

“My Inmost Being...”: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Inner Workings of the Soul
Rev. Basil Burns, PhD, Spiritual Director of the Domano Renewal Centre

Session IV Handout: The Imagination, Memory & the Spiritual Life

A FEW NOTES ON MEMORY AND IMAGINATION

MEMORY: “Memory is the capability of the **mind**, to store up conscious processes, and reproduce them later with some degree of fidelity. Strictly speaking, however, a revival conscious process is not remembered, unless it is, at the same time, recognized as something which occurred before. Memory therefore, involves a process of recognition. *Voluntary* reproduction of **mental** processes is frequently spoken of as recollection, and *involuntary*, as recall.”

- “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me.” (Isaiah 46:8-9)

IMAGINATION: “The ability to retain sense images even while the senses are not active.”

- Sense Imagination: the ability to retain basic images in the mind even when you are not seeing, hearing, etc.
- Creative Imagination: the ability to place the content of the imagination together into things that do not exist in reality (i.e., Putting the idea of “wings” together with “horse” and coming up with a “winged horse”).
- Contemplative Imagination: Almost like prophecy – that power we have to directly perceive divine things through images that bypass a reasoning process (some would even call this our “intuition”).

HEALING OF IMAGES (Healing through purification of Imagination!): “Before we make our own this first exclamation of the Lord's Prayer, we must humbly cleanse our hearts of certain false images drawn ‘from this world.’ *Humility* makes us recognize that ‘no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,’ that is, ‘to little children.’ The *purification* of our hearts has to do with paternal or maternal images, stemming from our personal and cultural history, and influencing our relationship with God. God our Father transcends the categories of the created world. To impose our own ideas in this area ‘upon him’ would be to fabricate idols to adore or pull down. To pray to the Father is to enter into his mystery as he is and as the Son has revealed him to us.” (Catechism, #2779)