

Monday Evening Lecture

***Vast Space, Vast Self: Reflections on Spirituality and Commuting in New York.***  
**with Chad Thralls**

August 2, 2021

**7:00 – 8:30 PM EDT**

**Suggested Donation \$20.00**

In this presentation, I explore the role that the size and scale of urban spaces play in opening the human spirit to prayer and contemplation. The spaces where we spend our time provide a spiritual landscape to our lives. They establish the horizon our spiritual selves inhabit. Beyond the physical limitations on the amount of space available to individuals in the city, many of us spend most of our time indoors in front of screens. In my experience, spending large amounts of time in small, indoor spaces narrows my focus to myself and my problems. It promotes rumination on the things in my life that are not going as well as I would prefer. In contrast, I feel very differently about what's going on in my life when I am outside, especially outside in an open space like a park. My claim in this presentation is that open spaces evoke the vast, spacious, contemplative self.

Chad Thralls is a Teaching Fellow in the University Core Curriculum at Seton Hall University. His research interests include the history of Christian contemplative spirituality, the practice of contemplation, contemplative pedagogy, and how the practice of contemplative spirituality is influenced by place, specifically the city. Recent publications include *Deep Calls to Deep: Mysticism, Scripture, and Contemplation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020. "From 'Get Out of My Way' to 'Shining like the Sun': Thomas Merton on Cities, Community, and Solitude." *The Merton Annual* 31 (2019): 146-157. "Urban Parks as Sacred Places: Pilgrimage, Solitude, and Access to Nature." *Studies in Spirituality* 28 (2018): 211-231. Chad grew up in West Virginia and when he is not in the city, he enjoys hiking in the mountains.