



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

74: From Contemplation to Action, Part 1 (cont.)



Photo by L. Nicholson, Reuters, US-Mexico Border

*For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me,
naked and you clothed me,
ill and you cared for me,
in prison and you visited me.*

- Matthew 25: 35-36

"As more and more individual people through the spiritual journey access the energy we call the intuitive level of consciousness...we perceive intuitively the oneness of the human family. We feel the sufferings of other people. This is the level that Jesus was speaking to in the Sermon on the Mount when he speaks of showing mercy as the greatest wisdom. Or...Jesus speaks of those who visited the sick, helped the poor, fed the hungry, visited those in prison. All of those acts of mercy he identified as being done to himself.

"As the Universal Human Being he represents then the deep self, the true self of everyone. And it is Christ who is suffering in everyone. And insofar as we have or experience union with Christ, we too experience that poignancy, that identification with the sufferings of others, that reaches out, and must reach out to do something, to help, however modest, according to our state of life and our possibilities.

". . .Even the world religions must rethink their ethical principles in the light of the new consciousness that is coming into the world, with its sense of personal responsibility made acute by the intuitive vision of Christ suffering in the oppressed and the hungry. And that vision of Christ is the fruit of a still higher consciousness. . . . of personal responsibility and the sense of concern, harmony, negotiation, compassion and forgiveness, which is the human way of handling conflict.

"Now this is a concern of a person of prayer, of contemplative prayer, whose journey, of its very nature is evolving into personal responsibility and a sensitivity not only to act in a human way, but under the higher gifts of the Spirit which give the energy to work, not just to accept what is, but to change what is unjust."

- Thomas Keating, from the Session 73 video

A Meditation

"A few weeks ago, a young lady, a peace activist (or better, a peace witness) came to our monastery for a retreat prior to performing a prophetic act of peace witnessing at the atomic weapons plant of Rocky Flats in Denver. She sent the following letter:

Dear Monks,

Last month at a peace conference I was asked to give a five-minute speech...I was sick of words, so I gave a one-minute speech instead. I wanted to share it with you because I will be seeking to amplify and refine these ideas during my time of solitude.

...The big question that I'm struggling with is: how do I live in and out of the existential reality of the Resurrection of Christ in these times of crises?

I really don't take my cues on how to live from the bomb. I don't act out of fear, despair, or desperation. My hope is solely founded on the belief that the Resurrection is efficacious in our time. Christ has the final word...In fact, the bomb does not exist outside the world which Christ created and continues to uphold moment by moment by his Power and Love.

...So, when I go to a nuclear weapons plant to pray for peace, my prayer is a prayer of celebration and a proclamation of the efficacy of Christ's Resurrection over the illusory power of the bomb.

...It is my hunch, and I am experimenting with this, that to dance and celebrate in the midst of Babylon has the potential (if Christ so blesses it) of turning Babylon into the New Jerusalem. But for the celebration to be genuine and authentic, it must come out of a heart open and vulnerable to the world's suffering.

May God grant us such a heart and teach us to dance celebrating and victoriously.

"I don't think you could find anywhere a more profound understanding and expression of what Christ's victory means and what our share in that victory involves!"

- William Meninger, *1012 Monastery Road*

To Practice

- For most of us it is unlikely that we will stand outside a nuclear power plant as a peace witness. Our call may be less dramatic, almost invisible. Reflect upon your movement from contemplation to action. How is your contemplative practice informing you?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 22, "From Contemplation to Action" from *Invitation to Love*, Chapter 20 in older editions.

Notes and Reflections: