

Dear friends,

A few weeks ago, as I was "listening for" the substance and rhythm of our retreat I found myself lighting upon a word that somehow seemed to be a part of the dance of *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio* and *Contemplatio*; one that finds its ultimate purpose as an expression of our community domain.

I was trying to find a way to describe an intuition of possibility: a potential to create a space where our intention could allow "Spirit to become flesh" among us. A way to consciously and intentionally dispose ourselves to welcome the inner light to shine and manifest in transforming ways among us. The word that seemed to be insinuating itself into my consciousness was *Conversatio*.

As you may have gathered already, the way I'm using *Conversatio* means a great deal more than normal conversation. The Latin word comes from the word *Converso*, which means "to interact, to pass time with." *Conversatio* is also used to connote "a way of life, or behavior," such as the monastic way of life whose ultimate purpose is transformation into Christ. This ultimate purpose does not only belong to the monastic way of life. Father Thomas spoke continually to us about centering prayer as a way to grow progressively in response to God's passionate invitation to deepening friendship and culminating in union; a communion, a oneness with the source of all life.

TK's insights led him to call us together, to lay the groundwork for communities of practice so that the treasures of the Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel would not fade out once again into obscurity. Beyond that, he encouraged us to have extended times of prayer through silent retreats to intensify and encourage our practice. Later on, he summoned us for what he initially called elders retreats or "issues workshops" where the format of the gatherings included prayer and dialogue, intuiting that this combination could lead to further transformation and catalytic interaction.

The point of all this is to invite us to the possibility of *Conversatio Divina*. Coming to retreat is less about "information" and more about an awake, unobstructed and surrendered heart. Bringing a mind open to be surprised by what Spirit may inspire and invite out of each of us as we come together. Cultivating a "live" intent, a synergy, an "awake receptivity" and attentiveness to what our collective love may be able to enter into.

As I share with you some tweaked lines and wisdom from other pilgrims of the way, see if they may convey something more and elaborate on what I've said so far. As part of our inner posture or disposition in coming to retreat we are invited...

To "gather together in spirit and in truth" or, more simply, "to be with the truth." ...Whenever something increases our experience of the Truth, it opens our Heart and quiets our mind. Conversely, whenever something, such as a thought, fear, or judgment, limits or narrows our experience of the Truth, the Heart contracts and the mind gets busier. We are all equally endowed with this capacity to discriminate the Truth. The true teacher, is within us and among us...

To "be in the company of the truth" or in "right association." This refers to a group of like-minded people who, when moved by the Spirit, engage in a spiritual dialogue... open to the Divine presence in all gathered and to the delicate movement of God in our midst.

"When two or more are gathered in my name, there I am, in the midst of them." As his words imply, a group practicing together creates a mystical field, a field of grace.

To be committed to awaken, uplift, and be open to the light that unmask our delusions. In short, the commitment is to be known by the Truth and to receive the Truth...

We bring a shared intention to be together in the service of Spirit, for the sake of entering the deepest possible level of Truth for this given period of time.

While the container/structure of our retreat will be one of prayer and silence, our conference times may become fertile ground for *Conversatio* and transformation.

May we allow ourselves to be held in that mystical field of Grace. May we be awake and attentive to the delicate fabric of our oneness, as we shed our leaden aprons and expose ourselves to the "beams of love."

Trusting in the God who is still becoming flesh,
Maru