



Thomas Keating

Notes From A Deep Conversation

Without thinking or feeling some emotion, there is just awareness. There is then no desire for bliss, enlightenment, or to teach others. Things are just as they are. In that so-called emptiness, enjoyment arises of itself. As soon as we try to enjoy, the enjoyment ceases. Somehow at the bottom of emptiness (openness, pure awareness), there is enjoyment, fullness, presence and peace.

Bring the same emptiness and freedom to each moment and its content. Then you will be happy even in the midst of suffering. Accept everything and everyone just as they are, where they are, and try to act as lovingly as possible in every situation. Be ready to be led you know not where or when. Hush the discriminating mind dividing things into good or evil for me.

Fear draws us to the center we have created, the ego self. Love expands from our real center, the true self.

One feels the pain of others and must reach out to help them even if they are unaware of their pain. But one is content and at peace because one does not discriminate.

The true self is all the colors of the rainbow and must expand to experience the whole of one's being. One is not limited to one or two colors. One need not reject any color, but is to become all of them. The more colors one manifests, the more one manifests the Light that we are and the Light that we share. Ladders and stages suggest leaving behind the previous rung or stage. One rather adds new dimensions to what one is, like a tree adds rings.

Take and accept yourself just as you are, where you are. If you are aggressive, lustful, fearful, or shy and passive, notice your feelings before, during, and after each incident, without emotional reactions of blame, shame, anger or discouragement. Let God work with your faults and limitations. Just recognize them and be with them, without trying to correct them directly. As you watch them, feel them, and accept them, their force and exaggeration will gradually diminish. Keep moving to the center of your being where divine love is and be present to and welcome whatever bodily feeling or emotion that is happening. The present moment contains all we need to be happy. ☸



Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

The Practice of Visio Divina: Seeing with the Eye of the Heart

It may be said that the spiritual journey is a conversion of heart, which can be inspired and supported by art, beauty and quiet joy in the ordinariness of everyday life.

Over the last year as part of our online course series with our partner, Spirituality & Practice, Contemplative Outreach has been exploring the use of art in the contemplative journey through the practice of Visio Divina. Visio Divina facilitates a relationship with an image or subject, patiently being with it, receptive in mind and heart, perhaps even in dialogue with it. In stillness, we allow the image to reach beyond the intellect and into the unconscious level of our being, a place that can't be accessed directly. In wonder, we are invited to look at every aspect of an image and ponder it as an encounter with God. It is a way of seeing an aspect of ourselves in God at the non-verbal, heart level. The canvas then becomes alive with personal meaning meant just for us. This is the same movement of the Spirit we can experience with Lectio Divina and Scripture.

For our 2014 Lenten online retreat, we used the stain glass artwork *The Stations of the Cross* by Frederick Franck. An artist and mystic, Franck was founder of Pacem in Terris in Warwick, NY, and author of several books, most notably the *Zen of Seeing: Seeing/Drawing as Meditation*. Seeing/drawing was his form of meditation. This practice brought him in direct contact with the Divine within, and trained his artist eye to see God manifested in his surroundings. “[B]efore I start drawing, it often happens that suddenly the utter poignancy of a cloud sailing through the sky, of a child with its balloon-treasure moves me ... and I hear myself say, ‘Oh God’ I, who when asked, ‘Do you believe in God?’ am most apt to shrug: ‘I believe in nothing but God!’” Retreat participants were guided in practice and encouraged to develop their own capacity for Visio Divina, seeing God in all things.

In our Advent 2014 online retreat, we incorporated the art of Fra Angelico, and began with the well-known painting, *Annunciation* from the Cortona Altarpiece. Fra Angelico lived a devout and ascetic life and all of his paintings were said to be divinely inspired. Humble works in simple colors, his paintings came out of deep prayer and many exude this quality. The intentions of his paintings were to bring an incident in the life of Jesus Christ into the presence of the viewer for their reflection and prayerful consideration. We continued the practice of Image Gazing, which starts by taking in the entire composition and registering what it depicts. As we continue to gaze, we begin to reflect on the deeper meanings that



Detail of *Venice #14 Lagoon*, 1957 by William Congdon, courtesy of The William G. Congdon Foundation

present themselves. For example, we may wonder how it demonstrates consent to the will of God. Then we gaze at each of the component parts and see beyond seeing how each part contributes to the whole. As we ponder the image and observe every detail we may place ourselves in the scene and see and feel from this perspective. We observe our responses. A prayer or an inspiration may arise; we may receive a glimmer of how consent manifests and how the Spirit of God presents opportunities for us to deepen our relationship with ourselves, others and God. The possible messages are endless and very individual—there is no right or wrong way of seeing.

During our six week 2015 Lenten online retreat we practiced Visio Divina with the collection of William Congdon, who painted over 200 crucifixion images. Congdon once said, “[N]ow, without looking for inspiration elsewhere, I always paint the Crucifix, because in it lies everything I have seen and lived so far ... and everything [I] shall ever see in the future; sum of yesterday and prophet of tomorrow; death and Resurrection.”

Fr. Thomas teaches that the purpose of Lent is the purification of the unconscious. Congdon, an Abstract Expressionist and a contemporary of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, was primarily interested in exploring the unconscious, which was the impetus for his art until his conversion to Catholicism in the

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1950's. After spending time in Assisi and Subiaco, Italy, he was baptized, and as he was transformed, his artwork transformed. Many of his images emerged from the silence of the monastery where he spent time to find himself. In so doing, he found Christ and thus devoted himself to painting the crucifixion as a path deeper into himself, and himself in God, in search of inner balance and harmony.

Each of these three artists expressed their deep relationship with the Divine, creating from a deeply interior, meditative place within, where each in their own way encountered God.

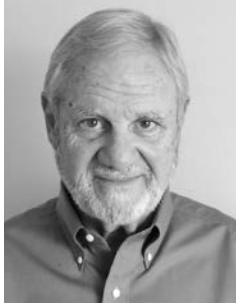
Here are a few more suggestions if you would like to practice Visio Divina:

Take the time to gaze at an image and allow it to speak to you, first on the level of what is seen with the eyes of your rational mind, the literal details of the image. When you are ready, allow those sights and thoughts to pass by, making space for the inner eye of the heart to open and interact with the image.

You may wish to sketch the image and experience your own non-verbal response. You do not have to be an artist to do this—you simply follow the lines as you see them, tracing them on paper. Or, you may trace the image with your finger, or both.

Be patient. Stay with your experience. Settle in and rest in the presence of the image. See beyond seeing and allow the image to speak its truth to you. You may also journal, and/or use these questions to inspire your reflections: How does this image inform or illumine your relationship with God? How does it speak to you of your spiritual journey now? How does this experience support your willingness to be opened, to be healed?

In order to see with this inner eye we need to take time away from the pressure of busyness and the need for stimulation. Spiritual practice is our daily pilgrimage into silence and stillness. Over time, we can be at rest, at ease within ourselves within the present moment, in stillness. Over the next few days, practice stillness within the routines of daily life. If you feel drawn to Visio Divina, then give some time to this practice of seeing with the eye of the heart. ☩



Fr. Carl J. Arico

To BE and not to DO. That is the Challenge.

*The man who is growing old becomes
more conscious of the eternal.
He moves less, and thus the voices
which come from the beyond
are better heard by him.
Invading eternity causes the reality
of time to pale.*

ROMANO GUARDINI

I turned 80 in August 2014. Earlier that year, as I was pondering this milestone, I was drawn to carve out some rare time for myself. And so in the spring of 2014 I experienced the gift of two weeks of genuine silence and solitude. It was on Long Beach Island – a barrier island in New Jersey. My desire was to experience what it would be like to simply BE. I certainly was well aware of what it was like to DO. As I entered into that space, a routine began to evolve which included the usual rhythm of prayer, occasional reading and daily mass at the local Franciscan church.

Slowly but surely I began to feel the embrace of the solitude and eventually the embrace of silence. I took as my active prayer, “Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).” I was overwhelmed by the power of that Scripture. How many times I have prayed it but now the words began to penetrate beyond the psychological level of awareness to the spiritual level. Each word and each phrase had force, no matter how little or how much of this Scripture I took in. Like Mary, pondering it in my heart, it spoke louder and louder on the intuitive level to the point that I became the prayer. It was like an antibiotic, bringing healing to levels I was not aware of then or now.

I invite you to stop reading for a few minutes, close your eyes and slowly pray this passage over and over: *Be still and know that I am God.* Allow it to sink deeper into your being and become one with you. Allow it to work its way into your system and bring to light whatever needs to come forth.

