# Contemplative Life as Charismatic Presence

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If we would probe into the mystery of contemplative presence in the contemporary Church and world, and understand to some degree the significance of Vatican II's simple yet profound statement, "The contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence," it is necessary to examine what we mean when we speak of presence. There is nothing more real and engaging than presence when we experience it; nothing more elusive than presence when we attempt to analyze it. Presence is one of the most dynamic and traditional images of Christian faith. But how does our faith imagine presence? Can we carve out an image of presence? When we imagine something, we are telling ourselves how it looks to us. The creation of embodiment by the human imagination is the best source and possibility for the knowledge of anything, for there is no limit to the thoughts our images contain.[1]

In his play, *The Unfathomable*, Gabriel Marcel sketches two poignant images of presence. Shortly after World War II, a French woman talks with a priest about her presence to two men: one, her dead brother-in-law; the other, her husband recently repatriated from a German prison camp. Concerning her dead brother-in-law whom she loves, she says:

> When I think of him in a certain way – with tenderness, with recollection – there wells up in me something like a richer, deeper life in which I know he participates. This life is not I, nor is it he, it is both of us . . . But basically for you (the priest), the dead are no longer there; and your thoughts are no different from those who do not believe. Whatever be the glorious and unimaginable existence that you ascribe to them . . . for you they are no longer living. But for me – the truly dead, the only dead, are those whom we no longer love . . .

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Then Marcel has the woman reflecting on her husband whom she no longer loves:

> This feeling of absence that a dead loved one could not awaken in us I experience for my husband with a horrible intensity . . . He is always at a distance and that is not saying enough, for space itself does not separate those who love one another. He is not with me, we are not together; we are – let us say – like objects placed near one another, forever outside one another.[2]

Marcel's etchings set in sharp contrast what I would call presence in space and presence in spirit. We find ourselves prone to describe presence in terms of the local and temporal proximity of one body to another. Material juxtaposition of objects is what we first think of as an initial acceptance of presence. Even before we are conscious of it, presence in space-time is what focuses our thoughts, though we immediately realize that this does not encompass the mystery. Objects are not present to each other merely as located in the same place. People are not present to each other either as a crowd confined to one location. A group of nuns under the same roof, or limited to the space behind four walls, are not by the fact of this proximity present to one another, much less do they by this spatial nearness grow into a community among themselves or with anyone else. What is more, as long as our image of presence is spatial, we say with pity or with rage, "those poor, those oppressed, those torturers . . ." Those others are objects.

Presence is a subjective experience; it is primarily a kind of knowledge or awareness and not a purely objective relationship at all. At the root of presence is someone who takes me into consideration and whom I regard as taking me into account. Presence belongs only to the being who is capable of giving himself/herself.[3] Presence to the self, therefore, is a crucial issue, nor am I present to myself in an invariable way. On the contrary, I am often alienated or decentered. This means that presence is not just a given. It is not that others extend their presence to my subjectivity. I make myself present to them. Presence is a function of my subjectivity. Normally it is in relation to some facet of my own self-consciousness that I categorize and appreciate the presences I create outside me. The absolutely essential elements in the

perception of presence are my self-awareness concretized in a particular way in relation to someone outside my subjectivity with the resultant feeling of empathy. The most significant element in the experience of presence is empathy which is produced in a person through the instrumentality of a corresponding or correlating self-image or archetype. The key is that of the archetype, because archetypes ground the experience of presence.[4] In simpler words, the other, if I feel him/her present, renews me interiorly in some way. His/her presence is then revelatory: it makes me more fully myself than I could be without it.[5] This is why the philosopher Louis Lavelle can write: presence is "the discovery of one's own being through contact with another."[6] So we are speaking of a real but subjective event. We are indicating something spiritual, not something material, an empathy making for meaningful interpersonal contact. Thus presence is tied up with the mystery of person and with the interdependence of persons who make up the Body of Christ. Something of this is involved in the expression of Vatican II in its Mission document quoted above, "the contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence." (no. 18)

The background for such personal presence is God's initiative – God establishing his presence with his people in the covenant relationship of the Old Testament, and the Father fulfilling his promises and embodying his love in Jesus in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the divine presence is already seen as characteristic of God's covenant with his people, so much so that the whole covenant relationship is expressed by this dwelling of God among men and women. (Ex. 25:8; 40:34-38; Num. 35:34). This presence is activated by a love choice. (Deut. 30:15-20). We realize this initial stage of presence in divine revelation is spatial, localized. It is to be superceded by what Jeremiah calls a "new covenant" and this expression is the only passage where such a term is used in the Old Testament. It contains a deepening of the whole experience of presence and a contrast between this covenant and the older one. Jeremiah declares, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel when those days arrive – it is Yahweh who speaks – Deep within them I will plant my law, writing it in their hearts. Then I will be their God and they will be my people." (Jer. 31:31-33). Then there is a further development in Ezekiel, who some twenty years after Jeremiah took up the formula coined by his predecessors and substituted the term "spirit" for "law": "I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you . . . I shall put my spirit in you." (Ez. 36:26-27). The gift of the "Law engraved upon the heart" is identical with the gift of Yahweh's own spirit. "I shall put my spirit inside you, and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances." (Ez. 36:37). "They will no longer have to teach each other" because God himself will be their master who intends to be present and to act upon the human person from within. These two oracles of Jeremiah and Ezekiel proclaiming the presence of God and his Spirit in humanity profoundly influenced what we find in the New Testament, especially in Paul and John. Paul experienced this presence as perhaps the most significant new element in the Christian revelation, from the day of his conversion, "Then God, who had specially chosen me while I was still in my mother's womb, called me through his grace and chose me to reveal his Son in me." (Gal. 1:16).



Paul does not hesitate to apply to all Christians what he has said about his own experience. He formulates the idea of the Body of Christ in Romans 12:5, "So all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other." Then in Ephesians 1:23 he explains in greater detail. The Church is the "fullness of Christ," which means that she is filled with Christ as Christ himself is filled with God. The relationship between the Church and Jesus is analogous to that between Jesus and the Father. For both Paul and John this presence of Jesus in the Church and in every Christian is linked with the active presence of the Spirit.

For Jesus is, on the one hand, the culmination of the *presence* of the Spirit of God, (Mk. 3:38-39; Mt. 12:28 etc.); and, on the other, he is also the starting point for the sending of the Spirit. In Christ, the Spirit has, as it were, finally attained his goal, the new creation. There is only one instance in history where the Spirit found acceptance in a unique way, totally, undistorted, untarnished – in Jesus of Nazareth. In the power of the Spirit he is wholly a vessel for God's self-communication, so that he is God's love, the meaning of all reality, in person. Jesus is God's gift of love to humanity, for in Jesus we see the love of the Father embracing humanity *in its totality.* God's love claims Jesus totally for others, so that he is interested in only one thing: God's coming rule in love. Jesus' death, climaxing a ministry which was partial, limited and fragile, is the final spilling out of this one concern. It is the other side of the coming of the Kingdom of God – its coming in love. This extremity of emptiness enabling Jesus to become the vessel of God's fullness is the form in which the presence of the Kingdom exists under the conditions of this age: the kingdom of God in human powerlessness and finitude, wealth in poverty, love in desolation, abundance in emptiness, life in death.

