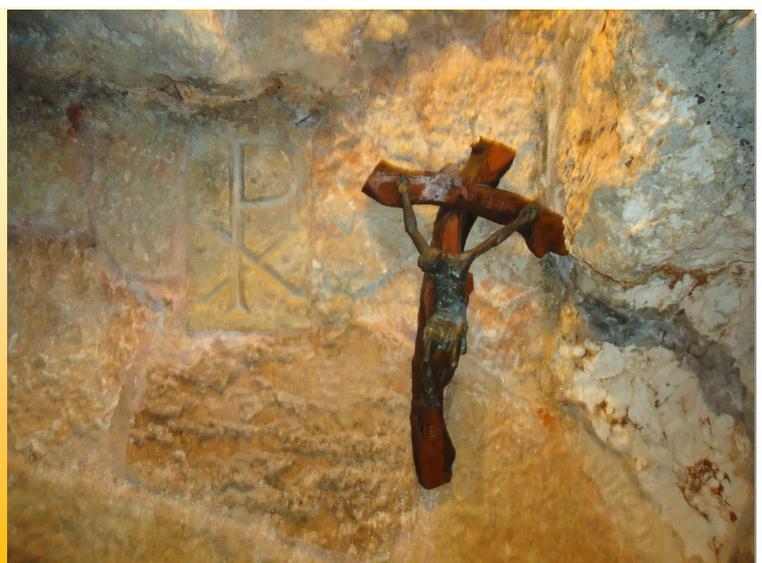
[Eastern Iowa](#)

[Midwest Regional Calendar](#)

[Benet House, Rock Island, IL](#)

[Carmelite Spiritual Center, Darien, IL](#)

[Chiara Center, Springfield, IL](#)



# CICO Centering Prayer Communities

For meeting locations, please contact the facilitators:

## Bloomington-Normal

Monday, 11:25 am

Jana Schopp, 309/662-5525,  
jana@stpatrickmerna.org

Tuesday, 9 am

Sandy Baker, 309/706-1177, bakersm@gmail.com

Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Richard Dammers, 309/664-5921,  
rdammers@ilstu.edu

Thursday, 6:30 pm:

Mary Beth Bantham, 309/662-9563,  
mebanth@ilstu.edu;  
Kathleen Kolls, 309/454-1046,  
daisys12@frontier.com

Friday, 9:30 am:

Florrie Dammers, 309/664-5921,  
fadammers@gmail.com

Saturday, 9:00 am:

Madeline Callahan, 309/829-5469,  
mcallaha@iwu.edu

## Champaign-Urbana

Monday, 7:00 pm:

Mary Lou Menches, 217/344-1125  
mmenches@illinois.edu

## Geneseo

Tuesday, 8:30 am:

Susan Ford, 309/945-8504, msford12@geneseo.net

## Monticello

Tuesday, 4:00 pm:

Rosemary Hardy, 217/762-2435, crhardy@net66.com

## Peoria

Monday, 11:00 am:

Nancy Wheeler, 309/258-2333

Wednesday, 6:30 pm:

Cece Tedford, 309/692-6109, or 309/255-9168 (cell)

## Peoria Heights

Monday, 7:00 pm:

Pat Callaway, 309/691-5586,  
pcallaway9346@yahoo.com

## Rock Island

Wednesday, 1:00 pm:

Sr. Catherine Cleary, OSB, 309/283-2100,  
ccleary@smmsisters.org

## CICO Leadership Team News

### Thank you for your service, Chris Kraft!



Chris Kraft has stepped down as co-coordinator. We are deeply grateful for her many years of service on the Leadership Team and as co-coordinator of CICO and for the many other contributions she has made to the life of our centering prayer community over the last twenty plus years.

The CICO Leadership Team meets in February and August—check the calendar for dates. All are welcome to attend. If you can't attend, please contact one of the team members with your suggestions for the agenda.

**Florrie Dammers** (coordinator) fadammers@gmail.com

**Sandy Baker**, bakersm@gmail.com

**Sr. Marianne Burkhard**, srmarianne@cdop.org

**Ed Colloton**, ecolloton@gmail.com

**Mary Lou Menches**, mmenches@illinois.edu

**Jana Schopp**, jana@stpatrickmerna.org

**Presenters:** Florrie Dammers, Anne Colloton, Toni Petersen, John Petersen



**This newsletter** is published twice a year, in winter and summer, by the Central Illinois Contemplative Outreach leadership team. We also keep in touch with emails and our website:

<http://centeringprayercentralillinois.org/>

It is our hope that by recognizing our widespread community and sharing our experiences, our collective centering prayer practice and community will grow.