

FROM FEAR TO LOVE
Spiritual Grounding in Anxious Times

“Holding the Shadow, Cultivating Compassion”
July 23, 2022 | Meditation Part Two *with Marjorie Thompson*

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an expected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

-- Rumi --

What Then?

That I feed the hungry, that I forgive an insult,
that I love my enemy in the name of Christ -
all these are undoubtedly great virtues.

What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ.

But what if I should discover that the least among them all,

the poorest of all the beggars,

the most impudent of all the offenders,

the very enemy himself -

that these are within me, and that I myself

stand in need of the alms of my own kindness,

that I myself am the enemy

who must be loved -

what then?

- Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

A Meditation for Compassionate Self-Observation

Each of us has, deep inside, the capacity to see with eyes of compassion. Christ, who indwells our heart, sees with love. With a little intention and practice we can access our heart-center in daily life. Here is one way to practice compassion for our selves.

Get in touch with something about yourself you really dislike and wish you could be rid of—perhaps a character weakness or bad habit. Become aware of your usual feelings in relation to this. Notice the feelings without sinking too deeply into them.

Now take a step back from your judging ego to a deeper center, a place of interior freedom from which you can observe your reactions and feelings. This is your inner sanctuary of love, where the compassionate Spirit burns like a little pilot light.

Breathe and relax into this heart-center. Just as oxygen feeds a flame, let your breath feed the Spirit-flame within, till it is full and bright. Feel compassion fill your heart.

From this compassionate center, look at the part of yourself you so dislike. What do you observe with the eyes of love?

Let the compassionate One in your heart give comfort to the wounded child in you—with words, or song, or a gesture of embrace. Notice how your inner child responds.

Accept a higher love for your self—even in weakness, brokenness, incompleteness. You are a work in progress. The Spirit bears with you patiently.

Take a moment now to name and absorb the gift of this meditation.

*“The Compassionate Observer” is a phrase coined by Jane Vennard
(see *A Praying Congregation*, Alban Institute, 2005, 99-100).
These meditations are two of my several adaptations of her original process.*

The Examen

God in Day-to-Day Life

Choose a period of time to examine in prayer: a day, a week, or a specific event.

Allow your mind to wander through that period of time. Some questions you might ask yourself about that period include:

- What am I most/least grateful for during that time?
- When did I feel a sense of love, peace, joy, life (gifts of the Spirit)?
- When did I feel exhausted, drained, angry, resentful, restless?
- What specific events, thoughts, or experiences drew my attention?
- What aspects of that time repel or bother me?
- What moments of that time speak to me of my deepest desires?
- What moments of that time feel out of place or uninteresting?

Ask yourself: *When did I notice God's presence during this time? What felt like a time of God's absence?*

As some answers to these questions arise, notice what they tell you about yourself. What do you typically notice or miss while life is happening? How does God tend to call you into greater fullness of life? Toward what activities, actions, or attributes is God drawing you?

Repeat this prayer at regular intervals to begin to see patterns in how God is working in your life, and how you are responding.

Adapted from Daniel Wolpert, *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices* (Upper Room Books, 2003), 180.