



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

78: Pause



Don Widmer, *Female House Sparrow*

*I open my mouth and speak of her:
gain, at no cost, wisdom for yourselves.*

*Submit your neck to her yoke,
that your mind may accept her teaching.
For she is close to those who seek her,
and the one who is in earnest finds her.*

See for yourselves!

*I have labored only a little,
but have found much.
Acquire but a little instruction;
you will win silver and gold through her.*

*Let your spirits rejoice in the mercy of God,
and be not ashamed to give him praise.*

*Work at your task in due season,
and in his own time*

God will give you your reward.

- Sirach 51:25-30

As we prepare to close the fourth part 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 forth?

A Meditation

The spiritual journey is like the migration of English sparrows, each weighing about an ounce and a quarter, who twice each take off into the unknown, committing themselves to the air and flying over the ocean where there are no landmarks to give them any guidance. And yet without any hesitation, every fall thousands of them take off, and in the spring, thousands return undergoing the same hazards. This migration, Evelyn Underhill believes, is a good example of what the spiritual journey is all about. We have no idea of where we are going. There are all kinds of difficulties we cannot foresee. The birds commit themselves to the elements by way of blind trust in the instinct. The spiritual journey is basically a surrender in blind trust to our conviction that what we hope to find on the journey we either already have or will certainly find... We must let go and let the wind (the Holy Spirit) take us where we hope to go.

"It is a commitment of immense proportions and requires an eminent trust that God will bring us where we hope to go if we submit to this inner conviction or urging that we have to start. It does not matter how many difficulties there are, we have to go. There is no turning back once we have started... The image of these little English sparrows is a moving symbol of our own situation. In our case, however, taking to the air is not based on instinct, but rather on the theological virtue of hope... Hope is the anticipation of the end, here and now.
- Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*

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 since the beginning of your journey in this program. You set an original intention for the journey. These teachings, along with a Centering Prayer practice, have been transformative in the lives of many people. What movements are occurring within you? Have participating in this journey and practicing Centering Prayer evoked a change in your sense of self? A change of inner conviction?

Notes and Reflections: