



# Voice of the Cloud

the newsletter  
and program catalog  
of

MONS NVBIFER SANCTVS

## Pentecost/Trinitytide 2015

Charismata, Contemplation & Catholicity





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Theoria, Leitouurgeia, Diakonia, Koinonia  
(Contemplation, Liturgy, Service, Communion)

**V**ision Statement  
All in the fullness of Christ.

**M**ission Statement  
To inform, form, foster, inspire and protect the realization of Christian virtue, holy wisdom and union with God.

**O**ur Core Values  
We encourage Authenticity and Maturity  
For the development of Virtue and Clarity;  
We seek Reconciliation and Renewal  
For the realization of Flourishing and Fullness  
Consummated in the Love of God which sets creation free  
from the bondage of sin.

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# Epistle From Fr. James

Dear Friends of Mons Nubifer Sanctus,

Our world presents us, in-your-face style, with a cacophony of voices all vying for supremacy. They claim importance, downright urgency, make promises for a better life, a bigger you, promise less spending so that you'll spend more, or just pledge relief from the pressures we endure as sounding boards and antennas for the confused clamor of our age. These statements bear no more proof of veracity than to point out that to even say this much is to risk repeating a cliché. Our letters and e-mails, our communications and newsletters, can and I'm sure do get lost in the underbellies of the ever burgeoning in-box and piles of pending recyclables. And why shouldn't they? The last thing I want to do is to contribute to the white noise of your life and the junk of this age. I remember listening to a speech given by the writer and Christian agrarian Wendell Berry; he concluded by pointing out the paradox in his having travelled 2,000 miles to give a talk about why people should stay local! I find myself in a similar situation, filling up your desks, Facebook walls and e-mail accounts with invitations to unplug yourself, to travel here to learn or re-learn what it means to be still and silent in the presence of God. At the same time, however, I am searching to find a way to interpret to you the profound importance of the work we have set out to accomplish here at Mons Nubifer Sanctus.

Of course, not all of our programs are focused on stillness and silence. We understand that contemplative practice is no different from the fullness, the catholicity, of the Christian life itself. Therefore we feel that a solid formation in doctrine, scripture, liturgy, community life, service, history, virtue and all the rest must combine to comprise the comprehensiveness of a robust spirituality which challenges and transforms the whole person. But it is in prayer that the Christian life is sustained. Prayer is its heart. The Christian walks towards intimate union with God through identity with Christ

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in the Holy Spirit. This is the secret, spiritual work of contemplation, made visible and common in Eucharistic worship and expressed in doctrine, holy teaching and service to the world.

It has been interesting to notice that our programs which focus chiefly on contemplative practice, on still prayer and silence, have garnered the fewest registrations. I cannot help but detect in this our present age's mistrust for faith and intuition. Faith and intuition are, of course, the chief faculties at work in contemplative prayer. Faith-based, intuitive knowing is a knowing through unknowing, an inward walk into the mystifying, murky and often messy longings of the soul while yet trusting wholeheartedly in one's own divine calling, in God's

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love which restores and transfigures. If we are not in an outright war with it, we hold suspect or deny altogether a knowing which defies and even mocks our subsistence on the islands of the rational, demonstrable, and scientific. It grieves me deeply to admit that this mistrust manifests itself among Christians as much as in the world,

though usually in a more nuanced way. Such an inward walk, a walk into the pre-rational, is, however, necessary for anyone who would follow Christ through the scandal of the cross, for anyone who would embrace the refining fire of the Spirit and uncover that which can only and truly satiate human desire, the very same desire which now runs surreptitiously beneath and feeds the confused cacophony of the boiling world as it seeks satisfaction in that which cannot satisfy.

I cannot help but likewise perceive somewhere in this a skulking fear of the silence, a fear of its intimacy and nakedness, a feeling of inadequacy and unpreparedness before it. Given the great din we have become accustomed to, such a fear would be expected. This is exactly why silence and stillness should above all be embraced and befriended. One must assume that the presence of a fear of silence, a fear of facing those stuffed-down and unreconciled places of the soul within that silence, proves the deep need for silence; that it somehow justifies the e-mails and the newsletters we send, that we must continue to call and convince and embolden you to unplug, to take this little leap of faith, and to come and learn or re-learn how to be at peace in the intimacy of

silence; how to stand before God exposed; how to vanquish insanity and choose what is simple and sane; how to be, truly, what you are as God has made you, when the you of your own and the world's making is stilled.

All of these words said, however, I am still at a loss of how to interpret the importance of this work to you. How can I elucidate this wonderful way which must above all be encountered, experienced and inhabited? I can tell you that some struggle mightily in the face of it, only to find their heart strangely softened on the other side. I can tell you that others right away find within it a deep and abiding consolation. Others remember in the midst of this practice what it is to truly live, and yet others what it means to die well. All of it turns towards one end: that we might be fully alive, fully human like Christ was fully human, the image and likeness of God. Saint Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) wrote: "The glory of God is the human person, fully alive, and the life of man consists in beholding God." This double work – to behold God and so be fully alive, and to give glory to God by beholding him and living – this is the work of contemplative practice.

Let me, then, cast in my lot with Wendell Berry and invite you once again to come, to take the risk of discovery at the risk of some discomfort and challenge, to take the risk of being sane at the risk of noting our concessions to insanity, to enter the paradox of being taught what cannot be taught, to be alone with God with the help and in the company of others, to take the time and travel here to learn or re-learn what it means to be still and silent in the presence of God.

God's Peace,

Fr. James Krueger+



## News & Happenings

The biggest news here in the northwestern Catskills is that spring has finally arrived. To tell the truth it seems that we've skipped spring altogether and leapt from a late winter into an early summer. Maureen and I have been busy tending to the gardens behind the guesthouse and putting in a few raised vegetable beds. We have also enjoyed seeing what has been coming up in the flower beds.

We are pleased to be welcoming Nashotah House Seminary student Margaret Brack as an intern for the last week in June. Margaret will come to us with a host of gifts, including being a fine musician and singer. While here she will receive training in contemplative practice, mostly through following the daily schedule and receiving spiritual direction, getting a small taste of rural parish ministry in an Anglo-Catholic setting, and assisting us in some key tasks. Her work duties will focus on extending the word about our programming on a more regional basis, especially in the Hudson Valley and New York City area, making web connections, and encouraging churches in the region to inform their members about our ministry.

We are putting out a call for others who wish to study and serve here on a longer-term basis as an intern or work-scholar. We can house such people for a month or more, and might even consider a full year. While here one would train in the contemplative life, gain an appreciation for rural parish ministry and mission, and help this ministry to thrive by lending a hand in areas of need. If interested please inquire, or pass the word along if you know someone who might be attracted to such an opportunity.



# *Charismata, Contemplation & Catholicity*

As I compose this essay a heavy, soaking rain cascades down the roof slates and leafed-out trees and into the jubilant grasses outside the open window. Maureen and I have been busy building vegetable beds behind the guesthouse, and this rain is a welcome comfort to our freshly planted seeds and seedlings. The wounded earth of our digging now brings forth life that will nourish us and our guests throughout this season and in seasons to come.

In a certain rainy-day mood I occasionally think back on times past, wondering about the spiritual promptings and dilemmas which have led me to this quiet day of satiating rain. A young man who eschewed commitments, who loved leaving as much as he loved arriving at something new, a songwriter and poet and enthusiast of romance, I led a life marked by the most extreme states of mind, some of which seemed revelatory. It would take a long time and a lot of digging down before I could begin to distinguish excitement from spiritual progress, sentiment from prayer, emotional tides from the work of the Spirit, assurance from election, the call from my own response. This work continues for me.

