

# The Benediction

St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Los Osos, California

**The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall**

Rector

**The Rev. Donna Ross**

Associate Priest

**The Rev. Barry Turner**

Associate Priest

**The Rev. Faye Hogan**

Associate Priest

**The Rev. Sharon G. Dalrymple**

Deacon

**The Parish Council**

Anne Kanter, Sr. Warden

Pamela Bleisch Strawn

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Esta Kandarian

Francis Rivinus

Barbara Schippers

Kathie West

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**Sunday Services**

The first Sunday of each month:

10:30 am One service of Holy  
Communion with music

All other Sundays:

8:00 am Holy Communion  
with inclusive language

10:30 am Holy Communion  
with music

Refreshments and fellowship follow  
each service.

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**Dear Friends:**

As we move into the New Year, I am filled with hope - hope and excitement about the ways that we will see God working in our personal lives, in our community life, and in the world in this coming year.

Just as a little overnight rain gives me hope that more rain will come and the hills will again be green, so the small ways that I see God working give me hope that even the bigger things that seem so unsurmountable will also unfold in ways that I cannot even begin to imagine. We have all seen unexpected miracles in our lifetimes, as well as unexpected disaster.

It is easy for us to focus on the disaster. Daily news briefings tell us that climate change is happening even quicker than we thought, our leaders talk of nuclear attack as if it were tossing a tennis ball, and the rich are helped to get richer even as the poor get poorer.

But into that scenario of despair comes the story of the God who levels the playing field for everyone - the God who looks out for the poor and stands up to the bullies. That is the story of the ancient Hebrew people - brought out of slavery in Egypt into freedom; it is a story that repeats and repeats. It is our story. And during this season of Epiphany, our faith narrative reminds us again and again that redemption is not the action of a distant God, but that we, limited as we are, are called and invited to take part in God's story.

Which will we choose? The narrative of oppression and disaster or God's narrative

of new life and hope through the incarnation and revealing of the Christ in our midst?

When we choose the story of God then we can look at all the tragedies of this life, not as something that we have to get through in order to get to heaven in the future, but as opportunities for us to see through God's eyes. These are the eyes of compassion - we read that Jesus wept. He did not brush away the suffering and difficulty of this life, but in his relationship with the one he called Abba, Daddy, he saw hope and love.



God calls us to a relationship with her which is so deep, so intimate, so trusting, that we know as Paul said that nothing, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor

any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38,39) And as we stand within that relationship, listening to that story we know that all things are working together to good because God is bringing all things to their proper place in Christ.

May God bless you deeply with hope this New Year.

In Love,

**Rev. Caroline J. A. Hall**

## Mutual Ministry Review

Every year in January, we take a pause to ask how well we are serving God and the Christ in all persons in and through this faith community of St. Benedict's. This year we are inviting you as part of our Mutual Ministry Review to also review the draft Five Year Mission and Ministry plan that the Parish Council has prepared (with special thanks to Pamela Bleisch, Barbara Schippers, Esta Kandarian, and Rod Morse) and is recommending for us to adopt at the Annual Meeting (January 28).

You can read the Five Year Plan by going to our website and looking under the Church News tab, then choosing "Documents", or you can take the quick route; <http://www.stbenslososos.org/2018/01/02/draft-five-year-mission-and-ministry-plan/>

The Mutual Ministry Review questions are on-line here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/59BR779> and there will also be paper copies available in the church. The Parish Council takes your feedback very seriously and reads every response, using these as a basis for its planning retreat. We particularly need to hear back from you about the draft Five Year Plan and may make changes based on your input.

In addition to paper or on-line responses there will be a couple of meetings for discussion. These will probably be on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>. Please check the Benediction Weekly for information.

It helps us to have as many responses as possible. Even if you're not a regular or frequent attender, please give us your feedback (by January 18). Thank you.

## Annual Meeting

Once a year, we gather together to review and discuss the life of the congregation and to elect new members to the Vestry and Parish Council, and to represent us in the Deanery and at Diocesan Convention. This year's Annual Meeting will be held **after the 10:30am service on Sunday January 28<sup>th</sup>**. Lunch will be provided.

