



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 23: Pre-Rational Energy Centers, Part 2



Hilma af Klint, *Untitled*, 1933

*Whoever wishes to save his life,  
will lose it.*

- Matthew 16:25

"Over-identification with the group is the dominant characteristic of mythic membership consciousness. When we derive our identity from the social unit of which we are a member, we give the group unquestioning loyalty. The sense of belonging to something important gives us feelings of security, pleasure, and power."

- Thomas Keating, *Imitation to Love*

The energy centers, from which our programs for happiness originate, are one aspect of the roots of our unconscious motivation and hidden values, and frankly, the pain we experience in life. Another equally powerful aspect is the mythic membership consciousness, or we might say, unconsciousness. And the problem for us, as Fr. Thomas describes, is our over-identification with particular groups in which we belong or identify with or derive our values from. This over-identification reinforces and strengthens the expression of the energy centers.

In the Session 23 video segment, Fr. Thomas introduces us to Jesus as a wisdom teacher, who uses strong, sometimes shocking, language and examples to wake us up and shake us up. For many of us, the power of Mythic Membership is so strong it takes something even more powerful to wake us up. In her book, *The Wisdom Jesus*, Cynthia Bourgeault asks us, "to see Jesus first and foremost as a wisdom teacher ... concerned with the transformation of the whole human being. Transformation ... from our animal instincts and egocentricity into love and compassion; from a judgmental and dualistic worldview into a non-dual acceptingness ... a message that was radical in its own time and remains equally radical today."

The discomfort we sometimes may feel when hearing some of Jesus' radical teachings can be a sign that an awakening is imminent if we can ponder and ruminate on the teaching through our discomfort. Remember in the story of the Transfiguration, Matthew 17:5, when a voice from a cloud says to Peter, James and John, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; *listen to him.*" St. Gregory the Great advises us to listen with the ear of our heart.

### **A Meditation**

"The spiritual life starts at the place where you can hear God's voice. Where somehow you can claim that long before your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your school, your church touched you, loved you, and wounded you -- long before that, you were held safe in an eternal embrace. You were seen with eyes of perfect love long before you entered into the dark valley of life ... The spiritual life starts at the moment that you can go beyond all of the wounds and claim that there was a love that was perfect and unlimited, long before that perfect love became reflected in the imperfect and limited, conditional love of people. The spiritual life starts where you dare to claim the first love."

- Henri Nouwen, lecture at Scarret-Bennett Center in Nashville, 1991

### **To Practice**

- View the video excerpt "Pre-Rational Energy Centers, Part 2." It is about 17 minutes in length.

- Reflect on the Henri Nouwen quote in the Meditation section. Do you know that you are seen with eyes of perfect love? Will you dare to claim that love?

### **Resources for Further Study:**

You may wish to read Chapter 5, "Mythic Membership Consciousness" from *Invitation to Love* (all editions).

### **Notes and Reflections:**