Light falls from Jesus Christ on the rest of history; Jesus is for the Christian the measure and criterion for the discernment of spirits. Only through him and in him is it possible to share in the complete fullness of the Spirit's presence. The Spirit is the active presence of the Crucified and Risen Lord in the Church, in individual believers and in the world.[7] Thus Paul can write in Romans 5:5, "The love of God – the love with which God loves us – has been poured into our hearts by the Spirit who has been given us."[8]

Love is, therefore, the power that establishes presence, whether we

are thinking of God or ourselves, according to the principle, you are where you love. And St. John in his first epistle proclaims this:

> The way we know we remain in him and he in us is that he has given us his Spirit . . .
> We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.
> (1 John 5:13, 16)

So presence in the Church is a particular application of the charismatic indwelling of Jesus' Spirit in the hearts of his people, empowering them to be where the needs of the Body of Christ are: a generous and diverse giftedness fitting the members of the Body to attend to all needs. One cannot write the word charismatic without thinking of presence, since charism is the effect of the personal, continuing presence of Jesus through his Spirit. Charism is secondarily the passing, flamboyant burst of the Spirit in a life; radically it is a lifelong dialogue between Jesus' presence, his Spirit, and our individualized, predestined personality. St. Paul points all this out in the following passage where he attempts to channel for the upbuilding of the early Church, the energies which were emerging in the first Christian communities. He, moreover, answers the paradoxical need of the human person to be united with the whole cosmic process and, at the same time, to be unique in one's individuality.[9]

> There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one; to another to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues. But it is the one and same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills. (1 Cor. 12:4–12)[10]

These gifts enumerated by Paul are partial presences in that they extend to and care for some particular need. But among them is not found the gift of contemplation. Is this because this gift deepens and grounds every other gift? Because contemplation unites us and gives us a foundation to support and find meaning in our lives of struggle and festival, death and resurrection?

This is our problem and a source of existential anguish for us. Where in the charismatic picture do contemplatives fit? And how are *we* to be present today to the Body of Christ and to the overwhelming needs of



God's people which invade and plague our consciousness and seem to shake our very souls? We rattle the bars of our human finitude as the pressures for participation and immediate efficaciousness bombard us from every corner of the world. And we ask if our mortality is not a source of despair pointing to an unreachable dream.

No genuine contemplative can escape this struggle, this search for meaning in the contemplative role. Furthermore, no one can pretend that the achievement of personal identity is accomplished once and for all by any one generation or any person. Basically, we grow through a series of integrations and identifications achieved within the concreteness of contemporary history.

The classic example of this struggle is Therese of Lisieux. And her description of the anguish is no mere sentimental devotion characteristic of nineteenth century French piety, but the "groaning" or travail of creation seeking its redemption or liberation in her person. Somehow the existential powerlessness of the human condition, augumented by the inhibitions of cloistered structures, makes more urgent the discovery of an answer to the question of presence to need. Therese was not at all satisfied with her contemplative presence as she experienced it: "Carmelite, Spouse, Mother of Souls . . . But I feel the vocation of the fighter, the priest, the apostle, the doctor, the martyr," she exclaims. I want to carry the gospel everywhere and die every kind of martyrdom. "To satisfy me I need all."[11] The sorrow of finitude speaks here. How much latent humanity before us!

And we, can we be any different? In anguish we cry out, how can we be present to and help the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, the tortured? How can we effect the change of policies of exploitation, nuclear proliferation, armament buildup? What do I say to my own heart, for example, as I sit looking from my window over the teeming thruways of New York City or see the filthy streets and burnt-out tenements of the infamous South Bronx filled and surrounded with rot, decay and violence – the people, the beautiful children, the elderly, with no way out? What do we do with this perception of death? What do we do when we see this face of Christ Crucified? What do we contemplatives do with the pain of the world as we experience it in our prayer empathy? How do we live with the burden of so much awareness without surrendering to the pressures for efficaciousness on the one hand, or a self-protecting refusal of reality on the other? How do we handle the guilt we experience as we open ourselves to contemplative joy and wonder in the face of beauty, love, intimacy, growth; to that playful cast of mind that flowers in contemplative "being"?

