The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Weekly Teachings 22/05/2011

What makes our meditation Christian?

Sample Talks introducing meditation to a mainly Christian audience (Part Two)

The following are suggestions for talks for weekly groups. The following points will be food for a series of talks. Restrict your introduction to 15 minutes at the most at your weekly group meeting.

- Highlight John Main's importance as a spiritual teacher. By rediscovering our way of meditation ? the repetition of a prayer word to enter the silence - in the writings of John Cassian, a monk from the 4th century, he has contributed greatly to the recovery of this spiritual tradition and the contemplative dimension of prayer. After the flourishing of this way of prayer amongst Christian hermits in the Desert in the 4th and 5th century, it was considered only a valid way of prayer for saints and some specially spiritual monks or nuns, definitely not for the ordinary person. But John Main stressed that meditation was for everyone: "Meditation is as natural to the spirit, as breathing is to the body." After the death of John Main, Laurence Freeman has been leading the World Community for Christian Meditation.
- Emphasize the simplicity of meditation; it is not a complicated technique, there is no

difficult theory to master, but it does require discipline ? twice-daily practice will lead to continuous prayer. But this is a self-imposed discipline ? it is your free choice to meditate or not.

- Introduce the concept of a Mantra, a Sanskrit word, but now in the Oxford English Dictionary and used in daily life. Its meaning is: ?that which clears the mind". John Cassian used the term "formula" and this was translated by John Main as "mantra". We are using it in the sense that it is spoken of in the anonymous book "Way of the Pilgrim" as the ?Jesus prayer?, a prayer word we repeat in the heart. John Main recommended "Maranatha"- an important prayer in Aramaic ? the language Jesus spoke - for early Christians, meaning: "Come Lord" and "The Lord comes". St Paul uses it in 1 Cor 16; St John ends ?Revelation? with it and according to modern scholars it was a password for early Christians to enter secret Eucharistic celebrations during the persecutions.

- Explain the purpose of the Mantra. It simplifies and unifies the mind by freeing it from distractions. The result is an alert stillness, when we are focused on God. By silencing our thoughts, we "leave self behind" (Luke 9,23) and become more attentive to God and in turn to others in ordinary life. By limiting ourselves to the "poverty of the single verse" (Cassian) we become "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5: 3). "Set your minds on the Kingdom of God and his justice before everything else" (Matthew 6, 33-34). Explain how to say the Mantra: gently; don't evaluate; don't expect to achieve anything; don't use it as a club to beat your thoughts with; say it with faith and love.

- ?Unless the mantra is accompanied by faith and love, it has no real value; it would be merely a mechanism. It is a real danger to trust the mechanism of the mantra. But as an expression of faith and love, it becomes a very powerful means to direct your faith and to open you to God.? (Bede Griffiths)

Laurence Freeman OSB
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