

Contemplative Outreach

Spiritual Journey with Thomas Keating

Part 3 Tape 16(b)



Liberation from Cultural Conditioning

Freedom and Suffering

Sometimes there is no rational explanation for suffering. It is just there and it is awful. Sometimes too, when suffering is about growth, God has to hold himself back, as it were, from too soon an intervention or we will not be transformed as we need to be. If divine energy is to flow through us there is no alternative to dismantling the false self system.

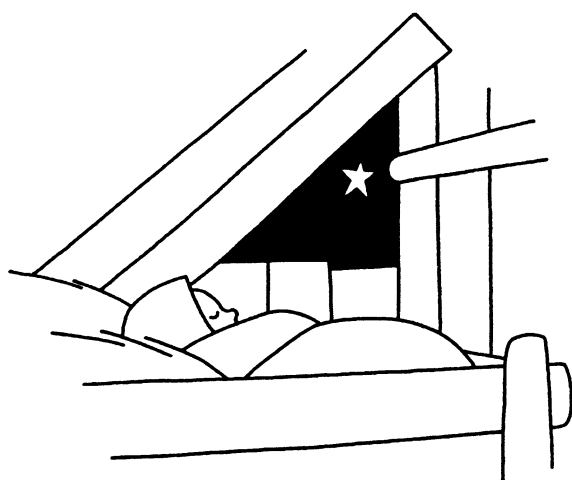
The Energy of Divine Union

Anthony heads for the desert and solitude but the outcome is a release of divine energy in ministry to the people. But before that could happen he had to endure three temptations:

1. The temptation to **give up** and abandon the spiritual journey.
2. The **Night of Sense** which freed him from the dominance of feelings and the emotional programmes for happiness. This is necessary for our physical, biological and even intellectual growth into adulthood is not always accompanied by emotional growth.
3. The **Night of Spirit** which freed him from cultural conditioning, peer group pressure, preconceived ideas about God, Jesus etc. Our image of God can be shattered and this can even be interpreted by us as a loss of faith. God is not dead but an image we have of him may need to be laid to rest.

Know How to Listen

The essence of the spiritual journey and of any vocation is following the subtle movements of the Spirit, knowing how to listen to the word of God as it presents itself and being able to move with the moment.



How Much to Share

The contemplative life generates energy and this energy leads to ministry. Anthony adopts a rhythm in his contemplative life: “.....to lead it intensely for a period of time, and then to share it. To work into daily life and one’s body and relationships, the new insights and the new levels that one has received in solitude. And then to return from action to integrate the stimulation or the learning one has received from practical experience.”