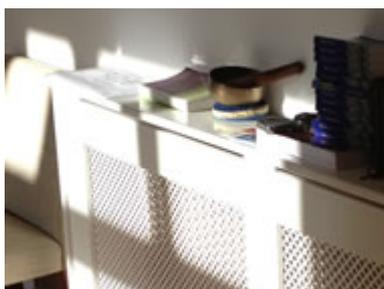


Thursday after Ash Wednesday



The first practice for Lent ? to strengthen or initiate a good habit.

If you don't meditate regularly, today is a propitious day to start. If you already meditate imagine that you are starting all over again. As the medieval mystics used to say ? you know nothing, you want nothing, you have nothing. We meditate, as John Main said, without demands or expectations.

From the outset, then, there is an exhilarating glimpse of true freedom.

Children can do this naturally, I think, because they approach, it not as a demanding discipline, which big egos fear because of the prospect of failure. But they come to it as play. As in every game, there are rules. (Say your mantra). Without rules there is no game, no play. Keeping the rules of a well-played game gives a sense of satisfaction even if you happen to lose from time to time. You don't stop loving the game because you don't win every time.

Sit down, sit still, back straight, close your eyes. Say your word gently, faithfully and simply from beginning to end. Return to the mantra continuously. When distracted, start again. The word: maranatha. The time 20-30 minutes.

There?s a habit involved therefore. Not only the ordinary daily habit that makes each morning and evening meditation an integral part of the day. But a habit of mind. There are three initial stages:

First, face the zone of distractions, bombarding your surface mind like meteorites. Big and small. Zoom through that with the mantra and you will come through the asteroid zone to a more peaceful and clear mental space.

Zone two is a tempting place to prioritise your tasks, review difficult situations, solve problems. If you want to go further, however, let go of this temptation and keep letting go, getting lighter and freer all the time. Say your mantra.

The third zone is the place of perpetual beginning. When you say the mantra simply and with full attention you know you have really begun. This knowledge is the beginning of the knowledge of God that comes to the poor in spirit and those who are content to know nothing.

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