The World Community for Christian Meditation

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An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB. "Dearest Friends,"

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Inner peace is hard to find at times of conflict and fear. We find it difficult to sit still when mind and feeling are in turmoil.

It is easy to give up meditation at such times when it is most needed. So it helps to see that our meditation is not for ourselves alone. If it were, we are no more than religious consumers. The meaning of contemplation is found in its fruits, especially the love and service of others. When we have inner peace we go out to others in compassion. Lacking it all our out-going is subject to the ego's desire, anger and competitiveness. God is the love that casts out fear in our neighbor because, when we have truly met that love within ourselves, we can never do our neighbor harm.

Self-knowledge opens us to the mystery of human uniqueness - unity in diversity. Until we recognize and embrace our own uniqueness we can never relate to the universal. We remain trapped in the prison of egotism. Our own particular holiness must be realized before we can know the whole in which we have our being and where we most truly belong. The great error (and the sin of clericalism) is to pretend to have grasped the universal before we have come to self-knowledge. Trying to grasp the universal, to speak for it, to control it - these are the signs that we have still not been grasped by it.

What does the 'universal' mean? Jesus expressed it as the nature of divine love that bestows itself impartially on all that is. Like the sun it shines on good and bad alike. That means that God is beyond human morality. God never fights on my side against others. Like the rain divine love falls on the innocent and the wicked. That means God's justice is beyond any human attempt to be just. One love unites the persecutor and the victim. First we need to experience this universality as it bears down on ourselves. It then whittles away the ego. It simplifies us. It lifts us above the complexity of our lives as it pours into our whole being through our deepest centre. Only then are we really awake. Then the twin human adventure of discovery and celebration begins. We discover that the same love is everywhere and embraces all, even those we may not yet be able to love. But at least we can see they are

loveable. We also celebrate. We rejoice in the intoxicating
beauty that only the eyes of a lover can see. Only then have we truly made peace with ourselves and the world.

Peace is not achieved by rooting out and destroying evil. When we become aware of our vices - anger, pride, greed, lust - the attempt to destroy them easily degenerates into self-hatred. After all, if we cannot love ourselves why bother to love others? Better than destroying your faults is to work patiently to implant the virtues - a slower and less dramatic work but far more effective. And by avoiding the dangers of religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness it creates a more pleasant working personality. Hidden in all our faults - our capacity for evil - there are also the seeds of many virtues. The terrorist may have had the seed of justice in him before his anger and the delusion that he is the instrument of God's wrath took him over. When we conduct war against ourselves (many of the greatest religious fanatics have been self-denying) we risk huge collateral damage: in the destruction of our own seeds of virtue. Every kind of violence is a crime against humanity because it deprives the world of unknown goodness.

The first step in implanting the virtues that will eventually overpower the vices is to establish the foundational virtue of deep and regular prayer. Through this silent rhythm of prayer wisdom slowly penetrates our mind and our world. Wisdom is the universal power that brings good out of evil. As the book of Wisdom says, 'the hope for the salvation of the world lies in the greatest number of wise people.' The wise know the distinction between self-knowledge and self-fixation, between detachment and hardness of heart,
between correction and cruelty. There are no rules for wisdom. Rules are never universal. But virtue is.

After Meditation, an excerpt from The Book of Wisdom 8: 21-29 in Christian Community Bible (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1997), p. 925.

I have come to know everything we see and everything hidden, because
Wisdom, who designed them all, taught me.

In her is a spirit that is intelligent, saintly, unique, manifold, subtle, active, concise, pure and lucid. It cannot corrupt, loves what is good and nothing can restrain it. It is beneficent, loving humankind, steadfast, dependable, calm though almighty. It sees everything and penetrates all spirits, however intelligent, subtle and pure they may be.

Wisdom surpasses in mobility all that moves, and being so pure pervades and permeates all things.

She is a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; nothing impure can enter her. She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of God's action and an image of his goodness.

She is but one, yet Wisdom can do all things and, herself unchanging, she renews all things. She enters holy souls, making them prophets and friends of God. . .She is indeed more beautiful than the sun and surpasses all the constellations; she outrivals light, for light gives way to night, but evil cannot prevail against Wisdom.

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