The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Readings for 1/4/2012

Palm Sunday

An excerpt from Laurence Freeman, FIRST SIGHT: The Experience of Faith (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 61-62. Meditation reunites the pure beam of light which is fragmented in our perception by the prism of the ego. It leads to a new way of seeing, a way of perception that merges the daily practice of meditation with daily life and work as an integrated way of faith. When we see something, as a child, for the first time we are amazed. The world is teeming with undiscovered wonders and we cannot understand why our elders seem so unimpressed by them.

I was waiting once for my bags to appear on the carousel at an airport terminal. It seemed an interminable wait and I just wanted to get out into the fresh air after hours of breathing in artificial environments. Then I noticed a small boy staring at the carousel with transfigured attention. When the light flashed and the bell rang to announce the bags were finally arriving his excitement escalated. When his own bags appeared he shouted the news to his father with an unbearable joy and wonder. I was just pleased my bags had not got lost again.

Whoever loved that loved not at first sight? Whoever did not see the world for the first time and fall in love with it? But we gradually forget this first-sight thrill as life becomes routine and stress filters out the joy and wonder. But the first sight experience is recoverable at another level of perception. In fact, if it is not recovered we fail to develop. Faith is the capacity to see again for the first time.

After meditation: Mary Oliver, ?Invitation? in REDBIRD (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008) pp. 18-19.

Invitation

Oh do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy

and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles

for a musical battle,
to see who can sing
the highest note,
or the lowest,

or the most expressive of mirth,
or the most tender?
Their strong, blunt beaks
drink the air

as they strive
melodiously
not for your sake
and not for mine

and not for the sake of winning
but for sheer delight and gratitude?
believe us, they say,
it is a serious thing

just to be alive
on this fresh morning
in this broken world.
I beg of you,

do not walk by
without pausing
to attend to this
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.
It could mean everything.
It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:
You must change your life.

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