"Oh my Jesus," Therese cries out, "how can I combine these contrasts? How can I realize the desire of my poor little soul? . . . What is your answer to all my follies? Is there a soul more little, more powerless than mine? Nevertheless, even because of my weakness, it has

pleased You, O Lord, to grant my little childish desires and You desire, today, to grant other desires that are greater than the universe."[12] It was St. Paul with his description of the variety of gifts who supplied her with the lead clue to the solution of a dilemma which had become for her a vocational crisis. She writes:

> During my meditation, my desires caused me a veritable martyrdom, and I opened the Epistles of St. Paul to find some kind of answer. I read there, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that all cannot be apostles, prophets, doctors, etc., that the Church is composed of different members, and that the eye cannot be the hand at one and the same time. The answer was clear, but it did not fulfill my desires and gave me no peace . . . Without becoming discouraged, I continued my reading, and this sentence consoled me: "Yet strive after the better gifts, and I point out to you a yet more excellent way." And the Apostle explains how all the most perfect gifts are nothing without love. That charity is the excellent way that leads most surely to God.
>
> I finally had rest. Considering the mystical body of the Church, I had not recognized myself in any of the members described by St. Paul, or rather I desired to see myself in them all.
>
> Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was burning with Love. I understood it was Love alone that made the Church's members act, that if love ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the Gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that love comprised all times and places . . . in a word, that it was eternal!
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> Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: "O Jesus, my Love . . . my vocation, at last I have found it . . . My vocation is love!"
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> Yes, I have found my place in the Church and it is You, O my God, who have given me this place; in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be love. Thus I shall be everything, and thus my dream will be realized.[13]

This is, undoubtedly, one of the finest examples of contemplative presence to all reality in Christ – not an escapist quest for some hazy and imageless transcendence; but an experience of reconciliation, transforming love and communion grounded in the great archetypal images which rise from Therese's existential depths: "I understood the Church has A HEART and THE HEART WAS BURNING WITH LOVE . . . LOVE comprised all vocations, embraced all times and places . . . My vocation is LOVE . . . in the HEART of the Church, my Mother, I shall be LOVE."



We can only point toward an analysis of this profound moment of illumination and integration that here and in the following pages of her autobiography finds such powerful symbolic expression. What is the significance of the unique and original way in which these images are dreamed, appreciated and ordered among themselves? With what invisible, inner values are they associated? What do they tell us about Therese's growth, and, therefore, about contemplation and presence, dark nights and union with God and his people? What do they tell us about ourselves, what resonances do they stir up within us? As Mircea Eliade observes: "Today we are well on the way to an understanding of one thing of which the nineteenth century had not even a presentiment – that the symbol, the myth and the image are of the very substance of the spiritual life . . . The power and the mission of the images is to show all that remains refractory in the concept."[14]

Time and the scope of this paper do not permit us to pursue the many possibilities available to us in contemporary hermeneutical theory and practice. In dwelling briefly, however, upon this decisive moment in Therese's life, I hope to indicate how contemplatives might apply a serious and insightful hermeneutic to mystical texts. There is hardly a more congruent extension of contemplative presence in the Church! If interpretation is, indeed, an act of mediating between the past and the future, as Josiah Royce says, then it necessarily will demand of contemplatives not only fidelity to tradition but also creativity; not only serious study, but also a mature contemplative prayer inescapably inserted into the concrete realities of contemporary history.[15]

To situate this text, it is essential to remember Therese is near the end of her spiritual journey, five months after her first hemorrhage and only a year before her death. Enshrouded in her dark night – the "trial of faith" and the long, silent night of terminal illness, she holds in her hands, so to speak, her own heart, only to find it a confusing center of so many opposing desires and conflictual feelings. In mortal anguish, with all the life and vitality of a twenty-three year old woman, with so much latent humanity doomed to death, she reaches for a way not to die, not to be limited, but to be immortal, to be a god. I see this as a struggle to believe in and grasp her own splendid uniqueness in "the scheme of things," her own individuality and specialness. And lest we be shocked by such self-consciousness, Ernest Becker reminds us that the desire to be *the* one, to make the biggest possible contribution to world life expresses the very heart of creation.[16] While I believe this urge to immortality in Therese has to be conditioned by her illness and approaching death, not to mention her upbringing as the little Queen of her father, the images that arise from the depths of her soul indicate it is not a simple reflex of the death-anxiety but a reaching out of her whole being toward life, meaning, and her own highest destiny. The

burning fire of her desires foretells a plenitude of life that will lift Therese out of her still narrow individuality and limited "I" and give her complete access to the intimacy of the "we," to the full meaning of the Body of Christ. She has yet to achieve a final depth of humanization and communion that is flowering in her soul's night.[17]

We might call this a crisis of heroism, growing out of a highly – though not completely developed – prayer presence to Christ and his people: "Carmelite, Spouse, Mother of Souls," she says of her role. With that courage characteristic of genuine heroism, she reaches out for ALL, for totality, for a way to break through the barriers of human finitude and answer all need everywhere. She does not evade the full intensity of life or longing; nor does she fear her own greatness and potential, even though it brings her to the brink of chaos – "a veritable martyrdom." Nietzsche writing about such an experience says: "One must . . . have chaos in oneself in order to give birth to a dancing star." And Rainer Maria Rilke echoes these words when he writes, "Works of art (and the human personality is the greatest work of art), always spring from those who have faced the danger, gone to the very end of an experience, to the point beyond which no human being can go. The further one dares to go, the more personal, the more unique a life becomes."[18] So Therese cries out as she opens herself to the fullness of experience and awareness: "My desires and longings reach even unto infinity . . . I feel the need and desire of carrying out the most heroic deeds for you." We may have here a mark of the genuine mystic: the refusal to partialize awareness, the ability to become increasingly present, more and more conscious and aware, without going mad.

One can only wonder in passing how much the basic archetype of childhood, which permeates Therese's spirituality and grounds her presence to God throughout her life, functions here in her uninhibited wishing, her unabashed honesty and self-presence. Is it the wise child within who leads her through the dark, creative places of the spirit to the transforming and fulfilling faith experience which explodes in symbolic illumination before us?

Carl Jung notes that the "great problems are always related to the primordial images . . . All the great events of life's highest tensions evoke these rich images and cause them to manifest themselves in conscious interior processes, once the individual has become sufficiently reflective and acquired the ability to understand his own vital experiences."[19] Thus when Therese's consciousness cannot resolve by itself the tensions set up by the intensity of life and desire within her, her imagination, stirred by Paul's image of the Body of Christ, lays hold of the primordial image of heart latent in the depths of her own being. It becomes for her a veritable epiphany! In appreciating with great inwardness the Heart of the Church, the Heart of Christ, the Heart burning, on fire like the sun, with love at the center of the



universe, she experiences her own heart, the wellspring and center of her being, transformed, harmonized and fulfilled by the unifying fire of love.

As a symbol of union and wholeness, *heart*, as Therese feels it, appears to be an image of the self. The self, not to be identified with the conscious, individual ego, is the center around which the authentic personality is built and the shaping power that seeks the full development of our being. This center embraces the whole of the psyche. The self is the total being that is seeking to come to birth in us and that corresponds to our own personality in its full and genuine form. But we must bear in mind that this total being is open to the fullness of being. To quote Jung again:

> The self is our psychic totality, consisting of consciousness and the limitless ocean of the soul on which consciousness floats. My soul and my consciousness – these make up the self, in which the ego forms a part like an island amid the sea or a star in the heavens. The self is thus infinitely more than the ego. Loving oneself should mean loving this totality, through the medium of which one would love all mankind.[20]

The self makes itself known to consciousness only by means of certain basic images, a few great unifying and illuminating symbols. Heart is one of these. When such a symbol rises in consciousness, then, to the extent that consciousness suddenly finds itself related to a transcendent fullness of life, we are justified in saying that a process of spiritual maturation and fulfillment is going on in the depths of the soul. The psyche is moving toward its full expansion, a new birth is underway. The symbolic manifestation of the self always points to a decisive moment in a person's life: the moment of illumination.

In such an experience a person's center of gravity shifts. It passes from the individual ego with its personal concerns to a depth at which the secret of personal being coincides with the secret of the universe. To be born anew is to be born to divine life and love and to the sacred part of oneself.[21] It is to celebrate one's fragile, finite, limited humanity as a vessel for God's love, for the fire of the Divine Sun; and it is to know by experience that one's presence to and communion with humanity is first and foremost an application of this love. "What being loved makes being do is precisely be," writes Frederick Wilhelmsen in *Metaphysics of Love.*[22] Therefore, the archetypal image of a human heart filled with love's fire, symbolizes a profound experiential harmony and solidarity between Therese's inner self, others, the world, and God. Fire is innate in the psyche. Its appearance, together with the heart image, within Therese in the context of inner fulfillment and communion, tell us that her longing for life and specialness, her passionate desires, her very affectivity, are purified, redeemed and

liberated for humanity in a breathtaking manifestation of the union of eros and agape. Carried into the heart of God, opened up to his divine perspective, to his love and plan for the world, she experiences her own heart, burning with love, as a vessel capable of bearing the whole weight of the world's history. Moreover, she feels herself to be the mystic center, energizing by its love, the whole of world life. The realization that love is the power that establishes presence flows out of her own inner experience. How she would thrill to Vatican II's affirmation in *Lumen Gentium*:

> Let no one think that religious have become strangers to their fellow men or useless citizens of this earthly city by their consecration. For even though it sometimes happens that religious do not directly mingle with their contemporaries, yet in a more profound sense these same religious are united with them in the Heart of Christ and spiritually cooperate with them. (n. 46)

Louis Lavelle expresses this thought by saying: "True influence is that of pure presence."[23]

Paradoxically, while experiencing and ultimately surrendering to her own fragility, brokenness, limitation and the death-dealing forces within her body, (as the poignant image of the unpetalling of the flower in this section reveals), Therese, by awareness or empathy, does break through the barriers of human finitude to a presence in spirit, a presence of love and compassion, that is universal, all-embracing, personal and Christ-centered.

Her discovery of meaning opens up the whole panorama of presence. Just as in Jeremiah and Ezechiel, new heart and new spirit become the expression of presence in the Old Testament, and as Paul in the New Testament speaks of the love of God "which has been poured out into our hearts by the Spirit which has been given to us;" so for Therese, the heart burning with love functions as the great archetypal image in the dynamic of grounding her presence to God and to all his people everywhere.

It is only such an experience that can assuage the guilt contemplatives feel today in the face of global helplessness. Only this kind of personal experience, moreover, explains the totality attributed to the contemplative role in the Church. It is one thing to state, as Pius XII did, that contemplatives have a universal apostolate, beyond the limits of time, place or occupation, because it identifies itself always and everywhere with all the interests of Christ;[24] it is quite another thing to experience it as Therese did.

Yet only an experience like this, coming out of the soul's night, brings about the kind of solidarity and compassion that changes the "I" of the contemplative into a "we" – enabling her to say "we poor," "we



oppressed," "we oppressors," "we torturers," "we manipulators." The poor, the oppressed, the lonely old people, the exploiters, etc., are objects until we are with them, until they are with us, until we are poor, too. In experiencing the Father's love embracing her humanity in its totality, the contemplative understands that her life-role derives its meaning from the all-inclusiveness of the humanity of Jesus. I submit that this final stage of identification with God's people is the fruit of what we have traditionally called the dark night of the spirit. Human limitation, fragility, brokenness, neurotic dependencies, etc., are the stuff of which it is made. Identified thus, as Jesus was, with the struggles of the human community in the concrete specifics of history here and now, the contemplative in her very person carries before the Father the wounded unfinishedness of human existence in confident expectation that he will bring life out of death. One with the Jesus whose fragile ministry ended in abandonment and death, and with his vision of hope for the kingdom of love and communion, she bears creation beyond futility into the Heart of God.

Since all this is a vision of faith, however, seldom or never to be rendered palpable in any spiritual manifestation, we contemplatives must necessarily embrace the prolonged anguish of this dynamic presence in spirit. The HEART burning with love will always bear a wound.

