

## Contemplative Outreach

### Spiritual Journey with Thomas Keating

#### Part 5 Tape 26(a)



#### Prayer in Secret

How do we begin the wonderful process of coming to experience union with God and with other people? Science itself talks about the inter-connectedness and union of all things and uses vaguely religious language to do so. Within Christianity, however, the presence of the creative Word of God from the very beginning is a familiar concept. So, how do we access the deep knowledge of God that St. Paul so often talks about in his epistles?

Jesus assists us in this with his wisdom saying from the **Sermon on the Mount** when he says that if we want to pray, we should go into our inner room, close the door and pray to our Abba in secret and our Abba who sees in secret will reward us. (cf Matthew 6:6)



By using the intimate term “**Abba**”, Jesus is addressing the suffocating spirituality of the time which put the emphasis on the transcendence of God and the justice of God. God, in other words, was distant and hazardous. Jesus is encouraging us to let go of any old ideas of God that we have and any negative catechesis. He wants us to realise the closeness of God. This is the God of contemplative prayer and other misunderstandings can be discarded.

“**If you want to pray...**” we must want to develop our relationship with God. Prayer must come from a place of love. For God’s part, the biblical term “fear of the Lord” is a technical one and equates to alertness to God’s presence and readiness to take refuge in that presence.

“**Inner room**” We leave aside ordinary awareness and move to the inmost centre of our being where we are inclined to silence. Over-identification with goes on around us can be tryannical

“**Close the door**” Remember, we must Resist no thought, Retain no thought, React to no thought and Return to the sacred word. Our thoughts are the problem so we have to learn to disregard them and our will at least can give up on these thoughts and attitudes. We need a vacation from the childish programmes for happiness.