



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

58: Night of Spirit: Towards Transformation, Part 1 (cont.)



Photo by Ron Barnett

To those in darkness: Show yourselves!

...I will never forget you.

- Isaiah: 49:9, 15

*...[T]he hour is coming in which
all who are in the tombs will hear
his voice and will come out...*

- John 5:28

In the Session 57 video we learned of the exuberant approach to divine union that is full of light and about an approach that seems very dark. John of the Cross calls this the path of pure faith. The invitation that we receive is the one just for us. Both paths are born of the great love of God for us in our particularity. Gratitude is an essential disposition in the spiritual journey.

"In other words, we may be invited to the front entrance of the interior castle, or we may be directed to the service entrance. We may be invited to climb the front stairs, or we may be led up the back stairs. The back stairs correspond to the hidden ladder of John of the Cross. Which way is better? Nobody knows. What is certain is that both paths lead to transforming union. God...can be fully accessed only by pure faith. The purification of faith and love, not spiritual consolation, leads to transforming union.

"Transforming union is a restructuring of consciousness, not an experience or set of experiences. In the course of this restructuring, the presence of God becomes a kind of fourth dimension to the three-dimensional world in which we have been living. In the light of transforming union, therefore, the most important element in contemplative prayer is the practice itself, not its psychological content. If we fully grasped this truth, it would make the spiritual journey much easier. At the beginning of the journey, our expectation of what should happen and our commentaries about what is happening are the causes of most of our anxiety and distress."

-Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*

A Meditation

"For I know well the spring that flows and runs,
although it is night.

"That eternal spring is hidden,
for I know well where it has its rise,
although it is night.

"...Its clarity is never darkened,
and I know that every light has
come from it,
although it is night.

"...This eternal spring is hidden
in the living bread for our life's
sake,
although it is night.

"It is here calling out to
creatures,
and they satisfy their thirst,
although in darkness,
because it is night.

"This living spring that I long
for,
I see in this bread of life,

although it is night."

-John of the Cross, *Song of the Soul that Rejoices in Knowing God through Faith*

To Practice

- We hear that the great declarations of light and our own little experiences of light or dark, or perhaps both, are granted to us in love. We are called to simply participate in the fullest, deepest sense possible in this great plan of Creation. What are you experiencing at this time?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapters 15-17 from *Invitation to Love* (20th anniversary edition), Chapters 14-16 in older editions.

You also may wish to read *The Dark Night of the Soul* by Gerald May.

Notes and Reflections: