

**Transcribed Notes on “Dealing with Difficulty”**  
**Legacy of Wisdom Series [YouTube](#) Video with Fr. Thomas Keating**

**Moderator:** How does one take difficulty and make it positive in life in difficult situations?

**Fr. Thomas:** By **knowing someone who loves you**; that’s the first step. And if you begin to see that this ultimate reality loves you, the term personal is tricky because for the Eastern religions they never had a reason to theologize. In Christianity the idea of the Trinity forced that concern. So for a person in general, the philosophical definition is a being with intelligence and free will. But that’s not really satisfactory completely. But it’s not a personality, so the Buddhists would rightly say that if you think of God as a person with a beard or with a form, you know it’s not the right track. That’s what they think we mean sometimes until you try to explain this to them, but it’s hard for them to see that difference. So a person, when I try to resolve the argument peacefully if people feel strongly about that, is that God isn’t a person. He certainly treats us in a personal way because that’s who we are. So God is something that adjusts itself to every level of being and is just as present to an amoeba or a subatomic particle as he is to the king of Siam or whoever the biggest American star is right now.

I think that it’s important not to think too much, or ***to have a dimension of silence in one’s life***, which if it doesn’t happen it doesn’t mean all the time, ***that keeps us in contact with this mystery within us that is our Source that keeps us in being and to see creation as an ongoing thing***. We’re **always** being created and you know the Buddhists have a theory at least then that every second has 69 moments. You’ve heard of it? And you go in and out of existence every one of those moments. I think that’s a great idea! I mean that puts things in proportion. So if the creator is creating you 69 times in a second, it must think you’re worth doing to me. It must love you! But now, science can figure out the universe—what it looked like a trillionth of a second! So the 69 is kind of insignificant, though it’s a trillion. So that means that every, every moment for eternity, but just the closest you can come to **a trillionth of a second, that we’re being loved into existence, though we’re asked to live these values and to grow from human into the divine transformation in the most difficult situation possible**, namely in a world where we’re dominated by the needs for certain security, certainly independence and for affection, esteem, you can’t build up an ego without some degree of those. But it’s *the exaggerated search for those things in as happiness* that is very strong in humans because we’re born without any standard of where happiness is and yet with the desired...

**Moderator:** If I am hearing you correctly, you are suggesting a moment of quietness among these things, that allows you transform these things?

**Fr. Thomas:** Yes, to become acquainted with this dimension which might be called the true self, and is called that in some spiritual books, or if you prefer, the deeper self. Or to put it this way, just for fun: Who are you? Are you just your resume or what fax you give to a doctor when you go to a new one in the office? Or are we at a deeper level,

that is to say the level of character or personality—what you like or what you need to know if you're going to have friends with someone or marry someone. You need to know what their likes and dislikes are, or whether you can adjust to them and all those important questions. But there's a deeper self; that self is the one that is subject to the influences of culture, education, family, personal experience. And so that *you*, which might be a way of pronouncing it, the first one would be “**Who** are you?” and the second one would be “Who **are** you?” that is the interest in your deeper self. But the final one is “Who are **you**?”

**That is the object, it seems to me, of true education or adequate education; or the ultimate goal is to bring people to the awareness of this self that is not the false self, and hence it is often called no self** in Buddhism, or letting go of the egoic activity, which is sort of equivalent to false self goals. But the false self doesn't exist. It's in our mentality and reflex. So the false self is those smoked glasses out of which people see the world and see it according to what their experience has been. But you can't impose that on somebody else then.

But in a community it gets modified by the reality of other people or their wisdom or by the realization that the illusory self doesn't really exist. You have to let go of it. And you're not gonna do that unless you have motivation. The motivation, it seems to me, is to be aware of this deeper self that is weight that you already have that is waiting to become cultivated, but it had been covered over by these layers of the illusion or false ideas for happiness that kind of have to go. Life is an experience of letting go, okay? So to come to terms with that, one needs a view and usually a community and that's what religion is for. It's to get you as Wilber\* puts it, on a conveyer belt that **will take you to the transpersonal states of consciousness.**

Well, many science books will not accept that level of being of human existence. I think if they could come to terms, you don't find answers to spiritual things in nature. It's not designed to be there. It's not the scope in which science...is really funky...it has to have experiments to prove itself. So how to bring science and religion together seems to be an important issue today. Science is contributing in this and is really providing us with a new cosmology that will be vastly more realistic than the one in which all wisdom literature has been written.

1. What did Fr. Thomas say that I find important for my spiritual journey?
2. What new realization did I discover?
3. If I were to tell someone else about this video, what would I say?
4. How does this influence my Centering Prayer practice?

\*(Ken Wilber wrote *Up from Eden* and *A Brief History of Everything*)

Ken's Video: [“Showing up for Life”](#)