Contemplatives, consequently, in the spirit of solidarity will be praying not only for the poor, the oppressed – but WITH them – and thus bear witness to God's consuming desire over the centuries to be with his people. This communion in the heart of Christ is the image, the manifestation, of the brotherhood of all the peoples of the earth.[25] As such, it is the presence of the future now, the very embodiment of hope, and the presence of all that the human person and the human community aspire to be. This is why Vatican II in its document *Gaudium et Spes* says of the contemplative mission: "The Spirit calls some to give clear witness to the desire for a heavenly home and to keep that desire alive among the human family."[26] Thus, the responsibility of contemplative communities to be signs of hope, to keep deepening the hopes of humankind by embodying on the horizontal level the love they experience. Genuine love must have a body: this body is the love we have for one another.

We would be painting an incomplete picture of the dynamic of charismatic presence if, at the same time, we were not conscious of an accompanying phenomenon: human nature alienated, separated and hostile to this kind of love dynamic as it affects our concrete historical situation as contemplative women. Marcel has this to say: "There is a solitude, that of the great contemplatives, which is a communion and there are some pseudo-communions which are only alienation;"[27] and which show themselves in divisions, rivalries, jealousies and hostilities

that emerge among us. All true communion or presence in love maximizes diversity; whereas, hostility succumbs to the fantasy of the absolute black and white and employs that constraint which makes another person or group an object. I believe we contemplatives may not contribute to the breakdown of the body of love, no matter what pressures are brought to bear upon us from within or without. We must declare ourselves for the unbreakable brotherhood of final human destiny. In the face of threatening division and hostility, contemplative presence in the Spirit becomes a healing influence, a leaven, a unifying and reconciling power in the Body of Christ.

## Notes

1. William Lynch, **Images of Faith** (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1973).
2. Gabriel Marcel, **Presence and Immortality** (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 275, 277, 280.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 153.
4. Charles R. Meyer, **A Contemporary Theology of Grace** (New York: Alba House, 1971), pp. 47–81.
5. Marcel, **op. cit.**, pp. 238–239.
6. Louis Lavelle, **Evil and Suffering**, pt. 2, "Those Who Are Separated and United," (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 137.
7. Walter Kasper, **Jesus the Christ** (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), pp. 70, 256–267.
8. Stanislaus Lyonnet, "The Presence of Christ and His Spirit in Man," **Concilium**, Vol. 50, (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), pp. 93–106.
9. Ernest Becker, **The Denial of Death** (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 150 ff.
10. Also 1 Cor. 12:28–31; Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:7–12.
11. Therese of Lisieux, **Story of a Soul**, trans. John Clarke (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1975), pp. 192–193.
12. **Ibid.**
13. **Ibid.**, p. 193–194.
14. Mircea Eliade, **Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism**, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 11, 20.
15. Cf. Cardinal Eduardo Peronio's **Address to Contemplatives of Canada**, Montreal, Nov. 1977, p. 6.
16. **Op. cit.**, pp. 1–7.
17. Marcel, **op. cit.**, pp. 201–202.
18. Rainer Maria Rilke, **Letters**, (Stock: Paris), p. 167, quoted by Gaston Bachelard, **The Poetics of Space**, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 220.
19. Eloi Leclerc, **The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union** (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977) p. 65, quoting Carl Gustav Jung. **L'âme et la vie**, p. 66.
20. **Ibid.**, p. 69, 243, quoting Carl Gustav Jung, **L'homme à la decouverte de Son Ame** (Paris: Bucket-Chastel, 1963) p. 335.
21. Leclerc, **op. cit.**, pp. 68–71.
22. Willhelmsen, p. 139.
23. **Op. cit.**, p. 137.
24. **Sponsa Christi**, January 10, 1951.
25. Vatican II, **Ad Gentes**, n. 40.2.
26. **Ibid.**, n. 38.4.
27. **Op. cit.**, p. 27.