Please plan to participate in this important meeting when we will agree on a budget for 2018 as well as hopefully approve the Five Year Mission and Ministry Plan, and elect new leaders.

If you think God might be calling you to serve on the Vestry or Parish Council, or to represent us at the deanery and diocesan level, the Nominations Committee (Anne Kanter and Pamela Bleisch) would like to hear from you.

## Deanery Meeting

Representatives from all the churches in San Luis Obispo (the deanery) gather several times a year to share ideas and hear reports on diocesan business. On **February 11**, St. Benedict's will be hosting the meeting and our Earth-care group has invited Bill Bradlee from Interfaith Power and Light as a guest speaker. He will be helping us to understand our carbon footprint both as a congregation and as households and sharing ideas on how we can reduce our carbon emissions and so bless the planet.

Everyone is welcome. **The meeting starts at 2pm.**

**EVENT!**



## Finance and Building

First the good news! God has once again blessed us greatly. We started the year with a deficit budget – in other words, we expected to spend more than we were brought in. We agreed that this was a challenge we wanted to take on so that we could pay the Rector three-quarters time. We received more than we had expected, and we spent a little less with the result that we ended the year in the black and can even put some money back into the reserves that we had to spend down a couple of years ago while we were waiting for the bank to agree to re-amortize our loan.

Now the not-so-good news! We are still waiting for PG&E to tell us how much they will charge to give us the expanded power service we need in order to put in the fire-sprinkler system. Due to some very generous donations we think we have enough money for the whole project, but don't want to start till we know for sure – we've done that before and landed ourselves in unexpected difficulties.

# 2018

The vestry will be bringing the 2018 budget to the Parish Meeting on January 28. This looks to be a deficit budget again but the surplus from 2017 will be enough to cover the expected deficit in 2018 – and it gives room for God to surprise us again with each other's generosity.

## Christmas Carol Concert

A big thank you to the choir and especially our Music Director, John Cribb. Once again it was an outstanding concert. We had many guests from the local community – some who make it part of their regular tradition to come every year, others there for the first time. Many people were moved to tears.

We give thanks for this wonderful opportunity to share our gifts with the wider community and to help to point people towards the Christ we know and serve.



## Homeless Outreach

A big thank you to everyone who has helped with the Community Dinners here in Los Osos and People's Kitchen in SLO, not to mention our breakfast ministry. An especially big thank you to Diana Hammerlund who has guided the People's Kitchen crew for as long as any of us can remember, and to Pat Henry and Suzan Vaughn who have stepped into her shoes, to Alice Welchert for her leadership with gifts for Prado Day center and the Community Dinners and also to Barbara Hirahara and everyone else who gives their time and energy to create community, by providing good food and abundance.

In January, our emphasis for our neighbors at the Prado Day Center is cold weather nutrition and gear. Soup, hot instant cereal and paper bowls, hot chocolate and cups are very welcome. New socks, gently used sleeping bags and back packs, parkas and rain ponchos are also especially needed at this time.

Closer to home, our deacon intern, Jim Arnold, has been working to make a warming shelter a reality. This may be about to happen, using the South Bay Community Center and the Schoolhouse as the venue. **If you can volunteer for an overnight (6:30pm to 6am with four hours to rest) or to come in at 6am to prepare breakfast and clean up) please let Caro+ or Jim know.** If everything comes together we will aim to have it open on rainy nights or when the temperature is forecast to go below 40 degrees. It will cost \$150-\$200 every night the shelter is open. You can make a gift for this ministry which is a joint venture of St Benedict's, Los Osos Cares, People Helping People and South Bay Community Center by putting Warming Shelter in the memo line of your check and putting it on the offering plate.

## Early Announcement: Yosemite Trip with EarthCare, May 10-13, 2018

The EarthCare group at St. Benedict's is planning a trip to Yosemite National Park for three nights, May 10th to 13th (Thursday evening to Sunday morning), a time when the spectacular falls there are the fullest. Joe Morris and Rev. Barry Turner are the Co-leaders of the trip. Complete details will soon be available, but for now we want to let you know its chief aspects for future planning:

We have reserved eight tent cabins, double-occupancy, in Half-Dome Village (formerly called "Curry Village"), at an approximate cost of \$250 per person for the three nights. If desired, people can alternatively reserve and pay for motel-style lodging at Yosemite Valley Lodge or a campground site at their own initiative.

