



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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September 26, 2010 Readings

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?Straying from the Mantra"

John Main OSB, "Straying from the Mantra," *THE HEART OF CREATION* (London: Canterbury, 2007), pp. 9-11.

To learn to meditate we have to learn to be humble. . . . What does it mean to be humble? It means to begin to acknowledge that there is a reality outside of ourselves, that is greater than ourselves and that contains us. Humility is simply learning to find our place within that greater reality and . . . learn to live in our place. The first thing to understand is that you are your own place. To come to terms with all reality, we must first come to terms with our own reality. It is in the stillness of meditation, the stillness of body and spirit which reveals the unity of body and spirit, that we enter the experience of knowing really that we are. We come to know this with absolute clarity and absolute certainty. Only then are we ready to go to the next step which is to go beyond ourselves, to rise beyond ourselves. The tragedy of the egoist is that the egoist does not know his or her place. The egoist thinks that he is at the center of the everything and sees everything. . . only in relation to himself.

Meditation and the constant return to it, every day of your life, is like cutting a pathway through to reality. Once we know our place, we begin to see everything in a new light because we have become who we really are. And becoming who we are, we can now see everything as it is and so begin to see everyone else as they are. The truest wonder of meditation is that we even begin to see God as God is. Meditation is therefore a way to stability. We learn through the practice and from the experience how to be rooted in our essential being. We learn that to be rooted in our essential being is to be rooted in God, the author and principle of all reality. And it is no small thing to enter reality, to become real, to become who we are, because in that experience we are freed from all the images that so constantly plague us. We do not have to be anyone's image of ourselves, but simply the real person we are.

Meditation is practiced in solitude but it is the great way to learn to be in relationship. The reason for this paradox is that, having contacted our own reality, we have the existential confidence to go out to others, to meet them at their real level. And so the solitary element in meditation is mysteriously the true antidote to loneliness. Having contacted our conformity

with reality, we are no longer threatened by the otherness of others. We are not always looking for an affirmation of ourselves. We are making love's search, looking for the reality of the other. . . .

Meditation is demanding. We must learn to meditate whether we feel like it or not, whether it is raining or snowing, or the sun is shining or whatever is on television or whatever kind of day we have had. In the Christian vision of meditation. . .we find the reality of the great paradox Jesus teaches: If we want to find our lives we have to be prepared to lose them. In meditating, that is exactly what we do. We find ourselves because we are prepared to let go of ourselves, to launch ourselves out into the

depths--- which soon appear to be the depths of God.

After Meditation, an excerpt from the Katha Upanishad 3, 1-2 in THE UPANISHADS, translated by E. Easwaran (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1995), p. 88.

In the secret cave of the heart, two are seated

By life's fountain. The separate ego

Drinks of the sweet and bitter stuff,

Liking the sweet, disliking the bitter,

While the supreme Self drinks sweet and bitter

Neither liking this nor disliking that.

The ego gropes in darkness, while the Self

Lives in light. So declare the illumined sages

And the householders who worship

The sacred fire in the name of the Lord.

May we light the fire of Nachiketa

That burns out the ego and enables us

To pass from fearful fragmentation

To fearless fullness in the changeless whole.

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