

Outward Disciplines: SOLITUDE

**“Settle yourself in solitude
and you will come upon Him
in yourself.”**

-St. Teresa of Avila
16th c. Spanish mystic





Challenge of solitude

...Fear of being alone



- child new to the neighborhood... "no one ever plays with me"
- college freshman yearns for high school when he was the center of attention...
"Now I'm nobody"
- business executive sits in her office powerful yet feeling alone
- person lies in a nursing home waiting to "go home"...her friends have passed on

Loneliness

“...not being alone, but the feeling that nobody cares.”

Solitude/being alone

“...is the richness of self.”

LONELINESS

OR

SOLITUDE

Feeling like
somethings missing

Enjoying your own
company

A dull feeling
that follows you
around

A chance to be
with your thoughts

Yearning for the
company of others

Time away from
company

You feel as if no
one cares

Gives you time fo
self-care

Emotional concept
to overcome

Physical concept
that can be changed



**“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring Will
be to arrive where we started And
know the place for the first time.**

Most of the trouble in the world is
caused by people wanting to be
important.

— *T. S. Eliot* —

T.S. Eliot

“Where shall the world be found,
where will the word resound?
Not here, there is not enough silence.”

Only those who will risk
going too far can possibly
find out how far one can go.

T.S. Eliot

Solitude as a state of mind
Leading to outward action

“See, this alone I found, that God made human beings simple, but they have devised many schemes. If we possess inward solitude, we do not fear being alone, for we know that we are not alone. Neither do we fear being with others, for they do not control us.”

— Foster



Jesus and SOLITUDE

- Jesus spent 40 days alone in the desert after being baptized (Matt 4:1-11)
- Before choosing the 12 apostles he spent the night alone in the hills (Luke 6:1)
- Jesus withdrew in a boat to a deserted place apart from everybody (Matt 14:13)
- after the feeding of the 5000 Jesus went up into the hill by himself (Matt 14:23)
- following a long night of work, early in the morning, he rose and went out to a deserted place (Mark 1:35)
- after a period of intense, preaching and healing, Jesus instructs the disciples to “come away by yourselves to a deserted place.” (Mark 6:31)
- following the healing of a leper, Jesus withdrew to the wilderness and prayed (Luke 5:16)
- Jesus sought solitude in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46)



**ONLY IN SOLITUDE DO
WE FIND OURSELVES;
AND IN FINDING
OURSELVES, WE FIND IN
OURSELVES ALL OUR
BROTHERS IN SOLITUDE.**

- Miguel de Unamuno

**LET HIM WHO CANNOT BE ALONE BEWARE OF COMMUNITY...
LET HIM WHO IS NOT IN COMMUNITY BEWARE OF BEING
ALONE... EACH BY ITSELF HAS PROFOUND PERILS AND
PITFALLS. ONE WHO WANTS FELLOWSHIP WITHOUT
SOLITUDE PLUNGES INTO THE VOID OF WORDS AND
FEELINGS, AND THE ONE WHO SEEKS SOLITUDE WITHOUT
FELLOWSHIP PERISHES IN THE ABYSS OF VANITY,
SELF-INFATUATION AND DESPAIR.**

- DIETRICH BONHOEFFER -

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We need times of community AND times of seclusion

Solitude and Silence

Controlling the tongue



A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER.
– PROVERBS 25:11

Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6And the tongue is a fire. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. (**James 3:1-12**)

I said, 'I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will keep a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence.' I was silent and still; I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse, my heart became hot within me. While I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue: 'Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. (**Psalms 39:1-4**)

Solitude and Silence

Controlling the tongue



Ecclesiastes 5:1

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.



Solitude and Silence

Controlling the tongue

“Really holding one's tongue comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness and solitude. Only when we learn to truly be silent in solitude, are we able to speak the word that is needed when it is needed.”

