

MATINS - 15

Christ's Ascension ... you feel this physical ascension proves that you should – literally – direct your mind upward during prayer. Beyond the superior symbolic value of rising upward, **the direction of His movement is actually quite incidental to the spiritual reality.** For, in the realm of the Spirit, Heaven is as near up as it is down, behind as before, to left or to right.

- **The access to Heaven is through desire.**
- **The path to Heaven is measured by desire and not by miles.**
- **Love and desire constitute the life of the Spirit.**

Does this make any more sense to you? We need not strain our spirit in all directions to reach Heaven, for ... **we dwell there already through love and desire.**

Cloud of Unknowing – Chapter 60

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“For, where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.”

Jesus.

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“This is the Christ who has 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.

Thus, even if we drink a cup of soup or walk down the street, it is Christ living and acting in us, **transforming the world from within.** This transformation appears in the guise of ordinary things--in the guise of our seemingly insignificant daily routine.”

Thomas Keating

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

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LAUDS

“The offspring of pure prayer that is swallowed up by the Spirit is ... *gift.* No longer does the mind actually pray, but there is a *gaze of wonder* as the inaccessible things which do not belong to the world of mortal beings, and the mind is still, not having knowledge of anything here. This is *the unknowing* of which it is said, ‘**Blessed is the person who has reached the unknowing during prayer, which cannot be surpassed**’, as Evagrius said.”

Isaac of Nineveh.

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• Whenever you feel drawn by grace to the contemplative work, and are determined to do it, **simply raise your heart toward God with a gentle stirring of love.**

• The contemplative life sits in peace, with the one thing necessary ... now **he is bound to God spiritually, in a communion of love and desire.**

• In this work, the perfect Artisan does not seek personal gain or exemption from suffering. **He desires only God and Him alone.** He is so fascinated by the God he loves, and so concerned that His will be done on earth, that he neither notices nor cares about his own ease or anxiety.

• Anyone who really desires to be a contemplative will know **the pain of arduous toil... the unrelenting struggle to banish the countless distracting thoughts that plague our minds** and to restrain them beneath a *Cloud of Forgetting.*

Cloud of Unknowing - Selections

MATINS – 16

- Your senses and your faculties will be frustrated for lack of something to dwell on, and they will chide you for doing nothing.
- See that nothing remains in your conscious mind save that of a **naked intent stretching out toward God.**
- 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.**
- **Prefer to be lost in this nowhere, wrestling with this blind nothingness.**
- Finally, there will come a moment when he experiences such peace and repose in that darkness that he thinks, “Surely it must be God Himself!” ... yet, to the last, it will remain a *Cloud of Unknowing* between him and his God.
- I say, “You have transcended yourself, becoming almost divine,” because you have gained by grace what is impossible to you by nature, for ...
**this union with God in spirit, in love,
and in oneness of desire
is the gift of grace.**

Cloud of Unknowing – *Selections*

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LAUDS

“Prayer deprived of contemplation is full of interruption,
and such prayer can hardly be prayed.

This 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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“The monk who knows that he is praying is not truly praying.
The monk who does not know that he is praying is truly praying.”

St. Anthony of the Desert

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“Master intricate speculations by refusing to feed them, to gnaw on them.” (Cloud)

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

Richard Rohr; Everything Belongs / *With Permission*

Do not try to withdraw it into yourself, or to put it simply, **I do not want you to be anywhere**; no, not outside, above, behind, or beside yourself.

But to this you say: “Where then, shall I be? By your reckoning, I am to be nowhere!” Exactly! In fact, you have expressed it rather well, for I would indeed have you be nowhere. Why? Because **nowhere, physically, is everywhere spiritually**. Understand this clearly: your spiritual work is not located in any particular place.

Your senses and faculties will be frustrated for lack of something to dwell-on and they will chide you for doing nothing. But never mind. **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** Whom no one can possess through knowledge. For myself, I prefer to **be lost in this nowhere, wrestling with this blind nothingness**, than to be like some great Lord traveling everywhere and enjoying the world as if he owned it.

Forget that kind of everywhere and the world’s all. It pales in richness beside **this blessed nothingness and nowhere**. Don’t worry if your faculties fail to grasp it. Actually ...the senses cannot reach it. It cannot be explained, only experienced.

Yet, to those who have newly encountered it, it will feel very dark and inscrutable indeed. ... **Our true, inner-Self appreciates it as a fullness beyond measure**. For in this darkness we experience an intuitive understanding of everything material and spiritual without giving special attention to anything in particular.

Cloud of Unknowing – Chapter 68

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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. That **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

* Compare: “My happiness is to reproduce Myself in the souls that I have created out of love. ... **Yes, I take immense pleasure in transforming a soul into Myself!**” (Jesus to Blessed Dina)
For similar Locutions of Jesus to Mystics, see Day’s: **5A / 7B / 12B / 20B / 21A / 28B / 31B**

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LAUDS

“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 persons **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.”

MATINS - 18

And so, **keep on working in this nothingness which is nowhere**, and do not try to involve your body's senses or their proper objects. I repeat, they are not suited to this work.

Now, as you know, quality and quantity are not properties belonging to God or to anything spiritual. Therefore, do not try to use your interior or exterior senses to grasp the spiritual. What I am trying to say is that **man knows the things of the spirit more by what they are not than by what they are**. When, in reading or conversation, we come upon things that our natural faculties cannot fathom, we may be sure that these are spiritual realities.

Our spiritual faculties, on the other hand, are *equally limited in relation to the knowledge of God as He is in Himself*. For however much a man may know about every created spiritual thing, his intellect will never be able to comprehend the uncreated spiritual truth, which is God. But ... **there is a negative knowledge which does understand God**. It proceeds by asserting everything it knows: *This is not God*, until, finally, he comes to a point where knowledge is exhausted. This is the approach of St. Denis, who said,

“The most divine knowledge of God is that which is known by not knowing.”

Cloud of Unknowing - 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 Joshua Heschel

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LAUDS

“Intensity of stirrings in prayer is not an exalted part of pure prayer. These things belong not to the highest, but only to the intermediate stages. *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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The brothers asked **Abba Agathon**: “Father, which of the virtues of our way of life demands the greatest effort?”

Agathon said to him: “Forgive me, but **there is no effort comparable to prayer to God**. In fact, whenever you want to pray, hostile demons try to interrupt you. Of course, they know that nothing but prayer to God entangles them. Certainly, when you undertake any other good work, and persevere in it, you obtain rest. But **prayer is a battle all the way to the last breath.**”

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