Whenever I became aware of other thoughts, I followed Guideline #3 for Centering Prayer and gently



returned to the passage. I recall the wisdom of Shunryu Suzuki who said, “Leave your front door and your back door open. Allow your thoughts to come and go. Just don’t serve them tea.”

I became aware that less is better—my external prayers must decrease, the Spirit’s praying internally must increase.

As time passed, prayers slowly formed and flowed out; some were original, some were recollections. I share them here, gifts from the island by the sea. Remember the 4 R’s—read, reflect, respond and rest. Follow the promptings of the Spirit.

“To pray and to trust, to love and to mend, to be available and to let go.”

“To see as you see, to know as you know, to love as you love, to be as you be.”

“Lord Jesus Christ be my life’s breath.”

“We are just walking one another home.”

“If you knew how much I love you, you would weep tears of joy.”

Guardini once again reminds us, “The man who is growing old becomes more conscious of the eternal. He moves less, and thus the voices which come from the beyond are better heard by him. Invading eternity causes the reality of time to pale.”

Invading eternity causes the reality of time to pale ... the awareness that there is more to life than time. The tide of eternity slowly covers the sands of time.

Of course I am back to DOING but with a greater sense of BEING. During a 10-day retreat this March I became aware on a more profound level that doing that is enriched by being awakens us to the oneness and the unity of it all—the ongoing connections that are present during the ordinary times of our lives. The Mystical Body of Christ is present in all creation. There is no real separation.

Romano Guardini says it well. “Existence becomes more transparent and a new harmony is being evolved. Thus faith takes on a new form ... transfused by an eternal light.”

So it is not so bad being 80 now. Of course the alternative is death and eternal life—WOW! What a bargain. ☸

[quotes from Romano Guardini, *Living the Drama of Faith*, 1998 Sophia Institute Press]

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Trauma as Teacher

by Thomas Hall

When I was 15, I watched my father die. His cancer diagnosis coincided with my entry into adolescence. Over the next two years Marshall slowly wasted away, until his emaciated body lay before me — his mind lost in a coma — still clinging to life. While my sophomore friends prepared for math and history finals for the spring semester, I skipped high school to prepare us for death in his hospital room. It took me decades to understand that his death was not just “bad luck,” but my initiation into the spiritual journey. A student once asked me, “Who taught you to practice *Lectio Divina*?” “My father,” I answered.

At the hospital I was unsure how to be or what to do, and disoriented in a sea of emotions. In an attempt to anchor me, my mother gave me a job. “Stand by Dad’s bedside. Watch his breathing. When his lips become dry, dab them with this lemon swab.” All of my love for him became concentrated in this vigil, hour after hour, for four days as I watched his breathing, and every so often, simply reached over to gently moisten his lips.

There were many times when my mind was lost in thought for hours. I imagined what life would be like afterwards. My father would not see me graduate from high school or college, attend my wedding, or bless his grandchildren. What would happen to my mother who loved him so dearly? My faith informed me that there was life after death, but such assurances paled in the face of the silent man before me. My father could not communicate, could not console me, could not tell me anymore how much he loved me.

These reflections led me into deep, sometimes overwhelming experiences of grief and fear. Although there was a sense of surrender to the inevitable, it never occurred to me while at his bedside to be angry with him, or with God. Anger would come later. Sometimes there arose a special joy in the many beautiful memories that came to mind — building a boat together in our garage, or working alongside him in the woods on his survey crew with my brothers. Many different emotions rose and fell, inspiring further reflections.

And then there were periods when I sat in profound silence, communing with him in a presence-to-presence relationship founded in love.

Only after teaching the ancient Christian prayer practice of *Lectio Divina* for many years in a master’s degree program at Creighton University did I finally realize how this repeated pattern — my focus on my father’s breathing, the flow of reflections, the arising of emotions, and my entry into silence — was the spontaneous, cyclical movement of *Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio* and *Contemplatio*.

Only much later did I come to understand that the experience of contemplation and the deepening of our relationship with the Divine are built into the very structure of human life. Through this traumatic experience, God invited me to enter as deep and abiding a relationship as possible, just like God invites every human being, even if they never say a formal prayer, enter a church, or receive a sacrament other than the present moment. This contemplative dimension of life experience is given abundantly, freely, and leads to those same qualities of openness, freedom, selflessness and compassion which characterize advanced practitioners of any traditional inner discipline. This natural interior process — focus, reflect, respond, rest — is the foundation of a formal prayer practice, but *Lectio* produces its fruits because all human beings possess a contemplative core, and life itself has the spontaneous capacity to lead us all to its depths. The distinction between spiritual practice and everything else in life is an artificial division which we eventually outgrow.

Reading the New Testament and the lives of the saints, I began to understand the role of trauma in the spiritual journey. Very often, we are initiated into the spiritual path through unbidden traumatic experiences which occur outside our normal range. Trauma branded me with painful truths about the mystery of life and death. I walked out of the hospital after my father's death still an adolescent, but one who had aged prematurely, disproportionately. I felt alone, out of step with my peers. I could not silence the darker dimensions of trauma by positive thinking or spiritualizing my experience, hoping to diminish the pain that followed in trauma's wake. In a culture that resisted suffering, I tried to fit in, but I could not return to the old ways I organized myself, my life, others, even God; these no longer worked. Trauma deconstructed the map which held my life together.

I did not understand that my self-identity would also undergo a similar deconstruction. Sometimes it takes something as destructive as trauma to break the defensive seal on the unconscious, to release the ego's tyrannical hold on our identity, and displace or reposition the limited self in relation to our

deeper identity that always exists in harmony with the Divine. As a result we can experience a sense of “no-thing-ness” at our core, a primal ground of consciousness that mystics with the support of their traditions rigorously train to enter. Two years after my father's death, while reclining alone under the summer stars, I had such a profound opening. At the time I did not connect it to the ego-stripping through which I had just passed. I knew my experience that night was not caused by an undigested piece of potato, but intuitively knew this was an encounter with the Divine. The next morning I cornered my parish priest after Mass and tried to explain what had happened. He listened patiently . . . and told me he did not take the course in mystical theology in seminary. His superiors told him that if someday some parishioner came to him with such an experience he should instruct them to “read the Bible.” So that afternoon I dutifully began with Genesis. But after a week I only made it as far as Deuteronomy before I began my search for a different way to more directly cultivate that elusive experience.

What my parish priest was trying to tell me was to regularly practice *Lectio Divina*, and experience contemplative prayer. But he did not know it. His superiors understood that this practice gradually cultures the subtler senses to make our awareness more receptive to the experience of unstructured silence and the deeper self. Although all human beings experience the gravitational pull towards the Divine, and trauma can be an entry point to the spiritual journey, without an understanding of the contemplative dimension, the discipline of regular prayer, an orientation towards serving others, and the support of a community of practitioners, it is difficult to walk this path. ☩

Thomas Hall is a long-time Centering Prayer practitioner. Together with his wife, Colleen, they founded Nebraska Contemplative Outreach in 1990. For 17 years Thomas taught a summer course at Creighton University in the Christian Spirituality Program on “Centering Prayer and the Experience of God.” He currently resides in Wimberley, Texas.



The Silence of Life

By Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Meister Eckhart once suggested that nothing so much resembles the language of God as does silence.

That challenges us on many levels: What language will we speak in heaven? We don't know, but if, as Scripture tells us, heaven will be where we know and are known perfectly, love and are loved perfectly, and understand and are understood perfectly, I suspect that words will be superfluous. We will speak the language of silence.

So it is wise that, already now, we begin more and more to learn the language of silence, not just for later on, after death, but especially so that already in this life we can begin more to connect ourselves to our deepest roots.

Raimon Panikkar, in a recent book, *The Experience of God*, makes a distinction between what he calls “the silence of life” and “a life of silence.” They aren't the same thing. His words, while not always easy to grasp, are deeply insightful and worthy of meditation, so I quote him at length:

“The silence of life is not necessarily identical with a life of silence, like the silent life of desert monks. The life of silence is important to realize our objectives, to plan our actions or develop our relations, but it is not the same as the silence of life. The silence of life is the art of making silent the activities of life that are not life itself in order to reach the pure experience of life itself.

We frequently identify life itself with the activities of life. We identify our being with our feelings, our desires, our will, with everything that we do and everything that we have. We instrumentalize our life while forgetting that it is an end in itself. Plunged into the activities of life, we lose the faculty of listening, and we alienate ourselves from our very source: silence, God.

Silence appears at the moment when we position ourselves at the very source of being.”

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He goes on to suggest that our striving to attain the silence of life should not take away from the importance of our everyday activities—eating, working, socializing, healthy recreation. But there must be times when we also practice a healthy life of silence, when our bodies, hearts, and minds must be stilled enough so that, somehow, we can sense what lies beyond our activities and is the source of them, life itself, God.

How do we get there? That is exactly what every spirituality worthy of the name is trying to teach us. While there are many differences in the roads they suggest, there are a number of things upon which they all agree:

First, all the great traditions of prayer tell us that the road is simple, but not easy!

Next, each, in its own way, tells us what Jesus told us, namely, that the road that takes us to genuine depth, to an experience of God, is not so much dependent upon any particular prayer practice, but upon “purity of heart (Matthew 5: 5),” that is, upon a certain moral condition, an unselfishness, that takes us beyond the tyranny and idolatry of the ego.

And, how do we do that?

Every spirituality has its own route, but, again, they all agree on a number of non-negotiable elements:

Any journey that takes you towards God will demand, at a point, some vigorous asceticism, some real fasting, a real purification and a disciplined ordering of the countless, obsessive feelings and

desires that act through us. We must break what some spiritual masters call “the tyranny of the ego” and Panikkar calls “the idolatry of the ego.” We will not get in touch with the deep source of our lives if the activities of our life are so consuming and obsessive that we can never find an identity and meaning in something beyond them. That is the ultimate reason behind asceticism and fasting of all kinds; we renounce something, even if it is good, with the aim of getting in touch with its deeper source, life itself, God.

And this asceticism, through which we are trying to come to the silence of life will require too, at some point, a life of silence, a deliberate, disciplined effort (not to stop thinking and feeling since this is impossible) but to put ourselves in touch with what is beyond our thoughts and feelings at their origins. A Hindu text tells us that God is found in “nourishment,” in what is seen, heard, and understood, but adds immediately that we only experience our activities as bearing God if we also, at times, deliberately halt those activities and go into silence so that we can see what’s behind them.

The practices of meditation and contemplation, no matter what particular technique we use, have this precisely as their aim, namely, to practice a little bit “a life of silence” so as to sit for awhile in “the silence of life.”

Nothing so much approximates the language of God as does silence. It’s a language we need to practice. ☸

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Fr. Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com or www.facebook.com/ronrolheiser

The New Monasticism

by Rory McEntee and Adam Bucko

FOREWORD: *We write this article in honor of our mentor Fr. Thomas Keating, who has been one of our most important guides and supporters, hosting new monastic dialogues at St. Benedict's Monastery for the past four years, mentoring a number of us personally, and writing a generous afterword to our new book. In addition, his more than 30-year experiment in interspiritual dialogue, now known as the Snowmass Interspiritual Dialogue Fellowship (for which Rory is the administrator), has been a birthing place for this new understanding. To him we offer our deepest, heartfelt gratitude, as he continues to guide us in following the call of the Holy Spirit in a new generation.*

Many of our mentors tell us that in the past, people like us would just join a monastery. However, we sense a new calling. We feel the depths of the monastic pull but want to live it out in the world, in the context of work, relationships, raising children, engaging to build a world that works for all and not just some. We spend time in monasteries, but ultimately are committed to turning our entire world into a “monastery.”

When we look at the generation of our parents it seems they had two choices: to go to a monastery or an ashram and live a spiritual life away from the world; or to develop a career, join the corporate world and then practice spirituality on weekends or on vacations. For us, those choices are not sufficient. While we are grateful for those who prepared the ground for us, when we talk to young people we realize that our generation feels a different call. We don't want to leave the world and yet we want to live our call with the same kind of commitment the monastic vocation demands. We don't want to leave the world and yet we don't want to join the machine of corporate values. We want to be in the world, we want to work, but we want our work to be a form of prayer—our special way of touching God and becoming an instrument of Her dream for the world.