Of course, all of these things are part and parcel of the spiritual life. The spiritual life is an adventure; it takes courage, grit and great risk, and so it is and should be exciting. So, too, does God work through desire and emotion. Still, if the Christian spiritual life is to deepen, God must be allowed to cleanse our courage and risk-taking, to distill our desire, our emotion and our excitement. These must be refined to their radiant essence. Desire and emotion, spiritual bravado, excitement and sentiment, these are not the goal of the Christian spiritual life. As Christians our hope is towards the new creation.

We pass through the seventh day of the end-times, the Holy Saturday of the tomb, when the old order has vanished and all things new, all hope, lies silent in utter potentiality. We pass through this





death into the eighth day, the day when the new creation emerges, sparkling and alive, vivid and sure, filled with the Spirit of God, with the dynamic peace of the Father who reigns in his Messiah who has made his abode in us. This is the astonishing and undreamed day of Resurrection, the day when the human being has finally become the image and likeness of God. This world-to-come must first find soil in our hearts and there be planted, the seed of Christ who is the first-fruit of the new man. Throughout our lives we tend this seed and water it with the sacraments, with scripture and holy teaching, by fellowship with the

saints, with prayer, and with the spiritual practices handed down to us throughout two thousand years of Christian living. We do this so that this little seed might itself bear the fruits of the age of light – the light which is darkness to the grasping, worldly mind but dazzling to the heart opened by love – and bear these fruits even in this age of darkness, that they might then drop their seeds in this age of darkness, scattered and given for the life of the world. Graces and gifts are given for this, and this is the work of contemplation, which is the work of the Church. When the Church fails this, she fails. She does not exist merely to comfort and reassure in a dark time, as if we should find reassurance in darkness, but to storm the gates of darkness and death and vanquish them in the light of Christ, which is the light of truth, the light of a heart no longer given to deception, no longer searching a dark age for consolation and a home within it, no longer pursuing a counterfeit spiritual hope but knowing where Christian hope truly lies.

Following the lead of “Pentecostals”, who themselves emerged in the early 20th century, the “charismatic movement” filtered into mainstream churches, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, in the 1960s. The word charismatic comes from the Greek word *charis* which means ‘grace’ or ‘favor’. A 2011 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study

showed that some 500 million Christians, a quarter of all the Christians throughout the world, consider themselves to be “charismatic” or a part of the charismatic movement. Though far from a monolithic subgroup, people who identify as charismatic share a spirituality which expects outward signs, such as healings, speaking in tongues and prophesying (something which a lot of people do without knowing it) to be present in the lives of believers. Insofar as the movement sets itself up as a little fire within an established church stuck in the ruts of the ways of the world it is a welcome breeze of renewal. That these outward signs demonstrate and communicate the presence of God’s grace, favor and the Holy Spirit should, however, immediately bring to mind the sacraments. In this case everything sacramental is charismatic, the Eucharist being chiefly so.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that the interdependent workings of the various gifts and graces of individuals, and the sacramental life of the gathered faithful, have always been exactly the channels through which God has worked and continues to work in his Church – from the boring and unseen graces of cleaning toilets and administration to the secret prayer of our hearts to extraordinary visions and healings to the Sunday mass. Any gift – administration, healing, contemplation, Eucharist<sup>2</sup> – is given not for an individual’s sake but for the building up of the Church as the new, reconciled, completed humanity, the people of the new creation. At least since the day of Pentecost the charismatic movement, and the “contemplative movement” for that matter (if we make the mistake of perceiving and presenting the gift and practice of contemplation as a movement), are nothing new. These are not, indeed, movements at all. Nothing is added to the fullness, to the catholicity, of the Church by naming these as “movements” separate from or even within the Church. They are the Church, and they have always been the Church. It is the Church who is graced and enjoys, through Christ, God’s favor and kindness. It is the



Church who moves the faithful into the fullness of Christ – not into an atomized “personal relationship with Jesus” but into complete identity with him as his very own body, interceding on behalf of the world, being united to the Father in the Holy Spirit by a movement of total self-emptying and offering. We affirm in the Creed that the Church is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic”, and when she is being these she is being all she is. This fullness is her catholicity; she cannot and must not be reduced to various movements.

When Paul writes about spiritual gifts in his First Letter to the Corinthians it is to rebuke those who make a show of outward signs and spiritual graces. He seeks to establish order in the gathered community, and he will go on to demonstrate the superior way of self-emptying love, which is the way of the contemplative and the cross. Time and again Jesus himself warns against focusing on outward signs, and laments his hearer’s dependence on them as a basis of faith.<sup>3</sup> Christian wisdom tells us that it is in the empty desert that the beloved of God is prepared to meet him in intimacy; man falls in the lush garden full of the signs of God, but is saved on the dry wood of the cross. The real work of the Spirit cuts deep; its greatest miracle is the sanctification, and so the completion, of the human being, made in the image and likeness of God. This sanctification often makes its greatest headways in dryness, in the absence of consolations and signs. It is here where the real mettle of faith is tested and strengthened, and the seeker of God is urged to seek him in and for himself.

It is natural, then, for the believer to move from a focus on outward signs, a focus on pious feelings and sentiments, spiritual excitements and empirical proofs, to a more secret work, a hidden charisma, to an emphasis on the transfiguration of the whole person, down to the very inner sanctuary of the heart and the marrow of the bones. This is the work of contemplation. The child first needs the outward display of the parent’s love (which includes their discipline and boundary-making) to be assured of their care; but the adult has assimilated this love into their own being and now turns that love towards their own children and the world. The seed is nourished by the rain, but only so that it might become nourishment itself. When the faithful are focused on the more outward displays of charismata the Church remains stuck in its teenage years. Contemplation is charismatic

and, since the goal of contemplation and the Christian life is nothing other than union with God, all charismata must lead into its depths. Now more than ever, in a society that by and large identifies as post-Christian, those who would remain Christ's own need the illumination and insight, the solid peace and directness, the deep inward humility, and the supple resolve of a heart turned towards God alone in all the tender longings of contemplative love. Turned, that is, towards the mystery of God the Father in himself through union with Christ in the Holy Spirit. With this will come also a necessary renunciation of the worldly and vulgar, of the mechanical and popular; healing shall be had when our bodies are utterly given in love. Then shall we show forth the true human being, the one who eats solid food, the one who lives on earth as in heaven, the mature human being in the fullness of the stature of Christ and made in the image and likeness of God. Then shall we dwell in that blessed new creation which vanquishes the old. Then shall we show the world the true power of the Spirit in a life of deep, abiding and undisturbed faith, an open-hearted trust in God above all. Then shall we perceive the world to come even in the midst of the falling away of this present world.

This is our great work, the work of the Church: that the childish seed-shell might be cast away that you, and your fellow faithful through and with you, might grow into the fullness of Christ.

1. Notice that the word “Eucharist” contains the root *charis*: Eu-*charis*-t.

2. Theologians have traditionally distinguished the graces (*charismata*) which build up both the inner and outer life of the Church from the graces which inspire personal sanctification. Contemplation would likely be filed with the latter group. We're not making this distinction here. We are following the understanding that the sanctification of her members is the goal of the Church, while the goal of personal sanctification is incorporation into the Body of Christ, and union with the Father in him. There is no personal sanctification without reconciliation, so there is no sanctification without community and communion.

3. See Jn 4:48, 20:29 for two examples. Mt 24:24 warns against being deceived by signs. See also Mt 12:38; 1 Cor 1:22.

## ∞ ℒ Signs of the Saints an excerpt from Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*

Our Lord bestows a signal grace on the soul if it realizes how great is this favor, and another greater still if it does not turn back on the right road. You are longing, my daughters, to enter into this state of prayer at once, and you are right, for, as I said, the soul cannot understand the value of the graces there bestowed by God upon it, nor the love which draws Him ever closer to it: we should certainly desire to learn how

to obtain this favor. I will tell you what I know about it, setting aside certain cases in which God bestows these graces for no other reason than His own choice, into which we have no right to enquire.

