



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

44: The Four Consents, Part 1 (cont.)



Ivan Guaderrama *Vivid Heart*

*"What eye has not seen,
and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those
who love him."*

- 1 Corinthians 2:9

"This gradual training in consent...is the school in which God brings us gently, step by step, to accept more and more of his plan and then to move into the divine union that vastly transcends what any human eye or imagination can even grasp in the smallest degree of what [God] has in store for those who make these consents, who love him."

- Thomas Keating, from the Session 43 video

For most of us, this consent, this YES to our fundamental goodness which is sourced and rooted in God, is not a one-time acknowledgment or decision. Yet, as we heard, this acceptance marks a "quantum leap" in our consciousness and in our understanding of ourselves and all reality. Once understood and lived out of it, we remove a significant obstacle to making the other consents: the YES to full participation in life, the YES to the inevitable afflictions and diminishments and, finally, the YES to full transformation in Christ, *as* Christ. Yes unfolds to Yes and Yes and Yes.

A Meditation

"The radical consent of deepening contemplation means something even greater: saying yes to God's presence *acting* in you. As you continue in contemplation, you learn more about how to let God's presence act in you as the source of your prayer and the source of your life.

"...Your activity in Centering Prayer is like a rose's petals opening to the sunlight, like surrender unfolding inside you, like self-abandonment awakening within. Your action in contemplation is a radical consent to God's eternal nature more than your own self-initiated effort in one contracted moment in time... In contemplation, you awaken to this indwelling reality, this gift of love that is the deepest center of your own being and the very heart of the world."

- David Frenette, *The Path of Centering Prayer: Deepening Your Experience of God*

To Practice

- This radical consent can be thought of as practicing incarnation. The minister, theologian and teacher, Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *An Altar in The World* urges the daily practice of incarnation – of being in the body with full confidence that God speaks the language of flesh. She asks, "Why else did Jesus spend his last night on earth teaching his disciples to wash feet and share supper? With all the conceptual truths in the universe at his disposal, he did not give them something to think about together when he was gone. Instead, he gave them concrete things to do – specific ways of being together in their bodies – that would go on teaching them what they needed to know when he was no longer around to teach them himself. ... I am happy for practices that bring me back to my body, where the operative categories are not 'bad' and 'good' but 'dead' and 'alive.'"

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 8, "The Four Consents" from *Invitation to Love* and Chapter 12 from *Open Mind, Open Heart* (20th anniversary editions), Chapters 7 and 13 in older editions.

Notes and Reflections: