

MORNING – DAY 15

➤ In the realm of the spirit, Heaven is as near up as it is down, behind as before, to left or to right.

➤ **The path to Heaven is measured by desire and not by miles.**

C. of U. – Chapter 60

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➤ “ Christ disappeared in His Ascension beyond the clouds, *not into some geographical location, but into the heart of all creation.* In particular, **He has penetrated the very depths of our being, and our separateness has become submerged in His divine Person**, so that now we can act under the influence of His Spirit.”

Thomas Keating, OCSO

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➤ **To the Mind that is still ...
the whole Universe surrenders.**

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THY KINGDOM COME!

➤ “ We open our gates to the transfiguring Presence, redeeming our poor contingencies, our disharmonies.

➤ “ **The Kingdom is the serenity of God already enfolding us, and seeking to penetrate and redeem the whole of this created order,** ‘shattering the horror of perpetual night’ by a ray of heavenly brightness.

➤ “ We pray for this transformation of life, this healing of its misery and violence, its confusion and unrest, through the coming of the Holy God, carrying through to regions still unconquered ...

➤ “... that the Splendor *over against us* may **enter, cleanse, and sanctify every level of our existence,** give it a new quality, coherence, and meaning.”

Evelyn Underhill

EVENING – DAY 15

ARIDITY AND THE COCOON

➤ A small opening appeared in a cocoon. A man sat and watched as a butterfly struggled to force its' body through that little hole. Then ... it seemed to stop making any progress, appeared to have gotten as far as it could and would not go any further. The man took a pair of scissors and opened the cocoon. The butterfly emerged with a **withered body, tiny and shriveled wings**. (It would never, ever fly.) What the man did not understand was that the restricting cocoon, and the struggle (read "Aridity") required of the butterfly to get through the tiny opening was **God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its' wings**.

Anonymous

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➤ "If I understand John correctly, the three spirits* work in concert with the dryness and emptiness described in a sign of The Night. **The collective effect is to both invigorate and refine all of a person's faculties: intellect, memory, will, imagination, and senses. The faculties find themselves exercised and energized in their hopeless attempts to manage things. And, in their failures, they become more delicate and sensitive.**"

* i.e. the spirits of Fornication, Blasphemy and Confusion.

Dr. Gerald May

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➤ **"Inner tranquility comes to very few except after a long period of agony.** For the agony is a preparation for the peace, which is something not to be induced, mechanically, from without, but to be won, in freedom and responsibility, from within."

Victor Gollancz

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➤ Being a Contemplative means not reckoning and counting, but ripening like a tree which does not force its sap ... but stands confident in *the psychic storms of spring*. **The mystical summer moment will come**, but only to the mind that is still – as though eternity laid before it - **unconcernedly still and wide**.

MORNING – DAY 16

The Cloud of Unknowing restates salty tradition of the Desert Fathers and Hesychasts of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, as well as blending significant elements of John of the Cross, especially his teaching on The Dark Nights.

Between the Clouds goes beyond *Cloud of Unknowing* to incorporate the charm, humanity, humor and wisdom of Teresa of Avila. Further, *Between the Clouds* attempts to place all this teaching in dialogue with the psychological discoveries of our own time*, together-with the oft-times disarmingly whimsical writings of contemporary Visionaries.

* The early 20th C. English Mystic, Evelyn Underhill (quoted often in *Between the Clouds*), profoundly anticipated many of these discoveries!

Between the Clouds* thus attempts to reduce contemporary obstacles to Contemplation, especially the tendency to *over-activism* and *over-intellectualism*, either of which result in a **too great dependency on concepts as a supposed means to go to God.*

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• “Prayer deprived of contemplation is full of interruption, and ... occurs as a result of the darkness of mind, which in turn is caused by the senses being greatly fragmented:

**fragmentation of the senses leads to
fragmentation of the intellect;
out of this a thick darkness
springs up in the mind.**

• “Whosoever prays in this state of contemplation ... prays with pleasure, and remains in prayer without any effort.”

Isaac of Nineveh

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• “Master intricate speculations by refusing to feed them, to gnaw on them.” (C. of U.)

• “The clinging mind wants to attach itself to everything in order to control everything ... is preoccupied with clarity and control.”

Richard Rohr

EVENING – DAY 16

➤ “ **The more firmly the creature is established in its origin**, the eternity of God, so much the more fully does it receive in eternity, by God’s free, eternal decree, a share in the inner divine movement of the Trinity. ... Man, **once in eternity**, is no *alien spectator* of a series of events unrolled before him; through the light of the glory dwelling in him, which is God Himself, **he is enabled to take part in the eternal processions, that is, in the very activity of the eternal love.**”

Hans Urs von Balthasar

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➤ “ St. John of the Cross helps us to understand that **the discouraging and unsettling phase of the spiritual journey**, a longer or shorter ‘night’, is not all it seems. It is not the withdrawal of the divine interest in us, leaving us stranded in a barren world and thrown back onto our own inadequate resources. **It is the stretching of our powers of perception beyond what they can yet understand of the mysterious work that is God’s sheer Presence.**”

L. Freeman, O.S.B.

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Dark Nights and Winter Space

➤ “ Winter is a season of waiting. It requires great trust and a willingness to believe that this angst will not last forever. **Even though all appears dead and void of movement, there is a quiet growth taking place.**

➤ “ During the darkness, gestation occurs. In the frozen air, branches with terminal buds secretly grow every day. In the unmoving soil, flower bulbs are strengthened for their future journey upward toward the sun. **In the frozen human heart, the silent seeds of confidence are prepared for amazing new growth.**

➤ “ **Because we cannot see our growth, Winter asks us only to be, to live with mystery, to wait patiently.**”

J. Rupp & M. Wiederkehr

MORNING – DAY 17

➤ To put it simply, I do not want you to be anywhere; no, not outside, above, behind, or beside yourself. ... Nowhere, physically, is everywhere spiritually.

➤ Go on with this nothing, **moved only by your love for God**. Never give up, but steadfastly persevere in this nothingness, **consciously longing that you may always choose to possess God through love**.

➤ For myself, I prefer to be lost in this nowhere, wrestling with this blind nothingness.

➤ **Our true, inner-self appreciates it as a fullness beyond measure.**

C. of U. – Chapter 68

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**The soul that journeys to God,
but does not shake off its cares
and quiet its appetites,
is like one who drags a cart uphill.**

John of the Cross

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➤ “The mystery of His Presence is *hidden* throughout creation and in every part of it. At some moment of history, which prophecy calls *The Last Day*, **our eyes will be opened, and we will see reality as it is, which we know now only by faith.**

➤ “Faith reveals that Christ, **dwelling** at the center of all creation and of each individual member of it, is **transforming** it and **bringing** it back, *in union with Himself*, into the bosom of the Father.

➤ “Thus, **the eternal glory of the Trinity is achieved through the maximum sharing of the Divine Life with every creature according to its capacity**. This is the fullness of the Divine Plan, ‘the mystery hidden for ages in God’ (Eph. 3:9).”

Thomas Keating, OCSO

EVENING – DAY 17

➤ A brother asked an old **Desert Father**: “What shall I do? For many **thoughts** are bothering me, and I don’t know how to fight back.” The old man said: “Do not fight against all of them, but against one. In fact, all **thoughts** of monks have a single head. Therefore, you have to figure out which and what kind it is, and fight against it. By doing so, you can defeat the rest of those **thoughts**.”

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➤ A brother came **Abba Poeman** and said: “Abba, a variety of **thoughts** are coming into my mind and I am in danger.” The old man took him out in the air and said: “Open your robe and take hold of the wind.” And he answered: “No, I cannot do it.” The old man said: “If you cannot do it, neither can you prevent those **thoughts** from coming in. But what you should do is to **stand firm against them**.”

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➤ “Examine carefully **the mind’s path during times of prayer** to see what the aim of its course is; see whether it’s prayer flows forth **smoothly and abundantly**, or whether it is **cut-short and comes spasmodically**. One person’s prayer may be **tranquil**, and another’s **agitated and fervent**; one person will pray **from the depths of the mind**, while another **from the flow of his thoughts**. Sometimes prayer issues from a person’s **groaning**, at other times **unbearable stirrings** from within cause prayer to burst forth.”

Isaac of Nineveh

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➤ An old **Desert Father** said: “**Constant prayer quickly straightens-out our thoughts**.”

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➤ **My beloved is silent music and sounding solitude ... a ceaseless stream of love that springs-up every moment.**

Teresa of Avila

MORNING – DAY 18

➤ Keep on working in **this nothingness which is nowhere.**

➤ Man knows the things of the spirit more by what they are not than by what they are.

➤ Our spiritual faculties are *limited in relation to the knowledge of God as He is in Himself.* But ... **there is a negative knowledge which does understand God.**

➤ St. Denis said, “The most divine knowledge of God is that which is **known by not knowing.**”

C. of U. - Chapter 70

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➤ **An island in this world is the Prayer of Silence.**

Each time, when arriving at the shore,
we face the same hazards, the same
strain, tension and risk.

**Each time, the island must be conquered,
as if we had never been there before,
as if we were *strangers to the spirit.***

Abraham Heschel

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➤ **“Intensity of stirrings in prayer is not an exalted part of pure prayer.** What is the most precious and the principal characteristic in pure prayer is the brevity and smallness of any stirrings, and the fact that the mind simply gazes, as though in wonder, during this diminution of active prayer.”

Isaac of Nineveh

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➤ **“There is no effort comparable to prayer to God.
Prayer is a battle
all the way to the last breath.”**

Abba Agathon

EVENING – DAY 18

➤ “ There is a factor which is always present in every developed life of prayer: **the liability to spiritual dryness and blankness** ... the times when all your interest and sense of reality evaporate ... **and you are quite unable, in any real sense, to pray.**

➤ “ Everyone is so *off-color* from time to time. Now first of all, **it is possible to reduce the intensity of such desolations ... by wise handling of yourselves**; and here prudent self-treatment is plainly your duty – the dictates of grace and common sense coincide. **The condition is largely psychological.** It is a fatigue state, a reaction sometimes from excessive devotional fervor, sometimes from exacting spiritual work, which has exhausted the inner reserves of the soul. **It almost always follows on any period of marked spiritual progress or enlightenment.** In either case, the first point is, accept the situation quietly. Don't aggravate it, don't worry, don't dwell on it, don't have contrition about it, but turn, so far as you can, to some secular interest or recreation and 'wait 'till the clouds roll by.'

➤ “ 'In a state of exhaustion,' (as one priest said of the end of his Sunday) ... 'the only gift of the Spirit in which I am able to take any interest is a hot bath!' **There is a toll levied by psycho-physical limitations. Effort and resistance will only make it worse.**”

E. Underhill

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➤ “ Prayer is a crucible in which time is passed in the likeness of the eternal.

We hand over our time to God

in the secrecy of a single word.

When anointed by silence,

our thoughts merge into

the endless knowledge

of an all-embracing God.

We yield our thoughts to God,

Who endowed us with

a chain of days, for the duration of life.”

Abraham Heschel

MORNING – DAY 19

➤ When you go apart to be alone for prayer, put from your mind everything you have been doing or are planning to do..

➤ Keep only the simple awareness that *He is as He is*. Let Him be thus, I pray you, and force Him not to be otherwise. Search into Him no further, but **rest in this faith as on solid ground**.

➤ This awareness, stripped of ideas and deliberately bound and **anchored in faith***, shall leave your love and affection in emptiness except for a naked thought and blind feeling of your own being.

➤ Let that quiet darkness be your whole mind and **like a mirror** to you.

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➤ “ All His acts, all His creations
of nature and of grace,
He keeps them **as in a mirror**
in the purity of His Spirit.”

Jesus to Conchita

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➤ **In this contemplative work, think of yourself and of Him in the same way:...** In this way your thought will not be fragmented or scattered, but **unified in Him Who is All**.

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➤ **“ You must live in this essential Unity ...
bringing together your spiritual life
in one only Love: Him;
in one only Will: His.”**

Jesus to Conchita

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➤ Look up joyfully, then, and say to your Lord, in words or desire: **That which I am, I offer to You, O Lord, for You are it entirely.**

EVENING - DAY 19

➤ “Any prayer that is not, from time to time, **transformed in wonder** at the mysteries has not yet reached consummation. Nor can prayer consisting of stirrings last continuously if it has not tasted at all of the wonder which comes with the joy of God. **Continuous prayer is wonder at God**: that is the sum of our message.”

John the Elder

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➤ **“There are planes of being beyond this, countries dark to the intellect, deeps into which only the very greatest contemplatives have looked.”**

E. Underhill

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➤ “No matter how full of wonder, or how empty and barren the moment seems, it is always sufficient ... it contains everything that is needed to *lovingly* begin the next moment.”

Anonymous

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➤ **“Spiritual achievement costs much**, though never as much as it is worth. It means at the very least the painful development and persevering, steady exercise of a faculty that most of us have allowed to get slack. **It means an inward if not an outward asceticism, a virtual if not actual mysticism.**”

E. Underhill

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➤ **“By His divine, breath-like *spiration*, the Holy Spirit makes the beloved capable of breathing in the Son, and the Son in the Father, which activity is the Holy Spirit Himself.**

➤ **“The soul united and transformed in God breathes-out in God, to God, the very divine *spiration* which God ... breathes-out, in Himself, to the beloved.”**

John of the Cross

MORNING – DAY 20

CONSECRATION & TRANSFORMATION

➤ “ **Once we have entered the supernatural region, it is God alone who is the mover, the doer of all that is done...**

➤ “ His consecrating action is mostly unperceived by us. **His invisible rays beat upon, penetrate, and transform the soul...**

➤ “ The full power of **those transforming rays** could not be endured by us at all, if it rose to the level of consciousness and was felt by sensitive nature...

