

## CONTEMPLATION AND SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP

by Rev. SeiFu Anil Singh-Molares

Whether it's prayer, meditation, dancing, singing or another form, contemplation is central to our calling as spiritual directors and companions. Contemplative immersion soaks us in the beyond, saturating us with the infinite, the very process we try to invite and manifest in our practice as spiritual companions. And although it is ineffable and beyond description in its essence, it certainly lends itself to the poetry of language, which provides tantalizing invitations for us, and the people we companion. Of course, mystics have also demonstrated it in various other ways over thousands of years.

Any of us coming out of deep contemplative retreats have had cause to reflect on this in (and at) some depth.

Contemplative practice is like going for a swim in many respects. As we splash through the shallow end of the beach, we jump in and immerse ourselves, before proceeding to swim out a bit. What characterizes us spiritual companions is that we tend to swim farther and farther out. And as we do, when we look back at the shore, things that weren't immediately apparent start to come into view: houses, trees, mountain ranges, and the like. Instead of seeing just the beach itself,

we start to see the shore, and our views begin to extend from yards and meters to miles and kilometers. At the same time, people and things that were readily apparent on the shore begin to fade into specks, and then disappear altogether. In short, our perspective shifts dramatically, expanding and contracting at the same time. We see more of the larger picture, and less particulars, allowing us insights as we continue both outward and inward swims simultaneously.

But the dramatically enhanced perspective doesn't end there, because as we turn to the other side, most often what we will soak in is the blue sky and the blue sea or ocean, vast, and seemingly infinite. And we will feel like solitary, miniscule specks in the face of eternity.

Just as we are!

The relevance of these deep contemplative incursions (and excursions at the same time) to our practice as spiritual companions is significant.

Like the deep water swimmers that we are, we gain perspective on our lives, and their comparative importance (or perhaps better

*continued on next page*

said “lack thereof”) the more we immerse ourselves in our contemplative practices. Our prayers, meditations, and other contemplative approaches help us gain insight into the bigger picture. On the relative level, as we swim out, we also witness our own personal, and often trivial, concerns as just that—small, and part of a much larger and interconnected fabric between all beings and things. As this fabric reveals itself to us, we can breathe even more deeply, so that we might acknowledge that our worries are really much less concerning than we sometimes believe. Of course, we should certainly address them, but keeping in mind their context, and how they seamlessly interweave and interconnect with those of others.

And again, as we turn our sights to the endless sea and boundless sky, we see an even bigger picture, that of eternity itself. This helps us with issues of life and death, and ultimate meaning, our central concern as spiritual companions and directors.

These contemplative practices feed what we can bring to our companions, by inviting them to reflect and live into their own immersions with God and the Beyond, so that

they too may gain the perspectives and insights that flow from those discernments. And so that they might feel more at ease with the temporal and the infinite, in one and the same breath.

Of course, this picture would not be complete without mentioning that deep water swimming requires good skills! We have to learn to swim at our own pace and measure. And to discover our limits, so that we may become aware of when we need to turn back to shore, lest we risk drowning.

So it is that even seasoned directors and companions need to be accompanied, and supervised, ourselves, in much the same way that we do for our own companions. Because ultimately, we are all in this together, bound and liberated one and all in the flow of the endless.



Rev. SeiFu

“When we take a contemplative turn out to the endless sea and boundless sky, we see an even bigger picture, that of eternity itself.”

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A large, leafless tree stands in silhouette against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. The tree's branches are intricate and spread out, filling the left side of the frame. The background transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a darker teal at the top.

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# THE WILD GOOSE

really  
i was only going to  
check the lectionary  
just before  
i went to bed  
then Boom!  
the words  
hot, red like Pentecostal passion  
like lava  
pouring  
from the center  
of my soul  
sleep overtook me  
yet i woke  
writing the next  
paragraph  
in my head.  
O Wild Goose,  
i am forever  
drawn to  
Your Mysterious Flight



Following a career as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, **Kate Stulce** completed the Shalem Program for Spiritual Guidance and joined Spiritual Directors International. She is the author of *Dream in Progress*. She and her husband reside on a farm in Tennessee.

## Waking up is a lifetime endeavor...

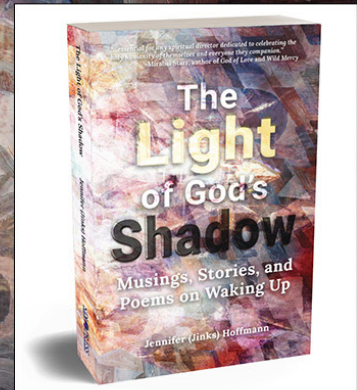
Written by Jennifer  
(Jinks) Hoffmann,  
Psychotherapist and  
spiritual director.

## The Light of God's Shadow

Musings, Stories, and  
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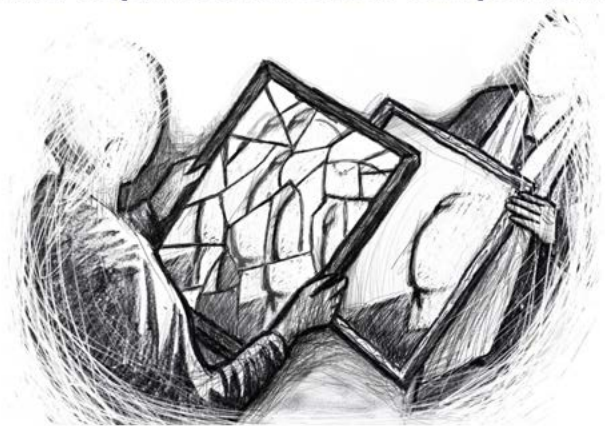
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# SPRING AFTERNOON

Red tailed hawk  
Screeches across the brilliant blue sky  
looking for her supper.  
Two geese silently come to rest  
along the creek bed.  
A dove in the near distant trees  
calls out a love note seared with  
longing.  
Closer by, an inchworm makes her way  
Up the leg of my lawn chair.  
And who am I?  
Just a witness,  
to the immense beauty  
of an afternoon in spring.  
A soul caught between  
The inch worm of earth  
And the hawk of heaven.  
In the thick and thin lines  
Between being and becoming.



Maryann Joyce enjoys bringing creative expression to her work as a retreat leader and spiritual director. She is a cancer survivor and finds it a privilege to companion those who have experienced loss or illness.

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A stunning infrared image of the Cosmic Cliffs nebula (NGC 3324) captured by the James Webb Space Telescope. The image shows a vast, turbulent region of star-forming gas and dust, with bright orange and red hues dominating the foreground. Numerous bright stars are visible, some with prominent diffraction spikes. The background is a deep blue space filled with countless distant stars.

“To understand nothing takes time.”  
(Zen proverb).

“Cosmic Cliffs”  
star-forming region called NGC 3324, captured in infrared light by NASA’s new James Webb Space Telescope  
Image credit: NASA, ESA, CSA, and STScI



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