The World Community for Christian Meditation

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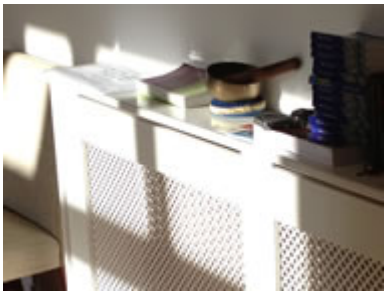
First Sunday of Lent



Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry.

The Christian forty days of Lent mirror the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, after his Baptism and before going public with his dangerous teaching. The triple temptations of the ego ? pride, sensuality and power come at the end of his fasting - when he was hungry.

It is when we feel we have earned it that illusion is most tempting. Every addict knows the feeling that the next fix is something he has deserved ? after a hard day?s work or a praiseworthy period of self-control. The weakness of body creates a spurious defence and self-deception. There is nothing trickier than the mind running in its old neural pathways, comfortable with re-doing the same thing and strongly resistant to change.

Meditation practice requires the gradual construction of new neural pathways ? habits of mind ? that takes time and can rarely be done just by oneself. Even in the first stage of the learning process, meditation teaches us that we are essentially relational. The great illusion that we are autonomous underlies most of our mistakes and bad decisions. To meditate with others is a simple and mysterious acceptance that we are inter-relational and that others are not objects to be viewed from above but people with whom we share the work of becoming human.

Jesus was tempted by a false divinity but preferred a true humanity. The discovery of the meditation we practice in the interior ?wilderness? ? the state of radical simplicity - is that in being human we are also being divinised. This strange idea becomes real in the experience of the fruits of meditation in daily life. We see that we can indeed be transformed and fulfilled beyond any of the limits we define ourselves by.

Temptation means the encounter with the persuasive force of illusion. The desert teachers assure us that this encounter is necessary to our growth. Illusion vaporises as soon as it is exposed.

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