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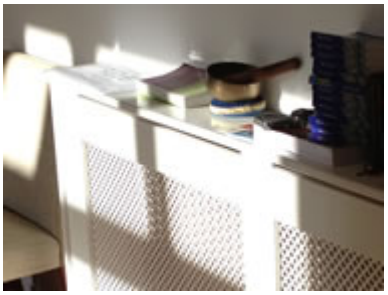
Friday after Ash Wednesday



The second kind of daily practice for Lent is to reduce or give up something.

Meditation is ? as the word itself suggests ? a middle way between extremes. The Buddha tried extreme ways to enlightenment and failed. St Benedict inspired a style of life that could be described as moderation in all things except moderation.

The Tao by definition is a middle way. This is the ?narrow way that leads to life? that Jesus taught.

The opposite of moderation is addiction. It is not surprising then that in a world where we are insanely destroying our environment to improve our standard of living we are increasing the gulf between rich and poor and increasing addiction and mental illness even in the most affluent parts of society.

A tipping point arrives when the forces involved in any situation can no longer hold things in balance. To avoid the potential catastrophe of such moments we can decide to act out a turning point. This is the literal meaning of ?repent? (metanoia, change of mind) ? voluntarily to change direction before we fall over the edge.

To meditate is to make that decision and to begin to restore a healthy, dynamic balance to life. If our practice is serious we will soon see the effects in our mind and behaviour patterns. To help things along during Lent it could be helpful to identify some area of consumption or indulgence where a temporary reduction or even abstention would be beneficial. It sends our whole psyche a signal and strengthens the virtue of self-control.

?Habits makyth man? is the motto of my old Oxford college. If we look at our habits ? mental or physical ? we will probably see where we can introduce change. Food, drink, internet, habitual ways we waste time or do harmful things to ourselves or others. A little change in this sense goes a long way.

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