



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Saturday Lent, Week 5



Any definite period of time is a symbol of a whole lifetime. If we live them consciously, the mythic forty days of Lent take us on a journey that reflects every process in our experience. We begin, we falter, we recover, we learn from mistakes, the feeling of success alternates with that of failure. Hopefully at the end we emerge with an integration that indicates a higher level of consciousness, a way of seeing that effortlessly goes beyond success and failure.

Many people are as frightened of success as they are of failure. A person in business who is promoted to a higher position, one that everyone envies, can be filled with anxiety and self-doubt even while everyone jealously applauds him or her. As long as it remains an ambition to be achieved, success is enjoyable. Once arrived at, however, it challenges our self-estimation and can easily generate fears, for example that we will not prove capable of the new role we now find ourselves in. What often keeps people in the race for success is merely the fear of how they will be seen by others if they reject what everyone else desires. As soon as you are seen not to be 'hungry' in modern corporate life you become the prey.

In this state people have in effect lost themselves - but in the wrong way. They have actually lost the ability to lose themselves. And they may have to wait until the wheel of fortune turns against them for that capacity to be restored – if, of course, they can still recognize it.

Only working in the spirit of service and responsibility to others avoids this trap. So, the emptiness of "success" is a precious lesson about the nature of the spiritual work. We have hardly begun the work of meditation until we have at least recognized and then begun to let go of the desire to succeed at it. What at times might feel like success in meditation has to be renounced immediately. The ego always clings to what it knows best – success as the supremacy of the individual I. But the ego must be eased into going beyond spiritual desire, even the desire for God. Only regular practice, steady, deepening fidelity, makes this happen.

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