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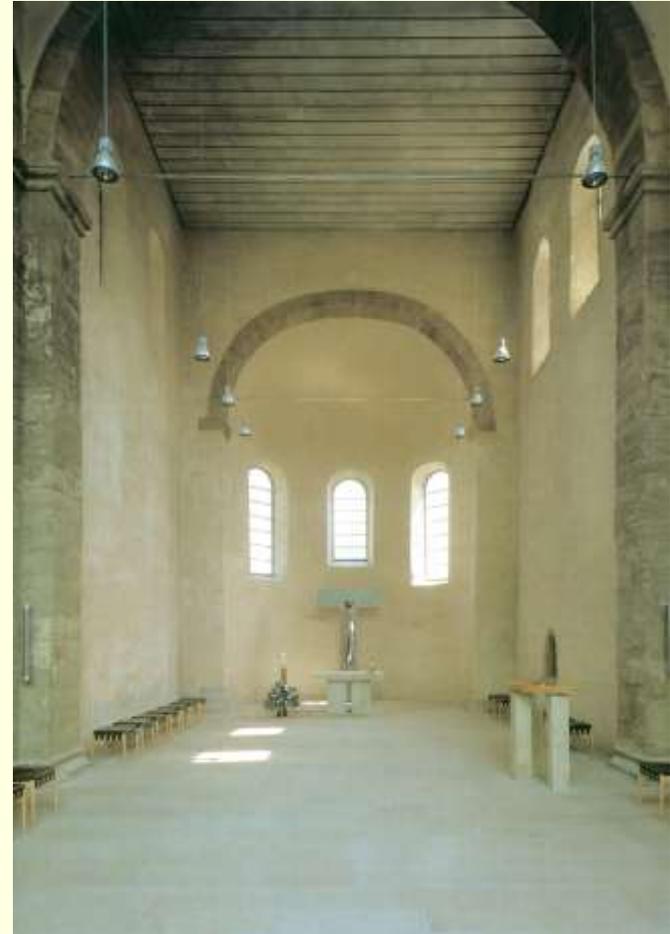
Deepening Centering Prayer

November 6 - 8, 2015

Hosted by Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

A Deeper Consent

- “We sit to understand and heal our lives and witness our stories”
- “On our journey there are many teachings. We have to ask ourselves, do we want variety or do we want depth?” Juan Llarena



The Contemplative Experience

“There is never ever a moment when we are separated from God.” Bill Sheehan

Donald Masters

The Contemplative Life of St. Francis of Assisi

Brother Sun Sister Moon

The Lepers

What is Perfect Joy?

Objectives for Today

- Renew and deepen our Centering Prayer Practice
- Learn new applications of the sacred symbols appropriate for the seasons of our lives as we grow in Divine Intimacy
- Open up new depths of meaning and new aspects of the practice in order to penetrate God's unconditional love.

Sources for Today's Presentation

- Thomas Keating and Contemplative Outreach
- David Frenette, The Path of Centering Prayer
- Louis Savery, The Divine Milieu Explained

Fr. Thomas's Teaching on the False Self System

- Mostly unconscious desires for affection, security and control
- Explains our “hidden” motivations
- Tied to our instincts for survival and not necessarily “bad”.
- We seek to understand the False Self and see how it helped us survive. We don't need it any longer

Breathing New Life Into Our Practice

- Returning to the basics with a fresh eye enriches the foundation of our practice.
- Renewing the practice by deepening the sacred word, breath or glance infuses us with more receptivity to the unseeable mystery of God
- Using a sacred symbol in a new way may better suit the season of life we are in.
- Clearly see that the joys and sufferings of ordinary life, even business, are part of the spiritual journey.

The “Heart and Soul” of Centering Prayer

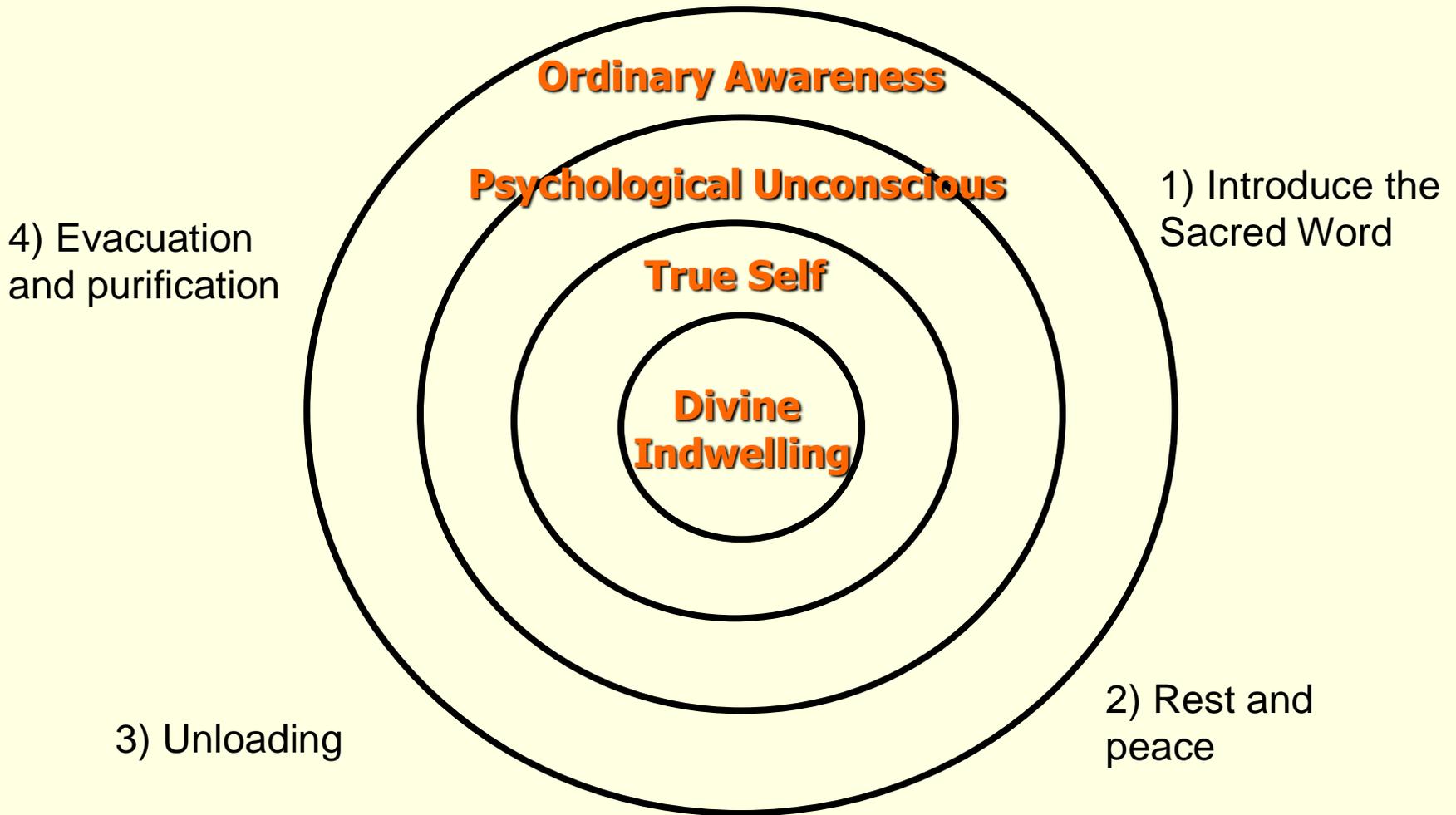
Is our *intention and consent* to

God’s *presence and action* within moving us
forward and transforming everything

“The awareness of the Divine Indwelling is a
quantum leap on the spiritual journey.”

Thomas Keating

The Levels of Awareness



Unity Consciousness

- Some modern theologians say that God not only created the world in the big bang, but that creation is an ongoing process
- “God is manifesting who he is at every moment, in and through us and through all creation.” Thomas Keating
- Creation is continually happening materially and in less visible ways
- Creation and the evolution of life are in God

Tielhard de Chardin--The Law that Gives Evolution its Direction:

Attraction

Connection

Complexity

Consciousness

Levels of Relationship

Thomas Keating

Tielhard de Chardin

Acquaintanceship

Attraction

Friendliness

Connection

Friendship

Complexity

Intimacy

Consciousness

The Law of all Progress

Moving forward includes passing through some stages of instability and it may take a very long time. Progress may be characterized by:

- Experiencing our Woundedness
- Physical and Psychological Discomfort
- Reverting to a more earlier state

The Four Consents: Father Keating's Theory of Human Growth and Development

Based on Erickson's
Stages of Growth

Essential for the Process of Human
Growth and Development

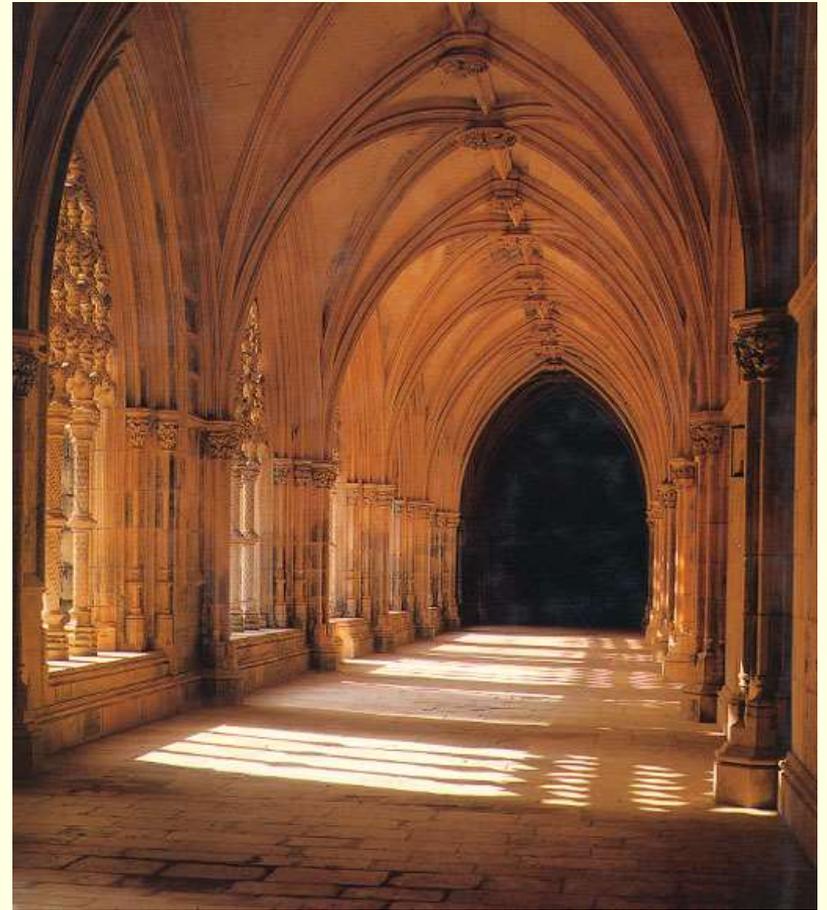
God's Invitation

Human Growth and Development

- Consent to Being—our Basic Goodness
- Consent to the Energy of Creativity, Sexuality, and Adolescence
- Consent to Human Limitations
- Consent to Being Transformed

The Sacred Symbols: The Word, Breath and Glance

- Our 3 main senses:
sound, sense and sight
- Refining our vision of
ourselves, others and
our understanding of
who God is
- Being cleansed of the
obstacles in the
unconscious separating
us the awareness of
Divine Union



Deepening the Sacred Word

- Allowing our way of thinking to be changed
- Movement toward greater openness to God and less rigidity
- Allow the SW ever so gently return to you, when engaged with your thoughts
- Practice attitudes such as simplicity, gentleness, letting go and resting in God
- Opens us to the living Word of God
- Develops trust that our practice is in relationship with God and we experience who God is

Deepening the Sacred Breath

- The breath unites the body and spirit in prayer
- In Hebrew, spirit and breath are the same word, “ruah”
- Especially helpful during the “active night of sense”, periods of grief, mourning, anger
- Helps us to open to God’s depths and dis-identify with surface thoughts and emotions
- We are able to be present to pain through God’s indwelling presence by returning to the breath.

The Sacred Nothingness

- Practiced with no symbol
- Most suited for long term practitioners
- It is patiently waiting upon God trusting that we are in God without relying on symbols
- Relying on nothing and return to nothing
- We pray with nothing, no symbol, but only with God

Kenosis: Self-Emptying Love

Forsaking Love for Love's Sake

- Each prayer period involves participating in the emptying of self.
- God is nudging us to detach from the sacred symbol and all attachments
- We do this by:
 - 1) Letting go of engaging with thoughts
 - 2) Letting go of the sacred symbol
 - 3) Letting go of spiritual experiences

Healing the Separate-Self Sense

- Skillful contemplative practice helps transform your relationship to feelings.
- The separate-self sense is purified by contemplative practice.
- Feelings are embraced through felt awareness, not by thought.
- One of the best ways of letting go of an emotion is simply to feel it.
- Your relationship with God is what makes the healing and transformation of the divine therapy possible.

Finding God in our Diminishments

- Each person has gone through a process of growth and diminishment, carried by the forces that brought them to this point
- There's a place for every diminishment in the Divine Milieu.
- Everything can be redeemed, resurrected
- St. Paul: "To those that love God all things can be transformed into good"
- Communion is resignation (acceptance), with God and the diminishment, results in complexity and consciousness