

Transcribed Notes on
“Something Special” Legacy of Wisdom
YouTube Video with Fr Thomas Keating

Moderator: What happened that brought you to spiritual awareness?

Fr. Thomas: I guess suffering the various psychological things and to feel responsible for other people's teaching and lives. (suffering)

This has been adventurous! But I think the chief thing I would say is I have pursued trying to live in the presence of God as much as I could, failing a good deal of the time. But I had a practice and God supported me in having time, making retreats. These helped deepen my relationship with silence. In my experience silence and God are almost the same thing. By silence I mean no thoughts, no desires, no self-reflections, at least deliberately for a period of time daily or twice daily or three times or all the time if you're really trans-personalized.

But I've been through what they call the dark night, a few classical disappointments, a little bit of rejection here and there. I pretty well lost my family by entering the monastery, most of them were opposed to, especially my parents. So at a young age I left a lot behind, and it almost took me a generation of almost 20 years to begin to have the freedom because circumstances shifted the rigidity of the Trappist life when I entered so that when I got to relate to my parents more profoundly than I think if I had stayed home. I think that's what's meant by saying you receive a hundredfold for everything you surrender. That's a wisdom saying. The greatest wisdom saying I like in Jesus' teaching if people could grasp it. I don't know how to teach it. It's an insight **“If you try to save your life, that is who you think you are, maybe the false self or maybe even the true self, you will bring yourself to ruin. But anyone, anyone at all, who brings themselves to nothing will find out who they are.”**

So activity, including my own, takes a certain amount of absorption. But also we are much greater than anything we can do. Perhaps on the invisible level, perhaps sources of light or sparks of light as the Hindu something or the Buddha nature or the Christ nature. Paul was saying, “I live now not I, but Christ lives in me.” That means that now God is eager to enter into a personal, intimate relationship in every detail of [our] life.

So I have been pursuing that now for a number of years, and I'm still far from getting anywhere closer. But I am not disturbed by that anymore. But first pride is the only thing that hurts from failure. So to accept one's human condition is part of the happiness that comes from....why do you have to succeed all the time? Well, you try, and after a few failures you realize there must be something else to this and then you start to succeed. **But it's not you. It's the divine energy that has finally gotten**

freed from all of our cultural and educational and personal limitations and is just able to be.

We had a wonderful example of that in our leader there of our retreat center there had a child who fell when she was about 11 months and was completely paralyzed, except she could move her arms. She never could speak. But she used to come to the retreat and lie on the kitchen table there while her mother cooked for us and she had the most exquisite smile and she would sometimes break into this roar of laughter. It's hard to know just what. But she just was. That's all. She was just on the table. She was a symbol of **what the retreat was all about, that is to become aware and to accept our own limitations.** She never thought of anything else I guess. She died when she was I guess about 35.

She was able to be with us because of the extraordinary love of her parents who had to take care of her day and night for all those years. **So love is what produces the most extraordinary fruit.** It was their love that made of this girl a kind of icon for perceptive retreatants for what their retreat was all about: **just to be in God's presence and to accept themselves just as they are.**

It is hard going, and so it takes a lot of practice, and the unconscious is unbelievable remnants of all of our experiences. To empty that out is what I call the unloading of the unconscious. That's purification in other terms, but all of the right traditions have that kind of discipline. Now modern psychiatry has greatly enhanced it, and it could be a great companion in that process. So really the bottom line is **humility is to accept all reality, God, oneself, and other people just as they are without judgment or trying to change them.**



In April 2015 while on retreat Maggie took this picture of the painting hanging in the retreat house of Sarah Johnston, daughter of Pat and Bob Johnston, with a monk (Fr. Theophane? who adored her) from St. Benedict's Monastery at Snowmass.