

28. November 2019

Answering Questions
“The Contemplation”
Part 2

Question: How can those who have a "normal" lifestyle become contemplative?

Yesterday we said that the contemplation is a gift of God, which we can prepare through our spiritual path so that the inner transformation can arrive through the Spirit of God.

Thus, a first answer to the question of how to practice contemplation in a normal living environment becomes clear.

Just like someone who goes to a convent specifically to lead a contemplative life, one is called to walk the path of holiness in the world. So the gaze must first be directed to what the path of holiness looks like under the given circumstances of life. This means living conditions that have already involved me and are no longer open to a special call to another way of life.

One must be able to distinguish well, because if the circumstances of life are not yet established, one is not yet married and has no family for example, then the Lord can call us on a way of life, which is oriented in its outward form entirely on the contemplation.

So if we live according to the will of God in the world, the given circumstances become the challenge to unite more and more deeply with the will of God and to fulfill the tasks given to us in his Spirit. The goal of a spiritual life is to be fully united with the will of God.

In order to better understand and fulfill the will of God in concrete situations, an intimate life of prayer is indispensable. The prayer leads us into the everlasting conversation with God, in the inner exchange with him. However, the prayer that prepares us for contemplation and later becomes a contemplative prayer should not be just occasional but should fulfill multiple dimensions.

a) It should be regular as far as possible.

b) We should be jealous to use all of our available time for inner contemplation with God. Without neglecting our duties, care must be taken that we do not spend time on unnecessary things, and therefore check our habits well, whether they do not bind us to the outside world, weaken our soul's attention to God. It makes a big difference whether, as part of my duty, I have to perform external activities or if I voluntarily lose myself in external activities.

This means that one has to practice a way of spiritual asceticism that watches over whether I actually open all that to God concretely, which is possible for me. This can certainly also be done in the world. Even under normal circumstances of life there is the possibility of showing God in this way that one prefers the nearness of his immediate presence to the secular distractions.

c) We now come to the methodology of St. Francis de Sales, who insists on the omnipresence of God and especially to draw attention to the presence of God in one's own heart. St. Benedict, the monk father of the West, also drew his monks to the point of becoming aware that they were living in the presence of God. This can also well be practiced in the world by mentally realizing that I am doing all my work as a service in the Kingdom of God, and in the presence of God. This is an important step in understanding my actions more in the light of God and not simply being taken up by the dynamics of the activities.

It is even deeper in the other dimension, namely to get to know the presence of God in one's own heart.

It is not difficult to understand that it will be easier to practice these steps of internalizing in a space of silence. You can quietly here, for example sacrifice a few minutes of sleep, to dwell early in the morning - when the morning is still virgin - just before the Lord and try to perceive God's presence in us. In this context, I refer to my reflections on the prayer of the heart (23 to 25 of february 2019), which is an excellent exercise to enter the heart, but also to install a "chamber in the heart" (15 of november 2019) to which one can withdraw in order to cultivate intimate exchange with God.

I would like to emphasize the moment of silence. This is invaluable, because any voluntary exposure to the noise of this world will make access to internalization enormously more difficult for us. You have to look for the silence and then you will notice how much we are surrounded by constant noise, which also involves a lot of unnecessary talking.

The topic continues!