



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

52: Pause



Photo by Mary Anne Best taken at the Garrison Institute

*For this reason, I kneel before the Father,
...that he may grant you in accord
with the riches of his glory to be strengthened
with power through his Spirit in the inner self,
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;
that you, rooted and grounded in love,
may have strength to comprehend with all
the holy ones what is the breadth and length
and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ
which surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness
of God.*

- Ephesians 3:14, 16-19

As we prepare to close Part 3 of our program, we again pause and reflect, we breathe in and we breathe out: What have we heard? What has spoken to our heart? What do we wish to carry forward?

A Meditation

"While we were standing together at the back of the basilica, there was suddenly a tremendous gust of wings. Sparrows and pigeons were continually flying around but this gust of birds was mighty and different. We looked up, and there, high above the narthex was the unmistakable, compelling face of a barn owl. Again and again, it flew and paused, frantically crashing its white body with terrible hopelessness against the dusty windows. Every so often it would fly the whole length of the church, only to soar up again into another barrier of light. I cannot describe how unbearable it was to follow the flight of that bird, knowing that we were quite incapable to give it its freedom. There were holes and spaces, if only it would see them. Each time it failed, the pause and the stillness became longer, and the fearful despair of the bird felt greater.

"We left... We couldn't bear to be there. Later, the whole experience haunted me. The gaze of that particular bird is so involving. I suddenly thought, what if God witnesses in every [person] a divine spark, which flies within us blindly, like that bird, crashing in terror, punched and pounded from wall to wall, blinded by obstacles and dust, and yet, God knows that there is a way for natural freedom and ascending flight? What an extraordinary pain that witness would be."

- Jennifer Lash, *On Pilgrimage*

"I have great confidence in the future that God's love will triumph over every obstacle... He's invited us to become his most intimate companions and sharers of the divine nature, and does everything possible to get us there. There's no question of God's intention. The issue is whether we'll consent. That's all we have to do, ultimately, accept his love and I think if we put other projects in front of that or even beside it, we're missing some of the great realities of life and also its immense possibility for transformation."

- Thomas Keating, "A Blessing," *God is Love: The Heart of All Creation*

To Practice

- Many words have been spoken; now is the time to rest and let a "word" come forth to meet you from your inmost being.

- A powerful way of embodying a truth is by affirmation. After reflection, deep listening and pondering these offerings, you might choose a phrase as an affirmation and carry it forth with you into the next part of our journey.

- Reflect on what you have been experiencing so far in this program. These teachings, along with a Centering Prayer practice, have been transformative in the lives of many people. What movements are occurring within you? Has participating in this journey and practicing Centering Prayer evoked a change in your sense of "self"?

Notes and Reflections: