

Exercising our capacity for attention

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An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB “Dearest Friends” in Meditatio Newsletter January 2020 at wccm.org, pp. 4-5.

What we often call love can be the hungry, craving of our loneliness for comfort and possession. When it is disappointed – by whoever we projected it onto – our self-centred “love” can quickly turn to anger and despair. To navigate beyond this cycle, we need asceticism, the personal discipline of exercising our capacity for attention. Eventually this capacity becomes ego-transforming love. Paying attention to the real, not to our illusory version of reality, illustrates why truth sets us free, equally to love and to be loved.

The connection between meditation (the essential asceticism of the Christian life) and love (the source and goal of wisdom) is like a cord that draws a curtain in a darkened room and allows the divinizing light of a new holiness to flood in. The new holiness for our time is the recognition of God in all the conditions of our age, without nostalgia and tuned with all we have learned about human nature and the laws of the universe. It is a universal not parochial holiness. It doesn't depend on human approval but on the mutual recognition that occurs between ourselves and God in the contemplative state. Its offspring is the ecumenism of all faiths. Based on the pattern of history, we can guess that the renewal of Christian life will be achieved when a critical mass of disciples has learned how to navigate the perfect storm of our present crisis.

After meditation: “Love” by Franz Wright in GOD’S SILENCE (New York: Knopf, 2006), p. 99.

LOVE

While they were considering whether to stone her—
and why not? —he knelt
and with his finger wrote
something in the dust. We are
as you know made from
dust, and the unknown
word
was, therefore, and is
and forever will be
written in our flesh
in gray folds of

memory's
flesh. *En*
arche en ho logos: