

Spiritual Geography

The Interior Landscape and Climate of the Human Body, Soul and Spirit

Father James Chelich

Copyright: February 1990 - James Chelich

Revised November 2017 - James Chelich

Revised April 2018

CONTENTS

The Human Person

Page 2

A Brief Journey Within

Page 2

The Interior Landscape

Page 3

Senses of the Body, Soul and Spirit

Page 4

How the Parts of the Human Landscape are Related

Page 5

Preserving Right Order Within

Page 6

The Unraveling of the Order Within

Page 6

Preserving Right Climate in the Body, Soul and Spirit

Page 8

APPENDIX

God Appearing in Darkness

Page 12

The Manner of Knowing God

Page 13

Entering Your Interior Spirit

Page 14

Inspirations and Promptings of the Holy Spirit

Page 15

The Human Person

Religious language can sometimes be vague and esoteric. In other words, it is sometimes not helpful in getting down to the business of building a healthy and an effective interaction with the world around us. Is there a way of thinking about ourselves as human beings that not only brings us religious insight but at the same time remains true to the way we actually experience ourselves in our day-to-day life? Western Christians were usually taught to think of a human being as made up of two parts: a body and a soul – the body being the physical or material part, and the soul being the spiritual or non-material part. I want to encourage you to think of yourself as being made up of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. This way of understanding the human person was embraced by Saint Paul. We find it beautifully and succinctly expressed in his prayer at the end of his first letter to the Thessalonians:

*May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness.
May He preserve you whole and entire, spirit, soul
and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Thinking of yourself as a human being in this way can be especially helpful to you if you want to lead a serious spiritual life.

A Brief Journey Within

Before we go talking about “body”, “soul”, and “spirit”, let's take a brief journey within and examine some of the ways we experience ourselves as a human being.

The first level of experience is that of your Body-self. Here your body is the center of your awareness. At this level you experience and know yourself and your world through your body. You experience yourself through your bodily drives and you experience the world around you through the body's senses: sight, smell, sound, taste, touch. You come to know yourself in light of your bodily drives and the bodily pleasure or pain you feel as you experience things through the senses.

Moving inward, the next level of experience you come to is that of your Ego-self. Here your ego is the center of your awareness. What *you* want, what *you* think, and how *you* feel about things, stand at the center of your consciousness. You experience yourself and the world around you through the filter of your desires and your opinions. You experience them in light of what they mean to *you*, what *you* need from them, how they agree or disagree with *your* thinking, how they might be useful to *you* or how they might stand in *your* way.

The third level of experience you come to is that of your Wounded-self. Here your past and its wounds are the center of your awareness. They stand in the way of everything you think, say or do. At this level, you know yourself in the light of the wounds and sins of the past. You experience others in the light of the past injuries and out of a guarded sensitivity to being hurt again. You experience the world as

hard and painful.

Moving even further inward, the next level you come to is that of the No-self. Here you experience a great emptiness within you. It is vast, deep and dark. You experience yourself as a dark emptiness of vast proportions, yet somehow uniquely your own. Your emptiness is unlike that of any other human being's – it has a particular shape and a unique character all its own. It is a 'personal' emptiness. At this level, you know yourself in light of the emptiness within you – in light of your poverty as a person. This 'personal' emptiness is the center of your awareness.

There is yet another level you can reach in your journey inward. It is the level of the Other-self. The great emptiness that lies within you is not as empty as it appears to be. If you focus your attention you can sometimes sense a Presence there – another Self. This Presence fills the vast emptiness within you. It is hard to recognize because, to your mind, it appears as darkness. This is because it is like nothing you have ever experienced before. It is not a 'thing' like other things in the physical world of people and objects or in your memory. It is totally different. At this level, you know yourself in light of this Presence within you. The sense of God-with-you becomes the center of your awareness.

These are some of the ways that we experience ourselves as a human being. Now let's see if we can sketch a map of this interior landscape of Body, Soul and Spirit. What really makes up a human being?

The Interior Landscape

The BODY is your physical form.

It is an organic form that grows and develops, and then decays and dies. It is driven to seek food, shelter, sexual union and reproduction. The BODY is your experience of the world through the physical senses. This sensual experience is inquisitive and playful but unbounded and directionless. It is attracted toward those things that give it bodily pleasure and away from those that give it bodily pain.

The SOUL is your INTELLECT and WILL.

