

Fr. Perozich comments —

Occasionally readers of these comments lament that the comments and articles are too long for their particular concentration span.

This one is for you, short and to the point.

Contemplation is a gift from God leading a person who already has abandoned serious sin, who is engaged in active and meditative prayer beyond liturgical prayer, to a deeper relationship with God.

The good feelings of prayer disappear.

The image of God that the faithful created disappears.

The expectations of the prayer experience disappear.

God draws the faithful into an intimacy that is beyond human desire or imagining.

God begins to reveal Himself as He is, not as the faithful imagines God to be.

If prayer life seems dry or absent of God, it is not. Prayer life is changing to a deeper, more intimate encounter, all at God's initiative and gift of grace.

The Call To Contemplation As A Call To Deeper Conversion

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The call to **contemplation** is, in many respects, the call to a second conversion. During our **first conversion**, we must leave behind those aspects of our life that are incompatible with a life of grace. During our **second conversion**, which often coincides with the beginning of contemplative prayer in a soul, one must leave behind those aspects of God that are purely **sensory**. In other words, **contemplation** invites us to an intimacy with God that transcends our senses and is, therefore, beyond words, ideas, and images.

This new way of being with God can appear terrifying to a soul that has experienced the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and whose only desire is to return that love. **Because when one no longer feels God's love or experiences his nearness in prayer, one assumes**

that either God has abandoned them or that their own hearts have grown lukewarm. Yet if a soul has not given up prayer and is striving to love their neighbor, they can rest assured that **something much deeper than what they can fathom is occurring.**

For the person who is experiencing this grace in their life, **one's reliance on sense perception not only in life but during the time of prayer lessens.** From the ruins of this apparent collapse, a **deeper faith, hope, and love is born, which purifies the soul so that it can love more deeply.** Needless to say, **the gift of contemplation** in one's life demands a **faith and a trust that is beyond what our senses can provide, ushering the soul into a deeper and more fertile land where God is no longer the product of our own imagination.**

*Image courtesy Franciscan Friars of the Renewal
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