

*Centered Living: The Way of Centering Prayer*, by M. Basil Pennington (Image/Doubleday, 1986), 204 pp.

Pennington was, as most of you know, one of the three Cistercians who along with Keating and Menninger originally founded Contemplative Outreach. I had never sat down with one of Pennington's books until recently—and it turns out that I have been depriving myself of a treasure.

*Centered Living* proves to be a remarkably cogent and persuasive presentation of Centering Prayer. It is written with an unerring choice of appropriate words. Even though Centering Prayer has been part of my spirituality for more than fifteen years, I found fresh understanding of its effects by reading this book.

Speaking of the transformation of consciousness which gradually takes place during Centering Prayer, Pennington says, "We move from self-centeredness to God-centeredness—or perhaps it might be more correct to say we move through self-centeredness to God-centeredness... The shift is from outwardness to inwardness, from illusion to reality. We were centered in self, but not the true self, rather, in the illusion we had created, made up of things outside ourselves. Turning within, we find our true self, the most perfect image of God, which leads us into God, who is there as our constant Source" (p. 92).

As the *Library Journal* puts it, "Here Pennington shares testimonies of practitioners, updates guidelines, offers theological reflection in the context of Merton, and closes with thoughts on teaching others. Aimed at a broader readership than [Pennington's] *Centering Prayer*, this title is clearly designed to tap into the burgeoning interest in this form of Christian meditation."

This book and many others on contemplative prayer can be found in the Lending Library at Grace Episcopal Church, in the section labeled CPR.

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