



# The World Community for Christian Meditation

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## Weekly Readings 3/2/2013



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

**CHRISTIAN MEDITATION: Newsletter of the World Community for Christian Meditation, Vol. 33, No. 4, Winter 2009-2010, p. 6.**

There seem to me five essential aspects of the spiritual life, which for convenience I would describe briefly as these:

Understanding the scriptures. The rejection of the sacred scriptures of humanity by the closed rationalist mind is one of the worst self-inflicted wounds of our culture. It is equaled only by the contemporary heresy of literalism, as stupid in its way as the rationalist approach is blind. Recovering the spiritual taste and sense of scripture is a priority for all our educational programs, but it requires a re-stimulation of the perceptive powers needed to awaken us to them.

Participating in the Eucharist. No just "going to church" but sharing in the koinonia and fellowship of the mystical ritual that is performed there. Different churches have varying approaches to the Eucharist. And many today see all religious ritual except those that have the benefit of being novel and exotic as meaningless. But again, before the sacramental sense can be restored some interior wakening of the spiritual senses has to begin.

Mindfulness of death. Every wisdom tradition sees this as a valuable practice. It challenges our culture's endemic denial of death. This denial explains the ways that we both entertain ourselves with violence in the media and find it so hard to recognize that drawing our last breath. . . .is not failure, but may be welcomed and embraced at the right moment in our life.

Small acts of kindness. When John Main was once asked what was the best way to prepare for meditation, this was what he replied. A smile or polite gesture that we offer as we turn our attention away from ourselves to others can transform us and them in the moment. On a different scale it applies to all our work for justice and peace, for the relief of suffering or the education of the young. Whatever we do remains "small." We cannot save the whole world by anything we do. But everything we do makes a difference.

Saying the mantra. This, as John Cassian says, collects all the emotions of human nature and helps us adjust to every situation. It is a Eucharistic act because, like the Eucharist, it reveals and celebrates the real presence. It awakens a taste for scripture that can highlight the significance of any experience we are undergoing. It gets to the root of all fear, including the fear of death, because it helps us live in the present moment that includes the continuous mindfulness of death. Death and resurrection are of the moment. Finally, it is an act of the purest kindness to ourselves. And by making us feel better about ourselves, it frees and fuels us to love others.

Perhaps it is stories rather than the more prosaic kinds of statements of this letter which instruct us most usefully. . . .But tradition is composed both of story and the endless reflection and commentary on the narrative. And we need tradition to give context and assistance for the long spiritual journey that is each life. When the Magi came with their gifts to the newborn messiah and fell on their knees they represent the beginning of the slow subjection of magic to wisdom in human culture. But in the same story, we see ourselves as travelers from afar, and we return to the path we have found with greater gratitude and wonder.

**After meditation: from "The Joy of the Saints," noted in *The Fire of Silence and Stillness: An Anthology of Quotations for the Spiritual Journey*, ed. Paul Harris (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1996), p. 150.**

Sarapion the Sindonite travelled once on a pilgrimage to Rome. Here he was told of a celebrated recluse, a woman who lived always in one small room, never going out. Skeptical about her way of life---for he himself was a great wanderer---Sarapion called on her and asked, "Why are you sitting here?" To which she replied, "I am not sitting; I am on a journey."

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