

Darkness in the Marketplace

Fr. Thomas Green, SJ

- Was there something that stood out for you personally? Was there an “ah ha” moment that you would share? Were you surprised or shocked by anything stated in the book?
- In what ways would you augment or do differently the way you give Spiritual Direction based on the experiences and insights Green presents in Darkness in the Marketplace?

Chapter 1 – “In fact, it seems to me that the whole of the New Testament makes one thing abundantly clear: Allowing always for the special call of Mary to forget everything else and simply to sit at the feet of the Lord and be absorbed in him, it is usually his will that we be able to keep him only by giving him away”. In this chapter Fr. Green comments on several saints and their writings about the contemplative life as well vs their apostolically active personal lives (St. Paul, St. John of the Cross). Discuss some similar contemporary examples of these types of ‘wayfarers enroute to transformation in God’?

Chapter 2 – Fr. Green presents the comparisons of ‘working for God’ and ‘doing God’s work’ and gives the ‘blue cheese for Christmas’ example. Have you had the experience of sensing that God was asking you or one of your directees for ‘blue cheese’ but you/she preferred to give Him something else, and how would you approach that situation in light of Fr. Green’s reflections on this?

Chapter 4 – “The readiness of the unready” – Fr. Green stresses that the directee is the primary discernor of God’s word and the SD is the co-discerner or ‘interpreter’. He speaks of “ 3 kinds of ‘readiness of the unready’ 1) going to prayer for guidance to find everything blank and the Lord seemingly asking that he just be free to say whatever he wishes through me 2) as a SD I feel I know what is right for the directee and yet cannot say why it is right or give reasons for my judgement 3) when it seems to be the ‘accidents of God’ which lead in the right, though unexpected and often unwanted, direction. “ Fr. Green shares about situations where as a SD he was able to sense whether a directee’s experience were or were not genuinely from God but he was not able to precisely say why. Have you experienced situations similar to this and how did you work through them if the directee found it difficult to accept your direction?

Chap 5 – Fr. Green says that the main point of this chapter is that “Nature can be transformed but sin must be uprooted. It is precisely the sandpaper of failure and frustration which is working this change in me. This second kind of ‘darkness in the marketplace’ is the pain and frustration that comes from failure in our outer lives especially the failure to find God to be Christ for those we serve and those with who we serve. This is a very important part of the process of purification and transformation”. Have you experienced times of failure and frustration like this and if so, in reflecting back on them, how did they lead to spiritual growth? Do you see this happening in your directees?

Chapter 5 – Fr. Green suggests we pray the prayer “Lord let me be as disturbed about this situation as you are, no more or no less. If you are angry let me be angry, but if you are not disturbed let me share your peace”. What virtues are required to sincerely pray this prayer and how can it enlighten us about wounded self-love and self-righteous zeal in both ourselves and our directees?

Chapter 6 –St. Teresa of Avila explains that there are 2 ways to seek humility – one healthy (focused on God) and one dangerous (focused on self). What are some ways that a directee can be gently encouraged to focus more on God rather than on self?