



BECOMING ALL FLAME: The Transformative Power of Contemplation

July 14-19, 2024
Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, MA

MARYKNOLL MISSION INSTITUTE, MARYKNOLL, NEW YORK 10545-0311

The Desert Fathers share a story: Abba Lot, A man of prayer, fasting and meditation, comes to Abba Joseph and asked: "What else can I do? Abba Joseph stood up, stretched his hands towards heaven and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said to Abba Lot 'If you will, you can become all flame.'"

Borrowing from this wisdom and the imagery of fire and flame, from the works of Teilhard de Chardin, we will explore how to deepen our spiritual practice to rekindle within us the fire of Divine Energy. Through communal contemplative practice and various processes used throughout the program, we will deepen our understanding of our role in the evolutionary process. We will strive to imagine how we can contribute to holding the planet in love, as we live through this time of what is being called the **Meta Crisis**.

Resource Person: Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, MA, received her Master's Degree from St Mary's University, Winona, MN, in Human Development with a concentration in Theology and Economics. In 1977, Nancy joined NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby founded by Catholic Sisters. She became a researcher/lobbyist working on national and international issues. In 1982, Nancy was named Executive Director of NETWORK, continued her research and took on speaking engagements on Catholic Social Justice Teachings. After 15 years at NETWORK, Nancy was elected to Leadership in her Congregation (1994) and eventually became the President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (1998).

All of these experiences brought Nancy to the realization that new ways were needed to effect change, a new way of responding, one that is rooted in our deepest selves. The world, thought Nancy, is at a critical moment and it demands a new consciousness. In 2002, Nancy founded the INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNAL CONTEMPLATION AND DIALOGUE (ICCD). The aim is to experience a relationship between the insights of the Social Sciences, evolutionary theory with our experience of faith and spirituality. Nancy is committed to the transforming power of communal contemplation in one's life and the life of the community. This enables a shift in consciousness, which is so necessary on our evolutionary journey, and in engaging the critical issues facing us. We are called to foster dialogue, have inclusive relationships, all with

compassion and justice. ICCD believes that with an expanded consciousness rooted in contemplation we are invited into the realm of transformation. ICCD is in its third decade with new resources and program. For more information go to www.iccdinstitute.org.

Suggested Readings

Bourgeault, Cynthia. **Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening**. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 2004.

_____. **Eye of the Heart, A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm**. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2020.

Bruteau, Beatrice. **The Grand Option**. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2001.

Cassidy, Laurie and Copeland, M. Shawn. **Desire, Darkness, and Hope, Theology in a Time of Impasse, Engaging the Thought of Constance FitzGerald, OCD**. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2021.

Deignan, Kathleen CND and Osgood, CND, Libby. **Teilhard de Chardin, a Book of Hours**. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2023.

Delio, Ilia. **The Not-Yet-God**. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2023.

Keating, Thomas. **The Human Condition-Contemplation and Transformation**. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999.

King, Ursula. **Christ in All Things**. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016

Sylvester, IHM, Nancy. Her reflections can be found at www.iccdinstitute.org. Click on Contemplation and Nancy's Blog to read about contemplation.

Application forms and program descriptions may be found on our website:
<http://www.maryknollsisters.org/missioninstitute>