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**Transcript**

**Thomas Keating eulogy on October 23, 1993,   
at St. Dominic's Church, Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York**

**Mary Mrozowski died on October 18, 1993**

[Acknowledging Mary's family and all Mary's friends]. My own heart is completely broken because I've lost, as it were, both arms. But above all, my heart is dwindled, because Mary was gifted by God by the most extraordinary courage. It is a friendship that tells me something about the communion of saints, that nothing else has in my life. I'm not really sad, just shocked. Like I've been hit by a truck so to speak. And I'm sure you resonate with that feeling. I can't believe that Mary is gone. There is something in me that refuses to accept that fact on a natural level, and yet at the same time, we must celebrate. And with God's help I'll try to give you just a shade of history of Mary's life has unfolded, especially in my presence because I've seen it from a perspective that maybe many of you have not though your view is just as valuable, I'm sure.

She showed up at a retreat I gave in New Mexico, sent by Sister Thelma Hall, her spiritual director, who was also a friend of mine. And who wanted us to get together. Well, we got together, all right! And we never recovered! I could see in Mary right away the embodiment of the vision I had for Contemplative Outreach, the vision of sharing with lay persons and those in active ministry the profound and inner meaning of monastic life that should never have been locked in a cloister someplace, that belongs among lay men and women by the fact of their baptism and their confirmation.

It is Christ in you leading your life and in complete solidarity with your life, just as it is, including the dark side of your sin. The meaning of Jesus' incarnation is that he has come to share our life and, to be perfectly frank, to live it for you and with you and in you.

Now Mary already had that intuition. She'd been working with divorced Catholics. In those days, divorced Catholics were not at the top of the list of the church's mind. [laughter] So she gave them some honor. She was a divorced lady herself. And then she moved on to Bible study, and then she was in the charismatic renewal and then she drove up and joined us in this retreat, which was a kind of watershed. From that time on, I kept asking Mary to join us in some further work.

First it was with teaching Centering Prayer. Centering Prayer is only a way of entering contemplative prayer, which is in itself just a way of relating to God permanently, instead of just saying hello on a Sunday or in praise or fear. This life of God is growing, growing, growing, so it lives in us, and it becomes a permanent thing. And this was the way Mary was grown step-by-step. Spiritual life is a growth process. It's growing up in God. So, wherever you are now is just the new beginning. It has unlimited, unlimited possibilities.

Anyway, I said to Mary, "Would you help me with Centering Prayer." She said, "Okay, but I can't afford it because I have to earn a living. I don't have any time." There was another gentleman on the retreat who said, "I'll pay Mary a full salary and she can work for three full days with you." And that's how in this Long Island-New York area she began to have time to work for us.

Then when we saw that we needed a structure to support the people who were doing Centering Prayer, core groups and so on, and I asked her if she would be the executive director of a little organization that we started called Contemplative Outreach. And she said, "Okay." I didn't ask any questions of what else she was doing, I just wanted that okay.

And then about a year later, we had the opportunity to start a live-in community which would incarnate the vision of Contemplative Outreach, providing a place where people could come and receive the unadulterated vigor of an interior life, in the life of prayer, so that they could bring it back into their daily life and incorporate it in the day-to-day. And this involved living in a rather down-to-the-heel house with two young men who were only one step away from being hippies [laughter]. They somewhat improved over the years. One of them is still with us. And she said, "Let's do it! Let's do it!" She wasn't a gal to hang back at this point, and so they started through many vicissitudes and changes of address, they finally settled down in what you now know as Warwick, New York.

But the thing is that so important about Mary, it seems to me, is that she embodied the lay contemplative saint. And I mean saint. Because all this business of plaster statues and whatnot and icons, as far as I'm concerned is reverential but for the birds! I want to see somebody with flesh and blood who's in love with God and says so, and who empowers other people to experience their potentiality with this same romance, this relationship. Prayer is not prayers, prayer is not formulas. Prayer is a relationship, a relationship that keeps growing, expanding, deepening, and becoming dynamic. There's no telling where it's gonna go! There's no telling where the Lord will call you to if you're open!

We based our Centering Prayer on three theological principles. It's Trinitarian in its source. It's rooted in the faith that this God, this universe, this ultimate reality is living God's own life within us, this sharing of infinite love between the relationships in the divine Trinity and we're pulled into that dynamic of giving and receiving and it becomes more and more unlimited because God is unlimited.

And it's christological in its focus. That means as we do contemplative prayer or Centering Prayer, which is the way into it, we participate in the deepest level in the paschal mystery, where the unloading of the unconscious and the trials of prayers become our share of Christ's passion within us, and prepare us to bear the trials of daily life, which are no longer just difficulties, but part of the journey and part of our share of the redemption of the world. It doesn't look like much from the outside but inside, this [inaudible], this acceptance of our innermost trials of daily life and the joys of daily life, it becomes the divine life manifesting itself in our littleness, in our weakness, and I dare to say, even at times in our simpleness.

And finally, the third source of contemplative prayer is bonding. It is ecclesiastical in its effect. Ecclesiastical doesn't just mean coming to church, it means feeling your union and unity with everyone in the world, especially the poor and those in need, those you love.

