



# THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

## 80: The Most Excellent Path, Part 1 (cont.)



Elpopphoto

*"Go into the whole world  
and proclaim the gospel  
to every creature!"*

- Mark 16:15

I would like to emphasize the heart of the Christian spiritual journey...is the divine love and it's unbelievable but determined will to transmit to us the absolute maximum of the divine life, light, love and happiness that we can possibly receive, ...the extraordinary gift of inward transformation in which the divine life is actually transmitted to individual human beings and through them transmitted to the community, not so much through action but through being; that is, transformation of the inmost being into dependence [on], sensitivity [to] and manifestations of the Spirit.

...So, love, then, is the secret of secrets: God is love and God is hidden from us chiefly because we don't know how to love in this way. And this is the purpose of the spiritual journey and of contemplative prayer and of Centering Prayer, which is totally in the service of this project to get to know through a practice the deep knowledge of God, as Paul calls it; and to open ourselves profoundly and ever more comprehensively to the influence of the Spirit who communicates to us, 24 hours a day if we're willing, this presence which is basically love.

...Just how important this is in the Christian perspective is a little hard to grasp without a [contemplative] practice. It's hard to grasp it because we're not used to thinking of love in so many different ways... the love of friendship, ...love between lovers, a child for its parents, the love of a parent for the child, the love of one's country, and indeed, the love of ourselves. The word that Paul is using...is not just any kind of these loves, but is everything that is good and beautiful and true in each of those relationships – magnified trillions of times to a presence that is burning with love, a fire that is so intense that we can't see it in this life without turning into a grease spot!

...Each of us has within ourselves the whole program of divine transformation because the Spirit of God, like the soul in the body, fills the whole body spiritually and every part of it and every cell of it... The Spirit dwelling in each holon of the Mystical Body has a program and puts at our disposal all the potentials we need to be transformed from the very roots up into the mind of Christ, into the divine light and love, and into the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, of course, is not a geopolitical institution; it's not a form of politics; it's not a project for world supremacy. It's a state of consciousness.  
-Thomas Keating, from the Session 79 video

## **A Meditation**

All the sacraments, all prayer, all rituals are designed to awaken us to our Christ nature, out of which we and all our faculties are merging at every microcosmic moment. Jesus, in commissioning the apostles, seems to speak to this experience: 'Go and make all nations your disciples!'... Does this text refer only to the geographical world? This is the usual interpretation, but it does not exhaust the profound meaning of the text. We are invited, or more exactly commanded, to go into the expanding worlds that open to us as we move from one level of faith to the next. It is as if Jesus were to say, 'Go forth from the narrow limits of your preconceived ideas and prepackaged value systems! Penetrate every possible level of human consciousness! Enter into the fullness of divine union and then, out of that experience, preach the Gospel to all creation and transform it through the empowerment which union and unity with me will instill in you.'

Divine love makes us apostles in our inmost being. From there comes the irresistible presence and example that can transform the world.

- Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

### **To Practice**

- Reflect on your own growth in love since beginning a Centering Prayer practice. How has it manifested in your life?

### **Resources for Further Study:**

You may wish to read Chapter 5, “The Most Excellent Path” from *Manifesting God* by Thomas Keating.

### **Notes and Reflections:**