The World Community for Christian Meditation

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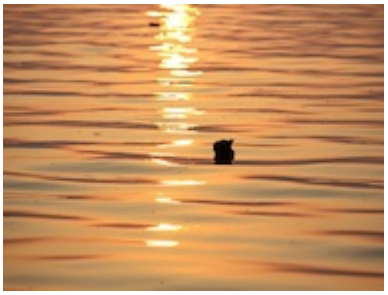
Monday of Lent Week 3



Small adjustments can make a big difference. Imagine the vast distances involved in a minor error in a spacecraft?s compass settings. Or the brief experiences in childhood that set a pattern for decades before their effect can be corrected.

So with the attitudinal settings with which we start the practice of meditation. Because some people have an allergy to all things religious, the physiological, psychological or pragmatic approach can seem best at the beginning. It is like the spacecraft being focused on the next planet in its path. ?I?ll meditate in order to get these proven benefits.?

Benefits certainly follow from practice. But, once achieved, they push the horizon further and the spiritual or more integral dimension of meditation swims into view. Horizon becomes a symbol of the infinite rather than a short-term goal. Thus begins a contemplative setting that provides a new burst of energy for the whole voyage of discovery.

The problem at the beginning can be that we think of contemplation merely as a means of getting new information. So we cling to the mind?s pre-existing patterns and limitations and try to fit the boundless into it. When this fails we think we can?t meditate. Hopefully we finally get the point ? that contemplation is not a way of adding to our knowledge. It is the opening of a wholly new way of knowing that is inexpressible in the earlier ways we have been used to before. This is really puzzling and frustrating to the mind but makes deep sense and speaks directly to the heart.

At first the mind says all this is meaningless but, in fact, it is supported by the purest logic. To sail across a vast ocean we have to lose sight of our home shore. To open the new way of perception, to ?purify the eye of the heart?, we have to let go of our familiar ways of knowing and cognition and to enter a light so bright that it seems utter darkness.

I once was being examined by an eye surgeon for a detached retina and was scared of losing my sight. He shone a bright light into my eyes and when he removed it I was shocked and

terrified when I realised I could no longer see anything. I told him this with some anxiety at which he laughed and casually reassured me.

To learn to meditate is learning daily that life is a journey of discovery. Whoever wants to learn this needs to have something of the explorer in them.

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