

## A Word from The Center



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*I shall walk in a broad space, for I have sought your precepts. (Psalm 119:45)*

*The psalmist is no longer entrapped, enclosed in a pit, pursued by enemies or suffering the sore straits of a harsh journey. She has received breathing room to live secure, freed from the fear of 'falling' and the ravages of oppression (38:16–17). The ground beneath the psalmist's feet is made firm; 'narrow straits' are widened into open vistas. With such language, the psalmist's 'pathway' is broadened into a 'refuge.'*

*...William Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*.*

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### **I. Updates & News**

- 1. Phones:** We've activated our new voice mail number. Should you want the number, please let us know. Our e-mail address remains the same.

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- 2. Bogus Emails:** Our email system was hacked during the summer. We sent out one notice in August. Just in case you didn't receive it, please ignore anything strange looking that seems sent from me, The Center or Sinetar & Associates, Inc. Friends have had this happen and tell us that bogus emails are often sent with questionable/distasteful attachments.

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- 3. Website:** We hope soon to inform you of our updated Web site; this has been a time-consuming project, and interrupted our flow of more meaningful work. Hopefully, the result will be well worth the detour.

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4. No Monographs this Fall: Relating to all of the above, I am starting another book or longer project and will send out a word about Monographs (*OLF, III*) as soon as there's something to say.

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5. Reading Resources, Anyone? Years ago, when people were reading more than they seem to be today, I set up a minor resource list of (to me) spiritually-relevant books. Some I never look at any more; some I still turn to when in need of encouragement or inspiration.

Because we get frequent requests for resources, and people seem to want books for their own contemplative library-collection, we repeat some titles we've included in previous e-letters.

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## II. Books We've Loved

### On Contemplative Prayer

✚ Abhishiktananda. *Prayer*. Delhi: ISPCK (P. O. Box 1583, Kashmere Gate, Delhi, India 110006).

This booklet is so pure, so rich with the voice of the Spirit—not really academic or cerebral—and so thin a volume that I've misfiled it several times. I love this work and reread it frequently, especially after losing it for a while. One can read it from back to front, from middle to end. Whatever. The author was a French monk who lived in India for about thirty years, and found his Christian life greatly enriched by the Hindu-Buddhist religious tradition.

✚ Thomas Merton. *Contemplative Prayer*. Image Books/Doubleday.

Now here is an inspiringly practical, delicately nuanced comment on contemplative prayer from one who "knew." One of the best found. Includes short excerpts from different monastic traditions. Merton had a universal mind, hospitable to the principles of both Eastern meditation practices and more traditional Western approaches, and an integrative love is obvious in these chapters.

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### Books with a Contemplative Feel

✚ Oswald Chambers. *My Utmost for His Highest*. Discovery House.

A Christian devotional designed for daily reading as meditation and application of Scripture. Incrementally, this study can build strength of worship and authentic faith. If we're mealy-mouthed about expressing our values or walking

our spiritual talk, Chambers can straighten us out. He's a no-nonsense, "get real" practitioner. For me, meditating with Chambers for a year, every morning, was like attending boot camp. When the year was up, I started over again at the beginning and felt, "Thanks, I needed that."

✚ John Muir. *In His Own Words*, edited by Peter Browning. Great West Books.

I've cited Browning's book of Muir quotes in almost everything I've written. When I'm down, Muir cheers me up. When frazzled, Muir calms. I've packed *John Muir* in my suitcase for long business trips. If you're a born contemplative, after reading Muir, you may end up donating your farm to a conservancy group, moving to a hut in the Rockies, or joining the Trappists or the Saint Clares. A saintly book. Buy it! Give it as a Christmas gift to the members of your local city planning board if they even consider paving over one more inch of wilderness.

✚ William Brown. *Seeing the Psalms*. Westminster/John Knox Press.

Brown's narrative is rich, poetic, original; it's a new slant—intuitive yet academic. How unusual. This seems the most significant treatment of the Psalms in a long time. If you are a poet, artist, a meditative open-minded sort, a bit of Brown's commentary with a bit of meditation on some psalm should nourish spiritual insight.

✚ e. e. cummings. *100 Selected Poems*. Grove Press.

If your spirit isn't quickened, your heart stirred up or even softened, by some line in this choice volume, consider getting help.

✚ Walker Percy. *The Moviegoer*. Ivy Books.

What can one say about Percy? He's God's man. A writer who calls us to awareness in the tradition of philosopher Soren Kierkegaard by describing the malaise or "sickness unto death" that engulfs us if we are not, as he puts it, "onto something" holy. *The Moviegoer* proves that Percy saw the holy in the dustiest, cobwebbiest corner. God bless you, W.P., e.e., and John Muir; you have blessed us.

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#### Other: Works on Meditative, Contemplative Practice in Daily Life

✚ John of the Cross. *Selected Writings*.

✚ Julian of Norwich. *Showings*.

✚ Meister Eckhart. *The Essential Sermons*.

✚ Nicholas of Cusa. *Selected Spiritual Writings*.

✚ Quaker Spirituality. *Selected Writings*, edited by Douglas V. Steere.

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## Inspirational

- ✚ Truman Capote. *A Christmas Memory*.
- ✚ e.e. cummings. *Seventy Three Poems*.
- ✚ Martin Buber. *Tales from the Hasidim*.
- ✚ Logan Persall Smith. *Trivia*.
- ✚ Simone Weil. *Waiting for God*.

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## Hard to Classify

- ✚ Eric Gill. *In a Strange Land*.
- ✚ Bede Griffiths. *The Golden String* (autobiography).
- ✚ John Hargreaves. *As I See It*.
- ✚ Thich Nhat Hanh. *Being Peace*.
- ✚ Pascal. *Pensees*.

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## The Center Mission

To increase understanding of the progression and diverse expressions of the spiritual completion (*teleios*) 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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