



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

28: Frustrations Caused by the Emotional Programs-Continued



Image courtesy of Diane Walker

*He said therefore,
"What is the Kingdom of God like?
And to what shall I compare it?
It is like a mustard seed ..."*

- Luke 13:18-19

"How can they do this to me? How can people be so cruel? How can God forget me? Blah. Blah. Blah. This, of course, is the Typhon* in us going off ... the emotional exchange which was perhaps reasonable in a child of two. But now, I guess you realize, you're an adult and something a little more mature is hoped for, expected...And so, you have to start somewhere, and the spiritual journey begins when you start...doing something with the message that begins the Christian life and which Jesus, in his parables, speaks about as the 'Kingdom.' At some point you have to say 'Yes' to having the mustard seed sown in your psyche."

- Thomas Keating, excerpt from Session 27 video

With such reflections buzzing in our heads, how do we listen to what the Spirit is saying and act out of love? "Everything is a grace" was a favorite saying of Thérèse of Lisieux. How, we may ask, can *everything* be a grace? Herein enters the opportunity to having the mustard seed sown in one's psyche.

"What this parable clearly implies is that, if you think that your church, your nation, or your ethnic group is going to be delivered by God and enjoy a magnificent triumph--or if you expect that the world is going to be converted...you are mistaken; it isn't going to happen. What the Gospel is interested in is you. Not what you can do; just plain you.

"St. Thérèse writes: 'Holiness does not consist in this or that practice but in a disposition of heart [notice the shift from externals to internals] which remains always humble and little in God's arms but trusting to audacity in the Father's goodness...'

"The sacred place is right where you are...the place where transformation in Christ is worked out.

"So, what is it that makes the difference between the daily transformed life and the ... untransformed life? It is the hidden action of the Kingdom of God that works not so much through external circumstances as through a radical change in our attitudes. This is what transformation is. ...It is how we live where we are and what we do with those circumstances.

"The ordinary circumstances of daily life bring back the same faults, the same temptations, the same routines, and often the sense of going nowhere! But 'nowhere' is where the Kingdom of God is most active. Grace and daily life are always in dialogue and sometimes in a state of war. There is a struggle to figure out what God is saying in the events and circumstances of daily life and how everyday life is meant to transform us."

- Thomas Keating, *St. Thérèse of Lisieux, A Transformation in Christ*

*The primitive level of the emotions: likes, dislikes, magical thinking.

To Practice

- It may be helpful to view video presentations more than once in order to grasp their implications, especially as they relate to the spiritual journey. Thus, you may wish to view the Session 27 video, "Frustrations Caused by the Emotional Programs" again.

- On the spiritual journey, everything *can be* a grace. Ponder "Everything is a grace." How do the circumstances of your life give evidence to this?

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 3, "The Afflictive Emotions" in *Invitation to Love* (all editions).

Notes and Reflections: