



The World Community for Christian Meditation

Published on *The World Community for Christian Meditation* (<http://www.wccm.org>)

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October 17, 2010 Readings



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“Two Words From the Past”

John Main OSB, in THE HEART OF CREATION (New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 42-44.

The early monastic Fathers soon discovered that one of the hurdles that every man and woman of prayer must surmount is what they described as *acedia*. *Acedia* is a fairly complex psychological concept, but it contains the notions of boredom, dryness, lack of satisfaction, a feeling of hopelessness, of not making progress. I think all of us are to some extent familiar with these manifestations of the ego.

In fact, the concept of *acedia* is a particularly modern one. People in our society are very easily bored. Boredom makes us restless and inconsistent in our commitments, all of us. Just as the early monks used to saunter off to Alexandria for a little bit of distraction from time to time, so we, in our secular society, are usually on the look-out for distraction. Those of us who have discovered the path of meditation will often feel a contrary tug, to withdraw our necks from the yoke so that we can rest up for a while. We all seek a diversion because we are get a little tired with the sameness of the daily commitment to a pilgrimage that tests us with long periods of uneventfulness

A young man recently came to see me and asked, “How can you bear to look out of your window and see the same thing every day? Doesn’t it drive you mad?” Perhaps the real question should be, “How is it we can always see so much, looking out of the same window everyday?” The early fathers knew that boredom comes from desire, the desire for fulfillment or fame, for something new, for a change of environment or activity, for different relationships, for a new toy, whatever it might be.

Pure prayer shrinks desire. In the stillness of prayer, increasingly still as we approach the Source of all that is, of all that can be, we are so filled with wonder that there is no place for desire. It is not so much that we transcend desire but rather that there is simply no place in us

any longer for such desire. All our space is being filled with the wonder of God. The attention that is scattered in desiring is recalled and absorbed in God. [. . .]

Meditating, we let go of the desire to control, to possess, to dominate. We seek instead only to be *who we are* and being the person we are, we are open to the God who is. It is as a result of that openness that we are filled with wonder and with the power and energy of God, which is the power to be and the energy to be *in love*. [And] when we are in love it is impossible to be bored.

Meditate for Thirty Minutes.... Remember: Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention—with humility and simplicity—to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation.

After Meditation...

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad (verses 3,8, 10 and 12), tr. E. Easwaran, THE UPANISHADS (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1987), pp. 217-218.

In the depths of meditation, sages
Saw within themselves the Lord of Love,
Who dwells in the heart of every creature.
Deep in the hearts of all he dwells. . . .
The Lord of Love holds in his hand the world,
Composed of the changing and the changeless,
The manifest and the unmanifest.
The separate self, not yet aware of the Lord,
Goes after pleasure, only to become
Bound more and more. When it sees the Lord,
There comes the end to bondage.

All is change in the world of the senses,
But changeless is the Lord of Love.
Meditate on him, be absorbed in him,
Wake up from the dream of separateness.

Know him to be enshrined in your heart always.
Truly there is nothing more in life to know.
Meditate and realize this world
Is filled with the presence of God.

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