The World Community for Christian Meditation

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

READINGS FOR 27/5/2012

From John Main, OSB, ?Beyond All Images,? THE WAY OF UNKNOWING (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 41-43.

Meditation is a way of coming to an immeasurable reality beyond all images. The problem we face on this journey is that we have to sidestep our own ego which is the supreme manufacturer of images, mostly images of ourselves and, to a lesser extent, images of others, even images of God.

When you begin to meditate, the ego is immediately reactive. It regroups its threatened forces and proposes to you the question, ?Are you wasting time at this? What progress are you making? Where are you getting?? If you have a rather stubborn sort of nature and continue to meditate in spite of taunts like these, your ego will probably try another tack. It will say, ?You are doing tremendously well, you are going to be a saint, you are a born mystic.? . . .And so the ego begins to manufacture for you the image of the truly spiritual man or woman. Before long that image is fractured and you are back where you started. There are countless ways the ego will try to discourage you, to stop you meditating, because the ego knows right from the beginning that if you meditate, if you do go beyond all image to reality, then the ego. . .will be dethroned. It will lose power.

Now why should we meditate? I think all of us answer that question eventually in this way: at various times in our lives, all of us have wanted to be committed to truth, to be committed to God. Meditation answers that need. . . .What we know, I think, is that all of us have tried, all of us have wanted to pray, and all of us have failed. But at some time we come to the conclusion that the wisdom we receive from the contemplative tradition of prayer is the wisdom that turns the failure into triumph. The silence and poverty we experience in our meditation become self-authenticating. We know that we cannot analyze God. We know that we cannot, with finite minds, understand the infinitude of God. But we also know, or at least we soon begin dimly to suspect, that we can experience God?s love for us. . . .It is this experiential knowledge that teaches us, too, that the images manufactured by the ego, whether of hopelessness or of sanctity, must all give way. None of them can be taken seriously. . . .

Success and failure give way to what we come to know to be true through our own experience

of meditation: death and resurrection. Every time we sit down to meditate we die to self and we rise beyond our own limitations to new life in Christ. We know that it is his life within us, his indwelling Spirit in our hearts, which is real and the essential energy of our growth. We also know that we can only come to our full potential if we are rooted in that reality, rooted in that love and living out of its power. We have to learn to say our mantra. We have to learn how to say it from the beginning of our meditation to the end. We have to understand that it is the daily discipline that finally unmasks the ego. Unmasked, it disappears. We must not be impatient or despondent. We must say our mantra, with faith, day after day. Success or failure will then have no significance. The only thing that is significant is the reality of God, the reality of his presence in our heart. . . .

After meditation: from Willigis Jager, SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE : Essays and Reflections on the Mystical Experience (Liguori, MO: Triumph, 1995), 137.

The point of contact with God is here and now because there is nothing that might not be divine. Here and now is also hell. Heaven and hell are separated only by our ego. If we can abandon the ego, we can enter the kingdom of God. There are no magical rituals that take us there, only the dying of our false ego. Only love gives us the power to abandon everything so as to enter into this new order of being.

Carla Cooper - cmcooper@gvtc.com

Source URL: http://www.wccm.org/content/readings-2752012