

## Prayer and Contemplation

“To desire God is the most fundamental of all human desires. It is the very root of all our quest for happiness.” (nsc186)

“Religion in the sense of something emanating from man’s nature and tending to God, does not really change man or save him, but brings him into a false relationship with God: for a religion that starts in man is nothing but man’s wish for himself.” (cgb154)

It is in this sense that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom - and of true religion...This fear is what imposes silence.” (cgb154ff)

“Contemplative experience...is a pure gift of God and *has to be* a gift, for that is part of its very essence. It is a gift of which we can never, by any action of ours, make ourselves fully and strictly worthy. Indeed, contemplation itself is not necessarily a sign of worthiness of sanctity at all. It is a sign of the goodness of God...” (nsc188)

“Contemplation is precisely the awareness that this ‘I’ is really not ‘I’ and the awakening of the unknown ‘I’ that is beyond observation and reflection and is incapable of commenting upon itself” (nsc8)

“The best thing that beginners in the spiritual life can do...is to acquire the agility and freedom of mind that will help them to find light and warmth and ideas and love for God everywhere they go and in all that they do.” (nsc219)

“Learn how to meditate on paper. Drawing and writing are forms of meditation. Learn how to contemplate works of art. Learn how to pray in the streets or in the country. Know how to meditate not only when you have a book in your hand but when you are waiting for a bus or riding in a train. Above all, enter into the Church’s liturgy and make the liturgical cycle part of your life - let its rhythm work its way into your body and soul.” (nsc219)

**“Strictly speaking I have a very simple way of prayer. It is centered entirely on attention to the presence of God and to His will and His love. That is to say it is centered on *faith*...My prayer is then a rising up out of the centre of Nothing and Silence. If I am still present ‘myself’ this I recognise as an obstacle about which I can do nothing unless He Himself removes the obstacle. If He wills He can then make the Nothingness into a total clarity.”** (From a letter to Aziz quoted by Robert H. King in “Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh, p143)