



CONTEMPLATIVE NETWORK

NEWS & VIEWS

Volume 2 No. 4 | Third Quarter 2022 | Jan Masterson, Editor

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Welcome New Board Members

By Chairman Robert Hesse, PhD.

With great pleasure, I introduce newly elected Contemplative Network (CN) board members: Rabbi Harvey Rosenstock M.D; Rev. John Graham M.D.,

D.Min.; and Mr. Lanson Jones. We are blest all have agreed to give guidance as part of the board's Fundraising Committee.



Harvey Rosenstock is a Rabbi and a medical doctor. He is a Jewish contemplative dedicated to Kabbalistic prayer. As a psychiatrist, his special interest is in treating and healing patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He is a passionately dedicated docent at the Houston Holocaust Museum. He is perfectly suited to guide CN in meeting its goals of research and ministry on the healing effects of Oneness Prayer on everyone, regardless of faith belief. Welcome Harvey!

John Graham is an Episcopal priest and medical doctor. He is the former President of the Institute for Spirituality and Health (ISH), the first US organization to train hospital chaplains. He successfully led the ISH through difficult times, restoring and expanding it beyond its historically respected international status. He is completing work on his third doctorate, holistic medicine. His experience and wisdom are perfectly suited to guide us on our mission and vision.

Welcome John!





Lanson Jones is a successful businessman and gifted survivor of a near-death experience. He has an entrepreneur's vision and passion; he sees a need and finds a way to fill it. His business skills, gifted intelligence, youthful enthusiasm, and spiritual hunger for learning and teaming, are incredible assets for meeting our mission and vision. His youthful guidance provides hope for CN's future. Welcome Lanson!

*"The truth of your character is expressed
through the choice of your actions."*

Steve Maraboli

A CONVERSATION WITH...

Deborah Klesel, RN, PhD., MSN

Dr. Deborah Klesel has agreed to be Contemplative Network's Director Research. When asked why she volunteered to take on this daunting task, she beautifully summed up the reason for our research into the effects of belief and prayer on the healing process. Deb said, "I believe the Divine Healer is present in the sacred space that exists between nurse and patient. When we listen with our heart, His essence is in the midst of our interaction." Her compelling research interest is "the nurse as the presence of God during bedside care where the art of intentional prayer meets the science of healing." With her experience in bedside nursing care, designing research protocols and preparing young people for a nursing career, she is especially primed to take our mission to the next step.

Klesel is trained in critical care nursing as well as numerous specialties. Her varied experience includes end of life care using transitioning presence. Her research of breast cancer survivorship, determined by spiritual resources, is

key to longevity post diagnosis and treatment. She is currently ABSN Program Director of and Assistant Professor at the Peavy School of Nursing at the University of St. Thomas.

Deb is a native Texan, born in San Antonio. She has three grown daughters. In her spare time, she reads books on faith and science and inspiring stories of spirituality and ways to tap into our inner being to find peace. She enjoys being outside and feels God's presence in nature. She listens to jazz, George Benson is a favorite. She wants readers to know she is "eager to get up each morning; to discover what God will give her today." Even when afraid, she accepts God's gift of grace, confident He will be with her. Her positive approach to living each day as a gift helps Deb bloom where she is planted.

*"A gentle person treads lightly, listens carefully,
looks tenderly and touches with reverence."*

Henri Nouwen

MESSAGE FROM THE MYSTICS



Esther (Etty) Hillesum was born January 15, 1914 in Middelburg, Holland. She was murdered in Auschwitz concentration camp November 30, 1943 at 29 years old. What is known about her internal and external life comes from the numerous letters collected after her death and diaries she kept in the

Westerbork Transit Camp. She describes her religious awakening and the persecution of the Jewish people in Amsterdam during the German occupation.

Hillesum came from a dysfunctional family. Although intelligent and well educated, her parents and two brothers suffered from mental health issues. She was in therapy in an effort to come to terms with her chaotic upbringing and unpredictable family life, which she referred to as a “madhouse.” As a confused young woman searching for love and stability, she was involved in tempestuous affairs with older men, including her therapist.

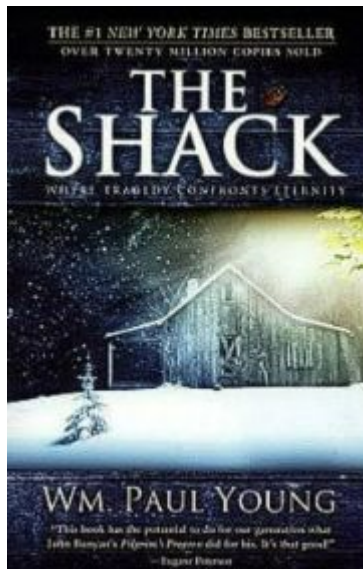
In July 1942 the roundup of the Jews in Amsterdam intensified. Hillesum voluntarily became an administrator for the Jewish Council in the “Department of Social Welfare for People in Transit” at the Westerbork transit camp. She left after a month and refused to go into hiding. In 1943, her status was revoked. She and her family were interned in Westerbork and soon transferred to various concentration camps. No one survived.

Her analyst, Julius Spier, introduced her to the bible and St. Augustine. He encouraged her to read Rilke and Dostoyevsky. She was also influenced by Russian and Christian mystics as she strived to calm her chaotic mind and find her spiritual center. Her spiritual growth is seen in the diaries she kept and letters she wrote. She refers to God “as a power we must nurture inside of us.” In spite of her circumstances, she saw beauty in the world. She believed the “very good and the very bad” are in balance. She lived with tenderness, empathy and realization.

Etty Hillesum’s “Prayer from Auschwitz.”

"You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share Your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude. At night too, when I lie in bed and rest in You, oh God, tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer."

A Recommended Read

**BOOK:***The Shack***AUTHOR:**

Wm. Paul Young

PUBLISHER:

Windblown Media

REVIEWED BY:

Linden Price

This New York Times #1 Bestseller, published in 2007, has sold over 20 million copies. That alone is reason to pick up the book and give it a read. You will not be disappointed.

Have you experienced tragedy in your lifetime? Have you questioned the love of God, apparently absent or, at best, distant when needed most? This book relates the story of Mackenzie Allen Phillips, a.k.a. "Mack" and the effect of tragedy in his life.

The story beautifully conveys how God broke into Mack's life and turned it around. But what stands out is how God is depicted in His interactions with Mack. God, as presented, draws you into the intimacy of the interaction between the Persons of God and the main character. The mercy, forgiveness and infinite love of the Divine coming to meet the needs of a hurt, judgmental human being who feels little, if any, connection to the spiritual, is wonderfully and sensitively constructed.

Reading this book touched me deeply. It made God's love, concern for and involvement with His creatures personal and tactile. My only caveat: read with a box of tissues close-by.

From Science to Soul

By Deborah Klesel, RN, PhD., MSN



Do I think or do I believe?

When I say “I believe,” what does that mean? While it seems to me “believing” is as second nature as breathing, how did I come to “believe” something instead of just “thinking” it? Maybe what I think is fluid and affective and what I believe is concrete or cognitive. That was part of the critical reasoning I learned in nursing school.

So I did what most people do – I “googled” it. The internet quick fix summed it like this: a “belief” is a judgement based on a thought I keep “thinking.” So, it seems I have to either believe what I keep thinking or think what I believe.

So what is a belief?

According to Joseph Sommer, Julien Musolino, and Pernille Hemmer beliefs are what make us human and affect our thinking, which guides our behavior. So if my beliefs guide my behavior, then I must trust or have faith what I believe is true. Growing up I learned faith has three components: the affective, or thoughts about it, the cognitive, or beliefs in it, and the practical, or outcome of the first two.

If faith means belief, it was faith that supported me through nursing school as a single mom with three girls and three jobs. It was also faith that not only led me to get my PhD, but what I found in the process.

My research in cancer survivorship discovered, not only do women use faith to decide the direction of their treatment when faced with a cancer diagnosis, it also predicted length of survivorship. What my participants taught me is, while life is hard, faith is the belief things will get better. Quoting Martin Luther King Jr., and many did, “It’s taking the next step when you can’t see the entire staircase.”

There was no logical reason I survived nursing school, let alone complete my

PhD. For many of my participants, there was no logical reason they survived treatment. But there was a practical reason we did: It was faith.

What practicalities of your life are based on faith? Do you believe in them?

*"An unexamined faith is not worth having,
for it can be true only by accident."*

James Luther Adams

An Interesting Journey Godward

By Alex Torres



A Saint Kolbe retreat is an effective channel of God's unconditional love. It is a glimpse of what will be experienced in paradise. The River Rule, which blocks the misuse of personal stories, also prevents me from divulging much of what takes place at the retreat. However, I am fairly certain the Almighty would not mind a summarized account of His love.

Upon walking into the gym, the weekend participants were greeted with loving embraces, which immediately set the tone for the retreat. Imagine two lines of volunteers, which we call "free world," each wearing a red shirt, waiting to receive us with open arms and big smiles. Needless to say, by the time we completed the gauntlet of loving embraces, the entire group was laughing, some crying, overwhelmed with joy. In a matter of a few minutes, our walls were brought down. Thanks be to God.

One participant, a cradle Catholic hailing from Brooklyn, New York, Raymond Bingham commented, "The love felt is overwhelming and sincere. It is heartfelt and visceral to the point of tears. The participants are 'smack-dab' in the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I loved being part of the retreat."

Another participant, Toby Guillory said: "At the Kolbe retreat, I had a chance to ask all the questions I wanted. The unity, the structure of the Church and the worship was all one. We were one. All of my questions were answered. The Holy Spirit was present. I walked into the Kolbe retreat with my heart and mind open and was filled with the love of my brothers and the presence of God. I walked into the Kolbe retreat expecting and received. I walked in a Baptist and at the end, walked out a Catholic. Today is a new beginning, a day of renewal of heart, body, spirit and mind."

The retreat includes food, music, an abundance of prayerful discussions and activities concerning the Catholic faith, but most importantly, active listening. Throughout the retreat, the volunteers heard stories of traumatic childhood experiences, which gradually shaped distortions of reality, which in turn led us down criminal paths. We did misuse the gift of free will. Criminality, of course, is much more complex; thankfully, the volunteers focused on mercy and prayer, which does cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:20)

Saint Kolbe, pray for us.

"A single act of love makes the soul return to life."

St. Maximilian Kolbe

POETRY CORNER

Wayfarer

By Antonio Machado

Translated by A. Trueblood

Wayfarer, the only way
is your footsteps, there is no other.

Wayfarer, there is no way,
you make the way by walking.
As you go, you make the way
and stopping to look behind,
you see the path that your feet
will never travel again.

Wayfarer, there is no way -
Only foam trails to the sea.

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR



If anyone would have told me two years ago I would be corresponding with and learning from four offenders housed in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, I would have politely told them, "You're crazy!" The idea would have been so far outside my comfort zone, it would have been laughable. Yet, here I am in 2022, not only corresponding with Alex, Esau, Raymond and Eric, but looking forward to their letters. And all

have joyfully agreed to contribute to this newsletter. God surely does work in mysterious ways.

I have had several conversations with myself about this gift. Why me? What have I done to deserve this group of men willing to share their experiences with an audience they do not know and will never meet? My conclusion? Because my curiosity (the Holy Spirit?) led me to offer to edit a book, which introduced me to Kolbe retreats and the effect it has in the prison system, I was motivated to learn more (the Holy Spirit again?). When I asked Deacon Bob to share whatever details he could about his experiences, he talked passionately about what *he* learned from the retreatants. His fervor further piqued my curiosity. When I agreed to establish a newsletter for Contemplative Network, one of my first goals was to find a way to include these men so others could be introduced to and inspired by the power of human beings blooming where they are planted, no matter where that fertile field might be.

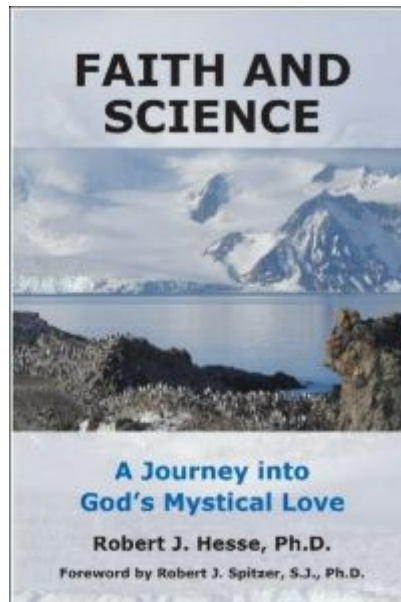
As our relationship grows, Alex, Esau, Raymond and Eric are teaching me what real joy is; that it comes from God and is not dependent on our outside environment, but on our inner peace, which is the Holy Spirit dwelling within each of us. All we have to do is recognize God's presence and accept His grace. A valuable lesson finally learned at age 76. Proves God is active in today's world, has lessons for us no matter how old we are, or where we are on our faith journey when He offers them. What a blessed gift!

Stay healthy. Stay positive. Stay loving.

Jan

"Our life's journey is really about the people who touch us."

Stuart Scott



Available on [Amazon](#) and [Crossroad Publishing](#).

100% of the author's royalties are being donated to the non-profit, 501(c)(3), Contemplative Network to promote Oneness and Contemplative Prayer, interfaith dialogue and scientific research into the healing properties of prayer.

How to Do Centering Prayer

- Set aside 20 minutes, twice a day if possible. One time is better than none.
- Sit comfortably on a chair with your back straight.
- Close your eyes. Settle into the deepest center of your being.
- Silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
- As thoughts and feelings rush in, silently and gently repeat your sacred word until they go by. Thoughts are normal. Let them come, accept them, let them go. Do this every time thoughts grab your attention. It will get easier with practice.

[Brief Introduction to Centering Prayer \(pdf\).](#)

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

This is your newsletter. We encourage you to be an active part of its pages. We welcome comments, questions and suggestions. Send all correspondence to editor@contemplative.net. Your full name, country and email address *must* be included. If you do not want your full name used, we will honor that request.

To submit a book review, essay or poetry for possible publication, it must be an original composition attached as a Word document in Times New Roman, 12-point font. Accepted length is 350 to 500 words for book reviews and essays and no more than 20 lines of poetry. Submissions are subject to editing. Be sure to keep a copy; submissions will not be returned. If your review, essay or poem is selected, you will be notified prior to publication.

The pen of the tongue should be dipped in the ink of the heart.
Chinese Proverb

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