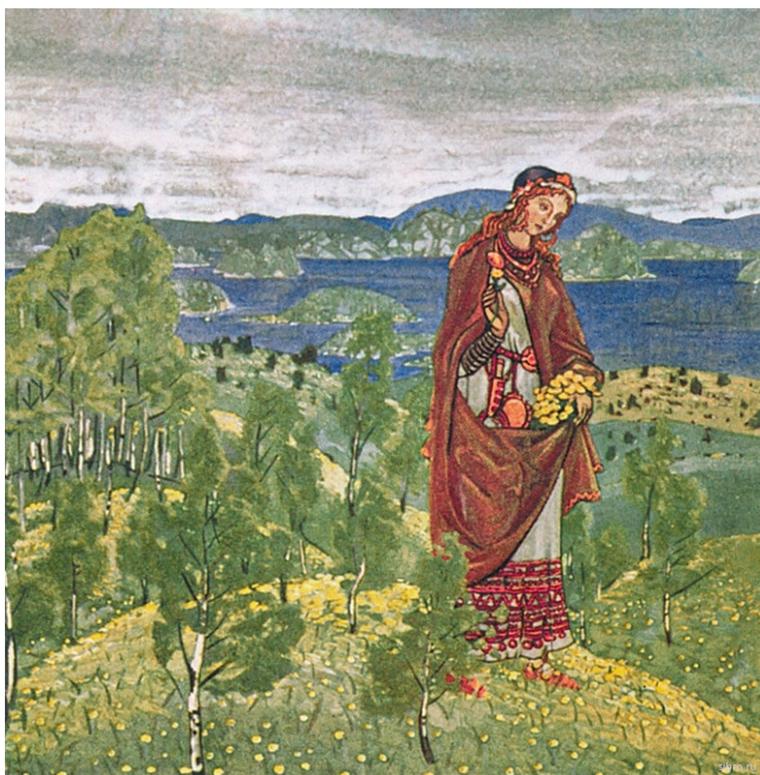




THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

11: A Review



Nicholas Roerich, *Unkrada*, 1909

Behold, I make all things new.

- Revelation 21:5

Periodically throughout this program, we will be taking breaks to allow time to pause, catch-up and review. In this spirit, here are some of the highpoints we've covered over these first 10 sessions:

Why intentionally embark on the spiritual journey?

"What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of a human life? Where is the fullness of life to be found? All the great questions of life can be approached, explored and experienced by embarking on the spiritual journey. ... Christian religion [is] a life to be lived, a relationship with God to be developed and enjoyed."

- Thomas Keating, "Introduction," *1012 Monastery Road*

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What is contemplative prayer and how does it contribute to the spiritual journey?

"Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation, a conversion initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to divine union. One's way of seeing reality changes in this process. A restructuring of consciousness takes place which empowers one to perceive, relate and respond to everyday life with increasing sensitivity to the divine presence in, through and beyond everything that happens."

- Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*

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What happens in the silence?

"The purpose of silence is to give an opportunity for the longing for God to break through the crust of the false self and our defense mechanisms, so that we can be motivated by hunger and love to pursue the transformative process untiringly."

- Thomas Keating, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ*

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Centering Prayer is entry into a process of inner transformation, as well as a method of prayer and prayer itself. Trusting in the process of Centering Prayer is a major step forward in the spiritual journey. As Fr. Thomas notes in *Open Mind, Open Heart*, "This interior process ... mean[s] letting go of all personal agendas, expectations, and desires for divine consolation, psychological breakthroughs, and self-reflections of any kind."

The Unfoldment of Trust

Attitudes about God have a profound impact on whether one enters the spiritual journey and looks to a deepening relationship with God. Just as in our human relationships, we can grow in trust in our relationship with God. It takes time and attention to cultivate the movement from acquaintanceship to friendship to intimacy.

"The Christian spiritual path is based on a deepening trust in God. It is trust that first allows us to take that initial leap in the dark, to encounter God at deeper levels of ourselves. And it is trust that

guides the intimate refashioning of our being, the transformation of our pain, woundedness, and unconscious motivation into the person that God intended us to be."

- Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*

"To know God in this way is to perceive a new dimension to all reality."

- Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*

The Invitation

"If you want to pray ...

Centering Prayer responds to this invitation:

- by consenting to God's presence and action within
- by surrendering our will completely to God
- by relating to God who dwells in secret, which is the silence of self.

"As God brings the 'new creation' to life in interior silence, that is to say, the new you, with the worldview that Christ shares in deep silence, his view of things becomes more important than our own. Then God asks us to live that new life in the circumstances of everyday life, contradicted by turmoil, opposition and anxieties of all kinds."

- Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*

To Practice

- Review any session-narratives, video excerpts or transcripts you found particularly helpful or you wish to take in again more deeply.

- In one of our video excerpts Fr. Thomas asks, "What are you waiting for?" Ponder where you are in willingness for the spiritual journey. Note your questions, wonderings, frustrations as well as your affirmations, as all are common in this process of transformation.

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read or reread *Open Mind, Open Heart* or *Intimacy with God*.

Notes and Reflections: