



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

32: Dismantling the Emotional Programs, Part 2-Continued



Ancient icon, source: unknown

*Your adornment should not be an external one ...
but rather the hidden character of the heart,
expressed in the imperishable beauty
of a gentle and calm disposition,
which is precious in the sight of God.*

- 1 Peter 3:3

"And Jesus says, 'Oh, you poor souls.' He sympathizes with us so much: 'You could be so happy! Why do you torture yourself? Why do you torment yourself? Life is open to you, unbounded life.' All you have to do is to learn to let go of ... a particular attraction which is a manifestation of the false self, motivated from that source.

"Notice again, how our Centering Prayer practice reinforces that capacity of letting go. So, if you learn to let go of all thoughts in contemplative [Centering] prayer, returning to the sacred word when you notice you're thinking some particular thought or have some particular impression or feeling, then in daily life it is going to become easier when you have some particular distressing or afflictive thought or feeling that is emerging from frustration of one of the energy centers, to let it go. ...

"So, the best solution, then ... is to try to bring divine love into every situation. So that instead of compulsively reacting and being upset ourselves and making the world worse by retaliating, continuing the vicious circle of violence, more violence, more violence, why not act in a human way, which is to try to cooperate, to negotiate, to wait it out, to show love no matter what happens. Because if you keep it up, love always triumphs. ...

"According to one of the great sayings: 'Love triumphs over all' in the long run. It's the greatest energy there is. It's the energy that created the universe. Even the new physicists are now saying that. Love is the ultimate consciousness out of which the whole universe exists."

- Thomas Keating, excerpts from Session 31 video

A Meditation

"The way forward is the way inward -- to recover the mystical dimension of life beginning in the human heart as the heart extends into the cosmos. We need to find the Omega center within us, that depth of love that makes each of us unique and distinct, that God-centered love which holds us together moment to moment and constantly creates us anew.

"To return home to ourselves is to commit ourselves to new life. Jesus began his public ministry with a plea for conversion, to change the way we think about things, to unlearn the habits that keep us separate and isolated, to settle down in our own skin. Jesus said, 'If you make my word your home you will learn the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8: 31-32)."

- Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*

To Practice

- View the video excerpt "Centering Prayer," from the *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ* series. It is about 10 minutes in length.

- Reflect: In the video segment, Fr. Thomas concludes, "You don't have to create the beauty; you've got the beauty. You don't have to create the freedom; you've got it. You don't have to create the image of God in you; you have it. You don't have to win over God's love; you have more than you know what to do with. You don't have to become more beautiful because nothing could be more beautiful than your own, particular uniqueness."

Can you take this in and affirm the truth of it for yourself?

Notes and Reflections: