

0. Everything Belongs: an Unretreat

Leader: Let us worship Christ, our light and our salvation.

People: He is the light of the world.

Leader: All of you who live in darkness, come.

All of you who long for a Rescuer, come.

All of you who would praise the King, come.

All of you who would worship the Lord, come.

People: We come with joy to meet the Lord. Shine in our hearts, dear Jesus.

Leader: Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you. Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.

People: Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your church, gathered today.

Lectio Divina

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:7-11, NIV)

An Unretreat

- Like a retreat, but spread out—a few minutes a day
- “In a very secret and quiet place, in the deep silence of the night, with face upturned toward heaven” (Hugh of Balma)
- 7 or 8 biweekly meetings before church, 9 am, starting February 11
- Web page: life.ccel.org/everything-belongs
- Fellowship. Introductions

God’s promises

1. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. (John 14:17)
2. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. (14:26)
3. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them. (14:22)
4. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (15:11)
5. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. (17:3)

Spiritual formation

What is spiritual formation?

How does spiritual formation happen?

- According to Rohr, primarily through suffering and prayer
- Prayer: vocal and mental
- Mental prayer: affective meditation and contemplation
- Contemplative prayer: acquired and infused
- Meditation, self-knowledge, self-giving, watching, welcoming, extension, contemplation, service

Starting at the beginning: Affective meditation

- Carve out a regular time each day for affective meditation and prayer
- Close the door to your room. Leave distractions such as electronic devices in another room
- Treat to-do lists, fears, desires, thoughts of other people as temptations. Attend to God and your own heart
- Read slowly, 1-2 pages a day
- Ponder: is it true? Is it beautiful? Do I live this way? Should I?
- When you find something that is beautiful, that attracts your heart, you stop reading and ponder it
- The book gives you topics to ponder, calls you back from distraction, so that you can get to know yourself, so that you can give God your loving attention

What is your spirit?

The traditional theology of the Greek Fathers devised three terms for three aspects of [a person's] one spirit.

- That which is unconscious and below reason was the *anima* or *psyche*, the “animal” soul, the realm of instinct and emotion, the realm of automatism in which [one] functions as a psychophysical organism
- The reason, the enlightened, conscious, active principle, the *animus* or *nous* [mind]
- There is an even higher principle ... in which both the others are joined and transcend themselves in union with God, [which] is the *spiritus*, or *pneuma*. This higher principle is ... [a person] united, vivified, and raised above [nature] and inspired by God

The “spiritual life” is then the perfectly balanced life in which the body with its passions and instincts, the mind with its reasoning and its obedience to principle, and the spirit with its passive illumination by the Light and Love of God form one complete [person] who is in God and with God and from God and for God. One [person] in whom God is all in all. One [person] in whom God carries out his own will without obstacle. (Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*)

Re-integration of head and heart

1. “Because it is not what you are nor what you have been that God looks at with his merciful eyes, but what you desire to be” (Cloud of Unknowing)
2. “The whole life of good Christians is nothing else but holy desires” (Augustine)
3. There is a knowledge that is called love or charity, because, according to Gregory the Great, love itself is knowledge of him in whom it is directed, because in proportion as we love, to that extent we know. (Le Clercq)
4. What is more congenitally appropriate and serviceable for human nature than to love the Good? So the devout soul who has a true feeling for the incomparable beauty and splendor of the Good will be set on fire with its heavenly love and say: My soul is thirsting for the strong and living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of the living God? (St Bruno)
5. Bernard’s identifies four degrees of love. First, one sees that he loves himself for his own sake. And when he sees that he cannot subsist of himself he begins to seek God by faith as necessary to him, and to love him. So secondly he comes to love God, but for his own and not for God’s sake. But when he begins out of necessity to cultivate his God and frequent his company by reading, meditation and prayer and by obedience, then God gradually and sensibly becomes known to him. Having tasted how sweet the Lord is, he ascends to the third degree, where he loves God for God’s sake, rather than his own. And there he stays; for no one can say how perfectly anyone achieves the fourth grade in this life—loving God for his sake alone. For in some marvelous way he forgets himself, falls away from himself and clings to God, becoming one in spirit with him. (Bernard, *On Loving God*)

What is contemplative prayer?