Practice what I advised in the preceding mansions, then - humility, humility! for God lets Himself be vanquished by this and grants us all we ask. The first proof that you possess humility is that you neither think you now deserve these graces and consolations from God, nor that you ever will as long as you live. You ask me: 'How shall we receive them, if we do not try to gain them?' I answer, that there is no surer way to obtain them than the one I have told you, therefore make no efforts to acquire them, for the following reasons. The first is, that the chief means of obtaining them is to love God without self-interest. The second, that it is a slight lack of humility to think that our wretched services can win so great a reward. The third, that the real preparation for them is to desire to suffer and imitate our Lord, rather than to receive consolations, for indeed we have all offended Him. The fourth reason is, that His Majesty has not promised to give us these favors in the same way as He has bound Himself to bestow eternal glory on us if we keep His commandments. We can be saved without these special graces; He sees better than we do what is best for us and which of us love Him sincerely. I know for a certain truth, being acquainted with some who walk by the way of love (and therefore only seek to serve Jesus Christ crucified), that not only they neither ask for nor desire consolation, but they even beg Him not to give it them during this life: this is a fact. Fifthly, we should but labor in vain: this water does not flow through aqueducts, like that we first spoke of, and if the spring does not afford it, in vain shall we toil to obtain it. I mean, that though we may meditate and try our hardest, and though we shed tears to gain it, we cannot make this water flow. God alone gives it to whom He chooses, and often when the soul is least thinking of it. We are His, sisters, let Him do what He will with us, and lead us where He will. If we are really humble and forget ourselves, not only in our imagination (which often deceives us), but if we truly detach ourselves from all things, our Lord will not only grant us these favors but many others that we do not know even how to desire. May He be for ever praised and blessed! Amen.

Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582),  
*Interior Castle*, Book 4, Chapter 2.7.8.

# *Upcoming Programs*

## *Summer/Fall 2015*

Programs at Mons Nubifer Sanctus are open to all. Each program is aimed at enhancing the appreciation and practice of the Christian life. We emphasize the costliness of Christian discipleship, encouraging spiritual maturity and union with God. Whether of an academic, practical, or spiritual nature, every program is designed to embolden us towards this end, and so is circumscribed by the practice of prayer, both silent and liturgical. Each day consists of an early morning period of still prayer, followed by sung morning, noon and evening prayer services. The day ends with another period of still prayer and the nighttime service called “Compline.” The daily schedule also includes a period of silent work, wherein we complete the chores necessary for our time together and practice the safeguarding of a prayerful heart in daily activity.

Overnight retreats begin with arrival and registration between 2 and 4pm on the starting day, and end at 2pm on the final day. All participants are asked to be present for the duration of the scheduled activities from beginning to end as each portion of the schedule represents an integral part of the curriculum and is essential to the contemplative formation on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus.

We are located at Saint James Church Lake Delaware, 55 Lake Delaware Drive, Delhi, NY 13753, on southbound State Route 28 halfway between Delhi and Andes. We are accessible by Trailways bus line from New York City and points southeast, and from Albany, Cooperstown, and points north and west. **Unless otherwise indicated all programs require pre-registration and are offered for no formal charge.** We only ask that you give a freewill donation according to your ability to give. If you are unable to offer a cash donation work scholarships are available; please inquire. See our website [www.monsnubifer.org](http://www.monsnubifer.org) or contact us for further information or to register for a program.

**+ June 27, or stay from the 26th to the 28th: The Human Person, Fully Alive: Explorations in Christian Anthropology**

**9:00am to 3pm, lunch included.**

*“The glory of God is the human person, fully alive, and the life of man consists in beholding God.”* Saint Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.), Against Heresies, 4. 34. 5-7  
Christian anthropology is that branch of theological reflection which articulates a vision for the human person as she relates to, and reflects, the personhood of God. Issues of anthropology are the chief concern of contemporary Christians, from the raging debates about human sexuality and abortion to the human’s relationship with his environment. Through reading, commentary and discussion participants in this program explore both

classical and contemporary Christian articulations of human personhood, relating anthropology to the other concerns of theology such as creation, sin, spiritual knowledge, and salvation.

