

October 31, 2010 Readings



“Leaving Needs Behind”

Fr Laurence Freeman OSB, *LIGHT WITHIN* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 69-71.

[Meditation] isn't a call to follow a way of saintly perfection. It isn't a call to be a hero or a genius, nor even a call to be extraordinary in any way. It is a call to be the person you are and to take the time it takes to be who you are (whether it is five years or fifty years), the person Jesus has loved by laying down his life. . .

So Fr John would point to the Gospel and would say that the teaching of meditation is the teaching of the Gospel. He says in *WORD INTO SILENCE*, “the whole of the teaching of Cassian on prayer is based on the Gospel.” And he quotes Jesus' words: “In your prayers do not go babbling on like the heathen who imagine that the more they say, the more likely they are to be heard. Do not imitate them. Your Father knows what your needs are before you ask him.” [. . .]

There is a great demand in the words of Jesus, “your Father knows what your needs are before you ask him.” It is the summons to be silent. It is the invitation to trust. Silence in meditation is the supreme expression of our trust in God, just as in any human relationship it can be the supreme expression of personal trust. From the experience of meditation we know that the demand at first evokes something frightening and almost impossible to understand: Leave your needs behind. And how can we leave our needs behind? Our need for personal fulfillment, our need for sympathy, our need for understanding, our need for recognition, our need for every essential kind of human affirmation. Leaving those needs behind seems to us to be almost impossibly negative until we understand that hanging on to them is the sure way of remaining in need. Hanging on to our needs is a denial of the fullness that we are offered in the present moment. When they are clung to, those needs are really not needs but desires.

How do we let go of them? Meditation tells us very simply. We let go of them by not asking for them, by not petitioning for them, at least not in an egotistical way. Not asking for me. Every

prayer of the Mass is a petition, but it is the need of the community in which each has transcended or is transcending his own isolated desires and egoism. When we pray for the coming of the Kingdom we are, as it were, throwing our own isolated needs and desires behind us and sacrificing ourselves to the Kingdom, as a preparation for communion. Needs are also left behind by ceasing to think about them. That perhaps is the greatest challenge: to turn away even from thinking about our needs, in the trust that the Kingdom is established, and that its fullness is realized to the degree that we trust. If only we can trust.

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...

Olivier Clement, THE ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM (London: New City, 1995), p. 45.

The sacrifice of Jesus accomplishes the Father's eternal plan to unite humanity with divinity, to bring alive and deify the depths of human nature, of the universe, of being. Never again should we be alone, shut out or lost. When we are in shame or despair, and there seems no way out, Christ is waiting for us in silent love.

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