



## How Inner Work Bolsters the Outer Work (with adaptation) - Matthew Fox

Part of the inner work necessary in a time of pandemic is resisting the temptation to fall into despair. This is why the teachings of Julian of Norwich and of other creation spirituality mystics is so important to bring our souls and our work alive today. One feeds the other.

I remember the morning that 9/11 happened and we had class scheduled that day at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland, California. We happened to have a visiting Native American woman elder with us that day. She said this to us:

*Beware of dwelling too much on this event. The media are busying playing the tape over and over and over again. This is the worst thing for your soul. In our tradition we know that replaying evil or trauma is very dangerous. It robs you of the freedom to respond and to create and even to offer healing.*

And that is the entire point about our listening to the mystic Julian of Norwich at this time of pandemic. First, that she lived through something like this - only scarier because they lacked science - and STILL she insists on the experience of awe, gratitude, wonder, namely the **Via Positiva**:

*Return to Goodness. The goodness of God and the goodness of creation and of life and existence.*

This does not mean that one goes into denial about evil. But it does mean one cannot and should not dwell on evil alone. That is why there are **FOUR PATHS** to our spiritual journey and not just one.

The **Via Negativa** (a path of darkness leading to light) not only includes loss and grief but it includes meditation that teaches letting go and emptying. It has relevance for us at a time like this, a time of many lettings goes, including of course learning to live with fear and uncertainty while putting distance between fear and ourselves.

The **Via Creativa** also speaks loudly to us today—what can you/we give birth to, as an offering to heal? What is your vocation in all this? What gifts do you bring to the table?

The **Via Transformativa** calls us anew to address the sufferings so many are undergoing. A time like this deepens our sense of vocation or calling and to return to that calling in a new time—why are you/we here? What can we accomplish together?

**BUT:** And this is All-Important! **RETURN TO THE VIA POSITIVA.** I cite Alice Walker who says: “Hard times require fierce dancing.” Yes! Tough times require MORE JOY and MORE PASSION for living and MORE biophilia (love of nature). Otherwise we succumb to melancholy and, dispirited, we lack the passion and moral imagination for acting effectively.



### **For Presence**

~ John O'Donohue ~(*To Bless the Space Between Us*)

May you awaken to the mystery of being here  
And enter the quiet immensity of your own presence.

May you have joy and peace  
in the temple of your senses.

May you receive great encouragement  
when new frontiers beckon.

May you respond to the call of your gift  
and find the courage to follow its path.

May the flame of anger free you from falsity.

May warmth of heart keep your presence aflame and  
anxiety never linger about you.

May your outer dignity mirror an inner dignity of soul.

May you take time to celebrate the quiet miracles  
that seek no attention.

May you be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.

May you experience each day as a sacred gift  
woven around the heart of wonder.

*Elaine*