And it's these three things that makes contemplative prayer transforming. But that's abstract. I'm not asking you to remember those three things, I'm only saying that Mary, in my view, was embodying each of those three things -- the trinity, her love of Christ, and the bonding. Now the bonding has two hearts, two subdivisions. One is personal enhancement- enhancement of your full life. Whatever you've got gets bigger - even if it's your debts [death?]. Everything gets bigger. Your love of your family, your capacity to relate to others. Mary was leading a kind of quasi-contemplative life, like religious, but we deliberately never made it a religious life because we wanted it for lay persons. And it was the lay persons that we want to call and empower to take possession of their baptismal grace and become what religious should be--namely the manifestation of the God of love, in daily life.

Now I noticed that Mary, as a result of five or six hours of Centering Prayer a day for seven or eight years, in addition to what she'd done before, was increasing her love of her family. She was becoming the happiest grandma on earth. She was loving her daughters more and more. She was relating to her brothers and sisters. And this was becoming a community problem! Because how do you fulfill your duties in the community and prayer at the same time? That's your problem too! But where Contemplative Outreach as a group is trying to come to grips with how you do that. You don't leave prayer and you don't leave your duties. You don't leave your husband or your wife because you're becoming holy and they aren't. You come to peace with everything.

And this personal enhancement has what I would conclude with, what seems to me the marvelous quality of Mary, which I don't know if I can ever stop missing, but I'm sure I'll start seeing it growing in the others because she had, because of her modesty, a certain star on some of the others in Contemplative Outreach. But what I would like to leave you with is this extraordinary quality of empowerment. By that I mean that the bonding with God becomes so exuberant, that everything she was doing was becoming a prayer. Sister Bernadette was there with her on her deathbed. They were praying all day long. We go into the next room, that's prayer, if we sit down, that's prayer, we have eggs and bacon, that's our prayer. If we go into discernment, that's our prayer. Prayer is not so much what you do, it's why you do it and who you do it with. In other words, it's all coming out of the center, that has gradually become established. A center that is always ready for God, always willing. Even if that will kill you! It's a trifle. From that perspective, dying isn't a problem. Except to your relatives and friends.

Some of you heard some of my tapes, and you remember the story of a Bernie O'Shea who was giving, giving, giving, and who was always ready to do God's will, and who in a single moment fell dead on the street. Because there was no need to delay, there was no need for preparations, there was no need for holy water (I recommend holy water), but there comes a point where they have done their work and YOU are a sacrament of the church. Whatever you do is pouring grace into the world, and this is the fruit [inaudible] the religious life, out of baptism and confirmation fully understood through the eyes of faith, enlightened by contemplative prayer. It is this eye of faith, enlightened by contemplative prayer, that Mary was giving to everyone in the last years of her life. And getting better at! All the time!

And I saw that she had reached the peak of her ministry and I was willing to let her go out of the Chrysalis House and spend her whole time on the journey, but she didn't want to do that. That was the discernment that she made, with the support of her wonderful community, was to provide her with the chance to do that as much as she wanted to. And that's what she was doing when she died. As we say in the West, she died with her boots on! Or should I say with her booties on?

She never stopped loving God, and so death is not an interruption. And throughout our network, all through the states and beyond, I get the feedback, wonderful feedback, that though it's a terrible shock, that somehow we feel the presence of God. We feel the joy of Mary, we feel her empowering through all this. In other word, the communion of saints knows no bounds. And if we are on the same wavelength in any degree that Mary was on, our grief, our joy, our grief today, during the week, we turn into ever greater joy. And that's what she did- a lay woman, a divorced woman, a woman with a very difficult life, a woman in various ministries but always growing. A woman who is now a classical example of a lay contemplative person. Maybe they're out there, but I don't know anybody of this quality -- yet.

And this, to me, is the very heart and soul of the Second Vatican Council -- spiritual renewal, especially the empowerment of lay people to take charge of the church, to take charge of its mission, and to take charge of its spiritual direction, which I'm sorry to say, few of the clergy are trained to do, or religious. And that's why they're diminishing, but the Spirit is raising up lay persons who are more and more capable of providing the church with the interior spirit that it has to have in order to survive into the next century.

I am going to miss Mary, terribly, if you will. I can't see how to go on without her. But I know by faith that she hasn't finished her job! St. Therese of Lisieux said "I'm going to spend my time in heaven doing good upon earth! I'm not going to just sit here and do nothing while everyone else is in trouble!" And the fact that Mary was interrupted so suddenly in the midst of a tremendous ministry that was just a smashing success in Denver, with people hanging all over to get her advice, and she just slipped away. Notice, there was no delay like Bernie O'Shea. I think she one-upped Bernie O'Shea, actually. Because not only did she accept it, but as you know her great philosophy, to welcome death for any event. And someone who welcomes death, welcomes God.

So whatever she's up to at the moment, I don't think she's sitting around. She's active. She's speaking to us on a new level, and to be tuned in to that level, you have only to pray. To do your own form of contemplative prayer. And I predict that Mary's death is not the end of something, but she's the lay example of St. Therese of Lisieux. She's not doing it from a cloister, she'll be with you in the street, at the kitchen sink, and if necessary, in bed.

Again, my deepest sympathy to the family and to the members of Chrysalis House. May God be with us all, and may our sorrow be turned into joy and empowerment. "Go now and do likewise" (Luke 10: 37).

