

Perhaps you are thinking: “Tell me, please, is there **one sign**, or more, **to help me test the meaning of this growing desire I feel for contemplative prayer**, and this delightful enthusiasm, which seizes me whenever I hear or read of it?” I will answer you as best I can.

You will notice, first of all, that I am giving you **two kinds of evidence** for discerning whether or not God is calling you, spiritually, to contemplation. **They must occur together**, both indicating the same thing, **before you may rely on them without fear of error**.

The **Interior Sign** is that growing desire for contemplation constantly intruding in your daily devotions. And there is this much I can tell you about that desire: it is a blind longing of the spirit, and yet there comes with it, and lingers after it, a kind of spiritual sight, which both renews the desire and increases it.

The **Exterior Sign** manifests itself as **a certain joyful enthusiasm, welling up within you, whenever you hear or read about contemplation**. I call it *exterior*, because it originates outside you and enters your mind through the windows of your bodily senses (your eyes and ears).when you read. As for the discernment of the sign, see if that joyful enthusiasm persists, remaining with you when you have left your reading. If it disappears immediately or soon after, and does not pursue you in all else you do, know that it is not a special touch of grace. **If it is not with you when you go to sleep and wake up**, and if it does not go before you, **constantly intruding in all you do, and kindling and capturing your desire ... it is not God’s call to a more intense life of grace**, beyond what I call the common door and entry for all Christians

Privy Counseling – Chapter 18

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**“God’s call to a more intense life of grace...”**

**“What John of the Cross articulates in his concept of the Dark Night of the Soul are ... inner dynamics**. Thus, if one undergoes a true transformation in her life of prayer, her life of love and service will be similarly transformed. The dynamics are the same. **A Dark Night is about the transformation of prayer, love, and service to others**, albeit John articulates it explicitly only as it pertains to prayer.”

Ron Rohlheiser, O.M.I.

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Our Lord feeds and strengthens your spirit by the excellence, frequency, and deepening of those favors sometimes accompanying Grace so that you may perseveringly live in his love and service. But **He works in two ways**. **On the one hand**, you learn patience in their absence and **on the other**, you grow strong with the life giving, loving food they provided in their coming.

Moreover, in this **time of suffering your love becomes both chaste and perfect**. **It is then that you will see your God and your love, and being made spiritually one with His love, nakedly experience Him at the sovereign point of your spirit**. Here, utterly despoiled of Self and clothed in nothing but Him, you will experience Him, as He really is, stripped of all the trappings of sensible delights, though these be the sweetest and most sublime pleasures possible on earth. **This experience will be blind, and it must be in this life**; yet with the purity of an undivided heart ... you will perceive and feel that it is un-mistakenly He, as He really is.

Finally, the mind, which sees and experiences God as He is in His naked reality, is no more separate from Him than He is from His own being. For just as God is one with His being because they are one in nature, so **the spirit, which sees and experiences Him, is one with Him whom it sees and experiences, because they have become one in grace**.

Privy Counseling – Chapter 21

## LAUDS

“**What is the sphere where spiritual prayer is prayed?** Spiritual prayer is a kind of prayer that is prayed with the inner impulses of the soul. **There the mind can see the birth of things past, present, and future, as well as the very ordering of the worlds.** At this staging point, the fatigue resulting from the vehemence of ascetic labors is altered and finds an end. **Body and soul cooperate with a single will of mutual consent.** Only a few obtain to this, while one in a thousand proceed beyond it.

“Just as the air never ceases to provide *everything that is and moves* with breath to inhale, so too, **when the Holy Spirit is operating in the mind’s movements, these never cease from prayer,** just as the Apostle said: ‘*He who feels out hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, for the Spirit prays on behalf of the saints in accordance with God’s will*’ (Romans 8: 27).”

Joseph the Visionary

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**Consecrated silence is an event that starts and ends in God.**

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“**We have to know how to bring The Fathers into critical relationship with later writers.**”

The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Desert Fathers were not monolithic. Half lived in the deserts of Egypt and half in the deserts of Syria. **The Egyptian Fathers** were described as “men intoxicated with God.” Seeing themselves as *athletes of God*, they submitted to fasting and vigils through the night. These *Fathers* had come out of a culture where Platonism and Stoicism\* were philosophical carriers to articulate a form of Christian life.

•Plato taught that we could separate the mind from the body. Stoics, on the other hand, counseled a [self-imposed] harsh discipline to bring the body under control.

**The Syrian Fathers**, drawing from their Semitic roots / sense of God’s immanence, emphasized consciousness of *The Presence of Jesus* dwelling within the heart (as the deepest level of awareness where one encounters God). St. Theophan the Recluse expressed all Semitic understanding of Contemplation in this manner:

**“Stand with mind in the in the heart, with the faith that God is also there, but *how* He is there ... do not speculate.”**

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## VESPERS

“**Those** who are able to **shut themselves up** in this way, within this little *Heaven of the soul*, wherein dwells the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and **who have formed the habit of looking at nothing and staying in no place which will distract these outward senses, may be sure that** they are walking on an excellent road, and will come without fail to drink of the water of the fountain, for ... **they will journey a long way in a short time.**”

Teresa of Avila

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**Contemplation is:**

- Idea-less knowing, that is beyond any ordinary human mode.
- **A secret inflow of God ... a ray of darkness ... a bright ray of His sacred wisdom.**
- A divine and dark spiritual light ....

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“To grow in a deep encounter with God as He truly is in Himself ... we must ‘un-know’... in a manner beyond finite categories.”

John of the Cross

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## COMPLINE

“**You who sleep in my breast ... are not met with words**, but in the emergence of life within life and of wisdom within wisdom. **You are found in** communion: dispossession within dispossession; dispassion within dispassion; **emptiness within emptiness**; freedom within freedom.”

Thomas Merton

Yet, you may say: “Rest? What can he possibly be talking about? **All I feel is toil and pain**, not rest. When I try to follow his advice, **suffering and struggle beset me on every side**. On the one hand, my faculties hound me to give up this work, and I will not; on the other, I long to lose the experience of myself and experience only God, and I cannot. **Battle and pain assail me everywhere**. How can you talk of rest? If this is rest, I think it is a rather odd kind of rest.”

My answer is simple. **You find this work painful because you are not yet accustomed to it**. Were you accustomed to it, and did you realize its value, you would not willingly give it up for all the material joys and rest in the world.

Yes, I know, it is painful and toilsome. Still, [this is] high-quality *rest*, because **your spirit does rest in a freedom from doubt and anxiety about what it must do**; and because, during the actual time of prayer, it is secure in the knowledge that it will not greatly err.

And so, **persevere in it with humility and great desire**, for it is a work that begins here on earth, but will go on without end into eternity. I pray that the all-powerful Jesus may bring you, and *all* those He has redeemed by His Precious Blood, to this glory. Amen.

Book of Privy Counseling – Chapter 24

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LAUDS

“During the time of prayer, **the soul resembles a ship positioned in the middle of the sea**. **The mind is like the steersman in charge of the boat**. Impulses convey the boat like the winds.

“**Of impulses that are aroused in the soul during the time of prayer, not all are suitable for the ship’s course**, enabling it without any cause for fear to reach harbor, safe from the waves. **Suitable impulses** stirred up in the soul during prayer are **akin to the gentle breezes** which convey the ship of the soul over waves to a harbor that is totally restful.

“**Other impulses** consist in the **hidden spiritual knowledge** concealed in the natural created world, wonderful insights arising from the contemplation of Providence .... Every time they are revealed to the mind during prayer, **these insights** give a sweet taste to the mind’s palate, like a honeycomb, and they **kindle all the faculties of both soul and body with their warmth**.”

Joseph the Visionary

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**If you wish to keep growing, you must  
nourish - in your heart – the lively longing for God.**

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“The so-called journey itself is a psychological and spiritual experience: the purging and separation of the self, its movement to higher levels of consciousness, its unification with that more spiritual but normally unconscious self which is in touch with the transcendental order, and its gradual or abrupt entrance into union with the Real.

“Sometimes it seems to the self that this performance is a retreat inwards to that "ground of the soul" where, as St. Teresa says, "His Majesty awaits us"; sometimes a going forth from the Conditioned to the Unconditioned, a "supernatural flight“. Both are but images under which the self conceives the process of attaining conscious union with that God who is "at once immanent and transcendent in relation to the Soul which shares His life."

Evelyn Underhill

VESPERS

- “The soul is so satisfied with God that, as long as the recollection lasts, the quiet and calm are not lost, since **the will is united with God even though the two faculties [intellect and memory] are distracted**; in fact, little by little the will brings the intellect and the memory back to recollection. **Even though the will may not be totally absorbed ...** it is so well occupied, without knowing how, that **no matter what efforts the other two faculties make, they cannot take away its contentment and joy.**”
- “There is a **deep-down** enjoyment and **awareness of God’s indwelling** that is **habitual**, that is **practically continuous** and pervading all else that goes on in a typical day.”
- “**Nothing is done without God’s innermost co-action ...** all of this person’s first inclinations (fears, joy, desires etc.) are directed to the Lord Who originates them.”
- “**Here one does what is to be done even in difficult or excruciating circumstances.** The soul experiences in God an awesome power and strength which derives from the intimate bond with God.”
- “**The soul is conscious at this time that the torrent of God’s Spirit is besieging and taking possession of her** so forcibly that all the rivers of the world seem to have flooded in upon her and to be assailing her. She feels that all the actions and passions in which she was formerly occupied are drowned therein.”

Teresa of Avila –  
 Selections from Writings on  
*The Transforming Summit*  
*Fire Within*: pp. 180 - 195



**In the end, it all comes down  
 to the *infinite binding*  
 without which  
 one cannot begin  
 to talk of  
*freedom.***



COMPLINE

Contemplative prayer is a way of not thinking.

It moves into the mystery that is too deep for words.

Prayer must lead us beyond time, words and ideas  
 to a more spacious place, where God has a chance to get in.

The *Prayer of Words* is an attempt to express, to ourselves,  
 our dependence on the Great Mystery.

The *Prayer of Silence* is not so much to express,  
 but to *experience ...* that dependence.

Richard Rohr; Everything Belongs /  
*With Permission*

As the Scriptures tell the story, **there were three men most involved with the Ark**: Moses, Bezaleel, and Aaron. On the mountain, Moses learned from God how it was to be constructed. Using the design Moses had received from God, Bezaleel fashioned it in the valley. But Aaron had care of it in the Temple, seeing and touching it as often as he liked.

These three men illustrate the three ways that grace may draw us to contemplation. **Sometimes, like Moses, we must climb the mountain and toil with only the help of grace before reaching contemplation** and then, like him, relish its fruits, but rarely. (Yet in this context, I want to make clear that God’s self-revelation to Moses remained a gift and not the reward of his toil.)

**Then again**, our progress in contemplation may be by way of our own spiritual insight, helped by grace; then **we are like Bezaleel, who could not behold the Ark until he had worked to fashion it by his own efforts**, though helped by the design given to Moses on the mountain.

**And then** there are times when grace draws us through the instrumentality of another’s words. In this **we are like Aaron, who was entrusted with keeping of the Ark** which Bezaleel, by the skill of his hands, had fashioned and prepared.

Cloud of Unknowing – Chapter 73

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### From The Nights to Transforming Union

**“Oh, if souls would only want to listen to My Voice when I am speaking in the depths of their hearts, they would reach the peak of holiness in a short time.”** (Jesus to Faustina)

Luis Martinez was born in Mexico in the year 1881. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1904. By 1913, on the eve of a full-scale persecution of the Church in Mexico, he assumed direction of the Major Seminary in his Archdiocese.

Two years later (February, 1915), a soul quite advanced in the mystical life asked Fr. Martinez for spiritual direction. At the time, in his own words, he had read **“nothing more about mysticism than the poems of St. John of the Cross, and those from the literary point of view.”** A year later (having spent much of that intervening year reading the works of the greatest mystics), he agreed to take charge of this soul.

Fr. Martinez practiced what he learned. On September 21, **1916**, Jesus assured him that he would receive the grace of transforming union. Some two weeks later (October 7), he made an act of total abandonment to the Divine Will. This was followed by a long period {ten years} of dryness and aridity with a dominant desolation ... God combining (*as he is accustomed to do at times*) both nights, that of the senses and that of the spirit.

On April 18, 1926, all public worship ceased throughout Mexico. Many priests were tortured or murdered. On March 25, **1927**, while hiding in a garden next to the house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, [now] Bishop Martinez received the Gift of Transforming Union ... *within a span of only 11 years from first having considered the [demanding] call to Contemplation..*

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### LAUDS

Prayer is turning the mind and thoughts toward God. To pray means to stand before God with the mind, mentally to gaze unswervingly at Him, to *converse with Him* in reverent fear and hope. ... **The principal thing is to stand with the mind in the heart before God and to go on standing before Him unceasingly day and night, until the end of life.** ... Behave as you wish, so long as you learn to stand before God with the mind in the heart, for **in this lies the essence of the matter.**

St. Theophan

“There is an un-lost soul-center in the depths of one’s being which has never gone out from God. There is ... a central substance which belongs in common with God and with us. As the unborn child is attached at a certain point to its mother, the mark of which remains forever afterwards, so ... this inmost soul-center ... is like a tugging natal cord of life connecting us with our Source.”

