



Guidance for a more Contemplative Outlook

These extracts show us what attitudes and practices prepare us for a more contemplative living, and what results from such a way of living.

Attentiveness

“If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not ‘washing the dishes to wash the dishes.’ What’s more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can’t wash the dishes, the chances are we won’t be able to drink our tea either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus we are sucked away into the future-and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life.”

-Thich Nhat Hạnh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*

Turn to God

“Without unambiguous times in the week and day when we are free to just appreciate the giftedness of life, to recognize ourselves as intrinsically loved creations of God’s joy, we will likely smother our capacity to simply appreciate life in God as an art and narrow ourselves to life in God as a task. Even during our tasks, wherever possible, we need to leave spaces to turn to God and simply appreciate the life in and around us. Our work and service at its best will grow out of this appreciation.”

-Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence*

Watch as Obstacles Dissolve

Something remarkable happens when we go on sitting through all the *but*'s, through all the thoughts, sensations, and emotions that we would so like to oust. Gradually they begin to feel less alien, less like obstacles in the way, rocks in the path. Our deepening awareness becomes a kind of dew, falling on everything equally, allowing everything to sparkle.

—Noelle Oxenhandler, “Ah, But the Breezes...”