



# The Contemplative Society

Autumn 2010

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I am one with the  
*Source* in so far as I,  
too, act as a *Source*,  
by making everything  
which I have received  
flow again...

Raimon Panikkar,  
*Christophany:*  
*The Fullness of Man*

## Message from TCS Board President

Dear members and friends of  
The Contemplative Society:

Thank you so much for your prayers and generous financial donations this past year. As we anticipated it has been a year of changes and amazing growth and grace. Cynthia's letter describes some of her responses to calls globally to teach, lead retreats, interact with spiritual leaders of various faith traditions, and to complete her book on Mary Magdalene. What has taken place, since The Contemplative Society was formed 13 year ago to financially and administratively support Cynthia's work in introducing the Christian Contemplative tradition, is infinitely beyond anything we had thought or imagined!

Our Administrator, Eileen deVerteuil, has developed and transformed our website and introduced Facebook, both helping to increase our global outreach. She, along with Board Members Harry Eerkes and Lynda Rose, organized our retreat with Cynthia at Lake Cowichan last April, and even managed to find 20 extra spaces so that a total of 60 people were able to listen to Cynthia's teachings and participate in the sittings, chants, community, and Silence. Our CD Ministry has grown considerably with the introduction of new recordings from Cynthia's teaching retreats and the improvement of less current sets. As Administrator, Eileen is involved in copying and shipping CD sets around the world. She is also involved in responding promptly to phone calls and emails, providing resource material and support to new contemplative groups, publishing the newsletter, and other office-related tasks. Administering The Contemplative Society is a complex task and your donations are helping us to support Cynthia and other teachers of the Contemplative path in this way. Additional donations would mean we could respond to a number of needs and new projects that are beyond our financial resources at this time. As well, we would

love to increase our financial gifts to Cynthia, especially as she leads our annual retreat without charge to us.

Planning has been underway for some time now for our March 2011 Retreat with Cynthia at Poets Cove, Pender Island. We had a serious challenge in securing a site for this event as our beloved Glenairley and Queenswood facilities are now permanently closed and other potential sites were already booked. When one of our members heard about our difficulty he approached Poets Cove management and was offered a very generous reduction in their usual rates. We have always tried to offer retreats with Cynthia at the

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most affordable fee possible and that is also true this year, as we have priced this event to just cover our costs. We are looking forward to sharing this experience with many of you in this beautiful setting.

I give thanks for all the blessings of this past year. For Cynthia and her teaching, for other teachers of the Christian Contemplative path, for the Board of The Contemplative Society who give so generously of their time, for members of the Society who have volunteered countless hours editing and reviewing our CDs, for our Administrator, and for you, our members and friends, without whose generous donations we would not be able to offer financial support to Cynthia and to carry out the administrative work of the Society.

I look forward to the coming year and what might be possible with your prayers and support.

Warmest Wishes and Blessings  
Pat Manning, President



### *New CD Coming Soon: An Introduction to the Practice of Centering Prayer*

This CD offers a full introduction to the method of Centering Prayer but will also provide a valuable refresher for those with an established practice. Here is what one of our reviewers had to say after listening to this new set: *“Wow! I have two books on the subject and have taken an introductory workshop, but this recording was so full of insight and helpful anecdotes that it revitalized my practice in a profound way!” - Darla from Victoria BC*

Watch for an email notifying you of this CD release the beginning of December!

## *A Personal Retreat - by Heather and Christopher Page, Victoria BC*

At the beginning of July this past summer we made our second retreat at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Lafayette, Oregon.

To get to our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey from Victoria BC, we took the ferry from Port Angeles and drove 5 hours southwest to Lafayette. The Abbey is 5 kms (3 miles) . west of Lafayette, Oregon, an hour south of Portland.

The Abbey rests on 1400 acres of rolling farmland and untamed brush. It is a beautiful monastery, home to about thirty monks who make their living as bookbinders and providing storage for local wineries.

The lives of those who call the Abbey home are shaped mostly by the gentle rhythm of the daily office. The monks gather five times a day in their beautiful austere chapel. The schedule never changes: 4:15 a.m. Vigils, 6:30 a.m. Lauds and Community Mass, 12:30 p.m. Day Hour Prayers and Angelus, 5:30 p.m. Vespers, 7:30 p.m. Compline. The public and retreatants are welcome to join in any or all of these services.

