

FINDING THE HIDDEN TREASURE by Benignus O'Rourke

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Chapter 53 – A Bottomless Well of Love

Basil Pennington has an image of how stillness allows us to be open to the promptings of God's Holy Spirit. He says: *'I have noticed when a pond is greatly agitated by the breezes or the wind one can throw in a pebble, or even many pebbles, and there is no noticeable effect. When the pond is perfectly at peace and one casts a pebble into it the gentle waves spread in every direction until they reach even the farthest shore.'*

'I have noticed that in the greater quiet the thoughts, for better or for worse, are much more perceptible. When we are in the midst of a busy life many thoughts go in and out of our minds and our hearts, and we do not perceive the effect they are having upon us. When we come to achieve a deeper inner quiet then we are much more discerning. The way is open to follow even the most gentle leadings of the spirit and to avoid even the most subtle deviations that are suggested either by the self or by the evil one.'

'In deep prayer,' Basil Pennington continues, *'with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can hope to so establish this deep inner quiet that even in the midst of everyday activities this lively sensitivity will remain, and all activities will be guided by the call of grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit.'*

When we enter the deep silence, our prayer is a kind of standing still before God, a kind of gaze of love; being with God without the need to say anything. And at first, we have the feeling of losing ourselves in emptiness. But if we persevere and succeed in keeping still, gradually we will discover that in the silence, in the emptiness, there is a fullness that calms. We discover that the sacred space is full of the activity of God.

In this space, in this sacred leisure, we regain a freshness and nourishment, a feeling of well-being which draws us back with a deep hunger to this quiet prayer, which seems senseless to our active, busy minds, but which fills us with energy, purifying us of the rubbish we collect in our minds.

William Johnson, in his Letters to Contemplatives, writes that as the emptiness deepens, we carry it around always, *'when one is talking and laughing and teaching and walking and standing on the train. It is there when one goes to sleep at night and when one awakens in the morning.'*

This emptiness, what Johnson calls the void, becomes a spring of clear water welling up to life eternal and giving great joy. *'We come to realise the void has a source,'* he writes, *'and the source is Jesus, the Word Incarnate, the Inner Guest. And he is opening up the way to an even more immense and limitless and bottomless void which is the Father.'* We are not afraid of this emptiness, Johnson says. It is intensely creative, like 'a bottomless well of love'.

'At first it does not seem like love. You are the log soaked in water; and the fire of love is engaged in burning out the smoke or the dirt. But when this smoke clears away the log catches fire and becomes a living flame of love.'