



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

26: A Pause



Photo: Mary Anne Best, Garrison Institute grounds

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send?
Who will go for us?"
"Here I am," I said,
"Send me!"
- Isaiah 6:8*

You are now about halfway through Part 2: The Human Condition. Now, pause, breathe in and out. Rest. Fr. Thomas in *Reawakenings*, offers an elegant expression of rest: "'Rest' refers to interior quiet, tranquility, ... peace, the rootedness of being one with the Divine Presence. 'Rest' implies that we are beginning to experience the mind of Christ, [the] awareness of the Godhead as infinite mercy, concern for everything that is, and the servant of creation. This rest is your reassurance at the deepest level that everything is okay. The ultimate freedom is to rest in God in suffering as well as in joy." For such rest, the soul hungers.

Meditations

"Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cell's confinement
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly,
Like a Squire from his country house.

"Who am I? They often tell me
I used to speak to my warders
Freely and friendly and clearly,
As though it were mine to command.

"Who am I? They also tell me
I bore the days of misfortune
Equably, smilingly, proudly,
Like one accustomed to win.

"Am I then really that which other men tell of?
Or, am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,
Yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighborliness,
Tossing in expectations of great events,
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
Weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
Faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

"Who am I? This or the Other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? ...

"Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*

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"And so, the question: What is a human being? Or, more specifically 'Who are you?' begins to emerge into prominent light and each one of these realities requires our consent to open to the next

possibility. ... God is trying to bring us to a new place - an extraordinary place and it requires effort and yet it's the place where we were originally created ... made in the image and likeness of God."
- Thomas Keating, "Human Evolution" video segment from Session 16

To Practice

- A powerful way of embodying a truth is by affirmation. In this way, what is outward and external, perhaps interesting and worthy as an idea, becomes real and living, connected with the inner spirit and conveying meaning. After reflection, deep listening and pondering these offerings, you might choose a phrase as an affirmation and carry it forth with you as you move deeper into the Spiritual Journey program.

Notes and Reflections: