

## Letter to a first-time User of “Between the Clouds”

Hello, Anne:

I am very pleased to receive your communication. I feel moved to respond to the following portion of your letter:

**“Everything I have read so far looks so rich, I don't know how I will go about teaching during the day with any focus but on morning prayer.”**

Your words trigger my own recall of the following *navigational coordinates*:

- 1) “The gaps – *in a sense, more so than the formal time of “contemplation”* - are the thing. The gaps are the spirit’s one home. Stalk the gaps!” (see Vespers / Day 28);
- 2) You may wish to jump-ahead / read the 11 entries on Dark Nights (they begin, I believe, at *Day 15*). This should help you better understand just what you are encountering / suffering-through as you persevere;
- 3) **It is in no way intended that one would “meditate” on the selections during the time of *Consecrated Silence*.** Remember: *God is only known by a process of unknowing*, a “negative knowledge”. These selections (rich-as / the treasure-that they are) must not negate that vital and laborious journey over a very dark path to ... *The Unknowing*;
- 4) “The *hinge* ...is fidelity and regularity of commitment ...”, not keeping a scorebook of “good” and “bad” meditations (see Day 28 / Lauds)

<<>>

You write that, “it all looks so rich”.

By way of counter-point ...: All that you will find in the Breviary is meant to be *instructional and directional* (if a distinction can be made between those two concepts).

**“Instructional”**: there are writings that will serve as a virtual “lamp unto your feet”. You have set out on the longest journey in the world ...[the journey] from “head” to the *deep, solitary core of your being*.

**“Directional”**: the thrust of many writings (especially those from “Cloud of Unknowing”) are there to assist in a forward movement of the heart ... “driven only by your love for God.”

**(Personal aside**: I have come to understand that Cloud of Unknowing’s oft-mentioned “gentle stirring of love” must begin – as a smoky fanning of kindling wood, complete with the inner discomfort that can bring to the eyes of the spirit !! – [begin] with *one’s first waking moment: one ought not wait for a Time of Quiet to stir that love!*)

<<>>

Finally, Anne, to sum up: “Between the Clouds” is designed to be an **affirmation** of what God (the chief worker in this calling, this labor) is asking of you / doing with you. “Clouds” was, from the outset, intended to be a virtual Spiritual Director (on my assumption that most Contemplative’s are not able to find a proper / an understanding Spiritual Director).