

## Contemplative Outreach

### Spiritual Journey with Thomas Keating

#### Part 3 Tape 15(a)



#### Liberation from the False-Self System

“.....the heart of Christian asceticism is the dismantling of the unconscious value system, put together in early life, which we’ve been calling the emotional programs for happiness; especially when they have been fossilized and developed and defended through the process that winds up with what have been called an energy center.”

“But the spiritual journey is not a career. It is not a constant growth process that you can feel and appreciate. It’s rather... it’s characterized by the ever increasing gift of self-knowledge in which we perceive our mixed motivation and the dark side of our personality.”

#### John of the Cross and the Dark Night of Sense

“.....diminution of satisfaction in our relationship with God, and in the concrete in our participation in prayer, liturgy, or ministry, is the direct effect of an increase of contemplative prayer; that is to say, an increase of pure faith.”

1. “This is a positive experience. It’s not a dissatisfaction with anything, pleasure, money, power, anything. It’s simply the realization that is taking root, once and for all, that no created thing is going to bring us full satisfaction.”
2. “.....a certain anxiety in our relationship to God, and a fear that we are moving backwards.”
3. “.....an inability, disinclination, to practice discursive meditation or what we call the reflective part of listening to the Word of God in Scripture.”

#### Our Personal Efforts Don’t Work Anymore

“And now we find to our dismay that our personal efforts don’t work anymore. Actually the one who does the work, or most of it, from this point on, is the Spirit of God, and our efforts are often more of a hindrance than a help.”

“.....all of us are incredibly sunk and trapped in our cultural conditioning.”

“.....*three intense trials* may arise in the Night of Sense that make it more difficult but also accelerate its progress and enables us once and for all to put to rest the motivation coming from the subhuman false-self system.”

1. The Spirit of Fornication (Vivid sexual images)
2. The Spirit of Blasphemy (Intolerable blasphemies, ideas and thoughts)
3. The Night of the Spirit (A thousand scruples and perplexities)

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## **Spiritual Journey with Thomas Keating**

### **Part 3 Tape 16(a)**



### **Liberation from Cultural Conditioning**

#### **Freedom from the Domination of Feeling**

The Night of Sense brought Anthony freedom from the domination of his feelings and emotions. They lost their addictive character and adopted the character of a preference. "It would be nice but if it is not to be, then, that is okay too."

#### **When Centering is bombarded by thoughts ask:**

*Do I want to feel something?*

*Do I want to control something?*

*Do I want to know something with the security of certitude?*

#### **Translation and Transformation**

Transformation is the moment of new insight/consciousness. Freedom and energy result. Translation is the integration of body, mind and spirit with this new consciousness. When this is done we are ready for further transformation.

#### **A Call Into the Unknown**

Oddly enough as you journey towards transforming union you become ever more aware of your capacity for any evil. Humility – very different to low self-image – is developed. However, we need to be careful not to take on penance, trial, difficulty or ministry that is beyond us. These are only undertaken when we are called to them. Anthony headed for the tombs under the inspiration of grace. The spiritual journey consists in doing God's thing not my own.

#### **Here I AM!**

Anthony is beaten, buffeted and terrorised. He hangs on and passes beyond emotional addiction and even emotional preference to total freedom. He is filled with the energy of transforming union as God reveals he was beside him all the time. But why the necessity for so much suffering if God was there?

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### 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.

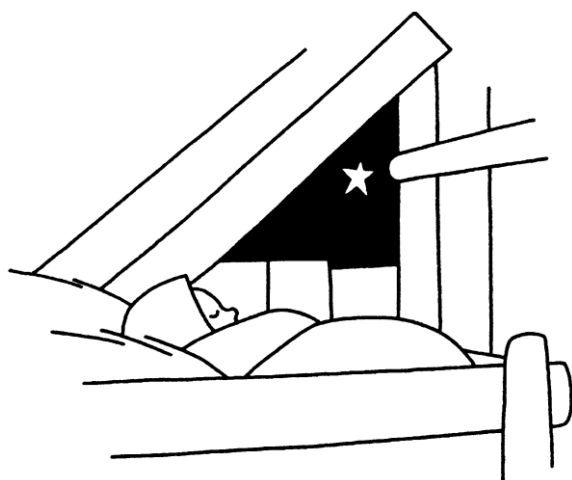
### The Energy of Divine Union

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."

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### Part 3 Tape 17(a)



## Spirituality in Everyday Life

### How to Adapt this Journey to Everyday Life

The primary practice **IS** daily life. And being able to handle and be faithful to one's commitments and to the wear and tear of daily life **IS** the arena in which spiritual progress takes place. In spiritual literature the desert, the ocean, the forest, all these are symbols of the spiritual journey and also of endless routine.

To see daily life as a spiritual journey, Centering Prayer is the keystone. It is designed to heal the disease we call the human condition. It is an extract, you might say, that combines the following four elements in a kind of capsule.

THE FOUR BASIC ELEMENTS TO HEALTH which is a certain amount of	
1)	Solitude
2)	Silence of an exterior kind, both of which are designed, of course to cultivate interior silence.
3)	Simplicity of life, not necessarily penury, but a reasonable use of the goods of the earth so as not to use up goods that other people need.
4)	A discipline for prayer and action.

We need two doses a day – a maintenance dose and a curing dose. Experience shows that two doses a day more effectively maintain the reservoir of healing than one long dose. Ideally, if your schedule allows the first dose can be included in a quiet reflective hour at the beginning of the day and the second dose in a quiet half hour in the early evening.

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### Part 3 Tape 17(b)



## Spirituality in Everyday Life

### Into Everyday Life

1. **Identify the Emotional or the Energy Centre:** Take note of events that trigger emotion in you and identify the emotional centre or the energy centre that is the source. Deliberately let go of the energy.
2. **The Active Prayer Phrase:** Deliberately work into your unconscious a phrase from scripture or some other phrase by repeating it again and again. Use it, but use it gently, when unhelpful commentary of any kind arises in your mind.
3. **Cultivate a Loving Acceptance of Yourself:** Someone has to break the cycle of emotional damage passed on from generation to generation so accept the damage done to yourself and try to forgive yourself and everybody else and disengage from everything that prolongs it. Accept it all and try with God's help to build on your experience so that it will not be repeated.
4. **Sit with Painful Emotions:** Sit with your feelings, stare them down. They can be changed. Embrace God in the emotion not the suffering in it.
5. **Use Friends, Therapists and Medication:** If you need to, avail of friends, therapists and medicine but the basic healing is in acceptance.
6. **Guard the Heart:** Let go of every emotional annoyance as soon as it arises when you can get to that stage. Consciously decide not to engage with upset and annoyance. Concentrate instead on what you are doing.
7. **Have a Minute Book:** Collect your own favourite scripture passages and spiritual quotations and carry them with you in a small notebook. When you have a spare minute in your day take it out and consult it.
8. **Share it Together:** Joining with the worshipping community to share Eucharist is a help and so also is joining a Centering Prayer Group or a Lection Divina Group or some other weekly support group.
9. **Take Personal Responsibility:** Take a personal responsibility to gently disengage from over-identification with groups. Withdraw projections and re-evaluate unquestioned assumptions and values from early life.

