Centering Prayer

TAKES CENTER STAGE AT MATER DOLOROSA

Contemplative prayer has been a tradition at Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center since its first retreats in the 1920s. In the Fall of 2018, Retreat Center Director Michael Cunningham continued this tradition with a new program that brings Centering Prayer to retreatants and those interested in pursuing this ancient prayer form.

Centering Prayer traces its roots back to the desert fathers where John Cassian and others headed to the desert to try and unclutter their minds of worldly thoughts and focus their attention on God alone. The search for silence and solitude to be alone with God was a common thread in their austere lifestyles, and prayer forms that sought to release our worldly distractions from worship were practiced. In the 13th century, a spiritual classic was written taking these principles to a new level in a book called “The Cloud of Unknowing.”

The anonymous author of the book further defined what we have come to know as Centering Prayer. It is a detachment of the mind and our desire in prayer towards God. The book encouraged the reader to detach themselves by purely consenting to God’s will in a movement of our heart; a desire and disposition of surrender. “Not My Will, But Yours Be Done” (Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42) presents us to God with a prayer of the heart, not just of the mind. Centering prayer is often called the Prayer of Consent, as it represents our willingness to be open to God. A willingness that is without agenda or needs, just a desire to rest in God’s presence.

The catechism has much to say on the topic of contemplative prayer forms, particularly as they can move a person from a “friendly disposition” in our prayer life to one of “intimacy with God,” illuminating other prayer forms we might be practicing in a new light.

Mater Dolorosa hosted an evening workshop, “Introduction to Centering Prayer,” Nov. 11 for 29 participants. Dr. Cunningham led them in the method. They practiced it and prayed together. It was a wonderful experience and will result in setting up a permanent Centering Prayer group at Mater Dolorosa, which will meet weekly. For further information about Centering Prayer, please contact please contact Dr. Cunningham by email mcunningham@materdolorosa.org or sign up online on the web events page at materdolorosa.org.
As we begin this new year of 2019, I wish you all the very best. May 2019 be filled with God’s love for you and your family and know that you are in our prayers daily.

It seems that January always has a special tone all its own. There’s a freshness and renewed energy that excites us about the future, but also some regret and sadness that often lingers from the year just finished. And, as we bring in this New Year of 2019, those mixed feelings are present with us.

As you know, our beloved fellow Passionist, Father Michael Hoolahan, passed away in early June. While he had been failing, his sudden death caught us all by surprise. He was a long-time personal friend, a center of prayer and wisdom in our Passionist community life, and a gentle and compassionate confessor and counselor for the many retreatants who have come to Mater Dolorosa over the past 15 years. He is greatly missed though we are consoled by his presence in our prayers daily.

As Father Michael’s memory continues to inspire us, God’s consistent blessings energize us as we look to the coming months. Since our new retreat season began in September, we have had some 10 retreats and this year’s retreat theme “Be Not Anxious: Living in the Peace of Christ” has been well received. As we continue this theme in the New Year, we are looking forward to inviting the men and women of the Mater Dolorosa Retreat Family into rich reflection on their experience of living with Christ. As always, our retreat schedule is full so we anticipate many blessings during the coming year.

Along with those scheduled weekend retreats, we also have a full schedule of Kairos Retreats for high school seniors during the midweeks. We will also be serving a diverse complement of parish staffs, school faculties, men and women religious, elementary and high school retreat groups, confirmation retreats, archdiocesan staffs as well as several ecumenical groups. Such a rich diversity of people and programs will be finding a sacred place here at Mater Dolorosa. We are indeed privileged to be able to serve so many various religious groups here in Southern California!

2019 is full of promise for us and we pray that it is also full of promise for you and your family. Be assured of our prayers for you and we hope that you will be keeping us in your prayers as well.

Father Mike Higgins, C.P.

Meet Heather Banis
THE NEW CHAIR OF THE BOARD AT MATER DOLOROSA RETREAT CENTER

Heather Banis, Ph.D., has been appointed as the new Chair of the Board of Directors at Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center. As a board member since 2013, serving as co-chair of the Vision Planning Committee, and later as board secretary, Dr. Banis brings a wealth of experience to Mater Dolorosa.

In her professional life, she serves as the Victims Assistance Ministry Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. In that capacity, she provides pastoral care and outreach to clergy abuse survivors and their families, and assists in coordinating psychological services for those harmed in support of healing and recovery. In November, she spoke to all the bishops gathered for the General Assembly of U.S. Catholic Bishops in Baltimore about best principles and best practices.

“It was such an honor and such an incredible experience,” Ms. Banis said. “I felt that my message was heard by the bishops as they strive to restore trust with the people of God.”

Her awards and honors are numerous. They include the Msgr. J. Clifford Parkers Service Award at her home parish of St. Philip the Apostle Church in Pasadena, and the Elizabeth Ann Seton Religious Recognition Award from Our Lady Queen of Angels Cathedral.

“With her leadership experience and her depth of appreciation of the mission of Mater Dolorosa,” said Father Mike Higgins, C.P., “Heather is an outstanding choice to navigate the board and retreat center into the future.”

Meet Blessed Nicéfero Díez, C.P. and Bl. Juan Pedro Bengoa, C.P.

Blessed Nicéfero Díez, C.P.

Blessed Nicéfero of Jesús y María (Vicente Díez Tejerina) was born in 1853 and Blessed Juan Pedro de San Antonio (José María Bengoa Aranguren) in 1890. Both were born in Spain. Aspiring to do something meaningful in their life, they responded to God’s call generously by embracing religious life in the Passionist Congregation. They volunteered as students to go as missionaries to the American Continent. They studied at Tohca, Mexico, but because of the persecution of the Church during the presidency of Plutarco Calles, they were imprisoned and they were exiled to the United States. They completed their studies for the priesthood in Chicago and were ordained in the cathedral by Archbishop Mundelein in 1916. They preached many popular missions among the Latinos in United States, Mexico and Cuba.

José María Bengoa Aranguren
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Vicente Díez Tejerina
Juan Pedro had to return to Spain in 1926 and Nicéfero in 1932 to take up responsibilities of leadership of the Passionist Congregation in their country. As the civil war was breaking out in Spain in 1936, both died heroically as martyrs defending the Catholic faith along with 24 other Passionists, by a group of anti-ecclesial anarchists. Before they died, Nicéfero who was the Provincial Superior, stationed in Daimiel, exhorted his community, mostly students, to be brave like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, gave them general absolution and Communion to strengthen them spiritually.

As he was dying, Nicéfero, with a bullet in his body, smiled at his persecutor offering him forgiveness, but the other, enraged, put an end to Nicéfero’s life with another bullet. Pedro Bengoa was martyred a few days later in Ciudad Real. His last words were “Long live Christ the King.” The martyrs were beatified by Pope St. John Paul II. As Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, their example strengthens us to be courageous in making important challenging decisions at difficult times of our life and of the historical period we live in.
Harvest on the Hill Fiesta was a Resounding Success!

A HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL

Yet another wonderful team effort was made for our Harvest on the Hill event in October. Mother nature co-operated to the point we didn’t even need the outside heaters provided for the event. There are so many to thank for their work to put on the event and, then, the successful running during the evening.

This year we tried and succeeded to do some new things, including the online bidding process. This went surprisingly smoothly, and we managed to separate us from our money in the wonderful cause that is our spiritual home, Mater Dolorosa. The net proceeds of $86,000 will allow us to begin the needed improvements to the west wing of the retreat center.

The lovely thing about an event like this is the way the spiritual community comes to the fore. We are really a loving extended family, along with all the fun that is a part of it. Thank you, one final time for all you have done. Donors, volunteers and staff. We love you all.

from our “silent auction” items as a result. The work could not be complete of course without the great donations for the silent auction and the main auction. Once again, our benefactors – that’s you guys – did us proud. Behind the scenes, some of us less technical learned to take pictures in our makeshift studio near the bell tower at Mater Dolorosa and know enough about digital photography to be dangerous.

Seriously though, the team did a great job, the kitchen, the volunteers, the servers, our co-chairs Kathryn Kenney and Jennifer Gowen, and Pat Wickhem “The Auction Magician” who managed to separate us from our money in the wonderful cause that is our spiritual home, Mater Dolorosa. The net proceeds of $86,000 will allow us to begin the needed improvements to the west wing of the retreat center.

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CALLING ALL GOLFERS!!! Please join us for a fun day on the golf course. Get a family foursome together or invite three of your best friends for a great day. If you have never golfed in our tournament, this is an event you won't want to miss. Your day of golf is spent with others you know or invite three of your best friends for a great day. If you have never golfed in our tournament, this is an event you won't want to miss. Your day of golf is spent with others you know or invite three of your best friends for a great day.

Please call our Development Office at 626-446-7731 or email Jeanne Warlick at jeannew@ materdolorosa.org for more information or to register.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:

www.materdolorosa.org/golf-classic

Call our Development Office (626) 355-7188, ext. 103

Email Jeanne Warlick
jwarlick@materdolorosa.org

We look forward to seeing you at Glendora Country Club on Monday, May 20, 2019!
Feeling blue? These books are filled with JOY!

Father Alan Phillip, C.P., Local Superior of the Passionist Community at Mater Dolorosa Retreat Center, author of two previous books, has come out with his latest – “The Ten Things You Must Do Before You Die: The Ultimate Bucket List.”

Don’t be put off by the title. This book examines the life of joy. “The challenge of coping with everyday depression and finding happiness may seem complex,” Father Alan observes. “This book clears the air and shows simple and practical steps to find true and lasting joy.”

Father Alan also has written “Our Hearts at Sunday Mass,” and “From Blues to Smiles to Joy.” His books are available at the retreat center gift shop and on Amazon. They make great reading.