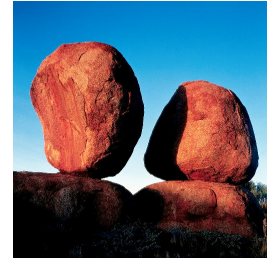




Augustine Centre

Contemplation news: *The way of no way*  
Term 2, 2009



## Saturday contemplation

The Saturday contemplation is held on the third Saturday of each month, 9.30 am till 12 noon. Please bring some food to share if you are able to stay for lunch.

## Contemplation study course

### 'Mystical Christianity'

This four week study course will explore the mystical Christian tradition from early sources and the desert tradition to its modern, contemporary expression. It will emphasise engagement with the writings and allow opportunity for group reflection. Materials for each session will be distributed during the contemplation sitting the week before.

**10th June:** Early sources, the gospel of St Thomas and the desert tradition

**24th June:** The Carmelite tradition, St John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila

**8th July:** Meister Eckhart and the Rhineland mystics

**22nd July:** Contemporary mystical tradition

Wednesdays 7.30- 9.30 pm, by donation (suggested donation \$15—\$20)

## Restorative retreat

### Restoring Body and Mind

### Balancing life and work

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May** at Cloudmountain Retreat, Dunkeld

Learn simple meditation and stress-management practices

Personal coaching around self-care and life balance (optional)

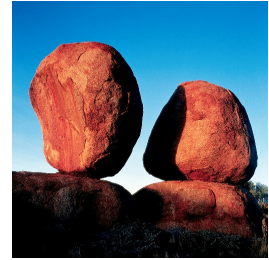
Walk, read, reflect, create or rest

Tai Chi and meditation

Enjoy food, conversation and communal experience



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### Enneagram retreat

**Friday 12th—Monday 15th June** at Cloudmountain Retreat, Dunkeld

The enneagram is a powerful and effective way of understanding yourself and your way of operating. The weekend workshop will explore the nine enneagram types and look at how each one operates in work and in relationships.

Cost: Early bird \$330, \$ 370 after May 22nd, contact office for more details

### Contemplative retreat

**Friday 3rd—Sunday 5th July**

The Augustine Contemplation programme, 'The Way of No Way', is offering an opportunity for people to participate in a silent retreat, with extended periods of meditative practice. This retreat is suitable for beginners, and instruction and support will be provided throughout the weekend. It is also an opportunity for experienced meditators to strengthen and deepen their practice. The weekend will include encouraging talks, interviews with the teacher, outdoor walking meditation and healthy vegetarian food.

Cost: \$140, \$90 concession. Shared accommodation. Book through the office on (03) 9819 2844.

### A monastery without walls

**Cloud Mountain Retreat** and the **Augustine Centre** are offering you an opportunity to create your own space for private retreats. Contact the office for bookings.

### Introductory workshop

Introduction to the contemplation programme at the Augustine Centre.

**Saturday, 6th June, 2—4 pm**, by donation

### Contemplation group schedule

**Contemplation sitting meditation:** Wed 6 pm – 7.15 pm

followed by a short presentation around a theme related to practice.

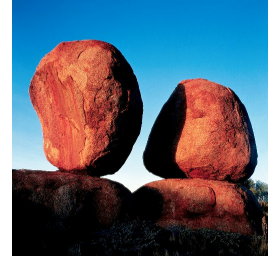
**Labyrinth walking:** 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7.30 to 8.30 pm

**Contemplation sitting meditation:** Thurs 7am - 7.45am, followed by breakfast (optional)

**Saturday contemplation meditation:** 3rd Saturday of the month, 9.30am – 12.00, followed by a shared lunch (optional)



The way of no way, Term 2 2009



## The Centre of Humility

Written by Rev. Paul Sanders

The most widely known piece of writing by St John of the Cross, in the preface to his book 'Ascent of Mount Carmel', has these familiar words:

***In this nakedness  
The spirit finds its rest,  
For when it desires nothing,  
Nothing raises it up,  
And nothing weighs it down,  
Because it is in the centre of its humility.***

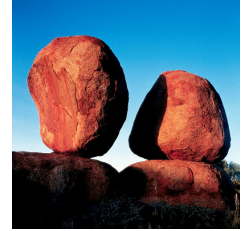
The meaning of humility is from the Latin *humus*, earth or soil, a willingness to be *what* we are from *where* we are, to be settled into the ground of our life. The contemplative way, the 'Way of No Way', is not about finding an ideal state but instead returning to 'no state' – ordinary mind and body. This is the most ideal place, just like a new-born baby, before clothes and a name are thrust upon it. This understanding is presented by St. John of the Cross as a 'not knowing', a constant turning back against the tide of objective certainty, a process of self-emptying. His language indicates that in the contemplative realm one is always turning away from inflationary achievement to stand in the bare awareness of mindful innocence. And so the way is about 'undressing', uncovering the bare matter, entering the soil, mixing with humus, as the only way of removing the illusions of separateness, quite different from imposing on oneself a new structure or program of existence. St John of the Cross is uncompromising – 'for to go from the All to the All we must leave ourselves in All'. There are no hindrances to this apart from those created by ego consciousness, as part of our hold on pre-existing states, views and self-images. The All is totality. No gaps, no spaces, nothing left over, nothing to find, nothing to create and nothing to be fixed up.

Humility stems from a willingness to awake, to see that the barriers were only inventions in the first place. In the language of St John of the Cross:

*'Nothing raises it up,  
And nothing weighs it down.'*



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The end is the beginning, the last breath is always the first. Our practice brings us into the lightness of being – an unfolding, an acceptance that our life comes from and at the same time always is 'great space'.

When we hear this strange language of negativity, there is a tendency to bring our own mind down, to deny, suppress or cut away from what seem to us deficient images of spiritual life. Humility becomes not another spiritual state, but the giving up of all supposed states. We tend to hold a million ideas about how our life is meant to unfold. The *Way of No Way* calls us to proceed with faith, to continue even in the darkness of not knowing, being drawn and led by our own Centre, the clear intelligence, the eternal spirit, without obstruction. Who is this mind? Who is doing the practice? Who is being willing? Who is finding it difficult?

One cannot stand outside to see. Just as the top of our hand has never seen the palm of our hand, so we cannot get outside our life to describe the intimacy of being at the Centre of humility. The statement by Jesus that '*the Father and I are one*' is his direct pointing to this truth. Where does a tree stop and start? At the soil, leaves, air, bark or limbs?

Placing our bodies on the cushion, buttering a piece of toast, falling asleep in the chair after a long day, we are always in the centre of our humility. Within the constant whirling movement of our life, the play of emotions, feelings and thoughts, the deep well of being, is uninterrupted. Everything else is commentary after the fact, a wonderful playful fiction. Our practice is to be willing to allow the unfolding, the falling away of the heavy 'self-sense', the me-consciousness which tricks us into separateness. Our practice is to permit the softening of our contractions, to open up our heart. And here there is rest – not inertia, not resignation, but unobstructed resting in 'not knowing'.

We are never able to define what intelligence, consciousness and spirit are, or how this unfolding comes about. St John of the Cross does not explain anything regarding the way, and neither can we. Because we are this mystery itself at work we can never get outside ourselves to know. All we can do is use metaphors – we sit, we breathe, and we let the All be All in us. Resting in nakedness of intent is the centre of humility, the knowing of unknowing.



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