

## Chapter 6. Return to the Sacred

*Leader:* Blessed are you, strong and faithful God, our light and our salvation; to you be glory and praise forever. In the beginning your Word summoned light, night withdrew, and the creation dawned. In the fullness of time, you created in your image humankind, the stewards of all creation. At the dawning of the new creation, you sent your son, the Word made flesh, the light of the world. As we rejoice in the gift of your presence among us, let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, your Spirit ever renew our lives, and your praise ever be on our lips.

*People:* Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

*Leader:* God of immeasurable power and grace, we thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, to be the light of the world. He lived a holy life and taught us to love the scripture and keep it. By his life, death, and resurrection Jesus fulfilled all that was spoken through the prophets, teaching us to live in love and faith, pursuing the good of all. Through Jesus Christ we have hope of new life and so we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

*People:* Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

*Leader:* Spirit of God, be near us, and draw us nearer to you. Bless us unto your service. May we share in the joy of Christ's abundant life. Filled with your grace and power, may we live as Christ taught us to pray:

*People:* Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

### Lectio

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. (John 15:9-17)

### Questions on Chapter 6

1. What is the chapter *about*? Were there any parts that struck you or affected you?
2. "Our religion is not pure detachment or pure attachment: it's a dance between the two" (p. 170). What does Rohr mean by detachment and attachment? Which does he favor? Reflect on these words in light of the title of the book, *Everything Belongs*.
3. "The third way is the way of wisdom. It's a lonely, perhaps narrow path, because almost everybody takes the other two ways: flight or fight. The usual path for liberals is to fight. 'Let's fix and change it.' But they too often become a mirror image of what they oppose" (172). What are the "three ways"? Where would you say COS' reaction to the HSR falls among these three ways?

### Meditation: The national league

#### What is contemplation?

Mystical contemplation is a *passive contemplation*; or, if you prefer it, a manifestly supernatural, infused, and passive contemplation, wherein God, who generally makes the soul feel His presence, becomes known in an ineffable manner, and is possessed by a loving union, which communicates to the soul repose and peace, and exerts an influence upon the senses. (Lehody O.C.R.)

#### Guidelines for contemplative prayer

1. You are not in charge of your prayer life, and you ought not try to be. You need to learn to allow yourself to be led by the Spirit. The Spirit will teach you all things. The Spirit will give you what you need.

2. Some people fear that they are “doing it wrong,” or that they ought to be doing something—but it’s difficult, or that they don’t know what they should be doing. That attitude is itself a problem. Relax. Do not fear. This is God’s work. It’s a gift. Whatever God gives you in prayer, or doesn’t give you, be grateful. Your job is to think about God; let him worry about you.
3. If you have heard that contemplation is primarily about achieving silence, forget that. Read Lehoucq’s definition again. It’s not turning off your brain or silencing your thoughts. You can’t do that anyway. It is God filling your spirit with love and light and life. “Be still and know.” Silencing your thoughts and calming your desires and fears helps make you able to love God and to receive and perceive God’s love, to taste and see, but it’s the tasting and the seeing that are infused contemplation.
4. You should not choose to try to pray contemplatively on your own, according to both John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila—if you *can* meditate, or ponder the life of Jesus and the things of God, you *should*. Only when you can no longer meditate or pray in the way you are used to is it possible that God is leading you into infused contemplation. This you should discuss with your spiritual director, if you can.
5. Basic steps: if anyone taught you contemplative techniques such as a prayer word or breath prayer or stilling the thoughts in your head, they were teaching you something good and useful, something on the road to infused contemplation, but they were not teaching you infused contemplation itself. For that, you must *ask* in faith and place yourself in a posture where you are able to receive, a posture where intentional reasoning is quiet, where the fears and desires of the world are for the moment forgotten, where you think nothing of yourself, where you are entirely surrendered to God. You turn your attention and your will toward God—you lift up your heart—that’s your part. God’s part, infused contemplation itself, is a gift of grace, of his body and blood, that you cannot gin up for yourself, that you cannot doubt is from God. It may make you aware of God’s presence, block distractions, fill your heart with love that wasn’t there before, suddenly reveal things to you, overflow into tears of joy or sorrow or devotion or awe or some other unnamed and indescribable emotion, overwhelm you, transform you, repay years of sorrow and suffering. It may initially be small, infrequent, of short duration, unclear, but even that is very valuable. It is the pearl of great price for which you would sell all.
6. If your heart is filled with love that wasn’t there before, lasting love, self-giving love, what you experienced can’t be a deception. Satan would never do such a thing.
7. Remember that contemplation is a gift, as is compassion, or wisdom, or devotion, or the ability to compute logarithms in your head. God gives different gifts to different members of the body, not according to what we deserve, but according to his eternal decree. You probably don’t have the gifts given to everyone else—you have your own unique gifts. If your gifts seem humble to you, so much the better for your soul. Be grateful for whatever it is that God chooses to give you. He knows best.
8. Humility is essential. Continually remember that you are nothing, you have nothing, you can do nothing, you desire nothing but to know and love and serve Jesus. Be grateful for whatever God gives and whenever he gives it.
9. Should you really ask for the gift of contemplation? You should greatly desire it, for it is your end. And to God a desire combined with faith is a request. A request called *hope*. And hope in God does not disappoint. God answers prayer. But don’t dictate terms or techniques or timelines.

### Rohr quotes

1. In talking about letting go of the ego’s needs and accomplishments and the need to be less in control, I could be interpreted as overemphasizing detachment. But when you look at Jesus on the cross, you see that Christianity is a religion of *attachment*. Jesus says to love and pay the price for it. The soul always attaches. It falls in love. . . . When we attach, when we fall in love, we risk pain and we will always suffer for it. The cross is not the price that Jesus *had* to pay to talk God into loving us. It is simply where love will lead us. (169).
2. We’d like to remain in an aloof, Zen-like detachment, but that’s not the Christian way. The Christian way is to attach. . . . We have to learn the great art of detachment, which is not aloof, but the purifying of attachment. Our religion is not pure detachment or pure attachment; it’s a dance between the two. . . . We move back and forth between desert and city. (170)
3. This tension or dance between attachment and detachment is often called the Third Way. . . . We stand in the middle, neither taking the world on from the power position nor denying it for fear of the pain it will bring. We hold the realization . . . *until it transforms us*, knowing that we are complicit in the evil and also complicit in the holiness. Once we stand in that third spacious way, neither fighting nor fleeing, we are in the place of grace out of which newness comes. . . . When our ego stops getting hooked, when it’s not our agenda, then we can hope ours is the agenda of God. We can stop building our kingdom and become *usable* in the kingdom of God. (171)