➤ “ All that is needed for His purpose of consecration is the impact of the Eternal Charity **in its transforming power upon the surrendered soul...**

➤ “ **Various and disconcerting disciplines, frustrations, sufferings, confusions of mind and failures of body, fear, weariness, loss of prayer bring the surrendered soul nearer to Him by *the only safe path.***”

Evelyn Underhill

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THE SURRENDERED SOUL

➤ “ I have to be still ... to wait in darkness, and feel it as holy. I have to be glad that my reason is confounded, and that my faculties have no locus of action and cannot be exerted to alter my state

➤ “ I have to accept this strange *scotoma* of the senses and reason, not with anger, not with terror, but with *gratitude and gladness.*”

Oliver Sacks, M.D.

EVENING – DAY 20

➤ **Jesus told Conchita:** “ It is **the grace of incarnating Me**, of living and growing in your soul, never to leave it, to possess you and to be possessed by you **as one and the same substance***, without obviously you giving Me life: rather, it is I who communicate to your soul in a com-penetration which cannot be comprehended: It is the grace of graces.”

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➤ **“At the center of our being is a point of nothingness ... untouched by sin and illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, ... inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will.”**

Thomas Merton

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➤ **“ Abandonment is a steel file, and the endurance of darkness leads to great light.”**

John of the Cross

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➤ **“ I relinquish** all the powers I normally command, above all, *the sense and affect of activity*. This, [even after these many years], is humiliating, a mortification of my *self* – the active, masculine, ordering *self*.

➤ **“ I allow, welcome** this abdication of activity. In the darkness, neither charts, nor the chart-making mind are of service. My state, in this Dark Night, is **intense and absolute and essential passivity**, in which action – **any action** – would be useless and distraction.

➤ **“ The watchword is, ‘Be patient ... Endure ... Wait ... Be still ... Do nothing ... Don’t think!’ ”**

Oliver Sacks, M.D.

MORNING – DAY 21

➤ **Nothing I can do, and no exercise of my physical or spiritual faculties can bring me so near to God and so far from the world, as this naked, quiet awareness of my blind being and my joyful gift of it to God.**

➤ **Keep yourself recollected and poised in the deep center of your spirit.**

➤ **Offer Him your very Self in simple wholeness.**

P.C. – Chapter 3

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➤ **Jesus told Blessed Dina:** “Apart from the eternal and perfect happiness that I enjoy in My Father and in Myself, **My happiness is to reproduce Myself in the souls that I have created out of love.**

➤ “ The more a soul allows Me to **reproduce Myself faithfully** in her, the more joy and contentment I find. The greatest joy a soul can give Me is to allow Me to raise her up to My Divinity.

➤ “ **Yes ... I take immense pleasure in transforming a soul into Myself,** in deifying it, in absorbing it wholly into the Divinity.”

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➤ “ Prayer, in the sense of union with God, is the most crucifying thing there is. **One must do it for God’s sake; but one will not get any satisfaction out of it ... in the sense of** feeling, ‘I am good at prayer. I have an infallible method.’

➤ “ That would be disastrous, since what we want to learn is precisely our own weakness, powerlessness, unworthiness. Nor ought one to expect ‘a sense of the reality of the supernatural’ of which I speak. And one should wish for no prayer, except the prayer that God gives us --- **probably very distracted and unsatisfactory in every way.**”

Dom John Chapman

EVENING – DAY 21

➤ **Jesus told Dina:** “My joy, in which I am allowing you a share, can be found in **aridity**, in **anguish**, and in **darkness**, because it is the joy of perfect union with My divine will, it is the joy of My love, the joy of My Heart.”

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➤ **A little point of nothingness and absolute poverty is the pure Glory of God in us.**

➤ **It is, so to speak, *His Name written in us ... as our poverty ... indigence ... dependence ... sonship.***

➤ **It is like pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of Heaven.**

Thomas Merton

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➤ **“A soul depends on grace in proportion to its desire for greater perfection.”**

Lawrence of the Resurrection

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➤ **“He who abides always in a *Present Now*, in him does God beget His Son ... without ceasing.”**

Meister Eckhart

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The Resurrection Conspiracy

“The company of those who
plant seeds of hope in
dark times of grief or oppression,
going-about
the living of these years until,
no one knows quite how,
the tender Easter-shoots appear.”

Robert Raines