



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 76: From Contemplation to Action, Part 2 (cont.)



“And so, do your part to cooperate with grace and win this great gift, for truly it will teach the one who possesses it how to govern himself and all that is his. He will even be able to discern the character and temperament of others when necessary. He will know how to accommodate himself to everyone and (to the astonishment of all) even to inveterate sinners, without sinning himself. God's grace will work through him, drawing others to desire that very contemplative love which the Spirit awakens in him. His countenance and conversation will be rich in spiritual wisdom, fire and the fruits of love.”

- *The Cloud of Unknowing*

"You have the destiny to be transformed and the capacity to transmit your personal transformation, that is your absorption of the divine mystery, your assimilation into the Word of God, into daily life among the people you know and with whom you live. And it's the very failure of your efforts to serve that teaches you little by little how to serve, which is with complete dependency on the divine inspiration, mercy, so that you serve without demanding success. And this is what changes the world, maybe not in your lifetime, but it will bring people into union and unity with the Ultimate Mystery whom we call God."

-Thomas Keating, from the Session 75 video

## **A Meditation**

"Brother Bernie [see Session 45] was one of the Ancients. This is a very difficult word to explain. While it doesn't specifically have anything to do with age, one does not become an Ancient without spending many years in faithful monastic living. No one knows just how long it takes, nor can anyone put his finger on just when the change from ordinary monk to Ancient occurs. Everybody knows which monks are Ancients, but nobody can say just when they become so or how. One monk can be an Ancient at fifty, another at seventy, still another not until eighty.

"An Ancient is not what a monk does but rather what a monk is: it is something that radiates from his very being and that manifests itself in everything he does. It shows in the way he says, "Thank you!" It reveals itself in his smile, in the depth of his stillness at prayer, his patience in illness and his fidelity to the small daily duties of his community service.

"Not everyone becomes an Ancient. It is the end product of a life given over to faith, hope, love and prayerful service. When it is there, you know it. ... Obviously, the quality of being an Ancient is not limited to people in the monastic scene.

"...The unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* tells us to expect the qualities of an Ancient to show themselves in persons given to prayer over a long period of years.

"...We are all called to be Ancients. In fact, each of us should be at least partly on the way to this goal. It does not happen overnight; it is a gradual happening that comes from a continual response to grace showing itself in our loving service."

- William Meninger, *1012 Monastery Road*

## **To Practice**

- Continue to reflect upon your movement from contemplation to action. How is your contemplative practice informing you?

## **Resources for Further Study:**

You may wish to read Chapter 22, "From Contemplation to Action" and 23, "Contemplation in Action" from *Invitation to Love*, Chapters 20 and 21 in older editions.

## **Notes and Reflections:**