



*The Anchorage 20:*  
*A Contemplative Community for All*

P.O. Box 9091 \ Greenville, S.C. 29604 \ (864) 232-LOVE (5683) \ [www.theanchorage.org](http://www.theanchorage.org)

*Come away...*

October 2017

Dear Friend of The Anchorage Community,

For 17 years I served God in a faith-based non-profit. I mobilized volunteers overseas, building bridges between people and communities. I also became really good at building walls around my heart. I got so busy working for God that I didn't spend any time with God. That left me cold, burnt out, with no margins and no joy. While I knew I needed to drastically change and intentionally slow down and spend time with God, I had no idea where to begin. I had dabbled in morning devotion time, gratitude journaling, meditative drawing, but nothing had really clicked.

God knew how to get through my walls, though. Catherine Powell and I met at a gathering where she was offering information about the Anchorage. We instantly bonded over our love for cats. I continued to gravitate to her table, and as we got to know each other that weekend it was clear that Catherine and the Anchorage had something I needed.

I timidly attended my first desert day with some reservation. Could I be still for THAT LONG? Could I just rest? Were there going to be OTHER PEOPLE there? Was it going to be worth taking a vacation day from work? The answers were all yes, and in a very positive and profound way.

This day set into motion a new beginning for me of contemplative practices, centering prayer, and listening to God. The ministry of the Anchorage has helped me ground myself in Gods amazing and boundless love. It has connected me with some amazing men and women of faith who encourage, pray, and support each other. My daily practice of centering prayer has brought back my joy even in the midst of some difficult challenges.

I am so grateful for The Anchorage. This is a ministry that offers resources, space, opportunities, encouragement, and support for each of us as we seek to sink deeper into Gods love. After many years of seeking the safe harbor of Gods embrace, this ministry has beckoned me to sit with Jesus, and let the strengthening love of God wash over me.

We would love for you to anchor deep with us.

Your gift of presence builds community.

Your gift of prayer uplifts us all.

Your financial gift allows The Anchorage to continue to provide the resources and space for all seekers to rest and breathe in God.

Would you please prayerfully consider a financial donation to the Anchorage? Your support will help others find what I, and many others, have found – a place of restoration and growth, learning in a profound way the deep love of God.

Blessings,  
Angela Sudermann, Servant Leader, The Anchorage

**Servant Leaders**

- Rosemary Goodall  
Methodist
- Jason Loscuito, Chair  
Baptist
- Juan Ortiz  
Grace (non-denom.)
- Starla Revels  
Episcopalian
- Angela Sudermann  
Baptist
- Holland Webb  
Nazarene

**Staff**

- Catherine Powell  
Founding Servant  
Leader

**Support**

- Susan Leaphart  
Volunteer  
Coordinator
- Camp Wynn  
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**Advisors**

- Elizabeth Canham  
Episcopalian
- William Dietrich  
Quaker
- Peggy Dulaney  
Methodist
- Travis Ellison  
Presbyterian
- Kathryn Fitzgerald  
Catholic
- Glenn Hinson  
Baptist
- Merwyn Johnson  
Presbyterian
- Carl McKenzie  
Lutheran
- Kent Satterfield  
Episcopalian



# “Eclipse of the Soul”

By Michael Fleenor, NC

Many of us in the Southeast were fortunate to see the greatly marketed “rare total eclipse of the sun.” As many as 120,000 people came to Upcountry South Carolina and Western North Carolina to view it.

They witnessed a cosmic “Diamond Ring” just before the moon totally obscured all but the thinnest rim of the sun. Like a circular necklace, they saw “Baily’s beads” shortly thereafter. Following the appearance of these astronomical “jewels”, all went black for over 3 minutes. They could finally witness the beauty of the eclipse in safety without special glasses that protected them from being blinded by the sun’s usual intense rays.

In that eclipse interval, wild “streamers” could be seen shooting out from the sun’s corona (crown), something invisible to the naked eye except when the sun is completely obscured. A hush overtook everyone and everything in awe at the solar display. The small distant coal black hole swallowed everything nearby except that wispy dancing ring of fire.

The central darkness finally receded and the sun re-emerged, people put their glasses back on, and resumed their conversations, in more noticeably quiet tones than before were heard to whisper in muffled tones, “This is a once in a lifetime event and I’m changed by it.”

St. John of the Cross, a 16th century Spanish priest and mystic, described a spiritual “eclipse” in his life in the poem “Dark Night” (of the Soul). In this love poem to God, he experiences a blinding darkness that alarms, almost terrifies him because his senses “were purged” of their usual sensitivity to physical stimuli around him as he was plunged into utter darkness. Surrounded by this space devoid of light, a paradoxical inner luminosity of Love shone and he “arrive[d] at a sweet and delicious life with God.”

Ironically, “darkness” in our Christian lives is something we have nearly always been taught to avoid. “Be in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7) is what rings in our minds because darkness is virtually always equated with “evil” and therefore something to protect ourselves against. Curiously, John of the Cross tells us something different about darkness. It is in mystical luminous darkness and its almost deafening silence that shuts out the glaring, often blinding light and noise of the world.

At first this darkness is terrifying; it feels like the sun itself darkens, something that literally feels like death. Yet, it is during such spiritual eclipses, that we see the cosmic “diamond ring” of God’s commitment in Love to us; we feel the touch of the “necklace” of grace he places around our necks that assures us that we are His and His alone. Beautiful “streams” of mercy emanate from the “crown” (corona) God places on our heads, It is this beauty that would be imperceptible unless we are plunged into a “darkness of the soul”.

Such mystical experiences are rare, intense, unexpected, disarming . . . often alarming. All other distractions are purged. We are driven into silence. They force us to redirect our attention to matters beyond ourselves and a new (and maybe only?) Reality around us. As Isaiah describes his experience in Is. 6, they redirect our focus to both an awful (terrifying) and awesome newness of God’s presence and Love. Words fail to adequately describe it. We are left only in hushed appreciation and tremulous humility.

Such moments, like an eclipse, are rare indeed. After periods of such “blindness”, we are able to see more clearly once we re-emerge into the relentless, “blinding light” of the world to which we all must eventually return. These times of retreat are not luxuries but necessities. They provide anchors like old ships that used drogue anchors to stabilize them in turbulent waters. We need both anchors while “at sea” as well as anchorage for rest and refurbishing. I experienced one such episode in the stillness and solitude of Mepkin Abbey this past spring.

When we share these experiences with God, we cannot help but see better with eyes of Love, as God sees the world. It is then we are “in the light as He is in the light”. That seeing comes only through a period of darkness, a “total eclipse” that leaves us in utter amazement of His goodness to us.