



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

93: What is Divine Therapy? Part 2



Makoto Fujimura, *The Tears of Christ*

*Whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come.*

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

What makes us a new creation? When we dedicate ourselves to a contemplative practice such as Centering Prayer, God invites us into the process of divine therapy where we are experiencing two things at the same time, the affirmation of our basic core of goodness and the purification of our unconscious. In *Manifesting God*, Fr. Thomas illustrates how our Centering Prayer practice deepens and changes us through the stages of contemplative prayer:

"The Prayer of Interior Recollection – Interior silence becomes more and more profound, pervasive, and peaceful. The gift of interior silence is sown in us as a precious seed through the daily practice of Centering Prayer and comes to full bloom in 'prayer in secret.'

"The Prayer of Quiet – The will is aware of being united to God in some deep and satisfying way, while an annoying barrage of thoughts may be going on at the same time in our memory and imagination... We may have been looking for happiness all our lives in the wrong places and now have suddenly found the direction in which it can be found.

"The Prayer of Union – God, so to speak, opens his heart to us and, to make sure that we don't miss the point or fail to receive the fullness of his grace, puts to rest the mental obstacles in us by suspending the reflective faculties... We are then ready to take all the pleasures of this world and drop them in the wastebasket. Nothing can compare with the delights of the Divine Presence.

"The Prayer of Full Union – This grace takes away all self-reflection... Not only does the Spirit suspend the ordinary reflective faculties, but even suspends the sense of an individual self. At least for the moment, one loses all interest in what it has ever done or of what becomes of it.

"The Grace of Transforming Union – One sign of Transforming Union is to manifest God's goodness and tenderness in whatever the 'now moment' contains or seems to require... As the false self diminishes the True Self builds a new self which Paul calls 'the new creation.'

"Unity - Even Transforming Union is transcended... One is united to God in the unity of the Holy Spirit in the same way that the Father and the Son are united."

...That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

John 17:21-23

A Meditation

...'What does it mean to live a spiritual life?' and 'How do we live it?'... The spiritual life [is] the active presence of God's Spirit in the midst of a worry-filled existence. This life becomes a possibility when, by the disciplines of solitude and community, we slowly create some free inner space in our filled lives and so allow God's Spirit to become manifest to us.

A hard struggle is required...to allow God's Spirit to work in us and recreate us. But this struggle is not beyond our strength. It calls for some very specific, well-planned steps. It calls for a few moments a day in the presence of God when we can listen to his voice precisely in the midst of our many concerns. It also calls for the persistent endeavor to be with others in

a new way by seeing them not as people to whom we can cling in fear, but as fellow human beings with whom we can create new space for God. These well-planned steps, these disciplines, are the concrete ways of setting your hearts on his kingdom, and they can slowly dismantle the power of our worries and thus lead us to unceasing prayer.

The beginning of the spiritual life is often difficult not only because the powers which cause us to worry are so strong but also because the presence of God's Spirit seems barely noticeable. If, however, we are faithful to our disciplines, a new hunger will make itself known. This new hunger is the first sign of God's presence. When we remain attentive to this Divine Presence, we will be led always deeper into the kingdom. There, to our joyful surprise, we will discover that all things are being made new.

- Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*

To Practice

- View the video excerpt "What is the Divine Therapy?, Part 2" which is 28 minutes in length.
- Henri Nouwen says, "If we are faithful to our disciplines, a new hunger will make itself known." Has this hunger awakened in you? Is there a sense of something new emerging?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapters 12, "What is the Divine Therapy?", 13 "The Process of Purification", and 14 "The Stages of Contemplative Prayer" from *Manifesting God*.

Notes and Reflections: