

# SEEKING CHRIST'S PEACE: ON CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Talk 4 (09/11/23)

We are treating doorways into contemplative prayer; we are seeking to quiet our spirits to be receptive to Christ's peace. His peace is one of a living communion with Him and openness to his transfiguring graces. So our resolute interior path is to be one of increasing receptivity to God and his action in our lives.

The previous doorways were verbal and imaginative. Today's is more interpersonal. The doorway I want to put before you now, is **a simple look to the Holy Spirit or Jesus in a hope for deeper communion with God**. This would be *as if we were about to speak* from the depths our hearts, something like: *I pray to love you, God, as much as possible*. As we seek to quiet our hearts, going beyond words, going beyond our interior pictures, seeking to be open to what God graciously wants to give us through the deepest channels of his love in creation—we especially begin with this glance of hope *toward someone closer to us than we are to ourselves, and as if we were together in the darkest night, in an interpersonal realm that is beyond our ordinary ways of knowing and loving and relating*.

As though we were about to give voice to the greatest, most generous, holiest prayer, we enter into a quiet wanting to be in the holy presence, and to be blessed. We enter in a way freed from the grossness of our own stumbling words and ways, and trusting in grace's light and help. As the quiet comes, we allow our intention of our deepest hopes to become a posture or prayer of listening for the divine answer to our holiest yearnings through Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

When we lose our quiet we again take up the intention to make our quiet, grand petition, or, better, the deep desire to listen for God's gracious response with a silent, graceful, trusting glance, to be as a life-preserver to bring us back from drowning in a clutter of words or images. We gently, gently hold onto this buoy to breath deeply again of the quiet openness to God's love.

The interior image here seems to me even less visual than that of the cloud of unknowing: a heart image of hope and trust in a divine other, who is wise, awesome and attending. (The *cloud of unknowing* may be an image of this care for us in God's grace!)

This doorway seems the most natural, for it is more like the beginning of a most intimate conversation with a close friend, when we first seek eye contact, becoming present to each other in a silent communion of hearts, before either speaks.

Again, you are welcome to keep to the previous ways you have encountered and used successfully, or to begin to employ this one. I began over 40 years ago with the Cloud of Unknowing. And now this personal one is my preferred doorway, or at least something like a combination of this and the Cloud.

An important note to add: that when one seeks union with God in prayer, one should already have a firm resolve against committing any mortal sin, and at least begun to resolve against committing any deliberate venial sins. A contemplative journey while holding onto deliberate sin is perilously full of delusion.