

From Victim to Witness: The Graced Ordeal of Afflictive Thoughts

As we try to sit silently before God we often experience anything but the silence we seek. Instead we can feel pummeled by afflictive thoughts. In this talk Fr. Martin Laird, O.S.A., author of *Into the Silent Land*; *A Sunlit Absence*; and *An Ocean of Light*, will look at the teachings of Evagrius, the great contemplative master of the 4th century Egyptian desert. Far from teaching us how to get rid of the thoughts that seem so defeating, Evagrius wants us to learn everything about these afflictive thoughts. As a result, our *relationship* with affliction changes as we shift from being victim to witness. This gradually declutters the mind and allows the silence of God to emerge as the simple and simplifying ground of our being.