



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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November 28 Readings



An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB, "Reverence," LIGHT WITHIN

(New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 92, 94-95.

Religious people tend to be more self-consciousness than others. And if we are honest about our self-consciousness we should see its connection with a certain lack of reverence in our religious life. We may indeed be surprised that at the most sacred moments in our religious life our spirit of reverence is shamefully hollow. A busy, noisy irreverence in our churches is certainly something that non-Christians often remark upon. They remark for example on the lack of silence or of physical stillness. They often remark too about the amount of time spent in asking God for things we want.

This does not mean that we should never move in our seats, or that words are not an enriching part of religious worship. But. . . meditation changes our attitude to worship because it teaches from within our own experience that the God we worship is present and that it is his presence that we are worshipping. Meditation makes our religious life more reverential because it teaches us, through experience of his indwelling Presence, that it is *in* his Presence that we worship his Presence. We are no less in him that he is in us. In the interpenetration of his consciousness with ours we know because we are known. The most natural response to any experience in which we know and are known is reverential silence. Silence leads deeper into mutual knowledge. [. . .]

We use so many words. We hear the same words, the same ideas, so many times a day that they become blunted for us. But many people will remember how they could hear the words of St Paul read by Father John as if they were hearing them for the first time. That was wonder. Without wonder we forget that the reality we are talking of and worshipping *is* real, *is* present. Reverence and wonder can grow only out of a direct contact with real Presence. Otherwise, we remain locked at the level of indirect contact, talking *about*, thinking *about*. We then inevitably become self-consciously concerned with the way we talk, the way we express it, the way we come across; and so develop religious self-importance. The next step is to become argumentative or condemnatory. This is the great curse and tendency of religious people, the consequence of losing reverence.

Yet the way from self-importance to reverence is so simple. We don't have to try to engineer direct contact with God because it has already been made. That is the incarnation, the Word made flesh. We don't have to try to argue our way into that greater Consciousness because it has already taken up its dwelling within us, not by argument but by love. Meditation is simply knowing that.

Meditate for Thirty Minutes.... Remember: Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer-phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything—spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention—with humility and simplicity—to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation.

After Meditation, from T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," FOUR QUARTETS (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), pp. 50-51.

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.

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