Introduction

NOTES

Susan Tiberghien: In introducing this course, I will start with a personal note. Recently we watched the Cathedral of Notre Dame burn in Paris. We watched beauty burn. We watched the spiritual home of millions of people from all over the world burn. And we listened to President Emanuel Macron, "We will rebuild Notre Dame." Beauty will survive and in so doing, may it unite us anew in this turbulent 21st century as we come together peoples of all faiths.

Beauty has always been a doorway to the spiritual world. When we contemplate beauty, we lift our wings, we awaken our soul. In this course we will follow the path of poets, writers, and mystics as they celebrate beauty. They will show us the way to let beauty open our hearts and minds to the Eternal. We will add our own voices to honor beauty and to listen to its call to protect our planet, to be caretakers of the creation.

There will be four parts to the course. First we will look at how beauty has been honored over the centuries from the hymns to Inanna in 3000 BCE to the poetry of Rilke in the beginning of the 20th century. We will then turn to C.G. Jung to appreciate the impact beauty had upon his soul. In the third part, we will continue to open our eyes to a deeper seeing in reading excerpts from contemporary poets and writers – Thomas Merton, Annie Dillard, John O'Donohue, and Marion Woodman. We will find words for our own experiences of beauty. In conclusion, we will reflect upon where beauty leads us, as we listen to Simone Weil and return to CG Jung.

In offering this course to many of you from different countries, I have chosen poets and writers from many countries, Jung from Switzerland, Merton and Dillard from the United States, O'Donohue from Ireland, Woodman from Canada, Weil from France.

Seeing beauty in nature calls us to be custodians of our planet. Seeing beauty in our fellow human beings calls us to be peacemakers. We will look for ways to answer this call of beauty as we acclaim the oneness of creation.

So again, welcome to my course, Seeing Beauty. I am happy to share with you my own fervent response to the call of beauty.

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