

Contemplation in a world of diversion

God I am not trying to rule the roost, I don't want to be king of the mountain. I haven't meddled where I have no business or fantasized grandiose plans. I have kept my feet on the ground I've cultivated a quiet heart. Like a baby content in its mother's arms, my soul is a baby content. *Psalms 131*

Therefore I will not weary myself with seeking beyond what God wants me to know. Instead I will abide in peace with the understanding God has given me, and I will let this occupy my mind. If we are to see properly, we must pluck out of our eyes our own presumption. If we gaze too long at the sun, we go blind; in this manner, I think, does pride blind many of us who want to know too much. *Catherine of Genoa*

Now all our existence in this life is subject to change and recurrence. That alone does not make us secular. But life becomes secularized when it commits itself completely to the cycles of what appears to be new but is in fact the same thing over again. Secular life is a life of vain hopes, imprisoned in the illusion of newness and change, an illusion which brings us constantly back to the same old point, the contemplation of our own nothingness. Secular life is a life frantically dedicated to escape, through the novelty and variety, from the fear of death. But the more we cherish secular hopes the more they disappoint us. Secular society is committed to "Diversion", that is, to movement which has, before everything else the numbing function of quieting our anguish. *Thomas Merton The inner experience*

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him. For everything in the world- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. *1 John 2:15-17*

It is therefore a matter of great courage and spiritual energy to turn away from diversion and prepare to meet, face to face, that immediate experience of life which is so intolerable to the exterior man. This is only possible when, by a gift of God we are able to see ourselves not as a vacuum but as an infinite depth, not as emptiness but as fullness. This change of perspective is impossible as long as we continue to run away from ourselves. *Thomas Merton The inner experience*

The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. *Colossians 1:26-27*

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. *Romans 8:11*

The real purpose of prayer and meditation is the deepening of our awareness of our life in Christ. What is the relation of this to action? Simply this. He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give to others. He will communicate to them the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means and his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas. We are living through the greatest crisis in the history of man; this crisis is centered precisely in the country that has made a fetish out of action and has lost (or perhaps never had) the sense of contemplation. *Thomas Merton Contemplation in a world of action*

I am the vine you are the branches if a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing. *John 15:5*