

Cynthia Bourgeault's response to the news of Spirituality & Practice's move to Claremont, California

Hi, I'm Cynthia Bourgeault. It's my pleasure to say a few words on behalf today of the most recent initiative of the inimitable Fred and Mary Ann Brussat, to establish a Center for Spiritual Practice in partnership with the Claremont School of Theology.

I've known the Brussats professionally for more than a decade now, and I've had the honor of working with them as colleagues on six e-courses on their Spirituality & Practice website, and I can say from this ten years of experience that there are two things in particular that impress me about their work, always have.

First, they're always ahead of the curve. They see what is needed with an unusual clarity and know how to redefine the turf so that they move out of old boxes to create new wineskins for the new wine to flow in. They were one of the pioneers in shaping this whole format of online spiritual formation, and I think you could justifiably call them the midwives of the whole interspiritual age. They've created the resource bank, the documents, the connections that allow people to actually start working and moving in this new field.

And second, they do what they do with a rigorous attention to detail and professionalism. Their online e-course is still a model of simple elegance that still sets the benchmark for an entry level into the whole field of online education. I think even for us baby boomers who come to computers as a second language, their Spirituality & Practice courses are virtually idiot-proof. So thank you to them for that.

So I think this new gambit with Claremont excites me in two ways. First of all, it collects and makes accessible in really wonderful ways this *massive* archive of spiritual resources they've developed over more than a decade of presenting these e-courses -- two decades! It's a wonderful interspiritual collection of teachings and resources. And they're not just going to dump it in one place, but also continue to develop it and make it accessible by mentorship of new curators, showing people how to use it, showing people how to work with it. So it's a wonderful new model of ongoing availability and sustainability of a treasure that might otherwise be lost as they move to retirement and handing on the reins.

And second, I'm particularly thrilled that they're doing this in association with Claremont. Their partner is sort of, in some ways, their counterpart in the seminary world to what they are in cyber world. Claremont I've worked with myself in a wonderful way. On former projects, I've worked closely with three of their professors in fields of Centering Prayer, neuro-meditation, and Christian and Buddhist dialogue.

Like the Brussats, they are ahead of the curve in knowing what needs to be happening and beginning to anticipate a new era where the world is not just lived in a single denominational box or even a religious lineage box, but in a much larger context of lay-led life learning and leadership and in interspiritual communion.

And they've developed a model I haven't really seen elsewhere in the seminary world of having an active research line out to the forming shape of leadership in an interspiritual world. So I think they've also -- in a way that just warms my heart -- kept an oar in the water with insisting on *practice* -- Centering Prayer, meditation, contemplation -- as the basis for the real transformation and formation for ministry.

So in all ways, I think this partnership is a win-win, and I'm delighted and honored to be asked to say a few words in support. I hope you'll take it seriously and support them as best you can. Thank you!