

November 7, 2010 READINGS



“Dearest Friends,”

Laurence Freeman OSB in the Newsletter of the World Community for Christian Meditation, Vol 32, No. 3, September 2008, p. 4.

When the force of faith is set free in the human person it impels us to experience reality beyond words, images, and ideas. We then discover that the filters of metaphor, however useful and necessary they may be at one level, can also (and need to) be deactivated if faith is to grow. Like all human universals we grow in faith or faith wilts and dies. Faith contains the eternal yearning we all have to see reality just as it is. “Brothers and sisters,” said St John, “what we shall be like we do not know but we do know that when Christ appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is. As he is pure, all who have grasped this hope make themselves pure.” (1Jn 3:2-3) To see God is to become like God. Purity is the condition of this vision. In much of religion, though, where faith is restricted to belief or ritual, purity means piling on the filters, adding to the intervening layers. At the core of each religion, however, is the ineradicable mystical knowledge that ultimate purity is a 20-20 vision of reality, unfiltered and unmediated by metaphor. Most of us never fully attain it but the intuition that this is so is part of the deep nature of faith itself.

To see reality as it is, or at least to free oneself progressively of some of the filters, is a major act of faith. It expresses the trusting face of faith because our attachment to the beliefs and rituals of our tradition (rather than the beliefs and rituals in themselves) become a false and falsifying security. And so, many deeply religious people feel an aversion or antipathy to meditation because it seems to (and indeed does) undermine the secure boundaries that protect our world view and our sense of being superiorly different from others.

A way of faith, however, is not a dogged adherence to one point of view and to the belief systems and ritual traditions that express it. That would make it just ideology or sectarianism, not faith. Faith is a transformational journey that demands that we move in, through and beyond our frameworks of belief and external observances—not betraying or rejecting them but not being entrapped by their forms of expression either. St Paul spoke of the Way of salvation as beginning and ending in faith. Faith is thus an open-endedness, from the very

beginning of the human journey. Naturally, we need a framework, a system and tradition. [But] if we are stably centered in these, the process of change unfolds and our perspective of truth is continuously enlarged.

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...

"Who Said This?" by Mary Oliver in RED BIRD (Boston: Beacon, 2008), p. 58.

Something whispered something
that was not even a word.
It was more like a silence
that was understandable.
I was standing
at the edge of the pond.
Nothing living, what we call living,
was in sight.
And yet, the voice entered me,
my body-life,
with so much happiness.
And there was nothing there
but the water, the sky, the grass.

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