

# The power of spiritual knowledge

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Spiritual knowledge is the result of total attention: Set your mind on God's kingdom before everything else and all the rest will come to you as well. (Mt 6:33) Spiritual knowledge is a way of perception that arises from a clear and awakened center of consciousness: Be still and know that I am God. (Ps 46:10) It arises from stillness rather than just from intellectual activity, and it is marked by the contemplative qualities of silence, stillness and simplicity.

Spiritual knowledge is not the same as religious belief. Religious belief without spiritual knowledge can be very empty and hollow. Spiritual knowledge is the result of total attention which we could describe as a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything as Mother Julian described it. If something costs everything, what are we left with? Nothing. In the two parables Jesus uses to describe the kingdom of Heaven the treasure buried in the field, the pearl of great price the person sells everything, everything, to buy the pearl or the treasure. There is this direct relationship between having nothing and having everything, between poverty of spirit, the first of the Beatitudes, and the kingdom of God.

That's why we let go of everything. And that's why in all the great mystical traditions, terms like nothingness, emptiness, poverty, describe what we encounter on the journey. Nada! Nada! Nada! says St John of the Cross; or Cassian: By the continuous repetition of this single verse, you renounce all the riches of thought and imagination, and come with ready ease to the first of the Beatitudes, poverty of spirit. So our meditation is on this wavelength of mystical wisdom, of spiritual knowledge.

**After meditation: poem by Annie Lighthart in IRON STRING (Monmouth, OR: Airlie Press, 2013), p. 3.**

## THE SECOND MUSIC

Now I understand that there are two melodies  
playing,  
one below the other, one easier to hear, the other  
lower, steady, perhaps more faithful for being less  
heard  
yet always present.

When all other things seem lively and real,  
this one fades. Yet the notes of it

touch as gently as fingertips, as the sound  
of the names laid over each child at birth.

I want to stay in that music without striving or cover.  
If the truth of our lives is what it is playing,

the telling is so soft  
that this mortal time, this irrevocable change,

becomes beautiful. I stop and stop again  
to hear the second music.

I hear the children in the yard, a train, then birds.  
All this is in it and will be gone. I set my ear to it as  
I would to a heart.

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