




## "Flee distraction; search only God<sup>1</sup>"...

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- In order for there to be a Christian unity in our lives, there must be a supernatural motive of everything we do.
- If we don't flee distraction, we cannot be a contemplative; be it a religious, lay or secular.
- If we search *only* God<sup>1</sup>; being a religious, lay, secular, we will be a contemplative.
- *Only God* - is found in our (undistracted) duty of state, making for example the laundry chores - as a Father of a family - as a Mother - as a Priest - as a Brother Carthusian - as a Father Carthusian in his cell - as a Child helping - as a Centenarian slowly.
  - The difference is in the Rule for the religious, the chores for the family, the job for the employee of the Laundromat; but undistracted from any futilities, interior or exterior. - *Only God* is for all, all the time; it is our eternal *duty*, repose, peace, *Quies* and life as creatures.
- If you do the laundry for yourself (being a religious or a lay person), while you are not doing it for God Only, ...you are being distracted by the illusion that you are doing something apart, secular; there must be a supernatural motive in order for there to be a Christian unity in our lives. Everything passes, *Love Only* remains; love is contemplative, unitive, spousal, filial, friendship, communion, eternal, unfathomable.
  - *Flee distraction (from this world's secular godlessness)*; search only God in what you need or are called by duty to accomplish, live in this "secular world" as if not living here, apart, but only with God .
  - The monks in a monastery, flee the "world" to search only God; the lay contemplatives flee the "worldly" distractions, the any "futility" *distraction*, as possible, to search only God's presence and communion in their duty of state, whatever it may be, peacefully, during all their life; the monk in a monastery does the same but has a rule or customs (few distractions, many reminders – humble heart – deepen the connection with self, feel in Gods care - contrary to the ordinary world - metanoia), the lay contemplative has his customs or rules to facilitate the fleeing of distraction and the search for God in their duty of state (few distractions, many reminders – humble heart – deepen the connection with self, feel in Gods care - contrary to the ordinary world – metanoia). It just happens that lay contemplatives navigate the open "secular" world, and the monks navigate the "protected" clausura environment, but the difficulties are the same: fleeing distraction to search only for God. Flee distraction is the necessary first step; search only God the sole objective of human life. Seek God (*quaerere Deum*).
  - To seek God, experience is that 1<sup>st</sup>, we need to flee distraction (ascetism); and then, systematically, *only*; we are in a good position to find only God (mysticism).
  - Could one think that being *secular* means an *access to God* adapted to secular life with more wine, steaks and movies for example? Without proper *discernment*<sup>3</sup>, that could describe one of the side roads leading nowhere, from the *Mount of perfection* teachings of Saint John of the Cross, NADA<sup>2</sup>.
  - As an example: to "Drive the car" or "Seek God" – we need to "get out of the house" "sit in the car" "buckle up" "wear our glasses" etc. But in fact we need to "*flee distraction*" (*we can't remain on the couch looking at TV to drive the car*); then "search only God" – drive only the car. Maybe for some, fleeing distraction is a


"no brainer", but for me, I have to apply myself to the 2 steps: "Flee distraction; search only God"... and the better I "Flee distraction;" the more focused I "search only God"; the better I get away from the TV and "sit" in the car the more probable I will drive the car.

- There is no such thing as authentic "secular" spirituality if there isn't "Flee distraction; search only God", within the open world's "uncloistered monastery" for the rest of us, in God's creation. A physical living monastery is an exemplary microcosm of what must be done *interiorly* in the "uncloistered monastery" for the rest of us. Our "secular" state requires a same fleeing to the spiritual *interior* desert, "Fleeing distraction; to search only God"; there is no "secular" "non NADA" way. The challenge for us lay faithful is to find same "customs" to "Flee distraction; search only God" *interiorly*, but in the open world's wilder environment. But the principle "Flee distraction; search only God" cannot be diluted, otherwise we will not drive the car, but could/would *wishfully* say, while couched in front of TV (distracted life) - "I seek God". I *know* this wishful "seek God" exists, I experienced it. Metanoia - "Flee distraction; search only God", is probably an authentic way to apply "*quaerere Deum*" and NADA<sup>2</sup>.
- I would like to say that "there is a "secular" way" - but the truth is, I think: "there is a secular *interior life* challenge", and it is immense, like Abraham's Faith, but possible only with God's Grace. And the *Quies* SBPCLC is not going to be "carthusian" if "Flee distraction; search only God" - NADA<sup>2</sup> - is not at the principle of interior metanoia, within a normal exterior everyday life (as Mary), in the "secular" open world.
- I think that this reflection will need to continue to develop, to deepen its documentation on particular situations, and ultimately that: "Flee distraction; search only God" could help "*Acquire a peaceful (Quies) spirit, and thousands around you will be saved.*" Saint Seraphim of Sarov 

Hopefully the individual reflection on SBPCLC Lay contemplative spirituality will be nourished here. In the "uncloistered monastery" for the rest of us: 1- *Flee distraction*; 2- search only God. 3- Duty of State/SBPCLC customs. 4- Contemplation. That parallels the [5 steps](#).

***In doubt***, we should do, *at the present moment*, within our duty of state, *what is best conducive to a spirit of peace*, *Quies*, prayer or union with God, as that is the vocation of the SBPCLC.







To conclude, the *Quies* SBPCLC project as required by the 11 guidelines; is living *at the present moment*, within our duty of state, "real time" *continuous*; through sage, tried and tested, balanced customs; sometimes crucifying, *life within God's Wills*; a pure *Fiat*, our continuous personal *Laudem Gloriam*<sup>4</sup>, in the open world. It is not armchair theology, not part time, nor modernist or syncretic mysticism. Our *customs* need to be from the tested paths of Christ's Mystical Body's Magisterium, experienced and documented in the spiritual life of the Saints and the Doctors of the Church. Only by traveling the path which lasts a *lifetime*, can we appreciate the simplicity and the redemptive scouring, of authentic desert fathers monasticism as lived in the Charterhouse, and of human life. About the relationship between "*fleeing distraction and interiorly searching only God*" within our duty of state - we can say that:

- *Quies*, or contemplation, is not a theoretical "armchair" subtle intellectual understanding of the learned, neither a technique where then could be separation of moments between secular activity with contemplative spiritual moments in our life; rather lay spirituality the same as in monastic spirituality<sup>5</sup>, remains a concrete *continual praxis* of the heart and the will, supported by customs; an essential aspiring interior loving union of Will with God, fleeing *exterior* and *interior* distraction/futility; it is not theoretical knowledge or a technical feat happening in the mind or the body, rather it is an [unknowing](#) , a

collaborative abandonment, a participation to God's Will, and a continual love – by the NADA<sup>2</sup> path as Saint John of the Cross teaches. Just *sit* (or "flee distraction") and *Love God, in His Will, at the present moment*, within our duty of state, be it in a monastery or out in the open world as a [SBPCLC](#).

- "A certain brother went to Abba Moses in Scete, and asked him for a good word. And the elder said to him: Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything."
- The fruits of prayer described by Paul the Apostle are: *love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness, self-control, and purity*. (Galatians 5 :22-23).



1. **Only God:** God alone | God only | *Soli Deo* | *Deus solus* | to be only in God's Will
2. **NADA:**  |  | [Saint John of the Cross Mount of perfection](#) 
3. **Discernment:** *We came from Palestine to Egypt and went to see one of the fathers. He offered us hospitality and we said, "Why do you not keep the fast when visitors come to see you? In Palestine they keep it." He replied, "Fasting is always with me but I cannot always have you here. It is useful and necessary to fast but we choose whether we will fast or not. What God commands is perfect love. I receive Christ in you and so I must do everything possible to serve you with love. When I have sent you on your way, then I can continue my rule of fasting. The sons of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them; when he is taken away from them, then they will fast."* [Sayings of the Desert Fathers](#)
4. **Laudem Gloriam:** Her soul had been so deeply touched by grace that God's presence became the pivot of all her hopes, uniting her love to his divine love. God's love took her out of herself, giving her a perspective of eternity which enlarged the whole meaning of her earthly life and its ultimate destination in eternity. As a Carmelite she would say, 'I have found my vocation ... since I shall be eternally a Praise of Glory, I want to be *Laudem Gloriam* here on earth'. [Elizabeth of the Trinity, The Charism of her Prayer](#) , Jean Lafrance. Chapter 4.  
 In his Apostolic Letter [Rosarium Virginis Mariae](#) , Pope John Paul II had the following to say: "*The West is now experiencing a renewed demand for meditation, which at times leads to a keen interest in aspects of other religions.... Much in vogue among these approaches are methods aimed at attaining a high level of spiritual concentration by using techniques of a psychophysical, repetitive and symbolic nature.*" Father George A. Maloney, S.J., Director of Contemplative Ministries in Seal Beach, California; wholeheartedly agrees with this assessment and points out the dangers and pitfalls of such an approach, divorced from Scripture and Tradition (both East and West). The wisdom of the desert Fathers and Mothers comes to our aid in helping us to discover the hidden reality in the world, ourselves and ultimately in the Triune God who dwells in the heart of the believer who seeks a deeper relationship with God in prayer. The contemplation of the "mystics" is not reserved to those who live in convents, monasteries and hermitages. It is for everyone everywhere, in the midst of the turmoil of daily life. In this work, "[Discovering the Hidden Reality: A Journey into Christian Mystical Prayer](#)"  he shows us how -- without a lot of methods and techniques -- we can enter into this deeper form of prayer and thus "*pray always*."

## Further reading on *fleeing distraction, keeping silence, Quies*

- Excerpt from: [Prayer of the Heart: The Contemplative Tradition of the Christian East](#) , by George Maloney, S.J.

*"Solitude is the withdrawal from the multiplicity of 'worldly' cares to enter into a oneness with God. Such a withdrawal admits of **many degrees**. Arsenius, one of the early monks who left the Byzantine court to flee into the desert, had heard a voice telling him to 'fuge, tace et quiesce,' 'flee, keep silent and be at rest.' These three injunctions are more or less at the core of the hesychastic spirituality. They demand a fleeing, a withdrawal from the spirit of the world and a silence, at least an interior silence of the heart. The Quies (hesychia in Greek) is the necessary tranquility wherein the total being becomes integrated, so that there is no more self-seeking dispersion of the passions in all directions. Everything is coordinated and under the influence of grace."*

*"Both silence and solitude, therefore, must be interpreted in hesychastic language in symbolic form to embrace various levels of attentive listening to God's word as it is being spoken within the individual and in the events of everyday life. Besides the evident physical withdrawal and maximum 'aloneness' that the hesychasts continually prized and eagerly sought after, they taught a silence and solitude that highlighted a movement inwardly toward a more spiritual listening to God's indwelling presence. This second stage of withdrawal, as Archimandrite Kallistos Ware describes, is the spirituality of aloneness and silence in the monk's cell. This is a 'localization' in a physical sense, within a community of monks or even lay persons living in the world wherein one turns into a quiet place and cuts off further communications with others in order to stand in a state of alertness and remembrance of God's presence."*

*"The true silence and solitude that are necessary for not only monks but for all Christians, regardless of their style of life, are summarized in the phrase 'return into oneself.' This is a state of soul where the real desert is found in the heart. St. Basil describes such a return to oneself:*

*'When the mind is no longer dissipated amidst external things nor dispersed across the world through the senses, it returns to itself; and by means of itself it ascends to the thought of God.'*"

*"This is the stage of silence and solitude that brings about a true inner stillness and a state of attentive listening and total surrender to God's word heard in the depths of one's being."*

- [Prayer of the heart](#)
- [Quies](#)