These are limited and go fast. Entrance fee to the Park is extra, and meals and transportation to the Park are your own responsibility. We will be giving information for carpooling, strongly encouraged.

In the mornings, we will be leading easy, nature-themed walks on Friday and Saturday, and Rev. Barry will conduct an outdoor service on Sunday. Plus a possible party Saturday evening, with some snacks, singing, and strumming. Joe Morris, a Sierra Club outings leader, has led many trips to the Park before.

We are limiting the enrollment to 18 people for reasons of logistics and fostering community, so early registration and payment for this very special trip is advised.



photo: backcountryjourneys.com

## **Being in Community with our Neighbors in Need**

Alice Welchert

From Los Osos to the Prado Day Center in SLO and beyond, people need warm meals, clean clothing, safe, stable shelter, caring relationships, dignity and lives that have meaning. Members and friends of St. Benedict's serve our neighbors in need in many ways.

### **Community Dinners**

On New Year's Day it was our turn to host the Community Dinner at Trinity United Methodist Church. Food appeared in abundance -- salads and casseroles, lasagna, bread, brownies and cookies, fried chicken and milk, coffee and festive beverages. We always use washable plates, cups and utensils. Food scraps go in the compostable green waste. We provide to-go boxes as needed. We had about 20 guests (less than the last time for whatever reason). The numbers fluctuate, as they do at the People's Kitchen. Sharon O'Leary, a homeless advocate from Morro Bay, made sure that leftover food was distributed in the community.

### **Proposed anti-homeless parking ordinance**

Some people in Los Osos live in their vehicles. For them, a car or van is home. An ordinance has been proposed in a LOCAC (Los Osos Community Advisory Committee) subcommittee that would ban sleeping in vehicles in Los Osos at night. If such an ordinance goes into effect, people would be subject to fines and could ultimately lose their cars.

On December 18 the ordinance was discussed again at the Traffic and Circulation subcommittee. About a dozen people were present. Jim Arnold and I attended from St. Benedict's. A few people favored the ordinance while the majority present did not. The subject will be revisited in June and is not likely to go away. Safe parking areas are sorely needed.

### **Works in progress for 2018**

With cold nights and the possibility of rain, Los Osos needs a warming shelter. Jim Arnold and Caro+ have been diligently working towards this end. Barbara Hirahara is a champion of Laundry Love -- a designated evening where families and individuals in need can come to the local laundromat and get clothes washed for free.

### **An inspiration**

Hope's Village offers "Showers of Love", a mobile unit that provides showers Tuesdays and Saturdays in SLO. Showers help homeless people feel human again. Better hygiene is important in many ways. Barbara Schippers has been a tireless advocate of tiny houses and communities, such as Hope's Village, for years. If you would like to experience what a difference a shower can make or to volunteer, see Barbara. The handful of folks who are moving Hope's Village from vision to reality understand what it means to be in it for the long haul.

### **Special thanks**

Many thanks to folks from St. Benedict's who made special donations to the Prado Christmas Wish List via check. In the past we have given toys, gift cards or movie tickets. Giving checks allows the Prado folks more flexibility. When I called CAPSLO (Community Action Partnership of SLO) a polite, somewhat tired voice answered. When I told her checks were on the way for the Wish List, her voice brightened. A little kindness goes a long way and touches people we don't even know.

### **Donations for Prado Day Center**

In January our emphasis is cold weather nutrition -- soup, hot instant cereal and paper bowls, hot chocolate and cups. New socks, gently used sleeping bags and back packs, parkas and rain ponchos are also especially needed at this time.

**The next meeting of St. Benedict's Homeless Outreach Committee is Tuesday, January 9, at 4:00. All are welcome.**



## Reflections on Matthew Fox's Visit and Talk

Rev. Mike Eggleston (at the request of EarthCare)

I write not as a leader nor member in St Benedict's Episcopal Church, but as one of many who moves in a somewhat wider orbit around the community centered on Snowy Egret Lane. It's the orbit of those who consider themselves friends of St Benedict's. I write to commend the church for hosting the creation theologian Matthew Fox in Los Osos at workshops and worships on December 1-3, and to continue hosting the Stations of the Cosmic Christ for another month or longer in your worship center.

