

READINGS FOR 20/5/2012



From John Main OSB, "Growing in God," **THE WAY OF**

UNKNOWNING (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 79-81.

The longer you meditate, the longer you persevere through the difficulties and the false starts, then the clearer it becomes to you that you *have* to continue if you are going to lead your life in a meaningful and profound way.

You must never forget the way of meditation: to say your mantra from the beginning to the end. This is basic, axiomatic and let nothing dissuade you from the truth of it. . . . [T]he discipline, the ascesis of meditation places this one demand on us absolutely: . . . that we must leave self behind so completely, leave our thoughts, analyses and feelings behind so completely, that we can be totally at the disposition of the Other. . .

What is the difference between reality and unreality? I think one way we can understand it is to see unreality as the product of desire. One thing we learn in meditation is to abandon desire, and we learn it because we know that our invitation is to live wholly in the present moment. Reality demands stillness and silence. And that is the commitment that we make in meditating. As everyone can find from their own experience, we learn in the stillness and silence to accept ourselves as we are. This sound very strange to modern ears, above all to modern Christians who have been brought up to practice so much anxious striving: "Shouldn't I be ambitious? What if I'm a bad person, shouldn't I *desire* to be better?"

The real tragedy of our time is that we are so filled with desire, for happiness, for success, for wealth, for power, whatever it may be, that we are always imagining ourselves as we *might* be. So rarely do we come to know ourselves as we *are* and to accept our present position. But the traditional wisdom tells us: know that you are and that you are as you are. It may well be that we are sinners and if we are, it is important that we should know that we are. But far more important for us is to know from our own experience that God is the ground of our being and that we are rooted and founded in him. . . . This is the stability that we all need, not the striving and movement of desire but the stability and the stillness of spiritual rootedness. Each of us is invited to learn in our meditation, in our stillness in God, that in him we have everything that is necessary. [...]

After meditation: from St Augustine of Hippo, ?The Confessions,? AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM, ed. Harvey D. Egan (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 68.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty, so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! And behold, you were within me and I was outside, and there I sought for you, and in my deformity I rushed headlong into the well-formed things that you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you. . . .[But] you called and cried out to me and broke open my deafness; you shone forth upon me and you scattered my blindness; you breathed fragrance and I drew in my breath. . . .

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