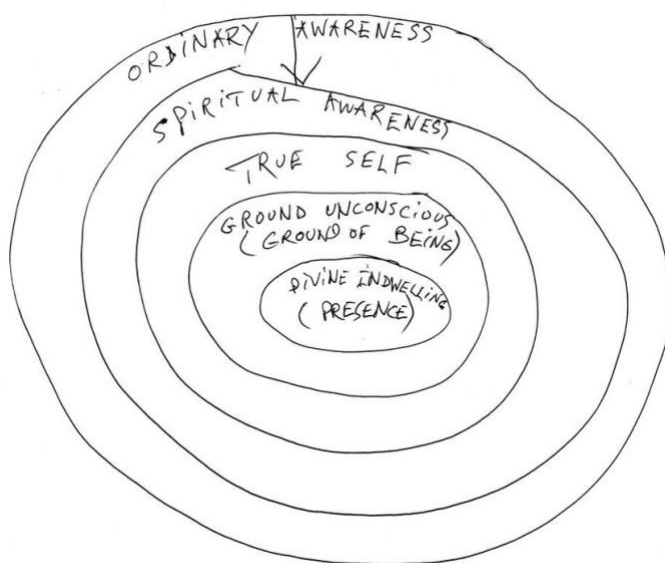




THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

47: Levels of Awareness



*"...Your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ your life appears,
then you too will appear with him in glory."*

Colossians 3:3-4

In the next few sessions, we will be exploring the psychological experience of Centering Prayer. In this session's video, Fr. Thomas outlines a Christian anthropology of the levels of awareness of our being. He starts with our ordinary awareness, which is where most of us live our day to day lives absorbed by people, events and our reactions to them. A deeper level of our being is spiritual awareness, the level of intuition and spiritual will, where we might experience a little more freedom from life's circumstances and our emotional programs. Going a little deeper is our true self, the image of God, where we begin to be able to accept ourselves and all of reality just as it is and live in the present moment. Finally, the inmost center of our being is the Divine Indwelling.

"...We are most of the time out of touch with the spiritual level of our being and allow events to dominate us rather than choosing what to do with them. As we work on this process through Centering Prayer and recognize the dynamics of the unconscious, our spiritual faculties and true self are being liberated. That experience relativizes our emotional investment in symbols of happiness demanded by the false self. The reason is we are beginning to experience inner peace, which is the happiness we *really* seek. In the practice of Centering Prayer, we encounter the same emotional reactions we had before, only now we *notice* them instead of blindly reacting to them. It is essential that we learn to recognize the tendencies of our false self if we want to be happy, because only in recognizing them can we change them. We do not have to analyze them; we just have to notice them and let them go."

-Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*

A Meditation: Your True Self is Love

"Those who have gone to the depths—of suffering, awe, or silence—discover an Indwelling Presence. It is a deep and loving 'yes,' an 'amen' or 'let it be,' that is inherent within you... [T]his inner presence is described as...God as immanent, within, and even our deepest and truest self ...

"The true self—where you and God are one—does not choose to love as much as it *is love* itself already... The true self does not teach us compassion as much as it *is compassion*. Loving from this core of your being is experienced as a river within you that flows of its own accord... From this more spacious and grounded place, one naturally connects, empathizes, forgives, and loves everything. We were made in love, for love, and unto love. This deep inner 'yes,' that is God in me, is already loving God through me..."

- Richard Rohr, Daily Meditations, December 18, 2016

To Practice

- View the video excerpt "The Levels of Awareness" which is about 8 minutes in length.

- Fr. Thomas says, "the spiritual awareness...open us to deeper levels of our being that we perhaps never had any suspicion existed..." Notice if you are experiencing a deeper level of your being and how that is manifesting in your life.

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 3 in *Intimacy with God* (20th anniversary edition), Chapters 7 in older editions.

Notes and Reflections: