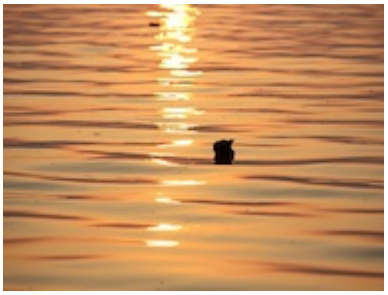
Published on *The World Community for Christian Meditation* (http://www.wccm.org)

Wednesday of Lent Week 3



The human spirit yearns to breathe the air of liberty. We rankle under impositions and restrictions placed upon us by people or institutions, by parents, pharaohs or presidents. We defend our ancient liberties with great rhetoric. We bomb, torture and lie in the defence of freedom.

For many of us today ? especially Roman Catholics in the seedy limelight at the moment - religious institutions and their leadership have failed to understand and witness to the essential meaning of liberty.

Without that understanding there is no genuine witness, just pious or pompous posturing. How, for example, can we proclaim and defend liberty while denying open discussion of the questions that the majority of us are talking about daily? How can we not recognise that genuine equality in areas like gender, sexual orientation and status in the institution are non-negotiable adjuncts of liberty?

Institutions, religious or political, fail and anger us with their intractable power-structures and their blithe assumption of the right to govern. So we distance ourselves from them. But then we find we are alone. Liberty cannot be defended or enjoyed only by individuals. We need community and community needs sem measure of organization as St Benedict understood. Spiritually our contemporary crisis throws many homeless people on the streets and forms many wandering tribes. And some, of course, run back to the failed institutions surrendering their liberty in return for security.

The Christian stories that nourish and teach us daily during Lent keep returning to the myth of the desert. They ask us have you found your desert yet? Have you accepted it as your place of learning? Do you know the disciplines that ensure survival in the desert? Have you learned to wander freely in it recognizing the pattern formed by the different directions you have

taken?

Has your meditation taught you yet that liberty is not just a right we exercise. It is a country of its own. An ecosphere of its own. Where the spirit is there is liberty.

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