



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

51: Mid-Point Review



Photo by Janet Chung, *Spiral Stained Glass*

We are at about the halfway point in our program on *The Spiritual Journey: Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life*. Let's use this as an opportunity to pause and review some of the points made from the beginning, allowing you the opportunity to reflect and respond to how the program is going for you so far.

Before the program was conceived, Fr. Thomas said he felt his legacy was the *Spiritual Journey* videos. His desire was that their viewing and study be stressed as foundational to understanding the journey and they should be experienced by all who aim to take this journey.

Here are some points of intention that we set out for the program. You may wish to reflect upon them and the related questions. Where are you in relation to your own intentions, experiences and points of growth?

The program was designed for education, participation and formation, encouraging participants to listen from silence and stillness, in and through the heart, to ground themselves in a life of practice, and to reframe the language for our time as much as possible. What intention did you set for yourself in the beginning? (You were asked to state your intention in Session 2.) Is your intention the same or has it changed as you have progressed on this journey? Have you experienced listening from the heart?

"[This] is an attempt to provide a roadmap, as it were, for the journey that begins when Centering Prayer is seriously undertaken and to point to some of the recognizable landmarks on the journey, as well as to its ultimate destination. The latter is not so much a goal to be attained, as an ever more resolute commitment to the journey."

- Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation*

As you have seriously undertaken a practice of Centering Prayer, how has your commitment to the journey evolved, or has it?

The program is intended to be an integrated wisdom map of the psycho-spiritual aspects of the transformative awakening and healing that happen to Christian seekers committed to the contemplative path of consent. So far, we have reviewed our attitudes towards God, the models of the human condition - evolutionary, existential, and philosophical – the psychological experience of Centering Prayer, and the four consents.

How have you applied the teachings to your personal experience of the spiritual journey, and how have they affected how you relate to the circumstances, events and people in your life?

"... Although [this program] seeks to establish a dialogue between the insights of contemporary psychology and the classic Christian spiritual masters, its primary goal is *practical*: to provide a solid conceptual background for the practice of contemplative prayer and the spiritual journey for our time. We are called to this journey not just for our own personal growth, but also for the sake of the whole human community."

- Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation*

Fr. Thomas often reminds us that this is not a privatized journey. Do you find your own circle of compassion widening?

Meditation

A Blessing for The Journey
Fr. Thomas Keating

"This is Father Thomas Keating and I've been asked to share a blessing as we begin this [program] of developing faith, trust in God, and allowing God to love us as he desires with an infinite compassion.

"Blessings really mean affirmation. So, we don't need to tell God what to do. He knows exactly what to do. His divine therapy...speaks directly to our needs as our individuality and personality is developed. So, let us ask God who dwells within us and who loves us to hear our prayer, and this is one that we might think of saying, at least in general:

"Dear Lord, I believe and trust in your incredible love for me that heals the wounds of a lifetime – body, soul, and spirit – and which calls us into a share of your divine life, even in this world. May this course we're taking fulfill your will for us at this time as we begin or renew our commitment to Centering Prayer as a new life in Christ. That [it] will help us to face what needs to be healed and also create the longings in us for deeper and deeper communion and union with yourself, dear Lord.

"So, I affirm everybody as God affirms each of us with his infinite blessing and love. My prayers will be certainly with you and I ask yours also for me that I might persevere to the end in the love of God."

To Practice

- You may wish to take this time to view any video segments you missed or that were particularly meaningful to you.
- Throughout the message above are questions for your reflection and consideration.

Resources for Further Study:

We most often refer you to read chapters from *Invitation to Love* and *Intimacy with God*. You may want to review some of the chapters you've read, notice what you underlined or highlighted, and see what it has to say to you today.

Notes and Reflections: