

Why We Renounce Ourselves

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An excerpt from John Main OSB in “Why We Renounce Ourselves” in THE WAY OF UNKNOWING (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 11.

When we meditate, not only do we stand back from the individual operations of our being, but we begin to learn to find a wholly new ground to stand on. We discover a rootedness of being which is not in ourselves, because we discover ourselves rooted in God. Rooted in God who is Love. All this happens because we learn the courage to take the attention off ourselves. We learn to stop thinking about ourselves and to allow ourselves to be. To be still, to be silent, is the lesson and in that stillness and silence we find ourselves in God, in love.

After meditation: “What It Takes” by Margaret Gibson in NOT HEARING THE WOOD THRUSH (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018), p. 31.

What It Takes

The fire won't light—no kindling—
so I twist and ball the daily news, then add

the darker moments of my childhood,
hair from my hairbrush,
hollow laughter, and then like wisps of lint
from the trap of the clothes dryer,
whatever remains in me of aspiration,
expectation, longing.
It takes a while to penetrate
the great truth of fire's benevolent
destruction, what it
teaches as the logs at last ignite
and a ruff of radiance surrounds
each dense and materially
worthy or unworthy
thought of mine that clutters
the infinite space of the heart—the heart,
which only wants to open.
My god, what it takes to ignite the dross
of cherished illusions—then
stay put and watch the burning.
The sound is of wind over the vast star fields.
Forgiveness may be like this. Also, grace.

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