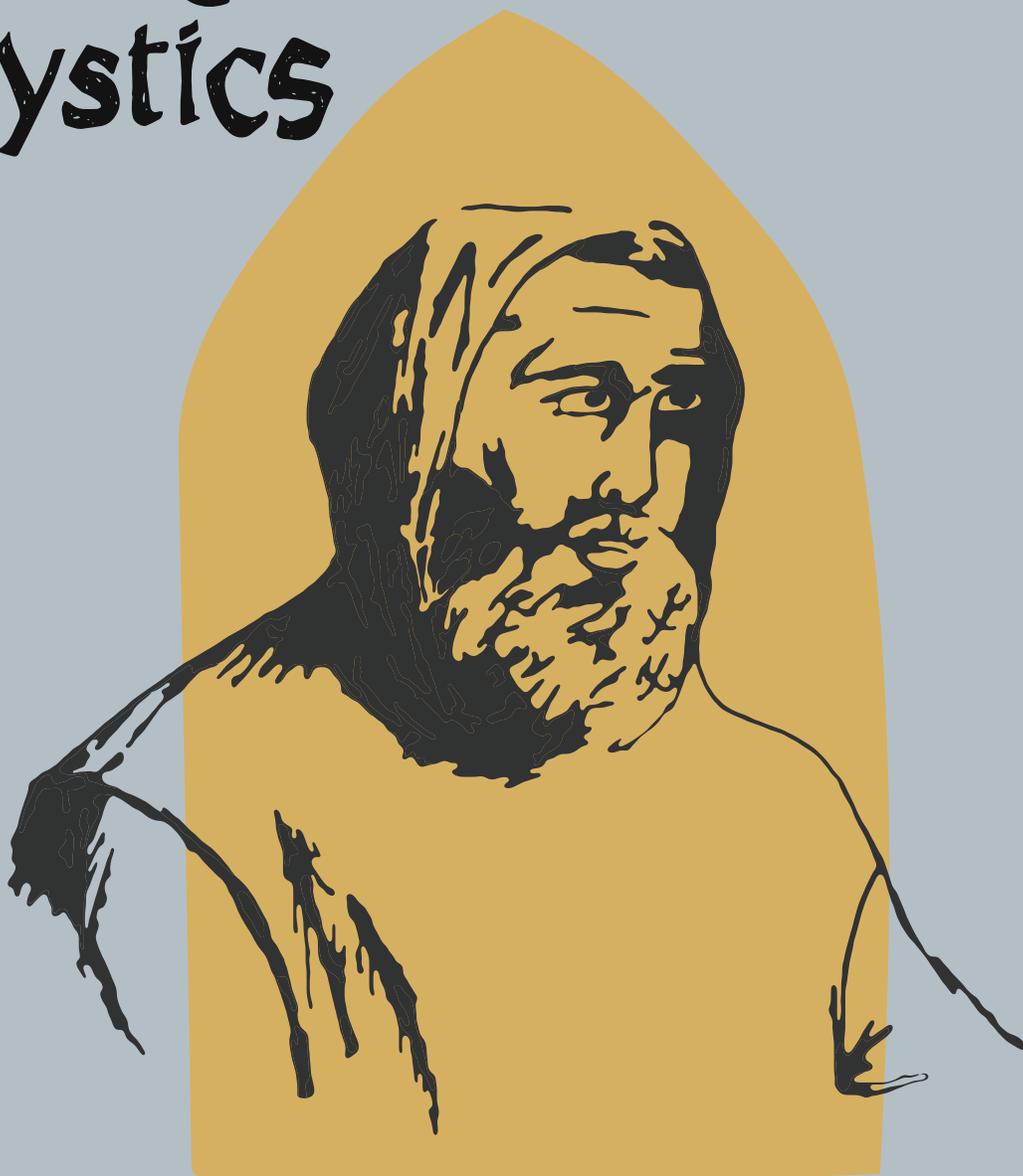


# Turning to the Mystics



## Guigo II

Listener Questions  
with James Finley

Jim Finley: Greetings. I'm Jim Finley.

Kirsten Oates: And I'm Kirsten Oates.

Jim Finley: Welcome to Turning to The Mystics.

Kirsten Oates: Welcome, everyone, to Turning to The Mystics. I'm here with Jim. And we're going to have a special episode where Jim is going to coach me and guide me in implementing the lectio practice that he's been teaching from Guigo II. And we're going to be using the podcast as a kind of audio lectio. And as an invitation for you to use the podcast in that way going forward.

Kirsten Oates: Thank you for being here, Jim.

Jim Finley: Yes, glad we're doing this. The idea Kirsten and I talking about this is that how it might be helpful, instead of just thinking of it as listening to me quote a mystic like Guigo and then comment on Guigo and comment on Guigo's insights of how to do lectio. Instead, you'd be listening to the actual podcast as the lectio. It is how to listen to the podcast as you're Lectio Divina or since lectio, lectio is Latin for read.

Jim Finley: So, it's like your audio Divina, like contemplative listening. And Kirsten and I will do back and forth. And we'll model that for you as things that come up within her on phrasings or whatever. And so, it will help you to model how it might go on within you, how to write off or personalize it for yourself.

Jim Finley: And I like to begin then with an initial thought that how you listened to the sessions that we have here together with the mystics is, of course, is preeminently personal. It's what's most natural and meaningful to you. And so for you, it might just be listening to it while you're out taking a walk, where you're going to bed at night or to sit quietly and to just listen that way that you're already doing lectio because there's a kind of attentive listening to it.

Jim Finley: And you're also doing meditatio in the sense quite naturally. You'd be intuitively just reflecting on something. Like you hear a certain phrase and, "That, I never thought it that way before," and you reflect on it. And I say, "God, for the grace to be faithful to this," and so on.

Jim Finley: But we want to look at here. Let's say you want to go more deeply into it. Let's say you want to get into it in a more substantial, broad-based way that Guigo has in mind. And that's what we're going to be exploring here of how to do that. And I'd like to begin then with some practical points of other practice, about a daily practice and so on. And then, we'll do the dialogue with Kirsten on taking a text and number of texts and song.

Jim Finley: First of all, real basic things. One is intention. That your intention is to set aside some time each day to deepen your experience and your understanding and response to God's presence in your life. That you're in the purity of intention like this. And also knowing that it isn't enough to just simply in passing to sense that desire in your life. It's necessary to set aside some time devoted to this. It's like a rendezvous.

Jim Finley: And therefore, it's a habit. It's cultivated in a practice, like how does the poet become a poet?

Or how does an artist become an artist? You have to commit yourself to the craft to get into the poetic mind, into the artistic mind. And so, it's the same with this. And so, it would be something that you would do each day, if possible, so maybe twice a day.

Jim Finley: A practical time for people is often say for 20 minutes because it's short enough to be practical. You can do that. But it's long enough to begin to settle into meditative mind. If you're prompted and can do longer, you would do longer. You would go with the flow of the givens. You would meditate at the time of day. Your practice, your time with God would be the time that you're most naturally alert or rested. But you go with the flow with what the realities of your life allow. You're always working with your circumstance to do this.

Jim Finley: Next, the place, you meditate anywhere. But it's very helpful also say in your home like the place where you sit for this daily rendezvous with God. You can also have different postures like yoga postures. You can meditate lying down, and so on. But most of the time, you need to be sitting in a chair with your back straight, both feet flat on the floor.

Jim Finley: And so you're sitting still. You're sitting straight. And you're sitting in the place you go to each day to be with God for meditation and prayer. If you want to have some sacred symbols that are based on your tradition, a crucifix, an icon, the Scriptures might be there, burning candle, a stone or something from outdoors. But there's a certain kind of configuration or simplicity to the place. It embodies what you're sitting there for in that place at that time to be with God.

Jim Finley: And also, I would say lastly here to be patient with yourself because this cultivation of this meditative mind, because it's subtle, it takes time to learn how to put all the busyness of the day behind you. And to commit yourself to a sustain subtlety or sustain sincerity or sustain delicacy of mind. And be patient with yourself. And sense your patience with yourself as you're echoing God's infinite patience with you. And you're learning to slow down and accept yourself as you are that you might become ever more present in the presence of God.

Jim Finley: And so with these considerations like this in mind then, we can turn to Guigo, to the podcast and passages. And Kirsten and I together, we'll walk through in dialogue to see if it helps you get more practical grounding points for yourself in your own practice.

Jim Finley: So Kristen, however you would like to begin this and where you are with this. And just...like this...yes.

Kirsten Oates: That's great. Thank you for that introduction, Jim. What I thought I'd ask you to help me with is just stepping through the four rungs. So, I have been listening to this season. And I noticed that I was very struck by something that was said in Session One, something you said in Session One.

Kirsten Oates: And the way I experienced that, Jim, is it just kept coming up for me the words that I heard and I can go over the words. So, let me read the words and then I'll share how I experienced this as a communication from God to me, like God trying to share something with me.

Kirsten Oates: So, in Session One at the beginning, you talked about what matters most is to come to our place of prayer. And then, you mentioned a quote from Thomas Merton from a talk on prayer that he gave to the novices. And this is the quote. I've written it down.

Kirsten Oates: “The way we would begin in prayer is that we belong to God. And all the prayer starts and unfolds out of that knowing that we belong to God. We are trying to get past the topic of prayer to this deep experience that we belong to God. We are God’s beloved. Renewing our faith that we are sitting there in God’s presence, God is all about us and within us, closer to us than we are to ourselves.”

Kirsten Oates: And so, those words kept coming up to me. I was drawn ... I felt very moved by them when I listened to that session. And then I kept coming back to them. And where they spoke initially to me is I would come to my ... I do have a daily practice, a 20-minute daily practice in the mornings. And I would come to begin my practice.

Kirsten Oates: And initially, it would happen halfway in the practice or at the end of the practice. But I’d remember these words about setting this intention. So initially, it was more of like a criticism of myself would arise like, “Oh, you really don’t take a pause and start with that knowing.” And I can be a bit performative and get into my practice like a task, 20 minutes letting go, letting go.

Kirsten Oates: And so initially, it was coming to me as a noticing after the fact. Yeah. So, is that my lectio? Is that God?

Jim Finley: Yes, that’s very good. Let’s say, first of all, I think an insight here is say if there’s a cultivation of an intimate relationship with somebody and that ongoing relationship is very meaningful to you. But we’re talking here now but there’s also a relationship with yourself. There is this relationship to your own understanding of your understanding, of your own mind, of your own attitude. Like the reflective self observes itself.

Jim Finley: And not only that, the self in relationship to itself in relationship to God. See. So, you’re sitting there reflectively being aware of your awareness. And what are you aware of? And this is how it usually starts. You would be listening to the podcast, listening to the words, Guigo.

Jim Finley: And what you’re listening for is something that strikes you in a certain way. See. The very fact that strikes you is kind of the instantaneity or the instancy of lectio. It’s already started because something in you heard it.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: See. And then you heard something that you intuit is actually, your heart knows it’s true. And your heart also knows it’s immensely beautiful. And your heart also knows that if only you could be eventually stabilized in the deep knowledge that you belong to God, see, you would be finding this inner peace that these mystics are trying to help us find.

Jim Finley: And so, you listen to it. And the very fact that strikes you is itself the gift. It’s like God within you awakening you that it’s really true you do belong to God. So, God’s awakening you to the fact that you belong to God. And so you sit there like this. And as you’re sitting there to deepen this beautiful thought, see, you drift off into this and that. And you kind of forget or get disconnected from the very fact that you’re sitting

there in the presence of God to whom you belong.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: And then you notice that you slipped away. Then you start critiquing yourself for slipping away. And maybe you really don't believe that you belong to God. Or it's so fragile. All it takes is a least little thing and where did belonging to God go?

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: You belong to the circumstance. You belong to your own self-criticism. And actually, this is the real meditation takes place in. And I'll share an insight that helps me when this comes up for me. And I want to say this is ... And by the way, we're doing a meditation now, you and I, because we're meditating on the experience of lectio. And we're meditating on slipping out of the lectio.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: And we're reflecting on that. And we're reflecting on it in the presence of God. See. And so, here are some thoughts. Here would be some thoughts. I'm going to say it aloud as if I was going through this, too. Here I go again slipping off. This happens a lot with me, Lord, as you know. And now, the meditations also a prayer because then I'm talking to God.

Jim Finley: But you know what? No matter how many times I slip away, it in no way whatsoever diminishes how deeply I belong to you. I don't belong to you because I can consistently measure up to being consistent enough so that I deserve to belong to you. I belong to you. Even before I was born, I belong to you, hidden with Christ and God forever. I belong to you through and through and through and through. I'm yours.

Jim Finley: See. And so, what I'm trying to do maybe here actually is going to belong to you is to really put myself in your hands and to hand myself over to you as you lovingly accept how I keep slipping away from the awareness that I belong to you. And this has a nice ring to me when I look at it this way, see. And it frees me up from a self-centered kind of achievement task, to a receptivity to the grace of it all, have the consistency of belonging to you.

Jim Finley: That helps? Do you see that?

Kirsten Oates: Yes. So that would be the meditatio where I'm talking to God. In talking back to God, you've revealed this in my heart that I longed to know I belong to you. I longed to start every practice in a way that I belong to you. But where I've gone with that is to criticize myself. So, how can I hand over to you this teaching of belonging, this experience of belonging?

Jim Finley: That's exactly right. And that would be the prayer, see. Help me ...

Kirsten Oates: Help me.

- Jim Finley: ... with this because I can't live with an habitual knowledge that I belong to you unless you help me to know in my heart that I belong to you, see. And peace is not dependent on how I'm doing, that I'm not getting there soon enough. Here's another thought I think comes out. See, I offer this response to what you said.
- Jim Finley: So, where did that come from? It's one I'll say, "Wow, I wish I have thoughts like that," is what I'm saying there. And so, this is what I meant by patients. Because if we really listened to the gospels, if we listened to the mystics, if we listened to ourselves, if we're attentive, if you notice, we're learning things, we're learning things. And little by little by little, the consistency of the willingness to start over, we turn back to the first rung of the ladder to walk the walk and listen.
- Jim Finley: Little by little, these more gracious or generous understandings of ourselves in the presence of God, it grows which is the lectio. It's kind of we're more in attunement with this.
- Kirsten Oates: That's so helpful. Thank you. I have a question then. So, if I experience God speaking to me, I was so struck when I heard those words. And then every day, the words would come to me even not listening to the podcast. So, it was really striking to me. So that's God speaking to me. And then in the meditation, I'm speaking back to God in the ways we've talked about. And the prayer, my desire for God to help me to be stabilized in this sense of belonging.
- Kirsten Oates: What about the contemplation? What do I do next now I've gone through those three rungs?
- Jim Finley: Yes. Let's say these three rungs, like the angels ascending and descending on the ladder, is we develop this habit of going up and down the rungs of this ladder like this. And we might journal, we might whatever. Another thing I'd like to share in the meditation part. Something that helps me, and this is personal, too, is to journal this.
- Jim Finley: So you would take something ... For example, I belong to you. See. It could be your word. And you might call onto that word for years. That might be your starting place always. And you deepen, deepen, extend your repertoire of words. So what helps me to do this is to take the podcast, for example, I was going to use the podcast. And I would listen and say I would write out say words like you just said. I'd write it out.
- Jim Finley: Then I would put a box on the paper. And on the box on the paper, I would say, "How have I," or, "How am I understanding and experiencing these words?" See, "How have I experienced them?" See, because although I might need to grow in it, they're not foreign to me. By the very fact, I'm so drawn to them. See? So, how have I and how am I? And put it in your own words? Or do this like this so I can meditatio.
- Jim Finley: Next, what's it asking out of me? There was if I belong to you ... And you brought it up yourself, it's like psychotherapy with God. See, if I belong to you, I guess what I never realized before but I'm actually assuming that the fact I keep forgetting I belong to you must mean when I'm forgetting and I don't belong to you.
- Jim Finley: But what if I always belonged to you? Always, always, always, always, always? So, belonging to you must mean trusting you, knowing you see me as the one who belongs to you see always. And with your help, I'm becoming more and more consistent in it. It's asking me

constancy in that.

Jim Finley: And then the third box would be, how's that going? How's it going? Where am I at with myself and your presence? So, what I find for me to write it out like that, maybe because I write. Some people wouldn't write it out. And of those three boxes because you're signing off on it, you're personalizing it and carrying it around with you.

Jim Finley: So, say those are the first three rungs. You go up and down. And another thing you said is very important. You can tell this is getting to you because it comes to you during the day, see. That's what you're looking for, see. So, in a way, you could be driving in your car. You could be whatever, going down a hallway. And there's this more stabilized interiority of everything, see.

Jim Finley: Because when you stop to think about it, the dialogue you're going to have with someone whether meeting with someone or they're doing the dishes, everything is the context in which you belong to God while you're doing the dishes, is the context you belong to God when you're facing this situation. And that's what you're looking for is habituating the ladder like an interior reference point.

Jim Finley: And when you get reactive, you can tell you've fallen off the ladder. You can tell. And the sooner you realize it and can interiorly circle back around, get back on the ladder again, that's to be grounded that God is as confusing as the moment is I belong to God in the midst of my confusion. I belong to God in the midst and I'm going to do my best to see this through. And the knowing God's helping me and God's with me and so on.

Jim Finley: So, there's that. And then, that brings us then to contemplation to the fourth. So you would take a text. You would take one of the words so I said we'd quote Guigo in contemplation we said. And do you have one or you want me to offer one?

Kirsten Oates: Well, are we using the I belong to God? We'll stick with that?

Jim Finley: Yes. I see, yes. Let's stick with that one, yes. With contemplation also.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: So let's say your I belong to God is true like your word. And you're going up and down the ladder. You could spend your whole life that you'll never exhaust belonging to God because it's inexhaustible. You can be on your deathbed and you just hope that you belong to God which isn't a bad way to die actually. It makes it crystal clear that you do.

Kirsten Oates: The final lectio.

Jim Finley: The final lectio.

Kirsten Oates: You'd find you really do belong to God.

Jim Finley: Yeah. Well, it's really true. And so, let's say this is your word. This is your word. This is your word. So, let's say on the ladder first, it says the deepening of a quiet desire for an ever deeper experiential groundedness and belonging is the end of fear. So, contemplation then is this.

It would be a moment in which you're graced with a taste or a flash of the belonging that's unexplainably self-evident.

Jim Finley: It's no longer something to ask for. See, it's no longer something to think about. It's somehow belonging to God are the words that express what's happening to you is you're experientially realizing what's ultimately true about every moment of your life. And you're unexplainably resting in the wordless clarity of communal belonging. It will be contemplation like that.

Jim Finley: And this realization might be quite vivid actually, might be quite striking. That can happen. Very often, it's very, very subtle. If you weren't careful, you would have missed it. What's happened is that practicing going up and down the rungs of the ladder is achieving its work. It's sensitizing you to this realization of a belonging. And by the way then in the belonging, like you were saying, it's a belonging in which you and God mutually disappears other than each other.

Jim Finley: See, because you are the one that God created as the one God gives himself, herself to as the beloved itself, donating presence as your very presence. And you in realizing that, the reciprocity of love you give yourself, to the God to whom you belong, see. And because in a way, you're saying that God belongs ... It isn't just that you belong to God but God belongs to you, see. That God has entrusted himself or herself to you, see.

Jim Finley: And so there's a kind of holy strange alliances or an affinity in love, a grace affinity and love of belonging. And it's that self-evident taste and the resting in the taste of the oneness. And then it would automatically just dissipate. It would just go away. And as we were saying, and then that's where you fall, I felt like falling slowly backwards in slow motion into what? Into the lectio. I belong to you.

Jim Finley: But now it's different, see. Because now, this simple sincerity of the words to God, I belong to you, just resonate deeply. And having tasted the infinity of the belonging is right there. So, even though you're not feeling that mystical fullness you momentarily felt, it resonates within you. You know that it's true because you tasted it. Likewise, the meditation reflecting on it is different, see, because you tasted what's beyond conceptualizing, beyond figuring, beyond thinking.

Jim Finley: And so, it's more than enough. The totality of belonging is completely present as the lectio. It's completely present as the meditatio. It's completely present as the prayer like the divinity of ordinariness of ourselves. And then just when you least expect it again is the taste of the infinite belonging. It's granting. It's from God. So that's why it's received passively like it happens to us.

Jim Finley: So the active part of contemplation of the belonging, the active part is preparing ourselves and doing the inner work of habituating ourselves on the ladder. The fruition is the passive part of the inner touch which is really a foretaste of heaven. Because it's not mediated in a thought, it's not mediated in emotion, it's not mediated again an insight, it may spill over into thoughts. You may write them out.

Jim Finley: Where Guigo's goes ladder come from is he was working out in the yard. And he said, "He suddenly came to me." He went and wrote it. Yeah, that's pretty good. And it's just so ... But

you know what spills over into thought is deeper than thought. And you live in the deeper, see. And you know it may spill over into emotions. You may be moved by it, see. But it's deeper than emotions.

Jim Finley: It's a desire that's deeper than desire because in your heart, you know there's nothing missing so there's nothing to desire. And little by little, that descending mystical dimension starts permeating itself on the rungs with the ladder. And I think this is contemplative character transformation. This is a gradual stabilizing in this unit of state ...

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: ... which in our tradition is Christ consciousness. See, this is how Jesus lived.

Kirsten Oates: That's so helpful. So, if I'm hearing you correctly, Jim, I can stay active in the lectio, the meditatio and the prayer as I feel called like a natural conversation with God. And then, the contemplatio will be a gift from God, a great gift when God chooses. And I might notice it as I'm suddenly stilled. Or I might notice later in the day after my lectio that something feels a little different in my confidence of belonging or something like that.

Jim Finley: That's exactly right. And I think it's so helpful here. I mean, this is very appealing to look at this. But ideally, it would be asking for the grace for the habitual contemplative state if it's God's will. But what we're really after to do God's will is holiness. And to do God's will is the acceptance of ourselves as we are, in God's presence in our situation as we are, with a loving heart because efficacious and the holiness.

Jim Finley: And then, these enriched deepenings occur as the grace, as kind of charism or a gift that comes, because the extent to which you're called to and habituated in it is God's working with you. This is why Teresa of Avila says, "With regard to mystical contemplation, there are some people who never have." They're holier than those who do.

Jim Finley: So, you can have it as a kind of a predisposition or you can be more inclined to it. But when itself, when it does happen, if it actually becomes the enriched interiority of your holiness that it's a way providentially, you're called to be holy by being in this contemplative state. And you know the truth of it is measured by ... It's heightened your sensitivity to suffering, to yours, to other people, to animals, to the earth.

Jim Finley: It radicalizes your presence to the situation. It isn't distant you. It radicalizes you in this very paradoxical way. And it also unites you with the whole world even when you're all alone. Even when you're sitting all alone, the whole world sits with you, God sits with you. You have those kinds of sensibilities I think.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah, that's really helpful. And, Jim, I think what I'd like to do now then is go back through another coaching session because that phrase did deepen in me. And I had ... Like a second conversation. And I'd like to use the journaling questions you offered as well just to see if I'm using those correctly.

Kirsten Oates: So, back down to the lectio, another day of practice. And the words keep coming back to me. There's something about those words. In my sitting throughout the day, they're still coming back to me. And the next thing I feel like I'm hearing in the lectio is if I really

believed I belong to God, how is that showing up in my relationships and in particular when there's a conflict because I struggled a little bit with conflict?

Kirsten Oates: And so, that was coming up for me, this sense of what would having to address something challenging look like if I really belong to God? So, if I use your questions now, Jim, to the meditatio, so the first question was how have I or am I experiencing what this is saying?

Jim Finley: Yeah, you belong to God.

Kirsten Oates: So, I'm experiencing it as I belong to God even in conflict. And that's ... But how to habituate in that sense of belonging in conflict?

Jim Finley: Very good. That's your personal, that's your first box. I'll do my first box. I'll do mine, same quotes and words. So I'm journaling up. I'm filling in the response. I have experienced it because when I was listening to the podcast and heard it, I was taken by it. And so, I did hear it. I said I heard it. I also heard it and it stayed with me and I heard it.

Jim Finley: And I also think I heard it also in a certain way, the act of hearing it, I was somehow experiencing it. And I also I think, in my heart, I knew it was true. And so, I have ... But I also, in my meditatio reflecting on myself. My being access touched and hearing it was disturbingly brief, see. Because what I find is I am one who hears it. But the constancy of the hearing, I have some work to do.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: I spent a lot of time not hearing. I would just note that.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: But then I would say I guess, we were saying earlier, but if I belong to you, does it diminish at all how infinitely I belong to you? See. But you're encouraging me or inspiring me. It would go like that.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: So, that would be the first. See, that's how I have jumped ahead because like what's it asking out of me? I got to add a little bit there.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: So, let's do the next box.

Kirsten Oates: Yes. So, the first book was how am I experiencing it? And I ...

Jim Finley: And understanding it, too.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah. And then the second box is what is it asking out of me?

Jim Finley: Yes.

Kirsten Oates: And so, I really jumped ahead to that box and what I should firstly because it's asking me to look at how I experience my belonging to you, God, during conflict. Do I lose touch with that? Would I not be so afraid of conflict if I really knew I belong to you? So, it's asking me to look at the way I experience belonging in conflict in particular was what it felt like.

Jim Finley: I think that's really true. I'm going to share my box on that, too, like in conflict. See, my thought would be I don't know necessarily if you're asking of me to be so habitually grounded in my awareness that I belong to you? Though I'm in conflict, I'm not really in conflict because I'm still grounded in the I belong to you, what do I care? [inaudible 00:35:05]. I mean, yours is either way.

Jim Finley: And so, I'm just free as a bird. So, I think what happens is that we're still just ourselves. Thich Nhat Hanh says your hello, habit energies. I'm just myself. But what it does do I think, it contextualizes the conflict. I mean, it is conflict. And we engage in it and they're psychologically appropriate and appropriate or maybe there's certain wounded places inside you need to work on how to be more comfortable and inappropriate conflict which is a part of life.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: And knowing when it's inappropriate and how to set boundaries to that, there's all of that, see. So, it gives us permission to have the whole range of emotions like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane sweating blood trauma, "Let this cup pass from Me." And so, I accept conflicts as part of my life. And I know that I belong to you and my conflict.

Jim Finley: And I ask that you inspire me in my conflict to be clear minded, to be clear minded that I say something that at least is attempting to help diminish the conflict or resolve the conflict, that you will grace me with that in the midst of conflict like that.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: And then afterwards then or another way to look at it, too, I know if I meditate with you in the morning, you'd tell God. As I go through the day, I want to look ahead to the day where there may be certain moments, where either loneliness or sadness or conflict will happen. And I ask that you'd be with me there and to know that I belong to you in the midst of that.

Jim Finley: And after the conflict is over, I'll circle back around and reconnect with you. Then get reinstated again and how you were present there in the conflict. And also, how I experienced the conflict to what it teaches me about myself, like lessons I still need to learn about myself. And so, that's how it would come to me.

Kirsten Oates: Yes, that's beautiful. This is really helping me going through this process. The last question is how does this apply to every moment of my life? Is that ...

Jim Finley: Yes.

Kirsten Oates: And so, where I've come from was being really touched by this Thomas Merton and you telling me I belong to God. And I keep having those phrases come to me. And then, being asked to look at conflict in particular. So, how does this apply to every moment in my life?

Kirsten Oates: Yeah, I think it's this belonging is every moment of my life. And so, it's continuing. I feel like God help me continue to pursue you as the place where I belong. But also, to help me know that I already belong in all the moments where I lose touch with that.

Jim Finley: Yes. Very good. Yes, I'll share a way I would put it also, it is, is say I was taken by the words I belong to you, you're telling God. And I've benefited so much meditating on it and reflecting on it. But I think another way of looking at the belonging is that the belonging is a way of putting words to the naturalness of the moment when I'm just present. So I could be quietly sitting, looking out the window. But I'm looking out the window with an underlying sensitivity.

Jim Finley: The sitting and looking out the window is the belonging. The sun moving across the sky, me sitting in a chair in my own living room. That all of life is just a way of putting words to the true nature of every moment. And also, as I move in and out of that naturalness of belonging to know the consistency in which I infinitely belong to you in my wavering ways. And I move with the flow of myself. And this moves that way into a habitual atmospheric kind of thing, yeah.

Kirsten Oates: I love that phrase "I move with the flow of myself." And like you said earlier, my habits, my thoughts, my emotions, I'm moving with the flow of myself. That's beautiful. And then, this flow of Lectio is helping to create a certain kind of flow in our lives.

Jim Finley: That's right. And it's another thing to look at it this way, too, when you look at how those implications of this. See, I move with the flow of myself. It also means there are certain moments I can tell I get triggered in the flow of myself is I get frightened. And so, maybe what's happening, there's a reason to be concerned on a scale of one to 10, it's about a two, I got to be careful. But in my body, I feel an eight, see.

Jim Finley: And that's the flow of myself. But the flow of myself, I need to tend to do with your help because I probably have internalized a past thing. And when it gets triggered, my body responds. And so, I'm always watching the places within myself, of the gifts of myself, but also the internalized vulnerabilities of myself. And we'll work in progress on this learning curve to be awake and receptive and humble and open and honest, and that kind of thing.

Jim Finley: So, it also means the flow of myself in that way also.

Kirsten Oates: Yes. So, after I've done that journaling if I want to journal or meditated on these questions, I turn to my prayer. And, Jim, do you suggest ... I guess, if you're journaling, you could journal or you could just do it spontaneously. So, my prayer out of this would be I'm so grateful for this desire around belonging. I feel so drawn to this experience of belonging to God.

Kirsten Oates: And I also feel drawn to see the whole world as belonging to God, to see everyone and everything as belonging to God, and to treat myself and everyone and everything as if they belong to God. And my prayer is that, God, you will deepen my experience of belonging so that I can deepen my presence to others as offering belonging to everyone.

Jim Finley: Yes. Let's say first of all, the meditatio part would be this reflecting about belonging and the importance ... the grace of seeing this, realizing this and the depths of it, and so on. And

that'd be the meditatio that as you're reflecting upon within yourself what was given to you and the quickening of the lectio.

Jim Finley: The prayer part would be your reflection would turn to where you would tell God this. So you're telling God or you're asking God who is the one who accessed your heart and experiential knowing that you belong to God. You would ask God to help you to deepen it. So, I think the key to the prayer of the heart center is this heartfelt exchange. It's like that little prayer we did with Thomas Merton, "My Lord God, I have no idea where I'm going. I do not see the road ahead of me." And the prayer is, "My Lord God," see, we're listening in while he talks to God. See, there's this prayer.

Jim Finley: So the meditation is pondering or reflecting in the presence of God. And the prayer is to talk to God. And then, invites deeper lectio which we then listen to God. You listen deeper. And invites the contemplatio as this kind of wordless presence, like there's just kind of this luminous stillness and so on.

Kirsten Oates: Wonderful. Well, I feel a great benefit from going through this with you, a little vulnerable and sharing that with everyone.

Jim Finley: Yes.

Kirsten Oates: But I hope it's helpful. And my hat is hoping to help everyone. And I feel greatly supported by you, Jim, in going through that process.

Jim Finley: Well, I think you helped everyone listening because, in effect, what we were doing is having a session of spiritual direction with a lot of people listening. Because unless we're willing to get personal with God with ourselves. And it is [inaudible 00:44:23] ... You can have a director or someone you can talk to like this because until it gets personal, it doesn't start.

Jim Finley: As long as you're distancing yourself with observations and underlying and putting little notes in, but until you move in real close, then I think it's personal. Because then, you're not being who God wants you to be as the one who belongs to God. It's not a theory. It's a conscious expression of the reality of yourself. With no vulnerability and no humility, it doesn't happen. It only starts with that.

Jim Finley: So, I think it was great. It was good. I think it helps others to be do the same with themselves.

Kirsten Oates: Wonderful.

Jim Finley: Yeah, that's great.

Kirsten Oates: Thank you, Jim. And so, the invitation is to use the podcast as an audio lectio practice if people want to pausing to journal or pausing to reflect. And you actually have a time of quiet in the podcast where you ring the bell so that they could pause there and journal or pause there and reflect.

Jim Finley: And as passing, a new way to end here, notice how to get into the stream of this, notice that it's endless. See, it isn't like a task that you finish. It's just inexhaustibly inexhaustible.

It's in the flow of the grace divinity of everything. This becoming a habitual inner state of consciousness and a transformative grace process, and that's really what it's about really, I think.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah.

Jim Finley: To deeply experiences this, to live this and share it with others day by day as you're given to do so by how you're present to them and so on.

Kirsten Oates: Well, what a gift to have these podcasts, Jim, and the deep flow that you've developed and the way the words come out invites us into that flow in a deep and meaningful way. So, I'm so grateful for that. And I look forward to continuing on.

Jim Finley: Thank you. It's lovely, beautiful.