

## **WRITING AS CONTEMPLATION**

*Contemplative writing as a tool for personal or professional growth*

“A summing up and a letting go”—title of last chapter in Joseph Sittler’s *Gravity and Grace*

### **Observing: Awareness. Practice:**

1. Notice! Notice! Notice! Focal experiences; mindfulness; awareness
2. “Let that which normally bores you suddenly thrill you.” – Any Warhol
3. Journal in response to experiences, events, scriptures, conversations, objects, dreams
4. Read, read, read!—observe the words, images and ideas of others prose, poetry and journals

### **Wading: Sensing, enjoying, expressing:**

1. Dabble some every day!
2. Cultivate the innocent wonder of a child
3. Physically: find a place(s) that cultivate contemplation
4. Try new places, ways, experiences: break old patterns
5. Find ways to cultivate “emptiness”—space, hospitality for yourself, ideas, wonder

### **Swimming: Methods for good writing—Do use:**

1. Short words – Anglo Saxon words: speak, draw, take, dog, star, trek
2. Short sentences
3. Short paragraphs
4. Strong verbs: devouring, jostling, thrusting, raging, leaping, edging, ripping...
5. Strong metaphors: rock, shaft of light; “Love leaves its high holy temple” (Maya Angelou)
6. Benedictine method (5<sup>th</sup> century; four steps below from Guigo II in 12<sup>th</sup> century):

**Silencing** (*Silencio*)—“Be still and *know*...”

• **Reading** (*Lección*) grazing—re-reading, silently, aloud

• **Reflecting** (*Meditación*) chewing—phrase, image or metaphor that lures, or disturbs)

• **Responding** (*Oración*) ruminating—in the gut; yearning = praying)

• **Resting** (*Contemplación*) digesting—absorbed in Love: “lost in wonder, love, and praise”

**Embodying** (*Encarnación*) “Word becomes flesh”—gets in your blood stream and bones

*You can use this method with scripture or any literature—or life, nature, relationships...*

7. What to do with a difficult sentence, after trying—*get rid of it!*
8. Avoid: passive voice; verb to be; which; flat adjectives; use few adverbs

### **Diving: Going down deep into the writing process. Ways of getting back up again!**

1. Spiritual: Recall past times—relive and revisit these
2. Relational: Recall mentors—what would they say?
3. Mechanical: “Save as”—resave on computer; then ruthlessly prune, prune, prune!
4. Methodical: “Mind mapping”-“Net-lining”-“Spider webbing” central idea—others around it
5. Take a break: “Sometimes the truth depends on a walk around the lake.” – Wallace Stevens

### **Floating: Moving into the “flow”—the writing carries you:**

1. Practice keeping a journal—at least 4 days out of 7!
2. Practice contemplation, meditation, prayer in your tradition
3. Keep a disciplined writing time each day—at least 4 out of 7 and/or go away for periods...
4. Go away to a contemplative place for periods of several days
5. Revisit all of the above—as you write; take breaks! Keep writing!
6. Move text around, cut and paste.
7. Prune, prune, prune! Keep it *spare!*
8. Revise and foot note later.

9. “Playful projects for serious purposes”: Play with words!

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