



# The World Community for Christian Meditation

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## Tuesday Lent, Week 1



?Did you sleep well last night?? It?s a common enough question if you are meeting with people at home or at a conference, polite but also rather intimate. Be careful how you ask - for some people it?s heard as an invitation to tell you their dream life over breakfast.

Behind the question is the disturbing statistic that eighty percent of Americans are chronically sleep-deprived- and as we all seem prone to catch American malfunctions it probably applies in part to us all. Sleep is a desert experience. We move away from the bustle of daily life into a realm of consciousness where we pass through often turbulent dream-emotions and concerns into a dreamless state of calm and rest. If we cannot sleep well because our minds are too agitated or our lifestyle does not respect the body-mind harmony we will not reach this place of tranquility where we are energized and recharged by the pure dynamo of stillness. Our behaviour next day will tell the tale.

When we meditate we go into a kind of wakeful sleep. (?I slept but my heart was awake?, as the Song of Songs, 5:2, puts it). The first and good stage is relaxation but if we are very unused to relaxation we may be quickly overwhelmed and fall asleep or battle with drowsiness. Posture, food-management, timing and practice will help balance alertness with relaxation. Let the muscles of your face relaxed like a baby sleeping but sit with the back straight.

Reciting the mantra is an act of faith and a work of attention and wakefulness. The journey to the place of rest and purification, to the oasis in the desert, is this essential work of attention which is the heart of all prayer. When awake at this level what do we recognize that we were closed to before? Relationship that is without attachment. Silence that is truth.

Laurence Freeman OSB

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