In addition to the regular chapel times of worship, monks and guests who wish to may gather in the Bethany House meditation Chapel for group meditation at 3:05 a.m., 3:35 a.m., 4:50 a.m., 6:00 a.m., and 6:00 p.m.

When we visit the Abbey we stay in one of the five retreat houses, each of which contains two bedrooms and a shared toilet and shower. Delicious vegetarian meals are all served buffet-style in the retreatants' refectory, a short walk from the residences. Breakfast and Lunch are silent; dinner talking is allowed but in our experience the silence is rarely broken.

There is a room down the hall for those who may wish to have conversation while eating.

The grounds offer ample opportunity for walking. There is a large pond behind the residences and a winding circuit of

trails going almost endlessly up the hill behind the Abbey.

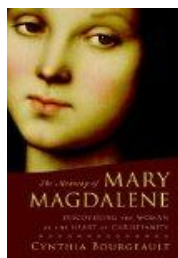
The monks mostly keep to themselves. Although there is a good chance through the day that you will encounter one of them and they are always warm and friendly. A personal conference can be arranged if a retreatant desires spiritual direction.



The Abbey only has the capacity to accommodate about ten retreatants overnight and it is usually fully occupied. So it is necessary to plan ahead. \$50-\$60 a day covers a private room and all meals. If you want to plan a personal retreat, you could not find a more welcoming and sacred environment.

If you would like to read more about our personal retreat at the Abbey you can visit Christopher's blog at: <http://inaspaciousplace.wordpress.com>, beginning with entries from August 3.

The Abbey website is [www.trappistabbey.org](http://www.trappistabbey.org)



### *From The Meaning of Mary Magdalene, by Cynthia Bourgeault*

If Mary Magdalene does, in fact, enjoy a privileged access to the Master, she has certainly earned it: not because she is his special favorite...but because she has been able so deeply to absorb and integrate his spiritual methodology. She has learned the secret of unbroken union with him across the realms, and she teaches from the same fount of living water that flowed in him... (p. 56)

## A Letter from Cynthia

November 1, 2010

"All Saints' Greetings to all you Saints!"



I am writing to you on the eve of All Saints from Our Lady of The Holy Spirit Abbey in Conyers, Georgia, where I am spending a few respite days in the midst of the teaching rounds. It's a great pleasure to call you all to mind as I reflect back on the highlights of the past six months and ponder the shape of what may lie ahead.

The big watershed event has been the publication of my book *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, which officially made its debut on September 14. Autumn has been stacked with a busy schedule of book signing events, beginning with our official launch in Blue Hill, Maine, then moving on to Southern California, where the highlight was preaching and concelebrating with the St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Apostolic Community in San Diego, whose two women priests recently made the cover of TIME magazine as the impulse toward women's ordination gains momentum in the Roman Catholic Church. From there the book tour took me to Hong Kong, then to Asheville, North Carolina, and there will still be a couple of more East Coast events (Washington and New York) before I head back to my usual winter bivouac in Colorado in early December.

So far so good. While I fully expect at some point to run afoul of shocked traditionalists crying "Heresy!," so far the reception of my book has been overwhelmingly positive, as folks see that what I'm really about is trying to liberate Christian theology from a long, painful history of neurosis around issues of sexuality and human intimacy, and to reclaim the way of the Heart as a transforming path, equally practicable by those in committed relationship as by celibate monks. In our own time, as so many of us watch in helplessness as the Church seems intent on dashing itself on the rocks of what one of my priest friends calls "the pelvic issues" (women's ordination, gay marriage, abortion, birth control, priestly sexual misconduct), it seems clear that we all need to find our way back to a much higher anthropology of human sexuality. My book is among other things an offering in that direction.

My teaching priorities these days seem to be constellating around creating deeper and more intense Wisdom Schools for maturing contemplative practitioners, combining rigorous kenotic practice with a deepening participation in the Christian mystical life, particularly as it expresses itself in liturgy, and in the ancient but little known Christian practices around mindfulness and inner attention. Highlights of our Wisdom circuit this past year have been the Holy

Week meditation retreat at the House of Prayer in Minnesota (with Calgary contemplatives Betsy Young and Susan Cooper in attendance), and our pilot Wisdom School in Assisi (this time with our Canadian "double B's," Bronwen Boddington and Barbara Britton on deck), where we were able to immerse ourselves deeply in St. Francis' extraordinary path of deepening surrender.

