



NUMBER TWO

### **LEARNING TO GROW IN YOUR SOUL**

As a society, we are locked in the *pre-adolescent stage of development*. What does that mean? To begin to answer this question, first ask yourself: How much deep thinking is really going on?

We humans are bound up by our memories, hostages to our past. Deep down, we want to make some sense of our advancing years beyond just the wearing down and running out. Aging happens not only to our bodily functions and organs, but to the whole of our nature—the particular person we have come to be (and will yet become). Throughout our lives, our character has taken shape and continues to form as we get older. So, what then is our pre-adolescent character? It is narcissistic by nature, and it is supposed to be that way. Pre-adolescence is all about “me.” However, stuck in this stage of development, we . . . well, you get the message.

Aristotle observed, “The soul is the form of the body, the origin of its movement, and is the body’s final aim or purpose.” So what does it take to grow in our soul, to develop true character that is lasting? Thomas Keating offers us insight into the human condition and frames the challenge every one of us must confront:

We as humans are locked into our “emotional programs for happiness.” These emotional programs set off afflictive emotions. The afflictive emotions might be reduced to anger, grief, fear, pride, greed, envy, lust, and apathy. If we have an emotional investment in the instinctual needs for survival/ security, affection/esteem, or power/control, events that frustrate these desires will inevitably set off one or another of the afflictive emotions. †

How well we know that we *make things up*, machinations unconsciously invented for the purpose of coping. These fabrications set the stage for living our (entire) life through what is called the “False Self.” The False Self is our self-image, developed to deal with the emotional trauma of early childhood and it seeks happiness in satisfying the instinctual needs Fr. Keating enumerates. The mission of WisdomGuides is to encourage men and women to walk boldly toward living a “True Self” life—in other words, to

live in the image of God, for which every human being is created. Our participation in the divine life is manifested in our uniqueness, the way in which we learn to become who we really are and not a caricature of who we only think we are.

WisdomGuides wants to engage your mind with fresh ideas about your *self*. The mind is more than a muscle, much more! It is naturally curious, inventive and transgressive (going beyond your set boundaries). We subscribe to the “use it or lose it” school of the mind, so may we suggest that “use it” simply means to consider new and different perspectives. Replacing outworn mental habits with new ideas is a threat—an attack on the cherished image we have of ourselves. Thus, courage and stamina are essential if one is to make the journey inward.

If you engage with WisdomGuides, we want you to develop a cognitive curiosity. It is critical for you to grow in self-awareness and self-acceptance, and to make a commitment to stretch beyond that which is safe, into the unknown world of your psyche. To mature is to grow, and the measure of real growth is . . . character. No pain, no gain! Enjoy the journey.

T.S.

Something for you to think about:

- o *How curious am I?*

† Quote from Fr. Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*.