One great inspiration for us was our late mentor and lay Catholic monk Br. Wayne Teasdale, who after spending years with Fr. Keating, his spiritual father, immersing himself in the way of the Christian Sannyasi via Fr. Bede Griffiths, and forging a close relationship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, realized that we are entering a new time in our religious history. He called this emergence “interspirituality.” To him, it meant that all of our religious traditions would have to re-invent themselves in light of the others, pooling their resources and spiritual wisdom for the common good of humanity, and that through this an emerging spiritual path would be born which would exist in parallel with the traditions—not replacing them—but existing among them, yet beholden to none. We speak of our own experience on such an interspiritual path in our book.

Br. Wayne wrote that there was a special need in our age for the monastic ideal to be lived out in the world: “Our time, with its special needs, require[s] a spirituality of intense involvement and radical engagement with the world ... it is in the real world that the wisdom of the monks must be made accessible. It is in the real world that their awakening and development need to occur, not off in remote solitude (*A Monk in the World*).” For Br. Wayne, this wasn't simply a theory or wishful thinking—he lived it out daily in the praxis of his life, living as a hermit monk in the heart of Chicago, without institutional support. While we enter silence daily and even for long periods of time, we ultimately understand that our monastic solitude “is not the absence of the world, but the presence



of God ... For us, the whole world is the meeting place with the One whom we cannot avoid ... We encounter God ... in all these 'little ones' who are his own, the ones who suffer in their bodies ... the ones who are troubled, the ones who are in need of something. We encounter Christ rejected in countless acts of selfishness (Madeleine Delbr el, *We, the Ordinary People of the Streets*)."

Br. Wayne also developed the ideal of a monk outside of the context of a particular religious tradition: "Monasticism has its origin here in the hidden places of the heart ... [and] an inner monk doesn't require an overtly religious context. It is an innate expression of the mystical quest that everyone can reach by virtue of our common humanity." Fr. Keating writes in the afterword to our book, "The monastic vocation epitomizes everyone's vocation to divine union ... Hence the term 'monk' presupposes

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a radical commitment to surrender the ego-self in order to receive the completely gratuitous gift of participation in the divine life of love, peace, compassion, forgiveness, service of others, and wisdom ... Since most people are not called or attracted to seek union with God within the structures of traditional monastic life, means of reaching divine union in the context of the immense diversity of life in the world must be created."

Fr. Bede Griffiths, who bridged the religious life of Hindu yogic spirituality and Christianity, spoke of the vocation and future of monasticism as "a lay order," where "increasingly the majority will live in their own homes or form small communities—a monastic order in the world (*The New Creation in Christ*)."

Raimon Panikkar, the great interspiritual theologian, said "If the monastic dimension exists at least potentially in everybody, the institution of monasticism should be equally open to everybody ... The monastery, then, would not be the 'establishment' of the monks, but the schola Domini, the school where that human dimension is cultivated and transmitted (*Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*)."

We follow in the footsteps of these great mentors, some who do not belong to any one particular religious tradition, such as feminist mystical theologian and spiritual teacher Beverly Lanzetta, who has led a new monastic community for over 30 years while existing outside of any religious traditions. Some of us are married, some single, some celibate.



Founders of the Foundation for New Monasticism:
Rory McEntee, Pir Netanel (Mu'in ad-Din) Miles-Yépez
and Adam Bucko, with Fr. Thomas in the center.

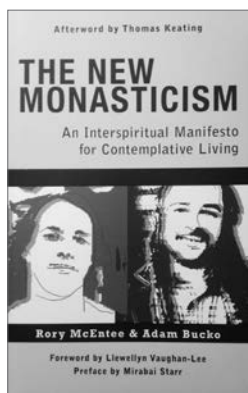
Some of us are Catholic or Episcopal, Buddhist or Jewish, Sufi or Spiritual but not Religious, but all of us try to live our “monastic” vocation from the depths of our hearts and with the same commitment of our being to the transformative journey as the monks of old, where all decisions in our life emerge out of this commitment. Some of us live in communities and some of us live alone as part-time hermits, like Br. Wayne did, engaging in the struggles of daily life and dedicating our lives to service.

Those of us who gather in communities sometimes start little hermitages like David and Tamara Milliken. Through their Inner Sky Community and their marriage they live the Benedictine yogic rule (inspired by Fr. Bede Griffiths’ Shantivanam Ashram), dedicating themselves to new monastic contemplative life and service in which they live with orphans, serving as foster parents while teaching others about the beauty of relationship, prayer and service.