Rufus M. Jones

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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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Jesus told Sister Faustina: “I demand of you a perfect and whole burnt offering; an offering of your will. No other sacrifice can compare with this one. ... Know that when you mortify your self-will, then Mine reigns within you.”

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- At the highest point of fidelity to “Prayer of the Lips”, one cries out for wordless prayer, for a *merging* of one’s own consciousness with that of God.
- Prayer of the Heart is a disciplined, an *acquired* ... **stilling of the mind:**

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

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VESPERS

“It is like the experience of two persons here on earth who love each other deeply, and understand each other well: even without words, just by a glance ... it seems ... they understand each other.

“When God wants our mind to cease operating in its ordinary human manner, He gives a delicate but loving luminosity in such manner that all we have to do is receive. Prayer grows, at His initiative, from our human manner to the divine manner. This does not mean that there is to be in the future no activity of the mind at all. ... Since God gave us our minds to be used in their own manner, they must be allowed to perform their office until God gives them a better one.

“The will calmly and wisely must understand that ... our efforts are like the careless use of large pieces of wood, which [careless use] smothers this little spark.”

Teresa of Avila

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COMPLINE

Sacred Words lend to Silence its needed Contour and Form:

- The Gamekeeper puts a Carp in the pond with a stone in the center, and another Carp (of equal size) in a pond with no stone in the center.
- In the pond with a stone, the Carp swims around the marker repeatedly ... in even, ordered circles. It grows fat and healthy. (Its’ movement reveals a definite purpose and pattern.) The Carp in the other pond swims in erratic circles, ever meeting resistance. It becomes emaciated; it shrinks.
- The repetition of Scriptures which echo one’s personal testimony of God’s Love, Faithfulness, Providence ... becomes a solid stone, security, in the midst of Silence’ swirling pond.

Anonymous

Day	Extended ... Matins / Lauds	“1/2 Wk” Vespers / Compline
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Four</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jesus told Conchita:</b></p> <p>“You must live in this essential Unity ... in one only Love; in one only Will. “</p> <p>The chief act of The Will is <b>consent to the inflow of grace</b> ... an attitude of waiting for the Ultimate Mystery.</p>	<p>The next time you feel like God can't use you, just remember ...</p> <p><b>Abraham</b> was too old, <b>Isaac</b> was a daydreamer, <b>Jacob</b> was a liar, <b>Leah</b> was ugly, <b>Joseph</b> was abused, <b>Moses</b> had a stuttering problem, <b>Gideon</b> was afraid, <b>Sampson</b> had long hair and was a womanizer, <b>Rahab</b> was a prostitute, <b>Jeremiah</b> and <b>Timothy</b> were too young, <b>David</b> had an affair and was a murderer, <b>Elijah</b> was suicidal, <b>Isaiah</b> preached naked, <b>Jonah</b> ran from God, <b>Naomi</b> was a widow, <b>Job</b> went bankrupt, <b>John the Baptist</b> ate bugs, <b>Peter</b> denied Christ, <b>The Disciples</b> fell asleep while praying, <b>Martha</b> worried about everything, The <b>Samaritan woman</b> was divorced, more than once, <b>Zaccheus</b> was too small, <b>Paul</b> was too religious, <b>Timothy</b> had an ulcer...and <b>Lazarus</b> was dead!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Five</b></p>	<p>“To pass beyond the superficial levels of our own rationally controlled consciousness</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>in order to enter the innermost core of our being,</i></p> <p>great discipline, great suffering, tribulations and</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>a living faith vision of the present, loving God</b></p> <p>... are required.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“There is an <b>un-lost soul-center in the depths of one's being which has never gone out from God.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">There is a <b>central substance which belongs in common with God and with us.</b></p> <p>This inmost soul-center... is like a tugging natal cord of life connecting us with our Source.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Six</b></p>	<p>“But when, after so many years, we look back on our life, then we don't really know in the end what all we have failed to do, what tasks we passed by in guilty blindness and left undone, tasks that we might have addressed only if we had an entirely different attitude with which to master the deeds and suffering of our days. How much <i>time that could have borne eternity</i> did we leave empty, what might all have come to be that didn't come to be?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Karl Rahner, S.J.)</p>	<p>Prayer, as it matures ... is a surrender of certain control, a liberation from <i>Self's</i> one-dimensional world.</p> <p>Prayer is voluntary loss of my Self-mastery illusion.</p> <p>Prayer is a surrender of <i>Self</i> to Him Who brought it into being.</p>