Your INTELLECT can think and reason, learn and remember. It can seek the truth or weave illusion. It can recognize what is good (that which gives, nurtures, and enriches life) and what is evil (that which consumes manipulates and destroys life.) It is attracted to that which is easy and mentally stimulating and away from that which is difficult.

Your WILL can choose. It can choose to accept and act on the truth or to live in illusion. It can choose to do good or evil. It can override the drives and attractions of the Body and act contrary to them. It can even override patterns of thinking that have become comfortable and customary. This makes you a “person.”

The SPIRIT is neither the body, the intellect nor the will.

It is the vast and *apparent* “emptiness” that you sense within yourself, at the core of your consciousness. It is a great interior “space.” You might think of it analogously as a cathedral. This emptiness exists in every human being, but it has a particular form and a unique character in each one. This makes each individual human being a “person” unlike any other. This “personal” emptiness in each human being was created and is intended to be filled by God. It is God’s dwelling place or sanctuary in every human being. It is where you come into communion with God. Because this emptiness is unique in each human being, the Holy Spirit of God fills it in a unique way in each person. Each person embraces the Holy Spirit in their own unique way. God is “God in you” as He is capable of being God in no other human being. God touches, handles and loves the world through you as He is capable of touching, handling and loving the world through no other human being and in no other way. This is the unique and sacred dignity of each human being.

When the mind has not the prior experience to begin to make sense of something it perceives, it often “draws a blank” (meaning that nothing “comes together” from prior experience to help make sense of it.) There are experiences that are so totally “other” that it leaves human cognition “in the dark.” The experience of God in your SPIRIT is one such experience. The further side of this vast interior space “opens out” onto eternity. One might call it a “window” onto the timeless. The term SPIRIT expresses that there is within a person a place where she interfaces with eternity and comes into relationship with the Divine Presence that permeates eternity. This is an awesome realization. Here is the seat of the spiritual life.

Senses of the Body, Soul and Spirit

It is important to explain something about the dynamics of awareness. Our body is aware of things and engages them through the senses. Sight, taste, hearing, feeling, and smelling are senses proper to our physicality (our body). We also have senses that belong to our rationality (our soul): to grasp the integrity of something, to see the whole as well as the parts, to apprehend the interconnectedness of things, to recognize when things are in wrong (life-defeating) relationship. We also have senses that belong to our spirituality (our interior spirit): to sense the movement of the Holy Spirit of God within us, to recognize what is authentically “of God” and what is not, to recognize the personal stamp of the Creator in all created things. These senses must be attended to, exercised and developed if we are to live the life of a whole human being. The senses that belong to our rationality and spirituality enable us to live in constructive relationship with other human beings, with the fundamental physical and rational forces that move the universe, and with the spiritual forces that link, at the deepest level, all things in a life-giving whole. They are all needed to live in full communion with all things that exist.

How the Parts of the Human Landscape are Related

The BODY's senses are directionless, and its drives and attractions are unbounded. The BODY cannot give direction to itself, nor can it discipline itself. This has to come from somewhere else.

The SOUL, through the INTELLECT, gives direction to the senses of the Body. It does this by thinking and reasoning, searching for the truth and recognizing what is good. The SOUL, through the WILL, binds and disciplines the drives and attractions of the Body. It does this by choosing to accept and act on the truth and by choosing good over evil. But while the SOUL can seek the truth and act on it, it cannot decide for itself what the truth is. Where does it find the truth? And while the SOUL can recognize what is good and what is evil and can choose the good over the evil, it cannot decide for itself what good and evil is. Where does it learn what is good?

The SPIRIT is where the truth is revealed and where we learn what is good. In the still, emptiness of the SPIRIT we listen for the "whispering sound" of the voice of God (see 1 Kings 19:1-13.) Many call awareness at this level "Conscience." Seeking and listening for the voice of God in the emptiness of the human SPIRIT is contemplative prayer. Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to us:

*...being the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth.
John 16:13*

As I explained above, it is in our SPIRIT that God is present to us uniquely and personally. Here the Holy Spirit gives us clear sight of the truth, teaches us what is good and inspires us to act for the good. The BODY does not know of itself, and the SOUL cannot decide for itself what truth and goodness is. Neither does the BODY know of itself, nor can the SOUL provide for itself the answers to the really big questions that give life sense and meaning:

Why am I here?
Where have I come from?
Where am I going?
What have I been given to do?
Who am I?

When the BODY is left to itself or the SOUL decides for itself what truth and goodness is, all hell breaks loose. And when we look to the BODY or the SOUL to provide answers to the questions that give life sense and meaning, only confusion, frustration and despair result. Truth, goodness and the answers to the great questions of life are only given in the stillness and emptiness of the INTERIOR SPIRIT when it is used as it was intended, as a sanctuary for listening to God who dwells there. The Bible says:

*Behold, you are pleased with sincerity of heart,
and in my inmost being you teach me wisdom." Psalm 51:8*

Preserving Right Order Within

The WORLD draws life from the BODY and its activity
when the BODY receives direction and discipline from the SOUL.

The BODY draws life from the activity of the SOUL
when the SOUL receives knowledge of truth and goodness from the SPIRIT.

The SOUL draws life from the SPIRIT
when the SPIRIT is reserved as a sanctuary for listening to GOD.

In the SPIRIT, the SOUL draws life from GOD, Who has made
it His dwelling place. The Bible says:

Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

The key to your health and happiness as a human being is what you do with your interior SPIRIT. When the SPIRIT is kept clear and used as a sanctuary for facing God and listening to His voice, then everything is given right order in the SOUL, in the BODY, and in the WORLD, all in turn. The problem with the human SPIRIT is that it appears to be empty to someone who does not know what it was created and intended for. The experience of the emptiness of the SPIRIT can be painful – sometimes so painful that it aches. But the pain has a purpose. It reminds us that we are hollow within, that we are incomplete, that something vital is needed to complete our humanity. The irony is that what appears to be missing is actually present – in the very emptiness within us, and behind the darkness that fills it. If you are not aware of this, the pain of the emptiness within you will prove too much to bear. You will attempt to fill the emptiness. You will drag one thing after another into your SPIRIT: the gain of money, the achievement of power, the accumulation of possessions, the advancement of an idea, the pursuit of a career, even the affection of a loved one. You will try frantically to make the money, the power, the possessions, the idea, the career, and even the loved one fill the vast expanse of your emptiness. It will not work! You will try to distract yourself from the pain of your emptiness with too much food, too much sex, too much alcohol and drugs. You will dissipate the gifts and energies of your SOUL and your BODY trying to fill the emptiness of your SPIRIT – the place that only God can fill within you.

The Unraveling of the Order Within

Without GOD speaking in the SPIRIT,
the SPIRIT to instruct the SOUL,
the SOUL to direct and discipline the BODY,
and the BODY to build up the life of the WORLD,
everything begins to unravel. Our life as a human being is thrown into reverse.

The SPIRIT begins to feed off the SOUL:

It tries to fill itself with things that belong only in the SOUL: the talents and gifts of your mind, the force and direction of your will, your love for others.

You attempt to make a “god” out of your ideas, your gifts and talents, your own will, or your affection for a loved one. Sooner or later they are crushed by the pressure of having to fill your SPIRIT.

The SOUL then begins to feed off the BODY:

The SOUL no longer directs and disciplines the drives and attractions of the BODY. Instead, it takes them as its own and yearns and longs for what the BODY is driven and attracted to. The “passions” are born in the SOUL: gluttony, lust, avarice, envy, anger, discontent, vain-glory, pride. Desire has taken hold of the SOUL and the SOUL is lost in it.

The BODY then begins to feed off the WORLD:

The BODY begins to consume, manipulate and destroy life under the influence of the passions. It uses and abuses the things of the world way beyond reason or need in order to feed its unbridled drives for food, shelter, sex and pleasure.

The Bible tells us:

...the old self...deteriorates through illusion and desire.

Ephesians 4:22

When the SOUL begins to decide for itself what is true and what is good, “values” are born. What is true and what is good become *my opinion* of what is true and what is good. What is true is what is true *for me*, and what is good is what is good *to me*. Everyone then has their own “values” and one person's “values” are as true and good as another's. What is lost is a *shared knowledge* of the truth and of what is good that will stand the test of time and experience, and upon which people can build a cohesive human community. The SOUL pushes its self-made “values” back into the SPIRIT and contends that they are god-given for all. The SOUL then seeks to coerce others into acceptance of its “values.” When they refuse to embrace them, the SOUL is filled with anger. This gives birth to hostility toward others. This leads the SOUL to employ BODILY force. Where we should be searching in our SPIRITS, seeking the truth and learning what is good; we are now imposing our “values” on one another by force of one kind or another. Violence erupts between people and the world is burned down. Illusion has taken hold of the SOUL and the SOUL is lost in it.

Instead of *deciding* the truth of things, the SOUL must be in constant *search* for the truth of things (their integrity and right-relationship with one another). The SOUL brings its discoveries before God in the SPIRIT to sound out their truth. In the course of the day the SOUL constantly enters the SPIRIT to ask to see the good in each moment and situation and for the strength to do it.

Preserving Right Climate in the Body, Soul and Spirit

Spiritual health comes down to knowing and preserving the climate proper to the BODY, SOUL and SPIRIT.

Right climate in the human body is physically exercised, nourished in a balanced way and exercised in the doing of good.

The Bible says:

Does not a little suffice for a well bred man? Sirach 31:19a

Let your BODY pay attention to your SOUL. Restrain your BODY from being controlled by its drives. Avoid excess in any form. Strive to live simply. Possess only the things you need and the things you enjoy and actually use. Dress your BODY in clothing that is modest and complimentary to your physique. Enjoy beauty where ever you find it. Exercise your BODY physically and regularly employ it in assisting the weak and protecting the integrity of persons and things. The integrity of persons and things are never to be violated for the pleasure of the BODY. Enjoy the pleasure of the senses but never allow your Mind to dwell on the memory of their experience. Your Mind is enriched by the experience of your senses but it is not to feed on them. Your BODY is the sensitive and responsive instrument of your SOUL. For some things of the BODY you may find that you develop an addiction, such as for alcohol, drugs or sex. You are not less a man or less a woman because there are some things you simply cannot handle. It is wisdom to know this about yourself and to act accordingly by controlling them with the help of others or by abstaining from them entirely. Of all the things that belong to your BODY, sex will be the one that you will be most tempted to use to distract you from the emptiness of your SPIRIT or the anxiety and pain you carry in your SOUL. The sexual drive has its own purpose, and sexual pleasure its own joy. But the purpose of sex is not to fill or distract you from the emptiness of your SPIRIT or relieve the pain or anxiety you carry in your SOUL. If you use sex to do so, you will only experience an ever deepening sadness.

The bad weather that stirs up most frequently in the BODY are the storms of over-indulgence and excess. Calm them with physical exercise, fasting and abstinence for a period of time. This will restore sensitivity and responsiveness to your BODY.

Right climate in the human soul is curiosity, creativity and vigilant attention to the integrity of things.

The Bible says:

Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their master, as the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes on the Lord, our God. Psalm 123:2

Let your MIND pay attention to your SPIRIT. Often let your MIND shut down its activity, become still and attentive, and enter into the sanctuary of your SPIRIT to pray.

Learn not to give in to the pressure of what others want you to be. Want to know your true self – who God made you to be. Strive to embrace your talents and abilities, as well as your weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Be passionate about coming to know the gift you have been given for the life of others. Do not be afraid of the discipline and work necessary to develop this gift. Seek to put this gift to use. Meaning and fulfillment in life comes from this. Open your mind to the beauty of nature and take joy in it. It will remind you that you are beautiful.

Learn not to give in to the envy of things that others possess. Many people acquire things only to make others jealous. Your jealousy will allow them to control you and you will lose your freedom to be confident in yourself. Desire and work for things that will both do you good and allow you to do good for others.

Let your Mind and Will strive to understand and honor the integrity of all people and things, and the right and life-giving relationship between them. Examine how you handle the world and strive to be just in all you do. Do you give life? Do you nurture, enrich and rejoice in it? Or do you consume, manipulate and destroy it? Examine yourself often. Teach yourself to take delight in people finding healing and coming to wholeness.

Allow your Mind to be creative with ideas and projects, in artistic expression, and by pursuing a career. But let your creative activity always be within the bounds of what it has been shown to be true and what it has been taught is good, always honoring the integrity of people and things, and the life-giving relationship between them.

Let your Will pay attention to your BODY. Let it discipline your BODY to act according to the truth and do what is good. Let it move your body to enhance and defend the integrity of people and things, and the life-giving relationship between them. Do not permit your Mind to dwell on your BODY. Let it keep your BODY exercised, clean and healthy, and employed as an instrument for doing good in the world – nothing more.