### **+ July 10-12: Contemplative Prayer for Beginners**

Dip your feet into the ocean of contemplative practice in the classical Christian tradition. Participants gain a solid theological and historical foundation in contemplative Christian practice, as well as some practical skills. Learn how to pray deeply; how to chant the daily prayer offices in morning, noon and evening prayer services; how the Christian sacramental and communal life supports and deepens contemplative practice, and how to practice contemplative activity. Participants have the opportunity to avail themselves of individual spiritual direction and/or the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) during this retreat.

### **+ August 6-9: Transfiguration Prayer Vigil**

The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into a deep and regenerative silence engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation) in formal 30 minute periods throughout the day. This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work helps us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. Each day also allows some free time for rest and the enjoyment of our beautiful grounds. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program.

### **+ August 13-16: Creation and the Christian Life: A Hiking Retreat**

This retreat commingles contemplative prayer with day hikes in the Catskill Mountains and reflections on Genesis 1-11 as it relates to the Christian spiritual life and our relationship with the earth and its Creator. Creation and salvation are unequivocally linked in the biblical narrative. The Bible begins and ends with creation stories and is punctuated throughout with allusions to the narratives of the first few chapters of Genesis, constantly bringing our attention back to God as the font, and so the finale, of all creation. As such, the salvation so deeply hoped for in the Christian tradition is not the truncated concern of isolated individuals but a redemption and renewal of cosmic proportions. What do the creation stories of Genesis have to tell us about the human's place in the created order, and so about the nature of salvation itself? What is sin and how does it affect creation and our relationship to it?

Participants must be able to hike at an intermediate level (elevation gains and some difficult terrain, such as rocky trails) for up to 6 miles.

**+ August 28-30: Until I Rest in Thee: Readings from Saint Augustine**  
Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Northern Africa from 395 – 430, is one of the most influential theologians in the Western Christian and philosophical traditions. He may also be one of the more misunderstood. Sometimes criticized for his somber views of human limitation, Augustine is yet composer of the line “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” Through reading, commentary and discussion this program gives a solid foundation for understanding the life, thought and later influence on Western culture of this prolific, brilliant and sometimes controversial figure.

**+ October 2-4: Contemplative Prayer for Beginners**

Dip your feet into the ocean of contemplative practice in the classical Christian tradition. Participants gain a solid theological and historical foundation in contemplative Christian practice, as well as some practical skills. Learn how to pray deeply; how to chant the daily prayer offices in morning, noon and evening prayer services; how the Christian sacramental and communal life supports and deepens contemplative practice, and how to practice contemplative activity. Participants have the opportunity to avail themselves of individual spiritual direction and/or the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) during this retreat.

**+ October 16-18: Contemplative Prayer for Caregivers and Helping Professionals**

This program introduces the theology and practice of contemplative prayer while focusing our reflections specifically on how contemplative practice prepares and strengthens us for service to others. In the midst of contemplation one encounters the deep suffering inherent in this life, a life marked by sin and existential separation from God. Through the courageous, honest and simple engagement of this suffering we are opened to greater love and patience for others, sharing in the messianic life of atonement and reconciliation on behalf of all. At the same time, contemplative practice helps us to establish discernment and clear boundaries, and so to free our service from manipulation and coercion. You need not be an active caregiver or in a helping profession to attend. This retreat is offered in honor of Saint Luke the Evangelist and Physician whose feast day is October 18.

### **+ October 29-November 1: All Saints Prayer Vigil**

The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into a deep and regenerative silence engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation) in formal 30 minute periods throughout the day. This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work helps us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. Each day also allows some free time for rest and the enjoyment of our beautiful grounds. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program.

### **+ November 7: Towards a Biblical Sustainability: Movie Screening & Community Forum With Dr. Susan Emmerich**

**9am - 12pm; no pre-registrion required.**

The award winning film *When Heaven Meets Earth* documents Dr. Susan Emmerich's work on Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay. For decades Chesapeake watermen and farmers have been fighting environmentalists over fishery and land use regulations, convinced that their cultural and economic survival is at stake. This film highlights the inspiring story of reconciliation when Emmerich applied faith-based stewardship principles to mediate the conflicts in these two communities. Witness how both watermen and farmers awakened to the biblical mandate to care for God's creation, an awakening which transformed their relationships to God, creation, environmentalists and one another. Emmerich will be personally present to speak about her work, to discuss how these principals can be applied in our own community, and to field your questions. Susan Emmerich is a nationally known speaker on faith-based environmental stewardship and is currently the CEO of Emmerich Environmental Consulting and director of the Creation Care Program for the Center for Law and Culture.

### **+ November 25-27: Thanksgiving Retreat**

Details TBA

### **+ December 11-13: Rose Sunday Advent Retreat**

Advent, like its big sister Lent, is a time of preparation. Fasting, atonement, and prayer have always been the tenor of these preparatory seasons. Rose Sunday – or Refreshment Sunday – Sunday marks the third week in Advent, a time when the fast was customarily relaxed for a spell. Even the liturgical color is changed from a solemn violet to a buoyant rose for this one day.

This retreat provides some time set apart from the incessant demands of our daily lives to discover the refreshment of stillness and silence. Here is where opportunities for true repentance and atonement present themselves. Participants spend time together in formal periods of still prayer, punctuated by Advent reflections and opportunities to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction. On Saturday evening we welcome guests from the outside and participate in a simple service of Advent Lessons and Carols with a reception following; see below for details.

**+ Saturday December 12: Advent Lessons and Carols**

**7:00 – 8:00pm; reception following. No pre-registration required.**

Advent anticipates the celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation, the perfect union of the human person with the Divine Persons whereby we are redeemed from isolation and death into the mystery of God's eternal love. Join us for a prayerful and joyous service consisting of readings from scripture interspersed with many of our favorite carols. Tarry for a time afterward in the Parish Hall for some food and fellowship around the warmth of the fire.

**+ Tuesday December 22 – Thursday December 25: Heart of Christmas Prayer Vigil**

Enter the heart of Christmas during four days of silence and worship. The Prayer Vigil comprises the core of the contemplative training at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. The retreat crests in the midnight mass of the Nativity of Our Lord in celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation and concludes with a community Christmas brunch on Christmas Day. See Christmas Program below for details.

**+ Thursday December 24 & Friday December 25: Christmas Program**

**No pre-registration required unless you plan to attend supper on Christmas Eve and/or to stay overnight.**

**Dec 24: 4:30 pm:** Solemn Vespers, **5:30 pm:** Light Supper, **8:30 pm:** Still Prayer Vigil, **11:00 pm:** Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord. **Dec 25: 9:00 am:** Still Prayer Vigil, **11:00 am:** Christmas Day Mass, **12:00 pm:** Community Christmas Brunch. All are welcome.

### **+ Tuesday December 29 to Friday January 1: New Year's Prayer Vigil**

Enter 2016 with wakefulness and purpose while continuing the celebrations of the Christmas season. The Prayer Vigil is at the heart of the contemplative training on offer at Mons Nubifer Sanctus. Participants enter into a deep and regenerative silence engaging the practice of still prayer (Christian meditation) in formal 30 minute periods throughout the day. This is punctuated by the chanting of the psalms at morning, noon, and evening prayer services, and a daily period of silent work helps us to carry our prayerfulness into everyday activities. Each day also allows some free time for rest and the enjoyment of our beautiful grounds. All participants have an opportunity to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) and/or to receive individual spiritual direction during the program. This prayer vigil culminates in the New Year's Eve Midnight Mass for Healing and Peace, see below for details.

### **+ Thursday December 31: New Year's Program: Midnight Mass for Healing and Peace**

#### **No pre-registration required unless staying overnight.**

Though the Church begins its new year with Advent, the secular holiday of New Year's is a time when we reflect as a culture on the past and make resolutions for the future. Despite these intentions, just about everything about New Year's and our celebrations of it seem to distract us from these intentions. Mons Nubifer Sanctus and Saint James Lake Delaware invite you, then, to enter 2016 with wakefulness and purpose. Not blinding ourselves to the great sufferings of our time but engaging human pain and offering it up to God for healing, this will be the aim of our time together this evening. Let us together pledge to live 2016 in the love of Christ. **9:00pm:** Still Prayer Vigil; **10:15pm:** Break/prepare for mass. **11:00pm:** New Year's Mass, reception following. Overnight accommodations available, please inquire.

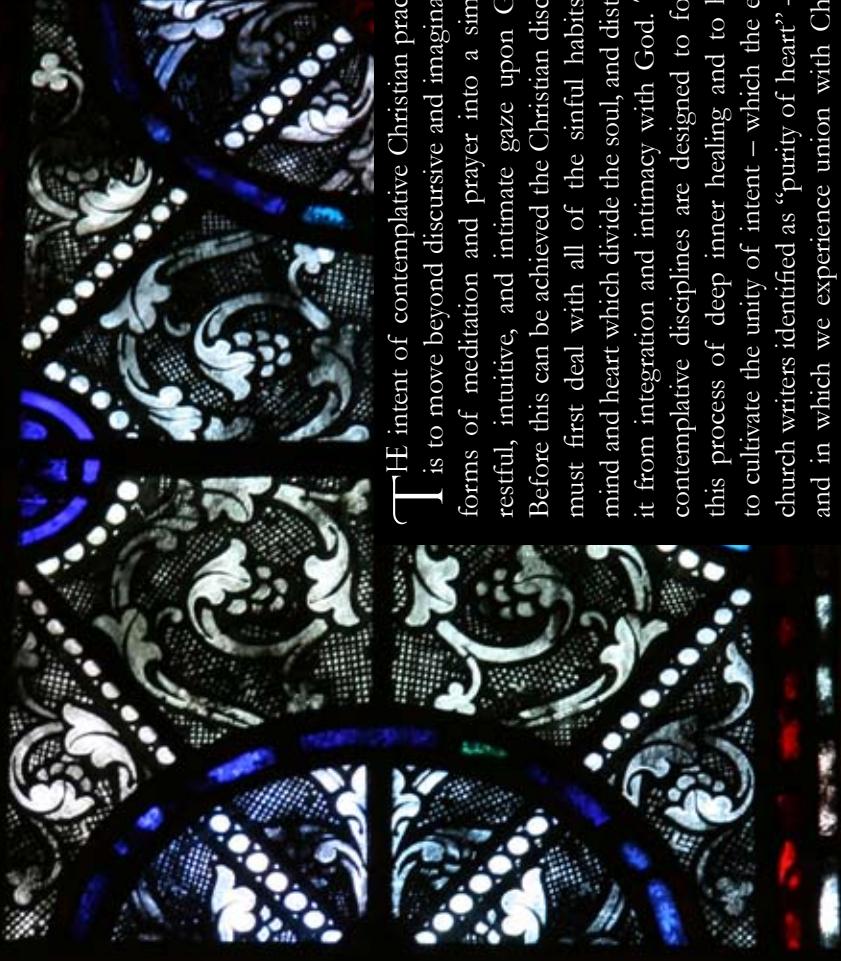


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THE intent of contemplative Christian practice is to move beyond discursive and imaginative forms of meditation and prayer into a simple, restful, intuitive, and intimate gaze upon God. Before this can be achieved the Christian disciple must first deal with all of the sinful habits of mind and heart which divide the soul, and distract it from integration and intimacy with God. The contemplative disciplines are designed to foster this process of deep inner healing and to help to cultivate the unity of intent – which the early church writers identified as “purity of heart” – by and in which we experience union with Christ, and so with the Father in the Spirit.