The courage born of solitude

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An excerpt from Letter One" by Laurence Freeman OSB in COMMON GROUNDS (New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 17, 18.

Holiness demands courage, the courage born of solitude. Until that courage is born in us, we cannot reach the goal for which we thirst and strive for most deeply. Until we are conscious that we participate by right in the community of God and God's universe, we can enjoy no great *shalom*. Obedience to religious rules and conventions are not manifestations of holiness in themselves. They are preparations for an experience which unfolds in life and in relationships, which expresses itself above all in compassion and unlimited friendship. In itself, it is the opening of the eye of the heart. It removes the film of ignorance that clouds insight into the true nature of reality. [. . . .]
When insight dawns, we feel relief, exultation, and delight. Sheer joy. Holiness grows through insights at all levels of our life and consciousness. But it is deepened by the fundamental insight that happens when we see through ourselves. This comes when the brick wall of the ego yields to the mind of Christ. Our isolated individuality, with its inherent sorrow, expands to reveal true individuation, showing that we are indivisible parts of the great whole. Fixation on our own sinfulness or on the sins of others is absorbed in the perception of God as all in all.

After meditation: "Weekend in the Underworld" by Franz Wright in WALKING TO MARTHA'S VINEYARD (New York" Knoph, 2004), p. 50.

WEEKEND IN THE UNDERWORLD

Once I held your face
in my hands, I saw through
space

Poor spirit
drifting off now

like smoke in pouring rain
Wait—
Are you there? *Everywhere. I'm everywhere*