The bad weather that stirs up most frequently in the SOUL are the storms of the passions: gluttony, lust, avarice, envy, anger, discontent, vainglory, and pride. They are born when your Mind dwells on the drives and attractions of your BODY, and your Will gives itself over to desire what the Mind imagines. When the storms of the passions rise within your SOUL, calm them in the following way: tear your Mind's attention away from what it wants to dwell upon, withdraw from the situation, and immediately set your Mind and Will to performing an act of charity: say or do something good for someone others easily overlook or ignore, give or leave alms for the poor. Jesus says:

*(When) within you are filled with rapaciousness and evil...
give what you have as alms; all will be wiped clean for you. Luke 11:39, 41*

Pray in the following manner until calm is restored:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Luke 18:13

It is not cowardice to flee from the storms of the passions. They poison the SOUL. And the most poisonous to the SOUL are anger and the judgment of others. Mentally and physically withdraw from any situation or conversation filled with angry bitterness toward anyone or anything. Immediately change the subject or retreat from any conversation that dwells on the critical judgment of another. Sometimes we or someone we know needs to vent their anger at being hurt or abused. This is necessary, but let there be no conversation that dwells on the anger and fuels the bitterness. As for criticism of another when they are not present, completely avoid any part of it.

Right climate in the human spirit is unencumbered, silent and still, and attentive to God.

The Bible teaches us to pray:

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. Psalm 52:12-13

In your Spirit strive to pay attention to GOD. Face the emptiness within you and resist the temptation to fill it with anything whatsoever. Enter it often in prayer and address the Darkness there that shrouds the presence of God. "Knock" upon this Darkness relentlessly with an attitude of longing love until the Holy Spirit manifests Himself to you. "Seek" to learn from Him what is good. "Ask" to be shown the truth about yourself – who you were created to be and the gift you have been given for the life of others. "Ask" to be shown the truth about God and the world as a living whole.

So I say to you, 'ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you'... If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Luke 11:9, 13

Vigilantly keep your SPIRIT clear of all things. Examine yourself often. If ideas, affections, ambitions or anything else whatever have crept into your SPIRIT (become the center of your life), move them out of your SPIRIT immediately with a firm act of your Will. Of all the things that belong to your SOUL, the one that you will be most tempted to use to fill the emptiness of your SPIRIT will be your affection for others – especially the affection you have for your dearest loved one. Love for others belongs in your SOUL not in your SPIRIT.

Establish a time in which to pray daily (10—15 minutes).

This is vital for the health of not only your SPIRIT, but your SOUL and BODY. Still the activity of your Mind (Intellect) and let your Mind enter your interior SPIRIT. Let your Mind do nothing but focus its attention on the vast, dark emptiness within you. Then let your Will form an attitude of Longing Love for God and direct it at the Darkness. Pray:

Lord, give me deeper understanding of who you made me to be. You seek to touch and love the world through me as You can in no other.

Lord, You have given me a gift through which I will give life to the world. Help me to discover it, not to fear the effort necessary to develop it, and to give it generously to others.

In your SPIRIT never cease to ask the great questions of life and your destiny:

Who am I?
Why am I here?
Where have I come from?
Where am I going?
What have I been given to do?

Answers will come to you and you will know them to be true.

As you move through the moments of your day, let your MIND briefly (5-10 seconds) enter your SPIRIT in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to let you see what is really going on and the good that wants doing. Ask for the strength to do it. This is what it means *to pray always (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*.

The bad weather that stirs up most frequently in the human SPIRIT are the storms of fear and anxiety. When they do, calm them by recalling the words of Jesus:

O weak of faith! Stop worrying. ... Seek first God's kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all things will be given you besides. Matthew 6:31, 33

and by praying in the following way until calm is restored:

*A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Psalm 51:12*

Right climate in each part – BODY, SOUL and SPIRIT – creates right climate in the whole. This manifests itself as *love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness self-control. Galatians 5:22*

APPENDIX

God Appearing in Darkness

Do you find it strange that God should be found in darkness? Or that you should look for His presence in the sanctuary of your human SPIRIT? The idea of God appearing in darkness is found throughout the Bible. When God appeared to Abraham, He appeared as darkness:

As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. Genesis 15:12

God appeared in darkness to the Hebrews on Mount Sinai:

The Lord told (Moses), 'I am coming to you in a dense cloud...' On the Morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain... Exodus 19:9, 16

You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, which blazed to the very sky with fire and was enveloped in a dense black cloud... You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. Deuteronomy 4:11-12

Having come down in a cloud, the Lord stood with (Moses) there and proclaimed his name, 'Lord'... Moses at once bowed down to the ground in worship. Then he said, 'If I find favor with you, O Lord, do come along in our company.' Exodus 34:5-9

God traveled with the Hebrews and the sign of his presence was a dark cloud that moved with them in their wanderings:

Whenever the cloud rose from the dwelling, the Israelites would set out on their journey. But if the cloud did not lift, they would not go forward; only when it lifted did they go forward..." Exodus 40:34-38

God appeared in a dark cloud in the sanctuary of the Meeting Tent:

Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he pleases into the sanctuary, inside the veil, in front of the propitiatory of the ark; otherwise, when I reveal Myself in a cloud above the propitiatory, he will die. Leviticus 16:2

God dwelt in a dark cloud in the Temple in Jerusalem:

When the priests left the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord so that the priests could no longer minister because of the cloud, since the Lord's glory had filled the temple of the Lord. Then Solomon said, 'the Lord intends to dwell in the cloud.' 1 Kings 8:10-12

When the Temple of Solomon was destroyed and the sacred vessels hidden in a cave, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied:

The place is to remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows them His mercy. Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord will be seen in a cloud, just as it appeared in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Temple might be sanctified.
2 Maccabees 2:7-8

And so the Book of Psalms praises God, Who makes Himself known in the darkness:

And He inclined the heavens and came down, with dark clouds under His feet... And He made darkness the cloak about Him..."
Psalm 18:10, 12

The idea that you should look for God in the sanctuary of your human SPIRIT is also found in the Bible. God gathers His people to Himself again in Jesus. Jesus declares that God is now to be worshipped in the sanctuary of the human SPIRIT:

Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... An hour is coming, and is already here, when authentic worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Indeed, it is just such worshippers the Father seeks." John 4:21,23

And so Saint Paul teaches:

Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. 1 Corinthians 3:16

To the human Mind (Intellect), the emptiness of the SPIRIT appears filled with darkness. This is because God is unlike anyone or anything we have ever experienced before. There is nothing in our past experience to which our Mind can refer the experience of God. There is nothing that our Mind can use to "make sense" out of the experience of Him. When it stands before the presence of God, our rational Mind "draws a blank." And so, when we face the emptiness at the very core of ourselves we see only darkness. This is because God is God, not us. God is larger and different than anything we can imagine. In the human SPIRIT the presence of God is cloaked in this Cloud of Unknowing – hidden from recognition by the rational mind.

The Manner of Knowing God

While the finite human mind is incapable of grasping the infinite God, this does not mean that we cannot *know* God. There is another *way of knowing*. Love is a way of knowing. Loving someone or something can often succeed in knowing them when trying to understand them (figure them out) fails. As a matter of fact, loving can always "know" someone or something better than even the most exhaustive effort at trying to understand them.

Rational thought attempts to "know" something by reducing it to its given parts, by referring the parts to similar things in our past experience, and by observing how the

individual parts are related to one another. Love attempts to "know" something by accepting and embracing it *as a whole*. Love recognizes the truth that a thing is always more than the sum of its parts, even when you can see them all. The first thing the human Mind wants to do when given a new experience or encountering something new is to understand it. Then, once it understands it, the Mind might develop an affection for the object of its experience. With God, this cannot work. The reasoning of your Mind is useless in knowing God. God makes this clear:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

What is needed is an attitude. Instead of thinking, let your Mind come together with your Will and form an attitude of Longing Love for God. What is "Longing Love for God?" It is a yearning for God with everything you are; a wanting God more than anything else in the world. The Bible says:

You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Deuteronomy 6:5

Longing Love for God is an intense desire of your whole Will that your Mind aims and focuses on God. Direct this attitude at the darkness that hides God's presence in your SPIRIT. In this way, compel the Holy Spirit to make Himself known to you. Love compels God to reveal Himself to you. The Bible says:

Everyone who loves in begotten of God and has knowledge of God. 1 John 4:7b

While forming and sustaining an attitude of Longing Love for God is simple, it is often not as easy. Your Mind can be easily distracted and your Will can be weak. Your Mind needs to be exercised in loving attention and your Will needs to be strengthened in loving resolve. The best training in forming an attitude of Longing Love for God is by practicing deeds of love for your fellow human beings – especially by doing good for those who do not appeal to you as very attractive or "loveable." Saint John says:

One who has no love for the brother he has seen, cannot love the God he has not seen. 1 John 4:20b

The best place to begin the practice of the deeds of love is by petitioning God in prayer for the needs and well being of others – especially those who have offended or injured you. Jesus says:

Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons and daughters of your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:44-45

Entering Your Interior Spirit

Still the rational activity of your Mind. Move inward to the deepest point of your awareness of yourself. You experience yourself standing in a vast space shrouded in the “darkness” of non-recognition, and yet you can sense (with your spiritual senses) a Presence and its “movement” in the “darkness.” God is present to you here. Focus your Mind's attention on the vast, dark emptiness within you. Let your Mind come together with your Will to form an attitude of Longing Love for God and direct this attitude at the darkness. If you must do something to keep thoughts from distracting your Mind's attention, call upon the name of God using a single, simple word such as "Father," "God," or "Lord."

Do not expect that God will manifest Himself out of the darkness in your SPIRIT in grand ways all at once. Enter your SPIRIT often for prayer. "Knock" relentlessly with an attitude of Longing Love on the Dark Cloud that hides God's presence. Be persistent! Don't give up! God always responds. You will begin to notice. At the end of the parable of the Corrupt Judge (Luke 18:1-8), Jesus says:

Will not God then do justice to his chosen who call out to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them, do you suppose? I tell you, He will give them swift justice. Luke 18:7-8a

Do not form an expectation of how the Holy Spirit will make Himself known to you. If you do, your mind will be taken up with your expectation of how God is supposed to appear. Not only will you be disappointed that what you expected did not take place, you will miss the way the Holy Spirit does make himself known to you. When you pray in the SPIRIT, give God permission to be God and not you, to manifest Himself to you as he chooses, not as you expect.

Inspirations and Promptings of the Holy Spirit

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you... The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you. John 14:16-17, 26

It is to the SPIRIT that we retreat to ask God to show us the truth and to teach us what is good. In pursuing truth and understanding the good the spiritual person turns to God first. They never cease "asking," never cease "seeking" what is true and what is good. There is a mortal danger in thinking that we know the truth and what is good, and in taking pride in our “knowing.” It quickly decays into self-righteousness and arrogance, and renders us spiritually blind. The truth and what is good is larger than our conception of it.

Jesus himself said that only God is good (Mark 10:18). It must be continually sought. Then view of it given as a gift.

God inspires you from within: to words and acts that witness to the truth and do good – to words and acts of compassion, generosity, reconciliation, justice and heroic love. If an inspiration comes to you, resolve to act upon it!

Thoughts of things you have to do and challenges you have to face may also come to you when you enter your SPIRIT. Don't let your mind dwell on them. Simply pray as each come to you: "Lord, when I have to face this, inspire me."

How does one recognize *the Holy Spirit* who *will be within you*? How does the Holy Spirit *instruct you and remind you of all that Jesus teaches you*? The movement of God's Holy Spirit in the interior spirit of a person is like the rippled movement caused by a breeze moving on the surface of calm water. It is a thought that rises, a tug or nudge to speak or act. This is the Holy Spirit inspiring and urging you to do or say something that love requires.

This raises an important question. When your Mind is still and sits quietly in your SPIRIT and listens with alert attention, you may hear many "voices." Many thoughts may come to your Mind. How do you know which of them is the authentic "voice" of God? Which thoughts are truly from God? God is an objective reality, not a subjective human construct (something you make up for yourself in your mind). God is not you and God is not *your idea* of who God is. This is why it is essential that you read the Scripture regularly – especially the Gospels. The Scriptures are God revealing His mind to humanity. The Scriptures are God's word – God's thoughts and judgments. Reading the Scriptures trains you in recognizing the authentic "voice" of God.

It is also essential that you join and live your spiritual life in communion with the Church. The Church is anointed by the Holy Spirit to guide you in discerning the "voice" of God among the other "voices" you may hear within you. The Bible says:

...you should know how to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth. 1 Timothy 3:15

If you enter your INTERIOR SPIRIT with the firm intent of "seeking" to learn from God what is good and "asking" Him to show you the truth, He will not fail you. The Bible says:

*Lord, you love truth in the heart, then in my inmost being teach me wisdom.
Psalm 51:8*