

An Advent Retreat via Zoom  
Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>

From your own home, join us for an Advent Retreat led by Fr Dennis Crowley. He will guide us on our 2023 journey into the mystery of Advent.

Since it is the very nature of a guided journey to have a destination, Fr Dennis will share his ideas, and experiences that have guided his own spiritual journey. The most pivotal experience was meeting Thomas Merton on Thanksgiving Day in 1967.

Fr. Dennis will intersperse our time together by offering a simple silent meditation practice that Tom taught him. He hopes it will give each of us a tool to enhance our Advent Longing with quiet peace in an often too hectic time of Christmas preparations.

Some of the pieces Fr. Dennis will refer to are attached to this email to use in your preparation for the Retreat.

## SHINING LIKE THE SUN

IN LOUISVILLE, AT THE CORNER OF FOURTH AND WALNUT, IN THE CENTER OF THE SHOPPING DISTRICT, I WAS SUDDENLY OVERWHELMED WITH THE REALIZATION THAT I LOVED ALL THESE PEOPLE. THAT THEY WERE MINE AND I THEIRS. THAT WE COULD NOT BE ALIEN TO ONE ANOTHER EVEN THOUGH WE WERE TOTAL STRANGERS.

IT WAS LIKE WAKING FROM A DREAM OF SEPARATENESS, FROM A DREAM OF SOME SORT OF ILLUSION OF SELF-ISOLATION.

SUDDENLY, I SAW THE SECRET BEAUTY OF ALL THESE PEOPLE SURROUNDING ME. I SAW THE DEPTHS OF THEIR HEARTS WHERE NEITHER SELF-DEFEAT NOR SELF-ACCEPTANCE CAN REACH. I SAW THE CORE OF OUR TRUE REALITY, THE REAL PERSON THAT EACH ONE OF US IS IN THE EYES OF GOD!

AND IT WAS AT THAT EXACT MOMENT THAT I WAS STARTLED BY THE QUESTION IF ONLY WE COULD ALL SEE OURSELVES AS WE REALLY ARE! IF ONLY WE COULD SEE EACH OTHER THIS WAY ALL THE TIME! THERE WOULD BE NO MORE WAR, NO MORE HATRED, NO MORE CRUELTY, NO MORE GREED, NO MORE EXPLOITATION!

THIS SENSE OF LIBERATION FROM THIS ILLUSORY ISOLATION WAS SUCH A RELIEF AND SUCH A JOY TO ME THAT I ALMOST LAUGHED OUT LOUD. I SUDDENLY WAS SURROUNDED BY THE IMMENSE JOY OF BEING HUMAN, A MEMBER OF A SPECIES IN WHICH THE DIVINE ITSELF HAD CHOSEN TO BECOME HUMAN SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME DIVINE.

AT THE SAME INSTANT, ALL THE SORROWS AND STUPIDITY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION SEEMED ABSOLUTELY TRIVIAL NOW THAT I REALIZED WHO WE ALL ACTUALLY ARE.

AND I THOUGHT IF ONLY EVERYBODY COULD REALIZE THIS! BUT HOW COULD IT POSSIBLY BE EXPLAINED? WHAT WORDS COULD I POSSIBLY USE? HOW COULD I EVER TELL PEOPLE THAT WE ARE ALL WALKING AROUND SHINING LIKE THE SUN?

THOMAS MERTON, CONJECTURES OF A GUILTY BYSTANDER