Others see their calling to serve as part of the great social movements in bringing God’s dream of compassion and justice into our world. One such community, Center for the Working Poor, was developed by Paul Engler in Los Angeles where, through masterful cultivation of strategic praxis, they help the working poor to build a movement for human dignity and justice, combining Fr. Keating’s teachings of Centering Prayer with wise, prophetic action inspired by Cesar Chavez and Dorothy Day.

Finally, some of us feel moved to work for this new monastic movement by building a theology for the movement, (see “Media / Resources” at www.new-monastics.com, as well as our new book). Some of us are also building a movement of prayer communities like the HAB Community, an emerging network of friends inspired by the spiritual legacy of Fr. Bede Griffiths to meet in small groups practicing contemplative prayer and service. In addition, we have co-founded the nonprofit Foundation for New Monasticism as a vehicle to support new monastic life, teachings, and dialogical engagement with religious traditions and varying expressions of new monasticism.

As we take our fledgling steps into uncharted territory, we ask for your prayers and support. We are a young movement with mostly younger people, but we strive to be inter-generational, religiously diverse, prophetically aware, and interspiritual in nature. We hope those of you who feel inspired will look further into what we are doing. Our book and the Foundation’s website (listed below) are good initial resources, and you can contact us through the website. We invite you to join with us, bringing your gifts and wisdom into this ever-expanding “divine milieu.” ☸



The New Monasticism: An Interspiritual Manifesto for Contemplative Living,
Rory McEntee and Adam Bucko, Orbis Books, 2015.

The Foundation for New Monasticism: <http://www.new-monastics.com>



Photo courtesy of Elpopophoto

Hunger for Happiness

Bob Hope, Rockport, MA

It is the wailing and the weeping
 That wakes the will to repent
 Happiness is the soul's birthright
 And all unhappiness comes
 From selling it for a pot of porridge
 Which leaves the soul so starving
 For the infinite Love already within
 Love, let me repent of my selfish self
 And open to that vacuum within
 Whence You call me to our Oneness

Seedling Soul | Carolyn Goddard, Nashville, TN

As I drove, Donna was describing how she put a white sheet over the raised bed where she had planted seeds. She was saying something about enabling the young plants to survive the heat. Sadly, I was not listening with the "ear of my heart." I wasn't even listening very well with the ears of my head. But the image took root within me—and broke ground as a metaphor.

I wonder if the purpose of the ego is to shade my seedling soul while she soaks up the nutritious grace and love that she needs. Perhaps my ego, like Donna's sheet, casts a shadow that shelters that which is buried deep within me.

According to Donna, when summer fades into fall, the covering will no longer be necessary. In fact, it could become an obstacle to growth. Once it has served its purpose, the sheet need to be taken down—or is it that, in the fullness of time, the ego needs to be dismantled?

In either case, I suppose exposing a fledgling plant or soul to the elements could instigate fear and pain. When the protective veil is lifted, will the young plants wither? If I let go of my false sense of self, who will I be?

When Donna strips away her sheet, I hope the seeds will have fulfilled their purpose—that she will find strong young plants ready to grow to fruition. And when we finally come out from under our egos, I hope even more fervently that new life will flourish in all of us. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Please send your comments, suggestions and content submissions to Pamela Begeman at clp@coutreach.org.

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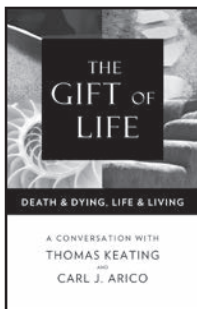
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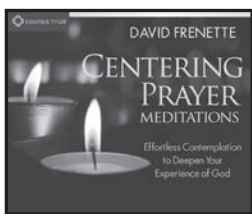
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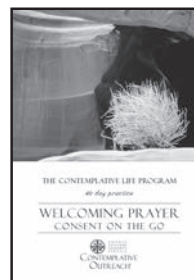
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Choose US or International Contacts.

In the USA contact

Susan Komis

ph# 973.846.6925

susankomis@coutreach.org

or

Marie Howard

ph# 973.846.6907

marie@coutreach.org

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Please contact

Sr. Fionnuala Quinn

ph# 011.353.1 8299710

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Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.
10 Park Place, 2nd Floor, Suite B
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email: office@coutreach.org
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Contemplative Outreach Theological Principle #12