

A Word From Marsha Sinetar



Fall, 2009

With glad tidings, I offer a short glad word about our new Monograph (IV)... It's now at the printers, and a “review” copy will be mailed out around the holidays. About 10 or 20 copies will go out first, to those who typically send us helpful proofing feedback. The rest of our first print runs will follow once we correct certain glaring errors. As always, once we run out of copies we may not reprint. If you want, but didn't get, a copy by December 31, 2009, please e-mail us.

Here's a sample idea from Monograph IV... *Practice: Contemplative Study*

“Not everyone reads the Bible. Those who do read it (and other holy texts) and who do so as a practice, seem *called*—disposed—to study with relish, not all the time but as the Spirit moves them. Their attraction to God's word seems a universal discernment, or receptivity, to the sublime light shining in the soul.

...Because the Spirit alone opens to us the scriptures (Luke 24:32), we can alter the classic contemplative direction: Go sit in your room, read, study your Bible, and meditate as the Spirit moves you. And the light and warmth of the Spirit will teach you everything you need to know.”

Exciting News: 1st Center Scholarship, 2009

A few of you sent superb suggestions when, in our Spring '09 Letter, we asked for names of *small* colleges with graduate schools that might have interest in our contemplative themes.

Thanks to a lead from one of you, our 1st Center Scholarship has begun at Siena Heights University in Michigan. How thankful we are to the graduate faculty for its receptivity and helpfulness in what seems an initial pilot program.

Siena Heights is named for St. Catherine of Siena, a 14th Century Italian Dominican and contemplative who had enormous leadership talent.

St. Catherine proved that contemplatives are diverse and live both in and out of traditional monasteries. In the book *All Saints*, we read that despite her tireless activity in her greater community—as a healer and peacemaker—Catherine was also a mystic. She had daily, direct experience of God and a profound and faithful prayer life. Catherine believed her “cell” was constructed of self-knowledge and truth—not of bricks and mortar.

Please visit the University's website from which we *paraphrase* the following (<http://www.sienaheights.edu/MissionHistory.aspx>):

Siena Heights was originally a college for women who intended to become teachers. By the 1950s the university was recognized as one of the nation's 10 best liberal arts colleges for women. Now coeducational, its expanded curriculum includes programs in business and human services, as well as providing options for adult students, with evening, day, and degree completion centers all over Michigan, including Adrian, Southfield, Lansing, and Battle Creek.

One professor's governing precepts frame such values: Siena's Educational and Graduate programs strive to help students meet their individual educational needs and encourage them to “contemplate and share of the fruits of that contemplation.”

We hope to expand our Scholarships quietly, over time, thereby advancing our **Mission**. If you have added suggestions for widening our efforts, please send them. May our efforts draw countless people—academics; talented helping professionals; graduate students in counseling, education, leadership, and the pastoral disciplines—into an expanding circle of diverse others, hospitable to our universal and timeless contemplative themes.

Thank you also to all of you who send even one idea, donation or volunteer help. It is my great joy to be able to share freely of these Monographs and our web site. Our graphic, web helpers, printers, editor friends, and readers all donate their expertise so generously. You help more than words can express. The smallest ideas encourage me and are so much appreciated.

Every contribution is amazingly useful. **However, please remember: We are not a 501(c)3, non-profit organization.**

FAQ: Recent inquiries include...

Q (1). “In this era of social interaction, why isn't your site and Letter more interactive?”

A. Our site and resources are truly designed for contemplatives who, to repeat, tend to be wholesomely engaged, self-sufficient, deeply thoughtful, and healthfully attracted to silence and solitude. Our readers really *read!* And are highly self-directed students of “the peace that passes understanding.” Our site is an educational resource, not a social networking thing.

Q (1a). “I am seeking a more social spiritual-community so I can make new friends, attend seminars, get instruction, counseling... Any leads?”

A. Not really. Many communities, such as you'd like to join, seem eager for membership, and market themselves colorfully. However, remember: ***All communities are not equally helpful.*** Check the news: Some of these seem cultish, controlling, even abusive. Do your research. Consider getting recommendations from your (a) pastor, rabbi or spiritual director; (b) local/preferred place of worship; and/or (c) get suggestions from those whose judgment you respect and trust most. Use your own mature judgment.

Q (2). “Re: Monographs... why do you want feedback?”

A. Feedback (1) tells me if these mailings are welcome. **(2)** Everything sent always asks recipients to tell us if they *don't* want such mailings, and we remove such names immediately. We don't want anyone to get unwanted stuff. Ours is a little, uncommon effort. It does not suit the dignity of our message to use our resources as a marketing ploy.

Q (2a). What constitutes feedback? Pretty much anything that says how you're using and/or experiencing the content. **(See Spring 2009 Letter.)**

A. Some readers send personal opinions on a specific page, topic or paragraph. They reference the page or line number. Others send suggestions for our future reading—titles of their favorite books, or they cross-reference some paragraph to one of our own books that have become staples in their study.

A. (2a). A few readers ask us to send Monographs to selected others. A few tell us how they are using the Monographs in their professional and/or personal walk. Monastic readers often pinpoint ideas, pages, and precepts that support their contemplative life, and/or describe how the Bible citations augment their meditations. It all helps.

If you would prefer to be removed from our mailings and listserv letters, please let us know and we'll do so promptly.

All thanks, all peace, and everything of what's truly good—for the Holidays, the New Year, and beyond.

The C e n t e r Mission

To increase understanding of the progression and diverse expressions of the spiritual completion toward which we strive; to advance and preserve selected principles of the contemplative tradition and the entirety of the founder's body of work.

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