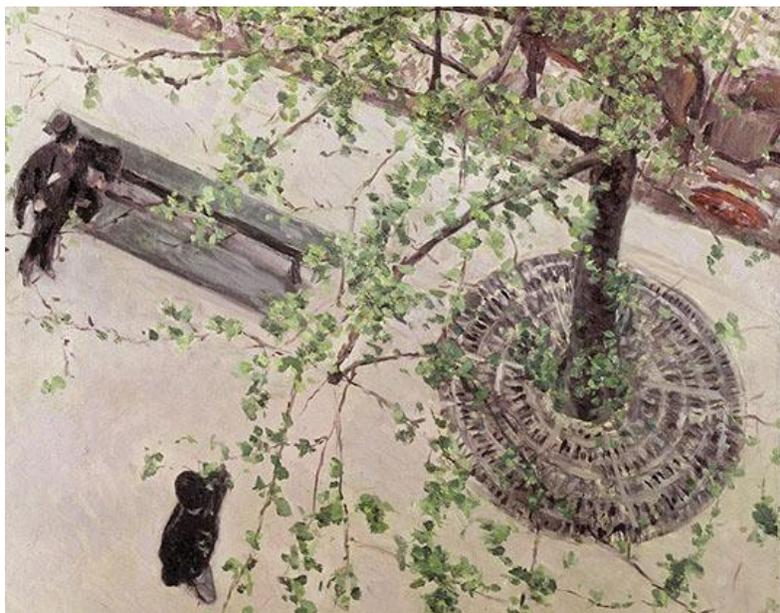




# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 24: Pre-Rational Energy Centers, Part 2-Continued



Gustave Caillebotte, *The Boulevard Seen from Above*, 1880

*A crowd seated around him told him,  
"Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters]  
are outside asking for you."  
But he said to them in reply,  
"Who are my mother and my brothers?"  
And looking around at those seated in the circle  
he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.  
For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister  
and mother."  
- Mark 3:31-35*

"He doesn't mean not to love or take care of our parents. What does he mean? He means dis-identify with anybody, including those you most love, if they stand in the way of following the Gospel, of freeing yourself from these hang-ups, or of locking you into a conformity morality ...

"As we grow, our relations have to change appropriately and this involves our relationships to ourselves, God, and other people, and especially our parents. But, you see, we have absorbed at this period of four to seven, the values of the parents ... so that their ideas of morality have gotten stuck in us and these may or may not be the result of a genuine conscience."

- Thomas Keating, excerpts from the video "Pre-Rational Energy Centers, Part 2"

In *Awakenings*, Fr. Thomas states, "The sayings of Jesus are designed to move people to question their unquestioned values so that they can be open to the radical program for change that he offers. We do not normally enjoy change; even a change for the better is threatening. It is easier to stick with the value system that we have absorbed from our parents, education, ethnic group, nation and religious education. Jesus regularly invited his hearers to question their value system. ...

"One well-known person who carried out this wisdom saying was Francis of Assisi. He came from a fine home; his father was a successful businessman and highly respected in the community. Like most parents, he thought it would be nice if his children would marry someone chosen by their parents, have a good income, home, children, take care of them in their old age, bury them, and lovingly remember them. These were normal human expectations of the time. Unfortunately, they become institutionalized over a long period of time, and come to be considered as the supreme values. Then when anyone hesitated about any part of the expected scenario, the resistance ... was enormous.

"When we are called, as Jesus is implying, to a higher set of values that involves the service not just of our immediate family, but of a broader scope, ... then these unquestioned values stand in the way. ... If the accepted values oppose or prevent us from growing beyond them, we must ... launch out into the unknown. We must be ready to renounce the values we have interiorized. ...

"When Francis left home and possessions, his father felt insulted, hurt and rejected. ... Because it is so difficult to distinguish human loyalty from the higher loyalty of God's call, the agonizing moments of this period of our conversion require us to sit down and figure out what this choice is going to cost. Then we will not be surprised when those we love accuse us of disregarding their love for us. ...

"What Jesus is teaching is the inward freedom from over-identification that prevents human growth. It is not a denial of what we owe in gratitude to our parents, but the freedom to go beyond their particular worldview.

- Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*

## **A Meditation**

"We can see that when we look on ourselves, our contradictory selves, in the light of Real Conscience as it comes through, then we can simply see the various contradictions, as we are seen from above. So, we can get an idea of how we are looked on by what is highest in us. ... and for a moment we can see, without any emotion, how we have been, this is what Real Conscience is. It is a light shed on our Being which simply reveals things as they are and enables us to see many things together and just see how it is, how we are. ... What we know as acquired conscience has been laid down in us by imitating and by some things we were taught. ... Real Conscience is when ... you have an inkling of how you would appear from above – when you see as you are known. This is the Conscience that will tell you when you are working for self or for the sake of good, or for one's aim, or to go on this journey inwards to get nearer to what is real."

- Beryl Pogson, "The Light of Conscience," *Brighton Work Talks*

## **To Practice**

- Reflect: Francis is a model of dis-identifying himself from acquired values and norms in order to listen to the wisdom of Conscience. What does this mean for you and your journey at this time? Can "you have an inkling of how you would appear from above?"

## **Resources for Further Study:**

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

## **Notes and Reflections:**