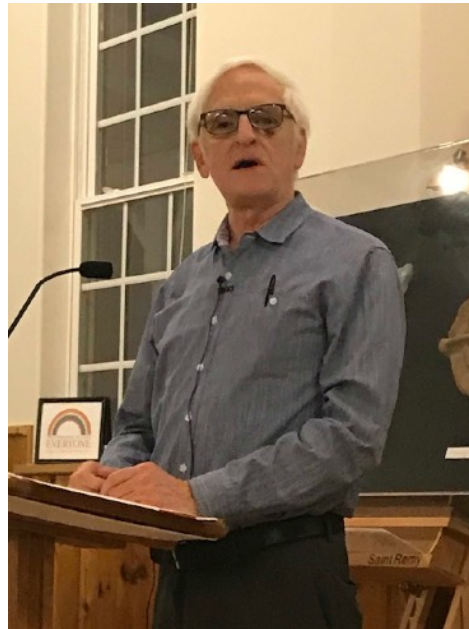
It was evident that St Benedict's has expanded both the number, and the hearts and minds, of those who consider themselves friends of the environment and friends of this church.

I had previously read (or at least perused) four or five of Fox's books. Still, he brought many new thoughts and hopes. For me, the most important thought was his suggestion to "Pray the News," rather than just getting dragged deeper into our daily dark news. I also was nodded gratefully whenever Matthew Fox spoke of our call to be at once both mystics and prophets. As Fox writes, "Mysticism moves the struggle for justice beyond blame and anger to new possibilities." He often quoted Meister Eckhardt: "For the just person, to act justly is to live; justice is her life. . . .in God, action and being are one."

Thirty to forty attendees also signed up to learn more about a very loosely-organized but perhaps powerful new order which Fox has proposed,

"The Order of the Sacred Earth." About 20 of those people attended a follow-up meeting hosted by St Benedict's on December 21 (see below). Neither St Benedict's nor its EarthCare team was a sponsor of that December 21 meeting, but was a gracious host do all who gathered.

Thanks to St Benedict's for planting this seed and many others by hosting Matthew Fox. May it bear good and surprising fruits both in individuals and in our local community.



## Order of the Sacred Earth: Taking Action to Love and Defend the Earth

Don Maruska

Does it feel like the Earth is in a state of siege from chaotic politics, environmental assaults, and climate disasters? On the Winter Solstice, December 21, about 20 people from St. Benedict's and the surrounding area met to discuss how to love and defend the sacred Earth. This session followed from Matthew Fox's invitation during his visit December 1-3 to create the Order of the Sacred Earth. This order welcomes all. We seek to be both mystics (lovers) and prophets (defenders) to support all peoples and all of creation and bring light during these dark times.

A core group decided to continue meeting with a focus on reading and taking action from Matthew Fox's new book, "Order of the Sacred Earth." Everyone is welcome to join the discussion. We'll be posting meeting notices in the St. Benedict's bulletin for sessions in 2018. How would you like to be a lover and defender of the Earth? Join us to explore.

## The Shire at Canterbury

Berkeley Johnson, Canterbury Chaplain

Happy New Year, everyone! Things get off to a fast start for the CanterburyShire young-adult and college ministry in 2018.

In January, we are planning a visit to St. Ben's, Los Osos, to view the Stations of the Cosmic Christ Exhibit.

In February, we will be offering our first-ever Jazz Service featuring students from Cuesta College.

And in March, **please save the date of Sat., March 10th for our 3rd Annual Chili Cook-Off with Silent Auction & Raffle Fundraiser at St. Stephen's from 4-6pm.** As always, we are hoping to have chili entries from each church, and if you have any items or services you would like to donate to the Silent Auction, please be in touch with your parish's Canterbury Board Rep, or contact me directly at [canterburyslo@gmail.com](mailto:canterburyslo@gmail.com).

Details for all these events to follow via weekly emails, monthly newsletter articles, and social media.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the hiring of Cal Poly student Kristin Lee as our new social-media officer! Please be on the lookout for us as we expand to Instagram & Twitter in the coming weeks!



## Abundance Shop Report

Francis F. Rivinus

For the last week of 2017 the Abundance Shop held a half-off end-of-year clearance sale of everything that was in the shop! The response of shop customers was wonderful; we had some very busy days and succeeded in thinning out shop inventory to make room for new donations. The shop will be starting fresh in January. Many new things are coming in and will be available beginning January 2.

Several of our original paintings went home with refugees from the fires. Four families that we know of chose paintings from our shop to fondly remember the time they spent here during their evacuation. The shop just got a group of new paintings coming from a favorite, William Shuman. These are mostly of wild lands, snowy peaks and rushing rivers, with some ocean waves. They may be the last of his work that we will have available.

During September and again in November, the Abundance Shop accepted trainees, along with their mentors from Transitions Mental Health, to work with us for a week so they could gain experience in an actual shop. The November week was special because it involved two trainees one of whom was training to be a mentor. Depending on the experience of the trainee, a week with the shop provides work sorting, putting stock into inventory, culling old inventory for redistribution either to the dollar area or to other thrift stores, cleaning and organizing and other jobs that are part of the day to day functioning of the shop. For their part, Transitions Mental Health staff has offered to give us some training about how better to give training to our volunteers, so they can feel more confident and clear about what is expected of them. We have found our relationship with Transitions to be a win-win for both parties.



(Abundance Shop, continued)

In the latter part of September, the shop ordered a shed which now stands next to our tent. The tent has been partially dismantled to prevent it from being destroyed by the winter storms which we hope will bring us rain. The shed is now in active use and has provided an important addition to the shop's limited storage space.

During November there was a working meeting to which all shop volunteers were invited to discuss what is working well and what needs to be improved. The discussions were open and several very good suggestions for operational improvements were made. Our shop is a living organization and needs to adapt to changing conditions as well as improve the processes we use. The candid, thoughtful input from all our volunteers is a key to assuring a positive way forward.

During 2017, Abundance Shop volunteers worked more than 6000 hours making the shop a success. Their hard work has given the shop a place in the community that is recognized, and appreciated. Our sorters have gone through mountains of donations separating them into inventory for sale in the shop, items for use by the shop or items for redistribution. The donations that have come in during 2017 would more than fill St. Benedict's to the ceiling. Because of our volunteers' efforts, most of the donations go to fill the need for basics of local families and help support other deserving non-profit groups in our area. Very little goes to land fill. Our cashiers have welcomed customers, many by name, helped bring in donations and given out receipts and learned a new point of sale system that allows the shop to accept credit cards thus permitting us to serve customers we would have lost before.

Abundance Shop sales revenues 2017 were excellent and have set a challenging target for the future. The shop's gross revenue for 2017 was over \$77,000 as compared to \$52,000 for 2016. As a result, the shop has been able to pay all its financial obligations, contribute \$36,000 to St. Benedict's and maintain conservative financial reserves. St. Benedict's has tithed 10% or \$3,600 to the eight local charities which our volunteers selected last spring. The charities are:

The Los Osos Community Coalition  
 The Noor Foundation Clinic  
 The Feline Network  
 Transitions Mental Health Association

The Food Bank Coalition  
 Meals the Connect (Formerly: The Senior Nutrition Program)  
 The Canterbury Foundation  
 Woods Humane Society

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## Upcoming Events

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### **Gifts of Awe: The New Creation Story**

Quiet Day, Saturday, Jan. 13, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

The Stations of the Cosmic Christ invite us to rediscover "the Christ" in creation, in you and me. The name Cosmic Christ simply refers to Christ in all the cosmos, in galaxies, stars, planet Earth, in you and me, in all life and even every stone. "The Cosmic Christ," opens our eyes to God incarnate in all the world; the whole universe is sacred. Creation Spirituality seeks to restore our ancient understanding shared with all spiritual traditions of the divine, to change the way we perceive the world in order to change the way we relate to the world.

There is more to ponder in these 16 Stations than one can absorb in a brief "walk through." It may help to focus on just a few that attract your attention. Come see the Stations on your own or come for our last of three Quiet Days. Read the meditations by Matthew Fox and Bp. Marc Andrus in the book Stations of the Cosmic Christ, available on the side altar for brief reflection or to purchase. Let these 3-dimensional images focus your meditation and awaken your imagination. The Quiet Day will be led by the Rev. Barry Turner

(Upcoming Events continued on the next page)



## **Journey of the Universe: An Epic Story of Cosmic, Earth and Human Transformation**

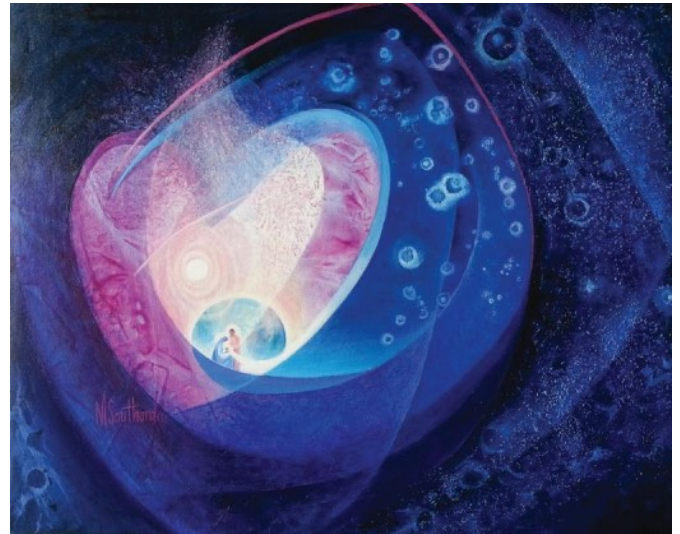
Showing of film, Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 pm

If one had to condense Brian Swimme's message to a few main thoughts, it would be for humans to be willing to walk their hearts back to the beginning of the universe, and once there, to begin appreciating the beauty, generosity and love which propelled it into existence. Beauty, generosity, pure generativity and love are his descriptions for the dawn of our 13.7-billion-year journey.

The Journey of the Universe film prepared by Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker integrates the perspectives of the sciences and the humanities into a lyrical telling of the 13.8 billion year story of the universe. Brian Swimme has been one of the teachers in Matthew Fox's Center for Creation Spirituality.

This evening is dedicated to telling and reflecting on the Universe Story. Discussion afterwards will be a wrap up of our display the past three months of the Stations of the Cosmic Christ. These clay sculptures by artists M. C. Richards and Javier Lemus depicting the 7 "I am's" and the 9 cosmic events in the life of Jesus will be on display at St. Benedict's only till Jan. 31.

A closing quote from artist Mary Southard, CSJ seems fitting: "Love is the most creative force in the Universe. The Universe is love outpouring itself, animating each being, and connecting us with every other being. We are held, loved, healed and enlivened within this flow of love. To be creative is to allow ourselves to be enlivened by this flow of loving creativity, to let it flow through us in our creative activity, whatever our mode of expression.... Creativity is primordial and pervasive in the Universe, in each being, in each of us. The energies of love move in and through and with us, and every being in the Universe, connecting all in One Whole (Sacred) Reality." (Cultivating Creativity – Awakening the Artist Within, December, 2017 Calendar)



At the Heart of the Universe, Mary Southard, CSJ

## **Through the Dark Night with John of the Cross**

Webcast by James Finley PhD, Thursday, Jan. 11 at 10 am & 7 pm

The Community for Action and Contemplation has made available a talk by James Finley, entitled, "Through the Dark Night with John of the Cross." We will show this webcast on Thursday, Jan. 11 both at 10 am and 7 pm. James Finley was mentored by Thomas Merton when he was an oblate at Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky as a young man. Finley has been a student of John of the Cross for over fifty years since. He is a practicing Psychotherapist and one of the primary teachers in the Living School at the CAC.

The presentation is "classic" James Finley which once you've heard you'll never forget. He introduces us to the essence of John of the Cross and explores the way we are caught up and entangled in patterns and habits that compromise our hearts to the claim of God's love on us. In the Dark Night, if we "stay the course" we will discover the grace of God that utterly and wholly permeates our lives...just as they are in the present moment.

[www.contemplativeway.org](http://www.contemplativeway.org)

**Note:** We have improved on our technical efforts to play this webcast at St. Benedict's. Presentation and Questions play for 1 hr. & 46 min.

**The Benediction**

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