



# The World Community for Christian Meditation

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## READINGS FOR 15/7/2012



An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB, "Letter Nine,"

**COMMON GROUND: Letters to a World Community of Meditators (New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 103-104.**

Meditation allows no self-deception. We see ourselves as we are. It is impossible to avoid seeing the ways in which we are phony or hypocritical; our illusions, self-deceptions, fearful insecurities, and compulsions stand out clearly

; and the way we judge and dismiss others so arrogantly will strike a dagger in our conscience when we see it. But by facing this dark side of ourselves, we enlighten it. We see it with a light that shines from somewhere deeper in ourselves. And this light of our spirit burns away our self-hatred with the ultimately unavoidable and revolutionary truth that we are good and lovable.

The more conscious of the true self we are, the more we see our attitude to others change in the way we live out our relationship with them. Fear diminishes, generous love grows; reactive anger yields to the wisdom of forgiveness; judgement is absorbed by patience. In the place of the control and manipulation which, in the ego's eyes, makes the world go round, an amazing freedom is glimpsed as a real possibility in human affairs: the freedom that arises when people let each other be who they are. The world would not be perfect even if we did that from childhood on, but we would need far fewer prisons, and those in prison might be the ones who would actually benefit from being there.

But what a risk. The great risk we take in meditation is first of all to be ourselves. This is the first step. If we do not take the corresponding next step, we would never move from where we are; we would be hopping on one leg all our life. The next step is to take the risk of letting others be themselves. Perceiving their reality as distinct from our own is the way to do this. And to see them as real is to love them. Iris Murdoch once wrote that "love is the perception of the individual." She went on,

Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than ourselves is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality. What stuns us into a realization of our

supersensible destiny is unutterable particularity.

Turning attention away from ourselves toward the greater reality ?outside us? that contains us is the great act of contemplation. It is the same act of contemplation however we manage to do it?in relationships, in art, in service, and in prayer. Certainly, learning to meditate?a lifelong art to learn?is a fundamental way to do it. But it is not limited to the actual work of meditation. To meditate is to learn how to live contemplatively in everything we do, [to], as St Antony of the desert once called his disciples to do: ?always breathe Christ.?

**After meditation:** from Bishop Kallistos Ware, THE POWER OF THE NAME: THE JESUS PRAYER IN ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY (London: Marshall Pickering, 1974), p. 39.

The aim of . . .all Christian prayer is that our praying should become increasingly identified with the prayer offered by Jesus within us, that our life should become one with his life, our breathing with the divine breath that sustains the universe. . . .The more prayer becomes a part of ourselves, the more we enter into the movement of love which passes unceasingly between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of this love, St Isaac the Syrian has written with great beauty:

Love is the kingdom of which our Lord spoke symbolically when he promised his disciples that they would eat in his kingdom: ?You shall eat and drink at the table of my kingdom.? What should they eat, if not love?

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