The World Community for Christian Meditation

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The Power of Silence

The essence of meditation is stillness and silence. Silence is both external and internal. External silence is hard to find in our world today. We are bombarded by trivia and distraction through the media.

Erich Fromm puts this very well in his book ?Psychoanalysis and Religion?:

?We have the most extraordinary possibilities for communication in print, radio and television [one would add nowadays the Internet as well], *and we are fed daily with nonsense which would be offensive to the intelligence of children were they not suckled on it.?* We are surrounded by noise and have become so used to it, that absence of noise feels strange and unfamiliar, therefore even threatening. We need to find the courage to create pockets of external silence in our day, additional to our periods of meditation, where we don?t talk to others, in person or on the phone, where we don?t listen to the radio, TV or music. Be brave switch off the radio, switch off the phone and dive into the silence! Do this especially in the hour or half hour leading up to meditation.

Preparation before prayer/meditation is important. We can?t expect to sit and meditate, stilling the mind, if just before we have been involved in conversation ? heated or otherwise -, watching TV or listening to the radio. We need to insert a period of external silence before we sit down.

For whatever our soul was thinking about before the time of prayer [meditation] inevitably occurs to us when we pray as a result of the operation of the memory. Hence we must prepare ourselves before the time of prayer to be the prayerful persons that we wish to be. (John Cassian)

The first step in meditation is therefore to actively withdraw into the silence by letting go off external noises, by withdrawing from any sense perceptions at all: ?*A mind not distracted by external things and not dispersed through the senses returns to itself.*?(St Basil)

By sitting still and focusing on our mantra we allow ourselves to become aware of the silence that lives at the Centre of our being. This silence is not just an absence of noise, a mere absence of sounds, but a creative energy, that then allows us to become ?pro-active? out of our own creative impulses, rather than ?reactive? to external stimuli.

Inner silence creates the awareness we are missing in everyday life: ?*Silence is really about being fully attentive to who we are and where we are and what is going on inside ourselves and outside ourselves...it is about being peacefully attentive, not self-consciously, but simply attentive, aware.*? (Laurence Freeman)

Sitting still in silence also forms the foundation for stability, standing on firm ground, spiritually and psychologically rooted. This is a rootedness that lasts not only the duration of your meditation sessions, but will become an attitude of mind. This will transform your life and allow you to live and act permanently from that deep centre of silence at the core of your being.

For further help with setting up and leading groups, please look at the ?Christian Meditation Groups? Website in English, Spanish and French, based on the book ?A Pearl of Great Price? by Laurence Freeman

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