

## 24-01-13 Quiet Day Addenda

### Lead Us Not into Temptation

#### Luke 22:31-34

Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked/demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

#### John 21:15-19

Do you love me ... feed my sheep

#### Mark 14:32-41

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray. He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Humanity is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

*Nothing could be more  
down to earth or more  
humbling than this  
boundless Presence,  
which just is. It doesn't  
have to prove itself.  
It doesn't have to  
acquire anything.  
It just is.*

The essence of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and action within. The logo of Contemplative Outreach as depicted on our newsletter suggests how this consent normally develops. The seven stages of Centering Prayer outlined below continue these steps beyond the present logo and dispose us toward ever-deepening self-surrender. These seven stages might be called the process of Centering Prayer. I summarize them as follows:

- 1. Silence** is consenting to God's presence – what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God – within and among us. External silence supports this movement.
- 2. Solitude** flows from interior silence. Disregarding our interior dialogue leads to “resting in God” (Saint Gregory the Great), and to consciousness without particular content.
- 3. Solidarity** is the awareness of increasing oneness with God, with the whole human family, and with all creation.
- 4. Service** is following the ever-present inspirations of the Spirit not only during the time of formal prayer, but in the details of everyday life. It is a spontaneous expression of solidarity: God in us serving God in others.
- 5. Stillness** is what Jesus called “prayer in secret” (Matthew 6:6). This is the experience of God's presence beyond rational concepts, beyond preoccupation with one's personal thoughts and desires.
- 6. Simplicity** is the integration of contemplation and action, a growing capacity to live in the midst of duality– the ups and downs of daily life – without losing the non-dual perspective. Contemplation is not the same as action. They are distinct but they are not separate.
- 7. Surrender** is the total gift of self to God, a movement from union to unity. It marks the beginning of what Jesus calls “eternal life” as an abiding state.

As we are moved through the stages of grace, our perspective changes in regard to Centering Prayer, the contemplative life, and God. In between the steps there may be delightful plateaus as well as dark nights, all of which have physical, mental, and spiritual consequences. The most transforming dark nights seem to be primarily psychological states, and the darkest of all is the purely spiritual suffering that arises from just being a creature, apparently unequipped for the hazards and trials of this life, but going through them with invincible confidence in God's love.