



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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February 6 Readings



Laurence Freeman OSB, "Meditation," **JESUS THE TEACHER**

WITHIN(New York: Continuum, 2000), pp. 212-213.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus identified material concerns as our main source of anxiety. How can we make ourselves more comfortable and reduce personal suffering? This is the major preoccupation that obscures the present moment and disrupts true priorities.

Therefore I bid you put away anxious thought about food and drink to keep you alive, and clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes (Mt 6:25).

When he tells us not to worry Jesus is not denying the reality of daily problems. It is anxiety he is telling us to abandon, not reality. Learning not to worry is hard work. . . .[Yet] despite its "attention-deficiency disorder," even the modern mind has its natural capacity to be still and to transcend its fixations. In depth it discovers its own clarity where it is at peace, free from anxiety. Most of us have half-a-dozen or so favorite anxieties, like bitter sweets we suck on endlessly. We would be frightened to be deprived of them. Jesus challenges us to go beyond the fear of letting go of anxiety, the fear we have of peace itself. The practice of meditation is a way of applying his teaching on prayer; it proves through experience that the human mind can indeed choose not to worry.

This is not to say we can easily blank the mind and dispel all thoughts at will. In meditation we remain distracted and yet are free from distraction. This is because---however minimally at first---we are free to choose where to place our attention. Gradually the discipline of daily practice strengthens this freedom. It would be childish to imagine that this is fully realized in a short time. We stay distracted for a long time. We soon get used to distractions as traveling companions on the path of meditation. But they do not have to dominate. Choosing to say the mantra faithfully and to keep returning to it whenever distractions intervene exercises the freedom we have to *pay attention*.

It is not a choice in the sense in which we choose a particular brand off the supermarket shelf. It is the choice to commit. The way of the mantra is an act of faith, not a movement of the ego's power. Within every act of faith there is a declaration of love. Faith prepares the ground for the seed of the mantra to germinate in love. We do not create the miracle of life and growth by ourselves, but we are responsible for its unfolding. Coming to peace of mind and heart—to silence, stillness, and simplicity---requires not the will of a type-A high-achiever, but the unconditional attention, the sustained fidelity of a disciple.

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 Simone Weil, "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," *WAITING ON GOD* (London: Fount/HarperCollins, 1972), pp. 91-92.

There is only one way of never receiving anything but good. It is to know, with our whole soul and not just abstractly, that people who are not animated by pure charity are merely wheels in the mechanism of the order of the world, like inert matter. After that we see that everything comes directly from God. . .All that increases the vital energy in us is like the bread for which Christ thanks the just. All the blows, the wounds and the mutilations are like a stone thrown at us by the hand of Christ. Bread and stone both come from Christ and, penetrating to our inward being, bring Christ into us. Bread and stone are love. We must eat the bread and lay ourselves open to the stone, so that it may sink as deeply as possible into our flesh. If we have any armour that is able to protect our soul from the stones thrown by Christ, we should take it off and cast it away.

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