I am particularly interested, as many of you already know, in the issue of the formation of Wisdom teachers, an area that has been sadly neglected in recent Christian centuries and which does not lend itself easily to standard contemporary methodologies such as "teacher training" or certification. In ancient times a Wisdom teacher was a "*pneumatikos*"—a person of mature spirit. Today's equivalents are a master, a guru, or— as the Sufi's have it, a *shaik*—and the mode of delivery of Wisdom is not academic discourse but "*sohbet*" ("spiritual conversation"), held energetically by a person specifically trained in moment-to-moment awareness and the conscious wielding of spiritual energy. How does one learn to do this? In the time-tested ancient transmissions, it was through internship and mentoring. A student went and placed his or her life in the fate of an "abba" or "amma," a spiritual elder who had learned to "walk the talk." Is there a way of replicating this process today, adapting it to the conditions of our own times? This will be a particular concern during our Advanced Wisdom School, and in a series of Wisdom Schools on the drawing board for 2011 and 2012, particularly our "Advanced" Wisdom School in New York State, and our "Radical Grace" Wisdom School which I'll co-lead with Richard Rohr at Ghost Ranch in May 2011.

And yes, under it all there has been hermit time, rich and good hermit time on Eagle Island, where I was able to hunker down for nearly the entire month of October.. I am hoping to clear the decks in 2012 for about six months of a much more intensive response to a growing inner summons, as I sense both inwardly and outwardly that a new phase of my life is calling and a deeper intention is the price of admission....The whirlwind has been stimulating, and in so many ways valuable, but the time is drawing closer when the requirement to "hew the line deeper" (in Rafe's words) will be simply inescapable...

So...in this brief All Saints foretaste here in Georgia, I wish all my northern friends the deepest of blessing as the cool and dark months, the inwardness of Advent, draw closer. I do so look forward to catching up with you all again in March.

Blessings!

Cynthia



*A message from TCS Administrator*

Dear members and friends,

How wonderful it has been to get to meet and connect with so many of you over this past year! As plans for our 2011 retreat on Pender Island unfold I am looking forward to opportunities for more shared experience as we support each other in our contemplative practice and learning. If you are not able to attend in person, please keep in mind that we carry many live recordings of Cynthia's teaching from past retreats and Wisdom Schools. For those of you interested in the recording from the March 2010 Lake Cowichan retreat where Cynthia shared her deep and profound teaching on *Silence*, we are hoping to have this set edited and ready for release early in 2011.

**Send us your photos.**  
We would love to include your photos on our website or in the newsletter. Thank you to Heather Page for this photo taken at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Lafayette, Oregon



**Membership renewal reminders:**  
Those of you who are current members can expect to receive an email with a renewal reminder as your annual membership nears the due date. We hope that you will continue to support us in our work and service to Cynthia and the contemplative path. For those of you who are not current members, we encourage you to join us in this growing worldwide community of practitioners and supporters! Please see details below.



*The Contemplative Society is committed to recovering the ancient unitive Wisdom tradition and mystical heart of Christianity through contemplative teaching, retreats, and meditation.*

**Membership and Support Information**

The Contemplative Society is funded largely through membership donations. Members benefit by receiving advance notice of news and events, letters to members from our principal teacher Cynthia Bourgeault, a semi-annual newsletter, as well as voting rights at our Annual General Meeting. The most important benefit, however, is the strength that comes in working together to support the contemplative movement and the work of Cynthia in her active life of writing, teaching, and leading retreats around the world.

Membership is on an annual basis, and includes the following options:

TYPE:	AMOUNT:
Basic Membership	Any Amount
Sustaining Membership	\$300.00 minimum
Growth Membership	\$600.00 minimum
Donation Only	We gratefully accept donations of any amount

The Contemplative Society is a registered Canadian charity. Tax receipts will be issued at the end of the calendar year.

**Please Complete the following:**

- |                                          |                                                   |          |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member      | <input type="checkbox"/> Basic: (any amount)      | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining: (\$300 plus) | \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation Only   | <input type="checkbox"/> Growth: (\$600 plus)     | \$ _____ |

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to **The Contemplative Society** and mail to the following address:

The Contemplative Society  
PO Box 23031, Cook St RPO  
Victoria BC V8V 4Z8 Canada

Membership information and donation by PayPal is also available through the Membership menu at [www.contemplative.org](http://www.contemplative.org)