The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Readings for 16/9/2012

From Fr. John Main, "Purity of Heart," WORD MADE FLESH

(London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2009), pp. 58-59.

. . . .We often think of freedom merely as the freedom to do what we want to do. But even the most rudimentary experience of making contact with the power of Jesus in meditation shows us that freedom is not essentially the power to do but the liberty to be who we are

. . . . .To be who we are, we must be in relationship. We often painfully discover that we cannot be ourselves in isolation. The fundamental relationship of life is our relationship with God, and meditation is our commitment to that. Prayer could be described as the selfless attention we bring to this relationship in which all relationships find their source. So we do not think about ourselves in meditation. We attend to God. Even to think of God would lead us to thinking of God in terms of ourselves.

[. . . .] The wonder of prayer is that, in selfless attention, we enter God's all-goodness and become good ourselves; not through any kind of platonic striving but simply because we enter the radiance of the orbit of his goodness. This is the essential basis of all morality, not that we try to imitate God but that we participate in the goodness of God. The ancient Fathers called this "purity of heart." It is enjoyed when our heart is cleansed of all desire, including the desire for God. We should not want to possess God or even to possess wisdom or happiness. Desire itself prevents us from enjoying any of these. We should rather, simply and in quiet stillness, be who we are and be content to be good because we are in God.

We all come from a state we once enjoyed of simplicity, innocence and the joy of sheer goodness. This is the basis of a truly religious response to life. You can see this in the serious eyes of a child who is beginning to discover the wonder in the mystery of life, in religion, in God. Meditation is so important to all of us because, by the simplifying power of its action, it brings us again to this serious approach to the religious experience.

By serious, I mean that in meditation we are not trying to manipulate God for our own purposes. We are not condescending to involve him in our lives. We are rather discovering the wonder of his involvement in our life. We do so by saying the mantra, coming to stillness

and silence, going beyond desire and coming to purity of heart. We are then simply open---but this requires everything we are---to reality in its purest and most intimate self-revelation. We are open to God's presence, within us and around us, as the power that sustains us by love

After meditation: Thomas Merton, "Informal Talk, 10/1968," THE ASIAN JOURNAL OF THOMAS MERTON, ed. N. Burton, et. al. (NY: New Directions, 1975), p. 308.

And the deepest level, communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discovery a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers [and sisters], we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.

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