

## Meditators' Blog 10/10/2011



by Greg Ryan

### Three Guides Along the Way (Plus One): Merton, Main, Freeman (and Charlotte)

This morning, our weekly meditation group help a three-hour introductory session on Christian meditation. We hold these every couple of years and always have a good group show up. Today was no exception. We focused on meditation in these troubled times, on Christ as the Source of all Peace and on meditation as a way to grow in that awareness.

My plan was to spend an hour each on Thomas Merton, John Main and Laurence Freeman. It worked ? almost according to plan: The CD player wouldn't cooperate. The DVD player would not skip to the fourth track that I needed. So I had to change things on the fly. Luckily, I had planned more than I could have used, so I was able to ?switch gears? without too much notice or disruption. In fact, I was able to slip into Father Laurence's reflections on Martha and Mary in order to share with the group some of my frustrations. Also, something of the tantrums I had vented on Liz, my wife of almost 41 years (who is almost used to these things). She's also my main helper at these events. She's the ?Martha? of our relationship.

But I also reflected on how we each have our Martha and Mary sides. We all have that active side that usually hogs the spotlight. But we also have the ?Mary? side calling us to sit at the Master's feet when we make the time to meditate in the midst of all the hubbub.

I explained how it was Thomas Merton who taught me the ?what? of the contemplative life. How we are created in God's image and are meant to share in God's Life even in this life. I've been spending time this summer listening to Merton's talks to the young monks at Gethsemani and time and again he tells them that their life is first of all a LIFE, a simple life hidden from others, perhaps, but life, nonetheless. And so with us, as I explained to our little group. We find God in the ordinary happenings of our ordinary lives. Not so much saying to ourselves ?where is God in my life? Oh, here he is! but simply being aware of our lives as gifts from God. Every moment. This was Father John's teaching: The Present Moment as the Moment of Christ (to use two of his book titles). He taught me to be faithful to the simple path of meditation; to allow God's presence to become not only a reality in my life but the reality, as he wrote in *Word Into Silence*. It drew me into this Community of fellow-travelers who have supported me over the past 30-plus years.

And now I have another teacher: I shared with the group how I have been enjoying the wonders of grandfatherhood for some 14 months now, after the arrival of our first grandchild, Charlotte. In many ways I have been reliving the joys and memories of fatherhood from when our two daughters were babies -- around the time I first learned to meditate. I remember visiting Father John in Montreal and becoming an oblate member of the community. I remember how Father Laurence graciously walked with me and talked with me about the pilgrimage I was undertaking as a husband and father. When the girls were old enough, we went there as a family so they could make their First Holy Communions at the monastery.

Much older now, I am able to fit these joys into a bigger picture. I can appreciate that Charlotte will spend more of her life without me than with me ? whether it's 14 months or 14 years ? so I savor every moment we share together. We sing songs, read books, play games ? or just walk down the hall as she holds onto my finger. With the expectancy of one who is used to waiting, I look forward with great joy to the time when she first squeals, ?Grampa!? For me, it has the ring of ?Maranatha!?

*Greg Ryan (in the picture above with Charlotte!)*

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