St. Dominic

12th c. Franciscan - Spain

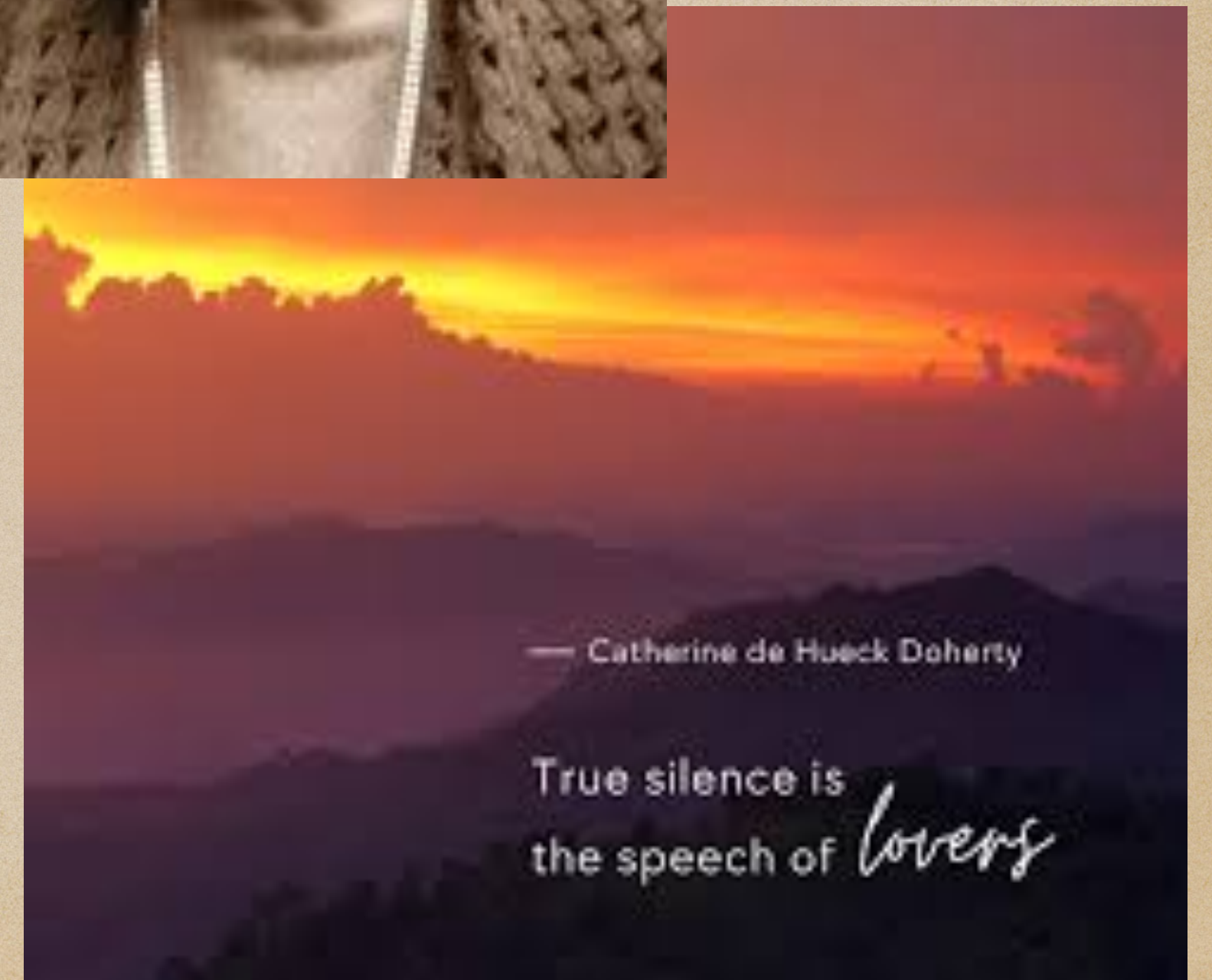


Solitude and Silence

Controlling the tongue

“All in me is silent, and I am immersed in the silence of God. It is in solitude that we come to experience the silence of God, and so receive the inner silence that is the craving of our hearts.”

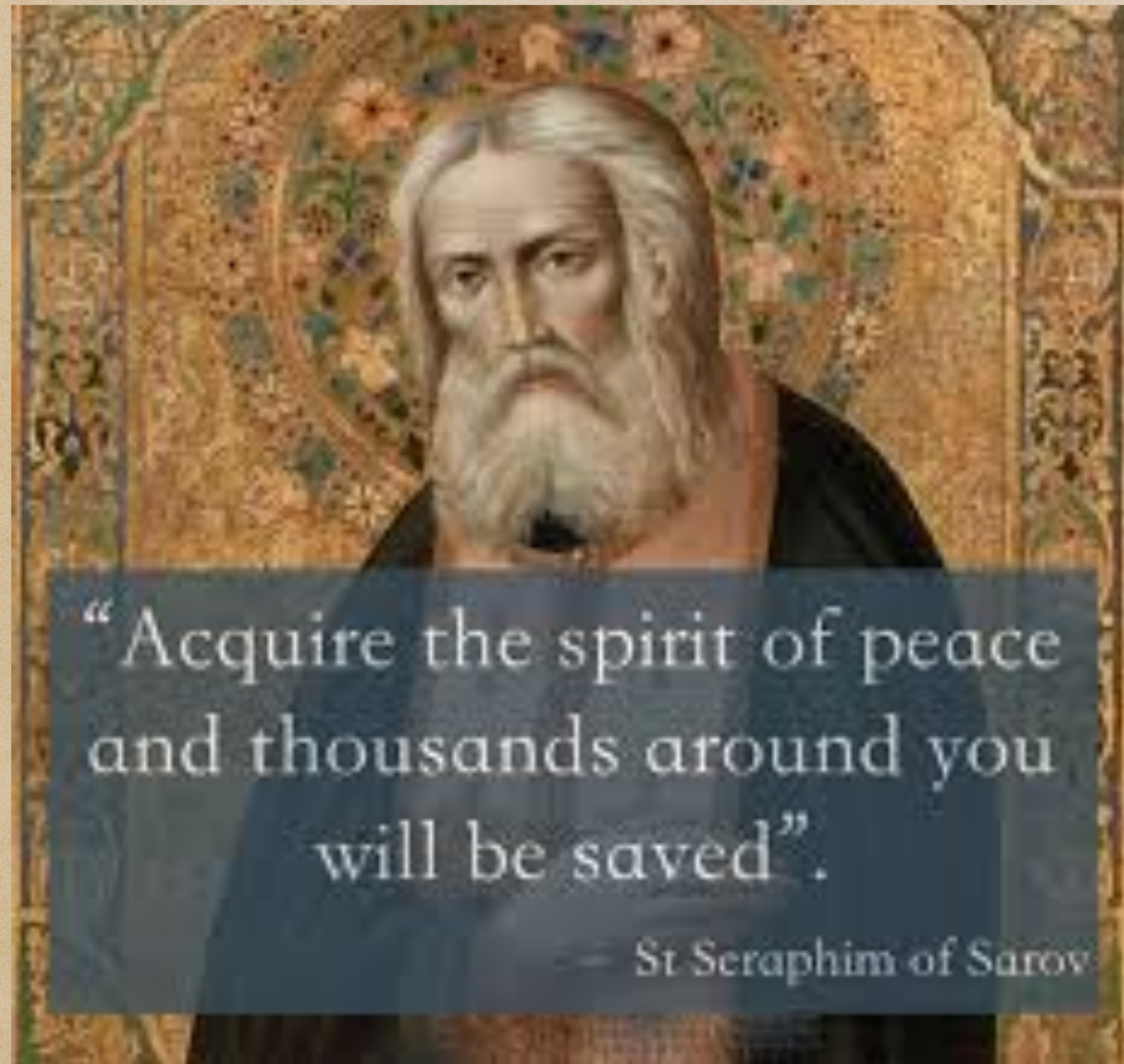
Catherine de Haeck Doherty
20th c. Russian contemplative



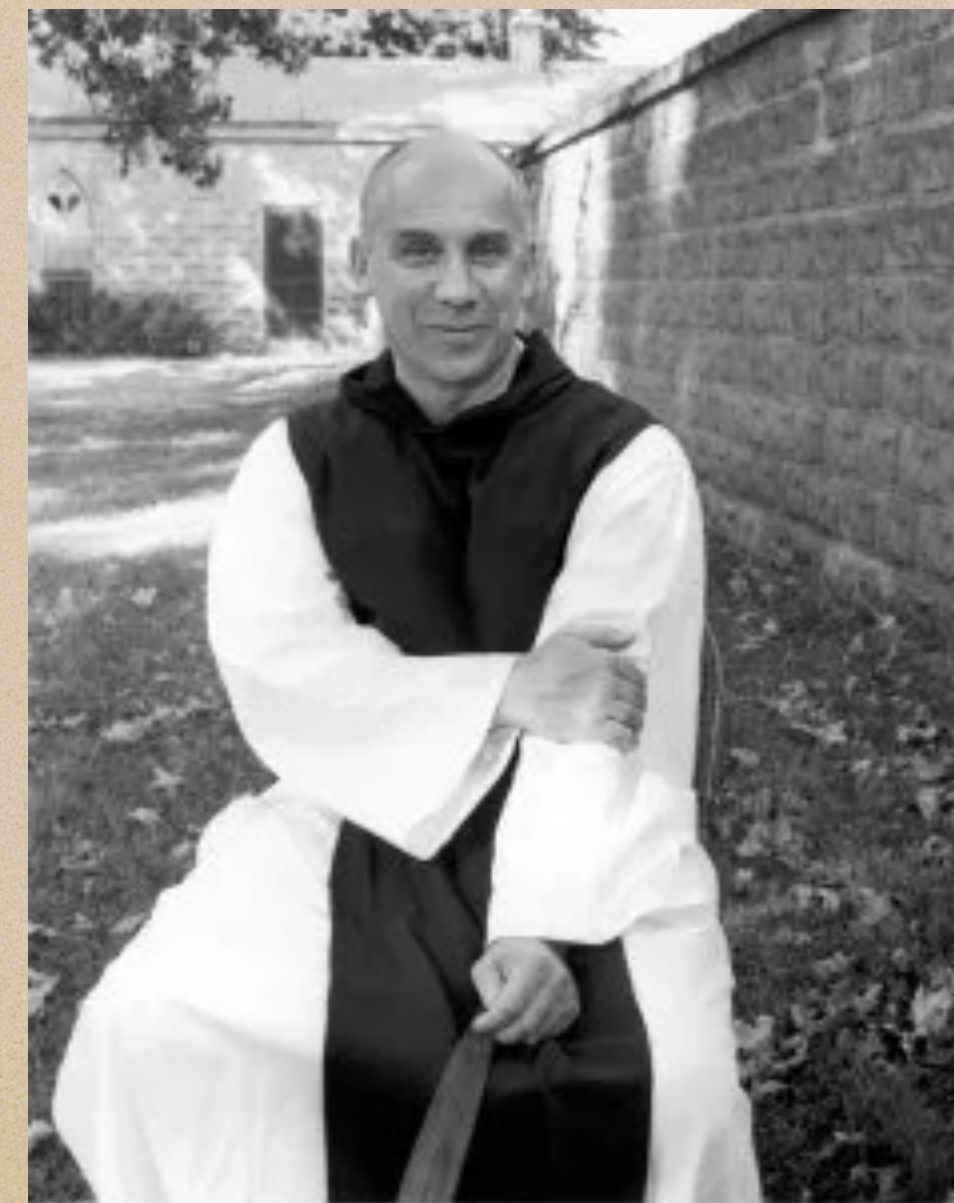
Steps into Silence and Solitude

1. Take advantage of the "little solitudes" filling your day.
 - Morning hours
 - During the day
 - At night
2. Develop a "quiet place" designed for silence and solitude.
3. Observe yourself in silence and solitude.
4. Go on a personal retreat. (What emerges?)

Solitude and Silence



“It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers. The more solitary I am the more affection I have for them. Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say.”



Questions to consider

1. Which steps might you find most helpful at this point in your life?

- Take advantage of the “little solitudes” filling your day.
- Develop a “quiet place” designed for silence and solitude.
- Observe yourself in silence and solitude.
- Go on a personal retreat.

2. What keeps you from solitude?

3. What practical re-ordering of your life could be done in order to create more space for God?

4. What experience in solitude would you like to have that you do not presently possess?