

A Word from Marsha Sinetar



November, 2010

“We could encounter God’s refreshments while singing hymns or reading the psalms...or while engrossed with anything infused with the divine love. ...The Spirit moves one at expected times—say, when praying—and at any unexpected time.”

...Posture of Heart IV: Contemplative Study

A NEW SERIES & ONE SMALL CHANGE

1. A New Series

I’m excited to tell you that the next Center publication starts a new Series of Monographs (about which I am keeping mum so as to surprise you.)

As the quote above suggests, the Holy Spirit can move us when we least expect it, and our next Monograph explores one of those I (to me) astonishing times. Because not everyone recognizes or experiences that potential, the ideas are formulated with many questions to stimulate your thought and possible professional dialogue.

I’ll probably return to *Posture of Heart* down the line.

The Inquiry Series hopes to respond to you Center friends who are (mostly) helping professionals and monastics and who tell us you enjoy readings that edify thoughtful study and discovery. Your recent feedback of that sort indicates our readers particularly benefit from...

(a) mulling over our contemplative themes without explicitly being told what to think;

(b) looking up the Scriptural citations themselves, so as to read them in context and integrate those verses with their own favored texts, to meditatively work out their own spiritual issues; and

(c) sharing the ideas with friends, clients and using the Monographs while on retreats.

Receiving such reports is really wonderful, and should explain why the current Outreach is so fulfilling.

2. One Wee Change:

PLEASE EMAIL US IF YOU WANT OUR UPCOMING MONOGRAPH.

To help us (a) estimate how many initial Monographs to print, and (b) to help us keep our U.S. Mail and Listserv Lists current, we now ask readers of this Listserv Letter to let us know each time we announce a forthcoming Monograph if it's wanted. **We will give first priority to those who RSVP.**

After that initial mailing, should quantities remain, we'll send out the remaining Monographs to List members in some subjective order—probably those we think want to receive them will get the balance, first. And, yes, thank God, all such mailings continue to be of a complimentary nature.

We also continue to send out complimentary Monographs in the first batch of mailings to selected Center friends and our monastic readers (both groups tend not to receive these e-letters).

OTHER UPDATES

1. ADVISORY IDEAS?

If you are a spiritually minded professional of some sort, well-familiar with my books and receive benefit from reading our e-letter, please give a little thought to how The Center might expand its outreach (see Mission) in some mellow, non-hyped up, non-commercialized way. A larger (or more elaborate?) organizational set up would require lots of chit-chat and fund-raising, thus taking one away from actually *living* contemplatively.

That said, reader feedback and the fulfillment we receive from encouraging budding—if also active—contemplatives and some very generous, surprising donations we received this Quarter, makes me want to do more, communicate

more, speak out more about God's grace to a wider, heart-hungry audience. Your input is always invaluable.

Please send your ideas in the way(s) you already do: email, voicemail and U.S. Mail. I ponder it all.

2. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE BEGINS

Per our most recent e-letter, I'm delighted to report that the Pastoral Peer-Leadership group, sponsored by a grant from the Lily Foundation, began in October, 2010. The Renewal program is hosted by ***Sustaining Pastoral Excellence***—a Michigan-based, nonprofit group funded by a Lily Foundation grant. The small professional circle will read and discuss themes presented in the revised edition of *Ordinary People as Monks & Mystics*, and...

- ✚ meet monthly
- ✚ explore their own issues of contemplative living
- ✚ read and discuss one or more of our Monographs
- ✚ have two long-distance “visits” with yours truly, including Q & A sessions, sending me questions beforehand to enhance that dialogue.

To get real: If we're serious about integrating contemplative practices into an otherwise busy, conventional life—whatever our roles and function(s)—that shift of attention, and that shaping and arranging of a more silent, worshipful schedule, usually generates more problems—and of a higher order concern—than it solves. Didn't St. Gregory propose that contemplative life is a heavenly life, and impossible to live “perfectly” in this world?

Over 20 years ago, when I first began meeting with small professional groups and floated trial balloons on such subjects, “higher order” concerns invariably came up. For example...

- ✚ **Guilt:** How do I/we deal with family and friends seem offended, even openly critical, when I/we take time for prayer, spiritual retreats, and the line... it's painful and I usually end up feeling guilty.
- ✚ **Selfish vs. Unselfish:** Isn't it selfish to deprive my child (spouse, co-workers, etc.) of my time, attention, help, etc. when I shut the door to pray or decline an invitation to this or that function?
- ✚ **Time Constraints:** I'm just too busy to add one more thing to my daily schedule; I've tried regular meditation, “quiet” times in the early morning—frankly, I need my sleep.

One imagines that similar ideas will surface again and again in most Peer-Leadership groups—whether these take place in long-distance phone discussions or in monthly in-person dialogue. How exciting.

Anyone interested in facilitating such groups or joining a possible next session, please let me know.

3. CONTINUING THANKS

As we mention in each e-letter, we are **not** a non-profit organization. Still, some of you generously remember and acknowledge our work with small, very much appreciated donations.

Each good turn spurs others: We are using said sums, however minor, to send more (e.g., extra) complimentary Monographs to those who tell us they're using them to extend their professional reach. Or who ask us to send these to their colleagues. Or who share these themselves, for instance:

“...I find these readings so helpful and send extra to those who crave contemplative encouragement. Like one nun, who works with the homeless, and who herself lives so threadbare a life that she cannot afford to buy books.”

Thank you so much. Even small sums add up and enlarge the circle. If you know someone who might enjoy this e-letter, please share it with them. If you'd like to be taken off our List, please let us know and we'll remove your name promptly.

All best for the upcoming holidays and beyond, in all peace and good will.

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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