1. There is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means. . . . And it may thus be described: . . . a real sense and

apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the Word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them. (Jonathan Edwards, "A divine and supernatural light," 1733)

2. In the strict sense of the word, contemplation is a supernatural love and knowledge of God, simple and obscure, infused by him into the summit of the soul, giving it a direct and experimental contact with him. (Merton, *What is Contemplation*)

3. There are two eyes of the soul, reason and love. By reason we may search out how mighty, how wise, and how good God is in his creatures, but not in himself. But whenever reason falls short, then it is love's pleasure to look alive and to learn to occupy itself. For by love we can find him, experience him, and reach him, as he is in himself. (Cloud author, "The assessment of inner stirrings")

4. Oh, when shall it be given to me, to the full, to be still and to see how sweet the Lord is? When shall I gather myself at the full, so that, for your love, I no longer feel myself, but only you, above all feeling and all human modes, and in a way that is hardly known to everyone? (*Imitation of Christ*)

5. If one could silence the clamorous appetites of the flesh, and hush one's perception of earth, the waters and air; if one could silence the vault of heaven; and could one's very soul be silent to itself, and by ceasing to think of itself, mount above the awareness of self; if one could silence all dreams and images which the mind can imagine; if one could hush all tongues, and signs and symbols that pass: for all these say to any who listen, "we did not make ourselves, but he made us who abides forever"; if after speaking thus, they were then to be silenced, after drawing one's attention to him who made them, and he were now to speak not through them but by himself, so that we might hear his Word, not through human tongue, nor through the voice of an angel, nor through a voice speaking out of a cloud, nor through any false appearance, but that we might hear instead without these things, himself in his very Being—himself whose presence we love in those things; that we might hear him now, with our spirit, as we reached out with our swift impulse of thought to that Eternal Wisdom which dwells, unmoved, beyond all things; if this movement continued on, and all other visions were to pass away as totally unequal; and this one vision were to ravish the beholder, immerse him and draw him into these inner joys, so that life might be better forever, like that fleeting moment of awareness we have longed for; would this not be "Enter into the joy of your Lord"? (Augustine, *Confessions*)

6. Contemplation is the perfection of love (Gerard Groote)

7. The fruit of this exercise is high spiritual wisdom, which is suddenly and without constraint belched forth by the spirit inwardly, within itself. It is without definition, the antithesis of illusion; it cannot be controlled by or become subject to the workings of the natural faculties. For the natural understanding, no matter how keen or sanctified it may be, is to be called, in comparison to this, mere foolishness, formed and devised in illusion; as far removed from the real truth seen in the light of the spiritual sun as is the dark light of the moon, shining through a mist of mid-winter's night, from the brightness of the sunlight at the height of a mid-summer day. (Cloud author, "A letter of private counsel")

8. There is no other way to the summit of unitive contemplation than the affective meditation on the suffering humanity of Christ . . . for among all the mind's exercises for the ascent of the spiritual intelligence, this is the most efficacious. (Thomas of St Victor)

Definitions from the *Philokalia*

Contemplation: the perception or vision of the intellect through which one obtains spiritual knowledge.

Intellect: the highest faculty in man, through which—provided it is purified—he knows God or the inner essences or principles of created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception. Unlike the reason, from which it must be carefully distinguished, the intellect does not function by formulating abstract concepts and then arguing on this basis to a conclusion reached through deductive reasoning, but it understands divine truth by means of immediate experience, intuition, or 'simple cognition.' The intellect dwells in the 'depths of the soul'; it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart. The intellect is the organ of contemplation, the 'eye of the heart.'

Reason: the discursive, conceptualizing, and logical faculty in man, the function of which is to draw conclusions or formulate concepts deriving from the data provided either by revelation or spiritual knowledge or by sense-observation. The knowledge of the reason is consequently of a lower order than spiritual knowledge and does not imply any direct apprehension or perception of the inner essences or principles of created beings, still less